



ON THE AIR

TSU AFTER DARK SERIES

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLING AUTHORS

TL REEVE & MICHELE RYAN

On The Air

TSU BOOK 6

TSU - AFTER DARK

BOOK ONE

TL REEVE
MICHELE RYAN



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Welcome to TSU After Dark

Natasha Nemescu is ready to start a new chapter of her life—even if it is a couple years later than she intended. As a new student at Turnskin University, she looked forward to her classes and a chance to join the new Co-ed Greek house she'd learned so much about while trying to find the right college for her.

However, when she arrives nothing goes according to the plans she's made. Her classes are at night. She's getting weird looks from the rest of the students, and everyone is calling her “your highness.”

Natasha isn't royalty—she'd know if she was.

Yet, three men are about to rock her world and prove to her there is royal blood in her system. Whoever said college would be the best years of her life, obviously never met Natasha Nemescu.

To My Family

Thank you for putting up with long nights, no sleep and my “one more chapter” speech. It’s a pain in the butt sometimes, but you guys never waiver. Thank you for the food too. Without it, I’d starve, and I’d never have the brain power to write that “one more chapter.”

To Michele

Thank you. Seriously. Sometimes I don’t know what I would do without you. You are the one person who can put me in my place when I need it and also my biggest champion. I didn’t know when we first met, if we’d be friends, let alone seven years later, here we are. Thank you for everything. And, yes, I hope you’re a sobbing mess right now. he-he-he

To You, Dear Reader

Thank you. For everything. These stories have become near and dear to Michele and my heart. This new series is dedicated to you. This is my fun series. Stay tuned for more.

A Note From Us

Dear Readers,

Welcome back to TSU.

After several long discussions with Michele, we have decided to open our world up for the things that go bump in the night. When we first started TSU, we hadn't even contemplated the whole demons, vampires, or witches aspect. However, when I got invited to Milly's Sassy world—a world where there are shifters, humans, demons, witches, vampires, and such... Well, Michele and I got bold.

We have created a new subseries for TSU: TSU After Dark. A whole series dedicated to those creatures who are night dwellers. Radio Sass is the first book. We also have plans for more demons and vampires. We're just putting it all together now, so we can start this new chapter of our series. We are so stinking excited. I can't even explain it.

Some of the original characters from TSU will make appearances in each book, and some will even transfer over into our other Window Rock World series.

Did I mention Natasha and her brothers are also the heirs to the Nemescu company and fortune?

We hope you enjoy this book. As always you can drop us a line at authortreeve@hotmail.com or michele.ryan@hotmail.com and if you'd like, you can join our facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/RandRavingreaders/ Also, if you want to follow along with our Window Rock World you can do so @ www.apachecountyshifters.com or <https://www.tsuafterdark.blogspot.com/>

Until next time, keep reading!

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Chapter

One

“Natasha Nemescu,” Natasha said, stepping up to the table situated in the middle of Turnskin University’s quad. She’d been waiting for this since moment since her brother called her. “Freshman.”

The dark hair girl glanced up at Natasha, then searched through the organized packets resting in a brown storage box. “Nemescu, you say?” She arched a brow while she continued to delve through the folders. She didn’t seem too overtly nice, but then again, Natasha didn’t know her, and she didn’t know Natasha.

The last time she talked to her brothers, talks which were becoming less frequent by the week, they tried to prepare her for what to expect. Unfortunately, what they said and what she experienced were two different things. It made her a bit self-conscious and also wonder if she’d made the right decision. *You’re here now. No looking back.*

Sebastian and Erik were five years older than Natasha and spent more time with their mother and father before their mother passed away. No one talked about her—their—father, but the disconnect between her and her brothers only seemed to widen as they grew older. While she played with dolls, they were gaining interest in girls and hanging out with friends. Her

grandmother and grandfather did the best they could to hold the family together, and she appreciated them and their sacrifice. At their age, it couldn't have been easy raising a five-year-old girl and twin ten-year-old boys.

After a while, she stopped trying with them. One day when they were ready, she assured herself, they would come back into her life. Until then, she made the best of everything.

Then last year, her brother Sebastian reached out to her. He told her about Turnskin University and encouraged her to join them. According to the information she learned while researching the school, the whole school catered to others with a smattering of humans. The Co-Ed house was new too. The once low performing sorority had been transformed into something more—better. Something anyone who joined would be proud of. Natasha jumped at the chance to join them.

“Oh, here we go,” the girl said, grabbing her file. “Since you’ve pre-applied for our new Co-Ed house, your registration form is in your packet along with your class schedule, maps and other pertinent information.”

Natasha accepted the envelope and opened it. As she looked through it, she frowned. “I’m sorry...night classes? I kind of wanted day time.”

The girl tilted her head then shrugged. “Well, sorry.” The girl looked at her for a second more, then held her hand up. “Next.”

“Yeah, sure.” Natasha stuffed everything into the folder then shoved it back into the packet. She turned from the table. *Oh well, what do you expect? You’re the newbie. Not top man on the totem pole.*

True enough.

“They always do this.” A guy came up beside her. “Jacob.” He held out his hand. “Junior.”

He had short brown hair and amazing green eyes. In the late-afternoon sun, Natasha swore she saw something preternatural within them. *It's probably because you've been driving all day. You need a nap.* Jacob stood a few inches taller than her. He didn't have the bulk of a shifter, nor was he slim like a vampire. He had an athletic build and an easy smile.

Natasha took his hand. “Natasha.”

“Nice to meet you. So, night classes huh? I have them too.”

“I'm not happy about it.” In the spring, she'd sign up for the classes she really wanted, during the day. “But, it's only for a semester, I can handle it.” She lifted her chin slightly.

“It's not so bad,” he said. “You might like them.”

“Yeah, maybe.” Not really.

As she started away from the crowd with Jacob, stray glances were thrown her way along with the murmurs of her last name.

“Nemescu...” one said.

“What did she say? Nemescu?” A girl gave Natasha a side-eyed glance.

“No way,” another whispered.

The uncomfortable sensation of being ogled slid down her spine and settled in the pit of her stomach. Natasha pushed a strand of her hair behind her ear and quickened her pace. She didn't understand why they were so consumed by her name, or why some of them sounded as though they were in awe of her existence. Truth be told, she was more of a Niven—her

grandfather's last name—than a Nemescu. She couldn't remember a time her grandfather Liam, hadn't been there for her. And when her mom passed away, leaving her alone with her brothers, Liam actually made it a point to make sure she understood she belonged. *Ugh, you're just being dramatic. They probably know your brothers.*

"Nemescu, huh?" Jacob cocked a brow. "Well, it's good to meet you, I'm sure we'll see each other around."

"Yeah, sure. I bet we will." She smiled up at him. "Good to meet you, Jacob."

"Likewise." He winked before heading in the opposite direction.

She pulled her keys from her pocket as she drew near her car. She'd rented one of those small pull along trailers for her things, so not to inconvenience her grandparents. Between her grandmother's shop and her grandfather's butcher business, she didn't feel right asking them to help. Her grandmother hadn't been happy about the idea of her going it alone. Her grandfather even less so. However, once she made her choice to attend Turnskin University, she jumped in with both feet. Kids were supposed to leave the nest, right? She was twenty after all, not a child. An adult.

After getting into her car, Natasha rested her head against the headrest. The drive had taken sixteen hours. She stopped twice to eat and once to nap. She didn't have the funds to go all out and rent a hotel room for the night. Nor did she want to push herself to drive the long distance without really knowing where she was going. Instead, she pulled into a truck stop and parked near the big rigs. The clatter of cow hooves on metal had woken her early the next morning.

When she opened her eyes, the truck's driver stood near her driver side window, startling her. She reached for her bag where she had a can of pepper spray. She'd been willing to use it, until he gave her a friendly smile and held up a disposable insulated cup.

"Coffee?" The guy handed it to her when she rolled down the window. "You looked pretty out of it last night."

She had been. She reported for her final shift at the shop with her grandmother then went home at two in the afternoon to finish packing the trailer. By the time she pulled into the truck stop, it'd been midnight. "Yeah, sorry." She took the cup from him. "I hope I didn't bother you."

"Nah," he answered. "Just different seeing... this."

He bought her breakfast, then wished her well. When they pulled out of the driveway, Natasha continued west while the man headed east to the slaughter house. She grinned. In the last twenty-four hours she'd forged a completely different life, for sure, but a sense of pride welled within her.

She grabbed her welcome kit off the seat beside her. As much as she knew how to get into the school, she hadn't seen Greek row where all the houses were located. A giddy spark of excitement shimmered within her when she spotted the new Co-Ed house on the map. Part of the house's motto reminded everyone they had a place to call home. No matter their sexual orientation, gender, shifter, demon, vampire, or human. It kind of reminded her of Baker Springs in a way. She never felt like an outsider even though she knew nothing was what it seemed there. When she turned eight, her grandmother and grandfather figured she was old enough to know the truth. She lived in a community of others.

That day, she accepted their words as truth and never doubted for a second what her grandparents told her. As she'd grown older, those truths were reinforced and it'd been why, when her brothers told her about Turnskin University, she'd immersed herself in researching the school and where she'd be living.

Bell Dryer, President, and Hayden Rafferty-Lopez, Vice President, along with their Secretary, Victor Lorenz had reached out to her for a video conference. They were all so nice. Victor had impeccable style, while Bell reminded her of a, well, Stepford wife. She hated even thinking it, but the girl had some serious retro clothing issues. Hayden on the other hand reminded her of what an Alpha wolf should look like. Lean, tough as nails, but when she laughed, she became this sparkling person Natasha couldn't take her eyes off of.

Natasha pulled out of her spot and followed the directions on the map she'd placed on the seat next to her. Now, she wished she would have arrived sooner, not just because the school was huge, but because she hoped to see her brothers and spend time with them as well. *Later. I can do it later.*

She glanced at her surroundings while following the directions. There were acres of wooded area for shifters to run whenever they needed, along with a tranquility she'd come to yearn for. It'd been why she loved Baker Springs, Nevada so much. Miles upon miles of open land and serenity. There were hiking trails everywhere and she'd explored each and every one of them. She wondered if she could do the same at school. *Later. You have plenty of time.*

As she turned the corner onto the street she needed, a moving van blocked the driveway of a pretty swank house. Two girls, blondes, stood near the vehicle tapping their feet

while swiped tears from their eyes. Another girl stood near the gate carrying on an animated conversation with a nice-looking older guy. The man wore a grim expression as the girl continued to rail against him. *Okay, I've gotta find out what happened there.* She never considered herself a nosey person, but she did make the occasional exception.

The address to the home she needed appeared a few hundred feet from the glitzy house she drove past, and Natasha pulled into the small parking lot. She couldn't believe the place. It reminded her more of a lodge than a house. The white stucco facade complemented the mocha trim. There were four cars in the lot on the side of the house, which left one spot on the end. It might be the farthest from the door, but she'd deal. As she got out, she took in her surroundings. The two-story monster of a house stood out in contrast to the others near them. Music played in the back yard while conversations echoed off the outer walls. A sign had been posted on the gate, announcing everyone was welcome and to come on in.

“Don't mind if I do.”

Natasha pushed open the gate and sucked in a breath. Their property went on forever. At least five hundred feet from where she stood, sat a gazebo where a group of people were sitting carrying on a conversation. To the right were a few picnic tables also filled with guests. A splash of water drew her attention. In the pool, lounged a couple cuddled together, while another duo sat near the curve in the pool, laughing. The curvy girl closest to Natasha couldn't take her eyes off the hot guy beside her. *Mates.*

More than once she wondered what it would be like to find the one person who would complete her. She'd only experienced it vicariously through her grandparents and those

in Baker Springs. Sometimes she wanted it more than she wanted her next breath and the next minute, she hated it with a passion. She despised feeling jealous of those she considered friends. She supposed it'd also factored into her leaving home. Most of the people she went to high school with and had lived side-by-side with were pairing up, and she couldn't even get a date. Sure, she had the occasional friend with benefits, but even *that* well was drying up quick.

Of course, she'd never tell anyone about it. She didn't want them to pity her or try setting her up with their cousin twice removed on their mom's, sister's, best friend's human side or whatever. It just felt weird. To her, she'd rather be single than get setup.

The gate clattered shut behind her, and all eyes were on her. Natasha swallowed hard, raising her hand to wave. A petite blonde, the same one she spoke to during the video conference approached. She wore a small pair of jean shorts and a tank top. *So, she's not always dressed so primly, good to know.* Bell smiled at Natasha as she extended her hand.

"You made it!" Her bright smile eased a bit of Natasha's anxiety. "Did you find everything okay? What about checking in? Do you need any help?"

A man the size of a mountain lumbered over to them. "Bell, don't suffocate her." A twinkle of humor lit the guy's blue eyes. His larger than life form towered over Bell. "I'm Christoph, Bell and Jackson's mate."

Natasha blinked. "Uh..."

"Did you tell her we're fucking too?" Another man, Natasha suspected could be this Jackson Christoph spoke of, approached. "You're a horny fucking lion."

Christoph snatched at the front of the other man's shirt and yanked him forward. "Can't help it." He claimed the man's mouth, and a soft sigh passed Bell's lips.

Well damn. What a welcome to the neighborhood.

"Can you guys suck face somewhere else, please?" Another girl appeared near the rear of the house. "We have company." She pointed to Natasha.

Bell blushed. "Sorry. We've only been mated a year."

Oh. "Congratulations," Natasha answered.

"Thanks." Bell beamed. "So, did you bring your things or are you waiting for them to be shipped?"

"Brought them with me?" Natasha hitched her thumb over her shoulder, toward where she parked her car.

Bell grinned. "Great!" She linked arms with Natasha and drew her near the edge of the patio. "Everyone, I have an announcement to make." Those who were further out eased forward. "This is our new pledge, Natasha Nemescu. Natasha, this is everyone." Bell pointed toward the pool and ticked off several names. "That's Hayden and Nico, and Bodhi, Hayden's twin, and his mate Emma. Then my brother Tate and of course you know Victor, his mate."

She waved at everyone as a small murmur of conversations rippled through the crowd of people. She caught bits and pieces of it. Most were talking about her last name...again. *What the hell is going on here?* "Hi. It's, uh, great to be here."

"Her stuff is in her car, so you know what that means," Christoph stated. "Get your lazy asses up and help us get her settled."

Natasha frowned. “No.” She winced at her tone. “Sorry. What I mean is no thanks, it’s cool. I’ve got this. You’re having a party.”

“Nonsense,” Jackson replied, taking her hand and bowed. “Your highness.”

Natasha snatched her hand back and scrunched up her face. *The fuck?* “I am not a princess.” She pointed to herself, not sure why she’d suddenly become nervous. “Human, nobody.” Had they really thought she was royalty? Is that why they were giving her weird looks? *Maybe he’s just being a sarcastic asshole, and here you are spazzing out. Way to make a first impression,* she chided herself.

“My mistake.” Jackson glanced over at Christoph who shrugged. “Anyway, as the newest member of our makeshift family, it would be an honor to help you get settled. Plus, the faster we get this done, the quicker you can relax by the pool with a refreshing drink.”

“Don’t drink the punch.” The girl who reprimanded Bell earlier came up beside her. “I’m Zoe, Bell’s twin sister.”

Natasha’s gaze flicked between both girls. No way in hell. They were as different as night and day. Where Bell had been blonde and blue-eyed, Zoe had black hair, violet eyes and a full sleeve tattoo on her right arm. She wore more leather than Natasha owned, and it seemed had a fetish for bracelets—leather, rope, or chain it didn’t matter, they were bunched up on her left wrist.

“We take after each of our parents,” Bell stated.

“But, not by much,” Zoe added then hitched her thumb in Bell’s direction. “She’s the weird one of the family.”

Bell gasped, then stuck her tongue out at her sister. “Anyway, some of us are missing. Shelly and Joy are signing up for some classes, and Raquel moved out.” A contemplative look came over the girl’s face. “She just had my nephew a couple of months ago. Her and Utah have been staying at the apartment they rented near the campus with her brother. Kind of like Emma and Bodhi, she has an apartment off campus because her little sister lives with her.”

Natasha absorbed everything Bell told her. As they entered the house, another guy sat on the couch near the sliding glass door. He didn’t even look up from his book when they walked into the house. Bell stopped beside him and laid her hand on his shoulder. He glanced up and gave her a brilliant smile. “This is Utah,” she said as she signed as well. “The aforementioned baby daddy. He comes by sometimes to have dinner with us. Utah is our only tiger who’s also a lion.”

Natasha cocked her head to the side. A deaf shifter? No way. They were supposed to be invulnerable to human maladies. She waved at the guy who inclined his head. “It’s really true what I read online about you and most especially your families.” She covered her mouth, embarrassed she’d said such out loud. “Sorry.”

Zoe snickered. “Don’t be. My sister is a regular Dudley Do Right.”

Bell groaned. “Shut up, Zoe.”

“I think it’s great,” Natasha said. “You’ve made this inclusive community here. You guys should be proud of yourselves.”

“Thank you.” Bell led her upstairs while the others trailed behind. “So, do you have any questions so far about anything?”

Tons. Like why Jackson had said your highness. Or why she had night classes. Plus, the whispering... “Do all first years have night classes?” Okay, so, not subtle but she’d been a little bummed none of her school time would be spent outside soaking up the sun.

Jackson came up beside her. “No, they don’t.” He gave her a curious look. His eyes were different, almost iridescent in color. “Those classes are usually reserved for our night dwellers.”

Natasha laughed. “Night dwellers? You mean, vampires?” So far, everyone had been so different than the citizens of Baker Springs. Where she came from everyone lived and worked together. Here they liked to keep people apart. *Weird.*

“So much more,” Jackson replied. “Demons, unseelie fae, witches...”

“Okay, so the fae thing is a little unusual, I’ll admit that much,” she replied.

Jackson gazed at her again as though trying to put pieces to a puzzle together. “Are you sure you’re human?”

Well, duh. Her grandmother had been human as had her grandfather. “I think I’d know if I was anything other than human.”

He nodded. “True.”

“Well, I’ve never heard of it,” Bell stated. “If you’d like, I can have the Dean of Students take a look at your schedule and see what he can do to remedy the situation.”

“Oh, I don’t want to go through all that. It’s only for a semester. I’ll get day classes during the spring term.” She waved off their concern. “So, which room is mine?”

Bell motioned to the door closest to her. “You’ll be sharing with Shelly. I hope that’s not a problem.”

“Not at all.” She’d grown up with her brothers, having a sister would be nice. “I can handle the unloading, like I said. Go back to your party. I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

Bell sighed. “You’ve got a lot to learn about us.” She linked her arm through Natasha’s. “If I know my mates, they’re already recruited everyone and they’re waiting on us.”

Sure enough, when they stepped outside, everyone had been positioned near her car. Christoph had his arms crossed over his massive chest. He looked every inch of his Alpha personality. When he spied Bell, his features softened then mixed with something else when Jackson stepped forward. *Interesting.*

Natasha had a feeling that even though her classes had been screwed to hell and back, she was going to enjoy being at TSU. She pulled her keys out of her pocket and went right to the trailer. “It’s not much. Like I said, I could have done it.”

She opened the door and stood to the side. Everything she wanted with her fit in medium sized packing boxes. Each box had been stacked properly to give her the maximum amount of space. She hauled the first one out, and Bodhi, she believed, grabbed it out of her hands, then started for the gate.

“Welcome to Turnskin University,” Bell whispered, placing her hand on Natasha’s shoulder.

“Thanks.” *I think...*

Chapter

Two

Since everyone had been so helpful, it didn't take very long to unload her trailer. It gave her plenty of time to not only get to know her new housemates, but also relax, which after the last couple of weeks she had, was worth it. It also gave her time to do a little exploring as well. The quickest way for her to learn where her classes were located, along with the more important places like the library and cafeteria, was to walk around. Hopefully, if she learned her way around during the day, she'd be able to get around at night without any issues.

It was still weird to think about her classes being at night. It also didn't set well with her, especially after the way Jackson kept looking at her. *Oh well, not my problem.* Natasha shrugged it off. She wasn't there to be liked, she was there to get an education and start her new life out in the great wide open. Too bad it felt a little too confined for her right now.

Being in the house with everyone and seeing the mated couples interact as they helped her unload the hauler, sent a pang of jealousy through her. She hated it. She promised herself she wouldn't allow what she saw affect her anymore. She didn't need a mate or a companion to complete her. Besides, if the guys at the house were any indication, the school was filled with hotties. She'd get the hook up sooner or

later, and those would tide over her insatiable need to find the “one.”

Ugh, don't be so stupid.

Back home, others had given her a wide birth most times. Guys and girls. Sure, she had friends, but they were few and far between. Her grandmother said it was because she could be a little stand-offish sometimes. She thought it was because they could sense something different about her. Of course, the difference was that she'd been human and the majority of them were shifter. It also had to be weird seeing her grandfather and her brothers Erik and Sebastian, and then her.

She'd been the gangly kid. A square peg for a round hole. She didn't talk much in the beginning, and Natasha chalked it up to the trauma of her mother dying, though she couldn't quite remember it. She'd also been the one more at ease reading than rough housing with the other shifter kids.

“Get over yourself. No one cared.” Yet, she did. She'd obsessed about it sometimes. She'd dream she'd been born a wolf and every male loved her. She had her choice of mate and they'd fall at her feet to please her. They were silly daydreams, imagined by a thirteen-year-old pubescent girl who wanted to do cool shit like all the others.

Her grandmother convinced her to try out for track one year during high school. Told her humans could participate just like anyone else. Yeah...not so much. She had a feeling they all dialed it back so not to kick her ass as badly as they had. She quit two weeks later. Then Liam had the bright idea she should join the Miss Blue pageant for the summer fair. That had been more humiliating than anything. Where all the girls had these cool talents besides their impeccable good-looks, Natasha had her love for cosplay.

She could laugh at it now. She could only imagine what she must have looked like getting up there looking like Lady Ceil from Phantomhive, then reciting her favorite parts from the anime and manga... Nonetheless, she'd been cut from the competition shortly after her talent section. Too bad they didn't understand Japanese was majestic as fuck.

Afterwards, no one pushed her to do anything else. The majority of the time she stayed holed up in her room reading or spending time with her best friend Sadie, who she missed so much right now. The people here were so different, and Sadie would have balanced them out. Oh well, she didn't have time to dwell as it was. According to her schedule, she had Intro to Philosophy in a few short hours. Which meant she needed to hurry up and find her class, then hightail it back to the house to change. She needed a shower badly. *Maybe people are giving you sideways glances because you're rank.*

She glanced down at her map as she stopped in the middle of the quad. The tables from earlier were gone and the place had emptied out pretty quick. The oranges and reds of the setting sun caught her by surprise. She'd been there since noon and now... *Shit... it's four.* Her first class started at seven. Why couldn't she find this damn class? She started across the open area, but stopped short when she saw a help wanted sign. *You don't need any distractions right now. Keep going.* Unfortunately, her feet had other ideas. She stopped in front of the poster. The college radio station needed a night host. Three days a week for four hours a night. *Might as well apply.* Until she could figure out what was going on with her classes, she'd be with the night dwellers anyway. She pulled the tab hanging from the bottom of the paper, then glanced at her map one more time.

The radio station had been marked by a red star. *Why can't the classes be indicated the same way?* Since she'd been feet from the radio station, she decided to check it out. Even if she didn't like it, hopefully those on the inside could tell her where her class was. As she drew near, the soft music she'd heard while on the trail became louder. She noticed right off the bat they enjoyed alternative music, which was a plus in her book. She could work there. *You have no experience though.* What she didn't have in experience she could make up in ingenuity and her ability to pick stuff up pretty quick. Natasha opened the door and noticed that it wasn't like any radio station she'd ever seen.

The small room had an open, inviting quality to it. To the left, the actual sound board and equipment needed to run the station, to the right shelf after shelf of vinyl. A small part of her squealed at the thought of touching them. A guy appeared in the booth, holding a cookie and a cup of something to drink over the table beside the equipment. The guy seemed pretty intense, especially when he clenched his jaw protruding the muscles there. He wore black retro-frame glasses over grey... no mercury...colored eyes. His sandy-blond hair stuck up in different odd angles, which only sharpened his strong features. He wore a yellow sweater pushed up to his elbows, exposing the corded muscles of his tattooed forearm. She debated between shifter and vampire, but neither fit his broad imposing form.

“Hey there.”

The feel of a hand on her shoulder caused her to jump. Lost in her musings, she hadn't heard anyone approach. “Hey, sorry.” She tried to steady the erratic beating of her heart, however it only got worse when she turned to look at who'd talked to her. *Holy shit.* He was Asian—Japanese, if she had to

guess. He had his hair styled in a mohawk streaked with purple and blue highlights. When he turned his head, she took inventory of the small tattoos on his neck and behind his ear. She wondered absently if they went lower and if he'd let her see them. *Bad girl*. The guy in the yellow sweater placed the headphones on his ears and seconds later, the light alternative music changed to something darker and a little more insidious. Her pulse grew sluggish and her body swayed to the music. She'd never heard anything like it before, yet her soul yearned for it.

The guy in front of her cleared his throat, snatching her from her thoughts and embarrassing her even more. She glanced up into his eyes, which were brown for the most part, but also held a hint of red to them. His full lips pulled into a smile as he continued to stare at her, which only caused her gaze to lock on the double piercing at the corner of his mouth. *Holy Jesus that should be illegal*. Natasha felt herself sway towards him.

“Not a problem,” he said, not taking his eyes off of her. “What can I do for you?”

Unable to form the words to say, she squeaked. Embarrassment flooded her. Her heart started to race. The guy standing in front of her inhaled. His nostrils flared and she swore she'd never seen anything that sexy before. “I-I'd like to apply for the job.” She shoved the small tear away she gathered from the poster in the quad into his hand. “This. Please.”

He glanced down then quirked a brow. “You ever work in a radio station before?”

Natasha shook her head.

“Journalist student?” He pressed.

Again, she shook her head. “I...well...see, I can talk and...”

“Talking is good.” He chuckled softly. “Come on. We have to change out the commercials in a minute.” He motioned for her to follow after him.

“I don’t have much time,” she blurted out, unsure why the guy had thrown her for such a loop.

“Then we better hurry.” He winked. “My name is Keiji.” He held his hand out to her.

“Na—” A warm current of energy surged through her as she grasped his hand. She let out a shuddered breath. “Whoa, sorry. I’ve never been this tongue tied before. My name is Natasha.”

“Good to meet you, Natasha.” The way he said her name made her want to rip her clothes off and demand he fuck her then and there.

“Likewise, Keiji.” She said his name little more breathless than she’d meant to. “So, this is where the magic happens?”

His gaze became hooded. The hint of red in his eyes swirled. “Yeah, you can say that.” He stepped closer to her. “What are you?” He didn’t give her a chance to answer and instead, buried his nose in the crook of her neck and inhaled. The groan he let loose sent a shiver of pleasure down her spine.

And you were afraid you wouldn’t get any. She untangled herself from his embrace. “I’m...” She swallowed hard. “Human. I lived with shifters. My grandparents, my brothers and I are human.”

He stepped toward her again. “No, it’s more than that.” As if on cue, the music stopped. “Shit. Uh, if you want to fill out

the application by the door. I really have to get back to work.”

O-kay. “Thanks, for...whatever?” She tilted her head to the side not sure what just transpired between them. “Bye.” She headed out of the studio and grabbed the application from the small table by the door, where he’d said it would be.

As she stepped outside, she replayed what happened between them. She’d never seen a shifter sniff another’s neck in greeting—well she had, just not her. *What are you?* His words whispered through her mind as she followed the path back towards the quad. “Shit!” She stomped her foot. She meant to ask him where her class was located. She’d been so distracted by Keiji she completely forgot. “What the hell is wrong with me?”

Natasha trudged back the way she came, hopefully, Bell or her sister Zoe could tell her where she needed to go. The campus dwarfed her expectation. There’d been something new to see at every corner — finding the right buildings had been a little overwhelming. She crossed the campus in record time, and when she saw her new home away from home, she breathed out a sigh of relief. Then groaned. She hadn’t asked for a key before she left. She’d needed some space and figured going out would give her a chance to acclimate herself to her new surroundings. Now, she felt like an asshole.

She walked up to the front door and knocked. How embarrassing she had to knock on her own door to get inside. A second later, the door opened, and a girl wearing glasses the size of her face and rainbow suspenders greeted her. “Hi! I’m Shelly. You must be Natasha. Bell said you forgot your key and to be on the lookout for you. Come on in.”

“Interesting,” Natasha muttered.

“Huh?”

“I forgot to ask for a key,” she answered.

“I’ve done the same!” The girl laughed. She had this infectious happiness to her. Her clothes were a little too tight for Natasha’s style, and her vibrant red hair lay in a mess braid down her back. The girl was quite curious.

“Small world. Say, is Bell around?” Though she didn’t have time for it, she had to figure out what the hell was going on around her. Not even in school six hours and weird shit was happening to her. Plus, she still had to find her class.

Shelly nibbled on her lip. “Yeah...um...”

Natasha had seen that look before. The bewildered, how do you tell a “human” about mates fucking. She got it. “Say no more. What about Zoe?”

“Oh, thank the goddess,” Shelly said with a sigh. “I thought we’d have to have the ‘talk,’ —She made air quotes as she spoke— “and I’m not good at the ‘talk.’”

Natasha laughed. “No. I’m good. Promise. How about Zoe?”

“If she’s not outside, I think she’s with Rocky and then they’ll be...you know.” She bumped her hands together.

Natasha bit the inside of her cheek so not to laugh. She was really going to like being in this house. Everyone was so different and amazing. “Thank you, Shelly.”

“You’re welcome.” Shelly touched her arm as Natasha turned to go outside. “If you need someone to talk to...”

“I might just take you up on your offer.” She smiled before continuing on.

Outside, Bodhi and Emma were still in the pool cuddled together. A younger girl sat on a chair not far from there. Over

by the barbecue stood Utah, who looked to be on dinner detail. Poor guy. Another girl and a guy she hadn't met yet sat at the table having an animated conversation while their school books sat open. No Zoe or Bell. She let out a breath. *Damn.*

“You look lost,” Hayden stated, joining her. “It’s a lot to take in, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, tons. I shouldn’t feel so lost, but I do.”

Hayden laughed. “It’s different than home. I agree. I’ve never been to Baker Springs, but if it’s anything like Window Rock, it’s a small community with a mixture of shifters, humans and psychics?”

“Demons, witches, vampires and shifters,” Natasha answered. “No psychics.”

“Interesting.” The girl laughed. “So, are you settling in?” Hayden led them over to a small sitting area away from everyone.

“I have a class at seven tonight, and I can’t find the class. Worst part? I saw an advertisement for a job at the radio station, and the weirdest part was the guy... shifters don’t sniff necks in greeting. Well, they don’t with me, anyway.” She looked down at the application she still held in her hand. Keiji’s actions should have set her on edge. Instead, she wanted to go back.

“Zoe works at the station! You should talk to her when she’s available.” Hayden’s brows scrunched together. “Night classes? I thought you were human?”

“I am. I thought it was due to me being an underclassman. I didn’t realize it was when all the night dwellers went to class. This is all a little weird.”

“I can talk to the—”

“Dean of Students? Bell said the same. I told her it’s okay. This guy though...” She couldn’t explain Keiji properly.

“Cute?”

Definitely hot. Like top ten. “More so. I can’t explain it. He’s not my usual type, but he got me.” Natasha rubbed the back of her neck. “Anyway, he flustered me so much, I forgot to ask for directions.”

“What’s your first class?” Hayden glanced over at her campus map. “There’s nothing different about the night schedule, so you know. I had art at twilight.”

Natasha sagged. “Oh, good to know.” She hadn’t realized she’d been worried about it, until Hayden voiced it. “I have Intro to Philosophy. Gordon is the teacher.”

“He’s good,” Hayden answered. “Strict on homework but totally worth it.”

“It says he’s in Williams Tower.”

Hayden grabbed her map. “Right. So, follow this path.” She pointed to the trail Natasha had been on when she found the poster for the radio station. “You were almost there when you stopped at the radio station.”

“Crap. Of course, only I would be right there and not even see it.” Natasha sighed. “At least tomorrow I can sleep in.”

“That’s the spirit. I’ll have Utah keep your dinner warm if you want to get ready.” Hayden gave Natasha’s arm a reassuring squeeze.

“Thanks. I appreciate it.”

When she left for her first lecture, Natasha felt a little more centered. She still couldn’t explain everything with Keiji or why he’d affected her so, but while she’d been eating her

dinner, she filled out the application. She'd been saving money for years, but having a backup plan would help her be able to concentrate on her school load more than worrying about making a payment on time. As she came up on the radio station, she popped inside and dropped her information in the basket next to where she'd grabbed the application. Then she followed the directions Hayden gave her to Williams Tower.

She approached the building, and a sense of foreboding washed over her. It was as if the shadows watched her. She shifted her gaze back and forth across the grassy area trying to find where the feeling came from. She shivered. Not even being around vampires gave her this kind of sensation. She rubbed her arms while walking up the stairs to the building. It wasn't like her to be paranoid. Nothing scared her, yet the fear making her heart pound and a bit anxious said differently. Natasha picked up her pace. Her class wasn't far from the door, and when she shoved into the space, she let out a breath of relief.

The class was mostly empty, so she took a seat near the front and waited. As the door opened, she gasped, drawing Keiji's attention. He smirked at her. Instead of finding a seat somewhere around her — because let's face it, she'd been that conceited— he placed his bag on the counter in front of the class and then stood off to the side. He kept his gaze on her. Goosebumps flared to life on her arm, the back of her neck and her thighs. *What the hell is wrong with me?*

“Sorry about earlier,” Keiji said, finally sitting beside her. “I've been working more hours, and I treated you rudely.” He also didn't know a thing about personal space, nor much care for people staring at them.

“It happens,” Natasha muttered. “I meant to ask you for help finding this place and—why did you sniff my neck?”

His eyes widened. “You’re different.”

“Human.” She pointed to herself.

“Sure you are.” He grinned. “Anyway, I wanted to apologize. Enjoy class.”

“Thank you and there’s no need to apologize. I...” She contemplated telling him she filled out the application, then thought better of it. “I’m sure I will.”

Chapter
Three

Keiji shifted in his seat. He'd been rock hard since the minute he caught a hint of her tantalizing scent—vanilla and something succulent. *Natasha*. He couldn't get her out of his mind. His gaze traced every inch of her lithe body. From her multi-colored hair to her bright blue eyes, he couldn't get enough of her. She had full lips and creamy flesh. Usually he didn't go for the bumbling girls. He liked them self-assured, yet with her, he found her quirks enduring.

He also shouldn't pick her for the job. She had no idea what she'd be getting herself into. Plus, she wasn't even a broadcasting student. When it came to jobs at the studio, they at least wanted students who knew their way around a sound board. It would save them several teaching hours and allow Keiji or the morning DJ, Stefan, to take a much-needed break. However, the thought of not being close to Natasha made him anxious. It left a bitter taste in his mouth and twisted his guts.

As Gordon droned on and on about what *Introduction to Philosophy* would consist of, Keiji spied a glance at the seating chart passed to him once it'd been filled out. *Nemescu*? He glanced at the girl driving him insane with lust. When she came into the radio station, nothing about her screamed royalty. Everyone demon or vampire or fae learned the name at an early age. The Nemescu clan were ruthless. They killed

to instill fear among those who might fight them. They'd built an empire in Romania and were now reaching out to other countries around the world. Could it be why Natasha was there?

Interesting... He leaned forward slightly and grasp his bottom lip between his fingers. He lightly plucked at the flesh while he continued to study her, this time with a critical eye rather than one hazed by desire.

She appeared so... clueless.

Did she not know who she was? He gave an internal snort. *There's no way she can't know.* So, it begged the question again, why was she there? Nemescu offspring had the best education money could buy, including private tutors. They also didn't attend school alone. They had bodyguards, kind of like his friend Maël. Already, his friend had guarded some of the most powerful vampires stateside and one vampire at TSU. Yet, as he watched her enter Williams Tower before class began, she'd been afraid. Vampires like most demons weren't afraid of the dark. On the contrary, they craved it. She didn't. In fact, she relaxed the minute she stepped into the light. He'd tasted her fear on his tongue as she drew closer to him. Her heart rate increased as she sensed the shadow demons lurking among the trees near the entrance.

Keiji tilted this head to the side. None of this made senses. All of the evidence indicated she was vampire. But, her body language coupled with her scent, said something else. So, what could she be? Of course, she'd been quick to point out she was human and lived in a shifter community with her human grandparents and human brothers, but it didn't fit. None of it did.

“And this is; Keiji. He’s my Teaching Assistant. If you need anything outside of my office hours, you can e-mail or setup meet times with him. He will be here when it comes to all tests, while I will administer midterms and final exams.”

Keiji’s gaze locked with Natasha’s as she gasped. He gave a small smirk. He had a feeling this would be an interesting semester. As he stood up, he straightened his shirt then waved. “I’ll also be taking over lessons when Professor Gordon can’t.”

The girls situated around Natasha began to giggle, but he paid them no mind. He only had eyes for the girl sitting almost directly in front of him. In a short amount of time, she’d crawled under his skin and he had to know everything about her. The minute Gordon ended the class with an assignment of reading the first three chapters of Plato’s *Five Dialogues*, he gathered up his things and followed Natasha out.

“Hey,” he said, coming up beside her. “Have any more classes?”

Natasha jolted. “Whoa. Sorry. Hi. No. I’m going home—er the Co-Ed house across campus.” She flicked her gaze toward him while clutching her book to her chest. Her steps quickened as she stepped outside.

“Can I walk with you?” His protective instinct rose as the smell of her terror intensified. “You seem a little...”

“Nervous?” She gave a soft chuckle. “I am. I didn’t realize the campus was this dark at night. Where are the lights?”

“Towards the quad.” He guided her down the path back to the lights. For every step they took away from the building, the more she relaxed. “If you’d like, I could walk with you, you

know, whenever you needed me.” He didn’t know why he made the offer, it just seemed like the right thing to do.

She let out a breath. “You’d do that?”

“Of course,” he answered without hesitation.

She stopped in the middle of the quad. “Why? You don’t even know me, and we’ve barely met.”

Keiji tucked a strand of her multi-colored hair behind her ear. “I’m Keiji Nomura. I’m also a red demon.”

“Next, you’re going to tell me you like long walks on the beach, candle light dinners and deep conversations.” She bit her bottom lip, as her blue eyes sparkled with playfulness.

“As a matter of fact, I do.”

She laughed. “You’re smooth.” She turned before continuing on her way.

Keiji caught up to her. “Thanks.”

A small smile drifted across her lips. “So, you’re a junior, huh?”

He nodded. “Yeah. Don’t take this the wrong way, but you’re a little older than some of the freshmen here.”

“Yeah. I spent some time helping my grandmother.” Unlike earlier, her strides slowed to a sedate pace. “My brothers are here too—have been for a couple of years now, so it’s easier. With my grandfather’s butcher shop, it’s, you know... We tried to stay to help, but we all got the urge.”

“Your grandfather has a respectable job, and I can only imagine how much time he spends away from home. Your grandmother must be proud of you.”

“She wanted me to go to school closer to home.” Natasha shrugged. “I wanted to get out. I’ve been in Baker Springs my whole life or, for as long as I can remember. When I started researching colleges, my brother Sebastian told me about this place. TSU kind of stands out on its own, you know? I liked the campus. I liked the Co-Ed house. It almost feels like home. I guess I kind of like the familiarity of it.”

“So, you’re staying at the Co-Ed house? Can I let you in on a little secret?” He found himself enjoying her company. He even liked learning the little bits about her she gifted him with. *You’ve got it bad.*

“Sure.” She glanced over at him.

“I helped design the add-ons there.” Pride filled his tone. Bell and Hayden could have gone to anyone in the architecture department to help them with the design, but they came to him. Their ideas were bombastic and pretty unique. Bell’s father, Rapier, joined them on a couple of trips to *University Diner* for checkups and to examine the finer details Keiji added. The man read the blueprints and with each change Keiji made, Rapier incorporated it into the build. They actually worked well together, and Rapier offered him a job once Keiji graduated next year.

“Shut. Up. Seriously? The house is amazing.”

Heat filled his cheeks. *Am I blushing? Demons don’t fucking blush.* “Thanks. It’s all Bell and Hayden. They let their imaginations run wild, I transformed them into reality.”

“Well, all the same. The house is incredible. Did you design the outside?”

He shook his head. “Utah did. He built everything while Rapier and his crew built the house. The guy has an artistic

eye. He's cool people too. Have you met him?"

"I have," she said. "He's not very talkative."

Keiji laughed. "He's deaf."

"Doesn't mean he can't talk," she replied.

"He stays to himself mostly from what I've seen. Not my business, you know?" They walked across the lane separating the main campus from housing.

"Totally." She pointed to the house. "Looks like everyone's still awake." Several lights were on in the house.

"Seems like it." He held the gate for her as she stepped through, then followed behind her. "So..."

"So?" She turned to face him at the base of the stairs. "Thanks for this. I guess it's first night jitters. New school and all." She tucked a strand of her hair behind her ear.

"No problem." He ran the pad of his thumb along her jaw. "Have a good night, Natasha." It took all of his willpower to not gather her up in his arms and kiss her. The whole time he walked beside her, her intoxicating scent swirled around him. It clawed at his senses, turning him inside out.

She leaned into his touch. "You too." Then, she did something he hadn't been expecting. She licked the tip of his thumb.

For a second, he stood there dumbfounded, wondering if she'd really done what he thought she had. In the next second, he gathered her into his arms and kissed her. It was all tongue and clashing teeth. He swallowed her moans as his heart hammered. *Who the fuck is this girl?* Keiji palmed her ass, pressing her body flush to his. He sank his other hand into her

hair, tilting her head to the side a bit, allowing him to deepen the kiss. She tasted as good as she smelled, maybe better.

The door opened, and a soft squeak broke them apart. Natasha panted for breath while touching her lips. Her cheeks were a pretty shade of dark-pink. His dick throbbed behind the confines of his jeans. His heart hammered as he tried to catch his breath. A petite red-head—Shelly—appeared. He remembered her from coming by a few times. Keiji raised his hand to wave.

“Sorry. I didn’t mean to interrupt your...erm...thing.” Shelly stepped back inside the house, pushing the door to.

Natasha laughed once they were alone again. “Wow. Okay. So, goodnight, Keiji.” She climbed the stairs to the porch.

He chuckled too. “Goodnight, Natasha. You’re welcome. Catch you in class.”

She nodded before opening the door. “Yep.”

KEIJI WAITED for her to enter the house before leaving. He’d never done that before—just kissed someone for no reason. He strode back across the campus to the station. Taichi would be on duty for the evening. He had to tell someone about what happened, and he might as well tell the one person he trusted the most. He and Taichi were bound by their demons. Where his was the bringer of destruction, Taichi’s could prevent it. In being opposites, bound together, it also led to some incredibly hot make out sessions and more. Over the last few years, their encounters had escalated to full on sex. Being with Taichi ... He couldn’t adequately explain what he felt or experienced with the guy. Plus, he’d never cum so hard in his life. The whole situation had been more than he’d expected.

He entered the station as his lover pushed away from the table. He stood and glanced out the window. His features lit up when he saw Keiji. After holding up a finger, he flipped a couple of the switches on the main board before exiting the booth. He closed the distance between them then cocked his head to the side. Leave it to Taichi. The guy could smell Natasha on him.

“Her name is Natasha,” he said before his lover could ask any questions. “She’s not anything she says she is.”

“Did you learn this from kissing her?” Taichi quirked a brow. There hadn’t even been a hint of jealousy in his voice, it’d been of a curiosity.

Keiji stepped to him, knowing the truth of Taichi’s scent, he teased him. “You jealous?” He invaded Taichi’s personal space, dipping his chin to rub his nose across his lover’s. “You’ve never been jealous before.”

Taichi whimpered. “I’m not.” He let out a tremulous breath.

Keiji palmed Taichi’s nape. “No.” He tilted his head to stare into the man’s brown eyes rimmed with violet. Since walking away from Natasha, the bolt of adrenaline continued to wreak havoc on him. His heart pounded. His dick ached. “What is it?” He grabbed Taichi’s hip and rubbed against him.

The interest was reciprocated. He felt the thick length of his lover’s cock pressed to his groin. The lust burning an unrelenting path through Keiji’s body intensified. He captured Taichi’s mouth in a searing kissing, and a rush of relief filled him while guiding him away from prying eyes. He claimed the demon’s mouth, taking as much as Taichi would give him and then some. Keiji’s hands went to the hem of Taichi’s shirt, trying to pull the offending piece of material from his body.

Inch by glorious inch of his sun-kissed skin was exposed to Keiji's gaze. He groaned. The man was magnificent. Not overly muscular, his slender form had been created with power in mind. Small tattoos littered his torso. A koi fish followed the curve of his hip, while he had the symbols for earth, wind, fire and water, in different spots around his torso. Keiji licked his lips as he went to his knees.

“No,” Taichi whispered. “Not enough time.”

“There is always enough time. Don't worry.” Keiji winked. He released Taichi's belt then opened his pants and allowed them to fall to the floor. He hummed in approval. His lover's cock was hard and a drop of precum clung to the slit.

He didn't hesitate. He took Taichi's tip into his mouth. The tang accompanied by the hint of musk had him moaning in pleasure. He cupped the demon's balls and rolled the tight spheres in his palm while sucking and bobbing his head. Taichi whimpered. His body shook as he ran his fingers through Keiji's hair, whispering encouraging words in Japanese. When Keiji swallowed around him, Taichi flexed his hips. “Keiji... Time.” His breath came in soft pants.

Yes. Time. He gave one more suck then retreated from Taichi's dick. “Later, I'll be more attentive to your gorgeous cock.”

Keiji turned him to face the sound board. “Take us to the end of the hour commercials, then the syndicate stations wrap up. We'll have ten minutes.” He pushed his lover towards the booth

“Not enough time.” Taichi tripped and stumbled into the room, removing his pants as he went. With one hand on his cock, stroking himself, he set the programing and clicked the button.

Keiji laughed as Taichi rejoined him. “See, plenty of time.” He pulled a packet of lube out of his pocket and unzipped his pants. Once he pulled his cock out of the opening he stroked it absently while applying the jelly. “Fuck, I’m about ready to blow.”

“You were the one who wanted to suck my dick.” Taichi glanced over his shoulder and smirked. “You could already be fucking me.”

Keiji growled. He squirted a liberal amount of the lube onto his fingers then rubbed some on Taichi’s ass. The hole fluttered before opening to the intrusion of his finger. He sunk the digit deep inside his lover, only to retreat and press forward again with a second finger. He was so fucking tight. “Fuck.” He pulled from Taichi then pressed the tip of his erection against the puckered entrance. “Take me into you. Push back.”

Taichi cried out as he did as Keiji instructed. Keiji couldn’t look away as inch by inch his lover took him. He groaned Taichi’s name and grabbed his hips, directing him. When their bodies were flush, he stayed still. He loved the way his lover gripped his dick. The way the heat seared him. Taichi rolled his hips, silently begging Keiji to move. He obliged. His thrusts were frenzied. He hadn’t expected it to be like this. He meant to tease his lover. However, when Taichi squeezed him hard, he lost all sense of control.

He didn’t fuck. He rutted. Harsh, guttural sounds built in his chest. He literally released the beast within him, fucking his lover in hard demanding thrusts. Keiji bent over Taichi and placed kisses along the back of his neck and shoulders. He wrapped his arm around his lover’s middle and took his dick into his hand. It was slick with precum, and a thrill shot

through him. He liked it when Taichi lost control. The demon was always so put together. To see him lose the polished veneer he used for everyone else gave Keiji a sense of triumph. No one but him saw this, and if the kiss he shared with Natasha had been any indication, he couldn't wait to show her as well.

“Keiji,” Taichi sobbed. “So close.”

He'd been too. The idea of Natasha joining them, or at the very least watching them, turned him on. His hips stuttered, and he grunted. “Cum for me. I want your load.”

Taichi gasped. “Shit.” His cock twitched in Keiji's palm before giving a heavy pulse. In the next second his lover went wild, fucking Keiji as he came.

The fire building in Keiji's gut turned into an inferno as his back tingled with his impending release. He groaned low pressing his forehead to Taichi's spine. He thrust one last time and unloaded in Taichi's ass. His orgasm stole his breath while he clung to the demon. Each burst of his release pulled a moan from him. He rode the thin line of pleasure and pain, enjoying the sensation consuming him.

Then he laughed.

“Eight minutes and thirty seconds. I could have sucked your dick a little longer.” Keiji didn't want to pull from Taichi just yet, so he eased into the chair beside him, bringing Taichi with him. “Thank you.” He nuzzled his lover's neck. “I didn't realize I'd been so worked up.”

Taichi sagged in his arms and gave a content sigh. “Who is she really?”

THEY DRESSED in silence while Keiji tried to gather his wits. He'd just fucked his lover's brains out and yes, he owed Taichi an explanation. After Taichi reset the music, they cleaned up then stopped by the coffee pot to get a fresh cup of brew. Taichi glanced at him expectantly and Keiji rubbed the back of his neck. He'd put off answering him long enough. "Her name is Natasha Nemescu."

Taichi took a step back. "Holy shit, a Nemescu?"

"Yeah, tell me about it. But, she swears she's human. Not an ounce of vampire or royalty in her." He went over to the basket where she'd left her application before class. "Here. This is her application."

Taichi looked it over. "How is this possible?"

"I'm not sure. I meant to come back here and meet with you and Maël—"

"You got caught up in the moment?" His tone had been teasing as his lips twitched.

"You'd understand if you met her. It's crazy." Keiji ran his fingers through his hair. "She came in while I was on duty with Reid and asked for a job. She's got no experience."

"Who's got no experience? I'm not training a noob." Maël rested his hip against the table where they placed all the event flyers. His nostril's flared as though he scented the musk of Keiji and Taichi's lovemaking in the room, yet he didn't say anything. He knew and accepted their relationship. "Bad enough I had to find out about vampire royalty being here, but I can't find their detail yet."

Taichi laughed as he headed back for the booth. "Good luck, *shujin*."

Keiji clenched his jaw. The little asshole liked to goad him. Whenever Taichi went to his knees in front of Keiji, he called him master. No matter how many times he told the *itami ketsu* not to, he still did it. He rolled his shoulders. “That’s because she doesn’t believe she’s royalty.”

“What?” Maël stood a little taller. “How is that possible?”

“She believes she’s human,” Keiji answered. “She’s convinced there is nothing special about her. She said she was raised in Baker Springs with her grandparents and two brothers. It’s more though. When she walked into Williams Tower, she freaked out at the presence of shadow demons.”

Maël dumped himself into the chair near where Keiji stood. “What’s her name?”

“Natasha Nemescu.” He handed Maël the application she filled out.

“Fuck.” Maël scrubbed his face with his free hand. “She is the lost heir to Dimitri Nemescu.” Keiji began to pace as Maël read over her information. “A little over twenty years ago, Dimitri returned to Romania a bit out of his mind. He kept saying *she* was gone and *they* were all gone. When asked to elaborate what he meant by *she*, and *they* but he kept repeating the name Natasha. Several of the guards, including my father, believed he’d found his betrothed and she’d somehow disappeared, maybe died. However that wasn’t the case, Natasha turned out to be his daughter. Her mother and older brothers disappeared.” He shrugged. “Soon afterwards, Dimitri died—met the sun. His brother Yevgeni took over the Nemescu empire. The one order, besides guarding those who need us, has always been to find *her*. I thought it was just a story. A folklore, because nothing ever came of it.”

“Well, she’s very much real and attending school here along with her brothers. Question is, what are you going to do about it?”

“We should have her come in and interview,” Maël said. “Maybe if I can see her, I can figure out if she’s really the heir or just an unfortunate victim of having the same last name.”

Keiji nodded. “I agree. I’ll get it all set up, then you can get a feel for her.”

Maël handed him the paper back. “Sounds good. I’m out. I have a late one with Simaco.”

He fist bumped the vampire as he passed by, then made his way over to the booth. Taichi was going to pay for calling him master in front of Maël...

NATASHA COULDN’T BELIEVE the text she received from Keiji early the next morning. She’d been sure he wouldn’t even consider her as a candidate for the position since she had no experience in field. Yet, as she sat at the table eating a late breakfast, she read his message again. *Be at the station at five.*
~K

The timing was perfect. She could go straight to her English Lit class from the radio station. She had two classes that night and thankfully, she didn’t have to go back to Williams Tower until Wednesday. She couldn’t put her finger on what scared the piss out of her about the building, but it had been as though the whole area had eyes. She’d meant to ask Keiji when he dropped her off what the deal was, but instead found herself playing tonsil hockey with a demon. Natasha snorted. If her grandmother found out what she’d been doing, she’d have a conniption fit.

Some things grandmother doesn't need to find out about.

She supposed she should thank Shelly when she saw the girl. She probably saved Natasha the embarrassment of jumping Keiji in the full view of every house on Greek Row. No one deserved that punishment. She shook her head as she took the last bite of her yogurt, then opened her laptop. When she returned home after the eerie experience outside the tower, she decided to send a note to admissions. She shouldn't let the people, or the class times bother her as much as it did, but something about the way people said Nemescu around her, made her twitchy. A reply greeted her when she opened her email. The letter had been friendly bordering on formal.

Miss Nemescu,

The class schedule assigned to you fits the core requirements for your degree program. Please refer to the handbook for a full explanation of pre-requisite classes. If you have any more questions, we are here to help you. Welcome to TSU. We hope you have a wonderful year.

Miss Abigail Turnoff

Natasha stared at the screen. The woman—Abigail hadn't answered her specific question. Instead, told her to read the handbook that didn't have any answers either. *What the hell?* None of it made sense to her. She shut the lid of her computer and stood. She supposed she couldn't dwell on it. But, still. Why was everyone so insistent about keeping her in the night classes? Shouldn't they be more accommodating? *Shouldn't you?* Natasha frowned. Next semester she'd address the issues a little more forcefully. If she had to, she'd have her grandfather come down and help her straighten it out. *Yes, because your grandfather should fight your battles for you.* Ugh.

“Morning,” Nico said entering the kitchen. “You look lost.”

After stepping inside the house last night, she found most of the Co-Ed members in the living room watching some rom-com. She took the seat offered to her and spent a good portion of the movie getting to know everyone around her. It would seem Nico and Hayden had quite a history. Hayden had known Nico was her mate since the age of fourteen and he fucked it all up because of their age difference and family circumstances. It took four more years for them to fix the situation and move forward.

“Stumped more like it.” She sighed.

“What’s wrong?” Nico sat at the table after turning the coffee pot on. “Maybe I can help.”

“I’m not sure anyone can to be honest. I sent in a request to find out why I have all night classes. Instead of a straight answer, I received a cryptic answer.” Natasha opened her computer, so Nico could see the email.

“Weird. You’re right. This isn’t normal.” He scrubbed his chin with the back of his fingers as he read over the email again. “And you didn’t sign up for the classes at night on your own?”

“No, I wanted all day classes. I mean, I don’t mind. I figured a ton of new students and all, but isn’t it weird on some level?” She noticed the differences the minute she stepped outside last night. While the shifters and humans were coming back from their classes, the unseelie fae, demons and vampires were going to class. She’d been the only human to follow them.

“Really weird. I can do some digging if you want?” He glanced up at her. “It wouldn’t be a problem.”

Natasha bit the corner of her lip. “No. I’m probably making a bigger deal of this than I have to. I’m sure of it.” She picked up her computer. “Anyway, I have to get ready for an interview for a job I’m not even qualified for.”

He gave her a surprised look. “What?”

She shook her head. “Never mind. Have a good day.” With a wave she headed up the stairs to her room to do a little light reading before getting ready to go. Just because she felt out of place didn’t mean she didn’t have to do the homework.

NATASHA ARRIVED at the radio station with only a few minutes to spare. While she’d been reading Plato’s *Five Dialogues*, Shelly made an appearance. The girl apologized profusely for interrupting her the night before, and Natasha had shrugged it off. There’d been no way of knowing what she’d been doing outside. Besides, she liked the quirky girl. Shelly had an infectious way about her. She always seemed so happy, albeit a little weird. It added to her charm and eclectic style. Before she left, Natasha agreed to hang out with Shelly over the weekend.

“You made it,” Keiji announced, drawing Natasha out of her thoughts.

“Yeah, you surprised me.” She tingled from head to toe as her body remembered the night before. In fact, the buzz of energy racing through her grew stronger as the hours ticked closer to interview. She believed, at the time, it’d been due to her nervousness, however now she wondered if it was something more. She couldn’t put her finger on it, nor did she

know if there was a name for it. Yet, it wriggled around inside of her, making her feel funny. She squeezed her hands into tight fists so not to do something stupid.

“Good,” he said. “Taichi and Maël will be here in a moment. They’re going to sit in on the interview if you don’t mind.”

“I don’t mind.” She hadn’t expected it to be so formal but understood.

“Great.” He glanced up when the door opened once more. “Right on time.”

Natasha turned. Her heart lodged in her throat. Both men were...intimidatingly good looking. She didn’t know where to start. The one on the left stood about two inches shorter than the guy on the right. He had almond-shaped brown eyes and unlike Keiji, violet flecks rimmed his brown eyes. There was a superior confidence to the smirk tugging at the corner of his tempting mouth. He wore a white button-down shirt that had the top three buttons undone, drawing her gaze to his tanned flesh and ribbed tank underneath. Like Keiji he had tattoos along his neck that dipped below the collar of his shirt. His jeans hung low on his narrowed hips, drawing her attention to his groin. He wasn’t her type normally, but both he and Keiji were delicious.

Hussy.

The other man crossed his tattooed arms over his broad chest and narrowed his blue eyes at her. *What the hell, did everyone have tattoos except her?* She opened her mouth to ask, when his gaze turned downright deadly.

He’d been built to kill, she could tell just by staring at him. The guy outweighed the man next to him by a good twenty

pounds if not more, and if the way his biceps twitched while adjusting his stance, was a tad bit muscular too. He rocked the buzz cut, which gave her a better view of the tattoos on his neck. He reminded her of one of those Eastern European warriors. If she had to guess his heritage, she'd say Slovenian or something along those lines.

“Natasha Nemescu meet Taichi Goto and Maël Darius.” Keiji placed his hand on her shoulder. “Let’s sit down. We can discuss the job and answer any questions you might have about the position.”

She nodded. “O-okay. Lead the way.”

Chapter
Four

“**S**o, you’ll take the job?” Keiji hedged, glancing up at her.

“Wait, what?” Natasha had no business working for the radio station. Applying had been a whim for her. Something she thought would be cool to try out, but not something she expected would happen because of her lack of knowledge. “Are you serious?” She tried desperately to concentrate on everything they told her, but even then, most of the information went right over her head. They really did deserve someone experienced.

Taichi laughed. “You’re adorable.”

Her cheeks flushed. “I’m sorry. I’m surprised is all. I guess I didn’t think we’d be having *this* conversation.” Natasha rubbed her hands against her thighs. Sitting there with all three men had its challenges. The men stared at her with such attentiveness. Maël smiled when he should, while Taichi gave an encouraging word or three when she needed them most.

“If you’re not sure about it, it’s okay. We understand. It is a bit overwhelming,” Maël said.

“Uh, well...”

Keiji shot Maël a look. “Give her a minute.”

“What? Wouldn’t you rather her be sure she wants the job instead of looking for someone else by next semester?” Maël leaned toward her. “It’s not that we wouldn’t enjoy having you here, but we also have to be practical.”

He had a point. However, she wanted the position. “I don’t need any time. I want the job. I’m just surprised you’re giving me a chance.”

“Don’t be,” Keiji said. “You’ve got the determination to learn, and we’ll help you.”

The way he said we’ll almost sounded like *I’ll* to Natasha. “So, when do you want me to start?”

“Do you have your schedule with you?” Taichi inquired.

“Yeah, I’m actually on my way to class next.” She opened her backpack and reached in to grab her folder. Natasha placed it on the table then opened it. There on the inside cover lay her itinerary along with dates and times. She went to school four days a week with Friday through Sunday off. She turned the folder towards Keiji. “Here.”

He stared down at the list. “Weekends are actually important to the station. It’s also when we need someone here.”

“Serendipitous then, huh?” She gave him a small smile as she closed the notebook.

“I’d say so.” He winked, lounging back into his chair. “You’ll start this weekend.”

Natasha nodded. “Sounds great.”

She cleared her throat while putting her notebook away. *Is it hot in here? Sure feels like it is.* All three of their gazes were on her, and, if she was honest with herself, it made her

uncomfortable. Not because they were leering at her. No, in fact, it warmed her. It made her feel as though she'd been wound too taut, from the tips of her toes to the top of her head. Even her scalp tingled with some kind of expectation.

“What’s your next class?” Taichi brought her out of her thoughts.

“Statistics,” she answered. “With Jacobson.”

“I’ll walk with you,” Keiji announced, exchanging a look with Taichi and Maël.

“Sure, I’d like that,” she replied.

Natasha stood. She said a quick goodbye to Maël and Taichi, then joined Keiji at the door. Their walk across campus was quiet. No rehashing of the kiss they shared or the fact they’d been caught. She didn’t exactly have an answer as to why she licked his finger, or if it had been the right thing to do at the time, however, she couldn’t stop thinking about *it*. She’d be remiss if she hadn’t hoped it would happen again.

“So ...” Keiji stated. “The other night.”

Oh no, he hated it. “Yeah ... Weird huh?”

He snorted. “Not even close to weird.” He pulled her to him and before she could protest or ask for an explanation, he kissed her again. His lips were warm and demanding. The soft moan he gave when she allowed him to deepen the kiss, excited her.

A rush of heat and desire flowed through her, sensitizing her body. Natasha wrapped her arms around him, clinging to him as he devoured her. The nervous clash of teeth from the last time had been replaced by a confident man on a mission. A bit of her shifted deep within, and the out of sorts feeling returned. She couldn’t explain the sensation, other than bit of

her awakened within his arms. It called to the dormant half of her psyche—something she didn't know had been there until now.

When he stepped back, she took a shuddered breath. She'd been left a little off balance and also a bit unfocused. It was weird. She blinked a few times, trying to clear the fuzzy haze cover her eyes. She shielded her eyes from the bright lights illuminating the quad. Her heart raced. Her breath came in soft pants. *What the fuck is wrong with me? I've heard of being fucked stupid, but being kissed blind?* Great, she'd only been at school for a couple of days and she was already having a breakdown. She wouldn't go so far as to call it a nervous breakdown. She took a step back and Keiji was there, grabbing her arms to steady her. Her sight fluctuated from clear to fuzzy each time she blinked until they finally cleared.

“Natasha?” Worry filled his tone. “What's wrong?”

She shook her head. “I don't know. I think ...” She licked her lips. “I think your kisses are potent.” She gave a shaky laugh, though her mind raced, trying to figure out what the hell happened.

Keiji blew out a breath. “Is that all?” He wrapped his arm around her shoulders and guided her towards the bench. “Do you need to sit?”

“I think it might be a good idea.” She worried if she blinked again, she'd go blind. Stupid really, but the irrational fear consumed her. She'd never had this kind of reaction to anything before.

“Can you tell me what happened?” Keiji pushed a lock her hair behind her ear.

“I thought I was going blind from your kiss.” Okay, it sounded just as insane when she said it out loud.

Keiji laughed. “What an ego boost.” He bussed his lips across her temple before tipping her chin up. His gaze locked with hers and if there was anything wrong with her eyes, he didn’t say anything.

What the fuck? She glanced to the left as black figures shifted between the trees and along the brick walkway heading to one of the three libraries located on campus. It went between a black mist into a corporal figure. “Uh...”

Keiji turned his head to see what she did. “What?”

“What are those things?” She pointed in the direction of black things.

Keiji cocked a brow. “Shadow demons?” He returned his attention to her. “Natasha, didn’t you see them the other night?”

She shook her head. “No. I mean, I felt this uncomfortable presence. Like, someone was watching me, but I couldn’t figure it—wait. Why am I seeing shadow demons? I get vampires, demons like you, or shifters and fae, but a shadow demon?” They were the invisible beings of the unseelie court. Only those who were supernatural or other could see them. *But, I’m human.* She scrubbed her face. “None of this makes sense. Did you do something to me?”

He held his hands up. “No way. I believed you from the beginning. I don’t meddle in the affairs of humans. If you say it, it must be true, right?”

“Yeah. Right.” She frowned. “I’m going to be late.” Natasha stood. “I have to get to class. It wouldn’t look good

for me to miss my first statistics class because my eyes are funky and I see shadow demons.”

Keiji was at her side in an instant. “I’ll walk with you. It’s the least I can do after ... You know.” He gave her a coy smile, causing her to laugh.

“Thank you.” She followed the path towards the math department, still not completely sure what happened to her. However, the more she looked around, the sharper her sight became. As weird as it sounded, she could penetrate the darkened corners. Whole groups of students were gathered together sitting at tables she’d never seen before. Others were spirits. It was as though Keiji unlocked some ability inside her. *Don’t be ridiculous. There is a logical explanation for it...this.* She’d grown up with others and a town filled with shifters. Perhaps she’d been so used to everything, she ignored them.

“You don’t have to thank me.” He took her hand. “Listen, there is a really cool event coming up, called the Daímonas Festivál. You should check it out. I think you might enjoy it.”

“What is it?” She’d never heard of the particular festival.

“You’ll see.” Keiji stopped in front of stairs leading to her class. “If you say yes.”

“Where is it?”

“It starts by the tower. Three days from now,” he answered.

She stared at him for a second. *What the heck? It’s not like you’re doing much. Plus, it might be fun.* “Sure.”

“Great.” He pressed a quick kiss to her lips. “I’ll be here when you get done to walk you to your next class.”

“Uh...how do you know when my class is over?” She quirked a brow.

“Duh, I saw your schedule.” He laughed. “Have fun, Natasha.”

“I’M SORRY NATASHA, but we’re not allowed to go.” Bell appeared a bit uncomfortable as they stood in the kitchen talking. It’d been three days since she left Keiji at her door with a promise to join him for the festivities. But she wanted to make it a group thing. All of her housemates had been amazing since she arrived. So she invited her friends to the festival, hoping they could hangout as a group—give her a second to think without Keiji obliterating her concentration. “It’s in the rules.”

“Yeah, it’s only for demons. It’s not for hu—er not even Joy can go.” Zoe pointed to their resident water sprite, part of the seelie court.

She supposed they were right, and there were rules just in case. The school didn’t need fights breaking out in the middle of the school grounds. Plus, from living in Baker Springs, she realized there could be some resentments between the groups. It made sense, however the way Zoe and Bell stared at her made her a bit uncomfortable. Ever since she returned home from school, they’d been giving her a bit of space. Or, it could be she was being paranoid.

Bell stepped up to her. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

She frowned. Had it been so obvious something happened? “What do you mean?”

“Your eyes are a little red,” Zoe replied.

“What? Huh?” Were they really? Why hadn’t Keiji said something? Had he noticed? “Oh ...” she waved them off. “It’s nothing. I think I got something in my eye earlier. You know how it is, when one hurts, the other waters up too.”

Bell and Zoe exchanged another look before Zoe spoke, “In your irises?”

“*What?*” She ran from the kitchen up to the second-floor bathroom. After flipping on the light, she stared at her reflection in the mirror. Sure enough, small tendrils of red circled her pupils contrasting the blue of her irises. *When did that happen? Duh, when you sucked face with Keiji.* “Oh no.”

Bell came up behind her and laid her hand on Natasha’s shoulder. “Are you sure of who you are?”

Natasha spun on her. Anger flared within her. The irrational emotion aided in sharpening her vision. *Whoa.* “What’s that supposed to mean?”

Bell sighed. “Nothing, but your eyes didn’t just happen without a reason.” She wrapped her arm through Natasha’s and pulled her out of the bathroom. “You know I’m a lion, right?”

“Yes. I investigated every part of this school before I enrolled. Zoe is a panther, right?”

Bell nodded. “Yes.”

“What’s this got to do with my bloody eyes?” Natasha was out of sorts. She didn’t understand how or why any of this was happening to her. She was human. Her mother was human. The only supernatural beings in her life were those she grew up with in Baker Springs. She’d repeated that mantra several times over the last few days when people continued to give her

strange looks. However, it would seem those around her knew different, which didn't set well with her.

Bell gave her a sad smile. "You don't have bloody eyes. They're just different is all. But, it still begs the question, are you sure you're 100% human?"

Natasha sighed. "If you would have asked yesterday or three days ago, I would have said yes."

"Now?" Bell hedged.

"I don't know."

"It's not the end of the world," Bell replied. "It means there is something different about you. I could smell the hint of it, but I wasn't sure what I'd been scenting."

"What about Jackson," she said, remembering how Bell's mate had acted around her the day she arrived. "Do you think he might have any clues as to what I am, or if I've 'become,' something because of Keiji?" The chance was still there, even if it sounded lame.

"You can ask," Bell assured her. "But he and Christoph are in Window Rock for a couple of days helping my dad with some stuff at the orphanage."

"It can wait." She stepped into her room. "Besides, I'm not going to let it dampen my night off, right?"

"Right," Bell agreed. "Are you sure you want to still go to the festival?"

"Yeah," Natasha answered. "Maybe Keiji can help me too."

Bell giggled. "You like him."

“Yeah, I mean, I guess so. He’s cool. His friends are nice too. He’s the first one, in all of my classes, to treat me like a person and not like an oddity.”

“He’s a great guy. I heard he’s a formidable demon as well. I wish we could go with you,” Bell said, frowning.

“I’m sure there will be some kind of thing we’ll be able to do later.” Natasha grabbed her satchel. “Don’t wait up, okay?”

Bell rolled her eyes. “For that, I will. Then I’ll give you grief for coming home at such a late hour.” The girl laughed as she followed Natasha out of the room.

“Oh God.” She groaned. “You and my grandmother would get along great. Are you sure you haven’t talked to her or received an email filled with rules for me?”

Bell laughed. “No, but rest assured, if they do show up, I’ll put them on the refrigerator.”

Natasha made a pained noise. “No. Please no. My grandmother did the same at home too.”

“What does your grandmother do?” Hayden asked, meeting them in the living room as she walked through the door.

“Hang rules on the fridge,” Bell answered.

“Oh wow.” Hayden placed her bag on the couch. “That’s horrible. Why would she torture you?”

Natasha shrugged. “She’s a mom. Anyway, I’ll see you guys later.”

“Better have some juicy tidbits,” Bell hollered as Natasha closed the door behind her.

LAST NIGHT, she'd watched as the areas around the tower were roped off. In one spot, a giant fire pit had been created. In another, a stage, and in a final area, a fighting arena. She didn't understand why they would need a fighting ring. It didn't make sense to her, but she went with it. *When in Rome...*

As she grew closer to where the festivities were to begin, she saw the flicks of flame. Small lanterns illuminated the whole area surrounding the fire pit giving it an eerie ambiance. She walked through the opened area in the rope. The air around her snapped and crackled along her skin. She'd felt something similar back home. A ward is what Miss Georgia used to call it. They could be made to keep people in or to keep those not wanted, out. *So which was this?*

Well, since you're in, it must not be one to keep people out. Or maybe she's not the certain people they meant to keep out. Ugh...don't think. You're here, have fun.

Fun.

Again, she spotted the shadow people along with several different types of unseelie fae. It was as if the area exploded with life. Those she'd never seen—those who'd been whispering behind her back. *How is this possible? What did you do to me, Keiji?* Her mind wouldn't stop turning. Or maybe couldn't. *This is so stupid.* She contemplated turning around when Maël approached her. *Vampire.* She didn't care if he was one, but how did she know? Sure, she lived with them, but him, it wasn't like he broadcasted it either. He lifted his hand and waved at her and she returned the gesture meeting him half way.

“Hi,” she greeted him. “Fancy seeing you here.”

He tipped her chin up and stared down into her eyes. “Ah ... There you are.” He released her then held out his hand. “Walk with me?”

“Uh, sure.” She took his hand. “What did you mean by, ‘ah, there you are’?”

“Well, Keiji said you were human. I tended to agree with him because you didn’t have bodyguards and you didn’t strike me as someone who is vampire.” He led her over to where a group of people were waiting near the fire pit. Several of the students threw wood onto the pile while another person stood to the side with a giant book in their hands.

“What is this?” She’d been momentarily distracted by the activities surrounding them. “Er, I mean, what kind of bodyguards? Do all vampires have bodyguards?”

He shook his head. “*Nu*. Only the most powerful have them. Your last name, Nemescu, you should have them.”

She pulled a face, confused by his answer. “What’s wrong with my name?”

“Nothing, only the most powerful in the Romanian vampire clans. You are a princess.”

“Bull. Shit. There’s no way. I mean, hello, I can go out in the sun.” Duh...she’d never had an allergic reaction one to light. Not even after the first time she kissed Keiji. Not even after her eyes went buggy.

He smiled, tucking her closer to him as a crowd formed around them. “I didn’t say you were a vampire.” He tapped the end of her nose. “I believe you are a ...” He leaned to her, so only she would hear him. “Dhampir.”

“A what?” She arched a brow. She’d never heard of dhampirs. Vampires couldn’t procreate, so how did she come

to be?

“Dhampir. It is a cross between vampire and humans. They...you” —He tapped the end of her nose— “Are envied by our kind. You have all the abilities of a vampire. Extended life, increased strength, superior hearing and sight with none of the downside, like aversions to sunlight, only surviving off of blood. You can eat. Taste food. I’m getting jealous just being in your presence.” He growled, grasping her chin. “You shouldn’t fear me, Natasha. My job is to protect you.”

Uh, sure. Like she could believe anything he said while he held her like he wanted to eat her and fuck her at the same time. She inhaled his dark and dangerous scent. It wrapped around her, the spicy hints lolling her into a sense of calm. Her heart slowed. The anxious edge of trepidation she felt moments ago disappeared. “What...” She licked her lips. “What are you doing to me?”

He grinned. “Relaxing you. I could hear your heartbeat. You were panicking, even if you didn’t realize it. It’s a lot to take in. I will answer every question you have.” He pulled back, releasing the invisible tether holding them together.

She let out a shuddered breath. “Sure... I think.” Her hands trembled, and she clenched them into tight fists. “You’d think after living so long with vampires, I’d be used to this.”

“I came on strong. You’re tempting. However it’s my fault. Forgive me.”

She bit her bottom lip, staring up at him. “There’s no need. I think I’d like to learn more about these dhampirs.”

“Ah...” Maël slipped his hand into hers. “They’re very rare. You and your brothers are the first I have heard of in over a hundred years.”

“Wow. So, how did this happen?” Had her father been a vampire and somehow... *What?* It didn't make sense.

“Well, if you're not sure how children come to be,” he teased.

Natasha snorted. “Duh. But, how?”

Maël sighed. “That, I do not know. It's a rarity. Your father and mother didn't just have you, but your brothers too.”

Wow. She didn't know what to say or think given the information Maël imparted on her. If anything, she only had more questions. None of which he could possibly answer. The only people who could, were dead. “So, my protector, huh?”

He smirked. “Until my dying breath, princess.”

“There they are.” Keiji came up beside her. “We've been looking all over for you.” He brushed a kiss over her lips.

Natasha glanced down and noticed Taichi held Keiji's hand while she held Maël's, who seemed quite content at the moment. *What an interesting turn of events.* As if hearing her thoughts, Taichi smirked at her. “Here we are. So, what is this.”

“Shh...” Taichi winked at her. “It's special. I like your eyes by the way.”

“T-thanks.” She returned her attention the guy with the large tome. “I like your ... hair?” Today he added purple streaks and spiked his hair.

“Thanks. Have you ever thought about adding some red to yours? I think it would really make your eyes pop.” He stepped to her. “Although I do like this too.” He ran his fingers through her hair. “Yeah, now I understand why Keiji is taken with you.”

Her cheeks heated. “Awesome?”

He laughed. “Looks like everything is about to begin.”

The man with the book stepped forward as a precession of men wearing hooded black robes walked through the wooded area to the right of where they were standing. They were quiet. Everyone was for that matter. She watched with rapt awe as the group of hooded men took up their positions around the pit. They extended their arms, palms up then began to chant in Latin the words spoken by the man holding the book.

Exardebit ignis ardens mihi

Ne perenni cremer igne succensi

Omnes qui me videbunt

Et populi pars meī

Flamma una, plures partes,

Pectora flammae ignis sacer

Flames leapt to life. The snap and crackle of the fire filled the still night air. It was beautiful. The fire danced along the dry wood, eating up its fluid. The person at the head of the pit turned to those who had gathered for the festivities. “Welcome to the opening night of Daímonas Festivál. The Fire of the Druid will burn from now ’til the end of the festival. Tonight is a welcoming for all new students. Only those of you who are of the night are allowed to partake in this celebration. We have food and drinks setup inside Williams Tower.”

“Well that answers that,” she muttered.

“What?” Maël glanced down at her.

“The spell at the perimeter.” She hooked her thumb over her shoulder at the entrance.

“Ah, you felt it?” Keiji asked.

“Yeah. It’s pretty simple. I have a friend back home who sets them up at her store. Says they’re made to allow people who are welcomed in and those they don’t want around, out.” She cleared her throat. “Why can’t shifters come?”

“Long story,” Taichi said. “If you have a drink with me, I’ll explain.”

She glanced between Keiji and Maël. “Sure. Lead the way.”

Chapter
Five

“**D**id you enjoy yourself last night?” Taichi met Natasha at the office door. Her shift at the radio station started in less than ten minutes.

Getting out of the house had been a chore. Natasha set all of her alarms to make sure she'd be up and ready to go with plenty of time to spare. However, last night she got a little too involved with the opening festivities. She couldn't remember how many glasses of punch she had, other than it'd been sweet and exactly what she needed to calm her frazzled nerves. It also meant when she finally crawled out of bed, she only had twenty minutes to shower and dress before running out the door.

“I did. Maybe a little too much.” She pulled her sunglasses off and tucked them into the collar of her shirt. She blamed the pounding headache pulsing at her temples, on her eye sensitivity and the fact she drank too much, but in the back of her mind she wondered, *what if?* What if everything she'd learned over the last three days had been true. What if she really was part of the ‘nightwalkers?’ “How about you?”

“I did.” He guided her over to the small coffee station near the back wall of the building. “Here, you look like you could use this.”

“Thank you.” She sagged when the first wisps of the bitter coffee aroma hit her nose. “So, interesting night, huh?”

Somehow, she'd been sandwiched between Taichi, Keiji and Maël ninety-nine percent of the time. They each showered her with attention and strangely enough, affection. No, they hadn't done anything more than hold hands with her or place their arms around her, however, this sense of rightness, as cliché as it sounded, filled her, and she'd been content to soak up their attention. She also noticed others had done the same—drifting into smaller groupings. She'd wondered if perhaps it was due to the nature of the festivities, yet instead of voicing her inquisitiveness, she quietly observed everyone, including the men who accompanied her.

“It was fun.” Taichi handed her a cup of coffee. “Let me show you where the magic happens.” His eyes became heavy-lidded, and his lips curled in a sensual smirk at what she figured was a double entendre. The man, like Keiji, had a potent edge to him, more so when he teased her.

“You're pretty smooth.”

He laughed. “Come on.” He led her up the small staircase and into the booth where all of the broadcast equipment was located. “Take a seat.” He pointed to the chair next to his own. “We have about four hours of syndicate broadcasting that covers the hours of 6am to 10am on the weekends. Then the radio station takes over for the rest of the day and night.”

“Makes sense. So, is it the same for the day shift ... The shifters?” Even though she couldn't figure out what the hell was going on with her body, she still like to think at some point she'd get back to the old her and be able to participate in daytime activities too. Even if, now it was a long shot.

“Yes. Zoe knows the day shift better than I do,” he answered. “This computer has all the tracks in it. We usually fill an hour at a time, so click at least ten to twelve tracks into the playlist and hit play. It’ll start for you and this” —he tapped a clock next to the computer— “will count down when there is only eight minutes left in the hour.”

Natasha was a little bummed. “I honestly expected a turntable and tons of vinyl. Since, you know...” She pointed to the shelf of records just outside the booth.

“Those are leftovers from when the station opened in the sixties. The college switched over to computers a couple of years ago when everything changed from analog to digital.”

“Oh.” She nodded. “Makes sense, I guess. What else?”

He pointed to the computer beside her “This is how we pay the bills.”

He lost her. “I’m sorry?”

Taichi laughed. “Commercials. Sponsors.”

“Oh geez.” She gave a breathy laugh. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be. You’re learning.” He placed his hand on her knee, and the warm tingles she experienced the night before spread throughout her body. His gaze locked with hers, and the same pit-of-her-stomach butterfly effect Keiji had over her whenever he snared her gaze happened with Taichi. She didn’t understand it, but she liked it nonetheless.

Rational thought said it wasn’t impossible to like three men—or in her case two men. The idea made her feel a little inappropriate. Like, she was being greedy. From a moral standpoint, she should be happy to find one person and settle down. Maybe have a few kids. White picket fence. Like her grandmother had with her grandfather. Yet, the logical part of

her brain couldn't reconcile what she experienced with all three men. So where did it leave her?

"You look like you're thinking too hard," Taichi said.

"You caught me." She gave a shy smile.

"You're thinking about last night, aren't you?" He cocked a brow. "Maybe, over analyzing it?" Taichi clicked the mouse, then hit a button on the board in front of them. When he faced her again, the judgment she feared would be etched across his face hadn't been there. Even his tone took on an inquisitive quality. In some respects, she wouldn't have blamed him if he'd been a little territorial or angry with her, instead he watched her, which only unsettled her more.

She tried to formulate how she felt last night, but it stayed jumbled in her foggy brain. She enjoyed herself. She liked the attention each man lavished her with, but should she have? Didn't it make her a bit of a slut? She cringed inwardly. *Teach me to drink the fruity punch again.* "I don't know." A weak answer for sure. "I'm beginning to question myself and everything I knew about my life up to now."

"You seriously believed you were human." His expression changed from playful to attentive. He sat forward, taking her hand in his. The warmth emanating from where they were connected grounded her, forced her to concentrate on his words. "I can't begin to understand why you'd hide it, or why someone else would hide it from you. It had to be a pretty big reason. Still, after the last few days, you do realize you're not human anymore, right?"

Dhampir. "I guess. I mean, I don't think I have reached the level of being angry enough to confront my grandmother. It's like my world has imploded and now I have to rebuild it with what I know."

“There has to be a sensible reason your grandmother didn’t tell you. Hang onto that.”

Yeah, she agreed. Why they moved to Baker Springs. Could her grandmother have known the whole time, and thought by not telling Natasha, she’d been protecting her? *Maël did say, I was supposed to have bodyguards.* “I need more time to process it. I think.”

“I agree. For now, we should concentrate on work.” He gave her hand a reassuring squeeze then went back to his duties as the DJ.

For the next hour, Natasha took copious amounts of notes. Every time Taichi did something, she asked a question. He’d been patient with her, going over everything he did and made sure she understood the reasoning behind it. Her confidence grew as she sat there with him—but not to the point she believed she could do the job on her own. No, there were too many switches. Too many buttons. She still feared she might mess it up. *No one wants to hear gibberish when they’re listening to the station.* Maybe in a few days she’d feel a little more certain of her tasks.

Though Taichi talked openly with her, he’d been a bit reserved the rest of the time. It gave her a chance to study him. Unlike Maël and Keiji, he carried a bit more inner peace. His presence eased her, even when all he did was touch her in a sympathetic way. She supposed it had something to do with the kind of demon he was since he prevented whatever damage Keiji could bring. It was as though Taichi had been the water to douse Keiji’s fire. *No wonder they seek each other out.*

He’d also been a bit nerdy. When he explained the different control knobs and buttons, his eyes lit up. Gadgets,

Natasha found out quickly, were his things. Anything mechanical, he had to figure out how it worked. She wondered if perhaps he'd taken everything apart in the station and put it back together, just to see if he could. She laughed softly, garnering Taichi's attention.

He cocked a brow. "What?"

Heat filled her cheeks. "I was thinking, is all."

"About?" He prodded.

"Did you take everything in here apart on your first day, just to see if you could put it all back together?"

Taichi chuckled. "I may have contemplated it a time or two."

"But you haven't?"

"No. It's too expensive, and I didn't want to cause trouble." He pulled her chair closer to him. "Will you be going to the rest of the festivities this coming week?"

He caught Natasha off guard with his question. "I guess so. I'm still confused by the whole, 'no shifter,' thing to be honest. I'm not even sure I understand what Daímonas Festivál is."

"The shifters, seelies, and such all have their Greek Games at the beginning of the year as a welcome for the new students. A great majority of their activities happen during the day, so some of us are excluded due to our... proclivities."

"Sunlight," she murmured. "Death. Destruction."

He nodded. "This school is about inclusion. It's why it was opened to begin with. So, we, the night dwellers, have Daímonas Festivál. It's our welcome to the students who are demons, unseelie, vampires and such."

“I don’t think I belong though,” she said. “I live between both.”

“True,” he replied. “You do—did. You’re unique. I’m not sure I’ve ever met another dhampir.”

Natasha scratched her forehead and scrunched up her face. “I’ve got to be honest with you. I might have realized I was different for a while.” Probably since she moved to Baker Springs at such a young age. She figured the stares and comments had been because she was a human in a tight *other* community. She never took into consideration she didn’t match anyone there, not even her grandmother. “I attributed my different to being human.”

“It’s easy to do.”

“Maybe. So, what does the festival offer next?” Natasha changed the course of their conversation. It wasn’t that she didn’t want to explore the whys of everything, but she’d do that later, when she could formulate what to say to her grandmother.

“Well, there is a little fight recreation with a party afterwards. A costume ball. A demon hunt.” His gaze turned decidedly hot—aroused. “Do you want to hear about the hunt?”

Natasha licked her lips. Her heart pounded. “Sure. I mean, hunt? Cool... uh what is it?”

He glanced at the countdown clock then back at her. “We break into small groups and chase the females who want to participate.”

She sat back a little. “What?”

“Usually, it’s mates. Or potential mates. No one is forced on either side and even if the person is caught they still say

what happens next,” he answered. “It can be fun from what I’ve seen. Hedonistic.”

Natasha swallowed hard and squirmed in her seat. “What do they do when they win?”

The dark rumble of his chuckle sent a shiver of desire down her spine. “What do you think they do, *kawai*?”

Kawai? She drew her brows together. What did that mean? “*Kawai*?”

“It means, sweet,” he said. “Hurry now, we only have five minutes.”

Right. What did she think they did? An image of Keiji, Taichi and Maël running through the vast forest surrounding their campus filled her mind. Adrenaline raced through her system. “Oh...”

“We would catch you.” He inched towards her. “Take you to the ground.” His breath brushed across her lips.

Natasha closed the distance, pressing her mouth to his. He allowed her to explore, tangling her tongue with his. Taichi tasted like coffee and something else. Adventure, maybe. He groaned, dragging her out of her chair and into his. He ran his hand under her shirt, the heat of his palm left a sizzling stripe across her flesh. The hard length of his erection pressed into her hip. *Holy shit*. She whimpered his name, which only fanned the flames of their arousal, causing an inferno of sensations. If she thought Keiji’s kisses had been intense, Taichi’s were delectable. Sensual. Erotic, as crazy as it sounded. His hand drifted higher, the backs of his fingers skimmed the underside of her breast, ripping another cry of pleasure from her throat.

They should slow down. Give themselves a second to think about the ramifications of what they were doing there. Taichi did have a boyfriend, Keiji, and she liked Keiji too. She shouldn't be sitting in Taichi's lap getting her grind on, while Keiji was home, sleeping or whatever. Yet, she couldn't let Taichi go. She turned, straddling his lap. Sparks of pleasure zapped through her body. Natasha rolled her hips. Then did it again. She let out a shuddered breath and kissed Taichi again. It'd been forever since she dry-humped a guy. It felt naughty. Forbidden.

The alarm on the clock sounded, and Natasha reluctantly pulled away. She touched her lips while trying to gather her tattered wits. She didn't understand how everything had gotten so out of control. It wasn't like she hated it either. She enjoyed being in his arms—perhaps a little too much. She clambered off of his lap. The words 'I'm sorry,' sat on the tip of her tongue, but she couldn't push them past her lips, because she hadn't been sorry. Given the chance, she'd do it again and go farther. *This is a dangerous game you're playing.*

"Right on time," Taichi muttered, adjusting himself. He spun his chair to the board, then switched out the tracks to the news. "I don't regret it, if you're worried."

"I... I'm not worried." She glanced out over the reception area of the station. "Or regretting it. I liked it. I'm just... Confused. I think."

"Because of Keiji?"

She rolled her shoulder.

"I'll take that as a yes." Taichi gave her a knowing smirk. "You're allowed."

“To what? Like both of you? Make out with both of you? Fuck both of you?” She snorted. “Don’t get me wrong, I’ve seen it in my hometown, I understand. I just...”

“You don’t believe it’s for you?”

Natasha sighed. “Possibly? Wouldn’t it make sense? I mean, since I arrived here, I found out about my true parentage, and there are two guys who blow my mind.” If she were being honest, three, though she didn’t know how Maël felt about her. He seemed more preoccupied with protecting her than much of anything else. Besides, she shouldn’t be looking a gift horse in the mouth.

“Don’t you think you owe it to yourself to find out? To live a little.” He turned to her once more. “Look, I’m going to be *that* dick for a minute. You have been living the life your grandmother wanted you to have, whatever her reason might be. Have you stop to consider why you’re here? I don’t mean because it’s a great school either.”

He had a point. She was living by what her grandmother and grandfather wanted for her. She wasn’t mad at them for it. She realized a long time ago, they’d do whatever it took to keep her and her brothers safe. “I feel like I’m a broken record, but you’re right.”

“Of course I am.” Taichi grinned. “Now, how about you try changing everything out? Then we’ll grab a bite to eat.”

“Sure.” Natasha scooted closer. “Can I ask you something?”

“Anything, *kawai*.”

She followed each step Taichi gave her when she’d watched him earlier. “Since the demons are part of the night

classes here, how is it you and Keiji can go out during the day?”

“We’re like you.” He tapped her on the end of the nose with his finger. “We can be out in the sunlight. Maël can’t since he’s a vampire. Same with the unseelie and the lesser demons. We, I guess, are the lucky ones.”

“Do you wish you were able to join the shifters?”

He sat there for a moment, seeming to contemplate what she said. “No. We don’t fit with them. We’re different. Not in a bad way, mind you. The dark calls to us—our demons, even though I am supposed to be good and Keiji is supposed to be bad. It’s complicated.”

No, she thought she got it. “It freaks me out.”

“Because you’ve never used it,” he replied. “All you have to do is embrace who you are.”

Sure, easy for him to say. “I have my work cut out for me then.”

“Well, we’ll be here to help whenever you need us.” Taichi held his hand out to her. “We have an hour. Let’s grab something to eat.”

Natasha nodded. “Great, because I’m starving. Remind me next time not to drink the punch.”

He laughed. “One of these days, you’ll have to ask Bell about it and her pledge parties.”

Chapter

Six

The sun had set only an hour ago, and Maël's skin tingled. His palms itched to touch Natasha. Yesterday, Taichi told him and Keiji of Natasha and Taichi's experience inside the station. He'd been jealous. He didn't have any reason to be though. If things continued as they were, eventually she would end up with them. He didn't know exactly when all three of them, Keiji, Taichi and he formed a bond, but as time went by, it tightened until they were in sync with each other. The idea of sharing Natasha relaxed him some, but until he claimed her properly, like he'd desired since the minute he met her, the anxious feeling of being rejected tore through his mind.

Or, perhaps, it had been her scent he couldn't get out of his head, and it was driving him insane. She made his teeth ache with how sweet she was. Hearing the rush of her blood in her veins was a siren's call, drawing him closer to her. Only one person could do such to a vampire, a bonded. Of course, he'd never heard of a vampire having a dhampir as a bonded—nor had he thought the person would be attached to Keiji or Taichi, but in the long run, did it matter?

The more he thought about it, the harder it became staying away from her. It'd been why he stood outside the Co-Ed house for the last hour, like a stalker, pacing. He didn't have a clear plan. He figured with how unsure she'd been during the

bonfire, she'd have questions. He could answer them. All he had to do was climb the stairs and knock on the door. *One. Foot. In. Front. Of. The. Other.*

Maël didn't move.

Fear played a part in it. He made a phone call two days ago and didn't tell anyone. While he'd been pacing outside Natasha's home, her uncle, Yevgeni, waited patiently for them at one of the poshest hotels for others in Colorado, and he expected to see Natasha. The man had been one of the first to search for her when Dimitri returned after his trip to an American nest. Family blood was meant to be preserved and kept safe. Hiding Natasha had broken each of the Nemescu men. Maël hoped bringing her back into the fold would help the healing process for all of them.

"Obsessed much?" Zoe, Bell's sister, approached him on the way to the small parking area off to the side of the house. "She's in there studying, you know. Pining after you guys. Getting all lovey-dovey bullshit."

"Who shit in your cereal?" Zoe's flippant statements always rubbed Maël the wrong way. She had this attitude of not caring, but the smell of her fear, though subtle, said differently.

Zoe rolled her eyes. "Go in. She'd like to see you. One of you at least—would be better if it was all three."

Maël grunted. "Thanks."

"You're welcome."

He took the steps two at a time and strode towards the door. Before he could knock, the door opened and Shelly, he thought, stood aside for him. She pushed her large glasses up

her nose and gave him a small smile. “She’s in her room. Last door on the right, upstairs.”

“Thank you, unicorn,” he said, hurrying for the stairs.

Her small gasp made him smile. There wasn’t a “night creature” or “Unseelie” who hadn’t wanted a sampling of unicorn blood. He’d had a little taste of it once. Fucking blew his mind. They were highly addictive and protected. They were few and far between now. The days of drinking from the tap were gone. Unicorns didn’t share, and anyone caught forcing the subject was put to death then and there. There was no forgiveness anymore where unicorns were concerned.

Maël followed the girl’s instructions and came to a stop in front of the last door on the right. He held his fist up, ready to knock on the door. Again, a pang of self-doubt filled him. What if this backfired in his face? He’d never been nervous around girls—women. Never. He squared his shoulders and announced his arrival. “Natasha?”

The soft pad of footsteps grew near before the door opened. Natasha greeted him. Her long multi-colored hair, now sporting red streaks like Taichi suggested, had been pulled up into pigtails. Her ear phones were wrapped around her neck as if she might have been listening to music. *I wonder what kind she likes.* She wore a cute pair of pajamas too, though he wasn’t sure why he thought flannel was cute, but it was on her. Her ribbed t-shirt molded her petite frame and cupped her breasts perfectly. The flannel pants were baggy, with puppies and kittens dotting the material, the total antithesis for a demon or in her case *other* residing within her.

She pulled off the glasses—she didn’t really need—totally confusing him. “Hi. What are you doing here, don’t you have class?” She leaned against the doorway.

“Not tonight,” he replied. “I thought if you were up for it, we could go to the demon battle.”

She smacked her forehead. “Duh. Sorry.” She stepped aside, allowing him to enter. “Come on in.”

“Thank you.”

“I totally spaced on the demon battle.” She placed her glasses on her desk. “Between classes and working and ... things, I’ve been a scatter brained as of late.”

He grinned. “Don’t worry. Get dressed. We’ll go. I’m sure Taichi and Keiji would enjoy seeing you at the event.”

She stilled. A wave of uneasiness rolled off of her. “Uh, about them.”

“You made out with both of them,” he answered. “I have been told.”

Natasha turned to face him. “And you’re here still?”

“Sure, why not.”

“Because you don’t like sloppy seconds, or you have standards or—”

He gathered her in his arms, unable to stand another minute of not being able to taste the forbidden fruit standing before him. His lips brushed over hers, and a wild groan filled his throat. Lust and need pounded through his veins as he coaxed her lips apart for a kiss.

Natasha stiffened momentarily then went pliant in his arms. She opened to him, allowing him to take what he needed. He tensed, swamped by the ever-present demand he claim her for all to see. His dick throbbed, his balls ached. It would be so easy for him to strip her bare and take what he yearned for, but he withdrew from the kiss. He hated it,

however he also wouldn't be an asshole about it. He could spend years in her arms and never want to be out of her sight.

“Does that answer your question?” He cocked a brow, holding himself in check so not to pounce on her.

“Wow.” Natasha cleared her throat. “Yeah, I guess so.” Her hand trembled as she opened her closet door. “I need to change.”

“I'll be right outside.”

When she finally stepped out into the hall, Natasha surprised him. “Okay, what did you do with the cute girl with big glasses and flannel pajamas?”

She rolled her eyes. “Whatever.” She spun in a slow circle. “Too much?”

Fuck. No. His gaze lingered on her tits and ass when she turned, giving him a three-hundred and sixty-degree view of her outfit. Maël never had a thing for school-girl skirts or knee high socks, but on Natasha ... He swallowed hard. She wore a cropped, off-the-shoulder TSU sweatshirt. The red hue in her eyes popped with the crimson and gold college initials. On her feet were a pair of black Doc Martins.

His gaze lifted to gap between her top and her plaid skirt. His mouth watered. His fangs popped through his gums. The glimpse of smooth, creamy skin drove him insane. He'd have to keep his shit in check. No way he'd make it through the night without taking a bit of advantage of their situation. Maël held his hand out to her. Her fingers slipped into his palm, warming his cooled flesh.

He stepped to her, wrapping his arm around her middle. “You look edible.” He bent his head and gave her a half smile,

exposing a bit of fang. “I can’t wait to see the expressions on Keiji and Taichi’s face when they see you.”

She tucked her bottom lip between her teeth. “Really?”

He eased the abused flesh from where she’d bit into it. “Oh, yes.” He kissed her again, walking her backwards into her room. He closed the door with the heel of his foot.

“Maël?” She swallowed hard. A hint of arousal and tinge of fear wafted from her.

“I thought I could wait.” He advanced on her. “I thought the first time I had you would be with Keiji and Taichi.” Maël pulled his shirt off. In her bedroom, he sought out his restraint. Tried to leash the beast within him, but it didn’t work. He needed his bonded.

Natasha glanced up at him through the fall of her thick lashes. “You’re serious about this?”

He nodded. “Don’t you feel it?” He placed her hand over his heart. “Right here.” The warmth of her palm on his chilled flesh, caused goosebumps to spread along his chest and up to his shoulder. His nipple puckered, and his gut clenched. “I’ve felt it since the first time I met you.”

She gasped, staring up at him. The red flecks in her eyes intensified. “I don’t know what I feel. It’s like a magnet, pulling me towards all of you. I can’t fight it—not that I’m trying very hard or anything.”

“We feel it too.” He gathered her in his arms. “Let me show you what it’s like to be with a vampire.”

She grinned, wrapping her arms around his neck. “Cheesy line.”

He gave a little shrug. “Perhaps.”

MAËL SLIPPED his hands beneath the off-the-shoulder sweatshirt. The cool kiss of fingertips brought a chill to her skin. When he showed up, she hadn't expected *this* particular turn of events. Sure, she could admit she daydreamed about it. All three of the men wanting her. Practicality invalidated those hopes, reminding her not to be selfish or set lofty goals where men were concerned. Like before, she'd been a great fuck buddy, but none of the shifters she knew wanted to keep her as a mate.

Maybe you were looking in all the wrong places. Perhaps she had been.

He lowered his face to hers and brushed his lips across hers. "Did you know..." he pressed another kiss to her lips while guiding her to where he wanted her. "Sex with a vampire can be quite...arousing."

It already appeared to be so, judging by the long, thick appendage, rubbing across her lower belly. "Oh?"

"When you've fully come into your abilities, we will feed off of each other." Maël's thumb ran across her nipple. "Cum together." He palmed her ass. "It'll feel so good, it'll hurt. You'll crave me, and I'll crave you."

She licked her bottom lip. "What about Keiji and Taichi?"

A predatory gleam filled his eyes when he pinned her to the wall. Her back hit the drywall with a thud. "They'll join us. All four of us will be connected."

Her heart pounded so hard, she heard the whoosh of her blood in her ears. Her gaze had been stuck on his, the swirl of color mesmerized her. Beckoned her to fall into him. To give over without care. *How does he do that?* He slipped his thigh

between her legs, startling her out of her stupor. Were they really going to do this?

The answer was yes. She didn't want to fight it. She didn't want to ignore whatever had been growing among all four of them. She had no desire to deny it either. Natasha arched to him, rubbing against his jean clad thigh. *So fucking hot.* When she'd climbed on top of Taichi in the station, it had released some part of her. One she couldn't tuck away as she'd done previously.

She whimpered into Maël's mouth. The intensity of the situation growing to a palpable pitch. She sucked on his tongue, mimicking the way she'd one day suck his dick. He ripped his lips from hers. A snarl filled with lust passed his lips. His irises were blown. His cheeks were flushed with arousal.

"Tell me, princess," he murmured. "Can you be quiet?"

She nodded without hesitation. "Yes."

"Good." He reached under her skirt and ripped away her panties. After dropping them to the floor, he ran his finger through her slit, collecting the juices there. He groaned before licking the digits clean. "We don't need anyone interrupting us, after all." No, they didn't. Maël placed her hands on the tab of his pants. "Pull me out. I want to feel your warm hands on my dick."

Shit. Those words shouldn't have turned her on like they did. He also shouldn't be able to purr either, since he was a vampire, but he did anyway. Maybe it was his fangs. Or maybe it'd been the rough rumble to his voice that caused the sound, all Natasha cared about as she did as he asked, was the fact her pussy dripped for him. She didn't have to touch

herself to know it to be true. The ache of being empty and the throb of her clit told her everything she needed to know.

She glanced down at the engorged flesh between his legs and moaned. Magnificent. He'd been uncut. The tip of his cock peeked out from his foreskin. A drop of precum pearly at his slit then dribbled down his shaft. Fascinated, she stroked him, gathering up the slick, sticky liquid and brought it to her mouth for a taste.

Her eyes went wide, and her gums throb. His dangerous flavor exploded on her taste buds, causing a chain reaction she didn't understand. She ran her tongue along her teeth and winced when she cut herself. *Son of a bitch*. Maël growled, dipping his head. He sniffed her once before lifting her lip.

"Oh dear," he whispered. "Things are about to get interesting."

Before she could respond, he had her facing the wall. He kicked her legs apart, allowing him access to her. His chest splayed against her back. He hissed at the contact while cupping her breasts. He pinched and teased the nipples, drawing them into hard points. Natasha couldn't breathe for all the sensations bombarding her. She whimpered his name, trying to hold on to some piece of her sanity.

"I've got you, princess. I swear on my life, I will never let you go." Maël positioned himself at her entrance. "Tell me I can have you."

The broad crest of his erection stretched her open. She shuddered. "Yes. Please."

He filled her in one stroke, stretching her past the point she'd been accustomed to. The thick edges rubbed spots she didn't know could feel good. She went to her tip-toes sucking

in a breath to keep from screaming at the intensity of the moment. For several seconds, he didn't move. She relished the way she rippled and adjusted to him. The overfull sensation morphed into something more. Something demanding.

Natasha wiggled her hips, allowing him to rub across her sweet spot. Her mouth fell open and her eyes fluttered shut. She promised not to make a sound, but who the hell had she been kidding. She wanted to cry with the way Maël fit her. It was perfect.

He groaned her name, retreating from her then filling her once more. The pace he set was docile. She'd expected a hard pounding. Something that would take minutes to complete. Instead, he took his time. The soft grunts vibrating in his chest sent tendrils of pleasure through her body and shot straight to her clit. As if sensing what she needed, he lowered his hand to her sex and found the swollen nub that was begging for attention.

He circled her clit with his forefinger, teasing the bliss from her. She shuddered in his arms. Natasha dug her nails into his thigh. A strangely pleasant sensation spread through her. Her heart slowed to a chug. Her eyesight became acute. The light of her room became blinding. She whimpered, wincing at the brightness.

“Shh,” Maël whispered. “It's okay.”

“I don't ... I don't understand.”

Maël nibbled on her neck. “Your senses are becoming more intense, aren't they?”

She nodded, unable to speak.

He groaned, grinding his hips against hers. “Your hearing too?” This time his words were soft, and she wondered if she

heard him at all.

“Yes.”

“Don’t fight who you are.” He withdrew from her and spun her to face him. “This is the beginning of your new life. You’re both human and vampire. You walk between both worlds and are valuable.” He lifted her into his arms and filled her once more. “You should feed tonight.”

“Ew,” she squeaked. “Not sure about the whole blood thing.”

He smirked, exposing the sharp point of his canine. “You will.” He ran his tongue along the point then kissed her. An intoxicating sweetness spilled across her taste buds. She sucked at his tongue, wanting more of the sugary goodness. When Maël broke the lip lock, he rolled her hips over him and groaned. “Told you.” He cocked his head to the side, exposing the long line of his neck and the throbbing pulse at his throat. “Take.”

An awareness consumed her. She swore she saw his blood flow through his veins. Heard the whoosh of his heart, pumping the nectar through the rest of his body. Her gums throbbed again before her teeth elongated. Her mouth watered, and a crazed sensation took root in her center. Those hungry tendrils spread through her body until all she could focus on was his dick in her pussy and the all-consuming need to bite the man who fucked her into such a heady situation.

She buried her face at the juncture of his throat and breathed deep. He smelled so good. Fear of what she’d become warred with need. She took her time, nibbling and sucking on the spot where she wanted to sink her teeth. Maël moaned her name, burying his hand in her hair. He held her in place while his thrusts became more determined and frantic.

Everything inside her coiled with anticipation. She stood on the precipice of what was and what could be. All she had to do was trust him. Trust herself. So many things had changed in such a short amount of time and, though it might be scary, she knew she had to make the leap or continue to walk oblivious to those around her.

Natasha bit him. Maël slammed into her twice more as the first trickles of blood slid down her throat. Everything building inside of her, the anticipation, the fear, the excitement, shattered within her. Her climax hit her with a blinding impact. She thought she'd float away until he bit her as well. Pleasure shot through her once more, causing her to climax again.

“Easy, princess. Don't drain me.” She could hear the humor in his tone, but she should have been more aware.

“Sorry,” she whispered, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand.

“Don't be.” Maël caressed her cheek then brushed his lips over hers. “Tonight, was a crash course, next time you'll know.”

“You sound pretty sure of yourself,” Natasha teased.

He laughed. “It's because I am.”



“So, tell me about this battle.” She tucked herself into his side and a sense of peace descended over her. She hadn't expected to start her evening by screwing one of the guys who

made her body tingle. She also hadn't anticipated drinking his blood or unlocking her abilities. *God, that's some next level superhero shit ...*

"It's better to show you," he answered.

"What's with all the secrets?" She glanced up at him with narrowed eyes.

"Can't be giving away all surprises."

"It's like you think I haven't ever been around *others* before," she teased. "Besides, I've seen some of your tricks, mister."

He shrugged. "You have, but this is different." He lifted their joined hands and kissed the back of hers. "More intense."

She rolled her eyes. "Whatever."

He chuckled as she jumped from the bottom step. The house was mostly quiet. Hayden and Nico were off doing some kind of mate thing. Emma and Bodhi had left a few hours before Maël arrived. The only ones there were Joy and Shelly, along with a few of the newest members. It was one thing she liked about the house. At certain parts of the day, no one was there. She could sleep, work on homework, or just veg before heading to the station for work.

"You've got sass," he said, opening the front door for her.

"I've been told such," she replied.

"You should show it more."

It was her turn to laugh. "You're opening a can of worms even suggesting that."

"It might be fun."

“Okay, mister. You’re on.” She smacked his ass and yelped in joy. “I’ve wanted to do that for a long time.”

He growled. “Have you?”

She nodded. “Oh yeah.”

Maël palmed her naked rear and squeezed. “Feelings are mutual.” He then leaned in. “I love that you’ve foregone your panties. Holding your ass in my hands while fucking you was a dream come true.”

A hot rush of arousal shot through her. She hadn’t been prepared for the way her body reacted to the sexy Romanian vampire. The way he made her burn for him. The way he made her crave him with one kiss. None of it made any sense to her. She shouldn’t be lusting after three men, however all three of them occupied her mind 24/7. And, after their little episode in her room, she didn’t think she’d be able to resist them even if she wanted to.

“So, three of you...” she hedged, not even sure how to broach the subject with him. They were friends after all.

“Yes,” he answered. “The three of us.”

“Don’t you get... I don’t know, jealous? Because you’re vying for the same girl.”

“No,” he said. “It’s different. It turns me on hearing about you and Taichi at the station. It made me even hotter thinking about you and Keiji and, when I tell them about us, they’ll feel the same way I do. Do you have problem with Keiji and Taichi’s relationship?”

Did she have a problem with them? No. The thought of seeing them doing anything made her hot and bothered. “No.” She didn’t hesitate with her answer.

“You shouldn’t answer yet,” he said leading her toward where the arena that had been setup days before.

“Because I might freak out?” She snorted. “Keiji and Taichi making out would be hot enough, seeing them do anything else ... I’m sure I’ll lose my shit.” She turned to him, stopping them in their tracks to glance up at him. “Question is, if I get all hot and bothered, are you going to cool me off?” Natasha ran her finger down the middle of his chest to his rock-hard stomach. *Fuck, he’s sexy.*

He hissed. “You’re playing with fire.”

“Let me guess, I’m going to get burned?” She licked her lips. “What if I want to feel the flames of passion lap at my flesh?” She hadn’t meant to be corny about it all, however, his eyes swirled with desire. She flipped his switch.

“I’d say you’re about to get your wish granted.” He growled.

“Fuck, that’s sexy too.” She let out a shuddered breath.

Maël snatched her hand and tugged her to him. “Not out here.” His fingertips brushed over her hip, leaving a trail of goosebumps in its wake. “I want to savor you next time. Sip from your neck while you scream my name.”

Oh. Damn. She had a feeling it would only get worse before the evening was over. “You’re naughty.”

“You have no idea.” He grinned.

She took a step backward, then another before spinning around, following the path towards Williams Tower. Nervous energy built within her. “Tell me what I’m about to see.”

“And ruin the surprise? Never,” he said in a mocking tone. “Tonight, you’ll celebrate with the rest of us night creatures.

Enjoy it.”

“So infuriating.” She rolled her eyes, stepping into his embrace when he wrapped his arm around her.

“Part of the perks of being an upper classman.” Maël lead her over to the entrance of the roped area. “We’ll have fun, don’t worry.”

Chapter
Seven

When they'd met at the fire pit the other night, the place hadn't looked like this. Two large, red and black Japanese gates sat at either end of the space. Inside, a square bamboo ring had been erected. The twinkle of light from nearby trees caught Natasha's attention. She gasped. Beautifully ornate paper lanterns hung from the limbs. They were perfectly arranged to give the space the maximum amount of light and atmosphere without being garish or too outlandish. There were also words written in Kanji along the sides and front of them.

"Whoa..." she whispered.

"There is more to show you," Maël said. "Keiji and Taichi are popular around here."

She figured as much. Over near the second gate, a long table rested. Face painting supplies were strewn about while some of the students sat in chairs. Those wearing *artist* T-shirts moved about, while others sat with the person in front of them going over the different designs. One student had a kabuki mask. Another had a red-nosed demon, like Keiji. Some were made up to look like a beautiful Geisha. Then there were garish masks. Those meant to frighten anyone who might walk upon the person by accident.

“Would you like to get one?”

She nodded. “Yes!”

Maël led her over to the table to an empty chair. While she waited, she looked over the drawings laminated in little hand out. There were so many masks and ways to paint her face she couldn't choose—until she had the perfect idea. She'd wear Keiji and Taichi's mask. Half of her face would be blue, and the other half would be red.

When the artist joined them, Natasha explained what she wanted, then waited as the girl worked her magic. By the time she was done, she couldn't believe it. She hoped Keiji and Taichi liked it. She glanced up at Maël and grinned. “Well, what do you think?”

He gave her a once over. “I think you're going to have two horny demons eating out of the palm of your hand.”

“What about a certain vampire?” She tucked her bottom lip between her teeth.

“Very much so,” he growled.

She paid the artist, then took Maël's hand. They meandered through the crowd, checking out the different stands setup for everyone. Some had strange smelling foods, while others had jewelry or pottery. Another booth had a shirt commemorating the weeklong event and announced where all the money raised went to—a local charity for domestic violence survivors. When Natasha glanced around, everything that seemed so out of place days ago seemed normal now.

Maël guided her back to where all the chairs had been setup around the ring. He placed her at the end of the row towards the aisle. She gave him a quizzical look. “Just wait. It's a surprise.” He pointed towards the squared ring. “Watch.”

The same druid from the other night appeared out of a puff of smoke. The roar of the enthusiastic crowd became deafening. She wondered for a second how Maël dealt with it.

As if hearing her thought, he leaned in and said, “It gets easier with time. Focus on the druid. Soon the other noise will drift to the background.”

Natasha nodded.

The druid raised his hand to silence the crowd. Natasha’s heart hammered. Her palms were sweaty from the anxious energy racing through her. She’d never seen anything like this. Once the rowdy crowd settled, the silence became a bit unnerving. He waited another beat before speaking.

“The, Aka-oni to Tengu no karakai dates back to 940 in the Heian period. It is a battle between the red demon and the protector, the long-nosed demon. The lore has been passed down from generation to generation, celebrated by a festival in their honor.”

A group of drummers she hadn’t seen until that moment began to play. The dramatic rhythm spiked the excitement cooling in her veins. Soft chatter behind her drew her attention. She glanced over her shoulder and almost swallowed her tongue. Keiji—she didn’t know how she knew it’d been him, other than she could feel him—stepped toward them in his demon form. He easily stood over seven feet tall. His slight muscular form was bulked out. The tattoos she’d seen peeking from the collar of his shirt became Japanese Kanji characters, and an orange light pulsed from them, giving him an eerie glow.

Her gaze lifted as she took in every inch of him. He was all brawn, demanding attention as he stomped towards them. When she got to his face, she was struck by how much it

reminded her of those Tengu masks she'd coveted back home, only it was his true form. A thrill skittered down her spine. This guy was hers. A feeling of rightness settled over her in those scant few seconds.

Keiji put on a show, darting into the personal spaces of those around him, causing them to jump then laugh. When he spotted Natasha, he crept along the path almost as if he stalked her. Her breath hitched. She trembled in his looming presence as he bent to her and sniffed. "Sweet." He licked the junction of her neck and growled. "Mine."

Natasha blew out a tremulous breath. "*Domo arigato, Aka-
oni.*"

His lips curled into an awkward smile. "*Amaimono no
tame no amaimono.*" He bowed low, then produced a piece of candy out of thin air. "*Anata no tame ni watashi no kawai
hachidori.*"

Keiji could speak to her in Japanese all day long. She giggled. Had he really just called her his hummingbird? "*Watashi wa kōeidesu.*" She'd fallen in love with the Japanese language watching way too much anime. To be able to use her skills with the guy she liked overjoyed her.

Keiji grunted then strode to the ring, his head held high. She could tell he thrived off the attention as he stepped into the middle of the square. The drummers began again, and a blue light appeared at the other end of the area. As it drew near, it intensified, growing bigger by the second. She'd never seen anything like it. When Taichi appeared in front of Keiji, he stood a good three inches taller. His body was built like a warrior's should be, and like Keiji, he was shirtless. He wore traditional hakama pants, along with a haidate thigh guard. She

wondered for a moment if this is what Samurais looked like thousands of years ago.

Maël leaned in. “Intense, yeah?”

She nodded. “Yes, very.”

The drummers ceased playing and the demons faced off in the ring. Anticipation crawled through her belly. Though she knew what the outcome would be to this fight, it didn’t stop her from wanting to cheer each of them on. She didn’t have to choose who she wanted to win. Keiji and Taichi circled each other, their gazes were locked in a battle of wills. The tension between the men rolled off of them in waves adding to the atmosphere surrounding the match.

Maël placed his hand on her thigh and gave a squeeze. “If you think this is extreme, I can promise you that later it will get more so.”

She couldn’t take her eyes off of the match as Keiji and Taichi launched into their contest, grappling with each other. “What do you mean?”

“What I mean is,” Maël pulled her onto his lap. “Those two will be so worked up by their battle, they probably won’t make it back to their room. We’ll stumble upon them fucking, hard. Relentless.” He nuzzled her neck and groaned. “Question is, do you want to watch them or participate?”

She shivered. Images of the men fucking flashed in her mind. Her skin heated. Her breath came in a soft pant. The idea of watching them turned her on. It made her ache. Her nipples hardened, and a tinge of embarrassment accompanied her desire. She’d never gotten this hot and bothered by the thought of watching anyone have sex, but those two ... shit.

“Both,” she answered.

Maël nipped the area where he'd bitten her earlier. "Good answer."

Natasha's skin felt warm and tight. Even with the short skirt and top, a fine sheen of sweat formed on her brow as she watched the two demons in the ring teasing and taunting each other. The crowd's anticipation hung heavy in the air, almost tangible as it built for the battle. She didn't stand a chance. More so after Maël put ideas of finding Keiji and Taichi going at it afterwards. It made her wonder if they fucked in human form or demon and would they allow her to join them.

Being taken by one demon could be hot, but two...well that was downright dirty and beyond thrilling.

Focusing on the battle was becoming impossible.

Natasha clenched her thighs together as need flowed through her body. Maël placed his hand on her exposed leg, giving the firm flesh a healthy squeeze. His touch was not helping. Instead, it inflamed her need more. If it wasn't for the fact that she wanted to watch Keiji and Taichi battle, she'd suggest going back to her room and doing what they'd done earlier.

"Here we go," Maël said before wrapping his arm around her shoulder and pulling her closer to his big body.

Keiji went after Taichi first, succeeding in knocking him to the ground. It surprised her when the crowd booed and hissed in response. Taichi, unphased by landing on his ass, did a kick up from his back, stomping his feet as he approached a smirking Keiji.

Taichi took Keiji out with a sweeping leg kick. The red demon hit the ground so hard the earth vibrated, and the chairs

shook. People rushed to their feet to cheer and chant Taichi's name.

"How long does this last?" Natasha inquired, fascinated by what she was watching.

"It's scheduled to go fifteen minutes. Last year they went back and forth for a full half hour, effectively working the crowd into a frenzy." Maël chuckled. "The school *was not* amused."

Natasha didn't doubt it. The guys had only touched each other twice and already those who supported Keiji and Taichi were chanting their names in tandem. It was deafening and exciting all at once.

Keiji recovered, grabbing Taichi in a headlock, before taking him to the mat. The guys rolled around, getting in blows here and there. The roar of the crowd got louder becoming deafening at one point.

Natasha found it hard to cheer for either guy since either advantage was only held for a second before the other demon took it back.

From where she sat, she could see the muscles on their big bodies straining and flexing with each move. Sweat glistened on their skin, and Natasha yearned to lick it off both guys.

She had it bad.

Back and forth it went for what seemed like hours, until Taichi chased Keiji from the arena. She stood up, craning her neck to keep them in her line of sight, but she lost them once they hit the woods.

"Watch," Maël said.

Smoke filled the arena once more and when it cleared, there in the middle of the ring, stood a dozen druids, arms raised to the sky and chanting. The clouds shifted, and she gasped. Little dots appeared and began to fall like rain. Natasha held out her hand and caught one of bright red and blue wrapped “drops” in the palm of her hand.

“Candy,” she whispered, her tone filled with awe.

Coolest thing ever.

Maël nudged her. “You going to stare at it or eat it?”

When he went to pluck the candy from her hand, she snatched her hand away from him. “Mine.”

He chuckled. “Then eat it. Druids make the best fucking candy.” Maël unwrapped one he picked up from the ground and popped the morsel into his mouth. A look of utter pleasure flashed across his features. “Blood candy.”

Natasha unwrapped hers then popped it into her mouth. An explosion of flavors splashed across her tongue. “Wow.” It reminded her of cotton candy and funnel cake.

“The candy here is a hot commodity.”

“Why?” she asked before eating another one. This time it tasted like whipped cream and strawberries.

“However they make it, it reacts to each person’s chemistry. So, no one person will experience the same flavor as anyone else does. It’s kind of cool when you think about it,” Maël replied before popping another into his mouth.

It was kind of cool.

After finishing her last piece, she folded the wrappers and stuffed them in the tiny pocket on her skirt. Later, when she

returned to her room, she'd tack them to the memory board she brought with her from home.

“What's next?” She didn't bother keeping the anticipation from her voice.

“We get to dance and celebrate Taichi's win.” Maël stood, and tucked Natasha into his side before easing his way through the boisterous crowd exiting the arena.

“Poor Keiji...he never wins, does he?” She glanced up at Maël while taking the cup he offered her.

“No. I wouldn't worry about it though, in the end, he wins Taichi.” Maël smirked. “And you. If you ask me, that's a pretty good deal.”

She couldn't agree more. The cup in her hand crinkled under the pressure of her fingers tightening around it. Excitement warred with nervousness. The anxious energy rolling through her made Natasha hyperaware of her surroundings. The more Maël told her what to expect, the less she was able to concentrate.

Maël's gaze never left her as he took a drink of his beverage. “Having already experienced the pleasure of your body, I can't wait to watch them make you lose control when they fuck you.”

She gulped. “Where will you be?”

“Watching and waiting for my turn,” he purred.

Holy shit, she was going to be a puddle of goo by the time the night was over. She needed to focus on the here and now, not what may or may not happen later. “Where are Keiji and Taichi? Should we go find them?”

“Let's dance,” Maël said, ignoring her question.

He placed his cup in the trash can nearest them and held out his hand. Natasha dumped hers as well before placing her palm in his. The biting chill of touch sent a thrill down her spine. It was fascinating. The way her body heat chased away the cold, warming Maël as well. They stepped onto the makeshift dance floor as the introduction cords of *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)* by Marilyn Manson pumped through the massive speakers. The languid beat rolled through her body. She loved it.

Dancing right now with Maël would be a great way to release some of her pent-up energy. He tugged her into his arms, pressing her flush to his body. The thick length of his cock pressed to her lower belly, adding to the pleasure still crawling through her veins. The liquid erotic rhythm of the song made her sluggish, languid. Slowly they moved to the music. Their hips brushing and grinding against each other in a purely hedonistic way.

She glanced around the area. The way some of the couples were connected it looked as though they were having sex. Their hands slid across each other's bodies in a sensual manner. Their groins were pinned together. The self-indulgent way they rocked together had Natasha wondering if they were close to climaxing. She shouldn't be watching them, but she couldn't take her eyes off of them. The whole debauched scene was hot as hell. "Who'd have thought Manson's music could be so dirty."

Maël's lips brushed the shell of her ear as he whispered, "You've obviously never fucked to him then, have you?"

Natasha shivered when he nipped at her sensitive lobe. "Ahh ... no."

Maël moaned when he palmed her ass and her belly rubbed against his erection. Hard to believe they'd fucked only a couple of hours ago since they were both acting like horny, lovesick, teenagers.

"We'll have to make sure you get the pleasure of experiencing it," he assured her.

A set of large hands encase her shoulders and warmth bloomed along her back. A quick turn of her head brought her face to face with Keiji. His eyes were heavy lidded and filled with lust.

Taichi stood off to the side, close by. His eyes reflected the same desire as Keiji. Neither of them said a word and they didn't have to. Maël released her into Keiji's arms and stepped aside. Taichi pressed against her back. Although she had seen a few relationships that were multiple partners back home, Natasha never thought it would be something she'd encounter or want herself.

Did it make her a slut?

Keiji fingers brushed over her forehead, smoothing the frown between her brows. "Someone is over thinking this."

"Maël and I fucked before we came to the arena," she blurted.

Taichi chuckled behind her.

"And?" Keiji asked. "I fucked Taichi last night and this morning."

Natasha tilted her head to catch the other man's gaze.

Taichi nodded.

"Your point?" Keiji drew her attention back to him.

“I thought you should know?”

Keiji chuckled this time. “I knew it the second I smelled you. Your scent has mixed with Maël’s. You also shared blood.”

Natasha nodded. “We did.”

“Once Taichi and I have had the pleasure of taking you, you will smell of all us. But to answer your question; I don’t mind and I am not jealous. Neither is Taichi. You’re ours,” he growled.

“But—”

Keiji placed a single finger across her lips, effectively stopping her from speaking. “No buts, Natasha. Only us ... only pleasure.”

“We’re going to dance, eat and enjoy the party,” Taichi added. “When the night is over, you’ll decide the next step, and we, all three of us, will follow your lead. No repercussions or judgments from us or anyone else on campus.”

She snorted. “Someone will have something to say about one girl and three hot guys. My reputation—”

“Bell has two mates. Do you think anyone on this campus gives a shit? They’re her mates. It is not up to us to question who is chosen for us,” Keiji said. “No one will question or speak badly about you. It happens way more than you think or know. One female with multiple male mates is not uncommon for our kind. Look around, Natasha. You’ll see it on the dance floor, in the little groups who are huddled together. It is easy to pick out those who are together.”

Natasha had seen it already.

Couples on the dance floor varied. Male-female, male-male and a mix of several males and one or more females. One tiny girl had six large guys around her. Each one seemed to be touching her at various points and Natasha could tell by how they interacted that they were somehow involved with one another.

“Like them?” She nodded to the group off to the right of them.

Keiji followed her gaze. “Yes. I don’t know them very well. I do know her name is Nova. She’s human, but her mates are all demons. They hail from Lucifer’s bloodline and are brothers. They share her.”

“Whoa. How does she keep up?”

Keiji chuckled. “I don’t know from personal experience, but I’d have to guess it’d be no different than us. They’d either share her at the same time or one at a time. Unlike us though, since they’re brothers there would be no sexual play between the guys, *hachidori*.”

“She looks very happy,” Natasha noted.

Nova’s face had a huge smile as she spoke enthusiastically with the men surrounding her. She was secure in her position and the love of the massive men who surround her, who scowled at any male that was stupid enough to approach the petite woman, sent a wave of longing through Natasha.

Taichi smiled. “Actually, there are seven brothers. One is missing and from what they’ve told me, she’s very happy.” Taichi pressed his chest to her back and groaned. “Two of them are in my classes. One of them is in my A&P class and another is in my Biology class. They’re cool. Honestly, unless they told you, you’d have no idea of their bloodline.”

“We’re still talking about this?” Maël appeared on her right. In his hands held four red cups. “I’d figured by now she’d be parched from the heat and dancing.”

“She’s curious about how this will work,” Taichi said before removing two cups from the vampire’s hands.

Maël arched a brow at her. “She seemed more than fine when we spoke about it.” He paused. “On two separate occasions tonight. Truth be told the second time when I explained to her how the night might go—”

“What did you tell her?” Taichi asked.

“I told her chances were you two would be fucking like rabbits after the adrenaline high.”

“That’s not exactly how you put it,” she reminded him.

“It was pretty close,” Maël replied before taking a sip from his cup.

“And how did you react, Natasha?” Keiji inquired.

The warm flush of embarrassment filled her cheeks. Her mouth went dry. She couldn’t adequately describe the feeling, other than extremely horny and wet.

“The smell of her need was like an aphrodisiac. I’d wager her sweet little pussy went molten at the thought of you two fucking.”

Taichi inhaled deeply. “He’s right. I smell it coming from her now.”

“As do I,” Keiji added. “We’re going to let it build. We’ll dance with you, then when you’re out of your mind with hunger, we’ll go someplace more private to relieve the ache. If you wish it.”

“Can we go now?” Natasha didn’t bother hiding the need in her voice.

“Patience, *hachidori*. We want to give you a night to remember and look back on fondly.” Keiji smiled. “It will just be one of thousands of nights we will give you pleasure.”

“For now, we will dance,” Taichi said.

Alrighty then. “Sounds good to me.” Didn’t seem like such a bad plan. Of course, by the time they were done dancing, she’d be a trembling mess on the verge of imploding. She’d grown wetter just thinking about them naked and aroused. On second thought, maybe this wasn’t a good idea after all...

Chapter
Eight

Keiji pushed open the door to his and Taichi's apartment then ushered Natasha and Maël inside, after removing their shoes. They'd worked themselves into a frenzy, grinding and rubbing against each other as the music pounded through their veins. The evening had gone better than he anticipated.

Natasha's admission had caught him off guard, but it didn't offend him. In fact, surprisingly, it turned him on. If anyone claimed their bonded first, it was best it'd been Maël. Due to her lack of knowledge when it came to dhampirs like her, popping her first fang in the middle of all three of them might have ruined the moment.

Still, he had to prepare her for what was to come. They had to lay it all out there for her and let her dictate how the evening would end. He hoped it be with her between all three of them. However if it didn't, he completely understood. For Natasha to go from thinking she was human, to finding out in a rather short amount of time that she was a dhampir, couldn't be easy on her.

Keiji locked the door behind him, startling Natasha. She faced him, her eyes wide with a mix of excitement and trepidation. She tucked her bottom lip between her teeth and his dick jerked behind the fly of his pants. Her scent darkened,

becoming sweeter by the second. *Formalities first. Sex second.* Keiji crossed to her and held out his hand. When she readily took it, a piece of him settled. He guided her over to the small couch and sat down beside her.

Taichi and Maël joined them.

“Tonight is all about you. What you want and don’t want,” he said, keeping his gaze on Natasha. “But you have to understand what will happen here.”

“All of it will be with your consent,” Taichi added. “If you don’t feel comfortable, everything will end. No pressure.”

Maël nodded. “Agreed.”

Natasha folded her hands together and seemingly contemplated what they said. “What if ... What if I want to watch first?”

“What do you want to watch us do first, *hachidori*?” Keiji scooted a bit closer to her. “Kissing? Touching? Sucking? Instruct us. We will grant you whatever your fantasy dictates.”

“Don’t be so impatient.” Her laugh had Keiji’s cock straining against the zipper. “I...” She frowned for a second, then shrugged as though she carried on some conversation none of them, besides her, could hear. “This is all so weird.” She sighed. “There, I said it.”

“What’s weird about it?” Taichi prodded.

“When I decided to come here—to TSU, I did so because my brothers were here, and I thought at least I could spend time with them, because I missed them. Instead of finding them, I found you guys and new friends. Nothing about my leaving home was planned. Now, it’s like everything already is ... planned out, I mean.” Her gaze darted from Keiji to Taichi before settling on Maël. “I want you to do what you would do

whether or not I'm here. You can't fabricate spontaneity. Show me what you like."

A devilish grin tugged at Taichi's lips. His face darkened with mischief. "Ah, whatever we like, *shujin*."

Keiji grit his teeth, giving himself a second to gather a bit of threadbare control. "Maël, why don't you put Natasha on your lap, so she gets a better view."

"How about we go to your room," she said. "Better than out here, right? More room for all of us."

"I like where she's going with this," Taichi said, rubbing his hand up and down Keiji's thigh.

Keiji stood. "Perfect." Their bedroom had a large bed and a small chaise lounge, which was angled nicely for Maël and Natasha to sit on. "Follow me."

He led them down the short hallway to his and Taichi's room. They'd kept the decor to a minimum, never really seeing the point of putting pointless paintings or embellishments on the walls. The bed was the masterpiece after all. He stood to the side, allowing the others to enter. A part of him yearned for her approval.

Once they finished their bonding, he would turn the decorating part over to her. She could do whatever she wanted with it. Besides the bed dominating the room, he wondered if he subconsciously waited for someone like Natasha to come along to decorate it.

"Oh..." Natasha glanced around the room. "I guess you don't need anything fancy when you have a bed like that."

Keiji had it custom made. No matter if they were in human form or demon, he and Taichi would be comfortable. The bed measured ten feet by twelve feet, and all of their sheets and

blankets were custom made in Japan. He spared no expense in its construction and it'd been worth every penny he paid. "No, but if you wish to add a few touches, you are welcome to."

"I'll take it under advisement," she said, running her fingertips over the comforter.

Maël came up behind her and wrapped his arm around her middle. "Would you like to sit on the bed to watch or would you rather sit over here?" He turned her slightly toward the chaise lounge. Like the bed, Keiji had it custom made out of the finest silks he could afford. Many nights he fucked Taichi on it, reveling in his cries of pleasure and pleading moans.

Natasha glanced between the bed and the chaise. "The chaise."

"Excellent choice," Taichi chimed in. "I think you're going to enjoy sitting there."

MAYBE IT WAS the two cups of punch she drank, or the druid-made candy she ate, but Natasha was on fire. Her skin tingled with anticipation. Her lower belly twisted with arousal so potent, she thought she'd go insane before someone finally touched her. Her fingers twitched, desperate to feel Keiji and Taichi's naked flesh. She'd never felt so out of control in her life.

Maël tugged her back into his arms as if sensing the growing need within her. A soft whimper fell from her lips as she stood in awe of the two men before her, removing each other's clothes. Their lips touched in an innocent kiss and lust crawled through her veins, turning her on more. She couldn't take her eyes off of the men.

"You like it?" Maël murmured in her ear.

“Y-yes.” She didn’t dare try to peer back at him, afraid if she did so, she’d forget what Keiji and Taichi offered, and fuck Maël to relieve the growing ache within her.

He splayed his palm across her stomach, leaving a blistering trail of cold in its wake. Natasha shivered, burrowing herself deeper into his embrace. “Good. We’re both a little over dressed now too.” He flicked his chin in the direction of Keiji and Taichi.

She glanced over at the men and gasped. Taichi was on his knees taking Keiji’s cock to the back of his throat. She shuddered. Her focus narrowed to a point, watching each bob of Taichi’s head. The trail of precum and saliva glistened along Keiji’s length before being gobbled up again by Taichi. Each slurp was accompanied by a moan from Keiji. His head was thrown back in ecstasy. His eyes were shut, and his mouth was slightly opened.

Her breath came in soft pants. Her knees shook, becoming weak. Maël sat down on the chaise, taking her with him. The hard press of his erection bit into the flesh of her hip, adding to the already erotic atmosphere. Natasha rocked against him and was rewarded by a hiss from Maël. He tensed behind her.

“You’re playing with fire,” Maël grunted.

Sure, she was and she didn’t care. A red haze colored her vision. “Are we only supposed to watch?”

“No.” He released his hold on her and pushed his hands under her skirt. He caressed her inner thigh, refusing to touch the spot she needed him most. Her pussy. Up and back he went, hypnotizing her with his motions.

She fell into the rhythm, rocking her hips. Her heart pounded. Her body trembled, and her eyes closed while she

burrowed her face in the crook of his neck. When he finally circled her clit with his middle finger, she climaxed hard. Maël milked the tiny bead of her release, but it wasn't enough. She still ached for more. Natasha opened her eyes and found Keiji and Taichi staring at her. Their gazes were heavy-lidded. Taichi stroked Keiji. A fine sheen of sweat coated their bodies.

Come spewed from Keiji's tip and Taichi was there to lick and suck it up. Keiji grunted, giving a lazy thrust of his hips, while his eyes were still glued on the spot between her thighs where Maël teased her pussy. "Naughty girl." He pulled from Taichi's grip and strode towards her. He was still hard. His uncut tip was covered with spit and cum. "Show me."

Maël spread her thighs, exposing her sex to Keiji and Taichi's perusal. "She's wet, hot and tight. She felt so good wrapped around my dick."

She let out a shuddered breath as Keiji closed the space between them. He loomed over her, lust swirling in his dark gaze. He bent his head to the side, exposing his neck as he did so. Natasha licked her lips. His strong pulse tempted her to take a taste. But, was it safe? Could dhampirs do that—bite a demon.

"You're thinking too hard," Maël whispered. "If you want him, drink."

"But...he's, you know..." She sighed. "I have so much to learn."

"Drinking from me won't harm you." Keiji held his hand out to her, and Natasha took it without fear.

Keiji fisted his hand in her hair and placed her face in the crook of his neck. His scent. Fuck. She inhaled deep, enjoying the subtle hints of something dark, almost dangerous. It

aroused her. Blinded her to anything and anyone else in the room. The pounding of his heart grew louder. His breath came in heavier pants. His cock, trapped between them, thickened even more, if that was possible. She wiggled against him, wrapping her arms around his middle. Unlike Maël, Keiji's skin was hot. She glanced down, convinced his tattoos came to life, glowing against his skin.

What she wouldn't give to trace each one with her tongue. Keiji chuckled, massaging her scalp. Heat filled her cheeks. *Right*. She pressed her lips to his neck and moaned. He tasted as good as he smelled. She ran her tongue along the tendon, trying to gather as much of the potent flavor as she could.

Keiji growled. His hand clenched in her hair, causing pinpricks of pleasure to slide along her scalp. "Wrap your legs around me." He let go of her hair before palming her ass. When he lifted her, she did as he commanded, fitting herself flush to his big body. The tip of his erection bumped her clit. "Bite me, and I'll give you what you want. What you crave."

A second set of hands joined Keiji's. "She isn't used to drinking. You have to show her." Maël nuzzled her neck. "Remember." His fangs pricked her skin, and she whimpered. "You won't hurt him."

When he sank his fangs into her neck, she followed suit, biting down on Keiji's neck. The second his blood spilled over her tongue, a more exquisite euphoria washed over her. It was different than Maël. Wicked with a hint of mischievous. She swallowed, drinking him down. She couldn't get enough of her demon warrior.

"Hang on," Keiji muttered, sinking deep within her. "Can't hold him back."

Natasha sealed the bite, confused by what Keiji said. When she opened her eyes, the long-nosed demon gathered her in his arms. His twisted visage, part surprised and part blissed out, startled her. She glanced over her shoulder and found Taichi sprawled out on the bed, lazily stroking his cock. His big blue body appeared at ease, like he'd seen this before.

Keiji bottomed out within her, drawing her attention back to the demon. She gasped his name, clinging to him. His dick stretched her to the max. Everything on this demon was bigger, including the appendage she was currently impaled on. She clung to the demon, unsure if she'd be able to survive whatever came next. He fit his hand between them and found her hard clit, begging for attention, especially after the way Maël left her hanging moments before.

“Keiji,” she whimpered. “Please.”

His thumb rolled her tight nub twice, pushing her headlong into her climax. She jerked her hips, riding him hard. The fluttering in her belly intensified until she thought she would die of suffocation. Then, she was gliding through the air, completely empty and lost as to what was going on.

She landed on Maël's lap, his hard cock straining to get inside her as Keiji and Maël guided her over him. Inch by glorious inch filled her and she let out a satisfied sigh. A small grin tugged at her mouth. His hands slid up her sides, caressing her skin, before pulling her sweatshirt off, exposing her breasts. Her nipples puckered already hard from the stimulation provided by seeing each man now fully naked. He then removed her skirt, adding it to the pile of clothes surrounding them.

Keiji took a hard point into his mouth and sucked while fisting his hard dick. His long tongue curled around it, sending

sparks of pleasure straight to her clit. Natasha fit her hand between her spread thighs and worked the hard bundle of nerves as Maël thrust into her. She cried out; it was all too much for her to process. The connection. The pleasure. The knot of bliss building inside of her expanded and, just when she thought it would consume her, it shattered. The muscles of her pussy rippled and pulsed through her orgasm. Maël's thrusts became more insistent and the sounds he made left her riding the high of all highs. His grip tightened on her hips, his nails bit into her flesh. She sank into it, enjoying the fact she'd wear his mark tomorrow.

A masculine groan had her opening her eyes. In front of her, Keiji had Taichi bent over. The blue demon's hand continued to pump the long, thick erection between his legs. The bulbous tip almost purple from need. Taichi's gaze met hers. It swirled to life with intention. He braced one hand on the chaise and leaned forward, burying his face between her thighs. He inhaled and let out a shuddered moan.

"I think he likes the way you smell," Maël murmured.

She swallowed her snippy reply when the demon's tongue lashed at her clit. Her hand went for the back of his head, holding him in place while he continued to nip and tease her. Maël nuzzled her neck. The soft sounds he made turned her on even more. There was no way in this position, Taichi wasn't licking Maël too. The thought sent a thrill down her spine, and she clenched around him.

"Fuck, demon," Maël grunted. "If you're going to tease us both with that tongue of yours, suck on my balls."

Keiji's chuckle caught her by surprise. She looked up at him. His features were twisted in pleasure. He curled his lip when he shifted his hips and, just as she suspected, his tattoos

glowed, giving his skin a molten coloring. *This is so fucking hot.*

Natasha cried out. Maël's thrusts were becoming more urgent. He hissed in her ear, mumbling something in Romanian while guiding her over his cock. Like before, she allowed the entirety of the situation to swallow her whole. She couldn't concentrate on one particular thing or touch. All of it combined making this experience ... beautiful. *Stop thinking.* She couldn't though, she wanted to remember every moment.

Maël nipped at her neck then dragged his fang across her skin. The blistering heat of his bite combined with the lash of Taichi's tongue sent her headlong into a second orgasm. She hadn't been expecting it, nor had she realized she'd been so close. Maël flexed his hips and let out a low groan as he drank from her. Each pulse of his release set her on fire as she rode him through the pleasure.

Keiji's thrusts became more frantic, and seconds later, he joined them, finding his climax within Taichi, yet the blue demon gained no relief for himself. He lifted his head from between her legs. The look of pain on his face troubled her; he should have come too. Joined them. She didn't understand why he hadn't. A niggles of worry took up residence at the back of her mind. What if she couldn't have him. What if he'd only made out with her to appease Maël and Keiji.

"You're over thinking it," Maël said.

"Wouldn't you be?" She didn't take her eyes off Taichi.

"We planned it this way."

Taichi lifted her from Maël's lap and carried her to the bed. Keiji and Maël joined them moments later. They didn't say a word, not that they had to. The niggles of worry dissipated

when Taichi's gaze met hers. She held her hand out to him. Each of them wanted her. He'd been saving himself for her. To bind them together. The idea renewed her need. He gathered her in his arms, so they were face to face. She felt so small in his arms. Protected.

He fit the tip of his length at her entrance and sank into her. She swore her eyes rolled into the back of her head. The delicious drag of his dick across her already sensitive walls drove her insane. She clung to him, wrapping her legs around his waist, so she was flush against his body. His thrusts were measured, enough to give pleasure but not make it end too soon. He palmed her ass, rocking her against him. Her breath came in soft pants. Her body melted into his. She knew it would be so good, that they'd burn hot and fast once they actually did "it." This though ... no, this was more. She could feel it all the way down to the small molecules pinging around in her body. These men were claiming her.

Natasha cupped his cheek and brought his mouth to hers for a kiss. Their tongue met, and she could taste herself and Maël on his tongue. She whimpered, becoming more demanding. The whole situation was hedonistic, fucking a vampire and two demons at one time, but his kiss ... She went wild. She placed her hands on his shoulders and locked her ankles behind him. Her mouth never left his as she quickened their pace. She was desperate for more. Needed something only he could give her. She didn't quite understand it, of course, but she continued.

As if realizing what she was getting at, Taichi grabbed both of her arms and placed them above her head. He held them there with his right hand as he slammed into her over and over. The growl of need he let loose sent a shiver of desire

down her spine. Natasha arched to him, meeting him thrust for thrust.

Maël and Keiji, back in his human form, joined them. They both latched onto her nipples as Taichi continued to fill her. She was overwhelmed. Like before, she couldn't concentrate on one stimulus, but all of them together ... She reveled in it. Allowed the passion to devour her. She cried out, pushing her breasts into Maël and Keiji's mouths while clenching around Taichi. The guttural groans emanating from him turned her on.

“*Jirai*,” Taichi grunted. He tilted her hips up, letting him grind against her, and shortened his strokes.

Natasha hissed. She dug her fingernails into his hand. She swore he grew thicker inside of her, to the point she worried he might do serious damage. She whimpered, closing her eyes. It was all too much. She couldn't take it. She was going to die.

“Don't fight it,” Keiji whispered. “Ride his dick. He's so close”

She did as he instructed, trying to counter Taichi's thrusts. Natasha cried out. It was too intense. Too much. Her breath came in heaving pants. Her legs trembled. She swore she hung from a giant cliff by the thinnest of threads, hoping it would keep her from falling. “Taichi ... please.”

“*Jirai*,” he snarled again.

“I don't know what that means.” She looked up at him totally confused by what he wanted from her.

“Say it,” Keiji said. “*Jirai*. It means, mine.”

“Yours,” she cried. “I'm all of yours.”

A satisfied smirk tugged at the demon's lips as his thrusts became frantic. He rut within her, making wild noises as he did. She clung to him, riding the edge with him until her skin right above her right breast began to burn. Natasha tried to pull away, but Maël and Keiji held her in place. She didn't understand. It hurt worse than a burn. She sobbed out their names and both men pressed kisses to her cheeks and foreheads.

"*Kuru*," Taichi snarled. "*Kuru*." He buried his face in her neck and groaned. His whole body trembled as though he held back on her.

"Come, *hachidori*," Keiji murmured. "He needs you to come." Keiji fit his hand between them and pinched her clit.

Natasha sucked in a breath. Her cry lodged in her throat as her release shot through her. The burning in her skin became white-hot, combining with the erotic bliss destroying her. Her vision dimmed as an unholy roar rang in her ears. Then she felt it, the hard throb of Taichi's dick as jet after jet of his cum filled her. He nuzzled her breast where the pain had been the worst, then licked it. She didn't understand what he was doing, but with each lap of his tongue, the pain ebbed from her.

"What the fuck just happened to me?" She lay there, cuddled to Taichi who'd let to pull out, her whole-body limp as a wet noddle, her mind quiet.

"You've been thoroughly fucked," Maël teased, kissing her.

"And branded," Keiji added.

Say what? "Branded?"

Keiji gave a soft chuckle. "Later. Right now, rest. This big oaf is pretty possessive of what's his. I have a feeling he's

going to keep you in his arms all night.” He patted Taichi on the shoulder.

Taichi gave a lazy thrust before gathering her into his side.
“*Jirai.*”

His.

Chapter
Nine

Keiji woke to the aroma of fried bacon and fresh coffee being brewed. In his mind, there was no better breakfast food scent to wake to. The scent of bacon mixed with the musky scent of sex caused his morning erection to bob under the sheet covering him.

Reaching down, he palmed his dick, giving it a hearty squeeze to help ease the ache he felt deep into his balls. After last night, fucking should be the last thing he should be focused on, but it appeared he was ready for round three ... or was it four? His stomach growled, reminding him of what woke him. He was hungry for both food and sex, and his dhampir lover was nowhere to be found.

Beside him, Taichi slept sprawled out. His dick tented the sheet covering his hips and a small wet spot formed. Whatever he dreamed about, Taichi was happy. He glanced to where Maël lay and blinked. Maël laid a protective arm across Taichi's midsection. It shocked Keiji, because the vampire had never shown any interest in them in a sexual way. But hey, he guessed one's outlooks could change, especially after the horny demon licked Maël balls last night while bringing their bonded to climax.

It'd be interesting to see how all of it would play out in their future. Keiji didn't care, he'd welcome the vampire to play with all of them, instead of just Natasha.

Speaking of Natasha, Keiji shoved off the covers and stood. He headed to the bathroom to relieve his bladder, but found the longer he stood there, the more he stroked his dick. *Fuck*. He chuckled to himself, flushing the toilet. He had it bad for the little dhampir. After washing his hands and tugging on a pair of running shorts, Keiji made his way to the kitchen.

Natasha stood in front of the stove, frying bacon, wearing nothing but one of his older well-worn, well-loved shirts. White earbuds were in her ears, and her pretty red painted toes tapped to the beat of whatever song she was listening to.

He drooled taking in how the hem of his shirt flirted around the skin of her thighs.

Keiji's one regret from last night was he didn't get to taste her pussy and suddenly the urge to eat food dissipated, replaced with a deep seeded hunger for her.

Now he understood the ache in his balls. His demon knew their mate was awake, willing and waiting for him. Keiji was going to take advantage of the fact he had her all to himself while the other two slept. He didn't mind sharing Natasha with Taichi or Maël. He knew having her alone, to himself, would be rare a rare occurrence. Keiji planned to benefit from those moments when they happened. First, however, he needed to focus and find out how she felt about everything she did and saw last night. It had been an intense experience for him, so he could only imagine it from her point of view.

Not wanting to scare her, he cleared his throat a couple of times before she turned to look at him. Finally, she pulled the

buds from her ears, giving him a heart-stopping smile. “Hey. Hope you’re hungry. I made us breakfast.”

“Not for food, *hachidori*.” He growled, leaning down to nip at her exposed neck. Keiji knew she’d be able to feel his dick through the thin fabric of his shorts and her shirt, pressing hard into her lower back. “I’d much prefer to feast on your pussy for breakfast. If that is an option.”

“*Oh!*” Her fingers trembling so much, the spatula she held clattered to the floor. Grease splattered on the stove, floor and the tips of her feet. She hissed. “Shit.”

Keiji crouched down. He should have realized his words would catch her off guard. She was still trying to acclimate herself to their desires and her position as their bonded. He rubbed the grease off her foot and examining it for burns before glancing back up at her. “Are you hurt?”

Natasha gave a husky, sexy laugh that made his dick jump. “I’m fine, other than my pride being bruised by my clumsiness.”

Keiji kissed the top of her abused foot before standing and taking her back into his arms. He took a moment to enjoy the feeling of her pressed into his body. She was the perfect fit. Her head rested on his chest, above his pounding heart.

She cleared her throat, bring him out of his daze. “If ... ah ... you want ... I’m ... happy to offer up *whatever* you’d like for your morning meal.”

Her stuttering was cute.

“I believe I wanted to know if your pussy was one of the menu items,” he said, loving the flush of pink on her cheeks at his bluntness. He wondered if the pretty color extended to the tops of her breasts.

“Are you always this blunt?” she tilted her head up to stare at him.

“Yes. I’ve found it causes less confusion.” He rubbed his thumb across her cheek. She sighed, and her eyelids got heavy, effectively hiding her pretty eyes from him. “Can I eat your pussy, *hachidori*. Can I lick your tight little hole until you cream all over my lips?” Keiji smiled when she gulped. “I want to find out if it’s as sweet as I suspect it to be.”

She blinked, her cheeks getting redder. Fuck, he loved her ability to blush. It made his dick rock hard.

“How can a girl say no,” she said, the edge of bashfulness left her tone.

“You always have that option, *hachidori*,” he assured her. Yes, they were all her mates, but it sure as hell didn’t mean she was their fuck toy.

“What’s it going to be? Eggs and bacon or pussy?” She took a step out of his embrace and waited.

“I’m going to be honest. For me, pussy wins every single time.”

Natasha’s tinkling laugh and the scent of her arousal clung to him. She went up on her tippy toes, pressing her full lips against his then whispered, “Yes.”

“Thank fuck.” Keiji growled, slipping his hands under her shirt. *Naked*. He closed his eyes to gather his tattered control. If he didn’t do so now, he’d end up coming before he got inside her. Keiji gathered her in his arms before placing her on the kitchen table. He shoved the offending material of her shirt off of her, exposing her pert, round breasts. “I’d wake up happy every morning if this was always offered as an option.”

Natasha pushed herself to the edge of the table and braced her hands and feet along the lip of it. She didn't wait for him to tell her what to do, instead allowing her body to comply with her bonded's needs. Her legs parted giving him the first glimpse of her wet, gleaming sex. His mouth watered. She was bare except for a small strip of black curls. Her clit peeked out from its hood, tempting him. Her folds were slightly swollen, thanks in part to the fact that at some point yesterday all of them had been inside her. Maël being the lucky bastard to get his dick in her twice in one day.

“Do you hurt?” He wouldn't do anything to her if she was in pain. They weren't exactly gentle with her the night before.

She shook her head. “No. Achy.”

Keiji ran his thumb along her slit. The juices coated his appendage, and a ragged groan filled his throat. “To be fucked?”

“Yes.” She arched to him. A trickle of her arousal seeped from her.

The muscles in her stomach quivered and her breath came in a shuddering pant. “Easy.” He eased a finger between the lips, opening her to his gaze. The sexy flash of her flesh, had been the exact same color of her nipples. Yet another thing he craved to taste.

“Soaked.” He bent his head and inhaled. “Sweet.” The musky scent of her need had been heady, going straight to his balls. Later he would spread her like this and gorge himself on her flesh, making her cum over and over on his tongue until he had his fill. For now, however, he gave her clit a quick flick of his tongue. He knew if he made her climax, he too would lose it. He'd rather be inside her when he found his release, than spilling it in his shorts.

Her hips jerked, and she pleaded with him. “Keiji ... please.”

“I didn’t mean for this to happen so quickly,” he admitted after removing his finger from her. “I wanted to make sure you were okay with last night and how everything went down.”

Natasha covered her breast and sex before she sat up, swinging her legs over the edge of the table. Keiji couldn’t stop the groan of disappointment from escaping his lips. “You mean getting fucked senseless by three different guys?”

“Well ... it was slightly more than that, *hachidori*. Taichi fucked you in demon form and I fucked him.” He waited for her reaction to his bluntness. “It’s a lot to take in.”

“That’s what she said,” Natasha teased.

He chuckled. If she was cracking jokes, his concerns about her might be completely unwarranted. “You have doubts?”

“Yes, and each of you eased them in some way.” She sighed. “I was more worried about what others would think and worried people would consider me a whore—” Keiji’s face twisted in disgust at the term she used, and Natasha noticed. “It’s true. I’m fucking three guys. Believe it or not, women can be quite brutal with their judgements.”

“We’re bonded,” he growled.

“Yes ... we are. Or we will be after you get done reassuring yourself I’m good with last night and our future,” she grumbled, shifting back and forth on the table.

It was then the sweet scent of her desire reached his nose.

“Patience, *hachidori*, all good things come to good girls who wait,” he cooed, willing to make her anticipate the pleasure he’d bring her.

“Yeah, well unlike you three, I’ve been up over an hour, patiently waiting for you to wake. I finally figured the smell of breakfast might encourage one or all of you.”

“Are you sore, *hachidori*? I know Taichi’s demon was less than,” he coughed, “gentle in his mating.”

“I liked it.” But she didn’t answer his question. “A lot. Will, uh ...”

Keiji smiled, watching her gaze dart around the room and her cheeks flush red at her embarrassment. Having enough of it, he captured her jaw, forcing her eyes to his.

“Will what?” He already knew what she’d been too bashful to ask. He wanted to hear her voice it.

“The demons ... your demons, will they participate ... often?”

“They will participate as much as you or they want. It’s not uncommon for our demons to show themselves during sex. Especially with a bonded, since you are just as much the demons’ as you are ours. They will want their turns also.”

She nodded, her legs kicking back and forth.

“Are you okay with that?”

“Yes,” she mumbled.

“They can sometimes be more amorous, but they will never hurt you,” he assured you.

“I know. I felt, I mean, I feel safe with them,” she replied.

“Good, as you should.”

Silence filled the room and Natasha looked at him expectantly. When he didn’t make a move she huffed. “Have I assured you properly?”

He laughed. “Yes, *hachidori*, you have.”

“Good,” she said before her fingers floated across his bare chest. “Can we continue now?”

“Fuck or bond?” he inquired.

“Both,” she replied, her body vibrating with desire.

“Lay back, *hachidori*.” Keiji knelt in front of her and inhaled her distinctive scent. His tongue ached for another taste of her sex. As he speared her pussy with his tongue, gathering the first samples of her incredible taste, his demon rushed forward. The long-nose demon groaned, burying his face in her crotch, wanting to remember the smell and taste of his bonded.

His tongue was longer, thicker and he used it to his advantage. Keiji used his thumb to rub at the swollen bundle of nerves at the top of her sex while his mouth sought out her entrance and pushed forward. His demon growled at the first sip of their bonded. He savored it, wanting more. He lapped at the silky fluid dripping from her pussy, starved for her. The demon hummed in pleasure and pushed forward using his tongue to fuck her. She clenched around his intrusion. Her muscles rippled and sucked at him, just as they would around his dick when she came.

“*Keiji!*” Natasha’s fingers dug into his scalp as he used his whole mouth to pleasure her.

Fuck, Natasha was a beautiful woman in the throes of her passion. Her back was arched, her firm, pink-tipped breasts jutted upward, her hips bucked up and off the table as she chanted his name, coming on his tongue.

“Son of a bitch!” He growled against her swollen flesh, taking one, long last taste before working his way up her lithe

body. Having already paid homage to her pussy, Keiji focused his attention on his favorite part of a female's body, her breasts.

Natasha's were spectacular in shape and form. Situating himself between her still trembling thighs, he pushed the plump flesh together, lapping, licking and nipping at her nipples.

"Oh!" she cried out, rubbing her sopping wet pussy against his stomach, marking the man and his demon with her cum.

Keiji spent a long time on her tits, loving and playing with them. When he was done, the pink little buds were a dark cherry red. He then traced Taichi's brand with his tongue. She shivering and groaned. The brand was still fresh and ultra-sensitive. Soon his brand would also mark her as his.

Natasha rolled her hips. The head of his erection bumped the wet heat of her pussy, teasing him to distraction. He hissed in pleasure when her pussy, slick and hot, brushed across him again. He needed inside of her. Needed to feel the walls of her sex flutter and suck him into her body. He yearned to feel the spill of her juices rain down on him as she climaxed in his arms and he wanted to put his cum inside her, so she carried his marking scent.

"Please ... Keiji," Natasha pleaded. "I need you."

He knew then and there that he'd never be able to deny this woman ... his woman, anything. Keiji lined himself up with her entrance and shoved forward. It was better than he remembered. He gave over to the sensation of her rippling and tugging around him. The way she pulled him in while a million whispered kisses assailed his tip. He groaned, fighting the release building in his balls. He'd wasted too much time.

“Ah, fuck.” He groaned against her neck. “You’ve got me ready to cum, and I haven’t even moved.” He retreated, hissing at the sensual drag of his cock along her sensitive walls. It was pleasure and torture all balled together. His sac grew heavy, drawing closer to his body. He closed his eyes trying to concentrate on something else, anything else, so he had the strength to make this good for both of them.

“Please,” she whimpered, shifting her hips and trying to take him back inside her.

Instead, he took the heavy stalk of his cock and slapped the spongy head against her swollen clit. Her reaction was immediate.

“Ohmigod ...” she cried out. Keiji smiled when he felt her nails dig deep into his shoulders and she mewled. “Again.”

Keiji did it several more until his balls ached and he craved to feel the warm, tight clench of her pussy around him. Unable to deny them further, he guided his cock to the well of her sex and pushed through the tightness of her clenching sex. He didn’t wait for her to adjust to his size, because he couldn’t wait any longer, either. He’d spent so much time talking and teasing her, he’d pushed himself into a corner. Now, the orgasm building deep within his groin couldn’t be staved off. He pulled out to the tip, only to surge back into her wet, quivering pussy.

“Fuck me, Keiji,” she urged, her hips rolling, pulling him deeper inside of her.

“*Fuck,*” he snarled, knowing if he kept being so loud he’d wake the others and they’d join in. Right now, he just wanted to have this time with her to himself.

The pleasure was majestic. Something he'd only ever experienced with Taichi. He was powerless to stop himself, he fucked her with short, hard thrusts. So hard his balls ached from slapping against her ass. Leaning down, he captured the hard-tipped point of her nipple, drawing into his mouth and suckling on it.

Natasha groaned, lifting her hips to take even more of him and his demon, whom he had kept back, surged forward, wanting to claim its bonded.

"Shit...fuck..." He groaned against her breast as he felt his dick get even bigger and harder. Natasha moaned, thankfully, with pleasure.

Some warning, for both of us, would've been nice, asshole. Keiji swore he heard his demon chuckle in his head. His gaze found hers. Keiji saw his demon reflected in the depths of her eyes, but he also saw love, pleasure, and acceptance. A part of him relaxed, knowing she wanted both halves of him.

His demon took over, rutting into Natasha so hard he worried she'd be hurt. The table she laid on screeched as it moved across the tile floor, thanks to the forceful thrusts. It hit the other wall with a bang.

Dammit, that was going to leave a mark and give Taichi something to bitch about when he woke up. The demon didn't give a shit though, and it didn't stop him from pounding into her even harder.

"Cum on my cock, *hachidori*," he demanded, needing to feel what he knew Taichi experienced last night inside of their mate.

"Keiji," she cried. "Oh ... I'm—"

The demon reared back, impatient his demand wasn't met quick enough. He gripped her hip with one hand on her hip while he spread the lips of her sex and using his thumb and forefinger of his other hand and began to milk her swollen clit.

Natasha screamed, her pussy fluttering around his thrusting cock and then he felt her release wash over his cock.

Keiji moaned.

At first it was like a million rain drops fell on him, then her cream coated him. It seared his cock while the muscles flexed and rippled milking him for everything she had. His breath left him on a rush. The demon didn't stop though. He fucked her through the release, as he throat chanted. The air around them snapped with electricity. Fire licked at his spine. He physically hurt from the sheer will of him not emptying himself in his bonded.

"Fuck, that's good." His gaze dropping to where his dick moved in and out of her. It was wet, and shiny with her sticky release.

Because Taichi branded her last night, she was better prepared this time. She hissed, bucked her hips, and came all over his dick again as his mark began to appear over her left breast. The demon was fascinated by it, watching as it was etched permanently on her skin.

It was sexy as fuck

The release he had been struggling to hold back, broke through. Pleasure rolled down his back, his balls drew up against his body and he swore his toes curled into the floor. "*Hachidori.*" He grunted with each spurt of cum exploding from his dick. It hurt so good to unload. His body jerked and his ass clenched as he filled her.

He didn't know how long he stood there, but it felt like forever as he continued to throb. His knees weakened, and Keiji toppled forward careful not to hurt his bonded. Their breaths came in heaving pants as they tried to recover the intense session.

Natasha's fingers burying into his hair brought him out of his post-coitus haze. Keiji lifted his upper body while keeping his still hard dick inside of her, and his gaze searched her face.

"Wow," she whispered. "I'm going to need to start taking my vitamins to keep up with you guys."

He chuckled.

"Wait ... do dhampirs even take them?"

"No, *hachidori*, you get them when you feed." He pushed a wayward strand of hair off her face. Both their bodies were covered in a fine shine of sweat, and soon he suspected Natasha would start to get uncomfortable on the hard-wooden table. "Which you should've done while we were bonding."

Natasha shrugged. "It's still all new to me. The last thing I'm thinking about is sticking my teeth into your neck to suck your blood."

"I'm just as guilty. I should've reminded you. Next time." He shifted his hips and pulled out. His dick jerked again and another pearl of clear fluid leaked from his tip. "When Maël wakes, you must feed though,"

She nodded. "You really think they're both still sleeping?"

"Doubt it. They're more than likely in bed with raging hard-ons," he joked.

"Um." She wiggled her brows. "That could be fun."

“Yes, it could be.” He winked. A warm feeling of love rush over him at her laughter. “And possible.” Keiji gestured till his still hard dick.

“You have more stamina than the energizer bunny. Is that normal?” She wrapped her dainty hand around his engorged flesh and squeezed.

Keiji’s ass clenched and he flexed his hips, shoving his cock deeper into her grasp. He palmed his balls and tugged, trying to gain some control back from the beast within him. “Paranormal beings don’t have the same issues as humans, the poor bastards. We often can stay hard after a release.” He closed his eyes. “Right now, the demon is pissed I pulled out. I guess he wasn’t done coming inside you.”

She gasped. The smell of her simmering arousal intensified. “Interesting.”

“Since I haven’t heard them moving in there, how about we finish up breakfast, wake them up, feed them and then you can feed from Maël.”

“It’ll be easier when I learn more control and am able to do so from you and Taichi,” she said.

“Yes. Especially during our bonding. It is my understanding that you feeding from us while finding our climaxes together is fucking amazing.”

“We’ll work on that,” she said before hopping off the table.

Keiji fought back a groan as he noticed a trail of his cum and her juices trailing down her inner thigh. “If you want to set Taichi off, I’d suggest not showering right away. His demon will love the fact that you smell of the both of us.”

“Kinky,” she said softly.

“Oh, you have no idea, *hachidori*.”

“You two done in the kitchen?” Maël called from the hallway.

Natasha broke out into a fit of giggles at them being caught.

“Yes,” Keiji grumbled. “You could have come in.”

Both Taichi and Maël appeared in the doorway. Keiji didn't miss the look in Taichi's eyes; it was filled with desire and good old fashion lust.

“Truth be told, we've been up since the moment you went down on her,” Maël admitted. He moved his thumb between him and Taichi. “We watched you brand her. It was fucking hot.”

Keiji's gaze dropped to his lover's groin, seeing his erection tenting the silky basketball shorts.

Maël reached out, pulling Natasha into his arms unceremoniously. “She needs to feed. And it's more comfortable to do it laying down,” he said calling over his shoulder as he took their mate back down the hallway toward the bedroom.

“Breakfast can wait,” Taichi growled, before capturing Keiji's hand and all but dragging him down the same path Maël just took.

When they entered the room, Natasha and Maël were already on the chaise lounge, and she was eagerly feeding from the male vampire.

Taichi stared down at him. Desire and lust burned in his gaze as he straddled Keiji's lap. He sought relief, both of them knew it. Taichi wrapped his hand around both of their dicks

and began to stroke them with long, hard pulls. The way his tip leaked all over Keiji had him ready to fuck.

Dinner sounded much better than breakfast or lunch, anyway.

Chapter

Ten

Natasha's phone rang as she stepped out of the radio station. Today, she had the early shift which surprised the hell out of her, but it also gave her time to think. Things were rapidly changing, and she had to reconcile her former life with her new one. She glanced down at the screen and frowned.

"Hayden?" she said, after sliding her finger across the screen.

"Hey, sorry to bother you. I know you've been busy." A door closed in the background. "A woman showed up today. Well, actually, two women showed up today, said they knew you and wanted to check on you."

"Uh..." She hadn't really told anyone where she was going, only her grandparents, and her grandmother wouldn't just show up unannounced alone or with someone else. So, who could it be?

"She said her name is Chrissy Hyde. The other lady with her is Nicole," Hayden replied.

Oh no. Natasha groaned. "Oh man."

"She's important, isn't she? I've learned these things over the last few years."

Natasha sighed. Instead of finding Keiji or Taichi, she headed in the opposite direction, toward the Co-Ed house. If Chrissy was there, something was up. “Nicole’s with her too, you said?”

“Yeah. What do you want me to tell them?”

“I’m on my way. They’re good people, just a little...loud. Chrissy mostly.” She hit end on her phone then shoved it into her back pocket. *Shit. Not today. I don’t have time for this.*

She quickened her pace. Left to their own devices, Chrissy would try to hook the whole Co-Ed house up with dates, especially if they didn’t tell her they had mates, like Bell, Emma, and Hayden did.

She felt like a salmon trying to swim upstream as she pushed through the crowded quad. Everyone was talking about the costume contest later that night. Some were pissy because they couldn’t attend, others were gushing about what they had planned. She, on the other hand, still had to go shopping. Natasha figured she had about nine hours to find a costume, get dressed and join the guys.

Her phone beeped, announcing someone texted her. She sighed. Today just wasn’t her day. She slid her finger across the screen and grinned.

Shopping and early dinner. My treat? ~K

Of course, he added a bunch of emojis at the end that made her laugh. She answered him with a thumbs up then jogged across the street to house. From the porch she could hear the ruckus laughter and conversation going on inside. Taking a deep breath, she placed her hand on the door and opened it.

“Well, there you are.” Chrissy’s bright cheery voice, surprised Natasha. “I thought I was going to have to call your

brothers to come find you.”

By boys, she meant her sons. “Hey Mrs. Hyde, how are you?” Natasha dropped her bag by the door.

“What have I told you about being so formal around me?” She pursed her lips and gave Natasha a haughty look. She hadn’t changed a bit. Her green eyes sparkled with intent and amusement.

“Habit,” Natasha murmured. “So, what brought you here today?”

Nicole tilted her head. “Something’s changed with you.” She elbowed Chrissy. “Don’t you see it.”

The woman played with the long ends of her ash-colored hair. “I did, the minute she walked through the door. Do you think she’ll tell us what happened?”

Hello! She was standing right there.

“We said the same. It happened almost immediately,” Bell said. “I made tea and finger sandwiches.”

“But they’re not made from real fingers,” Shelly added. “Unless, you know, you need that. In which case, I’m not sure I want to know how they’re made.”

Chrissy snorted.

“You’re so weird, Shelly.” Natasha laughed.

Shelly shrugged.

“I was just commenting on the house,” Chrissy said, drawing her attention back to older woman. “Hayden said a gentleman by the name of Keiji rendered the blue prints and Bell’s father and his brothers remodeled the place.”

“Keiji is her boyfriend.” Shelly took a sip of her tea, her pinky finger fully extended. “So is Taichi. She doesn’t talk about it though, because there’s a vampire sniffing around too.” She looked up at Natasha. “He is a vampire, right?”

Natasha groaned. “Yes. Maël is a vampire. Yes, we’re all involved.” Wasn’t the way she had planned on announcing it, but Shelly let that cat out of the bag.

Shelly shivered. “I could tell. I could feel it in my blood. All the little platelets shrieked in terror.”

So weird.

“*Ay dios mío,*” Nicole murmured.

“And, guess what?” Natasha plopped down on the couch between Hayden and Emma. “I’m a dhampir.”

“Come again,” Chrissy muttered, sitting forward in her chair.

“Dhampir. I guess it’s a long story. Something I am hoping my brothers can enlighten me on, if I ever see them again.”

Nicole sat forward, staring at Natasha with intent. “This is getting juicy, can I use this for a book idea?”

“I’m sorry, dear. I don’t think I understand.”

Natasha sighed. “I don’t either. Gran and gramps never said a word about our mother and father. We, or well, I, don’t even remember how old I was when we came to live with them.”

“You were three,” Chrissy croaked. “Your brothers were eight. Jenny and Tom came to us a few days before your family moved to Baker Springs and said something happened. They were going to pick you and your brothers up. But that you three needed the shelter of an *other* community.”

“Gran never told us much. I don’t blame her. I guess whatever happened was tragic. But, on the other hand, it’s hampered me. Look at me.” Natasha motioned to herself. “I found my bonded and the next thing I know, I’ve got amazing eye sight. I can be out in the day. I can eat still and, as a nice how do you do, I drink blood.”

“Maybe we should learn how to make those real finger sandwiches,” Shelly mumbled while taking a bite of her food. “Or she needs a *Snickers* bar.”

Nicole covered her laugh with a cough. “Is that when your eyes changed?”

Natasha nodded. “Talk about freaking me out. If it wasn’t for Keiji, I’d have thought I was dying.” Over the past few days, the red flecks in her eyes had darkened to a shade lighter than blood. Being in Keiji’s apartment had also been a reprieve for her. Maël explained her light sensitivity wasn’t because she was becoming a vampire, but more so due to the fact that she’d been around them at night more than the day. Slowly, but surely, she’d become a creature of the night without even realizing it.

Chrissy sat there for a moment, her gaze locked on Natasha. She wanted to squirm in her seat but thought better of it. “Well, congratulations are in order. I am sure your grandparents will be so proud.”

“I haven’t even told them yet. Gran didn’t want me leaving Baker Springs. She thought I could find someone there. Fall in love with a shifter. Go through the whole scenting ceremony.”

“I would have paid good money to see *that*,” Nicole said with a laugh.

“You’re such a perv,” Natasha replied. “I should call your mate and tell him what you said.” It was well known how Onyx snagged Nicole. However, she wasn’t sure if Nicole tamed Onyx or the other way around. The girl had a hard life, and like Natasha, came to a town not really knowing anyone except for the Wolfe family.

“Call him, I don’t care.” Nicole winked at her.

“You two ...” Chrissy shook her head.

Natasha cleared her throat. “Anyway, I’m not sure taking a stroll down memory lane is why you’re both here. I’m thinking it might have something to do with Gran?”

Chrissy nodded. “She’s been worried about you. I told her I’d come check on you, see if anything was out of place.”

“As you can see, I am right as rain.”

Chrissy narrowed her eyes. “Almost. You’ll get there. Now, who here is single. You should all know, I have fantastic mingling skills.”

“No,” Nicole said. “Don’t answer that question.”

“I am,” Shelly answered. “I’m in love with a beautiful lion, and he doesn’t even know it.”

Natasha groaned. “This isn’t going to end well. I should be going.”

Chrissy cleared her throat. “Sit there. I drove all this way to see you. You can afford me another hour or so.” She gave Shelly her full attention. “Why do you say that?”

“He’s too cool to be seen around me.”

Bell shook her head. “He’s in love with her. They’re both... Weird. Henry isn’t going to say much to you unless

you open up to him.”

“And, who is this Henry to you, Bell?”

“My adopted brother.” She placed her cloth napkin on the coffee table in front of her. “He’s very quiet. Both him and Tate are. We didn’t have what you would call a normal life. So, they’re more apt to stick together. But, if I know my brother as well as I do, he likes Shelly very much.”

“Come with me tonight,” Natasha blurted. “You can do the costume contest with us. We’ll have fun.”

“Is that wise?” Hayden said. “There are reasons why our activities are separate.”

“She’ll be surrounded by us, and I’ll protect her,” Natasha answered. “Besides, what could go wrong.”

“Those are famous last words,” Nicole stated.

“I’ll do it,” Shelly said. “I’ll be in a costume. No one will know who I am.”

Chrissy tapped the side of her nose. “Oh honey, they’ll know.”

Shelly blanched. “I showered this morning. I swear.”

Natasha laughed. “You smell like sugar and happiness.”

“With a hint of rainbows, if rainbows had a scent,” Chrissy added.

“Wow. Who knew.” Shelly shrugged. “I’m sure surrounded by demons we can cover up my unique B.O.”

“We’ll figure it out later,” Natasha assured her. “Now, we should go shopping. We both need a costume.”

Shelly hopped up. “I have an idea!” A small impish smile tugged at her mouth. “Make me a vampire.”

Chrissy choked.

Nicole nodded. “*Perfecto.*”

NATASHA COULDN'T BELIEVE she was doing this. Before she and Shelly went shopping, she shot off a text to Keiji, letting him know there was a change of plans. She didn't know why she made the offer to bring Shelly with her, other than it felt right. The girl was so ... introverted, she never went anywhere from what Natasha saw and she didn't talk much either. Add in the fact she looked like a throwback to a bygone era, and the girl needed some help. If anything, she hoped it forced Henry to step up to the plate.

“Shelly,” Natasha said, drawing the girl's attention. “Are you sure you want to be a vampire?”

“Oh, very much so.” Shelly grinned. “Did you know vampires hunted us?”

“See, that statement makes me feel a little squeamish.” Natasha frowned. She didn't know much about unicorns only that they were the rarest of all, besides dragons.

“Don't let it bother you. I've been around this school for a while now and so far, so good. I can't keep hiding, right?”

No, she couldn't. Nevertheless, coming out in a group of demons... Natasha made a horrible mistake. “Right.”

“*Hachidori,*” Keiji said, wrapping his arm around her from behind. “We have a guest?”

Shelly grinned. “Yep. I'm going to be a vampire.”

Keiji stilled. “Okay.”

“I’ll explain on the way, for now, we need to find costumes for everyone.” Natasha lead them to her car. Since she knew the costume contest was coming, she’d been exploring the area via the internet and found one gigantic costume emporium. If they couldn’t find what they needed there, they wouldn’t find it anywhere.

Three hours later, Natasha had a costume. So, did Shelly, Keiji and Taichi. She called Maël to see what he wanted, but the prim vampire didn’t want to dress up. When he found out about Shelly joining them, he went into protector mode, instead of playful bonded mode. It didn’t surprise her, Maël had been raised to take care of those who needed it, and, in this situation, Shelly would need him.

After stopping by the local drug store to buy Halloween makeup, they went back to Keiji’s apartment. Shelly stepped inside the space and wrapped her arms around her middle. Her eyes darted from left to right and the stink of her fear wrinkled Natasha’s nose. She glanced at the girl, who looked more like a wounded animal than anything.

“You’re safe here,” Natasha said. “No one will hurt you.”

“Maël won’t hurt you,” Keiji added, “Plus if this is how you’re going to be at the costume party, everyone will know.”

“You’re right.” Shelly stood a little taller and pushed her shoulders back. “I can’t cower. You’re my friends. It’s only a smell. An emotional/biological reaction. I know better.” She took a deep breath and nodded. “Let’s do this.”

“That’s the spirit,” Keiji said. “I’ll put out our dinner while you two get dressed. Then we’ll eat.”

Natasha took Shelly’s hand. “We’ll use Taichi’s room.”

Keiji grunted. “Good call. It’ll drive him insane knowing two females including a unicorn were in his space. It’ll get him primed for later.” He winked at Natasha.

“Why would he be vexed by us being in his room?” Shelly quirked a brow.

“I’ll explained after we’re dressed.” Natasha took Shelly’s hand. “You know, you’re really brave doing this. I mean, you could have told me no.”

“I need to stand on my own sometimes and I can’t keep being scared.”

Natasha grabbed the garment bags off the couch then led her down the hall to Taichi’s room. “Right. Let’s get you into this dress, then I’ll do your hair and makeup.” She closed the door behind them.

“What made you choose the pink dress?” Shelly asked as she pulled off her shirt, exposing the small scars along her stomach and shoulders. If Natasha didn’t know any better, they looked like claw marks. “I don’t remember what happened. I woke up one day and there they were, and my family was dead.”

Natasha could kick herself. Here she was pushing the girl into doing something dangerous. “Shelly, I—”

“It’s not a big deal. Someone was bound to see them.”

Natasha frowned. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. Since being here, I have made new friends, and I’ve learned to blend in. I’m a regular chameleon.” Shelly slipped out of her jeans, exposing more scars. She crossed to where her bag hung on the back of the door, snatched it from the hook and opened it. She removed the dress she picked out and stared at it. “It’s a little daunting, isn’t it?”

“What?” Natasha said, placing their makeup on the desk across from them.

“Being someone else. You did it your whole life. You came here and found out who you really are. Me, I’ve always hid because I don’t remember what happened to me.” She stepped into the dress. It hugged Shelly’s curves perfectly and changed the nerdy girl into a princess. “Can you zip me?”

“Of course.” Natasha pulled the zipper to the top and hooked the clasp together. “There we go. Have you thought about how you want your hair?”

Shelly grinned. “Yes. My hair is frizzy curly so nothing I ever do to it fixes it, but if you think you can work your magic, maybe we can do it in ringlet curls?”

Natasha stared at the girl for a second. She had everything she needed. “Let’s do it.”

By the time she was finished, Shelly didn’t look like Shelly. The ringlet curls came out perfect and hung three-quarters of the way down Shelly’s back. Natasha thought about going heavy with the makeup, but it would make everyone suspicious. Instead, she went with a soft coat of white paint, blackened Shelly’s eyes and went for a ruby red lip. At the corner of her mouth, Natasha applied a dribble of fake blood.

“So, what do you think?” Natasha nibbled her lip, hoping the unicorn liked her new vampire look.

“Pictures. We need pictures. It’s amazing. I don’t even look like me.” Shelly giggled as she bounced in excitement.

A knock came at the door. “Are you almost done?”

“Yep, give us five more minutes.” Natasha picked up her mirror and applied her peach colored lipstick.

“You know, I find your costume ironic,” Shelly said. “You’re a girl playing a boy who is playing a girl.”

Natasha laughed. She was doing exactly that. The pink pinstriped dress fell to the floor in ruffled layers. The black wig she wore came to her waist. She parted it down the middle and gave herself two pigtails on either side of her head. She also had a pink and white ruffled umbrella to use as a walking stick. It’d been the first thing she saw when she stepped into the emporium. “I think it’s why I love this manga so much.”

“I’ve never done anything this exciting before. I think I’m going to faint.” Shelly clasped her hands in front of her.

“Don’t do that, you don’t want to wrinkle your pretty dress do you?”

Shelly ran her hands down the front of her dress. “No.”

“Relax. You’re going to knock everyone’s socks off.”

Natasha couldn’t believe they found something as exquisite as the piece Shelly wore. It must have taken hours. The hem and about two inches above it, had been tie-dyed black that faded into blue as it seeped into the bridal gown. The bodice and back were also dyed black, but close up it looked like a forest at night, with small crystals mimicking a starry sky. A black satin ribbon wrapped around her middle and, instead of tying it into a bow, Natasha made it a sash, to give it a more elegant look. This was not the same Shelly who walked into Keiji’s apartment a few hours ago. This was the new and improved Shelly.

Natasha placed her finger under Shelly’s chin and lifted it. The girl stood a little taller. “Never let them see you’re frightened.”

“Right.” The corner of Shelly’s mouth curved upward. “I’m ready.”

Natasha opened the door to Taichi’s room and was greeted by all three guys. Keiji was dressed as Roy Mustang from *Fullmetal Alchemist*. He tugged at his glove showing the alchemy symbol. His soldier’s uniform fit him perfectly, and the blue of the uniform set off the purple in his hair. Beside him, Taichi wore a black tailored suit with a grey button-down shirt. At his hip a squirt gun made to look like a revolver used in *Black Cat*. His eyes glittered with intent and arousal. The horny demon seemed to always have his switch flipped since they bonded. Hell, all three of them looked like they were about to pounce on her.

“You both look amazing,” she said then glanced at Maël. “And you’re handsome as ever.”

“Thank you.” He glanced at Shelly who’d be a little too wide-eyed. “Tonight, I will be both of your bodyguards.”

“Speaking of, where is Shelly? I don’t see her,” Taichi teased.

“I’m right here.” She waved her hand and motioned to herself. “Well, what do you think?”

The guys gazes softened as they smiled at her.

“Perfect,” Keiji said. “The dress fits you beautifully.”

“You’re going to get so much ass tonight,” Taichi added. “Henry is going to be a jealous wolf.”

“He is stupid not mate you,” Maël stated. “I will keep you safe.”

Even though she wore white makeup, Natasha could still see the pink tinging Shelly’s cheeks. “I bet you win the

contest.” Natasha hooked her arm through Shelly’s. “Henry is going to be so jealous, you’ll have him eating out of your hand.”

“That’s kind of gross. I mean, germs and all. Dogs ... wolves even, have a bad habit of licking their butts and balls.”

“God, you’re so weird.” Natasha snorted.

Natasha didn’t know what she was expecting when she walked into the area where Taichi and Keiji had performed the night before. A large dance floor had been setup along with a D.J. stand and speakers. As they entered the area, they kept Shelly between them. The magic surrounding the area rippled across Natasha’s skin and caused the bonding marks across her chest to warm. The feeling was interesting to say the least and for a second, she worried if Shelly would be able to get through. The barrier didn’t budge when Shelly tried to go through. She stared at Natasha for a second, fear-filled her features. She held her hand out to her friend and this time helped her through.

That was close.

Maël, Taichi and Keiji followed behind them, then joined them on the other side. At a desk hidden from view, Natasha and Shelly signed up for the costume contest. Keiji and Taichi decided to stay clear of it. She didn’t mind. Either way, it was going to be fun, she could feel it. Like at the other events, several different stands were setup around the area along with the face painting tables. Natasha took Shelly’s hand and guided her around the area.

Since the first time her senses awoken, she could tell her friend everything she saw and who was there with them. Shelly surprised her. Before Natasha could wash away any fear by telling her friend about the shadow demons and spirits,

Shelly pointed them out. It was as if the unicorn belonged there, something Natasha hadn't been expecting.

“So, what do you think?”

“It's amazing,” Shelly answered before taking a bite of her sugary treat. “Everyone at the school should be able to experience this.”

Natasha agreed. “Should we go check out the competition?”

“Yes, please.”

They wandered through the crowds, hand in hand. The guys stayed a good distance back, giving Shelly the chance to explore everything. Though Natasha probably wore the same expression of wide-eyed wonder that was on Shelly's face the first couple of nights, it was as if she saw this new world in a whole new light. Shelly only saw the darkness as death and destruction, but this ... Fuck, Natasha loved TSU for this right here.

“Excuse me,” a tall, bleach-blond, blue-eyed boy said. His eyes were like Natasha's, flecks of red colored his irises. “I couldn't help but notice your dress.”

“Oh, thank you it's—”

“Not yours,” he replied sheepishly then pointed to Shelly. “Yours.”

Shelly giggled. “Thank you. You're ... you're, Spike?”

He nodded. “Only if you'll be my Drusilla.”

“Because Buffy was always trying to stake Spike ...” Shelly mumbled to herself. “I like it.”

He stepped closer to Shelly. “My name is Cyril. What’s yours?”

“Shelly,” she replied.

“Cute name for a cute ...” He inhaled. “I don’t know what you are, but you smell amazing.”

“See, I told them I didn’t have bad B.O.”

Cyril laughed. “We should hang out sometime after class, if you want.”

Shelly lifted her chin a little. “I’d like that, Spike.” She winked.

“You can always find me in Will— Hey, Keiji, Taichi and Maël what are you guys doing here.”

All three of Natasha’s bond stepped behind her. “We’re here with them, but especially our bonded.” Keiji wrapped an arm around her chest, a total possessive move. “And, supporting Shelly.”

“Well, I was just telling Shelly here that if she wants to hang out, I’m always in Williams Tower.”

“I’d like that,” Shelly replied.

“Awesome. Well, I’m helping with the costume contest, so I better be going. It was nice to meet you, again, Drusilla.”

“Same to you too, Spike.” She waved as Cyril headed back into the crowd. “He didn’t know I was a unicorn!”

Score.

As the night wore on, the throng of people thickened. Natasha’s palms were slick with sweat. The more people that gathered around them, the more she worried Shelly would be

found out. Yet, no one messed with them and if Shelly had been worried, she never said a word either.

A tap at the microphone drew their attention to the stage a few feet in front of them. Shelly and Natasha stared up at the girl dressed as zombie Barbie. In her hand were three cards. This was it. The moment Natasha and Shelly were waiting for. She took her friend's hand and gave it a squeeze. Shelly returned the gesture. Her eyes sparkled with excitement. Her body hummed with energy.

“Good evening everyone. My name is Dalilah, and I am going to announce the winners of the costume contest!” A cheer rang out through the crowd. “We have three categories. Each one will have two winners, male and female. So, let's get started. Drum roll please!”

A hush fell over the group gathered around the stage. Keiji, Maël and Taichi stood behind Natasha and Shelly shielding them from anyone who might get a little too close to their friend. She glanced over at Shelly, who waited impatiently for the announcement. A figure she recognized from the house appeared beside her, Henry.

“How did you get in here?” Shelly whispered when she spotted him.

“Long story. We'll just say a witch owed me a favor. How did you get in here?” He snuggled up to her, draping his arm around her waist.

“I walked in,” Shelly replied. “I'm glad you came.”

“Yeah, me too,” Henry answered.

“And the winners in the extravagant costume contest are: Shelly O'Rourke and Taichi Goto!”

Natasha cheered as Shelly stood there, dumbfounded. She looked to Natasha then back to Henry then to Taichi. She covered her mouth with her hand. Surprise etched her face as she slowly made her way to the stage, Taichi holding her hand the whole way up. Spike aka Cyril appeared on the stage and presented both Taichi and Shelly a crown and a sash.

Her friend stood there with tears tracking down through her makeup. Thankfully, it was thick enough to keep her identity hidden, but also made her a bit creepier looking. Keiji wrapped his arms around her and kissed her neck as the other winners were announced.

“You did good,” he whispered across the shell of her ear.

“I did, didn’t I?” She rested her head against his shoulder and cut her gaze to Henry who looked ready to snatch Shelly off the stage and drag her home—especially after the way Cyril paid special attention to her. “I think it was one of the best decisions I’ve made today. But, who signed Taichi up?”

Maël placed a kiss to her neck. “I did. I had a feeling she might win, so one of us needed to be with her.”

Natasha sighed, and a pang of love filled her. “Thank you.”

“Anything for you, princess.”

Chapter
Eleven

“Need help?” Maël asked from the bedroom door.

Natasha sat on the bed, struggling to pull her favorite black boots on. Today they didn't seem to want to go.

“Yes.” Natasha yanked on the zipper which finally gave, and she was able to zip her boot. “No,” she said before standing up.

“Ready now?”

“Yes.” Natasha nervously wiped her damp palms over her dark jeans. Tonight was it. The hunt. She remembered what she'd been told. No one would force anyone to comply. No one had to do it if they didn't want to. However, if they did, the sex would be amazing and out of this world. She'd been trying to prepare for the event, but until she saw what she was getting herself into, she didn't have a clue.

She'd been coming up with all sorts of scenarios when it came to her bonded. They had done and been involved in things she never thought possible. Yeah, her imagination had become way more extensive since she bonded with her three guys. Whatever they had up their sleeves, she trusted them to protect her and give her a night she wouldn't forget.

Even if they were keeping it secret. *Annoying much?*

Maël placed a protective hand on her lower back, guiding her out of the bedroom and down the hall to an empty living room.

“Where are Keiji and Taichi?”

“They went ahead and are waiting for us,” Maël said before opening the front door for her.

“Last time that happened, I ended pinned up against the wall with your dick inside of me,” she teased.

Maël chuckled. “True. I think both Keiji and Taichi would beat the shit out of me if I did that tonight.”

Wrapping her hand in his, they made their way over to the roped off area where, for the last several days, the festival had taken place. It was a beautiful night. A cool breeze rustled the rapidly changing leaves. The moon was tucked behind big, fluffy clouds, providing minimal light. It gave the night an eerie feeling. Thankfully, with everything going on in her body, she could see perfectly.

“Were you okay with last night?” She looked at him out of the corner of her eye to gauge his reaction. As usual, the vampire gave nothing away.

Last night, Maël, whom she had always thought was completely heterosexual, allowed Taichi to blow him. Taichi being who and what he was, pushed the vampire and ended up playing with his asshole at the moment Maël came into the demons waiting mouth. She had been fucking Keiji, who had been kind enough to position her in reverse cowgirl, so she could see what they were doing. Maël then returned the favor. It was hot, it made her horny and she had ridden Keiji’s dick hard, until they were both panting from their orgasm.

“Which part? You fucking Keiji, or Taichi giving me head?”

“Definitely the second,” she said, hating the telltale warmth filling her cheeks.

“Well, yeah, of course, I was. Otherwise I wouldn’t have let Taichi get his mouth near my junk.”

She giggled. She had learned to enjoy all three guys’ directness. She never wondered what they were thinking, because they always told her.

“Did you find it hot?” he hedged.

“Yes, it made me really hot and wet. Keiji can confirm it.”

Maël laughed. “I don’t need him to confirm shit, I could see how hard you came last night, but I wanted to be sure.”

“It’s just—”

“Just nothing. I know you’re still getting used to being dhampir and you tend to still think like a human. Paranormal beings don’t label themselves as hetero or gay. Our bonded or mates are just that.”

“I got that. Honest. It’s just, before I came into the picture, I know there was nothing going on between the guys and you. I just want to make sure it’s for the right reasons.”

“We didn’t have that connection because you weren’t in our life. Once you appeared, all the rules changed. I’m okay with what happened last night, and I might be comfortable with going farther, or I might not. All I know is, if we’re all enjoying it and no one is getting hurt, why do we have to label it? All three of us are in your life until the end of our days. Let’s just live, laugh and love.”

His explanation was so simple and made perfect sense. She just didn't want him to ever feel he was doing something because *she* got pleasure from it. "Okay."

"You gotta stop over thinking this shit, it'll drive you nuts and make it so you can't enjoy tonight's festival or life." Maël stopped and pointed to the grounds.

Natasha blinked, taking it all in. Every single night the area had been decorated differently. Tonight, it gave off a hedonistic vibe. Small fire pits were strategically positioned to provide some warmth and light. Around the pits were massive amounts of pillows where some groups of people already rested, conversed or in the case of the couple to the right, made out.

Red covered lights were suspended on an invisible wire, or by magic, she wasn't sure. It gave the entire area a warm, relaxed feeling. Natasha felt all the stress she'd been holding onto since last night evaporate.

"Nice, huh?"

"Beautiful," she whispered.

"You're beautiful," Taichi said, coming out of the darkness.

"Agreed," Keiji added, joining them. "I got us a spot."

Natasha followed the Keiji and Taichi to the spot they'd picked out. Big, soft fluffy pillows were scattered about in the small circle. The brilliant shades of purple, red, orange and yellow shimmered in the light of the flames emanating from the small fire pit. "So, beside what you told me before, is there anything else I should know before we get started?"

"It's just best, we think, for you to experience it as it happens," Keiji said. "Sometimes being too prepared can take

away from the experience.”

“Asshole,” she muttered under her breath.

“We have a surprise for you,” Maël said from his position to her right. “Once they reveal themselves to you, they will participate in the activities.”

She wasn’t very good with surprises. She wanted to know everything, then and there. Waiting ... well, she hated it.

“Relax,” Taichi stated. “All will be well.”

Natasha rolled her eyes at her bonded, who simply laughed.

“Here.” Keiji handed her a cup filled with a muted orange-colored liquid. She sniffed it. Keiji laughed. “It’s safe. It’s juice.”

She took a tentative sip. A mix of strawberry, mango, and pear with a hint of orange juice had her taste buds jumping. She could literally drink whatever this was by the gallons.

“It’s a secret recipe. Only the druids know it and they only make it once a year, during Beltran. Get your fill of it while you can,” Maël told her.

“First the candy, now the juice. Is there anything those druids can’t make?” she asked.

“Shhh. You don’t want them to hear you. It’ll give them a big head,” Maël said.

“With how fabulous this drink is, I’m pretty sure they already know it,” Natasha replied, before tipping back the large red cup and downing the remaining contents.

“Your surprise is here,” Keiji said.

Natasha glanced over her cup. Wait a minute, was she really seeing who she thought she was? Stumbling to her feet, she dropped her cup and took off toward the small group heading their way.

Erik, her older brother but the younger twin, caught her first, giving her a big hug, swinging her around in a circle before kissing the top of her forehead and passing her off to his fraternal twin, Sebastian, who was the older twin and more reserved. He gave her a small hug and placed a kiss to her forehead.

“Surprise!” Taichi called from his pillow.

“You two.” Natasha gestured between her older, protective brothers. “Have a lot of explaining to do.”

“Sounds like someone is in trouble. Thankfully, this time, it isn’t me,” said the red-headed girl who stood between her brothers. Natasha had been so surprised she hadn’t even noticed the other woman, till she spoke.

Sebastian cleared his throat. “I’m sure before the night is over, Greer, you’ll be up to no good. You simply can’t help yourself.”

Greer gave a husky laugh, smacking her brother’s arm playfully. Sebastian, in turn, rubbed the offended appendage like the slight woman had hurt the big lug. Natasha could sense an intimacy between the woman and her sibling.

“It’d help if you’d introduce everyone,” Erik chastised his twin before putting his arm around the woman between them.

Interesting.

“Right.” Sebastian straightened to his full height. “Introductions first, ass-kicking to follow and then having some fun at the festival. Natasha this is Greer.” He gestured to

the female who was now cuddled up against Erik and then to the man who stood off to her older brother's left-hand side. "Jacob. Our bonded."

"Our?" Natasha inquired.

"Yes. I didn't stutter, did I?"

"Guess neither of her brothers can get pissed off when they find out Natasha is bonded to the three of us, huh?" Taichi joked.

"Oh, shut up," Natasha muttered under her breath watching her older brothers stiffen at the demon's words.

"Technically two," Maël interjected. "She hasn't bonded with me yet."

So not helping. "Wait ... don't I know you?" Hadn't she met a guy named Jacob the first day of school?

The guy gave her a sheepish grin. "Yeah ... your brothers said you were coming, and I kind of wanted to scope you out." He rubbed the back of his neck. "Kind of been watching you too, to be sure you were safe. Turns out, I didn't have to."

"Wait ... what did you say?" Sebastian demanded, pulling them back to the subject at hand.

"He said," Natasha made sure to enunciate each word so she didn't have to repeat herself with her stubborn brothers. "I'm bonded with the three of them."

Erik's eyes bulged. Greer giggled. Jacob snorted, and Sebastian, her poor older brother looked as if his head was about to explode.

Natasha held her hand up, preventing any outburst from her older sibling. "This conversation isn't going to be about who or how many guys I'm bonded to. This conversation will

be about the fact that you *both* have lied to me for years. I want to know why.”

“How about we go sit down, stop drawing attention to ourselves and speak like adults?” Greer suggested.

“Sounds like a plan,” Natasha agreed before making her way back to their spot and dropping her body down on one of the pillows she had just recently vacated.

Erik, Sebastian, Greer, and Jacob followed, although she noticed Greer and Jacob along with her three guys sat on the other side of the fire, giving the siblings some privacy.

“Believe it or not, we’re happy to see you, Natasha,” Erik said, breaking the uncomfortable silence.

“I’m happy to see you also. I’ve missed you both. That happiness doesn’t negate the fact you guys kept things from me. Big things,” Natasha reminded them.

Sebastian sighed, and Erik rubbed the back of his neck before gesturing to his twin to continue.

“What was done, was done for your safety. Having the Nemescu surname makes people immediately wary of us. With good reason, considering who and what we are.”

Natasha huffed, crossing her arms. “What are we?”

“Dhampir.”

“Yeah. I’ve figured that much out.”

“Our family is from Romania. The surname Nemescu is royal ... You are of a royal vampire bloodline. One of the strongest of the Old World. The Nemescu name is the most powerful. Our uncle is currently the head of the family. He resides in Romania. In addition to all that ...” Sebastian paused.

“Our family is one of the largest crime syndicates in the world,” Erik continued.

“You mean the mob?” Natasha tried to keep her shock contained.

Her siblings looked at each other, shrugged and then returned their attention back to her. “Crime syndicate sounds better than mob. The mob brings images of drugs, guns, prostitution and hired hit men.”

Natasha snorted. “I say pot-ah-to, you say potato. Call it what it is.”

Sebastian ignored her. “Because of our family name, life hasn’t always been easy. Our father had some dealings which went bad. In order to protect his family, he sent our mother with us one way and he went the other way, hoping they’d follow him. Instead, they followed our mother and murdered her. She got lucky and was able to hide us before she was murdered. Our father, having lost his bonded, and thinking he lost his children, had no desire to continue without his family, took a walk in the sunlight.”

Natasha gasped, not even able to imagine her father’s pain and suffering.

“Our grandparents, and specifically our uncle, decided it was in our best interest to hide the only heirs to the Nemescu family in plain sight to protect them. Our grandparents uprooted their lives, willing to protect us with their dying breath. They moved to a new town where shifters lived, hoping to mask who and what we were. It worked.”

Natasha didn’t know what to say or how to react. Everything she was brought up to believe was a lie. And it was

told to her by those she loved and trusted the most. “How long have you two known the truth?”

“A while,” Erik answered.

“Don’t you think it would have been smart to prepare me before I came here? Things have been happening to my body, and I accepted it and embraced it. Why did you think I couldn’t handle the truth before then?”

Sebastian leaned forward, placing his large hand over her much smaller one. “It had nothing to do with whether you could or couldn’t handle the truth. It had to do with something only a few of us were aware. I only found out when I went through the change, same as Erik. The threat to our family still existed. Your safety, my beloved sister—our safety trumps everything.”

Damn it. How could you stay angry at someone who simply wanted to protect her from the evils of the world, even if she didn’t agree with how they all went about it?

“Is it safe now?”

Erik nodded.

“Three days ago, our uncle took the evidence he needed and made the move to eliminate those responsible for murdering our mother. The Lombardi family is no longer a threat to us.” Natasha sighed. Even though she understood everyone’s actions, she was still hurt and needed time to process it all. “Our uncle desires to meet and know you. He is the last connection to our father.”

Natasha gaze flickered from the fire to her brothers. Concern was heavy on both of their faces as well as her bonded, who she could sense around her.

“We will not beg for your forgiveness, Natasha,” Sebastian informed her. “We did what was right.”

“I’m aware.” She shook her head, trying to clear her wayward thoughts and feelings. “It’s a lot to take in and to be honest ... You’ve both had time to process and deal with all this. I have not, and I’m going to need some space.”

“And you shall have it,” Sebastian assured her.

After her brothers told her the truth, the atmosphere around their fire pit was pensive.

Maël, Taichi, and Keiji had moved closer to her and kept conversation around her light. Her brothers had moved to the other side of the fire with their bonded. Natasha couldn’t help but stare as Greer sat on Erik’s lap, teasing and kissing Sebastian, Erik, and Jacob.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered.

“For what?” Keiji asked.

“Killing the vibe. Obviously, you guys had something planned, and I’m behaving like a bump on a log.”

“Yes, we did have plans,” Keiji admitted. “And those plans can wait. Comforting you is our priority. Our focus and everything else doesn’t matter as far as we’re concerned.”

Taichi tucked her head into his chest, his hand caressing her hair and back in comfort. In the background, she could hear announcements from the druid as he kicked off the event. Cheers went up and the energy in the field changed. Excitement, desire, and arousal filled her senses.

Greer now straddled Sebastian, her hands holding his cheeks as she kissed him. Erik and Jacob were also involved in a lip lock. Turning away so not to interfere in the intimate

moment between her brothers and their bonded, she noticed the same thing was happening in the pits around her.

Pushing her head off Taichi's chest, she noticed people stripping naked and making their way to a roped off area. It looked like the beginning of an obstacle course.

"It's the run," Maël said, his voice heavy with energy. "All those who wish to participate will run through the course, being followed by their bonded, if they have one, and captured. Those without bonded are paired up with partners."

"What happens during the course?"

"They fuck. Out in the open, where all can see," Maël answered.

Taichi snorted. "It can be, for the ones who are not bonded, an orgy. Paired up couples can share, join or just watch. It's quite enlightening to see which of our classmates are closet freaks."

Natasha wasn't able to deny the desire she felt pooling in her lower belly at the image the guys painted.

"We thought it would be an experience. If you are willing, so are we," Keiji added. "Or we can go home and do whatever you wish."

Movement on the other side caught her attention. It was her brothers and their bonded making their way to the roped off area. Looked like her siblings were going to participate.

"You still thinking like a human?" Maël asked.

"No ... fuck," she sighed. "Yes."

"We'll go home," Keiji said before standing up and holding a hand out to her so she could stand.

Natasha stood, but instead of heading toward the exit, she removed her clothing and followed the crowd toward the roped off area. It didn't go unnoticed that very few people remained behind around the individual fire pits.

This was part of who and what she was, and for Natasha, who was tired of living in the past, she wanted to embrace her future, whatever it may bring and be with her bonded.

Granted it might be a little uncomfortable if her older brothers were next to her or whatever. Turning around, she snagged Taichi's hand. "Promise me, wherever we end up, it's nowhere near my brothers."

"That can be arranged."

The waiting crowd was in a frenzy, people cheering, hooting and hollering until the gates were opened and the entire group of people surged forward, taking off.

Natasha ran, jumping around and over the course. She sensed, more than felt, her guys behind her and it wasn't long before she was taken to the ground, Taichi looming above her in his demon form. Around her, the moans and the sound of skin slapping against each other began to fill the area and her senses. Her clit throbbed in need and her pussy ached.

Taichi inhaled deeply, his big, naked body shook with anticipation. "Fuck...it's turning her on." He fit his tip to her entrance and filled her with one thrust.

Sparks of pleasure erupted inside of her. Her back bowed as she climaxed hard. Taichi didn't move within her. His grip on her hips tightened to the point of pain. Electricity snapped through her body and when she could finally focus and breathe, she slipped from his grasp. Natasha pulled off of him

and began to run. She stumbled momentarily before going deeper into the wooded area.

She feared for a second that she wouldn't be able to see where she was going, but the same small red lanterns lit up the course enough to keep everyone from hurting themselves. Again, she could feel her bonded approaching. This time, it was Maël. He hissed in her ear, taking her to the ground.

He rolled her over then straddled her chest. His hard, glistening dick glowed in the low-light. "Your turn. Taichi sucked me hard. So hard, I came down his throat on the second stroke."

His filthy words turned her on. "Is this a competition then?" She took him in hand and stroked. "If I can make you cum in one, what do I win?" She tugged him forward before swirling her tongue around his tip.

He snarled. "Fuck, Natasha. Take it." He fisted his hand in her hair and directed her mouth over his length. In the precarious position, she couldn't move much, so he did it for her. "Ah fuck yes. Suck me."

Natasha moaned around him. She remembered the little trick she learned from Taichi and smirked. While Maël's eyes were closed, she ran her finger over his puckered hole. He shoved his dick deep into her mouth, but she'd been ready for it. A spurt of precum rolled down her throat.

"Oh...shit."

Natasha rubbed the fluttering muscle over and over. When she had Maël so out of his mind and ready to blow, she surprised him, taking him to the ground. It didn't lessen his aroused state. He growled in outrage and took off after her again.

The trail she ran on dipped and turned. In small alcoves of darkness, she heard the cries of passion and the male grunts of those finding their releases. The smell wafting from the area made her delirious with arousal. Her body shook from both it and how demanding her bonded had been. She wasn't, however, ready to give into them yet. She might ache with need, but it wouldn't stop her from making the whole experience burn brighter for all of them.

The ground rumbled under her as she continued down the path. She lost her balance and put her hands out to steady herself. Before she could catch herself and take off again, Keiji gathered her up in his arms. The demon kissed her hard, demanding and forcing his thick tongue between her lips. Natasha suckled it, running her tongue up and down the sides. Keiji growled against her lips before he broke the kiss and started nibbling down her body.

He carried her to the closest tree and braced her against it. The fierce demon pushed her thighs apart so wide her hips ached, fitting himself between them. The large head of his erection had turned a ruddy color and he leaked copious amounts of precum. Like Taichi, he didn't hesitate. He filled her with one thrust. They both threw their heads back and cried out. The intensity of their coupling shattered her. She needed to move, yet every time she did so, it only heightened her climax. She bit down on his neck, not hesitating this time. Her teeth locked into place and it was different this time. She didn't understand it as she continued to orgasm on his cock, but she knew instinctively what to do. Her mark this time, when she pulled forth would remain. She claimed her demon.

When she released the hold, her brand lit up. It burned in the most delicious way. Keiji rutted inside her, rubbing her groin against his while he flicked and plucked at her clit. The

sensations swallowed her whole. She drifted on a blanket of warmth and love as he roared, pumping his release into her quivering channel.

Moments later, Taichi and Maël joined them. The big red demon carried her over to a clearing, and laid her on the grass and leaves, but he didn't pull out. She'd have laughed if it hadn't been for Maël and Taichi capturing her nipples between their teeth. Maël bit down and began to feed from her, which set off a small orgasm within her. Keiji groaned and another blast of his seed filled her.

"Ohh," she cried out, her fingers clenching in their hair, holding them to her breasts.

Slowly Keiji pulled out of her. His groan had her glancing down. Like before, in the kitchen, his thick shaft pulsed even though they'd both come, hard. He eased behind Taichi and filled the demon still lapping at her nipple. His strangled cry turned her on.

"So hot," she whispered, touching herself.

As if in sync, Maël released her nipples with a loud pop. "Remember the plan." He crawled between her thighs and groaned. "Fuck. I can't wait to get inside you."

Wait ... they *did* have a plan.

"Hmmm," Taichi mumbled against her breast while Keiji went wild behind him.

Maël settled his hips between her thighs and pushed the hard stalk of his erection through her wet, swollen folds. Her eyes fluttered shut. Her back arched off the ground. He might not have a dick like her demons, but it was still thick and long and touched her in places she'd cry if he didn't hit with every thrust.

“Her pussy is so fucking tight.” Maël growled from above her. The brands Taichi and Keiji bestowed upon her pulsed, glowing as the vampire pulled out before slamming home, deep inside her. Natasha threw back her head and screamed through her release. “Fuck me, her coming on my cock is divine.”

“Yes, and now I want my taste.” Taichi positioned himself so Keiji could continue to fuck him while he buried his face between her legs.

Maël pulled out and ran the large tip of his cock over her clit, causing her entire body to shudder with pleasure. “Suck it off of me.” He directed Taichi’s mouth over him and groaned when the demon began to bob his head. Then, her vampire pulled the demon off and lined his cock up with her entrance. He sank deep inside of her once more, stealing her breath.

Her pussy was still quivering from the quick orgasm Maël had given her as he flexed his hips. Several times more, he pulled his dick out, allowing Taichi to suck him, before slamming back into her.

“I could do this all night,” Keiji admitted.

“Remember the plan,” Taichi mouthed off.

Without any warning, Maël pulled out of her, turned to Taichi, pressing him down to the cool grass. His mouth latched onto the thick flesh between his legs of his lover. Taichi turned, wiggling his body so he could do the same. Natasha blinked as they did a sixty-nine, each taking the others cocks deep.

Keiji gathered her in his arms, her back to his front, holding her while Maël and Taichi sucked each other off. His hands palmed her swollen breasts, lazily rubbing her hard

nipples between his thumb and forefinger. “They crave the taste of your cum,” Keiji said before nipping at her ear. “Do you want to watch them?”

“Yes,” she croaked out.

Not far from where they were two females. One of the females was spread out on her back, her legs open as the other female feasted on her pussy. A large, gray Gargoyle approached, dropped to his knees and gave a long lick to the female on her knees. When the female didn't protest, the giant creature kneeled behind her, wrapped his hands around her hips and powered his massive cock into her. Natasha had a bird's eye view of the entire thing. The woman being fucked tore her mouth from the other woman, screaming in pleasure as the Gargoyle slammed into her at a furious pace.

“*Shit*,” she moaned her pussy clenching at air, the need to be fucked raged through her.

“You haven't seen anything yet,” Keiji assured her.

Around her people were in various stages of intercourse, and it seemed the more the merrier.

“None will approach us, they sense the bond,” he assured her. “Of course, it doesn't mean they won't watch.”

Keiji wasn't lying. Others were watching Taichi and Maël sucking each other's cocks with fervor.

“Please,” she mewled, rolling her hips. Her soaking wet sex caressed Keiji's erection, coating it with her juices.

He ignored her. “I think Taichi is going to blow first. Maël might be new to this, but he is sucking Taichi's dick like it's his favorite treat. Once he comes, I'm going to take his ass. Maybe Taichi will do what he did that first time. Lick your pussy and Maël's balls while he fucks you.”

Natasha groaned, her head thrown back, resting on the demon who held her. Keiji began to kiss and nip the area from her shoulder to her ear, sending tendrils of pleasure up and down her spine. Goose pimples formed on her skin when he used his teeth at a particularly sensitive spot.

Taichi gave a loud groan around Maël's dick, signaling Keiji was correct in his assumption of which would find his release first. Maël came off the other demon's dick with a loud pop, licked his lips and turned the demon to face her. He was so close, she could touch him.

She knew what would come next, and her gaze found Taichi's. Keiji and Maël seemed to be working in tandem, as Keiji prepared Taichi's ass, Maël checked to make sure she was ready.

She was. Ohmigod. She was more than ready. Natasha dug her nails into the thick muscles of his thighs as she worked her sex over the thick, hard flesh of his cock. The spongy tip would butt up against her clit, making her see stars.

Maël positioned her over his dick, sinking slowly into her as Keiji did the same to his lover. Taichi's face twisted in pleasure as his lover began to fuck him. Maël on the other hand, allowed her body to adjust to his invasion.

"Lean forward." Maël muttered a curse before gently pushing her forward until her mouth hovered over the demon's cum covered cock.

Natasha didn't have to be told what to do, she eagerly gobbled up Taichi's dick as Maël began to work his hips, pumping his dick in and out of her hungry pussy. She loved the taste of her demons. She licked his tip, encouraging more of his spicy flavor to coat her tongue. Her taste buds came alive each time she lapped up more essence. She moaned

around him and was rewarded with a spurt of what remained of his release.

Taichi moaned.

Without warning, her vampire pulled her off of Taichi's dick. The demon moved between her wide spread legs, licking her with his long demon tongue. She knew he was also licking Maël's cock when he was outside of her body for that split second.

Natasha's release built low in her belly. The fact that she was so exposed, out in the open and having others watch as she came on the cock pounding in and out of her body frightened her for a second.

"Let it happen, princess," Maël encouraged. Natasha twisted on his thrusting flesh, it was too intense. She worried if she'd survive it. "Cum on my cock. Taichi wants your juices on his tongue just as much as I want to feel it."

Keiji grunted loudly, drawing her gaze to his. He'd been watching the action going on between her legs and for a moment, even though it'd been Maël who fucked her, it felt as if they were all connected and all within her body. The release she earlier feared, now she chased, wanting to experience this ultimate debauched pleasure.

"Good girl," Keiji cooed.

Maël captured her breasts, twirling her throbbing nipples, apply the perfect amount of pleasure, and it happened. Taichi latched onto her clit, the tip of his demon tongue lapping at the swollen pearl. Her body convulsed, her womb clenched against the thick flesh impaling her and she felt her release rain down over the vampire's cock. Maël bit her then, feeding on her. Natasha felt herself slipping into the darkness of the

bliss that was so damn intense. Each pull of her blood, she could feel her pussy quiver around Maël as if to milk his release from his balls.

“Goddamn, that’s so *fucking* hot.” Keiji’s features shifted taking on his demon form. The slapping of his hips against Taichi’s ass got louder, harder and more often. Taichi took it, never stopped lapping at her clit. “Now, Maël.”

Taichi released her and Maël released his hold on her neck before removing her from his throbbing cock, turned her and lowered back down on his straining length. “Bite me.” Maël worked her hips, grinding and thrusting.

Natasha leaned forward, sinking her elongated fangs into the other vampire’s neck. The rich, copper tasted of his blood made her head swirl and her body shudder. Someone’s fingers probed at her puckered hole. Teasing and tempting her and seeking her assurance. Natasha’s hips jerked at the forbidden pleasure.

If he took her ass, they’d all be connected.

Like with Keiji, she knew. Some buried instinct took over, she repeated the steps ensuring even though her mark would heal as a scar—an imprint of her fang would stay in her vampire lover’s neck, claiming him for the world to see. A part of her delighted in the idea of everyone knowing. A thrill shot down her spine and she moaned.

“Taichi, please ...” She rocked against both men, Taichi and Maël the pressure building within her once more. She should have been exhausted, yet the longer she went, the more energized she became. The heady buzz from taking Maël along with the sounds filling the forest, turned her on.

“Push back,” he ordered, and she did.

Pressure mixed with pain as Taichi adjusted himself at her puckered entrance. The blunt tipped finger pushed past the tight ring of muscle. He removed his fingers and she cried out at the loss. “Shhh,” Taichi murmured before she felt his fingers return, this time coated in something cold and slippery.

Lube.

“You okay with this?” Maël captured her chin between his fingers and forced her to look down at him.

“Yes!” She focused on the cock in her pussy and the fingers moving slowly in and out of her forbidden hole. Taichi sunk another finger inside her, using them to stretch and prepare her. She arched to him and shuddered, a cry of bliss lodged in her throat. “Ohmigod.”

“I think she likes it,” Keiji said, getting a front row seat to what his lover was doing to her ass.

“Oh fuck,” she snarled.

While Taichi continued to prepare her, Maël nipped and suckled her nipples, occasionally using his thumb to tweak at her throbbing clit. The anticipation of feeling Taichi in her ass while Maël was in her pussy had her at a fever pitch. She couldn't take it anymore, not sure what it was, but they had to help her, had to finish this before she died.

The head of Taichi's cock probed her, seeking entry to her most secret place. Wanting it, she took a deep breath, pushed back and felt the large head of his cock slip through the tight ring of muscle. Taichi eased in, inch by slow inch until she felt his hips settle against her ass. Natasha had never felt so full, so secure or loved in her entire life.

“Jesus ... Fuck.” Maël growled under her, pumping in and out of her with short thrusts. “Her pussy is so fucking tight.

Fuck ... I can feel your dick, Taichi.”

She wasn't really sure how this was supposed to work. It all seemed over complicated. If Maël began to move, it would mean she'd lose Taichi and she definitely didn't want that.

“Keiji is going to be doing on the work,” Taichi said. “Just enjoy it.”

She knew the second Keiji began to move in and out of Taichi's ass. She felt it, as did Maël.

Pleasure ripped through her body, and she cried out each of their names. Her clit throbbing, her pussy and ass stretched to their max, but she didn't care because they were connected and doing this together. Hopefully, they'd all be able to come together.

“*Fuck,*” Taichi cried out. “Harder, Keiji,”

With each thrust, Natasha's clit rubbed up against Maël's pubic bone and she could feel her release rushing through. “Ohmigod ... Ohmigod.” She chanted the words through each thrust until the swirling maelstrom within her body broke and she screamed out her release.

Maël grunted, Taichi growled and Natasha felt their releases deep inside her body at the exact time. Keiji's loud roar followed seconds later.

Chapter
Twelve

Natasha woke, cocooned between Maël, Taichi and Keiji. Her body was pleasantly sore from their evening together. The bite mark at her neck throbbed, reminding her just how aggressive Maël could be when he claimed her. She stretched, loosening the muscles in her body before curling back into her bonded.

Last night had been ... amazing—corny as it sounded. It'd also been overwhelming. Not only had her brothers known the truth the whole time, they had a bonded as well. She understood their need to protect her. The danger lurking just out of sight while they were little must have been a constant reminder to her grandparents. It all made sense now. Why her grandmother wanted her to stay in Baker Springs. Why they wanted her to settle down with one of the shifters, even though none of the guys saw her in such ways. They would have covered her scent and her uniqueness.

In a way, it seemed serendipitous she found Turnskin University—that her brothers found it as well. The one place where shifters, others and humans could co-exist without fear. Kind of reminded her of Baker Springs and again, she realized, it'd been what she'd was looking for with a relaxed set of rules, of course.

“You’re thinking again,” Maël mumbled, wrapping his arm around her and tugging her back against his chest.

“How can you tell?” A small smile crept across her lips.

“You’re a whisper through my mind.” He rubbed against her. The hard length of his erection teased the cleft of her ass.

“Naughty,” she whispered, a hint of teasing laced her words.

He quite rumbled laughter vibrated against her back. “Not even close.”

“They’re still sleeping,” she hissed.

“And?” Maël filled her in one stroke. He muttered a curse. “I’m sure they are very much awake, waiting to see what we do.”

Natasha looked up at both of her demons. Taichi’s heavy-lidded eyes caressed her naked form. Behind him, Keiji watched her and Maël. Their gazes darkened. The flecks of blue and red swirled with lust. Taichi bit his bottom lip and moaned, fanning the desire burning through her veins. She gasped when Maël rubbed her clit.

His lazy strokes weren’t enough to get her off, but enough to keep her on edge. There was nothing hurried about this. It was all about them. All about the love forged between them. Keiji and Maël shifted their bodies closer. Taichi linked his fingers with hers. His face was inches from hers. Somehow, she found her breath matching his. It was euphoric. It centered her, ensnared her.

Tantric, maybe?

What did she care. It was exhilarating. Her heart pounded. Bliss mixed with adrenaline. Passion flooded her senses.

Taichi smirked before leaning forward to capture her lips. The kiss was languid. The gentle lap of his tongue against hers caused her to moan. Behind her, Maël grunted. He nipped at her shoulder and the arm holding her in place tightened.

None of them spoke. There was no need for words. They were physically and mentally in tune with each other. After the run, and subsequent bonding, they carried a piece of each other within them. The erotic way their bodies moved together had a flutter of her impending climax washing over her. A small whimper fell from her lips. She squeezed Taichi's hand, clinging to him as a lifeline.

Their tempo increased. They rocked together in an unheard sensual beat. The gasps and sighs of her lovers were music to her ear. She sank into it, absorbing it. It wrapped around her like a comfy blanket, warming her.

“Fuck, you're beautiful,” Keiji murmured. “You make it easy to lose control, but also want to be better. To make it better.”

A flush filled her cheeks. “It's not me. It's all of us.”

Taichi lowered one of their joined hands, he wrapped her palm around his throbbing shaft, then pushed Maël's hand out of the way. She sucked in a breath the minute Taichi began to not only manipulate her clit, but also tease and fondle Maël's balls and cock. The devilish look in his eyes as she squeezed and pumped Taichi's hard length, turned her on.

The frantic way they each chased their release, was too much. The excitement of it washed over Natasha. She concentrated on the tingling sensation building behind her clit. She canted her hips, rolling them across Maël's groin. The approving sigh from her vampire encouraged her. Her world

narrowed down to the spot between her thighs and the growing need centered there.

“Let go,” Maël moaned. “Give it to us, princess.”

He nuzzled her neck with the tip of his nose before burying his face there. The strangled sound he made before biting her, had her release slamming through her. She lost her ability to breathe as he drank from her. Everything within her shattered into a million pieces and only fractured more so when the wet, sticky heat of Taichi’s cum coated her hand and the marks upon her chest glowed. The guttural groan from Keiji drew her attention to him. His features were tight, then, when he stilled, became serene, placid even.

Maël licked close the wound at her neck as he throbbed deep within her. Their shared connection burned bright within her. She didn’t want to move from their bed. She wanted to stay just like this—well maybe not exactly like this, they were sticky after all.

“Good evening,” she whispered.

The guys laughed.



NATASHA STOOD outside the hotel where her uncle waited inside for her. She tightened her hold of Maël’s hand. Her palms were sweaty. Her stomach had been a cluster of knots since she started to get ready for this introduction. She glanced

at her bonded, they surrounded her, giving her the strength she needed to get through this moment.

Beside her were her brothers and their bonded. They'd already met the man named Yevgeni and knew more about him than she did. The irrationally jealous part of her mind reared its ugly head and she shoved it way down. She clung to the knowledge of them all trying to keep her safe, even if she'd always wanted to know the truth.

Now or never. "I'm ready," she said.

They crossed the street and entered the lobby of the opulent hotel. Though they were in a little college town, the hotel screamed money. The marble floors gleamed in the soft lighting. Across from them a cozy sitting area had been filled with large plush furniture. The fire burning in the fireplace snapped and crackled, drawing her attention. Shadows danced upon the wall and she swore she saw a small figure swaying within the flames.

No way.

The smartly dressed front desk clerk smiled at them, waving them forward. "Welcome. Checking in?"

"No," Sebastian said. "We're meeting our uncle. Yevgeni Nemescu."

"Ah, perfect." The woman smiled. "This way. He left instructions to show you to his table when you arrived."

The clerk led them through the hotel lobby to a restaurant near the rear of the establishment. The sheer beauty of it took Natasha's breath away. The far wall overlooked the small town and gave a spectacular view of the mountains in the distance. The twinkling lights glittered in the small trees lining the

sidewalks and reminded Natasha of the picturesque towns she'd seen in different magazines, but never up close.

They stopped in front of a table where a man, flanked by two other men sat. He looked like a very old visage of Erik, but not. His shoulders were slumped. His eyes were dull, almost lifeless. A scruffy beard covered his cheeks. The sheer number of wrinkles on his face didn't denote the youthful complexion of a vampire. Natasha was sure the woman led them to the wrong table in the secluded dining room until the man glanced up at her.

Joy filled those tired blue eyes. He grasped her hands in his. His lips parted. "Annalina." Her mother's name was a faint whisper on his lips.

She frowned. "No, Natasha."

The man smiled, but the sadness returned. "Of course you are. You look very much like your mother."

Her grandmother said the same about her all the time. "Thank you. It's a pleasure meeting you." She didn't know what to call him. Yevgeni seemed too sterile. Uncle too personal. Mr. Nemescu way too formal and stuffy, especially since they were family.

"Yevgeni is fine," he said as if reading her thoughts.

"Yevgeni," she replied, sitting across from him.

Her brothers, their bonded and her men filled in the seats lined up like little wooden soldiers for them. She didn't know what to say. Instead, she studied the man across from her. She could barely remember her mother. Her father was a complete ghost to her. A shadow, she could never quite pull from the darkness. Did Yevgeni look like him? She glanced at her brothers. Were they a rendering of their father?

“You have many questions,” Yevgeni said, pulling her from her thoughts.

“I do,” she answered. “I don’t think I can have all of them answered though.”

“I’ll start then.” He reached into the pocket of his jacket. He retrieved a locket attached to a gold chain and placed it in her hand. “Your father wanted you to have this. He carried it every day with him while he tried to find all of you.”

Natasha stared down on at the beautiful pendant. The simple design etched into the oval-shape surprised her. She expected something more ... expensive looking, silly she knew. She also realized she hesitated to open it. She wasn’t sure why, other than some irrational ideal her subconscious put in her head. She stuck her finger under the clasp and flicked it. The pendant opened, revealing a picture of her mother and her father.

Tears sprang to her eyes. She traced the shape of her mother’s face, the length of her smile. In her mind she heard the faint echo of her laugh mixing with Natasha’s childish giggles. She sucked in a sob, closing her eyes. Grief didn’t make sense, it would seem. She couldn’t remember ever crying over the loss of her mother, definitely not for her father. Yet, it struck then, holding the picture of her parents.

The painful mourning of loss. The abyss of not knowing what to do next or how to go on without them, swamped her. All of the repressed feelings she’d pushed down so far, just so she could get through her day to day life, came back with roaring clarity. She missed her mother. She missed her stories. She missed her laugh. She missed the way she’d sing through the house or in the car when she’d drive. Natasha missed the smell of her mom. Lilacs and honey. She missed the way her

mother sat near the window of her room and brushed her long, silky black hair. Natasha missed every inch of her. *Oh mom.*

She gathered her tattered courage and looked upon her father, then over to the man who sat across from her. His eyes were damp with unshed tears. His lip trembled as he cleared his throat. Yes, they were brothers and yes, they looked alike. She followed the line of her father's strong jaw, his bright blue eyes and sharp nose. When she looked to Sebastian who gave her a small grin of encouragement, he too looked like their father, but with a hint of their mother. Erik was wholly their father.

"They were happy," she murmured.

"Very much," Yevgeni answered. "They never meant to end their lives before you three grew into beautiful adults. You were all wanted and loved. You were a surprise for an old vampire who didn't think he'd ever have children of his own."

"Are we as rare as I am learning?" She could stop staring at her parents.

"More so." He dabbed his eyes with a handkerchief. "Twins are unheard of. However, three dhampir..." He shook his head. "I believe it is what put your mother and you children on the radar for other syndicates."

She nodded. "We were worth something. If they took us, they'd make money."

"Yes." He didn't have to expound on his answer, she could figure out the rest. "You though...a dhampir. You can walk in the light. You can procreate. You were who they were after most of all. You can bring the vampires into a new era with your blood." Yevgeni looked to Maël. "Tell me you feel it. The way dhampir blood sings through your veins."

Maël stared at Natasha. He didn't say a word for a moment. When he spoke his tone was stern, protective. "I do. But, that is a folklore." He frowned.

"It's truth and you know your body is changing." Yevgeni extended his hand to her and she placed her hand into his. "Your blood can change a vampire to dhampir. It takes years to do, but little by little your bonded will become like you."

"What about demons and shifters?" Greer's cheeks turned a bright shade of pink when everyone turned their attention to her.

Yevgeni shook his head. "It has no effect on them, since genetically, they're on a different spectrum. Their animal bonds to their human psyche and they become one. Vampires are just that. There is no duplicity in their biological make up. Plus, shifters can't make their kind, vampires can and do. Dhampir like Natasha make it so the biological line of a family can continue on."

"So, Sebastian, Erik, and I won't be able to have biological children?" Greer's soft tone held a wealth of emotion.

"Unfortunately, no," their uncle answered. "Only the female dhampir have that ability. I am sorry. I know how upsetting all of this is."

Jacob tucked Greer into his side. "It will be just fine, sir. We will have children one day, I think a lot has happened over the last few days and it is a bit overwhelming."

He could say that again.

Natasha had gone from wanting to be free and start her own life away from a community she didn't feel like she belong in, to being a part of the *other* community and then

some. Add in the fact she held the key to helping the vampires walk in the sun once more...talk about pressure.

“Even I feel it,” her uncle said. “I have dedicated my life to finding you. Dimitri would have been so happy knowing you lived. He...he went insane you see. He thought with your mother’s death, and not finding you three, you too had died. He lost his will to live and to keep pushing forward. I would have never thought to check with Annalina’s parents. I didn’t know them, I’m not sure Dimitri did either.”

“I don’t mean to be rude,” Natasha said. “But, how old are you?” Even if her mother and father met in their thirties, Yevgeni couldn’t be more than fifty if that much, though he appeared older.

“I am a stout one hundred and twenty-four years old,” he said with a slightly smug grin.

“No shit,” she said breathlessly, surprised by his honesty.

“No shit,” he replied with a lift of his chin.

“This is...wow.” She scrubbed her forehead. “I’m not naive when it comes to lifespans, especially since I was raised in a shifter community, it’s all a bit...”

Yevgeni patted her hand. “It’s a bit startling when you make the connection between yourself and your nest.”

She tilted her head to the side. “Nest?”

“What we call a group of vampires. A nest.”

She looked to Maël who nodded. “So, does that mean my demons and vampire are part of our nest?”

Yevgeni chuckled. “Yes. The invitation is also extended to Greer and Jacob, though I think for a shifter it might take a bit more time to accept.”

“Not as much as you’d think,” Jacob said. “I am a solitary shifter after all.”

“What are you anyway?” Natasha winced at her tone. “I have been dying to ask you since last night. I mean you walk around during the day time, I figured wolf or something preppy.”

Jacob laughed. “Not even close. Gargoyle.”

“I’m sorry, what?” Natasha blinked. “One of them cherub things that sit on the peaks of buildings standing guard?”

Jacob nodded. “Only, my gargoyle form isn’t a cherub. It’s bigger. Think demon wings instead of feathers.”

“He’s so fucking hot,” Greer said with a sigh.

Natasha bit the inside of her cheek so not to laugh at the way the red-headed girl sighed as she stared at Jacob and her brothers. She had it bad for them. “I’ll take your word for it.”

“Sebastian, and Erik, are you planning on changing your human?” Yevgeni cut through their idle chit-chat.

Her brothers stared at Greer. The stern looks on their faces said enough without word, like Maël, Taichi and Keiji, they left the decision up to Greer. No one but her could give Natasha’s uncle an answer.

“I will take the bite when I am ready,” Greer said. “I have agreed to it, but all of the details have been left for me to sort through.”

Their uncle nodded. “You should live your life as you choose. Have children, then take the bite. Give yourself a rich family filled with the pitter-patter of tiny feet. Experience everything together. Sebastian and Erik can still bite you and not change you without offering up their blood.” He added, “It

would be nice to hear a child's laughter again after so many years."

Greer nodded. "Thank you."

Yevgeni motioned for one of the men standing behind him to approach the table. In the man's hand was a briefcase. He handed it to her uncle before stepping away. "This is all the information you and your brothers need to know about your family and your inheritance."

"I'm sorry, inheritance?" She had money? What?

Her uncle retrieved three stacks of paperwork. He handed one to her and the others to her brothers. She glanced down at an investment portfolio summary. She'd never seen so many zeros before in her life. "This ..." She licked her lips. The trepidatious knots in her stomach clenched. Her heart pounded. "This is for me?"

Her uncle nodded. "Yes, all three of you have an equal amount of money. You also own a piece of all of the Nemescu businesses, along with some other stocks and bonds. You are the heir, Natasha. The way your father arranged everything, once you learn the business, your brothers will become your advisors, and I ..." he sighed. "I will retire."

"Walk into the sun?" She choked out.

He snorted. "And miss these years by your budding family's side? Never." He winked at her then gave her an impish smile. "I might go on vacation. Find a lover or three like you have." He wiggled his brows.

Oh wow. Ew. Natasha laughed. "Sometimes, I don't need to know these things."

"I have one more gift for you. All of you," her uncle announced. "There will be a ball in two weeks in your honor.

All Hallows Eve.”

Natasha blinked. “Seriously?”

Yevgeni nodded. “Yes. It will be a perfect time to announce the heirs to the Nemescu syndicate have returned and enjoy the festivities.”

Natasha left the hotel an hour later. Thoughts of what to do next spun through her mind. She couldn’t believe she was returning to Romania in a couple of weeks. Shit, she couldn’t believe she agreed to fly to Romania to begin with. However, sitting there with her family, it felt right. Like deep down in her bones. She wanted to meet her family even though it scared the crap out of her. It’d only been a few weeks since she found out she wasn’t exactly human.

“Are you okay?” Sebastian came up beside her.

“I think so, yeah.” She nodded. “It’s—”

“Weird?” He smirked.

“Yeah. Totally.” She glanced over at Greer and Jacob sitting on Keiji’s couch. “So ...”

His gaze followed hers. “I could say the same.”

She laughed. “True.” When she left home, she hadn’t even thought about finding the one, let alone three. “I’ve missed you guys. Every day.”

“We missed you too. I’m sorry we couldn’t tell you. I wish we would have done everything differently.”

“Me too, but we’re all together now.” She grinned, watching her bonded tease each other. “So, who’s going to tell gram and gramps about all this?”

Her brother gave her a devious look, one probably matching her own before they said the same at the same time. “Erik.”

“What are you conspiring about over there?” Erik asked.

“Nothing,” Natasha said, biting back a laugh.

“I don’t buy it,” Erik grumbled.

Natasha laughed. No, he never would. She sat back and watched as her family interacted with each other, excited about her new future, but also sad. She only had one wish, that her parents could have seen all of this. But, she supposed they’d always be there in a way. *Love you, mom and dad.*

Keiji held his hand out to her. “Come here, *hachidori*. We should be celebrating.”

Yes, they should. She took his hand and stepped into his embrace. “Just as long as we don’t invite my brothers and their bonded to our bed. That’s just ew.”

Keiji’s rumble of laughter warmed her. “Never. You’re only ours. Forever.

Forever, had a nice ring to it. “Always.”

Also By

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<http://www.apachecountyshifters.com/>

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TSU Series

<https://turnskin-university.blogspot.com/>

Unrequited Mate

Alpha's Mates – formally Sorority Row

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TSU After Dark

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Revelations (BTS Halloween)

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About the Author

TL Reeve, a bestselling, multi-published author with Cobblestone Press, Decadent Publishing, Evernight Publishing, and Loose-Id, was born out of a love of family and a bond that became unbreakable. Living in Alabama, TL misses Los Angeles, and will one-day return to the beaches of Southern California to ride the waves at Huntington Beach. When not writing something hot and sexy, TL can be found curled up with a good book, or working on homework with a cute little pixie.

Michele Ryan is a multi-published author. She embraced her creative passion and co-authored several books with fellow author TL Reeve. Michele has also published two solo novellas. Michele is a lifelong resident of the state of New Jersey, along with her husband and three children, whom she refers to as her hobbits. When Michele is not plotting or writing, she can be found either volunteering at her children's school or reading.

