



MARK ALDERS

TIME OF THE SOUL

PEMBROKE EVE CHRONICLES

Time of the Soul continues the adventure a month after the events of Light of the Body.

This time the townsfolk are celebrating the Spring Dance. An event that will hopefully kick away the worries of past incidents in the town. Although, even an occasion such as the Spring Dance can't remain uneventful for long, especially because this is Pembroke Eve, after all.

Unfortunately, for Jacob things are about to get really weird as a pan-dimensional being whisks him away just as Corey Harrington decides to make a scene at the dance and start throwing punches. The being, who also happens to fall in love with Jacob, shows him a different past, a possible present and a future he must choose. But the consequences of the being's love is more than Jacob can handle or allow to happen. He will lose all of his friends and a life he thought he had if he accepts the being.

Something he knows cannot possibly happen.

Jacob is alone, without Callum or Zane or Suzy this time. Even Mr. Barnaby and his strange friend can't really help in the alternate reality the being has created to woo Jacob into his web. In the end, Jacob must resort to making a deal with the devil—his arch enemy Corey Harrington—and use all of his wits to make sure his life is as it should be before the being discovers his plan and decides that Jacob no longer deserves his affection...or his life.

The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this copyrighted work is illegal. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is investigated by the FBI and is punishable by up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000.

Please purchase only authorized electronic editions, and do not participate in or encourage the electronic piracy of copyrighted materials. Your support of the author's rights is appreciated.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events or locales or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

Time of the Soul
Copyright © 2010 Mark Alders
ISBN: 978-1-55487-579-5
Cover art by Angela Waters

All rights reserved. Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilization of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, is forbidden without the written permission of the publisher.

Published by eXtasy Books
Look for us online at:
www.extasybooks.com

Time of the Soul

The Pembroke Eve Chronicles Book 3

By

Mark Alders

Dedication

For my family

Chapter One

Tonight was the Spring Dance.

A night I'd been looking forward to for about a few months, believe it or not. I mean, before recent events I wasn't interested. Now things were different. I was the saviour of the town, not once but twice. Me, Jacob Theison. Then again, I couldn't have done any of it, getting rid of the aliens or fighting off insectmen, without my friends.

As I thought about them, I sipped my cocktail. The drink was a concoction of strawberry and watermelon laced with so much alcohol my nostrils warned me of its strength well before my lips touched the rim of the glass. Still, it tasted nice, if a little sweet for my liking.

Watching everyone around me enjoy themselves was a pleasure. There was so much laughter, chatter and genuine affection between people who had been through so much lately, I really did feel as though I were a part of them and this town.

Many of the folk had asked me to dance numerous times. I wasn't a wallflower, not by any stretch of the imagination, but I was content to look on, watch the festivities unravel before my eyes. Although, I have to say, my gaze always drew back to two people in particular.

I attended the dance with Callum and Zane, the objects of my attention, my boyfriends. They looked so handsome dressed up in black tie, cummerbunds and corsages that I wanted to get them out of their suits and ravish them all night in a tangle of naked flesh. I had to wait for that. Unfortunately.

Also, my dearest friends, Suzy and Mr. Barnaby came, too, although not together. Suzy had a new boyfriend, much to Zane's disgust. Evan was his name.

When I learned Aloysius couldn't attend, something about him being a dragon and the sight of him upsetting a few people, I wasn't surprised. Mr. Barnaby insisted he stay at home and watch the shop. Aloysius guarded it well. Not even a mouse or spider or bug dared venture into the storeroom.

There was a sign below the traditional Spring Dance banner. On it read, *Jacob Theison, hero of Pembroke Eve and our guest of honour*. Stuff like that can mess with your head. As I said, I couldn't have done any of what I did without Zane and

Callum or Suzy and Mr. Barnaby. We were a team and I hoped we'd be so forever, too.

I took another sip. I suppose I convinced myself I had to attend the dance despite the way I had felt about it in the past. I was a celebrity, after all. I don't mean that in a bad way, no way. I was a part of this town as Mr. Barnaby's seasonal specials or the flow of rainbow trout up the Longmuir during the mating season. I loved being a member of this community and a valued one at that. It's just that—well, I would have liked to have felt as I did without all the fanfare. I would have preferred a thank you, maybe a card or two and been done with it. The townsfolk didn't need to make a fuss and Mrs. Leary most certainly didn't need to bake the largest cake I had ever seen and have it shaped like an alien. No she didn't.

As I looked around, soaking up the atmosphere, I was also glad to see people from all over the town attend, from the *golden mile* to the farms beyond the limits. Everyone I knew and plenty I didn't were here. They all mingled, the rich, the farmers, the workers and those who chose not to, kicking away the troubles of the last couple of months.

"Hey, carrot-top, how's it going?" Corey Harrington asked as he bumped into my shoulder, knocking the cocktail glass from my hand. It smashed onto the floor. "You the town captain of

the faggot brigade or something now?"

I sneered at him, not bothering to answer, deciding instead to head for the bar and get myself another drink. Corey hadn't changed. Not even with everything that had gone on. He was still a jerk. Then again, once a jerk always a jerk as my mum would say. She was right.

"Watch it, Harrington," Zane said, coming straight over to see what all the fuss was about. There was another bump of shoulders, this time Zane let him have it.

For a brief moment Corey stood silent, his eyes furious. When a couple of his thuggish ape-like friends began to make their way over, he found his voice. "Or what, faggot face?" Drunk, Corey spat out the words with a slur. Alcohol and Corey don't mix in a nice way. "You the latest pillow biter here then, Zaney? What's happening to this town? Soon we'll be surrounded by cock suckers."

"Or dickheads," Callum said, coming to my other side. I turned to look at him, more of a glare of concern really. He smiled at me. I don't think he understood the weight of this situation. There could be fisticuffs and smashed chairs over heads at any moment. I knew Callum. He was taking Zane's lead, acting tough. Sometimes having two guys wasn't such a good idea. I pushed him back, letting him know I didn't want this to accelerate out of control.

"I think we've already got our share of dickheads here." Zane stepped closer to Corey, hands on his hips and blocking my view. Great. Zane took it upon himself to continue comparing cock sizes instead of walking away as I intended in the first place. I didn't want this to go on. So what if Corey bumped me. Let him be a dickhead in his own space. I didn't want any part of it.

Unfortunately, nobody else felt as I did.

"Hey, Zaney, from what your boyfriends tell me, you squeal like a girl when you're being fucked up the arse. How about it, Zaney, scream for me. Let's hear how much of a fag boy you really are."

Zane jolted into action and, through sheer luck more than anything else, Callum and I held onto him before he could do anything we'd all regret. I had one arm. Callum had the other.

"You're such a fucker. You know that?" Zane put up a struggle but eventually calmed.

"Is this how you do it, Zaney?" Corey performed a blow job motion with his hand, his tongue poked his cheek in time with the movement. His friends, Suzy's new boyfriend among them, laughed and jeered, spurring Corey on. Zane let out a hate filled growl. Guys like Corey didn't need much encouragement and seeing Zane's anger would have been plenty.

"C'mon, Zane. Let's get out of here," I said.

"He's not worth it," Callum added.

Corey didn't let up. He was being cheered on and nothing appealed to a drunken idiot more than drunken idiot mates. "Hey look, Zaney's a real bitch now, taking two cocks up his arse. Tell me, do you do both at once or can't you handle that because you're such a pussy?" More laughs from Corey's thugs encouraged him to continue. "I bet you cry when they fuck you, just like you did for me, hey bitch?"

"Take that back," Callum yelled. He released Zane.

I realised all too late I shouldn't have relaxed my grip on Zane. Without Callum's help holding him back by myself proved to be useless. Zane wanted blood. I couldn't blame him.

"You fucker!" Zane flew at Corey, laying in punches straight away. I could do nothing but watch in disbelief as Callum went to his aid and all the Neanderthals behind Corey joined in, too.

Townsfolk all around screamed. The Spring Dance was soon consumed by the brawl. The sound of fighting overtook the music. Right at the centre of it all was my Zane and Callum, arms flailing as they tried to lay as many punches in as they could before they were overwhelmed by Corey's friends. I took in a deep breath and joined the ruckus. They needed me.

"Zane! Callum," I screamed, then everything

around me burst into a flash of white, burning light.

* * * *

When the light subsided, I found myself in a high school's hallway. The place was abuzz with activity. Baffled by the sudden change in location, it took me a few moments to even realise what hallway it was. It wasn't just any old hallway. I was in *my* high school hallway. The one I remembered from four years ago. Even the people were how I remembered them. Some I hadn't seen for years, but there they were, in school again and going about their business, carrying their books and heading for their classes. What the fuck was going on? I was at the Spring Dance a second ago.

The bell sounded.

"Hey, don't just stand there. You coming or what?" a male voice asked from behind me. "Can't be late for science. You know Mr. Mendelssohn gets real cranky about tardiness."

I turned to see a guy I thought I'd never see again in my life. It was Thomas, the lanky guy with the buck teeth and freckles and beady eyes. The guy who made me jack off thinking about him all those years ago as I came to realise I did like being here in Pembroke Eve. But that was all in the past. Why was I here again?

“Um, you’ve never spoken to me before,” I said, confused. “I don’t even know your last name.”

He looked serious for a moment, before his eyes sparkled and he smiled. “Oh, Jacob, you’re such a tease. You know very well I’m your boyfriend.”

Chapter Two

Okay, now I was taken aback. Thomas *what's his name* was an infatuation, a guy I dreamt of to use as jack-off material, nothing more nothing less. Now here he was declaring I was involved with him.

Before I could utter another word, the sweep of the crowd around me and my stunned state combined so that I was led towards Mr. Mendelssohn's class like a sheep rounded up by the farmer's dogs. I was sitting at my old desk in no time flat, the one where I had the perfect view of Thomas. Right next to him. Only this time, instead of him being unaware I was thinking dirty thoughts about him, he was looking at me, appearing to think those thoughts about me. The smirk on his face and those wanting eyes were unmistakable.

I shifted my weight. The chair creaked like my grandmother's knees as she bent over to get into her stove. I could honestly say I was

uncomfortable. I could also say, above all, I had no idea how I even got here, let alone understood the strange notion Thomas had a thing for me. Hang on, strike that. Thomas was my *boyfriend*. We were beyond *just a thing*. Funny, this never happened. *So why am I experiencing it like this now? What's going on here?*

A tap on my shoulder knocked me out of my reverie. A chubby guy, Brad I think was his name, handed me a folded piece of paper. Oh God, I forgot how much of a zoo high school was. I had a fair idea what was written on that paper before I even opened it. I bet they were faggot jokes or a drawing of me with cocks in every orifice. How lame.

I stuffed it into my pocket. I didn't want the class getting the satisfaction of seeing me embarrassed as I read what was written on it. If I was still in this nightmare after classes for the day had finished, I was sure the resident bullies would have something to say and force me to read the note after school. Until then, I wasn't going to play. I just wanted to get out of here.

Sighing, I thought about how the brawl involving Zane and Callum and Corey's thugs back in the community hall, some four years into the future, seemed like such a good alternative to my current situation. My stomach churned and not in a good way. A queasiness overcame me.

"Open the note I sent you," Thomas whispered as he leaned over, trying to look like he wasn't leaning over and whispering to me.

I rolled my eyes. "No."

There was a moment of pause as Mr. Mendelssohn stopped what he was doing and began eyeing the class, a procedure which also involved him pointing at the indecipherable notations he had just scribbled on the white board and droning on about some theory he so happened to be infatuated about at this point in time. Soon, he was looking right at me. He must have seen me take the note. I had been busted. Fucking great, that's all I needed.

"What is the theory that postulates the existence of at least eleven dimensions, linking Einstein's theory of space and time and Quantum Mechanics, Jacob Theison?"

There was an almighty hush, like everyone in the room had taken in a breath all at once. Every gaze was fixed on me. Now was the time, the test if you will, to see if I had been paying attention to him and not worrying about what a stupid piece of paper had written on it.

I placed my hands into my pocket. I touched that paper. It was still there. I had hoped, perhaps in a crazy way, that the note had vaporised into the past, like I had only a few minutes ago.

"Is it String theory, Mr. Mendelssohn, sir?" I

said with little confidence.

Mr. Mendelssohn smirked. "Correct." He stepped forward. "But giving me the right answer doesn't change the fact that you were passing notes around between your classmates. I saw you put it into your pocket." He held out his hand. "Give it to me, Mr. Theison."

I touched the paper once more. I swear it should have burnt a hole in my pocket and fallen onto the floor, never to be seen again. But no. There it was, in my hand. I pulled it out and handed it to him. I was reluctant, but also, in a strange way, glad to be rid of it.

Agonising moments passed as Mr. Mendelssohn read what was written on the paper. Finally, he said, "Save your creative writing for your English teacher." He threw it down onto my desk. "For your insubordination you will see me in the detention hall today after school."

"Yes, Mr. Mendelssohn, sir," I droned.

He went back to the white board. I looked down at the paper. On it, with neat fluid handwriting, were the words, *You must believe me when I tell you this, you were on the wrong path. I changed that. I saved you. Remember, you need me. I need you. We are meant to be together. I know that.*

I sighed. Yep. High school was a zoo I had spent the last four years trying to forget. Great. Now I was going to be labelled a freak, too. As if

being gay wasn't enough to create the wrong sort of attention amongst the intellectually challenged members of the school. What the hell did the letter mean anyway? What path was I on that was wrong, other than being here right now, that is? The words raised more questions than anything. I hated that.

Thomas leaned over once more. "We are meant to be together."

Before I could answer him that white light filled my vision. I welcomed it this time, wanting so much to be away from that classroom. I shut my eyelids tight. They hurt, but I didn't care. I was going to be somewhere else when I opened them. Hopefully back to where I belonged, punching Corey at the Spring Dance.

* * * *

When I did open them, I was at an outdoor wedding. The majesty of the cloudless sky above was a beautiful shade of evening orange and a perfect backdrop to what was before me. There was a gentle breeze that filled the beautiful white silken curtains that were draped lavishly around one of the largest gazebos I had ever been inside. Flowers were everywhere, big, beautiful red roses mostly. There were also many people, all smiles and gentle nods as they watched the proceedings.

In front of me was Callum, my beautiful Callum. He was dressed as he was on the night of the Spring Dance, all handsome and perfect. To his left was another man. I didn't recognise him, but he was adorned in a costume that looked somewhat like it had come from a Bollywood movies' wardrobe. All colours and sparkle and I had to admit style, too.

To Callum's right stood Zane and Suzy. Wait. To the left of the groom was the bride, wasn't it? That meant that Callum was getting married...to another man! A man who wasn't me. I blinked hard, unable to fathom where—or to be more exact, *when* I was. Was this the future? Everyone did look a little older. How far into the future? A year? Ten years? Or was this wedding just a possibility? God, I hoped it was only a possibility.

The priest was reciting the vows, somewhat enthusiastically, knocking me from my reverie. "Do you take this man, Armin Punjar Rajneesh Williams, to be your lawfully wedded husband, to love and to honour, to cherish and to obey..."

Again I zoned out. My mind more worried about the causes of what was transpiring before me, not the actual here and now of it all. Why wasn't *I* being married to him?

I was brought back to the moment when Callum finished the *I do* part and he kissed Armin. It was also at about that point in time I became

giddy. Unable to comprehend why my boyfriend was no longer with me. What had happened?

I steadied myself. Deciding I needed to get out of the gazebo and get some air. It was crowded in here. I got to the stairs when my emotions caught up with me. My body swam with doubt and confusion and an unsettled feeling overcame me. When I reached out, hoping to grab onto the railing of the gazebo in an attempt to stop myself from falling, Thomas came into view. He looked older, say in his twenties or something.

Yes, this must be ten years ahead.

"Aren't you going to congratulate the newly weds?" he asked. "I'm sure Callum is waiting for you to see him. Say, isn't Armin quite the catch?" He grabbed my by my shoulders, a look of concern now drawn on his face as he realised I wasn't in a good way. "You feeling all right, my darling?"

"I...I..."

I fainted.

When I came too, many faces filled my vision. Some I knew, others I didn't. When they disappeared, Thomas greeted me, his now familiar smile also there. "You gave me such a scare, Jacob."

"I gave *you* a scare?"

"You sure did." He pecked me on my forehead, then whispered into my ear, "This is more how it

should be. I told you many years ago you needed to be on the right path."

Two largish men picked me up, holding onto me. I could feel sensation return to my legs. "What are you talking about, Thomas?" The guy talked in riddles. My stomach knotted. I balled my fists and decided there and then to give him a piece of my mind. "Look, as far as I know Callum and Zane and me are boyfriends running the Food Emporium together...and as for you, I've never talked to you. Sure, you pressed my buttons, but it was all just a fantasy, a high school infatuation and nothing more."

Thomas kept his smile. "You sold the Food Emporium to Mr. Foo Hue's son, Tang, last year after Callum became re-acquainted with Armin, his old flame. Surely you remember that?"

"Um, no." I pushed myself away from the two men who helped me to my feet. I didn't want to discuss anything with people listening. I went over to a huge display of flowers in one of those person-sized vases, no one near by. Thomas followed. I continued, "As far as I'm concerned I was at the night of the Spring Dance. There was a fight...and then boom, I was whisked away back to high school before being sent forward to here, whenever here is."

"It's the year twenty twenty and—oh, wait yeah, I'm sorry, you're thinking of this in linear

terms.” He patted me on the shoulder. “All you need to know is that you can trust me. Everything will be explained...in time.”

“But as I said, I never even talked to you. Didn’t you hear that?”

Thomas came closer. Before I knew it he touched his lips onto mine, embraced me tight. I was swept away in his touch and, as he parted my lips, I tasted him, felt him on an intimate level. He was sweet, like jelly candy or something. He deepened his affection, giving me all of his attention. I groaned.

My head spun. He was a good kisser. Not too tame, yet forceful enough to let me know what he liked and what he wanted. From this, I most certainly knew he wanted me.

I groaned again. As he continued his kiss, chasing my tongue with his own, he brought his hands down to the small of my back. He ran his fingers under my trouser top, massaging me there. My stomach did little somersaults, in time with the movement of his hands across my skin. He was good and I couldn’t help but be swept away by all that he did. It felt wonderful.

He parted the kiss. “We can go home if you like. I’ll tell Callum you’re a little unwell and that you need some rest. I’m sure he’ll understand.”

“Why would I do that?” I knew it was a stupid thing to say as soon as I said it. I knew what he

wanted. I think on a subconscious level I played dumb so he would explain what the fuck was going on. No, it wasn't on a subconscious level. I wanted to know, mind, body and soul what was happening. Why was I with Thomas and not Callum or Zane?

"Because I want to keep you on the path and the only way I know how to do that is to please you."

"You mean you want to fuck me?"

His eyes sparkled. "Perhaps. You'll see."

Chapter Three

I don't know whether I said yes or not, but in what seemed an instant, I was in some sort of house overlooking the ocean. I guessed we were on the *golden mile* in Thomas's home. It was lavish, probably too nice. Everything looked expensive, from the pictures on the walls to the vases on display on fancy plinths. Even the furniture looked as though it belonged in a ritzy show room.

"Welcome to our home," he said nonchalantly as he threw his jacket over the nearest chair.

Again I was confused. "I really don't know this place. I really don't know you, to be honest. This is all just too much for me, I'm sorry."

"Perhaps this will help refresh some of those memory cells of yours," he said with a voice so sultry and manly at the same time I think that alone would have got me hard had it not been for the fact he pulled down his pants right there and then, taking the initiative and getting his clothes

off first.

Thomas was a fine man, skinny yes, perhaps too skinny like Zane, but I didn't care. What was before me pleased me to no end. Then again, I liked that sort of frame on a guy, so it would have been a pleasure no matter what. He was hard, yet his foreskin, a nice pucker tip, remained over his head even in his obvious state of arousal. He had shaved his pubic hair, too. Not too much, more of a trim, a neatening up of anything out of place he might grow. I liked it.

"Geez, you're damn fine," I said with a gasp as I went closer to him.

Seeing him like this was different, one that had only been possible in my dreams before this day.

"And I'm all yours, my darling." He slipped off his shirt. His nipples were hard. God he was hot. His chest was hairless, but his stomach had a delightful little snail trail of blonde hair from his naval. He was a geeky guy, lanky and somewhat awkward no question, but there was a charm about him as well. I couldn't put my finger on it, but as I stared at him, taking in his awkward beauty, I noticed his almost white hair and eyebrows complemented his milky complexion perfectly. He even had freckles over his body to match those on his nose. Perhaps that was it, he was different and I celebrated that difference. You could even say he was an albino, although his eyes

were a gorgeous deep blue and his hair did have some colour, even though only a pale blond. Yep. He was different.

"But I *don't* know you. You *don't* know me. How did we ever get to this? *When* did we ever get to this?"

"I'll show you the how."

He undid my belt. Seconds later, my pants were at my ankles and he fumbled in my underwear for my cock. I stirred well before he grabbed it and brought it out of my clothes for him to feast his eyes upon and enjoy.

"But...but." My protest was a weak one. I wanted to see where this would go. My animal instincts took over my reason. My lust rose up to control me. I loved that feeling.

"I want to join with you," he said, his voice rather hard I had to admit considering the circumstances. This was supposed to be an intimate moment.

I was somewhat disappointed by his words. "Don't you believe in foreplay, then?"

"You don't understand."

"Yeah, I do. You want to fuck me and that's the sum of it all. Right?"

"No. I said *join* not copulate. There is a difference."

As I was about to ask him to clarify what he meant, he retracted my foreskin, revealing my

beautiful moist red head. Pre-cum dribbled from my piss slit. I shuddered, the sensation of the cool air touching my sensitive skin was very erotic and I couldn't wait to see what he would do to me next, if indeed the joining was something different to a fuck.

He retracted his own foreskin. I think I was beginning to understand. Geez, he wanted to cock dock. So he did believe in foreplay. I'd never been docked before and my mind turned with delightful thoughts about how this would feel.

How wrong was I?

When he touched his cock onto mine, electricity charged from him into me, transmitted easier by our pre-cum. Bright energy arcs passed from him into me. He rolled my foreskin over his head to cover it. Pins and needles consumed my body and my heart beat loud in my ears. More and more jolts of energy entered my body from his cock. I yelped. My balls ached and my stomach churned.

"What...is...this?" My lips were so numb I couldn't form words properly. I realised I was being propped up by the wall, otherwise I think I would have slumped onto the floor. I was unable to control my muscles and could only watch as he continued to do whatever it was he was going to do to me.

He smiled and stared deep into my eyes as he rolled his foreskin over me, locking our cocks

together. We had joined. When he let his hand go, because they were no longer needed to keep our cocks together, I experienced something different.

No longer did it feel as though electricity was coursing through me. Rather, it felt as though I were being siphoned, as if some sort of energy was being taken out of me. It felt as though my blood, my life force was being taken from me. Or was he draining away my sexual energy? Was he taking my cum? I didn't feel the pangs of ecstasy, far from it. No, this was something else. But what?

Being pressed against the wall I had nowhere to go. He held my hands tight above me to stop me from manually breaking our join. I was too weak to resist him anyway. My vision blurred from the effects of what he was doing. I couldn't handle the sensation of being siphoned any more. I had to get his foreskin off my cock, break the docking, before he drained me completely. I could feel my life ebb away.

I squirmed, pressing my arse against the wall, trying to gain some distance between us. Pain shot up from my cock. My foreskin stretched over his head. Any movement caused great discomfort.

"Don't," he yelled, his voice acidic and filled with disapproval. "Not yet. I haven't completed the transfer." He came closer to me. Our cocks stayed connected, the tightness of his foreskin over me making doubly sure the seal wasn't easy

to pull away from. He knew I wouldn't have been able to break our connection without using my hands and I didn't fancy a split foreskin, so I couldn't pull away. I had no choice but to wait for him to complete whatever it was he was doing.

"What...are...you?" I said.

The smile was wiped from his face, his eyes rolled in their sockets. "You must trust me. I do care for you, but I am not Thomas. Not the Thomas you think you know, anyway."

"I think I...figured that...out." I jumped as that sensation of being siphoned increased. My bladder, stomach and insides felt as though they were about to collapse. Waves of pain pierced through the numbness, stabbing at every muscle and fibre and nerve within me. I became short of breath. "But...you're...hurting me."

Whatever he was taking from me, it was making me feel terrible. Thomas—or whoever he was—screamed.

Then it was over.

He let me go. Surprisingly, I was still aroused even though my body felt tired, like I had just run a marathon or swam for hours. I was also relaxed, the most I had ever felt in my life. What had he done to me?

"Thank you, Jacob. Now I shall reward you."

He kissed me, that perfect kiss of his that melted my heart and made me forget all of my

concerns. A moment after that he was uncoupling our cocks, rolling back his foreskin to release mine from his grip. Clear fluid dripped off the end of my cock, like water did after taking a shower. I was somewhat shocked to see it.

“I...I...don’t understand...why—”

He placed his finger onto my lips. “Shhh. I shall heal you, too.”

He then got onto his knees, taking my cock into his mouth. If I thought his kiss was damn good, he sucked me off unlike anything I had ever experienced in my life before. Full of determination, passion and above all a technique most would kill to know. His tongue movements over my head, his mouth action, the gentle but firm suction, and the delighted moans he delivered, all were perfect.

My climax wasn’t far away. I closed my eyes. Before he had even gained a rhythm over my length, I tried to get him to stop by placing my hands under his chin in an attempt to lift him off me. It didn’t work. I wanted more than a blow job. I had different urges. I wanted to fuck him, to plunge my cock into his tight arse, letting him feel what pain was like. But he didn’t budge. He kept at it, sucking and slurping and enjoying my cock on an intimate level even Callum and Zane wouldn’t have come near. My stomach shuddered and my hands were tight fists, scrunching his hair.

I blew my load and he took it all.

When I convulsed, as each wave upon wave of ecstasy helped me pump more of my cum into his mouth, I let out a cry of relief. Not once did he stop what he did. In fact, even after I had finished, he continued to blow me until I went flaccid.

My knees went weak at some point as I off-loaded myself into his mouth. I had slid down the wall so that I was sitting. Whatever the joining meant, it sure made me cum like I was a super horny fourteen year old watching porn for the first time. I must have given him a week's worth in one go. I don't think I've ever felt like that before in my life. It was frightening and fantastic all at the same time.

I wanted to experience it again already. I wanted him to drain me again, then reward me with an orgasm that made me shudder like someone being electrocuted.

"That was...I don't know. That was amazing and as scary as all fuck at the same time, too. I've never experienced anything like that before, ever. But...but I think I need to go to sleep now. I'm fucking beat."

He came away from me, my cock glistening from all his attention, cum still leaking out from my piss slit. "You will need to rest. At our next joining I will take more from you. You will need your strength."

He lifted me up and carried me into the bedroom, as if doing so required no effort on his part. I was placed onto a large king size bed. There he undressed me, being as gentle as he could, kissing me all over as he did so.

As I watched him, my eyes widened in surprise. "Who are you really?"

"I am someone who cares deeply about you."

"That's not an answer."

"It is all I can give at the moment. I must be sure you're on the right path before I can tell you any more."

I sighed. Seemed I wasn't going to get a straight answer. "How do you know if I'm on the right path? I thought my path was with Callum and Zane. I thought I was supposed to be running the Food Emporium, not sell it. I would never sell it. It was Mrs. O'Doherty's and she entrusted it to me."

"Tang Foo Hue is a good looking young man."

I couldn't help but laugh, one that felt real good, I had to say. "Am I that shallow?"

"No." He kissed me on my cheek. "But if you continued on the path that you were on, I would be dead right now and you would be have been my murderer."

Chapter Four

I think it took a long time for the words he spoke to sink in. Mainly because I had no clue what he was talking about, but also because being accused of murder wasn't something that happened every day.

"How? I would never kill anyone."

"Shhh. Sleep for now, my beautiful darling. You will see more and understand more when you wake."

He placed his hands onto my forehead. The warmth of his touch soaked into me, comforted me, put my mind at ease for a moment. My eyelids got heavy. After that I don't know. I must have fallen asleep. There was a flash of light before darkness seeped into my consciousness.

When I woke, I was in my bedroom at my parent's house. *Star Wars* posters and action figures greeted me. For the longest moment I stared at the surroundings of my room. The last time I was into *Star Wars*, the last time I had any

sort of collection other than stick magazines and Mr. Barnaby's attempt to understand me by ordering copies of *Blue*, was when I was eight or so.

Fuck! I've gone back in time again. "Thomas!" I screamed out to no one, but satisfied I did so. That was until I heard myself. I sounded different. I sounded young, my voice no longer filled with manhood. Yep. I was eight. I checked myself under my boxers, disappointment washing over me. Shit, I was pre-pubescent again. No hair. No erections. No joy. If I thought going through high school again was a nightmare, this was far, far worse.

I bolted out of my bed.

"Where you going, Jacob baby?" My mother called out, her head buried in the tuckbox freezer we kept in the laundry as I rushed past. She'd been to Mr. Barnaby's General Store and had stocked up on something. She only ever went into the tucker box when she'd bought up the specials.

"Nowhere!" I called back, slamming the front door behind me.

It was true. I didn't know where I was going. All I knew was one thing. I had to get out of the house. I ran and ran as fast as my puny legs could carry me, on and on.

I went down the end of the street, through the

Westfell forest, jumping over logs and undergrowth, until I found myself in Wilson's field. I was surrounded by golden wheat, much higher than myself. I was calm. The wheat swayed in the breeze. I sat, taking a moment to catch my breath and give myself a chance to try and work out how the hell I was going to get back to being eighteen again.

What did Thomas say? I was on the wrong path or something. Well, if you ask me, re-living my pre-teen years was wrong. It's not that I didn't have a happy childhood, I did. It's just...well, the past was the past. No one should have to go through life more than once. No one.

Fluffy cotton-wool like clouds rolled by, chasing each other. The only noise that of my own breathing. I was alone. No one would know I was here and I liked that idea. I needed to be alone, to think of everything that had happened, to try and put together some sort of meaning from all the time shifts, if they meant anything at all.

There was also that *joining* thing. Shit, that was some serious stuff. What *was* Thomas? What was he taking from me? And more importantly, why? I knew with a good measure of certainty he wasn't human. In that case, did he care for me as he said he did or was he using me for something? And why wasn't it me who was the one getting married to Callum? Zane I could understand, he

was with us because he needed our love at the moment. He had been through a lot. Once he felt secure he would move on, make his move on Suzy. That was fine. We all knew that.

But this was all unknown to me. I didn't like it. Thomas was a disturbing mystery at best and everything he had shown me so far only deepened that feeling. I knew I was meant to be with Callum. Why was he marrying his first love? A man who was banned from seeing him of all things?

Something didn't add up here.

Thomas talked of the path. Who's to say what's right and wrong? Isn't life about discovering? Isn't life about making mistakes and loving and learning and being...well, being human?

I was so deep in thought I barely registered a low hum getting louder, a warning something wasn't right. Instead, I kept on sitting, contemplating the last few hours and picking off a stray ant or two that wandered onto my legs. I was in a T-shirt and boxers. Yep. *Star Wars* ones.

Still, that's what I liked when I was that—I mean, this age. Later, I would replace all of that with pictures of hot cars, followed by erotic posters of near naked men when I came out at fourteen. Beyond that I didn't bother, preferring plain walls. Funny how tastes change in life.

I was disturbed by that hum again. The sound

grew louder and louder until it demanded my attention. It was the sound of an engine, a huge engine, one that belonged to something that most certainly wasn't a motor bike or car.

I stood up. The wheat towered above me, obscuring my vision. Frustrated, I jumped as high as I could. As I did so, I caught the unmistakable glimpse of something that struck terror into my soul. Before me was the feed shoot of a combine harvester.

The machine charged toward me.

It must be harvesting time, which meant the field I was on would have at least two or three more harvesters reaping the wheat.

For a split second I became disorientated. The path I had used to get into the field had disappeared, the wheat had recovered from being disturbed. Which way should I run? I simply didn't know how to get back into the Westfell. In the end, I decided any direction would do.

As best as I could tell, I ran away from the approaching combine harvester. After a few more moments, another approached. Stopping, I jumped up once more. There was another in front of me. Or was that the same one? Had I just run in circles? No. I couldn't have. Could I?

I screamed, but the roar of the engine drowned out any hope of me being heard. The thrashing of the combine's blades threw up debris into the air,

obscuring my view of the sky and the only way I could tell where I was.

I ran again. Where to I didn't know, but I felt as though I were a rat trapped in a maze. If I ran in the wrong direction, I would become mince meat. If I stayed put, I would meet the same fate.

I was sick from fear. I ran in sheer and absolute panic. Blood rushed and thrummed in my ears. Sweat poured off me. Wheat and leaves and stalks all scratched at my skin as I tried to push my way to safety, desperate to get off the field.

No matter where I turned I was confronted by a wall of wheat and that terrible noise.

The sound intensified again. One of the harvesters was close. I turned in time to see the blades thrash the wheat, slicing them into oblivion. I screamed at the top of my lungs as I tried to keep ahead of the machine. I was failing. The harvester bore down on me. I screamed again and again. Tears rolled down my cheeks. My legs were no longer able to keep up the pace I needed to escape and they ached in protest. I ached all over.

I tried to keep on running, my body screaming out for rest, for oxygen, when I tripped up on myself, nearly falling. I was petrified. The slashing sounds of wheat as it was thrashed, the suction of the air around me as everything seemed to be drawn into those blades, the vibration of the

ground, all of this made me wish I was back in my bedroom surrounded by *Star Wars* memorabilia.

Again I stumbled, but this time I fell.

A strong hand grabbed me, stopping me from falling flat onto the ground to be reaped moments later. I was pulled along by him, his strength unbelievable. He could move, too. My feet hardly touched the ground as I was sped away to safety. I hoped.

I wasn't able to see who had saved me, his back the only view I got as the wheat gave way before him as he charged through it.

Thankfully, the hum of the combine harvester melded into the distance and the wheat thinned until we were on the edge of the field looking into the Westfell.

"Wait...I can't run any more!" I yelled out, my hand, arm and shoulder sore from him pulling me across the field.

He stopped. I collapsed onto the ground. He stood over me, his face silhouetted by the blazing sun above. "You okay?"

"Thank you...you saved my life."

"Now you are beginning to understand." He knelt down next to me. His features no longer obscured by shadow. It was Thomas. He was older than I was at this point in time, perhaps in his teens, but something about him was weird. Behind his eyes there wasn't the mind of a

teenager inside his head. If I didn't know any better, I'd say he was eternal, bearing the weight of that eternity he walked in. "Now you are beginning to see how the universe works, aren't you?"

"But I don't...I don't remember who saved me before...when it really happened, I mean." I scratched my head just under my hair line. "Heck...I only remember someone saved me. I never saw him again, you know."

"That's because at this point in the path, you didn't know me. You didn't associate me with Thomas, just some bloke who helped you get out of the field. Now you know."

"At this point in the path?"

He got up and helped me to my feet. "Yes."

My vision became a blaze of white light. I was taken out of time once more. When the light subsided I had arrived at my next destination, at the next point in time where he wanted me to be.

I was in my old English class at high school. The scruffy Mr. Anderson grinned down at us all.

Chapter Five

"Class. Settle down, please," Mr. Anderson commanded in that cheery way I had always remembered. With hindsight, as I had, I would have called him a bohemian, and come to think of it, he'd probably agree. I liked him. English was my favourite class. "We have a new addition to our fold. Please welcome Thomas Woolsey. He comes to us from Wayfarer's Court. Thomas, would you like to tell everyone a little bit about yourself?"

When Thomas stepped out from behind Mr. Anderson, I gasped. Woolsey? That's right. Now that I knew his last name, everything clicked. Why didn't I make that connection sooner? He's the son of Doctor Woolsey, the man who sacrificed himself, helped in our fight against the insectmans. Oh God. Right there and then my feelings went out to Thomas. I couldn't even imagine what it would be like to lose my father. I know it hadn't happened yet...but...but still. I

knew. All I wanted to do was go up and hug him.

"Hey, I'm Thomas," he began. "My folks moved over here because my dad got a transfer to the hospital. He's a doctor. Anyway, I kinda like doing all sorts of stuff and hopefully I can get to know some of you better." Thomas looked straight at me, his gaze warm, tangible.

I smiled.

Mr. Anderson pointed to the vacant seat next to me. "You can sit next to Jacob Theison, Thomas. I'm sure he won't mind."

"No, Mr. Anderson, sir, I won't," I said. I ignored the giggles and jibes from some of the less talented members of the class.

"Settle down," Mr. Anderson barked as he walked over to his desk. "I want each of you to take out a piece of paper. I want a five-hundred word story about something that has happened to you recently. I also want you to write it in third person and for bonus points, perhaps try it in present tense. You have until the rest of the lesson to complete it..."

I didn't catch the rest of what he said. I was thinking about what to write. I mean, if I wrote what had happened to me lately I think I'd be accused of making stuff up. Then again, reality was weirder than fiction, wasn't it? I began with the words, *Last night, Jacob Theison was eighteen years old. Now he is fourteen.*

As I wrote Thomas took his seat, disturbing me from my study for a moment. He leaned over and whispered, "Meet me after school in the first floor boys' toilet, okay?"

"Sure thing."

After Mr. Anderson's class and a period in Home Economics, school was finished for the day. I ran to the first floor toilet's hoping I hadn't missed Thomas. He wasn't in my last class. I missed him.

As I approached the toilets, he was there, leaning against the wall, smiling like he always did. When he saw me, he went inside.

I followed him in.

"Hey, thanks for coming." He placed his school back pack onto the tiled floor. "I've got something to ask you."

"What is it?" Curiosity rose up inside me, almost overwhelming my thoughts. What could he possibly ask of me? I mean, this was one hell-of-a ride as it was and I seriously doubted I would know anything he didn't.

"I want to ask you out on a date." He came over and hugged me. "I want you to be my boyfriend."

I was taken aback. "But you're already my—" I cut myself off. Wait. I had to think about this. What did he tell me before? Hang on...yeah, he told me I was thinking about this in a linear way when it wasn't. From what I could tell by what I

had experienced lately, Thomas didn't live his life like I did. He was just there, able to go anywhere along the path of my life as easily as I walked through the air.

My head hurt as I tried to think about what he said. He must have known this was out of *order* for me. Was he showing me something else I needed to know so I could understand him? But what? Why take me back to the time when he asked me out? What purpose did it serve?

"I know you are confused. That will pass, my darling, I promise." He slipped my backpack off my shoulders. It hit the floor with a dull thud. "By bringing you here to this point I have hopefully helped you understand that I am not all that different to you. You now know I have family, just like you, Jacob. I can love, just like you. And, as you will see in a moment, I can be hurt, too." He leaned forward, planting his lips onto mine.

I closed my eyes, that last sentence he spoke disturbed me. What the hell did that mean? I dismissed that thought from my head, deciding it wasn't appropriate considering I was being kissed. I would allow him to take me to wherever it was he needed to take me next, whether that would be an erotic moment, the past, what I thought was my present, or the future, I didn't know. I didn't care.

He gently parted my lips with his tongue and

his sweetness burst in my mouth. The sensation overwhelmed me, sent me to the place I so loved. I began to stir. The toilet door burst open.

"Holy fuck! What do we have here?" a voice boomed, echoing around the toilet, loud and obnoxious.

Thomas and I broke our kiss. I stood stunned.

The voice belonged to Michael Peterson, another one of Pembroke Eve's intellectually challenged. Sure, he wasn't as bad as Corey Harrington, but a bully was a bully. From the look on his face, I'd say we'd soon have all the attention we didn't need from him.

"Go away, Michael. You can get in line, I'll be with you in a minute," Thomas said.

I glared at Thomas. Why did he say that? Fuck. Being sarcastic to Michael wasn't a good idea. Mainly because his muscles dulled any intellect he may have possessed. Being on the football team meant that all he needed to know how to do was chase an oval shaped pig-skin around a field and that was about it.

"Hey, you're the new kid here, aren't you?" Michael said as he came toward us both. "Seems to me you don't know the rules of the school yet, faggot. Looks to me like I'm gonna have to teach them to you so you'll know your place."

I tried to come between them, at least give Thomas a chance to stand tall and prepare for the

inevitable pounding he'd get before Michael came to me and finished the job.

Michael pushed me aside, as though I were nothing. I was propelled into the first cubicle, knocking my knee on the toilet bowl. Pain shot up through me, but I didn't have time to worry about it. Thomas needed me. I had to do something before he became tenderized by Michael's beating. I came out of the cubicle in time to see Thomas raise his fists in defiance.

"No!" I screamed to him.

In horror, I watched Michael land a right hook onto my boyfriend's cheek. Thomas was thrown to the floor by the sheer force of the punch. Blood trickled from his lips to stain his shirt.

Michael laughed. "Hey guys, there's two dirty faggots in here trying give each other what for." He came to stand over Thomas, a smirk on his lips, indicating without a shadow of a doubt that he wasn't finished yet. "Get up fag boy. I want to pound that gayness right out of you."

Thomas staggered to his feet. Three huge boys came into the toilet. They were Michael's thugs. Why is it bullies hang around in packs? I crawled over as fast as I could to Thomas, covering him with my own body.

"Leave us alone!" I yelled. "What did we ever do to you?"

"You were born," Michael replied with a sneer.

I was pulled off Thomas with rough uncaring hands. Again, I was thrown into the cubicle and again I could only watch as my boyfriend received more blows to his face and body. There was a dull thud, one that sent shivers down my spine. Thomas was on the floor once more.

There was a lot of commotion, but I couldn't see what was going on. My leg was giving me grief. It took me a moment to gather my wits and for me to be able to put my weight on it. The toilet door was opened along with so much shouting I couldn't make out the words.

Everything then went quiet.

When I clambered out of the cubicle, what confronted me gave me some hope. Mr. Anderson was kneeling next to Thomas. "Seems you've had quite a first day, Mr. Woolsey."

Blood was all over Thomas's face. I went to him as best I could, considering my knee must have been swollen up like a balloon. The pain shooting up from my leg didn't give me any comfort. But I was more concerned with Thomas. "Will he be all right?"

I, too, knelt down beside him, ignoring my agony, holding him behind his head, staring into his deep, blue eyes with a good measure of desperation washing over me. Hoping with all my heart they hadn't hurt him beyond a few cuts and bruises.

"I'll be fine," he said with a pained expression.

Mr. Anderson asked, "Can you get up?"

Thomas nodded. The teacher then helped him to his feet. He leaned on him. I got up, too. "I think you need to see the nurse, too, Mr. Theison. Seems you both have had quite the experience."

I ignored him. My only concern was Thomas. "I'm here for you, Thomas. You hear me. I'm here for you."

"Forever?" he whispered.

"Forever."

I didn't make it to the nurse—well, I probably did, but Thomas must have decided that my lesson had been completed and I no longer needed to see any more of that part of my life.

My vision blurred into that bright white light and when I opened my eyelids I was at a time that meant so much to me. Gave me so much joy and above all, meant that I was my own man, finally.

I was at my eighteenth birthday party.

Chapter Six

Balloons and streamers and all sorts of banners adorned the walls of my parent's garage. I remember dad had spent two days getting everything ready, with mum fretting about matching napkins and paper plates as he worked. God, they were the best.

The point in time I had arrived at was near the end of the party, I'd say close to one in the morning. Most of the family had left, but a few of my friends stayed. The DJ had packed up, his time done. My iPod and portable speakers, our only source of music, randomly played all sorts of songs from a play list I had spent a whole day on compiling. I don't think anyone appreciated my taste in music. I preferred classic rock and roll. How did I know this? Well, I was pretty much alone, save for a few stragglers. I noticed mum and dad in the kitchen making coffees and most of my friends who were left were with them. Still, I was warm with alcohol and the love of those who

had attended. The evening had been great, both how I remembered it and how I was now witnessing it again.

In the corner, as I walked past the vacant DJ's table to get to the bar and top up my drink, there was Thomas, sitting alone. He looked so handsome, yet he also had a distant look, a disinterested gaze. As I came closer, I noticed he was sweating.

"Hey, darling," he said, standing up to hug me. "Congratulations on being eighteen."

"Thanks." His hug wasn't heartfelt, more a gesture than anything else. "Are you all right?"

"I'll be fine soon. So...do you want your present from me now or what?" his voice had lost the softness I had come to enjoy. The words he spoke more a command than anything.

"Sure."

He took me by my hand, leading me away from the few who remained in the garage. We went out to the front of my house. I had to admit, I was feeling a little anxious as he led me out into the yard. What ever had he brought me?

"Here. This is all yours." He fumbled in his pocket, plucking out keys and jangling them in front of me.

In the driveway was a Ferrari, bright red, sleek, sexy and beautiful. It took me a moment to realise the model was an F430 Spider, too. Fuck! The

thing must have cost a fortune.

"I...I can't accept this. It must have —"

He kissed me, muffling my protest. His familiar sweetness touched my tongue. When he parted, he said, "I think you should take it for a spin. How about to the lookout...then I can give you the other part of your present."

I was speechless. Truly, I had no words. Before me was the most stunning car I had ever seen in photographs, let alone in real life. Now I owned it, a supercar I had only ever dreamed about. I didn't even want to ask how he got one.

Nervously, I took the keys out of Thomas's hand and made my way toward the brilliant red painted metal of what I could only describe as a man-made beast on wheels. I still couldn't believe I was standing next to one, let alone have the chance to drive it. This was a dream come true and Thomas made such a thing happen. If love could be bought, I think this was the way to do it. I had more than admiration for him.

He opened the door for me, patted me on my arse and offered that smile of his as I climbed into the cabin. To complete the gesture of being a perfect gentleman, he closed the door, too.

Once inside, I sat there for the longest time, taking it all in. I was like a kid at a car show, only this time I owned one of the cars I had drooled over. Thomas nudged me, egging me on. I think

he wanted to get on with it. When I looked at him, about to thank him over and over, by planting kisses all over him, beads of perspiration trickled down from his temples.

"Are you *sure* you're all right?" I said, more than concerned now.

His lips formed a quivering smile, unlike the sexy *I want you* grin he always gave. "Please...drive to the lookout."

"But you look sick. I don't think you should go anywhere. I think you should get some rest, you can stay here tonight if—"

"For fuck's sake, Jacob, just do as I tell you!"

I was shocked to hear him raise his voice, especially having his venom directed at me for no apparent reason other than me looking out for him. I saw red. "I may be your boyfriend, but I don't deserve to be spoken to like that, you hear me?"

I opened the door, about to climb out, when he put his hand onto my knee. "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have shouted." His eyes showed true conviction and his face had softened. "I just want to...I need you, Jacob. Can't you understand that? It's time for me to...I must have you soon or I will no longer be...and you'll be stuck here in this point on the path."

I sighed, relenting. "Fine. I accept your apology. But next time I *will* walk away, no matter where or

when you have placed me in my life. You understand that?"

Thomas put his fingers onto the bridge of his nose. I could tell he was hurting and immediately my anger subsided, to be replaced by concern once more.

He said with a slow slur, "Yes, I understand. Now please, can you drive me to the lookout? I want some private time with my birthday boy."

The engine of the Ferrari roared to life when I started it, LED displays and lights blinked to life as I selected the reverse gear and pulled out of my drive.

I don't know how fast I went, but we were at the lookout point before I knew it. The drive so exhilarating, so wonderful I think every conscious thought I had relished the experience.

The lookout was just that, a place high above Pembroke Eve located off the main road that led to Wayfarer's Court. When I parked and stopped the engine, Thomas pushed the button that brought down the top. Soon stars filled my vision and a cool breeze caressed my skin. Below, the lights of the town twinkled amongst a nest of darkness, the ocean in the distance adding to the spectacle.

Thomas stood up and came over so he was between me and the steering wheel, unzipping his pants. "I've needed this for such a long time."

I reclined my seat away from the steering wheel

as far as it would go. "You want to *join* with me first, don't you? That's what you need, isn't it?"

"Yes." He was dripping with sweat, his skin an awful pallor, even more so than usual. "I must feed. You are the source of my food, my darling. The energy you expel as you walk the path of your life is the power that sustains me. I need it. I need it now." He dropped his belt onto the floor and his pants slipped down. His beautiful bulge was clear as his underwear billowed out. He was indeed ready.

I don't know what came over me, but I reached up and pulled down his underwear. His cock, such a magnificent sight, was as hard as I had ever seen it. Even in the dim light of the stars and the single street lamp at the end of the car park, his arousal told me how much he wanted me. I kissed the end of him, licked his foreskin before taking him all into my mouth. His pre-cum, salty and sweet, filled my mouth. I groaned, savouring him, enjoying him, becoming a part of him.

He pulled me away with care, his cock slipping out of my mouth with a slurping sound that aroused me even more. "First we join. Then you can have your fun, do whatever you want with my body."

Those words sounded so erotic. All I had to do was allow him to drain me of my...what did he call it? Time energy? I smiled and he took that as a

signal to continue.

On Thomas's instruction I stood up. He did the rest, taking down my pants, reaching in to grab my hard cock. I let out another lip quivering groan as he retracted my foreskin, readying me for the joining.

When our cocks touched, that jolt, that familiar but terrifying jolt, shot through me. I was nearly thrown back down into my seat. He stopped me from falling by grabbing me.

"Steady," he said, bringing his lips to mine. I accepted him. His tongue invaded and conquered me. I became saturated in his taste and touch, his warmth and his affection. He *did* need me and that made me feel important.

As he kissed me, he pulled my foreskin over his glans. His electricity passed through me, preparing me for the next step of his feeding. More and more I experienced stabs of pain and pleasure. He then covered my cock with his foreskin, sealing the join, completing it. His skin was tight around me and that made me harder.

We were one.

I was overcome by the sensation of being siphoned, my muscles made taut by the electrical current he sent into me earlier, my body stunned to stillness so he could take from me all the energy he needed to survive.

"Fill...yourself...with me!" I said as I came

away from our kiss, gasping for air, desperate for him to stop, but not wanting to deprive him in any way. I held him, not too tight, I didn't want to break our join. After all, I gave to him willingly this time. I understood he needed to live. I understood why his temper got short back at my house. He was hungry, desperate for nourishment and I was blind to his needs. How could I be so selfish?

"You are the only one for me, my darling."

"Take...all you...need."

He brought his hand down onto our cocks, smiling at me as he did so. I jumped, the sensation of his touch electric. I smiled at him, too. He looked better, even though he continued to siphon me, obviously needing more. Pain had already invaded my insides, but I didn't care.

"How's this?" He began jerking me off, slowly at first, using his skin around me to lubricate his action. My stomach shuddered as he worked, as he built up speed. My balls tingled. My body made its climb up to ecstasy.

"I...love...it," I was unable able to form the words. My body screamed out in agony, the pain so overwhelming I was numb, weak at the knees. Yet, at the same time, I was engulfed by great euphoria. With him jerking me off, with our cocks docked, I was also in ecstasy. My body shuddered, like I was going into shock.

"Good. Just a little more then you can have me, okay?"

I nodded, unable to speak. He had stopped jerking us both off and was now holding me up, unable to continue pleasuring me because I was too weak to stand without support. My vision blurred and every muscle within me felt as though it were on fire. I burned. But I burned for him.

Tears rolled onto my cheeks. I was about to tell him to keep on taking more, as much as he needed, when he momentarily broke his embrace. I grabbed for the door. Thankfully, the window was down so I had something solid to hold on to. With all my might and everything I had left, I tried to stay standing for him. I quivered from the strain, my body so numb I could no longer register anything other than the desire to stay upright for him.

Thomas rolled his foreskin back, releasing me from the join. I fell, slumping onto the leather driver's seat, exhausted, panting, sweating and somewhat relieved I had given him all he needed and that it was now over. Fluid poured out from my piss slit to cover my stomach.

"You were wonderful," he said as he came over me, moving up toward my lips, licking and kissing my chest and neck as he came.

I still couldn't speak. My body consumed by pins and needles as the last remnants of his

feeding still swam around my veins. I lay there, letting him ravish his attention over me as he saw fit. I couldn't do anything for the moment, not until I caught my breath back again, anyway.

When my vision returned, stars welcomed my sight. Thomas licked away the fluid off my stomach, taking in every ounce of the sustenance he needed, not wasting a drop. I also realised I was erect and he had my cock in his hand, keeping me aroused by his touch.

He looked into my eyes when I sat up, his stare reflecting a different kind of hunger. "You liked that, didn't you?"

"I know what you are," I said.

"What am I?"

He shuffled his way up so he could bring his lips onto mine. He kissed me, his silky wet tongue touched mine. When he came away, I replied, "You're some sort of vampire."

Thomas pecked me on my cheek. He straddled me, his cock dangling so that it tickled my own as it lay erect and ready on my stomach. "Fuck me, my darling. Fuck me like I'm your bitch. My man cunt is begging for your hard sexy cock and I want it now. Oh God, my darking, fuck me real hard until I scream for you to stop. Please. I want to be your slut. Your fuck tool. Now do it, my darling. Fuck me!"

His words, his dirty arousing words not only

stunned me but spurred me into action. Without another thought, I reached down and grabbed my own cock, holding it up, letting him know that I wanted him to get into position. I was going to fuck him, but he was going to do the work.

“Then take me,” I said.

He moved down. Before he came over me proper, before his arse was near my cock ready for me to plough him, he ran his finger along the length of my cock and over my head, taking up all of my pre-cum and rubbing it along his arsehole, using it as lubricant. God, he was hot.

A second later, his arse came down onto my cock and he screamed out in both pain and pleasure, as I had done before. He grabbed my nipples, squeezing them. I didn’t care. I enjoyed watching him squirm, his face screwed up, his eyelids shut tight as I fucked him.

“Oh, fuck!” he cried out into the night, like a wolf baying at the Moon.

His tightness slowly opened up and I was able to push more and more of my length into him. I didn’t let up. I didn’t give him time to get used to having me inside him before I plunged myself harder into his arse. I wanted to fuck him and fuck him good. It was the least I could do considering he had taken from me what he wanted.

When I was with Callum or Zane it was for love, we all shared each other, tenderly, with

passion and above all, with love. When I was with Thomas, it was different. He was more animalistic, more primal, and in a way, somewhat better than how I had been loved before by anyone else, including Callum. But did I love him? I couldn't say. I know I didn't want to see him hurt by anyone. I also know I didn't want him to die. Perhaps I did love him. Perhaps I was so in love with him I didn't even realise it—well, that's not true. I did realise it. I had given him some of my life. Surely that was love.

My cock was inside him. I had given him everything I had. He managed a smile before he bobbed up and down, his cock and balls, slapping onto his stomach. I pushed up in time with his movements. The sounds of our sex, our love, filled the air. I reached up and pulled him down, wanting to have him kiss me as I fucked him.

I kissed him, this time it was my turn to let him know I wasn't so easy to subdue. I sent in my tongue to conquer him. He moaned with delight. Seemed he liked me being more forward. I did, too.

Before too long, as we continued to writhe with passion on the seat of the Ferrari, our arms and legs a tangle, my cock tingling with the pleasure of his flesh around me, I exploded with orgasm. Like the last time we had joined, my climax was all consuming and absolutely fucking fantastic. He'd

be pissing out my cum from his arse for weeks, I'm sure.

My body shuddered and my cock kept on ejaculating. We parted our kiss. I could no longer breathe with his lips against mine. I was sweating again, but not from being drained, this time I was the one in control.

"Fuck!" I blurted as my climax came to an end.

When I had given him all I had, he came off me. My cock slipped out of him. I missed him the instant the night air kissed my sensitive skin. We hugged each other tight, our bodies, tired and hot from our passion, cooled together as we lay there, deep in each other's stare.

"I was a virgin, you know," he whispered into my ear. "You were my first."

Chapter Seven

Before I could answer him, I was blinded by the white light invading the cool night that clung to our heated bodies. For the first time I didn't want to be anywhere else other than in that beautiful car parked at the lookout and in the arms of Thomas.

Unfortunately, I didn't have a choice in the matter. I opened my eyelids to the sight of the detention room and Mr. Mendelssohn glaring at me. His signal to let me know I needed to get on with my work and not look around as though I had just arrived, which I had. But he wasn't to know that.

In front of me was my science book. The page was opened at one of Einstein's theories. I studied the words, their meaning obscured for a moment as my disorientation lingered. I blinked in quick succession for a few seconds, hoping that would clear both my sight and my mind.

When I did register what was written on the

page, I noticed his theory stating that our lives were a path, a slice through the space time continuum. As I looked at what was written, something struck me on a deep level. Einstein's theory rang a bell in my mind so loud I couldn't ignore them. They virtually shouted at me for attention.

I raised my hand.

"What is it, Mr. Theison?" Mr. Mendelssohn droned.

"Can I ask a question?"

He scratched his chin, just where he was attempting to grow a goatee. "Most irregular to be asking questions during detention, but seeing as it's quiet and you're the only one here today, ask away, young man."

I knew he couldn't resist my question, he was a teacher after all. "Is our future set out, you know, are our lives determined like Einstein states?"

His eyes widened. Clearly I had hit a nerve, one that he had to respond to. He came away from his desk, coming next to me. "Are you referring to the theory that we don't really have a past or a future because everything is already mapped out? Yes, it's true then that Einstein did say that the path of our lives has been cut through the space time continuum and that we only gain the notion of time as we travel along that path like a car travels along a road."

"Yes, Sir. That's the one."

He leaned back onto the desk in front of mine, looking rather casual. "But is that all there is to it?"

"I don't understand," I said with absolute sincerity.

His lips formed a knowing smirk. "Einstein only talked about the world of the large, planets and suns and galaxies and the like. But what about the world of the small? Tell me, Mr. Theison, how does his eminent theory stack up at the sub-atomic level where leptons and quarks rule? How is the *time* of our existence determined by Quantum Mechanics?"

"I really don't know. Isn't Quantum Mechanics all random or whatever?"

"Indeed. The world of the small is a world in relative chaos, a world where any number of possibilities could become reality. It's believed that time is happening just like we experience it, that the future is a random occurrence and unfolding before us. A far cry from the structure of Einstein's theory, isn't it?"

I became confused, my mind a jumble of thoughts and notions, none of which made sense anyway. How could our lives be determined and have infinite possibilities, too? "So how can randomness and structure exist together?" I blurted, not really sure I understood my question.

All I knew was that Thomas kept on talking about the path I was on and that he had to make sure it was the right one. Did he know something even Mr. Mendelssohn didn't? Was I on the right path since I had accepted Thomas for what he was? His source of sustenance.

Mr. Mendelssohn reached over and closed my book. "You've done well, Mr. Theison. Most your age don't even ask the questions you have, preferring only to parrot learn these sort of things and regurgitate them during tests. Now, to put your mind at ease, I believe that our choices make our lives and that time is a notion no one can truly understand. Think about that as you walk out of this room."

I had to admit, I'd never seen him this way before. Perhaps I'd caught him in a good mood. "Are you letting me leave detention early?"

"Yes. So go before I change my mind."

"Yes, Mr. Mendelssohn, sir."

I left, not giving him a chance to say anything, stuffing my book into my backpack. In the hall I came across Thomas. He was leaning against the lockers, waiting for me.

"How was detention?"

"You know," I began, "it was a lot more interesting than I'd ever imagine. Mr. Mendelssohn must have got a bit last night, cause he was real chatty."

Thomas walked next to me. His hand brushed against mine. Did he want to hold me? I wouldn't have minded. Then again, this was high school, and any sign of affection would be met with teasing or worse, violence. The incident in the boys' toilet proved that, even though I had no idea when that incident happened relative to when I was now. I suspected it was in the past, but I couldn't be sure. My leg wasn't sore, so I assumed it had happened a while ago.

"Do you know what day it is?"

Was he reading my thoughts? How did he know I was thinking about the order of events that had happened lately? "No. Is it before or after you asked me out?"

Thomas giggled. "You still think of things in a linear way, don't you?"

I stopped. "What does that mean?"

"When I asked you out it was at a point on your path, but from that moment, when you said yes and we became boyfriends, no matter what point you are brought to after that, it will always be."

"Okay, now I'm confused."

He grabbed my hand. His palm was sweaty, but I was comforted by his touch. "Think of it like you're travelling down a river and your boat springs a leak. No matter where you go on that river from then on, you'll have a hole until you fix it."

"I think I get it...but it's kind of hard to understand seeing as time *is* linear to me—to us humans, I mean."

"You'll learn. You're in my world now, and we can move freely along the path as you are moving freely now in this time."

The last words of his sentence struck me, like I had been hit upside the head. "So I have a choice? Can I choose *when* I want to be on my path?"

He squeezed my hand. "The longer you stay with me the more you will learn how to control your journey along your chosen path."

For a long time we walked, hand in hand, though the hallway and over the grounds. At the school's front gate, I realised I hadn't answered his question. "What did you mean when you asked me if I knew what day it was?"

"This point in time is the twenty-seventh of March, as humans have quantified it, does that date ring a bell, my darling?"

I couldn't for the life of me remember anything special about that date. In fact, it was quite hard for me to even attempt to guess. How could I remember something that, to me, happened over four years ago? "You're really screwing with my head, you know that?"

We were now walking toward my house, travelling down the main street of Pembroke Eve. Mr. Barnaby had a new display of tinned *Baked*

Beans. They were on special. Buy four cartons of 24 and get a carton free. No prizes for guessing what will be on the menu at our house over the next couple of weeks. Good thing I didn't mind *Baked Beans*.

"I don't mean to. It's just that tomorrow is the day Mr. Mendelssohn has his rather unfortunate accident," Thomas said, somewhat casually considering the weight of what he spoke about.

"Oh God, you're right." I couldn't believe such a thing didn't click when he first mentioned it. From what I remembered the whole school was in shock. Some even needed counselling. Then again, could you blame me? I was somewhat disorientated being thrown back and forth in time. I didn't even know what day it was.

"Yeah, he was in that nasty car crash. The poor guy became a quadriplegic and had to leave teaching and be nursed for the rest of his life."

My stomach turned. A terrible feeling overcame me, like I had been punched and the person who did it was now laughing. "Um, Thomas, the principal...he...he didn't tell us how badly hurt Mr. Mendelssohn was."

Thomas stopped, released my hand. "I'm sure he did. You just aren't remembering it right, my darling."

I glared at him. That nasty feeling still churned within me. "Then prove it. Let's go to that point

and see, shall we?"

"All right."

His lips turned to form a malicious smirk and as the white light filled my vision, that smile of his became etched into memory. I had a feeling Thomas wasn't telling me everything.

Chapter Eight

I blinked hard a few times, trying to free myself of the effects of my jump through time. When my vision returned, I found myself in our home—well, the home Thomas had said belonged to us both anyway. The view of the ocean, the lavishness of the furniture and fittings and the grand scale of the rooms seeped into my consciousness. I had come into the future. Why?

“Thomas! Where are you?”

No answer.

I began searching the rooms of the house. I had materialised on the top floor. This house had three levels with God knows how many rooms. I could be a while. He could be anywhere, but one thing I had discovered during all of this, he wouldn't be far away. He needed me to sustain him, after all.

That thought kind of revolted me now that I thought about it. I *was* Thomas's food. Sure, when I was being drained of my time energy, even though it hurt, I always felt as though he had my

best interests at heart. On both occasions I had never feared for my life. But was that because he needed me to live as long as possible so I could keep on feeding him? Every documentary I had ever seen on the TV always showed that the predators never wandered too far away from the prey. Oh God. Was I prey to him? That terrible feeling returned. Perhaps I was being blinded by his generosity. Giving me the Ferrari, having me live in an expensive house and his affection both before and after he had fed. Were they all a means to keep me from questioning what he was really doing to me?

I dismissed that thought from my mind. Perhaps I was over analysing everything. Maybe Thomas was genuine and me not being able to understand fully how he lived the reason why I had such thoughts. Perhaps I was at fault.

I came down the stairs to the second story landing. "Thomas!" I screamed at the top of my lungs.

Still no answer.

I grew concerned. He was *always* with me. "Thomas, where the fuck are you? Answer me, *please!*"

As I came around from the landing to the first room, a bedroom, although not the master suite, Thomas came into view. He was lying on the floor, seemingly unconscious. I went to him. "Fuck,

Thomas, what's wrong with you?"

He looked terrible. His skin so pale his veins were visible underneath. His lips were blue and his eyes sunken so much I feared the worst. When I touched his hand his flesh was sticky. He felt like meat that had been left out of the fridge for too long. Was he dead? My heart raced as I checked his pulse. It was faint, but at least he had a heart beat. It was then I noticed he was sweating. I know for a fact dead people don't sweat.

His eyelids opened slowly. "I...went...too...long," he whispered with a rasp that sent shivers down my spine. His words like a pained rattle more than anything.

"What do I have to do?" I was desperate. I couldn't let him die. I didn't want him to die. I needed him, if only to get back to the present I knew.

Thomas turned his head away from me, staring at nothing, his eyes distant. "I...don't...want...to...hurt...you...anymore." He coughed.

"Don't talk shit. Tell me what I have to do." But I already knew the answer. He needed sustenance and there was only one way to give it to him.

I unzipped his pants, pulled them down as far as I could considering I had an overwhelming feeling that every second was of vital importance. I undid the button on his boxers, found his cock and brought it out into the air. It was a sight, as

translucent as the rest of his skin. Every vein, from the largest to the tiniest, was visible. His faint pulse pushed the blood around his cock as I retracted his foreskin. His head wasn't a lovely ripe, red cherry as I was used to, but an insipid white, small and wrinkled.

I undid my own pants and as quickly as I could, too, readying my cock for the joining, shuffling so I was as close to him as possible on the floor. We lay together as the sun from the window streamed in unrelenting, giving his skin an even more ghostly pallor.

When I was in as best a position as I could get, close so our genitals could touch, I turned him, grabbing his bony hips, so that he was on his side. He groaned, whether from pain or approval I had no idea.

Our cocks touched.

There was no electricity when our skin made contact this time, just pins and needles and a dull sensation at the point of contact, like my foreskin had been squeezed but was now released, the feeling that of the blood rushing back to fill my veins. I began to panic. This wasn't how it was supposed to be. I began the procedure as quickly as I could, first rolling my foreskin over his glans.

"C'mon, Thomas, you can do this. Stay with me. I'm going to feed you now, okay? Just hang in there, beautiful."

His eyes were still distant, unable or unwilling to focus on me. His tongue had flopped out of his open blue mouth. I shook, but I had to continue. I had to give him my time energy, his sustenance, and as fast as I could, too.

When I was satisfied I had covered his glans properly with my foreskin, I rolled his over my cock. He was tight, even in his flaccid state.

I had done it.

Our cocks were docked. He could feed. All I had to do was hope and wait, because unlike before I didn't get the feeling I was being siphoned. In fact, the only sensation I got was a slight pressure on my bladder. That could be anything. I could even need to go for a piss. God, I hoped he'd be all right.

I cursed myself in my thoughts. If only I had arrived sooner. What did he say? I could control the time I arrived at on my path. Then why did I come here now? At this point. All the other times before, the time I arrived at was to learn something, to have him teach me about the world where he lived and how time can be understood in a non-linear way. What was I going to learn if Thomas died? Was I too late? He didn't even respond to my touch. I didn't feel anything from our joining other than the sensation of our skin contact. Normally, say with Callum or Zane, such a sensation would have been wonderful. But not

with Thomas. Cock docking meant an entirely different thing with him.

Although, I had to admit, every other time we had joined we had both been erect. Did sexual arousal help speed up the feeding process? I had an idea. I decided to massage both of our cocks, to try and awaken him, get him hard so that it might be easier for him to take what he needed. I had a strong suspicion it was our pre-cum that helped lubricate the transfer. If anything, *I* had to get hard and produce some, even if he couldn't.

No easy task, not when I didn't feel especially aroused by the sight of my boyfriend lying on the floor, a moment away from death. But I tried. I jerked myself off while we were docked and, while I at least got the sensation of our skin rubbing together, I had to try and think positive about this. Hopefully that, at the very least, would make me stir.

Faster and faster I moved my hand over our cocks, concentrating my attention on my own head, to try and maximise any chance I had of producing my natural lubricant. His foreskin, even though see through and sticky, still felt nice as it slid over my cock. Thomas groaned again.

I did feel something. I stirred. My thoughts soon turned from those of doubt to those of desire. I wanted this to work. I wanted him to take me, to get as much of me as he could so he'd be all right.

He got tighter and tighter around me, my reward for my efforts.

Rubbing harder, I became fully aroused as more and more blood pumped into my cock. I began to breathe heavier, my efforts overtaking me, making me feel as though I'd soon be in the throes of passion. I wanted above all for him to feel it, too.

I was now hard and I had to adjust how I lay next to him so I didn't break our join. Being docked with a flaccid cock was more problematic than I had first thought. I was stretching his foreskin so tight I could almost see through it as though it were made of that cling wrap stuff. I could nearly see my own cock underneath his skin.

"C'mon, Thomas, take me. I'm ready...I'm ready."

He turned his head, now looking straight at me. "Leave...me...to die."

"No!"

I used my other hand to massage his balls as I continued to jerk us both off. I had to get him hard, too. I had to get him to understand that I wouldn't give up on him. Not ever.

Then I was consumed by a tingle, deep inside, right at the pit of my stomach. "That's it. I'm your food and what you need, so feed from me. I'm yours."

"You don't...understand."

"Like fuck I don't. Now take what you need. Do it, Thomas. Do it now!"

The sensation inside me increased, my toes and fingers became numb and for the first time I was no longer holding his flaccid cock. He was hard, too. It was beautiful. His skin gained opacity, his spiderly veins becoming hidden as they should be.

I shuddered and, not only was my bladder experiencing the feeling of being siphoned, the rest of my insides were, too. I smiled. I had done it.

"I...will need too...much," he said, his voice returning to normal.

Every organ inside me screamed out in pain, my body as ridged as Thomas' was a few moments ago. He was taking from me and this time he needed so much more. I could feel the urgency he imposed on me, feel that he took from me much more quickly than he had before. Could I give it all to him? Or would I fail, unable to rescue him from the brink of death?

"Fucking take what you need. You can't die, you hear me? I don't want to be stuck somewhere without you..."

But my words became muffled as I convulsed. Spittle flew from my lips as I talked, as I tried to convince him to keep on feeding. The pain that surrounded me soon became a part of every nerve

and every fibre and was so intense I lost control of all motor function, my limbs now useless appendages from my body. Thankfully, Thomas took over, holding my cock to stop us from parting. I could no longer feel my fingers or my toes anyway. He was feeding and I could do nothing until he was finished.

His skin had become opaque, a wonderful sight. He had the strength now to lift his legs and arms, but he needed more. His eyes were still sunken and his tongue and lips were still a terrible bluish hue. I had to keep conscious, keep aroused so I could give him even more.

Thomas took over by masturbating me while my cock was inside his foreskin, our join still holding. "I have to...stop. I'll...kill you otherwise. I need...you for more than this. I need you for...as long as you'll...live if I hadn't met you. Do...you understand that, my...darling?"

"Don't...be...stupid." But as I spoke those words my eyes rolled back into their sockets. My view of the ceiling and not of my beautiful Thomas. "You won't...hurt me, I know...that. Just do what you...have...to. I...*will*...understand."

I couldn't scream out in agony, I no longer had the strength. I had been more than siphoned and an uncomfortable serenity passed through me. Was I close to death? Had my attempt to revive Thomas resulted in my own demise?

“Jacob, my darl—”

But I didn’t hear the rest of what he said. I sunk into a terrible darkness. My world collapsed into unconsciousness. I had lost my hold. Was this the end?

* * * *

Thankfully, I wasn’t dead. I knew that because when I opened my eyelids, there was my Thomas. His lips were pressed against mine and his eyes, those piercing, beautiful eyes of his, stared longingly down at me. He looked as he always had, sexy yet dorky in that special way only he possessed. I coughed, unable to help myself. I could feel my strength return, my body awaken from the darkness I had recovered from.

Thomas moved away from me. “Thank God you’re all right. I was worried sick.”

“You’ve just given me CPR, haven’t you? Was I that bad?”

He nodded, running his hand across my cheek with tenderness. “I’m afraid so. You can’t do that again, Jacob. I may not be able to revive you, not if I need too much from you again. You’ll not have it within you.”

I sat up, my body aching all over from being drained of all of my energy. The room spun. “At least we’re both all right.”

"I suppose." He kissed me, that sweetness of his serving to remind me I was feeling rather hungry.

"Do you have something to eat? I'm starved."

"Sure do. Anything for you, my darling." He rose.

I realised I was on the bed, the pillows thrown onto the floor. I was naked, my clothes scattered about with the pillows. My cock, now flaccid, had dribbled cum into my pubes. It wasn't dry yet, so I assumed from that I had recently orgasmed. At least I didn't have to pick out cum spackle. As Zane had said a few times, that hurts. Seemed Thomas had continued on without me after I had fed him. Was that a necessary part of the feeding process? Did he need his desert after the main meal?

"Thanks."

When he left the room, he called out, "What do you fancy?"

"Oh, I don't know, something sweet I think. I'm feeling a bit light headed." I touched my forehead for emphasis. My head pounded, too.

He didn't answer, but I assumed from that he had something in mind as to what to give me. I sat up. Looking around I noticed for the first time how large this secondary bedroom was. The ocean a deep expanse of darkness as night touched it. I wondered how late it was. I realised, too, I hadn't

slept since...oh fuck, I didn't know how long I had been awake. Jumping back and forth sure made me feel disorientated. Give me linear time any day. At least I knew what was going on then. Maybe I could convince Thomas to stay at one point, experience each day as I did. Then again, perhaps the energy I created as I arrived at different points was what he fed on. Did he collapse because he had tried it that way and I had no energy to give him?

I dismissed those thoughts from my mind. Second guessing without any information wasn't a good idea. I decided to concentrate my efforts on what I did know. I looked around the room.

Amongst all the furniture, stuff that could be found in any bedroom, mirrors, a dressing table and a chaise-lounge, oddly there was a large chest of drawers next to the door Thomas had disappeared through. It was a huge great wooden thing that didn't quite sit right with the rest of the bedroom furniture. I mean, everything else matched, all modern and shiny. Not this. The chest of drawers looked like it didn't belong in here, or had been in the room so long the rest of the furniture was added afterwards.

The second drawer was open.

Before I knew it, I was up off the bed, rummaging through the drawer, my curiosity getting the better of me. Inside, there were

photographs, hundreds upon hundreds of photographs, all of good looking young men. Some of the pictures were old, like the ones Grandma had of Grandpa when he was a lad. Some were recent, beautiful glossy digital prints.

I went to the bottom of the pile. There was a picture of me. I looked as though I did when I was eighteen, or to put it another way, how I looked when I was at the Spring Dance only a few hours ago...or whenever I was there. I couldn't remember him taking my picture. Then again, to me, it may not have happened yet. Underneath my photo, there was a picture of Callum. Then Zane.

As I thumbed through them, trying to work out what they meant, I was shifted in time once more. My world faded into the familiar white nothing.

"No!" I screamed. I was taken away to the next point in my life.

Chapter Nine

I arrived outside, the sun beating down on my back, the sky blue, the birds chirping and the world around me unaware I'd materialised from whenever it was I had come from.

I realised I was walking along the main street of Pembroke Eve, holding Thomas's hand. He looked like he was in his late teens, say nineteen or so. I assumed from that we were in the present—well, the point in time where I had been at before this relationship began, anyway. I had arrived from the future then. Not where I wanted to be. Why hadn't I gone back to high school, to find out if Mr. Mendelssohn's accident was detailed by the principal? Or, for that matter, why hadn't I stayed where I was so I could confront Thomas about those photographs?

"Can I ask you something, Thomas?" I cleared my throat.

Although, when the moment came for me to bring up the subject, I didn't quite know how I

was going to do it. Namely because he'd know I was snooping around in his belongings. Then again, the house was supposed to be mine. Whatever was in that house was my business, too. Wasn't it?

"What is it?" he replied without interest.

"I really don't know how to begin. There are so many questions going around my head I—I mean, why are there all those pictures in that chest of drawers?" There, I said it. But my mind wasn't at ease. I spoke the truth when I said I had plenty more questions. "Who are they? No...wait. No. that's not what I mean—"

He stopped. "Are we going to go through this again?"

I was taken aback. "What do you mean?" I hated answering a question with a question, and as my dad used to tell me, that was a sign of a weak mind, but I couldn't help it. I had no idea what was going on. I was in the dark, fumbling for a flashlight or whatever to try and find my way. That's how I felt anyway.

He grabbed me by my shoulders, coming around so he could look me right in my eyes. "The reason I was on the floor dying was because *you* left me. You had discovered those photographs and before I could explain them, you stormed out."

My bottom lip trembled and that awful feeling

of dread rise up from my stomach. "How long were you...how long did I leave you for?"

His eyes narrowed. Slowly, he replied, "Two weeks."

I took a step back. It was like a brick had just struck me from behind and for a moment I lost my footing. Thankfully, Thomas was still holding me, stopping me from falling onto the pavement. "You got so jealous and so angry when you discovered those pictures I didn't know what to do. Yes, those pictures are of the ones I had fed off before you, but that didn't mean you had to leave me. Why did you leave me to die? Why? I can't help who I am."

I saw red. How could he say such a thing? I'd never leave anyone to die, not even Corey Harrington. "You lie!" I yelled, more from my reaction than anything else. "I'd never do that. Why do you think I nearly killed myself to save you? What are you playing at? Are you trying to manipulate me so I'll do whatever you say without question, be your food forever and ever?"

He let me go. I stepped back again. "I don't ever want to hurt you in any way. I told you that." His voice was calm, in complete contrast to mine.

"You said I was your first. How can I be your first when you've had hundreds before me? Answer me that?"

"I don't want to go through this again." He

turned, walked away.

I ran to be in front of him. "Don't walk away from me. Answer my questions, Thomas. I have to know."

His stare bored into my soul and his face hardened. "I've already fucking explained everything to you. I have no desire to explain myself again."

"Or you'll do what? Get what you need off Callum or Zane?" I placed my hands onto my hips, standing defiant.

"Yes."

That one word floored me. I opened my mouth, then closed it again. My mind still spun with questions and that niggling doubt I had first felt back when I climbed into that Ferrari remained. But at the same time my feelings went out to him, too.

Finally, I said, "You're not giving me much to go on. How can I trust you if you don't tell me everything?"

I dropped my arms to my sides. For the longest time we both stood there looking at each other. I searched for the reason of my doubt. How could I be his first when he chose to feed off young men and that sex was an integral part of his feeding process? The time I woke up on the bed, after I had orgasmed and unaware I'd been ravished, proof of that. Or had he done nothing and my

orgasm was an after effect of being drained to within an inch of my life? I had read stories of men who when beheaded would ejaculate. I never understood why anyone would want to straddle a headless man. Had I ejaculated out of instinct?

My doubt lingered.

“All you have to know is that I need you, my darling. You *are* my first, but I am also eternal. The shells I reside within as I walk my path don’t last forever.”

Oh God. That doubt within me rose up to almost choke me. I understood his words exactly. Thomas—I mean, the being within him, used humans so he could exist forever. Those pictures were of his food, no denying that. But what about his hosts? Who were they? I swallowed hard.

I *was* Thomas’s first, technically. Thomas was probably a virgin when he was taken over. I bet he’s not even gay. I remembered he didn’t have any interest in me. But once the thing got inside him that was another matter. Thomas had become whatever the creature wanted to fulfil his purpose, and considering cock-docking was his feeding method, then men were his only choice. Poor Thomas.

What this things purpose was I didn’t know. But I had to find out. I could give my doubt a name. Disgust. All this time I had been disgusted by Thomas—I mean, by the thing that had

consumed him. I hadn't realised this before, but now I did. Now I knew. No wonder he was so adamant to only reveal what he wanted me to see. If I saw the truth earlier, I perhaps would have let him die. I had been corrupted by flashy presents and nice houses and...and affection. I had been controlled, manipulated and used. No longer did I fear for myself. I feared for those who were next.

I licked my dry lips. "And Callum and Zane?"

"Simple. They will be mine if you fail, my darling."

A new found determination swept over me. I had to rid this world of this creature. How? I had no idea. But one thing was for sure, I had to succeed. "I won't fail you, Thomas," I said, having to swallow any bitterness to make myself sound as though everything was all right between us.

He smiled. "That's better. Now let's kiss and make up, okay?"

I stepped forward, almost forcing myself to do so. He embraced me, his touch sending shivers down my spine. But I couldn't let him suspect anything. I couldn't give away my intentions. Not yet.

We kissed.

He tasted sour. So much so I almost dry retched with his tongue inside my mouth. I was as gay as they came, but having Thomas's affection thrust upon me now made me feel repulsion. I've never

felt like that about a man before.

When we parted, he said. "That's better. Now, you'll need to feed me soon. I've been more than twenty-four hours without you."

"Sure." I ran my hands over his back. "You know I'm here for you as long as you need me." My words sounded as bitter as his kiss, but I had to say them. I needed some advice and I think I knew who could help me, too. Mr. Barnaby. If there's one thing I'd learned while being in Pembroke Eve, friends were the most important asset I could have. Callum I hadn't met yet, and Zane—well, he was also unknown to me at this point in time, if I was right about the time I had arrived at. So was Suzy. There was only Mr. Barnaby left.

Thomas pecked me on my cheek. "Good. Now let's go get those items your mum needed before I need you. I like to feed in private, as I'm sure you appreciate."

I reached into my pocket. In it was a slip of paper. I'd arrived at a time when I still lived with my parents. When I studied the paper, I smiled. On it were the usual things, but there, right at the top, in my mum's handwriting, were the words, *I want 50 tins of ready made ravioli, sweetheart. Get more if you have to. I don't want to miss out on getting the special carton price, okay?*

I smiled. I had a feeling I had materialised at

this time for a reason. Maybe I could control the points of my life I arrived at. I was just thinking I needed Mr. Barnaby's help. Now I was going to see him. Did Thomas know, too? I couldn't say anything, just in case he didn't. From what he had told me the future wasn't exactly determined. Remember, he had to make sure I kept on the right path. Well, I had news for him. The path I would now choose *wouldn't* be the one he wanted me on, that's for sure.

The wonderful tinkle of the shop bell rang out as we entered the General Store. Without even realising it, we had arrived. Mr. Barnaby wore his usual cheerful disposition.

"Greetings there, Jacob my boy. Hello, Thomas. What'll it be today, gentlemen?" The old man came around from the counter. "You know, I've just got a consignment of tinned ready made ravioli I think you won't be able to pass up on."

"Funny you should mention that, that's exactly what my mum wants," I said.

I noticed Thomas had a disinterested look drawn on his face. Good. Now was my chance.

"Well, bless me, news does spread fast," Mr. Barnaby said next to me. "I haven't even unpacked them all off the pallet yet."

I handed Mr. Barnaby the list. I was going to use him as a distraction to get away from Thomas for a moment. "Here's what else mum needs. I'll

go grab the cartons of ravioli."

A panicked look overcame the old man. "Oh my, but—"

I began my journey to the storeroom. "Don't worry, Mr. Barnaby, I'll make sure I won't scare Aloysius in any way."

The look of concern changed to that of surprise. His eyebrows shot up his forehead like blinds opened too fast. "How did you know about him?"

Unfortunately, our conversation drew the attention of Thomas. "Who's Aloysius?" he asked, stepping closer to Mr. Barnaby.

I got in before Mr. Barnaby's inevitable protest, adding as casually as I could, "He's Mr. Barnaby's storeroom boy, that's all." Which was true as far as I was concerned. Mr. Barnaby had mentioned he had a storeroom boy a couple of times in the past. Funny, I've never seen him. Now was my chance.

"Is he cute?"

Shit! Thomas had become interested. I shrugged my shoulders, again trying to sound as though I was disinterested. I hoped he didn't suspect anything, but I was scared out of my wits he'd discover I was up to something. I'd never had to act like this before. Then again, I wasn't anyone's food before, either. "For a fifteen year old, maybe. Certainly not my thing."

This time I couldn't halt Mr. Barnaby's words,

and he blurted, "I'll have you know he's most certainly not fifteen. He's my dearest and oldest friend. I don't know who you think he is, my boy, but he's nothing like you say."

Thomas slapped Mr. Barnaby on his back, distracting the old man for a moment. "You don't have to justify yourself. Whatever floats your boat, hey?"

I didn't need to worry. Mr. Barnaby took it upon himself to dismiss the whole thing and ignore Thomas's jibe. "I'll get the things on your list, plus a little something I ordered in for you. I'll put it on your account, so don't worry. Just don't be too long in the storeroom. Aloysius gets most upset if anything's disturbed without reason."

"Yeah, don't be too long, Jacob, my darling. We have to go soon. I'm starving." Thomas must have decided that the conversation was going nowhere and that he'd change it to be more about him. He headed over to the magazine section, picking up a copy of *Blue*, the latest from what I could tell at this distance.

Mr. Barnaby had wandered down one of the aisles, but called out, "You can grab a chocolate bar or something if you're hungry Thomas. It's on me."

"Naw, it's okay. I want something more... substantial."

I caught a glance of Thomas before he buried

his head in the magazine and I disappeared into the darkness of the storeroom. His eyes had that look, that wanting within them he got before he needed to feed. I shuddered. I would have to join with him soon.

As soon as I was in the storeroom proper, I was confronted by a dragon, all scales and teeth and smoke curling from its nostrils. But the sight didn't shock me. In fact, I had a feeling deep down that he was more than familiar, like a memory from childhood once forgotten but now apparent.

"Aloysius?"

My heart sang. I did know the creature. I couldn't explain it, but I knew him. I smiled.

The reply from the gloom, a voice so welcome I had to stop myself from yelling out with joy, said, "You may think this all strange, but just know that I have a special understanding of everything that's going on here. You don't need to question how I know, answers will come in time, but Jacob, you bring with you great evil. Be very careful how you tread."

I came closer to the dragon. "I know. What can I do?"

"Do you know who he really is?" The rasp of the dragon, that sandpaper over wood sound he created when he spoke was such a relief to hear. I walked over so I could see him better. He was magnificent, the largest thing I had ever seen alive

and royalty with scales as far as I was concerned.

"No. No, I don't."

"He is an eternal and he's not only feeding from you, but each time he does he's taking away what you are so he can become you. You are also his next victim."

Chapter Ten

"Wait. Let me get this straight. He's going to go after Callum or Zane whether or not I do as he says?" That's why he had their pictures. They were next and he was going to use me to get at them, too. The fucking bastard. Anger seethed within me. I couldn't let him take anyone else, no matter the cost. I loved Callum and Zane and as far as I was concerned, my love for them meant more than anything, even life itself.

"Yesssss." Aloysius moved his head, a whiff of smoke curled up from his nostrils. "He will become you just like he became Thomas. So sad..." Aloysius's words trailed off, before he added, "You'd better go. He may come in here after you. You already know he can't be too far away from you. He needs you, for now."

"How do I...you know...kill him? I mean, I thought that if he didn't feed he'd die. I was only going to starve him. Well, that was my plan anyway."

A thoughtful expression came over him. I supposed it was a thoughtful expression, either that or he needed to pass wind. Reading a dragon's face wasn't easy, his expression didn't change, the scales too hard I supposed. "No. You can't do it that way. He would then just accelerate his takeover and you'd be lost forever, and before you're prepared. I'm aware you've already experienced what could happen if he takes too much. No, the only way to get rid of an eternal for good is to have him drawn out so he's between hosts. Then he will be vulnerable."

"How?"

Aloysius lifted his head. "Quick. You've been in here too long. The ravioli you need is over there, next to the pallet of mushy peas. I believe your wonderful mother will need four cartons. Now go, Jacob. Believe me when I tell you this, you'll find a way. I know you will. Oh, and you've got a smudge of dirt on your face, too. Did you know that?"

"Where?" I instinctively rubbed my nose, hoping I had removed the mark without knowing where it was.

"You'll see soon enough. Now go."

I didn't dawdle, grabbing the cartons and making my way out of the storeroom as best I could without looking as though I was in a hurry and I'd been talking to Aloysius about how I could

kill an eternal. Seemed the time line Thomas wanted to get me off was correct. I was going to murder him. I just had to figure out how I was going to do it.

Thomas was at the storeroom door.

I jumped. "Geez, you scared the shit out of me, Thomas. Don't do that."

"Were you in here flirting with the storeroom boy, then?" He tried to peer in, but thankfully I'd blocked the view, holding four cartons of ravioli helped.

"I told you, he's not my type. Now, you ready to go or what?"

"Yes. I'm getting hungrier by the minute now."

I swallowed hard. Then something struck me. Something Aloysius had said. If the pictures were of his victims and his hosts, then there was one missing. Thomas. Of course. How could I have missed that? Then the other thing he said confused me. Did I have a dirty mark on my face? Surely Thomas or Mr. Barnaby would have at least hinted to such a thing. "Tell me, why isn't there a photo of Thomas in your collection?"

He waved his hand to dismiss my question. "Yes there is. You're simply mistaken. Now let's go, my darling, I'm getting bored here."

As I came out from the storeroom and joined Mr. Barnaby at the counter, my vision became consumed with that familiar white light. But this

time, it was because I wanted it to come. Thomas had said he'd given me the power to travel to any point in my life, and by God, I knew where I wanted to go.

* * * *

I arrived at our house, the mansion at the edge of the ocean. I smiled. I had done it. Immediately I began searching rooms. I knew with absolute certainty the photo of Thomas wasn't in the chest of drawers. So where was it? Thomas had said it was there. Was he lying?

Whether or not I would find the photo, I had no idea, but I had to try. Although, I had to be quick, I knew Thomas wouldn't be far. I didn't know how much time I had. Funny, I could travel to any point, time having no meaning. Yet when I needed time, there was none.

"Jacob, what you doing?" Thomas called out from below. He must be in the kitchen fixing me something to eat. He didn't need that sort of food.

Fuck! That meant that he *was* close. I was hoping, probably foolishly, that he'd not be home. "I'll be down in a second." I then thought of that mark on my face Aloysius had claimed was there. That's it. I'd use that as an excuse. Is that what the dragon meant when he said it? Was he giving me a sort of alibi so I would have a chance to search

the house? "Just cleaning myself up a bit."

"Come down as you are...now, please."

"I won't be long, honest." I said as I went into a bathroom. The room was huge, all modern taps and a bath so large I could have ten friends in there with me. I went over to the sink. Then something struck me. There wasn't a mirror in the bathroom. What sort of bathroom doesn't have a mirror?

I stood there, staring at the wall where a medicine cabinet was fixed, but no mirror. How was I going to see if I had dirt on my face now? Then something else struck me. Wait. What if there weren't any mirrors in the house at all? Surely that must mean something. First, no picture of Thomas, the eternal's latest host, then I discover that there are no mirrors to be found.

But I had to make sure.

I rushed out of the bathroom and went down the hall. No mirror at the end. I descended the stairs. On the second level, I checked every room, including the bedroom Thomas had collapsed in and the room that housed that chest of drawers. Yep. There weren't any mirrors in any of the rooms there, either. Not even on the dressing tables. Now that was weird.

Why hadn't I noticed this before? Then again, every other time I had been in *my* house, I'd been preoccupied. Funny that. Now I knew what

Aloysius meant. He was giving me a clue. He was telling me, in that wonderful subtle way only dragons could, that the way to defeat an eternal had something to do with mirrors. Maybe they can't see themselves. No, that was stupid. There had to be more to it than that.

I clicked my fingers. "That's it!" I yelled out, realising I had done so all too late.

"What's it, my darling?" His voice was closer than before. He must be coming up the stairs. "Oh...um...I got that smudge off my face...bugger wouldn't come off...all greasy or something."

My throat constricted and I had to admit, a wave of panic washed over me when he approached. I knew with absolute certainty I never had a mark on my face. I also knew I didn't have any reason to be in this room again, not without it looking like I was checking that pile of photos to see if Thomas was lying, anyway.

I stepped out the bedroom, dashing into the next room. It was a TV room, comfortable looking slouch chairs were scattered about over a shag pile rug and a large LCD screen hung on the wall. Again there was that lovely view from the window.

I hoped Thomas would buy what I just said, and his next words at least washed away some of my doubt. "You're silly. You don't need to pretty yourself up for me. I love you the way you are."

He came into the TV room. As he entered, my suspicion, my *eureka* moment I had seconds ago came to fruition. I knew why he didn't have any photos of Thomas or indeed any mirrors in the house. An eternal mustn't be confronted by the image of his victim. Such a thing like his reflection or a picture of his latest incarnation would draw him out.

Aloysius was right.

I had to draw the eternal out of Thomas before he claimed me as his next host and Callum as his food. I also had to tread carefully. I mean, he had changed time itself to get me to accept him, including having Callum, the love of my life and the guy who only had eyes for me, marry Armin. And why oh why would I sell the Food Emporium? I promised Mrs. O'Doherty I'd look after it for as long she needed me to. It wasn't really mine to sell. When I thought about it, lots of things became clear. I had been manipulated. And I hated that feeling.

"Why, that's so nice of you to say such a thing," I said as convincingly as possible as I embraced him.

He groped my arse. My skin crawled as he continued to touch me. "Now come down for something to eat. I fixed you some lunch. Your favourite, cheese and chutney sandwiches."

"Thanks. Don't forget you need to eat, too."

He squeezed me tighter. "I intend to get my fill of you, don't you worry about that."

I let him go. He reciprocated. "Whenever you need me, I'm here for you."

"Good." He took me by my hands. "Now that you've accepted that, you can forget about looking for that photo. I threw it away." He squeezed my hands tight, so tight he hurt. I tried not to show him he was causing me pain, but couldn't help but wince. My eyes began to water as he continued to apply pressure. "Or I'll punish you if you doubt me again. Clear?"

He let go. My fingers were white and my knuckles and joints ached as the blood slowly returned. I knew he was strong. Breaking my bones wouldn't be a difficult task for him. "I'm sorry. I understand and I won't...I won't doubt you again. I promise."

"Now go eat," he snapped. "I need you at your best. I'm hungry and I will need a lot from you today."

"Of course."

I left the room and went down to the lower floor kitchen. My hands still stung and I rubbed them together to try and get the feeling back into them before I reached over the kitchen bench for the plate of sandwiches he had prepared for me.

A terrible thought consumed me. If I wasn't careful, if I rushed my plan, I could be killed. I

didn't have any doubt in my mind at all that he would kill me. In fact, I feared for my life, especially seeing how fast his moods turned when he was hungry.

When I took the first bite into the sandwich, Thomas appeared. He had a cruel smirk on his face and a hunger in his eyes.

"You finished yet? I can't wait for you any longer."

I swallowed the contents in my mouth. "I've only just started."

"Don't answer me back with that attitude!" He picked me up off the breakfast bar stool with ease, my sandwich thrown to the floor from the force of his action. "You said you'd be there for me. I need you now. Now give me what I want. I can't wait any longer for you. I can't wait for you to dither about, worried only about yourself."

He dropped me. I fell flat on my arse, unable to gain a footing on the kitchen tiles as I fell. I got up as fast as I could. I didn't want to give him the satisfaction of seeing me on the floor, showing him any weakness may spur him on to hurt me more. Then again, my defiance may anger him more. I just didn't know what to do. I'd never been in a situation like this before.

"I—I am here for you, but you told me...to eat. You told me—" I couldn't finish my words.

He struck me.

I was propelled into the fridge from the force of his strike across my face. My shoulder found the stainless steel and pain shot up from my arm. My face seared with agony. I tasted my own blood.

He came over me. "Feed me now. I have provided for you. I have given you a nice house, a good car. What have I done to deserve your disobedience? Tell me. What have I done to be treated this way?"

I tried to get up off the floor again. But I couldn't. Not straight away. My right arm, the one I used most of the time, didn't want to support my weight. "I...I—"

He kicked me, right into my stomach. The breath of my life was knocked out of me and I gasped before coughing up blood and splattering it across the tiles in front of me. "Don't speak. Just get the fuck up and do what you have to. I don't want any more disrespect, you hear me?"

I used my left hand to grab onto the fridge handle. I pulled my self up. Pain continued to shoot up through my injured arm, but worst of all, my face went numb and my left eye began to close over. I don't know if he broke any bones when he struck me, but it sure as hell felt like it.

When I was on my feet, unable to stand upright like normal because my body became consumed with pain when I tried to straighten, and without a word, I unzipped my pants and took down my

underwear. My clothes found my ankles. I was ready for him. He could have me, for now. Next time things would be different. Next time I would be better prepared.

He grabbed my cock.

I shuddered with disgust, with complete and utter revulsion as he began to roll back my foreskin and began his feeding.

Chapter Eleven

I didn't have to experience the feeding procedure, thank God. As he begun, I wished with all my heart I was somewhere else, anywhere but in that kitchen with him at that point of time in my life.

The white light saved me.

I found myself in a huge locker-room, complete with the stereotypical shower cubicles along one wall and slat benches next to rows upon rows of lockers along the other. Even though steam from the showers made things hazy, to the point where all the mirrors were foggy next to them, I could make out the sign on the far wall, *P.E. Sea Eagles University Football Team*. I wondered why I had materialised here. As far as I was concerned, this was Neanderthal central. Not a good place for a gay guy at all.

My heart skipped a beat when laughter pierced the air above the sound of running showers. When I caught my breath, I realised that laughter was just

some blokes engaged in a bit of horseplay on the far side of the locker-room. They even slapped wet towels over each other's naked buttocks as their laughter became louder and louder. I chuckled to myself. Most football guys saw more naked men than I ever did and touched more, too.

Although, being here did mean one good thing. I couldn't see Thomas anywhere. That pleased me. That's not to say he wasn't around, but for the moment, I was free of him. Good. I needed some time to think. I didn't want a repeat beating, not unless I was better prepared.

I sat down.

Corey Harrington stood next to me. He looked about how he did the night of the Spring Dance, age wise. I had arrived in the present—or near enough to it. My attention was then drawn away as my gaze wandered over his body. He was wearing a towel and a cheeky smile and nothing else. He was also dripping wet, water cascading off his well toned muscular body, including a six pack I'd only ever seen on underwear models in magazines. Fuck he was hot. The bastard. Pity he was a dickhead and about as intelligent as two planks of wood nailed together. Thick, that's what he was.

"What do you want, Corey?" I said with a sigh, trying to sound as disinterested as I could, even though I knew with certainty what was going to

transpire.

"Why don't you just suck my dick, faggot?" he said, stepping closer so that his crotch happened to be in my line of sight.

I looked up. That wasn't what I expected to hear. He was still smiling, too. I had seen Corey naked once before—in my real life. In the life I had before I met...Thomas. I'd even blown him before. Sure, it wasn't in this locker-room, but at the lake. That time I had to blow him underwater so I wouldn't be seen. Which led me to one conclusion and one conclusion only, I *could* affect how I wanted events to unfold. My path was different now. That much was certain. I had succeeded in changing things. Then again, I had to. My life depended on it.

"Sure. If you say so," I said cheekily. The smile disappeared from his face. Was he taken aback by what I said? Somehow I didn't think so. He had that look in his eyes I had seen so many times, it was unmistakable. He had a wanting. "So, do you want me to blow you here right now or somewhere else more private?"

His lips curled and he replied, "Here and now. But do it quickly. Before I change my mind."

"Or your mates finish in the shower and catch me blowing you, you mean."

He put his hands onto my head. "Just do it...*Jacob*."

"If I do it for you, I want a favour in return." His hands massaged my head. It felt good. His touch was strong, yet not too strong so he rubbed my hair from their follicles.

There was a moment of silence, before he said, "What?"

"I said, if you want me to blow you, you'll have to do me a favour."

"No. I meant, what is it you want me to do for you? I ain't doing nothing freaky, you hear me? Just because I'm letting you touch my dick doesn't mean I want to go out with you or anything like that. And I ain't buying you a gift, either. You want flowers or chocolates or shit like that, you get it yourself."

"Shut up and listen, Corey. I want you to take a photo of Thomas for me."

He let go of my head. "Why can't you do that? He's your boyfriend."

I stood up. "Well then, you can suck your own cock then, can't you?"

That want remained in his eyes. His bulge was clear, too. He wanted relief and at the moment I was the only one who could give it to him. I mean, Corey did like guys doing certain things, after all.

"Okay...Deal." He held out his hand and I shook it.

After the deal was sealed, he placed his hands onto my shoulders, pushing me back down. I sat.

His hands massaged my head again and I removed the towel, letting it drop to the floor.

As I feasted my eyes on what he was blessed with, I said, "Good. Now I can get down to business."

Corey was well hung, much to my disappointment. Why couldn't Neanderthals like him have pin dicks? Why didn't he have a little knob, one unable to sprout out from his pubes even when fully erect? There would at least be some justice in this world if that were the case and some satisfaction on my part. But no. He was beautiful, both in body and in genitalia. Fucking bastard.

I grabbed his cock hard and squeezed so his foreskin retracted naturally as his head became engorged with more and more blood, swelling to the size of a plum and just as red, too. He was now rock hard and as huge as he was ever going to be. His piss slit dribbled pre-cum.

He moaned. "Fuck yeah." He tightened his grip, his fingernails digging into my scalp. His touch, even though rougher, still felt good. "Most girls don't even know how to touch a dick, they're too scared. But not guys. They know how to handle the equipment. And gay guys, they're the fucking best."

"We sure are." I brought my mouth up to him.

I didn't bother with any licking or kissing or

any other means of dancing around, getting straight down to what he wanted. I just sank his cock into my mouth and as deep as I could take him, having to adjust myself a few times so I wouldn't gag or he didn't touch my uvula so I would dry retch. I didn't want that, not a good look.

Instead, I concentrated on sucking with as much force as I could, making sure I had plenty of saliva to lubricate my action, rubbing my tongue against him for added effect. I also made sure I groaned and gurgled as I worked. Soon, with a bit of jiggling on my part, I became nose deep in his pubes. He smelt manly and like lavender scented soap. Then again, the lavender odour on his skin was to be expected. He'd just showered.

Thankfully, he wasn't as huge as Zane. I *could* take all of him, so much so I would have blown him anywhere and at any time and had ball rash on my chin if he were my boyfriend and not such a jerk. I now had an idea what Suzy and so many others saw in him. I could also see the danger.

When I had finished, he wouldn't do anything to reciprocate what I did to him. I'd have to wank off in the toilet. I bet I'd even have to wipe my own chin. Corey was a guy who was so self centred, so selfish, that everything, including sex, was all about him.

But this time around I *was* going to get what I

wanted. I was going to get something so important that what I did to him now was going to be worth it, even if he didn't realise it. My deal with Corey, my arch enemy and the Devil as far as I was concerned, was for a reason. A bloody good reason. My life.

"Grab my arse and fucking suck me harder, bitch!" He growled deep as he began gyrating and holding onto me as though his life depended on it.

His words disturbed me from my thoughts.

I couldn't reply, having his cock in my mouth saw to that. I did mentally giggle, though. I mean, what he just said was such a great B grade porn line. Something my beautiful Callum would have said to get me all worked up.

I missed Callum.

Still, Corey's words turned me on, especially in the heat of the moment. I stirred, feeling uncomfortable as my underwear rubbed against my awakening cock. I tried to ignore my own desires.

Instead, I moaned and groaned some more as I continued to work his length, letting his cock slip out of my mouth every now and again so it made a wonderful slurping noise. I licked the length of him, wetting him even more. Corey hissed between his teeth. He liked that.

"You like my dick, don't you?"

"Yes," I said, licking my lips, taking in his

manly taste. He was nice, sweet and salty at the same time. He must eat well.

I did eventually grab his arse, noticing straight away his buttocks were rock hard, so toned and so damn fucking sexy I wished he was gay and not such a meat head. I pulled him closer.

Then again, I'd decided I'd had about enough of this one way affair. The time was right for him to climax and pay the price for what I did. I needed that photograph.

He massaged me again, this time twirling my hair in his fingers. A nice touch. Seemed he wasn't ready to finish, so I took all of his cock into my mouth once more. Corey whimpered with delight. When I looked up at him, his magnificent stomach trembled and his rock hard pecs jiggled slightly. His nipples were hard, too. His eyelids squeezed shut.

Corey was approaching climax and well beyond the point of no return. I kept at it though, hoping it would be over soon, working faster and faster, sucking harder and harder. My lips tingling, my jaw aching.

The next couple of seconds confirmed my theory. He yelled. His hot sticky cum filled my mouth and slid down my throat. More and more he ejaculated, until he bent over nearly double as his body continued to convulse and he unloaded more of himself into my mouth.

I took him all. After all, the deal we had made would be worth it.

"Fuck!" he said with a growl. He grabbed his cock and pulled it out of my mouth.

He came away with a sound not unlike a pop. My saliva dribbled off him. The sight of his cock, all wet and hard and still oozing cum from his piss slit, was a magnificent one.

"Do you want me to lick you up, beautiful?" What the hell, he was going to save my life, might as well give him the complete fantasy.

"Oh, God, yeah."

I grabbed him again, continuing to suck him off, but also licking him, concentrating my efforts on his foreskin as it rolled back into place to cover his head. He continued to cum, no where near as much as before, but still. It was nice to use it as lubricant in conjunction with my saliva. His cock felt wonderful, so slippery and sexy. I slid him in and out of my mouth as he became flaccid, spitting back the contents of my mouth to cover his cock and then taking him in again. I did this over and over. He let me. His eyes still had that wanting.

After a long while, he stepped away from me, his cock flaccid, yet still glistening with my attention.

He picked up his towel and wrapped it around himself. "Thanks," he said casually. "You'll have

the photos by the end of the week."

I was about to get up, head for the toilet to relive myself when a voice I never wanted to hear again in my life, if I could help it, rang out to echo across the locker-room. "You fucking cheating bastard," Thomas screamed, running toward me, his face bright red with anger.

Corey came between us. "Hey, you two. Bitch fight outside. This is Sea Eagles ground not a faggot convention."

Thomas stopped in his tracks.

"Sorry, Corey," I said, coming around him to face Thomas. "I was just leaving anyway."

I closed my eyes, willing myself away from this time. The white light greeted me.

Chapter Twelve

I arrived in high school, the lunch hall to be exact. A tray of food comprising of greasy chips, a burger that already looked half masticated and a drink that didn't have any ice in it, sat on the table in front of me. I sighed. I didn't miss these meals and I yearned for some of mum's cooking, even if it was one of Mr. Barnaby's weekly specials from a month ago.

Seemed I had gone back in time to my past. Again, not where I wanted to be, but considering my haste when I left, I couldn't complain.

Unfortunately, my time away from Thomas wasn't going to be as long this time. He sat down adjacent to me, parking himself so I had to look at him face to face. He placed down his tray of food forcefully. It was filled with bits of everything from the cafeteria. Although, I knew he wouldn't be eating anything on it.

We were the only ones at the table. Great. Just fucking great. Now I had to deal with him. He

looked pissed off. As he should be, I supposed considering how he was the last time we'd seen each other, in the future.

"Why did you do it?" he spat. "Especially with that thing, Corey."

My stomach turned. I was scared out of my mind by the sight of him, but I couldn't let that get in the way of what I had to do. "I said I'd be there for you when you needed to feed. I didn't say anything about being exclusive to you in the bedroom, did I?"

His anger was apparent. His face twitched and the buttered roll he had picked up became a mash of dough in his white knuckled hands. "Don't twist things around. Listen to me and listen to me real good, *Jacob*. You will do as I say, be where I tell you to be and do as I tell you to do from now on. Do I make myself clear?" He spoke those last words through his teeth.

"Or you'll do what? Beat me senseless again?"

There was no reply. Only his stare that bore through to my soul, chilling me to the bone. He stood up, but surprisingly he came around the table so he could sit next to me.

When he was seated again, he shuffled over so he could be as close to me as possible. He looked at me, right in the eyes again. This time his face had softened. My words must have affected him, because what he said next nearly floored me.

"I'm sorry, my darling, I really am. I just get...get agitated when I'm hungry, that's all. I don't eat like you, three meals a day and that. But when I'm hungry—well, I kind of get a bit obsessed. I don't have much time to feed. You've got to understand that. You've also got to believe me when I say this, but in no way did I mean to hurt you. You're my boyfriend and that means a lot to me."

He delved into his jeans pocket, producing a ring box. When he opened it, inside there was the most beautiful gold band I had ever seen. Did he think he could buy my love? What a nerve. What a fucking nerve. I didn't know whether to feel appalled or laugh.

"Um...geez, I can't marry you...I'm only fourteen at this point in time," I said as he took the ring out of its housing, trying to sound as pleasant as I could.

"Consider it a down payment, a symbol marking the turn in our relationship, if you will."

Just my luck to get involved with a time vampire who not only acted like one of the Neanderthals who made up the football team, but who also thought he could own me, too. I *hated* him. To even look at him made my skin crawl. I shuddered at the thought of having to continue being intimate with him so I could keep up my charade and buy the time I needed to kill the

prick. He had to die, if only to stop him from doing this to someone else.

"And...what is this *turn* you talk of?"

He leaned forward and pecked me on the cheek. I cringed, but hopefully I hid it well. "I can provide you with *everything* you need. You don't need to go to the likes of Corey Harrington to get some sexual attention. I will do anything you want me to do, gladly."

"You want me to be exclusive to you, then?"

"Yes, that's it." He picked up my hand and slid the ring onto my index finger. It did look beautiful and fit perfectly, I had to admit. I liked the sort of Celtic writing engraved across the band, making it look ancient. Too bad the ring was also a symbol of his control, like everything else he gave me.

"But only after I've fed you. Right?"

"Now you understand." He got up. "I'll see you after English class in the first floor boy's toilet where I can show you what I mean by giving you everything you need. Besides, I can't stand being here in this hall watching you all eat, it disgusts me."

I disgusted him? Fuck!

"Sure," I said, squeezing the word out, unable to believe what I'd heard.

When Thomas was out of sight, a chubby lad came and sat down at the table. What was his name again? Brad something...yeah, that's it. Brad

Burmeister.

"You going to eat those fries, Jacob?" he said, his hand already hovering over my plate.

"Naw. You can have them."

He plucked the plate off my tray with enthusiasm, tucking into them before I could blink. With his mouth full, he said, "I don't mean to be nosy, but I couldn't help over hear what Thomas said to you." He stopped devouring for a moment to add, "He's bad news, Jacob. My Aunt was in an abusive relationship and—oh gosh, she was so beat up we didn't recognise her. I can see my uncle in your Thomas."

"I know," was all I could honestly say.

"If there's anything I can do to help you, you let me know, all right?"

I don't quite understand what possessed me to say the words I said next, but before I could register what I had said, I had blurted them out. "I want *you* to be my boyfriend, Brad."

He dropped his fries. A stony look washed over him, before he smiled and said with a nervous chuckle, "I'm...I'm not sure that's what I had in mind when I said I wanted to help you."

By now I had gained back my wits. "No silly, it'll be pretend. I just want to get Thomas off my back. When I tell him you're my new boyfriend he'll freak out for sure, but at least he'll leave me alone for a bit. Please, Brad. You said you'd help

me.”

His gaze wandered down to my hand. “I like that ring you got. It’s real pretty.”

I pulled it off my finger, relieved when I handed it over to him. “It’s yours to borrow until I’ll need it again in four years time at the Spring Dance, okay? That and all the fries off my lunch plate for as long as you like, too.”

He looked puzzled, but said, “Okay...I’ll do it.”

“Good. Meet me in the first floor boys’ toilet after English. I’ll tell Thomas I’m dumping him and you’re my new squeeze.”

He put the ring onto his pinky finger. The only one it would have fit. “Say, we don’t have to kiss do we?”

“Maybe.” I was willing to take that chance. Sure, Brad appealed to me about as much as a naked girl did, but I had to buy more time. I saw the reaction when Thomas caught me blowing Corey, so I’m hoping he’ll flip his lid when he sees me walk hand in hand into the toilet with Brad. Hopefully, he’d get mad enough to chase me. I had to see what a mirror did to him and the only one I knew of in the toilets was on the other side of the urinals near the sinks.

“No tongues though. I don’t put anything bad into my mouth.”

He was a fine one to talk. He was the one stuffing his face with greasy chips. But he was

right. He was doing me a huge favour as far as I was concerned, more than anything I'd ever asked anyone so far. Brad, if nothing else, had a good heart, and in my book that made him attractive. If he were *into guys*, I'd be proud to have him as mine. All things considered, he was quite cute. I bet he had an adorable cock, too.

"No worries. Just meet me there, okay?"

"Yeah, yeah. I'll be there." He then continued to devour the rest of the fries.

I hoped I didn't have to go too far to try and convince Thomas he was my *new* boyfriend. I don't think Brad would ever recover if I did anything but hold his hand and kiss him on the cheek.

* * * *

The final bell rang, meaning English, and therefore school for the day, was over. I bumped into Brad at the bottom of the first floor stairs. He looked nervous, twiddling his fingers and offering a crooked smile as I approached.

"Relax. I'm not going to ask you to give me a blow job." I slapped him on the back.

He let out a chuckle. "I'm—I'm not sure about this, Jacob. I don't want to get hurt. I have enough trouble being called names because of my weight. I don't want to be called...you know...gay, too."

I understood how he felt. High school wasn't exactly an easy path to navigate, especially if the—and I use the term lightly—*socially elite* decided a certain person didn't fit in. Weight, height, shape, hair type or colour, sexual orientation, it didn't matter. Anything could be used to make someone feel inadequate or vulnerable.

"No one will know. I'll go into the toilet first and make sure only Thomas is in there. I'll tell him I have a surprise for him or something. Then, when the coast is clear, I'll come and get you. Only then, once inside and away from the doors, will I hold your hand. And that's it. That's all you'll have to do. I'll do the rest. All right?"

He nodded slowly. "I suppose. I—I don't care if you are...gay. I like you. You've always been nice to me. And after this, I hope we can be friends."

"Sure we can. I'd like that. Now, let's get this over and done with then." I didn't mean to sound so dismissive or cold to Brad's feelings, but my mind was on the matter at hand. Dealing with Thomas.

The boys' toilets came into view, only a few metres away from the flight of stairs. Brad was close behind. As I opened the door I gestured for him to stay put. He smiled, this time one that reflected a bit more confidence.

A nasty feeling overcame me as I went into the toilets. There, in the locker area, was Thomas, just

as he said he would be. His smile, that terrible knowing smile of his, chilled me to my core.

"Glad you could make it, my darling," he said as he came up to me. I caught his gaze flick over me. "Say, where's the ring I gave you?" His voice had turned cold, that smile wiped from his lips.

"There's something you need to know." I stood as straight and tall as I could. If he hit me, well, I was ready for him.

He pointed at me. "Don't fuck with me. I'm not in the mood."

My heart was in my throat and I could feel butterflies rise up from my stomach. "I'm not mucking around. I've got a new boyfriend, Thomas...I've decided that—"

"What did you say?" He laughed out loud, mocking me. "You're pathetic, you know that. The only guy you can get is the one who'll let you suck him off in a locker-room. You've got no respect for yourself and certainly none for me. You're a waste of space. A useless fucking waste of space. Who else is going to look after you like I do? Who else is going to put up with your bullshit? You're only good for food and nothing else."

"I'm not useless."

"Are you answering me back?" He came close to me, so close I could feel his hot breath against my face. I shuddered. "Watch yourself," he added with a sneer.

I swallowed hard. "I'll prove it to you."

He seemed to relax, his piercing blue eyes serene. "Okay. Show me. Let me see this famous boyfriend of yours. Let's see him in the flesh. I'd like to meet the guy who has saved me from having to touch you in any intimate way."

I was trembling so much I couldn't move—well, not move in any way that could have saved me had he wanted to beat me and I needed to get out of the path of his anger. Getting Brad involved in this mess didn't seem like such a good idea. I hoped with all my heart Thomas didn't flip out too much to the point of becoming a deranged lunatic. Something I had no doubt in my mind he could become in an instant. I swallowed hard in my dry mouth.

Finally, I managed to get to the door, not exposing my back to Thomas, watching him as he stared at me, as his gaze, hate-filled and angry, bored into my soul. When I opened the door, Brad was where I had left him.

"The coast is clear. He's the only one in there," I said, noticing how dry my lips were. I licked them constantly, but I still felt parched.

"You look as though you've seen a ghost," he said, slipping his chubby hand, all cold and clammy, into mine.

I licked my lips again. "It's not easy confronting your fears."

He pushed me through the door. "I know. I have to do it every time I step out my front door."

I couldn't help but smile at him, even if it was only a gesture. Sure, I was gay, but unless people knew, I was left alone. Not so for Brad. Being *fat* was something he was made aware of every day by every one he met. I had more than admiration for him. I was proud of him. I don't know if I'd ever be as strong as him to be honest, but I had to try.

Brad and I walked into the toilet together. When Thomas saw him, his eyes narrowed. I don't know what was going through his mind, but I had a feeling it wasn't pleasant.

"Thomas, this is Brad—" I began.

Thomas yelled something incomprehensible before he rushed at me, his hands finding my throat before I could react. Brad was thrown to the floor and I was left alone, the life being squeezed out of me.

"I'm going to fucking kill you, Jacob. I'm going to fucking enjoy this as your pathetic life slips away in my fingers."

Thomas pushed down on my larynx, forcing my airway closed. I couldn't think straight. I had to get him off me, but not being able to breathe made my thoughts jumble, made me become soaked with fear. I tried to pry him off, my fingernails scratching the skin of his arms to the

point of drawing blood. That did nothing. He was still strangling me.

"You...won't...be...able...to...feed," I managed before let me go.

Thomas slammed me into a bank of lockers and I hit them with a sickening crash and clatter of metal, making my ears ring. One of the locks dug into my back. Searing pain shot through me and my legs buckled. Seconds later, I was on the floor, struggling with all my might to get up, but at the same time not wanting to for fear he'd kill me.

Thomas's face was bright red, veins bulged from his neck and temples. He stepped over to me, kicking me in the stomach. I tried to protect myself, but whatever I did, however I shielded his blows, he only got stuck into me more.

"Get up! Get up, you useless piece of shit!" Thomas screamed, his words echoing through the toilet's locker-room so they rang over and over in my head.

I rose. Both defiance and pride filling me, making me act. If this moment was to be my last, then I would take it like a man. On my own two feet and looking him, and death, in the eye.

"Do your...worst," I said, my voice husky and pained.

"Now you listen and you listen good." He punctuated every word he spoke with a poke of his finger into my chest. Spittle flew from his lips.

"You'll fucking feed me when I tell you to feed me. But before that, you'll say goodbye to that...that fat fucking lump you call your boyfriend or I'll make you suffer even more before I eventually do away with you."

Before I could answer him, before I could reach up and rub my throat, because like my back and stomach, it stung like hell, Brad must have found a remnant of strength within him. He pushed Thomas in the back.

Thomas was forced away from me from the strength of Brad's attack, but he quickly recovered.

"You fat fucking freak," Thomas screamed, turning so he could face Brad.

But Brad didn't give him time to compose himself. Within a millisecond, so fast I barely believed it myself, he kicked Thomas fair in the groin. The sound was sickening. A dull, terrifying thud.

Thomas fell onto the floor like the bag of shit he was. Holding himself and yelling out in pain. Why didn't I think of that? Brad was fantastic.

Brad came over to me, grabbing me by my shoulders. "C'mon, Jacob, let's get out of here. We've got to report this. You're hurt real bad."

He was right. My back and my throat—heck, my whole body for that matter—ached with so much pain I don't think it mattered about details.

But I was more concerned with something else.

“Not yet.” I pushed myself away from Brad, my vision blurring as I got up onto my feet.

At first, I could manage anything but an awkward stagger, but as I built up momentum, I was soon running. I ran to the sinks. To the mirrors. I had to take the chance, I didn’t know how much longer I’d be alive if I didn’t put into place my plan right now.

Chapter Thirteen

When I arrived at the sinks, I placed myself between one of the mirrors. Hopefully, I would be able to block it from Thomas's sight. The mirrors weren't that large, thank God.

I turned, ready to face him again, determination reviving me.

Thomas got up. The look he shot my way was no longer that of anger, but of sheer and absolute revulsion. His expression created a sort of dark cloud over him, seeping into his skin, making him look evil and filled with malice. Which is exactly what he was. An evil malicious bastard.

He came toward me, as I knew he would. His gaze intense and full of harmful intent. Thankfully, he ignored Brad, only bothering to push him out the way as though he were an inconvenience, an insect only worth swatting away.

"You'll wish I drain you of all of your life next time I feed from you. That much I promise."

I stood tall again. "What happened to the *my darling?*"

As he came at me, he balled his fists so tight his knuckles went white. His mouth quivered, as if he were about to speak. He didn't. He just kept on coming toward me like a man possessed. As soon as he was within arms reach, I ducked, coming to a kneel, making sure I kept my gaze upon him in case I had to get out of his way real quick.

He caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror.

At first I had no idea what had happened. Everything seemed to slow, like time had been changed. Then, Thomas split. One part of him, the host, hid his face with his hands and crouched down, too. The other part, the part that I assumed was the eternal within him, remained standing, frozen by his reflection. The eternal was darkness personified, a being that for all intents and purposes looked like a shadow, only with more depth and form.

A little voice, a whimper, filled with emotion and tears, said, "Help me, please."

The voice was of the real Thomas. I went to him, suddenly feeling great sadness for his plight. I couldn't even imagine what it would be like to have that thing, that vampire within me, doing things to people, hurting them, feeding from them against my will. The poor guy.

"Thomas?" I whispered into his ear.

He didn't register. Instead he kept his face hidden in his hands. Tears trickled through his fingers, wetting them. He repeated his plea over and over. So much so, I became haunted by his words. I felt for him on a deep level.

Brad grabbed me, knocking me from my thoughts of concern for the real Thomas. "I don't know what I'm seeing, but please, let's just get out of here."

When Brad helped me to my feet, the eternal blinked, hiding his deep onyx eyes for a split second. Thomas, the real Thomas, then got up, like he was pulled like a puppet on a string. Both moved toward each other and I watched in horror as they joined again. Became one. Became the monster I had to feed.

I had a few moments to figure out what just transpired. Was the eternal stunned by the mirror? I didn't think so. Not by what I had witnessed. To me it looked more like the mirror made the eternal face himself, reflect his crimes back to him, making him feel guilt and anguish for his victim.

Of course, that was the reason for the eternal momentarily separating from his host. For a moment, he couldn't face the reality of what he did to humans. He could be drawn out as Aloysius had said.

Brad pulled me away, helping me toward the toilet's door. When we were clear of the sink and

urinal area and in the locker-room, the parasite within Thomas became one with him once more. Their separation no longer apparent.

They were one being again.

When Brad reached out to open the door, Thomas yelled out. "I'm so sorry, my darling. I'm so sorry. You can have him, just don't leave me. Please, oh God, please don't leave me. I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry, you..."

I didn't get to hear the rest of his lies. Brad took me away from the toilets, guiding me toward the nurse's station. His touch caring and gentle as he led me on.

"Thanks," I said to him as my eyes filled with the white light of time travel.

* * * *

I was in a hospital ward, a private one. How did I know? I was alone, lying in my own bed in a large room complete with a view of the outside world. The room was unlike any hospital facility I had ever seen, the machines were sleek and unrecognisable.

Sure, some I sort of recognised, a drip, a heart monitor, but they looked different to how I remembered them. I had arrived in the future.

A doctor entered the room, a sort of portable computer device in his hand. "Mr. Jacob Theison,

is it?"

"Yes," I replied.

He checked an LCD tag on my wrist. "Good. Now, tell me what happened?"

"I don't know," I said honestly. I knew I had been beaten by Thomas, now at two points in my life, but I seriously didn't think he'd understand that. Then again, if this was the future, the beating I got in the kitchen would be the reason for my hospital stay.

"Well, you've suffered a broken arm, a fracture to your cheek bone, internal contusions, including many near your lower ribs and abdomen, lacerations on your back, and to top it all off, a nasty injury to your tongue and inner cheeks. To put it mildly, you've been through quite a lot and beaten to within an inch of your life from what I can see."

Yep. The injuries he mentioned described what Thomas did to me in the kitchen in gruesome detail.

"Now you've told me the extent of my injuries, I think I don't want to know, the truth be told, Doctor."

"I don't blame you. Still, we fixed you up, the bone knitter and tissue regenerator did most of the work. We'll just keep you overnight for observation, okay?"

"Um, sure."

He made his way to the door, punching information into the device as he went. "Oh, I forgot to mention, there's someone here to see you. He's been waiting patiently since you were admitted a few hours ago."

I didn't need a second guess as to who was waiting for me. Before I could tell the doctor I wanted some more time alone, the man of my fears came into the room. He was smiling like he always did, that cruel scar I once loved but now despised.

"How are you, my darling, I've been so worried." As soon as the doctor was out of ear shot, Thomas added, "Don't think for one minute this'll get you out of your promise."

"And what promise is that?"

"That you'll be my food for as long as I need you."

I shifted my weight uncomfortably when Thomas sat on the bed. "I said that's what I'll do, so that's what I'll do."

Thomas's demeanour changed to one of delight. "I have another present for you."

I couldn't believe my ears. Here he was still thinking he could buy my affection and forgiveness. I would never forgive him. "I don't want it."

He patted me on my arm. "I think you'll be most interested in this gift, I've spent a lot of time

preparing it, bringing it into fruition.”

From the tone of his voice I knew the so-called gift he had for me wasn’t anything material. He was up to something. But what?

“What *have* you *done*?”

“Oh, come now. I’ve done it for you.”

I sat up so I could look him in the eye. “I said, what have you done, Thomas?”

His grin widened, revealing his eye-teeth. A sparkle ignited his eyes. “It seems that poor Armin met with a rather nasty accident while surfing on his honeymoon in Hawaii. The lifeguards tried and tried, but they couldn’t revive him. Now dear, sweet Callum is all alone and in so much grief. What a terrible thing to happen and right after his wedding, too.”

I opened my mouth, unable to speak. Unable to place into coherent words how disgusted and how furious he made me feel. After the longest time, still in shock and disbelief, I managed, “You’ve been seeing Callum, haven’t you?”

He nodded. “What’s good for the goose is good for the gander, isn’t that right, my dear cheating boyfriend? Besides, Callum’s next on my menu anyway. I just decided that I needed to speed up the process, get used to his taste before I took all I needed from him. I mean, such a move wouldn’t have been necessary so soon if you hadn’t been so disobedient and disrespectful. So, really, it’s all

your fault anyway, isn't it?"

My skin crawled. Imagining Callum, my dear and lovely Callum, being touched in any way by this...thing, sickened me to my core. Made me want to bring up my own bile. "I hate you."

"Now we're even." He got up off the bed. "I've arranged for your discharge a little early. I need to feed tonight. Don't worry. It'll be one of the last times I'll inconvenience you. I promise."

I pressed the call button for the nurse. "Get out."

"I'm going." He blew me a kiss. "Make sure you're ready for me in two hours when I come and pick you up. Oh, and let me make it very clear how easy it would be for me to kill you should you decide to try anything funny. I know you think you had a little victory when you tricked me into seeing my reflection, but really, all you've done speed up my plans."

The nurse came in. "Is everything all right, Mr. Theison?"

I looked at her, then Thomas. "I think I need something to eat, nurse. I'm kind of hungry."

"Now that's a good sign." She began fluffing my pillows and tidying my bed while I was still in it. "Very well. I'll get the canteen to bring you up something. In the mean time, no getting up out of bed. You need all the rest you can get."

"What a good idea, nurse," Thomas said. "My

boyfriend will need all the rest and food he can get. I don't want him to be in here any longer than is needed, now do I?"

She adjusted some dials on one of the machines. "See? Now you listen to your dear boyfriend. He knows what's good for you."

"He's *not* my boyfriend," I said between my teeth, still seeing red over what Thomas had told me about Callum.

She looked at me. "According to the medical sheet he is your De Facto."

"My what?" I said, almost choking on my own tongue.

Thomas stepped up to the base of the bed. "What's yours is mine, my darling. Just in case something should ever happen to you, I wouldn't want all your things getting into the hands of the wrong people, especially when I've looked after you for most of your life. It wouldn't be fair, would it?"

Again, and for the second time in as many minutes, I was shocked. Thomas was a real nasty piece of work indeed. The sooner the eternal was killed the better as far as I was concerned.

The nurse had finished her busy work. "You'll work it all out. Love will always find a way." And with that she trotted out of the room. So did Thomas.

She was right. Love will always find a way. My

love for Callum was endless and without bounds, and I'd do anything for that love. I willed the white light to me. It came. I dematerialised, hoping I would appear at the point in my life where I could put my plan into action.

Chapter Fourteen

The white light dissipated. A sports stadium swirled into my view. On the field below me were many men, all in uniform and all practicing manoeuvres I didn't understand but were necessary for playing football.

The flags of the *P.E. Sea Eagles* flew proudly all around the ground, but most were above the stands. One, near the main stand, was so huge all I could think of was the cost of it and how that money could have been used elsewhere in the university, say for the arts or for updating the library's technology.

I was sitting on a bench in what was colourfully referred to as the nose-bleed section. A place where patrons were packed in without a weather cover and placed as far away from the action as humanly possible without them having to resort to watching the game on the telly.

A shadow came over me.

I looked up, straight into the eyes of a rather

disinterested Corey Harrington. He was sweating, his hair plastered to his forehead. He was training with the men below because he was adorned in the team's blue and white striped jersey and a rather tight pair of black sports shorts. I couldn't help but rove my gaze down to his bulge.

"Hey, here's the photos you wanted, as I said I'd provide...for services rendered." He offered a half-hearted smile before handing me a USB stick.

I couldn't believe he had come through for me. I took the stick off him, trying to not look like I was too enthusiastic. "Thanks," was all I gave him.

"Any time. Just don't tell a soul what you or I did and I won't feel obligated to break your pretty boy face in. Okay?"

As he was about to walk away, my curiosity came up to demand my attention. "Um, how did you get those photos?" I fiddled with the stick. "Just asking."

He turned, my question had struck a cord. "You're not the only faggot willing to give blow jobs for favours."

Seemed my *so-called boyfriend* had been busy, too. "Thomas sucked you off, didn't he?"

Corey nodded and winked. "Yeah, he sure did. And I only had to get him an email address. Jesus, you fag boys must be real desperate for some good meat, hey?"

"An email address?" I said, keeping the

conversation on track. Now I was burning with curiosity.

"That's what I said. Some Indian dude...Arman or Amon or—ah hell, whatever his name was, it was a simple enough job. Which is a good thing, too. Thomas don't suck as good as you."

"*Armin* is his name."

Corey clicked his fingers. "Yeah, that's him. Thomas told me he wanted to get in contact with him so he could introduce him to someone or some such shit like that. I thought he was talking about a relative or something."

As he shrugged his shoulders, my curiosity turned into anger which then boiled up more and more. The full weight of what had transpired hit me and I came to realise the depth of Thomas's manipulation. How my whole life had been affected.

"The fucking bastard wasn't talking about a relative," I spat, but my malice wasn't direct at Corey. "He was using you to set me up."

"Whatever. I got what *I* wanted. Besides, you faggots can sort that shit out amongst yourselves. I got to go." He left me, clambering over the benches. "Oh, and Jacob, whenever you want some hot cock down your throat, you know where to find me."

Corey was out of the nose-bleed section and running across the field before I realised. My mind

too preoccupied with how I was going to continue. I had to be careful. The eternal within Thomas was good.

I looked down, the USB stick I held tight in my hand drawing my attention back to the moment. I smiled. All I had to do was print off what was on the stick. After that, I had a weapon I could use against him.

But I was going to need help.

Seeing as I was in the present, even though I no longer recognised my life because of Thomas, the only places I knew of where I could print off the photos were at my parent's house and the General Store. Both presented a problem. I couldn't go to my folks place, they would be at work and I didn't want to be alone for too long, not with the eternal on the prowl. The General Store wasn't any good for the opposite reason. I didn't want him to discover Aloysius.

Come to think of it, I couldn't even see Zane or Callum or Suzy. They didn't know me. The aliens who captured the town either hadn't arrived yet or, because time had been so affected, wouldn't ever arrive here.

There was only one choice left.

I had to see Brad.

He was my only friend on this new path of my life. I had befriended him in the past, I wondered if I had kept up with that friendship and he would

help me again. Being jolted backwards and forwards all over the place did mean I missed the simple things in life. I longed for a shower. Or did I only feel dirty because of what I had to resort to because of my desire to get rid of the eternal within Thomas?

I stood up, my determination once more springing me to action.

As far as I knew, Brad lived on the west side of the town in an apartment complex. The building, from memory, was right in the middle of the less affluent part of Pembroke Eve. Too far away to walk. I had to get there and I had to get there quick.

The coach's whistle caught my attention. I watched as Corey sprinted across the field to stop right below the nose-bleed section. The whistle sounded again. I assumed from that they were playing a practise match. I had an idea.

I went as fast as I could down to the field, clambering over benches and trying my damndest not to trip over and look like a complete tool in front of the whole team.

When I got to the metal fencing that bordered the field, I screamed out, "Hey, Corey!"

At first he didn't reply. Instead he bolted to a sprint, jumped high in the air and caught a ball that had been kicked to him. He finished by kicking it back where he was then applauded and

called all sorts of names by his team mates. I assumed that's how they encouraged each other.

Corey was poetry in motion, and for the first time I could see the appeal of watching sports. He looked magnificent as he bounded around in those tight shorts, his body a beautiful sheen, his muscles flexed. He was damn fine. I could see myself cheering him on if I ever went to a game.

When he came back into position, he said, "What do you want, faggot?"

"I need to borrow your car keys."

He laughed. "You've got to be fucking joking!"

"I'm serious, Corey. I need to get to the west side. I'll bring it back. Hell, I'll even fill the tank up, too. I just need your car."

"No way."

Again he sprinted off. The ball never out of his sight as he caught it and returned it.

He came back. "You still here. I thought I told you no."

"Please, Corey. I'll do anything. I really need your car. *Please*."

This time he didn't dismiss me straight away. "How'd you get here then?"

"It's a long story. Look, I'll get out of your hair as soon as you give me your keys."

"Suppose I let you. What is it you'll do for me exactly?" His nose scrunched up as his mind worked. From his sudden interest, I'd say he

wanted something sexual, but a blow job wouldn't persuade him, he'd already received at least two of those that I knew of recently.

Before I could answer, he had to do some more ball chasing. When he came back into position, and in as low a voice as I could so the whole oval didn't hear me, I said, "You can fuck me with that big, beautiful cock of yours." There. That'd stroke his ego.

His lip curled. I'd appealed to his desires. "Is your man pussy nice and tight?"

I smiled. Yep. I'd got him. "Tighter than any one of the pussy's that belong to the cheerleaders you guys all go through, that's for sure."

He looked me up and down. His eyes had that look, that wanting about them. "The keys are in my locker. It's open. If there's so much as a scratch on my car, I'll make sure you do get fucked up, and not in a nice way. Oh, and park it in the same spot. I don't want have to go look for it. Now get out of my sight before I change my mind."

"Thanks, Corey."

"Just leave your phone number on my sports bag. I'll contact you later so we can finish this arrangement."

I left. When I was about to enter the locker-room, the coach screamed at Corey. Seemed my talking to him had got him into trouble. I think he missed a kick or something. To tell you the truth, I

was kind of looking forward to his phone call. At least Corey wouldn't drain my life from me, even if there wouldn't be any affection whatsoever as he fucked me. I missed Callum—the Callum of my time—so much.

Corey's car was a typical show pony type of thing. All hotted up, plenty of chrome and an engine that was way too large for the type of vehicle it actually was. Still, it got me to Brad's house and that's all that mattered.

I was kind of nervous when I pressed the buzzer to his apartment. According to my current knowledge, the last time I had seen him was over four years ago.

"Yeah, who is it?" his voice crackled over the intercom.

"Um...it's me...Jacob. Can I come in?"

"Sure you can. I've been waiting for you."

Chapter Fifteen

Okay, now I was confused. I hated all this time travel crap. I craved—no, yearned with all my being for my life to return to what it was. At least then there was some rhyme and reason to the way things happened.

The door to twenty-seven B clicked open as I approached. Standing there, all welcome smiles and in overalls and work boots, was Brad. I had to say, the four years since I had seen him had been kind. He was thin—well, thinner. Not only was he healthier looking, his skin glowing and radiating a cheeriness I hadn't seen before, he was damn fine, too. You could say handsome. If he had a girl, she was one lucky thing, for sure.

"Hey, Jacob." He led me into his place. "These tax forms are driving me crazy. I've been ripping my hair out all afternoon."

I nodded, trying to look as though I had some inkling of what he was talking about. When we came into the dining room, I began to understand.

On the table were forms and papers scattered about. Most had the heading, *BB's Beautiful Gardens* written on them. I now knew the reason for Brad's transformation. He had become a lawnmower man. How damn fucking hot.

I at least knew where to begin the conversation now. "Yeah, since I sold the Food Emporium I've got plenty of time to give you a hand with the paperwork of your business."

"You're a champion, you know that."

"Hey, what are friends for." I patted him on the back as he pulled out a chair. "Say, Brad, can you get a hold of some mirrors, large ones?"

"Sure can. Folk are using a lot of them to make their yards look bigger these days. They're real popular in courtyard gardens."

I sorted out his papers, placing them in date order. The latest was for the seventeen of January. I assumed that was either yesterday or today. He seemed to be mowing lawns or doing garden duties pretty much every day.

"Good. I would need about four or so."

"When do you want them by?"

"The eighteenth." I decided to take a stab in the dark.

He sat down, a gorgeous smile brightening his face. "No worries. I'll have them by tomorrow after lunch."

"Thanks...oh, and can you bring them to the

boat house and set them up inside? I'll explain everything when you get there."

He nodded. "That's sure going to be hard to explain to folk who see me doing it, but yeah I can set them up. Anything else?"

I produced the USB stick from my pocket. "Just one more thing. Can you print out the pictures on this?"

Gingerly, he took the stick from my hand. "It's not porn or anything like that is it? I mean, I don't care that you're gay...it's just that I live with my parents here and if they see the stuff you're in to...well...um...you know."

"Relax. Nothing's on it that'll offend them or you."

"Okay. Consider it done, then."

"So, how much do I owe you for the mirrors?" I thumbed through his invoices, noticing that mowing people's lawns was a lucrative little business.

Brad was on a winner here.

He gestured to the pile of paperwork. "Don't worry about it. You've helped me more times than I can count with all this stuff."

I willed my time travel light to consume me and it came. I had achieved everything I desired at this point in my life. All without seeing Thomas. Perhaps he was giving me some space for now. He did say he was nearly done with me. Which was

perfect as far as I was concerned, because I was nearly done with him.

* * * *

When my mind cleared away the confusion of my jump, I found myself in a hotel lobby. The place was gaudy and extravagant, complete with indoor atrium and oversized leather chairs scattered about in communal groups.

I knew without a shadow of a doubt I was in Hawaii, in the hotel where Callum and Armin were honeymooning. I also knew why I was here. After the news of Armin's death, I would have come anyway, even though I had only just recovered from my beating. Funny how I was still alive at this point in the future. Perhaps Thomas decided to keep me around for a little while longer. Food was food, after all.

For the here and now, Callum needed me. And in a really weird way, I needed him. If only to see him in the flesh.

The concierge stepped up to me. "Can I help you, sir?" The *sir* said with a hint of disdain.

"I'm looking for someone," I replied with equal condescension.

"I see."

He looked down at me. I didn't need this guy's shit. Thankfully, Callum appeared out of the

elevator in the nick of time. He looked heart broken, his face a weary mask.

"And there he is." I ran to Callum, not bothering to wait for the concierge's response.

Unfortunately, Thomas also came into view, too, stopping me in my tracks. He must have been out of sight when the elevator doors opened, otherwise I wouldn't have been so enthusiastic. My spirit sank. Seeing that permanent smirk of his made me feel sick. Scratch that. Seeing him hold my Callum by the waist, that made me seethe and not because of jealousy. I knew what Thomas had in mind. Callum was his next meal.

"Hello there, *my darling*," Thomas said, coming around so he was next to me, taking my hand into his. "So glad you could find us. I was worried sick about where you had got to. I hope you haven't been up to anything you'll regret." That last sentence was said with more malice than I had ever heard from him. It was like venom dripped from the words.

I tried to ignore him, deciding instead to remain defiant. "What are *you* doing here?" I whispered to him.

He didn't answer. I knew he wouldn't do anything in a public place that would expose him. He liked to do his dirty deeds in private. We both stared at each other. The hate seething from me was tangible.

Thankfully, Callum came to hug me, breaking the stalemate I had with the eternal.

"I'm so glad you're here, Jacob. Thank God Thomas paid for you both to come. I've...I've been...since Armin...passed. I don't know what to do...it's all been so sudden and..." Callum broke down and I couldn't do anything but accept him into my arms and console him. It was apparent Callum didn't know Thomas was the one who murdered his husband.

As I continued to hug Callum, his smell, sweet and tangy like ripe lemons and frangipani, filled my nostrils. I wanted to tell him everything. How Thomas was a leech and that I was the one who was meant to be with him. No, actually, I *was* with him. Time had only been changed so Thomas could feed off me.

"There, there, I'm here for you, buddy. Anything you need, you just ask." I ran my hands over his head, feeling his soft hair between my fingers.

"I know," was all he said, still consumed by his grief, his shoulders heaving with the weight of his emotions.

Thomas came and patted me on the shoulder. "I think we should all get out of the lobby. Come to think of it, we're going to be here for the rest of the week or at least until Callum is able to fly home with Armin, anyway. Why don't we all go up to

our room?"

Callum came away from our embrace. Immediately, I missed his touch, but looking at him, thinking of myself should be the last thing on my mind. He was in pain. His eyes were bloodshot and tears had stained his cheeks.

"Oh geez, I must look a mess," he said, wiping his eyes. "You're right, Thomas. Let's get out of here."

I panicked. I didn't want to be left alone with the eternal. "I have a better idea," I said. "Why don't we soak up some fresh air and go sit by the pool? You never know, it's such a nice day, the sunshine may cheer you up a bit."

Callum lowered his head. "If it's all the same to you, I'd rather go to my room."

Thomas glared at me. "Now isn't the time to be enjoying yourself, Callum. There is much to do. Jacob wasn't *thinking* when he said that."

"What would *you* know?" I hissed at Thomas.

His return glare made me know I'd stepped over the line. I didn't care. There was no secret now between us that we hated each other.

"No, Jacob, Thomas is right. I've got so much to organise before the flight back," Callum said, looking distant for a moment.

Damn it. Seemed Thomas was better than I thought at manipulating people. I nodded slowly. "Okay. Like I said, whatever you want, Callum."

Callum's attention then came back into the moment. "Speaking of work, I need to check up on something with the concierge. It's about the arrangements I've made for...for Armin." Tears rolled down his cheeks, this time he didn't bother wiping them away. The poor guy. "I'll be back in a second, but you can go on without me if you want. I know where you are."

Callum walked off.

"Wait! I'll come with you," I said, all too late.

To my dismay Thomas had pressed the elevator button, the sound of the bell making me jump. The doors slid open.

"After you, *my dear sweet darling*," Thomas gestured.

"But Callum needs me."

He grabbed my arm, pinching my skin. He hurt, but I didn't yell out. Instead, I twisted so he had no choice but to let me go, not wanting a scene right here in one of the ritziest hotels in Hawaii. I ran.

I sprinted as fast as I could across the lobby, past luggage trolleys, quaint shops, flower stands and finally, out into the street. When there, gathering my bearings for a brief moment, I decided to head toward Waikiki beach.

The place was crowded and that served me in two ways, it was public and I could lose myself in amongst that crowd. I know I was crazy to do so,

but there you have it. Crazy times led to crazy measures.

Many times I bumped into people, at one stage someone's ice-cream went flying from their hand. I shouted out my apologies. But really, I had to keep running, because when I glanced back, Thomas was giving chase.

He could run fast.

I was short of breath and sweating in no time, the Hawaiian sun blistering. I had to stop, much to my dismay. When I did pause, my exhaustion became apparent and I almost doubled over from the exertion, having to hold my sides to try and prevent me from getting a stitch. Yet, every time I turned to see where Thomas was, he was closer.

I may have been bumping into people, but Thomas didn't give a shit. He came at me no matter who was in his way. One mother had to pull away her child, the kid would have been knocked over if she hadn't. He was like a bulldozer through the crowd.

Panic rose up within me. Seemed the hundreds of tourists and locals alike, were no longer going to offer me any protection. Perhaps Thomas didn't want to create a commotion in front of Callum back at the hotel. Yep. That made more sense. Now that Callum wasn't here—well, he could do whatever it took to get me to go with him. I bet the time was close for his feeding.

I felt so much sorrow for Callum above anything else, and not because his husband had been murdered, either. Callum was going to be Thomas's next victim, after all. Acting all nice and being well behaved and sugary sweet, like he was with me at the beginning, was his tactic of choice to woo his victims. I had to say, his plan had worked on me.

A man gave me a dirty look as I bolted back up to a sprint and nearly careened straight into him. Again, I had to get away. I had a terrible feeling Thomas had put into place most of his plan to get Callum. I would soon be redundant.

I mean, for all I knew, Callum could have already fed him. I shuddered at that thought. Yet, deep down, I knew it would have been a given. Thomas, if anything, was determined.

As I ran, I decided I had no choice but to jump to a point in time to try get away from him. As the white light came, I got a terrible feeling he wouldn't be far behind, able to pick up on when I was.

I had to be ready for him.

Chapter Sixteen

When I materialised, my mobile phone rang, startling me.

I pressed the answer button and Corey's voice rumbled through the speaker. "Hey bitch, I'm waiting for you. Get that cute little arse of yours over to my place right now. I want to fuck you 'till you choke."

He hung up.

Geez, he had such a wonderful way with words. But then again, I did owe him a favour. Pity I felt like shit and the last thing I wanted right now, besides seeing Thomas again, was having Corey puff and pant behind me.

I left the mansion on the golden mile, the home Thomas had provided for me, the place where everything in my life had turned for the worst. I didn't bother locking the front door, deciding to climb into my Ferrari and speed as fast as I could to Corey's place. Which, considering what I was driving, meant I was there in no time flat. I didn't

want to be alone at any stage. I knew Thomas was hungry, why else would he chase me through the streets of Hawaii?

Pulling into Corey's drive, I noticed the sun was high in the sky. It must be close to midday and I wondered what day it was. When I rang the doorbell, Corey opened the door, the look on his face more than enough to let me know he desired my body.

"Glad you could come," he said with a wink.

"I didn't really have a choice, now did I?"

He slapped me hard on my arse when I passed him. "Oh, come now, Jacob. Don't be like that. A deal is a deal. I'm just making you pay up, that's all."

I found myself in the front lounge before I knew it. There was mood music, some *Harry Connick Jr* track playing on the CD and the lights were dim. Oh dear God, was this how he treated all his fucks? If it were up to me, I'd rather do it in the kitchen and be done with it. At least I could get a drink straight away afterwards.

I turned to him. He had already taken off his shirt, the low light doing nothing to diminish his well toned body.

"You've got ten minutes, whether you cum or not, and I'm out of here," I offered, my voice distant.

"No need to get stressed out." He undid the

belt of his jeans. "I've got heaps of beer and pretzels. We can make a night of it. Just you and me. You know, like mates, but a bit more involved."

Was that how he justified having sex with men? I didn't know whether or not to laugh or feel sorry for him. No, I was sorry for him first, then I let out a laugh. "Do you get *involved* with all of your mates?"

"Depends."

By now he was down to his boxers. I couldn't take my gaze off him. He was an Adonis, no question. I suppose being round him tonight wouldn't be so bad. I may not get the chance to be intimate with anyone again, not if Thomas has his way.

"Ah, what the fuck." I surrendered to the moment Corey had spent a bit of time preparing. "I'll stay for as long as you need me. Just stop calling me a faggot, okay?"

He slipped off his boxers, his cock was erect, but not yet fully hard. His foreskin had slid back to reveal his beautiful big ripe, red head. He wasn't far from being rock solid, just like the muscles all over his body.

I stood in amazement for a moment. Back in the locker-room I didn't get a chance to appreciate his full beauty. Now I did.

"Okay, I'll stop calling you a faggot. I'm only

saying that shit to stir you anyway. I like you, Jacob. I like you a lot."

Pre-cum dribbled from his piss slit. "I can see that."

Then he said the weirdest thing, "Come here. Come to your Daddy. Let Daddy take you into his arms and soothe away your worries."

Again I didn't know whether or not to laugh. He must have been watching some bad porn. Then again, he must have been good, I stirred. Perhaps I should just play along. What harm could it do? I was already in for a fucking, might as well have some fun in the process.

"Where does Daddy want me?" I must have sounded ridiculous saying such a thing. But there you go, I had said it. As I did, I realised I had a smile on my face. Maybe I needed this. I wouldn't have thought in my wildest dreams, that the biggest jerk I'd ever known would be such a turn on in this alternate time line.

He sat on his suede-like sofa, patting the cushion next to him, the look in his eyes complete and utter lust.

"Daddy wants you to take your clothes off real slow. Then he wants you to sit next to him and tell him how much of a good little man you've been today."

I began to giggle. "I'm a what?"

"You're my little man, of course. Now, don't be

naughty. Otherwise Daddy will have to smack you."

"How's this, Daddy?" The room felt warm as I lifted up my shirt, revealing my navel and stomach for him to enjoy. I was getting a thrill too as I watched him enjoy me. His eyes intent and his lips wet from him licking his lips.

"Uh oh. Not like that. Do it slow. Daddy wants to enjoy his show."

I slowed. I also moved my hips and danced to the music as I took off my shirt, seductively and with a new found lust for the football jock who so happened to be jerking himself off because of what I did.

"Like this?" I said with a sultry tone as best as I could manage.

"Yes. Daddy likes what he sees. His little man is very handsome."

My cock hardened. Seemed his words, as corny and so out of place as they sounded, especially considering I was an adult and not a *little man* or anything else for that matter, got me horny. I was soon hard as hell, too. But because he wanted his performance, I couldn't free my cock from my pants, not yet. I ached. The material of my underwear suddenly felt harsh against my skin.

By the time I got around to taking off my boxers, my cock was as hard as it was ever going to be and the CD had begun its second loop, the

lounge filled with some *Tom Jones* styling. Still, I had to admit, I was having fun.

When I did slip off the rest of my clothes and I was there before him in all my glory, Corey gasped. I liked that.

"Come, sit down here. Daddy wants to give you all of his special attention."

I was next to him before he could finish the sentence. My cock ached even more, producing so much pre-cum it dribbled onto my balls. I was about to wipe the fluid away, when he added, "Only Daddy's allowed to touch."

He grabbed my dick. Not tight, but forceful enough to know he wasn't mucking around. Then, with slow deliberate movements he jerked me off, making sure his hand ran the length of me, squeezing more pre-cum out of my piss slit.

Soon his fingers glistened with my excitement. "You're good...Daddy."

He stopped, letting my cock slap onto my stomach.

"Now, talk to me, little man. What you say will determine what present Daddy will give you."

To tell the truth I didn't know what to say. I hadn't role played before and my mind went blank. What was I supposed to say? I'm being chased by a time vampire who wants to feed from me? Eventually, with my cock tingling from his attention and my stomach quivering from pangs

of ecstasy that rose up to soak me with that wonderful euphoric feeling, I said, "I cleaned my room today." Geez, that was so lame.

But Corey didn't seem to be bothered. In fact, he kissed me on my cheek, his lips warm and his stubble tickling. My God, a football hunk kissing me. What was this time line coming to?

"That's good. Did you tidy up your wardrobe, too, like I asked?"

Before I could answer, he had moved from placing his attention onto my face to licking and kissing my nipples. They went hard within seconds as his tongue roved deliciously around and around them. Again wave upon wave of pleasure washed over me.

If I thought his attention couldn't get any more wonderful, I gasped when he kissed my stomach, moving down towards my pubes. Was he going to blow me? The anticipation was killing me.

"I did, Daddy. I cleaned it all, just like you said."

Corey, to my absolute disbelief, did take my cock into his mouth. I was soon deep within him and what's more, he sucked so hard and rolled his tongue around so much I thought I was going to blow right there and then. My balls tightened as he worked. My stomach did somersaults.

When he came away, he said, "What else have you done today, little man? Daddy is very happy

with you so far.”

My cock glistened with his saliva, even my balls were soaked. I was amazed above all else how he could be so damn fucking good. He even licked his lips before kissing me over and over, touching my glans with his hotness. What a visual and sensual feast he provided. It was fantastic.

“I washed Daddy’s car,” I said straight away, getting into the swing of this now.

“Oh, what a good little man.” He grabbed me by my hips, letting me know in no uncertain terms he wanted me on my hands and knees. “I’ll show you what a wonderful reward I have in mind for you. You’d like that, wouldn’t you?”

“Yes, Daddy.”

When I was in position, or more to the point, when he was satisfied, because he kept adjusting me, making sure my legs were spread wide enough and that my head was down so I got a view of my own cock, he began to run his hands over my skin with so much tenderness I gasped. With his touch he also kissed my back, moving down so he was soon giving his attention to the top of my backside.

I think Corey had this game wrong. If I was understanding the way this role playing was supposed to happen, wasn’t I supposed to be a *bad* boy and get punished? Whatever. Not that I had the heart to tell him. I was having so much fun

thoughts of Thomas seemed far away.

"Are you ready?" he asked, his voice had a depth of caring that brought to life for me the fact he wasn't just a meat head with the intelligence of a dirty jock strap.

Not that he gave me a chance to answer.

I became lost in the moment as his tongue, gently at first, licked my arsehole, wetting it, preparing me for his beautiful cock and my present for being good. He did this for a few minutes, or about as long as it took *Tom Jones* to finish crooning that I was a sex bomb.

Seconds later, as his patience had thinned and he was satisfied he had done enough, otherwise he'd blow his load before he could fuck me, he stopped with the foreplay and shuffled himself along the sofa.

There was a brief agonising moment as he got himself into position. Then magnificently, he pierced me. I whimpered as pleasure and pain shot through me.

"Shhh, my beautiful little man. Daddy will treat you right, you'll see."

He was big and oh, so fucking wonderful as he sunk himself deeper and deeper into my arse. His cock rubbed against my prostrate and I swam in his warmth. My feet tingled and my stomach trembled with delight. In he went, further and further, filling me, making me moan even more

with pleasure. Not once did he rush or attempt to push himself into me so he hurt too much.

Instead, when he had gone in as far as he could go and his balls touched mine, he moved with a slow sensual rhythm. I had never been fucked with so much care, so much attention to how I would feel. He kept his strong hands on my back, massaging me.

"Oh, Daddy, you're so good to your little man," I said with a gasp as he worked and I moved my hand up so I could jerk myself off while he was inside me.

The sensation of my prostate being stimulated, of him moving both inside and over me, and my own manual movement over my cock was almost too much. I was in heaven, one created by the most unlikely person in the whole wide world.

Corey didn't answer. But I knew he was close to climax because he had moved his hands from my back to grasp my hips tight, enabling him to push himself deeper into me. I let out a delighted yell, the sensation of him filling me more than adequate.

He moaned, too. His movement within me had become erratic over the last few seconds and even though he was root deep in my arsehole, he tried to push himself in deeper and deeper, enjoying my tightness because he was near on screaming. His rhythm was nowhere near as fluid as when he

first started, but I didn't care. I was enjoying him as much as he was enjoying me. Then, for a long moment he stilled, trying to halt his descent into orgasm. I knew that feeling all too well.

Corey let me go, unable to hold himself anymore and with a groan and with his body shuddering, he released his cum. He yelled out, "Oh, my little man, you've been the best today."

"I hope I did please you."

He slipped out of my arsehole, the feeling momentarily making me gasp. I bet it would take a while for me to return to my usual tightness. He was huge, and even though he hurt, he was the most beautiful I'd had since I had been with Thomas, before I found out the truth about him anyway. I thought I'd never say those words, not about Corey.

"Now clean Daddy up, just like you've been cleaning all day."

I came around so I could face him. His cock was still hard and cum oozed from his piss slit. I took him into my mouth without hesitation. He was warm and slippery and delicious. I loved every moment of what I did as I sucked out the remnants of his orgasm. I kept on wanking myself, too. Soon, the rapture of orgasm consumed me and I blew my load, capturing as much of my cum in my foreskin as I could, pinching the end. Some dribbled onto my fingers, but thankfully I didn't

soil his sofa.

All the while, Corey held me, massaging my hair as he had done in the locker-room. I sucked and slurped on his cock until he became flaccid. He pulled me off him. I missed him straight away and wanted more. So much more.

"Did you like that?" I asked, coming to sit next to him as he flopped down onto the sofa, his sexual energy spent.

"I sure did. You *were* nice and tight, just like you said. Jesus, guys are the best fucks, they really are."

"Glad to hear it. And you know, I'm glad I borrowed your car now."

He smiled. "Say, do you want a drink before we go again?"

"That would be nice...Daddy." I was surprised he wanted more. I was surprised I did, too.

He laughed. "I hope that didn't sound too stupid with all that *Daddy* stuff. I saw it on a skin flick and thought I'd try it. Next time you can be the bad boy and I can punish you some."

I patted him on his knee. "It worked for me and I'd love to be your bad boy. Bad boys like to do dirty things."

Corey's eyes widened. "I can't wait, my bad little boy," he said with a laugh that filled the room, drowning out even *Barry White*. "But clean yourself up. There are some tissues on the table

over there. I think it's time for a beer break and some snacks. I'm starved."

I looked down. I was no longer holding my foreskin, so yeah, my cum was soaking into my pubes and running down my leg. I felt dirty, probably just as well considering that was his plan for our next roll on the suede sofa.

As Corey got up, slipping into his boxers and jeans, the sound of something being smashed outside sent shivers across my spine. "What the fuck was that?" I added, my heart in my throat.

"Might be some critter rummaging around in the garbage cans. It happens all the time being out here near the Longmuir. Here, get your gear on. You can give me a hand scaring them away."

So much for the drink and getting to be a bad boy.

Chapter Seventeen

When I was half dressed, not bothering with my shirt, I joined Corey in the hallway. He had a flashlight and baseball bat at the ready.

"Time to have some more fun, hey?" he said, the sparkle in his eyes different this time. More animalistic. "This day just gets better and better."

I think the idea of scaring off or even killing a small defenceless animal appealed to him. Then again, he was a meat head. Sure, an adorable one who happened to be exceptionally tender when he made love, but the fact remained. Corey was Corey.

He handed me the flashlight. Before I could turn the switch on, there was a loud thump on the front door. I jumped.

"Now that didn't sound like a critter to me."

"Oh, don't be such a baby. It's probably a couple of mates mucking around," he said as he reached out to open the door.

I grabbed his hand. A terrible feeling

overwhelmed me. "What if it's not any of your mates?"

There was another thump on the door, louder this time. "Well, I still have to answer the door to see who it is, don't I?"

Corey knocked my hand away and turned the handle. Before he could pull the door open, Thomas barged into the hallway, coming at me, knocking the flashlight from my hand.

"Fuck!" I screamed as Thomas pushed me into the wall. I hit it with a thud and the air was knocked from my lungs.

"I am going to get what I want and then I'm going to enjoy watching you die, too, *my darling*." Thomas's face was a twisted mask, his eyes intense and his lips had formed such a sneer, saliva dripped onto his chin. He brought his hands to my neck, choking me.

"What the fuck? I don't want no fag fight in my house spoiling my day," Corey said, raising the baseball bat and bringing it down onto Thomas's back.

There was a loud crack that pierced the air. But Thomas didn't budge. Instead, he kept one hand on my throat, pinning me to the wall, while with the other he undid my belt. He needed to get to my cock, the means of his feeding. Now must be the time. I could also see the hunger in his eyes, that and the hatred.

Corey whacked Thomas again, this time across the back of his knees. "Jacob is mine today and no one's going to spoil that, you here me."

Thomas crumpled from the force of Corey's blow. He let me go and just in time, too. He had begun unbuttoning my boxers and my cock had poked out of the slit in the material.

I gasped for air. Unable to speak, unable to offer any assistance other than to try and get my wits about me and as quick as possible so I could help Corey. If there's one thing I knew about Thomas, he'd kill Corey to get to me.

Seemed I was right. Thomas focused his attention on Corey, turning to him.

"You fucking dickhead," Thomas said with a chilling coolness to his voice considering he'd just been struck with a bat. "You've got no idea who you're dealing with, do you?"

Corey readied his baseball bat once more. "Get the fuck out of my house or I'll smash your face in real good."

Thomas laughed. He stepped forward. "Go ahead."

I don't quite know what happened, but as soon as Corey went to swing at Thomas, the bat was stopped in mid and snatched from him. Thomas had it and he patted the hitting end in his other hand to emphasis that fact. The look on Corey's face said it all. He was both shocked and

surprised, as I was.

"How'd you...?" Corey stepped back, the confidence he had in spades earlier had vanished. His posture no longer showing any poise, his shoulders slumped. The guy was defenceless and what's more, he was confronted by one pissed off eternal who happened to be holding a weapon.

"Run, Corey," I screamed at the top of my lungs, spittle flying from my lips, finally able to speak. My throat throbbed dull, but I had to do something. Thomas would kill us both and then move on to Callum. So long as I had breath in my lungs I would do whatever it took to stop him. I had to.

Thomas turned to me, bat at the ready. "How nice. I get to tenderise my food now before I eat it."

I didn't cower. Again, showing my defiance satisfied me on a primal level, even though it would make no difference whatsoever in the end. Defiant or not, I would still be a corpse.

"You fucking bastard." Corey's momentary lapse in confidence had ebbed away. Thank the Lord he *was* a meat head and showing the world his testosterone level was an every day occurrence. He charged at Thomas.

What happened next happened in a blur. Thomas had been thrown off balance and pushed into the cupboard where Corey had retrieved the

bat and flashlight. Thomas screamed as the door was slammed shut, trapping him. Corey quickly placed the back of a chair under the handle and discarded the bat. I don't know how long such a thing would hold Thomas, but at least we had some time to get the hell out of here.

"Let's go!" I tucked my cock back into my boxers and zipped up my jeans. I grabbed Corey's hand, at the same time, trying to ignore the screams of hate and terrifying bangs from the cupboard as Thomas tried to get out. The wood the door was made from wouldn't last long. Already it had stress cracks along the grain.

Corey didn't resist me when I grabbed him. Perhaps he was still stunned. He didn't know what Thomas was, after all. We ran outside. I knew what that smashing noise was earlier. The windscreen on the Ferrari had been smashed.

"What the fuck's his problem, Jacob?" Corey said as I gestured for him to get into the car.

"He's not who you think he is—shit! My keys are in your house." I fumbled in my jeans pockets with desperation. Nope. They weren't on me. They must have fallen out during my strip show. Damn it. We'd have to run.

"Your car is blocking mine. And I ain't going into my house with that psycho in there. You got your phone on you? I'm gonna call Sherriff Tucker."

"Calling the cops won't do anything. You saw how easy it was for him to get that baseball bat off you. No, we got to run then."

A terrible and disturbing sound of wood being splintered into a million pieces came from the house.

"Where do we run to, then? The town centre is too far." Corey had come around the car. He stood next to me, concern reflected in his eyes.

"But the boat shed isn't."

"What are you talking about? Why would we go there?"

I didn't know what day it was. I didn't even know what time it was. All I knew was the simple fact, it would be useless to time jump. Thomas would find me no matter where or when I appeared, and what's more, probably murder Corey for getting in the way, too. Nope. I had to hope and pray that Brad had come through for me and brought those mirrors to the boat shed as I asked.

I grabbed Corey's hand again. "Trust me."

"If you think you're going to run through town with me holding your hand and you with only your shirt on, guess again. I don't care if I'm with you, but I ain't letting the whole world know we've been playing hide the sausage, okay? Only faggots parade around in public smooching and performing tonsillectomies on each other."

His face screwed up, wrinkling his nose. His distaste for public affection toward me obvious. I felt dirty again, but not in a nice way.

"Fine. Whatever. Let's just get the fuck out of here before our friend gets out of your hallway cupboard."

He pulled his hand away. I didn't have the heart to tell him that his logic was flawed and he *was* bisexual. Being with guys was as much of an enjoyment for him as going out with girls. Then again, living in his meat head world, fucking a bloke and going out with a bloke were two entirely different things to him.

By the time my thoughts came back to the moment, I realised we had run clear up the street. I was lagging behind. The sight of Corey's muscular back, his skin had a nice sheen of sweat to highlight his toning, made me realise I wasn't as quick as him. Perhaps I needed to take up football.

"Wait up," I said with a gasp.

He twisted his neck to look at me. "You'd better move your girly legs harder if you don't want your boyfriend catching up to you."

I looked back. The sight of Thomas chasing us sent a chill through me. He ran like he was a machine, determined, unfaltering and above all, undeterred by anything other than his goal. To get me.

"He's not my boyfriend."

"No kidding."

We were running along the Longmuir river, the Westfell forest came into view on the far side. I knew we were close to the boat house. If only we could get there before Thomas caught up to me.

I fell behind even more. My legs no longer able to keep up the blistering pace needed to both keep up with Corey and stay ahead of Thomas. Sweat trickled into my eyes, more annoying than anything, and my lungs felt about to burst. My run now more of a jog. I was slowing. Damn it.

"Corey!" I managed to yell out.

Corey turned. "Fuck!" he screamed. "He's right behind you!"

I didn't look. Instead, I tried to find the strength, any last vestige of energy I had within, me to pick up my pace. Feeling nervous, I tried with all my might to turn those nerves to my advantage. I failed.

My legs turned to jelly and my mind clouded with fear. I don't think I could have run for much longer even if I was as fit as Corey. I had been defeated by myself. Whatever strength I had mustered within myself wasn't enough. I couldn't run at the pace required to stay ahead of Thomas and the boat house was still so far away.

In my desperation, I did turn to look behind. I wished I hadn't. Thomas could have been no more

than ten metres from me. I was numb all over. I had to force the air into my lungs, mentally tell each of my legs to keep on moving, keep on running.

Then, my body gave up.

I stopped. I couldn't move anymore. My body screamed out for not only oxygen, but for this to be over with. I wished this would soon be over. I wished it with all my heart. I couldn't go on anymore. I was tired of him chasing me.

"You're going to pay for your insolence," Thomas said, his voice so calm, so collected it was like he hadn't even been giving chase and talking in normal conversation.

Seemed my wish would soon come true.

Thomas closed in. The evil intent look in his eyes scared the spit out of me. I was terrified to my core.

Chapter Eighteen

I closed my eyelids tight, expecting Thomas to charge into me with all his might, knocking me onto the ground so he could feed off me and strangle me at the same time, giving him the last of my life both ways.

Instead, a strong hand slipped into mine and gripped me tight. Memories of the wheat field and that combine harvester flooded into my mind. Was Thomas going to take me somewhere else to finish me off? I opened my eyelids, the sight of Corey holding me gave me a small spark of hope.

“Move it or I’ll drag you,” Corey commanded, his face stern.

The sound of his voice, even if typical Corey speak, spurred me into action. How I managed to find the energy to keep on running was beyond me, but having him hold me, help me, made me dig deep into my reserve and continue.

“I...thought...you didn’t...want to...be seen holding my...hand?” I asked, struggling to speak

and run at the same time. But the question I asked him was an important one as far as I was concerned and worth the effort.

The run we had endured didn't affect his speech, and I supposed running around a football field had helped him.

"You just worry about moving your arse, I'll deal with anyone who decides to be stupid and question me."

If I didn't know any better, I'd say Corey cared for me.

"Thanks," I said with all the conviction of my heart.

I had to admit, I cared for him, too. And really, I'd never, in the whole of my life, ever think I'd admit that. Corey was, after all, supposed to be my enemy.

The boat shed came into view.

Brad's ute, complete with his garden care business name written across the doors, came into view. He stood by the boat shed. Seemed today was the eighteenth and this was just about lunch time. Finally, something went right. I couldn't help but smile, my relief tangible.

We ran onto the jetty, only slowing when we approached Brad. I looked behind. Thomas was nowhere to be seen. That didn't mean he wasn't behind us. Rather I bet it had something to do with the fact Thomas wanted to see what we were

up to before he made his move. I knew he wouldn't be too far away. He never was.

Which suited me fine. While Thomas was watching, I could catch my breath and put my plan into action. I hoped Brad had printed out those photographs, too.

"Hey...Brad," I called out as the sounds of our footfalls across the wooden jetty filled the air.

Corey, even though we were plainly in sight of Brad, didn't let go of my hand, not until we were standing next to him and he'd decided to let me go and give me a chance to recuperate. I was glad he let me go. I now had the chance to double over and cough up my guts to try and get oxygen into my bloodstream as quick as possible. I had a stitch, too.

"Are you all right, Jacob?" Brad asked, coming to pat me on my back, doing the best he could to try and comfort me. I was glad I wasn't wearing a shirt. I'd be soaked by now.

"He'll be all right," Corey offered. "Now, what the fuck are we doing here? And it'd better be good, cause I bet that freak will show up at any moment."

"Good question," Brad added. "I mean, what's with all the mirrors and stuff?"

I managed to stand upright even though my sides hurt and I had no sign of the pain easing. I unfortunately didn't have time to worry about

myself.

"Have you set up the mirrors, Brad?"

He nodded. "Sure have, just like you said."

"What's all this about?" Corey planted his hands onto his hips. "Have you been planning this? I sure hope your friend banging down my door and chasing us through town wasn't because you provoked him. Ah fuck, he's not a jealous lover type, is he?"

I shook my head. "Nothing of the sort, Corey. In fact, I wish it were that simple. No, it's a long story, but for now, I think the best way to explain it is that he's a vampire and leave it at that."

Brad's eyes lit up. "You mean we're going to be vampire slayers, like *Buffy*?"

Before I could reply to that blatantly false statement, Corey, encouraged by Brad's words, chimed in, "You mean he's going to suck out my blood and turn me into a vampire? How cool."

"Listen guys, if he were a vampire like how you see on the TV, then I really wouldn't care right now. I most certainly wouldn't have nearly killed myself running across town to get away from him. You've seen what he's capable of, Corey. Oh, and when he does come for you, you can bet your life your blood is the last thing on his mind."

"So what have we got to do?" Brad said, thankfully feeling my concern.

With Corey, I wasn't so convinced. I bet he was

thinking how great it would be to be a vampire. I bet he thought being a vampire meant he could change into a wolf or a bat at will and suck the blood of virgins or something. I understood how that image, that fantasy, would appeal to him. If he truly understood, had even an inkling of what I had gone through, then I'm sure he wouldn't think of it in such romantic terms.

I decided to let them keep their fantasies in their heads. I know Brad wasn't as blinded by popular culture and fables of vampires as Corey, but his words spoke volumes. He liked the idea of being a vampire slayer, garlic strung around his neck and a stake in his hand at the ready. If only it were that easy.

"Have you got those photos, too?" I said, wanting to get on with things.

When I looked around, I noticed there weren't many folk about. Sure, there were the usual sights, couples strolling along the Longmuir, kids playing in the park, but really, for such a nice day I would have thought the boat house would be an attraction. Then again, I noticed there weren't any boats moored. Perhaps a regatta was on and our folk had all gone up to Wayfarer's court for the day. Whatever the reason I was thankful.

"Yeah, they're in the glove box of the ute," Brad replied.

Corey sprang into action, already half way

toward the vehicle when he called back, "I'll get them. You two do what ever else it is you have to."

When Corey was out of ear shot, Brad said, "I didn't know you were with him...you know...as lovers."

I walked toward the boat shed, wiping away the sweat from my brow. Brad followed. "That's another long story—"

"Tell me about it."

If I didn't know any better, I'd say Brad was more than curious. Perhaps he was interested, but too scared to admit it. "You got a girlfriend?"

His eyes saddened. "No. Everyone in town remembers what I used to look like. I still haven't shaken that off."

As I was about to tell him he'd meet the girl of his dreams one day and sort of mention I was Corey's fuck buddy and we weren't attached in any way, a scream pierced the air.

I turned to see a sight that sickened me to my stomach. Thomas was coming up the jetty, stepping over Corey who was slumped on the wood. Whether or not he was unconscious or worse I couldn't tell. All I knew was we had a matter of seconds before Thomas came for us.

"Run into the shed, Brad!"

Thomas ran, too.

I waited until the last possible second, the

moment when I could still get away from him but at the same time, give Brad a chance to get away.

"Time's up, my darling. Fun time is over."

When Thomas was too close for comfort, I bolted into the boat shed. His hands, rough and uncaring, grabbed me on my shoulders and I let out a desperate yelp as he spun me around.

He had me.

Then, unexpectedly, he stopped. I looked right into his eyes at the exact moment he caught himself in the mirror. They blackened, and it took me a moment to realise I was no longer looking into the physical form of Thomas but the eternal's.

"Brad, grab Thomas—the real Thomas," I said though quivering lips, being so close to the creature enough to petrify me.

I realised Thomas had crouched himself on the floor like he did back in the boys' toilets all those years ago. The shock of being pulled out of the eternal must be too much for him. He just rocked back and forth in the foetal position, his head hidden in his knees.

Thankfully Brad was quick to pull Thomas away. When I was certain I wouldn't be tripped up by anything, I edged my way backwards so I could come into the boat shed proper.

The only problem was one I hadn't anticipated. Sure, Brad had done a magnificent job, I think there were at least six huge mirrors lined up all

around to surround me, but the eternal didn't let me go. He must be frozen by his own image. I didn't remember it happening like this before. Then again, he wasn't touching me before.

I was stuck.

His grip on me was solid and every time I moved, even an inch, his hold on my shoulders tightened. All about me was his darkness, engulfing me in the depths of eternity within his eyes. I was terrified.

"Get away from him, Jacob. I've got Thomas now. He's a little shocked and he's talking gibberish, but I think he'll be okay."

"I can't." Again I tried to wriggle free. Useless. The eternal's fingers dug into my flesh, cutting off my circulation, and my arms tingled with pins and needles. "Just get Thomas out of here."

"What about you?" Brad asked, coming up to me.

"You've got to make sure Corey's all right. Then, grab those photos. It's the only way I'll be able to get this bastard off me."

"But what will that do, Jacob?"

"Brad, please understand me when I say, I've spent my lifetime getting to this point. I don't know what will get rid of him, but I do know those photographs have something to do with it. He's not a *stake in the heart* kind of vampire, if that's what you're thinking."

His face reflected his confusion. I knew how he felt. It took me a long time to come to grips with what the eternal was. I suppose I was a little harsh on Brad. Unfortunately, I didn't have the luxury of time any more.

I was in agony. The eternal dug his nails further and further into my skin, even from the movement of my breathing. I winced, hoping above all Brad trusted me and he'd do as I say.

Finally, he said, "Okay. I'll go...but..." His words trailed off as he turned away.

"What's the matter? What's going on?"

"Holy shit!" Brad screamed.

"What?" I yelled in reply.

I didn't need a description from Brad. Thomas came into my view. He was holding his head, muttering profanities and sprouting nonsense. He had dug his nails into his eyes and blood poured out to stain his face and shirt.

Then to add more horror to an already horrific moment, he yelled out, "Help me!" with such desperation I wished with all my heart I wasn't in the clutches of the eternal.

Thomas then began smashing the mirrors.

Chapter Nineteen

I knew with absolute certainty he hadn't smashed the mirrors deliberately. He couldn't see and as a result, he staggered around aimlessly, screaming for help, his face a twisted, grotesque form. The sight, surreal and macabre at the same time, made me feel more determined to get rid of the eternal. Brad did his best to try and calm him, but each time he went to him he was knocked away, Thomas's strength enhanced by his madness.

Thankfully, Thomas hadn't smashed the mirror that had captured the eternal. Although, if he did break free, as I'm sure he would, there wouldn't be any others at this rate to trap him again. With each passing moment, this situation became worse and worse.

Another mirror smashed. Thomas was covered in cuts and blood and he continued to rave on like a lunatic. A real, true to life lunatic, someone who had been taken over and manipulated by the eternal, someone I held no hope for, the truth be

told. My feelings went out to him and I wished I could go over and comfort him, let him know everything was going to be all right. Even if I didn't believe that notion myself.

"Stop him, Brad. Stop him from hurting himself!"

Brad had no choice but to wrestle Thomas to the ground. I decided I had to do something no matter the consequences. I kicked at the eternal, hoping I could make him let go, no longer worrying about my comfort. My shoulders were numb with pain and my arms had lost sensation completely, but I had to try.

Then the eternal blinked.

My heart skipped a beat as I watched the being come to life. The mirror had lost its power. Either that or something else had happened I wasn't aware of that made him wake. Was the mirror's hold on him only temporary?

"Hurry, Brad!" I screamed.

I couldn't see what was going on. Shuffling and scraping noises and all sorts of clatters and bangs sounded behind me, but other than that, I had no clue. I tried to turn my head. Immediately, searing pain shot up to consume me. My head ached and, where the eternal held me, my skin had been punctured, because my blood trickled down my chest. I cried out in agony again, but this time my vision became clouded, so overcome by being held

in such a manner. I could only see a sort of blurry swirl in front of me, dominated by the darkness of the eternal. I blinked to try and gain back my vision.

Because I was worried about myself for a brief moment, I couldn't see Brad or Thomas. I hoped Brad had managed to calm Thomas and get him out of the boat shed. I really did. That way the only person the eternal could join with would be me. A frightening thought, but I would do anything to make sure no one else suffered the same fate as Thomas. Was his madness permanent because of the eternal?

When my vision stabilised, the eternal blinked again.

"If I go, you'll be coming with me," he said, his voice distant, yet still no less chilling, sounding like an ice wind blowing off the mountains.

I don't know why, perhaps it was to buy some time, but I blurted, "Who are you?"

"I am the one who resides in the shadows until the light of someone's life beckons me to complete them. I am soon going to be Jacob Theison, if no other comes to claim me."

I tried once more, but failed to pry myself away from his terrible grip. He had clamped me so hard with his fingers, I couldn't move. Slowly, and with movements so minute, but he stepped away from his reflection in the mirror. I wouldn't have

noticed if I weren't so close.

His plan was obvious. The eternal was trying to move himself so his line of sight was positioned between the gap in the mirrors created when Thomas went on his rampage.

"You have an awfully high opinion of yourself, don't you?"

"When you have lived as long as I have, nothing is beyond reach. That breeds what you call confidence. So yes, I am more than happy with the achievements I have accomplished. I have been Tahuti, the God of time in ancient Egypt. I have been Nostradamus and Da Vinci and even the philosopher Aganoc, a man who lived some three-thousand years from now. You will be all of these people, too. I remember all my partners. What I am and what you are will soon become one," he said, his voice building more strength with each passing second.

I spat in his face. "I've seen what you do to people who you've become one with. No thanks."

The eternal smiled. "You have no choice. And your friend is only the way he is because he was drawn away from me against my will. I could save him, but that would be up to you."

"You mean, if I tell Brad to bring back Thomas so you can continue be his leech? If I had my way, I'd sooner see you dead so you couldn't hurt anyone else ever again."

From behind the eternal's shoulder I could see outside the boat house. Corey staggered to his feet, bewildered, but nevertheless, he was alive and what's more, he was coming this way.

A small spark of hope flicked inside me. I sure hoped that spark could ignite more than a fire. I needed all the luck I could get at the moment. The eternal had nearly freed himself from the reflection of the mirror.

"What makes you think Thomas didn't welcome me?" he said smugly.

"Why would anyone want *you* inside them?"

I knew we were just verbally sparring, but hopefully by doing so I would be able to give Corey the valuable seconds he needed to get into the boat house with those photographs.

"You did."

I laughed. Even though I was in so much pain and my arms were no longer functioning, I couldn't help but be amused by what he had said. "Only because you manipulated my life so I had no choice."

"Manipulation is such a subjective word. Some would say I helped save you. That combine harvester would have ended your life had I not dragged you out of that field."

"Don't you see, I went into the field because of you. You created the events to suit yourself, for your own means."

The eternal released his grip. I fell to the ground on my arse, my hands so numb I couldn't use them to support me. I ended up flat on my back for a moment before I forced myself to at least sit up. When I finally got to a sitting position, I turned, noticing straight away Thomas was bound by his hands, probably for his own safety, in the corner near the equipment cupboards. Brad was still trying to do his best to calm him, cradling his head in his arms. But where was Corey? I panicked.

"Get out of here, Brad," I said, shuffling myself to try and get in between him and the eternal.

What I managed was a sort of awkward bum-walk. Still. I got there in the end, before the eternal could compose himself, anyway. Looked to me like the effects of the mirror were lingering, the eternal unable to move beyond a few paces for fear of being caught by any of the remaining mirrors. The only chance the eternal had was to either get inside one of us or try and make a run for it out the boat shed's doors. How long could an eternal live without a host?

At that moment, when the eternal began to step toward me, and I knew he had made the decision to take one of us, Corey came from God knew where to help me to my feet.

"Get up, Jacob. We've got all we need now to ice this bastard, whoever the fuck he is," Corey

said, stunned at the sight of a walking shadow.

Sensation had returned to my hands and arms, and once Corey pulled me up so I could stand, I took the photos from him. As far as I was concerned, I had to act now, while the eternal was still awash from the effects of being trapped.

"Seems I have four of you to choose from, after all. And all of you are so handsome, too. I will enjoy taking over one of you and then using the rest of you to feed my new glorious life."

The eternal took a step toward me.

"I hope you rot in hell, eternal." I took the first photo from the pile and held it up, directly in the line of sight of the being.

Nothing happened.

Then there was a snort of laughter. The being found what I did amusing to him. "You are such a fool, Jacob. I would have expected you to know that the photograph is only a weapon if I am inside the person on the picture."

The eternal took another step forward.

I was taken aback by the eternal's words. All my planning had amounted to nothing. Of course I should have known that. That's why there weren't any pictures of Thomas in Thomas's house while the eternal resided within him. Damn it! How could I be so stupid?

"Then I'm going to have to trap you using a mirror then, aren't I?" I looked at Corey, tilting my

head to give him the message to get Brad and Thomas out of the boat shed.

I don't know if Corey understood what I meant. His frown somewhat shattered my confidence.

"You'd better be quick, my darling. It won't be long before I am inside you and, by the looks of it, your friends are about as useful as those photographs. Pathetic. All of you."

The eternal stepped forward again, now only a couple of paces away from me. I couldn't retreat, Thomas and Brad would be exposed and I couldn't flee for the same reason.

Corey sprang into action, charging at the eternal, yelling something that sounded like a cross between a curse and a war cry. If there was one thing meat heads understood above all else, it was the fact when they were being insulted they would have to act. I knew it had something to do with his honour and the excessive amounts of testosterone coursing through his veins, but right now, I didn't think acting rashly was going to help.

I was right.

In an instant, Corey was swatted away like a fly. His body careened across the boat shed's floor until he joined Thomas and Brad at the equipment cupboard. I didn't get to see if Corey was all right.

The eternal took one more step toward me.

My heart pounded loud in my ears. I could

think of nothing else other than the horrible sight of the eternal coming toward me, step by step, to become a part of him, to become the vehicle in which he would manipulate time itself. All so he could feed off his victims.

Another cry pierced the air. This time Corey had an oar and wielded it like a lance, his target the eternal.

What I saw next helped fan that spark of hope I thought had disappeared. Corey struck the eternal clear on his chest, the advance he had made no longer my worry. Unfortunately, as the eternal was pushed backwards by the force of the blow, Corey was propelled into one of the mirrors, smashing it and showered in glass. I gasped in horror.

"Corey!" I yelled, going over to him.

A bad move.

Not only were there just two mirrors left, nowhere near enough for what we needed to keep the eternal a statue frozen by his own reflection, I was no longer in the way. Thomas and Brad were left open to the eternal's advance.

I realised my mistake all too late, even though I was compelled to help Corey, get him up onto his feet as he had done with me.

I twisted my neck to see the eternal's strength and full movement had returned. The being quickly recovering from the blow Corey had dealt

him, now advanced at a much faster rate than before toward the two young men who lay helpless on the floor.

The terrible sound of Thomas continuing to talk as though a demon were inside him struck fear into my heart.

“Jacob!” Brad called out as he clambered to his feet, placing Thomas’s head on the floor.

I ran to them.

As with Corey moments ago, I was swatted away. The sheer force of the blow knocked the wind out of my lungs. I landed awkwardly on the floor near the doorway. I coughed, desperate to get some air into me so I could get up and help my friends.

The spark of hope I once had inside me had been extinguished. I watched helplessly as the eternal headed unhindered toward Brad and Thomas.

Chapter Twenty

Brad stood defiantly between the eternal and Thomas.

"No, Brad!" I screamed, staggering to my feet, still feeling the effects of being thrown across the shed.

My muscles didn't want to do as I instructed, my strength had been knocked out of me. Somehow I got up.

Brad didn't move.

"Move your arse, Brad," Corey added as he came over to me. "Here, Jacob, lean on me. I've got you."

Blood and cuts covered his body. He looked terrible. But I had to admire him. Sure, he acted foolishly, charging at the eternal and almost getting himself killed in the process, but he acted out of goodness, for the concern he had for his fellow man, for his friends.

"We've got to stop that thing from getting inside Brad or Thomas." Corey let me use him to

support me, my legs still wobbly.

We both stepped forward, looking more awkward than anything. I was determined to get at the eternal, sacrifice myself if I had to.

"You will make a wonderful new host," the eternal said as he came within arms reach of Brad.

Brad's face turned white. He was frozen with fear as the shadow of the eternal began to merge with him, the lines between him and the being blurred.

Then Brad screamed.

"Fucking hell!" Corey yelled, letting me go so he could charge at the eternal again.

Before I could stop him, his arms slipped out of my grip. Thomas got up onto his feet, sprouting more gibberish.

Everything happened at once, but one thing was certain. Corey's attempt to get at the eternal amounted to a distraction at best. He was pushed away, his head hitting the floor with a terrible thud.

I yelled, too, as I tried with all my might to get to Brad.

The eternal never faltered, didn't even turn his head to look at Corey and what he had done. From what I could tell, Brad's body had been half submerged in the darkness of the eternal. Their bodies, once overlapping the same space would soon meld.

The look on Brad's face would haunt me forever. His eyes reflected that of a man who had all the hope and life within him stolen and his mouth had formed a terrifying grimace. In fact, his whole face reflected the diminished state of his own mind and soul once the eternal began to consume him, become the new resident within his body.

Brad Burmeister, the man who had survived high school as a fat kid and had made a conscious decision to change his life for the better by becoming a lawnmower man, would soon no longer be the Brad I had come to admire. He would soon be the eternal, and I, as well as Corey and whatever remained of Thomas, would be his food.

I grabbed the eternal's shoulders, trying desperately to pull him away from Brad, screaming at the top of my lungs for him to get away. The eternal didn't even budge. It was like I wasn't even there.

As I pulled, my fingers hurting from the pressure, Thomas got up onto his feet. His eyes were still bleeding where he had tried to gouge them out, his face and lips stained with his own blood.

"What are you doing?" I called to Thomas. "Corey, get Thomas away, quick. I'm going to try and convince this fucking bastard to join with me

instead of Brad, you hear?"

Corey must have heard me. He came around to Thomas. All of us surrounded the eternal.

Then, something unexpected happened. The eternal moved away from Brad. Was he too tempted by one of us? What was his plan all along, to use Brad as bait for his real victim? Was Corey supposed to be next if he couldn't get Callum or did the eternal still want me?

Whatever the reason, Brad slumped to the floor in chilling silence as the eternal stepped away from him. He looked like he was unconscious. I hoped his mind wasn't damaged in any way like Thomas's.

Seemed I would soon find out the eternal's real intention. Only Thomas, Corey and me were left around him. I swallowed hard. All of us seemed to be stunned within the eternal's presence, Corey unable, or now unwilling, to carry out my order. I knew how he felt. It was like my feet were glued to the floor. Was being close to the eternal enough to strike so much fear into someone's heart that no action could be taken against the being?

The eternal turned to me.

Corey blinked, whatever had affected him had dissipated. Much to my dismay, he didn't pull Thomas away. Instead, he grabbed me by my arm and pulled.

"No!" I screamed and screamed as I was taken

out of harm's way and forced to watch the eternal merge with Thomas. "Why didn't you get Thomas out of there, Corey? Why?"

"I don't want anything to happen to you," he replied.

I understood his motive. I even understood why he had done what he had done, because I knew he cared for me. I would have done the same. But that didn't change the fact Thomas was once more in the grasp of the eternal. I pulled myself out of Corey's grip.

Again, I was too late.

The eternal had merged.

Thomas turned to look at me directly into my eyes. A calm had washed over him, his stare no longer that of the mad man of only a few moments ago.

Involuntarily, I took a step back.

Corey grabbed me again. "C'mon, let's get the fuck out of here."

"I'm not going anywhere without Brad. He needs us, too."

"But that fucking thing is inside that other dude again. We've lost, Jacob face it."

The next words came from the eternal and what he said surprised me beyond words.

"I can't swim, Jacob."

The voice wasn't of the Thomas I had known. The voice was of the real Thomas, not of the

eternal within him.

I opened my mouth, about to speak, when Thomas ran out the back door of the boat shed so quick his body was nothing but a blur. Corey had let me go, obviously he was also surprised by what had just transpired.

“Quick! We’ve got to follow him,” I said.

I took Corey’s hand and led him out of the boat shed and onto the mooring jetty where the boats of those who owned them would have been moored, if they were here, of course.

At the end of the mooring jetty stood Thomas, his back to us. His arms spread out, in a diver’s position. He looked back when Corey and me had ran onto the jetty proper.

“I see everything so clearly now,” Thomas said. “My mind is so clear. I can control my own thoughts and my own feelings once more. I have my other half back with me.”

“Don’t do anything foolish, Thomas,” I said. “We can help you.”

“Oh, no, you can’t and you know it. The evil within me will soon consume me again and then I will have to witness the daily horror as the eternal feeds. I don’t want to see that any more. I don’t want to be the one responsible for so much death any more. Remember Mr. Mendelssohn? He was only one of thousands I’ve had to see being murdered right before me.”

"But...but we can help you, I'm sure of it."

"How?" he snapped.

As he talked to me I could hear the eternal's voice begin to creep into his register. I knew Thomas only had seconds before he would again be taken into darkness.

"I don't...know."

"Goodbye, Jacob. Just know, you saved me after all."

With that, he jumped.

"No!" I screamed, emotion overwhelming me.

As I ran to the spot where he had jumped and tears streaked down my cheeks, the white light consumed me like the sorrow I felt for Thomas.

Chapter Twenty-one

When the light subsided, I knew this jump would be my last. When Thomas dived into the Longmuir to take his life, he took the eternal's, too. The being's death would make sure I no longer had the capability to bounce around time. If not being able to time jump was a consequence of getting rid of him, then good riddance, as far as I was concerned. The only vestige of hope I clung to was that Thomas was alive and well somewhere now that time had been restored to what it was supposed to be.

As my vision came to me and I pondered whether the restoration of time would leave remnants of what I had been through, I smiled. Deep down I knew Thomas was all right. I hoped he had met a beautiful girl and they had beautiful children, lots of them. But more importantly, I hoped he had a happy life. He deserved that much.

I looked around. I was at the Spring Dance.

Everything came back to me. Including, believe it or not, how this was a night I'd been looking forward to for a while. I mean, before recent events I wasn't interested. Now things were different. I was the saviour of the town, not once but twice. If I count my ordeal with the eternal, then the true count would be three times. Then again, I couldn't have done any of it, getting rid of the aliens or fighting off insectmen or defeating a time vampire, without my friends, both old and new.

As I thought about them, I sipped my cocktail. The drink was a concoction of strawberry and watermelon laced with so much alcohol my nostrils warned me of its strength well before my lips touched the rim of the glass. Still, the cocktail tasted nice, if a little sweet for my liking. I smiled. *Déjà vu* was an actual tangible feeling and I was experiencing it right now. I'm glad I had returned here.

Then again, the next words spoken to me reminded me of the fight that became the catalyst for the whole misadventure with the eternal.

"Hey, carrot-top, how's it going?" Corey Harrington asked as he bumped into my shoulder, knocking the cocktail glass from my hand. It smashed onto the floor. "You the town captain of the faggot brigade or something now?"

"Yes I am, Corey, and you're more than

welcome to join me.”

There. This time I give him a piece of my mind. I knew he liked guys...he just had to admit it, too. He paused, his mind ticking over with a possible comeback. Before he could answer, Brad came between Corey and me. I was glad to see Brad. He looked well, a far cry from the last time I we had crossed paths.

“Hey, Jacob. I know you’re real busy, what with running the Food Emporium and all, but do you think you’d find the time to—”

“Sure, I’ll help you with your taxes.” Hearing the words *running the Food Emporium* was music to my ears. Seemed time *had* returned to normal. Thank God.

Brad’s jaw dropped and his mouth opened in astonishment. “How did you know I was going to ask that? Actually, don’t tell me. I’ve come to learn that everything to do with you is more than bizarre.”

“I thought it was this town to tell you the truth,” I said, with a chuckle.

He joined me in my laughter. “No. It’s you. So...really...how did you know I was going to ask about my taxes?”

“I really can’t tell you that.” Corey had disappeared into the crowd. My directness had deterred him. Or was that what he wanted to hear? Time will tell, as I knew all too well.

"I was afraid you were going to say that," Brad said with a sigh.

Callum and Zane came over to join us. "Say, who's the good looking?" Zane said, referring to Brad.

I think the poor guy blushed. Then again, Brad did look fine in a suit and without his high school puppy fat. The lawn mowing business worked wonders for him. I did notice there was a nice little patch of lawn in the back yard behind the Food Emporium's house. Maybe I should get Brad to mow it. I'd like to watch him do yard work with his shirt off on those really hot days. Of course, like a good customer, I'd offer to rub in his sunscreen and give him an ice cold drink to guzzle. It was the least I could do.

I came back from my day dreaming. I was so lucky I was surrounded by such wonderful men. I mean, even Corey Harrington was nice eye candy. And I knew what he did when he turned down his lights and put on his make out music. I smiled, thinking of how wonderful he was, once I got to know him, and he had helped save my life, too. I may tell him that one day. That'll confuse the fuck out of him.

"This is Brad," I said, coming out of my daydreams, "and he may not even realise it, but he's been a great friend." I patted him on the shoulder. His confused look deepened.

"I have?" Then, Brad's eyes flickered, as if he registered a memory once lost within the recesses of his mind. "Oh, I've got something for you, Jacob. You told me to keep it until this time. I still haven't figured out how you knew that I should give it to you now, but there you go. As I said, I've stopped trying to guess."

"What is it?" Callum asked, coming around to hold me by my waist. I relished his touch and held his hand tight on to my stomach, making sure he wouldn't be able to let me go in a hurry.

Brad delved into his front trouser pocket and produced something I thought I'd never see again. The ring the eternal had given me more than four years ago by linear time. The metal of it glowed, making the Celtic markings stand out even more.

Then I remembered what my intention was. I remembered what I had said to Brad all those years ago and that I would need the ring at this time and at this event.

I took the ring from him.

"That's a pretty damn fancy ring," Zane said.

I took Callum by his hand and came around so I was in front of him. I then got onto one knee, staring up at him with a hopeful expression, placing the ring onto his wedding finger.

I don't know what happened first, whether Callum began to get misty eyed because my gesture was a universal declaration of my love or

someone had turned off the jukebox and the whole town watched as I proposed, but the result was the same.

With my heart in my mouth and my nerves making me almost lose my voice, I said with so much conviction and with everything within me, "Callum Wilber Burroughs, will you marry me?"

Crying, Callum came down to embrace me tight. "Yes. Yes. Yes. Of course I'll marry you. Of course!"

The whole hall erupted into applause. Even Suzy and Mr. Barnaby had noticed my performance and rushed over to congratulate me. The smiles on their faces said it all.

Zane came down to hug us both. "Congratulations, you guys. You're meant to be together, you really are. Oh, and I had better be your best man, I swear to God."

Callum helped me to my feet, holding my hand with a beaming smile they could have seen from space I'm sure. He tightened his grip, a gesture that reassured me and made me wonderfully aware he'd never let me go. Ever.

"You sure will be," I said. "I can't think of anyone else."

"And what about me?" Suzy came up and planted a kiss onto both of our cheeks. "I suppose I can't be a part of this, hmm?"

Callum embraced Suzy, bringing her closer.

"You can take Zane off our hands. He needs someone to love him and I'm afraid you're the only one who can give him what he's used to from Jacob and me."

She pulled herself away. "But I've got a boyfriend."

Zane coughed. "If I'm that repulsive, just say so and I'll leave."

Her forehead wrinkled. "Oh, Zane, don't be silly. You know I love you...It's just that—"

"Just what?" he asked with a harsh voice, folding his arms.

"Um, maybe you can sort this out another time. I think this is supposed to be mine and Callum's moment, right?" I said, not meaning to sound harsh, far from it. It's just that—well, I had waited my whole life for this moment and I think I deserved it to be perfect. Was that too much to ask?

Suzy grabbed Zane by his arm and pulled him away.

"I think she's not quite finished with him, the poor boy" Mr. Barnaby said with a chuckle. "But I have to add my sincere congratulations to you both. Just wait until I tell Aloysius, he'll be over the Moon."

Brad added his congratulations, too, shaking my hand and giving Callum a hug. He was a good friend, that much had been proven. Pity he didn't

know what the hell I was talking about and why he had been such a good friend. Oh well. Maybe one day I would tell him.

Callum's face was stained with tears, his joy more than apparent. "You've made me the happiest guy on the planet, Jacob, you know that?"

"I know."

He glanced at his ring. The metal had begun to glow blue, like the flame of an oxy-acetylene torch. "Is this thing magical?"

"I really don't know. All I know is the guy who gave it to me sure was...different, to put it mildly."

"I can understand Brad's confusion. You're talking in riddles."

"Then let me explain, but not here."

As the music began to play once more and the townsfolk began to dance and drink and be as merry as they should considering this was the biggest party of the year, I took Callum over to a quiet spot near the far end of the hall.

I told him everything.

About the Author

My name is Mark Alders. I live in a house. This house has a street in front of it which is a good thing because if it didn't I wouldn't be able to drive down to the shop and purchase the chocolate I need on a daily basis *giggle* Seriously, I am a mild mannered post office worker by day and an erotic romance writer (mainly male/male) at night. Not much else to say other than, like everyone else, I have bills to pay, a mortgage and family that I love and drive me crazy all at the same time. Oh, and I have a dog, too! See? Average Joe...except when I get down and write...then I let my imagination go to places I never knew existed and my characters invade my mind.