

A close-up, black and white photograph of a woman's face, looking slightly to the left. Her long, dark hair is blowing in the wind. The background is dark and filled with numerous butterflies of various sizes and colors, including shades of brown, gold, and black. The overall mood is ethereal and mysterious.

WINGS
OF
RAPTURE

THE GILDED BUTTERFLY CHRONICLES

MICCA MICHAELS

Wings of Rapture



MICCA MICHAELS

Title: Wings of Rapture

Series: The Gilded Butterfly Chronicles, Book 2

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Dedication

To you, to me, to all survivors. No one can hold us down. We're warriors and I'm proud of all of you and I hope you're proud of yourself. The struggles are real, but they only add flavor to our victories.



CHAPTER ONE

Creed

Sitting in the main meeting area of our security office, my thought process is completely scattered. I never thought I'd have to use the basement for one of my own. Part of me thinks I should feel bad for putting Crow in a cell and leaving him down there alone, but a larger part of me knows better.

Looking around the room at the guys, I know it's in the best interest of everyone that Crow's separated from the rest of us. I've learned to never go against my gut or one of my guys' gut feelings, and Phoenix has been suspicious from the start.

I've been waiting for one of my brothers to say something about it, but they haven't said anything one way or another. Shit's running through my head like a checklist, trying to make sure everything is in order. Having him down there has me on edge. I know where Lennie is. I know where Brooks is. I know where Lyn is heading, so there's... that's when it hits me, Lyn wasn't going to the house.

Anxiety isn't something I'm very familiar with, but right now it's coursing through me hard and fast. Jumping up, I call out to Lyn as loud as I can, dreading what I suspect. The others must have stood up as well, because I can hear them right behind me as I take off for the other end of the house. The sense of urgency hits me so hard and fast I feel like my knees are about to buckle, but there is no stopping. I have to get to her.

Our boots hitting the floor at a rapid pace sound like a regiment of men running through the building toward the

basement. As I call out her name again, her scream pierces the air, causing us to speed up and all but fly down the basement stairs.

The sight that greets me when I jump off the stairs, landing on the cement floor, sends a chill down my spine and anger coursing through me. “Crow! Get away from her!” I race toward him, barely registering what I’m seeing. “What the fuck is wrong with you?” I know the words came from me, but it definitely doesn’t sound like me. My voice is coated with fear, my body nearly trembling as I come to a stop, afraid to move any closer.

Crow is still in the cell where we left him, but somehow, he has Lyn in there with him, cradled on his lap. How the fuck did he get out? My mind races as I search the cell walls. Wait, how the fuck did the cell door get twisted? My stomach churns as my gaze is drawn back to Crow, and I realize it’s the noise he’s making that made me look back. He’s hissing at us, his teeth all but exposed as he huddles over her, almost feral. He turns to look at us and renewed shock rolls through me as my eyes meet his demon red ones.

Lyn remains in his arms, limp. Her long hair is a flowing mess that is strewn across her face and down Crow’s leg. I fucking swear he’s killed Lyn. Slowly inching my way toward the cell, I hear the others start to move with me, but we’re brought to a standstill by a hiss that escapes him once more.

He seems to be protecting her, but from us. What kind of bullshit is this? Making a fist, I hold it up, signaling the others

to stop where they are, hoping if it's just one of us, we can get closer. I try again to quietly approach the cell, but his growls and hisses force me to stop after one step. I don't want him to do anything else to Lyn, despite how she looks at the moment and I'm worried we might be too late. I'm afraid I'll endanger her if he feels threatened.

There are three 'cells' in the basement of this office building. One cell stands alone, with bars on all four sides. It's free standing and resembles a metal, barred empty box. Appropriate for isolation if warranted. A wrap-around black curtain hangs from the ceiling and can be dropped around the cell. Effectively blacking out whoever is inside.

The other two share a center metal barred wall. Each of those cells has a bed, a desk with a chair, and a freestanding bathroom. The open area that's outside of the cells has a side room where the bathroom is, a few chairs, a table, and a small kitchenette.

"Come on, Crow, give us our girl. We can work out whatever the fuck's going on with you." Nice, Dakota, subtle, real subtle.

When Crow glares at us, his chest heaving as he clings to Lyn. Suddenly a gunshot rings through the air, echoing in the small space. My ears ring as I spin to see Dakota still pointing his side piece directly at Crow. He had taken a hell of a risky ass shot, considering Crow is still cradling Lyn. Before I can yell at him for taking the risk, I see the shocked expression on his face. Following his gaze back to the cell, I know my

expression is a mirror of Dakota's. All the shot did was put a hole in Crow's fucking shirt. There is not even any blood to be seen where the bullet penetrated. What the actual fuck is happening?

"Crow-man, what the fuck is going on?" Dakota's words are ground out through clenched teeth as he struggles to hold himself back. I can't say I blame him, though. The only way he wouldn't have bled was with a bulletproof vest. Even then, the close range shot should have knocked him back. Not to mention, we all knew he wasn't wearing one. "You need to start talking, damn it. What's wrong with Lyn? Did you kill her?! You son-of-a-bitch! Say something!"

"She's dead, but she'll be back. Death is no longer permanent, you'll see." Crow finally speaks, his voice low and scratchy, but full of an odd sort of bored wonder as he looks down at her in his arms again.

I can't wrap my mind around what the fuck is happening. My world is spinning. I can feel the tears falling down my face and I don't give a fuck. I'm all but gutted at the sight of Lyn's limp body through the cell, and I'm afraid there is nothing I can do about it. Not to mention the others. Lennie loves Lyn like the mom she didn't get to have with Hadlee. I'm angry and afraid for all of us.

"I can smell your fear, your anger, your sadness, and even your confusion. It all smells rancid. I didn't know emotions have smells until now. You see, I didn't know what happened to me, not truly anyway. Not until I saw her." His voice trails off as

he pulls Lyn closer to his chest, rubbing her hair and cheek. His actions piss me off even more than I already am and there isn't a damn thing I can do. Fuck!

“How the fuck did that bullet not hurt you? And what the hell did you do to the cell door? To Lyn? Damn it, Crow, you owe us a fucking explanation.”

If I'm this close to losing my shit, then I know the others are as well. I'm so angry, my body is shaking, my fists are clenched so tightly that if I had nails, I'm sure I'd be dripping blood onto the floor. I struggle to focus, I need to think clearly past my anger if we are going to get in there to help Lyn.

Somehow, he's bent the cell door to the point we can't open it. I don't even have to try to open it to know it's not possible. Not with the way they are mangled and stuffed back into the opening. Those are reinforced metal bars. How the hell?

“I didn't lie when I said I didn't know what they had done to me. I had an idea, but I wasn't sure. Now, I know.. Somehow, they turned me into the monster of people's fantasies and nightmares. Something that only exists in myths, legends, lore, or whatever you want to call them. Yet, here I am. We used to joke around about this type of thing. I never considered the possibility that they could be real, but now I know they-” he stops himself and lets out a small, dry laugh, the sound nauseating to me that he could find humor in this situation. “Well, *we* are, in fact, real.”

What the actual fuck is he talking about? Crow better start making some fucking sense, and fast. Something other than

the nonsense he's spewing. Fairy tales, really? He has to be on some drug or something. That would explain why the gunshot hasn't affected him yet.

"Don't you see, brothers?" He starts, at last taking his attention from Lyn to look between me and the others, his face almost hopeful. "We will live forever, and I started with her. Isn't it said that every coven of vampires needs a strong vampiress? At least that's what the stories say. Well, here she is, or rather will be, when she wakes up. Who more perfect than our Lyn?"

I glance at my brothers standing on either side of me and I can tell they're thinking along the same lines as what I am, but no one is going to say it out loud. It's ridiculous. I'm the one that needs to voice this. What a fucked-up situation.

"Crow, you're trying to tell us someone turned you into a fucking vampire and that's what you've done to Lyn?" I stare at him speechless for a moment, my words sounding just as crazy out loud as when I thought it. "Man, you've lost your fucking mind. Are you listening to the bullshit spilling out of your mouth? What fucking drugs are you on?"



Crow

I can't be angry with my brothers for putting me down here. Hell, in their shoes, I can't say I wouldn't have done the same. After all, they had no clue what I am, or, more appropriately, what I've become. Soon enough, everything will be fine, and they'll understand. The shock will wear off and they will come around and see this is all for the best.

Lyn's body grows cool in my arms, and I know it's almost time. Closing my eyes, the images flood my mind. *Lyn is pressed between my body and the wall, my cock rock hard and throbbing while I devour her mouth. For a moment, the fear of me tearing apart the cell wall tinges her sweet taste, but quickly it gives way to her passion. She returns my kisses eagerly, leaning into me for more, the hammering of her pulse just beneath her flesh exciting me. Kissing and licking her as I move down her neck, her moans of pleasure echo through the bare cell room. Her heartbeat thrums against my lips as I press a kiss to the nape of her neck, my need rising until it's borderline painful and the only thing I can think of. My teeth descend, and I know I'm helpless to stop it. I sink my fangs into her neck, the pop of them penetrating her flesh humming*

through my veins as a thrill of euphoria races through me. The taste of her blood is ambrosia in my mouth, and quickly the heady sensation takes over and I pull her blood from her, coaxing it free and into my mouth. She bucks against me for a second, but the venom from my fangs enters her bloodstream and quickly her resistance gives way to pleasure. I draw it out, reveling in the feel as she sags against me. I'm so wrapped up in sucking her dry to bring her back better than before that I cum in my pants like a teenager.

The muffled sound of Creed yelling at me pulls me from my blissful memory. It's probably for the best, as the mere thought of it has me growing excited all over again. They still don't get it. They won't, though, not until they can see it for themselves. I push his yelling out of my mind, letting it become background noise. I can't focus on him, not when I need to make sure I take care of Lyn.

The scent of her is damn near maddening, and it's everything I can do to keep myself focused. I would, and will, rip this world apart to give her anything she wants. It's only just begun. The guys are right; she is ours, and now I have made it truly forever. I can't wait to slide my cock deep inside her to seal our new bond to prove exactly how much she belongs to me.

I can still hear the guys, but it doesn't matter. What's done is done and I know Lyn will be thankful after she's woken up to her new way of life, despite what they say. No one will be able to hurt her ever again. Not like she's been hurt so much in the

past. I've given her something no one else could, absolute strength and immortality.

My sole focus is Lyn, knowing instinctually that I have to be ready for the exact moment she succumbs to death. That precarious moment before she fully passes to whatever is beyond this life. Hearing Lyn's heart finally stop, I feel the pull to feed her. That slight pinch in my gums telling me it's time. Using my fangs, I puncture two holes into my wrist, ripping them a small bit so the blood can flow more freely. I've learned I heal quickly, not that it would matter if I didn't, I would do anything to take care of her. Letting my blood drip into her mouth, I carefully adjust her so she is laying on her back in my arms. The moment the first drop of blood touches her lips, she parts them, and I move my wrist closer, the steady flow prompting her to drink from me. Once she latches onto me, I allow her to drink until a slight tingling at the back of my head tells me it's time to stop her. I gently try to pull my wrist free, but she eagerly sucks, the pull of her tongue against my flesh making me hard all over again. The gentle moan from her snaps me from my thoughts and I force her to stop. We will have plenty of time for the rest later. We will have eternity.

When she stills and lays limp in my arms again, I hear the guys yelling at me with renewed vigor. I'm not worried about them or what they'll think about what I've done. Their turns will come, and everything will work out. They just have to get used to the fact that vampires are real and not just stories in books. We will be those stories.



Creed

Taking a deep breath, I have to reason with him somehow and get him to release Lyn to us before it's too late, if it's not already. I fold my arms across my chest and brace myself to reason with someone I no longer know.

“Let's say you're correct, which I doubt, but if you are, do you realize you've forced this change on a person that has serious PTSD? She was forced to endure one of the most violent violations a person can have, and you essentially just did the same fucking thing, because I guarantee she didn't agree to this madness of yours. If she wakes up, she'll kill you.”

The menacing tone of my voice makes him look up at me. It's a quick glance, but I notice his eyes are back to the color I remember. I have no clue if I imagined the red in his eyes before, but I know I didn't imagine his crazy words. His appearing mostly normal again is at least a bit of comfort, despite his overall skin coloring still being paler than normal. But I'll take that little bit of normalcy and allow it to flood me with a bit of relief.

The tension in the room is so thick I can feel it crawl across my skin. Anger from my brothers is thrumming through the room. Behind me, they're growling like a pack of rabid dogs and at the same time cursing Crow's very existence. I've got to keep this situation from exploding so we can find out more information. Needing to be the one in control has its down moments, and this is sure as hell one of them.

Before I can talk, he shifts her in his arms; her pale skin taking on the pallor that only death brings. She hangs limp in his arms, and I start to move forward, but yet again, I'm frozen in place when he opens his mouth, revealing a set of sharp fangs that descend from his gumline.

All of us race to the bars of the cage, pounding on the unyielding metal as he tears into his own skin and lets the blood drop into her mouth. "Crow, what the fuck, man?!" Dakota bellows, firing another shot into his chest, again resulting in nothing more than a flinch from Crow.

"How do we get in there?" I bellow, pacing the cell wall, trying to find an entry point. Shock rolls through me again as Lyn grips his wrist and pulls it to her mouth, clinging to it like it's her lifeline. We are all frozen still, watching in horror as his blood drips from the corner of her mouth and a soft moan echoes through the otherwise silent room. My gaze is fixed on the way her tongue strokes his skin, her lips pressed against him, the look of euphoria on her face. My dick throbs in my pants and I realize that somehow this is turning me on. The moment quickly passes when he pulls her loose and she hangs limp in his arms again.

That is all it takes to snap me out of it and quickly I'm back to trying to reason with him. She had just moved. That means we still have a chance to save her. "Crow, if she's going to wake up, when will she do it?" I ignore the fact that, by all appearances, he literally just let her suck his blood. "Why isn't she moving?"

"Goddamn it, man, do you think we can't see the blood on her face? What the fuck did you do to her? Fucking talk to us!"
Awesome question, Dakota.

"She needed to feed to complete the process. It is necessary so she can live like she is meant to. As a queen. As an immortal. When I woke up, I had blood around my mouth, so someone did the same for me. Plus, I could taste it, so that has to be part of it. I took her blood through a bite and then fed her some of mine. She should wake soon and then you'll all see. You'll see she won't be mad at me and she will understand what I have done for her. She'll be forever young, strong, vibrant, perfect and she'll thank me"

This is insane. He's fucking insane. He doesn't know Lyn to speak of her like that. This is not the man I've known for all these years. The Crow I know would never force anyone to do a damn thing. I turn to see if any of the others are any closer to processing this than I am, but it seems we all have similar lost expressions on our faces, clueless to what the hell is going on, or even what to do about it. Locked away from her by the very bars we hoped would help keep her safe.

A single moan grabs all our attention, and we focus on Lyn's body as she shifts in his arms. Crow stands, carefully laying her body flat on the bed to give her room to wake up before he slowly backs away. His actions make me want to question him. To force him to tell us what the fuck is going on. She moves on the bed, groggy and seemingly disoriented. I take a step closer to the bars again, desperate to be near her.

Crow turns to face us with a smile on his face. At least that's the same crooked smile we're all used to. "You all will have to stay away from her till she's stable. Lyn will be very strong when she wakes up and most likely very hungry. I suggest you get the blood I asked for. It would be a good idea to have it on hand for her."

I can't believe we're all standing here listening to this craziness. I don't know what we saw, but to pretend vampires are the gist of it is insane. The movement of Lyn's hand catches my attention, causing me to surge forward. "Lyn, baby, are you alright? Baby, please answer me."

As she sits up, the sounds of our collective sighs bring an end to the silence. Once she's sitting up, she pulls her knees up to her chest, wrapping her arms around them. She slowly leans her head forward, resting her forehead on her folded knees, almost as if she is going to be sick. Crow really doesn't understand what he's done. He'll get no appreciation from Lyn. He'll be lucky to keep his head attached to his body when this is said and done. He doesn't know her as well as he thinks he does.

“Lyn, my sweet, I told you I wanted to taste you. I didn’t lie. Now you’ll be young and strong forever. No one will ever hurt or harm you ever again.” He’s absolutely insane, his words coming out almost proud instead of ashamed as he should be.

Slowly she opens her eyes, and takes a deep breath, her sights on Crow. Her eyes are red, like his were, and I hold my breath as she glares at him. She looks vibrant, still the same, but a bit different. I don’t know how to explain it. Before I can process it, Lyn’s up and moving so fast she’s nothing but a blur as she crosses the cell. Lifting Crow by his throat as if he is nothing. Lyn presses him against the bars of the cell, his eyes bulging from his head, still not removing the grin on his face. The amount of rage rolling off her is damn near palpable, and I don’t blame her one bit. Even if I still can’t believe what I’m seeing.

“What the fuck have you done to me?!” She tightens her fingers around his throat, her low growl sending a shiver up my spine and making my cock jump. For fuck’s sake. Seriously?



CHAPTER TWO

Brooklyn

Holding Crow, a man I haven't even really met, by his throat, is damn near orgasmic. There is power that floods through me, and the very thought of it is inexplicably turning me on. What has he done to me? All my senses are in overdrive. My voice doesn't even sound right and still, I can't help the glee that flashes through me as I squeeze tighter. "Answer me! What the fuck have you done to me!?"

He tries to speak, but his words come out garbled, so I loosen my hold, but only enough to let him speak. "I gave you what no one else could. I gave you eternal youth. I took away any weakness you might have had and made you stronger. No one will ever hurt you again. You should be thanking me, not angry with me. Now put me down and stop being foolish." His voice is nearly chastising and not nearly as afraid as he should be considering I have him pinned to the wall by his throat.

What's that supposed to mean? Gave me something no one else could? And did he really just call me foolish? Crow doesn't know me. Who the fuck does he think he is? My anger builds inside me until it's nearly volcanic and I'm about to

explode. None of his words makes any sense and I'm struggling to figure out what the hell is going on.

"I didn't need you to give me a damn thing. I was doing amazingly well without you. Now answer my motherfucking question. What the fuck did you do to me? Why do I feel this way?" I didn't think a cocky smile could piss me off as much as his did, but I was wrong. I find myself wanting to squeeze his throat again and wipe that full-of-himself grin off of his damn face until he is gasping for air and apologizing.

"I turned you into a walking, talking, no longer breathing nightmare. I made you what people fear. What people fantasize over, even dream of being. I made you a vampire." A vampire? I blink in surprise, not sure what I was expecting, but this isn't it. The guys were right to lock him up. His words ring through my mind. He's crazy. "You'll be the leader of our coven after we turn the others." His gaze meets mine, full of excitement at the idea. Yeah, ok, no need for debate. He's fucking insane.

I clench my teeth so tightly they almost hurt, not sure what to do or say next. A vampire? As crazy as it sounds, something rings true about his explanation, and I briefly recall him biting my neck before... My mind wanders off, not sure before what. It would explain why I am pinning him to the wall like he's a feather. Why is he still conscious after I've held him by the throat, cutting off his air supply.

"Who the hell do you think you are to force this decision on me? I'm not a little girl to be forced to do a goddamn thing.

And I'll be damned if you think you're going to touch the others." I don't care who, or what the fuck he is. He won't get near them.

Without an ounce of hesitation, I squeeze my hand tighter around his neck, and dig my nails deep into his flesh, a promise of what exactly I will do to him if he tries. Crimson pools to the surface, the slick blood pooling around my fingers before it runs down his throat, the sight of it causing the tiniest of pains in my gum line. I run my tongue along my gums where it hurts, poking my tongue with my fang. As impossible as it is, Crow wasn't crazy after all. At least about turning me. The rest, he is damn near certifiable if he thinks he is going to touch what's mine. Even as my fangs draw my own blood, there's a smile fixed on my face, knowing the pain I'm causing.

My voice drops low, the threat clear in my words. "If you ever force anyone to do anything, if you *'offer'* anyone an immortal life, I will remove your fucking head from your pathetic shoulders. Then, I will rip off your arms and legs and while those roast on an open fire, I'll sink a stake of wood and one of metal through your dead heart, right before your torso is thrown on the fire. Do you get me? Do you understand the words coming from my mouth?" I have no idea where all that came from, other than the books I've read over the years, but it sounds good. I only wish he seemed to take it a little more seriously.

"Lyn," his voice is strained, the blood still oozing out over my fingers, my grip still tight. I loosen it again, oddly giddy that

the motion allows blood to flow more freely from the gashes in his throat. Before I can fixate on it, he continues. “Don’t you see? What I’ve done will prevent anyone from ever causing you, or anyone you love, harm again. I never imagined you’d be truly angry over being given this gift. I thought you’d be pleased at the idea. At what it can do for you, and for them. That you’d see the good side of things.”

His arms are hanging down at his side, not even trying to stop me. Crow’s neck is freely bleeding and his voice is damn near a whisper because of my grip and he still insists on talking. Violence seems appropriate right now, and I consider removing his tongue. At least then he will shut up.

“Being ‘*given*’ a gift? Being given a gift is something a person actually wants and doesn’t have it forced on them. You can’t be serious right now. You don’t know me. You had no right to make this type of decision for me. No one has a right to make this kind of decision for anyone. I’m so furious, I can’t even think. How dare you presume to know what I’d like or not like?”

The best idea I could come up with was to toss him onto his bed like a fucking rag doll, needing to get him away from me before I do something worse to him. Crow’s upper body hits the back wall while his lower half slams into the bars on the side of the cell. Spinning around to stare at Crow as he lands, I glare at him, mentally daring his dumb ass to move.

“One of you do something with him before I actually rip off his fucking head. Wait!” I hold up my hand, realizing they

would be at risk if they tried to help. “I’ll be damned if he gets the opportunity to bite one of you.” I quickly dismiss the idea of them doing anything to help. Crow’s better off in here, away from them.

“Lyn, baby, please come out. We’ll figure this out.” Creed’s voice makes me refocus. I know they’re here. Losing control of my temper before this was dangerous. Now, I’m even scared to see what could happen. It had been nothing to toss Crow. I didn’t want to accidentally do worse to them.

My poor Creed’s so used to being in charge, having control over everything and everyone, but not this time. “No, Creed, I can’t do that, and you know it. I don’t want to hurt any of you, and I won’t allow Crow the chance to do this to any of you, either. There’s no way I can trust either of us.” My gaze meets his worried one. “I can’t and won’t take that risk,” I say quietly, almost to myself.

There is only one way this situation can be handled, but I know none of them would be willing to go through with it. After all, who would want to kill both of us, put a stake through our hearts, remove our limbs, behead us, then toss everything in a fire? Again, going based on if the shit I read is real, because I don’t really have a fucking clue what it takes to kill a vampire.

I feel so different, yet not. I’m thirsty, but it’s not for water. Somehow I know that what I now thirst for is blood. That can’t be allowed near my dad, the guys, and especially Lennie. Making me better than I was, I scoff inwardly. That’s the

biggest load of bullshit I've ever heard. All he's done is force me to be away from the people I care about, but mostly to be his guard and ultimately to ensure that both of us die.

My constant nightmare is not having fucking control over my life, and I scream out in pure frustration before I can stop myself, the sound echoing back to me as it resounds off the bare cell walls. Once again, something has been forced on me that has completely changed who I am. I'm so angry and there's not a fucking thing I can do about it.

"Baby, please don't. Look at us. It's me, Phoenix, talking to you, and none of us are going anywhere. We can figure this out. We just need to be calm." His voice reaches me as my scream dies down. I have no clue what to do, so I fall quiet and hope that something will come to me.



Phoenix

After Lyn finishes screaming, I look from Lyn to Crow. I refuse to speak to him right now because I want nothing more than to beat him within an inch of his life. I don't even care that he's claiming to be immortal. "Baby, he forced something on you, and he had no right. We are all pissed off for you.

Look, we know you're scared and, to be honest, so are we. Hell, we just learned there is such a thing as vampires in the world, and now we're a part of it."

The excited expression on Crow's face nearly makes me lose my temper. I'm not sure if it's really an expression of excitement or what, but it's definitely not appropriate right now. That fucker has a story to tell, and he will tell us everything.

I can see Lyn's mind processing what I just said as she turns back to me, her eyes meeting mine. She tilts her head in curiosity and I realize she doesn't see it. "What do you mean, *'we're a part of it'*." Silly woman.

Looking around at my brothers again, I spread my arms out to include all of us. "Your chosen men and chosen brothers are right here and we're not going anywhere. Vampire or not. Are we guys?" Glancing around at each of them, I see all of them cross their arms as they shake their heads no.

Hunter steps forward and I have to admit I was worried until I saw the serious expression on his face. "See, now we can get to the heart of the matter and don't get mad at us, but we have limited information about vampires. From all the different movies we've seen, you need blood. First, you have to get control of your hunger, so it doesn't control you. I'm sure asshole, I mean Crow, also needs to feed."

"Hunter, did you just quote a line from Twilight to our girlfriend? I may have to kick your ass for that alone." Part of

me wants to laugh. The other part wants to shoot something and watch it bleed.

“Wait, holy fuck balls. Do you guys think since vampires exist, then maybe wolf shifters do too? Man!! If they do, I want one.” Hunter’s joy at the prospect of a pet nearly makes me laugh.

At this point, we’re all wearing dumbfounded expressions that seem to say the same thing, *‘Hunter, you’re a special kind of idiot’*, but there’s no hiding my smile. I can tell the others are making an effort not to smile either, considering the seriousness of the situation.

Lyn’s sudden outburst of laughter not only catches me off guard, but it also catches the others off guard as well, and I mean, like actually laughing. “Hunter, I love your humor, but if they are real, that means they’re people and we don’t own other people.” She’s still laughing, and Hunter has an expression of disappointment. Making it even harder not to laugh out loud.

“Alright, you two goofballs, can we get back on topic? Baby, are you feeling a thirst? We do have the blood that ass hat asked for. Umm, we can put it in a cup or something like that.” I stumble over my words, not sure what the hell to say right now. Why is she laughing harder? I don’t understand what’s so funny.

“Oh my god, Phoenix, I’m not Bella. You don’t have to put it in a cup with a lid and a straw. Just give us the bags, one each,

and we'll go by instinct." I swear I didn't mean to reference that damn movie.

"Wait! I wonder if she'll glitter in the sunlight? I guess she can use makeup to cover it up." Oh my god, can Hunter just stop?

"Alright, everyone needs to chill the fuck out. Brooklyn Dawn, you can stop your planning. There is no way in hell we're killing you or Crow, so get it out of that gorgeous fucking head of yours. Don't look at me like that. It's obvious what you think should happen, because we'd think the same thing in your shoes. So just forget it." Jaxon damn near made me jump out of my skin with his sudden outburst. The fucker.

Looking back at Lyn, "Is Jaxon right? Is that what you're thinking, Lyn? Damn it, you don't have to answer me. I can see it on your face. Here's our answer. Fuck no. We just got you in our lives and we want you here a hell of a lot longer. We may be pissed at Crow, but he's still our brother and you are still ours. We'll figure this out."



Brooklyn

A thought crosses my mind and I think now is the perfect time to ask one of the questions that has been burning my mind since the guys got the call from Crow. Besides, I need them to not focus on what has to be done right this minute. Eventually, they will come to the same conclusion as I have and see it's the only way to protect them all. It would just take them time to realize it's for the best.

“Crow, you're being very quiet. I think you have a lot of explaining to do. Like, why were you being hunted? Who were you being hunted by?” I think those are a legit place to start.

I look at the guys, knowing they want the answers just as much as I do. The raised eyebrows and scowls on their faces confirm what I thought. Everyone looks from me to Crow, waiting. Crow finally rights himself from where I tossed him and leans his back against the cell bars, turning to face everyone.

Dakota steps closer to the cell with tension in every step and an audible growl. There's no hiding his anger as he glares at Crow, who looks more relaxed than he should, given the situation.

“Crow probably has nothing to say to that. Do you?” His response catches me off guard. Instead of demanding the answers as to what happened to him, like I thought he would, he drops a bombshell on the room. “His plan was to force the change on you and then all of us. Is that why you're being quiet? Trying to figure out how you are still going to make

your sick little plan happen? He wasn't going to give us the chance to choose. He figured once you were changed, you'd help him change us. Isn't that right? We wouldn't have had the choice, like we do now. Could it be that you're figuring out shit's not going as you've planned it out? Come on, *'brother,'* tell Lyn your plan."

Wait, what? "Is he right?" I turn on Crow, seething. "Did you want to do whatever you did to me, to them too? To not give them a choice?" My mind is reeling, my anger about to bubble over that he was going to hurt what was mine.

"It wouldn't matter now. There is no choice, Lyn. I'm pretty sure I speak for all of us when I say we would do anything to be with you. Even if that means this." He motions to the cell as if it encompasses everything and I turn back to him, shocked.

"What did you just say?"

I know I can move fast, but this time I'm pretty sure I am somehow even faster. Before I know it, I've jerked open the mangled cell door and I'm standing in front of Dakota, picking him up like he weighs no more than a feather. Once I have his ass pinned to the far wall, his feet barely brushing the ground, I turn my head briefly to look at Crow with an expression that I'm sure speaks volumes. *'Don't fucking try me.'* The level of strength I have makes me feel amazing and scared at the same time, not that I'll say that out loud.

Satisfied he is going to stay where he is, I turn my attention back to Dakota, speaking through gritted teeth. "Dakota, I'm so angry at Crow, I can barely see straight and you're over

here talking about giving you all a choice? Are you fucking kidding me? There is no choice. I will not do this to any of you, and if Crow does, I will fucking kill him. It's fucking bad enough this was forced on me. I'll be damned if any one of you joins Crow and myself in hell."

Dakota doesn't say a word, but instead, he tilts his neck to the side, exposing his pulsing carotid artery, making me freeze. The sound of his pulse quickens and all but pounds into my head, driving me crazy with need. Stepping closer, I press my body solidly to his, licking my lips in anticipation, the slight pain at my gums almost as pleasurable as it is uncomfortable. He doesn't hesitate to wrap his arms around my waist and back, pulling me even closer to him. Tempting me. Daring me.

"Do you know what you're asking me to do?" My voice is thick with need and desire. Still, I won't do this to them. "You're asking me to turn you into the monster that was forced onto me? To kill you. Feed you my blood and wait for you to awaken being what? The living dead? No, babe, I won't do that. I won't do that to any of you."

He gives me a wink as he straightens his neck, taking my mouth in a deep, passion filled kiss. Fuck me, his taste is amazing as it explodes in my mouth. My body is pulsating with desire and my pussy throbbing, wanting him right here against the wall as I kiss him back with equal passion. The sudden taste of blood forces me to drag myself away and jump back.

I run the back of my hand over my lips and look down to see it's exactly what I think it is. There's a small trace of blood on my lips. I don't know if it's his or mine, but the very sight of the crimson dots on my skin heats me to my core and makes me want him even more. It's all I can do to keep myself from consuming him. Dakota watches me smugly and all I want to do is smack the look off his face.

“Dakota, what the fuck? Why would you do that? You're trying to force me to change you. Everyone needs to stop. Damn you.” I seethe, knowing I have to get away from him or risk doing something I will regret.

I race back into the cell and pick up the mangled door, jarring it back in place and twisting one bar over another until I am satisfied they will not get in, and it will at least slow Crow from getting out. I give him a look to remain very quiet and still. If he does otherwise, I know I will likely lose it and show him he's not immortal after all.

“Alright, everyone, just take a couple of steps back, take a breath and let's slow this crazy train down. This is all new to everyone. Before anyone makes a decision about anything, I suggest Creed, Dakota, Hunter, and I see what information we can find out about all of this. When we come back, we can all discuss what we've found and go from there.” Phoenix is the first one to actually seem to speak reasonably as he looks around the room for anyone to argue with him. He nods, “Good. Jaxon, make sure Lyn and Crow get the blood they need and not from one of us. *Yet.*”

Forget being reasonable, I feel my eyes change, and by the way they look at me, I can tell they see it too. “Are you all not listening to me, or is it you just don’t fucking care? The only choice here is to kill the two of us. We need to die. We will die one way or another.”

“Lyn, we’re hearing every word you’re saying and I’m quite sure the ones you aren’t saying out loud. What you’re missing is what we’re all actually saying. Are we pissed at Crow? Fuck yeah, we are, and that’s not something that’s just going to dis-a-fuck-ing-pear anytime soon. We’re a team, a family, and you’re part of that. There is no walking away in any way, shape, or form. You’re ours, babe, like we’re yours. We won’t kill Crow, even though he’s the master of all fuck-ups, because he’s ours and we don’t abandon each other for fucking up.” He looks pointedly at Crow, earning a shrug from him that annoys me even more. “That goes for you as well, well, except the fuck up master part. And don’t even try it again, Lyn. We won’t kill you either, so just forget it and move on.”

Hunter’s words stun and silences everyone. I know he has feelings, but I never realized how deep his emotions and thought process truly went. He really cares. I want to hate everything he said, but that’s me being a bitch. There is a bigger part of me that wants to be part of that family and needs them to not turn away from me. I need time to truly think about everything he said, and, as he put it, didn’t say.



CHAPTER THREE

Dakota

Walking upstairs and over to the main meeting area, Hunter's words still echo through my head. He's not wrong with anything he said, and I damn well know I can't be the only one that's wanting Lyn to turn me. I'm sure my actions outside of the cell made my decision obvious. Creed looks at me with a 'what the fuck man' expression and I simply shrug my shoulders. It's not like I knew what I was going to do before I did it.

"Dakota, what the hell were you thinking? She could have sunk her teeth right into your carotid artery and sucked you dry. Don't you think that's a decision for us to make as a family? For that matter a decision for her to make?" Creed snaps when I don't justify what I did.

Creed sounds madder than he looks. He's not fooling anyone. I know better. "Come on, Creed. You know damn well everyone's mind is churning the same way right now. I was just the first one to step up to offer for her to do it. Besides, I didn't plan on doing anything, I just sort of did it."

“Yeah, it’s on my mind, but there’s more to it than just simply being turned into a vampire. I still can’t believe it’s even possible. What about her dad? What about Lennie? I’ll be damned if her life is taken from her before she’s had a chance to grow up and make that kind of decision for herself.”

“I think I may have found something.” Phoenix’s voice slices through our debate. He’s in the central meeting room, leaning over his laptop, engrossed in something on his screen. Creed, Hunter and I walk over to him, taking a seat at the large meeting table. As Phoenix was about to start talking, Creed’s cell phone rings.

He pulls it from his pocket and swipes to answer before putting the phone to his ear. “Hey, can you tell me anything? Hold on, I’m going to put you on speakerphone. Dakota, Hunter, and Phoenix are here with me. Guys, this is a friend from one of the alphabet agencies. Alright, go ahead.” He puts the phone on the table so we can all listen.

“Alright, so this is what I found out concerning Crow. Crow exited from active duty over four weeks ago. Directly after, he was recruited by someone we have yet to determine, to go on an information gathering expedition. I say expedition because there really is no other explanation for his movements. From what I can tell, he went to Bulgaria and then Germany and there isn’t a paper trail. Everything was word of mouth.”

That bit of information makes us look at each other. “Bulgaria? Germany? None of that makes any sense to me.

I'm so confused." I'm pretty sure we all are at this point. It doesn't make any sense.

"I can only tell you what I know, and that's that he was keeping this a secret. The only reason I found out about it was, well, I'm just that good. Anyway, a week after he arrives in Bulgaria, he goes missing. Two and a half weeks later, he makes contact, again, we are not sure with who, but there is record of a phone call from an area he was seen, and states he's in Germany, disappears again and then nothing until he contacted you all for rescue, but from Canada this time. How he went from one place to another and yet another is a total mystery."

"Wait, when he made contact the first time, what was said, done, happened? There's an information hole and we need it filled PDQ man, so speak the fuck up if you know anything else," Phoenix snaps.

Jesus, Phoenix, fucking chill out. It's not like we can tell him Crow's a vampire and that might have something to do with the gaps in time or information. For fuck's sake, I feel crazy even thinking it. "Like I said before. I can't tell you what I don't know. There is a gap, and I don't like it. But if there was a report made, it's been taken care of. If you get my meaning?"

"When he called to get a rescue, he told us he was being hunted. When the guys got to him, there was no evidence that he was being pursued, much less hunted. So, you're telling us

that's it? No proof of anyone hunting him or what the hell he was actually doing out there?"

"Man, not only that, but there's rumors going around a few military bases and Government of paranormal bullshit. Stories that if I were to repeat, I'd be locked up. Whatever's going on, y'all need to stay out of it and as far away as you can. This is beyond a fubar situation. Nothing's adding up. Look, I have to go. One last thing. Be careful who you talk to and who you ask questions about. Remember, trust is earned."

He hangs up before we can say anything else. The room falls quiet for a second before Hunter speaks. "Well, that was a whole lot of nothing. Seriously?"

"Not like we could have just blurted out the lack of information might be because Crow could have already been a vampire by then," I tell him.

"He couldn't even tell us who was after Crow. Hell, if there was anyone in the first place." Hunter shakes his head in frustration.

"I'm sure there was someone after him, considering. But why him?" Creed asks.

"That's the problem. Too many questions and not enough answers." Irritation rolls through me. I hate not knowing. More so when it has to do with those close to me.

I look back at Phoenix and point to him, hoping he has come up with something a little more solid. "You're up. What did you find?"

“According to the lore about vampires that I’ve found, Lyn and Crow are essentially immortal. They’ll never die because of natural causes. In order to kill a vampire, you have to separate the head from the body and burn both parts. Making a vampire seems easy enough, if this information is accurate. You still need her permission, of course, but it is pretty straightforward. I’ll use Lyn and Dakota as an example, since he seems all gung-ho to change.”

“Yeah, I am. I’m not losing Lyn. Not over some stupid shit like this. And, yeah, the idea of having eternity with her makes me a very happy man. You can’t all sit in this room and tell me you haven’t at the very least considered the idea already.” My words are harsher than I intended, but I want Lyn, no matter the circumstances, and I’m not going to pretend otherwise. “Anyway, use me as your example to explain.”

“Lyn would have to bite you, drain almost all of your blood. She would make you virtually dead. Just at the point your heart stops, she will drop some blood into your mouth, allowing you to feed until it’s just enough. Somehow, it indicates that she’ll know when to stop. Then, you’ll , well, you’ll die and then come back as a vampire. Mind you, this is all from legends, bits and pieces I am finding all over the place. Although I’m less inclined to call them legends now. Especially considering what we saw downstairs. There is no denying what we all saw with our own eyes. With the accuracy of what is written, for all we know, the people that wrote this stuff could be a vampire themselves.”

“Okay, so now that we know what might be, how do we figure out the rest?” I ask everyone, not surprised when they fall quiet, just as unsure how to answer as I am.



Jaxon

Watching Brooklyn is so fucking confusing. She looks like herself, but doesn't. She sounds like herself, but doesn't. I'm so angry that something else was taken from her control and forced on her and there is literally nothing I can do to make it better. I need to get her talking, because I'm pretty sure I know how things are going to go and she needs to be in a better frame of mind to be open to accepting it.

“Brooklyn, talk to me, lil sis. What are you feeling? What do you want to happen? This is about you and your thoughts.” When she looks up at me, I swear she's crying without tears. They shine brightly, like tears want to fall, but none do. It's like she's trapped without being able to release her emotions and the sight kills me.

“They have to kill me, Jaxon. There is no other choice, and no one is seeing that. I'm a danger to everyone. I would lose my

mind if I hurt anyone. I don't even know myself anymore. This way that I feel. I can't trust myself to keep them safe."

The sound of absolute defeat in her voice is fucking heartbreaking. I'm thinking sympathy isn't what she needs right now. Sometimes, Lyn needs the blunt end of things, and it's time I give it to her. Sometimes a good old fashion reality check is the perfect medicine.

"What are you going to say to them, and to us, when and if we ask you to change us? You're only looking at the negative side of this. What about the positive side of things?"

"Positive? There is nothing positive about this, Jaxon. I don't know how you can think otherwise." Her expression is full of disbelief and confusion. I can tell she hasn't even considered that anything good can come from her change.

"Sure, there are, you just haven't taken the time to consider it. So, let me help you and list some potential positives of this." I wait for a moment while she simply stares at me, speechless.

Taking a sip of coffee, I sit on the floor against the wall, using the small amount of time to pull my own thoughts together. I clear my throat because I'm actually winging this at this point and I hope whatever I come up with will actually sound reasonable. "Do you know how much better we'll be at protecting people? Even more so, the ones we care about. Think about how long we can live, being pretty much immortal, and how much good we can do in that time. Here's one that's piqued my curiosity. What other paranormals are out there that we don't know about? How do they play into all of

this? Being vampires will open us up to a whole new world of knowledge and ability to do something good.”

Her body language tells me she’s following my frame of thought and right now, that’s the best I can hope for. Even if she doesn’t seem to be completely on board, yet. Taking a deep, steadying breath, I continue.

“Since there are vampires, just imagine what else is out there. We don’t know who was hunting Crow. Was it to turn him into a vampire, or worse, imagine if there are people who know about vampires and hunt them to destroy them for the monsters people believe them to be? Sure, there are probably good and bad vampires, just like humans. You are proof of that. You are a vampire, Lyn, but your first thought is to not hurt those you care about.”

“That’s not the same, Jaxon,” she shakes her head, but doesn’t sound as unconvinced as she once was.

I keep going, hoping she will start to see the other side of things. More enthusiastic about it, the more I think it through. “What are the possibilities that there are other paranormals that face the same threat? We could be that organization that helps to set rules of behavior, protect, and help other paranormals, as well as humans.”

The room grows quiet as she thinks over my words right before Creed catches us by surprise as he takes the last step into the basement and his foot hits the solid concrete floor.

We all face him as he steps fully into the basement. “Jaxon, do you mean turn the security company into a paranormal type

agency? I don't know, like, Paranormal Intelligence Agency or something?" Creed looks at me in question.

"Sure, why not? I mean, obviously we can't outright call it that, but we can use the initials or something. We can slowly, but carefully, build relationships with other paranormal groups. If there are in fact others out there. In the same breath, I'll say that no one's going to convince me that this is some sort of fluke. We've been brought into what we thought of as the realm of make believe. Except now, we know they're real and we can be a positive side of it." My words seem to make Creed pause and consider things.

"How the fuck are you all looking at this as a good thing? I've been turned into a fucking monster and you're trying to tell me it's alright. That you'll just adapt to dating and living with me, a vampire? You've lost your fucking minds." Lyn turns away from us in disgust.

Damn it, I thought I had her. I think we're going to have to call her out to see the light in the darkness she's surrounded herself in. "So, you're a monster? I always thought of monsters as evil, doing bad things, hurting others, even killing because they can. I'm not seeing that in you."

Redirecting my attention to Creed, it's time to push buttons and I hope he catches on quickly. "Creed, my brother, just think of the extra strengths we'll have. The money we'll save because only Lennie, and maybe Brooks, would be eating actual food. I'm sure we can work something out with a local blood bank or something to fulfill our needs after we all

change. Man, this will be fucking cool now that I really think about it.”

Lyn’s scream silences me and makes me turn to focus on her. “I’m a fucking monster! I’m not doing this to any of you. Just-”

I cut her off before she can say anything else. “Brooklyn, did you bite and therefore kill Dakota?! No, you didn’t. You know why? Because you’re not a fucking monster. You have control. You have ethics and morals. What you aren’t is some blood thirsty, out of control, threatening monster. Even new when I’m sure your body is screaming for blood. Now, stop being selfish with your immortality and fucking share!”

Well, I didn’t mean to go that far, but I can tell it at least has her thinking. I don’t think she is being selfish, but I was hoping my comment would lighten the mood enough to get her thinking.

“I didn’t want this. I mean, how can you want something like this? I’m so confused, lost and alo...”

“You’re not alone, so don’t even say or think it. Your boyfriends and your brothers are right here and we’re not going anywhere. Ok, well, that was a lie because someone needs to go get Dad and stay with Lennie. Don’t look so shocked. He asked us all to call him Dad and I for one love it.”

I can’t handle hearing the defeated tone in her voice when she speaks. Is this the best situation? No, but damn it, she’s still here and so are we. We just want to be with her as long as

possible and are willing to do whatever it takes, even if that means being turned into a vampire with her.



CHAPTER FOUR

Keegan

“Kerrigan and I will go get Dad and have him come here. We’ll stay with Lennie, so he doesn’t have to worry about her while he’s here. I won’t speak for my brother, but this is my family, and I’d like to become a vampire. Not for all the Hollywood glamor bullshit, but Jaxon had some good points, and I think we can do some good.”

I watch as Kerrigan steps up to the cell bars, his eyes never leaving Lyn. Not even to look at Crow, who is still watching everything with an almost smug look on his face. When he reaches through the bars, laying a hand on Lyn’s cheek, she looks up at him. “Lil sister, you’re no more a monster than any of us are. No, this wasn’t your choice, but it is what it is and all we can do is go from here. I, for one, like the idea of being there for those that may not have anyone. We’ll be stronger, faster and stay forever young. I don’t have any complaints about any of that.”

She places a kiss on the palm of his hand as he withdraws his hand from the cell. “See there, lil sis, a monster would have already sunk their teeth into his wrist and drank him dry. You

did no such thing.” I watch her closely, but still, she remains quiet. It’s going to take time for us all to get used to this, but we won’t let her forget we are all in her corner.

We give her a reassuring smile, not wanting to go, but knowing we need to catch Dad before he starts to worry. Leaving her in the basement, we jog up the stairs to the main office, only to come face to face with Dad and Lennie.

“Dad, how funny. We were just on our way to get you and challenge Lennie to some Fort Knox races. Lyn said you need to practice the different ways to get to the rooms. Kerrigan and I thought we could have some fun with you. Jaxon always gets to have the fun. This time it’s our turn.”

“Oh yeah, that sounds like fun. Grandpa, do you want to race with us?” I’m so glad it came out smoothly, considering they caught us by surprise. Plus, the door is still open for them to hear us downstairs, so Lyn will know what is going on.

“Lennie! I want you to practice getting to the one in your room from different places in the house. Guys, don’t make it easy for her. It’s a game of tag. If they tag you, Lennie, you start again.” I send Lyn a silent thanks, knowing it’s a brilliant idea and Lennie will take the challenge.

“I’m going to win, Brooklyn, you’ll see. Come on, Uncle Keegan and Uncle Kerrigan.” Lennie grins and starts to move away, as relief floods me at how amazingly well that went.

Focusing on Dad, I give him a wink. “Dad, when you go down there, be warned they’re bickering about how things should be done. I said you’d be the voice of reason in deciding how it

should be done, and everyone agrees. So, good luck, and each of us vote yes. You'll understand more when you get down there." He looks at me curiously, but catches on that we are trying to keep it from Lennie, whatever it is and remains quiet. I turn back to Lennie, "Come on, Squirt, it's time to take you down."



Brooks

I don't know what the hell that was all about, but I guess I'll find out soon enough. Watching Keegan, Kerrigan and Lennie tag each other as they're running out the backdoor makes me chuckle. It's great to see her playing.

Walking down the stairs, the first thing I notice is the damn lights are off. As I reach up to flip the light switch, Lyn asks me not to. "Lyn, you know you shouldn't strain your eyes in the dark and that goes for the guys, too."

"Dad, will you just come downstairs? Once you're down here, we can explain, and you'll see for yourself, these men are fools for not listening to me." Well, she's in a mood and her voice seems off somehow, so I guess I'll let it go for now.

Walking down the stairs, I can make out what looks to be like three cells. It doesn't make sense why they would want me to come down here to talk, though. Two are empty and the last one has two people in it. At least from what I can see in the silhouetted darkness. I give my eyes time to focus, and I suck in a breath as I realize it is my daughter behind the bars, as well as a man I assume is Crow.

I don't normally have a temper, except when it comes to Lyn, and right now, I know damn good and well my temper is showing. Tightening my hands into fists and squeezing them, I can feel my nails digging into the palms of my hands. "Someone better start fucking explaining why Lyn is in a mother fucking cell before I lose my shit!"

"Dad, stop, please. They didn't put me in here, I put myself in here. Look at me, Dad, really look at me. There is a reason I'm in here."

My mind is reeling. What the hell is she talking about? I know what she looks like and I don't need to look closer to figure that out. There is an angry growl to my voice and right now, I don't give a fuck. Someone better start giving me some answers.

I walk over to the cell, trying to see clearer through the shadows in the dark as I look her over from head to toe, not sure what I'm supposed to be seeing. This is not helping me cool down, instead the absurdity of it is only pissing me off even more.

“Brooklyn Dawn, you look perfectly fine. Now come out of there right now. I don’t know what game you think you’re playing, but I want you to stop. I don’t find this funny. Matter of fact, I’m about to lose my goddamn temper.”

I move down the barred wall to the cell door, intending to make her come out. When I reach out and grab it, confusion floods my mind. It doesn’t feel like normal bars. I focus on them, and let my eyes adjust a bit more so I can see it better and feel that it’s been twisted. What the hell? “Why are these bars twisted? Who did it, and how the hell are we to get her out of there?”

“Dad, just listen. I twisted the bars. Well, twisted them more, anyway. Crow twisted them first. That’s not the point, you’re still not looking at me, damn it. Look at me and truly see me.” Raising my head at her tone of voice, I focus on just her again. After a second, I finally see it through the shadows of the bars on her face. I’m shocked to the point I take a step back at what I see.

My baby girl’s eyes are red, and she has fangs. “What the absolute fuck is going on Lyn? You look like you, but you have reddish eyes and fangs. I’d call you a vampire if I didn’t know better.”

“Dad, you can call me a vampire or a monster. Either way, you would be right, and I should be destroyed.” I frown at her words, and her tone. Well, now she’s being ridiculous.

“What one considers a monster is a matter of personal opinion.” Waving hands to clear the air of the mounting

bullshit, I look around at my newly adopted sons and see that they all have massive smiles on their faces. Which makes no sense, considering my daughter is locked in a cell in the basement of their office.

“Alright, does someone want to fill me in on what the fuck’s going on? My daughter is in a cell and we’re having a hypothetical conversation about mythical creatures. Which is not explaining why Lyn is in a fucking cell. Now someone start fucking talking.”

“Dad, we need you to listen before you react.” Creed steps up to the cage so that I can see him and Lyn at the same time. I remain silent, but give him a wave to continue, hoping like hell he has an explanation.

“There’s no easy way to say this and you won’t believe me right off, but no one is lying to you. Lyn is a vampire. When the guys got back with Crow and he saw her for the first time, he went after her. We locked him in the cell they’re both currently in. She came down here on her own and somehow he was able to get to her, kill her, and feed her some of his blood. When she woke up, Lyn threatened to kill Crow for forcing his will on her. She’s locked herself in the cell to keep us from getting to her or Crow from getting to us. Her being a vampire changes nothing for us. All of us still want to be with her, and more so, we all want her to change us, or at least I’m relatively sure they do, so we can be with her and protect her. Even knowing all of this, she still insists she’s a monster.”

I stare at Creed in shock, his words not registering. An actual vampire? I shake my head. No, his words are registering, it's just not making any sense whatsoever. Finally blinking, I burst out laughing and there's no stopping it. I'm laughing so hard, my gut hurts and I have tears running down my face. This is the funniest prank ever. I have to give them credit for this one. They really went to great lengths to pull this one off. Complete with a cell in the basement.

Taking a deep breath, I focus on Lyn. "Can I be the first one you turn? I love the idea of no pain, living forever and being able to possibly help people without them knowing it. Oh, and I want a wolf shifter as a pet." Oh my god, I'm dying. I'm laughing so hard. I need to breathe.

"I was told we can't have a pet shifter because they're human. I didn't think about them that way, but if they are real, we can always help them and any other paranormals." Hunter isn't helping me to stop laughing. He's making it worse with the sincere way he seems disappointed he can't have a wolf shifter as a pet.

"Dad, do you see me laughing? Do you see the guys laughing? Apparently, you need proof, so who's willing to draw blood to get a reaction from me?"

"Alright, Lyn, this has gone on far enough. Jokes on dear ole Dad, now come on out."

Watching her open the cell door confuses me when I know for a fact the metal had been twisted. "Hey, babe, I'll do it and if you bite, awesome. I'll see you when I come back."

Before I could blink, I watch as Hunter takes out a knife, slicing his palm deep enough to let the blood pool to the surface, the sight of it glinting in the low light. Lyn's across the room and has him lifted off the floor, pinned against the wall, a low growl emanating from her. I'm stunned as I watch her run her nose next to his neck. Pulling back, she lifts his hand and licks the bleeding wound on his palm, making my stomach churn. By the time she's done, there's no blood left on his hand.

My gut tells me to approach with caution, but I need to get closer to see if my eyes are playing tricks on me. Did they want the lights off so it was easier to prank me? I cross to where Lyn has Hunter pinned to the wall, I can see she clearly has him pinned. I listen and hear Hunter's whispering voice. "Baby, please," Hunter all but begs, the need in his voice unmistakable. "You have tasted me, now let me taste you and be with you forever. Bite me, Lyn. Please, baby."

I watch her as she looks into his eyes and smiles, completely transfixed as he smiles back at her. I quickly glance around the room to see if anyone is going to do anything but no one is moving to stop her. Then it occurs to me what I said during our hypothetical conversation. They were actually serious.

"Do you really want this, Hunter? Do you want to be killed and reborn by me? Do you want to belong to me forever?" Her whispers are seductive, even to me. It's not sexual, but a feeling of safety and protection. Something that is enticing and luring to me in every way.

“Yes, Lyn, yes to all of it, but most of all, yes to you. Do it, baby.” Hunter leans his neck to the side, not breaking eye contact with her as she leans into his neck, the dim light glinting off of her fangs as she closes in.



CHAPTER FIVE

Brooklyn

Hunter smells absolutely divine, and he wants this. I can tell the truth behind his words by the way his pulse thrums in anticipation. Steady and strong, instead of erratic and panicked. His begging is making my panties wet. Knowing how much he wants this. Running my tongue up his neck, I feel his body shiver against mine in anticipation. His hard, full cock presses against my lower abdomen, only making me want this more. . His whispers are alluring, and I want to taste him again.

I force myself to take a few deep breaths to help clear the sexual fog that's currently clouding my mind. It's more difficult because I can smell his want, his lust, his desire. That, coupled with every other emotion rolling through his body, is all but overwhelming. I can't do this.

None of them understand what they're asking me to do. Abruptly, I release Hunter and step back, turning my back to Hunter and walking back into my cell. I don't even bother to close the door. I'm tired. This emotional roller coaster has left

me drained, and I just want to escape it all for a little bit until I can figure it out and everyone can see reason.

I cross to the thin bed and lay down, curling up into a ball. I'm secretly thankful Crow moved to the chair and has remained quiet the whole time. Not that I'll tell him that, but I really don't need him making this more complicated by encouraging their insane idea that this is a good thing.

I don't exactly know how I know, but I know Crow won't make a move to leave this cell without me telling him to. It's like I have a window to see inside him. His emotions and even his thoughts and for right now, he's actually concerned he fucked up. Good, he should be.

I barely finish my thought when I hear a growl, a yell, and someone rush by me. As I open my eyes, I see my dad slamming Crow against the bars of the cell. Crow doesn't fight back, just looks at him with a steady gaze. The emotions rolling off of Crow tells me that he won't do anything to hurt my dad, despite being stronger than him. The sound of the guys rushing toward the door diverts my attention and I stand up to block their way.

“Who the fuck do you think you are to force a goddamn thing on my daughter? She didn't deserve what you've done. I should rip your head off your worthless shoulders!” The amount of anger radiating off my dad is something I've never seen before.

Walking over to Crow and my dad, I rest my hand on Dad's shoulder. “Dad, we need him alive. He knows how I feel about

what he's done and exactly what I'll do if he so much as looks at someone wrong. Please, put him down."

The only credit I'll give to Crow is not striking out at my dad. He and I both know he's much stronger. He could easily do as he wants. He's taking my dad's anger because he knows he fucked up and deserves what's happening.

My dad releases Crow, only to take my hand and lead me over to the bed to sit down beside him. He takes a deep breath and, as he exhales, he looks around the basement. He locks eyes with the only person behind me, Crow. His stare is so fierce it makes me swallow as I can feel Crow's emotions.

My dad's voice resonates around the basement as he speaks to Crow. "Speak and I fucking swear to all the Gods it better be quick."

"Sir, all I wished to do was make her truly untouchable. The guys explained what happened to Brooklyn in her past, as well as what happened recently. I was beyond angry that she was so fucking vulnerable, even surrounded by people who would die for her. I only had an idea of what had been done to me, but when I saw her for the first time, I knew. Not only did I know, but I knew I could keep her safe. Brooklyn isn't the type to be coddled and protected, so I gave her the ability to protect herself. No one can ever hurt her again."

I watched my dad's face soften as Crow was explaining why he did what he did. Even my own anger was morphing from a raging boil to a slow simmer. He might have fucked up, but he seems sincere in his reasoning.

“Brooklyn, ever since you went through what you did with Max, you’ve been a people pleaser. While I don’t agree with what Crow did to you, I do understand. In a way, he did what I couldn’t do. I protected you the best I could. He gave you everything you could possibly need to protect yourself.”

I know my mouth has dropped open from a bit of shock, but looking around at all the guys, including Crow, I can see they are feeling the same way. I can see it, smell it, and damn near taste it. It’ll take some time to sort out exactly what the different emotions smell like and taste of. This whole thing is going to take some serious getting used to.

Taking a minute to try to level my emotions, I watch my dad doing the same thing. When he looks back at me and our eyes meet each other’s, he takes another deep breath. Rolling his shoulders as he releases his breath, I brace myself for whatever it is he’s about to say.

“Lyn, you’re no monster. Crow has made you a stronger version of yourself. You’re still as amazing and wonderful as you were before. You have men begging you to make them more than what they currently are. I see good men in front of me. Men that were ready to go to battle for you and me, but gave you the room you needed to spread your wings and take your revenge. They already know you better than I thought I did, and that even goes for Crow. That is devotion, and these men won’t stop until you turn them.”

When he stops talking to take a few deep breaths, I know he’s not done, so I wait. Opening his eyes from his breathing

exercises, he focuses back on me. “I agree with them. I want you to change me, too.”

I am so stunned by what he’s just said, I stand up and back away from him toward Crow. Resting my back against Crow’s chest annoys me because it feels comforting. He’s smart as he doesn’t move and try to make further contact with me. “You want what? Are you out of your damn mind?” I can’t believe these men.

“Lyn, come on. You’re the only one against this and I can’t say I understand why. We’ve already told you, you’re not a monster and that your behavior proves that again and again. We can all be stronger and live forever. We can still do good and, who knows, we could put a positive spin on vampires,” Dakota reasons, watching me closer. Damn it, I hate him and his logic sometimes.

I know damn well no one is thinking of Lennie right now. “Creed, what about Lennie? Do you seriously expect me to drain that child and change her? Forever locking her in her eleven-year-old body? If you think I can, then you don’t know me at all.”

“Lyn, I’d never ask you to do that, and I’d never ask Lennie to make such an adult decision at such a young age. That’s another thing we can do. We can help make rules of conduct and things like that. We’re a strong unit and would be great at helping all, well, species, for lack of better terms. I’d let Lennie choose when she’s an adult and not any sooner,” Creed answers without hesitation, and I frown.

I turn to look at Crow, and he smiles back at me with his annoyingly sad smile. At that moment, I know what we need. “Can everyone just give Crow and I time alone to talk? This just happened to me, and I have questions of my own. Just leave us be for the night. I need time to process. Everyone go up to the house and I’ll have a decision for you all in the morning. Creed, tell Lennie I’ve got a headache and went to bed early. I’m not ready for that talk yet. Especially not when I don’t even know how I feel about this myself yet.”

I give them what I hope is an apologetic smile before I turn away again and look at Crow, the look on my face changing to a *‘don’t fuck with me’* expression. I know I said I wanted to talk, but it will be on my terms. I lay back down on the bed and close my eyes, not even waiting for them to leave before I do so as the thoughts flood my mind.

I don’t even know if vampires sleep. Do they get cold? This puts a new spin on a midnight snack. Do vampires drink coffee? Oh, hell no! A lifetime without coffee? This is insane. No, me having this conversation in my head is insane.

I listen as they all go upstairs, the sound of each of their footsteps unique. Interesting how I can tell them apart, just by the way they walk. Dakota is the last of them and he pauses at the top of the stairs before taking the last step and closing the basement door behind him. I can tell they’ve gone to the central meeting area instead of going home, but at least they have left me alone for a little while, like I asked. I need to think about everything that’s been said. Keeping my eyes closed, I take a now unnecessary deep breath, the irony not

missed on me that it's still somehow soothing and helps me to calm down. I decide it's time Crow answered some questions.

“Crow, what happened to you? I mean, how the fuck did you get turned into a vampire, and who was hunting you? Those men call you their brother and now they don't even know you. They want to change for me, so tell me everything.”

“Brooklyn, I honestly thought you'd be excited that not one living creature could hurt you. There's nothing vulnerable about you now.” I don't miss the fact that this is not the first time he has avoided answering who was hunting him. More so, who changed him. I'm not letting it go that easy, but first, I'll play his game.

I slightly open one eye after hearing the tone of his voice. His emotions are palpable. I can feel him in a way. He's sad and confused, despite his outward confidence in his decision. “Crow, what made you think forcing this change on me would ever be alright? You don't know me. You can't possibly make an appropriate decision with no information. Would you have gone on a mission with little to no information? No, you wouldn't, and you damn well know it.”

“On the drive back, the guys gave me a summary about you, past and present. I knew right then and there you were and are, an amazing person. All I could think was no one would ever hurt you again, and I was going to make damn sure of it. What I did wasn't to hurt you. That's the last thing I meant to do. It was meant to keep you safe, even when we couldn't.”

I'm still pissed off, but his reasoning is sincere. There is no doubt about that. Not to mention, there are other things a bit more important to deal with. "That's something I'll have to process another time. Right now, I need to know who changed you, who was hunting you, and why?"

"Well, I think that story should be told to everyone at the same time. So, how about we, um, how about we eat and rest a bit? I'm still new to this as well."



Phoenix

Walking into the main meeting area, I finally take time to admire the look of the offices as we pass them. Each office represents the owner's style and personality. My office consists of a variety of different wood types. My desk and shelves are Eastern Red Cedar. The floor is Red Oak, and the door is made of Black Walnut.

The main meeting area has a grayish blue carpet. The large meeting table is all made of bamboo. All the chairs are high back, black office desk chairs. Just because we're in a meeting doesn't mean we have to be uncomfortable.

“I’m going to make us some coffee. From the lore I read, they’ll be able to hear us, but I’m fine with that. I think the first thing we need to address is if there are any of us that don’t want to change.”

Walking over to the coffee station, it only takes me a couple of minutes to get a pot of coffee brewing. Lining the cups up, I walk back over to the table and take a seat.

“Here’s my thing. I don’t want anyone to think this is an all-or-nothing type of thing. If you choose not to change, it’s as acceptable as it is to change. I’ll talk with Lennie before I change. This is important, and I want her to understand what our new position will be.” Creed gives his input and I think it’s a good point. None of us are going to look down on anyone else for their decision, one way or another.

I’m so glad Creed is the only one of us that has a child. It’s hard enough to think of her making this type of decision as her uncle, I doubt I could do it as her Dad. I do agree with Creed making her wait till she’s older and mature enough to make such a life altering choice. Even if the thought of that still makes me feel weird, too.

“I personally don’t really care what order we go in, but obviously she can’t change us all at once. I think that would be dangerous for all of us. In terms Hunter can understand, a bunch of newborns in the same place at the same time equals trouble.” I can’t help the smirk that takes over my face as I send him a wink.

“Hardy Har Har brother. It doesn’t matter to me either as to who is turned first, but Lennie is important. She’s your daughter, Creed, but she’s our niece and just as important to the rest of us. I don’t want her affected by this, and I damn sure don’t want her scared of us.”

The deep intake of a breath and Lennie’s name being called makes us all spin in our chairs to face the side door. Lennie is standing there with her hand over her mouth. We can hear Keegan and Kerrigan calling her as they get closer to the building. As soon as they enter the building behind her, we’re all on our feet.

“Lennon Marie Creed, what the hell do you think you’re doing? You’re supposed to be in the house with your uncles, not forcing them to chase you down. Now explain yourself.” Creed can be mad or pretend to be mad, but it won’t work, we all know she has heard enough.

“That’s not going to fly, brother. She heard us and you damn well know it. She’s too smart to fall for you being mad routine.”

“Dad, you cursed, and why are you talking about vampires? Where’s Brooklyn? What’s going on that you all want me in the house? I’ve been here before. What’s the big deal?” She looks between all of us curiously, knowing we’re hiding something.

“What did I say about asking a bunch of questions and not giving people a proper chance to answer them?” We all look in

shock as Lyn and Crow walk through the door into the main area, stopping beside Lennie.

It's obvious she's on guard, with Crow being that close to Lennie, Keegan, and Kerrigan. She positions her body as a shield between them. Crow won't do anything. His body language is giving off the *'I'm a mean hard ass'* vibe, but his facial expression looks as though he's broken. He's already pissed Lyn off enough. I don't think he will risk doing anything more.

"You said it's impolite and that people would understand me better if I slow down. You also said that slowing down doesn't mean I lose the question, it means I have more time to think on it to ask it properly." Wow, that's a great lesson. I had noticed Lennie was slowing down a bit when she'd talk.

"Correct. Now why don't you go get a Sprite out of the lounge fridge and go have a seat at the table? It seems we not only need a company meeting, but a family meeting. Everyone get what you need and then we can begin."

I'm glad she's up here. That tells me more than she most likely wants me to know, but that's alright. Glancing at Lennie she looks perfectly fine and scared to death all at the same time. That has to be a female talent. I think if a man could have different facial expressions at the same time, we'd confuse ourselves. The thought gives me a much needed lift to my mood as we all settle in and wait to see exactly what it is that Brooklyn has to say.



CHAPTER SIX

Brooklyn

Why do I feel as though my life has been thrown into warp factor ten and there's not a damn thing I can do about it? Oh wait, because it has. Fuck my life. I was not ready for this conversation and now my hands have once again been forced. I can't really blame anyone for this.

I had laid downstairs listening to their conversation, hating that I couldn't tune it out, but glad I could get their honest opinions too. Not that they were just telling me what they thought I wanted to hear. Still, I was able to stay where I was, until Lennie showed up and overheard them.

Now we are all sitting around the table, and they are waiting for me to begin, only I have no clue exactly what to say. I lean back in my chair and take a sip of the crimson liquid inside my mug, wishing again that it could be coffee like everyone else was having. At least I can enjoy the scent that fills the room as the brew finishes. I lick my lips, making sure they are clean before setting it back down on the table, making sure to not draw attention to what I have to do now to survive.

“Brooklyn, do you have contacts in and if you do, can I wear some?” Contacts? Oh shit, my eyes. I’ve got to learn how to control that. Closing my eyes, I force myself to relax before slowly opening them again, hoping like hell it works. I don’t want to scare her. “Whoa! How did you...”

Holding up my hand, I stop her before she gets started on one of her question rampages. “Lennie, I need you to listen to everything you’re about to be told. I need you to understand no one is lying to you or keeping anything from you. Do you understand?”

“Yes, ma’am, I understand and I’ll listen.” I can’t say how this is going to go over with her, and I wish I did. I wish I knew this wouldn’t change how she thinks of me. Or hell, that it would. All I could do was try.

“First, you know that some of your uncles went to rescue your uncle Crow.” Her head nod is good enough. “Well, he came back different. So different, they had to lock him up. He escaped and attacked me. No, hush and wait.” I stop before she can interrupt and wait for her to quiet again. “I can see your explosion of questions before you even get started. Just wait.”

My head is pounding, and I realize it’s the overhead lights. They’ve got to go. Now I really understand what Crow was talking about. “Guys, can we ace the main lights and just leave the side office lights on? I can attest to that part being true.” While we’re all looking at Crow, Jaxon is out of his chair before anyone has a chance to move. He walks over to the far

wall and smacks the lights off. The throbbing in my temple instantly stops, and it's easier to think again.

Looking back at Lennie, I smile. "Lennie, when Crow attacked me, he bit me. I know you read a lot of books and for once I'm happy you've been reading what you have been. Crow turned me into a vampire. That's why my eyes were red, and why I could change them back to normal. Now, your dad, uncles and grandpa want me to turn them into vampires. That's what they were talking about when you walked in."

Her face is, well, expressionless. She gets that from her dad. I've noticed Creed does that when he's processing information. You can't read a single thought until he is ready for you too. "So, are you going to change them?" Well, that wasn't what I was expecting from her at all.

"Lennie, do you understand what I've said? That we're not joking? None of us knew this part of our world even existed until Crow was rescued and did what he did to me."

The expression on Creed's face says he's as shocked as I am at her response. Lennie is completely calm and taking this all in stride, like it's another day. She looks at each one of us and seems to study our expressions.

"I already knew about vampires, wolf shifters, cougar shifters, pallas cat shifters and even some hybrids. I might be eleven, but I do go to school and so do other kids. I've met a lot of gifted kids and their parents. So, are you going to bite them?"

All of us sit back in our chairs like our worlds had just been flipped upside down, yet again. "I've told them no and that

they need to destroy me because I'm a monster."

I can't say I've ever seen Lennie pissed before, but I damn sure have now. "That's the stupidest answer ever, Brooklyn. Just because you're different doesn't make you a monster. Dad says that how a person treats others determines if they're a monster or not. You're no monster. You're just scared. You should talk to Sergeant Waldrop."

I have no clue who she's talking about, but the looks on Creed and the others' faces tell me they do and they're floored. Right now, everyone's eyes are fixated on Lennie. "Squirt, why would we want to call the Sergeant? What would he know about this?"

Rolling her eyes and looking at her uncle Phoenix, she raises an eyebrow. I swear she almost looks annoyed. "Uncle Phoenix, the Waldrop's are all wolf shifters. The Sergeant is the Alpha to the El Paso Pack. Did you really think they owned so many '*dogs*'?"

As she air quotes dogs, she giggles as silence engulfs the room. "Lennie, how come you've never said anything before?"

"Dad, I swore to keep them a secret. I've seen what humans do to shifters and there's no way I want any of them hurt or killed, so I've kept their secret."



Creed

“I think Lennie’s right. We need to reach out to Waldrop and ask him if he’s willing to talk to us. We all need more information. Lyn, correct me if I’m wrong, but you’re still not willing to turn us? At least without more information, correct?”

“You’re right, Creed, because I don’t think any of you understand what you’re asking me to do. Crow and I don’t even know what we’re capable of. Do we really have control or is that an illusion? Something that is just here because we are new at this whole thing? Maybe the more our bodies get used to this vampire thing, the more we will lose control. What can and can’t we do? I think we all need more information and until we know a lot more than we do now, my answer is no.” I think we do, but I respect what she’s saying. While we all want this, we would never force her to do it until she is ready.

“I’m calling Waldrop, because we need information. Obviously, Lennie knows a bit more about this, but not everything. Not only that, but they have to be safe because she’s never been harmed and only had good times with them.”

Looking over everyone, I place my phone to my ear. After it rings through a couple of times, I ask for Waldrop and agree to hang on a moment. I can't even begin to describe how I'm feeling right now. I have no idea how the hell I'm supposed to start this conversation, but it has to be done. We know what we want and I'll admit I'm a bit shocked none of us have reservations about this.

"Lt.! How the hell are ya man? What can I do for ya?" Well, he's in a good mood. That's good, I guess.

"Hey, Waldrop, we're all doing good. I have you on speakerphone. Everyone, including Lennie, her nanny and her nanny's father, are sitting here. We have a situation that Lennie has said you may be able to help us with."

I feel like I'm talking in circles. "Well, since Lennie told you all I can help, then I'm assuming this has to do with a myth that may be real. Am I close?"

"You are definitely close. Can you talk and can you help?" I hope he can, I really do.

"Lennie, what do you have to say about this?" Why is he asking my eleven-year-old daughter what she has to say about anything?

"Sergeant Waldrop, they know and found out in a bad way. Remember how you've always said there should be a choice? Well, my dad and uncles' girlfriend wasn't given that, and it was forced on her."

“Forced? That’s wrong on every level and is akin to being violated. Creed, what was done to her? Is she alright? If you tell me what was done, I may be able to send people to help teach her anything she might need to know. Son of a bitch, is the ass hole that did this, still breathing?” I swear he’s fucking growling, and it’s making my skin crawl.

“Bryan, breathe man. I fucking swear you’re growling. Crow came back a vampire. He attacked her, bit her and turned her. She’s here, pissed as hell, but she’s alright. As for Crow, Brooklyn has threatened his very existence should he make a move she doesn’t like. Hell, I don’t even know how to say what I mean.” Now I’m about to growl out of frustration.

Everyone starts chattering and I understand why, but it’s not going to get us the answer we’re in need of. “Alright, everyone, let’s calm it down. We all want and need answers. With Bryan’s help, we’ll get them. Bryan, please tell us anything you can.”

I can hear him moving around and knowing him as I do, he’s going into his home library. “This may sound like a lesson, but everything is relevant, and I can guarantee you all will need to know this information. First, Brooklyn, I’m so sorry this happened to you. Especially without your consent. Crow, you’ll be lucky if the newly forming Counsel doesn’t kill you for this.”

I think that in and of itself lifts a weight off of all of our shoulders that we didn’t realize was there. “Obviously there are vampires, as well as wolf shifters, cougar shifters and so

many more that we'd be here all night to list them all. There's too many different paranormals to list. There is a Counsel that is forming and they're attempting to make rules and guidelines to keep everyone safe. The vampires don't tend to associate with the other paranormals as they believe they should rule the world. No offense, Brooklyn."

"I'm not offended at all. I may be a vampire, but that doesn't mean I don't have manners, morals, and common decency. I'm trying not to think of myself as a monster, although I'm probably just delusional. My first thought was more than likely correct."

I don't think she realizes what she just said, but I can see that Lennie does, and again she looks pissed off. "Brooklyn, I already told you what I was taught about monsters and you're not one. Besides, if you're a monster, then so are all my friends and I don't like that. My friends are good people. Even their animal sides are awesome." Smiling at Lennie, I send her a wink of approval.

"Brooklyn, we aren't monsters. We have animals inside us that can show themselves, but we're not monsters. Let me share with you how Lennie learned about us, if she hasn't already, and you'll see, we aren't the monsters you seem to think we all are." Looking at Lyn, I raise an eyebrow to see if she'll take him up on his offer. Either way, I want to know.

"Go ahead, Bryan. How did Lennie learn about this world and manage not to say a word?"

“Lennie found out about us a few years ago, and I can assure you it was purely by accident. Lennie, Charlie and some other kids were outside playing while I was grilling us all dinner. We were having a good time, and everything was fine, till it wasn’t. One of the younger pups, kids, if you will, started getting chased by an older human kid on his way home. He had been a few doors down at another pack member’s house. Anyway, it was a bullying situation that we thought had been handled.”

His sigh speaks volumes, and I can tell he’s not happy with what happened next and it ended up exposing his kind. Looking over at Lennie, she looks angry with the memory of the incident.

“One of our older juvenile kids went to protect the pup and shifted right in front of Lennie. She didn’t panic, she didn’t even scream. She stoically stood there like it was an everyday thing. She, of course, had questions and I answered them honestly. I never asked her not to tell you. She volunteered to keep us a secret for our own safety. Lennie’s silence for all this time means a lot to us. So, whatever you need or need to know, just ask.”



CHAPTER SEVEN

Brooklyn

I'm trying to register everything Bryan just said. I always assumed the paranormal world consisted of ghosts and legends, or maybe fairy tales, not real beings. Now everything I thought I knew is being tossed out a window. I'm not sure what's throwing me the most. The fact that the paranormal world exists, or the fact that everyone, other than me, seems perfectly fine with it.

“Bryan, do you know about vampires or personally know any vampires that would speak with me? I feel like I've landed in a different world and have been left to my own devices.” He's growling again. Why is he growling and why in the hell is my body clenching and reacting to it?

“Brooklyn, once you're what's called sired, meaning turned, your sire is supposed to teach you and guide you. Because that's not an option, I would suggest speaking with Sergeant First Class Mitchell McDonal. Creed, you know him. He was Lennie's Science teacher.”

Looking at Creed's face, it's obvious to see this news is shocking as well. "Are you shitting me right now? McDonal's a vampire? See, Lyn, he works around kids all day, every day and doesn't hurt anyone. He's obviously not a monster, and neither are you."

I want to feel some sort of relief from what Bryan is saying, but it's too soon, I think. "Brooklyn, may I ask you something and you answer me honestly?"

What do I have to lose at this point? "I won't lie, no matter what question you ask. So go ahead."

"Do you feel the urge to feed on anyone around you right now?" What kind of fucked up question is that?

"Well, of course not. Why would you even ask me something like that? I don't even want to turn them and you're asking me if I want to feed on them? What am I missing?"

"Brooklyn, that right there proves you're no monster. There have been, and still are, times where new vampires have slaughtered hundreds during their first few months. Here you are, what, hours old and you've not only not killed everyone at the table, but have backed away from them when they've asked you to bite them. You have more control than some vampires substantially older than you."

Listening to Bryan talking about other vampires is actually helping me understand that we may have options. I still insist on thinking things through and speaking with another vampire, but he's at least eased my mind some.

“Bryan, I’d like to thank you. You’ve helped to ease my mind a bit. I’m still not convinced these men understand what they’re asking me to do. I’d like to speak with Mr. McDonal as well as him speaking to these hard-headed men about what they’re asking for.”

Looking around the table at each of them, I can see the resolute decision in their eyes, but that’s not enough for me. “You all sit around this table looking stoic and so trusting. Well, in my opinion, you’re fools. Just because I don’t want to drink you as I sit near you doesn’t mean I’ll have an ounce of control once I’ve sunk my fangs into an artery. Nothing happens till we’ve all spoken with McDonal. That’s the deal. Take it or leave it.”

“Alright, Lyn, I think that’s reasonable. We should know more about what we’re asking. Not to mention Crow could have changed you with luck and not in a way that’s normally done. Bryan, could you have McDonal call us while we’re all gathered here? I know it’s a last-minute request.”

I’m thankful Creed is taking this seriously. This isn’t a game. This is the difference between life and, and what the hell do I even call it? I can understand the lure of the paranormal side of life, which I always thought was fantasy, but the reality of it is permanent. There’s no going back if they aren’t happy.

While the guys wait for a call from Mr. McDonal, I give Lennie a reassuring wink. “Lennie, talk to me. Why are you looking at me like I’m about to float away? I’m right here, so talk to me.”

“Brooklyn, you can’t leave me. I just got you and you’re still teaching me how to do my hair. I mean, there’s so much more I’m going to need you for. Plus, well, I love you.”

I can feel her emotions in every word Lennie’s said. I move to her and wrap my arm around her, hugging her close to my side and kiss the top of her head. Resting my cheek on the top of her head, I look directly into Creed’s eyes. I want him to see my eyes and that I mean his daughter no harm.

“Lennie, I’m not going anywhere. We all just need to breathe, get more information, and then we can talk things out.”

Creed’s phone ringing brings the chatting in the room to a stop. “Hello?” I see his eyebrow raise, and a small, crooked smile forms on his face. When an expression of shock takes over his face, I lose it.

“Creed, what the hell has your face going through so many emotional changes? Is that Mr. McDonal?”

When he holds up a finger for me to wait, I want to scream. This directly impacts me, and he expects me to be patient and sit here quietly. He doesn’t know me that well, because that’s not happening. No sooner am I about to explode, Creed places his cell phone down on the table.

“Alright, McDonal is on hold. Lyn, he said I should prepare you and warn Crow. Lyn, the newly formed Paranormal Grand Counsel, is listening to this conversation. They would like to answer any questions you may have.”

Well, this is something I wasn't expecting. From the expression on everyone else's face, I can tell they weren't either. "Crow, the Counsel is aware of what you did. McDonal is currently on hold for me to explain to you that what you've done would normally equate to a death sentence. The Counsel may question you and I suggest you answer them, if they do."

The instant Creed reached forward to unmute his phone, all hell broke loose. The sound of arguing with very loud voices shatters the silence on our end. I didn't think, I just reacted.

Raising my voice, I begin to speak. "Excuse me!" Everyone goes silent at the same time. "Ladies and Gentlemen, I don't think arguing amongst yourselves is going to solve anything. Crow and I were informed that the newly formed Paranormal Counsel may have some questions for us. There are many things we all need to learn as well. I suggest you gather yourselves and act as you've been selected or elected to. Whichever the case may be."

I didn't realize I stood up while I was calling everyone to task. Sitting back down, I pat Lennie's leg to tell her I'm sorry for ripping myself away from her. Creed, Phoenix, Dakota, Keegan, Kerrigan, Hunter and even Crow have big smiles on their faces. While my dad and Jaxon are laughing.

I give them each a look and both of them shrug their shoulders with a, "what" falling from their mouths. I swear all these men are going to be the... Yep, now I made myself chuckle, and it's really not funny.



Brooks

There was a wave of power that came from Brooklyn when she spoke and I'll be damned, but I could tell everyone felt it and went silent. Even those on the other side of the telephone call went silent. No one was hitting the floor, so I was confident everyone was still breathing. I don't know what exactly that was, but I'm damn sure going to find out.

Lyn sat down and comforted Lennie, before she continued to speak. "Now, there are too many people involved in this for everyone to be speaking and or shouting at the same time. I suggest someone take the lead on that side of this call to ask the questions and whoever the question is geared towards will answer on this side. I'm not in the mood for more chaos. Also, keep in mind there is an eleven-year-old child here."

My emotions about this are still all over the place. I'm fucking livid that Lyn was again forced into something. I'm excited that no one will ever be able to do anything against her again. I'm concerned because I know damn good and well she's still violently pissed at Bianca for the Max bullshit.

I don't blame her for how she feels. I just don't want her doing something she may regret. Bianca is a pain in the ass and I can't deny I'm pissed at her, but she is my daughter as well, and I don't want to see her hurt. Bianca has some serious issues, but she needs help, not hurt or worse. That's something that'll be handled later. Right now, I need to focus on what's in front of me.

“Brooklyn, my name is Mitchell McDonal. Please feel free to call me Mitch. Because the gentlemen around you know me. I'll be the one asking most of the questions. I have to ask that everyone remain silent, unless a question is specifically asked of you. Brooklyn, does all of that meet your approval?”

Lyn's expression is screaming annoyance already. She's not one for small talk or banter, but getting to the fucking point. Most of all, she really does hate speaking on the phone. She'd prefer to see the person's face that she's speaking to.

“Mitch, I'm fine with everything. Let's get on with this as I have questions of my own and I'm not one for speaking on the phone.” Do I know my daughter or what?

“I can understand that. Brooklyn, my first question is, would you like Crow put to death for his offensive actions towards you?”

Well, damn. If it was possible to get whiplash from turning your head quickly, we'd all fucking have it. We're looking at Lyn, who's looking at Crow, who's looking at Lyn and no one is making a sound.

“No, I don’t want him put to death. Crow didn’t do this to me for malicious reasons. In his mind, he was giving me everything I could possibly need to protect myself. As I’m sure you’re aware of past and recent events. Although he went about it the wrong way, Crow only wanted to help me. I’m angry with him, but he has his warning from me. The rest, we’ll work out as a family.”

I’m not shocked with what she said, but she has given me even more to think about and consider. Lyn picks up her cup and takes a sip, making sure, yet again, that her lips are clean. I’m sure everyone at this table knows what’s in her and Crow’s mugs.

“Now I have a question. Mitch, the guys will be opening their security company soon and wish to help humans as well as the paranormals we’re just learning about. We all feel there should be guidelines, rules, laws governing the paranormal community. We’ve been told the Paranormal Counsel is newly formed. Would they be interested in forming a working alliance with us?”

We all look at Lyn, and all of our mouths have dropped open in a bit of shock. Out of all the questions she could have asked first, her first concern in the business? Giving Creed a side glance, the shit-eating grin on his face isn’t shocking.

“Well, that’s not where we thought we’d start, but that is something we’d like to discuss with your company. I understand you’re the Head of Human Resources, so perhaps

after this we can set up an appointment for the Council and your security company to meet in person to discuss things.”

“I can accept that and agree to make an appointment for a proper meeting. Now, Crow and I could use some information about vampires. We’re told you’re a vampire, but not on the Council. Will you give us a rundown of do’s and don’ts as well as tell us why you’re not on the council to represent vampires?”



CHAPTER EIGHT

Hunter

I'm not the one to normally sit quietly and just listen to everything, but every once in a while, it's the best solution, like now. Most people know I'm the joker of the group, but I'm also this family's analyzer. I analyze everything.

Watching Lyn speak with Mitch and her interactions with the other guys, including Crow, tells me a lot. She will change us all, when and if we want. There is no other reason her first question would have been about the security company and the Council.

“Do's and don'ts for a vampire are relatively simple. I'll also address facts and fiction. So, we can go into the sunlight for limited amounts of time and no, we do not shimmer like they did in the movie, *Twilight*.”

I burst out laughing so fast and hard I made Dad jump. It didn't take long for everyone else to join in on the laughter. You could even hear the laughter from the other side of the phone call.

“I’m just going to say, you all suck. No pun intended.” And with that comment, Lyn sent a wave of deeper laughter around the room.

Getting myself to stop laughing was not easy, but I managed. “I’m sorry for that, but after what was said downstairs earlier with the references to Twilight, I couldn’t resist. Please, continue.”

“Hunter, you’ve always been known for your humor. I want to know what was said downstairs, but later. Brooklyn and Crow, you will have to learn to keep your eyes their natural color and not show red in public. You’ll need to create a business relationship with a blood bank near you or create one. Yes, it would be legitimate, but would also serve as a personal food bank. Sounds crude, but it is what it is.”

While they’re talking, I get up, refill everyone’s coffee cup and grab fresh bottles of water. After that, I realize no one’s keeping notes of all this and I’m sure we’re going to have questions after this that simple notes could answer.

Grabbing a notebook and pencil off my desk real fast, I take it back to my seat, open it, and start writing down everything I can. I’m so focused on what I’m doing, I damn near jump out of my skin when I feel someone touch me. Looking up, I see Lyn standing there silently giggling.

“Hunter, what is it with me being able to sneak up on you? Never mind that, I was trying to tell you that taking notes isn’t necessary. Phoenix has his laptop’s recording device going,

and it's transcribing the conversation as it's being recorded. I'll give you credit for thinking of it, though."

Well, hell, giving Lyn a wink and a smile, I toss the notebook and pencil on the table and lean back in my chair, refocusing on the conversation. "This is to all of you. The most important thing is secrecy. Humans cannot know that we truly exist. There are some that know we exist and are cool with it, while others will do anything they can to hunt us down and kill us. We never reveal ourselves on purpose."

For fuck's sake, dealing with this might actually be harder than I thought it would be, but I also know, it just doesn't fucking matter. I want a life with Lyn and if that means becoming a vampire, so be it.

"A couple of other things before the council members start asking their questions. Brooklyn and Crow are the truest definition of stealthy. They won't be heard coming or going unless they choose to be heard. Just about everything you've ever heard about vampires is, in fact, wrong."

When Mitch finishes speaking, Brooklyn and Crow look from each other to everyone around the table. They both shrug their shoulders in a who knew kind of motion. The bickering on the other side of the phone tells me there's something else that needs to be said.

"The one part that is factual is how to kill a vampire. Decapitation, extremities removal, a stake through the heart and then burning the body is the only way to permanently kill

us. Now I'll turn this over to the Council President, Taylor Sturgis."

The first twenty minutes of the conversation are interesting. Then President Sturgis, threatening to kill Crow for what he did to Lyn and Lyn warning him of his impending death should anyone try. It was quite entertaining. However, I'm bored and annoyed now.

"Can someone please tell me who this pompous ass thinks he is? He may be the President of this Council they've formed, but he's not going to live long enough to enjoy the position if he doesn't learn how to shut the fuck up and listen."

Well, that got all eyes on me, and honestly, I don't care. We have things to discuss and work out and listening to his pompous, condescending attitude sure as hell isn't one of them.

"Don't look at me like that. I said what I said, and you all were thinking. I can already tell Mr. President hasn't served a day in the military. That cancels his advice on anything having to do with the functions and daily operations of *'our'* security company. As for Crow, Lyn is his Queen and will suffer her consequences, not anyone else's."

There are all the smiles I was waiting to see. I'm over this bullshit already. The only thing that would make me happier right now is if Creed was to... The laughter burst from me so hard and fast, I made everyone jump this time, before they started laughing with me. Creed did exactly what I was thinking. He hung up the phone.

“Holy shit, if that council wishes to work with our security company, that man won’t be allowed to be involved. I am not dealing with that shit every time there needs to be some sort of communication.”



Creed

“Lyn, can we get to the discussion of you changing us?”

Lyn opens her mouth to speak and my damn phone rings again. Looking at the caller id, I see it’s Mitch. Swiping the green phone icon, I answer the phone and automatically put the call on speaker phone.

“What?”

“Creed, don’t be mad at me, man. I would have warned you how much of an asshole Sturgis is if he wouldn’t have been up my ass during our call. There is one thing Brooklyn has to know.”

We all shift our attention to Lyn as she’s just sitting there chatting with Lennie. When she stops and looks over at the phone, she raises an eyebrow. “I’m listening. Whatever you need to say, you can say here and now.”

“This is about a personal matter. Are you sure you wish this to be discussed in front of everyone?”

“One of these men is my father. Three others I consider brothers and I’m dating those that are left. So, please don’t try my patience anymore and just tell me what you have to say.”

“Please don’t get angry and remember that I gave you fair warning. Before you choose to turn the men you call your boyfriends, there’s a detail you must know. Biting and turning anyone will link them to you. It’s like a familiar bond. However, should you be in the throes of making love and you bite them, you mate them. Meaning, you’re claiming them as yours, forever.”

No one is moving a muscle. Lyn’s eyes are blown fully wide. Brooks has a cheesy smirk on his face and Hunter, for the love of all, Hunter looks as though he might explode with excitement.

“Crow bit and turned me. Does that mean we’re mated?”

“Not unless you were making love at the time and from what I understand, Crow’s lucky to still be alive. However, you are linked. For a full mating, you would need to be making love and you would have to bite him back. It’s the exchanging of blood from both sides that mates you. Turning them just to turn them will link them to you with the Sire bond, which can sometimes be as strong as a mate bond.”

I can’t read a single facial expression passing over Lyn’s face. They’re changing too quickly. Brooks, however, I can read as

though it is written on his face in bold print. He likes the idea of all of us being linked to Lyn.

“Let me get out my thoughts and then you can tell me if I’m grasping what you’re saying. So, say I bite and turn everyone in this room, except Lennie, then we’re linked. If we make love and, in turn, bite each other and exchange blood that way, we’re mated. Do I have that right?”

All of us are sitting on pins and needles at this point in anticipation of what Mitch is going to respond. It’s obvious that all the men in the room are on the same page concerning being turned.

“Yes, Brooklyn, you have a complete grasp of what I’m saying. What you choose is what you choose, but changing anyone outside of the room you are all in at this point, wouldn’t be a good idea. Newborns can be rather difficult.”

Everyone immediately looks at Hunter, who’s already laughing his ass off. “Good Twilight reference, Mitch.”

“Hunter, my man, you are a special case. Anyway, I’ll let you all go for now. Let me know when your security company is up and going. We could use you all and your security company. Somehow, the number of paranormal hunters has grown. It’s as if it’s been turned into a sport. These fuckers don’t care how old a target is either. “

“Hold on, Mitch, you never told us why you’re not serving on the council as the Vampire representative.”

Jaxon is normally a quick guy, but when gathering information, he's an ace. I didn't even realize he hadn't answered the question.

“Oh, right. I told the Council I'd happily represent all vampires when I retire from teaching and Sturgis is no longer President. I can't stand that arrogant bastard, and I love teaching.”

With that, Mitch hung up and we all let our postures go and lean back in our chairs. That was a lot of information and I'm not sure how I feel about it.



CHAPTER NINE

Lennie

I've never been in a meeting like this before and I can't say I like it too much. Everyone is so emotional. I can't tell if Brooklyn is mad, sad, happy or what. She does look a little scared, I think. Listening to all this talk is giving me a headache.

Uncle Crow was bitten and turned into a vampire. He came home and changed Brooklyn into one, too. I never thought my own family would get involved with the paranormal world. I mean, my friends were born that way, so it was normal for them, and normal to think of them like that. But my own family?

I mean, yeah, Dad, Uncle Dakota, Uncle Phoenix and Uncle Hunter want to be turned because they love Brooklyn. I think Uncle Crow is in there somewhere, too. At least I think so. Uncle Jaxon, Uncle Keegan and Uncle Kerrigan want to change to be with the others. I don't know what Grandpa thinks, but it makes sense for him to change, too.

I don't know how I feel about all this. I know I don't want to be changed right now. It would be cool if my dad and uncles would be pretty much immortal. The bad part is I know there are bad people out there that would want to hurt them just because they're different.

That's stupid because no one is the same. Being different makes everyone unique and special in their own way. That's the way I see it, anyway. Who wants to be the same as everyone else? How boring.

Now they're talking about becoming vampires again. Brooklyn looks like she's going to explode. Well, I don't understand what the big deal is and if you ask me, I think it's a good idea.

I like the idea of everyone always being together and everyone always being safe. I know there are dangers out there, but we're a family and families protect each other.



CHAPTER TEN

Brooklyn

The way Lennie has her eyes currently fixed on me, like she knows I'm close to blowing my top. She may be eleven chronologically, but maturity wise, she's much older. I guess that makes sense being raised by a bunch of military men.

The whistle that pierces the air made Crow and I wince in some serious pain. Looking over at my dad, I swear I snarled at him. "For fuck's sake, Dad. Don't do that. That was so painful I'm surprised my ears aren't bleeding."

He doesn't have an ounce of sympathy in his expression. "Everyone listen up. All this arguing is getting nothing accomplished other than giving me one hell of a headache. I think we need to listen to what Lyn has to say about this. We all understand what will happen and still want to change. So, let's hear Lyn's concerns."

Bus, tires, ouch, Dad. I mean, really. "Look, you all heard what was said, and you heard what I said, repeating everything to make damn sure we all fully understood this. Answer me

this, and I'll consider turning you all. Why? That's right, why? Why do you all want to be turned into a vampire by me?"

They're all looking at each other like lost kittens trying to find the right door that'll lead them home. If they think that's good enough for me to pretty much kill them all and bring them back, they're sorely mistaken.

"Lyn, I think it's you that doesn't understand. Creed, Dakota, Phoenix and Hunter don't want to be simply changed by you. They want to mate with you and freely give themselves to you. Just as I do. Brooks, Jaxon, Keegan and Kerrigan wish to change, but to be linked to you, not mated."

Everyone, including Lennie and myself, are staring Crow down. If our eyes were drills, he'd be full of holes by now. It's not till he turns and locks eyes with me that I truly feel the depths of his emotions. He isn't kidding.

"Crow, how can you feel that way? None of you know me that well. I always keep my feelings inside because, well, they've never really mattered and now you're all saying my feelings are everything? I don't understand."

"Lyn, you've shown more strength, honor, determination, leadership, humor and anything else we could possibly think of since we've met than anyone else I know. You say we don't know you? No baby, I think it's you that doesn't know yourself."

Glancing over at Dakota and seeing his devilish grin, I smirk back at him. His grin is annoying me because he's probably right. Not that I'll say that out loud. I'm so lost as to what to

do. I need time and that's something they're going to have to- my thoughts are interrupted by the sound of raised voices from outside followed by a loud bang.

"What the fuck was that? Lennie, downstairs, now! Brooklyn, you're with Lennie. Crow, with us. Brooks,"

Creed doesn't get another word out of his mouth when a force I've never felt before blows me off my feet. My ears are ringing and I can't see shit through all the clouds of dust that's billowing around me, stinging my eyes. I smell blood, familiar blood and it pisses me off

"Dad! Where are you?! I can't see Lennie!" I scream, not sure they can even hear me over the ringing in my own ears, but I have to try.

Someone will fucking die. Just as I manage to stand up, I hear Lennie's cries, despite the chaos around us. "Lennie, call out to me, baby. I can't see you, but I can hear you." This vampire hearing thing was definitely a plus right now. "Crow! God damn it, find the others. Fuck, find my dad!" I know Crow can hear me. His hearing is like mine and I use it to my advantage. If the blast didn't hurt me, I know he is okay as well. Not to mention, I can still feel him.

Lennie, I need to find her. "Lennie!" I call out again, hoping she can hear me.

"Mommy! I'm here. Help me, I hurt!" Her voice is faint, but I can tell where she is and I start making my way toward her voice. The rubble shifts beneath my feet, and I realize I have stepped on someone, the soft feel of their flesh different

beneath my feet than the hard, ruined concrete. Bending down and feeling with my hands, I feel bare skin, and realize it's a chest. Creed, oh my god. He's pinned beneath a heavy slab of concrete, unable to move. Grabbing whatever is covering the top part of his body, I flip it over and he drags in a ragged breath as the pressure is released.

"Len...Lennie."

"Shh, Creed, I'll get her. Can you move?"

"Yeah, I was just pinned," he groans, shifting again.

"See if you can stand and help the others. We don't know how much damage that blast did. I'm going for Lennie. Crow! Have you found my dad or anyone else?"

I only get another four steps when I hear a quick popping sound and I feel a sudden flash of heat burn through my shoulder. "Mother fucker, someone shot me. Oh, hell the fuck no." I spin to find the source just as I feel a small hand grab my ankle, stopping me in my tracks. "Oh god, Lennie." I ignore the searing pain in my shoulder as I drop to the ground next to her.

"Mommy, I'm here." Her voice is muffled, but relief floods me at the sound.

"Be still, baby, I've got you. Daddy is right over there. Are you alright? What hurts?"

A chair has landed on top of her and seems to have protected her from anything falling in the blast. I can see better now that the dust is clearing a little more, but she will still need to be

evaluated better. She has some small cuts, but nothing serious that I can see. “Do you feel like anything hurts?” I ask, not wanting to risk moving her if there is something I can’t see.

“No, Mommy. I’m just scared.”

“It’s okay to be scared. You are being so brave. Let’s get you over to Daddy, okay?” I don’t wait for her to answer as I lift her up and take her to Creed. “You two stay here and be quiet.”

“The others,” Creed starts, but I hush him.

“We will get to them, Creed, but someone shot me. Your priority needs to be Lennie.” He nods his understanding, and I can tell he wants to stop me from going, but knows he can’t. I make sure they are low again before I move away to find out who is after us.

Ducking as low as I can, I close my eyes and listen to try to locate where everyone is. Those I know, and whoever else is here, that shouldn’t be.

I lower my voice to a volume a normal person wouldn’t be able to hear, “Crow, someone is here. They shot me in the arm. Shh, don’t growl, damn it. I’m fine. Our priority is finding them, and then getting to the others.”

I’m interrupted by a pair of boots that step right next to me. I freeze. Looking up, all I see is someone dressed entirely in black and I realize that I must have enhanced abilities with my sight as well, because they don’t appear to be able to see me crouched just beneath them through the haze of the blast. Two

more people dressed similar to the first step up right behind him, neither of them seeing my position either.

I remain motionless, reminding myself that I technically don't have to breathe anymore, so I hold my breath to keep from displacing any of the debris cloud and drawing attention to myself.

“You fucking idiot. We weren't supposed to kill them all. We were supposed to grab the vampires. Crow and the bitch he turned. There will be hell to pay over this, and I'll be damned if I take the fall for it with that asshole of a Council member. Him and his sorry excuse for a queen can kiss my ass. Anyway, everyone that believes her bullshit deserves what they get.”

Crow's growl and hiss is loud enough anyone can hear and the men turn in his direction. At least what I can see of them. I'd like to say I saw the entire thing, but I don't really see a damn thing. Crow suddenly appears behind the three men, and then one by one their bodies crumple and hit the floor with a thud.

Crow looks at me with a shrug, as if he didn't just effortlessly drop the three men. Vampire strength or not, it was impressive. He ignores the fact that there are three dead men at his feet and focuses on everyone else. “I saw Kerrigan and Jaxon run outside. I'm assuming to check for stragglers, so we are not caught off guard when these three don't bring us back. Where's Creed, Lennie and the others?” Crow speaks so matter of factly, like it doesn't matter that he just killed three men.

Phoenix walks up to us and seems a bit too calm, and he's bleeding pretty badly from his temple. As the others start to join us I realize everyone is hurt a pretty good deal, but it could have been a hell of a lot worse. "I found Creed and Lennie. I left Lennie with her dad, they are over there," I point in the direction I left them. "Has anyone found my dad yet? Dad!" I yell as I realize no one has a location on him.

The others rejoin us, looking okay, save for a few cuts and marks that look like they will bruise as they help search for my dad. "There were four more waiting outside. They have been taken care of," Jaxon informs us as he starts searching the far end of the office.

As more of the smoke clears, we're able to start seeing better. It takes us another five minutes to find my dad beneath all of the broken concrete and when we do, I hit my knees. "Dad? Please, Daddy? You have to talk to me. Open your eyes, damn it." He's limp and unmoving.

I guess vampires can cry. I feel the wet tears running down my face. "Dad?" I can't lose my dad. "Hunter, please, do something." I plead with him, motioning to my dad.

Hunter is already at his side searching for injuries and his pulse. "Lyn, he has a pulse, but he has an arterial bleed that I can't stop. I'm sorry, baby, I can't do anything to save him." Looking into Hunter's eyes, I can see his pain and sorrow. I know he would do anything to help my dad, and this is it. There really is no saving him. Tears stream down my cheeks at

the sight of the blood that surrounds my dad, a dark contrast to his paling body as his life is leaving him.

“Lyn, you have to turn him. It’s the only way we’ll have a chance of saving him. He wanted it anyway and you know it. I’m sorry, baby, but you have to turn him or lose him.” Crow’s words are gentle, but they strike me to my very core. I would do anything to save my dad, even if this is what it takes.

I hear Crow’s words, but I don’t remember moving. I don’t remember my fangs descending or remember sinking them into my dad’s wrist, but I did. I feel sick and hopeful at the same time as I draw his blood from him. Crow’s voice slips through to help me focus, keeping me centered and from taking it too far.

“That’s enough, Lyn. Just wait a moment till his heart stops. You will sense it. Then open a vein and allow your blood to drip into his mouth. Once he latches on, it’ll be almost over. You’ll know when to make him stop drinking from you. Whoever isn’t too hurt, get everyone else out of here. Leave the three of us.”

I don’t pay attention to anything other than my dad. This has to work. I can’t do this without him. “Crow, promise me this will work,” I plead, watching and listening to the dying sound of my father.

He wraps his arms around me and squeezes me a bit, his lips brushing my hair as he speaks. “Baby, I wish I could promise you, but I can’t. You’re the only one I’ve changed, and you

weren't hurt. He was still alive when you bit him, so, shhh, listen."

I could hear his heartbeat slow down. The beat was as slow as going over a bridge with the dividers in it. Thump, pause, thump, pause, thump. Then silence.

"Now, Lyn, bite your vein and drip your blood into his mouth."

Without a thought, I bite my own wrist, ripping a bit. Just like Crow said he did for me. I place my wrist over his mouth. I'm shaking, so Crow holds my wrist steady as my blood drips onto my dad's lips and slips inside his mouth.

I am getting scared it won't work, nothing happens as the blood disappears inside his mouth. Then, suddenly, my dad rears up and latches onto my wrist, and I sag in relief as he hungrily draws at my wrist. I can feel him sucking blood from me and I've never been happier. That single thought makes me laugh.

That's when I felt what Crow had said I would. My dad had had enough. Separating him from my wrist isn't easy, but Crow and I work as a team and shortly after, my dad starts his own transition to the paranormal side of things. He's alive, sort of, and that's all that matters. We can deal with the rest as it comes.



CHAPTER ELEVEN

Crow

While Brook's is transitioning, Brooklyn and I get him to his cabin. Carrying him isn't a big deal, it's more important we get him away from the others to be able to control him when he first wakes up. The fact that a full-grown man seems to weigh nothing still surprises me. Seeing the relief on her face is a huge deal. I don't know what it is about Brooklyn, but she has me and can do whatever she wishes to or with me. She is my only weakness.

I'm worried about my brothers, but despite being cut up and with a few injuries, all of them were able to walk from the building. Creed was carrying Lennie, but mainly for everyone's comfort. Other than some contusions and abrasions, I didn't see too much. We were lucky.

I look over at Brooklyn as she settles her dad on his bed and remember she said she was shot. "Wait, you were shot." I ignore her protests as I make her stand up so I can look her over, instantly spotting the hole in her shirt.

“It’s fine, Crow. Hell, it doesn’t even hurt anymore.” She pulls her shirt aside and reveals her skin, completely undamaged beneath. “Guess being a vampire has its perks, after all. I really would have hated to have to deal with a bullet wound.”

I give her a small smile, even as guilt tears through me. She isn’t happy I took the choice from her. Something I totally understand now, but I needed to keep her safe. I couldn’t explain it.

“So what did those men mean by the Queen?” She asks, looking back at her dad, watching him for any sign of movement. “Or why would they mention the Council at all? Why would they be after us?”

“I’m almost as new at this as you are. Hell, I thought they were called Vampiress, what I hoped you would be for us. Who knew?” I let out a dry laugh. “But I have been asking myself the same question since the words came out of their mouths. I probably shouldn’t have been so quick to kill them. We might have been able to get information. As far as I know, the Council would have no reason to come for us.”

“I would have done the same thing. You were protecting your family.” Her words are soft, understanding and give me hope for the first time that she might actually forgive me.

We fall silent for a moment, both watching her dad’s motionless body before she speaks again. “Crow, I can’t thank you enough for this. It sounds odd, but you gave me the ability to save my dad and I’ll never forget that.”

Returning her smile is one of the easiest things I've ever done. "Brooklyn, I'll stay with your dad. I know you want to check on Lennie and the others. Go on. I promise to bring Brooks up to the main house when I know he can control himself. Being your dad, I see that being easy for him."

Brooklyn looks from her dad to me and then back to her dad. Sitting on the side of his bed is the closest she could get to him. Standing up, she turns around and throws her arms around my neck. She gives me a tight squeeze and a peck on the lips. The motion moving something inside of me.

"Thank you, Crow. I really am worried about all of them, but mainly Lennie." Kissing me one more time, she leaves her dad's room. Hearing the main door open and shut, let me know she's left the cabin to go to the main house where everyone was headed after the explosion.

Taking a seat in the chair across from Brook's bed, I watch and wait. This part didn't take too long for Brooklyn, but I don't know how long it took for me, or even how long it's supposed to take in general. After the Queen comment, I'm realizing how little I actually know about being a vampire in general.

Setting that to the side, there are more important matters to think about. Like why did the Council attack the security office? The hitman they hired had certainly been clear that they were not going to pay for their fuck up to the Council. I might be new to this whole thing, but what would they want with Brooklyn and myself? I guess the bigger question is, who

do they know in order to arrange this scale of an attack so quickly? Someone will pay for this and it'll be very messy.



Brooklyn

It scares me to leave my dad, but I also know there's not a damn thing I can do for him now. Fuck, I hope I did the right thing by turning him to save him. I feel as though I just forced this onto him, like it was forced onto me, despite him telling me otherwise. He still hadn't had time to learn everything about becoming a vampire and all that it involves. The attack on us for our lives, for example.

Running as fast as I can, I don't stop at the front door and rush in to find the others, needing to see for myself they are okay. Luckily it's open. "Lennie! Creed! Guys! Someone answer me!"

"Whoa, babe, breathe. We're all in the main office. Everyone will live. Well, for the exception of the person or persons that orchestrated this attack. We just need to know what they were after. Come on, let's go see the family."

Dakota knows exactly what I need to hear, but I have something to add to it. Walking into the house office, I catch Lennie as she runs at me. “Aww, Lennie, my beautiful girl. Are you alright? Shh, don’t cry. The most important thing is we’re all here.”

“Where’s Grandpa and Uncle Crow? I want to see Grandpa. Is he alright?” Looking over her shoulder at the rest of my men, I shake my head no.

“No Lennie, he’s not alright. Crow is sitting with him right now, so he’s not alone.” Taking the seat offered to me, I sit down and place Lennie on my lap. There was no way I could have done that before. She’s not a big girl, but she isn’t a feather either.

“Sweetie, Grandpa’s artery in his leg was hurt really badly and Uncle Hunter couldn’t get the bleeding to stop. So, I had to choose to watch him die or change him into a vampire. I bit him and started the transition. That’s why he’s at his cabin and not here. That’s also why Uncle Crow is with him. It might be a little bit until you can see him, but he’s safe.”

Looking over all the guys, I realize just how lucky we were. “Dakota said that the first thing you all needed to know was what they were after. Well, it’s not a what, but, who. Three of them were right in front of me when I was trying to get to Lennie and I overheard them before Crow took care of them.”

My train of thought is interrupted when I pat Lennie’s arm and it’s cold. I mean, really cold. “Lennie, does your right arm hurt? Can you wiggle your fingers for me?”

“I can’t. I’ve been trying, but it’s like a sleep or something and it’s hurting more and more.” Tears well in her eyes as her adrenaline wears off and she starts to feel the pain.

“It’s okay, sweet girl. Try for me.” I motion with my hand and wiggle my fingers. She concentrates on her hand through tear filled eyes, but shakes her head and looks at me again, her eyes full of fear. “Shit, Creed, Lennie’s shoulder is dislocated, and it needs to be set right now. What can we do?”

“Keegan, upstairs, my bathroom closet, full medical kit, get it. Kerrigan and Jaxon, kitchen pantry, flour, water, paper, you know what to do. Dakota, you do it while Lyn and I hold Lennie.” Creed orders everyone to get moving and, without question, everyone runs to help.

“Daddy?” Lennie questions as Creed sits next to her. For fuck’s sake, I know what we are about to do, and I wish I could take the pain that’s coming away. Looking into Creed’s eyes, it’s like we’re pleading with each other to take Lennie’s pain as her tears finally start to fall, her sobs echoing in the room and breaking my heart.

Keegan bursting back into the room, breaks our staring contest. He passes Creed the med kit and he opens it, pulling out a small bottle, a syringe, and an alcohol pad. “Lennie, I want you to take a breath for me, baby girl. I’m going to give you a shot of morphine to help with the pain. It’s going to sting a little, but it will help you with the pain in your shoulder. Uncle Dakota will have to pop your arm back into place, well, your shoulder. The adrenaline that’s been running

through your body is subsiding, so you're starting to feel the pain and we need to stop it before it gets any worse."

Having a high pain tolerance can be a downfall. Lennie nods bravely at Creed before she squeezes my hand hard and looks away from her dad, to the window behind us. I hate seeing the tears running down her face. Creed preps the needle and takes a deep breath before sticking it into Lennie's arm. She sucks in a breath and lets it out on a sob, but thankfully, she remains still.

"Lennie, lean against me. Your dad and I are going to hold you, because Dakota has to yank pretty hard. If you can relax and let the medicine kick in, it'll help a lot."

As the medication kicks in, Lennie's body relaxes and I look at Creed, who looks at Dakota, giving him a slight nod to go ahead. Creed and I each get ready to hold her as Dakota grips her tightly, holding her wrist and elbow to steady them. Lennie winces and cries again, as we hold her shoulder in place to allow Dakota to maneuver her arm the way he needs to. After another second, he yanks her arm and we all hear an audible pop. At the same time we hear the pop, Lennie passes out and goes limp in my arms.

"Well, I hate to say it, but Lennie passing out works in our favor to immobilize her shoulder and keeps her from hurting for the time being. Do you think we need a cast, or would a sling be good enough?" I can't say Dakota is wrong.

"Hunter, do you still have that immobilizing sling? I think that would work great and be good enough. Tell the guys to forgo

the makeshift cast and come back in here.” Creed nods in the direction of the kitchen.

Creed is being stoic, but I can tell the daddy in him wants to cuddle his baby girl. He can cuddle her after we get her arm taken care of. We need to make sure it’s in place and set before she wakes back up so we don’t have to put her through that again. Hunter brings in the sling and we slip it onto Lennie’s arm, positioning it so she can sleep comfortably as Creed gives her a second low dose of morphine to keep the pain at bay while she sleeps.

I look around at everyone else, grateful their wounds all seem, for the most part, superficial as they chat and bandage each other. I rub my hand over where the bullet went through my shoulder, the hole in my shirt the only sign it even happened. I still wasn’t happy how Crow went about things, but I couldn’t say I was mad about not hurting. That being said, if he hadn’t turned me, I might not have gotten shot. But, too late to dwell on that now, we can only move forward.

“I don’t want to pop the bubble of serenity that seems to have formed, but those men were after Crow and I. Well, they said, *‘Crow and the bitch he turned’*. One of them said something about not taking the fall for the asshole Council member and something about a queen. My questions are, why come after us, and with so much force? Seven men is a lot to capture two people. Mostly, who do they know that could have arranged and executed this kind of attack so quickly?”



CHAPTER TWELVE

Brooks

Before I open my eyes, I know I'm in my cabin. I can smell the natural pine that the cabin is made of. Opening my eyes, I see the light wood color of my ceiling and the gunmetal gray ceiling fan.

Collecting myself to sit up, I know something is different. I don't have my glasses on, but I can see perfectly fine. The excruciating pain I was in before is gone. Sitting up, I come damn near face to face with Crow.

"Well, I didn't expect to see you when I woke from my nap. What's going on?"

Scooting forward in his chair, he tilts his head while looking at me. "Brooks, you weren't taking a nap. May I ask what the last thing you remember is?"

"We were in the meeting discussing things. I think I mentioned something about a headache and then I woke up here. It must have been a pretty bad headache." I stop, trying to remember how I got back to my cabin when I realize he is shaking his head. "Why are you shaking your head no?"

“Brooks, there was an attack on the security building. Someone blew part of it up. That part happened to be where we were all gathered.” I swing my feet from the bed, needing to check on my family, but Crow holds me in place. “Whoa, no need to jump up. Everyone is fine. The only one seriously hurt was you.”

Standing up, I realize I’m not wearing any clothes. I don’t even look at Crow and walk over to my dresser and then to my closet. “Crow, tell me what else happened. Why am I here? How was I hurt?”

“Brooks, you had an arterial bleed. It was severed, and you were bleeding out. We couldn’t get it to stop. You were going to die. Hunter told Brooklyn she had to bite you and turn you or watch you die. I didn’t say anything, because he was right.”

As I button my jeans, grab a shirt and walk out of my closet, it hits me. She had to bite me and change me or watch me die. She had to...Turning to look at Crow, I see my reflection in the mirror. My own red eyes staring back at me.

I guess the myth that a vampire doesn’t have a reflection is inaccurate, because I sure as hell see myself. Damn, I have to say I look pretty good, and nothing hurts. I mean nothing. Smiling at myself is a bit freaky. I have fangs.

“Brooks, do you have any questions? Are you feeling the need?”

“The need for what?”

“The need to feed.”

We both burst out laughing because that was funny. I guess he's actually asking for a reason. "I don't feel hungry, if that's how it works. I'm a little thirsty, if that matters."

Patting me on the back, "It does matter. I can't and won't let you around the others until I know you've got control over yourself and they'd be safe with you around them. I don't mean to say you're a threat, but being around the unturned means hearing their blood running through their veins and the beat of their hearts. It can be, well, it can alluring to say the least."

My fangs descend at that description and I know instinctively he's right. I need to make sure I have a handle on this before I risk the others. "You know, I think I should have something before we go. Where is everyone anyway?"

"Everyone else is at the main house. The blood supply is in the security building. We can walk over there and see if we can get to it and if it is undamaged or go into the woods and find an animal. The sooner we get a local blood bank operating, the better."

Walking out of my cabin makes me realize how much my body has actually changed. I feel thirty years younger. Nothing hurts and my back has been horrible for years. I can definitely get used to this.

Not long after Crow and I took care of our new needs, we began to head up to the house. I thought I would be grossed out by feeding on an animal, but it wasn't any different than a rare steak.

Entering the house, Crow and I glance at each other. We can hear Lennie complaining because she's getting another shot, but from the sounds of it, she needs to rest. Crow and I make our way to the double office doors, and each take a side, leaning against the doorframe. I'm glad he stops because it gives me time to evaluate my reaction to being around them. I can sense their pulses, just like Crow said I would, but there is not a need to attack any of them and kill them.

After Creed gives Lennie another shot of some medicine, Phoenix's voice catches our attention. It's easy to read everyone's body language, plus I swear I can smell their emotions. It's a room of simple but powerful emotions. Rage, pain, guilt and everyone's full of questions.

"I know we're all pretty banged up, but we were attacked and we know they were after Crow and Lyn. We also know that one of the attackers said he wasn't taking the fall for the *'asshole Council member'* or some queen. I think McDonal has some explaining to do."

Phoenix's voice speaks to his temper being close to exploding, but I want to hear what else he thinks. No one seems to have noticed us yet. We've all been betrayed and now there's a specific danger to our family. I don't know how the paranormal world works, but I'd assume loyalty is as important as it is to the non-paranormal.

"I'm not saying McDonal is the guilty one, but he's the one we know with direct ties to the Council. We need answers, and we need them as soon as possible."

Phoenix has hit the nail on the head with what he just said. Looking over at Creed, it's easy to read his face, especially with the way he's watching Lennie and Lyn. When Creed lifts his phone, I know shit's about to get real.

“Creed, do you think we should wait for Crow? He may have more information that would be helpful. It's not like we've had time to sit down and talk all of this through since learning about everything.”

Lyn's movement catches my attention as she walks over to the mini kitchen and starts making a pot of coffee. She still hasn't said a word and I'm beginning to worry. The others are watching her too, but no one is talking.

“So, what information do we have on the attack? I'd like to know who tried to kill me and my family.” I finally let them know we're there as we step from the doorway and wait for their answer.



CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Hunter

Brooks' voice surprises us all. Lyn damn near drops the coffee pot when she quickly puts it down. Running over to her dad, the embrace they share is heartwarming. I'm happy he made it through the transition and for more reasons than what's obvious.

"Dad, are you alright? Do you *'need'* anything? Did Crow fill you in on what happened? I'm so sorry. I didn't want to lose you. I know I was selfish, but you said you wanted to..."

Taking a step back from hugging Lyn, Brooks doesn't let go of her hands. His smile is wide and bright. "Brooklyn Dawn, take a breath. My answers are yes, no, and yes. I'm glad you changed me and I didn't die. So, calm down. Now, what happened to my granddaughter?"

While we're all chuckling at Brooks and Lyn, she glances around the room with a look of, *'would y'all knock it off'* which only makes us laugh that much harder. I decide it's time to get on with things, so I walk over to Brooks, and reach out my hand out to him.

“Dad, I’m glad to see you up, walking and talking. Lennie’s shoulder was out of place. So, Creed gave her a shot of morphine before and after setting it. She’ll be out for a while but she needs the rest. Why don’t we all take a seat so Creed can call McDonal and find out if he has any idea why a Council member targeted us? Personally, I’d like to know their reasoning before I kill them.”

After Creed and Lyn check on Squirt one more time, they both walk over to Creed’s desk and he sits in his chair and takes a deep, ‘*what the fuck*’, breath. Lyn sits on the arm of his chair, but doesn’t move her gaze from her dad. I’m not sure what she expects to happen, but I have absolute faith in Brooks. It could be as simple as she is stunned and grateful to see him alive, though, instead of worried he is going to do something to one of us. Knowing her, it is likely just the grateful part.

“I’m only going to say this once, and I’m being very serious. Hunter, Phoenix, Dakota, Jaxon, Keegan, and Kerrigan, you are all to remain silent. My gut tells me this call is going to stir a shit pot of epic proportions, and I sure as fuck don’t want us to be the ones licking the spoon. Do I make myself clear?”

It’s natural for us to snap to and respond, ‘*yes sir.*’ I’m sure we’re all on the same playing field with understanding why he didn’t include Lyn, Crow and Brooks in the ‘*silence*’ order. I know we can all be calm and quiet, I’m not too sure about Creed remaining calm, especially not after their attack hurt his daughter.

Sitting back, hearing the phone ring through to the other side, my nerves start to kick in, which is unlike me. However, I've never truly been in love before. Shifting my attention directly to Lyn, it hits me. I'm in love. Whoa, holy shit, I'm in love. My smile grows with that knowledge, but it grows even bigger when Lyn locks eyes with me. The phone rings again, breaking the momentary trance as he answers on the other side.

"McDonal, we need to talk. Are you alone?"

"I am. I'm in my office at home. What can I help you with?"

"What you can do is give me a fucking list of names. Specifically, the name of whoever sent the order to kill Lyn and Crow."

"What do you mean, kill them?" He sounds genuinely surprised, and a look passes between each of us. At least we know we can trust him, there would have been some sort of hesitation if he was faking it.

"Yeah, not long after our call with you and the Council, our security building was targeted and half of it blown up in the attempt to kill them. One of them was overheard saying he was not taking the fall for the fuck up with a Council member, and something about a Queen, right before Crow took care of them," Dakota fills him in.

"A list, McDonal," Creed demands. Rightfully so, his daughter was hurt by their failed attempt.

“Creed, I can understand why you’re wanting a list of the people, but I can assure you I don’t know anyone on the Council that would attempt such a brazen move. The Council even admits how badly they need ‘*good vampires*’ to help lead the Covens to create what they hope will be an era of peace. There are very few that would do anything to risk that. Vampires without strict rules are worse than a gang of unruly teenagers. As for a Queen, that could mean several things. Did they happen to say anything else?”

The expression on Creed’s face says he doesn’t give a fuck what McDonal thinks. He wants names. Once we have the names, we can start researching and find out who the mastermind was behind the attack. The men sent after us didn’t mention a Council member without cause.

“McDonal, this is Lyn. I know you don’t know me, but I’m telling you right now, we will find out who is behind this and why they attacked us and they will pay with their blood. I don’t care who it is, Council or Queen. My daughter’s shoulder was dislocated and my dad damn near died. Not to mention, all of us were hurt in one way or another. So, you need to explain what you mean by *there are very few and what several things their mention of a Queen could mean.*’.”

I’ve seen Lyn upset. I’ve even seen Lyn mad, but right now, I’m willing to go as far to say she’s homicidal and I’m right there with her. What’s bothering me even more is the steady sound of McDonal’s voice. I’m not sure he knows more than what he’s already said.

People who are unsure of what they're saying, or are lying, but trying to sound convincing, have a quiver in their voice as they speak. He doesn't have any traits of someone that's lying. At least, not that I can tell.

"Hey, McDonal, let me ask you something," I speak up as dead air fills the otherside of the line.

Everyone turns to look at me at once, and normally being the center of attention doesn't bother me, but the looks of *'this isn't a fucking joke, Hunter,'* is actually pissing me off. Yeah, I'm the jokester, but they damn well know I know when to be serious.

"If you're one hundred percent sure it wasn't one of the people you know that knows of us, then who? You have to have an idea of who'd want to take out a couple of vampires, but at the risk of taking out an entire group of people seems extreme to me. So, if you have an idea, hell, a suspicion, name them. Queen or Council member."

Looking around the room, I settle on Lyn's eyes and give her a wink. Getting off the arm of the couch, I pat Dakota on the shoulder and signal Jaxon over to me. When he meets me in the mini kitchen on the side of the room to finish what Lyn started as we wait for McDonal to answer, Jaxon helps me by serving the cups of coffee as I make them. Something tells me we are all going to need it.

"Hunter, there are only two groups of supernaturals that would like to see vampires cease to exist, the wolf shifters and the dhampirs. Other than those two, I'd say a demon, but those are

rarely on physical earth, so not very likely. Each group has their own individual Council. That's why forming a Grand Council is so daunting. The different groups don't often see eye to eye as you can imagine. But even so, those on the Council are supposed to be for peace, so I can't imagine them trying to outright go for you like this.

"As for Queens, that's a little different. There are twenty all around the world. So it could be any one of them they spoke of. But again, I'm not certain which would have it out for you guys, especially being so newly turned."

"Twenty? That's it? Well we can start there," Creed suggests and I nod in agreement.

"It's not that simple. Every female vampire *is* a Queen. Because of that, they are beyond protected."

The room falls silent as we register what he said. All at once, the room erupts in questions. Everyone is demanding answers and explanations.

"Whoa, hold the fuck on," Brooklyn interrupts us all, waiting for us to quiet down. "McDonal, explain."

He audibly swallows before continuing. "Females are almost impossible to turn. Their very existence is to bring life. The womb exists to bring life into this world. Turning something so pure and whole, something that represents life itself into the undead, is next to impossible. Usually, it results in their actual death, as life and death are not meant to exist together." All eyes fall on Crow, a mix of emotions as we realize at once what this could have meant for Lyn. He could have killed her.

She seems to realize the same thing, but holds up her hand, keeping us silent as we wait for McDonal to continue. “Because of that, those that do make it through the transition are honored. Stronger than the rest of vampire kind. Queens.”

“How do we know we can trust you? When we called you for help before, you could have called us yourself, but you brought in the Council. What’s to say you are not in on this too?” Phoenix growls. He has a very valid point.

“Because much like Sires, each vampire is tied to a Queen. Some by choice, some by fate, and some simply because her power demands it. Once they are tied to that Queen, there is no lying. There is nothing that vampire would not do for his Queen. I cannot lie because Queen Brooklyn is my Queen.”

What the fuck did he just say? Did he just say Queen Brooklyn is his...wait. Did he say demon? My mind is reeling with all of the information he just dropped. “Hold up, wait a minute, back the fuck up. Queen Brooklyn, as in our Lyn? And did you say demons? Wait, you said dhampirs, too. On top of vampires, werewolf shifters and whatever else is out there, now you’re telling us demons and dhampirs are real? Fuck the coffee. I need a stiff drink.”

“I’m nobody’s Queen,” Lyn shakes her head, looking at all of us in disbelief.

“It sounds like you are,” Phoenix grins. “Not like it can be helped now.”

“Look, you all have no clue what’s really out there. Things you couldn’t even begin to imagine. If someone has, in fact,

painted a bullseye on any of you, well, I'm sorry to say, but you need to take this seriously. Vampire Queens are cunning, ruthless and as evil as a demon that's thousands of years old. They have to be because it's a power grab among themselves. Besides that, we all tend to stay to ourselves. Not really intermingling with other, shall we call them, species. We've just managed to form the Grand Council and we're not even sure if it'll work as we mean it to. If they are, in fact, behind this attack on you, then clearly they already have problems."

"McDonal, do you know who the most powerful supernatural being of each group is? I would assume it's the President of each group's individual council. If they are even called President's that is. I have an idea and all I need is their name, which supernatural group they represent and a number I can reach them at. We will start our security company and get to work right now. Our first case will be our own. Just no one else will be aware of it." I can see the gears turning in Creed's mind as he speaks.

"That's easy, but first, the most powerful vampire is Queen Brooklyn. She's the newest vampire, as well as being one of only twenty females. That automatically makes her a target as well because the other Queens will not want to give up their positions. We call our females Regină, it means Queen in Romanian. Mainly because that's where the first of us came from, or at least that's the legend. We have legends just like humans do."

Well, isn't that a development none of us were expecting? This is not a time for sarcasm, but damn it, I can't let this one pass

by. “Well, we already knew Lyn was the Queen of our castle, so why not all vampires?”

Wow, that didn't even pull a smile from anyone. What the hell? I know this is serious, but not even a tilt of the lips? Lyn cocks her head at me, and an almost smirk forms. Good enough for me.

“McDonal, email me the information you have and I'm asking you to keep quiet about this. We will get to the bottom of this. We appreciate your help. We'll be in touch.”

When Creed stands up, Jaxon has already made his way over to him, placing a cup of coffee in his hand. I forgot I even waved him over to help me. Instead of helping me with everyone's coffee, he did it all and delivered all the mugs while I stood shocked and all but speechless as McDonal dropped one bomb after the other.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Brooklyn

Once Creed disconnects the call, I chime in. I think they're forgetting something rather important. "You're all missing a very important clue, or at least a possible important clue. The bodies of the men that attacked us. They have to have some form of identification saying who they are and where they come from. I say we start there."

"There is something else we need to take care of," Dakota rounds on Crow, murder written on his face. "You heard what he said, didn't you?"

"I did," Crow squares his shoulders.

"Do you understand what you could have done?" He growls, stepping closer. "You could have killed her!"

"Dakota," I interject, noting Lennie stirring from the sound of his raised voice.

"No, Lyn. Not this time."

"Then at least take it outside. You are going to wake Lennie," I state firmly, unwilling to budge on this one. I know they need to have it out before we can all move forward. It's better to get

it over with now, so we can figure out what the hell is going on around here with no bad blood between any of them.

“Done. Outside, now,” Dakota growls, the others closing in on Crow as they go outside. Crow glances at me and I know he doesn’t want me to stop whatever is about to happen, so I stand back. But if it goes too far, I won’t honor his wishes. I can’t stand by and let them hurt him for what he didn’t know.

The moment they make it onto the grass, Dakota throws a punch, connecting with Crow’s jaw and snapping his head sideways, blood pooling at his lip. Crow doesn’t fight back. He takes the punch and looks at Dakota as he swings again, connecting with his stomach, the impact making Crow groan and double over, taking another hit to the face.

“Fight back, damn it!” Phoenix knees him in the stomach. “You could have killed her!” His rage fills his voice as he slams his fist into Crow’s jaw, snapping his head back and sending him crumpling to the ground. “Fight, damn it!” He kicks his midsection in emphasis, trying to get him to fight back.

“No,” Crow groans, holding his stomach. “You’re right.”

“We could have lost her,” Dakota snarls. “Get up!”

Crow slowly drags himself to his feet and sags in front of them. “You can’t do anything to me I haven’t thought of since that conversation. I deserve it.”

“Ugh!” Phoenix kicks the ground in frustration, spinning away from Crow, unwilling to fight a man that won’t defend

himself. Even if he is a vampire.

“Alright, enough,” Creed steps between them. “I think he gets the point. It doesn’t change how we all felt about it before. His heart was in the right place. We all agreed on that.”

“Not to mention, if anyone should be pissed, it should be the one that was almost dead-dead,” I smirk. “Now that it’s out of your systems, think we can get back to figuring out who is actually after us and stop trying to go after each other?”

They remain silent, but I can sense they have calmed down a great deal. Crow will have a long way to go still toward making things right, but at least they won’t be raging mad at him as we try to find answers. With Lennie still sleeping, Creed and my dad stay at the house with her. The last thing we need is for her to wake up all alone. I hate the fact that it’s possible she could suffer from nightmares or even night terrors of the attack. I can only pray she doesn’t.

As we get closer and closer to the wreck of a building that’s our security office, I can finally see how badly damaged the building is now that the dust has settled and we are not so worried about everyone. One side of the building is essentially gone and so is part of the main meeting room.

“We made sure the electricity is shut off, so no one accidentally gets electrocuted. We’ve removed the bodies of all the attackers as well. Other than that, we haven’t touched anything.”

Hearing a voice I don’t recognize makes me spring into a protective stance. My fangs pinch at my gums as I leap

impossibly high and land in front of my men. I release a hiss, followed by a growl that makes my own hair stand on end. I didn't realize I had that ability, but I like it.

“Brooklyn don't! Phoenix, damn it, she's going to rip my head off my shoulders.” The newcomer holds his hands up, as if showing he means non harm. “Brooklyn, my name is Bryan Waldrop. Alpha Bryan Waldrop of the El Paso Pack and head of the CID. I heard through the grapevine what happened and got here as quickly as I could.”

Standing up straight, I relax my body and allow my fangs to retract. Closing my eyes for a moment allows them to return to their natural color. I'm not sure how I know my eyes have gone back to normal, but I know they have. Opening my eyes once again, I smile at Bryan and shrug my shoulders. “Your voice sounds different in person.”

“I get that a lot. Anyway, I brought part of my team with me. Like I said, we removed the bodies for proper identification. Whoever sent them knew enough to remove their fingerprints. All the bodies had chemical burns where their prints used to be.”

I really want to be annoyed that he's done what I thought of, but that's pretty fucking petty, even for me. It doesn't matter how we find out who the assholes are, well, were. Just as long as we find out names.

“Well, Bryan, can you explain to me how in the hell you can identify people that don't have fingerprints?” For fuck's sake, I just sounded like an arrogant bitch. Taking a deep breath, I

release it slowly. Relaxing my body, I ball my hands into tight fists, squeeze, and then release. Wiggling my fingers a bit, I feel a lot more relaxed. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to snap, I’m just on edge.”

“Understandable. All of those men were still human, but looked like feeders. So, they would have actual careers either within or outside of the Coven, as well as being a live food source for a Coven of Vampires. So, there’s that. Other than fingerprints, there’s photo identification, dental identification and there’s even a way to use tattoos for identification. We’ve identified people from birthmarks. Now, with the advancement of modern technology, we can use DNA to identify people. With all of our options, we will figure it out.”

I’d like to say all of that makes sense, but I need one thing explained. I just hope it doesn’t take too long to figure the other shit out. Something is still off about this. I’m not sure what it is, but something tells me it’s staring me right in the face and I’m just missing it.

Watching the guys inspect the building and talking to Bryan’s men, helps me to center my own thoughts. When a few wolves run by, I jump, not out of fear, but in shock. They’re huge. They have to be at least three times the size of a normal wolf.

“Brooklyn, we’re Dire Wolves. The world believes that we went extinct thousands of years ago. Dire wolves have been around for millennia. I am one of twenty Dire Wolf Pack Alphas. The largest population lives in Ireland.”

That's when it hits me. Whirling on Bryan, my eyes go red, and my fangs descend. Backing him up, "What the hell is a feeder? How did you get here so quickly? How is it this happened only hours ago and you're already here? You better start fucking talking."

As he backs up, I can see his wolf in his eyes. His warning growl doesn't scare me. This son of a bitch knows something, and he's going to talk. "Tell me what you know, Bryan! My family was hurt and my dad was damn near killed. Talk before I remove your fucking Adam's apple from your throat."

I don't care that we're being surrounded by both my men and his wolves, both in human and wolf form. "Brooklyn, we knew to come because one of my men intercepted an outgoing message from the Ole Man. When we went to get him, he had already dis-all-fuck-appeared. I only have part of my team because we were already in the air, heading in this direction. Not to this specific location, just this direction in general. So, I made contact with my connection in the FBI, and I was told they'd meet us here. We came straight here after that to warn you all. When we found the building and the bodies, we went into action. I didn't betray any of you."

Taking a few steps back, I take a much-needed deep breath. I know I'm close to losing control, but this is my family and I won't let this go till the guilty suffer. It's not until I open my eyes that I realize Crow and my dad are by my side, and they both look ready to kill.

With my dad standing next to me, that means he left Creed and Lennie. I don't understand this vampire shit yet, so maybe Crow and my dad could feel my anger, or something like that.

“How about everyone just chill the hell out? Baby, you were right to be suspicious of Bryan and his men. Now we know the truth and the former Post Commander is A.W.O.L We know a queen seems to want to take us down, and likely someone on the new Council, but Bryan and his men are innocent.”

Reaching my hands out, I take one of my dad's hands and one of Crow's, making the three of us back up. Glancing behind us, there's no one there, which is good, because neither of them has calmed down.

“Give us a few minutes. I seem to have more control than my dad and Crow, give me some time to calm them down.”

There are tense nods from everyone as I nod my thanks. Tightening my grip on both men, I force us to turn toward the house and start walking away. As we do, I speak to them to try to help get them to relax, realizing as soon as I tell them to chill, they all but do. They might still be on edge, but neither one is as tense as they were. It was something to file away for later.



CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Jaxon

Hunter may be the analyst of the group, but I'm the best observer, no matter what Hunter thinks. I can and do learn more from watching the actions of people than having a conversation with them. Mouths lie, body language doesn't. No matter how good you think you are. Everyone has tell-tell signs that they're lying or hiding something. It's just a matter of time to observe them to figure it out.

Bryan is telling the absolute truth, and watching the FBI Agents that arrive shortly after the CID did, are also completely honest. I watch Bryan introduce everyone to the lead FBI agent, Nate McNamara and everyone split duties to cover the most ground to gather intel.

So, what is the Ole Man up to that has him on the run, and who the fuck is this Queen? Especially for the Ole Man still being active duty. How is he associated with this council member or bitch that attacked us, if he even is? There is a hole the size of Texas in this story, and we need all those fucking puzzle pieces.

“Crow, are you calmed down? We really need you to tell us what the fuck happened to you. Every little detail. I don’t give a fuck how small of a detail it is, we need to know. Brother, you know how this shit works. Talk.” Phoenix demands after Crow has a few minutes to calm down.

Phoenix is in a definite don’t fuck with me mood and who can blame him? Crow and Brooks look human again, so that’s at least a start. Lyn is still on guard, but now it’s Dad and Crow she’s watching, instead of the men that arrived to help us.

“Can I have everyone’s attention, please? I realize this is the scene of the attack, but as you can tell, the building isn’t usable at the moment. I suggest we move this up to the house. We have an office there that can accommodate everyone. Dad, Crow, why don’t you two run up and tell Creed the CID guys and the few FBI guys that are staying will be joining us in the main office?” I suggest, hoping everyone will be on board. Once we are away from the blast site, maybe they will relax a little more.

Lyn releases their hands, and they immediately take off running. Holy shit, can they run. Her smile tells me I made the right call. There’s a lot of information to process and we might as well have coffee and a comfortable seat.

By the time we all make it up to the main house, the sun has set. Both agencies left most of their men behind to continue going through the rubble, gathering what little they could from the attackers. If it takes a while to identify the men that were

sent, we are hoping something in their gear, or the explosives they used, points us in the direction of who sent them.

The first thing I notice when I walk into the office is that Lennie isn't there anymore. I didn't consider that part, but I'm sure Creed put her in a room we'll be able to hear her from in case she needs something. Even if she is in her own room, with the vampires in the house, any of them will hear her before she even makes it to the room.

“Ladies and gentlemen, if everyone has a seat, we can try to get through this as quickly as possible. First, I want to say that we have no issues working with the CID or the FBI. Lyn, the CID stands for the Criminal Investigation Division. The CID handles criminal issues within the Army and Bryan, as you know, is the head of that division. The FBI is here because this is also a civilian matter, again Nate is the Special Agent in charge.” Creed informs her.

Listening to Creed speak to everyone reminds me of how much this really is his element. When he was speaking to Lyn, he was calm and understanding. Now that he's addressing Crow, the CID and the FBI, he's not holding back.

“Crow, what the fuck happened to you? Why did you get out a month early? Then, you went traveling around the world on some secret mission. You need to tell us everything, man, and I mean right fucking right now.” He slams his fist on the table, emphasizing the fact that we need answers.

I want to know what's been going on with him, too. We've had no time alone, so we can talk or be together since he's been

brought back. Keegan and Kerrigan miss him as well. We need to hear his answers for more reasons than the others, but no more important.

Looking up from my coffee mug, I lock eyes with Crow, and everything in me wants to melt into the palms of his hands. Goosebumps race over my body when he winks at me and then stands up, walking over to stand near Creed.

“I’m not the best speaker, and I do have some blank spots in my memory, but I will do my best to fill in what I know. Before I say anything else. Bryan, is everyone here clear to hear anything and everything that will be or at least could be said?”

“Roger that. Everyone here is either in the know, or a part of, so you’re clear.”

For fuck’s sake. I never even thought to check on that. It would have been one hell of a mess if there would have been someone new to the topics we’re about to discuss. That’s my Crow, always thinking outside the box.

“Good. So five weeks ago, Cass Dexton approached me and requested a meeting. When I told him I would let the Lieutenant know about the meeting, he was very specific in saying not to tell anyone. As the Post Commander and my senior, I didn’t really think too much about it. Maybe I should have, and none of this would have happened.”

Oh, hell no. He is not taking all this on his shoulders. I was about to stand up and say as much when Brooks beat me to it.

“Like hell you’re going to take the blame for all of this. You’re as much a victim in this as we are. You were following orders of an officer you trusted. Just tell us what you know, and the rest will get worked out. You’re not alone here. We’re not only a team, we’re family. Now, go on, son, and tell us what the fuck happened.”

Way to go, Dad. I don’t think I could have said it any better. It’s obvious by the smile Crow is now sporting that it had the desired effect on him.

“Alright, Dad, I see your point. But I won’t stop being sorry for acting without knowing.” He looks at Lyn apologetically, his gaze darting to the guys and I know he is thinking about the fact that there was a very real chance he could have killed Lyn, instead of protecting her. It seems they are over it as they nod, and he clears his throat and continues. “So anyway. Later that same day, I met with Dexton. He asked me how I felt about myths and legends, stuff like that. I told him that myths, legends, lores, whatever the hell you choose to call them, had to come from somewhere. So there must be a grain of truth to them.”

I never thought of it that way, but he does have a solid point. Hell, I even remember all of us joking around about what kind of paranormal being we’d want to be if we had the choice. Now that I think about it, we all chose to be vampires. What an odd coincidence.

“He told me about a group that had been selected to go to Bulgaria and asked if I would like to join them to see if the

rumors were, in fact, true. He said he'd pull some strings for me to exit my service early, but that I couldn't tell anyone about it, even if I were to be directly asked. I knew you all were exiting together or within a week of each other. I was the one that had the longest left, so it seemed the easiest decision."

"You didn't think something was off? Why would an officer ask you to not only pull out early, but to keep it from everyone?" Nate asks. Lyn lets out a small growl, and I can tell she's irritated by the questioning, but stays quiet because we need the answers.

The instant he shrugs his shoulders, I know he's internally blaming himself again. Standing up, I walk to the center of the room, not once removing my eyes from Crow.

"Don't you dare. I know you, Crow, and mentally you're blaming yourself again. Just stop it. Don't you guys remember the playful conversations we used to have? If the paranormal world was real, what would we choose to be if we could? I can tell by the chuckles you do. What did we all say? Vampires. So, knock off blaming yourself and let's get the bastard or bitch that's really at fault."

Seeing the smile spread across Crow's face is the best reward. He's so gorgeous and I hope like hell he's still mine. Well, ours. I'd never leave Keegan and Kerrigan out in the cold. They're as much mine as I am theirs. Shit, focus.

"You're right, Jaxon, and I did forget that. Anyway, I didn't question orders. I never have. And I trusted him. So, I arrived in Bulgaria as instructed, only to be shot with a tranquilizer. At

least that's what I think it was. I honestly don't remember anything else until I woke up hearing German being spoken. I can't say I was still human at that point, or not. Only that I was disoriented but came to enough to overhear part of their conversation. Dumbasses apparently didn't know I was fluent in German, because they said I was supposed to be the first American sacrifice and the rest of my team would be theirs at a later date. From what I gathered, we were all going to be sacrificed so Cass Dexton could be changed into a vampire and be given a position of power within a Queen's coven."

He pauses and has a confused expression on his face. Everyone sees it, but no one is saying a word. We know Crow well enough to let him think this through and figure out what is going through his mind. Nate starts to speak but Creed shakes his head, making him give Crow time to sort it out. "I wasn't human by then. I'm almost sure of it. I'd already been fed on."

"Do you have any idea who changed you?" Bryan questions.

He thinks for a moment and shakes his head. "I don't. I actually don't remember anyone specifically feeding on me. Only the drugged blur of being tranquilized. The transition was slow and painful. My mind must have blocked that part out due to the pain."

When he looks up, I track where he's looking and it's right at Lyn. His face is a mixture of pain, sorrow, regrets and God only knows what else. I think saying out loud what he endured made him realize he could have caused Lyn extreme pain

when she transitioned. Not to mention, renewing the thought that he could have outright killed her.

This was one hell of a mess.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Brooklyn

The emotions flashing across Crow's face are fucking heartbreaking. Damn it. I don't want to feel bad for him or angry on his account, but what kind of person would I be if I didn't? I know one thing, that fucking former Post Commander of their's is a dead man. He just doesn't know it yet.

“Alright, I know we all have questions, but overwhelming Crow right now isn't going to happen. He remembers what he remembers, and poking at him isn't going to help. Give him a minute to catch up with his own thoughts. Besides, who wants to purposely annoy a vampire? Hunter, shut up.”

I know that would make everyone laugh and release some of the tension building in the room. He did open his mouth to speak, so it's not like he was totally caught off guard and innocent.

“Hey, I wasn't going to say... Okay, so maybe I was. We all want to be turned anyway, so annoying him would just help the process along.” Hunter smirks.

There's no stopping the laughter that rolls through the room and, to be honest, it's needed. Now I understand the emotions Crow was going through. It's pretty much the same thing as me feeling guilty for my dad getting hurt because of Max.

"Crow, how did you get away from them, and how did you get from Germany to Canada? We need to try to fill in what happened, if we can. From what the guys said, you looked like a train wreck when they got to you." I ask at last, seeing that Crow is a little more relaxed again.

"My Queen, your guess is as good as mine. I remember waking up in Germany, killing a guard and running. The next thing I know, I'm waking up again feeling like my fucking skin was on fire."

"The sun," an unfamiliar voice chimes in.

"Exactly. My hearing is like supersonic, so I could hear the people that were looking for me before I ever saw them. To tell the truth, all I saw was black when I did see them. They were all dressed in black. They even had their faces covered, and these people spoke a language I'm not familiar with. Other than that, I'm afraid there is literally nothing I can tell you about them."

I pause, wanting to know who spoke before Crow. Everyone looks away from Crow as he answers to look toward where the voice that spoke came from. "Who are you?"

"I, my Queen? I am called Lyam and I am a vampire, as well. I'm originally from France and I'm currently in my three hundredth year. I was going to contact Lieutenant Creed to

educate you and Crow on the ins and outs of being a vampire and ease your transitions. When I heard about the attack, I requested to be brought along. The men outside just sent me in after my search of the property to see if I could place any of the scents from the feeders.”

In his three hundredth year? That’s what he said, right? Looking over at Crow, I see the biggest smile on his face. Part of me wants to physically remove that smile from his face and the other part of me wants to bounce like an overly excited ten-year-old. Damn asshole.

“Then, Crow, my dad and myself will speak with you tomorrow after we get some rest. Were you able to find anything?” I ask.

He shakes his head. “I apologize, my Queen, I could not. Whoever orchestrated this did a very thorough job. There is no trace of their origin that I could find.”

“That doesn’t sound good,” Nate frowns.

“It’s not,” Bryan shakes his head. “If they went to such great lengths to keep the origin of their feeders a secret, that means they have something much larger to hide than we thought.”

“Like what?” Creed frowns, thinking it over, his question echoing my own. What could be so large, but involve taking the guys to sacrifice, and then hunting us all down?

I clear my throat after everyone falls quiet. “A lot has happened in a short amount of time. We all need to disconnect for a while and sleep. Matter of fact, I need to check on

Lennie. Dad, why don't you come with me? I know she will be eager to see you if she wakes. The rest of you make sure you get some rest. We can all meet up in the morning for breakfast and come at this with clearer minds."

After saying our good nights and giving a kiss to Hunter, Dakota, Phoenix and Crow, my dad and I grab some stuff from the kitchen and run upstairs faster than I ever thought possible. Being a vampire is going to take some getting used to. Not to mention learning all the *'ins and outs,'* as Lyam so eloquently put it. Dad has blood mugs for us, and I have real food for Lennie. We'll just sit with her all night. Not like we need to sleep other than out of habit at this point.

Walking into Lennie's living room makes me smile. She and her uncles have fairy lights up everywhere. It really is adorable. Creed is already in the room, wanting to check on her himself before bed. He grins as I enter and walk over to her little kitchenette to place everything down on her countertop. After placing juices and soda in her mini fridge, I walk over to her bedroom door.

Putting my hand on the handle, I turn to look at my dad, who's sat himself down on one of her oversized beanbag chairs. Before he became a vampire, there was no way he could sit in a beanbag chair. He would have surely gotten stuck with his hips and back.

I go to her bedroom door to check on her, apparently turning the handle at the same time she pulls it open from the other side. We end up scaring the shit out of each other and jump

back. My slight scream is nothing compared to her scream that's followed by a wince from the pain of her shoulder getting jarred.

“Ouch! Mom, that hurt. What are you doing?”

“Don't you Mom me, I was trying to check on you and you scared the hell out of me. I didn't expect you to be pulling the door open. You're lucky it's just your dad in here and that your uncles, the CID and the FBI haven't burst down your main door already.”

“Mom, you cursed, and why are all those initials you just mentioned here? Is Grandpa alright? Who attacked the security office?”

All it takes is the look, and she knows she's rapidly firing questions again. The best way I know to calm her little butt down is to step to the side and let her see her grandpa. So, I do.

The instant she sees him and her face lights up. “Grandpa! You're alright!”

Turning to watch her race over to him, I'm not worried about anyone biting anyone, at least for tonight. Lennie has her twelfth birthday in a couple of weeks, and it's nice to simply enjoy her pure joy. No matter what, there is plenty of time to deal with the rest.



CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Crow

Explaining how I became a vampire was pretty useless, and I'm not sure how much it really helps us at all. I really can't remember too much other than flashes of things that make no sense. I can't figure out what this queen attacking us, the Council, and Cass Dexon have in common. I do know I need to set it aside for tonight and let my mind rest. If I don't it is going to drive me crazy and this change already has me halfway there.

After all the looks from Jaxon and the kiss from Brooklyn, my dick is so hard it hurts. The last time I had any was Jaxon, and that was a few months ago. I think he and I need some quality time together to relieve this tension.

His insecurity is showing in his body language, and that hurts me. His shoulders are slightly hunched, as is his back. He's not one to slouch. Jaxon's giving off vibes that tell me a lot. I need and want to reassure him.

"I know there's still things to be discussed, but if I don't gather a blood supply for Brooks, Brooklyn and myself, we could

have issues in the morning. Does anyone mind if I grab Jaxon to help me?”

Everyone in the room shifts to look at Creed before he leaves to check on Lennie. The habit of looking to our Lt. is there, even if we're not active duty anymore. When Creed agrees with me and signals Jaxon to join me, my dick jumps with hopeful anticipation.

A couple of minutes after exiting the main house and heading toward the hunting lodge, I finally break the tense silence. Reaching out, I gently grab his arm, pulling him to a stop.

“Jaxon, your scent is driving me insane. I've missed you. I've missed Keegan and Kerrigan, too, but you most of all. Do you still want to be with me, or has Brooklyn taken my place? Or, I guess the recent changes.” I ask hesitantly, self-conscious of my fangs that pinch my gumline.

His mouth meeting mine tells me everything I need to know. Wrapping my arms around him, hugging his body to mine, I walk him backwards, deeper into the woods. Keeping one eye open enough to keep me from running him into anything, I see a wide tree and maneuver him to it. Placing his back against it, I press my body tightly against him. I want to make damn sure he feels what he still does to me.

Jaxon's moan fills my mouth, making my dick pulse. Reaching my hand down, I press my palm firmly against the outside of his jeans and begin to rub him. When he pulls back, breaking our kiss, he spins me around, changing positions with me and

pressing my back to the tree, completely catching me off guard.

“Fuck, Crow, you’re going to make me cum in my jeans. I need, no more than that, I want to show you how much I’ve missed you. I’ve got to taste you.”

When he smacks my hands away from undoing my jeans, I just chuckle. Sliding my jeans and boxer briefs down, he drops to his knees and catches my dick in his mouth, sucking me to the back of his throat.

“Holy fuck.....” Lifting my face to the darkened sky, chills of pleasure travel up and down my body. Fucking hell, I’ve missed him.

Running his teeth lightly across my shaft sends my body into overdrive. Sucking my dick and balls is beyond amazing while moaning is keeping me from forming... “Oh my god baby, fuck yeah,” a complete thought.

Letting him suck on me is amazing, and I’ve missed it, but I want and need more. Reaching my hand down, lightly wrapping it around his neck, is my signal that I want to fuck. Releasing my dick with a slurp and pop, I give his neck a light squeeze as I guide him to a standing position, careful not to lose control of myself with my new strength.

Releasing his neck, I turn him around. Leaning over, he presses his chest to a large low-lying branch. I use one hand to undo his jeans, allowing them to hit the ground like mine. Reaching around his body, I grab his dick, reveling in the way it twitches in my hand as I wrap my fingers around him. He

pushes his body back against mine and I start jacking him off with a tight grip, just like he likes it.

“I’ll give you anything, Jaxon. Tell me what you want, babe.”

“Crow, fuck me...”

The moans he’s releasing and the quiver in his voice is making my dick leak cum. “I can’t wait. I’m going to fuck your ass while you’re bent over this tree. Do you like that idea?”

“Ye...yes, please.”

Reaching into my vest pocket, I grab the small tube of lube I’d put there earlier. I was only hoping I’d not have to use it on myself. Opening the tube, I slather one of my fingers and his entrance. Slowly and softly rubbing his ring of muscle with my finger, I pop Jaxon’s ass when he pushes back, trying to force my finger to slide inside. I want him, but I won’t hurt him.

It takes a little bit to prepare his ass, which tells me he hasn’t let Keegan or Kerrigan have him. After sliding one finger into his ass, I slowly finger fuck him, only occasionally hitting his most sensitive spot. Feeling his muscles relaxing, I slip in another finger after adding lube to both fingers and his ass. After repeating everything until I have three fingers in his ass, I pull them out and press the head of my dick against his entrance.

I can feel him fighting the urge to push back against me. Slowly, I glide my dick inside his channel till I’m balls deep. “You alright? You know I don’t want to hurt you. So you need

to tell me if you're alright and ready for me to move. Fuck, you feel so good."

Him squeezing my dick with his ass is normally enough, but, "I need to hear the words." He'll speak and tell me or I'll just stand here and not move an inch.

"Please, please fuck me. I've missed you and you feel so good."

Pulling back a little, I begin to slowly and softly fuck his ass. I'll know when he's ready for more. Fuck me, he feels as good as he always has. Increasing my speed and how hard I'm fucking him, I shudder when he moans for me. "Yes, harder and faster."

His pleas and his moans are driving me to the brink. Grabbing onto his hips tightly with both hands, gentle is out the window. Angling myself just right, I feel when my dick starts slamming his prostrate just the way we both like.

His screams of pleasure spur me on to give him anything and everything he wants. Feeling my balls draw up, I lean over him, reaching my hand around to grasp his dick. Wrapping my fingers in a tight grip around the shaft of his dick, I start stroking him. My tight grip, my stroking and my fucking his ass, makes us peek together.

While I shoot my load deep in his ass and start to slow down my pumping, I feel his warm seed spilling all over my hand. I keep fucking into him as I stand up. When he pushes back against me, I realize my dick isn't getting soft.

Giving him a slap on the ass, “It looks like your toy wants more. How do you feel about that? I know I want to continue. You feel so fucking good. Just like you always do.”

“My cabin is just beyond those trees. Can we go there and continue? Keegan and Kerrigan might be there, and I know they’ve missed you, too.”

Bending down, I kiss his back as I slowly slide out of him. “I like that idea. Let’s go have some more fun in a more comfortable place.”

We quickly re-dress and start walking to the cabin. Taking a hold of Jaxon’s hand, I interlace my fingers with his. I love him, Keegan and Kerrigan and I want to reassure them that no matter what happens between Brooklyn and I, the four of us will never stop being together. I also know I need to speak to Brooklyn about this. I don’t think she’ll mind, but I’ll never assume anything again.



CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Creed

After last night's meeting, I checked on Lennie with Lyn, leaving them to make sure everyone else was settled in for the night and the house locked up. I got a text from Lyn that she and Dad were going to stay with Lennie. I still went up to check on her again after making my rounds. She was fast asleep in her bed with Dad and Lyn sitting in her small living room, chatting about their new lives.

I have to say I was relieved to hear them making jokes and talking like not much had changed. I can tell they're both on alert though and that I don't like. I want them to be able to relax in their own home. Not worry about some fucking idiot with ideas of grandeur and immortality.

After a fitful night's sleep, I walk downstairs and take my time. I need to think and process all the information thrown at us and I can't seem to get long enough down time to focus. Even when I'm laying down to sleep, my mind is spinning. Right now, there are two people on my mind, and it seems they both wish to die.

Dexon will pay for this. We know he's the one that started this shit. He sold all of us off like livestock to be food, all so he could become immortal. Fucking douche canoe will suffer, then die.

Then there's this queen and or Council member that seems to be after Crow and Lyn for whatever fucking reason. Their heads can come off just like anyone else's. I don't know who she is, but we will find out and she will pay.

Walking toward the kitchen, I smell bacon, eggs, syrup, coffee and, umm, blueberry muffins. As I round the corner to walk into the kitchen, I see Jaxon back on Crow's lap. I'm so glad those two are alright and still happy.

Dad, Hunter and Phoenix are running dishes full of food into the dining room. Lennie is sitting with Lyn while she puts an ointment on Lennie's shoulder. I bet it's some CBD oil. Lyn doesn't like heavy narcotics and, to be honest, neither do I. It's a good alternative.

“Morning, everyone. I hope everyone was able to rest last night. Jaxon, stop. Don't you get up. I'm happy for you. Lennie, how are you feeling? Do we know where the alphabet crews are? Where is Lyam, and last but surely not least, when do we eat?”

Walking through the kitchen into the dining room, I nearly run into Keegan and Kerrigan, both with huge smiles covering their faces. Well, I know where Crow spent last night. Hearing distant voices, I follow the sounds into the main foyer.

Overhearing a name I recognize brings me to a complete stop. I want to hear everything, so I remain silent and as still as possible. “We have to tell them the two women are missing. We don’t know if their missing has anything to do with this. I don’t even know all the details, but I do know the relationship between Mr. Lacey, Brooklyn and her mom and sister is damaged beyond all repair. With that said, I still think we need to tell them.”

“Tell them what?” Turning the corner, I come face to face with Nate and a couple of FBI Agents. Their body language and facial expressions tell me I caught them off guard.

As they turn to look at me, I watch them as they try to school their faces. Silly assholes, that’s not going to work on me. They will tell me what I want to know or I’ll just call Lyn, Brooks, and Crow to get the information I want. They don’t want to test me.

“Lt., you surprised us. We were just...”

I raise my hand, “Don’t even try to placate me or feed me some bullshit line. I heard what you said and fully expect you to answer my question. I’ll even repeat it for you. Tell Dad and Lyn what?”

“Lt., we think it would be better...” he starts, but I cut him off again.

“Tell me right fucking now what you need to say and, I do mean now.”

“Lt., we intercepted a message that was about Miss Lacey’s mother and sister. They’ve both been reported as missing and the persons of interest in their disappearance are Mr. Brooks Lacey and Miss Brooklyn Lacey. We’ve told the powers that be that there is sufficient evidence to show there is no connection between the two sides.

What the absolute fuck is going on? What do they have to do with anything that’s going on now? I need to think, and we all need to talk this shit out. Running my hand through my hair and giving it a tug, my frustration is mounting.

“Holy shit! I need everyone to listen up. Lyn and Dad, I was just informed that your mother slash ex-wife, and sister slash daughter, are missing. You both are under suspicion, but don’t worry, your alibis are solid. Not only can the CID vouch for you, but so can the FBI. You being under suspicion isn’t my worry. Their disappearance is. Not just because they’re missing, but I’m concerned whoever attacked us may plan on using them to get to us. The timing is no coincidence.”

I didn’t officially call a meeting, but everyone’s grabbed a plate of food and something to drink and are now spread around the office. Nothing is making sense and until we link everything up, I fear everyone is in danger.

“Creed, are you sure they’re missing and not just pulling yet another stunt for attention? God knows those two can’t handle the world turning and them not being at the center of it.” Lyn asks.

Lyn has every right to feel the way she does, especially concerning Bianca, but there is no doubt they are missing. “Baby, I understand how you feel, but I was quickly briefed on the situation by Nate before I came back in. The house they share is completely trashed, and while they might be known for wanting attention, I doubt they would ruin their own stuff. It’s not known if there was a struggle because it looks as though the house was tossed. I would hazard to say whoever is responsible was definitely looking for something.”

“Was there any sign that they were hurt?”

Dakota’s question seems to have caught everyone off guard. It’s a viable question, even if it takes us by surprise. “I think the more important question is why.”

“There has to be a connection between the taken Lacey women and what’s happening here. The only obvious connections are Lyn and Dad. The problem is those two don’t know us, so someone using them to get to us makes little to no sense.”

“There’s no visible blood at the scene, but like I stated earlier, the house was completely tossed. The local officials were removed from the property when the FBI showed up. It’ll be at least a couple more hours before there’s a preliminary report available.” Nate advises.

“If I may. As an outsider, I have to question whether the two events are actually related or if there’s a coincidence of magnificent proportions happening. I’m not aware of the relationship status between my Queen, her father, and the two

missing women, but it seems there's no love lost there. So, trying to use them against them seems fruitless to me." Bryan gives his thoughts. Usually, I am not one to believe in coincidences, but his thought has merit. It doesn't seem like using them to get to any of us would do anyone any good.

"Alright, we don't have time for this. For all we know, those two are so dramatic and attention seeking they could have set this entire thing up. Until we know more, it gets set aside for the shit that's directly affecting us."

"Agreed." I nod at Lyn's statement. "Alright, so let's go over what we know."



CHAPTER NINETEEN

Brooklyn

It's been a week since the explosion and with all the alphabet agencies around, not to mention all the hovering adults, Lennie has taken to hibernating in her room. Her shoulder is still bothering her, and she's constantly complaining about the sling and how annoying it is.

Creed and I took her to the doctor, and he reaffirmed she needs to stay in the immobilizing sling for another couple of weeks. After that, she can graduate to a regular sling and the home physical therapy he's given her to do.

I know something else is going on, though. She's been very short-tempered and snapping at anyone that crosses her path. I can at least say there's one thing positive about being a vampire, and that's my sense of smell.

Knocking on Lennie's main door, I can hear her talking to herself and seemingly about to lose her collective shit. Instead of knocking, I just walk right in. She's walking through every room in her apartment. It's obvious she's looking for something, but what, I don't know.

“Lennie, how about taking a break and telling me what’s going on with you? You look and sound like you’re about to lose your mind. Not to lessen the fact that you seem ready to kill someone. Come on, talk to me.”

The expression on her face when she turns to look at me makes me question if I’m right about what’s going on. This isn’t how Lennie normally acts and she definitely doesn’t snap at people, even if there’s a good reason to do so.

“I always keep it in the bottom drawer of my desk, under my stack of extra folders. No one knows I keep it there, so how would anyone know to look there to take it?”

“First, you need to breathe, and I mean it. Second, what are you talking about? What’s missing?”

“Have you or Dad been up here when I haven’t been? My journal is missing and I’ve looked everywhere.” She raised her voice to me and... Oh, hell no.

“Young lady, did you seriously just raise your voice to me? Even worse. Did you really just accuse me and your dad of intruding into your space and stealing something from you? I’m going to assume I heard you wrong, so I’m going to ask you to repeat yourself.”

“I didn’t accuse you or Dad of taking anything. I asked if either of you took it. If you didn’t then fine, who did? It’s not where I keep it. I never move it away from my desk, because that’s where I write in it. When I’m done with my journaling, I put it back in my hiding spot.”

She has been so sensitive and moody, even her uncles have noticed. She has no patience for anything or anyone. I wanted to blame it on the last few weeks being so damn stressful, but as a woman, and now a vampire, I know better.

Losing my temper with her or even snapping at her isn't going to help this situation. So, I'll keep my voice calm and low in tone. I can handle this. If I can handle my bitch of a sister, I can handle a moody Lennie.

"Lennie, I think there's something going on that we should talk about. How about we have a sit down in your living room? I can explain what I think is going on and you can ask me any questions you may have. Sound good?"

With a humph, she walks over to her favorite bean bag and just plops down. I follow her and sit on the couch, folding my hands in my lap. I can tell she's getting nervous, and that's not helping anything.

"Lennie, everyone has noticed you've been moody. We all understood your mood swings for a few days after the explosion, but now you're getting snippy. I've learned there are some advantages to being a vampire. One of those advantages is my sense of smell."

The look of confusion that takes over her face damn near makes me burst out laughing. I bet she thinks I'm saying she smells or something. Damn, I really want to laugh. Damn Hunter for always making me see the humor in everything.

"I'm not saying you smell, Lennie, so relax. What I am saying is I think you're about to start your monthly. You're exhibiting

all the signs for it. Don't forget, I've been there and have experience with it. So, I think after our talk, you and I need to go shopping. So, do you have any questions?"

Watching her close her eyes and taking a few calming deep breaths tells me she understands what I'm saying. I'm not looking forward to having this talk with Creed, but, that's the life of a dad.

"I thought I was getting sick. My stomach's been bothering me and so has my back. Out of all my friends, I'm the only one that hasn't started yet. I honestly thought something was wrong with me."

The heartache in her eyes is so real. I don't understand why she didn't come to me. In a little over a month, she's come to me for everything. Including coming to me about a boy she likes at school.

"Lennie, you've come to me for everything. Why not this? If you had concerns, why not talk to me or even your dad?"

The expression that flashes across her face takes away any sense of control and I burst out laughing. I guess my laughter causes her to burst out laughing as well. Seeing and hearing her laughter makes me feel so much better. I hope it does the same for her. Laughter does tend to be the best medicine.

It takes us a few minutes to gather ourselves enough to stop laughing. When Lennie leans back in her bean bag chair, I get visual confirmation telling me I'm right on the money and my sense of smell is amazing.

The feeling that rushes over me is not alright. Closing my eyes and using my hands to cover my mouth, I have to hide my reaction from her and leave as quickly as possible. I'm so disgusted that I'm reacting this way.

"Lennie, sweetie, you need to go take a shower. I'll run down to my bathroom and get you what you need. Once you're all cleaned up, we can continue talking. I'll also bring you something for your discomfort."

She immediately looks down at herself and just as quickly jumps up and runs to her bathroom. After I hear the shower start, I wait a couple of minutes, then knock on the door.

"Come in!"

Opening the door slowly, I peek in to make sure she's in the shower. Seeing that she is, I walk all the way in.

"Lennie, I'm going to take your clothes and get them soaking. I'll bring back some feminine products, Motrin, chocolate and orange juice. Do you still have water in your mini fridge?"

"Thank you, and yeah, Uncle Jaxon just refilled it with water bottles, lemons and Sprites. I'll stay in the shower till you come back."

Letting her know I was leaving, I got down the stairs to the main floor faster than I thought possible. Running her clothes to my bathroom, I run the tub and toss them in. I'll deal with them a bit later.

Whipping out my cell phone, I call Creed. He's got to handle this. I have to get my dad, Crow, and myself out of this house.

If I'm smelling it and being affected by it, it will only be a matter of moments before the others are.

"Hey, babe, why are you..."

"Creed, there's no time. I need you to come to my room and get the stuff I'm leaving on my bed. Take it to Lennie. You're going to have to handle this. I started reacting to her, and I have to get the others out of the house."

"Lyn, why would you react to Lennie? She's... Oh, shit."

"Exactly. She's in her shower cleaning up. Take this stuff to her. I'll handle Crow and my dad. We'll be at my dad's cabin."

Between rummaging through my bathroom and jogging into the kitchen, I manage to grab the guy's attention. As I'm going through my secret stash in the pantry, I start reporting to those standing behind me, throwing out questions.

"Jaxon, put this stuff on my bed. Creed is headed there to go up to Lennie. Dad, Crow, come with me, now. Everyone, we'll be at Dad's cabin, Creed will explain." Without waiting for an answer, I make them leave the house, relieved when we are outside and headed away from the scent.



CHAPTER TWENTY

Creed

Lyn's call has completely shocked the shit out of me. Walking from the office to Lyn's bedroom doesn't take long and I meet up with Jaxon halfway there. Seeing he's carrying stuff from the kitchen makes me crook an eyebrow.

“What is all that, and who's it for?”

“Creed, has it been that long since you've dealt with a woman and her monthly? Chocolate is a natural craving. Sometimes a woman will want something salty, so we have chips and crackers.”

Looking over at him, he looks at me and cracks a grin. Switching direction with our arms loaded with everything Lyn says we need, we head upstairs to the third floor.

“Well, that's what Lyn said. I also have some Motrin. Lennie's to take two. Lyn said Lennie's tummy area is bothering her and her back hurts, so it'll help with cramping.”

As he shrugs his shoulders, I grab a hold of Jaxon and drag him upstairs with me. “No man left behind.”

The look he gives me makes me laugh. Finally, standing outside Lennie's main door, we both take deep breaths. Opening her door and walking inside, I hear the shower still running.

Jaxon takes all the kitchen supplies to her little kitchenette while I walk over to her bathroom door. Lightly knocking, I call out to Lennie that her Uncle Jaxon and I are here with everything Lyn said she'd need.

"Dad, open the door a little."

Cracking open her door, I lock eyes with her as she peeks out of the shower. "Brooklyn had to get grandpa and Uncle Crow out of the house, didn't she? I thought she was trying to hide her reaction, but I wasn't sure. Is she alright?"

"I think she's pretty upset at her reaction and that she can't be here for you. Uncle Jaxon and I have everything she said you could need. After you're cleaned up and dressed, Uncle Jaxon and I will sit with you and answer any questions you have. Later, you can call Lyn, alright?"

"Okay, but I need clean clothes and the stuff Brooklyn sent up for me. I know how to use everything, Dad, so don't worry. I do have a lot of female friends, you know. So you can breathe easy."

Her laughter carries through her small apartment, making Jaxon and myself laugh. Gathering her the clothes Jaxon said she'd be more comfortable in, I do a quick knock on the bathroom door. Opening it, I slide her clothes on a small seating bench with her other supplies.

Walking over to her living room, I take a seat on her couch. Jaxon is acting like the mother hen that he is and is making her a drink on ice. As well as arranging some snacks on her mini serving tray.

Jaxon sets the mini tray on her coffee table and hands me a bottle of water. Sitting down beside me, we both wait for Lennie to come out of the bathroom and join us. I knew deep down I'd be in this situation one day, it just honestly slipped my mind. The swift kick in the ass reminding me that she's old enough for this and not a baby really sucks.

The bathroom door opening snags mine and Jaxon's attention. Looking over, I see Lennie walking out of her bathroom in her black sweatpants and bright pink sweatshirt. Her hair is wrapped up in a towel and she has bright pink slipper socks on.

The smile on her face is more from embarrassment than excitement. Leaning forward, I pat her favorite bean bag chair prompting her to have a seat. Clearing my throat, I sit back and put on a smile, readying myself for a talk I honestly wasn't prepared for.



Lennie

I want to disappear. Sitting here listening to my dad and Uncle Jaxon trying to explain my menstrual cycle to me is the ultimate nightmare. There are a few good things about this. I have Hershey bars with almonds, my absolute favorite candy bar. There's also Ritz crackers with sliced ham and cheese slices, cans of Sprite and bottles of water.

Uncle Jaxon said Brooklyn ran to the refrigerator, grabbed the meat and cheese tray, threw a box of Ritz on it, and shoved the Hershey bars in his front pocket. Instructing him to take care of me and why I needed to be taken care of. Well, that's a bit embarrassing, but I know she meant well.

"Dad, can we just stop for a minute? You realize that I know and understand what's going on with my body, right?"

Both of their eyes are wide and mouths drop open, they both look shocked. "Squirt, how do you know about this stuff? If you don't mind me asking."

"I do have female friends. I also go to school. I had to take a health class, which was not separated by gender, by the way, and learned about everything. The boys in the class were a-

holes about our monthly and stuff, but we got them back when the teacher started talking about the prostate exams they'd have to deal with when they got older.”

Watching them wiggle in their seats is hysterical and there's no way I'm sorry. ”I'm sorry, no, I'm not. Watching you two wiggle is funny.”

Laughing as hard as I am, I barely get those few words out of my mouth. Now, on top of them looking uncomfortable, their faces are beat red. Oh my god, I wish Lyn was here to see this.

“Hey now, what made your face fall like that? We're glad you were prepared and understand what's happening to your body.”

Wiping my eyes, trying to stop the tears from falling, I shake my head no. Trying to calm myself down, I know I'm overreacting, but jeez, I really wanted Mom here.

“No, it's not that. I'm just emotional and I wish Mom, I mean Brooklyn, was here.”

“I can't physically be there with you, but I can be there this way. Is this good enough?”

I jerk my head up so fast that my neck pops. “Brooklyn! I didn't even think of video calling. Yes, this is totally good enough. Can you video me on my phone so Dad and Uncle Jaxon can leave? I'm making them squirm.”

I jump up to grab my phone out of my room when I hear Dad and Uncle Jaxon yell out that they'd see me later and they love

me. I don't think my phone completed the first ring before I answer it.



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Crow

Sitting in Brooks' cabin is almost nerve wracking because it's so quiet. Well, it's quiet now. Lyn spent the last two hours on a video call with Lennie. That's an entire conversation I wish I could bleach from my brain.

When Brooks' phone rang, he answered it, then put it on speakerphone. Setting the phone on the table, Brooklyn and I turn to face the phone while Brooks grabs a few blood mugs from his little kitchenette.

“Alright, Creed, you have our attention. What's the scoop?”

The growling on the other end of the phone let me know that not only was he not alone, but there are wolf shifters at the main house. I bet Hunter is in heaven. Well, except team Edward isn't there, but I'll never admit I thought that.

“Stop fucking growling already. For fuck's sake, that shit's fucking scary. Now, the reason I'm calling is to let you all know that Bianca has yet to be found. The former Post Commander is also still A.W.O.L.”

“Wait, wasn’t Lyn’s mother missing as well? Why do I have a feeling shit just got real, and I mean real bad? I know Lyn and Brooks say they neither like nor love her mother, but I’m sure there are some emotions there.”

“I’m sorry but Lyn, your mother, and Brooks, your ex-wife’s body, was found early this morning. She didn’t make it. I won’t go into details, because there’s no point. I will say she’s being taken care of and what we need to know is where you’d like her buried and we’ll see that it’s done.”

Setting my hand on Brooks’ shoulder and wrapping my arm around Lyn’s waist, I feel no movement. There’s no visible sign of anger or sadness. I’m not sure how this vampire thing works, so I’m not sure if this is a typical response for vampires, but the emotion I have gotten used to feeling coming off of the humans is non-existent.

“She always said she wished to be cremated, so I guess that’s what you should do. Just tell me this, did she suffer, or was it quick?”

I don’t know why that matters to Lyn, but I can’t say I wouldn’t want to know the same thing about one of my loved loves. I’m personally more curious as to where Bianca is. We all assumed that she was taken along with her mother. Especially since Brooks and Lyn expressed how much alike they were.

“Are you sure you want me to tell you more? I don’t like the fact that I’m having to deliver this news over the phone. I would have preferred to be with you all in person.”

“Creed, when you texted me, I said no for a reason. We just don’t know how we’ll respond to any human being near us right now. Lyn said she reacted to Lennie but got us away from there before we were aware of the situation. We’re currently feeding a bit more to keep ourselves sated. Now, please answer Lyn’s question.”

“She was killed with a single bullet to her head. The way she was found and everything around her makes it appear as whoever was with her was behind her and made the shot. It was quick and I’m confident in saying she didn’t feel anything.”

“Lyn, your eyes are red, and your fangs are descended. Baby, you’ve got to try to focus. No one here has done anything wrong. If you lose control, you could hurt a lot of innocent people.”

“I want Bianca found. If I have to start at that house and sniff my way to finding her, I will.” Her voice comes out strained and I can tell she is fighting for control.

I don’t relax until I see Lyn close her eyes and drop her shoulders. Looking at Brooks, I see the unshed tears in his eyes. His eyes haven’t gone red, nor have his fangs descended, but his expression speaks of his agreement with Lyn.



Creed

“Do we even need to look for the sister if they didn’t mean that much to them? I mean, if the mother’s dead, most likely the sister is too. It’s just a matter of finding the body.” Nate shakes his head.

The words are barely out of his mouth as Lyn, Crow and Dad say their goodbyes, but before the call was disconnected. Son of a bitch, I know we are about to have a problem and there is no time to prepare the room.

“Everyone down, don’t fucking move!”

The growling, bodies hitting the floor and a few screams, I peek up over my desk to see Lyn, Crow and Dad growling at someone they currently have off the floor and pinned against the wall.

“What the fuck did you say about my sister?”

The growls that are emanating from the three of them are causing goosebumps to spread all over my body. The worst of it, my dick is getting hard. Now is definitely not the time. I have to quickly calm things down.

“Alright, everyone, let’s take a deep breath and calm down. I understand the moron has extremely bad timing and absolutely no tact whatsoever, but that’s no reason to kill him. Lyn, Crow, Dad, let’s put him down and step away from him. He’s not worth it.”

As Lyn lowers the moronic agent to the floor, I thought it was over. Boy, was I wrong. As soon as she releases him, all three of them take off out of the house. I’m so confused. What the fuck is going on right now?

“Creed, I just got a call that Bianca was spotted around their old house. Where are they going at warp factor five? Holy hell, can they run.” Bryan pokes his head in the room, having stepped out to take a call.

That’s when it hits me. “Son of a bitch, that’s why they took off like that. They must have overheard you on the phone and went after Bianca themselves. I don’t know if that’s a good thing or not.”

“Hey, Creed, I think a team needs to get together to go after them. If suspicions are proven correct and Bianca did in fact kill Lyn’s and her mom, she won’t see the dawn of tomorrow.”

I can’t believe this shit. Having to focus on several things at the same time is exhausting in every way imaginable. Bianca needs to be found, for one. The Ole Man has to be found for another. And we still need to figure out why this queen blew up the office and wants Lyn and Crow. Fucking hell, I still need to check on Lennie again.

Running my hands through my hair, I fist my hair and pull out of pure frustration. What I really need is for shit to settle the fuck down. We all need Lyn to turn us. Jesus, I could go on and on.

“May I suggest as a fellow vampire and still needing to speak to my Queen and the other newborns, I go after them? It’s not as if anyone else can handle them at this point. Think about it. Three extremely angry, new vampires around hundreds or more humans. I can take the opportunity to speak with the three of them on our way back.”

I have no argument against anything Lyam’s said. He is here specifically for them. Plus, he’s right about being more equipped for handling them. Nodding my head yes, and waving my arm, “Go for it and good luck.” He’s going to need it.



CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Lennie

I never believed my friends when they'd tell me how bad their stomachs and back hurt or how nasty they felt. My stomach hurts so bad and the dirty feeling is real. I've already taken four showers and if Dad comes up here one more time to '*check on me,*' I may scream.

I've taken the medicine like Mom and the bottle said too. It helps, but not much. I still haven't found my journal and it's really bothering me. It has everything in there and it's not meant for anyone else to read. The only room I haven't checked is my guest room.

Now that I think about it. I haven't been in my guest room since last week. I won't need it till this summer when Charlie comes to visit, so I haven't needed to go in there, but maybe I wasn't thinking and left it in there somewhere. Walking toward the door, I'm trying to remember when the last time I actually saw my journal was.

Placing my hand on the doorknob, it hits me. Not only didn't I see my current journal. I didn't see any of my journal books.

Using my good arm, I turn the handle and before I know what's happening, I'm yanked into the room. The last thing I hear is, "*fucking brat,*"



Bianca

Sending those assholes on a wild goose chase was pathetically easy. Hiding in this spare room was even easier until this fucking brat had to go looking for her journals. I knew she'd never find them, because I'm the one that took them. Looking down at her unconscious little body, I just want to kick the shit out of the spoiled little fucking princess. Hearing her talk to herself about losing her mind and her journals was driving me out of my mind. Why does everyone get what they want and I'm always left out, pushed to the side, or outright ignored?

That slut of a sister of mine gets the man I wanted and then sends him to prison. Well, if she wouldn't have kept teasing him and leading him on, he wouldn't have to take what he needed and deserved.

I would have given Max anything he wanted. I was good enough to suck his cock and let his friends fuck me while he

would watch, but he wouldn't fuck me. All he kept saying was I had a dirty pussy, and he deserved better. How *'Brooklyn'* was pure and perfect for him.

Yeah, well, he got his in the end. It didn't go as I thought it would, but it permanently took care of him. He only thought he was the teacher. Looks like I'm the one that taught him a lesson. Now all he can do is dream about having his cock sucked by me. I hope he's gagging as some big man fucks his mouth as deep and hard as he did to me. I really do hope he's someone's bitch.

He was supposed to kill Brooklyn and *'our father.'* He promised he'd do that and take care of *'our mother'* as well. None of that happened either. Everything always works out for Brooklyn. It's always been the same, like I don't fucking exist. Well, we'll just see about that.

Being shut up in this princess's guest room while everyone else went on with their lives. Hearing this brat talk to her friends about how amazing her new mom is nearly made me vomit.

The anger in me is slowly being unleashed and everyone that's ever done me wrong will fucking die. Well, one person can be scratched off that list, but it was way too easy to put a bullet in the back of her head. I can't wait to see the look on that bitch's face as each person she cares about dies, right in front of her. She has to suffer and once I break her in every way possible, I'll kill her.

Looking at this little rich bitch, I know I need to do something before she wakes up. I won't let anyone mess things up for me. No one knows I'm here and I mean to keep it that way, even if it means silencing this little brat. After looking around her little apartment, I am able to find everything I need to keep this little bitch quiet and still move quickly enough to do it before she wakes back up.

After gagging her and tying her hands and feet, I shove her into the closet. Being a smaller walk-in closet, she can at least breathe, for now. Now to have a bit of fun and really fuck with these people.

Time to use the little girl's cell phone to send some text messages.

Household chat: I'm not feeling good. Taking a nap, please leave me alone.

Dad: Can I do anything for you?

Jaxon: I can bring you a heating pad. Putting it against your lower back or tummy can help.

Brooklyn: I'm on my way back. I'll check on you in a couple of hours.

Household chat: Can everyone just leave me alone? I'm not dying. I just want to rest and be left alone.

Brooklyn: Alright, we'll leave you alone for now, but I expect you downstairs for dinner, since you're not dying.

You know what, bitch? You're going to see someone at dinner, but it won't just be the little bitch here. I'll be right behind her

with this little pretty against her head. I look at my gun fondly. Just one of those son of a bitches makes a move I don't like, I will shoot them. I grin at the thought, almost hoping they do.

I have nothing to lose. She's already taken everything from. Now, I'm going to make her feel like I do. Then, after they're all dead, I'll shoot her. No one will care about my death, but it'll damn well be remembered.



CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Brooklyn

Getting back to the house isn't going to take long. I'm just thankful they figured out it wasn't Bianca wandering around the old family house. That saves an unnecessary trip to Texas. I may not have liked my mother, but she was my mother and I'll be damned if someone's going to get away with her murder. Especially my own sister.

I just wish I knew where Bianca's conniving ass is. I don't trust that bitch for an instant. I know she's up to something, but I have no idea what or where and it's got me worrying. I wonder if the FBI would be willing to help us locate her? She is technically still missing and with Mom dead, Bianca's life could be in danger.

"In the years we've had a family chat, or a household chat, I've never seen Squirt talk to anyone like she just did." Crow frowns at his phone.

I should roll my eyes at Crow because I know he means well, but he's probably never been around a young girl the first time

she's gotten her monthly. The entire event can be traumatic. Not to mention her hormones are all over the place.

"Crow, that little lady is almost twelve years old and has started her monthly for the first time. There's nothing in this world that's going to make her happy or feel better about what she's going through. Not to mention, the realization that the same thing will happen every month from now on is a bit overwhelming," I tell him. "She will be okay."

I'm quite interested in knowing what the hell my dad is up there snickering about. A monthly for a girl is not a laughing matter. It's fucking awful. I understand why women have it, but still.

"Dad, I have to know what the hell you're snickering about?"

Is he really shaking his head no? Oh boy, now I really need to know. "Come on, Dad. Spill it. We could use a chuckle. We have the time, and Lyam here can explain all he needs to."

"Alright, but remember, I said no first and you're forcing me to share. Now, I remember when Brooklyn started for the first time. If I remember correctly, and I know I am, she was at the local mall with a few of her friends. When they all went to the restroom, Brooklyn over here screamed at the top of her lungs."

He's no longer snickering. He and Crow are full on laughing their asses off. I can't see Lyam's face, and I think that's for the best, but I can see his shoulders shaking. This is not funny at all. It was traumatic for me. Mainly because of what happened afterwards, but still.

“Anyway, she screams like she’s dying, and I swear everyone in the mall went running. So she’s in a bathroom stall screaming, crying and trying to talk. At least that’s what I hear when one of her friends calls me, tells me that something is wrong, and that Lyn won’t let anyone in and she definitely wouldn’t come out.”

Crossing my arms across my chest, I feel like a petulant child right now. “One of my friends decided that medical help was definitely needed and called nine-one-one. As if the situation wasn’t blown out of proportion already. Anyway, Dad showed up before emergency services did, but not by much.”

“I managed to get everyone to clear out of the bathroom, but for the exception of her friends and one mall security guard. Once I understood what was happening, I slipped her friends some money and sent them to buy her some sweats, new panties, and feminine products. Luckily, the mall had a pharmacy.”

At this point, the only thing holding Crow in his damn seat is the seat belt. I don’t find this funny at all. Assholes. All I can do is let out an exaggerated sigh to show my dislike for this conversation.

“Oh, come on, Lyn. Admit it. At the time, no it wasn’t funny. Now, it’s hysterical. You know damn well that’s not the most embarrassing thing that’s ever happened to you. How about the time you insisted on wearing a two-piece to the local pool and...”

“Lyam, you said you needed to speak with us. Please go ahead and tell us what we should know.”

“Yes, my Queen.”

Lyam doesn't hesitate to begin telling us a bunch of useful information. Plus, it stops my dad from making me relive embarrassing parts of my life. We're not far away from the house, so at least there's that.

After almost forty minutes of listening to Lyam confirm or deny myths about vampires, I'm ready to fall asleep, metaphorically, of course. Dad's voice ringing out jars me enough to focus.

“There's the sign for our exit. I don't know about you all, but I'll be glad to get out of the sun. These windows being this tinted helps, but it's starting not to matter. My eyes are killing me, and my skin feels like it's about to crawl off my body.”

I wasn't focusing on how I felt till he said something. Now that I look at my dad and Crow, I can see they're both uncomfortable. Luckily, in about five minutes, we'll be at the mansion and out of the blazing sun.



Hunter

If another person asks me anything, I swear to God I'm going to lose my shit. I don't see any reason for the CID or the FBI to still be here. There is no more information to be gathered from the blast site, and they already know everything they can from us. They're up to something and they're not briefing us on it, but they sure as fuck are monitoring us. It's clear in the way they watch us when they don't think we are looking.

When I said as much to Bryan, he agreed. They had gathered all the information possible from the blast site, and had the bodies of the attackers, hoping to come up with some sort of evidence to trace back to their covens. Not to mention, he was eager to get back to his pack. His daily check-ins as Alpha were not cutting it and he feared it was leaving an opening to a challenge for his position with him being long distance so long.

That afternoon, he had everyone packed up and moving out. The FBI insisted they stay, but as they could not come up with a viable reason to stay longer to their superiors, they too had to

go. As soon as they were off the property, some of the tension we had all been feeling lifted in their absence.

I'm relatively sure I've worn a nice straight path on the carpet. Walking back and forth in the office while Creed, Phoenix, Dakota, Jaxon, Keegan and Kerrigan talk about the Ole Man and where they think he's gone. Which is only pissing me off.

Headlights catch my attention as I'm about to snap at everyone in the room to just shut up for a minute. I've heard enough guessing and assuming for a lifetime. None of it's leading anywhere, except dead ends.

My cell phone vibrating in my pocket makes me jump, but I'm not alone. That tells me it's the household chat. Lifting my phone out of my pocket, I swipe the screen to see a message from Lyn.

Brooklyn: Someone come get these nasty as fuck smelling pizzas. Dad, Crow, Lyam and I are going to go quench our thirst, then we'll be back to spend time with y'all. Lennie, I expect to see you downstairs with the rest of the family. You have twenty minutes.

Lennie: Fine, be there in a few.

I know and understand what's going on with Squirt, but her attitude flip needs to be addressed at dinner, and if I know Lyn and Creed, Lennie's in for a verbal lashing. Standing at the window, I watch Dakota, Jaxon and Keegan open the van door and grab all the food.

I burst out laughing when Lyn, Dad, Crow, and even Frenchie damn near throw themselves out of the van. All of them had their noses pinched closed. That's joke material right there, or at least it will be.

Walking from the office to the dining room doesn't take long, but that's how long it takes for me to register that there are no agents joining us. Thank God. I appreciate their help and everything, but there was something off about them, and it was much better with them being gone.

I could smell the food before I saw it and that's always a good sign for good food. Waiting while the pizzas and other stuff are spread over the table, I watch guys hurriedly take their seats. I guess we're all starving.

Creed, Dakota, Phoenix, Jaxon, Keegan and Kerrigan take their seats as I walk around the table and sit down next to Kerrigan. We've only been eating for maybe ten minutes when Lyn, Crow and Dad walk in the house and into the dining room.

"Where's Lennon? I told that girl to be here with the family..." Brooklyn starts, looking around for Lennie.

"I'm...I'm right here, Mom. Don't be mad. It's not my fault."

Quickly giving each other questioning looks, we all turn to look at Squirt, freezing at the most terrifying sight anyone can imagine. A woman resembling both Lyn and Dad has a gun against Lennie's temple. Not only are we not moving. I don't think we're fucking breathing. *Bianca.*



CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Brooks

I've blinked my eyes a dozen times, trying to clear my vision of what I'm seeing, but the image stays the same. I have a perfect view of everyone from where I am and the bad part is, so does Bianca.

I don't understand. She looks like my daughter, but doesn't. She even sounds like my daughter. That monster holding a gun to my granddaughter's head is not my daughter. She is a dead woman. She just doesn't know it yet. I can't rationalize this. What went wrong with her?

"Let me make this perfectly clear. If you move. I will shoot you. If you piss me off. I will shoot you. Fuck it. Do anything at all, I will shoot you. Just nod your heads to show that you understand." Bianca waves the gun erratically, fear filling me.

Everyone very slowly nods their head, agreeing to what she's said. What fucking choice do we have? Locking eyes with Lennie, it's obvious Bianca has hit her, and possibly more than once. Lennie has bruises on her face and they're pretty nasty

looking. How many times she was hit, I don't know, but if I can see it, so can Lyn and everyone else.

"Why are you..." I start, trying to placate her, but she interrupts.

"No, you don't get to ask me questions, dearest Daddy. You never fucking cared before. Don't act like you care now. The only thing you care about is that bitch whore of a daughter standing next to you."

The growl in her voice resonates pure unhinged anger. The look in her eyes is nothing but a cold, dead anger. She was given everything by her mother. Bianca never seemed to want to be with me, so I never forced her. Maybe that was my mistake. Her mother spoiled her, and I did nothing.

We're forced to watch her lean down next to Lennie's ear. The sound that comes out of her mouth can't be described as a chuckle. No, more like an evil cackle, if that's a thing.

"Ya know, Lennie, I really appreciate you being such an excellent writer. Your journals were so much help. I know exactly who's who, their attitude and relationship to my whore of a sister."

Bianca is shaking with excited anger as she whispers in Lennie's ear. Fucking hell, she has lost her damn mind. I bet Lyn is right and Bianca knows exactly what happened to their mother.

"Bianca, you need to talk to us. After you let Lennie go. Tell us what happened to your mother."

“Tsk, tsk, tsk... Daddy dearest, I told you not to speak. Pathetically predictable that you wouldn’t think the rules of my game apply to you. I guess I’ll have to prove my point.” She looks almost gleeful.

She moves the gun from Lennie’s temple and aims the damn thing so fast, that when she shoots, we all wince. I’m not worried about Lyn, Crow, or myself. Bianca has no fucking clue what’s happened to us and that, short of beheading us, she isn’t going to get the ending she is after. I’m willing to bet she’ll find out at some point, but that’s something we will deal with when we come to it. First, Lennie. Sputtering from one of the men breaks my thought process.

“You bitch. You fucking shot me. What have I, or any of us for that matter, ever done to you? From the sounds of it, you’re just a self-entitled bitch who thinks the world should revolve around you. Well, fuck you, you skanky bitch,” Dakota growls, clutching his chest, his words coming out almost garbled.

After Dakota finishes speaking, he falls out of the chair, and his body hits the floor. Lennie lets out a soft scream as he lands right at Crow’s feet.

“Shut up,” Bianca shakes Lennie, looking wildly between us. The scent of Dakota’s blood hangs in the air, and I have to fight the way my body reacts. I can’t let Bianca see. Not yet. A quick glance at the others and I see they are holding back as well. Even if we couldn’t smell it, there is no missing the blood pouring from his chest. I know she missed his heart, but

if we don't help soon, he'll die and there won't be any bringing him back.

“You dumb bitch! Who the fuck do you think you are? Ever since we were little, you thought you were better than everyone around you. That's why no one likes you. The only attention you could get was spreading your legs for anyone with a dick. You always blamed us for your lot in life. Well, you know what? Fuck you, fuck your insanity and you better fucking kill me, because I'm going to rip your motherfucking throat out and bathe in your blood!” Lyn seethes. Her words are furious, but I can tell she's drawing Bianca's attention away from the guys and, more so, away from Lennie.

Holy shit. The look on Bianca's face makes her look like she's possessed by a demon. I get wanting to draw her attention away from the others, but I don't know what Lyn's thinking, trying to piss her off even more. Bianca is clearly unhinged. Instead of responding, she raises the gun again and aims it point blank at Crow.

I wince as another gunshot rings out, echoing in the small room. She doesn't hesitate as she shoots Crow square in the chest. What the fuck? He falls to the floor next to Dakota. I'm not worried about him, he might hurt like fuck but that shot won't kill him, no matter where she hit him.

“Bianca Lacey! What the fuck is wrong with you? You don't even know these people, yet you're making them responsible for what you think was or is an awful life? You are not my daughter.”

“Fuck you, Daddy, I haven’t been your daughter since the whore beside you lied about Max. If she wouldn’t have teased him so much, he wouldn’t have had to come to me to take care of him. I was good enough to suck him off, but he wouldn’t fuck me. I wasn’t good enough, because I wasn’t her!”

While she continues to yell, I’m able to see Crow on the floor. I’m beginning to think Lyn did what she did on purpose to give Crow a way to help Dakota. I can see the bullet on the floor and Crow has slumped over close to Dakota. I can’t be sure, but from where I’m standing, it looks like Crow has bitten Dakota to save him before it’s too late. Looking back at Bianca, I don’t want to draw her attention to what’s going on at my feet.

Thankfully, she continues ignoring the two on the floor, thinking she already dispatched them, so caught up in her own tirade. “You know what? I’m already over this. None of you can, or will even try, to see things from my point of view. Besides, I didn’t come here to get any of your sympathy. I’m here to kill each and every fucking one of you, right in front of the whore.”

Lennie flinches as Bianca entwines her hand into Lennie’s hair and pulls it to control her. When they first arrived, Lennie looked terrified. Now, Lennie looks like her fuck around and find out button has been flipped.

I’m getting the worst feeling in my gut that Lennie is going to try something, and with the gun pointed back at her head again, that’s not a good idea. Bianca is hell-bent on hurting

Lyn as much as possible. She won't care that Lennie is an innocent child. The only advantage we have in this situation is Bianca doesn't know about the paranormal world.

The smile that takes over Bianca's face is freaky and scary as hell. I've never seen her anywhere near this level of crazy before. She's always had delusions of grandeur, but I thought it was only because of her mother spoiling her.

"Before I shoot the rest of you, I need to say one more thing. Daddy, Brooklyn, I shot mom in the back of the head. That bitch tried telling me I had to get a job. That she wasn't going to pay my way for the rest of my life. Worst of all, she said I should be more like Brooklyn! I don't work and there's no way she was getting away with that. If she didn't want to take care of me, then she shouldn't have given birth to me!"

As she finishes screaming, she raises the gun toward Hunter, who spreads his arms, daring her to shoot him. With her enraged, I know we all want to do anything to keep the gun from being pointed at Lennie, even if she is using her as her shield at the moment. "Go on then, bitch, do it." He knows we'll save him, one way or another.

She hesitates for a brief second, but lets out a low growl and squeezes the trigger. No sooner does she fire the shot, all hell breaks loose.

Hunter falls back, his body hitting the ground, and, at the same time, Lennie takes the opportunity to stomp Bianca's foot, while slamming her head backwards into Bianca's chest. Stumbling backwards, Bianca falls, taking Lennie with her.

The gun goes off and before I can form another thought, Lyn and Lyam are over the table, bee-lining straight for Bianca.

Lyn rips Bianca's hand from Lennie's hair and pushes Lennie to the side to get her as far from her sister as possible. Lyam grabs Lennie and scoops her up, getting her away from the situation. I jump over the table and yell for Lyam to follow me, racing up the stairs, knowing he is right on my heels.

"We're putting you in the panic room. Engage it, Lennie, and don't argue with me. You know what's happening downstairs. Now engage the panic room. We'll get you when it's safe." I tell her, leaving no room for argument.

She nods her head and I watch as she places her hand on the mirror, and the chimes start before the secure door starts to close and lock her in. Seeing her tears streaming down her face, I back up, but we don't leave till the panic room's secure door is closed, and I hear the lock activate.

Running back downstairs, Lyam and I see blood everywhere. Looking at each other, neither of us knows who it belongs to. Moving toward the dining-room door, what I see, both breaks my heart and gives me relief at the same time.

My gaze lands on Bianca's lifeless form, crumpled on the ground, blood spilling from her throat, the gaping wound making my stomach turn as I realize where the blood on Lyn's hands likely came from. I don't even recognize the woman on the floor anymore. Rage and sadness fill me, and I'm not sure exactly what to make of it. Bianca was my daughter, and I wish I could have done better by her, to keep it from coming to

this. To keep her heart and her mind well enough. I feel like I have failed her. Like I have failed them both.

Lyn should have never had to deal with any of this. Not the attacks, not having her choice taken from her time and time again. Not losing her mother, and not having to kill her own sister to protect her family. The swirl of emotions threatens to overwhelm me, but I realize beneath it all is relief. Bianca is freed from her madness and Lyn no longer has to worry about what her crazy sister may or may not do to get even with her for something that wasn't even her fault.

Taking an unnecessary deep breath, I release it. Realizing too late what a bad idea it is with all the freshly spilled blood. "I have to go, or I might turn someone." My voice comes out strained and I feel myself tremble.

"Dad, I'm sorry," Lyn stands up and meets my gaze as I turn away from Bianca.

"You have nothing to be sorry for. You did what was necessary."

She presses her lips together and nods, fighting whatever internal battle she is having. "Whatever you are thinking, Bianca did this to herself. With her own choices."

"Yeah, and now I have to make mine, to protect my family from getting hurt again," she squares her shoulders and looks around the room. Dakota is still unconscious, and it looks like Hunter has begun the process as well, Crow hovering over both of them watching them closely.

“Lyn,” I interject, not wanting another decision forced on her because she feels she has no other choice, but she holds up her hand and stops me.

“No, Dad. I appreciate it, but you know it was going to happen sooner or later. I guess it’s sooner. Bianca might be gone, but the threat against us with the Council and whatever Queen is hunting us isn’t. I can’t take the risk of losing everyone like this again.”

“The others are already changing. You know we are all on board, but we don’t have to rush into anything.” Creed glances from the guys over to Lyn.

“It’s not rushed. It’s what’s best for us. For our family.” She squares her shoulders and looks back at me. “I know it’s asking a lot, but I can’t do this by myself. If you think you can, will you turn Jaxon?” Her question makes my brow raise, but she continues. “Everyone will still be linked to me that way, and there is no way I can turn everyone on my own. Right now, it’s a matter of protecting the family and keeping everyone alive. Well, sort of. Where is Lennie? Is she alright? I mean, she’s not shot?” Brooklyn half rambles and half orders, trying to make sure everyone is taken care of as she wipes her bloodied hand on her pants.

“Brooklyn, my granddaughter is hysterical, but no, she’s not shot. As for being safe, yes, Lyam and I got her to the safe room in her apartment. She’s locked in and safe. She understands what’s happening here and knows that’s the safest place for her right now, even if she doesn’t like it. I told her to

stay there until one of us came for her. Creed, why don't you use the intercom to talk to her and see if you can calm her down a bit? It would probably be good for her to hear from her dad," I suggest. Jaxon has made his way over to me and has already tilted his head, exposing his neck with a shit-eating grin on his face. They all knew this would happen eventually. What I don't like is it seems, once again, Lyn's being forced to do something. Granted, this time it'll protect her entire family, but still, the situation isn't ideal.

I look at him awkwardly, not exactly sure what to do, even if Lyam had just explained it in depth to us. "Yeah, let's sit down on the floor in the foyer. I don't want you fainting or something. Let's just start there. I'm going to bite you, sucking your blood out of your body till there's hardly any left. At least that's what they said happens. Once your heart stops, I'm going to make you drink from me. You're cool with all of this?"

"Absolutely," he winks at Crow and I see a red flash in his eyes. Lyam said it could be very sexual, especially if there were a previous romantic connection. I can see why Lyn asked me to turn Jaxon. Those two have one hell of a connection.

He lays down, turning his head to face me, again exposing his neck. I don't even know how I feel about this, but I do know Lyn's right and we don't seem to have a lot of time between us being attacked by someone.

Leaning down, I realize my fangs are already descended, the hum of his pulse beneath his skin calling to my new instincts. I

bite down on Jaxon before I can back out of it, the small pop of my teeth puncturing his flesh, somehow relaxing me. His moans send a sexual sensation through my body that's so powerful, I can say I've never experienced anything like that before. I pull back once I feel he is nearly drained and notice that Crow is watching heatedly, momentarily distracted from the ones he is turning. Fuck this is going to take a lot to get used to.

I push the thoughts aside and refocus, waiting for the moment I hear his heart completely stop. Lyam said it was a small window of time, and I don't want to fuck it up. Once his heart stills, I rip open a vein in my wrist and allow my blood to drip into his mouth. Holding my wrist close for him to latch onto, I start to get nervous because he seems to take a little longer than I thought it would. After a few more tense minutes, he's up and latching onto me. Teeth sinking into my wrist until I force him to stop and he falls limp on the floor again.

I let out a long breath and look around the room, now more full of unconscious bodies than not. Well, this is going to be a hell of a change.



CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Dakota

Why the fuck are the lights so god damn bright? Holy shit balls. “Can someone turn the damn light down? They feel like someone’s pointing a mag light right in my eyes.”

Why is Creed yelling at Lennie? What in the hell... wait, that bitch fucking shot me. Crow... Crow said something to me and then I felt a flash of something that was both pleasurable and painful. Oh shit, am I a vampire?

Opening my eyes fully, I realize I’m in the living room on one of the couches. Turning my head toward the center of the room, I see Jaxon and Keegan sharing the larger couch. When I feel a hand grab my wrist, I roll over a little bit and see Kerrigan on the floor below me.

That’s when I’m fully aware that we’ve all been turned into vampires. Fucking hell, did that little bitch shoot all of us? Sitting up, I look around to see exactly where everyone is. Crow, Dad, and Creed are sitting in the middle of the staircase. Phoenix is laying on that french chair that Jaxon insisted on. I don’t see Brooklyn, Hunter or Lennie. Son of a bitch, Lennie.

“Where’s Lennie? Is she alright? Is she safe away from us, ya know, just in case? Where’s Hunter? I don’t see Lyn or that other one. Was that Bianca that shot me?”

“Dakota, I’m still breaking Lennie from asking questions like speed racer. Can you just not? Yes, Lennie is safe, and she’s is alright. She’s shaken, but she handled herself like a champ. Hunter is outside watching the fire. We don’t need the forest burning down and he was the first to finish his transition and said he needed some air. Finally, yes, that was my sister Bianca, and she’s what’s burning in the pit out back.”

Walking over to Lyn, who was just out of sight, I wrap her in a tight hug, placing light kisses on the top of her head. “I’m so sorry she went crazy like that. I see we’ve all been turned. So does that mean she fucking shot everyone?”

Lyn shaking her head no, both gives me relief and fills me with more questions. Turning around, I glance around the room as more red eyes begin to open. Turning back to face Lyn, I quirk an eyebrow in question.

“Bianca shot you, then Crow. You were not shot directly in your heart, it was bad enough that Crow started turning you while Bianca’s attention was diverted. Then she shot Hunter. As she was about to take aim again, Lennie flipped out. She stomped her foot down on Bianca’s and slammed her head back like she was taught, and caught Bianca off guard. As she landed, Lennie fell on top of her when the gun fired one last time, hitting Creed square in the chest. So, I made the executive decision that Crow, Dad, and myself would just turn

everyone. Well, except Lennie. Thankfully, Lyam stayed behind to make sure everything went smoothly with the transitions. I couldn't take the risk of my family getting hurt anymore."

Feeling my shoulders relax a bit, it hits me. "Where is Lennie?"

"Lennie's in the safe room that's in her apartment. She is connected to the others and can walk through them. We've been using the intercom system to speak with her. She's using some of the supplies to keep herself occupied. She knows and understands what's going on out here and why it's safest for her, right now anyway, to stay in the secured rooms. We're all fine, Dakota. I promise."

I see over Lyn's head that Crow is heading toward us with what looks like a cup of coffee, but it smells like pure ambrosia. Handing the cup to me, I don't hesitate to take a drink from it. The itch that was starting in my throat is already easing, and my body is feeling better. Saying it feels more alive isn't correct, but it is an accurate description.

Looking from Crow down to the inside of my cup, I realize it's blood. That is going to take some serious getting used to. It's weird, but I know my eyes were red. I can actually feel them changing. My fangs are descended, but not all the way, and the slight pinch that forms on my gums isn't exactly painful, but it is new.

Crow slowly makes his way around the room, handing everyone a cup of blood. He's quite the nursemaid. Not that

I'll ever say that one out loud. I know we're all pretty new to this vampire way of life, but I'm not feeling froggy. I don't need, nor want, his ass leaping at me right now.

While we're all sitting around, sipping our blood mugs, not one of us has said a word since Hunter joined us. We're all physically here, but I can't say the same for mentally or emotionally. I know we'll be alright. I just hope it doesn't take too long. We still have a business to rebuild, a council to meet with, and an old fucker to find. Not to mention figure out how some queen fits into all of this.

That fucker has some serious explaining to do. Not that anything he says is trustworthy, but I still want to hear what he has to say. He's responsible for what happened to Crow, and we all damn well know it. The bigger picture is that he's participating in espionage. He should have to step in front of a firing squad.

This silence is starting to get to me. It's time to get this room woke up and remind them we have shit to do and a target on us. We need to talk this shit out and put the work into it for our family.

Our priority was to get the Security Company going. Helping anyone and everyone is our mission statement. What I didn't expect was that our first case would be for ourselves. I don't know how this is going to go, but I'm going to drag Hunter into it. That man can find humor in anything and everything.

"Hey, Hunter, do you think we'll get gray hair as we age, or will we always be youthful looking? If we always look young,

how are more vampires not exposed?”

Well, that brightened his eyes and made him sit up straighter. Taking a sip from his mug, he clears his throat. “I’d say no, we’ll never age, and as for vampires not being exposed, I think that’s because the sun really is a nuisance, so they, we, I mean we, tend to stay out of it. Activity at night is less noticeable.”

“I see what you’re saying and I actually agree with you. Knowing that, why do you think the Ole Man wanted us turned into vampires or be sacrificed? We still aren’t a hundred percent sure what the fool’s reasoning is. I do know I want this target off of us and to be able to live as we see fit.”

The growls that reverberate around the room are just what I was hoping for. We don’t have time to sit and mope about shit and we’re not like that anyway. Now, we just have to figure out where to start and what our plan of action is.

“One, he no longer deserves the nickname of the old days and he damn sure doesn’t deserve to be called any form of Commander. Cass Dexton is a self-serving, traitorous bastard and I intend to bring him down and as hard as possible. The sooner the better.” Creed growls, the red flashing in his eyes.

Creed’s tone and volume lets us know exactly how he feels about Dexton. That’s what I was hoping to hear. We all needed a bit of a verbal lashing and a reminder of who and what we are, as well as a reminder of who we’re after.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

Brooklyn

I understand the guys want to find their former Commander, but I think they're a little fixated. We also have to get the office building repaired and set up a meeting with the Paranormal Grand Council. Find out what they have to do with any of this, if anything, and why there is a Queen so hell-bent on hunting us down. We have a lot to do.

At least I don't have to worry about them bugging me to change them anymore. Although I'm still pissed as hell at how I was forced into that one, even though I will never let them know it. I just didn't see another way of protecting them, other than giving them the ability to protect themselves from whatever's out there. And at the rate people are coming for us, there is a lot we need to protect ourselves from.

I don't know how the link we all now share works, but I can tell everyone needs to take a step back and calm down. Right now, my priority is getting Lennie out of the safe room. I don't like her being in there, much less the room protecting her from a perceived threat. None of us are going to hurt her.

“Hey, guys, listen up. Creed, go let Lennie out of the panic room. Everyone has had blood, and none of us are going to hurt her. If being close to a human were going to be an issue, the proximity of her, even in the safe room, would have already been enough to trigger any of you. At least, according to Lyam. Forcing her to be away from us when she knows damn good and well what happened isn’t fair to her. She’s not a baby and we need to start respecting that.”

Creed and Jaxon jump up and go running up the stairs. Damn, we can move fast. Alright, now to get everyone doing what they do best. “I think everyone here has a special ability, and that’s what made you guys an awesome unit. Let’s put your military training to the test.”

I’m pretty sure I’m winging it at this point, but I don’t care. Everyone being busy in one way or another will help ease the tension that’s in this house and possibly help us get closer to our goals. At the very least it will keep us from wallowing and get us moving forward again.

I’m looking forward to having boring days. I have faith that it’s possible. Looking at my family, I know we’ve got this and I know we’ll come out of this just fine. These men were a unit and then family. Now, we’re all a family unit.

“I don’t know what all of your abilities are, so I’m going to call out something that needs to be accomplished and whoever wants that job, call out and get to it. Does this sound good to everyone?”

Seeing them clap their hands together or nod their heads in agreement, it's like they've been waiting to be given something to do. Well, if I'm truly the Queen of this coven, then I might as well start acting like it.

“Alright, someone needs to figure out our food supply. I refuse to deplete the forest of its animals and feeding on humans is an absolute no go. Blood bank, either we need to make a deal with one or we need to create one.”

Keegan and Kerrigan both stand up and take that one. The rest of the assignments go relatively easily. Phoenix takes paranormal research for the security company and pairs up with Lyam to help fill in some of the blanks. Dakota takes on tracking Cass down. Hunter, Jaxon and Crow take the task of getting the security building repaired. Creed, Dad and myself take on forming an alliance with the Grand Council.

Lennie is relatively quiet after Creed unlocked the panic room, but I honestly expected it. She'll be twelve soon. She was just taken hostage with a gun to her head. If she came out happy and bubbly, I would be worried. The bruising on her face actually looks worse than it did, but that too is expected. I think I have a job for her and it's right up her alley.

“Hey, Lennie, how good are you at finding out information without anyone suspecting you?”

When her eyes meet mine and I watch her quirk one of her eyebrows, followed by a devious smile, I'm convinced that the girl would locate God himself if we put her up to it.

“The expression should worry me, I think, but right now, it’s fitting. This is what we need. Just tell me if it’s not possible. If I were to give you a list of names, could you find them on any social media sites, learn about them and make a page for each of them, so we can learn as much as we can about them all?”

“Mom, I mean, Brooklyn...” she stops herself and looks away.

Oh, no you don’t. “Why did you stop, correct yourself, and then drop your head? Lennie, it’s not the first time you’ve called me Mom and I’m flattered. I have no problem with you calling me Mom, if you want. That’s up to you and your dad, but whatever you choose is fine with me.”

When Lennie looks at Creed with that smile of hers, I damn near melt and it’s not even directed towards me. Creed simply winks at her, “You heard Mom. She needs your help. Can you do it?”

“Yes! I can. I can find out anything and everything about them. I need time, though. This isn’t a simple thing. I need whatever information you have on them.” Her excitement is glorious to see.

Phoenix looks up at me, then to Creed, and then down to Lennie. Raising an eyebrow, I’m not exactly sure what that means, but I sense he’s curious about Lennie’s assignment.

“Hey, Squirt, we’re doing paranormal research. Since they’re all paranormal of one type or another, would you like to work together with me and Lyam? Maybe we can work up a full profile on each of them.”

Her enthusiasm over this is amazing. I'm not sure if it's because she likes that kind of thing or if it's because she's not being treated like a little kid anymore. My new momma gut feeling tells me it's both and that's just fine.

I stopped working for a little bit to get all of us blood mugs, we might not be hungry, but it's better to keep the tank topped off and not risk actual temptation, especially with all of us being so new. We also took the time to prepare Lennie an actual meal, despite the scent of real food making most of us nauseous. I'm sure we'll all get used to our new senses, but for right now, we all stand on the other side of the room until she is done eating.

When she finishes her meal and looks up at us, she bursts out laughing so hard that she leans back a bit hard in her chair. That turns her laughter into tears and has us all running to her.

“Creed, Lennie's hurt her shoulder. Is there anything we can do for her? I'm sure her being mishandled didn't help matters much.”

“Mom, can I just have some Ibuprofen? The doctor said that's what I should take right now. He said not to mask the pain, but to take the edge off. I didn't understand what he meant at the time, I do now.”

“Sure, we can do that. I'll get you a Sprite and a couple Ibuprofen. Then you can get back to work when you're ready.”

I really want to just send her to bed so she can relax, but I know that's not the answer and treating her and us with kid

gloves is the wrong move. She may be on her monthly, but it's something we have to adapt to just as much as she does.

Not treating her like a child, being attentive, and keeping our thirsts taken care of should help everyone to have a sense of normalcy around each other. We're a family and with what we've already been through, we can handle anything that comes our way.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Phoenix

I can't believe how fast this day went by, or at least it sure feels like it flew by. To be fair, a good part of it, I was knocked out cold while I transitioned. Looking down at Squirt, I realize she's passed out at her computer. Picking her up, I signal to Lyn and Creed that I'm taking her to her room.

"I'll come with you. She needs to wake up to handle business before she goes to sleep for the night." Lyn calls, standing from where they were working.

Being a little confused, I look over to Lyn and the wink she gives me reminds me of our little girl is now a lady. Opening my eyes wide, I mouth 'oh yeah' at Lyn. I don't know how I could forget something like that, especially since I can actually smell it. That is so weird and makes me feel wrong.

Once we make it up to Lennie's room and she takes care of her personal stuff, we tuck her in and tell her goodnight. Walking out of her apartment, Lyn closes her main door and sags against it.

“It’s amazing how I can feel exhausted, but wide awake and ready to go. This vampire thing is going to take some getting used to.”

Stepping closer to Lyn, I press my body against hers. Lifting her chin with a finger, I lightly graze her lips with mine. Leaning in for more, I trace her lips with my tongue. The shiver that travels through her body also runs through mine.

Reaching down, I wrap my arms around her thighs and lift her till she wraps her legs around my waist. Using the door behind her, I grind my hardness against her, eliciting a glorious moan from her.

“Baby, can I have you? I want and need to be inside you.”

Her lips crashing onto mine is answer enough. Carrying her down the stairs to our floor, I walk straight to her room. All I can think for a moment is thank god the door is already open. Walking inside, I kick the door shut behind us before crossing the room and gently laying Lyn on her bed and lay on top of her, bracing my weight as not to hurt her.

Kissing her is like sipping the finest wine. I don’t want it to end, but there’s something else I’d like to taste. Lifting my body, I reposition myself on my knees, looking at her beauty. I almost lose my damn mind when she removes her shirt and bra at the same time, sending them flying across the room.

“Damn, baby, are you trying to make me come before we really get started? Now, lift that fine ass of yours so I can slip off your leggings.”

Slowly pulling her leggings down her body reveals black and red lace panties. Damn, my baby is gorgeous. Pulling her pants off, I follow her lead and throw them over my shoulder. Leaning forward, I crawl up between her legs and make myself at home.

Rubbing my nose over her lace panties, I inhale deeply, taking her delicious scent into my body. It's then that I notice the string ties on the side of her panties. Oh, how glorious. Reaching over, I untie one side and then the other. Pulling the front down to reveal her perfectly trimmed, beautiful pussy.

Looking up and meeting her eyes, I slowly run my tongue up her, getting the reaction I was hoping for. Closing her eyes and arching her back, she spreads her legs more for me.

There's no stopping the rumbling growl of pleasure that comes from me. "Oh yes, that's my good girl."

Her quick intake of breath tells me of a compliment kink and I can definitely work with that. Spreading her pussy with my tongue, I use a thumb and pointer finger to keep her open for me. Running my tongue around her clit is already making her legs shake.

Sliding a finger from my other hand through her juices, I slowly slide it inside her heat while I nibble on her clit. Her moans are causing my cock to leak, but before she gets that, she'll explode on my tongue.

Finger fucking her a little harder has her calling my name. Fuck, I like the sound of that. Gliding my tongue around her clit once again, I can feel her quivering inside. She's close, so

close. Latching my lips onto her clit, I use my tongue to tease the shit out of her. Finger fucking her even harder, she explodes with my name coming from her.

Rising up to a kneeling position, I remove my shirt, using it to wipe my mouth. Lifting one leg at a time, I remove my jeans and my boxer briefs. Lyn licking her lips is driving me insane, but that will have to wait for another time.

Leaning back over her, I position myself at her entrance. Looking into her eyes, I see them flash red. Fuck yeah, sliding my cock inside her is pure magic. Feeling her legs completely wrap around me as I seat myself inside her is mind blowing.

“Phoenix, I want you to fuck me now.”

The growl that comes from her at the end of her statement is a slap on the ass to a wild stallion. I slowly pull out of her and quickly slide back in. Each time getting harder and faster. Her nails racking down my back sends a pleasurable pain through my entire body.

Reaching my arms around her, I fall backwards and bring her with me. Now she’s in control. “Ride me, my Queen. Take all the pleasure you want. Let me feel your juices run down my cock and balls.”

Lyn leans down, pressing her breasts to my chest and starts grinding my cock deep inside her. Jesus, fuck, that feels amazing. When she sits up and starts riding me like she would a stallion, I watch as her eyes go red.

So her eyes turn red when she's close. Good to know. Sitting up, I take her legs and wrap them around my waist. Placing my hands on her hips, I force her down as I push up. "Yes, Queen, come on me. Use your nails. Fuck, you feel like the Goddess you are."

Before I know what is what, she sinks her fangs into my neck, making me explode. I, in turn, sink my fangs into her breast. As she screams my name and squeezes my cock even tighter, she makes me cum again.

Once we've both withdrawn our fangs, she repositions her legs, allowing me to fall backwards and her follow to lay on my chest. "*Being a vampire definitely has its perks.*"

"It definitely does," I laugh, rubbing her back.

"Wait, what? You heard that?"

"Of course, I heard. I'm right here."

"Phoenix, I thought it, I didn't say it out loud." She looks at me in surprise and we both start laughing.

"Yeah, being a vampire is definitely cool," I agree.

When she turns her head, placing a kiss on my chin, she whispers, "We're mated, babe. I hope you're ok with that."

Rolling her over, I slide between her legs, slamming my hard cock back inside her. I'm confident that tells her how I feel about it and her smile is all I need. As I take her once again.



CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

Dakota

Being a vampire is cool as hell. Having vampire hearing and sense of smell while Phoenix and Lyn are fucking, damn near drives me insane. I'm eternally grateful they showered before they came back down because the scent of them at a distance, through a closed door, is bad enough. Not that it totally helps, but it's better than them not showering.

One thing we learned at the beginning and relatively quickly was sleep's not a thing for us anymore. We rest by sitting down and relaxing, but truly sleeping is now a thing of the past. Taking a sip of my blood mug, I look around the house office and realize we're all together.

"Hey, I'm wondering if we can have a little meeting for a minute?" I speak up.

Everyone turns to look at me and without question they all walk over to me, taking a seat wherever, giving me their full attention. I'm not one for making speeches, but there's something that needs to be said.

“Lyn, we all owe you a giant thank you. We know you were struggling with the decision to change us, but when we were put in danger, you set your feelings aside. You allowed Dad and Crow to help you get us all changed as quickly as possible, but more than that, you quite literally saved Hunter’s and my lives. I just wanted to tell you thank you.”

Each of the guys agree, thanking her but she shakes her head.

“I only did what was necessary to make sure you could all be protected. To protect yourselves better with what we are up against. I see more why Crow did what he did after going through that. After being terrified I wouldn’t be enough to keep you all safe.”

“They will have no clue what they are up against now,” Hunter smirks and the mood lightens again.

Taking a sip from my mug, I ready myself to tell them what we found out about Cass.

“Now, I’m forced to turn the subject to Cass. He’s been located and none of us did it. Squirt did. We haven’t told her yet because she’s asleep, but when she wakes up we will.”

“Holy shit, that’s amazing. So where is he?” Hunter’s so impatient.

“Calm your jets, because as we speak, it’s being double and triple checked, but it looks like he’s been executed. Oh, stop the growling and hissing. What difference does it make who did it? The traitorous bastard is dead. Lennie found some pictures that were posted to a friend of a friend’s of a friend’s

social media page. She knew a couple of kids from the pictures, so she contacted them. She asked where to send flowers and what should be put on the outside of the card. The kid is smart. She was given the information, and it turns out the funeral was for Cass.”

I knew that would send them into a tailspin of conspiracy theories, so I’ll just sit here and wait for one of them to ask how we know for sure it’s him. After another ten minutes, Dad finally looks at me with a raised eyebrow.

“Dakota, I’m in no way calling you, my granddaughter, or whoever told her he’s dead a liar, but how do you know for sure?”

Smiling at Dad, I hand him a piece of paper that I received by fax while Phoenix and Lyn were upstairs and the rest of us were dying with need. Watching him read over the paper, his head pops up with a shit-eating grin on his face.

“Well now, isn’t that interesting?” I thought he’d enjoy that.

Personally, I’m feeling robbed. He was ours to catch and deal with. He set up Crow and was trying to set the rest of us up. I will say whoever killed him did it in a way to make one hell of a statement.

“How about sharing with the rest of us? After you share your news with us, I have a question that needs addressing.” Jaxon motions toward the paper.

Jaxon isn’t normally the impatient one, so I wonder what’s eating at him? I guess we can find out as soon as I share the

news that I'm sure it's going to make everyone happy and not happy, all at the same time.

“Alright, everyone, here's what the fax that was sent to me says,

Attention: Dakota

Action Report on Death account of Cass Dexton

13:28 Subject torso located

Victim's country estate, El Paso, TX, back of 20 acres in ravine

Decapitation is the likely cause of death. Autopsy will confirm or find the actual cause.

1:58 Subject head located

El Paso Military Installation, Main Gate, Impaled on metal Spike

Sign below victim reading:

Traitor

Cass Dexton was removed as Post Commander and arrested under suspicion of treason. Bail was posted by someone that chose to remain anonymous. Surveillance video deemed useless. Person shows as blur, no definition.

End

“So, as you heard for yourselves, our major headache has not only been located, but efficiently dealt with. The problems I have with this are, one, we didn't get to question him. Two, who did this? Whoever did was aware he'd been arrested by the Provo Marshals Office and required bonding out. On a

separate note, the only ones that I'm aware of that might resemble a blur on a security tape would in fact be a vampire."

I can't begin to read the emotions flying through everyone. Getting used to feeling what the other's feel and smelling it is definitely going to take time. One thing I'm loving is the hearing part of this. I can't say for sure, not that it really matters now, but I don't think being a vampire will be all that hard.

"Well, that removes our need to hunt Cass down. Which actually sucks. I was really hoping we would get some answers from him about what was done to Crow. Who ordered it, and why? You said you had a question or something that needed to be addressed, what was it?"

Leave it to Creed to get right to the point. "So, would anyone happen to know where that three hundred-year-old vampire, Lyam, disappeared to? Personally, I find it interesting he pops up when shit's happening and then poofs. This would be something good to get his input on."

"He's been here all-night helping research. Maybe he stepped out for some air, or a hunt or something. None of us even know what a vampire really does when they have downtime," Hunter shrugs.



CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

Phoenix

“Well, I guess you all could consider that I’m here to help in any way I can. With all of you being new to this *‘lifestyle,’* if you will, it was decided that someone with experience, patience and a sense of humor would benefit all of you.”

We all spun toward the office doors so quickly, you’d could have sworn we all broke our own fucking necks. Lyam is standing, well, leaning against the doorframe with a smug smirk on his face.

“And where in the hell have you been? Oh, and where the hell did you come from? There’s enough shit storms around here without adding a three hundred-year-old prissy princess into the mix.”

The growl and hiss that comes from Lyam make my goosebumps have goosebumps. Holding my hands up, dipping my head, I slowly step back, allowing Lyn to step in front of me. I’d say I feel like a pussy, but she is our Queen.

“You’ll have to forgive Phoenix here. He’s very protective of his family, especially after all the shit we’ve been through

recently. So, why don't you chill the fuck out and answer the man's questions?"

The power emanating off of Lyn is literally crawling over my skin. Looking around at the others, I can see it's affecting them too. Even Brooks is looking from Lyn to his own arm. This is really cool, but I have no fucking clue what it means.

"I think it would serve us all better if we had a seat and maybe some refreshments. Your refrigerator is fully stocked with blood. It will hold this household over for some time. As new vampires, you'll need to feed at least four to five times a day. Always remember to feed before you're in the presence of humans. Although it's seen as distasteful to feed on humans, the temptation will be there nonetheless and strongly for a while."

"Look, we're grateful you're willing to school us on all things vampire, but could you tell us who the hell you are? Where you came from and maybe who the hell sent you?"

Thank you, Creed. I mean, yeah, we need to know all this stuff, but learning from a stranger that just showed up on our doorstep is a bit disconcerting. I'll admit he seems very nice and quite helpful. The information he gave Lyn and Crow after Dad's transition helped a lot. And he was invaluable in guiding us through the shit show after Bianca. But then he just up and disappeared again when we were finished with our research for the evening. It made all of us realize how little we know about him. Getting some basic information first is welcomed.

“Ah, yes, apologies. My name is Lyam Monet and, as previously stated, I am three-hundred-years old. I was born in Paris. I was working as a journalist and covering what was referred to as ‘*Sacrifices to the Devil.*’ Rather proud of that title actually, but excuse me, I digress. I was out late working yet another murder scene when I was attacked from behind. The police, as you call them, didn’t even notice I was taken. It happened so quickly. I was turned that night and reborn. I have made it my mission to help those left to their own devices because of a subpar sire. No offense.” He nods to Crow. It wasn’t his fault really that he was a sire incapable of taking care of those he turned.

“No offense taken. Please continue.”

Wow, Crow was a lot calmer than I thought he’d be. Especially being called out like that. Well, I guess that’s a good thing. As a human, those would have been fighting words, but then, those words wouldn’t have been spoken to start the fight.

“As I was saying. I was visiting one of my ‘*offspring,*’ if you will, and overheard the conversation you had with him and the Grand Council. Which I will say I believe your company working with them is a truly wonderful idea. I can see you all know whom I speak of, McDonal. Yes, I am his sire and regularly check in on him and my other offspring.”

I never gave McDonal’s sire a second thought. I won’t say having Lyam around is a bad thing, but his appearing and

disappearing has got to stop. He does it so fast it's inhum... for fuck's sake, never mind.

"To speed up the rest of this introduction, let me just get to the point. When I heard all that the Council said, as well as referring to a queen, I had to meet you and help you. We don't have many and my Queen, you are the only one in the United States. Hearing the threat hanging over you all, I reached out to some of my contacts. Once everything was discovered and Cass Dexton was arrested, I learned he would be released once his bail was paid."

"So you went and posted his bail anonymously. Followed him home. Killed him, placing his head at the post's main gate, knowing no one would actually see you. Slick, I have to admit, that was slick as hell. The problem is we needed to question him about Crow and the attack on our security office. Now we'll never have the answers to that information."

Creed's right, and I'm not sure how I feel about it. I can see and smell everyone else's frustration as well as my own, but even that doesn't help anything. That's when an idea flashes through my brain.

"Lyam, you already know the answers we seek, don't you?" His smile tells me I've hit the nail on its proverbial head.

"Tis true, tis true. Cass knew nothing concerning the attack on your security office. He did know about Crow being turned. There's a very old vampire in Germany who believes feeding off the strong will help him regenerate. He's a fool that's minutes away from death because of his own stupidity. He was

beheaded hundreds of years ago, but not burned. When they buried him, they literally sewed his head back on his shoulders. Merely removing a head will not kill a vampire.”

That is both disgusting and fascinating. Just not sure what is weighing the most at the moment.

“The point is, his body has not been the same since his head was removed and then reattached. He’s quite literally withering away. To him, drinking the blood of sacrifices and strong men will help him continue to thrive. Crow, you weren’t being hunted to kill you. You were being hunted so you could be educated. Your state of hunger made you a bit delusional. That, I’m sorry to say, is why you attacked and turned our Queen.”

Did he seriously just raise his hands like, well, that’s that? Wait, how in the fuck does he know all this? Something isn’t sitting right with me and looking at my brothers and Lyn. It’s obvious we’re all on the same page.

“Let me be the first to say that was one hell of an entertaining story, but how in the hell do you expect us to believe all that? Answer us that.”

“Simple. First, Queen Brooklyn is my Queen. As I know you have been informed, my tie to her does not permit me to lie to her. Secondly, that dying vampire is my sire as well as Crow’s. Well, allow me to correct that. He was our sire. While some of my younger and I’m sure overzealous offspring were attempting to catch Crow, I permanently removed our sire’s

head and made sure all parts were burned in different burial plots.”

The intercom activating makes all of us jump and wince. Not because it scares us, but because of the high pitch squeal it releases. Squirt calling for her mom was the prime opportunity to end this meeting, for now. We have a lot to think about.

“Lyam, we have a guest suite you may use to relax and freshen up or, you’re welcome to the spare cabin in the middle of the property. Whichever you choose is perfectly fine. We’ll all meet back here in the morning. Lyam, you can continue educating us then, if you’d like.”

“The guest suite sounds divine. A warm shower is never a bad thing. As for continuing your education, that sounds good to me. There’s quite a lot to cover. Not only that, but I may have information that you’re all seeking.”



CHAPTER THIRTY

Hunter

This entire evening has been one major cluster fuck and finding out we don't get to handle Cass just pisses me off. I can say I'm grateful Lyam took care of his and Crow's sire. I'm not sure how long it'll take to get used to referring to things a bit differently.

Walking up the stairs to my room, I run into Lyn as she's on her way down from seeing Lennie. "Is she alright? She's had to deal with so much in such a short time. Maybe we should plan her birthday party tomorrow."

Lyn's face lighting up is one of life's greatest gifts. She is so excited and as we're walking, she's telling me different ideas she has and how she's had Lennie's gift in her room for a couple of weeks.

I'm not sure if she realizes she's followed me into my room or not, but I let her continue to chatter as I close my door. She walks over to my bed as if she's done this a thousand times and starts taking off her shoes and socks. Standing up again, she walks over to the ensuite I share with Dakota.

Not saying a word, I follow her and make sure I lock Dakota's door. I don't know where this is going, but I'll be damned if that fucker interrupts us. Turning from the door, my thoughts are silenced and my body refuses to move. The sight before me is stunning.

Lyn is naked and facing me. Her head is held high with her arms running down the length of her torso, nice and relaxed. Finally, forcing my body to move. I walk up to her, lightly brushing her hair from her face. Taking in all the glorious smells, I know she wants me.

Dropping my hand from her face, I slip my shirt off over my head, dropping it to the floor. Reaching down to the waistband of my jeans, I unbutton and unzip them. Keeping my eyes locked on Lyn's, I slip my jeans and boxer briefs down my legs and then step out of them.

I'm so grateful I'm not wearing my boots. That would have been a nightmare. As I raise myself back to a standing position, Lyn steps in the shower, turning the water on. There's no way I'm not going to stand here for a minute and watch her luscious body as water cascades down her breasts. Seeing the steam beginning to rise, I step into the shower with her. Wrapping my arms around her waist, I pull her to me. Reaching down, I lift my manhood so it's pressed between us. Her grinding against me nearly undoes me.

Slowly backing her up against the shower wall, I reach down, wrapping my arms around her thighs. Lifting her is the same

as lifting a feather. Vampire strength is a real thing. Not that Lyn's heavy, but it sure does make this a lot easier.

Lifting her up while pressing her body to mine feels spectacular. Taking her mouth, we use our tongues to explore each other's mouths. Rubbing her womanly heat up and down over my hardness is eliciting moans from both of us.

Lyn's moans send waves of pleasure through my body. Unable to handle anymore, I position myself at her entrance. Slowly lowering her as I push up is a feeling I never want to get used to. Her warmth and the grip of her walls feel so good, I can see myself easily becoming obsessed with her.

"Hunter, please. I can't take this. I need to feel you deep in my core."

"Oh yes, my queen, as you wish."

Forcing her down as I slam up, I seat myself as deep as I can. I know I'm not the longest, but I have girth on my side. Balancing my stance and holding her hips, I begin pounding into Lyn as fast as I can.

Feeling her walls quiver around me, I brace her tighter against the wall while slipping a hand down between us. Twisting my hand so I can use my thumb on her button wasn't easy, but it was so worth it. Barely touching her sends her over that glorious edge and my name falling from her lips into my mouth is damn near explosive.

Lifting Lyn enough to pullout of her is fucking painful, especially with the whimper of losing our kiss and me from

inside her. Setting her down on her feet, spinning her around, her hands automatically brace herself against the shower walls. Bringing her hips back. I push on her back to lower it. Spreading her legs, I line myself up with her entrance. Pushing back inside her and feeling Lyn tighten around me is glorious beyond words. When Lyn pushes back, I give her a little pop on her ass. The moan she releases breaks me.

As I'm pounding into her, I can feel my eyes change and my fangs descend. It's a new feeling for me, but it's a rush at the same time. Lyn reaches for my wrist, and I gladly give in to her want. Leaning over her back and placing my mouth just below her right shoulder, we both sink our teeth into each other at the same time.

The rush it sends through my body, even after we remove our fangs, makes me fuck into her as hard and as fast as I can. Reaching around her, I tweak her button by pinching it between my thumb and pointer finger, making her squeeze me as she orgasms, causing me to explode deep inside her.

Slipping out of Lyn, I help her stand up. We take our time washing each other and stealing kisses. Finally, feeling like drowned rats, we get out of the shower. Drying off, we walk over to the bed and just plop down and fall backwards. I know we're not tired, but we still need to rest.

'Well hell, I should grab a book and go sit in Lennie's living room. I want to be there in case she has nightmares or just needs something.'

“That’s a good idea. I’ll be shocked as shit if she doesn’t start having nightmares. I’m actually surprised she hasn’t already, but Squirt is a serious trooper.”

Lyn sits up so quickly she made me jump thinking something’s wrong. Looking around, as well as listening, I don’t see or hear anything. Turning to look at Lyn again, I crook an eyebrow in curiosity.

“Umm, babe, you want to share what the hell made you jump like that?”

‘Hunter? Can you hear me?’

Nodding my head is about all I can do because I’m seriously confused at the moment. I know damn well I heard Lyn speaking, but her mouth never moved. I was looking right at her. *‘What the fuck is happening?’*

‘Remember what Lyam said about how sometimes mated couples have shared abilities that come from mating? Well, it looks like we have telepathy.’

“That is fucking cool as hell. Not that it’s my business, really, but have you mated any of my brothers? I mean, do you share some kind of ability with them?”

‘Yeah, ya nosey bastard, she does. Maybe we’ll all have telepathy. I can hear both of you as plainly as if I were in the same room with you.’

It’s at that moment both of our eyes go wide and we burst out laughing. That means Phoenix had to suffer while Lyn and I

were together. Laughing a bit harder, it hits me at the same time I can tell Lyn realizes it.

It will happen when she's with Creed, with Dakota and, if he's lucky enough, Crow. Now it's not so funny anymore. Apparently, I'm the only one not amused by this because Phoenix and Lyn are still laughing their asses off.

Lyn doesn't even stop laughing long enough to kiss me. She pecks me on top of my head and then walks into the bathroom to get dressed. It only takes her a few minutes, and when she walks out, she blows me another kiss.

"I'll be with Lennie if anyone needs me."



CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Liam

Walking this property to my temporary housing is no hardship. This land is quite beautiful. The night sky is clear, and the air is crisp. Other than a few forest animals, it's very quiet here. Which is another welcoming feature.

Arriving at my humble home, I walk into a beautiful, authentic wooden cabin. There have been many times over the past three hundred years that I thought I was walking into one situation, only to find something else upon arrival.

Closing the door after I walk in, I observe wooden beams everywhere. It's a perfect balance of light and dark woods. They really do complement each other and bring out the aesthetics of the cabin.

Walking over to the fridge, I grab something I haven't had in decades, a cold beer. It won't get me drunk, or even buzzed, for that matter, but it'll taste good all the same. Sitting in an oversized chair in the living room, I open my beer and, as the Americans say, I take a swig, focusing my mind on the task at hand.

How am I supposed to tell these men, and mainly my Queen, that the people that blew up the security office only did so to get a hold of her? They didn't really want Crow, other than to separate his head from his shoulders.

She knows nothing of this world, yet she's been thrust into a Vampiress war of epic proportions. The one thing all vampires have in common is our original sire. No matter how far you look into Vampiric history, everyone is somehow linked to the same Vampires Sire, Lilith.

She is the mother of all the paranormals. Obviously from vampires to wolf shifters to palace cats and so on. Being cast out of the Garden of Eden and being replaced with a mere mortal such as Eve, set Lilith on a path of revenge and retribution. Many don't know that Adam and Lilith were both Demigods.

Just thinking of a pissed off Demigod gives me chills. Gods are more tolerant of mistakes of any form than the Demigods are. Demigods can, and do, tend to hold grudges. Not only that, they are very gifted. Magic's came from somewhere and I find it almost humorous that no one's linked its existence to the DemiGods. It's laughable that anyone would think the Gods themselves would bestow magical abilities on mortals. That's a power they only intended to wield themselves.

There lies the current issue. Lilith stated that her rebirth would come when least expected. Not only that, but would come in the form of a new birth. Human's think she meant a new birth,

as in a baby being born. Paranormals know it as the birth of one of us. Birth meaning a new beginning.

When Crow made Brooklyn, the entire paranormal community knew when she awoke. How do I tell them that Brooklyn's been blessed by Lilith and a lot of paranormals will either want to keep her, want to kill her, or want her blessing?

Someone knocking on my cabin door jolts me to a standing and ready to fight stance. Whoever it is, isn't human. No human is that quiet on approach, no matter how hard they try.

'Come in.'

As soon as the doorknob starts turning, I know it could only be one of two Vampires, Crow or Brooks. I'm betting it's Crow. Opening the door and peering inside, I see Crow's head.

"Brother, never enter a room headfirst unless you're in the mood to lose it."

The expression that takes over his face tells me he never considered that. Well, that's just another reason I'm here and will be as long as I'm needed.

"Wise advice, Lyam, and something I'd not thought of. I'm sure there's many things you'll be able to teach us and I'm glad for that."

"But you want to know what really made me come here personally, instead of sending more of my offspring? You also want to know why Brooklyn feels different to you each time she mates with one of your brothers? Well, why don't you grab a beer and have a seat?"



Crow

Walking over to the cabin's kitchen, I open the fridge, grab a beer and pop the top. Turning to look at Lyam, I see he's sitting in the little living room. Making my way to the couch, I take a drink and sit down.

Leaning forward, I sit my beer on the coffee table. At least I know that beer still tastes the same. Leaning back, I cross my right ankle over my left knee. Allowing my hands to rest in my lap, I prepare myself for whatever's about to be said.

“Well, you stated the questions I've been thinking about, so why don't we start there? Actually, start with why the hell you were having me hunted? I'm still not happy about that.”

Lyam leans forward a bit as he nods his head, seemingly understanding why I'm not happy.

“I'd like to apologize for the behavior of my offspring. They went about locating you in all the wrong ways. I can assure you they've been dealt with concerning that situation. They were tasked with finding you, explaining what was happening, and asking you to go with them to meet with me.”

The disappointment is clearly written on Lyam's face. He looks like a disappointed father that's spoken to his children several times and the behavior is not improving.

"I can accept that explanation and only express that they're lucky I wasn't one hundred percent. If I had been, I can promise you I would have killed them. Now, I'm quite sure you have other offspring that you could have sent in your stead. So, no more games and no bullshit. Why are you here?"

"I'm going to tell you everything, but you have to understand one thing first. The world you once were a part of no longer exists for you. The human world is now the alien world. You, your brothers, Brooklyn's dad, Brooklyn and even little Lennie, are now a part of a world that is as dangerous as it is wonderful and magical."

I can appreciate how he sees things and how he explains it. I like blunt and straightforward people. Beating around the bush tends to be for people that worry about hurting someone's feelings. It's not really a bad thing, more like there's a time and place for it and now's not it.

"Now, as for Brooklyn, that's a bit harder to explain, and I'm hoping you'll be able to assist me when I speak with her. Which I need to do very soon. First, I have to express the amount of danger everyone is in on the property. Whoa, calm down. They're not in any danger from me. That is truly the main reason I'm here and not simply speaking to you all on a video call."

I wish I could say his words are comforting, at least a little bit, but I'd be lying. He does need to explain the danger aspect of this. I have run out of patience.

“I know you've noticed certain things about Brooklyn. Like when she's emotional, it's like a tidal wave of power that flows from her. It's exciting and scary all at the same time. You, as well as the others, can feel when she's mated with another of her men. That's because she's completing her harem. Each man adds to who and what she is. Who she is, is the reborn embodiment of the DemiGoddess Lilith. What she is, is the most powerful Queen in existence. She's Goddess blessed.”

Did I... Wait, I know I heard him correctly. How in the hell did this happen? What the fuck does this mean? Now I'm more confused than I was to begin with. If she's Goddess touched, reborn or whatever, then what the fuck are we?

“Crow, I need you to calm down and listen. Mainly because I'm going to need a bit of help explaining all this and these people are your family. You know them better than I do, so listen up. The attack on the security building was another queen who wants the paranormal world to believe she's the embodiment of Lilith. Her problem is that it was partially working until Brooklyn was reborn. The moment she was reborn, the paranormal world knew exactly where to find her and who she is.”

When he stands up, I know it's because the heaviest of his news is still to come. I think anyway. As he starts passing

behind his chair, I just sit and watch him. Waiting for him to continue.

“The only one that wants to bring harm to Queen Brooklyn is Queen Talia. Everyone has their suspicions that she was a liar and only posing as Lilith reborn. Now that the paranormal world knows the truth, Queen Talia will lose everything she’s obtained. To prevent this from happening, she must show that she’s more powerful than Brooklyn. Truth be told, she isn’t, but she will go to any length to remove any threat to her reign. Well, fake reign. Because of the power she’s wielded, others will assist her with this. They don’t wish to lose their place in the hierarchy, either.”

Standing up, I make Lyam jump. I did stand up fairly quickly. When are we going to get a fucking break to just live our lives? All we want is to actually help others and we can’t do that when there’s a target on our Queen’s head.

“Crow, I need you to calm down. There is only one way this can end, and everyone lives as they wish. After Queen Brooklyn mates all the men she’s chosen, she must challenge Queen Talia to a death match. Understand, Crow, this is a fight to the death and in no way, shape, or form may anyone interfere.”

Before I even realize what I’m doing, I walk out of the cabin and head for the main house. It’s not like I have to worry about waking the household up. Other than Lennie, everyone’s awake. There is no way in hell I can hold onto this and not let them all know what’s happening.



CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

Creed

The one good thing about all of us being vampires is no one can sneak up on anyone else. Our hearing and sense of smell is a hundred percent on point. Getting used to certain noises hurting my ears will take a while, but the rest is pretty nice.

All of us, for the exception of Crow, Dad, and Lyam, are sitting in the office looking over the photos of our security office. The explosion was bad, but not as extensive as we thought. Structurally, the building is sound. It's going to require some serious renovation, but that's better than the entire building being a loss.

The slamming of the sliding glass door in the back of the house has us all on our feet, moving toward the kitchen. We stop when we hear another noise upstairs. Seeing Dad running down the stairs only spurs us forward again.

“It's me and Lyam. We need everyone except Lennie in the office. Hunter, can you grab everyone a mug? I promise with what we have to say, everyone will need it. I'll do the explaining because I've spoken with Lyam, and I can do the

explaining a bit quicker. There will be a shock factor, so prepare yourselves.”

Making an entrance like that and dropping news like that isn't a normal thing for Crow, so this must be really important. Giving Hunter a nod to go grab all the blood mugs, I have to admit with Lyam being with Crow, this has my curiosity level up. Not to mention the expression on his face, speaks volumes I haven't seen from him in some time.

Walking over to my desk, I take a seat, leaning back in a relaxed, yet guarded position. I don't know what's going on, but I'll damn sure be prepared for anything. Giving Crow my full attention, I just watch as he walks towards me.



Crow

Waiting for Hunter to return with all the blood mugs and everyone to have a seat, I walk to the front of the office. Leaning against the bookcase just behind Creed's desk, I wait and watch everyone. After a few more minutes, Hunter walks in with a tray of mugs, Lennie in tow.

“Creed, I don’t think this is something you want Lennie sitting in on. It’s up to you as you’re her dad, but what I have to say affects us all. It’s all wrapped around us and the paranormal world we now find ourselves in.”

“That means it affects my life, too. This is my family and I have a right to know what’s happening. I’m almost twelve and not a little girl anymore. I’m not leaving.”

Lennie walks over to Brooklyn and sits on the floor at her feet. The look I get from Creed, Brooklyn and Lennie, tells me there’s no point arguing. Taking my mug, I drink half of it down. Making sure my lips are clean before setting my mug down.

“Alright, brother, we’re all here. Would you like to tell us what’s got you so riled up that you’re damn near vibrating from it?”

Looking at Lyam, he gives me a nod to go ahead. As does, Creed, Dakota, Phoenix, Hunter, Jaxon, Keegan, Kerrigan and Dad. Finally, looking at our Queen and Lennie, my feelings are all over the place with the boom I’m about lower on everyone.

“Something about Lyam being here wasn’t sitting right with me. I don’t necessarily mean in a bad way. I just knew something was, well, off. I went to the guest room and realized he’s gone to the cabin. We had a long, detailed talk and when I say he blew my mind, I mean it and I still feel as though I’m grabbing onto things to fully make them make sense.”

Taking another drink, I allow my eyes to roam the room once again. It's obvious I've peaked everyone's curiosity. To a point, that's a good thing, but we all know what they say about curiosity killing the cat.

“I had a few questions for Lyam, which he answered without hesitation. First, our Queen Brooklyn. We know you've mated or claimed Phoenix and Hunter. You should have also noticed new abilities. Such as hearing them without them actually using their mouths to speak. Hunter and Phoenix can also speak with each other, without the use of their mouths. This will intensify with each mating or claiming you have. You will become more powerful with each one. Only you know who your men are truly meant to be, and the rest of us have to accept that.”

Looking at Brooklyn and her raised eyebrow, it's obvious that she's intrigued by what else I have to say. I am thankful for that, because I've said the easy part. Now to drop the bomb or bombs, depending on how everyone wants to look at this.

“The thing is, Lyam is here because of who my sire was. That part is true, but it's not the only reason. He's also here because he was drawn to be here when Brooklyn was reborn. The moment you woke up after your transition, you started sending out powerful vibrations of, well, of power. Making a long story short. Adam and Lilith were the first two people on the earth. The issue was that they were both Demigods.”

Here we go. I hope everyone is holding on to something because I'm not stopping till I get the rest of this out.

“The gods were threatened by Lilith, her love of Adam, and her power. When the gods were able to cast Lilith out of the Garden of Eden, replacing her with Eve, she had already created the paranormal side of the world. Shifters of all sorts, vampires and many others. She swore that when she died, her spirit and powers would be reborn into a queen worthy of such a gift. Brooklyn, you’re that reborn queen. You’ve been reborn right in the middle of a Vampire war. Queen Talia swears she is the one chosen by Lilith and has been building her empire under that lie. The moment you awoke, the paranormal world knew the truth. Queen Talia is the one that’s responsible for the security building being blown up. She was using other factors in our lives to attack. The main goal was to grab you. They only wanted to kill me, because at the time I was their only threat.”

A stunned silence has fallen over the room and I expected it to be honest. They’ve heard what I said. Now they need to process it, deny it, and then try to figure out what the fuck we’re supposed to do next.

“She can have whatever Lilith was or is passing on. I don’t want it and don’t need it. I just want all of us to be together and run our lives the way we see fit to do so. I want peace and calm for Lennie. She’s had enough drama in her life and doesn’t need anymore. Matter of fact, none of us need it.”

“Queen Brooklyn, I am sorry to say it doesn’t work that way. Lilith’s spirit and power chose who would be bestowed with her gifts. It’s not something you can merely reject or give to

another. This gift is yours and with that comes being '*The Queen*,' of the paranormal community."

What the ever-loving fuck just happened? I thought he meant she'd be the queen of the vampires. Not the entire paranormal community. She's going to kill me for this alone. Reading the expressions on everyone's face is easy. Anger and frustration are the biggest and easiest to read, at least to me. And there is plenty of all of it in the room right now.



CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Brooklyn

What in the hell am I supposed to do with all of that? Queen of all the paranormals? What kind of fucked up situation have I been forced into now and why do the gods deem it necessary to keep testing me? My mind is going a hundred miles an hour in fifty different directions.

“Brooklyn, I think...”

Raising my hand, I stop Crow from speaking or coming any closer to me. I’m not mad at him anymore. I just don’t know what to think right now. I mean, this Queen Talia is coming after me because of something I don’t want and would gladly give her if I could. That’s when a thought, then several others, cross my mind. I’m focusing now.

“Whoa, hold on a minute. Lyam, what’s missing from what Crow said? Something isn’t adding up. If this queen wants me dead, and she’s willing to hurt my family to get to me, what’s going to stop her from trying again and again and again?”

Son of a bitch, I don’t like what I’m seeing in him. The way he’s standing and his expression. His body seems tense, where

he seemed relaxed when he entered the room and when we first met.

“Queen Brooklyn, it’s obvious you dislike being called that, but you must get used to it. It’s who you are now and everyone in the paranormal community will call you by your proper title. You cannot allow your hesitation for the title to show, as the paranormal community will see it as a weakness. Something you absolutely are not, but they will attempt to take advantage of. As for missing something concerning Queen Talia, yes and no to your question. You’re missing nothing when you say she’ll come after you and anyone you care about till she’s able to kill you. What you are missing is that you must allow her to come at you again. The only way to end this and to keep everyone safe is to challenge Queen Talia in a Death match.”

How in the hell am I supposed to issue that kind of challenge to a woman I don’t know, don’t want to know, and damn sure don’t want to kill?

‘Lyn, I know right now only Phoenix and I can communicate with you this way, but this woman won’t stop till you’re dead. That means killing us if need be.’

‘Baby, Hunter’s not wrong with what he’s thinking and saying. We all know you’re not a murderer, but you are a protector. This is you protecting all of us by killing her. Which I have no doubt you’ll do.’

Looking from Hunter to Phoenix, I just want to stomp my feet and scream out, I don’t want to play anymore. Their smiles

and light chuckles let me know they heard what I was thinking. That's still going to take some getting used to.

“So what you're saying is that in order to save my family and myself, I have to kill this woman that I don't know. A woman that wants me dead merely for the fact that I'm, I'm, what Demigoddess touched? I haven't been a part of the paranormal world long and so far, it's not making a good impression.”

No sooner do I finish speaking, the guys start speaking and arguing all at once. We all now have heightened hearing and there's no need for them to be bickering and yelling like they are.

“Hey, everyone! Could you just stop!”

Without even turning around, we all know who that came from. Looking at each other, you can almost read the shame taking over our faces and body language. We all just got essentially told to shut the hell up by an eleven-year-old. We all look at Lennie at my feet. Not one of us is uttering a single word.

“I'm sorry, but at the same time, I'm not. Y'all are yelling and cursing about something, from what I understand, we don't have any control over. You all may not be able to get headaches anymore, but I sure can, and I'd appreciate it if you all just quieted down. If Mom has to kill this Queen Talia to keep the rest of us safe, you all know she's going to do it. So, stop acting like any of us can stop what's going to happen.”

In a matter of moments she said what she wanted to say and settled back at my feet as if she didn't just put a whole room of

vampires in their place. I won't hide the fact that I love when she calls me Mom.

“Well said, Squirt, and you're right. Your mom will do what has to be done, but that doesn't mean we have to like it. You're also correct in saying there isn't anything we can do about it. Especially with Lyam saying there can be absolutely no interference. Thank you for making us all see a little reason.”

The level of pride in Lennie's posture is very evident. With every word that Keegan spoke, her back straightened and her smile widened. Our girl's going to be able to handle anything as she gets older, and I'm damn glad for it. No one will ever be able to hurt her.

Turning to face Lyam once again, I pick up my mug, take a long drink, and clean my lips before setting it back down on the table. Now for the not so fun part, details. There's always details.

“Personally, and excuse me Lennie, but I'd like to know what the hell is involved with this challenge of the Queens. Where this is to take place, and when, for that matter? Also, if we can't interfere to help Brooklyn, what will stop her minions from attacking us?”

Right on Dad. I knew you would see through the technical bullshit and get to the point. He knows me well enough to know that I want this shit over as fast as fucking possible. I know Lyam said my mating needed to be complete and I know it's not.

I still need to mate or claim, whichever it is, Dakota, Creed and Crow. I've already linked my dad to me by turning him to save his life. After Crow and I mate, he can mate Jaxon, Keegan and Kerrigan, which will link them to me. For fuck's sake, I don't know how I know all that, I just do. Some new instinct that comes along with being a vampire.

At least we know now where the threat is coming from. That gives us more ground to prepare. We might not know how the Council fits in yet, but that seems the least of our concerns. This Queen Talia seems pretty hell-bent on my destruction, and that means coming for my family. Something I can't allow.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Lennie

Now that I feel like a bully for making everyone quiet down, I can actually hear what all the different conversations are about. No one is happy about this challenge, but they at least all agree on one thing: Mom's going to rip that lady's head off her shoulders.

Dad, Grandpa, Uncle Jaxon, and Lyam are all talking about making sure they keep the others from interfering in the challenge. Uncle Crow, Uncle Dakota, Uncle Hunter and Uncle Kerrigan are all talking about loopholes. Whatever those are.

Uncle Keegan and Mom are just listening to everyone, being really quiet. Almost too quiet. Mom told me that you can learn a lot by being quiet, watching, and listening to what others are doing. I've also learned she's right.

I don't like the idea of this challenge thing, but I understand why it has to happen. Well, I'm pretty sure I do anyway. Looking back at Mom, I realize she's looking at me. When she smiles and winks at me, I know she's either about to do

something or say something that's going to make everyone else flip out.

“Hey, Lyam, do you know how to get a hold of Queen Talia? I want all this drama done and over with. We have about five weeks to get the security building cleaned up, named, renovated and ready for business before I have a couple of week's worth of meetings.”

I don't know what Mom's talking about with all the meetings, and I don't think anyone else knows either. Everyone looks totally confused. It's kind of funny.

“You all act like I don't know how to write and send emails. No matter what's going on, we do have a business to get up and running. In order to accomplish that, I have to do my job. I don't sleep, so when I'm simply relaxing I've been sending out emails and making contacts. Other words, doing my job.”

Mom seems annoyed and everyone else still looks surprised. I must be missing something. I swear I don't understand adults. They're all weird. I love them, but they're weird.



Brooklyn

For fuck's sake. They act like I'm speaking a foreign language. What I've asked for and what I've said is in plain English and self explanatory or at least I think so. The men look beside themselves with confusion and Lennie looks as though she wants to laugh her little ass off.

"Lennie, did you understand any of what I said? If you did, maybe you should explain it, because they all look a bit lost."

That's all it takes for Lennie to start laughing. Her laughing makes me laugh, leading to Keegan bursting out in laughter. That's when the others snapped out of whatever stupor they were in.

"Gentlemen, this is what's going to happen. I'm taking Lennie to the kitchen. She needs to eat. After that, she'll be in her apartment with her grandpa. She has schoolwork to work on and I won't allow her to get behind because of all this bullshit and her getting hurt because of it. Creed, I would like to take a walk with you, alone."

Pointing at Lennie and my dad, I motion for them to head to the kitchen. They both get up and head straight for the kitchen. Turning to once again look at the room full of men, I cross my arms and shake my head in disappointment.

"Guys, look, let me make this easy. Any threat that hangs over me, hangs over the rest of you and, more importantly, my daughter. I won't fucking have it. So listen up, Creed, you're with me so we can talk. Lyam, find out where this bitch queen is and set up this challenge. The sooner the better."

Turning away from the guys, I walk to the kitchen. I know my dad would be fine handling Lennie, but I want to make sure that she is really alright with everything. She's stronger than a lot of people think, but she is only eleven years old.

Walking in the direction of the kitchen, I hear Lennie and dad laughing and talking. I don't have to look behind me to know Creed's following me. Entering the kitchen, I smell grilled cheese. That used to be one of my favorites.

"Well, aren't you the lucky one? Your grandpa's grilled cheese sandwiches are the best. I've tried to make them like he does, but I've always failed. They're good, don't get me wrong, but they aren't to his standards. Your dad and I are going for a walk. When we get back, I expect you to be working on your schoolwork."

Kissing her on the top of her head and giving my dad a wink, Creed and I walk out the sliding door, heading toward the woods. I have a couple of things that need to be brought to light, and I'm hoping he's on my side for all of it.

"Creed, I need to know what you're thinking. You've been quiet, and it's bothering me. Now that we all know why the security building was attacked, I feel like Lennie getting hurt was my fault and..."

"Stop, right there. Lyn, none of this is your fault. Hell, it's not even Crow's fault. As far as I'm concerned all of us are victims of circumstances caused by others forcing their will on us. So, if the other things you want to talk about involve what's going on, or will be going on, know this: I support you

one hundred percent and I'm thrilled Lennie is calling you Mom, so you don't need to worry about that either."

Glancing up at him, I give him a wink and smile. He can't know how much stress and anxiety he just lifted off my shoulders. I can feel my entire body relax. Walking deeper into the woods, neither of us say anything and we just enjoy the quiet and the break from the tension and drama.

This land is so beautiful and quiet. There's a sweet smell and a crispness to the air. It doesn't feel cold, but then, from what I understand, vampires don't really feel the cold. Creed taking my hand in his and interlacing our fingers, sends a thrill through my body. And my body all but vibrates in anticipation as we make our way further into the woods.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Creed

Taking this walk with Lyn is the break we both needed. I knew she was feeling insecure, or at least worried about everything going on. Especially in relation to Lennie. That's why I just shut her down. None of this is any of our faults and we will make the best of the shitty situation. Time to change her frame of thought.

“Lyn, if I don't kiss you and feel my dick inside you soon, I may scream. I want to fuck you out here, in the woods. I want to sink my teeth into your neck and for you to do the same to me. I need and want to belong to you, and you to me. Are you alright with that?”

When she stops, I thought I'd fucked up. Turning to look at her, the smile and gleam in her eyes told me I hadn't. As she walks up to me, she wraps her arms around my neck, while never breaking eye contact.

Putting my arms around her waist, I lower them, grabbing her ass in both hands. Lifting her up, she encircles her legs around me and squeezes. Tightening my grip on her, I rub her center

against my rapidly hardening dick. The moan that escapes her mouth sends pleasurable chills through my body.

Walking over to a fallen tree, I lower her to the ground while attacking her mouth with mine. The battle our tongues wage makes my dick fully hard, and I can feel moisture beading at its head.

Without breaking our kiss, I reach down to undo her jeans at the same time she's undoing mine. Lowering her jeans, I release them and slip my fingers into her heat. I don't even try to stop my growl and let it vibrate into Lyn's mouth.

Thanking the Gods for slip-on shoes, I slip out of mine at the same time Lyn breaks our kiss and slowly drops to her knees. Never breaking eye contact with me, she takes me into her mouth.

The heat of her mouth and the vibrations of her humming, is mind numbing. Taking me deep enough that my dick hits the back of her throat is going to make me come, and I'm not ready for that.

Entwining my fingers in her hair, I start fucking her gorgeous mouth. The motion of her hidden arm tells me she's playing with her button, fuck that's hot.

“That's right baby, fuck, your mouth feels good. Come for me. I'll let you sit on my lap and ride your dick.”

Oh, holy shit, her suction is amazing. When she starts matching the rhythm of my dick as I fuck her mouth, it lets me know she wants it harder. “You want me to fuck your mouth

hard? Oh, fuck, baby, yeah, like that. Come for me, baby. I want you sitting on my...”

Lyn’s orgasm not only shoots through her, but me as well. Lifting her up, she releases my dick with a pop and a grin. One day I’m going to fuck her mouth till she gets what she wants.

Bending down, I grab my jeans as I fully step out of them. Throwing them on the fallen tree, I sit down. Lyn’s straddling my legs when I lift her to wrap her legs around me and fully seat herself on my dick.

Her warm, wet lips parting as I slide through them and into her channel is fucking electrifying. Her head lolling back as I push deeper is so sensual. Lyn rotating her hips while she presses down and I push up feels so amazing.

The moment she looks into my eyes, I know everything’s changing for us, and I want that more than anything. She begins riding my dick and the power rolling off her feels like heaven. Watching her eyes change and her fangs descend has the same effect on me.

I feel my own power reaching out to her. “Creed, fuuuck.”

“Come for me, baby. Fuck, I’m gonna, oh, God, Lyn!”

The instant she sinks her fangs into my neck, I sink my fangs into her shoulder and we both shatter. Coming together with our bites sends a power rush through us that I can tell the others can feel.

After we both remove our fangs, I realize I’m not getting soft. Hell yeah, time to bend her over and fuck her. Lifting her up

and letting her stand, I stand up only to spin her around, bend her over the tree, and slip my dick back inside her.

Fucking into her with her screams and demands that I hurt her. We don't hear Dakota approaching. When he walks into the small clearing in front of Lyn and me, I see him rubbing his dick over his jeans.

“Baby, do you want Dakota to join, or do you want him to watch?” I slow down not only to speak, but to allow Lyn to speak.

“Come here, Dakota. I want your dick in my mouth. Will you give your Queen what she wants?” Her voice is thick and husky, and if I were not still hard, I would have been again.

The grin and the growl he lets loose makes her clench her muscles, which clenches my dick. Damn, that fucking feels good. As Dakota walks closer, he's undoing his clothes. He's in sweats, so it's easy for him to drop clothing as he comes to a stop in front of our Queen.

Stilling as she reaches out, taking his dick, I can see on his face when she takes him into her mouth. Fucking into her again, causes her to deep throat Dakota. All of our moans become a chorus of pleasure.

When I see his eyes change, I know he needs to be alone with her, as well as inside her. “Dakota, take over, brother. Mate with our Queen, feeling all of her.”

She releases his dick as I pull out of her I back away. He steps over the tree, sitting on his sweatshirt he'd thrown on it.

Without hesitation, Lyn climbs on top of him. Watching his dick disappear as she slides down on top of him is hotter than I ever expected.

Keeping her feet on the ground she starts bouncing on him. Watching her ass slam down on him and rotate her hips in a circle is making my dick leak come. As Dakota sucks on one of Lyn's breasts, I take myself in hand with a firm grip.

I know what's about to happen and I want to be a part of it, like Hunter and Phoenix were when Lyn and I were mating. I could feel them and the connection snap into place as we all climaxed together. It was fucking amazing.

Dakota releases her breast at the same time Lyn leans forward and starts kissing and licking his neck. I can feel her orgasm building and it's obvious Dakota can as well. His hands are placed on either side of her hips, forcing her to grind against him as he kisses and licks the opposite shoulder that I marked.

Feeling that impending explosion of come, I grip myself tighter and stroke my dick even harder. The moans and growls are a chorus at this point. The instant his fangs pierce her skin and Lyn's pierces Dakota's skin, we all explode simultaneously.



CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Liam

There are times when information gathering can take days, weeks, and even longer. I'm always suspicious when it's merely hours into digging and I have all the information I could possibly need laid at my feet like an offering to the Gods.

Everyone else is going to see the same thing I do, a trap. Now, it's a matter of tripping that trap when and how Queen Brooklyn wants it done. I know she mated two more of her men, and that's wonderful. She's already proven her strength with as many mates as she has and to think there's still one or two more.

I've grown accustomed to the feeling of a Queen I'm connected with mating. It's also obvious these men feel when she's mating as well. Hunter and Phoenix disappeared up the stairs some time ago. Their connection is strong, likely stronger than any of the paranormal world anticipates.

Crow, Jaxon, Keegan and Kerrigan left out the front door over an hour ago. Keegan and Kerrigan have Crow and Jaxon,

which is a good thing. There's nothing worse than a bunch of horny vampires. The only thing people tend to hear concerning vampires is the blood lusts we can fall into. While true, you haven't seen anything till you see a Coven of horny vamps.

Sitting in the office in the house, my cell phone damn near makes me jump. I'm still not used to carrying around phones. I barely got used to the idea of the phone when the cellular first came out. Pulling the damn thing out of my suit's inner pocket, I answer it.

Listening to my offspring, who are attempting to redeem themselves after the screw up with Crow, removes my focus from my surroundings. Another reason I typically hate these damn electronic contraptions.

The sudden touch on my arm not only makes me jump, but exposes my red eyes and fangs at an eleven-year-old child. While she just stands there, seemingly unphased by it, I'm in a bit of a panic that her mother will remove my head from my shoulders for hissing at her.

"Lennie, dear, I'm so very sorry, but do you realize you've managed to sneak up on a three hundred-year-old vampire? That really is quite phenomenal. Especially because you yourself are not a vampire. Quite impressive, young lady. Quite impressive indeed. Now, how can I help you?"

Looking over her shoulder, I see Queen Brooklyn, her men, her brothers and her dad all walking towards the office. Everyone is smiling which is a good thing, because what I

have to tell them won't add to those smiles. What I have to say may very well erase them all together.

"I was going to ask how do I prepare the blood mugs for everyone? I want to do it and I don't know how."

Smiling at her, I can see her mother's demeanor. "Well, I believe I can help with that. One bag will fill two mugs. Once you have them all poured up, you heat them in the microwave for twenty seconds. It's not hard and you are a bright young lady. I'm sure everyone would appreciate a nice warm drink."

Watching Lennie turn, walking with purpose through her family and heading straight for the kitchen, grabs everyone's attention. Queen Brooklyn keeps the men heading toward the office. Reminding them that Lennie is not a baby and is responsible enough to do as she wishes when it comes to helping in the house and to leave her be.

"Queen Brooklyn, just the person I need to speak with. Gentlemen, this information is pertinent to you all as well. Miss Lennie has gone to prepare us all a mug. My offspring and I have found out important information you all should know. I'll wait to begin till Miss Lennie is back."

"Lyam, don't you think as her family we should be the ones to decide if and when she should be present for a meeting? Especially when this conversation revolves around violence and a physical altercation involving her mom?"

I understand where her grandfather is coming from, but I remember what Queen Brooklyn said about this matter, but

before I have the opportunity to respond to his inquiry, Queen Brooklyn is looking her dad directly in his face.

“Dad, we’ve spoken about this. There is a time and a place for children, I agree with that, but this is not one of those times. Lennie has every right to hear what’s happened or what will happen. This affects her just as much as it does us. Lyam, thank you for considering my daughter.”

Slightly bowing my head in acknowledgement, I look up when a shadow crosses in front of me. That shadow belongs to Lennie, who’s holding a tray of mugs. The expression on her face is truly priceless. I’d call it disgust with acceptance, if that’s a thing.

“If it’s alright with everyone, I’ll start while Miss Lennie is passing out the rest of the mugs she’s so graciously prepared for us. As I was saying, my offspring...”

“I don’t mean to be rude by holding my hand up to stop you, but something is bugging me. Why in the hell do you keep calling them your fucking offspring? I mean, don’t they have names, names or did you destroy any individual identity they had? Color me seriously fucking curious.” Hunter scrutinizes me.

“Uncle Hunter! You cursed! Not once, not twice, but three times. You own the swear money jar in my room, a lot of money.”

Looking from Miss Lennie to Hunter to her parents, I’m sure my confusion is evident. It’s Miss Lennie, however, that turns to face me, so I give her my full attention.

“Mr. Lyam, when we first moved here, my family put swear jars in a couple of places in the house. The ones downstairs were for the smaller curse words. If someone says the F word, they have to put ten dollars for each time in the jar all the way up in my room. I’ve emptied that one once already. All of it is supposed to help them not curse so much.”

Listening to this type of discipline amuses me greatly. Cursing wasn’t something we dealt with back when I was human. Now, it seems to be a common thing. Nodding my head with understanding, I simply smile at her.

“To answer your colorful question. I call them my offspring, because that’s what they are. I did not play a role in their initial creation, but I am the one that turned them into vampires. Therefore, as their sire, they are my offspring. I don’t mean any disrespect and, of course, they have their own identity. Calling them by their names doesn’t serve a purpose because none of you know them. Does that answer your questions?”

A room full of nodding heads tells me I did, in fact, answer Hunter’s questions. Now maybe I can get this information out before Queen Brooklyn explodes. That’s apparent as her facial expression reads like a book.

“Along with the paranormal world you’ve been made aware of, there’s a part of this world you have not, and that’s what we need to discuss. What the books say about this group of people is correct. Witches are real. There are good witches and there are bad witches. All of their services can be purchased. The

difference between them is what they will and won't do." I wait a moment for them to process. "Some of them, like all beings, are willing to do anything for what they perceive as power."



CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

Kerrigan

I hear what Lyam's saying, but I damn sure hope I'm not understanding what he's not saying, or at least hasn't said yet. If this goes where my gut is telling me it is, Lyn's going to lose her fucking mind. Hell, for that matter, so will the rest of us.

"Lyam, my gut tells me the reason you're telling us all this is that this entire situation goes so much deeper than any one of us could have ever guessed. Respectfully, you need to say whatever it is that needs to be said, but in a delicate way."

The expression that takes over his face tells me I'm right on the money. That also means shit just went from epically bad to atomically bad. Maybe that's why he wanted Lennie here. He knows Lyn won't go nuclear with Lennie sitting by her like she is now.

"Kerrigan, I very much wish I could deny knowing what you're talking about, but alas, I am no liar. As of right now, from what's been discovered and brought to light, it seems witches were hired by Queen Talia to do anything they could to remove Queen Brooklyn before she was even reborn."

How would someone know of her before she was reborn? Not only that, but how far back are we talking that this Queen bitch and her hired minions went after Lyn? There's been so much pain in her life that this shit makes sense and completely pisses me the fuck off.

Looking directly into Lyam's eyes, it hits me, and it hits me so hard that when I stand up, I flip my desk chair over. The anger raging through me is nothing like I've ever felt before, and I've had brothers killed in front of me in combat.

"Kerrigan, what's wrong with you? You have a very clinical mind, so you tend to see things before the rest of us. So, in light of that, would you care to inform the rest of us of what the fuck you're thinking? Lennie, not now Squirt. I'll pay up later."

Crow's right on the money, but I damn sure don't want to be the one to say what my mind is seeing. All I see is everything bad that's happened to Lyn has in one way or another been because of that nasty bitch that wants to be the queen of all.

Turning to walk to the window closest to me I hold up a hand to make everyone stop. I can hear movement behind me so I know someone is attempting to get close to me. I don't need nor want to be fucking comforted. I want to rip something apart and watch its blood coat the ground until the life drains from those cold and heartless eyes.

"How can none of you see what's staring all of you in the fucking face! How am I the only one that sees this fucking

bitch has been after Lyn from day one? For fuck's sake, think about it. Her life is fine till all of a sudden it isn't."

I need to breathe and calm the hell down. I don't want to say this. I don't want to tell Lyn everything she's suffered through was because Talia wanted and wants her out of the way. Once that possibility hit me, everything that's happened to her makes sense.

"Kerrigan, my brother by choice, please tell me because I don't have that kind of mindset. I'm not seeing what you are. Help me understand."

Turning to face Lyn, there's no stopping the damn tear that falls from my eye. It's Lennie's snuffle that grabs my attention and everyone else's. Looking at her, it's obvious she's figured it out as well. That bothers me just as much as what's been done to Lyn.

"Mom, everything is that queen's fault. Everything."

Her words are mere whispers, but we all hear her. Walking over to her, I sit down beside her, taking Jaxon's seat. She looks up at me and I use my thumb to wipe her tears.

"I know, Squirt, and I'll explain it to them. This is not for you to do."

Wrapping my arms around her, I tuck her into my side. As her tears soak my shirt and her body tremors from a mix of crying and anger, I look up to see Lyn kneeling before us. Rubbing Lennie's back and trying to comfort her, I know I need to explain.

“Lyn, everything that’s happened to you was due to Talia’s interference. She hired bad witches to remove you as any kind of threat to her future reign. Think about it. Think about everything that’s happened to you and you’ll see it. Sis, I am so angry that she’s made you the target of her hatred and narcissistic ways.”

The expression on her face immediately goes blank, but we can all still feel her through our links to her. Not only that, but we can smell her understanding, her rage, her absolute shock at the level that bitch went to take her down. No one says a word as the realization hits everyone. I’ve never been curious what it’d be like to have a room full of vampires pissed off before, but I damn well know I wish I wasn’t in this one.

The amount of power that Lyn fills this room with, causes us all to slam backward. No one other than her is currently standing. Just as suddenly there’s a burning feeling on my chest, just over my heart. Everyone in the room grasps their chests at the sametime I do, even Lennie.

“I will fucking kill her and anyone that’s done me wrong because of her. Mercy is no longer a part of who I am. That bitch has no fucking clue the monster she created by coming after me. Queen, my ass. I’m the mother fucking Queen and before I rip her worthless head off her shoulders, she’ll kneel and address me as the Queen I am.”



TO BE CONTINUED IN...

Untethered Revenge



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About the Author

Micca Michaels is just one name I go by, mom, nana, auntie, sissy, twinsy, bestie are a few others. I love the quiet country life. Coffee and cookies bring me great joy. I'm 47 years old and looking forward to 50. My other half is one of my best friends and I'm blessed for that.