



## Love Bites

### My Immortal Knight – Book 2

#### By Delilah Devlin

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#### CHAPTER ONE

“He’s coming in. Get ready,” Joe’s voice jerked Darcy Henry to wakefulness.

Berating herself for dozing off during a stakeout, she fumbled for the switch on her night vision goggles. Instantly, the landscape before her was awash in shades of luminescent green. She scanned the water’s edge. The crests of the ebbing tides rolled onto the beach, unbroken by any sign of “Bat-boy.” Had she already missed her opportunity?

“Where do you see him?” she whispered into the mike on her headset, glad the roar of the incoming surf masked their voices.

“Ten o’clock. Get cocked.”

She reached for her crossbow and drew back the linen cord with both hands and latched it in the spring clip. Then she slid a steel-tipped arrow onto the track. Sighting down the shaft of the arrow, she braced the bow in her left palm and dug her elbow into the sand. With the stock snug against her shoulder, her right forefinger slid around the trigger and she turned her sights back to the water’s edge—just in time to see a tall figure stride out of the surf.

He fit the description of the new vamp in town she’d purchased from the barman at the “blood bank.” Only the barman hadn’t filled in all the details. Darcy stiffened against her body’s sudden surge of attraction and firmly reminded herself the vamp’s body was like any other man’s. *Yeah, right.*

Her gaze flickered over him, inventorying his characteristics—for her *After Action Report*. Broad-shouldered, leanly muscled, just over six feet tall. Blond, she could tell, despite the fact his hair was plastered to his head. Handsome, too. With broad prominent cheekbones, a longish straight nose, and lips that appeared permanently curved in a smirk.

Unable to resist the temptation, she adjusted the lenses of her goggles to zoom, and her gaze slipped lower. His package was as fine arriving as his ass had been going into the water. His long, uncircumcised cock dangled between his legs. Something not mentioned in the barman’s description—and definitely not something that would make it into her AAR.

“Cease!” Joe said, impatience clipping his words. “A civilian’s in your line of sight.”

Darcy lowered the bow, cursing under her breath. “Where? And how the hell did we miss that?” she whispered angrily.

“She had to have been here when we arrived,” Joe replied. “If I hadn’t seen her hand rise above the dune...”

Nothing was ever as simple as it seemed. A vampire spotted on Vero Beach just happened to meet the description of a suspected killer they’d circulated that day.

This night’s stakeout might be a bust after all. They’d have to track him to his lair and try to take him out while he slept. Dusting a sleeping vampire never sat well with Darcy. Too unsportsmanlike. Asleep, even a probable serial killer like this one wore a face like an innocent.

She burrowed deeper into the wet sand at the bottom of her shallow foxhole, prepared to wait it out. This time she wouldn’t doze, no matter how balmy this November night grew. Too many late nights and too little sleep, were taking their toll on the whole team. Instead, she concentrated on how uncomfortable she was with damp sand working its way into her clothing and the smell of rotting seaweed all around her.

Having a target to observe helped. Hopefully, the vamp wouldn't make a meal of his host or Darcy would be forced to intervene. Hand-to-hand with a vamp was a last resort. Humans almost always lost to their superior strength. No matter how many degrees of black belt one had earned.

Joe let out a low whistle. "Damn! How'd a ghoul like that get a such a fine piece of ass?"

A woman sat up near the top of a dune, her arms outstretched, revealing a slender back, rounded hips and a cascade of long, dark hair.

The male vamp went down on his knees and leaned over her.

Darcy tensed, ready to spring to the woman's rescue at the first sign of fangs.

Instead, the woman's back arched to offer her breasts to her lover. His mouth closed over a beaded tip and the woman's loud groan of approval was discernable over the rumble of the incoming tide.

Joe's soft laughter sounded in Darcy's ear. "Better take notes, Darc. See what you're missing?"

Darcy knew better than to answer her partner. Any response would only add fodder to the ribbing she'd receive at the Special Unit's outbrief in the morning. Her lack of a social life was already a favorite topic.

As it was, she was glad the guys weren't "wired in" to her goggles. Joe's fed the monitor in the van parked further down the beach.

Maybe she'd get even luckier and the vamp would move his tryst indoors.

Instead, he released the woman's breast. With his hands braced on either side of her, the tops of his shoulders rippled as he "walked" down her body, his head circling as he kissed a path across her belly. Then he moved lower.

Darcy squirmed. When was the last time a man had buried his face in her pussy? God, had it really been three years since Manny had transferred to Miami-Dade?

The woman's hips lifted and her hands dug into the sand. When his face reached the juncture of her thighs, she shouted and her head thrashed from side to side.

Darcy wished she could roll to her back and give the couple their moments of privacy—and herself a reprieve from an unwanted rush of desire. Tight as a spring, it wound inside her belly. She was helpless to stop the flush of heat that swept from her face to her breasts. And thankful for the darkness so no one on her team would see her blushing.

When the vampire rose to kneel between the woman's legs, Darcy's heart thudded dully in her chest and increased in tempo. His cock fell onto the woman's belly, engorged and enormous,

just before he hooked his arms beneath her knees and lifted her buttocks off the sand. The woman reached for his cock and guided it to her pussy. Then his hips slammed forward, hard.

The woman arched into the sand and shouted again.

No man had ever made Darcy shout, a thought that niggled her feminine pride while it aroused her curiosity. Although with his super-sized hardware, the shout might not have been one of ecstasy. The thought cheered her for the moment, and then she noted the woman slamming her hips upward to meet the vamp's thrusts.

From Darcy's angle, she had a perfect view of the long gliding action of his hips as he pumped into the woman's body. Darcy's legs widened and she dug her knees into the sand, shifting her hips to relieve the itch between her legs.

"I'll bet you twenty she comes before he does," Max's voice broke in.

"You're on," said Joe. "What man wouldn't come all over a woman like that?"

"Ahem. Just a little reminder, guys," Darcy said, hoping to dampen this particular line of conversation. "Captain will be reviewing this feed, too. Joe, you better not have your zoom on."

Soft chuckles sounded from the guys, but they soon quieted and hunkered down to wait—and watch.

Darcy's attention returned to the couple further down the beach. The woman's legs straightened, her toes pointing toward the moon, and her long moans indicated she was fast approaching the big 'O'. The vampire ground his hips into hers, and the woman screeched.

Joe groaned.

"You owe me twenty," Max said.

"Damn," Phil whispered. "Wonder if the wifey will be up for a little tickle in the morning."

"I'm telling Bets you called her that," Darcy said, her mouth so dry the words almost cracked.

The woman's legs jerked up and down, and the vamp flung back his head and thrust faster.

Suddenly, he stopped, his nose lifting into the breeze.

Realizing the wind had shifted, Darcy hugged the sand and held her breath.

The vamp opened his eyes and stared straight at her.

Darcy froze, hoping he hadn't really seen her. But a grin stretched across his face.

"Fuck, Darcy!" Joe shouted into her headset. "You're made. Get out."

Darcy couldn't risk a shot with the woman downrange. She ditched her crossbow, ripped off her goggles, and sprang from the foxhole. Running straight for the road a hundred yards in front of her, Darcy felt the world slow. Her feet mired in the sand. Her heart drummed loudly in her ears.

Then she heard bare feet pounding in the sand and knew he was gaining.

"I'll try to get off a shot," Joe said, his breaths coming short and fast, "but he's moving in on you. Pick up your feet. You're running like a girl."

Anger and a spurt of adrenaline increased her pace. She leapt over a hummock of tall sawgrass and hoped it scraped his balls. The road was fifty yards away. The headlights of the approaching van swept the beach in front of her.

"He's too close. I can't get off a shot," Joe said. "Hold him off, I'm coming."

Twenty-five yards and uphill, now. Her boots sank ankle-deep as she climbed a dune. She reached the top, and then her feet left the ground as a heavy weight knocked her through the air.

They rolled in a jumble of twisting limbs to the bottom of the dune. When they stopped, his long, hard body stretched over hers, anchoring her limbs to the ground.

Darcy opened her eyes, expecting a vampire's mask and a row of jagged teeth. Instead, the vamp's handsome face hovered inches from her own.

"Well, well, well," he said, his voice a low, rumbling purr. "A she-cop. A dangerous species, indeed."

"You're English," she blurted. Something else not in the report. Was he even a vampire?

Despite the layer of clothing separating their skins, Darcy burned from his heat. She struggled against his restraint.

He stretched and hooked his ankles around hers and his hands held hers easily to the ground.

Finally, she let her head fall back in the sand. "So, how'd you know I was there?" she asked, already knowing the truth, but needing to distract him.

His face lowered, and he sniffed along her neck and the collar of her shirt. "I could smell your arousal."

Darcy jerked, that hadn't been quite the answer she'd expected, and then noted that up close he smelled of the sea and the other woman's perfume.

Noise from a half a dozen pairs of booted feet hurtling down the dune filled the air around them. When the sand settled, the clicks of rounds chambering in pistols sounded loudly.

The blinding glare of multiple flashlights trained on Darcy and the vampire lying in the trough of the dune fully illuminating his features. His wary gaze held Darcy's.

"Get off her now!" Joe shouted.

"Now, gentlemen," the vamp responded, his voice calm, "why would I give up my only advantage?"

He leaned close and Darcy forced herself not to flinch. *Christ, he's going to bite me.* Expecting teeth to sink into her neck, she was surprised when his warm, rough tongue lapped her instead. *So that's what their tongues feel like!*

"Just in case," he whispered.

When she could organize her scattered thoughts she realized he'd prepared her skin—used saliva from the special glands in the back of his throat to deaden the nerves. *Why bother?*

"I give you my word. We won't harm you if you let her go," Joe continued.

"And our long standing relationship assures me your word to a vampire is your bond?" Wry humor laced his words. "No thank you. I think I'll stay right where I am. Besides it seems a fair trade. I have an interesting bit of woman-flesh beneath me to replace the bit you chased off."

Joe cursed softly.

The vamp's gaze drilled her into the sand. "I'm sure you've wondered what it's like. From where I'm sitting...er, laying...it's pretty damn sweet."

Which reminded her his sex nestled between her legs. Awareness stiffened her belly and thighs. Darcy glared at him—vampire or not—she was getting pretty mad.

"You son of a bitch," her partner growled.

"Joe," Darcy said, trying not to strangle on her words, "Let's not piss him off. Remember, I'm the one with a naked vampire squashing the breath out of me."

"Yeah. Captain's gonna have your ass," Max said.

"Somehow, I think that's the least of my worries," she murmured.

"Well folks, it looks like we got ourselves an old-fashioned Mexican standoff," Joe said, disgust in his voice.

"You're fucking Cuban," Max pointed out.

As a smile stretched across his face, the corners of the vamp's eyes wrinkled. "Is this what you have to put up with every day? Poor girl."

Darcy's breath hitched. He'd been handsome before, but smiling, his attraction was lethal. Even with a crowd of her buddies standing with fully loaded weapons trained on them, Darcy's body responded to the vampire's sensual pull. Her breasts tightened and her nipples pressed painfully against her sports bra.

"We should probably put this to a swift end," he said, lowering his head to nuzzle her neck.

That wasn't what she wanted to hear. Bracing for violence, she was unnerved when he raised his head. He still smiled.

In fact, his smile was so broad she could detect the state of every one of his pearly whites. Darcy stilled, her mind racing. He wanted her to know he was in control. Not the action of a blood-crazed vampire.

But still a vampire.

With her mouth dry as a desert, Darcy said, "If you keep your mouth next to my neck, we could sit up and talk with the guys about what to do next."

His gaze flickered to her lips and back up. "Do you really want your friends to see what you do to me?"

Confused, she felt something nudge her inner thigh and remembered his erection. Heat rushed to her cheeks. The whole crew would know a horny vampire pinned her to the ground.

"Shy?" he whispered.

Her eyes narrowed. "Performance problems? Couldn't get it off before?"

"She bites!" Louder this time, "I'm going to move behind her slowly. So that we can talk." He winked.

This was a big joke to him. In that moment, she knew he wasn't the killer. Vamp or not, he wasn't going to harm her.

With his mouth against her neck, he lifted his body off hers, and she followed him up, sitting in the sand. He slid around her, until she was between him and six raised weapons. When he settled, his long bare legs stretched alongside hers and an arm held her back against his belly, his cock snug between them.

"Our little secret," he whispered.

She was getting damned annoyed with the whispers that raised the hairs on the side of her neck. “Not so damn little. And definitely not a secret.”

“Glad you noticed.”

Darcy glared straight ahead.

“You’re the Special Unit, aren’t you?” the vampire asked, his voice pitched for the group to hear.

Darcy wished she could see the expressions of her team, but the lights trained on her kept them in shadow. *How the hell did he know that?*

“I’ve been looking for an opportunity to approach you regarding a delicate matter.”

“You have our full attention now,” Joe said.

“There’s a serial killer in your midst.”

Darcy heard a snort of disbelief and shuffling of feet.

“Yeah, and we’re looking at him,” Joe said.

This male posturing wasn’t getting the vampire’s cock off her back. “Joe, shut up. This isn’t getting us anywhere.” Glancing over her shoulder, she said, “My name’s Darcy.”

“A pleasure to meet you,” he murmured in her ear. “Call me Quentin.”

*Quentin.* Now it would be harder to kill him. He had a human name to go with his human face. “There’s more you want to tell us?”

“I believe we have a mutual foe. I, too, am hunting.”

“The way I see it,” Joe said, “the killing started about the same time you showed up.”

Quentin’s hand tightened on her belly. “I followed it here. From Seattle. My friends aren’t any more pleased with the attention his actions bring on our community than you are cleaning up his messes.”

Before Joe could issue another challenging remark, Darcy broke in, “What are you suggesting?”

“That we partner.”

“Our unit partner with a vampire?” It was unheard of. Their unit killed vampires—all vampires.

“There would be advantages to us both. You know the area. I have a vampire’s perspective and special skills.”

“We don’t need you to help us find a vampire,” Joe said. “We do just fine on our own.”

“And when you catch him? He’s not going to go into escape mode like most. He won’t panic. And you won’t find him by accident.”

His words sent a chill through Darcy.

“He’s a calculated killer.” The vamp’s words were becoming clipped.

An impatient vampire wouldn’t be good for her health.

“Think guys,” Darcy said. “The killer has left remnants of his meals in plain sight, taunting us.”

“Are you suggesting we should take this vampire on?” Joe asked.

“No.” *I just want him off my back.* “I’m saying this isn’t our decision.”

“We’ll bring you to the Captain,” Joe said, sounding disgusted.

“If you help us,” Darcy said, “What’s in it for you?”

“I need a place to stay. I choose yours.”

The air whooshed from her lungs at the thoughts his remark invoked.

“Let’s get this guy some pants before Darcy hyperventilates,” Max said.

## CHAPTER TWO

The guys were crowded around the bathroom door at the station house when Darcy returned with a cup of steaming coffee. “What gives?” she asked. “Doesn’t the uniform fit?”

“Seems when a vampire gets it up, he has to do something with it.” Max shrugged. “You asked.”

Darcy’s face burned. “Sorry I did.”

A roar echoed from inside the bathroom, and Darcy turned on her heels. Head down, she carried her cup to the conference room table to wait for the rest of the crew to file in and take their seats. She hated to admit, even to herself, that she was eager to see the vamp again. Her fascination horrified her.

Or so she wanted to believe.

Finally, he strode into the room looking irritated and wearing prison orange. Despite the unfortunate color, he was devastatingly handsome. Darcy had seen him in luminescent green

and in shadow, but bright fluorescent light revealed his eyes were a startling blue and his hair, finally dry and combed, fell in silver-blond waves to the tops of his broad shoulders.

Darcy cleared her throat, hoping no one had noticed her staring. “What’s the matter,” she asked him. “Not your color?”

He shivered in disgust. “It’s vile.” He took an empty seat beside her.

Never having been this close to a vampire without ramming a stake through its chest, Darcy’s senses were ringing all alarms.

Joe slipped into the chair on the other side of her, his brown-eyed gaze glaring at them both.

“Your boyfriend?” Quentin asked, his voice silky.

“My partner,” she said, between stiff lips.

Feeling awkward sandwiched between the two of them, Darcy was supremely aware of the silent testosterone war going on between the two men—one glowering, one smiling. Darcy straightened in her chair, blocking their staring war. Immediately, she recognized her mistake. Now, they were both looking at her.

Another of the team, Phil Carstairs, entered carrying Darcy’s bow and quiver. “I retrieved this from the beach.” He held the crossbow in front of Quentin and sneered at him.

Darcy murmured her thanks, accepted her gear, and laid the items on the table.

The vampire reached past her and drew an arrow from the quiver. “Not silver?” he asked, with a single raised eyebrow while he fingered the tip.

“I wanted to be sure it would pierce your chest,” she said with a smile that didn’t reach her eyes.

“You prefer an arrow to drive deep?” he asked in his sexy purring voice, his expression innocent.

Darcy’s cheeks turned pink.

The door of the conference room swung open and Captain Springer entered, looking strangely pleased. He approached the vampire, his hand extended. “I’m Captain Leon Springer.”

The vamp stood and accepted the handshake. “Quentin Albermarle.”

“I’m pleased to meet you. And I apologize for the inconvenience.”

Darcy sat stunned. The Captain was apologizing to a vamp? She'd half expected him to ream their asses for bringing him here in the first place. She looked around the table and saw that the rest of the team was similarly shocked by their ferocious frowns.

"You must understand our concerns," the Captain continued, "Everyone's a little on edge. The reports of random murders out of Seattle, and then murders following the same M.O. begin here, shortly after you arrive. My guys jumped to conclusions."

"Understandable, given the circumstances," Quentin replied. His smug expression made Darcy want to plant her fist in the middle of it.

"Can you believe this?" Joe muttered.

"I've verified your story with the police there," the Captain said. "You come highly recommended."

Quentin nodded and watched while the Captain took his seat at the head of the table, his crew of black-uniformed officers taking the remaining chairs.

All were prime specimens of human males—well able to take him in a battle to the death. His gaze fell on the one exception—the woman sitting beside him. Her slender backbone was as straight as one of her deadly sharp arrows. But he knew better than to take her outthrust jaw and angry expression as anything other than a mask. Her body had melted beneath his on the beach, her ripening arousal a pungent betrayal of her hard-fought battle for composure.

Beneath her prickly exterior beat the heart of a wanton.

How delightful it was going to be to break through her resistance. With barely a woman's curve evident beneath her uniform, he wasn't fooled. Her boyishly slender hips held a subtle feminine flair that had cradled his sex nicely. The gentle curve of her taut waist had quivered when he'd stretched his body over hers. And her small, soft breasts were tipped with sensitive nipples that had pebbled to hardened points when his chest met hers.

She didn't know it, but her eyes had grown wide as saucers when she'd realized his cock pressed into her thigh. Without a hint of makeup, her gaze framed by dark thick lashes had betrayed her excitement. Her expressive brown eyes, glittering with heat, had also told him she was curious.

Careful where his thoughts lingered, lest he find the need to seek out the WC again, Quentin widened his legs in the hard plastic chair and turned his attention back to the details of the outbrief.

"Folks, I'll admit I was skeptical when I first heard Quentin's proposal. We've been fighting vampires for over four years. We see the darker side of their interaction with humans—the violence and harm they can do. We're the ones who are called out when they step over the line.

“But the fact is, we haven’t been doing so well in this war. And I think it’s time we rethink our strategies. Time to consider a partnership. Vampires live among us. For the most part, we can’t tell them from us.”

“At least not until they show us their teeth,” the one who’d introduced himself as Max Weir replied angrily, his hard-eyed glare letting everyone in the room know of his objection to the offer.

The Captain leveled a glare of his own at the large man. “I’ve considered Quentin’s offer and I accept. I think he’ll be an invaluable asset to the team while we’re hunting our killer. He has personal knowledge of this vampire and understands his habits.”

The Captain held up a hand to quiet the murmured protests from the team. “It’ll be dawn soon. We need to get Quentin to a safe place to wait out the day, and the team needs to rest up as well.”

“I have a place,” Quentin said, smiling. “Hers.” He nodded to the woman beside him whose face was reddening with anger.

“Fuck no,” her partner growled.

“That’s out of the question,” she said, her back bristling.

“Darcy, it would solve several problems if you would.” The Captain’s ruddy complexion grew darker. “We wouldn’t have to draw attention to our ‘arrangement’ with expense reports we’d have to justify. But you needn’t worry—he checks out with Seattle PD. Seems Quentin, here, has helped on several major investigations. He’s considered a trustworthy sort.”

“A trustworthy vampire?” The woman’s partner, Joe Garcia, snorted.

“Having him assimilated with the team is an excellent idea, actually,” the Captain said. “Darcy, I’m assigning you and Joe to be his shadows during this investigation. In the meantime, Joe, I think you’d better stay at Darcy’s place, too. She’s got the room.”

Quentin grinned.

“As soon as he wakes tonight, we’ll start picking his brain. I’ll send an artist around to get a sketch of the vamp we’re looking for.”

Darcy’s arms folded over her chest, her expression pure bulldog obstinance. “I don’t trust him, Captain.”

“Well, now you can keep an eye on me,” Quentin said. “And if I step out of line, you can use one of your toothpicks to turn my black heart to dust.”

Finally, she looked at him. “I will be watching you. Have no doubt about that.”

“All right, then,” the Captain said. “It goes without saying that this little arrangement is strictly need to know. This is an unprecedented step the department is taking. I want it to work. Now, get out of here.”

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Darcy entered her house quietly and set the bags she’d retrieved from Quentin’s hotel room on the floor. He could carry them the rest of the way to his bedroom when he woke. *His bedroom.* Already, the house felt alien. *Invaded.* As soon as she’d deposited Quentin and Joe on her front doorstep earlier, she’d hotfooted it out of the house. Retrieving his things had only been an excuse to put some distance between the vamp and her raging hormones. *Why him?* Why did her body come alive at just the sight of him?

Sunshine poured into the large open space of her Florida room, and she grinned. Joe was a devious man. He’d opened every blind and shutter to ensure the vamp remained trapped behind the guest bedroom door. Joe was on the couch sleeping, a tangle of covers knotted around his waist. His chest bare. With his arms flung above his head, she had an excellent view of his washboard abs and the arrow of black hair that stretched from nipple to nipple and down below the edge of the sheet.

Cursing herself for noticing, Darcy tiptoed past him. Her sexual libido had rotten timing. The vamp had awakened feelings she’d tamped down for three years.

Thankful she had Joe around to save her from herself, Darcy headed to her bedroom. Inside, she stripped off her clothes and padded on bare feet into her bathroom, intent on showering away the sand she was sure had worked itself into every crevice.

Reaching behind the shower curtain, she turned on the water. She brushed her teeth, and rummaged beneath the cabinet for the scented soap her mother had given her at Christmas. The raspberry-perfumed soap would be her secret indulgence. No matter she normally used only plain bar soap for a quick scrub. She wondered if the vampire’s keen sense of smell would detect her change of routine.

She reached in to lift the stopper and stepped beneath the shower’s spray.

“I thought you’d decided to find yourself another place to stay.”

Darcy nearly screeched at Quentin’s husky whisper. She whirled and then remembered she hadn’t a stitch of clothing on. Her hands covered her breasts, but she quickly realized she had to look ridiculous. The rest of her was bare, and his hot gaze devoured every exposed inch.

“What do you think you’re doing?” she hissed, keeping her gaze glued on his face.

“Availing myself of my hostess’s amenities?” he said, a smirk tilting one corner of his mouth.

One glance down and she'd be toast. She was already having problems breathing after noting the way the water ran in rivulets from the ends of his hair and down his broad, hairy chest.

"Well, you can just waltz right out of here and go use the guest bathroom. I'm not sharing."

"Your boyfriend's made that impossible for me to do." He folded his arms over his chest.

"You're stuck with me until dark."

"Not my problem. And his name's Joe. How the hell did you get past him?"

Quentin's smile stretched and he shrugged.

Darcy wished the rose-colored tile behind him would make him seem less...manly. "I'll scream, and Joe will come running. He'll kill you if he finds you here—and I won't be happy to clean up the mud you leave behind." She jerked when he reached over her shoulder for the shampoo.

His long, muscled forearm grazed her shoulder, and Darcy held herself stiff as a statue to keep a shudder from racking her body. His large, broad frame crowded her, sucking the air from the steam-filled stall. When he calmly squeezed a glob of shampoo into his palm and raised his hands to lather his hair, her breath hitched.

She didn't know why she didn't make good on her threat to scream for help, except she'd be embarrassed as hell if she were found naked with the vamp. Her reticence couldn't have a thing to do with all that golden skin and the tufts of dark hair beneath his arms—and certainly not the cock lifting from its bed of wiry brown hair.

*Ah hell!* She'd looked.

Darcy spun away and grabbed the washcloth. Scrubbing her arms and breasts, she abraded her skin to remind herself this was a dangerous man—whom she probably shouldn't turn her back on.

When his soapy hands slid around her waist and pulled her back snug against his chest and abdomen, the only thought that didn't blow her mind was that his cock rested in the crease of her ass.

"I'll offer you a trade," he said, his mouth next to her ear.

Darcy fought her body's inclination to lean into his embrace. If she were going to be weak, she'd lay all the blame at his doorstep.

"I need blood—about half a pint to stave off grumpiness..." He licked her ear then sucked her lobe between his teeth.

A frisson of desire shuddered through her body, unwanted, but so strong her head fell to the side, exposing her neck.

“... and I can give you an orgasm unlike anything you’ve ever known.”

Mention of the “O” word tightened her belly to a hard knot. He’d stirred an ache when he’d first strode out of the waves. Nothing less than a wild fucking would do to get him out her system.

His hands smoothed up her stomach to cup her breasts.

Darcy tried to push his hands down. Not because she didn’t crave his touch there, but because she knew her small breasts didn’t stack up well against the globes on the woman he’d been with earlier. Her traitorous nipples constricted instantly.

She eased her legs apart and let his cock slide between them.

Quentin groaned and tongued her neck. All the while his hands caressed her, smoothing over her breasts, across her belly, and down to her pussy.

Darcy swayed on her feet as pliant as a rag doll in his arms, biting her lips to keep the moans that threatened to tear from her throat. His fingers separated her labia and stroked between. Her hands reached behind to grasp his thighs, otherwise she’d have melted to the floor of the shower in a puddle.

He licked behind her ear, then tsked. “We’ll have to do something about this sand first.”

Again, he reached for the shampoo. When his fingers massaged her scalp, Darcy swore someone purred. His strong fingers worked in the suds and kept right on kneading and shaping. When he drew her under the water to rinse her hair, Darcy’s eyes were closed and she followed him, docile as a lamb.

“Give me your soap,” he said.

Her eyes slowly blinked open. “Soap?”

“The bar you’re clutching in your hand.”

Darcy looked down her arm and realized she still held her mother’s soap in her hand. She held it up for him.

Leaning down, he sniffed, then took the bar. “Raspberries. My favorite. Now come here.” He drew her away from the water and sat on the ledge at the far end of the stall, pulling her to stand between his open thighs. With a twirl of his finger, he indicated that she should turn around.

She shot one last meaningless glare, then turned away.

He worked the lather between his hands then glided his soapy hands over her skin from shoulders to buttocks and all the sensitive points in between. When he reached her ass, Darcy's heart beat loudly. His hands parted her buttocks and his finger trailed down the crevice. "No sand here," he said, gravel in his voice.

In the creases between her legs and buttocks, he found a trace of grit, so he lifted her cheeks and spent minutes soaping and smoothing to ensure not a granule was missed. By the time he'd finished, Darcy's legs wobbled and she was ready to scream.

When he turned her to wash her front, Darcy's gaze fell on his face. His nose was flared, his cheeks reddened and the smirk was now a tight line of tension. Gratified he was every bit as overcome with desire as she was, Darcy gave herself over to his touch. *Just this once.*

He lathered his hands and reached for her breasts. Already tight and puckered, her nipples caught the soap bubbles he smoothed there. His large hands dwarfed her breasts, but despite her earlier doubts, he played with them, apparently fascinated.

His fingers rolled her nipples, tugged and squeezed until they stretched, engorged. She nearly protested when he left them to glide his hands down her belly. He swirled a finger inside her belly button and Darcy's abdomen jumped and quivered, her legs once again turning to jelly. Then he reached lower.

She parted her legs to make room for his hands and he swept them between, rubbing over her outer labia, then parted them to finger her tender inner lips.

Darcy reached for his shoulders to steady herself, then leaned to rest her head on his shoulder as his fingers rimmed her cunt, circling, rubbing. He found her clitoris and plucked it. "Lift your leg over mine," he said.

He didn't want mere compliance—he demanded her knowing participation. Darcy was beyond any pretense of defiance. She lifted one leg and draped it over his. The space between her legs was wide open for his marauding fingers to explore. Her nails bit into his shoulders.

Looking down the space between their bodies, Darcy's breath grew shallow and raspy. Their differences, human to vampire, weren't important now. How their bodies complimented each other's, feminine to masculine, assumed precedence. Something deep inside her soft core yearned to yield to his mastery.

His erection stood straight up, veins crisscrossing beneath golden skin tinged with red. The wide, plump head looked soft and purplish. She couldn't resist smoothing a fingertip over it.

"No touching. Not yet," he said, his words clipped.

He rolled the bar of soap between his palms working up lather, then set it aside. When his hands descended to her crotch, Darcy closed her eyes and let her head fall back.

His fingers rubbed over the hair on her mons, tugging, massaging, and then he reached lower to follow the lines where her thighs met her pussy, his fingers smoothing, yet creating an ache that drew her belly taut.

She widened her legs and sank slightly on one knee to rock against his hand. *Hurry!* She wanted to shout at him, she needed him to be inside her now.

He traced a finger between her labia and Darcy gasped, sure that now he would dip inside. "Open your eyes," he said.

He removed one of his hands from her and circled his cock. "This is vampire cock, sweetheart," he said, his voice roughening.

"What? You think, once I've had vamp, I'll never go back?" As soon as the words were spoken, she regretted her quip. It was something she tended to do when she was nervous.

Quentin's face broke into grin. "I can guarantee any *man* who comes after me will be found wanting."

"You think highly of yourself, don't you?"

"I've over a hundred fifty years of practical experience, love. I'm just stating facts."

*A hundred fifty years of fucking?* She wet her lips with her tongue. "From where I'm standing, I'm not seeing anything that special." *Liar!*

His hand glided up and down himself. "This is only one piece of the equipment, love. But I'm getting ahead of myself. I want to describe the process, so there will be no surprises. I don't want to frighten you."

"I'm not scared." Her skittering heartbeat made a liar out of her.

One brow rose, mocking her assertion. "Well, then let's get on with it." The hand between her legs, rubbed over her hips, then clasped one buttock to force her closer. He lowered the head of his cock to her pussy and pushed between her legs.

Darcy's nails bit harder into his shoulders, but she refused to betray her excitement in her expression. She pressed her lips tightly together and dared him with her eyes to take her.

Instead, he leaned forward and kissed her lips. Darcy gasped and he took advantage, sliding his tongue into her mouth. She angled her head and deepened the kiss. When her own tongue swept inside his mouth, she encountered sharp barriers. His incisors.

She tried to jerk away, but his hand on her ass anchored her against his hard, lean body. Her skin noted changes there, too.

“I wanted to prepare you.” His voice was deeper, rougher. Quentin was losing his veneer of humanity, changing into his vampire self. He pressed her ass closer, causing his cock to rub against her aching cunt. His gaze pinned her like a butterfly to a mounting board. “Tell me you don’t want this.”

Darcy shivered in his embrace, her nipples constricting tightly. “Just this once,” she whispered, not recognizing the husky tone of her voice.

The corners of his lips curved and the tips of his fangs appeared. He stood, his cock pushing unerringly inside her cunt, higher, deeper, until his hips lifted her from the floor.

Darcy gasped loudly. She’d known he was large, but knowing and *knowing* were two different things entirely. She was stretched to the limit. The walls of her vagina eased around him, softening to accept his intrusion.

In two steps, he pushed her beneath the shower’s spray, pressing her back against the tiled wall. Darcy closed her eyes as water sheeted over her face. Her legs rose to wrap tightly around his hips, and her arms clutched his shoulders. Instantly, her focus became the rigid pole of his sex, driving impossibly deep inside her. His hips rolled. Darcy’s back rose and fell against the wall and her legs squeezed to draw him closer, deeper.

His hands grasped her buttocks and he lifted and shoved her hips down, causing a friction between her vagina and his cock that threatened to sweep over her like a wildfire.

“Give me your neck,” he growled.

*Now!* Now she’d find out what a true vamp-induced orgasm felt like. She rolled her head to the side and offered her neck for their pleasure.

His tongue lapped at her skin and Darcy trembled. Then his fangs bit into her, and her breath hissed between her teeth. A short, sharp pain was followed by an indescribable euphoria as his mouth suctioned against her neck.

Darcy grew still in his arms, sensation overpowering her limbs. Her passion-drugged senses noted his body was hardening, muscles expanding. His cock thickened and lengthened, and Darcy’s hips lurched. She whimpered.

His teeth pulled away. “Wait. Will ease.” His chest and hips shook.

Darcy opened her eyes and saw his savage mask. Plates of bony armor pushed his forehead out, altering his gaze into a sinister, hooded leer. His mouth dripped with her blood.

“I don’t want you to stop.” She bit her lips and moaned when his hips jerked beneath her. “Move! Move now!”

He lowered his head and sank his teeth into her neck again, anchoring her in place as his hips resumed their deep, upward thrusts.

Darcy mewled like a kitten, one hand fisting in his hair, the other scraping his back with her nails.

Quentin pounded harder, driving her higher against the wall—faster and faster.

Then she was writhing in his arms—a wild thing, clawing his back to reach the summit. Her orgasm slammed through her, stiffening her legs, arching her back. She cried out.

Quentin's answering howl reverberated on the tiled walls.

Still panting, Darcy's gaze rose to meet Quentin's. As she watched, his face reformed but his gaze was wary. "You can let me down now," she said.

His lips tightened, but he nodded.

Suddenly, the door to the bathroom slammed open and the shower curtain was jerked back. Joe took in their compromising position with a single searing glance.

He raised a sharpened stake in his fist.

## CHAPTER THREE

"No! Joe, don't do it." Darcy cried out, her hand reaching beyond Quentin's back to stave off the blow.

"You god-damned bastard!" Joe spat. "What did you do—use your vamp hypnotism on her?"

Quentin remained where he was—deep inside Darcy's still-pulsating channel. Despite the interruption, he wasn't ready to withdraw from the sweet flesh that fisted around his cock.

Joe raised the stake higher. "Get off her!" he said, his jaw clenched.

"Unless you care to join us," Quentin said, his tone even, "I'd suggest—"

"We're finished," Darcy said, and pushed against his shoulders.

Reluctantly, Quentin backed away from the wall and eased his cock from inside her. Her legs slid to the floor, but he was gratified when she clutched his waist to steady herself.

He turned to face his adversary, unconcerned his cock gleamed with their combined cum.

Joe's face darkened, his body taut. When his gaze swept over Darcy's naked body, his stance grew more rigid. "Bastard!"

Quentin realized Darcy's blood still trickled from the punctures in her neck. He held up both hands. "I'll close the wounds." Keeping an eye on the man holding the stake, Quentin drew Darcy close to him.

Darcy flinched, but allowed him to lick her neck to seal the small punctures. When Quentin lifted his head, he glared a challenge at Joe.

Joe's gaze darted to Darcy. "Go get some clothes on," he said curtly.

Darcy's arms wrapped around her waist and she stepped toward Joe. "You can't hurt him."

Quentin hoped Joe didn't see her backside or he'd be dust. His fingers had left bruises, which were quickly turning blue.

"Were you willing?" Joe asked.

"Yes," she whispered.

He closed his eyes for a moment and lowered his stake. "How could you?"

Darcy's face was ashen, and a sheen of moisture glazed her eyes. "I don't know. I was curious, I guess."

*Curious?* Anger bristled through Quentin, but he held his tongue. She'd been a hell of a lot more than curious. Hotter than a bitch in heat was a more apt description.

Joe's gaze swept over her again, and a muscle tensed in his jaw. "Fuck you, Darcy."

Darcy blanched and turned her face away.

Quentin's hands fisted. He resisted the urge to tear the man's head from his body. He recognized jealousy and desire when he saw them. And Joe was eaten up with bitterness borne of both emotions.

"Get dressed," Joe repeated.

Darcy left the room without a backward glance.

Quentin would have liked to follow her out, to soothe the hurt he'd seen in her eyes.

But Joe loomed over him, his chest rising and falling rapidly. Finally, his face twisted into a sneer and he tossed the stake at Quentin's feet. "Stay away from her, or I swear I'll kill you." He turned on his heels and followed Darcy into the bedroom.

Quentin pulled the shower curtain closed and turned the water a notch hotter. Then he reached for the raspberry soap. When his lathered hands encircled his cock, he murmured, "This is going to be more interesting than I thought."

\* \* \* \* \*

“Darcy!”

Ignoring Joe’s angry voice, Darcy shrugged into her robe and belted it tightly around her waist. When his hand clamped onto her shoulder, she stiffened.

“Did...Did he hurt you?” Joe asked, his voice softer now.

“No.” The word strangled in her throat. She was sore and she wouldn’t be at all surprised if her tender inner flesh was slightly torn. The vampire’s cock had almost been more than she could take.

“Dammit, Darc, don’t lie to me.”

Darcy whirled, fighting tears and embarrassment. “Joe, this is none of your business. I’m fine.”

“Then why are you lying?” Joe’s gaze pinned her.

Darcy fought to remain immobile and not give him a clue concerning her conflicting emotions.

He must have seen something anyway, because his lips twisted and he grabbed her arm. Pulling her behind him, he entered the living room, then dragged her down the hallway to the guest bedroom.

When the door closed behind them, she shook off his hold. “I’m tired. I want to rest.”

“After you’ve satisfied me,” Joe said, his jaw set.

Darcy jerked. “What did you say?”

“Just take off that robe.”

“I will not. Get out.”

Joe’s hard-eyed gaze narrowed, and Darcy felt a moment’s uncertainty.

“I said, take it off.” His voice was low and menacing.

Her gaze swept over his bare chest to the top of his jeans. The snap at the waist was undone, but she detected no bulge of sexual arousal.

“Stubborn...” he said, stepping close to her. His hands landed on the collar of her robe and he pushed the lapels wide. “...foolish...”

So shocked she could only stand there while he stripped the robe from her body, Darcy didn’t realize she was naked again until the cool, conditioned air hit her moist skin.

“...stunning...” Joe’s hands hovered just above her breasts. His brown-eyed gaze stared at her nipples, which were drawing to painful, rigid points.

It was the cool air, she told herself. Not the heat that flushed his cheeks, nor the muscle that clenched his jaw. One palm lowered to cover her breast and she gasped. Already abraded from Quentin’s play, her breasts were sensitive, tuned to the powerful, sensual pull of Joe’s rigid posture and the deep breaths that billowed his broad chest.

His gaze rose to her face. “I’m sorry, Darc,” he voice raw. “I meant only to see if he’d harmed you.” Still, he stepped closer.

Darcy didn’t step back. Their chests met and her head fell back. Their mouths were inches apart. When his arms closed around her, she whimpered and widened her legs to let him nestle between her thighs.

“I won’t hurt you, I swear,” he said, then his lips closed over hers.

Too lost in his kiss and the confusing maelstrom of her awakened desire, she didn’t protest when he walked her backward to the bed. Her mouth latched onto his and she sat on the edge then allowed him to follow, dragging her into the soft center. His body blanketed her cooling skin, and she welcomed him, opening her thighs wide around his hips.

His kiss deepened, his tongue swirling into her mouth. Not wanting to surrender, but helpless against his sensual assault, Darcy reciprocated, murmuring unintelligible protests until his mouth lifted from hers. His expression was still angry, but the hurt lingered in the stark clarity of his gaze. “Tell me to stop.”

His command echoed Quentin’s—jarring and direct. But she knew she wouldn’t ask him to stop. He’d been her partner, her best friend. And she wanted him every bit as much as she had the big, bad vamp. Clasp his face with her hands she pulled his face to her breast and cried out when his mouth closed around her nipple.

He shifted to the side and his hand glided over her belly and below. His strong fingers delved between her swollen flesh. Darcy widened her legs and pushed her hips up to take him deeper.

But she flinched when a second finger joined the first. She was too sore to take him.

He withdrew.

Afraid he’d reject her after being reminded of why she was sore, she was surprised when his mouth continued to suckle her breast—softer now, his tongue sliding over the tip.

Darcy’s hips lifted off the bed again, and Joe slid a jeans-covered thigh between hers, pressing gently into her soft core. The gentle abrasion was almost too much, but she rode his thigh.

Needing him closer, Darcy smoothed her hands over his bare back, then down to slide her hands beneath his waistband, cupping his firm buttocks.

Joe's buttocks tensed and he murmured, and then pulled away. Without breaking with her gaze, he stripped his pants down his long, lean thighs and kicked them to the floor.

Darcy's chest constricted. She'd seen him in gym, wrestled him to the floor during workouts, but she hadn't any idea how beautiful his male flesh was—like warm, creamy cocoa. His cock was a shade darker, springing high and tight from a nest of black curls.

"I won't come into you," he whispered, his brown eyes soft and caring. "You're too tender. But let me love you."

Darcy let her legs fall apart, splayed wide for his hot gaze. Joe's hands cupped her knees and glided along her inner thighs, pausing inches from her pussy. He leaned down and blew on her heated flesh. His fingertips rubbed briefly around her opening, and then he raised them. His expression grew dark. "You're bleeding."

"Not much," she answered quickly. "It's just...it's been a long time."

"He hurt you. Why did you lie for him?"

This was the one person in the world who deserved the truth from her. "Because I liked it."

"Why him?"

Darcy looked away. His disappointment burned a hole in her stomach. "I don't know. Watching him with that other woman..."

"If you were horny, why didn't you turn to me?"

Crassly put, but honest. Darcy couldn't give him anything less. "I didn't know you wanted this. With me."

"Who's watched your back for three years?" His voice rose. "Who held you when you cried your eyes out after Manny left?"

"We're friends, Joe. It's what friends do. I thought that was all you wanted us to be." Darcy sighed deeply. "It isn't like you haven't had other women. You told me all about them."

"Maybe, I wanted to see whether it bothered you."

"You were testing me?"

He raked a hand through his hair—the gesture evidence of his frustration. "If you'd given me any indication you cared..."

“I do.”

“Not the way I want you to. Hell, you’d let me fuck you, now.”

“Aren’t you going to?”

He glanced down at his cock, a look of disgust twisting his mouth. “You may not want me the way I want you to, but I won’t refuse what you offer.”

Regret tore at her heart. “I’m sorry Joe.”

“For fuck’s sake. Don’t apologize. I’ll really feel pathetic.”

“You don’t look pathetic from where I’m laying. And this isn’t a pity fuck. We’re friends. I love you.”

“Don’t look at me that way. I was just...surprised. When I heard you in there... with him...I thought he’d forced you.”

“Well, he didn’t.”

Joe’s eyes closed briefly. “Why a vampire? We kill them. Was it his cock? Did his size fascinate you?”

“It wasn’t...just that. I wanted *him*. He makes me insanely angry, but at the same time I’ve never been so...turned on by a man.”

“And now? You want me?”

Darcy blinked. Stated baldly, she sounded like a whore. “Yes.”

“Will you have him, again?”

She shook her head. “I shouldn’t. I know that. But I don’t know. He pulls me.”

Joe took a deep breath and his gaze raked over her body, coming to rest on her open legs. “You’ve got a gorgeous cunt, Darc. Especially now—pink and wet.” His hands clasped her knees again, but he pushed them closed.

“What are you doing?”

“Being a friend. Get some sleep, Darcy.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Quentin woke to the rumble of male voices outside Darcy's bedroom door. The SU team had arrived. He stretched and then turned to his stomach, rolling his face in her flower-sprigged, pink pillowcase. The sweet scent of her shampoo and natural musk filled his nostrils.

Darcy had been quite a surprise. As surprising as the feminine décor of her bedroom, which contrasted with the spare iron bed that dominated the center.

He'd expected tensile strength and endurance to match his. But her lithe, spare body had been unexpectedly feminine. Nor had he expected her passion—his back still bore the marks her fingernails had scored in his skin.

*Just this once.* She'd said it with her eyes clouding with desire. Quentin hadn't a doubt in the world she'd be back in his bed before morning—unless her partner put a spanner in the works.

He regretted her humiliation. A super-cop caught with the enemy. That wouldn't go down well with a straight arrow like Joe Garcia. And Quentin hadn't missed the hot look the other man had swept over her naked body.

Well, he could look all he wanted. Quentin wasn't going to share this one. Although, he wouldn't mind if Joe watched. He'd rather enjoy rubbing the other man's nose in his jealousy.

Quentin's stomach growled and he recognized the aroma of streaks frying on a grill. He rolled out of bed, intent on halting the group from cooking the essence out of a perfectly bloody steak.

But there was the problem of a lack of clothing. He refused to contemplate donning the rumpled orange uniform he's tossed in the corner of her closet. And there wasn't any sign of his bags. He grabbed a towel from the bathroom, knotted it around his waist, and headed for the door.

As soon as he swung the door wide, all eyes turned to him.

"Now that's your color," the large, beefy man named Max said, biting the side of his lip.

Quentin swept the room with a glare and hitched the pink bath towel higher. He spotted his bags next to the door. As he retrieved one, chuckles followed him. Quentin stalked toward the privacy of the bedroom to change when the door to the kitchen swung outward and Darcy strode into the room.

Her gaze raked over him, and her cheeks flushed.

Joe followed her out, and his arm curved around her waist. By the interested stares from the rest of the team, his gesture wasn't a common occurrence. Joe intended to mark her as off limits to Quentin.

Quentin smiled and let go of the towel.

Darcy froze, but her gaze dropped to his cock.

Quentin took his time unzipping his bag. He pulled out a cotton shirt and blue jeans and dressed.

Darcy glanced away and folded her arms over her chest. Her mouth drew into a tight line. If not for the spots of bright color on her cheeks, Quentin would have thought she'd been unmoved by the sight of his naked body.

"We don't hold with vampires flashing their privates in our homes," Max said, his rough-hewn features hardening to stone.

"Since, *my privates* have been a subject of some scrutiny by this group, I didn't think you'd mind," Quentin replied to Max, but his gaze didn't leave Darcy.

Max cleared his throat. "We're having steak and potatoes before we head out for the night. That artist will be over here shortly to get your description of our perp."

"Yummy," Quentin replied.

"The steak or the artist?" Darcy asked, her chin lifting.

"Neither." His gaze swept over her, telling anyone who looked he'd much rather have her.

Every male back in the room stiffened.

Darcy turned to the door and opened it wide. "Come choose your steak," she said between gritted teeth.

Quentin moved to follow, but Joe stepped into his path.

"The lady invited me," Quentin said.

Joe's gaze narrowed. "I'm in charge of the fire. I'll be right behind you."

"Going to make sure I fall on a stake?"

Following Darcy's straight back through the kitchen and into the back yard, Quentin knew the two had a bone to chew. His hopes for a rollicking night between the sheets with the lady cop were dwindling.

When the outside door closed behind Joe, Darcy rounded on Quentin. "I'd appreciate it if you'd keep your sexual innuendoes to yourself."

Quentin stepped close to her. "Why so bothered, Darcy?"

Her glower could have scorched the sun. "I have to work with these guys. If they knew—"

Quentin caught a whiff of an aroma other than steak coming from Darcy's person. He stepped closer and inhaled. "If they knew what? That I fucked you senseless in the shower, and then you crawled in bed with your partner?"

Her eyes widened. "I didn't—"

Quentin raged. She'd turned to another as soon as she'd left him. *A human male, at that!* "In case you didn't know, vampires can't impregnate a human. We have other means of procreation. We also don't carry disease. The ultimate safe sex, wouldn't you agree?"

"What the hell does that have to do with any of this?"

"I'm just reminding you there are certain advantages to a vampire lover." Quentin's face hardened to stone. "How could you go to him with the scent of me still on you skin? And my cum dripping from you?"

"That's enough," Joe said, shoving Quentin away from Darcy.

"Joe." Darcy's stricken gaze held her partner's for a long moment.

Disgust was written in the sour curl of his lips. "I'll be in the kitchen. Yell if he needs killing." Without a backward glance, Joe left Quentin and Darcy alone in the back yard.

Darcy's eyes narrowed and she pointed her finger at him. "Now, look here. We fucked. That doesn't give you any hold over me. I could screw an entire football team, and it wouldn't be any of your damn business."

Quentin drew in a deep breath to let loose on her, then realized he was angry—over a woman. He's shared dozens, no hundreds, of women in his lifetime. Why not this one? Then he realized what she'd just said. "While I share your bed, there will be no footballers anywhere near you."

"Footballers? Football *players*, jerk. And I didn't say I was going to share your bed."

Quentin stepped closer and caught her by the waist, pressing his lower body hard against hers. "Aren't you?"

"You arrogant ass—"

"Such language! Mustn't let your temper fly, love."

She wriggled to escape his hold, but he held her fast. "That's it! I'm gonna take you down. You and the batwings you flew in on!"

Quentin kissed her. Her hands pushed at his chest, but her lips told a different story. They melted beneath his.

He lifted his head. "Are we having our first row?"

“You bet your ass!” Her hands tugged at his hair and pulled him down for a second kiss. Her lips parted beneath his and her tongue lapped the tip of his.

Quentin grabbed her arms and held her away from his rapidly hardening body. “I won’t share you with your partner.”

Darcy’s gaze fell from his. “Nothing happened.” She looked up. “Nothing.”

He raised one eyebrow. His sense of smell never let him down.

“Not really,” she said quietly. “He stopped it.”

Disturbed that she hadn’t been the one to halt the love play, Quentin’s hands tightened around her arms. “You’ll share my bed.”

“Only until the investigation is over. And the bed’s mine, by the way.”

Satisfied she’d surrendered to his will, he said, “Not while I occupy it. I’m in charge of that particular fire.”

## CHAPTER FOUR

Later, armed with the sketch of Nicholas Powell, their serial-killing target, the SU team hit the known vampire haunts—the “blood bank” bars and the streetwalkers’ corners. Joe, Quentin, and Darcy however, were headed to the seedier destinations—accessed by invitation only—vampire escorts required.

Places the team had only dreamed of entering before Quentin provided entry.

The first was a nondescript house in a subdivision. Passing swing sets and manicured lawns, Darcy exchanged a glance with Joe. This could be her neighborhood. Suburban Vero Beach hid dark secrets.

“How’d you find this place?” Joe asked, as he turned onto a long gravel drive. The house wasn’t visible from the road. Chain-link fencing surrounded the yard, which was overgrown with vines and the occasional palm tree. The drive ended in a circle with vehicles parked bumper to bumper in a long row.

“Tessa told me where I could find a meal,” Quentin said, quietly.

Darcy fumed. Tessa had been the blonde-haired vamp who rubbed her body all over Quentin’s while they’d danced in a dark corner of the Piki Tiki bar.

“What do we need to know?” Joe asked, all business as he parked the car.

“Just follow my lead and do whatever I tell you.” Quentin glared at Darcy for a moment.

She wondered what that glare meant.

The trio exited the car and approached the front door illuminated by a single naked bulb. A low thrumming rhythm sounded from within the small, square one-story house.

Quentin ignored the doorbell button and pushed open the door. Joe raised his eyebrows and shrugged, and then indicated Darcy should precede him.

The smell within the house was pure sin.

Sickly-sweet opium, cannabis smoke, and stale sex hung in the warm air. Music with a heavy, grinding Latin beat emanated from deep within the house.

Darcy’s fingers itched for her bow, but they had come weaponless.

A woman approached them. She wore a pareo, knotted at one hip and nothing else. Her gaze raked over Quentin and she flicked her long, bleached-blond hair over her shoulder to expose her full breasts. “Hey stranger. Need a pick-me-up?”

“As a matter of fact, I brought my own,” Quentin murmured with a nod to Darcy and Joe.

Her lips formed a moue. “Well, if you need a foursome...” Her fingers trailed across his chest as she passed them.

Darcy wanted to break her fingers, but Quentin’s sardonic glance kept her expression neutral, even as her chin lifted in defiance. She couldn’t really blame the girl. Dressed in a long-sleeved, cotton shirt, blue jeans and sandals, he was a sun god—golden-haired, golden-skinned. Too beautiful to believe.

They entered the living room, which was lit by a single table lamp. Most of the occupants were naked or in the process of losing their clothing. Wearing jeans and a halter, Darcy felt conspicuously overdressed. Most were also engaged in sexual acts. “Quentin?” she began, uneasy with the tableau.

His hand pressed the small of her back, urging her toward a plaid-upholstered couch in the dingy room. “Let’s play,” he whispered in her ear.

Darcy sat on the edge of the seat, her eyes darting to the darkened corners. The couple on the sofa opposite theirs disengaged their lips, and the woman knelt in front of the male vamp to take his cock in her mouth. Would he expect her to do *that* in front of everyone? “Quentin,” she hissed. “If you expect me to—”

Quentin pressed a finger to her lips. “Do you know these people?”

She shook her head.

“Do you think they’ll recognize you on the street?”

She shook her head again.

“Then hush.” He sat down next to her and indicated that Joe should sit on her other side. He leaned behind her and said, “Start to undress her. We have to look ‘engaged’ or we won’t be approached.”

Darcy glared at Joe who shrugged, then reached for the clasp at the back of her neck. He leaned into her and whispered, “We have to play by his rules. I won’t let this go too far.”

She snorted. It was fine for him. He wasn’t about to be exposed to a group of vampires and sluts with Double-D boobs. The straps of her top loosened. Her hands caught and held the material to her breasts for a panicked moment, and then she let it slide to her lap. “Why is it you vampires can’t go to the drive-thru? Does everything come down to sex?”

“Our bloodlust feeds our sexual hunger and vice versa. It’s just the way we’re made. Relax,” Quentin whispered, and he turned in his seat to kiss her, his hand gliding over the breast nearest him.

With her eyes opened, she saw him nod to Joe. “Don’t enjoy this too much,” Quentin warned.

Joe’s hand cupped her other breast, and he kissed her shoulder. “This is gonna kill me.”

Darcy wanted to protest. *She* was the one dying here. Both men’s mouths worked on her flesh and mouth while their fingers tweaked her nipples.

Quentin glided his lips along her jaw. “I need blood,” Quentin said, “or they won’t believe I brought you here to feed.”

Darcy pushed the hair from the side of her neck, but he shook his head. “It’s too soon. Joe, give me your arm.”

Joe knelt in front of her and lifted his arm to Quentin. Quentin licked once, and then pierced his wrist. “Fuck!” Joe hissed. Then his head sagged onto her shoulder. “Sweet Jesus.”

Darcy understood the quickening of Joe’s body. Her gaze locked with Quentin’s as she pushed Joe’s head down until his lips grazed her breast. His mouth latched onto her nipple and drew hard.

While she told herself this was just for the job, her body exulted. Her eyelids fluttered and her legs opened to let Joe press against her. Quentin’s hand slid between their bodies and he cupped her sex through her jeans. *Mine!* his angry gaze said.

Joe moaned and burrowed his head into her breast, alternately nipping her swollen flesh and licking to soothe. His thighs straddled her leg, and he pumped his erection against her.

Darcy grew alarmed as tension built in her belly. Coming for the two of them wasn't in her job description. And who the hell would she give the credit? Knowing Quentin, he'd demand it.

Surrounded by both men's scent and warm skin, she was overwhelmed. Sweat broke on her forehead and upper lip. Her hips rubbed against the heel of Quentin's palm as he ground it into her cunt.

Darcy's hand curled around Joe's head to encourage him to suckle. Joe drew her nipple between his teeth and suctioned hard.

The snap to her jeans popped open and the zipper eased down. Quentin's hand slid inside, and his fingers found her clitoris.

Darcy moaned and her head fell back against the cushion. Forgotten were the mission and the other occupants of the den. With her free hand, she pushed her jeans further down her hips to expose her pussy.

Joe's mouth left her nipple and licked a path down her belly. He stopped suddenly, and Darcy opened her eyes, ready to issue a protest.

Quentin's hand was fisted in Joe's hair.

"All right," Joe growled.

Quentin disengaged his teeth from Joe's wrist and let blood trickle down his chin. "Someone's coming. If I leave you, you're to play—only!"

Joe lifted an eyebrow. "Of course."

Darcy rolled her eyes. An inch from orgasm, her body screamed for release and the two of them were dividing territory. "You started this."

Quentin grasped the back of her head. "And I'll finish it." He kissed her hard then stood to greet a tall, slim black man whose avid stare made Darcy want to crawl into a hole and hide.

Joe's arms encircled her hips, and he drew her flush with his body, covering her from breast to hip. She wrapped her legs around his waist and hugged him tightly. "Quentin's leaving with him," she whispered.

"Then let's continue with the game plan."

"I think you need to lose some clothing too," she grumbled.

Joe grinned. "It is hot in here. Will that make you feel better?"

Looking at his broad shoulders, she murmured, “Probably not.”

Joe pulled his T-shirt over his head. His deeply tanned skin was shiny with perspiration. “I see now why you were so blown away.” He grimaced. “He’s a guy, but I was ready to come all over you when he was sucking on my arm.”

Darcy smiled at his look of disgust. “Mind-blowing, isn’t it?”

“I still have a hard-on that could pierce steel,” he said with a crooked smile.

Darcy knew. It was pressed to the juncture of her thighs. Like a kid with her nose pressed to the candy store window, she eyed the wide expanse of muscle that spanned his chest. Her body was primed and well oiled—desperate for release. “He said we could play.”

His expression looked troubled, a frown creasing his forehead. “Not the way I want to.”

Her hands caressed the tops of shoulders. “The team’s not wired in, and Quentin told us to play. Betcha we can find a place to melt your metal.”

Joe chuckled. “I didn’t know you were such a nasty girl.” He leaned toward her and licked her lips. “Is it just coitus that’s strictly against Quentin’s rules?”

She sucked his tongue between her lips and bit gently. “You’re starting to sound like him.”

“God forbid.” He shuddered.

Darcy laughed and framed his face with her hands. “I think it’s fucking he has a problem with. He seems very possessive of my cunt.”

“Don’t blame him,” he muttered.

“But there’s so much else we could do.” She kissed his lips. “I’m so hot now, I can’t wait.”

A smile curved his lips. “We’re undercover. Have to play like the natives, don’t we?”

Darcy groaned. “Like I said, he started this.” *Will I be able to face Joe in the morning like nothing happened between us? Will our friendship change?*

Joe’s grasp tightened on her hips. “Put your hands inside my pants, Darcy.”

She liked the baldness of his command. “Okay. You first.” She unsnapped his jeans and slid down the zipper. His sex sprang into her hands. His cock was fully engorged and hot to her touch. The skin stretching over it was smooth like satin. “Did I tell you how beautiful your cock is?” she whispered.

Joe’s eyes closed for a moment. When he opened them again, his gaze was stark with longing. “Did I tell you, you have the prettiest tits I’ve ever seen?”

Thrilled by the compliment, she blushed. “You’re full of shit. You just want to fuck me.”

His cheeks flushed red, and his jaw tightened. “Hell, yeah. But it’s true. Your nipples are dark pink, like your pretty cunt.”

Darcy’s heart raced, and her hands squeezed his cock.

Joe leaned forward to kiss her lips, and she glided her hands over him, up and down. Squeezing, twisting.

He leaned his forehead against hers and closed his eyes. “I’m already there, baby. I’m gonna come all over you.”

Darcy took his lips in a deep, grinding kiss and thrust her tongue inside while she pumped her hands faster.

He pulled his mouth from hers and gasped. “Shit!” spurts of white pearlescent cum striped her bare belly.

“There are limits to my largesse.”

Darcy gasped and released Joe’s cock at Quentin’s curt tone. She looked up to see him standing over them, his hands fisted at his sides.

Chest still heaving, Joe reached for his T-shirt and wiped Darcy’s belly clean. “Sorry about that, old man.” Only he didn’t look sorry at all.

“It’s time to go.” After Joe stood, Quentin’s hand grasped Darcy’s and he hauled her up into his arms. “You don’t seem to take instruction very well, my dear.”

With her jeans sagging mid-thigh, Darcy summoned what was left of her pride. “I make my own choices.”

“That’s where you’re wrong. You haven’t any choices. I’m making them for you. And by God, you will be mine.” His hands slid over her buttocks and he tugged up her pants.

Darcy fumbled with the zipper and snap, and then gasped again when he spun her and reached for the halves of her halter. His hands smoothed the fabric over her breasts, and then he fastened the clasp at the back of her neck. Trembling, Darcy didn’t resist when one hand grasped her crotch and the other palmed her breast.

“Mine, Darcy,” he whispered in her ear.

\* \* \* \* \*

Quentin followed close on Darcy's heels as she sped to her front door. All night long he'd simmered. The sight of her hands wrapped around Joe Garcia's cock as the other man gained his satisfaction had boiled like an ulcer in his gut.

After two more fruitless stops at vampire dens, he finally had her to himself. He'd toyed with her breasts and sweet cunt at each of the *hells* until her fevered gaze and the aroma of her arousal had nearly driven him mad.

Joe had watched Quentin's seduction, impotent, his fists on his thighs, his gaze bleak. When he'd finally dropped them at the curb in front of her house, he'd mumbled something about making reports and gunned the engine as he left.

This time Quentin would have her to himself. No interruptions—and a bed beneath her back while he ravaged her senses. After tonight, she'd have no doubts about which man she preferred between her legs.

Quentin didn't heed the voice in the back of his mind, warning him to woo her. He would take her.

Darcy fumbled with the keys and dropped them.

Quentin smiled, grim satisfaction filling him. She had reason to be nervous. He was going to eat her up. Wring every drop of sweet cream from her she had to give. After he taught her a lesson.

He stepped beside her and snatched the keys from the ground. Holding them out for her to take from him, he relished the tremor he detected when her hands accepted the keys.

This time she opened the door and shoved it wide. "I'm tired. Goodnight," she said over her shoulder, heading straight for her bedroom.

When she slammed her door closed, his hand stopped it, and he shoved it open and advanced into the room, stalking her.

"You're angry. And I suppose—from your viewpoint—you have reason to be."

His smile grew as she babbled and took a step backward for each he advanced.

He admired the stubborn tilt of her chin. She didn't lack courage. "But you haven't any right to your anger. You don't own me."

When her thighs met the side of the mattress, she tried to sidestep him, but his hands grasped the edges of her miniscule top and he tore it down the middle, halving the slender strips of fabric. Perfect for what he had in mind.

She backed onto the mattress and then crawled on all fours away from him.

Quentin leapt onto the bed and straddled her back. His hand smoothed over her bare skin and cupped her shoulders.

She shuddered beneath him, the quaking raising his already rock-hard cock. "All right. You win. I want to fuck just as much as you do. You've been driving me crazy all night."

He traced her spine with a finger. "I'm not going to give you what you want. Not until you beg. And then, I'll make you wait some more before I let you cream."

"What are you going to do?"

"Why? Don't you trust me?"

"You have me pinned to the bed. Why should I?"

He leaned down to whisper in her ear. "Because I'm about to become your whole world." Her answering shiver of delight was all he'd hoped to arouse.

He stretched his hand along her arm until he reached her wrist. Her arm tensed, but she didn't resist when he tied the fabric strip around her wrist in a knot. She was curious. More curious than afraid. *Foolish girl!*

He eased off her and dragged her closer to the headboard, and then looped the fabric around one iron bar and tied it. He did the same with her other wrist. "Now, get on your knees."

Darcy's breath was harsh and coming faster. She struggled against her bonds and pulled herself into a kneeling position.

He reached around her body to the snap of her jeans and opened them, then smoothed the rough fabric over her hips and down her legs.

Raising one knee at a time, she helped him remove the pants.

He tossed them to the floor. "Do I have to tie your legs?"

"No," she replied, her voice small.

Having subdued her, Quentin was ready to begin his campaign. "What do you want, Darcy?"

Her back quivered. "For you to touch me."

With his hands on the soft skin of her buttocks, he almost lost his resolve. He parted her cheeks and pressed his thumb against her asshole. "Like this?"

"Quentin?" her voice rose on a plaintive note.

"No?" He leaned down and tongued the rosy ring. "Like this?"

“Quentin!” Her breath caught.

“Is that all you want me to do?”

“No. I want you to fuck me.”

He kissed each cheek. “Well, we all have our disappointments.”

He left the bed and walked out of the bedroom, closing the door behind him.

“Quentin? Quentin!”

With her angry curses ringing in his ears, he strode into her kitchen and found a bottle of lousy Scotch. Pouring two fingers into a tumbler, he savored the bite of the liquor and willed his flesh to obey his command.

He wasn’t one to ponder over the deeper emotions, so he didn’t question why this particular woman raised his possessive hackles. He just accepted that she was his. It was time he took a mate.

He imagined her still perched with her shapely ass in the air, fighting her restraints. She’d spit nails at him right about now.

It was going to be a long night, but she would learn who was the master.

\* \* \* \* \*

Darcy woke to an incredible sensation. A hot, wet cloth swirled over her ass and in between her legs. She moaned and widened the gap between them. The cloth dipped to circle her cunt and she lifted her hips. An invitation her tormentor couldn’t miss.

“You’re awake,” Quentin said, his tone matter-of-fact.

In an instant she recalled everything. Her hands tugged against the headboard, but her restraints held. “What are you doing?”

“Preparing you, love. I don’t want Joe’s scent on you when I take you.”

Darcy bit her lip. Her body remembered even better where they’d left off. She still ached for completion after his diabolical seduction. He’d promised to make her cream.

Instead, she’d been left to scrunch the bedding between her thighs in an attempt to masturbate herself.

“Get on your knees.” His voice held a self-satisfied tone. He was enjoying her torment.

She glowered, but complied immediately.

“Good girl.” His naked skin blanketed her back and his cock slipped between her legs.

Darcy tilted her hips, hoping he’d slide right in.

“Not yet.”

She was afraid of that. Her legs trembled and her cunt wept.

He brought the cloth to her neck, rubbed over her breasts, paying special attention to her aching nipples. Then he scrubbed her stomach. “That’s better.”

“I’m not going to beg,” Darcy said, hoping to incite an argument and break through his icy control.

He chuckled, a mirthless sound that worried her more. “Your legs are shaking. I’ll make you more comfortable.” He reached past her and snagged a pillow, then placed it beneath her belly. “Lie down on this. “

Darcy lowered herself, disturbed to find the pillow raised her ass. She was positioned for his pleasure.

His hands cupped a buttock each, then glided to her thighs. “Open your legs.” He arranged her thighs and knelt between them, encouraging her to widen the gap with nudges from his knees. “Just right.”

*Just right for what?* A warm gust of air blew over the heated flesh between her legs.

“Tell me what you want,” he commanded.

Darcy hesitated. The last time he’s asked that question her answer hadn’t done the trick.

“You have to tell me, or I won’t help you.” His words gusted over her quivering flesh.

“I want you to fuck me.”

He slapped one side of her ass. A stinging, sharp blow. “Wrong answer.”

“Did...did you just spank me?” she asked, her voice incredulous.

*Smack!* “You don’t ask the questions. I do.”

“You arrogant—”

*Smack!* “Don’t raise your voice to me. Not unless it’s to plead.”

Darcy gritted her teeth, seething, but holding onto the thought that eventually she’d get an opportunity to give him some retribution. In the meantime...

“Now tell me.”

“I want to please you,” she said between clenched teeth.

He shifted on the bed and his rough tongue lapped her pussy. “That wasn’t so hard, was it?”

“No.” The word was a moan.

“What do you think pleases me?”

*Control, you fucking asshole!* “Being inside me?”

*Smack!* He spanked the other cheek.

“What the hell did I say wrong that time?”

*Smack!*

Darcy pressed her hot face into the bedding. Her ass was warming up and she couldn’t help wriggling on the pillow. If he’d just lick her cunt one more time, she was sure to pop.

She needed one right answer.

His hands kneaded her buttocks, and Darcy moaned.

“What will please me, Darcy?”

“For me to beg,” she said, her words muffled in the comforter.

“Will you?”

“Yes.”

“Beg sweetly, love.” His tongue fluttered on her cheeks, then moved to the crease and descended. When he reached her anus, he paused.

“Please,” she blurted, hearing her rebellious inflection.

He gave her a single flicker.

She got the point. He wanted a constant stream of supplications. *Shit!* Darcy’s chest heaved. Anger warred with need. “Please, Quentin. I need you inside me. Oh please.”

He bit her ass. “Try to sound a little more convincing,” he said, a wry note of humor in his voice.

“What do you want?” she asked, angry with this humbling, but unable to deny what would satisfy her body. “I ache. I’ve been hurting for hours. I need you to deep inside me.” She took a deep breath. “Please, come inside me.”

“Better.” The point of his tongue pushed into her ass and fluttered.

“Oh God. Please, take my pussy.” Her words this time were sincere. “I need your cock, deep inside me.” Her moan ended on a higher note, when his finger replaced his tongue.

“You’re tight here, love. Don’t guess my cock will be playing in here for a while.” His finger pushed and pulled, in and out.

Darcy sucked air into her starving lungs.

“Don’t forget to beg, love,” Quentin warned.

“Can’t even think, you bastard.”

He swatted her ass, part of his palm slapping her cunt.

The sting ignited her. “Oooh. Fuck me. Fuck me, please,” she pleaded hoarsely.

“Then raise up to meet me.”

Eager to comply, she knelt, her hands twisting in the fabric that bound her to the headboard. The head of his cock pushed into her cunt.

She needed no further prodding. “Please, yes! Give it to me.”

He thrust his hips forward, and Darcy whimpered. He didn’t go very far, her vagina was tight and resisted his thick cock. She wriggled her hips to accommodate him, and he plunged deeper this time. Her gasps were loud as each successive thrust shoved him deeper inside until he was fully seated.

It was embarrassing how easily she came. He didn’t have to move again—her cunt did all the work. Deep, spiraling spasms gripped his cock and squeezed, pulsing around him. Darcy hung on her ties. His strong shaft was the only thing that kept her from crumpling to the bed.

When her heart slowed, she realized he was still buried to the hilt inside her. There’d be more.

## CHAPTER FIVE

The ties loosened and Darcy’s arms fell limp as noodles to the bed. Quentin pulled her up until she was sitting in his lap, their bodies still connected.

So overwhelmed was she by her response to his lovemaking, she trembled in the aftermath. His arms circled her belly, and Darcy felt strangely comforted.

She closed her eyes and rested her head on his shoulder. “No one’s ever filled me like you do.”

Quentin nuzzled her until her head tilted. He tongued the lobe of her ear. “Am I hurting you?” he murmured.

Her hands closed over his, and she brought them to her breasts. “I like this pain.”

“Can you take more?” He squeezed her breasts.

Her breath caught. Exquisitely tuned to his touch, her nipples flowered again. “Do I have to beg?”

He gently bit her ear. “My turn to ask. I want to transform to find release.”

“That didn’t sound like a request,” she grumbled.

His shoulders shrugged. “I haven’t mastered begging.”

“Can I watch you change again?”

“You won’t be frightened?”

“Maybe,” she answered honestly. “I still want to see it.”

He kissed the top of her shoulder. “Then turn around and straddle me.”

She turned and looked at him for the first time in hours. Even in his human form, he frightened her. Bathed in soft lamplight, he overwhelmed her with his size and golden beauty—and the things he made her want.

His arms opened in invitation.

She’d take him this time. She climbed onto his lap, her legs spread wide across his hips. With her hands anchored on his shoulders, she looked to where their bodies strained to join. He held his cock, and she centered her pussy over it. Taking a deep breath she lowered herself. This time his intrusion was easier to take.

Darcy hissed as she sank partway down, and then lifted. Her eyes drifted closed and she concentrated on the feel of his large, rigid cock as she rose and fell, taking him deeper each time. Her pussy, awash in her cream, lubricated each slow slide.

His hands lowered to her buttocks, and he gripped her tightly, forcing her to move faster. Darcy smiled, recognizing his rising passion by the deep growl from the back of his throat and the increased tempo of his breaths. She smoothed the hair from his face and leaned forward to kiss him.

“It’s okay,” she told him. “I can handle it.”

His jaw strained, and he seemed to fight an inward battle for control, but finally the monster in him won. His eyes gleamed golden and reflected the lamplight like an animal's. His head fell back, his mouth gaping to reveal long incisors.

Darcy bounced faster on his lap, already carried along by the excitement of his quickening. His body was changing. The shoulders she gripped were harder—the definition of each muscle more articulated. His hips pumped like steel pistons, driving his expanding cock deeper with each opposing thrust of her hips.

Afraid she'd blow first and miss the show, she bit the inside of her lip to distract herself from the tight coil twisting inside her belly. Then his face changed, the bones beneath his cheeks and forehead pushing forward into a sinister mask. Alarmed and thrilled, Darcy noted only the smirk that curved the corner of his lips remained to tell her he was still inside the monster she rode.

His nostrils flared and his hands pulled her closer until her chest flattened against his. His mouth hovered over her neck. "Tell me what you want," he growled, his voice a deep, raw slash that cut straight through her sex-primed soul.

Darcy was glad he couldn't see her face. She needed him desperately. "Bite me."

His arms encircled her, and she gripped his hair hard. Their thrusts grew shorter, harder, and he groaned when his teeth entered her neck.

This time he didn't prepare her skin, but she was so hot for it the pain only increased her escalating passion. When he started to suction her skin, the blood rushed from her head and points below, and she stopped moving for a moment to savor the sensations.

Then she had to move or go insane. Her skin felt tight and hot. Her nipples tingled, and she rubbed them wildly on his chest. Her cunt was pliant, the interior walls hot with friction between their opposing movements.

He was growling against her neck, and she was falling—the ground rushing at her so fast, she couldn't catch a breath. She screamed.

Quentin held her shuddering body close and rubbed his face on her shoulder, ensuring his human mask was once more in place.

He bore her back onto the bed and stretched over her body, still embedded deep inside her warmth. He licked her neck to close the punctures, and then lapped at her skin to wash away the trace of blood that smeared her flesh.

"Mmmm," she moaned and writhed beneath him. "Do you think we have time for one more?"

He glanced at the window and saw the light filtering around the edges of the curtains. "Insatiable hussy," he murmured, and ground his hips against hers.

“You owe me.” She wrapped her arms around his neck to pull him closer. “I still ache. You left me too long.”

“You needed punishing, minx.”

A frown drew her dark brows together. “I’m not yours to punish. How archaic is that?”

He circled his hips. “Primitive, love. A law of nature—man to mate. I won’t have you sharing your sweet cunt with another.”

“I haven’t made you any promises. This thing between us is just sex—and convenient. Further, you’re not a man and I’m certainly not your mate.” She gasped when he jerked his hips.

*You’re wrong sweetheart. In time, you’ll recognize you’re mine.* All these hours later, jealousy still ate at him. The sight of Darcy’s hands clutching Joe’s shuddering climax had enraged him. Worse, had been seeing her taut belly glistening with the other man’s come and her eyes glittering with sensual excitement. *You belong to me!*

He gripped her thighs and pressed them up and wide, and circled again, rubbing the crisp hairs at his groin into her clitoris. The color of her cheeks grew brighter as her passion escalated. He could feel her heart beat faster in her chest. She liked his mastering. “Has your curiosity with vampire fucking been satisfied?” he drawled.

Her eyes widened. “You heard?”

“Every wretched word you uttered to your besotted partner.”

“He’s not ‘besotted.’ We’re just—”

“Friends? I don’t buy it.” Anger fueled him. He raised on his arms, which were still hooked beneath her thighs and pumped his hips hard, lifting hers with each short, sharp stroke.

Darcy’s breath quickened and her hands clutched the bedding. “You shouldn’t have eavesdropped. This is confusing for me.”

“What? Wanting a vampire?” His hot glare pinned her to the mattress. “Or having two lovers to choose from?”

“Yes! Wanting you. Wanting him. It had been so long.”

“A drought, now you have a deluge. You can’t help but drink?” His thrusts came faster, sweat broke on his chest and belly.

“Why do I have to choose?”

Quentin halted. “You don’t. I told you before. You’re *my* choice.”

Darcy arched her back and squeezed her inner muscles around him. "Christ, don't stop now!"

Unable to resist her plea, Quentin surged forward, burying himself as deeply as he could.

Darcy groaned and squeezed him tighter, her teeth bared in a grimace as she strained.

Quentin slammed back inside, and his hips pumped, faster and faster, finding a rhythm that edged him closer to the precipice. He held nothing back, all his energy and strength focused on the clenching muscles of his ass, driving him harder and deeper, propelling her off the bed.

Sweat from both their bodies aided his momentum. The only sounds that filled the room were her harsh grunts and the slap of his thighs and balls against the backs of her thighs and ass.

Darcy reached for the bars of her headboard to brace herself and held his gaze as her orgasm rolled over her, tightening her muscles and leaving her gasping for air.

Quentin followed, his orgasm rising from his toes, tightening his thighs and balls, slamming through his cock. With one last thrust into her rippling sheath, he roared as a stream of cum shot into her womb.

When the haze receded, he was still staring down at her, and her vagina milked his cock with one last, deep caress. He released her thighs to slide along his hips to the bed, but he lay, draped over her body, reluctant to break their connection.

"I want to get up," she said.

Quentin laid his hand on her breast. "I thought we might stay like this. Sleep for awhile."

Darcy dropped her gaze. "I need to do some things."

He opened his mouth to cajole her, and then thought better of it. Why did it matter to him? If she didn't want to remain in his embrace, what of it? "Sure." He withdrew his cock from her slowly, noting her slight wince. Poor thing was sore. He had ridden her hard. The thought pleased him immensely. She'd have a physical reminder of his prowess.

The purr of an engine pulling in front of the house drew both their attention away. "Your partner's returned from his sulk. I wonder if he found company."

Darcy pushed at his shoulders.

Quentin rolled onto his back. "I guess you'd better speak to him to assure him I haven't bitten your head off."

She was already headed to the shower without a backward glance.

"But no exchange of bodily fluids! Do you understand me?" he called after her.

Darcy lifted her hand and shot him the bird. He grinned. The woman was a hard case. A stubborn minx who was proving a delight to master. She hadn't worked it all out yet, but she'd come round. He didn't believe for a minute that she had actually conceded. But he still hadn't unleashed his full arsenal of tricks.

He yawned and was asleep in moments.

\* \* \* \* \*

Darcy shut the door quietly behind her, leaving Quentin sleeping like the dead. Wondering what self-immolating demon possessed her, she padded to the guest room and rapped lightly on the door. "Joe?"

"Go away, Darcy." He sounded irritated.

She bit her lip. The smart thing to do would be to walk away and let them both have some distance and get rest. But she wasn't accustomed to letting problems lie. She wouldn't be able to sleep until things were right between her and Joe. Quentin had to be wrong. Joe wasn't in love with her. He'd been as carried away by the moment at the vampire's den as she'd been. That's all.

There was no good reason for this chasm to stretch between them. They'd been friends too long.

She knocked again.

The door swung open and Joe's wide, naked chest filled her view. Her mouth went dry and she cleared her throat. "I thought we might talk."

He looked beyond her into the living room, his face set in a cold mask. "Boyfriend let you off the leash?"

"He's not my boyfriend."

"That's supposed to make me feel better? You fuck him. What should I call him?"

"Look, just forget it." She turned to retreat.

Joe's hand stopped her. He grabbed her shoulder, his fingers softening to caress her. "Sorry, I bit your head off. I don't have the right to reprimand you."

Darcy glanced back at him and dropped her gaze, afraid of what she'd read in his expression. Disappointment might break her heart. But looking down turned out to be a bad move.

The crisp dark hairs that arched beneath the waist of his sweatpants drew her gaze to his erection, which tented beneath the soft gray fabric. She cleared her throat.

“Yeah. I’ve been like this all night,” his voice rumbled.

“Why?” She nearly strangled on the word, her mouth had gone so dry.

“You don’t get it, do you?” He stalked her into the hallway like a panther until her back met the opposite wall. He braced both hands against the wall, enclosing her in wall of muscle without touching her. “Every time I close my eyes, I see you with your hands wrapped around my cock. Then I imagine what that sweet pink mouth of yours would feel like when it opens for me to come inside. “

Darcy remembered his beautiful, creamy-cocoa cock and fought the wave of heat that swept over her. “Why are you telling me this now, Joe?”

“Because you’re slipping through my fingers. I gave you time to get over Manny. Time to see *me*. I thought I had plenty of it.” He tugged a lock of her hair. “I guess I’m just not the right species, am I?”

Darcy jerked. “Don’t be an asshole about this.”

His hand curved around her breast and it pebbled, drawing deliciously tight. Joe grunted. “Huh. Has he been neglecting these little wonders?” He knelt in front of her and opened his mouth over the tip, wetting her T-shirt, sucking so hard Darcy’s toes curled into the cream-colored carpet.

“Stop it, Joe.”

“I just want a taste.” His hands reached beneath her T-shirt and he grew still. He glanced up at her. “No panties? What were you thinking?”

“I wasn’t.”

“Liar.” He gathered the edges of her shirt and lifted it to bare her pussy to his gaze. “Are you dripping with his cum?”

He inserted a finger and Darcy’s head hit the wall behind her. He brought it to his mouth. “Sweet. You must have bathed first. Good thinking.” He opened her with his fingers, exposing her clitoris and leaned forward.

Darcy nearly leapt out of her skin at the first flutter of his tongue. She braced her hands on his shoulders, sure she would slide into a puddle at any moment. Too much stimulation—too soon after being with Quentin. The sight of his dark head moving between her legs swept away the last protest she could utter.

His tongue swirled on her clit and her knees grew weak. He substituted the pad of his thumb and increased the pressure. Then his tongue dove into her cunt and lapped.

“You’re so hot here, Darc, swollen. That bastard.” His tongue returned to torture her some more.

A gush of liquid anticipation greeted his tongue and he groaned. “Christ, you’re sweet. Will you come for me?”

She sobbed when he finger-fucked her—three long fingers thrust as far as he could reach. Her hips ground down on his hand.

“Baby, this is for you.” His mouth latched onto her clit and he suctioned hard, at the same time rotating his fingers, twisting so his knuckles scraped her tender channel.

She was coming apart. The intensity of her passion frightened her. How could she want this after a night spent in her vampire’s arms? “Joe. You have to stop.” She pulled his hair hard and he halted, his chest heaving. He turned his face into her belly.

*God help me. How can I deny him? I love him, too!*

Joe stood, his shoulders slumped. Darcy couldn’t bear to see his dejection. She was lying to herself and to him. She wanted him every bit as much as she had wanted Quentin. Both men called to her newly awakened sensuality. She wished she could squelch it as quickly as it had arisen, but there it was. She desired them both with a longing that made her knees weak and her pussy weep. How could any emotion so powerful be wrong?

She reached for the waist of his sweatpants and tugged them down his hips. He stopped breathing and closed his eyes.

From one moment to the next, she stared at him, her heart in her throat, and then she was winding her arms around his neck and her legs around his taut waist.

He pushed his cock inside her and murmured in her ear, “I love you, Darcy!” He backed her hard against the wall and ground his cock into her, lifting her up then withdrawing to let her slide down the wall, then up again.

Darcy held him tight. “Jooooe!” She splintered into a thousand pieces.

His face pressed into her shoulder, muffling his cry of release.

They slid to the floor in each other’s arms.

“Sshhh. It’s okay. I have you,” he crooned.

Darcy realized she was shaking and turned her face into his shoulder and cried.

“Shhh. Please don’t cry.” He took her to the floor, blanketing her with his warmth. He framed her face with his hands and kissed her. “I never wanted to hurt you.”

His sweet entreaty and undemanding kiss contrasted sharply with his burgeoning arousal. He trembled and she wrapped her arms around him.

“It’s not enough, Darc. I’m sorry,” he whispered. “I have to have you, again.”

Impossibly, she felt her body respond. Although she ached from use, she allowed him to push her thighs upward until her ankles hugged his neck. He pushed up on his arms and angled his hips for maximum penetration and began to rock.

Darcy dug her fingers into the carpet and gasped with each strong, deep stroke.

His face reddened, the skin of his cheeks and jaw tightening as he increased his pace. He turned his face and kissed her ankles. “Darc, tell me you don’t want this as much I do.”

“I can’t. Please, faster,” she whispered hoarsely.

It was all the encouragement he needed. His thrusts grew shorter, faster, until their skin slapped and moist, sucking sounds emanated from her drenched vagina. His breath caught and she felt the spurt of his cum wash inside her, but he kept moving, faster, harder—and then she fragmented, her cry echoing in the hall.

\* \* \* \* \*

The SU team was once again assembled in her living room, reviewing what they’d learned the previous evening. Dressed in casual clothing, they prepared for another night’s hunt.

Darcy was subdued, trying not to jump at every creak or bark of laughter. The sun had set an hour ago and Quentin had yet to make an appearance. She wondered whether he’d noticed she never came back to her bed. After making love with Joe, she’d opted for the couch despite his invitation to sleep with him. Darcy was starting to feel like salt-water taffy, pulled in two different directions.

She’d taken a seat on the buff-colored sectional sofa on the far end, opposite Joe. She felt his gaze on her, knew he had questions and wanted to talk about what happened between them, but she wasn’t ready to acknowledge how she felt.

Logically, there wasn’t any real choice. Quentin was here only as long as the operation lasted. Joe was here for the long haul. Quentin wasn’t human. Joe was definitely all man. She risked her reputation and her place on the team by consorting with a vampire—however helpful his expertise was turning out to be. A relationship with Joe wouldn’t be without its implications to the team, but wouldn’t prove divisive.

Quentin was a charming, but conceited, ass. Joe was a considerate, straight-arrow kind of guy. So why was she torn? Why couldn’t she just turn her back on Quentin and mark the whole misadventure as just an aberration? A sexual experiment?

Her bedroom door opened and the group fell silent. Quentin's steps drew near and the hair on the back of her neck rose. He was coming straight for her.

Darcy straightened and darted a glance at Joe. His face remained impassive, but she saw his fists clench.

Quentin's hand fell on her shoulder. "Missed you when I woke up, love."

Darcy closed her eyes. She didn't need to look at the faces of the men she worked with to know their reaction to his little bombshell.

"That's enough," Joe's voice cut through the silence like a knife.

Quentin walked around the sofa and took the seat beside her.

Did he not know how close he was to being dusted? Darcy willed him to shut up, but Quentin stretched his arm along the back of the sofa and tugged on her hair. "What's for supper?" he asked his expression guileless.

"Phil's wife, Bets, made enchiladas. I'll check the oven," Max said quietly and left the room.

"I better help," Darcy said and rose to follow him out.

Quentin's hand fell to the small of her back. "This isn't finished."

She didn't reply and headed for the kitchen. As soon as the door swung closed behind her, she let out a deep breath.

Max's angry gaze sliced her to the bone. Normally easy-going with her, his expression was hard-eyed and accusing. "What the hell were you thinking, Darc? If you needed nailing, why didn't you turn to Joe? He's been in love with you for years."

Max's disappointment made Darcy feel about a foot tall. "I didn't know how Joe felt. I didn't see it."

"Is it just about the sex?"

She felt shame wash over her cheeks. What would he say if he knew she'd screwed both of them? "Maybe, at first."

Max raked a hand through his dark brown hair. "It's none of my business, but we're like family. This isn't gonna sit well with the rest of the guys. You do what you have to, but just remember: Interspecies relationships don't work." He hit the swinging door with his knuckles and left the room.

Darcy busied herself removing the pan of enchiladas from the oven and the salad Phil had brought from the fridge. Although her back was to the door, she knew who stepped into the kitchen next. The rumble of voices in the living room grew louder.

"I hope you have something other than that mess in the pan to feed me," Quentin said.

She opened a utensil drawer and extracted a spatula, then slammed the drawer shut. "There's a couple steaks, nice and bloody, in the fridge. Help yourself." She turned to face him. "Are you trying to get yourself exterminated?"

"I warned you." His voice radiated quiet fury. "You've bathed, but his scent is still all over you."

"It won't work between us, Quentin," she said quietly.

"Because the guys are mad as hell at me?"

"No. Because there's no future for us."

Quentin crossed his arms over his chest. "As long as you remain human, there certainly isn't."

Her eyes widened. "Are you saying what I think you are?"

"I can give you eternity."

"To spend it with you?" she asked incredulous. "How arrogant you sound. Do you think all humans aspire to immortality?"

"Don't you? And don't tell me you haven't ever considered it." His gaze narrowed. "I won't believe you."

Darcy stopped herself from denying it. It was true. Especially, since she'd met him. "That wouldn't change how I feel. Would it?"

"It's a risky process, I admit. More humans die than make the change. And some aren't the same after they turn. Some lose their souls."

"Doesn't sound like much of a choice." She didn't know why, but she felt close to tears. His argument only strengthened her belief that their relationship wasn't meant to be. She turned and opened a drawer to pull out the silverware.

Quentin's arms circled her waist and pulled her close to his body. "I'll make you want me more than him."

Darcy fought the urge to surrender to his embrace.

“You can’t deny your attraction to me and the dark and dirty things I do to you. Did he make you scream?” He grabbed her ass and squeezed. “Did you wriggle your little ass for him because you wanted it so bad you felt like you’d die of want?”

Darcy’s breath grew ragged but she refused to answer him. Her body was doing all the talking. Her breasts grew heavy and pointed, and her pussy was damp with her desire.

“Well darling, you begged for my touch. Think about it, tonight. Remember what I can make you feel. You’ll crave my touch and my cock. Before the sun rises, you’ll be mine.”

## CHAPTER SIX

Two nights later the team hit pay dirt.

The weather had turned stormy. High winds from the Atlantic whipped up six-foot whitecaps that had the most devout surfers heading north to Cocoa to catch the waves despite the chilly air.

Just after dusk, Phil radioed in that a group of young vamps were trashing a nightclub along the boardwalk.

Joe drove with Darcy in the front seat. If Quentin was chafing at the distance Darcy had kept since the team discovered their dalliance, at least he had the satisfaction of knowing Joe hadn’t enjoyed the woman’s favors either. They’d both been shut out in the cold.

No matter how hard he’d tried to break through the icy barrier she’d erected, Darcy had repelled every advance. She slept alone on the sofa, although he’d offered to return the use of her bed. He was secretly glad when she refused. Although he was tortured surrounded by her scent, he wanted her to imagine him there—sleeping on her pink pillows, stretched across the mattress where they’d shared wicked delights. He hoped like hell she got as little sleep as he did.

They barely spoke except to discuss the evening’s business. Something had to give soon. Quentin planned to be the man nearest when Darcy broke.

Joe, Darcy, and Quentin arrived outside the bar just as a man was tossed through the plate glass window. Quentin didn’t have to look closely to know the man had been drained dry first.

“Perhaps, I should go in by myself,” Quentin said, his hand on Darcy’s arm.

“Do you think we haven’t faced a real rave before?” she asked.

Quentin bristled. Those were the most words she’d spoken directly to him all evening. “You want information, don’t you? If you go in with your bows cocked, they won’t be in the mood to talk.”

A scream rent the air and Quentin stepped ahead of Joe and Darcy to cut them off. The rest of the team was arriving for clean up. He had to be quick. Letting his incisors slide into place, he entered the bar.

There were four young vamps inside. Their T-shirts with the Ron Jon surfer logos looked incongruous with their armored faces. They'd paired off and were dining on their newest victims. The bodies strewn between the tables were evidence of their rampaging bloodlust.

Quentin lifted his head and snarled, his deep growl alerting the vamps of his presence.

One of them, a lean, blond-haired teenager, lifted his head from the gaping wound of a woman who looked more dead than alive. "You're on our turf. Move out," he said.

"You're attracting undue attention, children. Did your sire not mentor you in the need for discretion?" Quentin said, with a sniff. "You lack finesse."

The young vamp's lips lifted in a snarl. "Don't need it. This is a lot more fun. Now move out, old man."

Quentin raised an eyebrow. "I'll let you live for another minute or two if you answer one question."

The others raised their heads from their meals, their deep thirst forgotten in the challenge he had issued.

The blond, who must be their leader, dropped the woman and stalked toward Quentin. When he was half a dozen paces away, he launched himself at Quentin in a single impressive leap.

Quentin sidestepped the boy who landed against a table, overturning it and several chairs. Before he could extricate himself from the tangle, Quentin reached down and staked him through the chest. He disintegrated into dust, leaving only his rumpled jeans, T-shirt, and tennis shoes.

Quentin turned back to the remaining three. "Now, about that question..."

The three looked at each other and raised their hands.

"What the hell do you want to know?" Another sun-bleached blond youth asked.

"Where can I find your sire?"

"The Master?"

Quentin snorted. Nicky really was reaching. "Nicky. Where do I find him? We're old friends." He took a step toward them, and they backed away.

"He has his own place now. If you're a friend, how come you don't know?"

"I just arrived in town." Displeased with their lack of candor, Quentin let his armor reform his face to indicate his impatience.

"All right, man. He's got a place near here. In South Beach Park." His face morphed. He couldn't be more than sixteen and beardless. "You aren't going to tell him we left a mess, are you?"

"I'm wondering how you propose to extricate yourself from this?"

"Huh?"

"You won't be leaving this place, except in a dustbin."

Darcy and Joe stepped through the door. More of the SU team members peered through the window, crossbows and spear guns aimed at the three.

"Shit!"

"Keep one alive," Quentin said. In an instant, two sets of clothing crumpled to the floor.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dressed in black, they'd taken up positions behind the concrete block wall that enclosed the property on the beach side. The incoming tide lapped just feet away, and the smell of rain was in the air. Light poured from windows. Music blared within. It seemed a party was in full flourish.

Hunkered down next to the gate, Quentin whispered, "Be sure to keep the rest of the unit back until I give the signal. They stink of gun oil. I can smell it from here."

"We're going in with you," Darcy said.

"No you're not."

"Look, I know you've got a bug up your ass about the sleeping arrangements," Joe said, "but Darcy and I are supposed to be your shadows."

"Darcy's made it abundantly clear, who's in and who's out," Quentin said between gritted teeth. "We aren't a team."

"Fine," Darcy said, laying a hand on Joe's arm. "You go right on ahead. We'll try not to get in your way."

"You're staying put."

She smiled, her teeth a white slash in the moonlight. "Of course. I always do what I'm told."

"Damn stubborn wench," he muttered.

“Pompous, arrogant asshole,” she replied, still smiling.

“Darcy, keep clear of Nicky.” If Nicky knew what the girl meant to him...

“Time’s a-wasting,” Joe whispered. He lowered the microphone on his headset to his mouth.  
“We’re going in.”

Quentin pushed open the gate and skirted the wall on the inside, keeping to the shadows and using the foliage of the palms and bougainvillea to hide behind as he crept along. Not that vampires couldn’t see into the darkness.

French doors opened with a spill of light onto a slate tile patio. A lone figure stepped outside and lit a cigarette. The flare of the lighter illuminated the face of the vampire they’d come to kill.

The hair on the back of Quentin’s neck rose. This was too easy.

“You may as well quit skulking in the bushes, Father. I see you received my message,” Nicholas Powell said.

Quentin heard Darcy’s gasp. He straightened and approached the monster he’d created.

\* \* \* \* \*

Darcy glanced at Joe. His face had hardened to stone.

It couldn’t be. Quentin couldn’t be responsible for creating this evil vampire. But she didn’t have time to consider the implications. They’d been made. She rose from her crouch and surveyed the courtyard. Her gaze lifted to the balcony above them.

Two vampires trained automatic weapons on her and Joe. The gun oil Quentin’s keen sense of smell had detected hadn’t come from the SU team. Then the thought came unbidden, had Quentin set them up for a slaughter?

“I’m flattered, Quentin. You’ve come all this way to see me. You and your friends must come inside.” It wasn’t an invitation. With an indolent wave of his hand, Nicky signaled to more vamps who spilled out the doorway. “After you. But first, drop your weapons.”

Quentin raised the stake in his hand and then laid it at his feet. Joe and Darcy lowered their crossbows. It took every bit of her willpower to abandon her weapon.

Quentin stepped through the doorway. He didn’t glance behind him to see whether they followed.

“Don’t be shy,” Nicky said. “Come inside and join the party.”

Darcy stepped onto the tile patio. As she drew abreast Nicky, he held out his hand. "I'll take your headsets."

Inside the house, it became immediately apparent a trap had been set. There wasn't a human in sight, just five more vampires, unholy grins on their distorted faces.

"So what do you think of my humble abode?"

Darcy had just met the dark-haired vampire, but his voice, low and sardonic already grated on every last one of her nerves. She glanced about her, checking exits and for items that could be used as weapons if her weapon of last resort was taken from her. Slate tile covered the floor, and unless the beige leather sofas could be used to batter a vamp to the ground, only the glass and chrome tables offered any possibilities.

Quentin stood in the center of the living room and had yet to look her way. But his stiff posture and neutral expression reassured her that at least he was as much a victim as she was.

"So what do we have here? GI Joe and Jane?" Nicky said as he circled them. He halted in front of Darcy and looked her up and down. His dark eyes smoldered. Leanly built and muscular, Darcy didn't doubt Nicky would prove difficult to best in a one-on-one.

She glared at him, her hands fisting at her sides.

"Is she your woman?" Nicky turned to Quentin, one eyebrow raised.

Quentin remained silent.

"Hardly seems your type. She's rather plain. And not a curve to feast on," he said, his voice silky. "Rather like taking a boy. Do you like boys, Quentin?"

Quentin snorted. "Just for breakfast." He nodded to the vamps circling the perimeter of the room. "Seems your appetites are decidedly male, these days."

"I learn from my mistakes. Women are strictly for nourishment." He walked behind her and his fingers trailed down her throat. "They make lousy soldiers."

Darcy forced herself to remain still, although she knew her escalating heart rate betrayed her alarm. Her gaze sought Quentin's, but his stare remained on Nicky.

"Monica was a little unstable," Quentin replied.

"Fancied herself in love with me, can you imagine? How are our friends, Dylan and Emmy, by the way?"

Quentin shrugged. "I haven't heard from them."

"I must give them my regards when I see them next. I didn't have the chance before I left Seattle. I was rather rushed."

Darcy wondered how long the glib conversation would last. At this point, she couldn't have gotten a word past her lips. Nicky's fingers continued to trace her neck and jaw. She swallowed.

"So when will the rest of the team arrive?" Nicky asked so casually, it took a moment for the words to register.

She stiffened and feared her reaction had given something important away.

A little smile curved the corners of Quentin's lips. The smirk she'd come to love.

A short staccato burst of gunfire sounded from the front of the house. Quentin's gaze shifted to Darcy, and he lifted his chin. Darcy took it as a signal to act. She grasped Nicky's finger and bit.

"Bitch!" His fist punched her back, over the kidneys. Despite the Kevlar jacket she wore, Darcy nearly passed out. But she didn't let go of his finger.

In a blur of motion, Quentin leapt toward them and Darcy opened her mouth, releasing Nicky and rolling away. The sound of breaking glass and wood came from behind her, but Darcy continued to roll until she reached the back of one of the sofas.

When she made it to her feet, Quentin and Nicky were out of sight, although the sounds of their scuffle could be heard from the patio. She reached for the 9mm handgun strapped beneath her vest at the small of her back—and for the stake in her boot. A gun might not kill a vampire, but a headshot could incapacitate one for a moment—long enough to stake it.

Gunfire continued to explode, so near the sound was deafening. To her right, one of Nicky's minions inside the room had an AK-47 trained on a sofa Joe must have hidden behind. When Darcy looked to her left, she found herself staring down the barrel of a Glock.

The vamp holding the weapon wore a gleeful expression. "Question is, should I shoot you first, and then suck your blood?"

Darcy held her hands up, her weapon pointing toward the ceiling. "Question is, do you have the safety off?"

The youth's gaze dropped to his gun, and Darcy fired a round through his forehead. Before he hit the floor, she staked him. "The safety's in the trigger, stupid."

No time to gloat, she headed for an unarmed vamp, fired off a shot and staked him. Another saw her coming and ran for the front door. Knowing the SU would catch him before he made it to the road, she turned to help Joe.

She saw his hand rise from the back of the sofa and fire several rounds toward the vamp who had taken cover behind the jutting edge of the fireplace. The vamp raised his machine gun and took aim. Before he got off a round, Darcy hit him in the temple. He dropped his weapon and cradled his head. "You fucking bitch," he screamed.

Darcy leapt for him, kicked the machine gun away and raised the stake. Only the wooden tip was blunted from the previous kills, and was stopped by bone at his sternum.

The vamp roared and quickly overpowered her, pushing her to the floor. Unable to do anything except stare in horrified fascination, Darcy watched his mouth with its jagged row of teeth descend.

Suddenly, the vamp screamed and crumbled into dust. Quentin leaned over her, his stake still poised. He lowered it and offered his other hand to help her to her feet.

She pushed the pile of dusty clothing from her body to the floor. "Thanks," she said. "Is that it?"

"That's everybody inside and the team's taking care of the strays on the grounds. But Darcy, Nicky got away."

Darcy felt ill. A niggling sense of doubt rose. Did Quentin deliberately allow him to escape? "At least he's lost his minions." She looked around the living room. It was pretty well trashed. Bullets had ripped through the furniture and the walls, in some places leaving gaping holes so large a fist could fit inside. Thank God she and Joe had escaped being hit.

Joe? Her heart went still, and a cold dread settled over her. She hadn't seen him since he'd battled it out with the vamp with the machine gun. She hadn't heard his voice.

She approached the sofa Joe had taken cover behind. Before she rounded the corner, she saw a crimson pool of liquid, which was spreading wider by the moment across the blue-gray tile. "No, no, no."

He was lying on his side, his 9mm still grasped in his hand, his face ashen. She knelt in his blood and felt for a pulse at the side of his neck. It was weak and slow. Her hands moved over him, looking for the wound. The blood appeared to seep from beneath his Kevlar jacket and she opened it, dreading what she would find.

The bullet had entered the top of his shoulder making a rather small, innocuous-looking hole. She reached inside the jacket, smoothing her hands around his back and found the exit wound. It was large and gaping. Joe wasn't going to make it, but she had to try. "Joe, you hold on. Don't you die on me. Quentin, help me get this jacket off him. I have to stop the bleeding."

Quentin's hand stopped hers as she began stripping away the vest. "Darcy, he's lost more than fifty percent of his blood. He's going to die."

She sought his gaze, her own pleading with him to help. “I have to try. Please, help me.” She didn’t realize she was crying until his fingers smoothed the tears on her cheeks.

“Sweetheart, no amount of modern medicine can save him. I might be able to turn him, though. It’s not too late to try.”

She shook her head, not understanding what he was saying.

“I can make him a vampire.”

“No!” The word wrenched from her gut.

“His internal organs are shutting down, one after the other. He’s going to die.”

She leaned over Joe and cupped his face. “Joe, wake up. You have to tell me what you want. Please, wake up.”

“Darcy, he’s not going to answer you. He can’t,” Quentin said. “You have to choose.”

The moments were ticking by and she could feel Joe’s life slipping away. She raised her face to Quentin. “Do it. Save him, please.”

Quentin knelt and gathered Joe’s upper body off the ground to hold him in his arms. “I have to take more blood—to the point of his death. Go stand at the door. Make sure no one interrupts.”

She didn’t want to leave. She wasn’t sure she trusted him enough to leave Joe’s fate in his hands.

“Go!” Quentin lowered his mouth to Joe’s neck.

Darcy rose and went to the doorway that led to the patio. She glanced back at Quentin and prayed she’d made the right choice for Joe.

Stepping outside she realized the storm brewing all day had broken. Rain fell in fat drops, soaking her uniform in moments. She welcomed the moisture and raised her face to let the drops mingle with her tears. *Will he forgive me?* As close as they had been—as partners and lovers—she knew he held a deep and abiding hatred for vampires. Yet she had just given Quentin permission to make him into something he believed abhorrent and unnatural. She’d made him into one of the monsters he’d sworn to fight.

Darcy heard the sounds of her team members as they combed the yard for weapons and vamps. Since stealth was no longer employed, she knew the vamps had been vanquished.

Max stepped inside the garden gate. “Darc, is the house secure?”

“Yeah.”

"You okay?"

She nodded, and then realized he couldn't see the movement. "Sure."

"Joe and Quentin still inside?"

"Yeah." Darcy shook herself. She had to keep Max outside. He wouldn't understand what Quentin was doing. "Max, let the rest of the team know the inside's secure. We lost our headsets."

Max radioed the status. "Let's see if the rest of the team needs help."

"You go ahead. I'll be along in a minute. I have to let...Joe know where I am."

She returned to the doorway. Quentin still held Joe in his arms.

Joe's mouth was latched to Quentin's wrist, and he was drinking. He was alive. But had his soul survived?

Quentin's gaze was on her, wary and watchful. In the lamplight that bathed the two men, both glowed golden and beautiful. She couldn't be sorry for her choice. The two men she loved lived.

"I'll have to get him away from here, quickly," Quentin said.

Darcy sighed, weary enough to sleep where she stood. Another set of problems presented themselves. "We have an outbrief and after action reports. What do I tell them?"

"Nothing yet. Joe's alive, but we don't know if he's intact."

"Meaning, he's not a monster?"

"Make an excuse. He needs time to get on his feet. And he has to feed soon."

She looked at Joe, his eyes closed, suckling like a babe on Quentin's wrist.

"He needs blood from a source."

"Meaning not...recirculated?"

"Just enough to take the edge off his hunger. Then we can feed him steak or animal blood."

Darcy glanced away, sickened by the reality of what would be Joe's existence. "Take him to my place. I'll get there as soon as I can."

"Darcy, perhaps it would be best we found another host. The longer he waits, the stronger his thirst will be. He'll be out of control."

“I made the decision to make him what he is. His first meal won’t come from a stranger.”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Hours later, Darcy let herself in the front door, dreading the coming moments. She’d lied to the SU team and Captain Springer about Joe. In a few hours they’d know it and she’d lose her place on the team, and likely lose her job altogether. But that thought was the least of her worries. She had to face Joe and see whether her gamble had been for nothing.

The kitchen door slammed open, and she jumped. Joe filled the doorway, fury darkening his face, his chest heaving with suppressed rage.

Her hand crept to her throat, fear leaving a metallic taste in her mouth. She doubted Joe was going to thank her.

Quentin followed him out of the kitchen.

Her gaze shifted to him, but his expression gave away nothing of his thoughts, which made her even more nervous.

“You bitch!” Joe cursed. “You’ve made me into a thing. You didn’t have the right.”

Trepidation pumped her heartbeat faster and she opened her mouth to explain, but realized she really couldn’t. He was right. She’d made the choice for him, knowing how he felt about vampires. She straightened her shoulders, ready to face his ire.

Quentin laid a hand on Joe’s shoulder. “We talked about what happens next. You need to feed.”

“Shut up!” He shrugged off Quentin’s hand with a jerk. “This is between her and me.”

“I’m not leaving you alone with her.”

“Then you can watch,” Joe snarled.

Quentin looked ready to strike him, but Darcy shook her head.

Joe stalked toward her and Darcy held her ground, refusing to back away. This was Joe. He wouldn’t hurt her. He might be mad as hell, but he wouldn’t hurt her.

Grim-faced, he reached for the front of her black T-shirt and ripped it away. “Get your clothes off.”

Shaking, Darcy swallowed, her eyes widening as Joe crowded closer as if daring her to step back. "Can we at least go to the bedroom?" she asked, needing a moment to collect her courage.

"Strip now." He enunciated each word slowly, his nostrils flaring. "I smell your fear. Smart lady."

She lifted her trembling hands to the front of her sports bra, opened it and let it drop to the floor. His hand covered her breast immediately. He flicked the pad of his thumb on her nipple and it puckered, drawing to a tight point.

"My boots," she said quickly. "I need to sit down."

He shoved her back against the couch and she fell over the arm. He ripped at the laces and jerked her boots off, one at a time, then he pulled her to her feet again.

Her composure lost, Darcy sent Quentin a wild-eyed glance. *What are you going to do?*

His jaw tightened, but he remained still, his hands fisted at his sides.

"I said take off your clothes," Joe snarled.

Darcy grabbed for the snap at her waistband, popped it open, and slid down the zipper. He stood so close her head rubbed his belly when she knelt to push the pants down her legs. Her cheek glided along his straining erection.

Naked, she straightened, fighting to keep her hands at her sides rather than covering her breasts.

The corners of his mouth lifted. It wasn't a pleasant smile.

She shivered, alarm and a wicked thrill coursing down her spine.

Before she could protest, he ducked and shoved his shoulder into her belly. She folded over him and he straightened. Lifting her from the ground, he headed for her bedroom.

Darcy raised her head to find Quentin, hoping he would intervene. His jaw was set and his gaze a little wild. He followed them inside, turning on the lamp on the bedside table.

Her breath left her in a whoosh when Joe tossed her on the mattress. He stripped in seconds and fell across her. "No preliminaries, sweetheart. I'll fuck you before I eat."

His thighs forced hers apart, and he rammed inside her. Even as tears of outrage filled her eyes, she couldn't deny the ease of his entry. Her pussy was drenched with her arousal.

Joe allowed her no time to adjust nor room to breathe. He pinned her arms to the bed high above her head. He pumped into her, hot and fast, his chest flattened against hers. With his face inches above her, he forced her to see his anger and accept the pain he inflicted.

His cock pounded away at her womb reaching farther than she thought he could. His girth was thicker than she remembered and crammed tightly into her channel with each forward stroke.

While her mind protested his rough treatment, her body ripened. Her nipples swelled, the tips stabbing at Joe's chest. The delicate tissues lining her vagina released a wash of pre-cum that lubricated his cock and eased his passage.

"If I'd known you got off on violence, I'd have raped you long ago," he murmured.

"This isn't rape," she gritted out, finding it difficult to speak as he pummeled her. "I'm here of my own free will." Darcy decided to prove it. She raised her legs around his hips and gripped him, pulling him deeper into her.

With a growl, he pumped faster. His scowl tightened, and he closed his eyes and flung back his head. With a final thrust he came, his warm ejaculate spurting into her.

For a long moment they stared at each other. Then he released her hands and dropped his forehead onto her shoulder. Darcy enfolded him in her embrace and held him until his breath slowed.

"I'm sorry," he said, his voice strained.

She squeezed her eyes tight, relieved Joe was intact, and still her friend. Remorse meant he still had a conscience. "I know. It's okay," she said. "It's okay."

He pushed away and she unwrapped her legs and arms. Rolling to his back, he covered his eyes with his forearm.

Darcy lay sprawled on the bed, her legs splayed, tears leaking from her eyes, utterly defeated. Joe's soul had survived, but his unhappiness wasn't a matter of adjustment to his new state. He hated what he'd become. And it was her fault.

She heard the rustle of clothing and her eyes found Quentin. His face was taut, his gaze haunted. He removed his clothing and lay down beside her, opposite Joe. Darcy opened her arms to him.

They lay on their sides facing each other. Quentin wiped her tears away with his fingers then rubbed the moisture onto her nipples in slow circles.

Darcy leaned toward him and kissed his lips, her breath catching on a jagged sob when his mouth molded to hers.

He made love to her, sweetly, slowly—his hands soothing her frazzled nerves. He rubbed away the tension in her shoulders, circled each bump of her spine in slow, melting caresses until her sorrow eased. He built a slow fire that raised dimples on her nipples and drew the tips to hard points. His hand moved to her belly and he massaged away the tension she hadn't known was

there, smoothing with his fingertips, gradually increasing the pressure using his knuckles to knead. She almost drifted to sleep beneath his tender ministrations until his hands slid southward, dipping between her legs.

She eased her legs apart, allowing him entry, and he circled her opening without dipping inside, building a slow ache that had her arching gently into his hand, seeking more of his sensual solace.

He kissed her, his lips lapping hers in an undemanding kiss, and suddenly, she wanted more.

She wound her fingers in his soft hair and pulled his face closer to deepen the kiss, making kitten sounds in the back of her throat to tell him how well he pleased her.

He drew back from the kiss and her eyes opened. His face was taut, his nostrils flared, and she knew the cost of this sweet seduction to his control. "Love, Joe must feed, and you have to take him into your body again to ease his lust while he does it." He inserted a finger into her channel and swirled inside. "He's waited too long to drink without the bloodlust overcoming his senses—unless he substitutes sexual lust for bloodlust. Do you understand what I'm telling you?"

She nodded, not happy he prepared her for Joe's benefit. She bit back a moan when a second finger slipped inside her.

"You have her well primed," Joe muttered behind her. "She wants you."

"You made a ballocks of your previous opportunity, pup," Quentin countered angrily, even as his hands continued to gently seduce her body. "You'll do this under my guidance. A first feeding can take a man's mind. I won't let you harm her by forgetting yourself."

"But she wants you. The scent of her arousal is growing by the moment."

"Perhaps..." Darcy's voice was so soft and uncertain, she wasn't sure they'd heard.

Quentin's gaze met hers. "What is it, love?"

Darcy swallowed, not believing what she was about to ask. "Could you both make love to me?"

He grew completely still.

Behind her, Joe's soft, cynical laughter shook the mattress beneath her.

Her hands framed Quentin's face. "I want *you*, but he needs me now. Can't I hold you and take both of you inside me?" She knew her face flamed at the whispered suggestion.

Joe stopped laughing.

"You're very tight there," Quentin replied, his words spoken with deliberation. "He'll hurt you."

“Then help him prepare me...to take him.”

“You try me, Darcy,” Quentin said, his voice sounding hoarse. “I haven’t any liking for sharing you with another man.”

Her heart thrilled at his words. “Tonight ends it. I promise.”

He drew in a deep breath. “You have a lubricant?”

Darcy couldn’t believe he conceded so easily. “In the nightstand.” As he turned to reach for the tube, a mix of dread and guilty anticipation stepped up her heartbeat.

“Such a nasty girl,” Joe said, his hand reaching around her to cup her breast. His lips opened over the curve of her shoulder. He forced her to her back on the bed.

Quentin placed a hand in the middle of Joe’s chest and shoved. “You won’t treat Darcy harshly, not in word or deed or I’ll dust you.”

“Are you so sure you could take me?”

Darcy rose on her elbows. “Joe, put a sock in it. If you’re going to suck my blood, you’re damn well going to treat me with respect. You may be a big, bad vampire now, but you’re acting like a brat. Cut it out.”

Joe glowered, but his expression changed when his gaze drifted from her face and down her naked body. It grew feral. “Damn Darc! This isn’t easy. I can feel changes creeping over me—some I’m fighting to control.”

“That’s why you won’t feed unless I tell you,” Quentin said. “Darcy needs to trust you won’t hurt her, again. So for now, our attentions go to her.”

Darcy felt liquid trickle from her cunt. It was downright embarrassing how arousing this discussion was becoming.

When two sets of male nostrils flared and sniffed, she thought she’d rather find a hole to hide in than face their knowing expressions.

Quentin’s mouth curved into a smirk and Joe’s eyebrow lifted in a *mano a mano* challenge.

Darcy’s heart sounded a loud tattoo they couldn’t fail to hear.

“How ‘bout we start north and work our way south?” Joe asked, giving the lead to Quentin.

Quentin nodded and indicated Joe could start first. Quentin lay down on his side, resting on his elbow to watch.

As Joe leaned over her to kiss her lips, Darcy's eyes didn't leave Quentin's face. If he was still jealous of Joe's presence in her bed, nothing in his expression betrayed him. Darcy almost wished for a flush of anger or a frown.

So when Joe's tongue darted into her mouth, she clutched Joe's hair to deepen the kiss. Their tongues parried and stroked. Their mouths ate each other's lips in wet, sultry kisses.

When they drew apart, Darcy's mouth already felt swollen.

Joe left a trail of wet kisses along her jaw, down her neck, and lower to her breast. With his hand kneading the soft underside, and his mouth kissing the tops of her quivering flesh, Darcy reached for Quentin.

Quentin leaned down and licked her lips. Opening her mouth, Darcy touched her tongue to his without seeking a kiss. Their tongues mated softly, lapping at each other's tips. The kiss that followed sealed their mouths then slid, creating a soft suctioning that drew Darcy's belly tight once more.

When they parted, Darcy stared at Quentin for the longest moment. *I love you.*

Joe tongued her nipple, encouraging it to peak. Quentin nibbled on her earlobe.

Darcy tried to keep silent against their determined onslaught, but her gasps and soft moans caught her by surprise. They gave her no room to hide the depth of her growing excitement. Quentin's hand slid down to palm her neglected breast, and Darcy's hips moved restlessly on the mattress.

When both men's hot mouths closed over her nipples, Darcy's back arched off the mattress, pressing her chest high. The men worked in concert, sucking, chewing softly on her sensitive stems.

Then their hands smoothed over her belly and thighs, coming up the soft insides of her thighs, pressing them apart until her core was open and exposed.

Darcy's breaths became jagged and she shook—fine tremors that radiated down her belly and trembled through her thighs. Quentin made a shushing sound and kissed her belly, swirling his tongue into her belly button, then licking downward to the nest of damp hair.

Joe showed no mercy, he bit her—large open-mouthed bites, but never hurtful, that surprised and excited her. His hands lifted the leg nearest him onto his shoulder and he buried his face between her legs, nipping and kissing her thighs.

Quentin's fingers stroked around her labia, taking the fragrant glaze seeping from within her to tease the swollen kernel at the top of her nether mouth.

Joe's tongue darted inside her, fluttering, stroking, lapping her cream like a cat.

Darcy sighed noisily, watching the two heads, one with long silvery-blond hair, the other close-cropped black, circling over her flesh. “Ahhh, please,” she pleaded. “Take me, now.”

“Sweetheart, you’re not nearly ready for us,” Quentin murmured. He reached for two pillows. “Joe, help me get these under her hips.”

Joe rose, and Darcy moaned at the loss of his mouth from her cunt. His hands cupped her buttocks and lifted her high enough for Quentin to slide the pillows beneath her. Then the two men knelt, staring at her splayed thighs.

“You have the prettiest asshole, Darc,” Joe said, his voice deep and growling, his hand stroking his cock. “I’m gonna fuck it ‘til you scream.”

Feeling a twinge of fear, Darcy tried to close her legs, but both men tugged her legs wider and higher.

“I’m afraid we still have some work to do before she can take you.” Quentin reached for the tube of K-Y. He squeezed it onto his fingertips and gave her a glance that sent prickly heat dancing across her belly.

“I’m going to stretch you with my fingers. Relax when I come inside you.”

Joe apparently understood his role, his fingers dipped inside her cunt to finger-fuck her.

Darcy’s hips rolled, trying to take his fist deeper.

Quentin rubbed the ointment around her asshole and Darcy quivered, her head digging into the mattress as she arched. Then he inserted one finger and swirled inside her ass.

She cried out and Joe withdrew his fingers. “No, you don’t. Not yet.”

The loss of the extra stimulation kept her from creeping over the edge of her climax. Instead, he stroked her thighs—teasing passes that glanced against her labia without ever giving her the deeper strokes she craved.

Quentin inserted a second long finger inside her and Darcy moaned, feeling herself tighten to resist his invasion.

“Relax, sweetheart,” he crooned. “Let me in.”

Darcy couldn’t take it. The pressure burned. “This is too much,” she whispered.

Joe’s mouth latched onto her nipple and he suctioned, drawing the tip between his teeth.

With Joe’s teeth gnashing on her nipple and Quentin fingering her ass, Darcy’s sphincter gradually eased. Then she had to move. She needed *more*—and told them so—loudly. With her

head thrashing on the mattress, her hand sought her other nipple and she tugged it, twisting gently.

Joe's hand pushed hers to the bed. "Not until we say so, Darc."

Darcy's ass burned, stretched beyond what she thought she could comfortably take, but it caused an exquisite pain. Her hands clutched the bedding.

Quentin pulled out partway then stroked back inside. Then he repeated the sweet torture, in and out, stretching and burning her tender tissue.

Darcy whimpered and circled her hips.

"You've been so good," Quentin said, his voice a deep rumble. He leaned over her, his fingers still shoved deep inside her and kissed her. "Darcy, can you take more?"

Darcy sucked his lower lip between her teeth, all the while her hips continued circling on his fingers. "Oh, please. Give me more. Come inside me."

"Joe, let's take her, now." Quentin pulled his fingers away and wiped them with tissues from her nightstand. Then he pulled the pillows from beneath her.

Joe tugged the sheets to the end of the bed and tossed them to the floor.

As she watched the men prepare the bed, Darcy hugged her belly, trying to still the tremors that grew stronger by the moment. Excitement so strong *she* could smell her own arousal created an ache that clamped her thighs together involuntarily. Her fingers crept to her clitoris and she rubbed herself.

"What did I tell you about helping yourself?" Joe knelt on the mattress and rolled her to her side to face Quentin. Then he snuggled next to her back, his cock flush against the crease between her buttocks.

"I'm only going to come a little way into your cunt, love," Quentin said. "Joe, you're to wait until she's ready. She's tensing up again. Here's the gel." He passed the tube to Joe.

Joe pushed her hair forward and swept his tongue over the vertebrae at the back of her neck. Quentin scooted closer to her, his cock brushing her belly.

Sandwiched between the two men, Darcy was starting to have second thoughts. The heat coming from their two bodies was drawing the air away from her lungs. She was panting, shivering, and neither had entered her yet.

Quentin extended his arm for her to rest her head upon and Darcy felt a moment's ease when she looked into his face. His watchful gaze searched hers.

She brushed her fingers over his cheek and caressed his shoulders.

His hand lifted to cover her breast and she sighed. She slid her thigh over his, opening her legs for him to fit between.

Quentin's hips pulled back, then his cock nudged her cunt, found her moist welcome, and he surged inside her.

Her thigh tightened around his hip, pulling him deeper into her, and he pulsed, shallow thrusts that slowly stoked her fire.

Joe's hands smoothed down her back to her buttocks and he squeezed, helping her press closer to Quentin. Then his fingers pressed inside her ass.

Her breaths shortened, catching on ragged sighs and moans. Her hips found Quentin's rhythm and she countered it, pressing her pussy forward to greet his strokes.

When Joe's cock slid between her cheeks. Her thrusts deepened, forward and back. He pulled his fingers out and pressed the thick, round head of his cock against her opening.

She whimpered, sure she'd never take him inside. The pressure became unbearable and she opened her mouth to beg him to stop. Then gasped when he shoved past the tight ring.

"Christ, you're tight, Darc." Joe's forehead rested on her shoulder and his hips stilled. A shudder shook his tall frame.

Darcy burrowed her face into the crook of Quentin's neck and moaned. "Give me more, Joe. Please, give me more." Her hips jerked when he surged into her, crowding her delicate tissues.

She didn't realize she was shaking, until Quentin's arms surrounded her. "Now, Joe. Prepare her neck."

As his cock stroked deeper into her ass, Joe's tongue slid along her neck.

Darcy gasped. Filled to bursting with masculine cock, she was on the brink of splintering into a thousand pieces. Her hands clutched Quentin's shoulders, her nails digging into his skin.

Joe pumped against her ass and Darcy had to move. "Quentin?" she asked her voice quavering.

His mouth settled over hers, his arm crooked beneath her thigh to lift it, allowing both men room to slide deeper into her. Quentin surged forward until he was fully seated.

Pinned between them, she couldn't move her hips. She quaked, whimpering and moaning, not recognizing the animalistic sounds erupting from deep within her throat. She accepted their deepening thrusts, their hips countering each other's moves.

Quentin's lips lifted from hers. "Now, Joe," he growled.

Joe's hands circled her chest to clasp her breasts, his fingers pinching her nipples. A rumble from behind her was all the warning she got before his teeth sank into her neck.

Darcy screamed, loud and long then closed her eyes tightly. Quentin kissed her again, his tongue sliding along hers and she bit him. He growled and thrust harder.

Joe's rumbling grew to a roar and his hips jerked out of synch, faster. Burning her ass, as his thick cock stretched her farther.

Faster, harder, deeper, their thrusts grew wild and Darcy writhed between them, sweat breaking over her body, cream gushing in her cunt.

Quentin's hips rolled and jerked, and his arm drew her thigh higher. Joe's hands moved lower to close over her hips, anchoring her to receive his hard, pistoning cock.

Beyond words, Darcy's body took their thrusts, forgetting to breathe. Then her orgasm rolled over her, clenching her belly, tightening her vagina and ass, pulsing, caressing their cocks. Both men growled and Darcy screamed as release washed over her. The men rocked, their cum spurting deep inside her body.

She didn't know she was crying until Quentin licked her tears from her face. As Joe closed the small wounds on her neck, he withdrew his cock, but Quentin stayed buried deep inside her. His arms pulled her closer and she turned her face to nestle in the crook of his neck.

Joe kissed her shoulder and drew away, leaving the sweat on her back to cool in the air. She heard the sounds of water running in the bathroom, but couldn't stir herself to move away from Quentin.

Quentin kissed her temple. "Come my dear, I'll help you with your bath." He offered his hand to pull her to her feet.

She was grateful for the support when her legs crumpled beneath her. With a shaky laugh, she let him lead her to the bathroom.

As Quentin passed Joe in the doorway, the two men exchanged nods. When the door closed behind the woman he loved and her vampire, Joe quietly left the bedroom.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Darcy woke to find the early morning light rimming the curtain and a heavy weight draped over her. She smiled when her scattered thoughts coalesced. She'd fallen asleep with Quentin's head upon her shoulder and his cock embedded between her legs.

"Good morning." He didn't open his eyes, but his mouth curved into a smile.

“Feeling pretty puffed up this morning?” she teased.

He arched an eyebrow. “You’re very chipper, considering.”

“Considering what? That I feel like a two dollar whore who has a hundred in her pocket?”

His eyes popped open. “That was rather coarse.”

She wrinkled her nose. “I’m feeling rather...sticky this morning.”

“I’m sorry, I’ll move.” He rose on his forearms, lifting his torso, which only pressed his cock deeper inside her.

She rubbed her heels on the back of his thighs and pressed down, keeping him firmly inside. “Not yet. Please?”

He lowered himself on his elbows, his face inches from hers. The smirk that was never far from his lips stretched lazily.

Blushing, Darcy covered her mouth immediately. “Maybe I should brush my teeth first.”

Quentin shook his head. “A little tooth scum won’t put me off. Not when I find myself buried inside someone so delightful.”

“No, really. This isn’t a minor case of halitosis.”

“No. I’m not moving until you tell me what your first impulse was.”

Beneath his watchful stare, she squirmed, but her gaze held his. “A morning kiss, then?”

“As in ‘good morning’, or as in ‘morning after’ kiss?” His eyes crinkled at the sides.

Darcy felt exposed—more so than the previous evening when her body had been examined and explored thoroughly by two men. Exposed and vulnerable. She pushed at his shoulders. “As in ‘good morning, I need to get up’.” She removed her feet from his thighs and waited for him to get the hint.

“I think I’ll see for myself which it is.” His head dipped and his mouth swooped down to take hers in a lazy, erotic kiss—his open mouth rubbing her lips, until she forgot her embarrassment and sighed.

When he ended the kiss, Darcy gave him a coy glance. “Well you didn’t expire. So which was it?”

His mouth curved into a self-satisfied smile. “It was a ‘Wake up, I’m horny’ kiss.”

She laughed and raised her legs to circle his waist. “You’ve got me there. Took you long enough. You are a slow riser.” She gave his cock a squeeze with her inner muscles.

“I believe *we’ve* been insulted.”

“*We* will think *you* lack stamina if you don’t get down to business quickly.” She tightened her thighs to hug his body close.

His cock pulsed inside her, edging deeper. “What business are you speaking of?”

Feeling deliciously wanton, Darcy quipped, “The business of giving me pleasure.”

“What compensation will you give me for my services?” he asked in a haughty tone.

“Shall we barter? Service for service?”

His hips flexed, driving him deeper. “Hmm. Bears consideration.”

“Like for like?” she said breathlessly.

“I think not. Wouldn’t be a fair trade. We’re not made the same.”

“Because we’re vampire and human?”

“No. Man and woman.” His fingers skimmed her breast. “You’re rounder here.”

“Barely,” she mumbled.

A growl sounded from deep inside his throat. “The tips of your *rounder* breasts are larger and longer...” He tugged on the stem of her nipple. “...and more sensitive than mine. Playing with my nipples won’t make me nearly come. You have a distinct advantage.”

Darcy mewled and curved her hips to encourage him to move.

“And then there are the more obvious differences.” His hand crept between them and he fingered her clit and drove his hips upward to emphasize his point.

Not to be out-caressed, Darcy reached between their bodies, curving her hand around the cock embedded in her pussy and cupped his balls. “I envy you this...” Her fingers ringed the base of his penis. “...and this. I imagine just pulling off your clothes could excite you. And yet, when you come inside me you’re still less vulnerable than I am. A woman must accept a man’s intrusion.”

“Love, we’re made vulnerable in a different way.” He pulled her hands away and pressed them against the pillow beside her head. His cock stroked inside her—deeply. “Your woman’s body holds secrets a man can’t understand. And you possess a treasure—a warm, moist place a man can burrow inside.” He pulled back and stroked inside again. “Yet it’s only when the woman is someone we trust that we choose to linger in her solace.” Quentin stoked the slowly building

fire with a series of gentle glides, pulling out and driving forward. Then he held himself still inside her, gazing down at her face, the heat and tenderness in his expression melting her from the inside out. “Your cunt is a place of solace, but my cock will always be an intruder and will always beg entrance.”

She wrapped her legs around his hips and her arms around his broad shoulders. “You’re wrong. Your cock fills the emptiness inside and I haven’t the will to refuse your entrance. I want you inside me. I would hold you there forever if I could.”

His face grew solemn. “This solace is transitory, love, as long as you remain human. Otherwise, I would keep you thus forever.”

Again, he’d mentioned turning her. Each time, she was more tempted to accept. An eternity of loving him wouldn’t be enough. She speared her fingers into his thick hair and pulled him down for another kiss.

The muscles in his arms bunched and he lifted his torso, giving his hips greater leverage. His strokes were longer—and to Darcy’s mind—too damn slow. She planted her feet in the mattress and angled her hips upward to shorten the distance between them.

Their hips countered each other’s strokes, pounding against each other; faster, sharper, creating a friction that built a spiraling coil of sensual tension. Darcy’s legs quivered and her breath grew ragged. When her orgasm burst, she dug her fingers into his shoulders, held her hips as high as she could reach. His cock rested snug inside her channel, caressed from head to scrotum.

Spent, his weight crashed down on her and her legs collapsed. She rocked him, side to side, holding him as tight as she could, relishing the jetting release that bathed her.

Her lover yawned and kissed the crook of her neck.

If she didn’t roust him now, she might be stuck beneath him for another long while. The thought was a pleasant one, but she really did need to get up. Drowsy and well-sated, Darcy traced the knobby vertebrae of his spine. “I should check in on Joe before he sleeps for the day.”

Quentin’s body stiffened above her. “You needn’t worry about him anymore.”

She pressed a kiss against his shoulder. “I’m not going to make love with him again, if that has you worried. Last night was goodbye. To tell you the truth, I don’t really know why I wanted him, except I kept saying to myself it was right for me to love him.”

“And not me. Because he’s human?”

“Because we’ve known each other so long—as partners and friends. And I do love him—just not the way he wants.”

“You know what I think?” he said, his voice held that droll note she was coming to treasure.

“Hmmm?” Her lips curved into a smile. He was going to say something outrageous.

He rose on his elbows to look down into her face. “I think you were using him to fight your attraction for me.” His expression was as complacent as a cat’s after licking cream.

“You’re unbelievable!” She pretended outrage and made a half-hearted attempt to shove him away. “It has to be all about you, doesn’t it?”

“Were you lovers before I arrived on the scene?”

“Of course not.”

One self-satisfied brow rose. “Well then.”

“That’s it? That’s your entire argument? You’re an arrogant bastard.” He was right, but she’d never admit that to him. He was already too sure of himself.

“I’m the one in the saddle, aren’t I?”

“So now you’re Roy Rogers?”

“Would you rather I was Trigger?”

“Hmmm.” She pretended to take his suggestion seriously. “You do have a feature or two that remind me of a horse. Mainly your backside!”

“Not my cock? I think we’re insulted again.”

Gaiety fled, and she gazed solemnly at him. “Intellectually, I know you’re an unsuitable choice for me, but I can’t help myself. I want you still. Hell, I want you all the time.”

“I’m similarly afflicted, my dear.”

She drew a deep breath. “I really do need to make sure Joe is okay. I won’t sleep easy until I do.”

“Darcy, he isn’t here.”

“Did he leave to hunt for more blood?” Darcy asked, alarm rising as she imagined a hundred frightening scenarios.

He held himself perfectly still above her. “Darcy, he’s gone.”

“What?” she asked, not understanding.

“We talked about it last night, before you came home. He has a lot to adjust to and think about. His love for you was clouding the issue. He knew he’d lost, so he decided to leave.”

“But the team—”

“He’s taking a leave of absence.”

Tears filled her eyes. “This is my fault. He’s alone now.”

“He’s a man, love. Clinging to him would make him feel less so.” He rolled to his side and pulled her closer into his arms.

“I don’t like him leaving like this.”

“Did you like having both of us love you, so well?” he asked, his voice tight.

Her answer was important to him. She couldn’t make light of it or give anything but the honest truth. “It was frightening how much I felt—and painful. I couldn’t concentrate on one sensation so much was happening. I wanted to cling to you to slow it down. Are you wondering if I will be satisfied with just one man now?”

He didn’t answer, just stared at her steadily.

Her hand cupped his face. “You are quickly becoming everything to me. You enrage me, annoy me, fill me, and excite me. You’re more than I ever knew I needed.”

“How ungrammatical,” he said drolly, but his eyes were warm and approving.

She understood. He couldn’t reciprocate with loving words. He was a guy. Big, bad vampire was still just a man—and right brain-left brain challenged. Words of emotion might be impossible to draw from him, but his actions spoke volumes.

He’d kept her safe when Joe’s storm had raged against her.

He’d prepared her body for another man to take.

He’d kept her warm and loved, and had been with her to soften her grief from Joe’s departure.

Darcy let Quentin pull her close. Snuggled next to his body, she slept with her head resting over his heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

Darcy took her seat in the conference room, uneasy with the silence from the rest of the team. Not a single glance met hers and her heart sank. She was going to be fired.

The Captain had called the meeting for late afternoon—before Quentin could possibly attend.

The conference room door swung inward and Captain Springer entered. He glanced at Darcy and his face grew solemn. "Sorry about your partner, Darc."

Darcy gave him a questioning glance. He didn't sound angry with her.

"Joe called me and told me what happened. That he'd asked Quentin to make him a vampire when he realized he wasn't going to make it."

Her shoulders lifted with her swift intake of breath.

"He did tell you, didn't he?" he asked, his expression full of sympathy.

Darcy nodded her head, blinking back tears. Joe had saved her ass. "Did-did he say if he was coming back?"

"He's got a lot to think about, but I told him his job was still waiting here for him. Hell, partnering with vamps might be the wave of the future."

Phil's arm slipped around her shoulder. "Tough break, Darc."

Murmurs of sympathy from around the table made Darcy feel about two feet tall.

Max's steady glare was the only exception. *Does he suspect the truth?*

She straightened her shoulders. "Boss, do we have any leads on where Nicky Powell is now?"

"Unfortunately, he's gone to ground. But he won't be able to stay there long. We found a stash of money in the house at South Beach Park. He can't go far without scoring more."

"Any clues how he'll put the money together again?" Phil asked.

Captain Springer's face lit with mirthless glee. "Word on the street is he approached a Jamaican drug runner to offer his special services to develop a new market and distribute the drugs."

Max cursed. "That's all we need. I suppose he's planning on making his own ring of pushers, too?"

"You got it," Captain Springer said.

"How do we know so much about his plans?" Darcy asked.

The Captain seemed entirely too pleased with himself. His cheeks were florid and satisfaction gleamed in his eyes. "We received the info straight from the horse's mouth. Seems the drug lord isn't pleased with his new partner."

"Who'd he go to?" Darcy asked.

“One of Rupe King’s men.”

Smiles lifted the tension in the room. Nicky Powell had made a fatal mistake.

\* \* \* \* \*

Later that night...

“Why is it fortuitous that Nicky approached that particular drug dealer?” Quentin nuzzled Darcy’s neck finding it impossible to keep his attention on what she was saying. What she was doing filled his senses. And her scent...

Her sweat-ripened musk lured him like a hound to a fox. He lapped moisture from her neck.

Darcy gripped his chin and brought his face level with hers. “Pay attention.”

“Are we ready again?” He circled his hips under her to check for the depth of penetration.

Darcy rolled her eyes and pushed his hands from her breasts to the leather-upholstered sofa. “Business first.”

“Of course.” He smiled. “I love our conversations regarding commerce.”

“Oh, you! I knew it was a mistake to let you divert me when we came inside the house.”

“We *came* inside the car first to be precise. And what’s this about letting you do anything? As I remember it, you left quite a few items of clothing on the lawn in your mad dash for the door.”

He enjoyed Darcy’s rosy-cheeked embarrassment immensely. Only she hadn’t shown a hint of embarrassment when she’d shoved him down onto the sofa and climbed onto his lap. Nor had she blushed when she’d spread her legs wide around his hips and sank on his cock.

After she’d taken him, she’d been in an annoyingly chatty mood.

“If you’ll just give me two minutes I’ll explain everything.”

“I’ll give you nine inches.”

“Huh! Is that all?”

“Give me a reason to exert myself further,” he said, his voice dropping to a low rumble.

Her breasts were his barometers. He had only to watch the changes there to gauge her arousal. Her face was never as transparent. Even now, her chest was flushed pink. Time to escalate his seduction.

His hand rose to a tightly budding nipple. When he rolled it between his thumb and forefinger, her hips reacted. She couldn't help herself—he could tell by the ferocious frown she wore that she wanted to resist.

Simply watching her move on him, taking her pleasure of his body, pleased him. Her small breasts jiggled with each bounce. Her taut abdomen and sleekly muscled thighs clenched as she levered herself up and down. He could watch his cock disappear inside her pretty dark-furred mound for an eternity.

“Damn you,” she moaned. “I’ll never get my point across.”

“Wouldn’t you rather I did?” He flexed his hips to spear upward.

She gasped. “Just hold that thought.” She circled on his cock again, driving him crazy with her tight twist and bounce. Her eyes squeezed shut and her small white teeth bit her bottom lip.

Quentin gripped her ass, his fingers splayed to “persuade” her to pick up the pace and height of her movements.

Darcy accepted his guidance with enthusiasm, moaning louder the harder and faster she bounced.

From the corner of his eye, he saw the front door push open. He stiffened, ready to toss Darcy to the side. Then he recognized the pair who appeared in the doorway.

Dylan O’Hara’s expression reflected his wicked amusement at having found Quentin “occupied”.

Emmy Harris winked and held her finger to her lips.

The two stood in the well of the foyer and waited for Quentin to finish.

Cursing beneath his breath, Quentin slid his hand beneath Darcy’s hair and tipped her face to his.

Her lips closed over his, and then she murmured a protest when he tugged her gently back.

“We have visitors.”

“Let’s not answer the door,” she groaned and ground her pussy over his cock.

“Ahem,” his ex-best friend, Dylan, cleared his throat. “You left the front door open.”

Darcy screeched and swung her head around.

Emmy raised her hand and fluttered her fingers. “Hi there. We’re not interrupting anything, are we?”

## CHAPTER NINE

Minutes later, Quentin's ears still rang from Darcy's loud scream. If he hadn't been so annoyed at the interruption only moments from orgasm, he might have laughed at how quickly the woman had sprung from the sofa *and his cock* and hidden in the bedroom.

Dylan, the bastard, had seated himself on the sectional, his arms outstretched and waited while Quentin picked up his clothes and dressed. He didn't bother to even try to hide his devilish smile.

Emmy's bright inquisitive stare embarrassed Quentin, because she made no bones about the fact her gaze was glued to his cock. She might even have mumbled something like, "I knew it was one of those vampire things—you're all hung like horses."

When the lower part of his anatomy was clothed, Quentin flopped down on the sofa. "Dylan, I thought we'd agreed that Emmy needed to be kept safe. Nicky's suffered a setback and is more dangerous than ever."

Dylan shrugged. "She wore me down."

"Yup! To a nubbin." Emmy grinned. "Now he can't satisfy me, I'll have to find my kicks elsewhere."

"Well come over here, sweetheart." Quentin opened his arms, feeling playful and fully enjoying his friend's jealous glare.

Emmy crossed the short distance and settled her shapely hips onto his lap. She leaned toward him and kissed his cheek.

"Uh huh!" Quentin pressed a finger beneath her chin and held her motionless while he gave her a wet, smacking kiss.

"Now see here!" Dylan said, his voice laced with irritation. "Get your lips off my wife."

Quentin broke the kiss. "Married? Now I really must kiss the bride." He bent her over his arm and pressed his lips to hers, again.

Emmy giggled and clutched his neck, and giggled louder when Dylan growled another warning.

When Quentin came up for air, he slung his arms around her and continued to hold her in his lap. "Have to hand it to you Dylan, your Emmy is all woman. I can see why you'd want to stake your claim. But Emmy, what do you see in this Paddy?"

Emmy's cheeks flushed with pleasure, and her eyes softened when she gazed at Dylan. "He's my big, bad wolf. He scares the hell out of me when he's making love."

Quentin understood her perfectly. Darcy scared the hell out of him. His need for her grew stronger by the night. “So when did you two marry?”

“On our way here—in Vegas!”

Quentin released a bark of laughter. “Tell me you didn’t...”

Dylan rolled his eyes. “Oh yes!”

Emmy’s smile was beatific. “Elvis himself did the honors singing ‘Hunk, Hunka Burnin’ Love!’”

Quentin’s mouth stretched with an unholy grin. “Must be love.”

Shamefaced, Dylan shrugged. “What can I say? She had me by the shorthairs at 10,000 feet.”

“Oooh!” Emmy bounced on his lap, her excitement impossible to contain. “Do you know what the ‘Mile-High Club’ is?”

Quentin quirked an eyebrow at his best friend.

“Navarro leant us his 10-seater to fly here. Emmy seduced the steward and he told her about the club.”

“You make it sound like I had sex with the man,” Emmy said, her lips pursed in an adorable pout.

“Damn close enough. He came in his pants!”

“I had to give him something in exchange.”

“In exchange?” Quentin asked, knowing the answer. He was sure he’d enjoy Emmy’s version better.

“For his blood, silly. Besides he was wearing an apron. No one but he and I knew. Except nosy over there. Of course, Dylan had to initiate me afterward—in the bathroom, the galley—”

“He gets the idea, love,” Dylan said smoothly.

The bedroom door creaked open behind him and the scent of raspberry soap wafted over him. Darcy had showered. Quentin’s cock twitched.

“I think you have the wrong woman in your lap,” Emmy said slyly. She rose and walked toward Darcy. “I’m Emmaline Harris—”

“O’Hara!” Dylan reminded her.

“That rude man is my husband, Dylan *O’Hara*,” she said, wrinkling her nose. “We’re friends of Quentin’s. Friends of the night, if you know what I mean.”

Quentin turned to watch the exchange. Darcy had changed to a faded gray sweatshirt with the SU logo emblazoned across her chest and donned a pair of faded blue jeans and sneakers. Her hair was still wet from her shower. Two rosy spots of color warmed her cheeks.

The contrast between the two women was remarkable. Darcy was the taller of the two, but Emmy dwarfed her by virtue of her exuberance and statuesque frame. Emmy was dressed in a blood-red pantsuit that clung lovingly to her fleshy figure; her bright gold hair and ivory skin a vivid contrast to Darcy’s severely understated appearance.

But Quentin knew how deceptive Darcy’s beauty was. It was tactile rather than visual. Baby-soft skin stretched over taut, defined muscle. Soft hair, soft lips, soft kittenish cries when she grew excited...

Her curves were subtle. Her ass fit his palms, warm and round. Just the thought of her small, round breasts with their velvety-soft, rose-red nipples...

Quentin shifted on the seat and caught Dylan’s amused stare.

“I never thought I’d see the day.”

“Huh!” Quentin grunted. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“She’s not what I would have expected,” Dylan murmured.

Quentin’s eyes narrowed in warning.

“Oh ho! How the mighty have fallen.”

“Boys!” Emmy tossed her hair over her shoulder. “Darcy and I are going to scare up some steaks. Can we bring you anything?”

Dylan smiled lazily. “Whatever you’re having, dear.”

“See how he dotes?” she said, with a wink at Quentin. Emmy blew Dylan a kiss and followed Darcy through the swinging door.

Dylan’s face grew serious. “So, tell me about Nicky.”

“He’s on the run. We found his new lair, but he gave us the slip.”

“Us? I heard you were working with the local vampire hunters.” He jerked his head in the direction of the kitchen. “I take it Darcy is one of them? Aren’t you playing a dangerous game?”

“It’s been interesting,” Quentin murmured.

"I'll bet it has."

Darcy cut raw steak into bite-sized cubes, enjoying the sharp crack of her cleaver as it met the cutting board, while Emmy busied herself with washing potatoes and popping them in the microwave.

"My guy's Irish," Emmy said. "Strictly a meat and potatoes kind of guy," Emmy said.

"So you two are married?" *Hack!*

"Last night," Emmy replied happily, unaware Darcy was glaring holes at her back.

*Hack!*

"It's so hard to believe. Just a couple of weeks ago I was a bookkeeper and had sworn off men forever, and then there was Dylan. Don't you find vampire men impossible to resist?"

"Nope. The only thing I find hard to resist is slipping a stake through their hearts." *Hack!*

"Oh." Emmy's eyes rounded as she turned to watch Darcy. "Oh! You saw me sitting on Quentin's lap. That was nothing. Quentin's just a tease. A little jealousy goes a long way in the bedroom, if you know what I mean." She smiled. "Dylan will be reasserting his mastery when he drags me to a bed. There's never been anything between Quentin and I, so you don't have to worry."

"I wasn't worried." Darcy's words were clipped. "I don't give a rat's a—"

"Although he has seen me naked several times," her voice softened. "Actually, he's watched Dylan and I having sex several times."

*Hack!*

"Not that he did it on purpose, I'm sure. Dylan and I tend to get carried away and can never make it to a bed. You're not jealous, are you?"

*Hack!* "Of course not. What's it to me who he watches having sex?"

"Oh. I thought you two were...involved. You seemed to be enjoying yourself, earlier. Sorry about walking in on you and all. Are you mad about that?"

Darcy slid the meat off the cutting board onto a platter and handed it to Emmy. She turned her back to wash her hands at the sink.

"You know, you aren't at all what I expected Quentin to fall for."

Darcy's hand stilled as she dried them off. Emmy's comment mirrored her own thoughts. After seeing Quentin's hands curled around Emmy's abundant curves, she'd felt distinctly sexless.

"I never would have expected him to have such good taste. Dylan tells me he's strictly a munchable man. Any port in a storm. But you're not like that. You're in love with him, aren't you?"

Startled, Darcy let Emmy see her torment. "I'm not in love with him," she lied.

"Of course you are," Emmy said softly. "Who wouldn't be? He's an honorable, sexy guy. You know, he saved my life."

Darcy shook her head. "What we have is just sex."

"Keep telling yourself that," Emmy said with a slow smile. "I did. I thought there was no way Dylan would ever fall in love with me. I was too fat, too ordinary."

Anger melted beneath Emmy's thoughtful gaze. Darcy snorted. "Ordinary? You're beautiful. Any man would appreciate your curves. I feel like stick-girl standing next to you."

Emmy blinked. "Well thanks, but you're wrong. Men were not beating down my door. Only Dylan ever appreciated my big ass. And if I'm sexy now, it's because Dylan makes me feel that way."

Emmy set down the platter and stepped closer to Darcy. She reached to smooth Darcy's drying hair away from her face. "I can see why Quentin would fall for you. You have beautiful, expressive brown eyes." Her hand cupped her cheek. "And soft skin. And a willowy, yet strong body."

"No boobs," Darcy said with a crooked smile.

Emmy lifted an eyebrow in challenge and cupped Darcy's breast.

Darcy sucked air into her lungs, shocked by the intimacy of the caress.

"You have lovely, small, round breasts—with very, very responsive nipples. I'd do you."

Darcy blushed and pushed Emmy's hand away.

Emmy's expression grew serious. "You're not what I would have expected for Quentin. You're much better."

Desperate to change the subject, Darcy asked, "I take it you haven't been a vampire long?"

"No. Nicky Powell nearly killed me. Dylan had to turn me to save my life."

"Do you..." Darcy chewed on her lip. "...like being a vampire?"

Emmy's face beamed. "It's incredible. Every sensation is more intense. I can see in the dark. Scents are richer, fuller. My hearing is keener. And my lust!" Her laughter sounded like tinkling

bells. “I’m insatiable! Poor Dylan thinks he has to follow me around every where I go, because I want it all the time.”

*Amen!* “I’m not a vampire, but I want it all the time with Quentin,” Darcy admitted.

“So, are you thinking about turning?”

Darcy nodded. “He’s asked me.”

“It’s very dangerous. Think long and hard about it.”

A blush heated her cheeks. “It’s the long and hard part of him that nearly has me convinced!”

The two women giggled.

Emmy gave her a coy smile. “So is Quentin as good as he looks?”

“Better! But he always has to be in charge.”

“Sounds like Dylan. They’re both arrogant bastards, but I’ll tell you a secret. Dylan loves it when I turn the tables on him. A little aggression—and a lot of up close and personal attention to his cock, and he’s putty in my hands.” Emmy picked up the platter. “Let’s go feed these guys. They’re going to need their strength.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Darcy stripped in front of the bathroom mirror. *So, I’m willowy.* She tweaked her nipples until they reddened and stretched to points Quentin couldn’t help but notice.

She rummaged through the cabinet beneath her sink and found a tube of rose-scented cream and squeezed a generous amount onto her palm, then smoothed it over her hips, belly, and thighs. Next she found a tube of lip-gloss, cinnamon-flavored, and slicked her lips with the pink gel. She wanted him to pay special attention to her mouth. Then she searched for the perfume her mother had given her the previous Christmas. *Tuscany*. She pulled the cap off the bottle and inhaled the fragrance—floral, spicy, with a tinge of musk. A couple of squirts on her wrists and she was ready to go.

Pulling open the bathroom door, she found Quentin had already divested the bed of its covers and was sprawled in the center, two pillows behind his head. Both lamps on either side of the bed illuminated his body. He smiled and patted the mattress beside him. He was entirely too smug. This was going to be so much fun.

She sauntered toward the bed to join him.

Quentin’s hot gaze traveled from her face to her breasts and his chest rose. When it slipped lower, Darcy increased the sway of her hips. His cock pulsed against his belly.

She climbed onto the bed from the end, crawling between his outstretched legs until her knee nudged his sac and her hands were planted on either side of his hips.

“Come over me,” he commanded.

Darcy shook her head. Instead, she stared down at his cock for a long moment, and then looked at him from beneath the fan of her eyelashes. “It seems to me, someone’s been neglected.”

“Darcy?” His voice rose in warning.

She leaned down and opened her mouth. Her tongue darted out to lick a path from the base of his shaft to the tip. “I’m in charge this time, *Albermarle*.”

His eyes narrowed and a flush painted his cheeks red.

She scraped a fingernail up the inside of one thigh. “You can’t move. You can’t touch me. If you do, I’ll punish you.” She delivered a slap to his inner thigh near his balls.

His leg flinched and his jaw hardened. His gaze promised retribution. *God, she hoped so.*

She licked his lightly furred thighs, her mouth moving ever closer to his groin. She felt the tension building in his legs. When she reached his smooth sac, she mouthed his balls, smearing the cinnamon-gel over them.

His breath hissed. “It burns.”

She slapped his thighs again. “I’ll just have to lick it off, won’t I?” She sucked first one, then the other ball into her mouth, laving his tender flesh with her tongue. Suctioning gently, she tugged and licked—swirling her tongue, mouthing him with her lips.

His breath grew ragged and his hips lifted, a shallow thrust that reminded her there was so much more to explore. Darcy felt an answering twinge of desire tighten her vagina. One last lap, and she lifted her head. “All better?”

His chest rose and fell rapidly, but he didn’t speak.

Darcy grinned and hoped he was getting nervous. She walked her fingers up his cock and it pulsed. She tapped the engorged head. “Uh huh! Bad boy. Not yet.”

Sliding her body over his groin, she decided to make a detour. When her face was level with his, she widened her legs and placed her knees on either side of his hips. Her open slit centered on his erection, and she rocked to caress it wetly with her labia.

His eyes were open and glaring directly into hers. Darcy leaned down and sucked his lower lip into her mouth. Then she slid her lips over his, smearing the last of the gel. His tongue darted

out and licked her, and then he nudged her face with his nose to push her back. He proceeded to remove every last trace of the gel from her mouth.

“Mmmm,” he groaned appreciatively.

Darcy held herself still over him, savoring the sensations. Her breasts speared his chest, her hips slid her open cunt over his cock, and she felt the rising tide of an orgasm.

She gasped and drew away.

His expression was triumphant as his hands clamped over her ass to hold her to him, pushing and pulling her hips faster, increasing the friction that was quickly building a fire in her loins. He’d turned the tables on her.

Darcy fought for control, but his body rocked beneath her spread legs and pushed his cock harder against her pussy. She shoved against his chest but only succeeded in increasing the pressure at the apex of her thighs. Her orgasm blossomed, taking her breath, tightening her thighs around him.

“Yes, baby. Come for me.”

She shouted, jerking her hips faster, wanting to prolong the fractured ecstasy. Then it passed and her movements slowed. His hands continued to caress her buttocks. Then one slid to her chest and he fondled her breast as her heart slowed its rapid beating.

Darcy drew a deep breath and opened her eyes.

Quentin’s calculating gaze held hers and he pinched her nipple—hard.

“Thanks,” she said, her voice rasping. “I needed that to help me keep control.”

A single eyebrow rose. He twisted her nipple, then scraped his fingernail over the sensitive peak. “Why would you want control?”

“I want you to beg,” she whispered.

“*That* will never happen.”

“Watch me.” She pressed his hands to the pillow beside his head and scooted down his body, pausing to suckle his flat brown nipples until their tiny points rucked.

Her tongue swirled over the hair that covered his abdomen, and she smiled when his muscles tightened. He gasped when the point of her tongue dipped into his belly button and fluttered.

Lower, she slid down his sweat-moistened flesh, licking the soft skin of his belly. She nudged aside his cock with her nose and applied small, sharp bites on his muscled abdomen that caused his penis to jump and pulse.

Cupping his sac with one hand she smoothed her cheek over the length of his shaft. It smelled of her release and his own musk. But she wasn't ready to give him the ultimate kiss. She slid lower and tongued his balls, sweeping below the sac to follow the line to his asshole.

"Sweet Jesus!" he muttered.

Shoving at his legs, she urged him to raise his knees and widen them. Now, he was at her mercy.

She tongued the tight ring and gloried in the sharp hiss of his gasp. She circled his asshole, lapped it with the flat of her tongue, then used the tip to tickle the center.

"Enough Darcy!" She loved the desperate tone in his voice.

"No. Not nearly enough. Have you ever been fucked here, Quentin?"

"No!"

"Then let me be the first."

Quentin started to sweat in earnest. Part of him wanted to wrest control from the vixen, the other part of him was dying to see where her curiosity would lead next. Would she really...

She did! One slender finger pressed inward where none had ever dared enter before. He squeezed his buttocks, resisting, but she was relentless. Finally, he felt the tight ring give and she was inside.

"So tight," she murmured. "I believe you." She swirled her finger and watched his face, no doubt to gauge his reaction.

He fought to school his features into a mask, but she touched something inside him that had his hips jerking off the bed. "Darcy!" he warned. He didn't dare move again, his arse burned already, his balls had tightened to stones, and his dick felt ready to burst. But he couldn't give her this victory.

"Poor baby. You look worried," she said, and rose on her knees, her face poised above his aching rod. "Will you beg me, now?"

Gritting his teeth, he refused to give her his answer, but his body spoke for him. His hips pumped, nudging his wayward little man against her lips.

Her mouth opened and she took the head of his cock into her warm, wet mouth. Her teeth nibbled on the crown—tiny, sharp bites that sent electric shocks throughout his body and he bit back a moan.

God, he needed her to take him into her throat. He pressed upward, trying to gain deeper access.

But she drew back. "Tell me what you want."

Quentin stared at her. Her eyes glittered with triumph. The witch knew how close he was to exploding, but denied him. He closed his eyes and willed his flesh to resist her lure, but he'd already lost. He'd die if she didn't take him now. "Please, Darcy. Suck my cock."

"Oh baby, you've made me so happy. But I don't think you're ready."

His eyes slammed open and he glared.

Her smile promised unimaginable torments and Quentin cursed. With her finger up his arse, he was shackled to her whim.

Her pink tongue lapped a lazy circle around the root of his cock, rising ever higher until she reached the head. He panted, hoping now she'd sink her mouth over him, but she pressed the tip of her wicked tongue into the small opening at the top, coaxing a drop of pre-cum.

She groaned and slid her mouth down his shaft, the sound vibrating on his swollen flesh.

His hips pumped upward, shallow, short thrusts that frustrated him. He craved her warm mouth, needed her deep, wet throat to swallow all of him.

Her free hand encircled him at the base and she scraped her teeth along the rigid pole of his sex.

Silently, he promised revenge. Promised to drive her mad with his tongue and cock. Until she begged for forgiveness for making him to plead. "Darcy, give me release. Take me, baby. Fuck me."

A second slender finger slid inside him and he couldn't hold back his shout. Pain and ecstasy warred. Then she moved her fingers, in and out, while she fluttered her tongue along his raging erection. His cries ripped from the back of his throat. Suddenly, she stopped all movement. He watched her, his body tensing to resist her next assault.

Her expression wasn't gloating as he'd expected. Her cheeks flamed, her chest rose and fell with each ragged breath. She was as seduced by her actions as he was. Her mouth closed over him and she sank on his cock, until his head bumped against the opening of her throat. Then she opened her jaws wider and he sank deeper into her.

He heard a lusty, hoarse shout and then he was driving his hips upward, slamming into her depths. When he came, his cries grew strangled, and finally, his balls exploded and cum spurted into her throat—long, hot streams of liquid fire. When he'd shot his load, he lay there, spent, allowing her to sooth him with her tongue and mouth, her low murmurs gentling his flesh.

He'd get his revenge later on the little witch. After he'd recovered from the greatest orgasm he'd ever experienced.

## CHAPTER TEN

Darcy yawned and stretched easing the pleasant aches in her muscles, only to discover something impeded the movement of her arms. Her eyes shot open. Her wrists were wrapped in pink cotton—her panties, she realized, and they were tied to the headboard.

"Finally, you're awake," Quentin purred. He lay on his side, his head propped on one hand.

He looked like a man who wasn't in any hurry.

And why should he be? she silently grumbled. He'd come, roaring like a freight train, then promptly fell asleep. Darcy had lain at his side, frustrated and hurting for what seemed like hours afterward. She'd had her way with him, but her victory had backfired.

Now her body remembered where she'd left off. Every swollen, achy point throbbed with her heartbeat.

She groaned inwardly. He was going to make her pay. He'd torture her with the sweet, sliding promise of his cock, fingers, and mouth until she begged as loudly as he had.

She winced. Perhaps, she'd taken things a little far. Maybe, he'd accept an apology. "Quentin?"

"Yes, love." His voice was mild—with a hint of amusement.

*Shit! Shit! Shit! What does he want to hear?*

His body stretched beside hers, but not touching. The heat from his skin burned her. His mouth curved only slightly and his gaze never left her face.

His stillness made her nervous as hell.

"You know, everything you're thinking is written on your face, love. It's really quite remarkable."

Darcy wished she could school her features into a careless expression, but all her energies were spent holding her hips still. She clamped her thighs tightly and fought the quiver of arousal that threatened to shake her belly. *Where will he start? With my breasts or my pussy? Oh God, will he take my ass?*

She gave up trying to pretend fearlessness and glared at him. "Will you just get it over with? What do you want me to say? I'll say it." Her voice rose. "Do you want to spank me? I'll take it. Just get it over with, so you can fuck me."

Quentin's smile broadened. "What an imagination you have! Did I leave you in a bad way, sweetheart?"

"Yes!" Now she really would wail. "Touch me, please!" She rolled her hips toward him, pressing her thighs against his.

He settled his hand on her stomach and pushed her back.

"Are you going to leave me, again?" A sick panicked feeling made her stomach boil. "Are you going to make me wait? Because if you are, I'll scream so loud the whole neighborhood will think I'm dying. And I won't be so discriminating about who I beg to help me!"

His gaze narrowed, his eyes glittering dangerously. "I told you. You will not take another lover. Never again. I watched while your partner pounded away at you. I won't share you, again."

She thrilled at the possessive note in his voice. "Then fuck me. Make me yours. I'll be yours as long as you want me."

His hand hovered over one breast, then settled, warm and heavy. "And if I want forever?"

The nerve ending in her nipple fired, shooting a curling desire into her belly. She swallowed past the lump that lodged in her throat. "I'll give it to you."

"You'd give me your life for a fucking?" he asked, his voice casual, but his expression was alert.

She raised an eyebrow. "You are an extraordinary fuck," she purred.

"What makes me special? How can I know you aren't simply saying what I want to hear?"

Could he read her mind? "Baby," she moaned, "I love the way you smell—of the sea and warm musk."

He raised a single eyebrow. He wasn't impressed.

"You only have to look at me and I melt. Your mouth torments me." She writhed and arched her back to raise her breasts. "My tits are so tight and hard, they're begging for your kisses."

"Huh!" he grunted, but molded her breast with his palm.

She raised her knees and let them fall open.

His gaze zeroed in on her moist slit.

"I need your mouth and your huge cock. Take me."

His jaw rippled as he clamped his teeth tightly. "Tell me about my cock." Was his voice hoarse?

“You fill me to bursting. When you’re crammed up inside me so tight I can’t breathe, I don’t ever want to let you go.”

Heat was in his gaze and he flared his nostrils. “There’s the little matter of what you did to me tonight.”

“I’m sorry. I took it too far. I know I did. But you were so wonderfully responsive. I felt powerful and so goddamned turned on. Then you fell asleep...”

“Did I leave you wanting?”

“Yes!”

“Good.” He reached over her and released the knots that bound her wrists.

“That’s it?”

“I find I can’t prolong your punishment. I’m hard as oak and I haven’t had the pleasure of your warm *solace* this evening.”

Darcy opened her arms joyously.

Quentin lowered himself over her, stretching his body, pressing her deep into the mattress from her shoulders to her toes.

“I’m going to fuck you until you shout the roof off the house.” He pushed her hands onto the pillow and nudged her knees apart.

Eager to begin, Darcy wriggled beneath him, wanting her legs free to clasp his hips, but he didn’t allow it.

His cock nudged between her thighs, poking against her soaking slit.

Darcy’s hips widened just far enough so he slipped between her thighs and pressed against her slick folds.

Quentin’s jaw clenched and he drove his hips forward, pushing past her labia, into her channel, all the way inside her until he butted her womb. He released a groan.

Darcy echoed it.

But he didn’t move again. “Well, here we are.”

Darcy waited for the storm to erupt, but he remained still. Her eyes narrowed. She knew he’d conceded too quickly.

She tugged her hands from beneath his and traced the center of his spine, lightly, teasingly.

“Darcy,” he growled, “You’re not going to wrest control from me.”

*Oh yeah? I know your hot buttons, baby.* She dug her nails into his back and scraped them down to the top of his buttocks.

“Witch.” His mouth descended and he circled his lips over hers. She tempted him with her tongue, reaching out to lick his closed lips, stabbing at the seam.

He resisted her invitation.

But she’d just started. Her hands glided lower and she cupped his firm ass, giving him a squeeze.

His cock pulsed, but he didn’t move inside her. He dragged his lips from hers. “Have you no patience? Is it not enough that I’m inside you, filling you? It is for me. You’re cunt is hot and moist, and your lust is fragrant.”

Darcy glared at him. The bastard was going to make her wait. This was almost more diabolical than her last “lesson.” He was there! All the way up her. How could he resist their heat? Her hips longed to squirm and flex, but his weight trapped her movements.

But he’d forgotten about one set of muscles over which he had no control. She tightened her pussy and released, tightened and released.

And her hands were free. She reached until her fingers found the crease of his ass and trailed downward, then pressed his tightly furled anus. Grinning, she said, “Can you resist? Hmmm?” She circled one finger and felt his thighs tremble atop hers.

Leaning upward she bit his lower lip and dragged his mouth down to hers, sucking his lip inside her mouth, while her hands continued their torture below.

Sweat broke out on his face and chest, his arms began to shake, and his dick moved an inch deeper.

With a hoarse cry, he rammed a knee between her legs, shoving her thighs wide and pulled out of her entirely.

Darcy moaned a protest and pressed her finger into his ass.

Holding himself above her on his arms, a deep rumble built in the back of his throat.

Darcy chuckled and poked her finger in and out. The man did love a finger-fuck. “What’s it gonna be, Bat-boy?”

Quentin broke into a full-fledged growl, and Darcy knew she’d won.

He grabbed her and rolled her roughly onto her stomach. Then he pulled her hips up and drove his cock straight into her, cramming himself inside her.

Darcy yelped and rose on her hands—the better to meet his powerful thrusts.

Each forward drive jerked her whole body until she grasped the headboard to brace herself.

It was almost too much—too deep, too hard, too fast. His hands gripped her cheeks and jerked her higher. He rammed forward as far as he could go, grinding himself inside her, lifting and lowering her hips to increase the friction where her pussy met the crisp, wiry hairs at his groin.

Darcy hung onto the bars, her hips jolting, until her orgasm hit—an explosion of sensation that tightened her vagina and seared the breath in her lungs. Quentin was right there with her, his steel rod pistoning against her buttocks faster, his hands squeezing her ass in a bruising grip, and then he released a roar that should have rattled the windows.

As he slowed, Darcy gasped, her breath hitching on a burst of laughter. “I’m going to have to check the shingles on the roof in the morning.”

Quentin collapsed against her back, taking them both to the mattress. “Madam, will you ever let me have the last word?”

\* \* \* \* \*

Quentin stirred three teaspoons of sugar into his tea and ignored the amused smiles from his two companions.

Seated around the kitchen table, the three vampires took turns yawning sleepily.

Emmy stretched her arms above her head and giggled. “Well, I’m going to say it. No Dylan, I know you think it’s impolite to comment, but I swear Quentin shouted loud enough to wake the dead last night.” She ignored Quentin’s scathing glance. “What on earth did she do to you? I think I could use some pointers.”

Quentin remained tight-lipped. His dignity demanded he keep mum. Darcy’s “pointers” were the culprits, after all.

Dylan cleared his throat. “Speaking of your tormentor, where’s Darcy gone off to?”

“She left a note. Said she’d stop by the house after dark and give us the scoop.” He didn’t add that he’d been too caught up in sex-play the evening before to let Darcy tell him the latest developments in the case. It was too bruising to his ego how the woman managed to distract him.

“Quentin...”

Emmy's voice held a tentative note that snagged Quentin's attention from his cup.

"Darcy told me last night that she's thinking of becoming one of us."

"I've asked her to consider it," Quentin admitted.

"It's not a good idea," she said quietly.

"I know the procedure is dangerous, but I have done it before. If she wants it enough, I'll do it for her."

"You mean if she wants you enough," Dylan murmured.

"Well that, too."

"I think you should wait," Emmy whispered, her face reflecting sympathy.

Quentin stared. Something was wrong. "Was your experience so terrible?"

"You know I didn't have a choice, but no, it was less frightening than the alternative. But that's not why I'm asking you to wait."

A sick feeling of dread descended on him. "Well then, out with it, Emmy."

"You can't turn Darcy. She's pregnant."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was early evening and the sun still winked on the edge of the horizon. At the gate guard's direction Captain Springer, Max, and Darcy exited their unmarked squad car.

"I have to take your weapons," he said, his expression unapologetic. "Mr. King's orders."

At the Captain's nod, Darcy reached beneath her jacket for the Beretta holstered at the small of her back and handed it to the guard. Max pulled a gun from his ankle holster, but the Captain merely shrugged. "I knew he'd shake us down."

They were instructed to leave their car inside the gate and walk to the front door. The house was split-level and long. The grounds were lush with vegetation. A flagstone path led to the front door where another guard held the door open for them to pass. "Go straight back to Mr. King's office."

The interior of the house was more impressive than the exterior, if the long corridor they traversed was any indication of the rest of the house. Dark wood floors, white stucco walls and high ceilings were enhanced by a large heavy oak armoire and high-backed leather chairs. At the end of the corridor was an open door.

“Drugs sure pay good,” Max said beneath his breath, halting in front of a large display case filled with baseball memorabilia. “Damn, he’s got a signed Sosa game ball.”

Darcy gave him a gentle shove to keep him moving toward Rupe King’s office. As they neared the door, a large man with the shoulders of a linebacker held it for them, indicating they should pass. After they filed in, he stepped out and closed the door behind him. Darcy had no doubts he would remain just outside the door in case Mr. King needed him, and the bulge she’d detected beneath his vanilla-colored suit jacket had certainly been a gun.

“Come in, come in,” a low, melodic voice, with a hint of Jamaican accent beckoned them inside.

Darcy turned to see a tall, thin man wearing a long-sleeved linen shirt rising from behind his desk. His hair was close-cropped, his face a dark ebony, his mouth wide, and his dark brown eyes were wary.

“Mr. King?” the Captain asked.

“Indeed.” His gaze swept over the three resting on Darcy. “You and your people may take a seat here.” He indicated a brightly upholstered couch and two armchairs before a large picture window that looked out into the tall pines in the back yard.

Her two associates took the armchairs, which left Darcy sitting on the sofa with Rupe King.

There was a long silence, and then Captain Springer cleared his throat. “Mr. King, you contacted our department regarding a man who approached with a business proposition.”

Rupe King’s lip curled in a sneer. “A vampire! A goddamn vampire wants a share in my operation. I’d as soon fuck with the devil himself.”

“This particular vampire is of interest to us. He’s responsible for numerous deaths of young people here and in Seattle, where his string of murders originated.”

“His name be Nicolas Powell,” Rupe all but spat the name. “And I too have particular interest in this vampire.”

The Captain’s expression became intent. “I understand you recently lost your brother.”

“Yes. One of Nicky’s minions devoured him before his companions’ eyes.” Rupe King’s eyes held a bitter rage. “I will see my brother avenged, whatever the cost.”

“We’ve had one confrontation with him a couple of nights ago. We took out his followers, but Nicky gave us the slip. He’s wary of us now. We need a way to set a trap for him.”

The Jamaican’s eyes glittered with interest. “I must admit that while I have a well-trained staff, I do not feel they are adequate for this challenge.”

Captain Springer's chin lifted toward Darcy and Max. "My unit's been hunting killers like these for four years. We have the experience."

Rupe King gave Darcy an assessing glance.

Darcy kept her expression impassive.

"Will I be left alone, if I help you get him?" the wily drug lord asked.

"For the duration of the op, yes."

Rupe King relaxed against the sofa. "I will sacrifice a shipment. It arrives tonight. Two of my trusted men will be aboard the boat to act as the deliverymen—they must be mine or he will smell a double-cross."

Captain Springer nodded. "Just tell me the dock. Also, I have a vampire of my own who will help with the sting. No harm must come to him."

"Three actually," Darcy murmured. "Two more came in from Seattle last night to help. Friends of Quentin's."

Captain Springer shot her a startled glance, then quickly recovered. "The three who work for me will not be harmed."

Rupe King did not look pleased. Obviously to him, the only good vampire was a dead one.

Only a week ago, Darcy would have agreed.

"So be it," he said with a nod.

While Rupe and the Captain finalized the details, Darcy's tension grew. Things were heating up fast. Tonight they'd trap a killer and Quentin's mission would be over. And she still had a choice to make. Leave the life she'd built for herself, or join with Quentin as his companion of the night.

On one hand, she had a career. And she'd worked damn hard to be accepted by the guys, even earning a good measure of their respect for her fighting skills and dead aim. Although of late she'd taken hits due to her liaison with the vamp, she took great pride in what she had accomplished.

On the other hand, outside of her work she had no life—and no one to share what she had built.

Quentin offered her an eternity of companionship and love—oh, and mind-blowing sex. Although he drove her nuts with his insistence that he be the master of their relationship, she

relished the challenge of shaking him up. Last night's victory still had her grinning. If only inwardly.

"You will not see me, again." Rupe King's voice drew her attention back. "My operation has been compromised by this business. Gentlemen, and lady, I wish you good luck this evening." He rose signaling the end of their interview.

As she passed Captain Springer, he captured her elbow and ushered her out of the room. When they were out of earshot of King and his associates, he leaned toward her. "Do you think you'll be able to keep your mind on the operation, or do I need to replace you on this mission?"

Darcy's cheeks flamed. "I'm in, sir. I won't let you down."

"When we get to the car, you'll have to tell me how we acquired two new team members," he said, his voice huffy.

Darcy gulped, he really was pissed. Quentin was a distraction she could ill afford in her line of work. After tonight, whichever way she chose, she wouldn't endanger others by her inattention.

The three retrieved their weapons at the gatehouse and headed away from the drug lord's estate.

Darcy sat in the back seat aware of Max's accusing glare in the rearview mirror. He continued to disapprove of her actions and it hurt her more than she was willing to admit. Max needed to get over it.

Darcy ignored him, and instead, filled the Captain in on what she knew about Emmy and Dylan, which was embarrassingly little considering the two knew a whole lot about her—like what she sounded like when she came and the exact shade of pink her nipples were.

"We'll head straight to Darcy's, Max. The team will be gathering. Is the van loaded up?"

"Yes, Captain," Max replied.

"Well, let's go nail this devil!"

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Quentin sat quietly while the team entered Darcy's home. He noted that Emmy took care of the introductions and proceeded to charm the pants off the hard-nosed bunch.

Dressed in her version of night camouflage—a wrap-around black T-shirt that exposed her deep cleavage and black jeans that hugged her fleshy derriere—Emmy drew every male eye in the room. No one seemed immune to her artless charm.

No one, that is, except Max Weir. The muscle-bound man watched her with a cynical eye. While he appeared resigned that the three vamps were part of this operation, Quentin doubted Max would ever let go of his deep-seated prejudice.

As had become the team's habit, they brought food to share among the group while they reviewed what they had learned. Emmy's plate was piled high with tidbits from every dish that was lined up on the table. The woman had an appetite.

Quentin's had disappeared. He felt like he was watching the group from a great distance. Since Emmy had made her announcement, he'd been reeling. Darcy was pregnant! And the child could only be Joe's. That fact ate at his gut. A child was the one thing Quentin could never give Darcy.

"Could you be wrong?" he'd asked Emmy after her bald statement.

She'd shaken her head. "I can sense the difference. Smell the blood gathering in her womb."

"Couldn't she be menstruating?"

"This feels different."

"Well that's definitive. It 'feels' different," he'd said, knowing he sounded snide and small. "Isn't it too soon for you to say? It's only been a few days, since..."

"Darcy's body is already changing, Quentin."

Why hadn't he noticed? Of course, the scent of her skin and hair, and yes, her arousal, tended to overwhelm his senses whenever she was near.

A child certainly changed everything. No vamp—at least none with a conscience—would turn a pregnant woman. The results were too horrific.

Thank God, Em had noticed.

"Quentin, you aren't eating," Emmy said, taking a seat beside him. "You really should try these meatballs. Phil's wife, Bets, made them. They're barely cooked—in our honor. Wasn't that sweet?" She used a toothpick to spear one of the sauce-covered balls and popped it into her mouth. She held up another and offered it to him.

Rather than let her see how morose his thoughts had turned, he opened his mouth and accepted the offering. If Emmy sensed he was disturbed, she'd never leave him to stew in his own thoughts.

The door opened suddenly and Captain Springer strode inside, followed closely by Darcy. Quentin wondered why the Captain had detained her. The Captain's broad face held a look of determination that hardened his square jaw.

Quentin's gaze followed Darcy into the room, then fell to her flat tummy. *Damn!* Something hitched in his chest. Something he didn't want to put into words.

His desire to make her his mate for eternity was slipping through his fingers. She'd been ideal—with a passion strong enough to match his. For the first time in his undead life he'd been ready to commit to one woman.

The right thing to do would be to give her up. Now.

But despite her pregnancy, he couldn't bear the thought of letting her go.

Darcy offered him a tight smile and waited for Emmy to scoot down the couch. Then she slid onto the couch beside him—so close his thigh heated with the contact.

"Listen up," Captain Springer called for their attention. "It's going down tonight. Rupe King's boat is coming in with a shipment of coke. When Nicky meets it at the dock, he'll get a little more than he bargained for."

Having been filled in on Rupe King's role in the bust by Max, Quentin listened as the Captain issued instructions to the team.

"I'd like to extend a welcome to Dylan and Emmy O'Hara." The Captain nodded to the couple, then glared at Darcy. "I'd appreciate your input as this goes down, but this is my operation. My team is trained and I wouldn't like either of you to be hurt in the crossfire."

Dylan nodded his understanding. "We'll be standing by to assist."

Unexpectedly, Darcy's hand settled on his thigh and Quentin covered it with his own, giving her a squeeze. No one seemed to notice as all eyes were on the Captain.

"We'll go in with Kevlar, crossbows, and assault rifles. The Vero Beach PD have already cleared the dock of civilians." The Captain paused and his gaze swept each of his team. "It goes without saying that we're going to take out every one of Nicky's gang. Give no quarter!"

The team came to their feet and filed out the door. Quentin caught Darcy's hand when she rose to follow.

Her glance was questioning.

"Perhaps, you should sit this one out, love," he suggested quietly.

A frown furrowed her forehead. "Not now, Quentin. You can't wrap me in cotton wool. I'm part of this team and this is our biggest operation to date. This is my job."

Quentin knew she'd refuse. He should just tell her. Or better yet, tie her to her iron bed and let her rage at him.

She tugged her hand from his, and Quentin sighed and stood up to follow. He hadn't the right to come between her and her ambitions. But tonight, he'd stick close to her shapely ass and make sure she didn't run into trouble.

This would be her last dangerous assignment for a while. He'd tell her why later.

\* \* \* \* \*

The radio crackled in Darcy's ear. "Nicky and his crew just pulled into the marina," the Captain said from the command post—the team's van in the parking area. "Remember, we'll wait to strike until he brings his men in to move the cargo."

*Thank God!* She'd been afraid she would disgrace herself. The wait had been interminable. The storm that threatened to break over their heads had whipped up waves in the inlet, setting all the boats tied to the dock bobbing in the water. Her stomach pitched right along with them.

"I'm gonna barf if this doesn't go down soon," Phil moaned.

Soft chuckles sounded from seven mikes. Darcy commiserated with Phil. Glad she hadn't eaten any dinner, she kept silent beside Quentin, nausea roiling in her belly and clammy perspiration breaking on her forehead. This was one stakeout she'd be happy to see the end of.

"Too many of Bets' meatballs, Phil?" Emmy broke in, her voice full of sympathy.

"God, don't mention it," he groaned.

Above the sound of the gathering wind, footsteps echoed hollowly on the wooden planks of the dock. Quentin crouched so close behind her she felt his body grow rigid. It felt right to have him watching her back even though she still missed Joe. They'd taken up a position on the cabin cruiser tied next to Rupe King's. Hunkered down behind the gunwale of the boat, they listened tensely for the order to move in for the kill.

Quentin had stuck to her like glue all evening. It was annoying, but sweet, how protective he was of her. And totally unnecessary. When things turned ugly—and they would—she'd be moving fast. She didn't want to trip over him.

The rumble of voices sounded in the next boat, but they were too low to make out their words. There was a sudden burst of laughter and a door opened, spilling light from the cabin onto the dock.

Darcy rose up to peek over the rail, but Quentin's heavy hand pushed her down. She turned to glare at him. "What do you think you're doing?" she whispered angrily.

"Shhh." He lifted his chin in the direction of the other boat.

Darcy saw one of Nicky's boys on the bow with a radio next to his ear. "Tell them it's clear," the teen said.

Ignoring Darcy's glower, Quentin whispered into his headset, "Get ready. Nicky's given the all clear. The others will be closing on the boat."

"Roger that," Max replied quietly. "No one moves until I give the signal."

With the team in position on neighboring boats and inside cars in the marina, the gang would be encircled in moments.

Darcy held her breath. Once the noose tightened, Nicky would react like a trapped animal. She'd seen the mayhem he was capable of when he held all the cards, now she'd get a glimpse of a monster in full rage.

The heavy tread of half a dozen of Nicky's "soldiers" echoed dully in the night. Darcy hugged her crossbow to her chest and concentrated on the sound of her breaths to make her racing heart slow its pace and give her thoughts focus.

Slower, calmer, centered. She drew on her inner reserve of peace, visualizing the team's victory.

She was ready.

"Get cocked," the Captain said.

Darcy rose on her knees, lifted her bow, and sighted down the shaft of her arrow, and then rose a fraction higher to point it over the railing. In the dim light provided by the lamps strung from boat slip to boat slip, Darcy couldn't sight on Nicky.

"I don't see Nicky," she whispered.

"Must still be in the cabin," Max replied. "Take out the men on the dock you can see when I give the order."

With the deck of the boat pitching beneath her knees, Darcy struggled for balance. "I'll take the first in line."

"I've got the second target," Max replied.

Once the team had selected their marks, the airwave was silent. The only sounds coming from boats nudging their slips and booted feet on wood.

Suddenly, one of Nicky's men lifted his nose into the wind.

"Now!" Max shouted.

Darcy pulled back on her trigger, letting her arrow fly. Her first target staggered, and then disintegrated. When she reached for her next arrow, Quentin leapt over the gunwale and landed on the narrow walkway between the two boats.

The rapid tattoo of gunfire erupted and her team members shouted in their mikes as they took cover.

Cursing beneath her breath, Darcy quickly pulled back her bowstring, latched it in the spring clip, and slid the arrow along the track. Armed, she slid over the gunwale, intent on following Quentin.

From all along the dock came the sounds of the ensuing battle. Curses, and the sharp staccato of machine fire ripped through the night.

“How many?” Max’s voice demanded.

“I counted nine,” the Captain said, his voice sounding raspy as he ran along the dock to join the fight.

“That means six to go.” Max grunted, and then roared. The sounds of fists meeting flesh filled Darcy’s headset.

“Emmy, get back to the van!”

“Dylan, I have a stake in this too. You’re not leaving me behind.”

“God dammit to hell!”

As she crept aboard the drug lord’s cruiser, Darcy ignored the voices in her ear and the flashes of gunfire that burst brilliantly around her. Getting Nicky was her sole focus. Oh, and saving Quentin’s butt. They were partners now. He shouldn’t have proceeded without her.

She climbed up the gangway and slipped over the side, making her way toward the steps leading down into the cabin. The lights had been doused, but she sensed movement inside. Careful not to make any noise, she inched her way toward the shadowed compartment.

“Well, if it isn’t GI Jane.” The voice came from behind her and she stiffened, her heart lurching in her chest. “I’d recognize your sweet scent anywhere.”

The team went instantly, eerily, silent. With her heart picking up its pace, she slowly turned to face Nicky Powell, her bow raised level with her chest. All she could think was where the hell was Quentin?

Quentin watched from the shadow of the cockpit, his hand tightening around the puny stake he held. Nicky had a gun pointed at Darcy. Quentin didn’t dare make a move or he might distract her.

Nicky took a step toward her.

“Don’t come any closer,” she warned.

He sniffed the air. “I smell Quentin. He’s been all over you, hasn’t he?” His smile sent a shiver down Quentin’s back.

“You’re surrounded,” Darcy said, her voice steady. “You may as well lay down your weapon. You aren’t stepping off this boat.”

Quentin’s chest filled with pride at her courage.

“But I have you, therefore I have the advantage.”

A soft click and the blur of her arrow flying toward Nicky’s chest happened so quickly, Quentin didn’t have time to react.

The arrow sank only to its tip.

Nicky’s laughter, soft and ominous rang in the air. “Do you think you’re the only ones who own flak jackets?” He plucked the arrow from his shirt. “Let’s stop wasting time. Come here.” He waved her closer with his gun.

Quentin watched Darcy’s face and knew the exact moment she’d decided not to cooperate. She drew a deep breath and her hands clenched at her sides. He started to rise from his hiding place when she took a step toward Nicky. Suddenly, she fainted to the side.

The roar of Nicky’s gun spurred Quentin from his hiding place. From the corner of his eye he saw Darcy pitch forward and over the side of the boat, her body splashing softly in the water below. He roared and launched himself at Nicky, desperate to get to Darcy.

He raised his stake and Nicky fired again, striking Quentin in the abdomen. He dropped the stake, but the bullet didn’t slow his advance. His charge carried him into Nicky and down onto the bow of the cruiser. His progeny roared, his face transforming and pulling Quentin into his bloodlust.

Quentin’s body and face expanded and he flung back his head with a roar of fury. He rolled with Nicky, fighting to keep his “son” beneath him. He spotted a coil of rope and reached out his hand to close around it.

Nicky pounded at Quentin’s sides with his fists, but Quentin was undeterred. He grasped the rope in both hands and wound it once around his opponent’s throat.

Nicky’s eyes bulged as the noose tightened. His mouth gaped and his body bucked in powerful surges, trying to unseat Quentin, but Quentin pulled tighter until the nylon cut into the other vamp’s throat.

With adrenaline surging through his veins, Quentin snapped the rope, severing Nicky's head from his shoulders.

When the din of his bloodlust quieted in his head, he heard the shouts of the team and Dylan as they ran toward him. He lurched toward the side of the boat and jumped into the water. As he entered it, he heard splashes all around him and bright lights shown into the murky depths.

He swam deep to the bottom of the inlet, but he didn't see her. His heart breaking, he reached into the silt and waving fronds of seagrass, searching for the place her body had settled. How long had it been? *Please God, I have to find her.*

His lungs burning from the lack of air, he refused to return to the surface. Every moment was precious. His hands sank below the swirling green seaweed as he swam along the bottom.

Then he saw a pale oval glimmering among the fronds. He reached and snagged Darcy's braid, pulling her into his arms. He swam for the surface, his lungs nearly bursting, praying he wasn't too late.

When he surfaced, many hands reached for his burden. Although reluctant to let her go, he lifted her body gently into their waiting arms, then heaved himself onto the planks beside them.

Max made quick work of removing her Kevlar jacket and her T-shirt. Then he placed two fingers to the side of her throat. "Her heart isn't beating."

A raw, burning sensation tightened Quentin's throat. With every fiber of his being, he fought the need to push everyone aside and gather her close to him and howl. Darcy couldn't be gone. Eternity without her was unthinkable.

His breath sounding harsh in his ears, he watched Max press his clasped hands against her chest. Captain Springer knelt beside her head and lowered his mouth to hers, breathing into her lungs. Dylan pressed her T-shirt against the furrowed wound high on her shoulder that seeped slowly with her blood.

An arm settled around his shoulders and Quentin looked up into Emmy's misty face. Then he realized he was crying. She kissed his cheek and hugged him tightly to her breasts. His arms slipped around her while his eyes burned, watching the men work over Darcy's still form.

"Breathe dammit," he whispered, willing her to live. If only, he'd moved more quickly, he could have taken the bullet for her.

The men continued to work and Quentin's dread grew. He was responsible for this. He had made Nicky. God damn his soul.

Max stopped the compressions and checked her pulse again.

Quentin saw a flutter of an eyelid. “Wait,” he said, his breath catching. *Please don’t let me have imagined it.*

Darcy’s body convulsed and water bubbled from her mouth. Max rolled her to her side and she choked, vomiting water. Her eyes remained closed and the group waited to see whether she’d recover.

Slowly, her hand fisted and she coughed. Her eyes opened and she stared straight at Quentin.

Quentin didn’t care that everyone saw the tears that streaked down his cheeks. He crawled toward her and reached out his hand to cup her cheek. “Don’t you ever give me another scare like that,” he said, not recognizing the sound of his voice, it was so clogged with emotion.

Darcy’s hand settled over his. “What? You think I planned to suck down the entire Atlantic?” She coughed again, the sound rattling harsh inside her chest.

“Let’s get this one to a hospital,” the Captain said.

Darcy’s eyes sought Quentin’s. “Nicky?”

“He’s dead,” he said flatly.

“As are the rest of his minions,” Max said.

Darcy settled back against the wooden planks, her eyes closing. “So tired.”

Quentin gathered her into his arms and lurched to his feet. “Sleep, baby. I’ve got you now.”

She sighed and pressed a kiss to his throat.

Quentin held her to close to his heart as he followed the Captain toward the waiting van. He’d never let her go.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

Darcy followed the sound of soft laughter into her kitchen on wobbly legs, rubbing her sore, itchy shoulder. As she pushed the door open, three sets of vampires’ eyes swung guiltily toward her.

Suspicion aroused, her gaze darted around the kitchen but didn’t land on anything that would inspire the uncomfortable silence—except an open package of calves’ liver. Quentin shoved something on the counter behind his back and leaned indolently against the counter.

Darcy's eyes narrowed and she reached around him. She pulled out a cold container of her favorite ice cream, Cookies N' Cream. She lifted an eyebrow, but Quentin simply pulled a laden spoon from behind his back and slipped it between his lips.

Emmy snickered. "So you're up at last? Should you be out of bed?"

Darcy frowned at her attempt to change the subject. Something was up. "What's going on here?"

"We were just discussing the merits of organ meat," Dylan said, then quickly pressed his lips together.

Emmy jammed him in the belly with her elbow and smiled brightly. "And Quentin's odd cravings."

"Emmy!" Quentin's narrowed gaze looked just plain mean.

"I think we'd better leave these two alone, darling." Dylan grabbed Emmy's elbow and herded her out of the kitchen.

"Sweetheart, how are you feeling?" Quentin asked—too quickly.

*Tired of everyone changing the subject and talking in riddles.* Darcy crossed her arms over her chest. "Everyone has been treating me with kid gloves."

"You were injured, love. Everyone's been worried about you. Even Captain Springer and the team make it a point to stop in every day."

"And talking in whispers when they think I'm sleeping."

"Right. I suppose you've been wondering about that." Quentin straightened away from the counter.

Darcy's breath hitched. This was the first time she'd stood next to him since being shot, and she'd forgotten how tall he was. Even unconsciously, he was able to distract her. "Mmmm-hmm."

"Well, we felt it was for the best."

Ignoring the sensual awareness that made her skin tingle, she drummed her fingers on her arm.

"We didn't want to impede your recovery."

Impatient now for him to get to the point, she blurted, "Out with it."

"Alright," he said, blowing out his breath. "But first, let's go sit down. You're looking a little flushed."

She let him lead her into the empty living room and settle her on the sofa, fussing unnecessarily with the pillows until he was satisfied of her comfort. He'd been this way all week—ever since she'd been released from the hospital. Solicitous. Kind. Distant.

"Have you changed your mind?" she asked quietly, not seeing any need to draw this conversation out. The suspense was already killing her.

He squatted on his haunches in front of her. "Changed my mind?"

"About turning me."

His gaze slipped from hers and Darcy felt her heart squeeze tightly.

"I suppose you're eager to leave now," she said, although the words seemed to stick in her throat—behind the lump that threatened to choke her.

"Leave?"

"With the investigation over, I thought you'd be itching to get back to Seattle."

"It rather depends," he said quietly.

She knew her heart was in her eyes, but she couldn't help the hope she knew was reflected in her expression. Her emotions were too raw to conceal. "What does it depend on?"

"On you."

She swallowed. "You don't want to turn me, do you?"

"Not now."

"Because it's dangerous?"

"Because it wouldn't be right."

Shaking her head to clear her confusion, she said, "I don't understand."

"Love, you're going to have a baby." His expression was stark, his jaw tight.

"What?" Of all the reasons, that would have been last on her list. Pregnant? How—"Oh." *Joe.* *Oh God.* "Everyone knows?"

"Yes, love."

"But the hospital—"

"Captain Springer told them I was your fiancé. I asked them to let me tell you."

“My mother?”

He nodded.

“But I’ve spoken to her on the phone every day.” *My own mother kept a secret like that?*

“She thinks the child is mine. She’d have been on the first plane here if she hadn’t caught the flu.”

She inhaled a ragged breath. “Joe?”

“He hasn’t called in. And I thought you’d want to be the one to tell him.” Quentin reached to pull away the pillow she clutched between nerveless fingers, and then closed his large hands around hers, warming them. “You don’t have to make any decisions now. You have a lot to think about. And there are some things I want to tell you.”

Her eyes pooled with tears, but she nodded. *Are you going to tell me it’s over? That you can’t love a woman with a child? Because I won’t give it up.*

“I never told you how it was I came to be...what I am.” He squeezed her hands, and his gaze held hers. “I was a spoiled, reckless young man. I left England in search of adventure because I suffered from boredom. I’d never experienced a grand passion for anything.” He lifted his shoulders and shrugged sheepishly. “Except sex, that is.”

A little smile curved her mouth. This she could well imagine. He was describing the Quentin she’d first met.

“I never loved anything or anyone. I was a younger son, so my family was only too glad when I headed to the Caribbean.” He smiled crookedly. “My behavior was causing a bit of a scandal, you see.

“Anyway, in the Caymans I met a dark, honey-skinned woman. Her appetite matched mine and she taught me things—wicked, sexy things that bound me to her. I craved what she meted out. Even believed I was falling in love with her.”

Darcy knew where this was headed. “She was a vampire.”

“Yes. We spent weeks in her cottage next to the beach, and I never once questioned her aversion to the sunlight or odd cravings for raw flesh. Her brand of sexual sorcery enslaved me for a time. I pleased her, and she gave me the one ‘reward’ that was in her power to give.”

“Eternal life,” Darcy whispered.

“Yes. Only once I’d changed, I recognized her dark seduction and she ceased to hold power over me. And I was damned to walk the Earth at night—forever seeking relief from my never-ending boredom.”

Tears finally slipped down her face. “And now?”

“I tried to tie you to me in the exact same way that witch did to me. With my own brand of dark seduction.”

“Because you were bored and you could?” She had to know what was really in his heart, however much it hurt.

“Because I love you, and I don’t ever want to let you go.”

Darcy closed her eyes and breathed a sigh of relief. When she opened them, his worried expression prompted her to ask, “What do you fear?”

“That one day you’ll wake up and discover I’ve bound you with desire.”

“Would that be so bad?”

“It is, if there isn’t true love in your heart, as well,” he replied, his voice thick with emotion.

Darcy pulled her hands from under his and reached to cradle his face between her palms, her heart bursting. “I love you, Quentin. For however long I live, I will always love you.”

Quentin’s eyes squeezed shut. “And I will love you for all my life.”

Darcy’s heart raced and her hands smoothed over his broad shoulders. “Love me, Quentin.”

“I do,” he breathed.

“No, *love* me.”

His eyes popped open. “I see. Your shoulder?”

“Aches like the devil, but I have a deeper ache somewhere else.”

“I think I have just the cure,” he purred.

“*Hurry.*”

Quentin stood, swept her into his arms, and walked briskly to their bedroom. There he laid her on her pink-flowered sheets and swiftly, gently, removed her clothing, and then tore his own from his body.

Darcy grinned. “A little anxious, are we?”

“We have suffered an entire week of purgatory, madam.”

“Poor baby. Is that why you slept on your side of the bed?”

He stalked toward the bed, his expression intent, his gaze locked on her open, welcoming cunt. "I was afraid I'd hurt you if I so much as touched your soft skin. I've been going mad."

"Come to me," she said, opening her arms.

He stretched his body over hers, braced on his arms, careful not to jostle her shoulder. "I don't know if I can be gentle," he whispered.

"Fuck me, Quentin," Darcy moaned.

"Oh love, invite me into your solace." He nudged her portal with the smooth, broad head of his cock.

Darcy's body glazed the tip with her creamy invitation.

He entered her with a single, endless glide, and then held himself still.

Darcy closed her arms and legs around him and held him tight. "No one will ever fill my body or my heart like you do." She circled her hips on his cock, screwing them both to distraction.

"*Christ*, you're not making this any easier for me." He moved then, flexing his hips to drive into her, surging, pushing her up the bed with each hard stroke.

All her love poured from her body, bathing his cock with welcome.

Quentin groaned and leaned down to take her lips in a searing kiss, eating her mouth. "I won't ever let you go. You're *mine*." His hips moved faster, his thrusts grew sharper. His face tightened, but didn't transform.

Even in the throes of passion, he protected her.

"Please, please. Harder. Oh come deeper!" Darcy clawed his back, pumping her hips against his, seeking the sweet release his body promised.

Quentin reared back on his haunches, hooked his arms beneath her knees and drove deep, pounding relentlessly into her, lifting her hips from the bed with his powerful thrusts.

"Yes!" she cried out, and writhed beneath him, her channel convulsing around his shaft.

Quentin shouted and his hot, liquid release poured into her.

As the last spasms of her orgasm milked him, Darcy reached for him again. "Hold me."

He covered her, once again holding his weight above her on his elbows. He rested his forehead on hers, while he gasped for breath.

Darcy soothed him with her hands, caressing his moist, sweaty back. “Will it always be like this for us?”

“Always. I promise.”

“Even when I grow older?”

He lifted his head and searched her gaze. “I’ll love you when you’re old and wrinkled and frail. And I’ll always think you’re the most beautiful woman I’ve ever held.”

Darcy sighed and settled her hands in the small of his back. “I have a child to rear. School and PTA meetings. I’ll need to be with him during the day until he’s old enough not to need me.”

“Do you think my love is so shallow, I won’t wait?”

“I’ll grow older, my body will change.” She wrinkled her nose, trying to inject a little levity into the most important conversation they would ever have. “My boobs will droop. People will wonder what a handsome thing like you is doing with a soccer mom.”

Quentin’s hand caressed her breast tenderly. “These little gems will remain perky into your dotage, madam.”

Her heart twisted. She had to tell him. “I may choose never to turn. What if I want to grow old and be a grandmother?”

Quentin’s eyes misted. “I’ll hold you every night and love you gently until the day you die, and then I’ll watch over our child and *her* children. I won’t ever stop loving you.”

Tears streaked down the side of her face and she sobbed, clutching at his shoulders. When the storm passed, she sniffed and gave little laugh. “Look at us, blubbing like babies.”

He smiled tenderly and smoothed the tears from her cheeks with his fingertips.

“You know, I have the oddest craving for Cookies N’ Cream.”

Quentin closed his eyes, a look of intense euphoria on his face. “Yes, with liver chasers.”

Darcy’s face stretched into a grin. “Was that what you were hiding in the kitchen? Sympathy cravings?”

His frown didn’t dim her mirth. “It’s not funny. I’m afraid what other indignities the next nine months will hold.”

Darcy laughed. “I can see you in the emergency room. We’ll need two cots.”

His expression held horror. “Do you think so? Bugger me!”

She grew serious again. “What about Joe?” she asked. “Can you share our child with him?”

“I’m resigned that he’ll be a part of our lives, if he wants it. But I will not share a wife.”

Afraid she might start crying again, she said, “Are you asking me to marry you?”

“No. I’m telling you what will be.”

“I like it when you get all mastery.”

His eyebrow rose, and the smirk she loved tipped the corners of his mouth. “Oh, I can give you mastery, love. Shall I show you?” He leaned over her.

Her palm against his shoulder, she held him back. “One more question first.”

He waited, his expression alert.

“Will our son be born in Vero or in Seattle?”

The smirk deepened. “Seeing as we both work for the SU, I think that question is already answered.”

“You and Captain Springer have been doing a lot of talking while I was out.”

“We’re like this,” he said, crossing his fingers. “Besides, did I ever tell you how much I detest the cold?”

“Some members of the team won’t be very happy about a vampire joining the team permanently.”

“Three vampires, love. And Max will just have to get over it.”

“Three?”

“Emmy’s determined to be a doting aunt. And Dylan and I have a mind to institute a governing council of vampires to help keep the peace.”

“So I’m marrying a politician?”

“You’re marrying a Master. Think you can handle it?”

Her hand crept around his cock. “I already am.”