

Orphan Ivy II: A Family Affair

Loki Renard

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Chapter One

In a grand chateau, a long established balance of power was being overturned by the regulated movement of small pieces of plastic. A small plastic horse dangled above a black tower, then descended upon it. Mercilessly knocked over sideways, the tower rolled across the board uselessly before being snatched up gleefully by slim fingers.

“White Knight to Black Rook. Checkmate.” A smirk and triumphant toss of the head accompanied Ivy's announcement. Looking at her, it would have been hard to imagine that she was once an abandoned fledgling left to fend for herself. In the months since she'd been scooped up off the streets, her appearance had changed a great deal. She had once been a slim, pale little wretch, now she was a slightly more full figured young woman with clear skin and dark mischievous eyes. In spite of her newest chosen past time, she did not look like a typical chess player. She wore a tight t-shirt over a striped thermal top and a dark denim skirt that brushed the top of her knees. Her hair, once dull and frizzy, had been styled to sit close around her head and colored with streaks of blue against a silky black backdrop. A few strands of her longer fringe framed her face, giving her a more impish appearance than ever.

Blaze made a snort of irritation, sat forward with his forearms resting on his knees and brushed a few strands of his long blonde hair out of his eyes. Unlike Ivy, he had not changed in the slightest. He was still the same tall, imposing vampire he had always been. As usual he was overdressed for the occasion in a dark tailored suit. He hadn't even so much as removed the jacket that gave him the perpetual appearance of formality. “Ridiculous,” he insisted, scanning the board for an open move.

Sitting back and folding her arms across her chest with the utmost satisfaction, Ivy grinned. “Let me know when you've submitted to your inevitable defeat.”

The ancient vampire's head snapped up suddenly at the mention of the word 'submit'. She'd chosen it purposefully to needle him. Blaze was of the old school, he believed in hierarchy and order. He believed that he was owed both respect and obedience and he had no qualms about ensuring he received both. Ivy, on the other hand, was not of the old school. She probably wouldn't have known the old school if it had walked up to her and boxed her ears. “Yet again, you try my patience, fledgling,” Blaze snapped, his tone becoming crisp and curt as it always did when he felt the need to demonstrate his relative seniority.

Too wrapped up in her victory to be concerned, Ivy's smile grew all the wider. “Yet again you loose at a game you've had hundreds of years to master. How terribly embarrassing for you.”

With the utmost dignity, Blaze rose from the board, making a gesture that would have served to wrap a cape around his body with an impressive swirl, had he been wearing one. There was no cape however so the movement translated into a dramatic swatting motion. “You edge ever closer,” he threatened her direly.

“Yeah? Well you edge ever loser,” Ivy replied pertly, not dissuaded by the fact that her sentence made no sense at all.

“He does not beat you enough,” Blaze sighed, slipping his pale, strong hands into the pockets of his

tailored pants and moving out of striking range of the fledgling who, in his often shared estimation, needed a beating more than anyone else on the planet.

"You are far too concerned with my behavior," Ivy replied, shifting on the plush couch so that her backside was planted firmly on the back of the couch, her feet on the cushions. Blaze's look of horror at her casual position was almost enough to set off mischievous giggles. She enjoyed tweaking Blaze, perhaps a little too much.

Blaze's pale eyes belied a hint of humor. "That is because your behavior is so deeply disturbing. You treat the furniture as if it were some kind of post modern playground for you to clamber over."

"Half vampire, half monkey, that's me," Ivy agreed, tumbling backwards off the couch in a move that she'd intended to be a graceful dismount, but which didn't quite work out. She tumbled heels over head and went crashing into the sideboard, dislodging an old duck shaped ceramic urinal. It hurtled through the air and was seconds away from an untimely demise when Blaze caught it.

"Half vampire, half incoherent, uncoordinated brat," he corrected her, placing the urinal in a safer location.

"What is going on?" Jon walked into the room briskly. He was a well built vampire, more broad in the chest than his brother, but not quite as tall. He looked as if he had been disturbed in the act of reading something boring. His dark hair flopped into his eyes and the sleeves of his dark woolen sweater had been rolled up, revealing well muscled forearms. He peered at Ivy over a pair of reading spectacles that sat low on his nose. It was an affectation, he didn't need reading glasses to read, but it was a carry over from his life as a mortal, albeit an incongruous one given his penchant for facial piercings. His dark brown eyes were warm, but wary, and for good reason. It was never safe to leave Blaze and Ivy alone for too long together. For all of his warnings, Ivy never seemed to quite grasp that Blaze was as vicious and dangerous a vampire as had ever walked the face of the earth. "I've been giving Blaze a sound spanking in chess," she declared gleefully. "That's why he's standing."

"Control your wench, brother, before I am forced to do it myself," Blaze said in bored tones.

"Control your brother, Jon, before I am forced to do it myself," Ivy echoed Blaze childishly. Her triumph had gone straight to her head and she was being even more mischievous than usual.

"Ivy, enough," Jon growled. Suffice to say, her behavior did not please the vampire who had taken her as his own, both as a lover and as a fledgling in need of guidance.

"I actually think she's behaving worse than ever," Blaze noted with something of a sidelong look at Ivy. "Have you been keeping up her discipline? Would you like me to give you some pointers?"

"He doesn't need pointers from you," Ivy said, her tone dripping with snark, her lip curling with derision at the very idea of Blaze having any input as to how she was treated. Knowing him he'd probably have her whipped from sunrise to sunset.

Jon sighed and ran a hand through his hair, looking from Blaze to Ivy and back again with a long suffering expression on his handsome features. "Some days I think it would be best just to let you two have at each other and let the chips fall where they may."

It was Blaze's turn to smile broadly. "A capital idea," he purred, meeting Ivy's somewhat panicked gaze.

"No!" she gasped.

Blaze took a deliberate step towards her that saw her pushing back towards the sideboard, thoroughly dismayed that there was nowhere else to go. "Why not, little vampire? You're not afraid are you?"

"Please Blaze," Jon shook his head at his older blood brother. "Resist the urge to toy with her."

Blaze's expression was one of pure devilry. "One of these days, little brother, I will get my hands on her, and I will enjoy it *immensely*."

"You're not allowed. I'm not yours, I'm his," Ivy pointed out quickly in an effort to dissuade Blaze from taking that dangerous line of thinking any further.

"Technically, you belong to us all," Jon informed her, as he had done many times before. "Any one of your elders is in a position to mete out punishment as they see fit."

"That's stupid," Ivy wrinkled her nose as she picked herself up off the floor and wished she was taller. Standing near Jon and Blaze made her feel dwarfed.

"It takes a clan to raise a fledgling," Blaze intoned.

"Ugh," Ivy said, waving her arms in disgust. "I'm a grown ass woman. I don't need to be raised. You all really need to get over your obsession with raising things. Get a puppy or something."

"A puppy would be slightly less generally destructive than you," Jon teased her.

"But you can paper train puppies. Can we paper train her?" Blaze spoke over her head. To Ivy's immense chagrin, Jon's lips crinkled in amusement.

"Crate training might be a better option. That way she can be kept out of trouble when there's no-one to keep an eye on her."

"Goddammit!" Ivy stomped her foot. "I don't need to be kept an eye on. I am perfectly capable of entertaining myself without burning the house down."

Jon and Blaze exchanged humorous looks. "I like the crate idea," Blaze said, smiling.

"I will kick you if you keep talking about me like I am a dog," Ivy declared.

"Will you now?" Blaze turned to her, an expression of anticipation establishing itself on his pale features. "Please do."

"Are you really going to just let him hit me?" Ivy demanded, looking towards Jon.

"Perhaps it would teach you that you have to show respect to everyone," Jon said quite seriously.

“Oh for...” Ivy threw her hands up in the air. “I am better at chess than him! What is it going to take to get some respect around here?”

“You want respect?” Jon's brow raised at her.

“Yes!”

“Try showing some.”

Rolling her eyes, Ivy stamped out of the room in a high temper. The triumph she'd felt in besting Blaze had all but completely evaporated. It seemed that no matter what she did, they would see her as a lesser creature, someone to be patronized and threatened with spankings. “Ivy.” Jon was quick on her heels. He caught her by the elbow and spun her to face him. “What is with the childish attitude?”

“I don't have a childish attitude. You are treating me like a child,” Ivy pointed out. “You even got fucking Blaze of all people to baby sit me!”

“Don't swear at me, Ivy.” Jon's usually mild expression was growing grim quickly.

“Why? Will you wash my mouth out with soap and water? Send me to bed without any dinner?” In spite of her protestations that her treatment was unfair, Ivy's behavior was quickly devolving into puerile taunts.

“No,” Jon shook his head at her. “I will take your pants down and give you a damned good thrashing.”

Ivy blushed to the roots of her hair. They were in a common hallway and anybody could have heard Jon's embarrassing threat. His reassurance that spanking was a normal way of life in the coven had yet to properly reassure her. “And what's going to happen to Blaze? Nothing! He can do whatever he wants.”

“Yes, he can, he has earned that right. He is also not behaving like a little brat.” Jon's expression was growing more severe with every word that passed his lips. “I have work to do Ivy, important work. I can't be pulled away every fifteen minutes because you've decided to throw yourself into the furniture.”

It was Ivy's turn to narrow her eyes. “Well if you don't have time for me, don't worry about me. I'm fine on my own.”

“You are not.” Jon sighed deeply. “Ivy, please, be reasonable,” he said, trying to appeal to her better nature.

Ivy was all out of better nature. “Leave me alone!” She shouted at the top of her lungs. “You always take his side!” With another shriek of rage, she took off at high speed into the depths of the coven's stately home, leaving Jon standing in the hallway, a tic starting to play in his jaw.

“Five minutes and a switch,” Blaze's irritatingly calm tones came from the doorway. “Maybe ten.”

“You can't just beat good behavior into someone,” Jon shook his head, swiping the useless glasses off his face.

“Sure you can,” Blaze disagreed. “I do it all the time.”

“And how long do any of your relationships last?” Jon snapped the question at his older brother, knowing full well that Blaze had never been able to maintain a relationship beyond a few years.

“That was a little below the belt,” Blaze noted, smiling as if he were not at all disturbed by Jon's snark. His eyes hard hardened however, and the smile did not reach them.

Jon shrugged. “It was the truth, Blaze, you can't just beat someone into submission every time they irritate you. Eventually you get tired of them or they get tired of you.”

“You're wrong,” Blaze stated arrogantly. “The relative short livedness of my intimate relationships has nothing to do with my approach to discipline and everything to do with the fact that I have all eternity to play with and I do not intend to spend it with one person.” His speech had become stiff and formal, just as it always did whenever someone came close to a nerve.

“You speak as if you have no idea what it is to love.”

Blaze's pale eyes glowed. “Love is a human emotion. It is designed to keep the little meat creatures pair bonded long enough to reproduce. We have no need for love, Jon. Those of us who imagine they do are deluded and clinging to shreds of a humanity they will never regain. You're trying to play happily ever after with Ivy as if she's some stray waif of a human. She's not human, she's a vampire and one day she will tire of you and she will leave you for someone capable of knowing her for what she is.”

“And who might that someone be?” Jon asked, his eyes narrowing at Blaze. “You, perhaps?”

The suggestion was waved away with a foppish hand. “Don't flatter yourself. I don't want your leavings.”

“I need to finish my taxes,” Jon sighed, tired of arguing.

Blaze snorted with total derision. “Love. Taxes. Next you'll be concerned with death. Stop living in a delusion, little brother. You are not a human, and neither is she.”

Whilst the brothers argued the finer points of eternal love or lack thereof, Ivy had retreated to her favorite sanctum. Nobody had told her that she wasn't allowed there, but she had a feeling that she probably wasn't meant to be. Weeks ago she'd found a quiet passage that lead to a series of rooms that didn't seem to be used very often at all. Unlike the rest of the mansion, which had been updated with the passing years, these rooms were full of antique furniture that dated back beyond the histories Ivy had read at school and seemed to have come straight from the Middle Ages.

She ran her fingers over the cool arm of a chair that was not held together by glue or by nails, but by interlocking wedges of wood. Other pieces were carved with ornate Latin style symbols that escaped her entirely. These rooms were heavy with the weight of history, and Ivy found herself marveling at the sheer number of years that had passed prior to her own birth and subsequent death. The stillness of the place, combined with the tall vaulted ceilings reminded her of a roped off section of a museum.

“Hello.”

Ivy jumped and whirled around to see the slim figure of a noble woman standing in a far doorway. It was Madeline, the matriarch of the line Ivy had joined when Jon had taken her in. "Sorry," she apologized pre-emptively. Madeline was ancient, but beautiful, with wide eyes that had seen much more than Ivy could imagine.

"No need to apologize," Madeline replied graciously, approaching with a smile. Ivy had not had many opportunities to speak with Madeline, but she was the maker of both Blaze and Jon and as such, she had to be very old indeed, though her appearance was entirely timeless. She always wore the most elegant dresses Ivy had ever seen. At that moment she was wearing a classic cream beaded dress after the popular fashions of the 1920's. The slim fitting creation with its fringes and beads complimented her figure perfectly. All that was missing from her outfit was a cigarette in a cigarette holder and a pair of gloves.

Ivy had always liked Madeline. Unlike Blaze who felt the need to remind her of his seniority at every turn, Madeline never seemed to need to remind anyone of who she was. She had a quiet grace and elegant strength that everyone respected, even Ivy, who made a point of not respecting much at all.

"I..er.. wasn't doing anything," Ivy spoke quickly, lifting her hands to show that she hadn't been touching anything she wasn't supposed to.

Madeline's cheeks dimpled with amusement. "I am sure you weren't."

Letting out a sigh of relief as she realized that she was not in trouble, Ivy explained herself. "It's just usually people don't want me to be places, or they say I'm doing something bad."

"That must be tedious," Madeline commiserated.

"It is tedious," Ivy agreed.

Madeline regarded the younger vampire for a long moment, then smiled. "I feel like going for a walk. Care to come with me?"

"I don't think I'm allowed," Ivy said sadly.

"I think you'll be allowed with me," Madeline winked.

It would have been rude to refuse her, Ivy reasoned to herself, so the two vampiresses left the Chateau and began walking in the extensive gardens. "I love this place," Madeline said conversationally, stopping to caress the petals of a rose.

"It's nice," Ivy agreed somewhat half-heartedly. She was feeling very ill at ease, not because of Madeline's presence, but because of Jon's irritation. He was so keen to keep her under control and so quick to become annoyed when she did not respond to being locked down like a prisoner. "Thank you for letting me stay here," she said, remembering her manners.

"You are quite welcome," Madeline replied. "Are you happy?"

The direct question caught Ivy off guard. She looked into Madeline's eyes with a rueful smile. "Most of the time," she said honestly.

"Good, that is all anyone can hope for."

Madeline was more than nice, she was a straight talker. Ivy liked that. "Can I ask you a question?"

"Of course," Madeline inclined her head and waited.

Ivy paused for a moment, trying to formulate the question diplomatically. Jon would probably kill her if she angered Madeline. "Did you really make Blaze *and* Jon? They're so different."

"Yes," Madeline nodded. "Though I chose Blaze several centuries before Jon. It was a different time and different skills were needed. The world has become a much softer place in recent years. Blaze I chose for his strength and intelligent ruthlessness, Jon for his ability to understand the world as it was at the turn of the century."

"So Blaze is hundreds of years older? That's why he is so arrogant then," Ivy mused aloud. She blushed when she caught Madeline's eye and realized that she may have unintentionally insulted her. "Sorry. I didn't mean all older vampires are arrogant, it's just Blaze is always on at Jon."

"You think they're bad these days?" Madeline smiled. "They did not always get on as well as they do now," she reminisced. "When I first made Jon he worshiped Blaze, but as he grew stronger and desired to go his own way they began to fight. For a time it was necessary to separate them entirely."

"Why? Did they hurt each other?"

Madeline paused for a moment, as if she were looking for a tactful way of putting things. "Blaze has always been fond of Jon, but he's never had any qualms about enforcing his rule of law."

"Well that hasn't changed," Ivy said emphatically, making Madeline smile in amusement.

"No, but Jon has. I am very proud of what he has become. He has strength but also compassion."

"And Blaze?"

"Blaze is what he is. He has always carved his own path" Madeline said diplomatically.

Ivy processed that information silently. So Blaze had come first but had clearly been overshadowed in his maker's eyes by Jon. No wonder Blaze spent so much time patronizingly telling Jon how wrong he was about everything. He was trying to make up for what they both knew, that Jon was the favorite and he was a relic of a world long gone by. For the first time since she laid eyes on Blaze, Ivy felt some empathy for the arrogant vampire. "He's not so bad," she blurted, blushing slightly for a reason she could not explain.

"He certainly has his charms," Madeline agreed knowingly.

"He always threatens to hit me though," Ivy confided.

The matriarch cocked her head to the side. “Why might that be, do you think?”

Ivy shrugged. “Maybe it's his whole need to establish dominance thing?”

“Maybe it's the fact that there is a half wild fledgling crashing about the place,” Madeline winked.

Ivy blushed deeply. So her behavior had been noted even at the highest levels. No wonder Jon was so mad. She wasn't just being bad, she was making him look bad by default. The revelation was followed by a silence that bordered on the uncomfortable for a moment or two, then the conversation abruptly turned to other things, the pleasantness of the roses, the uncommon clemency of the weather, the general niceness of all the things that were. Ivy was barely paying attention anyhow. As they made meaningless small talk, her mind was whirring between two targets, the warmth and strength of Jon, and the wild abandon that was Blaze.

Chapter Two

Tiring of arguing with his younger brother, Blaze took to the city to feed. His appetite for the baser things in life had been rampant of late, ever since Ivy and Jon had made the Chateau their home. He told himself it was because the fledgling irritated him so, but at the back of his mind he knew that was not the reason. The real reason was almost unthinkable.

As he wandered the streets, a loud bar drew him in. It was not his usual haunt, but the pounding music and the scent of aroused flesh promised to distract him from the unwanted thoughts that plagued his mind. The moment he stepped past the bouncer and into the den of human iniquity, he knew he had come to the right place. Almost right away, he found the perfect victim for taking out his frustration and sating his hunger.

Her scent caught his attention first. In the mass of heaving, sweating humanity, her scent was crisp and clear. He looked her over as she sipped at her drink by the bar, then moved forward through the crowd to order a drink of his own. The wait for the drink gave him time to observe her from afar and take her fragile mortal beauty in. She had raven dark hair that brushed her shoulders in a jagged cut, pale skin brushed lightly with cosmetics that did it no justice and mascara laden eye lashes surrounding dark pupils. Her features were neat and compact. Several of the other men were watching her with lustful intent, their eyes drawn to her half exposed cleavage. She was dressed well, in long boots and a short skirt. The exposed flesh of her legs was alluring, almost as alluring as her bare midriff and cleavage. She was putting on a shameless display of young nubile femininity and her mere presence was driving the men around her mad. Several would be suitors orbited through the crowd around her, circling like a pack of wolves.

There were other females of course, females competing for masculine attention, dancing to and fro, occasionally allowing themselves to be captured by the muscled youths for a quick tryst in one of the bathrooms, but like many of the mortal men who thronged the place hoping to sate their lusts, Blaze did not have eyes for them. He was drawn to this singular young woman, a woman who appeared disinterested in what the men around her were offering, yet was still clearly seeking something.

Her eyes caught his across the bar and he saw a glimmer of recognition. She did not know him, but he strongly suspected she knew what he was. Interestingly she did not appear to be afraid. She was the perfect material for a familiar, beautiful enough to engage the mind, young and healthy enough to feed the body. He tipped his glass at her and she smiled.

His answering smile widened as she began walking towards him, working her way through the crowd. Just like that here was another willing victim secured with little more than a flicker of an eye. It was almost too easy. The jealous glances of mortal men were upon him as he drew her in like a moth to a flame.

Later on he drove deep inside the wet, willing pussy under him, reveling in the sweetness. He didn't know the mortal's name, he didn't need to know the mundane details of her life. All he needed was the glazed look of pleasure in her eyes as he thrust inside her, rewarding her for her blood sacrifice.

A bloody mark on her neck was testament to what she had given. Her moans were a testament to what she was receiving. His thick cock had her stretched wide, making her clit stand proud. The heat of the

human around his flesh was wonderful. The supplicant's body felt like smooth butter as he fucked her, giving her what she'd all but begged on her knees for.

His seed strained to escape, but he was not finished. He wanted to see the mortal tremble and cry out before he let himself go. With masterful caresses he grazed his cold thumb against her clit, urging her onwards. His mind linked with hers, feeling her ecstasy. She was close, so close, and as he rocked his hips back and forth, sliding the length of his cock in and out of her she began to come. "Oh my god," she whispered over and over in the aftermath. He smiled, knowing that the god she was praying to had abandoned her into the care of a creature beyond life and beyond death.

He left her in an erotic haze, still writhing softly beneath the coverlet. When she awoke in the morning she would have a vague memory of what had passed the night before, a fantastic story she would never be able to confirm or deny. No doubt she would take to the clubs regularly in the future, hoping to see him again, hoping to give herself again. Perhaps he'd take her up on the offer, perhaps he'd spend the evening with another willing woman instead.

With a cocky smile plastered across his face, he began the walk home. Having sated his two great appetites he was a vampire content. The only pity was the fact that the moon was dipping dangerously close to the horizon, forcing him to hurry a little more than he would have perhaps liked to have done. When he gained the Chateau, he lingered out the front for a moment, enjoying the way the sky was beginning to lighten in the distance. Already the rays of the great ball of fire were warming the earth, rousing prey from their slumber whilst their nocturnal predators retired to sleep.

Before he could be singed by the sun, he slipped through the great doors. Inside, the Chateau was quiet. Most of the family would be slipping into somnolence with the rising of the sun. That meant that there would be nobody to share his tales of conquest with for many hours. That was also a pity, but his hopes for companionship were lifted when he heard a small movement in the library.

When he arrived at the doors to the library, a slim figure laying on the couch made him hesitate. It was Ivy. Alone. He could not sense Jon anywhere. That was strange indeed. Usually if they were not fighting they were wrapped up in one another's arms in a sickening display of cloying love and affection.

"Ivy?"

She stirred slightly and peered over the arm of the couch at him. Her large eyes and hunted expression reminded him of a burrowing mammal.

"Blaze," she said flatly.

"What are you doing here?"

"Sitting," she replied with irritating obviousness.

"Yes, why are you sitting here? Why are you not in bed?"

"Are you going to send me to bed now?" There was a note of hopeful rebellion in her voice and a spark of mischief in her eyes that simultaneously drew him in and repulsed him. From the moment he'd laid eyes on the fledgling, his mind had been filled with dark fantasies of punishing her the way she

needed to be punished. But she was Jon's, and he could not in good conscience cross that line, even if little brother seemed to have no idea that the cute little wretch he'd found would soon have the capacity to tear his throat out and not care one way or another.

"Good night, Ivy," Blaze said, turning to leave.

"Hey!"

He turned back to see her pouting. "Don't you want to know why I'm here all alone?"

Crossing his arms over his chest, Blaze waited for her to enlighten him.

"Jon kicked me out of bed."

"Why would he do such a thing?"

"He said I was... uhm..." Her eyes flicked up to the ceiling as she tried to remember. "He said I was ungrateful and badly behaved and uh.. something else."

"I see." Blaze continued on his way, ignoring the almost audible pouting emanating from the library. As usual, his brother needed him whether he liked it or not. He paused outside Jon's bedroom and tapped on the door. "Jon."

Jon's voice sounded simultaneously angry and sad. "Not now Blaze."

Ignoring his brother's wishes, Blaze pushed his way into the room. "What's going on?"

Jon's posture was that of a defeated man. He sat on the edge of the bed, his head in his hands, clearly upset at the turn events had taken. When he spoke, his words were laced with frustration. "She's getting worse, not better. I don't understand why. I've given her everything she needs and still she defies me."

Blaze folded his arms over his chest and leaned against the door frame. "Yet again, I will endeavor to explain. When you found her she was half dead from hunger. You've been feeding her and slowly, her strength is returning. She is beginning to grow."

"That's a good thing, right?" Jon shrugged as if he did not understand what the issue was. He was a good looking man which was fortunate for him, because he was not always the sharpest tool in the shed.

With as much patience as he could muster, Blaze continued to explain what should have been obvious. "Yes, but it also means that she will become more headstrong and a great deal more dangerous. I have not been joking these past weeks. Get yourself a sturdy whip or switch and use it."

"I spank her all the time."

Blaze snorted with derision. "Spanking her is a waste of time. Might as well swat her with a rolled up newspaper."

Jon shook his head. "I don't want to hurt her."

“You won't hurt her. Not by disciplining her. Leaving her laying about the house like a cat in heat, that might get her hurt.”

Jon's expression was puzzled. “Like a cat... what?”

Blaze glowered at his brother. “Do you pay any attention at all? Do you?”

“Of course I do.”

“If you do not stop her, she will feed and she will fuck and she will kill indiscriminately. Do you not remember your early years?”

“I remember you beating me until I did as I was told.”

“And you're damn lucky I did. Now do the same for her before it is too late.”

“I can't, not like that,” Jon shook his head. “I love her. I hated you for a long time. I don't want her to hate me.”

“Oh for...” Blaze's irritation threatened to boil over. “Do you ever listen to me?”

“I believe you,” Jon said. “I just can't whip her. Not like that. It would destroy everything we have.”

“You mean it would destroy your fantasy of a happy romance? What will be left if she continues on this path? Where will she end up? Will you even like one another at the end of it? She is changing, Jon, and she is changing quickly. You cannot afford to let her go unchecked.”

For a long minute there was silence, then Jon raised his head. “Would you help me?”

“Help you? How?” Blaze's eyes narrowed. If Jon was asking what he thought he was asking then...

“Just tell me what I need to do.”

Blaze nodded. “Very well.”

Ivy had not gone far. She was still rolling about on the couch, sleep evading her as desire and rebellion raged through her body. Blaze paused for a moment, wondering if what they were about to do was a good idea, wondering what the consequences might be. Ivy would not see this coming, that was certain. She had become accustomed to Jon handling her with kid gloves, giving her a little smack here and there, but for the most part indulging her smart mouth and her rebellious ways. Things were about to change.

“Ivy,” Blaze said authoritatively. “Go to bed.”

She sat up quickly, a look of curious surprise on her face. “So you *are* sending me to bed,” she said with a cheeky smile.

“I am. Now go.”

The smile spread and became naughtier. “No.”

Without another word, Blaze gripped her by the fabric at the back of her neck and yanked her up from the couch. “Go. To bed,” he growled, dropping her towards the doorway as if she weighed little more than a kitten

“You can't tell me what to do,” Ivy protested angrily, her mood shifting quickly as she stumbled, then found her feet.

“Wrong. You are a fledgling under our roof. You will do as you are told.”

For a long moment, Ivy and Blaze stared one another down, Ivy's usually sweet expression twisted with a rebellious rage. In sharp contrast, Blaze was perfectly calm, perfectly focused. There was no doubt in his mind that he would come out on top of this altercation and that certainty was apparent in every inch of his body.

“What's your damn problem,” Ivy muttered finally, turning and walking away towards the bedroom where Jon was waiting for her. His torso was bare and muscular and thoroughly distracting to Ivy as she slammed her way into the room and momentarily forgot why she was angry. “Your brother put his hands on me,” she said, remembering quickly.

“Is that so?” Jon's voice was soft, controlled. She took it for weakness. Time to play tattle tale. Time to play one brother against the other.

“Yes, he manhandled me and tossed me all over the show,” she exclaimed, waving her hands around to illustrate how terrible it had all been. When Jon did not react immediately, she scowled. “Are you just going to let him do that?”

Behind her, the door began to open. She was forced to shuffle forward to allow the incoming vampire into the room. “Blaze!” She pointed at him as if he was a crime suspect she'd just spotted in a line up then looked back at Jon expectantly.

“It's time we had a talk, Ivy,” Jon said in heavy tones. She frowned in consternation. This was not going the way she hoped it would go.

“What about?” She began backing into a corner of the room. Being flanked by both vampires was intimidating. She could feel energy rolling off both of them, a determined energy that made her ill at ease.

“Your behavior has been deteriorating lately,” Jon said. “In spite of repeated warnings, you continue to defy me and do whatever you feel like doing. I can't trust you to obey me, so I am forced to have someone keep an eye on you constantly.”

“So?” Ivy shrugged. “It's because you keep telling me what to do. You need to let me do what I want to do.”

“No,” Jon shook his head. He glanced over at Blaze quickly, then back at Ivy. “You need to learn to do as you are told, when you are told to do it, and you need to learn to speak respectfully.”

Frowning, Ivy looked between the two men. Something was going on, something she did not like in the slightest. "Since when are you such a hard ass?"

"Since you started to fully come into your powers," Jon explained. "You are growing stronger by the day..."

Ivy interrupted him, one hand on her hip, one finger pointed at him accusingly. "And that's a good reason to stop me doing what I want to do, because I'm too strong? You're so fucked in the head."

"Enough," Blaze said flatly, breaking into the exchange before it could deteriorate into tantrums and name calling. He stepped forward and grabbed Ivy then carried her, kicking and squealing over to the bed. She found herself pressed face down onto the coverlet as Jon's hands claimed her, pulling her skirt up. She made an outraged howl, but it did nothing. He simply hooked his fingers inside her panties and pulled them down so that they sat just beneath her bottom.

"That attitude will not be allowed to stand any more, Ivy," Jon lectured.

"Fuck off," Ivy swore viciously. She didn't understand why Jon and Blaze had joined forces, or why they cared so much about what she did. She hadn't done anything wrong. She hadn't hurt anyone or anything. It was so unfair. Her sense of persecution increased dramatically as she felt a thin rod lightly pressed across her cheeks. "What are you going to do?" For the first time, a note of trepidation snuck into her defiant tone.

"I'm going to teach you a lesson," Jon informed her, tapping the switch across her cheeks. She squirmed in place, doing her best not to whimper.

"But Blaze is here," she complained softly, trying to appeal to Jon's loving side.

"Yes he is. He has also been there for your misbehavior. If you can act up in front of him, you can be punished in front of him."

Ivy's cheeks blazed hot with embarrassment. From the moment she'd met Blaze she'd been tip toeing around him, fascinated by his apparently ruthlessness and desiring to prove that she was above it, or at least beyond its reach. Now he was looking at her bared bottom and he was going to watch as she was spanked. "Please Jon, I'm sorry," she whimpered contritely. "I won't be bad again."

Out of her line of sight, Jon wavered visibly. He looked over towards Blaze, who now stood in the corner of the room, his arms crossed firmly over his chest, his golden hair falling forward around his face. Jon's brown eyes met the resolute blue gaze of the older vampire, who simply shook his head. 'No', the look seemed to say. 'You must go through this.'

Ivy heard a strange sigh, then felt the switch leave her bottom. For a moment she was filled with hope that her plea for clemency had been heard, but her hopes were dashed not a second later when the switch cut down across her cheeks, burning a harsh, hard line. She squealed with the unexpected pain and kicked out to try to free herself. It was hopeless of course. Jon was far stronger. He held her easily and cut the switch across her bottom several more times, laying horizontal lines across her cheeks until she was sure she must look like a radiator. It hurt more than any spanking had ever hurt and to make it worse, this one seemed to be given for no reason at all. She'd been a little bit mouthy, but that was all.

Surely speaking her mind wasn't now grounds for a sore red ass?

It seemed it was, for having reached the lower part of her cheeks with the switch, Jon began working back up, crossing the previous welts. All thoughts aside from thoughts of escape left Ivy's head then. She was in an extreme amount of pain and hot tears began flowing down her cheeks as she sobbed. Involuntarily squirming and kicking, she forgot about modesty, she even forgot about Blaze standing in the corner of the room with a grin look of satisfaction. Ordinarily she might have had some slim chance at escape, but on that occasion she had not reckoned on Jon's new found determination.

"Stay still," Jon growled. Having warmed to his task, he didn't stop slapping the switch against her bottom until she stopped kicking and wriggling. When she lay passively across his lap, sniveling pitifully to herself, the rod finally lifted for the last time and the room was quiet aside from her cries. She waited for Jon to lift her into his arms and comfort her, or to rub the pain away with a gentle hand, but neither happened. Instead she heard him speaking to her, telling her that he hoped she had learned her lesson.

"It won't be tolerated anymore, Ivy. You are not a law unto yourself," he lectured her. She sniffled and nodded against the bedspread, too sore and heartbroken to move. Jon was not the man she thought he had been. He was just as heartless and cruel as Blaze.

"Up," he tapped her bottom. She was off his lap in an instant, wiping her eyes furiously to eradicate all trace of tears. She was more upset than she'd ever been with him and all she wanted to do was to get as far away as possible from him, from them all. He'd mentioned spanking as a condition of being part of his clan, but he'd never mentioned being whipped with a rod that felt like it had been forged in the fires of hell.

"Ivy, look at me." Jon's voice was softer now. She clenched her jaw tightly, lest she say anything that earned her further punishment and met his gaze. To her surprise, he did not look angry, or even satisfied at having punished her. He looked sad, and possibly regretful. "Ivy, do not make me treat you this way." His brown gaze was like hot chocolate and it threatened to melt her heart. She began sniffling again and he reached for her and pulled her into a tight embrace.

"I'm sorry," she whispered in the smallest voice possible, hoping that he would hear it and Blaze would not. The punishment she'd endured had the marks of Blaze all over it, and though she was already coming to an understanding of why Jon had been convinced it was necessary, she was not well pleased with Blaze at all.

"Don't make me do that again," Jon whispered back. The pain was evident in his voice and without him needing to say a word, she knew that it really had hurt him to do that to her. He'd done it because he loved her, because a certain asshole had convinced him that it was necessary. Even as she allowed herself to be comforted by Jon's gentle touch, she had begun to plan for revenge.

The sound of a door closing softly told them both that Blaze had taken his leave, and with a long sigh, Jon drew Ivy down to lay on the bed beside him. "How does your bottom feel?"

"Like you poured lava over it," Ivy pouted, pressing close to him. It made little logical sense that she should seek physical comfort from the vampire who had unleashed such pain on her, but it was what she did nonetheless.

“You have been so difficult lately,” Jon said. “I worry about you.”

“Don't worry about me,” Ivy smiled a little. “I will be better for you. I promise.”

“I am glad to hear it,” Jon relied, cuddling her closer. “Is there anything you want to tell me?”

“What do you mean?”

“About why you're such an angry little wench sometimes,” he smiled affectionately, kissing her nose.

“I don't know,” Ivy replied honestly. “I guess it's just, I want to do my own thing and you have me almost under guard. And Blaze... he's...”

“He is just trying to help,” Jon interjected.

“Why? What does he care? He's been sticking his nose into our business since day one and what good has he done?”

“He thinks he knows best.”

“He needs to get laid and quit worrying about other people,” Ivy grumbled.

Jon chuckled. “Somehow I doubt he has problems getting laid.

“Ew. Gross. I don't want to think about it. It's bad enough you spanked me in front of him. I bet that was his perverted idea.” She spoke casually, gently fishing for information. She was rewarded when Jon turned over to lay on his back and ran his hand through his hair.

“I was at my wit's end with you Ivy. I've never done this before.”

“You've never had a girlfriend?”

Jon smirked. “I've never had a girlfriend who was also a fledgling coming into her powers, someone I'm responsible for.”

“Oh,” Ivy nodded. “And Blaze has?”

“Well... he had me, in a manner of speaking.”

“I hope not,” Ivy grinned.

“Not like that, brat,” Jon laughed, slapping her thigh lightly. “I mean he helped me when I was learning.

“You've been 'helping' me for ages without his input,” Ivy pointed out. “Maybe you should just trust yourself instead of listening to him.” She was appealing to his ego and sense of independence, and it was working. Jon nodded slightly.

“Perhaps you're right.” He glanced over at her, seeing her smile. “Or perhaps you just don't want your

backside switched again.”

“Hey, my interest in this matter is self evident. What you have to ask yourself is this – what is his?”

Jon laughed at her thinly veiled insinuation. “The legal profession is missing one of its own.”

When Jon fell into a deep slumber, Ivy was still lying awake. It was difficult to sleep with a throbbing bottom, and even more difficult to sleep with thoughts of anger and revenge in her heart. Jon had switched her, but it had been at Blaze's behest, she was sure of it.

She got out of bed, making as little disturbance as possible. It was time to set a few things straight. She began searching through the mansion, looking for Blaze. She found him in a private study, reading by candle light. She pushed the door open roughly, announcing her presence with the loud banging sound produced by the door slamming back against its own frame. He did not react to the noise at first, which made her even more angry. He knew damned well she was there. “Blaze.” She growled the word angrily, like an insult.

Finally he turned towards her, a smug smile establishing itself on his features. “Already misbehaving and disappointing your master, Ivy? That will surely not do.”

“I know you were behind what just happened,” she hissed in a low, angry whisper. “And I suggest you watch your back from now on.” Her eyes glittered venomously in the low candle light.

Blaze arched a brow. “Threats, how charming. It is almost as if you don't want to sit again.”

“Lay a finger on me and I will destroy you,” she promised.

He stood and stretched, then took a step towards her, forcing her to back into the hallway. She might have been angry, but she wasn't stupid enough to put herself in a position where he could easily lay hands on her. Smiling as she retreated, Blaze leaned up against the door frame and spoke casually. “You just don't get it, do you? Why is that?”

Frowning with confusion at his obtuse statement, Ivy snapped. “Why is what?”

“Why can you not accept your comparative weakness and attempt to behave yourself?”

“I've got a better question,” Ivy said, disregarding the line of questioning that did not interest her in the slightest. “Why are you so very interested? Why do you care? What's your angle on this, huh?”

A cold smile passed over Blaze's thin lips. “I am interested in keeping order in this house.”

“Bullshit.”

An expression of amazement passed over Blaze's face and his mouth fell open slightly in surprise. “You must be utterly mad, girl.”

Ivy clenched her fists at her sides and set her jaw determinedly. “I am mad. Mad at you for messing with me. Nobody messes with me.” As her bold statement hung in the air she was half afraid that he

might grab her and beat her senseless. After all, it had been the consequence he had been promising her since they had made one another's acquaintance. But he merely smiled a queer smile, nodded slightly, then turned and walked away.

Not certain whether she had come out on top in the encounter, Ivy returned to the bed chamber, where she passed a sleepless day. Something was not right, but she could not put her finger on what. What she did know was that where she had once slept soundly next to Jon, feeling protected and in his care, she now felt oddly exposed.

Chapter Three

“Dammit Ivy!” Jon's face was beet red with frustration. In his hands he held the charred remains of what had been one of the first printed editions of Byron's poetry. The leather and gold embossed cover that had once glowed richly on the shelves of the library crumbled between his fingers, spreading ash all over the floor.

“I'm sorry,” Ivy said in tones that strongly suggested she was not sorry at all. “I fell asleep and it fell into the fire.”

Jon's expression revealed his doubt as to the veracity of her tale. “I'm supposed to believe that you were sitting around reading poetry?”

“You're supposed to believe that I was reading poetry and fell asleep,” Ivy replied with sneaky joy.

Jon scowled and shook his head at her, opened his mouth and then shut it again. He seemed to be genuinely lost for words. Gently, and with mournful respect, he placed the remains book on a table and turned towards Ivy. “What is wrong with you? You never used to be like this, not willfully destructive, not deliberately antagonizing.”

A careless little shrug indicated Ivy's complete disinterest. “Maybe I'm changing Jon. Maybe I'm not the little stray you picked up at the coffee shop.” The truth of the matter was that it really had been an accident, but with Jon accusing her of lying and being destructive, she was hardly in a conciliatory mood. If he wanted to believe she was a terrible vampire hell bent on destroying all he loved, then he could believe it as far as she was concerned.

“Maybe you aren't,” Jon said heavily.

Ivy's eyes narrowed. They were getting to the heart of the matter now. He was tired of her, he didn't like who she was anymore. “Is that a problem for you? After all this insistence that I become a proper vampire, you don't like who I am now? It wasn't good enough when I slept on a couch and it's not good enough now that I sleep in your bed?”

He shrugged and looked away from her, apparently unwilling or unable to meet her gaze. “I don't know. This isn't...”

“This isn't what?”

“It isn't what I thought it would be,” Jon admitted, his shoulders slumping. “I thought if I loved you, it would be enough.”

“It is enough,” Ivy urged him, feeling a sudden panic rising in her breast. They might be fighting, but she did not want to lose him. He had become more than a lover to her, he was her world. Surely a crispy old book wouldn't be what came between them?

Jon held up the remains of the old book. “It's not enough, is it Ivy? You need something more. I don't know if I can give it to you.”

The implied rejection hurt. "So you're just going to give up on me? Why didn't you just leave me as I was if you weren't prepared to deal with me?" Ivy shouted angrily. She turned on her heel and ran out of the room before Jon could respond, before he could confirm what she already knew, that he was tired of her and didn't want her anymore.

Above the fight and blissfully unaware of it for once, Blaze watched as lights as plentiful as stars blinked on across the city, making for a lightscape that almost matched the Universe's own display. Humans, though transient in nature, were quite special in their own way, he mused to himself, watching the moving red and yellow lights that were streams of traffic making their way around the city. He'd never admit having thoughts of that nature to anyone. Admiration of humans was a slippery slope that all too often ended in a pile of ashes. He'd known more than one vampire who became fascinated with humanity and eventually wandered into a bright sunny day to experience the light one last time.

Distracting himself with more pleasant thoughts, Blaze smiled slightly as he remembered the sight Ivy had made the previous evening. She looked wonderful with her gorgeous red bottom criss crossed with lines, her eyes filled with tears, but also defiance. She had taken her first switching well, better than he had anticipated. He had expected hysterics, but once she had discovered that she couldn't fight the punishment, she simply accepted it. If only the aftermath had been better handled. His memories drifted to the way she had confronted him afterward. She had left Jon's bed to find him and she'd been so angry, so frustrated. He was certain that she didn't really know why she was filled with a perpetual rage that saw her seeking out trouble regularly, but he knew very well why. She had outgrown her master. Jon had gone soft on her in the final moments and so she had come to him. Even when angry and afraid she could not stay away from him. It wasn't fair really. Wasn't fair on her, certainly wasn't fair on Jon who loved her.

Blaze mused over a coffee, looking out over the city. Things were becoming dangerous. He should walk away, take some time out. Let Jon figure out how to deal with Ivy on his own. Sweet, silly little Ivy. Since the moment he'd laid eyes on her, she'd claimed a place in his mind. She was different from a great many other vampiresses. She lacked pretense and she abhorred a facile facade. Everything she did was because she felt it. He really was very fond of her, though he would never have let her know that. She was the type to twist affection into lenience if she so much as suspected that kindly feelings were at hand.

She was better off with Jon, he tried to convince himself. Jon wanted to provide stability and monogamy and the sort of environment that she would flourish in. He wanted none of that. He was old and set in his ways. He wanted freedom and new experiences. He wanted a regular stream of beauties who catered willingly to his every whim. He did not want, nor need, a brat of a fledgling hell bent on rebelling against everything she could find.

Footsteps coming across the roof interrupted his thoughts. He did not need to turn to see who was coming. Madeline was a soothing presence who could make even the greatest agonies seem to disappear.

"Hello mother dearest," he said, standing to greet her and pressing kisses to her cheeks.

"Hello my son," she replied. They sat together in the roof top garden, not speaking for a time, simply

sharing the space.

“Jon tells me he has been taking your advice with regards to Ivy,” Madeline broached the subject tactfully.

Leaning back in his chair, Blaze tucked his hair behind one ear, laced his fingers over his midsection and looked over at his creator silently. He knew very well he had no secrets from her, though she did not often pry into his thoughts, she made sure to know what was going on. She was here for a reason, he was certain of that.

“He loves her very much,” Madeline said at length, approaching the elephant on the roof from a slightly different angle.

“I know,” Blaze sighed. “I have no intention of coming between them.”

He reply surprised him. “Perhaps you should.”

Blaze frowned deeply. “What are you saying?”

“I am saying that the tension between them grows daily. It is already spilling over into other affairs. I do not wish for our house to be upset by a mere fledgling. Listen.”

Blaze stopped and listened. When he paid attention to the house below he could hear voices raised at full volume. Ivy and Jon were at one another's throats again, and so soon after the switching. He wished he was surprised, but he was not. “What do you want me to do?”

“Take some time out. Take her with you.” Madeline nodded towards the driveway, where Ivy's slim figure was pelting full speed into the distance. “Give her what she needs.”

Ivy ran out of the mansion, tears streaming down her face. Jon's frustration was getting the better of him and he was lashing out at her with words that hurt far more than any switch ever could. The arguments she could have handled, but their sex life had all but vanished and that was driving her mad. Jon preferred to work and complain about her behavior rather than actually spend any time with her. His spankings did nothing to scratch the itch that underlay her restlessness and misbehavior, she was perpetually filled with lust that only seemed to grow with every passing day. Even Blaze was beginning to look good to her. She'd been almost disappointed when he'd walked away the previous evening. Her body yearned to feel the touch of a strong man, a man who knew what he wanted. A man who was capable of bending her to his will.

“Hello, little vampire.”

Just like that, he was there. Where he'd come from, she didn't know. Blaze stood in the pale moonlight dressed as finely as always, cutting a dashing figure indeed. She skidded to a halt in front of him, not bothering to wipe her tears away. He must know by now what was going on. Everybody seemed to know.

He looked at her for a long moment, taking in her tear stained cheeks, her wretched sobs. "Come with me." It was a simple command, no explanation given. She followed him as he walked back towards the house, but instead of going back inside, he went to the garage.

"Get in," Blaze ordered as he unlocked one of the older cars. It should have been strange, but it wasn't. Ivy was tired of fighting, tired of being frustrated, tired of yearning for that which Jon would not give her.

She belted herself into the passenger seat and dabbed at her eyes as they drove. Blaze did not speak at all at first and the only sounds in the car were her small sniffles. After several long miles, she finally became aware that they were not heading into the city as she had assumed they would. Instead, they were heading away from it at speeds that would have made a traffic officer lose their mind.

"Where are we going?" She tried looking out the window to work out where she was, but the landscape was pretty much a dark blur.

"A little place in the country," Blaze replied, not taking his eyes off the road for a split second.

Accepting that, Ivy slouched down in her seat and nodded. She was exhausted from arguing with Jon, all she wanted to do was forget about the horrible expression she'd last seen on his handsome face. Disappointment, heartbreak. It was too terrible to bear. Did he even like her anymore? Was he sending her away? She looked over at Blaze, trusting him to tell her the truth. "Did he ask you to take me away?"

"No." They were on gravel roads now and Ivy began to get the feeling she would never be found if Blaze took it into his head to end her.

"Great. I'm going to end up on the back of a milk carton," Ivy sighed.

"If that's a reference to modern culture, I'm afraid it is beyond me," Blaze said, activating the hand brake and slamming the car into a hard right turn that sent the vehicle hurtling sideways for several meters before straightening and heading in a new direction.

Ivy's squeal of fear and excitement rose to a peak as the brakes went on full lock after a few seconds and the car skidded to a halt in front of a country cabin that Ivy paid absolutely no attention to as she leaped out of the car and looked back the way they'd come. A deep rut had been carved in the gravel so impressive that the driveway looked as if it had been banked for the purpose.

"That was insane!" Her voice rose to a high pitch and she jumped up and down a little. "Can we do that again?"

Blaze smiled a thin smile. "I hope you enjoy the rest of this little trip as much as you enjoyed the arrival."

Immediately, Ivy grew wary. "What are we doing here?" She looked around, but saw nothing but grassy plains and beyond them, tall stands of trees that seemed to go on forever. She wondered how far they had come in the relatively short journey. She wondered if she would ever see home, or Jon again.

"Teaching you a lesson," Blaze said, walking around the car and extending his arm to usher her into the

cabin.

“Not more lessons,” Ivy sighed dramatically. “I am tired of lessons.”

“Then try learning them for once,” Blaze suggested as they gained entrance to the cabin. Once they were both inside he shut the door and bolted it behind them.

The burst of adrenaline that accompanied the action let Ivy realize the gravity of her situation. She was now locked in a small cabin with a remorseless vampire who may or may not want to hurt her. She tried to cover her growing fear with bravado. “Or what, will you shuffle me off to an even more remote location?”

Blaze turned to her, fixing her with a look. “There is no 'or what' this time. I'm not Jon. I'm not in love with you. I don't care if you like me. You'll do as you're told or you'll suffer the consequences.” His words bordered on the cruel, but he did not speak cruelly, he spoke matter of factly.

Ivy stared at Blaze wide eyed. This was not good. This was not good at all. “What about Jon?”

“What about him?” Blaze asked, shrugging off his suit jacket, revealing a hounds-tooth waistcoat and white shirt. As usual he was impeccably dressed. “You were told, were you not, that the clan decides how its fledglings will be dealt with. Your relationship with Jon is immaterial.”

“But he doesn't know I am here.”

“He will know by now. Madeline will have informed him.”

“He will come for me,” Ivy set her jaw defiantly. It wouldn't do for Blaze to know that she really was terribly afraid of him.

“No, he won't.” Blaze placed his neatly folded jacket over the couch then turned to her. “Oh, and before you get the idea into your head, if you try to run away I will find you and I will thrash you to within an inch of your life. Understand me?” He loomed over her, so much taller, so much more powerful.

Ivy nodded. Her mouth had gone dry with fear. “Okay,” she agreed in a small voice. Without Jon she no longer felt protected. Blaze could do whatever he wanted to her. “So, what happens now?”

“Now you can go and build a fire.” He pointed to the fire place and for the first time, Ivy bothered to stop and take in where they were. It was a one roomed fine old log cabin with an impressive fire place that she was certain would be needed in the winter. The walls were made of logs and it seemed doubtful that they would provide all that much insulation. A large bed covered in a jaunty patchwork quilt was pressed into the far corner of the room. Next to the fireplace, which took up much of the back wall, there was a small kitchen area. There was no refrigerator, but there was an oven and a sink. No bathroom was evident either. The area where they stood boasted a large overstuffed couch, a coffee table and a couple of arm chairs. It was an intimate cabin and Ivy was not looking forward to sharing it with Blaze.

“Where are we going to feed? We're in the middle of nowhere. We'll starve!” She spoke dramatically, grasping at any straws that might provide reason for them to leave.

"Let me worry about that," Blaze said, tapping her bottom lightly and pointing to the fire. She gasped at the light touch. He'd never touched her before, but even the light pat set her senses into overdrive. With blushing cheeks she rushed towards the fire, eager to escape him. There was a stack of old newspapers in the grate and she began balling the paper up and stuffing it into the center of the fire. A few sticks of kindling went next, arranged around the paper in a teepee shape. "You've done this before," Blaze noted from the comfort of an arm chair.

"Yeah," Ivy nodded, keeping her eyes on the fire. "I used to go camping a lot," she explained, putting a match to the paper and watching as the bright orange flame took hold immediately. She was very much on guard now, sensing that she needed to be careful if she wanted to steer clear of pain. Blaze finally had her where he wanted her and she knew very well what he wanted to do her. He'd told her plenty of times how terrible a beating would be from him. As the kindling began to catch, she looked around for a small log to place on the fire, taking her time. Down by the fire she felt somewhat safe. She was doing as she was told after all. She couldn't be punished when she was doing her duties conscientiously, could she?

Blaze was silent as she tended the flames, which grew quickly and began licking around the small log she'd placed. She added another one and sat back, enjoying the radiant heat. "Come over here," he ordered suddenly, breaking into her fire induced reverie.

Her instinct was to refuse, but she thought better of it almost immediately. All she had to do was what he wanted. Then hopefully he wouldn't hurt her. Hopefully he wouldn't touch her again and set that fire in her belly ablaze. With her eyes lowered, she got up and walked over to the couch, sitting as far away from him as possible.

"Closer."

Obediently, she inched across the couch to the middle then stopped, glancing up quickly to see if she was pleasing him. The moment she caught his eye, it was as if she'd been jolted with electricity. His gaze was so pale and clear, it seemed to consume her.

"You're already behaving better," Blaze noted, cutting straight to the heart of the matter. "Why is that?"

Ivy wrestled back a sarcastic response. "Because I'm afraid of you," she replied honestly. She saw a flicker of satisfaction pass over his features.

"And you are not afraid of Jon?"

She shook her head and looked down for a moment. "Jon loves me. He wouldn't hurt me."

"Look at me," he ordered. She looked back up quickly, loathe to anger him. "So you take advantage of that love?"

"No!" Ivy was horrified at the insinuation, but as Blaze continued to look at her, she had to admit that her response wasn't entirely true. "Sometimes," she admitted.

"I am not a believer in love," Blaze said, lacing his fingers over his midsection and directing his gaze towards the fire she'd built, "but I do know that if it does exist, it cannot survive being taken for

granted.”

“I don't try to take him for granted,” Ivy said. “I just wish he would let me do what I wanted. I hate being told what to do all the time.”

“Why do you think he tells you what to do all the time?”

“I don't know,” Ivy shrugged, picking at a thread on the couch.

“What do you want to do?”

Thinking about that made Ivy smile a devilish little smile. “A lot of things,” she said vaguely.

“And would any of them be good for you? For the clan?”

“Probably not,” Ivy admitted. “But I just... have these urges.” She was surprised how open she was being with Blaze. She had never thought of him as a confidante, but he was listening and for whatever reason, he seemed to actually care. Besides, she reasoned to herself, he would probably beat her if she didn't tell him what he wanted to know.

“Of course you do,” Blaze smiled slightly. “We all have them. We must learn to control them.”

“Why? Why can't we just do as we please?”

He arched a brow at her, then looked back towards the fire. “You think the clan would survive long if we went out and fed and fucked our way across the city?”

Ivy giggled at the unexpected profanity. “I guess not.”

“Besides,” Blaze said, returning his piercing gaze to her. “It feels good to be given a place and kept in it.”

Ivy was skeptical. “I don't like it,” she said, shaking her head.

“Because you have not properly submitted to it,” Blaze said. “Get on the floor.” He extended a finger and pointed towards the thick rug.

“What?” Ivy was confused. “What do you mean?”

“I mean slide off the couch and sit on the floor,” Blaze said dryly.

She couldn't see a reason not to obey him, so she did as he said, slipping onto the rug and sitting there. From the floor, Blaze looked even larger and more imposing than usual. It did not make her feel at ease in the slightest as he smiled down at her. “For the rest of your stay here, you will not sit on the furniture unless told to.”

“Oh I see what's going on here,” Ivy said, comprehension dawning. “This is that puppy thing again.”

Blaze smirked. “Not quite. It's an easy way to remind you of your place.”

“My place?” The old outrage began to grow in Ivy again. “Well fine, if that's what you want, fine.” With dramatic flair, she threw herself onto her back and looked up at him from the ground near his feet. “Look, you can see my belly. I must be super submissive now.”

“Yes,” he purred, leaning down and placing his large palm on the exposed skin of her lower abdomen where her shirt had ridden up. “You are, aren't you?”

His touch, so thoroughly unexpected, but so very intimate, made her eyes fly open wide. Suddenly flooded with conflicting emotions, she squirmed. His hand was so close to intimate parts of her body, but he paid no attention to them, he simply held her down.

“I can feel the butterflies in your stomach,” Blaze said, speaking softly and hypnotically. “It feels good, doesn't it? It feels good to know that right now, in this moment, you have no choices, no responsibilities. You have nothing to do but lie there until I let you up.”

As he spoke, Ivy began struggling a little, but he shook his head and pressed down a little more firmly. “No, do not resist this,” he ordered. “Not unless you want to be punished.”

With a small whimper, Ivy tried to relax as much as possible. “Good girl,” Blaze praised her. “Now feel it. Feel what it is to submit for a moment.”

Looking up into his eyes, Ivy had something of an epiphany. Blaze was terrifying, but she could trust him. He was going to extreme lengths to help her and Jon. She didn't need to fight him. She didn't need to do anything at all. The realization brought with it an overwhelming sense of calm as her body relaxed properly. Blaze never took his eyes off hers, reassuring her both with his attention and his touch.

“There you go,” he said in smooth, almost hypnotic tones. “That feels nice, doesn't it?”

Ivy nodded slightly. She felt an overwhelming urge to giggle, not out of the thrill of naughtiness as usual, but out of a feeling of lightness. She felt almost as if she were floating, and her mind, usually full of thoughts of rebellion, was strangely quiet.

“You're a natural,” Blaze said with the air of a physician as he removed his hand. She missed his touch almost immediately.

“I am?” She was surprised at how doozy she felt. It was as if he had drugged her.

“Absolutely. No wonder you behave like such an unholy little terror when you're not satisfied.” He tussled her hair as she sat up and she smiled

“See, it was never my fault after all.”

“Well that's a matter of perspective,” Blaze said. “It is up to you to give obedience. Beyond that, you need worry about very little.”

Ivy nodded, falling silent. The experience with Blaze had disoriented her somewhat. She had always imagined that he would be different. Harsher, definitely. But he had barely laid a finger on her and

already she was more willing to obey him than Jon.

“Why so serious?”

“No reason,” Ivy shook her head.

Blaze tutted, shaking a finger down at her. “Uh uh, you must do as you are told, remember? That means answering questions honestly.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“Okay,” Ivy took a deep breath. “I don't understand why I find it easier to obey you. It worries me.”

“Of course it is easier. I have never been anything but an authority figure to you. Jon made the mistake of being a boyfriend.” Blaze's nose wrinkled as he used the term 'boyfriend' as if the very word were distasteful. “But here is something you should know,” he said, resting his arms on his thighs as he leaned down and took Ivy by the chin, ensuring that he had her complete attention. “If I get the slightest indication that you have given him any trouble. Any trouble at all. I will make you regret the day you were born. You owe your life to my brother and I will thank you to behave as such.”

Chills ran down Ivy's spine. As kind as Blaze had been when she was behaving herself, she had no doubt in her mind that he would make good on his promise. She nodded slowly, indicating that she understood.

“Good,” Blaze said, releasing her chin. “I actually think we might be done here.”

“Really?” Her excitement was impossible to hide.

“I expected you to be more difficult,” Blaze admitted. “I expected to have to whip you and whip you again for days on end, but I will not have to do that, will I Ivy?”

Ivy swallowed and shook her head. “Nossir.” She might enjoy being spoiled and willful most of the time, but with Blaze in the picture it simply wasn't worth it.

Chapter Four

Fury had Jon in its grip. When Madeline had announced that Blaze had taken Ivy somewhere, he had been forced to control himself before he did something he would regret. After having torn the place up for some clue of where Ivy had been taken, he paced back and forth in front of the Chateau, tempting the sun to rise upon him. His usual strict instincts of self preservation had deserted him. He felt sick to his stomach knowing that Ivy was out there somewhere, upset and with Blaze.

He regretted the last words he'd said to her more than he regretted anything in his life. He wanted her more than he wanted his own existence. But perhaps she didn't want him anymore. Perhaps she was tired of the way he pussyfooted around her then became frustrated when she misbehaved. Perhaps he really wasn't enough for her.

The rumbling of a motor got his attention, cutting through the self pity and anger. He looked up to see Blaze's black Valiant hurtling up the driveway. For a moment he thought that perhaps Ivy had stolen the car, but as it skidded to a halt, Ivy leaped out of the passenger seat and ran towards him. He extended his arms and she flew into them and clasped him tightly. "I'm so sorry," she sobbed.

"It's okay," he reassured her shooting a fierce look over at Blaze, who had a rare wide grin on his face. "Did he hurt you? Are you alright?"

"He didn't hurt me," Ivy sniffed, "I'm just sorry I was so terrible to you."

"I'm sorry too Ivy, I should never have made you feel unwanted," he said, picking her up in his arms and embracing her for all he was worth. She nuzzled into his neck, and he felt her sweet breath and hot tears against his skin. Relief flooded his body. All was not yet lost.

"Go to our rooms," he said quietly, placing her on the ground gently. "Pack anything you want to take with you. We are leaving."

"Okay," Ivy agreed quickly, scampering inside without another word. With her gone, Jon clenched his fists by his side and watched his older brother walk towards him, his swagger even more exaggerated than usual. Blaze looked thoroughly relaxed with the sleeves of his shirt rolled up to his elbows, his hair drawn back into a pony tail and sunglasses sitting atop his head. He looked like he'd just returned from a pleasant joyride, not from abducting a hellion. Jon looked at his brother warily. "What did you do to her?"

"Nothing, she's been perfect," Blaze shrugged as he dropped his car keys into his pocket.

"Ivy?" Jon's expression was incredulous. "I doubt she was perfect."

"I am serious," Blaze said confidently. "She just needs to be handled properly. I don't think you'll have any trouble with her for a while."

Jon turned and looked the way Ivy had gone, then turned back to his brother. "Seriously, what did you do? If you hurt her..." His expression became fierce.

"I didn't hurt her. I didn't slap her once. Ask her yourself."

"I will do that," Jon said, his features dark with anger. "And if I hear a single thing I don't like..."

"You know where to find me," Blaze shrugged.

Jon turned on his heel and stalked away, the seething anger still not appeased by Blaze's glib responses. Instead of being apologetic, Blaze actually seemed to think that he'd done him a favor by abducting his girlfriend. It was time to get away. Time to put an end to this madness. Jon found Ivy in their bedroom obediently packing the few possessions she'd brought with her when they moved into the Chateau. He'd thought being closer to a new family would be good for her. He had been a fool.

She smiled uncertainly as he entered the room. He didn't blame her for being uncertain or confused. Things had been confusing and strange of late. Taking her slim frame in his arms, he held her close then looked at her seriously. "Ivy, what did he do?"

"He didn't do anything really," she said. "He talked to me."

Words. Words could be even more damaging than beatings, Jon thought to himself. Just how badly had Blaze twisted her mind? "What did he say? Tell me everything."

Ivy shook her head as if she were confused by the question. "Just that I should treat you better, you've done a lot for me and all I've done is been a spoiled brat."

"Well that is true," Jon said, still unconvinced. The very idea of Blaze touching her reignited the rage deep in his belly.

"Jon?" A small voice cut into his angry train of thought. He looked down to see Ivy's eyes on him and filling with tears again.

"Yes?" He leaned down and brushed his lips across her forehead gently.

"Don't let me be bad again." It was a small, almost whispered plea.

"I won't," he reassured her, stroking her hair.

"I mean it. Don't let me be like I was."

"I won't," Jon promised. "But tell me Ivy, what changed your mind?"

"Because I know it will break us, and because..." Ivy hesitated for a moment. "And because Blaze said he would beat me if I was in trouble with you again."

The cold anger returned in full force as the words tumbled out of her mouth. So he had threatened her after all. "Did he now? Would you excuse me please, Ivy?" Jon's voice was tight with anger and Ivy could only watch wide eyed as he stalked out of the room to find his meddling brother.

Blaze was waiting for him in the foyer, clearly having anticipated his younger brother's imminent return. He had discarded his jacket and rolled up his sleeves and he looked ever so slightly wary as Jon

stormed towards him, a muscular mass of dark rage.

“Don't touch her. Ever.” Jon's anger was like a physical force as he stopped a foot away from his brother.

“Why not direct some of that energy into controlling her instead of fighting with me,” Blaze suggested quite reasonably, slipping his hands into his pockets casually.

Jon ignored the good advice. “Stop meddling, Blaze! Or I'll stop you myself.”

With the ongoing threats in the face of even the most calm and measured responses, Blaze began to lose his cool ever so slightly. “Are you really going to threaten me? For helping you? Are you going to disrespect me this way?”

“You didn't help me, you just terrorized her,” Jon growled. “Anyone can bully someone into submission.”

“Is that what she said? That I threatened her? Bullied her?”

Jon shook his head and waved a dismissive hand. “No, but it is clear enough what you did. She's like a different person.”

Blaze sighed and looked skywards for some kind of help. “Jon you have outdone yourself with your foolishness. All I did was set a boundary. A boundary you were unwilling to set. She responded to it because she wants it. She needs it.”

A low growl emanated from Jon's throat. He was in no mood to listen to Blaze's theories. “I don't need your help Blaze.”

“Yes you do. You were on the brink of giving up on her.”

Jon almost foamed with rage, rage made all the worse by the fact that Blaze had an answer for everything. “Stop sticking your nose into my affairs!”

“But they are not just your affairs are they? They are affairs that affect the entire clan. She needs direction, and one way or another, she will be given it. If her boyfriend is unwilling to do the job, there are others who will stand in his stead.” Blaze smirked antagonizingly.

“I should knock your head off,” Jon growled.

“Really Jon?” Blaze's tone was saturated with a paternal kind of disappointment. “Physical threats? Do we have one fledgling in this house or two? Do you need a reminder of what happens when you overstep your boundaries too?”

Jon's head snapped back at Blaze's insinuation and he changed the subject quickly. “I brought her here thinking she would find support.”

“And she did. I don't understand why you are so upset,” Blaze shrugged.

“Because she's mine and you took her without asking.”

“Again, you were on the brink of turning her out regardless.” Blaze's demeanor began to grow more threatening. “Now that Ivy has seen reason, is it going to be necessary to make you see the light as well?”

“I am not young or weak anymore Blaze,” Jon growled. “Do not think you could best me easily.”

“What is beating me going to achieve, Jon? At best you win and Ivy thinks you a brute. Worst case scenario you lose and are further shamed in her eyes. Love has made you a fool.” Blaze stepped forward, his voice an uncommonly low growl. “Go back to your little girlfriend and treat her well, before I beat you.”

Jon's nostril's flared with rage, but a small voice in the back of his head had begun speaking ever so quietly. Maybe Blaze was telling the truth, and maybe he was pushing the older vampire past the point of forbearance. Blaze had become deathly still, and Jon knew from experience that it was the stillness that was the most dangerous. The stillness meant that an explosion was brewing. Looking into Blaze's eyes, he saw that the vampire's pupils had retracted into two small, dark dots. Any moment now, he would find a powerful fury unleashed upon him.

Without stopping to apologize, Jon turned on his heel, walking away quickly as possible. He had not been fully mollified, but there was nothing to gain in fighting Blaze, not unless he wanted to hurt the clan at large. Still seething with unrequited rage, Jon stormed into the bedroom, slamming the door loudly enough to make Ivy jump. “Come on, we're going.”

“Why?” Ivy looked shocked and a little scared. “Why do we have to go?”

“Because this isn't going to work. It's twisted. He's going to...” Jon refused to finish his sentence as he paced back and forth.

Ivy looked around, as if Blaze might materialize through a wall. “He's going to what?”

Jon turned towards her, holding his hands up in an expression of frustration. “He's going to take you from me, alright?”

Ivy stared at Jon for a long moment. “Do you seriously think that? Do you think I would cheat on you? With *Blaze*?”

“No, not cheat,” Jon ran his hand through his hair. “But he has a way with women. He makes their minds melt and now you're behaving, but only because of him!” He slammed his palm against the door frame, glowering furiously.

Ivy sat back, confused. “Why are you angry at me? You wanted me to be good and I am good. Do you want me to be bad? Want me to go up to him and spit in his face? What do you want from me?” Her voice rose to a shrill peak of frustration.

Jon shook his head, trying to breathe, trying to calm himself down. “I'm not angry at you. I'm angry at this. This is wrong. You're mine, dammit.”

“Am I?”

“Yes,” Jon growled.

“Well why don't you stop whining like a little bitch and prove it?”

Jon stopped dead in his tracks at her profane language, then turned to her with a low growl. She was standing there, her arms folded over her chest, a look of self possession on her features. She was a foul mouthed little wretch, but she was right. She had changed, and maybe it was because of something Blaze had done, but he was going to make damn sure she knew who she belonged to.

Ivy smiled a wicked smile and squealed with pure excitement as Jon advanced on her, plucked her off her feet and tossed her onto the bed. “I'm going to fuck you until you forget everyone but me,” he promised her, reaching under her skirt and wrenching her panties off her body. He didn't bother to remove his pants, he simply unzipped his fly and took out his already erect member. Placing the head of his cock against her slick entrance, he plunged deep inside her with one thrust. It was a passionate conquest and he reveled in the way she felt around him. “Mine,” he growled. “All mine.”

It was all Ivy could do to gasp and moan as she was taken roughly. Jon was not usually like this, he was usually considerate, slow, tender. This time there was little tenderness in his touch as he took her by the hips and held her firm, slamming his cock in and out of her, forcing her to adjust to him with every hard thrust. “Don't you ever disobey me again,” he growled down at her, lecturing her as he fucked her.

“Yes sir,” she gasped with a little giggle.

“I am serious Ivy.” He pulled out and flipped her over onto her stomach, sliding right back inside her. He was glad to see that her cheeks were unmarked aside from a few light remainders from her session with the switch, but they were not going to remain unmarked for much longer. He raised his hand high and brought it down in a thundering slap across one cheek, then the other. Punishing her bottom as he took her pussy, he showed no mercy and gave her no quarter.

Caught up in the raw lust of their tryst, Ivy was not complaining. If anything, every slap made her move more enthusiastically. Her climax came when he leaned down and fastened his jaws on the back of her neck in a primal display of dominance that could not be denied. She shivered at the touch of his fangs then came with a shrill cry of pleasure that resonated throughout the Chateau. The tight trembling and pulsing of her flesh around his cock brought him quickly to his own peak. He was forced to lose his grip on her neck as he cried out his own pleasure.

Jon panted for breath he didn't truly need as she lay beneath him, marked on her ass by his hand and on her neck by his jaws. She was thoroughly claimed and he was thoroughly satisfied. All was well. In their pleasant post coital haze it seemed as if nothing could ever go wrong again.

But the next evening something had changed. The moment Ivy woke up, snuggled up by Jon's side, the Chateau felt strangely empty, as if something was missing. Wandering the halls, she soon discovered what, or rather, who was missing. Blaze. He was nowhere to be found and his energy which often filled entire rooms of the great mansion was completely lacking.

“Where did Blaze go?” Ivy quizzed Madeline when she came across her in the garden pruning the rose bushes in the moonlight.

“I could not say,” Madeline replied vaguely. “He often comes and goes.”

“Hm,” Ivy frowned to herself.

“Did you need him for something?”

“No,” Ivy shook her head. “No, it's fine.”

But it wasn't fine. She missed him. The experience at the cabin had changed the way she saw herself, the way she saw everything. She felt oddly abandoned by Blaze's disappearance. She was careful not to let on to Jon how she was feeling though, it would not do to make him feel as if he was not enough for her.

She tried to push the uncomfortable feeling that something was wrong out of her mind and focus on the good things. Over the next few days, there were no more fights. Jon seemed to have truly turned something of a corner in his own mind and though he was still loving and affectionate, he did not give her nearly as much leeway as she was used to. More than once, Ivy found herself over his knee for little more than a smart comment.

On the positive side, Jon did not watch her nearly so closely, nor did he require that anyone else watch her either. A tenuous sense of trust was building between them and even on her most mischievous days, Ivy had no desire to spoil that.

As the days passed into weeks a carefree atmosphere had taken hold in the Chateau and she reveled in it. With so few vampires in such a large place there was plenty of space for each of them to pursue their own fancies. Ivy took up painting and Madeline, who had been painting for centuries often gave her short, impromptu lessons. As winter began to claim the lands, the nights were long and cool and the days were mercifully short. A sense of contentment soon began to envelop Ivy and her days were marked not with conflict and shouting, but with art and beauty and love.

Whilst daubing away one evening she felt a change in the air. Her senses had been growing more keen with time and she found that she was able to sense other vampires at a distance. She realized, as she paid more attention to what she was sensing, that a heavy, intense energy was moving towards the house at great speed. It was familiar too, but it was tinged with something new, something bright and light. As the energy drew closer, Ivy sensed a certain refinement to it. It was powerful, but directed. It could only be one person. Blaze.

With a growing sense of excitement, Ivy put down her palette and peeked into the foyer. She was wearing a painter's smock and she'd liberally spread paint all over face by rubbing her cheek with her hand whilst she was concentrating, but she forgot about her appearance entirely in her excitement to see him. He was close, very close, perhaps right outside. The front door opened and her spirits lifted as his tall, elegant figure stepped over the threshold. He looked just as imposing as ever, but instead of his usual severe expression, he was smiling broadly with pleasure.

She smiled and stepped into the hall and was about to call his name, but her heart sank the moment she saw his companion, a tall, lithe vampiress with platinum blonde hair and plump crimson lips. She wore

a dress so revealing as to be shameful. It displayed the bulk of her cleavage and hugged the curves of her hips, then flared out at the calves in a fashion that contrived to make her look like a doll. It was too late to escape into the library or elsewhere without looking as if she was running away, so Ivy stood, hovering awkwardly in the hallway as the pair approached.

“Hello Ivy,” Blaze smiled pleasantly. “This is Georgia. Georgia, this is Ivy.”

“Oh a fledgling. How sweet!” Georgia cooed.

Ivy's jaw dropped. “Is it that obvious?”

Georgia laughed and Blaze drew her closer with an arm around her waist. “She doesn't have her full powers just yet,” he explained to Georgia as if Ivy weren't there at all.

“That's *adorable*,” Georgia squealed, beaming at Ivy as if she were a fluffy kitten.

“Want to see something adorable, you...” Ivy began spitefully. She caught Blaze's eye mid sentence and shut her mouth quickly. He was giving her a look that told her in no uncertain terms she would regret it if she kept speaking. “Excuse me,” she said with forced politeness. Allowing herself a small exclamation of frustration, she fled back to Jon's rooms as quickly as she could without actually running.

“What's up vamping?” Jon asked when she slammed through the door. The entire room smelled of coffee. Jon had been hard at work testing out new machines for what he hoped would be a chain of vampire owned and operated shops across the nation and there were small paper cups containing coffee samples perched all over the place.

“Nothing,” Ivy sulked, tossing herself onto the bed. “Why are we still here? I thought we were getting out of this stupid old shit hole.”

The old Jon might have exclaimed in dismay, or perhaps asked her what was wrong. The new Jon did not bother with such formalities. He simply got up, flipped her over and laid several hard swats across her bottom that made her cry out in pain. “Are you ready to speak politely?” He held her against the bed with a hand on her lower back, his other hand poised, ready to spank again.

“Yes, I'm sorry,” she sniffled. A guilty feeling was creeping around in her belly. She had no right to be so angry about Blaze and his lady friend. Jon was her partner, not Blaze.

“Now tell me what put you in such a bad mood.” Jon released her, allowing her to rub her bottom whilst she explained about Blaze's stupid friend.

“She looked at me like I was a stuffed toy,” Ivy said indignantly.

“I see, and that was the only thing that put you in this bad mood?”

“I'm not a baby,” Ivy protested, ignoring his question. “I'm not weak or pathetic. And I'm not cute!” She scowled furiously, screwing her face up in such a manner that nobody could mistake her for something cute.

Jon smiled slightly. "You didn't answer my question, vampling."

Ivy blushed. "You're going to be mad at me, aren't you?"

"Not if you tell me the truth."

"Fine. I was jealous," Ivy spat out. "Now you can go and kick his ass."

Jon laughed. "Blaze's lady was right, you are cute."

"I am not!" Ivy exclaimed at the top of her lungs.

He raised a brow at her. "And you have a crush on Blaze."

"I do not," Ivy lied.

"Yes you do. It's okay. It's natural even. You're a submissive little wretch and he's the most domineering figure in the place."

"It's okay?" Ivy blinked in surprise. "Weren't we going to leave because he was going to steal me?"

"I wasn't thinking right when I said that," Jon said, sitting next to her and drawing her into a hug. "Blaze isn't interested in relationships, he's interested in conquests. And you don't love him, do you? Not in the romantic sense anyway."

Ivy shook her head. "No I don't love him. I don't even like him half the time. He's mean."

"Right," Jon chuckled. "So it's not something I need to worry about."

In the mood to take offense, Ivy took offense. "Oh so you don't think I could get Blaze?"

Jon's lips quirked. "I don't know how to answer that."

"You don't think I'm hot enough for him?"

"Oh dear lord," Jon sighed. "You're hot enough for anybody. Next thing you'll be asking me if your ass looks fat in that smock."

Ivy turned around and inspected her rear as much as her body would allow her to. "Does it?"

"No, but it's going to look very, very red if you don't snap out of this," he warned her. "You're walking a very fine line here Miss Ivy."

"After all this time I'm back where I started," Ivy complained. "Getting the ever loving hell patronized out of me. It's not fair."

"Life isn't fair," Jon quoted mechanically, then he grinned. "Perhaps we should get to know this lovely lady who has you so in knots."

“You better be kidding,” Ivy growled most unmissively.

Jon laughed as he pinned her down and began kissing her neck in a way she found thoroughly distracting. “I assure you I am not.”

Chapter Five

“Georgia, what an honor to meet you,” Jon bowed low and pressed his lips to the back of the blonde’s hand. Ivy seethed silently as the intruder pretended to swoon and turned to Blaze. They’d settled on the idea of a double date dinner party to make formal introductions, which Ivy thought was stupid given that they didn’t actually eat dinner. Her objections had been overruled however and she found herself standing next to Jon pretending to be polite and well bred.

“Why didn’t you tell me you had such a handsome brother?” Georgia asked coquettishly, running her painted nails down Blaze’s torso.

“Jesus lady, why don’t you just take them both,” Ivy muttered under her breath.

“What was that Ivy?” Georgia smiled at her warmly. The vampiress seemed completely incapable of telling when someone didn’t like her.

“Yes, what was that Ivy?” Jon echoed the question, but there was no smile on his face.

“Nothing,” she muttered, taking a large swig of wine. The double date was already going terribly from Ivy’s perspective. She was regretting having squeezed herself into a tight pink dress in an effort to emphasize her assets like Georgia did. It was difficult to draw breath, so much so that she felt as if she were being slowly swallowed by a lazy python.

Conversation was polite and therefore tedious. Ivy took advantage of the liquor at her disposal, wishing it was more effective than it was. When she’d lived she’d been a terrible lightweight, but as a vampire she’d be sloshing in the stuff before she got a decent buzz.

The only positive aspect of the evening was the fact that Jon really did look incredibly handsome. He’d actually deigned to put a suit on and he looked wildly attractive in it. It highlighted his broad shoulders and his narrow waist and the formality of the clothing played against the length of his hair nicely.

Blaze was droning on about something boring, but feigning interest in what he was saying gave Ivy the chance to give him a quick visual once over. He was always well dressed, so his appearance was hardly out of the ordinary, but there were a few touches here and there that indicated he’d gone to extra effort to look good. If she wasn’t mistaken, he’d had a manicure.

“Who does your nails, Blaze?” she asked, boldly interrupting his diatribe on Peak Oil.

He glared at her and she smiled a broad smile. With the confession that she had a crush on him out there, she was a hundred percent certain that Jon would never allow Blaze to lay a finger on her. Besides, Georgia was laughing, which made the joke a success.

“I do them myself,” he said stiffly.

“Really? They’re *gorgeous*,” Ivy said, emulating Georgia’s exaggerated style of speech. “Maybe later on we could give each other pedicures.”

“Oh a pajama party!” Georgia squealed without a hint of sarcasm. “It’s been ever such a long time since I indulged in one of those.”

“Yes, a pajama party, and Blaze can bring his favorite teddy bear,” Ivy grinned.

Her smile only faded when Jon leaned in close to her and murmured in her ear. “You should know, little vampire, that I will enjoy watching Blaze spank you.”

He smiled broadly when she looked at him, plainly horrified.

“Oh how sweet, lover’s whispers,” Georgia commented, patting Blaze on the knee.

“Indeed,” Blaze said, smiling grimly, his pale gaze fixed on Ivy.

“Jon, can I speak with you for a minute?” Ivy asked politely.

“Of course,” Jon obliged, ever the gentleman.

“What were you talking about in there?” Ivy hissed in the hallway.

Jon smiled. “I was talking about you getting your comeuppance. You want to needle Blaze? Well you’ll get what you’re asking for.”

“Wait, but you’re... jealous of him,” Ivy reminded Jon. “You don’t want him touching me ever. Remember.”

“Ah,” Jon said. “So you are not only a brat, but you are also a spy.”

“The whole house heard you yelling at him,” Ivy pointed out. “And how do you know he won’t be consumed with lustful thoughts and try to steal me away if he touches me?”

“So, so naughty,” Jon murmured, stroking her hair gently. “I will enjoy seeing you get your comeuppance very much.”

“Please, don’t,” Ivy begged. “He will half kill me.”

Jon was insistent however, both on the fact that Blaze would get his opportunity to discipline her, and on the fact that they must rejoin the dinner party immediately. Ivy was very quiet after their little conversation, a fact that was noted by all and attributed to ‘sleepiness, aw how sweet,’ by Georgia.

The moment the vampiress went to powder her nose, things got real for Ivy, who found herself flanked by Blaze and Jon in a way that was incredibly disconcerting. “You find it amusing to be disrespectful in front of guests, do you?” Blaze asked coldly. “Seeing as you have had your fun, I think it is time I had mine.” He reached for her and she barely dodged his cold grasp.

“Blaze please, I’m begging you,” Ivy dropped to her knees. She would have done anything to avoid feeling his wrath physically, anything at all, and crawling about on the floor wasn’t out of the realm of useful evasive techniques.

"My my, look at that," Jon noted.

"I know, she can be remarkably polite when she wants to be, can't she?" Blaze replied, looking down at the young vampire grovelling at his feet. "But what shall I do with this cheeky brat who tried to ruin my date?"

"Pity me and let me go? I was a fool - a terrible fool." Ivy clasped her arms around his knees and looked up with an expression of extreme piteousness.

"What's going on here?" Georgia's sweet tones interrupted the little gathering. She had not spent nearly as much time powdering her nose as she'd been expected to.

"They're going to beat me because I teased Blaze about his manicure," Ivy said quickly, seeing an opportunity for lenience by proxy.

"Oh you aren't are you?" Georgia's face fell in an expression of disappointment. Ivy was beginning to warm to her a great deal now. She suddenly saw a use for her and the use was very useful indeed. The looks passing between Blaze and Jon said it all. Blaze wasn't going to risk turning the voluptuous blonde off by thrashing the most pitiful fledgling any of them had ever seen.

"Bring her back when she is contrite," Blaze said to Jon, the regret that he would not be the one to spank her heavy in his voice.

Jon nodded, crouching down and peeling Ivy off his older brother's legs. "Come on you," he said, standing with her in his arms. She tried to squirm away, but he simply tossed her over his shoulder.

"Help! He's going to kill me!" Ivy squealed dramatically for Georgia's benefit.

"Pipe down brat," Jon commanded, slapping her ass soundly.

Ivy squealed like a stuck pig, but no help was availed to her as Jon carried her through the halls of the great home and eventually deposited her on the bed in their bedroom. He stood over her, his hands on his hips, shaking his handsome head. "You really are something, you know that?"

"Hey, I was teasing, just teasing," Ivy argued.

"You were being disrespectful and trying to make him look silly in front of Georgia," Jon countered.

"Well if what I say can turn her off him, then maybe she's not the one for him anyway," Ivy argued with supreme logic.

"Enough of the arguing brat," Jon said. Without engaging in further debate, he sat down next to her and pulled her over his lap. "No Jon!" She thrashed around as much as she could, but the dress hobbled her more effectively than leg irons would have. She was utterly helpless as he began spanking her very soundly indeed, each slap making a loud cracking sound that echoed off the walls.

"Please Jon," she begged, squirming for all she was worth. Jon was resolute though, and all she managed to achieve by fighting was tearing the dress from the small split in the back to all the way up

her thighs. With her legs flailing about wildly with every slap, the next thing to go was the silly little zipper that was supposed to keep the bodice on her.

Jon kept spanking as the dress disintegrated and Ivy was eventually left in nothing more than a thong that offered no protection at all from his palm. "There will be no more of that behavior, do you understand me?" Jon lectured her, pausing the spanking for a moment that gave Ivy hope it might all be over. It was quickly dashed when he reached for a small whippy rod that had been laying on the nightstand for weeks without incident. The sting of the rod against her already tender cheeks sent Ivy into another paroxysm of frantic struggling. "No!" Jon growled, stopping again. "You can stay still, brat, and take your punishment."

"But it hurts," Ivy whimpered.

"It's supposed to," Jon said, slapping the rod down across her cheeks again. "Now quit wriggling."

Ivy tried, she really did, but it was almost impossible to stay still whilst her bottom burned and stung. Before long, she was crying tears of pain and penitence as Jon kept her firmly in place and laid the rod of discipline across her cheeks over and over again.

"You will behave yourself whether we have company or not and you will not try to sabotage other people's relationships, you understand?"

"Yes!" Ivy squealed. "I am sorry. I wasn't trying to sabotage them!"

"You may as well have been," Jon said sternly, finally putting the rod down. "Now put something else on. We're going back."

Ivy's low moan of despair was not met with any sympathy and she was compelled to search through her wardrobe for something suitable to wear. There weren't any other really nice dresses, but there was a black denim skirt that was loose enough not to cause her sore bottom any additional pain. She pulled it on carefully, then threw on the most ragged t-shirt she could find in protest. Jon said nothing about her unorthodox choice of clothing, he simply ushered her wordlessly back to the dining room where Ivy knew she was about to dine on good ol' fashioned embarrassment.

Blaze and Georgia had been engaged in what looked to be an intimate conversation but they both fell silent and gazed at her as she entered. Georgia's expression was full of pity, but Blaze didn't seem to give much of a damn at all.

"I think Ivy has something to say to you," Jon said, prompting Ivy.

"I am sorry Blaze and Georgia," Ivy said in a small voice. Tears began to spill down her cheeks as she made the apology she didn't remotely feel. It was horrible and she was more embarrassed than she had ever been. Not only did she look silly and juvenile in front of Georgia, Blaze had managed to get her in deep trouble yet again. With her apology made, she turned and ran out of the room as fast as her feet would carry her. She didn't care if Jon caught her and spanked her again, she wasn't going to stand there and grovel in front of Blaze and his latest conquest.

Moving quickly throughout the maze like corridors, she took refuge in the secret wing of the house amidst the medieval relics. The utter stillness of the place soothed her as she cried, hiccupping with

shame and rage. Stupid Blaze, stupid Jon, neither of them could take a joke.

A thick old rug provided some measure of warmth and comfort as she wrapped herself up in it. She hated what Jon had done to her, and what Blaze had done even more. She was not some brat to be taunted and spanked and put on display. She had feelings, but they didn't care about her feelings, did they? She pouted to herself furiously, wallowing in self pity of record breaking proportions.

"You're misbehaving again." Madeline's refined tones floated to her from a corner of the room, scaring her silly.

"I am not," Ivy disagreed hotly, leaping out of the rug. "How are you always here?"

"Ivy dear, you're in my bedroom," Madeline pointed out patiently, flipping a switch that flooded the room with light.

"Your bedroom? No I'm n..." Ivy gasped and put her hands over her mouth as she looked around, making sense of the large room for the first time. It was so full of wonderful curiosities and antiques that she'd never taken the time to look at the room as a whole. So that's what the big bed was for, being occupied by Madeline. "I'm in your bedroom," she said, feeling thoroughly silly.

"I suggest, my dear," Madeline said dryly. "That you make your way back to the party before things get out of hand. You can't run away every time something happens that you don't like."

"Yes Ma'am," Ivy agreed, obediently turning on her heel and making her way back to the dining room. It seemed that, spanked or not, she was destined to make a fool of herself. Running away only gave her an opportunity to make an ass of herself somewhere else. When she arrived back again all three vampires were still there, sitting at the table and chatting away quite pleasantly. Ivy blushed as she entered the room as inconspicuously as possible.

"Hello Ivy, feeling better?" Georgia asked kindly.

"Yes thank you," Ivy muttered, slipping not into her own seat, which was wooden and hard, but onto Jon's lap. He welcomed her with a kiss on the cheek and she curled up in his lap quietly, listening to the rumbling in his chest as he spoke.

She was still terribly embarrassed, but she came to realize as the conversation continued without her input, that nobody else was much concerned about her embarrassment, or about her spanking for that matter either. They were just interested in having a nice time, sharing a drink or two and getting to know one another. No wonder her rude taunts had been so out of place. It was a shocking revelation, but it really wasn't about her. Not in the slightest.

Nuzzling into Jon's neck, Ivy allowed herself to relax in a way she'd only done once before. His hand, warm and reassuring, rubbed her back and her bottom as she drifted into a submissive haze. She was lucky, she realized, lucky to have so many people who not only cared enough about her to ensure that she learned the lessons she needed to learn, but to put up with her when she insulted them, or accidentally burned their books, or sneaked into their bedrooms whilst they tried to sleep and cried all over their antique rugs.

"Thank you," she whispered into Jon's ear.

"You're welcome, vamping," he purred, shifting her on his lap so that she could drink a little wine and indulge in conversation if she chose to do so. Uncharacteristically, Ivy opted to listen for once instead of filling the room with inane chatter. She learned a lot in the process, including the fact that Georgia was a genuinely warm and lovely vampiress and Blaze was completely enamored with her.

"You're being so good," Jon whispered into her ear. She smiled at the compliment. She was being good, and moreover, she was enjoying it.

It wasn't until the little party broke up and the couples went their separate ways that Ivy realized how far she'd truly come. Before she could leave with Jon, Blaze tapped her on the shoulder. "I'm impressed Ivy," he said, taking her hand and pressing his lips to the back of it. "You are becoming quite the lovely lady."

Ivy stared at him agog. He'd never done anything like that before. Finally he was treating her like an equal, not like a silly, badly behaved fledgling. With an impulsive burst of emotion, she wrapped her arms around him and hugged him tightly. "I'm sorry," she apologized. "I've been horrible for, well forever."

"Nothing lasts forever, not even your misbehavior," Blaze winked, patting her back affectionately. "Now if you'll excuse me."

"You are excused," Ivy grinned and curtsied, watching as Blaze took Georgia's arm and lead her towards his rooms.

"You look happy," Jon said, sweeping her up into his arms.

"I am happy," she said, wrapping her arms around his neck. "I have a family."

"Yes you do."

Content in a way she'd never imagined she could be content, Ivy clung to Jon as he carried her through the now familiar halls to their bedroom. A short year ago she could never have imagined being surrounded by so much love and care, even a few months ago she was convinced that everyone just wanted to control her. It had taken many tears, spankings and finally making a fool of herself in front of absolutely everybody to realize how very lucky she was. Jon had given her more than just the love of a good man, he had given her the love of a good family.