



DEN

OF

SAVAGES

BLOOD MOON BONDS

BOOK 3

MISS RENAE



Book Three

*Den
of
Savages*

Blood Moon Bonds



A paranormal reverse harem. Meaning the main character does not have to choose between her love interests. Keep in mind this book contains trigger warnings. Death, attempted rape on an adult, child kidnapping, and mentions of self-harm.

Reader's discretion is advised: group scenes, blood play, breath play, knife play, and voyeurism. A psycho beta and omega that balances him. If any of the above-mentioned triggers you, please skip this book. Mental health is very important.

Why choose, MM, MMFM, Med/Fast burn, Dom/Sub reverse, Forbidden Romance, Mate Bond forged against The Council, Alpha FMC, Crossover Characters, Standalone in a Shared World

Blurly

Welcome to Blood Moon Prison

WHAT IF I STOLE your life from you? Wouldn't you seek to haunt me? Don't you want to drive me mad with guilt or push me into insanity?

I believe those last moments define you and what is to become of your afterlife. Those that die in gruesome ways cannot find peace or solstice. How could they, when I inherently cut their life span short because of my rage and hunger?

The voices in my head are a constant reminder of those I killed. I'm plagued by those who died at my hand. Consumed with the constant need to absorb more of what life is—blood, pleasure, and power.

With the voices urging me toward my demise, why not take all that life offers me? Consume anything and everything I desire; consequences be damned. Within the walls of Blood Moon Prison, there is only one thing I care about.

Revenge.

Get Help

IF YOU OR A loved one needs help, always reach out!

These are some amazing resources. Protect your mental health. Remember, you're NOT alone.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

800 273-TALK

National Suicide Hotline

800 784-243

Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence

800 799-7233

Sexual Assault

800 656-4673

Glossary

F ACTION -A group of shifters, witches, or vampires.

Bond-A family of shifters, witches, or vampires. A bond comprises of Alphas, betas, and omegas.

Raven Coven-A bonded group of witches.

Elara Pack-A bonded group of shifters. They are usually called beasts.

Scarlet Den-A bonded group of vampires. Have the ability to hide within the shadows.

Sigil-A magical crescent moon birthmark that everyone is born with. It is located on the chest. At the age of ten, these sigils will glow with their status within the factions.

Alpha Sigil-Glowes red

Beta Sigil-Glowes purple

Omega Sigil-Glowes blue

Ascending Ceremony-A ceremony at ten years old where the glow of your status is revealed

PROLOGUE

Chaos. That's what had befallen our community. Overrun by those with power, they manipulated the weak, coercing many into doomed mate bonds. Males outnumbered the females three to one and were each all too willing to destroy one another. The prize? Unclaimed females. Destruction and poverty held us in peril. They sacrificed children. The community was in ruins. During the bonding ceremonies, the factions killed betas and omegas to satisfy their quest for power.

Members of each faction eventually came together, hoping to find peace. A council was formed from The Elara Pack, The Raven Coven, and The Scarlet Den to keep any one faction from gaining too much power. We are now referred to by our descended faction: Raven, Scarlet, or Elara.

The Council created a boarding school named Blood Moon Academy. This is where the youth of the three factions learn their craft and establish new bonds. The Council warns against crossbreeding. They say we could become feral—combining our different powers will make us too powerful for our bond to handle. Some believe it's just The Council's way of controlling the power. It's even rumored they covertly create cross-bonds.

We are all born with a crescent moon birthmark. At ten years old, the crescent sigil glows to reveal our status. A predetermined bond status that dictates your life and your future. When the glow is established and our bloodlust, magic, or beast form is revealed—each faction will inherit their ancestor's power. Some of the community will keep their children's status hidden in fear of becoming targets of The Council.

Even a hundred years after The Council was formed, Blood Moon Academy is still thriving. However, some still use the bonding ceremony to gain power. Soon this indiscretion will come to light, and The Council will need to maintain the peace again and stop history from repeating itself.

Chapter One



THE CAT WHISTLES AND threats are daily in Blood Moon Prison, but I'm used to it by now. The hex on my hand is still as prominent as ever. Is today the day it will win control of my mind and finally make me submit to its demands, with its whispers getting stronger every day? Their call for my blood is getting louder, and the voices are like nails on a chalkboard, taunting me every second of the day.

“Move,” Thomas the guard grumbles, pushing me between the shoulder blades and urging me further down the hallway.

I throw my head back and cackle, giving them a good view of my pointers. Gerald and Thomas have the pleasure of dealing with my sass today. I immensely enjoy taunting them as they escort me to D Block, where breakfast usually consists of stale bread and some lumpy, brown, unknown substance they attempt to pass off as oatmeal.

Barf.

Today is no different. I can smell the bitter notes of the disgusting gruel as soon as we enter. As always, all eyes swing my way. Plastering on my signature grin, I hold my head high and skip my ass over to the line for my tray of rations.

“Morning, Nessa!” I chirp at the lady who always serves us. The inmates have always described the witch as monstrous, giving her a wide birth. She’s just misunderstood.

Nessa never replies to my greetings and refuses to give me her name, so I’ve dubbed her a cute nickname after the lockness monster, Nessa. Cute, right? I know. I’m a genius with nicknames. Nessa grunts in reply, as she always does, never really a morning person. I made friends with her when I arrived here two months ago. Don’t bite the hand that feeds you and all that jazz. The voices in my head urged me to do just that.

‘Blood, feed, devour.’ The chant in my head is like background noise.

“Shut it, Hexa,” I whisper, making everyone in line take a giant step back. They’re all afraid of Hexa’s *cooties*. I laugh at their reaction and wave my fingers dramatically at the shifter

behind me, who gives me a dull look, clearly unimpressed with my early morning banter.

“What was that? Oh, *devour* everyone and absorb their *power*?” I murmur.

“Hey, psycho girl,” a husky voice greets me.

I turn to face the culprit, who sucks at giving out nicknames. I finally understand why Damian hates the *P* word so much.

The Beta, Nick, gives me what I can only describe as a hungry look, making my lips twist into a grimace. It’s like the inmates get bored and want some excitement. Hey, the crazy girl looks like fun. Let’s bother her. I obnoxiously yawn as I give the guy a bored look. I’m over the wham-bam-thank-you-ma’am fucks I’ve been getting lately. I need some spice, some *pizzazz* if you will. This beta is not it. He has been trying to garner my affection since I got here. Honestly, he’s just a little too desperate.

Hexa grows louder, making my head spin with her incessant demands. I attempt not to wince at the invasion. I can’t show weakness. I smile at the shifter, running my fingers along his chest with a groan.

“The voices tell me your blood is sweet, big boy. I wonder if that’s true,” I tease, my eyes flashing red with bloodlust as my fangs brush against my bottom lip.

As I watch the side of his neck pulse with each delicious heartbeat, I can feel saliva pooling in my mouth.

“Just a small taste. I promise you’ll enjoy it,” I purr.

Before giving him a chance to respond, I launch myself at the shifter and latch my teeth into his neck. The skin gives way like a knife in warm butter, filling my mouth with cherry and a hint of something bitter. I suck in a greedy mouthful as my thighs squeeze around his middle.

I drop like a dead fly to the floor. My body seizes. Not my finest moment, but also not the first time I'd sampled the goods of my fellow inmates and been tased because of it. My body shakes and convulses as the taser does its job of subduing the bloodlust. The currents stop, and I'm left breathless in a heap on the floor. I throw my head back and laugh. The jolts have silenced the voices for now, and the silence is such a relief that I can't help but rub my hands down my body.

A strong hand grips one of my pigtails and yanks me roughly to the side.

"How many times have I told you, T, you can't eat my staff, and you—"

"You can't eat the inmates," I cut him off, finishing the same sentence he tells me every time I step out of line and taste anyone.

It's so unfair. I pout as I look at the upside-down Thomas, the bite of pain on my scalp is a delicious sensation. The hand in my hair yanks me harder, bringing me back out of my head to focus on a pair of sapphire eyes. I pucker my lips at him, my lower lip sticking out as I give him my puppy dog eyes. His hand loosens slightly as he watches me, his thick black

brows furrowing together at my display as he slowly lets me go.

“Seriously, Thomas? That’s it? A warning?” Gerald questions.

I smile over at Gerald, who is glaring at me with equal amounts of hatred and lust. A cool rush blows over the back of my neck, sending a shiver down my spine.

“You got a little something,” a deep voice grumbles. The voice is molasses and dripping like honey. I shiver again. Damn, he is sexy. I could cum just from his voice alone. His face is hard and chiseled like alabaster, his eyes lacking emotion as he stares blankly at me. “Your snack left behind some crumbs.”

His thick fingers run against his full lips. My tongue slithers out and licks, wishing it was my lips his finger was touching. How would those fingers feel elsewhere? I shiver at the thought.

“Mmm, want a taste?” I purr, wiping the corner of my mouth with my thumb and sucking it between my lips, hoping to get some reaction from him. I frown. Usually, I get a lusty look, or at the very least, disgust. The Greek God gives me nothing.

“Elijah, back away from her now,” Gerald commands. *Elijah?* I’ve heard of him. He is the Coven’s Alpha; the rumor is he and the Pack Alpha are together. Not that I’ve seen what happens behind closed doors. What I wouldn’t give to be a fly

on the wall during one of their play times. My mouth waters at the thought before I turn to Gerald in irritation.

“Seriously, Gerald? I wasn’t going to do anything he wouldn’t have liked.” I pout. Gerald always gets in the way of my fun, especially when things get interesting.

“Careful, love. I could use a new distraction,” Elijah says. Coming up behind me and flicking my ponytail.

“Oh? Goodie, just what every girl likes to hear, that she is just a distraction. But I’m curious, Elijah. What would I be distracting you from?” Hmm, trouble in paradise?

Elijah’s honey eyes bore into mine as I place a hand on his chest. I can smell his scent, thickening with arousal. I affect him. My eyes glance down at his lean frame, where his cock is currently straining against his jeans.

“Enough!” the warden barks, constantly popping in to ruin my fun.

Gerald and Thomas bow their heads in response to the alpha bark. I can’t help but laugh, the sound echoing off the walls in the room. The Greek God grunts beside me, making me flick my attention back to his honey eyes. Interestingly, the warden’s bark didn’t control him either.

“Are you going to eat him too?” Elijah stage-whispers. I can imagine him whispering dirty things in my ear. I shake my head, trying to clear it of my dirty thoughts.

“I would prefer if you were the one eating *me* instead,” the words slip out. Oops, sorry, not sorry. What can I say? I like to

flirt. Also, I may have thrown in an extra wink for good measure—my mind still fantasizing about being between the man-wich of Alphas.

“Oh *darling*, you don’t know what you’re asking for,” he warns, his honey eyes ensnaring me in their gaze. *Fuck me*, everything about this man is dripping with honey. From his voice to the color of his eyes. Honey. Fitting.

“Oh *honey*, please.” I pause, running my fingers down the side of my neck, drawing his focus to the movements. “I love a challenge.”

“She begs. I’ll remember that.” His voice could make me beg for just about anything. His lip doesn’t twitch into a semblance of a smile. I sigh in disappointment.

“Talia, come here, now!” the warden barks, his beady eyes zeroing in on me. I could refuse him, but I know it’s a bad idea. I roll my eyes, wishing I didn’t have to approach him because being within sniffing distance of this alpha vampire is not on today’s to-do list. I get my ass up and off the floor, straightening my uniform as I skip toward the warden.

“What is the meaning of this?” he asks me, his face reddening with rage. I place a hand on his chest, scratching my hand against the collar of his shirt. The pendant he always wears catches my eye. The warden leans into my touch, completely enchanted by me.

“I was hungry, and now I’m not.” I shrug, leaning in closer to him. Stretching up on my tiptoes to reach his ear. I whisper, “That bark is so sexy, Alpha.” I lick a trail up the side of his

face. His salty taste ruins Nick's blood's cherry flavor, which is disappointing. Finally, the warden snaps out of it and shoves me off of him. I cackle, throwing my head back.

"Sir, you're needed on B Block. A fight between the vampires has broken out and is worsening." Thomas says, coming up on my left side. I lean towards the guard and place my hand on his biceps.

"Will you protect me?" I say in a small voice, teasing him.

The bastard can't help but stand taller under my gaze, wanting to protect me. It's in his beta nature. The warden only employs betas. Some sick power play to make sure he is the top dog, I'm sure. A mistake on his part because the alpha inmates can easily manipulate his staff, but he's too self-absorbed to realize it.

The warden takes a radio and brings it to his mouth, "All available guards report to B Block before the fight becomes a bloodbath!"

I study the warden's peppered hair, and a smile forms on my lips. The stress of this job—running the Blood Moon rejects—makes him age faster. He points the finger at me in a silent warning to watch myself before turning and exiting through the door he came in from, taking about half of the guards with him. I turn back around, fully prepared to continue seducing the deliciously tortured soul called Elijah. He's close to breaking, but to my irritation, he's nowhere to be seen.

"Damn," I grumble to myself. I lost him. "Well," I perk back up, never letting my crown fall. "I will find him, and I

can't wait to see what he tastes like." The thought sends a shiver down my spine.

Turning back to the empty line, I attempt to get my grub on again. My lip lifts slightly, transforming my smile into a sneer at the sight of the cold gruel on my plate. I sigh, taking it and heading to the far corner to eat alone. The dirty looks I get from the other female inmates and the lusting ones from the males follow me as I sit down. I can feel all of them watching me, the weight of their stares like a straightjacket, confining and suffocating. I would know my therapist placed me in one during my first meeting with him. Not that I blame him. I'm unpredictable, and I have sampled delicious blood occasionally.

I scan the rows of tables full of my fellow inmates, eating and talking in small groups. The vampires in the center are all together, while the witches sit closest to the door like they are ready to bolt at a moment's notice. The shifters sit closest to me and are the furthest from the door—like they don't fear anyone. Maybe it's because they are the largest group out of all the factions and can beat anyone on sheer numbers alone. But I think it's because their leader is infatuated with me and likes to have me when he can monitor me. My gaze stops on his enormous, ink-covered frame. He sits at the head of the table, facing my little corner. I still haven't learned his name, as the guards call him by his shifter form, saber, while his wanna-be Pack of followers calls him by his title, Alpha. When I look at his green eyes, he is already watching me. There is something about the shifter that sends a thrill down

my spine. I've climbed his sexy ass like a tree several times, but still, I crave him.

My body has a mind of its own, and I want to go to him. I have to grip the edge of the table to stop myself from walking over there and dropping to the floor before him. He drives my already shattered mind crazy with need. But I'm not the only one.

Currently, he has two beta females on their knees before him, worshiping the floor he walks on. One is bowing low, her eyes never leaving his shoes, her black hair a curtain surrounding her face. While the other rests her head on her Alpha's lap so he can stroke his thick fingers through her shoulder-length brown hair—an ugly, mousy color. I grit my teeth in irritation. I hate when I see him showing affection to the other females. My mind wanders back to Elijah, and I wonder why he allows it because, fuck that, if the Pack Alpha was *mine*... I wouldn't share.

No matter how much my body demands we claim him, I refuse to succumb to and bow before him as they do. I'm an Alpha, damn it, the only alpha female in prison, and I bow before no one. I watch as he leans down and murmurs something in mousy's ear, making her shudder. I already know what he is doing. The same thing he does every day; eats his breakfast, then has one of his many followers please him right here in the middle of D block. The guards always turn a blind eye to the Alpha's morning routine, too afraid to stop him.

I remember the first time I saw some beta slut drop to her knees for him and suck his cock. I was in shock at first, but holy fuck was I also turned on. His gorgeous green eyes flashed orange with his beast as he kept his eyes on me while he climaxed. Every day since then, it's been the same routine with a different bimbo who wants his attention. I mean, I get it. The shifter is gorgeous, and having the most powerful Alpha's attention guarantees no one will fuck with you.

I watch the show before me. He wraps his fingers tightly into her hair, forcing her down harder until her body locks up at the invasion at the back of her throat. I can't help but groan at his power over her, getting off on and watching him dominate her.

I shuffle my legs back and forth, trying to stem off some of the ache between my thighs that no doubt the whole of D block can smell. But I don't give a fuck. I can't look away as he finishes inside her mouth. He's close, I can tell. His jaw clenching as his nostrils flair. He forces mousy down on him with a large palm on the back of her head, finishing deep inside her throat and forcing her to swallow him.

My core throbs with his release, begging to be filled with his cum and dominance. Before I can give in to the urge and beg him to use me next, I'm up and out of my chair and bolting toward the exit. The urge to turn back and look at him one last time is strong, but I push through.

Chapter Two



I 'VE NEVER KNOWN THE definition of peace. That deep-rooted feeling of calm and serenity. Instead, all I've known is pain, destruction, and chaos. All I've ever been is a pawn in this war for power. A tool to harness, to wield as a weapon. I'm death personified.

I live within the shadows of the worlds I create, the pain and suffering of my fellow inmates giving me power. The pendant holds a piece of my soul, bonding me to this plane no matter how much I wish I could escape it. I know that as long as the pendant's magic is fueled, I'll be stuck in limbo, in purgatory.

The only times I have a semblance of freedom is when my magic is at its strongest. I can temporarily ignore the pull to obey the wearer's commands, but usually, doing so has its consequences. The warden will house me in the basement if I don't comply with his requests. So, even when I can deny his call, I don't.

The basement reminds me of the one person I have loved and lost—who died because of me. It reminds me of the times my tormentors would experiment on me, watch me heal from any wound they inflicted. It became a game to them, a way to expel their inner demons at my expense. The three Alphas who brought me into this world are the ones who have damaged me the most.

Until now, I had cut off all my emotions and absorbed the fear and despair of those around me—feeding my dark nature and even darker soul. The darkness is a part of my very being. The shadows that linger around me are a reminder of all the carnage I've caused over the years. I am nothing more than inmate zero-zero-zero-one—the first prisoner of The Council.

I accepted my fate many years ago. Time passed me by, and as I reached the peak of maturity, my body stopped aging, leaving me stuck in the body of a twenty-one-year-old. I can't say why my physical being is at a standstill, but if I were to guess, the pendant is responsible. Whatever black magic binds me to it, it stops me from aging. The day I realized I was stuck as this deformed being I wanted it all to end, but even then, I wasn't granted that small mercy. I have tried and failed to leave this world more than once. I'm not ashamed to admit it,

but I wish one attempt would have worked. But now, I'm experiencing a new emotion I've never felt before.

Hope.

Talia is an anomaly. I've been watching her from the shadows since she arrived here. Her darkness calls to mine. In all my existence, I've never felt this pull towards another. I want to taste her and consume the power she harnesses. I'm intrigued by her, her emotions, and the enigma that is the Alpha vampire. She is stronger than she appears and hides her true power as she fights the curse that brought her here. Soon I'll approach her.

"Let's go," Thomas barks from the doorway to my cell. Rolling over, I watch the beta shift back and forth on his feet. He is ready to bolt at a moment's notice. I smile under my mask, glad he can't see my amusement. Slowly, I get up off my cot and step toward the guards. There are six of them, led by Thomas and Gerald. Overkill, if you ask me. The last time I killed a guard, they sentenced me to a month of solitary in the basement. If none of them touch me, I'll leave them be.

The air is potent with the stench of fear; a layer of black smoke rests around us. The men around me gasp as I lift my mask. I absorb the familiar dark magic, savoring the taste. I can't help but snack on the emotion. Once I've had my fill, I lean against the hallway wall. As always, I do not know where my entourage will take me today. It could be to see Roger, the prison therapist, or D Block for breakfast. Or to the warden's office? He may have someone in need of punishment only I

can divvy out. I refuse to speak to these imbeciles and patiently wait for them to get their shit together and tell me where to go.

“The warden requests your presence in D block today.” Gerald finally says.

I tilt my head in acknowledgment before taking off toward the first floor, where the inmates are packed together like sardines. The prison has four floors plus a basement, and the warden decided it would be beneficial to house all of them on the same floor, including dining.

With all of them on top of each other, there are bound to be issues, but the warden thrives on the chaos between factions.

Before I can reach the elevator, the calming scent of lavender invades my nose, Talia. My body reacts to the tantalizing scent in a way I’ve never experienced before. My cock hardens, straining against my uniform.

My eyes land on the closed door to my right. Is she in there? The smells wafting out from under the door are those of lust and blood. Who did she feed on? Jealousy rears its ugly head at whoever has her attention. She’s mine.

“Keep it moving,” Gerald demands.

I growl but storm down the hall to the elevator before I do something I’ll regret.

All eyes stop and stare as I enter the cafeteria. I wish I could remain unaffected by the wide berth everyone gives me. My years of solitude are a direct effect of the position I serve at

this prison, being used by the warden to display the power he holds. Everyone in the prison acts as if I am the plague, and maybe they're right. I'd be lying if I said I didn't wish for someone to talk to. The life I live has been long and lonely, it wouldn't be so hard if I didn't have to live it alone.

The vampires all gather on the far end of the room, separating themselves from the other two factions. I wonder when they will lose themselves in the bloodlust I can feel hanging in the air. It would only take one small instance of a lack of control for them all to snap. The warden must want that to happen since he forces them all to endure facing the other factions every day. He puts on a front about wanting the inmates to all get along, but I know better. The man is evil and corrupt, looking for the next source of power. If the inmates misbehave, then he has reason to punish them—to use me. It's why I'm here today, front and center, being displayed as a power move, a warning: step out of line and reap the consequences.

I don't bother getting a tray of food today, simply sit at the closest table, the one right across from Elijah and his Coven. His eyes shift my way like he can't help but keep his eye on the biggest threat in the room. I don't blame him, not really. We have had a few run-ins, him and me. I know why he is here, and a part of me hopes he succeeds. Then, maybe, I'll be free.

Chapter Three



“I ‘M HERE!” I ANNOUNCE with a bow as I enter the classroom. The teacher, Ms. Clare, is already in full lecture mode. All heads swivel as I sit on the windowsill at the back of the classroom so I can look out over the courtyard I’m not allowed to go to. I sigh dreamily at the sun, wanting to feel the fresh breeze rustling my hair as warm rays coat my skin. It’s been ninety-two days since I’ve set foot outside this prison. Everyone else gets to go outside and enjoy the day, but not me. I’m a flight risk.

They can't afford to lose control over me since I can't be alpha barked. I smirk at the memory of the last time I was free from my cage. A guard chased me around the yard my first day here because I refused to go back inside this hell hole when daylight was still burning. I thought they were enjoying my game of cat and mouse, a beta finally getting to chase after an alpha, but they didn't enjoy the game as much as I did. So, when I attend Blood Moon Prison's version of a classroom, I always sit here and reminisce about what it feels like to be free.

"Talia, how many times do I have to tell you to take a seat at an actual desk?" Ms. Clair's voice breaks through my daydream, irritating me. I can't have one second without one of the staff demanding something of me. Usually, I comply with her demands, but not today, Satan.

I turn slowly to look at our want-to-be teacher; she is pretty for her age, her long gray hair tied into a bun at the base of her head, a few tendrils loose around her smooth skin, no doubt from the enchantment spells she uses. As a witch, she can make herself appear younger, the lucky bitch. Ms. Clair raises her eyebrows at me, waiting for 'little old me' to comply with her demands, but I smirk and lean back against the window, the cool glass soothing my heated skin.

"Now, Talia," she demands again. I cackle in response—making her waver slightly.

"Nope," I respond, popping the P with a wide grin. "I think I quite like this spot," I say, my smile dropping off my face.

Ms. Clair swallows as she opens her mouth, preparing to say something further when the door opens, revealing a face I was hoping to avoid after this morning's relapse. Nick, the shifter from the breakfast line. He stands in the doorway, his large shoulders almost touching the frame on both sides.

The class turns to watch him enter. He stops by the closest desk to me and gives the occupant a feral look—the Beta whimpers as he quickly gathers his belongings and scampers off to a different seat.

“Hello, psycho girl.”

Something about this guy makes my skin crawl, not in a fun way, but in a way that makes me feel threatened. I don't respond well to feeling threatened. This guy better be careful. There aren't any guards here to stop me from ripping his throat out. A growl rumbles low in my chest as he stares me down.

Biting him was a huge mistake. They say a vampire bite can heighten attraction. Fuck, I made myself his brand of heroin, didn't I? I groan, slamming my head back against the window as Ms. Clair continues with her lecture as if nothing out of the ordinary has happened today; brilliant witch, that one.

“So, you're going to ignore me after biting me?” he teases, trying to get my attention back on him.

I refuse to acknowledge he is speaking to me. Out of sight, out of mind, right? Maybe if I don't look at him, he will go away.

But he doesn't give up, he's like a fly that won't stop buzzing—a hand lands on my knee, making my whole body tense under his touch. The voices grow louder.

'Finish. Devour.'

I grit my teeth, fighting the urge to do just that. It would be so easy to drain him and get rid of my new little stalker. But alas, killing inside a classroom is frowned upon.

"Back for round two?" I ask as I lazily lean back in the chair to get more comfortable.

"You little—"

"Bitch? Yea, I've heard that one before, buddy." Looking down at my nails, I continue. "I don't do well with rules," I say, looking back at him. "Plus, admit it, you enjoyed being my blood bag." If steam could come from his ears right now.

"Nick." a powerful voice says in warning. At the doorway, the shifter alpha stands glaring at his subordinate. Fuck me, please.

"Seriously, Dax? You're just going to let this... vermin bite one of us and not do anything about it?" My breakfast, I mean Nick, questions. Vermin?

"You're a horrible nick-name giver and your name is Nick." I snort out a laugh at my lame joke, trying not to freak out that I now know the Pack Alpha's name. This entire time I've gone not knowing his name but now that I do, I can't help but have my infatuation with him grow.

"Bitch!" Nick yells as he launches himself at me.

My instincts kick in as my fist connects with the meaty center of his throat, causing him to wheeze as he attempts to catch his breath. Pulling my foot up between his towering frame and myself, I kick out at his chest, forcing his large ass back. The larger they are, the harder they fall.

My stomach flutters with nerves as the scent of the ocean breeze has my mouth water. Every part of my body is aware of his presence. The Pack Alpha has been on my to-do list for months. My secret fuck buddy. We don't talk; we fuck. That's how I like it. So why the hell is he defending me now?

"I'll give you one last chance. Remove your hand, or I'll remove it for you." Dax's voice is low and deadly. The surrounding students can hear his threat, but none step in.

This possessive side of Dax shouldn't turn me on, but I can't help it. I've never been one to have good self-control. Add his addictive scent, and I'm almost panting and desperate for him. My scent is probably giving me away. I can do nothing about it.

Nick's large body suddenly crashes into the wall at the front of the classroom. Students yell out in surprise. Nick isn't a tiny shifter by any means, and the distance from one end of the room to the other is massive. At Dax's display of strength, I can't help but finally look at the Alpha who defended me.

Every pair of eyes in the classroom are watching us. He made me an even bigger target by protecting me and making me appear weak. Before I know it, I'm up and in his space, pushing a finger into his chest.

Fuck, he is gorgeous, and I want to lick him all over. No, Talia, stop it. You don't want the shifter, *bad girl*.

“What do you think you're doing?” I demand, my head tilting back to look into his mesmerizing yellow eyes, fueled by his beast. He's so fucking tall that I should take a step back so I can see him fully, but I don't want him thinking I'm backing down. Dax's strong jawline is ridged with his anger. His thick blond beard hides most of his face, leaving only his high cheekbones and vibrant eyes visible. But it's those eyes that captivate. The intensity behind that stare sends a shiver down my spine. His hardened face softens slightly when his gaze lands on me, showing a hint of dimples beneath his beard. My breath hitches.

Why does my pussy have to get in the way of everything?

Dax inhales my scent and licks his lips, exposing the sharp canines of his sabertooth. This alpha is confusing me, damn it. One second, he's getting blown by a beta slut, and the next, he is teasing me with sexy dimples after defending me. I cross my arms over my chest, putting a barrier between us. Dax's eyes follow the movement.

“Na ah, buddy. My eyes are up here.” I growl at him.

“Don't pretend you don't enjoy having my attention, kitten,” his deep voice almost purrs.

I scoff and roll my eyes. “You're a dick to be used and discarded, Dax,” I emphasize his name, looking down at my nails. The horny bitch inside me disagrees and never truly cared to ask for his name, but now that I know it, I can't help

but tease him. “Plus, what would Elijah think about our little rendezvous turning into you being a dominating Alpha-hole?” I finally look back up at his handsome face, keeping all the emotion drained from mine. I don’t want him always having the upper hand.

Dax opens his mouth to speak but hesitates. Clenching his jaw tightly closed, his growl bubbling up in his chest. “You don’t know shit about Elijah,” he spits, his eyes flashing yellow again. The threat in his tone would scare a lesser female, but it sends a thrill of excitement through me and I’m curious to learn more about both Alphas.

“Huh, maybe not, Dax, but you don’t own me. Next time you get the urge to defend me...” I grip his shirt in my fist and lift onto my tiptoes to reach his ear, “don’t,” I hiss.

The bell rings, signaling the end of class. Dax’s eyes snap back up to my face. His signature mask back in place. He reaches out and flicks one of my pigtails before stalking out of the classroom. I’m sad to see him go; with him around, I forgot all about Hexa. I lick my parched lips as I watch him turn the corner and out of sight.

Chapter Four



My heart thrums in my chest from the entire exchange between my kitten and me. I know I shouldn't have defended her as I did, but I couldn't control my beast. He demanded we put Nick in his place in the cafeteria; I could barely resist the urge to march across D Block and force him to submit. Even using one of my Betas for release didn't soothe the urge. We want her. Crave her. Not some random slut looking for protection.

Not only did Nick put me on edge, but seeing Elijah and my kitten flirting made my blood boil. I won't allow her to take

him from me. He is mine. She may be the object of my desires, but Elijah is my heart. He is my soul—my reason for being in Blood Moon Prison.

My muscles were tightly coiled and ready to strike, so on edge that anything could have sent me over. When I saw Nick touching her in class, my beast lost it. I shouldn't have stood up for her like that, but I couldn't help myself. She gets under my skin like no female ever has. I was content for her not to know my name, it helped me keep a distance between us. But Nick shouldn't have been touching her, period. I've warned the guy to leave her alone already, and his obsession with her is becoming a real problem.

“What the fuck is wrong with you?” my second-in-command demands. I grit my teeth at his tone. The other shifters can't hear him speak to me like that. I'll be seen as weak, and I can't have that. Within a blink, my hand grips his throat.

“Watch it, Seth. You have a problem with how I run things, fine. But make no mistake, you challenge me with an audience again, you die.”

People are challenging me a lot lately; they seem to have forgotten why they once feared me, why I'm Alpha to all shifters in Blood Moon Prison. Seth's wheezing has me loosening my grip on his neck. He crumbles to the floor. I should feel bad for his current state, but I can't find it in myself to care. He looks pathetic as he coughs; I leave without waiting for him to recover.

My beast is pushing to be let out. I need to shift. The fight, the hunt, it's what I'm itching for the most. I need to sink my teeth into flesh and satisfy my craving for blood. I exit the building, walking right past the guard stationed outside the prison walls without a second thought.

“Alpha, I missed you,” a whiny voice purrs as I'm coated in a thick layer of floral pheromones. My stomach clenches with nausea, wishing to expel every other scent but one, Talia's. I don't engage in the fan club around me—desperate, needy bitches who will bow down and suck my cock without question. I'm bored easily. I want a challenge, and the redheaded spitfire is what I want. Elijah's honey eyes filter through my mind. The thought of having them both simultaneously becomes my top fixation. One fantasy I refuse ever to indulge in, less she tries to take Elijah from me. I won't allow it. I have to keep them separate and remain in control.

“Bring him to me,” I call out, dismissing the whiny voice and forgetting about anything but my control over the Pack. They throw Nick down on the floor before me. My lip curls as the sour notes of his fear waft off of him.

“Alpha, please, I don't know what I was thinking. I won't do it again, I swear! The vampire...” I kick him in the gut with my full strength, his bulky frame flying up before quickly crashing to the dirt. Nick rolls onto his back, gripping his stomach for a moment before turning and emptying the contents of his breakfast into the dirt. Nick looks up from his hands and knees. Dirt, snot, and strings of saliva coat his face. Pathetic.

“I swear, Alpha. She’s yours. I won’t touch her again.” His eyes leave mine as he arches his neck to me, exposing his throat to me in submission. The sense of control I was craving hums through me, soothing my beast. The feeling is short-lived as I hear a throaty cackle that sends blood straight to my cock. Talia.

Slowly, I turn and face the little spitfire. She leans up on her tiptoes and kisses the guard sloppily on the cheek with one of her pigtails in her hand, twirling the red strands between her fingertips. The guard slaps her ass, making her laugh. Rage consumes me. No one will touch her like that.

“Bad boy,” Talia teases him, skipping towards me. The Pack steps between us. I can’t help but watch her tits bounce with each step or how her tiny form makes me want to stick her in my pocket to save for later.

Seth growls, stepping up to her before I can stop him. “This is shifter business vamp, leave!”

Talia stops to study him, her mouth chewing slowly on pink bubble gum. Fuck, her lips are red and full and so fucking bite-able. I fight the urge to sink my teeth into them, claim them. My claws appear with a partial shift as I dig my nails into the heels of my fists. I won’t stop until I feel them break the skin, coating my fingers in warm blood.

“Talia,” I say her name through gritted teeth. This is the first time I’ve ever spoken her name out loud. Her green eyes flash to mine and an amused look crosses her face.

“Dax,” she taunts back. My name on her lips has me storming past the Pack and into her space. She’s so tiny, barely coming up to my chest. Grabbing her by the arm, I pull her behind a large, round oak tree. The thought of that guy’s hands on what’s mine is making me impulsive. It’s taking every ounce of my control not to allow my beast to stake my claim. I want to mark what’s mine. Right here, right now.

“You let another male slap your ass in my presence again,” I lean into her and whisper, “and I’ll remove his hand.”

“Promise?”

I raise my eyebrows in surprise as I attempt to gauge her seriousness. Her pouty lips tilt up into a smile. My cock strains against my jeans at her single word. Fuck. She likes it when I dominate her? Taking a step closer, I tower over her. I can’t help but smirk when she takes a minuscule step backward.

“Yes, kitten. I vow it.” I growl to prove my point.

“Careful, Dax, your fan club might get jealous if they hear you keep defending *little old me*. What would Elijah think?” Why does she keep bringing him up?

The question throws me off my game and has me hesitating to respond. I watch her slowly lick her lips, the movement reminding me of what that sexy mouth can do. My gaze flashes back up to her eyes. The feral look I see there is mesmerizing. FUCK. Her breasts rise slowly as she fills her lungs with my scent. In an instant, her tight little body wraps around me in a vise grip as she sinks her teeth into my neck. I groan at how good it feels. I spin us and lean against the tree.

Needing to feel more of her, I grip her hips roughly and grind her on my rock-hard cock.

Talia pulls back, a feral look in her red eyes, fueled with bloodlust. My blood drips down her pale skin, the contrast making her appear unhinged and fucking delectable. I want her now. I refuse to wait a moment longer. My claws grip her ass, ripping the fabric of her red shorts and pulling them from her body. Immediately, my beast goes rabid with possessiveness. He doesn't want anyone to see her.

"Leave," I bark, loud enough for everyone to hear me. I give the guard stationed at the door a look, daring him to defy me.

Talia's growl vibrates against my chest, making me answer with one of my own. Fucking finally, I get to have her after all the teasing I've dealt with today. I kiss her along her collarbone, tasting copper, but I don't care. I want her. Talia's growl turns into moans as she grinds her hips into me.

"No, stop. Dax, stop," she demands, pushing away from me and jumping back to her feet. She's never turned me down before, and my beast doesn't like it.

Fur breaks through the skin along my arms as I attempt to control myself. Nobody claimed me to be in control of my beast, and right now, he is in control and demands we take her. Her mind does not want us, but her body does. I growl through clenched teeth as I attempt to stop myself from claiming her. Talia laughs, the sound making my cock jump.

“You think your beast can force me, Dax? Is that it?” she asks, clapping her hands. “I love a good game as much as the next girl.” She leans into me, her red eyes flashing brighter with her excitement. I can smell her slick dripping down her naked thighs as she stands before me, half-naked. “Tell me, do you enjoy choking?”

She runs her hands up and down my arm, tickling the fur, and making me shudder. I can't focus on the question she's asking me. I want her too much.

Crack!

The sound echoes around us before I feel the sting against my cheek, snapping me out of my lust-fueled rage. Slowly, I raise a hand to my cheek in surprise. The little minx slapped me. No one has ever challenged me before, besides Elijah. I stare her down, my nostrils flaring as my beast slowly gives me back control—my throat being squeezed by her strong fingers has my cock swelling painfully with need. Talia raises an eyebrow at me, a smirk on her lips.

“You like it rough, Dax? Need a pussy cat who dominates you instead of the meek little mice you like to feed scraps to?”

Talia's hands rub slowly down her body. I drink in the seductive movements before my eyes zero in on her naked pussy. I can see her thighs glistening with her sweet nectar. Licking my lips, I scoop her up and lay her in the dirt. Pushing her thighs as far as they will stretch, I buried my face between her folds, licking my tongue deep inside her pussy and tasting her honey. I moan, biting and sucking her clit. She makes me

feral with my need for her. Her cries of pleasure fill the air, along with the smacking of my lips as I coat my entire face and beard in her slick. My pace is punishing as I lick her tight little clit, pushing two fingers into her opening.

Her hand slinks into my hair, her thighs squeezing my head in a vise grip, suffocating me, but it's not enough. I want more. I snake my hands under her ass and roll us. Talia lets out a squeak of surprise at the sudden change of positions. Her knees on either side of my head trap me between her pussy and the ground. She attempts to get up, but I stop her, my fingers digging into the globes of her ass, my claws breaking the skin and her blood coats my fingertips. Talia gasps at the pain, but I don't care.

"Fucking ride my face, kitten. I want to be so consumed by your scent and your juices. Choke me with it," I demand as I pull her cunt back to my mouth and bite her clit, hard. Talia cries out and grinds herself on my face, demanding more pleasure from me. My nose rubs against her clit as I thrust my tongue into her tight, hot pussy. Her moans send a shiver down my body. Her movements are jerking and sluggish as she screams out her pleasure, her back arches as her long pigtails tickle my thighs with the force of her orgasm.

Talia collapses on me, drowning me with her cum and flooding me with a sweet and tangy flavor. I immediately want more. I growl in protest when she gets off of me. Her body is trembling with the aftershock of her release, and her blood drips down her ass and thighs, adding to how fucking hot she

is. The smile on her face makes my breath hitch as I sit up on my elbows.

“Thanks, Dax,” she says, before turning and heading back inside.

“Hey!” I growl when she doesn’t stop. I’m not done with her yet. I need to feel that pussy spasm around my cock.

Talia cackles but never looks back, making her even sexier. She knows what she does to me and loves using it as ammo. I can’t help but smirk at the thought of everyone seeing her bare ass with my claw marks etched into her skin.

My kitten left me hard and frustrated. Next time I get the chance, I’ll punish her for walking away before I am done.

I quickly shed my clothes and set them in a pile. My body completes the change quickly, just as eager as I am to feel the dirt on our paws and the wind in our fur. My beast pushes me back, taking control of our run. The tension coiled inside us dissolves almost immediately. I stretch my toes, claws digging into the dirt, and take off at a trot through the trees surrounding the prison.

Blood Moon Academy isn’t as far from us as they would like the students to believe. Nor are we truly underground, either. Yes, we have some levels that extend deep down into the earth, but really—we are an extension of the Academy itself, instead of the home of the witches, shifters, and vampires. We’re the misfits—the ones who are too savage to walk free within society. I stop on the edge of the forest, just

before the student parking lot, plagued by the memory of seeing my kitten for the first time.

I could smell a large group of students gathered, their scents all mingling together and overpowering my sensitive nose. A metallic scent lingered in the air. Blood. My body lowered to the ground as I stalked closer to the line of trees. The parking lot was full of students loitering around a massacre of bodies, limbs, and blood.

My gaze fell upon the group of enforcers attempting to subdue the culprit. The girl was tiny, with pale skin and long, lush red hair. She kicked out at one guard with a growl in warning and bared her teeth at the rest. She was so focused on the threat in front of her she didn't notice the needle until it was too late. Her body locked as the drugs hit her nervous system, dropping to the ground in a heap. There was an overpowering urge to go to her, to protect her, but I had to force myself to take a step back.

I can't get involved in matters of The Council. *Yet.*

Without a backward glance, I took off back towards Blood Moon Prison, a fire in my belly after seeing the alpha vampire. I wanted her. No, I needed her. I hoped she didn't ruin everything I'd gained.

Curiosity killed the cat.

Talia has become my obsession. In the end, she will be mine. I'm a selfish bastard and demand both my obsessions to be mine and mine alone. I quickly get dressed and head inside in search of Elijah. We need to talk and come to an

understanding. I don't share. Not him, and not her either. He needs to understand his place. Even if he doesn't like it.



“Elijah,” I say as I lean in the doorway of his bunker. He’s currently hunched over his desk, making potions. Little purple, blue, and green vials line the shelf in front of him. I furrow my brows as I study them, curious about what they are for and why he has made so many. Before I get the chance to ask, Elijah turns his honey gaze on me.

His face is clean-shaven and shows off his chiseled jawline. His eyes are hidden slightly behind thick lashes that brush his cheeks with each slow blink he gives me. His full lips sit in a firm line across his face, not showing a hint of any emotion. My chest aches with the memories of the last time I saw him truly smile. I swallow thickly, rubbing the back of my neck, the fight leaving my body. Elijah has always soothed my beast with his mere presence alone.

“What do you need, Dax?” His no-nonsense attitude rubs me the wrong way. I growl and step into his room, placing one hand on his chair and the other on his desk, caging him in.

“You,” I growl. My larger frame dominates over him.

Elijah lifts his chin in defiance, staring me down. I can’t help but get lost in the swirls of green within his brown eyes. He raises a callused hand and grips my beard roughly, pulling me down and claiming my mouth with his. I instantly melt into his familiar touch. He’s the only alpha I’ve ever let have a

semblance of control over me, but even then, it's only in the bedroom. When Elijah dominates me, the feeling is freeing, consuming, and addictive.

Eli bites my lip, drawing blood from the force. He pulls back to look at me again, my beard still in a punishing grip between his fingers.

“Have you come here to warn me off your toys again? I've told you I don't want any of them,” he says, sounding almost bored.

“Not even Talia?” I ask before I can stop myself. I grit my teeth, knowing the question showed my insecurities.

Elijah raises one eyebrow in question as he lets go of my beard. I instantly miss his touch. I remain towering over him as I wait for his reply. His nostrils flair as his gaze flicks down my body before returning to my eyes.

“Dax, you know why I'm here. It's the only thing that matters to me. Not some pussy,” he spits out, never taking his eyes off mine as he speaks.

I know Elijah has his sights set on one thing and one thing only. It's been that way since the day we set foot inside the prison, and up till now, if he told me this I believed him. But this time feels different. Who is he trying to convince? Me or himself?

This time, when he reminds me he only has one reason for being here, I don't believe him.

Chapter Five



IN MY SHIRT AND shoes, I walk past guards and inmates alike, all of whom stop and stare at the blood and cum dripping down my thighs. I smirk. That Alpha marked me, and now everyone will see it. I should care that he keeps putting me in the limelight, with him showing me so much attention, but I'm on a post-orgasm high and nothing will bring me down right now.

“Talial!” a deep voice barks from down the hallway. It's not an alpha bark, but the message is still the same. Stop. I smirk

and turn to face Thomas and Gerald. Did I say nothing could bring me down right now? Fuck my life.

Thomas' steps falter when he sees the state I'm in, making me laugh. It's so entertaining to see males jealous over something that will never belong to them. I take my pleasure and give when I feel like it.

"To your cell, now!" Gerald yells, pointing an angry finger at me. I lift my hands in mock surrender; at least, with them escorting me, none of the inmates will attempt to move against me. I pretend to look remorseful at the guards, but the expression is short-lived when I see Dax standing with his fan club. Some girl who desperately wants his attention is hanging off of him like an accessory. She glares at me with so much hate that I swear if looks could kill, I'd be dead by now.

As I turn to follow Gerald and Thomas down the hall, I blow her a kiss to taunt her. I skip along like I usually do, except this time I'm half naked, and my bouncing ass gains every cock in the facility's attention. I grin in satisfaction; I can't help it.

Stepping past the guards and into the room I get to call home, I strip out of the rest of my clothes. Someone moans as they watch me give a free show.

"Talia, hurry," Gerald demands, his voice deep and husky, making me shiver even though I just had a mind-blowing orgasm.

"I need to shower."

“The warden wants to see you,” Gerald warns, his blue eyes never leaving mine, like the gentleman he thinks he is not. Pigs, all men. Not that I mind getting down and dirty.

Pretending not to let the fact that the warden wants me in his office show on my face as I head off down the hall to the community showers. Every head turns to watch me as I pass. Oops. I forgot I am fully nude now, my mind was preoccupied with what the warden could want.

Stepping under the scorching water, I wash off quickly. I decide not to get my hair wet as I don't have the time to dry it. I stand under the spray with my eyes closed, enjoying the heat cascading down my shoulders.

The minty notes of Thomas' scent fill my nose, letting me know he is watching me shower. He clicks his baton on the tile wall.

“Let's go, inmate.”

Cracking one eye open, I study the blond shifter. He would be handsome if he weren't so annoying and stuck up.

“When was the last time you took the stick out of your ass, Tommy boy?” I tease, flipping the water off and standing there, dripping wet with my hands on my hips, giving Thomas my full attention. His eyes roam down my body before forcing himself to look back at my face. Typical. He growls, tossing me a shitty gray towel that hardly absorbs any water. The thread is so bare.

Slipping into my red shorts, I roll them a few times at the waist, effectively making them fit better on my tiny frame. My eyes are bright today. For the first time in a long time, the green isn't lifeless. It might be from drinking not one, but two shifters' blood today. I don't know, but I look good. I fix my ponytails, and, not for the first time, wish I had my favorite chunky tennis shoes with metal buckles and cute little jewel skulls or my favorite red lipstick. I miss dressing up and making heads turn at my gothic attire. Not that people don't stop and watch me, I am a five-foot, female Alpha. Plus I'm labeled as psychotic. Their words, not mine.

It'd be nice to dress like my old self. Chains, black leather, skull heads, maybe a cute choker? Is that too much to ask for? I'm a simple girl; chains and whips excite me.

With a sigh, I leave the bathroom and follow Thomas down the main hall to the warden's wing. Gerald is gone. It's me and Tommy boy, so there's no use asking questions. Thomas wouldn't tell me shit even if he knew something.

Thomas stops at the warden's door. They posted two guards outside his office like they are protecting The Council or some shit. I roll my eyes at the display of power. Thomas knocks twice and waits for the warden's reply.

"Enter." The one word is muffled by the closed door. Thomas pushes the heavy metal door in and steps to the side for me to enter first. I paste on one of my signature smiles, eyes scanning his office. They lined the left wall with bookshelves. It's not books he has on display but contraband

he and his little spies have confiscated over the years. My eyes land on an interesting piece, it has drawn me in for months. This one isn't on the shelf but around the warden's neck.

I force my eyes not to look at the pendant any longer and focus on the warden. He is sitting in his leather office chair, reclined with his feet on the desk in front of him. The relaxed display does nothing to ease the tension between my shoulders.

The warden's eyes leave mine and look over my head. I grit my teeth and force myself not to follow his gaze.

“That will be all, Thomas,” he says, dismissing the guard.

I swallow hard, knowing that with Thomas gone I have no buffer between me and the one who controls every aspect of my life. The warden doesn't care that the hex is the reason I killed those students with my bloodlust. All he cares about is I'm the only one under his care that he truly cannot control. It does something to the vampire who demands he is the Alpha among Alphas. Small dick energy, if you ask me.

The warden stares me down, the silence in the room deafening, but I refuse to be the first one to break. If he wants to stand here all goddamn day and stare into my eyes, well, let's see who blinks first. I raise an eyebrow at him in question. The only sign I'll give him is that I'm waiting for him to speak.

“I have assigned you basement duties, Talia,” he says, breaking the silence. I lean forward, intrigued by the idea.

“And what will I be doing?” I ask, genuinely curious.

“You will deliver food to the inmates in lock up and clean the floors and any other things the guards ask of you while you’re down there.”

“Fine. When do I start this glamorous job?”

“Guards,” he barks, startling me.

My heart pounds like a drum as the door opens, revealing Thomas and Gerald. The two guards take me back to my cell, where I dream of having two alphas in my bed.



A few days later Tommy and Gerald barge into my cell, completely ruining my beauty sleep.

“Let’s go, inmate,” Tommy barks, making a grin spread across my lips. Sitting up on my elbows, I peer over at him. He is shifting back and forth on his feet like he is nervous about something. Curiously, I sit up and stretch my arms above my head. Both guards watch my chest arch with my movements.

“What’s on your mind, Tommy boy? Why so nervous?” I tilt my head at him in question.

“I said let’s go, inmate!” he yells, completely dismissing me and making me frown. Tommy isn’t one to normally indulge in my curiosity, but the sour notes of his fear are a surprising addition to his avoidance. For once, I comply without giving

him a hard time, instead trying to wrap my head around everything the guards are not saying.

I spare a glance in Gerald's direction, but he refuses to meet my eyes. Hmm, interesting. With a shrug, I head out the door with my head held high. I march past the guards and head to the staff elevator. I'm excited to see what lies below us in the basement. Ever since the other day, when the warden demanded I start new duties in the basement, I've been eagerly waiting for when this new job would start.

The hallways outside the warden's office are full of inmates. The scent of the ocean fills my nose, calming me slightly. I know Dax is nearby, but I refuse to look for him. I skip down the hall and stop in front of the elevator, waiting for my escorts.

The air is cold and frigid in the lower levels. My breath comes out in little clouds around me at the freezing temperatures at which the warden keeps the basement.

"What's down here?" my voice echoes down the long corridor.

Gerald and Thomas share a look before Thomas says, "Don't worry about that. Go inside, grab the cleaning supplies, and mop the hallway. Once you're done, someone from the kitchen will bring down a cart of food so you can pass out food to the inmates."

Before I can respond, Thomas and Gerald march back toward the elevator, like they can't escape this area fast enough.

With a sigh, I enter the supply closet, grabbing a mop and bucket. A few voices echo from down the hall. That must be the kitchen staff with the food cart.

“I don’t care what Dax says. That bitch is mine.” The voice is familiar and makes me pause. My stomach coils in anticipation.

“Fine, but you know what you owe me for helping you, Nick.”

My blood boils with rage at these two males, thinking they can pull one over on me.

“Hey, guys. You’re not following me, are you?” I ask, coming out of the supply closet and holding the mop like a weapon. The alpha vampire, Micah, is the first one I see. He and I have already had our fair share of issues since I arrived at Blood Moon Prison.

“You need to be taught a lesson, little girl,” Nick threatens. I roll my eyes at that.

“Who’s going to teach me? You?” I ask, letting out a belly laugh from the sheer audacity. The angry look on his face makes me laugh even harder. Nick and Micah both take a step toward me. I brace myself for their attack but am surprised when neither of them rushes me. Instead, they both stare over my shoulder like they’ve seen a ghost before scampering off toward the elevator.

I crane my neck over one shoulder and come face to face with a ski mask. I instantly know who this is. Onyx. The

rumors say a demon possesses him. Or is he a demon? I honestly can't remember which right now. He wears a mask to hide severe dysmorphia from an accident when he was a child.

“What I wouldn't give to be possessed by a demon right now,” I murmur, his scent is mouth-watering. A gloved hand collars my throat and spins me until I'm up against the wall. Onyx tilts his head to one side as he studies me, his fingers still wrapped around my throat. Kinky.

“It's Onyx, right? I've heard so much about you. Have you heard of me? I'm Talia Scarlet.”

I watch the black holes in his mask where I think his eyes may be. His fingers tighten around my throat, the leather groaning with his efforts. I grin as my lungs protest, but I don't stop him. I don't fear his dominance, but I'm intrigued by what he will do next. My pussy clenches around nothing, apparently agreeing with me.

Onyx grunts as he smells my pheromones. Mmm, *pheromones*. Yes, I could use something to make me moan right about now.

“Not a big talker? That's fine, shadow man. I can scream loud enough for both of us,” I purr. My tongue snakes out and licks across my lip. Onyx doesn't reply with words but with action. His thigh comes up between my own, pressing into my core. My feet dangle a few feet off the ground. The mop clatters to the floor.

I like a man who takes what he wants.

“Fuck,” I say with a moan as I grind my hips, seeking friction. Onyx growls low and deep in his chest—the sound feral and guttural, and fuck me if it isn’t the sexiest growl. “Are you going to *possess* me, Onyx?”

“You’re not afraid of me, are you?” he asks, tilting his head to the side like I’m this puzzle he is trying to figure out.

“Afraid of you? Why would I be afraid of you?” I can’t help but laugh.

“Everyone is, Red.”

The nickname sends a chill down my spine. Seriously, he could tell me he will devour me right now, and I’d ask for more. He is that intoxicating. Hmm, interesting that Hexa isn’t flaring up at me to devour him for myself. I can’t help but frown. I can’t remember the last time she wasn’t desperate for blood.

His free hand grips my jaw roughly, squeezing my cheeks together as he forces my head to one side. The smooth texture of his mask at the crook of my neck triggers shivers of need deep in my belly. He takes a deep breath as he inhales my scent, smelling how wet I am. I’ve never been a patient alpha. I take what I want from whom I want. But with Onyx, something tells me he needs control, the ability to decide what to do next. My hips voluntarily grind into his knee again, my body begging for release. Onyx lets my jaw go, his hand trailing down the side of my body and stopping at my waistband. The leather is rough against the sensitive skin there

—my core throbs in response. I spread my thighs as I lean back against the wall, silently asking him to go lower.

Onyx's hand around my throat never wavers as he sinks lower into my panties, touching my curls.

“Yes, do it.” I hiss, adding a little of an alpha bark in the command. I can't help it. Sue me. I'm a needy Whore-ny bitch. Onyx's laugh catches me off guard. The deep, throaty sound rattles in his chest. Almost like he doesn't laugh very often, his fingers deny my demand. Okay, now I'm getting sexually frustrated, and when that happens, I can become unpredictable. I'm completely over the bullshit. I want to cum, now.

“Fuck me with those sexy gloved fingers, Onyx. Or don't I...”

Onyx cuts off my demand by forcing two fingers deep inside my dripping pussy. The burning stretch is exactly what I need. His fingers hit that spot deep inside me, moving in slow flicks that have me whining. He moves his fingers around to find a new angle; he is studying what I like. The hand around my throat tightens, cutting off my whimpering and oxygen. But I don't care. I'm so close. I can feel my head beginning to spin as my lungs burn for air, but I still don't stop him. I buck my hips in time with his fingers—the leather adding a delicious texture that has me gushing all over his hand in seconds. My mouth parts on a silent O as I pulse around his digits.

Onyx's grip loosens slightly, allowing me to take in gasping breaths. My throat is on fire as I come down from the orgasm my body desperately needed. He slips his hand from between my thighs and holds his glistening fingers in front of my face.

“Open,” he barks. I comply immediately. Holy. Fuck. He commanded me!

He forces his fingers deep into my mouth, covered in my arousal, swirling them around my tongue. His dominance turns me on more. I moan as he forces his fingers deep into the back of my throat. As he removes his fingers a trail of saliva gathers against my lips. Slowly, he lowers me back to the floor. My body sags as I watch him reach under his mask with the same hand that's covered in cum and saliva, and I moan as he tastes me.

“Damn, Onyx, baby. That was hot as fuck. How do I taste?” I ask between breaths. Knowing what he did, watching his hand disappear behind the mask sends me a fresh wave of arousal.

Pushing off the wall, I step into his space. His enormous frame towers over me. I can't tell how tall he is because he stands hunched over, almost like he's attempting to hide.

“You're mine. Anyone who says otherwise will die,” he says with a growl—a dare to defy him.

Fuck. Me. Why am I okay with that?

“Yours?” I whisper. I'm surprised at how unsure my voice sounds. I told him to possess me, didn't I?

His fingers slowly lift to my face, caressing me gently. I can't help but close my eyes and lean into his touch. The feeling is brief; before I know it, he lets me go. I lazily open my eyes, facing an empty hall.

Chapter Six

ELIJAH

THE RAIN PELTED DOWN on the windows as the storm got worse. The overhead light flickered, pulling a gasp from my lips. I hate storms, the last time a storm came through here my life had changed forever.

“Come here, son,” my mother’s sweet voice called from the kitchen.

My little feet carried me across the small room and into the kitchen, where my mom was scooping ice cream into bowls. Her face lit up with a smile so infectious I couldn’t help but

smile back at her. These parts of my mom were few and far between those days. When the curse she was under wasn't affecting her, she was this beautiful, vibrant woman with so much love in her honey eyes—eyes we shared. My heart thrummed in my chest as I wondered how long this would last.

I padded across the old tile floor and reached out a hand for my bowl. We cheered our spoons together before we both dug in.

“So, how was school today, Elijah?” she asked. My cheeks heated as I looked back down at my bowl. How do I tell her about Dax, the boy who makes my heart beat faster? She wouldn't approve. Not because he is a male or an Alpha, but because he is a shifter. Crossbreeding is forbidden, and as a young Alpha Warlock, The Council would forbid me from pursuing anything with him.

I looked back up at my mother's face and spilled it all anyways.

“His name is Dax. He is a senior.” I smiled shyly as I remembered watching him on the football field yesterday during classes.

“Oh?” she asked, smiling wider. She raised her eyebrows playfully and waited for me to gush about him.

“He's perfect, mom. Smart, funny, and brings me those cookies I love. I watched him at practice yesterday. He is a quarterback and...”

The look on my mother's face told me I'd said the wrong thing. The spoon was halfway up to her mouth before she slowly lowered it back to her bowl. I waited, knowing she was going to flip any second. I know it's because of her curse, the black magic that The Council punished her with.

"Shifters play football, Elijah. You know how I feel about you risking your life for anyone who isn't a part of the Coven!" she screams, standing up and storming out of the room.

Regret panged in my chest, I shouldn't have told her about him. I knew it would only upset her. The mom I know that's deep inside, buried by the hex, would have loved Dax, but the woman that has been cursed and lost her entire bond due to going against The Council's law? No, she wouldn't understand.

Screaming came from down the hall. Before I knew what I was doing I burst through the bathroom door and found my mom sobbing on the floor. She looked so broken. Her fist was bleeding from where she had smashed the mirror.

"Shut up, shut up!" Her body trembled as she fought the magic coursing through her. Tears pricked my eyes at being the trigger that pushed the hex to the surface.

"Come on, mom, let's get cleaned." I reached out and took her by the arm and slowly helped her to her feet. For a moment, we both stared into each other's eyes, both of us knowing that she wouldn't last through this much longer.

“Let’s take a bath?” I asked, helping her sit down on the edge of the tub as I filled it and began to add her favorite bath salts. Lavender and rose filled the room quickly. I helped her strip out of her clothes, not taking my eyes off the bubbles that were slowly rising to the edge of the tub.

Once she settled into the tub I helped her wash her hair. She wouldn’t do it if I didn’t help her. The hex has made her a shell of a person. All she does is sit there, staring blankly at the wall.

“Okay, I’ll come to get you in ten minutes,” I told her, but she didn’t even acknowledge I was speaking to her. I paused at the doorway, giving her one last glance. “I love you.” My voice cracked.

I silently closed the door behind me and slumped to the floor, not wanting to truly leave her alone. After what I think is ten minutes, I slowly cracked open the door.

My mother was completely submerged under the water, her black hair a halo surrounding her body. My eyes filled with tears as I reached out a shaky hand and pulled her out of the water. Her eyes told me I was too late. They were glassed over and half-massed. I sobbed as I hugged her limp form to me, the water sloshing over and onto the floor. I didn’t care. The only family I had was gone. The ones to blame? The Council. They punished her for loving a vampire. All this because she wanted to be free to love whom she wanted.



Life in Blood Moon Prison is like a game of chess; to win, you must have the knowledge and insight to stay one step ahead of your enemies. I cannot show weakness to the beasts and savages that reside within Blood Moon. Unlike the Pack, who use their beasts to demand respect, or the Den, who use brute force to instill fear, I lead my Coven with cunning and grace, letting the other factions believe they are more powerful than we are. Without it, the Den of savages would devour us all, fueled by their bloodlust. Chaos and ruin would be all that's left of the witches and warlocks. I refuse to let that happen.

When I strike, they won't see it coming. Careful planning and sacrifices must be made. I may lose a piece of my soul in the name of revenge, but war is not won without loss, sorrow, pain, and destruction. I formed an untraditional Coven, a hierarchy with me as the Alpha. The mages were sentenced to life here because The Council deemed us a risk. The others forget that my Coven is the strongest amongst our faction and we are not as weak as we may appear.

"I can hear the wheels turning in that head of yours, Eli," Dax says from my left. I sigh, rolling over to face him. My heart constricts with the affection I have for him. Throughout this endeavor, he has stuck by my side when no one else ever has. My heart twinges with guilt at all Dax has sacrificed in the name of vengeance. My vengeance.

Instead of answering him, I express all I feel for him in a tender kiss, licking the seam of his lips until they part and allow me to dip inside for a taste. I groan at the mix of his

flavors that burst on my tongue. Slowly, I pull away, rubbing a hand through his long, blond hair.

“What’s on your mind?” Dax is watching me intently. I never could hide my feelings from him. I’ve mastered the art of indifference, but it’s always been harder with him.

I sigh, getting up from the bed and pacing across the small space of the cell. My mind is running a million miles a minute. Between Talia and Dax, I’m feeling torn. Before life here in Blood Moon Prison, I was always against the world until Dax came along. He improved my life, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t get past the heartache and pain The Council caused my family.

The metal springs in the bed squeak in protest as Dax gets up and stomps toward me. His enormous frame wraps around me. My body sags into him. The simple embrace calms my racing mind.

“Talk to me, Eli,” his voice barely above a whisper.

“We have been here in prison for a year, Dax. A year. We are no closer to getting the pendant than when we first arrived.” My mind wanders to the warden, who heavily guards the one thing that could prove The Council’s power is corrupt. Dark magic fuels the pendant, opening the floodgates to unlimited power. The power they use to control and corrupt us all. “If I could get my hands on it, we could expose them for what they are.”

“I know, my love. I don’t want to lose you in the process.” Dax buries his nose in the crook of my neck, inhaling my

scent.

Pulling away slightly to look up at him, my heart thrums in my chest harder, faster. I know he would do anything for me, but with The Council forbidding the factions to bond—we could never be together. I need to do this for us, for my mother.

Every day I stop and listen at the warden's office door. You never know the information one might gain. Reaching into my pocket, I pull out the green vial I save for this occasion. I down the bitter contents in one go. My nostrils flare as I breathe through the changes. The numbness settles low on my belly before the tingling sensation spreads down my extremities. The pins and needles are the first sign the concoction is working. I glance down at my hand to make sure, and when I can't see it, a grin spreads across my lips. The spell is like the shadow ability the vampires possess, a way to be incognito, but the potion isn't as strong as the vampire ability. It lacks the potential to go completely into the shadows. I don't have the ability to pass through walls, which would be super helpful. My scent and my form remain solid, I'm simply invisible to the naked eye.

I creep closer to the door as two guards stand sentinel outside. They might not see me, but they could hear me if I were to speak. The warden's voice booms through the door.

“What do you mean he is sending me another witch?” It's been a while since we have gotten a new Coven member, and I can't help but wonder what this one did to be admitted here. I

roll my eyes as the warden's feet stomp back and forth across the room. "Fine, Raven. But understand this. I am already having a hard time keeping the factions separate. We don't need another witch who finds comfort in a shifter," he spits out. I can't help but flinch. He is talking about me and Dax. I like this new witch already.

I can feel the effects of the potion coming to an end. I grit my teeth as I take off down the hall, wishing I could have gotten more information.

Chapter Seven



TODAY, I CAN FEEL the tension growing between the factions, like a ticking time bomb waiting to explode around us. My beast roars at the back of my subconscious, agreeing with me. I'm fully alert as I enter Doctor Roger's group therapy session. The other alphas sitting at the circle all stand as I approach. I wave them off, giving my second-in-command a forced smile. Seth's dark eyes narrow in suspicion as he watches me take a seat. I should have known there wasn't any chance I could avoid his questioning stare.

“Good morning, everyone, please take a seat over at the circle of chairs so we may begin,” Dr. Rogers announces as he sets his briefcase down. His clothes are rumpled and hang loosely off his scrawny frame. His long black hair hangs in greasy clumps around his face as he stands in front of Talia with an uncomfortable look on his face.

“If you need to take care of some business in the bathroom this morning, I’ll gladly leave,” Talia says with a straight face. Her snark makes me smile.

“Funny, Talia. Remove yourself from my chair and find yourself a seat,” he says while pushing up the thick black-rimmed glasses on his face.

“No thanks, I’m comfy.”

Talia wrinkles her nose, sinking further into the chair as she dismisses him completely, stretching out like a house cat.

“Hey, pretty girl, come sit with me,” a sensual voice says from across the room.

My gaze slowly leaves Talia and lands on a familiar set of brown eyes. Elijah. Jealousy flares at the thought of the two of them together.

“Talia, move seats, now.” Roger’s voice snaps me out of my thoughts.

With a smirk on her sexy lips, Talia skips over to Eli and flops down into his lap, forcing him to wrap his arms around her so she doesn’t fall to the floor.

“Your own seat.” Rogers sighs, rubbing the bridge of his nose like he is dealing with a naughty child. I’ll punish her. Gladly. Plus, I warned her, if she lets another male touch her in my presence, there would be consequences. Even if that someone is Elijah.

“Careful, sweetheart,” Eli purrs in her ear. “Your fan club might get jealous.”

I watch Elijah’s hand wrap tighter around her slim frame. The glare I give them both is feral and promises retribution. Talia waves at me mockingly. Growling deep and low, I have to force myself not to get up and spank her ass for being a brat.

“Damn, is it hot in here, or just me?” Talia mutters, fanning her face dramatically, which in turn has the males around us groaning. We can all smell how turned on she is... *Fuck me*. She likes the thought of being between the two of us.

“Careful, kitten. I’ll fuck you right now and not give a damn who’s watching,” I warn her. This primal need to dominate her is consuming me.

Elijah and I stare each other down for a moment before he says, “I could spell your hands together and force your thighs wide. Would you scream for me? Let everyone hear how good I can please you with my power and tongue?”

Holy shit, Elijah and his dirty talk has always turned me on. I adjust myself as I watch Talia melt into him further, her body sagging back into his. Elijah’s hand slowly creeps up her arms towards her shoulders. She arches her neck, inviting him to collar her. I shouldn’t be allowing him to touch her, but I can’t

help but enjoy my pets playing together. The moans around the room remind me we aren't alone.

“Enough!” I alpha bark, jumping to my feet. His hand stops at her collarbone, his thumb dragging up the side of her neck while he watches me.

“Elijah, watch yourself,” I grind out.

“You sound like a possessive boyfriend, Dax. What's the matter? Afraid I'll please your pet better than you can?” Elijah taunts. His voice is low and calm. For once, I wish he would show some damn emotion like he used to, like before we got sent here.

I glare at him. I'll punish him later for this, and he knows it. There is something about the Warlock that has always commanded my attention. It's why I am here, after all.

“Dax, sit down. Talia, find your seat, and Elijah, stop provoking Dax again. Every session I have to remind you of that, and still, you attempt to push his buttons!” Roger's voice is shrill.

I cringe as my ears ring from the sound, but I do as he says and take my seat.

“You better move, sweets, before we make an even bigger scene,” Elijah says as he strokes the side of Talia's face.

“Me next, crazy girl,” Micah, the Den Alpha says from behind me. I don't even pay him any attention. He constantly tries to provoke me— weak if you ask me. Talia must agree

since she doesn't even give the Den Alpha the time of day as she takes her seat.

"Good, now we can begin," Roger starts. "Elijah, why don't you start us off?" It's formed like a question, but he isn't asking at all. Dread fills my belly at the thought of hearing from Elijah.

"Fine," Elijah replies his voice void of emotion as usual. "Ask away, Doc."

"How are you transitioning from the Academy to lockup?" Roger asks, pushing his glasses up his nose.

"Hmm, well, let's see. I'm the lead Alpha of a Coven. I have to attend these daunting meetings."

"Yes. How are you handling all of that?"

Elijah looks at me and says, "Doesn't matter. I've accepted my fate."

The tension around the room is awkward, and even Roger doesn't know where to go from here.

"I can't," Talia mumbles. Her body tenses as she rubs a hand down her face with a groan.

"Can't what?" Roger asks her like she was speaking to him. Dumbass. We all know the hex Talia suffers with. It's the same hex that was placed on Elijah's mom. I've been trying to figure out how to break it while helping Elijah fulfill his plans.

I study her body language like a hawk, wanting to relieve her of her discomfort. I exchange a quick glance with Elijah

and notice a tightness in his jaw that wasn't there before. Even under Roger's questioning stare, Elijah was more relaxed than he is now, telling me all I need to know. He cares for her, too. I find myself warming up to the idea.

"The voices," she murmurs, pinching the bridge of her nose.

My attention catches on Onyx as he slowly slips off his glove, placing his large palm on the back of her neck. The tension between her shoulders eases slightly as she battles with her curse.

Roger leans forward in his chair, the squeak loud within the room's silence. I sweep my eyes across the circle, stopping on Micah's broad form. The vampire Alpha has a small smile as he watches her struggle, getting pleasure from her pain. My beast roars with the need to defend her yet again. But something stops me. I'm not sure if it's because I know how Talia feels when I dominate the other inmates in her name or if it's because of something else. Roger stands, shuffling across the room. He grabs a briefcase from beneath his desk, and places it on the surface, clicking it open. He pulls out a vial of clear liquid and a new needle, filling it quickly and flicking it a few times. Within seconds the room erupts into chaos as three Alphas stand in between Roger and Talia. Onyx stands the closest to her while Elijah stands shoulder to shoulder with me, staring the Dr. down.

"Touch her, and you'll regret it," Elijah growls.

I raise my eyebrows in surprise as Elijah's fist begins to glow with his magic. Roger stops, unsure how to respond. His

eyes bounce between the three of us before he raises his empty hand in defense.

“The warden has demanded she be sedated if she shows signs of distress while in group,” he attempts to explain.

Onyx’s growl vibrates so loudly that it sends a shiver down my spine. Out of all the inmates in this penitentiary, he would not be the one I’d challenge. Ever. I’m tempted to face the soul eater out of instinct. He is the biggest threat in the room and my beast does not like having him at our back.

“What’s going on?” Talia asks, her voice sounding less pained and more confused. At this, I finally turn and face my kitten, my brows knit together in concern. I step up to her and crouch down to her level, placing a finger under her chin as I study her green eyes. She snatches her chin from my grasp with a growl. I can’t help but smirk at her fire.

“What the fuck is going on?” she demands, looking between Roger and the three Alphas surrounding her. I’m surprised when it’s Micah who answers.

“It would seem all three of your toys are coming to your defense, little girl. Do you need protection, baby? I can provide it. For a price,” Micah chuckles, gripping his dick suggestively.

My beast roars at his vulgar actions. Before I realize what I’m doing, I’m standing and taking a step in his direction. Micah’s vamp speed has him up on his feet and in my face within an instant, his minions at his back in defense of their Alpha. I smile at that.

“Looks like you’re the one who needs backing here, Micah,” my voice is low and menacing. He has no idea what’s in store for him if he doesn’t back off.

Micah opens his mouth to reply, but Talia speaks over him, “Seriously? What is this? Asshole Day? I don’t need anyone to come to my defense.” She stands, jumping between all of us, not an ounce of fear in her hard gaze.

“You three need to take a chill pill. I’m fine.” She rolls her eyes to the ceiling, looking for her patience. She turns to Micah and pokes him in the chest. “And you need to back off before I’m forced to take action.”

Once again, as Micah goes to speak, he gets cut off. I can’t help the laugh that bubbles out of my chest at the lack of respect he has earned amongst the inmates and staff.

“Enough! All of you!” Roger screeches. “Take a seat, *now*.”

We all stand there for a moment, but Talia is the one to act first. Causing the rest of us to follow suit, interestingly enough. They may not realize it yet, but Talia controls more than they realize.

Chapter Eight



THE VOICES ARE LOUDER than ever, drowning out whatever Roger is saying. A comforting hand lands on my leg, the touch instantly quieting the voices to a dull roar. My eyes snap open, landing on the masculine hand. Their nail beds are black, with inky tendrils traveling up the top of each finger. The shadows swirl and move around his hand like living beings against his charcoal skin. My eyes snap up to his face, a white mask covers everything but his eyes and lips.

“Onyx,” I murmur.

This mask is different, it allows me to see his completely black eyes. I stare into his void-like eyes, lost in a trance as he tilts his head, studying me.

“Onyx, you know the rules of my sessions!” Rogers’ voice is shrill again. I swear the guy will have an aneurysm over dealing with this lot of savages.

My eyes flick down to his full lips; a white scar slashed across the pale flesh. A slight tick briefly lifts the corner of his lips as he slowly removes his hand from my thigh. A sense of sadness fills me at the loss of contact. Interesting.

“Gloves, inmate one. Now!” I glance down at his shirt. Stitched on the front are four numbers. Zero zero zero one. The first inmate? Anger bubbles in my chest at the lack of respect Roger shows Onyx by calling him by a number and not his name.

I expect Onyx to say something back, but he doesn’t. He complies with Rogers’ demands, slipping black leather gloves onto his fingers. Are those the same gloves he used on me? Once again, my traitorous cunt throbs at the thought. Get it together, Talia. You can’t have every dick in the facility at once. Or can I?

“Onyx is a soul eater, and not in a fun way,” Elijah says from my left, distracting me from my musing. I can’t seem to take my eyes off Onyx. He is all-consuming and the most interesting thing in the room. “He feeds off nightmares in his spare time,” Elijah continues.

Did he feed off me? That thought turns me on. Fuck, I'm insatiable today. If I were a guy, I would be thinking with my dick right now. My pussy clenches as if to respond to my thought. Down, girl. Yup, I want Elijah's lips on my heated skin while Dax fills my mouth and Onyx consumes my pussy. I fantasize about being completely spent and wanton after being used and abused by all three.

Challenge accepted.

"Is that true, Onyx? You're a demon who devours souls? Do you want to eat me?" I tease.

The shadows around his hands grow, hiding his arms and chest in darkness. I want to see his shadows in action. I already know what those fingers can do. Fuck me six ways to Sunday. The thought is thrilling.

"He won't reply to you, Talia. He hasn't spoken in years," Roger says, making my gaze snap to the Dr. in surprise. I know that's not true since Onyx spoke to me that day in the basement. Just another thing that is a mystery when it comes to him. Anger fills me at why Onyx won't speak, and I need to know why.

"What did you do to him!" I demand, eyes glowing red in my fury. I jump up from my seat and flash in front of Roger. He flinches as he stares at me.

"I-I... it wasn't me or anything someone here has done. I don't..." he squeaks out as I gather his shirt in my fist.

"Talia," Dax says my name in warning.

I growl in Roger's face.

"He chooses not to speak," Roger whispers. His shifty eyes bounce back and forth between me and whoever is standing to my left.

"Let's hope so, Dr. for your sake. If I find out you had anything to do with it, it won't be the soul eater you have to worry about," I threaten, snapping my elongated canines in his face as the bell rings, signifying today's session is over. "Saved by the bell."

With one last look around the room of males, I take off out the door before I do something really stupid like murder the entire circle of inmates in my rage for this guy I don't even know. Something in me wants to protect him, like this primal part of me knows he needs me as much as I need him.

Chapter Nine



MY SKIN IS ON fire; the voices are loud inside my skull—demanding the doctor’s blood. With hurried steps, I burst through the doors of the bathroom. I splash water on my face to distract myself. My entire body shivers with the attempt to control Hexa’s power.

I stare at my reflection in the mirror. The image staring back smiles maliciously, a savage smile promising pain and suffering. I gasp at the loss of control I feel. Hexa’s mind games are attempting to rattle me. *No.*

I yank my hair out of the pigtails and ruffle it around my shoulders. The long strands tickle my lower back as I hold my breath, waiting for the image of myself to morph back into the real me. As I watch the unhinged girl in the mirror, my eyes strain, burning from my stare off.

'kill, destroy, devour,' her mouth moves with the words in my head.

“Fuck you!” I scream, slamming my fist into the mirror.

Manic laughter pounds inside my skull as the girl in the mirror morphs into something more sinister. My throat burns from the constant screams of frustration echoing around the bathroom. I drop to my knees in defeat, roughly gripping my hair at the roots—the pain grounding me slightly. Blood coats my tongue. I can't tell if it's me or part of these mind games.

The voices in my head pound against my temple, begging to be let free.

'Kill, destroy, devour,' the chant becomes louder.

“Shut up!” I scream.

Pulling my legs up to my chest, I drop my forehead to my knees, my hair cascading around me like a shield as I rock myself. Tears prick my eyes. The hex is getting stronger as the days go by.

For the first time since I got here, I feel something I've never felt before.

Terror.

A chill sets deep in my bones, and my teeth chatter together uncontrollably as I continue to rock myself. Scrubbing a hand down my face, I can't help the anger that flares to life from within—this burning rage towards the warlock who did this to me. Tobias was a psychotic diviner with the ability to summon other beings. But that kind of magic takes a lot out of the user, so he created a spell fueled by black magic that gave him the needed power. Unfortunately, the effects of his black magic still linger, and Hexa grows stronger by the day.

I laugh bitterly as I think about how Tobias is now dead. You would think I'd be free of this curse with the wielder being expired, but you'd be wrong. You see, his minion Dan decided to make plans of his own and now is the sole cause of my imprisonment, waiting for me to succumb to the powers of the hex.

I grit my teeth from the throbbing headache. There's no way I'll ever give into the hex's final demand—my demise, by my own hands.

“Get up,” a deep voice demands.

Tendrils of shadows seep from the floor and surround me. They dance around my legs, caressing me like a lover. Onyx, my shadow demon. A sense of relief fills me as I see him standing over me.

“Hi, shadow,” I stutter, my voice barely above a whisper as I attempt to give him a watery smile.

“Get up, Talia.”

I stand up as he commanded, feeling stronger than I did moments ago. The touch of his shadows gives me instant relief.

“Hmm, would you look at that? Your darkness absorbed mine.”

Onyx has this way about him. Whenever he enters a room, there is always a chill in the air. I don't mean just the temperature, either. It's like he absorbs the life and warmth around him—fueling his shadows and consuming everything. I don't blame the inmates for fearing him, but for me, I could never. His domineering predisposition comforts my damaged mind.

I laugh, feeling the burning on my skin stop. I rub my hands up and down my arms as the chill from Onyx settles over me, my teeth colliding against each other.

“Why are you here? Couldn't stay away?” I purr, stepping up into his space as my hand disappears into the shadows around his chest. My fingertips don't connect with anything as they glide through, making me furrow my brows in confusion. It's like the shadows conceal him from me.

“Don't,” he growls, making me jump back and look up at him again.

“Why not?” I cross my arms over my chest, feeling vulnerable, my feelings hurt that he won't let me near him.

A shadow travels up my arm, slowly reaching my neck, a soft caress that makes me shiver with arousal. Fuck, this guy

can get to me with a single touch. He runs his shadows through my loose hair and tugs a strand lightly. Wishing I could touch him too, my hands open and close into fists as my eyes close. I savor his shadow's gentle touch. A cool pressure wraps around my throat. My eyes shoot open as I reach up to touch the shadows on my neck, but once again, my hand goes right through them, connecting instead with the tender flesh of my throat.

“What are you doing, shadow?” I ask as his grip on my neck tightens. He growls, leaning closer, his warm breath contrasting with the chill in the air.

“I kill those who dare to touch me,” he warns, trying to frighten me.

“You like it when I touch you though, don't you? Admit it.” The shadows on my neck twitching tell me all I need to know. I cackle, clapping my hands. He has no idea how much I like this right now. I widen my stance, silently praying one of his shadows will play with me as his fingers did.

“You're dancing with death, Red,” he warns, his voice almost a whisper. I shiver at the nickname. A breathy moan escapes my lips. If I died from an orgasm that would be a hell of a way to go. I'm hoping he will do something, anything. I'm desperate for it. I crave it.

Crave him.

Shadows slither up the side of my face and tickle my lips. I open my mouth as they slowly creep in between my lips.

“Show me what that mouth can do, Red,” he says, pushing his shadow deeper down my throat. A burst of blackberry coats my tongue. The delicious taste drags out another moan. Onyx removes his shadow from my mouth, leaving me breathless.

“You taste delicious, shadow,” I pant, licking my lips and savoring the hint of blackberry he left behind. “I want more.”

The flavor is sweet and sour. Fuck, he tastes so good. My mouth waters at the thought of tasting more of him.

His grip on my neck chokes me into silence. My pussy pulses with his dominance. His shadow pushes at my lips, demanding entrance. I comply immediately, causing Onyx to groan.

“I quite like you wearing me as a necklace.” I like wearing him as a necklace too.

I open my mouth up wider as he fucks my mouth faster, harder. Something touches my inner thigh, creeping up my shorts. I widen my stance, coaxing the touch a little higher.

“Fuck!” he says through gritted teeth. His shadow pulses inside my mouth as something hard presses into my pussy. The shadows inside my mouth and pussy begin to pump in tandem, filling me completely.

My body shakes with the need to cum. The shadows pulse deep inside me as my mouth is flooded, thick ropes of blackberry bursting against my tongue. I greedily drink it

down. Onyx removes his shadow from my mouth, leaving a trail of saliva and his essence dripping down my chin.

“Faster,” I demand as his shadows continue pumping in and out of my pussy.

“You’re mine. Admit it and I’ll let you cum. Don’t, and I’ll leave you unsatisfied,” he threatens, growling his demands as he continues to lazily pump in and out of me.

In an instant. My vision is gone, and I’m surrounded by darkness.

“What the,” I growl in frustration.

Onyx’s laugh is dark and deadly.

“You don’t need to see. Just feel me. Feel what I can do to my pretty pussy,” he orders, pinching my nipple.

His touch then travels down the swell of my stomach and reaches the apex of my thighs where he draws small circles on my clit. His movements are slow and teasing, driving me wild. At this point, I can’t tell what’s shadow and what’s Onyx.

“Red, I can feel your body trembling from my touch. Tell me you’re mine, and I’ll give you what you crave.” His words surround me, consuming me.

“I’m yours! Let me cum,” I beg.

I want him, I want him now. For a moment, I think he isn’t going to respond, but all of a sudden his shadows pick up speed, circling my clit and pushing deep inside me. Caressing

all over my body. My climax comes quick, hard, and fucking intense.

I scream.

His shadows release their hold on my eyes, I stare up at him towering over me. He's still wearing the mask and gloves with his black pants slung low on his hips. His skin is the darkest shade of midnight like his name describes him. He embodies the Onyx stone, smooth and shining. In the middle of his chiseled chest sits a pearl-white crescent moon, a color I've never seen before. The planes of his stomach peak and valley so deeply it makes him appear to be made of stone.

“You're beautiful,” I whisper as I try to catch my breath.

I lick my lips as I reach out and touch his abs. The muscles contract, as if he isn't sure how to feel about me touching him. I look up at him again in question. Has he never had someone touch him before?

Onyx growls deep and low, a hand shooting out and gripping my hand in warning.

“Turn around.”

His words send a shiver of excitement down my spine as I quickly do what he says. I stare at his reflection in the mirror as he comes up behind me, his enormous frame towering over mine. The contrast between us has my pale skin glowing under the fluorescent lights.

Sure, solid hands reach out to gather my hair in his fist. Then, he pulls, making me arch my back for him.

“If you move, I’ll stop.”

I swallow down my snarky comeback, not wanting him to follow through. Releasing my hair, his gloved hand travels down the back of my neck and the curve of my spine until he reaches the waistband of my shorts. He tugs them down my thighs and lets them fall to the floor. I gasp as the cold air hits my heated skin.

His thick fingers are smooth and silky against the sensitive skin of my thighs, his hands inching closer to my pussy. I spread my legs to give him better access. A thick finger pushes into me, and that greedy bitch clamps down around him, pulling him in like she’s hungry for more. She might have had a mind-blowing orgasm, but she wants more. Onyx adds another finger, stretching me as he pumps in and out. His movements are slow as he watches me. I groan when he hits that spot deep inside me. Onyx adds a third finger, making me gasp as he quickly finds that sensitive spot again. He’s taking his time learning my body.

“More,” the one word escapes as I exhale, breathy and full of need.

The bathroom door bangs open, interrupting us. Onyx’s shadows immediately surround us, shielding me from whoever walked into the bathroom. Inhaling, I get a whiff of sea salt.

“What the fuck is going on?” Dax’s demand sends another shiver of need down my body. The thought of him watching makes my pussy spasm around Onyx’s fingers. He must feel my reaction as he lazily pumps in and out of me again. Slowly,

the shadows around me evaporate, giving me a clear view of Dax standing in the doorway behind me. His blond hair is a mess like he has been running his fingers through it. Our eyes connect in the mirror, and his nostrils flare, no doubt smelling my arousal.

“I warned you what would happen if someone touched you.” His eyes flash orange with his beast.

“Go ahead, Dax. I’ll keep his hand as a souvenir,” I purr in response, the corner of my mouth twitching into a smirk as I lean over the sink. I push my hips back, trying to gain more friction than the slow, leisurely pace that Onyx is playing at right now.

“More,” I moan, never taking my eyes off Dax through the mirror. His broad shoulders, spanning the width of the doorframe, lift slightly as he pants. I can tell it’s taking everything in him not to intervene.

“Careful kitten, I don’t like sharing,” Dax warns.

I cackle. The harsh laugh makes my pussy tighten around Onyx’s fingers. He is delusional if he thinks I listen. Me? Listen? It’s fucking hilarious to think anyone can control who fucks me. I belong to no one.

“Shadow, I want more. Show the shifter how you can please me.”

Onyx growls, whipping out and covering my mouth with his shadows. I growl in frustration as he removes his fingers from

inside me. My eyes snap up to his mask in annoyance. That's it! No one is getting play time with me now.

"You are not in control, Red, I am, and I'll decide who and what your pussy needs." Onyx turns from me, his shadows keeping me bound in place against the sink. I growl as I try to stand, but his shadows grip my stomach, binding me tighter. He will regret keeping me confined like this, I guarantee it. A surprised look crosses Dax's face at hearing Onyx speak.

"She needs to be punished for taunting you, don't you think?" Onyx asks Dax, his baritone voice rattling my body.

Fucking traitorous cunt, we are supposed to be on a dick strike from how the shadow is manhandling us.

Dax steps closer, stopping just outside the shadows floating around me like smoke, hesitating to touch them. I attempt to speak but can't with the stupid muzzle around my mouth, so all that comes out is a mumble.

"I like you all tied up and at our mercy, kitten. It's a good look for you," Dax taunts as he steps into the ring of smoke surrounding me. He reaches out a hand and smooths my hair from my face, gathering it between his fingers, he begins to braid my long hair as he continues. "You were a naughty girl, starting something with me and then leaving me wanting. Then, you tease me with my own pet, Elijah. Then, here I come to check on you after the way you left Rogers' session, only to find the soul eater's fingers deep in my pussy."

A smile stretches across his handsome face, his dimples coming out to play behind his thick blond beard; my fingers

itch to tug on the strands. He finishes the braid, tying it off with the tie from his own hair. I watch his wild mane fall into his golden eyes.

Dax tugs the braid, making me grunt at the sharp pain on my scalp. “My pussy,” he claims.

If looks could kill, Dax would be a dead man from the glare I’m sending his way through the mirror’s reflection.

Chapter Ten



“**S** PREAD YOUR THIGHS, KITTEN. It’s time I claimed my pussy cat,” Dax whispers, tugging on her braid.

Her whole body rigid; anger flares in her eyes. I study her reaction to him in confusion. Her body language doesn’t match the smell of honey and burnt sugar of her arousal. Doubting my keen senses, I remove my shadows from around her mouth as Dax whispers something in her ear.

“Fuck you, Dax. You can’t come in here and fuck me because you want to!” she yells as she attempts to stand up,

but my binds prevent her from doing so, keeping her body bent over the sink.

“Oh, kitty cat, you’re wrong about that. You’ve been mine since the moment you stepped into Blood Moon Prison. Admit it.”

“Fuck you,” she growls. “Onyx, let me go. Now.”

I flinch, glad she cannot see my reaction to her tone. I don’t like it, but I comply nonetheless and slowly release my hold on her. She is up in Dax’s space as soon as she is free, shoving him back. I am mesmerized by the globes of her ass. She is so beautiful.

“For months you’ve told me I’m just a fuck. That the only one you want is Elijah. So what changed?”

Dax has the decency to look ashamed, his mouth opening and closing as he tries to respond, but Talia is having none of it.

“What, you only want me when I show interest in someone else? Now that Elijah and Onyx are around, you want me for yourself?” Talia smirks as she taunts him with his lover.

I can taste the sexual energy between them like a physical object in the room.

“It’s not like that kitten.” His eyes return to their standard blue. “My beast needs you both.”

He steps up into her space, wrapping a hand around her throat. I expect her to fight back, but she does not, and another

wave of honey fills my nose, making me moan. Both sets of eyes snap my way at the sound.

“Looks like I’m not the only one who wants you, kitten. Let me show you how much I want you. Let me please you.” He licks a slow trail up the side of her jaw to her ear. I watch Talia’s anger melt at the touch.

Without thinking, I reach out and slap her ass with my shadow, the sharp sound echoes around the bathroom. I growl with frustration; I need them to do it. Need it more than I have ever needed anything. I can feel the power inside me.

“Do it,” I demand.

Dax lets her neck go and picks her up by her ass, his large hand squeezing her against him tightly, and shoves her hard against the broken mirror. I’m panting as I watch him dominate her. One-handed, he pulls his cock free, his knot already swelling slightly and the tip glistening with pre-cum.

Talia struggles to break free of his hold on her. Dax’s hips have her pressed so firmly against the mirror, she doesn’t have anywhere she can go.

“Let me down, asshole. You think because your beast needs me, you can take me whenever you want?”

She slaps him in the face, making me flinch, not expecting her to still be angry. Dax growls, snapping his teeth at her as he buries his head in the crook of her neck. Nipping and biting her neck, he leaves a trail of marks like a necklace. Talia claws at him anywhere she can reach, leaving thick lines of blood on

his face and neck. Dax roars in pain, but still, he does not relent in his biting. He grips the side of her throat in his teeth, not letting go as he positions himself at her entrance and thrusts inside her, filling her. Talia screams, throwing her head back against the mirror. She bucks and fights him, but it only fuels Dax further. Dax lets her neck go, throwing his head back as he moans.

“Yes, kitten. Mark me.” The sounds of them fucking fill the bathroom. “Is that all you got? Come on, kitten. Strike me again,” he demands. Talia grunts as she wraps her hand around his throat, squeezing the air from his lungs.

My cock pulses as I watch them both fight for dominance. I can feel them edging close to release, their energy gives me strength. The usually black smoke I absorb is not present but is instead a white, puffy cloud of pleasure. I finally give in to my urges and fist my cock roughly as I absorb the power their pleasure is giving off.

His claws draw droplets of blood that seep past his fingertips and drip to the floor. He lifts her up and down on his cock, his movements hard and unyielding. Talia’s breasts bounce with each hard thrust. The broken mirror has cut into her back and painted the shards red. She grabs his hair between her fingers, yanks him roughly to the side, and sinks her fangs into his neck.

Dax growls as he finishes deep inside her. I pump myself faster as I watch them climax. The sight before me is magnificent.

As I finish, spilling my seed all over my gloves, my eyes connect with Talia's. Talia smirks at me. She is a feral goddess; covered in blood, spilling from her mouth and down her chin.

My eyes study all of her, from the bite marks on her neck to the cum leaking down her thighs.

“Good girl,” I praise her.



My heart is beating a million miles a minute. I could have gone through the shadows, but after watching Dax and Talia together, I am on a high I have not felt before. People part like I'm the plague as I walk down the hallway, giving me a wide berth in fear I'll consume their souls right here, right now. I roll my eyes at them, even though they cannot see it from behind my mask. If they only knew that I don't kill by choice. I usually hide among the shadows like most vampires do, but I don't want to lose this feeling I have.

The power I gained from Dax and Talia's pleasure is a new and exciting experience. I have only ever gained power from pain and fear. Pleasure has never been an option, but now it's almost more powerful than anything I ever experienced. I don't understand why. Is it because of Talia? Maybe I never found someone who never feared me, who allowed me to experience a new emotion, a new piece of myself. I crave her. I need her.

Normally I enjoy the fear I see from the inmates and guards, but right now it doesn't seem to have the same effect. All I can focus on is one thing, gaining back control over my life. I have never really had the ability to control everything around me like everyone thinks I can. I have always been controlled by those who possess the one thing in this world that contains my power—the pendant.

The wardens throughout the generations have held the power the pendant possesses since my arrival in Blood Moon Prison—the key to my existence.

I pushed the clothes in front of me and squished myself against the closet wall. Holding my breath so I wouldn't make too much noise. My mother's mates were loud, again. Their voices were taunting me. My body trembled. They would look for me soon—their favorite toy.

I hid.

My mother's scream came from downstairs. If I wasn't getting the brunt of their punishment, my mother was. As their omega, they saw her as an object to be used and destroyed. They never showed her kindness. Always taking what they wanted from her, repercussions be damned.

A shiver slithered down my spine, my pounding heart so loud it could give away my location. The thought of Elara's nose tracking my sour scent of fear or Scarlet hearing my heart racing had me pushing back further into the tight space.

“You can’t do that to him, Alpha Scarlet! He’s just a boy.”
My mother’s voice was pleading and desperate. I wiped my clammy hands on my sweatpants and closed my eyes. As a child, we always believe nothing can hurt us if we cannot see it.

I was wrong.

“Come here, Onyx. We have a birthday present for you,” a deep, menacing voice barked. *Scarlet. I gritted my teeth to fight off the impulse to obey the Alpha’s command. But the urge to listen never came. Instead, a power rushed through me, a new and foreign feeling.*

“Where is he? He should not be able to fight a bark.”
Raven’s voice demanded, clipped with irritation.

“How the hell should I know? You’re the warlock. Locate him!”

Muttering of a spell began, and the sigil on my chest burned in response, making me whimper. A single tear fell down my cheek as I begged the universe not to let them find me. My mother’s bonds were the strongest among the world’s factions. They were cruel, evil, vile beings who took what they wanted and had the power to do so.

The closet door swung open, and I came face to face with the warlock who tortured me with his magic spells for fun. His eyes scanned over my hiding spot, but his gaze never connected with my own. Goosebumps prickled across my skin as I felt my power rising to the surface. I glanced down quickly

in surprise as shadows danced around my small frame. What was happening?

“Well? Where is he?” Scarlet demanded.

Let’s go. He isn’t here.” Raven responded in boredom.

“What do you mean he isn’t here, Raven? Your magic led us to the closet!”

The warlock Alpha shoved him back to create distance between them. The magic in the air made it hard to breathe. I couldn’t understand how I stopped them from seeing me. Was it my new gift? Or something else? Looking down, my hands were covered in tendrils of black, inky darkness, the chill from them caressing against my skin had my teeth chattering. With my new magic, I couldn’t help but fear myself.

“Well. Well. Well. Look, what we have here?” I looked up at the shifter Alpha. Elara had used me as hunting practice and was the most feral of the three. My eyes never left the threat before me. Before I could process what was happening, his giant hand gripped my shirt and ripped me from the closet. My feet dangled off the floor as he, one-handedly, held me at eye level.

“Clever little boy, aren’t you?” He tsked, his smile growing wide across his face. You see, Elara was the most powerful shifter because he could take on the form of any and all beings. You never knew who he would show up as or what. But it is his proper form that has always scared me the most. There wasn’t an ounce of humanity in his dark gaze, nothing redeemable.

His nostrils flared as he smelled the fear I attempted to mask. No matter how hard I'd tried, I'd never been able to hide my emotions from him.

"Boys. Look-y here. I caught us the thing that could change everything." Confusion crossed my face. What was so special about me? I didn't understand why they hated me so much. What had I done to garner so much pain and suffering?

"Is the binding spell ready for the transfer?" Scarlet asked.

"Of course it is." Raven snapped. Annoyed with his question.

"Wh-what are you going to do, Alpha?" I stuttered as I watched Raven's dark eyes for any sign of what I could expect.

"You're very powerful, little demon. You will help us secure the world so we may rule over them all." Elara answered for him. My stomach sunk at what that could mean. They had discussed creating a hierarchy, a Council that would rule over all the factions. I didn't realize I would be participating in their plans.

"No, I won't let you do this!" I screamed, scratching at the hand still holding me.

"Let? Dear boy, this is what your mother was bred for, to create a vessel for all of our power. A tool so powerful, no one can defy us. No one. Not even you." A slow smile crept across his face like he had won the best prize. "Now, all we need to do is bind that power, and the factions will have no choice but

to bow to us.” Scarlet’s smile was malicious as his eyes glowed red.

I was dragged down the stairs and into the basement. The one place my body would physically try and reject. I was conditioned to associate this room with pain and suffering. The small space was a concrete box of my biggest fears. From the torture sessions to the place, I was forced to watch as they asserted their dominance over my mother.

I was tossed to the floor in a heap, my knee taking the brunt of my fall. I winced but didn’t cry out, I refused to give them my pain. The beasts relished it and gained power from it.

“Now, little demon, it’s time you learn what you were created for,” Raven taunted. He lifted his hands and flicked them toward me. I couldn’t help but flinch, unsure what magic would be tossed my way. My hands were bound within magical cuffs and held above my head. Taking calming deep breaths, I raised my chin in defiance. I wouldn’t let them get away with this.

That same chill began to filter out of the pores of my skin, it was becoming familiar now, and I watched as the shadows encapsulated the magical cuffs. Within seconds, the magic burst into a white light before raining down around us, dispersing into the air.

“NO!” Scarlet bellowed, taking the few steps between us and grabbing my throat in a punishing grasp. I kicked out, connecting with his shin as his grip tightened around my throat further, cutting off my air. My lungs burned as I tried to

suck in a breath, my vision blurring. I would pass out soon if I didn't get a breath. A few more moments went by and I hadn't lost consciousness. A look of surprise crossed Scarlet's face.

"This can't be," he murmured.

"His power is too strong, Scarlet. We need some motivation for him to comply," Raven said darkly.

In my peripheral vision, I saw Elara approaching, that creepy smile flitting across his lips once again.

"I'll go get some motivation."

The Alphas all exchanged looks before laughing. The sound was evil and devilish. Elara took the stairs two at a time, leaving me with Scarlet and Raven. The room was deathly silent— no one speaking as we waited for Elara's return. A scream had my eyes widening a fraction. I tried to smooth out my features but Scarlet saw my reaction before I was able to mask it.

"Good, your mother will be the perfect motivator."

Scarlet tossed me to the floor once again. I looked up and saw Elara dragging my mother down the stairs by her hair. Rage filled every fiber of my being as I watched the only person I'd ever cared about cry in pain.

"Onyx," my mother's voice broke as she said my name. Tears fell freely down her face. I wanted so badly to run to her and comfort her, but I didn't. They would have only used it against me. I refused to show weakness.

“Now,” Raven started “this is how it’s going to go.” Reaching into his pocket, he pulled out a familiar necklace. It was the only item my mother had from her time before her bonds claimed her. My mother must have recognized her precious belonging because she began to cry harder. “I’ll use your mother’s family heirloom as a conduit. Your life force will be tied to the pendant, ensuring your magic is ours to control. Ours to own.”

Raven lifted the pendant above his head, his fingertips glowing a bright red as the pendant pulsed to life. I was so fixated on Raven, I hadn’t seen Scarlet until it was too late. I screamed as his teeth sank into the tender flesh where my shoulder met my neck, the spot already bruised from his fingers. Scarlet ripped his fangs free none too gently, letting my blood flow freely down my chest and wet my t-shirt. I fell to my knees as I panted through the pain. A prickle of magic encapsulated my skin, the feeling hot and cold, pins and needles racing across my skin. I cried out in pain again as I heard my mother’s voice calling out to me. I glanced her way, but Elara was still maintaining his grip on her hair.

My blood began to rise in the air and slowly pulse with power. Within a blink, the pendant began to absorb my blood within it. My shadows surrounded me, attempting to protect me from the spell Raven was casting. My shadows shot out from my mouth and hands, spreading in every direction. I fought back with every ounce of my gift, but it wasn’t enough. I hadn’t had my powers long enough. It had been a mere twelve hours, and I had no idea how to harness them. The new chill of

my powers began to evaporate and in its place was a raging inferno, like I was being lit up from within. I could hear Raven's chanting growing louder, the spell nearing completion. The pain throughout my body became too much, and in my fear and rage, I didn't realize it until it was too late.

My mother was hit in the chest by my power and I watched in horror as her skin turned a sickly gray, the black tendrils spread throughout her body as she fell to the floor, her unseeing eyes staring up at the ceiling. I killed her!

“NO!” I screamed, falling to the floor. I crawled to my mother's side and cradled her in my small arms as I sobbed for the loss of the only one who's ever truly loved me. I couldn't protect her. I was useless. They were stronger.

I am bound to the pendant that will always control me, and I was helpless to stop it. My mother's necklace has always been right within my reach, but just far enough away to taunt me with the illusion of freedom. I'll never be free. I'll always be a pawn, a tool used to control and kill. I live with the constant reminder of my killing my mother, of how weak I was—how out of control I felt and still feel.

Chapter Eleven

ELIJAH

MY HEART POUNDS IN my chest as I realize I'm in one of Onyx's infamous dream worlds.

"Damn you, Onyx," I grumble in irritation.

I hear his laugh echoing around me. Leaves crunching get my attention, and I'm up on my feet preparing for whatever torturous thing Onyx has planned. This isn't the first time the soul eater has used his nightmares to gain power from me.

A silhouette approaches from a distance.

"Talia, what are you doing here?" I ask in surprise.

I could ask you the same question Eli, I was looking for my shadow.” The look on her face is pouty and adorable.

Taking a step back, I ask, “What is going on between you and Onyx anyways?” I have been wondering about it for a while now, after how she defended him in group therapy.

Talia’s green eyes dance with mischief. “Wouldn’t you like to know?”

Yes, I would. But only because of what I need from Onyx and how it could affect Talia.

She’s dressed in a skin-tight black dress with skulls all over it, amplifying her curves and the swell of her breasts—nothing like the prison uniform. I wipe my hands on my pants as I want her to stop in front of me.

“Tell me, Elijah,” she says, dragging out my name. “Why are you here?”

“Onyx made me relive my biggest pain. You know, so he can eat my misery.”

“Oh, that’s not the only thing my shadow eats,” Talia sniggers.

The wind picks up, pulling her lavender scent over me. I suck in a breath, my cock instantly hard. Fuck, how am I supposed to handle this right now?

Take her, Elijah.

“What?” I murmur under my breath, turning my attention back to Talia, who is talking to me, but I can’t focus on

anything she's saying.

“Seriously, shadow? You brought me here to be the voyeur?” Talia chuckles. Now I'm even more confused. “Of course, I want him. He's gorgeous.” Talia's eyes flash ruby with her bloodlust.

“What did he tell you?” My voice is soft.

“He told me to devour you, or maybe that was the voices?”

She taps her bottom lip as she thinks before shrugging her shoulders, like she doesn't care who gave her the idea. I take a step back, not trusting this dream world. Talia's eyes light up with excitement as she watches my movements.

“Oh goody! Are you going to run from me, Eli? Please say yes,” she purrs, licking her lips and clapping her hands.

My heart beats a million miles a minute as I decide what to do. Talia flashes out of sight, making my head spin around in search of the red pigtails only to find her standing behind me.

“If I catch you, what do I get?” Her voice is playful and eager. My cock swells painfully hard as I think about what I could let her do to me. Talia pushes her fingers into my hair, making me groan. “Tell me,” she barks.

I'm forced to blurt out the truth. “Anything.”

Talia laughs, smacking her lips like I just offered her a slice of cake.

“Run. I'll give you a ten-second head start.”

Without a backward glance, I take off through the trees with Talia's siren voice counting to ten.

"One."

"Two"

"Three"

My eyes search the darkness trying to decide where to run.

"Four."

"Fuck." I mumble.

I dip under a low-hanging branch and slide into an opening of a tree trunk. My heart is pounding so fast that it's probably like a beacon for a vampire, but I can't seem to slow it down.

"Five."

"Six."

"Seven."

I place my hand over my mouth to try and stifle the sounds of my breathing, but I can't seem to catch my breath. Nerves dance around my belly at the thought of being caught by her.

"Ten! Ready or not here I come! Well, not yet, I'm not." Talia chuckles. I hadn't even heard her finish counting.

Fuck, that throaty laugh of hers is sexy as hell. I hadn't even heard her finish counting. I begin to doubt that I should be allowing this to happen. What would Dax think if I slept with his girl?

As I'm about to come out of my hiding spot and tell Talia we can't do this, a delicate, slender hand wraps around the front of my throat, making me groan. My balls tighten, begging for release. Something about Talia dominating me has all the fight leaving my body. Letting her take control takes the pressure off of me.

"You found me, Alpha. Now, what do you want as your prize?" I ask.

Talia sucks in a breath at me calling her Alpha, I can smell honey thickening her usual lavender scent. Her delicate hand squeezes my neck tighter, pulling another groan from my chest.

"That's a good pet."

A feral grin spreads across her pink lips. Talia leans down and kisses me hard. Her soft tongue licks my lips before she bites down, her fangs breaking the skin as she sucks my bottom lip between hers. I groan at the bite of pain, my cock throbbing and desperate. Talia releases her hold on me, her lips dripping red.

"You taste delicious, my pet," she praises.

Being called hers makes my heart ache at the reminder that she isn't mine. She must see the look in my eyes because she hesitates to say anything for a moment.

"You are mine, Elijah. Dax will understand it eventually. You have history, but I know what I want." She kisses me again. "I want you."

She sounds so confident, like she isn't worried in the slightest. Her confidence gives me a new sense of purpose as I get up off the ground and crowd into her space.

“Tell me what you want, my goddess, and it's yours.”

I tuck her baby hair behind her ear, letting my fingertips trail down her jaw. Taila shivers at my touch. Fuck, she's so responsive.

Talia doesn't use words to tell me what she wants; instead, she reaches for the hem of her very tight black dress, pulling it up her hips and exposing her creamy white thighs. No panties?

“No, I hate panties. Why would I wear them in my dream?”

I didn't realize I had even said that out loud. My eyes zero in on the apex of her thighs; I can see her pussy glistening with her arousal. My mouth waters. Talia walks over to the tree I was hiding behind and leans her back against it, spreading her thighs wide and beckoning me over with a curl of her finger. I comply immediately, dropping to my knees again before her.

I kiss her hip, right where her black dress is resting. Her breath hitches as I trail kisses and licks down her thigh. I grip the back of one leg and throw it over my shoulder, giving me better access to her heat. I waste no time licking between her folds, tasting her for the first time.

Fuck, Alpha, you taste divine,” I murmur into her pussy, making her moan again.

The sounds she is making push me to dive deeper. I lick and suck up her juices, eager for more, lapping every ounce of her

sweet nectar. I can't get enough. I growl in frustration, gripping her other thigh and placing her completely on my shoulders, her back digging into the tree.

“Yes, that's it. Fuck. Just like that. Your *mine*, Elijah.” she tells me right as her thighs death grip my face and her hands dig into my hair. When she cums, it's glorious. Her body jerks with each pulse of her clit. I suck her clit harder, thrusting my tongue into her pussy as far as I can. Her walls spasm around my tongue, and she floods my mouth. Talia's body goes limp as she catches her breath.

When Talia looks down at me, the adoration on her angelic face gives me a sense of relief, like nothing else matters but her.

“You did so good. Shall I reward you, my pet?” she says affectionately, rubbing her hands through my hair and all over my face. Talia removes her legs from my shoulders.

“Stand up, Elijah.” she barks, a feral glint in her eyes.

I listen without hesitation. Talia drops to her knees, her dress still pulled up around her hips. The sight of her before me has my breath hitching.

“Fuck, you're beautiful, sweetheart.”

Talia smiles as she pulls my cock free, making me hiss. I lean back against the tree briefly as her tongue licks the head. Talia wastes no time sucking me deep into the back of her throat. I groan, glancing back down, her ruby eyes glow in the forest shadows. Talia begins to pick up speed; I itch to tug on

those ponytails. As if she can read my mind, she reaches up with her free hand and leads my hands to her head. I grip both pigtails in my fists, thrusting my hips softly to see how much of me she can handle. When she doesn't gag, I thrust harder until her nose is hitting my pelvis with each thrust.

“Fuck, you can take all of me,” I say in awe.

Talia answers me with a hum in the back of her throat, the vibrations making me grow harder inside her mouth.

“I'm close,” I warn her, not wanting to cum in her mouth if she doesn't want me to, but it seems those two words spur her on further. She picks up speed. Her vampire ability blurs her movements. I close my eyes and let myself cum down her throat. She swallows every last drop I give her. The slurping and sucking sounds fill the quiet forest. Talia lets my cock fall from her lips with a pop and, sitting back on her heels, she looks up at me. Her lips are swollen, and the sight of her has my cock hardening again.

“Fuck. I can never go again so soon,” I mumble in surprise.

“That's because of my shadow.” I completely forgot Onyx was watching from somewhere within the shadows. “I want more, my pet,” she demands.

Talia turns away from me and bends over, exposing her ass and pussy for me. Fuck, I reach out and palm her ass in both hands. Massaging her and pulling her hips up to mine.

“What do you want?” I whisper as I rub the head of my cock through her slick heat, the tip hitting her clit with every

lazy thrust. Talia throws her hips back, urging me on, but I don't take her fully until I hear that she wants me.

"I said, what do you want? Tell me," I bark, reaching forward and grabbing a pigtail. I know my bark does not affect her, but it will show her how serious I am about an answer.

"Do it, fuck me hard and..." I don't even let her finish her sentence before I slam into her, all the way to the hilt. I don't give her time to adjust to me as I pull out almost fully and slam into her again. Talia cries out, "Fuck, yes, harder." I do as she commands. Gripping each cheek, I push them up and change the angle of my thrust, making me hit deeper inside her pussy.

"Fuck," I moan through my release. Familiar swirls of white mist are floating around us. Is Onyx feeding from our pleasure?

The world around us starts to transform, putting us back inside my childhood home.

I watch Talia's green eyes meet mine before I'm staring at the familiar wall of my cell.

Chapter Twelve



WITH MY BEAST RIDING me hard, I slam my fist into the brick wall of the empty classroom. Some of my pack are sitting at the desks awaiting my orders.

“Alpha, let me help you relax,” a feminine voice purrs as she trails a hand down my arm, desperation coming from her in waves. My nostrils flare, hating the citrus scent. The Pack knows I need Elijah and have always respected my boundaries. But now that I’ve publicly claimed Talia as well, all of the betas and omegas have come to garner my attention.

“Leave,” I bark, not turning away from the window to acknowledge her. She sighs but follows my order without any back talk this time. Good. I’m tired of her back-talking me in front of the pack.

“Alpha, there was a fight again between the witches and shifters this morning on D Block,” Seth says.

I pinch the bridge of my nose trying to find some sort of control over my urge to lash out at the messenger. I am so sick and tired of dealing with the fighting between factions.

“Who was it this time?” I ask hesitantly, already knowing it was Nick.

“The vampires have been trying to get the witch faction on their side against us. They’re threatened by our numbers and the control we have over the guards, and they want it for themselves. Nick snapped when he overheard them talking about it at breakfast. You know how he is, his wolf rides him hard, and he was defending our pack,” my second’s voice implores me to go easy on the wolf, but I can’t do that. If I do, other shifters see that as a weakness and challenge me as Alpha or my rules. I have been lead alpha this long with few casualties. I’ll need to make an example out of this wolf.

I sigh. “Bring him to the courtyard and gather the pack.” Without a backward glance, I leave, knowing my second and those present for the meeting will fulfill my demand without having to alpha bark. They fear me too much not to comply.

I take off down the hall to B block—witch and warlock territory. All eyes swing my way as I enter their living

quarters. I've never crossed the threshold into Raven territory without an invite before, so seeing me now must put many of them on edge. I can smell the change in scents from fear to anger at my blatant disrespect.

"Leave," a masculine voice demands from the table in the rec room. There are at least a dozen or so sitting in chairs around their Alpha, no doubt having a meeting about their potential alliance with the vampires. I can't let that happen.

"Elijah," I greet, stepping up to the doorway of their rec room and leaning against the doorframe, effectively trapping all of them inside the room. Within an instant, they are all up and out of their seats, ready for a fight. "I didn't come here for a fight with your Coven." I raise my hands to try and placate him.

"Why are you here?" he asks.

"I heard the vampires have offered you a deal, and I've come here to inform you it would not be in your best interest."

"Are you coming into my block and threatening me?"

"No, love. I'm warning you. Big difference." I soften my voice as I watch him slowly get up from the table. His honey-colored eyes never leave mine. Elijah is tall for a warlock, towering over his coven members, but compared to a shifter or a vampire, he still has to look up at me. Elijah swaggers over to me, a hardness set in his jaw as he rubs his hand down his face and studies me for my intentions. I don't blame him, he is so stuck on his vengeance, he believes we all share the same motivations.

“We’re on the same side,” I remind him. He stares into my eyes, never once backing down. Anyone else and I would see it as a challenge, but with Elijah, my beast doesn’t seem to mind. Elijah turns his back to me briefly to look at his coven.

“Leave. We have business to discuss.”

I sidestep into the room as the coven exits, giving me a wide berth as they do, making me smirk. I growl and snap my teeth at one girl who steps too close to me, making her gasp as she darts out of the room.

“Dax, leave them alone,” Elijah teases, but that smile of his I’ve always loved isn’t present. “Dax, my coven needs this alliance,” he whispers, making my eyes snap over to his, full of regret and sadness that tugs at my chest. “I need this.” I grit my teeth and force myself to look away from him. No, I can’t let him affect me like this again. I refuse. I know he has reasons for all he has done but I always hoped he put me first for once. “The vampire lead alpha promised my people protection if the coven gives blood willingly. How can I turn that down, Dax? I need to protect my people. I’ve lost four beta males and one female omega this week alone.”

My eyes snap to him in surprise. How am I only hearing about this now? Anger bubbles in my chest.

“I’m sorry Eli, I had no idea.”

“Of course, you didn’t. You’re too worried about chasing pussy these days to notice anything outside your pack.” I wince at his words, wanting to deny them, remembering how seeing Talia on his lap caused me rage.

“I promise you this deal can benefit you, too, Dax. The vampire’s bloodlust under control will help them not lash out as often. This could be a good thing all around,” he begs me to understand.

“Fine,” I growl.

My heart aches from the memories of before Blood Moon Prison.

“Hurry up, Dax,” Elijah’s voice sounds from down the hallway. A smile blooms across my face in anticipation of catching the Warlock. I briskly walk down the corridor of our high school after him.

Ever since we met last year, I’ve been completely obsessed with the alpha. Maybe it’s because being with someone outside my faction is exciting, or maybe it’s because Elijah accepts me for who I am when no one else in my life ever has. Either way, Eli brings out my protective nature.

“I got you!” I chuckle, wrapping my arms around his slim frame. My nose finds the crook of his neck. His spicy scent is as familiar now as my own and I greedily inhale it. I could never get enough.

“Fine, you got me,” he says in mock surrender. His honey eyes connect with mine, his lips mere inches away. My stomach tightens with the need to kiss him for the first time, but I know he isn’t ready for that. Not yet.

Reluctantly, I release him, but still, he doesn’t step away. If he’s not careful, I’ll kiss him. But I know all that would do is

put an even bigger barrier between us. Since he lost his family, he has a darkness in him. A darkness that fills him with guilt and pain. With The Council threat looming over the factions, Elijah and I could never be.

Hope fueled me. Imagining a world where our love wasn't forbidden and being from different factions didn't matter. Where we were free to choose who and how we loved.

Unite the factions.

Expose The Council.

Take them down to build a new world fueled by love instead of power. Because power tends to be corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

I thought we would form a permanent bond back then, but I was young and naive to believe someone as powerful and good as Elijah would ever put someone as broken and feral as me first. He will always sacrifice his own happiness for the greater good of us all.

Now, this prison has taken that from him too. My fun-loving alpha is gone, and in his place is someone I hardly recognize.

Chapter Thirteen

ELIJAH

MY COVEN TRIES TO get my attention, but all I can focus on is her. The fiery redhead who consumes me completely, even in my dreams. I've never wanted someone as much as I want her, but I can't allow myself to feel for her. Dax cares for her too, and I won't allow myself to get in the way of his happiness. I've already taken enough from him.

My chest aches from the memories of the day my life blew up in my face and Dax lost his trust in me. No, I can't let myself spiral right now. Letting out a shaky breath, I push around the now cold eggs on my plate.

I can't help but snap my gaze back to Dax. He's so fucking sexy at six foot four, with broad shoulders and slim waste. His bright blue eyes capture you when he's looking at you. When you have his attention, nothing else matters but you. That damn stare has been haunting me for months now, the stare of someone I've loved and lost, all because of some damn revenge plan I vowed to someone who isn't even here anymore. My heart sits heavy in my chest as Dax's gaze finally meets mine.

My body stiffens under his penetrating stare, nothing like the alpha I used to know. His eyes are full of uncertainty and loneliness, not the playful, fun-loving alpha I remember. I did that to him—my selfishness.

“Eli,” a deep voice greets me. I was so lost in my head I didn't even notice Nick approaching. “We want to talk about this alliance with the vampires. We are concerned about the alpha female and her lunatic ass trying to claim the vampire Den for herself.”

I cross my arms over my chest as I listen, my eyes narrowing, “Why is a shifter speaking on behalf of the Den?”

My question catches Nick off guard as his eyes flash with his wolf. Instead of answering my questions, he avoids them altogether.

“We believe she wants to control us all, and it seems she's starting with the Pack. Seducing my Alpha.”

“So that's what this is about? You're upset that Talia isn't interested in you. So you, what? Want to make her pay?” I ask.

Rising to my feet as I come eye to eye with Nick, I can see Micah watching the entire exchange from his side of the cafeteria. One thing these imbeciles need to understand is I will always protect Dax.

Nick growls in frustration, leaning into my face. “Pretty soon, she will try to infiltrate your Coven. I’ve seen her sitting in your lap during group, attempting to make Dax jealous. She will cause a riff between your members, Elijah. What then?” he asks through clenched teeth.

I can’t help to think he may be right. How can I trust her completely when she’s so mentally unstable?

“Let’s not forget the warden has the soul eater in his pocket, and she and he are getting very cozy,” Nick adds.

I don’t say anything I don’t have to. We know with Onyx out, chaos will follow. Last night’s nightmare plagues me. I hesitate. I don’t know what to believe. But I know I must follow through with why I’m here, or everything I’ve sacrificed will be in vain.

“We need to come together against the common threat. Talia and Onyx must be stopped before chaos erupts on us all,” Nick says, slamming his fist into the table.

I watch the shifter walk back to the Pack and take a seat. I need to talk with Micah, it seems we have one common enemy right now—The Council. The war for control over the prison will have to wait because if we don’t, I’m afraid there won’t be anyone left to rule over.



Standing outside of A block, I'm nervous, I discreetly sniff myself but don't notice anything different in my smell. As a warlock, my senses aren't heightened like the vampires and shifters so I know if I don't calm down, the vampires will smell the weakness on me and pounce like the savages they are. The guards stationed outside A block stop me from entering.

"I'm here to see Micah," I say, never once looking at them, but from my peripheral, I can see moon marks glowing purple with the beta status.

"Gentlemen, please let my dear friend in. We have business to discuss," a scratchy voice demands. He sounds like he swallowed battery acid or gargles with rocks, his vocal cords are so damaged. I meet with Micah as the guards allow me to enter. He's standing at a table across the room, surrounded by lackeys who are practically salivating at the mouth for the chance to drink from me. Once a vampire is placed in Blood Moon Prison they are no longer allowed to feed from a source and are provided blood bags as sustenance. But Micah has other plans

"Micah, have you heard about the soul eater's return?" I ask, getting right to it, there's no need to beat around the bush. I don't want to stay in A Block longer than necessary.

"Hmm, I have, yes," the words said with a hidden meaning. He knows more than he's letting on. It pisses me off when I'm

left in the dark about things in my prison, especially regarding inmate zero-zero-zero-one.

“I believe he is working with the Alpha female and is planning to try and overthrow you for your position,” I say.

I can't help but taunt the vampire. His arrogance makes me see red. Micah gets up and swaggers toward me, his eyes flashing red with his heightened emotions. My usual mask of indifference remains in place, knowing that the idea of the tiny Alpha taking his place pisses him off. I need him mad. If he lashes out at her and the warden has to step in, then he and the Den will be the ones to blame, and maybe the whole lot of them will go into lockdown and solve all my problems.

“That little girl could never beat me,” he growls, the sound rattling like nails in his chest. The scar across his neck is rigid and shining against his pale skin. I've always wondered how he got the scars he has.

“I don't think she could either, Micah, but would you want just to sit back and let her call the shots? You should surprise her by forcing her to her knees first.” My voice is dark and dangerous, a side of myself I don't like to let out, but I have to remind myself this is for Dax and our people. If Talia truly works with the warden, then we must protect ourselves.

Dax might hate me for what happened and blame me for being locked in here—believe me, I blame myself too—but I will manipulate whoever I need to get shit done. I don't have the strength and muscle to outmaneuver the Den and Pack, but I

have the magic and cunning to manipulate this dumb vampire into doing my bidding for me.

“Tell me, Micah, how can you stop her? She has the soul eater on her side, and you and I both know he cannot be killed.” I ask, taunting him with his fear of the Nightmare Demon. The bull-headed Alpha takes the bait, his nostrils flaring with his rage.

“I’ll handle it. Oh, and Elijah, why don’t you show us some good faith? Donate blood today and prove your alliance with the vampires,” Micah says with a predatory look. His Den all inch closer, salivating for a taste. My back goes rigid as I stare down at the vampire leader.

“Take care of the threat. Prove to my coven we are under your protection and I’ll gladly allow you to feed.”

Chapter Fourteen



THE MORNING ALARM BLARES, signaling the start of yet another day in the prison. This time I'm thankful for the early morning wake-up call. My head is pounding as I attempt to sit up. I groan as I rub my temples, trying to massage away the pain. Last night's sleep was restless, and I woke up more exhausted than when I went to sleep. My body feels sluggish, and my mind is cloudy. I know that the soul eater must be responsible for the nightmares that plagued me last night but my question is why? In the last year, he hasn't been an issue, and now he is suddenly everywhere: group

therapy, the bathroom with Talia, my nightmares. I wouldn't be surprised if he is behind the shift in tensions between the factions as well.

My skin tingles as I absentmindedly itch everywhere I can. I need to shift soon or I might go crazy. My bare feet hit the icy floors, which feel colder than usual. I quickly reach my dresser, pull out a red shirt, and throw it over my bare chest.

The vampires are rowdy this morning, more than usual. I stop and study them for a moment. A beta from the Coven is being picked on by the Den. I grit my teeth and say nothing. It isn't my problem. I can't interfere with vampire affairs and be able to maintain control of the Pack. There is a war between the factions, and if I'm going to remain the lead alpha of the pack and maintain the largest faction, I need to keep out of the vampire and witch business.

The female beta screams as the vampire feeds. I grit my teeth as I tune out the need to step in. I itch my arms as I wait in line for food. Usually, one of the betas fetch me my meals, but I can't be bothered today with waiting for one to do so. I need the distraction from my beast and all that's going on around me. I can feel him pushing at my chest, demanding freedom. Which I don't understand, after what happened in the bathroom with Talia he should be settled for a while. My tongue lays heavy in my mouth, and my nails have lengthened into claws as I grip the blue tray firmly. My body shakes with adrenaline as a trail of sweat beads on my forehead.

“You okay, Alpha?” Seth asks, coming up from behind me. I jump at his voice, so on edge I didn’t even notice him approaching.

I grunt in reply and move forward in the line. The beta Talia named Nessa scoops eggs and bread onto my plate without looking up at me. I don’t blame her as the vibe I’m giving off right now isn’t very welcoming. With my tray in hand, I head straight to our table and sit down. The entire table’s voices talking in hushed whispers around me. I tune them out and begin shoveling eggs into my mouth. I don’t even taste them; all I’m focused on is distraction from the inner turmoil going on inside me. My beast roars with irritation at me ignoring his demands.

“What do you think, Alpha?” a feminine voice asks, bringing me back to the present. I look over at the tiny omega, Chloe. She has never really spoken up to me before, so whatever is going on must be important.

With the spoon halfway up to my mouth, I stop to look at my pack members around me. All of their eyes focused on me for an answer. I have no idea what they are talking about and don’t know how to answer. I set my fork down and take a long drink of cold coffee. Giving myself a moment to think of a response. I set my cup down and wipe my mouth, clearing my throat. Instead of answering her, I direct everything at my second.

“Seth, tell me where the pack stands on this,” I demand, pretending I know what’s going on. Seth gives me a small

smile, his brown eyes giving me a look of sympathy. He knows I wasn't listening, and he's worried about me. Seth has been a loyal second in the pack this last year here in Blood Moon.

“Well, the rumor is the witches have bargained with the vampires to supply blood for protection,” Seth states matter of fact.

“Continue,” I implore, with a wave of my hand.

“Um, we believe that the soul eater and the alpha female are behind the alliance between the other factions. They're working together to gain control over the prison,” Seth finishes, rubbing the back of his neck. I can smell the sour notes coming off of him in waves. He also believes this to be true and knows my obsession with Talia. I know Elijah was considering this deal with Micah but I didn't realize the extent.

Slowly, I look over all my pack mates that are present, the ten or so main members of my pack that I trust. I can see it in their eyes they believe this is true. If Onyx and Talia are working together to dominate all of the factions and the vampires and witches have allied, then that means we will be the first targets. I can't let this happen. If Onyx did visit my dreams last night, then that would mean my beast is riding me so hard because of his darkness. Rage builds inside me, my body shimmering with my beast. My pack mates all look at me in concern upon seeing me this close to losing control.

“We need to do whatever it takes to remain in the status quo,” I demand through gritted teeth. My jaw aches from the

effort to remain in control. My heart aches for the thought of Talia turning against me. My pack nods as their eyes flash with their own beasts.

“Who the fuck do you think you are?” Talia’s voice rings down around me.

My beast rises to the surface to defend our mate. What, no. I slam my fist on the table, the pain helping me maintain control.

“Oh come on, Talia, the Den was having a little fun with the new meat,” Micah taunts.

“Touch her again and you die.” Talia’s voice is low, deadly. Her usual playful demeanor is gone. Curious who this witch is that has her so worked up, I finally turn my attention to the Den.

Micah is currently stalking toward the small crowd surrounding Talia and this Beta she is defending. The girl’s hair is wild and hangs in her face as she stands behind the tiny Alpha.

“I-I’m fine, T,” she murmurs. Trying to defuse the situation.

They know each other. Before I know what’s happening, my feet carry me towards the two females. In my peripheral vision, I see Elijah approaching from the opposite side of the cafeteria, but still, I don’t take my eyes off the threat in front of me. The tension lies heavy in the air.

“Talia, let’s just go,” the beta begs, grabbing Talia’s arm and trying to pull her away. But I know Talia. She won’t back

down from a fight. It's not in her nature. My eyes connect with the deep amber eyes of her friend, who gasps when she sees me and Elijah approaching. Her eyes frantically scan the room and land on something truly terrifying.

She screams, stumbling backwards and falling on her butt. Talia turns to her friend in concern as the girl points a shaking finger in my direction. Talia's eyes follow, landing on something behind me.

"Oh, that's my shadow. Don't worry, Lacy. He won't hurt you," Talia promises, her smile slowly growing as she looks between the three alphas coming to her defense.

"What trouble are you causing today, kitten?" I ask, stepping past the crowd of vampires.

"Lacy, come with me." Elijah alpha barks before Talia can reply.

Elijah's tone is calm and comforting, like talking to a wounded animal. I guess technically he is since she is a part of his coven and was attacked by the vampires.

Lacy shakes her head frantically as she backs herself into a corner.

Micah clamps a hand on Eli's shoulder, a mocking smile on his lips. I can't help but growl at the contact. I hate it when anyone touches what's mine. Talia or Elijah.

"See, Elijah. I told you if you would agree to my terms, this wouldn't have happened," Micah says. "Feed the Den, and the

random attacks will stop. Don't, and well...I can't guarantee their safety."

The threat has everyone jumping in. Elijah launches at Micah, throwing a punch that goes too wide. Micah retaliates by grabbing his head and slamming it down on his knee. My beast pushes at me to shift, but somehow I manage to maintain control.

Talia growls, her vampire speed has her between Elijah and Micah before I even have a chance to blink. Smoky shadows creep along the floor in inky tendrils, quickly forming a solid mass between Talia and Micah. Between them stands Onyx, but to my surprise, he isn't facing Micah, but Talia. He wraps a bare hand around her throat as he rests his forehead on hers, forcing her to take a few steps backward.

A scream drags my attention back to Lacy, fighting off a horde of vampires. I groan and take off in her direction. If she is important to Talia, then she is important to me. As I step in between Lacy and the Den, Onyx's shadows began to swell and fill the room with their power. A chill settles over me. The vampires hesitate to attack me while the shadows dance around our feet.

"Lacy, get to Elijah, now," I say.

I don't look at the beta to check if she is listening to me but I can hear her feet scurrying against the tile floor as she runs toward Elijah. With her out of the way, I lift my hands slightly as I prepare to fight the four vampires surrounding me, but still, they don't make the first move. An uneasiness settles

inside me at that. Whatever is happening inside the prison is going to cause chaos. If I don't know what's going on, then I won't be able to control it. The thought sends a shiver down my spine.

“Elijah, take your beta and leave,” Onyx says, coming up from behind me.

That's twice now I've heard him speak. The entire room goes silent at his words. In the year I've been here, never once has anyone heard him speak. Now that Talia is here, everything is changing. I don't like change that I can't control.

Chapter Fifteen



WAKING UP FROM A dream like that is definitely one of my favorite ways to wake up. Elijah is a Greek God sent here for me to worship, and I'll gladly get on my knees for him in the real world this time. A grunt from beside me gets my attention.

“Good morning, Red. How did you sleep?” Onyx teases. His voice is extra deep first thing in the morning.

“Did you enjoy my show, Shadow?” I rub my hands down his chest. My cream skin contrasting beautifully with his

charcoal one.

“Careful, or we won’t leave this cell today,” he growls into my ear, the smooth texture of his mask rubbing against my heated skin.

“Don’t threaten me with a good time,” I say on a moan. Laying my head on his shoulder.

Onyx has been in my room every night since we met and the best part of my day has been waking up with him next to me. With Onyx around I feel more in control of my hex than I ever have and the feeling is addicting.

The crescent moon on his chest begins to glow. The white of his sigil turns red. This isn’t the first time I’ve seen it glow, but I still don’t know why. I’ve tried to ask him about it before, but he always avoids the question or poofs into his shadows. I really don’t want him to leave, but I know it’s coming. It’s like he has to go somewhere every time it glows.

“Leaving me?” I question, the words getting caught in my throat. I hate this part of our relationship. The part where he hides things from me.

Onyx sighs, rubbing his bare hands through my hair. The petting soothes me, making me close my eyes and lean into his gentle touch.

“I have to, Red. I’ll see you later.”

Without giving me a chance to respond, his shadows swallow him whole, and all that’s left is the warmth from where his body was.



I stumble into D Block on autopilot when a familiar voice catches my attention.

“Please don’t.”

My eyes snap over to my ex-roomie Lacy being stalked by a few of the Den. Fuck, what is she doing here? My heart rate skyrockets just as fangs sink into Lacy’s neck. With my vampire speed, I sprint to her side, ripping the vampire off of her and tossing him like the trash he is.

“Who the fuck do you think you are?” I snarl. Full-on protector mode. If anyone has been through enough in this life, it’s Lacy. She shouldn’t be here in prison, let alone be vampire bait.

Lacy steps behind me, placing a hand on me, her fingernails digging into my forearm. I don’t look at my friend, too focused on the threat of the Den members surrounding us, looking for weakness before they strike.

“Oh, come on, Talia, the Den was having a little fun with the new meat,” Micah taunts.

Micah strolls towards me with a smile on his face, his eyes red with his bloodlust

“Touch her again and you die.” I’ll kill everyone in this room if they attempt to even touch one hair on this girl’s head. Callum would kill me if anything happened to the girl he loves and my brother can hold a grudge.

“Talia, let’s just go,” Lacy begs me, tugging on my arm.

With a scream, Lacy lets me go and promptly falls on her ass. I look down at her in surprise. Her eyes are wide in fear as she points a shaking finger behind me. My eyes scan the room and I see Elijah coming up on my left as Dax comes from my right, Onyx not far behind him.

“Oh, that’s just my shadow. Don’t worry Lacy, he won’t hurt you.” I want to comfort her but watching all my alphas stalk toward me has become one of my favorite fantasies. I’ll have to remind Onyx later.

“What trouble are you causing today, kitten?” Dax teases. His orange eyes scan down my body, leaving heat in their wake.

“Lacy, come with me.” Elijah alpha barks. Distracting me from Dax’s sex appeal when his beast is riding him. Fuck, I love this fantasy even more now.

Lacy whimpers from the floor behind me, too afraid to stand amongst the savagery. I don’t blame her, not really. It takes a special kind of person to thrive in prison. Micah’s chuckle pulls me back to the issue at hand. I reach a hand out for Lacy to take, helping her to her feet as Micah places his hand on Elijah’s shoulder.

“See, Elijah, I told you if you would just agree to my terms this wouldn’t have happened,” Micah says. “Feed the Den and the random attacks will stop. Don’t, and well, I can’t guarantee their safety.”

I. See. Red.

Before I realize what I'm doing I'm between Micah and my mate. Yes, he's mine; I licked him. I shove Micah back using my full strength. I snarl at him as he takes a threatening step back toward me. Within a blink, a cold hand wraps around my throat. Onyx rests his forehead against mine and forces me to take a step back, and then another.

“You're being a bad girl, Talia.”

“That asshole was threatening what's mine, Shadow. I had to—”

Onyx cuts me off with a tight squeeze on my neck. Growling low in his chest.

“I can't protect you if you're just going to jump into every fight, Red,” he tisks at me, pushing his forehead harder against mine.

“She's my friend and my brother's girl. She's family.”

That makes Onyx hesitate.

“Family?” His voice sounds small and insecure.

But before I can question why, a scream echoes around the cafeteria. I'm in shock, so I don't react fast enough as I'm stunned, watching Onyx materialize before Dax.

“Elijah, take your beta and leave,” Onyx says.

Lacy glances at me for reassurance, and I nod my head, giving her a weak smile. I'll need to catch up with her later, find out why she is here, and make a plan for us all to escape.

Chapter Sixteen



BUTTERFLIES FLUTTER AROUND MY stomach over what I need to do and how I cannot hurt Talia. There is something special about her. I care for her.

Without knocking, I burst into the warden's office and see he is in a meeting with some blond vampire. I pause, glancing between them as the blond jumps out of his chair faster than I can blink.

“Who are you?” he demands.

His blue eyes are bright and clear, and surprisingly, he does not appear angry, but more curious. Our eyes are about level with each other, which is new for me since I stand just under seven feet. I inhale his scent. I can practically taste the chill all vampires have coming off of him.

I usually stay quiet, but I refuse to be silenced any longer.

“Onyx,” I start, but the warden’s booming voice cuts me off.

“Why are you here? I’m in a meeting, leave!”

I debate doing just that, but I came here for answers, and I refuse to leave knowing nothing. I raise my chin in defiance, Talia has given me the strength to stand up for myself.

“We need to talk,” I say, with very little inflection in my voice as I try to appear in control. Never once have I demanded answers from him; I have always been afraid of what he would do, or how he would follow through with his threats. Every warden has held power over me, controlled me. I hate it. It ends here.

He stands quickly, pushing his chair back—the wood grinding against the floor fills the room, sending a shiver of unease down my spine.

“Who do you think you are, coming in here and demanding anything of me? Don’t forget who is in charge, and what will happen if you don’t comply,” he threatens as he looms over his desk.

I can feel the vampire’s presence next to me, but I never take my eyes off the warden.

“Sir, if I may, I’ll go get settled in and report back to you in the morning.”

The vampire’s voice is smooth and calms me. I don’t understand it. How can someone I’ve never met make me feel as if I already know him? He feels like kin; for all I know, he could be. I haven’t seen a blood relative in two hundred years. I avert my eyes from the warden to look at this new guard.

Chapter Seventeen



THE FRONT DOOR OF the cafeteria bangs open, and five guards walk in. Fuck, something is about to go down. I stand quickly, my pack mates attempting to follow suit in defense. I raise a hand to signal them to stop. The guards have blocked off the two exits. My eyes scan the crowd, looking for a head of red hair but coming up empty.

“Talía, it’s time for you to get your morning buzz on,” the warden sings, making the guards chuckle. My brows furrow in confusion, what is he talking about?

The tiny spitfire steps out from the corner, her arms dangling loosely at her sides as she walks over to him.

“Are you sure you want to be the one to stab me? The voices want blood today,” she threatens with a low growl, shooting blood straight to my cock. Fuck she’s so hot when she’s taunting him. My little kitten’s claws are coming out to play. My eye catches on the long needle in the warden’s hand, much like the one the guards used to subdue Talia back at Blood Moon Academy. I smirk as I watch the warden hesitate.

“What was that?” Talia asks, tilting her head to the side as she listens. “You want me to drain all of the guards?” Talia chuckles, clapping her hands together as she bounces in excitement.

The guards, Thomas and Gerald, step closer to Talia, preparing for the warden’s orders. Before I realize what I’m doing, my beast bursts free, fur sprouts along my arms and back, my clothing rips as my tail bursts free, whipping back and forth in irritation. My ears slant backward as I bare my teeth at the threat to my mate. My beast decided this for me, pushing me to the back of our mind as his instincts to protect take over.

My canine lengthens as my whiskers sprout free. A low, menacing growl bubbles up my chest as I slink closer. The inmates begin speaking in hushed whispers all around us. My sabertooth is known to maim and kill without remorse. Chairs scrape as they all scramble to give my beast a wide berth. I can taste the fear in the air, fueling my need for blood. My mouth

salivates as I stretch my claws, tapping them on the concrete floor.

“Aww, here kitty,” Talia says, her bright green eyes glowing as she looks at my beast. I slink over to her; my beast wants her touch more than anything right now. Talia laughs as she runs her hand over my fur, my head pushing into her shoulder. “Who knew, you called me kitty but really you’re my kitty, aren’t you? My saber,” Talia purrs, totally dismissing the warden and his guards. Her touch sends a shiver down my body, just as the chaos breaks loose around us.

“Seize her!” the warden orders.

The guards reach out to do as they’re told, infuriating my beast. I launch myself at Gerald, ripping into his jugular, his blood sprays around me and drips down my muzzle. I turn to attack Thomas as well. My movements are so fast he doesn’t see me coming; my claws connect with his back, tearing clothes and muscles. His cries of pain echo around me. Thomas falls to the ground below me; my beast finishes him off quickly, too, ripping into the back of his neck and pulling his head free with a single tug.

“Aww, so you do like me,” Talia says with a manic grin on her face. Her eyes glow red with her need to feed. Her breasts bounce with each breath she takes as she watches the carnage around us. A few guards approach us from the doorways, slowly stalking towards me, since right now I’m the bigger threat. I crouch down, ready to pounce when I hear Talia gasp from behind me.

Her vampire speed puts herself between me and the blond guard. Her smile is gone as she assumes a fighting stance, surprising me she'd be defending a guard.

“You can't touch him,” she growls.

My saber flinches at her tone, feeling like a child being reprimanded as he takes a step back from our mate. Confusion crosses through my and my beast's bond just as Onyx also steps up between me and the guard.

“What are you doing? Kill the beast! I don't care who does it, but get it done, now!” the guard captain yells, his voice showing his fear.

“Back off, Rhett,” Onyx alpha barks. I'm so confused, I don't see a guard coming up behind me until it's too late. The needle meant for Talia is plunged into my shoulder, and soon after, everything goes black.

Chapter Eighteen

ELIJAH

I WATCH THE GUARD haul away my limp Alpha. My heart jumped into my throat as I watched him go feral. My heart breaks for him as I watch Talia and Onyx defend the guard. I have no doubt they are working with the warden now. Dax has been betrayed by every single person he has ever cared about. I stand and shoot out a spell in anger. I'm sick of everyone having a hidden agenda! The purple spark disappears within the shadows surrounding Onyx. He grunts as the spell licks his skin and coats him with the immobilizing spell. His shadow grows, swallowing up more of the room as the lights

flicker like they are angry for what my spell has done to its master. Onyx collapses to the floor before Talia and the blond guard. Her screams fuel the chaos as the Den and Coven spring into action.

Teeth rip into flesh and bone as blood gurgles and growls. The Pack shifts into their beasts to fight back against the onslaught, but with both the Coven and Den fighting together, they are outnumbered. I watch a guard pull the alarm, the ear-piercing sound blares around D Block. Body parts litter the floor from both sides as the shifter Pack fights back. I watch Talia and the blond guard pull Onyx's limp form to the side of the room, shielding themselves behind a table. Before I know what's happening, my feet move in their direction.

"How dare you betray Dax!" I scream, shooting bolt after bolt in Talia's direction. I won't let her get away with this. She's the reason he went feral and is now under the mercy of the warden and his goons. He wouldn't be in this position if it weren't for her.

"What the hell is your problem, Elijah?" she screams, shoving me away from Onyx, who is completely swallowed up by his shadows, which are licking along the guard's boots—who is also standing in front of him in defense.

"Was it all a lie? Your feelings for him?" I spit through clenched teeth. "For me?"

Talia flinches like I physically punched her before the fiery Alpha's face morphs into one of rage.

“How dare you blame me! I didn’t ask for him to defend me!” Talia screams, grabbing the sides of her head as she falls to the floor. Looking behind me, I see the Den’s Alpha, Micah, throwing a spell I gave him at her. Her clothes erupt into a burning flame, so hot I have to step back as I watch her scream. The blond guard comes to her aid, attempting to smother the flames with his jacket.

My heart is in my throat again as I watch Micah tower over her. Just another person I care about being hurt because of me.

“You think you can challenge me, little girl? I run this prison and will always be the Den’s Alpha,” he barks.

Talia slowly sits up, her body bleeding and burning down her arms and across her torso. I flinch from the pain she must be in, but she doesn’t show it. Talia launches herself at the vampire, latching onto his neck like a parasite and gulping him down. The burst of movement puts out the small flame. My eyebrows shoot to my hairline as I watch her drain him. I’ve never seen a vampire bite another vampire in this way before. Right before my eyes, I watch Talia’s skin heal as she stands before us, wearing nothing but a guard’s jacket draped over her shoulders. I can’t help but let my eyes glide over her skin. She truly is gorgeous, like a siren who can lure any male into her clutches with just a look.

“I don’t want your Den Alpha spot, you dumb ass,” Talia snarks, still panting as blood drips down her chin. My eyes connect with the guard’s red ones. He is studying me in a way that makes me hesitate. I don’t know why, but the loyalty he

has in his eyes for the siren has me questioning if this is more than just an alliance between an inmate and a guard.

“Who are you?” I demand, his eyes flair as he takes a step towards me.

“Brother, leave him be. He isn’t a threat to us,” she says before looking at me. “Eli, call off your coven. Leave D Block now, and your people will be spared.” She looks over at Onyx, who is sitting up as my spell slowly wears off. A growl rumbling deep within the shadows sends a shiver of fear down my spine. I can’t see what he looks like, but I do not doubt that once he is fully healed, he will come for me. I take a step back, my eyes darting around at the fight—still in the heart of battle. Magic is shooting like fireworks. Teeth and fangs collide in equal measure.

“You walk out that door, warlock, and you’ll regret it,” Micah snaps. I grit my teeth in frustration as he continues. “The alliance we have? Gone. My protection? Gone. You walk out that door, Elijah, you’re the enemy, and you know what I do to my enemies, don’t you?” His eyes flare red.

I whistle, getting the coven’s attention as I circle two fingers above my head, indicating for them to wrap it up. With one last look at Talia, I exit D Block, praying that walking away from the Den of Savages doesn’t doom us all.

Chapter Nineteen



AS SOON AS THE Coven leaves, the Pack attempts to flee. The vampires circle them like prey, salivating, ready to rip into flesh as their bloodlust consumes them. The blood and rage in the air have the voices in my head going haywire. They are pounding against my skull in a rage, demanding I consume and destroy everything.

“You okay, T?” The familiar baritone voice from my past asks, snapping my focus back to him. Callum, my brother and best friend, stares down at me in concern.

“The voices...” I rub my temples to ease my headache. “The blood is calling to me.” My eyes survey the bloody massacre Dax left behind.

Callum nods in understanding. My chest warms, I don't know how he infiltrated the prison, but having him here makes me feel less alone. A strong grip on my neck forces me backward. Blood coats my tongue and I see Callum's panting as he watches me.

“NO!”

What did I do? My head pounds with the power of the hex, taunting and feral.

‘Feed.’

“Sweetheart, the warden will be back here any minute. We need to leave.” Onyx's voice breaks me away from the memories, and I look up into his masked face. The shadow around my throat coils tighter. The movement is possessive as he gently coaxes me closer to him.

“Callum,” my voice wavers with emotion. I couldn't forgive myself if I hurt my brother, and I'd never be able to look at Lacy again.

“He is fine.” The grip on my throat tightens, helping me focus. “Trust me to keep your hex in check, Talia.” Onyx's voice is steady and sure.

He leans his forehead against mine as his shadows caress me: shoulders, face, and legs. Their touch calms me as he

holds me possessively against his large frame. Micah's voice breaks our momentary reprieve.

"This isn't over," Micah says with a growl. He's pissed that the Coven has left his Den without magic and a feeding source.

I laugh at his threat. If he thinks I'll stand aside now and let him destroy the Pack he's crazy. Elijah is right. It's my fault Dax attacked the guards, so it makes it my responsibility to protect his Pack in his absence. I refuse to allow myself to wallow in self-pity any longer.

"Let the Pack leave or prepare for war," I demand, my bark carrying across the now silent room. My eyes connect with the few vampires closest to us, daring them to challenge me.

"You can't be serious? I decide when this is over, not you. Secure the Pack, now!" he barks, but the room remains silent.

"Elara Pack, leave," I bark, crossing my arms under my chest and securing Callum's jacket around me. Onyx's shadows on my neck remain in place.

Feet begin to shuffle towards the exit just as the warden enters.

"What is the meaning of this? Stop! I command you!" the warden yells.

I roll my eyes, the guy is delusional if he thinks we all don't know he loves the idea of the Den being in control of the prison. If the Den controls the factions, then the warden controls us all. A laugh bursts from my chest without warning.

“You think you’re in control? Stupid men are always thinking about power and dominance instead of loyalty.” I click my tongue against my teeth to taunt him.

“Who do you think you are challenging?” he barks, stomping towards me. Callum and Onyx step between us like a shield. I place a hand on each of them and push myself between the gap at their shoulders.

“Bow,” I bark at the warden, getting a sick satisfaction when his eyes widen. He has known for a while now that I’m able to deny an alpha bark, but he has no idea how strong my own bark is. Slowly, the warden drops to his knees, a growl escaping his lips as his chest rapidly rises and falls with his anger.

“I’m in charge now.” My heart races with the adrenaline of this morning’s events. I scan the area for a moment, a wide grin on my face. I probably look crazed, but I don’t care.

I’m tired of men trying to rule and lord over us all. If I can’t fight the hex anymore, maybe I can use it to my advantage and leave the underdogs on top for once.

“Brother, your radio, if you will,” I hold my hand and wait. Callum hands it to me as I step closer to the warden.

I pass the radio back and forth between my hands as I study the warden below me. It’s a good look for him, being under my boot.

“Now, I’m going to give you this radio, and you’re going to tell your guards to release Dax, or I’ll get angry. You won’t

like it when I'm angry," I singsong the last part with a grin on my face. The warden's face is bright red with rage as he attempts to stand on shaky legs. I cackle and bark, "kneel!"

I can hear bodies dropping to the floor around me. I've never attempted to control this many at once, but the prospect is thrilling. I hear Callum's growl behind me and turn to give him a playful look. He hates it when I command him, but in a room this size—I either control all or none.

"Sorry, brother. I'll make it up to you," I promise.

My eyes scan over the vampires who are looking at me with hate and fury.

Onyx is the only one in the room still standing, and I'm not surprised. The thought of him bowing to me turns me on, and my thighs press together to soothe the ache in my core.

"I can smell you, sweetheart," Onyx teases, his voice like a gentle caress over my skin, making me shiver. I don't respond to him as I look at the pathetic warden below me.

"You thought you could pump me with drugs and keep me subdued? Well now look who is in charge. Free the Alpha shifter. Now!" I bark again, getting pissed he isn't complying with my demands.

On shaking hands, the warden pulls the radio to his lips, the frequencies static crackling in the quiet room.

"Guards, return Dax Elara to his living quarters in A Block, lock him in," the warden says through gritted teeth, never once taking his eyes off me.

“That’s a good boy,” I purr, patting him on the top of his head.

The warden growls. “You will regret this little girl. I promise you that,” he spits.

Ignoring his threats, I turn to Micah and walk over to him. “You look good on the floor beneath me, Micah.” I smile as he attempts to stand, fighting my influence. “The Den is mine now. Accept it or die, ” my voice deepens with the need for blood. The voices encourage me.

Kill him, devour.

“Fuck you,” Micah spits with his fury. “I’ll never bow down to you, a female can never be a true Alpha.”

“Are you sure that’s your final answer?” I ask, laughing excitedly but giving him one last opportunity to change his mind. I raise my eyebrows in question, waiting for his answer.

“Fuck. You,” he says, emphasizing each word.

“It’s your funeral,” I say just before I launch myself at his neck, sucking in the bitter tang of his blood. The whispers grow louder in my head, pounding for freedom and destruction.

Within seconds, Micah’s body slumps over as I stand there panting. The bloodlust is riding me harder, egging me on to finish him off, to consume him completely, to finish off the whole lot of them.

A heavy hand lands on my shoulder, startling me. Callum’s familiar scent fills my nose, grounding me and bringing me

back from the brink. I'm so grateful he is here.

“Does anyone else feel I should not be Alpha?” I ask, my voice carrying over the quiet room with ease. Crickets, that's all I hear in response to my question. Good. “Leave.” I bark, and immediately, the Den is standing and leaving D Block as quickly as they can.

Callum goes to pull away from me to follow my barks command.

“Not you,” I tell him firmly, smiling up at him. My shoulders tense once it's just me, Callum, and Onyx left standing in a room covered in blood and gore. Limbs and severed heads sit in pools of blood. I sigh, rubbing my temple, the headache worsening.

“How can I lead the Den? They're savages, and truly, I'm no better,” I confess as I continue to rub my head. A cool touch brushes the baby hairs off my forehead, my eyes shoot open to look at Onyx, whose shadows are wrapping gently around my head, instantly making the pounding better.

“Thanks, Shadow,” I sigh in relief.

“You will not just rule the Den, sweetheart. You will rule over us all.” Onyx's baritone voice says. I look up into his face, seeing the white mask surrounded by shadows and darkness, and wonder what he truly looks like.

“I don't want it,” I tell him, shaking my head. One of his tentacles wraps around my pigtail and tugs gently, the sensation comforting.

“You may not want them, Talia, but they need you.”

How could they need me? I’m just a psycho girl hexed by a diviner. I can’t lead a faction, let alone an entire prison full of powerful beings. I shake my head, getting ready to deny it when I hear Callum speak from behind me.

“Talia, you need to be free. Free of this place and free of your curse. What better way to do that than to lead them all to freedom?”

My heartbeat picks up at the prospect of being free.

“You will not do it alone,” Onyx adds.

For the first time, I feel hope.

Chapter Twenty



I BURST THROUGH THE door to C Block, my eyes tracking across the space quickly. I need to make sure Lacy is okay. With her here, I can't sit back and let the chaos just unfold around me. We need a plan and I refuse to let anyone place another finger on my brother's mate.

Pushing past a group of witches who all stare at me in concern, I can practically taste the fear coming off of them. Not that I blame them, not really. I am known to be unpredictable, and Elijah has backed out of his deal with the Den.

“Where is Elijah?” I ask the group, but none answer. I grit my teeth in frustration. “Where is the Coven Alpha!?!” My bark booms. I have zero tolerance and even less patience at this point.

“That way,” a girl points a shaking finger towards a closed door.

I push through the doors and the first thing I notice is how large the room is. Along the left wall sits a bookcase full of potions and bottled herbs. The couch in the middle of the room holds a broken and bloody witch. Fuck! She looks bad.

“Hey, Lacy, let me heal you,” I quickly bite my wrist and attempt to bring it to her mouth, but she refuses. I can’t help but growl in irritation. Clearly, my patience is running thin with everyone today. I sigh and flop down on the couch next to her. It’s then I see Elijah hunched over a desk in the corner, mixing herbs with a mortar and pestle.

“Not that I’m upset at seeing your beautiful face,” I start, wincing at the damage the Den has done. “But what the hell are you doing here?”

“Callum and I decided that we should infiltrate the prison. He has been slowly bringing in weapons to prepare for an escape.” My eyes widen in shock. How did I not know about this?

“Are you telling me you got arrested on purpose?” I hiss. How could Callum let her do that? What about Bash or Enzo? Wouldn’t they be pissed if they knew she was here?

“No, not exactly,” she says, giving me a small smile.

“Okay explain it to me then? Why would your mates, MY brother, let you get thrown in prison?”

“Well I didn’t get thrown in here on purpose, but Cal decided he wouldn’t stand to let his mate or his sister rot in here. So, when I got detained, my mate started stockpiling weapons in the woods behind Blood Moon Academy.” She takes a big breath, brushing her curls from her face. I wince at the pain she must be in but I don’t interrupt her.

“Once I was inside, we found an old supply closet and have been slowly moving them.”

“Wait, how long have you been here?” I cut her off.

“About a week?” Lacy shrugs, like it’s no big deal. Fuck me. I’m a horrible friend. I’ve been so wrapped up in my own shit I didn’t even realize she was here. Until today.

“It’s fine, T,” she says, waving me off. “I did the same to you before... remember?” I give her a half-hearted smile. Because yeah, of course, I remember getting thrown in prison after a bloodlust episode where I killed a shit ton of students.

“So, back up, how did you end up on The Council’s radar anyways?” I ask.

She gives me a sheepish look, her eyes glancing over to Elijah who is mixing a potion that smells like sage and tea tree. His back is to us, but the tension in his shoulders lets me know he is listening in on our conversation.

“Bash and I were coming back from a ride. Enforcers were waiting for us as we landed.” One of Lacy’s mates is a dragon shifter, along with my brother—a vampire, and a third mate—Enzo.

I furrow my brows in confusion. Bash’s beast is extremely powerful. I can’t imagine he just let his mate be arrested.

“Why didn’t you just fly away?” I raise an eyebrow along with my question.

“They had weapons. I was afraid Bash would get hurt.” Her chocolate eyes gloss over with the pain still fresh in her mind.

She looks down at her hands, her nails covered in grime and blood. Pride swells in me, knowing she fought back today.

“And then what happened?” I prompt after a long moment of silence.

“After Bash landed, his beast stepped in front of me, but it was me they were after. They threatened to shoot him if I didn’t comply.”

Elijah walks over and places a hand on her shoulder, assessing the bite marks on her neck and bruising around her cheek from Micah and his goons.

“Drink this,” he says, tilting the purple elixir against her lips. His eyes leave hers, landing on mine. The honey in his gaze makes me inhale sharply. He’s so damn gorgeous. My heart rate intensifies as he continues to watch me.

“I don’t see why you just won’t let me heal you,” I grumble, crossing my arms over my chest, fixating my eyes on the wall

of potions.

“You know why, T,” Lacy sighs, leaning back against the headboard.

I can't help the chuckle that escapes. When you drink a vampire's blood as a witch or shifter, the blood reacts like a drug. Add in an attraction to said vampire, and you get uncontrollable lust. It's quite enjoyable when in the throes of passion, not so much when it's your brother's mate.

“Don't laugh! The last time I drank blood was Callum's and I ended up running through a forest chased by an Alpha!” She throws her hands up in the air. This time I let out a full belly laugh.

“Oh shut up, Lace, you liked it.” I grin like a maniac when she buries her head in her hands in embarrassment. I can't help but tease her. Goddess, I've missed her.

“You should heal rather quickly,” Elijah says, walking back over to the desk and setting down the now-empty vial.

“Thanks, Elijah,” Lacy whispers. He gives her a small smile and then heads toward the door.

“Lacy, you're safe here.” Sincerity fills his tone. His gaze turns to me. “You're welcome here as long as you like, mistress.” A small curve to his lips.

I gape at his now retreating back. That was the first smile I've ever seen on his face. Plus, I'm reminded of our playtime in Onyx's dream world, and I can't help but want to experience more of that with him.

A slap on my arm brings me out of my dirty thoughts. Ouch! I frown at my friend but quickly chuckle at the look on her face.

“What the fuck is going on with you and Elijah? I saw you with Onyx and the shifter alpha. Spill, T,” she demands.

I love when Lace shows her confident side. Such a change from last year.

“Well, the shifter’s name is Dax,” I say with a smile. “He and Elijah are together, while Onyx...” My heart flutters as I think about the three alphas who have captured my attention. I have the alpha-hole shifter, the damaged warlock, and the soul eater—whose darkness matches mine. Each of them fills a void in my heart that this world has put there. Each challenges me in ways I never thought possible.

“Let’s just say I want them all.” I blush for the first time in ages. I haven’t had to explain to anyone how these alphas affect me until now. I’m finally realizing how much I want all of them. How, in my head, they’re mine.

“I just want you happy, T,” she whispers, taking my hand in hers. She gives me a sympathetic smile. If anyone gets it, it’s her. The Council put her in prison for loving outside her faction. Maybe together we can right the wrongs and give us all a chance to love who and how we want to.

Chapter Twenty-One



I 'M STARTLED AWAKE BY a scream within B Block, another victim of Micah's goons. I should have killed Micah when I had the chance, but I'm not prepared for the burden of being Alpha. Once the current Alpha is killed, you must take their place until another challenges you for the position. I can hardly handle my own shit, let alone an entire faction. I know one day I'll be forced to eliminate Micah permanently. He is becoming more of a problem as the days go by.

Now, the Den is out for blood and mayhem, all at the command of their Alpha. The Coven is their current fixation, and they're being bullied and harassed now that Elijah backed out of the alliance. I'm all for a little fun and bloodshed, but even I know the Den can go a bit overboard with their games. With a groan, I place my pillow over my head. I'm not ready to start another shit show of a day. After watching Dax's magnificent beast tear into the guards, I know some shit will go down in D Block. It's only a matter of time before another riot occurs.

A knock on my cell wall has me lifting my head. Lacy and Callum both stand in the doorway. Lacy's brows are pulled together in concern.

"Hey, roomie," I greet with a smile, sitting up and patting the bed beside me. Once she sits down I give Callum a look to let us have a moment alone. I don't understand why she is here and I need to make a game plan to get us out.

"Fine. I'll go, T, but we need to talk too," he says, irritation clear on his face about leaving his mate alone. I nod and watch him go, his boots clicking down the hallway.

"So," I begin, raising an eyebrow at Lacy. "What brings you to my neck of the woods?"

Lacy sighs and collapses back on my bed, staring up at the ceiling.

"It's bad out there, T. The Council is really cracking down on the factions co-mingling." Never once does she look at me as she speaks. "Bash and I were just coming back from a flight

around the woods and the Academy staff saw us..." she trails off. "Together." she rubs a tired hand down her face.

Of course, The Council saw a witch and a dragon shifter together and made an example out of them. I fall backward onto the bed as well, also staring up at the ceiling looking for answers. There's no way The Council will ever allow me to have my happily ever after, either.

"So, why isn't Bash here, Lacy?"

"I made him fly away. He's currently hiding at Rain's pack house with Enzo." At the mention of Lacy's best friend, I turn and face her.

"How is Rain? Stormy?" I ask. Rain bonded her to a pack of freaks during our first year at Blood Moon and her bonds took in Stormy like she was their own. I stayed with them over the summers at the pack house so Callum and I wouldn't have to separate after the group home was destroyed.

"She's happy," Lacy says, her voice cracking slightly with emotion. I don't blame her. Last year, Rain had a vision that Lacy would be kidnapped. Lacy spent all year fighting the prophecy only to end up right within the clutches of her biggest fear. Between Callum, Bash, and Enzo, Lacy was able to make her escape, but that was the last time I had heard from her. "We built a house on the compound, the guys and I," she says, interrupting my trip down memory lane. I smile at that, glad she has somewhere safe to go after all of this.

"So what happened after that? How did my brother get a job here?"

She sighs, finally rolling to face me. “You know how Callum is, he couldn’t let me face the prison system alone.” She rolls her eyes and a smile breaks out across her face. Yea, my brother can be overbearing, that’s for sure. I laugh. Even though I wish Lacy wasn’t here, a selfish part of me is happy to have her in my corner.

After a moment Lacy’s face grows serious, and I can’t help but worry.

“Dan is rumored to be working for The Council,” she says with uncertainty. I can’t help the immediate rage that consumes me at the mention of his name. The guy who controls the hex and is the reason I’m in here to begin with.

“Of course, he fucking is. When I get us out of here...” I sit up. “And I will get us out. That asshole will pay for what he has done to us, Lacy. I promise you.” I stare into her deep, chocolate eyes, imploring her to believe me. Dan not only wronged her, but me as well, and for that he will pay.

Lacy nods, “Yes, he will, T. And my coven will be there to ensure it this time.” The hard look that crosses her face startles me. I’ve never seen this look on her face before. ” I-I’m sorry,” she whispers. I furrow my brows in confusion. What does she have to be sorry for? I don’t ask, I simply wait for her to continue. “I was so wrapped up with my coven I didn’t...” A single tear falls down her cheek, making my chest tighten with emotion. “If we would have gotten back to campus sooner, we could have stopped you. It’s our fault you’re in here. My fault.” She hit the center of her chest as she says this.

I'm shaking my head before she even finishes her sentence. "No, Lace. If you would have been there, then you might have fallen victim to my hex, to the bloodlust. I'm glad you were not there." I implore her to believe me. "I don't blame you and you damn well better stop blaming yourself," I growl. Pulling her into a hug as she cries against my chest.



Callum appears in the doorway, a frantic look on his face. I'm instantly on high alert, on my feet and across the small space in an instant.

"What is it."

"On the radio, the warden has stated he is leaving and putting the entire prison on lockdown, T. We have to go, now!" Callum pushes past me and shakes Lacy's shoulder. She had fallen asleep after our talk and I didn't have the heart to wake her.

"What's going on?" she mumbles sleepily.

"We are leaving, pet. Now." Callum barks the last part, putting Lacy's ass into gear. Her eyes are wide and frantic; I can't help but step closer to her.

"Don't bark at her," I growl. Callum gives me a death stare, and to anyone else, they probably would have backed down. But me? No. Not fucking likely. "I'm not leaving without my guys." I blurt out, surprising myself. But they are, aren't they? Mine.

Callum growls. “We don’t have time to find them, Talia!” he yells in frustration.

Neither of us back down from our stare-off as an alarm blares throughout the prison. Lacy gasps and buries her face in Callum’s chest.

I growl, kicking the bedpost as I begin to pace back and forth. What the fuck are we going to do? I whip around and point in Callum’s direction.

“Get to the supply closet, gather as many weapons as you can. Wait for me there,” I bark. Callum narrows his eyes in irritation. A smile blooms across my face. “Not so fun when the bark is directed at you hmm, brother?” I can’t help but taunt.

Callum growls, stepping into my face and towering over me, all six-five to my five-foot-nothing frame. But I don’t care how tall he is, we both know who’s really in control.

“Stop it, both of you!” Lacy yells starting at us both. “You,” she points at me. “Go get your Den.” To her mate she continues. “And you! Let’s gather weapons and get the fuck out of here.” When neither of us moves, she gives a bark of her own. “Now!”

I can’t help the laugh that bursts out at her audacity. I love seeing her take control. Who says a beta can’t control an alpha? I grin, raising my hands in surrender before giving them both one last look and dashing into the hallway.

Chapter Twenty-Two



“ALPHA, NOT ALL OF the pack made it back to A Block before the lockdown. Nick and Lara are both not accounted for.” Seth says, standing in the doorway of my single cell. I sigh, never once looking away from the ceiling as I daydream about the vampire who has been my infatuation for months. “Alpha?” Seth questions again.

“Send the Blue Jay Flock or the Mice Horde to locate them. Report back to me.”

Seth hesitates at my door before I hear his footsteps retreating down the hall. The tigress' orange scent still lingers around me and is a complete distraction. I should be worried about my pack mates, not some vampire alpha. Nick and Lara need to be located. We need to keep our distance from Onyx until he is secure again— under the pendant's control, we are all his prey.

So why do I find myself palming my cock instead of protecting my pack?

Fuck.

I'm slowly losing my mind over this woman. My pace quickens, my grip punishing. I grit my teeth as I shoot ropes of my release, but I still don't feel satisfied. I need to run. Standing, I walk out of my cell and to the main quad of A block. Most of my pack is handed out in small groups around the tables and couches. They can't help but separate themselves into species of beasts. The Wolves are in a Pack, while the Wild Cats in a Pride are on the opposite side.

Out in the real world, the shifter species isn't as divided. Coming together to bond and form strong packs of Alphas, Betas, and an Omega. But here in the prison, it's different. To survive, you need a pack that has your back while you are vulnerable. Who better to do that than those who are just like you? I've been trying to unite the shifters for over a year, and it's been a slow process. How can we lead an entire prison as a faction if we can't unite as different beasts?

Seeing the separate groups of beast frustrates my beast more than I already am. My canines lengthen as I climb onto a table to stand over the faction.

“Listen up! Two of our own are still out there, vulnerable during the lockdown.” I begin. The Pack begins to talk amongst themselves. I hold a hand up to silence them. “The Horde has gone out to locate them and should be back soon with an update.”

“Who is missing?” someone yells out from the back.

“Nick and Lara from the Wolf Pack.”

The Pack begins talking in hushed voices again as I wait to continue. I know they won't agree to unite and protect two wolves, but I want to convince them all to unite.

“Listen to me,” I demand. “We don't know who has control of the pendant, but I can guarantee you that the last time the warden lost control, the factions ended up in an all-out war. I refuse to lose any of my Pack.” I stop and make eye contact with as many of the Pack as possible, imploring them to work together. “There were hundreds of inmate casualties during the last big riot. We must all come together. Wolves, Wild Cats, Avian, Reptiles, and anything in between. If we don't, I guarantee some of us will die.”

As if the universe agrees with me, loud banging sounds from down the hall coming from B Block. Vampires. I growl as I hop down from the table and head towards the opening that leads out into the hallways.

“Remember what I said!” I demand.

I can feel the Pack following me to the door; I hope they will be enough.

As a large group rounds the corner heading our way, my eyes catch on Nick’s shifter form, his all-white wolf leading the Den right to us. My skin prickles with the need to shift and protect what’s mine.

“What is going on?” I ask Micah.

“Oh, Dax. It’s time the vampires have control over the prison.” Micah’s smile is pure evil.

The Pack crowds in closer behind me, some growling at the threat in Micah’s words. I hold up a hand to silence them.

“What do you want, Micah? Your Den isn’t strong enough to subdue my Pack, and you know it.”

Micah reaches into the collar of his shirt and pulls out a familiar ruby-red pendant. The Pack as a whole takes a step back in fear. Micah swings it back and forth briefly before concealing it once again.

“How?”

“So you see, Dax. I am strong enough.” Micah laughs. Nick’s wolf growls at that. “Yes, pup, because you did as an obedient dog should, I now have the power.” Micah pats Nick on the head patronizingly.

The corner of my lip lifts into a snarl. Why would Nick betray us like this?

“If you’re wondering what Nick is getting out of this, I’ll gladly tell you,” Micah says, taking a step into my space. With my hands balled into fists, I attempt to control my shift.

“Your kitten,” Micah whispers.

The two words send my beast into overdrive. Before I can stop myself, I’m entirely shifted and launching myself at the wolf who would betray us all for a bruised ego. What a fucking prick. He will pay for what he did.

My shift causes chaos to erupt in the small hallway. The Pack collectively begins their shift. All species of shifter launch themselves as one at the Den.

My teeth connect with Nick’s shoulder, ripping a chunk off as he falls to the ground. He shifts back and yells for help from the Den.

Poor bastard didn’t realize, the Den are savages and only do what they need to. There is no loyalty, no honor among them—only brute strength and power.

Shifting back, I stand over Nick’s bleeding form. His blood covers my chin and chest.

“This is the day you regret turning on your pack Nikolas. The day you die for attempting to bargain for what you’ll never have. Talia doesn’t want you.”

“I’m sorry, Alpha.”

I cut off his lame-ass apology with my hands wrapping around his throat. Nick’s eyes go wide as he struggles to breathe, looking over my shoulder at someone behind me. A

prickle of awareness has me turning to face the one thing I've been fearing.

Onyx.

I drop Nick's pathetic form and turn to defend myself. Onyx's mask is covered in blood. He's wearing only his mask, gloves, and black jeans. His feet and chest are bare, exposing his scarred and burned skin.

Onyx raises his hand to his mask and slowly begins to lift it. I know what is coming. This is the part where he consumes my soul. There isn't much I fear, but the idea of being trapped within the prison of Onyx's dream world—becoming one of his nightmare beings—terrifies me.

I am not opposed to begging as I lift my hands to placate him.

"Please," I start, but it isn't me the shadows reach for... it's Nick. I stand there stunned as I watch the light leave Nick's eyes, his body slumping over as Onyx drains his soul from his body.

"No one touches my queen," Onyx's voice rattles. Slowly, his large frame turns back towards me. I can see the fight, but I can't take my eyes off the threat before me.

Onyx reaches out a gloved hand and claps me on the shoulder. My mouth pops open in shock.

"You care for her too. Don't you?" he asks, his voice muffled behind the mask. He tilts his head as he looks down at me. The movement is monstrous.

“Yes. I would die for her,” I say with no hesitation. It’s the first time I’ve admitted it out loud but that doesn’t make it any less true. I would die for her if it meant she got to escape this place for good.

”Good. But would you kill for her?” he asks me, his fingers digging into my shoulder with a strength I could never possess.

“Yes.”

Onyx releases my shoulder and begins to lift his mask again. Black tendrils seep out from behind his mask and branch out in all different directions. Within seconds, every single inmate is laid out on the floor. Cold. All except Micah and me.

“No,” I whisper, as I stare at the slumped form of my second, Seth. His glasses are missing, and his face is badly bruised. My breathing becomes ragged as guilt wracks through me over losing my entire Pack.

“Dax,” Onyx says.

I slowly turn back to being responsible for all the carnage. Rage fills me so full that I explode. I know I could never truly defeat Onyx, but my beast doesn’t care.

Onyx removes a single glove, a black cloud growing in size on his palm.

“Calm,” he barks in a low, steady voice.

Anger boils under my skin like an inferno. I heard his bark mere inches from his black cloud.

At this point, I don't care if he kills me.

“I did not kill your Pack. They are in my dream world temporarily.”

“What?” I look around again at the fallen and realize each of them are breathing. I watch Seth's chest rise and fall for a moment before looking back at Onyx.

“You!” Micah's voice screeches at Onyx. “You belong to me. Now, kill Dax and return to the pendant.” He rubs his fingers across the ruby, causing it to pulse with power.

My eyes bounce back and forth between Onyx and Micah, wondering if Onyx will comply with his demands.

Onyx laughs. He throws his head back, still holding the orb of smoke in his palm.

“The pendant has a weakness, Micah.” Onyx taunts, slowly approaching the vampire. “You see, the more I absorb, the less the pendant works. Even if that is only temporary.” Micah's eyes scan the fallen vampires and shifters.

Realization crosses Micah's face.

My heart is beating a million miles a minute as I watch the soul eater lift his mask. Black, smokey tendrils ink out and down his bloody chest and sink to the floor at his feet. Quickly, the shadows move as a solid mass toward Micah. I watch in horror, unable to look away as the tendrils surround the vampire alpha. His screams of pain are ear piercing but it's all the distraction Elijah needs.

My eyes widen at Elijah's arrival. I see him muttering an incantation under his breath from down the hallway. A purple glow emanates from his palms, like a beacon for the pendant to follow. Within a flash, the pendant flies off of Micah's collapsed frame and into Elijah's hands. Stupid. Onyx will kill him for what he has done.

My instincts kick in and I step between the soul eater and my ex-lover. I can't let anything happen to him. Onyx's chest heaves as he stands still among the fallen. Slowly, he reaches across his body for his glove. I know that once he removes it we all will be in peril.

"Onyx, please," I beg, holding up a hand.

Surprisingly he stops, lowering his hands loosely at his sides.

"Would you allow this warlock to gain control over the one thing that could destroy us all?" he questions.

"I-I'll deal with him," I stutter. But there is no way Elijah will listen to reasoning. His whole reason for being here is because of that pendant. When Onyx still doesn't move, I turn to face my ex.

"Elijah."

"No, Dax. You know what I need to do. I need to stop the soul eater and the vampire from gaining control. I have to stop The Council. Expose them for what they are!"

At this point, Elijah is yelling, and it's the first true emotion I've seen from him since we stepped foot in the prison. I'm so

shocked I don't know what to say back. My heart aches for the broken man before me. He has lost everything for this revenge plot, me included.

“Let me help you.”

He shakes his head sadly, throwing a vial into the hallway before I can do anything further. The air is thick with smoke that irritates my nose and eyes. I can't breathe. The burning in my eyes is like fire as I gasp for breath. Coughing, I fall to my knees. Hard.

A hand lands on my shoulder as shadows surround me, easing the spell's effects.

“Onyx, please.”

“He will die, Dax. Either stand aside or die with him.”

With those parting words, I watch Onyx walk around the corner and out of sight.

Chapter Twenty-Three

ELIJAH

MY HANDS SHAKE AS I run. I know Onyx won't be far behind me. In all the years he has been here, never has he been so close to gaining access to the pendant for himself.

Guilt. I feel guilt over abandoning Dax again, for Talia's condition, and even for the soul eater himself. But I have to do this. I can't let anyone else suffer, the way we all have, at the hands of The Council.

Shame continues to pool in my stomach for leaving Dax behind. But he knows this is why I'm here. This is why I came to the prison in the first place.

"Elijah," Onyx's deep voice booms, the alpha bark a clear sign to freeze.

I spin around, ensnared by his bark, and watch as he slowly approaches. My eyes dart around the hallway. I should run, but I find myself trapped.

"Onyx. Look I..." I hold my hands up to placate him. "The Council needs to be exposed. If I can just prove how corrupt they really are. I—I'm sorry," I end in a whisper, not knowing how I can explain to him why I'm doing this.

My heart is jackhammering in my chest. I know what the soul eater is capable of. He incapacitated an entire hallway full of people with a wave of his hand; I doubt he will give me the same courtesy and put me in a temporary dream. This is personal for him, and not the first time I've stood in his way.

Onyx stops in his tracks as he debates what to do.

"You don't think I want to expose them? Don't you get it? I'm trapped in this purgatory for the remainder of my existence because of them," he says in a gruff growl.

"What?" I furrow my brow as I contemplate what he is saying.

"The Council created this prison for power. My power. With a constant flow of prisoners at their disposal, they force me to

comply with their every whim. Always staying one step ahead. Always more powerful.”

“Help me stop them,” I blurt out.

Maybe we can do this together? Maybe Onyx and I don’t have to be enemies.

“Give me the pendant, and I’ll destroy them all.” There is a sense of sincerity in his voice that makes me want to comply, but still, I hesitate. He covers the distance between us and holds out a gloved hand, patiently waiting for me to choose.

“Looks like I missed all the fun,” a feminine voice says from behind me.

Talia.

“Red, tell your pet to hand over my pendant before I’m forced to extract it from him by force,” Onyx threatens.

Talia remains quiet, surprising enough that I take my eyes off Onyx to look at her. She’s standing at the end of the hallways, leaning against the wall as she watches us, her face void of all emotion. She doesn’t look like the girl I’ve come to know. My eyes travel down her body, trying to come up with a conclusion as to why she isn’t her normal smiling self, but I come up empty.

“What happened to you?” I ask.

“Do you actually care?” Dax’s voice snaps my gaze over to him.

I hadn't realized he was here. I'm standing among the people I've turned my back on. The ones who should be punishing me for my betrayal. Yet they all stand around giving me a chance to fix this. So why am I still struggling to let the past go? Why can't I let them help me? I know logically we are on the same side but still— my stubbornness consumes me.

“I care, Dax,” I say.

Onyx lays a hand on my shoulder, squeezing it gently. His opposite hand reaches up toward his face. I look up at his mask, wishing I could see his face. Maybe knowing his features would help me confide in him, trust him. Trust them.

“Onyx,” Talia's voice is strained. “Don't,” she practically begs. I hear her feet lightly clapping against the concrete floor towards us.

Onyx actually listens to her, lowering his hand and sparing me. Fuck. I shift back and forth on my feet for a moment. Before I know it, I'm reaching into my pocket and procuring the pendant. With shaking hands, I offer it to him.

“We will make them pay, Elijah. All of us. For everything they have done. My vow,” Onyx says as he hands the pendant to Talia.

I watch her place it around her neck and tuck it under her shirt, too stunned to ask why she has it. I don't understand what is going on, but still, I say nothing.

I can feel Dax watching me, his eyes penetrating my soul. He stands off to the side of the three of us, watching but not

saying anything. To be honest, he doesn't have to. He has always been loyal to me, and he promised to help me expose The Council, and still... I went against him. Haven't trusted him.

“Dax.” His name gets caught in my throat. There isn't anything I could say to him to excuse my behavior. I know if I would have told him my plan to steal the pendant during the riot he would have helped me.

“Stop, Elijah. You don't get to keep doing this to me. I've stuck by you since the beginning. Promised to do right by you. Got thrown into prison for you!” His yelling makes me flinch. I watch his chest heave with his emotions. As everyone else stays silent, he continues. “I don't think I can do this anymore. Put someone first who will never do the same for me.” He sounds broken and defeated. I watch his shoulders slump forward as he runs a tired hand over his beard.

“I know.”

I can't think of anything to say back that would be fair to him. He's right. I've gone behind his back one too many times, and I don't deserve his forgiveness. There are so many things I wish I could say, that I probably should say but don't. I just stand there, watching the love of my life walk away from me for the last time.

Chapter Twenty-Four



I WATCH DAX LEAVE a broken and defeated Elijah. I feel torn between them. I understand why Elijah hasn't trusted anyone to carry this burden with him. He believes his responsibility to avenge his mother's death. He doesn't realize it yet, but we won't let him bear this cross alone. He has Onyx and me on his side, even if Onyx doesn't know it yet. Eventually, he'll have Dax too. I know how much Dax loves Elijah; he won't be able to stay away for long.

My eyes shift over to my shadow who has been silently watching the exchange between my guys. Fuck, they are all

mine, aren't they? All three of them. At some point, I'll need to bridge the gap between them, but for now, we need to deal with the pendant.

"Elijah," I say his name softly, like I'm talking to a wounded animal. And maybe he is. "I need you to do something for me. I need you to break the pendant." I know this is a hard concept for him to grasp, the idea of not having the pendant takes away from the proof he has that The Council is corrupt. But I hope he will do it anyway. See that with the pendant gone, we will have an advantage over The Council.

"Break it?" he asks. His honey eyes bounce back and forth between Onyx and me.

"Yes. Soon, Onyx won't have the power to disobey the pendant's powers, and when that happens, we will be vulnerable." I look down, ashamed to admit it. "Plus, the hex is getting stronger. I won't be able to control it for much longer without Onyx..." I look to my shadow. The one thing that has been keeping me sane. "I'm afraid I won't be able to stop it next time."

I don't look to Elijah when I say this. I'm afraid to see the judgment in his eyes. Gentle fingers grip my chin, causing me to look up. For the first time since I've met Elijah, he has a small smile on his face, showcasing a set of dimples I've never had the pleasure of seeing before. The smile is breathtaking and sends butterflies fluttering through my belly at just how gorgeous the warlock truly is.

“Never be ashamed to admit you need help. Look how well that’s done for me,” he teases. I chuckle at his lame joke. We all know his not asking for help and has hurt us all. Elijah strokes the side of my face affectionately. “I’ll try Talia, for you. But I can’t guarantee I’ll be able to break a two-hundred-year-old pendant.”

Before I realize what I’m doing, my lips are on his. His lips pop open in shock briefly before he bends down to give me better access, wrapping his strong arms around me. He kisses me gently, like I’m the most precious thing to him. I lick my tongue across his lips, dragging a moan out of him.

“We need to leave.” Onyx’s voice startles me, his words breaking through the tender moment.

“Let’s go,” Elijah says, feeding his fingers through mine and holding my hand against his chest as we walk out together. With Onyx on one side and Elijah on the other, I smile for the first time since the riots started.



“Callum, where is Lacy?” I demand, coming into the supply closet where they have been stock-piling equipment for our escape. Callum is filling a duffle bag with little vials of purple liquid.

“Here I am,” Lacy says, popping out from behind a shelf and throwing herself at me in a giant bear hug. Tears prick my eyes. There is just something about Lacy’s hugs, she always

gives them when I need them the most. “Please try not to chew Callum’s head off. I quite like his head right where it is,” she whispers into my ear.

“I bet you do,” I snark back to tease her. Lacy slaps my shoulder, making us both laugh like high school girls.

“So, were you able to convince your warlock to break the pendant?” Lacy questions, pulling away from our hug.

Elijah walks over at that and answers for himself, “I’m going to try.”

“Good, because my roomie here needs her guys to figure their shit out sooner rather than later,” Lacy says before turning to me. “Speaking of which, where is your saber?”

My eyes bounce back and forth between Lacy and Elijah. “He had a few things to take care of before we leave. But don’t worry, I’ll go find him while you guys get settled.” I look at Elijah as I say this and he gives me a grateful look.

“Are you planning to go back out there by yourself?” Lacy squeaks.

I smile, reaching into my shirt and grabbing the pendant.

“No, I have the power to control a soul eater, I’ll be fine,” I reassure her. “Onyx we need to get Dax, are you coming?”

I watch my shadow’s large frame step out from around the crates, his body and white mask are splattered with blood. Damn, he looks hot like that. See, something must be wrong with me to enjoy seeing him covered in gore.

“Careful, sweetheart,” Onyx warns with a growl that sends a shiver down my spine. We have spent so many nights together, but I haven’t really gotten to fully appreciate Onyx yet, not like I have with my other mates.

Onyx heads toward the door to wait for me, I knew he wouldn’t let me go alone. A warmth fills my chest at the Den I’m creating. The group of damaged souls that call to my own.

“Talia, be quick about it okay?” Callum says as he wraps his arms around Lacy from behind. I smirk at their PDA. My brother has never been the one to show affection, let alone where others could witness.

“Come,” Onyx says from behind me, making me pout as he takes away my fun. I give Callum a wink for good measure before I do as my Alpha commands and head out the door.

“Where do you think Dax is?” I ask as we stand in the hallway. “Do you think you can find him?”

“If I were to guess, he is probably with his pack. He will want to protect them from the Den.”

Without waiting for a reply from me, Onyx takes off in the direction of A block with me on his heels. Butterflies dance around my belly at the thought of convincing Dax to come with us. What if he doesn’t care for me as much as I do him? No, I can’t allow myself to think like that. If it’s not me he comes for then at least it will be for Elijah. Or even just at the chance to be free.

Onyx takes my hand in his leathered ones and pulls me along beside him. His touch soothes my nerves.

We enter the A Block and come to a halt as every set of eyes turn to greet us.

“I’m here,” I announce with a bow, letting Onyx’s hand go. “Now, where is your Alpha? I need him.” I raise my eyebrows as I search around the tables.

“Talia, you shouldn’t be here.” The familiar voice makes me flinch from its harshness.

Onyx growls at Dax’s threatening tone, taking a step closer to me. Dax steps through the crowd which parts like the red sea for him. His muscles ripple with strength as his lean body gracefully approaches. He runs a hand through his thick, blond beard and his blue eyes study mine. My heart is beating a million miles a minute over just how gorgeous he is. He is mine. I refuse to leave here without him.

“I’m not leaving here without you Dax.” My heart rate is so high I know that everyone in this room can sense it, but I don’t care. Dax stops a few feet from us and studies me, his eyes bouncing back and forth between Onyx and me.

“My pack needs me. I won’t leave them,” he says, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Fine, bring them,” I snark without hesitation. The more the merrier, right?

Seth comes up behind Dax and an uneasiness settles over me. There has always been something about him that never sat

right with me.

“You think you can just waltz into our domain and demand we follow you?” Seth asks with a forced laugh.

“I could very well force all of you, actually, Seth,” I sass. This guy really has no idea what it feels like to be alpha barked, does he? “Kneel,” I bark. As a collective, the entire Pack falls to one knee. Oops, I was only asking for Seth to kneel. It still proves my point.

“You can’t force us to comply with this!” Seth spits from the floor at my feet. I can’t help but laugh at his predicament, he just looks so damn pathetic. But alas, he’s right. I don’t want to lead with forced commands.

“You’re right about one thing, I don’t want to lead by force. I want to lead you all because I’m the only one who can.” This has Dax growling and stepping up into my space. I pat his chest. “Easy, tiger, I’m not taking them from you.”

I walk past Dax and to the first shifter closest to us. “You, do you want to be free of this hellhole?” I question, waving my hand around. She nods in response and I smile at her. I look at the few around me and they nod as well. “Good, then trust that Dax and I will help get you free.” The crowd yells in response and some slowly get to their feet. I hold up my hands to silence them. “But there is something we need of you in return.” The entire room goes silent. “The Council must die.” Murmuring and whispers begin again.

Dax comes up behind me and places a hand on my shoulder. Looking up at him, he gives me a small smile that thaws my

cold heart just a little.

“The Council needs to pay for what they have done to all of us!” Dax walks over to a table and climbs up on top of it like the king he is. Fuck me, he’s so damn hot when he goes all alpha.

“I’ve told you since the beginning that we need to come together as one and fight for ourselves, for our freedom! Now is the time to act, who’s with me?” Dax bellows, his voice echoing.

I’m practically panting at his display of power, and really, I wish I could climb his sexy ass like a tree right about now. Dax turns his gaze back on me and gives me a small smile before jumping down and heading my way, never once breaking eye contact. He just expects those around him to give him space.

“You come into my Pack again and demand them to kneel, and I’ll lay you over my knee and spank that sexy ass until you beg me to stop.” He is towering over me, practically panting with the desire to turn my ass red. And to be honest... I kind of like the idea. I smirk and lean up onto my tippy toes to get closer to his ear.

“Promise?” I ask, taunting him.

“Kitten, I promise I’ll do it.” Oh, I know he will too.

I lick the side of his neck, making his whole body shiver. “Yummy, you taste so good,” I purr. Tempted to take a bite.

“Sweetheart, we need to go. You can play with Dax later,” Onyx says in that deep, sexy timber I love so much.

I pout as I turn to face my shadow which gives Dax the opportunity to slap my ass, hard.

Smack

The vibrations shoot straight to my clit, making me want more. I stop dead in my tracks as I try to control my hormones. Dax leans over my shoulder to whisper in my ear.

“I always keep my promises.” His hot breath blows my baby hairs, tickling my neck and making me shiver.

“Who’s ready to get the hell out of here?” I bellow.

The entire faction whoops and hollers in response; some of the wolves howl their agreement. I’m grinning from ear to ear, the rush of having the Pack backing me is exhilarating. Now, time to get the Den on my side. Shouldn’t be too hard with Micah now gone.

Chapter Twenty-Five



I NEVER THOUGHT I'D enjoy someone coming in and claiming my pack as their own, let alone let them live to tell the tale, but with Talia—she was born to lead us all to freedom. I'll gladly step to the side and watch her claim this entire prison as her own.

We leave the Pack to their own devices while Onyx, Talia, and I go to gather the masses.

I follow Talia as she marches down the hall toward B Block where the Den is currently recuperating from Onyx's power.

Knowing the savages, they are seeking revenge for what Onyx did to them and their Alpha. Not that I blame them, but getting them to see reason in such high emotional stakes won't be easy.

Onyx walks silently on my left, and for once I can honestly say I trust him to remain in control of his gifts. Not because Taila holds the pendant, but because I'm realizing that Onyx has never been the villain in the story as we had all made him out to be. The Council is. My beast paces back and forth, itching for the fight that is to come.

Taila whirls around to look at us both, her cheeks are flushed with adrenaline and I can't blame her. Everything in our lives is about to change.

"Both of you are going to stay here with the Pack," she alpha barks. Onyx growls, stepping into her space and wrapping a gloved hand around her throat. Anger boils in me at his dominant position over her. As I go to defend her, Talia holds up a hand to stop me. "What, Onyx? You told me I need to command them all. So let me do that."

Onyx tightens his grip on her throat. "How can I protect you if I'm not by your side?"

Talia's face softens as she places her own hand over his.

"I need you to trust me. This part must be done alone. If you go in there they may attack, and we don't need to lose anyone else. After your gift incapacitated them, they will be hungry for revenge. Let me show them it's The Council that deserves that wrath." She sounds so sure, so confident that I can't help

but believe her. Onyx believes her too, letting go of her throat and taking a step back, giving her a single nod. She grins maniacally as she kicks open the door.

“Honey, I’m home!” she calls out, making me chuckle.

I hope she knows what she is doing.

“Dax, you need to forgive Elijah. He did what he thought he needed to do, even if he was wrong. In the end, he sided with us,” Onyx says once Talia is out of sight.

I watch his mask as he speaks, wishing I could see his face to truly understand him better. I sigh, staring up at the ceiling.

“The truth is, I’ve already forgiven him. I just need time away from him,” I confess, looking back at Onyx.

Onyx gives me a single nod, the same way he did Talia. A warmth settles in me at having his approval.

“I need you to promise me something,” he begins. “Promise me that if I do not survive the pendant’s power you’ll look after her.”

My heart sinks into my stomach at his words. What? How can he expect me not to question him?

“Why would the pendant kill you?” I finally ask after a long pause, dreading the answer.

“I don’t know for sure, but I believe it is the reason why I cannot die— that it contains my life force, and with it gone...” His implication hangs between us.

If the pendant goes, he does too.

Fuck, how will Talia respond when she finds out? I refuse to keep this from her, but how can I not promise to care for her? I love her. The realization dawns on me like a brick to the face. My heart lies with both Elijah and Talia. I'll do anything necessary to have them free.

“Promise me,” he growls.

“I'll always care for her, Onyx. Always.”

Chapter Twenty-Six



I KNOW SHE WILL be okay if I don't make it through the unlinking. Guilt wracks my stomach over not telling Elijah and Talia what I fear will be the outcome of this spell.

Scanning the cafeteria, I can't help but be proud of Talia. She not only brought us all together, but she commanded herself as the leader. Among the masses are the Coven, Pack, and Den. I don't know how she managed to do it, but I would imagine convincing them they need revenge against The Council played a major role. Watching from the far corner as

she floats around from table to table getting everyone suited up with weapons, I have to wonder where they all came from.

My gaze lands on Callum, Lacy, and two others whom I don't recognize. I find myself walking in their direction just as Talia stops to talk with them. I watch their interactions as I approach, and it's clear she knows these two new guys. Talia laughs at something Callum says. Lacy covers her mouth to try and hide her own laughter.

"Stop harassing him, Talia," Lacy scolds. "He did get Bash and Enzo in here, along with all these weapons." She waves her hand around in a circle, clearly proud of her mate.

"True," Talia chuckles. "You did good, brother." She smiles up at Callum just as I stop a few feet away.

I feel awkward and truly suck at interactions. One thing I've never been good at is talking with people. Before Talia, I didn't talk to anyone at all.

My gaze shifts to Lacy, who is the closest to me and notices me first.

"Hey, Onyx," she greets me shyly. I don't really blame her, but it's nice to not see her cowering in fear of me anymore.

"Hi, Lacy," I mumble, for once glad she can't see my face.

"Bash, Enzo, this is Onyx," Lacy introduces us. "Onyx, these are my mates. Enzo here is a siphoner."

The one named Bash grunts his greeting, not saying anything. He is covered in tattoos, the only skin ink-free is his face.

“Hey,” Enzo says. “I’ll be the one helping Elijah break the curse.”

That surprises me. I was shocked when Elijah said he would help me break the pendant but understood he would help because he cares for Talia and she asked him to. I can’t understand why Enzo, a complete stranger, would help me.

“Why?” I blurt out.

Enzo’s smile widens at my outburst. “Why?” he repeats. “Because I can. As a siphoner, I have the ability to channel others’ magic to then create my own spells. With magic like yours, I’ll be able to channel the strongest magic our world has ever seen, guaranteeing we break the pendant.”

“But why? Why would you help me?” I still don’t understand, just because he knows how to do it doesn’t mean he should. Talia places a hand on my chest, getting my attention, I was so focused on the warlock I didn’t even notice her standing in front of me.

“He wants the same thing we do, Shadow. To be free. Free to love who he wants to love,” Talia says softly.

I look to Callum, who hugs Enzo from behind as Lacy gives Enzo a kiss before reaching out to take Bash’s hand. The love between them is almost palpable. A vampire, two witches, and a shifter. The Council would never allow it. I swallow thickly as understanding dawns on me. They believe, with me on their side, we can destroy The Council and be free to love. Free to live as we desire. All of us.

I look down at Talia, who's hugging me around the waist. The action is new and exciting, making my heart beat faster. Slowly, I wrap my hands around her small frame, hugging her back.

“Okay,” I say. “When do we do this?”

Enzo laughs, clapping his hands together once. Everyone else is wearing equally excited smiles on their faces. I wish I could share in their enthusiasm, but how can I, when I have no idea if I'll live once the pendant is broken? My gaze connects with Dax, who is standing off to the side with Elijah, and I wonder briefly if they have talked out all of their issues yet.

“We do it now. Then we can bust out of this joint and demand our freedom with an army backing our cause,” Enzo says with a mischievous smile on his lips.

Chapter Twenty-Seven

ELIJAH

COMING OUT OF MY spell room holding the ingredients needed to unlink Onyx, I run into a hard chest.

“Woah,” Dax says, grabbing my shoulders to steady me. My heart jumps up in my throat at just being near him again. I’m standing there stunned, wanting to say anything, but my mind is blank. “We need to talk,” he states.

I nod, setting the items on the table and taking a seat; maybe a little distance will help me clear my head.

“I’m sorry,” I blurt out. “I don’t deserve your forgiveness, but I’m hoping you’ll grant it to me anyway.”

Dax sighs and practically falls into the chair opposite me, resting his elbows on the table as he studies the items I selected.

“Onyx made me promise not to tell you or Talia, but I can’t keep this from you. Onyx believes his life force is tied to the pendant and that once it’s destroyed, it will take him with it.”

My eyes widen. Onyx might be right.

“Maybe Enzo’s help will make a difference?”

Neither of us speaks for a moment as we let the gravity of the situation sink in. Talia will break if she loses Onyx. Not only is he her anchor and helps clear her mind, but I know she loves him. My gaze jumps up from the table to meet Dax who is already intently watching me.

“We have to try, Eli. Onyx deserves his freedom too.”

Yeah, he deserves it, maybe more than anyone else.

Dax and I walk into the cafeteria together. It feels strange to be with him and not have solved any of our problems, but right now, we have more pressing matters to deal with than our feelings for each other.

D Block is crowded with inmates loitering around, preparing for the war that is to come. I wipe my hands on my shirt nervously. What if this all goes to shit?

“Stop worrying,” Dax whispers.

I look up at his smile, my heart aches at all I've put him through, and he still stands by my side. I don't deserve him, but I'm grateful. I find myself smiling back, the action foreign. I can't remember the last time I smiled like this.

"Hi, gentlemen," Talia purrs. "Have we fucked and made up yet?" She smiles mischievously at us, her hands on her hips.

My eyes bounce back and forth between them, unsure how to respond to her question.

"When are we doing the unbinding spell?" I ask instead, avoiding the awkwardness between Dax and me.

"Now," Enzo says, coming up with his Coven and Onyx lingering behind them. "Let's go outside."

Enzo, Onyx, and I stand in the center of the clearing. My eyes scan the crowd, landing on Talia. She's so beautiful and strong. I still can't understand why she thinks I'm worthy of her. Her smile brightens under my gaze, and I can't help but return it.

"I'll need the pendant." I reach out waiting for her to give it to me. Self-doubt settles in my stomach. If I were her, I wouldn't trust me with it. I haven't given her a reason to trust me. Anyone here, actually.

"Elijah, we trust you," Talia says confidently, passing the pendant to me. Who would have thought that instead of using the pendant to take down The Council, I'd be destroying it?

Enzo steps up next to me to peer down at the pendant.

"That's it?" he asks. "I always thought it would be bigger."

“That’s what he said,” Taila teases, laughing at her lame joke. I chuckle and fold my fingers over it, securing it in my fist.

“Onyx, you will have to take your gloves off for this part,” I say gently, knowing how he feels about physical touch.

The three of us form a small circle, connected by our hands. As I chant the incantation Enzo begins to pull the power into himself. A shiver racks his body as he attempts to ground himself.

Enzo gasps, pulling his hands back. Panting, he stares widely at me as he shakes his hand out.

“Did it work?” I ask. I’m concerned for him. His skin is pale, and his forehead is covered in a sheen of sweat.

“I don’t think so. It’s almost as if the pendant is channeling its own energy.” He starts pacing back and forth as he thinks. Stopping abruptly, he turns to Onyx. “Who created the pendant? If we can figure out what they’re channeling then maybe we can stop it.”

All eyes turn to Onyx, who rubs the back of his neck. Even without seeing his face, I know how uncomfortable it is for him to have everyone’s attention. Feeling the need to reassure him, I place a hand on his shoulder.

“It’s okay, you don’t have to say anything. We can try again.” I nod at Enzo who reluctantly forms the circle again.

I begin the incantation again as I watch Enzo struggle to maintain his grip over my fist where the pendant sits. With a

growl of frustration, Enzo throws his hand up in the air and starts pacing again.

“It’s no use. It’s like it has an endless supply of power. I can’t break it, I’m sorry,” he groans. “I think I’m going to be sick.” He turns and throws up all over the dirt and his shoes. After a few moments, Lacy runs up and murmurs something in his ear.

“He can’t do it, Talia. Please don’t ask him to try again,” Lacy says. She and Talia stare at each other for a moment before Talia gives her a small smile.

“Yeah, okay. We will just have to figure it out after we take down The Council,” Talia says, rubbing her head. The hex must be riding her hard and I can’t help but worry about her. “Onyx, do you have any idea who could be feeding the pendant energy?”

“Yes,” he whispers. “My mother’s bonded.”

Talia walks up and puts a hand on his chest.

“Who are they, Onyx?” she asks.

“The Council.”

Chapter Twenty-Eight



WHO WOULDN'T FEEL LIKE a badass with an entire army at your back? I grin as we march through the woods on the outskirts of Blood Moon Academy. The wolves run alongside me while the flock drifts high above us. Among those that fly overhead are some rarer beasts. One is a phoenix. His massive form burns bright, streaking the sky with reds and oranges. My eyes catch on a familiar set of wings. While they might be made of feathers, the body is that of a lion. Griffins are another extremely rare form. I smile, knowing Magnus and Damian are here to get the revenge they

deserve. The Council took Magnus's sister a few years ago, and he deserves retribution for her loss.

"Hey, kitten, how does it feel to seek your revenge?" Dax asks, coming up beside me. His muscles coil with the need to shift into his sabertooth. His long blonde hair covers his glowing yellow eyes.

"Like the world's best orgasm," I snark.

Dax throws his head back and barks out a laugh. I could listen to that sound all day

"That can be arranged," he growls. Butterflies dance around my belly at the thought.

"What can be arranged?" Elijah asks, pushing himself through the foliage. A smile plays on his lips. I love this new side of him, a man who doesn't hide his emotions.

"It would seem Dax here will give me the best orgasm, but he doesn't realize that both Onyx and yourself would play too," I answer, giving Elijah a playful wink.

Before Elijah can answer, tentacles of smoke curl around my waist and tug me to a stop. Onyx materializes before us, forcing us all to halt. The silence between us is deafening as we wait for Onyx's verdict. He was sent ahead to scope the academy and prepare us with a plan.

"The Council is already on school grounds. The warden warned them of our arrival," Onyx warns. I grit my teeth in irritation. Welp there goes my plan to attack from all sides at once, overwhelm them with the masses.

I exchange glances with my mates. All playfulness from a moment ago is gone. Nerves dance around my belly at all that is to come, over those that will inevitably be lost to our cause. Bracing myself, I face the entirety of the Blood Moon Prison inmates and address them.

“Prepare yourselves! The Council knows we are here. Even though we have lost the surprise element. I smell victory on the horizon!

“We don’t know what they are capable of or who will be their front line of defense. Do not wander off on your own. Unity is our only weapon!

“The Pack will start our offense while the Coven defends them. Protect the Pack with all you got.” I look to the Coven, where Lacy and her mates stand. “Once they are weakened...” I smile devilishly. “The Den of Savages will be released.”

The entire army remains eerily silent. Lethal and deadly. I nod my head at Lacy, she and her coven will lead the witches while Dax and I lead the shifters. Lacy rushes to me and pulls me into a hug.

“I know you have an army backing you, T, but please stay safe, okay?” Lacy’s voice is small and scared, making my heart beat frantically in my chest, the adrenaline seeps into my bones.

“Don’t worry, my Den has my back just as much as your Coven has yours.” I pull back and give her a smile. “Go, we have some mayhem to start.” Lacy smiles and returns to Enzo and Bash.

“Dax, let’s go,” I say and turn toward the treeline. I can feel the shifters at my back, ready to begin our fight for freedom, and I couldn’t be prouder.

The student parking lot is empty. My eyes scan the area suspiciously. The Pack stands sentinel, waiting for my queue. A movement to my left catches my eye– Damian and Magnus head toward us.

“What’s happening?” I ask in a low voice.

“The students are all in the pit,” Magnus grumbles. His stony face is devoid of emotion. Damian cackles. His psycho ass loves everything about this. I notice his gloves are missing and wonder how much power his ability has.

“The Council is there as well. They’re seeking an army of their own to defend against the radicals,” Damian says, pushing his dreads out of his face.

“So they aren’t prepared. Good.” I nod and face the Pack. “The students are being held in the pit along with the staff and Council. When we ambush, if the students try to run, let them. We aren’t here to massacre the entire school, just those who deem they hold power over us all.” I look at as many of the Pack as possible. I look at Dax and give him a nod.

“Follow me,” Dax announces as he pushes open the door to the pit.

Chaos erupts. Magic and shifters collide. Purple and blue streaks of fireworks burst out in defense, blinding us.

Shielding my eyes, I run. Screams and growls fill the air. It's then that my mind begins to hyper-fixate.

Kill. Devour. Destroy.

No, no, no! I tug at my hair to stay in control. No! I refuse to let Hexa gain control of me. I can't! The inmates are expecting me to lead them to freedom. My head pounds with the hex's force, my vision blurring. My fangs lengthen with the need to feed. Memories of the last time I was at the academy resurface. Dan. He needs to die.

Focusing all my energy, blood lust, and rage, I scan the area for a shaved head. I know he is here. Those who want access to more power will want The Council to remain corrupt. Power fueled Dan when he took on the hex's power. For him to access that power, the hex must be completed. Three must sacrifice themselves: one shifter, one witch, and one vampire. The only one left standing is me. If I fulfill Hexa's demands... he wins. I grit my teeth and stand on shaky legs. My fingernails dig into the palms of my hands.

"Well, well, well. What do we have here?" Dan says, coming up behind me.

I smile. "Just the pathetic warlock I was looking for," I singsong. Behind Dan stand six men, all no doubt here to try to kill me. I can't help but laugh. "You know if someone kills me, the Hex won't work, right?"

"Dan nods at the guy closest to him, who immediately rushes me, fangs extending, eyes glowing red. Before he can sink his teeth into me, my fist is punching into his chest cavity

and ripping out his heart. My head pounds hard with Hexa's approval, but I ignore it. Two more come at me from the sides. Both shift into wolves and launch themselves at me. I snatch the maw of one and pry his jaw apart. Blood coats my face in a spray of scarlet. The second's teeth sink into my calf, making me angry. I kick out, sending the wolf flying and slamming into the wall; plaster and debris fall around his limp form.

"Who's next?" I taunt. Dan laughs and signals two more forward. The closest one tosses a potion at my feet. When the vial breaks, inky, black smoke fills my lungs, making me cough. My eyes water and my vision is obscured. Hexa hisses in protest, and somehow I find the effect no longer present. Fuck, she's getting stronger, but I can't worry about that right now. At least she did something useful for once.

Pain erupts on my shoulder, pulling a rage-fueled scream from my lips. I grip the attacking vampire by the hair and body slam him to the floor. With my knees in his chest, I pull until I sever his head from his body—Hexa's curse roars from within, urging me further. Adrenaline pumps through my veins as the last warlock sinks a needle into my neck. My limbs lock, and I slump to the floor. Dan hovers over my limp form, muttering an incantation. My vision tunnels into darkness.



"Talia!" a voice startles me from within the fog. "Wake up, kitten, please," Dax's voice is filled with desperation. I groan, sitting up. Dizziness makes me nauseous.

“What happened?” I look up at Dax, his brows furrowed in concern.

“We have to leave.” He urges me to stand. When my legs go weak, he sweeps me up into his arms and run towards the exit.

“Wait! We can’t leave them, Dax!” I kick out my feet, making him put me down. I refuse to leave anyone behind, not Lacy, nor Callum. Elijah and Onyx are my Den, and I won’t leave them. I gasp, reaching for the pendant—only to find it’s not there. I scream in frustration, genuine fear wracking my body. Dan. He played me for a fool, and I let him. Fueled by Hexa’s bloodlust, I’ve done the one thing that he wanted. Now I’ve lost something that matters to me. Someone who has shattered the walls that I’ve built around my heart. My mate. My Onyx.

“Talia, we have to go. Now! The Council is manipulating Onyx. If we don’t leave, we all die,” Dax begs, tugging on my hand. Yanking myself free, I sprint back into the chaos.

The horror spread out before me has me screeching to a halt. Onyx is mask-free, shadows emanating from his body in all directions. I pant as I watch those closest to him drop like flies. No, these are my people! The Council can’t get away with this! Before I can question my life choices, I vamp speed to Onyx’s side.

“Onyx!” I scream, trying to get his focus on me. My blood pumps loudly in my ears. He doesn’t even acknowledge me screaming for him, so lost within the souls he is devouring.

“Shadow! Fight! Fight for us!” I beg. “Stop it. Please. For me,” I end on a sob.

Slowly, his gaze lands on me. His skin is a sickly gray, littered with scars from burns. My heart breaks for what they have done to him. Tears stream down my face as my breath gets caught in my throat. I have to stop him.

With steady steps, I reach out and touch his arm. A chill seeps straight to my bones. His shadows lick up my body and just as I think I might have made the biggest mistake, they disappear. Everything around me turns to background noise.

“Kill them, Shadow. Make them pay for what they have done.” I put as much alpha bark into my words as I can. “Make The Council pay,” I hiss through clenched teeth.

Onyx’s chest rises and falls as he watches me. His sigil glows white with the power of the pendant. I know with all the carnage around me he has the power to fight back, for now. If he doesn’t act soon, it will be too late.

Slowly, he turns and faces the bleachers. At the top sit three alphas—the Council. Rage builds within my very soul at what they have done to us all. It ends now.

“Destroy them, Onyx.”

Onyx lifts his hands slowly in their direction. All three jump up in unison. The one in the center shifts, his body morphing into that of a beast similar to my shadow. He launches himself down the bleachers and barrels right toward us. Another of The Council grips the pendant tightly, muttering something,

but I don't give him time to complete it. Within a blink, I'm gripping the sides of his head and twisting it roughly to the side.

"No!" the third alpha screams, his eyes glow red with rage as he attempts to stop me, but it's too late. His bonded blood already covers my hands. He lunges at me, but before he can touch me Elijah and Dax step between us. Dax's saber's claws dig into his face, ripping into the sensitive flesh as he roars in rage. Elijah's hands hold a ball of fire that ignites the Alpha into flames. The red and orange consume him as he topples down the stairs.

For a moment, we just stand there, thinking we have won. Onyx picks up the pendant and folds his fingers over the ruby. Blinding white light seeps between the cracks of his fingers.

"If I don't destroy the pendant, they will rise again," Onyx warns. I watch in awe as the pendant shatters and Onyx collapses from the release of power.

"Onyx!" I scream. No, we can't have come this far just for me to lose him. I collapse to the floor and grab his face between my hands. Slowly, his skin begins to glow, his sigil pulsing with power. His charred skin cracks and beneath that lies smooth, pale skin. As the connection between him and the pendant dies, Onyx's true form is finally free. His face is strong, with a jaw that could cut glass. His dark eyelashes lay heavy against his cheeks, hiding his eyes from me. He appears healed, but his body is stagnant, unmoving. Just once, I wish I could have seen his smile. I sob, clutching his body to mine in

desperation. Dax and Elijah stand on either side of me, each placing a hand on my shoulder in silent support. No! This wasn't supposed to happen! How dare he sacrifice himself!

Slowly, I set Onyx's body down, giving his lips a tender kiss. The only kiss we will ever share. I rest my forehead on him for a moment. Gathering the courage, I let him go. Looking out at the sea of bodies, my heart breaks for all we have sacrificed to gain freedom. Among the carnage sit Callum, Bash, and Enzo.

"Lacy?" my hoarse voice barely above a whisper. I can't handle losing anyone else I love. "Where is she?"

I run in blind panic towards my brother's Coven. I've never seen him look so broken. I pant through my emotions, trying to remain calm, but seeing her body... Her skin has shadows climbing under the surface. Onyx killed her.

"Callum," my voice breaks as I stop a few feet from him. My eyes search his. He shakes his head and looks back down at Lacy. Bash clutches her to his chest as he rocks back and forth. The beta, who never shows emotions, has silent tears streaming down his face. I look at Enzo, who refuses to make eye contact with me. I did this to them. My rage and revenge took the only thing they care about.

Hexa rears her ugly head, demanding blood and retribution. I turn and zero in on Dan with one thing in mind. Revenge.

"My fucking turn," I spit with venom.

Dan is not too far away from where we mourn the loss of family. The sick fuck is enjoying seeing our pain.

I scream a battle cry, and I rush into him. He doesn't see me coming as I sink my teeth into his neck and rip his throat out. The blood from the wound muffles the screams seeping out of Dan's mouth as he falls to the floor. I stand there, panting through my rage and bloodlust, as Dan's wound begins to knit itself back together. I growl in frustration as I watch him stand back up.

"You thought it would be that easy?" Dan taunts, pulling a vial out of his pocket.

I clench my hands so tightly my fingernails break the skin. If he thinks I'm going to go down without a fight he is sorely mistaken

"Remember, Dan," I spit out his blood, hating the taste of it. "You kill me, the power of the hex is gone." I cackle a full-blown belly laugh as Dan's eyes narrow with hatred. Channeling my rage, my fury, and my strength— I bark out an Alpha command.

"Kill, devour, destroy," my voice booms throughout the pit, vibrating off the walls of the alcove.

For a moment, those that survived the massacre turn and face me. Then each and every one of them; mages, beasts, and savages alike, swarm in like bees to honey. I watch as teeth tear into his flesh and his limbs are ripped from his body. His earth-shattering screams overpower the growls and snarls of the frenzy. Within seconds, his body lies in pieces on the floor.

I feel the hex fade from my head as the room grows quiet once more.

“Talia, look,” Elijah says. I glance back, and he and Dax are walking toward me. I was so distracted I didn’t see Dax shift back. I follow Elijah’s hand and see some of our fallen rise. I gasp as I look back to Lacy, still lying limply in Bash’s arms. What is happening?

“Onyx didn’t kill them,” Dax says. My gaze flicks to his. I hadn’t realized I’d asked that out loud.

Hope fills me as I watch them all rise, one by one. I rush to Lacy’s side and study her beautiful face, her curly black hair sits in a halo around her head. Lacy gasps, her eyes fly open and land on Enzo. He sobs and pulls her into his arms.

“Never scare me like that again, *amor*. I thought I lost you. I couldn’t bear this life without you.” My heart soars for Lacy and her Coven. I’m happy for them, truly. But I can’t help but hang my head at the loss I’ll always feel in my heart.

I turn and face Elijah and Dax and give them a watery smile. Dax pushes my hair off my forehead before pulling me into his arms. A sob racks my body, making my knees weak. Dax slowly lowers us to the floor, rocking me.

“I’m so sorry, kitten,” he murmurs into my hair. I can feel Elijah rubbing circles on my back as they let me break down.

“It’s not fair! He never got the chance to truly live. He was a prisoner his whole life. It’s not fair!” I pound my fists into Dax’s chest over and over until I’m exhausted.

Once my tears are cried out, I sit there numbly, staring up at the stars for the first time in ages, not knowing where to go from here. How does one move on from love? I wish I had told him I loved him. Leaning back, I look between my mates.

“I love you, both of you,” I tell them. You never know when it’s too late, and I refuse to waste another second with them, not knowing how much I care for them.

“We love you too, kitten. You’re ours,” Dax whispers, leaning in and gently kissing me.

“You always have us. Never forget that.” Elijah’s honey voice promises.

I turn to Elijah and kiss him too. His hand pushes into my hair as he shows me how he feels about me.

“What about me, Red?” a husky voice asks.

I gasp, pulling away from Eli. The man before me is lanky. His sandy blond hair falls into his hazel eyes. His lips curl into a small smile. My soul calls to his like he is the half that makes me whole.

“Onyx.” My voice is breathy. I stand on wobbly legs and take a step toward him. He opens his arms wide, a silent invitation. I grin and launch myself at him. He catches me with ease, tucking my hair behind my ear lovingly. “How are you alive?”

“When the pendant broke, it forced me into my shadow realm. I couldn’t just leave our people there. Before I joined

them here, I helped them find their way back. I'm truly sorry I took so long, but I couldn't find Lacy."

We both look at her, and she gives him a warm smile.

"Thank you," she whispers. Onyx nods before turning back to me.

"Forgive me?" I can see the hesitation in his eyes.

"There is nothing to forgive. You saved us all." I kiss him hard. Pushing my tongue against his lips and taking him for the first time. His hand grips my ass tightly as he devours my mouth. I'm left panting and wanting more.

"All right, enough, you two," Lacy laughs.

Onyx sets me down, and before I realize it, I'm crying again and clutching Lacy to me. We both cry as we comfort each other.

Pulling back, I look at everyone, savage smiles on all our faces. We are all free. Free to live and love the way we want. The way we deserve.

Epilogue



Stormy's Tenth Birthday

TINY SQUEALS OF JOY are the first thing I hear as I wake up. A smile creeps across my lips as I remain still, listening.

“Do you think he is still asleep?” Stormy asks in a hushed voice.

“I don't know. Should we tickle him?” Mia asks.

My daughter is five years old now and just like her mama. She's a mischievous little thing. The girls giggle again and flop down on the bed beside me, reminding me I'm alone. Where did my mates go?

“Daddy! Wake up!” Mia's voice is full of excitement.

“Raw!” I yell, making both girls squeal again as I tickle them.

“Say, Uncle!” I demand between tickles.

“Uncle X, stop,” Stormy says between peals of laughter.

“Close enough,” I say. “Happy birthday, Storm. Today is a special day!” I smile down at my niece fondly. Her bright smile is infectious.

Footsteps have all three of us jumping under the covers. A tiny knee digs into my side as we hide from the intruder. Mia giggles, covering her mouth when Stormy shushes her.

“All right, you hooligans. It's time for Stormy to go and get ready. Onyx, Talia is asking for you,” Rain says from the

doorway.

I fling the blanket off the bed entirely, making the girls scream and dive to hide again. Rain gives Stormy a hard look that she honestly can't pull off. She's just too sweet to be stern.

"Stormy," Rain singsongs, "daddy Magnus made pancakes."

Stormy jumps off the bed and barrels past Rain, yelling over her shoulder, "Bye!"

Rain and I both chuckle. Before she turns to leave, I stop her.

"Rain, I needed to talk to you for a moment." Looking down at Mia, I say, "Love, why don't you go find daddy Eli, and I'll be right there." I nod towards the door as I get off the bed.

"Everything okay?" Rain asks, her brows furrowing in concern.

"Fine. I just wanted to know how you would feel if I reopened the school. I want to provide a place where our children can grow and flourish in their gifts. Find their bonds. A place where Stormy can be safe."

Rain watches me for a moment, considering my idea before her head slowly nods in agreement. "I think that's a lovely idea, Onyx. Our kids need somewhere safe."

A warmth fills my chest at her approval.

"What are you guys doing in here?" Silas' voice says from the doorway with Damian right on his heels.

“Well, isn’t this the best welcoming committee? Did you bring me breakfast in bed, too, Damian?” I tease.

Damian cackles, his dreads falling in his face. “Well, my sweetness has been missing for too long. She was supposed to find Stormy and come back for breakfast, and Stormy returned without her. So here we are,” he says dramatically, waving his hands into a bow, and making Rain laugh.

“Oh, stop it. I’m coming,” she says, rolling her eyes playfully.

“Not yet, you’re not,” Silas grumbles under his breath, making Rain blush.

“Freak,” she gasps.

“Only for you,” he says, and you can feel the sexual tension in the air as his beast shows through, sending Damian’s beast into the fray as well. Slapping his chest, Rain says with a breathless laugh. “Let’s go before you guys get into any more trouble.”

Damian and Silas walk out first, leaving Rain at the doorway, “I think you’re right. We need a new academy.” With a small smile, she leaves.

When I finally arrive, the party is in full swing. Rain, Talia, and Lacy outdid themselves. The compound is decorated with pale pink and lavender. There are balloons, a jump house, and a table full of snacks with a ginormous cake at the center.

“Fancy seeing you here,” a sultry voice purrs. A shiver runs down my spine as I look over at my mate. Even to this day, my

heart gallops in my chest at her smile. Her long red hair is down and flows freely in the gentle breeze. I reach over and tuck the loose strands behind her ear and capture her mouth with mine. Talia melts into my touch, and for a moment, I forget our family surrounds us. Family. Such a strange concept for me, but it's one I've grown to appreciate over the years.

“Hello, beautiful,” I murmur against her mouth. Talia hums in approval.

“Daddy! Cake!” Mia says from beside me, tugging on the hem of my shirt as she bounces on her toes in excitement.

“Attention, everyone,” Magnus calls out. We all gather around as we listen to him continue. “I want to thank everyone for coming out and celebrating my sunshine’s tenth birthday.” He smiles down at his daughter, taking her hand in his. “Today, Stormy will ascend and her beast form will be revealed. No matter her status, we are all proud of you,” he tells her.

Our family claps and hollers in unison as Stormy looks out at us all with a smile on her lips.

“It’s time for cake and ice cream,” Damian calls out.

I watch Rain and Lacy pass out plates as my bonds come over.

“Hey, have you talked with Rain yet?” Dax asks, rubbing a hand through his long blond hair. I watch Elijah scoop Mia into his arms and hold her close.

“Yes, she likes the idea of our children having a school of their own.”

Elijah nods. “Good. Have we chosen a name yet?”

Before I can answer, Rain yells from across the yard. “It’s happening!” We all turn to Stormy, whose sigil across her chest begins to glow. The color is a vibrant blue, just like her mother’s. An Omega. My heart beats in my chest, another reminder of how much we need this school.

Stormy drops down to her knees, a panicked look crossing her face. Silas crouches down before her, murmuring in her ear as he rubs soothing circles on her back.

Black fur begins to sprout down Stormy’s arms as she screams through the change. Within seconds a little girl is no longer standing before us and I know we have made the right decision in reopening the school.

It won’t be Blood Moon any longer but a new name, a new beginning.

New Moon Academy.

Home to all.

Miss Renae

I am a why-choose paranormal fantasy author—a dog trainer by day and a spicy romance author by night. Be sure to follow me to get all updates on upcoming releases!

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