

# Devil's Tavern II:

Vengeance

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Aspen Mountain Press

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# Warning

This e-book contains scenes of violence and erotic sensuality that some may find objectionable. Please store your e-books carefully where they cannot be accessed by younger readers.

# **Chapter One**

The electromagnetic field detector or EMF detector stayed at a constant zero while Nathan traversed the cemetery. The only time it spiked was when he walked under a streetlamp. However, he didn't expect anything more. The night was dark and the worn gravestones were shrouded in mist. The moon stayed hidden behind a blanket of dark clouds, while a steady drizzle saturated his clothes and chilled him to the bone. Owls hooted in the trees and rodents scampered in the underbrush of the overgrown burial markers. It was a perfect night for ghost hunting.

Local lore told that for the last fifty years the ghost of a woman in white roamed the hallowed ground. After talking to several of the neighbors around the graveyard, he got a general description of the woman. She had brown hair, was tall, and only walked the streets when it was bad weather. To corroborate the stories he had heard, he went to the library to do his own investigation. Nathan had gathered several stories from the old timers in the town that confirmed the newspaper reports he had gotten at the library about the hypothetical haunting. The sightings he had made notes on said that a young woman had been driving one dark and wet night with her boyfriend passed out in the seat next to her. Her car had lost control and slammed into a tree not a mile from the cemetery. She walked the lonely stretch of road and then wound through the graveyard to her grave looking for her boyfriend who had survived the horrific crash. This was not the only alleged woman in white he had probed. He had been to hundreds of sites

where women in white stopped people on the road begging for a ride home. When the driver pulled up to the house, the home was some dilapidated hovel or a rusted iron front gate of a cemetery. There were even times when the person would go up to the door and ask about a woman. The parents would then tell the unfortunate soul that they used to have a daughter who lived there, but she had died. Of course that was a big surprise.

For years he studied everything including haunted train tunnels, Bigfoot, trouping fairies, the Jersey Devil, the occasional werewolf sighting, or whatever case he was brought in on not to mention his own personal investigations. Some of his encounters couldn't be explained away. However, nothing in his years of experience had pointed him in a definitive direction for the existence of an afterlife. Sure, he had come across the possessed or some people who had claimed to have a great revelation or been visited by angels. In his mind everything he had stumbled upon could be explained away by medical science or just a hoax. With nothing to go by, it had only strengthened his resolve that there was no such thing as God or the devil. When just by chance he did come across something genuine or that he couldn't explain, it left him flabbergasted and gave him the oomph to begin his research anew. It was during one of those unexplainable events, he met his ghost hunting partner who was abnormally absent.

Nathan stared up at the sky wondering if the rain would stop soon. It's unlike Josephine to blow me off. Usually she calls. I hope she's okay. In this weather, I don't blame her for not coming out. Heck, I don't even blame the spirits for not wanting to come out. He sighed and stared through the rain searching the graveyard for any orbs, spheres of energy, some thought to be ghosts. Not seeing any, he raised his digital camera and snapped a few photos. Nothing showed up on the view screen except an image splattered with fuzzy dots. He doubted his digital recorder picked up any sounds either. Earlier he'd sat in the acclaimed haunted crypt where the woman in white was supposed to appear. The pictures he had taken had only revealed specks of dust and flying bugs on his view screen. No ghostly activity. Nothing had answered him when he had asked questions. He'd left his recorder in the tomb on the off chance he might get an EVP, an electronic

voice phenomenon, where the woman's voice recorded on the device. Weariness, from the long night, settled into his bones. All night he'd hoped for Josephine to come, but she never showed. He ran his hands over his arms and shook from the chill. *Time to call it a night. I've been here for hours. Nothing else is going to happen. I'll have to tell Jo that I got my most exciting evidence to date and she missed it.* 

He strolled back to the sepulcher and began packing up the rest of his gear. The patter of soft rain drummed on the stained glass windows of the mausoleum. Encased along the back wall were remnants of the deceased. A doll for the child who rested there. A small picture of the mother. The boots for the toddler son who had died. He took one final shot of the macabre scene and then headed back to his car. Outside the rain was coming down harder. A few gravestones ahead of him, he noticed a blur of white passing by. He stopped and listened. Another flicker. *Maybe this place really does have a ghost*. He waited another moment and heard voices coming toward him. The white flashed again. Fog wound around his legs and clung to the markers. He smiled and waited for the vapor to grab a hold of his legs and drag him to some unmarked grave. *I don't think I'll get that lucky*. He paused and saw the forms of teenagers or other ghost hunters searching for proof of the afterlife emerge from the mist. *Hope you have better luck than me. Everyone in here is just dead*.

He slipped into the haze and wove his way back to his car. He hadn't realized how far back into the bone yard he had ventured. The night had gotten away from him and the expanse of the cemetery seemed never ending. He and his partner hadn't even touched upon half of it. Rumor had it, there were more graves lost among the trees from ages past. Halfway through the graveyard, his thoughts turned back to Josephine. She's going to get an ear full when I get a hold of her. It's not like her to stand me up. Shit. I hope something hasn't happen to her. Damn dead zone, I can't get a signal on my cell to call her and make sure. He picked up his pace while dread wound through him. Not watching where he was walking, he felt the impact of a warm body. Nathan was jolted out of his focus and dropped his equipment case.

"Watch the fuck out!"

"Fuck," Nathan muttered under his breath. "I'm sorry. I didn't see you." He offered the man his hand.

Ignoring the hand, the man got up and dusted himself off which only resulted in smearing more mud on his jacket. He adjusted his thick glasses and tucked in his shirt. Nathan noticed he only carried a flashlight. *That's a great way to get around in the dark.* How many stones did you hit? Where's his umbrella? The man's pants were torn near the knees and his shoelaces untied. It seemed he dressed in a hurry. What was he doing?

"Didn't see me? Well that's obvious! Now get the hell out of my way! There's enough cemetery for everyone. Amateur."

He began to move past him, but Nathan saw he had dropped a tape recorder into one of the flowerpots. Another amateur ghost hunter looking for spirits. You won't find any here, but hey maybe they'll find you more attractive than me. Good luck with the other hunters. Hopefully they won't decide to lock you in one of the tombs to get their jollies off. He bent down and grabbed the device.

"Sir, you dropped your recorder. You don't want to lose it in the darkness."

The man stopped and turned back around giving him a murderous look. Nathan held out the small device. The man snatched it out of his palm not even touching him. When the air stirred, Nathan caught a whiff of blood and another sweet scent that smelled familiar. He stepped forward, but the man backed away.

"Is there a problem?"

"No," he frowned. Something is off about this guy. I wonder if he's here to have his way with some of the occupants. I wouldn't put it past him. Then again, maybe he's meeting up with the teenagers that I spied earlier. "Sorry. Have a great night. Good hunting."

The man grinned. "Oh, it already is. See you around."

The other ghost hunter disappeared into the night. At times, he stumbled upon other investigators, but hardly paid them any mind. The ones he did consider his friends he hadn't heard from in months. They called him when they needed a hand on a hunt which was fine with him. He enjoyed the camaraderie that he had with the other spook group. It was always nice to have someone to explore with. It made the night go

by faster. That was one reason he had asked Josephine to accompany him. That and he wanted to talk to her. He had known her for a while now. Things between them had always been good, but he wanted it to be more. His chest tightened thinking that something might have happened to her. He picked up his fallen case and then quickened his pace to get back to his house and check his messages. Hopefully there would be one from her. At least he would try calling her once he got out of the dead zone which surrounded the cemetery.

On the drive home, he tried his phone but he couldn't get a signal. The encounter with the hunter disturbed him, but he pushed it out of his mind. Instead he ran down the events of the night. He wondered if any evidence would show up on the tapes. First he would have to listen to them, but he doubted it. Occasionally he got a moan or scream. In his mind, those could never be concretely documented as paranormal activity. On some rare occasions, he picked up a disembodied voice that even he couldn't explain. It elated him to think that something else was sharing the world with him. Those little shreds of evidence bolstered his faith in a hereafter even if it was just a little sliver more of faith.

When he arrived home, he secured the car and checked his mail. He glanced at the horizon. A thin band of pink rimmed the sky. Underneath that a line of gold added color to the lightening sky. He pulled his phone from his pocket and saw that the battery was dead. Shit. I'll have to see if Jo sent me any emails. The car in the driveway next to his gunned to life. He jumped from the sudden explosion of sound. He looked over and saw his neighbor sitting in the driver's seat. He raised a hand. His sleepy neighbor gave him a blank gaze and then waved. Nathan knew they were readying for work and he had to hit the sack. He went inside, set all of his equipment down on the table and double-checked the shades to be sure he was protected. His stomach growled. There was a little time for him to go over the evidence before he retired, but first he had to eat something. He strolled into the kitchen and opened the fridge. His tongue rested on the side of his teeth while he peered into the bright interior of the refrigerator and surveyed the contents. What to have? What to have?

He pulled out a cold one, twisted the cap off, and knocked it back. After a few long swallows he wiped his hand across his mouth. Gathering his things, he sauntered into the bedroom, turned on his computer, and hooked up his laptop to his docking station. After a moment, he settled down to check his email hoping to find one from Josephine, but there was nothing. He typed her a quick note asking her if everything was okay and to give him a call when she had a chance. When he did, he noticed a scarlet smear on his hand. He licked it off and set down to work. Staring at the computer screen, a loud burp rumbled through his fangs. *Oh man. I left the O negative on ice way too long. I'll have to get a fresh batch tomorrow night when I hit the blood bank. Thank God I have a stash of AB positive in the refrigerator.* Nathan put on his headphones and ignored the grumbling hunger deep in his belly.

Before opening up the program to check for voices on his recorder, the monitor blinked and a new window popped up. *Odd*. On the new screen was a newspaper article about an old bar. He clicked the mouse to go back to the other window, but his system was frozen. *This is all I need. This piece of shit decides to go down the tubes when I just installed a high dollar program to sift out static*. He hit the side of the monitor, but that only made the picture fuzzy. His gaze darted over the headline.

#### Ghost Hunters Found Dead in Nevada.

This time he tapped the side of his computer tower and the monitor blinked again. Another typed message appeared on the screen.

#### Whatever you do, don't go there. No matter what happens.

Nathan pushed a few keys on the keyboard, but nothing worked. What the hell? Who is fucking with my system?

## Heed the warning.

He hit the keyboard again and this time it responded. Who is this?

#### Just a guiding light.

He went to type more, but his screen returned. He shook his head and dismissed the fluke. *All I need is someone hacking into my system. Guiding light. Whatever. I have stuff to do.* He didn't need any more hassles. It was bad enough he had been alone all night

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in the cold searching for phantoms when his mind was stuck on Josephine. He couldn't help but smile when he thought of the good times they'd had together and the way her body felt. Oh shit baby. I need to get me some of you. Why did you stand me up? I'm sure you had your reasons, but I'm going to make you pay for it tomorrow. You'd better be okay. If not, I'll make sure that you're avenged. Just to be certain, he sent another email and asked if she was free tomorrow and to see if she was okay. He was being a little over protective, but he cared about her more than he wanted to admit.

A couple of minutes later, his email dinged. He read the reply and smiled. She was okay. Something had come up. Relief washed over him. He could put the ghost hunting aside for tomorrow evening and go see her. Such a fine ass you have and you taste so good too. One of these days, you'll be mine, my sweet. Muhahaha...

# **Chapter Two**

Josephine stared at her reflection. Her hazel eyes were rimmed red and had deep shadows under them from several sleepless nights. The black hair she prided herself on was limp. Her complexion was blotchy and her cheeks pale. She pulled the brush through her hair and forced herself not to think about the events of the past few days. Not to think about the dread that now weighed heavy on her soul. I can't do this now. Nathan will be here in a couple of hours. I have to get ready. Once the sun had set, he would knock on her door and they would begin their normal ritual. She giggled when she thought about some of the antics he performed. One night he had surprised her and she had walked in to find rose petals leading up her stairs. Candles in bedroom and him naked on the bed with a bright red bow around his cock lying on the rose petals. Another time after a long investigation, he had come over and cleaned her entire house not to mention cooked her dinner. She knew that was a miracle because he hated to clean. He always sensed when she was in a bad mood and knew how to cheer her up even it if was with some offhand remark or kooky action. But I don't think he can cheer me up over this one. No matter how many bad Dracula impressions he does.

When his first email popped into her box the night before, she could tell by his tone that he wondered where she was. She hardly ever missed going out with him and would call him if something was up. It was obvious that he had been worried. She couldn't answer him. She hadn't answered anyone in the past few days. The news was eating her up inside. It still hadn't sunk in what the doctors had told her. She hadn't

gone to work in three days. She had only left the house to get groceries. Then she had gotten his second email and she knew he wasn't going to let up until she said yes. And in the wee hours of the morning, she didn't want to argue with anyone.

The only visitor she did have was Harold. They had first met a few months ago at one of her ghost hunting meetings. He was a quiet geeky kinda guy, always so polite. He had a knack for computers. When hers went down two months ago, she had asked him over one night to fix it. She had offered him some money, but he wouldn't hear of it. He had appeared on her doorstep last night and wanted to come in. She tried to get him to leave, but he was so persistent. After a while, she let him in. She shivered when she thought of Harold. Last night he had asked her if she wanted to go out on a date. There's something seriously wrong with that guy. He wouldn't take the hint to get lost or that I'm not interested. Because of him I couldn't call Nathan even if I wanted to and last night I didn't want to talk to anyone. It was a nightmare getting him out of the house and convincing him that she wasn't interested in him that way. Desperate to get rid of him, she told him she would think about it. He was satisfied with that and left. The only thing I'm going to think about is keeping that creep away from me. Well, I won't have to worry about that too much longer. Soon I'll be six feet under and nothing else will matter.

Josephine tried to push through the dread weighing on her soul, to have an upbeat attitude for tonight. However, her newly discovered condition was the only thing on her mind. Cancer had taken her mother young and her father too. Now it was coming after her. She rested her head in her hands and sank onto the toilet seat. Her head was pounding again. Tears lined her eyes. I can't do this. I can't die. It's not my time yet. There has to be something I can do. Maybe I should call Nathan and tell him to cancel. If I do that, he's going to know something's wrong.

Her hands trembled. Her whole body shook. She found herself right back in the doctor's office hearing him tell her the diagnosis. It all seemed so unreal. *How can I be dying? I'm not even thirty-five yet. I planned on having kids. God, I have to get ready. Nathan will be here in a few. Can I tell him? I have to tell him. I owe him that. Will he understand? He'll kill me if he finds out another way. Wait a minute maybe—* 

She got up and wiped her eyes. A renewed sense of determination washed over her. "What if I ask him? Would he even consider it?"

Josephine splashed water on her face. She pulled her lips back from her teeth and imagined her canines long and pointed. She wasn't sure if she could handle being a vampire alive for hundreds of years and only seeing the night sky. Even though she worked inside most of the time and then did the ghost hunting on the side, she loved to sun bathe when she had a day off. Feeling the sun on her face, warming her skin, hearing the birds twittering, and seeing the dew sparkling in the early morning light would be things she would miss. She wasn't much into drinking blood, but you did what you had to do to stay alive. She would miss chocolate though. That was one of her weak spots. Nathan knew it too and often brought her truffles to cheer her up. Well a girl has to take the choices that are in front of her. Dying or becoming a minion of the undead. I'd go for being a minion. Her thoughts curled around the idea of being a vampire and it began to settle. She had trusted Nathan ever since he had helped drive the demon from her body years ago. Thinking about the possession brought back the awful screams and the torment. She tried to drive the memories away.

At that time, she had been at a low point in her life. Her father had just died after years of suffering from colon cancer and she was getting over the breakup with her long time boyfriend. She was depressed and angry, but thought she was spiritually fortified. When they had begun the exorcism, things were okay until the demon jumped from the girl and into her. She was on the crew which was filming the possession. The demon had her pinned inside her thoughts so she couldn't move and it was in control of her body. She had just been the nearest thing it had found a home in. Nathan was helping Marsha force the demon out. Marsha was a powerful psychic, they both knew and worked with her on other ghost hunts, but it was the first time she had ever met Nathan.

Nathan and Marsha had acted quickly, but not before the demon began clawing at her skin. She still had scars on her stomach and legs. The screams that she thought were the demons were hers. It told her she would be released if she called it master. It told her it could take away all her pain. All she had to do was give into it. When she refused, it had played her father's death over and over again. Each time before he died, he blamed her for all the suffering he had undergone. She didn't give in and prayed inside her head not jarring her faith. They drove it back to hell leaving her a little more sensitive to the evils in the world. She wasn't psychic but could tell if a place was haunted or if there were other entities inhabiting a certain area.

The first person she saw after the ordeal was Nathan. His smile was a beacon that gave her hope. After she recovered, they stayed in touch and began to get to know one another. They lived close together and began to go out on hunts. They talked on the phone and he confided in her what he was. That had freaked her out. Once she got over the initial shock and didn't sense he was evil, she called him back up and asked him to meet her for a drink. After they got to talking again she was fine with him being a vampire. It intrigued her.

About a year into their relationship, they discussed taking it to a new level. She was curious about him sucking on her, how it felt, and she wanted a piece of him because he was drop dead sexy. They agreed to a friend with benefits deal with a few other rules. Over the months, her feelings for him had bubbled up inside of her. She always squashed them because she didn't know how he would react if she slipped and told him that she enjoyed his company more than being friends. Besides that, she didn't want to complicate the relationship or drive him away. She enjoyed his good nature and his jokes. If he wasn't in her life, she wasn't sure what she would do.

Well I think it's about to get complicated. She sauntered into her room to get ready knowing just the thing to wear from her last excursion to the lingerie store.

## **Chapter Three**

Nathan opened his eyes. Consciousness came to him quickly. He wasn't a creature of dreams so he had no visions to shake off. His awareness was immediate and sometimes he wished he could wipe the sleep from his eyes the way many other creatures did. Before rising from the bed, he stared at the ceiling watching a cobweb blow in the breeze from his air conditioning. The spider was hiding in the corner waiting for unsuspecting prey to come into the web. I know how you feel. Sometimes you can wait and wait and the prey never comes. Sometimes you can wait and no matter what you do nothing works to attract the right one. He thought about Josephine for a minute and his heart softened. He didn't think of her as prey, but sometimes he wondered how she really felt about him. They'd never put a label on their relationship, but sometimes it would have been easier. Although, trying to pin her down was like trying to force a hummingbird to stay put.

Sighing he got up, showered, and turned on his computer. His hunger burned along his veins, but he wasn't too concerned about it. Besides, having that razor edge made the expectation of his meeting with Josephine all the more meaningful. He licked his lips in anticipation of tasting her heady blood. While he toweled his sandy hair dry, he glanced over his emails to see if Josephine had canceled. Thankfully, she hadn't. Maybe I'll get the reason why she didn't show last night. Her email reply was so short. Normally she'll write me a small book. I wonder if something's going on with her. Maybe I'll stop and get her some sunflowers before I go. Those are her favorites. When he was sorting

through his emails, an Instant Message popped up on his screen from a fellow ghost hunter who lived a few states away. He was part of the original group where he had met Josephine during her possession.

**Phantasym99:** Hey, Nate. How's it going?

Nathan typed back, but he really wasn't in a chatty mood. Phantasym99 was really Geri Morse a demonologist. Their paranormal group had a good success rate debunking a lot of hauntings. For a bunch of humans, he considered them friends of the trade and normally when Geri called he joined them.

**Goingbattieby12:** Going okay. Was just on my way out, mate. Anything important?

**Phantasym99:** A quick thing. There's been some talk about getting a team together to head into Nevada. We've tried getting a hold of Jo, but she ain't getting back to us. Everything okay with her?

Jo always gets back to the other team members. It's nice to know that it's not just me, but this only worries me more. Nathan stared at the screen and wondered what they would be doing in Nevada. The team traveled all over documenting cases, but each team member came from their own paranormal team and only met up for large cases. Something had to be developing if they were asking him to come along.

**Goingbattieby12:** Wow Nevada! Investigating a possessed roulette wheel? Yeah, Jo's been distant with me too. I'm heading over to see her tonight. I'll let her know you've been tryin' to get in touch with her.

**Phantasym99:** LOL. Thanks. Appreciate that. No. Nothing as dramatic as that. Some of them want to hit the casinos, but I'm not into the glitz and glamour. I'll see a show I think. Meet up with a few other people I need to get together. Anyway there's an old tavern out in the middle of the desert that Marsha wants us to hit up. Says something's brewing in the depths. You know how she gets when she's honed in on something. Since it's out your way we thought you might want to accompany us. Marsha'd love to see you again and we want you on the team. You have a great eye. Besides you have to meet the new member of the group.

**Goingbattieby12:** *Send me the details and I'll let you know. Ciao for now.* 

If Marsha thinks that something's stirring then it probably is. She's never wrong when it comes to the paranormal. It'll be nice to see her too. Nathan clicked the IM window shut, but it popped back up after a second.

**Phantasym99:** *Will do. Happy hunting.* 

Nathan turned his computer off and wondered what kind of investigation they wanted to conduct. At least it'll give me a change from prowling around graveyards. I'm getting so sick of those. He checked the time on the computer and saw he was running late. Shit! I'll have to forgo the flowers this time.

He locked up his house and stepped outside. The neighborhood around his was a typical suburb where kids rode their bikes on the streets and husbands mowed their grass to keep in line with the homeowner associations' ordinances. His neighbors weren't home yet. The ones across the street were watching television. The show reflected off their bay window. Nathan ignored all of that and stared up at the full moon. The night was cool. The darkness was alive. Things mortals couldn't see or hear were open to him. Worms were digging through the earth beneath him. From the musky scent, a fox was hunting in his backyard. Closing his eyes, he let the night energy fill his entire being. The air surrounded him making him lighter and smaller. There was no pain from changing forms only exhilaration. It was natural to him. A gust of wind rushed under his leathery wings and bore him high into the inky darkness.

Nathan loved soaring through the air even if it was in the form of a flying rodent. In his early years, it had been the only thing keeping him sane. When he had first been turned he fought against what he was. Flying gave him a peace of mind he hadn't found when he was human and it enabled him to endure until he accepted his new lifestyle. Gazing at the houses below, he pondered the many things humans had wrong about his kind.

Vampires had no aversion to garlic just that it made humans smell really bad if they ate a lot of it. He'd once found himself in Italy during World War II and he could hardly drink any of the blood from the people in this one small town because they ate so much garlic it peppered their blood. Running water wasn't a problem either. Silver didn't

hurt him. That was strictly werewolves if you believed in that kinda thing. He didn't have to sleep in his native earth like Dracula. Unfortunately, sunlight was a problem. The old superstitions were correct on that front. One toe in the light and he'd start to fry. He didn't anticipate being a crispy critter so he was always home by dawn or in a secure place. The majority of his kind couldn't step on hallowed ground. If they did, poof, they'd turn to dust. It was the same with holy relics. They were repelled by them and if one touched them it burned. For some reason, he was immune to these trappings. He had no problem going into churches or graveyards. Even though it was an enigma to him, Nathan figured it was because he didn't believe in God so it had no effect. Either that or he was just a one of a kind. He already knew that he was a freak hunting ghosts when he was a vampire.

Josephine's was a half an hour flight from his house. She lived on the other side of the city surrounded by a large hedge so she had no prying neighbors to worry about. Her house was an older farmhouse with a dilapidated barn in the back near the tree line. He fluttered for a moment in the shadows enjoying the quiet of the night, and then morphed back into human form. One part of the magic, behind his transformation, he could never figure out was how his clothes went with him when he changed. He stepped into the light and lifted his hand to knock when the door opened. Josephine stood with a wine glass of blood in hand, dressed in a sheer emerald silk nightgown, and smiling. God, she looks so damn hot. I can't believe this beautiful creature was ever possessed by a demon. He shivered when he remembered seeing her contorting on the floor into impossible back bends and screaming obscenities at the whole team. It was good that they had exorcised it from her, but it had forever changed her. She was more sensitive to things and her body was still scarred. He didn't see any of that, only the gorgeous woman he was in love with.

Her jet-black hair hung over her shoulders and brushed the top of her ass. The green of her nightgown brought out the paleness of her skin and the jade tint of her hazel eyes. He inhaled, smelling the rich blood flowing underneath her flesh. The anticipation made his mouth water and his stomach growl.

"Hungry, big boy?" she asked.

His smile widened. "Only for you, babe." He placed a light kiss on her lips tasting the strawberry lip gloss she wore.

She wrapped one arm around his neck and sucked on his top lip. His cock stirred at the welcoming gesture. She thrust her tongue into his mouth and flicked it over his teeth. Nathan resisted the urge to unleash his fangs and nip at her tongue. A shudder rolled down his back when he tasted her blood. *Oh, you minx. You did that just to get me going.* He sucked on her lips for a moment savoring the small amount of her blood before he pulled away breathless. His fangs pushed against his gums, but he held onto his control. He grabbed the goblet of blood she held and drank it down in one gulp. It wasn't human, but it did the trick infusing him with strength after his flight. He kissed her again and stained her lips with the pig's blood.

"Yummy." She wiped her hand across her mouth smearing the crimson on her flesh. "I love my pork to be squealing."

Nathan laughed. "Well anything would squeal at you for being so damn fine."

Josephine closed the door and chuckled. "I take it you're glad to see me."

He set down the glass and then picked her up in a tight embrace. "It's been too long, Jo. I was hoping to see you last night, but it seems you got a little sidetracked. Was everything okay? Are you okay? You didn't answer my first email or any of my calls. What gives? You shouldn't make me worry about you. I might have thought you were getting eaten by some nasty beast or something." He set her down gently.

She hesitated, but then gave him a seductive smile that tightened his groin. "Haunting graveyards wasn't on the top of my to-do list last night. Can't a girl have a little private time?" She began to walk into her living room. He heard the tone in her voice and knew she didn't want to talk. He wasn't going to push her. He'd done that in the past and she didn't speak to him for a month. He wasn't about to let that happen again. She meant too much to him to screw up their relationship.

*Fuck*. He chased after her and appeared before her using his enhanced abilities. She jumped back. He took her hands in his. "I'm sorry." Nathan kissed both of her hands and waited. After a moment, she melted.

"No, it's not you. I've had a lot on my mind. Last night I wasn't in the mood to talk to anyone."

He slid his hands around her waist. "Well I'm glad that you feel like talking now." He kissed along her neck and forgot about the troubling thoughts he'd had earlier.

"So what were you investigating this time? Werewolves, fairies, shadow people?" She craned her neck to give him better biting access, but he only nipped her flesh.

"How about we talk about this upstairs?"

Josephine giggled and wormed out of his embrace. She took his hand and pulled him after her up to the bedroom. Another bottle of blood sat on the nightstand warming to room temperature. She's always prepared. Vanilla scented candles lit the room. The sound of rain echoed in the background. She sure knows how to make a vampire feel welcome. All I need now is my own coffin in the corner and I'll be right at home.

He sat on the bed and took his shoes off. She stood in the doorway watching him. He met her gaze and smiled. For a brief moment, a flash of memory showed how she'd looked after her possession, she was drenched in blood. It was that night he'd gotten the first taste of her and knew that he desired to have her in his life. She was a special woman. Her possession was one of the cases where he was unable to explain away the idiosyncrasies of the paranormal.

"I was looking for a woman in white at the cemetery."

She blew out a candle and sat on his lap. Josephine rested her head on his shoulder and wrapped an arm around his neck. She pecked at the arch of his throat tingling all his nerves. I'm so glad that we're not just friends anymore. I have to tell her how I feel about her. She has to know. I wonder if she does. All thoughts flew from his mind when her other hand ran over the bulge in his pants. She nipped lightly along his flesh. His dick grew harder. His fangs pushed through his gums. He rarely unleashed the beast in his

nature, but she could handle it. She had tamed him in all other ways even if she didn't know that.

"Oooo...sounds scary. Did you find anything?" She bit down on his ear. Her nimble fingers unbuttoned his fly and slipped inside his jeans.

He drew in a long breath enjoying the sensation of her warm palm on his shaft. "Just a bunch of horny teenagers and amateur ghost hunters. Nothing out of the ordinary. Fuck, Jo. Don't you know what you do to me? Playing around like that will only get you hurt. What are you doing to me?"

Her lips enclosed his Adam's apple and sucked on it. A hot flash took hold of him. His cold heart began to beast faster. Her fingers slid along the smooth skin of his cock, hardening it even more, until she cupped his balls. "Anything I want. Wasn't that our agreement? You suck on me and I get to have my way with you. Or do you want to change it up a bit after so long? I'm surprised you're not sick of me."

He chuckled. That was their agreement many moons ago. "I could never get sick of you. And your way always leads to trouble."

Over the past year, she had eased up on the kink and let him take the lead once in a while. He never knew what would come of their meetings, but tonight he wasn't about fucking. He desired to be with the woman he loved even if he hadn't told her yet. Her skin was soft and alive. Before he met her, he wasn't sure if he could have feelings for a mortal again. She showed him he wasn't dead inside. Josephine slithered out of his lap and went to her knees on the carpet. She tugged on the legs of his jeans until he shimmied out of them. Before long she crept back up between his legs and her luscious mouth enclosed his cock. Nathan grasped the edge of the bed. His nails speared through the comforter to the mattress. The wetness of her mouth was almost as captivating as her velvet pussy. He couldn't decide which sensation he enjoyed more. Her teeth scraped over his sensitive flesh. With slow tantalizing strokes, she ran her tongue along his dick, sucking all of him in. She laved at the supple head and bit down. His hips thrust forward while her hands clutched his hips keeping him under control. The alternating sensation of fast and slow tongue strokes accompanied by the gentle

vacuum she created kept him entranced. He lost himself when she increased her rhythm. A moan left his lips. His hunger gripped his insides. Blood. He craved blood. The only thing he enjoyed more than having sex with her, was when her blood was flowing down his throat.

He shut his eyes on the sight of her glorious head bobbing up and down. He focused beyond the grips of the hunger. Her heartbeat boomed in his ears. The smell of her blood was overpowering. His fangs descended from his gums and filled his mouth. When she stirred the air, it was an effort not to grip her between his legs and rip into her throat. It was one reason he loved her because she trusted him completely. He drew in a ragged breath. His slow beating heart picked up. Her hands snuck under his shirt and dragged over his abdomen. Her fingers left heat trails over his cold flesh. His muscles tightened and then the phone rang.

"Oh, fuck," he groaned. Her rhythm faltered when the phone rang again.

She swallowed his dick one more time, leaving him on the brink of orgasm and then looked up.

"Stopping now... isn't a good idea."

She rolled her eyes. "I don't have a choice. You know that. Work comes first. Hopefully I don't have to go in. I've called in sick for the past few days. They wouldn't be calling me unless it was an emergency. Don't worry. I'll be back to finish what I started." She dashed out of the room and into her office.

Nathan fell back against the bed and stared at the ceiling. He prayed this wasn't happening to him now. He'd been so close. Unfortunately, she didn't rush back in. He had the option of masturbating and finishing himself off, but he decided to endure the agony and wait for her to get back. Besides it would be more fun with her drinking him down, than him yanking on his equipment and getting the brief moment of satisfaction which would follow his exertions.

# **Chapter Four**

I can't believe the phone is ringing now! It's been quiet all day. Who in the hell is calling me? She had been out for a few days and knew if her job was calling it was an emergency. When she wasn't ghost hunting, she was the coordinator for a large heating and air company and they were getting into their busy season. She was always on call twenty-four hours, but she rarely got calls at home. Hopefully the computer system hadn't blown up. If it had, she wasn't going to be able to help. Her computer skills were moot. She glanced back at her bedroom and hated leaving Nathan, but it in the long run it would only make him more grateful.

The phone continued to ring. She sighed and picked it up. "Hello."

"Jo, is that you?"

The voice on the end sounded familiar, but she couldn't place it. "Yeah. It's me. Who's this?"

"Oh thank God. It's Harold. I hope I'm not calling you too late."

You've got to be kidding. This guy can't take no for an answer. Didn't he get it after I kept telling him to leave last night?" Ahh...now really isn't a good time. I'm still not feeling well. I appreciate you calling though." She stared at the swirling designs of her screensaver and then wiggled the mouse. Her home screen appeared and it showed that she had a new email. She chewed on her lip not wanting to be rude and hang up on him, but she really wanted to get back to Nathan. Now that he was here, she was

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feeling the pull toward him. He lit up her world with his hands. He knew exactly where to touch her and he didn't judge her for any of her flaws.

"Wait. Wait. Are you sure you're okay? I mean you don't need anyone to come over and keep you company, do you?"

"Look. Harold. I'm trying real hard to be nice here. I will not now or ever go out with you. You have to get that through your thick head." She clicked on the email. It took a moment to open.

Harold breathed on the other end of the phone. She heard a ding on the other end. "Oh, dearest, you've opened up my email. Have you read it yet?"

She stared at the phone. *Okay he has to be stalking me or something.* Her gaze swept over the email.

"My dearest love,

Please know that you are everything to me. You and I are bound to one another through a bond that nothing can break. You are the moon to my sun. You are the Captain's chair to my Jean Luc Picard. All you have to do is ask anything of me and I will do it. I am yours for all eternity. I shall let no harm come to you. No evil will touch your luscious lips..."

Reading the rest of it made her stomach churn. "What the hell are you talking about I'm the captain's chair to your Jean Luc Picard? I hate Star Trek. How can you even think that I want to be with you? There's nothing between us Harold, good bye!"

"Wait! You don't understand. I get that. I-I was going a little over the top with the email. I apologize my dearest, Josephine. Let me come to you and make you feel better. I can brighten your day. I can make it so that you don't want anyone else in your life."

"Hey, Jo. You coming back to bed?" Nathan called from the other room.

*Shit.* She pressed the phone into her shoulder to cover the sound. "Yeah. One sec." Nathan could hear every word that she and Harold were saying. She wasn't hiding anything from him, but it was a little unnerving sometimes.

"That fiend's there isn't he? The spawn of Satan. How can you let him touch your beautiful, alabaster skin?"

"Harold, I don't know what you're talking about, but what I do in my own life doesn't have anything to do with you. Please stop calling me and don't email me ever again. If you do, I'll call the cops. Do you understand?"

"I won't let that creature hurt you. I'll make sure that the monster is put in the ground once and for all. I swear it!"

"Yeah. Whatever." She finally hung up on him and turned her phone off. If work was going to call her, they would have to deal with not being able to get a hold of her. She slammed the phone down and then deleted the email. *That man is never going to learn*. She took a moment to collect herself, after the strange encounter. Jo knew Nathan was waiting for her and she needed the comfort of his arms. She needed to know that everything was going to be okay. Even when she told him her news. *I can't think about that right now*. *I just need to be happy*.

She ran her hands over her arms to ward off the chill that had suddenly come over her. She went to get up but saw that her computer screen went blank. Letters began to appear on it. When the typing stopped, she read the message.

Beware the dark one who seeks his keys.

She shook her head and figured that Harold had sent a message to scare her.

She grabbed a tissue and dabbed at the corners of her eyes to stop them from watering. *I can do this. I can.* She got up and gathered her wits and pushed her strange encounter into the back of her mind.

Back in the bedroom, Nathan was lying on the bed. She loved seeing him that way with his hair tousled and his face relaxed. It was hard to believe that he was a vampire. He looked so young and so innocent. Yeah innocent. I know he's had a lot of throats and seduced a lot of women. Even still, he has a good heart. I wonder what he'd say if I told him how I felt. No. I can't do that. It would ruin our friendship. Can I even ask him to change me? That will certainly change the dynamic between us. Will he even want me if I become like him?

"Is everything okay?" He opened his eyes dark blue eyes.

She smiled. "Yeah. Just some creep who thinks I want to go out with him."

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He propped himself up on his elbow and stared at her. "Is this someone who I need to go pay a visit to? Put the fear of me in him. Go all rah to get them off your back. You know I wouldn't let anything happen to you."

She sat on the side of the bed. His arms came around her waist. He began nipping her neck and ran his hands over her breasts. Her nipples began to harden from the small gesture. She giggled and squirmed. "You don't have to scare him off. I need you right here. Right now."

"I can certainly oblige you there. Now, where were we?"

## **Chapter Five**

It was good to have her back in his arms. Her warm body stirred his passion once again and for a split second made him long to be human. It would be nice to wake up to her every day and greet the sun. It would be nice to call her his own. He kissed her neck again savoring the tang of her skin and his hunger suddenly returned. A small growl left his lips.

"Getting excited I see?" Jo commented.

"Only for you. I need you, Jo. I need to taste you." He bit her throat harder until she groaned, but he didn't break the skin. He waited a heartbeat and she didn't move, but he felt the small shivers rippling her skin. It hardened his dick more knowing he was the one doing this to her. Jo unwound from his grasp and lifted her nightgown over her head.

Nathan licked his lips staring at her full breasts and her puckered nipples. The slight round belly and the down of her dark pubic hair made him hot. He ached to slide his cock deep inside her slick well. The sudden interruption of the phone call had cooled his jets for only a few moments. He grabbed his shirt and dropped it to the floor. Josephine pushed him down on the bed and straddled him. She planted her lips on his. She thrust her tongue in his mouth and wound it around his fangs. Nathan met her tongue with his own touching it, fondling it while they tasted one another. She ran her tongue along the curve of his canine and he stopped. He barely made a move because if

he tasted her blood at that moment, he wasn't sure if she would survive their night together. She pulled away and gave him a coy smile.

He skated his hands over her warm smooth flesh. He inhaled the citrus aroma of her perfume and the musky scent of her desire. His hunger throbbed in time with her heartbeat. He yearned to sample the bouquet of her blood. Her breasts brushed against his chest. He reached up to take them into his hands, but Josephine ground herself along his rigid member. Nathan groaned, needing to be inside her tight well. Tired of playing, he grabbed her leg, swung it over his hip, and slid his cock into her pussy. Josephine stabbed her tongue on his fang. A drop of blood slid down his throat. He suckled her lips until his lover pulled away. It took everything in him not to take her throat. The beast was loose in his nature now. It was a struggle to decide which he needed more. Sex or blood. They were so closely tied together it was hard for the animal instinct in him to separate them.

Josephine placed a hand on his chest creating space between them. The beast in him needed to fuck her. It needed to tear into her throat. He shook his head and pushed those feelings away. All he focused on now was the engrossing pleasure. His balls constricted against his body. She rode him hard, drawing his cock inside of her until they fit perfectly together. He loved the way her breasts bounced while she rode him. Blood colored her cheeks while perspiration dotted her forehead. She was close to coming by the frantic pounding of her pulse and how her heart hiccupped. He placed a hand on her back and drew her down. He rammed into her one last time and came.

"Oh, Nathan!" Josephine screamed.

At that moment, his teeth pierced her flesh and the hot blood spurted down his throat. He drank in long draughts as he felt her tremble. Her nails dug into his sides, but he barely registered the pain. He was more concerned about the blood. Images from her memories flashed before his eyes, but he ignored them the way he always did. She rode him in slow strokes while he supped until the change in her heartbeat signaled he'd taken enough. He pulled away spent and basking in the afterglow of their union. She settled on top of him, cuddled into the crook of his arm, and sighed. He ran his

fingers through her hair and over her shoulder listening to her heart gaining strength. Josephine's body formed to his, but he sensed she was on edge. He assumed that it was from the phone call that she had gotten. He had heard every word the man had said on the other end. The conversation had obviously upset her and he wanted to make it all better. Nothing would ever hurt her while he was around.

Licking his fangs clean, he noticed a slight change in the flavor of her blood. It had a distinct tang that left a sour taste on his tongue. He pushed it aside and pulled her closer. With her warm body next to his, he wondered if she shared the same dream he had of them having a future together. He had imagined the conversation so many ways. Everything I want is right here. Why can't I tell her that I care about her? Why can't I admit that not everything has to be based on facts? Why do I get stuck in my own head? I never used to be like that. I guess time has changed me. Five hundred years would change anyone. Some of the things I've seen would make a human instantly believe in something. Why can't I?

"Are you happy?" She trailed her fingers over his chest.

"What kind of a question is that? Of course I'm happy." I'd be happier with you always by my side.

She stared into his eyes. Nathan saw something in her gaze that he hadn't seen before. Trepidation. Concern. She had always been totally open with him. He didn't assume it was another man because she would have told him about it. Besides the phone call earlier made it sound unlikely she was looking for anyone else.

"If you're happy, then why do you continue to search for ghosts? Why don't you live the way a regular vampire lives?"

Nathan laughed and kissed the top of her head. "And what does a *regular* vampire do? Stalk sexy women and turn them into the undead? Sucking beautiful white throats such as yours? Or hide from vampire hunters who run around with crosses and holy water? That's not my cup of tea. I enjoy ghost hunting. It helps me figure out if there's truly life after death. There are so many unanswered questions and I'd love to prove that science isn't the only thing out there. Besides it gives me something to do when I'm not doing you."

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She hit him on the chest. "You're a fucking vampire. How can you not believe in the afterlife? Aren't you the epitome of life after death? Don't you have faith? Didn't the demon who possessed me run away scared from you?"

"No. The demon wasn't afraid of me. They just can't possess vampires. Well, I guess they could if we let them in. We've had this conversation before, Jo, my belief in God, Heaven, and Hell is a little jaded. How can mankind put their faith in an all knowing... never mind. I don't want to get into it tonight. You know I was a priest..." He stopped when she began kissing his shoulder.

Josephine flicked her tongue across his nipple. When she looked up, the tears in her eyes chased away his thoughts of the past. "There's something I've been wanting to tell you."

Nathan pulled her further into his embrace. He listened to her heartbeat glad that it was getting stronger. He didn't like the way she sounded. "What is it? You can tell me anything. Our relationship goes beyond ghost hunting together and our wonderful nights. You know that."

She wiped the tears from her eyes and nodded. He threaded his fingers through hers. She began to shake.

"What is it, love?"

"I'm dying, Nathan."

"Dying? What do you mean? How can you be dying?" He ran his tongue over his teeth cleaning the last of the blood from them. The subtle difference in the taste made him worry. How in the world can that be? She can't be dying.

"I-I have cancer."

"Surely you can get treatments? Radiation or chemotherapy? They have plenty of medicines now days. Science is discovering new cures all the time. You can't give up hope."

She sniffled. "Not for me. Not this kind. It's called Myelodysplastic Syndrome or MDS. It's blood cancer. Sometimes they can treat it with stem cell transplantation, or

other drugs, but I have some weird genetic anomaly that makes treatment impossible. They've given me a year."

The news floored him. He never assumed that she'd be in any kind of danger. "How did you find out? When did you find out?"

"I went in for a regular check up. They drew blood and found something off. They ran more tests. I argued with them about treatments, but they said no. God, I can't believe we're talking about this."

She got up and slipped on her nightgown. Her hands were shaking. The wounds on her neck stood out against her pale flesh. It hurt him to see her in such pain. The strong woman and investigator he knew wasn't supposed to break down. Even when she'd been possessed she had fought against it. Now it seemed she was dying before his eyes, giving up when there was still time to fight.

"What is it that you wanted to ask me?"

Silence stretched out in the room which reminded him of waiting in a crypt for a specter to appear. Sometimes it never happened. He wondered if she would crack and tell him. She knotted her hands in the satin fabric of her negligee. Worry lines marred her forehead. "I'm not ready to die. I've been thinking and I—" she stopped and bit her lip. The smell of her blood perfumed the room.

"You what?"

"I-I was hoping you might turn me into a vicious creature of the night." Her voice dropped to a hushed whisper almost as if she had lost her courage to ask him.

A wave of pure love overtook him. He got up from the bed and drew her into a hug. Wetness plopped onto his shoulder from her tears. His heart was overcome with joy. He kissed her forehead. She feels the same way about me too. This is turning out to be a wonderful night. I wasn't sure if it was possible she could love me the same way. "I've wanted to ask you to join me for a while now, but I didn't know if you wanted that. I wasn't sure if you shared my feelings. I don't ever think you'd be vicious by the way. You're too gorgeous. I've yearned to tell you how I feel about you, but I didn't want to screw up our relationship."

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Josephine pulled away and wiped her eyes. He saw the relief etched on her face. "Why didn't you ask me before?"

"Because you wanted to keep our relationship strictly friends with perks. I've tried to keep my feelings hidden, but—"

Her eyes narrowed.

He saw her disbelief.

"W-what are you saying?"

"I love you."

"How can you love me when you don't believe in anything?"

"Love has nothing to do with faith. It only deals with matters of the heart. And I know that I love you. I've loved you for a long time."

Josephine stared at the floor and backed up. "Whoa! I can't believe this. I don't want to die. I know I'm not ready to cross the great barrier of death and see if there's a heaven or not. I was hoping that because of our relationship you'd do me a favor. Here I thought I-I..."

"Are you saying you're not in love with me?" Nathan was floored.

"What? I—" she shook her head and wasn't able to answer.

He never suspected Josephine wouldn't return his feelings. He ran a hand through his hair and put his jeans back on. I can't believe this! How could I have been so wrong? She doesn't know what it means to make another vampire. It's just not done every day. So profound was the experience of turning another human that a vampire normally only made one other vampire in their entire lifetime. The two were linked at the soul level and the connection could only be broken with death. They shared feelings and experiences. Most of the time it was easier to keep a human lover and move on. He'd had many over the years, but she was the first he'd ever felt so strongly about that he wanted her to join him in the night.

He thought back to his transformation. It was uncanny. He had been tortured in the dungeons for being a heretic because he had started questioning his faith back in the fifteen hundreds. That was a no-no when you were a priest. His savior had been a

woman who took pity on him. She was in the dungeons feeding the other prisoners bread and water and saw him. He never understood why she chose him. She never told him and in the early days he would agonize about it. Her name had been Mary. She showed him how to survive in the darkness but never claimed him for a mate. She died not a decade later. He felt every agonizing moment she had, even when they were hundreds of miles apart. His maker had walked out onto a rooftop to greet the sun. He'd felt the first light caress her flesh. At first it had been warm and comforting. And then it began to burn. Even the echo of the pain had been overwhelming he wasn't able to keep from screaming. She was conscious until the very last second right before she turned to ash. When her soul faded from her remains, she never reappeared to him to say farewell. That was what truly broke his belief in God and his heart. He had loved her like any good fledgling. Now five hundred years later, he had found a companion and she didn't want anything to do with him.

"Where are you going? Nathan, I-" she struggled to say her piece, but his feelings devastated him.

He couldn't hear the dismissal that she was going to tell him. He'd kept everything bottled up for so long that he couldn't dam up his emotions any longer. His mind might have been scientific, but his soul wasn't. "I'm sorry, Jo. I-I don't want you to die, but turning you into an immortal isn't something that I take lightly. Forgive me if that upsets you. If you felt the same way that I do, then my answer would be yes. But if it's out of friendship, I'm sorry I can't."

He pulled his shirt on and gulped down the blood she had left for him on the nightstand. The silence between them stretched thin. Normally he kissed her on the cheek before heading back home, but hearing that she didn't reciprocate his feelings hardened his heart. He wasn't about to let on he was hurt. "I'm heading back to the graveyard tomorrow night to take one last look around. I doubt there's anything there, but I'd appreciate it if you'd come. We're still friends right? Maybe you can help me scout out other areas of the cemetery and do some EVP work. I missed you last night."

"Maybe. But—"

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Nathan opened the window to leave. The night energy infused and strengthened him. His form shifted and shrank. He gazed at Josephine through bat's eyes one last time and then flapped off among the stars.

# **Chapter Six**

She slumped onto the bed with the cold breeze chilling her skin. The astonishment of Nathan's admission of his love hadn't completely made it through her mind. She was still stunned and didn't know what to say. She had never assumed that he felt the same way. She figured that he thought their relationship was friends with benefits. Knowing that he truly cared about her warmed her being, but now he was gone. Tears slipped down her cheek. *Great. Here I go not sure if I should tell him I love him and he beats me too it.* What did I do? I clam up and then can't get the words out. God, what must he think of me now? He still wants to be friends, but I heard the coldness in his voice. I can't let him think that I don't care for him because I do.

Wiping her eyes, Josephine grabbed her cell phone. It took her a moment to find his number because her hands were shaking so much. He wouldn't be home yet but at least she could leave him a message. His voicemail picked up on the first ring which meant he had his phone turned off.

"Hi, you've reached Nathan. Leave me a message and I'll get back to you when I'm done looking for spooks."

She waited a couple of heartbeats and then his message beeped. She sniffled and drew in a breath. "Nathan, it's me. Jo. Obviously. Look, I can't leave things the way they are between us. You never let me finish what I was going to say. I know how you get sometimes just going on about how you feel and then that part of your mind shuts down and you analyze everything. That's what I love about you though. Please call me

back once you get back in. I don't want you to have the wrong impression about us. About me and how I feel and—" the voicemail cut her off. She hung up and noticed her hands were trembling even more.

"I have to get a grip. I can't lose him after all of this. Being with him is more important than being a vampire any day." She slipped her robe on and dropped the phone into the pocket.

She padded into her den and went on the computer glad to find the message was gone and none waited for her. After a few moments, she pulled up the electronic journal which she kept hidden away within her files. She didn't believe in keeping a physical diary in case anyone found it. She glanced over the previous day's entry about Harold coming to see her and telling her about his undying love. It made her shiver just thinking about him. I never should've let him touch my computer in the first place. It would have saved so much trouble if I hadn't ever invited him in. I should have just taken the beast to the place down the street.

Josephine began a new entry recording her feelings about what had occurred between her and Nathan. She decided to add her thoughts about Harold and how he made her skin crawl. She thought a moment about the phone call she had gotten earlier. How in the world did he get my work number? I didn't give him that. I don't give that out to anyone except in case of emergencies. Did someone give it to him? Anyone she worked with should have known better if they had. She shook her head, trying to figure it out. As she made a few more notes, the realization hit her how overcome with exhaustion she felt. Adding a few more keystrokes, she ended the entry, saved it, and then curled up under the covers. All along, she hoped that Nathan would call. The minutes stretched out but the phone didn't ring. Their conversation kept replaying over and over again in her mind, trying to change the outcome of it, but it didn't change anything. She fought to keep her eyes open, but in the end, she succumbed to sleep.

The next day she woke up and checked her messages on both lines. There weren't any. Today was her normally scheduled day off. She tried to find things around the house to keep her mind occupied and not drift back to her discussion with Nathan

from the night before. He wouldn't be up until sunset. That was one of the drawbacks of being involved with a vampire. They had messed up hours. Then again so did she. Her job kept her busy and when she wasn't doing that she was out ghost hunting with him or with the other team she was a part of. One of her specialties was capturing spirits or other things on film. She didn't know why, but over the years that she'd been taking photos, strange things had popped up. No one else seemed to have the same results she did. Sometimes Josephine wondered if she had some weird guardian spirit making it so that the ghosts would appear to her. Maybe if I really did, I wouldn't have this disease. Or maybe I already have one foot in the grave and that's why the spooks show up to me the way they do? Who the hell knows anymore?

She stopped scrubbing the bathroom floor and realized that her hands were raw from the bleach and her eyes were tearing up from the chemicals. She wiped her eyes, but that only made them sting more. God, I can't do this. I can't keep fooling myself about my dying. I have to accept it. My time is limited. I have to make the best of it. I have to get through to Nathan and let him know I was being an idiot last night. I have to let him know that I love him. I just couldn't spit it out. All I really want is to be in his arms. He makes me feel alive. It doesn't matter that he's dead or undead. He loves me. I love him. Why can't relationships ever be simple?

Finally, she gave up and started watching whatever was on cable. She flipped through the stations, but nothing caught her interest. Not even the chocolate cake in her fridge called to her. Her stomach grumbled, but her emotions frothed and made it impossible to even consider eating. She had to talk to Nathan and set the record straight. She had to make him understand that she loved him and would do anything for him. Somewhere in their two year affiliation love had blossomed inside of her and she never thought it would. All of her other relationships had been disastrous because she was never able to admit her feelings to any of them. She associated it back to her childhood and never getting any attention from her father. At least that was what the therapist had said when her mother dragged her there for five years. She never thought that it had done any good. When she told the therapist about seeing ghosts in her

pictures, she was prescribed medication. Josephine never took it and that created an even bigger rift between her mother and her.

Halfway through the campy *Dracula* remake she'd settled on watching, and her crumbling chocolate cake, she had smashed with her fork until it was crumbs, she fell asleep. Her dreams were filled with visions of Nathan looming over her but not saying anything. Others were him biting into her neck and draining the life from her, but the coldness in his eyes told of the true monster that he was. She didn't fight him off, even though everything in her wanted to live. Right at the point where he was going to bite her again, she heard a knock on her door.

Josephine jumped. Her hand flew to her racing heart as she was being pulled from her dream. She glanced at the television set to see Dracula bent over the neck of a woman about to sup on her blood. Her gaze darted to the window and saw the sun was setting. She checked her cell phone and saw there were still no messages. Another knock sounded on the door. Getting up, she raced to the door. When she opened it, Harold stood outside with a dumb smile on his face and bag slung over his shoulder.

"Harold, what the hell are you doing here? I told you last night on the phone that I wanted nothing more to do with you. You and I aren't an item. I have no interest in you. If you don't leave, I'm going to call the police."

He pushed his glasses onto the bridge of his nose. The remaining sunlight reflected off his balding head. He was pasty skinned with thin lips and a large nose. He wore a black shirt and tattered blue jeans that came to his ankles. "I know, Jo, but I had to come and see you. I had to get to you before he did."

She rolled her eyes. "Before who did?"

"The fiend who has you under his spell. I heard him on the phone last night when we talked. I know he was over here." He pushed her backward sending her careening into the wall and jarring a picture loose. He closed the door and locked it. It took a moment for Josephine to regain her footing. She scanned the living room for a weapon because she had a feeling he'd gone off the deep end. She didn't want to alert

him that she was frightened. She had to play along until she could figure out a way to get out of the house.

"Harold, I'm not sure what you're talking about. I'm not under any kind of spell. And the man you heard on the phone last night isn't some kind of fiend. He's my boyfriend."

He ignored her comment and dug into his bag. Pulling out a cross, he snatched her wrist and pressed the silver cross to her cheek. The metal was cold against her flesh. His expression eased when nothing happened to her. She yanked her hand from his grasp and backed away toward the kitchen where she could escape through the back door.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing? Get out of my house! Do you think I'm possessed or something!"

"No, not possessed. The hell spawn that's invaded your life is a creature of darkness. He's hypnotized you so you'd believe that he was a man and not a vampire. I had to be sure that his blood hadn't infected you. So far your soul is still pure. I swear, I'll free you from his influence."

Everything in her froze. She understood now. *How does he know about Nathan? I've never told anyone. I've only written about him in my journal.* . "Harold, h-how do you know about Nathan?"

He placed the cross back in his bag and began pulling out other things and arranging them on the coffee table. Among them were a vial of holy water, stakes, and a bible. He sighed and then smiled at her when he had everything in order. "He's the monster who has bewitched you. I'm so happy that you admitted it. If you can talk about it, that means you're not completely under his enchantment. Forgive me for snooping on your computer. I've been reading your journal. I know it's wrong, but I had to be sure you were safe. He told me that I had to do it. He led me to you and told me what to do. I had to bide my time, but in the end he said that I could have you if I delivered the vampire to him. I had to be sure that you hadn't been turned yet. I'm sorry about the email that I sent you last night. I realize that it was a bit over the top. You must think that I'm a complete freak."

#### Crymsyn Hart

Josephine was infuriated. He doesn't want me to think that he's a freak. What the hell? Who told him about me? He comes barging into my house and takes over my living room with vampire hunting tools. This guy is a lunatic. She craved to lash out at him, but knew it was better to keep a level head. "How in the world could you get onto my computer? Who was telling you that you could have me?"

Harold scratched his head. "Ahh.. .The night you asked me to fix your computer. Well I know a little something about trace programs. Don't worry about who told me. It's not important."

"Don't worry about it! It's important to me. You've invaded my privacy. Youyou read things that were personal about my life and you tell me don't worry about it. How much do you know? How much does your buddy know who helped you hack into my computer?"

He glanced down at the gear on the table. "I know that you were possessed a few years ago. I know about your years of therapy and the spirits that are drawn to you. And I know about your diagnosis. I know doctors. We can make you well again. You don't have to beg at that monster's feet. I can find a way to save you. There's more to me than you even know." He placed the bag on the floor. It was still loaded with more weapons. She saw a small crossbow that was already loaded with a very sharp stake. That would do some major damage to Nathan if Harold got close to him.

Oh God! At least I never wrote down where he lives or his last name. "Harold, you certainly don't think that you're going to become some vampire hunter do you? You can't go after Nathan. He's just a normal guy like you. He's not some monster who sleeps in a coffin."

He chuckled. "Don't stress yourself out about what I'm going to do. You save your strength for getting better."

Josephine forced a smile. This guy has seriously lost it. I have to warn Nathan. I can't let anything happen to him no matter what our conversation was last night. How in the hell am I going to get out of here? She glanced around. Twenty feet and she could be out the back door. "Well. I- I guess you're right." She inched along the wall and around the furniture

until her fingers slid along the smooth surface of one of her flowerpots. She grabbed it and threw it at Harold. The pot hit him in the shoulder. She bolted into the kitchen, grabbed her keys from the hook, dashed out the back door. She ran through her yard to her car.

Shit! Two of her tires were flat. What the hell!" Argh!"

She dug into her pocket for her cell phone and was going to call the police when her front door opened. Harold stood in the doorway watching her. A scowl painted his face. Josephine froze for a second and then booked it down the street. It seemed her sneakers barely touched the pavement while she ran. Her fingers hurt from clutching her cell so hard. She glanced at it again and began to dial. While her fingers touched the buttons, she tripped hard on the uneven sidewalk and her phone flew from her hand into the street.

Right at that moment, a car drove by and ran over the phone. You've got to be fucking kidding me. Her knee throbbed where she had skinned it when she fell and tore her jeans. Her palms were rubbed raw as well. She glanced back and saw Harold hadn't followed her, but she wasn't taking any chances. She dived behind a neighbor's fence and focused on catching her breath. She prayed he would get in his car and leave.

He didn't. She glanced at the sun. It had set now. Nathan would be up. She had to get to him. She couldn't go back to her house in case Harold was there waiting for her. She glanced behind her and saw the lights on in the house behind her.

Standing up slowly, she straightened out her clothes and knocked on the door. She peered around and waited to see if Harold was around, but she didn't see him. The door opened. A woman gave her a suspicious look. Josephine knew how she must appear with her jeans torn, her palms all skinned and she was out of breath. She smiled and tried to remain calm.

"Can I help you?"

"I-I'm sorry to bother you, but can I use your phone? I live down the block and someone slashed my tires and broke into my car and took my cell. I was hoping to call a tow truck. If that's okay."

#### Crymsyn Hart

The woman gazed outside. Josephine waited a breath and then two. After a moment, the woman ducked into the door and then handed her a cell phone. "Here."

"Thanks." She took the phone and then dialed Nathan's number. It rang a couple of times then she heard an intake of breath and he picked up.

"Hello."

"Nathan. It's Jo. You can't go tonight."

She heard the hesitation in his voice. "I'm just about out the door. Are you coming?"

The neighbor was eyeing her. She had to make this quick. "I can't. Someone slashed my tires."

"Are you okay?"

The woman sighed. "No. I'm not. Can you come and help me with the tires?"

Nathan sighed. "You don't need me to help you change the tires. Do you need something else?"

"Please come. I need you," she whispered.

Her neighbor cleared her throat.

"I'll be there in a few."

"I'll be at the end of the road. You can't come to the house. I'll explain everything when you get here. Please hurry."

"Fine."

Josephine hung up and handed the phone back to the neighbor. She could tell that Nathan wasn't happy about coming to get her, but he would come. The woman gave her a small smile. "Thanks. They'll be here with a tow truck in a few minutes."

The woman's smile was fake. "You're welcome. Good luck with that." She shut the door and left Josephine out in the cold.

She glanced back down the street and saw that Harold's car hadn't left her driveway. She began walking down her cul-de-sac and out toward the main street where Nathan would be coming down. She kept biting her lip and pacing until she saw

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his headlights pull up next to her. Once he did that, her heart stopped thumping and she was able to find some semblance of calm.

## **Chapter Seven**

When Nathan got the phone call from a number he didn't recognize he almost didn't answer it. He had been watching his computer screen waiting to see if Josephine would IM him or maybe even an email from her. Then he looked at the unregistered number and picked it up. When he heard her voice on the other end, he wasn't sure if she was being sincere or not. She asked him for help. He heard the plea in her voice and her tires were slashed. He had everything packed up in his car ready to go investigate and was burning moonlight, but decided to go and get her. The night before he had spent the night flying until dawn contemplating what had been said between them. He was torn. Part of him wanted to transform her and have her by his side for an eternity, but the other part knew that taking on that responsibility wasn't something he could muster if she didn't care for him in return. He was lonely. She would make a wonderful mate, but the thought of them being so close and she not loving him shredded his heart. He just couldn't do it.

Now with her sitting in the car next to him, all he could smell was her blood. It overpowered the car. They didn't say anything while they drove back to his house. She was huddled in the corner of the seat shaking and crying. He hadn't seen her so distraught since right after her possession. Once they pulled up outside of his house, she tried to get out of the car, but fell back into the seat. He helped her up and she winced when he grabbed her hand. She can't even stand my touch. Why did she call for my help?

"Do you need my help or don't you?"

She sniffled and then glanced at him with those emerald eyes. "What? Of course I do. Sorry. My hands." She showed him her palms. They were all skinned and covered in dried blood. He glanced at her jeans and saw that her left knee was all torn up.

"Can you walk? What happened to you?"

"Yeah, I can walk. My knee is just stiff and I need to wash my hands off. Can we go inside please and then talk?"

He nodded and scooped her up out of the car. He carried her quickly up to the house and then once inside, into the kitchen. He set her down in a chair and then took out a rag and put some water in a bowl. He sunk to his knees and ripped her jean's leg off. She hissed in a breath of pain when he placed the cloth on her knee and began wiping away the grit and the dirt. She flinched every time he dabbed at it. He was doing his best to be gentle with her as he began wiping away the blood from her hands. Each time he inhaled the watered down nectar it made him want to bite deep into her veins, but the way that she was shaking it made him wonder.

"So what happened?"

Josephine placed her hand on his face. It was cooler than he thought it should have been. He noticed the slight tremors running along her nerves. "Harold, the guy who called the other night, came to my house, slashed my tires and forced his way into the house. He started pulling out stakes and crosses. He even shoved one into my face and wanted to know if I was a vampire. He knows about you. He was going to keep me in the house until you came."

His jaw tightened. Why would she tell anyone about him? She had promised that she would never tell anyone his secret. He pressed on her hand and she jerked it away. "Sorry."

"No. It's okay. I ran down the block and fell. I went to the neighbor and asked to use her phone because mine was knocked into the street after I fell. Thank you for coming to get me. I didn't know who else to call and I couldn't go back to the house.

Nathan, I'm so sorry." She began sobbing. The strong woman he knew was breaking down before him and he wasn't sure what to make of it.

After a moment, he wrapped her in his arms. She hugged him close almost trying to smoosh them into one being. He felt her tears dripping on his neck. Her heart was beating erratically and she was still trembling. The smell of her blood was overwhelming him and he hadn't fed earlier. He licked his lips and began kissing her throat. She arched her neck and raked her fingers down his back.

He tried to resist, but the river of blood beneath her flesh called to him. His fangs pushed against his gums and ripped through the soft flesh, lengthening. He tilted her head back a little more until she sucked in a breath and then he bit deep into her throat. Josephine moaned, but didn't stop him from taking her blood. Her hands worked under his shirt and touched his skin. That only fueled him to drink more.

"Nathan, please. I need you," she pleaded.

He pulled her closer and drank another swallow before releasing his hold on her. He noticed the slight sour taste to her blood now. He pressed his lips to hers and then thrust his tongue into her mouth. She returned the kiss with a fervor that he always loved about her. The thoughts of what had happened earlier melted from his mind when she pulled his shirt over his head. Her hands racked his pecs and her mouth kissed along his neck. Her tongue swirled over his heart. She drew in bits of his flesh before sucking on his nipple before biting down hard. He jumped and then eased her away from him.

"Jo, should we be doing this? After last night."

"Last night I never got to say what was on my mind. You left."

She kissed him again and this time it drove all of the questions from his mind. He used his strength to tear her shirt apart and ripped the flimsy satin of her bra. When it snapped, he pressed his face into her chest to hear her heart beat and feel it vibrating against his tongue. She began undoing his pants. His cock hardened. Her hands slid up his shaft and he moaned. He needed her always. He planted kisses along her breasts and twirled his tongue along her nipple feeling it harden and contract in his mouth.

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She groaned. His other hand dug into her jeans and cupped her pussy. His fingers slid along her warm slit until he settled on her clit. He began to massage her buried bud. Josephine rocked closer to him. She kissed his neck and licked a line along his throat. He began to massage her further. Josephine began to bite at his flesh until his hunger began to engulf him again. He pierced the top of her breast and loved it when she quivered.

"Fuck me, Nathan. Hard."

With only the barest taste of her blood on his tongue he slipped down her pants. With a small tug, he pulled the satin of her panties off and threw them into the corner. He kissed her harder and then plunged his cock deep inside her velvet sheath. Her eyes widened when he did and her back arched. He wanted to make her happy. He wanted this to be forever.

"Is this what you wanted, Jo?" He thrust into her again.

"Yes."

She bit down so hard on his neck that he growled. It felt so good he wished that she had fangs. He dove into her again and sensed she was close to coming. So was he. He kissed her again and this time she ran her tongue over his lip and snagged it on his fang. A drop of blood slid down his throat. He slid into her again meeting her flesh until they were almost one. He sucked on her tongue for only a moment before releasing into her. She cried out and then rested her head on his shoulder breathing heavily. She still didn't let him go.

"Are you okay?" he asked her.

"Yes. I am now. Thank you for coming to my rescue."

"I'm always into rescuing the damsel in distress." He kissed her again and then untangled their arms and legs. He helped her up and noticed she wobbled. He must have taken too much. She headed toward his bedroom. He moved faster than she could, scooped her up, and headed up the stairs where he deposited her on the bed. She squealed and then laughed.

"I like being your damsel." She yawned.

"I'm glad you feel that way. Now, I think you should get some sleep. You've had a hell of a night. We can talk about this more when you wake up."

She shook her head. "I'm not tired."

He ran his index finger down her nose. "I know that look and I took a lot from you. Yes you are."

She snuggled into the pillow and he pulled up the covers to her chest. She grabbed his hand when he began to walk away. "Please stay with me. I don't want anything to happen to you. Harold can't find you. He can't."

He smoothed the hair from her face and used a little bit of his power to push her into sleep. "He won't hurt me. And I swear he'll never hurt you again either."

Her eyes fluttered shut and her breath evened out into sleep. When it had, he kissed her lightly on the forehead and went back over everything she had told him. Harold was going to pay for what he had done to Josephine and for messing up his night. He glanced down at his sleeping love and knew that he had to go to the cemetery and see if Harold turned up there. Anger and a hate so strong moved through him that it didn't matter if Josephine didn't love him or not, he would turn her regardless at this point. No one was going to harm her ever again. He growled when he heard his computer ding.

He got dressed and scanned the subject lines of the emails and saw one from Geri. He clicked it open. It was the details about the Devil's Tavern. The tavern was supposed to have a ton of activity. He typed back a quick reply to send him the directions and he would meet them there. It would give him something to do besides haunt graveyards once Harold was out of the way. He shut the computer down and opened the window. Josephine was nice and warm in the bed. The night filled him and gave him energy. He would need it when he faced Harold. His form shrunk and he flew off to the graveyard.

At the graveyard entrance, he took human form once again. The wrought iron gate was frozen on its hinges from years of rust. He slipped in and began searching the shadows looking for anyone or anything. If Harold was hiding among the crypts then

he would find him. Nathan licked his lips in anticipation of tasting his blood. He prayed that Josephine would never have to know what he had done. Of course she might be happier knowing that this asshole is taken care of. When I'm done, I'll go back to the house and we can talk about how we feel. I sensed it in her when I was drinking from her. I should have taken the time and spoken with her. No. I have to take care of Harold because he's the only thing standing between us now.

He opened his senses to the darkness around him searching for any sign of Harold. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a blur of white. He turned quickly but found nothing. At times the shadows could play tricks on him, but tonight they were unmoving. Nathan saw another blur and took off, in the direction of the shape, dodging gravestones. Deep in the bone yard he came to a mausoleum. He had been by it dozens of times, but the doors had never been open. He pushed his way through the brush before the doorway.

Inside was a white translucent form. He inhaled and didn't smell any recent human activity. When he moved closer, the form solidified into a woman. What the hell is this? Is this really a ghost? He didn't want to spook the spirit. The figure wavered and smiled. It glided closer until it hovered a few feet from him. A cool breeze swept over his arm. When he reached out to touch the entity, his hand passed through it. Tinkling laughter filled the small crypt. This isn't real. Ghosts don't normally appear and then float in front of you. He stepped closer and the phantasm retreated. His senses said that something was off.

Nathan heard a whirring sound in the distance. He closed his eyes and listened harder. He turned around after he sensed an additional presence in the tomb. At first he assumed it was another ghost hunter, but before he could react, burning agony encompassed his entire being. Something had been shoved into his back. He dropped to his knees and gripped the object. Before he could get a good hold on it he was knocked over the head from behind. The impact left him a little groggy. He tried to stand, but another blow hit him. This time he went down into the darkness.

# **Chapter Eight**

Josephine heard the phone ringing. It was far off and she didn't want to drag herself out from under the comforting warmth of the blanket covering her. But the phone didn't stop ringing. It pulled her out of the blissful sleep that she had been enjoying. It was the best rest she'd had in a long time not plagued by dreams or nightmares just darkness where she was able to rest her weary mind. When she opened her eyes, she searched around for the phone.

"Hello?" she asked, her brain still filled with the web of sleep.

"Nathan?"

Josephine yawned. She was surprised to notice she didn't feel the least bit tired, she felt energized. She wiped the crust of sleep from her eyes and then focused on the room around her. She was in Nathan's bedroom. She hardly remembered getting there and then it hit her that he had saved her after Harold had tried to keep her prisoner in her own home.

"Is Nathan there?" the woman on the other end asked again.

It took a second, but she recognized the voice. "Marsha? It's Jo."

"Josephine? What are you doing there? You're supposed to be at the cemetery with Nathan. Did he go by himself? I didn't see that coming."

What is she talking about? She glanced around the bedroom and saw the open window. The original plans for the night were that she was going to meet him at the cemetery and then she was going to tell him how she felt about him. Harold had

screwed everything up. When Nathan brought her back to his house, she hadn't expected to make love to him, not that she minded. She was just so distraught to think that Harold had read her intimate thoughts and knew all about Nathan. *Oh God! If he read last night's entry then he knows that Nathan is going to be heading to the cemetery.* She listened to the house and didn't hear any other sounds coming from downstairs. Fear was making her blood run cold.

"We were supposed to go, but something happened. He must have gone by himself while I was asleep."

"Are you okay? You sound troubled."

"No. Everything's fine. I fell asleep because I've been sick. You know him. Once he gets something on his mind, he's not going to let it go." She got out of bed and went into the closet. She kept a small suitcase of her things at his house just in case. Thankfully she did because she had nothing else to wear since he had shredded everything.

"Yeah. He's the most stubborn vampire that I know. Look, get over there fast. Something's wrong. I can't see exactly what it is, but I know it involves you. Him being undead really hampers my visions. Tell him I'll call him later. I have other things I want to talk to him about."

Jo tugged on a pair of jeans she hadn't worn in almost a year and found they were a little snug. *Guess I had one too many cheeseburgers. Oh well. Not that it's going to matter much longer.*"I'll let him know that you called."

"Thanks, dear. You tell him to be careful. Undead or not, he can still get hurt."

That woman is too psychic for her own good. "Will do." She hung up the phone and then grabbed one of Nathan's shirts. The ones in her suitcase wouldn't fit, if her jeans were too tight, they would be too. She threw the phone on the bed knowing there wasn't any way to contact him. The only thing to do was to meet him at the graveyard and hope that she beat both of them there. She raced downstairs and saw his keys sitting on the kitchen table. On the floor were her shoes and the remnants of her bra and panties. She slipped her shoes on and grabbed his keys. Thank God he had decided to

become a bat and fly over to the cemetery. Harold was going to be waiting for him, she just knew it. The only thing that she could do was pray that Nathan got the drop on him or that Harold had chickened out. Maybe he stayed at my house and figured I would come home. Or maybe he really followed me to the neighbor's house and overheard my call to Nathan so he knows I wasn't going to chance it. I can't let Nathan walk into a trap because Harold has gone off the deep end.

She locked the door, and then got in his car. All of his equipment was in the back seat. He was close to leaving last night, but she had stopped him. His jacket sat on the seat. She picked it up and brought it close to her nose to inhale his scent. After the two years that they had known one another, she had originally figured she would eventually find a human guy to date and then she and Nathan would go back to being friends. She never expected the love that had grown between them. But after all the nights spent ghost hunting together, watching horrible cult movies until almost dawn, and talking with him, they had developed into a fully fledged relationship. Now that he was in danger of being terminated, she would do anything to save him. Even face Harold if she had to and throw herself at his feet as long as he didn't hurt the man she loved.

Josephine raced to the burial ground praying that nothing would get in her way. She hit every red light along the road and made an effort to keep below the speed limit because cops loved to patrol the back roads. The roads were dangerously curved. Deer had a tendency to jump in front of passing cars and were another potential hazard. She prayed that nothing would cause her to get into an accident. She fiddled with the radio, shut it off, messed with the heat, and kept her eyes glued to the rearview mirror hoping not to see blue and red flashing lights. Each minute she spent on the drive to the cemetery felt like an hour. Luckily when she pulled up outside the cemetery gates she was met with only the dead.

The bone yard was the oldest in the state and occupied acres and acres of land. Hell, it was so old, that over the length of time it had been in use, some of the graves had vanished into the surrounding trees. Nathan and she had been investigating the

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graveyard for a couple of months going over it in quadrants. She had a few pictures of misty forms and orbs, but she hadn't realized that he was also searching for a woman in white among the graves. She turned the car off and got out. A chill lingered in the air. An owl hooted off in the distance. The moon was hiding behind a passing cloud. She popped the trunk and grabbed one of Nathan's flashlights.

From there she hurried into the graveyard praying that Nathan was okay. If Harold had done anything to Nathan she was going to kill him. I swear by all that's in me. I'll bite his head off if I have to and make him pay. He'll get his for what he's done to me and I'll find out the one who is behind all of this. Once we do that, I'll have Nathan go after his scumbag partner too.

# **Chapter Nine**

Nathan opened his eyes slowly. His entire being was on fire from the pain. He took in a ragged breath of air, but came up short. The agony was concentrated in his chest. He glanced down and saw a stake protruding from his torso. Horror rolled through him, but that boiled down into anger. He couldn't believe he'd been lured into a trap. He gritted his teeth against the pain. Jo, I swear that once I get free. I'm going to suck him dry, but before that I'll make him eat his fingers for ever touching you. Nathan went to remove the stake, but found his hands were tied above his head. He tugged on the ropes testing their strength. They were tight and he was weakened from being stabbed so close to the heart. Harold knew what he was doing because he hadn't killed him. How much does this nut job really know about me?

"Well, well. You're awake."

He turned toward the voice. A pasty-skinned man with thick black glasses stood before him. He held a flashlight in one hand and a cross in the other. Nathan didn't flinch at the cross. The man didn't seem to notice. Harold directed the beam of light into his eyes and blinded him. He winced at the illumination.

"Who are you? Why am I tied up? Why did you attack me?" Nathan asked trying to sound like an innocent ghost hunter who prowled the night searching for spirits. He needed to figure out a way to deal with this wayward vampire hunter who had threatened his girlfriend.

"You and I both know why you're tied up."

Yeah because you're an idiot who thinks you can take on a vampire. Man, you don't know anything. Nathan chuckled, but the stake made it hurt worse. This guy's insane.

"I think you've mistaken me for someone else. I was in the graveyard looking for ghosts. Nothing else. If I interrupted some dark ritual you had going on, offended a dead relative or something, I apologize, but you have to get me to a doctor. Dude, come on. This is nuts. Can you get the flashlight out of my eyes please?"

The man didn't budge. "I know what you are, vampire! He was right. I didn't believe him at first. He was the one who led me to Jo's little ghostly meeting. He told me about her online journal and how attracted spirits were to her. That was why he knew about her. He has plans for you. He told me to keep you alive, but I don't think I can do that. You stole Josephine from me. You turned her against me. I saw her get into your car earlier. I had to take the chance you would be here. You're going to pay for taking her from me. I love her. Not you! You don't know what love is. You're nothing but a beast spawned from the fires of hell."

Harold flung himself at Nathan and pressed the cross against his cheek. The cold metal felt good against his clammy skin. Unlike others of his kind, Nathan didn't burst into flames. His attacker pulled away because he wasn't writhing in agony. He looked at Nathan and then back at the cross. "How come you're not smoking? He said that you would be."

"Why would I be smoking? And who is this other guy you're talking about? Are you making a movie or something? Cause this isn't funny." Nathan's strength was ebbing, but he had to keep up the charade for a little longer until he got this ass wipe to release him.

"Because you're a vampire. That's what you do. You can't walk on hallowed ground, you burst into flames in the sun, and you cringe at the sight of a cross. How come you're not doing that? Why did he give me all the information if it's not working? There has to be something in here that works." Harold backed away and dropped his flashlight. He dug into his back pocket and pulled out a small black notebook and flipped through the pages.

Nathan closed his eyes from the pain shooting through his limbs. Honestly, he could laugh because this whole scenario struck him as funny. *This is like a bad horror movie. I can get through this. I'm not the victim. I'm the monster.* He opened his eyes and tried to capture Harold's mind. The man was too strong willed or he didn't have enough juice to break through his attacker's walls.

"You're using your powers on me. That's the same thing you did with Josephine. She proved that to me tonight. You made her fall under your spell so she'll do anything for you. I know how your kind are. I know you were with her the other night. I heard you on the phone. He told me that you had powers of the mind."

Nathan moaned from the hunger gripping him. He struggled past it and focused. He had to get free for Josephine. "Look, dude. I haven't done anything to Jo. We have an arrangement. We're friends nothing more. I hunt ghosts in my spare time with her. What we do behind closed doors is no one's business but ours. We're two consenting adults. What have I done to her, pray tell? The last time I saw her, she was running from her house because she was terrified of you. And who is this other guy that you keep talking about? Is your sidekick here? Is he the one running the projector with that *ghost*? Neat trick by the way."

"You don't have to worry about my friend. He'll come to collect you in his own time. Until then, you're mine to do with as I see fit. I never meant to hurt her. You stole Jo from me! She was mine."

"How can she be yours if she's never told me about you?" Nathan asked.

"She didn't know my true feelings about her until last night."

"Well, don't you think it's a little late now? Jo is free to make her own decisions and it seems that I was the one she chose. I didn't put her under any spell."

He heard a twig break outside the tomb. The door inched open creaking on its hinges. Harold stopped and turned. Nathan inhaled. The door opened more. Harold gripped the cross and held it out before him to ward off whatever was entering the tomb. He pushed a button on the cross and a blade slid out of the bottom. Holding it

with both hands, he lifted it high above his head. Nathan was about to object when he lunged forward.

"Nathan, oh God! Harold what have you done? What—"

Before he could stop, the bladed-cross was embedded into Josephine's chest. She froze and then looked over at him. She tried to reach out but then crumpled to the ground. He screamed when she lay still on the leaf strewn floor. The metallic tinge of blood scented the air. The bubbling fury inside of him erupted giving him a surge of strength. He tugged on the ropes and broke free. Harold fell to the ground beside Josephine. Nathan yanked the stake from his chest and yelled from the blinding pain ripping through him. Each individual splinter which raked his heart seemed like a large spear being driven into his soul. Darkness tunneled his vision, but he forced himself to stay conscious. He had to for her. He shoved Harold out of the way and replaced him at Josephine's side.

You weren't supposed to be here. Why did you come? You can't die on me. Why didn't you stay asleep? She struggled for breath. He grasped the cross, pulled it from her bosom, and flung it across the crypt. He licked his lips at the blood staining his hands, but he pushed the hunger away. The light was already leaving her eyes. She had precious minutes to live.

"Why, Jo?" he asked her.

"What are you doing?" Harold was trying to take her away from him.

Nathan growled at the puny man fighting to keep him from his beloved. He had no idea what he had done. Now he would pay even more. His soul would rot in hell for the rest of his days. Harold whimpered and scampered into the corner. Josephine took Nathan's hand. He squeezed it, but didn't get a response.

"You have to do something! You have to save her," Harold pleaded from across the room. "You just can't let her die."

"I thought I was a monster. Why would you want her to become something you just tried to kill? Or was all this part of your buddy's plan?"

#### Crymsyn Hart

"No, this was never part of the plan. I swear he never mentioned anything like this. Please you have to save her. I don't care what she becomes."

He didn't respond but held her fragile form. Josephine's body was cold in his arms. "Nathan, I'm so sorry. The other night. Earlier. I-Please don't let..." she whispered. He brushed his lips against her forehead and hugged her tight. "I know, love."

Her blood called to him. The hunger in him was going to overpower his reason soon. He couldn't lose her. He would bind them together for all time and he would always keep her close to his heart. Harold stirred but remained silent. Nathan bit into his wrist and held it over her lips. He really didn't have enough blood to turn anyone, but he had to try. Her eyes were half closed and her heart barely pumping. The blood dribbled down her chin. Every muscle in him froze when she didn't swallow.

"Come on," he whispered. "I can't lose you."

Time spanned an eternity while he waited for her to react. Finally her mouth began moving against his wrist. He repositioned her head and let her drink. The tugging on his veins grew severe and made spots dance before his eyes. He was getting cold and heard the death bell tolling in his thoughts. If he didn't pull away soon he wouldn't survive, but he wasn't sure how much she needed to complete the transformation. He had seen the results of an incomplete ones and they weren't pretty. Half-dead zombie-like vampires that terrorized villages and gave the undead a bad name. Her mind fluttered on the edge of his. That was a good sign. Forgive me, love. I would give you more, but I can't. Please come back to me.

He pulled his wrist away. He set her down and turned his gaze on Harold. The man's blood was laced with fear. It smelled wonderful. Nathan rose and watched the horror-stricken expression move over his prey's face. He glanced at the stake and bladed-cross. Nathan hissed. Even injured he was still quicker than the-would-be vampire hunter. Harold dashed to the side of the crypt. Nathan snatched his shirt and held fast to the squirming man.

"If you kill me Josephine will have your head."

Nathan chuckled. "I doubt that very much, but I don't intend on killing you." He wrenched Harold's neck to the side and punched his fangs into his jugular. Blood scorched his throat and immediately cleared the spots from his vision. He drank until the wound in his chest stopped hurting and was on its way to healing. He pulled away reluctantly leaving Harold weakened, but still alive. He threw him away from him glad to be rid of the man.

"What are you going to do with me?"

Nathan licked his lips. He needed to go out and find another victim. He hated taking human lives, but in this case he would have to drop a body. Hopefully there was a vagrant in the cemetery that he could find for dinner. "She'll be hungry when she wakes up. Fresh blood will rejuvenate her. Be careful what you wish for."

Nathan collected the weapons and walked out of the tomb. He pulled the doors closed and shoved the cross through the handle. Harold shook the door and pressed his face to the window.

"You can't leave me! I'll tell you anything you want. I'll tell you about my partner. I'll tell you what he wants you for. Why he sent me to Josephine. Anything. Please!"

Nathan didn't turn back but went to find his dinner. "Too late now."

An hour later, a shrill shriek echoed in the cemetery. Happiness touched his lips when the scream died away. He made his way to the vault, removed the cross, and tucked it in the back of his jeans. He had been lucky to find not one, but too bums both passed out on the outskirts of the cemetery so he was feeling his frisky self again. When he opened the doors, he found Josephine cradling Harold's cold body.

"Jo?"

She glanced up. The gleam in her eye made him wonder if she awoke intact. She still smelled human to him. Her shirt was still wet from her blood. When he looked closer at it, he realized that it was his shirt.

"Are you afraid of me too?" There was a coldness in her tone she hadn't had before.

How could I ever be afraid of you? Hearing that broke his heart. The link between them hadn't solidified yet so he couldn't read her. "Never afraid, just cautious."

His fingers ran along the cool metal of the cross and played over the small button to send the blade out. He wasn't sure if she would be afraid of crosses or hallowed ground. She was newly turned and somewhat human so he had some leeway. She got up with a smooth grace she hadn't had before. A hunter's prowl. She was an ethereal beauty. Her dark eyes stared at him from under heavy lashes. She wound her arms around his neck and gave him a secret smile. His heart fluttered while his cock hardened. He would crumble if she asked him to fuck her right there. That was what he ached to do. Josephine kissed him lightly on the mouth. He tasted Harold's blood. He dismissed the urge to lick her lips clean and taste the inside of her mouth. Instead, he kissed her in return but then pulled away and unwound her hands from his neck. *Baby, you have no idea how much I want you, but we can't do this now.* The pout on her lips almost ripped his heart in two, but he kept his expression stoic.

"Are you mad at me for coming here?"

"Hardly." He eased his grip on the cross and caressed the side of her face sensing that she wasn't going to attack him. "I'm only taking it slow. You're different now and I don't want us to rush into anything until you and I have had time to discuss this new lifestyle." Her hand ran along his erection. She bit her lip. The gleam in her emerald eyes was that of a true vamp. He took in a deep breath to maintain control. "Come on. You have to get some more blood in you. I know you're hungry. I can feel the beast inside you. Besides, sleep will do me good too."

He gave her a smile and took her hand. When he walked toward the door, she didn't move.

"What is it?"

There were tears in her eyes. "Why don't you want me?"

Nathan sensed her confusion. Her mind was jumbled. He understood exactly what she was going through. She may comprehend where she was and what she was doing now, but once she slept and fed it would all be muddled. At least that was how he remembered his awakening. He took her in his arms and reassured her. "Of course I want you. I've always wanted you. I'm not sure how long your immunity to sacred

ground will last. I want to get home before the sun comes up. After you've fed, slept, and..." he paused to nuzzle her neck. She giggled when he nibbled her ear. "Then we can get reacquainted. I know you want to do that. I promise I won't let anything happen to you."

"Okay." She grinned.

He gave her a peck on the nose and led her out the door. He didn't bother with the body in the crypt. Harold could haunt the place for all he cared. They walked back to the car and he got her settled into the seat. He was ready to climb in the driver's seat when he spied a woman standing at the fence. He froze.

Her brown hair formed a halo around her face. An eerie glow surrounded her. She was dressed in white with a playful smile on her lips. It could be another projection like Harold had used to lure me in. He heard her faint laughter. He dashed into his back seat and grabbed one of the cameras he had among all his equipment. He got out and heard her laughter again. At first, he thought it was the wind, but then she winked at him. Her smile widened. He raised the camera and clicking the shutter. He wasn't sure if he got her because when he looked back she was gone. Was that a real ghost? Should I start believing in the afterlife now?

A moment had passed and he waited for her to return. He didn't hear the whirring of the projector. Come to think of it, I never did find Harold's accomplice. I wonder where he was. I didn't smell him when I was hunting. It was only Harold and I followed his smelly trail back to his car and he was alone. Oh well. Nathan shook his head and chuckled. He glanced back at Josephine and knew where his true attraction lay. She was the most important thing. Now and forever.

## **Chapter Ten**

Josephine had dreams filled with blood and darkness. She fought through them to wake up, but wasn't able to get clear of the nightmare images which were haunting her. Every once in a while she sensed Nathan close to her. When she reached out to him, he retreated too. Her heart was set on getting to him, but no matter how hard she tried to find him in the shadows, he would always disappear. The emptiness inside of her grew and when she thought it would consume her, the darkness broke. Her soul was lifted and she was bathed in the light. She opened her eyes. The first thing flashing in her mind was Harold with his arms raised over his head. She saw him and then saw Nathan. Before she could react, Harold plunged a weapon into her heart. A sudden pain filled her chest.

"Harold, no!" Her hands flew to her breast, but her hands came away clean. There was no more wound. What happened? She glanced around and saw she was no longer in the crypt. It took her a second to get her bearings. There was a computer. Her suitcase was out on the floor by the closet. I'm back at Nathan's house, but what happened? I don't remember coming back here. The last thing she remembered was making love with Nathan. After that the rest was a blank. "Nathan, what's going on? Why am I in your bed?"

He appeared in the doorway holding a bottle. She inhaled and smelled the blood. *Is that possible?* Her gaze focused on the liquid and she licked her lips. *I'm losing it.* She forced herself to look at him. He appeared different from earlier that night. She couldn't

put her finger on it, but he was more defined. His blue eyes were crisper. Nathan's skin was flawless. She yearned to stroke it and feel if it was as silky as it looked. She glanced around the room. Even without the lights on, she could see clearly. There were cracks in the wall she'd never noticed before. Small, hardly discernable spider webs blew in a small breeze that went through the room. When she listened, she heard Nathan breathing. She'd never heard that while he was across the room before. She heard him swallow and even how his feet crunched against the carpet. The computer was giving off waves of heat, but he wasn't. He set the bottle of blood down on the computer desk, took his phone and slipped it into his pocket as he sat on the bed. I wonder if he heard my message from last night.

He ran his thumb down her cheek. His touch was softer than she had ever imagined. The aroma of the blood on his lips was more enticing the closer he was. "Hey, you're awake. That's a good thing. What's the last thing you remember?"

She searched her mind trying to dig up anything from the night she had been rescued by Nathan. The echo of the pain in her heart gripped her once more. She shivered and rubbed the spot over her right breast. She still expected to find the wound there. The skin was whole. "Besides Harold driving something pointy into my chest? I-I went to the cemetery to find you. You were strung up. Then it got really cold. I wanted to tell you how I felt. I needed you to know about my message, but I could barely see you. There was this bright light too. Oh God. I was dying. I was cold. I didn't want to die. Then it got really dark. After that..." She stared off into space and thought about the peace that had flooded her body for a brief second. She tried to grab onto that feeling, but it was fleeting.

He pushed a stray hair out of her eyes and then ran his thumb across her lips. She froze not sure if she should move. "After that you woke up. Harold was still with you in the crypt. Your hunger would've been insatiable. Once you woke up, you fed off him so you could stay alive. Instinct took over. With newborns they need to feed a lot. Right now, I can feel the hunger in you. You shouldn't feel bad for his death. Personally, I think he deserved it after being such an asshole to you."

Shock hit her. *Did Nathan turn me?* "I thought you weren't going to change me. The other night you said that you weren't. What happened?" Relief and a strong surge of love gripped her. A large lump of emotion clogged her throat, but she couldn't cry. She wanted to reach out and hug him, but she wasn't sure how he would react. She cringed at how they had left things the night before when she couldn't spit out how much she loved him. Then an image flashed in her mind of them in the kitchen. She wasn't sure she could look at the kitchen table again.

Nathan shrugged. "I did what I had to do. I decided my hunt for the meaning of life was more interesting with you being in my unlife. Besides, I couldn't lose you even if you did have another boyfriend that you didn't want to tell me about..."

Josephine looked down and ran her hand over the comforter. There was a tickling sensation on her mind. Nathan. *Another boyfriend?* She hit him on the shoulder and found it to be hard. "Thank you for turning me. I know it wasn't something that you wanted to do because of what I said. I—"

He raised his hand and stopped her. "Jo, when we were in the kitchen and I fed from you, I could sense your emotions in your blood. Now I can feel your mind. I can dig into it and learn your heart's desires if I wanted. If I was a bastard, I'd twist you and make you into my puppet. But I wouldn't do that. I just want you to be happy. Listen to my advice and hopefully one day you can tell me the truth about you and Harold."

Josephine placed a hand on his shoulder. It was obvious that he hadn't listened to her message yet. *Me and Harold? What is he talking about? I'm going to kill him if he thinks that there was something really going on between me and that asshole.* "If you are seriously thinking there was something between me and Harold, you have another think coming. I don't know what he told you, but none of it was true. Did you even listen to my message?"

"What message?" A grin tugged on his lips for a moment.

She shook her head and rolled her eyes. "Never mind. Why do you think I went to the graveyard?"

"It was obvious that you wanted to stop me from killing Harold."

She punched him harder. "Yes, that was why I went to the graveyard, so I could warn him. No silly. I wanted to warn you. Enough about that. You know there was nothing between me and that creep. Eww. There was-is only one man in my life. Or should I say unlife. Besides he's dead. We don't ever have to worry about him." She slid over the bed and wrapped her arms around his neck kissing his cheek. Nathan was normally cold when she was human, but now he was warm to her. Because I'm just like he is now. He let out a contented sigh. She was glad that he seemed to be relaxing. She was waiting for his mind to kick into high gear. Waiting for him to start analyzing to see if maybe she wasn't really here or something because he didn't believe in the afterlife. She never really understood that about him, especially considering he was already undead. He had seen a shit load of stuff during his lifetime, saw her possessed and still he didn't believe in all the evidence that he had gathered. He swept a lot of it under the rug, but he had gathered more evidence which he considered circumstantial than any other ghost hunter she had ever met. Besides her photos, which he tried to explain away, but couldn't, he wasn't sure about the evidence. There were times when she had sat him down and showed him some of the stranger ghost anomalies she had.

The weirdest was a series of photos where the ghost had actually written messages on the prints. Nothing ever appeared on video, but all her Polaroid's, digital, and even black and white film. She never shared any of them on the web, only with her ghost group. I wonder if I'll still attract ghosts now that I'm not alive. Does that matter? Maybe now that I'm a vampire I'll get even better pictures. Who knows? She inhaled and then began kissing a line down Nathan's throat. She smelled the blood underneath his skin. It didn't smell as good as the human blood in the bottle on the computer stand, but it was still enticing. She nipped at his throat and raked her fingers over his chest.

"How did you meet Harold anyway?"

His comment broke her mood. She pulled away and groaned. "He was psycho. He was a friend of a friend so I thought he was cool. We chatted a couple of times at other ghost groups. He said he was a whiz at computers. A couple of months ago, after a meeting at my house, I asked him if he'd take a look at mine because it was doing

wonky things. Last night he tells me he's been reading my emails and going through my schedules and my diary for over a month and a half. When he barged in the other night and said I was under your spell, he kept going on and on about how you were a monster. I knew he meant to kill you then. I couldn't let that happen. You mean too much to me. Then he said he was working with someone. I asked him who, but he never told me. He didn't happen to tell you did he?"

"It's nice to know I rank above the now dead vampire hunter in your life. No, he didn't tell me who it was, but he said the same thing. Someone had led him to you. He pulled out a notebook and was checking his notes to see why the cross didn't work on me. It was all very strange. I didn't sense anyone else in the graveyard." He sighed.

He was pulling away from her and getting all analytical. If that was the case, then there was no way to get him out of his mood. She knew him too well. "Nate, don't get all grumpy on me now. Just because you didn't sense anyone, doesn't mean they weren't there. Maybe they fooled your super vampire senses. Or maybe it was all a lie and it was just Harold."

He glanced at her. His eyes were cold and his mouth set. "I wasn't fooled. And Harold was too stupid to set up the stakeout on his own. Someone had to have helped him. If I ever find him, I'll kill him. No one sets me up or hurts you." The muscles tensed in his back. He got up and walked to the window. It was nice to see that he returned her feelings even if he hadn't stated that he loved her yet. There was still that barrier between them. She could feel it. They had to clear the air. She got up slowly testing out her new legs and walked over to him. Placing a hand on his back, she inhaled and noticed his musky scent was deeper than before. He pulled away from her touch.

"Thank you for being so protective of me. But there's more for us to talk about than if Harold had an accomplice. I need you to hear me. Please." She bit her lip and prayed he would listen. All she needed was to start up their new relationship with some bad air between them. Please don't leave me out in the cold. Not now when I need you the most. She

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wasn't sure what he would say. She hoped he would return her feelings. If he didn't, she had nowhere else to turn. If he did, then she knew her eternity would be at his side.

## **Chapter Eleven**

Her soft voice pulled him from his thoughts. Everything about her was changed and yet the same. The transformation had enhanced her features. Her lips were alluring. Her hazel eyes now held flecks of silver. She was a dark angel come to rescue him. His expression softened when he looked at her. "No, I'm not getting all scientific again. I was just thinking. You're right. We have to clear the air. I was only kidding about Harold. I know you had nothing going on with him. It just makes me furious I wasn't able to find the other one who was helping him."

She laughed. "I hoped you weren't thinking too hard. I know that look. You were getting all stodgy. Let's not worry about Harold or anything else. I need you to know how I feel about you." She stopped and pulled in a deep breath. Her expression was troubled. "When I originally found out I had cancer, I couldn't deal with it. That was the real reason I didn't meet you the other night at the graveyard. I hadn't been to work in days. I didn't want to talk to anyone. And then your email popped up. You were worried about me. It dawned on me I didn't have to die. When you said you loved me I was floored. I never thought you wanted more than the good sex between us. I thought I was the only one who had fallen in love. I couldn't spit it out fast enough. I was in shock from hearing you say it and what that could mean. But I'm saying it now. I love you. Not because you're a vampire, but because of who you are. I've loved you for a long time now. I just never had the guts to admit it."

"Reading minds was never one of my fortes. I never dreamed of reading yours. When you didn't reciprocate my feelings, I shut down. I couldn't think. I had to get away from you so I could clear my head. I'm sorry I was such an ass. I should've stayed and heard you out. I should've realized that you needed me."

Josephine sighed. Nathan didn't expect the pressing of her lips against his. They were soft. The sudden gesture hardened his cock. Everything in him yearned to kiss her back, but he placed his hand on her shoulder and pushed her back a step. He had to get some things off his chest. It was good that they were talking. They hadn't done it often enough when she was human. "Jo, now that you're a vampire. Things are going to be different between us. There's a reason I overreacted the other night."

She shook her head. "You never believe what's right in front of you, do you? Like that ghost at the burial ground. Yeah, I saw her and how she winked at you. And yet when you climbed into the car, you still didn't believe what you'd seen. What made you this way? You've never told me."

"Does it matter?" Nathan didn't want to get into his beliefs or why he wanted to prove there was an afterlife. It dredged up too many horrific memories. It was more than his turning and losing the one who turned him in the past. She didn't understand the profound experiences that they still had ahead of them. Once she had fed and the bond between them had solidified she would feel his emotions and vice versa. It tugged on his heart that she was baring her soul to him. It made him love her all the more. Before he could explain, his phone vibrated in his pocket. I bet it's Marsha again. What is so important that she needs to get a hold of me? Before Josephine had woken up, he had checked his emails to see his friend had sent him several emails. She urged him to call her back because he wasn't picking up his cell. He wasn't in the mood to talk with her. Josephine had him too preoccupied. It was strange having another vampire in his house. It made the hackles stand up on his neck. The predator in him wanted to tackle her. The man in him wanted to make love to her. He sensed once they came together it would be explosive.

She took his hand, brought it to her lips, and kissed the inside of his palm. The small gesture made him almost lose his control. "No, it doesn't matter at all. You'll tell me when you're ready. But can you tell me when I get to start remembering what happened? All of these things are a blur. Here and there I recall some things."

He saw the pout on her lips and his heart crumbled. She always knew the way to get to him. The feel of her breath on his flesh sent tingles up his arm. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her into him. Her hardened nipples pressed against her shirt and poked his chest. His need for her was overwhelming. "So how about you and I get reacquainted first. I'd love to show you a few tricks that I've picked up over the years."

She nibbled his earlobe. "I'd love to do that. First I want to be sure that you get this through your thick skull. The reason I went to the cemetery was to warn you, and maybe save your undead ass. Hmm...I guess that means I'm undead now too. Anyway. You always said you wanted to be friends, fuck buddies or friends with benefits, whatever you want to call it, nothing more. Over the past year, I've had feelings for you, but never said anything because I didn't want to screw this up. When you left, I called to talk to you. I shouldn't have let you fly off that night, but I was stunned. Every time you left me at night, it was like losing a piece of me. I love you, Nathan. Vampire or not. I'll learn whatever you have to teach me, but I don't want to let you go. I'm so sorry. Please forgive me for being such a pain in your ass all this time."

He could hardly believe his ears. She was asking him to forgive her? Oh baby, you don't ever need to apologize to me. You and I are going to be together forever. Nothing will ever happen to you again. Whoever else Harold was working with I'll find him and then you can rest easy. No one will ever harm you. He opened his mouth to reply when Josephine captured his lips one more time with a force he'd never felt in her before. Her fingers wound through the strands of his hair holding him to her lips. His tongue snaked in her mouth. He brushed his tongue over her canines. Once he did, they began to grow. She groaned into his mouth and pushed harder into him. He'd always loved the way that her body molded to him. They were meant for one another. He didn't believe in coincidence or

fate, but with her he assumed that anything was possible. He might even be able to expand his horizon and start to believe in the paranormal. *Maybe there is an afterlife. Now that she's with me maybe I can get more information. But* — His thoughts were halted when she ran her hands over his growing erection. He ran his tongue along her slim fangs. He dragged the tip of his tongue over one slowly and drew blood. The same way she used to do with him. He got the desired effect. She sucked on his tongue harder. It was good. He was going to tantalize her now. Her hunger exploded in his mind. It rolled through his body and swept him up in its grip. He wanted her blood. Nathan growled and pulled away. He would do her more harm than good, now wasn't the time for this. The hunger reflected in her eyes giving her a true predatory look.

"I have blood in the refrigerator to ease your thirst. Let me get it. I don't think I've had enough myself." He began to leave, but she grabbed his hand.

"That can wait. I need you!" Her eyes went completely silver. She raked her nails along his chest shredding his shirt. She brushed the tatters away. Her fingers ran along his flesh and sent shivers through him. His resolve was slipping fast. He either needed blood or to make love to her or he was going to lose it. He raised an eyebrow and stared at her. She pulled her shirt over her head and dropped it to the floor. Her breasts were pert. He ached to hold them and twirl her nipples between his fingers. She grabbed his pants and yanked them down breaking the zipper in the process.

She giggled. "I think I'm going to enjoy this being a blood sucking monster thing. I guess you have to get me a matching coffin." She pushed him onto the bed. Nathan let her pull his jeans all the way off. Then she undressed.

"Who said anything about needing matching coffins? I figured you'd move in here with me. We can share the bed. I have more precautions against the sun than you do at your apartment."

She stopped and giggled. "Well, I guess you have to deal with my redecorating and painting the kitchen purple."

He didn't respond. He enjoyed watching her too much and was stunned into silence because she was finally with him. Before him was a woman and she was his

creation. The coolness of the air contracted her nipples even more. She slid her hands over her belly and her breasts tantalizing him. Nathan licked his lips in anticipation of tasting them. She rolled her nipples between her fingers and gave him a sly smile as she held her breasts out for his inspection. A hint of color tinged her cheeks. His heart picked up an extra beat. He inhaled and smelled the desire blossoming inside her blood.

"Come here, baby." His cock stirred against his thigh taking on a life of its own. She saw his shaft move and smiled.

She ran her hands over his length and made him shiver. He closed his eyes and enjoyed the sensation, and was surprised at what he felt next. A sharp sting raced up his thigh and then he felt Josephine drinking. His body shook from the pleasure overtaking his brain. He bit his lip to keep himself in check. It would be so easy to move and claim her throat. The beast inside of him demanded it. The part of him that was her master said he should be the one drinking from her. The man in him loved being drunk from. He wanted her to drink him dry. For a quick instant he almost took himself back to his human days when his sire first brought him across. Her mouth worked slowly on his femoral artery drawing in the blood. She had bitten right on the first try without any help. Her mind radiated contentment and passion. It wound around his nerves and lit his entire body on fire. After another mouthful, she pulled away from the fount and kissed her way up his thigh. Her tongue licked his shaft and then kept going up as she slid her body along his. Her breasts settled against his chest and her eyes twinkled. She gave him a quick peck on the lips and then shimmied, rubbing herself over him. Her wet slit enticed him. His dick hardened even more. He would do anything to have her. She was no longer the prey, but the hunter and he was at her mercy.

"Is this close enough?"

"Not quite."

He wrapped his arms around her back and then flipped her over on the bed. He flashed her a smile and then spread her legs further apart. He went between her legs and began planting soft kisses along the inside of her thigh. He left a trail along one until he came to her down of soft hair. Then he lifted her other leg and did the same

thing. This time he nipped along the line of her artery. He stopped and bit down hard enough she jumped and then moaned. However he didn't draw blood. He didn't want the taste of her to be ruined by the coppery goodness underneath her flesh. Nathan stopped playing with her and he trailed his hands along her sides feeling her squirm. Then he dipped his head to her luscious well and tasted her. He laved her nether lips before slipping his tongue into her glistening sheath. Josephine jumped and groaned.

Oh baby you taste so good, he whispered inside her thoughts.

He sensed her surprise at the intimate contact. How can you be doing this?

Lots of practice. He chuckled and continued his torture. He plunged his tongue inside of her once again and buried his face into her down. Her pleasure rushed through him. Her nerves were on fire and his were sizzling. His fangs extended. The ache in his belly to taste her blood mingled with her sweetness nearly overpowered him. He waited to use them and made sure that he didn't pierce her delicate flesh. Instead, he focused on her clit and twisted his tongue around the buried bud. He ran his hands over her stomach and cupped her breasts. His thumbs flicked across her nipples feeling them harden when he rubbed them. Josephine moaned and twisted under him excitedly as he worked her up into a frenzy. Her body was his now. Her delight redoubled along their shared bond. He was about ready to explode if he didn't slide into her tantalizing pussy. It was getting harder for him to concentrate on pleasuring her when his hunger and lust were urging the beast inside of him to take her.

"Nathan, so not fair."

Life isn't fair, love. And the darkness makes it even more unfair. I have the advantage over you and you're going to find out over the course of the eternity that we will have together. I can stop if you want me to.

No!

In response, he tortured her clit a few more times. She drew in a breath. Her muscles quivered. Her knees locked around his head. Her hips pushed against him. When that happened, Nathan unwound her legs, rose up, and slid his cock deep inside of her. Her pussy enfolded his shaft. *Oh baby you feel so good. Even better now. Once you* 

figure us out we can last for hours. She arched her back and wrapped her legs around his waist. Her hold was tight and she wasn't going to let him go from her grasp. He slid his arms along her thighs feeling their silky smoothness. He gripped her hips and nestled his face between the valley of her breasts. He licked over her heart and then moved to her right breast. His tongue flicked across her nipple. He sucked on it for a moment and wound his fingers through her hair. Her legs tightened around his hips. He plunged his dick deep into her quim. Her sheath enclosed his cock. He growled and swirled his tongue along the ridges of her areola. Josephine shivered again. Blood called to him. He ran his tongue along the line of her neck.

"Do you want me to?" he whispered.

"Yes," she cried out.

Nathan opened his mouth wider and pierced her vein. The spice of her blood was the same only a little thicker and richer. The sour taste that had defiled it was completely gone. It was good that the cancer which had been eating away at her system was gone. One good thing about being a vampire was you couldn't contract any disease and it killed off anything in your blood. She was colder than what he remembered, but remained wonderful. Part of her still tasted human. He began delving into her faster while drinking at the same time. Her mind reflected his passion. She was losing herself in the ecstasy of their pairing. Their joining was beyond anything he had ever experienced before with another creature. Their bodies were being twisted even tighter together. He hadn't felt so close to another being since he had been created. Their coupling was beyond that. It was mind blowing. He pulled on her throat one more time and then felt the pain of her fangs plunge into his neck. Once that happened, he began to lose it.

I love you, Nathan.

Her pussy gripped him tight. He drank in one more sip and came. She released his neck. An overpowering feeling of love washed over him. It took him a moment to realize that she was returning his feelings. Her soul was bound to him now. And even

though she had confessed how she felt, sharing those words with her in their act of love, quieted his soul.

### **Chapter Twelve**

Josephine wrapped her arms around her chest and hugged herself. Her whole being was electrified. She had never thought that being with Nathan could have been so intense. She not only felt him buried inside of her body, but he was also inside of her mind. His passion enflamed her nerves and still rode the insides of her body. The echoes of their pleasure bounced along her soul and made her heart beat. The warmth of his presence wasn't like that of a human, but he was alive and there. He lay next to her not saying anything, only enjoying the aftermath of their experience. The love she had for him swelled. She better understood, in some way now, what he had meant about being tied to another vampire being a profound experience. She had only been one for a night and if the rest of eternity was going to be like this, then she could hardly wait for it.

She closed her eyes and felt his contentment rolling through her mind. There was a gnawing inside of her as well. An edge that was starting to make itself known. She wasn't sure if she liked the feeling. It was a darkness consuming her. The back of her throat was getting dry. She swallowed hard and tried to drive back the feeling. She licked her lips and tasted the remnants of Nathan's blood. All she wanted now was more of his blood or some of the human blood she detected in the room. When she inhaled the aroma of it wasn't so fresh anymore, but it still smelled delicious. She licked her lips in anticipation.

I can't believe this is going to be forever. I have Nathan and I don't have to worry about the cancer killing me. She concentrated on her body and everything felt in order. Jo stretched out her mind along the room. Even though she wasn't connected with him, she could still sense him. His breathing. His faint and slow heart beat pulsated against her skin..When he moved in the bed and rustled the sheets, she could feel him also. Her tongue caressed her fangs and she was surprised to find how long and sharp they were. She wanted to see how much of her had changed, but she didn't want to disturb the reverie that she was relaxing in.

Her stomach grumbled. The edge in her gut began to creep into her veins winding around them until it started shredding her insides. She drew in a breath. The pain was not something that she had planned on. Nathan had told her in the past that the hunger could get so bad that it was like slivers of glass slicing open his veins from the inside out. The longer he let it go on, the worse that it got.

Josephine.

She didn't respond. The voice was velvet smooth and slid along her thoughts. She smiled and loved that Nathan was speaking to her. The closeness to her was something she had always longed for. Now there were no more barriers between them. A warm tingle spread through her. Heat settled above her heart and soft finger strokes slid along the tops of her thighs heading toward her already throbbing sex.

Nathan, what are you doing?

Shh...

Those fingers brushed across her breasts. Her nipples contracted and then she let out a small contented sigh. The weight on the bed shifted. Nathan slid a hand across her belly and rested it there. The added weight was different from the tantalizing strokes she had just received. His fingers slid down and danced along her already moist slit. He began kissing her neck and nipping at the skin. He tugged on her ear and growled.

"Oh, I could take you again. I can feel you're desire. However I think that we both have to get some food. How are you feeling?"

"Kinda like slivers are cutting away at my gut. I understand now what you meant when you told me about the hunger and how it affected you. Is that a bad thing?"

He brushed a hair from her face. "No. It means that you're recognizing the signs of the hunger. When it gets to the point where you're having trouble concentrating through the pain then you have to worry. That's when you could lose control and attack someone. But I won't let you get to that point."

He stared deep into her eyes. His mind brushed against hers. She felt his hunger and his contentment. He was happy they were bonded together. He kissed her lightly on the lips and then pulled away. Right then she sensed something in the room. Her whole being tensed. Before he could make it out of the bed, she grabbed his hand. Nathan stopped and looked at her.

"What's the matter?"

She sat up in bed and then unwound her fingers from his hand. She listened to the room and didn't hear anything. There was something that seemed to be off in the room. She peered into the shadows. They didn't move, but she wasn't sure if something lingered in the darkness or not. She shook her head. *I'm losing it. It has to be this whole new lifestyle thing. I'm not used to it yet. That's all.* 

She glanced at him and gave him a wide, fang filled smile. "Nothing. Hearing things I guess. Hearing everything. Did you know your neighbors are really noisy with their bed banging against the wall? And the ones across the street are having some kind of sex party. You live on a freaky block. I'm surprised that the neighbors haven't knocked on your door to have you join the party."

"Who said that they haven't?"

"And you haven't taken them up on their offer? I'd think that a vampire would certainly bring a little spice into their lives."

"Well it would, but I'm really not into group sex. I rather my escapades to be a one on one thing. Haven't you figured that out from me being so obsessive with you? I mean I had to turn you into a vampire so I could have you all to myself."

Josephine giggled and pressed against him. She kissed his lips and suddenly desired to take a long hot shower. "Well I think that you've done an excellent job." Josephine ran her fingers over his chest. "You mind if I take a shower?"

"No problem. When you get out, I'll have something waiting for you."

She nodded and then headed down the hallway into the bathroom. While she did, she felt the same dark presence following. She stopped and gazed into the shadows. *I'm* not losing it. What the hell is going on? Something brushed the back of her neck. She spun around. Nothing was there.

Laughter filled the darkness and her mind. A bolt of fear went through her. In that instant she recognized the feel of what was following her. Her body froze. She gritted her teeth against the terror that began to run through her. I'm hearing things. It's nothing. Maybe it's the hunger that's starting to get to me. She forced herself to move and went into the bathroom. When she flipped the switch, the lights flickered a couple of times before they finally came on. When they did, she barely held in a gasp when she looked at her body in the mirror. She looked ten years younger.

The lines were gone from her face. Her skin was paler than it had ever been. Silver flecks danced in her eyes. The crow's feet were gone. She lifted her lip and saw the long curved fangs that reminded her of a cobra's. She touched them lightly with her fingers and felt her gums tingle. Her fangs retracted back into her gums. *Amazing*. She trailed her fingers over her arms and then examined her stomach. It was all flawless and she could see the outlines of her muscles. The most important thing was that all of her scars from her possession were completely gone. The words, whore and bitch were no longer carved into her skin. That in itself was a miracle. She traced where the letters used to be. The demon had done that from the inside out. She wasn't able to stop it because it had locked her inside her body. Now she hoped that she was resistant to anymore possessions. She had never thought that Nathan would be possessed only because he was already dead.

A smile spread over her face when she turned on the water. She was immune and whole for the rest of time. And she would always be able to thank the man she loved for that.

### **Chapter Thirteen**

Nathan took another swig of the blood he had left on the table. It was warm and a little congealed, but he didn't mind it. It helped quiet the hunger that raged inside his veins. He had watched Josephine walk out of the room with her fine hips swaying back and forth, what a gorgeous ass she had. She loved him and it reflected in her mind like the blazing sun off a still lake warming him. That love became the sun that he hadn't seen in so very long. Their beings were entwined so tight now that he had sensed her slight moment of panic before she went into the bathroom. He wasn't sure what had caused her to be so frightened, but he figured that it was something to do with her adjusting to her new life of being a vampire.

He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. Her hunger beat against his mind. Newborns needed to feed a lot more until they had settled into their skins. It made his gums ache from the beat against his mind. His urges were under control. He had to go out and get more blood for her in a night or two. However, he also had to teach her how to feed. He could only imagine what was going through her mind now that she had turned. He had noticed one thing when he was making love to her, her flesh was no longer scarred from her possession. He was glad about that. Hopefully, she doesn't have to worry about ever being harmed by one of those things again. I hope that we don't have to face a demon anytime soon. Speaking of demons, I wonder what's going on with Geri and his hunt that he wants me to get involved with. I'm not sure if it'd be good for Jo to go though. Her being around a group of humans for a long period of time, might not be a good idea.

"Thinking too much. You're going to have smoke coming out of your ears." Arms came around his shoulders. Josephine's wet breasts pressed against his back. Her fingers slid over his chest and began teasing his nipples. A shiver of pleasure went through him. Her lips placed small kisses along his neck.

He chuckled. "Not likely. I'm not sure my brain gets that hot anymore. Are you feeling any hungrier?" He caught one of her hands and kissed the inside of her wrist flicking his tongue over her veins. He tasted the soap along her flesh.

"Hungry. I could eat a moose. The pain is tolerable, but I think if I go on any longer then it will only get worse. So are we going to hunt the night away? Are you going to show me how to tear out the necks of the town virgins?"

"I'm not sure that there are any virgins left. Maybe a few of the town drunks. We could sneak into a few houses and suck the necks of some innocent children. I hear that ten and eleven year olds are the tastiest."

"Hmm, I think I'd settle for some prepubescent fifteen year old who has a hard on for scantily clad comic book heroines with a kick ass attitude. What do you think? Maybe we can find one that has a twin sister or a hot cougar. I know you love going for the older women and all."

Oh I love your train of thought. He was about to answer when he felt the vibration of his phone going off in his pants pocket. "Hold that thought." He untangled himself from her arms, reached down, and fished out the phone. He recognized the number. "Hello, Marsha."

"Nathan, thank God! I've been trying to get a hold of you for days now. Did Josephine give you my message?" He heard the tears in her voice. Something was horribly wrong.

He glanced at Jo who was drying her hair. "Everything's fine. No, she didn't tell me that you had called. She's been a little bit under the weather. What's going on? Is everything okay?"

"It's about Geri and the rest of the team. Oh God, Nathan!"

"What about them?" He began pulling at the label on his bottle. He had to make a run to his buyer and get another six pack. It was best to have on hand in case of an emergency and he wasn't about to have Josephine get so hungry that she went off and attacked the neighbors.

"They disappeared two weeks ago. The police found their bodies four days ago out in the middle of the dessert."

Shock hit him. That can't be right. How is that possible? "Ahh, Marsh, are you sure it's them? I mean, I just got an email from Geri the other day. I was IMing him two nights ago. He was being his usual chatty self and was asking me about doing some investigation."

"That's impossible, Nathan." She drew in a breath. "He's dead."

"So you're saying I was contacted by a ghost?" He gritted his teeth. *I don't believe in ghosts. She knows that* Josephine rested her head on his shoulder waiting to see what was going on next. He felt her curiosity fluttering on the edge of his mind.

"I don't know who or what emailed you or was chatting with you, but it wasn't the team. They went out to this abandoned tavern in Nevada. It's supposed to be haunted. They wanted me to go with them, but I had another engagement I couldn't miss. I was going to leave when I was contacted by the police. Sheila, you hadn't met her, she was my niece. She—I was training her. I never should have let her go! She kept telling me something bad would happen if she went. She was getting visions. She believed they were from angels. I shouldn't have let her go. Is Jo okay? I've been having bad dreams about her."

Angels. I doubt that. If those fluffy winged things do exist I doubt they'd give any hints about what is to come or be talking to Marsha. "Calm down. I'm sorry to hear about your niece. Jo is fine. I'll tell her that you were asking about her." Josephine kissed him on the cheek.

"Okay, if it wasn't Geri, then who was I talking to the other night?"

"I don't know. What did you talk about?"

"About going on a hunt to some place in Nevada called the Devil's Tavern." His email dinged on the computer. "Hold on a sec." He got up and went to the computer. He shook the mouse so the screen came back on. The list of emails showed that one was from Geri. The little smiley face on the contact even said he was online. "What the hell!"

"What is it?" Marsha asked.

"Is everything okay, Nathan?" Josephine asked.

He glanced at her and saw that she seemed a little paler than she should have been. Her eyes were wide. He wasn't sure if he should be concerned or not. He reached out with his senses and didn't feel anything in the room. He kissed her cheek. "Everything's fine, hun."

"Are you sure Jo is okay? I've pulled a couple of cards on her and all I keep coming up with is death."

Marsha, I love you, but sometimes you being psychic is not the best thing in the world. I sometimes wonder what you really know about me. "Yes. She's fine. We'll talk about it later. Look, I just got another email from Geri. It shows he's online. He sent me the directions to the tavern." He shifted the phone to his other hand.

"Send him a message and see if he answers you. We both know that he doesn't have any one living with him. I'm surprised that he even goes out on dates. We're the only ones that know about their deaths right now."

"Okay one sec." Nathan brought up his IM. He typed in a message. He noticed in the screen's reflection that Josephine had wrapped herself in his robe.

Goingbattieby12: Hey, Geri. Whatcha doing tonight?

**Phantasym99:** Hey, Nate. Not much. Just a small bout of insomnia. You get my directions?

**Goingbattieby12:** Yeah sure did. Sounds fun. I'll get myself together. You don't mind if I ask Jo to come along too do you? She'd love to come. So how's Sheila?

"What's he saying?" Marsha asked.

"Hold on. I'm waiting for him to type something."

**Phantasym99:** Doing great. She's feisty. Yeah I'd love for Jo to come along too. The more the merrier.

"He says that Sheila's doing great and she's feisty. He'd love for Jo to come along

too. Obviously, this isn't Geri. I know him well enough that if he was talking to a

woman he'd be stumbling over his words and would never use the word feisty. Besides

that he wouldn't just say it was all right for Jo to come along. He'd ask you first."

"Sounds about right. He couldn't even look at a woman. Besides I know that he has

a thing for Jo and would get tongue tied even thinking about her," Marsha commented.

Goingbattieby12: Well that's great. Now tell me who this really is. I know Geri and

Sheila are dead.

There was a pause.

"Nathan, what's going on?" Josephine asked.

Nathan ignored her question. All of a sudden the room grew darker than it already

was. Shadows wrapped around objects and became tangible. The atmosphere

thickened. The faint trace of sulfur filled the room. Josephine drew in breath. She let out

a small yelp. He spun around and looked at her. Her eyes were filled with fright. She

sat on the edge of the bed. A low chuckle came from the corner of the room. He put a

finger to his lips and signaled for her to be quiet. She nodded, but he saw the

trepidation on her face. He glanced back at the screen.

Phantasym99: So you think that you and the psychic bitch have it all figured out do you?

The words on the screen were echoed in the room. How is this happening?

"Nathan, are you hearing this too?"

"Yes, Marsha. It's here too."

Goingbattieby12: Who are you? He typed.

Phantasym99: If you really want to know that then come here and get your revenge for

your friends. Or truly find out if there's an afterlife. I can answer all your questions. I know all

about things that you'd never even dreamed of. All those ghosts you think that you capture on

film are nothing compared to what I can show you.

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Nathan glanced at the bed. Josephine was staring at him with a confused look. He knew that she heard the voice too. The atmosphere in the room pressed down around him. He hadn't felt anything like this since he had witnessed Josephine's possession.

**Phantasym99:** There's nothing that your vampire can do. She's a lovely piece of ass though. Did you know that it was me who instructed Harold to start talking to her? It took him a while to get up the balls to do it. It's a shame he couldn't bring you to me. However, I didn't think the little prick really had it in him.

"Leave her out of this. Why did you kill the other investigators? Why did you send that jackass to her? What do you want with me? With us?" he asked the thin air. He also heard the voice over the phone too.

Dark laughter filled the room. "Your precious investigators got in my way. And you. Well now you're special. Why don't you come down here and find out?"

What the hell is going on here? Who is this? Nathan began to type something again, but the computer screen went black and began to smoke. Before that happened, the printer went berserk. His computer shut down. The atmosphere remained heavy. He tried to think about everything that had just happened. No one made threats to his friends or about the woman whom he loved. He had sworn to himself that he would find the individual who had sent Harold after Josephine.

"Nate, what's going on?"

"Nothing, Marsha. Stay put. I'll take care of it and then call you back." He closed the phone before she could answer him. He glanced over at Josephine. His instinct to protect her kicked in.

He pulled on his pants and a shirt. He glanced at the printer and saw a stack of paper was waiting for him. He picked it up and saw that a map of Nevada had been printed out along with driving directions to get to the Devil's Tavern. Whatever this thing was, he had to make sure that it wasn't going to hurt anyone else. Either way he wasn't going to see his beloved hurt. Once he looked over the map, the atmosphere returned to normal. The darkness receded, but the presence lingered.

"If you think you can take care of me vampire, then come and get me. But remember this. If you don't come, I'll come after your little pale darling here. If you think that you can't be possessed, then you don't know anything yet. See you soon, vampire." The voice died down and the dark spirit vanished.

"What was that thing? I thought it was a demon. Did it really mean what it said? Can vampires be possessed?" Josephine asked. She got up and clutched the sheet to her chest. She was breathtaking in her beauty, but she was shaking.

He remembered her fear from the time she had been possessed before. They had discussed it in the past, and he knew she feared that it would happen to her again. He drew her into his arms. "If it was, it's nothing you need to worry about. I've never known a demon to possess a vampire. It's just blowing smoke. I have to take care of this to make sure it doesn't hurt anyone else. And I don't want anything to happen to you. If it was the person who set Harold on you, then I'll make sure that nothing happens to you."

She nodded. The fear receded from her eyes. He felt the predator in her respond to the threat. "You're not going anywhere without me. I don't care what it said. I'm always up to a new adventure. I have you at my side so nothing can go wrong. I don't think I'll be possessed again. If it wanted to do that, it would've tried before I went into the shower. I felt it touching me and thought it was you. I sensed when it came in. Besides, I can't let some sweet human honey scoop you up."

Nathan chuckled and kissed the top of her head. This was the woman that he knew. She wasn't going to back down no matter what was coming after her. Her hands trailed over his shirt and down to his crotch. He felt her desire and her hunger. His hunt for this entity would have to wait. She was the most important thing to him now. Her hungers were the first thing.

"I love your enthusiasm, but right now we have to get you fed." She nipped the side of his neck and he resisted the urge to fold. "I love you, you know. No demon or pussy human is going to run me off. I've been after you for two years. I even had to get staked for you to reveal your feelings for me."

She bit him lightly on the neck. "That wasn't planned. As of right now, I'm your partner in crime. Ghost hunting, coffin sharing, whatever you do. Okay?"

"Okay. That's a fair plan. I have a bit before I have to go."

"Before we have to go you mean."

"Yes, before we have to go." He lowered his lips to hers and traced her fangs with his tongue. It took every ounce of concentration to hold back from tearing into her body. At that moment, nothing else mattered but her. That and the deep love they shared. Whatever entity wanted him in Nevada had to wait. He had more important things to take care of right here.

To Be Continued...

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