



THE TWO KINGS
AFTERLIFE SAGA

STEPHANIE HUDSON



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OceanofPDF.com

The Two Kings
Afterlife Saga
Book 2

By
Stephanie Hudson
Kindle Edition

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Other books by Stephanie Hudson

Afterlife Saga

Book 1 Afterlife

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Dedication

I dedicate The Two Kings to the 96 LFC fans who lost their lives on that terrible day on the 15th of April 1989 in the Hillsborough disaster.

“You’ll never walk alone”

Justice at last

All at once the crowd go silent,
Holding a breath in waiting,
So many Lives, so many Names,
All in the hands of debating.

There is no price for Justice,
There is only truth to remain,
To find it for the hearts that have suffered,
And every fan who feels the same.

A dream with heads held high,
A journey of heartache and pain,
A justice so utterly deserved,
A never fading memory we gain.

It’s all about the hope we build,
And the mountain we all climb together,
In hopes to one day find,
A truth so deep it affects us forever.

Justice for the 96'
YNWA

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About the Author

Stephanie Hudson has dreamed of being a writer ever since her obsession with reading books at an early age. What first became a quest to overcome the boundaries set against her, in the form of dyslexia, has turned into a life's dream. She first started writing in the form of poetry and soon found a taste for horror and romance. The Two Kings is her second book in the series of seven, with the story of Keira and Draven becoming ever more complicated in a world that sets them miles apart.

When not writing, Stephanie enjoys spending time with her very supportive family and friends, playing with her dopey deer hound Milo, who has a fondness for eating tennis balls, chatting for hours with her biggest fan, her sister Cathy who is utterly obsessed with one gorgeous Dominic Draven. And of course spending as much time with her wonderful husband Rob, who is her real life hero, one that swaps his shining armour for jeans and comic book t-shirts.

This year she also fulfilled a life's long dream and finally became a mum.

Ava Jessica Hudson was born on the 1st of August 2012

Here is my dedication to my lovely first born.

Flying on a Dream

I hold my breath,
I take the pain,
I see what's coming,
It's the life we gain.

You look oh so beautiful,
I can't help but cry,
You're my baby girl,

Happiness fills me so great, I could fly.

I hold you so close,
I never want to let go,
I touch your head,
And let the love flow.

You are so tiny,
A little bundle in my arms,
A hand so small grabs for me,
And a floodgate breaks the dam.

Now you drift off to sleep,
And I can't help but stare,
I gaze at beautiful blue eyes,
And skin so light and fair.

Dark hair frames an angelic face,
As dark and soft as the raven's wing,
I hold on to you so tightly,
As my heart soars and sings

You're my baby girl,
You're my Ava J,
You're my one and only,
On this forever Day.

I love you.

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Chapter 1

Hunted

Draven's eyes scanned over me checking that I wasn't going to go into shock from Vincent's outburst.

"I'm fine, you go," I managed to say but before I knew it Draven's hands were touching my face making me look into his incredible deep eyes. His gaze was edged with a concern he was most likely trying very hard to hide, no doubt to stop me from panicking...

It wasn't working!

"Keira it will be alright, you don't have to worry." Was he joking! Of course I had reason to worry. I mean, I was being bloody hunted and images of me on a "Wanted" poster in some supernatural tavern were filling my mind. But of course instead of saying this, I just nodded and pushed his hands from me.

"Go, I will be fine on my own and Takeshi needs you." I couldn't help but lower my face as I said this, not needing him to see the pain in my eyes nor hear the worry in my voice. After all, my acting skills weren't ever going to win any awards. So despite my best efforts, he didn't look convinced but he knew as well as I did that he needed to go. With that in mind he kissed my forehead and begrudgingly left with his brother, to leave me with my own thoughts of dread.

I couldn't understand how just hours after my own personal nightmare we were having to deal with Draven's. It was like a cruel game of chance that we couldn't win. We just wanted to be together but it was like every force of Heaven and Hell was telling us NO! I decided to get up as I knew I would never sleep without Draven's warm touch on my skin. I went over to my bag which was still on the couch from the last few days I had spent here and grabbed the last pair of jeans and T shirt that I had left. At least now it would be safe for me to go home and get some new clean clothes and some other things that I might need soon. Then I stopped, thinking, was I right....would it be safe or was I forever to be in danger?

I had to stop myself before I lost my mind to all the dark places it wanted to go, I mean I couldn't live in fear forever and with Draven as my protector, what really was there to be frightened of?

Just as I had slipped into my clothes and tied my hair back there was a light tap on the door. Without waiting for a reply Sophia came strolling in the room looking radiant as always followed by Candra who had a plate full of food.

“Dominic thought you might need some company and also feeding,” she said smirking as my face said it all. He was worried I would be sat here freaking out on my own, so he had sent Sophia to check on me... Or more like Human sit me!

“He worries too much.” I said frowning but still the smell of hot chicken soup and crusty bread had me close to salivating! She just shrugged her shoulders and made herself comfortable on the couch opposite, folding her legs as though she was ready to start meditating.

“Well at least you’re looking better, you looked like Hell....and trust me, I’m acquainted with the big man downstairs!”

This she found hilarious, it being her idea of a joke and I couldn’t help but relax at the sound. Draven had been right to send Sophia. It was just something about her that had you forgetting your worries and making you see the bigger picture or no picture at all, either way it worked. I mean she didn't seem as worried as Vincent or Draven but who really knew her true feelings?

I sat in the big red velvet chair and rested the tray of food on my lap before diving in.

“I take it you were hungry?” She giggled as she watched me wolf my food down. I just nodded, not realising how hungry I was.

“Sophia... I need to know, what's going on?” I asked not knowing whether or not she was ever going to tell the truth. Her eyes widened and her face tensed for a moment before returning back to her usual relaxed state. She flicked her curly hair back over her shoulder before eyeing my face carefully.

“Keira there is nothing that you should be worrying about, Dom will sort it out and make it right. This was something that he predicted would happen

and he has taken precautions.” She said all this in such a way that made me believe it had been rehearsed. It was so “matter of fact” that I couldn't do anything but not trust her words. I had seen the panic on Vincent's face and then on Draven's too, so I knew this wasn't as clear cut as Sophia was making out. But I decided to play along and wait until I could get my answers from the one man I knew would give me what I wanted....after all, I knew his weaknesses!

“Ok then, answer me this...why is it nobody told me that Layla was being held prisoner right here under my nose?” I was determined that I would get at least that out of her.

“Oh no, I'm not falling for that trap again....these are things that only Dom can tell you, it is not my place.” She held up her hands as though I had a large pistol in my possession and was about to mug her. But the only thing I needed from her was the truth, which just so happened to be the one thing this family had difficulty in disclosing. I decided to admit defeat. I mean, Draven couldn't keep what was going on from me forever. I knew he didn't want me to worry but not knowing was far worse than the truth.....wasn't it?

“Keira, can I ask you something?” Sophia's voice was as soft as petals blowing in the breeze and she knew that with this seductive tone, I would never be able to refuse her anything. But instead of showing just how willing I was to give Sophia anything she asked of me, I restrained my answer to just a shrug of my shoulders.

“I guess I am just curious but how does it work? I mean when you see us in our true form.” She was edging forward in her chair and she eyed me as though ready to judge my response. This was something I didn't want to be talking about but she was clearly waiting for my response and I was clearly stalling for time.

“I'm not sure I understand what it is you want to know exactly?” I said hoping that she would want to drop this conversation. Of course from the look on her face this wish wasn't likely to be granted.

“Well...Can you see me now, you know... in my Demon form?” It was

still hard to believe that such a beautiful creature as Sophia could ever be such the powerful Demon she was. I still thought of her as this pretty little doll that captivated everyone around her. Of course seeing her lay a punch so hard on Draven's face, it sounded like bone cracking, well that did shed a little Demon light her way.

I looked down at my now empty bowl and brushed off the crumbs of bread that lay on my top. It wasn't fair, they had all their secrets but the one thing they didn't understand about me they wanted a full explanation on how it all worked.

“To be honest Sophia, even I don't fully understand how it works or why for that matter but to answer your question, no I can't see you in your Demon form, not at the moment.” She sat there unmoved but I could see the faint flicker of red in her eyes and normally this would have given me a reaction of my own but after tonight, I was starting to think I would never be the same again. After all the horrors I had seen in my life and the even more horrific kidnapping years ago, I thought I had experienced enough for one lifetime but I knew now that it had only been the beginning. This thought did make me shudder. What else exactly did fate have in store for this plain, little Liverpudlian girl?

“I'm sorry Keira, please forgive me, I sometimes forget that you are human. I can't imagine what it has been like for you to find out your world was not as you thought.....You must love my brother very much.” By the time she was finished I couldn't help the tears that fell down my cheeks and before I could look away in shame, Sophia was knelt at my feet, leaning up to wipe the tears from my skin.

“You are truly an amazing being Keira and never let anyone tell you any differently.” She kissed both my cheeks before getting up off the floor and before I could thank her she was gone.

I curled up on the couch and waited till my tears ran dry. I couldn't help it and I knew I was being silly but I think that without Draven's

secure arms to keep me safe, I felt vulnerable from my own emotions. It was a mixture of relief and dread. I was happy that I had finally found closure to a nightmare that had been haunting me for years. Morgan was dead and you couldn't get more closure than that! But now I was in a world that I didn't fully understand and I was way out of my league.

I got up and gave myself a shake determined to bring myself back to reality. I knew why I was doing this, so there was no reason to feel sorry for myself. I was alive and I still had the most important things, my family and friends were all safe and I had Draven, that's all that mattered. I looked down at my bare arms and ran my fingers over the scars of my past, knowing that for the first time, seeing them like this didn't bother me anymore. I had waited for so long to move on and get over hating myself for what I am, but now I knew my purpose and if I had never had this sight, then things with Draven would have gone quite differently. He was my reason.

I went over to Draven's huge oak desk and searched for something I would look at for the last time. I found my case file and took out two pictures before walking over to the double glass doors that led onto the balcony. I placed my warm hand in the middle and the glass responded as though it was alive, disappearing back into the wall. The cool air hit me and my body reacted by covering my skin in goosebumps. I only had a t-shirt on and for once no gloves, so the feel of the night air on my scars was a feeling I was not used to but for some reason, it made me smile.

I walked over to the edge and noticed my blood was still on the floor in little droplets from where Draven had set me down before realising my feet were in such bad shape. I hoped the rain would come soon and wash it away, as I didn't want Draven to have any reminder of what had happened tonight.

The wind had picked up now and I looked at the first picture. It was Morgan's mug shot. I had never seen a face so evil in all my life, not even after years of seeing humans one minute and then as Demons the next. I had never met someone that emanated so much pure hatred. His twisted love for his sister had overtaken his senses and when he found she loved someone

else, his love just fuelled his rage, killing them both in the most brutal of ways. I don't know what it was that he saw when he looked at me... was it his sister incarnate or his guilt? Whatever it was, it was over now and I doubt that his fate would have led him to the same place his sister was. She was now at peace. I ripped up the face into as many pieces I could and threw them into the night, letting the wind take his face away from my nightmares.

I looked down at the last picture I held in my cold hand. This one was me, broken and afraid. It was when I was in the hospital, so soon after they found me outside, where Morgan had dumped me, slowly bleeding to death. This was the one thing Morgan had done with the last shred of humanity left in him. I had cut my own wrists hoping he would believe the Demon that was torturing him had made me do it. It was my last hope of escape and my last chance to save my family, who he had talked about getting rid of. I still thank God daily that it had worked and perfect smooth skin on my arms had been the only thing I had lost.

The picture was still painful to look at. Bringing so many terrible memories back but none as bad as when I saw my family's faces, when they first saw me. My mother had been crying so hard she couldn't breathe, my dad screamed out in an anger he couldn't control and my sister couldn't even look at me, which had been the hardest response to take. Of course I didn't blame her, I would have probably been the same but from there on, I became I different person. I had been reborn into a hard shell of my former self and only my nightmares knew the truth...

I was afraid of the world, so I hid from it.

I was bitter at the world, so I was disgusted with it. I hated the pity in judging eyes that watched with their silent stares. I was convinced that everyone around me was thinking, "Oh dear, there goes the girl who tried to kill herself just to get away from the living nightmare." But they were all wrong! I didn't want to die, I wanted to live but I knew one way or another, this was my only chance at saving my family. After all, if Morgan hadn't done the right thing by taking me to hospital then he wouldn't have needed to go after my family, if I wasn't around any longer. But when everyone around

you, even those closest to you, all believe you're a suicide case, then no matter what you do, you will always be classed and viewed in that same, sad light.

I looked at my old self one last time before bringing the picture to my lips as I kissed that bitter, bruised me goodbye before ripping it the same way I had done with Morgan's and I let the wind take away my past forever. I fell to my knees and cried with happiness until my legs went numb on my last cold night of being afraid.

I went back inside once the tears of my past had all dried up. I was close to freezing at this point and the only thing keeping me from realising sooner was my goal. I was hoping to find Draven back because not only was I bubbling over with a million questions but I needed his touch again so badly. I felt like a junky needing another fix. It made me wonder if Draven had this effect on everyone or was it just me because I was so madly in love with him, that it physically hurt when we were apart.

I decided the only way I was going to warm up without Draven was to take a warm shower. I was so tired but I was fighting against it, as I wanted to wait for him to come back. I hadn't been in the bathroom since my nightmare when I first saw Sammael but I knew I didn't have anything left to fear when it came to that Demon, as I had witnessed Draven send him back to the underworld.

I got undressed and let the warm shower caress my skin, making my muscles ease and relax. I loved water and enjoyed it even more when it washed away my troubles along with cleansing my skin. By the time I was finished my hair was squeaky clean and my fingertips looked like raisins but I smelled great thanks to some luxurious bathroom products. Once I had dried myself off, I got dressed back into my clothes and went to sit on the couch hoping Draven wouldn't be long.

When I next awoke it was dark and I was still half asleep but I was aware that I was being carried towards the bed. Strong arms gripped me tightly to a hard chest and I sighed taking in the tremendous scent. This was one of the things that always took my breath away with Draven. He always made my bones turn to jelly at just the smell of his skin. I still had my eyes closed as he laid me on the bed gently but I felt the covers move back with one swift movement. His arms left my body leaving my skin feeling cold in their absence. He then pulled the covers back up over me.

I was waiting for him to get in next to me but he didn't. I could still feel him lingering over me before a hand came to my face. I felt fingers softly trace my cheek, running up to move the hair that had fallen over one side of my face. Then before his hands could leave me, I grabbed his wrist and pulled him to me. I lifted up my face to his before he could pull away. I didn't understand why he would want to pull away from me but before I could think about it in depth, my lips found his and everything stopped.

At first his lips wouldn't respond and I was doing all the work but as soon as this thought hit me his lips parted, letting me in. His mouth was warm and so soft but his kiss tasted different. However my mind was still filled with an intoxication that I couldn't break from and this is where I found my drug of choice.

His hand held my face and just before his kiss got even more intense he pulled back suddenly, causing me to open my eyes. I was about to protest and try to pull him back to me as my body was screaming to be touched but then the faint moonlight touched the side of his face, making his perfect features light up like the Angel he was. I gasped and bit down on my lip so hard I thought I would taste blood. Of course it was a Draven just not the one I was used to.

It wasn't Dominic.... Oh no,

It was Vincent!

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Chapter 2

Ooops

“Oh No.... Oh... I'm so, so,... so sorry, I thought...” I couldn't continue as I was so ashamed of what I had just done but Vincent didn't move. I was screaming with embarrassment inside but on the outside I couldn't even find the right words. I sat up, suddenly being wide awake and it felt as if my skin was going to melt off my cheek bones. I covered my face in my hands wishing I could take it back....what was Dominic going to say? Already I was referring to him as Dominic so as not to get confused even more.....well you sure couldn't fault my logic! I felt warm fingers find my hands and start to pull them slowly from my face.

“Keira please don't hide yourself, it was not your fault....you were not to know it was me.” He said this so sweetly I couldn't help but feel worse. I tried not to look at him but now there was a glow of candle light, which helped in lighting up my guilty red face. He remained bent down on one knee, so that he could see me better.

“Look at me” he asked me and unlike his brother, it didn't sound like a command. His hand found my chin and lifted my face so my eye line met his. His eyes looked like blue crystals, full of emotion set in a handsome angelic face. His blonde hair was smooth curls, all pulled back from his face. It was the first time I had seen him looking so casual, wearing a tight white t shirt and jeans that fit him very well, too well in fact, I felt wrong for thinking how sexy he looked in them. God what was wrong with me! Well at least I could say I was only human.

“I am so sorry Vincent” I said but he just smiled making my heart melt.

“There is nothing to be sorry about Keira, but in future, I think it best if

Dominic himself were the one to put you to sleep” He was still smiling and he playfully ruffled my hair before getting up. But then something made him stop to turn and look at me one last time, before leaving me alone with my shame. The way his gaze had penetrated me, it made me blush seeing his soft eyes suddenly looking hungry for another kiss. Then he shook his head, as though he was trying to get the memory of my lips out of his mind. He left the room swiftly, almost like he had just taken flight, leaving the room in darkness once again.

“Good night Keira...sleep well.” He echoed, his voice penetrating the walls before sounding further away and then fading into nothing but a bitter whisper. I threw my head down on to the pillow face first, I grabbed the other pillow and buried my head deep within the two, hoping I would wake and find it had all been a dream.

“Oh no...what have I done?” I said out loud knowing that Dominic would know about this, he would find out one way or another. I wonder if Vincent would tell him? Oh God, Oh God.....There was just one word that kept going round and round my mind.....

SHIT!!!!

I must have fallen asleep at some point but I had no idea how it happened as, after what I did last night, I never thought I would have been calm enough to sleep again! When I woke it was still dark but I soon realised this was because of the curtains that had been pulled around the bed, encasing me in a material island. I was lying on my front and my hair was loose, hanging down as I lifted my head up. I stretched out like a feline but froze when I felt my hands touch another body. I almost cringed as the memories of last night’s mistake came flooding back to me.

I don't know why but my heart started pounding in my chest as I moved my curtain of hair back to discover it was Draven (Dominic that was) lying next to me. What else did I expect?

I looked at him and my eyes met perfection, only for a change he was still asleep. It was the first time I had seen him like this and I couldn't help but smile at being able to study his features at length. It's not as if I hadn't looked before but I couldn't help the fact that being around Draven still had me in knots. Sometimes he was just so intimidating that I found myself looking away from his intense gaze, so this was nice to be able to stare freely without feeling the heat flood my cheeks.

I tried to move closer to his face that seemed to be lost in a peaceful state of sleep. His strong jaw moved slightly as I turned on my side to face him. There was enough light coming through the cracks to show every detail. I had to resist the urge to stretch my arm out to touch his face, to brush a piece of his black hair from his olive skin. There was dark stubble covering his solid jaw line and framing his perfect lips. I followed it up to his straight nose, resting my eyes where his were still closed. He literally took my breath away. My dark Angel. His dark Demon.

I don't know how long I was staring at him, getting lost in his splendour but my bladder decided for me to get up and use the bathroom. I turned my head begrudgingly away from him and moved off the bed slowly so as not to wake him. His reactions were so lightning fast, I couldn't help the little shriek that came from my lips as his strong hands gripped my arms, pulling my body to his, as though I should have never been allowed to move in the first place. My heart rate rocketed for two reasons, one being that I was scared about what his reaction would be at finding out what had happened last night with his brother and the other was the feel of his immense manhood pressing into my back. Ok, so it was more the second reason but I couldn't help it, just the feel of him made the memories of the intense pleasure he caused me during sex was enough to get any girl's heart rate up. Hell I thought I would find my release, just thinking about it!

His huge arms were wound tightly around my torso and his head was above mine, he hadn't woken, so grabbing me had just been a reflex action and the thought made me smile to myself. I waited for his breathing to

become steady again before I tried to move. Don't get me wrong I would have stayed like this all morning, day and night but my bladder was now screaming out at me and I wanted to pee before it resorted to cursing. Getting free was no easy task, as every time I moved he just held me tighter. I managed to wiggle out of his hold and shimmied down, getting very embarrassed when the back of my head got closer to his.... umm.....Sergeant. I had to resist the urge to giggle at what I had christened his large manhood. I know I was being a prude but the term penis was too much like sex education and the other words sounded too vulgar! So Sergeant it was!

Once I got free, I slipped out of the curtain without letting in too much light and shuddered when my bare feet touched the slate tiled floor. I was still wearing what I had put on last night and when I lifted the t shirt to my face I was glad it still smelt fresh thanks to the shower I had last night. Once in the bathroom, I decided not only to use the toilet but to brush my teeth to get rid of morning breath and to wash my face. I brushed my tangled, messy hair and tied it back into a high ponytail. It was still wavy from not being able to dry it last night, so it curled up at the ends by my waist.

I really needed to get another hair dryer for when I was here. But wait... what was I saying? How did I know that Draven would still want me after last night. That thought was a painful one. I stared at myself in the gorgeous gilded mirror and my reflection didn't help my paranoia. My pale skin looked even paler than usual, thanks to the cold chill in the air. My eyes looked almost as black as the lashes that framed them and my lips were the only part of me that held any colour, like a red heart painted on a blank, white canvas.

I shook off the feeling of dread and walked back into the room only what faced me filled me with even more dread....Draven was now awake. The curtains had all been pushed back and Draven was still lying in the bed looking at me. The falling covers revealed muscle after muscle on his torso and wasn't the only strong thing I could see. It was very evident that he was now, most definitely wide awake and his Sergeant looked like it could be used to bludgeon someone to death! The whole sight made me swallow hard. I could tell by his face that he didn't yet know the awful truth, as he was smiling at me with a wide, cocky grin.

“What are you doing over there and dressed may I ask?” His voice sent a shiver down my already cold back and I bit my lip at what the sound of that voice did to me. It was so rough and deep, with lashings of authority to it. Oh yeah, he most definitely didn't know, rather that or he damn well knew how to play it cool before erupting. I stayed silent because I really didn't know how I was going to tell him. I walked over to him but stopped before I got to the bed and it didn't help when he started frowning, as I paused to lean on his desk. I'd not felt like this since the time my neighbour's baby had thrown up on my homework and I had to try and explain it to my science teacher the next day. I'd received a hundred lines on reasons not to lie.

“Draven we need to....talk.” My voice didn't sound like my own and it didn't help that he wasn't taking me seriously because he was grinning... like it was funny?! Well he wouldn't be so amused in a minute and as someone very familiar at witnessing Draven's temper, this was not going to be pretty.

“Is that so?” He said as though he was mocking me, still with his confident grin that wouldn't leave his lips. He was propped up on his side, with his hand holding his head up on his elbow, he looked like Adonis. He wasn't taking me seriously, that much was clear. He then patted the bed as a gesture for me to join him but I knew if I went over there, then no will on earth would stop me making love to him before I could finish my disgraceful goal. But when I didn't move, his smile disappeared and was replaced with another frown. His eyes burned into mine, black and intense.

“If I didn't know any better I would say you looked afraid of me Keira, is this true?” I couldn't do anything but nod, not needing to meet his dark gaze.

“Why in the world would you be frightened?.... Here.... Come to me.” This was one of Draven's orders but I still couldn't move. I was rooted to the spot like it was the safest place to be.

“I think I should stay here until you hear what I've got to say” I said, without any backbone at all. He tilted his head to one side and commanded in a dark tone

“Look at me.” Which was a bad idea, as it felt as if he was trying to

burrow inside my head, making me do his will.

“Don't do that!” I said, getting angry that he was trying to use his powers on me but he just laughed.

“Then obey me and come here.” His face was soft and I couldn't help but trust his easy smile.

“I doubt you will still want that, after I tell you what I've done....it's something bad....like really bad.... but it was a mistake and completely my fault!” I blurted out and he laughed again as though I was missing something.

“Poor Vincent, I doubt he found it that bad.” He laughed again but this time I was sure it was at the sight of my face drop.

“What...how... you already know?” I asked dumbfounded.

“Of course, but you are not at fault” he said so matter of fact that I had to shake my head at him.

“You're not angry?”

“I might be a jealous fool over you Keira but I do know the difference between an honest mistake and one not so innocent.” He said this last part as if he remembered seeing Jack kissing me in his club.

“However” he said drawing out the word before continuing.

“I will get angry if you don't give me what I want and you have kept me without your skin on mine for far too long, come here.” He nodded next to him and I bit my lip, loving how demanding he was for my body. I walked over to the bed, taking my time and watching his aggravation grow made me smile.

He grabbed my body before I had chance to sit down on the bed and pulled me so close to him I could feel his passion for me press hard up against me. Well it looks like even Demon/Angel half breeds get a morning glory! His lips found mine before I could speak and his tongue parted my

lips, creating a fire in my lower belly. The intoxicating taste of his tongue on mine had something else in me burning very quickly. His hands ran up my back and into my hair. He pulled my hair band out gently, letting my hair flow down around us both. But before I could get too carried away (ok too late for that), we needed to talk about this. So when his lips left mine and started to travel down to my neck, I took my opportunity to ask him.

“How did you know?” My voice was shaking with the pressure building between my legs that his kiss was doing to me.

“Vincent told me.” He said as if it was obvious. He sat up and when I did the same he shook his head telling me no. He gently pushed me back down as he expertly removed my clothes in silence. His eyes scanned every part of my now exposed skin and I saw his jaw twitch as he ground his teeth together. His hands gripped the top of my thighs and explored further up to my cheeks, once there he ground me into him further. I let out a moan as I felt it rub up against my weak spot.

“Draven I think...mmm.” I was stopped in my tracks as the feeling was getting more elevated.

“You were saying” He said into my neck but I had lost my words and my mind for that matter. His hands were still pulling my body into him and moving me to his will. I felt like a bendy doll that just wanted to be played with!

We were soon on our sides, facing each other then he pulled me down to the right height. He was looking down at me with hunger in his eyes. His hands found the inside of my legs and he spread them apart, so he could then enter me. The force made my back arch and I screamed out. His hands fought my body’s reaction, as I tried to pull up but the hands on my hips were stronger and pulled me back down onto his solid manhood, causing me to shriek out again.

The pleasure was clearly too much for me to take and I climaxed after only what seemed like seconds. But as he continued to thrust against me, he got even more aroused by the noises I was making. He growled at the sound

of me screaming, which brought me back to the bed that was getting a pounding. His hands held my wrists down over my head and his mouth found my exposed nipple. I looked down to see the deep, purple ring around his black eyes as the Demon side was dominating his powerful body. He saw me looking at him and this seemed to drive him into a supreme frenzy. His hands left my wrists and fisted into either side of the pillow under my head, so as he could tear it apart. Ripping it in half caused spotless white feathers to rain down, landing on my equally white skin.

Then his arms wrapped around my body so tightly, I could only just breathe as I knew what was coming next. For once he was the one to arch half his body upwards, taking some of me with him, as it was time for both of us to climax in perfect sync. His neck went back, the tendons straining against his skin as his head looked at the canopy above, he then released one last cry that turned into half a growl. The action reminded me of a wolf throwing his head up to howl at the moon.

Meanwhile my head rolled back into the mass of feathers as I bit my lip to hold in the scream that found its way out anyway. When I had finished convulsing Draven's body collapsed on top of me and his weight was comforting. His head rested next to mine and I waited until his breathing calmed before speaking first.

“Well... that was intense,” I said smiling but he whipped his head up to look at me seriously.

“I didn't hurt you did I?”

“No, no, of course not, what I meant was that it was intense, in a good way,” I said smoothing out the line that had formed in between his eyebrows.

“Ah, well as long as you enjoyed it” he smirked and then winked at me making me melt like butter on a hot crumpet.

“Umm... I don't think there would have been a woman alive or man for that matter that wouldn't have enjoyed that. That was bloody marvellous!” At this he let out a roar of laughter that made me jump.

“I have never had sex like this ever before, so it means I sometimes lose control, which believe me is not something I am used to and with what you do to me, I have to be even more careful, as I have never experienced losing control around a human before... I forget how breakable you are.” He had my hands in his, entwining his long, thick tanned fingers with my thin white ones. There was such a contrast in colour and size I let out a nervous giggle.

“Is that why you sometimes bite me?” I asked always being more than curious about that but he looked a bit ashamed.

“Yes” he said sternly before continuing.

“It is an impulse, like an animal instinct but with a human it seems to be more enhanced. The smell of your skin and the blood underneath it, it is too much for me not to taste. But I have found I can contain it if I concentrate very hard.” I was fascinated but I found myself wishing he didn't feel like it was a bad thing. During sex, I had wanted him to bite me as it seemed to intensify the pleasure and now I had a better understanding about people that liked that sort of thing.

“So the pillow got it instead,” I remarked blushing. He lifted his lids to look at me once, giving me a quirky smile before lowering his lids to one of my breasts, where a single white feather had landed. He then got closer and blew on it making it tickle its way to my neck. I closed my eyes and sighed at the prickling it made on my skin. Then I flashed open my eyes and remembered what it was I wanted to tell him.

“I like it!” I blurted out but he just shook his head, knowing what I meant.

“I do, I don't know why but it just feels right when you bite me and of course there is the pleasure that follows.” Now this had him raising his eyebrows and leaving the feather forgotten.

“I think you are too good in giving into my needs. I am selfish when it comes to getting what I want. I know this but you have the power and right to tell me no, do you understand?” Oh I understood but it still took me back on

hearing it being spoken. He was saying that I was his equal and that he would in fact obey me if I so wished. Then as if by nature I had a flood of naughty thoughts whip through my mind all at once. Of course he wanted to know what it was that had me smiling like an idiot but I just licked my lips before kissing him.

“So now tell me, is Vincent very angry with me?” I asked dreading the answer but judging from Draven's soft black eyes and a smile that made his face light up, I guessed I was being paranoid again.

“Of course not, why would he be?”

“Because I kissed him,” I said feeling the shame burn my cheeks.

“Yes you did but it was my fault. I should have been the one to put you to bed myself but instead I sent my brother to check on you. Granted he got more than he bargained for but I doubt very much that he minded. I can imagine he hasn't been able to stop thinking about it!” He laughed at both a combination of his comment and my reaction to it.

“Oh don't say that!” I buried my head into the pillow that used to be in one piece only instead I got a face full of feathers. Draven fell on his back and pulled me on top of him so I couldn't hide. I rested my folded arms on his wide chest and looked down at him, and again, he was grinning.

“Well I remember what our first kiss did to me. And after all, you were his first human kiss...poor bastard!” He laughed again making me shake with him but I frowned hiding my smile and jabbed him in the side.

“You shouldn't say that!”

“Oh Keira don't fret, he is fine. I am just teasing you but what can I say, I am half Demon.” And with this, he smiled showing his full set of white teeth and for the first time I noticed his canines were larger than most humans. No wonder he had been able to bite me so easily.

His hands were tickling my sides and I couldn't help what came next. The worst thing in the world happened.....I snorted! His eyes widened at the

new noise that just passed my lips and my hands flew out to my mouth but of course it was too late....it was out!

“And that was...?” He asked mocking me as he couldn't contain his wicked, bad boy grin.

“I don't want to talk about it” I said getting defensive at my utter humiliation. I rolled off him but he pinned me down and pulled the covers off me leaving me exposed.

“Oh no you don't, I want to hear it again!” And then with surprisingly gentle fingers he tickled my defenceless naked skin until I was near to tears with laughter. Of course the snorting came through which made his roaring laughter harder and deeper. By the end of our little playing on the bed we were both trying to calm down enough to form actual sentences. Then it hit me, here I was having one of the best mornings of my life, when there was still so many questions I needed answering.

“Oh my God... I can't believe I have been so self-centred! I haven't even asked you about Takeshi, is he alright?” Draven looked as though he found this endearing but I just frowned, he can't let me get away with my selfish behaviour.

“Don't scorn yourself and you are sweet for asking but I think after everything you have endured you are entitled to a little distraction. Takeshi is fine now, he is resting. I gave him some of my energy to help him heal.” He was smoothing my hair back from my face as he spoke.

“How did this happen to him?” I could tell he didn't want to tell me but I raised my eyes to him before he could protest.

“Ok, I will tell you but Keira, I don't want you to obsess about something I will not allow to happen.” I nodded to indicate he should continue.

“Lucius is trying to poison his mind so that his actions can't be seen for what he has planned. I don't know exactly what he is going to do but one

thing is for sure...he knows about you.” This made me shudder at the thought and Draven didn't miss my reaction as he pulled me closer to him, wrapping the covers around me like a secure cocoon, making me feel like a butterfly.

“But nothing *will* happen to you. He can't take you from me.” This sounded very threatening and I couldn't imagine anyone being as crazy as to want to antagonise Draven. Well apart from the obvious being Sammael.

“But why does he even want me?” I asked bringing him back to my eyes, which softened when they got there.

“Because my lovely, you are mine and you are my only weakness. You are also a very breakable human as we both know so this puts the risks at a higher price. He will do anything to have you, to take you from me but he is not stupid and will not chance coming here himself. It just means that I will be a little more protective over you than I normally would.” He said all this without too much emotion and I knew it was to spare me worry....but because I knew this I worried anyway.

“Ok, next question, why the Hell didn't you tell me that you had Layla here imprisoned?” Ok telling by his reaction to this question I could add another crazy person to the list of “Who would risk making Draven angry.” He did not look happy that I hadn't forgotten this small factor.

“We are *not* going to discuss this!” He said flatly but I was not going to yield that quickly.

“And why not? I think I have a right to know!”

“You do not yet know enough about our ways to understand.” He was trying to judge my response but whatever he saw in my face, it was not what he had hoped for. His face said as much.

“Understand what?” I shook my head at him but I had a feeling I was going to regret the truth.

“You will think our ways are barbaric and you won't look kindly on me for being the one that has to enforce such punishments. Is this something that

you really want to know about?” It wasn't so much a question but more a statement as he knew that I would not. I was torn between the two Dravens I knew. I remembered how cold he had first been to me and the sight of him fighting, ripping into those creatures they called Gorgan Leeches. How he wielded his two powerful swords that came from his Demon form, slicing into the body that Sammael had used as a vessel. It had been a truly frightening sight.

And of course there was the other Draven that was with me now. The one that had taught me more about the pleasures my body could endure than anyone before him. I had felt more love and passion in these past few days than in my entire life. His soft voice telling me how perfect I was and how his eyes looked at me when he told me that he loved me. It was like two completely different people but I couldn't help that I loved both of them to my very core.

“Ok so I get the point but I don't exactly need details here.” He was getting up and before I could protest he was leaning down to whisper in my ear.

“I have to do Demon/Angel man things.” And he winked at me before leaving to use the bathroom. I couldn't believe how shocked I was just to see him doing something so human. I mean he was only using the bathroom for goodness sake but I still couldn't believe it, even when I heard the toilet flush I found myself giggling. I got up, cleaned the evidence of our joining with some tissue and put my clothes on still chuckling to myself before he came out. I wondered if he left the seat up? Ha!

When he came out, he too was dressed and his hair was pushed back, wet around his neck. The sight of him in designer jeans and a tight fitted black vest made me need to sit down. His shoulders looked huge and it seemed every day he was taller. I was only five foot three so he was over a foot taller, being I guessed over six foot. I had never asked him so I wasn't certain.

“How tall are you?” I asked thinking while I was pondering it, I might as well get the facts. He looked at me with a curious smile and I knew he was

wondering where the question had come from but he obliged me anyway.

“I'm about six foot four, two hundred and forty pounds and I hate cucumbers, anything else you would like to know?” He asked and I could tell he was teasing me again.

“You hate cucumbers?” I said trying not to laugh at the thought. He came up to me as I was sat on the bed and put one hand on either side of my thighs, leaning into me smiling.

“I don't like the texture but one thing I do like the texture of...” He was speaking over my mouth and the rest of his sentence was lost on my lips making it very clear what he was referring to. We were just about to do the naughty again when my phone started to vibrate and I almost cursed out loud.

“Bloody technology!” I said instead but Draven found my frustration funny and he jumped up quickly to retrieve my phone. Of course as soon as I saw who it was, this did make me swear.

“Oh shit!” I knew it wasn't lady like but I couldn't help it.

“Keira what's wrong?”

“Just reality!” I said before flipping the phone open and saying begrudgingly,

“Hi mum.”

Chapter 3

Unfortunate Family Members.

“Hi Honey, I've not caught you at a bad time have I? Only there was no answer at home.” My mum’s sweet voice made it difficult to lie so of course I did a lousy job of it!

“No mum its fine, is everything alright?” I noticed Draven had taken a seat and looked very amused at the dread on my face. The problem was that even though I was some distance from him, I knew he could still hear every word that was being said, on both sides. Damn Demon hearing!

“Yes everything’s fine sweetheart, I guess I just wanted to see if there's anything new with you?”

“Umm no not really just plodding along, you know college and work and stuff.” I was trying my best to sound casual but when I was faced with the most gorgeous, sexiest man alive staring at me and knowing every lie I made, oh and finding it hilarious at that, well let’s just say it did make personal phone calls....difficult.

“So, nothing new then?” My mum was being about as subtle as a bull at a tea party!

“Mum is there something you want to ask?”

“Well don't be angry with her but Libby kind of hinted that you were courting?” Oh no just when I thought it couldn't get any worse. I was going to murder my sister! When I didn't answer my mum cleared her throat down the phone.

“Keira!” My mum was getting impatient and I refused to look at Draven who the last time I looked was frowning.

“Yes mum...well, I'm sort of seeing someone.” I said quietly but it didn't do me much good as when I looked up, Draven’s injured expression filled my view. He was stood in front of me and he mouthed the words “sort of” to me.

“I mean *yes*, I am dating someone.” I corrected and this brought the

smile back to his lips.

“Well that's nice Kазzy honey, me and your dad both think it's about time but Libby mentioned he's your boss.” Oh boy, Libby was certainly going to be in for it now. I would refuse to cook for a month but poor Frank would have to eat gruel and charcoal for the duration and that wouldn't be fair on him.

“Yes that's right, he owns the club but he's not my manager, so it kind of doesn't count, plus we don't really see each other when I'm working, see I work downstairs.” I was babbling on and on and for the first time I felt like kicking Draven in the shins as he stood there grinning at me like a mischievous child. I mouthed the words “grow up” at him but this just added fuel to a naughty flame.

“Well as long as it doesn't interfere with work Keira that's the important thing.”

“No it doesn't.” I said trying to sound convincing but when you have the memory of Draven's hands all over your body when you were trying to work, it made it harder to lie.

“So what's he like? Libby said he's very handsome and that you were wearing make up again so I gather this means you must really like him.” Bless my mum but right now I just wanted my phone to blow up! But no doubt that Draven would just use his powers to fix it again. He was definitely enjoying himself too much for this little call to end.

“I'm not wearing make up again, Libby is exaggerating. I wore it once for Halloween!”

“Don't get touchy Keira it's nothing to be ashamed of, you're just getting your life back on track and it's good to hear. We're happy for you, just remember to take it slow and don't let the fact that he's your boss and *rich*, intimidate you.” Oh sweet Jesus, could this get any worse? Of course the answer to that quickly followed.

“Oh and remember to use protection, remember it's better to be baby safe than baby sorry.” This had been my mum’s motto since I turned seventeen. I just wanted to cry but from the looks of Draven he already was, with laughter! He was sat back down and I scowled at him. I waved my arm around at him to motion for him to leave but he just shook his head at me, telling me a defiant no. So I mouthed the word “Fine!” at him to indicate my anger.

“Mum it's a bit soon for that.” I was just thankful I didn't slip up and say “too late” instead.

“Well as long as you’re careful when you do, that's all that counts.” This of course was not the best time to panic about the fact that I didn't really know if we *had* been careful. Could Demon/Angel half breeds reproduce? Oh no, how could I have not thought about this sooner?

“Anyway, what is the young man's name?” This made me laugh out loud. I just couldn't help it. For one I didn't actually know how old Draven was but I was pretty sure he was past being called young man!

“His names Drav...umm I mean... Dominic.” At this Draven’s eyes held something other than humour. I got the impression that he loved it when I called him by his first name.

“That's a nice name. Has he taken you anywhere fancy?” I couldn't help but smile when I saw Draven's face drop. Of course we had been a bit preoccupied to go on an actual date, what with my psycho stalker after me and then there was his Demon partner in crime, leading to my being kidnapped. So to be honest we just hadn’t had the time. All in all, we’d had one hell of a week!

“Well I have been a little busy and things are still fresh, we have only been dating a few days mum. Anyway how’s *me* dad?” I needed to get her off this subject. My mum wasn't old fashioned as such be she still thinks that the girl has to be wined and dined by a gentleman before a girl gives up the goods! Well my goods had already been bought, purchased and spent, many times over and boy was Draven one hell of a buyer. He was a pro! But I

wasn't about to disclose that bit of information to my mother.

“Oh he's fine, asleep on the couch as usual, I don't know why he bothers watching telly if it's just going to send him off to sleep.” I could faintly hear some world war documentary in the background and it made me chuckle.

“Libby is back off their trip soon, isn't she?”

“Yeah, Sunday I think.”

“I hope you haven't been scared all alone in that house by yourself, you know you can ring me or you know we have Skype now.” Oh great more lying.

“I *ain't* been scared, there's *nowt* to be scared of.” I said and before I had thought about it, my Northern Twang had shown itself in full force.

“Keira use proper English dear.” She scolded. This had always frustrated my mother but considering she had married a Scouser (Someone from Liverpool) I was always surprised when she pulled us up on it. The sweetest thing about this was when Draven heard me sort of being told off by my mum he came over and kissed the top of my head lightly. He mouthed the words “*I like it*” and I couldn't help but smile.

“Libby also tells me that you have been painting again, I must say if this is down to this new guy you're now dating, I like him already.” I could almost hear Draven smiling behind me as his arms wrapped around me.

“Yeah I decided to take advantage of the amazing views around here, I'll send you one soon. Anyway mum I'm going to have to go but...”

“Oh well there was one other thing I wanted to tell you before you go” This was what I had been waiting for. I knew my mum well enough to know the hidden meaning behind the things she did and this time I knew that she had been stalling.

“What is it mum?”

“Well don't go off the handle but someone's coming to visit you,” she said trying to sound upbeat, as if that would help! I suddenly went cold, knowing there was only one person who my mum would know I wouldn't be happy about seeing.

“Oh No, no way mum, not going to happen, not now not ever!” I said in a stern voice that shocked Draven enough to drop his arms and face me. I was frowning so hard my cheeks ached.

“Catherine Keira Williams, I didn't bring you up to have that attitude and family is important, you surprise me!” Ah, so now it was time for the guilt trip....parents!

“Mum please, I am just getting settled here and this is the last thing I need right now.” Ok so I know it was a cheap shot, going straight in for the guilt thing but trust me...when needs must!

“Keira there would never be a right time for you to see your cousin in your book.” Damn straight I hated the bitch and a frozen Hell wouldn't even cut it!

“Does Libby know about this?”

“Not yet but she won't say no, anyway it's only for a week or two.” I thought I was going to choke on my own tongue.

“Anyway I will let you know the details love, talk to you soon, bye bye, kiss kiss.” And with that my mother put the phone down before I had chance to have the tantrum that I was very close to having.

“ArrrggggSHIT!” I screamed out before I could contain it any longer and man did Draven look more stunned than ever.

“Sorry about that but to say that I am pissed off right now would be a huge understatement!” I let my arms fly over my head like a drama queen. I had never been one for overacting but when it came to my cousin Hilary, no amount of overacting would ever be enough! She could give Margaret Thatcher a run for her money.

“I take it, you don't like this person?” He was trying very hard to hide a grin and for a change he looked a bit worried about my reaction if he were to fail at concealing it.

“Is there a stronger word for hate?!” I said bitterly.

“I doubt you mean that.” He said as he followed me about the room that I was stomping round.

“I bloody do! Trust me on this one, she is pure evil.” He might be almighty and powerful but when it came to keeping his face straight he failed miserably. His laughing didn't soften my features either.

“Draven!”

“I'm sorry but it is hard to believe that such a cute and adorable creature could be so angry, you are too loveable to hate anything Keira.” He caught my face in his hands and made me look up into his face and when he kissed me, I inevitably turned to putty.

“May I ask what it is exactly that you do not like about this hell cat?” Umm... I liked that, Hell Cat... it had a nice ring to it. Of course it needed a few added words like...bitch, slut, skank, harlot, cow oh and man eater!

“Everything!” At this he frowned as he wanted a serious answer. He didn't realise this was a serious answer.

“Just trust me on this one. She is beyond a handful and she seems to make it her mission in life to make me miserable at every opportunity. She will try and steal you away, that I will bet my life on!” This had him laughing again and I can sort of understand why, this to him must seem a very trivial thing to hate over.

“Well she can try but won't you feel satisfied when she doesn't succeed?” I have to admit I liked the idea.

“She is very pretty, granted, but she would spread her legs for anything that has a pulse and a shiny new car but she does seem to get whatever she

wants and when she sees that I have you, she will go in for the kill!” As soon as the last word was out of my mouth, he had picked me up and put me over his shoulder like a fireman. I let out a nervous giggle before he lay me gently on the bed. My legs dangled over the edge while he placed each hand on either side of my head. He came very close to my face before speaking.

“Keira listen to me now when I say that I am yours as you are mine, do you understand?” I nodded as it was the only response I could give as I had lost all of my functions. The heavenly scent of his mouth had me hypnotized.

“So we are not going to worry about this evil cousin are we?” He was shaking his head and speaking in a way that had me agreeing to anything he wanted. He pushed himself against me when I didn't answer quickly enough, so instead I moaned at the feeling he was creating between my inner thighs.

“Good girl.” He said before his lips curved up on one side into a wicked grin. We stayed like that for some time, kissing like teenagers before his strong arm held my back and pulled me up until my body was fully on the bed. He held all his body weight on his arms above me and lowered to kiss me again like he was doing a press up. Things were about to get heated for the second time this morning when there was a knock at the door. Draven growled at the disruption.

“LEAVE US!” He shouted but before they had chance to leave, I frowned at him and his black eyes softened.

“Wait!” He said before smiling at me. He got off me and went to open the door to Candra who had brought some food. I sat up and smelled the fresh bread and hot teapot. My stomach made noises like it had radar. He stood back and waited for her to place the tray on the table and before leaving she bowed her head to him saying “My Lord.” Draven nodded in return but before she could leave I said.

“Thank you Candra” And she turned looking shocked and then smiled gratefully before leaving. I got off the bed to tuck into a sticky croissant and some jam but more importantly a cup of tea which Draven had already poured for me.

“Thank you” I said taking it from him but he just winked at me before pouring himself some juice. I still don't know why I kept getting shocked every time he did something so normal. I mean even Superman must eat and use the bathroom...surely?

“So what would you like to do today?” Draven surprised me with this question and I had a feeling that the phone call with my mum had something to do with it.

“Umm... I don't know. What brought this on?” I asked after swallowing a mouthful of butter pastry goodness.

“Well I think your mother was right, I haven't gone about this the right way at all.” He was smirking at the idea of dating a human, I could tell.

“To be fair Draven, when have we had the time, when exactly were we supposed to go on this date? I mean, before you kidnapped me and when you acted like you hated me or after, when we found out Morgan was coming for me?” I couldn't help but shake my head while laughing at the idea but he didn't seem to find the funny side.

“Keira, I didn't kidnap you and I most certainly didn't hate you! But I guess I get your point, which makes me wonder, what you would have said if I had asked you out on a date, after our little car journey the second night you worked upstairs?” This question made me stop eating and look at him. Yep he was being serious.

“Why... did you want too?” I swallowed hard while waiting for the answer.

“I was thinking about it yes, but I had to fight with what was right and what I wanted. I am afraid my logic won over my heart that night. However I still didn't want to leave you. It was my first experience at being worried about someone I loved and unfortunately it was not to be the last time I felt this way.” I couldn't judge his facial expression this time although I am usually good at it, but this time it was like a sadness he was trying to hide. I could tell he was worried about something but I knew he would never tell me

so.

“But I am still curious as to what your answer would have been?”

“That's a tough one, because if I were listening to my heart I would have said yes but the same as you I would have gone with my logic and said no.” At this he looked truly stunned and no wonder, with a man like Draven, you don't say no.

“Why would your logic tell you that?” I think my answer knocked his ego slightly because now he had come to sit next to me and was giving me a very intense stare.

“Because I knew there was something different about you and you did kind of scare me but come on, do you blame me?! I mean up until that point you treated me like I was ...was...”

“Yes?” He raised his eyebrows but I just looked down at my hands.

“Well, like I was some silly little plain and pale outsider that you needed to get out of your club quicker than cockroaches!”

“Oh Keira, you can be so blind sometimes, you really don't look at yourself the way others do. I apologise for ever making you feel this way but I needed you to stay away from me at the time. You don't know the endless nights I spent thinking. No not thinking but fantasising about touching that soft pale skin of yours.” At this he ran the back of his fingers up my bare arm, making me close my eyes and my breathing to become heavy.

“Those times I am not proud of but now I have you, I will do anything to keep you and that includes making you happy, so back to that. What would you like to do today my sweet?” He leaned his head down to catch my smile with his lips and when he had finished he licked his lips saying,

“Mmm, sweet indeed, jam has never tasted so good.” Then I went the colour of the jam but this seemed to just excite him more.

“Ok I have made my mind up, can I go home?” I said while he was

kissing my neck though it made him stop and look at me.

“You don't like being here?”

“No, no, it's not that, I love being here with you but I guess I'm just ready for things to get back to normal.”

“Keira, you are dating a Demon/Angel half breed that has to control the worlds supernatural, I think you can kiss normality goodbye.” He said, laughing while he pushed his hair back with a pair of large hands. This was definitely a weak spot of mine. I just couldn't stop my heart from doing a back flip in my chest at the sight. It had me wondering what he would look like under an exotic waterfall, naked of course.

“Well as close to normal as you can get around me, plus I need to do stuff at home, human stuff and not to mention I have no clothes left.”

“Now that is not what I call a problem, if it were up to me, you would never wear clothes again but then I would have to keep you hidden away for myself. I don't like it when you get leered at fully clothed so I can imagine you naked would send me into a blind rage.” He wasn't joking. I remembered when I had heard the loud crash in the VIP area when me and Jack had kissed, then the power to the entire club had gone out. Talk about blowing a fuse!

“None the less, I still need to go home at some point but I would like it very much if you came with me?” I looked up at him giving him my best wide eyed puppy look, which I hoped made him melt the way he does to me.

“Of course I am coming with you, I'm not going to let you go alone.” He said this as though such an obvious thing.

“Okey dokey lets go, oh and by the way, I'm driving!” I got up but he pulled me down onto his lap and kissed me before saying,

“Not a chance!” But when I got up I actually stamped my foot looking like a spoilt teenager. He got up and towered above me only I wouldn't back down.

“Come on, I need to get my car back at some point and this way I have to give into to you next time.” He gave me a huge grin that lit up his eyes and he rubbed his chin with an exaggerated gesture.

“Umm....I like the sound of that but you’d better remember this bargain because have no doubt that I will collect Keira.” I felt almost giddy at the thought.

Minutes later we had made our way down a maze of stone passageways as Draven held my hand leading me all the way. It didn't take us long to get outside and I was amazed at the door we went through. It was a hidden stone wall that moved when Draven touched it causing it to slide to one side. It made me jump at the sound of stone grating against stone.

It was at the same side of the house that held the metal door that also led to the bins. I had used this door twice, once on my first night working in club Afterlife and second when I had tried to escape from it. Draven had known I was in danger and that Morgan was after me but I had tried to run from it all including Draven. I had always wondered though, just how he had gotten out to me so quickly that night. Well now I knew the answer to that one. But thinking more about it, he did have wings and could have just jumped from the balcony above us, the one that connected to the VIP.

When we got outside I was ready with extra layers on, as the weather had changed overnight, turning bitter cold but I didn't mind so much as this way I got to see Draven in a black fitted leather jacket. The man made me feel warm down below at just the sight of him. Oh my my.... He caught me looking and he opened the door to my big blue truck with a confident half smile.

“Thank you kindly.” I said while batting my eyelashes making him laugh.

“You are most welcome, my lady.”

He suited being in my truck as he had such a rough side to him, especially when he had stubble framing the lower part of his face. I could

imagine him chopping logs in half with one swing and with arms like that, this wasn't the only image I had of him. In most of my images I was entwined in those strong muscular arms of his. I started the engine but because it was cold it didn't want to fire up first time. I stroked the dash and said,

“Come on big blue, time to wake up.” Then she started after a few spluttering sounds but I had a feeling this was down to Draven who had touched the ignition making God only knows what happen.

“You are so very sweet, aren't you?” He said as I pulled the big Bronco round.

“Not so much, I can be naughty when provoked.” I said giving him a wicked grin and wink of my own.

“I wouldn't do that if I were you, not while you are driving and I am very, very tempted.” This was Draven's way of saying he was turned on, which of course was making me horny as Holy Hell! I couldn't keep the smile off my face or the colour from my cheeks most of the drive home, but it was his fault. He wouldn't stop staring at me.

“You are a very careful driver aren't you?”

“What you mean is SLOW...right?” His laugh said it all.

“Well seeing as you're immortal and I am so not, I think the speed limit is beneficial for both of us, as I don't want to die young and you don't want me to die young, so it's a win win situation.” This was said in a light hearted way but it had the opposite effect and just made him look serious.

“I won't let you die, period!” He said it in such a way that made me shiver but I decided to leave him to his thoughts as he looked out of the window for the first time. I mean, it's not like he could help it if something did happen to me. That was just the natural way of life but never the less, I kept silent on the matter. I was a firm believer in ‘it is better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all’, and I was standing firmly by it.

The last few minutes of the drive were filled with the sights of the

wilderness either side of the road and the sound of the engine. Draven didn't say another word. I think death was a sore conversation to have with him but it was inevitable so at some point we would have to discuss it. Ok not on our first date, that was kind of a depressing subject to bring up, so now I was secretly scorning myself over it. I was trying to think of a way to bring him back so I did a very lame thing but hopefully he would find it more cute and endearing.

“Ok, I have one for you, why is six afraid of seven?” I asked hoping he wouldn't look at me as though I was totally nuts....Ooops too late.

“I'm afraid I'm not following you.” Jeez hadn't he heard a joke before, even one as lame as this.

“Nooo, this is where you say “I don't know, why is six afraid of seven?”” Ok this was painful but at least we were having a conversation again...well sort of.

“Oh sorry, Keira please tell me, why is six afraid of seven” Well at least he was smiling now.

“Because seven, eight, nine!” I bit my lip waiting for his response and thankfully the car started to shake and fill with the sound of his laughter. He stopped just as we pulled up outside the house.

“That was adorable.” He said taking my hands in his after I turned the key and cut the beast.

“Are you alright?” I asked cautiously.

“Yes I am. I am very very happy and when I didn't know what it was to be this happy...how it feels I mean, well.... it still takes me back but most of all it makes me terrified at the thought of ever losing it. Of ever losing you.” His eyes glazed over making them look so deep you could have drowned in them. He brought my hands up to his mouth and kissed them over and over before saving his last kiss for my willing lips.

“Well lucky for you I have never been this happy too and I ain't going

anywhere!” Just as I finished this last word he was out of the car and round to my side opening my door and pulling me out into those solid arms I love so much. He kicked the door shut and the sound made me jump but he just held me tighter to him.

“I just love that cute Northern English accent of yours but most of all...” he carried me to the porch steps before he continued and placed me on the second step so I was at the right height. He leaned in to kiss me but before he got there he finished his sentence.

“I love you my Keira.”

Chapter 4

First Date.

Ok, this was the thing with having a ridiculously handsome boyfriend, who has had hundreds of years to perfect the art of kissing, you can't help but feel a little self conscious about your own ability. He seemed to enjoy it but I didn't know if the reason he kissed me so much was down to how good it was or the fact that he thinks I needed the practice. Either way I wasn't complaining but I was kind of hoping for the first.

Once he had finished kissing me he ran his thumb over my lips ever so slowly but I still couldn't open my eyes. This was the other thing about Draven, he was, to say the least....intense. Those black, deep set eyes would

stare at me with no idea about what it did to me, or maybe he did know and just didn't care. Draven was the type of man that if he wanted to stare freely at someone then he would, without giving it much thought. Like the first night I saw him at the club. He was walking up to the staircase that leads to the VIP when he saw me. He stopped right in front of my table and with a club full of people fascinated with his every move, he stopped dead and stared at me at length, without a care in the world. I had looked away first because as much as I love Draven he still kind of scares me. Don't get me wrong I know he would never hurt me but I can't help feeling a fear at the power that lies beneath his flawless skin.

I opened my eyes to see Draven smiling at me.

“I hope my kiss wasn't sending you to sleep.” He said knowing full well that was impossible.

“Quite the opposite actually.” I said before going on tiptoes to kiss him on his nose and I laughed when he wrinkled it up. I turned on my heels and fished around for my keys out of my jeans pocket.

“I gather I don't have to invite you in like I would have to a Vampire?” I said giggling but he just frowned and said,

“You watch too many movies Keira.”

“Buffy actually.” I said as I threw my keys into the bowl by the door and wiggled out of my jacket but Draven had already grabbed the shoulders and was peeling it off me. I had never had a guy take my coat off for me. It was nice that he was a bit of an old fashioned gentleman. I just didn't know how old.

“Buffy?” He asked revealing he really wasn't a TV watching kind of guy.

“Yeah you know Buffy the Vampire slayer, she kicks arse! Do you even watch Telly?” He laughed at my question and I loved the sound of it in this large old house.

“I don't really get the time but I am intrigued at how a human would destroy a Vampire, especially a woman.” I was in the kitchen when he said this and I was only glad that I wasn't handling a sharp implement.

“What? Don't tell me Vampires are real?” No way, he must be teasing me! No frigin way!

“They are very real but not in the way the media portrays them. They are Demons that have been created by infected blood, which genetically changes their demon attributes. But they have many weaknesses and are fairly easy to kill.” He said all this as though he had been giving a lecture on Demon kill zones!

“Oh ok.... that's a little hard to take.” I was leaning over the sink when I felt Draven behind me.

“I'm sorry but you did ask. Maybe next time I should try and.... sugar coat it.”

“I guess I shouldn't be surprised at anything any more. Would you like a drink?” I asked trying not to forget my manners, even though the word Vampire still hung in the air like a cartoon bubble over my head. My mum would be proud.

“I am fine, thank you my sweet” He said this in my ear, which sent sparks up and down my spine. I was ready to strip naked and throw myself at him! Instead I filled the kettle and clicked it on. I got down a big mug that had my home team Liverpool FC on it and popped in a teabag.

“Did Frank inherit this house?” Draven asked and I was surprised with the question. Where did that come from?

“Umm yeah he did.”

“From his uncle?” Ok how did he know that? I nodded and he could clearly see the confusion on my face.

“I have been coming here for a long time Keira and I know the name of

every individual that lives here, why are you surprised?” He had got the carton of milk out for me before I had time to turn.

“Thanks.” I finished making my tea without answering him. For one, I didn't know why I had been shocked, it's not like I was ever normal myself and now I had a supernatural boyfriend. I smiled when I said the word in my mind and Draven as usual didn't miss it.

“Seeing you smile just makes it even harder not to kiss you.” He said taking my hot mug away and lifting me by the waist with one arm wrapped around me, pulling me up to reach his face.

“I take it you like kissing me?” I asked being brave when he had placed me back down and handing me back my tea.

“Kissing you is like making love without getting naked.” He said as if he meant every word.

“You're teasing me! I know I am not that good.” I had been told once that I wasn't a great kisser because I never relaxed.

“Why would you ever think that?” He didn't look happy at my spoken thoughts. I walked in the living room and he followed but when I sat down on the arm chair he shook his head and nodded at the space next to him. It wasn't that I didn't want to be next to him but I didn't want him thinking that I was always so clingy but it seems, he doesn't think like I do.

“I got told once that I don't relax enough to be a good kisser.” I said shamefully and just shrugged my shoulders as if it was no big deal.

“The boy was a fool! It was a boy wasn't it?” He asked in earnest and I nearly choked on my tea!

“YES of course it was!” I said laughing out loud.

“I was just checking, you might be inclined towards both sexes.”

“Do *you* like that sort of thing?” I lowered my eyes to stare at my tea

while I went the colour of tomato soup.

“With you NO, I do not share!” He said watching me carefully before continuing.

“Kissing you makes it hard to stop, like taking a drug, I get lost in your taste and once I have had that taste, I become addicted. It is like I can feel every fibre in your body speaking to me and the only way to communicate back is by using my lips on yours and my tongue to feel you.” Well I certainly hadn’t had my kissing described like that before, that was pure Shakespeare!

“Thank you.” I said shyly but he tilted his head to one side and made me look at him.

“You do not need to thank me for explaining the truth about how I feel. Sex with you is very much the same feeling only I use something else to communicate, other than my tongue” He said in a bold, naughty way and it was soon apparent that he was getting aroused by the topic. His hands started to find my skin and I had to concentrate on how to breathe. I hated the fact that I was going to have to stop it because there was conversation that we needed to have. I pulled his hands back from around me and pushed him away, which made him growl and me jump.

“Now stop that!” I said pulling my light brown eyebrows together in a frown.

“Then give in to me” He said in a hoarse voice that sounded desperate for his drug.

“First, we kind of need to talk about something.”

“Another worry?” He asked, turning back into his smooth velvet voice so as not to offend me.

“This is an important one and one we should have had sooner.” I was going red just thinking about trying to form the words. Words I wish I didn’t have to say!

“I should have mentioned this earlier but we have made love five times now.”

“Soon to be six!” He remarked, making me blush.

“Ok, here it is....I'm not on the pill!” I blurted out but his reaction was the complete opposite to the one I had imagined. He was laughing at me!

“I gather this new worry is due to the “Baby safe” comment your mother made to you earlier.” He couldn't keep his face straight, so I guessed that it wasn't something *he* was worried about.

“So I take it this is something we don't need to do anything about?” Did that make sense?

“You mean contraception?” Again with the roaring laughter.

“I'm so glad you find this funny,” I said sarcastically turning away from him.

“I don't mean to but you have to see it from my side, I have never needed to have this conversation before. It's a real human moment for me.” Well when he put it like that, I could kind of see his point....kind of.

“So Angels and Demons don't....reproduce?”

“We can but we are different to humans. We can control it.” As soon as he said this, my heart sank. Did he not have orgasms? I had been pretty sure that I could feel umm... stuff down below afterwards.

“How is that possible? I don't understand, how can you enjoy it if you don't....um...” Again he wasn't making this easy for me, when he kept looking at me like I was a child asking about the “birds and bees” or “Where do babies come from?”

“I will explain.” He playfully gripped my chin before continuing.

“When two of our kind has sex, it is not as intense as it is with a human,

as I have recently learned first hand. We can control every aspect of our bodies including whether or not the sperm is....active.” He was looking at me, waiting for me to ask questions about something I didn’t understand but so far, in a weird way, I understood.

“So you mean dead or firing blanks?” I couldn't help but giggle as I noticed his male pride get a hammering so he corrected me, quickly.

“I mean, more like working to its full capacity.”

“So how come being with a human is better?” I always thought he was just saying this part to make me feel better and less inadequate.

“The best way to explain is if you could imagine two powerful magnets that want to fight each other rather than mesh. Now a magnet and a piece of metal, they are instantly attracted and drawn together.”

“Ok... so I'm the metal in this picture...right?”

“I am not explaining this very well am I? Being with another of my kind is not as fulfilling sexually because our powers are both strong but when I am with you, imagine the intensity multiplied by thousands. Our senses are hypersensitive, so when it comes to you, every touch, every smell and every taste feels....incredible.” He leaned over my head and took in my scent while his eyes were closed. I felt like a giant glass of red wine....red because of my blushing skin. Or I guess I could have been white also as I am unusually pale.

“So back to the baby part, doesn't that affect your....you know?” I was waving my hand around like the queen of England waves from an open top car.

“Orgasm, No it doesn't affect the feeling you give me but I have heard that when we do finally allow ourselves an active release then it is even more intense. But I’m not an expert on these matters....First human remember?” He said this last part as he playfully poked me in the ribs making me close to snorting.

“But if that is something you wanted to do I could always go on the pill

or we could use a Sergeant's jacket but I think extra large would be in order!" I said this before I could think about what I was saying and I bit down on my lip but it was too late, it was already out. He was close to tears with laughter and I was just close to tears.

"That is shocking Miss Williams! Just when I thought I knew you well enough to judge what you would say next, you say something like that! You are so unpredictable and I love it. But may I ask, is this term for a condom a Northern thing or a Keira thing?" I couldn't speak and I was close to taking the skin of my lips.

"I will take the fact that you are trying to destroy those perfect lips of yours, as it was a Keira thing. I am pleased." He said in triumph but I had no idea why. I wasn't the only one that was unpredictable. He put his thumb to my lips to prevent me from biting them further, then he bent his head to kiss them, only when he got there he bit them gently himself. It sent me close to crazy, it felt so good.

"Umm... I can now see why you do that, it is satisfying." This made me smile and find my voice again.

"So back to the whole protection thing."

"I am afraid it wouldn't work like it does with human men. I am not being arrogant when I say they would be quite unstoppable. But enough of this talk, I am hungry!" He was above me before I even had time to blink. He grabbed my wrists and pulled me to him off the couch. He stared down at me and my neck arched right back to meet those hungry eyes.

"My Sergeant orders his Private upstairs for drill training!" My eyes widened in excitement and my breathing became difficult to control. His large palms felt their way down my sides and found my waist, there he gripped me tightly before lifting me up and over his shoulder like he had done earlier. It was as if I weighed nothing at all and he sprinted up the stairs before I could count two steps, ending in my bedroom.

He slid me down, holding one hand behind my neck to lay me down

gently. I swallowed the bloody great lump in my throat when I saw his purple eyes. I heard his shoes hit the floor before he joined me on the bed but he just eyed me like a beast would do to its next meal. I felt the burning love down below and the fear in my chest. He was like a man possessed...no, not a man....A Demon!

He started stripping the clothes off me like he was trying very hard to resist the urge not to rip them apart. I was a bit relieved when he didn't as I was quickly running out of clothes. I sat up and pulled his vest from his Greek God like torso and I noticed the denim aching with the bulge that grew within it. He noticed my wide eyes at the sight and he gave me one of his trademark bad boy grins. This was quite a surreal moment for me, giving all the times I thought I had been dreaming about Draven visiting me in my room. Of course all those times *had* been real and of course all those times I wanted him to be doing this to me now.

We were soon both naked and he seemed to be studying me in depth. The whole time I tried everything in my power to get the ball rolling as the embarrassment was getting too much for me to handle but he wanted his way with me. This was my torture.

“You make me nervous when you do that.”

“Good, I love to watch you blush.” His hands gripped tightly onto my hips and he pulled me down the bed to him. His fingers moved down my thighs and stopped when they reached under my knees. He held them in a strong vice, separating my legs and pulling them up around him so that he could easily enter me. I closed my eyes and braced myself for the feeling but screamed out anyway as I usually did.

Would I ever get used to the immense pleasure it caused? As both our actions became more rapid the bed didn't agree with our activity and squeaked and creaked like a cow on an old rocking horse. Draven cursed in a few different languages and I couldn't help but find it a bit funny. I had never laughed during sex before but it must have caused a reaction down below because he gave me a look of surprise. Now I knew it was obviously a first for him also as I can't imagine anyone in their right mind laughing with

Draven inside them...anyone but me that is!

“Are you laughing at me young lady?” He said showing me his teeth when he grinned.

“No Sir.” I said giving him a cheeky smile which made his eyes soft like black velvet.

He pulled out of me, making me let out a moan in disappointment but he just mouthed the words “trust me.” Then he got up and grabbed the end of my mattress with both hands. I was about to get up to make it easier but before I could open my mouth he flung the mattress on the floor next to my window seat, with me still lay upon it. I let out a gasp but this just seemed to excite him as the next thing I knew he was on top of me again and inside me. Here we continued with no further interruptions. And my bed was happy again.

This time making love was more experimental as Draven kept changing positions but this resulted in mind blowing release after release and I was almost at the point of screaming out how I couldn't take much more but before I could utter a word of protest, he changed something within me so that I *could* take it. It was like giving me a clean slate and then he moved my body so that I had my back to him. We had never done it this way before and with the added bonus of the window seat it was a very comfortable position. I lent across it and his hands explored my back and ran up to my hair, grabbing handfuls of blonde waves before entering me again. I arched my back against him and he moaned in response.

I loved the sound, so I did it over and over again, making it grow more rough and intense each time. This turned me on at an unbelievable level so I matched his noises with my own, until we both found euphoria at the same time. He let out the loudest moan that quickly turned into a roar to drown out my scream. It was heavenly!

He pulled my body backwards off the seat and I collapsed in his arms. We both remained entwined in each others arms like that for a while and he stroked my wet hair from my forehead that had been soaked in sweat from at

the sexual exercise. Well one thing was for sure, I wouldn't be putting on any weight any time soon. My skin was steaming and Draven felt it too because he lifted my hair off my back and started to blow cool air over my shoulders. It felt amazing, like jumping into a cold swimming pool after sunbathing all day. He even made his skin cold to quicken the process.

“After that I think you deserve an upgrade.” I looked up at him but I couldn't get a good view of his face, so I propped up to lean on his shoulder. He was grinning to himself.

“Oh really, so what will it be next?”

“Um.... I'm thinking.... Commander!” I said and kissed him quickly on the cheek before getting up but I didn't make it very far as he grabbed my hand and pulled me down.

“Where are you going?” He asked looking less than happy about me leaving him but I giggled.

“Time for human girly things” I said before getting up for the second time. I grabbed a purple fleece throw from my bed and wrapped it around me. He groaned disapprovingly about me covering up but I felt funny walking around naked.

“You make me want you all over again with that colour on your skin.” He let out a sigh and I figured I'd mistaken the groan. I smiled down at him before going to the bathroom. When I got there I turned on the tap as I didn't want Draven hearing me pee. That was the beauty about being at Draven's home, his bathroom was bigger than my bedroom so even with supernatural powers I doubted he could hear. Well I hoped not, maybe I was underestimating his abilities.

I finished my human action and looked in the mirror to find I was no longer my pale self. I was glowing a very healthy colour. I brushed my hair with the spare brush I kept in one of the drawers and tied it up into a knot. I was going to have to take a shower as my hair was a train wreck but my skin smelt of Draven, which was by far the nicest smell in the world. If I could

somehow bottle it, I would make millions. I could call it something corny like Dark Rouge or Demon Beast. I giggled to myself and realised I had been doing a lot of laughing these days thanks to Draven. In fact I couldn't remember a time when I had ever been this happy!

I walked back into the room to find the bed back to normal. Bless his gorgeous butt, he had made the bed. This shocked me as I didn't think a man like Draven would have ever needed to do this before. I wondered if this was the first time, like a bed making virgin. However he wasn't anywhere near the bed, he was dressed and stood on the other side of the room next to my desk. There he was studying my art work and I felt my skin steam again. I wasn't the best with showing people my work. I wasn't very good and did it more for the pleasure it brought me than for the talent, or lack of in my case.

He had in his hands the first painting that had done since I was kidnapped by Morgan years ago. It was of the view next to the house of the surrounding mountains and lush waves of green forest that was in the masses. He was staring at it so intently that I don't think he noticed I was back in the room. Of course I was wrong.

“You painted this?” He asked without looking at me and I walked over to him to look down at my mixture of greens and blues. I shamefully said,

“Yes, it isn't very good I know but it's something I have always enjoyed doing.” He turned to face me and looked at me with a serious eye. He placed his fingers over my lips.

“Keira, how can you say these things, your work is beautiful and your emotions show on the canvas, you were happy when you painted this, I can tell.” He looked back at it as though he was proud and I could feel my eyes welling up. I don't really know why I had this reaction but if I were to guess I would put it down to my past.

It had been because of art that I had met Morgan as he had been my tutor (under false pretences). He had loved my art also but I later found that even if I had swallowed a bucket of paint and then threw up on the paper he would have loved it. He was sick and twisted and the whole experience made me

turn my back on my passion. Until of course I met Draven. Maybe this is why he liked this picture so much, maybe he knew it was down to him.

“Then I would like you to have it.... But of course only if you want it that is.” He put his hand on the back of my neck and pulled my head into his chest, he kissed the top of it and said,

“I would be honoured, Thank you Keira.” He was so sincere and before I was reduced to tears I said.

“You’re welcome, but no selling it on eBay!” He laughed and picked me up like I had been a small child, swinging me around but as he did this my leg knocked a book to the floor. He put me down and picked it up and before I could grab it back, he had opened it.

“No don't!” But it was too late. My book of Demons was being folded back, page after page in his hands. He was shaking his head at all I had seen in the time I had moved here but one picture he came to made him shake with an emotion I didn't know. I looked down and remembered the dream it came from.

It was after Layla had stabbed me, my first night in Draven's bed but I had forgotten the dream until it came back to me nights later. I'd been in Afterlife dancing with some old school friend of mine, when I could see a pair of strange eyes watching me. At first in the dream I had thought they had belonged to Draven but when I saw the body emerge from the shadows it was a man I had never seen before.

He was very tall like Draven, with wide shoulders that looked built for swinging a warriors Axe. But that's where the similarities ended. Where Draven was olive skinned and had dark features, hair, eyes, this guy was the opposite. He had blonde hair, tied back from his face but it was cut just above where his spine started. He had very pale skin which just enhanced his startling dark blue eyes.

He had strong features, with a square jaw and hard mouth. He was stunning but frightening as hell! It was mainly down to his eyes and the way

they followed me. Every movement my body made with the music he matched with his gaze. It was both freezing and fiery. It was the look of a natural born killer and he had just found his next victim, only this creature liked to play first.

I remember trying to ignore him in my dream but it was as if he was forcing himself into my brain, using my mind against me. My eyes weren't my own, so when I couldn't look away from him, I saw he was no longer in the distance, no he was *now* right in front of me. I tried to run but my legs wouldn't work, I tried to lash out at him but my arms wouldn't move. He had me paralysed and he looked down at me with sardonic satisfaction.

His hand came to my face and his skin felt like smooth marble and ice cold fingers, leaving their mark in lines down my cheeks. Then the lights went out in the club and the room was plunged into a dark silence. I looked about the room but couldn't see anyone else. That's when the man in front of me spoke for the first time.

“They're all dead little Keira girl.” His voice was the deepest voice I had ever heard and I will never forget the way my name sounded at that depth of evil. I looked down at my hand expecting not to see anything but they were glowing deep red. At first I thought my wrists had been slit again but then I realised it was from a reflection.

I had never felt a fear as strong before as I lift my head to look back at him. My eyes found what I imagined one of the devil's minions to look like. There was a blood red mist around his figure but his body was blacked out. His face was in the deep shadows but his eyes glowed white making him look almost like the walking dead. Behind him were two massive bulls horns that came from his shoulder bones and attached to these were his wings hanging down like demonic curtains. It was like a thousand bats had been killed and all their wings used to be sewed together to make one huge set. They were worn and broken in places with holes nearer the edges. They then went down into points making the ends, where finger like claws looked deadly to the core. His hands were balled into fist by his sides and when he didn't touch me with them I was about to turn and run.

“You can't run from me little Keira girl. There is nowhere for you to hide.” His voice wasn't coming from his lips but from every corner of the room as though there was an army of him. I followed the whispers but couldn't make out anything. I turned back towards him and he leaned his face forwards making me step back with fright. Blood stained lips curved into a sadistic smile showing me all his bloody teeth like he had not long finished a human meal. His fangs started to grow past his lips and down his chin at the sight of my fear. A single droplet of bloody dripped down his right fang.

“See you soon” He said and licked the blood off it before clicking his fingers. This made all the lights in the club return and my fears sunk to new depths. He had illuminated the room for me to discover the blood bath. All my friends, everyone I ever knew was now lying in broken heaps around us. Bloody, dismembered and tortured bodies I could hardly make out individually. The walls and furniture ran red with blood as though a raging river of the life source had passed through.

I screamed uncontrollably which is what finally woke me up from my nightmare. I had got up that night to draw him from my memory not really knowing who or what he was but I had to cast him out. Even now I still get goosebumps from the picture. Sammael had nothing on this dude!

Draven was still gripping the book like it was a small creature that needed to be contained.

“Draven what's wrong?” My voice seemed to bring him back to the room but his face was one of pure fury and hatred.

“Have you seen this man?” His voice was steel, cold and one I had rarely heard before.

“Only once, in a nightmare... why?” I was pretty sure I didn't want to know the answer to this but it wouldn't be the first time I had received an answer I didn't like. He dropped the book to the floor and turned to me to grab my shoulders. I looked up at him and hated the harsh bitter face I found there.

“Because Keira, the man in this picture is...” I swallowed hard, now knowing the truth and the foundations of our combined fears.

I finished his sentence.

“Lucius”

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Chapter 5

Bodyguard Time

It took a while for Draven to calm down from this new development and I tried to hide my worry for his sake. The only up side to all this, is at least now I knew his face and to keep well clear of it if I ever saw it in anything but my dreams. Draven had made some phone calls but he spoke in a really ancient sounding language so once again, I was kept in the dark. I was trying to look busy until he had finished on the phone.

“Keira, I will have to leave you but it won't be for long.” I have to say the idea didn't have me doing back flips off the bed but I guess this was proof there wasn't really much to fear.

“I am sending Ragnar over here to keep an eye on the house in my absence.” Ok, so it looks like I spoke to soon!

“Great, Ragnar” I said before I could stop myself. He raised an eyebrow at me....darn!

“What's wrong, he is extremely strong and very loyal?”

“Yes and he also hates me!” I said like a spoilt child but Draven laughed. At least he was in a better mood.

“Keira he does not hate you. He is just not used to seeing humans around me, especially those who speak their mind so openly. Think back to the times he has seen you, once you came to my table to shout at me....yes?!” Ok, so he had a tiny point there. His warm arms encased me in a secure hold before leaning down to my ear.

“I find this adorable little Keira but I can trust you to give him a chance can't I? He is after all your new bodyguard.” Oh no way! Never going to happen! The new horror of having that fairytale giant counteracted the sound of Draven calling me “little Keira” which tried to drag me back to the dream of Lucius. I think I was going to have to start wearing heels!

“Draven, that is not going to happen, I don't need a bodyguard. Not when I have you.” I said stubbornly and I stomped away leaving him trying to control his smile.

“Does that mean you are willing to move into my home and stay within those walls forever?”

“No of course not, I want to still to do my normal stuff, like work and college but come on, a bodyguard? Don't you think that's a wee bit over the top?” I could tell it was like flogging a dead horse. He wasn't going to budge on this.

“No, I do not and if I had my way, you wouldn't be going back to college and as for the work thing, we will discuss it when I return. But Keira, understand, if you want this ‘normal life’ you speak of, then there will be consequences and your protection comes first in my list of priorities.” At this he sounded absolutely unmoveable.

“Fine, but that's not going to look weird at all, having some scary guy the size of a house following me everywhere I go. Like I can't get any weirder!” Ok, so I was sulking now but for someone that just wanted to fade into the background, having bloody Goliath around wasn't part of the picture!

Draven made me look up at him and he looked hurt. I instantly felt guilty. I lowered my head feeling a bit ashamed of my behaviour. He put his hand under my chin and the slight pressure he applied made me look up at him again.

“Keira, please don't make this difficult. I don't like leaving you but if I have to do it then at least let me do so with a confidence that you will be safe. That's all I ask.”

“I'm sorry, I guess I'm just grumpy because you're going that's all.” I reached up on my tiptoes but I still couldn't reach his lips, so he took the hint and leaned down to me to meet me half way.

“Now that reason I like.” He said smiling.

Five minutes later Draven opened the door to find Ragnar filling the gap. The old wooden deck creaked angrily under his gigantic weight. His skin looked even more horrific in the daylight, like worn leather. He was taller than Draven and as wide as the door frame. I gulped and Draven turned to me and took my hand, giving it a squeeze to tell me it was alright. Ragnar was wearing black trousers and a black T-shirt that looked as if it was crying out in pain from being so tight. I hoped he wouldn't sneeze while he was here or that thing would rip into shreds and he would be left with nothing. His arms looked like tree trunks and the pure muscle was covered with bulging veins. His hands looked like spades that could have crushed my head with one small action.

“Keira, this is Ragnar.” I was trying to hide like a child behind Draven but he pulled me to his side. I looked up at him and a nervous smile crept its way across my face.

“Hello, would you like to come in?” I asked not forgetting my manners, even in the face of this beast! He looked at me curiously and then looked back at Draven for his answer.

“Ragnar will stay outside.” At this Ragnar just nodded at his master. Draven motioned for him to move and he left to walk the perimeter of the house. I noticed there was now a huge black Land Rover sat in my driveway. Well I doubted Ragnar would have fitted in one of Draven's many sports cars.

“I won't be long.” He kissed me long and hard as though it was to be our last. Then he spoke to Ragnar before he left.

“Geyma austrvegr jenta og gi lifdagar ditt, lytte til andra” (Means “Guard the girl with your life, listen for others” in Part old Norse and Norwegian) He was just about to get in the car when he stopped. I was still in the door way and couldn't understand what he was saying but he shouted back to Ragnar,

“Oh and Ragnar, “ Ikke skirra austrvegr jenta, være hyggelig!” (“Do not scare the girl, be nice!”)

“Ja min herre” (“Yes my Lord”) He spoke for the first time and his voice matched his size. It was rough like a person just recovering from having their tonsils out. I watched as Draven got in the driver's side and drove off at a quicker speed than I would have liked, kicking up the gravel as he went. The sky was clear over the house but there were darker clouds moving across the mountains that threatened the ground with rain. Ragnar gave me a nod before I went back inside to be properly alone for the first time since Monday and today was Thursday. I went to flick on the kettle and make a hot chocolate when I noticed the answering machine blinking. I pressed a button and a very polite voice told me I had forty three messages. Forty three! Wow Libby *had* been worried. I didn't have the time or the will to listen to them all so I pressed the erase button.

I made two mugs of chocolate as I thought it was only polite to make my ‘forced upon me’ guest a drink. I hadn't asked him but to tell the truth I was too scared to. I opened the door to find him standing guard by the frame. I just hoped we didn't have any visitors, it's not as if out here we got the Avon lady or anything but still, I doubt Ragnar was going to look kindly on a postman. Maybe I would need to make a sign “Beware of the Ragnar” or “Warning Viking Demon on patrol”.

“Hi, I... um... I made you a drink.” I said and he cocked his large head to one side.

“Why?” He asked and I couldn't help but jump.

“Because I made myself one and it is cold out here. Plus it's kind of what humans do.” I said in a bit of a nervous whisper.

“They'd give men cups, like an offering?” He sounded confused. He also didn't sound like he was used to speaking in English but I understood it even with the strong European accent.

“Guests usually get offered a drink...yes. Do you like chocolate?” I asked looking like a hobbit next to a giant. He just shrugged his shoulders and I felt the wooden floor bounce from his slight movement. I hoped he didn't go through it. I passed him the mug and it looked like a thimble in his whopping great big hands. He looked at it as though it was going to do something more.

“It's nice....sweet.” I said smiling at him. Like this he didn't seem so scary. Once you got used to the pot holed face and colossal size. He placed it to his lips and I said quickly.

“It's hot!” But he smirked which added a nice glaze to his chestnut coloured eyes. He drank it all in one and my mouth must have dropped because he started laughing. At least I think it was laughter, rather that or he was doing an impression of a bull grunting and getting ready to charge. He handed me back the mug which was still hot.

“Good?” I asked determined to get more than a few words out of him but he just nodded so I gave up. I moved to the open front door and he watched me carefully.

“I thanking you” He said and it looked as though he found it difficult thanking a human girl for anything.

“You're welcome, if you want anything else, just let me know.”

I had to admit that with my very own private Hercules standing guard I didn't worry about my new stalker. I could imagine getting hit by Ragnar would be like being hit by a runaway train. I decided while I was alone to do a load of washing, take a shower and ring RJ to let her know I was still alive. I felt a bit bad that I had waited so long and after what had happened to Jack

and Celina, I really wanted to make sure he was alright. Plus this would be a conversation I didn't really want Draven to hear. When it came to me and Jack being friends, Draven didn't approve....that much was clear. I got the cordless and snuggled on the couch.

“Hey RJ, its Kaz.”

“Oh my god! What happened to you, have you heard the rumours? People think the Dravens abducted you or something!” She sounded a little too happy about this idea. I wondered if she wasn't the one to spread these rumours but then I dismissed the idea feeling guilty for even thinking it.

“No, no, nothing like that, I just had some real personal stuff to deal with and the Dravens have been helping me with it.” At least I could get away with saying that without lying.

“Like what? You know Jack has been really worried about you, he wanted to call the police!” She did sound concerned but also relieved, which was sweet.

“Some stuff from England but it's all over now.” For some reason saying it out loud made it seem more real.

“Is he there?”

“No but you have his cell number right?”

“Yeah, I will give him a call. RJ, I have something to tell you but I don't want you to freak outok?”

“O.k..” She said slowly.

“You also have to promise me not to tell anyone and remember you're the only person that will know, so if I hear that the whole town knows tomorrow then guess who I am pointing the finger at?”

“OK, ok I got it, Jeez... deadly secret, pinkie seal and blood exchange! I promise.” I didn't quite understand the other bits but I decided to trust her

anyway.

“Well...um... me and Dominic Draven are sort of...well, dating.” As soon as I said it I thought she had been hit with a brick, she was screaming.

“RJ.....RJ? You still there?”

“OH MY GOD, NO FREAKIN’ WAY!!!! That is some crazy shit! Tell me everything before I go insane with jealousy and come round in a murderous rage.” I laughed at the thought of RJ's face when she got here to kill me and met Ragnar by the door! I explained how Draven had helped me out with some issues with a stalker I had back in England and that's why I didn't like talking about my past. I didn't think telling her this would do any harm....well I hoped not. I carried on saying how Sophia wanted me to stay with them for a few days just to be sure he didn't come around looking for me.

“So how did it happen, you lucky bitch?”

“I don't really know but I guess after spending sometime together something just clicked.” Ok, this bit was a lie but it sounded more believable than the outrageous truth. That I was born for him, even *I* couldn't get my head around that stumper.

“So have you jumped his bones yet? Because I'm telling you now it would not take me seconds to rip those...”

“Ok, ok, I got it.” We both laughed.

“We're taking things slow.” Another lie. I was just glad I wasn't having to lie in person....not yet anyway.

“To hell with slow! You will tell me though...right, I mean when you do the dirty deed?” She sounded almost possessed.

“No, probably not, but I will tell you this, kissing him is like nothing I have ever felt before.” I had to give her something.

“Then sex will be even better! I read an article about guys that are good kissers are almost always good in the sack!” Amen to that! I could definitely agree with that assessment.

“Poor Jack, he was really smitten.” This had me cringing with guilt.

“I really wanna talk to him, he has a right to hear it from me first, so hint hint...don't go telling him!”

“Not a soul, not until you give the word.” This was the most serious I had ever heard her so I believed that she would keep her word. I smiled at the idea. This will be the hardest thing for RJ, so it made me respect her even more for it. RJ lives for gossip and when faced with the town's biggest scoop, she usually would have thought that it was her responsibility to tell the world. So I understood how hard this was for her. If there was ever a need for a gothic news anchor then they would have found gold in RJ.

“So, is he still your boss?” The questions went on like this for forty minutes. Everything from what he smells like to what he eats for breakfast. The breakfast answer I had to make up because I just didn't know. All I had seen Draven eat was an apple. So of course I said fruit.

“It figures, with a bod like that I would have guessed he was a health freak.”

By the time she got off the phone it was dark outside and my stomach was growling at me after talking about food. I was going to order pizza but then remembered Ragnar out there and didn't think it fair to scare some poor pizza delivery guy half to death. That would most certainly get the town's folk tongues a wagging. I opened the fridge but that didn't inspire much so I grabbed a frozen pizza from the freezer and turned the oven on high. I got the cheese out of the fridge and grated some more for extra topping. It was really tight in the cheese department! I put it on a tray and closed the door before ringing Jack's number.

“Keira! Are you alright? I have been leaving you messages!” He sounded upset that I hadn't called. Oh dear.

“Hi, yeah I'm sorry I can explain, but I really don't want to do it over the phone”

“I will be right there.”

“NO!... I mean... no that won't be a good idea, what if we met up?” I said stumbling out the words before thinking about my very possessive boyfriend that very nearly hated Jack.

“When and where and I will be there?” Ok this wasn't making it any easier with him being so noble and nice!

“How about that diner, the one with the crummy food that looked like road kill?” He laughed and I relaxed at the sound.

“Why, you got a death wish?” I shuddered at how well that statement mirrored the last few days.

“I will eat before I get there, can't die from warm coke can you?” We both giggled like kids, chatted a bit more and arranged for tomorrow afternoon as he had some free periods. Of course his lectures hadn't been affected by the fire, so he was still going to class. That reminded me that I needed to find out when my lessons were starting up again.

“Ok, I will see you tomorrow then.”

“Yeah I look forward to it Kazzy,” Jack said before hanging up. I smiled at the thought that now no one could be angry at me but the voice behind me told me that evidently I could be oh so wrong.

“And just who will you be seeing tomorrow? Because I am pretty confident you weren't on the phone to me and that didn't sound like a female that is so looking forward to meeting you!” Draven's deep voice filled the kitchen and it wasn't a happy voice at that. I turned to look, bracing myself for his cold stare and yep, there it was.

“Draven, I can explain,” I said weakly but he just gave me a stern frown and folded his arms across his wide chest that was breathing heavy from

trying to contain his anger.

“I sure hope so because I have only been gone a few hours and already you have another date lined up!” Ok so he was pissed but this was ridiculous!

“Don't shout!” I shouted.

“Draven I was talking to Jack because he is my friend and he has been worried about me.” If I thought back to how this sounded I would have gone with something else, because this nearly sent him over the edge.

“Keira this is not an advisable route to pursue.” He warned me and my own anger grew roots.

“And what does that mean?” I said now following suit and folding my arms.

“You are an intelligent girl, figure it out!” He was acting like a very articulate child.

“Are you implying I am not allowed to be friends with Jack?”

“Implying No, telling you, Yes!” I shook my head in disappointment.

“This is utterly outrageous, how can you be so...so...”

“What?”

“So bloody childish!” This coming from the person that was close to stomping her foot in frustration. He didn't say anything to this but just looked astonished at the accusation. It actually made me wonder if he had ever heard this being said to him before...I almost giggled at the thought. What must it be like? All five foot and three inches of me, telling all six foot four inches of pure muscle, off like a spoilt child.

“Look this is stupid and pointless! I am meeting Jack tomorrow” At this he was about to interrupt and erupt but I held my hand out to stop him.

“To tell him that I just want to be friends and that I am now dating YOU!” At this he softened slightly but not enough to get my blood down to its normal temperature.

“He deserves to know the truth and I ain't the type of girl to lead men on or let them go on thinking there is something more when there isn't. If you don't like it then I'm sorry but tough shit! This is who I am and I am not going to change what I believe in just because I am in love with you!” By the end of this little speech I was breathing heavy and Draven looked like he rather wanted to make mad passionate love to me or knock my block off! I doubted anyone in his life had ever spoken like this to him and I couldn't help but be afraid and excited at the same time. Like jumping from a plane and being terrified of heights.

He looked like he wanted to say something but instead he was in front of me before I took my next breath. His lips crushed against mine and the heat of the argument ended in my mouth. He pushed me back on to the kitchen table and was pressing his Sergeant, oops I mean Commander, up against me.

“You drive me insane, you know that!” He hissed over my mouth and before I had time to protest his tongue parted my mouth open for another passion fuelled kiss. His entire being commanded the kiss to his erotic beat. My lips tried to keep up but it was as if he couldn't get deep enough, couldn't taste enough and in return I failed to breathe. He angled my head with one large hand at the base of my neck and his other hand travelled a private journey down the base of my spine. I could almost feel my toes curling, wizard of Oz style. Man this Demon knew how to kiss, I say Demon 'cause there was nothing angelic about what this man was doing to my most intimate parts.

After the nicest make up kiss in history I finally got back my breath. He pulled me up off the table and smelled the air where the scent of burning pizza filled the room.

“Oh sodding hell, the pizza!” I got up and opened the oven door to a cloud of smoke. The smoke alarm went off and I grabbed a tea towel to wave in front of it. This must have looked odd to Draven because he reached up

and grabbed the alarm, crushing it in a single motion, until it made a pathetic dying sound before being replaced by silence. He made the window open, without even going near it and he pushed the smoke out towards it in gathered cloud. I stood staring like he was my own personal magician. I looked down at the plastic crumbs in his hand and his eyes followed.

“Too much?” He said sheepishly before making the pieces fuse back together and even the battery acid that had escaped onto his hands followed back into the casing. I couldn't tear my eyes off the sight. It was like watching the destruction of it in reverse. Once it was back together he placed it back on the wall and fitted it into place. I looked at the tea towel in my hand thinking it could now retire. I laughed out loud at the thought of what Libby would have done if she had seen Draven doing this the next time she burnt something, which in her case was a daily occurrence.

“What's funny?” He asked light heartedly.

“Just wondering if I will ever get used to seeing it?”

“Seeing what exactly?”

“The impossible.” He grunted out a little laugh at my answer. I pulled out the black disc that once resembled something you could eat and broke it up to fit it in the bin.

“Well there goes my dinner, looks like cheese on toast.”

“That was pizza right?”

“Hard to believe, I know.” He looked so much happier now we had made up, smiling down at me.

“Then why don't you order one to be delivered?” He said passing me the phone and the take out menu that was stuck to the fridge by a Union Jack magnet.

“Ok, but only if you help me eat it, so far all I have seen you eat is an apple. If I didn't know you were an Angel/ Demon then I would think you

have an eating disorder.” He roared with laughter at my little joke and I loved that I could make him laugh.

He let me pick the pizza and when it came, he wouldn't let me pay or get up to get it. I wondered what the delivery person thought when Draven answered the door. Well at least Ragnar wasn't here to frisk him!

“You didn't have to pay for it.” I said as he brought it in the living room.

“Keira please don't say you have a problem with me buying you dinner, especially one that cost so little. It was, after all, my fault the first one burned.” He said taking the blame, which brought me no satisfaction.

“Ok, but the next one is one me.” I took the box and put it on the coffee table, ready to be devoured as I was starving.

“If you say so.” He said in a mocking tone to add to his mocking smile.

“Do you ever get hungry?” I asked as I grabbed a piece and dangling the stringy cheese in my mouth before biting off the end. He watched me as if it was the first time he had seen me eat.

“Yes, but mainly for other things. I find watching you fascinating.” I blushed like always.

“Why because I'm a pig when it comes to food?” I said smiling because I just didn't care, I loved my food.

“NO, not at all, I find you fascinating because I never knew watching someone eat could turn me on.” Oh... that I didn't expect.

“Don't be daft, how could you?” I said going the colour of the pepperoni on my slice.

“Quite simple... it makes me want to taste you.” He said so matter of fact I was taken aback. Then he leaned over and grabbed a slice, so watching him eat it, I could actually see where he was coming from. This had never happened to me before, finding a guy sexy while biting into a pizza slice was

a weird thing to get turned on about...but it still happened. I was even more surprised when he ended up eating most of the pizza because after three slices I was full. I put the box in the kitchen and grabbed a bottle of water out of the fridge.

I forgot to ask Draven if he wanted a drink, so I popped my head round to ask when I noticed he was looking at a picture of me and Libby when I was seventeen. It was one we had taken at Alton Towers, a theme park we went to for my birthday. I had shorter hair that looked way out of control and a little red vest with a short denim shirt. I looked so different to how I dress now and no doubt Draven was thinking the same thing. Well, it was summer and a very hot one at that. I got burnt on the shoulders that day and that night, when out with my friends, I was dancing like Michael Flatley, Lord of the river dance!

“I hate that picture.” I said as I tried to take it from his hands but he just lifted it out of my reach, which wasn't hard. I was so short next to him that I knew there was no point even trying.

“Why? You look happy, was it a special day?”

“It was my birthday, I was seventeen.” I said feeling my skin blush at the way I was dressed.

“I didn't think England had such good summers.” So he did notice.

“We had a heat wave that year, plus I used to dress quite differently than I do now.” I wasn't sure which Keira he preferred, the carefree young blond that liked to show off her slim figure or the shy scared girl that stood next to him now, wearing black jogging bottoms and a grey long sleeved top with thumb holes.

“I like that you saved yourself for me, I do not think I would be happy for so many eyes to see your flawless skin in places that are for my eyes only. I like the way you dress now and that I am the only one that gets to unwrap you whenever I choose.” He winked at me before placing the picture back.

“But I do have one question, why do you have metal teeth?” I laughed so hard tears formed.

“What, you do?” I couldn't keep my face straight, he must have thought this looked more like a torture device. Then I stopped laughing as soon as I remembered what Sammael looked like when I had seen him in his Demon form. His lips had been sealed shut by thick metal pieces that looked like crude stitches. This had been his punishment and done to him by the Draven brothers.

“It was my brace, I had crooked teeth when my wisdom teeth started to come through.”

“It looks barbaric, did it not hurt you?” Bless him for thinking about my pain.

“It just ached mostly, but sometimes the metal would go into my gums. That I didn't like so much. But it was worth it.” I said smiling showing him the result.

“I think I would have preferred you to have crooked teeth than go through pain.” He said sincerely. I kissed him on the cheek for saying something so sweet.

“Ok, back to our date. Argument - check... make up kiss - check...pizza - check... now moving swiftly on.” He was smirking thinking I was talking about sex.

“Draven! You've really never had a date before have you. You don't fool around until the movie is on and the lights are off.”

“Ok!” He clicked his fingers being cocky and the lights went out and the TV came on, amazingly on a movie channel. I giggled like I was back to being seventeen. I plopped down on the couch next to him with my back against his chest and picked up the remote. His arms went round me and I snuggled closer to him, loving every minute of the best date of my life.

“So what will it be action, romance or horror?”

“Don't like comedies?” When he spoke, he blew air down my neck and my mind filled with his scent making it harder to find words to his question, especially when his large hand was moving up and down my neck.

“Yeah sure I do, but I like being the one that makes you laugh...plus there is the whole snorting issue.”

“Ah yes, I remember that adorable little noise you make.” His hands then slid down to my weak spots and I started giggling. But I stopped him before I was in fits.

“Behave!” I warned.

“Never!... So what is customary for a first date?”

“Well it depends what the goal is. Horror usually gives the guy the chance to show how brave he is and protect the girl when she jumps at the scary bits but I think you have already proved yourself with that one, more than enough!”

“Protecting you is my job Keira.” He leaned round to see my smile.

“Or there is action, this gives the girl chance to show she is cool with watching violence, which impresses the guy but in this case I have seen enough action in the last few days to last me till the end of the year!”

“I must agree with you there,” he said with a controlled bitterness.

“So then there is romance that gets you in the mood, but considering you get horny just watching me eat then I don't think it's needed.” He moved my hair from my neck and licked my skin, proving my last statement. I was momentarily hushed to silence and my teeth found comfort in my bottom lip.

“Ok, then I will choose...mmm.” I tried to sound unfazed but it wasn't convincing as I moaned when his licking turned into sucking. I let the remote slide out of my hands but before it could crash to the floor his hand left my neck and caught it, before passing it back to me.

“You were saying?” He said over my skin and I could feel his lips turn up into a confident smile. I swallowed down the breath caught in my throat and tried to continue.

“That’s not fair when you have such control over my functions like that!” I shook my head and closed my eyes as I tried to focus on finding a movie.

“And you don’t believe you have the same control over me? Why do you think I find it so hard keeping my hands off you?” He whispered this last part and I lowered my face to conceal a smile he could feel there.

“Ok, back to the movie...umm ah here’s one....Blade!” I thought I had chosen well until I heard the tut behind me.

“More Vampires, Keira please tell me you don't have a *thing* for these vile creatures? I will never understand human obsession with the scum of the underworld!” I turned to face him and in the glow of the flickering TV, he looked serious.

“I like Blade because he fights them. Ok, so he is one but he still wants them destroyed. So what is your beef with them?”

“Beef?” It was obvious he hadn’t heard this expression.

“You know, like why don't you like them or is *hate* a better word?”

“I don't want to discuss it.” He said stubbornly but I frowned at him.

“Come on, just tell me...I think all things considered, I can take it.” Of course I was soon proven wrong with the next words to leave Draven's lips.

“Lucius is the Vampire king.”

Oh dear, this really didn’t look good!

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Chapter 6

Vampires

I could now understand why Draven didn't want to talk about this with me. First I had to accept that Vampires were real and now they had a King, oh yeah and that he was the one after me! This was really hitting my limit on the 'crazyometer'.

“Ok, you're going to have to explain this all to me because otherwise I am left with all I know from movies and Bram Stokes.” Draven made the TV go off and the lights come back on, making me wonder if we would ever just have a normal date that didn't include conversations that scared the living shit out of me. I sat facing him and folded my legs together ready for story time.

“I should never have said anything. Being with me is already taking its toll.” He traced a finger down the side of my face, as if soothing out a suffering line around my eye.

“And what is that supposed to mean?” I was a little hurt at this comment.

“It means that we have been together only but a few days and already I am telling you things that will only make your nightmares worse.” He was trying to tread carefully around the subject but I just guessed he was stalling for time.

“Draven! That is ridiculous. I have been going through this since I was seven years old and guess what...you weren't around then and I coped! I'm

stronger than you think, please give me a little credit!” This had him in the palm of my hand within seconds. I could tell my words had hit home.

“You are right. I forget how strong you are. I can't imagine what it must have been like for you to go through that on your own. I wished I had known of you sooner, I could have helped you.”

“Things happen for a reason and I wouldn't change a thing....well ok being hunted by Demons might be one thing.” I laughed but he frowned at my joke on the matter.

“Oh come on if I don't laugh I will cry, so pick one.” He didn't pick, he just kissed me instead and obviously I complied.

“Anyway you are stalling for time.” He smiled on my lips and I couldn't contain my own.

“You know me well Keira.” I liked it when he said this because he was proving to me on a daily basis just how well he knew me. This gave me some unneeded power.

“I have known Lucius since his beginning.”

“Have you always been enemies?” I couldn't help but ask questions but he grinned at me, which told me he had been expecting me to do as much.

“No we have not. For most of his years we were friends, we even fought side by side in battle but that is another story and one I am in no hurry to tell you.” I gathered by his tone it was bad, with no doubt lots of blood shed.

“Is he as old as you?” He smirked at me. Draven had not yet told me how old he was and this was one way to find out. I think he must be a little sensitive about his age.

“No he is not. Why is it you are determined to know how old I am?”

“Because I find it fascinating and excuse me but weren't you the one who did everything in your power to find out everything about me?” He just

shrugged. HA! I had him there!

“Lucius has been around since the dawn of Christ and his rebirth was days after the crucifixion of Jesus.” I was lost for words! So that would make Draven older than Christ! Holy shit! I tried not to react but he was staring at me waiting for the slightest of reactions. He let out a low growl when he saw one.

“And when was that exactly?” I asked making one of his eyebrows rise but he just shook his head in submission.

“It was a Friday, April thirty three AD. I think, we didn't document dates the same back then, as they do today.”

“Were you there?” I felt kind of weird asking about it but I was near brimming over with questions and I didn't want to be disrespectful.

“No, there was no need for us to witness his plans. And he was still a human then....well of sorts. Powerful for a human but as the son of one of the Gods, then it was to be expected.” He was talking about it with little emotion which surprised me.

“What do you mean there was no need, couldn't you have prevented his death?”

“Yes but this was not his wish, nor the wish of the Gods.” He said this with such ease, I it found baffling.

“Ok, now I am confused, he wanted to die?” This was not the religious education I had learnt back in school. I think my teacher would have had one of her usual meltdowns listening to Draven talk about the crucifixion this way. Miss Brown used to keep a flask of coffee laced with whiskey in her top desk draw. She used to swig from it when being bombarded with questions like “Is there video games in Heaven?” or “Will I meet my dog there and will he still have the tire marks on him from where he got run over?” Needless to say she didn't last the year.

“It is not as it is written, though some humans still believe the truth. Do

you really think a man as powerful as he, wouldn't know that one of his disciples was going to betray him?"

"You mean Judas...right? He sold out Jesus for thirty pieces of silver and revealed Jesus to the Romans, which is called the Judas kiss." He looked quite impressed that I knew all this but I was a history buff.

"Keira for someone that is not very religious you seem to know your material. That is how the bible tells it, yes, but these are not all the facts. See the faith that was being followed was dying out by the Romans. Jesus knew that the memory of something great, outlives a great man! And sometimes it only takes one significant act to change the world forever. He made the sacrifice for that faith to live on indefinitely. Which it did, being now one of the world's oldest and most followed beliefs." It sure did make sense but what did I know?

"So let me get this straight, you're saying that Jesus asked Judas to betray him?"

"Yes that is what I am saying." He said calmly.

"But why? Why Judas and why go to all that trouble and pretence, why not just hand himself over to the Romans?"

"That's a lot of whys Keira, even for you," he said laughing but I just poked him in the ribs for making fun of me.

"I do not know all the answers but I know that the act was more of an impact this way. See, he needed a way for the Romans to be looked badly on for their conquest and this turned out to be the ultimate sin. Judas was unfortunately caught in the cross fire. He did the deed before Jesus told the other disciples of his plans. So when he kissed Jesus this was the sign the Romans needed to arrest him. Judas was picked because of his well known greed but through this act, his sins were to be wiped clean in the eyes of God. He was actually known to be one of Jesus' most loyal disciples." I must have had my mouth open at this point because Draven playfully tapped my chin before carrying on.

“But after Jesus was crucified the other disciples hung Judas as a traitor. He was first left to burn in the sun for days. He was then made to eat the silver that turned out to be the price of his own life, along with Jesus’. Finally, before running out of air from choking, he was cut allowing his guts to spill below his feet. Some say that the sky filled with another darkness, like the crucifixion eclipse that happened on the ninth hour that Jesus finally died.” His hands found mine and he kissed them twice before looking up into my eyes to judge my reaction.

“Ok.” I blew out air like I was blowing the seeds from a dandelion.

“So I hate to ask the obvious but what has any of this got to do with Lucius?”

“He was Judas!” Right....Ok now I needed a drink....a real one.

I got up and went to the liquor cabinet and searched for something strong.

“Are you alright or have you hit your limit yet?” He said looking a bit worried about the shaky bottle of Jack Daniels in my hand.

“I just need a human minute, you want one?”

“Let me.” He said taking the bottle from me and placing me back down on the couch. He left me to my thoughts while he got the glasses and I hoped ice. It was such an emotional account of the most significant event in history. Emotional for me that was. Draven told it with little conviction. I suppose as a human event, it didn't really affect him until Lucius came along. Which got me thinking, how did that happen?

Draven was placing the glass in my hands and the ice made a cracking noise with the warm liquid that had been poured over it. He resumed his place and placed the bottle on the table ready for seconds. He downed his back like it had been apple juice.

“Do you ever get drunk?” I asked bringing back the familiar roar of laughter that came from him when he found any one of my questions

amusing.

“Not in the same way that you do, I get more relaxed but that's about it”

“I like to sing when I am drunk and trust me nobody wants to hear that!”
This had him laughing harder.

“I think I would pay good money to see that and of course hear it.”

“Why would you do that?” I was shocked and suddenly very glad that he couldn't access my mind like he could with other humans or he might have had me doing karaoke with the click of his fingers.

“I can imagine it would be highly amusing to see you intoxicated and well, I have never heard you sing before.”

“And never will, not unless you like the sound of dying cats. You might be powerful but nothing would save your eardrums!” He put both hands on my face and pulled me in for a kiss while he chuckled at my descriptions.

“I think you exaggerate immensely. Surly you cannot be that bad?” He really wasn't taking me seriously.

“Well, you're just going to have to trust me on this one 'cause you ain't ever going to witness it!”

“You know I just love it when you go all Northern like that, it is beyond cute.” I wrinkled my nose in disagreement.

“No, still cute.” He said smirking.

“Anyway let's get back to my questions. So you said he is Judas or was or whatever, how is that possible?” He frowned, not liking that we were back to this.

“Have you not had enough for one day?” I didn't answer. I just gave him a look which was pretty easy for him to interpret.

“Ok but only if you promise one day to let me hear you sing?”

“Draven you should be ashamed, that is blackmail!” But he just grinned like a bad boy and mouthed the word “Demon” to me.

“You can't pull that one every time! You don't see me doing something bad and then say, Well, I am a Cancerian!” I punched him when he started laughing and we ended up having a bit of a play fight on the couch. Well, more like I tried to reach his body parts and he kept restraining me. It was a big turn on and I almost gave up my goal to have sex with him for the third time today. Wow, three times that would be my record.... umm, here's hoping.

“Ok I give up, you win my goddess!” I made a satisfied noise and grinned with it.

“Right, so explain, how is it possible for Lucius to be Judas?” He let out an exaggerated sigh before continuing.

“Well the Gods in heaven are not the only ones with plans. Judas renounced his God with his last breath. He felt betrayed by Jesus but he was wrong. Jesus tried to clear his name to his disciples in one of his last of the seven statements he gave before his death. But it was dictated wrong in the scriptures. His disciples thought he was just trying to prevent vengeance and didn't believe his words when he said “Truly Judas, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” But they left out the “Judas” part for reasons of their own. Mainly to justify murder. When this was found out by Judas it was too late, he could not change the fact that he turned his back on his faith and so he was not accepted into the paradise that Jesus spoke of. Instead he was reborn by another God, one of the Netherworld.”

“He became a child of the Devil?” Draven just nodded and I couldn't help but feel a small pain in my heart for how Lucius came to be.

“Then what happened?”

“Lucifer, who is father to most of the elders on this plane wanted a King

to rule over the Vampir or Vampires as they're more commonly known as. These Creatures have been around for thousands of years but they were weak and unpredictable. They needed a leader, one stronger than them all, someone who could control them whilst making them evolve. Imagine these weak demons like rodents becoming wild, powerful cats. They mutated, genetically so they became stronger, quicker and more methodical in their thinking. Lucius became their master and he is in all of the Demons that he turns."

"So it isn't humans that get turned?" I think he knew I was going to ask this because he tilted his head slightly.

"No, these rumours originated because years before medical science, people weren't that great at distinguishing between death and someone that had just passed out for a time. As a result, a lot of people got buried alive and when the earth is wet and the graves shallow some would claw their way out. When rare cases like this happened it would naturally be put down to Vampires. Lucius is the only one that can change a Demon into something more, and if they are a partially gifted then they are even more so when they are turned. He likes to collect powerful Vampires because he can control them." Draven was now very serious and sounded almost respectful to his lost friend.

"So if I met a Vampire he wouldn't be able to change me or another Demon....right?"

"That's right. Think about it, if they all had the power to change both humans and Demons then the world would soon be overrun. Considering they are immortal it would be very hard to stop them or to maintain control."

"So what about the other rumours, you know, garlic, stakes to the heart, sunlight, silver and feeding on humans.... that type of thing?"

"Garlic no, but sunlight and silver, yes. But sunlight is the only weakness Lucius holds, although it does not kill him. He doesn't like these things because they are all a reminder of how he died as a human. So his memories of them got transferred into each one he turned, so therefore, it is now their weakness. But considering Lucius passed on despite these, it makes

him immune to most cases. As for the feeding on humans I am afraid that part is true and not just for Vampires.” I wasn’t surprised considering I hadn’t been frightened when Draven had bitten me during certain, breathtaking times, I had already guessed as much.

“What about the spiking?”

“Ah well, that is highly unlikely as it would have to be made by the same wood as the tree he was hung from and considering no one knows what type of tree it really was then you would have to be extremely lucky. Plus it wouldn't have to be in the heart, anywhere would do.” Oh well I will keep that in mind. I couldn't help but giggle at the conversation we were having. Draven didn't seem to mind, I think he was just glad I wasn't screaming. I put my strange behaviour down to a coping mechanism.

“So they’re not dead then?”

“No, they have an immortal host like usual Demons but whereas most Angels and Demons outgrow their vessels. Vampires keep on to theirs because of the blood that regenerates them. The blood lust is down to wanting to be more powerful than the next. A lot of the time they feed on humans but do not need to kill them. Many have been bitten, drank from and then healed. Most don't even remember the act. It is a very sexual act and most prefer to have sex with the living. You do, however, get rogue Vampires that kill and trust me when I say I have had to deal with more than a few of those in my time.” I could just picture him as a slayer but then he and Buffy popped in my head doing the bump and naughty so I quickly pushed that far, far away.

“What are thinking about?” He asked as I must have been staring at nothing. I usually did this when thinking hard about things.

“I guess I am still confused as to why he would want *me*.” This changed Draven so quickly it took me a moment to realise he wasn't still on the couch. His body was ridged and at first I thought he had heard danger, like when you see a dog’s ears go back when they know some things not right.

“That is quite enough for today. You do not need to be worrying about something that I will not allow to happen. And besides this is supposed to be a date and I doubt it is customary to talk about so much death and destruction.” I got up and put my arms around his neck, well tried to, but he got the hint and when I interlocked my fingers he lifted his neck back up and me with it. He held my waist and when he went to kiss me, I moved my head back causing him to let out a disapproving groan. I was teasing him and he knew it from the big naughty grin that spread the width of my face. He tried again but I moved and with his hands still holding my waist he couldn't do anything about it.

“You’re enjoying this, aren't you?”

“Maybe, but you’re not I gather?” I was clearly making fun of him, which was hilarious in it own right.

“Cocky now aren't we, what happened to that shy girl that used to flinch if I came too near or jumped if I touched her lightly? I think I must be spoiling you Vixen?” He said giving me a thoughtful half smile and a new nickname. His eyes nearly closed from looking at me with such intense lust.

“Do you want to spoil me again?” I asked biting my lip.

“Always!” Was all he said before lifting me up into his impressive arms and running with me up the stairs once again to my room. There he sat down on the window seat and I was on his lap where he kissed my neck still trying to reach my lips. I stayed firm knowing that teasing him would be worth it in the end. See I had a plan, I wanted to see what he would do when under my control, then I would give in at the last minute. That is if I could last that long without kissing him first.

“Behave,” I whispered and he gripped me tighter. I moved to straddle him and felt his eagerness increase into a hard bulge. I pulled my top off, leaving me with just a plain black bra. I really needed to invest in some fancy underwear.

He cupped the material with me in it and then gripped them making me

moan. He then stood up and held me wrapped around him with one arm. With the other he unfastened his jeans and lets his length breathe freely. He pulled down on my waist line and with a quick movement from each leg I was out of my black sweat pants quicker than it had taken me to put them on. He lifted me higher before sitting back down so he could lower me onto him. This way was always going to be more intense as it seemed to go in further making it harder to take, so when I screamed out he lifted me off slightly, knowing this could be a problem.

Then he controlled my movements to be slow and steady. I thought that with me being on top it would put me in the driving seat but because of Draven's size it meant that I wasn't yet used to this position as I had first thought. However I was still in control...In one way at least. I still wouldn't let his lips touch mine and he looked like a man starved from his addiction. He was craving my lips but I kept moving out of his way and he would growl and groan with agony at being withheld. It however made my pleasure increase.

“Keira yield to me!” He commanded and I placed my lips near his ear to whisper,

“No, not till, I... am... ready.” I said slowly and over pronounced. So in return he multiplied the storm that was happening in between my legs. I whipped my head back and he started to bite my neck but stopped himself before he could penetrate the skin.

“Do it!” I ordered and I could feel the gratified smile on my skin. I could tell he was happy he had regained some control. He stood up suddenly and pulled me tighter into his groin. I screamed back again and his arms that held my waist gripped tighter still not allowing me to leave his size. He walked over to my desk and sat me down, while keeping us securely connected.

There he took back his control and gave me a very powerful orgasm making me shudder in his arms. I could feel the energy grow inside me. The fire and ice fought each other under my skin. My blood raced around my body as if it was being pumped by two hearts. Draven's and mine. His hand was supporting my neck as I jerked against him. I could feel that he was close

too, so I looked up at him and said,

“Kiss me, kiss me now...” He didn't even wait for the last word to leave my lips before he crushed his own to mine. He came quickly after that, while still kissing me and I felt his crying out inside my mouth. I also came....again. He rested his forehead on mine and I could see his smile. He lifted me over to my bed and lay me down before joining me.

“That was incredible, Keira. No-one has ever teased me like that before and well you know the out come...it was just...” It wasn't often that you heard Draven lost for words, so this unfinished sentence was the biggest compliment I could have ever received.

“Ecstasy!” I said before snuggling into my little nook situated under his neck and by his shoulder. He stroked my hair back and kissed the top of my head.

“Yes... yes it was. Sleep now my little Vixen.”

I was soon fast asleep and would have loved to say that I dreamt of me and Draven being together but I didn't. Even though in life I belonged to him, this was no longer the case in my dreams. I had lost all control. I belonged to someone else....to another. So I dreamt of Lucius that night and in my dream....

I belonged to him.

Chapter 7

Life Interrupted

I woke to the lush feeling of a warm naked body next to me and I sighed, I was so happy. The body next to me shifted his weight and then I felt his breath by my ear.

“Good morning, my little Vixen.” I loved it when he called me this and it was the truth, I was his and there was no getting away from it. I rolled over to face him to see he had clearly been wide awake now for some time. I stretched out and my bones made cracking noises at having to work again. For some odd reason Draven found this amusing.

“Morning!” Was all I said as I was still shy in the morning. I still expected to wake up and find out it had all been an amazing dream, of course I was always over the moon to find out it hadn't been. I was shy because I knew my hair would be a mess and my breath strong enough to take out large farm animals.

“You haven't been awake for hours staring at me again have you?” I asked praying he hadn't but his smile confirmed my fears.

“If you owned a masterpiece, you would spend a long time admiring it, wouldn't you?” He said simply. I hid my head under the covers to hide my shame. I felt the bed move while he laughed.

“Why are you hiding under there? Are you blushing again because you know that just enhances the picture of beauty?” Oh please let him stop before my cheeks exploded! He got frustrated when I didn't come out, so he made the covers float up to the ceiling using his hands to control them. I was still as naked as he was and he laughed harder when my hands flew out to my private parts.

“Bring it down!” I shouted as it flattened against my ceiling.

“You will no longer use it to hide?” He raised an eye to me and I nodded, making my quilt coming waving down until landing first on my feet then to my shoulders.

“How do you do that?” I asked trying not to sound like a five year old.

“I use its energy to do my will.” He said but when I frowned, he knew he would have to give me a bit more than that.

“Everything has energy, even though your eyes can't see, it is still there. Most of my kind can home in on some of these energies and once you get a feel for the right energy, you can use it, move it, break it, do anything you want with it.”

“So there are some things you can't...umm...home in on, is that right?” I pulled the covers under my arms and propped up on my elbow as I waited for

his answer.

“Me?... No, there is nothing that I can not home in on but that is only because I have extra gifts. But don't forget I have to be stronger than the rest or there is very little point of me being here. My brother and Sister are the same, they can find any energy but they can't hold onto it for as long as I can.” He said this more as a matter of fact than sounding arrogant.

“Is that what you did with the cabin?” This memory instantly squared his features into hard lines.

“It was,” he answered shortly, clearly not liking where my questions were leading.

“So things that big you can control?” I asked remembering the sight of the cabin that held me, being ripped apart by just Draven's thoughts.

“My rage helps increase my powers as it is fuelled by my Demon side which is stronger in aspects of energy control.” He said this so matter of fact it felt a bit like an interview.

“So there are limits?”

“It takes a lot of our energy when we use our powers and we need a lot of rest after so much has been used. We need to regenerate the power that has been transferred.” Now I knew why Draven had slept so much the night after the fight with Sammael, it must have worn him out and of course there was the ripping apart of all those Gorgan Leeches to consider.

“Of course, feeding from humans helps.” This also sounded very matter of fact and if I wasn't already getting my head around all this supernatural stuff, then running out of the door screaming would have surely accrued.

“Ok when you say....feed, you do mean, on their emotions...yes?” God I hoped so. He had told me about this before and when I first found out, I went a little crazy. He explained how Angels and Demons both feed from human emotions to get their energy. But some take it to the limit, keeping humans in extra happy or extra depressing states so they can keep absorbing whichever

energy they preferred. Draven had also told me how it wasn't always Demons that like the negative energy and Angels that liked the positive. Angels can sometimes be bad and Demons sometimes good. One thing that he made clear though, is how no-one, Demon, Angel or even Draven himself could feed from me.

“Yes but of course, we do not eat humans Keira, we are not animals!” He sounded insulted but considering the conversation we had last night, could he really blame me? I may have thought this way but I decided to keep my mouth shut on the matter.

“Umm... while you're in the answering mood, could I ask another question?”

“But of course.” Ha, he won't be so forthcoming when he hears it.

“It's about Lucius.” There it was... the ultimate frown.

“Keira please, don't you think we have spoken enough about him?”

“Well it is better for me to be prepared. I know you say he can't get me but I would still like to be well informed, just to be safe.” Ok this wasn't the only reason. After dreaming about him for the second time, I wanted to know if there was something more to his powers than other Demons because usually when I had drawn what has haunted my dreams, this meant they couldn't come back. Like being locked out but with Lucius this hadn't happened. I didn't want to tell Draven that I had another dream, especially not one where he had kissed me.

“What would you like to know?” He said sighing in defeat.

“Well I know it might be an obvious one but why isn't he called Judas?”

“Because he was renamed by Lucifer when he was reborn into his new vessel. His name means Light, I think this was the Devil's idea of a joke, considering his body burnt in the sunlight.”

“Um, I think my joke, about numbers was better,” I said giggling at how

lame of a joke it was but hey I had been telling it since I was six years old. He tickled me, trying once again rather to distract me or get me to snort. Both I resisted.

“So he doesn't look the same...I mean as he did?”

“No, his body was beyond healing.” He said flatly.

“Ok... so does he have any special powers, ‘cause that would be useful to know?” He was growing more aggravated with every question I asked. So I decided to add on a little extra to that question to butter him up.

“Because I find it hard to believe anyone could be as powerful as you.” It worked cause his frown was replaced with a smile and he kissed me but I kept my mouth shut...(morning breath).

“Lucius is like most with his powers, although he is an extremely skilled fighter. But what makes him stand above the rest are his powers of manipulation. He can control any mind, Demon, Angel and of course humans are as easy as breathing.”

“Can he even control you?” I held my breath but Draven’s expression gave me the answer before he spoke.

“Yes... but the stronger the mind the harder it is, usually he can control many minds at once but with stronger minds, like mine, Vincent and Sophia’s, he can only control one at a time. This makes him more vulnerable when against numbers.”

“Has he ever done it to you?” I knew I was stepping on thin ice, though I really was boiling over with questions but I also knew he had his limits.

“Yes once, and he was severely punished, so he won't be forgetting it any time soon!” Ok this was definitely the limit as he was scaring me with his intense staring. I had got the answers that I needed. Now I knew why Lucius was able to access my mind unlike most. It was a terrifying thought!

Draven was still looking angry so I jumped on top of him and kissed him

over everywhere my lips could reach. He liked this and his mood quickly changed so we were soon thinking about other things we could be doing other than talking. But just before he could kiss me fully I clamped my hand over my mouth.

“Oh no you don't!” I grabbed the throw at the bottom of my bed and got up to wrap myself in it.

“Where are you going...oh wait... girlie human things again?” I nodded and said,

“Morning breath.” And he laughed to himself as I walked to the bathroom. I also wanted to check on something else and was more than happy when it hadn't come yet. I brushed my hair and plaited it so it lay down my back. I also got rid of my bad breath and washed my face. I went back in and he hadn't moved an inch. The sight of him made me want to run over to him, just to get there quicker. He was stunning! The morning light from my window made his skin look like golden sand. His hair was wild around his neck and was as black as night. His shoulders looked huge and solid. I wondered how something so hard and powerful could be so soft to the touch. And I might add, very comfortable to sleep on.

When I was within reach he didn't wait for me to climb back on top of him, he just grabbed me and put me there. The throw was on the floor and the covers only covered the lower parts of our bodies. He was happy and in more ways than one. Oh yes very, very happy...ooh...um. Hello Commander Draven!

We were just kissing and fooling around when all of a sudden he stopped and held me tighter.

“Draven what is it?” His face was stone and his head whipped towards the door.

“There are other humans in the house.” I froze as I heard footsteps on the stairs. Then it happened too quickly for me to react properly, my door opened and I screamed. I wasn't the only one!

“ARRHHH.....OH my god! Oh shit!..., I'm so sorry, I ..I didn't think...”

“LIBBY!” I screamed as I fumbled for the sheets to cover us. Draven wasn't any help for laughing! Then it got worse as Frank burst into the room with a baseball bat in hand!

“What the...OH Shit! OH Man!” He turned around covering his face with his hand and dragged Libby from the room, as she was still apologising. Once they left I could hear them both crack up. I was the only one in the house not laughing as the bed still vibrated from Draven's outburst!

“I CAN STILL HEAR YOU BOTH OUT THERE!” I shouted angrily, causing the giggling to cease and footsteps to be heard down the stairs.

I hit Draven on the chest but it didn't have much of an impact, like trying to break rocks with a jelly hammer!

“What's the use in having so many powers if you can't even prevent *that* from happening!” I dramatically pointed to the door. I was so ashamed, thank God we weren't actually doing more than kissing, ok we were both naked but it could have been worse.....not by much though.

“Do you want me to erase their memories?” He asked still being highly amused.

“You can do that?” I asked being hopeful but Draven just smiled like he was teasing me.

“I can but I won't, this was far too funny to have missed, for anyone.” And once again it set him off. I got up and got changed quicker than ever before. I didn't want to but I knew I had to go down there first.

“Stay here!” I warned and he nodded, still with a thick smirk plastered on his handsome face.

“As you wish, Vixen.” He said, sounding like a genie.

Libby and Frank were still giggling about it, when I walked in the

kitchen.

“Morning Kaz!” Libby said like it had never happened but it would have been more convincing without the bloody great, big, childish grin she wore plastered all over her face.

“Stop that!” I said but as soon as Frank went back outside to get their bags from the car, she came over to me and put her arms around me to whisper in my ear.

“My, my, what a lucky girl you are... oh my!” She pulled back to reveal a huge smile. She of course was referring to the God like figure of a man lying upstairs in MY bed....Damn straight, I was lucky! I couldn't help but finally break down with laughter and lots of snorting! We were both in fits by the time Frank came back in.

Draven then made his appearance and was shaking Frank's hand in the hallway.

“Mr Draven, Sir,... please don't worry... you're welcome here.” Frank didn't sound right calling anyone sir but he was obviously intimidated by Draven's reputation and Draven did send a lot of work his way. His men were hired for the downstairs security at the club.

“Please Frank call me Dominic and thank you for your hospitality, it was rude of us not to ask if I could stay the night.” Oh come on, we weren't bloody teenagers!

“That's not a problem. Kазzy doesn't even need to ask.” He said, seeing me in the doorway and he came over to me to give me a bear hug, as it was Frank's way of saying hello to me. He had always treated me like his little sister and I loved it. But Draven looked frozen at the sight. He was ridged until Frank put me down.

“Hey Kaz, you miss us?” He said laughing and ruffling my hair.

“Sure, just wish I knew you were coming back early!” I said through my teeth.

“Yeah I bet you do!” He said before grabbing all the bags in one hand and running up the stairs with them. Libby came into view and I noticed she had pulled her hair down from the hair band that was holding it up. I had to stifle a giggle.

“Lib's you remember Dra... I mean Dominic, don't you?” Of course she did, Draven is the most unforgettable man in existence. She came forward and shook his hand that he had extended first.

“Of course, hello Dominic, how are you?” She said politely

“Very well thank you and I am sorry about you finding me in your home in such an inappropriate manner.” Oh Libby would be loving this, he sounded like Mr Darcy! She was a sucker for Colin Firth.

“It is fine, really, I guess I just never expected....well, you know. You're the first boyfriend of Kaz's that I have ever met.” She was fishing for details now, I could tell. I turned to her and gave her a stern eye, which did nothing!

“Really, that surprises me.” He said while giving me a look as if to say “We will be talking about this later.”

“Oh yeah, Kazzy rarely dated.”

“Ok enough of that, there is no need to go into details here,” I snapped and they both laughed. Well it didn't take my sister long to turn to the dark side! When she first heard I was working at the club, she was the first one to tell me things weren't right about the Dravens. Of course she didn't know why, just rumours she had heard. She tried everything in her power to stop me from working there but now it seemed she was more than pleased about the outcome...well that made two of us!

“Can I get you anything to drink?” She asked putting on her posh voice the way my mother always did when she had company.

“No thank you.” He replied in his smooth velvet voice and I thought my sister's legs would give way.

“Are you sure? Kaz, tea's brewing.” Of course she didn't need to ask me. I usually couldn't function properly in the morning without a cup of tea and my sister knew this. Only from the looks of things, when she had first seen me this morning it must have looked like I was functioning just fine.

“Ta! So how come you're home early?” I asked while we moved into the kitchen and Draven held out my seat for me before taking his own. Libby looked like she had just swallowed a bug.

“Libs!” I said bring her back around. Oh yes, she was definitely seeing Draven as Darcy.

“Oh well, Frank got a call that there had been an accident with some of his Uncle's old property, so he has to meet with the insurance guys early tomorrow morning”

“What happened? I didn't know his uncle had more property.” But from the way Draven stiffened in his chair, I was the only one in the room that didn't. It was only a very slight movement but I seemed to notice everything about him, no matter how small and insignificant.

“Oh yeah, he owned a cabin in the woods but lightening struck it would you believe?” My heart nearly stopped. Now I knew why Draven was stiff in his chair. She was turning to look at me because I still hadn't given a response, so I asked the only thing that came to mind.

“When did lightening hit it?” I asked and she continued pouring the tea, but Draven looked at me and shook his head, telling me not to ask questions but it was too late for that.

“Kaz.... come on did you not see the storm on Wednesday night? It was awesome!” Oh yeah I saw it alright, I was there seeing Draven create it! My head was swimming around in a pool of much needed answers.

“Oh yeah, I must have forgotten,” I said through my teeth at Draven but he just shrugged.

“So that was Frank's uncle's place?”

“Yeah but Frank never really wanted it, it was almost a ruin. Frank’s uncle lived there the year before he died. It was strange that he moved out there and no one in the family understands why.” She placed the tea in front of me and I blew on the hot liquid. When Libby's back was turned Draven grabbed my mug quicker than my eyes could register, then he blew on it and put it back in front of me in another blink of an eye. I put it to my lips and it was now the perfect temperature. Bless him. I mouthed the words ‘thank you’ but I think he was happier with the smile it brought to my face.

I went to open my mouth to ask something more but Draven placed his hand on my arm and gave me a little squeeze so I stopped myself. Libby called Frank to tell him his coffee was ready and she took one of the other empty seats and smiled at both of us.

“Well Kaz, it is nice to see you looking so....happy,” she said and then nodded to my bare arm that Draven was still holding. Oh no, I had completely forgotten to put gloves on. To tell the truth I had been getting used to the feeling without them thanks to Draven. I never thought it would be possible to forget my idea of a security blanket like my gloves but now I felt bad for Libby.

“Oh god Libs... I'm so sorry.” I got up suddenly and Draven looked shocked at my reaction. I held my arms behind my back and excused myself to get some gloves. Libby and Draven both had the same facial expression....pity and I hated pity!

“Kaz, that's not what I meant!” She started to explain but I was out of the room like it was on fire. I didn't mind Draven seeing my scars but anyone else seeing them had me in knots. I was hit with an overwhelming guilt. I never wanted these reminders but mainly I never wanted anyone else to be reminded of what we all went through. Frank met me on the stairs and I still had my arms behind my back. He was about to say something but saw why I was in a hurry and moved out of my way without the pity face. Good old Frank.

I was soon making my way back downstairs, armed with my security blanket when I could hear them talking about it, so I remained quiet the rest

of the way down.

“I gather she has told you what happened to her?” Lib's voice sounded like controlled anger and it was the first time in a long time I had heard anyone talking about it. When it first happened I would hear my family discussing it numerous times while they thought I was out of ear shot. My Dad would be the worst, getting angry at everything and my Mum's tears would be the only sound to soften his attitude. This upset me more than the actual event.

Draven must have nodded because I didn't hear his response.

“Well she must really trust you for her to have spoken about it. She doesn't talk to anyone about it...ever! I have to thank you, I have been worried about her for so long now, so to see her this happy...well let's just say it has been a long time.” I had tears in my eyes and I couldn't help them. I loved my sister so much but I thought that I had put on a good enough show to make them all think I was happy. Now I knew it had all been for nothing.

“She is an extraordinary brave girl but also selfless. I believe these are the reasons for her silence. She thinks that she can deal with everything on her own but she needs to realise that she has people around her that love her and want to help her.” This was Draven's account of my reasoning behind why I was the way I am. He was spot on about the last part.

“Well I am just happy that now she has you. I can tell you love her and have for some time now...am I right?” Libby was asking him and I wanted to go down and stop the conversation but with tears still streaming down my face, I couldn't move.

“You are undoubtedly right. I love her very much and you have no need to worry anymore, I would never let anything like that happen to her again.”

“Then I wish she could have met you years ago.” She said and I could tell she was getting emotional about it. I heard her blow her nose. I felt a hole grow wider in my chest at the memories that I just wanted to be wiped clean. I hated that it still affected the people that I loved. I just wanted to be the one

that had to deal with it, no one else!

I got up not caring about the noise and ran up the stairs with soaked cheeks. When I got into my room I sat at the window seat and cried. I thought about the contrast of feelings this window seat had endured in the past twelve hours. I heard the door open and cringed as for the first time since being with Draven I just wanted to be left alone. I hated people feeling sorry for me and this was too much to handle. Draven had said I was brave, well this wasn't brave...this was pathetic! Crying like a frightened child.

I didn't look at the door but I knew it was Draven, I could feel him, like I was connected to his pulse. When I felt him getting closer I turned away to hide my face and my sore watery eyes found the view outside my window but for once the sight didn't make me smile.

"Keira look at me." His voice was so soft it came out in almost a purr. When I didn't, he intervened by putting his hand under my chin and gently turned me to face him. I hated people seeing me cry, like showing them my weaknesses but with Draven it was different. I was torn between wanting him to comfort me and not wanting him to see me this way.

When I turned, he was knelt down by the seat but he was still taller than me. His hand wiped away my tears and he held my cheek in his palm. His eyes were deep like the midnight ocean and I bit my lip to try and stop the tears that continued but just in time he pulled me into him and rested my face into his shoulder for me to sob. It was like he felt my pain because without saying a word he made me feel what I needed the most....He made me feel safe.

"I'm sorry, I just hate hearing my sister getting upset and I didn't know she still worried about me...not in that way," I said once I had finished crying and Draven just continued to smooth back my hair.

"Keira please don't EVER apologise for your emotions!" He kissed my now salty cheeks and I smiled.

"Can I ask you something?" Draven's asked me cautiously, so I nodded.

“Why have you never spoken about this to anyone but me?”

“I don't like pity and I don't like feeling like he has won,” I said honestly but Draven shook his head at me.

“Keira you are amazing, firstly you survived what that monster put you through but because of it's aftermath you still torture yourself with unnecessary guilt. You don't want to talk about it because you don't want pity but with your refusal to discuss it, what are those that love you left to think. I know that you have dealt with it on your own and in your own way but it is never healthy to carry so much emotional weight by yourself...you understand that one day the weight will get too much for one pair of shoulders to cope with.” I understood what he was saying. If I never spoke about it, how was anyone to know that I was coping. Maybe everyone thought that I just wasn't and then no matter what I did, I would still get pity.

“You're right, I need to face the truth instead of running from it. I wish someone had said it like that to me sooner.” I said trying to match his smile. I hugged him and kissed him on the cheek for being so sweet.

“Right, now I am over my little meltdown.” At this he frowned, but I continued anyway “You need to tell me what happened to Frank's Uncle.”

He continued to frown....

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Chapter 8
Ego Vereor Demons

I sat there and listened as Draven told me the horrors that infected Frank's Uncle.

His name was George Miller and he was Frank's mother's, oldest brother. From what I heard from Libby, he had been a well liked man that always helped out with the community. He had been a fireman most of his life but took early retirement when his wife past way with cancer. The death of his wife hit him hard, as it would with most but it looked like his family were kept in the dark about his true depression, because one day a hiker found his hanging corpse in his log cabin.

He hadn't spoken to his family in nine months. They put his suicide down to his desperation to be back with his wife. Frank had been the last person he had seen, two months prior to his death. He was also the last person he spoke to, when he rang a week before he was found. He told Frank that he had left him everything but his only wish is that the cabin and the land was never sold. He didn't care about the house, which Frank had found the strangest thing of all, as it had been in Frank's family for generations and his wife had adored the place.

Frank didn't understand at the time but just put it down to him sorting out his affairs. Libby told me that Frank had felt guilty ever since, thinking he could have maybe talked him out of it or got him some help. But when Frank spoke to him on the phone, he thought he sounded fine and like his usual self. Of course he had been wrong. The last time Frank saw him he had been with a woman that worked in the library but he never introduced her and she never spoke a word to him. At the time Frank and Libby had been living with Frank's parents while they were house hunting for somewhere near by. They had very nearly signed for a house when Frank got the call about his uncle George.

Of course this wasn't Draven's account of the events, no this was all told to me by Libby not long after I first moved here. Draven knew Frank's uncle for very different reasons. George had started to actually get his life back together unbeknown to his family. He had an evening poker night with some of his old buddies from the fire department and he had finished restoring his

cabin which he used for hunting. But one other passion of George's was to result in his death. See, he loved the written word but when he worked he had very little time for it and with a house full of his late wife's romance novels he started taking weekly trips to the library. This is where he met the Ego Vereor Demon.

She was working as a Librarian and was instantly attracted to George because she could detect his grief. They soon became friends and starting spending more time together. Draven suspects they also became intimate, which is another big offence in the Demon/Angel world. The only reason Draven was allowed to be with me is because I was different. I was classed as the "Chosen one," but I was still in the dark to the details on that one. All I knew is that I was sort of born for Draven but this was still too much of a large pill to swallow and Draven wasn't giving me any water to help knock it down with.

Her name was Yvonne Dubeck and Draven told me that she was called an Ego Vereor Evertor, meaning "Self Fear Demon" in Latin. She liked to feed from the negative emotions caused by Paranoia. She would gradually gain the trust of these poor unsuspecting humans by dating them and then little by little she would implant delusions of what people feared the most. In George's case it was Alien abductions.

He soon became obsessed that he had been abducted numerous times and was living in fear until his next abduction. He became a recluse and lived in the woods like a hermit. The only person he would see was Yvonne as he never got abducted when she was around. She would get stronger every second she was around him but because he was a strong character he would get better. But, of course, she would not allow this to happen for long. In the end she got the ultimate high when his paranoia got too much one day and he took his own life, this happened before Draven could intervene.

Draven had been too late to save George and Yvonne disappeared before her punishment could be inflicted. She is now on the wanted list or as Draven put it she is now 'Marked.' Which I gathered was the equivalent to being on the America's top most wanted list. By the time Draven had finished, I felt

slightly sick at the thought. My heart ached for Frank's uncle and I shed a few tears during the story. It was just so sad, to have first lost the women you love, to then be tricked by the next. Trust really was a deadly thing!

Draven assured me though that George's soul would be reunited with his wife's, a bit like a safe passage to be favoured by his faith. As a rule the Gods give those that have been wronged by their kind special treatment. I tried to find out more but Draven made a face like this was something I wouldn't want to know, so this inevitably had me more confused than ever.

My phone vibrated as a message flashed up on my phone but Draven was not happy about its sender.

“I do not understand why you can't just ring the boy and explain that your situation has changed.” Draven was now sulking like a spoilt child.

“Because Jack is a friend and I would like to keep it that way. Besides, it would be rude to do it any other way and you need to get used to me seeing my friends.” I said before reading his text message, informing me that we were now meeting at two o'clock.

“Fine, but you know I don't share.” He said but he couldn't keep the half smile from his lips for long, only it was short lived as he ruined it by saying,

“Well in that case I will go and let you get ready for your date.”

“Come on! It's not a date, I am just meeting a friend and besides you have your ex girlfriend sat at your table every night!” This made him frown and then roll his eyes at me.

“Keira, I have explained about Aurora. She means nothing.” He had me looking up into his eyes, when he came close enough to kiss me.

“And I have explained about Jack. And besides you didn't tell me about Aurora, Sophia did.” I reminded him but once again he just rolled his eyes.

“Anyway you don't have to go yet, it's not even twelve and I'm not meeting him until two.”

“Where are you meeting him?” He said as sourly as anyone could.

“At a diner on fifth, why?” I asked cautiously.

“Because I need to know where to send Ragnar.”

“Oh no, Draven please you really don't...” He cut me off by kissing me again and no will on earth could have me resisting.

“Keira do not fret, no one will see him but you.” Now I was the one frowning.

“And how is that going to work because I am pretty sure his stealth skills are limited thanks to his gigantic size?” He was laughing again and this was probably due to the idea of Ragnar hiding away in bushes or behind trees.

“He has been given a power that will encase the minds of humans around him to simply pass him as if he was not there. He will not be seen... I can promise you.” He nodded slightly at this promise and I found it an endearing quality to add to many others.

“You did that for me?”

“But of course, why not? You didn't exactly hide your displeasure in having a bodyguard.” I gave him a huge grin and hugged him but my small arms wouldn't go all the way around so I gripped onto his T shirt. He liked this and held the back of my neck, which always sent tingly sparks down my spine.

“Thank you but how will I see him?”

“The power he has won't work on you, like most of my talents.” He said as though he was both annoyed and proud that his powers hardly ever worked on my diverse mind.

“Ah well, that's good to know. So you don't have to go now.” I said but by the look on his face, he had other commitments today and had to go anyway, and I couldn't help thinking it was a kind of punishment because I was seeing Jack.

“I am afraid I do still have to go but I will have Ragnar bring you back to me once you have finished with the bo.....Jack.” He refrained from calling him ‘Boy’ as he saw my disapproving look. I hated it when he called him this, it was degrading but I think that was reason enough.

“It's alright, I will see you after work later,” I said turning knowing this caused another conflict between us. Draven didn't want me working at the club anymore but I wasn't having any of it.

He let out a short laugh that sounded like a “Hell No.”

“Keira, we have discussed this, you know my feelings on the matter.” He was putting on his smooth velvet voice to try and bring me round and normally it would work, making me do anything he asked but this time I remained strong. I sat down on my bed and folded my arms across my chest.

“Actually we haven't. But this is not up for discussion Draven. I am working at the club and downstairs, not the VIP. Don't look at me like that! Would you prefer I find another place to work, one you won't be able to keep an eye on me?”

“I would prefer you didn't work...period!” He was stood above me moving my top off my shoulder so he could feel my skin there. I shuddered under his warm hands, making me feel like he was creating sparks. This was a tactic to get what he wanted. He had learnt other ways to infiltrate my mind instead of using his powers.

“That isn't going to happen. So tell me now, do I still have a job at your club or should I start looking elsewhere?” He looked shocked that his power of persuasion wasn't working like he hoped. So he up'd his game. His hand moved up from my shoulder to my neck (A major weak spot of mine).

He gripped the back of my neck with his full palm under my hair. He pulled upwards making me stand to face him and my heart rate doubled. He leant down to my ear but before he spoke, he kissed my neck, making me bite my bottom lip.

“Keira listen to me, you do not want to work for me. You want to work with me... don't you? Forget this idea and join me at my table, by my side where you belong.” His voice filled my mind like a white cloud of happy ideas and I knew I was losing the fight quickly. It was like getting lightheaded on a hot day and staring at the sun for too long. I couldn't focus and every time I came close to finding my way back, he would touch me down my sides making it harder to breathe.

But his confidence was his downfall because when he thought he had me completely under his will, he started to relax it, so I pushed as hard as I could making the fog fade and disperse into my clear mind once more. I opened my eyes and smiled up at him

“Nope, sorry, didn't work!” And I couldn't help but laugh when I saw his face drop. He growled under his breathe to show his displeasure at being beaten.

“Now stop that! You know you shouldn't be doing it anyway.” I chastised.

“You will not listen to me on this matter, will you?” He said getting aggravated at my defiance.

“No, but I will meet you half way, I will cut down my hours to three nights a week and work the hours you choose.” I said making his face change from a displeased one to one of intrigued.

“You are very clever at getting what you want, aren't you?” He said raising an eyebrow at me, making him look sexy as holy hell.

“I learned from the master.” I said winking at him and this had him showing his trademark bad boy grin adding greatly to the dark sexiness.

“You do indeed. Right, while we are discussing compromise, I will allow you to work two nights a week downstairs, of your choice but Saturday nights you will work upstairs in the VIP. And you will end each shift by accompanying me at my table. Is this acceptable?” He said in the most business like manner I had ever heard from him. It made me realise how much of a ruthless business man he must actually be.

“Alright, that sounds reasonable enough, but I will be at the club with my friends once a week at least and you won't moan...right?”

“Me moan?” He said seriously and I almost laughed.

“Yes YOU. Let's face it Draven, when it comes to me spending time with other people, we don't actually see eye to eye.”

“And I suppose this little bargain means you will be spending time with friends that are also male?” God he was so old fashioned, like I was committing sin and adultery!

“Yes, I have male friends, just as you have female friends.”

“Female council members you mean. Keira although I find it utterly adorable that you get jealous over me, I also know that it is completely unnecessary. You are the only one my eyes see.” I couldn't help but blush when he said this.

I did get jealous but mainly over the amazing beauty Aurora. She was Draven's ex girlfriend and although when you're immortal and have been around for over one thousand years, those years are counted very differently. But twenty years for a couple to have been together is still a bloody long time in my book. Of course it didn't help that she was the most beautiful creature alive and made starry nights and sunsets over the ocean look drab!

“Anyway if I didn't know any better I would say you were stalling for time to keep me here.” He said before kissing me and I knew it was his way of a goodbye, so for the first time, I didn't enjoy it as much knowing this.

“Why do you have to go again?” I said after catching my breath. Ok so I

kind of lied about the whole not enjoying it comment. He laughed to himself as he clearly loved it when I was being this needy.

“I don't want to go but I do have some business that needs my attention. But Ragnar will bring you back to me.” He said making me feel like a lost puppy being returned to his owner, that or a Frisbee.

“It's ok, I will just see you tonight after work. I should probably do some college work before I go back next week.” The idea didn't have me dancing about the room with joy that was for sure. I had got used to spending all my time with Draven, that the thought of being apart made me feel a bit lost inside.

“I think you are smart enough.” He playfully flicked my nose before continuing. “So I take it you have decided you are working Friday nights.” I had chosen Fridays as it was always student night and very busy, which I liked because the hours went quicker and the bands were good.

“If that is alright by my boss, then yes.” He frowned when I called him boss but secretly I think he liked it.

I walked him downstairs and Libby was sat on the couch with Frank looking cosy.

“You two going out?” She asked like she was the mum of this picture.

“Dra...Dominic has to go back to work.” I said but couldn't help but giggle a bit at the idea of Draven actually working. It was more like he just barked orders and they got obeyed. And I really needed to get used to calling him Dominic.

“Thank you for having me.” He said this like I had my friend to stay and his mum had told him to thank my mum, which in this case was Libby.

“Oh no problem, any time really. But before you go, me and Frank were wondering if you would like to come over tomorrow night for dinner?” This was so sweet and I was about to decline for him, knowing this was a bit too soon for so much human company, when he shocked me.

“That would be great, I would love to but please let me bring the wine.” O...K...A...Y, this was going to be weird! I shot him a look as if to say “really?” but he just smiled before agreeing on a time and saying goodbye. Once outside on the deck with the door closed behind us, I asked him if he was sure.

“Of course, why not? Is this not a customary gesture in humans?” He looked a bit hurt so I back tracked.

“Yeahhh.... but I guess I didn't know if you would be comfortable, that's all.”

“Keira, I may have not spent a lot of time around humans but I know how to behave around them and besides if it all goes wrong, I can just blank their memories and replace them with more positive ones. Then they will have no other choice than to approve of me.” I couldn't tell if he was joking or not, but knowing Draven he would get his way, no matter what.

“Well I am pretty sure you're already in there, but if you did want to seal the deal then maybe turn up in your Aston Martin and you will have Frank ready to sell his soul to you, for one ride.” He raised his eyebrows as if I had just given him an idea and I would be very surprised if he didn't turn up tomorrow night in the shiny beast.

“That's good to know. Ragnar is already on his way here and he will follow you to the diner and back, then later to the club but remember no one but you will see him. Oh and also I thought you would want Libby to have forgotten what happened earlier so I altered her memory on the matter. She won't remember you getting upset.” This was the most considerate act that anyone could have done for me, giving my head strong nature and hating anyone knowing my emotions. He knew how this affected me because his hand went to my cheek to lift my gaze to his.

“Your eyes look amazing in this light and when glazed by emotion they look deep enough to swim in. Umm... stunning.” He said stepping back to admire them and I automatically closed them resorting back to my shy self. He had never mentioned anything about my eyes before so it took me back. I

always thought my eyes were dull and plain, being not really blue but more of a grey. Before I had chance to open them again he was kissing me, softly at first then with more intensity. His arms wrapped around me like he never wanted to let me go.

“You are incredibly difficult to leave.” He said once he had finished but by then my legs were like hot moulding clay.

It took two more kisses and an “I love you” before getting in his car and driving away, which made me feel cold as soon as he was out of sight. I saw Ragnar come around the side of the house and waved, to which I received a nod in return. I went back into the house and Libby was ready to pounce.

“Right tell me everything!” She said smiling and very nearly dragging my arm off when pulling me upstairs. But I was very willing as I was getting desperate to talk to somebody about it and if I couldn't be with him, then talking about him was the next best thing. We both jumped on the bed and folded our legs up like we used to as kids. She looked so excited for me and I couldn't keep the smile off my face.

“You look so happy Kазzy! I don't think I have ever seen you this happy.” She said beaming, thanks heavily to pregnant hormones.

“Well I have never been in love before!” At this she let out a high pitched scream and clapped her hands together. I half expected Frank to come running up the stairs with a baseball bat again.

“So come on tell me, how did it all happen?”

“I don't really know but he sort of just confessed he liked me.” Which was the truth, well kind of. I told her about how Sophia invited me to sit at their table after work and I ended up next to Draven. Ok, so this wasn't exactly the truth but it was as close to it as I could get. I told her about, after a few drinks, I relaxed enough to talk to him.

“It kind of happened really quickly but from what he says, he has had a thing for me for a while, which is really hard to believe.” She screwed her

face up like she disagreed.

“No it isn't. He obviously has good taste and you could tell he felt something for you when he brought you home that night. But I do wonder what took him so long?” Well of course I knew the answer to that one but I wasn't about to disclose that with Libby. Could you imagine me saying “Well see Libs, here's the thing, he is a Demon/ Angel half breed and is like the Mafia Godfather of the supernatural world we live in.” I couldn't see it going down well at all. So instead I just said,

“I guess he was just being cautious.”

“Well he is most definitely not a snob, so I will be the first to admit I was wrong about him. I thought he would be surrounded by bimbo strippers that had massive...well you get the message. It restores my faith in human nature that money isn't everything.” This I wanted to laugh at but managed to control my outburst. Firstly Draven couldn't get any further from human if he tried and secondly he wasn't the bimbo type. From the looks of Aurora he was more the blonde Goddess type, so I failed to see what he saw in me but happiness kept me from caring.

“So from what I gather earlier, you have, without a doubt hit all bases. So come on dish the dirt, how was it?” This had me howling with laughter and I threw my head back as more laughter followed.

“It is utter bliss and more...incredible, mind-blowing and completely like nothing I have ever known!” I said and she sighed at the thought.

“He looked umm.....fit” She said which is her way of saying well equipped.

“OH YES” We giggled again.

I carried on talking about Draven for over an hour and only just had time for a quick shower ready to meet Jack. This thought wiped the constant smile from my face, as I knew I was about to hurt him and it was something I was ashamed with myself for getting out of hand. I had led him on when Draven

had hurt me and I used him in the worst way....to get revenge. It was not a good moment for me and I was appalled at my actions. Well now it was time to face the music and put things right, even if I needed to beg and grovel. I wasn't going to let it prevent me and Jack from being friends. I knew Draven didn't like it but he would come around....wouldn't he?

I was ready for leaving, with a fresh clean outfit that consisted of my usual jeans and long sleeved top, with gloves underneath of course. I put my half wet hair up in a messy twist and bits fell down at the sides. The only difference to my appearance was the happy new glow my skin had acquired. I grabbed my long black jacket as it looked like it might rain later and headed for the door. I shouted my good byes to Libs and Frank and opened the door to a very handsome face, one I hadn't seen in years and one that would no doubt cause me even more problems with Draven.....

An ex from *my* past.

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Chapter 9

Hello Stranger

“Well hello Keira, looking fine as always!” Justin, Frank's brother, stood opposite me leaning casually on the door frame. His baby face features had grown into a strong looking expression and he was skinny no longer. It had been replaced with a wide chest and broad shoulders. He looked like he had just jumped straight out of a surfing magazine, with his long blonde dreadlocks tied back from his face by a bit of thin rope. He had surfer beads up both wrists and a fossilized sharks tooth tied round his neck with some black cord. He wore combat trousers and a T shirt under a thin zip up hooded sweater, even though it was winter. And he looked fantastic!

“Justin, Hi...what are you doing here?” I asked, trying not to sound as

surprised as I was. I hadn't seen Justin since my sister's wedding and well, back then I had a bit of a crush on him. Ok, so maybe more than a crush but he had been with a girlfriend.

"Just here to see the big guy but I get you instead, which is far more of a bonus and may I say much easier on the eyes." His compliment made me blush like a vicar in an underwear department! His lips formed a devilish grin at the sight of my pink cheeks, while I opened the door wider and called to Frank.

"Are you staying for long?" I asked, secretly hoping not because knowing Draven's reaction to Justin's flirting, it would be like lighting a firework and letting it go off in your hand. Hot and foolish!

"No, just passing through." He said casually before Frank came to the door way.

"Ah, look what the cat dragged in! You back from trekking the jungle?" Frank said this while grabbing his brother into a bear hug. Justin was trying to breathe and hit him on the back to be released.

"God Frank, what you trying to do, break my spine in two!" Justin took a swipe at him which he skilfully dodged. I moved out of the way to let them bond the way brothers did. I could never imagine going up to Libby after not seeing her for months and punching her. Oh yeah, she'd love that.

"So how was Costa Rica? I thought you would have been on a diet of rice and beans but you look like you have put some meat on those skinny bones lad!"

"Yeah, well at least I'm not a muscle head!" This was how it went on for a few minutes but I was trying to edge towards my car until they spotted me.

"Where you off to Kaz?" It hadn't taken Justin long to adopt my nickname.

"Oh, I'm meeting a friend." He looked a bit disappointed and Frank nudged him.

“Yeah little Kaz here has been quite a hit with the guys in this town.” I rolled my eyes at Frank but he just laughed.

“I can see why!” Justin said in a low voice I could still hear, making Frank laugh louder.

“Don’t even think about it Romeo, she’s taken!” Frank tried to grab him into a head lock but Justin moved like lightening and was down by me in seconds, jumping off the porch steps. He looked down at me and I lowered my eyes before the blood rushed to my face.

“So, who’s the lucky guy?” I really didn’t want to be talking about this now. I was already running late for Jack.

“Oh no one you know. Anyway I must run but it was great seeing you again.”

“Oh, you’ll be seeing me next weekend, that is if my big Bro don’t mind letting me crash for a few days.” He said this last part at Frank and he looked happy enough that his brother was back. I, on the other hand, wasn’t so sure Justin being back here was such a great thing.

“Sure, you know you can but first you go and see Mum and Dad.”

“Yeah, yeah I was on my way there next.” Justin rolled his eyes at me in a comedy fashion and I smiled. Then he put his arms around me and pulled me to his now hard chest. I froze but he just hugged me to say goodbye. I swallowed hard, which he must have heard because he laughed as I quickly unlocked my car door.

“Well I guess I will see you next week then.” I said while getting in my bronco and he watched me like a wolf would a piece of meat. I giggled nervously before driving off. On the way there I thought about how glad I was that Draven hadn’t still been there when Justin had turned up. He didn’t like Jack because he felt something for me but at least he behaved himself! Justin was just a big flirt and would do it in front of anyone, including Draven. Oh yes, it was definitely better that Draven didn’t know about Justin.

Then it hit me, Ragnar had probably seen the whole thing! Oh no! I couldn't see him which suggested I might have got away with it but something told me this wasn't a likely outcome. Oh well, it was only a hug.

I got to the diner and checked the clock on the dash. I was only ten minutes late after some luck with traffic lights and a heavy foot on the gas pedal. Jack was already inside and I waved as I passed the window. He had already secured a booth next to the window and soon the butterflies in my stomach turned to wasps! I was dreading this but I knew it was the right thing to do. Of course it didn't help that he was grinning at the very sight of me. It was going to be like dumping puppies.

He was wearing his usual ripped jeans and today's choice in T shirt was a faded Rolling Stones' but the lips had cracked from years of washing. His hair was the same wild bronze with lighter bits at the front and it flopped around in every direction. His soft features and gorgeous honey eyes lit up as I came nearer.

"Here she is," he said getting up and hugging me. I didn't tense up as I had done with Justin. I don't know what it was about Jack but he was one of those guys that put you instantly at ease. He was tall and had a toned build because he spent a lot of hours hiking. We sat back down and I couldn't help but smile at the sight of him. Then it faded as I realised that this might be the last time we were like this. That he might not want to be friends any longer. My heart sank.

"Hey Jack, I'm so, so sorry." I blurted out and he looked shocked. I guess I just had needed to say it now for a long time, that it was the first thing I wanted out of my lips. At least I had said it even if it was the last time he wanted to talk to me.

"What for?" He was making this even harder, especially when he wouldn't stop smiling at me like I was bloody wonderful.

"For everything! I have treated you all wrong, I should never have done that to such a good friend and then I gave you that letter and then I didn't call..." I was fumbling out my words like they were hot mouthfuls I had to

get rid of.

“Keira stop! You don’t have to explain or apologise for anything. I am a big boy and knew what I was getting into.” Oh God, this just made me feel even worse!

“What do you mean getting into?” I asked feeling ashamed.

“Keira, I couldn’t help the way I felt for you and I guess I still can’t but I have known for some time that you didn’t feel the same. That still didn’t stop me though. I could tell that first night when you saw him that he was the only one you had feelings for.... but Keira that doesn’t mean I blame you and I certainly don’t want to stop being your friend.” I had tears welling up and I hid my face behind my menu for a moment.

“I don’t deserve such a good friend.” I said looking down and reading nothing on the plastic in my hands. He pulled the menu from me and held my hands in his.

“Keira, I am lucky to have you as a friend. I won’t lie and say I am happy that you and Dominic Draven are together but I am glad that you are with someone who obviously cares a great deal for you/” This made me look up at him and his eyes showed such sincerity.

“How do you know that?”

“Keira, when you disappeared he had everyone in the club spoken to. The band stopped and the lights on full. I saw the desperation in his face when I handed him the letter you wrote. I was very surprised when he thanked me and even shook my hand.” He said, looking at the same hand as if seeing the memory on it.

“However, I wasn’t surprised that he chose you. He is lucky to have you.” This made me blush again as I wasn’t great at receiving compliments, especially when I didn’t think they were justified by my appalling behaviour.

“Keira, will you tell me something if I ask?” I knew this was coming and I told myself earlier that if he asked I would trust him. He deserved that much

from me...he deserved the truth. I nodded knowing this wasn't going to be an easy conversation to have.

“What happened to you that night?” His voice was soft and soothing. I knew this was him trying to make it easier for me. Then the waitress came over to us, giving me little more time to think about how I was going to start. But the more I thought about it, the more I knew I had no other choice than to start at the gruelling beginning. Jack ordered two sodas and I looked outside to find my watch dog on guard. I was about to wave but stopped myself before I looked nuts. After all no one else could see him and this was proven when a couple walked past him and came into the diner. And trust me when I say this was not a man you would just have walked past without a mouth dropping moment!

I waited until the cokes came and the snotty waitress went back to refilling her salt pots. Bless Jack because he just sat patiently and waited for me to find the courage to start.

“Well there really is no other way to put it, so here goes....I was kidnapped.” I said but he looked like he was going to choke on the ice cube he'd been sucking on.

“Jack, are you ok?” I said handing him my napkin so he could dispose of the cube.

“I'm sorry can you just run that through me again please....you say you were....kidnapped?” He whispered that last word like it was a sinful one.

“Look, I think I need to explain my past before I explain that night. The thing is Jack, this is the most private thing I could tell anyone. I have been running from it for two years now and only my family knows the truth. It's the reason I came here and it's the reason I have.... lied.” I said this expecting more of a reaction but no, so far so good.

“What kind of lies?” He said in a non judging tone.

“First, my real name is Catherine Keira Williams not Johnson and I am

really twenty three not twenty one like everyone thinks.” I let this sink in before carrying on. His face tried to remain unmoved but I could see the shock in his eyes. Whatever he had expected, it hadn’t been this. I continued to tell him about how and when I first met Morgan and what the result of that was. I tried to miss out the details but Jack wanted to know, as many would. I answered his questions and saw how difficult it was for him to hear. He tensed his fists and gripped the table making it shake. He even ground his teeth whenever I got to a more disturbing part.

Once I had finished I told him the second half but had to change it slightly to leave out all the supernatural stuff. I explained how he had tricked me into meeting him and luckily Draven found where he was keeping me before he could really hurt me. When I had finished, he lent back against the leather backed booth and stared at his hands for a while before speaking. He then raised his eyes and I saw pure hate there for the very first time and it scared me when he said,

“I hope Draven killed him!” This was so out of character that I shuddered. What could I say, yes he did, he stabbed him in the heart once but then he came back and killed himself! Nope I couldn’t go with that. When he saw me struggle for an answer he made it easy for me.

“You don’t need to tell me Keira, I think I can gather for myself and with a man like Draven I can’t imagine it was a good way to go but for this, I would agree with him. This Morgan clearly needed to meet his end.” He said bitterly at the thought of me in the clutches of that mad man. He looked down at my gloves that were under my sleeves and shook his head at what they must be hiding.

“I don’t think I have met anyone as brave as you. But I have to tell you, I never thought you tried to kill yourself. I always thought it must have been some kind of accident.” This touched me more than he could ever know. I had not yet met anyone that thought this way. Everyone had thought I tried to commit suicide, even my family had thought that I had tried to end it all but they had all been wrong. I just could never bring myself to tell them that they might have been next in Morgan’s deluded, warped mind! I took his hand in

mine and kissed it.

“Thank you. You don’t know what it means to me, to hear you say that. You are the first to have given me the benefit of the doubt. Everyone else just assumes...well you know.” I said looking down at my arms and I automatically pulled down on the material.

“I really appreciate you confiding in me and I will not say a word but I guess you knew I wouldn’t, otherwise you wouldn’t have told me.” I looked up to meet his face that had once again changed back to his usual happy self and he winked at me making me laugh. He really was one of the best friends I had ever had!

“I don’t deserve such a good friend” I said as I playfully flicked him with the end of my straw.

“Well what can I say, I will just have to charge you later on, when your rich boyfriend opens you a bank account!” He said laughing and I faked being hurt and flicked even more coke on him. We both giggled liked naughty kids and we got some evil looks from the other customers.

“Now pack that in!” I said before he could throw an ice cube my way. Jack got up and went to the rest room and as I followed his tall frame walk away, I noticed a pair of eyes watching me...purple eyes!

Oh great! Draven had been watching my entire ‘date’ as he called it! I now swallowed hard knowing that I was going to be in for it later. I shook my head at him but the middle aged trucker he was using just mouthed the word “No” at me while shaking his finger at me. When Jack got back, I decided to try and ignore him and I carried on with Jack as if I hadn’t noticed. Well I was going to get an ear bashing anyway so I might as well have a fun afternoon before Draven got hold of me.

“So Jack, it’s my turn to ask something of a sensitive nature.” He curved up one side of his mouth like he had been waiting for me to ask.

“You want to know about Celina don’t you?” He said looking at me over

his now refilled coke glass.

“Well yeah,” I said shamefully feeling like a gossip.

“It’s fine, well I mean, it freaked the crap out of me when I saw her there but now I guess I can finally move on. But I won’t lie....it hit me hard.” I couldn’t help but feel sorry for him. All this time he had thought Draven had stole his girlfriend away two years ago, he had even semi believed that he might have killed her. Celina was Draven’s assistant and had made me believe his fiancée at one point but this had been a lie to keep me from feeling for him. Of course it hadn’t worked but it still hurt like hell! Celina of course was a Demon and had started a relationship with Jack years earlier. This is one of the biggest crimes a Demon or Angel can commit. So when Draven saw her in his club with Jack he put a stop to it. But instead of punishing her, he allowed her to stay in this plane and work for him. Jack, of course, didn’t know this and still doesn’t, so I was curious to what she told him that night he saw her up in the VIP area.

“She explained that she was actually engaged.” My heart stopped for a moment but started again when he continued.

“She thought the guy had been unfaithful but it was a misunderstanding. She ran away to her aunt’s house and no one knew where she was to explain the truth. He works for Draven, apparently, so when he saw her that night at the club he took the opportunity to tell her what really happened. She didn’t go into it and he wasn’t there that night but when he works for Draven, she tags along.” This story had been well thought out but I gathered for a Demon, lying wasn’t a hard job to master and if it didn’t work, they could just control their mind so they would believe what they were told. Which had me wondering if the reason he seemed to be taking this so well, wasn’t actually down to some mind manipulation? Whatever the reasons I was just glad he didn’t seem to be hurting about it.

“I know what you’re thinking, why not just tell me that...right?” He said and just nodded as I was pretty sure he wouldn’t want to know what I was actually thinking!

“Well she told me that her fiancée is a bit of the possessive type and she didn’t want him finding out about me because she didn’t want him to do me any harm. But when I helped Draven by giving him that letter, he agreed that he would not discuss our meeting again” I was lost for words and knowing the truth about this wasn’t making it any easier to pretend I didn’t.

“So how do you feel now?”

“I guess I’m fine, now I know.” Ok, I think he must definitely have received a little Demon therapy from the red headed beauty Celina.

“Well I’m glad something good came out of that night. Thank you for giving Draven that letter, you helped save my life.” I said sincerely.

“I just wished I’d had the guts to do it sooner but no offence, your boyfriend is one scary arse dude!” I smirked and looked sideways to the trucker which Draven was still using to listen in and I saw him grinning at this statement. He obviously liked the idea Jack was scared enough of Draven, to not pursue me romantically. Then I laughed as the waitress eyed him warily so he went back to sipping his coffee. Thankfully Jack thought I had laughed at his last comment so I said,

“Yeah, he can be intimidating at times but he means well and he was extremely grateful for what you did.” I said a bit louder than I needed to and the trucker snorted making the people next to him jump at the sudden outburst. Jack raised his eyes in disbelief.

“No really,” I said again.

“Well, no offence Keira but he was the last person I did it for.” Ok I was walking on thin ice now, as I half expected the trucker to get up and throttle him because he swivelled in his stool and stared at us both with purple tinted fury. I frowned at him giving him my sternest stare trying to will him to back down. Jack was turning to see who I was glaring at and I waited for disaster. My harsh eyes were replaced by ones of dread and pleading. But just in time, Jack was faced with more of a creepy smile and it came across as more of a gay admire, than the hate it had been. Jack sort of smiled back but quickly

turned away, being clearly freaked out.

“What was all that about?” He whispered behind his hand.

“Beats me!” I said trying not to laugh at the memory of this big fat trucker smiling like a little girl dressed in her best, smiling at a boy she fancies! Well if Draven wanted to play games then he definitely won with this move.

We continued to chat for a while longer until I noticed the time was getting on and I needed to get ready for work. Jack walked me out to my car after receiving an even creepier wink from his new trucker friend. Thankfully we started laughing about it once we got outside. As I said goodbye he leaned into kiss me on the cheek, when an almighty crash came from the dumpsters being turned upside down made us both jump.

“Wow what the Hell was that?” He was asking the right person as I had seen the whole thing but I couldn’t tell him that it had been my colossal bodyguard having a paddy at the sight of me be kissed goodbye! Jack couldn’t see him and I was thankful. Ragnar looked enraged and his skin looked aflame as he showed it. I got in my car before Jack could finish his gesture. I pulled away not caring how Ragnar got back. I felt like a prisoner having my every move watched. This wasn’t protection, this was a dictatorship. Was I even in any danger or was this just an excuse for Draven to catch me doing things he didn’t like.

By the time I got home I was still gripping onto the wheel like it was the enemy. We were going to have words tonight, that was for sure. I wondered would it always be like this. A constant up and down of agreeing and disagreeing. He was just going to have to get used to not getting his own way all of the time. I pulled up outside the house and Ragnar was there already waiting for me. I sighed before cutting the engine and begrudgingly got out to deal with him and his face of thunder.

“Ragnar” I said nodding to him as I approached. He crossed his stone pillar arms across his vast chest.

“You should learn your place and know it’s not to anger your Master.” He said in his usual hoarse deep voice that had a strong accent. I got closer to him and crossed my own arms but I doubted it had the same impact as he had. Never the less, I jutted out my chin and raised my head.

“He is NOT my Master, he is yours! I don’t answer to anyone, do you understand?” I said this in my sternest voice and I was amazed that it didn’t shake in the face of this monster Viking.

“Huh!” He just lifted up his shoulders as if he didn’t believe me and this angered me more but he just smiled to himself like he knew the trouble I would be in later and moved to let me pass. I couldn’t help it and knew it was childish but as I walked past him, I said “Jerk” under my breath. But this had him laughing heartily as he walked away to do his rounds of the house. I could still hear him once I was inside. However Libby and Frank couldn’t.

I tried to hide my frustration from them as I walked in the living room. Justin had gone but Frank and Libby were still talking about him.

“Oh hey Kazzy, did you know Justin was here?” Libby asked but before I could answer, Frank spoke for me.

“Oh yeah she was here to hear the boyish charms of my brother. I think he has a soft spot for you Kaz because he wouldn’t shut up about you after you left and wanted to know all about Dominic. He also wanted me to ask you if you would take him to the club next weekend, as he’s coming back to stay for a few days?” Oh no, this was bad! I was about to protest but my helpful sister came to my aid.

“Yeah, sure she will.” Ok, maybe not!

“Won’t you?” She said giving me the eye as if to say, you bloody well will! So I caved and nodded knowing this was definitely going to come back and bite me in the arse and not in one of those nice, sexy ways!

I could just imagine Draven’s opinion on this and the idea of having to tell him was making me forget Jack. Hell, he was a piece of cake to explain

compared to Justin! If Draven thought me seeing Jack was bad, then this was going to be a disaster, titanic style. Jack was just minor league flirting but Justin, he was a big player and was definitely up there with the pro's. The problem I faced was not controlling Justin, Oh no,

It was controlling Draven...

My Demon rage fuelled boyfriend.

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Chapter 10

Never a Good Time

I was ready for work in record time and it was probably down to autopilot. I was still frustrated with Draven's possessive behaviour, first with having Ragnar following me around for so called safety and then with Draven eavesdropping at the diner. But despite all this, my main frustration was the opposite of all these things. It was really down to how much I missed him when I wasn't around him.

He was definitely like a drug and when I was without it, I was cranky. I would rather be around him disagreeing and arguing than not at all. I was still stewing over all these little factors when I was in my car driving towards club Afterlife. It was strange, as though the closer I got to him the happier my body felt. I even turned on the radio and sang along to some cheesy music. I was half way through Tina Turner's 'Simply the Best' when I arrived.

It was already starting to go dark when I got inside the club and as soon as I walked through the huge oak doors my body filled with a warm positive energy. It was like a wave of joy and it took all my effort not to go running up the stairs into Draven's arms and say to hell with work! I wondered if he felt the same about me... could he sense that I was here?

The Club wasn't busy yet but I knew that as soon as the band set up, then the club would flood with Goth's, Emo's and Rockers. We even had a few Cyber Goth's as I called them. Now *they* were extreme! With huge material hair and the biggest boots I had ever seen. Some wore coloured gas masks over their mouths and I had no idea why. But at the moment, the bar area only held a few early gothic birds with Mike and Helen working behind it. I hadn't seen them for what seemed like ages but it had only been a week.

"Hey guys!" I said hoping for the same happy response.

"Well look whose back, word had it you quit." Mike said in a friendly tone and my heart calmed after that. Helen waved before reloading the glass washer.

"Yeah, I kind of did but no one else would have me, so here I am." I said

half joking and Mike smiled. This was a clear indication that none of them knew about my new relationship with their boss, along with mine.

“Well, it’s good to have you back.” Mike said but just then Cassie came from behind the back room carrying some empty glasses and said,

“Speak for yourself!”

Cassie had never liked me and the feeling was most definitely mutual! She was a little slut and she didn’t try to hide the fact. She hated me for two reasons, the first was that Mike took notice of me and the second was because I had been chosen to work in the VIP area. This had sealed the deal as she would have sold her soul to get up there. I smiled at her to show I was a bigger person than the Gothic Barbie look alike that was now scowling at me. Mike rolled his eyes as he wasn’t her biggest fan, although you wouldn’t have thought so to see Cassie throwing herself all over him, like a wasp over a squashed grape.

The evening started to get busy when a band called ‘The Shin Splints’ started to play but they were a little heavy for my taste. I was behind the bar serving the swarm of students when the worst thing possible happened. Ok, slight over statement, but to a girl at work it was never a good time to get your period. I had to grab Helen and ask her for any girly supplies as I had forgotten to load up my bag. Lucky for me she always had some, so she informed me.

I ran to the toilet to assess the damage and yep you guessed it, I had leaked! After some clean up and lots of toilet roll, I was ready to go again until the worse bit about periods hit me....the pain! I usually didn’t get bad periods but every once in a blue moon I would get a real doozy that would make me feel like I was giving birth to a baby elephant....and tonight was the night for it! I could normally cope if I had pain killers to take but I had none. Again I had to ask Helen but on this, she was no help. So I soldiered on only every now and again I had to stop for cramps.

“Keira are you alright?” Mike asked as I was taking a minute by the sinks.

“Yeah, just cramp” I said like I had spent the day running. Ha, me running, I hated to run!

“Kaz, I have five sisters and I know enough about girls to understand the signs! You get yourself off early... it’s quietening down now and Jerry is fine with it.” I wanted to laugh at this last part, of course Jerry would be fine with it, considering my connection to Draven, I think he would have given me his first born if I asked for it! I nodded while already getting my bag and jacket from the hook in the back room. This was Jerry’s office and also where we kept some of the spare bottles of spirits. Jerry was at his desk cashing up one of the tills.

“You off now?” He asked looking up. He was smiling until he saw my face then it dropped. I knew then that I was deathly pale.

“Umm...I hate to say this but you don’t look good kid.” He frowned and looked like he was going to pick up the phone but I knew who he’d call and I didn’t want the fuss.

“I’m fine, just a bit of a head ache but nothing an early night won’t cure.” I said making him think twice about the phone call idea.

“Yeah, that band was a bit far out tonight.” Jerry liked rock music but he was more of an old fashioned lover of it than some of the new stuff and when tonight’s band had mixed techno with screaming, it had all gotten too much for him....and me!

“Well, Draven wants you to go you upstairs after your shift.” He said trying to look busy and impartial. I nodded before leaving but my body not only hurt, it was now filled with dread. The last thing I wanted was an argument with Draven about today’s disapproving Keira act! So I did something very out of character. I walked out from around the bar and continued until I got to the double doors that led outside to the car park. I knew it was wrong and rude but I just couldn’t stand the rest of the evening pretending everything was fine, when all I wanted to do was crawl up in bed and cry from pain. Why is it that if you don’t take tablets straight away, then it doesn’t ever seem to go or even fade? It just felt like a thorn bush was

growing inside my uterus!

I saw my car in its usual parking space and got out my keys ready to stick in the lock. I looked about expecting to find Ragnar but he was nowhere and suddenly I felt a bit vulnerable. This was stupid now, I was getting dependant on having a bodyguard to feel safe. I took a moment to lean my head on the metal frame to cool my burning head before unlocking the door to the driver's side. It had taken me a while to get used to driving this side of the road and for ages I would go to the wrong side of the car, which when I looked up, had happened again.

I was losing it!

Then hands came out from behind me making me jump and scream out. They slammed the door shut before I could get in. I stared at the window knowing it was Draven behind me and as soon as I inhaled in his perfect scent, I felt some of the pain ease. I wouldn't turn round to look at him because I knew I would meet his temper. I felt him lean down to my ear and his lips touched my skin making me shudder.

“Why are you leaving me Keira?” His voice was steady as if he was using a lot of control not to get angry. I took in a deep breath and turned round to face him hoping that the dim light from the few lamps around wouldn't show my sickly skin. I was expecting to find hard features but as soon as he saw me his eyes went wide and his hand came to my face. He ran the back of two fingers down my cheek and then looked worried.

“You are very hot and also pale... are you unwell?” Oh great, now I had to lie to the Master of detection.

“I'm fine, it was just hot in there.” I said looking down so he couldn't see my eyes lie. I was a dead giveaway when I looked them in the face.

“Then please tell me, why is it you think you can drive home in the passenger seat?” He said in a smug tone and one trying to hide humour.

“I said I am fine!”

“Then answer my question, why were you leaving me?” He asked softly making his hand cold and putting it to my burning face. It felt amazing! I closed my eyes and let his cold skin sooth me before answering him.

“Because I didn’t want to argue with you.” I said looking him up and down. God, now *he* looked HOT! He was wearing a black pin striped suit with a waistcoat but with no tie. His hair was styled back and he had shaven the stubble off, making him look very smart and above all, sexy as hell. I bit my lip and tried to concentrate on keeping a steady rhythm in my chest. I expected this would make him angry, so when I saw him smiling at me I was shocked and confused.

“And that’s the reason you were going to go and say nothing?” His voice invaded my mind and I let it because with every word out of that delicious mouth, it was making my pain fade. I felt a bit ashamed that this was what I was going to do and lowered my face without answering but he took my guilty face as confirmation. He bent his knees to look under where my face was hidden.

“I’m sorry.” Was all I could say and he pulled me to him for an embrace. I let his strong arms hold me to him and I tried to swallow the pain I had down below.

“Keira, there is no need for you to apologise. If you would like to leave then you are free to go but I would like you to have protection at least,” he said but I got the impression this was something he didn’t want. So I quickly said,

“I don’t want to leave you, I just didn’t want you to get angry at me for today.” He frowned down at me but I just rested my head on his chest because I didn’t like it when he frowned.

“Why would I get angry at you? Just because I am used to getting my own way it doesn’t mean I will take it out on you, when I don’t.” So this whole time I had been worrying for nothing! I was such a fool.

“Come back inside and join me, I have missed you.” He said this before

his lips were placed to mine for a very passionate kiss. While he devoured my taste his hands felt for my skin pulling up my black top at the sides. I could feel the night air hit my cold flesh and mixed with the heat from his hands it was like the two elements were fighting against each other. For one long blissful moment I forgot all about the pain.

When he had finished, he picked me up into his arms and walked around the side of the building out of sight from the front entrance. Thank God because if he had walked back in the club with me like this I would have died with shame!

“Where are you taking me?” I asked, trying to look behind his huge shoulders that were blocking my view.

“Upstairs to the VIP.” He said but I knew this wasn’t going to be the conventional way. He looked down at me and smirked as he made his way around to the side of the building.

“Close your eyes.” He said and he bent his knees slightly before launching us both upwards. Thankfully this was when I closed my eyes. I felt us land and opened my eyes to find we were on the balcony outside the VIP area.

“Well that was quicker!” I said trying to pretend I hadn’t been as terrified as I had. However he just laughed heartily. He placed me down gently before taking my hand in his and leading me out through the glass doors. He looked happy, so I didn’t want to burst his bubble by telling him I really wasn’t up for sitting at his table. But off we went anyway and as usual, we got every Demon/Angel eye in the place staring at us. Draven never cared about this and led me proudly to my seat. There we were met by the same council members who were always at his table.

Ragnar was standing guard as we approached and for the first time he nodded to me and grinned after he did with Draven. I was shocked considering the last thing I had said to him was calling him a jerk. They all stood when they saw their Master was back and with an empty seat by his side he let me sit first. I had a feeling this was the ultimate sign of respect.

I sat and in turn everyone nodded to me. Takeshi was back and had fully recovered from Lucius's mental attack. He wore his usual Japanese robe but this one was plain black apart from the purple Dragon he had embroidered on his back. Zagan was next to him and looked as scary as ever. I had never seen him in anything but his long black hood that hid most of his face. His long straight white blonde hair hung down and I think he was Sophia's bodyguard but I wasn't sure if there wasn't something more going on with them both, as they seemed to flirt with each other a lot. On the other side was Celina and of course the breathtaking Aurora. She was wearing a black dress that was cut across the chest showing a shameful amount of bust, even if she did have her hair down to cover it. I tried not to look but she caught my expression and smiled like an evil cat!

Draven's eyes didn't leave mine though, so I didn't care. Besides, I was in too much pain to care. Sophia looked happy to see me but as soon as she saw my pale face she knew something was wrong but I just shook my head slightly to warn her not to say anything. I was lucky because Draven missed it, while speaking with his brother. Vincent had nodded to me and I think I blushed but don't think it was visible from my ill looking skin. It had been the first time I had seen him since kissing him. I had said sorry that night but when I got the next opportunity I should really say it again and again, many times over.

Sophia kept eyeing me carefully but she was true to my cause and kept quiet, but then I had a thought, I wondered if she could get me some tablets or at least some more supplies because if I was staying the night, then I really needed more. But how was I going to ask without Draven knowing.

"Keira what would you like to drink?" Draven squeezed my hand bringing me back round from thinking of a way to talk to Sophia.

"Umm, just mineral water please." I replied and Draven looked concerned with my plain choice but when I didn't convey the reasons he allowed Loz, the waitress to get my drink. I was caught between trying not to show my discomfort and answer the questions I was being asked. Then I decided I would try something new.

“Sophia can you hear me, in your head I mean?” I asked this through my mind and I felt a bit stupid for trying but when she turned and looked at me I was hopeful. She winked when nobody was looking. Great! Well this was a start. So I continued,

“Ok right, I am going to try something, can you talk to me in my mind if I let you in?” I waited for a slight response and when Zagan stopped gazing at her she nodded the tiniest amount. So the next thing was for me to try and let her in but I wasn’t quite sure how I even blocked them out to begin with. I let my mind wander and opened it up to my side where Sophia sat but this was worse than useless! So I tried another technique, I relaxed my mind and instead of pushing things out I let everything in, I opened up to the noises around me and listened for anything more. I could hear the hum of conversations behind me and the buzz of humans below. Then some glasses being put down, someone laughed behind us...Then it hit me I could here Sophia saying over and over

“Hello....HELLO.... can you hear me yet?” I had to try and not giggle but it was so funny because it was her voice but it was in my head! It was weird and amusing at the same time.

“Ok, I can hear you, can you still hear me?”

“Yes I can.” I had to bite my lip to stop myself from smiling but when my water was put in front of me I had a reason to smile so I did, as I thanked Loz.

“This is cool!” I said and she just raised her eyes at me before smiling.

“Ok, so what’s wrong with you because no offense but you look like shit!” She even sounded concerned in my mind and this was quite a surreal moment as I had never felt someone else’s voice in my head before.

“It’s the time of the month and I’m in pain, but don’t tell Draven ‘cause I don’t want him to fuss and worry.” She couldn’t hide her frown but nobody was looking at us.

“Keira he will find out sooner or later and my guessing is it will be the first. You need to explain you are not well and need to go to bed, you look exhausted!”

“No, please don’t say anything, not yet but I do need your help.” She rolled her eyes and then looked down as if to say yes.

“Ok, I’ll take that as you will help me. I need painkillers and umm... supplies.” She sat there for a moment to think and Draven had noticed that I hadn’t spoken to anyone for a few minutes. I felt his hand on my leg and I almost jumped.

“Are you alright?” His voice blew down onto me and because my mind was open it felt different, more powerful like the first time I had heard it. I closed my eyes for a moment and let it help my cramps. Then I closed my mind back up quickly before he figured it out.

“Yes, I’m fine.” I gave him a smile that he didn’t believe but thankfully, he didn’t pursue it. Instead he took my hand and brought it to his lips to kiss. I noticed Aurora’s eyes bulge slightly at the gesture and I shamefully allowed myself, a smug smile to creep across my lips. Meanwhile Sophia must have come up with something because she leaned over to me and said,

“Oh Keira, you have to see this new dress of mine, it is simply divine. It is made from Italian silk and has a cut across the... oh well it would be better if I just showed you. Brother you don’t mind if I borrow Keira for a moment, do you?” It wasn’t really a question but more of a statement as she had already stood and was taking my arm. Zagan stood also but she turned to him and a look was all it took for him to get the message.

“What are you up to Sophia?” Draven said in an unhappy tone.

“Just girl stuff which is none of your business.” She said firmly enough to make Draven let go of my hand, which he kissed again before doing so. Then I was being dragged away by Sophia. She looked lovely in her coral halter neck dress that was made from a material that floated around her doll like frame. It swayed as she walked and it was cut short showing off her

beautiful legs that looked like they belonged on a shaving advert.

She linked my arm and walked me through the double doors that lead into their vast home. As soon as the doors closed I let out a moan and bent down to try and relieve the growing pain.

“Oh dear, you don’t have much luck do you?” Sophia rubbed my back and made large circles with her palm. I stayed like that for a minute before standing back up straight.

“Better?” Was all she said and I nodded.

“Thank you.” She shrugged her shoulders and we carried on down the grand hallway. At the end was Draven’s bed chamber and Sophia opened the door for me. Once inside I almost collapsed on the couch.

“I will be back with what you need, do you have a preference?” I told her what I needed and she was out of the door before I could blink. I was finally glad to be alone and in a horizontal position. I gripped at my stomach hoping this would somehow help but the pain just got worse because I couldn’t relax. By the time Sophia came back, I was close to agony. She had some clothes and bless her, some clean underwear.

“Right take these and then sort yourself out but you had better be quick because it won’t take long for my brother to get restless.” I knew what she meant. When it came to me doing things without him, he was very suspicious. I swallowed the pills she gave me and went into the bathroom. Once I was finished, I changed into the comfortable black gym pants and new underwear that still held a label and price tag...Wow \$150 for a pair of knickers! Oh dear this wasn’t a good idea.

I walked back out expecting to see just Sophia but I froze when I saw that Draven was now stood next to her with his arms folded. Sophia looked like she was trying very hard not to giggle at my situation but I just tried to act cool. Ok, so me and the word cool didn’t really mesh well, but it didn’t mean I couldn’t try.

“Why have you changed?” Draven was trying not to be demanding but it clearly took work. He was now looking even better as he had taken off his suit jacket and just had on a crisp white shirt under his waistcoat. His legs looked even longer in his well pressed trousers and all I wanted to do was to expose what was underneath them.

“Well, I will leave you both, Keira shopping tomorrow.” She said and I now knew my price for asking her help, she was going to do the whole dress up the life size human doll thing.

“Shopping?”

“Yeah, you know, the place people go, to buy clothes and stuff and from what I hear someone keeps ripping your clothes, so it is only right that he should get you some new to replace the ones in pieces!” She smiled and it was bad to the bone. Draven shot her a look.

“Thank you Sophia, you really don’t understand the concept of prudence do you?” He said in an unimpressed way.

“Glad I could help,” she said before leaving. I was still processing what she had said and wanted to know how the hell she knew about my ripped clothes! I let out a sigh and walked over to the bed while Draven stood watching me like I had just done the crazy chicken dance. I was just about to step up to the bed when I felt Draven’s arms around me preventing me from going any further.

“Is there something wrong, what did Sophia show you?” Man, can anyone say paranoia?!

“You’re getting paranoid, she just showed me her dress and then asked me if I would go shopping with her tomorrow.” The idea made me wince. I didn’t love shopping and knowing that Sophia would make a big fuss over the whole expedition didn’t help.

“And now?” He asked running his hand down my back, making it respond with pleasure. If it hadn’t been bad timing then I would have turned

round and jumped on him. So it pained me to say,

“I’m just tired that’s all.” As soon as I said this he had me in his arms and placed me in bed like the last few steps would have been too much. What he didn’t realise is this just made me want him more.

“Then rest so I can wear you out again.” His lips curved into a sexy grin and he kissed me lightly before making the curtains around the bed move, encasing the frame in thick material. Of course he didn’t have to touch them to do this.

“Are you not joining me?” I said not helping the disappointment in my voice. This made him happy. He loved it when I was needy.

“Not yet but soon, now sleep.” He ordered before pulling the last curtain across. Well at least I had got away without him knowing why I was so tired. Maybe my acting skills were getting more convincing. I lay there and let sleep take over the throbbing hurt in my belly knowing it wouldn’t be long before Draven would want to know why I didn’t want to make love to him and it pained me to know this was the first day we hadn’t had sex. I guess I was subconsciously worried that he wouldn’t feel the same about me. It wasn’t like he was used to human women problems and this was a gross one. I was embarrassed beyond belief and this was one part about being human that I didn’t want to share with my Demon Angel boyfriend!

Only a week.....

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Chapter 11

No More Excuses.

I knew I was dreaming but it still carried on. Normally with my dreams, I wake as soon as I realise what it is but with this one it was strange and different. Almost like something I needed to see.

I was outside the Library in town that was close to the campus. It was a sunny day and I could feel the heat on my skin and when I looked up at the sun, my vision went blotchy. I could hear and sense I was there for a reason so I went inside. As soon as I thought it, I didn't even need to open any doors, I was right there by the information desk.

There I saw a man walk towards me and I knew it to be George, Frank's uncle. I don't know how I knew this as I had never seen a picture of him but there he was, bounding his long legs this way. He was a man in his late sixties but it was obvious that he kept himself in good shape as he hadn't lost his fireman's fitness. He had a full head of silver hair that caught the light in a shimmer as he walked past the tall windows of the library. As he got closer I could see almond shaped eyes of grey and he had laughter lines around strong features. This was clearly a man that had found lots of happiness in his life.

I lifted my hand up and waved but even though he was staring in my direction he didn't react. It was like I wasn't even here and when I looked down at myself and saw nothing, I knew why. I wasn't there to be seen.... I was there to see!

I turned to face the woman behind the desk and knew it was Yvonne Dubeck, just as I had known it was George. It was a bit like being at a play and knowing who all the characters were without ever meeting the cast.

Yvonne Dubeck was a small framed, thin woman with half moon glasses

resting on her long beak like nose and she wore her hair pulled back into a tight bun. She was pale and her mousey coloured hair did nothing for her grey strands coming through. She wore a tight pencil skirt that looked hard to walk in and a plum coloured shirt with a thin bow attached around the neck in the same material. She wasn't much to look at but something happened as soon as she caught sight of George.

Her eyes widened and started to glow around the edges for a split second. She looked excited and when he came to stand right in front of her, she took off her glasses and her face softened, changing her appearance to one more striking. George couldn't find the words at first as her powers over him took effect. I could almost make out the negative energy she was extracting from him. She was stalling for more time with him as he asked where the World War Two books were. Of course she offered to show him and off they walked.

I wanted to slap her away from him and somehow change the past but it was useless, I was only there to observe. I tried to follow but couldn't move, so I shouted out in protest but that's when the scenery changed and now I was back at more familiar ground.... I was back at Libby and Frank's house, my new home.

I had to remember that I wasn't asleep in my bed and this was just me sleepwalking. I was in my room and it was dark. I could just make out my long mirror but when I looked for my reflection to be staring back at me, there was nothing. I was stood by my desk which now was a set of old pine drawers. I noticed that my bed was missing and there was an old rocking chair in its place which was now in the den.

In the chair sat George with the lights off and he was looking into a telescope. I walked over to see what he was looking at and he didn't even stir as I approached. I looked up into a clear night sky covered in a blanket of stars. But this wasn't why I was there. I heard a noise that George couldn't. It was a chanting I couldn't understand but I knew who it came from. I walked over to the window still taking care that George couldn't feel me as I was now stood next to him. I looked down into the yard and directly below the

window was Yvonne Dubeck, stood there no longer looking plain.

She was naked all but for a long black cloak around her shoulders and the hood was raised. Her hair was down and wild blowing around in the windy night breeze. Her eyes glowed like the full moon above, white and pearly. Her nails grew impossibly long until they curled round back into her own hands. They pierced the skin like razor tipped arrows and she howled in pain or pleasure, I couldn't tell. Blood spurted into the air from the contact and looked like a black fountain glistening under an evil moon. I felt like I would soon lose my stomach contents but when I thought it couldn't get any worse I felt the bile rise at the next stage of Yvonne's demon phase.

Her chanting was getting louder and each time I listened, I would see something in her change. She moved the looped nails together and they interlocked, the blood sealing the bond, before creating a power source in the middle of them all. It got brighter and stronger, growing with every foreign word that passed her spit covered lips. She was now losing liquid out of every orifice and I wrinkled my nose as if I could smell rancid cheese mixed with bleach. Her skin looked like plastic that was being stretched to the point before breaking, the blood behind, bubbling just beyond the surface, giving her body a deadly glow.

Then something happened. The ball of energy had reached its sizable limit causing it to explode, making the room fill with a blinding light, as though the house had created its own blue sun. George fell backwards off his chair and pulled his body backwards into the corner like a frightened child. As before, I couldn't move and wanted desperately to run to him to comfort the shaking man. Then a clicking noise like a giant cricket was outside, started getting louder before showing itself. It was Yvonne, who had floated up to the window and with her hands raised up, it made her head look bigger. Then the image kept changing from the truth to what George was seeing. Where I could see Yvonne in her Demon form, he was watching himself be abducted by an Alien figure through the window.

He was screaming and when the clicking noise turned into a deafening high pitched scream, he placed his frightened hands over his ears. I had tears

streaming down my face. Then the light disappeared and the feeding began. By this time George was in a state that was so beyond fear. He was no longer aware of anything around him, so Yvonne walked over to him and I got first hand a Demon feeding from a human.

It was like nothing I had ever seen before and my breath caught as a wave of fine blue mist flowed out of his body. It clearly didn't hurt as he wasn't even aware that he wasn't alone. She placed a hand on him gently and it looked like she had just had an orgasm. She let out a long moan and then touched her naked body with her hands that were now back to normal. All of her had returned to how she first looked. And when she was finished, she kissed him on the head before turning to find me in her way at the window. I don't know how I had moved but I knew it symbolised my need to stop her. This time she saw me as my body was whole again.

“Mmm... Electus, I bet *you* taste good.” (Means “Chosen” in Latin) Her voice was like ice and I couldn't do anything but feel my skin prickle, feeling the aftermath from her feed. My skin wasn't the only thing in the room to grow cold. The moon came out filling the room with a natural blue light and I looked up, to see the walls cracking as they had now turned to ice. The floor was also being affected by this Demon and the freezing cold travelled up my legs after leaving the floor.

I wanted to cry out but nothing came. The Demon Yvonne got closer and the ice melted under her steps but refroze when she left each space. Her nails grew once more but unlike last time, they forged into one long, flat blade and before I knew what was happening she rushed at me. I tried in vain to move but my legs were frozen to the floor boards below. Then, happening in the blink of an eye, she plunged the blade into my gut, making me bend over it and spit out blood over her naked body. I looked up to see her face change into Layla and I screamed out in both pain and cruel fear!

Then I shot upwards, gripping the pain in my lower stomach. It took me a while to realise I was in bed with Draven and he now had his arms around me but I couldn't hear what he was saying, because there was a ringing in my

ear from the noise Yvonne had been making. I pushed it out of my head until my senses came back into focus. I was panting and Draven rubbed my back like Sophia had done earlier.

“That was a bad one,” Draven said bringing me back even more to the room I was in. I nodded but then let out a moan as my period pains had come back with a vengeance. Draven noticed me grip at my stomach, so he whipped back the covers before I could stop him. The curtains flew back and light filled the room.

“No, don’t!” I said through the pain but he wasn’t listening to me. He put his hand to the wet patch below me and lifted it to the light. My blood was on his hands...literally. I wanted to cry! I saw his face go pale before worry replaced it.

“Keira, what’s wrong... did I do this to?” He was trying not to shout but you could see it was difficult. He was angry with himself at the thought of hurting me.

“Oh no... no, no, no!” I said before burying my face in my hands. I could feel the tears wet my skin and then another almighty cramp brought me round.

“Keira tell me, what have I done?” He voice was pleading.

“It’s not you, it’s me. I’m so sorry you had to see this.” I was so ashamed, it was worse than any pain my uterus was causing me.

“Then if it wasn’t me, then?.....Ah I see.” He said as the bloody penny dropped, no pun intended! He relaxed instantly now he knew I was in no danger. He had already produced a cloth to wipe his hand clean before pulling me into him.

“Keira do not be sorry, I just wished you would have told me. I knew something was wrong but I never expected...”

“What? ... It to be so gross!” I said bitterly

“No!... It to be so....so human.” He said softly, before kissing me on my forehead.

“Do not be embarrassed Keira, it is only natural. Are you in a lot of pain?” He was soothing back my hair off my wet face and when I jerked from the pain, he froze.

“I guess that is a yes.” He got up from the bed and even in this situation I still gasped at the sight of his amazing naked body on full view. He came back with some tablets and water. I took them and he knelt down to wipe the tears from my cheeks. I was about to apologise again but he put his finger to my lips.

“Ssshh don’t do that,” he said before kissing me.

“Right well let’s get you sorted.” He said and was about to pick me up but I protested.

“Please, I am so ashamed already, I can do it.” I said getting up and making sure to hide my behind! He didn’t like me getting up on my own, but come on, it was only a stupid period! I was about to look back at the mess I’d made of the sheets but before I could, Draven stopped me. Then a few seconds later he let me look. The sheets were clear and like brand new.

“You’re too good to me, thank you,” I said thinking that I had the most caring boyfriend ever. He really was so sweet with me that it kind of made me want to cry but thankfully I didn’t. At least now I knew why I had been so sensitive lately.

“I am not good enough, if I were, then I would have noticed this sooner. Why didn’t you tell me?” He looked hurt that I hadn’t mentioned this to him and I really didn’t want to tell him why but I couldn’t see a way around it.

“Don’t get mad, ok?” This made him raise his eyebrows with curiosity.

“I thought you wouldn’t like me as much, you know because we can’t have sex.” As soon as I said it I felt a guilty lump form in my throat. Now he looked *really* hurt.

“Is that what you think of me, that sex is the only thing that I am attracted too? Oh Keira, how could you?” He moved away from me and I couldn’t blame him, if it had been the other way around I would have been very angry.

“You said you wouldn’t get mad,” I said quietly.

“Did I?” He asked sarcastically as we both knew he didn’t.

“Look I’m stupid and way oversensitive, I know this but I am so sorry.” I was close to pleading.

“Sensitive YES but stupid no...Never!” He was coming back around and I almost wanted to laugh as I realised I had never argued with anyone in the nude. I went up to him and raised his face up to mine as he was sat on the couch looking down.

“Please forgive me, I get oversensitive when it’s the time of the...well you know and it plays on my insecurities. And when I still find it hard to fully understand what it is you see in me, all those insecurities get the better of me and make me say and think bad things.” This was turning out to be the worst sorry in history but in a crazy way it seemed to be working. Until I added the icing on the cake and started trying to swallow over and over, as I knew what was coming! Oh God, please No!

I ran from the room and nearly ripped the door off to get to the bathroom fast enough. There, I threw up in the most expensive toilet I had ever used. I was saying a private prayer to God, asking for Draven not to hear me but I was too late, it was worse than hearing me, he was seeing me. His hands came to my face and pulled back my hair like he had read a manual on attending to sick girlfriends. Once he had it all, he held it tight with one hand and with his other he soothed my back.

“Please don’t watch,” I said before more came up. The pain was nothing compared to my utter shame!

“Sssh, don’t talk.” He wouldn’t listen to me and he just stayed with me

until I was finished and the contents of my stomach were cleared out. He handed me a tissue and I blew my nose and cleaned myself.

“Thank you but I think I have it from here,” I said looking down and he knew what I meant, so he gave me some privacy. Once I had finished sorting myself out and washing the trousers and underwear that had been given to me, I wrapped a towel around myself and went back out. Draven passed me some more sweat pants to put on and this time these were my own. He didn’t say a word as he passed me some water and more tablets as the others didn’t have much chance at fulfilling their use.

“Better?” He asked when I downed all the water to the last drop. I nodded before walking up to him and hugging him like he was a lifeline. He held me back and I felt him sigh.

“Did I say I was sorry?” I said again hoping this would work but when I looked up he didn’t look very mad at me.

“Yes you did and although it is nice, it is also unnecessary.” He went to kiss me and I turned my head. I had brushed my teeth like a woman possessed but I still didn’t want him kissing me just in case.

“Although when you do that, it doesn’t help the forgiving process,” he said teasing me but he knew why I did it. I held his hand and pulled him to the bed where he lifted me over the steps and into the bed like I was a child that needed a boost. We snuggled down into bed and the lights changed into a gentle glow. I knew this meant he wanted to talk.

“Are you still in pain?” He was obsessed whether or not I was still hurting, bless him.

“Not a lot,” I lied.

“I wish I could take it away but unfortunately, I cannot heal what is not broken.” This made sense as it was nature so he kindly reminded me.

“But maybe I could still help.” He lifted back the covers and lifted my top exposing my bare stomach.

“Hot or cold?” He asked showing me his hand.

“Umm... hot please.” He nodded and placed a very warm hand across my skin and pulled down my trousers exposing more of the area where I hurt. The heat helped more than I could have imagined. I relaxed back and let his warm tingling hand make my pain fade.

“Is this helping?” He asked after I was silent for a while.

“Oh yes, better than any painkiller.” I said smiling to prove just how efficient it had been.

“Good,” he said into my hair.

“You’re like a hot water bottle without having to wait for the kettle to boil!” He let out deep and rough laugh and this brought a smile to my pale face.

“What did you dream about?” His question caught me off guard and I stiffened up in his hold. I knew I couldn’t get away with passing it off as nothing but I really didn’t want him worrying anymore about me. Well there was one saving grace...at least I hadn’t dreamt of Lucius. When I didn’t answer he took my reaction for what it was and rested his lips at my ear.

“Tell me,” he whispered but this made my stomach flutter and not from pain. His scent always did crazy things to my body and mind. I sighed and looked up at the carved roof of the bed. Then I explained my dream to him but leaving out the details was hard to do when he kept asking questions. I could feel him grip the covers and heard a ripping sound when I told him of when she stabbed me.

“Draven! You promised you wouldn’t overreact!” He let go of the covers and made the material heal itself. When it was finished knitting itself back together you couldn’t even tell where he had torn it. I looked round to face him and noticed he was deep in thought. I took a moment to study his features that were harder than I was used to. He was clearly not happy that I was being made to witness these things but come on, it had been far worse

when I was seven! And then, of course, I didn't have my own delicious protector to wake up to, even if I had bled on his fancy bed.

“Were you frightened?” His voice was trying to stay neutral but it sounded strained.

“Yes, but mostly, I just wanted something big and pointed to whack her with! I wanted to help George.” This brought him back to being my Draven. He kissed my cheeks while he was still grinning to himself. It was probably the thought of me swinging a big sword like Zena the warrior princess but knowing my luck I would get it so high above my head and then fall backwards with the weight.

“You would make a fierce enemy to have. I would not like to get on the wrong side of you.” Ok, so now he was most definitely teasing me

“You have been on the wrong side of me and you survived.”

“Barely!” He mouthed over my skin before kissing me and he held my face in his unbreakable hold so I couldn't pull away. Of course after about three seconds I didn't try to any longer. His hands moved around to my neck and down my back making my body cry out for more. Then my new situation must have dawned on him as his hands released me.

“How long does this last for?” He asked in a hoarse voice as he was clearly desperate to have my body in more than an embrace.

“Umm...usually a week.” I said in a hopeless tone. How would I last the night let alone the week! Now this was painful.

“I could sleep at home if it would make things easier.” I didn't really want to do this but I didn't want to make this harder on him. But this wasn't the right thing to say as he let out a low growl and his face turned stern.

“*Keira!* Do you think I only get pleasure from your body? It pains me to be away from you and this is not just down to what your body does to me.” He scolded and I blushed but for once I hoped it turned my skin a healthier colour.

“It is your mind and heart that captured me, your body is just the bonus I get along with you....and what a body it is.” His hands ran up my sides making me inhale deeply. He wasn't the only one finding this excruciating.

“But if you...” He cut me off with another kiss and I was starting to think this was his favourite way of shutting me up.

“Enough of this talk of leaving me. You will NOT! Understand?” Ok, this was a clear order I was happy to comply with. I nodded, smiling at his domination over me and I kind of relished in it. Once he was happy that the idea was firmly out of my mind, he pulled me closer to him after asking me if I was comfortable. I let my head rest on his chest while he played with my hair. The feeling was making my lids heavy and I yawned making him chuckle. He made the lights die and I knew that the sound of his strong heart beat would soon have me fast asleep in the only place on earth I wanted to be. In his arms....

Forever.

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Chapter 12

A Long Wait.

When I woke, I saw the morning light filter through the curtain cracks. I moved slightly and then realised Draven and I hadn't moved all night from the position we had fell asleep in. I could tell he was still asleep because his breathing was steady and light.

I shifted slowly so I could see his face but he was looking the other way. His arm was still securely around me as if he had tried to protect me from any more nightmares. I knew I needed to get up for obvious reasons but that didn't mean I wanted to. I could have lain there all day listening to his calm breathing.

I moved slowly trying to slide down under his hold but his arm weighed a tonne. They were solid and pure muscle which rippled down, starting from his impressive shoulders. They would then meet the biggest one, his biceps. They looked bigger than my head. One blow from that bad boy and you wouldn't be getting up again, that was for sure!

I managed to scoot out without waking him and I gently put my warm feet to the cold slate floor. Once my skin was used to the shock, I got up and straightened my top that had twisted. I looked back as I heard the bed shift but thankfully he had just rolled over to his side. He was still asleep, so I tiptoed into the bathroom and after finishing my morning routine I walked further round into the room.

At the end was a massive stone arch that was mirrored by a window letting the morning light flood the room. Through the arch was a raised bath that had steps up into it like Draven's bed did. I walked closer and the bath was the biggest I had ever seen. Even bigger than Sophia's, which I had once been lucky enough to take a dip in. The cramps started telling me to ease the pain by taking a swim in it. I looked back at the door as though I was about to do something naughty but to hell with it. I'm sure he wouldn't mind. So I bent over to where I thought the water came out but there was nothing. No tap, no spout, no hole.... nothing.

I bent further in, leaning over the rim, realising it was made from a block of carved stone. Then I had a thought. His shower was on a motion sensor so maybe this one was too. So I waved my arm about, thinking how glad I was that I was doing this alone, as I felt like an idiot waving at a wall. But it worked. The stone wall to the side started to move and one block came out half way causing the water to quickly follow. It poured into the stone pool below and I looked about for anything to add to the water. I noticed that there was a stone shelf hidden and there were glass bottles filled with luscious smells. I pulled the top off one and poured it in, then bingo, the clear water started to create bubbles.

I slipped off my clothes and stepped in letting my hair down as I went. The temperature was perfect and I sighed as the water devoured my skin. I dipped my head under fully and smiled as I came up for air. I pushed the drips off my face and pushed my hair back. I stretched out and didn't once come into contact with the sides as you could have fitted ten people in here easy. I was about to close my eyes and rest my head back when I noticed the window.

I pulled myself over to the other side and an amazing view opened up before me. The window was ceiling to floor and was as wide as the bath. The green sea of the mountains and national park filled the floor and a cloudless topaz blue filled the sky. If I had the supplies I would have painted it. I lay on my front and folded my arms to rest on the side so I could gaze out at earth's perfection.

“Mmm beautiful,” I said out loud before dipping my head back once more, only when I came back up, I was no longer alone.

“I must agree.” Draven’s voice sounded even more powerful as it echoed in the vast room. He was stood back, leaning on one of the marble pillars casually watching me and I could feel my skin burning from embarrassment. It was like I had been caught with my hand in a cookie jar.

“Umm...how long have you been there?” I asked, dipping further under the water to hide my modesty. This action made a bad boy grin cross his lips.

“A while,” he said knowing this would get more of a pink cheeked reaction. Of course when it did, his grin widened. He was dressed, unlike me and his long denim legs strolled over to the edge of the bath. I was still on the other side and he cocked his head back slightly to motion for me to come to him. When I didn’t move, he frowned at my lack of co-operation.

“Come here!” He ordered but again I wouldn’t and I knew teasing him wasn’t a good idea seeing as I couldn’t really give myself to him fully. But he replaced his frown with cunning eyes and wicked lips. Then he dipped one finger in the water and I jumped when it started to go cold.

“Ok ok!” I said before giving in to him in record time. He sat on the steps next to the bath and dunked his arms in as I got nearer, pulling me the rest of the way. But not before he made the water turn back to its usual relaxing temperature.

“That was cruel!”

“I would call it more of a ‘tactical decision’. And besides what can you expect when you look like this?” His mouth found my wet shoulder and he tasted the water off my skin. I closed my eyes with pleasure when his mouth moved closer to the curvature of my neck. Then his hand expertly found the inside of my leg and he moved it upwards until I let out a moan when he hit his mark. I quickly shifted before anything more happened and he groaned while my neck was still in his mouth.

“Draven, we can’t, remember,” I said barely legible. The feeling was burning the lower part of my body making me want him to take me so badly I couldn’t breathe. His bite left my wet flesh and he looked up at me, although for a moment I thought he would do it anyway because his eyes were now Demon purple. It was frightening. He stood up and I thought he was going to leave.

“Don’t go!” This made him lose his Demon side and he smiled down at me.

“I am not going anywhere.”

“Then what are you doing?” My question was quickly answered as he yanked off his T-shirt displaying a perfect male torso overflowing with muscles upon muscles. He continued getting naked and started to unbutton his jeans removing them from toned olive skin. This then made it even harder for me to control my burning urge to have him inside me.

“I am joining you of course, you’re in my bath remember?” He added in a cheeky tone. I moved out of the way putting some safe distance between us. However once he was in, his hands searched for my ankles and when he found them, he pulled me into him. I slid right to his body as if we were magnets and he held me in an iron hold, so I wouldn’t leave him again. I tried to worm my way out from him but it was useless.

“Don’t struggle.” He whispered into my wet hair.

“But we can’t do this,” I said in vain.

“Keira, I just want to feel, nothing more. Let me feel you, all of you.” He asked before he repositioned me so my back was against his chest, once there his expert fingers found me. I let out a moan and tensed in his arms. He moved very slowly and delicately over my happy place in a circular motion. He continued to move to his own rhythm and what a rhythm it was! My mind went cloudy and my breathing got heavy with each motion he made. He was just so skilled in the art, it was almost like he could feel everything I felt and to increase the pleasure he would move it to how he also liked it.

“Do you want me to stop?”

“No... please don't” I begged as I was close to ecstasy. I buried my head to the side, into his chest and his other hand cupped my exposed, heaving breast. It felt as though my eyes were rolling back as the intensity increased and with every moan I let out I could feel his own pleasure increase behind me. His manhood was getting harder and bigger like a force of its own. So I pressed back on it as I was still in between his legs with my back against his front.

I pushed back on him again and his fingers moved faster in return. He was kissing my neck and he licked up to my ear, before turning it into biting. He took care not to bite too hard but I could tell it was difficult for him. I bent my head to one side to allow him access but when he wouldn't do it, I put my hands behind my back and found his Commander. It was actually the first time I had touched it and I now realised why it sometimes was hard to take. He was huge!

He groaned louder and I got the reaction I wanted as he bit down into my flesh making me come instantly. I screamed out and jerked, causing the water to form little waves. He held me down and pulled me closer. My hands were moving quicker and as he sucked on my neck at the holes he had made there, his release came quickly after. We both seemed to jerk against each other in sync until our wave riding became a calm bob in the water.

I looked down and saw little droplets of my blood from my neck disperse in the bath water. Then he licked the puncture marks, sealing them closed. My body relaxed into his body and he held my head to him until my breathing came back to its normal rhythm.

“Mmm, that was lovely.” I said and then let out a satisfied sigh.

“Yes, I must agree and also a first.” He said completely sated. I turned to look at him and when I saw him with wet hair I wanted to do it all over again. I put my hands on his face and moved them back through his hair and down to his neck before kissing him. He was surprised by this gesture, as he didn't respond until my kiss got deeper and more intense. When I stopped, I didn't

pull back from him. I just held my lips over his and licked before finding his neck.

He seemed shocked by my enthusiasm but he must have found it a massive turn on because he moaned letting out more air with his heavy breathing. Then out of nowhere his hands grabbed my wrists and he restrained me back. I thought I had done something wrong until I saw his face. He had his eyes closed while he spoke.

“I don’t think you should do that again while I can’t have you fully. I was close to losing control and I don’t think I could have stopped. But when we can, then what you just did would please me greatly.” He said all this as if it was a strain and I smiled that I could do that to him. Man oh man, why did I have to be on!!!!

“So when you said this was a first, what did you mean?” I asked once I had given him a minute.

“I meant, I have never found pleasure this way, without sex that is.” If his face hadn’t have been so serious I would have laughed. No way!

“You mean....you never...you know?” I waved my hand around like this would help.

“Keira, use words my love” He was mocking me as he actually knew what I meant but he just wanted to see me go red again...I was sure of it.

“What I mean is, you never found release without intercourse?” As soon as it was out Draven cracked up laughing to a point where *he* couldn’t find words. I folded my arms across my chest and moved to the other side. He tried to control it but he did a lousy job.

“Keira come back here, I am sorry..” He didn’t look very sorry! So I shrugged and dipped my head back to get my hair wet ready for washing.

“I find it very sexy when you do that” He was trying to butter me up but I wasn’t taking him on. I reached for the shampoo but he got there first. When I tried to retrieve it, he simply held it higher above my head.

“Give it!” I ordered but he smiled down at me, making me melt.

“Have you forgiven me?” He said making it impossible to stay mad at him.

“I don’t know, say it again.” I was now teasing him but he obeyed by lowering the bottle and mouthing the words “I’m sorry” over my lips.

We stayed in the bath for what seemed like ages as we started to play around splashing each other like kids and then he refused to let me wash my own hair. The problem with this of course is the feeling it created below. His large hands circling my head and neck was just heavenly and I tried very hard not to think of the bulge behind me, that just never seemed to go down. Then, of course, it took me even longer to get out of the bath because he kept pulling me back in.

Finally when I got out, he was there before me holding a big black fluffy towel to wrap me in. He rubbed me down before using the same towel on himself. I think he liked the smell of me and that’s why he did this because he seemed to smell his own skin after it. However, I was too embarrassed to ask.

He handed me a black soft robe that felt softer than anything I had ever felt before. I had no idea what material it was but I just hoped it wasn’t an animal. He allowed me time alone to change some things after yet another trip to his expensive toilet and when I went back into the bedroom there was food waiting for us, which made my stomach very happy.

We spent the morning together on the same couch, kissing, laughing, touching each other everywhere but keeping from doing the naughty. He watched me eat all wide eyed and cat like. I never understood why he found this so fascinating. It made me feel a bit like a huge science project. He would bombard me with questions ranging on anything from my childhood, to my favourite artists. Then it got more serious.

“And past boyfriends?” I gulped my tea. He had never wanted to know about this before.

“Why do you ask?” I was hoping he would reconsider.... Of course I’d be wrong.

“I am curious.”

“About what, who I dated?” He just nodded and then added

“Among other things.” I loved the way he spoke, so fluid and precise but sometimes it would be like cracking the De Vinci code. I cleared my throat to indicate I was ready for the fire line of questions but the naughty grin on his face already told me what he was going to ask.

“How old were you when you lost your virginity?” It was so matter of fact that I laughed, making him frown. Well it was his turn to be laughed at! If it had been me I would have asked in a round about way, saying “you know...the thing” or words like “popped cherry” but there was none of that and Draven never minced his words. He was always straight to the point and sex was clearly no exception.

“I was seventeen,” I said waiting for his reaction. He raised his eyebrows and it was clear he had not expected as much.

“What! Did you think I would have only lost it when I was twenty one?” I had to laugh.

“No, don’t forget Keira I have lived a long time and throughout history human girls have been a lot younger than that, when they were taken.”

“Taken?”

“Given.” He corrected himself and then shrugged his shoulders, a gesture you hardly saw from Draven.

“Poor girls!” My heart went out to them, young and frightened.

“It was expected Keira, they knew nothing of choice, not like today.” He looked uncomfortable knowing this part of my past but he continued to ask.

“Who was the boy?” This was Draven’s way of degrading my former love partner.

“His name was Johnny Carlson and he was my first boyfriend.”

“Did he... force himself upon you?” He had his hands balled into fists that he was trying to keep out of sight.

“NO, of course not, if anything it was my idea.” Now this shocked him!

“Why?”

“And why not? Teenage girls get strong sexual urges just as boys do. Plus it was kind of fuelled by alcohol.” This made him relax slightly.

“Can I ask, why are you asking these questions if you don’t want to hear the answers?” I asked getting up from the couch to stand over him.

“Because I want to know everything, even if I can’t change the past.” He looked stern at the thought of not having that power.

“And what would you have changed exactly?” I smiled at the thought of meeting Draven years ago, being so young and terrified, to the point it excited me.

“I would have been your first.” Mmm... well I could have seen that going better than my first time.

“And don’t you think that would have been a bit weird considering the age difference.” This made him roll his eyes at me.

“Keira, of course I would have waited for you to have come to age. I don’t find anything attractive about an undeveloped body. I like developed women.” He quickly stood in front of me as he said this and began to run his fingers over my curvy chest and then up to my neck. I looked up at him feeling even smaller with bare feet.

“And do you like your women little?” I said smiling, thinking about

Aurora who had legs longer than my entire body! Ok a bit of exaggeration there but you get my drift...she was bloody tall.

“Yes, most definitely.” He purred before carrying on.

“Some of the most expensive and exquisite gifts on the planet come in small packages.” This was sweet but come on, you never saw little models on the runway!

“Like what?” I challenged.

“Diamonds, for one.” Ok, so he had me there. I shook my head at him.

“I can hardly be compared to Diamonds!”

“I agree, there is nothing on this planet I can compare you to, there is nothing as beautiful or breathtaking, but I would have very much liked to have given you the Hope Diamond, but alas it is no longer in my possession.” I couldn’t speak, it was a combination of things. Being that he thought me as being *that* beautiful or that he once owned the Hope Diamond!

“That is the one Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI owned... yes? Only then it was called the French blue.” A proud smile crossed his lips before laying them on mine.

“Clever girl, you are right and know your history well. Which makes me wonder if your interest in the past is not due to more...supernatural reasons.” He liked the idea, I could tell.

“You mean for you?” I poked him in the ribs and he responded by tickling me back but when I tried to squirm away he grabbed my waist and flung me to the bed, pinning me down to make me giggle with what his other hand was doing. We were both laughing and didn’t hear when Sophia entered, or at least, I didn’t.

“Well that’s a funny noise you’re creating from Keira.” Sophia of course was refereeing to my snorting like an excited pig.

“Thank you for knocking, Sophia!” Draven said dryly.

“I did but you just couldn’t hear it over the....noise.” Again she meant my snorting. Draven lifted me up and we both walked over to the couch opposite Sophia. As always she was perfection. Her silky mass of curls was twisted up loose allowing some to escape. She wore a beautiful halter neck fitted blue top with white trousers that had a high waist band but flared out onto open toe sandals. She looked fit for a high end ocean liner. I, on the other hand, looked like I had been clubbed over the head and dragged back to my cave. My hair was wild and wavy and I was still in a robe.

“Did you both only just get up?” She asked with an evil grin, that she made to look cute.

“No, Keira and I shared a bath and I am trying to get her to stay in that robe all day but considering you’re here, I know that won’t last much longer.” He said full of humour. But of course I went bright red.

“You’re right about that, ‘cause I am not going shopping with her wearing that!” Oh no, she had been serious last night. I looked up at Draven with pleading eyes but he just laughed.

“Oh no, you’re not getting out of it Keira dear!” Sophia looked dead serious.

“Draven doesn’t want me to go.” I said bravely and Draven looked at me then back at Sophia with folded arms. It would have been more convincing if he wasn’t grinning like a fool in love.

“I don’t give a Damn what Dominic wants! He has kept you to himself for too long, now it’s my turn to have some fun with you.” She made me sound like a doll being passed around. Who was next, Vincent....? Oops better not think that!

“Plus you owe me... remember?” Oh no, she didn’t just pull that card! Draven shot me a look and Sophia’s mouthed the word “busted” at me.

“Someone elaborate please.” Draven’s voice was cool and collected but I

knew it wouldn't last.

“Sophia just helped get me some stuff last night, but that's it...*isn't it Sophia*” I said this last part as a warning....one she didn't take.

“Is that so and how exactly did you keep this from me?” Now he was intrigued.

“Oh Keira here is very gifted, brother and so it seems has learnt some new tricks...I am surprised she hasn't said anything.” I decided to use this new gift right now!

“*Great, thanks a lot Sophia!*” But this made it worse because she answered me out loud even though I was ready to let her in.

“You're welcome!” What the...did she wake up this morning pure evil! Draven shot her a look and then me, he was clearly waiting. He held out his palm and motioned for his question to be answered.

“Well, Keira here can talk to me without you hearing, she is using her mind and she can focus hard enough on letting me into her mind when she so chooses.” I rolled my eyes like this wasn't that big a deal but she carried on.

“She didn't want you knowing about her umm...unfortunate timing. But she was in pain and needed some supplies. I believe this was her only reasoning for trying to go home last night. But she didn't want to disappoint you, so instead, she stayed and sought my help. It was very clever of her, was it not brother?”

“It was indeed.” Was all he said but his look said so many other things.

“I didn't tell you any of those things, how did you know I felt that way?” Draven was the one to answer, although the question was directed at his sister.

“When you open up your mind it gives way to your thoughts, not just the ones you choose for her to hear.” He smiled at his sister like he was proud of her deception. Great, well I will never be doing that again!

“Keira, show me!” Oh shit! Now Draven wanted to see it first hand and I had a feeling I was heading for a trap.

“NO!” I said before folding my arms across my chest like a stubborn child.

“Oh come on Keira, you even agreed that it was fun last night. Let’s show him, you could even call him a rich arrogant fool and he would never know!” She giggled as Draven growled at her.

“I said No!”

“Why not...Oh, she is stubborn isn’t she?” Sophia stamped her foot and now I was the one laughing.

“She is indeed,” Draven answered. Ok this wasn’t fair, they were ganging up on me.

“Please Keira, do it for me, what is there to be afraid of?” His velvet voice was slowly winning me over but I didn’t let on.

“Because if I do, then you will be in my head and know everything and what if I can’t get you back out! I want to keep my thoughts private thank you very much!” Ok so I did sound a bit whiny at this point but peer pressure was never a welcomed thing.

“But what have you to hide from me?” Now he raised his eyes like I was keeping secrets from him. Of course there was a few, including the name Lucius!

“Nothing!” I said a little too defensive.

“But you could block Sophia again.”

“Yes, but you are stronger than her, you can almost access my mind already and I have to try very hard to resist, so if I do this, I might never find a way back again.” Sophia huffed at this, not liking to hear how her brother’s power was far greater.

“If that is the case, then show me via Sophia, talk to her and I will listen through her mind. When I hear your voice, I will be satisfied.” I was failing fast and he knew it, so to seal the deal he ran his fingers down my cheek before whispering in my ear.

“Please my love,” and that was all it took to crack me.

“Fine! But know that I am not happy about being made to do this!” I said before lifting my knees up and getting comfortable. Draven didn’t look as though he felt guilty for making me do this. He looked happier that he had won.

I relaxed my mind as I had done last night. I listened to the sounds around me trying to pinpoint one. I heard a door close in the distance and even some birds from an open window. I heard the clock pendulum rock its mundane motion, counting the seconds one, two, three and then my head filled with Sophia’s smug voice.

“Good girl Keira, my brother will be pleased.”

“Great, I am glad I could put on such a good freak show!” I said unhappily but Draven’s eyes lit up at his discovery.

“But look how happy you have made him, besides he would have asked me anyway and this way saves me a lecture.” She even sounded sincere in my mind.

“Glad I could help!” I said sarcastically and Draven laughed but stopped abruptly as though he had seen something he didn’t like. His hand that held my arm tightened and his face became stern, giving me the feeling he was about to confirm the reason I didn’t want to be doing this.

“Who is this boy Justin?” The voice I had heard in my head filled me with dread, as it was no longer the sweet voice of Sophia’s...oh NO

This voice belonged to Draven and now...

He had been granted full access!

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Chapter 13

Oh Lord... Draven?

After that Sophia excused herself at Draven's request. This meant Draven wanted to talk to me about Justin without Sophia to witness our little discussion. Of course I was still furious about him deceiving me. Once we were alone, I got up and folded my arms.

"We are not talking about this!" I said as I grabbed my clothes from last night and went into the bathroom but he was stood by the door before I could blink.

"Oh yes we are my dear!" He claimed but he didn't yet look as angry as I did, although, I couldn't imagine it would take long in coming.

"Alright if we are going to talk about it, then first we are going to talk about you tricking me!" Ha! Now this made him look sheepish.

"Keira, please!" He tipped his head but I wouldn't give up that easy.

"Oh no, not this time! You forced me into something I didn't want to do and as a result you saw something that is going to make you paranoid! Explain how this is fair?" He was trying to think of something diplomatic to say but for once I had him stumped.

"I did not force you into anything." What a load of horse shit!

"No, you just used...what is you call it...tactical decisions! It was a bloody guilt trip and you know it." I decided to get changed there in front of him and I did it while I was still having a go at him. He looked slightly amused by my angry dressing.

"Answer me truthfully, if you can, did you know that would happen?" I

had pulled my top on the wrong way round and he look down at it and nodded. Oh great, and when I was trying to make my point as well! So I almost tore it off and put it back on the right way round.

“Ok, I will admit that I had an idea.” I raised my eyebrows and sucked my lips in and he thought twice about his last statement.

“Ok, ok...more than an idea.” Now he looked guilty...finally!

“You knew?” I said and he just nodded. I threw my hands up and made a GRRR sound as I walked away. He was about to say something else but I turned knowing what it was.

“Oh no, don’t you dare say it!”

“And what was I going to say exactly?” He leaned casually on his desk as he too had crossed the room. He looked smug.

“You were going to blame it on being half Demon.” I said and his smug face was no longer...I had guessed right. Now I looked smug and we both couldn’t help but laugh.

“Ha, you’re laughing and therefore can’t be angry at me anymore.” In less than a blink he was before me capturing my face in his large hands and was now kissing me before I could protest...ok not that I would have. When he finished he looked too pleased with himself.

“And what are you looking so happy about?”

“I just survived my first real telling off. I feel almost human.” He then winked at me and I knew it was just going to blow over and go down as one of our quickest disagreements yet.

“At the risk of angering you again, I would very much like, if you could oblige me and explain who this boy is. As from the embrace he gave you, I’m sure you could shed some light on the matter.” He was trying to keep it light and cautious, as not to bring up the fact that he had obtained this information under dishonourable terms.

“He is no one, just another friend or more like family as he is Frank’s younger brother. He came to the house to see him as he’s just come back from travelling.” I tried to make it as matter of fact as I could but my voice wasn’t as steady as it could have been. Thankfully as soon as I had heard his voice in my head, I had blocked him out with all my might and that had been the end of his brief encounter with my thoughts. It could have been much worse, as he could have picked up on the fact that I have been hiding my dreams about Lucius.

“I think the boy has other ideas of friendship with you.” He said in a stubborn tone.

“You got that from a hug? He’s just a little...touchy feely that’s all. No hidden agenda.” Ok, I knew this wasn’t completely the truth as he had made it a little too obvious that he liked me but we did kind of have a thing once.

“Well at least he is gone now.” He said and I knew I should have used this opportunity to tell him about his stay next weekend but I didn’t. I just didn’t want to worry him even more and if I was lucky I could get away with him not finding out. I could just stay here for that weekend. But then I remembered how Frank had asked me to take him to the club one night... umm.... maybe I will have to rethink this one.

Sophia didn’t knock but just glided through the door without a care in the world.

“Are you ready?” She asked looking me up and down.

“I need to stop off and change first but then I’m good to go. I need to stop at the supermarket on the way back for tonight.” Draven shot me a look.

“Oh no, I forgot I’m working,” I said thinking I would have to call my sister and tell her it was off, but Draven smiled.

“Oh no you’re not, we have made plans and I am not cancelling on your sister.” He looked far too pleased about this.

“But...”

“No buts!” He said firmly, so I knew on this he was concrete. So I came up with a solution.

“Ok, but I work tomorrow night to make up for it.” He was about to tell me No but he thought twice about it when he saw my face, so he just sighed instead and then held up his hands in defeat.

“I think we should go in my car,” I said to Sophia who was waiting with an amused expression. Draven let out a roar of laughter when he saw Sophia’s face drop at my words.

“No way! I am not being seen dead in that thing!” I was hurt but she didn’t care on this matter because plain and simple... she was being spoilt.

“And what’s wrong with my Bronco?” I asked crossing my arms.

“Keira my dear, I might not be practical but I am rich and I do have standards to uphold. No offense.” Ok, I had to admit I didn’t think I would have seen her in my car but still, she shouldn’t be so stuck up!

“Well Draven goes in it,” I said pleading my case one last time. But she just let out a snorted laugh.

“Yes well, he is a fool in love and clearly would do anything to keep you happy because have no allusions Keira, he would have never been seen dead in that thing you call a car before he met you.”

“Alright Sophia that is enough, if she wants to drive she will drive or she won’t go at all.” He said firmly but from the look on Sophia’s face I was going to have to cave quicker than these two.

“Its fine, we will go in something ridiculously fast, with a shiny paint job.” I said in defeat but Sophia smiled which told me that she had something else in mind.

“What?”

“Well I was thinking... Limo!” Oh no, this was getting worse by the

second but now they laughed when my face dropped. I had only been in a Limo once and that was a Prom and it was filled with a load of drunken teenagers!

“That’s a little over the top for shopping.” She shook her head and again I caved.

“Ok, but I need to get some food on the way back.” They both looked shocked but what did they think, that I was getting the maid in to cook!

“What? I’m cooking tonight...Libby can’t cook for toffee.” They hadn’t heard this expression before and Sophia giggled.

“Are you sure?” Draven came up to me and I looked up to his bemused face.

“Yeah I’m sure, I mean that girl burns everything. Once she...”

“No, I mean, do you not mind cooking tonight’s meal?” Aww bless, he must be looking at this as a chore.

“No of course not, I cook most nights. Besides, I enjoy it and I’m quite good at it.” I said being modest about something for the first time and Draven noticed it.

“Oh really?” He said as he kissed me and Sophia just cleared her throat to indicate that she was still waiting.

“Ok, I’m ready,” I said but it was a lie as all I wanted to do was stay there having him kissing me all day.

“Sophia, you remember what we talked about?” He said as he threw her something I didn’t see. She caught it like it was part of her body she’d been missing and she slid it into her pocket before I could see.

“No problem, leave it to me.” She said winking at him and now I was doubly worried.

“What are you up to?” I asked before she dragged me away from my happiness. I could just make out him laughing as she pulled me out of the door.

There was a car waiting at the side of the building and it was like she said, a long black Limo. I really didn't want to turn up at home in this so I used the excuse that I needed my truck at home and that I would meet her there. She moaned a bit but agreed in the end.

I walked over to my blue beast and found Ragnar, my guardian stood leaning against it. I sighed and hoped my car door wasn't dented from his immense size. I knew I wouldn't get away with driving back on my own. I couldn't believe how protective Draven was over me.

“Do you want me to drop you off somewhere?” I said sarcastically but he just grunted.

“To your home!” He said not getting my humour. Ok, I was going to have to work on this. He got in the cab and I could almost hear the suspension cry out in pain. I tried to get it to started, but it was cold and didn't want to move like last time. And like last time I rubbed the dash and said,

“Come on baby!” Making Ragnar stare at me in disbelief.

“You speak to your car?” His question was serious and I coughed back a laugh.

“Oh yeah, I don't have many friends.” I looked across to him and he thought I was serious. I started the car and then turned to face him.

“I'm joking but it worked didn't it?” At this he finally laughed, making me jump. Would I ever get used to his version of a laugh. It was a cross between a deer's mating call and sandpaper being swallowed, then being thrown back up!

“You are a strange human girl.” I couldn’t tell if this was his idea of a good thing or bad, so I stayed silent. I swung the car round and made for the main road. I could tell he wasn’t happy with my slow driving but my motto was ‘I preferred to get there later than dead’ but considering he was immortal I doubted he would agree with me on this one. I was wracking my brain to try and bring up a conversation but come on, what did I have in common with a Viking Demon?

“I know it must be very boring for you to be babysitting me,” I said but he seemed not only surprised that I was speaking to him but also that I had sympathised with him at all.

“It is different. But I have been entrusted with guarding My Lord’s most prized possession, so it is an honourable one.” I let out a growl of my own.

“I’m not a Ming vase or his family’s crown jewels and I am most definitely not one of his possessions!” I said trying to get it through, but he remained unmoved by my outburst.

“Humans are too sensitive,” he stated but I counteracted his statement for one of my own.

“And you? Were you not once human?” He turned towards me and I got a bit scared that I had gone too far.

“Yes I was, but I was a Warrior King and our women weren’t outspoken. They knew their place well enough.” He said this as a warning for me to behave for my Master but I just chuckled as it was clearly far too late for that.

“Well times have changed and I doubted even back then that Queens kept their mouths shut.” I snapped back making my point. He didn’t reply but he did at least look as though he was giving what I said some thought but then his thick lips curved on one side and his eyes moved sideways at me. I however, was confused by his sudden amused behaviour but I was smart enough not to question it.

We pulled up outside my house and the Limo pulled up after. Thankfully

Libby and Frank were out. Ragnar walked over to the Limo and waited for me there. I made a motion at the blacked out windows and one rolled down.

“I will be five minutes,” I shouted to Sophia before running in the house to get ready. It didn’t take long but I remembered to grab my purse with my bank card and some cash, as I really did need to get some new clothes. I quickly changed my clothes and picked up my mobile phone that had been left to charge. And that was it, I was ready. I checked myself in the mirror and for a moment I didn’t recognise the happy Keira staring back at me. It wasn’t long ago that it had been a rare sight but these days I just couldn’t stop smiling. Then the unbelievable hit me...

Draven really had fixed me.

The drive there was interesting but this was more down to its passengers. Three Demons and a lip biting human. If I wasn’t already a little crazy this would have terrified me. But let’s face it, I wasn’t exactly normal. If anything I felt more comfortable than I would do with most humans. This was probably down to the fact that finally, I didn’t feel crazy anymore. Being around these Demons and Angels made every second of my life real. Every sight, every dream and every scary touch, I now felt that it had all pointed me to this strange family that I felt so much a part of, that it in itself scared me. I was terrified but for reasons opposite than what they should be.

I never wanted it to end.

Zagan sat in the front with the driver and Ragnar sat at the front of the Limo’s long seats. He looked a little cramped but I could imagine this he would be used to. I think he’d even look big in a hummer!. Me and Sophia sat next to each other at the very back and I really didn’t understand the need for this car for a simple shopping trip. But then we passed the turning to the mall I knew, so it made me speak for the first time.

“Umm, did we just miss the turning?” Sophia laughed at me in response.

“Keira did you really think we were going shopping in that tiny little mall? For starters they don’t have any designer stores.”

“I don’t buy my clothes from designer stores.... remember, boring non rich human here.” She was laughing again, only this time she flicked her hair back.

“Well you do now.”

“OH no, I’m not been dragged around some fancy store and spending a ridiculous amount of money on stuff I won’t wear.” She let out a moan but I ignored it.

“Draven likes me the way I am, not because I come with diamonds, an expensive handbag and a five hundred dollar haircut!” She was now pouting and this might have worked around Draven but not me. Although, it was adorable. When I didn’t budge she spoke.

“Fine! We can go in your boring plain shops but you have to at least come in some of mine.”

“As long as you don’t make me buy anything in them, then sure, no problem.” She was happy with this outcome. Well this was a first, I had never had to get the rules straight before going on a shopping trip.

“What did Draven mean back there?” I asked once again breaking the silence. She tried to put on a blank expression but it was hard when she really wanted to smile.

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“Oh come off it! What did he throw you?”

“You will just have to wait and see.” And that was all she would say on the matter. I could tell we were heading into the city as I vaguely remembered coming back from the airport this way. The Limo got a lot of attention, especially when we got into more populated areas. People beeped their horns and waved as if we could have been celebrities. I was going bright

red even though no one could see me through the blacked out windows.

“You don’t like attention much do you?” Sophia asked being a little surprised.

“What gives you that impression?” I said sarcastically but then I felt guilty afterwards so followed it by,

“Sorry, that was rude. I just get embarrassed when people watch me.”

“Umm... but you don’t mind Dom watching you?” She smirked and I laughed.

“I’m starting to get used to it but it is still embarrassing. I didn’t like it before you know...back when I thought he hated me.” She turned to me in shock.

“You thought he hated you?” I wanted to say “Well durr!” But I refrained.

“Yes of course, you do remember how he used to treat me...don’t you?”

“Well that’s interesting. I guess I didn’t see it because I just remember all the obsessing he did over you and all the endless research. He wanted to know everything about you and without access to your mind this frustrated him greatly. I remember when he came back one night from watching you sleep. He was in a rage because you had woken up and he realised he could no longer get away with being near you this way. It was the first time you started to really block him out. If I recall he destroyed the dining room in the west wing, fireplace included.” She was grinning at the memory and like this it was clear to see Sophia as a Demon not an Angel. She looked like an evil doll, one that would have ripped Chucky a new behind!

“It is still hard for us to accept that our powers do not work over you but I can imagine no one finds it harder than Dom. This has most definitely never happened to him before.” Again, she sounded smug with glee.

“Is he... very powerful?” I asked feeling nervous for the answer. She

turned to face me and with a serious eye she scanned my face.

“Yes. He is the most powerful of our kind by far but he is, after all, King.” My reaction made her jump.

“WHAT!” I screamed out and started shaking my head as though this had to be a dream...What the hell...he was king? Was she friggin’ kidding me!

“Yes of course, but wait... you didn’t know? I would have thought it would have been obvious. You have heard him being regarded as My Lord, have you not?” She actually looked shocked.

“Yeah, but I just thought that was like a Lord of the manor type of thing but not like a.... Like a King!” I said the word as if it was made of acid or something. It was just crazy to think of him that way and even more crazy to think of him choosing me! Sophia laughed till there were tears in her beautiful eyes.

“Oh Keira, there is so much you still don’t know but I am surprised this was not one of them. Oh dear you have gone pale, please don’t tell me this is another thing you are going to overreact about...Dominic will not be pleased at me breaking you.”

“I’m fine...I’m just...umm... a little overwhelmed with it is all.” I was still shaking my head and I noticed Ragnar smiling to himself. I guess my last statement to him about Queens not keeping their mouths shut had him thinking I believed I was one! Well at least now he knew he’d been wrong. No wonder he was smirking.

“King?” I said again in disbelief.

“Yes, but not in the conventional sense. You have only history to gauge the ideas on but it is not that way at all. His importance lies in the laws of our ways and how he chooses to enforce it. He is not your King Keira, he is simply your boyfriend and that is all you need to concern yourself with.” Ha, well that was certainly easier to say than do.

“Ok, tell me something else that will take my mind off all this king stuff.” This turned out to be another big mistake.

“Ok, you really want to know what Dominic gave me earlier?” In hindsight I should have said no but of course in true Keira fashion I nodded and she said something that made my pulse race with a near blind panic about the experience I was about to endure...

“He gave me his credit card.”

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Chapter 14

Shopping With a Demon

Shopping with Sophia was a mix between shopping with an artist and a very spoiled child. She was a perfectionist in every aspect and eyed every item I picked up as though it was never good enough. Each shop I chose to go in, was then followed by a very expensive designer store. Here Sophia was in

her element. She would get the different sections closed off just by showing a black bit of plastic which I presumed to be Draven's credit card. As soon as the assistants took one look at it, their eyes would bulge wider and we would get star treatment. In one shop we went in we even got champagne!

I looked so out of place that I felt like Julia Roberts out of *Pretty Woman* when she went shopping and started to get funny looks. Ok, so I wasn't in a mini skirt and a crop top but you get the picture. Next to Sophia it looked as though she had found a homeless person to spoil. She would try and get me to try things on that she picked out but I would be adamant that spending over a thousand dollars on one item of clothing was just silly and pointless...well, for me anyway.

"And how much do you think one of Dominic's suits cost?" She asked me when coming back out from behind the curtain in a gorgeous white summer dress which was backless showing off her silky skin.

"I don't even want to think about it." I said stubbornly before continuing,

"I like that one," nodding at the dress she wore but she was smiling at my response and no doubt to the first thing I said. It was true, I couldn't think about how much money he had. The thought made me feel queasy just like the word KING did! I couldn't help but think I was playing a game I just couldn't win. I was dating someone so far out of my depth that I sometimes felt as though I was going to drown. Everyday I seemed to find out something else about him, that instead of making me relax, it was making me even more nervous to be around him. So I did something very out of character when Sophia re-emerged.

"Sophia, where's the best place to get some sexy underwear?" Her eyes lit up and she clapped her hands.

"Now that's more like it!" She passed the dress to the assistant who already had arms full of outfits ready for her to try on.

"I won't try on the rest but I will take them all" She said waving her

clutch bag at the pile. The women looked as though she would drop down and kiss her feet. After all the clothes were rung through the till and the women told Sophia the price I gulped down the five figure number. I coughed and the assistant shot me an evil glare. Sophia just thought it was funny as always. She handed over Draven's credit card and I noticed it was a black American Express card, the ones that don't have a limit...another gulp! Ok, so if I was trying so hard for my normal life and to be with Draven at the same time, then maybe a shopping trip with Sophia wasn't the best way to go. I found myself still shaking my head as we walked out of the store.

“What? Well if you refuse to use it then I might as well.” She smirked and I couldn't help but laugh with her. She was most definitely a Demon and the book ‘When the Devil wears Prada’ came to mind.

She didn't carry any shopping bags, oh no, not Sophia. Instead she would have someone from the store take them down to the limo for us. I was in awe at how the other half lived. Of course the stores that I bought my clothes from didn't offer such a service and I wouldn't let Sophia ring up the driver to tell him to come and get them for me. She ended up calling me stubborn for most of the day but I just laughed it off every time.

I was actually surprised to find that I was really enjoying myself and I did get quite a lot of things I needed. But now I was out of my league as Sophia linked my arm and pulled me into Victoria Secrets.

Ragnar had followed my every move but whenever we went into a shop he stayed outside and this one was no exception. It was the first time I think I saw him blush... rather that or he just had wind. I giggled to myself and I think Sophia thought I was just being shy.

She pulled me over to the really fancy stuff and now I was the one blushing. She picked up something that had more gaps than material. Then I spotted the most beautiful set and I was surprised with myself. I had always just stuck to plain white or black before and I hated red on me thinking it looked cheesy with my blonde hair but this was different. It was black satin covered in blood red roses and a vine that was made from black ribbon. It circled the corset and tied to the thong at either side. At the back it tied up

with a thick red cord that crossed over so it could be pulled tighter. Everything matched including the suspender belt, stockings and amazingly the set included full length satin gloves.

The design was called 'Temptress' and I didn't think it could get anymore more perfect. I bit my lips at the thought and Sophia waited beside me not saying a word but when I turned to her and asked what she thought, she just smiled and held up Draven's credit card.

In the end I bought the stuff with my own money much to Sophia's dismay. I also bought some more underwear sets and some nice stuff to wear to bed, which were more of the comfort variety than sexual. I picked one set of pyjamas because the t shirt had a pair of red lips with fangs protruding from them and underneath it said the words 'bite me'! I thought Draven would get a big kick out of these and if he didn't then, I most certainly would when I saw the classic Draven frown. Sophia thought it was funny anyway but no surprises there. After we had made our way round half of the shops my stomach started to cry out at me.

"You haven't let Dom pay for anything! My brother won't be happy." She looked serious but seeing as I didn't agree to any of it, I could imagine that Draven would already know that I would be stubborn on the matter. Did he really think that Sophia would have been able to break me?

"Sophia, your brother knows I'm not the type of girl to just spend someone else's money Willy Nilly. But I wouldn't say no to lunch...will that make you happy?" She rolled her eyes at me and said,

"Well it's a start. Come on, I know a place." Her face made me regret not picking the place first.

"Ok but nowhere fancy...right." She winked at me and my dread doubled.

After a short limo ride we pulled up to a huge hotel with an all glass front that reflected the cold but clear day. The door man opened the limo door and another in a red jacket opened the entrance. He did a double take at me and Sophia, making me giggle at what a pair we must have looked like. Her beauty being absolutely flawless and I must have looked like her personal beggar flagging behind. To make matters worse I tripped over my own feet and the guy had to steady me. When I thanked him I was surprised when he winked at me. I blushed and scuttled in after Sophia.

“Sophia, why have we come to a hotel?”

“Keira really, hotels do have restaurants and this one just happens to make the best Strawberry Daiquiri’s in town.” She walked straight past the queue and walked right up to the bar as if she owned the place. I followed like a red faced sheep. Once there she got served immediately and ordered me the same as she. I sat next to her with disbelief clear on my face. Then a very tall thin man dressed in a black suit approached with a lowered head. His gold name badge told me he was the hotel’s Concierge and his name was Claude.

Claude looked at Sophia like she was royalty but I noticed he wouldn’t make eye contact.

“Miss Draven, how kind it is of you grace us with your presence. You look breathtaking as always.” He was close to drooling and I couldn’t help but cough back a giggle. He shot me a look as though he was going to have words with the doormen for letting in riff raff.

“Miss Draven, is this person bothering you?” He asked Sophia and I laughed again only I was the only one as she whipped round in her seat and gave him a heart stopping look that stunned me to silence and had Claude almost cowering. She looked utterly insulted and for a moment I thought she was going to bend him over her knee and give him a good spanking. (And not in a nice naughty way!)

“How dare you, this is my very good friend Keira and if my brother were to hear of this grave insult to his future bride then I doubt he would look

kindly on his investments within this hotel!” She sounded like a viper spitting out her disgust. This had him nearly grovelling at my feet in seconds and I was so embarrassed that I got up off the bar stool.

“My dear.... I am so, so sorry, please forgive my ignorance and....” I cut him off quickly said,

“It’s fine, already forgotten about really....Sophia excuse me.” I left when she nodded and Claude was now singing his apologies to the unimpressed Sophia. I noticed the sign for the restrooms when I first walked in and I stomped off in that direction. Once I was inside I let out a frustrated swear word and didn’t realise there was someone already in there until she hurried out without washing her hands. Oh great! First I looked like the homeless and now I’m an angry nutter! Ok, so he had insulted me but come on, it was an easy mistake, I didn’t exactly look like the type that would even be staying in this hotel, let alone a friend of the ridiculously rich Sophia, whose family were shareholders of the place. And what had been with the ‘Bride to be’ comment? I know they viewed me as being born for Draven but come on, we hadn’t even been dating a week!

I calmed down for a few more minutes before going back out there and I hoped the rest of the guests had forgotten the little episode. If there was one thing I couldn’t stand it was causing a scene and getting all the stares that went with it. I knew that the Dravens were used to this but it didn’t mean that I would have to be.

When back outside Claude was waiting for me and I swallowed a sigh.

“Miss Williams please allow me to escort you to your table where Miss Draven is waiting.” His thin features twitched at his discomfort at having to be in my company again. He must have thought that I would go running off to Draven and tell him what a nasty man he was to me. He was smiling but I could see the little beads of sweat form while I followed him into the restaurant. I could almost hear his silent pleas to keep his job.

He pointed to the table with the best view and was about to leave after nodding to me when I stopped him.

“Thank you and you don’t need to worry about earlier, I won’t be mentioning this to Mr Draven.” He looked surprised but ecstatic and I doubted very much he would be making the same mistake again.

“Thank you, and once again, I am extremely sorry for the offense I caused you.” I shook my head and said it was fine again before going over to take my seat opposite Sophia.

“Have you finished wiggling out?” Sophia asked grinning but I just folded my arms trying to be stern.

“That was a little over the top, don’t you think?” She just shrugged her shoulders and picked up the menu.

“You think I was over the top, just wait until Dom finds out.” She said smirking like she would indeed enjoy witnessing his reaction.

“Oh no, don’t you dare. Draven doesn’t need to hear about petty little mistakes. And anyway, what was with the whole future bride thing?” This brought a smile to her face at just the very mention of it.

“Well it is bound to happen...at some point anyway.” I laughed at this and she shot me a look over her menu.

“Oh come on, we haven’t even been dating a week! And considering how you guys regard time that must only be like minutes.” I picked up my own menu and didn’t recognise anything that sounded like food. I found myself wishing we had just gone to the food court and ordered a burger.

“Yes, but he has been waiting for you since the beginning so that kind of overrules that idea, besides, what does time matter when love is involved?” She stated, so I decided to give up with a trade mark ‘Grrr’.

After giving her the silent treatment for all of a minute she gave me a coy smile before asking, “Do you like your daiquiri?”

I sipped my cocktail and thought I might have to be alone with it, it was that good!

“Oh my, this is damn good!” She smiled as if to say “Told you so” and we both giggled when she ordered us two more.

“I won’t tell Dominic about Claude’s insulting you.” This shocked me and the only reason I could think of, was that Sophia was now getting used to my way of thinking.

“Thank you, but I really found it funny more than anything else, I mean come on, have you ever been seen with someone like me before or has your brother for that matter?” Her face gave her answer...oh hell no!

“Which is why I can’t help but think, if you had been sat here with Aurora, then that wouldn’t have happened.” I said this without thinking how Sophia would react, so when she banged down her glass I jumped, along with the other patrons.

“Keira! Don’t be so, so...” She was trying to contain her frustration at me.

“So what?” I asked weakly

“So blind! I never liked Aurora and I couldn’t have been happier when my brother finished it with her.”

“Why?” Just then we were interrupted by a waiter and Sophia gave our order in what sounded like perfect French and then he promptly went away again.

“I ordered for you if that is alright?” I nodded thinking it was for the best seeing as I couldn’t even read the menu and knowing my luck would have gotten something slimy and in a shell.

“Keira, there is something you should understand about Aurora. She may be an Angel, but there is nothing heavenly or pure about her. She is extremely self absorbed and will only do good for her own gain. She has more Demon in her than I, that I can promise you.” This shocked me enough for my jaw to drop. How could something so beautiful and radiant have a black heart? And if so, why had Draven been with her in the first place?

“So why was he with her for so long?”

“I have said too much, forget I mentioned her.” Oh no, there was no chance of that happening. I shook my head at her before saying,

“No way, come on you can’t start to tell me what I want to know and then stop. You know Draven won’t tell me, so that only leaves you....please Sophia.” I was close to pleading and could see my sad eyes reflected in her own.

“Fine, but I really need to learn how to say no to you!” She complained before continuing.

“You must understand... first, that my brother was very different before you entered his life and second, he is extremely used to getting what he wants. He had never known love until you, so you mustn’t judge him on his past.” When her serious eyes met mine, I knew it was going to be a hard version of Draven to take but I nodded my head anyway and prepared myself for the worse.

“He only used to see women as there to pleasure his needs and very little more. Their beauty played an important part, yes, but he knew it never felt right. He spent his time forbidding himself to get close to anyone until Aurora came. Her beauty captivated him into believing she alone could satisfy his needs and for a while, I suppose she did. She sat at our table as a council member but never at his side where she thought she belonged.”

“Wait a minute, you mean no-one has ever sat next to him at that table other than you or Vincent?”

“That is correct.” She laughed at my expression. I couldn’t believe that something that had seemed, at the time, so innocent was such an immense gesture. I knew that it was probably down to my over emotional state but I felt like crying (Thankfully though, I didn’t).

“The idea of her becoming Queen consumed her, so after years of her persistence and Dominic’s denial, she took matters into her own hand.”

Sophia ordered another strawberry daiquiri but I passed and ordered water instead.

“What did she do?” I was nearly on the edge of my seat and bouncing up and down like a child.

“Well as you know, Dominic is very possessive and does not share, although it was never an issue with other females.” She laughed but I was being blonde.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Oh Keira, don’t be naïve. Do I need to spell it out to you?” Then it hit me and soon had me hating this conversation.

“What! You mean Draven’s been with more than one woman at a time?” Ok, now I felt like crying for very different reasons.

“Keira do not judge him, this is quite common among our kind but you know he thinks very differently now he is with you.” This still didn’t help with the mental picture I had in my head of Draven surrounded by the most exotic creatures, all there to please his every need. Her words weren’t calming my green eyed monster, that was for sure!

“Right,” I said in a deflated tone, one she frowned at.

“So, getting back to the story. Aurora, knowing his jealous nature, slept with another in his bed.” My hands flew to my face in disgust. I mean, did she have a death wish? Sophia grinned at my reaction and looked delighted at what she was about to say next.

“I know what you’re thinking and we all held the same thoughts...what madness of love drives someone to do something so suicidal?” She looked sorry as soon as the words were out of her mouth because of course I could answer this one. Love drives us to do the most extreme actions.

“Sorry...I guess you can answer that one.” I felt bad for her as she lowered her head but I just leaned my gloved arm across the table and gave

her hand a squeeze.

“Sophia its fine, but you’re right, I can understand why love does make us do the craziest things but still, I would never be *that* suicidal!” I couldn’t imagine the level of rage this would have put Draven in, having just seen a minuscule amount when kissing Jack. The thought made me shudder.

“What did he do?” I didn’t want to ask but the darker side of me was burning to know.

“It may shock you as it did us all but he did...nothing.” She stated simply with only a quaint shrug of her delicate shoulders.

“WHAT!” I shouted this a bit too loud and the rest of the posh diners looked at me as though I had three heads. Sophia giggled before continuing.

“He did nothing, he just didn’t care. He told the other Angel that he was welcome to have her. After that she left the council and wasn’t seen until years later when she eventually came back to plead for another chance. Dominic allowed her to join his council but nothing more. He changed after the year she did that and none of us knew why....well, until now anyway.”

“What do you mean changed?”

“I mean he lost his passion for pleasure. He became more withdrawn and didn’t take many to his bed. We all thought it was down to Aurora but he would never talk about the reasons for his change. He started once again to do research into finding you but it was not to happen like that. You were always meant to find him, it was in the written fates and you don’t challenge the fates.” I couldn’t believe what she was telling me but if I thought that this was hard to take, then the next question I got answered threw me completely.

“Ok, so you said you thought it was Aurora that changed him but now you know it wasn’t, so what did happen? Why that year?” She was once again laughing and she took a slow drink before giving me my answer.

“Because my dear Keira...

It was the year you were born.”

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Chapter 15

Cooking for a King

After the bombshell Sophia dropped on me I was quiet and deep in thought for the rest of our lunch. She didn't seem to mind, only every now and again she would giggle to herself when she saw my confused face. I mean, could this even be possible. Whenever Draven had mentioned me being the chosen one, I hadn't fully understood what it had meant but now....what did this prove? Did he feel my presence in the world as soon as I was born? I bit my lip at the thought. For some reason what Sophia had just

told me, made everything more real...more terrifyingly real!

Once she had paid the bill and we were back in the limo on our way home, she finally pulled me from my mental breakdown.

“Keira please, you look traumatised. Dom is going to be so angry with me!”

“I’m sorry, I guess I just never believed it until now. It’s still hard to see why me.” I said weakly and even Ragnar looked down at his feet. Sophia took my hand in hers and she looked at me with more love than from a friend...this was from a sister.

“Then you are the only one. No one else doubts why. You are beautiful and in more ways than one. Aurora is beautiful yes but her soul is ugly and it shows on the outside. Your soul is pure and it radiates off you in every way. In this she will never be able to compete...you are out of her league and of this, she is painfully reminded every time she see’s you sat by my brother’s side.” For the first time I couldn’t help but feel sorry for her. It must be a hard pill to swallow.

“Poor girl” I said but Sophia couldn’t contain her outburst. She laughed so hard it nearly brought tears.

“Oh Keira, you are funny! She does not deserve your pity. She is the creator of her own undoing. She knew about the prophecy and that one day you would come. She never really loved him anyway...it was the power she loved. There is no one in this world or the next, that she could love more than herself.” I now knew why she seemed to hate her so much. After all, wouldn’t I be the same with Libby if Frank had been the same way. One of the reasons I loved Frank so much wasn’t how he treated me, no, it was how much he adored my sister.

Ok so now I was feeling slightly better and she could tell as now I was smiling to myself, so she added something more that sealed the deal on my mood.

“Anyway you think she is beautiful but she does have a team of girls who get her ready every night, but you drive my brother crazy without having to work at it! Why do you think it is that he won’t allow you to come to my private room? He gets insanely jealous over you, far more than he ever did when he was with Aurora.” I couldn’t help the huge grin that split my lips and strangely Ragnar started to relax more at the sight. He raised his head up and smiled to himself. It was an odd reaction for him to have but I just shrugged it off.

When we got closer to town I decided it would be better for her to drop me off at home before I got my supplies for tonight’s meal. I thought it was one thing going clothes shopping in a blacked out stretch limo but to the supermarket...a tad much. Plus I couldn’t really see Sophia pushing a trolley around the frozen food section.

We pulled up outside the house and I thanked God that no one was home and I knew Libby and Frank must still be sorting out his uncle’s insurance for the ‘*ruined*’ cabin. Ragnar grabbed all my bags even when I protested and he was by my front door waiting before I could walk two steps. Then I remembered what I wanted to ask Sophia before she left, I turned round to find the window already down and her sat there waiting.

“Yes?” She said as though she knew there was something I was forgetting.

“How did you know?”

“I am finding it easier, the more I am with you, to read the signs. You wanted to ask something else about my brother?” I shook my head and smiled before asking the all important question.

“What does your brother like to eat?” I don’t know why but I found myself going red when I asked.

“Anything hot.” She said making me laugh at her answer.

“You mean spicy hot?”

“Use your imagination honey! See you later.” And with that the window went up with the same evil grin on her face that I was getting used to seeing. I found myself still smiling as I walked up the steps. Ragnar eyed me curiously and when I put my hands out to retrieve my bags he just nodded for me to open the door. Well, he was well trained that was for sure I thought as he followed me in.

“You can just dump them there.” I said but he cocked his head to one side that reminded me of a dog that doesn’t understand a command. Then I felt guilty for thinking it.

“Dump?”

“Yeah, I mean you can just put them down over there.” Ok, he must have thought I meant throwing them away... hehe.

“Would you like a drink?” He actually smiled at me but then it fell straight away.

“No, I will be outside waiting.” And with that he left to guard the house. I couldn’t understand why one minute he was nice and then the next it was like I was an annoying bug buzzing around that he wanted to swat. It seemed to be my year for not understanding men.

I grabbed all my bags and ran upstairs with them but like true Keira style I tripped and landed on my knee.

“BUGGER!” I said out loud and then I heard Ragnar burst through the door and was next to me in seconds.

“What is wrong?” He asked looking down at me, seeming very cramped in the narrow staircase to my attic room.

“Nothing, I just tripped.” I was holding my knee, rubbing it knowing that it was going to leave a bruise. Then I let out a shriek as I felt myself being picked up by the waist and carried into my bedroom. He plonked me down on the bed and I turned and looked up at the giant who was ducking his head to fit in my room.

“Umm... thanks!” I said feeling the heat rush to my cheeks. He frowned and then knelt down but he was still higher than me. He lifted my leg up and it started to sting.

“Ouch!” I said but he just smirked at my baby like behaviour.

“What are you doing?” I asked nervously when he started to lift my jeans up but he didn’t answer me. He rolled them over my knee and, yes of course, it was bleeding. He put his face down closer to the cut and I pulled back making him growl.

“What are you doing?” I asked again, as he looked like was going to take a slip.

“I am going to heal it. My master will not be happy if he sees this, it will displease him....I, will have displeased him.”

“But this wasn’t your fault, I’m clumsy that’s all.”

“Yes I know, he warned me of this, but you wouldn’t have fallen if I had carried your bags up here.” His eyes met mine and for once they weren’t harsh or cold. I bit my lip at the feel of his massive hands that grabbed my leg back and pull it closer to his face. He then took a few deep breaths and blew over it, causing it to instantly turn numb and icy.

He wouldn’t allow my natural reaction to happen as I tried to pull away. It was impossible to move with his vice grip that had my leg locked. It felt like he was freezing my blood and the skin around the wound. I shivered as it started to run up my leg but then I felt him release me and after a few minutes of being under his control he spoke.

“It is finished, you can open your eyes now,” he informed me and I was surprised that I had indeed closed my eyes. I looked down and noticed the blood had in fact frozen and with the softest touch he casually brushed it away like red icy dust to reveal unbroken skin underneath. I was amazed how quick it had taken but I was more shocked at how such a frightening giant could have been so gentle. I was touched and when he was about to stand I

put my hand on his shoulder.

“Thank you.” He looked to his right where my hand was and then back at me. He looked as if he wanted to say something more but then thought better of it. He lowered his head into a deep nod and then rose from his knees and left without saying another word. I looked down at my knee and touched the smooth skin for myself, there wasn’t even a mark!

After I pulled myself together, I got up to put my new clothes away and tidy my room a bit just in case we were spending the night here. I didn’t want Draven thinking I was a slob, so I also changed the sheets and let the window open to let some fresh air in. That’s when I saw him. Ragnar was below my window with his back to the house and he was staring out to the view of the national park’s mountains. He had his arms folded and his head shook slightly before looking at his feet. I didn’t know what was wrong with him but I felt bad that it could be because of something I did. I was growing attached to my colossal protector and I didn’t like seeing him in pain.

I had a quick cup of tea before ringing Libby to check we were still on for tonight. She sounded stressed out but said it was fine and that they would be home in an hour. I reassured her again that I didn’t mind cooking and I sat down to make a list while I finished my tea. I checked the cupboards for anything else we needed and added it to my list before grabbing my jacket. It had started to drizzle and I couldn’t help but raise my head to it when I got outside. I didn’t notice Ragnar next to me and when I open my eyes he was frowning at me.

“What, I like the rain!” I said before giving him a cheeky smile and walking over to my truck. I call it a truck because it was a huge Ford Bronco that I could have lived in! He followed shaking his head like I was crazy but this I knew anyway, the only difference was now, I just didn’t care. I had Draven in my life and that was worth being a little crazy for.

I felt the truck sink down when Ragnar got in and I started the engine. When it started first time I smiled.

“What, no talking to it?” He asked not keeping the sarcasm out his heavy accented voice.

“Nah she’s fine with rain, she just hates the cold.”

“You are a different human.” He stated like he had just figured me out. I shrugged as I pulled the car round and made for the main road.

“Don’t you think I would have to be... all things considering?” Now he was the one to shrug only when I did it, it didn’t make the car move! We carried on driving in silence for a while until it was starting to eat away at me so when I finally said something, it came out sounding more like I was ranting.

“What’s wrong with you? Is it because I called you a Jerk because you know I’m sorry for that...don’t you?” This made him turn to me in shock and I was glad that I had the road in front to keep my attention.

“You think that bothered me?”

“Didn’t it?”

“NO, you are a wilful human so it is to be expected.” Ok, so if this was the case then what was wrong with him?

“Well if you hate protecting me so much then why don’t you just ask Draven to get someone else?” He growled again and I jumped.

“You know there is no need to do that!” I snapped.

“I don’t have a problem protecting you. It is a great honour for my master to have chosen me.” He said calmly.

“Then what is wrong? One minute you like me and the next you seem frustrated with me.” I was determined to get to the bottom of it and if he was going to keep being my bodyguard then he needed to trust me.

“It is not you I am frustrated with.” The way he said it answered my

question, it wasn't me, it was him.

"Why?" I said softly but he just turned and looked thoughtfully out of his side window before answering.

"It is because you remind me of someone from my past." This stunned me into not asking more. It wasn't my place to pry into his past and more than ever I wished I hadn't pushed for it. So I tried my usual trick and told him a very lame joke.

"Ok, I have one for you, why is there no aspirin in the jungle?" He turned to face me like I was having an episode.

"I do not understand the question, do you need an aspirin?" Ok what was with Demons and jokes!

"It's a joke, so you say "I don't know, why is there no aspirin in the jungle?" He didn't, he just nodded for me to continue.

"Because the parrots ate them all!get it? para-ceta-mol." I said repeating it slowly and then I could almost hear the cogs turning as he finally got it and the car started to shake under his laughter. Again it sounded like a bull about to charge. I couldn't help but laugh along with him. He was still making grunting noises when I pulled into a parking space.

Once inside the store I started to wiz around the aisles like it was a challenge and I only stopped when I couldn't find the aisle that held the dry herbs and spices. I found an assistant wearing a bright green top and patted him on the shoulder.

"Excuse me can you show me where the herbs are?" At first when he turned round he had a kind face and was an older guy but then it quickly changed into something from my nightmares....

His eyes were the first part to change when a red ring appeared around the iris, which got wider as my fear grew. I started to back up into some cans on the shelf but he just got closer. Then his face changed completely into the handsome but terrifying face of Lucius and I gasped.

“Can I help you *my* Keira?” He said in a chilling voice that was followed by an even more chilling smile. His fangs hung over his curved lips. I closed my eyes and shook my head.

“You’re not real, you’re not real!” I said over and over until his laughing stopped. I felt his hand on my arm and I let out a cry.

“Hey there, are you alright miss?” I opened my eyes to see the kind face of the old guy looking concerned. It took me a moment to pull myself together enough to form words.

“Umm yes sorry, I thought... I saw... something.” I stammered out and before he could touch me again, I walked away from him as he was still asking me what I needed. I kept on wanting to be sick from the sight that wouldn’t leave my infected mind. It was his voice, I could hear it over and over, ‘My Keira’ he had called me as if I was his! I wiped away a stray tear as I continued around the store like I was lost. I leaned over my trolley to get my breath when I heard a familiar voice.

“Kazzy?” RJ’s voice rang down the aisle and I looked up to see a bright pink head bobbing down towards me.

“RJ, hey!” I said, trying to sound my usual self.

“Hey, oh man, you look pale, well I mean, even more pale than usual. You ok?” She did look concerned bless her and I felt like hugging her for the comfort she brought me.

“I’m fine, well you know it’s the time.” I said rolling my eyes and then she started nodding the way girls always did. It was the one thing that united us all.

“Well that sucks, especially with having *your* boyfriend.” She let out a naughty laugh and I couldn’t help but join in.

“So, you back in college Monday?” She asked as she followed me down the aisles.

“Yeah, but I have so much catching up to do. Oh, should I pick you up same time?”

“Yes please, I missed your car...of course I’ve missed you too.” She nudged me and we both smiled. She continued to follow me round until I finished and I was more than glad about it. She was like a Goth angel coming to my rescue and I wanted to kiss her for it. I lost track of time as we chatted but her funky spiked watch told me it was nearly six.

“Oh crap, I have to go but it was great catching up. Oh and RJ, I have someone I want you to meet next Saturday but I will explain more on Monday.” This had her nearly running after me to find out but I just waved and walked over to the cashier. I couldn’t help but feel instantly safer when I saw Ragnar by my car and next time I wouldn’t stop him from following me round the store. Not now I knew that not even grocery shopping was safe!

Ragnar could tell something was wrong as I didn’t speak the whole way home, the only time words passed my lips was when I thanked him for carrying my bags into the kitchen. He looked like he wanted to ask what was wrong but stopped himself. I tried to concentrate on other things but every now and again my mind would wander back to Lucius’s face and I knew this is what he would want so, with that in mind, I clicked on the kettle ready for a cup of tea and went to work on tonight’s meal.

By the time Libby and Frank came back the house smelled of herbs and spices as thanks to RJ, I had found them.

“Mmm... something smells good.” She said as she parked herself down on the kitchen chair.

“How was it?” I asked but she just let out a sigh which said it all.

“That bad?”

“Worse, I just want Frank to sell the place but he won’t because of the promise he made to his uncle.” She whispered this last part as now Frank was walking through the door.

“Mmm Kazy that smells damn good, what is it?” I smiled at him before saying,

“Well it’s a surprise but I hope you like spicy food cause it’s a hot one.” I smirked to myself wondering what Draven would make of it, well Sophia had said he liked his food hot...ok she didn’t exactly specify that she meant his food, but considering sex was off the menu I gathered she was referring to what he likes to eat. I saw Libby’s face and knew she wasn’t as brave when it came to spices, so I added,

“Don’t worry, I also made a mild one.” At this she got up and kissed me before grabbing an open bottle of wine from the fridge and pouring me a big glass and I was more than grateful for it, she then poured herself a baby safe glass of OJ.

I told Libby about my shopping trip with Sophia and she was nearly in tears with laughter at my reconstruction of the day. She made me show her all I had bought and was impressed that some tops were actual colours rather than just shades. However, her eyes nearly popped out when I showed her my star buy. She ooo’d and ahhh’d over the satin material of the corset and asked me when I was planning on wearing it. I had given it a lot of thought when I bought it and knew that I would wear it for the first time we could make love again.

I decided that I would wear it under my work clothes and not tell him when my body was ready again but just surprise him. I would tell him that I was tired and hope he wouldn’t follow me back to his room. Then I would wait for him to find me lying on his bed in some seductive pose and hope that I wouldn’t be wearing it for much longer after that. I giggled to myself and Libby raised her eyebrows.

“Forget it, I don’t want to know!” She said quickly before starting to laugh with me.

Everything was ready and because Libby loved it so much I made my famous chocolate cake while the chicken had been marinating. Now the meal bubbled away and all that needed to be cooked was the rice. I don’t know

why but I found myself playing nervously at my gloves waiting for the time to tick to eight. I missed him so much it was like a hole that only he could fill. Then I heard it and bit down on my bottom lip at the sound of the knock at the door. I ran to it like an excited child saying,

“It’s ok, I’ve got it!” Libby just grinned at my enthusiasm to get to the door quicker than my legs could take me. I even skidded round the corner as my feet slid on the wooden floor. I steadied myself on the table by the door and took a deep breath before opening the door to the most handsome face I had ever seen...

My gorgeous boyfriend.

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Chapter 16

Dinner, Human Style!

Draven stood on my front porch like the world's most perfect date. His tall frame was clothed in a casual long sleeved black cotton T shirt, which

showed his extensive amount of muscle underneath. His long strong legs wore dark designer jeans that looked made for him and for all I knew they had been! He looked well groomed with his hair back and his soft olive skin shaved.

I couldn't help the great big grin that was plastered on my face at the sight of those lush deep eyes that looked just as happy to see me. I bit my lip at the naughty thoughts that came running through my mind at just the sight of him and then it tripled the feelings when he winked at me. He was about to speak but I didn't let him, instead I just pulled his face down to mine and crushed my mouth to his for a very intense kiss, which by the end, had me near panting.

"I take it you missed me?" He said over my lips before pulling away. I opened my eyes to find him smiling a confident smile. I just nodded and said,

"Maybe." This made him laugh.

"Oh really... only maybe?" He then placed his warm hand at the base of my back and pulled up my top to get to my skin, which he knew was a major weak spot (Along with everywhere else he touched!) I let out a quiet moan and he laughed again.

"Mmm... I didn't think so." He said being cocky.

"That's not fair! And anyway, didn't you miss me?" I asked before putting my head down as I went all shy with the question I asked. His fingers found the underneath of my chin and pushed my face up to meet his black, serious eyes.

"Always!" He said sincerely before picking me up by the waist to kiss me once more.

"Did you enjoy your shopping trip with my sister?" He asked once my feet came back in contact with the porch.

"It was interesting." I replied trying to hold my features in place from giving away all that I had learnt.

“Sophia described it as both fun and frustrating, considering you were stubborn enough to use only your own money.” He was trying to hide his smile and be serious but he was failing miserably.

“Oh come on, did you really think that I would have had a spending spree with your credit card! Surely you know me better than to go spending other people’s money.” I folded my arms trying to look stern but he just raised an eyebrow at me.

“Well, it was worth a try and besides, what is mine, is also now yours.” This had me laughing and in turn him frowning. I shook my head at him but he just mimicked me by shaking his head back. We were soon both laughing and he unfolded my arms and wrapped them around his waist for a hug. I could feel him lean down and smell my hair before kissing it lightly.

“Did you buy anything nice?” As soon as he asked this I went rigid under his hold and he didn’t miss it. He moved me back so he could see my face which was turning different shades of pinks and reds.

“Why, what has Sophia said?” I would be having words with her if she had mentioned the underwear.

“Oh nothing really, just when I asked she gave me a sly grin before saying it was interesting. This sparked my curiosity about what you had purchased.” Oh, of course now I couldn’t help grinning and giggling to myself at the thought of the look he would give me when he saw me in it, then more thoughts popped in my head which made me think to hell with the way he’d look at me, it was more like what he would *do* to me that had my blood racing!

He could see me trying desperately to hide my half smile, half bitten lip.

“Keira, why do you have the look of a Nun who has been thinking unclean thoughts?” His voice took on a very seductive tone and this made it hard to think clean thoughts when all I wanted to do was drag him into the woods and let him ravish me like a wild beast! Oh god what was wrong with me. I blamed it on the two glasses of wine I had consumed. Only I knew it

was completely down to what his body did to me.

“Well I can be naughty sometimes.” Yeah like now!

“Do you not like the idea of me being bad?” God what was wrong with me, I was being brave but with my head lowered, which I think he was getting more turned on about. I was about to walk back inside the house but he grabbed my arm and pulled me back to face him. He moved my hair from my neck and whispered down in my ear that sent sparks down my back, which continued right down to my more sensitive parts.

“May I remind you, I am half Demon and I know full well how attracted I am to your dark side, just as the Angel in me is addicted to the shy and good girl that stands before me now.” He stayed at my neck and my heart nearly stopped as he placed his lips on my skin there. His hands came to encase the column of my throat and turned it to the side so he could get to it better, as his mouth opened and his teeth held me still. A groan caught in my throat as I thought he would bite me but instead I just felt a bad boy smile rest in place of his fangs. I swallowed hard and this made him laugh.

“Did I make my point?” He whispered before releasing his hold on me. It took me a moment to find my basic functions to respond and I really wanted to come back with something witty but it doesn't really work when you're incoherent. Instead I caved into his control and just nodded like a frightened servant girl. Just then Libby appeared in the door way and cleared her throat bringing me back to my own mind. Damn he was getting better at getting into my head!

“Umm Kazy, I think the stuff needs stirring.”

“Oh fuggle! You know I'm blaming you if it's burnt!” I turned to him but he just looked smug, when I walked in he held me back by my waist and said,

“It will have been worth it.” Then he let me go to save the dinner. He followed me in and Libby was greeting him properly, the way our mother had taught us.

“Dominic, it is nice to see you again.” She said putting on her posh voice, no scouse in sight! I giggled to myself while stirring the dinner which had started to stick slightly at the bottom of the pan. I turned the temperature down and Libby came walking in with two bottles of wine. I hadn’t even seen Draven with anything in his hands but me. Libby mouthed the words “fancy” at me before putting them in the fridge. Draven followed behind and smelled the air.

“Mmm, smells good.” I smiled at the compliment before giving him a wink.

“I have just got to cook the rice and then we’re good to go.” I said just as Frank walked in from outside. He walked up to Draven and extended his hand.

“Dominic, how ya doing? I noticed the Aston outside, Man that sure is a nice car!” I hadn’t even noticed the car he came in but now I was trying not to laugh. I knew he would bring it but what he said next did shock me.

“Well if it’s alright with Keira, then I thought you might like to take a drive before dinner.” Frank looked like he was trying not to choke on his happiness.

“HOLY SHIT would I!” Draven laughed, especially when Libby hit him for being rude.

“Sorry babe, Hey Kazzy you don’t mind, do you?” He looked at me like I held all his dreams in my hand and could crush them at any second.

“No of course not, go and have *sensible speed* fun!” I said and he came up to me and ruffled my hair.

“Thanks kiddo, we won’t be long.” I thought he was going to drag Draven’s arm out after he came over to me and kissed me before leaving through the door with Frank. Me and Libby both went to the window and watched as two huge men acted like big kids. First he showed him the engine and you could almost hear Frank’s enthusiasm as we both expected him to

start jumping up and down. Then Draven slammed the hood and threw him the keys! None of us expected he would let Frank actually drive and from the look on his face neither did Frank.

“Well isn’t that sweet of him. I have to say I’m impressed Kaz, he is making a real effort and I think if he ever needed a kidney then Frank would be first in line. He has a friend for life now.” I grinned at her before turning to boil the kettle. The grin was both down to my sister being impressed and the idea of Draven ever needing a kidney.

By the time they returned, me and Libby were chatting about them both and I had consumed another glass of wine and Libby stuck to her OJ. The door opened to the sound of Frank swearing about the power of the engine.

“Man that is some serious shit you got there, I thought I was gonna lose her on that Fuc...I mean... Goddamn corner!” Draven was laughing at Libby’s frowning face at catching her husband nearly saying the F word. She got up and walked past him shaking her head.

“Babe! Aww come on baby, you should have seen me, it was awesome!” He said as he followed her out to set the table. Draven was still laughing as he came over to me.

“That was really good of you. I think you made his year, oh and you also have a friend for life.” I said laughing as I turned around to stir the rice that was very nearly done. I felt his hands on my shoulders and he leaned down to whisper to me. He moved the stray hairs off my neck with his fingertips.

“I didn’t just do it for Frank. I like to watch you smile at other people’s happiness, it makes your soul glow.” I turned round to face him grinning and I pushed him lightly.

“Don’t tease!” I said and he held up his hands and said,

“What me?” Before his cheeky grin fell on my happy lips. I wouldn’t let him fully kiss me as I didn’t want to get caught by my sister again.

“Now who is the tease?” He flicked me playfully on the nose and I

frowned making him let out a rough laugh.

“Tables set, Dominic would you like to come through?” Libby said as she grabbed the wine.

“Sure.” He said to Libby before she left to take the bottle to the table. He turned but then stopped to look over his shoulder at me like he had forgotten something.

“Oh and Keira, I am looking forward to a whole evening where you have to call me Dominic.” Then he left to take his seat in the dining room, leaving me biting my lip as always. Dating him, I was surprised that I had any bottom lip left!

Libby came back to help me carry the bowls of food to the table and when I walked through I suppressed a giggle at the sight of the table laid out with her best china and silverware. I placed the bowls down and lifted the lids to release the smell of fiery spices. I pointed out the hot one and the mild one for Libby and me.

“Damn that smells good,” Frank stated as he dug in. Libby smacked his head lightly and it was like watching a big kid get a telling off.

“Frank! Guests first!” She said and Frank rolled his eyes at Draven.

“Aww Lib’s, dudes don’t care about that type of shi...stuff.” He nodded to Draven for back up.

“It is fine, please.” He held out his hand for Frank to continue. This made him turn to Libby and give her a smirk like he had won a round. It was like watching a non violent Punch and Judy show. Frank piled his plate and then we all dug in.

“Damn Kazy this is hot stuff! What do you call it?” Frank asked as he shovelled it down like it was going out of fashion. I said the answer trying not to laugh.

“Well I call it... Kazy’s devilled Chicken!” As soon as I said it, all

eyes were on Draven as he had erupted into raucous laughter and couldn't control it. Frank and Libby looked at each other like he had lost it, so I added 'private joke' which was the truth. Once he had finished with his outburst, he leaned next to me and kissed me on the head before saying,

"It's delicious."

Everyone had seconds and I loved to watch people enjoy my food. Libby rubbed her belly and said,

"Well, the babe's had enough, but thanks Kaz that was lovely."

"Yeah cheers Kазzy, hot as hell but damn good!" Frank said as I took his empty plate from him before he started to lick it clean like a dog. Draven stood ready to help me but I put my hand on his shoulder to stop him.

"It's fine, I've got it." But Libby got up to help me anyway and I knew this was more down to her wanting to gossip in the kitchen.

"Right, come on, please tell me...what's wrong with him?" Libby asked as I opened the dishwasher.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh come on, there must be something wrong with him, otherwise we might have found the worlds most perfect man and then we could sell his DNA for millions!" I laughed with her but she was trying to be serious. I couldn't exactly say "Well he is half Demon!"

"So let's look at the evidence, he's kind, generous, rich, a perfect gentleman, utterly gorgeous to look at...." She was counting off his plus points on her fingers and had to swap hands to continue, there was that many.

"Oh yeah, and let's not forget according to you, an absolute sex God in the bedroom with an extreme amount of equipment! And saving the best for last...he clearly and completely adores you!" She had me blushing and I was glad I was hiding my head as I loaded the dishes.

“Come on...please give me something!” I shook my head at the conversation we were having and let the door slam.

“Ok, so what’s wrong with Frank?” I challenged.

“His feet reek!”

“Libby!” I shouted at her for being mean....ok I knew it was true so I couldn’t help but laugh.

“What? They do, and we’re talking premium French cheese style! And he snores. So that’s two things....your turn.” I got the cake out to cut it in half and started to add the whipped cream to the middle. Libby passed me the strawberries out of the fridge.

“Well there is one thing....he stares at me too much.” I said quietly but she just laughed, not taking me seriously.

“Oh, poor you! Come on, that’s not a fault, why would you mind that?”

“Well you know I get all shy and besides, it’s intimidating. He can be intense but mainly I don’t understand why he does it.” This made her smile turn serious.

“Oh Kaz, it’s not hard to understand at all. You do remember all the attention you got in school? Everyone fancied you but they weren’t brave enough to ask you out.”

“That’s not true!” I was getting defensive now but Libby wouldn’t back down.

“Oh Kaz open your eyes, you’re beautiful and you never needed flashy, short clothes or loads of makeup to achieve that and sat in there is the proof! I mean, even now you have Justin drooling at the very sight of you. Frank said his brother was gutted to find out you’re dating someone. Does Dominic know you’re taking him to his club next weekend?”

“No and I need to talk to you about that.”

“Oh no, you can’t back out, do it for Frank and just palm him off with your friend RJ when you get there but please just do it this one time...ok?” I would have loved to have said no but she knew my guilt would be on her side, so I just nodded.

“Ok, but I’m doing this for Frank!” I said sternly wondering how the hell I was ever going to break it to Draven? The thought created butterflies in my food filled stomach.

“Anyway, getting back to Dominic, I’m just glad you have met someone that makes you so happy and he’s lucky to have you in my opinion.”

“Thanks Libs and if I find out his feet smell or he grinds his teeth in bed then you will be the first one to know.” She hugged me and kissed my cheek.

“That’s all I ask.” She said as I was still spreading the cream on the bottom base of the cake. She watched me as I heated the chocolate for drizzling like a woman possessed. It soon became apparent what Libby’s cravings were when she had Frank running out at stupid hours to get her bars upon bars of chocolate.

I added the sliced strawberries to the cream base before putting the top on. Then after putting it on a large plate, I poured on the runny, chocolate goodness and I thought Libby was going to pounce on me. I asked her to carry in the dessert plates for me as I thought it would be safer than giving her the cake, she might have run out of the house with it!

On my way there I continued to think about the conversation and how glad I was that Draven didn’t just walk in on it, when I froze and nearly dropped the cake. My heart started pounding in my chest and my palms started to instantly sweat!

I had forgotten the most important factor to dating a half Demon half Angel boyfriend...

Supernatural hearing!

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Chapter 17

Embarrassing Past.

Libby looked at me as to why I had stopped dead in the hall way. What could I say? That Draven had most likely heard our entire conversation! Oh No, then it hit me, it wasn't only the stuff about Justin that he had heard. Well one thing was for sure, if he didn't know what I thought about sex with him was like, then he sure did now....In great detail!

I knew I had to move but I couldn't get my legs to work and Libby had given up waiting for me to come to my senses. I was staring down at the cake in my hands wishing it would just self combust so I didn't have to go back in there. Libby shouted my name impatiently and when I didn't answer, I heard her chair move along the wooden floor. Soon I found hands quickly taking

the cake off me only they didn't belong to Libby as I had thought. They were Draven's and another thing I was forgetting about my unusual boyfriend was his ability to sense my thoughts when I was in meltdown mode!

"Keira, look at me." His voice was soft and gentle but I knew once we were alone it wouldn't remain that way for long. I bravely did as I was asked and met a pair of dreamy dark eyes. He dipped his head closer to mine and I thought he was going to kiss me, he was so close.

"Come back to the table, we will discuss this later and don't worry...I'm not angry." He said before taking my hand and leading me back to the dining room.

"Kaz what have you been doing?" Libby eyed me questionably and Draven came to my rescue as I couldn't think quickly enough.

"She forgot a knife to cut the cake with, didn't you love?" He said sweetly and then produced a large kitchen knife from behind his back as he placed the cake down. I just bit my lip and took the knife from Draven with shaky hands. I was about to start cutting the pieces when my hand felt all warm and tingly.

It started to move without me controlling it and I knew Draven was worried that I wasn't up to the task of holding a sharp implement. My hand and his mind cut everyone a piece and as soon as I placed my own down in front of me the knife was put down and I was once again in control of my own body parts. I felt Draven's hand squeeze my leg under the table and when I looked to my side, he was smiling at me. This made me relax enough to start up the conversation again. Only Libby beat me to it.

"So Dominic, I gather now you and Kазzy are dating, you will be staying in town longer than you usually do?" Libby asked as she devoured her baked dessert. Draven smiled at her question before answering it.

"Yes, I will be making my stay here more of the permanent kind, however, I will still need to leave for a few weeks at a time for business but I will only leave when it is convenient for Keira to travel with me." Libby

looked just as shocked as I did. He wanted to take me with him! I was almost giddy at the thought!

“Well that will suit Kазzy alright, she’s always loved to travel.” She nodded to me to jump in but I was still surprised at this new bit of information. We had never talked about his work before, let alone the idea of that work taking him from here. When I first found out that the Dravens didn’t come here for more than a few weeks at a time, I had just assumed that one day they wouldn’t be here and I would have to find a way to get over him. But then, of course, things changed when Draven and I had become an item but still, we had never spoken about the future. So to find out that I would be expected to follow him around the world was an easy addition to our relationship. Libby however looked both happy for me but also gutted that I would be taken from her for weeks at a time.

“Can I ask what type of business you are involved in?” This was one thing Libby had always wanted to know but I still went red at her questioning.

“Lib’s! What’s with the firing line?” I said but Draven just put his hand on mine and smiled.

“Keira it is fine, I do not mind explaining my business. I deal in a lot of investments all around the world. These vary from anything to property, shares, nightclubs, casinos, hotels and even banks. My family have their hands in many different businesses but mainly we provide the money behind new ventures. Some payoff more than others, of course.” He said this with such business efficiency that it made me want him to repeat it to me in the bedroom, while he was wearing one of his expensive suits. Hearing this wasn’t just a first for my sister as I also didn’t know until now what his business entailed. Now I knew it was a bit of ...well.... everything!

“And you mentioned family, do your parents also deal in investments?” Her question was a perfectly normal one...that is if his parents hadn’t been a high ranking Angel and Demon still living in Heaven and Hell! Oh dear.... I bit my lip and took a huge gulp of my wine that finished it off. Draven picked up the bottle and refilled mine before doing the same for Frank and himself.

“No, I am afraid my parents are no longer with us. My brother and sister also share in our business but as the oldest, I am in control of the family’s assets, which includes running the company... most of which I can do from any country, with the occasional business trip” Ok now it was getting hot in here, why did he have to keep talking like that, it was just making my sexy fantasies aroused, one of which was where I would be his naughty secretary! And did he just say he was the oldest? I thought they were triplets. I quickly started to rack my brain as to whether or not I had told my sister that? Then his hand gripped the inside of my thigh and I felt strong fingers start to caress closer to my sweet spot.

I needed to focus, for starters this was most definitely not the time to be thinking about him ripping off more of my clothes, not at the dinner table with my pregnant sister and brother-in-law present. I tried to squirm away from his hand but suddenly his grip tightened before the point of pain and only eased when I shifted back closer to him. My god, he was demanding!

“I am sorry to hear about your parents Dominic and I’m sorry for my curiosity, Kaz hasn’t really told us much about you but I guess seeing as you have only been seeing each other a short time then it’s understandable.”

“I really don’t mind your questions Libby, I understand that our family generates a lot of questions when we come here and no doubt small town gossip follows but there is nothing out of the ordinary at our reasons for being here.” He said this with such ease that I choked on my mouthful of wine and started coughing at the burning in my throat. Draven started to pat me on the back and Libby passed me her water.

“Sorry, went down... the... wrong way.” I coughed out again as it was like trying to swallow the lies that flowed so easily from his cunning lips. Oh man, now he was good, hell... he was a master at it and I suppose years of having to deceive humans helped. When I was drinking my water Draven eyed me as if to say “That didn’t help” but I just kept my eyes down.

“Sorry Dominic you were saying?” Libby motioned for him to continue after my little episode.

“Just that the reasons behind the VIP not admitting locals is that my clients prefer to keep their privacy and business intact. Only Keira has been allowed to work up there and this was for two reasons, the first being she was not tainted by small town gossip and knew what it meant to be discreet. And well the second reason...was more of a personal nature.” He grinned to himself at being able to watch me freely when I first started to work there.

“Because you liked her?” Libby asked with a smirk plastered on her face.

“Libby!” I shouted, not liking being the topic of subject.

“Yes, because as soon as I saw her, I wanted to know her.” Draven said this with honesty in his voice and Frank nudged Libby on the arm before contributing his feelings.

“I tried to tell them once but neither would believe me. I knew when you brought her home that night, that there was more to it but our little Kазzy here has never been one to admit when someone fancies her!”

“Oh Frank not you too, can we get off this subject please?” I said feeling my cheeks melting but Draven was clearly amused with Frank’s interpretation of the events

“See!” Frank followed this by laughing and Libby frowned at him.

“Frank, you’re embarrassing her.”

“Na, she’s a tough nut aren’t you Kазzy! And one hell of a cook I might add.” This had me smiling as it was one compliment that I liked to receive.

“Oh, I second that but tell me where did you learn how to cook?” Draven turned to me and I met his yummy eyes with confidence.

“Just at home experimenting and watching my mum as a kid, she loved to bake....hey Libs do you remember her chocolate brownie cakes with the iced tops” We both made ‘mmm’ noises and Frank rolled his eyes.

“Women and chocolate...do you understand it?” Frank asked Draven and he laughed before saying

“It’s all in the balance.”

“Balance?” Frank repeated clearly confused.

“Well women must be addicted to something as sweet as their natures.” Me and Libby both giggled like flirty teenagers and Frank just rolled his eyes.

“I must remember to tell my brother that one! I bet it’s a big hit with the ladies.” At this Draven made fists under the table which luckily only I could see.

“Ah yes Justin isn’t it, Keira has mentioned him.” This looked almost painful to watch as unbeknown to my sister and Frank, Draven was finding it hard to even say his name without straining and gritting his teeth.

“Yeah, he’s just come back from travelling. He’s a real free spirit kinda of guy...which is code for he doesn’t really know what he wants to do in life but he’s a good kid.”

“You say kid, but Frank, he’s the same age as me.” I said but instantly regretted anything from my mouth that sounded like I was defending him.

“Yeah, but I call you kid and besides I’m going to be a daddy so I have the right.” He said as he rubbed his wife’s belly and she rolled her eyes when he stuck his tongue out at me. Of course, I did it back but ruined its affect when I laughed and nearly snorted.

“You’re both big kids.” Libby stated before cutting herself some more cake.

“Congratulations, Keira told me you were expecting.” Draven said, making the proud parents beam.

“Thank you. I believe I made Keira late for work once when she found

out the news, so she must have told you then.” As soon as she said it Draven’s face dropped slightly, as this was the time when he had shouted at me for being late and didn’t know the reason for it. Well not until now. I suppressed a smile at the memory.

“Yes.” Was all he said and I knew he was probably feeling guilty having now found out my reasons. I had thought that maybe he had believed it was down to Jack but this was something I could ask him when we were next alone, which I was both craving for and dreading.

“So your brother, Justin, will he be visiting you again soon?”

“Oh yeah, didn’t Kaz tell you, he’s coming to stay next weekend and Kazy offered to take him to your club?” Frank looked from me to Libby as if he had just put his foot in it but of course I already did that moments ago in the kitchen.

“It must have slipped her mind.” He said before giving me a chilling smile, one that made me gulp.

“Yeah, I was thinking I was going to introduce him to RJ.” I said hoping this would cool things down but it just made things worse.

“What the Goth with pink hair? ...Na, he’s got a thing for blondes.” At this Draven was almost desperate to let out a growl, I could tell by the way his large fists were turning white under the strain. Libby shot Frank a look and shook her head slightly. At least she knew that this wasn’t the best conversation to be having so she thankfully changed the subject and asked who wanted coffee.

“Tea for me, please.”

“Well durr, oh and don’t worry Kaz I wouldn’t ask you to make it.” Libby burst out laughing and Frank joined in as, of course, he had heard the story along with everyone else in my family! Draven looked like he missed something and I frowned at them both.

“Oh sorry, you don’t know why Kazy hates coffee do you?” Libby had

on her mischievous grin and I had to intervene quickly.

“Oh no, don’t you dare! I mean it...Dra I mean Dominic doesn’t need to hear about childish stories,” I warned her but this just made Draven even more curious. He cleared his throat before disagreeing with me.

“I beg to differ, I would love to hear stories about Keira as a child.” Libby gave me a wink but I just folded my arms and mouthed the words “NO” to her.

“I’m sorry Kaz but he’s the guest!” I grunted at this and just sat there looking extremely hacked off but for Draven this just added to his amusement.

“Well when Kaz was....umm how old?” Great now she wanted my input.

“Eleven,” I said abruptly.

“Yeah that’s right, she was eleven when my dad had some clients meeting him at the house. Our mother usually made tea and coffee whenever he’d have a meeting at home but mum was called to the care home. See our dad works in advertising and our mum works with the elderly. So when she got called away Kazyzy offered to help my dad by making the drinks. What she hadn’t counted on was that they would all want coffee and she had never made it before. Dad told her that the filtered coffee was in the cupboard and it was in a jar with a red lid.” She actually stopped to laugh and I don’t suppose my miserable face was helping.

“So she poured the whole jar in the bottom of the cafetiere and added the water before putting on the top and letting it brew.” Again the word brew had her in fits, which I just rolled my eyes at.

“Yes, yes, get on with it Libs,” I said impatiently and this had them all laughing.

“Anyway, she got everything ready, sugar, cream, cups and then took in the tray. It was only when they all left did Kazyzy notice that no one had drunk

their coffee as all the cups were still full. When she asked my dad why, he told her...

“Because dear, nobody likes cream and sugar with a cup of gravy!” At this Libby was crying with laughter and Frank had banged his fist on the table before erupting with his usual hoarse grunting. Draven too found this all hysterical but instead of laughing at me, he pulled me into him and kissed the top of my head. I could feel his attempt at hiding his amusement but the sound of his laughter had me joining in with them all.

“Why did you give them gravy to drink?” Draven asked through an outstretched grin.

“Because I thought it was the coffee, besides my dad’s clients thought it was that funny that it sealed the deal.”

“Yes I can imagine, very adorable!” Draven agreed and Libby mouthed an ‘Aww’ at me when he wasn’t looking her way.

“Yeah, well it wasn’t as bad as the time Libby blew up the popcorn machine!” I giggled and Frank’s eyes widened....he obviously hadn’t yet heard this one. Now it was Libby’s turn to get defensive.

“Catherine! Don’t you dare!” Libby only ever called me by my first name when she was serious but it sounded like the way my mum says it when I’m in trouble.

“Oh no way babe, you spilt her story, now I want to know yours.” She frowned at her big husband but to no effect.

“Sorry Libs, but if the guest requests then I must deliver,” I said in a smug tone.

“Frank lives here so that doesn’t count!”

“Fine...Dominic please can you agree with me, that this is also one story you would very much like to hear.” I asked in my sweetest tone and to seal the deal I placed my hand on the inside of his leg close to his sweet spot. I

could have sworn that I saw him gulp slightly.

“I’m sorry Libby but forgive me for never being able to deny your sister anything.” Libby raised her eyebrows first at Draven then at Frank.

“Traitors!” She commented but couldn’t keep her face straight. I was smiling at my revenge and took a large swig of my wine before starting my story.

“Ok, so our parents had gone away for the weekend and left Libby in charge as she is the oldest. She was told not to have anyone round but Libby ignored the rules and invited her friends and before long there were about twenty people in the house. She decided to make popcorn when she was drunk but because there was still un-popped corn in the bottom she thought it would be a good idea to keep the machine on.”

“I wasn’t that drunk!” She added but I continued like I hadn’t heard her.

“So when she forgot about it and the fire alarm started to go off, I was the one to find the flames. The popcorn machine was on fire and melting. Libby then came running in and opened a window before throwing it outside into our fish pond. The problem being one of our neighbours had heard the alarm and called the fire brigade! The next thing we knew we had to pile twenty drunken teens into a garage, clean up the evidence of a party and fish out the remains of the popcorn machine all before the firemen piled in.”

Frank clearly loved every minute of this story, so I purposely left out the bit where she had her boyfriend at the time, to stay the night. In hopes she wouldn’t mention me kissing a boy from my school who was two years older than me.

“So what happened? You ever get busted” Frank asked Libby.

“No, I made Kaz burn some toast and blame it on that but when mum and dad got back they wanted to know why all the fish had died!” This once again made the house fill with the sound of laughter but it died when she asked me the name of that boy I kissed.

“Thanks Libs! You know I don’t remember, you invited him! And what about that boyfriend of yours that you had to stay the night...eh?” I know it was cruel but she had struck first. Frank being of the protective jealous type shot her a look and in turn she shot me one that translated into a “thanks a lot!” at which I just shrugged my shoulders. Meanwhile Draven had the same look as Frank, only directed at me.

“How old were you?” Draven asked me and I winced.

“Nearly fifteen.” He frowned at my answer. I finished my wine letting the last drops gladly go to my head. Then I had a thought that would once again have me and Libby on the same page.

“Have you spoken to mum lately?” I asked and Libby looked like she had been caught stealing candy.

“Umm yeah, sorry about that, it kind of slipped out about you and Dominic, I take it she rang?” She said wincing at her own guilt.

“Oh yeah, she called alright! And I got the whole baby safe lecture. But this isn’t the worst bit...oh no..., guess who’s coming to stay?” My face must have said it all.

“No way, you’re bloody shitting me!” It was rare for my sister to swear but where our cousin was concerned there wasn’t enough swear words in the English language to cover it!

“I shit you not!” I said swearing myself, which was thanks to all the wine I had consumed. I think Draven could tell I was a little tipsy so I decided to stop drinking the grape and move on to something safer or before he knew it I would start singing Dolly Parton’s ‘9 to 5’ and then I really would be doomed. I don’t know what it was about that song but it always seemed to be the one my brain would favour!

“Ok, well that’s not going to happen!” Libby stated and I could only wish it were true. If Draven and Frank both thought me and Libby were stubborn then this was nothing compared to our mother. She was hands down

the queen bee of stubbornness. Hell, she was the reason they invented the word!

“Lib’s I hate to break it to you but I tried, mum won’t budge,” I said stating the obvious.

“We will see about that, wait till I speak to her.” This sounded about as aggressive as a budgie singing to a little old lady! She looked at her watch and I could see her working out the time difference and when she got up I knew she thought it best to deal with our mother herself. Even though I knew the outcome would still remain the same, there was nothing stopping me from dreaming otherwise.

“Good luck!” I said before she walked into the kitchen.

“What is it with you guys and this evil cousin?” Frank asked before getting up himself to take out the remaining dishes.

“Just wait and you will find out, because I can guarantee she will be here in a few weeks causing trouble and making everyone crazy...including you.”

“You know me Kaz, Mr Laid Back!”

“Yeah you might be, but an unhappy wife means an unhappy life.” From this his face dropped as now he understood my full meaning. Libby hated our cousin just as much as I did and from the sounds of the murmurs coming from the next room, she was making her full feelings known.

Frank left for the kitchen and I would bet my life that he too was now praying for Libby to win over the iron will of our mother. I smiled to myself and then turned to look at Draven but for once I found him looking away and in what seemed to be deep in thought. I knew what was coming and any minute now I would have to explain myself about Justin. I was about to speak and tell him I was sorry but he turned to me abruptly,

“You are right, your mother can not be swayed and Libby is not pleased.” He was about to say more when he stopped and smiled having heard something he liked.

“Now she is explaining the evening...do you want the verdict?” He leaned into me and my heart rate shot up a couple of notches. He moved the hair off my neck to get to my ear as usual.

“I think I have been accepted into the family.” He sounded pleased and the kiss that followed made me think that maybe I wasn’t in as much trouble as I had first thought. He pulled away and I knew the only reason was because Libby was now stomping back into the dinning room.

“Well, you were right...the bitch arrives the week after next!” I sighed at the idea and Libby added even more shit to the pile.

“Oh and she told mum to let you know that she can’t wait till she gets here, as she really wants to...” She paused before continuing with a thought that would have me close to screaming...

“To meet your new boyfriend!”

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Chapter 18

Screaming in the Night

The rest of the evening went by quickly and most importantly smoothly but thankfully with no more embarrassing stories about my past. It was getting late and it was only when a vibrating sound came from Draven's pocket did I look at the clock. Of course for the king of the world's supernatural I doubt eleven o'clock was past his bedtime.

It was strange to see Draven answer a mobile phone and it brought back memories of the first and last time I had seen it. Back then, of course, I had been terrified of him but even then, my love had never faltered. It is a bizarre feeling to be obsessed with something you both loved and feared. Now things are different. I have swapped fear for intimidated but the obsession still remains as strong as the day it was first imprinted.

Draven stood and excused himself before continuing with his phone call. He spoke a language I couldn't understand but if I were to guess it sounded from Asian decent.

“Well that’s me convinced, he’s lovely.” Libby whispered in vain as he could probably speak six different languages, listen to ten conversations while juggling cars and making a soufflé at the same time. Ok, the scratch the soufflé part but he could order someone to make it while all this was going on! I giggled and Libby mistook its meaning.

“Pleased?”

“Yes and thank you for making him feel so welcome.” I said this to both of them but Frank just winked like it was no trouble. Draven walked back in as he was placing his shiny black phone back in his pocket.

“I’m afraid I have just been informed that I have some business to attend too, so I must say goodnight but I thank you both for your hospitality.” My heart sank at the thought of spending a night alone. It’s funny how all those years I coped not knowing anything different but now after less than a week of spending every night in his arms, I didn’t know how I was going to face being alone.

“Keira, my driver is outside.” He said nodding to the door and I knew I had to say goodbye, but all I wanted to do was sit here and sulk! I wondered if it was actually business that was taking him away from me or was I being punished for the ‘Justin thing’.

He was shaking Frank’s hand and then he gave Libby a kiss on the cheek as he thanked them again. I, on the other hand, looked as though I was going to start sucking my thumb. I walked him to the door, while Libby and Frank remained in the den to give us some privacy.

He took my jacket off the hook and started to hold it out for me.

“It’s ok I don’t need it.” I said thinking it was odd as I was only going to be out there for a short while, unless he knew I would be clingy.

“Keira it is cold out there tonight, look, there’s a frost.” He was right as when I opened the door we were met by a sparkly blanket that covered the earth and was shimmering under the porch light.

“Yeah, but I won’t keep you.” He frowned at my reason.

“You do not want to come with me? I already told you, I will not be angry...”

“Wait, you want me to come?” His face softened as my mistake became clear. His hands took me by the waist and he pulled me into him roughly.

“Of course I want you to come with me...Keira, I never want to be apart from you, not even for one single night.” My lips curved into a shy smile which made him let out a low groan at the sight. He loved it when I went all shy. He turned me around and tapped me lightly on my lower cheeks and made me let out an excited scream.

“Right go and get your jacket on before you freeze this perfect behind.” He said jokingly.

“Wait I just need to grab some stuff and...” He stopped me and whispered into my hair.

“Keira don’t make a fuss but no you don’t. Just go and tell your sister you’re going and I will wait for you in the car.” I frowned but even though he couldn’t see it as my back was to him, he still knew it was there as he laughed lightly before kissing the top of my head and letting me go.

I ran back inside wondering why he had said that I didn’t need anything but I pushed it to the back of my mind before it started to overload with worry. I quickly explained to Libby that I was going with him but that I would see her tomorrow. I also promised to make a Sunday dinner just to get out of there quicker.

I grabbed my jacket and ran out of the door to find a huge black Rolls Royce in the drive waiting for me. A man in a grey coat and black hat was holding the door open for me, only it opened the other way compared to other conventional cars.

It looked like a deadly creature under the moonlight, with its angry square grill that looked as if it would take a bite out of the Aston Martin that

was behind it waiting to be driven by another of Draven's men. Its emblem gleamed silver and I was sure I remembered the winged figure was called the 'Spirit of Ecstasy'. Well that sure was fitting. I don't think I could think of a better description and I wasn't just talking about the car! I stepped forward cautiously as though it wanted to eat me and only when I saw the figure of Ecstasy himself sat there waiting, did I hurry my feet. As soon as I ducked to get in I had Draven's hand held out to help me.

This car reminded me of two different forces fused together. The inside was the complete opposite to the outside. The inside being made with pure luxury in mind and the outside had you gulping at the sight. It was a bit like Draven, half of him you wanted his soft touch and caress all over you and the other half you just wouldn't want to mess with.

I ran my hand over the soft cream leather seat and thought it to be far too comfortable to be in a car. The back seats were more spacious than I expected and there was a clear screen between the driver and us, its passengers. As always Draven watched me like prey as I looked around at the walnut finished and cream carpets that also held foot rests.

"You seem to like this car." Draven's voice was deep and smouldering making me jump at the sound and when the doors locked before we pulled away I added a gulp. Like this it was easy to see him as a King. He sat back casually like he'd known this level of luxury all his life and I felt like Oliver or Annie being taken under his wing. I bit my lip at just how different our lives were and prayed to God for not only opposites to attract but for them to be able to withstand anything. I needed Draven and it pained me to know my need was far greater than his....it had to be. Anything else just wasn't plausible. I mean he could have anything he wanted and I didn't know if I would ever understand why he would ever have wanted me!

"It's a beautiful car but why didn't you just drive the Aston back?" At this he cocked his head and smiled to himself.

"Because I like to have my hands free for other things," he whispered into my hairline before tilting my chin upwards for a gentle kiss. We both sighed at the same time when the sound of his phone vibrating brought our

lips apart. I started to pull away but with supernatural speed his hands grabbed my body and pulled me in to his for a demanding kiss.

“Only when I am ready to let you go little one!” He said in a hoarse voice clearly thick with lust. Meanwhile the phone became a background buzz soon forgotten as Draven’s lips seared mine with burning need. I could tell he was fighting himself to keep control and if the deep frustrated growl was anything to go by then I would say that his rational mind had returned.

He let me go and reached into his pocket to answer his phone.

“Speak!” He demanded in one of those I am your master and Lord tones. He listened for a moment before switching to another language to reply. I got the distinct impression he didn’t want me to know what he was talking about.

I decided to ignore the call and I watched the night fly by in a black haze. Only when Draven’s hand reached for mine as he moved closer to me did I realise the phone had gone. I didn’t turn my head to look at him but instead I rested it on his shoulder and snuggled closer before my insecurities got the better of me. He responded to this by stroking my cheek with his other hand.

“You must be tired.” I didn’t know whether he was asking me or talking to himself but at the very sound of the word I could feel my eyes closing and getting heavy. The hum of the engine was creating a rhythm that my brain responded to by drifting off and shutting down. When Draven’s hand started to make circles on my palm I couldn’t fight it any longer so when his words whispered their usual command in a velvet tone, I was compliant.

“Sleep now.” His words were the last thing I remembered.

I woke as I felt movement under my body and I soon realised I was being carried up some stairs. As soon as Draven felt me stir, he pulled my body closer to his and leaned his head down.

“Sssh, go back to sleep my young beauty. You will be in our bed soon.” The way he said ‘our bed’ made me smile under his jacket, which was pulled tightly around me. I could just hear a door open and the usual smell of old furniture filled my lungs. This room felt more home to me than any other place on earth.

I felt him stop and the sound of the covers being pulled back made a whoosh sound in the air and I knew he was using his gifts considering that his hands weren’t free. He lowered me down and I could feel the heat escaping from my body as the distance between us grew.

I seemed to be in a semi daze and didn’t know whether this was me dreaming as I started to feel the air on my skin where my clothes were being removed. His soft hands made sure to come into contact with skin with every inch of material that he pulled away from me. I bit my lip at the feeling his undressing did to me and the craving to have him take me was nearly uncontrollable. He lifted me slightly to pull the top over my head and then expertly removed my underwear. Then he ran his fingers gently over every curve and I inhaled deeply taking in his scent. He then gently rolled me over so that I was lying on my front and he did the same motions down my back. His palm flattened on the base of my spine and he ran it up slowly till it reached the back of my neck.

He must have thought that I was in a deep sleep as he started to whisper things to me in a different language before letting my hair loose. He gripped it with both his hands and twisted it. Then he placed it to one side so that he could kiss my neck and continue downwards, making my spine feel like sticky dough. Every touch felt like little electric pulses that lit up my nerves and senses like Christmas!

“My Lord, everything is ready...they are here and are awaiting your command.” A voice I didn’t recognise spoke and when I shifted slightly from surprise his soft hands held me still.

“Sssh.... le sommeil mon pure” (Means “Sleep my pure one” in French). His voice acted like a warm blanket over my mind and I tried desperately to stay awake and focus on what was happening but it was

proving impossible.

“Tell my council I will join them soon!” His authoritative voice filled the night air making it such a contrast to how moments before he was talking so sweetly to me. He wasn’t yet finished with me as his hands explored my skin and I knew that if I rolled over to fully announce I was awake, his movements would stop and he would leave. I wanted to ask him what it was that would soon take him away but I was captivated by the immense bliss that having his hands on my body created.

He smoothed back my hair so that he could see my face and the back of one finger traced my jaw line. I couldn’t help but bite my lip as he got closer to them and I heard him let out more air through his nose at his amusement. I felt his hands flatten on the bed either side of me and his body weight rested on them while he lowered his body closer to mine. His lips rested lightly on mine but for no more than seconds, then he moved them to my ear and whispered,

“I love you Keira.”

And then with that, he was gone.

I don’t how long I was asleep but when I awoke there was still the darkness that crept its way through the cracks of the curtains. I sat up and pulled the covers up to my neck as the night air was thick with an icy chill, one so cold that I could see my breath. In fact the only thing that kept me warm was my blood that raced its way through my veins from fear. Fear caused by the realisation that I wasn’t alone.

I sat deadly still as though my terror had me locked and frozen in time. I wanted to find the courage to move or speak but I could smell and feel that the air held another of my nightmares....this is how I knew I wasn’t alone.

I shifted when I heard a noise that sounded like nails scraping along a wooden floor and it was getting closer to the bed. I held my hands over my

mouth to prevent a scream from escaping but my breathing under them was nearly as loud. Finally I couldn't stand it any longer and I grabbed the curtain and yanked it back as fast as I could so I couldn't chicken out. They whipped back and I jumped at the noise they made.

I scanned the room but there was nothing but the sound of mocking laughter that seemed to come from every corner. The furniture hadn't moved but cast eerie shadows on the floor that looked like twisted corpses dragging themselves closer, as if drawn to my fear. I shivered as the laughter faded into the night, creating an unnatural stillness to the silent space between me and the figure that was in hiding.

"Who's there?" I asked and my voice shook, sounding like my rib cage was being rattled.

"Are you afraid?" The voice asked and the answer was confirmed when I recognised who it belonged to.

"No!" I lied bravely. Lucius' laughter echoed around the room as I didn't yet know where he was.

"If that is true, then come to me." His deep voice was commanding and had me near trembling. He was whispering "Come to me" over and over until my ears followed it to the open glass doors onto the balcony. I started to move and I didn't know why. Shouldn't I be running?

I grabbed the silk sheet that lay on the top of the thick covers and pulled it around my naked body as though it would provide me with some protection. It cocooned my cold skin with an icy layer and my feet found the steps around the bed.

My mind was screaming at me for what my body was doing. Why couldn't I control my actions? His whispering continued and when I was out of bed I moved towards the balcony where his voice changed,

"Yes... yes...further!" His words consumed my thoughts and I was only there to do his will. My outer shell felt as though it was freezing all over but

inside was pure hell fire. My veins were molten lava and my heart was the cause of the eruption. I wanted to scream out to Draven but even though I still had my speech I wouldn't use it.

I got to the open doors and saw the full moon light up the marble floor giving it a bluish tinge. The balcony was empty but I still continued further until the voice commanded differently. My hands went out to the metal railing for support and they turned wet after the frost that covered it, melting under my warm palms. Then my fingers curled round it tightly as I felt his body so close to my own behind me. Hands found my shoulders and pushed away the silk that they found there. He moved my loose hair away to get to my bare neck and I counted my last minutes before he took me.

“Do you think I want to end your life?” His lips bent close to my ear as he said this and I started to tremble under his huge hands that still had hold of my neck on either side, encasing the entire length with icy solid fingers. I nodded and he moved my head to one side to the angle he wanted it. His traced his finger tips down from my ear to my bare shoulder blade.

“Something so pure should be enjoyed before death and you are too young before that event happens. However I can still... devour you.” He gripped me roughly as he turned me into him so he could crush his mouth to mine. He tasted the blood there as he bit down hard on my lips and sucked them before kissing me passionately and taking my body into his arms. I was locked in his half naked frame and couldn't get free. The only veil between our bare bodies, was the thin sheet of silk that felt as though it was slipping away into nothing.

My body wasn't the only thing locked, as my mind seemed to belong to him also. It was like being licked by flames and touched by ice. I had to concentrate or I would never break free. I searched my own mind for his presence and when my head became hot and sticky I found him hanging onto me like a black plague. I closed my eyes tight and pushed and pushed until I felt my limbs become my own again. First I moved my fingers and they formed fists by my sides. My arms tensed and I pushed them out with all my strength hitting his solid chest.

I was surprised when he moved backwards and I didn't know if it was down to me or the shock that I had overcome his power. I could now see his face for the first time and it was hard, handsome and cold. His lightened skin only made his eyes all the more striking, like bloody coloured crystals. He had an ethereal beauty, like a marble statue carved into perfect features for all time. Harsh lines of a chiselled face mirrored the clear cut lines of a muscular body, with forearms tensing like tension wire on a bridge, as he flexed his fists in clear rage. His naked torso was clearly rippled without an inch of fat but, unlike Draven, he was of a slimmer build, swapping Draven's brute strength for stealth and speed.

His frown was soon replaced with a chilling smile and it only enhanced his terrifying face. I ran past him, back into the safety of the room only to be met by a blazing fire. I stopped dead at the sight of the flames that licked at the bed frame. The curtains had changed from their usual purple and gold material to a waving wall of red and orange. They moved like they were under water and I stepped back until I once again felt cold marble under my feet. I heard the crackling of wood splitting under the immense heat and then as I took even more steps backwards the two trees either side of the door erupted into blue flames, along with the door frame. The glass started to pop and melt, making little deadly shards cover the floor when the doors gave up and shattered.

"You maybe different to other humans but you will never escape the hold I have on you!" I turned to face him and screamed at the sight of him in his demon form. His body was black as if it had been burnt and flakes of ash fell to the ground beneath him. His huge horns that came from his shoulders held the start of his wings that were like half bat and half bird. They reached the floor and curled upwards with weapons situated on the multiple tips. Black claws grew longer and thicker from them at the sight of my fear. A smile crept its way across the unfamiliar demonic face of Draven's enemy, that was now also my own.

"What do you want!?" I shouted at his laughter.

"So small, for someone so fiery!" When he said this the flames flew out

to the sides and started to melt the metal railing and what were once black roses were now glowing red with heat.

“I will not have long to wait and you will soon come to me.” He sounded so sure of this that I almost believed that I would do anything that he commanded me to. He had a hold over me and we both knew it to be as strong as having the need to breathe. I was bound to him and I wanted desperately to cut the cord that connected us.

“NEVER!” I screamed before falling to my knees and covering my head. I wanted to be saved by Draven. I wanted his hands to pull me from this nightmare and keep me safe. But he didn’t come. There was no gentle caress, no soft words of love...only the sound of Lucius coming closer to take me.

“Draven...Draven!” I said his name over and over as my tears flowed freely down my cheeks.

“Years of waiting have taught the fool nothing of protecting what he loves the most and you... my pure one, will soon see what it means to be under my rule. Rest assured, no one will take you from me, as I will soon be taking you from his *lordship!*” His words were like venom that coursed its way around my body and infected it, making me shiver. I wanted to cry at the thought of being taken by the Devil’s right hand from the man I loved. His threat scared me into never doubting that one day he would complete his goal and I would be at his mercy.

My head lifted to see that there was now only a small space which was not alight. He lifted his hand up and motioned for me to rise. I did as I was instructed but as my eyes met the surrounding view I noticed the flames weren’t only confined to the balcony. Everything I had once thought to be the most beautiful scenery was now consumed by a red river of death. The burning trees were falling as the sea of flames destroyed everything in its path. I knew none of this was real but when even my throat burned when inhaling the hot air and my nose filled with the smell of wood turning to ash, I still cried like it was really happening. The balcony was crumbling away into the fiery abyss below and I felt as though I had been cast down to hell itself.

It felt like the end of the world.

“Why are you doing this?” I asked hopelessly and as my hair fell down in front of my face, his hands were there to hold it back. He stood so close, my breath caught in my lungs making it hard to breathe. He gripped the bottom of my face and forced me to look up at him.

“Because I want you for myself!” I closed my eyes tight and pushed him out of my head as I could feel his influence trying to tunnel its way back in.

“No,” I whispered as he released my face but his hand found my shaky one and he lifted it to his lips to kiss it like a gentleman.

“You will not have long to wait until we meet again but for now, I will leave you with a gift.” He nodded behind me and I turned while my hand was still locked in his. There, a flaming body emerged from the smoke filled room and the screams could be heard across hell’s valley below. I could just make out the body of a young girl with long blonde hair and a small thin curved frame. Her arms were bleeding from the deep cuts there and her naked legs were covered in melting flesh. The screams of agony pierced my ears and then I realised my own screams mirrored hers as we were one and the same. My other self stood dying in front of me and I cried out to help her. She fell to her knees and I did the same. We looked like a mirror image of good versus evil, living and dying.

Lucius walked over to the burning me and picked her up into his bulging arms. His wings wrapped forward in a protective way and he started to walk back into the bed chamber. He looked back over his shoulder and said,

“Remember Keira...soon, very, very soon.” The flaming me in his arms started to scream once more and when I woke from this hellish nightmare, I thought it was still my screaming that could be heard. It took me a moment to come to my own senses and not those of Lucius’ control. But when I did finally calm, I came to realise that I could still hear the screams,

Only this time, they weren't mine....

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Chapter 19

The Temple

The screams belonged to a girl, that much I could be certain. The room was just as I had last seen it before the dream. It was only me that remained altered from the horrors I had witnessed. I inhaled, filling my lungs finally with the usual scent of the room I loved like home. There was no burning oak smell, no flaking of the material under the flames that licked at them and

most importantly the balcony was empty and intact.

However my mental state was left fragile and frightened. I tried to shake off the feelings of dread and thankfully the full moon provided enough light for me to locate my clothes. I moved so slowly, like I was half expecting something to jump out at me and the constant sound of pain wasn't helping my nerves.

Once I was dressed, I wiggled my sockless feet into my trainers and moved towards the door I knew lead further into the fortress that was Draven's home. I opened it and the crack flooded the room with light, however this wasn't the only thing it let in. The sound was almost unbearable to hear and it wasn't only the dream that had caused my distress. My memories of my own living nightmare came back at me like a wave of unsuspecting cruelty. This is what made my feet move from behind the safety of the door.

I knew that if I had been heard when Morgan had me locked away, then my horrific past may not have left me with such a deep scar. How I had wished for just one person to find me, to save me from his madness and my hopelessness. I had screamed and screamed until my throat was red raw and my lungs left empty. But no one came....No one ever heard my cries but the man responsible.

I knew that if ever I had heard the same, I would rather risk my life to help, than to live the rest of my years knowing that I had just walked on by....not when I could have done something....anything! I just prayed that I saw Draven along the way, or at least someone that I knew could help.

I started down a long narrow corridor that I knew, as I had used it a few times, normally when being dragged away by Sophia. It consisted of stone arches that came down to blend with the soft stone walls. Luckily there were light fittings attached and the flames, although needed, they were also an unwanted reminder of the nightmare that Lucius had left me with...his gift.

I pulled my zip up sweater closer to my neck and even pulled the large floppy hood over my head, this way I felt more secure. It still didn't stop the

shivers that convulsed my body, when the screaming stopped. I had to move faster, I had to get there and couldn't let my own fears prevent me from saving a life.

When I got to the end of the corridor my knowledge of where I was ended. I knew if I turned right it would lead me to Sophia's room and I half considered it but when the screams got louder I knew they were coming from the left so with my mind set, I started walking down to opposite of where I knew. It seemed to be leading away from where people were or at least where they must have slept because it started to grow colder and not as well lit. I wished that I had a candle in my hand because I now feared that when I walked though the next door, darkness would greet me.

My hand made contact with the metal handle and I looked only to realise I didn't have my gloves on. I found myself feeling even more vulnerable as I stepped through on to what felt like a balcony. The night air hit me for the first time tonight even though my mind wouldn't easily accept this truth, the dream had felt *that* real. I closed the door behind me as I knew I would soon be screaming myself if I allowed it to slam shut.

It didn't take me long to realise why the sight in front of me seemed so familiar. I had been here before, or so I thought. I was stood in a long corridor that was open to the night on one side. The balustrade was connected to large pillars that formed arches to the roof above. The walls held the same wrought iron lamps that lit when walked past, making me jump every time the sound of flames igniting in their cages happened.

I had been here before, only then I was lead to believe it a dream. I looked over to see the massive courtyard far below and it looked as though a huge section of the house had been removed to fit in a Temple. The domed roof shone in the moonlight making it look like copper and I remember last time thinking the sculpture on top was a bird but now I knew better, as the figure of an Angel could easily be seen.

I was staring down at it from a different angle as now I was on a different side of the house but I could just make out the side from which I had first seen it. I remembered that night well and Draven had found me lost and

scared in the darkness. At first I didn't know it was him, only after he saved me from falling to my death did I soon come to realise who my dark knight had been. This was yet another incident when his sister had been involved and tried to throw me into his path but he had dealt with it in other ways. In other words, just another time that I was made to believe it had been all in my head.

I continued along the cold open hallway until getting to the door at the end and I thought how nice it would be, if like last time, Draven was there waiting inside. It didn't take me long to find out my wish did not come true. Instead it opened into a cold landing and the only way left to go was down. The stone spiral staircase made my fear of heights rear its ugly head and a wave of nausea washed over me. My head spun at the sight of how far down it went and only when the screams started up again did it remind me why I was here. So I swallowed hard before venturing down them.

They seemed to go on forever and I found myself glad that they went down and not up, as my chest was already getting tight from my lack of fitness. I was at least glad that the moon was full and the sky clear because there was no soft glow of any candles but there were lots of little slit windows that allowed the moon to shine through. The further I got, the more difficult it became as the stone wall was damp and the steps slippery. I lost my footing more times than I could count but thankfully I remained up right until finally I reached the bottom.

Now of course, the screams could be heard even clearer and as soon as my foot hit the last step I broke out into a run to get to the next door. The door was jammed but with a little persuasion, it creaked open, allowing me access. Thankfully in the next part I found that I could breathe more easily, mainly due to the well lit room and warm air. I could instantly tell that there would be people down here or why would there be lamps lit and the hum of voices in the distance.

The room I walked into looked like a shrine, with large holes cut out of the walls filled with what looked like artefacts and strange glowing orbs. One in particular reminded me very much like the one I had seen in my dreams,

on my first night in my new home. It was purple and when I got closer it started to spin and pulsate in its place as though it was responding to my presence.

Other holes held things that couldn't be explained without their owner present. In the centre of the room I had to walk round a glass case containing a sword that lay sideways. It was held there by stone hands gripping it tightly at each end and on the blade's end blood constantly dripped into a pool of black water from where the hands emerged. It seemed so strange a scene that it took my mind far from the reasons I was here.

I imagined it to be Draven's collection and then I quickly started to wonder what he would think about me being here. Would he be mad that I was venturing into the unknown or would he see my quest as a noble one?

I quickly hurried past and on to the next part and although worried for the girl's life, I couldn't help but be intrigued at all the new things my eyes were laying witness to. This truly was another world....Draven's world! And I knew this was one part of his life he tried desperately to keep separate from his human girlfriend. There was so much that I still didn't understand and only the love in my heart made it all less important. To me he was just a man and most of all, the man I loved. I knew sometimes I doubted myself but in this I was absolute.

The next hallway was wide enough to get a bus down and the mouldings were breathtaking. Stone carved into art work. Pillars that looked like sandstone men holding up the ceilings with bulging muscles and endless strength. Huge arches cut off into smaller half moons that were covered and framed with flowers that were gilded gold. The pillars also held gargoyles, before they reached the elaborate ceiling and they were not weathered like the ones I was used to seeing.

No, these looked like they could have been carved yesterday and this added to the fear they produced. I almost expected their eyes to start glowing and for them to growl as I went past. So, of course, when the sound of stone moving above me could be heard I screamed, proving that no amount of preparing myself could have prevented my fright. I looked up but the

grotesque creatures were still, only now their heads turned towards me looking down. This made me quicken my pace as now my heartbeat sounded in tune with the girl's screaming. It pounded in my chest and every step I made was then followed by the turning of a monstrous stone head.

“STOP IT!” I stopped and screamed out at them. I bravely stood facing their judging looks as my anger got too much. I mean, what could they do to me? I didn't give it much thought as one by one they slowly turned to face the other way and I was amazed to see my little eruption had any affect on them.

By this time I reached yet another door and before I went through it, I braced myself as I knew I'd come to the end of my journey because the screams could be made out as words of help. A girl's voice was pleading to be freed and at least I knew I wasn't too late. I took a few deep breaths and walked through to face my mission.

Of course I was wrong... this door wasn't the last to lead me to her. The screams stopped as soon as my foot entered the room, well I say room but it was more the size of a football stadium! The floor was a broken collection of tiles that made shapes and pictures I didn't understand the meaning of. There were lighter patches attacking darker ones, like clouds in a battle, merging into one sullen colour of grey. It actually looked like the floor was alive with energy and at first I stepped back against the door that had now sealed behind me. I turned in a panic but it was fruitless. I was locked inside what I soon discovered to be a tomb!

I let my heaving chest calm before walking into the centre where there stood the biggest pillar like the largest tree trunk in existence. Thoughts of the Jurassic age came to mind as that's how I imagined the green life to have been back then. Of course, being made of stone only made it look more like a fossil as stone vines worked their way up the great structure. I didn't know whether it was there for effect or was actually holding something mighty up above.

My eyes followed in awe, as I reached the ceiling where it spread out like life finding home. The vines continued along the ceiling as if being a life

force that at one time that had sucked needlessly at the air. Now, of course, it was being closed in by the roof but it looked like it once belonged to something much more. I found myself looking up until my neck ached, in pure awe.

I momentarily forgot my situation and unfortunately when I did look elsewhere I found the walls, floor to ceiling, covered with holes. It didn't take long for someone with half a brain cell to know what lay in these holes. They were the perfect size for a coffin to fit in widthways and I knew this is where the tombs of Draven's dead ultimately found rest. My mind raced with questions upon questions and I bit my lip as to what the answers could be. What had I found down here?

I knew one thing.... Draven was not going to be happy!

I moved round the open space with my breath caught inside my body, only to be released when absolutely necessary. I feared as though I may wake the dead with each footstep I took and given the size of the place, I took quite a few of them. When I finally crept across to the other side, I found that one wall was covered in the stone vines that seemed born from the fossilised tree that acted as a pillar. They had snaked their way up, produced from the trunk in the middle, and rained down this wall as if to guard something beneath.

I knew I should turn back but it was as if something powerful wanted me there. My fear was slowly being replaced with a need and a want so great, I couldn't do anything to save myself....from myself!

I felt my body react to my recklessness. My hairs stood on end thanks to the raised bumps on my skin. My heart rate doubled or even tripled as all my ears could make out was the beating drum that now played a doomed beat inside me. I tasted the acid that a nervous stomach produced and swallowed hard when I came only a foot away from the vine covered wall. My body wasn't my own, being forced by a mind I only half controlled.

“Touch us!” Whispers of the dead beckoned from each hole in the room. I spun around half expecting to see thousands of decomposed corpses all stood there edging closer to me. I turned back to the vines and raised my

hand causing a wave as they all hushed, waiting in turn for my mistake to play out like a Greek tragedy. My fingertips needed to find the vines that polluted the wall, concealing a truth I needed to find. I only paused a second but it was enough for the whisperers to urge me on, one last time.

Then my skin came into contact with the cold stone that caused a reaction. The stone moved under my fingers like I was finding a pulse on a sleeping corpse. It started to pulsate more violently before quickly producing thorns that pricked my palm and pierced it enough times over to extract my blood.

“Ouch!” I yanked my hand free and that wasn’t the only thing the pain freed, as now my mind was completely my own again. I looked down at my hand and found there a strange symbol that resembled a birthmark I had under my hair line. It was more noticeable when I was a baby, when I had only thin wispy hair but now it was completely covered under my thick blanket of blonde locks. It was an odd shape, like a quarter moon with its back to a sideward V. The blood had stopped escaping as I wiped it on my jeans but it was still red and sore.

I heard a noise and when I looked up the vines were now wide awake and alive with the new blood they had fed on. The part which had tasted my blood had turn a lush green colour and it grew thicker before retreating back behind its stone brothers that lay behind it. Then I staggered backwards as the whole wall became alive with motion that reminded me of light grey snakes all slithering to get away. It all pulled back at once, as if my blood had been acid and the vines needed to get away from the infected area.

I don’t think my eyes had been held open so wide or my mouth been hung down in shock as long ever before. I gasped as the retreating vines revealed a huge wooden door that belonged at the back of a castle drawbridge. Well that was just great.... I had revealed a door, yes, but I would have to be the size of a two story building to open it!

Then, as if my thoughts held some greater meaning, the door started to split in the middle and allow an opening big enough for the giant from Jack and the Beanstalk to pass through. But this didn’t just allow me access to go

in, it also allowed the girl's screams access out. This spared me any hesitation as I ran inside to find the crying girl I had to save.

I ran until my eyes adjusted to the dim light that came from the end of a tunnel I had been granted entrance too. My legs felt like jelly as it felt as though I had been walking all night but I didn't want to think about it now, I could rest later. Now I had to find her and considering now her voice could be heard, crying little sobs, I knew the next room would be where I would *finally* find her.

I walked through a bright light that I thought came from the room but when the energy made my body tingle I knew it had in some way acted as the door. I stepped through to the other side blinking, to clear my now blurry vision. It was like someone had taken a picture and the flash had me seeing nothing but black dots. When it cleared I wanted to scream at what the next room held....I was now, clearly, inside a prison!

The walls held heavy metal doors with only small barred windows in arches. The locks were strange and instead of holes for the keys to fit, they held little flat dishes that looked ready for a liquid to be poured in to. They were the weirdest looking locks I had ever seen. But this was all small factors compared to the banging and screeching sounds that my presence was causing.

"I smell human sweat upon flesh!" One gargled voice spoke and I shivered before nearly running back through the brightly lit portal.

"I smell a ripe fruit ready for plucking!" Another voice spoke, only this one made my bones near to shaking as its deep demonic edge continued,

"One I would gladly tear apart, skin from flesh, flesh from bone!" I wanted to start screaming myself but then the girl's sweet voice brought me round from my own nightmare and reminded me of her own.

"Help me, please." Her voice sounded strained from screaming and again the memories hit me harder than any of these monsters threats. I walked towards the door I thought the voice came from cautiously, knowing

the other creatures did not think kindly of my interference or maybe they did, considering they seemed to be thinking of me as a happy meal!

The doors went on and on, but the voice led me to her. I hesitated before going up to the door, remembering all my other mistakes I had not long ago made. But, when she pleaded one last time, my senses left me, being replaced by my guilt and memories. The metal door was cold and I noticed a bluish light filtering through the window in the door. I thought this must be from a window inside the cell but when I reached up on my tiptoes I was wrong. The blue light came from the silhouette of a young slim girl that only wore a long white muslin gown. She had her back to me and her black hair hung straight down her back like black beauty's tail. For a second I was like a deer caught in a car's headlights. I was frozen at the sight and the blue glow deepened a shade at my reaction to her.

“Are you human?” I asked the figure that still sobbed quietly.

“Yes and I am very afraid, will you not help me?” Her voice floated over to me like a warm blanket of re-assurance. How could such a velvet voice be immoral?

“What can I do, I don't know how to open the door?” She began to cry more and I knew the sound well. It was my cry. The same hopeless cry I had once been unable to stop. I pulled on the door with every ounce of strength but it was useless, I wasn't even making the metal rattle.

I pulled my body upwards to the window again but now I saw something only the deepest, darkest corners of my mind knew about. The vision made me want to die from the pain it inflicted.

I looked through a watered vision at myself sat down on the floor by an inflated bed. I wore dirty clothes and my hair knotted from weeks of neglect fell in front of my face, which hid my misery. I began to pull up my sleeves and feel the smooth skin there on my inner arms. I rattled my own body against the door at the vision.

“Stop it! Don't! Don't do it!” I cried out as the girl produced a small

wooden box from behind her and when opened, the music that filled my mind with hate and revulsion played out. It was my very own private death song and I cried louder being now the one full of pleas.

“Please don’t do this!”

“There is only but one way to save those that I love.” She spoke my words before continuing on with my hysterical actions. She smashed the box to the floor and the mirror shattered into a life changing weapon. She took the largest piece to her pale arm and drew the first red line across near to her elbow.

“STOP IT!” I screamed before looking away in my own disgust. It was like watching my own destruction being carried out in a dark, gothic play, by a girl I didn’t know. But I couldn’t look away for long and the darkness of my past compelled me to see it through as I did years ago.

I raised my head but now my scream was for a different reason. The black haired beauty was now inches from my face and her features were covered, only showing me the whites of her eyes through the black river that was her hair. Her hands weren’t holding onto the bars like mine were, so she was rather very tall or floating.

“You are my last hope, they come to kill me...stop them...stop them now!” As soon as she said it there were footsteps and voices that could be heard. I had to move if I was to help in anyway. I would have to see who it was that held her here and more importantly, who wanted to kill her.

“I will be back, I will do what I can.” Before I let my body fall down I saw her mouth, something that seemed far too familiar than I would have liked but at the same time my mind was coming up with a blank wall. I got the feeling that she was trying to warn me against something or was it someone?

My hands hurt and my knuckles cracked from holding most of my weight for so long. I could hear the footsteps getting closer and panic set in as I searched desperately for a place to hide. My head whipped round for some

dark corner, when I saw a pillar thick enough to hide behind. Once there, I could still hear her plea for me to help and tears filled my eyes at how hopeless a saviour I was. If only I knew where Draven was, then he could help, he could stop all of this and one thing was for sure....people would surely get punished!

I tried to stay completely hidden but the need to look was far greater than the warnings that were ringing in my head. The pillar I was frozen behind was in the shadows, so when I peered round to see, I wasn't noticed. There stood three figures covered from head to foot in long purple robes which had a strip of gold symbols running down the middle like a racing stripe.

It looked like ancient scriptures, like hieroglyphics or Mayan text, but without being close enough I couldn't tell. The appearance of the men caused a reaction with the other inmates as shouts and bangs against their cells erupted. This was short lived as with one blood curdling command from the man in front, the room grew silent. He had spoken a language I had never heard and one that sounded as if it was very unlikely to have still been used today.

I watched as the taller one in the middle approached the door as the other two stood back to await the prisoner. I presumed the one in the middle to be the leader as he seemed to order the others to be ready. He then raised his wrist to his mouth and to my disgust he bit down hard on his own flesh. I swallowed hard at the sight of him taste his own blood before allowing it to drip onto the lock. I now knew what the little dishes were there for, as I heard the lock start to move and click open. I let my shoulders fall as I realised I would never have been able to open them as they required the blood of the supernatural.

I watched the leader lick his own wound like a dog, while he waited for the door to swing open. Once it did the young innocent girl came screaming out like a banshee showing her other side....a desperate one. However the two guards were ready for her and caught her body as she tried to kick and scratch her way to freedom. I so wanted to run to her but I knew I was next to

useless up against these three. I felt the tears release down my cheeks as I watched them drag the screaming girl away down the corridor they had come from, the very corridor where I must now follow.

I tried to compose myself before I continued. I inhaled deeply and wiped my wet face with the back of my arm. Half of me wanted to run away and find a corner to curl up into, till I was found but I knew the half of me that willed me to do good in life would win. So with my overbearing need to help the girl I didn't know, I stepped from behind my hiding place and followed the path to where, hopefully death would not greet me.

My feet struggled over the deep cobbled floor and I was glad when I reached the narrow corridor so that I could steady myself on the walls. I continued down and the air felt tight and muggy. The damp walls made my hands slide from them as I felt my way along for support. Then as I turned a corner the light that had come from the prison could no longer be seen and plunged the tunnel corridor into darkness.

I froze and leaned on the wall until my breathing calmed. I counted to ten before forcing my feet to move on. I had to use my other senses to find my way out of the darkness and I started to concentrate. My nose filled with the scent of wet stone and my touch only proved the reason. It was my ears that gave me hope as I started to hear the hum of chanting and then my eyes saw a gentle glow of candle light work its way across the walls. The bright end told me I was near to where I would no doubt find the girl and who held her. I gulped the frightened lump, forcing it down my tight throat and moved into the next room.

Here my eyes came into contact with my destination....

The Temple.

Chapter 20

Impossible Reasons

I walked closer inside where the brightly lit temple hall hurt my eyes which had become accustomed to the dark. I stood still, blinking frantically so as not to be taken by surprise, hoping that one of the pillars I hid behind was enough of a barrier from the droning voices that filled the room. My heart nearly stopped and my blood froze from being so scared.

The chanting wasn't like anything I had ever heard. Not only was the language strange and very unnerving but it seemed to be passing between demonic lips. Its loud echoing felt as though it could crack the walls and destroy cities with only a few words. I couldn't choke down the fear that kept rising back up my body like a growing illness. It kept getting louder and louder which proved to be too much for my fragile human ears.

I could feel the marble floor beneath me vibrate and this was the only reason I hadn't yet crumbled to it like a frightened child. Nothing could compare to this moment. I had never experienced terror like it and I had never prayed so hard for it to be just another horrible dream. But as I felt the beads of sweat roll down my trembling face, I knew that no amount of hope in the world would make it so. My body shook so violently that I thought it would crumble into pieces.

Only when a great roar cut through the other voices did it all go quiet. This finally made my senses return to me, along with my resolution. I decided to move further round as now I knew I was still completely out of

sight. I walked slowly to the next massive pillar which was like a masterpiece in its own right. Painted blood red at the bottom, turning into flames of orange and gold as it curled upwards to the painted sky on the ceiling and dome. My eyes followed the story around the room that was a great war between Heaven and Hell. There were Angel warriors on horseback attacking winged Demons from a flaming sky.

The painting was so skilled and accurate that I almost thought them real enough to touch. I shuddered at the idea that this could actually be based on a truth. An unknown war that humans were utterly oblivious too... thankfully! The shiny floor looked like liquid and the reflection of the painted heaven gave the marble a bluish tinge making it resemble a lagoon.

Finally, once I had finished looking around my magnificent surroundings, my eyes fell on the imposing figures that were stood around the room like a secret cult meeting. Each clothed in red robes that matched Hell's representation they stood by. My mind counted seventeen red bodies draped from head to foot in blood velvet then followed on as the next set of six bodies wore purple with thick gold symbols at the bottom.

This reminded me of a strange display of the signs of the zodiac combined with ancient runes. These weren't quite the same as the men who had taken the girl but I soon came across them as my gaze rested at the top of the large circle that all the bodies created. At the top was a huge stone slab that acted like an altar and it too was covered in carved symbols that matched the robes.

I could feel my sweaty hands slip from the smooth cold marble that I tried to keep hold of. I was far too close now and knew this was very wrong but my will to turn away, wasn't half as strong as my will to stay. I bit down on my lip and rolled it back and to, through my teeth. If I hadn't been here witnessing this cult based nightmare then I'm sure I would have felt the pain I was causing myself.

Instead I focused all my attention and energy onto the scene that was being played out in front of me like a sadistic opera. The group was clearly waiting for something or more like someone and I had a sick feeling it was

the girl who I had made it my mission to save from her cruel fate.

I didn't have long to wait for the crescendo as a huge tall cloaked figure walked out through what looked like a series of guards that bowed respectfully as their master passed through. He dominated the room and like a Mexican wave at a football game, all the robed cult followed suit and fell to their knees and started the mind numbing chanting again forcing me to place my shaky hands over my ears.

The deafening beat rattled my mind like thousands of war horses charging into battle and I could feel my courage getting beaten with every step. I looked on through a watery glaze and held on with shaky limbs. They all started to sway as the momentum increased into a powerful finish and as before a great roar projected off the domed roof and echoed about the room, creating a deadly silence that followed. I peered round again to see the leader of this demonic choir hold up his hands as he demanded the rest to stand once more.

His imposing figure wore an all black robe that draped long over his face. It was decorated by one large gold symbol, positioned over his chest. It was the same circled symbol that mirrored the stone altar he stood in front of. It reminded me of the different moon cycles all intertwined. Then it hit me where I had seen that symbol before. I looked down at my palm and saw the half moon with a V shape attached to it.

The skin had dried blood around the edges but the deep red shape could be seen easily. It was unmistakable. The same symbol was not only on my hand, thanks to that strange vine entrance, but it was also on the back of my neck under my hair line. Hiding there like a dark secret, waiting until this moment to make its reasons known. A birthmark that sealed my fate and brought me here to find my true path. That thought terrified me far more than the demons before me. I was in no way part of this sick and twisted cult! I wouldn't allow myself to think it. Then it hit me....what if the man in black was Lucius?

What if this had been his plan all along, to get to me? First to control my dreams and then to play on my insecurities. Surely if he'd had access to my

mind then he would know my past. Then all that was left to do was to make me hear the girl's cries and I would come running. Just like he said "I will not have long to wait and you will soon come to me". I started to shake yet again at the thought.

The man terrified me to my very core and to make it even worse, I was also a little bit fascinated with him. Lately I had been trying to reject the idea and banish it from my mind like some law I was breaking. It felt against nature thinking about him but in some sick twisted way, I was drawn to him like bees to pollen. This forced me to be more afraid of myself and my own irresponsible actions. I didn't know what I would do when faced with the man that haunted and consumed my dreams but when I thought of him and his lips to mine it made me quiver with both revulsion and a burning hunger.

I tried to put it all down to his powerful mind control and wished more than anything that I was strong enough to push him out and once again gain control over myself.

I started to look at the black figure a little closer and the size of his frame matched that of Lucius. He was tall, with squared shoulders but I couldn't see any of his features as most of his robe covered his body and face. My mind raced with thoughts and ways that he could have penetrated the fortress that was Draven's home. Then my hands flew to my mouth and the panic hit me. What if he had overpowered Draven somehow? It was the man himself who told me that Lucius was the only one that was equal to his power and being able to control the mind of anyone, including Draven, was sure to have an advantage.

Before I knew it my face streamed with tears as the image of Draven been overpowered by Lucius got stronger in my mind. I was about to turn around and run away, forgetting or more like not even caring about the girl that I had come here to rescue. Now my main concern was the man I loved and the overwhelming feeling that I had walked straight into a trap.

I turned my back to the pillar and could feel the beads of sweat from my back roll down and turn to ice as it came into contact with the marble. I shuddered as I leaned my body's weight against it for support while I thought

a moment about what to do next. I needed to find Draven at all costs but would I have enough nerve to even move from this spot?

The seconds that ticked by felt like a lifetime and just when I had my mind set on getting out of this hell, the demonic voice of Lucius brought my attention to full alert and made my blood rush through my veins like a liquid inferno.

I turned to look back at the cloaked followers and realised they were all waiting for something to happen. Their heads all turned to one side of the hall to an opening that, at first was invisible but only when a snow white woman emerged could the entrance be seen. At first the bright light behind her just made her glow like a heavenly entity but when it faded back to where it came from, the features of an old woman could be made out.

She had flowing white hair that flowed around her as though each individual strand was controlled by an unseen force. The long dress she wore did the same as it wrapped in and out of her tired looking legs. The sleeves opened up into a V shape and the tips came down to the floor reminding me of Robin Hood's Maid Marion. Her face looked kind, despite its numerous wrinkles and her soft light eyes could even be seen from the other end of the hall where I stood locked to the floor beneath me.

She reminded me of what mother earth would look like if she were in a human form. I felt connected to her through my love for all things pure and natural. This was how I knew this woman was most definitely an Angel. It was the same feeling I felt around Vincent when I first saw him in his Angelic form. They had a pull towards them and I could imagine that it was probably the same that evil people had towards Demons. Something in our genetic makeup was forged by the same hand. We were undoubtedly connected to these creatures and throughout history even though our beliefs had never been proven, they had never faltered. Now of course I knew why.

Then Lucius held one hand out towards the old lady and motioned to take her hand, which the woman looked more than delighted with. She gracefully floated over to him and placed a frail, wrinkled hand in his. He bowed to her and lead her to one side of the altar. My eyes remained locked

as everyone now turned to the opposite side to where the old lady had entered.

Lucius let go of her hand and raised his other one before shouting out another dark command. I had never heard a demon use another voice until now and after this I never wanted to again! I could almost hear my own bones rattle thanks to the effect it had. It was the type of voice that great armies would have thrown down their arms and pledged a different allegiance too, just after one battle cry. It was so loud, rough and deep it could have come from the devil himself! It seemed to have different dimensions of evil to it and I had to bite down hard not to scream.

“[Daiva!](#)”(Means “Demon” in Ancient Persian) He shouted as he pointed one long velvet arm out at the guards who were bringing forth a screaming girl. She too was now dressed the same as the old woman and I noticed her old eyes flicker a brighter white before returning to their crystal blue colour. Whereas the screaming girl, who I had tried to save, had black tears rolling down her cheeks. It covered her beautiful face like deadly ink and it dripped down her pure white dress making the contrast ever more startling.

He stretched out all four fingers together and retracted all again to his palm to motion the guards to bring her closer. She lifted up her tired head and saw herself moving towards him, so she screamed louder and struggled even more against the two huge purple robed men who had her by both arms. Swiftly though, Lucius stepped forward and struck the girl with the back of his hand, across the face causing blood to spurt from her open mouth and hit the wall, which was at least fifteen feet away. This not only silenced her but made her body sway to an unconscious state.

I had opened my mouth to scream, but thankfully my shock and horror had stolen my voice and nothing came out from my near bleeding, cracked lips. I pressed my nails into my palm causing little half moon indents that showed my frustration at having to watch helplessly. The girls head was slumped forward and her dark velvet hair went to her knees. She was dragged the rest of the way to the altar and held opposite the gleaming old woman. Lucius touched the head of the girl and whispered something to make her re-

awaken to her real nightmare. However this time she had learnt her lesson and stood motionless at the mouth of hell.

I fought frantically with every idea I had that entered my head as each idea was as bad as the next. I needed to cause a diversion but even then, what could I do alone? I was outnumbered and most certainly out powered! I would not only be putting myself in danger of being captured but it would no doubt be pointless as well. She would never have enough time to escape with all these monsters that stood around her. No, all I could do was watch on in horror and experience her end as though it was my own.

“Māha [Arta](#)” (Means “Moon Order” In Ancient Persian) Lucius spoke more words I didn’t understand and looked up to the top of the domed roof as if waiting for something. None of us had to wait long for the dome to show a split in the middle and then part, moving back into the room showing us the night sky in its place. The vast black night was only filled by the fullest moon I had ever seen and was ringed with a blood red outline that gave it the appearance of an evil sun.

The words passed his lips once more and the red ring glowed even brighter as if responding to his command. All of the robed figures were still looking up to it as if a God had emerged, when abruptly Lucius seized the girl by the arm and turned her round into him, so her back was now against his hard chest. Her head tucked inches under his chin and with his other hand he held the bottom of her face and moved it up towards his lips. He mouthed words over her hair and it seemed to send her into a trance as she rolled up her eyes before closing her lids.

She started to sway but before she could hit the floor with her numb body he growled up to the moon and pushed her hard down onto the stone altar. He then, with a handful of her gown, tore it from her body with one quick motion and left her naked as the day she was born. Her soft pale skin glistened under the moonlight and look like milk rippling as it trembled in the night air.

Then what happened next came about so fast, I had to replay it in my head before reacting to it, like a time lapse that had to be caught up with. He

had produced a large ornate blade from behind his back and held it up to the moon as if to get it blessed before plunging it into the girl's body. Only the gold gilded end that protruded from her heart could be seen and the sound of blood travelling up to her throat and out from her colourless lips could be heard.

The blood from underneath her flowed around the circles that covered the altar and soon all marble sides showed the life that had now left her, mirroring the night's deadly moon above.

Within seconds of comprehending what had just happened right before my eyes, I let out an almighty scream that pierced the night like the blade that had just pierced her delicate skin and soon all robed heads had turned to face me. Blind panic had me frozen in time and surprise had the others doing the same. For seconds, shock was all that gripped at every being in the room but the sight of the black robe lifting his head towards me had me soon moving into action.

My legs started to run towards the closest door that I could see and my mind didn't stop to think what was through it and that it wasn't the same way I had come in. I turned my head just enough to see a long arm extend out towards me and shout,

“Bring her to me!” But this had my body moving faster than ever before. I could hear all the footsteps behind me but I didn't dare stop to look. I was waiting for hands to reach out and grab me but all the same I kept my feet moving. I pushed my way through the heavy door and thanked God that it was unlocked. I jumped at the sound of it slamming behind me and only then did I realise I had to wipe my streaming eyes as I couldn't see properly for desperate tears. I told myself in my head to calm down or I would never find my way out. My body wanted to carry on but my exhausted mind wanted to curl up in a corner and cry until there was nothing left.

I was in a strange room that had eight arched passageways which were situated in a long row going from one side of the room to the next. I knew I had to choose one as the sound of footsteps was getting closer. I closed my eyes and swallowed, and fearing I was making a grave mistake, I took the

one on the far left at the end.

It turned out to be through a narrow wet corridor similar to the one that had lead me to the Temple but at least this one had some light. As I ran through the cobbled tunnel the lights ignited above me and I soon realised as the ceiling became inflamed, that this was the way the lamps were positioned. They went up from the top of the wall into arches that met the other side's lamp. Then when lit, they made the ceiling glow with fire.

This extreme heat in such a small space made me cough and beads of sweat soaked my face. I was thankful that it didn't go on for long as I started to breathe more easily when fresher air hit me. I stumbled into the next room as I tripped on one of the larger cobbles that jutted out from the rest. I hit the floor with a thud and pain shot through my knees making me swear out in agony.

I scrambled to my feet thinking about the bruises I would now have before scanning the room I was now stood in. The large oval room wasn't as grand as all the rest, in fact it looked a little dilapidated. The walls that were once richly decorated had long tears in the royal blue wallpaper, showing the deep red bricks underneath. This made the room look as though a ravaged beast had clawed away at it, trying to get to the flesh the paper concealed. What could have made those marks? But more importantly what had I just walked into?!

Then I took a step closer seeing something that didn't just look like claw marks but something somebody had used their fingernails to write with. Then I fell back with a gasp landing hard on my backside. There staring at me from all around the room was the evidence that I had been right all along. Scratched, was the haunting name that had just made me a mouse in this game of chase.

LUCIUS

That's when my mind finally put together the last remaining puzzle piece. I now remembered what it was the imprisoned girl had mouthed. It was a warning and it was a name. The same that had spun a cruel web and

decorated this room of desperation.

LUCIUS

I could no longer hear the sound of being pursued and I didn't know whether or not that was a good sign. I examined the walls more closely and saw that the paper had what looked like old script and huge fleur de lis in faded gold. It had been scratched all over the walls, some places with bloody fingernails still embedded. My eyes followed the cracked mouldings and broken furniture that was beyond repair, it too also held the name crudely carved into the surfaces.

Doors with broken hinges were thrown around the room like scatter throws. There were glass shards from shattered mirrors and lamps that once added to the décor. It looked like a grand bedchamber that someone had gone berserk in and this was the aftermath. As I walked further into the room I found a large bed that had two legs missing so was laid to rest on an angle on its dais. Tattered curtains hung pathetically around the broken frame.

The mattress too was in one piece no longer as it had clearly been ripped apart. There were no windows in this room so the only light came from office type strip lighting that looked more out of place than me in Afterlife! It flickered and I could hear a faint buzzing as it tried to find the power to stay illuminated. This was by far the strangest room I had been in because, quite simply, it was the one most unlikely to have been here. It felt so out of place, like driving in the desert and then finding Las Vegas.

I found a door uncovered by a ripped tapestry and prayed that it was unlocked. I must have only been in there for minutes but I had wasted enough time as it was, so I made my sore knees move into a greater action and ran to the exit. Thankfully the door was unlocked but once I was inside I found myself wishing that maybe it hadn't. For I was back in the prison!

It only took me a few seconds to realise it wasn't the same one the girl had been held captive in. This one looked more serious as the cells resembled one man torture devices. They were caskets lined up against the wall like stone tombs and all that could be seen was a thin rectangle for their eyes to

see through.

I was glad to find that no eyes could be seen looking back at me but my blood ran cold as whispers started to come from behind the metal coffins. I couldn't make out any words as it was all being said in another language. I moved to avoid them, giving them a wide berth as I made my way past. I was trying desperately not to lose it but I could feel myself fading fast. All I wanted to do was hide away in a corner somewhere and cry myself into a sticky mess. This was most definitely my limit and I was so close to cracking, that I needed a minute to calm my mind and focus on getting to Draven. He was the only reason I was still moving and I knew if I had to crawl my way out of this hell, that for him I would keep going.

The wet stone walls made the air smell damp but I was thankful that this room was at least cooler than the rest. My hair had started to cling to my neck, which was irritating my skin, making me itch.

“ARRRH!” I screamed out at the sound of my name being whispered from around the corner. The room was in a sort of L shape with five large pillars running down the middle. The section I was in only had the small metal coffins along one wall but from what I was about to find out, that wasn't all this room had in store for me.

I bravely made my way around the wall keeping as far away from the one man prisons but as soon as I started to move I realised they weren't empty. I shuddered back another cry as each thin rectangle now produced two orange glows and when they started to blink, made me react to being watched. My hands flew to my mouth to keep my voice captive and as a result I bit down into the skin on my hand to restrain it further. I didn't take my eyes off theirs for a second, afraid that if I did, I would pay dearly for it. They moved with my body, following me as I went slowly out of sight.

Once around the corner it opened up into a bigger part of the room and this looked almost identical to the other prison, the one where I first saw the girl.

There was however one startling difference. One wall, like the other,

held heavy doors that lead into the separate cells. But on the opposite side was something I had never seen before and it looked as though made from the stuff nightmares were created from. All along the wall seemed to be alive with tortured souls trapped and begging to be set free. It almost looked like a giant womb spread over hundreds of people trying to claw their way out. Like a thick skin stretched out to near breaking point.

I stood motionless in the middle of two evils, waiting for the next move to come to me. I wondered if this is what Moses felt like when he parted the Red Sea, knowing that any moment either side of death could come crashing down on him and all that followed. I knew this was a completely illogical thing to be thinking and for one thing he had the Gods on his side! I knew perfectly well what I had on my side, both my sides for that matter and I doubted very much that they wanted to give me a big pat on the back and send me in the right direction!

I knew I had to move as I could now hear the voices from the Temple coming closer behind and I knew it wouldn't be long until they found me. What was worse? Talk about stuck between a rock and a hard place, this was more like tight roping over a live volcano or going to hell for a holiday!

I started to giggle nervously and I think this was mainly down to the fact that I was slowly losing it and though it was better to giggle than to cry and sob like a baby I couldn't stop either. I counted three pillars and knew that if I was going to do this then I would have to do it one pillar at a time. I focused on the first pillar and started to move my feet.

The problem I faced was that the wall of souls started to respond even more by my movement. Hands tried to reach out and grab me. Faces would push even harder through the skin until near features could be made out. Teeth snapped at me and looked as though they would soon bite their way through. As a result, I had a reaction of my own and moved further away, only nearer to the other wall. The one with all the cells!

They had barred windows that were lower than the ones in the other prison. Earlier to see into the girl's cell I had to pull myself up, but these you could easily see inside. This was a bad thing....a very bad thing! The first cell

I passed I could see a small man in the far corner just under his window. He was bent on his knees scratching away at the floor like someone possessed. He only had trousers on allowing the gruelling marks to be seen on his back.

As he arched over, it made the metal pins that stuck out from his spine stand out even more. There were two, one either side of each spine bone and it looked as though he had been stapled from the inside out. His hair was black and matted into clumps that hung down like dead rats.

The moon started to come out from behind a cloud and it cast first a shadow around the room before lighting it up. I gasped as I read the words that had been plastered around every available wall space. The words “Come play with me” were written in blood that had seeped from beneath his broken finger nails. I swallowed back my disgust in the form of bile when his face turned slowly to look at me.

His face looked withered with red cracks in his pale skin but it was when he waved at me that it all became too much for a weak stomach that had been pushed to its limit. As soon as my eyes caught sight of the protruding bloody bones that were what was left of his fingers I threw up outside his cell. He merely shrugged his shoulders before returning his pointed finger bones to scratch away at the only space left untouched which was soon to be completed with his bloody ink. I had to steady myself on the pillar as I tried not to panic anymore. I concentrated on my breathing until it sounded somewhat semi-normal, before carrying on to the next pillar.

As I approached I knew there was something better behind the next door as a feeling of utter calm and a warm tingle under my skin told me so. At least it made the tears cease to fall...well at least for the minute anyway! A bright light got stronger as I came closer. When inside the cell was visible I had to blink a few times before my eyesight grew accustomed to the bright room as opposed to the dark and dingy ones I had been in for the last ten minutes. Inside there was an Angel sat on the top of what reminded me of a white step ladder. The room was painted white but was peeling away to reveal a grey stone wall underneath.

There were also strange white balls of different sizes around the floor

that kept moving round the ladder. He kept his head down and his shoulders where slumped forward as if he had given up. He was wearing only white trousers that looked as though they were made from paper but the strangest thing was his small white wings which came from his shoulder blades. The ends were tipped with a yellowish colour and the tops brushed against the wall. I now realised that, because of my fear, I had lost my barrier to keep the images of Angels and Demons in their true form out.

This must have only happened since entering this area as back in the Temple they just all looked like crazy humans, which they clearly weren't!

“You shouldn't be here!” A soft voice said, and for the first time since being down this hell hole, I actually felt comforted.

“I know.... I'm lost.” I stammered out.

“They're looking for you.” Wow, he sure was great for pointing out the obvious, next he was going to tell me “You're also a blond girl that just puked up because you just met Mr bloody bone fingers!”

“I know! Is there was a way out of here?”

“You won't leave, not when he wants you.” Ok, this guy had lost his appeal very quickly. The comfort thing had lasted about all of thirty seconds.

“Umm thanks.” I said sarcastically just as I was about to move along but then his voice changed into a deep scratching, as if he was suffering with a throat infection.

“Don't let him get you or Draven will lose, Chosen One!” At the very mention of his name I flung myself against the door and shook the bars.

“Tell me, what have they done to Draven? Where is he? Is he alright?” I hurried out my questions like my mouth was on fire. But he just turned his body to face the other way and ignored me.

“Talk to me!” I shouted but he just raised his finger to his lips and said,

“Ssshh, they will hear you.” And nothing more. I could feel another mental piece of string snap and I knew I would soon lose it altogether. I nearly ran to the other pillar as now the only thing in my mind was finding Draven!

The next door revealed a black room with only a small window for light which was the size of a cereal box. This had bars, crossing over casting diamond shapes over the room. Down under it was a black African woman sat with her feet crossed as though she was meditating. She was also clearly a demon as there were two huge twisted horns coming from the side of her head just above the ears.

She was naked and had a full body with lots of curves and a pair of huge breasts, but I couldn't make out any other features as she was so dark and had her eyes closed. The horns mirrored along the floor stretching out their own terrorising shadows.

I was about to back away when out of the darkness I saw two white eyes without pupils. They stared straight at me and the whites of her teeth appeared. She then unfolded her arms and placed the palms on the floor outstretched in front of her. I watched in horror as the shadows took on a life of their own and came out towards me. They moved like snakes along the broken tiled floor and made their way up the door, coming closer still. I kept backing up but even when I could no longer see inside I could still see the shadows reach up and out of the cell.

This made me momentarily forget about the gruesome wall behind me before it was too late. I backed up until I felt the moving wall but before I could react, a myriad of hands all reached out and grabbed a part of me. I squirmed and twisted to try and get free but it was useless. Their grips tightened around my flesh and pinched my skin, making my eyes water.

“LET GO!” I screamed and I turned my head around even though there was a hand around my neck. I came face to face with one of the soul's heads and it looked as though it was smiling like some sadistic toy in a shopping bag! It snapped its teeth closer to my lips and the restraint on my neck prevented my head from moving away. I tried to pull away with harder force

but a pair of nails dug deep into my shoulder cutting the flesh there, making me cry out in pain and also remain still. Hands pinned my arms and legs and others gripped my waist. The ones which couldn't hold on to something just started stroking my trembling skin as if I was now a new pet. They pulled at my clothes to get closer to my warm body and my sweater came off my shoulders.

As the snapping teeth got closer, I closed my eyes to wait for the deadly impact. I knew pain well but it never prepares you for the next round you face. I tensed my face making it as hard as possible before I could just feel the air it created from its violent movement. Thankfully its breath was caught under the thin barrier but the smell of hot sticky skin filled my nose instead of its foul breath. It was like being centimetres from the mouth of a shark, waiting for that precise moment to take you.

“Please don't!” I whimpered out one last time before its teeth came into to contact with my face. Then a great roar filled the room making it stop in fear. It wasn't the only one, as my body finally stopped struggling under demonic hands. I opened my eyes to see a large fanged mouth open just over my left cheek but it was frozen thanks to the large figure that stood in the far end of the room. The voice came again barking another order out like the hounds of hell and slowly the hands and faces started to retract back into the wall. I moved away quickly, but one last hand, that had its nails still embedded in my shoulder scratched back taking some of my skin with it. My torn t shirt showed four bloody lines where they had left their mark. I screamed at the pain that shot through me and when I heard a whooshing noise next to me I turned to discover who my saviour had been.

“Ragnar!” I flung myself into his arms and fell onto his solid chest. I could feel the tears of relief rise up and it was only when he grabbed my arms to gently push me back did I start to compose myself. Thankfully he had allowed me to get some of it out before finding out what I was doing down here.

He looked down at me from his great height as if to give me the once over. He eyed my wounded shoulder and a low growl escaped his lips. He

then punched his fist into the wall that had held me captive, causing a wave of agony rippling among the souls. The thick skin like substance bubbled in and out of tortured faces, like a stone thrown into a lake and Ragnar started to curse at it in a different language. Before it could stop showing its aftermath, Ragnar held me under the arm and started to pull me back the way I had come.

“What are you doing, we can’t go that way!” I tried to protest but his grip tightened making sure I was only going to go the way he wanted me to.

“You shouldn’t be down here, what were you thinking?” He tried to control his anger but this just enhanced my own.

“WHAT! Do you know what I have been through?” I tried to stop but against Ragnar it was probably like a fly bugging him.

“I can imagine!” He said in a flat tone and glanced at my shoulder. I pulled my sweater over it and said in my deflated tone,

“Its fine!”

“How did you even get down here? Draven will not be happy!” He just mentioned the magic words to bring me back from my tantrum.

“Draven...Is he alright, where is he? Does he know that Lucius is here?” From the look on his face he did not! He was still pulling me around the room until we came to a door that I had not seen before. He stopped to look at me just before we went through it and the shock at what I had just said was evident.

“My Master is fine, of course, and what is this about Lucius?” He said this just as he pulled me through an opening in the rocks and we were both in darkness. I had no idea where he was taking me but the trust I had in him made all my worries fade, like waking from a nightmare and finding someone on the other side to comfort you. The dark tunnel would have been the end of me if it wasn’t for Ragnar’s secure arms that lead me through it with ease. It made me wonder if seeing in the dark was one of his Demon powers. Of

course I didn't ask.

The dark didn't last long thanks to Ragnar's long legs, giving that I had to practically run to keep up with him. The end of the tunnel was also the end of all the prisons as now I found myself standing in the middle of an amazing circular room that was like a smaller temple.

This one was all white marble with a black and white diamond tiled floor. The walls were covered in black granite statues which sat on thrones of gold in their own little alcoves. Each one was different and they all represented different forces. Wind and the Oceans both had great sapphires and pearls encrusted on their feet, while Fire and the Sun had rubies and amber, held in their hands. There were others like Earth, Night and the Moon all with various gems embedded amongst their figures.

The part of the walls that weren't paying testament to these godlike effigies were, in their own right, masterpieces. Covered with so many patterns and carvings you didn't know where to look. As though your eyes couldn't take in all the splendour they created. You just wanted to touch them, to run your fingers along the channels that formed integral art. The room was bright like the day's sun was getting at it somehow but with no windows and the night not yet over, I couldn't understand where it came from.

Ragnar realised I was no longer following like the good little sheep he expected of me and that in fact I had stopped dead in the middle of the room. He rolled his eyes and raised his head before backtracking to me. I was still mesmerized by my surroundings, all jaw dropping and wide eyed like, when I felt his strong spade sized hand circle my arm and pull me in the right direction. We crossed the room towards a set of oak doors that looked like they belonged from an ancient church. The wrought iron fixtures creaked as the door opened by two other men. A shocked gasp caught in my throat as I recognised the purple robes I had seen earlier. Ragnar felt me tense at the sight of them and looked down to meet my panicked face.

"Do not fear, they will not harm you." His voice was unusually soft and I never expected that a creature so big could even muster up a whisper. The

effect it had, made me calm enough to be lead along through the doors into the next room. However this relaxed state didn't last as long as intended because as soon as I saw the Temple I had fled from now opening up in front of me I started to struggle.

“What are you doing? LET GO!” I was trying to dig my feet down but Ragnar didn't even feel my resistance.

“Don't cause anymore more problems, young one!” His voice was stern but his face looked guilty and now I knew why....He wasn't here to help me....he was here to catch me!

He turned to face me and his massive frame blocked out the view of the Temple at the end of the room. We were now stood in a wide arched room that was lit by crude twisted wood that flamed at the top and was making cracking and splintering noises. I could feel myself well up and his features softened through a watery vision.

“Why cry?” He asked me, but was he joking? I had been running from the Temple for what seemed like an eternity and now the man I trusted or, more like, who was trusted to keep me safe was actually my enemy. Before I could answer his ridiculous question a voice behind him brought those tears come crashing down my face.

“Bring her to me!” Ragnar moved to my side allowing the sight of the powerful stance of Lucius, dressed still head to foot in his black robe with the long hood covering his deadly features. My head screamed for ideas, some way, some how to escape but it came up blank. I was faced with two colossal barriers in the form of powerful Demons. Ragnar sensing I might try to run had come up the back of me and when I took a frightened step back, I was met with his impenetrable chest. His two hands held me still, one on my shoulder (the one that wasn't still killing me) and one on my arm.

“How could YOU! How could you betray him?” I screamed out in anger at my once loyal bodyguard. Meanwhile the black robe was coming closer and my heart sank further into the pit of misery that Ragnar held me securely over.

“My Lord!” Ragnar’s head nodded in respect, the way he would have once done towards Draven and at this I couldn’t help shouting out “TRAITOR!” But Lucius started to shake his head before moving too fast for my eyes to see. A black whirl was all I could make out before blinking twice, then, once my eyes had a moment to get back into focus, they were faced with the shadowed face looking down at me. Wow, demons are fast! His hand came up to my face and when I flinched away he growled making me shiver. He shook his head in what looked like disappointment and then delivered the final blow to my mental state, making me want to cry out at the cruel reality when he said...

“Oh Keira, why did you have to wake up?” The voice was smooth as silk yet it cut through this nightmare like a fatal blow. The voice was masterful but with a loving touch and emotional concern. The voice was lost to me in a sea of questions.

The voice was none other than that of....

Dominic Draven.

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Chapter 21

A Viking's First Life.

I wanted to cry out at this cruel turn of events. It had been Draven all along. It had been Draven that had led that sick display in the temple which had resulted in the murder and sacrifice of a young frightened girl. To say I was stunned didn't even touch on the boundaries to describe my mental state! I was, however, clear on one thing... I was very close to a fully fledged meltdown.

The minutes felt like hours before anyone said anything. I wasn't sure whether he was waiting for me to speak first or if he was just giving me time to process all that had happened. I found myself unable to look at him. All I could see was the black cloaked image plunging a blade into a naked girl's body until it eventually went limp. This was the worst nightmare of all. Everything else that I had seen tonight had been a light summer breeze during a skip in the park compared to this.

"Keira, look at me!" His voice cut through the silence like an impenetrable force and I had to suppress the urge to shudder. I finally made myself look from the floor where I had done all my thinking. He towered over me like an impending doom and I didn't know what I feared the most, losing the Draven I knew, or meeting the dangerous Draven that I knew he could be. But as soon as I met his intense eyes, I knew I had nothing to fear but the temper that I had witnessed so many times before, like looking down

the barrel of a smoking gun, the danger over but it could still leave a nasty burn once touched.

His powerful hands came to his head and removed his hood so that all his face could now be seen. His features told me he was less than happy but concern was evident in his expression. He started to study me and found my cried out eyes all puffy and red. My pale skin looked white with fright and my hair was now loose from where it had been pulled and tugged at from the wall of souls. So in short, I was a mess.

His hand came to my face and for a minute I found peace with the feel of his gentle touch on my cold cheek. He traced my jawbone before getting to my bitten lips and his frown brought me back to my situation. I moved my face away from his hand and stepped back, once again into Ragnar's solid frame. This made all the muscles in Ragnar's chest tense as I could feel it ripple through my back. This wasn't the only reaction it caused as now Draven looked furious.

"Would you like to explain to me exactly what she is doing down here?" His anger echoed off the Temple walls and it took me a minute to realise his question wasn't directed at me. Was he really going to blame Ragnar for this mess? My answer came in way of Ragnar's sorry voice.

"My Master...I do not know." It was the first time that I heard Ragnar sound anxious.

"You failed me! Find me the one that granted her access...NOW!" This was by far the most extreme I had seen Draven's temper get, as the solid stone walls seemed to vibrate enough so that stone dust fell from various parts of the room. Ragnar just nodded and bowed before shouting his own command at some nearby guards. I watched as he walked from behind me towards them and it was only when I felt my own arm being taken hold of, did I turn and look to find Draven pulling me off to one side.

He swung me round so that he could back me against a stone statue of a warrior on horseback. I now stood at the base of the horse's legs and when I looked up I saw the huge animal's head looming over me. My eye line

begrudgingly came back down to meet Draven's cold dark stare, which had me soon wishing I was on the horse's back next to the warrior.

"Who brought you down here?" His question took me back.

"N..n...nobody," I stuttered out in a timid voice.

"Keira, do not try my patience, WHO?" His shouting didn't help matters and it made me want to shout back but for some reason I had lost all fight in me. I had resorted back to that same Keira that I was when I first met him. I had returned back to my pathetic way of being intimidated and controlled. I could feel him invading my mind for the answers and I knew that I would have to find the control that made me different from the rest. I swallowed hard and took a deep breath before answering his interrogation.

"Like I said, nobody brought me down here. I found my own way... regrettably!" I added bitterly.

"You're lying! I warn you Keira do NOT lie to me!" He was getting more irate with each word from my lips but I had to defend myself.

"Am I?" I snapped back.

"I am going to give you one last chance!" One eyebrow raised and he folded his arms but with his fists clenching as the seconds ticked by I found myself looking over towards Ragnar for some comfort.

"There is no use looking at him for help, if he would have done his job properly then this would have never happened!" He barked out.

"Don't blame him! He had nothing to do with any of this. And I am tired of trying to tell you that I came down here on my own!" At this his eyes flamed deep purple followed by a change into his Demon form. The last time I had seen him like this was in a very different light but to be on the receiving end of his rage made me want to cower to the floor. However my dignity wouldn't allow me to react to such extremes, instead I just backed away until my body was flush against the cold stone. This however, wasn't the only reason for the cold chill that travelled down my spine.

He looked as though he wanted to explode, but then a figure behind him came into view and his twisted face started to calm. He turned his head as the cloaked figure approached but his body still remained facing me, all tensed, ready to pounce.

“Dom, calm yourself. Why would she need to lie?” Vincent’s voice had an instant effect bringing his glowing body back down to his normal olive skin colour and this was when I realised that sometimes even without my gift, that if they wanted to, Angels and Demons could make you see their true forms. This I had never known until now and it answered some of my unasked questions. I watched wide eyed as his human form returned and his anger subsided. I found myself mentally thanking Vincent and when I saw him wink at me, when Draven’s gaze fell back on me, I knew that he had heard me.

“Then explain to me brother, how did she gain access through the Temple doors?” He didn’t take his eyes off me while he addressed Vincent, but Vincent was the one person that wasn’t intimidated by his brother’s temper. If anything he had lain witness to it more than anyone else.

“I am sure the answers will soon reveal themselves in time, but until then, why frighten the girl you love into telling you something she clearly doesn’t know?” His words hit their mark and almost instantly his features softened into the Draven I knew. I stood deadly still like a caged bird as I watched another figure emerge and even though cloaked from head to foot, I knew it to be Sophia. She didn’t speak but now that we had a bigger audience Draven let out a sigh before barking his next command.

“Ragnar, take Keira back to my chamber, I will be there shortly.” He turned his back to me and this is when I finally found not only my voice but also my own temper.

“NO! I am going home right now and you can’t stop me!” I stepped forward at this and I could almost hear everyone hold their breath as I made my millionth mistake of the night. He stopped dead and swooped his head round slowly adding to the dramatic affect.

“Oh can’t I?” He said calmly looking me squarely in the face, but I stood firm.

“N...no! I am not one of your desperate prisoners or one of your...your frightened servants that has to obey! I’m... I’m my own person and I want to leave!” Everyone looked stunned and all I could hear was my heart beating as though it was about to explode out of my chest and into Draven’s arms.

He closed his eyes for a second, like he was also living his own personal nightmare and for a minute, I thought he was going to let me have my way but then he motioned for Ragnar to come closer.

“Very well, so be it! Ragnar take Miss Williams to my chamber, even against her will if need be! And by no means let her leave...Do you understand?” This wasn’t a question but more like a threat.

I was left dumbfounded! I couldn’t find the words that I wanted to scream out at him. This was the first time he had ever referred to me using my last name and the coldness of it hit me like a sledgehammer. How dare he! This time he did walk away from me and only when Ragnar came behind me to edge me forward did I react.

“YOU CAN’T DO THIS!” I started to run after him but Ragnar caught me before I even had a chance. I wanted to hit him, to pound my fists against his chest and make my palm come into contact with his arrogant face!

“Oh and Ragnar... do not dare to fail me again!” This was the last thing he ordered before walking back into the Temple.

“No, my Lord.” Ragnar said through gritted teeth and it was the first sign that he was about as happy as I was, with our situation. Ragnar seemed to take no pleasure in forcing me to go the way he wanted me to. I struggled and wriggled which was pointless against Ragnar’s iron grasp. He directed me towards a door I hadn’t yet been through and it made me wonder how big this honeycomb of endless ancient rooms and corridors really was?

We walked through into another room that looked more like a massive

cloakroom and this was the first time I had seen one full of actual cloaks! All of which were hanging down like lifeless bodies with their backs to us. They were all in order of colour and I guessed this was down to rank as I saw ones in red, purple and even white but there was none in black and I knew why. Draven was clearly the Master of this little Temple's cult and therefore only black was meant for him.

As soon as the door closed behind us, Ragnar had obviously had quite enough of me making a fuss, so he whipped me round to face him and when I was expecting to see an angry face, I was shocked when I was met with one of hurt and regret.

"Please stop making this more difficult than it has to be. I take no pleasure in forcing you to do something you clearly do not want to do, but considering your regard for others I will ask you to obey...just for once, make this easier for me." This had been the longest sentence I had heard him speak and it wasn't without its effect. I felt sorry for him. He didn't want to be my bodyguard any more than I wanted him to but we were stuck with each other and through this mutual suffering, it seemed to bring us closer or at least on the same page. So I just nodded my response and turned to walk by his side instead of in front with him gently pushing me.

"Thank you." He said quietly and this made my guilt start to show its nagging head.

"Why does he blame you?"

"I was ordered to watch over you and I failed." He spoke in a regrettable tone and my guilt tugged even more at my heart strings.

"So you were ordered to watch over me even when I am here?" I asked as we walked down past row after row of hanging fabric.

"If you mean at the club, then yes, but down here then no....never, you were never supposed to see this place." I stopped and when he turned he was faced with a very confused Keira.

“What do you mean?”

“No one of your kind has ever set foot down here before and it is utterly forbidden. Only the higher powers allow access to whom they choose and humans are not worthy...sorry!” He added the sorry when he saw me frown at his lack of compassion for ‘my kind’ as he called us.

“So that is why Draven thinks somebody let me in?”

“That is the only explanation and that is why I want you to tell me who? It is the only way to reverse my actions.” Ok, so he made a good case but it didn’t change the fact that I still had nothing to tell him. If only I could make him believe me.

“Ok, I am going to tell you what happened and then maybe someone will finally believe me and then I have a chance at convincing Draven.” Ragnar remained quiet as we walked through room after room until we finally came to not only the end of our journey but also the end of my story. At first he didn’t say a word, he just looked deep in thought until his bushy eyebrows raised as if he had an idea.

“If that is the case you can prove it.”

“But h...?” Before I could finish he grabbed my hands and examined them. This is when it clicked and I realised what he was looking for...the strange mark that was still left in my skin thanks to the vine covered door... for what I now knew to be the Temple doors. As soon as he found it he dropped my hand as though I was going to infect him, then he staggered back and started muttering something in a different language. He was shaking his head like he was seeing a ghost.

“What!...what is it?” I was getting even more frustrated with his strange behaviour.

“It must all be true...you are the cho...no, never mind... it is not my place but this does change things.”

“Oh goodie, more cryptic clues, that’s all I need!” I remarked

sarcastically before walking back into Draven's chamber. It wasn't long ago when he was calling it *our* room but as it seemed, it sure didn't take long before Draven started shifting his weight around!

I walked back in the room and my heart sunk at the sight. It was only a short while ago that I was wishing to see this room again more than anything else in the world but now it was cold and dead without the warm Draven I loved, to be here to welcome me. Instead I had the temper filled Demon boyfriend to wait for and knowing I was soon to be in the firing line was not a thought that kept me all warm and fuzzy inside!

Ragnar made the lights illuminate the room and I half expected some horror to be there waiting for me. The past few hours had been some of the most traumatic I had ever experienced and I was feeling mentally and physically exhausted. All I wanted to do was curl up into a ball on the bed and wake from this nightmare to find Draven's arms round me, reassuring me it was all a dream. Well, that wasn't necessarily true, I also wanted to grab my stuff and make a break for it but the chances of that happening were like Draven walking through the door full of apologies and a big bunch of flowers....never gonna happen!

Instead of the bed I walked over to one of the lush, velvet, armchairs and sat down like a deflating fairground balloon. Ragnar eyed me cautiously, fearing I would snap if he said or did the wrong thing.

Some things had been bugging me about Ragnar and I knew that I would never get another chance to find out about my Viking protector. So I raised my chin and decided tonight was as good as any to add even more to my night of discovery.

"Is the reason your English is better because of me?" This is something I had noticed lately. The more time I had spent round him the easier his accent and wording seemed to get.

"Yes. My master thought it better to improve my English while I would be spending more time around you. He thought it would be less challenging for you if you could understand me better. So I learned." He didn't seem as

bothered with this request as I was. I couldn't believe the lengths that Draven thought it necessary to go to and for what? Making it easier for me to be protected? For me to be comfortable with it all? I was starting to understand why I was a thorn in Ragnar's side.

"Tell me something, you didn't want to be my bodyguard...right?"

"No I did not."

"Because you didn't like me...right?" His eyes met mine and for a moment it was like he was looking at someone else before answering me.

"I don't like humans!" Wow... blunt... much!

"Why, you were human once?" I replied without trying to get my back up but it was hard.

"I was, but once I was reborn my view on mankind changed!" He looked uncomfortable with where this conversation was going but if I was to bond with this Demon then I would first have to understand him.

"And what was it that changed that view?" This time it was he that was frowning but still, he continued.

"Because I saw how far man will go in search of power. In my culture we believed that the end of the earth as we knew it, would find its peace in an ultimate battle between Gods and the forces of evil. Where, in which the old gods would perish and a new peace would come. This we called Götterdämmerung which means the 'twilight of the gods'."

"And this is your reason to hate us. Surely you can see after all these years that we have evolved?" At this statement he looked unconvinced and he just folded his tree trunk arms, making the material on his black t-shirt almost tear with strain.

"Ok I don't buy it...something must have happened to you! You talk about the lengths man will go to in search of power but for what I have seen tonight there must be the same ambitions in your kind, or Draven wouldn't

need a prison like that under his friggin' house!" At this I crossed my own arms but I winced as the pain shot down my back thanks to what Demon fingernails had done.

"Remove your top!"

"What!" I replied in horror.

"You need to be healed before he returns." He stepped towards where I was sitting but I held up one hand to stop him.

"Its fine...looks worse than it is. Anyway, don't change the subject." I was being foolish I know but I needed to feel the pain to be able to deal with Draven's temper. As though it would give me the anger I needed to challenge him on equal grounds, besides, since the last time that Ragnar had healed me I decided that it should only be left to Draven to touch me this way. Ragnar had clearly done quite enough for me already in the line of Draven's duty.

Ragnar just shrugged his indifferent shoulders before walking back to one side of the door frame to lean upon. This door I couldn't keep my eyes off as I was still waiting for Draven's fury fuelled body to walk through.

"Am I not right? Why need that place if none of your kind craves more power, enough to break the rules and defy Draven?" I continued with my argument but Ragnar seemed unmoved by my observation.

"There will always be those who feel the need to try and control a domination which is not there's to control."

"You're talking about Draven's domination aren't you, because he is...is King?" It was even harder to say it out loud than in my head. I was still trying to process all that I had seen tonight but to add the day's events as well... then it became a whole new ball game. I had witnessed Draven's rule first hand tonight and I was terrified that I would forever see him in a different light. Would I still see him as Draven my boyfriend or Draven the supernatural King of a secret world?

"There is a big difference in how your world and mine are controlled.

Yours has appointed many men as leaders to gain power how they see fit. In my world, we have but one great leader that is a direct blood line to the gods themselves, both beneath and above. His word is final and undisputed but most of all he does not exist purely to kill all those he cannot conquer because he already conquers all. He has no need to start wars for power like man does. He has fought our wars to protect the balance in which he was born...that is what makes him a great leader, that is the difference.” This was obviously something he was passionate about as it was the most animated I had yet seen him get.

“And throughout history do you claim the same circumstances? Men back then were brutal in their quest for power, killing innocent people with little or no consequence and yet here you are trying to say we still operate with the same methods. Come now, you were a Viking were you not? You must see a difference!” Again he just shrugged his shoulder which made me lose my cool.

“That isn’t an answer!”

“I agree the methods of man have changed through the years, yes, but now instead of men to fight your wars, man has created the means to destroy not only their own race but every living thing on a planet. A planet which does not belong solely to them. Which is worse, an army that destroys a country or a single man that can destroy earth by pressing a button?” Ok so he had a bloody good point and one that was getting incredibly difficult to argue.

“You have a lot to learn, especially about our kind but you are smart and strong willed. This will help and is no doubt down to your gifts but it does not mean you are always right, young human.”

“I can imagine you would have sung a very different tune when you were human!” At this his face changed and I could almost see the memories of his human days fill his eyes with sorrow.

“When I was human my views were different, yes, but how I came to what I am now is the reasons they changed. My murder played a big part in

that.” I gulped at the word “Murder” and sadness replaced my frustration.

“What happened to you?” I said in a low voice, full of concern for my unlikely friend. I waited for a facial feature to tell me he was uncomfortable with me asking but there were none. If anything he just leaned back and looked casual on the door frame before starting his first life story as a human.

“My name is Ragnar Lodbrok and I was a Viking warrior who became King of Denmark and a large part of Sweden but it was short lived.”

“Because you were murdered for it?” The look on his face told me I guessed wrong.

“No, I was murdered because I chose a loved one over my throne, over the rule of my people and my need for power.” I was stunned to silence, so he carried on his heart-breaking story.

“Before I became King I had a family. My wife was also a warrior, we call them ‘shieldmaidens’ and that’s how I met her. She became injured in battle and when the wounded were rounded up one of my men discovered a woman lay in the dirt dressed like a man. I remembered seeing her fight and her skills on the battle field impressed me enough to save her life, even though she had been fighting against me. Her name was Lathgertha and she bore me five strong sons and an even stronger daughter. She had the beauty of her mother and the wisdom of a great leader.” He closed his eyes briefly, seeing his daughter behind closed lids, I imagined.

“She was my light, so she was rightly named Dalla which means ‘brilliance’ in my old language, Norse. It was my love for the girl that was to become my end.” I had tears welling up in my eyes and I hoped he couldn’t see them from the other end of the room.

“Why, what happened to her?” I whispered my question.

“The English arrived on our lands and found Dalla and her mother by the river. We found the bodies but no ship in sight. My wife and daughter fought with the courage of an army as my wife’s body was among the fifteen dead.

My daughter was nowhere to be found but after torturing the only survivors, I soon learnt that she had been taken as a gift for an English ruler. The King Aella of Northumbria was to take her into his bed before probably killing her.” I gasped at the thought and Ragnar looking past it, ignoring my sympathy.

“My sons were all around the world on their own conquests and knew nothing of this. So against the better judgement of my advisors, I left my kingdom taking only two Knarr’s and set out for your homeland.” Oh great, not only was I human, I was also English, making it a double whammy in the eyes of Ragnar. No wonder he hated me!

I had given up trying to hide my tears as soon as he had mentioned the death of his wife. I could just picture it, the two Viking beauties fighting to save themselves and each other. Back to back, taking them down, one by one they fell, only it was all to be in vain. I wondered how many of them were there and how different this story would have been if they had given up and ran. Would we even be having this conversation? Would he even be here?

“What happened when you got to England?”

“I took my small army and went to rescue my daughter but I was too late. I found her lifeless body strung from a tree outside the gates. She had not met an honourable death by the hands of that tyrant, so in a rage, I ordered my men into a suicide mission and stormed the castle. We did not get far and in my uncontrollable wrath, I had lost my senses. My men died for nothing and I had been captured only to serve an even worse fate.”

“What did they do to you?” I whispered before trying to sniff back yet even more tears.

“The king ordered me to be thrown into a pit of snakes, where they slowly bit me to death. Draven had followed my life with great interest because of my blood line. I am a descendant of Odin, God of war, and the leader of souls. It was therefore natural for me to take my place by his side. My only request was for my revenge to be carried out by the hands of my sons.”

“And was it?” I knew the answer as soon as I saw the sadistic smile creep upon his rough large lips.

“Yes, my sons fulfilled my wish and the wish of the Gods. Aella met his end by the mighty blood eagle.”

“Does that mean he was eaten by birds?” I asked naively but when he laughed I felt embarrassed.

“Well what is it then?”

“I think you have experienced enough horror for one night.”

“I’m a big girl, I think I can handle it!” He rolled his eyes at my stubborn behaviour before giving in.

“Alright, but don’t say I didn’t warn you! This method of torture and execution is performed by cutting the ribs by the spine before then breaking them. This is so they resemble blood stained wings... and then of course we pull the lungs out before pouring salt into the wounds but usually the victim had died by this point.” He said this so matter of fact that it chilled me to the bone. This just proved that my pig headedness had nearly made me vomit! He must have seen me turn green and proved that even Demons love stating the obvious.

“I told you so.” He said in a very satisfied tone. I gave him a fake smile that I added to a sarcastic look of disapproval.

“No wonder you hate me.” I stated shamefully.

“I didn’t ever hate you.” He tilted his head like I had misread everything he had ever said to me.

“But you said...”

“I said I didn’t like humans but that was never the reason I didn’t want to be your bodyguard.”

“I don’t understand, then why?” I shook my head as a natural reaction.

“Do you remember when I said you reminded me of someone?” I nodded and looked down at my feet as my face went red.

“My daughter had the same wilful sprit.” He also looked down to find his own feet and for a moment we shared in the same awkward silence for reasons relating to the same. This was named Dalla.

That was why he found it so hard being near me. I reminded him of the daughter that he had lost in the most awful way you can imagine and now he had to protect me. He was now forced to spend painful time around me. My guilt was unbearable.

“I will speak to Draven.” I was sure once he knew the circumstances he would relieve Ragnar from his duties concerning me.

“Why would you do that?” he looked confused.

“So that you don’t have to protect me anymore.” He was shaking his head like I was missing something.

“He already knows my feelings, it was one of the reasons that I was chosen to guard you. He wanted me to form a connection, a bond so that I would guard you with my own life.”

“But... that was so cruel. To play on your history...your loss.” He shook his head before rubbing the back of his neck with a large red skinned palm.

“Not cruel, it was smart and I would have done the same.” At this I reached my limit. I leant my head down into my hands and lost myself by counting up all the problems I had caused. I wanted to run away and try to make sense of all this craziness. I was human after all and knew that I would soon crack. I wondered just how long the conversation would take between me and Draven to go through everything that happened today. Tonight had made me realise just how little I knew about the man that I loved.

I wanted to say more but I couldn’t find any words of comfort or any of

my thoughts that would have made sense to say to him. I wanted to tell him that I was sorry. Sorry for everything, his loss, his lack of faith in humankind but more than anything I was sorry for all the trouble I had caused him. In the end I didn't have time to say any of these things. Ragnar had straightened up at the sound of his King's footsteps coming closer. I held my breath and tried in vain to still my beating heart.

Draven marched into the middle of the room between me and Ragnar and it looked as though his temper hadn't yet subsided. If anything this added to his impressive beauty. He was a hard and handsome man painted on a rough canvas. The lower part of his face was covered in black stubble and his hair had been pulled back from his face in a black cord. This made his chiselled features all the more startling. He still wore his black cloak which made his dark eyes look as black as this horrible night. I couldn't take my eyes off him and his didn't leave mine. I was hoping to find love and compassion in them but there was none. He hid it well and I knew why.

This was the only way that Draven knew how to operate. He was going to try and frighten the answers out of me. But one thing he didn't count on was how well I knew his games, because even though he clearly intimidated me, I was never truly frightened of him. I knew he would never hurt me but I was wondering just how far he would take this interrogation of his.

He tactically removed his cloak with one flick of his wrist and then threw it toward Ragnar to take away. I had to catch my breath at the sight of his tanned naked torso that was ripple after ripple of solid muscle. Ok, so that intimidation level just went up a notch! He knew what he was doing as it looked like he knew me well also. He only wore black fitted trousers with a black belt that had his family crest in brushed steel at the front.

"Did you find out who needs to be punished?" He asked Ragnar without looking at him and even though he couldn't see, Ragnar still bowed his head in respect.

"My Lord, she is telling the truth." At this Draven let out a growl and turned his head towards him, making Ragnar take a step back.

“LEAVE US! I will get to the bottom of this myself!” At this he turned his attentions back at me but Ragnar didn’t leave and Draven noticed.

“My Lord, if I may? She holds the mark to prove her story.” He also found my eyes and I mentally thanked him, for at least one person was on my side.

“Is that so?” Draven was being an arrogant fool now and I felt like chucking a glass of water in his face and telling him to grow up...but I was no way brave enough, no matter how much foolishness still remained with me.

Draven nodded to the door as way of an order for Ragnar to leave but still he remained firm.

“You have more to say?”

“Yes...I think you should pursue this after she has had some rest....I think she is too fragile for your questions...she is also hurt.” At this Draven looked furious, turning to face him. I felt like running in between them both and protecting my loyal friend.

“Wohin?” (Means “where?” in German)

“Schulter” (Means shoulder in German) Ragnar said and nodded towards my neck which made me pull my sweater closer over the four deep scratches that had been burning since they were made.

Again at this Draven growled a low groan of disapproval and it made me wish Ragnar would just leave to save himself.

“You are not *under* my rule to think for me! Incompetent fool! When I give an order I expect it to be obeyed. NOW GO and obey me Ragnarök. I will deal with you later!” At this my smooth skin was replaced with bumps and I pulled my legs up underneath me closer to my body. Ragnar admitted defeat and left after his usual,

“Yes my Lord”.

Now was the part I was dreading, time to face the music, time to face the Demon for...

Draven and I were finally alone.

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Chapter 22

Who Wanted a Normal Life Anyway?

I was determined not to be the one to break the silence first and thankfully I wasn't. After a small eternity of playing 'Who could stare the most?' He finally looked away and my heart broke when it was in disappointment.

"Come here!" Was all he said in a controlled voice but I still didn't move. This was Draven's way of dealing with things, this was due to his high

ranking and now he was pulling rank with me. He stood with his arms folded waiting for me to obey like all the rest do but I just couldn't do it, this however he took in the wrong way...

"If I didn't know any better I would say you fear me... is this so?" He raised an eyebrow when I didn't answer him, so I folded my own arms and looked even more like a spoilt child before answering,

"NO!" Was all I said before turning away from him but not before I caught sight of a little smug smile form on his lips, which he quickly discarded.

"Good, then prove it. Come here!" Again with the orders! If I had been in my right mind then I would have done as he'd asked but I just couldn't think straight. I didn't have time or the comprehension for his dominance. I felt like I was drowning in a whirlwind of memories I didn't want. I saw him stood there like some cloaked God ready to control his armies. Ordering the destruction of anyone that got in his way!

NO...no, I wanted to scream out at myself for even thinking it. I was just so confused, my mind was like a box of puzzle pieces that had bits missing. I was trying to convince myself that what I had seen in Draven was a necessity but there was still so much I didn't yet know. He was waiting for me to say something and I decided to play the only card I had. I just couldn't let him see how intimidated I was. I needed him to see that I was still his equal here and not just another servant to obey.

"I don't have to do what you command Draven, especially when you refuse to let me go home." I said in a weak and unconvincing voice, which made his arms unfold as he walked over to his desk to lean upon it casually.

"I am not commanding you to do anything unreasonable, you are injured and I want to fix it. As for the going home, that I will not allow because I need to get to the bottom of all that has happened tonight...all that you have seen." He rubbed his forehead with his fingers to express his feelings on the matter. He knew what I had seen and this had been his worst nightmare. I had seen the truth.

“I’m fine!” This was a lie as I could still feel the blood that had trickled down my back but I continued anyway.

“I don’t need your help, all I needed was for you to believe me and the fact that you didn’t, well...it speaks volumes.” This was also a lie as all I wanted was for him to scoop me up in his arms and comfort me. I had needed nothing but his help throughout my whole experience but when the time came, he had destroyed that need by proving himself the enemy behind my fear. I still couldn’t get out the thought of him killing that girl.

“Is that so... well in that case, I will have you taken to the hospital immediately, because let’s face facts, I know how much you love it there!” He replied sarcastically and I could feel the tears start to rise. As soon as he saw the hurt in my face it looked like he regretted it instantly.

“That was cruel.” I said in a weak little voice to prove it but he knew this already, after all, he had said it for that purpose.

“Yes...Yes it was... but I think I made my point. You are in pain and unless you like the feeling, I suggest you come to me.” He was right, I was in pain but the pain of his coldness was far greater than any gash I had in my flesh.

“I think I will take the hospital, thank you.” I replied bitterly which made him laugh and not in a nice way.

“What...Injections, stiches and above all questions?” He nodded to my covered arms as if to spell out my fears. I pulled my arms into my body as if to protect them in some way, which is where he found his answer.

“No, I thought not.” He shook his head as if he was very tired of all of this and it made me do the same.

“I fear that my patience cannot take much more, so for what I am to do, I apologise.”

“Apologise for what?” I snapped back at his lack of compassion in his ‘sorry’.

“For this!” Both his hands came out and I thought he was motioning for me to come towards him again, of course it was only when the arm chair I sat in started to shoot forwards towards him, did I realise the reason behind it. It moved too quickly for me to move from as it travelled across the room and before I knew it, he was towering above me, getting exactly what he wanted...total control. He could see me calculating my next move and before I could move from him he had me caught by the waist.

“Oh no you don’t! Just behave!” He lifted me up and perched me on the desk before spreading my legs to step closer into me. This way I couldn’t go anywhere and even when I tried to push him away it felt like an impossible task. It took me back to when he had first kissed me and I had tried to push him away before. Of course back then that had only been because of a guilty conscience, one that had been unjustified as he had me believe he was engaged to Celina. Now I was doing it for very different reasons and expressing myself was very much a part of that. I was trying to express my unwillingness but when his hands circled both my wrists and held them still, it was the end of that.

“Keira be still!” he barked at me and finally I obeyed. He sighed in relief when I gave up and his eyes for the first time softened when they met mine. He let go of my wrists before finding my shoulder and when I cried out in pain he froze. I couldn’t see his face as I had closed my eyes to help stop the tears but I could feel his hands now gently removing my sweater. The feel of his touch on my bare skin had me coursing with a familiar feeling and I couldn’t help wanting his lips to find mine. Talk about mixed emotions!

I open my eyes finally to find him frowning (No changes there!) but he wasn’t looking at me, he was examining my torn shoulder. He didn’t ask like last time, he just grabbed a handful of material before tearing it from me. I was left with half a t shirt and half a naked top half, which also exposed the damage. I saw him shake his head before saying,

“This isn’t good.” At which I wanted to reply “Well durr!” but I didn’t think it would go down well, so I opted for the silence route.

“What did this to you?” He asked through gritted teeth and I could see

he was trying hard to keep his anger under control.

“A wall of hands grabbed me!” This made him swear out in another language and I wondered if I had just heard the F word in Latin?

“Draven, that isn’t going to help!” At this he rolled his eyes and decided not to respond. He lightly pushed my hair back and carefully pulled the bits that had stuck to the bloody mess, making me wince as he put the red clumps to the other side of my neck. Then he started to get ready to do something as he slipped down my bra strap which was in the way.

“Unfortunately this is going to hurt, try to relax, ok?” Relax! Was he joking? After what he just said, that’s as bad as climbing to the top of a mountain and telling someone afraid of heights not to look down! I knew what he was going to do but I couldn’t understand why it would hurt. He had done this to me twice before and it never hurt, it actually felt kind of nice. Like funny tingles lighting up my blood stream.

“Ready?” He asked and when I nodded, I found out just what pain he was talking about. He placed his four fingers at my back and traced the cuts made in my skin. As he moved, he fused my skin back together and the burning felt like someone else was behind him pouring salt and vinegar into them. I closed my eyes once again so that he couldn’t see the pain in them but I couldn’t help the screams that came, making it more than evident at how this was feeling. Luckily it didn’t last long and by the time my breathing had got heavy, I was in his arms being held. His head was above mine and his hand held on to the back of my head, keeping me close to his body.

“Shhh...I know it hurts but it’s all over now. Just breathe...that’s it... deep breaths.” He was trying to calm me down and with each new breath I took, I was starting to feel better. All that was left was an itching where the new tissue had been formed (or so I guessed). He could feel it to so he manoeuvred my head so that I could look up.

“Better?” He asked and I opened my eyes at the sound of his voice, only when doing so I wasn’t faced with the human Draven, I was now looking at the purple energy that flowed through his veins. His huge wings looked

blacker than they did all the other times and when looking at them this close I could see that each feather coursed with the same energy. He took note at where my eyes were staring and I saw them ruffle slightly as if he was uncomfortable with being studied.

“Does it bother you...seeing me like this?” His deep purple eyes searched for the truth in my own and I wondered if my face had given me away. This had been the first time he had ever asked me anything like this before and I felt sad that he thought it would have ever affected me. Even after everything that I had seen, this was one of the things that never bothered me. Surprise yes, but not in a negative way.

“No, it doesn’t bother me but what does, is when you don’t trust me!”

“Here we go.” He said in a condescending tone and then moved backwards to give me space. The air that was created by his wings turning quickly blew my hair back. I jumped down from the desk making him say “Careful!” But I ignored his remark and used the desk for support rather than a seat. I crossed my arms across my chest once again and it was only then when I noticed my near nakedness. I angrily pulled the rest of my top off and reached for my sweater from where Draven had thrown it but before I could get there he had it in his grasp and was handing it to me. I noticed the blood stains inside it and let out a groan but when I tried to put it back on, he stopped me.

“Wait...you need cleaning up first!” I was about to protest but he was already close to my body again and had produced a bowl of water with a soft wad of material. He was looking down at me again making my body start to yearn for his touch and when his hand rested on my good shoulder I started to bite my lip at the feeling it created. His other hand was soaking the cloth in the water and I had little option to do anything but remain still. I watched him ring out the cloth with one strong fist before placing it on my skin, making me shiver.

“Cold?” He asked and I just nodded making him place a finger in the bowl and re-dampen the cloth before continuing cleaning my back. It was now warm.

“Thank you.” I whispered and he looked happy to receive it. We remained in silence until he was done and when his fingers left my now pink skin I wanted to pull him back to me. He stepped away once again and let me put the sweater back on, without looking at me. I decided that if we were going to have this ‘talk’ then I couldn’t keep staring at him in his other form.

I closed my eyes and listened to the noises around me until I heard something to pinpoint my thoughts on. I heard footsteps not far from the door and a bird cry out into the night. I wondered if it could be Ava and then realised that I hadn’t seen her since that night by the cabin. This was all enough to change Draven back to his human form as when I opened my eyes again he was back.

“All normal again?” He had known what I had been doing and for some reason I felt guilty but when he laughed at my frowning face I let it go.

“So what now?” I said just to fill the silence that he seemed content with.

“Why don’t you tell me how this all started. What on this Earth’s plane possessed you to find your way down to my Temple?” The hairs on my neck stood on end at the sound of the demanding Draven that had found his way crashing back.

“Oh, so you finally believe me now?”

“I might if you tell me what actually happened but until then I will try to reserve my judgement!” Grrr! This made me so mad that I could have screamed at him, which is precisely what I did.

“What horse shit! Your judgement?” I’m not some bloody servant of yours that is about to be punished for not serving drinks properly or that poor girl down there that you murdered!” This last part certainly got his attention all right, I thought he would burst into flames with anger.

“You know nothing about that “GIRL” you seem to think of as so innocent!” He was trying to control his temper by tensing his muscles and I could start to see his veins bulging along his arms.

“I know what I saw!”

“Oh and what was that, me murdering an innocent human girl as some kind of sacrifice to the Devil himself?” He let out a roar like laugh that chilled me to the core.

“Don’t mock me! Do you have any idea what I have been through tonight, you...you,”

“What?”

“Jack arse!” At this he let out a sigh before holding the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger.

“Is that why you thought I was Lucius?”

“Yes. I didn’t think it was possible for you to be even involved in something like that, let alone be in control of it.” This must have hurt because he dropped his hand to his side and looked at me in disbelief.

“Right... Well if that is the case, why NOW are you so intent on believing me some leader of an evil cult that murders young girls, for what... pleasure?”

“And what else am I supposed to believe? I saw it all with my own eyes and until the bitter end I would have never thought it was you behind the blade.” At this he was in front of my face in less than a second and he placed a finger over my mouth before the gasp could escape it.

“Well it was me behind the blade Keira, but for good reasons, ones I fear you won’t understand. And just to clarify, that ‘girl’ was anything but the good and pure human you so wrongly believe but she was however a very dangerous Angel!” He let that thought stew in my mind for a while before continuing. He gave me space as the words ‘Dangerous Angel’ sank in.

“But she...she was crying, she begged for me to save her...I...” I wasn’t only saying this for Draven’s sake. I needed to reassure myself with what happened.

“You were played Keira. She used you... she wanted you to help her escape and if she had succeeded, she would have then killed you. I am just thankful she couldn’t access your mind. Your gift, although extremely frustrating, it does however keep you safe. Although in this case, if my powers had worked on you like I had hoped, then you would still be in my bed safely asleep and blissfully unaware of what happened tonight.”

“You mean what you did!” I corrected but again this didn’t go down well and his reaction made him throw a chair across the room turning it into mere splinters. I let out a scream but he just shouted out.

“I MEAN WHAT I HAD TO DO!” As soon as he saw the fear in my eyes grow he calmed and his hand flew out to the remains of the chair, making it fuse back together so that it looked like it did the day it was made.

“I’m sorry.” He said with exasperation before continuing,

“I didn’t mean to frighten you, but Keira you must understand, that what happened tonight was never anything I ever would have wanted you to lay witness to.”

“Oh and lying to me is so much healthier?”

“In this case, yes it would have been.” He looked at my shoulder to make his point but I just shrugged.

“So that is why I was so tired in the car, you were controlling me?”

“Yes and given the circumstances, was that so bad?” I knew the answer to this wasn’t the one I would give. He was right in so many ways, but that didn’t make it any less moral.

“What, taking away my free will...mmm let me think...YES, I might find a problem with that! And anyway, if you knew what you would be doing tonight then why even have me come with you? Why not let me stay at home where there would be absolutely no chance of me finding that...that place?” I flung my arms up to emphasise my point.

“Keira, when will you understand it is simply not safe for me to leave you alone, a few hours yes but a whole night?” At this he shook his head like he wouldn’t even contemplate the idea.

“Well it wasn’t exactly safe me being here, now was it?” At this he growled and I rolled my eyes at him.

“Yes, well if Ragnar had done his job like I ordered, then none of this would have happened.” Now this got my back up!

“Oh no, don’t you dare blame him, this was my doing and mine alone. I will not have you scorning him anymore than you already have done...he had his reasons for not standing outside my door all night!” At this Draven looked shocked at my concern for my new colossal friend.

“It wasn’t long ago that you were singing a very different tune. Is there something I should know?”

“God, could you be any more paranoid?” Ok, so when I replayed that back in my mind I now realised why he was finding it amusing. For one he was counted as a kind of God and the other is that since he had first met me, I had been nothing but trouble! First, with my sicko stalker and now with Lucius after me, who could really blame him.

I know right about now would have been the perfect time to tell him about my nightmares and that I seemed to have a new Demon, vampire stalker and I’m pretty sure that later on I will regret not doing so but I had my reasons. If Draven was like this over just one incident that didn’t even include Lucius then I couldn’t bear to think how bad he would be if he knew just how many times I had been ‘visited’. He would have me locked up in a bloody tower just to be safe! I would not only have Ragnar as my bodyguard but a whole bloody invisible fleet! An army outside my door to escort me to college every day. Ok, so it might come in handy in history class, considering most would have been around when major historical events were taking place but I’m pretty sure that would still class as cheating and not research!

“What I meant was that I found out about his history. Draven, how could

you do that to him?” Note to self, stop pissing off Demon boyfriend! At this he looked like he would soon turn purple again but when he closed his eyes to gain control, he wasn’t the only one taking deep breaths.

“Listen to me carefully Keira, as I will only say this once. What I order my people to do is my business and mine alone. If I choose to have one of my most faithful subjects to take care of you when I cannot, then I would rather that a bond be formed as opposed to an indifference!”

“But...”

“BUT NOTHING! I will not have this conversation with you, do you understand? There are more important issues to discuss than for you to be telling me how I should be conducting my business.” At this I gave in. What was left for me to say to this anger fuelled king? He was right anyway. What right did I have to tell him how to run his kingdom? He had saved my life and kept me safe, by using his own judgement and here I was questioning that! I was a fool.

“I’m sorry, you’re right, I shouldn’t question your methods or stick my views into your business. I should just go. You can have Ragnar take me back.” I started to walk towards the door and away from him, mainly so that he couldn’t see the tears that rolled down my already salty cheeks. I felt one hand being pulled back behind me softly and with a small tug he turned me round to face him. I couldn’t look at him and as a result my tears fell from my tired eyes, landing at his feet. His hand came to my chin and lifted it up so that I couldn’t continue to be a coward and face him. I met soft eyes as the last shreds of temper melted away at seeing me cry.

“Oh Keira!” He whispered as both his hands came to my face to wipe all my tears away.

“I never wanted to put you through this. I never wanted what I am, to affect you this way. You spoke of a normal life and now I realise that this is something I can never give you. It pains me to see that I am the cause of this!” He lifted his tear soaked hands to his face and looked down at them. He looked disgusted as he turned away from me and I was near to crying until I

couldn't breathe in fear of what was to come. Was this the end? After all I had endured, after all we had been through...it couldn't be. I wouldn't allow it!

"What are...are you saying?" I spoke between sobs but even at the sound he didn't look at me.

"I will have Ragnar take you home." Was all he said and as a result I was close to crumbling to the floor.

"NO, no, no! You can't do this to me. I was stupid and I wasn't thinking! I see that now but please...you can't... you just can't!" I let my body fall to my knees and my devastated head followed. I cried even more when I felt his hand on my bowed head and I realised he was knelt on one knee in front of me.

"What Keira, tell me, what don't you want me to do?" His desperate voice asked with as much pain as my tears were made of.

"Leave me...I don't want you to leave me!" And there we had it...I had finally broke. After a night from hell I lost it. I had zero control left and Draven knew it as I started to cry it all out. He scooped me up into his arms and I buried my head into his chest letting my tears invade his soft skin over hard muscle. I gripped my hands tightly around his neck and never wanted to let go. I didn't know where he was taking me but my tears wouldn't run dry at the possibility that it was going to be somewhere without him. Then he spoke and relit my heart.

"Never! I will never leave you, do you hear me. Not until the day you no longer want me. Not until the day you stamp on my heart and set it on fire. Not until I hear you say that your love for me has been replaced with hate!" He pulled me to him tighter to prove this before releasing me on the bed but he didn't leave me. I felt his body get as close as he could to my own before making the covers devour our bodies in a blanket of secure warmth.

"Rest now, we can resolve this in the light of day." I didn't say another word as I rested my emotional body and intertwined it with the man I loved

and as if by hearing my thoughts the last thing I heard before crying myself to sleep, were the same thoughts from him....

“I love you.”

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Chapter 23

Calm After the Storm.

I wasn't sure if I had just had the worst night of witnessing nightmares in real life or whether it was just in my dreams. My thoughts felt like they were covered in a deep morning fog and the heavier the clouds, the more I seemed to be lost in the darkness of my mind.

I could feel something comforting on my back. It was a circling motion

but when I turned round I could see nothing there. I started searching for anything, listening, needing something that I couldn't place. I was walking through a misty white blanket of space. Then I heard it! My name was being spoken...no, not spoken but called.

I began to walk without seeing. I was calling out with no voice. I smiled when I recognised the voice and thanks to my reaction the voice got deeper, stronger and I knew he was nearby. Draven was searching for me also and the thought made me break out into a run. My legs pushed harder but after only minutes his voice started to fade and I pushed my body even farther. It was almost as if I was chasing him and although I was shouting out, there was no voice that followed the feeling.

Finally I stopped and stood breathless and breaking. His name escaped from my lips and for the first time I heard it being said. I hung my head down in disappointment. Then my heart flipped over as I felt a hand behind me on my shoulder and Draven's voice whispered in my ear,

“Wake up Keira!” It was smooth like drizzled cream over strawberries and this thought had me licking my rough lips. The feel of my tongue going over cracked skin made the fog start to clear and when I could see again, I knew exactly where I was. I was lying in Draven's bed sprawled out like a star fish. He was lucky his bed was enormous and could probably fit a baseball team in it or he would be teetering on the edge.

I shifted around and moaned as I usually do in the morning. My limbs felt like jelly but my shoulder felt great. I now knew the reason I could feel a motion on my skin in my sleepy state. Draven was making circles with his fingertips over where I was hurt last night. It didn't take me long to realise I was naked and my hair was loose and pushed to one side. Before looking at him I raised my head and looked over the edge of the bed. I saw my clothes lying there in a heap where Draven had obviously discarded them. I felt him laugh next to me before speaking.

“You didn't need them.” His voice was back to the usual ‘self confident’ Draven I was used to and when I looked round to face him, I saw not only what his voice told me, but that it was now calm waters again. He was

propped up on one elbow staring at me. He looked like he had been awake for hours but he also looked bloody gorgeous! He could have been straight out of bed and done a photo shoot for the sexiest man of the year! This had me turning red as a boiled beetroot and fearing what my own appearance looked like. His hand went to my cheek and his lips followed but then after a frown he kissed my forehead lightly.

“I love it when you blush. However these lips need work...Keira, what did you do to them last night?” His fingers went to the problem in question and he ran his thumb over them.

“I guess...” I had to clear my throat before continuing, as thanks to the crying mess I was last night, well it had left me sounding like I had swallowed not only a frog, but a toad, lily pad... and hell, any other pond life to go with it!

“I guess I gave them a rough time.” He laughed and it sounded like a symphony to my ears.

“More like a massacre! Let me fix them.” But before he could touch them again I had moved away making him growl. I remembered what it felt like last night and I thought after that, I would prefer to heal the normal way. He read my mind of course.

“It won’t hurt, not this time.” When I didn’t come back to him, he held one of his hands out like he was offering a peace agreement.

“Trust me...please.” After asking me like that, I think I would have followed him off a cliff...oh no wait we had already done that once. I was going to have to start thinking up new analogies, ones we couldn’t possibly do together, ones like ‘I would have gone naked parachuting with him’ because let’s face it why would he need a parachute, he did have wings!

I moved back into him and when he pushed me gently on my back I closed my eyes. I felt him lean over me and when he placed his hand over my mouth I couldn’t stop them from trembling.

“Trust me.” He said again. Then when warmth started coming from his skin they stopped trembling and instead, I was filled with a tingling that made them want to be kissed. It felt like he was generating little lightning bolts from his fingertips, creating a storm on my lips and soon he could feel them smile under his hand. It only took seconds and as usual, when he was finished he asked,

“Better?”

I still kept my eyes closed for the moment as I replayed the horrible night’s events back through my tired mind. I felt like Alice that had just fallen down the rabbit hole and had just woken up to find herself under the tree. What did she think, what did she do? Did she just get up and go home to carry on with her daily routine or did she have to go to therapy for the rest of her life? See these are things they don’t tell you in fairy tales...the aftermath!

Draven could obviously tell that I needed some time here, so he let me carry on with my mental whirlwind without saying a word. However this didn’t mean that he didn’t do anything and the feel of his touch on the side of my face was somewhat distracting. I wanted to put everything that had happened last night behind me so badly, that it felt tight in my chest with every breath I took. But I couldn’t! I knew I could never just pretend it hadn’t happened or even worse ...that it didn’t even matter. I needed explanations. I needed reasons, whys and hows. But my fear was...would Draven understand this need?

“Yes, he would!” Draven’s voice broke up my thoughts and now created new ones. He could hear my thoughts because through the turmoil in my mind, he had gained access while my guard had been down. I opened my eyes to find him back in his original position, propped up on one elbow and staring intensely at me.

“I know you need answers Keira. I was fully expecting to find you with a fragile mind and a worried heart this morning and I am fully prepared to explain everything you want to know. Last night I regret not taking the advice of not a servant but an old friend. Ragnar was right. He could see, where I had been blind. He knew how fragile you were and was looking out

for your best interests. I, on the other hand, just wanted answers and someone to blame...for this I am greatly sorry. I realised in the end, but I fear it was too late. Will you ever forgive me?"

I listened in silence and with a blank expression as I had never heard Draven not only sound so sorry but so sincere with it too. I was a bit blown away by it all but it didn't take me long to follow with my answer.

"Shut up and kiss me!" This he took as a good thing because the kiss was one of the most passionate I have ever received. Just when I thought it couldn't get any more intense....well it did! The fact that we couldn't follow it through with mind blowing sex was a bit disappointing but I didn't know whether this played a factor to how great the kiss was.

Draven had always excelled in the field of kissing, touching, taking my breath away, well you get the picture. But this time his kiss made me feel like I was a teenager again. Heart pounding in chest, crazy new feelings you couldn't understand and usually down below. His hands explored my face, neck, back until he finished by holding me so tight to his body that I felt like we were one entity. Once it finished and he moved back to see my face, he was met by a very different Keira. I couldn't keep the daft grin off my lips and the sparkle out of my eyes. I was, to say the least, very, very happy again.

He moved his head back further to take in my full expression and his features turned into confusion.

"What is it?" He asked me in a comical little tone and I guessed that I must have been staring at him as if we had only just met. As though this was a whole new side of Draven that I hadn't yet encountered....that of course being the sorry side.

"Nothing...it's nothing." I tried to pass it off as what I said it was and I decided to focus all my energy into rebuilding my mental wall. It didn't take me as long as usual as something in me just seemed to click. I didn't need to strain my hearing on other noises or concentrate on what they were. Maybe I was growing stronger? The more I was around Draven the more adaptable I became. Surly that crazy stuff I had witnessed last night should have sent me

over the edge?

I could feel Draven waiting for me to speak but I was too busy running through all the important questions I needed to ask him. This morning didn't change things just because his frowning face had been replaced by one of sorrow. I still needed to be in the know. He couldn't shut this all away as being his business as he had done last night.

I moved a little further away from him and he shook his head slightly to show his disapproval. However I didn't give in and neither did he make any attempt to pull me back. This time I was glad of it. I had to be stern. I had to get to the bottom of last night so that we could move on from it. I reached over the bed and grabbed my zip up sweater to put on. Ok, so I was making a bit of a statement but it felt like the only control I had, even if it was the most insignificant. I could feel his eyes searching for reasons in my actions but I gave him none. Once comfortable and semi dressed, I pulled the covers around my naked bottom half and sat up to face him.

“Ok, let's have it!” Was all I needed to say to make him release a sigh. This had been the conversation he had been dreading and it was written all over his face. A line formed on his forehead and it was the first sign of his many years older than me that I had seen. (This excluding the fact that he was most probably thousands of years older) He hesitated and it was quite obvious that he didn't know where to start.

“Ok, I'm going to make this easier for you by telling you what I know and you can just fill in the gaps...Yes?” He nodded and showed his palm by way of complying.

“So I gather that phone call you got at my sisters, was what, some kind of calling card to the Temple?”

“Of sorts, yes. But look Keira, I don't know how many details your expecting to get from all this.” He was trying to be stern but I didn't back down.

“Oh no you don't, you're not going to placate me with that! You're

going to tell me what I want to know and answer my questions whether you like it or not!” At this he raised his eyebrows to display his shock and I thought he was going to follow it by getting angry but when his brows smoothed, a smile played at the edge of his lips, displaying his amusement.

“Very well, but then can you promise you will try and understand my position, when I tell you things you are not going to like hearing?” This time I nodded and he took my answer for what it was, a reserved yes.

“When I received that call it was indeed to tell me that the temple was awaiting me and the girl made ready.”

“You mean the dark haired girl...that was in the cell, that you?” I couldn’t finish the words and say killed because it just wasn’t the type of thing you would say to your boyfriend. Or at least any normal boyfriend but there was nothing normal about Draven or about me for that matter. Usually couples argued about money or jealousy, who does the washing up and what TV channel they’re going to watch but NO, with me and Draven it was all about Demons, Angels, visions, dreams and evil stalkers! What I wouldn’t give to just argue about something mundane, like him not picking up his dirty underwear off the floor!

“That GIRL has been wanted for some time indeed, and trust me, when I say for good reasons!” At this his face hardened at the word “girl” and I could hear him grind his teeth as he spoke of her.

“Tell me?” He shook his head at first but he didn’t outright tell me no, so I knew I had leeway.

“Draven, it’s time to trust me” This got him alright.

“Ok, but I warn you, it will play on your pure heart and I fear I cannot stand to see you so upset as you were last night.”

“You can’t protect me from the truth, no matter how bad it is.” He didn’t respond to this but instead he showed me just how hard it was by rubbing his forehead with his fingertips in frustration.

“What do you mean by wanted?” I asked after he had been silent for a while and the sound of my voice brought him back to a conversation that he really didn’t want to be having.

“Our legal system is not so different from yours. The only difference is that we are more likely to follow through with our punishments. These of course are very different. When one of my kind breaks the rules there are different steps that have to be taken. First comes the warning, where they are stripped of their powers for a time. This is depending on what rules have been broken of course. But if the defendant hasn’t been caught for this warning to be administered and they carry on their destructive ways then they become part of the ‘Wanted’.”

He watched me shift my weight to get more comfortable and waited for me to finish. If anything he looked happy for this little distraction and seemed content on waiting for me.

“What did she do?” This of course was the question he had feared. His face screamed out these feelings.

“She was a young soul, being that of only fifty odd years. She was ill taught and had little to no guidance. These however are no excuses for her to not know the rules clearly. As I mentioned last night, she was an Angel but as you know, this does not automatically spell out clean soul.” This I had remembered him telling me. The major misconception humans held was that Angels were always good and Demons always bad. This however was not the case and this story would no doubt prove this old ancient fact to destroy the stone in which it was thought to be set.

“She was brought into her host with the good intension of lying low the first ten years, which is the first rule of being reborn. For those who are not used to the human world they are given a series of guide lines and are assigned a possession officer.”

“Is that like a parole officer?” I asked naively and when he smiled, I felt my embarrassed cheeks start to burn.

“Of sorts, yes but they are more like guidance counsellors. They are there to guide them for the first years of their lives.”

“Why aren’t they called guidance counsellors then?” I know this question didn’t really hit number ten on the “important things to know” scale but for him at least, it seemed to be nice little distraction. One side of his lips turned upwards, which he tried to hide with one hand which was resting over his chin. This is when I realised I must have sounded like a child asking where babies come from.

“We call them possession officers because they possess new souls. They own them. It’s a bit like being a parent. They are in control until they reach the right age and are safe to make it in the world alone.”

“Did you have one?” At this he let out a series of raucous laughter that made the bed shake. When he finally composed himself he clocked my frowning face and for once, it was he that was biting his lip. He was trying very hard not to laugh again and I would have been laughing with him if it weren’t at my expense.

“Sorry...it was actually a good question and as usual, unexpected. The answer is no, I did not have one.” He was now just managing to compose a straight face when I asked him why not?

“Let’s just say that Vincent, Sophia and I were kind of...umm...inbuilt with the knowledge of how it all worked....Anyway, where was I?” He pushed his thick black hair from his forehead, where it had rested thanks to his uncontrollable laughter. I instantly bit my lip at the sight. This was one of the hardest things about having such an amazingly handsome boyfriend, every time he did things like that, you found yourself wishing he would just shut up and undress you! I knew he had asked me a question so I had to think back through the sexy haze that was Draven.

“Umm...” I gulped before answering “Possession Officer” I whispered and he shot me a look as if to say “What’s wrong with you?” but he didn’t ask and I was glad for it. Instead he just gave me another half-smile before continuing.

“Ok, so back to my point. Hers was not very attentive to her studies and quit her after only a year. She wasn’t even given a human name but after her escapades she was rightly dubbed Vetala. This was because her ways resembled that of the Demon from Hindu mythology. Vetala was believed to be an evil spirit that possessed the dead, made humans mad and killed children along with causing miscarriages. Of course, she was a rogue Demon that cause havoc in small villages but the stories most always outlive the souls that they have sprung from. In this case it looked like history was repeating itself and once again we intervened.” I didn’t know whether he was pretending not to see the disgust in my face or whether he had just not noticed.

“Wait a minute...so you’re telling me that, that young tiny, girl down there was a ...a child killer?” This had brought his full attention back to my face and his hands stroked my cheeks affectionately before catching some escaping tears. He tilted his head to one side while giving me a wide eyed look of concern. It reminded me of when my family looked at me after the incident with Morgan. After I had been kidnapped, my family never seemed to be able to look at me the same way again, well who could blame them. I certainly couldn’t.

“Yes she was, along with other things. She became an artist in the art of manipulation. She liked to feed from the pain and suffering that would flow from the hopeless families that had lost loved ones. Parents who had lost the dearest beings to their hearts. She was a monster and to the bitter end she tried to control you and make you set her free. First she tried pity and when that failed, she showed you something that angers me to my very core. Keira, I’m sorry you had to be reminded of the pain you went through.” Of course he was referring to the vision she had made me see. She had played on my own living nightmare that Morgan had put me through. She knew my weaknesses and used them to her advantage.

“Wait, how did you know what she showed me?”

“When I finished her off, I saw through her eyes and scanned through her memories of her last encounters. When you screamed out I knew what

you had seen in the Temple but I didn't know what you had seen before you got there. I hoped that you hadn't found her or more like she hadn't found you. But then when I saw her re-enactment of what you had gone through at the hands of that...THAT SICK F...!" He paused before he could scream out his feelings for Morgan and closed his eyes tight as if trying to lock out a memory.

"Sorry, but as you can imagine, it affected me in a way you can't believe." At this I saw the pain replace his anger fill his eyes and his eyes flashed from purple to two deep, black lagoons in the dead of night.

"How did she even know about my past?" I asked this more because I wanted to get him talking again, to try and get him past that image that no longer only haunted myself. He answered with just a name, one that I would have never expected to pass his sweet kissable lips.

"Layla!"

"WHAT! Are you serious? What the hell has she got to do with this?"

"Try to calm yourself, I will tell you but you have to trust me, she can't get to you." This wasn't as reassuring as it was supposed to be, I will tell you! I remained silent as a sign that he could carry on but now I knew why this had been such a hard story for him to tell me.

"You remember me telling you that Layla escaped?"

"Well no actually, you didn't tell me, I found out, remember?" I said giving one of those, "See why you shouldn't lie" looks but he ignored it.

"Well after she stabbed you, she went into hiding...or at least she tried. My men found her and I imprisoned her until she could face a trial. I needed to get to the bottom of her hate but before I could ...umm question her....." at this I butted in,

"You mean torture... right?" He rolled his eyes at me but seeing as I was so used to this by now I let it go.

“Alright, yes I do, but the bitch deserved to die! So I will continue now that I haven’t the need to spare you on the dark details. Yes, I was going to torture her and I would have enjoyed doing so, given what she tried to take from me and Keira, be warned, that if anyone else was to try again, then I would do what I feel is necessary, for my vengeance is black and deadly!” From the bulging vein that pulsated through his tensed forearm and eyes that could have you begging for mercy in seconds of just once glance, I would be going against everything I ever believed in, to deny this to be true. He was terrifying! I gently placed my hand on his stone like shoulder and the feel of my skin on his, seemed to bring him back to my level of calm.

“I believe it,” I whispered and he just nodded in response. I however made a mental note never to mention Layla’s name ever again.

“I will continue!” When I gave him my concerned look it was he, for the first time, was to say “I’m fine” before continuing with the facts.

“I need to explain what the connection is between the two. See Layla, before working for me as a waitress, was a possession officer. The position didn’t suit her and after a string of bad judgments and poor excuses for educated prodigies she was renounced from her position and stripped of the powers she had been granted. This made her resentful but she appealed to me for a softer sentence giving her the chance to rehabilitate. I gave her an opportunity by working for me in the club but with the chance of getting her old role back. She became impatient and frustrated but I still don’t know the full reasons behind her hate towards you.” I shifted uncomfortably and played with the bottom of my sleeves as I usually did when hearing things that were hard to take.

“I soon learned last night, why it was Vetala who broke her out from the prison and when I saw it all through her eyes it started to make sense. See Layla was Vetala’s possession officer and although she left her, she considered her a mother figure and that she didn’t leave her but freed her. Layla had formed a bond so strong that she must have called to Vetala for help before getting caught. How Vetala got her out I don’t yet know but I do know that Layla betrayed her and pushed her into her own cell so that it

would give her longer for the head start. By the time Vetala was discovered Layla was long gone.” Once again he was tense at recalling all the events at Layla’s deception.

“She played her prodigy like a fine tuned instrument and let her play out your own dark symphony to you. Layla knew what she was doing when she told her about your past and I believe her last command was to get to you if she could.” I was shaking my head by the time he had finished but it got to a point where I was losing my not so cool persona and my cheeks were on fire with my own hate.

The name Layla stuck in my throat like a piece of gum I knew I shouldn’t swallow and the seven year myth of it remaining in your gut became a good analogy for this sick reality. Would I ever get past this? The list of people that wanted me rather dead or hurting was mounting at an impeccable rate.

“Wow! I mean, really, wow...Why, I just don’t get it! Why does everyone want to hurt me? See in my world I’m a nobody! I just go by unnoticed and stay quiet. I keep my business to myself and my past firmly locked behind closed doors. But in your world I’m like this hunted possession that people want to hurt and hate! Why can’t I have both...Why can’t I have you and be happy without having to sacrifice my sanity?” Ok, so I knew I was ranting on and being all self- pitying but come on...what else did I have to face? What was going to be next? And was I ever going to be ready for it?!

“I’m sorry Keira but this is my fault. This is why I wanted to keep you from me and why I should still be trying to.”

“NO! Don’t you dare say that! I am in more danger without you and you know it. Besides, could you really just walk away from it all now...after what we have been through?” My glazed eyes looked up to search for the same feeling as I had.

“No, I simply couldn’t do that...not now. Not after experiencing you first hand. This skin to touch.” He traced a thumb down my neck and it vibrated as my breathing got more intense.

“These lips to kiss.” This short sentence ended over my appendage in question and it did anything but calm my breathing. My heart rate went through the roof as he pulled my leg making my body follow to the underneath of him. He held all his weight over me as his kiss intensified. The feeling that coursed through my every nerve made every horror I had witnessed worth it ten times over. Being hunted meant nothing anymore as long as I had this feeling to hold on to.

His hands started to push up my sweater and the tingles shot up my side like he was communicating with every hair follicle on my skin. I wasn't the only one breathing heavy and when I felt Draven's impressive erection rise, I knew I would have to find the senses to stop this bliss. I was still on and not that he would have minded a bit of mess, I certainly wasn't ready for that undignified step to be taken.

His tongue was creating magic in my mouth as it moved in its skilful dance. I waited for him to move to kissing my neck as he usually did but when he got there I found myself arching into him and my head rolled back to give him greater access. I was losing control and knew if I didn't stop it all now I never would. Thankfully, when his hand found the inside of my thigh and the thought of the piece of string he would soon find there, it made me find my much needed sense and I sat bolt upright.

“Hey!” He said in disapproval, and then his hands tried to reach out to pull me back down into the same position. When I shifted out of his grabbing hands he let out a low growl that rippled deep in his throat.

“Whoa, cool down there cowboy. Painters and decorators are in, remember?” He let out an easy going laugh at the analogy I'd used, before calming down his libido. He gave me a bad boy grin as he shifted back to the side of me and seeing him behave himself I relaxed my tensed muscles.

“See what you do to me?” He rubbed the back of his neck with his large palm and shook his head like he was remembering what the feel of my lips on his, did to his manhood. I thought this the reason because I too was still trying to control the commotion he caused to my nether regions. Raging river came to mind!

“Well, when I’m off then I *can* do that to you!”

“When will that be again?” He asked in a hoarse voice that curled my toes.

“Friday...maybe Thursday, if we’re lucky.”

“If only I possessed the power to change time.” At this I think he was only half joking as when I looked over to him I couldn’t help but see the covers had created a tent near his loins. I knew I had to get up as now I was dying for the bathroom but seeing as I didn’t have anything on underneath, this was going to be like dangling the carrot. I pulled my sweater down as far as it would go but before I got up, I couldn’t help but pat his member and say “down boy!” before jumping up quickly before he could react.

“HA! With you showing off those perfect little pink cheeks peeking out...not a chance!” I was glad I wasn’t facing him as I went as red as rare steak and the feel of heat coming off my cheeks could have quite easily have cooked one! I giggled as I walked into the bathroom and the change in my heart was so different to how I felt now, it was hard to keep up. One minute life was throwing a curve ball at me in the form of Lucius and then I was getting a homerun when waking up next to Draven every morning. I felt almost giddy at the sound of Draven’s voice that not only entered my ears but also my soul but now I knew I was that way where I could no longer be able to live without it.

The first thing I did was to go to his huge gilded mirror to examine the damage of last night’s escapades. It was as bad as I had feared. My hair was loose but hung down in messy knots. My eyes were a dark blue, ringed with red circles that gave evidence to a night’s crying. I had blotchy skin on my pale cheeks and it looked like I was suffering from a bad hangover.

I cringed at the sight and after first doing my morning routine I decided to splash some cold water on my face to calm my hypersensitive skin that I had put through hell last night. I ducked my head and cupped my hands ready to capture the running water and when my hands were overflowing I threw the contents over my face. I took a few heavy breaths before re-examining the

tired face that belonged to me. I lifted my head expecting to see my stormy eyes judging my features but couldn't help the scream that erupted at what my vision found there.

A pair of blood red eyes frozen in time. A heart shaped pair of plump, hungry, lips that overflowed with blood. Purple fuelled veins that spread out from my eyelashes over my cheeks, like an infection that was slowly being pumped through my blood stream. As my mouth opened to scream once more, a pair of large white teeth gleamed in the morning sun.

I was faced with not the Keira I knew....No...I was now faced with the Vampire Keira...

The one I didn't ever want to know!

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Chapter 24

Changes

Was I dreaming?! I closed my eyes so tight until they hurt and I was shaking my head but none of these actions helped get the image from my

memory. It was only when I felt the presence of someone behind me that I tried to force out the breath that had locked in my chest. It couldn't be him! Lucius may have dominated my dreams but this was real wasn't it? This morning with Draven had happened?

I felt a hand come to my cheek and I let out a scream.

“Keira, what's wrong?” Draven's voice interrupted my fears and when I opened my eyes I saw that it wasn't only my demonic reflection there in his mirror. Draven's worried frown looked at me but he couldn't see me the way I had seen myself. I had to try and find some words that would make sense but considering all I could see was my perfect Draven behind me, as opposed to my Vampire image that still remained.

Why couldn't he see me? Why did he not turn his head away in disgust? My eyes held no normal stormy blue in a pearly white frame. They had been replaced by a black iris in a pool of blood. My skin looked that of a diseased dead girl and my lips looked hungry for flesh. I looked further down to my bare neck which held two bloody spots where my life had been feed on. I closed my eyes again and told myself to wake up.

“Keira look at me! What's wrong with you?” Draven's voice was shouting at me now. It was only when Draven started to shake me that I felt myself returning. I expected to close my eyes and once opened again, I would find that I was still in bed but I wasn't. I was still in his bathroom in front of the fairy tale mirror that held the source of my new nightmare....this one staring at me and what I had become.

Then something happened. It was like a black veil that had been lifted from my face and cleared my senses. It took me a minute to realise that I was finally back! My face had returned to its usual mundane self and I let out a gust of air like I had not been able to breathe in hours. I turned round into his tall body and sunk my head into his chest. He was waiting for an explanation but he at least gave me a minute to think of one. His hand held the back of my head to him and I wrapped my arms around his waist, linking my fingers at the base of his back. He leaned down his head to talk into my hair.

“Tell me little one, what did you see?” He whispered in such a way that I would have been a fool not to tell him the truth. I wanted to tell him everything that I had been keeping from him but when I played it out in my mind it didn’t go as well as I had planned. I kept seeing his rage again and again like someone was showing it to me on a loop and although his anger wasn’t focused on me, I would no doubt receive the brunt of it. He would hide me away from everything. I would never be able to live one minute of the day that wasn’t completely controlled by Draven.

This would give him the last reason to lock me away to keep me safe. I couldn’t do it! I had to win this battle myself. I had to make my own mistakes and follow them through. I mean, it was only his mental control over me that I had to fight and let’s face it, if I could blank out Draven then how hard was Lucius going to be. I just needed to find his weakness. I needed to learn more about him to figure out the key to beating him.

Then something even stranger happened. My mind flipped suddenly and I found myself wanting to tell Draven everything, to open up and have it all spill out like a downpour. It was the strangest feeling to be so torn, like half of my mind wasn’t my own....what was wrong with me?

Just as soon as these thoughts entered my mind and before my mouth could open I was once again flipped around and thinking the opposite. I couldn’t have Draven worrying even more than he should be. Deep down I knew I was making a huge mistake and knew I would pay for it at some point but for now, I set my mind at its current course and walked down its path.

“It was nothing...I just stubbed my toe and nearly fell but I’m good now.” I know I wasn’t putting on the best show of mental health and when he grabbed my arms and pushed me back so he could see my face, his however, said it all....disbelief.

“Keira, you screamed out, like you were terrified!”

“I guess I’m still a bit nervy that’s all.” He looked like he wanted to say something more but he could see that if he pushed the matter then it wouldn’t have helped the situation. He would never know how thankful I was for this.

“Come, you need more sleep. You look exhausted.” This was Draven’s way of saying that I looked awful, I was sure. Actually he wasn’t wrong. It was like I needed to wake up for an explanation of the night’s events but now I knew it was all ok again, my body started to relax and the signs that it had been deprived of its usual eight hours sleep were starting to show. Of course the only problem I had now was that I was terrified of what I might dream!

“No I shouldn’t...if I do then I might not wake up till tonight and then I would miss out on the day. I have too much to do as it is.” This made the hand, that he had on my side, tighten slightly.

“And that is?” This question I found a little insulting, considering I did have other things in my life that needed my attention. Ok, they weren’t much but I still wanted to do well in college and get myself a degree, even if I had messed it up the first time. But still, better late than never...right?

I decided to keep my thoughts to myself but it did make me turn my back to him and I walked back into the room without a word. Just the sight of his bed made me let out a yawn that was big enough for bats to have flown out of.

“That wouldn’t happen if you slept.” Draven’s voice was behind me at my ear making me jump. My reaction made him rub the tops of my arms as though trying to reassure me that I was safe.

“I will have you know that I have lots of stuff to do!” I said lamely but I could feel his smile before I could see it.

“Ah is that what this is...bruised pride. Let me rephrase my question, what I meant to say is, what is more important than much needed sleep for my beautiful vixen?” His tone was so easy and confident that I tried not to smile.

“Umm let me see...a ton of college work, cooking a Sunday roast, my job, friends...”

“Preparing for the human *Justin* to take out!” Ok, this made me wince as

I remembered we hadn't actually talked about Draven overhearing my conversation with Libby in the kitchen.

“Ah!” Was all I could muster.

“Yes ‘Ah’ indeed!” I turned to face him and could tell that this was one conversation I wouldn't be able to worm my way out of. I took a step back to look him in the face without straining my neck at his impressive height. It was only now that I realised he was fully clothed, wearing a long sleeved, light blue cotton T shirt that was V necked. This was added to dark indigo jeans and black boots. My eyes traced his fine-tuned indents of muscle that could be seen through the material and when he folded his arms across that hard chest I couldn't help the gulping noise I made.

“Look, could we at least hold off this drilling until I put some clothes on?” I nodded to him and then motioned back to me. Of course I was still only wearing a sweater that was barely covering my nether regions. This thankfully worked in my favour as it brought a devilish smirk to his lips.

“I happen to like this look.” He said as he tilted his head in order to get a better view. Then I saw a brief purple tinge flash in eyes that looked as though they wanted to devour me. I felt the heat invade my cheeks before turning away like a shy little girl. I looked about the floor for my jeans but came up empty, which now had me wondering what he had done with my clothes last night?

“My side!” Was all he said and I suppressed a giggle at the idea of us already having our own sides in bed.

“You know, if you had let me grab some stuff last night then I would be searching through a bag right now, not to mention fresh clothes.” I said as I walked around to his side finding my underwear and jeans, along with a pair of odd socks that I had put on yesterday. These weren't the only things that I noticed. On his side of the bed there appeared to be more room than I had first thought.

From the other side of the room it looked like the bed was at the very

end of the space, with his side very close to a stone wall. But now I was here I could see that there was even room for some more furniture. There was a bedside cabinet which was made from oak with wrought iron studs all down the legs. The base held a burnt orange and red tiffany lamp that looked like a wilted flower that was melting down to the black metal base. I followed the stone wall along to find another tapestry hung there.

I wondered why I had never taken in these details before but then the answer spoke behind me.

“It was a gift.” He was referring to the old looking picture that ancient fingers had constructed God only knows how many years ago. The edge was a series of different symbols boxed round their own frames and inside the main picture consisted of a peaceful sunrise casting its warm glow over a sandstone kingdom. Little yellow homes topped with terracotta roofs that wound round and round the hills until they met up with a spectacular curved stone palace. The palace itself was a work of art and reminded me of something right out of the Lord of the Rings novel. I couldn’t help but reach my fingers out to touch the material, as if checking it was real. I could feel Draven behind me, watching me as usual, which is what made me hesitate.

“Its fine, go ahead,” he whispered and I ran my fingers over the thousands of little bumps that made up one of the most beautiful pictures I had ever seen. I don’t know what it was about it but it captured you into its world. It made you want to see its own view from those windows and feel the heat on your skin from those powerful sun beams.

“It’s beautiful!” I wanted to ask him about it but before I formed words, he was making it disappear with one strong sweep of his arm. He had it gathered up and pushed it to one side like a curtain. I turned and looked up to ask him what he was doing but he just nodded back to the empty space which now wasn’t so empty. The magical picture had gone but it had been replaced by a dark, mahogany door.

“Do you want to know why I told you not to bring anything?” I stared at him blankly before speculating.

“I thought you meant...well you know, girly things, which I found, thank you.” I was referring to the box of supplies that had been left out for me to find in the bathroom, which I had been greatly thankful for while completing my morning routine. He laughed lightly before shaking his head.

“That you can thank Sophia for but this...well you can blame me for, she was only doing what I asked, so please, keep that in mind.” I didn’t see his face when he said this as he was opening the door for me to walk through first. He didn’t give me much time to think about what it could be, because as soon as I walked in, I quickly discovered what it was he thought I might freak out at.

I took one step down into the biggest walk in wardrobe I had ever seen. The ones on MTV cribs had nothing on this baby!

It was a huge room, almost double my own at home, and had every wall covered with hanging material. I couldn’t tell but I think my mouth was hanging open. I looked to one side and it was obviously Draven’s side as it had hundreds of suits hung in a specially designed closet that looked as if it rotated. There were lights above that made the colours stand out, not that there was much colour to speak of. Draven obviously preferred his black suits above any other but there was another section that held his more casual stuff, t shirts, row upon row of jeans and then there was a whole other section with nothing but men’s footwear.

There was a massive island in the middle that was suitable for Draven’s height but I just felt like a child next to it. It had frosted glass doors that fronted different size drawers, which filled every space on all sides.

I heard him laugh behind me and before I could turn to him he had turned my body to face the other side opposite his.

“This is your side,” he said happily and I nearly lost my balance. Was he joking?! Of course when I saw what he called my side, I knew he wasn’t. There was a wall full of clothes that looked all to be in my size. It was only when I looked closer that I noticed it was everything that I had seen yesterday. Tops I had picked up and put down because I refused to pay the

stores prices, some I remembered hoping they would be on sale and I could get them later at a much lower cost. I even recall Sophia frowning at me when she would see me putting the clothes back.

I walked up to the endless amount of clothes and ran my hand along them. It was then that I would see some of Sophia's choices for me that she had seen in her expensive designer stores. Oh my God, there was even a dress there that had a price tag of six months wages!

"You...you can't. I can't let you do this!" I stammered out but I had a feeling as soon as Draven heard it, that it wouldn't make much of a difference.

"And why not?" He said unfazed by my refusal.

"Because, it's too much! I don't need all this...I can't pay you back for all this" This made him come up behind me and take me by the waist.

"You know I don't want you to pay me back, that's not why I did this! And besides, don't you think I owe you from all the clothes I have destroyed. This way at least I won't have to feel guilty" My mind was swimming with excuses and ways of saying no but it was as though his voice was trying to smooth over these thoughts with ones of acceptance and approval. Of course the added arousal his hands created on my sides did make my own thoughts harder to hear. And then he tipped it his way by speaking but a few words at my neck.

"Please, just let me do this." At this I couldn't refuse him.

By the time I had finished getting fresh and ready, it was now lunch time and I was starving. Draven had left me to conduct some business which I refrained from asking him about. After last night I thought it best to give myself a little breathing space between me and his 'Work'.

I had showered the last traces of the night's horrors away. However, I still couldn't bring myself to look at my image in the mirror. The thought of

me changing again was just too much to bear. When Draven had been around I had used every ounce of will power I had to push that vision from my mind but now I was alone, I just couldn't do it.

What the hell was happening? Was this the power that Lucius had over me or was this part of his sick plan he had in store for me? I kept repeating over and over the part when Draven had first explained about Vampires. He had told me that Lucius couldn't change humans, only the supernatural. So why me? Surely this was just a trick, a sick and twisted stunt to make my mind weak. I didn't feel any different that was for sure, ok maybe a little stronger but that had happened ever since I had been with Draven. I had put it down to the happiness I felt whenever he was near.

But most importantly, why whenever I found enough mental power to think about telling Draven everything, was it quickly replaced with doubt and denial?! I was fighting myself and it was so exhausting I felt like crumbling to the floor every time I thought about it.

I had hoped the shower would have worked in washing away all my fears but as I let the water flood my skin I had still felt his hands on me. I scrubbed and scrubbed my skin until red and blotchy but that didn't help the feeling that gnawed away at my brain. It was as if Lucius was right behind me mimicking my every move. When my hands were washing my hair, his fingers were running through every strand. When my palms soaped up my body there were his thoughts of desire looking down at me. Those icy eyes taking note of every curve, every mark years of living in this skin had made. I closed my eyes and tried to banish what the idea even did to me. Why was I getting aroused by the idea? I wanted to hate myself! I wanted to scream out "What is wrong with me?"

I felt like I was in some way cheating on Draven. I wanted to put it all down to Lucius and his control but deep down I was just terrified that there was some substance behind it. I couldn't help myself feeling something more for this tortured soul that had been consumed by bitterness. His touch had been gentle but I had to keep reminding myself that the motives behind them were deadly.

Now, of course, here I was with a towel wrapped round me looking at the vastness of colour which was my new wardrobe. Trying to pick from all of this was, I know, the least of my problems but for some reason I was finding it next to excruciating. I mean before I didn't feel that what I wore around Draven was that important but now I felt like it was an issue. I started to question what he actually thought of my dress sense. Well not that there was much sense to it...I mean comfort always played a big part.

I let out a big sigh and after standing there for nearly twenty minutes I decided I was being paranoid. When I started to filter through the clothes they were all items that I would have chosen for myself anyway, so that meant if he did have a problem with the way I dressed, then wouldn't he have picked other stuff? New outfits that he hadn't seen me wear? But the more I looked, the more it just looked like a replica of the stuff I had at home.

In the end I just picked out a two, layered t shirt that had long sleeves. It was black and light grey, which made my eyes appear a shade darker. This I matched with a tight pair of faded jeans that flared at the bottom. I then started to search around for underwear and socks before getting dressed in my new outfit that had had all the tags removed. I smiled at the thought of Draven not wanting me to know how much everything had cost. Well at least he knew I wasn't with him for money.

I felt funny about going through his drawers but that was the only place left for them. I started at the top and almost screamed when I saw what was hidden there. It was completely filled with very expensive looking watches. One looked so full of diamonds that it would soon start bleeding them. I saw the name Piaget's Emperador Temple and bit my lip. There were other names like Franck Muller Aeternitas that looked like it had more functions than a Swiss army knife! Another said Louis Moinet's Meteoris and this one looked like it didn't only tell the time but also the solar system! There were other makes, some I even recognised but you would have still needed to re-mortgage a house to purchased one. I gulped down the hard lump before moving on to the next drawer. Thankfully, this one just had men's underwear and socks, so this one I closed quickly so that I couldn't see any designer names. I dreaded to think how much he spent on his boxer briefs.

Lucky number three it was and I hit the jackpot. I was a bit surprised when I saw it was very similar to the one I had at home. I half expected it to be full of red and black lace but when my favourite white cotton, short briefs filled the space, I smiled. Of course there were some other varieties but I grabbed the most comfortable ones as any of the others wouldn't be seen anyway, not until I was off and ready again for the naughty. The next drawer down held bras and the last one, socks. I took out what I needed and changed.

When I got back into 'Our' bedroom, as he kept calling it, there was food waiting for me. I sat down and helped myself to the plates full of sandwiches, cakes, fruit but most of all a pot of tea. I sighed with contentment as I filled my belly and sipped my warm mug of tea. It felt so good that it almost made me forget the last horrific twenty four hours. I snuggled deeper into his velvet covered couch and started to feel my eyes fall. I was still tired but I knew if I gave in and closed them I wouldn't wake again until the next day. Luckily I heard the door open and this made me sit up, with my eyes wide open.

Draven entered and by the smirk he had playing at his lips, I knew he had seen me nearly nodding off. He took note of the empty plate and mug that I must have dropped on the floor. Unfortunately, it hadn't been empty and now there was a light, brown liquid seeping from the rim.

"Sorry!" I said as I picked it up and removed a napkin from the tray to clean up the mess with.

"Why are you sorry?" He asked me in earnest and came over to me to stop my hands from rubbing at the rug that looked older than my family tree!

"Do you think you will ever get used to how clumsy I am?" I asked looking down feeling strangely nervous. He knelt down in front of me and gently removed the white napkin from my hands.

"I find it endearing," he said before lifting my face up so that he could get to my lips easily. After another very intense kiss he got up and joined me on the couch, pulling my body into his.

“Now I would like you to tell me, why it is that a boy you classed as not having any interest in you, is coming here to stay and commandeering you for an evening?” This question soon had me in knots and making a face like I was sucking on a sour gobstopper. I knew I couldn’t put it off any longer but I really didn’t know what to say. He had heard everything that me and Libby had spoken about in the kitchen, so now all that was left for me was to do was explain why I felt compelled to entertain a boy, that I had once had a crush on, that now evidently had a crush on me, to my now new Demon boyfriend, who, let’s face it, had jealousy issues. Boy...that was a toughie!

Oh yes...

This was going to be a long day...

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Chapter 25

Finding a Balance.

The next week turned out to be a complete contrast to last week's events. That Sunday only needed for me to smooth things over with Draven about Justin's stay and he found the silver lining that at least he could keep an eye on him with us having our 'date' (as Draven had called it), at his night club. Of course I didn't get this outcome without some extreme compromising. I had promised that I wouldn't be alone with him and I would invite all my friends. I also agreed to spending the night with Draven after I had driven Justin home. And again, of course, these were all very reasonable requests but when Draven had made his last request which had sounded more like a demand, it was the one I was dreading the most.

"And of course I must meet the *boy!*" I remember his words and the venom behind the word BOY. I gulped at the sight of his stern black eyes glaring into the distance of the forest floor. At that moment I was glad to have been on his balcony having this discussion because the heat generated from his look alone was enough to boil blood. Thankfully my skin was comforted by the early afternoon breeze and I could think as clearly as the cloudless sky above me. This was until Draven had let me continue with my

endless questions about that night's events, then my mind overloaded on supernatural laws. Draven had started to explain who the old woman in white had been when the clear skies changed to stormy grey.

“Potnia is an old friend of mine and was waiting for the Blood Moon or Hunter's Moon, as it is also known.” He explained as he took my hand and pulled me indoors away from the coming downpour.

“Blood moon?” I asked remembering the full moon ringed red shining down through the dome right before Draven had dealt out his version of justice. The memory made me shudder.

“It is when a crossing of souls is more likely to pass peacefully.” He smiled at my frown and decided to elaborate.

“Potnia was over four hundred years old and needed a new vessel.” Ok, so instead of frowning he found me scowling.

“Body, Keira, she needed a new body.”

“What! So she is now walking around as that...girl, the child killer?!” I asked in disbelief.

“Yes love, but don't fret. Her essence, her light, it will change the vessel into something pure. We do not waste a good and young vessel.”

“So what happened to the girl?” I asked in a whisper, like it would somehow get into trouble if someone overheard.

“What do you think?” He whispered back with a wink, which slightly unnerved me, considering what he was teasing me about. I just shrugged my shoulders not wanting to speculate. He grinned an evil grin and thumbed towards the floor. The message rang loud and clear making me shiver. He laughed once before enveloping my body into his embrace. After that he wouldn't answer any more questions I had and even got a little angry when I asked him about the room I had found with Lucius's name etched into the walls. Instead he had picked me up and threw me over his shoulder before depositing me on the bed with a quick bounce before coving my body with

his. There he made love to me like the night before, which left me struggling to get my breath for the next two hours.

Thanks to Draven the nightmares the night before were already becoming a distant memory that I was filing away with all the other horrors that were lost there. It was soon becoming an abyss in my mind.... an endless pit of dark phantoms that only found their way back to my active thoughts when I was asleep. Of course the proverbial king of these nightmares had quickly stolen the black throne from Morgan and become the new jailer for this already scared mind. His name of course was once Judas, the universal name used for betrayal. Now his new name, Lucius, was received from the Devil himself... I was starting to think that I had no luck!

I was now sat at my computer screen making my eyes water, I had been staring at it for so long without blinking. I rubbed my forehead as if by trying to find a genie in there to help me with my report. I had so much college work to do, I was feeling overwhelmed. I had caught up with English and had finished my Spanish revision but it was history that was my problem and in more ways than one! The past had now replaced my fascination with millions of questions. These all based around one name...Dominic Draven. Every date, every major event and every catastrophe had me wondering where Draven was in the world when it was all going on and how much of the world changing events had really been down to rogue Demons and Angels. This was why I couldn't concentrate on the French revolution.

Half way between wanting to poke myself in the eyes for an excuse not to work anymore and writing about the absolute monarchy that had ruled France for centuries collapsing in only three years, Libby thankfully walked into my room with a life line. A cup of tea.

“Oh the Lord be praised, you're a life saver!” Libby laughed at my outburst which had been a bit louder than I had intended.

“That bad is it?”

“You have no idea. Tell me again why I was persistent in going back to college?” I joked as I reached out to take the hot Simpsons mug off her. I looked down and blew on its perfect mix of brewed tea and milk.

“Oh you know, Education, Job prospects, oh and don’t forget, throwing a square hat in the air when you’ve finished!”

“Mmm, my favourite part.” Libby looked at me as if she still hadn’t got used to seeing me in such a good mood these days. I had overheard her one night talking to Frank about it. She ended up in tears and I was just glad that now people had exchanged tears of sadness for ones of happiness. I had spent too long feeling guilty about all the problems I had caused, well at least now I was making up for it. For now, I had never been happier!

“You working tonight?” Libby asked as she pulled her coffee coloured sweater straight that was stretching thanks to the bump showing.

“Yeah and I’m staying over so don’t expect me home,” I said with a wink as today was finally the day I had come off my period. She laughed and said,

“These days I never do.” And although she had said it in a light hearted way, I heard an underlying hint of regret. Alright, so the guilt thing hadn’t left me completely. She had turned around and was making her way to leave when I had an idea.

“Hey Libs, I was meaning to ask, do you have any free time next week? Cause you know, I could use some help shopping.” At this she whizzed round like someone had lit a rocket up her backside, only one that would make you smile, ‘cause she looked like a child did when they found out they were going to a theme park!

“Yeah, I would love too but wait, you only went shopping last week.”

“Yeah I know but it wasn’t the same, you remember me telling you about the designer shops right?” She laughed at the memory of my reconstruction of my famous shopping experience with Sophia.

“I would have loved to have seen you in Gucci!” She laughed until tears glistened in her luscious, green eyes.

“Never going to happen.... But hey, I wouldn’t say no to the Gap.”

We arranged a day that I was lesson free in the afternoon and giggled a little more over my day with Sophia, when this made me remember something vital that had almost slipped my mind. It was a promise I had made to myself about the day when I was no longer held restricted to just heavy petting and intense kisses. I got up from my computer chair and walked over to my closet. I leaned down and reached at the back for a stripy pink Victoria Secret bag.

I pulled out its contents and Libby wolf whistled. It was perfect and made me blush. She had always been able to do it since being taught by my dad when my mum wasn’t around. The last time I had heard her exercise this talent, was after a few too many at a family BBQ party. The flames had set the fence alight and when the Fire service was called, they met their match in Libby, fuelled on too much Pinot Grigio. My embarrassed father had to apologise for his daughter’s behaviour and send her to bed. She was twenty two at the time. I smirked at the thought, then quickly replaced it with hot cheeks as I looked down at the mixture of satin and lace in my hands.

“Well... won’t somebody be having fun tonight?” She said before giggling her way out of my room. I sighed heavily, wondering how I was ever going to pull it off. My idea when buying it, was surprising Draven by wearing it under my uniform and going to bed early. There I would slip into the matching gloves and lay seductively on his bed waiting for my body to be discovered. Of course now that the actual day had arrived I was starting to get cold feet.

I arranged the corset on my bed with the matching items and stood back. I was trying to imagine his reaction to finding me in this perfect example of sexy, seductive underwear. I bit my lip at the thought.

I knew the last week had been particularly tough on him to keep his urges under control. A few times we had come close to crossing the messy

line but the thought of my embarrassment later was what gave me the power to stop. I still found it hard to believe that Draven was as consumed with me as I was with him. He explained one night after an extreme kissing session how he felt.

“The obsession I have over you can’t be explained in words and I fear there are no greater actions that can do my feelings justice. But when I say that I had never imagined happiness like this was obtainable for me, making this the one and only thing about human life that I envied, trust in these words. I had lost all hope believing that the Gods had created a soul mate to belong to me but now I have you here in my arms, I know it was worth all my lifetimes in wait.”

At this point I had difficulty in holding back the tears that materialized in the corners of my eyes and was just thankful the only light had been the low glow from the moon, which cast a bluish tint to the furnishings. It had been the sweetest thing anyone had ever said to me and I wished I could have responded with an equally beautiful response but in the end knowing I couldn’t find the word, I spoke with my lips. He smiled under my touch as he could feel my wet cheeks and there is where he found his feelings reciprocated.

Even though we hadn’t made love that night it was still one of the most perfect nights of my life and one that will stay with me until the day the Gods decide to take me back. These thoughts were what changed my worried frown to an excited smile. I was going to go through with my plan and play the temptress for a night. After all that was the name of the outfit and tonight I would do it justice!

I picked my mug back up and went back to the computer to try and retackle my own revolution. That was my rebellion with History. I looked down and saw even Homer Simpson was mocking me, with his speech bubble saying “Mmm... Donuts” making me think more about food than French royalists. Draven had offered to help me, of course, but I felt that asking him about dates that were past too many lifetimes to comprehend, does somewhat constitute as cheating. Not only that but I think his version of

the past would contradict the written word, even though there was no doubt his account of events would be more reliable, however, there was no getting around the fact that I still couldn't use any of it.

History is made up of a collective narrative of the dictation of the men and women that lived through those times, whether it is through words or codes of pictures and symbols. I don't think history would have been told in quite the same way if the world knew about how much Demons and Angels had to do with the outcome of how we live today. I could just imagine Mr Reed's face when reading my report that stated how Demons and Angels were responsible for the fall of world leaders because it wasn't beneficial to the Underworld's balance on this fragile earth's plane. It was almost worth doing to see his head spin 360 degrees.

It took me a while to get my head round the fact that one can't live without the other. We needed them as much as they needed us to survive. They feed from our emotions and we needed their protection from ourselves. Of course, this doesn't mean that some of the world's problems hadn't slipped through the cracks. Bombs still exploded, wars still battled on and terrorists still held the upper hand in their fearless ambition to destroy the western world.

If I thought the world had its problems before knowing Draven, then I was surely mistaken. However I still couldn't decide which was worse, being blissfully unaware and putting my sightings of the other kind down to an over active imagination or knowing the unbelievable truth had suddenly become believable. When I really thought about what I had learned and witnessed in just a few weeks, then any normal person would be in therapy for the rest of their days but no, not me, instead here I was thinking life had never been so sweet!

It didn't take me long to give up on history and concentrate on other things, getting ready for work being one of them...ok, ok, the only one! After spending enough time in the bath to make the tips of my toes wrinkly, I decided to get out of the deeply scented water and dry my newly scrubbed, shaved skin. I then smoothed over some of Libby's fancy moisturizer until it

felt fully soaked into every inch of my body's surface. I did this feeling almost giddy at the thought of what was to come. I found myself wondering what his reaction would be. Would he be expecting it or would he first just stand there in shock, before taking me in those solid arms of his.

We hadn't talked about my period again after the weekend, so I gather he didn't want me to think of him as impatient but considering when we were together, we couldn't take our hands off each other, I think his impatience was a bit obvious. So tonight was a big deal. I wanted things to be perfect but as I had never done this type of thing before, I was still a bit nervous.

Back in my room I found my seductive outfit screaming out at me like some sex fuelled beacon and I couldn't help but blush. I knew I would need help tightening the corset and the thought of asking Libby didn't help with my over sensitive reactions. After taking some time to put it all on and tying the ribbons to the thong, that was already starting to feel like cheese wire, I called down the stairs for my sister.

"Hey what's up...WOW! Holy shit, you look fantastic!" She then stuck her fingers in her mouth and wolf whistled for the second time today. I rolled my eyes and turned round to show her the part that I was having a problem with and she started tugging like a woman possessed at the cord. I nearly lost balance a couple of times so she motioned for me to grab the desk for support. If I had known it was going to be like a mission to get me secure in this thing then I would have just opted for a bra! Once she had finished strapping me in, she stood back and said.

"Voila!"

"I'd say thanks if you hadn't have broken most of my ribs already." I gave her a cheeky grin before going to look in the mirror. Thankfully I had the foresight to put on my black trousers before Libby had come to my rescue so she didn't have to see my naked behind. This however made me look like some kind of dominatrix!

"Go get 'em tiger!" Libby said before leaving me to continue getting ready for my big night. I frowned as I heard her making cat meows as she

made her way downstairs. I took one last look at myself as I reached for my black and grey striped top that I was planning on wearing for work. I gulped as the corset under it had made my curves all that more...well curvy! It had forced my body into a perfect figure of eight, making my assets seem all that more accessible. I tied my hair up into its damp twist and added a touch of mascara to my dark blue eyes that were already starting to show their doubts about tonight. Would I really go through with this?

“Yes...Yes I would!” I said out load as I grabbed my bag and made for the door.

Club Afterlife was buzzing with its usual Friday night energy as the band was playing their first set and the early signs of drunken Goths were starting to show. I had been working behind the bar for about an hour and already I was regretting not just changing into my sexy lingerie at the end of the night. The thong at least, because in my opinion these were only meant to be worn when there was a very high chance that they would be taken off again soon, like ten, twenty minutes tops!

I must have looked like I had piles because I couldn't stop fidgeting with my behind. It was even more embarrassing when Mike even asked me if I was alright. Why I didn't just nod that I was fine I don't know but for some reason I had lost all normal functions and thought that saying 'Bug bite' then motioning to my arse was a far better explanation! One word...Idiot!

I had to suppress the urge to smack myself on the head. Thankfully it didn't take him long after that to act like I had scabies and forget the question he'd asked. Unfortunately it didn't take me long to forget my shame and start fidgeting with the thong again. All I could think about was how thankful I was to be working tonight downstairs and out of the eye line of my watchful boyfriend. I had looked up a few times to see a figure standing there but considering that they could see much more of down here than we could up there, I could never be quite sure if it was him or one of his guards.

For a short time RJ and the gang had taken my mind off my unusual

circumstances and for the first time tonight I forgot about my arse! Jack displayed the same boyish charm that had you smiling at just the sight of him when coming to order drinks from the bar. When I helped him take them to our usual table he asked me to join them. I told them I would after my shift and didn't think Draven would mind me having one with my friends before going upstairs to join him. Plus it would give me a chance to get some liquid courage down me before my time to do the dirty.

It was then that I saw something that couldn't have really been there. I was walking back to the bar when I saw someone staring at me in the crowd. His tall strong body stood out from the mass of jumping Goths. The band was playing their last song which was the one everyone knew. 'Stunned in to thunder' was the name of the song and it turned out to be quite fitting as now there I was stunned into the very core of where my feet wouldn't move from. The lights flashed in and out of darkness for effect and every time they came back up, my eyes would blink to find him still there staring at me, with intense eyes burrowing into mine. It felt like I was standing there naked, with nothing to protect me from his luring smile. One fang exposed from deadly lips and he winked one serious eye at me, which struck me as more of a warning than anything that a wink generally implies.

"Lucius!" The name escaped in a whisper but as soon as I said it, the lights went off and when they illuminated the club once more before the song ended, he was gone. I shook my head and whispered "Couldn't be," as I walked behind the bar to finish my shift. The image of Lucius standing there in a long, black jacket that reached the floor and hair sleeked back, enhancing the hard features of his face, stayed with me until I heard my time was up.

"What did you say?" I asked in a rude way, as I could have sworn I heard it being said in the same voice that has started haunting my dreams.

"I just said times up, you know, time to go enjoy life?" Mike had a confused look which was quickly turning to concern.

"Oh, yeah...life. Sorry I guess I'm just tired."

"That Reed been working you too hard?" He smiled at me like I was

some lost girl he had just found at the mall.

“Yeah, but that’s nothing new,” I replied before ordering a drink from him. I grabbed my bag from the back and found my drink ready and waiting for me to take over to my friends’ table. As soon as I sat down I felt better. I could quietly listen to everyone’s stories about their week at college and RJ was never short of distracting conversation. She talked about what everyone was doing for Christmas vacation and how she wished that she had a family abroad to go to visit.

“So how about you Kaz, you going back to England for Chrimbo?”

“Umm, I don’t quite know yet,” I said half heartedly, which she took for something other than nerves.

“Oh I get it, now you’re with the God Draven, you don’t want to lose sight of that fab bod of his! Hey, not that I blame you, if that was me I wouldn’t let him out of my sight for a second.” At this point Jack punched her on the arm and gave her an evil look, and for such a sweet guy, he really did dish out the dirties like a pro!

“Sorry Kaz, my sister is a little slow when it comes to stopping the nonsense from sweeping from that swallow little head of hers...It’s all the holes!”

“Hey! What’d I say?” I laughed while rolling my eyes and downing my drink.

“Its fine, but I better go. Oh before I do, are you guys all coming here tomorrow night?”

“Hell yes, you did say that there was a hot surfer dude coming right?”

“I didn’t say hot!” I said feeling the heat reach my cheeks, which made Jack smile at me.

“Yeah but that’s how I know he’s hot, because when I asked you on Monday, you couldn’t say yes when Sophia was around.”

“So from that, you got Hot?” I laughed as Chaz rolled his eyes at the rest of the group, making Lanie do her usual giggling fit.

“NO but when you went the colour of my favourite jello then alarm bells rang.” She said letting her pink hair cover half of her smug face.

“Whatever!” I said lamely.

“Alright, we will see you tomorrow, go and tell wonder boy we all say hi.” I couldn’t stay angry at RJ, not when she made me smile so much. RJ and me had been an unlikely pair from the beginning but after everything I had been through in my past, she was a perfect friend. She drew attention to herself like bees to pollen and it kept me in the shadows where I was very happy to be.

When first moving here, she quickly became my ticket to a new life. My first friend who had welcomed me into her group, despite our differences. She knew there was something under the surface of my past and didn’t buy my reasons for moving here for one second but she never asked and for that I was more than thankful for. Every now and again I would catch her looking at my covered scars and I could almost hear the question playing out in her mind but again she never asked. And for RJ (Gossip queen extraordinaire) this was like torture.

This is how I knew she loved me. It was her never faltering ability to keep her mouth shut when it mattered the most. I suppose that is why I forgave all her little digs about Draven, not that there were many. But still it must have been hard, to see some new girl access the only thing that was completely out of bounds for this small town. Afterlife was like a drug and when the Dravens were around, that drug turned into full blown obsession to fuel their new fix!

After saying my goodbyes, I made my way to the back staircase. Draven had told me that he liked to see me come up the front main staircase but I felt too exposed doing that, so I slipped past the crowd of drunken rockers to the door near the stage. This door had always been kind of hidden and it was only when I first went up to the VIP that I even knew it existed.

The two men that filled the doorway took only a slight look at me before they opened the door granting me access. I had used this door so many times you would have thought by now that I would at least get a smile, or some small indication that they recognised me. But no, I would always receive the same odd cold stare from the both of them. This is what made me shiver as I climbed the stairs.

Once inside the VIP I felt the warmth hit me like walking off a plane into a hot country. Every eye focused on me for a split second before returning to their strange companions. It had taken me a while to get used to the unusual characters that the VIP had to offer but now I knew they were all Demons and Angels, well let's just say, it didn't make it any easier, more enlightening but no way easier.

As I walked round the tables, not being able to help the Marilyn Monroe swagger I had going on, thanks to the steel bones in my corset, I noticed Rue, the blind waitress, give me a nod as a hello. It was only when I saw her palms turned slightly outwards did I realise how she spotted me. She had tattoos of eyes on her hands that did her seeing for her. I thought this was so cool when I found out, plus she had always been really nice to me, even when some of the others had looked down at me for being human.

I winked my own hello back at her and walked round the front to the top table. My breath caught in my throat at the sight of Draven in his black suit. Everything was black, his shirt, tie and waistcoat. He was simply breathtaking, like some modern day dark knight.

He was looking very serious until his eyes met mine. The harsh glint he was portraying quickly left them and was replaced by a warm glow of fiery purple. He quickly stood and was around the front of the table in micro seconds, making his body turn into a black blur. When his arms pulled my body into his, I let out a gasp at the surprise with him getting to me so fast. It was kind of dating superman in that way, and instead of the cape and spandex, I got wings and a Armani suit! His hands tightened around my waist and his eyes searched out my lips.

“I missed you, it was cruel to make me wait!” His voice was deep and it

rumbled out like a passionate man that had been starved of the touch he craved. I had no time to reply as his kiss drew me in like a spellbound race. His lips covered mine with perfect precision and expert timing, making my toes want to curl up like the witch in the Wizard of Oz. Of course the effect was similar to a house landing on me when he kissed me like that!

As you've already gathered, Draven had no problems displaying affection towards me in front his council, hell the whole VIP for that matter, but on the other hand I still couldn't help my burning cheeks from near exploding. When he finished tasting me, I looked down with embarrassment, which made him chuckle before raising my face back to his eye line. He smoothed his thumb across the blushed skin and smiled to himself.

"Mmm keep blushing like that and I will stand here kissing you all night my girl." This comment didn't help with the way my cheeks were melting like lava rocks but again he found this amusing and laughed to himself as he pulled me behind him to his table. As always his council all stood for his approach and he sat me before taking his place next to me. There I was greeted by all except Aurora. No surprises there! She looked as dazzling as ever, in her peacock coloured dress and hair glittering like the morning sun. Boy I hated her!

Sophia grabbed my arms and looked me up and down before giving me a cheeky wink. I had already seen her once today at college and told her my plans about tonight. This had made her clap her hands together in the middle of class, making everyone stop and stare like we were two morons that found the French revolution exciting. Reed had to swallow his tongue before committing the cardinal sin and asking Sophia to explain herself. If there was one thing you didn't do in this town and that was to piss off a Draven!

I had my regular bottle of Corona waiting for me and when I felt Draven's hand start to feel up my leg I couldn't help but start necking it.

"Whoa, easy there, rough night?" Draven teased as he knew full well that my night was completely uneventful. Ever since dating Draven my customers had all been super nice to me. I would even hear Jerry on the phone relaying my night back to Drave if anyone had caused me any trouble.

I thought that this was sweet but a little OTT. I never said that I knew about these little check-ups but I did find it funny whenever he asked me about my night.

“Just thirsty I guess” I said biting my lip at the bad lying I was doing.

“If I didn’t know better I would say you look nervous my Keira.” His velvet voice tested me, causing me to shrug my shoulders so that I didn’t have to continue my lying. I sat quietly while the conversation continued on about how there was going to be some new guests coming to stay at the club. I put this down to the fact that the Dravens had stayed here much longer than usual and how normally they would have moved on to their next destination.

Draven explained that I might be seeing a few new faces soon as now that they were staying, his leaders were going to have to come to him to conduct their business. The business being the controlling of the rest of America’s supernatural. See, the way this worked was all down to the Angels and Demons that Draven put in charge of the different states. He was after all just one man (so to speak) and he couldn’t deal with every supernatural on the planet. So the world was drawn up into sections, which were all governed by district members of his council. A bit like police and politics.

I tried to follow the conversation but I shifted, uncomfortable in my seat thanks to my squeezed rib cage that felt like it was sucking the air from my lungs. I twisted the bottle of Spanish beer round in my gloved hands and focused on the bubbling movement it was creating when Draven banged his fist down on the table in anger.

“NO, that is not good enough! I am their master and they will do as I order, there is no negotiating on this! For too many years they have lived in the shadow of the unknown and I will no longer stand for it. If they doubt the truth then let them stand before me and speak it but I will NOT succumb to their wishes just because they forget how to Fuc...”

“Dom!” Sophia shouted at her brother, preventing him from saying the F word and this calmed him slightly. He was standing while making this speech and the entire room had been silenced by it.

“It will be handled brother.” Vincent said in a cool, controlled voice and I doubted there was another alive that knew how to calm his brother’s temper like he did. The very sound of his voice had Draven sitting once more.

“I have no doubt about that brother!” He said harshly and I noticed Aurora’s eyes flicker with a burning passion at the sight of Draven’s outburst, the sight made me feel sick in the pit of my stomach. Draven grabbed his claw shaped shot glass with his anger still in full flame beneath the flexed muscle and emptied it of its glossy liquid. This seemed to help with his rage and when he opened his eyes again they turned to me.

“Forgive me, I hope I didn’t scare you.”

“No, its fine,” I lied. Of course I was scared of Draven when he was in a rage. I would have to be an idiot not to be! He knew I was lying but smiled at the effort I made all the same. He leaned into me and held my head with his big hands so that he could kiss me lightly on the top of my head. I felt my pulse race at just being closer to him and my bottom half felt the fire his touch created. I wanted him so badly I was close to exploding but the way the conversation continued I knew it would be a while yet. I almost felt like telling him that my body was fully accessible again and I was waiting for him to take full advantage of it right now but that would ruin my plan.

I decided to make the first move and after three drinks and an hour of debating Demon politics I got up from the table.

“I think I’ll go to bed.” I whispered and he was about to stand when I stopped him by laying my hand on his shoulder.

“It’s alright, I will see you when you’ve finished.” He nodded and took my hand, raising it to his lips to kiss it goodbye. Sophia got up as well and stated that she too was tired and would walk me back to Draven’s room. On the way I asked her how I would know if Draven was coming back to the room before he saw me. I wanted to be prepared.

“I will get a message to him to knock before he comes in, that way you can get into position before he sees you.”

“That will never work, can you imagine Draven knocking to get into his own room?” She laughed at the thought and admitted that no, she couldn’t.

After a cheeky grin and a mischievous wink she was gone, leaving me to enter Draven’s bed chamber alone. As usual, there was a drink waiting for me and after I downed the first glass of rosé wine, I poured myself another. I let my bag slide to the floor before my clothes followed. I slipped each layer off as I let the wine slip down my throat to help with my nerves. Soon I had a pile around my feet and nothing covering my skin apart from my corseted bodice, stockings and thong with garter belt that were covering next to nothing. The set that was promiscuously called temptress was starting to work its magic by making me feel sexier than I ever had in my life!

I went into the bathroom with my bag to add the extra touches to the look I was trying to achieve. I let my hair down and ran my fingers through the still damp waves, creating volume. It hung down my back like a mane, curly around my curvy figure and moving with every heavy breath I took. I tried to control my shaking hands as I fished around in my bag for my black silk gloves that for once weren’t fingerless.

I located them and replaced my usual ones, then found a small stick for my lips that Libby had lent me. It was the exact colour of the roses that were featured across my body like they were now a part of me. I smoothed it across my heart shaped lips and broke my one rule about being blonde and wearing red lipstick. The high gloss made them look wet and inviting, so when they curled up into a smile, I was surprised to find the whole look was starting to give me courage in my plans for seduction.

So with my outfit in place I walked in my black stockinged feet back to lounge dramatically on the huge bed that was draped with luxurious black material with was a mix of velvet and satin. I almost laughed out loud when I saw how much I stood out against the gothic bedding. The blood red roses almost came to life they looked so real amongst this perfect mix of rich, high class theatrics. Then I remembered the matches I had brought with me.

See, I was normally used to Draven’s click of the fingers and poof there would be the perfect setting for a perfect romantic evening but now I had to

do things the mortal way. I decided to just light around the bed to create the focus to where I wanted most of the night's activity's to happen and also if I were to light every candle in the room I would be there forever and a day, not to mention running out of matches.

Once that part was done I started to relax while I waited. I imagined Draven's strong hands searching my corset for access to my skin, would he undo the cord gently or would his demon side show through and tear his way through with impatience. My head rolled back at the sexual tension I was creating in my mind. I wanted him so badly and it wouldn't be long before he found the evidence of this for himself. I closed my eyes and retraced through the memories of his touch, the endless nights of passion fuelled by raw heat, passion and an unstoppable love that fused us together like one entity.

After hardly anytime at all my heart nearly stopped as I heard footsteps at the door. I expected for it to just open and see that tall frame silhouetted in the darkness but when I heard the door knock lightly I was surprised. I smiled and mentally thanked Sophia as she must have delivered the message to her brother after we said our goodnights. I took a deep breath before trying to control my shaky voice, after all I needed to play the dominant one tonight and that would never work if I was stuttering.

I moved onto my side and cast my own shadows as I posed seductively, lifting one knee up and giving a full view of my new sexy look. I arranged my hair around one side and made sure my bulging cleavage was on full show. I licked my lips and said "Come in" in the sexiest voice that had passed through my lips in twenty three years.

The door opened and there Draven stood, strong and solid but frozen in shock. He stepped further into the room but it looked like he had other ideas. He slowly moved his feet as if fighting with his own actions. I bit my lip at the idea that he might not like this new Keira that he was discovering in his room. I tried to banish that idea and after another deep breath, I had the guts to say,

"Won't you come closer?"

Again the figure was silent and I was starting to regret this pretty quickly as he had now stopped completely. I now wished I had taken the time to light all the candles so that I could see his features. His face was in complete darkness and I tried to squint my eyes to make out if he was wearing his usual frown. I was about to speak but Draven beat me to it.

“Keira, I’m sorry, I didn’t know you would be...be like that!”

“Like what?” I asked before my mind had time to realise my mistake.

“So exquisite,” the voice rumbled out like a starved man and it sent a shudder of mixed emotions to the core.

The voice of a man is a powerful thing, when words like that are heard. The voice of a man’s soul can seep through his lips, when words like that are spoken. And the voice of an Angel’s heart was heard that night, for those words spoken belonged....

To the voice of Vincent.

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Chapter 27

Mistakes and a Bed of Roses

I had frozen as if an ice queen had just cast a deadly spell. In my head a voice screamed out to cover myself up but in this case I wasn't the only one doing the wrong thing. Vincent still hadn't moved, although I was pretty sure it was wrong of him to be staring at me the way he still was. It was the first time I saw a flicker of the same power Draven held, run through his brother's body. I saw blue light emanate from his feet and as it travelled up to his upper body, it changed to a darker shade, reminding me of the day's sky turning into night.

He hadn't moved any closer but I could almost hear the want in his bones begging him to work until they reach the bed's edge. Then the candles started to flicker making it the second time I had ever felt fear around Vincent. The first time of course, being in the car park where he caught me before his brother could follow in his footsteps to take me against my will.

After what seemed like a small forever, I forced some words from my trembling lips.

“Vincent...I...I am so sorry...I didn't...” The words seemed to tumble out like a lost cause but whatever it sounded like, it seemed to work because his response was a gentle,

“Ssssh, please don’t do that.” His smooth voice made my skin prickle and a weird vibration flashed down my naked neck. His glowing body faded back into the darkness now that he appeared to be calming whatever emotions had been running wild with his mind. Now that he was once again just a silhouette in the room, he decided he was going to move from the spot he had been glued to and finally my mind did the same and kicked into gear, covering myself up with the bed covers. By the time we came face to face, we were looking less risky about our situation. My skin was covered and his eyes didn’t glow with the dangerous lust I had seen.

I bit my lip like it would help prevent the situation from getting any worse... that being my big mouth! But this reaction made him smile and he knelt down to my level so he didn’t look so threatening from the height of him towering above me. He wasn’t much shorter than his brother, there being mere inches between them. His skin was paler than Draven’s and the faint light from the now steady candles were casting a warm orange glow onto his soft features. He was still smiling and it looked like he was trying very hard not to let his eyes linger anywhere else but from my face.

“You know we really need to stop meeting like this!” He joked and finally I could let air out of my mouth.

“I’m so sorry, I thought....”

“I know, you thought I was Dom.” He said in a whisper before I could explain. At this I covered my shame filled head in my hands.

“Oh God! Why does this keep happening? What is Draven going to say?” I know it was a little tactless but it was all I could think about. I jumped slightly when I felt Vincent’s cool skin come into contact with mine, but when his fingers started to pry my hands away, I relaxed when met with his sympathetic face.

“He’s not going to find out Keira, I think for everyone’s sake this one should be kept between me and you. But I will tell you something...This is the last time I will be coming here to give you messages that Dom should be doing himself!” It was the first sign of disapproval I had seen him direct at

his brother before and it shocked me. It was as though he didn't think kindly on him for making me wait like this.

"He's not coming yet is he?" I asked looking down to hide both my disappointment and relief.

"Not yet... no, he sent me here to tell you he had some business to deal with before joining you, only if he knew what you had planned, I think business would most certainly be delayed." He tried to hid a cheeky grin I didn't ever expect to see on Vincent's face. But the wink he followed it up with surprised me more. I laughed and its purpose became clear.

"I had a feeling he would never have knocked." I said more to myself than Vincent.

"And why would you have ever though a man like my brother would have?" He laughed but when he saw my face he could read his sister's name all over my thoughts.

"Ah...Sophia!" He sighed and rolled his eyes.

"It wasn't all her fault, she just suggested that she could get a message to him to knock...you know...so I would know he was coming." I added quietly, which furthermore added to my shame.

"I see."

"You really won't tell him?" I asked hopefully.

"Oh no...trust me, the way Dom's temper is at the moment, it wouldn't be the smartest of things to do." He wasn't laughing anymore and I shuddered at the words Dom and temper in the same sentence.

"Why... is he angry?"

"Yes but trust me," he motioned to my body with his hand and added,

"This will help" Which made my cheeks torch the blood beneath my

skin. He shifted his weight and was standing again before I had time to blink. He was about to leave but I grabbed his hand to hold him back. He looked down at the small, black satin fingers that had curled around his large palm.

“Thank you Vincent.”

“For what, exactly?” His eyes didn’t dare look at mine but his voice shook with leaked emotions.

“For being my...my friend,” I replied but as soon as the answer reached his ears his skin started to turn icy cold. I dropped my hand from his and tucked it under the covers to warm it back up. He turned from me but before he left, he corrected me.

“I’m much more than that Keira!” And with that bomb shell, he left as quickly as an Angel with wings.

I was left not only utterly embarrassed but also feeling a little guilty and I wasn’t sure why? Was it my imagination or did Vincent seem to have a few deeper feelings swimming about in his mind. And even more confusing... were they about me? I shook that idea out of my head quickly and put it all down to some hidden feelings about someone else. Maybe seeing me and Draven so happy together, made those emotions to finding his own happiness all that stronger.

I battled like this for about an hour and by the end didn’t come up with any answers to Vincent’s strange behaviour around me. In front of Draven he was as he had always been but when we were alone it was definitely different. More intense and I’m not just talking about all the accidents we kept having. Ever since that kiss we shared, I felt like his eyes were following me everywhere. He would notice every move I made and his senses would interpret every detail. If I frowned he would frown, if I smiled he would follow suit. I had put it all down to protecting what his brother loves but what if I was wrong? What if there was more to it?

In the end I must have fallen asleep because when I heard the sound of breathing above me I found myself in the dark. I only had opened my eyes a tiny degree, enough to add a figure to the breathing. I was acting asleep because I didn't know who it was that was stood above me like a statue of Rome. I was lying on my back with one arm above my head and the other resting lightly on my stomach.

I tried to keep my breathing light, like deep slumber would have induced but it was hard giving the position I was in. I wasn't about to make the same mistake a third time and assume it was Draven that loomed deadly tranquil over me. If it had been Vincent I wanted to pretend I was asleep but if it was Lucius then I knew I was still dreaming. Why were all the men in my life exceptionally tall and well built, why can't we have all the badies like little goblins, bumpy and disgusting and all the goodies tall and handsome...that would be helpful!

I felt my hair move away from my face but there was no hand that governed it. Then the bed covers followed and moved down my body exposing my rose covered corset and matching thong. Then what looked like a black hand rose above me and illuminated my body from the bluish sparks that ignited from under the shadowed skin. It moved over my figure, following every curve without contact. At this I heard a low growl that came from the gut of a supernatural. The covers kept disappearing to the bottom of the bed and soon I could feel the cold edge of the night on the thin material of my stockinged legs. They had stayed in place thanks to the suspender belt that attached on to the lace around my thighs.

The room went silent and I could hear the wild weather blowing nature to within an inch of its life outside. I didn't know what was worse, being out there and letting Mother Nature give me a sound lashing or in here without a clue as to who or what was taking in my sight like sleeping prey.

Then every nerve in my body lit up making me let out a moan in unspeakable pleasure. Fingertips had started to touch my ankle just after the blue light disappeared and then worked their way up with a fine art. It was like this hand was communicating with my blood making it tingle

uncontrollably, fusing a connection with my vulnerable body and my even more vulnerable sex. I bit down on my lip to hold in the screams that wanted to erupt. I shifted under the fingers but the lightest touch turned quickly into a secure hold on my inner leg. Whoever it was didn't want to let me go! And deep down I didn't want them to, until Draven's face popped into my head and made my eyes flash open to face my stalker.

It was only when I was faced with the mix of Angelic and Demonic glow of Draven's power that my heart flipped in both realisation and excitement. His eyes looked strained in a control he was trying not to lose and his other hand was balled into a fist by his side. The contrast to the gentle hand he touched me with and the other that was taking his frustration was blatantly obvious.

He was acting slowly, like he was trying hard not to get too carried away too quickly. One thing was clear, tonight was going to give me what I had been craving for but I wasn't going to be in control as I had planned. His tensed muscles told me as much. He was now looking directly into my eyes but he still hadn't spoken. It was like he was drowning in my image before consuming my mind with his commanding voice. Soon he would do to me what he wanted to do and all the while giving me more pleasure than any normal human girl could take, I was sure.

He let his fist uncurl and his other hand left my leg so that he could pull my hands round to the front of me. I couldn't help it ... I spoke first.

"What..." I cleared my croaky whisper before continuing. "What are you doing?" I asked but all I got was,

"Ssssh, be silent," with a shaking of his head. Then, with a tight grip on my glove covered wrists and a sharp tug upwards, my body flung towards him like I was the one with powers. I let out a gasp but his lips caught it as my upper body was now securely in his concrete arms. He wrapped them around my waist and his fingers entwined in the tightly, tied cord at the back of my corset that concealed my breasts from him. I felt them about to pull it free but he stopped himself, all the while devouring me in deep, sensual kisses.

He was trying to taste every inch of me as his mouth moved from mine to my neck and shoulders. He was still holding all my weight and one arm moved further around my back and up my spine to my neck, where his hand supported the top of my backbone as he bent it backwards. He grabbed a handful of my loose hair and pulled it downwards to encourage my movements, all the while never letting it hurt me.

His mouth played at the base of my ear before moving closer down to where my pulse was the fastest. There he didn't even bother to tease me with his teeth. No, he didn't have the will for that, proving as much when he bit down into my flesh making me cry out in a blissful pain that made me succumb to the pleasure growing in between my thighs. I came with orgasmic results for the entire time that he remained sucking the essence out of me. I could feel the warmth of my blood seep out of the puncture wounds he had made but the two little streams didn't get far as he licked it back upwards, not wasting a single drop.

I was panting when he had finished tasting my blood and mixing it with his own as I was now very much a part him, with our blood creating a new energy inside his veins. This idea made me smile in the dark, showing off the whites of my teeth, like a beacon to where my thoughts lay. After he noted the bliss in my eyes, he licked my small wounds again and I felt them start to fuse together, the skin replacing the stinging pain with an annoying itch. He touched it lightly with his thumb and after a few circular movements it was all as though it had never happened.

My body was still in its aftermath stages of a huge release but Draven wasn't about to give me any time to recover. He raised me up further and took hold of me from under the legs with one arm and the other held my upper body. He stood up straight and any other man's back would have strained with the awkward weight of carrying a body from leaning down. But Draven made me feel as though I weighed nothing more than a bag of leaves caught up in the wind. He walked towards the glass doors and I stiffened in his hold.

“Where are you taking me?” I whispered but he didn't answer. It was

almost like he was lost in his own world and I just hoped it was one where he didn't forget that I was a very breakable human that would no doubt catch my death if I went out into that stormy night. I gripped on to his suit jacket as he was still wearing what I had seen on him earlier, making me the only different one...that being the near to naked one. This time he didn't need to touch the glass for it to respond and as it opened, the cold hit me like a tidal wave of ice.

"Draven!" I said in more of an urgent tone. But as soon as he took his first step outside, my mind was more concerned with the rippling vibrations erupting from under his skin. This close up, I could actually see the purple energy flowing through his veins like it had replaced his blood with light. Then I cried out with shock, when I saw two huge dark wings emerge from his back making a ripping sound, like they had cut their way from his flesh.

The wind was fierce and whipped around our bodies like a lasso. My hair flew about like an abandoned flag and the rain started to pelt down as a warning to the ever growing storm. I was about to beg him for shelter when I was silenced by a blank wall of feathers. His wings had shot forward creating a storm proof cocoon around me. He was covered up to the neck with the softest long feathers that any exotic bird would have been jealous of.

I couldn't help but reach out and touch them. I don't know why I was surprised to find them warm through my gloved fingers. I heard him moan a little and I wondered if it was a nice feeling to have them explored by human hands. I soon forgot about the wild night's weather and got lost in my heated little feather bubble. I could feel him taking me somewhere but I didn't dare ask as it was evident that he wasn't in the talking mood. The changes in his movements were the only indication that we were not just walking straight. I felt him climb stairs and jump long distances but all the time he kept me covered and safe.

I could have gone to sleep quite easily but excitement had me buzzing. Where was he taking me and more importantly, what was he going to do with me when we got there? Thankfully my questions didn't plague me for too long as I felt him slow down and when his wings went back I wasn't hit with

the wind like I was expecting.

He was walking us into a magnificent oasis of flowers. It was like we had just broken into heaven itself! I looked up at him to see him staring ahead, with serious intent plastered on his face. I followed his eyes and saw a clearing in the middle of the treasures of the natural world. I felt like I was on drugs or at least how they always made out in movies. Flowers moved in a nonexistent wind and the moon that should have been hidden behind stormy black clouds lit up the fantasy. We were outside I was sure but I doubted even Draven was powerful enough to change the weather. There was no rain, no cold bitter chill, there was just calm life that reached up to the heavens above. It was only when I followed the wall of life up that I realised we were in a glass dome and then it didn't take long before I could hear the rain lashing down against the glass. I loved that sound. The drops of water too heavy for its creators and leaving the clouds, like escaping souls trying desperately to get to earth.

His footsteps were in rhythm to the sound of the outside world and as it got angrier, he got calmer. I wanted to ask a million questions but my eyes drank in this little hidden world instead of speaking of it. The smell of thousands of flowers all in bloom was intoxicating and I was getting drunk from their sweet perfumes. I wanted the sun to come out, so that I could soak in their dazzling colours but the moon's light had to suffice. The room was huge and only when we got to the centre did I see what was meant for us. The clearing was surrounded by life and covered every inch of the floor by deep, red rose heads that matched my corset. There wasn't one thorn as he laid me down onto the softest bed in existence.

A bed of roses.

“A rose should be plucked among its sisters. It would be an insult against Mother Nature to deny her of your beauty.” His deep voice echoed around the dome making it a mighty and unstoppable force. I shied away at his complement but he didn't allow this reaction for long.

“Look at me!” He ordered making my heart flip. I moved my eyes to his dark form and watched in amazement as his suit started to disintegrate. It was disappearing into the air like little particles of dust leaving an overwhelming body above me. I took in every inch of his God like form, more like an oil painting from the world’s greatest artists, who had all joined force to capture the astounding mix of strength and beauty. He was the epitome of perfection.

Once naked, with only his wings behind him casting shadows, he came down to my level. There he studied me in great detail before his urges started to show. His hands gripped the material that concealed me and I kept expecting to hear ripping noises. I was somewhat relieved when I didn’t as this was one outfit I wanted to keep safe...or at least in one piece!

“Turn round!” I jumped at the sound of his Demon voice and I couldn’t help but slowly obey. As I lowered myself back down on to my stomach I was shocked to see a bright light emerge from Draven’s right arm. I looked to my right and saw a large blade of energy grow from his hand. I moved away but his left hand caught me and held me in place.

He leaned down to me ear and whispered, “Trust me Keira, I won’t hurt you.” This was a little comforting but when I saw the blade coming closer to my back I couldn’t help but flinch.

“Hold still and don’t move!” Ok, now I was panicking but closed my eyes tight as if that would somehow help. I felt his left hand on my side and the other one with the blade was coming nearer to my skin. Although I couldn’t see it, I could feel the heat coming from this part of him. Then I felt my corset loosening at the bottom near the curvature of my behind.

The sound of the cord being cut could be heard over the storm and when I felt the tighter part ping back I knew it was his way of freeing my body. It didn’t take long before I could breathe easier and when he had finished, he motioned for me to turn back round to face him. I did so while still holding my corset in place, making his eyebrows rise.

His hands felt the embroidered roses and worked their way down to undo the ribbons that were attached to my thong by hand. I was close to

trembling in anticipation which was adding to the intensity of all. And he knew it...Big time did he know it! He was getting some weird kick out of making me wait and when I opened my eyes I saw him displaying an evil, dark grin.

“Tell me what you want!”

“You know,” I replied in my shy way but this wasn’t good enough.

“Speak it!” He demanded louder and I had to close my eyes again, so that I wasn’t being controlled by his black gaze of desire.

“I want you...you to...to...”

“To what exactly? Say it, shout it!” He was working himself up until he would soon just take it anyway, so why not give him what he wanted, what we both wanted. I knew what he was doing, he was giving me a shred of control back...waiting until he heard the words, giving him the fire start!

He started to encourage the words as his hands moved to my sex. He then moved round to cup my cheeks behind and when he pulled me up to bring the front of my thong to his face I wanted to shift away in shame.

“Speak the words Keira.” He said softly taking a new approach. I tried to move again not wanting to give in just yet but when he started to blow down on me, I felt like I was going to explode if he didn’t kiss me down there.

“TAKE ME!” I screamed out and when he had gotten what he wanted, he flashed the whites of his fangs before replying with self confidence oozing from every pore,

“As you wish.” And then it happened...the first kiss to my most intimate place followed quickly by the greatest orgasm that I had ever experienced! It felt as though something inside of me had exploded and my reactions weren’t controlled by any logical thoughts I possessed. It was wave upon wave of mind blowing bliss and when my voice was dry from screaming I had to move his head away to indicate that I couldn’t physically take another second. He released me and came back up to take his prize that he had waited

for until I had had my fill.

“Now it’s my turn.” He whispered in my ear and then with a flashed movement he ripped away my corset and all other material covering my skin. He was like a man obsessed, so much so his hands shook as if by trying to contain the deep energy beneath him, like a caged animal fighting its master to be freed. He covered my body in little bites that didn’t pierce the skin but sent shivers down to my toes. His hands pulled me to him like I was never close enough. Then before he could enter me he asked me one last question.

“Do you belong to me?” It came out in a raspy breath and the purple eyes told me that I not dare but speak the truth.

“Yes!” As soon as the Y could be heard I screamed as he thrust himself into me with excessive force. Thanks to the moistness between my legs it slid in but the size, as always, still shocked me and was difficult to take. This was when I went into my own world of a seventh heaven. I thought that I would soon black out as it was sending me into another world. Actually the world I lived in could have been ending...skies falling, oceans flooding the land and earth’s core spilling out causing vast destruction and I wouldn’t have known anything but the ecstasy he was inflicting!

Every movement he made caused a different pleasure, pain and sensation. He would move me around to his exotic dance and I became fixated on the pumping energy beneath his shadowy skin. His wings shook with the satisfaction he received and they twitched as his momentum built up until his release was near.

I couldn’t have counted the amount of orgasms he gave me but by the time he was close I was a mere shell. I pushed myself to find my last moments of energy as I wanted his orgasm to be as powerful as all of mine were. I gripped his neck and pulled my body up into him. I locked my legs around his waist and joined into his rhythm before biting into his neck, and then I added the catalyst.

“I belong to you...Take me now!” His head arched backwards and his lower body forwards for one last thrust. He released inside me and I in turn

found my final raptures with the sound of his roar into the night. His fists grabbed handfuls of petals and crushed them into scented pulp. He was still coming and his wings had stretched out behind him, tensing under the strain. I watched from underneath him in a bewildered state. It was the most pleasure I had ever seen him endure.

He collapsed on top of me but still managed to find the strength to hold his weight so as not to crush my smaller frame. He remained quiet, with only the panting beneath his chest. I could feel his heartbeat as though it was my own and for once I was the one to ask.

“Are you alright?” This made him realise that I was staring at him in awe and when he smiled it lit up my face along with his. It was the first time that Draven looked truly shattered after sex. This was surprisingly comforting. Usually it was just me.

His wings shook and ruffled as he stretched one more time before answering me, which reminded me of a bird getting comfortable before settling down for the night.

“Am I alright? Is that what you asked?” He was laughing at my question and I was left utterly confused with his outburst. He rolled over and pulled me on top of him making his wings come forward and wrap around me securely once again. The feathers tickled my naked body and made me let out short little giggles.

“That’s adorable,” he said and before I could stop, he ruffled his feathers making them tickle me more.

“Oi! Behave!” I threatened but seeing as I was still laughing it didn’t sound very convincing. He took my face in his hands and was about to kiss me but stopped before he reached my lips.

“You’re incredible... that was...utterly incredible!” He spoke the words proudly before resting his mouth to mine.

After the kiss, he let me roll off him and to his side, where I nestled in

my little nook under his arm and on his firm chest. I ran my fingers along the lines of his defined pecks and he let out a satisfied sigh, which blew my wild hair out of my eyes. I found myself smiling as my mind was drifting towards a sleepy state. His arm pulled me close and his head flopped down to rest on mine. It didn't take long before sleep devoured us both in this bed of roses.

It wasn't only the first time that I had slept on a bed of roses but also...

Wrapped in the wings of an Angel.

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Chapter 28

The Self-Assured Surfer Dude.

I couldn't remember the last time I had slept as peacefully as I did that night. I woke with a feeling that a flame had been lit in my soul and the aftermath of last night would burn with me forever. Is that what was meant by the eternal flame? An everlasting love so powerful, so deep, that it became a part of you, like it had in some way altered your DNA.

I felt stronger in an unnatural way and I knew that last night had been different in more ways than one. It was as if the reasons behind Draven's exhaustion after sex was down to him somehow passing over to me some of his power because although, when I looked over to him, he was still fast asleep, I on the other hand felt as though I could have climbed a mountain and still have time for a round of footie afterwards! My body tingled and my muscles felt brand new like after a full body massage.

The light was what woke me and I was now gazing at what it was reflecting off. Thousands of stunning flowers that made the glass dome seem like we were in the middle of a rainbow. The roses beneath us hadn't even lost their lustre after a night of being not only without water but also slept on. I looked to my left to see Draven peacefully breathing and adding to the beautiful sight, he was also still naked.

The light let in from the glass walls was making Draven's skin look like liquid gold that blanketed an extensive muscular body. I couldn't help but start to touch his heated skin, starting at the shoulder blade. He was lying on his side, hiding his face from view and his night black hair was chaotically hung around his cheek and neck. Like a night of sweating had made it stick to the lines of his face. My hand crept down further round to his chest and the lightness of his breathing made me wonder if he was in as deeper sleep as I thought. I was soon answered when his hand shot up so fast and grabbed my wrist in less than a heartbeat.

"Ahh" I let out a slight scream of shock and when he heard my voice, he relaxed his grip on my scarred arm and pulled it closer to kiss the white lines that decorated my pale skin. It was now that I realised I was as naked as he was and the light wasn't only making him look like a Mediterranean heartthrob but it was also showing my every imperfection. I wanted to shy away but the feeling of his lips brushing my skin was too hypnotic.

"Are you cold?" The question caught me off guard as I didn't feel cold but considering how he was now running his fingers over little pale bumps that covered my arms, then I guess my skin felt otherwise. He was leaving trails of warmth as his fingertips reached up to my face that he now had cupped in his palm.

"Cause you know, I can think of more than one way to warm up beautiful naked girls that I love." He turned his body round to face me and in one quick movement he had my body disappearing underneath his massive frame as he towered above me. He shot me a bad boy grin before going in for the kill. His kisses started soft and gentle, like being covered in butterflies but it didn't take long before his Demon side started to devour me in the height of

our morning passion.

He circled each hand around my wrist and raised them above my head so that he could pin me down.

“Speak to me!” He asked in a raspy voice and I blushed at his request. It was silly the way I still got embarrassed around him even after all the nights we had shared but there was something about the sound of his voice that would always send sparks down my spine, like fireworks being lit by those supernatural hands of his. Finally I gulped down my shame and spoke the words I knew he was waiting for. I raised my lips to his ear and whispered, “Make love to me.”

After a few hours of extreme morning exercise we finally made it to his room and on the way back he explained to me what that place had been. Thankfully I might add, I hadn't had to walk back in the nude because knowing my luck I would meet Vincent in the hallways! No he made some of my clothes appear, along with some of his own, so we didn't look too much like Adam and Eve on our way back from a roll in the hay in the Garden of Eden.

He explained how his sister's projects sometimes came in handy when trying to seduce his girlfriends. I had punched him playfully on the arm, making him roar with a deep laughter.

“Don't joke about that!” I reprimanded him but he made it harder when he shot me a sexy sideways glance. We had walked through the numerous corridors hand in hand, as if we had been taking a morning stroll in a local park. He looked happier than he had done last night and I wondered how last night would have really gone if he knew that he wasn't the only man to see me like that. I quickly pushed Vincent from my mind and, on an impulse, I squeezed Draven's hand tighter, making his eyebrows rise. God he didn't miss a beat!

Back in his room he left to attend to some business while I had some

breakfast and then a shower. The shower part I had been reluctant, washing the scent of Draven from my body, but the part where I had been sweating was something I couldn't live with. Maybe I could ask Draven to bottle his scent and make me soap from it.

After I was nicely wrapped in lush white fluffy towels, I walked back into the room to find it wasn't as empty as I had left it. A Draven of the shorter variety smiled sweetly at me and I shrieked in response to find Sophia sprawled out on the bed playing idly with the edge of one of the fringed pillows.

"You scared me half to death!" I screeched but I was met by a cool look of knowing.

"I doubt that, giving the colour of your cheeks."

"Sorry?"

"The dead don't blush Keira dear. Anyway, did you enjoy my pleasure dome?" The cool look of knowing turned quickly to smugness garnished with a slice of demon. I decided to play dumb, evidently something I seemed to be good at.

"I'm sure that I don't know what you're talking about." It would have helped if I could look her in the eye when I lied but come on, that was never going to happen. She laughed making me turn from the opposite direction and when met by those amused dark eyes I just shrugged my shoulders.

"Oh come now, don't play coy with me sister, besides this bed hasn't been slept in and my rose petal floor had been crushed to a pulp!"

"NO it wasn't, it was fine this morning!" I said in defence but she had been expecting it and pointed at me, shouting,

"HA, got ya!"

"Grow up!" I said in a way that I would have to Libby but with Sophia, it was like having a naughty sister watching my every move.

“I do try,” she replied sarcastically, “but it’s hard when you’re immortal.” I flashed her an un-amused eye roll but when it turned to a smile and we both laughed. Draven was right, it was utterly useless trying to stay mad at Sophia. Like telling off a puppy for peeing in your favourite shoes and then resisting cuddling it when its starts to cry for attention. Not that I was calling Sophia a dog, more like a tiger cub. Cute as a button but with one swipe could take your face off!

As graceful as a dancer from Swan Lake, Sophia dismounted the bed and followed me into my new dressing room. There she stood by watching as I scanned my wall full of clothes but every time I went to grab something, she made a sound that reminded me of the TV game show Family Fortunes, the noise they made when you got an answer wrong.

“Ok, my fashion muse, what would you have me wear?” I asked as I folded my arms and took a step back. She floated ahead of me and picked out a tight pair of stretch jeans in black and a charcoal grey tunic top with big bell shaped sleeves and pretty, light pink flowers around the bottom. It had a big roll neck and it looked warm and inviting. It was just a shame that it wasn’t me.

“That’s lovely but I doubt Draven would want me wearing something like that just to meet Justin.” She whipped her head round like it was attached to an elastic band.

“You’re meeting with Justin today?” She looked shocked with the idea and once again I found myself shrugging my shoulders.

“So what?” I said pulling out a pair of faded blue jeans down off the rack and grabbed a plain black T-shirt with long sleeves. I turned round to get some underwear out of the drawers and when I saw Sophia now sat on top of the large dresser island, it startled me. Her short dainty legs hung down like she was sat on a giant’s doorstep.

“Sophia what are you...”

“I’m helping!” She started and her foot reached down for the lower

drawer and pulled it open with the slightest flick of her ankle.

“Knickers?” She wore the cheekiest of grins and I couldn’t help but laugh.

“What? That’s what you call them in England isn’t it?”

“Yeah....sometimes. So what was with the face... don’t look at me like that, you know what I mean... when I mentioned Justin?”

“Nothing major, just answered a few questions for me, that’s all.” She jumped down and landed lightly on her feet like a cat on a tin roof... soundless and flawless.

“Ok, so what’s that supposed to mean?” She walked past me now and was leaving out of the door, when she stopped and flung her perfect curls over one shoulder before answering me.

“Just that it explains why Dom was in such a foul mood last night, I guess he didn’t want this day to arrive. After all, it’s not every day a prince lets his princess go out on a date with a pauper!.... See you tonight Keira dear.” And with that she left making me want to throw something at the door behind her! In the end all I did was shout “IT ISN’T A DATE!”

After a quick change and a scribbled goodbye note to Draven I grabbed the outfit that Sophia had picked out before running for the door. I was still stuffing it into my bag whilst half running down the corridor, when I bumped into someone with a solid chest, which incidentally knocked me down.

“Ouch!” I said as my butt cheeks slapped on the cold stone floor.

“Keira!” Vincent’s astonished voice filled the air and then quickly memories of us last night filled my mind. I started to mumble out words of apology, at least that’s what I thought they were. I usually just start talking when I was nervous and while my mind was busy on other things, I was never sure what new trouble I was getting myself in with speaking.

He started to laugh as he helped me up and when my stockinged feet slipped on the floor, he was fast as lightning catching me again. The feel of his arm tightly wound around my waist was like setting off a firecracker in my stomach. He leaned down to my face and for a second my heart stopped, I thought he was going to kiss me. But if that was true then why was I closing my eyes instead of pushing him away.

“Are you steady?” He whispered and this seemed to break the spell. My eyes flew open and all I managed was a nod. It appeared he was quite reluctant to let me go but after minutes of silence his hand left my side. He looked down at my feet and another low laugh came from deep beneath his chest.

“Perhaps you should think about shoes, after all, it is raining outside.” Then it happened...I snorted out a laugh! If I didn’t want to die of shame before, then now was a contender! His eyes widened making them look like crystal blue lakes that could have commanded the winter skies. His lips curved into an angelic smile at the new sound he had witnessed and I bent down to pick up my shoes that had dropped from my bag. I kicked my feet into them just so I didn’t have to look into his alluring eyes. It was powerful enough to feel them burning into my every move.

“You seem in a hurry.”

“Umm, yeah, I guess. Just errands and stuff, my sister is a bit hopeless when it comes to cooking and she wanted me to cook today, while Justin’s staying.” As soon as the name was out of my mouth, I wanted to slip again and, this time, bash my head against the hundred year old stone.

“Ah, Justin. I must say, I haven’t heard that name spoken in a faltering tone yet.” Speaking like this you could tell he was Draven’s brother alright! I couldn’t help but say what I thought.

“Oh, not you too! God what is it with the Dravens and paranoia. You all sound the same! Anyone would think I was running off to marry the bloody guy!” He was trying to hide his grin from my little outburst but he was as lousy at it as his brother. At least with Sophia you knew where you stood.

“Is it not the right of a man to protect his woman, even from evils they cannot see?”

“Evil?” At this I laughed. “Oh come on, he’s a family friend, what could he possibly want but friendship with his brother’s, wife’s sister...you don’t understand!” Ok did that come out right? Why did I say that?

“Umm yes... what indeed? I’m sorry I pried... after all, I know nothing about a situation like that, being non human and all.” It was the first time I had seen him look hurt and his eyes turned to ice that looked ready to crack. He gave me a nod goodbye and turned but as he made his way down the hall he spoke one last time.

“Ragnar is waiting for you.”

I wanted to smack myself on the side of the head for being so tactless. What was I thinking!

On the drive home I didn’t say one word to Ragnar until I pulled up the drive and cut the engine. Over the last week Ragnar and I had become unlikely friends but after Draven had not only apologized to him but also commended him on thinking solely of me that night in the Temple, we had created an understanding.

I realized the real reasons behind his reluctance to have me under his guard. I reminded him of the daughter he couldn’t save. Draven on the other hand had made a ruthless decision making Ragnar my guardian, he knew that if he had these feeling that he would lay his life down to protect me. I hadn’t been too pleased to hear this at the time but in Draven’s eyes, he knew the best way to protect those that are dear to him.

“DAMN IT!” I shouted and hit the steering wheel with both palms. I had been stewing over what I had said to Vincent and what a complete idiot I had been. Ragnar looked over to me like I had lost my mind but in my current state I didn’t care and luckily he didn’t care enough to ask, or maybe he was

just scared to. Ok, so not likely!

When I got in doors I was just glad to hear that Justin wasn't there. He and Frank had gone on a boy's day out that consisted of fishing and drinking beer. I think it was more Frank's idea because the way Libby described it, Justin had been reluctant to leave the house this morning. He had asked about my whereabouts and when my sister had told him, he had looked...well...disappointed. This is all according to Libby, who loves nothing more than a good drama, even when there's none to tell.

I decided to work some more on my report after hanging up the outfit Sophia had picked. I don't know why I had changed my mind but something in me had just snapped. They were all making a big fuss about me escorting Justin to the club...which was all it was ...ESCORTING! NOT DATING! I said to myself over and over.

I decided that I would make an effort tonight, if not for Draven then for myself. I knew deep down that I wasn't really angry at them, it was myself that I was upset with. I should have just nodded and kept my big mouth shut.

I tried to concentrate on my work but that lashing rain against my window was sending me into a daze. I was thinking about all that had happened in the past few weeks and how since me and Draven had become an item, my life really wasn't going to be the same again. I know that sounds like a daft statement but forgetting all the Demon and Angel stuff, this relationship was it for me. Draven would be the last man I would ever love or more like, would I be the last woman Draven would ever love? After all, he was going to outlive me.

"NO! Don't do this" I said out loud. I sat at my window seat trying desperately not to think about the real nightmares haunting me...my real fears. They weren't only the ones that wanted to hurt me, they were the ones that would indefinitely hurt me. Like Draven's face when I started to get older. Could he still love me then? And if so, we would have to hide away our love.

After a certain while nobody would be able to see us together. For one,

Draven wouldn't age and two, I would just look like the sad granny that bagged herself a toy boy or worse, people would think I was his grandmother! Urgh gross! The thought had me near gagging. Thankfully Libby had knocked on my door to save me from myself.

It didn't take too much to get my mind occupied on other things and after Libby had finished with telling me about every client at work and moved on to what morning sickness was like, I was very close to forgetting my others worries. I was however grateful to her for leaving this last part until I had fully finished the sandwich she had brought up for me.

The day passed too quickly and as the night approached I was starting to dread the evening even more. RJ had called to check it was still on and that brought comfort to know that I wasn't going to be alone in this. The whole gang was meeting us and if I was lucky I could just palm Justin off with RJ, who let's face it, didn't exactly mind any male company. I started to get ready when I heard Frank and Justin come in and Frank's usual first question was about food...after Libby's health of course.

Frank had become obsessed with what Libby was now allowed to do and not do. The other day, I heard him telling her off because she was standing on the bed trying to change the quilt cover. He told her, as sternly as I had ever heard him, that she was not to be allowed to do these types of thing again until the baby was born, as she now had two people he cared for to think about. Of course my sister thought this was not only wonderful, as she hated doing laundry but she quickly added anything else she hated doing to the 'no can do pile'... this quickly included ironing! Only what harm can come from standing over a board, moving one arm back and to do I wasn't quite sure.

I was now stood in front of the mirror arguing with myself, as to whether Sophia's choice of outfits had been a good one. I was happy with the colours at least...or more like the lack of colours. Shades had always looked better on me. It wasn't the top that was the problem. No this was both comfortable and warm. It was the tight trousers that concerned me.

They hugged my skin like liquid tar, showing every curve on my bottom half. I tugged down the sweater tunic but unfortunately it didn't come down

to my knees like I would have preferred it to. It passed my cheeks but only just. I made a loud tut and said “Ah to hell with it” before turning away from the mirror.

I had done my hair a little differently too, deciding I didn’t want to look like I was just there to do another shift. I twisted each side back into a low pony tail and let my waves hang loose. Only today they were more curls than waves due to it still being damp from this morning’s shower. The shorter bits framed my oval face and I couldn’t help keep tucking them behind my ears. I had also added the slightest touch of mascara and clear lip gloss to “enhance what was already there” in Libby’s words.

I was now ready but I hadn’t yet seen Justin. It was strange to know there was another person staying in the house but it was only for one night and I would no doubt be staying at the club, so what did it matter. Justin was staying in one of the guest rooms on the floor below and I could hear footsteps directly below my room. I stayed up there for as long as I deemed acceptable beyond the point of being rude.

I grabbed my bag and phone before turning off my light to make my way downstairs but of course in true Keira fashion, I missed the last step onto the next landing and stumbled into the wall. I was just straightening up when I could feel myself being watched. I looked up to find Justin dripping wet, with only a towel covering his lower half. Oh my!

It seemed Justin had changed somewhat since Libby and Frank’s wedding. Age had granted him with a well toned body and sun kissed skin. There were fine lines defining his washboard stomach and a trail of light blonde hair travelled down amongst where the towel was covering. I couldn’t help scan over his features with my cheeks ablaze.

His dreadlocks were different lengths but all looked like golden snakes following his every movement, like a master. Some had metal bands round with different symbols etched in the centres. There were also a few wooden beads here and there that matched the numerous beads tied around his wrists. There were other bracelets as well that spelled out, well travelled surfer dude but right now it was hard to focus on anything with the grin he was now

sending my way.

“Well hello gorgeous, looking for me?” His tone shouted confidence but the wink he added at the end screamed cocky! I rolled my eyes making him laugh at me. He reached into the cupboard and grabbed another towel to hang around his neck, catching the drips that were clinging to his skin. That’s when I noticed a huge deep scar that ran down one shoulder and disappeared into the underside of his arm. He noticed me staring but I looked away before I could judge his reaction.

“I’ll meet you downstairs,” I said in a shy voice as I made my way past but just as I came closer, he shook his head so that droplets of water flew around him like little fruit flies around grapes. They sprayed me and I giggled.

“Oi... Behave!” I warned in a less than threatening tone and then added a little punch on the arm. It instantly took me back to Draven earlier and the smile I wore, Justin misinterpreted. I was surprised to find his slender arms as solid as rock under weathered skin.

“I’ll be down in a minute, just once I get the trout out of my hair!” He joked as he watched me go down to the living room. There I found Frank still wearing his fishing gear, including a hat with tackle clung to the rim. His face was wind swept red and Justin was right...he smelt like fish! He started to tell me all about his day, just as Libby came in with two mugs of tea and one coffee for Frank (the none tea drinker in the family).

“You look nice, is that new?” Libby nodded my way and I couldn’t help but fumble out a semi lie. The last thing I wanted was to admit Draven was now buying me clothes, let alone a whole new wardrobe.

“Bor...borrowed... from Sophia.” She frowned like she didn’t believe me but I quickly switched the conversation round and asked her if she knew when B day was going to be. Of course B day was code for “Bitch day”. In other words, when our dreaded cousin Hilary was going to be arriving. She pulled a face like it was sour milk she was drinking and I was sure I saw a shiver crawl up her back.

“She enters our life and the misery begins next week.”

“Be nice honey bee,” Frank said without dragging his eyes from the ice hockey game that was on replay.

“That was being nice...trust me, I could say far worse.” She stated and I couldn’t help but laugh at the sentiment that we shared. There was a whole book on what I could say but more than half of it would have to be bleeped out.

She was the essence of evil and would make a perfect match to Lucius! The trouble that girl had landed me in over the years was epic and above all...unforgivable! Stealing boyfriends was only the tip of the iceberg but at spreading rumours, she was the titanic disaster. She had once told an entire year of my school that the reason I had a large chest was due to an overdose of hormones I had to take, because I was really born a boy but my parents wanted another girl to save on buying me new clothes. Of course this didn’t help when I would borrow some of my sister clothes...adding fuel to the fire per say.

By the time Justin came down, Libby and I were sat in the kitchen talking about the Terminator/Predator that would be staying next week and most of all, who we could palm her off with for the duration. Justin cleared his throat to get our attention causing us to both turn at the same time. There our eyes met Justin leaning casually in the door frame. For once he looked smart in a tight black shirt, even if the sleeves were rolled up to show strong looking forearms, due to years of throwing a board around the sands of the earth, no doubt.

His wrists, as usual were covered in beads and leather ties but now with an added thick leather strap that was edged with a metal zip. His hair was different too, instead of hanging down around his face, like vines from the jungle, it was tied back and knotted at the back with pieces of dreads. It was now that you could see his handsome face clearer and the sun induced freckles added to his charm. His long legs carried him well in stone washed jeans that had little tears at the knees and pockets.

“So, are you ready for our date?”

I grabbed the black, leather boots Libby had lent me and tugged them on. I walked over to the door, realising they made me a little taller when opposite Justin but when I tried to pass him his arm blocked my way, leaning across the frame. I turned to him and said in a low voice “It’s not a date!” But his cocky smile told me he’d been expecting my response because before he let me pass he replied,

“Aww, don’t kill the dream honey.” Then he lowered his arm and followed me to the door where I was putting on my jacket. Libby had now joined Frank and perched herself on the arm of the chair her husband occupied.

“Have fun!” Frank said cheerfully, like we were off to the prom or something.

“Right kids, no candy after ten o’clock, no scary movies, unless it’s Jaws of course.” Libby laughed and Frank sighed at his brother’s humour, making me do the same until he added the next bit, which made my pulse quicken and Draven’s angry face flash from my memories...

“Oh and most importantly...don’t wait up!”

He finished this with a wink.

Chapter 29

Pistols at Dawn.

All the way to the club I had been on edge and it wasn't only down to my passenger. I hadn't seen Ragnar outside and kept expecting him to pop up in my rear view mirror. I know I didn't have to worry about Justin seeing him because he was still invisible to everyone else but I knew I wouldn't be able to help my reaction and I was pretty sure Justin would class me as a mental case if I just screamed for no reason. Although this idea did have its advantages, it might have stopped him flirting every time he opened his mouth.

Then I saw them...headlights, with a strange red glow that Justin didn't seem to notice. They flashed once and I knew I was being followed and Justin didn't have a clue. The black car behind looked as huge and intimidating as its driver did and it had me gulping at the sight. And it didn't help that the closer we got to Afterlife, the more I kept thinking I was playing with fire and tonight I would see a Demon throw sparks.

“What you thinking about?” Justin was staring at me with confusion plastered across fine cheek bones. What should I say...Umm well actually

I'm kind of hoping my boyfriend doesn't rip your head off and give it to his pet bird to play with! In the end I said,

“Just college stuff,” which I could tell he didn't buy.

“So will I get to meet my rival tonight or will he let me have you all to myself?” He laughed lightly at the end but I just growled and looked in my mirror tensely, praying that they could only see us and not hear us.

“You shouldn't joke...I'm taken and that means there's a no flirting rule.” I said sternly but when I looked from the road to his face, I gathered I was just playing right into his hands by responding.

“Who said I was joking? Besides, I don't know how not to flirt...not with you anyway.” I was expecting him be wearing a cocky smile when he said this but the serious tone and glance out of the window, I wasn't expecting. Thankfully the conversation turned to light hearted tales of his expeditions around the world and I found myself hanging on his every word. I couldn't help myself. It was a mixture of the subject of travelling that was close to my heart and the fact that he was so damn charismatic.

He had just finished his story on helping baby turtles get to sea after just being hatched, when we pulled up outside the vast ivy covered building that was both work and home to me. It made me wonder what my life would have been like without this place. If I had never come to Afterlife that night, never found a job here, what would have become of me? I would have probably been dating Jack and playing it safe by now and instead of worrying about a supernatural King's reaction, I would just have the usual, mundane human reactions...shouting, pushing and maybe a fist fight to be broken up by security.

No instead I had the image of Draven in his Demon form demanding power from Heaven and Hell, two large blades protruding from his hands all aglow and ready for action, a mighty roar into the night before striking his victim to the sound of my screaming! Yeah, something like that.

I took a deep breath and got out of my truck, slamming the door a little

too hard for big blue. I couldn't help but say "Sorry" out loud which made Justin chuckle.

"That's adorable."

"Shut up!" I said playfully before hitting him on the arm, which he then placed around my shoulders and gave me a squeeze.

"Don't look so worried doll, just a bit of harmless fun...drinking, dancing..."

"Demons" I whispered under my breath.

"Sorry?"

"Oh nothing," I said looking nervously around in case Ragnar was seeing him with his arm around me. The car behind had turned down the side of the building and out of sight but it didn't mean that no one was out there in the dark watching. My heart started to sound like Dave Grohl playing the drums as the thought entered my head. I shrugged out of his hold and nodded to Jo and Cameron, the doormen.

Of course knowing Frank they knew Justin, so instead of being stood out in the cold for another ten minutes chatting, I left him there and said I'd meet him at the bar. Once inside I felt that usual euphoria wash over me whenever I stepped through the doors. Like a magnetic pull or a drug that I didn't know I had swallowed as I entered. I had felt the same feeling the first night and it had remained that way ever since...the feeling, like I belonged and the building knew it. I don't know why but every day it seemed to get stronger, especially since the Temple incident. Maybe it had acted like an amplifier.

The club was in full force, with bodies everywhere there wasn't an inch of space. Some looked clung together by the tight black clothes and matching pale faces, supporting heavy made up eyes. When I first started I thought it was all very intimidating but now I knew what was upstairs, these lot looked like pet kittens playing under a tiger cage.

I pushed my way passed a couple that looked recently risen from the

grave and with the evil stares I received, they could have been zombies after my flesh. Who knows, in this place it could be possible for looks to kill, after all, there was only one rule in Afterlife, no humans in the VIP...So what did that make me?

The bar wasn't as packed as everywhere else due to the band that was playing. It was a heavy gothic band with a girl as its lead singer. The soft sound from her lips then shocked me as she started to scream out the last few lines of what I assumed to be a chorus. Actually the beat wasn't that bad and the crowd was enjoying themselves, which freed up the bar. Mike was working and unfortunately Cassie the 'Goth Barbie' was collecting glasses. Jerry was also serving but Mike saw me first.

"Hey cutie, who gave you the night off...? Ah, don't tell me, I think I can guess." He was smirking the whole time which told me he was pulling my leg.

"You know I don't work Saturdays but what a shame your biggest fan does." I nodded to Cassie who was collecting only two glasses at a time.

"Thanks for reminding me, you've now destroyed an illusion I had been working on all night."

"So who was she this time...Jessica Biel or Jessica Alba?" He laughed at how well I knew him and just as he put my usual Corona with lime in front of me, he answered,

"Neither smarty pants." I raised my eyebrows and put up a hand.

"Wait, don't tell me...I got this one...Umm... Sarah Michelle Gellar!" I could tell with his face I'd guessed right. See Cassie was a grade A pain in the arse that loved Mike and practically humped his leg whenever she got the chance, so I came up with the idea of blocking her out by pretending she was someone else. I doubted he actually did it but it was still something we joked about every time we saw each other.

"Hold on, here comes Buffy now!"

“Actually I preferred her in Cruel Intentions.” He winked at me and just as she came up to the bar I whispered,

“Yeah, but that’s only because she kisses a girl!”

“Argh, gross! Who kissed a girl?” Cassie asked but not without the disgusted look my way. She probably thought I was a lesbian now and it would soon be around the club that I was cheating on Draven with some out of town Cyber chick.

The Dravens’ prolonged stay was still generating an array of unusual tourists that travelled miles just for one night at Club Afterlife and maybe a glimpse at its famous Gothic millionaire. Unfortunately the drama and gossip of the town was still about me dating Draven. I think there was even one rumour the other day that I was pregnant and just saying it was his because I wanted his money. I had laughed until tears developed when RJ had told me. But I wasn’t hurt by all these rumours. It came with the territory when dating the town’s most influential man and besides, I knew the truth and that’s all that mattered.

Of course it caused a little friction at work to begin with but soon they just seemed to accept it was now a part of me and when I disappeared upstairs, it was as if I was forgotten about. On the shifts when I worked in the VIP, I would walk past without a word spoken to me, but on the shifts when I worked down here, then it was as though nothing had changed. I was now two different people to everyone else but I was still the same person inside. It had bothered me in the beginning, that I couldn’t have it both ways but I soon realised there was no other way it would work...it was them that had changed, not me.

“Oh my, oh my!” Cassie was muttering to me which was odd in itself. Her killer instincts had kicked into overdrive and she was now fixated on Justin who was walking this way.

“Move out of my way, my future husband just walked in and he’s looking this way, oh and try not to speak, I don’t want him running off.” She budged me out of the way to stand in front of me. I wanted to laugh out loud

but refrained. I didn't want to crush her dreams as soon as they had been created. Besides this was going to be far too entertaining to watch!

Justin sure did attract attention even if he did look like a fish out of water. He was trying to look around for me and I had to wave behind Cassie's back. This was like giving a diabetic, keys to the sweet shop because Cassie thought he was coming for her. He was now stood in front of us both trying to get to me.

"Hi, looking for someone 'cause my name's Cassie and I'm someone?" She flashed her white teeth under murderous red lips that were closer to hooker than hottie. She then added a girly hair flick, which ending up hitting me in the face with bleached blonde hair that even smelt like peroxide.

"Hey Cassie, I'm Justin and I've found who I'm looking for thanks." He was trying to be polite but she didn't even flinch.

"Yeah, well why don't you tell her you've found me and let me and you go party, I'm off in twenty minutes." At this he lost his gentlemanly patience and held her by the shoulders and moved her to the side to reveal an amused me behind, which brought his smile back.

"Sorry kid, I play in the big leagues and I've found what I was looking for." He finished it with a wink at me, which sent Cassie over the edge. She went scarlet to the dark roots and huffed off shouting "Dog" over her shoulder but Justin just replied with a "Woof, Woof", even though I think it was mainly aimed at me.

"Well she was pleasant... Not!" he said before ordering a rum and coke.

"You just met the slut of Afterlife and survived, congrats," I said causing a warm smile to replace the cocky one.

We were only there a few minutes when a familiar pink head could be seen amongst the crowd. Boy for such a little thing she couldn't half push her way through a room full of dancing bodies. She came bounding up to me so I met her half way, where she gave me a huge hug, momentarily forgetting

Justin. She was wearing a ripped black tank top with net sleeves. This was matched with a pink tartan tutu skirt and tartan boots on top of fish net tights that had seen better days. Her hair had grown out a bit but the roots were now dyed red, so each pink spike now looked like it was bleeding into her skull.

“Nice hair!” I commented and her eyes lit up with the complement.

“You like? And who said red and pink clash! You look cute as usual but wait...what is this, doth my eyes deceive me?” She said this in a posh, old fashioned English accent (or at least tried to) before carrying on,

“Are you, Keira our English rose, wearing the tightest black jeans I have ever seen?”

“No! And don’t make me regret them...ok?” I said in a low voice and she just nodded, understanding my code.

“Mum’s the word, old chap!” She did it again and at this rate if she persisted to keep up the accent then I would have to teach her a few things, like for one, not all English people sounded like Sherlock Homes!

“So what do we have here then, what did you bring me?” She motioned towards Justin with her netted hand and I turned to see him waiting for us. She giggled at the sight and as we walked over there I heard her behind me saying “Yum, Yum”.

“Justin, this is my very good friend RJ, RJ this is who I was telling you about.” I thought I had introduced them properly but I think Justin got the wrong idea.

“Keira, have you been telling people about me, you little minx?” He held a hand out to RJ like something from a period drama on the BBC. I don’t know why but Mr Wickham sprang to mind. He was being the perfect gentleman as we all chatted at the bar about what Justin had been up to the past few years.

“But if you’re only a few years older than Keira, didn’t you finish college?” SHIT! I hadn’t thought about that, they all still thought I was

twenty one not twenty three. Of course Justin knew what had happened to me, it would have been hard for Frank not to explain why he had to come over to England to console his wife. His family had been great in not disclosing this bit of information to anyone else and although Justin didn't know all the gruelling details, he still knew.

“Ah well... my parents didn't mind me taking some time out on account of being a free spirit and all. I'll go back but only when I'm finished with travelling.” He carried on but I was just thanking my lucky stars that Justin had been so cool with lying. If that had been me, I would have been busted Disney style and my big conk would have probably poked her eye out. But Justin was obviously a pro in this line of work.

By the end of his third story about helping out the locals, I think RJ was in love and ready to run away with him to become a world healing surfer, living in huts and mothering abandoned monkeys while making vegan meals for hungry locals.

“So do you like the band?” RJ was asking Justin as I saw one of the friendliest faces on the planet come towards us. Jack's messy hair flopped about in the crowd and a couple of girls dressed like vampire dolls drooled as he went past. His smile lit up my face as he approached and I couldn't help but laugh at his T-shirt that was black and the white lettering said “Guns don't kill people, *Zombies* do” and the word *Zombies* was painted in fake dripping blood.

“Nice T-shirt,” I said as he gave me a big bear hug.

“I wore it for you, knew you'd like it considering you work in a Gothic nightclub. Cute top, by the way.” He gave me a great big grin that I expected most of the room could see. Meanwhile Justin had stopped listening to RJ and was staring at us. You could feel the heat from his glare and it made us both turn round at the same time.

“Oh sorry dude, you must be Justin” Jack extended his hand and Justin slapped his own into it with an edge of aggression.

“And you? Sorry Keira hasn’t spoken about *you*.” I blushed and felt like pulling out one of Justin’s ribs and hitting him with it for being so rude.

“Oh this is just my brother Jack.”

“Geez thanks sis, that’s real heartfelt.” Jack hit a fist to his chest and joked about being the more mature one of the two. I quickly asked RJ about the band name, trying to disperse some of the tense atmosphere that was far too thick for me.

“So what’s the band’s name?”

“The Happy Yellow Stains, they’re ok but the next band is called ‘TCTF’ and they rock.” She then got Jack’s attention and drank from an imaginary cup, her way of asking for a drink. He rolled his eyes at me and shouted for Mike who was trying to get away from Cassie at the time, so he seemed more than pleased about his reason for escape.

“What does ‘TCTF’ mean?” I asked when I really wanted to ask if it meant ‘Tactless conversations to friends’, but I swallowed that one and waited for my answer which was in no way what I was expecting.

“This Clown Tastes Funny.”

“Sorry?” I thought she had just randomly told me something from a dream but no, that had been the answer. I hadn’t heard anymore because a vibrating in my bag told me that I had a message. I fumbled in the side pocket and half answered Jack at the same time,

“Yes thanks,” I said to the offer of a drink but I noticed Justin had made it a point of ordering me one first and he slid the bottle my way. Jack just shrugged his shoulders and told Mike his order minus one Corona. I now had my phone in my palm and flipped it open to a message from an unknown number.

“Did you think it a wise choice to dress so sexy when surrounded by

drooling boys, while your boyfriend looks on?"

OMG! Not only was he watching me but he was now texting me!

"Anyone I know...Or someone I wanna know?" RJ said trying to look at my phone which I was now clasping to my chest and turning rosy red.

"It's no one, just Libby." She wasn't convinced and laughed saying "Yeah right", then she carried on talking to Justin. Next thing I knew my phone was vibrating in my sweaty hand making me nearly drop it.

"Nobody is it? Well, why don't you meet this nobody upstairs and we can discuss what colour your cheeks have blushed to?"

I couldn't help the smile that crept across my face like a deflowered maiden.

"Lover boy calling?" Justin said in a flat tone that had taken my smile to heart. Jack frowned but said nothing. And RJ nudged me and said "Bootie call."

I ignored them all and text back with a shaky hand.

"Is this who I think it is using modern technology to arrange a date?" K

xx

I sent it and tried to listen to the conversation but it was hard when I kept looking over my shoulder to where his shadow might be or the phone to light up, letting me know I had a message back. I had been smart enough to put it

on silent and vibrate. Sure enough, seconds later it was glowing in my hand.

“Come to me and I’ll show you what I can do without this phone in my hand.” D xxx

I gulped and bit down on my lip. I wanted to say goodbye and run for the stairs as quick as my legs could carry me but I knew my guilt would be overwhelming, so I sent the text that I knew he wouldn’t like...the one telling him no.

“I can’t, not yet anyway but I promise I will see you later”

Love K xxxx

I really wanted to say “See you in two shakes of a lamb’s tail” but I knew I would be doing the wrong thing, so I flipped the phone shut and instead of sulking, I plastered on a smile and joined in with the conversation.

The others then arrived and Jack got Chaz’s attention and we went over to sit in a booth. Justin made a bee line for me and ended up in between me and RJ. Jack then sat opposite me and gave me a smile that said, “I feel your pain”. I mouthed a thank you at him when no one was looking. The night seemed to drag on and on, which made it near impossible to relax, knowing I still had hours until I could give in to what I really wanted to do.

“So where is the Prince of Darkness this evening?” Lanie asked as she snuggled up to Drew, who she had started dating not long after I had arrived here. Drew was RJ’s best friend from childhood so she had a few issues when she had found out and took a while to adjust but thankfully she was now cool with it.

“Yeah, are we too beneath him to warrant an introduction?” Justin said spitefully and Jack’s peaceful face turned deadly, but I butted in before anyone could say anything.

“Below the belt there Justin, he knows that I’m having a night with my friends and he doesn’t want to intrude, that’s all.”

“Yeah and it’s nice that he’s been letting the bar give us all free drinks all night.” Lanie said as she pushed her glasses back up her nose and looked to Drew for back up. But it was Jack who spoke up for him.

“Yes he has and if I were you I would judge on what you know rather than that on what you clearly don’t!” Jack and Justin then had a staring match, which if I could’ve had money on, I would have picked Jack every time. His ‘boy next door’ charm had turned into something protectively lethal.

“Chill out Bro, he was just kidding around, weren’t you Justin?” RJ came in and saved the day and when Justin didn’t respond, she nudged him and gave him a look to back down.

“Sure, why not?” He said dipped in smugness. OK, so Jack and Justin would never be sporting buddies but Justin didn’t strike me as the type that shared his toys or conquests, which incidentally is what he classed me as. Not long after, I got up to use the bathroom and RJ came with me.

“Ok... so what was all that about?” She asked as soon as the other girls had left the bathroom. We both stood at the basins that were covered in expensive gold leaf and held up with twisted iron. The gilded mirror showed two very different friends having a discussion about two very different boys.

“I don’t know what Justin’s problem is but it’s not about Jack.”

“Well durr, it’s about Dominic Draven that’s who! Oh, come on Keira, you can be so naïve sometimes. It obvious that Justin’s got a major thing for you and the Dark Prince is in the way.”

“I wish people would stop calling him that.”

“Are you kidding, that’s the shortened version, it’s normally ‘The Dark Prince of Hotness’ but we shorten it out of respect.” I couldn’t help but laugh and when she started to join in, we were giggling like a couple of schoolyard teenagers.

“Look, I know you will hate me for saying this but he kind of has a point, he has never come down to meet us...I mean, don’t get me wrong, it’s not like I’m expecting him to come down and kick it with us or anything but it would be nice to at least meet the guy.” What could I say to that? If they only knew the truth, would they want to meet him then? I was about to answer, when a noise from one of the cubicles startled us.

“Is someone...?” Just before she could finish, a girl emerged from behind a door and came to stand next to us. I knew instantly it was Draven. There was a flash of purple that RJ couldn’t see and my heart dropped. Had he heard everything? I started to replay our conversation over and over like a broken record that was now counted as evidence.

The girl finished washing her hands and I looked over to RJ who was putting on another layer of thick black lines under and above her eyes when something happened. The water that I had been running stopped...no that’s not quite right, not just stopped but froze.

It was as if this was a video being played and someone just hit the pause button. I looked to my right and RJ had frozen, still holding the eyeliner close to her lid. She was pulling a funny face like most girls do when trying to straighten their faces so that the makeup would somehow be applied better.

I then turned slowly to my left and found that only I and the girl were running in true time.

“Ah crap!” I said making the girl laugh.

“Hi Keira.” The girl said sweetly and I knew Draven was having far too much fun with my reaction.

“Hi,” I said with an unimpressed edge to my voice and this just made the

poor vessel Draven was using smile.

“If I was you sweetheart, I would check my phone, you never know who wants *you*...your attention!” she corrected herself or was it, he corrected himself?

“Draven you can’t jus...” I started to object to him being here but by the time I turned back to face him, the girl was gone.

“Hey, are you ok?” RJ asked back in full swing of real time and full of concern at my pale, confused face.

We finished in the bathroom and made our way through the crowd when I decided to hang back and check my phone...

“Don’t keep me waiting Keira, or I will have to come and get you. See you soon.” Dominic

GULP!

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Chapter 30

Coming to Get Me.

I was still in shock that he had gone to those lengths just to get my attention. RJ kept looking behind her making sure I hadn't gotten lost in the crowd. Bless her, she didn't know my half functioning state was due to just meeting my boyfriend in the girl's toilets in the form of a blue haired nineteen year old girl with braces and furry boots.

I think that one would throw anyone off their game. I kept walking towards the booth but jumped when a hand came out of a bunch of dancing bodies which turned out to be my friends. The hand belonged to Justin who was determined to make me stay and dance.

"Hey, there you are. I was looking for you." I was about to pull my arm away and walk back to the booth where Jack and Chaz were still chatting but he gripped me tighter.

"Dance!" He urged but I was still mad at him for being a jerk.

“Why, have you grown up in the past ten minutes?” I asked sarcastically.

“Look, I’m sorry about before, I was being a Jack arse...forgive me?” He started to plead with hands together praying but when I didn’t respond he made it worse by getting on his knees in front of everyone. This was causing a scene, so I grabbed his arm and pulled him up.

“Ok, ok, but just one dance.” I found myself whispering it, like this would somehow help. I could tell he wanted to dance one on one but I made it a group effort which thankfully RJ understood and got in between us as much as she could. I would have to remember to thank her later. Unfortunately though it didn’t last long enough to warrant thanks as she was quickly distracted by a tall Goth in army boots and a hacked off look. She went in for the kill and left me and Justin to dance with the couple, Lanie and Drew, who were currently making out.

“So, how did I do?” He leaned in to ask, sending a whiff of aftershave, mixed with salt water that smelt so fresh you could have almost swam in it.

“Huh!” I said looking round only half listening.

“You know... earlier, when I covered up my age.”

“Oh that, yeah that was great...I’m mean really great. I guess I should have warned you that no one here really knows about me...well apart from Jack that is.” His smile quickly turned sour at the mention of his new nemesis.

“Oh, that surprises me.” He tried to play it cool but I was having none of it.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” I asked with a distinct protective tone that made my voice deeper.

“Just that he doesn’t strike me as the type you could trust, but it could be his ulterior motive keeping him quiet.” This actually made me stamp my foot and the look he gave me, made me feel like I was an endearing spoilt little girl, which didn’t help my mood!

“You don’t know anything about him! And while we’re on ulterior motives, what exactly are yours, why are you playing this game? I just don’t understand!”

“Isn’t it obvious? I don’t want to upset you Keira, I really don’t, but it’s so frustrating being around you when all I want to do is…” He never got to finish his sentence because every person in the room was now staring at us, making his words die away into the club’s atmosphere. Even the music had ceased, making the only noise gasps from excited onlookers.

I turned to see RJ showing her tonsils as her mouth hung to her chin. She wasn’t the only one sporting this look and finally I looked in the direction everyone else was fixated on, only to find myself doing the same thing. The only face that didn’t match the rest of the room was Justin’s.

“Excuse me while I just steal *my* girlfriend away.” Draven’s powerful voice cut through the whispering room like a judge delivering his sentence. I found I had forgotten how to breathe, along with every other girl in the club. Justin looked like a little boy in the sand box after being pushed down by the bigger kid, meanwhile Draven barely even acknowledged his existence, which just made Justin’s hate burn with an even brighter flame.

He didn’t wait for his answer but instead took me gently by the arm and led me to the bar, along with every eye in the building. I don’t know how but I knew Sophia was watching all this from above and giggling her little demon heart out! He only looked back once to stare at the band, which quickly started back up again as though being secretly commanded to. This seemed to break the spell and once again the room began to dance to the new club beat.

Once we got to the bar, Draven only had to nod at Mike to get him to move into action. Jerry quickly ran to his side and was about to take over, when Draven spoke.

“Mike, isn’t it?” Mike, bless him, could only manage a head bob in return. Jerry backed away, taking Draven’s look for code and therefore letting Mike serve us.

“The lady would like a coke and I will have a Corona.” He ordered the drinks with ease and perfect manners, not like I was used to seeing in the VIP. Don’t get me wrong, he was never rude but there was always a clear cut masterful tone with everything he ordered, although now he was acting like just another regular. Except he wasn’t fooling anyone...everyone in here knew who he was. You could see the gossip travelling amongst the club like a freight train.

Mike brought our drinks over, only mine had lost a bit on the way due to trembling hands, which made a little tune on account of ice tapping against the glass.

“Thank you. Now be sure to get one for yourself.”

“Yes...Sir, Thank you...Mr Draven...Sir.” He stammered out before moving to the other end of the bar to breathe.

“Cheers!” He said tapping the side of my glass with the bottle neck. I had never seen him drink a bottle of beer before, so it looked a little foreign in his large hand. He wore an amused look, by which I could tell that he was enjoying my shock. He leaned into my ear and moved a stray piece of hair before whispering his thoughts, or more like mine.

“You didn’t think I would do it, did you?” His cheeky smile made my heart flutter and I smiled with him.

“No I didn’t but I’m glad you did.”

“Why, did you miss me on your date with the human boy?” He teased and I bit my lip.

“Firstly, you know it wasn’t a date and secondly...I always miss you.” At this he did something unthinkable in front all these people and I didn’t know whether I wanted to cry out with shame or bliss! He had grabbed the back of my head with one palm and turned it aside to kiss me. The whole room seem to gasp at the same time making it sound like a surge.

“Ah, that’s better. Now you’d better introduce me to your friends

because the pink one is trying to refrain from running to the bar just to shake my hand.” He turned just in time to look down at RJ, who looked close to hyperventilating.

“And you must be RJ?” His smooth tone had her instantly hypnotised into falling in deep and it took me back to the days when I had felt the same. It was like being pulled under the waters of a dark lagoon and knowing that you should try and swim to the surface but just don’t want to...you just wanted to drown in him.

“Y...You know my...name!” She snorted out like she was meeting a celebrity.

“Keira has told me all about you and, being one of her closest friends, I’m sorry I haven’t met you sooner.” Oh jeez that did it, now she wanted his babies! For once she was speechless. Which was a monumental day in itself. That, along with a Draven coming down to spend time with the common folk.

“Oh that’s alright, Keira had said how busy you are and we all appreciate all that you do for our little town.” I don’t know why but her eyes kept fluttering like something was in them. Anyway, this had quickly become a change of tune, it wasn’t long ago she was singing to Justin’s little jealous beat. Now what? Had she had joined cheerleader for the Dravens of Afterlife.

“Can I get you a drink?”

“That’s very kind...thank you.” Ok, this was getting weird now, like pod people had come and switched RJ with a quiet, polite, carbon copy just to try and impress Draven their leader. Draven was clearly waiting to find out what liquid form she wanted but she just stood there looking up like he was her new Gothic God.

“Bloody hell RJ, this is the part where you tell him what you want to drink!” I said with a little overload on the attitude. I just couldn’t help it, she was acting like someone I had never even met, a band groupie I could take but sister Rachael Jane, soon to join the church, becoming the first Goth fairy nun...Oh no!

Draven looked down at me like I was the one acting out of character but I ignored him as what I had said seemed to have taken effect.

“Alright snappy McGee!! What are you drinking then?” Hail Mary, she was back! I smiled and shook my coke in answer.

“Well, that’s not much fun.” She noted and had undeniably relaxed enough to drop the innocent act in front of Draven.

“No, but neither is getting wrapped around a tree...I’m driving.”

“She wouldn’t understand that, seeing as I’m the responsible one in the family.” Jack said as he came up behind her, seeing us on his way to the bathroom. He laid two hands on either side of her shoulders as he spoke and I was expecting there to be animosity in his tone but he seemed his usual happy self even though he was now faced with Draven.

“Mr Draven!” He said adding a nod in his direction making me think tonight I had somehow entered the twilight zone. Ok, now it was official, Draven was extending his hand to him and saying,

“Please call me Dom,” meaning I *was* in the Twilight zone, only the kind where everyone is happy and getting along with one another. I was just about close to singing the Sound of Music, Julie Andrews’s style when my bliss filled cup smashed to the floor with the sight of Justin stomping his way over. I think Draven and Jack both frowned at the same time. I mean could this night get any weirder?!

“So this is the famous Dominic Draven then?” Justin spat out, making the cool exterior he was trying for, look like a puddle of misery. It was funny then, that Jack was the one to react first and slapped him on the back while saying,

“Sure is buddy and Dom, this here is Justin, he’s just such a swell guy!” He said sarcastically before giving a respectful nod to Draven and walking off into the crowd. Meanwhile Justin looked like he was about to turn red from rage and start choking on his tongue.

“Well, we didn’t think you were going to show up... did we Kizzy?” This wasn’t helping my mental health I will tell you, it was like wishing for an outer body experience just so that I could kick Justin in the shins to shut him up. What was even more surprising is that Draven seemed to be amused by the whole thing, not the eternal wrath I was expecting.

“Ah, well that’s surprising because *Keira* knows I always keep my word and I’m always watching over her.” A little hint of the usual protective Draven burst through and Justin knew he had hit a nerve.

“A little paranoid aren’t we...what’s the matter? Worried someone will come and steal her away from you?”

“JUSTIN, that’s enough!” I said giving him a severe scowl. But Draven merely laughed.

“I’d love to see them try for a start but I think you missed the point. Being protective and being jealous are two very different things.”

“Oh yeah, how’s that then?” Justin baited.

“One is essential, the other is pointless. My protective side I welcome.”

“And jealousy, do you welcome that too?” It was like watching a tennis ball being flung back and to. RJ and I were in the middle, still looking from one to the other like mutes.

“NO, I conquer it. Drink?” He turned abruptly to the bar and Justin foolishly looked smug, as if he had won this round but I knew differently. I was the only one who caught the purple glint of anger in his eyes, that’s why he had turned...to control the beast within, the beast that wanted to tear into Justin’s vital organs!

“I will have a shot of something.” Piped up RJ and I was about to protest knowing how she gets when she has one too many but Justin interrupted.

“I think I will join you. Draven, you game?”

“Always!” The way he answered made me shiver with a hidden fear. It was the way he said it, like it was a game of life and death he was sporting. He was a chillingly lethal mix of perfect calm and Mt. Vesuvius and like Italy, nobody wants to be around when either erupts!

“So, what we having big guy?” Justin asked with a distinctive lack of respect in the way he called him ‘Big guy’, like it was meant as an insult.

“What about tequila?” I piped up trying to lighten the situation. It didn’t work but it at least made Draven smile at me like I was sweet.

“I was thinking something a bit more...exotic.” The smile he wore for me soon turned into one of cunning.

“Ooo, that sounds exciting.” RJ clapped her hands together making the chunky metal rings clash.

“What do you have in mind?” She continued. Justin just rolled his eyes like he was bored of RJ drooling over Draven. Rather that or he was jealous that he was no longer RJ’s flavour of the month.

“You’ll see,” was all Draven offered before nodding in Jerry’s direction. Thankfully for him he was at hand within a second knowing Draven is not a boss you kept waiting... for anything.

“Yes, Mr Draven Sir.”

“Jerry can you bring me a bottle from the VIP reserve?” Jerry looked startled like he would get caught out for saying yes. It made me wonder if he knew about the Dravens like I did. He looked terrified and let’s face it, if you did know what they were, then you would be in your right mind to be scared shitless. It was a little different in my case, as I was already accustomed to their world even before I met the Dravens. Hell, maybe I was nuts but the rest of humanity would not be so easily comforted by the idea that there were Demons and Angels feeding from their emotions.

“It’s alright Jerry, proceed.” He prompted, making Jerry scuttle off into the back room where he kept some of the bottles behind lock and key. It took

me back to the night when I first stepped foot into the VIP. I had been given a crate of bottles to take up there and had been just as terrified as Jerry.

It didn't take him long to find the bottle Draven had asked for and I knew instantly what liquid the bottle held.... Absinthe.

The bottle looked antique with a metal clasp at the top making it like a flask. The green liquid swirled around like a sea serpent trying to escape. RJ's eyes widened at the sight but Justin just sighed.

"Absinthe, right? I had that same shit in Spain, supposed to make you lose your head but it didn't even touch me." He boasted, but I was the only one that noticed the malicious grin flash across Draven's lips.

"Is that so? Then you should be just fine...right?" Draven taunted, looking over his shoulder at him. RJ couldn't help but giggle at the drama playing out. Meanwhile I was ready for dropping the two egos and going home. Draven could be the bigger person here and let this all go but no, here he was pushing Justin into a game he would never win. For one Draven never got drunk and secondly, Justin was like a pit-bull with a bone...he would never back down and give it up!

Draven had acquired some glasses and flipped the clasp on the bottle top ready to pour. He gave it one last swirl before pouring out three, one a little less full for RJ. He slid it towards her saying,

"Ladies first!"

"And who said chivalry was dead?" She said looking at me and I couldn't help but smile. It was surprising that a girl like RJ was a sucker for manners, giving she was rude to most people, most of the time. However Draven wasn't as pleasant with Justin and slid the glass down the bar which stopped right in front of him, making Draven seem like the luckiest son of a gun in the west!

I stood watching the three of them knock them back like it was water but as soon as the liquid touched the back of their throats the impulse to cough

couldn't be helped. Of course Draven remained silent, while the other two sounded like they smoked forty a day.

“Another?” Draven asked and, not waiting for their voices to return, he poured three more. I placed my hand over RJ's glass and gave him a warning look.

“Hey, I'm game.” She protested and Draven gave me a wink she didn't catch. I hoped this meant that he would make hers a dummy drink so it wouldn't affect her.

“Yeah, me too, that's good stuff.” He was trying too hard to sound convincing and Draven knew it.

“Ok, what do you say we make this a little more interesting?” He suggested and I just wanted to scream “grow up” to the both of them.

“What did you have in mind?” Justin showed just a hint of apprehension in his eyes making Draven's glint in return.

“RJ, do you want to see a little magic?” It was as if he was talking to a child and the size difference made it seem more plausible. Of course she reacted like a child, clapping her hands again, something she always did when she was excited.

“Gonna pull a rabbit out of your sleeve, cause you know I've seen that one before?” Justin said adding an unimpressed expression to his slouched shoulders.

Draven ignored him and placed all three glasses in a row ready for his ‘magic trick’.

“RJ, pick one.” She looked at me and then back at him before pointing to the one in the middle. Draven smirked and said “Watch” slipping back to his masterful tone. He then leaned over and blew over the one at the end closest to himself making it begin the transformation. Three sets of wide eyed humans, me included watched like puppets in the hands of a master.

A black cloud had emerged from deep within the emerald liquid making it turn into a black so dark it had a bluish tint. Like the night of a storm raging up from the elements, the green land provides. The amazing thing about the change was that it passed over the glass RJ had picked, keeping it lush bottle green colour that seem fresh in comparison to the destruction of the other two drinks. It was like it floated through RJ's choice and hit its mark with the next, making it to, a dark mist. Now we were all looking at two black drinks either side of one untouched.

“WOW, that was one hell of a trick! How in God's name did you do that?” RJ shouted and because I was, at that moment, taking a swig of my drink, I nearly choked on it. What she didn't realise in that question is how right on the money she had been! Draven knew of course, the reason for my reaction but he calmly just patted my back and carried on.

“Just a sleight of hand really, but please drink.”

“Is it safe?” RJ asked a little timidly for the RJ character I knew, and I realised it was the first time I had seen her freaked.

“Yes, but I must warn you, it can have some foul side effects if you plan on engaging in any dishonourable acts.” He winked at RJ but scowled at Justin.

“Yeah right, just give it here Mr Hey Presto!” Justin reached across and downed it, trying his best not to make a gagging face with a coughing fit. RJ looked up at Draven and took note of his wicked smile at the sight of Justin that had just downed every last drop. My stomach felt like a vat of acid had just been poured into it because I knew Draven and knew him well.

I recalled his words earlier and they swam around my head in their own little bubble making my brain ache.

“Keira knows I always keep my word,” he had said to Justin and now I wanted to repeat them but I knew it was too late...he had already drank his fate,

That's why Draven was smiling...

He had won.

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Chapter 31

Dishonourable Acts

Now, this was my dilemma. See, I was the one that had convinced Draven that Justin was not only to be trusted but he too didn't hold any feelings for me but ones of friendship. This would all be fine and dandy if I still believed it to be the case but now I was as sure of trouble brewing, as I was that the sun would rise tomorrow.

Draven had created this little game that would only benefit his needs. If Justin could only behave until I got him home it would work out being just a bad hangover for him in the morning, providing Draven his assurance of

Justin's intentions but this was Justin we were talking about. Oh, this was going to go terribly wrong and I would no doubt have to pick up the pieces! I just hoped they weren't body parts.

We all remained at the bar, each of us acting out the perfect example of ease and comfort, when not one of us was being himself or herself. RJ was trying her best to keep the conversation light and avoiding drama. (This was solely unlike her, I hasten to add) But at least she was doing better than me. I was nodding like a toy dog on a dashboard every time someone spoke. Of course, inside I was mentally punching myself for ever thinking this night was going to go well enough for me not to remember it for all the wrong reasons.

Justin kept up the bad boy "I don't give a shit who you are" persona but every now and again I could see a flash of the unknown when he looked deep into his enemy's eyes. Draven remained civil despite Justin's attitude but there was a definite undertone of the need to rip his head off as Draven flexed his muscles every time he spoke.

It was as if the very sound of Justin's voice was causing Draven's demon blood to flow faster. I knew this because without being able to control it I kept seeing his Demon form come to light. In the end, I had to try very hard not to keep making little gasps whenever it happened as the looks I received from both RJ and Justin were ones of worry mixed with a weary "Is she nuts?" Then when I thought it couldn't get any worse, Justin said the unthinkable.

"Well you know, me and Keira go way back, isn't that right Kazzy?" At this point I thought Draven would blow up because not only was Justin playing fire with someone twice his size, he was playing with a man that controlled that fire! Justin had come closer towards me and put his arm casually around my shoulders as he spoke. I just shrugged away and laughed nervously.

"Yeah, on account of Libby and Frank... you know, my sister?" I don't know who this last statement was aimed at because everyone I was looking at had sure as shit met my sister. I didn't know where to stand or to put my

mouth for that matter. I ended up next to RJ trying not to look at Draven who was glowing like Christmas.

“Of course, when I say way back, I mean we have history.” Oh my God, was he trying to get himself killed! Draven looked like he had somehow got even taller because he towered above Justin like he was getting smaller. I had to hand it to the surfer, he had the balls of a bull combined with the tact of a tidal wave and boy, he really knew how to make a bad situation worse.

“Is that so, then I think you had better elaborate, given the confused look on *my* girlfriend’s face.” Draven’s voice came out in an eerie calm that went as deep as the earth’s mantle.

“Oh, I’m sure she remembers, it got pretty heated one night, but we never really gave it a go, on account of the distance thing but when Frank told me Kaz had moved here...well!”

“Well, then you just had to race back here as quickly as you could to see her again. That’s very noble of you, but tell me, it must have been crushing for you to find her with another and no longer available for your taking.” He raised his eyebrows making his eyes somehow appear deeper but before Justin could come back at him with another foolish comment Draven continued,

“Let me offer you some advice for the next conquest you have in mind. Never let oceans get in the way...A real man never would.” Draven had finished his little speech with another shot finding home in the pit of an angry stomach.

“Excuse me but I think I must have a say in these ‘so called’ events,” I said finding my angry voice and putting my timid one back behind lock and key.

“So called? Oh Kазzy tell me you haven’t forgotten your sister’s wedding, I think she’d be disappointed to hear that?” He said in an over exaggerated tone that made me want to smack that smirk of his handsome baby face!

“Yes, well, one night consisting of one kiss is hardly something I would call history! Besides after that day we became family so it’s not even worth bring up...”

“Family? I don’t think...”

“No you don’t, that’s your problem! Now I think it’s time we went home before you make even more of a mountain out of a snowman!” I was really angry now and it didn’t help when I saw Draven beaming at me like I was the teacher that had told off a naughty bully. I was so tempted to just go and let these two to battle it out and leave them but I would never forgive myself knowing what the outcome would be.... Draven 1- Justin 0, but with a shiny new coffin to sleep in. Plus there was Frank to think about, I had made a promise and I was going to keep it, even if it killed me.

I turned to RJ and Draven, with close to steam coming out of my ears and they both knew it. But it was only RJ that had any sense to take my mood seriously, Draven on the other hand held a cocky smile curling up on one side and an arrogant glint to his black eyes.

“RJ, I will see you Monday, I’ll pick you up at the usual time. Tell the rest I say bye.” She nodded but I could tell the alcohol was starting to take effect because her eyes were glazed over like she couldn’t focus. She took this as her cue to leave first and with one last eye flutter at Draven and a scowl at bad boy Justin, she left to regroup.

“I will see you tomorrow D!” I said harshly but he looked unruffled by my lack of affection. I don’t think he’d even registered that I called him ‘D’. Something I had never done before, but I didn’t want to call him Dominic and I wouldn’t call him by his second name in front of Justin. No, that would be like filling up the tank and letting him go on all night and let’s face it, the last thing Justin needed was anymore fuel!

Draven didn’t reply, he just kept staring at Justin with this half smile, like he knew something the rest of the world didn’t. Justin shifted his weight and found the ground with his eyes. I just rolled mine and said “Oh for Pete’s sake!” walking past him but I didn’t get far. His arm came out quicker than

the breath from my lungs and in a moment the lights went out plunging the club into darkness. I looked around after sounding my surprise and just as the rest of the club began to ask the obvious questions, Draven had circled his arms around my waist before his hands pulled up my top to get to the skin on my back. I gasped again, only this time it finished inside his mouth that felt on fire. His kiss was passionate and full to the brim of want. I could hardly breathe in his crushing hold but it didn't stop me from entwining my hands behind his neck.

After moments of bliss his lips left mine, giving me one last lick to my top lip before I opened my eyes. I expected to find the same darkness I had closed them to but instead the room was lit even brighter and every eye seemed to be fixated on the two lovers at the bar. Justin could barely keep his mouth closed, let alone keep the utter disappointment from his face.

One look from Draven told me this had all been planned and he knew if no one could see us I would give it my all back. He had been right and that is what he wanted Justin to see. Mission accomplished! I was fuming inside but knew I couldn't show it in front of Justin. I was now sick to death of this game the two of them had me playing and for the first time since I'd met Draven I didn't want to look at him!

Instead of saying goodbye again I just grabbed Justin's hand and dragged him to the front entrance leaving Draven at the bar. I didn't miss the evil wink and mouthed words "Good luck" that were directed at Justin as I pulled him past.

Once I was nearer the door, however angry I was, I still couldn't help the little look over my shoulder to see if he was still staring at us. The answer was no. He was nowhere to be seen, he had just disappeared because there is no way he could have made it back through the crowd in that time. How did he get away like that with every eye in the room locked on his every move, I wondered?

Outside the cold air helped to clear my clouded mind but my anger stuck to me despite the weather. It had started to snow while we had been in the club and was quickly covering the ground with an icy blanket which would

turn deadly soon enough. I had made the right choice leaving now as I didn't yet have snow chains on big blue.

I didn't look at Justin once as we snaked our way through the parked cars to get to my truck. Then Justin startled me making me turn round to his raucous laughter.

"What are you laughing at?" I asked not bothering to hide my hacked off tone.

"Just wondering if you make everyone who meets you this crazy?" That question hit me harder than I cared to admit, considering my past. After staring at him for longer than intended, I turned before he could see my eyes well up.

"Oh no Keira...I didn't mean it like that!" He ran over to me just as I took my next step. He gently put his hands on my shoulders to turn me round to face him.

"Look at me!" He whispered and when I didn't, he placed the back of his hand under my chin.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be an insensitive jerk."

"And back in there?" I nodded to the doors which we had just exited but he didn't look back.

"What I meant...what I mean is..."

"Justin, don't!" I stopped him knowing what was coming next. I didn't want to do this now, hell I didn't want to do this ever! The last conversation we had like this was a lifetime ago. I wasn't even the same person anymore. Back then, of course, I had been in his shoes. He had been the one with the girlfriend and he had been the one telling me it could never happen. Well those words still rang true.

It could never happen.

“Why not, because you have some weird, possessive boyfriend who can buy you back?”

“Now that hurt!” I said and pulled out of his hold.

“I didn’t mean it the way you took it.” He snapped back, making his hair coil round one shoulder. I stood hands on hips waiting.

“I meant it with concern. I’m worried about you. That guy in there isn’t right, I don’t know what it is but I can’t shake the feeling that he’s...he’s...”

“He’s what?”

“Dangerous!” He spoke the word like he could somehow be over heard. I knew the truth and sure, sometimes it frightened me, but was it worse not knowing? What if that night had never happened and I just kept going through life working at the club, being obsessed with Draven, never to find out the truth...Would I be scared?

I didn’t know what to say to him. Anything I said would end up being a lie, so I said the only thing that I knew would end this conversation... I spoke the truth.

“Justin, I love him.” I looked like I had broken him. He started to shake his head but once he saw the truth in my eyes he stopped this motion. He let his shoulders drop and simply said,

“Ok.”

“Come on, let’s go home and raid the cupboards.” I said light heartedly pulling him back into the now. I automatically opened his side first before climbing into the driver’s seat. Big blue was cold and I had to give her a minute to start.

“All that money and he can’t buy you a nice, reliable ca?r” I hit him playful on the arm, just glad that he was getting back to his usual cocky self.

“I love this car and shut up before it hears you, or we will never get

home.”

“That’s fine with me but I warn you, I get cold quickly, so you’ll have to use your body heat to keep that from happening.” He received another playful punch, which he caught. He held his hand over my wrist and I flinched at him being so close to my scars. He looked down and then smiled at my gloves before letting go.

“I never told anyone, you know.” His confession shocked me but I couldn’t respond.

“When it happened I wanted to come and see you so badly but I knew I couldn’t. You didn’t need that. You didn’t need me to get involved. But I want you to know that I would have been there for you.” He looked down at his tanned hands that were fiddling nervously with his belt end, it made me want to comfort him but I couldn’t move.

“I broke it off with Jessica that year because she didn’t understand why I wouldn’t tell her. She overheard my parents on the phone to Frank asking how you were and after that she wanted to know all the details. The stupid cow acted like it was gossip! After that I couldn’t look at her. I don’t know why I’m telling you this now but I guess it’s easier to express past regrets to the person you regret them with.”

“Regrets?” I whispered out in a frosty breath.

“I always regretted saying no to you that night. I replayed it over and over on the plane ride home, knowing I had made the wrong choice. Draven had been right when he had said not to let oceans get in the way...A real man never would. I arrogantly thought that by coming back here you would be waiting with open arms to have me as your boyfriend. God how conceited am I!” At this I moved to cover my hand with his. He was warmer than I was and the cold touch of my fingers made him look up at me.

“I knew I never trusted that Jessica!” I said making him laugh. I felt instantly better at the sound. Guilt was tearing into me but I couldn’t do anything about it. Anything I said would have been a lie to make him feel

better, which I couldn't bring myself to do, knowing full well it would do more harm than good.

The rest of the way home he remained quiet and I didn't want to be the one to break into his thoughts first just so I could make myself feel better. I now wanted to take full responsibility for the way tonight had gone but I knew deep down the reason I felt this guilt was down to him bringing up my past. I couldn't help the choices he had made and where he now stood because of them but that didn't mean I wasn't sympathetic to them either. If anything, my mind was in more turmoil now than it had been in the club. Back then I only had Draven's actions to worry about, now it was my own actions that were the problem. What could I do to make everyone happy? I didn't want to be the cause of anyone's pain, let alone continue causing it.

Thankfully autopilot had gotten us this far and it was only when we started to bump along the dirt gravel road that I realised we were home. I glanced towards Justin from the corner of my eye to find him still fixated on the side window. I cut the engine and sat for a minute before turning to say something.

"Justin, look I..." I stopped mid-sentence and my eyes fixated on what Justin had been looking at all this time. As soon as my brain registered what I was seeing my vision started to go foggy. Tears welled up until they became too heavy and overflowed down my cold cheeks.

"Who would do this?" Justin's voice cut through the nightmare, pulling me out of a frozen lake I was drowning in. I couldn't speak. I just kept repeating the words that were crudely plastered on my side window over and over.

I FOUND YOU

YOU CAN'T HIDE FROM ME

I'M COMING TO GET YOU

SEE YOU SOON MY KEIRA X

It looked like it had been written on with red paint for effect. I still hadn't answered Justin. Instead I just got out of the car and started to walk away. I couldn't handle it anymore. I had hit my limit and found my breaking point.

I didn't know where I was going but I soon found myself running. I just needed to get away from it all...Demons...Angels and especially Stalkers! The price I was paying for Draven was turning into something far too deep for me to handle. I wanted to run to him and tell him everything, but every time the thought entered my head it was as though something else was pushing it back out again. Excuses that weren't my own kept clouding my resolution.

I got as far as the forest wall when Justin caught up with me, forcing me to stop and turn to look at him. Under the moonlight he bared a startling resemblance to an Angel, with his long dreads looking like roped gold and eyes pure of heart. He held me still but when I didn't respond to his words, he gave me a little shake.

"Keira! Listen to me!" The panic in his voice mirrored the panic in my mind that felt like it would soon burst from me. I didn't know what to do! I couldn't tell him the truth...how could I? Who could I tell...Sophia... Vincent? NO! They would tell Draven and for these reasons my thoughts quickly shifted without result. What was wrong with me, why couldn't I just tell him?

"Who did that? Was it him?" Justin looked furious now but I was in shock. Did he know about Lucius?

"Who?" I asked in a shaky voice that crept up a notch.

"Who? That crazy arse boyfriend of yours that's who! It's because he's jealous of us, isn't it? He's trying to frighten you, can't you see?" I was

stunned. He thought Draven would do this...was he nuts!

“NO, OF COURSE NOT! “ I yelled at him for just thinking it, let alone confessing it.

“He’s brainwashed you.”

“Justin please, you don’t know him. He would never do this.” I was pleading with him to believe me but I knew his prejudice towards Draven wouldn’t let himself trust in what I was saying.

“Then who did?”

“I don’t know...maybe some sicko who knows about my past and gets his kicks scaring young girls.” It was a long shot but it was all I had to go with. I didn’t really want to bring up my past for the second time tonight but I was running out of options.

“And that’s what you believe it is, because if you do then we should call the cops.” Oh no, this was bad. What was I supposed to do now, call them and say what?...Umm I think the Vampire King called Lucius is trying to kidnap me to get back at a Demon/ Angel half breed sent from heaven and hell...Oh and it just so happens he’s my boyfriend!... Mmm I don’t think so somehow.

“Look Justin, you will just have to trust me here. I don’t want to involve the police or anyone else for that matter. If it gets worse then I will do something about it but for now please, just be my friend.” At this he finally subsided his anger and I could just make out his eyes soften at my request. He still hadn’t released me from his hold and after moments of praying for his trust in me, he finally gave me his answer.

“Come here.” He said before pulling me in for an embrace. He wrapped his arms securely round me and I let my head rest on his shoulder. I was tired of fighting and being brave. I just wanted to feel another human emotion that was as weak and fragile as I was. I loved Draven with every breath in my body but right now...at this moment, I just needed to feel equal. So I

shamefully allowed myself to be held and buried the immense guilt that was mounting up, deep and far away from this moment. I moved my arms and rested them on the lower part of his back while his were doing the same.

Then I couldn't help myself. I couldn't stop the tears from flowing once the first drop left my tired eyes. Soon I was sobbing. I was gasping for breath as I cried my heart out all on Justin's shirt. He moved one hand to the back of my head and stroked my hair giving me the much needed comfort that I craved.

"Sssh, you're alright. I've got you." It was these words that brought me back. He didn't have me, Draven did. I pulled back but Justin automatically tightened his grip around my waist. I didn't want to make it look obvious that I felt uncomfortable. I didn't want to hurt his feelings but on the other hand I didn't want him getting the wrong idea.

But it was too late. He raised his hand to wipe my salty cheeks dry but in doing so he brushed my lips with his thumb. I held my breath thinking of ways to stop this from happening. Sentences were spilling out of my mind but only one word made it passed my lips.

"Please..." He took my plea for something else and moved his face closer to mine before I could stop what came next. The lips that met my own were soft but urgent. I tried to pull away but his softness soon turned to hard pressure on my mouth. He held my neck with one hand and his other hand gripped at the material of my top, near my side. He was surprisingly strong but my will was stronger. At the moment that he tried to force my mouth open I pushed all my weight forward like I was doing a rugby tackle but it was only enough to move him enough to free my lips.

"NO!" I shouted making him frown in the dark and this quickly gave him a new edge as the bad boy act didn't seem too much like an act anymore. He tried again taking on a new rough approach but at this I saw red and pulled my arm back as far as it would go, before clenching my fingers into a fist and letting it fly.

"ARGGGHHH!" I knew I'd hit my mark even before I heard Justin

wallow in pain. It had felt like my knuckles had crumbled like cookie crumbs. They started to throb instantly but my anger was still keeping my adrenaline levels up for the real hurt to sink in fully.

“What did you do that for?” He was angry but no way as near as angry as I was.

“Are you an idiot? I said NO, which guess what, in the world of crossing lines you just crossed a big one!” He was still nursing his jaw and a spilt lip that I had amazingly given him, when he decided to play the fool.

“I knew you wanted me to, you’re just scared of being caught, but I am not afraid of your rich, pompous arse boyfriend...Not by a long shot!”

“Then you’re a bigger fool that I took you for! You think I’m angry, just thank yourself bloody lucky you only ended up with a spilt lip because I can guarantee you, if Draven had been here, you would have earned yourself a lot more than a bruised ego!” I raised my arms up in the air and turned my back on him walking away to think. I couldn’t bear to think of what Draven would have done, but I know one thing, I don’t think all the will in the world would have stopped him from committing murder.

Justin just shook his head like he was looking for the right words to say and I knew the argument was far from over. Or was it?

“I...I...” Justin spluttered out the words like he had them stuck in the back of his throat.

“What?” I said with my hands on my hips, but then it didn’t take me long to realise something was wrong...very wrong.

“I...I...I’m going be sick!” He said before bending over double and dropping to the floor.

“Justin!” I shouted before rushing back to his side.

It was as if his limbs had turned to mush but it didn’t stop him from shaking. He was red hot to touch and I tried to sooth his back while he

vomited into the undergrowth. His back would arch every time his body wanted to bring some more up but his stomach was quickly emptied, leaving him with nothing but bile to excrete. Finally he stopped long enough to look at me but it was like he couldn't find me there in his sight. That's when I noticed the black clouds that had covered his entire eyes. He put his hands out, like searching for something in the dark, but there was enough light from the porch lamp and moon to see clearly.

“Keira...Keira where are you?” That's when my heart froze.

He was now blind.

Chapter 32

Heavy in My Arms

I was trying not to panic but every time I looked down and saw the picture of Justin shaking and grasping out at a world he could no longer see, then it was hard not to start screaming. I wanted to call out for help but what good would that do? This wasn't something doctors could help with and I was too ashamed to call for Frank. Justin had been my responsibility and I

had let my PIG HEADED boyfriend do this to him! And speaking of Demons, where was Ragnar all of a sudden? He hadn't left my side once since being "assigned" to me but now he was nowhere to be seen.

That's when other worries entered my head and the memory of the blood red words started to burn back from my subconscious. What if we were both in greater danger? What if Draven hadn't done this to Justin? That is when I knew I had to move. I had to get us both inside as quickly as I could.

I grabbed Justin under his arm and tried to pull him up but it was like dragging a sack of manikins around.

"Come on Justin, we have to get inside." He groaned but my words must have taken some effect because he started to support himself to a degree. I hooked his arm around my neck to hold most of his weight but my legs must have started to buckle because it gave him the extra strength to hold himself upright. I held onto his waist band for extra grip, which couldn't have been very comfortable for him but considering the circumstances, I think that having a wedgie was the least of his problems.

We staggered over to the steps when the porch light started to flicker.

"Justin, come on...we have to move faster, we're nearly there!" I couldn't keep the urgency out of my voice and he knew it. He started to mount the steps two at a time and I fumbled around my pocket for the keys... Shit the KEYS! I had left them in the truck!

"Justin you will have to wait here, I need to get the keys." I let him go and it was only then when I realised how much of my body weight he had been relying on, as he sacked it to the floor with a loud, creaking thud.

He looked exhausted and I wished that I could somehow have transported some of my overdrive adrenaline into him.

I ran as fast as my legs could take me but just before I reached for the handle I stopped. My mind flooded with different scenarios. Could someone be watching me...waiting for a moment like this? I looked round nervously

and found myself praying to see my giant guardian watching over me but instead my eyes met an eerie darkness, layered with a heavy haze of fog. I swallowed hard and opened the door which made me jump at the new sound. I was that on edge that my muscles ached from being tensed for so long.

My keys dangled still in the ignition and I kept telling myself not to look at my nightmare written on the opposite window but in the end I failed. The words were still there creating the need for my stomach to heave but somehow they looked different, like they were melting into new words. They followed an invisible path on the freezing glass and came to a stop when the very last drop formed the end of Draven's name.

TELL DRAVEN

I stared at my window, holding my breath in waiting. I don't know how I knew but I was certain this wasn't the end of the message. I wanted to prompt it on somehow, like I wasn't just connecting to an inanimate object, but more like it had been possessed.

"Tell Draven what?" My voice shook like my body was reacting from the freezing weather but I felt no cold. That's when it felt like the heavens were the ones to answer me. With a flash of light the clouds opened and released their floods to the earth, drenching every inch of my clothing in seconds. I looked away from the window and up to the pouring sky, in hopes of some sort of sign. However, it was when I looked back at the window that I found my answer.

EVERYTHING!

The rain had wiped most of the window clean but left bits that made up

this word. Then I screamed as the window burst into a thousand pieces. It was like a firework going off and my car filled with tiny deadly shards. Thankfully I was smart enough to cover my face but one little piece must have slipped through because I felt a stinging to one side of my cheek. I could feel the warm blood trickle down my bitter cold skin and when I touched it there, I found a small shard imbedded. I pulled it out and rubbed the blood away with my sleeve.

I felt like time was standing still, like it does in the dream world. I was seeing things that weren't real. The rain from the sky was falling in slow motion, slow enough for me to catch individual droplets like falling tears. I had an image of Heaven crying and I was the only one that knew what was happening.

I don't know how long I stood there, motionless in my own living dreams but when the next thunder erupted it brought me around enough to move. I grabbed the keys and looked at what remained of the window one last time. And one last time was all it took.

There, in the darkness, standing out like a beacon of Hell were two red, glowing eyes staring back from the woods, watching this whole scene play out like a cat and mouse. I was the mouse. And being so, I ran as fast as any sane mouse would have done. I held onto the keys like a lifeline and flung myself at the door with heavy impact.

By the sound of my freaked state Justin was encouraged to move as well and in the end all I had to do was drag him in the right direction and pull him through the door. I slammed the door shut, not caring about who I would wake up but more concerned as to who I would be keeping out! I leant on the inside of the door and let my body slip down to the tiled floor. I joined Justin's side and let my head rest on his shoulder. He too was panting and my head moved up and down with his anxiety.

"What was it? Why is this happening?" He whispered like the thing outside would still be there to hear us.

"I don't know why but I will find out." What else could I say? Tell him

that this could be the doings of Demons, rogue Angels, Vampires or even my boyfriend, the Supernatural King. What were next, Pixies, Elves and Goblins?! I didn't know if I could cope with anything else, I think at this point if I met Santa I would have run screaming to the hills!

I needed to focus, but all my mind wanted to do was panic. I wanted to curl up into a little ball and cry but something deep within me told me not to bother. I was strong enough for all of this. Like I was born to tame the horrors in my life and conquer them. So with this in mind, I stood up and pulled Justin up with me.

He didn't ask questions but he just complied and let me drag him up the stairs. He rested his arm around my shoulders and leaned in as much weight as I could stand as we took each step at a time. Every now and again we had to stop to both catch our breaths but by the time we got to his room I had to lean him fully against the door frame to get it open. It took me by surprise as it flung back and hit the wall, making the hinges rattle with the force. I was taken off balance and fell forward.

Justin knew we were outside his room and with one last burst of energy pushed both of us into his room, making us land on his bed. Now here I was lying under him, with both our chests rising in rhythm together. I shifted under his weight making him speak.

“Keira, wait!” His voice was urgent, but both soft and sour.

I looked from the side and into his eyes that were starting to clear. Like the storm outside, the storm in his eyes was disappearing. The black clouds moved like smoke from his lids and dripped down his cheeks like mascara tears. I raised my hand to wipe them clear but as soon as the black liquid touched my skin it started to tingle. It felt wrong, as though somehow what I was doing was not meant to be.

“I can see again, I can see you.” He blinked causing the rest of the blackness to drip away, leaving clear whites and crystal blues in its place. His hand came to my cheek and he gently wiped away the blood that had dried on my cheek. It was as if he didn't recognise the position we were still in, or if

he, did he didn't want to change it. He moved his fingers over to my lips and he traced them with his thumb. I couldn't help the tremble that escaped them but when he started to move his smile closer to them, I couldn't then stop the quiver.

"Justin!" I whispered as he lingered over my bitten lip before moving away to my ear. He was holding all his body above me like a muscular cage I couldn't move from but at this point, did I want to? My quickened pulse was uncontrollable and I had to bite down even harder on my lip to bring myself back. At any minute I would have to tell Justin to stop but in the end I didn't need to. He reached my ear and simply said one word.

"Sorry."

And then with that, he rolled over to the side of me and passed out. I closed my eyes and allowed one single tear to fall before curling over and holding myself cradled for a moment while I let the night's events sink in.

I don't know how long I lay there in a state of my own desolation but when I sat up again I was sure of what my next move would be. I left Justin alone once I had removed his shoes and covered him up with a bed blanket. I climbed the next set of stairs being careful where each foot went, making sure not to wake Libby or Frank.

My room looked cold and forgotten. Neglected from endless nights with Draven, it hardly felt like my room anymore. I could almost see the past of me still sat at the window seat waiting for another dream of Draven to come and find me. Back then, life didn't seem to be as worth living as it was now. I was just waiting in the shadows for a man I loved but didn't think existed the way he does now. But there was one thing I could say...life was, without a doubt, easier in those innocent days of being kept in the dark as to what Draven's world was really like. Would I change it knowing what I know now?

No I wouldn't, was the answer to that one.

And with this in mind I quickly changed into warmer, more practical

clothes, being jeans, a black, long sleeved top over my ever more secure gloves. I then pulled on a hooded sweater before doing the stupid thing and leaving the safety of my room. I knew what I should be doing is getting into my PJ's and collapsing my sorry state on my bed but this I couldn't do. I needed answers. I needed to hear Draven tell me that he wasn't the one to cause tonight's disaster. And I just prayed I'd hear what I wanted to hear.

The worse part of this plan was knowing I was going to have to go back outside and face whatever it was that was out there. Hopefully, it would be gone by now and all I would have to do was get back to the club without another incident to push me over the mental edge. Luckily the storm had calmed but it was still raining cats and dogs, so I grabbed a jacket that was hung up by the front door and slipped it on before braving the night.

I turned the key like it was a grenade and held my breath like death was going to be the one meeting me on the other side. So when I opened the door I couldn't help the sigh of relief that left my body.

I saw my truck sitting there like the finish line and after quickly locking the door, I ran through the rain so fast I was sure there would be a streamline behind me. I got to my truck but only when I reached for the handle did I realise how much I had been shaking the whole way. I couldn't grip it at first and closed my eyes in frustration. Seconds ticked by before I finally got a hold of myself and with a steadier hand opened the door.

I automatically went to brush the glass from my seat but found it strange when I felt nothing. I jumped in and slammed the door shut when I noticed the window was still intact. How was that possible... did I dream the whole thing? I found myself leaning over and feeling it for any loose shards or even cracks, but there was nothing.

Half way to Afterlife I was still shaking my head in disbelief. I was now starting to feel like I had lost it again...was I really going crazy this time? As this thought entered my mind I could no longer hold back the tears that mirrored the windscreen, making my vision all the more for dangerous driving. The rain pelted against the glass faster than the wipers could cope with and I knew that if this carried on I would miss the turning. I decided to

pull over and get a hold of myself for a minute.

I looked in my mirrors before stopping, which is when I saw that I was being followed. Lights loomed behind me like a warning glow and I knew that I couldn't stop now. I had to carry on and get there as fast as I could. I couldn't be sure I was being followed but why would another car be out at this time and trying to match my speed? I don't know, maybe I was just being paranoid but I didn't want to take any chances after what I had seen tonight.

That's when I changed my plan and decided to pull over to wait. I indicated before coming to a stop on the side of the road. I wiped the condensation off the rear view mirror with my sleeve, all the time not taking my eyes off the car behind. I held my breath and couldn't help shaking behind the wheel. It was only when the lights got closer that I realised I'd been right. I had been followed.

The car came to a stop about five metres behind me, but in the dark and this weather there was no telling what type of model it was. I leaned forward and my grip on the wheel tightened as I braced myself for my next move. I could just make out the driver's side door open and a figure emerged into the stormy night.

He was getting closer now and I waited until the very last moment counting under my breath. One...two...three! And then I hit it! I pressed my foot to the floor making the truck let out a screaming noise before it snaked its way back out onto the road. I gave the figure behind me one last look before speeding my way onto the road that led to Afterlife. I couldn't stop the panic breaths that fluttered out of my body and by the time I reached the parking lot outside I was a shaking mess.

I remembered this feeling well and since being locked up in Morgan's basement I hadn't been this uncontrollable since...until now that was. I used to hear his car's engine and I knew when the door slammed shut I would have at least three minutes until he would come down to my prison like Hell's keeper.

I screamed out to myself "NO!" And hit my fist onto the dashboard. The

pain shot through my knuckles like it had done when I hit Justin but it felt good and brought my mind round to safer thoughts. He was dead! He wasn't ever coming back to torture me and nothing would ever be as bad as that in my life again. And I had to keep a hold of that thought and get through whatever life threw at me. See, once you have experienced your own living hell for months, anything after that should be a piece of cake.

It was the first time I had seen the club closed and mine was the only car here. The place looked dark and eerie. In fact, it looked like the perfect place for the secrets it kept. My mind flashed back to the Temple and the horrors it housed there, making me shudder.

I looked round for any head lamps as I pulled the hood over my head to try and shield myself from the lashings of rain. Once I was sure I really was alone, I locked my truck and headed over to the main entrance. I ran making the puddled floor splash back up my legs and soon my skin was covered in wet denim and goosebumps.

The main entrance had been transformed into an impenetrable force, with huge iron gates that wouldn't have looked out of place on a castle door. They were as thick as my arms and had deadly looking spikes sticking out that nobody in their right mind would have chanced climbing. And what good it would have done them even if they did, as the next door was locked up and made of solid oak as thick as the stone walls that held them.

By this time my fist was throbbing from hitting two hard surfaces all in one night. I looked down and even though it was dark I could still see the bruise that was forming under the moonlight. I touched the edges and winced when it hurt.

I rolled my eyes and said "Great, so what do I do now?" Ok, so it didn't help my situation by talking to myself, but it did produce a thought. It took me back to my first day working in the club, back before the only things I knew about Draven was how damn sexy he was and how much I wanted him. Of course that want quickly turned to need and that's when things got complicated.

I was walking around the building to the right side. This was the side that was close to the cliff face of what was the biggest canyon in the national park. It was also the side where the huge, industrial bins were kept. I remember my first day when I was taking out the “trash” as they say here. I not only nearly lost all eight fingers but also got locked out of the coded security door.

Unbeknown at the time, thanks to Draven, I had kept all my fingers intact. Back then his powers worked stronger on me than they did now and thanks to possessing part of my body for a short time, he helped me open the door. Since then it was like he had left pieces of himself behind and till this day I still remembered the code.

It was darker around the side as the trees blotted out the moon with a disturbing silhouette. They loomed over me like a cage and the rain hitting their leaves made a rustling that made my imagination go into overdrive. Memories of the Gorgon Leeches Draven had fought by the cabin came seeping back and I could almost see their broken twisted bodies crawling out of the forest, oozing black liquid and blood from their cracked limbs.

I was confusing the sound of the wind beating against nature for scratched nails along tree bark. This made me all the more quicker and thankfully there was a light that flickered on when I reached the steps. The door was cold to touch and sent an icy chill down my spine. Thankfully the code was still the same and after I punched 1452 into the controls the door clicked and opened. I didn't hesitate. I walked into pleasant warm air but it was, for once, a silent empty space. The room looked the bigger now minus all the bodies and when I accidentally knocked into a chair the noise echoed, bouncing off the tall arched ceilings. In that sense it reminded me of a church and I couldn't help but laugh at the idea.

I looked up to the VIP but couldn't see anyone there. It was as silent as down here, and now there was no need for security, the doors and staircases were also bodiless. For the first time the club looked defenceless. And for the first time, I entered the club using those stairs. These were the stairs that had started the obsession what seemed like a life time ago. I had watched Draven

enter the club for the first time this year and stop to look at me sat in the booth closest to them. Then he disappeared up into the VIP room to never be seen down here again...that was, not until tonight.

The VIP was empty, but no surprises there. I moved into the centre and found myself in front of the top table and it looked odd to see Draven's chair empty. Then something hit me like a wave I couldn't control. My breath caught, my vision blurred and I staggered back before I could regain control of myself.

I blinked back my fogged mind and focused on Draven's chair once more. There I saw myself sat, curled up like a child crying. I held myself into a secure ball and my face was pressed close to the tall back, as if I was searching for a scent. I blinked again and the vision disappeared. What the hell was that? Was that even me? In the vision I had short dark hair and looked ill with misery. I didn't know what that was but I knew one thing for sure...I would pray every night for it not to be a glimpse of my future.

The huge double doors at the back were the ones that I had been through a hundred times but it had never scared me before. Now nobody was around it felt like I was an intruder and in this place I was sure to get caught. What was I saying? This was like my second home for God's sake. What did I have to be frightened of really? Draven was behind these doors and Draven was precisely who I needed to have it out with right now. So with that in mind I pushed with all my might thinking that the doors would weigh a ton, but I was wrong.

As soon as I touched them they opened automatically, so all my weight was thrown forward into the hallway. I landed on the floor in a heap and when I pulled my hood back that had covered my face I found myself staring at some high stiletto heels that would have cost the same as my car.

"I forget how clumsy humans can be!" Said a satisfied voice that went through me, mainly because I knew whose voice it was. I got to my feet quickly to look my enemy in the face before giving her any more reasons to play with.

“Aurora!” Was all I could say at being met with my boyfriend’s ex, who clearly wanted to make a hood ornament out of my head. She wore a long slinky dress that looked like it was her second skin. It had a long slit up one leg exposing her stockings. It was a midnight blue colour which made her blonde hair look like it belonged to the sun’s rays. She was astonishingly beautiful which made it harder for me to swallow.

“I assume you’re here to see Dominic?” I hated the way she said his name, like she owned it. Like she owned the rights to it, meanwhile I was still left calling him Draven like he was still just my boss. All I could do was nod at her, which provoked a dark smile to wriggle its way across her red soaked lips.

“This way!” She said and I had no other option than to follow her like a lost soul. We didn’t say a word to each other along the different hallways we travelled. I couldn’t recognise where we were, so it wasn’t as if I could bail out now. Every time Aurora stepped into the warm glow of the wall lamps that flickered against our surroundings she looked like a goddess. She moved like she owned the place, swinging her perfect figure around with an air of grace and seduction. She would sweep the longer parts of her dress along with one hand like a bride on the way to see her groom. I wished I wasn’t so jealous but in the shadow of such perfection it was a hard pill to swallow.

Finally, after an eternity of feeling like crap with my appearance, we had come to an end.

“He’s in there but be warned, you may not like what you see!” It would have been less convincing if she hadn’t been smiling at whatever warped thoughts she had to go along with this statement.

“And what is that supposed to mean?” I said not helping that my hands automatically went to my hips.

“Only the truth...enjoy!” She opened the door for me to pass through as though making sure that I would actually go inside. The door had been keeping in the sound of ethnic music like sounds from an ancient east. There were a lot of people in this room and the noise of lots of conversations filled

the incense smoked air.

I walked in to find familiar VIP faces, only they were different. They all looked happy as if this was one big Demon/ Angel party. It took my naive mind a moment to realise that it was indeed a party but one of a very different variety. It was when I saw all the naked bodies that it clicked, I knew where I was.

I couldn't help but look even though I didn't want to. There, my eyes found groups all mingled together like human jigsaws. Only they weren't human and there was nothing humane about five men all sharing one girl. I winced for her but when I saw that she wore an expression of ecstasy, I didn't feel sorry for her quite as much. She was lay among a bed of pillows and had five men I recognised, all from the same table at the club. Each one of them had a piece of her and was kissing each limb like she was a Royal.

This theme continued throughout the room, only some corners were replaced with five girls all hung around one man. There were also some couples dotted here and there that were engaging in intercourse. And it didn't seemed to matter where, chairs, tables, cushions and there was even a couple doing it on the bar where people sat around them like there was nothing in the way of where to put their drinks. Candles offered most of the light and in the side booths that were covered by bright pink and orange material with the light making the bodies behinds them seem like shadow puppets in some sexual show.

I stood dumbstruck for a moment and it seemed everyone was far too busy with each other to recognise me. I walked a bit further into the room but making sure not to get too close to their activities. I knew I had turned a very healthy shade of plum as I could feel my cheeks burning. I should have just turned around now as I knew Draven would never have been in here, as I had it on good knowledge that he never came to this room anymore. But maybe I would see someone that would know where he was...someone not doing the dirty I should add.

Ah yes, that would go down well, "Excuse me for interrupting your orgasm but do you know where my boyfriend is?" Yeah I'm sure that would

go down well...NOT!

I was nearing the middle which seemed to be the focus of the room. There I found a girl dancing for entertainment. She wore a long flowing skirt that was low to the hips and looked as though staying there by the power of magic. Her top half was nude with only a very large, gold necklace that covered her breasts. It spread out like a jewel encrusted spider and barely even managed to cover her hard nipples.

The young girl was dark skinned and like a gipsy, she had long black wavy hair that moved like a black river around a stream. She swayed her curvy hips to the music of instruments that were playing themselves in the corner. A large curtain covered half of the room and it was only when I walked round it that I found what it was concealing.

There, right in front of the dancing beauty, was an audience of great importance. The seats were made up completely of beds of rich crimson cushions. Gold bowls and pitchers were scattered around them ready for the picking. It was as if I had stepped back in time and I half expected to see Jasmine and Aladdin to be sat there. That would have been better than what I did find.

Sophia was curled against Zagan while he whispered in her ear making her giggle. Vincent was also there with two beauties giving him every ounce of attention their bodies would allow. He was close to being covered completely by their legs alone. Even Celine and Takeshi were enjoying themselves in local company. But this is not what made my stomach lurch and tie into knots in seconds. This isn't what made me want to cry out and run from the room with water filled eyes. No, it was none of these things, because there in the middle of it all was the King himself,

There in another woman's arms was Draven.

Chapter 33

Sophia's Play Room.

I froze in a numb stance that couldn't believe what it was seeing. I had been having one of the worst nights of my life and here was my boyfriend in the arms of another looking more than comfortable. I wanted to scream. I wanted to throw my arms up in the air and shout "WHAT THE HELL!" But I didn't do any of these things. After staring for a full five minutes I was finally noticed.

Sophia's eyes lifted from Zagan's neck and found mine that were still locked in shock. I saw her mouth my name and knew that Draven would respond but I didn't want to wait. I just wanted to run more than I ever had before and when I finally stopped running, I just wanted to cry until the end of time.

I felt so betrayed. Like a cold slap of reality had finally reached my cheeks and the aftermath left a sickening metallic taste in my bitter mouth. I never saw Draven's eyes but I knew they had found me. I, meanwhile, had turned around and ran from this nauseating room that was known as Sophia's playroom. Well I found nothing playful about it, considering it held my biggest fears...Lies and betrayal!

Draven's lies. Draven's betrayal.

Part of me wanted to stay and wait for an explanation, to find out just how deep the lies ran, but I knew one look at him would open the flood gates to a never ending misery. Every time I closed my eyes I could see that exotic looking beauty draped across him like she was stating her claim. I kept

shaking my head, like this was some sort of nightmare that felt far too real for me to cope with. I was actually hoping to see Lucius so then it would have been confirmed, but when I heard my name being called and the sound of footsteps getting closer I knew the horrible truth. I wasn't dreaming.

"Keira, damn it, wait!" It was Draven's voice sounding more and more irritated with every step I took further from him but I knew my running was to be short lived. I quickly felt him grab me but I whirled round and pushed him back (well at least tried too!).

"Just leave me alone!" I screamed out at him but I couldn't look up at him when I said this. I turned back around, intending to storm off again but he had other ideas. He hadn't even moved an inch from my pushing him, which had been like a cub scratching at a brick wall and expecting it come crashing down! He grabbed me this time by my shoulders and refused to let me go. I tried to struggle and worm my way out of his hold but he held me like bear.

"Keira don't struggle! Stop it!" He was shouting at me but this just added fuel to my jealous rage that was burning out of control.

"Draven, LET GO!"

"No, not until you listen to reason!" His voice made me want to shake with fear as his uncontrolled demon was coming through. His eyes started to glow purple and a vein pulsated in his jaw. I don't know why, but in my head I thought this would be a good time to make things worse, and I wriggled my hands up to his chest and started pounding my fists against him as hard as I could.

This didn't hurt him, of course it didn't, but it sure did make him angrier. He was trying to control me and grabbed my wrists with lightning speed. Although he held me by my arms, my body had other ideas and I pulled back with all my weight, which seemed to add nothing at all.

"KEEP STILL GIRL!" His voice now growled with a demonic frustration and it shocked me into doing at I was told.

“Is that it, do I have to scare you to get you to listen to me!” His eyes burned into me like they were filled with purple lava ready to bubble over and burn me. I just swallowed and fear filled tears started to swell up. He did soften slightly when he saw this but when he saw the cut on my cheek from the glass shard earlier, he saw red or more like purple again. His face went hard and his hands tightened their grip making it impossible to move any other way than how he wanted me.

“Fine, you have your wish.” He then walked in front of me pulling me along like a child does a rag doll.

“Draven, let me go!” I shouted out as it seemed to be easier when I wasn’t looking into his powerful eyes.

“NO!... It’s always the hard way with you, isn’t it Keira? You wouldn’t just listen to me...No instead I have you acting like a wild cat that can’t be tamed!” I didn’t respond but I really wanted to say something that including scratching his eyes out but I knew that way would just result in more fury and his rage was far scarier than mine!

He was taking me to his room as now I was back in familiar territory. We only had one more corner to turn and we would be at his door. I had gradually started to relax under his hold and as a result he had loosened his grip. I knew if I wanted to make my move it would have to be now or once in that room he wouldn’t let me leave until he saw fit. I had to act quickly or he would home into my thoughts and put a stop to it before I even had chance to take a breath.

I counted to three and yanked my hand from his as hard as I could, taking him off guard. I was already facing the right way so all I had to do was sprint down the hall to the main doors.

“Oh no you don’t, come here!” No surprises I didn’t get very far. I turned back as he spoke but by doing this I bumped right into his arms as he was standing in front of me ready to catch me. He swept me up into his arms kicking and screaming to be let down but he roughly pulled me into his body causing me to be still. He then kicked open his door making the hinges break

and the wooden frame hang limply from the wall. As we passed through it I could hear him say something under his breath and I watched the door heal itself before slamming shut and sealing me in.

He let go of me and I ran from him into a corner, panting like a small frightened animal. He too was breathing heavy and from what I knew about Draven, this was him trying to calm down. He had his back to me and it gave me a chance to wipe the tears from my cheeks. I wasn't in the mood to let him see me crying and weak like the scared child I felt like.

It was also the first time I noticed what he was wearing as he had changed from earlier. Before, he had been wearing black trousers with a pinstriped shirt without a tie. Now he was more casual in a tight black t-shirt that looked stretched to the limit around his tensed arms. His shoulders looked huge and indestructible, like he had spent his life chopping wood and carrying tree trunks over his shoulders.

He went down into a V shape at the waist and his long legs were also hidden in black having not taken his trousers off from before. He looked frightening all in black and when I lost my nerves I also lost my gift. The next thing I knew, two massive wings erupted from his back as though there was an angel inside of him trying to burst through his golden skin.

The wings took up a lot of space and seeing them inside a well lit room, made me want to go up and touch them. They were fascinating to watch. The way they moved with his body was so fluid and precise, as though the marriage between human and angel was so close to the thread, it was hard to believe they weren't one and the same. Not the way I was seeing him now anyway.

It had started with the wings but now the power had transformed his body into a demonic host that flowed to every visible piece of him. Purple veins lit up his strong body which had found a wall for both hands to rest against in frustration. He hung his head down and was muttering to himself in a different language that sounded purely evil.

“Sit down!” He ordered and when I pushed his buttons by saying no, he

hit the wall making me jump.

“SIT DOWN!” He shouted making me obey instantly. I placed myself on the edge of the bed and held onto the bed post with both arms like it would protect me from a demon’s wrath. The wall had crumbled under pressure in the shape of a fist. He turned his head and said with an eerie calm,

“Thank you.”

He then turned his body and simply wiped the wall’s stone dust from his knuckles that remained untouched and lifted a hand to the spot. The tiny particles scattered on the floor below all gathered in a little cloud and hovered its way back to the hole in the stone block. There they began to fuse back together and into the wall that was soon back to being whole again.

Seeing Draven get angry was one thing, but seeing him in his true form getting angry is not something to ever forget. He seemed to get bigger with it and I wondered if the reason I could see him fighting that night in the forest was down to him increasing in size. He didn’t speak again until he had calmed and with him having time to control his emotions was enough time for me to control mine.

I closed my eyes and placed a memory of the usual Draven in my mind. When I opened my eyes again he was back and it was, thankfully, easier to breath. He let out an exasperated sigh making me stand once more. I didn’t care if this set him off again, I wanted to be on equal grounds. I knew deep down that would never truly be, but the lie gave me more strength than the truth.

We were both now stood staring at each other, having some sort of Mexican stand-off show down. It felt like we kept coming full circle instead of ever moving forward. Like something wasn’t right with us being together, some sort of imbalance the world was trying to correct. Why couldn’t we just be together without other people getting in the way...was I to blame with provoking the whole Justin thing. Was this my punishment?

“Tell me what you’re thinking... please, it’s driving me near to

insanity!” His desperation took me off guard. He came towards me slowly but stopped when I gestured for him to. At this he looked hurt.

“Why?” This was the only reaction to his question I could find but this just made his features turn to a haughtiness I had never seen before, like it was an obvious answer everyone knew but me. He looked for a second like he was going to answer me but then thought better of it. Instead he changed the subject and pointed to my face, bringing me back to the night’s earlier horrors. The memory of Justin lying on the cold, wet ground, blind and frightened sprang back into my mind, generating a spark of anger into my already watery eyes.

“What happened to you, did he do this? If he did....!” His fingers curled into fists causing his knuckles to crack and turn white, making the blood from his hands to drain away and flow straight back to a fiery heart.

“You’ll what? Blind him again? Torture him or will you just out right turn to a cold blooded killer this time?”

“The BOY did this to himself, he had a choice!” The word *boy* grated through his teeth like chalk on a black board.

“Choice! What choice? ‘Cause I doubt he would have poisoned himself.”

“I warned him what his actions would bring but this would have never had happened in the first place if you would have done what I asked. But oh no, not *my* girlfriend, not *my* Keira who always knows what is best!” For the first time I was seeing Draven’s mocking side and I didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

“I can take care of myself!” I said stubbornly and somehow by standing up and crossing my arms I was proving this.

“Ah yes, because that has been proven so well in the past.” This was a cheap shot and he knew it, I could tell by the quick flash of guilt in his eyes that he tried to hide by looking down. His hair fell forward covering half of

his face and after minutes of silence, he pushed it all back with both his hands and looked back up at me. He found me still shaking my head at him.

“So you’re blaming me for tonight, am I hearing that right?” I cocked my head to one side trying to come across as confident but he didn’t seem convinced. Of course it didn’t help when I was pulling down at my sleeves nervously, which he noticed.

“Partly yes... I tried to tell you of the boy’s intentions but, as usual, you would not hear of it. In the end I took matters into my own hands and decidedly knew how to protect what is mine.”

“You’re trying to justify nearly killing someone just because they fancied your girlfriend?” I was expecting something more of a response than a simple shrug of the shoulders but no, that’s all I got!

“The boy was in no danger, I take it the effects have worn off by now or you would be here accusing me of murder not just an attempt, which it wasn’t.”

“Did it ever occur to you that I could handle it myself, without all your voodoo mumbo jumbo crap?”

“Voodoo?” He almost smiled but instead, the corners of his mouth, although looking amused, did not quite make it to humour.

“And how did you handle it may I ask, and be warned Keira, if this has anything to do with that mark on your cheek the boy will lose his head?” This was a serious threat that I didn’t dare mock.

“I punched him!” I said holding my head high and realising that my chin was jutting out, I quickly lowered my head, which did make him smile. I soon understood this wasn’t because he was amused with my behaviour, it was down to pride. I met his eyes and they were staring at the evidence of my bruised hand, with a strange quirky grin like he was picturing me pulverising Justin’s body into a bloody pulp.

“Let me see your hand!” He ordered, but instead I just looked down and

started to pull the cuff of my sleeve over my hand to hide it away. That's when I jumped and let out a surprised gasp at being touched. Draven had travelled across the room in a split second and was now pushing my sleeve back up my arm to inspect my hand further. He held my wrist firmly with one hand and the other soothed my purple knuckles with a warm touch that sent shivers up and down my spine.

For a moment everything stopped. Nothing mattered anymore while Draven was touching me, it was like my world had paused and all that remained the same, was me and the man that owned my heart despite all the faults with our never ending circumstances. I closed my eyes and sighed, letting the memories of tonight fade away into the abyss of my mind. His movements were as delicate as a butterfly's wings and his strength in the grip he still held around my wrist was fading too.

I saw the night in stages. First the night at the club when my heart fluttered at the sight of Draven unusually coming down to claim me. Then the terrible ordeal with Justin's kiss and what happened as a result of it. Then came the nightmarish eyes watching from afar, stalking in the night's rain through a mist of dark fears that still remained. And finally being followed here, thus completing my crazy twisted evening. But then that wasn't it... There was still the worst to come. There had been Draven in the arms of another! That bitter cold slap was back and forced me to pull my hand free and open my eyes.

"So tell me, who is she?" I lifted my head and met his gaze head on in a fearless manner not even I was used to. His face went tense before relaxing into a smirk that I wanted to slap off him.

"You're jealous aren't you?" He looked triumphant and laughed making me walk away from him, which instantly caused my body to grow cold from the distance.

"What did you expect, of course I bloody am?" I shouted without looking back.

"Good! Then you have some small shred of comprehension as to how I

feel. Welcome to my world Keira, I can already see that you can't deal with it any better than I!" He wasn't laughing anymore and now it was his turn to fold his arms but across his expansive chest it had more magnitude when he did it.

It was with these words that I realised I *was* the one to blame. I had unknowingly caused all of tonight's actions to go spiralling out of control. If I had just done what Draven had asked me to begin with, none of this would have happened. If, when I got that text message, I had just excused myself and walked up to the VIP area then Draven wouldn't have felt like he to go to such lengths to prevent something he knew would happen.

I knew as well as Draven, of Justin's affections for me, but I pushed it and pushed it, pretending it not to be true. I had been playing with fire from the moment I set foot into the club with another boy and I let Draven just stand there and watch...what had I been thinking?

"You planned it? You knew I would come back to the club and you sent Aurora to be there to lead me into Sophia's playroom. You knew I was there watching didn't you?"

"I felt you as soon as you entered the building. I had everyone assembled in Sophia's room and let the party commence. I knew the added touch of having Aurora be your guide would enhance my point." For the first time tonight he looked tired and relieved, like he had given up the good fight and walked away with no prize in sight. He had achieved his goal but without the slightest satisfaction.

"It was all an act?" I asked timidly.

"Of course it was! Keira I needed to prove my point, I needed you to see, to feel, to taste the bitter sting of jealousy and fear that I was losing you to another. Do you understand?" I nodded and let a single tear roll down my cheek which was filled with remorse and guilt.

"Why are you crying?" He asked softly turning full circle to where we had started this conversation.

“Because, I am ashamed of myself.” I said, letting my emotions bubble up my throat and soon tears followed the invisible road on my cheeks. One tear stung my little cut thanks to the salty droplet running over to the side. I quickly looked down letting them now find home on the floor, when I felt strong hands wipe them free and gently push my face upwards to look at him.

“That makes two of us.” Then like a child I buried my head into his chest and flung my arms around him making him hold me while I let all my emotions out onto the material that covered his solid chest. The feel of his hand smoothing the back of my head and down my neck soon calmed me.

Once he was assured this was so, his hands began to move down and remove my jacket. I didn't speak but just bit my lip with anticipation of being under his touch, skin to skin. He even smiled as to how many layers I had on as he started to dissect each item. Finally he got down to the last pieces of material in his way and I let out a moan when his hands came into contact with my waist.

He held me under my top and lingered with his hands holding my hips, and then as if seeing a green light he ran his hands up to my breasts taking the top with them. He kept moving until it freed my torso and then despatched it to the floor. He then did the same with my bra making me half naked in his arms.

Now, though, I felt it was my turn to shed some of his layers and with trembling hands I found the rim of his shirt. When I touched his skin he also let out a moan which was more animal than human. I lifted it up but only could reach so far and then he had to take over by lifting it the rest of the way. I ran my hands across his chest and the lines of his defined stomach causing him to find the small of my back and run his fingertips up my spine.

After a few soft journeys up and down my back, he then found my neck and more importantly my lips that were hungry to be tasted. He started to lean down but then stopped abruptly before reaching them. He looked towards the glass doors that led onto the balcony and his eyes hardened. I was about to ask what it was but when he spoke foreign words that sounded like a demand, I thought otherwise.

Instead I turned my head to look behind me but before I could, he wrapped his arms around my waist and lifted me to his lips. The kiss made me melt under a master's experience. I was now lost to the outside world and no longer cared what he had seen and what sounded like he had ordered away. I no longer cared about Justin, Aurora or what had been stalking me that night. And most importantly I no longer held an image of Draven in some other girl's hands because I was here...I was the now, and Draven made me feel like I was the only, as he picked me off the ground and carried me to the bed to make love to me like he owned every inch of me,

Which, of course, he did.

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Chapter 34

Tarnished Perfection.

The next morning was the calm after the storm in more ways than one and the glass doors held picture proof. The sky was clear of all the dark and gloomy clouds that had filled it the day before. The day and night of rainfall seemed to have transformed the land into being even more green and lush than usual. I couldn't help but smile at the sight but I also think my contented mood was down to my night of incredible make-up sex that was eagerly provided by Draven. As the memories flooded back to me an instant jolt of sexual hunger towards my lower regions made me giggle.

“And may I enquire what you find so amusing?” Even the sound of Draven's voice had my stomach flipping over. I tried to be cool but with the bloody great, big grin plastered across my face, that was a hard task to accomplish. He was sat at his desk with his chair turned to the side to look at me. There were papers spread out in front of him but from this distance, I couldn't see what they held upon them. I don't know how long he had been awake, but he was fully dressed and freshly showered.

In the end the only answer I gave was a slight shrug of my shoulders, which in turn he mocked by doing the same. I was about to say something smart and ask if he had recently checked the Karma Sutra out of the town's library after last night's wild sex escapades but I was kyboshed by the ringing of my phone.

My clothes, as usual, were thrown around the room like shrapnel from a sex bomb. I didn't want to just get out of bed naked and search for it as in the light of day I was still shy about showing him my body. Thankfully I didn't need to, as he had found it and made it to the bedside ready for me to take it...at a price. I tried to take the Abba singing phone from him but he wanted something in return.

“Payment first.” He said in a deep, smouldering voice that made me wish the phone would go to voicemail already and we could continue the payment in great depth. I kissed him on the nose instead, quickly remembering morning breath and grabbed the phone.

“Consider it a down payment.” I said making him grin and then I answered the phone to a very flustered sister.

“Kazzy?”

“Yeah, of course it’s me, you rang my number remember, what’s up Libs?” She sounded both upset and furious and I was just praying that it wasn’t based at me.

“Where have you been? Justin said that you brought him home last night but then he didn’t know where you went...so please tell me I’m just being paranoid and you’re with Dominic.” A guilty pang popped in my stomach at the sound of her worried tone and I knew I should have left at least a note or called first thing. Why didn’t I think? Deep down I knew why...I had been so obsessed with having it out with Draven, that nothing else seemed to matter at the time.

“I’m sorry Libs I should have left a note or rang but yeah, I’m at the club and I’m really...” I was about to say really sorry but she cut me off.

“Yes, yes I know you’re sorry but that’s not important right now, I called because I need you to come home, like, right now!” Ok, this panicked state had me really worried and Draven knew it because he took my other hand in his.

“What is it, is the baby ok?” I could feel tears almost emerging but then they disappeared just as quickly when she said “No, no, nothing like that, I’m fine and so is the baby. It’s something else that I can’t handle... alone!”

“For God’s sake Libs, you’re freaking me out, just tell me!” Draven frowned when I mentioned God and I couldn’t help but wonder what that look had meant?

“You’re freaking out! I’m the one freaking out! Frank’s had to go to the airport and I’m getting things ready here but I can’t face her alone, I won’t do it Kazzy, I won’t or I will end up committing murder and I can’t have a jailbird baby!” I laughed at how dramatic my sister was being, that was until

the penny dropped just as I asked who he was going to pick up. I knew the answer and let out an angry growl of my own.

“NO, no, no, no, it can’t be? She’s early!”

“Tell me about it.”

“I’ll be back as soon as I can. I promise but is Justin still there? Maybe he could keep her occupied for a while.” At the very mention of his name Draven look like he wanted to smash something up.

“Yeah, he’s helping me to get things ready but he wants to split as soon as she arrives. He has met her before remember...the wedding.” I recalled the event very well and when she hadn’t succeeded then in getting him to give up the goods she had hated me even more to find that his attentions lay towards another member of the family, one she hated more than anyone!

“Right... got it, I will be there soon, just hang on. Oh and Libs...” She paused and waited for me to carry on.

“When she arrives and if I’m not there...”

“Yeah?”

“Stay away from sharp implements.” Draven laughed at my warning and I hung up the phone.

“The cousin, I presume, has arrived.”

“Oh yeah... the bitch has landed!”

It took me longer to get ready than usual, thanks to while having a shower Draven kept insisting that he could be of some assistance and made it difficult to do anything while being watched like a gazelle. He leaned all his body weight on one of the pillars and seemed content on watching me wash my hair. I tried to ignore him but he was making it increasingly difficult

when he kept making comments like,

“You missed a bit”.

I think I would have enjoyed it more if memories of my cousin, Hilary, hadn't been playing in and out of my mind like a flicker book of misery and embarrassment. Draven knew I was preoccupied and he would soon understand to the full extent when meeting her. I didn't know what to expect but I was certain on one factor, I was absolutely dreading it!

And it also took longer to change than usual and after standing there growing cold with just a towel round me, Draven couldn't stand it any longer.

“Keira, this isn't like you, you never usually care what people think about your appearance so why are you fretting now?” I frowned and turned round to face him. He was standing close enough that I had to arch my neck up to see his expression clearly.

“I care what you think,” I said catching the hidden smile emerge.

“Ah, well I don't count as you know full well that I would find you most beautiful in any garment.” I wanted to mock him about sounding his age in saying the word garment instead of the modern use of the word clothes. But instead I called his bluff.

“And if I walked in the club one night wearing a bin bag... that would be acceptable?”

“That depends.” He said teasing me.

“On what exactly?”

“Whether or not the bag was used would be a factor, you may be a beauty in anything you wear but the smell I cannot account for and I'm not partial to the smell of garbage!”

“Rubbish.”

“Excuse me?” He asked, one eyebrow raised.

“I said rubbish, you know...you say tomatoe, I say tomato...let’s call the... whole thing off?” I started singing the song confidently until I got to the end and saw his expression. It was one of high amusement and I went bright red.

“You are so...”

“Don’t say it!” I interrupted but he said it anyway,

“Adorable.” I shuddered as I felt his lips on the sensitive skin near my collar bone. He licked where his kiss lay and made me giggle. We both laughed and I momentarily forgot about my cousin induced self-esteem issues. But it didn’t take long and after Draven had finished kissing me, I was back to square one.

“Right, I know what to do but I warn you, you asked for this.” I didn’t even have chance to reply because he was gone and out of the room before I had turned back around. I was left miffed and confused. The endless amount of clothes loomed before me and if they could have spoken, I was sure they would be all laughing at me. Why was I finding this so hard? Why was this the one person besides Draven that could influence my mood in such a way? I wanted to scream at myself for being so ridiculous but every time I went to pick something out, my hand would recall and I would be right back where I started.

I wasn’t sure how long I had been stood there and I knew every minute that ticked by, Libby would be going crazy. Finally I heard the door open and when I turned, I was not only faced with one Draven but now two.

“See what I mean! She has been stood like this for half an hour just staring at her clothes. This is beyond my capability as a man so I brought reinforcements.” I wanted to laugh but the stern look on Sophia’s face made me think it not wise. She took fashion very seriously and in her case she would class this as a world code red emergency.

“I see. You did the right thing Dom but now it’s time for you to leave us...we have work to do!” I couldn’t help gulp and shot Draven a panicked look but with a smirk, he crossed the room and kissed me.

“You left me no other choice love.” He whispered in my ear before leaving the room.

“It’s not that bad...no really. I am just a bit indecisive this morning.” She didn’t buy it and with a lie told so badly I wasn’t surprised.

“So this has nothing to do with the bitch that is showing up today then?” Ok, so she had me there, but what was it in this place, had some article gone out in the ‘Demon/ Angel weekly’?

“It’s ok, really. Jealously is a completely natural emotion, and one that my kind usually finds great pleasure in feeding from. It’s a shame really that we can’t feed from you, with your mood I would be full up till lunch!” I didn’t laugh unlike she did and I can imagine it was due to my hacked off expression that she found amusement in.

“I’m only kidding. Jeez you *are* uptight this morning. No wonder my brother called me.” She turned her attention to the clothes in front of her and with one hand running along the fabrics and the other rested on her shoulder like she was posing for a photo shoot.

“So what are we going for here...All out “I’m better than you” sexy or seductively casual?” Umm none of the above! I didn’t say that because she was already pulling clothes off the rack like a woman possessed.

“I dunno...I kind of just want to look...umm” I didn’t know how to carry on without sounding pathetic but it was clear she was waiting, so I continued and said the words with my head hung down and my eyes finding the fleurs-de-lis that patterned the thick lush carpet.

“Like I deserve your brother.”

“Oh Keira, anyone to doubt that is a fool and un-deserving of your attention. This girl sounds she needs some Demon arse kicking therapy,

would her head look good mounted on a wall?” This made me laugh in a nervous, God I hope she isn’t serious kind of way but I was soon feeling better. I could just picture Hilary’s face when meeting Sophia for the first time...actually it was the only thing I was looking forward to about her staying here.

By the time Sophia had finished, I felt like a giant Barbie doll. I was now stood looking at myself in the full length mirror feeling a little red faced. I had on a light grey sweater dress with a cowl neck and wide ribbing. It was so soft to the skin I couldn’t stop feeling the sleeves. It was teamed up with a pair of tight, black leggings and black boots that added to my height. Sophia handed me a hooded coat with an absolutely feminine charm. It was black also and tied at the waist with a belt in the same material. It fell to my knees with a slight flare and when I put it on it fit like it was made to measure.

“You look lovely, so much so my brother might buy me a TVR Cerbera.” I gave her one of my “you’re so spoilt” looks but she just laughed.

“That’s a car...right?”

“Keira it’s not just a car, it’s so much more. The feeling you get when you reach speeds up to 240 miles per hour...it’s like you’re flying!”

“But you can fly! And what is it with you and your brother with speed anyway?” I rolled my eyes having only ever done the speed limit my entire life, well I wasn’t so sure about what speed I was doing last night but that had been different. Which brought me back to last night’s horrors and why I hadn’t yet told Draven about them? I couldn’t understand it, every time something weird happened it was like my mind would come up with its own ideas on how to deal with it and telling Draven wasn’t even an option. I had asked Draven last night, after the wild, untamed makeup sex where Ragnar was last night. But was utterly taken back to find that he had been watching me all night. This had left me beyond confused and was just about to explain how I never saw him when my mind crashed into a red light. I was at a blank and couldn’t bring myself to speak about last night. Why did this keep happening? What was wrong with me and more importantly if Ragnar had been there last night, then why did last night go so horribly wrong? The blood

red window message, the glowing eyes in the darkness stalking me like some forest monster ready for its next feed and last of all, the car following me back to Afterlife?

Sophia's voice brought me back round to the now and the next set of horrors that awaited me.

"My brother has a TVR Sagaris in purple, you know. Has he taken you in it yet?" My mind was everywhere and nowhere all at once. I could feel Sophia's mind trying to invade my thoughts. The feeling brought me round and I quickly shut myself off, leaving her staring at me with a curious eye.

"Sorry, what was the question?" I blinked a few times and came back to the conversation.

"Keira, are you alright?" She knew something was wrong but thankfully I had something else to blame it on.

"Yeah sure, I mean I'm stressing 'cause of my cousin coming but apart from that, I'm just dandy." I could tell she wasn't buying it and I wondered how much of my thoughts she had seen before I closed shop. I decided to distract her with another question.

"So I know you and Draven have loads of cars but what about Vincent?"

"Ah, now Vincent prefers bikes but me... well...a helmet does nothing for a girl's hair!" I laughed at her comment and hoped it was enough of a deterrent for her to drop her suspicious gaze. The last thing I wanted was her taking her anxious concerns to Draven.

Draven was waiting by his desk and I knew from the look, that he had heard every word I had said. He stood up and was in front of me before I had time to blink. He took my hands in his and looked down at me with hurt in his dark eyes.

"How could anyone think that such a goddess could not be good enough,

I am the one not worthy. You look enchanting.” I blushed and in sight of this he leaned down to my ear.

“The smell of your blood rushing to your cheeks drives me wild, take care or I will not let you go.” I smiled before I realised what he was saying.

“You’re not coming with me?” I said this with puppy eyes and looked up at him.

“Now Keira don’t look at me like that, you know I can deny you nothing but I have some things of importance to do before I can leave and I fear your sister cannot wait for you.” I wanted to sulk but I knew I would only be making him feel guilty for something he obviously couldn’t help. Then I had an idea.

“Ok, but couldn’t Sophia come with me instead?”

“I...” She was about to agree but her brother spoke over her.

“Sophia is needed here,” he said sternly and then shot her a look like he was communicating something to her mind, something he didn’t want me knowing. My sudden fears from earlier came back and I worried that he had heard more than our conversation in the dressing room. I only noticed her nod before leaving the room.

“Is everything alright?” I asked and my voice brought me back his attention.

“Yes but of course. I am sorry I am letting you take on this hell cat alone but I will be along shortly...I promise.” The promise he made ended on my lips and I sighed with delight. He placed one hand on the small of my back and the other ran up my neck and in my hair. We started to get lost in each other’s touch until the sound of Abba filled the air and I swore under my breath, which just so happened to still be in his mouth at the time.

“I would appreciate it if you refrain from cursing when I kiss you or you will start to give me a complex.” He teased me.

“That will be my sister then.”

“Then you’d better go before I get too carried away and tie you up.”

“That’s not a bad idea. Maybe you could answer it and tell her that.” He smiled showing all his teeth and the gesture made his face light up in a way that made my knees weak.

“Are you not going to answer that?”

“Na, she will just think I’m driving.”

“Umm... no she won’t” He said filled with confidence.

“And why not?”

“Because I have arranged for a car to take you home...don’t look at me like that Keira, it is simply so that I can pick you up later myself.” I finished rolling my eyes and imagined the look on Hilary’s face when Draven turned up in something little and sporty.

“Ok but on one condition...” He raised one eyebrow and said,

“Which would be?”

“That you turn up in the Aston.”

Out at the front of the building, a car was waiting for me as Draven had said there would be. Ragnar was there waiting for me by a chauffeur driven car which I had no idea of the make. I had to admit I had missed the sight of my big bodyguard and a relief washed over me knowing I had him with me once again. It looked like he was trying to hide a smile as I grinned at him.

“So you’re back?” I asked as I stepped through the car door he was holding open for me. I also took notice that printed on the leather seats was Maybach. I had never heard of this car make before but the luxury inside told

me not only of its exclusivity and wealth but also how fitting it was for royalty.

“I wasn’t aware I was missing.” He mocked in his heavy accented voice.

“Last night?” I prompted but I had to wait for his answer as he was near bending his body in two just to fit in the car. I felt the suspension drop and I was tempted to ask how much he weighed. He frowned at me for a moment but didn’t answer. He looked like he was deep in thought, as though looking for the answer himself. I decided to let it go quickly.

There were too many questions rolling round in my head to focus on just one idea. The rest of the way was travelled in silence, which didn’t help my nerves at finding my dreaded cousin at my destination. I fiddled nervously with the matching grey gloves Sophia had handed to me and then played with a loose strand of hair that Draven had tucked behind my ear before kissing me one last time, while saying his goodbyes.

I decided to wear my hair off my neck and it was now securely twisted up and held by a heavy metal clip. I had noted tired eyes in the morning and thought of the bluish tint that had been there but when I had looked in the mirror in the dressing room they had gone. I put it down to the hot shower and blushing around Draven. To tell the truth, my skin had been amazing lately and I was starting to think happiness was the key. What else could it be? It wasn’t only my skin either, it was everything...my hair was softer, my nails were shiny and strong, even my eyelashes looked longer.

Ragnar cleared his throat and it made me look up to the sight of my house coming into view. I sighed and noticed the curtain move. It must have been Libby watching out for me like a hawk. I let my shoulders slump down and suddenly my legs felt like they were filled with liquid lead flowing freely through my veins. My body was reacting to the task at hand, given it didn’t want to see her as much as my brain did.

Ragnar noticed the change in my body language and frowned. The car stopped and both the front door and car door opened simultaneously. That’s when I saw Libby’s desperate face first, followed closely by Justin’s

exhausted spirit. Hilary really did know how to crush the soul into one of misery!

Then there she was, all five feet and eight inches of fake smiles and cruel comments. She had changed her appearance but that wasn't anything to be shocked at, she was always dyeing her hair, finding new fashions styles but all were just as slutty as the next and what she wore now was no exception.

She was tall and very skinny, painfully so if you asked me. She had straight, platinum hair down past her shoulders that she styled into a flick at the sides. She had evil looking green eyes that reminded me of a snarling cat. She had an oval face with small tight lips that always wore too much lipstick. Her short denim skirt barely covered her thighs but I was surprised that she was even wearing tights with it. The hot pink halter neck top matched with the tiniest cardigan that didn't scream winter chic that was for sure, but the whole outfit reminded me of something a fifty year old cougar would wear.

I mustered all my mental strength and got out of the car, which was a mistake but one I had no choice in committing.

“Kizzy Cat!” She squealed and squawked out the nickname I loathed. I tried to smile but it felt almost so fake that it would fall off. She was running towards me and pushed my sister out of the way making her nearly lose her step. Luckily Frank was close by and helped steady her. It was one of the very few times I had seen hate in Frank's eyes, so finally one car ride had convinced him round to our way of thinking. Of course, having his pregnant wife nearly knocked to the floor was enough for Frank to scowl at anyone.

She reached me and gave me an insincere kiss on each cheek like she was continental and I cringed when she combined it with phony kissy noises. She took a step back and took one look at my clothes and then her eyes scanned the car that was behind me.

“Well, hasn't somebody found themselves a Sugar Daddy!” She smirked at the insult and I could almost hear her congratulating herself in her head. I just released a lack lustre laugh and looked back at the car. I saw Ragnar getting out and it took me a minute to realise that nobody else could see him.

The car started to pull away and we all moved towards the house to give it more room to turn round. As I walked, Hilary eyed me and then turned to face me at the steps.

“Well you look better than I thought you would and the extra weight is only to be expected...all things considered, well you know after...” She stopped and then made a slitting wrist motion making a “Eekk” noise with it, which I didn’t understand but I was too far gone in my fury I didn’t care. The only noise I wanted to hear from the bitch was the sound of agony and restriction as a result of my hands round her throat!

She turned and went in the house and left everyone standing in disbelief staring at me like I was a firework about to blow! Ok... ok, I had to get a hold of myself. I had to think logically. If I resorted to murder then that wouldn’t look good for my future and I couldn’t imagine Draven visiting me in prison. Besides what was I thinking? I was forgetting the most important part about my relationship and how it could help me here...

After all, I was dating a half Demon!

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Chapter 35

Heartless Hilary

I finally managed to breathe and calm my actions down to just a growl in my throat. The rest looked at me like they were scared of what I was going to do next. I walked up the steps past Frank and Justin and was about to walk past Libby when she caught my arm and stopped me. She was about to ask if I was ok but I beat her to it.

“I’m fine,” I said without any emotion in my voice. I hated Hilary with a passion and the idea that she hadn’t changed a bit was not only upsetting but infuriating! I had been living with the spite and bitterness of that girl’s personality for years and one of the bonuses about moving here was that I was finally rid of her. And now here I was, only being here for little over three months and she had already invaded. It was too much to bear.

I closed my eyes and mounted the remaining steps feeling like all hope was lost. I would have to be one of those people right now, one of those who can ignore nasty folk and their degrading comments, but I wasn’t and I hated to admit that it had taken her all of two minutes to insult me and for that insult to have struck me so deep this early, only added substance to my

growing dread.

I heard Justin asking Libby if our cousin realised that it was winter and she merely replied,

“Oh yeah, she knows.”

The house was immaculate and everything smelled of lavender and furniture polish. There, at the club, I had been trying so hard with my appearance and here Libby had been doing the very same thing, only instead of her looks it was the pride of her home that had enforced such an effort to be made. I wondered why we both deemed it necessary to go to such lengths for someone we hated. She was clearly going to find fault whatever we did.

I took off my jacket and instead of joining my cousin in the lounge, I diverted to the kitchen. I heard the front door shut and knew everyone else had gotten over their shock and was now putting on their fake, happy voices. Libby was the second to escape and she joined me in the kitchen. I had clicked on the kettle but then decided tea just wasn't going to cut it, so opted for something stronger. I found an opened bottle of wine in the fridge and poured myself a glass...A very, very large glass.

“You've got the right idea... man if I wasn't pregnant then I would have finished it off by now!” As soon as she said the words I downed it and poured the rest of the bottle into my wine glass that really wasn't big enough for the job. I had to slurp at the edges so that the wine wouldn't spill. I didn't speak for fear of screaming, I just kind of stood there, staring at nothing, waiting for this nightmare to end but every time I heard that screeching voice of hers, I just let out a shudder.

“I was kinda hoping you would turn up with Dominic, then that would have shut that poisonous little mouth of hers! I can't believe she had the nerve to say that to you...I have a good mind to tell mum!” I held up my hand and shook my head. It was like school all over again.

“What's the point Libs, she'll never believe it and even if she does, there's no use in upsetting her. Besides, her sister's little princess can do no

wrong...remember?" Libby understood it all too well as we had both had our fair share of the little hell cat, as Draven had put it. Just then Frank came in and looked both scared and annoyed, I soon understood why. He feared his wife's unhappiness and hated the reasons behind it.

"Umm...I don't know how to say this but..."

"Just say it Frank!" Libby snapped and then felt sorry for it, so smiled at her husband as way of an apology.

"Hilary isn't happy with her room and wants one with a view."

"WHAT! Why that ungrateful little bitc..." Frank made a face like "Shut up or she'll hear you" and Libby never finished her sentence but I wasn't at a loss to know what the last part would have been.

"We don't have any rooms with a view available, the other spare room is full of stuff for the baby and..." Frank looked uncomfortable again and he shifted his weight making the floor boards creak under the strain. For such a big guy he sure did look cute as a button when he did that!

"What is it Frank?" Libby asked not keeping the strain out of her voice.

"Well she's got her eye on another room." His eyes looked up and we all followed like we could see through the ceiling.

"She wants Keira's room," he said sheepishly.

"What!... No way, out of the question!" My sister defended my honour well, but I just wanted to give up and pray that I would last the duration.

"Its fine Libs, she can have it." I mean of course she wanted my room, she wanted everything I owned, so why not my room.

"No she can't!" Libby was putting her foot down and Frank was torn between us two. He looked at me and then back at his wife and then back at me. He looked like somebody watching Wimbledon.

“Lib’s, really it fine, I won’t be spending the nights here anyway.” At this Libby whipped her head round and scowled,

“Oh no, you’re not bailing out on me, if I have to endure the cow, then so do you!”

“Libs chill! I just mean I won’t be sleeping here, you can’t deny me that, I do have a boyfriend and just because she’s here it doesn’t mean I’m going to give up every pleasure in my life!” Libby’s face softened at the remark.

“I know, I’m sorry, it’s just that I don’t want to be alone with her.”

“And you won’t, look I still have to go to college and you’ll be working in the day so that rules out the days...right?” She nodded and didn’t look so deflated with the idea.

“And in the evenings I will take her to the club and she can amuse herself with the poor souls there. So by the end of it, hopefully we will hardly see her.” I don’t know who I was trying to kid, my sister or myself but at least my little speech had worked on someone, because Frank’s face lit up and Libby even smiled.

“Excuse me, is someone going to tell me where I can unpack my stuff?” A voice came from above and there was nothing holy about it!

“Go tell her that I need to move some of my stuff first.” I said to Frank and he walked out looking a bit happier than when he had first walked in.

“What a ...”

“Yeah, I know, but if it makes life easier then it’s worth it” I said in a deflated tone. Just then Justin hurried into the kitchen looking like Steve McQueen out of the ‘The Great Escape’. He closed the door behind him and leant back on it while letting out a relieved sigh. For the first time since being home I wanted to laugh.

“Wow, that cousin of yours doesn’t believe in playing hard to get. I feel violated! Never leave me alone with her again, I beg of you!” Me and Libs

cracked up with laughter and soon Justin was smiling again. Seeing him like this had me wondering what he actually remembered about last night. Draven had told me that he would have no recollection about the night's events but I needed to be sure. I would have to speak to him before he left.

“Seriously though, that girl is messed up! And she has major beef with you...what's that about?” He nodded to me but shock didn't take shape on my face.

“It's a long...oh so long story.” This statement made it clear that I didn't want to talk about it and nothing more was said.

“So...Justin, what did you think about Afterlife?” Libby asked trying to change the subject, unfortunately for me, it wasn't any better than the one we had been on.

“Yeah it was cool, but man I must have been wasted 'cause I don't remember getting home last night. I hope I wasn't too much to handle?” Justin asked me and when Libby moved towards the sink Justin winked at me. Oh God, does this mean he remembered or was he just flirting with me? For once I hoped it was the second.

The wine had gone to my head and with the lack of food in my belly it didn't have anything to soak it up. So that, combined with clearing out my stuff, didn't put me in the best of moods. Libby had wanted to help but I said that if she wanted to help at all then she would do her best by keeping my cousin at bay!

I was close to snapping and I almost wished for my old hopeless self to find her way back, because acting numb would have been a breeze. I don't know what it was about Draven but he brought out the fighter in me. He had found the part of me that had been locked away since the “Incident”. Wow it seemed like an age ago since I had referred to it like that. But the truth remained...He had brought me back to life.

It didn't take long to stuff my clothes into a duffle bag that Frank had left out for me, nor did it bother me by sleeping in another room in the house but what did bother me more than anything else, was the idea that *she* would be sleeping in a bed that me and Draven had shared. I was trying not to think about it but every time I looked towards the bed and window seat I could see me and Draven there, making love and I didn't want Hilary infecting my memories.

I had emptied my wardrobe and drawers but the first thing I grabbed was my drawings. The last thing I wanted was Hilary finding my sketches of Demons and Angels! She already thought I was a freak without knowing this side of me.

I had moved into one of the rooms on the other side of the house where Libby had kept some of her gym equipment. Frank had carried the exercise bike and rowing machine down to the basement so all that remained was a large, inflated blue ball and a set of brightly coloured weights that were stacked in one corner.

I dropped my bags and sat on the bed with a sigh. It almost felt like the first day I had arrived here, that minus all the excitement. Libby tapped on my door and pulled me out of my sombre mood by offering to make me a cup of tea and a sandwich. My stomach rumbled at the thought of food.

“Oh, and Justin's heading off if you wanna say goodbye.”

I needed to talk to him before he left but the task left me with sweaty palms. What was he going to say? I stood up and pulled my sweater dress down loving how soft it felt on my skin. As I walked onto the landing I heard Hilary in my room unpacking while on the phone to one of her *few* friends.

“Seriously, you wouldn't recognise her, she's gone so fat!” She then giggled like someone on Nitrous oxide and I rolled my eyes, cursing under my breath as I knew she was referring to me. Maybe I had put on weight? No! I'm not starting that again, last time I saw her it was my nose that she had me paranoid about. I just hoped she was using her own phone and own money to slag me off! Of course when I reached the downstairs and saw the

handset wasn't in its cradle, I knew this call was on the expense of Libby and Frank.

“You know she's on the phone to a friend up there and I know the girl works fast but I can't imagine it's anyone in the US!” Libby looked furious and stormed off upstairs calling her name, which left me and Justin in the kitchen alone.

“So you've decided to escape?” I said light heartedly and he smiled.

“You're free to come with me.” He said with a seductive eye and I laughed nervously. I doubted that if he knew my secrets he would commit to such an offer.

“Me? Nah, I've always wanted to try out living in purgatory.” I joked, but given the circumstances it didn't seem that funny and although Justin laughed, I couldn't bring myself to follow him. Instead I turned my attention to finishing the sandwich that Libby had started and proceeded to add mayo to one side when I stopped and thought about my cousin's comments. Damn her! I scraped the mayo off the knife into the jar and screwed the top back on. I could feel Justin's eyes on me and when I turned back round sandwich in hand he was smiling.

“Just remembered you don't like mayo?” He mocked and with a mouthful I nodded and said when only half swallowed,

“Something like that.”

He knew why, as he too had heard Hilary's comment outside. My pride had been butchered today and I was close to opening a tub of Ben and Jerry's from the freezer and devouring the whole lot in a dark room alone. God, why did I let that girl grate on me so much? Justin brought me out of my gluttony thoughts and asked me 'THE' question.

“Kaz, about last night...” I almost dropped my sandwich but all I lost was a piece of lettuce. At least it gave me something to look at as I bent down to pick it up. He stopped me fidgeting after I'd put it in the bin and placed his

hand on my arm.

“Keira, did something happen last night?” Oh shit! Was he starting to remember? He took a step closer to me and as I took a deep breath, my lungs filled with the scent of soap and sea water. How was it that he could still smell of the ocean when he was far from it? I looked up and met his concerned expression.

“Did I...I, do something last night...did we do something?” I didn’t know how to respond. Of course it would have helped if I knew what it was exactly that he remembered, so I went with that.

“What do you remember?” He rubbed the back of his neck with his palm and looked deep in thought, like he was trying to dig it out from somewhere deep in his memories. I just prayed he didn’t find too much back there.

“It’s weird...like having a dream and being convinced the next day that it was real. I remember being at the club and drinking at the bar.”

“With me and Dra...Dominic?” That’s when he looked at me like he was drawing a blank.

“No it was just me and you... oh and then your friend with the mad hair turned up.”

“RJ, you remember her but no one else?” That wasn’t right, surely he should have remembered Draven being there, after all, it was before he had taken the drug.

“No, why, did he show up?” I didn’t know how to answer.

“Umm...yeah, but you must have just missed him.”

“What a shame!” He said sarcastically and I hit him lightly in the stomach.

“Oi be nice! What else?” I needed to get to the bottom of it all before he left.

“Well that’s it really, after that it kinda goes all fuzzy but I have the strangest feeling that I...” I leaned in expecting him to whisper but I think he took it the wrong way. He lent in to and gently moved my hair off my neck sending shivers down my spine.

“What is it?” I asked softly.

“That I kissed you and that I liked it.” His words rippled out of him full of raw sexual emotion. Of course just then Hilary decided to walk in and coughed to make herself known.

“Am I interrupting something?” She asked in a snooty voice and then I thought the best way to cover up the fact that it looked like we were doing something was to hug him. I slapped him on the back and then lifted my hand up to give him a high five. Thankfully he followed my lead and slapped my hand ending it with a ruffle of my hair.

“Catch ya later sister-in-law!” I smiled at his efforts but Hilary didn’t look convinced. He walked back in the hall to grab his stuff and there Frank and Libby stood by the door waiting to say their goodbyes. Hilary huffed at me as I walked past and I was sure I caught the words “slut” whisper from her mouth but I chose to ignore it as I knew it was said out of jealousy.

I found Frank giving Justin a bear hug and Libby quickly wiped a tear away thinking no one noticed. Since she had become pregnant she had developed such a sensitive side she couldn’t even watch a football game without crying for the losers. Poor Frank was scared to watch TV at all.

“Well, take care of yourself and my little nephew.” Libby smiled and almost set off crying again.

“We don’t know it’s a boy,” Libby said and Frank mouthed the words “Jerk” at him making it obvious where he had gotten that idea from. Lucky for him I was the only one that noticed it. Justin hit his brother on the back and then turned to wink at me. I smiled at him along with blushing and Hilary just received a nod which made her storm off like a spoilt child. She sounded like she had bricks for shoes as she went storming off up the stairs.

“Something I said?” Justin joked before walking through the door and just as I was going to ask him if he needed a lift, I realised I didn’t have my car, which had me wondering if that was the reason Draven had insisted on having a car take me home? In the end it didn’t matter because a beep from Frank’s dad, who was now parked outside, told me that he was going home. Frank and Libby waved before going back into the house but I still had unfinished business so I ran down the steps calling his name. He turned looking happily surprised.

“Hold up a sec.”

“What? Missed me already?” He was so damn cocky!

“I just wanted to know...to check...that you’re ok?” He looked confused and then smiled lighting up his slightly freckled face.

“You worried about me?” He saw me frown so he continued without an answer.

“I’m fine, I know I should have the hangover from Hell but it’s weird... like something I drank last night mustn’t have agreed with me but at the same time it did...does that make sense?” Oh yeah, it made sense alright!

“My only regret is towards you, I have a feeling that I didn’t behave last night and if I offended you at all then I apologise.” This had been the most sincere that I had seen Justin and for it I gave him a wink back myself. I had wanted to give him a hug but the sight of Ragnar in the background, staring with hellfire in his eyes at Justin’s back, stopped me.

“Friends?” I asked and in the end he pulled me in for a hug anyway but at least this way it hadn’t been me that had started it. The sound of a tree branch the thickness of my leg snapping behind us made him pull back and turn around.

“What was that?” The sight of a huge part of the tree had been snapped back and split in three different places.

“Man, you must have fat squirrels around here...what you feeding them,

protein bars?” I laughed and waved to him and his dad before returning to the house. I watched the car go out of sight and before going inside I saw Ragnar staring at me, giving me a dirty look, so I did a very childish thing...I stuck my tongue out at him and ran into the house. I was still smiling to myself when I walked into the living room.

“I don’t know what you’re smiling at? We still have to deal with that!” Libby said pointed to the ceiling.

“Let me handle it,” I said as I left the room to go and talk to my cousin. I had a good mind to pick up Frank’s baseball bat from under the stairs on the way but thought that was way too mafia. No, I was going to have to use my powers of persuasion and hell, maybe then if she didn’t listen she could ‘Say hello to my little friend!’ I smiled at the thought but my smile soon faded when I reached my...oh no, now it was *her* room. It was open so I knocked and walked in anyway, not waiting for a response.

“Kizzy Cat, what do you think?” The question was aimed at the changes to my room as now she had moved everything to how she wanted it. My bed was sideways and my desk had been stuffed in the corner, out of the way. She had even moved my rug and rolled it up to lean against the wall. She had also removed my purple blankets and pillows. She had dug out some yellow ones that were spare in the chest that was no longer at the bottom of my bed but pushed to the far wall. I wondered how she had the strength to do all of this.

“Umm yeah...it’s great, I guess.” I said unconvincingly.

“Well, I needed the room for my yoga. I can’t function without an early start and exercise, you should try it sometime.” Yeah like kick-boxing! I could just see myself doing a round house kick to a certain somebody’s head.

“Well, I do a lot of hiking.” I lied, what I really wanted to say was “I have loads of crazy wild sex so don’t have much energy for much else,” but I refrained.

“Umm, yeah it shows.” She looked me up and down and wrinkled her nose like I smelled. God forgive me, I hated her!

“Yeah, well anyway, I wanted to invite you to the club tonight.” I can’t believe I even found the words but they were out now and I couldn’t take them back. My one consolation was that I was giving Libby some time out.

“Will that guy you’ve been kind of seeing, be there?” I wanted to growl as a malevolent smile crossed her lips.

“My *Boyfriend*, well he does own the place!” I said trying to get one back over her but it didn’t work, she just enlarged her smile and tapped a finger to her lips. I was getting impatient so I put a hand to my hip and said,

“Well?”

“Yeah, I think it should be fun. In that case, I should have a shower now and shave my legs...you never know, I may get lucky!” This was her way of implying she could steal Draven from me but I didn’t bite.

“Let’s hope so,” I said before going to tell Libby the good news. For me, however, it was more like a Greek tragedy. Well at least I couldn’t say my life was boring! I was trying to find other silver linings in having my cousin here but that was the only one I could come up with, so I rubbed my forehead like I had a migraine on the way and found Libby in the kitchen.

“Is her majesty happy with her bed chamber?” Libby asked and I almost laughed, that was until I remembered I had to spend the entire evening with her.

“Yeah, she’s moved it around and everything.” Libby looked even more furious so to distract her I told her the good news.

“Well you don’t have to worry about her tonight.”

“Why’s that? You put arsenic in her tea?” I smiled at the idea.

“No, nothing that drastic, but you will be happy to know you have a Hilary free evening.” Her eyes lit up and I could have even sworn I heard the baby say a hallelujah!

“No way! You’re the best...I love you ...I love you.” She was dancing me round the kitchen and I couldn’t help but grin even though my doomed fate was lingering upstairs. Just then Frank came in wanting to know what all the commotion was about.

“Oh baby, the greatest news.” His eyes lifted and he mirrored his wife’s smile at once again seeing her so happy.

“We’re on our own tonight honey!” As soon as she said it he let out a big “YES!” and give the air a victory arm pump out of excitement. Then like kids, they high fived each other. I would have loved to have joined in but at that point my dread doubled. I turned towards the window and the shiny sports car pulling up the drive confirmed my fears.

Now it was my time to introduce Draven to my boyfriend stealing cousin...

This was not going to go well.

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Chapter 36

Seducing Draven.

I wanted to rush out of the front door and run into Draven's arms like something out of a movie but I didn't want my insecurities to be on display. Draven would pick them up straight away and my mental barrier felt more like a ruin than a fortress. I was scared to what I might reveal. My thoughts were disrupted by a voice from above.

"Libby! Is there any reason the pipes make that noise, only I need a bath and..." Hilary was calling down when she heard the car. At that point I threw all caution to the wind and ran out of the front door. There I found Draven getting out of a sleek silver beast and looking as gorgeous as ever.

He wore dark jeans and a dark grey T-shirt but the most amazing addition to this ensemble was the black leather biker jacket that fitted his

every muscle, making his shoulders look mammoth and powerful. I couldn't help but stop and take a breath at the picture of the man before me. His hair was pushed back off his face and curled slightly around his neck giving me a brilliant view of his incredible black eyes. He had a bit of stubble giving him a roughness I adored and when he saw me his eyes ignited with a passionate fire.

I bit my lip but couldn't wait any longer. I ran straight for him and threw my arms up and around his neck taking him off guard. It was difficult given the height difference so he helped me by wrapping his arms around my waist and pulling me up to him. There I found eager lips and for a moment all my problems melted away in our kiss.

He didn't want to let me go and as far I was concerned he could have me. I leaned down to his ear and he shuddered at my breath on his neck. I inhaled deeply and could have drowned in the mix of Draven's scent and leather.

"Take me away with you." I whispered and that's when he pulled my body back so that he could see my face.

"Keira, are you alright?" He was concerned and I mentally scorned myself for making him worry. He set me down as gentle as a rose on a lover's bed and gazed intensely into my eyes as if searching out the answers from within. I closed my eyes and concentrated on guarding my thoughts of desolation as I had already started to feel Draven's presence in my mind. I felt him trying to distract me by running his fingertips down my back and up to my neck. I could almost hear him frown and when I opened my eyes I was proven right, thankfully that frown meant he hadn't accessed anything he had been hoping for.

"I'm fine, but I did miss you." These words made the frown soften and soon a smile replaced it.

"That's always good to know." I put my head down against his chest and held him around the waist giving him a much needed hug. He knew there was something wrong but I was just glad that he knew the right thing to do now

was to just hold me tightly and say the words that made my heart beat for him.

“I love you Keira!”

I could have stayed like this till the end of time but when I heard the front door open I knew our time was up.

“I hate to tell you this but we seem to have an audience.” He sounded amused and when I let out a sigh into the inside of his jacket he laughed, making his body faintly vibrate. I knew what I was going to be turning around to face before I broke away from Draven’s hold. There, in the doorway, was my cousin leaning casually against the frame looking at her nails trying to seem unimpressed with our embrace. I grabbed Draven’s hand and we both started walking towards her.

“Time to tame the Hell Cat!” Draven commented secretly while we were still out of earshot. This had been perfect timing as for once in front of my cousin I wasn’t faking my smile.

“Well, well, what do we have here then, where did she pick you up, at the tall, dark and handsome catalogue?” Ok, so there went my smile!

“Dra...Dominic this is my cousin Hilary...Hilary this is *my* boyfriend Dominic.” I couldn’t help the way I emphasised the word “*my*” hoping she got the message but to her that probably meant nothing but fair game.

“It’s nice to meet you Hilary.” Draven said politely and for once I was wishing for his Demon side to be seen. That should do the trick!

“Oh, it’s more than nice!” She replied in a seductive tone which sounded more like she was impersonating a man with a cold.

“Keira’s told me so much about you.” Yeah, like what a bitch you are! I wanted to add but had to swallow my insult.

“None of it true, I’m sure.” She laughed and waved her hand about in a pathetic attempt at flirting.

“Hey, is that your car?” She asked looking past me like I didn’t even exist.

“Yeah, she’s one of Keira’s favourites.” He answered and then gave me a wink, which I’m happy to say Hilary didn’t miss.

“Only one? Gosh if that was me I would favour them all, I’m sure.” Hate her, Hate her! I repeated over and over in my head and by the look from Draven, I think he heard.

“Well that one has special memories for us, it was the first time I drove Keira home...Do you remember?” He turned to me and I’m sure my eyes glistened at the memory. I would never forget that night if I lived to be two hundred years old.

“Well at least it was you driving or you might still be trying to get here...Kizzy Cat still drives like an old woman no doubt!” My hands formed fists by my side and when Draven actually laughed at her comment I shot him a severe glare.

“There’s nothing wrong with being careful!” I stated but Hilary just laughed at me.

“I would rather live life on the edge any day. The thrill of a full throttle speeding car and the excitement of danger is what gets my blood racing and...”

“I think my sister’s waiting to say hi, Dra...Umm Dominic.” I pulled at his arm before she could finish, making me sound like a complete, boring geek. Draven soon got the message and opened the door for me, unfortunately he had kept it open for Hilary instead of slamming it in her face like she deserved.

“Oh, what a gentleman you are!” She said while fluffing her hair at him making me roll my eyes at how shameful an act it all was. Draven’s only response was a nod but Hilary beamed at him like he was godly. If only she knew how true that was.

“Dominic, it’s nice to see you again.” Libby said like she was the mother figure in all this. Well, if that was true then Frank was the big brother because he came up to him and slapped him on the back like he was one of the guys.

“Dom, how ya doing man?” Draven looked touched by such warmth in his welcome and he shook his hand.

“I’m very well, thank you and I see you and your beautiful wife are both good.” Libby couldn’t keep the grin from her face and Frank beamed with pride at the sound of his wife being praised. Draven was truly gifted when it came to knowing exactly the right thing to say.

I grabbed my new hooded jacket from the coat stand and Hilary looked at me like she wanted to rip my head off.

“What, you’re going now and leaving me?” Oops I had forgotten about tonight.

“Oh sorry, I forgot that me and Draven have to go somewhere first but... I’m sure you could get a lift.” At this her eyebrows came forwards and her lips formed an even thinner line.

“I could have a car come and pick you up.” Draven suggested and her hope was suddenly re-ignited. Libby saw my face drop and nudged Frank.

“That’s alright Dom, I have to go into town later for Lib’s chocolate baby fix, so I can just bring her with me and drop her off.”

“Her! Who am I, the cat’s mother? I think I would prefer...”

“So all’s settled then, thanks Frank you’re the man!” I gave him a sisterly punch on the arm and pulled Draven back towards the door. I didn’t need to look at Hilary to know I was getting “I hate you” looks from behind.

“Good seeing you again Dominic” My sister said but it was drowned out by Hilary saying,

“Looking forward to seeing you later Dominic.” Draven heard the little

growl that escaped from the back of my throat. For once he was the one trying to keep up with me as I was close to running to the car. He opened my door for me first and I saw him wave back to the house where Hilary was still watching. He got in the car just in time to hear me mocking my cousin.

“Look forward to seeing you later Dominic!” I repeated in a squeaky voice. Draven burst out laughing which would normally have had me in stitches, but I was too far gone in my bad mood to find the humour. Instead I crossed my arms tightly over my chest and took deep angry breaths. Why now, why ever, why couldn’t the girl just leave me alone? It was clear neither of us liked one another, so why did she go out of her way to make my life a misery? I was so caught up in my own self-pity that I didn’t realise we were far from the house and heading out of town.

“Where are we going?”

“You said we had to go somewhere, so that’s where I’m taking you.”

“What, to a place called ‘Somewhere’?” I teased making him raise an eyebrow.

“Is that Keira humour I detect, but no, surely not...it couldn’t be. My girlfriend is far too distracted by the unwanted visit of an evil cousin to be making jokes.” I bit my lip to try and prevent the smile that was creeping across my mouth but in the end I failed and laughed anyway.

“Right that’s it! Who are you and what have you done with my girlfriend?”

“Very funny Draven!”

“Ah it must be you, the fake Keira would never call me by my last name, she always calls me Dominic.”

“What like my cousin?” As soon as I said it I regretted it.

“Ha! You’re jealous!” He said with triumph and I cringed.

“I’m not! Even though she was practically drooling over you!” Why was I just providing him with more proof that he was right?

“You know I find it adorable when you get all possessive over me, but maybe now I can be forgiven for the same sentiments over certain human boys that will remain nameless.” He was right. What lengths would I go to, to keeping Hilary’s grubby little hands off my Draven?

“Maybe,” I said sheepishly.

“So are you going to tell me where we’re going or not?” I asked changing the subject. He looked so damn sexy when he controlled the car the way he did. One hand on the wheel and the other changing through the gears as the machine demanded it. He wasn’t one for doing the speed limit and along these empty roads he moved as if him and the car were one, gliding along as though they owned the road and commanded every bend to their will.

“I think not!” He was smirking and a trade mark bad boy grin made my skin prick at the thought of being touched by those strong hands that gripped the steering wheel like he was in a formula one. I had to look out of the window to hide my blushes at the thought of having sex in this car...Ok, well maybe not *in* the car but maybe on it, after all it wasn’t the most spacious vehicle inside.

“What are you thinking about?” I think he must have caught my smile by my reflection in the window because now he was staring at me.

“Nothing.”

“Is that so, then why can’t you look at me and why are you biting your lip Keira?” Damn it, he was good!

“No reason.” I tried to sound convincing but given I was one hell of a bad liar I was fooling no one. He looked so bad, the way he leaned across to me with a look of seductive authority.

“Come here!” I did as I was told and leaned over to meet him in the

middle.

“We wouldn’t be having improper thoughts now, would we Keira?” I gulped and shook my head combining it with a feeble “Nn...no.” That’s when he gripped my leg with his free hand and worked it up to under my sweater dress.

“Really, lets change that then should we?” Oh God what this man did to me!

I wanted to scream pull over and take me now! But I couldn’t speak. I don’t know which he controlled better, the car or me. My insides were on fire and as his fingers were gripped just below my sex, he was also sending me crazy, waiting to be touched there. My head went back into the seat and I closed my eyes to moan.

“And how about now...any dirty thoughts?” His teasing me just added to the excitement and I only just managed to shake my head to keep the playfulness going. This made his fingers edge further up my inner thigh causing me to moan even louder.

“Umm, funny that, considering the reaction I’m receiving.” Unfortunately we were approaching another corner making him need his free hand to change gear.

“Take over for me.” At first I thought he was referring to the car but when he nodded down towards where his hand had been I looked back at him in shock. I couldn’t do that...Not in front of him!

“We’re not shy are we?” The corner had come and gone but he wouldn’t touch me there until I complied with his request.

“I can’t...I...”

“Of course you can, just like this.” He spoke so softly that it almost hypnotized me. He picked up my hand and placed it where his had been. Now with his hand on top of mine he started moving it to a rhythm that felt like a symphony. I was getting lost in the feeling of euphoria and every

combined movement from us both and the machine we sat in was sending me over the edge of ecstasy. I was now moved over the most sensitive part and thanks to all the suspense I wanted to erupt as soon as pressure was applied. I cried out as it was nearing and my body thrust upwards counteracting every move we made.

But then I realised it was no longer “we”, it was now only me. I was pleasuring myself and Draven was watching with purple eyes. I wanted to stop from shame but my body wouldn’t let me. I was too far gone and lost in a madness that felt so right, it was insane.

I heard him groan and when I sneaked a look he was clearly getting as much from watching this as I was from feeling it. His evidence was bulging out and trying to break free. I could barely understand how he was still driving as most of his attention was focused on me and my wandering hands. I licked my lips and heard another groan ripple from him. I continued to suck at my bottom lip as my pleasure was increasing and nearing its height. I felt it surge within me and with a few more precise movements of my fingers I was there.

I arched my back and let out a gasp so animated that I blocked out the sound of the engine’s roar. Draven growled as my reflexes were causing me to vibrate as the sensation of coming to my climax wasn’t quite over. My body gave out one last jerk and then the aftermath started to settle. I was breathing heavy and I covered my face with my forearm to hide the shame that had set in.

“That was the most incredibly erotic thing I have ever witnessed, you are so beautiful...Thank you.” I could feel my cheeks burning and I had lost the feeling in my bottom lip from being bitten to hell.

“Keira, look at me!” He reached across and pulled my arm away from my blushed red face.

“I’m so embarrassed! I can’t believe I did that in front of you.”

“Well, I like to think that I helped.”

“Helped... You were the cause! That was so sneaky!” He was having way too much fun with my disgraceful display of pleasure and couldn’t keep from grinning.

“What can I say, I’m a man that knows what he wants and a man that always gets his way!”

“Always?” I asked, as I knew that wasn’t true and wanted to pull him up on it.

“Ok, so most of the time.” I gave him a look of disbelief and he continued,

“I got you, didn’t I?”

“Yes and if I recall that didn’t exactly go smoothly.” I teased making him raise an eyebrow my way.

“The journey is half the fun, my dear, but the destination is worth the wait. More than anything I wanted to make you mine as soon as I first saw you in the clearing that day, but I knew I had to move slowly or I would have frightened you off and yours was one mind I didn’t want to control into loving me.” He looked like he was replaying the memory back to himself and his eyes were brimming with sentiment.

“I hate to remind you, but when we met in the club, you looked horrified that I was even in the VIP and you didn’t try to hide your disapproval at Sophia’s idea of me working up there.” He looked away for a moment so I couldn’t make out his expression. I didn’t know what that was about but it concerned me...was he regretful?

“My actions back then were, I thought, in your best interest...after all, I didn’t think the best place for the girl that was destined for me to love, was in a room full of my kind and I was right.” He looked hurt but it seemed to be aimed at himself and I couldn’t understand why? I knew I should have let the conversation go but I needed to know, I needed to reassure him that his feelings of self-loathing were unjust.

“But you weren’t right...without the VIP... I...we...we wouldn’t have got together.” Finally at this he smiled, but it was one of a different kind, not one out of humour.

“Every night you were working I would watch you, I would sometimes catch your eyes searching me out, but I never gave in. I was battling with myself on what was right for you but in the end it was my lack of protecting you that changed things.” His voice was so full of emotion that I wanted to comfort him, kiss him, tell him how I loved him throughout his coldness to me. He was telling me things that, at the time, I longed to hear but was kept in the dark in the cruellest way.

“You mean Layla don’t you?” At the sound of her name his eyes turned hard and flashed with an anger so deep it scared me.

“There you were, so close to me and still, I couldn’t prevent it, when I think she could have taken you from me forever, well then I knew I couldn’t bear to have you living in harm’s way, not because of me.”

“That’s when you decided to lie?” No matter how I tried, there was no getting away from the bitterness in my voice. When Draven had told me about his false engagement to Celina, one of his council members, I had wanted to die. I felt as though he had ripped my heart from me and he kept hold of it until I found out the truth. He only nodded to this question so I carried on.

“Then I was right, our relationship would have never happened if I hadn’t worked there.”

“Keira, do you really think I was going to let you get away from me that easily? I was biding my time. I was still trying to figure out who you really were and until then, I knew I wasn’t going to risk your life because I was too impatient to make you mine. I have waited for you for too many lifetimes to comprehend so I was not going to make any mistakes...well... that was the plan but as we both know, it didn’t really work out that way.”

“No? That surprises me, which part would you have changed, not our

first kiss I hope?" I said trying to bring his mind back to sweeter memories. Thankfully my efforts were rewarded with a warm smile.

"Actually, it was one of the moments I did regret." I looked hurt, so he quickly elaborated,

"Not the kiss, that was sensational and something I had yearned for every time I saw you. But I never planned our first kiss would be on a roof top, in the middle of a storm, with you fearing me and I forcing you to listen to me despite your fear. What a fool I was, to expect after what you were seeing in me to stop and understand reasons that were unbelievable to you. It just proves how little I knew about the minds of humans, but you did surprise me."

"In what way?"

"You came back to me. The next morning you woke believing that night was real?" His question was answered with one look.

"I was never so astounded as I was that day. You, standing there with all your mighty wrath, demanding to speak to me like the little tough beauty you are and when you recalled the night in detail, I was stunned that you weren't afraid of me, if anything you were there challenging me, if I could think it possible, I believe I fell in love with you all over again. You were never supposed to remember that night and that's when I knew I no longer had any influence over your mind. I had to resort to using other means of keeping you from me until I was sure I could keep you out of danger."

"It was painful." I whispered shamefully

"Oh believe me, it was more painful to watch and to know I was the cause, just made it double the agony. I had never felt so many newly discovered feelings in such a short space of time. First to find that you harboured feelings about me that mirrored my own and then to fear that those feelings would die due to my own actions... You know not what I suffered." I wanted to argue this, knowing what my own feelings had been but I couldn't, not with seeing the hurt of the past still shadowed on his face.

“In the end I came to realise that the only way to ensure your safety was to have you by my side, which worked to both advantages, and it also gave me the opportunity to make you mine... intimately.” At this word he seemed to let nicer memories seep through and his hurt expression was replaced with one of fulfilment.

“Well, it all worked out for the best, we’re together now and that’s all that matters...However we do still have one problem to get through.”

“Keira, I will not let anyone harm you...never again. Lucius will not get near you!” He gripped the steering wheel with anger and I heard the leather cry out under his hands.

“That’s not who I’m talking about,” I said and he raised an eyebrow as way of asking me who.

“We still have my cousin to deal with!” At this he let out a roaring laugh, creating the past tension to evaporate back to where it belonged...the past.

We drove on for a while longer until I finally recognised where we were heading to. But then we started to pass through the city towards its outskirts, giving me a nervous edge to everything my eyes took in. We passed business estates and a sports complex but when it seemed that we were continuing farther still, I finally had to ask.

“Draven, where are we going?” He didn’t answer me but thought a reassuring smile would service my curiosity. I gave up and continued to look out of my window but I could feel Draven’s gaze on me as I did so.

We continued to head even further away from civilisation and when we turned onto what looked like a service road, I was left even more confused. Draven slowed down as a heavy guarded barrier was coming up. The barrier was only the start as it was positioned in front of some heavy iron gates that looked electric. I jumped at the sound of Draven’s side window going down

and an armed guard came over to inspect us. I don't know why, but my palms started to feel clammy. I had no idea what we were doing here, but more than that, I didn't have any idea what those gates were guarding.

"Let's see your ID!" The man in the uniform said in a less than polite voice. Draven's hands tightened on the wheel and a serious growl was rippling up his throat. The guard put his hand on his sidearm and backed up a step as if ready to engage in a hostile.

"Draven." I said his name as a warning to calm down, but he shot me a deadly look of composed anger. His eyes burned purple and when his hand went to open the door, I thought I would witness murder. Thankfully my silent plea was answered in the form of another guard. He came running out of the office, calling the other guards name.

"Tony! Tony, don't man! Mr Draven sir, I'm so... so... sorry, he's new and doesn't know who you are." I couldn't see the men's faces as I was too low to the ground but I didn't need to see him to recognise the panic in his voice. Draven didn't take kindly to being told what to do and I could tell it took all his energy to cool his temper and remain in the car.

"Very well, this time I will let the matter pass, BUT I expect his manners to improve or he will soon find himself on the unemployment list, do I make myself clear?"

"Yes Sir. Mr Draven Sir." He nodded and walked back to the booth with Tony following like a naughty teenager. I could hear him asking who Draven was and with a tired tone he simply replied,

"He's your boss and owner of this place!" The guy cursed but I didn't quite catch all of it as Draven fired up the engine and revved the beast until it roared with perfect mix of engineering and raw power. The barrier went up and the gates opened allowing us access to God only knows what.

"Ok... what the Hell was that all about?" I was close to furious at how quickly Draven had flashed to killer in mere seconds. He wouldn't look at me, which didn't help.

“Foolish mortals!” At this, I nearly choked on my own tongue. I had never heard him refer to humans as mortals before and, for some reason, the way he said it just made it sound degrading, insulting and pathetic!

“Excuse me, but you do remember that I’m one of those mere mortals don’t you?” At this he finally looked at me. His face was a mixture of regret and disbelief.

“Yes, but you’re not foolish.” I crossed my arms and huffed.

“Who’s the greater fool, the man that rises to the foolish behaviour of others or the man that acts foolish when faced with difficult situations?” My little speech had hit home and he smiled with a beam of respect in his dark eyes.

“You are right... my reactions were just as foolish. You are a wise woman my girl.”

“Don’t you mean ‘My mortal’,” I asked giving in to his smiles and joining him.

“Umm...I guess, for the time being anyway.” I let my jaw drop as we continued along the road towards a row of vast warehouses.

What did he mean by *that* and more importantly...

What the *hell* did he have planned for me?

Chapter 37

Draven's District.

I was about to ask and he knew it, that's why he spoke first.

"We're here." I knew from the sound of his voice that he wasn't going to tell me what he meant by me only being 'mortal' for now. So my only reaction consisted of a huff and crossing my arms across my chest once again, which caused Draven to find amusement and a soft laugh escaped from him.

We were approaching one of the largest warehouses on the east side and apart from a few people driving heavy plant vehicles it was pretty much deserted. There were huge yellow cranes and a lot of building equipment around but no work was going on.

The place would have just seemed quite regular if there had been busy bodies going on about their daily routines but with it being so isolated it gave it an eeriness that caused my skin to prick with goosebumps. I think Draven could sense my doubt because he leaned across to me and gave my shoulder a light squeeze. It was only then that I realised he had stopped the car opposite a small access door to one of the warehouses situated further back than the rest and it looked nestled away in between two of the larger buildings.

"Why are we here?" I asked without looking at him.

"I have some business to attend to here, but we shouldn't be too long." At this he opened his door and I was about to get out before I asked,

"Do you want me to stay in the car?" He answered me by exiting the car faster than my eyes could see and I jumped when my side door was opened. A hand reached in for me to take and I smiled at his old fashioned manners.

"Of course not, why would I want that?" He cocked his questioning look to the side as I joined him. He closed my door behind me without touching it and I wondered if I would ever get used to witnessing his powers?

"Do you have a lot of business in construction?" I asked, trying to change the subject and I didn't know whether the widespread grin was down to my efforts or the question I had asked.

“A few, yes, but don’t let its outer appearance fool you, it’s not what it seems.”

“It never is with you,” I commented as I walked towards the door, but he stopped me and pulled me back to him. He let go of my arm and folded his huge arms across his vast chest. My heart skipped a beat at the sight.

“Care to elaborate?”

“Well, Afterlife doesn’t look like a nightclub from the outside, more like a centuries old mansion.”

“So you were only referring to my buildings, not me personally?” I shifted the weight from one foot to another and stared at my boots.

“Keira...” He dragged out my name like I was a naughty child.

“Well come on! When we first met you weren’t exactly nice to me!” At that he softened and unfolded his arms.

“And yet you still saw the good in me, I’m a lucky man indeed.” At that I blushed and I heard him groan. I looked up to see his eyes glowing purple and a look of intense desire transform his features. He grabbed me and held me against him letting me feel his need for myself...a need that was growing very hard. I gulped as it pressed into me and he ran his chin over the top of my head.

“Do you know what you do to me when you blush like that?”

“I think I have an idea,” I said not being able to keep the teasing out of my voice. His hands found my back and with one hand resting on the small curve before my cheeks, the other started to trace my spine with his fingertips. I had to close my eyes as even more heat invaded my skin. He leaned his head towards my neck and started to brush the skin there lightly with his lips. That combined with what his fingers were doing was pushing me quietly over the edge.

“It makes me want to...”I felt him bite his own lip before continuing, as

though he was trying to control himself or fight an urge.

“To?” I asked in a whisper, as though to prompt him further.

“To bite you!” I thought he would sink his teeth into me, but instead he licked and sucked my neck making my legs turn to jam.

“I think I should conduct my business another time.” He started to pull me back towards the car, but I pulled back and broke from his hold laughing.

“No you can’t do that, I’m not letting you come all this way to then just leave because of me.” He gave me a bad boy grin and dipped his head to see me better.

“Are you telling me what to do Keira?” He was teasing me and I took a step back as he looked ready to pounce. Every step I took back he took two more towards me.

“Cause you have seen how I react to being told what to do!” He was clearly loving every minute of this because his eyes were turning a brighter shade of purple ringed with a distinct darker violet edge.

“I think you will live, you’re a big boy.” He looked down and replied.

“And getting bigger so it seems,” he raised his head and gave me a wink making me feel all gooey like a teenager again. We both laughed and he reached me with one last step and kissed my forehead.

“Umm, I think I could get used to being bossed around.” I looked up at him with raised brows. I knew that was never going happen, Draven was not a man to be spoken down to, that was for sure.

“Well,... as long as it’s by you that is.” He added. I giggled and reached up on my tiptoes to kiss him, thankfully he met me half way otherwise I don’t think I would have quite made it. I most definitely looked even shorter around Draven with him being over a foot taller than me.

After some intense kissing, he finally let me go and sighed at I know not

what.

“Fine, I’m convinced but later you’re all mine and then you can boss me about to your heart’s content...I’m quite looking forward to being under your command.” I rolled my eyes but couldn’t hide my smirk at the idea.

“Come on,” I said but he grabbed my gloved wrist to keep me from leaving his side.

“Wait!” He pulled me back so I was facing him and he rested both his hands on my shoulders.

“I need you to do something for me.” He ran his fingers up my neck and round to the hood on my jacket. I was about to ask him what he was doing but then he raised the large black hood over my head and pulled it down to cover half of my face. I think he caught the hurt look in my eyes before he covered them.

“Why, are you ashamed of me or something?” I knew as soon as I had said it that I shouldn’t have but I couldn’t help it. At that he whipped it back down and anger flashed in his eyes.

“Why would you say that? Why would even think it?”

“Then why?” I was trying to mask my guilt with anger, which I knew was foolish.

“Look, I would gladly want to relish in how proud I am to have you by my side and show what a rare beauty you are, but it would be far too dangerous. Through those doors hold those that are not as loyal to me as the people you know in Afterlife.”

“Then why even bring me here?” I couldn’t understand, if it was so dangerous, why he didn’t he want me to wait in the car or bring me to this building in the first place.

“I wasn’t ever intending on it but when I arrived at your house I...I had a change of heart.” He didn’t want to be telling me this and I knew why.

“So when you turned up, it was to tell me you were going to be late... wasn't it?” He rubbed the back of his neck with one hand in frustration.

“Yes, but when you ran into my arms and asked me to take you away, I wouldn't have left you for all the world.” I bit my lip and swallowed my attitude.

“I'm sorry,” I said as I reached out to his hand. He looked up at me with shock on his face.

“Why?”

“Because I didn't realise and because I shouldn't have thought you were ashamed of me.” At this he just nodded.

“Please.” He motioned to put my hood back up and I let him, knowing now the reasons. He was protecting me and didn't want anyone knowing my identity. As always he was trying to keep me safe and I was being stubborn.

“You know, I didn't think it possible.”

“What?” I asked looking up but only seeing his chest thanks to my low hood.

“That you could still look cute even when your face is covered.” I'm not sure if he could see me smile but he reacted when I poked him in the ribs, not that he could feel much thanks to him being made of solid muscle.

“In that case I will wear it up all the time.” I felt him squeeze my sides and then kiss my head before saying,

“Don't you dare.” I laughed and then felt him taking me by the elbow to lead me towards the door.

“Are you ready?” I don't know why but there was something in his voice that put me on edge and I found myself nervous enough to want to start scratching my scars. Of course I was already biting my lip but it didn't seem enough somehow.

“You will be fine, but stay close to me, ok?” He had obviously heard my worries but by saying this last part, he only ended up adding to my fears.

“And one last thing, try very hard to keep up your mental walls, there are things in here that I do not wish for you to...to truly see.” A shiver crept up my spine and seemed to stay with me at the base of my neck. I was very close to running back to the car and finding my safety within its metal body but I wanted Draven to think I was strong and fearless, not the frightened little girl I felt like. So he engulfed my hand with his own and led me to the door.

I couldn't help but jump at the sound of his other hand banging a fist against the metal door. I couldn't see very much but I was sure I felt him looking down at me and while we waited he leaned down and whispered,

“You will be fine,” in the softest voice. Great! Here I was trying to appear brave and I was acting jumpy at the first hurdle. There was a gargled grunt from behind the door and a bang back.

“Piss off!” A deep grouse came from behind the banging.

“Nice welcome!” I added and Draven growled and proceeded to pound his fist against the door causing a dent.

“Patefacio pro vestri vinco!” (Means “Open for your master!” in Latin)

“Quod letalis?” (Means “And the mortal?”) The voice sounded less angry now but still wary, so I wondered what they were talking about.

“Letalis est mei!” (Means “The mortal is mine”) At this, the sound of metal scraping against metal could be heard and the door vibrated before opening. I couldn't help but hold my breath as the crack opening became wider and the beast from behind came into view.

My held breath was quickly followed by a gasp when I was soon faced with a massive Samoan that looked as though he weighed at least 400lbs. He had a huge gut that meant it would have made it impossible for him to see his feet let alone other important parts of his anatomy.

He stood close to seven foot tall and would have made even Ragnar look small. I started my gaze at the bottom where I was surprised to see him wearing Jesus sandals and three quarter length, light weight khaki trousers. My eyes followed up and found him wearing a black vest that was enough material to be a bedspread.

When I lifted my head enough to see his face my eyes looked so far back that my hood fell from my head. Mine weren't the only eyes to display shock. His skin was a honey brown colour but now thanks to extensive tribal tattoos that covered half of his face it was closer to black on one side. The tattoos were one continuation from one that started on his shoulder and chest that curled up and attacked his face. It reminded me of waves that were made up of different intercut patterns that were beautiful Samoan artwork in their own right. His eyes were the same honey colour that matched his skin tone and they glowed amber when they met my own.

“Lucifer's blood, Electus unus!” (Means “The chosen one” in Latin) He stared at me like I was some freak that sported two heads and cat's eyes! As soon as he made the mistake of speaking, Draven let go of me and grabbed the man's neck at record speed. He pinned him to the wall and soon the man's face turned a deep shade of scarlet. The swirls on his face started to move like cogs in a machine and I thought I was seeing things.

They also looked like they were writhing around in pain and they continued up into his shaved head and hair that he wore in a plaited Mohawk. I had stepped back and covered my mouth with my hands in shock. Draven was furious and his purple veins rippled through his neck as though they were trying to burst through the skin.

I couldn't see the rest of his body as he still had on his leather jacket but I would bet good money that it would be the same everywhere else. A gurgling sound came from the man's throat like he was trying to speak. At this Draven just tightened his hold and cut off any sound.

“You will not repeat those words so long as you remain in this life and in exchange I will LET you remain in this life, with your head attached. Do I make myself clear Ira?” Draven allowed him enough to nod and then released

him, forcing him to carry his own body weight once again. His legs crumpled underneath him and he collapsed to the floor coughing and gasping for air to fill his lungs. Even though he had been choking moments earlier, he still managed to speak.

“Forgive my insolence Master, it shall not happen again.” He bowed his head and I could see the tattoo move down from his head and wriggle nervously down his spine, which had transformed from cogs into an inky snake cowering out of sight.

Draven came back to me and without dropping his harsh expression he ran the back of his hand down the side of my face before raising my hood to conceal it once again. He then took my hand back in his vice grip and turned his head towards Ira the Samoan one last time.

“See that it doesn’t or you will be seeing Lucifer once again and sooner than you may think!” His voice was like ice, cold and unforgiving, which was like hearing a different Draven altogether. Here he wasn’t my Draven, soft and gentle. NO, here he was the Master, here he was the one in control....here, he was a God!

I could feel the heat coming from his touch as he controlled my movements through the slightest turn of my hand. He was leading me through a low lit corridor which mostly offered a view of the rustic wooden floor that looked like it had seen better days, centuries ago. Part of me wanted to pull back and tell him that I didn’t want to go any further but when he tightened his grip around my hand I knew it was his way of telling me that I had nothing to fear. I was so torn between my doubts and the mental wave of reassurance that Draven was trying to inject into my mind, which left me feeling warm and tingling inside.

I knew we were nearing our destination when the hum of a deep base line was beating through the next door and the vibrations found the soles of my feet. Draven opened the door and I jumped at the sound of metal grating against the ancient woodwork. The music and smell hit me all at once as it flooded the hallway, swirling up with the stench of stale alcohol combined with fresh sweat from a mass of dancing bodies.

The heavy rock music drowned out any other sound, including that of my pounding heart. I was very aware that Draven was trying to get me to go into this room but I held myself firm and rooted to the spot. I didn't want to face this place and although I couldn't see, I could feel! That was enough for me to be terrified, because not one pair of feet that I could now see belonged to a human, at least not until I looked down at my own.

“Come with me Keira and trust me.” Draven had leaned down to whisper and his words weren't the only comfort as his breath sent a security that seemed to cling to my skin and stay with me like an invisible force.

He left my hand for a second and placed it on the top of my head which he let slide down to the back and then rest on my neck, as he whispered,

“Good girl” into my ear. So I let myself be led through a crowd which, if they could, would have sucked the essence right out of me and fed from my ever growing fear. It was never really explained why I was different from other humans, why they couldn't feed from my emotions or why they couldn't access my mind. Not that I was complaining but I didn't quite buy this whole “Chosen One” business that everyone seemed to preach.

As I watched the feet part, like Moses was coming in with his girlfriend in tow, I felt it wasn't only my own mental barrier that was keeping me from looking up and seeing these people for what they really were. Draven remained a constant presence in my mind keeping up his own walls of protection. I decided to tap into the feeling there and when I did I was amazed that I could for the first time detect some of Draven's thoughts. Of course, as soon as I did, I regretted it, as all I could feel was this overwhelming need of protection....But protection from what? Why bring me here if he was so scared that something bad could happen to me? What was he not telling me?

It was amazing that even though so many bodies were crammed into one space they still found the room to let us pass without coming too near. I was so tempted to look up at Draven and see what it was he was doing to make this happen but knowing him I can imagine it only took one stern look and that was enough. I could hear some people mutter things as they backed away and some even bent over slightly because I could see as their knees suddenly

come into view.

One woman even threw herself to the ground and starting bowing like she was praying to mecca. Of course in her low strappy top this didn't leave much to the imagination as her breasts kept protruding from the material every time she doubled over. I found it fascinating as to why she would behave like this at just the sight of him. I would have to ask Draven when I had chance. It was almost like she remembered him from another time...one lost to a far away history where this amount of respect was not only expected, but was demanded.

The place was bigger than I thought it was, as it was taking us a while to get through and it certainly wasn't down to the crowd. I turned back behind me just as a new song was being played and the death metal music that filled the air made the bodies join back up together after we had passed and all the feet were now jumping and moving at such speeds it was hard to tell where one pair started and the others ended.

I could tell we were getting closer to the stage area as the music was pounding in my ears making them close to bleeding it was that loud. Luckily Draven changed directions and soon I was able to hear more than screaming words in another language. However, whether the language was human or not was another question because it sounded more Demonic than anything else.

I had a feeling that this strange expedition was coming to an end as Draven's feelings were easing up on his worries and his grip on my hand had now loosened. I saw feet approach us and felt Draven's hand leave mine completely and take a new position from behind to rest on the small of my back.

"Wait!" I let out a small gasp when I didn't actually hear the words being spoken but heard them being commanded in my head. I automatically did as I was told, because in a place like this, I wouldn't be as stupid as to be my usual stubborn self. No, for once I knew what was good for me and here I welcomed Draven's power.

To be perfectly honest with myself, it was in fact turning me on no end.

His demanding and possessive behaviour towards me was sending an uncontrollable need that was causing a pool in between my inner thighs. What was it with this man and the insatiable need he created in me, even at times like this when I should be more concerned about making it out of this Demon pit with my sanity intact?

How much more could I take of the abnormal before I finally hit my limit and was pushed too far over the edge to ever make my way back? The truth of the matter was I was no longer counting myself as part of the 'normal' world that others lived in and the fact that I was more than fine with it all was more than disconcerting.

"Is everything ready?" Draven's serious voice asked someone that had stopped in front of us and from the wide, thick biker boots I was seeing I could tell it was a male.

"My lord." I saw the man's feet move back as he offered more of his body on view and I knew this action was caused from him bowing in respect as most of the others had done.

"Yes, Yes." Draven said impatiently and the man quickly straightened and carried on answering his 'Master'.

"Your usual retreat is ready and Leivic is waiting as you wished." The man's voice didn't sound a confident one and the name Leivic sounded more like lev...le...ich as he began to stutter in his nervousness. I couldn't help but feel sorry for him as it was how I usually felt around my History lecturer Reed.

"Good!" Draven's one word compelled the man to bend once more in bowing before walking away backwards. He was also muttering something in a different language but I can imagine it was something in Draven's favour.

"Come, my Keira." He said sternly but in a lighter tone than he had bestowed upon everyone else since being here. I was once again being led forward but this time with him by my side instead of being pulled along like some lost little girl just been found by an official taking me home.

Umm...Home... that seemed like a million miles away and an age ago!
Suddenly I found myself with an overwhelming feeling of homesickness and
a need to see English soil once more, but no, instead of that I was here....

In a Demon's secret club!

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Chapter 38

History and Harems

We didn't have to go much farther but I knew I would have to pull my hood back to tackle the steps in front of me otherwise I would find myself finding the floor on a more intimate level. I was just about to move it back when one arm wound round my waist like a steel band and I felt myself being raised up. Draven was lifting me up the few steps as though I weighed no more than a kitten. I was about to start protesting at being carried at his side like a small child and say that enough was enough but in the end I didn't need to. I heard the whoosh of material being moved back and with two more steps I felt Draven stop next to me.

“Dom my friend, how long as it been?” A laidback and gentle voice

spoke, taking the tense fear from my situation. Before Draven answered him he came to stand in front of me and raised his hands to lower my hood back. I looked warily up at him and saw that the short distance through the club had taken its toll on his features.

He looked tired and tense with worry. Little lines had formed around his eyes that matched the ones on his forehead from where he was still frowning. I knew it wasn't directed at me because as soon as I smiled up at him he let his eyes turn back from their angry purple to their softer black. The lines disappeared and he even let himself smile before kissing my forehead. I loved the sight of Draven's eyes getting lost in my own and it took his friend to clear his throat to draw his attention back to *his* situation.

"Leivic!" Draven said his name as though he was one of his dearest friends and combined with the embrace, I suspected that here stood one of Draven's most valued companions. The two men were about the same height but Leivic was of a slightly slimmer build. Both men were, of course, handsome but where Draven's features were untouched by years of scars, Leivic's wasn't.

I couldn't help the tactless gasp that escaped my lips and both men turned around to look at me. I wished that I hadn't done it but the shock of seeing such a handsome face butchered by whatever weapon had nearly split the man in two had me displaying my shock freely. The scar started at the top right side of his head and slashed across his face in a diagonal that left him with a line about half an inch thick of dead tissue, that looked whiter than white against his tanned skin. It missed his silver blue eyes and passed through his nose making it seem to bend further to one side. It cut through half of his lip that pulled it further down to the left and as I followed it I noticed it went from his face and down his neck no doubt finishing on his shoulder. When I met his eyes again I was left feeling ashamed of myself.

"And this must be the young flower that has captured my friend's stone heart and turned it into molten lava. I can see why Dom, she holds a rare beauty only equalled to the Gods, you are a lucky man, my friend." I must have blushed roses at this statement because both men were laughing heartily

when they saw my reaction. I didn't know what to do at that moment so I recalled my mother's words, "*When meeting new people always smile dear, hold out your hand and make eye contact,*" which is precisely what I did.

"I'm pleased to meet you Leivic." I said, having to clear my throat first. He took my hand as though it was made of fine china and lifted it to his scarred lips to kiss. Once seeing his kind eyes it was hard to see his handsome features that were damaged by his mighty scar. There was nothing but benevolence in his manner and his voice filled me with an ease.

"The pleasure is all mine, I can assure you, I haven't seen my friend this happy since our battling days." The thought gave me shivers. 'Draven the warrior' fit far too well for me not to get images flashing through my head of him fearlessly cutting through his victims as though nothing could stand in his way, a knife through butter came to mind!

"You honour us with your presence." He bowed to me and turned back to Draven who looked full of pride at showing me to his beloved friend.

"Has she arrived?" Draven asked but Leivic just shook his head and laid a hand on his friend's shoulder.

"Have no fear, she will, but while you wait you must relax. Come, everything has been prepared for you." It was the first time I started to take in my surroundings and noticed that this part of the club was private. Only a few people were back here and the only thing separating the rest of the club from this room was a wall of crimson curtains. They were thick but at the same time could be seen through. Like some magic window that kept distorting and rippling like water but still allowing us to see out into the crowd.

I suspected that we could see out but they couldn't see in. The people in this room were what consisted of the VIP and their servants. The raised space was lined with square booths that held large floor cushions which made up sunset coloured beds. Deep reds, vibrant pinks, golden yellows and burnt oranges filled the room with an eastern feel. Smoke coming from hookah pipes clung to the air and mixed with oil lamps smelling of different spices floated to my nostrils.

Some of the booths had couples doing more than talking and I shamefully looked away at the naked body parts. Others were getting their entertainment from dancing beauties in long flowing skirts and jewelled tops that barely covered their breasts.

Although while getting through the crowd the music had been deafening here, just behind the curtained wall, it was only a mild humming. I was almost wishing for it to be just as loud once again because then the sounds of pleasure filled moans wouldn't have been making me turn scarlet. I turned away from the sound but not quick enough to avoid seeing the four naked bodies entwined together, looking as though they were filmed for a porn channel.

I heard Draven let out a guttural laugh and as I glanced up at him I noted the amused look on his face, no doubt due to my uncomfortable reactions to this strange place. I was starting to understand that the world of the supernatural was even more sex driven than the human one, if that was possible!

“Come!” Draven's voice was a husky command in my ear, making the sexual tension between us close to snapping apart, whiplashing at my senses until his lips claimed mine. I thought this room would have me shying away from such feelings but the tingling in between my legs had me facing the facts.

No matter where we were or what we were doing, one command in that sexy voice of his was all it took. He curled his fingers around the top of my arm and led me to our own private, cloaked booth. The square of vibrant colour was bigger than the rest and seemed more secure from prying eyes that were to be invading our every move. Sex entwined bodies stopped momentarily as we walked past and one pair of eyes even peered over the nipple they were currently pleasuring.

Instead of moans of satisfaction there were now murmurs of shock and disbelief. I suddenly felt more exposed than these naked people, as though I was walking myself through a dream or a nightmare...it was so surreal.

“Ignore them.” I looked up to find that Draven’s eyes were intently worried on my face and before I could utter a word he swung me around so that I was hidden by his body. He then walked me backwards with a carefully placed hand steadying me at the small of my back. Taking one last step was all it took to make me fall backwards onto the bed of pillows. He grabbed my hand before I landed to lower me down gently and then turned back to speak to his friend.

“Give us a moment alone.” His friend smiled at him and then cocked his head round Draven’s large frame to give me a wink before departing. I couldn’t help smiling at the expression on Leivic’s face, like a mischievous little boy that knew his friend wanted to be naughty!

“Find something amusing?” Draven’s voice brought me out of my daft grin that I was sporting.

“I like your friend.” At this he raised one eyebrow and gave me a quizzical stare.

“What?” I said in defence but this made him growl and I let out a little yelp as he grabbed me under my knees and pulled me under his body.

“Tough shit... you’re *mine!*” At this his lips finally claimed mine and the curtained material floated around us, hiding away our heated bodies that were being overwhelmed with the sexual electricity we were producing.

I wanted to tell him no, wait, slowdown...anything to make him stop so that I could clear my head but the other part of me, my lust, wasn’t agreeing with me. Don’t get me wrong, it’s not like I didn’t want Draven doing this to me but here, surrounded by a room full of horny demons and angels all getting their kicks by watching us!

I think he could tell what I was thinking because he seemed to be doing all the work. One hand was holding most of his weight above me, while the other was exploring my upper body and quickly unfastening my jacket to make exploring easier. He then abruptly stopped kissing my lips to look at me. I opened my eyes at the movement and found him frowning.

“Keira?” He said my name as to prompt me into telling him what was wrong but even now, that frown of his sent butterflies cascading to my stomach. Like when you were a child and you had done something naughty in class and been sent to the headmaster’s office about it. It’s the feeling when you’re stood outside his door waiting to be reprimanded. It was like that when Draven looked at me the way he was doing now. Would I ever get used to the masterly figure as my equal? I surely hoped so.

“It’s just...” Was all I could manage in my shyest voice. This made his frown crumble and a soft smile replace it. He then let his body relax to the side of me and I wondered if his arm ached at all from holding all his weight on it for so long? It sure didn’t seem like it. He ran soft fingers across my cheek and smiled at me.

“Keira, there is no need to be embarrassed. I wouldn’t allow anyone to see us. I would never share you with anyone which includes seeing you like this. Hell if I could get away with hiding you away forever, for my eyes only, I would but I fear you would think it a little barbaric.” I laughed.

“A little?” I mocked making him just shrug.

“If I had found you in a different time I might have been able to get away with it, but now...in these modern times, I doubt harems would be acceptable.” I could tell he was teasing me but I still reacted the way he wanted me to. I let out a screech of disbelief and punched him on the arm that probably felt like I was gently lifting lint from his sleeve. He laughed and I tried to keep the anger on my face.

“Harem is it! Well, you’re welcome to it, just don’t expect me to be there lined up with the other desperate mistresses waiting for a turn at a royal roll in the sack!” I was fuming after I had finished my little speech and Draven knew why!

“Desperate?” He said raising an eyebrow with an amused look in his deep eyes. This time I was the one to just shrug my shoulders not wanting to give him more fuel to play with.

“Royal roll in the...Sack was it?” He was clearly enjoying himself and I rolled my eyes and moved to get up, trying to put some distance between us and his wandering hands, that he hadn’t removed from my body this entire conversation.

I know I was acting a bit spoilt but I couldn’t help the green eyed monster that was seeping its way into my brain’s functions. I couldn’t get the pictures of beautiful women all lay around waiting to pleasure Draven. Aurora being head of the pack!

I shifted and tried to sit up but Draven was quick and much stronger than I. His arm flashed across my body and forced me back down with little effort. He then moved his body on top of me and pinned my arms above my head.

“And where do you think you’re going little one?” He was still smiling and I was still showing my anger despite what being pinned down by the worlds sexiest man was doing to my nether regions. I started to wriggle and when his manhood pressed closer to me I stopped, realising what my movements where causing. My frown was quickly replaced with surprise and a bitten lip. He took note of what my teeth were doing to my lips and his eyes flashed purple with hunger.

“That looks tasty... here let me help you with that,” and then he dived into my lips so quickly his words died on my skin. He took my bottom lip into his mouth and sucked it up before running his teeth over the inside, making them quiver and turn hypersensitive.

He released my wrists but began desperately searching out the skin underneath my sweater dress. He growled when unconsciously my hips raised and met his groin in eager response. His reaction led him to lay more of his weight upon me and he forced his tongue into my mouth to claim more of me. His kiss kept getting deeper until my chest heaved and I was soon panting for air. He felt my body arching and instantly calmed his responses. That was the first time I had seen Draven lose his control if only for one second and it had me wondering what sex would be like if he ever did lose complete control?

I could see his jaw tensing and his eyes closed like he was fighting the demon inside of him. His hands were shaking over my body and then they tensed into tight fists taking handfuls of my clothes into them. He looked like he was close to losing his inner battle and would soon rip them to shreds. Part of me wished he would!

“Draven,” I asked nervously and my voice seemed to have a soothing effect as he released my clothes and began to breathe again unlike before when he had been holding his breath for the longest time. He opened his eyes which were now back to their endless, black pools of emotion. He could see that once again I was back to biting my lip and his lips curved into a devilish grin.

“I wouldn’t do that again if I were you, or I might not be able to control myself next time.” I let my lip slip from my grip before he leaned down to kiss me again, this time gently as though he might break me.

“I take it I am forgiven?” He asked into my skin as he had moved to kissing me on my neck. When I started to shake my head he pulled away from me making me instantly feel cold without his touch.

“No? Well did I mention that in this Harem you would be the only one there to...how did you put it...roll in my royal sack?” Now he was mocking me.

“Did you ever have a Harem?” I asked but I couldn’t help the emotional flush that flooded my cheeks. I wasn’t sure I even wanted to know, well that’s not entirely true, I did want to know but only if it was the answer that I wanted.

It wasn’t.

“Long ago, yes.” He waited for my reaction and smiled an evil bad boy grin when he got it. I tried to look away but he hooked a finger under my chin to force me to look back at him. He had one eyebrow raised and from the looks of things he was enjoying every minute of my mental torture.

“You know, the jealousy you display towards me is intoxicating. It drives me crazy to know that your possessive nature towards me grants me my own. It gives me great comfort to know I do not stand alone in feeling like you belong to me and I to you.” This statement couldn’t help but make me smile, which in turn spread to his lips also.

“I have to admit, I do enjoy watching your reaction to jealousy.” He said as he casually leaned his weight on one bent arm as the other was preoccupied with running up and down my side. I decided to play him at his own game, although the saying ‘playing with fire’ came to mind, after all his temper was far worse than my own. It still didn’t stop me though.

“So that night seeing me kissing Jac...” I didn’t get any farther with that memory as he covered my mouth with one strong hand quicker than my eyes could register.

“DO NOT REMIND ME.” He growled at me and his purple eyes flashed their discomfort at the subject. I knew I had gone too far. He eased his hold and lowered his hand.

“It is not wise to let my mind return to that...THAT cruel night.” He truly looked in pain, which shocked me. I mean, I remember the pain I had felt when seeing Celina kissing him, back when he made me believe she was his fiancée to try and push me away. Did he feel the same that night when Jack had kissed me? It would seem so.

“Not so funny when you’re on the receiving end, is it?” I asked smugly and this actually made him look sorry.

“Touché. You are right, I should not tease you on such matters, even if I do enjoy your reactions.” He ran the back of his hand down my face before he continued,

“But you have to understand Keira, back then I did not love. I didn’t give into it because it never fit. I always knew that one day I would find you and to fall in love with anyone but you was something I wasn’t capable of doing. But that doesn’t mean I never gave into the pleasures of the world and

I have lived more years where a Harlem was not only acceptable but it was expected of a...a man in my position.” I think it was the first time I was seeing Draven uncomfortable talking about his past. I was about to tell him that he didn’t have to explain but he held up a hand to stop me.

“No, I want to tell you, to explain who I was then and who I am now... because of you. Back then I was hard and cold, like a living statue that was here to represent Heaven and Hell combined. I have lived more years to count but only now does it feel like I am alive. Like a rebirth. I never knew myself before I met you, I just thought I was the man that I had to be because of my responsibilities to a race I didn’t respect. But after meeting you, I not only changed my view on love but on the truth of what I have really been helping to protect.”

“I started to see things I never knew existed, a compassion humans can display freely to one another. Like Frank and the brotherly way he treats you, knowing you can depend on him for anything, or the love and worry on your sister’s face that night when I brought you home in my arms. It started to fascinate me from my very first meeting with you. Almost like you were honoured with the power of heaven to wake me from my ignorance with the very first time I touched you.”

I was close to tears by the time he had finished expressing his feelings and I was taken back by everything that I had learned. Did I really do all that for him? Was I really the one who had changed him for the better? It was a nice thought, thinking I brought out the humanity in Draven that had never surfaced until now. Not to mention him saying he had never been in love before, now that was BIG!

I raised my fingers to his face and followed the strong line of his jaw. I didn’t know what to say but when he met my gaze my eyes must have said it all. I loved him and I would love him until every fibre in my body was gone and had turned to dust, but even when my bones had joined the earth, the memory of our love would live on beyond the ages.

All of this I let out freely for him to find and when he grasped my fingers in his hand to hold them to his lips, I knew that he had heard me. He

kissed my hand like it was the most precious gift he owned.

“It is,” he said startling me. I quickly put back up all my mental guards so as not to allow him too deeply into my mind. I still had secrets to keep but when I thought about them, I couldn’t fully understand why? It was like someone had planted an automatic response to hide things. Images of something Draven might recognise or a voice he would sense controlling me. What was I doing? I needed to tell Draven everything, I needed to let him in...I...I need...What was wrong with me?

Why couldn’t I.... I raised my hands to my head as to try and relieve the pressure pounding against my skull. Something was wrong, I knew that now. All this time...but how? It was like being here amplified it somehow, something was here that was doing something to me.

“Keira! What’s wrong?” I could hear the panic in Draven’s voice but it was being muffled by another. It was like trying to watch TV and talk to someone on the phone at the same time. I kept picking up bits of one and some of the other.

“*Tell him you’re fine,*” a voice hummed in my head. I shook myself as though that would somehow help. Then the next thing I knew I was opening my mouth and I heard myself saying,

“Everything is fine, I only have a slight headache.” It was the strangest feeling, like an outer body experience.

“*Good girl, now forget my voice and don’t let him into your mind again.*” The voice sounded frustrated, like he had lost some control and didn’t understand why. I tried to focus on not losing it but it was quickly fading away into a far memory that only recognition triggers. Like smell or a sound that pulls you back into the information of your past. I didn’t fully understand what had just happened but I knew one thing for sure...I was scared.

Draven looked happy with my answer and I started to lose control over what it was I desperately needed to tell him. It was like the last ten minutes

were a dream, at the time you know what is happening, it's so real you can touch, taste and feel even the pain but after you wake, it slips away like the tide. Why can't I remember?

“Are you sure you're alright? You seem... distant” He was right, I felt so far away, it felt as though I would never make it back home. I knew one thing for absolute, something today had changed. I knew something different....what exactly I couldn't say but it was there, like a locked room in my mind and only I could find a way in, now of course all I needed was to find the key!

“Yes I'm fine, sorry I was just thinking about stuff.” I said after feeling his touch on my cheek.

“Anything I can help with?” If only, I thought pointlessly to myself. For one thing I didn't even know what it was that I needed help with.

“Well maybe a kiss would help.”

“Maybe...? We'll just see about that 'maybe'.” He pulled me into his arms and took my breath away into his mouth. It was dreamingly delightful.

It was only when a cough outside the fabric barrier caught our attention and I started to pull away. Draven however wouldn't allow that for long and pulled me back so that I was level with his face.

“I will not be dictated to!” He said urgently as though a man starved of hunger making him search out my lips like food.

“شما صبر کنید تا من آماده ام” (Means “You will wait until I am ready” In Persian) He spoke out angrily towards the vibrant curtain that concealed both us and the “Intruder” before claiming me once more. I don't know how long his kiss lasted but I never wanted it to end. I never did. However he finished by holding my face in both hands and then tilted it down so that his final kiss ended on my forehead.

“Inebriante” (Meaning “intoxicating” in Italian) he whispered and just

before I could ask him what he meant he let me go and spoke again.

“I have to go now but I won’t be long.”

“Where are you going?” I asked trying to keep the needy tone out of that question.

“I have to meet with someone, it’s the reason I came here but I will explain later.” With that, he motioned his hand across and the material floated back without contact. Behind it a beautiful woman stood waiting along with Leivic. As soon as Draven saw the woman I could have sworn I’d seen him flinch. I was almost certain she was an Angel as there was a heavenly grace about her that had you looking at her in awe.

She was tall and slender, with a body displaying slight curves in just the right places. The dress she wore dipped so low you could see in between the two most noticeable curves and it looked as though she had glued the material to the sides to stop you from seeing her nipples. The stark white satin was almost glowing and had me squinting my eyes. Her hair was a complete contrast making her look like a chess board. Long, straight, night black hair hung loose down her back like a cloak of silk. She had one side held back in a crystal encrusted clasp that was in the shape of the zodiac sign for fire. I recognised it from when Libby had a brief fascination with fortune telling and star signs.

Her skin was like her dress, spotless and flawless. Skin of a child that glowed along with every other part of her. However her beautiful figure and perfect skin was nothing in comparison to the pair of golden eyes that had depths a man could drown in. They were enchanting to witness. And no doubt Draven had been enchanted intimately. The thought had me close to tears.

“Hora!” Draven nodded his head after saying her name in recognition. She smiled displaying a set of pearly white teeth that would have been a dentist’s wet dream. She bowed in respect making me wish she hadn’t as you could see right down her dress to her nakedness underneath. Well I guess if you wore a dress that tight you couldn’t get away with underwear! I was

almost smug when I saw Draven not looking. Oh yes, these two definitely had history.

“My Lord, it has been far too long, we must get acquainted once more.” I wanted to get up and push her off those expensive looking heels, Angel or not, I could still kick her bony skeleton arse!

Draven looked back at me and liked the look of rage on my face and thanks to conversations little past I knew why, he knew I was jealous. Hora followed his gaze to mine and what she saw there she didn't look worried, I mean why would she, I was a mere limpet in the shadow of the most exquisite coral.

“How rude of me, Hora this is *my* ‘Electus’ Keira, and Keira this is Hora one of my loyal subjects.” The way Draven said this sentence made my stomach fill with liquid desire. His voice smoothed over me like a warm blanket making me swoon. Luckily I was still sitting down otherwise I would have looked like an idiot. It was the first time I had heard Draven introduce me as ‘Electus’ which I now knew meant “chosen” In Latin. Hora looked like she had swallowed a bug and I suppressed the urge to laugh.

“Electus?...then the rumours are true for once. Congratulations My Lord, you have found a rare treasure indeed. In that case you should not keep the Oracle waiting any longer. I now understand her eagerness in speaking with you.” After she said this, all my misplaced ill will evaporated. Meanwhile Leivic had been silent but amused with me. His gaze had been locked with mine and was watching with great interest with thick arms folded across his chest. If he hadn't been smiling he would have been quite terrifying to look at.

“Keira, I have to go but wait here for me to come back for you. Do not move...ok?” I nodded and he looked relieved.

“Good girl.” He said before turning to the amused Leivic.

“Arkadaşım, bekçilik ve yakın kimse izin onu” (Meaning “My friend, keep watch and let no one near her” In Turkish). Leivic put a hand on

Draven's shoulder and replied in a language I didn't know.

"Hayatımda onu koruyacak" (Meaning "I will guard her with my life" In Turkish). I would have loved to have known what they were saying and my curiosity grew when they both turned to look at me before Draven left with Hora. I didn't actually receive a goodbye from Hora but I did receive a respectful head bow, which did bump her up to top billing of one of the nicer of Draven's ex's. The question of how many I would meet made me shiver. The amount of ex's one could acquire over hundreds of years was staggering. One bitch named Aurora was enough for me!

"Can I get you something to drink?" A deep accented voice brought me away from my darker thoughts of ex girlfriends.

"Um...ok, yes thank you," I said suddenly shy without Draven by my side. I looked around nervously now I was unprotected and couldn't help but gasp at all the eyes staring my way. Leivic noticed my change and decided to intervene.

"Доста!"(Meaning "Enough" In Serbian) His booming voice made me jump and I wasn't the only one. All eyes had now taken their naked bodies back behind the curtains and we were left alone. He turned back to see my shocked face at his sudden outburst.

"I am sorry, did I frighten you?"

"N...no," I lied. He smiled as he knew the truth. I couldn't help but wonder what he had said to make everyone leave us alone, so I couldn't help myself when I asked,

"Why is it your kind never stick to speaking just one language?" It's something I had always wanted to know but never asked Draven about.

"Ah, for a human this must seem very odd." I nodded and thankfully he appeased my curiosity and enlightened me.

"You will not find all of us do this, just us oldies like me and Dom." He winked at me before continuing,

“It goes back to a time when streets were thick with spies and humans were somewhat wiser, their beliefs a little more trusting in the supernatural. It made things complicated and more beneficial to speak in ways where only the old and the powerful could communicate openly. See, as old as we are comes with extensive knowledge. Languages are but one thing that we acquire over time. So as easy and natural as it is for you to speak English it is the same for us in many different ways...it is more habit than not.” Ok, well with him putting it like that I could understand it a little better and might not find it so annoying now.

“You make my friend very happy, I have never seen him so.” This turn in conversation made me smile.

“How long have you known him?” He raised an eyebrow at me making the scar on his face rise.

“Would you like me to tell you some stories about Dominic?” At this I nearly yelled out “Oh God yes!” But thankfully I had the good sense not to. However he could read the eagerness on my face, so I explained.

“He doesn’t tell me much about his past.” Leivic nodded.

“I understand... perhaps he does not wish to overwhelm you but I see that you are an intelligent girl, I think you can handle it.” He winked at me and I laughed. I was very much starting to like this friend of Draven’s.

“Then let me enlighten you my dear, but first let me get you a drink to ease the shocking stories I have to tell.”

I was so excited I could have danced around giving the naked demons something really strange to watch....I dare say I’m not a great dancer!

I sat there with my legs folded like a child waiting to hear the greatest stories of my life....

The stories of the man I love.

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Chapter 39

Sacrifices.

Leivic took a seat next to me and made himself comfortable among the pillows. He cast me a curious look, like he was still trying to figure out if I was real or not. I wanted to ask him what it was that he seemed to find so interesting but my thoughts were interrupted by a waitress who had arrived with a tray of drinks in one hand and a large, ornate smoking pipe in another. He noted my raised eyebrow turn to scepticism and quickly added,

“It’s for me.” To which I responded with a nod.

“Thank you Winnie,” he said kindly and reached out to take the tray from her before setting it down on a little side table. All the while I was thinking what an unusually tame name for a Demon and wondering if asking her where Pooh was, wouldn’t get me a killer look. Needless to say I refrained.

Once Winnie left, Leivic started to light the coal that was under the metal case on the top of the pipe. It was a metre high with a large glass vase at the bottom which held some form of liquid. I had seen these before in bars in Spain where you would find groups of people all sharing one. They came with multiple tubes with the mouth pieces on the end where they were smoked through. This one however was only meant for the one smoker. Leivic had finished setting it up and started to suck on the end pulling the air through. He blew out a stream of smoke making the scent of the east cling to the surrounding air.

“I hope you don’t mind?” He asked politely.

“Not at all.” What was I going to say, “Hell yeah, don’t you care about your health!” I don’t think so somehow.

He passed me a drink of what looked like red wine and only after a quick sip it was confirmed. I don’t know why but I let out a sigh of relief. What did I think it would be...blood? He took another long suck from the pipe causing a bubbling noise to emanate from the liquid at the bottom before blowing it out from scarred lips. It seemed to swim from his mouth and then took on a life of its own as it formed a smoke dragon in the air in front of me. It pranced along with its snaky tail following it, then opened its mouth. Leivic

then blew out more smoke making little blue sparks in the shape of flames come from its mouth.

“That was seriously cool!” I said with a massive grin planted on my face. Leivic bowed his head to me and said,

“I’m glad you liked it.”

“I fear such little effort deserved such an adorable reward.” I turned to him shocked at his reply, not helping but ask what it was he meant.

“Your smile, I find it adorable. You are such an innocent soul yet you have witnessed so much horror in such a short life. However you still remain pure and untainted by the cruelty of human life, that is a rarity indeed.” I was both shaken and moved by his words. I must have shown my shock because he frowned.

“I have upset you...forgive me, I spend so little time around humans these days that I forget myself. My gift is reading souls and I find it hard when I come across such a rare beauty in one, as to not express my feelings so forth. You are strong though, unusually so for a breather and for this Dom is a lucky man. There are not many that would be able to adapt so quickly with the blind faith like you have... Oh please don’t get me wrong but I say so in paying you a compliment. You are truly destined for my dear friend indeed and I could not be more happy for him. He is the one Being in the world that deserves it the most, I think.”

I still didn’t quite know what to say to this without brimming over with emotion. It had touched me that this man whom I had only just met thought so much of me. I felt blessed. I was about to speak but as if by knowing my thoughts he held up his hand to stop me.

“Please, there is no need to thank me for words that are true. I speak them because it is fact and something you need to hear. Like my friend Dom, I never just speak to flatter.” This made me smile, to know Draven wasn’t the type of man to say what he didn’t mean, just for the sake of provoking a response. Although saying things that would provoke a jealous response was

a different matter!

“I would like to thank you all the same.” I said feeling better.

I took a long sip of my drink, which helped me to relax a little at my current situation. I wondered how long I would be with Draven before places like this became the norm to me? If I thought my life was complicated before, then now it was off the charts crazy! Leivic was silent during my thoughts but when I heard the bubbling of liquid once again it pulled me away from the hectic track of my mind.

“So...how do you know Draven?” I asked before thinking about the question in my head. Man I sounded dumb! However Leivic wore an amused smile that crept up on one side before he answered me.

“Well there are very few of our kind who have not heard of their natural Master but there are those foolish enough not to obey him. I am lucky enough to call him friend and I hold that title with great pride.” I couldn’t help but smile at the affection in his voice when talking about the man I loved.

“I owe my life to Dominic and would give it undeniably in return. He saved me from my fate which was far worse than my death.” He watched as my eyes widened in horror. What could be worse than death?

“Would like to hear my story?” I think he was checking that I was up to it and when I nodded he look glad, as if he had been wanting to tell someone for so long and now, finally, was his chance.

“I would.” I answered prompting another trademark bow from him and I found this all very endearing.

“First I feel that I should tell you it is not a happy tale that I speak of, but one of great meaning and sacrifice. See in my Demon form, for I am a Demon, did you know that?” He asked shooting me a look making his colossal scar twitch. I coughed out my answer.

“Um..m...no I didn’t,” I said trying to hide the shock of such a nice, polite man as a scary Demon. I know I was being naive again but it is hard to

dismiss what history has taught about who are the goodies and the badies. I think Sunday school would have been quite a different lesson if the world knew the truth.

“I am, what you would calla Reaper shifter.” At this I couldn’t help the sudden intake of air causing him to look hurt. I mean what else was I suppose to do, here I was having a very personal conversation with a....with a bloody Reaper! A Demonic merchant of death!

“Please do not be frightened, I did not just take souls at a whim. I had contracts just like anyone would.”

“You don’t do it anymore then?” I asked when he said the words “Did” instead of “do”.

“No, I gave up that right long ago. See, I worked for Hell, gathering souls that were on my list until one day there was one on my list I didn’t want to take.” His silver blue eyes glazed over with the memory and I couldn’t help but put my hand on his arm. I wanted to comfort him as it was obvious that this was not an easy story to tell. He smiled making the scar across face rise and fall. There were laughter lines around his eyes that creased at my gesture and he looked touched by my concern.

“Have you ever heard of the Goths?” I narrowed my eyes trying to understand what he meant, then I looked around seeing many that were in this very club but he started to shake his head.

“Forgive me, not the Goths you see today, all those lost people that dress in black and like to believe in our kind. I’m talking about an [East Germanic tribe](#) who played an important role in the history of the [Roman Empire](#).” When I was still at a loss, he winked at me.

“It is of no matter, I guess the second century is little taught in education today. Let’s see...the Goth war was in 375, so that would put me in The Dniester about 365 AD.” I could barely nod I was in that much shock...that would make the man I was speaking to now at over 1600 years old! Is that possible? How many life times is that? Ok, so now I had a headache.

“Where is Dni...umm what you said?” He laughed at me giving up on trying to say the right name and then said it again only slower...like it would somehow help!

“Dniester is a river in Eastern Europe. The Dniester rises in [Ukraine](#), near the city of [Drohobych](#), close to the border with [Poland](#), and flows toward the [Black Sea](#). That’s where the tribe was situated at the time and being how I looked, I was being hunted.”

“HUNTED! But why, did they know who you were?” I was horrified by the idea of Draven’s friend being hunted like an animal but I soon understood enough as the next words out of his mouth were the last ones I could have ever expected.

“I didn’t look human then, see I was in my Demon form, which is a bear.” I coughed out my disbelief.

“I’m sorry did you say a...a bear?”

“Yes I did....I guess Draven hasn’t explained much about our kind and our other forms has he?”

“I don’t think Draven likes me knowing too much but I am interested, I think it helps the more I know, but Draven doesn’t see it like that.”

“I can understand it on both sides, if you were mine I would want to protect you from certain...things. On the other hand I can imagine you are brimming over with questions...it is...after all, human nature to be curious.”

“You can say that again!” I said laughing at memories that took me back to how many questions I would ask Draven when I first found out about this other world. Who wouldn’t?

“So where was I?”

“You were a bear,” I said as though it was the most natural comment in the world.

“Yes, yes I was. I was hunting in the river at the time but what I didn’t realize was that I wasn’t the only one. See, in this tribe it was a sort of rite of passage for a boy to become a man to kill a bear with nothing in his hand but a small hunting knife. I had my back to the boy and he crept up on me without making a sound. I can imagine he grew up to be a great hunter, after all, he had it in his bloodline as his father was not only the tribe’s best tracker but best warrior. He also had a daughter, her name was Siggwan. I believe it means ‘to sing’ in their native language.”

I knew, even without him saying so, that he was in love with the girl. I could see it in his eyes, his smile and mostly the way he said her name, full of pride and the deepest meaning. It was like he could see her standing right in front of him, he saw there a memory and then he turned his face as to hide the secret smile he thought I couldn’t see.

“That’s what saved me from getting hurt, I heard her voice singing. I turned around in time to see her brother coming and managed to knock the knife from his hand without causing too much damage. Not that he could have killed me but it would have still hurt. He ran off after that but not before finding his sister and taking out his anger on her. I found her later by the river washing the blood from her face.”

“Bastard!” I said making him look at me in surprise. His raised eyebrow made me want to justify myself.

“I’m a strong believer that a man that hits a woman is nothing but a coward!” I said raising my chin and making him smile.

“And you are rightly so, I feel this way also, which is why it hurt me to see. I walked towards her and when she saw me, she didn’t flinch, she didn’t even look scared at the sight of this 1800lb, nine foot Kodiak bear coming closer to her. She even smiled at me and I never thought I had seen anything as beautiful. She could stop my heart with that one smile.”

“She must have been extremely brave,” I noted before taking another sip of wine.

“She was fearless, more so than her brother was, that much was clear. She let me come next to her on the river bed and then she turned to me and told me how she was glad her brother hadn’t killed me. I wanted to thank her but I couldn’t change in front of her, so I decided to wait till nightfall.”

“So did you go back to find her?” I asked getting immersed in the story.

“I did find her again once I was human. I think you can guess what happened next. No doubt you can understand what type of love we shared?” He looked into my eyes and found his answer instantly.

“What happened?”

“I got my next contract.” My hands flew to cover my mouth as I shrieked.

“NO, oh no!”

“Yes I am afraid so. When I refused to take her soul I was merely informed that another would just replace me and take it anyway. So I did the only thing I knew I could do.” Pained lines circled his eyes like an evil frame.

“What?” I asked needing to know the end of the tragedy.

“I bargained. I traded her soul for mine, I signed myself over to Hell’s punishments so that she may live a full life and die with her soul intact. Of course this meant a hundred lifetimes for me to rot in the pit, well that was until Draven bargained for *my* life.” He turned his face to mine and now his pride was directed towards his friend. No wonder they were such close friends, Draven had saved him from...well the Devil only knows what.

I found I had tears in my eyes from his story and I cannot tell you how it touched me. Which reminded me of the saying, “Is it better to have loved and lost, or better to have never loved at all?” Before meeting Draven I would have said to have never loved but now, I know, I would rather have died after one kiss than never have felt his touch, even if only for once in my life.

“How did he get you out?”

“A powerful a man as Draven, needs very little in reason to get what he wants, I was just happy that I could return the favour.”

“What? You saved his life?”

“More like his body. I don’t think this scar would have suited him as it does me, I wear it well do I not?” He asked me, laughing and giving me a playful nudge in the side.

“Oh very handsome, in a rough, manly way. Women love scars you know.” I said, to which he responded with a wink in my direction.

“You have your own scars of the past I see.” I gulped and looked down to my concealed arms, wondering how he knew?

“It is alright, I am sorry I brought it up but you see we have something in common. We both have these scars as a reminder of the people we love, I sacrificed it for my friend, and for you?”

“For my family,” I replied quietly.

“Do not be angry at Dom, he did not tell me about your past, I was the one he asked to help find any information about you. When I learned about you I was the one Dom sent to protect your sister and Frank at the time.” I shot him a look of pure gratitude. Anyone who helped protect those I love earned my eternal respect and loyalty.

“Thank you, I don’t know what to say.” I lowered my head feeling doubtful I would ever be able to repay all these people that had helped me since Draven came into my life. Ragnar, Vincent, Sophia, Leivic and most of all Draven himself. This coming to a person only used to doing everything herself. I wasn’t used to having people to depend on. Don’t get me wrong, my family were very supportive through my history with that evil, sick time. But since I had visions I learnt very quickly to keep my problems to myself or they would turn around to bite me in the arse, in the form of a mental hospital. That being my true nightmare.

“You do not need to say anything, let alone thank me, I was more than

happy to help and now in meeting you I feel my friendship for Draven extends to his other self...to you Keira. But on that note I must leave you a moment, I will not be long, will you be alright?" I smiled at him before touching his hand that felt rough, like sandpaper and years of hard labor.

"Yes, of course, and thank you for telling me your story." At this he didn't answer but just kept staring at my hand on his, like he had never felt a touch for many years. This made me feel conscious that maybe it was not the right thing to do, but as soon as the thought entered my mind he lifted my hand in his to his lips and kissed my knuckles. He didn't say another word after that but nodded to me before he left.

I found myself only able to breathe after he had gone from my sight. I looked at my hand where his scarred lips had been and found it tingled slightly. I don't know why but I was sure he had tasted me when his lips had parted slightly and his tongue had lightly grazed me. I could still see the shiny mark of his kiss drying quickly. I know any normal person would have been freaked out by this but I wasn't and found it oddly comforting. After all he was half animal, maybe this was just his way...like a cat or dog licking you when you stroke them.

I started to go over what I had just learned from Leivic and the more I learnt about Demons and Angels the more it seemed to make sense. They weren't that far apart from humans and I wondered if that was what being on this "Plane" did to them. Did it make them more human?

Well at least to some of them it did and love seemed to be the key. It got me thinking what Draven was really like all his years before I came along? I had changed him, he had admitted as much. How was it he had put it earlier... "Back then I was hard and cold, like a living statue." That's what he had said. Had I really made the blood flow back into his lifeless veins?

He made out that I did. I found myself smiling to myself as I sipped my wine. Only when my lips weren't feeling liquid on them did I noticed that my glass was empty. I don't know why but I really wanted another. I didn't usually like red wine but there was something about this one that tasted a bit...addictive. It was only when I was studying the glass that I noticed

something weird looking on the sides. It looked like crystallized particles that clung to the sides where the wine had once been filled up to. I lifted it to my nose but couldn't smell anything other than the rich aroma of fermented grapes.

I ran my finger on the inside, collecting up the substance on my finger tip. Then I did a very silly thing before I could stop myself, I put the finger in my mouth and sucked it clean. The stuff felt like sugar grit but tasted bitter. It was mere seconds before my head began to spin. I felt like I was going to throw up but without the heaving process. I held my head in my hands as if this would help but it didn't and if anything, it felt like it was the only thing keeping it on my body.

I felt my skin prick up as someone came near to me but when I looked up there wasn't anyone there.

"You can hear my voice young one!" I sucked in breath and curled my legs to protect me as the voice that had haunted me earlier invaded my mind once again. It wasn't asking a question but more like expressing an order. I looked around frantically for anyone I could tell but as soon as I thought it, the voice boomed in my mind.

"NO, YOU WILL OBEY ME!" It screamed making my head vibrate in pain. I let out a little moan and nodded at no-one to say I would comply. Anything, just to stop the pain that rattled through me whenever it got angry.

"Good girl, now I want you to come to me, but I don't want you to let yourself be seen, do you understand?" I nodded again but I wasn't sure if the voice would know my answer...it did.

"Good, but you have to stop crying or people will hear you." I hadn't been aware that I was crying but when I put my hands to my cheeks they were soaked with salty tears. My lips trembled as I tried to control the urge not to start sobbing. I wanted to be strong but the voice started to get more urgent.

"Move when I tell you, I want you to get up and slide out to your left and

walk to the far wall, you will see it when the curtain moves back, that will be your cue to leave.” I shuddered at what I had to do next and inside I was screaming out which made it hurt all the more. I wished Leivic would come back to save me or even better, my dark knight Draven.

“*That is not going to happen my dear, Draven is busy with the Witch and his friend has his hands full with another of my little diversions. So you see it is just you and me, now M..O..V..E!*” He shouted at me and my head pounded every letter out to make the word. The curtain flew back and I dipped out from within its protective shade. I saw the wall and my legs ran towards it without my help or control. Once there, I leaned against it panting in both physical weakness and being scared out of my wits!

“*Good, now I need you to follow the wall along until you find a back staircase, go down it and wait until I tell you otherwise.*” I did as I was told and found a staircase where the walls were painted black making it more like a tunnel of doom. There were little neon lights along the floor so that I could see enough to make it down each step, then the faintest light could be seen under the door. I reached out for the handle when a pain so sharp and piercing hit me, it made me cry out and crumble to the floor. I was trying to catch my breath that was flowing out of me faster than I could take it back.

“*NOT YET! I will tell you when to open the door!*” I managed to get back to my feet and wipe my tears away angrily with my sleeve. I hated not being in control and this was the worst kind! At least if this person had shown himself then there would be something I could channel my anger at but now, all the moment gave me was an anger towards myself for being so damn weak in this other world!

“*On the contrary my dear, your mind is extremely hard to control and if it wasn't for the drugs I've been putting in your system I would not be able to be controlling you now...Now get ready to move.*” I braced my hands on the door ready as instructed and now I could hear a heavy base line had just started up, I wondered if this was what he had been waiting for...

I had guessed right.

“*NOW!*” I squinted my eyes at the pain of his command and pushed the door open into the lower half of the club. When the first sights of people came into view, I let out an unheard scream. Every single person in the club was in their other form making this the scariest place on earth....a room full of monsters!

Everyone was going into a frenzy for the band that was now playing and I guessed this had been what everyone had been waiting to see. I had never seen so many visions all at once, the most I had seen together was three, back when I was twelve. They had all been at a park, all huddled together like they were sharing a meal and when I got closer I hadn't been wrong. A boy had been injured by falling off his bike and they seemed like they were just adults trying to help him. Only I saw the truth as they all sucked in a red glow from his body, making the little boy slump over more, exhausted. Then I didn't know what they were doing to him but when I screamed out they all turned towards me and hissed.

I had told my mother that I had been sick so that I could hide in my room for days, fearing they would find me. Now I know they were feeding from the boy's pain. But this was something different. It was like they were feeding from each other and getting the ultimate high from it!

The room's low ceiling was hidden in a fog of energy and mangled bodies covered the floor. It was my idea of Hell, pure and simple Hell!

I pulled my hood up as instructed and tried to make myself invisible. Every time a body got too close I would sink away terrified it would touch me. Wings of all kinds could be seen well above the heads of Demons, black, feathered, curled and pointed into deadly shards. Different materials, glass, wood and even plastic looked to have made up the most unusual ones. Fangs, claws, weapons all shined in the dim club's lighting. But the faces were what haunted me now. Contorted faces, eyes where there shouldn't have been eyes, teeth where there shouldn't have been teeth and other added bits of skin that was stretched or loose over misshapen bone.

One girl had scales that flaked to the ground like snow when she danced. Others extracted liquid in other orifices that looked painful to watch. I gagged

as one man's spit was dripping into another man's mouth and was being lapped up like liquid gold. The smell was another thing making me want to vomit. Acid bile and rotting flesh filled my nostrils making me try everything but breathe.

However there weren't only Demons to be seen on the floor. Angels could be seen in bright glows that added more light in between the mass of figures. They had lighter coloured wings that always seemed bigger than the Demons. They were beautiful creatures, skin milky white or copper gold that looked fuelled by the absent sun. They were also going wild for the music and showed off more skin with every twist or jump they performed to the beat. Some even started to rip their clothes off, so that naked bits could also show their excitement. I looked away not being able to take anymore until I heard Demonic laughter in my head.

"What's wrong my dear, the world you belong too is a little less pleasing now you're far from your Master's bedchamber?" He mocked and I wanted to cry. It was somewhat true, I was naive and now the world I found to be Draven's was even more tainted. There was no going back from this and I had no doubt this is what Draven had wanted to protect me from, but then why risk bringing me here in the first place?

"Stop!" The voice shouted making my eyes water and blur. I did as instructed and sank back to the wall behind. Then I waited for what I recognised to be a diversion. Huge Angels were pushing their way through the crowd with ease and considering the crossed axes strapped to their backs I could understand...these guys were seriously hardcore. I watched them get to a group that had started to fight only instead of the usual pushing and fist throwing, these guys were tearing chunks out of each other! One guy got half his face caved in and parts of his flesh were flung into the crowd. One girl even jumped up to catch a piece as if claiming a trophy from a concert. I gagged down sick at the sight of her rubbing the flesh across her skin like it was some kind of new beauty product, leaving bloody smears like markings on a tiger.

The Angels had now disarmed the group fighting and unshielded their

weapons. They were holding them out to the crowd as a warning, one aimed at the neck of the Demon that must have started the whole thing. He was an odd shape, with extremely long legs and a skinny waist but his upper half looked as solid as a tree trunk with arms that reached the floor and hands that curled up like iron spades.

The crowd was parting again and when I saw a scarred bear head emerge, I couldn't help but scream at the sight of my new friend. The scream didn't go unnoticed and a voice screamed in my mind making me double over and hold my head in my hands.

“MOVE NOW!!!!” My legs started running to a door I could barely see through my tear filled eyes and this wasn't only down to the pain. The memory of Leivic's true form was strictly frightening. He was indeed a bear but one that had been severely tortured. It was like a bear had been set alight and survived the ordeal.

He had no fur but just fleshy skin that had scarred into congealed groups. Like a melted plastic bottle, only skin coloured. And then there was the scar that cut across his body from what looked like it nearly cut him in two. His eyes had turned into large black holes with a small white light that could be seen from deep within. Those white lights had found my face when I had called out and now I could hear the urgency in my captor's voice.

We had been discovered and I just prayed it wasn't too late.

Too late to be saved....

Chapter 40

Draven's Wrath.

I got flung through the door and it took me a minute to realise that it wasn't down to mind control. Now there were hands that had pushed my back into the opening and when I squinted because of the sunshine I knew we were in a sort of alleyway at the side of the club. I looked up to see we were sandwiched between the two warehouses and now we weren't alone.

"That didn't go to plan Agnomen, they now know we have the girl, we must hurry!" The Angel in front of me was talking to the one behind, who had hold of me. I looked to see that pure hate filled the eyes of the Angel as he glared deep into me. He was handsome, as all the rest were, but his evil mind did show its ugly head.

His eyes were almost as white as the anger that flashed through and his hair was cut short, close to his skull. The blue fitted suit he wore didn't look cut out for fighting but I could still see the muscles flexing under his jacket. The one major difference to this Angel was his wings or more like the lack of, as his were missing.

"You said the drug would last, Kokabiel, but she alerted them, I could no longer control her!" Again the voice behind me spoke to a man standing in the shadows. He didn't want to come forward, almost as if he was hiding from me. And that name...where had I heard it before?

"She has been drinking it for days, I was not aware of her power to block us from her mind. I have still done what was asked of me!" A demonic voice spoke from the shadows, one I hadn't heard before but seeing as I hadn't heard many, other than Draven's, then it could have been anyone. There was one thing now that I was almost certain of...There was a traitor at Afterlife!

I wasn't given long to think about it as I was now being pushed forward into the street where Draven's car still sat. I wished, more than ever, that I

was sat in there now, all safe and encased within its strong bodywork, but fingertips digging into my arms when I tried to resist, brought me quickly back, like whiplash.

“Do not make me hurt you girl, my master would not be pleased!” He whispered down in my ear, making me flinch and a shiver crept up my back from the memory of having him in my head.

“Galizur, bind her hands, that should stop her struggles.” He then pushed my arms forward and the suited Angel named Galizur walked towards me with a sadistic grin plastered to his features.

“With my pleasure!” The words snaked out of his mouth like venom and I shuddered as he touched me. He then produced a pair of thick steel clamps like shackles, engraved in symbols I didn’t understand and fastened them on my wrists making me wince at the feel of heavy metal against bone. He touched one of the symbols and they started to flame red like heated metal. Then they began to move slowly at first. I watched on as they picked up speed, circling around the width of my wrist until I heard a hissing noise, signaling that they were locked securely.

As soon as they had me bound, they started to pull me roughly towards a black van that had its side door open ready. I knew that as soon as they had me in that van, then that would be it for me, there would be no escape.

I started to panic inside, because up until now I had still been waiting for Draven to come out and rescue me. But now my true predicament was hitting me like a cold hard slap across the face. They were going to take me...

I started to pull my weight backwards and tried to move in a twisting motion towards the ground but no matter how much I dug my feet in, they just dragged my body. My panic was setting in and I could feel my breathing quickly accelerate to a point close to hyperventilating.

“LET ME GO!” I screamed out, as it felt as though the drug was wearing off allowing me access to more of my own functions but in doing so my oxygen was nearly spent.

“Well, look who found her voice! Galizur, gag the bitch if you please!” Galizur let go of my bound hands and pulled a bit of cloth from out of his pocket and started to twist it tightly but before he could get it around my mouth I screamed out in one last attempt at saving myself.

“DRAVEN!!!!” I used every last shred of breath in my lungs to call out his name and I was soon panting into the cloth tied like rope in my open mouth. I gagged and coughed, soon soaking the material. They seemed to panic after my outburst because now instead of pulling and pushing me to the van I had been lifted up under a strong arm and was being hurried towards the open door.

“Get her out of here, NOW! We don’t have much time.” After that I was thrown into the van and landed painfully on my side, knocking the wind out of me. I gripped with my hands and pushed with my feet to right myself but all I got was a foot pressed on my ribs to keep me down. I looked on through blurry eyes as I saw the daylight disappearing as the van door was sliding home.

I moaned at the sight and the foot on my chest applied more weight. Then the sound of doors slamming on either side told me everyone was inside and when the engine started, I knew that was the end of my chances. I couldn’t stop the over flow of heavy tears as I had lost all my hope and was giving into the realization that I had been kidnapped for the third time in my life!

“WE’RE TOO LATE, LOOK!” One of the Demons shouted just before a blood curdling roar was heard, that was so loud it made the van rattle and my ears pop. The foot released me and moved to the front window.

“Agnomen, you have failed. I will inform our Master of your incompetence.” Galizur had been the one in the back with me and now his expensive, black dress shoes weren’t keeping me down, I could see everything that was happening. I sat up against the side of the van and saw Galizur in between the front seats blaming the one called Agnomen about what was happening now. What was happening, I didn’t know but whatever it was had everyone terrified.

“You traitorous snake! I will have your head for this Galizur!” Agnomen spat out his words but I still couldn’t see what he looked like, as he never looked back.

“I very much doubt that, but one thing I am certain...he will most definitely have YOURS!” He pointed forward and as all eyes followed they found Hell’s fury in the demonic form of their King ...Draven!

After that, Galizur disappeared into a bright light leaving a void allowing me to see what the others were all watching.

“DRIVE DAMN YOU!” Agnomen screamed out making the van wheels spin into life. Draven stood, arms crossed, in the path of the accelerating van and didn’t even flinch. The purple energy flamed around his body and back along his huge wingspan. They were out and double the width of the van that was heading his way. I wanted to shout “get out of the way” but no words reached my lips in time.

Just as machine and body were to impact, Draven produced a large glowing blade from within his arm and moved gracefully to the side as the van went past. The purple flaming blade, the length of me, sliced through one side, making a long jagged opening from the sliding door to the back end. It cut through the metal as though it was a razor to paper. The van swerved to the side and turned back on its self after the wheels on one side lifted off the ground. Draven was once again in the centre of the windscreen and mingled voices of panic drowned out the sound of the engine. Meanwhile, I had been flung about in the back, like a ship on stormy seas, hitting my head on the wheel arch. Soon I could feel the thin trickle of blood running down my cheek.

This time Draven took long strides toward us and Agnomen opened his door and rolled out just as the van accelerated again. Coward!

Draven’s sword went back into his body, up his arm to its home. He then motioned with his hand towards the van causing the front of the vehicle to start flying through the air in pieces. The engine spluttered and then stopped just before it got to him. Another flick of his hand had the windscreen

cracking and then in one large section it flew outwards and past Draven to smash on the ground behind him causing an eruption of glass.

The driver panicked at seeing this and started to scramble to get in the back with me. He was also an Angel, but with the terrified look on his face, he looked more human than I did. There was no glow, no Angelic eyes of pearly white, just the look of a man who knew he was soon to die. In fact, the only reason I knew he was an Angel, was the pair of wings on his back that were pinned to his body so that he could crawl through the seats. There were still bits coming out of the van like splinters from a wood cutter, flying through the air past Draven as he walked closer towards us. His eyes were erratic as though searching for me. He saw the Angel scurrying in the back and he nodded to something I couldn't see.

Then the earthquake started, or what I thought was an earthquake. The van started to rock and vibrate with some kind of impact. The rip down the side of the door started to open further until two great Demonic claws could be seen. The razor tipped hands hooked around the opening and started to peel away at the door, making me feel like a sardine in a can.

The door rolled back until a colossal Demonic bear stood in its opening. I didn't even notice it had started raining until I saw the water glistening from its scarred tissue, making it all the more frightening. Leivic seemed to see me through his human eyes and for a moment I thought I saw regret in them. Maybe it was down to the utter fear he saw in mine, which brought on instant guilt on my part. Whatever the feeling behind them it passed quickly as the Angel took the moment to his advantage and grabbed the curved blade from his back. He began to come towards me, weapon in hand.

The action granted him another mighty roar that shattered the rest of the windows. Leivic seemed to let the anger seethe through him and concluded his actions from it. He reached out and wrapped a claw around the Angel's ankle just before he could reach me. I looked on in horror as the terrified eyes got further away from me as his body was dragged from the mangled van. I almost felt sorry for him, until I saw the deadly looking blade slip from his fingers and quickly dropped that thought.

Leivic pulled the body out effortlessly and once clear, he threw him sideways toward the closest warehouse. He flew upwards like the wind that catches a paper bag and smashed into the building as though made of bricks. He then fell to the ground in a broken mess of feathers and bones. He started to crawl but to where I didn't know. One wing was dragging along behind him all broken and twisted. Blood pumped from the part it connected to his back, which was now open and oozing.

I soon realized why he was desperately trying to drag himself back this way...

Draven was coming.

That powerful frame, aflame with pure hate was walking this way and with me in his sights, he looked as though the power would rip him apart, bursting out and destroying everything with it. He got closer to the Angel that was still painfully pulling his slaughtered body inch at a time across the watered ground. The heavens were still pouring down, making the puddles around him turn into miniature rivers of blood.

Now I actually did feel sorry for him.

He turned his head up and was about to protest but Draven without even looking down speared him like a guillotine with one floor length sword that shot out of his arm so quickly it caused my eyes to blur. The Angel twitched around the blade as its body was trapped to the wet, cemented road. He tried with one last attempt to move but with a swift twist of his wrist the blade turned inside his body and the Angel stopped moving. I wasn't sure if he had killed him, as I didn't know if you could even kill Angels, but at a guess I would have said that he looked pretty dead to me. As soon as the movement was made and Draven withdrew his sword back into his arm, I turned my head and closed my eyes, trying in vain to get the image out of my mind.

When I looked back Draven was by the torn doors of the van next to Leivic who was about to help me out. Draven put a strong hand on the bear's

arm and said in an aggravated stern voice,

“Leave her to me! Go and find the other one and bring him back to me...*alive!*” The word alive was said through gritted teeth and very little controlled anger. His friend just nodded and withdrew his hand from Draven’s grasp. Draven turned his face away from mine and said,

“Remember, I want him alive, Leivic...I need answers.” I knew what that meant and the word torture came to mind. Again, I closed my eyes to get the sight of Draven’s idea of justice out of my head. I couldn’t help but scream at the feel of someone touching my leg.

“Keira.” Was all he said, but it was soft enough to get me to look at him. He was right in front of me, so close I could feel his breath as he spoke. It was smooth and calming but I still flinched as he touched me.

He looked hurt, but didn’t stop as he put his arms around me and lifted me from the van. I had been huddled in the back with my knees up close to my chest as though trying to protect myself. I must have looked like a small frightened child...Hell, who was I kidding, I felt like one!

He held me so close to his chest I could feel his heart pumping through my own body. Loud and strong, beating his anger around his Demon ignited blood so that the only thing on his mind was revenge. I wanted to touch his face, to soothe him some way but I was scared. I didn’t know of anything that would bring him down from this rage. His breathing was that of a man that was controlling something deep within him and the flex in his jaw every time he looked at me told me he was not happy about what he saw there. The bleeding from my head had stopped and now was nothing but a crusty red mark down my face. My eyes felt sore and puffy from many outbursts of sobbing and for some reason I couldn’t get my hands to stop shaking.

“It is the effects of the drugs in your system, it will pass.” He said quietly and I realized that he could hear my thoughts. No wonder, thanks to the drugs, he could probably control me as well.

“Yes I could, but I wouldn’t, not even to make it so that you do not fear

me. I wouldn't put you through that again." He said bitterly and I felt ashamed, bringing on another overflow of tears. Here was the man I loved saving my life again and he could hear my fear of him, what must he think of me!

He put me down gently, checking I was steady on my feet before leaning me back on the side of his car. He lifted my head as though I would break if he applied too much pressure. I refused to meet his eyes, being too ashamed of myself.

"Keira don't.... Please look at me." He pleaded and on hearing his voice break, I did also. I looked up to find eyes full of pain and almost crumbled.

"I...I...I'm...so...rry" I managed to say but he just shook his head and told me,

"Ssshhh, be still." He looked down at my bound hands. I had become so used to that I had forgotten the manacles they were still in. He raised them up to inspect the markings and he mouthed some words I couldn't hear. He then raised one of his own hands to his mouth and bit down hard enough to draw a stream of blood. I let out a little scream but he didn't meet my eyes, as if he has been prepared for my reaction. He rubbed his bloody palms together so that both were fully covered and circled both my metal bound wrists. The fastening made the same hissing noise once they had finished spinning and unlocked, then falling from me but turning to dust before hitting the ground. He examined the skin underneath before being satisfied enough to let them go.

He then held me tightly by the waist to keep me up, and then he pinned me to the car with his hands leaning on either side of me. I could feel the tears roll off my chin to the ground and like a flash of light his hand caught one mid motion. He opened his palm as if to show me. It glittered purple sparks before disappearing into his own skin and then he raised the same hand to check my injuries. He moved my hair and little strands had dried and stuck to the blood. I couldn't help but wince when he pulled them, which made him stop and growl.

“He will pay for this!” He said as he let the rage flow back into him. This gave me the courage to raise my hand to his face and touch him cautiously; like stroking a lion that had been ready to pounce. However the effect was different, instead of getting my hand ripped off, he turned his face into my palm and closed his eyes. He seemed to be breathing me in, as if taking the essence of me to help in calming him down.

Whatever it was doing, it seemed to be working as the flex in his jaw relaxed against me, the bulging vein at the side of his forehead disappeared and his heartbeat resumed its normal rhythm. I just wanted us to get in his car and keep driving until we couldn't get any further away from this nightmare. I wanted him to take me away from this madness and wait for normality to take us both.

“That's not going to happen my love, normality can never exist in my world, it just isn't possible and nor can it happen in yours...not when you belong to me.” He said in a deep husky voice like he found it hard to form the words I already knew to be true. I forced the tears back deep within myself and swallowed the bitterness at how so unfair the whole situation was. How many times is my life going to be faced with this type of thing and survive?

“I won't let them get you, I won't let them hurt you, do you hear me? I..I will keep you safe, I swear it!” He pulled away from me and clenched his hands into tight fists, causing the skin over his knuckles to turn a paler purple and then white. Hearing my thoughts were bringing back his anger and I mentally scolded myself.

“Dom!” Leivic was approaching and the cause of our situation was brought back into view. He came from around the corner with a writhing Agnomen in tow and the last shreds of control crumbled around Draven as he let out a growl so blood thirsty, you could taste the air change. It was like charged demonic static!

He turned his back to me and I closed my eyes as the feel of his folded wings brushed gently across my skin. I knew I wasn't going to want to see this and I wished I could have just kept them closed and curled into a protective ball to hide but I knew I couldn't. I opened my eyes and saw the

man I loved ignite into raging flames and the sight had me gasping for air. His wings lost their soft feathery texture and were replaced by flickering purple flames licking the tips. Then they opened to their full wing span giving the dark, grey skies a new light source.

“AGNOMEN!” Draven’s Demonic voice said his name like he was at that moment the Devil’s right hand man. I hated hearing Demonic voices but to hear it spoken from Draven’s lips, made it close to unbearable.

“Draven.” I said his name in one last attempt to keep him with me but he was far too gone now to hear my idea of reason. His only response was to turn his head slightly and give me an order I knew better than to defy.

“Keira, get in the car now and don’t watch this.” At least his voice had turned back to normal to tell me this. At that moment the sound of the car unlocking made me jump. My nerves were shot to Hell and I was just a bag made of skin still holding my bones in one piece.

I opened the door after trying to control my shaking hand and almost fell on my weak knees into the seat. The door closed on its own and the door locked for extra measure. One of the two orders I had complied with but there was no chance of me not watching what was about to happen. I had never known what was good for me and I wasn’t about to change now. I knew full well what the consequences of my actions would be but it didn’t mean I cared!

I was going to see this nightmare through to the end, just as I had done with Morgan and how I would keep doing for the rest of my life even if it killed me. It was my nature and sometimes no matter how we try, there is just no changing, even if you know it to be wrong.

So, with this in mind, I rubbed the last tears out of my eyes and sat there to watch as Draven walked over to the man Leivic was dragging on the ground. The side window was down slightly from where I had opened it earlier and I was glad because now I could add words to what my eyes would witness.

It had stopped raining now but the black clouds threatened more. What was left was a sidewalk of dirty puddles and two bodies on the floor. One of which still hadn't moved.

Now Draven had grabbed hold of Agnomen and was dragging him closer to one of the larger puddles. I couldn't understand what he was doing but one look at Draven told me that I was the only one. I could tell he had a plan and I wasn't sure if I noticed a dark, madness creep upon those lips of his that I loved invading my own.

"Tell me, bounty hunter, who holds your contract?" Draven pulled him up by the hair so that his face was above from the floor. That was when I had my first good look at the man behind my attempted kidnapping. I gagged down the bile rising in my throat at the sight of one of the most disgusting faces I had ever seen.

He had dirty, red hair that stood in one point at the back of his head that was currently in Draven's hand. His face looked as though made of chalk, hard and cracking around the edges. His lips were overflowing with blood and the corners came high up his cheek bones giving him a sadistic look. His nose was missing, as if it had been chopped off with only the two elongated holes and bone in the middle remaining.

But believe me when I say that none of these were his worst features...oh no, it was his eyes. Or at least where his eyes should have been. There instead were two gaping holes that were filled with moving darkness which bled outwards onto his face. It was only when I squinted my eyes that I noticed why it looked like the darkness beneath them was moving. I saw that they were, in fact, made up from hundreds of big, black flies that had all found a home there. Every time he winced in pain as Draven pulled him this way and that, one would fly away and retreat from the cruelty.

"Answer me!" Draven was losing his cool and with one hand still in his hair the other grabbed his neck and started to squeeze, releasing even more flies from hiding. He coughed out spilling even more blood to the ground, but no words would form.

“Your refusal to talk means signing your sentence to death, NOW TALK!”

“Tal...talk..ing....al...also....signs it!” He spat out, just as Draven let go of his throat to allow him to speak. He dropped him to the floor and Agnomen’s hands automatically went to his neck.

“This is your last chance to give me a name.” Draven crossed his arms across his chest as he towered above the Demon at his feet. Like this the King in him could be easily seen. Power flooded his veins with every breath he took and with every breath I took, I knew I should not have been watching this.

“If I give you a name, you won’t kill me?” This question was not received well, the evidence of that was found in Draven’s dark laugh.

“You mistake me, your refusal to talk only signs *how* your death will happen...for it will happen! You signed it when you try TO TAKE HER FROM ME!” He demonically screamed out this last part which made Agnomen cower closer to the ground.

“But your death, you can choose. Tell me what I need to know and it will be swift. It is far more than you deserve. However, if you choose the other, then be prepared to start praying to a God you do not worship. For nothing but he could save you the pain!” He did not give him long to decide. He walked over to one of the largest puddles, knelt down and placed his hand in the murky rain water.

“IN nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur: et benedic hoc aquam manuum Dei Amen.” (Means “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Send forth Thy Spirit and they shall be created and bless this water by god’s hands. Amen. » In Latin)

The words of perfect Latin flowed out of Draven with a pride I have never seen before. He circled his fingers through the water and it soon turned crystal clear then sealed itself with an icy top. Draven removed his hand just in time as the frost worked its way into the middle. He then got up from one

knee and walked back to his prisoner.

Agnomen tried in vain to worm away but Draven was quickly above him once more and took hold of his head to drag him towards the frozen puddle of Holy Water. I watched on, wide eyed and curious as to what he planned to do. Agnomen saw his doom and started to twist and claw at the pavement. Before long he was leaving thin trails of blood after his fingers, as his nails had filed down to the bone.

Draven soon dragged him to the spot, despite all his painful efforts and held his face above the icy glass that mirrored Agnomen's terrified face.

"You have chosen your fate...NOW FACE IT!" Draven shouted in anger before forcing his head downwards. The last of the flies came out at once in a black swarm, forcing his head backwards slightly but once they had all scattered, nothing was left to prevent his strange torture from being inflicted.

I watched on in horror as his head smashed through the ice and as soon as contact was made the water started to rise and bubble around him. He writhed around in pain, but Draven held his head firm. His body was desperate to break loose and his sticky folded wings tried to open. Draven simply reacted by holding the back of his head with one hand and gripping one wing with the other. He then yanked back taking the wing with his arm, ripping it from the Demon. More pain could be heard but Draven was unmoved and just threw the wing aside like a piece of trash.

I looked to the side, where Leivic was still stood but his face was contorted as if he could imagine the pain himself. I suddenly realized that this statement might be closer to the truth, as he was once tortured in Hell.

Finally Draven pulled Agnomen's face out of the steaming water and let him drop back down just at the side of it. He was still alive but it was obvious the amount of pain he was in. His face was now melting off leaving a mixture of bloody bone and chalky tissue to drip to the cement. Again I was gagging.

"Now speak and I will end your misery!"

"YES...yes, yes any.....thing....anything." It came out in a mangled mess of words due to the lack of lips that were now mostly on the floor. He didn't even have teeth, as now he was just a melting face full of deep empty bloody holes.

"I want a name!" He barked out and this time he received his answer almost immediately.

"Gal...izur, Galizur was the one who hired me to get to the girl."

Draven grabbed his head back so that he could stare into the deep pits of his eyes and said in a breathless fury,

“And who is Galizur contracted by?”

“Lucius.... my Lord!” He sputtered out and Draven dropped him at the sound of the name.

“HA! Now I am your Lord. When your life hangs in my control of the balance, you fool! You know that if you had come to me with this information you would have been rewarded but instead you turn your back on me and your faith! And for what! What price has Lucius put on *her* head?” When he didn’t answer straight away he received a prompting kick that sent him rolling up through the air and landing close to the car I was sat in.

“P...P...ower...Power of the spear. He has the spear of Longinus.” Draven whipped his head round in disbelief.

“The Holy Spear!” He started to shake his head before continuing,

“The one you speak of is not in his possession. You have been deceived old, foolish Demon. Indeed but you are!” He said this last part shaking his head as if sorry for a moment. Agnomen at hearing this started to shake his head saying,

“No, No, it can’t be.” Over and over but Draven wasn’t listening. He had ignited his body into purple fire and held his hands out to his sides. His wings shook and the energy started to ripple through his powerful chest and beat down his immense arms. It flowed down and out of his body through his wrists and hands. It kept seeping out from him until it formed two, solid blades that touched the ground. They too were on fire as the flames curled round and licked at the air that fueled them.

He walked to a dry patch but the mangled van was in his way, so with what looked like very little effort he kicked the van and it slid to the other side of the road creating track lines on the ground before coming to a stop by toppling over onto its side. The sound of the back door glass smashing made me jump as little shards of it rained down on Draven’s car roof.

He then started to scratch the ground with the tips of his blades causing little sparks to dance along the ground. It looked as if he was writing something or drawing some kind of pattern that was being scorched right into the cement.

Once finished, he motioned for Leivic to bring his prisoner to him and he did it without question. It was only when he bent down that his eyes

burned into mine. He knew then that I had witnessed the whole thing. He closed them briefly as though sad at the idea. Then he opened them and shook his head at me before lifting Agnomen off the ground with one clawed paw. He carried him over to Draven and let him go on top of the marked ground.

Unbelievably he was still muttering about Lucius still having the spear and Draven started to laugh as though he had finally lost it.

“As I said before, you are foolish to think I would ever allow something like that to fall in the hands of power driven madness.” He leaned over him and flipped him face up so as he could get close to his face. He grabbed a handful of his jacket he was wearing and lifted him the last couple of inches.

“How do I know...?” Draven asked wearing a sadistic grin that didn’t fit those perfect lips.

“Of course, I have the Holy Spear!”

With that the Demon cried out and Draven let go. He flopped back down and continued to cry out cursing Lucius’ name back to Hell.

“Don’t worry fool, you will be seeing him soon enough!” And with that Draven flew up in the air above him and turned full circle, letting the tips of his lengthy swords make the same circle on the ground around the symbol and its captured Demon. Once each side met, the whole thing erupted into the deep, red flames of Hell itself and Draven came down from above with both his blades aimed at Agnomen’s chest. The impact made not only him cry out but me also. It was horrific to watch but I couldn’t stop. It was like the last hold over me was to see it through to the end with my once brief captor.

The two bodies were both now engulfed in the fire and only when the screaming stopped did the heavens open again and flood the earth with its waters. The flames died and Draven was left standing there alone back to his human form. His wet hair hung down over his face as he continued to look at the spot Agnomen’s body had disappeared to. I could just make out his lips moving through the rain smeared glass and then I could see him cross himself.

He had been praying....

Praying for the damned soul he just sent back,

Back to be condemned.

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Chapter 41

My Pretty Little Bounty Head

When Draven had finished, he looked up to find my face. I wanted to run out of this locked car and into his arms to comfort him. He looked so sad, so drained of energy that I touched the window. He turned to Leivic and was giving him instructions of some kind. I couldn't hear as the rain had picked

up even more and the sound it made hitting the roof was deafening all other noises out.

The gap in the window was now allowing the water to spray inwards and soon my arm was wet through. Draven was pointing towards the mangled van and then back to the only body still lying on the ground. Then, when Leivic bowed his head in respect, Draven put his hand on one shoulder and shook his head. Leivic looked upset despite what looked like Draven's reassurance.

I felt so bad that I was the cause of so much destruction that I couldn't hold back the deep sob that broke free. I cried out with so much emotion that I was shaking. I covered my head in my hands but it wouldn't stop my need to shake it back and forth, repeating silently "Why me?".

I should have been issued with a warning when I was born! Come too close and you will walk in my footsteps of the demolished road that I leave behind me. I know my mind was being dramatic but I felt cursed. I felt consumed by a guilt I couldn't get away from. Almost as if I could feel a sticky layer of it clinging to my skin for me to carry around for the rest of my days. But my biggest fear...would Draven get sick of it all? Would he realise for himself first hand, just how it is, that some love is not worth losing your sanity over! I would have done anything for Draven's love but just how far would he go to keep mine?

I was still crying out into my palms, when I felt a gentle hand on my shoulder. It was Draven's hand. I knew that, as soon as he made contact with me. Like our blood was somehow connected causing a reaction in me whenever he was near. He tried to pull me round to him but I was resisting.

"Keira, please don't be frightened of me, I won't hurt you my love." He spoke so softly as though anything above a whisper would have me cringing away like a frightened fawn. I pulled back with such force that it shocked him.

"I'm not frightened of you hurting me! I'm frightened of the hurt I cause you! Don't you see? Don't you see that it's me that causes this! All of this

destruction is because of ME! I...can't...I can't....do this.” That was all I could manage until I lost all control. I was sobbing until I couldn't breathe. Somehow I was in Draven's arms and he was holding me so tight as though he would never let me go. He was smoothing back my hair and whispering words in another language that were having a strange effect over me. It was these words that were seeping through my mind and making it cloudy. I tried to hold onto what little control I had left but it was exhausting.

“Let go, just let go.” Draven whispered directly into my ear and it was hard not to obey. I wanted to get up and run away just for the space to think but when I started to struggle Draven increased the pressure around me.

“Stop fighting me Keira, just let it all go.” I lay my head into his shoulder and could feel the wet leather jacket slide on my cheek. I wanted to be free of all the guilty feelings I had weighing me down but what right did I have when others suffered. One of his hands was moving up and down my back making it harder not to close my eyes and let myself drift to another state of mind. He knew I was losing the battle and started speaking to me softly in that other language that he'd been using.

“That's it, good girl. You're safe now, you're safe....” And this was the last thing I heard before the warmth of his words consumed me. I felt my body go limp and the feeling of being lifted before blackness filled my vision and sleep overwhelmed my senses.

I woke to the sound of voices that were irate. It was like when my parents used to argue but do it quietly so as that 'the kids' wouldn't hear...of course we always did. They tried to keep it low but every now and again a word said sharply could be made out. My mind was still groggy but those overwhelmed senses were slowly returning back to me. I didn't open my eyes but I turned my head slowly to free my ear to hear better.

“You are wrong Sophia, what the girl needs is my protection and mine only!” That was most definitely Draven's voice and the added authoritative tone made it clear that he so wasn't happy.

“Yes, but keeping her locked away isn’t the answer... She isn’t some princess you can hide away in a tower, she needs to live her life Dom!” Sophia spoke carefully but not carefully enough. Draven’s growl could be heard even if it came out deep and low.

“Dominic, Sophia is right, don’t let your love for the girl blind you into rash decisions. You can’t just take her away against her will and we all know Keira enough by now to know that it *will* be against her will! She is almost as stubborn as you brother...but you know this.” Vincent was trying to make Draven see sense and for a moment I took his silence as confirmation that it had sunk in. But I was wrong.

“She will do what is good for her. She may fight me on it but she will come around. I will take her somewhere safe so that no bounty hunter will find her. I will NOT allow what happened today to happen again! She was so close to breaking, so fragile that I fear the damage done is beyond repair. I am going to lose her if she keeps seeing this side of me...the fear in her eyes, brother...” At this I did open my eyes only to see Draven sat down with his head in his hands. I wanted to shout out to him but I knew there was more for me to hear.

“Dom, the girl loves you and that fear, you mistake for fear of loss. She will not leave you, if anything I think she fears you leaving her.” Vincent must have gained a great deal of information from my mind, more than Draven had, rather that or he was a hell of a guesser!

“ I never would, not unless it was to save her life! I tried to leave her alone in the beginning and look where that got me! I became a shell of myself and only when I have her do I become whole! I can’t let her go, I won’t!” He was working himself up and it was almost unbearable to hear.

I couldn’t stand to have Draven feeling so desperate, so lost in feelings that he wasn’t alone in. I, too, felt like I would lose him if my situation didn’t get better. I almost wished that he could have taken me away...away from anyone that wanted to hurt me, anyone that wanted to separate us. But I couldn’t do it...his siblings were right, I still had a life of my own to live. I couldn’t just walk away from it all...not again. I had Libby and Frank, I had a

little niece or nephew on the way that I didn't want to miss out on. NO, I would have to stay and fight! I would have to rise up above it all and take each knock as it came...I would get back up and stand up for what I believed in. And hopefully I would have Draven by my side to catch me.

“What am I to do if I can't even protect her here in my home? They were so close to taking her...too close. If Leivic hadn't seen her leaving, then she might have been lost. It would have been too late!”

“What was she thinking, going outside by herself? Was she being controlled?” Sophia asked, but Vincent was the one to answer her.

“Why don't you ask her yourself...I believe she has been awake now for some time?” His voice held amusement and when I knew I had been busted I opened my eyes fully to see everyone staring at me. I was on Draven's bed wrapped up in a warm blanket with my wet clothes now missing. They had been replaced by soft cotton pyjamas in navy blue. I had never seen them before. My hair had been plaited to one side, I guess thanks to Sophia's nimble hands, and her smile told me I had guessed right.

Draven stood up and pushed the hair back that had fallen forward from looking down at his hands. Vincent was standing amused, with arms folded and Sophia stood in between them making her tiny frame look even smaller next to her brother's larger ones. The staring silence was starting to make me feel uncomfortable, so I shifted in the bed into a sitting up position. This was Draven's cue to step towards me.

“I think Keira and I need some time alone.” I don't know why, but the way he said this made me gulp. The other two left without saying a word. Draven came to the bedside very slowly, almost like he was expecting me to scream at any sudden movements.

“It's alright, I'm not going to freak out.” I tried to give him a genuine smile but I'm not sure it fully made it.

“I would not blame you if you did.” He sounded like his voice would crack, being pushed to breaking point. He knelt down on one of the steps next

to the bed and leaned forward so that our faces were level. It reminded me of how you would usually approach a child.

“Well, I’m not going to, I think I did enough of that earlier.” Draven didn’t look convinced with my brave little act and was still waiting for me to crumble next to him.

“Keira.” He said my name edged with doubt and riddled with worry.

“I’m fine,” I said looking away from his intense glare that was trying to pry secrets from my soul.

“You are anything but. What you have seen...all you have witnessed...It is more than any of your kind can endure. So to say that you are *fine* is not only doubtful but also unbelievable!” He placed his palm round my cheek to bring my face back around to his view, but upon his touching me he found my damp skin there.

“Is this what you call fine?” I didn’t answer his question but bit my lip instead. What did he want me to say? NO I wasn’t bloody fine! I was just nearly kidnapped and then watched my boyfriend rip a van to pieces before turning on the people behind it all. Then to find that it was all down to a bounty on my head that wasn’t just going to get old and make people forget about the whole thing!...Umm no, I don’t think I was fine, but it’s not like I was about to give up on life for it all either!

“That’s more like it! For a minute there you had me worried!” Draven said, shocking me enough that my mouth opened to say,

“Excuse me?” I mean he had obviously just read my mind but was all of what I just thought a good thing?

“Keira, understand me. If you hadn’t been affected, then that would have made you numb and that worries me more than having you ‘Freak out’ as you put it. You know more than most, that to bury deep feelings, no matter how horrific, is not the way to deal with them. You first have to face them before you can truly let them go or they will remain with you and eat away at you

until they've consumed every ounce of you!"

"You sound like a man of experience from this type of thing?" I asked finding it hard to believe.

"Keira, I have many regrets in my long everlasting life. I have sent soul after soul back to where they will most certainly be condemned, over and over again until it soon became second nature to me but that does not mean I do not feel remorse. Of course some deserve it more than most but if I felt nothing then who would I be? Where would be *my* balance? Good does not exist without the evil and right does not hold weight without knowing the wrong."

"So what you're saying is to feel something, even pain, is better than to feel nothing, even if the pain is spared?" I knew what he said made sense and I was taken back to the sight of Draven saying a prayer after sending Agnomen to face his eternal judgement.

"For a being to feel nothing and live in this world with no emotions, well that would be a frightening thing indeed. Do you not agree?" I nodded in agreement.

"Keira, I want you to do something for me." Draven said this without any tones of authority but it did not lack a certainty that he would get his way.

"What is it?" I asked nervously.

"I want you to come away with me. Somewhere I am sure to keep you safe." He asked me so seductively it was hard not to give in to him for anything he asked of me. But luckily I knew Draven well and all of his tactics. I pulled away from him putting space between us.

"NO, I am not running away!" He grabbed out to me to pull me back to him but I moved quicker for once. This made him get on the bed to my level. Here, in one quick motion, he pulled me under him and held me trapped.

"You would not be running away, do not view it like that."

“Then how should I view it? It is what it is!” I said stubbornly.

“It would be both of us going somewhere together where we could be alone, alone from everything and everyone who wants to take you away from me.” He looked like he was close to begging me but I remained firm.

“So we will *both* be running away?”

“Keira, I will not allow my pride to be my undoing! If that is what you want to see it as, then I will not stop you, but my love for you runs far deeper than my pride ever will!” He was getting angry but I think it was mainly aimed at himself.

“I won’t leave Draven, I did that once before and although it caused me to find you, I don’t want me leaving here to be for the same reason.”

“And that reason is?”

“Fear!” I said the answer as simple as that. It was always for fear, it always had been. It can be labelled as a new start, starting fresh, finding myself but all the while it was just down to a simple fear. A fear so strong it can change the course of your life. The first time it turned out to be for the better but next time? What the outcome could be wasn’t worth exploring. As far as I was concerned, life with Draven couldn’t get any better.

Ok, so maybe being with him and not being hunted would be good, but what was the guarantee that evil wouldn’t just find us again. I couldn’t just leave Libby and the life growing inside of her. Frank and my new friends who accepted me even though they all knew something about me wasn’t quite right. That un-blinding faith in me that the ones I loved had in me was something I couldn’t walk away from. I had to stay...I just hoped Draven would stay with me.

“Then let it be for love not fear.” He tried one last time and held my face still when I started to shake my head.

“Are you saying that if I loved you I would go with you?” This he didn’t answer but he didn’t need to.

“I could say the same. I could say “If you loved me, then you would stay with me *here*, because you know how much it means to me.” But I don’t need to do that because I know you love me and I know you will stay with me...*here*.” He lowered his head in defeat. He let out a breath showing signs of his lost battle and his exhaustion from it.

“And if I took you by force...I take it you would never forgive me for that?” He asked bitterly.

“Draven!”

“I thought as much. Right, then an even more paranoid boyfriend it is then!” He said while rolling off me and I knew he was acting spoiled from not getting his own way.

“There is no reason to over react Draven.”

“You know, it’s a shame, I think you would have made such a sexy little prisoner.” He teased and then before I could make a comeback he shut me up by kissing me so passionately I forgot everything we were talking about. We were starting to get carried away, which was fine by me, but Draven was starting to fight with himself. He kept stopping and shaking his head but then he would allow himself one more kiss and his resolve would go out of the window. His hands were searching out for my skin and as soon as he got there we both moaned.

It was like a happy haze that enveloped my mind whenever Draven’s skin came into contact with mine. He remained on top of me but felt his way down to hook one of my legs round his waist, causing his want to press tightly against my need. We were now locked together and we both knew how to seal the union, but Draven kept hesitating, taking little stops to calm his breathing.

“Are you alright?” I asked after the third time this happened. He looked down at me with half shock and half guilt.

“Yes... no...I shouldn’t be pushing you after all you’ve been through

today, but Keira, I feel that if I don't take you now, then I will explode!" This confession had the added effect of rippled muscles that tensed as his last shreds of control were fading away.

"Draven, I'm not as fragile as you think and if you don't make love to me right now, I will just have to continue without you, and we both know how much you like to watch." With that firmly planted in his mind he let out an almighty roar and was soon kissing my neck as his answer. He kissed the skin at the base of my throat gently but when his hand came up from my side and turned my face, side onto the pillow, I knew what was coming. He held me still with one hand and the other hand caressed an area up from my shoulder.

"Such beautiful skin, like honey and milk." Draven's voice purred in my ear before leaning down to taste me.

"I like honey and milk." His mouth sucked in my skin and he held it there with his teeth. I could feel his canines extending but he was holding them back. I had never felt this all the other times he had bitten me but I put that down to the throws of passion. However, it seemed this time he was taking his sweet time. The hand that had been holding my face to the side was now venturing downwards. My top was pushed upwards to reveal my stomach and he seemed to take great pleasure in feeling his way down the length of my body until he reached the waist band of my cotton pyjama bottoms.

He still had my neck in his mouth, teasing and sucking it without actually biting it. I was so desperate for him to rather touch me or bite me I was close to screaming for it. And boy did he know it, as soon as the thoughts entered my mind I could feel him smiling. Then his fingers found the honey pot and spread my folds back to dip in further. I cried out at the contact and could feel my body soaking his fingers. Then he found my opening and applied a little pressure until his fingers teased just outside the entrance.

"Speak!" He commanded and in true Draven style he wanted me to tell him what I wanted. I think he got off big time to hear me asking for it.

“It does, so be a good girl and give me what I want.” His fingers teased even more travelling to my clitoris making me squirm under his hands.

“Pll..eeeeaaa...sssee,” I sighed out and this was his green light. He plunged his fingers inside me and bit into me at the same time making me find my orgasm instantly. I was still riding the waves of pleasure as he sucked the life source out from me. This caused those waves to quickly turn tidal and I was screaming underneath him. I bit into the pillow to try and contain myself but with his free hand he quickly tugged the pillow from beneath me, causing the screams to come to his ears again.

He seemed to love the sound as his sucking intensified and his manhood grew stronger, pressing into me until my leg ached. Then I started to feel a little light headed and my body replaced the tensed muscles with sagging limbs. Draven let me go instantly and placed his hand over the two puncture marks in my neck which started to tingle. He remained there for longer than usual and when I was about to ask what he was doing he shook his head and said,

“Ssshhh... relax,” in his velvet voice. I did as I was told, closing my eyes and was soon finding my energy returning back to me, like Draven had just re-charged my batteries.

“I took too much from you, and I need you strong for what I want to do to you.” He said, once he had finished at my neck and I opened my eyes to find him staring intensely into my eyes. I started to feel my cheeks burn as his eyes took in every curve and line of my face. He was studying me, that much was clear and I wanted to turn away in my shyness, which is strange considering what he just did to me. He ran his fingers across my cheek and down to where his teeth had just had hold of me. I could still smell my sex on his hands and I don’t know why but it turned me on even more to know that part of me still remained on his skin.

“So beautiful, so innocent and utterly fragile. Purity at its highest existence.” He looked as though he was saying this to himself as he kept his eyes down making his long, thick lashes cast shadows under his eyes. Like this, his features looked so soft and young. Like this, he was a lover not a

fighter, and a man not a king.

His fingertips travelled down the hollow of my throat and kept on going until my top prevented it. This was when a naughty smile curved up on one side of Draven's lips. He looked as if an idea just entered his mind and before I had chance to ask, in one quick movement he rolled onto his back and pulled me with him. I was now staring down at him and sat straddling his stomach with my knees either side of him. My hair fell to one side making the end of the plait tickle his upper arm. He didn't giggle like I would have, as I don't think a man like Draven ever would but instead he let out a deep, throaty laugh before moving it further up my neck.

"Did that tickle?" I asked mischievously.

"No, of course not, a man like me doesn't get ticklish," he said trying to be serious but doing a lousy job of it. I raised one eyebrow at him making him smirk.

"Really? Then I'm afraid I will need proof on the matter...just to be sure, you understand"

"But of course...be my guest." He said motioning with his hand up and down his body.

I cleared my throat before saying,

"Umm I think I will need that removed before I conduct my research." I nodded down to his clothed chest and he looked down at himself.

"I accept that, you may proceed." He said in over exaggerated snobbery. I tried to hide my smile which must have been displayed as coy. He raised his arms to rest behind his head in the ultimate relaxed pose. I started at the bottom of his Grey T-shirt that was already showing a line of skin before the waistband of his jeans. A little trail of dark hairs could be seen making their way down to join the other thicker region that surrounded his manhood.

"Oh, I think I'm going to enjoy this." I commented making him try very hard to hide a smug, 'the cat got the cream' look!

I decided that slow and extremely gentle was the way to go and as I gripped at the material ready to pull up I purposely let the tips of my thumbs touch his sides as I pulled it upwards over his rippled stomach. Even then I could feel him shudder under my touch but when I looked up at his face it was still set in neutral. I was going to have to try harder!

He let me pull it up and over his head which now revealed his wide, naked chest. His solid muscles, even when relaxed, looked deadly strong. It had me wondering if he could kick a van to one side, being that strong on his lower half, then how much could he bench press with huge muscles like that!?

I thought I would go straight for the money and work at his sides, they were always a sure bet to get anyone squirming. I first used my fingertips and ran them upwards moving so slowly it all looked like slow motion. He flinched when I neared his underarm but still his face was set in stone.

“You’re going to have to do better than that my dear.” He said being cocky but I had to admit, it sure looked like he was loving all this attention! So I tried another tactic. I went back to the beginning and this time used my nails. I ran them up and down each time getting further up to his underarm. Each time I got closer, I could see him trying harder to resist the urge to laugh. I smiled at the sight of a victory that was so close to being mine.

“You’re breaking Draven,” I warned but he just shook his head although I noticed he kept his mouth closed.

“Ok, you asked for it, time for hard ball!” I squirmed further down his body and I heard him groan, only for a different reason. I lent my body downwards so that my mouth was just over the skin on his sides. I looked up before doing anything, to find his eyes closed and I wanted to laugh at the sight of him biting his lip. I didn’t touch him once but what I did do was a far worse tickling torture. I sucked in a lung full of air and blew it out over his skin so softly I felt his skin prickle up. I dragged myself up the length of him until I had reached the top but only found my disappointment when he hadn’t made a sound. Damn him he was good!

Right this was it, my last play. I moved back down and this time I did make contact. I started to kiss his velvet, golden skin, first over his stomach then down to his sides. I made sure to make them as light as humanly possible and as I made my way up I could feel his muscles flexing as the intensity of it all was becoming unbearable. I got closer to his arms when I heard his noises of gargled laughter. I wasn't content with just winning, I wanted to push him over the edge so I climbed his body until my lips were above his. He was about to kiss me but I pulled away and shook my head.

"My game, my rules, so hold still and see if you can take this big boy!" I said making him smile at my aggressive tone. Whatever he thought, he did as he was told anyway.

"Close your eyes please."

"Please? I didn't think demanding, girlfriends used words like please *little girl*?" This made me growl at my *little* pet name and he laughed, which I caught by saying,

"HA got ya!"

"Doesn't count, vixen!" Now this pet name I didn't mind so much.

"Fine then...close your eyes and shut up man slave!" I said trying to sound domineering but once again he laughed.

"That was adorable!"

"Draven!" I warned making him comply.

"Right...sorry mistress." He teased but I let it slide. I let him control his smile until both his mouth and eyes were closed and relaxed. Then with a fingertip I started to trace up his jaw line to his lips. I began tracing the outside of them with such a gentle touch that I could tell he wanted to have me taste them. I then decided to use my nail and drag it across making them twitch. I got even closer and brushed my lips along, stopping to wet them with my tongue, this was his limit...only one of a different kind.

“Enough!” He shouted as hands came up making me jump when they grabbed the tops of my arms. He then pulled me roughly to his face and kissed me with a desperate need to have me. He held the back of my head and shifted his weight up so that he was sitting with me on his lap. He turned my head and deepened the kiss until every inch of my mouth was explored by his extremely experienced tongue.

Then he moved his hands down to grip my backside to lift me up. He shifted underneath me and I knew why as his extending manhood came forward. It must have been annoying him the way it was before. He grabbed my top and did the same thing that I had done to him not long before, only he did it with a lot less grace, as the top flew over my head, only needing to break our kiss for less than a second.

We were now both topless in each other’s arms and I held onto his shoulders as he explored my breasts. His palms kneaded them like dough and his fingers and thumbs caught my nipples between them making me squirm. Of course every time I wriggled he would grow firmer until his want pressed painfully against me. There wasn’t enough room down there for all three of us!

“I want you!” He breathed in my mouth and the words would end in a deeper kiss.

“Yes...yes,” I replied breathlessly wondering if it even made it passed my lips.

Being at this point with Draven was like falling into a black hole. It was an endless state of want, no, not want but *need*. Like if he didn’t take me soon I would never stop falling, I would never land. I would be forever somewhere in between belonging to myself and Draven. And I wanted to belong to him with every beat my heart made. I wanted him to take me, to be inside me so that we could merge our bodies, our souls and our everlasting love. It would all be one.

I don’t remember feeling him removing the rest of our clothes but when I looked down there was ripped material in pieces around us. I gathered that

Draven couldn't wait either because after lifting me once more he hovered me over the growth of him. I felt the end wet and mingle with my own wetness.

I wanted it so badly I could have shouted out to the heavens but I knew why he was waiting...I had my eyes closed. See the thing with Draven is he is all about reactions, *my* reactions. He likes to experience mine as he makes me his own, as he fills my body with more pleasure I can take...he likes to watch. So I opened my eyes and stared into his.

“Good girl!” He said before letting gravity take care of the rest. He shot up through me, making me scream at the extreme pressure having him inside me felt like. He was big, there was no getting around that and I don't think it helped that I was small but somehow we just fit. I don't know how he didn't hurt me as much as he should but his movements were gentle to start with, so as that I could adjust to his size. And boy did I.

The rhythm picked up as Draven lost his gentle control. He did most of the work, holding my behind in a firm grip and moving me to his tempo. I, of course, didn't care what song it was, it was all amazing to feel. He seemed to know exactly the right moments when I was close to finding my release because he would pick up speed to drive me over the edge. He seemed to love the feel of my muscles constricting around him inside of me because he would close his eyes and lift his face towards the ceiling.

Meanwhile I was digging my nails into his back and screaming out in a pleasure so great, I could hardly stand it. I didn't know how many orgasms I could take and every time Draven seemed more eager to push the limits. My limits that was! He slowed down slightly to allow me time to regain my breath but it was only a minute and then he would be forcing my body down on him once again with a furious energy. I was panting and every twinge of great pleasure had me gripping onto him once more. Then this time he lent me back so my breasts came forward and protruded from my chest. This gave him full access as he clamped his mouth around one nipple and began to suck.

I found this so fulfilling that it only took a few seconds to make me cry

out mercy for I was coming yet again. He loved it but this time he couldn't stop. He carried on pumping and sucking so that I wasn't the only one finding my release. He held on to my back as he thrust up one last time then I felt the shuddering of him exploding inside me. He cried out a growl and then bit down on my nipple like a wild beast, sucking the blood out from me which in turn caused me to experience an orgasm within an orgasm. I came like never before and ended up collapsed on top of him.

That's when everything went dark.

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Chapter 42 –

Cruel interruptions.

I don't know how I got to where I was now but it was beautiful. It was a golden meadow that glistened in the sun's rays. Little daisies danced in the gentle breeze and when I looked down my skin was covered in a flowing white material that seemed alive. It snaked round my shoulders and worked its way down my naked body like it owned me. It was almost like invisible hands were behind the way it moved and when one side cupped my breast I was convinced it was Draven's doing. Where was I?

"Draven!" I called out but my voice echoed like I was somewhere else. It bounced off walls that weren't there and came back to me. I tried again.

"Draven, where are you?" I called out but once again it didn't come from my mouth, it came from a memory I couldn't see. I held my hands up to my throat but found other hands already there waiting for me. They weren't my own. I turned quickly but found no face to blame. I wished I could just relax into this dream world but my uncertainty wouldn't let me. I started to feel cold and held my arms with my hands. I felt safer hugging myself but not safe enough. I started to feel a presence close by but not a soul, apart from mine, was in this golden circle. I looked around more closely trying to study my surroundings.

There was a dark forest that acted like bars of a cage, edged around the sides that blocked any other view beyond. The trees seemed to sway from side to side like they were caught in a secret storm I couldn't see. The white

sheet had pulled in tighter forming its self around me like a second skin. It tingled under the sun and sparkled as though wet. I lifted the ends that skirted around my legs and held it to my face to find that it was wet. It smelled like blossoming lilies and felt like it was made from their petals.

“Why am I here?” I asked out loud to no one but I was answered by a whisper that came flowing out from deep within the deadly looking forest.

“Because I want you!” It wasn’t a voice I recognised and made me shudder from the possessive tone from which it spoke.

“Am I dreaming?” I asked nervously while holding myself.

“You are.” The voice made me jump as this time it came from close behind my ear. I could feel a large body behind me and I instantly relaxed as I knew it to be Draven. I felt his large hands rest on my shoulders and his fingers curled up to hold my neck.

“Why am here if I’m asleep?”

“Because I can control your dreams.” Once again the answer blew into my neck, covering me in a calm haze. I felt my tensed muscles lose tension and I lowered my body slightly.

“Why would you want to?” I asked, feeling like a child.

“You ask a lot of questions don’t you?” His deep voice held humour which I found strange. It felt different to how I imagined it would. I don’t know why but something deep inside was trying to tell me something was wrong. Hands then tensed around my neck into a hold before a more urgent voice spoke.

“Don’t listen. Just hear my voice, take it in and do as I say,... yes....say yes to me.” I was slipping away to somewhere I knew I would most certainly be lost. It felt like I was drunk but at the moment you say to yourself “You’re drunk!” I knew it was wrong whatever it was but I couldn’t stop myself from saying

“Yes!” causing his hands to relax.

“Good. Do you like it here Keira?” His hands ran down to my sides because my body started to sway. I was drifting further down and could only nod my answer.

“Would you like to stay here, here with me....forever?” It was such a seductive voice that there wasn’t one fibre in my body that could have said no. I truly wanted to stay. I wanted these arms to remain around me till the end of time. Keeping me safe from everyone who wanted to hurt me. My mind flashed back to Morgan and my prison. My concrete cell that was a basement in Hell. I saw myself being touched by unwelcomed hands as they roamed my body, invading my soul with venomous thoughts. I saw myself crying in my sleep as I pretended it to be in my dreams but deep down I knew it was real, I knew it was happening, that’s why I cried. After these visions stopped the arms that held me pulled me closer into a deep cage of muscle and bone.

“I would never let anyone hurt you...Never!” He said in anger and I had never believed in a voice with so much certainty before this moment...even if it was all a dream.

“Oh Draven,” I said softly finding words one last time before I gave myself to this place forever.

“I’m sorry Keira..... but not even he can get to you here!”

That’s when I cried and crumbled to the floor despite the arms around me. My legs folded underneath me and I felt his body do the same. I cried out at him

“NO... NO,...PLEASE.... NO!” I turned to face the man and without looking, through fear, I pounded my fists against a huge chest of pale muscle.

“You can’t take me! I want to go back...please let me go.” I pleaded with the man in between sobs. He lent his head down to rest on mine and soothed back my hair that was flowing wildly in the wind. I looked up to see his

blond hair doing the same but the colour was darkened by the now stormy skies. It was like the Gods had turned angry and had taken away the sun as punishment.

He waited for me to calm and then whispered down into my ear.

“It is too late for that now...far too late. Even your dreams are not safe from me. You will be mine Keira....you will be mine and *soon!*” With that I finally looked up to find Lucius staring down at me with eyes filled with blood. Red tears ran down his cheeks and landed on my hair, making the contrast scream out. They weren’t just filled with blood, but they looked as though made of blood. The irises were flamed and licking out at the deep veined liquid that made every living thing possible.

His blood was on fire.

I screamed out and used every last shred of strength I had to pull my mind back to my own control. I thought of Draven and the love we had shared not long ago. I thought of the waves of pleasure he caused me to feel. Then I saw us both, locked in each other’s bodies, bound so tight we looked like one. Everything in sync, the way we moved, every breath, every scream. There was no greater force than ours making love and this is what brought me back, it was what freed me from my own dreams, the ones Lucius held in his hands.

I bolted up with a start and felt Draven shift quickly next to me.

“Keira, what’s wrong?” His worried voice made me smile. I was just so happy to be back that I turned quickly and threw myself into him. He was caught off guard but he held me securely like he knew how much I needed it. He gave me a minute like this before asking me again.

“I’m fine, just a bad dream.” I said knowing I should be telling him about it but for some reason I couldn’t let it out. Why did this keep happening? Why could I never speak about it? As soon as these thoughts

entered my mind it started to shut down. I started losing the questions, like losing a thread on a knitted sweater. Like it was being pulled so quickly it started to disappear until there was nothing left to hold on to.

“Are you alright? Tell me about it!” Draven pressed for an answer I couldn’t give, so I lied.

“I can’t really remember it now, let’s just forget about it. How long was I asleep anyway?” I asked trying to dodge anymore questions. Draven looked unconvinced but let it go anyway.

“Only minutes, you passed out on me...I was worried I went too far.” He looked like he did when he was guilty but I smiled back at him.

“No, you didn’t. You can never go too far.” This is when his guilty looked turned to steel. He frowned and pulled me close, holding my head the way Lucius had done in my dream. I tried not to shudder but I couldn’t help it, thankfully Draven took it for a chill and covered me up with the blanket.

“Keira, you still don’t understand how much I hold back with you. If I ever totally lost control I could hurt you and I would never allow myself to do that. I would never forgive myself!” He said the last part under his breath but I heard it anyway. He held me protectively in the cocoon of his arms and I sighed at the idea of him holding back on me.

“How much do you hold back?” I asked trying to look up at him but he held me still, preventing it.

“A lot. You are fragile Keira, much more so than my own kind.” This hurt me. In fact, it cut into me like a blade.

“If I’m so bloody fragile then why be with me if you have to hold back!...I mean, why not have one of your own kind to satisfy your real needs!” I know this was spiteful of me to say but I couldn’t help what came out. He pulled me roughly back to face him and I could see the anger and hurt mixed into one. I almost whimpered out my sorry as soon as I saw his face. It was stone...emotional stone. I knew I had gone too far and I knew that I had

truly hurt him with my words. He pulled away from me and got up out of bed without saying a word. I wanted him to shout at me, to shake me...anything but the cruel, cold hard silence that I had never received from Draven before.

“You had better get up and get dressed” He finally said and now I wished he hadn’t!

“You want me to leave?” I asked in shock. Draven had never, ever before once asked me to leave him and I could feel the tears quickly start to form.

“Your cousin will be here soon, you shouldn’t keep her waiting.” He said without looking at me once. All the while I had watched him get dressed, keeping his eyes to the floor. Then he simply walked over to the door and opened it. However before leaving completely, he stopped with his hand on the handle and was about to look up to see the pain on my face only he didn’t. Instead he shook his head as if trying to get something out of there and left. He closed the door with a bit more force than what was needed making me jump at the slam. Then I cried....again.....for the hundredth time today....

I don’t know how long I had been crying for but it didn’t feel enough. I wanted to get up and find him. I wanted to beg for forgiveness, tell him how stupid I was but I couldn’t move. I was locked there and frozen in my misery. Here I was, just had the best sex of my life and I had ruined it with only a few words! I hated myself for it! I would never forget Draven’s face. The face of someone hearing the cruellest words they had ever heard. On hearing them from the lips you kiss in passion. The lips that smile upon seeing you. The lips that tell you they love you. How could I have done that? I wasn’t a cruel person. If anything I was usually the one that kept her feelings under tight grip but today what had happened? Of course I had no one to blame but myself....my stupid, stupid self!

I carried on like that till the minutes ticked by but soon the sound of Abba was interrupting my mental scolding. I got up and didn’t even care that

I was stark naked. I felt numb so what did it matter? I found my phone inside my jacket pocket, which was placed over a chair...that Draven had probably placed over a chair.

“Hel...” I didn’t even get chance to finish before a voice starting screeching at me.

“Where the Hell are you?” Hilary’s voice boomed on the other end making me wince.

“Umm...coming, where are you?” I asked trying to calm her down but it didn’t help and yet again I was stupid to believe otherwise.

“What do you mean “Where am I?!” I’m at the Fucking club!” Her foul language wasn’t a shock, I already knew there was about zero percent ladylike manners in her!

“Right, well stay by the bar and I will be down there. Give me ten minutes.”

“Ten minutes! Get down here now or better still, send Dominic to keep me company.” She said and I could hear the smirk replace the pissed off face.

“Look the longer I’m on the phone the longer I will be...so just...” That’s when she hung up. Now instead of wanting to cry I wanted to scream! I was close to giving up but instead I ran in the bathroom to get the quickest shower I could. I was almost crying again at the thought of washing away Draven’s scent but it couldn’t be helped.

I kept my hair dry and once out of the shower tried to smooth it out as much as I could without the use of a hairbrush. I quickly dried myself, to a degree but when pulling on a pair of clean jeans I realised I’d missed my legs as I found getting them on without tugging was difficult. This is when Sophia came in. She found me in a bra and bent over the arm of the chair pulling the waistband with frustration. I turned to see her walk in, hoping it was Draven, when my hand slipped and smacked me in the face, before rolling backwards off the seat, landing on my back. I looked up finding her peering over the seat

with an amused look.

“Wow, you even make getting dressed look dangerous.” She mocked.

“It’s a talent” I replied sarcastically. I got off the floor and grabbed the top I had picked off the armchair and pulled it on with embarrassment flooding my face. It was a long sleeved black top with a faded peace sign on the front. I thought it a good choice and hoped Draven would find the deeper meaning.

“So...what did you say to my brother to turn him into such a foul mood?” Oh great, now the Demon sister to contend with.

“Why what did he say?” I asked sheepishly as I pulled my gloves up. I noticed her glance briefly at my scars before I hid them from sight.

“It’s not what he said...It’s more like what he just destroyed.” I couldn’t hide my shock and also couldn’t help but ask,

“What did he just destroy?”

“Oh, only a priceless vase that was given to him as a gift from the Qianlong Emperor, who was the fifth emperor of the Qing dynasty in 1736! Let’s put it one way, one like it sold at auction for about \$80.”

“Thousand!” I screamed hoping I hadn’t caused his temper at such high costs!

“Oh no, not thousands, think bigger, think millions!” She said coolly and I fell back into the chair.

“80 million dollars! Oh God!” I held my head in my hands and it felt like it weighed a ton.

“Oh come on, it’s not like you broke it...well threw it across the room, smashing out the window and landing in the canyon below, but that’s beside the point. Besides he will just fix it again, That is, when he’s in a better mood....What happened?”

“It’s all my fault, I said something really stupid!” I said shaking my head but she just smiled at God only knows what.

“Come now Keira, my brother is a big boy. Ok, granted he has anger issues but he will not stay mad for long. After all he did send me in here to check you were alright.” At this my head whipped up as though on a bungee.

“He did?” I asked full of hope. I mean he would have to care if he sent Sophia to check on me...wouldn’t he?

“He did!” She said repeating my words. At that I stood up and grabbed my jacket as it was cooler now without Draven to warm me. It was always colder without him in the room.

“You never told me what you said?” Sophia asked me as she followed me down the hall. I only stopped before I opened the door that led out to the club.

“It doesn’t matter but do me a favour?” She nodded and grabbed the door for me.

“Tell Draven that I’m sorry!” I said and walked out into the crowded space that was the VIP. I knew what I must have looked like, eyes still red and puffy from a day’s crying, hair un-brushed and wild. I still had little wet hair that clung to my neck and could feel the frizz trying to escape the clip I twisted it up into. My clothes clung to my damp skin and felt uncomfortable as I walked. But I did walk...I walked on and through the club with the look of someone trying to hide their pain. I carried on until his table came into view and the man himself.

I noted he too had changed and his look was haunting me. It was so harsh and cold, it was hard to believe it was the same man. His permanent frown forced his eyes smaller and fierce. He was shooting back drinks with little care and one glass I saw him crush into a tiny crumpled piece that he threw aside. My gut hurt at the sight of his anger, knowing I was the cause was crushing. I almost wanted to go up there. Get down on my knees and beg but I couldn’t, for oneI was frightened.

Vincent saw me and his look filled with pity. I don't know whether it was for his brother's anguish or mine. Draven noticed his eyes and looked my way. For a second they softened at the sight. He noted the redness in my eyes and closed his own. But then when he opened them, all I saw was a purple flame engulf them. It was like he had just played the words I had said to him over again and all he found there was his hurt. Then he swiftly turned his face from mine and barked an order for another drink. Everyone on the table looked too scared to speak, of course the only one smiling was Aurora.

I sighed and looked back down at feet that I made move towards the stairs. Of course, no will in the world could stop me from looking back before leaving. I found Draven staring at me but when I saw this he knocked back his shot glass and threw it aside making it smash at Loz's feet. I looked away one last time and ran down the steps before the tears could start again.

I found Hilary easily on account of what she was wearing. She had on skin tight, black leather pants that would have put Sandy from Grease to shame on the tightness level. She had matched this with a red leather halter top that laced up the front. She had pulled it on that tight that what little breasts she did have, were now closer to her chin. I think she had mistaken "Gothic nightclub" for "Whore house chic".

I couldn't help but look at the door as means of escape. If only I could get away with running from everything. At the moment it was more my guilt I wanted to run from but I knew that would follow me where ever I went so what was the point?

Hilary was standing at the bar and had her back end sticking out at an awkward angle. If this was to show off her body more, to me it just made her butt look bony! Don't get me wrong, I'm not usually a mean bitter person and very rarely bitchy but where my cousin was concerned....well, it was fair game!

She hated me for some unknown reason that I couldn't care less about but years ago this unfounded hate would drive me insane wondering why. I had no idea what it was all based on but one thing was for sure, I had become an expert living with it. I swallowed every insult, put up with every snide

comment and had to accept just about every stupid and outrageous thing she did, which, given her sexual tendencies, I was surprised the girl hadn't gotten into more trouble than she had. This was a girl without limits! Older men, younger men, married men and even a convicted man, so I'd heard. She had done it all... literally.

"About bloody time!" She said as I joined her. I didn't reply but just waved at Mike, ignoring her.

"Hey Kaz, just can't get enough of the place?" He joked and I laughed out, one of those fake laughs that you reserve for hiding true feelings. No one ever suspects they're not sincere and it's better than just saying out right that you're not in the mood for jokes because you think your boyfriend hates you right now!

Mike looked to my right and waited for me to introduce my evil cousin and from the sounds of the clearing throat next to me, he wasn't the only one.

"Umm sorry, Mike, this is my cousin Hilary, Hilary this is Mike my work friend."

"Work friend?" He cocked his head to the side at my classification of our friendship.

"Well, we only see each other at work" I reminded him.

"Yes why is that?" He asked making me smile for the first time in what seemed like hours. My smile was my answer and his flirting didn't go unnoticed.

"Hi, I'm Mike, your cousin's *work friend*." He said smiling but Hilary was uninterested due to his interest in me!

"Charmed!" She said as he took her hand to shake but her face spoke volumes, she was less than charmed. This was until she spotted another contender...the lovely Jack. He came up behind me and gave me a hug. I turned into him and it felt good in his arms. I wanted to stay there and tell him all my problems. He was such a good friend, the type you could spill

your life's woes to and he would just sit there and listen, not ever judging you, he wouldn't give that "I know how it feels crap". When did people even know how it felt, how could they when everyone experiences their feelings differently. Look at Hilary for example, she displays her hate for me openly but I keep mine hidden. Sometimes people use pain and sadness to harbour it into something positive, while others hide it away and cry until they are empty. This is why I loved Jack. And this is why I had to keep him away from the venomous Hilary before she infected him with her poison.

"Jack!" I said his name like it was a lifeline and he knew something was wrong when he saw my face looking up at him.

"Keira are you alright?" The very question had me close to tears, but I closed my eyes to push them back.

"Sorry Jack, this is my cousin Hilary." I said hating introducing her but not having much choice. He turned his attention to my cousin and she looked more than happy with her discovery. I mean, who could blame her, after all, apart from the Dravens, Jack was the most handsome guy in the club at anytime. Tall, athletic build, bronze coloured hair that flopped in his toffee brown eyes that had flecks of gold. That soft featured face that housed one of the greatest smiles I had ever seen. It was enough to melt any woman's heart...except mine that was.

Nearly once, but my heart had already been captured by another, but it was still flattering to know how Jack felt about plain old me. He was also one of the only people that knew my true past which was special for other reasons. I could trust Jack, I knew that, and it gave me so much comfort to know.

"Hi there, nice to meet you." he said and this time she gave him more of a reaction than she had done with poor Mike.

"Well Hello there, Keira didn't tell me she had a friend that works as a model." She said, shamelessly flirting. Jack smiled and then she was lost, that smile was all it took for any female with a sexual urge and Hilary had that in the millions.

“Did they teach that English charm at your school?” Jack asked flirting back causing Hilary to flutter her fake eyelashes at him.

“Oh no, I was just born with it.” She replied winking, which almost made me want to gag! I cleared my throat and tried to put a spanner in the works before the engine went into overdrive.

“Umm Jack, is RJ here?”

“Oh Kizzy Cat, more handsome friends for me to meet?” She said putting on her nicest charm that I knew was as fake as the platinum hair on her head! A moment ago she was biting my head off, now I was Kizzy Cat!

“RJ is my sister and I think she’s on her way with the rest of the gang.” Jack said tearing his eyes away from Hilary and back to me.

“Designated driver tonight then?”

“You got it!” He said and gave me an affectionate chin shake like I was a child. Hilary looked like she wanted to scratch my eyes out because of it and this made me smile.

“But hey, can I get you lovely ladies a drink?” This was when Hilary barged in front of me and took her place next to Jack.

Jack bought us both a drink, but by the time the rest turned up I was already on my third while the other two were still on their first. I had quickly become the third wheel and if it hadn’t been for Mike I would have been stood there like a right loner! They were flirting with each other like peacocks show their feathers to attract a mate. It wouldn’t have surprised me if the humping would soon begin. Hilary would flick her hair back every now and again which would land in my face. Jack would try and include me but before I could answer Hilary would interrupt as though the question had been aimed at her.

Thankfully RJ’s pink spikes came into view and I almost ran into her arms.

“Whoa there sparky, where’s the fire?” I gestured over my shoulder at the corrupt and the corrupter that were so close it looked as though they were sharing air!

“Ah the dreaded cousin has landed then?” She said dryly.

“Please help me!”

“Lead the way my young padawan.” I laughed at her Star Wars reference.

“Hilary, this is my sister RJ.” Jack said as he received an elbow in the side.

“Oh hi, Keira mentioned you.” She said rudely making RJ turn an evil glare her way. If there was something you didn’t do, it was piss off RJ!

“Hey!” She said, unimpressed and turned back to her brother.

“Yo Bro, you wanna get me a drink or what!” She said clicking her black painted nails at him to get his attention away from Hilary.

“You know I’m not your wallet Rach!” He only ever called her this when he disapproved of something his sister did.

“Shut up Jack! Anyway I bought you the T shirt you’re wearing, so if it wasn’t for me you would be half naked by now...and this is the thanks I get...I don’t know, kids today.” She said to me with a smirk.

“Umm, naked sounds good to me!” Hilary said, making Jack blush slightly before giving her a wink.

“Come on Hilary, I will show to our usual spot.” Thankfully RJ intervened and dragged her away, leaving me and Jack at the bar. We needed to talk.

“Jack, I think I need to warn you about my cousin.”

“Warn me, she seems really nice.” He said smiling. Deluded but smiling.

“Yes *seems* so but I know her, she’s...” Before I could continue he stopped me.

“Keira, if this is going to be a bitch session I’ll pass. I like to make my own judgments if that’s alright with you?” It was the first time Jack had ever snapped at me and I was gobsmacked. But I didn’t give up.

“Look, I’m just trying to warn you that’s all. She may seem nice but...”

“That’s enough! Look, you might have some issues, but here she is, come all this way to see you and this is how you treat her, trying to warn your friend against her. Frankly I’m surprised at you, I wouldn’t have pegged you for the jealous type, Keira, but I guess what she says is true...”

“WHAT?” I shouted making some of the other customers stare at me. Did I miss something?

“She doesn’t know why you act this way towards her but she can’t help that you’ve always been jealous of her. I think it’s sad that you make her feel this way, she clearly loves you.” By this time I know my mouth was gaping open but it couldn’t be helped. All that came to mind was what I said.

“BITCH!” I know it was tactless but after three Coronas, to Hell with tact! Jack looked at me like he was really seeing me for the first time and he didn’t like what he saw. He shook his head and left muttering something to himself. GREAT! This was just bloody marvellous! Now I was the bad guy. One thing was for sure, this had been one shitter of a day and there was only one answer for it...

Lots and lots of tequila!

Chapter 43

A Little Too Much Fuel

So that's what I did! As the night went on I drank lots. I drank more than lots. I drank until I got drunk and the pain of the day's events didn't bother me anymore. RJ had helped me in this. As it turned out she hated my evil cousin just about as much as I did. She had got pretty fed up of her stupid personality, quicker than most. Sorry for the weak insult but when your drunk it's hard to come up with more complex name calling. I still had fun though.

It was just me and RJ at the bar drinking and bitching about my horrid cousin. Soon I had forgotten all about stupid men in the world that hated me right now. Instead me and RJ solved all the world's problems and soon the answer became clear.

"MEN! Bloody men! They're all the sodding same!" I said not being able to help the full northern accent that came through whenever I was drunk. This made RJ giggle, which turned out to be her drunken trait.

"You know Draven's mad at me?" I said after swigging back my seventh Corona.

"Really, why?" She said swishing her rum and coke around in her short glass.

"Because I said something really stupid."

“Did you mean it?” She asked in earnest, which for drunken RJ, was surprising.

“Mean what?” I said missing the conversation because I was concentrating on the ice swirling around in her glass...man I needed to get a grip.

“You know, what you said, that made him mad?”

“Yes..no...oh I don’t know. Do you wanna know the worst thing about dating Draven is?” This made her turn serious. She whipped her head round and tried to focus on my face, which looked more difficult than it sounds.

“I didn’t think there could be anything bad about dating that God of a man.” RJ said, sighing as if imagining it for herself. Of course I laughed and said,

“Well yes, he is a God. King, God and supernatural wonder sex but that’s beside the point!” I’m thankful that when I said this she didn’t take it as literal as I had meant it or I could have more explaining to do and not just to RJ!

“Damn it! I knew the sex would be amazing you lucky cow!”

“Yes, yes it is, oh my god it’s mind blowing but...” I said getting horny just thinking about it.

“But what? What else matters?” We giggled before I came back to what I was trying to say.

“Ok, so you were saying the worse thing is...” She held out her hand to prompt me back.

“It’s being with someone that has the longest string of amazing looking girlfriends to contend with and when I say amazing, I really mean drop dead gorgeous, Angels falling from the sky type of shit!” Another thing about my getting drunk is not only does my accent come through but I don’t hold back quite as much on the swearing part. God, I was starting to sound like Hilary!

“Ouch! That gotta hurt the ego!” RJ said, shaking her spikes.

“You have no idea, I met one of them today and *I* almost fell in love with her!” I said making her giggle again.

“Ok, this calls for another drink!” She said standing up from the stool and nearly falling down it. My hand flashed out to steady her so quickly I surprised myself. For one, I sure had good reactions for a drunken person and when did I get that strong?

“Wow, good reactions...like a cat...Kizzy cat hehe!” She sniggered and we both laughed again. After we had finished laughing stupidly she got Mike’s attention, who had clearly found the whole of our drunken display funny. He had a constant smirk every time he looked our way.

“Mike, my good fellow, could you please get me and my lovely pink haired friend here a drink of your finest?” I said putting on the poshest English accent that I could in my state. He laughed as I waved at him like the queen does and RJ copied.

“Wish I could girls, but I have had my orders, no more alcohol.”

“What! That’s bullshit!” RJ said and I stopped her and said that wasn’t the English way and showed her how it was done.

“Now, now my good man surely not, be a doll and replenish our drinks.” Of course this was followed by a hiccup, which made us all laugh.

“Sorry, no can do ladies, the order comes from above.” He said and RJ leaned in and whispered,

“What, God?” Mike nearly wet himself, he laughed that hard, then he nodded behind us to the VIP making it time for me to drop the ‘English charm’,

“Bullshit!”

“Sorry, but it looks like your boyfriend doesn’t like a drunken Keira!”

He said smugly, making us both frown.

“Oh dear, looks like he’s still mad.” RJ said finishing off her drink.

“Hey we’re off, you coming?” Jack had come up to us and once he saw the state we were in, he frowned like the sight of us having legal fun was prohibited.

“Oh great, one drunken sister to contend with!” He glared at me like this was all my fault and I glared back. No doubt Hilary had spread even more lies about me.

“Kizzy! You’re drunk!” She said pretending to be horrified. Not long ago this girl was thrown out of college for smoking weed in class! I bet that story she’d missed when chatting to the gullible Jack!

“However will I get home now?” She said like some pathetic English damsel in need of a knight.

“Don’t worry, I will see you get home, even if others don’t seem to care!” Jack snapped at me. I was trying hard to come up with the greatest of come backs but in the end I just grunted like some strange fairytale troll. Jack rolled his eyes, while RJ leaned over into my ear and said,

“Good one!”

They started to walk off and I shouted out to them.

“Wait...how do I get home?” I asked in a pleading voice that I hated to hear.

“Well, I can’t take you, I’m at my limit as it is. Besides you should have thought of that before you got tanked up. My sympathies to Draven!” He said coldly before leaving with the others. RJ waved over Jack’s shoulder, as now he was supporting most of her body weight.

“Great!” I said out loud earning me some weird looks by depressed Goths. Ok, so this was unfair, not all Goths were depressed but Hell, I was

bitter. In the space of a couple of hours I had nearly been kidnapped, pissed off my boyfriend and lost my best friend to my arch-nemesis.

It was not a great start to anyone's week.

Of course, I knew what I had to do now, I had to face my Demon! I walked back to the bar and plonked myself down with a sigh. There was nothing else I could do, I had to go back up there or I would have nowhere else to stay. I considered waiting till everyone had gone and sleeping down here, but then I would just have looked like the coward I was. I wasn't even sure Draven would let me stay? I mean after all the times I had seen Draven angry, this was the worst. I mean him shouting at me I could take, I could handle that but silence...That I wasn't used to from Draven. My guilt was over whelming but now it made it worse. Did he know that I was drunk? I sincerely hoped not.

"You ok?" Mike asked me quietly, as though to pull me from my sad state. I just shrugged my shoulders like a child and hopped off the seat.

"I guess I'd better go now, but I will see you later, thanks Mike." I said before dragging myself over to the staircase I knew well. I weaved through the moving bodies that were making their way to the exit. Of course, it was closing time and I was the only one moving this way. The band were getting their stuff ready to leave and I nearly fell over a guy's drum kit that was littered around the floor ready for packing away.

"Whoa there, easy girly." A man said keeping me up straight. He wasn't much higher than me but his spiked Mohawk more than made up for it.

"Thanks." I said giving him a drunken goofy smile.

"No problem cutie." He said, winking at me. Bless him, at least he thought my behaviour was cute...hopefully he wouldn't be the only one tonight, I thought as I reached the guarded door. Once again the two guards that always manned this door stood, arms folded. Of course as usual they didn't say anything to me which really got my back up.

“You know a Hello, Howdy, even a bloody head nod wouldn’t go amiss!” I said throwing my hands up dramatically. They both frowned at me then looked at each other for the answer. Neither said a word which made me screech out a “Grrrr, forget it guys!” I then pushed past them, not caring about a reaction. It was one of the first times I got to open the door before they did. I stormed upstairs, panting all the way. I stopped at the closed door at the top before going in. It took me back to my first time and how nervous and unsure I’d been.

When I walked through, my eyes quickly searched out Draven’s table but my heart dropped when I saw his space was empty. I don’t know why, but the next person’s space I went to was Aurora’s. It was wrong of me, I mean I trusted Draven right? Then why did my heart plummet when I saw that she too was missing. I decided to walk around the back so that no one would see me. Everyone was far too busy to notice as I walked round with my hood drawn over my face. Of course I didn’t look so inconspicuous when I kept bumping into chairs.

“Sorry,” I would mutter as I snaked in and out of the back tables. I turned my head to say another sorry for knocking some poor Demon’s jacket off the back of his chair making him mutter something back I couldn’t understand. That’s when I bumped into my first Draven.

“Opps, my fault!” I said before looking up swaying.

“Keira?” Vincent’s kind face looked down at me now that my hood had fallen back.

“Oh, hey Vince,” I said trying to act cool but considering I never called him that I wasn’t fooling anyone. He tried to frown but couldn’t keep the amusement off his face.

“Don’t suppose you have seen your big, angry bro around this shindig have ya?” I asked making his shock at hearing me speak like this deepen his eyes. He even laughed making me giggle.

“Come on happy, I think you need some air.” He said taking my arm to

steady myself.

“Oooh, air is good,” I said and followed my blonde shepherd. Once outside, the cold air hit me making me feel more lightheaded than before. I turned round and nearly lost my footing making Vincent reach out to steady me. We both turned round at the same time, making it so I was facing the night with my back to the door. He moved from holding my waist and decided holding my arm was safer.

“Feeling better?” He asked softly, which was nice to hear after being picked on all night...picked on, man I sounded like a child!

“I’m fine really and I know what you’re thinking!” I said trying not to let the hiccups free that I could feel brewing. He smiled at me and then crossed his arms over his chest...man alive he was sexy! No, what was I thinking...wrong Draven.

“Oh really?” He asked dripping in smugness.

“Yes, you think I’m drunk, but I’m *soo* not.” I said trying not to fall on the spot.

“Umm that may be more convincing without the hiccupping and swaying but whatever you say.” He was teasing me and it made me smile.

“I thought you were supposed to be the good one?” I mocked making him laugh.

“I’m not the one drunk!” He replied.

“Ssshhh, don’t say that, Draven might hear you and then I will be in even more trouble!” I said holding my finger to my mouth to continue the “Ssshhhing.”

“He already has!” A voice said behind me, making my hand cover my mouth. Vincent glanced over me and looked like he wanted to burst out laughing. I think I would have kicked him if he had. I turned round to see my boyfriend stood there with his arms folded and as usual...frowning.

“Ah shit!” I said making his frown deepen. This was enough for Vincent and he let out a series of raucous laughter.

“Thanks for the heads up, Vinnie boy!” I said making Draven’s, face flash a moment of amusement. (my Draven that was).

“Anytime Keira dear, have fun you two!” He said as he walked past me but before he left, he whispered something in his brother’s ear. Draven didn’t respond but just closed his eyes briefly. Then we were left alone.

“Ok, come on, let’s have it.” I said motioning with my hands.

“Have what exactly, because I think you have had enough to drink?”

“Touché, pussy cat!” I don’t know why I said this but Hell who does when their drunk?

“Pussy cat?” One eyebrow rose at the question.

“Bloody Hell Draven, it’s just a saying, I’m not calling you a cat!” I don’t know what was going through my head but I’m pretty sure I meowed after saying this...Umm the look on Draven’s face only confirmed my fears.

“Anyway I’m not drunk...more like tipsy.” At this he snorted out his disbelief.

“Doubtful Keira, I have monitored how much you have had to drink for starters and I know your limits.”

“Better than your own, no doubt.” I said thinking what a good come back it was but then remembering this evening’s argument and the look on his face, it so wasn’t!

“Umm, I didn’t mean that...sorry.”

“You know, you have a dark and deadly tongue when you want to, but I never took you for being cruel” Ok that hurt!

“Oh my God! Draven, this is stupid. If you really think I’m that bloody innocent than leave me now because I’m not! Look I’m not claiming to be bloody perfect...far from it clearly, but I don’t want to be pers...umm that word...”

“Persecuted?”

“Yeah that one, one of those every time I make a mistake. I am human after all!” I said finishing it with a hiccup. Apart from forgetting words and swaying, I think it was a pretty good speech.

“So you’re sorry?” He asked in truth.

“Oh jeez, get with the program, Of course I am for Christ’s sake, I have been all night!” His eyebrows knitted together and I frowned back at him, at least I think I did.

“Without the profanities, Keira.”

“Oh shut up you fool!” I shouted at him, getting angry that he wasn’t big enough to accept my apology without making me jump through hoops! He looked dumbfounded at my outburst but I didn’t care.

“Me the fool? Ha, that is rich coming from your state!”

“Ok so I’m drunk, so bloody sue me!”

“I thought you were tipsy, which is it Keira?” He folded his arms again but looked like he would be ready to catch me at any minute.

“See there you go again...all foolish and such. Of course I’m drunk! But it’s not like it’s against the law...I’m a...umm ...an adult.” I said trying to fold my own arms but I wasn’t sure I made it.

“It shows!” He said dryly.

“I’m twenty...something and anyway in my land of home the limit is eighteen so I’m well old enough!” He looked like he was trying very hard not

to laugh at me which was making me mad.

“I’m not the law Keira, you do as you please ...as always.” He said softly but I could detect the coldness in this last part.

“Do you know something?” I asked opening my eyes wider at him.

“What?”

“This is...is...”

“Is?” He had to hold me steady as I got closer to him, which made my mind lose its train of thought.

“Bullshit! I’m sorry and that’s that. If you refuse to accept that, then you need to...to...”

“To...?” Once again he was mocking me but I noticed he had got closer to me and was holding me tighter on the arms.

“To grow up! Yes, you need to grow up. I mean you’re a bloody half Demon and my stupid words hurt you. You know I didn’t mean it and it’s your fault anyway!” I had to stop because for some reason I couldn’t manage talking and breathing at the same time.

“And how is this all my fault exactly?” He was letting his guard down because he was most definitely more amused than angry even though I was shouting at him.

“I can’t help that you have so many beautiful women all lining up. A string of ex goddess girlfriends that want to make ashtrays out of my head!” Ok, so now he was laughing at me and this made me push him.

“Stop it!”

“I would if it wasn’t all so ridiculous.” He said without letting me go...this was probably more for my own good as I would have no doubt landed on my butt.

“You’re saying my feelings are ridiculous?”

“Yes and your state of inebriation just adds to it!” Ok this time I did manage to pull away and after a wobble here and there I stayed on my feet at least.

“Steady!” He said reaching to me but didn’t make contact.

“My feelings are not funny! Do you think I like feeling so inferior?”

“And how exactly do *I* make you feel inferior? Do I not give you everything, do I not treat you well, have I not given my heart to you?” Ok angry Draven again. Now it was his turn to be dramatic. When I didn’t answer he carried on.

“I have given you parts of myself that I never knew I had to give. I will do anything for you, you know this and as you said so delicately, that YES I am in fact a Demon and yet your words cut me down like the Devil’s touch. Does that not tell you something? Does that not scream out to you just how much I must care, love and adore you, if but only a few words do this to me? My God Keira, think woman!” Ok so now my rage had been replaced by tears of feeling very, very sorry for myself.

“Don’t do that.” He said calming down his outburst.

“Do what?” I snuffled out while rubbing my runny nose on my sleeve.

“Keira, please don’t cry.” This somehow made me cry more and he reached out to hold me but I pulled back.

“I’m not crying! I have a cold.” I said lamely and when he tilted his head it reminded me of all those times before. The times when people used to do that after the ‘incident’ I would say “I’m fine” And they would tilt their heads in disbelief.

“Come here, let me see.”

“You can’t see a cold Draven.” I stated and he smiled at me.

“I can, Supernatural remember? Come to me.” He held out his hand for me to take but I remained stubborn.

“Did you really mean all that stuff?” I asked sniffing and rubbing my nose again.

“Yes I did. Those are my feelings Keira, whether you wish to believe them or not. It is the truth and it pains me you have to ask...when will you trust me Catherine?” He said my first name like it would get through to me, making more of an impact...of course it worked, the jammy bastard!

“It’s not you that I don’t trust.” At this he shook his head, he didn’t understand me.

“It’s me.” He looked hurt at this and ran his hands through his hair, which was a clear sign he was frustrated by my answer.

“You’re...you’re not sure about your feelings for me?” It looked painful to ask.

“No it’s not that. I know how I feel and I love you more than I have ever loved anything else before in my life. But I don’t trust myself not to screw it all up!” There it was, it was out now for Draven to have to deal with. He looked pretty relieved if you asked me.

“Oh Keira my girl, you would have to do something pretty extreme to change the way I love you.”

“Like?”

“Well I wouldn’t take kindly to you trying to kill me!” He joked...like I could, it would be like the moth against the flame.

“And cheating is a big no, no!” I said more for his benefit than mine, knowing I never would.

“NO! No one should ever touch you! Keira this is something I would never allow, you understand?” He looked furious at the idea and his purple

eyes expressed it deeper.

“Well that goes the same for you too mister!” I said standing up to him and poking him in the chest. He looked shocked that even in his full Demon rage I would still stand up to him. His shock soon turned to delight and pride.

“I am not afraid of you!” I said holding my chin high. He then grabbed quickly at the tops of my arms and pulled me close. I had to strain my head back to see his face.

“I would have it no other way my little vixen!” He said down at me before crushing his lips to mine.

And with that kiss I felt the weight of the day and evening lift and fade away into the night...well as far as I was concerned the night could have it!

Because now Draven had forgiven me

Well, it was about bloody time!

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Chapter 44

Passageways And Persuasion.

I don't know how it happened, but when he had finished with me I was left feeling even more drunk and also horny! I had to step back from him to clear my head, which was difficult considering I was feeling very drunk.

"Where are you going, come back to me?" He was being demanding but in my stubborn mind I was calling the shots which is what I decided to tell him.

"Excuse me Mr Demon King, I'm the one in control here. You just remember that please." I said flicking hair back that was already back. I wasn't what you called the smoothest drunk in the pub, that was for sure!

Draven straightened up and looked like he was trying not to laugh.

"I am sorry my princess, what would you wish for me to do?" I smiled at the thought, I then crossed my arms and tapped my top lip, missing the first time and hitting my nose. This he laughed at, which earned him a look of warning.

"Forgive me your highness for my insolence. It will not happen again." He then bowed to me like I was royalty, making me giggle. I tried to compose myself and I coughed back another giggle.

"See that it doesn't. Hehe this is fun right?" I laughed out and he rolled his eyes at me before laughing again.

"If you say so, love."

"Hey, less of the mocking and placating please. You're ruining my fun." I pouted my lips together making him stare at them like he wanted to bite me.

"I think I play the beast better than the servant, so maybe we should play that game instead." He said, giving me a cocky smile that crooked up on one side.

"Oh no, this is *my* game and I won't be bullied. Besides, you're too used

to getting your own way, but not tonight Mister!”

“Is that rightly so...Umm, then pray tell me mistress, what would you have me do to please you?” His voice left little bumps on my skin at how seductive it sounded. I had to close my eyes as my belly filled with pure liquid temptation. When I took a deep breath to clear my head I opened my eyes and screamed out. Draven had moved towards me so close that his face was now level with my own.

“Is something wrong Vixen?” I loved the way he called me that. It made me feel like I had a hold over him, plus the way he said it, sounded sexy as Hell!

I gulped before saying a shy,

“N..n..no” I backed up and every step I took he took another towards me. His dark eyes turned almost primal, like a hungry animal stalking its prey. I was getting ready for him to pounce and he knew it.

“Come Keira, I thought you didn’t fear me.” He was testing me, playing with me, like it was his game not mine. Of course, when my hands found the railing behind me I knew I had nowhere else to go.

“Draven?”

“Yes Keira.” I closed my eyes to stop the world from spinning and his words were the cause.

“I think I need....need...” I was trying so hard to find words in the darkness. The black haze that was my mind.

“Yes, what is it you need?” And then that was it, I felt it coming. It was horrible when you first realise it. Truly terrifying when you know what your body wants to do but you try to control it. It’s like your body is working against what your mind tells it to do...or not to do in this case. I could even feel all the colour drain from my face in a rush, like my body needed it elsewhere. And then there it was, a nightmare situation coming out from deep within me, it had nowhere else to go but out and out it was coming.

“I need to...to be sick!” I said and turned round to throw up over the balcony. My stomach heaved out all the alcohol it had consumed over the last few hours I had knocked it all back. I felt Draven’s hand rub my back and his other hand held my hair out of the projectile vomiting his girlfriend was doing.

“Ssshhh, that’s it, get it all up and out of your system, good girl.” I could do nothing but keep going until my stomach ached with the empty space. I looked down at the damage I had caused and hung my head in shame.

“Have you finished?” Draven asked me and I could only nod as that shame wouldn’t allow me to speak.

“Here drink this.” He handed me a glass of water, from where I didn’t know, but I still took gratefully. I took great gulps to wash away the taste of bile in my mouth.

“Easy!” He warned as I started to down it. He took it from me before I had time to finish it. Then, without warning, I was being lifted into his arms.

“What are you doing?” I asked as he lifted me higher to get a better grip.

“I’m taking you to our bed my little drunken princess.” He said this like he owned me, which of course he did, meanwhile I had never felt so embarrassed in all my life. I wanted to bury myself into a pillow and hide but I had to use Draven instead. I don’t think he minded. I felt him look down at me as he walked with me to the edge of the balcony.

“Wait...you’re not going to do what I think you are?” He stopped and looked down towards a smaller balcony below us that I had never noticed before. It was in complete darkness, so that might explain why it always went unseen. It looked only the size for one and curved round like an iron cage for a giant bird.

“This reminds me of the first time when you were in my arms, well when you were awake anyway.”

“And the first time?” I asked shuddering in his stone hold.

“The forest clearing. The very first time I saw you. I will never forget the way you felt in my arms whilst you slept. You fit so perfectly as you do now, like you were made for my arms around you. If I had my way, I would carry you everywhere.” I looked up to see him smiling to himself and I couldn’t help mimicking it.

“That maybe so, but unless you want to see me chucking up again then I wouldn’t jump down there.” He laughed making me vibrate.

“That won’t happen again, your body has settled now the poison has been removed. Trust me, you’ll be fine.” He said and before I could protest further he squeezed me tightly to him and jumped. My breath caught in my chest and the feel of air flying up around my skin and hair had me gripping onto his clothes with fright. I could feel my nails penetrate the fabric, I held on so hard. I must have closed my eyes because it was black and I could feel tears stream outwards from under my closed lids.

“You can open your eyes now.” He said, his voice full of concern for my fear. I looked around to find we were on the little balcony and facing a black, wooden door that looked impenetrable. I looked back up to see how far we had come and couldn’t believe that this was the same route we had taken when Draven had taken me home the first time. I had been so naive, why had I never questioned this before? All the answers were right in front of me the whole time, I just never asked myself the right questions.

The door opened after Draven spoke a word I didn’t know understand, but I jumped slightly as it creaked loudly at the great big hinges holding it in place. Draven side stepped us in just as I was about to tell him that I was good to walk now.

“Please allow me this little pleasure.” He said upon hearing my thoughts.

“You can read me?”

“It’s a little easier when you’re drunk, I find there are no walls at all to contend with. You’re like an open book.” He said in triumph.

“Oh goodie!” I said sarcastically.

“So you knew how guilty I have felt all night and yet you did nothing?” I asked frustrated.

“I must admit I was too angry with you to ease a guilt I wanted you to feel. I am sorry for it though.” He said not sounding too sorry!

“Oh well, that’s alright then!” I said, again not keeping the sarcasm at bay. As we had this conversation he had been walking me down a narrow hallway that only just fit the both of us. It was all stone with a solid arch above that was higher than it needed to be.

“Where are we?” I said, momentarily forgetting our conversation.

“My home is filled with secret passageways that only a handful of my people know of. It allows me access to anywhere throughout my home so I can go by unseen.”

“You mean free to spy?” I said, noting the obvious, which made him laugh.

“Clever girl, yes, to spy. I must know that the people in my council can be trusted.”

“That makes sense, as long as it’s not used for other things.” I said making a joke he didn’t get.

“Care to elaborate on that?” He asked me in a teasing manner.

“Well, as long as there’s no pleasure in what you see.”

“Ah, the girls, forever the jealous Vixen you are. There is only one body I would spy on and I am a lucky man that I can stare at it freely without having to hide. Although I can admit I have been known to watch you in the shower when you know nothing about it.”

“No you haven’t!” I punched him lightly and he laughed at me.

“Haven’t I?”

“You’re teasing me.” I decided and he didn’t answer but his bad boy smile had me doubting in what I just said. I didn’t get chance to check however because we had reached the end of the passage way. In front of us lay another black door which held no light underneath. Draven’s eyesight must have been that of a hawk because I couldn’t even see a handle or anything. It opened anyway and Draven motioned with the hand he held at my back. The swoosh of thick heavy material could be heard and then with the click of his fingers light erupted from lamps in the room. Except it wasn’t a room at all, it was another hallway, this time one the size you would expect to see in a castle or stately home. I had never been here before, I knew that much due to the different pictures the walls held.

Great tapestries, the size of trucks, made the stone walls dance with brightly coloured thread that looked like they were made yesterday. Even the smell of them was new and fresh and I could almost see the wealth of English ladies sat picking and plucking away on rainy days.

There were different themes as we moved along. On the floor before we got to the stairs, were scenes of gardens and landscapes but as he climbed the stairs it became more serious. Battle grounds, where little fabric bodies lay dying on blood soaked earth. Men in silver armour charged ahead with their spears held high and their swords at the ready. Horses with covered faces ran forth into an unknown death. I could almost hear the battle drums beat wildly against the skin of animals that were sacrificed to make them. It was only when Draven turned me away from them did I realise why...he was reading my mind.

“Do not think of those times.” He said shielding me from them as he took the last few steps quicker than the rest.

“Why not, history buff, remember?” I said light heartedly but obviously unconvincingly as well.

“There are some things that are not ever to be seen though the eyes that I love. It will pain me to see it again.”

“Draven, they’re just pictures.” I whispered to him.

“No, Keira they are not, they are my memories. From those that I have touched and made an undying connection to in my past. I buy these items they create as a means of escape from a haunting time they don’t understand and take these memories back from them, to free them.” He sounded full of remorse at all the times he had done this. I didn’t want to ask any more questions and from now on he didn’t have to turn me away from these sights, I just didn’t look.

Just how many wars had Draven seen? How many men killed in a battle they didn’t start, all for a power that would not be their own? I shuddered again and Draven tightened his hold. He knew I was thinking about it but I couldn’t stop feeling sorrow for all those poor souls I didn’t know. When Draven spoke about touching them I knew what it meant. It was when he possessed their minds. I suppose it was logical for some of their memories to be transferred during this time and I understood more than most the urge to get those images out. I had been doing that very thing most of my life. Is this what Draven wanted to shield me from, the pain of knowing? Is this how all those other people had found their releases?

“I can hear so many questions running wild in your mind, I’m surprised you’re not exhausted!” He said, trying to get my mind off it all.

“There is still so much I don’t know and sometimes my mind runs away with me.”

“So I can see.” He mocked playfully but I could tell he was just happy that he had distracted me for the moment. To be fair, with Draven around, that was never difficult to achieve.

For the moment we both remained silent as we continued on throughout his home and it seemed to be endless. Of course from the outside it didn’t seem half as big as it actually was. This was due to most of it being engulfed by the forest and cliff’s edge. It was blanketed from outsiders and it was understandable why, for one it was a lot older than everyone presumed it to be. It would be pretty hard to understand how once an old monastery, over a

thousand years old ended up on the outskirts of a small New England town. Not when the place itself was only established in the sixteen hundreds.

I remember Draven telling me once that it was brought over here stone by stone because of the positioning and importance the land holds. Something about where the Temple lay was directly on top of a gateway to the other sides. Of course, I was fascinated by it all but the more questions I asked, the more resigned Draven became to talking about it. I think he worried that my head might explode if told too much all at once. I can't really blame him, it must get very annoying and childlike to be asking so many questions about anything and everything. I mean it was like having my very own Wikipedia man!

“And what is a Wikipedia man?” He asked me and I mentally slapped myself. I needed to put a stop to this reading mind lark! It was becoming very frustrating and I was just thankful it didn't happen all the time.

“You really need to stop reading my mind!”

“Why? I'm thinking seriously about making you an alcoholic.” He laughed at his own joke and I couldn't help but follow him. Draven was such a serious character by nature, it was always infectious to hear the sound of his laughter.

“Hey, so that's why you let me drink all that I did, you wanted access to my mind?” I didn't think about it at the time but now it was clear. I mean if Draven knew about every drink I had, then why hadn't he stopped me earlier, before I had gone too far....of course now that answer was clear. He had wanted me drunk all along, just enough so that I didn't have any mental walls to prevent him from hearing my guilt.

“You are your own person Keira, you do as you please. I did not force you into drinking your bodyweight in Coronas and tequila shots.”

“Ummf, but you liked the outcome sure enough! And if that is the case why did you stop me at all?” I folded my arms instead of clinging onto him, that I had been.

“I must confess I did, but I knew if I didn’t stop you when I did then we wouldn’t be having this conversation now.”

“And why is that?!” I was a little miffed at the idea of him getting his own way at my expense.

“Because, if you had drank any more, then I would be carrying a passed out Keira instead of a pissed off one.” He tried to control his smirk but was doing a lousy job at it.

It wasn’t until I looked away from him that I realised I knew where we were. It was the main hallway that led down to his room door that was now facing us. I had to smile at the sight of ‘our’ bedchamber, making me forget that I was a little mad at him.

“Home,” I said under my breath, but of course he heard it, because he lifted the whole of my body up to his face. I really don’t know how he did it considering he had been holding me now for quite some time. Talk about superhuman powers or what! He leaned his head to my face and said,

“Yes, you are.” His voice was covered with happy emotions as he said this. He walked us inside and placed me gently down on the couch as though I was made of fine china. Of course I laughed out loud when he handed me a steaming, hot mug.

“I think you need this.” He said, smirking down at me. I looked down to see the thick dark liquid and one smell had me wrinkling my nose as the bitter taste of coffee invaded my nostrils. Draven frowned at me.

“Keira it will help sober you up.” He tried to reason with me but there was nothing he could say to get me to drink that horrible stuff!

“I think being sick helped with that thanks. But I wouldn’t say no to a nice cuppa?” He rolled his eyes at me.

“I thought that classified as a “Cuppa”” He tried to mimic my accent but I don’t think the mild Liverpudlian accent was his forte!

“Oh no, see a Cuppa means a cup of tea, see I’m somewhat of an expert on this.”

“Oh really, then please educated me so that I never make such a grave mistake again.” He moved to sit next to me and instead of lounging out I moved my legs to give him room. I actually got excited about teaching him something, even if it was all just playful banter. I mean I know I was drunk but I hadn’t completely lost all my marbles!

“Well ok, but you have to understand... ‘We’, as in the English people....well, we take drinking tea as a very serious business. See it can’t be any old shit!” At this he laughed at me, which I relished.

“No, but of course.” He said as if obviously he was in agreement.

“See, some of the posher lot of us like something called ‘Twinning’s Breakfast Tea’ but this is not your everyday stuff, more like the stuff you get out when you’re rich Aunt comes to stay, and your mother wants to impress your father’s sister.” I explained all of this like Draven understood which I doubted...I mean it’s not like he had anyone in his family richer than himself...If anything he was the rich Aunt!

“Ok, so I prefer something called PG tips which has a monkey and a comedian do the adverts or there’s a brand called Tetley and they have little funny characters that I used to collect as a child with little teapots and...” I took one look at Draven’s face to find him looking highly entertained at my drunken ramblings that I blushed before continuing,

“Anyway that’s not important...where was I...Oh yeah, well either one brand is nice but you can’t buy the stuff here, so I get my mum to send me a monthly supply.... you still with me?” I asked raising my eyebrow and looking to the side. I knew I was babbling on a bit so I wasn’t surprised to find Draven sat there with a half hidden smile. Half hidden because he had one hand covering his chin. Like this, he reminded me of some sexy professor! At this I slapped my forehead as I remembered one vital bit of information...He could hear me!

“Should I purchase some glasses, tweed jacket and a school room for this fantasy of yours?”

“Draven! You need to stop doing that! It’s not fair to pry into my secret thoughts, not when I can’t hear yours anyway.” I said pushing him but he just grabbed my chin to pull me in for a fierce kiss, which I stopped.

“Keira!” He pleaded, but I had my reasons and considering I had not long ago puked up there wasn’t a chance I was letting that happen.

“You have to try and control yourself,” I warned making him growl in return.

“But I don’t want to, in fact I want to strip you naked and bathe in your scent.” At hearing this I shouted out in shock. Because, of course, he never actually spoke the words, I just heard them being said in his mind...he was letting me in.

“I heard you!”

“And did you like what you heard?” He asked like a true bad arse.

“ Maybe. Ok yes but I still want my cup of tea...besides this is cold now,” I said handing him the mug I still had hold of.

“We can’t have that now, can we?” He then reached across and dipped his finger in the liquid. I watched over the brim like a child would have. I couldn’t keep the grin from my lips when the liquid started to move round before turning a lighter shade of brown. Once he’d finished he pulled his finger out and popped into his mouth and sucked it clean. I looked on like it was the sexiest thing I had ever seen.

“Umm... I still have to say I prefer coffee.”

“That’s because you’re not English. Which makes me wonder what are you?”

“I’m a Demon/ Angel half breed King of the supernatural world.” He

said it as though he had been doing everyday of his life but then again I couldn't really see Draven saying this to himself every morning in front of the mirror. This thought once again had him laughing.

"I'm Persian!" He then said proudly as if it was common knowledge.

"Oh...so no tea then?" I said taking the first sip of my very own bee's nectar.

"So is that like the Prince of Persia?" I continued but he just stared back at me blankly.

"Sorry?" He obviously didn't understand the joke. Not a game fan clearly.

"It's a video game." Once again he was frowning.

"There is a game people play called this?"

"Yeah, us people play stuff like that. It was cool but I was hopeless...I kept dying, falling off walls and such but my ex was really good at it." As soon as I mentioned an ex I realised my flaw. Note to self, never mention the ex's and what's more never praise them! Draven's eyes turned darker and his frown made them look lost in a deeper rage.

"Oh come on don't go all Demonic on me, it's not like you ever have to meet them like I do!"

"Lucky for them." He said coldly and when he saw my face, only then did he start to unclench his fists. We sat in silence for a bit while I finished my tea because in truth I didn't know what to say next. It seemed everything out of my mouth was just going to anger him or seem very childish in his ancient eyes.

"That's not true, I love to hear about what your life was like before I met you. It fascinates me to hear you speak. But feel free to leave out past lovers won't you."

“Deal. What do you want to know?” I said turning more to face him after placing my empty mug on the floor.

“What was your childhood like, was it a happy one?” I laughed at the thought of me as a child, all tomboy and scraped knees. Messy, wild, golden hair that grew more upwards than it did downwards. Dirty finger nails from digging worms in the garden and racing snails up my mum’s clean windows. Running into the wooded area near our house just after it rained because I loved the smell of wet earth and dripping leaves. Climbing trees and crying one day when my favourite one was ripped from the ground to make way for a new development of houses.

Making marble runs and our own board games out of crisp boxes, finished toilet rolls and sticky tape with my sister. Spending time with my best friend on the school wall talking about boys we fancied. Going to the school disco and having my first real kiss by the Maths room, from a boy I fell hard for..... Yes... apart from seeing Demons and Angels walking the earth with me, yes it was a happy one indeed. Of course I didn’t need to voice my answer, I had just shown him everything by accessing my own memories.

“And yet seeing my kind never prevented you from finding such happiness, how is that?” He spoke so softly as he ran his fingers along my jaw line and up to my cheek.

“I don’t know...I guess I just decided that it was better to live with it than not living at all.”

“Good answer.” He said this but he still looked sad for my early experiences with his kind.

“Do you wish you’d had a childhood?” I asked not meeting his eyes.

“It’s hard to wish for something you don’t fully understand. In my position it is not practical to be a boy with power. Innocence is not a wise virtue to hold in my world. I had to be strong from the beginning just as I have to remain so now but...” He hooked my chin up so that he could see my eyes before he continued.

“But?” I asked shyly.

“But being here with you is like being the child I never had the chance to be. Here with you is my chance to feel a happiness I have never felt before. I have never had moments like this Keira. I have never had someone to speak like this to, stories to tell and to hear in return...It is all so new to me and yet I find that I could be happy to do it for all eternity and the rest of my days!”

“Oh trust me, you would get tired of hearing my voice!” I joked and although he laughed it was for a different reason.

“That is impossible. I could listen to you until my ears bled. I especially like this new, no bounds Keira that speaks freely and full of an adorable Northern English accent, thanks to a little... well a lot of, what is it usually called...liquid courage.”

“You just like that because you can hear my thoughts.” Again I was making him laugh.

“Yes well, that too. Have I told you lately how much I love you?” He said pulling me closer until my head tucked under his chin.

“Even when I throw up over your balcony and talk drunkenly about tea and video games?”

“But of course! And what is it with that balcony that makes you want to throw up all the time?” He was making fun of me and it was working as my cheeks went cherry colour.

“Umm, that blush of yours could warm any man’s blood to boiling point.” This wasn’t an exaggeration as it didn’t take long before I could feel his blood boiling for myself...down below that was. So much so that I had to shift myself to one side so as to give him more room down there.

“Can I ask you a question?” When I said this he lowered his head and kissed me on my forehead after smoothing some of my hair back.

“Anything.”

“You might not like talking about it.” I warned and this is when he moved back to look at me.

“I will answer your questions even if I don’t want to.” He promised making me grin.

“It’s about what happened to me today.” I said, making his jaw tense at the subject. I think he was hoping that this afternoon was just going to evaporate into nothing and not have chance to make a memory.

“One can only hope.” He said bitterly before continuing,

“What is it you would like to know?”

“Well firstly...who was it that you went there to see?” I waited to see his response with eager eyes. I knew it was a woman from when Leivic said “She is waiting for you”, I couldn’t help the little twist of jealous curiosity that snaked in my belly.

“I was there to see a very good friend of mine, her name is Pythia.” As soon as he said the name it pricked recognition from my brain. Where had I heard that name before?

“You like history yes?” I nodded at his question as I was still searching my head for answers.

“Are you familiar with Greek mythology?” As soon as he said the words my mind clicked and I found the answer.

“She’s an Oracle!” I shouted a bit louder than what was needed.

“Actually she’s *The Oracle*...as in, she’s the only one.”

“But I thought throughout history there has been many?” Even today some clairvoyants are sometimes considered to be the Oracles of our time.

“No, there is and only ever will be one. Pythia is the only direct communal link between the Gods from both sides. Greek mythology has her

known as the [Oracle](#) of Delphi, where she was the high priestess at the Temple of [Apollo](#). There is some truth in this, but it is only where she was found, not where she remained. See it was believed back then that the Oracle changed from girl to girl but it was not true. Pythia just changed bodies every few years so that no one was ever sure it could be the real her. This still happens and it is imperative that it remains so. If she were to get into the wrong hands then they would have a direct line into the Gods' plans. You can see how that would be bad?"

"So when she left Del..py?" I knew I said the place wrong when Draven smiled but he didn't correct me, if anything he look like he enjoyed it better this way.

"She left behind a fake that was believed for years after. I could not allow her to remain and besides she did not want to. She had seen nothing of the world she knew so much about. She had only been allowed to stay within the temple and the only people she would see was those of the priests and the Supplicants that underwent the arduous journey to consult the Oracle's Devine wisdom. She may have been this creature but she was still just a girl as well. So I took her away to live how she desired as long as she was never discovered for what she really was. She calls upon me when she needs to tell me something and it is always on the seventh day of the month."

"Why?"

"Because the number seven plays an important part in my world. It is a holy number for many of reasons that I cannot go into at this time."

"Cannot or will not?" I asked skeptically crossing my hands over my chest.

"Both!" He admitted but he continued before I could protest " Keira there are many things you will learn about my kind even if they are things I do not wish for you to know, but at least let me tell you of them in my own time"

"Fair enough," I nodded knowing there wasn't much point arguing as he

would get his way whether I liked it or not. Of course he growled at this thought of mine but I didn't care, it didn't change the facts.

“Well, are you going to tell me?” I asked, proving my point, which he couldn't answer. Instead he just shrugged his shoulders and we both let it go...for now anyway.

“What I want to know is why you needed to see her now, it isn't even the seventh?”

“That is why I had to go, I knew it must have been something very important for her to call to meet with me. It was not like her, but now I know why.”

“Are you going to tell me?”

“Keira...”

“I take that as a no then,” I said not keeping the sulking sound out of my voice.

“Let me put it this way, the last time I saw her we spoke about the same thing.”

“And that was?”

“You!” He said clearly like it was all so obvious.

“Me? Why, did you tell her about me?” I asked shaking my head wondering what on earth they could be talking about me for.

“Actually, she was the one who told me about you.” As soon as he said it, I don't know why, but I started to hold my breath. Why would she know anything about me unless the Gods had told her and what would they have to tell her that would be important to Draven? We had met without any help so I didn't get it, which is what I said.

“I don't understand.”

“Keira, how can you still doubt yourself and the importance of our union. Before today, the last time I saw Pythia was over twenty three years ago, on the seventh hour, on the seventh day of the seventh month, 1987. So now you understand what it was that was so important for her to tell me”

“But...but that was...” I stammered out in utter disbelief but Draven finished the sentence off for me. He cradled my face in his hands and looked at me as though I was his greatest gift received from above before saying the worlds I couldn’t find....

“Yes...it was when you were born”

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Chapter 45

Let Sleeping Dogs *Die*.

That night my dreams were filled with strange images of an Oracle I had never met and a prophecy I didn't understand. For most of it I was in a Temple but not the one I had seen before. Somehow I knew this Temple was in Europe but I wasn't exact on where.

It was all made from the purest of white marble and in my mind it kept flashing in between the old and new. One minute the great structure would be degrading flakes of old stone and weathered floors. And then it would flash back to its glory days of radiant light and gleaming pillars of great craftsmanship.

I seemed to be the focus in the room as all eyes were on me. There were faces here I didn't yet recognized but somewhere deep down I knew them. It was a bit like when someone you know tells you so much about a friend, so that when you meet this person, you feel like you know instantly it's them. Well, it was like that only with a temple full. They all lined the pillars and looked on with anxious faces. As though everyone there knew my fate, but me.

I continued my assessment of the people looking on with a clear mix of desperation and fear. It was only when I looked down at myself did I really understand these looks fully. I was bare footed and lines of blood trickled down them creating deep crimson footprints behind me. I wasn't in pain as I probably should have been, but can you feel pain in a dream? Sometimes I would think so but now?

It looked as if I had just walked in and interrupted a battle. Everyone seemed to be wearing combat gear, black and oh, so ready for action. It was

like good vs evil and the only thing that separated them was me walking in the middle of the room causing them to part and take each side of the temple.

I was dressed in a white gown that floated around my skin like I was under water. It was so thin and wispy that I almost felt naked. Of course this stark white material that covered my skin was the perfect contrast to show the deep red pumping from my heart. I had been stabbed there, that much was clear as now there was a long, deep slice that led down past my breasts.

It was a weird sensation looking down at yourself in this state. I kept thinking that surely I should be dying, not walking towards an altar at the other end of the room. I should have felt weak and fallen to the floor to let the last of my life drain from me but I felt strong. I felt like my blood was leaving me but being replaced by something else...something unearthly, something that felt as though sent by the Gods.

It was only as I got closer did I notice myself standing to one side trying to push herself through the crowd of supernatural warriors. I was in my own dream looking on in horror. I was screaming something to myself in a blind panic. I was dressed in pajamas and my hair plaited to one side, messy, like I had just woken up from a nightmare. Then I kept flashing in and out of each of my selves. One minute I was the nightmare Keira and then I was watching on as the other me walk towards a brightly lit altar where I knew death awaited me.

“Don’t go there, RUN, RUN!” I was screaming out at myself but when my head simply turned to me, I only shook my head to indicate a “NO”.

Then I was back to the bloody Keira shaking my head and mouthing the words,

“No, it will be alright.” I wanted to go over and comfort myself, I looked so frightened and so, so fragile. Draven was right... I was fragile. I looked so breakable like that but not now. I wasn’t fragile like this, I felt strong. Invincible. Godly.

I whispered a goodbye and started off as fast as I could into a lightening

run. I could just hear one last scream from my other self as I ran into the altar and collided with the brightest flash of light, almost like a meteor had just impacted where I stood.

That's when I woke up and found I was dressed like the Keira in my dream, the frightened one. I had wet cheeks from tears I don't remember crying. I had a scratchy throat from screaming words I didn't shout out in the real world. But most of all I was heartbroken from watching myself die. What a horrible dream and most disappointing of all is that Draven wasn't there at my greatest time of need. He hadn't been there in my dream and he wasn't here now. I was in my own bed at home and it took me a moment to realize why. Draven had driven me home in the early hours of the morning and stayed with me until I fell asleep in my new room.

Now he was gone and my heart ached for him as the morning sun flooded my room that wasn't yet familiar to me. After a few seconds of getting my bearings, I whipped back the covers and looked at my chest. What was I expecting to find exactly I don't know but there wasn't a gaping hole like there had been in my dream. There was no sliced flesh and bloody feet. No flowing white gown and no strong buzz of energy raging through my veins.

I was still shaking my head when I heard a knock at my door. Libby didn't wait for me to say "come in", she never did. She was dressed for work but instead of her usual power suit, she had on a loose white shirt that allowed more room for her growing bump. She was glowing in her cheeks and the sight of her happy mood told me two things, One...she had enjoyed her night away from the she-Devil. And Two...she hadn't yet had the pleasure of her company this morning.

"So, how did it go last night?" She plonked herself down on my bed and handed me the mug that she held in both hands. This time instead of Homer Simpson, it was a Liverpool Lfc mug with the words "You'll never walk alone" below the team's crest of a Liver Bird.

"Thanks" I said taking the mug of tea and taking my first sip of the morning. I didn't smoke but I would imagine that this was my equivalent of

having my first cigarette of the day.

“So?” She prompted “What happened?”

“She met Jack, that’s what happened.” I said deflated. Libby just raised her eyes at me like I had lost it...maybe I had and after days like yesterday I think I was certainly entitled to lose something!

“But that’s a good thing...right? I mean, it gets her out of our hair and gets her focus off Dominic, so drinks all round...or not.” She added this last bit when she saw the misery on my face.

“Don’t get me wrong, I’m glad she didn’t spend the night chasing after Dra...Dominic but I don’t want that at the expense of Jack’s feelings. Besides, I don’t think we were as great of friends as I first thought. Not after hearing all about me from our delightful cousin.” I said bitterly and Libby covered her mouth in a dramatic shock.

“Why, what did she say?”

“I’m not completely sure but I can only guess. It’s what she does Libby, she plays the victim and creates me as the bad guy. You should have seen his reactions to me after just one evening of her lies. Anyway I’ve decided I don’t care, if he really was my friend he wouldn’t have believed such bull from someone he’d only just met!”

“Didn’t you warn them about her?”

“A little, well mainly RJ but I didn’t want to go around slagging off my relations to my still new friends. I mean they still don’t know about me....about my past and I don’t know how long I can keep that part of my past a secret. Jack is the only one who knows.” Libby put her hand on my arm and nodded at my problem. For the first time in a long time, I didn’t feel so strange talking about this kind of stuff and Libby could tell.

“You don’t have to tell anyone anything you don’t want to. They will still be your friends and I hate to bring this up but aren’t you worried about your biggest threat here?”

“I don’t under...”

“Hilary....she knows everything too, remember. Not that I think you have anything to be ashamed of but I understand why you don’t want people knowing, but are you not worried that the girl who hates you most in the world will take an opportunity like this and try and ruin everything for you?” Libby looked scared for me but I just shrugged my shoulders.

“She wouldn’t go that far. Look I know she hates me for some reason I don’t think I will ever figure out but I don’t imagine she would ever go *that* far!” She raised an eyebrow to indicate she clearly did.

“Trust me on this,” I said as I tried to get up but as soon as my legs touched the floor boards I had to sit back down. My head started to spin thanks to a Corona induced hangover.

“Rough night?” My sister asked as she noted my head in my hands.

“Umm....something like that. I drank way too much last night and I’m not sure if I won’t be an alcoholic by the time we get rid of Hilary!”

“Well, at least one of us can. Right, well I’m off to work now but will I see you after college?” She stood up whereas I couldn’t at the minute and looked down at me waiting for an answer.

“Yeah, but not for long, I’ve got work tonight so at least that should mean Hilary won’t be around here either.” I sounded tired every time I even said her name.

“Ok chuck, I will see ya later, try not to put up with too much shit from her and don’t worry about Jack, he will see her for what she is soon enough...they always do.”

“Yeah, but I don’t want him to get hurt.”

“Sounds to me like he deserves a good kick up the arse to wake him up,” she said as she walked to the door.

“Libby!” I scolded but she just smiled and blamed the hormones before leaving me alone in the house with someone I wanted to staple things to. I got up and the first thing I did was go in search of pills to numb the pain from not only my hangover. While I was in the kitchen the other pain in my life walked in. She was dressed in a pink track suit that had stars on her bony backside. The hooded top was one of those that only covered half of her torso but she matched it with a skimpy pineapple top.

“Man, I just love exercising in the morning!” She said overly energetic.

“I prefer sex!” I said under my breath.

“Excuse me?” She asked snootily.

“Oh nothing...Juice?” I asked holding it out to her, making her wrinkle her nose.

“I only drink organic freshly squeezed and no offence, but you don’t look like the type to buy that.”

“None taken,” I said wondering if that was supposed to be an insult or not because I wasn’t sure.

“So what are we doing today?” She asked me, casually leaning back on the fridge. I found myself staring at it just hoping the door would slam into her.

“Sorry....what do you mean by *we* because I have collage?” I shook my head but she just smiled reminding me of the Grinch at Christmas.

“Perfect!” She then clapped her hands together and left the kitchen leaving me both worried and confused by that comment. I ran out after her and found her half way up the stairs.

“What do mean perfect....do you have plans?”

“Yes, of course, but I have to get ready and need a shower if I’m going to scrunch my hair...it has a natural wave you know...” I didn’t give two

hoots about her so called wavy hair but what I did need to know about is her *so called* plans.

“Well, I need to get ready for college now.”

“Yes I know you do, ‘cause I’m not going to be seen dead with you wearing your hair like that!” She was still climbing the stairs to the third floor and I was still following until we reached the top.

“What do you mean “with me”?” She stopped outside my room and opened the door before answering me.

“I’m coming with you, of course! It’s a great chance to meet Jack again and besides, you didn’t expect me to hang around in this rickety old house did you?” I couldn’t answer her in my mental breakdown and she smiled at what she knew she did to me. I would have preferred her to have just punched me in the gut and get it over with, ‘cause any physical pain was better than the mental pain I was going to get constantly with her around. I was still standing there dumbstruck when she walked into my room and turned round to say one last thing.

“Oh and Keira....My room remember!” And with that, she slammed the door in my face making me close my eyes at the air that hit me.

“Brilliant!” I said as I got in my room to change. I knew there was no chance at a shower now as she would purposely use all of the hot water. Thankfully I had had a wash and stuff before I went downstairs but my hair still looked a state from a night of tossing and turning. Of course the weather didn’t help as I soon discovered when we got outside.

Thankfully, I had my car here now as Draven had it driven back to me this morning. We had decided it was better if I had woken up here, because I needed to go to college and I didn’t want my sister to have to deal with our cousin alone. In the end it wouldn’t have mattered because she didn’t even have to see her...unlike *my* fate.

We were on the way to college when Hilary started to moan...again.

“My god Kizzy Cat, you still drive like an old woman. I’m surprised you even make any lectures. Do you ever get pulled over for going too slow?”

“No I don’t, do you ever get pulled over for going too fast?” I asked knowing full well that she didn’t have her license anymore because she had too many points for speeding.

“I bet Dominic never lets you drive.” She laughed to herself and avoided my question.

“He does actually!” I said fighting the urge to stick my tongue out at her after saying it. However, she didn’t take much notice of my responses to her insults, she was more preoccupied with applying a fresh layer of pink lipstick that in my mind made them look more like she had just spent the night sucking them! Did I sound bitter? That might be because my cousin free day had quickly turned into Hell at college.

“You do know that you can’t sit in my classes with me...don’t you?” I was still trying to put her off, even though we were nearly there, I would have been gladly late for all of my lectures if it would free me from her company.

“Well durr! Do you think I want to spend my time sat listening to American toffs talking a load of shit I don’t care about....I mean it’s obvious you don’t do beauty at this school of yours!”

“Gee thanks!” I said making her laugh at me, not with me.

“Then what are you going to do?”

“Oh didn’t I tell you....I meeting up with Jack and he’s going to show me around and stuff. Then he’s taking me to this bar he likes.” She noticed my face drop and a dark, satisfied smile wriggled its way across her lips. Then I smiled at the one thought of Hilary’s day not being picture perfect.

“Let me guess, is it called ‘Willy’s One Eyed Joe’ by any chance?” Now I couldn’t keep the smirk from my face.

“Oh, so you’ve been there!” It wasn’t really a question as she knew the

answer, more like her prompting me for more information.

“Yeah a few times, with the gang after lectures. You’ll have fun...it’s just your kind of place.” I said knowing she would hate every minute of the dilapidated building that calls itself a social meeting place. It has two regulars that looked glued to their seats and to look at, you just know when they finally do move from “their” seat, the stool cushions would have ingrained their distinct arse impressions.

We didn’t speak again until I parked my truck in its usual spot. I had been trying to word what I wanted to say most of the way here but I knew that it was going to be a pointless exercise trying to reason with this destructive girl. Even now, to look at her you wouldn’t really be putting her down to be the biggest bitch in Britain and now currently the US.

Today she had tried to tone down her slut look and went for a pair of tight, skinny jeans that made her thin legs look like matchsticks and matched it with a white T-shirt that said “I love Yoga” on the front and then on the back had a winked eye with the words “It makes me flexible” underneath. Even naive me could read in between the lines to its seductive inner meaning.

“Look Hilary, I need to say something.” I tried to make my voice sound serious but when it croaked I realized that it was never going to happen but I still needed to try, and seeing Jack’s new red Toyota parked two spaces away made me follow it through.

“Jack’s a really good friend of mine and with you leaving *soon*, I can’t help but think it’s not a good idea to...you know...do anything”. At this she laughed and turned to look at me for the first time this journey. That’s when I fully understood my mistake...I had just made this game all the more appealing.

“Kizzy, Kizzy....Are you jealous?”

“NO!” I shouted a little too defensively.

“Really...’cause you know Jack told me how you two nearly hooked up

but you just used him to get to Dominic! I'm just so glad you haven't spoiled him for me...It's no fun when they're vulnerable, but thankfully he got over you too quickly (his words, not mine) to be affected. Actually, I think his exact words were "Used and abused" and imagine his shock when finding out this wasn't the first time." By the time she had finished, I was close to jumping on her and clawing her eyes out but I was frozen.

"Don't worry about old Jackie boy, I will take good care of him...I think he'll make a good fuck don't you....?" She opened the door as she could see him coming over but she didn't close it behind her until she finished her spiteful speech.

"Oh wait, you wouldn't know...you never really get that far do you Kizzy!" And then she slammed the door leaving me red faced and close to tears, I was that angry. I therefore, couldn't help the rage filled scream that erupted making Jack turn to face me in concern. I grabbed my bag and wrenched open the door. I then slammed the door making Jack jump at my behavior. I stormed up past them and when Jack grabbed my arm to stop me I yanked it free.

"Just leave me alone!" I said at him, making his usually soft features turn cold. I pulled my bag strap back over my shoulder and half jogged to my first class. I know I wasn't being fair but I couldn't stop thinking about what Hilary had said to me. I know Jack wouldn't have said most of the things she said but he must have said something. Could I be sure that Jack was the friend I always thought he had been? Now I wasn't so sure. Man I hated her so much it made my head ache!

"Hey Kaz, where's the fire?" I turned before I went through the door to see RJ's pink hair next to me. She looked like I felt. Her eyes were deep set in sleepless bags and no amount of makeup would cover up the same hangover we shared.

"Just trying to get away from the new couple." I said and nodded to Jack and Hilary who were walking hand in hand. She rolled her eyes and walked with me inside, obviously wanting to get away from them as much as me.

“I tried to tell him about her poisonous ways but he wouldn’t listen. Did you know she has already infected him into believing a load of bullshit about you?”

“Bull....ship?” I couldn’t help but ask.

“Ah I’m trying this new thing out for my mom. She wants me to curve on the bad language as my sister has started swearing, saying she gets it from me! So I have replaced a few words like fudge instead of fuc...”

“Yeah, Yeah I get it!” We both laughed and thanks to RJ, it was a nice little diversion to make me forget the ‘Hell cat beast and the beauty Jack’! I didn’t want to talk about it anymore, especially since my first class was with the dreaded Reedinator! RJ walked me, bless her and it reminded me of my first week here. I don’t know what I would have done if it hadn’t been for meeting RJ.

In there, I found Sophia in our usual seats, filing nails she didn’t need to file.

“What’s up home bird?” She said trying on a street vibe. I was laughing once again.

“Umm...well I’ve been better but what’s with ‘in the ghetto hood’ talk?”

“I knew you needed cheering up.” She said as I took my seat.

“I’m down with tat!” I replied trying the same but if you’re British and not from Essex, it’s quite hard to do.

“So I gather the bitch is still a thorn in you behind.” I groaned my answer.

“I understand and I see only one solution to this girl.”

“What’s that...violent crimes?” I only half joked.

“Nope...Demon introduction. I think it’s time I met this cousin of yours.”

I could say only one thing

“Fudge, yeah!”

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Chapter 46

Thank The Devil For Demons.

My history class didn't go quickly enough, but at least I had Sophia there with me to help keep my sanity in check. I had to submit my assignment and held my breath as I made my way down the steps to Reed's desk. Sophia hadn't ever handed in anything but just made him think she had. She offered the same service for me but I declined.

"I have this crazy idea of passing this class by handing in *actual* work," I had said before getting ready to leave.

"You're right...that is just so crazy!" She mocked and I couldn't help shaking my head in laughter. Sophia was one of those people that was so infectious to be around that it was hard to remember any problems I had. She had a way of making them fade into the 'not important' part of your brain.

That's where Hilary was right now....way back there, where my mind just said "why do we give a shit?"

"Keira, you're smiling at yourself again." For this she received a little flick on the arm making her giggle. We walked down to the front and I watched in amazement as she handed him a newspaper making him think it was her assignment, of course the newspaper deserved an A star, even though it really was a lousy paper. Of course the biggest stories were about the Dravens themselves but considering no one really knew anything about them, there really wasn't that much printed holding their name.

I remember reading the paper and scanning it for any details about them but they were mainly only mentioned when they donated to a charity or paid for any new construction the town benefited from.

I handed my paper over and Reed looked over it as if he wanted to throw it in the bin before even reading the first line. I gulped as those beady eyes found mine and then returned to his laptop without saying a word.

"Did you see that, the way he looked at my work, like he knew it would be rubbish or something? Could you read his mind....he's going to fail me right...?" I whispered to Sophia as I trailed behind like a blubbering fool.

"Don't be paranoid Keira. He was actually looking forward to reading it." I frowned unconvinced.

"What? It's true. Anyway forget about Reed, we have bigger fish to scare."

"It's fry....bigger fish to fry." I corrected but she just looked at me from the side and gave me a confident smile.

"Not today it isn't." She said in a way that displayed the true nature of what she was. I was close to feeling sorry for what she had in store for my cousin....well, almost!

We were soon outside and I found myself glad that my cousin was nowhere to be seen, that was until my phone started up and Abba filled the

courtyard we were sat in. When I saw it wasn't a number I recognized, my heart sank.

"Hello."

"Kizzy Cat, where are you?" Hilary's voice grated on me even when she was putting on the nicey, nicey act, that's how I knew she was still with Jack. I explained where and I heard her repeating it over to Jack.

"We will be there in five, Jack has been called into work so you have to take me home now." I knew she was still trying to sound fake in front of Jack but even he must have heard the cheek in that demand.

"Well I still..." And that's when she hung up leaving me to finish that sentence with only Sophia as my audience.

"Have classes." I finished weakly.

"She hung up didn't she? You know I don't think I'm going to like this girl." Sophia looked half delighted and half furious at the idea.

"Good, because giving how fast my cousin works, pretty soon she will have sucked everyone I know into her twisted lies and God only knows what they will think about me then?"

"I gather you're referring to her most recent work?" Sophia nodded past me and I turned to see Hilary and Jack both walking, arms locked, in the distance.

"How'd ya guess?" I asked sarcastically.

"Oh I don't know, maybe the fact that I can smell the hate for you, coming off her like cheap perfume." I turned my eyes to hers to find them glowing with the same hate. I suddenly felt wary about introducing my cousin to my Demon friend but before I knew it, Hilary's voice was making my skin crawl and grating on my last nerve.

"There you are, you're so hard to spot in a crowd, being so short and

all.” She would have carried on but the sight of Sophia had her stopped dead in her tracks. Sophia was, as always, in her designer wear that screamed money! She was one of the most beautiful creatures the world had to offer and when coming faced with her for the first time, she often took your breath away. This is what happened now and I couldn’t help but smile. Hilary had always been a jealous person by nature. Never being satisfied with what she already had, but trying to take or crush what those around her had, that she wanted!

No one seemed to be saying anything so I decided to intervene.

“Guys, this is Sophia,” I said trying not to look at Jack but finding it hard when he seemed to be searching out my eyes. I didn’t understand why, but I got the distinct impression that he wanted to talk with me. Whatever the case, I didn’t fold. I was still too hurt and felt far too betrayed to give in now. If he wanted to believe Hilary’s lies over what our friendship meant then that was just fine!

“And this must be Hilary, nice to meet you, of course I feel like I already know you, with everything Keira has told me about you.” Sophia said this with a sharp tone of knowing in her voice and I don’t think Hilary missed it. She just stared blankly at her, as if still in a state of uncertainty. Surprisingly, it was Jack to break the tension.

“Hi Sophia, I’m Jack, I’ve seen you around but don’t think we have ever been introduced properly.” He said being his usual ultra-friendly self.

“Hi Jack, of course I have heard a lot about you too. You’re one of Keira’s best friends aren’t you? She’s always saying what a truly great friend you are.” The way she said it made Jack look down at me with sorrow in his eyes. As though he had just been reminded of the fact and felt my betrayal for himself. I looked away and gave Sophia a warning look which only made her smile.

“So, how do you two know each other then, ‘cause no offense, but you don’t look like you would have much in common!” Hilary had found her

voice and unfortunately the shock of Sophia's beauty hadn't curved her wonderful way with words. She looked back at me with my baggy jeans and overly big jacket that made me look like I had dressed for an expedition. Her eyes floated back to Sophia's delicate little frame that was dressed in winter chic. A designer red, fitted coat and black leggings that disappeared in fur trimmed boots. Looking at us both side by side then she was right, we looked like unlikely looking friends indeed.

"My brother Dominic is in love with your cousin!" She said as simple as pie. I coughed out a word not even I knew and Hilary looked like she had swallowed a bug. Meanwhile, Jack looked hurt and turned his head to one side as if trying to hide a reaction already seen.

"Your brother is Dominic Draven, Keira's boyfriend?" Hilary asked as if to clarify it clearer.

"Yes, but that's not why we're friends, it's only how we met." Sophia said, clarifying herself.

"Well Kizzy Cat, I have to give it to you, you certainly work quickly with the locals. If I didn't know any better I would say that the Dravens consider you one of the family." Hilary said this as an insult but one disguised as a compliment.

"We do, but where are my manners, you should come up to the VIP tonight after Keira's finished work to meet us all... properly."

"WHAT!" I shouted by mistake, making everyone, including people not in this conversation stop and stare at me. I decided to try this diplomatically instead of screaming.

"Do you think that's a good idea, I mean, you know how your brother likes to keep his business private?" I was pleading with her mentally but she ignored me and looked at Hilary more closely.

"Nonsense, she is after all family and I'm sure Dominic would like to meet her properly this time." I almost growled at her.

“Sorry Sophia, I’m sure Kizzy is just trying to keep Dominic all to herself, she was always a bit selfish when comes to men, there’s been quite a few.” Hilary finished this by laughing at herself but it was at my expense, which I never appreciated coming from the unfunny viper that was my cousin.

“Fine, well it looks like I’m out numbered on this one.” I said not being able to keep the spoilt tone from seeping into my words. Sophia didn’t even look sorry, which made me think she was planning something. Actually the only one that looked sorry for me was Jack, which made me wonder, had Sophia’s cutting manner made him think twice about being so quick to trust someone he barely knew, over someone he respected not so long ago? I really hoped so.

We all said our goodbyes but as Hilary was giving Jack a more thorough bye when I took Sophia to the side out of earshot.

“What’s the big idea here?...I mean, I’m all for knocking her down a peg or two but even I think a room full of “energy sucking” Demons and Angels is a bit much!” Sophia just smiled like I would imagine a cat to do when walking the fence and winding up the neighbor’s dog. It was both evil and cute at the same time.

“Keira my dear...don’t you trust me?” She added this little innocent act by fluttering her eyes at me.

“You forget Sophia that I know what you’re capable of and remember your relentless schemes when trying to get me and Draven together.”

“And it all worked out well, did it not?” Well I had to give her that. In truth she had ended up playing a massive part in our ‘union’. However, I didn’t tell her this, but she took my silence in her favor all the same.

“Great, well tonight should be a breeze then!” I said sarcastically but she just laughed and gave me a wink before fake coughing which drew me to my

cousin's unimpressed face.

“So are we going or not?” She asked looking down at me like I was some bloody chauffeur of hers that she just caught without wearing their hat or making a wrong turn....well she wished! I was close to saying “To Hell with it” and making her walk home, 4 inch heels or not!

Ok so I didn't, no instead I said goodbye to everyone and started walking off in the direction of my truck to miss lessons because I couldn't be faced with the agro of my cousin's moaning at me. I didn't wait for Hilary but giving her longer legs it didn't take her long to catch up and I soon heard the clopping of her heels behind me, reminding me of being chased by horse.

We got in the truck and drove home in silence. It made me wish that everyone that had been suckered into Hilary's nicey, nicey act would just witness for themselves just how vindictive and cold she could really be.

By the time we got home I was close to screaming in frustration from the tense ride home. I noticed my knuckles were still white from gripping the steering wheel so hard and it remained the same as I was gripping the handle of my mug of tea. I kept trying to tell myself that it would soon be over, only a week of this crap and then I could relax again...well as much as I could with a bounty on my head.

Hilary had gone to start getting ready for tonight which I was dreading. The reasons were wholly selfish I admit it and the idea of Hilary spending anytime in the VIP was only burning a brighter rage inside me. Not only did I not want her anywhere near my boyfriend but I also wanted to keep my secret life intact. It was like being a superhero in a sense and I know that may sound egotistical but it was like living a double life.

Downstairs, I was just like everyone else but once I crossed the level, I became one of them. I became a part of their world and the idea that Hilary would too, be privileged into my heaven was infuriating. And undeservingly so. I felt so bitter I couldn't taste my tea. I couldn't taste the sandwich I had made myself and I couldn't swallow the idea of this evening was going to happen whether I liked it or not! I even found myself picking up the phone a

few times to call Draven and tell him, plead with him, about how much I objected to tonight. But thankfully my pride stopped me.

Of course none of this helped when the She-Devil herself came and interrupted my somber thoughts.

“What time do you go to work?” She asked, as she danced in the room like she owned the state. Man, I hated her. I hated what she did to my life every time she was around. It was like she went out of her way to try and destroy any ounce of happiness I found. Of course the only blessing about the ‘Incident’ was that she left me alone without adding to my misery. But of course, she didn’t need to try and damage an already damaged situation, which was the shred of my life at the time.

“Six thirty,” I said without keeping the depressed tone from my voice. It didn’t help when I saw her basking in her own glory. I was stupid really, what I should be doing was playing her at her own game. Smile to hide my distaste at having her so close to me. Fake a laugh at the unfunny things she said and totally hide the fact that I hated the idea of her joining the VIP club. I mean her crush on Jack was another thing but if she got her fake nails into any of the Draven’s I don’t think I could prevent murder. Ok, time to try and play this a different way.

“Are you excited?” I asked making her turn to me in shock. I had to suppress a coy smile.

“Umm I guess.” She replied in a softer tone I wasn’t used too.

“It will be nice having someone else there as proof it’s not as scary as it’s made out.” I said trying to sound casual but I had to turn round to hide a smile I had no control of. I opened the fridge and broke off a few squares of chocolate.

“What do you mean by that?” OK now she looked a bit more concerned as her eyebrows knitted together and a hand automatically went to her hip.

“Oh, it’s just with all the small town gossip Afterlife generates there’s

bound to be a few horror stories but none are true I can assure you.”

“Like what?” She genuinely looked interested and I think this was the first actual conversation we had had together in years. Like this it took me back to better times when we were younger and before Hilary’s vendetta against me was born.

“Oh, just about how when some people have gone up there in the past and never been seen again, that type of thing but you will have to ask Jack on the details...he knows all the gory stories.” I could now see the faint flicker of both doubt and fear mix through her eyes. I should have stopped there and hoped it was enough to put her off but my personality wouldn’t let me.

“But I doubt any of its true, I mean there’s some weird people up there but they all seem nice to me. And I don’t think D...Dominic would allow anything to happen in his club, he’s had people kicked out before for drugs and stuff.” She just nodded and I could see her mind doing ten to the dozen.

“Is that how you got with Dominic, by *servicing* him?” It was an innocent enough question but as ever, coming from Hilary’s lips it quickly turned into an insult. However I swallowed it like all the rest and answered her.

“Sort of, but I was never allowed to serve his table directly. We kind of got to be friends first and then he just asked me out.” Ok so that was completely made up but what could I tell her...the truth? Umm no, I don’t think that would have gone down well at all.

“Umm, well I guess in a small town things are limited.” She said as she had soon lost interest but it didn’t prevent her from jabbing at me one last time. With that she left the kitchen and I didn’t see her again until we had to leave for the club, where no doubt another nightmare was to begin.

At least in this one, I didn’t have my own demons to contend with.

Chapter 47

VIP Déjà Vu

We didn't really speak on the way to the club and a few insults about my slow driving hardly constituted as conversation. I looked to my right and found Hilary twisting a tassel of her scarf round in her fingers, it looked like she was nervous. Maybe some of what I had said earlier had sunk in.

The drive felt like my first time going to the club, it was that long

winded. This I put down to the uncomfortable situation and a mind full of anxious worries. What was going to happen tonight? I had no clue and just kept asking myself the same question over and over....why had Sophia invited her in the first place, what was she up to?

These were the type of questions rolling around in my mind like waves in an unsettled sea. It was only when I heard an agitated voice that I was brought back from auto-pilot to realise what she was saying.

“You’re going to miss the turn!” Her words registered just in time for me to slow down and make the turn on to the private road that led to Afterlife. It was dark out and the night was full of snow filled clouds in a sky we couldn’t see, well according to the weather channel anyway. But you could almost taste it in the air and when it was cold enough to see your breath, then the chances were if it did come down, it was going to stick. Even Hilary was wearing warmer clothes, although I wasn’t sure what was underneath that long jacket of hers. For all I knew she could be naked!

Thankfully, when we got inside it was confirmed she wasn’t naked but it sure came close. She wore a little black lace dress with a corseted top that flared out at the skirt. The red netting could be seen around the edges and is what gave it body to stick out like a tutu. She matched this slutty look with the highest heels in the form of knee high boots. Her makeup looked like something she had stolen from a vampire movie, with black eyes, pale skin and blood red lips. Her hair hung down in loose curls that looked like they had started to drop out of style, even though you could smell the hairspray radiating from her head a mile away.

I couldn’t help but look down at my plain self and glad to see I was only wearing black trousers and a black shirt that wrapped round and tied at the back. I added a tiny bit of colour in the form of a purple tie with white piping that RJ had given me once. She explained that now she was a full out Goth and no longer a tamer Emo, she had given me a bag of ties to wear for work. This was only the second time I had worn one as the first was when Layla had attacked me. Of course, the memory sent shivers up and down my spine and it didn’t have anything to do with Layla. No, it was down to Draven

touching me the way he had done that night. Our first real intimate contact.

I think Hilary took my little moment as one of jealousy as she looked pretty pleased with herself. I was tempted to tell her the only time I had ever dressed like that was at Halloween, but I thought better. The last thing I wanted was to prompt her in anyway. At this time it wasn't hard to get to the other side of the club as it only really started to get busy when the band was due to start and they weren't even here yet. However I had to stop her before she walked up the main staircase.

“What are you doing?” She asked me looking down at my hand that still gripped her arm. It was as if she would get burned by my touching her and she yanked her arm away and glared at me. I ignored it all and explained.

“We don't go that way,” I motioned towards the guarded door and she frowned.

“Not me, I want to make an entrance!” And with that she went up the steps alone and fearless. One thing I did envy was her confidence. I mean, she had it oozing from every pore and you could tell that by everything she did. I turned around and was still shaking my head when I got to the door.

“Evening!”

The new sound made me flinch back. Was it me or did the guards just speak to me? I looked up at their faces and realised it was true, they had just spoke. It had been both deep and heavy accented. Eastern European I think. And for once they didn't look so fierce. One, I think, even smiled...well sort of.

It was kind of crooked to one side but he added it with kinder eyes and the other one even winked at me. I ended up laughing out my “Hello”. I walked past with them both looking amused and it didn't take me long to realise why. Last night! Last night I had been drunk and had a go at the both of them for never saying Hello to me. Oh dear, me and my big drunken mouth!

Of course now, by the time I got to the VIP, I was blushing like a priest in the lingerie section of Marks and Sparks! I walked through the back tables again like I had done last night and my eyes scanned through all the bodies to get to the man I was looking for. I found his chair empty and this night was starting to mirror the one before. Well, at least I wasn't inebriated. However, unlike the night before, an extra guest sat at their table in the form of my arch nemesis Hilary.

She was smiling and fake laughing which meant she wasn't quite getting the Demon welcome I was hoping for. I was too deep in my melancholy to watch where I was going and like last night I walked into someone. Two strong hands came out to steady me and the feel of them holding me tightly had me trying to remember to exhale.

"A beauty blushing and falling into my arms, must be my lucky night." Draven's voice mused and the sound of his velvet tone had me close to swooning. Of course it also had me blushing more and when he saw this, I swore I heard him groan. His hands flattened to my skin and he moved them up my sides making every bit of my flesh bump up with tingles, even under the thick material of my jacket.

"Come with me, I want you." His voice was deep and guttural which indicated his 'Want' in abundance. I swallowed hard and tried to focus on simple functions, but in the arms of a God, who could?

"I can't, I've got to work and my boss might see," I teased but by the way he tightened his hold on me, he meant business. I gulped again and kept my eyes down watching his chest rise and fall with heavy breathing. He was wearing a full navy suit, with waistcoat, white shirt and red tie that made him look like he just walked off a photo shoot for the world's sexiest man title.

Draven had a wide frame, thick with more muscles to count but in his suits it always made him look slimmer and more powerful in a different way. He screamed authority with every thread he wore and he was definitely one man that wore the suit not the suit wearing the man.

"Your BOSS does see you and if you don't come with him now he will

just take you and I think those perfect rose cheeks of yours will explode with shame at the sight of me throwing you over my shoulder and having my way.” His eyes burned into me and started to search down the length of me like he was going to devour me where I stood..... Ok so gulping again.

“You wouldn’t!” I said in whispered desperation but the look on his face told me I was wrong.

“Wouldn’t I? Are you willing to take that chance little one?” He looked down at me and I shyly looked down to my feet at the sound of the pet names he was giving me. I think I preferred “Vixen” to “Little one” But I had to admit, it did sound endearing.

When I didn’t respond he bent over and in one swift movement he put my waist to his shoulder and tightened his arm around my legs to hoist me up and over before I could say boo to a goose! I squealed out a little scream but he just laughed heartily in return.

“Draven! Put me down!” I said as sternly as I could while being this turned on and embarrassed at the same time.

“Umm, I don’t think so, I like the view and besides it puts you at the best height for...” I was about to ask what when I felt his teeth on my cheek closest to his face and I squealed again.

“DRAVEN!” I shouted but once again he just laughed off my reprimand. Meanwhile everyone in the VIP was witnesses this and some laughed at the sight. Draven was un-affected by their stares and even sounded somewhat proud of the sight at having a squirming girlfriend in his arms like a fireman. I couldn’t help feel heat burn under my skin as the whole of the upstairs continued to watch our every move. I noticed new faces that I had never seen before and realised most of the old faces I had become accustomed to, were no longer sat at their usual tables. I was however happy to see my cousin’s face turn a strange shade of scarlet along with another blonde at the table...Aurora.

Ok, so being over Draven’s shoulder did have quite a few advantages,

the most obvious being the way he made me feel below but also seeing my rivals red with rage was somewhat satisfying!

We stopped and I turned round to see him place two fingertips to the glass and it opened to let the cold night air in. Thankfully, I still had my jacket on but it still took my breath away, and in this temperature you could see it leaving me. I think he felt me shiver because he squeezed me tighter before lowering me to the ground and spinning me round so that my back turned. I soon found myself situated between the stone wall and pinned by one hot horny male. I braced myself for the cold to penetrate my jacket as he walked me backwards but he placed a palm against it before backing me up completely. His eyes concentrated for a split second and then stepped into me closing the space between us and pressed himself up against me, now making me feel the immense heat from both sides. He still had his palm out to the wall and soon his other joined in blocking me in. Not that I minded but it was once again making it difficult for me to remember how to breathe.

“Is that for me?” I asked shyly, still not being able to look up at him.

“I do not like it when you are cold and this is the only private place I can have you alone. Unless you will agree to come back to our bedchamber with me?” He said raising one eyebrow.

“No, Draven, I’m here to work remember?” I said more sternly giving my shyness a back burner. He laughed making me cross my arms, which wasn’t easy, giving the small space he gave me.

“And you are willing to leave me to your cousin’s devices alone, unprotected and without your body to comfort me?” Now I was the one laughing at his raised eyebrow that looked sexy as Hell when he did it.

“I think you will survive, besides you can thank your sister for that! I don’t know what she was thinking” His evil grin told me he did.

“Come on, out with it.” I said making him raise his eyes in surprise.

“I do believe you have developed the talent of reading me too well, I will

have to watch myself around you.” His velvet voice teased.

“I also have an inbuilt stalling detector and guess what Draven...it’s buzzing.” He laughed again and his hands came up to hold my face. He leaned down and claimed my lips to his. He deepened the kiss when I tried to move and with that I couldn’t resist. I was soon getting lost in his mouth and the way he moved us both had me so close to saying ‘to Hell with work, let’s go big boy!’

His hands started to move from my neck and find the zip to my jacket. I could barely hear the sound of my jacket being opened to reveal my body over my heavy breathing. Man, I wanted him and when I felt him smile in the kiss I knew he had heard that part in my mind.

I soon wasn’t the only one breaking our locked lips as I let out a gasp at the feel of my body lifting. He had grabbed my legs so quickly I barely felt him move. He had pulled them apart and stepped his body in their place. He then wrapped them around his waist so that his body held all my weight. I was pinned to the wall and his arousal became clear. Actually it was as clear as being prodded with an iron bar! He then slid his hands up my shoulders and down my arms to pull the sides of my jacket away revealing my heaving chest. He stopped what he was doing to stare down at me making me self-conscious.

“Is something wrong?” I asked now getting worried at his frozen hands and hidden expression. His features were in shadow but it was easy to spot his smile as his perfect teeth flashed white.

“Wrong? Why would you ask that? That word should never be allowed to be used when you are around.” He sound half amused and half deadly serious, which was such a contrast, it was confusing.

“Then why have you stopped?”

“To admire my Vixen. I never thought a woman dressed more like a man could turn me on to the point of embarrassment.” I frowned and shook my head to disagree but with one hand rested on my behind to hold me up the

other was free to pull at the tip of my tie. He was right, I guess I was dressed more like him than myself. Minus the jacket of course.

“I remember the night you first wore a tie, in fact, I kept it. Not being able to keep all of you, I decided I could take a part of you to remember.” I closed my eyes at the memory he spoke of and for the second time this night I was reminiscing.

The feel of his fingertips running down my neck made me arch my head backwards to give him further access. The shirt I wore was a cross over so it didn't reach my neck and the tie I wore low so the knot rested between my curves. Curves he was now trying to explore.

“I want to take you inside and make you mine completely, will you let me do this?” He asked, which was a first. He started kissing my neck as if to seal the deal but I had to remain in control. I wanted to hold onto the small amount of power I had and decided no matter how horny I was I would show some restraint. I wanted Hilary to see that I did work in the VIP and not just spend all my time being felt up by Draven. So with all the will I had, I said the words my body disagreed with.

“No, Draven I have to work.” It came out like the lie it was. My skin wanted his touch, I was craving for it to the point that if he merely said the word “sex” then I would find my release. However, my words didn't seem to register as he continued to taste me any way he could. It felt so good to be under his hands after the day I'd had but every time I was about to cave and let him have his way with me, I saw Hilary's face pop in my head and knew I would never hear the end of it if I left with Draven. So with one last effort I reached up to push at Draven's chest. At first he didn't feel it so I tried a different approach. I concentrated on letting some of my barriers down and shouted out in my head,

“*STOP!*” This made him react. I could see the shock in his eyes as he let me go and let my body glide down until my feet were touching the ground.

“I'm sorry, I'm not sure it meant to be heard as a shout. I just know that if I left now, without working, I wouldn't ever hear the end of it with Hilary.”

It all came out in a mumble but he seemed to understand me, I think maybe he was getting used to it.

“And you care, why?” He said seriously, now being the one to fold his arms. He didn’t look very happy with me and felt like chuckling at how spoiled he was being. So instead of giving him an answer he wouldn’t understand I just raised myself on my tiptoes and put my hands on his face.

“I love you Draven but don’t be spoiled.” And then I finished with pulling his face down so that I could kiss his nose, however I only just managed to reach his chin. He was still frowning but it had softened him a little. I tried to turn and move out from his stance but when one arm flashed out like it was spring loaded, I stopped dead and sighed.

“Draven, be reasonable,” I said turning to meet his gaze. I could feel it burning into me so I might as well look at it, to complete the total lack of cooperation. I was shocked however when I saw him grinning in a smug, self-congratulating way. I frowned.

“What?” I asked trying not to bite my lip at the sight of a smile that drove me wild.

“Oh, nothing.” He shrugged and when I let out a little growl he laughed before elaborating.

“Just a thought that you didn’t bank on, but me however, well let’s just say it’s going to make for an interesting night.” He made a clicking noise with his tongue and winked at me making my heart flutter. He played the ‘bad boy’ only too well and it made me want to crumble at the sight. This time he turned to leave and I doubted my arm stopping him was going to be as effective! So I grabbed his suit jacket instead, making him stop to look down at me with eyes I nearly lost myself in.

“And what is that supposed to mean exactly?” I couldn’t keep the negative tone out of my question, just like he couldn’t keep the arrogant smile from touching the corners of his perfect lips. He then reached for my hand that was still clutching at his collar and uncurled my fingers from the

material. He lifted my now free hand to his arrogant smile and kissed it like a perfect gentleman would. His eyes found me over my knuckles and they flashed deep purple at his own thoughts.

“See you soon Keira...I’m looking forward to an evening when my favourite person is the topic of conversation.” My mouth dropped open and inhaled cold air quickly making him laugh as he turned away.

“NO wait! I have changed my mind, I think we should go.” The words tumbled out in panic and he turned only his head as the rest of his beautiful body faced towards the frosted glass. He had one eyebrow raised and again looked too sexy for words. Breathe Keira, just breathe, I reminded myself.

“Relax my love, they’re only stories.” He turned fully now and trailed one fingertip along my jaw line and down to the hollow of my throat. I couldn’t help but close my eyes at the touch.

“Keira stories.” He whispered and my eyes flashed open but were met with the empty space where Draven once stood. He had gone without making a sound. I couldn’t help the chill that snaked up my back now my heat source was gone. I looked down to do my jacket back up but it was already zipped shut. How did that happen? Man, oh man...he was good!

I swallowed the huge lump that was named Hilary down my dry throat and stood not knowing quite what to do next. This was bad...very, *very* bad.

I took a few deep breaths and when that still didn’t seem enough to make me walk back through the doors I took a few more. I could just imagine Draven smirking at my cowardly behaviour as no doubt he still knew I was out here. Maybe if I waited long enough he would come out and get me. NO, then she would win and I would feel like a failure. I mean this was war right? Then it was time to fight fire with fire and this time I wasn’t going to be the one burnt...oh no, this time I wasn’t going to play by any rules. To Hell with rules of conduct. To Hell with rules of right and wrong. What was fair or not, I just didn’t care anymore. This was going to be the night that Hilary would see a different Keira.

This is the night that Hilary would see the side that plays with Demons and has Angels on her side! Oh yes this time it would be...oh so different!

OK, so my bad arse attitude was fooling no one, especially me. But Hell...at least it had made me open the doors and come in from the balcony. I tried not to look at the table that was currently entertaining my own personal nightmare. Freddy's razor hands and Jason's hockey mask had nothing on the sight of Hilary flirting with my boyfriend. So I didn't look. I refused to look. I walked over to the bar and was met by Karmun.

"Hey Chica, how's my favourite human?" He gave me a smile that instantly put me at ease and made me forget my justifiable worries.

"I have been better, Karmun," I replied bitterly and for the first time I allowed myself to look over to his table. I saw Draven laughing and I didn't know whether it was something Hilary had just said or that he had overheard my comment. I hoped for the latter and knew full well that his superior hearing was up to it.

I walked behind the bar and into the back room that no one but me used. There I took off my jacket and lay it across the back of one of the only chairs in this tiny little space. There wasn't much room for furniture but there was a small desk that held nothing more than dust. I walked over to the mirror I usually gave myself the once over in before I started my shift and it took me back to the days that my heart beat faster and my stomach held nothing but knots at the idea of seeing Draven. Of course my body still reacted like that but now I was with him, it didn't ever last all night like it used to.

I twisted a loose strand back up into its place and straightened my tie, not being able to keep the grin of my face. The recent memory of Draven tugging at it on the balcony at least gave me some more colour to my very pale face. I looked up from my tie and let out a gasp at what I was seeing.

The mirror no longer held my image but was now white and steamy. I shuddered at another memory and almost screamed as words started to form

in the picture of mist. It took me back to that night Justin kissed me and what horrors followed with the writing in my truck window. It was the same and yet it felt different at the same time. It was as if someone was trapped inside the mirror world and writing messages to communicate words they could not say. Of course as soon as the words started to become readable I let out my held breathe and my shoulder muscles relaxed.

You look beautiful my love

Remember not to work too hard or

you will have your boss to answer to

See you soon

Vixen

D x

I don't know how he managed to write perfect script in vapour covered glass but he did. It wasn't fair that even like this his writing made mine look like the scribbles of a child in comparison. I ended up walking out of there giggling to myself and biting my bottom lip in between the little snorting noises I was making. Karmun eyed me curiously but remained silent on the matter. This was a small factor compared to my other audience, that even though was across the room, I could still feel his eyes taking in my reaction to his private message.

I managed the rest of the night without giving into my natural impulses and looking his way. I don't know how but I could almost taste his displeasure at this and felt as though I had paid him back for earlier. Now I was the one being smug. However it didn't last long as my mind kept twisting into why's, wants and what's. *Why* had my cousin been asked here? How I *Wanted* her to leave and most importantly, *What* was it that she was telling the man I loved?

My cousin's presence wasn't the only difference in tonight's shift. I wasn't allowed to waitress tonight. Well to be exact there wasn't much I was allowed to do! Karmun soon informed me that due to Draven's new guests, he didn't think it wise for me (as a human) to be serving them quite so soon. He wanted them to get 'used' to my being here.

I had sulked for a few minutes and then gave up trying. I mean, he may be my boyfriend, but he *was* also my boss. So instead I was to help Karmun behind the bar. It didn't take long for me to feel more in the way than help. Not with me keep having to ask him questions on where things were and what drinks go in what glasses. It wasn't exactly like any bar I had ever worked behind before. For one I had no idea how he knew which drinks were being ordered?

"I'm being more of a hindrance than help," I said to him half an hour into my shift and bumping into him for the seventh time in three minutes. He just laughed and smoothed out his silken hair with both hands. Karmun had lush coffee coloured skin and large almond shaped golden eyes that looked like honey. His black, long hair hung perfect past his shoulders and never once seem to get in the way of his job. Mine, no doubt would have been caught in everything if down and drinking from glasses to find meter long hair curled up in was not an appealing thought. These were just one of the many reasons that I almost always kept it up and firmly out of the way. Unless of course I was with Draven, then I never seemed to have a choice in the matter as it was obvious how he preferred it to be.

He soon shrugged off my worries and gave me a reassuring smile.

"You're too kind to me you know?" I said quietly as he poured drinks into exquisite looking silver goblets.

"Oh Keira, what a sensitive soul you are. Actually it's nice to have the company again." He said this and I could have sworn I saw a hint of sadness in his eyes. One he was trying to hide.

"Again? Were there two of you behind here?" I asked, although I could tell it made him uncomfortable to speak of. He looked like he wasn't going to

answer at first but when the silence got too much he answered me.

“Yes, before you came. Do you remember when you first came up to the VIP?” He asked me and made a gurgled noise as my answer. Did I remember? How could I ever forget. That was the night that changed my life forever...you don’t forget things like that easily.

“Well, do you remember when I told you we were short staffed due to...” He looked like he couldn’t finish so unbelievably I finished for him. Unbelievably, because my memory is not one of my strong points.

“Compromising circumstances!” This had been a term he had used on my first meeting with him and I had thought it odd back then to use that explanation of someone rather quitting or getting sacked. I couldn’t ignore the flinch I saw his body displayed as I repeated his own words.

“You have a good memory Keira. Yes me and Constantine made a...a good pair.” He looked so full of pain that I couldn’t help it when I placed a hand on his arm.

“I’m sorry,” I whispered and this brought his eyes out of his own personal response and they flew back to mine. He then slowly looked down and stared at my hand touching his. I didn’t know whether I had gone too far by my comforting gesture but when he smiled I no longer felt threatened. I still removed my hand in case it was in fact unwelcome.

“Why are you sorry?” He asked in earnest and I wondered at the answer. I mean I didn’t know the details. So I answered as honestly as I could.

“I can see that this Constantine must have been a dear friend to you.” I said without meeting his eyes, that didn’t look natural being so serious.

“He was...IS... more than a friend to me!” This time the way he said “IS” had me looking up and I couldn’t help but take a step back at the sight of his anger. Karmun was all air and summer breezes but like this all trace of calm was gone and in its place was the darkest of storms. When he noted my response the deep creases in his face smoothed and his eyes widened from the

harden slits they were.

Then it was as if we had never had this conversation. He gave himself a laugh and a shake before continuing with the night ahead. I may have only been human but it didn't stop me from knowing his light-hearted mood was touched with a fake coating that hid something painful that he tried to bury deep within him.

I knew from that moment I would never look at him in the same way. I would never forget those honey eyes close to spilling over with a devastated emotion of loss. I knew those eyes. I knew that look and I knew that pain. Only where his was for another, mine had been for the loss of myself. Staring at yourself in the mirror for hours, searching for a face you once knew, was what made time flash by in the years that followed my living death. After what happened with Morgan I felt the strongest part of me die and it was only the heart of another that brought me back to life.

With these thoughts in mind I turned without thinking towards the one who held my heart so close to his own, it made one. Draven was sat back all ease and power radiating from him like glowing embers. It made me inhale more air than needed and the slight noise I made was enough for him to hear and turn his head. His reaction caused mine to bite my lip. He grinned at me and then motioned for me to come to him. His hand extended and his fingers pulled as though he had me hooked. I was embarrassed at such a command being made in front of everyone so freely and I lowered my head letting the shorter parts of my hair fall forward covering my shame. I did manage, without looking at him, to shake my head indicating a *no* before turning away from him. I could hear him laughing from here. This caused my cheeks to turn a deeper shade which I hid with my hair. When I did finally glance back I saw him lean into his sister to whisper to her, all the while a super confident smile lay upon his lips like it would never go away.

“He wants me to tell you that you have finished for the night.” Karmun said bringing me back to the fact I wasn't alone.

“Umm...no I'm not, I work till ten and it's only...” I was interrupted before finding out the time.

“He’s the Mast...boss Keira not me and you finish whenever he wishes it.” He tried to say this without emotion but I could detect the bitterness in the way he was about to say “Master” instead he choose the word boss. I was now caught between stubbornness and curiousness. I didn’t want to give in so easily but then again, I didn’t know what tainted stories my cousin was telling everyone on Draven’s council. I bet Aurora was loving it! That thought made me shudder. It was also the reason my stubbornness won.

“I don’t care what Draven says” I said a little louder than what was necessary for only Karmun to hear. He looked shocked at my lack of co-operation and a little impressed, I think.

“I am here to work and so far I have done little of that, so please give me a job I can do that makes me think I am worthy of being paid.” He smiled at me now making me do the same, but his smile soon became directed behind me. At first I expected to see Draven as I turned but then I had to smile when I saw he had sent his reinforcement. So this is what he had being whispering...sneaky!

“Hello Keira, are you ready to come and play with us?” Sophia asked me sweetly rocking back and to on her heels. She looked like a little ballerina from a trinket box and the image of that I quickly wiped from my memory and started to rub my gloved arms unselfconsciously.

Sophia noticed my reaction, of course she did. She was like her brothers, always watching and analysing everything I did. It was an annoying family trait. Like everyone was waiting for the first signs of a meltdown I knew wasn’t going to happen. At least this is what I suspected anyway.

“I was just telling Karmun how my time isn’t up yet so he should give me another job to do...maybe stocking up or something.” They both laughed at the idea of this.

“What?” I asked them both frowning.

“I doubt Dom would like you heavy lifting Keira.” She said in composed amusement.

“Draven doesn’t want me doing anything! Working, full stop.” I ranted out but she took little seriousness in my words.

“Oh Keira, come now, what exactly do you see wrong in that sentence. My brother is now getting persecuted for what.... being too thoughtful?” She was trying not to smile at knowing guilt was my biggest weakness.

“I...I...that’s not what I meant, I just...” I was close to chewing my bottom lip off at a statement that sounded reasonable enough, that it was hard to argue against. Not that I still didn’t want to and with the added look of victory in her face made it all that harder not too. Of course instead of thinking of a good response I just let out a defeated breath and rolled my eyes.

“Fine but I’m not happy about it!” My shoulders slumped as light came to her features.

“Really Keira, anyone would think we were trying to get you to walk over hot coals, dance naked whist killing bunnies!”

“You do realise my cousin is sat over there right?” I said sarcastically making her laugh.

“Which reminds me, why on earth would you do this to me?” I asked her, pleading a cause that was far too late...unless they were willing to kick her out.

“Look, I know you are angry at me about having her here but despite being little ‘Miss Naughty Demon’ this one was not me. This one was an order and one you will have to take up with someone else.” Sophia tried not to laugh as my mouth dropped open and I could only imagine what a simpleton I looked.

“What! Draven?” She only nodded at my outburst and I felt my gut twist into a hard ball of rage. Why! Why, why and more whys? I now knew the reasons behind his evil grin earlier. It wasn’t at his sister’s request at all...it was at his. Well this changes things. My night’s frustration was quickly

turning to a lethal weapon I was about to let loose in Draven's direction.

Oh yes, my shift had now finished but my work for the night was definitely not over!

Not by a long shot.

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Chapter 48

Keira Stories.

I turned to Karmun before leaving with Sophia and said one word.

“Drink” The word came out ruder than I had meant it to but instead of being offended Karmun found amusement in my order. I guess Draven was rubbing off on me. I had a shot of tequila in front of me before I could blink. Everyone that knew me here, knew my drinking preference and it wasn't hard to realise which one of the two I needed the most right now. Hell Karmun even knew I didn't need the salt or lime. No, I already had a sour taste in my mouth that didn't need adding to.

“Come on, let's get this shit over with,” I said to Sophia in passing. I knew without looking at her the shock that I would have found considering I didn't usually curse like that. I'm not even sure she had ever heard it from me before now. I could feel her giggling beside me and had no doubt she was loving every minute of this, being a Demon and all.

For once I couldn't get to Draven's table quick enough and he watched me with curious eyes. I could see he wasn't taking my evil glare seriously, if anything he looked more excited by this than worried. By the time I got to my usual chair I was starting to think one shot wasn't nearly enough. Draven stood and the rest followed, all except Hilary...no surprises there.

“Hello beautiful.” He said with voice deep and full of meaning. He leaned down to brush his lips to mine and skimmed a finger down my cheek lightly. Of course all my built up rage disbursed at his gentle touch and was being replaced by rose coloured cheeks at now being the focus of everyone's stares. Two of which looked like they were sharing the same feelings.

No guessing which two.

I sat down, looking the exact opposite of my cousin, which was like having ice and fire in the same room and putting bets on which one will win. I liked to think I was the fire, considering I had Draven's direct heat next to me. Also Hilary wasn't trying to conceal her icy glare that was burrowing its way into my forehead. It almost caused me physical pain to try and understand why...why so much hate, why so much energy to go on hating someone for so long. It must have been exhausting for her. For years I had never found my answers but it wasn't through lack of trying.

And then it hit me! This was why Draven had Sophia invite her. This was the reason behind one evening of discomfort. He wanted to know as much as I did, he just would never admit it. He could read her mind and know, given the right questions, he would discover the truth behind the hate. It was genius really and why I didn't think about it before, was answered by that genius. It was him not me but still I had come close by figuring it out. Maybe we weren't so very different at all. Humph. Ok, so now I wasn't so angry at Draven but I still wasn't looking forward to this.

I gave myself a mental shake before joining in with whatever conversation was occurring before my arrival. Of course it didn't go unnoticed that the sound of my cousin's voice was already grating on me. I could feel his hand squeeze mine in reassurance to the fact.

"I have to say Kizzy Cat, I'm surprised you can even call this a job...you must have too much fun." I could hear the inner meaning to this comment like a wolf howling. I knew her tactics and her mind games better than most so it didn't surprise me that although her tone sounded friendly it was laced with vindictiveness.

"Well, this was a quiet night for me but I wouldn't usually have a family member here and I really didn't want to miss out." I felt like I was going against my screaming head saying this but considering my lying was that bad, I doubted anyone believed the words. She smirked at me and turned to answer a question I couldn't hear asked from Takeshi.

“You’re going to have to do better at lying than that my love.” Draven purred in my ear making my lids close at the scent that floated its way down the side of my face. I heard him laugh quietly to himself and thought it down to being able to hear my heart rate kick up a notch.

“Thanks!” I whispered sarcastically making him laugh out louder this time. Of course this caused everyone to stop and look at us.

“So, what have I missed?” I asked, hoping for an insight into the evenings ‘interesting night’ as Draven put it on the balcony. Of course as soon as Hilary opened her mouth I found myself regretting it.

“Oh Draven’s been learning all your dirty little secrets but don’t worry, I saved the best ones till you were here.” This time everyone laughed but me.

“I bet that made for a boring conversation as there’s not much to tell in that department.” I commented but from the looks of Hilary she didn’t agree.

“Really? You don’t think so? I guess I must have a better memory than you.” She challenged and Draven felt me tense next to him.

“I’m not afraid of you,” I snarled not caring for the serious turn this was taking. Everyone else looked like they were watching a game of tennis, back and to, trying to keep score. Well, I knew who Aurora was rooting for.

“Maybe that’s your mistake, after all I have known you a long time cousin and know full well what you’re capable of.” She answered like I would have and it made me think she had heard these exact words from me once upon a time.

“Likewise!” I replied sealing the tension you could have sliced with a blade. I don’t know why but being here, like this with Draven at my side and my enemy sat across, taunting me, a new me came out...the fighter in me.

She started laughing and waving her hand around like an embarrassing memory had just hit her. It hadn’t, it was just her next move in this chess game of real life.

“Well I had just finished telling them how you used to come home from school and wet yourself because you thought there were monsters in the toilet.” She said like this was enough to knock a couple of pawns off the board. I laughed myself showing her up.

“Yes, I was good at hiding the truth as a child. It was in fact because being bullied at the age of seven and avoiding a head dunking was something no parent wants to hear.” At this I had turned her story back on herself making her the bad guy she was. I noted Draven growl under his breath, everyone but Hilary heard it and all flinched at the sound. I felt his hand on my leg reassuringly. Of course this reason had been true but so had the other one.

For at that time, to me, monsters had existed as they do now. This was one story that would not give her the upper hand and make the others in alliance to her little charade. Amazingly even Aurora looked a bit dissatisfied at the turn the game took, but of course she wasn't finished with me yet...oh no, she wouldn't stop until she got to my King.

“Oh Keira that's awful, I wish Dom had been there at your school. I bet he would have frightened them off for you,” Sophia said kindly and the image she planted made me grin. How much simpler my life would have been back then if Draven had been in it to protect me. Of course there is no way he would have been a boy but the thought of us being the same age and being childhood sweethearts was a nice dream to see. It made me look up at him and he gave me a bad boy grin before winking at me.

“I have a pretty good idea what I would have done.” He said, making me shudder at the image he was now planting in my mind. I have seen scary Draven too many times to ever forget how powerful a sight it really is. I was so close to asking him to do a private showing for my cousin to see but I knew he wouldn't.

Pity, I thought as I reached for my bottle of Corona that had been waiting for me.

“Do you remember Simon, dear Kizzy Cat?” I nearly wore my drink

than consuming it! She wouldn't....she couldn't really be ready to go that far. Draven noted my reaction with a worried frown. Of course, this would happen, any mention of another man's name was bound to kill my strongest pawn...ah to Hell with pawn's she had gone straight for my Queen and had her sights once again on my King!

"That is not a story Hilary, that is a private and personal matter I do NOT want to be discussed!" I said in a way that proved I was taking pages from Draven's book in ordering people. Of course I remained calm which added to its desired effect.

"Oh Kizzy, come on, it was what...seven maybe eight years ago. I remember my mum telling me about it, She didn't think your parents would ever forgive you!" She laughed again but now all questioning eyes were on me, including Draven's. I wanted to lunge over the table and claw at her face. I wanted to maim, I wanted to hurt and I wanted to destroy! This time she had really gone too far and I wanted her to pay! This now wasn't just the fighter coming out of me, this was the Demon.

"That's enough Hilary, you go too far." I said still remaining an eerie calm that was wearing thin. Icy thin that was soon to crack.

"Apparently it was you that went too far and with a married man I believe...what was he, twice your age at the time...what was that...about sixteen years older?"

"SHUT UP!" I screamed out at her as I stood in my rage burning her with my stare. My ice had broken and left me with deadly shards that my mind wanted to throw her way. I was shaking, I was that angry but in the middle of my own turmoil I hadn't seen I wasn't the only one having a meltdown. I didn't give it much thought as I was facing my cousin in a standoff that would surely this time end in broken bones.

"Right that's it bitch, I have had it with your shit! Outside...NOW!" I was waiting for her to take me up on the offer but she just leaned back, crossed her legs and held her hands up like she was innocent.

“Kizzy, what did I do wrong, surely Dominic knows about your past... lovers?” She just kept digging my grave getting carried away with the way she was trying to bury me.

“Right, that’s it!” I turned and was about to go round to her side when Draven reacted.

“Enough!” He shouted and a heated hand whipped out and shackled my wrist. I gasped at the sight of Draven towering above me, face frozen in pure rage. He clicked his fingers and I turned back to Hilary in time to see her eyes roll back and her head smack the table as she passed out. At least I gather she had passed out and Draven hadn’t just killed her, either way I’m sure I would forgive him.

He still had hold of me like he was preventing me from running off and this is when realisation hit me. That was exactly what he was doing, he was undoubtedly angry and it wasn’t just at my cousin. I gulped as I could feel his temper mounting up like Mount St Helens. I tried to pull away but he pulled me back and leaned down to whisper one word.

“Stay!” The way he said the word made little bumps wriggle across my skin.

“Zagan, take the girl home!” He ordered with a tension in his voice that made me more than wary. Meanwhile Zagan had gone to Hilary’s side in a second and scooped her leggy body up in one swift motion. I didn’t want to look at Draven, but I found I couldn’t look away also. His features were stone. His jaw set in a way that made me want to cringe back but his vice grip was going to make that impossible. Zagan was walking to the back staircase when Draven spoke again.

“Wait” He then nodded to his brother once, communicating without words. He then let go of my wrist and left my side to go over to Zagan and his burden. I was about to leave also, not wanting to wait around for Draven’s wrath, but something caught me...It was Vincent. He wasn’t as forceful as his brother and entwined his hand in mine and gently pulled me to sit back down next to him, which was in Draven’s chair. I felt like I was breaking some

unspoken rule by doing so but it was only my own reaction that confirmed this was not the case.

Vincent didn't let go of my hand and I noted that it was cooler than his brother's was and also a little smoother, as I would have imagined flexible marble to be. I watched Draven stand close to Hilary and that's when I noticed that it wasn't only the attention of his council that lay witness to this night's spectacle. Every eye was watching, flittering between their Master and his mate....me.

"Hilary, can you hear me!" It came out as another order not a question.

"Yes." She said as though talking in her sleep. It was a peaceful voice and one I remembered from before she had changed into the hateful being she was today. It took me back to when we were friends. When we used to laugh and play together and there was nothing but a strong family bond between us. Really, what went wrong?

"I want you to tell me a name." His voice was smooth and hypnotic, like all those times he used to make me sleep and control my mind into thinking he wasn't really there.

"Draven don't do this." I pleaded quietly but when he shot me a look I backed down, knowing it was fruitless.

"A name?" She repeated like a drugged hospital patient.

"Yes, the name of the man you spoke of, Keira past...*lover*." He said this like it caused him physical pain. The word 'lover' coming out in what can only be classed as utter disgust. I wanted to crawl away from the rest of the night. To hide the shame that had too quickly replaced the anger I felt. And as if sensing this, Vincent let go of my hand and rested it on my shoulder, ready no doubt for me to try anything his brother would frown upon. It was silly feeling, like a prisoner amongst my own boyfriend's family, but given the type of family Draven had, I suppose it was as natural to them as breathing. I looked to my other side in hopes of finding Sophia on my side but from the harsh expression inflicting her eyes I found nothing but the shadow of

Draven there.

“Simon...Simon Carter.” Hilary said unconsciously acting out as Draven’s puppet. I didn’t like my cousin, that was no secret but it was not a nice thing to witness Draven’s control over us mere humans, no matter who his victim was.

“Good girl, now sleep and forget this night.” He patted her on the head like you would a sleeping child and she drooped more into Zagan’s hold. My emotions were mixing into one and making it difficult to feel anything concrete. One minute I feared what Draven’s reaction would be and then I would be too angry to feel that fear. Of course there were the others...shame, embarrassment, guilt, hurt and cold. That last one was more down to Vincent’s presence and the chill he sent down me with not only his touch but his stare into what seemed like empty space. I know not what he saw there but it was like he was searching out for some hidden answers from a source I couldn’t see.

Before I knew it my cousin was out of sight and Draven was coming back to my side. I guess it would be too much to hope this night would just carry on like this had never happened. I soon got my answer.

“Come with me Keira, *now!*” Draven’s demand filled me with a dread so deep I was drowning in it. Vincent released me but the cold pit in my stomach didn’t release me. Draven had re-taken possession of me and I found myself being more pulled than guided to the back doors leading into his home.

“Draven please, this is silly...I...” I stopped that sentence when I saw just how un-silly this was by his expression. That look would have stopped armies in their tracks and made them think twice about land mass and extended power. He looked back at the looming hallway and continued towards the end which felt more like my end. It seemed like an age of silent footsteps until we got to his door.

Before I could protest, the door opened and he zoomed round to the back of me, gripping my waist and controlling me onward. I had nothing to back

up on but his indestructible body which was moving forward like a pressing wall behind me. I don't think I had ever felt so small and weak before.

Now anger was building up inside me like a firecracker ready to explode in the palm of my hand. It made me storm inside instead of backing away and only when I heard the door slam did I face him.

"This is ridiculous Draven, you can't behave this way when you hear something you don't like!" I shouted at him letting the firecracker go, so to this he let off a rocket. He drove his tensed arm and fist down into the black velvet couch, breaking it in two. It splintered up in every direction, making it look like an animal had just clawed its way through it.

Draven hadn't spoken a word, not even made a sound. I had screamed at the sight of his outburst and only then did this seem to calm him slightly. He straightened his body and closed his eyes as if trying very hard to control himself better. I smartly decided to stay silent.

"Did...did he...he force you?" He said each word slowly and from the looks of things, painfully.

"What? I..." I was trying to process his question when he spoke again in a more forceful tone.

"Did he RAPE you?" He shouted out making me want to cry.

"I...I..." Was all I seemed to manage but Draven was losing the battle within him to stay even this level of calm.

"Yes or No Keira!" He said between clenched teeth.

"N...No" I said spluttering out the word as now I was crying. The sight of tears flowing down my flustered cheeks made his hard exterior soften.

"You'd better not be lying to me Keira, I will find out and he will die for touching you." His threat was so real, a sob broke out from me, however he still didn't move.

“I...I’m not...not lying.” I spoke in between trying to breath and cry at the same time. He could see my pain and there he also saw the truth. He let out a breath I don’t know how long he had been holding, as it seemed he hadn’t been breathing this whole time. I could see his figure start to move towards me through blurred eyes but I moved back a step.

“Don’t!” I cried making him halt. I blinked making my flooded eyes overflow and clear my vision for a moment. Now I could see a different pain in his face, one I had put there. Instead of coming any closer, he folded his arms and waited.

“I need you to explain.” His voice was now less strained but it was still guttural.

“Explain what?” I shouted, waving my arms at him. He didn’t react in anger and I soon realised it was never me that he had been *angry* at. It had been this man Simon.

“Forget it! I’m so out of here Draven!” I stomped toward the other door but I heard it lock without him moving.

“You’re not going anywhere until you tell me what I want to know.”

“The Hell I’m not! You can’t do this Draven! You can’t just act like this! I’m your girlfriend Draven not some bloody little girl you can control into doing what you order. You can’t hold me captive with this bullshit, macho, I’m the man King, so you will do what I say crap!” I was panting like a wild animal and digging my nails into my fisted palms, just to stop from hitting out.

“Are you finished?” He asked calmly but this just made it worse and with a growl I turned to punch the door. I didn’t make contact with wood or stone or anything but flesh. Draven had caught my fist in his hand and prevented a few broken knuckles, maybe even a wrist and some fingers.

“I’m really going to have to teach you how to punch without hurting yourself, that was all wrong.” He said without humour. I yanked my hand out

from his and he let me.

“Arrgg!” I made this noise as I walked back away from him towards the glass doors.

“You’re not leaving Keira, so deal with it!” He was losing his patience but I no longer cared.

“I need air, Draven, or do you think me capable of jumping off, sprouting wings and escaping!” I snapped back. The doors opened letting in the cold night air that licked at the thin material of my shirt. I wished I still had my jacket on but my anger wouldn’t let me say “Umm scrap that, I think arguing inside is better.”

I walked to the edge and took in deep breaths trying to calm myself down. I was so tired of coming back to this type of problem with Draven. It was like being on a constant rollercoaster of never-ending ups and downs. I didn’t know from one day to the next what was going to happen to shift me and Draven back to this destructive path we were walking down.

I wanted to scream out...Why! What’s wrong with me that I don’t get to have happy ever after! Why don’t I deserve good old fashioned normal for once. Just one evening when I don’t almost die, get kidnapped or see monsters every corner I turn. Why don’t I get to hold on to the Draven I love without seeing the Demon in him at any bump in the road. I answered my own question...

Because he was a Demon. Is a Demon.

I shook myself and added onto that distinction. He was also an Angel, a bright star in my life that I couldn’t live without even if I tried. Like living without the only light in the darkness of my past. He was my reason for breathing and now I knew I had to take the good with the bad just like everyone else in the world did. Perfect didn’t exist and if it did, without the bad you wouldn’t recognise the good. It would make it irrelevant. It would be nothing but dust and sand mixed in a desert. Could you separate the two? Tell them apart...the answer was no, and you wouldn’t even try.

I loved Draven and there was no force great enough to get me to change that, not even the Gods themselves could get me to say otherwise. So this...this right now meant nothing but another glitch. A thorn in my side that Draven himself would no doubt remove. So I decided that I would tell him about how stupid this all was.

I would tell him about a man that I had some teenage infatuation with that ended in me shamefully kissing an older man at sixteen and near throwing myself at his mercy. How I had ended broken hearted as he stopped things before they became a crime and him declaring his love for his wife. How my teenage dream of *me* being his wife was crushed leaving me with only the memory of one stolen kiss. How I had run away from home believing I would never find another love like it and how I would remain alone until he was with me. I was sixteen and the next time I learnt about what love really was, is when I was twenty three. It was when I found my home, my heart's home...

When I met my Draven.

I jumped at the feel of something being put over me. It was a thick, lush and warm blanket that Draven had put around my shivering body. He wrapped it around me like I needed protecting against the elements. It was only then that I realised it had been snowing and I was wet along with cold. I wondered why he had waited this long, normally Draven would have...

“I had to wait...I had to let you...finish.” He spoke in my ear causing a warm sensation on my neck. I shuddered when his fingers started to trace the skin there and his fingertips circled in my hair.

“I had to hear the rest of it, I needed to see for myself. To see if this...this *man* had hurt you in anyway. You understand how that I could never allow such a man to live if he had. I needed to know from your own thoughts that he hadn't touched you in that way...in my way. I would have killed him if that was the case and my reason would have been final and just.” He spoke so softly, it was hard to think clearly, to really comprehend he was talking about

murder.

“No!” I protested but he moved a hand to the back of my head and smoothed down my wet hair. He remained out of sight but his other arm wrapped across my front pulling me back to him tightly.

“Yes Keira!” I shuddered as his possessive voice that spoke of how I was his and never would belong to another.

“No one that has hurt you will live in the same world you do, I would never allow it. But seeing as there was very little harm done, only for a sensitive teenage mind to have suffered, then no harm will come to him. I can imagine turning you away...even at the tender age of sixteen was punishment enough. A strong character he must have been.” I tried to turn around to look at him but he held me still so that I couldn’t move from him. I knew now why he needed me upset. He wanted access to a fragile mind. He wanted to see the truth and only my thoughts would have portrayed such. But he had seen lots more, he had received a direct window into my soul, into my heart and every feeling it held there.

“Yes and I dare say it was very...enlightening!” His voice almost shook with barrelling over emotion. He kissed my head and then moved down to my neck. I could feel the drops of snow that had melted on his heated skin roll down onto my own. I closed my eyes and felt myself being turned round to face him.

“Keira, open your eyes.” He whispered as a plea, no longer an order left in his body. I looked up slowly to find his face painted with so many emotions. Pain, focus, guilt, relief but most of all...love. He cupped my face in his hands and pulled our faces closer together.

“Can you ever forgive me?” He whispered above my lips.

“Ye...” I didn’t get to finish the word above his lips but inside his kiss. He moulded our bodies together and kissed me with every passion lit fibre in his body. I felt a whoosh of air as his other form burst from his outer self all the while never leaving my lips. He gripped onto me so tightly, like he would

die if he ever let me go. Like both our lives hung in the balance and the only thing stopping the end was this kiss. This perfect act of love that stopped time...our time, no one else's, just ours.

His wings came out and rushed forward covering us in a dark feathery cocoon making the only light the warm purple glow that both our skins wore. Mine reflecting from the raw supernatural energy that pumped around him. I shuddered again making him hold me closer to him. His hands spread out on both the top and bottom of my spine. He needed me as I needed him and in both our minds we were one.

“Forever!” He breathed freeing me to take my own breath.

“Forever.” I repeated not only his word but also the same feeling that was bursting out from me like his Demon side. And then it dawned on me, like a knife had sliced into my heart and started cutting me down like the wound I was left with in my dream. Is that what it all meant? The light at the end, my heart missing because Draven still had hold of it? Still had hold of what I was leaving behind. My end. My death.

Because of course, I didn't have forever...

But he did.

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Chapter 49

Fearing Forever.

“Kaz, come on, be reasonable, mum and dad will be crushed.” My sister was stood cradling her growing bump in her hands and with the mothering glow lighting her features it was hard to tell her no... again.

“I can’t Lib’s, I’m sorry but it’s only one Christmas.” I repeated again feeling like a broken record.

“You’re wrong, look Kaz, I don’t want to upset you but think about it.” She tilted her head like I was missing something major important. I rolled my eyes as a natural reaction to a conversation we had been having for days.

“I know you’re pregnant but it’s not like I’m missing the kid’s first Christmas.” When she started shaking her head I knew that wasn’t what she meant.

“Keira, come on now, it’s not like I’m expecting that to be the reason. This has to do with you.” I had wondered how long it would take her to drop

my nickname and go in for a more serious tone.

“I don’t...”

“Keira, I really don’t want to say it but I see I have no other choice. It will be our first Christmas when were altogether...you know, like really there...” She was finding it so hard not to push me but I finally got to the inner core of why this was so important for everyone. It was the first time in years my parents would see me...the old me, that they thought they had lost...well more like... taken from them. She was right, this was important. After all, I don’t think I really remember the last Christmas where I wasn’t faking smiles and making comments I didn’t feel. Back then I had been numb, I had been a shell and a broken soul left bleeding.

“You mean not like the zombie Keira Christmas?” I said trying to lift her worried frown. Thankfully she laughed and I wasn’t left feeling as guilty.

“Ok, I get it, but Lib’s this is going to be really hard. I mean Dra, Dominic is very over protective.” I winced as I said this. Like my mind was mocking me, saying “Yeah right and the rest!”

“Well he could come as well, I mean it’s not like he couldn’t afford the air fare.” Well she was right there, he did have his own private jet for starters. I decided not to tell her that part. The fact of the matter was that Draven would be fine in small one dinner circumstances but spending a week with my family wasn’t something I could imagine happening. Not only that but I wasn’t raving about the idea of putting my family in danger. After all, I was still being...hunted.

“Look, I will speak to him, but I can’t make any promises...ok?” She nodded but her smile told me that she thought this was so a done deal!

I left the kitchen to find Hilary behind the door. I could tell by her smirk that she had heard every word. I decided not to stick around and ran up the stairs to my new room. I only tripped once, which was unusual for me these days. I don’t know why but ever since I had been with Draven I had become a little less clumsy and more co-ordinated. I wondered why that was?

The week after the VIP incident went by thankfully, without a hitch. Unfortunately for me, I wasn't allowed to bring the matter up with Hilary about her behaviour at the club, because thanks to Draven's mind control, she was left thinking it was a quiet night. The fact that I had to swallow my hate for that heinous act was easier said than done. I couldn't even pretend anymore.

Libby had noticed the change but I couldn't even tell her about it. So as far as she was concerned she was left thinking I had just lost all will when it came to my cousin. The fact that she had decided to stay until the beginning of December didn't help matters. As it turned out, me and my sister had both been deceived and deluded thinking it was only ever going to be just a week.

Once in my room, I had time to think about the whole Christmas problem. Either way I looked at it I was going to be hurting someone. If I didn't go then I know my mum would be crushed. My dad, I think would understand but he would feel disappointment for my mother's sensitive disposition. Libby wouldn't let me get away with not going lightly. And no doubt there would be waterworks to contend with thanks to a bunch of baby hormones that made crying at anything, her new sport. But all of these options seemed better than the alternative. Telling Draven was not a thing I would look forward to, that was for sure. I can imagine the 'NO' word would get used a lot.

I tried to look at things objectively, weighing up the pros and cons, but the deeper I looked the more I hated to admit things to myself...I was scared. I know it was an irrational response but I had grown so used to my new life here I was scared of going back to my past, even if I was only revisiting. Stupid as it was, I feared that I would be opening up old wounds by going back, while here it didn't even feel like I ever bled. Here was new. Here was safe. Here was Draven. Ok so maybe it would be alright if he was with me, I mean he could play human for a week, couldn't he? Thankfully the sound of Abba singing pulled me from my mental breakdown before a headache set in.

"What's up me Bitch!" RJ's "I'm from the hood" greeting made me giggle. I just hoped...no, no scrap that, more like prayed, that her next image

change didn't include gun tattoos, rap music and sayings like "Bust a cap in your arse".

"Hey RJ, what you up to?"

"Not a whole lot which is why you're going to help me." She said sweetly, telling me instantly that this might not be something I would want to do. I loved RJ but *sweet* was not in her genetic makeup.

"Ok hit me with it," I pushed.

"I need you to come on a private mission with me 'cause if I don't get out of the house now, my mum is going to make me babysit the brat and unless locking kids in cupboards is acceptable babysitting conduct, then I severely suggest we go shopping or God forbid even hiking! Anything just to get me out of this house in the next couple of minutes!" I was nearly in tears with laughter by the time she had finished her little rant and after some more over exaggerated comment about her younger sister and friends, we arranged for her to meet me here. She turned up in record time.

I ran down and was met by not one Thomas but two. Jack had also come with his sister. I gathered neither wanted to spend a Sunday babysitting. Jack nodded to me with his lips held firm in a thin line. We still hadn't spoken, thanks to my cousin. God only knows the lies he had been told and it hurt me more than I let on that he had chosen her side over mine. I guess I had to admit it to myself sometime, that we weren't as good friends as I once thought. I shook myself from anymore of those thoughts before I started crying.

'Cause I missed him.

Hilary came down the stairs behind me and nearly knocked me out of the way to get to Jack.

"Excuse me!" She huffed as she squeezed past me like I had been a bus standing in her way.

"You're excused," I said bitterly and walked towards RJ trying to ignore

Jack's glare.

"Come on RJ, let's go before we miss the movie," I said doing a vague impression of my happy self.

"Oooh, a movie, which one?" Hilary squealed as she hung on to Jack's arm like he was a prize doll.

"I don't know what it's called, the one where robots kill astronauts." I said hoping that alone would put her off.

"Oh I saw the trailer for that one but it's not out yet in the UK. What do you say Jack, are you game?" He looked down at me and then back at Hilary's pleading eyes. Which pleading eyes would he choose? Please say no, please say no. I repeated hoping somehow it would enter his brain...it didn't.

"Sure, why not. Killer robots sounds like a good way to spend a Sunday, very typical Sunday thing," Jack joked, I was the only one not smiling.

"Well that's great then! Isn't that great RJ?" I said shooting her a look to say it was anything but!

"Y..eah." She said drawing out the word and looking at me like I had gone a little crazy too.

"Right then, well let's all go together," I said again wondering when it was my brain was going to shut down and stop talking.

"Right, off we go then," I was still saying as we all piled into Jack's new car. I was still muttering stupid obvious comments like this until Jack said something that made my brain click into panic mode.

"Hey, I know this sounds kind of bad cop movie but I think we're being followed." Jack's eyes kept wandering back to the rear view mirror with masked worry. Mine weren't even trying to hide it, it was just there plain to see. I felt my throat starting to get tighter and my mind went into warp speed at all the different possibilities. The best one of course would be that it was no body but knowing that this was me we were talking about, it was probably

the Supernatural's best assassin!

I kept looking behind us and seeing the black beast in the form of a four wheel drive behind us getting closer had me fidgeting nervously in my seat but it only seemed that me and Jack were the only ones taking any notice. Then we all screamed.

I thought I was going to see my heart in my lap as I looked down from when it burst from my chest! Thankfully I was in one piece...for now at least.

“Jeez Kizzy, are you going to answer that!” My cousin snapped impatiently. I didn't miss the look Jack gave her and I couldn't help but smile a little. It was like the tiniest beacon of hope that he wasn't entirely lost to me. I was trying to retrieve my phone and lifting myself up to dig deeper into my jeans pocket when I noticed Jack's gaze in the mirror. He looked at me like he was trying to communicate something secret to me but I was at a loss to know what. Instead I just frowned and tried to concentrate on shutting up Abba before my cousin decided to comment again.

“Hello?” I said unsure of the number and its caller.

“Keira?” A voice I knew better than any other sound on earth sounded strained in my ear.

“What's wrong?” Was the question that first escaped my lips as Draven never rang me and I knew if he ever did, it wouldn't be just for a quick chat, it would be important.

“Would you like to explain to me why it is that you are in a vehicle with *that* boy Jack ?” His question was thick with disapproval and filled my mind with a different kind of worry. However the only question that I thought to ask was a tactless one.

“How did you...?”

“You are being followed, Keira.” He said as though utterly obvious. Ah... that would be Ragnar.

“So...” he prompted as I went silent.

“Soo, I’m off to watch a movie with RJ, Hilary and *Jack*.” I said making sure he understood the way I said Jack to emphasize that he wasn’t the only one and this was so not a date! Although it was nice to know he still got jealous. Childish I know but what could I say, I just couldn’t help myself.

“A movie?” He breathed out in relief and I smiled earning a hateful look in the mirror from Hilary. My smile deepened.

“Yes, something about killer robots in space so it should be very educational.” I giggled at my own joke and Draven laughed his deep throaty laugh making my legs turn to jelly.

“Well now, that does sound terrifying, but pray tell me, who will you be sitting next to for moral support?” Although his voice was teasing I could tell he was desperate to hear it would be RJ, my cousin, a stranger, anyone but Jack! I laughed again.

“Female” I answered not wanting to say any names out loud. I could now hear him grinning.

“So I will see you later Dra...Dominic.” I nearly always slipped up on saying his name and whenever I did manage to say it, it never felt right coming from me. Like a false meaning. However he didn’t seem to think as I did.

“I have never loved the sound of my name before I heard it said from your lips.” I knew I was now blushing because RJ had rolled her eyes at me. However it didn’t last long as my cousin decided now was the time to open her big gob!

“Oh Kizzy, I forgot to ask you, did I give you those plane tickets home your mum gave me...oops are you still on the phone, never mind, we’ll talk about *our* trip home for Christmas later.” Only three words came to mind at precisely that moment.

“What a Bitch!” I screamed in my head but it was soon drowned out by

the profound growl that came from the other end of the phone. Ok so now I was in trouble and Hilary knew it! Hell, she had planned it, executed it, counted on it and accomplished it. When she was standing behind the kitchen door this morning, I now knew what she had been listening too and as a result, where I had three words, Draven now only had one.

“Explain!” His voice was dry and devoid of feeling which made me gulp. It took me a few moments to try and figure out how exactly to deal with this. So I decided the best option was to play it down...way, way down.

“Oh, it’s nothing really,” I said in a flighty way.

“Kizzy, I don’t think your mum would be too pleased to hear you calling a family Christmas together nothing, she would be crushed!” Hilary said enlightening us all to her feelings that were completely false. She didn’t care two craps about my mother’s feelings, what she did care about, what she lived for, is making my life as miserable as possible and at this moment she was doing one heck of a job!

“*Keira!*” Draven said my name as a warning.

“Look, I’ll explain later,” I whispered gently trying to get him to calm down.

“You mean you haven’t told him yet, you’ve known for weeks!” At that point I had lost my patience with my destructive cousin and I couldn’t stop my reflex motion in kicking the back of her chair. Hard.

“Ouch...excuse me!” She moaned.

“Oh sorry there, did that hurt?” I asked feeling both childish and triumphant at the same time.

“No it didn’t,” Hilary huffed and crossed her arms looking like the victim here and I couldn’t help but say “Pity” under my breath which only Draven heard.

“It is indeed, such a pity that you didn’t explain these plans of yours to

me sooner! I will let you go now, but Keira, you and I are going to have a little chat later.” Draven sounded utterly hacked off and in some ways I couldn’t blame him. I mean, I had so many opportunities to tell him but every time I chickened out. He even asked me once what I usually did at Christmas.

It was one of those blissful mornings when we lay in bed together, entwined limbs and softly spoken words. He had asked me questions about my childhood and about holidays I had had, places in the world I had seen and where I would like to go. All these had been easy to answer but when the conversation turned to my weeks off college I had known all along that everyone but Draven expected me to be going home to England for the holidays.

“I will see you later then.” I said deflated and for once, not looking forward to that later. I don’t think he actually said goodbye but only repeated “Later” And then hung up. The car was filled with an awkward silence which I was perfectly happy with enduring given the mood I was now in.

“I guess he wasn’t happy about hearing that news.” RJ stated the obvious and I had to drag my glare away from the back of Hilary’s head to respond.

“Something like that.” I muttered.

“Well it wasn’t my fault, you should be more honest with your boyfriends, shouldn’t she Jack?” Hilary really didn’t have a limit on the bitch ‘o’ meter, it just kept getting higher and higher, until one day, my guess is that someone will kill her and her meter will be no more. I was still holding out for that day. Ok, so I wasn’t really, I wouldn’t actually want someone to murder my cousin but I could settle for a damn good arse kicking!

Jack didn’t respond and I was more than thankful for that. RJ made me smile as she rolled her eyes at my cousin’s statement and started talking about something my cousin couldn’t contribute too, the dreamy drummer from the band Acid Criminals. RJ continued on about how they were coming back to town and were playing at Afterlife once again but I just found myself nodding and “Oooing” and “Ahhing” at the right times.

This was all my fragile mind would allow. There wasn't much room for anything else besides the screaming inside my head that half wanted me lash out at Hilary with a stiletto heel in hand or repeatedly keep slapping myself on the side of the head! I didn't know who to blame the most...I mean, I know who I wanted to blame but I couldn't. It had been my responsibility to tell Draven sooner than later and with only a week until I was supposed to leave I knew that I was cutting it fine. I guess deep down I didn't want to admit it to myself. I didn't want to leave Draven but I was torn between what I wanted and what I should want. I should *want* to go back home and be a family for Christmas. I should *want* a little space from all the craziness my life had been enduring since I met Draven. All these thing I *should* want, but I didn't.

All I wanted for Christmas was Draven.

My Draven.

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Chapter 50

New Mistakes, Old Moves.

To everyone in the theatre I had seemed like the hardest, non flinching girl in existence. I had sat through two hours of evil robots ripping the limbs of humans and mutilation so great that it sent a few people running from the movie with their hands held firmly over their mouths. Of course when you live a life seeing some of the most gruesome beings that walk the earth along the same path, it is very difficult to get skrimish at movie blood and special effects. The real thing is so very different. The smell, the sound and of course the sight your eyes take in is everlasting and unforgettable.

However these were none of the reasons that I hadn't reacted to the scenes on screen. No, the reasons all started with the letter D. The sound of

disappointment in his voice was such a regular occurrence in my case, it made me wonder if I could do anything right in his world. Well, I was soon to find out because coming out of the cinema, the first sight I saw was a shiny, sleek looking black Ferrari.

I was no car freak but even I could tell that there was a hell of a lot of zeros parked on the side walk, and so could everyone else for that matter! Everyone coming out of the theatre was now struck down and staring at the black car like a space ship had just landed! I went bright red...Ferrari red.

“Oh... My... God!” Hilary said very slowly.

“You lucky bitch!” RJ said elegantly and Jack...

Well Jack just whistled.

I watched on in horror as people started taking out their phones and snapping pictures. Some even rang their friends to tell them about the car they were seeing. Words like “Ferrari Enzo”, “Over two hundred miles an hour” and “Carbon fibre” filled the air. There was one guy surrounded with a group of friends all listening to him reel off stats and figures, like he was Ferrari obsessed but the one figure that everyone started whistling at was the price tag, “A cool million dollars easy” he said while fishing around his bag for what was to be a digital camera.

As much as I love seeing Draven, this was one moment when I just wanted to walk away. The windows were tinted as black as the body was but that soon wasn't going to be enough to conceal the car's owner. The driver's side door open upwards giving the car the appearance of having wings...which was very befitting to Draven's character. He unfolded his body in a surprisingly graceful way considering his size. The little crowd gasped and it now gave something for the girls to gawk at in awe.

He straightened his frame to reveal grey denim covered legs, a tight black T-shirt underneath the world's sexiest jacket. It was maroon colored leather that fitted him like liquid skin. It molded to his perfect structure in the style of a biker.

Round the neck was a thin collar that curved down with the zip that was off to one side and the whole jacket was framed with a tan colored piping. The sight of his arms made me gulp down the feelings that his body was causing to my own. The leather strained over his biceps and just before the crease in his elbow was a thick line of piped maroon leather that went the other way round his arm like a band. The material went low down his arms and flared out at his wrists thanks to the zips that were loose at his forearms. Oh my God, he looked sexy! I was close to hyperventilating, that is, along with every other female that was also having improper thoughts about my boyfriend.

Most striking of all was the face. Set in a honey colored stone of flawless skin was the deepest, darkest eyes anyone had ever witnessed. A strong jaw flexed when our eyes met and I knew he was angry. Draven did broody better than anyone I knew and now was no exception. I knew this was coming and that was evident while I sat un-nerved by the two hours of body mutilation without flinching. Killer Robots from space had nothing on Draven's wrath!

Draven only took a few steps before he reached us, with his long muscular legs a few strides was all it took. As habit, one look from the owner of the prestigious nightclub Afterlife, the crowd dispersed and avoided his unhappy gaze. I wished I could have joined them. Meanwhile, Hilary had pushed in front of RJ so that she was next in line for when his look returned.

"Dominic, what a surprise, Kizzy Cat didn't say you were meeting us." The nickname I loathed made its way past her lips having an effect on me like barbed wire across a blackboard. I even winced, which Draven didn't miss. He never did.

"I am here to pick up *Keira*, We have a date...don't we?" After emphasizing my correct name, he made it very clear this was an order not a request, that I was to agree too. I first had to clear my throat before answering.

"Umm, Ye...yes, I guess we do." I couldn't help speaking unsurely and this softened Draven's features slightly.

“Oh, well I guess you want to get as many dates in before she leaves you!” Hilary’s acid tongue whipped out and I wanted to growl but Draven beat me to it. Everyone looked shocked and Jack took a cautious step closer to me. Draven didn’t like this one little bit.

I decided to try and defuse the situation before a real life reconstruction of the movie we just saw was to happen. I took a step closer to Draven and looked up at him with big sloppy eyes that hopefully resembled a puppy. I just hoped he liked puppies.

“Hilary, you know I haven’t yet decided anything about Christmas, I told you that earlier.” Although I was speaking to my cousin this was really aimed at Draven. I didn’t really give two hoots about what my cousin thought, but hell if she was going to use me to get closer to my man then I would do the same.

“And remember you saying that it would be nice if my parents were to finally meet *my* boyfriend and how Christmas would be the ideal opportunity?” I said smoothly which was amazing considering what a bad liar I was. Of course Draven would know this was lies but the others didn’t.

“Hey RJ, we gotta get going if we’re going to meet the rest of the gang but hey Kaz we will probably catch you later, at the club.” Jack commented while edging his sister away who hadn’t yet spoken a word. She was still staring at Draven like a starving wolf would to a giant T-bone.

“That’s cool, I will see you later, but is it alright to give Hilary a lift home?” I said.

“It’s ok, why doesn’t Dominic give me a ride and you go with Jack?” Hilary said shamelessly flicking her hair back and I wasn’t the only one that looked utterly shocked. I turned to Jack and saw his face had numerous more lines, which looked out of place on Jack’s “happy go lucky” features. He was looking at Hilary as though he was seeing her for the first time and he didn’t like what he saw there. I couldn’t help but feel for him, I mean there was a small part of me that wanted to scream out “I told you so” but I was not the type that would have ever followed through with that impulse. It just made

me hate her even more! She could hurt me all she wanted, I was close to being immune, but not Jack. Not my friend.

I was fuming but in the end it was Draven that cut her down into pieces and finally put her in her place. He leaned into her and lowered his head slightly to get to her ear. I was next to him so I heard every sharp edge to his words.

“It is only Keira that I want and I will take her now. I suggest you leave, while you still have the kindness of others that are prepared to put up with you. I doubt your degrading act will hold much longer!” She had been holding her breath in the hopes of something else a close proximity could mean but she was oh so wrong. I couldn’t help but try and hide the biggest grin I had ever felt.

For the first time since we were young children, Hilary looked like she wanted to cry and for the first time I couldn’t find any sympathy for the emotion. She deserved far worse and I think way down, on some deeply buried level, she knew it too. She huffed once and turned away to follow Jack and his sister to his truck. I couldn’t help but notice an action that looked like she was wiping a tear from her face, which stopped me smiling.

“Keira, get in the car please!” Draven’s cool tone was direct and precise. It made me shudder. I turned round to realize he was no longer next to me but by the car door waiting. I was torn between giving in or making a run for it.

“I wouldn’t even try....if you please.” He finished by nodding to the low bucket seat.

“Fine!” I surrendered and stormed over to the curb. I felt like I was bending over to such a degree that I was about to sit on the floor. It was the lowest car I had ever been in and no doubt the most expensive. I think if Draven ever sold his car collection he could have bought Brazil with the funds received.

I jumped at the sound of the door slamming home and thought he had closed it with a little too much force for such an expensive car. I watched as

he walked slowing around to the driver's side which reminded me of home as it was on the UK side. He slid into the seat that was positioned further back than my own, allowing for his impressive leg span. He didn't just start up the beast and let us go roaring off like I thought he would. He just sat there and lowered his head like he was trying to find the best way of dealing with this.

"Draven I..."

"Do you want to leave me?" He blurted out like he could no longer contain it. Almost like the idea of that question was burning a hole in his chest and he had to, no more like... needed too, stop the pain it caused. It was the first time I had ever seen Draven seem desperate.

"NO! I don't want to leave you!" I said forcefully. His head whipped round to look at me and once he read my truthful eyes his shoulders relaxed. It was only then that I took notice of the rest of his body. His hands had fisted around the steering wheel and the leather around his arms groaned under the strain. These all eased as he studied my face.

"Right...right." He said twice to himself before starting the car that started to vibrate around me in anticipation.

"Then you will *not* leave!" He said like it was final and the conversation was now over, which it so wasn't.

"Draven you can't just say that, I..."

"And why not? You do not want to leave me and therefore you are not going anywhere." He said in a fairly controlled manner.

"I have other commitments, I can't just..."

"You can and you WILL, that is final Keira!" He interrupted again and it was starting to get on my last nerve. This time he didn't wait for a response and pulled the car out with the speed and maneuvering of a formula one driver. It did briefly make me wonder if he owned one of those as well.

"We are going to talk about this," I said trying to keep calm but with the

speed he was doing I kind of felt like I was having an argument on a rollercoaster.

“No, we are not!” He said simply and I felt like I was being told off by a parent.

“Fine!” I said folding my arms like the child I felt. He took this the wrong way.

“I am glad you see things my way for once, it is for the best.”

“Draven you mistake me, I said fine because if we are not going to discuss it then I will end up leaving and you will not know why, but that will be through your doing, not mine!” I snapped at him causing his reactions to filter through to the Ferrari.

He sped up before applying the brakes and turning the wheel so as the car screeched across the road and snapped around facing the other way. I screamed out which he ignored and my hands flew out to brace myself on the dash and window as we continued spinning. It was like watching life in slow motion and I wondered if this is what happened to people in car accidents.

Did they have that moment when they waited for impact or did it just happen in the seconds time gave us. I found myself waiting for something but I wasn't sure what. All I knew was when I opened my eyes that the car was now on the other side and we were hammering it down the, thankfully, empty road.

“Draven pull over.” I said surprisingly calm.

“What?”

“Pull over NOW!” I shouted giving calm the boot! I was glad that he didn't argue. We carried on until the road widened for us to pull over but even in those few minutes I hadn't regained any cool. He stopped the car and after undoing my seatbelt I tried to find the handle...unsuccessfully.

“Where the hell is this bloody thing?” I waved my hands around in

frustration as I lost the last shred of sanity. The door opened without being touched. I nearly fell out in my haste and my legs wobbled like jelly thanks to Draven's stunt driving. I used the car to steady myself until I ran out of frame and then I started walking, ok so more like stomping.

"Keira! Keira stop!" Draven shouted after me but he seemed to have his hands around me in the nanoseconds before his words hit me. I turned around and pushed him as hard as I could. Of course it didn't cause his body to react to the pressure but he did stop trying to touch me.

"You Idiot! How dare you scare me like that! I will never get in the car with you ever again if that is how you are going to drive! Do you understand me?" I was screaming at him and if anyone were to drive past and see this, I had no doubt that it would probably find its way onto the front page of the town's newspaper.

Draven looked guilty as hell for scaring me and when he tried to touch me again I moved back.

"Don't!" I threw at him. He looked hurt but damn it, he deserved it!

"Keira, I am sorry for scaring you, but you have to know, no harm would have come to you"

"Oh right, Mr. Immortal! Look, you maybe indestructible but I am not, let's try and remember this fact alright because the next time you want to drive like you're in a drag race I will be happy to stand on the sidelines and watch and survive. You get me?"

"You are so angry." He stated like this was some sort of shock.

"You're God damn right I am angry!" He frowned at my reference to God but I just said his name in warning and his brows smoothed.

"I understand and once again, I am sorry." He said in earnest and he tilted his head to catch my eyes that he found watering. I couldn't help it, I wasn't exactly crying but I was on the verge. I hated confrontation but when I was this angry I found it difficult to come back down from boiling point. My

fists clenched and I gathered this was something we had in common.

“Would you like to hit me?” He asked me with no humor in his voice. Was he serious? I looked up at him and he nodded towards my clenched fists.

“What? No!” I said.

“You look like you do. It’s alright, I don’t mind, besides it may make you feel better. I could show you how, without hurting yourself.” He was deadly serious and I almost burst out laughing.

“Draven, I’m not going to hit you.”

“You hit me once before, remember?” He now had the slightest of smirks and I knew why.

“Yes and if I remember correctly we had sex soon after.” Now he wore a full bad arse smile. He also took a step closer towards me making my heart rate hitch up a notch.

“A perk on my part, but I am willing to sacrifice myself to the cause, I can assure you. I will let you beat me down if you will but only forgive me. It was an inexcusable mistake on my part and one that will not happen again.” A man like Draven was not the type to make a habit of apologizing so when it happened you do not take it lightly. Besides, who could not respond to such an apology.

I looked down, which he didn’t like. He hooked a finger under my chin and applied a little pressure to make me look up at him. His head was tilted again and his eyes penetrated mine like a fire was burning behind them. Of course there was a burning, deep and full of emotions too hot to touch. They started to glow purple at the sight of me yielding. I was about to say something before he got carried away but he didn’t let me. He took my head in his hands and angled me to lock his lips with mine.

His kiss didn’t start off soft and then deepen, no, this time he kissed me with such a fever induced hunger that it took my breath away. His hands left my face and encircled round my body so as he could lift me to his height. I

was thankful because giving the height difference my neck would suffer from it. It was only when he knew my need for oxygen was growing did he let me go, rather reluctantly I might add.

“Am I forgiven?” He asked over my lips with his eyes closed.

“Yes,” I whispered and although I couldn’t see, I could feel his smile spread over mine.

“Then come my little one.” He said in a husky voice that was still thick with lust. He took my hand that seemed tiny encased in his and pulled me round so that I was facing the car. I decided at that moment that there was no point. I pulled back making him stop. He turned to face me and his look was full of questions he was about to ask but I just held up my hand.

“Look Draven, there’s no point me coming with you if you’re not going to listen to me. I am telling you that although I do not want to leave you, I still have to go.” He was about to argue and add words to his shaking head but I beat him to it. I came right up close to him and placed my hands on his chest. He was breathing hard.

“Dominic,” I whispered his name making it sound right for once. He looked down at me, eyes full of an emotion I couldn’t grasp.

“I never want to leave you but I would not be the person you love if I didn’t think of others before myself. It would hurt my family if I didn’t go and I can’t do that...not even for you.” I held my breath after saying this last part and I could no longer look into his eyes, so I found my feet.

“I have hurt them enough to last more than one life time and I will not add more guilt to my soul.” I was speaking so quietly that anyone else would not have heard me. I also had tears rolling down my cheeks that I didn’t want him to see.

“Catherine, look at me.” The sound of my first name always made me shudder. Like he was seeing a different me standing here, one I was always trying to hide. I looked off to the side instead of braving his eyes. It was not

enough for him. He decided that he would take the steps to change this. He got down on his knees so as I was at his level.

I was in shock and I showed it. A man like Draven also does NOT get down on his knees for anyone! Well evidently now he did.

“Draven don’t.” I tried to get him to get back up but he shook his head. If anyone had been driving past now it would look like he was proposing to me and *that* would have made the front page for sure!

“I now understand why I must let you...let you go.” He looked like it actually caused him physical pain to say those words. I felt hopeless, I felt that no matter what choices I made in life, I kept making the wrong ones. No matter what I did I would have to hurt someone but it felt like I would be hurting myself more than anyone. It was a strange feeling but it was almost like someone was telling me in the back of my mind that I was making the wrong decision. Maybe I was but there was nothing I could do about it.

I let myself crumble down to his level which he let out a little moan about but before he could protest further I wrapped my arms around his neck and hugged onto him so tightly I could have been classed as a limpet. I kissed his neck twice and told him the three most important words in life.

“I love you.” He groaned in response and kissed me back. The next thing I knew was that he had lifted us both to a standing position, only my feet weren’t exactly touching the ground. I giggled as he swung me around and my legs dangled in the air like a small child sat on a big chair.

“You’re so little.” He said teasingly as he set me down.

“And you’re a big oaf!” I said as my come back, which was received by raucous laughter. We walked back to the car and when I hesitated to get in he said in a guilty voice,

“It’s alright, I won’t go too fast.”

My answer was given by getting in the car and soon we were making our way to Afterlife at a speed that only just broke the law. It looked like it was

causing Draven a great deal of concentration to maintain this speed and I had to suppress a satisfied smile. I could see by the natural road signs that we were near the turning for Afterlife. There was always a double twisted tree that had split in the middle and wound back together like brothers. This was my sign that we were near.

“There was something I wanted to ask you.”

“You know that you can ask me anything.” I smiled at his answer and thought if I wanted Draven to dress up in a furry loin cloth and swing from trees like Tarzan, he would draw the line. I found myself biting my lip to stop from laughing.

“Is this ‘something’ funny?” He asked smiling as well.

“No, but I just had a funny thought. Ok, so I was going to ask you something about me leaving.”

“Was?” He raised an eyebrow, an action that always made my heart flutter. It was so hard having a conversation with someone so unbelievably handsome it was hard enough to even concentrate on forming words in your brain let alone saying them.

“Well I say *was* because that was before we...more like you, freaked out.”

“Keira I did not ‘freak out’ as you put it.”

“Oh you so did, but that’s beside the point,” I said poking at him only instead of getting a soft fleshy bit it was just solid muscle. Come to think of it, I don’t think Draven had any soft and fleshy bits!

“The point then, my dear?” He prompted and turned round to face me. It was now that I realized we had stopped and were outside the secret wall that led to his garage/ car museum.

“I want you to come with me.” There I had said it and now I could feel myself wincing ready for his answer.

“But of course.” He answered as simply as that. I was shocked that I even shook my head slightly.

“Of course?” I repeated.

“Yes, Keira do you really think that I would let you go alone. I will buy the house next door if need be.” He wasn’t joking.

“I don’t think that Mr. and Mrs. Sutton would be happy about selling, all their cats are buried in the garden and John worked forever on that vegetable patch.”

“Keira, what are you talking about?”

“Prize turnips,” I giggled making him see that I was teasing him again.

“You crazy human!” He called me, trying to hide his smile. He turned back forward and lifted his hand to the stone wall. I had seen it a few times but I still jumped at the sight and sound of it moving back and sliding over. There it left a hole the size of a dumper truck and as we drove in slowly I always felt like I was entering the Bat Cave. Draven would have made an excellent Batman although in demon form he would be classed more as a birdman than bat and if you ask me birdman doesn’t quite have the same ring to it.

“So you’re coming with me, even if you have to play ‘Crazy Human’ for a few weeks?” I asked getting excited about the idea. He whipped his head around so quickly on any normal person it would have snapped off.

“You want me to spend it with you and your family?” O...k, what did he think I wanted him to do?

“Umm...yes, that’s if you want to?” I was getting worried now, maybe he didn’t want to spend any more time around humans than he had to. After all, before he met me, he wasn’t exactly our biggest fan.

“Of course but I didn’t think you would want me to...invade on that part of your life.” He was surprised that I wanted him to be a part of my family,

how crazy was that!

“Well, I can’t say it will be the life of luxury you’re used to and my mum won’t let us sleep together, not until we’re married that is...” Oops too far, much too far with the speaking. I bit down on my lip just below the point of it bursting open. I can’t believe I had said the M word around him! I felt like smacking my forehead but I think this would have given away my view of marriage a little too much. I mean I could only just get my head around being Draven’s girlfriend but...wife.

And then it struck me at how that could never be. Never, never, all thanks to one little word....

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Chapter 51

Hobbies.

“Married?” He inquired obviously amused thinking about it. His face had brightened and his eyes were wider than I had ever seen them before.

“I didn’t mean that! I just was explaining the rules.” I hurried out.

“You said and I quote, “Not until *we’re* married”. So I think that constitutes as evidence to something you having been thinking about.” He was so smug.

“No I haven’t.” I said stubbornly. He laughed at me and said,

“Yeah right,” as he got out of the car and came round to my side to open my door.

“Stop smiling Draven it does nothing for your bad arse image!” I said congratulating myself on what a great comeback that was. I took the hand he held just because I knew there was no way of getting out of this car gracefully without it. He tugged a little too hard not knowing his own strength or maybe he did because he caught me in his arms as I was flung towards his chest.

“No, but it does wonders for my Angel side!” He said in the ear he was now nuzzling. His hand pressed out on the small of my back and pulled my body closer into his own, while his other hand ran up and rested on holding the back of my neck. My spine felt like it had ran off and left me. I was putty in his oh so capable hands.

“It is nice to know what you think about.” He whispered in the sexiest

voice imaginable and once again I was trying to think about how to breathe without panting. He was kissing up my neck and I soon found myself wedged between his solid body and carbon fiber. Luckily Ferraris seemed to be smooth and rounded enough not to dig in anywhere uncomfortable and I believed the marketing department for Ferrari didn't use this as enough of a selling point. I mean, surely if men bought one of these, they certainly knew they were going to get laid, so maybe they should roll with that. Sex on this car would not disappoint, but I could imagine Draven as a partner would even make a VW Beetle look sexy.

"You're thinking about my car," Draven said shocking my mind into shut down.

"You're projecting your thoughts Keira, it's not hard to hear when you're shouting in your mind. Of course, I have no objection to listening to your sexual fantasies and with you being my first passion and collecting cars my second, I think combining the two would prove not only to be an incredible experience but also the limit on my control. YOU drive me insane." He finished his evaluation by pushing me hard against the car and kissing me until my toes curled. His hands came up to remove my jacket and under my top, making me gasp as he took hold of my breasts in each strong hand, filling his palms with my bra covered mounds. He was breathing hard and he wasn't the only one finding there wasn't enough oxygen to fill our lungs.

"I want you now Keira. I want to strip you naked and take you up against this machine but I WILL lose control and I cannot allow that to happen." He was fighting with himself I could tell. His eyes were closed and he had spoken through gritted teeth. He then released my breasts and took a new position.

He now had hold of the car either side of my head and when I shifted against him, accidently... on purpose, pressing against his need, I heard the sound of metal crunching making me flinch. I turned my head slowly and saw there was now two hand shaped dints in the car's roof thanks to Draven's pressure. The thought about how that could have been my head made me

realize he hadn't been exaggerating about losing control.

"Draven, you hurt the car!" I shouted jokingly. This made him open his eyes and the purple flames started to fade. He raised an eyebrow and gave me a smug smile.

"I thought you didn't like this car."

"Not when it's at 'kill me' speeds but I do otherwise. Plus it's very comfortable for kissing against." He laughed but when his eyes flashed a brilliant, deep purple flame I knew he was thinking about something a little more than just kissing.

He placed his hands over the dents and soon the sound of metal popping told me he had fixed it.

"See, all better and healed. Although I don't think the car would have survived much more than me kissing you and I do like this car, It was given to me by Enzo's son, Piero Lardi Ferrari."

"Really? Is he like the owner or something?" I asked feeling completely out of my depth.

"No, he only owns ten percent of the company." When I frowned he continued

"He was his son from a mistress and was only made acceptable as his legal heir after the death of his wife. See that Ferrari there?" He pointed to a sleek red car that was a masterpiece in its own right. It was higher up than the rest and after following him, weaving in and out of all the parked vehicles he owned, I could see it better as it was up on a dais. Even I knew what car this was as it was such an icon.

"It's a Ferrari F40." I said making Draven's head incline towards me. He held a strange look, I think it was somewhere between pride and impressed.

"It is indeed and one of my prize possessions. I was the first to buy one and it was presented to me by Enzo himself. It was the last car to be

commissioned by him before his death and he knew that, being 90 years old, it would be his last but he was proud to know at the time, it was the fastest street legal production car ever to be made.”

“It figures.” I said sarcastically and Draven laughed.

“What’s that one over there?” I pointed to a little silver car that didn’t have a roof and was numbered 130 at the front, side and back. The car had [tartan](#) on the seating and two red stripes at the rear of its wheelwell. Of course to me it was just a nice, kind of cute looking old car but what did grasp my interest is that unlike any other car here, it was in a very large glass box with frosted symbols etched all around the base. I walked round and was about to touch the glass when a hand shot out and shackled my wrist.

“Don’t!” Draven’s warning was enough to make me retract my hand.

“Why, what’s wrong, it’s just a car....isn’t it?”

Draven looked uncertain for a moment and then tried to replace it with a fake smile.

“It is.” Was all he said on the matter.

“Why did you name it Little Bastard?” I asked referring to the black writing at the back of the car which was situated under ‘Porsche’.

“I didn’t, his first owner did.” Draven looked a bit disgusted which I didn’t understand but as he was pulling me away I quickly understood how this was one car he was not proud of owning. I had a million questions flooding my mind but the only question I asked was

“His?...I thought people usually associate cars as female?”

“I guess they do but with this car they would be wrong. It is most definitely male.” He was not comfortable talking about this so I decided to let it go. Maybe I would ask Sophia some time.

“I suppose it’s nice you have a hobby.” I said lamely not knowing what

else to say.

“Well could you see me playing golf?” He joked and I burst out laughing. That was the last thing I could see him doing.

“Definitely not. But what was your hobby before cars were invented?” I asked feeling cocky which didn’t last long when I got my answer.

“I also collect weapons!” He said like it was collecting stamps.

“Of course you did.” He playfully tugged on my jacket and when I looked up he was grinning.

“And how about you?” He looked genuinely interested.

“Me? Oh the same. You wanna see my ax collection, I bet it will beat yours any day.” At this he burst out laughing and the sound filled my heart. I loved to hear him laugh.

“What a fierce little warrior you would have made.” He said as he led me up a back staircase I had been up a few times before.

“Are you mocking me?” I ran up a few steps ahead of him so that we were at the same height. He stopped as I poked at his chest and he folded his arms which always made him look twice as large as usual.

“I wouldn’t dare, you frighten me too much.” He said trying not to smirk but doing a lousy job of it.

“I should think so and don’t you forget it...mister.” I poked him in the nose this time, making him squint which was so funny to watch.

“Mister is it now?... Right, you asked for it.” I started backing up as he start to stalk me with my hands held up like I was surrendering.

“Now Draven behave, no playing on the stairs.” I was starting to laugh and panic at the same time. He kept coming closer like I was his prey and the second I took my eyes off him I knew he would get me and win.

“It’s too late for that Keira.” His eyes flashed one, twice and I decided to take my chance and turned just before he lunged for me. Of course I lost and when he grabbed me at the waist I half screamed and giggled like a little girl.

“Got ya!” He said as he swooped me up into his arms and ran the rest of the way up the stairs to the landing. Once at the top he threw me up in the air like I was a feather pillow and caught me before I hit the floor.

“Draven!” I squealed.

“Yes my love?” He said calmly.

“You can put me down now, you cheated.” He stopped walking.

“Cheated! How did I cheat?” He asked pretending that I had insulted him.

“You used powers I don’t have, that’s classed as cheating” I stated but he just grunted a laugh and continued down the hallway.

“Oh trust me, you have powers greater than mine vixen!” He didn’t explain more nor did he put me down. I was starting to think that Draven liked any excuse so that he could carry me and I would never understand why.

“So you were telling me about your hobbies, your real ones?”

“Oh, well they’re a bit lame compared to yours,” I said shyly.

“Nothing you do could be lame.” He said sweetly and when I didn’t answer he gave me a little jig to get me to tell him.

“Ok, well... I used to collect postcards.”

“You’re right, that is lame,” he teased.

“Oi, don’t be mean.” I tugged on his ear and his head went down but when I let go he kissed me and finished with an “Oww” on my lips, it made

me giggle, again.

“I am sorry and I was teasing you, it is not lame, it is sweet and endearing.”

“Well, it’s not that sweet and endearing as you didn’t let me finish, I also collected rude and funny postcards.” I stuck my chin out like this was something to be proud of.

“Oh, you dark horse you!”

“I bet you collect them too.” I said as it was easy to image Draven upon horseback, in tight pants and riding boots...yum, yum, yum.

“I have many horses, yes, and most do tend to be dark.” He was such a tease but I loved it when we were like this, all playful and relaxed.

“Show off!”

“Yes I am,” he said as though this was common knowledge, of course after today’s Ferrari incident there was no getting around that image statement.

We were soon at his door but I seemed to be the only one surprised when it opened with Sophia standing there waiting for us.

“Has Keira lost the use of her legs now?” Sophia asked frowning like I was some accident prone fool...oh wait, almost forgot, yes I was.

“No my little sister, she hasn’t, I just enjoy carrying her.” He said more seriously than I expected.

“Like a doll?” Sophia said with hands on hips like this wasn’t acceptable behavior. He didn’t answer right away, instead he let my legs slide down and then he smoothed my hair back from my face and kissed my forehead before saying,

“She is *my* doll, my beautiful porcelain doll that I want to play with, so

please leave us.” I bit my lip making Draven growl under his breath. My cheeks screamed out fuchsia pink at how embarrassed I was but Sophia just huffed and folded her arms.

“And when do I get time to play with her, I hardly ever get to spend time with her now?” She was sulking and here we were so overwhelmed with the need to make love, if she didn’t leave now I was afraid we would do it in front of her!

“Sophia!” Draven said her name as a warning but she wasn’t afraid like anyone else would be.

“Dominic!” She reflected back in the same tone. Draven growled again. At this rate I was willing to bet he was part animal as well as all the other stuff.

“Look dear brother, there is a reason I am here and it is to tell you that your other guests have started to arrive. So put down your dolly and leave her to me.” She was playing of course...at least I hoped so because in my experience with Sophia, if there was one thing she loved to do more than argue, that was to give this life size doll a makeover.

“Dracu’!” (Means F**k in Romanian) Draven shouted and I froze.

“Now was there any need for that, really Dom?” His sister was acting shocked but I could see the excitement in her features. She was a Demon after all, I bet she was just loving the drama.

“If I asked you not to work tonight would you obey?”

“Obey?” I repeated the word he knew I hated hearing. I mean if he wanted me to do something, then he was going the wrong way about it!

“Of course I don’t mean *obey*, more like... listen.” He said in a softer tone and I knew he was trying new tactics.

“I will meet you half way and work downstairs instead, alright?” He nodded and looked relieved. Which made me wonder what type of guests he

had turning up that had him glad I wasn't around. I doubted they were supper friendly out of town family members!

“Thank you. I will come to get you when all is well. Sophia will see you downstairs when you are ready.” Of course I would need a babysitter to make sure I obeyed, I thought bitterly. He read my expression.

“It is for both my piece of mind and your security.” He said, while running the back of his hand down my cheek. I only raised my face once to show that I understood but he knew I didn't like it. I thought I could at least be trusted to make my way downstairs without hitting trouble.

“Good girl, have I told you today that I love you?” He looked down at me waiting for my smile and he didn't have to wait long. When I looked round, I noted Sophia in the background sticking her fingers down her throat pretending to barf. Draven's head whipped round to glare at his sister.

“Excuse me Romeo but I believe they're waiting.” She said after clearing her throat.

“Let them wait!” He snapped showing his full authority on the matter. It made my skin heat up and tingle at the sight. Then he turned round and took me in his arms to kiss me like he never wanted to stop. I don't even know how long Sophia had to stand there and wait but by the time he released me I was panting and bright red from shame that someone had been witnessing it. He didn't care, it was like it was natural for him to express how he felt about me in front of his siblings and for everyone else for that matter. I loved that he never acted ashamed of me or tried to hide the fact that we were together.

“Later Vixen.” He said in way of goodbye and I was sure he said this to get to see even more colour invade my cheeks. His smile told me I was right. I felt hot and flustered until he left the room which instantly made me feel the opposite...

Cold and lost without him.

Chapter 52

Fighting My Demons and Almost Kissing Angels

Sophia waited with me like a good little girlfriend sitter until it was time for my shift. I had taken a shower and got ready under the watchful eye of my fashion muse and when I emerged from the bathroom wearing faded, light blue jeans and a long sleeved, black stretchy top she just shook her head.

“What?”

“Why you insist on wearing shades rather than actual colours is beyond me. Black makes you look very pale.” She said like she was the uber-years older than me she was.

“I am pale,” was my only reply. I walked over to the couch that Draven had broken not long ago but the next morning I had made him fix it because that couch had good memories for me. Very nice memories!

“You’re smiling to yourself again Keira.” Sophia would have an idea what I was smiling about I was sure of it. I didn’t say a word but I did stick out my tongue at her like I was five. She loved it!

I then grabbed my long fingerless gloves off the back of the couch where I had put them before getting in the shower. I tried not to notice the way Sophia always eyed my scars as I pulled my sleeves up to put my gloves on. It was a mixture of pity, which I hated, and admiration to what I had been through. Draven had no doubt told his siblings about my tragic little story because he shared everything with them. Hell, Vincent had witnessed it himself when he tuned into my memories once. It was back when they needed to know what Morgan was up to and finding out that he had teamed up with some heavy weight Demon big wig named Sammael.

Sophia was sat on the desk looking at her nails, acting bored by the time I was ready. She saw me reach for the door and jumped lightly as a cat to the floor to accompany me. We were walking silently down the hallway when I remembered a question I wanted to ask her.

“What’s with that car in the glass box?”

“Has Dom told you about it?” She asked with a bemused look on her delicate features.

“Umm...not exactly” She raised her eyebrows at me.

“Well alright, No he hasn’t but I was kinda hoping you would,” I gave her a pleading look I was used to working on Draven.

“Sorry, no dice. Ha, don’t look at me like that. Anyway, why do you want to know so badly?”

“Because he won’t tell me,” I answered honestly.

“Well that makes sense.” She didn’t elaborate. I soon realized she wasn’t going to spill the dirty on the car’s history so I gave up. Maybe I would Google it later and see what I’d come up with.

We parted at the door of the staircase I usually took to get up to the VIP. Of course my two favorite door men were there ready to great me.

“Evening!” They both said at not only the same time but also the same tone. I had to suppress a giggle.

The club wasn’t yet full but for a town that had very little on the entertainment side, it usually got quite busy for a Sunday night. The band had started to set up and I knew by the time they were ready to play their first song the dance floor would be packed. It was like the calm before the storm and I noticed Mike at the bar stocking up ready for that storm.

We had offers on at the moment for cocktails and Mike had been showing me how to make the most popular ones. The Woo Woo was a big hit, along with Sex on the Beach. If I were to pick one, the Long Island Iced Tea was the winner but that was down to the alcohol content not that it had any form of tea in it! Two of those and I would be wearing my knickers on my head and dancing in just my socks!

That's what I had been doing, making cocktails not dancing naked, when the "Gang" walked in with that added addition of Hilary the 'Evil Queen Bitch Bee.' Well at least that little drilling from Draven had tainted that permanent smirk she always wore. I would have to remind myself to thank him later for that.

"Kaz, hey can we talk?" Jack's desperate voice broke my thoughts. He had wedged himself in between two people I was serving but given his size they didn't want to argue. Jack wasn't small, in fact he was at least six foot, and had wide shoulders and a physique that backed up his love of rock climbing and hiking. He was wearing a black T-shirt that said "Clowns are the lowest form of wit" in white writing across the chest. I had to smile. I knew for a fact RJ had bought this for him as she knew he hated clowns with a passion. The film 'IT' was not on his top ten greatest films list!

His hand leaned in and took mine which caused a few people to stare at me like my head had just done a three sixty and I had puked green stuff.

"Umm yeah... sure, but it will have to be later though." I said not being able to help the blush that tinted my cheeks. He winked at me and let go of my hand to move with the others. Hilary had watched the whole thing with an even greater hate burning in her eyes. I couldn't help but notice how Jack avoided her gaze and took a wide berth of where she was stood. Was I missing something? Trouble in the pits of Hell? I couldn't really say "paradise" as that word didn't mix with Hilary.

The rest of the night I spent wondering what Jack wanted to tell me so badly and also having this nagging feeling that something horrible was going to happen when I found out. The night was in full swing when Mike came up to me after doing a round of collecting glasses.

“Hey Kaz, I think you should know there’s some commotion coming from your friends’ usual booth. Your cousin looks a little wasted and there’s a lot of shouting.” Oh great! Hello something horrible.

“Ok I will deal with it, will you be alright if I leave you for a little bit?”

“Yeah no worries, the bar’s calmed down now, you go and good luck.” Wishing me good luck told me that he wasn’t exaggerating the situation. Here we go again, I thought, as I made my way through the thick crowd of head banging Goths. It was only when I got closer to our usual booth that I could hear what was being said. Of course when I heard my name I stopped. I decided to hear this out and I ducked out of sight and stood by the staircase hidden, so as I could hear the rest of it.

“My God, you have all been suckered in by her little innocent act, did you all really think she just had some sort of pathetic cold blooded disease?”

“What are you talking about?” Lanie asked and I was surprised it wasn’t from RJ.

“Hilary don’t!” This was now Jack warning her but why would she listen to him at the crucial point of trying to ruin me. I was in two minds to stop this but I found I didn’t care anymore, I had to know just how far she would go to kill me off.

“I’m talking about the long sleeves, those horrible gloves she never takes off and about her trying to hide what *she* did!” She was almost laughing like it felt so good to be the one to spill all my life’s dark little secrets. At that moment I felt sorry for her. How sad it all was.

“Hilary, she told us it was bad circulation and we don’t need to know anymore than that!” RJ said and I wanted to hug her for it. Hilary was losing her audience but I don’t think she even cared anymore, she wanted the glory of it, even if the reaction would not be to the full extent.

“Don’t be naive. Isn’t it obvious to you all, she... tried... to... kill... herself!” She said each word slowly for that extra bit of drama.

Most of them gasped...all except Jack.

“Stop this right now!” Jack shouted out and it was always an odd thing to hear Jack getting angry, like it was going against nature.

“Oh, shut up Jack! Of course you’re going to believe all her lies, you’re still in love with the silly cow. What did she tell you, some sappy little story about her being kidnapped...oh please, I thought you were smarter than that! She is a manipulating little bitch that tried to kill herself after a man that didn’t love her had sex with her and left! A poor teacher that got his life ruined because she couldn’t take rejection, so she came up with this idea that he kidnapped her and raped her. Of course, he gets to spend the rest of his days rotting in jail thanks to a girl you all call *friend!*” And there it was, my life in her eyes...suddenly I didn’t feel so sorry for her, oh no, now I just wanted to rip her head off!

I stepped into view just as Jack was fighting my corner, the rest saw me but Jack still had his back to me.

“That’s not true, you spiteful bitch! I was told what really happened and it was proven to be true!” Bless him, but he’d obviously done his research, it was of course all over the internet...if you knew where to look that was. Any other time this news would have mortified me but right now it seemed it was in my favor. Hilary hadn’t been expecting that I had told anyone, let alone they would have found out the truth themselves. Considering all options she was looking pretty stumped for someone that had been so confidant just seconds ago.

It was at this moment that Hilary looked past Jack and spotted me. The rage must have shown on my face because for a moment she looked frightened. Jack noticed her reaction and turned to face me. He was red faced and pissed off as hell but when he saw my face it turned quickly to one emotion.

God I hated pity.

That’s when I didn’t say anything, I just let action take over. I walked

past Jack calmly and stood motionless in front of my cousin looking at her with God only knows what expression. I was feeling so many emotions it was hard to pin point just one.

“What, what are you going to do bitch?” She spat out down at me with her arms held out. I wiped the spray very calmly from my face before reacting. I turned my body back which must have looked to everyone that I was turning to leave...which I wasn't.

I pulled my fisted hand back making sure my thumb was tucked over my fingers, my arm held back like a sling shot ready to fire. I remember seeing her sniggering face as I turned back, quickly turn to shock before my fist came in to contact with her face. I could feel her nose crumble beneath my knuckles and then her body fell backwards and crashed to the floor.

“That, you bitter bitch!” I shouted down at her. She covered her nose with her hands and it wasn't long before I noticed the blood pumping from between her fingers. I looked at my hand that was still fisted and yep, it too had blood on it.

“You broke my nose you whore!” She shouted back with a gargle as some of the blood must have been dripping in her mouth. I wrinkled my nose at her in disgust and shook my head.

“You're pathetic! You really are. I have had to put up with your shit for far too long, so count yourself lucky I didn't break more than your God damn nose!” I fumed at her as she tried to get back up.

“You see, this is what she does! This is the real her! She's a destructive little parasite that craves attention!” Man what did she want me to do...kill her! She had regained her legs and was waving her hands to make her point. This just made more blood flow freely from a nasty gash I had given her on the bridge of her nose.

“You won't ever stop will you? You won't until you take everything from me, fine if that's what it takes!” I had lost all control now and I yanked up my sleeves and was ripping my gloves down my arms. I heard every

single person staring at me gasp at the sight of my butchered arms. I threw my gloves at her and she flinched at them like they would sting her. It was the first time she had seen the result of my past and I think it caused her pain to see, to really *see*.

“Right, well this is what you wanted, isn’t it! You wanted to see me humiliated, then we might as well go all the way! Come on Hilary, join in, add your part of the story, tell them how I did this to myself to DIE! Oh no, we can’t let them know the truth, that I did this to save myself from a mad man who was not only going to kill me but also my family! THIS IS WHAT YOU WANTED, ISN’T IT?” I was screaming now and thankfully my friends had circled us to hide us both from view of the club.

“SAY IT!” I screamed in her face when she didn’t respond.

“Y...yes.” She whispered like a frightened child. She was also now crying and couldn’t stop looking at my arms. Well if it was hitting home it didn’t register, I was too far gone for that.

“WHAT?” I held my hand up to my ear and turned my head.

“Come on Hilary, WE CAN’T HEAR YOU!” I shouted.

“YES!” She shouted back and that is when I lost all control. I launched myself at her like a bear. I think Leivic would have been proud. My mind was a red mist of twisted pain that made no sense of anything, no action my body made was coming from reason. We were on the ground and I had hold of fists full of her hair that I was pulling back. She wasn’t exactly defenseless and she fought back with everything she had. I felt the contact her knee made in my face and felt my lip burst against my teeth. But the strange thing was is that it wasn’t pain I was feeling, it was pure, raw adrenaline. Her hand was on my face and as someone was trying to part us her nail scratched down my cheek and neck.

I was like a possessed wild cat and I bent over double trying to get free from somebody’s strong arms wrapped around me to get back at her.

“LET ME GO!” I screamed at my back but I still couldn’t see who it was, although I assumed it was Jack, man he was strong. I looked up to see the damage I had done to Hilary’s face and I was glad to report it looked worse than mine felt. She had blood covering the lower half of her face and a nasty red lump under one eye. Her hair was stuck up on one side and her top was torn at the shoulder, there was also a scratch there that I didn’t even remember doing. It was only then that I noticed Jack had her in a locked hold at the wrists that were crossed over her torso. Ok, so if Jack was holding her then who was holding me?

“Stop struggling Keira and I will let you go.” Vincent’s cool calm voice floated down my neck making me shiver. There was something about Vincent that made you realize very quickly he had an “I might be calm but don’t fuck with me” type voice. I relaxed in his arms and in turn, he relaxed his.

“This is over between us Hilary, do you understand? No more!” I said turning to walk off but she wasn’t satisfied with the beating we both just had.

“The Hell it is bitch! I won’t be happy until I have taken everything from you, like you have done to me, including me fucking your rich arse boyfriend!” I actually laughed before I ran back to her and hit her one last time, which knocked her for ten, she was out cold in Jack’s arms and I felt absolutely no remorse. Vincent grabbed my arms back just in case I decided to take it a step too far, although I think I already did that.

“Enough!” He shouted at me and I nodded in agreement. Jack bent slightly to hold all her weight as she had slumped backwards.

“Can you take care of her?” Vincent asked Jack in a way of taking full control of the matter and for once I was just glad it was an Angel watching my back, seeing as he was blessed with more patience than either of his siblings.

“Yes, but who are you?” Jack was watching the position of Vincent’s hands with wary interest. I think his look prompted his grip to tighten in a protective reflex.

“She is safe with me. I am Vincent Draven.” He announced this in a way that matched his brother’s authority head on. It sounded strange and out of character for Vincent to act so coldly but I guessed he didn’t like being questioned by a mere mortal boy. I also wondered if he knew me and Jack kind of had history of sorts and if this was the reason for his distaste. I also found it strange to think of him as a Draven. To me he had always been Vincent or the more playful Vinnie when I was drunk! Either way it was weird to hear it said aloud.

I pulled myself out of my absurd thinking and noticed how all of my friends were sort of frozen in shock at seeing him for the first time. RJ looked as though she was about to throw herself down in front of him as a self sacrificing ‘wanna be’ virgin and everyone else just looked scared of both of us. I suppose for such a shy girl they hadn’t expected me to turn into a demented lunatic, “one flew over the cuckoo’s nest” style.

Any other time and I would had turned scarlet and fled from the room. I wasn’t one for centre of attention at the best of times but right now, right at this second, I just didn’t give a damn. Everyone was waiting for me to speak, I knew that, but I didn’t want to explain and from what everyone had just witnessed, I knew I certainly didn’t have to justify my actions. So I said the only thing that came to mind.

“Jack can you take her home?” I asked quietly and he agreed by way of a sympathetic look.

“Thanks,” I muttered as I then let Vincent walk me away. It was like he knew I had enough but he still had hold of the top of my arm like he was scared if he let me go I would go back there and kill her. My voice was devoid of emotion which wasn’t like me but I was tired. I was tired of feeling a shame I didn’t deserve. A fault that wasn’t my own and a guilt that just wasn’t warranted. I was just very, very tired.

“You can let go now.” I said in an exasperated voice.

“I don’t think so, I tried that before and now someone’s unconscious.” His voice could only be described as controlled calm.

“Yes, but the right person!” I pointed out, cocking my head to the side out of habit. He didn’t reply to that one, instead he just directed me to the door that led to the VIP. I really didn’t want Draven to see me like this and it made me wonder if he knew anything about what had happened...more importantly why was Vincent down here?

I didn’t ask but that was mostly because we were right next to the stage so hearing any answer he gave me was just not going to happen. The doormen eyed me like it was the first time they had ever seen me. I suppose I wasn’t looking too hot right now. Once through the solid wooden door the music changed to a background hum and Vincent’s hand dropped from holding my arm to smooth its way down the length to take my hand in his. I held my breath all the way down.

He was now walking in front of me with our bodies linked by entwined fingers. I was led upstairs but when faced with the two doors I knew which one I wanted to take and he knew it too. One led into the VIP area and the other onto a long outside corridor which bypassed the VIP to get into the home part of the nightclub.

“You don’t want to go in there do you?” Vincent stopped before opening door number one.

“Not yet, no!” I answered simply.

“I can feel that. Come with me.” He turned around me brushing against my body and I followed his movements because he still had my hand tightly encased in his. I don’t know why but it was only at this moment that I realized that my sleeves were still pushed up my arms and my gloves weren’t concealing them like they usually were. That’s when my shame actually hit me. I knew the numbness wouldn’t last long and when it finally came, it would slam into me like the sea does a body from falling from the cliff top. How could I face anyone again?

“Are you in pain?” Vincent’s soft voice broke through my personal desolation and when I looked up from the scars I only just focused on, I realized we were outside of sorts. I was stood on the open hallway and the

winter air hit me making me shiver. I was sure Vincent asked me something about pain and I looked up to find him stood very close, looking down at me with an odd expression.

“Yes...No, I..” Was that even an answer I had given, I wasn’t sure.

“I can feel your pain Keira, but I don’t know that it’s physical.” I thought about that for a moment. He could *feel* me? I also took this moment to assess myself. I flexed my hands and my right one hurt when doing so. A sharp pain across my knuckles but I didn’t need any guessing as to why that was.

I must have sucked in air because Vincent noted my movements and the sound of pain I had expressed. He took my right hand in his and examined it with a great deal of care. He frowned and before I could ask, the hallway illuminated from the moonlit glow to a warm, flaming orange. The wrought iron lamps on the walls were aflame from just a nod of his head. I almost gasped at how beautiful he was. Like a living statue of the Archangel Michael.

He reminded me of a fountain I had seen once in Paris as a child. The statue stood at the top of the fountain in the Place Saint-Michel, the Boulevard Saint-Michel is one of the two major streets in the [Latin Quarter of Paris](#), as far as I remembered from one of my many educational trips my parents took us on. Our family vacations always had some historical learning factor to play, not that I minded of course but Libby did tend to get a bit bored.

“Keira what are you staring at?” He asked me softly and yep, I was staring at him like he was some ancient oil painting created by the masters of his time. I looked down quickly and muttered a barely audible,

“Nothing.”

“I think you have cracked a knuckle but I can’t be sure, bend it this way.” He was holding my hand like a breakable antique and he moved my fingers individually, when I felt the pain in my middle finger I yelped and he

groaned.

“Dom is not going to be happy about this, what were you thinking?” He accused me and I yanked my hand from his despite the pain in doing so.

“I have pride Vincent, just like any other!” I snapped at him without daring to meet his crystal blue eyes.

“Was it worth it?” He asked me, keeping his voice so neutral it was close to being without feeling.

“Without a doubt!” I answered honestly. Damn right it had been worth it!

“It still affects you greatly doesn’t it?” It wasn’t really a question, more of a statement that I wanted to play dumb too.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I said moving away from him but as I started to walk the other way I was blocked by a pale arm coated in solid ripples of muscle. They tensed under the flames that cast shadows along the stone wall his palm was pressed against.

“I think you do and I think you’re afraid when you no longer need to be.” This time I did face him, as if to prove him wrong about that fear. In his face I found my lies. I was afraid.

“Your brother can’t protect me from everything.”

“I...We can and we will.” He looked like he had wanted to say something else but stopped himself. I started to shake my head and without thinking, rub my arms that were still on show.

“You can’t protect me from myself... no one can.” At this a single tear rolled down my cheek and stung my skin as it touched on the scratch my cousin had given me. Vincent took a deep breath and took hold of my hands that had started to scratch away at my scars. He moved them away and replaced them with long pale fingers that touched each scarred line as gentle as a butterfly.

“You have to let go of your past Keira. These scars you hold are only skin deep, they do not connect to your heart or your soul. These scars do not define you, you define them. They do not represent death and destruction like you think, they represent life, the life you chose to *want* to live...So...make it worth it.” His voice was like someone wrapping a warm blanket around me when I was standing in the snow. I was still looking down at my feet and when I saw my hair blowing around my waist I realized Hilary must have pulled it down earlier.

I felt Vincent’s finger curl under my chin and raise my face up to his. He was stood so close now that he was mere inches away. Our chests rose and fell in sync with each other as our eyes met. When his hands came up to hold my face my breath hitched. My God, he made me nervous.

“No tears,” he whispered and he smoothed his thumbs under my eyes and down my cheeks to take the tears away.

“What are we going to do with you my girl?” He said smiling down at me. Vincent wasn’t as tall as his brother but he was still a head above me. Actually there wasn’t anything about the two brothers that was remotely similar. Vincent looked like the Angel he was. Pale luminous skin that was framed with a halo of golden blonde short curls that looked almost childlike. His features were strong like a white knight, with high cheek bones and a long straight nose. His chin wasn’t as square as his brother’s which gave him more of an oval face. And the most striking aspect were those lips, being a dark contrast to his face with a natural red pigment, tinting them, reminding me of an apple you just wanted to bite.

“I guess I’m a mess,” I admitted.

“Don’t worry, it takes more than a bruised eye and a few scratches to keep the beauty from you but I can’t account for my brother’s reactions at seeing you less than perfect, he is...very possessive when it comes to what belongs to him.” He said this last part in a confusingly sad way which I didn’t understand. Of course I blushed at the compliment.

“Blushing won’t help my dear.” He said in a very sultry way that made

me shudder.

“Are you cold?” Before I could even answer he pulled me into his arms and started rubbing my back that quickly created warmth from his actions.

“I’m ok.” I said timidly at being so close.

“I’m going to have to heal you...is that alright?” He pulled me back a little to judge my expression but still kept me held to him.

“I thought that was against the rules?” I asked.

“Deep wounds need our essence, sometimes our blood to heal them but superficial wounds can be healed by just the right touch.” He had moved me so my back was flush against the wall and speaking while examining the damage. His fingers stroked the column of my neck before his other hand joined it by holding the whole of my neck steady. He could feel me gulp down my anxiety at being held by the throat so he cocked his head and winked at me.

“Relax, I won’t hurt you.” His words invaded my mind like a black cloud coating all my fears in the darkness so that I couldn’t see them, couldn’t feel them. I decided to close my eyes to add to the effect.

“Just breathe, beautiful.” I could hear the smile in his comfort. So I did as I was told. I took a deep breath and relaxed as I exhaled it. That’s when I felt it. The tingling cool air that began to caress the skin on my neck. I could feel his fingers grip my top and pull it to one side to reveal more of the mark Hilary had left there. His head leaned in so close until his lips hung over the mark, almost like he was about to take a bite out of me. I felt the cool air come from him and enter my pores. It reminded me of the time that Ragnar had healed the cut on my knee from my fall on the stairs. If anyone were to walk in on us now it would look like Vincent was trying to give me a love bite.

It didn’t take long until my neck went a little numb and Vincent let go of his hold. I opened my eyes to find him now casually brushing off the dried

blood from my skin. It felt like someone had just sprayed me with liquid nitrogen.

“Was it good for you?” He laughed at himself making me follow suit. I couldn’t help but smile at his kindness and warmth.

“Behave!” I said, as one of the most unserious warnings possible but it made him laugh harder.

“Around you, that will be difficult.” I couldn’t believe how openly he was flirting with me.

“I thought there was only one bad boy in the family,” I teased.

“You thought wrong.” He winked again and his eyes flashed a bright blue that was startling to witness. It was like I was watching the waves of the ocean through his eyes.

“Let’s see what we can do about this lip of yours.” I couldn’t help but take a step back but I quickly found I had nowhere to go. I couldn’t help my reaction. I mean, having Vincent so close to my neck was one thing, but my lips! My mind kept going back to that night when we had kissed and my heart thundered in my chest.

“I think it will be fine.” I said quickly causing a bad boy grin to invade his lips...ok so I take it back, they obviously did have a few things in common.

“Normally, I would agree with you, but considering how much you bite your lip when nervous I don’t think it would last the night. And from what I have gathered for myself, I do believe my brother is fond of those lips of yours.” Ok, so now I was beetroot red.

“You shouldn’t be flirting with me.” I bravely said and he raised one blonde, amused eyebrow at me.

“Me flirting? I am shocked you think this, I was merely stating facts that’s all. Besides....Angels don’t flirt.” He was now teasing me and I tried

not to smile at his playfulness.

“Oh no? I guess they don’t bullshit either.” I was now sporting a full on smirk after that come back and he was trying very hard not to do the same.

“But of course not, that wouldn’t be very angelic of me now, would it? Of course my father is a Demon so I am bound to have a streak or two.” He winked again and took a deciding step closer.

“Now stop stalling and let’s fix you up before Dom gets anxious about your whereabouts.” He sounded both seriously demanding and vivacious at the same time. Whichever he meant, I did as I was told.

“Close your eyes,” he ordered gently and as soon as I did so, his palm covered my left eye which I gathered was the bruised one. He didn’t apply much pressure but I could feel the heat building, making little beads of sweat form on my forehead. It was stranger than the sensation had been on my neck, like some deep heated therapy was being used. Then I noticed his head had moved very close to mine as I could feel his breath on my cheek. This time we weren’t inches away but millimeters. One small action from either of us and we would be touching.

I started to see red spots behind my eyes and as if I had told him so, the feeling of heat stopped and his hand moved away allowing my skin to breathe in the cool night air again. He might have moved his hand away but his lips were now directly over my own and I was terrified if I moved, even one tiny muscle, there would be contact. The tension of our situation was building like a tightly wound mechanical toy and any second one of us would let go and allow it’s in built reaction to be released.

“Don’t move. Hold very still for a moment as this might feel strange.” Strange! This whole night couldn’t get any stranger! Here I was, after just beating the crap out of my cousin, outside on a magically lit hallway with my boyfriend’s brother who is so close to kissing me, it felt strangely right amongst a night full of so wrong.

NO! I couldn’t think like that, what was I thinking? It was just from the

effect of all this craziness in the air, that's all, nothing to it!

I was still mentally scolding myself when I felt the same cold air hit my lips with the force that felt like the pressure of his lips. I flinched when it happened and Vincent's hands whipped out faster than my action and grabbed the tops of my arms to hold me still. His lips hung over mine like a tempting well to a dying man that just wanted to drown in its cool liquid. I could smell them and almost taste the air that passed over them. It was sweet like honey and cold like an ice cube had just been held to my mouth to suck. I even had to resist the urge to do so. Minutes seemed frozen and it felt like I was lost in a labyrinth of time.

"There, all better... although a little flustered." I opened my eyes to find a safer distance between us and Vincent's features could only be described as cocky.

"Umm...thanks," I said reverting back to shy, safe Keira."

"Oh you're welcome, it was an honor to almost kiss you, one I doubt I will forget as soon as I should do." He looked away to the sky when he spoke and just before I could say anything that might comfort the regret in his voice he turned to me suddenly and took my hand.

"Come, I need to get you back to my brother. I can feel him waiting and his impatience is growing." I didn't doubt that for a second knowing Draven but I still wanted to say something to Vincent but I didn't know how, so instead I showed him.

I pulled back on his arm, making him stop and look at me. I didn't give him chance to protest. I threw myself into him and wrapped my arms around his body which made his every muscle tense. I didn't care, I just wanted to explain, but this was the only way that felt right. I then lifted myself up on my tiptoes and put my lips to his cheek to kiss him lightly. Once there I whispered in his ear....

“Thank you Vincent, it was great for me!”

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Chapter 53

All for the Healing.

Vincent and I didn't say another word to each other as he escorted me back into the VIP. The first thing I noticed was Draven pacing like a wild cat, back and forth by the balcony. We walked round to meet him and I started to see all the unfamiliar faces that made up Draven's guests. I don't know why, maybe because I wasn't yet used to them, but they all seemed a lot scarier than the last lot. One table we passed looked like they want to first play with me and then devour me. A girl with bright orange hair even licked her cherry lips as I went by.

Draven spotted us immediately and the harsh eyes and tensed jaw told me he *had* been waiting. He stormed towards us now wearing a very power inducing black suit. Everything on him was black apart from a very deep purple tie that brought out the purple now in his eyes. He wasn't happy.

"Where have you been?" At first I thought he was asking me, but he was looking over my head, which wasn't hard giving my lack in height. His gaze burned into his brother's, who stood behind me.

"Calm yourself Dom, she is fine. She just got herself into some trouble." Vincent said in the most lucid way possible. I wanted to shout back 'Traitor' to him but I doubt the timing would have been right.

"Tell me!" Was all he said but his words sounded like they had been skimmed through acid.

"It was nothing," I spoke up feeling as this was about me I might as well have some say on the matter! He glowered down at me but he didn't reply, instead he raised a finger to my lips and shook his head. This was all the warning I needed. When Draven was this far gone it was sometimes best to let the beast calm down before pulling on its tail.

"She got in an altercation with her cousin." He was choosing his words very decidedly, which I appreciated.

“I will kill the bitch!” He said shocking me enough to make my mouth form an “O”. He turned as if he was about to do it right now when Vincent’s hand shot out and restrained him back.

“Keira attacked *her!*” Vincent said, as though he was trying hard not to smile. I’m glad to report he achieved it because I don’t think I could have stopped myself sticking my tongue out at him. Draven stopped dead and Vincent’s hand dropped now he knew his brother wasn’t about to run off to kill a ‘not so’ innocent human girl.

“She what?” Draven sounded as though the wind had been knocked out of him.

“I went down to get Keira as you asked and found her on top of her cousin, pounding her fists into her head and trying to rip out her hair.” Vincent said this like reciting poetry. Personally, I don’t think it was as bad as he made out, for starters I had only been trying to rip out a handful not the whole lot. But I guess tomato, tomatoe!

“Was she hurt?” He asked seriously as he now started scanning my face and body for injury.

“Excuse me...I’m right here!” I said getting impatient. Draven growled down at me and I rolled my eyes once and shut up.

“She received a scratch down her neck, a bruised eye and a cut lip.” Ok, so now it was like he was reading off an inventory. Draven made me jump by placing his hands on my neck and turning me this way and that to see for himself. He traced where every mark had been as though it was still visible, which I knew it wasn’t.

“You healed her yourself?” Draven’s cold question frightened me. Would he be angry?

“Yes, she was in pain and I didn’t think you would want her walking in here like that.” This was one hell of an interrogation.

“Your actions were right. Although I would want to heal her myself, that

would not have been practical at this time. You did well brother, I would not have been pleased if anyone else had touched her.” Draven was speaking like the reason for this conversation wasn’t stood next to him. I felt like slipping out from them both and making my escape.

“Well, if you two will excuse me, I think I will get a drink.” I was about to slide out from the Draven sandwich I was currently in when Draven’s hand gripped my waist in a very primal way.

“Stay!” Was all he said.

“Okkiedokkie.” I replied quietly as he slid me back in place.

“And what of the cousin?” He enquired.

“Bloody, bruised and beaten. She fought well, brother.” Oh jeez wasn’t I just the star pupil! It felt like I was in some weird, supernatural parent teacher conference.

Draven looked down at me and took my hand in his.

“Good girl, I am proud of you.” He said before squeezing my hand, that was, my right hand that had the ‘maybe’ broken knuckle. I yelped in pain and Draven growled letting go of the pressure but not my hand. He lifted it to examine.

“Ah yes, well I meant to tell you about that. Naturally, she hurt her fist in the beating process and that I could not heal...without...” He didn’t need to finish, evidently Draven got it.

“Yes, I understand. I would not have permitted that. I will fix it myself.” He stated in his usual masterful manner. Vincent made his move to leave but Draven spoke again putting full weight into his next command.

“Give me your hand brother.” Draven asked Vincent who looked as though he had expected what was about to happen. I was being moved to stand by Draven’s side while Vincent stepped forward to place his hand in Draven’s. They both closed their eyes and I could just make out the faint

flickering under their lids. Almost like they were watching something.

I was waiting for a reaction I could never predict but he did startle me again when something he saw made a growl ripple its way up through his chest. I was moving backwards slowly trying to get away from whatever it was but his hand zipped out and stopped me without even opening his eyes. It was as if he could feel every move I made. Although I was breathing hard and scared of his next reaction, the hand that held on to my wrist started to sooth his thumb around in circles to put me at ease. Then he spoke but I know not what.

“Vous êtes le seul homme qui j'ai confiance pour toucher son de cette manière sans avoir besoin de vous tuer à cause de cela » (Means “You are the only man I trust to touch her this way without the need to kill you because of it.” In French) Draven’s words, even though in perfect French tongue had been icy cold, even I could tell that without knowing the meaning behind them. If I was a betting woman, I would put money on the fact that Draven had just seen all that Vincent had, including him healing me. One thought...oh shit! Draven let go of his hand and instead of hitting him like it looked like he wanted to do, he shocked me and grabbed him behind the neck and pulled his forehead closer to touch his own.

“Frater” (Means “My brother” In Latin) He whispered and Vincent repeated the word. It was such a touching moment that I found my eyes tearing at the sight of such a strong unbreakable bond. This action was the very translation of the word Brother. A love that didn’t need words to describe, it was just enough, singled and defined by its purity. It made me realize just how much strength the word Brother had. Brother at arms, Brotherhoods and Blood Brothers all had the same thing in common...they all represent men as comrades.

My feelings must have been giving off signals as bright as Las Vegas because when I looked up they were both looking at me with odd expressions painted on their handsome faces.

“What?” I said burning red.

“Viena veida” Vincent said (Means “One of a kind” In Latvian)

“Yes she is.” Draven said beaming with a pride I didn’t know the cause of.

“Hello, right here remember!” I said getting fed up of the mixture of languages I would never understand and the conversation that was going on above my short head!

“Oh I know, I would never forget that my little one.” Vincent smirked at my given pet name and I scowled making them both laugh.

“I will leave you alone a moment.” His brother said bowing his head slightly to us both, a sign of deep respect. Draven then took my wrist in his over sized hand making me feel like the doll his sister joked about me being earlier. I felt so breakable in his grip that I should have been scared by it not turned on as I was. He gently led me to the balcony and took off his suit jacket before letting the doors open even though I was touching them. He eased the soft fabric over my shoulders and then let me through the doors onto the cold, late November night.

“Are you alright?” He asked me without looking at my face. He was still behind me holding my shoulders from where he had placed the jacket.

“I’m fi...”

“Please don’t say *fine*. Not to me Keira, trust me enough not to placate me with Fine.” He interrupted before I could say the word that he knew was not true.

“What do you want to hear me say Draven?” I said regretting how snappy it sounded.

“I want to hear you say how you actually feel and not what you know I want to hear.” Well he was being honest maybe I could be.

“You’re not going to like it.” I reminded him before committing to anything.

“I’m a big boy.” He mocked impatiently.

“Yes a very *angry* big boy.” He waved his hand around dismissing this notion without words.

“Alright, but don’t get mad, ok?” He nodded keeping his lips in a firm line.

“I feel guilty, I hate myself for what I did and I’m ashamed for what everyone saw. I don’t know if I can face any of my friends again now they know the truth about my past and I don’t want the pity that comes with it. I HATE pity! And now they have something to pity me for I can’t stand it. I want to bury myself in a hole and never come out. It’s like when I found out you knew all about my past and how I wanted to hide that from you forever and if there was any way I could take the information back then that would be one of my three wishes!” I was almost left breathless by the time I had finished my little explosion of feelings. I mean can anyone say information overkill!

Draven was left looking astounded at my outburst and now I found myself adding to my long list of regrets. He was trying to search for the words to comfort me but from a bombshell of emotions like that he had too many options to choose, I doubted he knew where to start. Hell even I didn’t!

“I don’t think you express your feeling to me enough. You obviously feel an overwhelming need to shut everyone out where your problems are concerned, myself included, but what I don’t understand is, why?”

“Why?” I repeated stupidly.

“Yes, Why? Why is it you feel the need to keep all these feelings locked away in a place where I am supposed to hold the key? You make me feel quite useless and that is not a feeling I am accustomed to. I only want to help you but I can only do that when you let me.”

“But you do help me. You help me by just being with me. I don’t feel like this all the time Draven, most of the time I am blissfully happy and that

is thanks to you. I guess I should have been more prepared that this was coming. My cousin's hatred for me knows no boundaries." I was stood facing him hugging myself taking little steps back every time he took a step towards me. I didn't want his touch because I knew with it I wouldn't be able to carry on this conversation.

"Where do you think her hate stems from?" I was surprised by his question...didn't he know?

"I thought you were the mind reading expert, you tell me." I shrugged my shoulders and let them slump back down with a sigh. He turned away for a moment so I couldn't see his face and I didn't know if this was a deliberate act or not. Was he hiding something? He still had his back to me giving me a fantastic view. His wide back looked huge thanks to the black waistcoat that pulled tight across his muscles and then there was his perfect behind, that looked like you could bounce nickels off it. I was close to drooling by the time he spoke.

"I think her hate goes back to a time when her father left but that is all I get from her. Her mind is too far gone and consumed by a pain and rage even she is confused. If she does not know her own mind, then neither do I. I cannot read what she can't see, but I have tried." This was not a shocking revelation. I knew Draven would have tried to find a reason for her behaviour and I was only sorry that he didn't find one.

"Do you still have that file on my past?" I asked, making him turn back to me in surprise.

"Yes but I don't understand...why..."

"Because I will need it to get answers." Draven just lowered his head as acceptance. He didn't like it but he wasn't going to argue.

"Let me see that hand." He beckoned me to him with his hand and I found myself moving without thinking. I gave him what he wanted and placed my injury before him to fix. He held me with such care it was surprising how gentle such a warrior could be. Then I winced.

“The knuckle is broken, see how it is sunken in. The knuckle is the end part of the metacarpal bone, here.” He showed me on my other hand and continued to explain it to me in detail. It was like having a consultation with a real doctor and I had to admit I was impressed.

“Since when did you go to medical school?” I mocked laughing which made him flash me a brilliant, white smile that would have made any dentist fall in love.

“I have always studied medicine, even in its infancy.”

“Are you like...qualified?” I asked wondering if a game of doctors and nurses would ever happen. He raised an eyebrow at my giggle.

“I have my doctorate if that is what you mean.” I couldn’t help it, my mouth actually fell open.

“Are you really surprised Keira? I am an educated man, who has had a *lot* of time on my hands and have not spent all of it fighting battles and waging wars like you may think.” He looked a little offended as he said this.

“Hey, I didn’t say that but come on, this coming from the man who said himself that he collects weapons as a hobby, so cut me some slack. I didn’t know you also collected degrees!” I finished sarcastically, crossing my arms. He now looked amused and it was becoming increasingly difficult to keep up...was he happy, was he mad, was I crazy?

“I suppose there is still a lot we need to learn about each other. I know of your love for the arts, did you know about my own passion for the same subject?” This was difficult to imagine for all the wrong reasons. I knew that I was stereotyping Draven in a sense but it was hard to picture him sat reading Finnegan's Wake by candle light and going to art galleries on his days off to admire [Andy Warhol](#)'s Campbell's Soup Can or Claude Monet's the Lily pond.

“Now I do.” I said looking down at my hand that was still trapped in his. He decided to change the subject.

“This might sting a little.” He said and when I reacted by trying to move my hand from his he merely tightened his grip and before I could utter a word of protest he lifted it to his mouth and bit down on me hard enough for me to shriek in pain.

“Draven what are you...!” I was struggling to get free when he just looked up at me over my hand with piercing, dark eyes. He watched mine widen in horror at the sight of him latched onto me like...well, like a Vampire. I could feel his teeth leave me but his lips stayed enclosed around the holes they had left and remained sucking the blood from me. He had bit me just below the knuckle closest to my thumb on the soft fleshy part. He was walking my body backwards and pushed me up against the wall to restrain me from struggling further. Once my back was flush against the stone he let his blood soaked lips leave my skin. It wasn't hurting anymore and after the initial shock the only pain had been his teeth popping into my flesh. He licked my blood from his lips like the taste was a fine cognac he had just experienced.

“Mmm...even your blood is honey sweet. Hold still!” He'd closed his eyes and then flashed them open when speaking the command. I just nodded my frightened head. He let one finger trail down my cheek.

“Don't look so scared little one, I won't bite you again...well not tonight anyway.” He finished by winking at me before plunging those same fangs into his own hand. It made me scream.

“Ssshhh” He soothed, after releasing himself. I looked down and saw a large tear across his palm the full length. His flesh looked like it had been torn with a jagged edge as it made a zigzag where he had pulled his teeth along it. I flinched and wrinkled my nose showing my distaste.

“Doesn't it hurt?” I asked, now being the one to cradle his large hand in both of my own. His grin was enough of an answer but I got the worded version anyway.

“I do not feel pain like you do. It is more of an awareness than anything else.” Oh well kudos to you I thought sarcastically.

“Close your eyes, this will feel...odd.” I did as I was told almost immediately as Draven placed his open wound on top of mine. I was struck by five different sensations all in within minutes of each other, each one taking the breath out of me. I tensed every muscle I had as the first wave shook me...it was pain. It shocked into me like I was being burned from the inside out. It was like flames had ignited in my bones and was licking at the inside of my skin.

“Keira, relax...please.” His voice sounded strained and I realised he was gripping my hand against my force to remove it. Thankfully the pain died very quickly and gave way to other feelings in its stead. The burning was diminished by a freezing cold that seem to spread like icy tentacles up my arm. It didn’t hurt but it wasn’t what I would call pleasant. That then gave way to what can only be described as energy. It replaced the cold tremors and turned it into an energy that was filling me up, racing through my veins like morphine. It made me feel strong, so strong that I had to fight the urge to tense my bicep and test it. I wanted to plough my fist into something but then I almost laughed out loud as that was what had got me into this position in the first place...since when I had I become so violent?

Whatever my thoughts I must have been reacting because Draven had tightened his grip just before the point of it being painfully breaking.

“Try not to struggle my girl” He said and though the words were kind they came through as firm and determined. Was I making this hard on him? I decided to relax or at least try to. Of course when the energy travelled up my arm and seemed to disappear in my heart I let out a sigh. I wanted it back, that strength it gave...almost like a taste of a drug so rare I didn’t know whether I would ever feel it again. And then I realised that it wasn’t the first time I had felt its presence. When I thought about it, it was actually a common occurrence. I thought about the aftermath of every time we had sex and yes there it was...only a diluted variation. I wondered if Draven would know about this?

This energy he seemed to transfer into me, this power of his that he would force into me making me feel a little stronger before collapsing in to

an ecstasy induced slumber. That was what was kind of happening now, the feeling you get when you know you don't have long before you erupt into the most blissful abyss of an orgasm. I don't know how it happened. It came out from somewhere deep within me that was like a creature lurking in my belly waiting to show itself in all its ferocity. One minute I was feeling like Supergirl and the next my legs were quivering with the need to sink to my knees and curl up and convulse. And then BAM, the last stage hit me and I did just that! I came so violently, I lost my legs and let my body give way to gravity. Of course Sir Isaac Newton didn't account for the Draven's of the world to be there to defy it. He had caught me in his arms and was gently lowering me to the ground instead of letting me fall and no doubt injuring me further. Although that last bit of the experience it would have been worth a bump to the head!

No surprises, I was panting. I could now completely understand why he hadn't wanted Vincent to do that to me. Not only did my hand feel fine but as a result my body felt like someone had injected me with sunshine. I felt fantastic. Draven still had his arms around me as I seemed to be in a crouching position by the wall. I sure was glad no one at that moment decided to get some fresh air, or they would have encountered more than they bargained for.

"Are you alright?" Draven's voice hummed in my ear causing the last exotic shudder come racing up my spine. I jerked in his arms making him pull me in tighter. I could only nod at his question. I think he could tell I wasn't in the right frame of mind to form words, so he just smoothed back my hair and held his lips to the back of my head. His other hand held my face under his chin and he only relaxed when our breathing was in sync. I pulled back to look at him.

"Did you know that would happen?" I asked.

"I did" He said unquestionably.

"Right, well next time you do that I think we should be on a bed." I said full of lightheaded humour.

“Next time?” He raised a perfectly shaped eyebrow.

“Tell me Keira, are you planning on joining a fight club any time soon or are you just referring to your utter lack of self preservation and inability to take care of yourself.” He was jesting with me I know but I acted insulted.

“Let me get this right...you’re saying you don’t think I can take care of myself?” I said putting my hands on hips after he had helped me up, an action that didn’t help my case.

“If the shoe fits.” He said looking blasé with a smidgen of amusement.

“Well I have made it this far and I’m still in one piece.” Now I was smiling because I knew what his comeback would be.

“Ah yes, thanks to a few patch ups by yours truly.” His eyes lit up at the challenge giving off little sparks of purple. That was the thing with Draven’s eyes. Real strong emotions brought out their true colour. Of course when he was turned on they were at their brightest.

“Well that’s nothing, just like having an MOT in my case. Besides I don’t have health insurance and I don’t have the money to pay for the health care here so I guess you’re good for some things.” I couldn’t help but laugh at his expression, shock mixed with the need for a cunning come back.

“Oh is *that* all I’m good for?” He grinned at me making me bite my bottom lip.

“Umm...I guess you’re a good kisser,” I teased again making him growl.

“Oh and the sex isn’t bad,” I continued trying so hard not to laugh it almost hurt. His growl got deeper and I could see the playful beast in him come to the surface.

“You know I will have to punish you for all those statements you just made.” He said stalking towards me and pinning me to the wall. His arms looked tensed and like they wanted to rip their way through the black material that encased them. He held each hand flat against the wall behind

either side of my head. He ducked his head to my level but only reached as far as my forehead. I couldn't help but gulp.

“Oh that's ok, because I don't think you're very good at that either.” I mocked laughing but I was soon shut up by the slap I received to my backside. I screeched out “AHH!”

“Hey!” I said looking up to see his evil grin and cocky eyes. It hadn't really hurt but just shocked me. If truth be told it actually felt quite nice, in a sexual way. Not too hard but firm enough to be told.

“You were saying?” He said like he had won a round and was back in the control he was used to having.

“Haven't you ever heard about Karma?”

“Yes and I believe you just received it, although my guess is that you enjoyed it so maybe it doesn't count, or maybe you just need an increased dose.” He replied dropping his hand by his side and pulling it back as if ready to do it again. I pushed my bum against the wall and held it with both hands saying

“Don't you dare!” At this he roared with laughter, throwing his head back as it came thick and fast. Then like lightning he had both my back cheeks in two hands and raised me up so I slid up the wall to his level.

“I will have my way with you!” He said, his voice guttural and thick with lust.

“Not now you won't.” I said being smug, although I wished that he could. My want was burning a hole inside me the size of Texas!

“And why is that my Vixen?” He said, spoken like a true lover.

“Because Karma has come round to bite you in the arse.” I put my hands on either side of his face and turned it to whisper the last part in his ear...

“Karma, because you have guests.”

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Chapter 54

New People Bring New Hate.

He groaned unhappily and I laughed in his locked embrace. His hands still had their firm hold on my undercarriage and his need to have me was pressing deep.

“You think being King would mean I could do what I want, when I WANT!” He shouted this last part towards the door and it was one of my first glimpses seeing Draven being spoilt. I couldn’t help it...I laughed again.

“And may I enquire what it is you find so amusing?” He sounded pissed off but one look at my smiley face, it was hard for him to stay that way.

“You’re acting like someone is about to take your favourite toy away and send you to your room,” I said through half bursts of giggles. He gave me a grumble and a dark look before easing into a half smile.

“You *are* my favourite toy, my doll, and I do not ever want to let you go.”

“But you must.” I said in a sigh.

“Must I?” He raised an eyebrow, one of Draven’s regular expressions that made my toes curl.

“Well, like I said, you do have guests.” His hands inadvertently held on to me tighter, making me groan.

“Make more noises like that and I never will.” He warned in my ear and then began kissing my neck to prove his point. I loved how Draven never wanted to leave me. I loved the hold I had over him. This was my power and although compared to Draven’s, it was at the lower end of the scale, it was still there and it was still mighty. Or so his growing erection told me!

He worked his way round from my neck and kissed me deep and intense. As if he was on an expedition to discover every last bit of my mouth. He didn’t have his hands free as they were still holding me up from behind but I could tell where they wanted to be. I, on the other hand, wrapped my arms up and around his neck, this being easier, as now we were at the same height. I ran my fingers through his hair, which I knew made him crazy. I grabbed handfuls and tugged slightly at my impatience to have more of him, Hell, I wanted every last bit of him. All there was to give. He moaned in my mouth as he fought with himself to keep control. What was I doing? I knew we needed to be back inside but this game was just too damn good to give up playing. It was a bit like taunting a wild beast through the bars of a cage, any minute now they would rip through the steel like hot claws through butter and I wouldn’t be able to hold him back. Most of me didn’t want to. I would have

given anything to shut down that part of me that was screaming reason. I knew I was keeping Draven from something important and I knew I would have loved to have continued to be selfish but that wasn't who I was. So I, very reluctantly, let go of his soft, midnight hair and tried to put an end to his raging desires and mine. No surprises he released a low growl.

“What it is you do to me! You burn my soul and set alight my veins, only to douse them out in the seas of your reason. If only I had your will, I would be the strongest being alive.” This last bit of his declaration sounded bitter. He let me slide down the length of him and the strain in his suit pants looked almost painful. If only he knew how painful it was for me to see it and to know it would be hours before I could embrace it with my own body of want.

“Well, if you think for one second this is easy for me, then you don't know me at all!” I said in a hoarse whisper.

“Good to know.” He replied with a grin before adding,

“Very well then, if I must, then I must.”

“I'll be waiting.” I said raising my eyes as though I was some helpless little puppy he was about to leave. Ok so I wasn't making this very easy on him. He looked down at me and traced the line of my jaw with a feather light touch.

“What did I ever do to deserve such beauty in my life, I will never know but I will be thankful of it for the rest of my days.” He said with closed eyes and I looked down at the complement, flushed and embarrassed.

“You will get used to it one day and see the beauty in yourself, as I do but for now, I will content myself with the delectable rose blush that blooms in place of its pride.” He was smiling and I was turning from *rose* to a less poetic beetroot. Now he was laughing at the changes in colour, obviously enjoying my responses with a little too much enthusiasm. I pushed him lightly and in a playful manner then giving him a coy smile.

“Draven, I do believe you are stalling.”

“Guilty as charged but given the inducement, do you blame me?” He winked and I giggled like a school girl. He was such a flirt, no flirt wasn’t the right word, it wasn’t a strong enough word, more like sexually dangerous and downright sinful.

“Right, time to go and play host, Draven.”

“Are you not coming? I could escort you back to our chamber.” He said innocently enough that anyone who didn’t know him would have thought these words from a choir boy.

“Oh no, I’m not failing for that one! Put me and you in the same room as a bed and we’re bound to fail into it.” I remarked confidently.

“Or be pushed,” he teased.

“Besides, I think I’ll stay out here a little longer, I need the air.” He knew my full meaning behind it and laughed heartily.

“Me and you both. Very well, I will go but do not stay out here for too much longer, it is cold.” I nodded and started to remove his jacket but he shook his head.

“No please, keep it, I want to know at least part of me is wrapped around you.” He leaned down, placing the tips of his fingers under my chin and kissed me lightly on the lips as if not daring to go any deeper in case he lost all control.

“When you have finished here, please go straight to our room, many of my new guests do not know of you yet and need to be warned. Will you wait for me?” I nodded making him drop his hold under my chin.

“Good girl. Till later then.” One more quick kiss and he was gone.

I stood on the balcony trying to catch my breath in the cold night. It was so peaceful despite the evening’s events. I tried to process everything that had

happened and although it was easier to deal with guilt and regret, I found it hard to fully feel those emotions freely. I am glad that I was strong enough not to care for once in my life. I was glad that I had stood up for what I believed in, no matter what the consequences. Well at least one thing was for sure, Jack was no longer fooled and I had a feeling he would make those feelings known to me soon enough. I could almost see the sorrow pouring out of his eyes as he stood holding my limp cousin in his arms. It also looked like he would have liked to have swapped places with Vincent and be the one holding me. Of course all of this meant was that sooner or later I was going to have to have it out with my cousin and when it happened I would just have to pray for control. I couldn't let myself get like that again.

I took a deep breath and felt better when the icy air shocked my body. The night was so crisp and clear, my breath looked like smoke. I shuddered and pulled Draven's jacket closer round my body breathing in his scent. I could have passed out taking it so much. It was like nothing I have ever encountered before. So distinct, so manly, I could have bathed in it and found release.

I wasn't sure how long I stood out there, going over and over in my mind the different possibilities tonight had caused. But when I'd had too much of persecuting myself to the point of purgatory, I decided enough was enough. I turned on my heels and made my way back inside.

The doors opened to a buzzing nightlife of such an array of characters that my eyes were like saucers taking everything in. Some so normal looking they could have been people waiting at the bus stop to get home from work. Others looked like they had just walked off a monster movie set! Although I wasn't allowing myself to see their true nature, (as I think I would have been scared shitless) they were still frightening in their own right. Mostly down to the eyes and the clothes they wore.

On one table, they were all wearing long black jackets, like highway robbers from the Wild West. Although they were without the cowboy hats they still managed to keep hold of the pointed, leather toed boots that were tipped with silver. All five of them had beards only in different styles. Some

plaited, others twisted into two points. One had it so long that it rested on the table next to his drink. It was quite ironic seeing as none of them had even one single hair on their smooth, bald heads.

Another table was made up of all women, which up until now, had been unusual for the VIP. They were utterly and stomach wrenchingly beautiful. They all wore very dressy evening gowns that made the VIP seem as though it had turned into a cruise liner for the evening. Almost every female had their best dress on, I was sure. Suddenly I felt like running back onto the balcony and dealing with the cold for the night. It would have been easier than standing here feeling like the pauper amongst kings and queens. I looked down at myself and almost felt so plain that I would disappear at any moment. Thankfully, I had taken Draven's jacket off before walking in here or I would have looked like I had stolen it from someone. Despite being massive on me, it was obviously something I would have never been able to afford. After all I was still just a waitress. Draven's fortune didn't affect me in the slightest. I wasn't with him for money and the fact that I wouldn't let him buy me anything, was more fun because I got to see his aggravated expression.

I had it folded over my arm and decided to leave it at the bar in case he needed it for any reason. Karmun seemed to have his hands full and I was in two minds whether or not to give him a hand. He had multiple trays all lined up ready to be picked up by the constant stream of waitresses coming to collect. There seemed to be a few more additions for tonight and I felt left out. I mean, I understood that Draven wanted me to be safe, but what would happen? Another Layla incident? I didn't think so.

"Hey honey, I didn't know you were still here?" I don't know why but he sounded both shocked and strained when he said this. It was odd coming from him. I put it down to the extra stress of the night. It wasn't usually this busy up here, which made me realise, downstairs was very quiet compared, which was usually the other way around. I turned round briefly and noticed the lights downstairs were out and there wasn't a body in sight. At that moment an unwelcome shudder crept up my spine like spiders crawling under my skin and skipping along my spine. I shook my head but the fear

didn't leave me as realisation hit....I was now the only human in here.

“Yeah, still here but hey you look like you could use a hand, let me...”

“NO...Umm sorry, sorry...but you know what my Lord said, you were not to work up here tonight and I would not like to make him unhappy. Besides it's calming now, you go....” He looked around nervously and he seemed very twitchy, like Draven was watching him or something. I shrugged and decided to give up, at least he knew I had offered.

“Ok, well could you get his jacket back to him, I think I'm going to call it a night.” At this mundane news he seemed to relax more and he even managed a smile at me.

“Yeah, sure, no problem. Have a good sleep won't you?” He said, like he wasn't only talking to me...weird. Again I put it down to his stressful situation.

“Umm...yeah....will do, see ya.” I replied warily.

I turned around and lost my footing which brought me screaming back to the first time I had ever set foot in the VIP and like that night I fell into a Demon. My foot kind of crumpled underneath my ankle forcing all my body weight to one side. Unfortunately for me that was the side of one of Draven's guests that was walking past. I crashed into him and put my hands out to stop myself from falling further only in doing so they gripped onto a body I had never seen before. I was just righting myself when my body was violently flung backwards by the swift movement of an arm blocking out and catching me in the ribcage. It momentarily knocked the wind from me and left me gasping. I had ungracefully landed on my butt and was wondering if it would leave a nasty bruise when a booming voice came from above me.

“How dare you touch me, you vile human bitch! Someone should teach you manners you disgusting parasite...GO and fuck off!” A man in a pin-striped suit was now dusting himself off like I had infected him with my human girly germs!

I couldn't believe he had just spoken to me like that! How dare he, the audacity of the man. I didn't give a shit whether he was a Demon or not, I wanted to claw at his shiny, expensive blue suit and rip it to shreds with my bare hands. Everyone was now staring and I was scowling so hard it was hurting my face. I had, had just about enough of this night and being put down! I got up, despite all the warning glares I received but then I stopped and really looked around...those glares weren't directed at me. They were directed at him. And soon, I knew why....

I turned to see the scariest sight any human eyes could take in. Draven stood by his chair and had witnessed everything. Then without any warning an almighty roar ripped out from him in a bloodcurdling way that made my knees shake. Silence rode like a plague infested wave among every person there. As the end of the most horrific sound ever known to man, one that was enough to make your ears want to bleed, started to end, Draven crashed his fists down onto the table and split it clean in two. Bottles, glasses and anything that was using the surface, went cascading down into the middle to meet the rest of the destruction. I didn't really have time to take in the fear that no doubt was held in every eye, because in the seconds all this happened, it only took a second more before the suited man was being held up in the air by his throat, Draven's hand firmly enclosed around it.

Draven stood so tall before me, it was like he had grown even bigger in the height of his rage. The suited man was left dangling and gasping for air as Draven's hand grew tighter to cut off the noise. For a second I thought he had killed him without another thought.

“HOW DARE YOU TOUCH HER!!!!!” He screamed and then erupted into his full Demon side. There was no purple glow, only burning, red hot flames of raw hate powered energy. I had only seen this side of him once before and that was when Morgan had me firmly in his grasp, of course I remembered how that ended, would he really go that far again?

“Mmmmyyyy.....L...L...Lord” He was trying desperately to speak but Draven's hand was acting like it had a mind of its own. It was enjoying causing the pain and it squeezed again only this time it caused the dangling

man's eyes to haemorrhage. I thought I was going to be sick at the sight. Blood was actually dripping down his face.

“I WILL KILL YOU!” Draven had lost so much of the man I loved I didn't know who it was I was looking at. Was he really in there somewhere? Somewhere deep down, like he was being held captive there until the beast was finished. His wings were now just feathered flames, that fanned out and licked at the air around them.

“I...I...I...di..didn't....k..k..kkknnnooww” He screamed out in pain using the last shred of breath he had left.

“THEN YOU WILL BE PUNISHED FOR YOUR IGNORANCE!” His Demon voice took over and made it near impossible to detect anything I knew from memory. That's when the man started to die and this is when I couldn't take any more.

“NO!” I screamed causing everyone in the club to inhale air at the same time. Draven's head turned around without even giving an inch to allow the man some breath. I mean yeah, I had hated him only minutes ago but nobody deserved to die because of the incident and I most certainly didn't want it on my head!

Draven's look made me want to literally cry with fear. It was so lost in the pit of damnation that I couldn't tell if he could actually see me! I don't know how I managed to carry on but somewhere I found a bravery that even I was shocked at finding.

“Draven please...I am begging you, please...please just let him go.” I had an old kind of aching in my voice that took me back to the first time I had heard it. It was my pleading and that was something I vowed I would never use again to another being...this was unforgiveable but obviously necessary.

“Did you hear that, DOG! The girl is begging for your life! The very girl you shoved to the ground like nothing but shit beneath your shoe. And here she stands, at the mouth of Hell, begging me to save your pathetic soul when you have done NOTHING to earn such pity! WHAT HAVE YOU TO SAY!”

He lost it again and I had to raise my trembling hands to cover my ears that couldn't take it anymore.

The man was just gargling and spurting to try and form words but with Draven's unwavering strength there wasn't a chance. Just how much could he take? I knew one thing for sure, if he'd been human he would have been dead the second his feet lifted from the ground. It had already looked like Draven had broken his neck in several places. Bone was jutting out at two different angles and every time he tried to speak, it bobbed up and down painfully.

"SPEAK!" Draven barked out the order as his last thread of patience had snapped...I knew it wouldn't be long until it would be too late and I would never look at Draven the same way *ever* again.

"Draven stop this! He can't speak for God's sake!" I yelled at him with floods of tears streaming down my face. At the mention of God everyone gasped and Draven's eyes flashed round to seek mine once more. They looked like the pits of Hell lived there, like a portal straight to the gates were right past those eyes.

"I AM GOD'S RULING HERE!" He said first to me and then to the rest of the room that were witnessing this side of their master. I held my head in my hands and let out sobs mixed with words like "Please" and "Let go" making something in my actions enough to get through to *my* Draven. I heard a thud before me and when I lifted my head, I was now faced with the broken man in a pile at my feet. I couldn't help but flinch back.

"BEG!" One command came past his lips that I could not imagine kissing again. Would I ever make it past this point... far past the point of no return? I responded by shaking my head but the words wouldn't surface through my shaky tears.

"BEG the 'Chosen one' for your life!" Draven's voice cut through me like I was being split in two. I didn't think I would ever be pieced back together after this. At the name 'Chosen one' everyone took a step back from me like I held some horrible disease. They all sucked in air that wasn't needed and their eyes all turned Demonic like someone had just flipped a

switch...of course that someone was Draven. Most looked terrified of me, one girl even dropped the glass she had been holding. I jumped at the sound of it smashing into tiny pieces on this cold stone floor that I just wanted to swallow me whole. Demonic and Angelic eyes all burned into me, bright and unwavering. I thought about them in the night, in this darkness my mind was swimming in and their eyes were all I could see.

“No...no, no, no,” I repeated over and over but it was like no one was hearing me, I wondered if I was even saying the words or just screaming them in my head.

“Pl...please...for..for...forgive mmme.” The man was crawling towards me, hands out stretched as though trying to touch me, to hang on to me like his last shred of hope at survival. I cried for him and stepped back. Then he yelped in pain as Draven placed his foot on his back to stop him moving. I could hear the sickening sound of bones cracking as he applied greater pressure.

“Don’t touch her!” He warned and instantly the man’s hands retracted to cradle his body.

“Please STOP THIS!” I shouted at him, wondering if my words could penetrate such a Demonic soul that consumed him.

“He does not deserve to live after such an insult to his Master. However I will let him breath but be warned, this is through the mercy of MY Chosen One not through my rule and wrath. You owe your life to this human Gastian but you have my word, you will not go unpunished!” I closed my eyes at the sound of his judgement and another overflow of salty tears followed their brothers and sisters.

The man had now collapsed, a new stream of blood flowing freely from his mouth, that was the only indication he gave that he was still alive...you don’t pump blood when you die, I told myself.

“Take him away! As I have been his judge, I will be his punishment, it will be by my hands only.” He was addressing the room now and turning

around so that every eye was in his view, making many flinch back and I didn't blame them.

“Let this be a warning to you all and let it travel to unattended ears. If anyone is to touch this girl, to look at her wrong or even breathe too hard in her direction, they will stand before me and be judged. An injunction with *my* law, your judge will be your executioner! Heed my words, the girl belongs to ME!” He had his arms straight out at his sides at 90 degree angles, as if he was challenging anyone to step forward and test his authority as their King. This was all I could bear. I felt like a ghost of myself looking in on the craziness of my life and shaking my head at how this had happened. How had I grown to accept this? When did I learn how to live half a life?!

I let out one last cry and while Draven's back was to me, as he addressed *his* people...

I turned and ran.

I somehow made my legs work, even though they didn't want to, I made them. I used every ounce of mental strength I had left and poured it all into moving. Moving as far away from Draven as I could get. I managed to push past the people in my way and thanks to Draven's new law no one dared to try and stop me. I reached the staircase and launched down it with a speed that shocked me. It was like running in a dream, one moment you don't think you're even moving but the next you feel as though flying, bending time to your will.

As soon as I was sure that my feet were at the bottom I ran for the only exit I was sure wouldn't stop me. Getting through the empty club was like running on an empty playing field. In my crazed state I could even smell wet, dew covered grass.

I cornered the bar, taking in briefly its cold dark state now that it wasn't infested with warm bodies...warm *human* bodies! That was why I was running, it was such a need to be with my own kind it felt like I would self combust if I didn't breathe Afterlife free air and speak to another human soul. I felt like I was drowning in there and all I needed was to be free and breathe.

Like that man being held by Draven's hand, had also been squeezing the life out of me. The *me* out of me.

I almost jumped over the bar just to make it all happen quicker. The door was in view and the exit sign glowed above me and in my state of mind I was reading it as something different...It said 'Home'. I pushed on the bar that would release me from this supernatural torment. For the first time since stepping foot in Afterlife, I couldn't help but cry as I said goodbye. For now I knew that I never wanted to set foot in there ever again. But would I? Would I, if the man I loved came back. The first thought that entered my mind about my Draven made my legs want to cave. I was outside by this time and the fresh snow covered the ground like a comforting blanket had been laid to protect the earth from the harsh elements. Of course, sensibly the snow was classed as one of those harsh elements but right now, I just wanted to fall and let it cover me too.

So that is what I did. One minute I was running, the next I was falling blissfully to my knees that impacted with soft and fuzzy snow. It sprayed upwards around me and I let out an almighty cry as I had reached my limit. I lowered my head and sobbed uncontrollably until I was gasping for air to fill my lungs. The cold sharp pains of the icy air actually helped soothe the pain in my heart. The dull ache of when my heart beat so feverous only an hour ago for *my* Draven. Was this it...was this the end of all my happiness? The answer came behind me...

"No, it isn't!"

Draven's voice broke into the night like some thief that could steal the stars.

Chapter 55

Cold Hard Fear.

“Keira, please get up.” His voice was back to the way I remembered it which seemed an age since I had last heard it. It wasn’t a command, it was him pleading. I started to shake my head. I still couldn’t speak yet, as I knew one word and the dam would crack, opening the floodgates for me to drown in my misery. I had my back to him, hunched over in the snow with my head still cradled in my arms. My hair was still loose and hanging past my waist, the ends getting wet in the snow and curling up like they hated the cold.

“Why not? Please, it’s cold, you’ll freeze!” He sounded desperate, hurting and in pain. I looked down at my hands and saw how white they were. My skin was almost translucent, reflecting off the white sheet beneath

me. I felt like part of it, like it was sucking me in to become captured. God knows at that point I wanted too. At least freezing was better than feeling!

“I can’t,” I whispered but I knew he would hear me. Then I felt him, like the sun rising behind me. It almost burned.

“DON’T TOUCH ME!” I screamed. The sound of a bird or some other animal moving through the surrounding forest made me realise how loud my scream had been. His hands left me like I had stabbed him with my invisible sharp edges.

“Keira...?” His voice was pleading...begging. That word...that terrible word that now had new meaning for me. It added to a pain that had stayed with me from the very first day that Morgan had taken me. This made me very, very...angry! I got up quicker than I thought possible for my unsteady legs. I spun round to face him and my foot sunk deeper in the snow’s layers.

“NO! How dare you! How could you, HOW COULD YOU!?” I screamed at him and pushed him so hard I felt pain in my arms. It didn’t matter, would anything hurt this man! He didn’t put up any attempt to stop me, he just stood there and took it with a deep hurt coating his eyes. Thankfully he was back to being Draven or I don’t think even in my rage I would have had the courage to do this to the flaming Demon Draven that had sizzled out for now. It was starting to feel like this was a daily routine. Get up, see friends, argue with Draven and scream at him. Get ready for work, see friends, beat up my cousin, get thrown to the ground by an ignorant Demon and watch as Draven tried to kill him. Then yell at Draven some more. Even by my standards, that was one hell of a day!

“Fight back! What’s wrong with you! Scream at me, command me, order me to stop oh mighty King! Aren’t you afraid of anything Draven?” I was seething to a point I could only see him through a misted red blur.

“Are you finished?” He asked calmly which broke me down to a level I didn’t think there was. I pulled my hand back and slapped him on the face so hard it did finally leave its mark. His cheek blazed red which helped me ignore the stinging whip his face left across my palm. His head was still held

down to one side and his eyes didn't look at me. A deep pain scarred them from their beauty and they had never looked more black and cold as they did at this point. His hair had fallen forward and covered his forehead and the side of his face I had slapped. The contrast of his red skin and his jet black hair was startling.

I was waiting for a reaction but I was left disappointed because he gave me nothing. He straightened his face and looked down at me in waiting for the next round of crazy I had to deliver.

"Fine, I guess if that does nothing to your frozen heart then let's see if this will...Good bye Dominic!" I said, with tears streaming down my cheeks. I turned and started to walk the other way not waiting to see if it had affected him the way I wanted it too. I didn't get far.

"NO! You will not leave me! You cannot, do you understand?" He was standing in front of me again now and I didn't even see his body move. It was like he had transported.

"Watch me!" I snapped back. At this he restrained me. He held the tops of my arms in two solid vices.

"Stop this!" He shouted. Those were my words! The very words I had begged for that life he cared nothing for. And I had been the one hurt by it!

"BEG!" I said almost spitting the word at him. At this it seemed to sink in.

"Come on Draven! What wrong, when it's on the other foot it isn't as gratifying is it!"

"You think ANY of that was *gratifying!*" He was seriously pissed now and for some reason I felt better for it. Anything was better than having Draven just stand there and take it like he was stone... cold, hard un-breathing stone.

"Well did you stop once, just once...for one tiny second in that flaming head of yours to think about how it made ME FEEL! DID YOU?" He

actually winced as though I'd branded him with a red hot poker.

"Wait, let me answer that one for you...NO!" I stomped.

"He hurt you, he threw you to the ground, I saw it and I reacted like anyone in my position would." He spoke the words like a true King.

"You really believe that don't you?" His features set in granite and he folded his arms across his chest before answering.

"Yes."

"Then you really are an idiot! Think back to my face Draven...this face!" I pointed at my face and walked him backwards because I kept pushing forward and he had nowhere else to go.

"This face, that was covered in tears as it is now. My pleading face that was begging, BEGGING Draven! Begging you to stop, begging you not to let me witness what you were doing, what you wanted to do, what you DID! Do you know when the last I begged Draven? DO YOU? Let me take you back to my hell!"

"No, please, don't do this!" He lowered his head like this was the most painful thing he had ever heard but I kept going, there was no stopping me now.

"One name Draven, MORGAN!" He cried out when I shouted the words and he bent over double and looked like he was trying not to erupt again. I didn't care...I just didn't care, so I carried on.

"I begged him, every DAMN DAY! I begged him to let me go or let me die, just anything so that I could have control back over my life. So that I didn't belong to him anymore. I had to nearly die to get free and when I made it out of there with my life, I vowed never to beg ever, ever, ever again! Tonight I broke that promise because of you. I was terrified Draven and it wasn't because of what *had* happened, it was because of you. I was terrified of you!" This was the straw that broke him. Draven finally got it! And he looked like he wanted to die because of it. He fell to the ground just as I had

and covered his face with his hand like he was trying to prevent it from caving in. I stood back and watched in horror at what I had done. Had I gone too far? I know I had wanted to hurt him, but this? I answered my own question.

I had gone too far.

“You can’t...I won’t...I won’t let you be frightened of me.”

“No,” I said in a whisper as I backed away from him further.

“I...I...can’t, NO, I won’t! I won’t live without you. Please Keira, I didn’t mean to frighten you, I had to do that, I had to show them that you couldn’t be touched. They had to fear it, they had to fear me, the very idea of it. I’m trying to keep you safe and keep you in my world at the same time but it is difficult. There are so many dangers, so many things to fear...but...but me? To think it was me all along that I had to protect you from, the way I am.” I cringed back as I had gotten a taste of justice and hated its bitter acidic after burn. I shook my head and he shouted back.

“YES! Yes it is and don’t try and deny me your true feelings. I frighten you, who am I to strike fear into the very heart that I am trying desperately to claim? Where is my hope? What is there for me to do, what can be done when you see me this way?.... Hell’s Beast in love with Heaven’s beauty.” He ducked his head again and the pain was rippling from him like it was erupting from his core. Mine felt as though I was the one murdering him. It had cracked under pressure and I knew only one man that could heal me. My God this was tearing me apart! How could I ever have thought so badly of him, been so scared of him. That man that had shown himself, was this man that was in front of me on his knees declaring his love. If I had nothing then this moment, only this moment in my life to last me until eternity, his words, his voice telling me that he loved me would be enough and I needed to hold on to that, I had to.

“I have to go,” I wanted to say, knowing that I had to put space from this night, I needed this time to get past this. I had to see things without Draven around, to face the facts and clear my head from the visions of the King, the

Judge and the Executioner! I cried out again as another flash of tonight's nightmare stole my concentration. Draven's hand choking the life from another being. I mean, I had seen Draven fighting but that was always different, that was in self-defence or from protecting me from death or kidnapping. Those men had truly wanted to hurt me so didn't that make it ok? See these are the things I needed to clear, to find clarity and make my decisions based on them, not on guilt at seeing Draven's pain or the intense love he had for me. I had to be smart. I had to leave. So I said the words aloud, the ones I knew would hurt the most.

"I have to go," I said letting fresh droplets of myself fall from my eyes and disappear into the snow. He raised himself up in one liquid motion and in two strides he was in front of me, so close that if I was to see his face, I would have to strain my neck back so far that I would be looking straight up to the winter moon.

"No!" Was all he said and I tried to hold on to my resolve as I stared at his chest expanding as he took a breath.

"I have to," I repeated but his breath hitched and held for the longest time.

"Don't go!" He poured everything he had into those two little words and more tears gathered and overflowed. His voice was so silky smooth it felt like being placed in a deep, cool lagoon on a blazing hot day. I closed my eyes before the next stage came. I knew it was on its way because I knew what my answer was going to be. And as if he knew also he raised his finger to my lips to stop me from speaking. He hesitated just a second before touching me but when I didn't take a step back he placed one warm finger on my frozen mouth. I closed my eyes and let another overflow spill down to his hand.

"Please Keira... don't leave *me*." He whispered and it felt as though my heart had stopped beating, it too, waiting for my answer. I looked away, moving from under his fingers, feeling like I had taken his place as the judge.

"Draven it's too late, I have to leave now or I will just end up saying more things I will regret later on and I'm so tired of feeling a guilt that is

enough for me to drown in.”

“No, stay and punish me, you have not said enough to me and I deserve more. Shout at me, hit me and beat me down until I’m nothing more than a shell but *please* don’t leave me!” He was begging and there was not one ounce of pleasure in it at all but I knew I couldn’t make it stop. It was too late for that wish.

“Then I will ask you, Dominic *please* let me go.” This time I did look up at him and when I saw the tears in his eyes for the very first time a sob broke free from my trembling lips.

“I am sorry but I cannot do that Catherine.” He spoke like he was truly sorry for not giving me what I needed. I broke down completely then and fell into his arms and cried until I felt empty. His strong hold wrapped around my torso and one hand held my head against his chest.

“Ssshhh, My little sweetheart.” He soothed back my hair and the gesture was making it harder for me to find control over my feelings. It was only when he took my hand in his and said the next words that I pulled myself back to our desperate situation.

“Come Keira, come with me.” He pulled gently on my hand but I pulled back.

“No, I can’t..I..”

“Keira you’re exhausted and freezing, you need rest and warmth. Let me give you that, let me take care of you.” He was trying so hard to lead me away with him, back to the place I still couldn’t go. It would have been so easy, like breathing, to just let him take me away to his tower. It was so tempting, knowing he would lay me down and encase me in his warm arms until sleep took over my mind and let me escape this turmoil. But I couldn’t do it. I wrenched my hand free and almost stumbled backwards.

“NO!” I shouted holding my hands up at him, like you would have an approaching wild animal.

“Ok...ok, look we can stay out here a little longer but...” I didn’t let him finish and he noticed me walking backwards.

“I’m leaving and you’re not going to stop me.”

“The hell I’m not!” He said angrily but also certain.

“Draven, I want you to do something for me.” I was still moving backwards but now he was moving forwards like at any minute he would scoop me up and carry me to his room whether I resisted or not.

“Go on,” he nodded cautiously.

“Prove to me how you feel,” I said in flurry of emotion and before he could speak I had to say one last thing, to get it out before he gave me no option. I was taking quicker steps now and he was about to reach out to me.

“Because, if you love me Draven, you will let me GO!” I cried out the word “go” causing his arms to drop to his sides and his face wince in pain. This was the last image I saw because I turned and started running as fast as my cold limbs would carry me. And I didn’t look back. I couldn’t give into the need. I ran like never before, not even thinking about what was making me move so fast. The world around me became a dark blur. I just kept going until I was far along the main road and out of breath.

Thankfully the moon was full and was lighting my way, otherwise this getaway would have ended abruptly. I bent over to catch my breath, holding my waist like that would help the stitch that burned there. It took me a while to get past that and I realised why, I hadn’t stopped running until I was half way home. I wasn’t the fittest person at the best of times, not having the muscle strength for more endurance but I couldn’t believe it. I started back up and continued at the dull pace of walking. Soon after my body’s energy was spent from running, I got very cold. My pounding heart wasn’t making my skin hot like it had done but now it beat so slowly it was like I was asleep. All my body wanted to do was shut down but my mind was punishing itself by keeping it moving. My muscles were now screaming in protest, my feet felt blistered and painful. But I had to keep going, only half way to go.

I almost hoped Draven would ignore my proof of love and come flying in to get me. I was just so tired it hurt just keeping my eyes open. My body shook in vain at its feeble attempts at keeping itself warm. My fingers were numb and my toes little cubes of ice. My lips had been bouncing against one and other as my teeth chattered uncontrollable and my thin, black cotton top clung to my skin as though it was trying to help. The bottom of my trousers were dripping and the damp was making its way up to my knees. I was a cold and broken mess. But I kept moving. I kept moving with the only knowledge warming my heart was that Draven had proved his love. He had not stopped me from leaving, he had not even followed. He had... just simply...

Let me go.

This was the one thing that kept my unsteady legs moving and my frozen heart beating. I couldn't even tell if I was crying anymore because my cheeks were numb to any feeling. But nothing mattered because Draven loved me. He had done the hardest thing in letting go of an eternity of control and given it to me.

And what had I done with it? I had left.

I had simply walked away and all for what? Just to find myself walking down this icy road of heartache and despair. Is this how far I would let fear negate my actions in life. Is this how weak I had become or was it strength? I know one thing that might answer that question...leaving Draven was one of the hardest things I ever forced myself to do. So now all was left was for me to start praying it was for all the right reasons.

The sound of an engine behind me, made me try to focus enough of my dwindling energy to turn. When I did I was quickly blinded by high beamed headlights. I shielded myself using my arm over my face to hide the light. I moved over so as I wouldn't get run over, at least I had enough mental power left over for that idea. I felt my foot catch on some uneven surface beneath the snow and lifted my eyes just in time to see the world differently. I must have been flying because the icy wind whipped out my hair and cut into my

face.

“Draven?” I asked just before my dream ended and I discovered that I wasn’t flying at all. I was falling....

Then darkness invaded me.

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Chapter 56

Yes, It Could Get Worse.

“Keira!” A voice brought me to and only then did I realize I had fallen down in the snow and passed out. Arms pulled my head up and the snow clung to the side of my face.

“Keira! Open your eyes girl!” A male voice sounded so strained speaking over me. It was so angry and upset.

“Oh come Kазzy, please...” Now a female voice mixed with heavy breathing spoke from a distance. I forced my eyes to open but they didn’t want to focus on the figure now standing over me.

“Come on Frank, just get her in the car and we will take her to hospital.” At that point my eyes made the distinction between shapes and faces. Frank was stood over me and forcing his arms under me. He lifted me with care and hitched me up a few times to get better grip. It felt strange to be carried by someone other than Draven and the differences between the two were easy to distinguish. It had always seemed effortless to Draven and now that was not the same case with Frank. Although he was strong, he struggled at being graceful about it. At that moment I missed Draven so much it was like having a jagged edge ripped down my chest that allowed for my heart to coming spilling out.

“My God, she’s like ice!” Frank complained getting closer to my sister who was stood anxiously by the car door, holding it wide open, ready for Frank to place me.

“We need to hurry and get her to the ER.” My sister’s voice told me she was giving way to panic and I needed to put a stop to it before I ended up strapped to a hospital bed with a familiar beeping next to my head for the night. I knew how this worked, I had been there and didn’t wish to *ever* go back. Besides I knew there was nothing really wrong with me that a hot bath and a good night’s sleep couldn’t cure. And some food wouldn’t have gone amiss, I was starving.

“Li..Lib..by I’mmm...ooo..kk” I couldn’t speak for my teeth chattering that sounded like pebbles rolling around in a tin can.

“NO, you’re not!” She sounded angry and who could blame her. I grabbed her hand as Frank put me in the car and she screamed at the icy touch.

“Jesus! You’re freezing Kaz! What the hell were you thinking?” She was shouting at me now and as crazy as it sounds, I felt like laughing. It was just the absurdity of it all. If only she actually knew what I had been thinking! What horrors lay there for her to find. She would have run a long time ago and I would have her now scolding me for not running faster, further...sooner!

“Pleeease nno hosspiiital” I stammered out and her eyes filled with tears. The last thing I saw before she slammed the door closed was her shaking her head. I must have closed my eyes for a few seconds because they flew open when we hit a bump in the road. Can you really do that? Sleep for seconds and have it feel like a small lifetime. My eyes just made out the cross roads that we had stopped at, the red light making me squint in the darkness of the backseat.

“Well which is it Lib’s, home or hospital?” Frank asked flashing me a look in his rear view mirror, catching my deathly, white face pleading.

“Please Lib’s, take me home,” I whispered without a hiccup thanks to the heating in the car bringing some life back to my numb lips.

“It’s just one night.” She looked down, avoiding my painful memories.

“Olivia, I’m begging you, please don’t take me there. They will see my scars, they will ask questions...they will see me a suicide and think that’s what I was trying to do again. I can’t...I can’t answer their questions...I won’t!” It felt like my night for begging but if that was what it would take then I would face hell’s fire to avoid those memories! I was afraid I would never make it through it all again, I couldn’t relive it all and survive. Thankfully I didn’t have to wait to find out.

Frank turned left and started driving towards home without waiting for Libby’s response. It was the nicest thing Frank had ever done for me and I would forever be eternally grateful for a gesture I doubt he knew the full meaning of. It had been a lifeline and I mentally thanked God for him. Neither of us said another word.

By the time we pulled up outside the house, my strength had come back to me and my body had started to thaw. Frank opened my side door and reach inside for me. I was about to protest when he abruptly spoke. Which coming from Frank sounded unnatural.

“Don’t!” I knew that emotion well enough, he was worried, upset and pained at seeing someone he considered as a sister in this situation. The brotherly love I felt from him was staggering. See, all the time through my breakdown he had been the one to remain the same. There was no putting on a soft voice and handling me with velvet gloves. There had been no fake smiles and whispered concerns behind my back. No wincing at the sight of my bloody bandages and broken body. He had just been him. The only one that had remained the same. And one look at a man like Frank made you realize that no matter what evil lived among us, no matter what pain they inflicted and no matter what nightmares they created, there was still good in the world because men like Frank existed. It was that simple. And so was letting him put his arms under me and carry me in the house like I was something dear to him. Because I was. I was his sister.

That night there were no more words between us, just deep meaningful gestures. Libby ran me a bath without a sound. She helped me shed my wet clothes and waited with me until I sank into the comforting, most loveliest feeling ever. She got up and left me to soak myself in the warmth of the water until I felt my skin wrinkle. Well at least I was a healthier colour. I would have smiled if I didn’t feel so lost and empty inside. I was sat up, head rested on my knees and holding myself so tight I felt if were to let go I would break into pieces. I looked down the curve of my knees and watched little beads of liquid flow down them into the murky water that once held soapy bubbles on the surface. I didn’t think it possible for me to have any tears left to cry but there they were, flowing down my body and escaping my grievous situation.

Finally, I made my head move, my legs straighten and my arms heave myself out of the bath like I was some dead weight. I found a steaming mug of tea outside the door and thought I would start crying again. I picked up the mug with one hand and held on to my towel with the other but as I made my way along the hall the sound of Frank’s voice made me stop. I made the

decision to make myself listen to this and took a few steps down before sitting down.

“No, no, like I said, she seems to be alright.” It wasn’t his usual friendly, easy going tone, this was his serious voice that only came out when ‘Pissed off Frank’ rarely showed. I could tell he was on the phone to someone and I could tell by his manner, thankfully it wasn’t my mother.

“Dom, I’m telling you she’s fine! But what on earth did you do to her? And why the fuck would you let her walk home in this weather?” Frank was losing his cool and my mouth dropped at the sound of it being with Draven. I wished I had supernatural hearing at that point because Frank was only making a few acknowledged responses which gave very little away.

“Oh... Oh right, I see, No, no, I don’t think you had any other choice. She’s damn stubborn for sure.” He seemed a lot calmer now which made me wonder what had Draven told him?

“No, just half way until we found her and of course she refused to go to the hospital.” This was so frustrating only hearing one side and having it keep stopping for the questions I couldn’t hear.

“I couldn’t make her Dom, I’m not her father and you should know that by now, the girl has a will of iron! Besides I didn’t want to add to her...her... well her misery by bringing up shit with her past!”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea, she doesn’t want to see anyone at the moment, let alone any doctors! Look me and Lib’s will keep an eye on her tonight...yes, yes, we will keep checking for that but do you really think she will go that far? She’s not going to just get up and leave without saying anything to us.” So Draven thought that I was going to run. I wouldn’t be surprised if I looked out of the window and saw it surrounded with guards! I would put money on Ragnar being out there at the very least.

“We will lock the doors and hide the keys if you really think it’s an issue but to be honest Dom, the girl is exhausted and just needs rest. I think you will find once she’s had some sleep, she will see things differently in the

morning.” I was in two minds to go down there and ask him outright what Draven had told them because in no way could it have been the truth.

“No, you did the right thing calling us. I think you’re right about her reactions to involving your family and like you said, I think you coming to get her, would have just made it worse.” So Draven had called them. Not only had he done as I asked by letting me go, he had also had a backup plan of seeing to my safety.

“Ok we will do and yes I won’t forget, I will tell her now, before she goes to bed, I think she is still in the bath...”

“NO Dom she isn’t a child, she wouldn’t fall asleep in the bath!.... Ok, ok, we will go and check on her but honestly man stop worrying!” Frank was muttering the next bit and when I heard the phone being placed back in its jack I gathered the muttering had been a goodbye.

“So, what did he say?” I heard Libby ask.

“He did nothing wrong Lib’s, this was Keira’s choice.” Frank answered in a neutral tone. Nothing wrong! I don’t bloody think so. I wanted to march right down there and put them right but after a nanoseconds thought, I knew that wouldn’t be very productive. For starters it wasn’t like he could have told them the truth but come on, making it out like it was all me! Man, it was infuriating but what could I do? I did the only thing I could, I got up and went into my temporary room to hide myself away.

I quickly changed into some old sweat pants, a black vest and my dad’s old college sweater for added comfort. It was huge on me but I liked that. I also loved that no matter how many times it had been washed it seemed to smell like my dad. I brushed my hair with a lot more force than necessary, which was probably causing a year’s full of split ends. It was only when it started to squeak that I plaited it still damp and flung it back over my shoulder to hang down my back like a rope to nowhere.

My activities must have been heard downstairs as soon enough I heard a light tapping at my door. The mood I was in I just wanted to be left alone but

I gathered my sister had hit her limit on being kept in the dark.

“Come in,” I whispered, half hoping she wouldn’t hear and think I was asleep already. That didn’t happen but neither did my sister. It was Frank.

“Hey...do you feel better?” He looked awkward stood in the door way, like it was too narrow for his large frame but he looked unsure about coming in further. Like I was catatonic or something.

“Yeah, I do...well warmer at least.” I tried to smile, not from wanting but more like needing, I didn’t want Frank to feel uncomfortable.

“Come in Frank,” I said quietly and for a second I thought he was going to say no and flee the room thanks to his sullen expression. Instead he ducked once and came over to sit opposite me on the bed. We sat facing each other without speaking for a few moments and Frank looked deep in thought as though trying to find the right words. I decided to kick start this or he would be waking me up by the time he found them.

“Look Frank, I want to apologise. I am sorry that you both got dragged out to get me in the middle of the night and I’m more sorry that you were both worried.” Frank frowned at this, which wasn’t the reaction I was hoping for.

“Aren’t you tired of saying sorry, Keira?” His question caught me off guard and I shook my head lightly in confusion.

“People don’t think I take much notice because I stand on the sidelines and keep quiet but I find that is the best place to see things clearly. Lib’s likes to get more involved, like your folks, but I realised from the start that all you needed was time to figure things out for yourself. I could see how exhausting it was for you, always having to put on that act, like you were *fine* all the time. Like you would be shitting fine after what you had just been through!” He clenched his fists at the memory and my tears misted at his confession of feelings that had obviously been on his mind for quite some time.

“But you did it, not very convincingly, but you still did it! You put every

single person before yourself and said sorry for something you didn't need to ever be sorry about. I would see you trying desperately to make your mum and Lib's feel better, which I appreciated more than you could ever know, 'cause trust me, in my life, the only thing that brings me pain is seeing your sister cry. I love her that damn much! But I love you too, you will always be a sister to me and I wanted you to know that I think you are one of the most selfless people I have ever known." After he finished I couldn't help my reaction. I threw myself into his arms and hugged onto him like any crying sister would. He made an "Uff" sound as I hit into his chest but after a moment he wrapped his arms round me and rubbed my back soothingly.

"It's alright, come on now, Ssshhh." I was crying into his shoulder and when I moved my head back there were two wet patches on his soft, checked shirt.

"Man, if I knew I was going to bring on the water works I would have just said goodnight." He joked making me laugh as I let him go.

"Sorry, I guess it's just nice to know that I didn't have to fool everyone. You really are a great guy Frank and I'm so happy to call you brother." At this he beamed a smile at me and gave me a wink.

"I know, I'm great aren't I, but hey do you think you could tell Lib's that some time 'cause her hormones have been riding me hard!" He joked some more.

"Yeah you wish!"

"At the minute my only secret weapon is chocolate, seriously you would think she was on drugs and I was her dealer...seriously addicted!" I laughed some more and the feeling was like being pumped with a cure for a numb state.

"Anyway talking about great guys..." And here it was, the man talk. I raised an eyebrow and he winced.

"Ok I know, this is none of my business but I spoke to Dom. He's really

worried about you...I mean like crazy man worried! The man is obsessed if you ask me but hey as long as he's good to you then I'm cool with the dude but tell me truthfully...did he hurt you?"

"NO! Sorry but no, nothing like that." He looked relieved and continued.

"Then he's a good guy?" He knew the answer but he just wanted to hear me say it. I didn't but I couldn't help but nodding.

"Then why did you run girl?" I took a deep breath and looked down. What could I say?

"What did he tell you?" I said, deciding that was the smarter way to go.

"That basically, some asshole pushed you and Dom pretty much nearly killed him because of it and it terrified the shit out of you. So you ran and he couldn't stop you." O..K....So maybe I was wrong. He had pretty much told him the truth and it was obvious which side Frank was on.

"You think it was the wrong thing to do, me running away don't you?"

"Yes!" Well at least he was honest if not a little blunt.

"Look honey, I get it, I understand how shit like that isn't easy for girls to see, especially after all you have been through the last couple of years. But let me tell you now, if that had been me and some guy with a death wish pushed down my Lib's, then that man would not be breathing right now! It maybe a guy thing, I don't know, but if you're a real man then you don't just stand back and let someone hurt your woman. Dom's a big guy and I can't imagine he let him get away with it lightly, so I understand you being frightened but just because he does that to a guy, who clearly deserved it, that doesn't mean you have anything to fear." And that was it in a nut shell. Fear.

I must have looked as deep in thought as I was because I only looked up when I felt the bed move. Frank patted me on the head twice and moved towards the door.

"Get some rest and think about what I said. Think about if you had seen

some girl hitting Dom over the head with a pipe...what would you have done to that girl? Not the same thing, but still, the principle remains the same.” The answer to that hit me without thinking...I would have probably killed her!

“How did you get so smart Frank?” I said smiling at him in the door way.

“I watched sports, brushed my teeth and got into my fair share of mischief but one thing I will always recommend...always listen to your mother.” He laughed at himself heartily and opened my door but then something made him stop. He turned his head and met me with serious eyes.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Dom made me promise to tell you something before you go to sleep.” He looked uncertain about telling me.

“He told me to tell you...” He looked down as if still deciding with himself before continuing.

“He hopes you finally found your proof!”

Chapter 56

Truth be Told for a Forgiving Day

That night I went to bed feeling completely lost in myself. I had thought about what Frank had said and it made so much sense in the world of men. But then again, I guess if the roles were reversed would I have acted the same? The part that had hurt me the most was the begging for a life, begging was a sore spot for me, which made me think...was this just all about me? Was it just another defect on my part caused by my unmoveable past. Morgan may be dead but what he did to me, what he put me through and how he had changed me was still much alive in its own way. I was damaged from it, I knew that, but would I really let it win. Was I going to allow it to make me weak when I needed to be all that much stronger. Would I let it pull me under into the darkness it lived when I needed to stay on the surface to be with Draven. One thing that night had proved, was that my choices were my

own...Draven had been right...I *had* found my proof.

My body was crying out for the rest my mind wouldn't allow me. I had put the light out and tossed and turned in my bed like a fish on the bottom of a boat for over an hour. In the end I sat up and looked about the dark room full of shadows I wasn't yet used too. I had only slept in this room twice because I was always with Draven. I tried to blame the irritation I felt on the bed being too hard, or the pillows being too lumpy but I knew the truth. Every time I had stretched out my arm it had found air instead of skin and flesh. Every time I had rolled over I found an edge instead of a warm body to lean against. I had got so used to spending my nights next to Draven it felt wrong to be so alone. I hated it!

I got up and wrapped a blanket that lay at the bottom of the bed around my shoulders. I walked over to the window where a high backed chair sat waiting for me to fill it. I slumped down and pulled my knees up to wrap the knitted wool around them. I looked out of the window to an unfamiliar view of the back of the house. This side backed onto the forest that surrounded both sides of the house and instead of my usual panoramic view of the national park and rolling green mountains, now I was faced with a wall of dark trees stretching out ready to claim me. I shuddered at the irrational fear creeping up inside my fragile mind. It was because I was used to sleeping in the complete ease of Draven's protecting arms but now I was alone and left wide open to the dark elements I knew existed.

Then something caught my eye. Something in the shadows of the trees, half hidden by thick branches and snow covered leaves. The moon glistened on every natural surface and provided enough light to see the black shadow. I could see the light in its eyes staring in my window like a lighthouse in the storm. Would I find false comfort in its meaning? I raised my hand to the glass and placed my palm out against the window. My actions caused reactions. The shadow moved suddenly and I let out my held breath, at the sight of Ava stretch out her impressive wingspan before taking off to the skies. I watched her until out of sight, which wasn't for long given her speed. My heart seemed to ache more when she was gone and I curled up tighter into a ball and held myself, with my head leaning against the side of the

chair. It wasn't comfy but with the back having little sides it was easy enough for me to use as a pillow and I soon found myself asleep.

The next thing I knew I seemed to be floating. I was in that state somewhere between sleep and awareness. I had been dreaming about being outside Afterlife and I was running away from something. I kept looking behind me as I ran and every time I did my eyes met nothing but more black forest I was leaving behind. I was in the thick of the forest and the only light was what the moon's rays could penetrate. I had been running towards something of a clearing and I knew this only as the light seemed to be brighter up ahead.

It was when I had reached that clearing that it happened. I was stood on the edge of the cliff face looking out towards the deep valley floor when something hit me. I had been staring off into the distant sky and focusing on something moving towards me at some speed. At first I thought it was Ava and even said her name aloud but as it came closer I could see it was far too big to be her, although it too had wings. Then before my eyes could take it all in at the speed it flew, it hit into me and grabbed a hold of my body.

I opened my eyes to find I was being carried somewhere and the strong hands that had hold of me pulled in closer to a hard chest. Then I was lain down on something soft and comforting. The darkness around me was too empty to make out any visual attempt at what was going on or who had gently placed me down as though I was a treasured gift. A hand smoothed back my hair from my face and it felt cool on my sticky hot skin. I must have murmured something because I felt my lips moving and the air flowing over my tongue that made a word. I know which word it would have been... no wait...not a word, more like a name.

"Draven," I said again hearing my own voice in a dream was a bit like catching a glimpse of yourself reflecting from a window in a passing car. One second you were there like someone else and the next you were gone like a distant memory. It was getting hard to follow which me I was playing out but I knew one thing, no matter which one of us it was, for the first time tonight I felt comfort in the arms that had held me.

The daylight blaring through my window was what woke me from my slumber. I threw an arm over my eyes and rolled over to lie on my back until my sleepiness subsided. I started to replay my night like a flicker book of events. It was hard to imagine waking up from a day like that and still finding the truth it had actually happened. It was when I got to the end of my private book that a memory made me bolt upright. It was last night, when I was dreaming while awake. I remember falling asleep on the chair by the window. I remember seeing Ava, calling out his name, feeling as though floating but there was something else. I had actually woken a few times in the night to see a figure standing over me, watching...guarding me.

Had it been Draven? Had he really come to me? I couldn't be sure but who else? So many questions with no way to get to the answers. I wanted it to be him and if that was the case then what did it mean, had I forgiven the night so easily? I shook my head as if that would help sort out all the jumbled thoughts inside my mind, it didn't but that's when I felt something. Soft and velvety. I looked down to discover my caller had left me a gift. A beautiful gift.

A blood red rose.

One, tied halfway down the thornless stem with a deep purple ribbon. I picked it up and placed it under my nose to inhale its sweet scent deeply. It was from Draven. My first flower from my first love. I turned it around in my fingers and took in every curve of its beauty. It was perfect in every way, every petal tucked in at just the right point, whereas others spread out around the bud as if loving the show. To anyone else it would just have been a flower but to me it was a symbol and that symbol was forgiveness. At that point I wanted to get up and race to his side like an invisible cord was tugging on my ribs. Of course, when my cousin knocked on my door, that put an end to that little romantic fantasy.

"Can I come in?" Hilary asked me, which in itself was astonishing. She had only opened the door a fraction of an inch and when I didn't answer she opened it further to gauge my reaction. I nodded instead of throwing a shoe at

her like I wanted to do. I wasn't in the mood to go through all this again but when I could actually see her face I was shocked. She didn't look angry, aggravated or aggressive, quite the opposite...she looked sad. I must have been frowning because the first thing out of her mouth was her reason for being here.

“Look, I know that the last thing you want right now is to see me, but I couldn't wait anymore, I mean I thought you would never wake up.” Although this sounded like she was having a dig at me it wasn't the case.

“Why, what time is it?” I asked trying to take my eyes off her black eye, cut nose and split lip. Man, I had really done a number on her last night. I bet she was wondering why there wasn't a mark on me, well if she was, then she was hiding the fact.

“It's getting on for half four.” She said after taking out her mobile phone to check. It was then that I noticed what she was wearing. It was the most casual I had seen her, in only a pair of loose fitted jeans and a baggy, grey jogging sweater. She had her hair pulled back in a high pony tail and no makeup. If you asked me it was the most attractive she had looked since she had been here. I mean my cousin wasn't ugly, just an over baked cake as my gran would have put it. Sometimes less was more and even though she had the clear signs of a beating she still looked good.

“Jack called, of course he wouldn't talk to me but he did leave a message for you. He will be round here about sixish.” She didn't sound even bitter when she said this and I was starting to think I had woken up in the twilight zone.

“I have to ask, why are you here talking to me like last night had never happened...actually scrap that, more like the last sixteen years never happened?”

“Oh don't get me wrong, last night I hated you more than I think I ever have but someone came round here this morning and gave me something.” Her eyes burned into mine at the point of remembering last night but where I thought they would retain the heat, they fizzled out. Now she just looked full

of regret and forgiveness.

“What? A personality transplant, new soul or let me guess, a defrosted heart?” I said sarcastically which I regretted after seeing her wince.

“I guess I deserve that.” Damn straight, but that didn’t make me feel any better for it.

“Yes you do, but that doesn’t make it right, please go on.”

“Dominic came round to see me this morning” I don’t think I could have looked more shocked.

“WHAT!” I shouted feeling the jealous rage bubbling up inside me like a bouncing kettle on the stove. No wonder she was being nice, this was all a ploy, it had to be.

“Keira please, calm down and let me finish...please.” She held her hand out for me to sit back down as I had jumped out of bed and was storming around the room.

“ He wasn’t nice to me Keira, actually he was a bit scary and if you ask me he has anger issues but what he said worked. Hell I would have been terrified not to do what he asked. He said that I needed to look at some facts and realise some home truths before harbouring onto a hate that was very misplaced. He really does sound kind of old fashioned sometimes doesn’t he?” Wow she had no idea! My mind reeled, Draven had come here and didn’t come up to see me?

“He asked about you, I told him you were still sleeping and he didn’t want to disturb you, so he left after giving me the folder.”

“Folder?” I asked her but I remembered the answer to it before she replied. Last night I had asked Draven for it back to help Hilary realise the truth. So that’s what this was all about...great! Nice Hilary will be lasting all of ten minutes then.

“Yeah, the police folder, I don’t know how the hell he got it but he told

me to look at it. At first I didn't want to because I didn't want to feel anything for you but hate. He made me swear I would and he's a hard man to say no to. So this morning I took a walk and read it."

"I don't need your pity Hilary, so you can save it for someone who gives..."

"I don't pity you! I...I admire you. I had no idea what had happened, well I mean not the details. Mum had told me only half of it as she thought it would have upset me, she still likes to believe we're friends. But I had no idea what you actually went through, yet here you are still breathing, still fighting!" She touched her face and smirked.

"You always did have a wild streak." And then she laughed, making it sound weird without its fakeness coating it.

"It actually got me angry to know what he did to you and I couldn't understand why I would feel that way. I mean I have hated you for so long it felt wrong to feel anything else. I'm going to be honest, the only reason I came here was to see how broken and miserable you were." Well those were my theories confirmed.

"Of course, when I saw how happy you looked and then that ridiculously gorgeous boyfriend of yours showed up I couldn't stand it. I wanted to take it from you, to destroy all that happiness, like you did to mine." I started to shake my head but she got up and threw her hands up like I was blind.

"I don't understand, what the hell did I ever do to you?" I asked making her face flush red with a hint of anger she was trying to control.

"Do you know that when we were kids you were my best friend?" I had known this, I mean I still had a friendship bracelet in my childhood memory box at home. I had even got it out a few times ready to burn but found myself just stuffing it back in the bottom with frustration.

"And you were mine, but all I know is that one day we were attached at the hip and then the next, you hated my guts and made fun of me in front of

all our friends. Then you and your mum moved away. Then when you came back a few years later, you made it your mission to make my life miserable and to this day I have no idea, no single clue as to why!” She actually laughed, but it was so lacking in humour that it sent a chill down my spine.

“I didn’t think you did. You were the reason my father left.” She said with her arms folded, staring at me like she had a lifetime’s worth of blame in those eyes. Those eyes that started to well up with pain and a relentless hatred.

“WHAT!” I shouted not allowing myself to believe a word.

“It’s true, you told your mum that you had seen my dad kissing another woman and because of THAT, my mother kicked him out when he had nowhere else to go! She wouldn’t even let him come to see me. YOU ruined my life, you broke up my family while you still got to keep yours! Why was that fair? WHY?” She was losing it now and I had tears in my eyes at all the years lost because of such a misunderstanding.

“Oh my God! Hilary is that the only reason you have hated me all these years?”

“The only reason? What would be another reason greater! You ruined my life Keira, isn’t that enough?” She stormed back over to me to shout in my face but I got off the other side of the bed so that I wasn’t beneath her. I held up my hands in an ‘I come in peace’ kind of way.

“Hilary, that wasn’t me!” At this her eyes spilled over with tears that landed on the carpet.

“Yeah right, of course you would say that!”

“Hilary, has your mum not talked to you about this, I mean, told you what really happened?” She looked both angry and confused which made her forehead wrinkle and I can imagine it was painful given her bruised face and cut nose.

“Look Hilary, I think you need to talk to your mum, ‘cause it wasn’t me

that told anyone anything. I didn't even know anything about your dad leaving until you guys moved away. My mum just kept telling me he was away on business because she didn't want to upset me. She knew I was fond of my Uncle." I was trying to reason with her and my voice found a very gentle, low volume.

"NO! You're lying! You must be lying...I ...I can't be wrong. Are you telling the truth because, so help me God if you're not Kaz then I wouldn't be able to hold myself back!" She looked so past furious I was getting ready for an attack which I didn't have the heart for. Now I knew why it didn't matter about the past she had put me through, like letting open a window for it all to blow away with the wind. I didn't want to fight any more, she wasn't the only one exhausted.

"Ring your mum Hilary, demand the truth and if she refuses then ring my mum and I will make her tell you what you deserve to know. You have a right!"

"Yes...Yes I will, I will ring her now, I don't care what time it is." And with that she left my room in a desperate state.

I got into the shower without really knowing what I was doing. It was like I was operating on autopilot. I just couldn't believe all these years she had thought that I had been the reason for the greatest loss in her life. She idolised her father, always had but when he left it was like he had taken a bit of her with him. She came back not quite whole but the part of her had filled with bitterness and rebellion. I know for a fact that her father had been caught having an affair, but only years later and well after the fact. It had never really been explained to me why he had left and I remember feeling very vulnerable, wondering if a lot of dads did this and praying my dad never would. I think I did all the washing up for a whole year just in case.

Of course, I didn't know exactly what Hilary was going to hear from her mum, but if it was the truth then she would have a new person to hate and I was pretty sure that someone was going to be my mother. I didn't want to be the one to say, because it wasn't my place and I was extremely angry at my Auntie for not telling her daughter sooner. I found out a few years ago when

looking through some old family photos with my mum. The conversation came up and my poor, teary mother confessed to being the one to have to tell her own sister that she had seen her husband kissing a lady that worked at the local newsagents not far from our house. Of course, as it turned out, it wasn't just a few pecks on the cheek for a cheaper 'News of the world'. It had been a full blown affair resulting in love. He soon left my Auntie for this other woman and went to live with her and her three kids.

So instead of letting Hilary be a part of her father's life with this other family on the side she moved them both away. She only came back when she was certain her ex-husband didn't live in the area anymore. The last my mum had heard they were living in Carmarthenshire in Wales. I had no clue that Hilary didn't know any of this and now understood why my mother always told us "Be nice to her, she's had it hard." That had been my mother's excuse for everything and now I knew why...her guilt had been speaking every time.

I got out of the shower not recalling if I had even washed my hair, my mind was in a back log of childhood memories. Every nasty word, every cruel gesture and every painful thing she ever did to me now made sense. Why wouldn't she hate me? I mean if it had been the other way round then how would I have reacted? If she had succeeded in getting Draven from me, then what would I have done? I had gone pretty far last night and that was only at the hint of it.

After getting dry and dressed I walked back into my room to find Hilary sat on my bed. Her head was buried in her hands and she was shaking. At that moment all hate we had felt for each other melted away just like a heat wave had swept through the room. She heard my footsteps and she looked up. The sight made my heart break. It looked as though she had been sobbing none stop since she left my room. Her face was red and blotchy, making her blue eyes stand out like they were dotted with broken blood vessels underneath the skin around them. Her lips were quivering and the noise of air being sucked in so that she could cry louder was enough to set me off.

I ran to her on the bed and she fell into my arms which forced us both onto the floor. I was kneeling with her head cradled on my shoulder and she

was slumped to the side soaking my top with an unending stream of tears. I smoothed back her hair and rubbed her back until she was spent.

“Ssshhh, Its ok, you’re not alone” I whispered making her release one more outburst of spluttered sobs. When she found some control she pulled back to look at me in awe.

“Why are you being so nice to me, you should hate me!” Again another hitched breath and a cry came thick after her question.

“I don’t hate you, I just never understood why you hated me, but now I understand.”

“I spoke to my mum and she told me everything, I yelled at her and said some pretty horrible things. Man, I want to hate her for lying to me!”

“I think you have lived with hate for too long Hilary. That type of thing will destroy you if you let it...trust me on this. After what happened I really knew what it was to hate...I hated everything! I hated it for being sunny, I hated watching people smile and laugh at things I couldn’t see the glory in. I even hated people being nice to me, their fake talk and happy eyes. But one day I realised, it wasn’t all these things I hated...It was myself. I hated who I had become and who *he* had made me!” Ok so now we were both crying and we really hugged each other for the first in sixteen years. It felt like a friend I had lost and just stumbled across in passing, totally unexpected but utterly welcome.

We sat together for the longest time and when Libby came back from work and found us both giggling and gossiping like kids, with Hilary all bruised up, she nearly dropped dead from shock. It must have been the last thing she expected to get home from work to find. Well it was odd, to say the least, but it felt so right at the same time. We both explained the past and after what happened last night, how we had come to this point. Of course Libby asked the one obvious question I hadn’t even thought of.

“But why the Hell did your mum tell you it was Keira that told her?”
Man that was a good question!

“Ah, well, this is the irony. She told me it was Keira because she knew what good friends we were, she thought that if I knew it had come from her that I wouldn’t even question it. She knew I trusted you and she didn’t want me thinking badly of your mum, I guess she was protecting her sister the way your mum protected her by telling on my dad.” She said this last part to me and I just shook my head at how one little lie had caused so many years of damage. It made no sense in my world but then again...what did? Why should I be surprised, wasn’t my life riddled with crazy, unrelenting events that changed every course I walked down.

Time that day quickly turned into a time for everyone else. Once I had spent some time with Hilary, Jack turned up all worried and armed with an endless amount of apologies. He told me what she had told him and no surprises, how she had played the victim. He admitted it didn’t take him long to realize the holes in her stories but by then he felt so ashamed of himself for believing it, he didn’t know what to say to me. He told me how every time he tried to be alone to talk to me I would avoid him. It was true, I had been avoiding him but for all the wrong reasons.

After convincing him finally that I had forgiven him, he left after pulling me in for a bear hug. By this time it was dark outside and close to eight. I had wanted to go back to Afterlife ages ago but after what had happened with my cousin and me, I knew I would have to wait. But now my time had come. I was going to see Draven and there was no stopping me.

That was until I got a phone call from the man himself. I hadn’t answered it but a message was waiting for me by the phone written in Libby’s hand. She hadn’t wanted to tell me herself and only when reading the message did I understand why.

Keira,

Please don’t come to me tonight,

I need time alone to think.

And I fear seeing you will only cloud my judgement.

I will come to you when I am ready.

Wait for me.

Dominic.

This was why he hadn't wanted to see me this morning....

He didn't want to see me at all.

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Chapter 57

Someone's Soul is on Fire.

It felt as though I had a dagger protruding from my chest and Draven had been the one who put it there. I picked up the phone three times before admitting defeat and slamming it back down on the receiver before it even had chance to ring. I wanted to speak to him, to hear the words for myself but I was also afraid. What if this was the end? What if this time there was no going back. Could I really let this go, just go on without looking behind me? NO! I couldn't do that and I wouldn't!

I was in the kitchen with a large glass of some spirit I found in the cupboard. It tasted like paint thinner as it burned down my throat but that was a good thing. I wanted that burn, I wanted to feel anything just so as long as it wasn't nothing. I could deal with anything but numbness. I heard a voice being cleared and turned my head to see Libby with a worried frown top her features.

"I don't understand, why doesn't he want to see me?" I asked her facing back to the sink and swirling the liquid around in my glass.

"I think when he said to give him time, I think he really meant you." She answered sympathetically.

"I don't want bloody time! What I want, is to go over there and demand him to speak to me!"

“Then why don’t you?” It sounded simple enough but Libby didn’t know the consequences of that action.

“Because last night I asked him to do something very hard...I asked him to let me go and he did. And now he asks the same of me, how can I say no, how can I do anything *but* wait?” Libby had been nodding in agreement, which hadn’t been the response I had wanted. I wanted her to tell me something, anything that would have made the excuse to go over there acceptable.

“He really scared you last night didn’t he?” Of course Frank had told her, there was nothing he wouldn’t have, so I wasn’t surprised or angry.

“Yes he did, but after talking to Frank last night, I kind of understood it better. I don’t condone what he did, not at all, but if the situation was reversed then I can’t imagine I would have taken it well either.”

“Men, eh?” This was her answer for everything and we both laughed at how barbaric and caveman they could act. Of course for Draven this was multiplied by about a thousand because not only was he half Angel, half Demon, he was also King of the hidden world of the supernatural. So granted, he had a lot of pressure to deal with, so I gathered having to deal with a hysterical human girlfriend was something of a pain in the arse. Maybe that’s why he didn’t want to see me tonight, maybe he just wanted me to take time to cool down before having to deal with it again. Some Demon /Angel quiet time...surely I could give him that, right? Ok, so it didn’t have to mean that he wanted to split up with me, I could just be feeling a little paranoid.

Ok, so after a few more glasses of some alcohol, which I still don’t know the name of I felt better. I mean for all I knew it could have been cooking sherry but it did the job so that was all I cared for. I was feeling quite merry and looking on the brighter side of life. I had made up with my cousin after a sixteen year feud. I was friends with Jack again and me and Frank had one of the best heart to hearts that I would never forget. So life was looking good, all I needed now was to be allowed to see Draven and have wild, mad passionate makeup sex and all would be good in the world. Not too much to ask

for...right?

It wasn't surprising when I looked at the clock and saw it was close to midnight. I had been moping about ever since Jack left and when Libby had started bringing me up cups of tea around ten, I knew she was worried about me being in my room, drunk, crying and listening to Celine Dion's "All by myself". She found, thankfully I hadn't been doing any of those things, apart from the drinking but thanks to four mugs of tea in a row I was pretty well past the drunk stage. I had been painting, something I hadn't done in a while.

It was of a pulsating heart, like the ones you find in hallmark cards, not the blood pumping muscle. The background was of the dark forest and the heart was amongst the shadowed trees looming around it. It glowed out in the night and I added light reflecting off the surfaces around it. The most significant part was the huge, jagged lightning bolt that came from above and struck the heart's core, splitting it in two. One side gaped more than the other and I thought that this was the side that symbolised me more than Draven's side, as he was clearly the stronger of us both. I knew I was being overly dramatic by painting this but mixed with alcohol and feeling sorry for myself this is what my mind had wanted to paint.

After Libby had come to say goodnight along with Hilary, which was still hard to get used to but nice, I decided to call it a night and hope for better things to come tomorrow. I even smiled at the thought of waking up to Draven by my bedside. It was a long shot, I grant you, but not an impossible dream. I plaited my hair so it hung like a rope down my back and got dressed into some light, grey pyjama bottoms and a vest top to match. After brushing my teeth and washing my face, I put my painting against the wall to dry after laying down an old towel so as not to get paint on the carpeted floor.

Once in bed, my mind started to drift quickly into a world of Draven Dreams. I found myself in the past looking in on the Draven of a different time. He wasn't wearing clothes as such, more like layers of cloth draped over his impressive shoulders, with a solid brass coloured, breast plate covering his chest. This then tied at the waist with leather wound round and round, all of which held symbols in some kind of metal. There, by his thigh,

hung a huge sword almost the length of his leg and his wrists were cuffed with thick, studded leather, one arm bound in strapping right up and over his bicep. His hair was longer but tied back with black cord giving him a harsher appearance. He looked like a brutal warrior stood upon the base of a throne made of carved stone. He had his arms crossed over his chest making his muscles bulge and the leather stretch further to accommodate them. Damn, he looked so powerful I almost cowered away.

I looked about the room and saw I was in some sort of throne room. It reminded me of the Temple but it was longer, like a great hall. Stone pillars the width of thousand year old trees, spread evenly down the room. The ornate ceiling loomed miles above me making me feel like an insect fallen into a pit of snakes. My eyes scanned my situation and thankfully I realised no one could see me. I was cloaked head to toe and hidden in a dark alcove away from all the people in the room, which were centred around Draven. He had never looked more like a King than at this moment.

“Let him come forth!” Draven’s deep voice boomed out the command making everyone in the room twitch with fear.

“Yes my Lord,” said a servant that bowed deeply before him. I arched my neck to see around the people that hid my view of the great doors at the end. They were the size of a two storey building and were made from dark mahogany. Great golden bars crossed over each other that looked to be a locking mechanism. The servant walked back towards them and slowly they began to open flooding the room with a blinding light. I was the only one now squinting my eyes which made me wonder if I was the only human here. At some point I was losing the knowledge of this being an actual dream. It felt too real. I could even smell the sandstone floor, feel the sweat beading down my forehead and taste the salt in the air. It felt like I was near the sea and I had the greatest urge to run for the doors and find out. But then a dark, tall figure emerged in the opening, casting the longest shadow along the floor and that urge quickly turned into finding out who this man was. The light was too bright behind him to make out any features yet, so like everyone else I had to wait.

He walked head held high as though he was on the same level as Draven and when the King spoke I knew he was likely so.

“My friend, I welcome you. I was told of your coming and hope our alliance will fortify through the centuries.” Draven said looking pleased at the sight coming closer to his throne.

“That is a likely prospect indeed, my King. You have my loyalty as I am sure I will gain yours,” said a voice that I was surely mistaking. It couldn’t be...could it? He got closer now and his long, hooded cloak floated around him like black liquid. I had started to move through the crowd and gave up all chances at being unseen. I, and the figure before Draven, were the only ones who had their hoods concealing their identities and I wondered who would be the first to reveal themselves. I just didn’t care now, as I pushed past bodies in my way getting to the front of the crowd. Murmurs and frowns left behind me in my wake as finally I came to the front and saw just how close I was to both the men that stood facing each other. I made it there just in time to see the hooded figure raise the cloth from over his head. The man’s face was now in full view and I couldn’t help the scream that erupted from deep inside of me. It was a noise of sheer terror that echoed off the great walls and amplified it tenfold.

“NO!” I screamed out as I saw both Draven and Lucius turn to source the outburst in the crowd. I was very aware of the people around me moving back so as not to be associated with me. Draven looked furious as he stormed over to me shouting a command I didn’t understand. It didn’t take long to guess what it had been when I was seized by both arms. I looked to my sides and found two huge guards dressed in thick armour holding me secure.

“How dare anyone display such insolence in my presence!” He shouted in my direction and at that moment I wondered if the theory was true, if you die in your dream do you really die in real life? Was this the end, was I going to die at the hands of the man I loved before he even knew me? My heart beat wildly in my chest, I thought it might hit the floor before he reached me. I started to struggle in a feeble attempt to free myself but the pain that shot through my arms quickly put a stop to that motion.

Draven was at me in seconds and now looking down at me as an enemy not as a lover, his size seemed twice as big. He looked ready to crush me and one of his hands was at the hilt of his sword ready to unleash it. By this I was shaking with fear. His face was more tanned than I was used to and he wore a lot more facial hair covering his flexing jaw and tight mouth with a black shadow. His deep set eyes were onyx black, edged with their powerful purple ring. His eyebrows knitted together in a frown I was very used to, making him look as hard as granite. I gulped down a hard lump when he spoke again.

“Show yourself!” I jumped slightly when his face shot forward only inches from mine. He was trying to see underneath my hood that covered my face down to my lips but got frustrated, so without a further thought my hood was ripped back and my identity was revealed. This time it was Draven’s turn to jump slightly and he took a few steps back.

“It can’t be! Impossible!” He said, almost panicked. I looked up slowly watching my own eyelashes lift as I met his eyes. He looked like I had struck his heart with a knife and took a step forward to plunge it in further.

“What matter of power is this?” He demanded to the room as if waiting for someone to own up to the prank. I tried to move once more, hoping to run away and wake up with my neck still in one piece, while Draven was turning to scan the room for answers. The guards gripped my arms tighter and when I let out a yelp in protest, Draven turned back his attention to me shouting once more.

“Let her go and don’t ever touch her again!” He ordered his guards, who didn’t need telling twice. They dropped their hold and stepped back like the others in the room.

“Do you speak?” His question was abrupt and rude but I wasn’t about to argue on etiquette. I didn’t know what to say or if to say anything at all. Maybe playing dumb was the best course of action, although I’m not sure Draven was going to accept this.

“Let me put it another way for you little one, if you refuse to speak then there are other means to loosen one’s tongue, so I will ask only once

more...Do you speak?" He had lent his head down so his words only entered my ears and it was enough to make me respond. I nodded five times in quick succession which brought a scary amusement to his lips.

"Good, now you will answer my questions. Who are you?"

"I...I am..." I was just about to say my name when Lucius interrupted us.

"My Lord, might you let me deal with this one, I believe she has been spying in on a time which is not her own." The sight of him made me move backwards. He now stood next to Draven and the differences in the two were like Yin and Yang. Draven was the bigger out of the two but not by much. Lucius looked as I would have imagined him to look as the person he was first known as...He looked like Judas. His hair was much longer with a full beard that was the colour of straw blonde, highlighted streaks made by the sun. His eyes knew me and I shuddered as they burned into me.

"You know of this girl?" Draven asked as he ignored my moving slowly further back.

"I have foreseen this one and she will cause you great pain my Lord, you must have her destroyed." His words penetrated me like electricity. I came alive with hate filling my veins and flooding my senses.

"He Lies! You cannot trust him, he will betray you Draven! He wants me to hurt you and he will kill me in order to achieve it!" I shouted out making Lucius hiss and Draven growl.

"And how exactly will killing you hurt me...unless Lucius, you know something I do not?" He turned to look Lucius in the face and was met by a dark grin. I decided then to risk everything and say the only words I knew he might listen too.

"If you kill me like he wants you too, you will be killing someone, whom you yourself has named to be Electus." I said the word meaning "Chosen" in Latin hoping it would still have meaning in this time. Draven's gaze left Lucius to stare at me like I had said the words he longed for.

“Then *it* is true, my time is now and I shall finally have her!” Draven reached out to grab me but the arm he touched started to simply fade away. The most painful sight was watching the horror on Draven’s desperate face as he realised what was happening. Lucius placed a hand on Draven’s outstretched arm and spoke too softly for a Demon from the pits of Hell.

“No my friend, I am afraid the time is not now. The time has come to put an end to this historical play of mine and claim her for myself.”

Draven pushed Lucius back and rushed to me to take the remaining part of my body in his arms. It was a strange sensation. Like being washed away with the tide, I was trying desperately to stay afloat. Draven’s face looked down at mine as though my eyes were the last thing to vanish. His last word was the last thing I heard before I woke....

“Please...”

“Draven!” I shouted as I bolted upright in bed. I looked around the room for any signs of the dream, any sight of the warrior King but my room looked as I had left it. Everything that was, but the dark figure that stood watching me from the corner behind my door. I froze like small prey at the sight of the hunter.

“I am afraid not my dear Keira.” That voice! The voice from so many of my nightmares was here now, in my room! This couldn’t be real...I had woken up hadn’t I?

“Lucius!” I said without asking.

“Of course, who else would go to such lengths as I, to get to you.” He moved from the shadows and I half expected to see the same Lucius from my dream. I was wrong. He wasn’t wearing a long cloak now hiding his body. It was strange to see him looking casual. He wore dark trousers, a dark red T-shirt and a long black jacket that went to the floor. It split in three around his legs to allow for the movement that brought him closer to the bed. He looked

well groomed with hair slicked back by fingers and a clean shave to reveal, smooth pale skin. He had sharp handsome features, a high nose and square jaw with staggeringly beautiful eyes. It pained me to accept these facts as I hated him more than I could muster up the words.

“If you were hoping for someone else then that hope is wasted, he is not going to come and save you as you may think. Tell me Keira, did you like my little trip down memory lane? I think that day would have been far more interesting with you in it.” He sat down on my bed like we were old friends having a chat instead of playing cat and mouse.

“How did you..?” I asked in a whisper. He smiled as he seemed to be enjoying the level of control he had gained over me.

“It wasn’t without its difficulties I can assure you, but I had to gain access into your mind somehow. You have a mind like I have never known, even Dominic’s mind I can control but so far that has been the hardest...well up until you that is. You have certainly been a challenge but I knew I would eventually break you.” He trailed one cold, white finger down the length of my cheek and I shuddered.

“Break me?” I asked not knowing if I wanted the answer.

“I have had a lot of years to master patience. And you were so worth the wait. I knew your dreams were the key and with the added touch of alcohol in your system it made it barely a challenge. Of course Dominic was right to keep you firmly in his grasp. I thought I would never catch you alone, he keeps impenetrable guard over your mind while you sleep but tonight I knew my chance had come. So now you are going to do everything that I say and in return I will not hurt you.” At this point my panic fluttered up into a whole new level and I could feel my pulse beating in my neck. Lucius also noticed. He caught the column of my neck in one large palm and my breath caught.

“I want to hear you say it,” he lent in to me to look directly into my frightened eyes.

“Say it!” His voice lost that smooth edge and he commanded this of me.

“Say what...I don’t know what you want me to say?” I stated bravely.

“I want you to say you are mine and under my control..NOW!” He shouted and squeezed his grasp tighter just so I understood the full extreme of my position. I closed my eyes and a stream of liquid came running down my cheeks. He still allowed me to breath but I didn’t know for how long. Then he shifted his body weight so that he was straggling me. He had each one of his knees at either side of me and with his free hand he whipped out his jacket to allow for space. It flew out like a black cloud and for a second I was in the dark. I felt the desperation of my situation and knew that if I didn’t agree, he would most likely kill me but if I did, would that be a fate worse than death. I would be under his control and there would be no going back. I couldn’t take the chance!

“Never,” I said barely moving my lips. His eyes narrowed as his anger grew but after seeing the certainty in my face he actually smiled.

“Very well, your choice has been made, one you will soon regret. It is time for you to learn the full extent of my powers.” His face went very severe before placing each palm of his hands on either side of my head. At first it looked as though he was going crush my skull in his hands and I actually braced myself for the end.

“Remember Keira, keep breathing or this *will* kill you!” That was the only warning I received before a great and tremendous pain shot through my brain like I had been electrocuted. I tried to scream, to holler, to yell and cry out but nothing came. It felt like my mind was a front door to a house that held an endless stream of vital information. I wanted to guard it with my life but Lucius was kicking in that door. Every new wave he sent crashing through me I felt myself getting weaker and weaker. The door was splitting and soon he would be in. I had never felt pain like it before and on top of it all I was running out of air. My chest felt constricted and ached for oxygen. I remembered his warning and took in a gulp full of air that tasted bitter around him.

“Let go... just let yourself go and be mine, then it will all be over.” Lucius whispered in a smooth voice. This had the opposite effect. I clung on

but after another wave of excruciating pain I was screaming inside to just do as he asked of me. I felt as though my head would explode and then there would be nothing left for him to take. I was so close...just so close to ending it all but then one image flashed through my mind like a lifeline in this storm of agony.

Draven.

All of a sudden I wanted to fight, to fight like I have never fought before! If I had control of my body then I would have kicked and scratched, punched and screamed at anyone doing this to me, no matter if they were stronger or not, I wouldn't have let this happen without a fight! So now I had to think, even with this drilling pain inflicting my mind. I had to be smart and use what I knew I had. Lucius had said that my mind had been the hardest to control, so what if right now he was using all of his strength to get to me and more importantly what if I *wasn't* using all of mine. My mind was clearly different so I needed to try...to push back...to fight with my mind!

I heard him growl as he heard my resistance grow. This gave me hope and this time it wasn't wasted. I decided to use what I knew about Lucius. He was Judas, and he was now reborn as the Vampire King. He sucked the lives from his victims and drew strength from their fears, but what of his fears. Then it hit me, I knew what he feared the most...what anyone would fear the most...

The day they died.

As soon as I thought it he let go of my head and sat back to really look at me.

“How?...Is it impossible...what are you?” He stared at me in disbelief as my mind started to form his greatest fear bringing it back from just a memory, making it a reality.

“NO...You Can't...you....!” He didn't finish, as the blazing sun erupted in the room scorching everything around us. I went back to his memories. I don't know how, maybe because we were still connected to each other. He

hadn't expected me to use his power against him and his face screamed out this fact. It was terror and the need to gain control again all of which was useless now, I had come too far to let go. I went back to that day he hung from a tree, the day his brothers in belief had murdered him. His flesh burnt away in flakes of charred skin and floated in the heated days he was left to hang. The sun got brighter and brighter until it became the fire in the sky. It scorched the earth and bit at his feet like snakes in the grass, the stings just as deadly, each flame like the fangs he had acquired from the Hell in which he was cast. This was his damnation. His punishment and his betrayal from both sides. This memory was his hell and now I had cast it again for him to relive.

This time he would not survive my dreams.

"NO!" He screamed one more time and he grabbed at my arms in a useless attempt at stopping me but the world around us just grew brighter still, like we had transported inside the sun itself. His grip became so painful it forced me to open my eyes. I was met by Lucius' body alight in an explosion of fire, nothing else was burning but his form and of course the hands that still held me. The smell of burning flesh was that of my own as Lucius was still here in my mind, not in body or soul. With one last scream he burst into a figure of black ash and only when I moved did it disperse and float away out into the night like a swarm of flies. I got up and slammed my window shut making the frame and glass shudder. I was shaking and slumped down to the floor in a fit of tears brought on from both pain and relief.

I had done it, I had beaten my nightmare but at what price? My arms started to really feel sore now and soon my tears were just down to the stinging on my skin. I got up and turned on the light to find the cause, hoping it was still all in my mind. It wasn't. There on both my elbows as red raw handprints burned into my skin. I touched one of the finger marks and winced at the pain it caused. Oh great more war wounds for Draven to fix!

Draven...I had to go to him, I had to tell him what happened tonight or if he still didn't want to see me then I could find Vincent. Yes, that is what I would do, he would help me and hopefully heal me. Because the burning was growing, getting deeper and clinging on like his flaming hands were still

there latched on to my skin.

So that is what I did. I quickly put on a pair of jogging bottoms and after carefully putting on a bra and a zip up hooded top I grabbed my car keys. By this time my arms ached like tonne weights had been strapped to them. Driving was not going to be easy but I knew I could make it, as long as I broke one of my golden rules...

Speeding.

Chapter 58

Touched By Judas.

I pulled my truck into the parking lot at Afterlife and at three in the

morning I was the only soul around. I was glad of this because by this point I was a hopeless mess of tears and sweat. The burning on my arms was considerably worse than before and now instead of a slight burn it felt as though my skin was melting off my bones. I ran to the side door by the bins as I knew the front door would be securely locked like last time. I punched in the number on the security pad a few times after getting it wrong more than once. I put this down to watery vision and a pain induced mental breakdown.

Once inside, I ran the length of the club and mounted the main staircase taking two at a time. The VIP was empty all but one. Karmun was still behind the bar cleaning and re-stocking ready for the next night. I guess he didn't sleep much. He heard me coming and put down a crate of Absinthe.

“Hey Honey, what are you doing here?” He sounded panicked at seeing me and I didn't care why. Immense pain kind of reprioritises all logic in your mind and I think if a giraffe had been playing checkers with a gazelle in the corner, I wouldn't have batted an eye!

“Sorry but I need to speak to Vincent, where is he?” Karmun looked dazzled for a moment while he thought about what to do.

“Can't it wait till morning, I mean he's most likely asleep Keira.” This is when I lost my cool.

“NO it can't bloody wait! Look I'm sorry but this is an emergency and I don't want to involve you but if you could help me and point me in the right direction then that would be more than great.” This came out in an out of breath jumble but he got the picture at least.

“Come on, I'll show you” He motioned for me to follow him and I was glad I didn't have to do anymore convincing than that, 'cause I think the next stage would have been screaming. We walked the way I usually came in and through the opposite door to the VIP, making it the second time in two days that I walked along the open hallway. The night air cut into my clothes but was oddly soothing on my imprinted burns. Karmun didn't say another word and every now and again I saw a great sadness sweep across his features. Maybe he was tired and now he had to escort me without reason to his

master's brother's room. He must be wondering why? We didn't need to walk very far but it was in a part of Afterlife I had never been before. The open hallway veered off to the left and the Temple's dome roof could be seen below from a different angle. We were now directly opposite where I had been standing with Vincent the night before. I was staring at the point when Karmun cleared his throat to get my attention. He held open a door for me.

"I can't go any farther but turn right down the hall and his room is the door at the end. Be warned he might not be alone. I'm sorry." He added before walking away, leaving me to wonder what he was sorry for, or was it for something to come? Maybe Vincent would not be happy for me to disturb him but what choice did I have. Draven didn't want to see me, Sophia would tell her brother instantly and it's not like I could go to hospital over this.

I did as I was told and soon was at his door gearing myself ready to knock. I tried to think of what I was going to say but the pain decided for me, the time was now and not to waste it. I winced as I bent my arm up to knock. I didn't do it very loud but it seemed I didn't need to as Vincent's voice was clearly awake and said a very distinctive,

"Enter!" So that is what I did. I opened the door slowly and entered a low lit space where all the candlelight was concentrated around the middle of the room. Of course this is where I found Vincent and no...he wasn't alone.

One look and I wanted to turn and run away from the level of shame that doubled my pain. Vincent's room all centred round a huge round, white bed that was raised only slightly from the ground. The bed was surrounded by a stream of pillar church candles, all flickering as the air came in with me. Vincent lay on his back, naked with only a white sheet covering the manly parts of his anatomy. I gulped at the sight of milky white skin covering a mass of muscles that flexed when they saw me. Of course the two beauties that lay on either side of him weren't paying me any attention what so ever. One was too busy kissing every inch of him and the other was sucking on his neck, legs draped across half his body. Oh yes and did I mention they too were both very, very naked!

"Keira!" Vincent's voice sounded a mix of strained, shocked and

mortified. If I could have formed words I think mine would have sounded the same. I decided this was one of the worst idea's I had ever had and bolted for the door with shame flooding an already emotional state. I started to run back the way I came but couldn't find the door Karmun had led me too. I was feeling along the walls in hopes of finding a handle or anything that led me far away.

“Keira! Where are you?” Vincent's voice filled the hallway and I knew he would soon walk around the corner and see me, the thought filled me with dread! Of course I gave up and sank to the floor to lean back against the doorless wall.

“There you are...Keira?...What's wrong, what's happened?” He ran towards me and dropped to his knees opposite me. He grabbed my arms to shake me and I screamed causing him to freeze. I was sobbing now at the unrelenting throbbing that set every nerve in my arms alight. He was speaking but I couldn't make out the words because I could hear nothing over my cries. He didn't touch me on my body again but just smoothed back my hair that had plastered to my head from sweat. I had slumped forward and rested my head on his shoulders to finish my sobbing.

“Ssshhh, you're safe now, no one can hurt you here.” This is what he had been telling me over and over, only now I could hear it as my breathing steadied and my tears ceased for the time being.

“Do you think you can tell me what happened...Keira?” When I didn't respond he called my name again.

“Keira...who did this to you?” He sounded so concerned and also controlled. He had anger bubbling up within him I could tell. He had fisted his hands and his lips were set in a firm line, mirroring his frown. I started shaking my head and was soon crying again.

“Alright...It's alright sweetheart, you're safe now, let's get you to Dominic.”

“No...I will be alright, I just came here to see if you could heal me...you

know, like before...?” He looked taken aback a moment, confused with my response.

“You still don’t want to see Dom?”

“It’s your brother that doesn’t want to see me and I don’t need to disturb him if you can heal me...he doesn’t have to know about this.” Vincent looked truly shocked.

“I know for a fact you’re wrong and I have no idea where you would get an idea like that from. Dom’s been a worried wreck since you left him, he was getting prepared to let you go, so I don’t know why you would think this? And besides, I would never keep something like this from my brother” I looked down like I was a child being told off by a parent. But then my head shot up just as quick.

“He...wants to see me?” I couldn’t understand how my sister would have got a message so wrong.

“But of course...I believe the word “desperate” would be a good way to describe it.” He gave me a smile and when I lowered my head in disbelief he raised it back up with his finger.

“You don’t believe me? Do you really think an Angel would lie to you” He laughed with his words and through the pain I managed a smile.

“Come.” He said rising to his feet and offering me his hand. He noted the way my face creased as I lifted my arm through the torment.

We made our way through his home like ghosts creeping through the night. I half expected Vincent to stop at a wall and assume I would follow him through it. It didn’t take any time at all before I was back to being on the familiar stone flooring I knew so well. We came to Draven’s door from a different angle and Vincent knocked on the side door, instead of the main door to his room that was situated at the end of the great hallway leading directly from the VIP.

My pulse quickened in anticipation of seeing Draven. Would he be

angry I was here or pleased? Well given the circumstances he didn't have much choice in the matter and besides I really did have bigger problems at this current moment. Like the blinding torture that was inflicting every cell up my arms.

Vincent knocked strong and hard three times, all the while looking down at me. I held my breath until I heard the familiar voice echoing through the iron studded, wooden door.

“Enter!” I was surprised when it sounded so awake...didn't he sleep when I wasn't around? Vincent went in first while I decided to remain around the corner of the door frame out of sight. I wanted to judge his reactions first before committing myself to these actions, although I had little choice in anything else.

“Vin? What's wrong?” Draven sounded concerned for his brother and his voice was smooth velvet without one ounce of indifference towards his kin.

“Dom, I knew you would still be awake.”

“Yes and I am surprised you are here and not entertaining in beautiful, twin angelic raptures...were they not to your liking brother or have you grown tired through old age...too much for you were they?” Draven laughed at his jesting and I was so surprised to hear this brotherly banter it made me smile through my dark situation.

“Not at all Dom, but trying to enjoy myself knowing you would be sat here, yet again, feeling sorry for yourself I felt it my brotherly duty to change that.” Vincent sounded full of amusement as he knew something his brother didn't...I was his winning surprise soon to be revealed.

“Then if I were you I would go back to your chamber and enjoy their heavenly pleasures for you are wasting your time on me...Go and leave me to my figureless shadows.” I had never heard Draven sound so small and fragile before and my breath caught in the back of my throat.

“Why would I do that when I have a gift for you?” Vincent sounded so smug I could hear the smile I couldn’t see. Before Draven had time to ask he took two steps back and nodded for me to come in.

“Look what I found!” He said as he moved to the side allowing me to be seen by his brother. Draven was on his feet before I could see the actions taken.

“Keira!” He was beaming at the sight of me. How could I have ever thought he wouldn’t have been happy? He was stood there dumbstruck for a few moments, staring at me like I was a dream or a cruel joke from his brother and if he took a step closer I would simply fade away. That thought took me back to my dream and I shuddered. Then someone broke the spell and he was at me in a blink of an eye. I looked up to smile but it didn’t last long on my lips before extreme pain killed all happiness. Unknowingly caused by Draven.

He had grabbed me to him by the arms and I crumpled before him screaming out at the unbearable burn that ran to the bone. Draven instantly let me go and through the tears I could just make out the horror on his face.

“Keira, what happened? You are hurt?!” I couldn’t answer him, that was soon made apparent by the sobbing noises that consumed my vocal abilities.

“I should have mentioned that first, it seems she has somehow injured her arms but she wouldn’t tell me how.” Vincent was adding as Draven scooped me up into his arms and was carrying me to his bed. He was so careful with every piece of me that I was amazed he could even hold enough of me to get me there without me merely slipping away from him. I felt him lay me down and he allowed me time to catch my breath and cease my erratic crying before asking me once again.

“Keira you need to tell me what happened? Did...someone...do...this...to...you?” This question came through gritted teeth and a strained anger desperate to be allowed to bubble to the surface. All I needed to do was nod and I heard something in the room smash.

“Dom! Focus! Now is not the time to lose it, fix her and then we will reap our justice.” Vincent’s voice of reason could just be heard over my weeping. I looked up to see Draven above me with eyes closed and two hands clasped behind his head as if trying to find the right actions in a mind clouded with rage, revenge and reprimand. He gripped on to himself like it would help pull the answer out from him but the pain in his face was clear...it was fear. This startled me to a point that made me shiver. Draven was never afraid, so something in my situation had snapped, something so bad even the impenetrable man I loved looked terrified. Suddenly my pain had a friend to join in my suffering...the very same fear.

“We need to see, take off her jacket” Vincent seemed to be taking charge where Draven was unable.

“DOM! Snap out of it! ta vajab sind” (Means „She needs you” In Estonian) He sounded angry which was unusual for Vincent but one look at his face told me it too was laced with worry. My situation wasn’t looking as clear cut for the healing I was used to. Panic was slowly setting in but my brain was so overwhelmed by other sensations it was hard to focus for long. It was like being very, very drunk. Sometimes your mind would wander through the motions like autopilot, getting you here and there, like the journey here but now it was fogged by the burning throb that replaced alcohol. Through this mist I felt my zip being pulled down and two sets of hands, trying in vain to remove my sleeves painlessly. I screamed so loud I used every shred of air in my lungs. I thought the hands would stop but they couldn’t...not now, I knew that. My mind still functioning at half its normal rate told me this. They had already caused the hurt, why stop now and prolong it. Like ripping off a band aid, like they say here in America. In the England we would have said plaster. I wondered which was right, I lived here should I accept the new terminology or remain true to my roots? It was a strange argument to be having with myself at the mouth of hell, but no one ever said turning insane was logical.

“Tanrının eliyle! Who did this!?” (Means “By the hand of God” In Turkish). Vincent spoke words I didn’t know but it made me open my eyes. The first thing I saw was Draven’s eyes glowing red like blood had been

injected there and then lit by the devil himself. His face was a hard mass of lines and the utter rage that presented itself was just as painful as my arms to witness. I winced back into the soft bed wishing it could swallow me whole and put an end to all this misery. I looked away only to find Vincent staring down at my arms with a violent disgust painted on his perfect features. Then, my next mistake cleared the way for another onslaught of hysterics. I looked down at where their gaze was focused...my arms.

The red handprints were no longer but instead lay bloody flesh beyond all repair. It looked as though I had been butchered! I screamed again and again, shaking my head to try and get the horrific picture from my mind. Flesh that had bubbled and burnt down until it looked like stretched red plastic over bone. The edges black and scorched around where each finger had been. Deep lacerations spread along the inside where his palms lifeline would have been. My veins had turned black down the rest of my arms, all the way to my finger tips, like an infection was spreading. The skin by my elbow looked to have caved in on itself leaving me with misshapen arms and blood covered the sheets beneath me. I could no longer use my arms and I'm not sure at this point that I ever would again.

“We have to heal her...NOW! It has already started to spread and we need to reach it before it gets to her heart.” Vincent’s words seem to pull Draven from his punishment and his head whipped up and looked at him for what seemed the first time.

“But the pain!” Draven said in whispered panic.

“Dom, she is already in a great deal of pain as it is, we must act quickly!” I admitted to myself I was glad they were concerned but I did wish whatever they wanted to do about it they would decide bloody quickly!

“She needs something...think of the pain Vincent!...Morphine or...” Draven was abruptly cut off by his brother’s stern tone.

“There is no time! The essence of the touch will not accept drugs, look how it spreads. You must get her to open her mind to you....that is the only way but we must hurry or it will be too late!”

“Keira...my sweetheart you have to listen to me.” Draven was speaking so softly it was hard to picture the words coming from the same man whose eyes were consumed by such fury.

“It... hurts...pppllllease...make.iit...stop.” I strangled out through screams, moans and cries. He smoothed back my hair from my forehead and kissed my salty skin.

“I will my love but you must be brave for me. I want you to do as I ask and let me in, open your mind as much as you can so that I can take that pain away...otherwise the pain will be too much.” He tried so hard to keep his voice level and void of the panic rising in him. He wanted to remain strong for both of us, I could tell but the pain they talked about was terrifying me to a point where functioning beyond reactions was a difficult task. I just wanted my mind to open and let Draven in but it was firmly closed. It had shut down thanks to Lucius’ influence. It was now on lock down not allowing any other intruder in. I tried to concentrate, to break down the walls I myself had put there but it was too hard. The mixture of pain and fear had made it near to impossible to think about anything else.

“Dominic NOW!” Vincent screamed out at his brother who was obviously hesitating.

“She isn’t letting me in!” He shouted back.

“There is no time! Do it now or we all LOSE HER!” So this was my answer...the root of their fears. My life and death hung on the scales each side weighing the same. One tip, one wrong movement and my life would be no more. My life, only without pain, without worry, without the traumatic past... but then I stopped breathing as the worst thought seeped in like a purple coloured blur....

Without Dominic Draven....

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Chapter 59

Breaking Walls.

NO! I wanted to live! I wanted to feel the sun on my skin, hear the wind blowing in my hair and most of all, taste Draven's lips upon mine. I was NOT going to die! I would fight, I would not let fear take me over to the other side!

"Restrain her!" Draven snapped out at his brother. Through my mental torture they had turned me around so that my head was now at the bottom of the bed. Vincent was stood at the end and had grabbed my arms to spread them up above my head. He held onto my wrists like live shackles, his fingers circled around bone like he was ready for the fight in me. I looked up to see his face upside down, nod at his brother. My watery gaze travelled back to Draven to find his straddling me, keeping his weight from crushing me. He was on his knees at either side of my waist and was looking down at me with guilt riddled lines invading his stern face.

I took a deep breath as I waited for Hells fire to touch me.

Draven gave no warning, which I guess was better for me, but at the moment he slashed open his own hands and placed them down on where Lucius had touched me, I felt like dying! I couldn't hear anything but my own ear piercing screams of pure and excruciating pain. Every type you could imagine! It was like a lifetime of pain, from stubbing your toe, to breaking your arm, all wrapped up into one moment. Years and years of accidents, illness, self inflicted and Morgan induced body mutilation could not compare to this single moment in time where my body was being pushed

so far to the limit, it felt like I was dying over and over.

“She can’t take much more! Damn it Keira, Let me in!” Draven shouted down at me. He was now using all his body weight to hold me down as I was using every last surge of energy to thrash around the bed. Draven’s hands were tight around the area that was minus all skin and let his blood flow out from his body into me. I was trying to focus on his words, his actions but the room spun around so fast I felt sick. Like being on a Waltzer ride at the fairground, while smacked up on the worst kind of drugs. I was trying to get a clear picture of what was happening, but the world was no longer the same. I felt like Alice falling down the rabbit hole, only my hole was leading me through a passageway to hell!

“LET ME IN!” Draven screamed at me as though he could feel me falling. I just wanted it to end! I wanted peace after what felt like a life of suffering. I just wanted to be numb!

“Gods Keira! Then let me help you! Open yourself to me! I WILL NOT LOSE YOU! YOU ARE NOT ALLOWED TO LEAVE ME, DO YOU HEAR!” Draven was screaming out at me, pleading with me and for the first time ever, he was crying. I felt his tears falling onto my face and the effect was like acid to my skin. The tears of a Demon and the tears of an Angel mixed made for a powerful antidote to my suffering. It was this feeling that made me really listen. I found my mind and the walls surrounding it. Walls that went up so high I could not see the top which was caked in cloud. I was a smaller version of myself in my mind. Stood at the bottom trying to claw it down with tiny hands. Draven’s voice still boomed overhead for me to let him in...but how? I needed to think, to find a way of destroying what I myself had put there!

Then the most amazing thing happened. I started to feel Draven’s tears

roll down my skin and leave a burning path behind them. I lifted my hand to my face in my mind and caught a tear that was not my own in my hand. I looked down as it glistened like a pearl and diamond combined. Then it started to glow like the orb I had dreamt of my first night at my sisters. It got bigger and bigger until I could no longer carry it so I threw it at the wall with both hands. The wall cracked on impact and caused a split to run up until out of sight. I heard it thunder above me and the heavens opened up for the flood. The rain in my mind fell down in giant droplets that soaked on impact and as soon as the first one hit me I woke.

I looked up to see Draven smiling at me with hands still locked firmly in place. I had thought him finished as for the first time since Lucius had touched me I felt no pain. Nothing! I was just numb and my body felt like it weighed the earth and was sinking into the bed.

“Good girl. You did it Keira.... You let me in and now you will suffer no more. Now just sleep...sleep...slee....” His words flowed over me like a warm blanket coving me from head to toe. I felt my lids grow heavy and being pulled down by no doing of my own. Then the world of hell and fire grew black and peaceful....

I was gone.

“It was Lucius!” Draven spoke in my lucid dream. He sounded angry although he was trying to keep his voice low and unheard.

“You are certain?” Now his brother was there and soon the image became as clear as their voices. They were both sat down in Draven’s room on opposite couches. Draven had his head in his hands and Vincent was shaking his head causing his halo of blonde curls to dance around.

“I felt his pain. I don’t know how but she beat him Vincent. She forced

him back and denied him access to her mind and she wounded him. How is it possible she is so strong?" Draven voice ached through exhaustion and a mass of nightmare events.

"It is impossible, Lucius is the strongest we know for mind control...No human would stand a chance! You must be wrong brother."

"But that is the thing! I know I am not! Once she let me in I saw everything. First her dream...he showed her the past but changed it so that she became a part of it. It was when we first met Lucius, when we were comrades. She saw Lucius and called out to me, she tried to warn me of his intent but the dream ended before I could react. He took her away from me and it was a message. He wanted me to know." Draven was now standing tall and firm on his knowledge.

"But how do you know this?" Vincent asked innocently enough but his shock was clear.

"Because to beat him she accessed his mind. I saw for myself her dream was also to become mine, but I had not slept since she left me. He was waiting to send me this message."

"But what message?" Draven's voice replied in stone cold fear.

"He intends to take her from me."

"But that was before she beat him. Which I still don't understand how she did?" Vincent sounded thick with disbelief.

"She was so, so clever. Sometimes I think I underestimate her. I told you she accessed his mind but I didn't say what she did with it." Vincent didn't reply but just waited in silence as Draven once again took a seat.

"She showed him his fear, his only fear. She showed him the Sun!" Draven sounded so proud, if I could have seen his features better I believe he would be beaming.

"Yes. I told her some while back of his history and she used her

knowledge against him. I doubt very much that Lucius was ever expecting such power from my girl, but power is what he found and one a great deal more than his.” I even felt myself smile at this in my dream, thinking at least I wasn’t as useless around the supernatural world as I once thought...I just hoped it to be true.

“But how?! How can it be true...she is human. Nothing on this earth has that kind of power!” Vincent didn’t sound so willing to believe it and I couldn’t blame him.

“Brother, no one is more shocked than I, but I can only say what I saw. The only way I can make sense of it is the more powerful the mind she gains access to, the more power she has to control. In our case, Lucius is the most powerful of our kind at manipulating the actions of others, then think of the supremacy she holds over all of us. She is after all, the ‘Chosen’.” I couldn’t tell how Draven felt about this but I needed to know...I needed answers. What did that mean? The “Chosen” And what about this so called “Power” he was convinced I held....was it true?

“So what are we to do? What did Pythia say on the matter?” My mind hunted around to pull that word from my memory and found her to be the Oracle Draven had spoken of.

“Pythia told me of what I already knew the very first time I saw her. Keira is the Chosen, there is no doubt. She told me to protect her with my life and the Gods will do the same. She is too important to the prophecy for anything to be allowed to happen to her. Pythia told me of her power and I didn’t believe it until now. This is the way the Gods have seen to her protection but she must be taught how to use it”

“I’d say she’s not doing too badly on her own on that one!” Vincent said sarcastically.

“Yes, but look at the damage he was still able to inflict” Ok so Draven had a bloody good point there! And there wasn’t a cat in Hell’s chance I was going to go through that again!

“And how was he able to do that exactly...I mean if she is so powerful...”

“She is still in her infancy, Vincent. Like a child with a dangerous weapon. She doesn’t know how to use it to its full advantage yet. Lucius knew this and used that power back against her, he had little choice, she could have killed that Bastard! Next time I will teach her to do just that!” Draven both interrupted and erupted at this last statement.

“Sounds to me like she came very close!” Draven just grunted at his brother’s statement then added his own views on the murder matter.

“Not close enough!”

My dream was starting to waver and quickly turned another corner. I was in a bed unlike this one. Made up from layer upon layer of furs and cushions spread on the floor. I felt like I was wrapped up in the softest silk and velvet combined. I stretched out and my hand grazed the rough sandstone floor in contrast to the covers I was entwined in. Then a voice broke through my sleepy state.

“My beauty awakes at last.” Draven purred in my ear making me jump. I whipped my head back round from staring at the floor and was faced with the different Draven I knew from my dreams. I flinched back not knowing what else to do.

“Do not fear me, I will not hurt you child” His short cut beard tickled my arm as he lowered his head to kiss my bare shoulder.

“I am not a child!” I said in a huffy manner and after I said it I wondered why? He raised his eyebrows at my little outburst and he laughed once.

“Ah, your pride as been hurt, forgive me. I merely mean, compared to my many years, that is all. Your body is all woman and pleases me greatly.” He was devouring me with his eyes over every inch of my skin which made

me realize just how naked I was. I felt so exposed I grabbed the cover and pulled it up to my chin making him laugh again.

“Your blush only enhances your beauty and makes your creamy skin glow. You must have come from somewhere cold for you to be untouched by the sun, although your hair is the colour of pure gold...tell me, where are you from?” He leaned back to take me in better and wait for his answer. I bit my lip, not knowing what to say. I knew this was surely a dream but I didn’t think in dreams you could experience such real sensations.

“Where am I?” I couldn’t resist the urge to ask. Draven shifted his weight to lean on his arm that made his bicep bulge and the leather strap strained around it. He wore nothing on his torso and as the covers covered his lower half for all I knew he could be as naked as I. He was stunning and I was glad to be the one waiting for an answer because I couldn’t speak for the beauty before me. It was like a Greek God had dropped down for a quickie. His skin was a sun kissed glow and his hair was the night. Longer than I was used to but tied down his back, braided in a leather thong, causing his features to be all the more striking. His bone structure looked to have been carved by a master of the arts, with a stone jaw and deep set eyes that pierced through me, making my insides turn to mush.

“How is it, you do not know or is it because Heaven dropped you at my feet for me to claim?” He was closing the space between us and I automatically put my hand out to stop him. My palm remained positioned flush against his hard chest and it moved to the beat of his heart. He seemed to react to my touch and his breathing became heavy with his closed eyes.

“Please...” He interrupted my spoken thoughts by letting a low growl surface before grabbing my wrist from the hand that prevented him from coming closer. He pulled me roughly towards him and repositioned my arm around his shoulder as he shifted my weight backwards. He leaned down and I now found myself under his huge frame that was hovering above me.

“You were saying please?” He brushed his lips across my neck and down my collarbone. I shivered under him but it wasn’t from a chill. I could smell the warm night air surround us from every angle. The room we were in

didn't have walls as such but huge richly, ornate pillars arching up to the golden ceiling above. The room held carved wooden chests and seats the shape of half moons on their side. Everything smelled so rich, even the lacquer that painted the wood its rich red colour and the blossoms from the gardens that must be below his open balcony. I could see the blanket of stars in the clearest night's sky just beyond his impressive shoulders.

I could feel the covers moving down from me and I grabbed at them with my hands.

"Why do you keep such perfection from me? Are you selfish?" He teased making me swallow hard.

"I don't understand why I'm here...Is it Lucius doing this?" I asked this to both of us but when Draven expressed his displeasure in another growl I sunk back further.

"I will not allow you to speak another man's name in my bed! You are mine! No one else's. What is Lucius' hold over you, my Goddess?" He was trying to regain his calm but I shook under him as he tensed his body above.

"He doesn't! I mean...well...I don't know...why am I here and not with the 'you' from my time?" My question confused him as he frowned down at me, looking even more severe than usual.

"What time is it that you speak of?" He was now holding all his weight up on his arms and any normal man would have crumpled under the strain for so long. I couldn't think here...I needed to move, to create some distance from this muscle cage he held me under. I decided quickly and turned using all my weight to one side until I knocked his arm out and rolled off the bed. My sudden movements caught him off guard and he fell back on his side as I made my escape. I still had the sheet around me and I got to my feet quickly pulling it tighter around my chest like I would have a towel.

"That was cruel, princess" He said full of humour.

"Don't call me that, I am just a girl." I said backing away from the bed

where he still lay. He rolled on his back and laughed heartily.

“Oh No! You are so much more than that! I am a King...did you know that? That will make you my Queen soon enough but for now you will be known as my Princess. No other man will lay eyes on you, no other man will touch you and no other man will speak your name on their lips...but wait, for what is your name?” This question surged movement from him and before I knew what had happened he was stood up and before me. He wasn't as naked as I thought, he had material draped around him like a long skirt tied to his waist by a thick leather belt studded in gold. His wide chest heaved, making his muscled six pack tense as he took his last few steps towards me. He was backing me up against one of the pillars and I soon felt its carvings pressing into the curvature of my spine.

“This is just a dream,” I said aloud to myself, making him cock his head to one side. He placed his arms either side of me and leaned down to my ear.

“Then why not enjoy it?” He whispered seductively before kissing my neck. I moaned at the sensations it caused and when he felt my succumbing need he wrapped an arm around my waist to pull me roughly into him. I bent to him and molded myself into his raptures. His lips searched out mine and he crushed against me forcing my mouth to open to him. It did...willingly. One strong hand worked its way up my neck, holding it there for a second in a demanding primal way, before travelling upwards to grasp a handful of my hair. There he steered my head to the side to gain better access to my lips. It was like being devoured by a passionate beast, his lips moving, grinding, sucking my own until my legs turned to liquid. He was holding me up to him and I gripped onto his back, digging my nails down his skin under the erotic onslaught I was enduring.

He only released me when he knew my need for air. I was panting in his arms as he kissed my hair line.

“Such passion that flows through your veins, how responsive you are to my touch...like you have felt it before?” He was looking back at me, taking in my face for his answers. It didn't take him long to find them.

“You are mine from a different time aren’t you?” I simply nodded.

“Then I do not have long to keep you.” He said to himself. He nodded once before making up his mind and then took my hand in his.

“Then come, come and see the reason you are here.” He turned towards the open walls that were so symbolic to my current situation. Was this why I was here? My open walls to Draven’s mind. Was this still my sleep...my dream being controlled by another?

I let myself be walked to the edge of the balcony and I breathed in the warm air that made me feel so alive, like it was pure energy. He pulled me to stand before him and held my shoulders from behind. I gasped at the sight before me.

“It is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen,” I said in a gasp. My hands were at my face holding in my utter overwhelmed surprise. A golden city stretched out before me as the night sky slowly gave way to the coming dawn. The sand coloured structures rolled down the hill from where we stood at all different shapes and sizes. A large turquoise dome was in the centre surrounded by high walls of ornate stone carved into petal points at the tops of arches. It took me back to Draven’s home and the Temple that lay at its core...its heart. It was rimmed with gold guild and smaller domes were dotted around within its walls. These must have been the smaller buildings where ancient priests lived.

“You like your new home princess?” He murmured in my ear before tilting my neck to one side to kiss the skin more easily.

“Is this....?” I didn’t finish as his mouth released the words, harder to believe from my own.

“This is Persia!” He ceased kissing me when I gasped.

“What is wrong?” My mouth hung open and no power could make me close it and take all of this in. How was I seeing this as though from a perfect,

flawless memory. He held me tighter waiting for my answer, one I couldn't find in this madness.

"I think I had better go home now," I said as though being able to stop a video that was playing.

"Then you have found enough peace in my time?" The question made me close my hanging mouth and turn to face him. He ran a finger the length of my jaw and lifted my face up when he reached my chin.

"Then grant me with a kiss before he takes you back." I closed my eyes as I let confusion seep over me. I felt his lips graze mine before lingering there long enough to allow a surge of lust to build. He crushed himself to me and kissed me until I felt as though floating in air. The smell of his skin's musk changed and the air around me grew a few degrees cooler. His touch grew less firm and more like soothing fingertips trailing along my skin.

"Keira...Keira...Time to wake, my Princess." Draven's voice echoed in the dark and I realized I was still living in the shadows of my mind. I called out his name as I opened my eyes to find I was lying down in bed. This time it was one I was familiar with.

"I'm here Keira, no one will harm you." I felt like saying "You said that before," but didn't. After all it wasn't his fault Lucius had come for me. If I hadn't been so stubborn then he would have never had the chance.

I saw Draven looking down at me, his face trying to mask the worry that lay there. I tried to sit up but Draven held me still.

"You need to rest more, your body is still weak from regenerating itself."

"But the dream! I dreamt of you...but it wasn't you now...it...it was..." I was babbling and sitting up despite his warnings. I had to tell him but he was making it difficult.

“Hush now, calm yourself. I know what you dreamt Keira.” He admitted, as though he was responsible, which hit me...

“You put it there!” I accused shifting to see him better.

“I did.” Was all he gave as an answer.

“But why...how?”

“Because you needed peace. I wanted to give that to you the only way I knew how. I took you back to that time with me and gave you something further than what Lucius showed you. A time when you would have been mine, before his interference. I saw how you worried about me in your dream and I wanted to make it as if you had never disappeared from my arms. I wanted to share with you my home...my first home.” Now I understood, where Lucius had used the past to take hold of me, to gain control...Draven had used it to ease my pain, to show me a part of his life before mine had begun. He wanted to share a part of himself with me to help me find the peace I had so desperately been searching for.

“Thank you.” I said before throwing my arms around his neck and kissing him like it had been an age since we had been together. He was certainly taken back but soon his surprise was replaced by eagerness.

“But wait!” I shouted half in his mouth, making him groan. I pulled back and whipped off the plain black top I had been dressed in. I even had a white cotton bra on but I wasn’t looking at that. No, I was searching my arms for new scars or pieces missing from my elbows. All I found were the old ones.

“They’re fine!” I said as if it was another dream.

“Of course, I healed you Keira. The flesh and skin regenerated as though it never happened but the infection was harder to remove.” He looked away briefly as though remembering the sight of me screaming in agony beneath him.

“What infection?”

“The Demon presence he left behind, but Keira I do not want you to think about it anymore. It is finished and I won’t let anyone come that close again...it is over.” I couldn’t help it, I crossed my arms over my chest and stared at him.

“And how will you do that exactly, are you going to hide me away like Rapunzel?” Well I certainly had the hair for it.

“Rapunzel?” He questioned not looking at all offended.

“Yeah you know, long haired gal, lives in a tower, sings a lot.” he laughed at my description.

“Ah you mean ‘رودابه’, the beauty.” He said the ancient words so swiftly like he spoke this language all the time.

“Excuse me?” I said causing him to smile at my understandable ignorance.

“It means Rūdāba, She is or was, where the brothers Grimm got their idea from I believe.” He started to help me with my top as I was trying to pull it down over the mass of hair that went in every direction. I knew one thing...I wasn’t looking forward to trying to brush out all the knots I had created.

“Rapunzel was real?” I asked, fascinated.

“She was...of sorts anyhow. Let’s see if I remember The Shahnameh’s description correctly” He paused and looked up as though it was written on the beds canopy.

“About her silvern shoulders two musky black tresses curl,

encircling them with their ends as though they were links in a chair.

Her mouth resembles a pomegranate blossom, her lips are cherries and her silver bosom curves out into breasts like pomegranates.

Her eyes are like the narcissus in the garden and her lashes draw their blackness from the raven's wing.

Her eyebrows are modeled on the bows of Teraz powdered with fine bark and elegantly musk tinted.

If you seek a brilliant moon, it is her face; if you long for the perfume of musk, it lingers in her tresses

From top to toe she is Paradise gilded; all radiance, harmony and delectation”

Of course he recited the poetry perfectly as though the one himself to have written it.

“What was that? It was beautiful” I said lowering my lashes, wishing for such beauty. Anyone would next to such a man as Draven.

“It was from The Shahnameh, the book of Kings. It was written by the [Persian poet Ferdowsi](#) around one thousand AD.” He said proudly and it seemed this was the day for learning a great deal more about Draven’s history.

“Yes and I will tell you one day who it is really about, but for now you must sleep.”

“No way! You can’t tell me something like that and expect me to sleep!” I moved out of his hold as he was trying to get me to lie back down.

“Keira you are being stubborn” He informed me but I didn’t care, I

wanted to hear more.

“Alright, I will make you a deal, if you lie back down I will tell you the story until you fall asleep.” I suddenly felt about six years old! It had been too many years to remember since I had been told stories before bedtime. I nodded my agreement and shifted further down to get comfy. I knew I was still fully clothed but Draven pulled the covers around me anyway, which felt nice and safe.

“There was a great Persian warrior named Zāl who was born with white hair. He was Albino. Zāl was the son of [Sām](#) and the grandson of [Nariman](#), both great heroes of ancient Persia but because of his defect, Zāl was rejected by his father. And therefore cast out as a child. He roamed Persia but it was when he was upon the mountain [Damavand](#) where the Gods heard his cries. They sent down a bird so large it would block the sun and darken the skies when flying. Some say it was the holy Phoenix named [Simurgh](#) sent to guard the child blessed by God.” I was nodding at him when he paused to take in my expression. He chuckled once at my enthusiasm and continued.

“The bird took him in until time past and he grew into a man, living on the land but never leaving the bird. Rumors of the silver man living in the mountains reached the ears of Sam, his father and he was soon found by the guilty man. But he could not reach him, so he prayed to the God’s that had taken in his son and begged for forgiveness. Simurgh knew at once when the man’s father would come for him that their time together was at an end. She plucked three plumes from her breast and the heavenly voice spoke in her place. "Burn this if ever you have need of me, and may your heart never forget your nurse, whose heart breaks for love of you." She said adding that when in trouble. She would appear as soon as the feathers were lit.”

“So he left with his father? Poor Sim...ugh...you know what’s her name” I said lamely causing Draven to take my face in his hands and kiss me gently on the lips.

“He did indeed return with his father but his misfortunes were no longer. His father made every effort to redress his past wrongs and when he went off to wage war he was given his father’s Kingdom.”

“So what about Rapunzel, well I guess I mean...you know...” I still wasn’t down yet with all the names and there was no way I was going to be able to say them with my accent!

“You mean Rūdāba. Well she was the princess of [Kabul](#), daughter of [Mehrab Kaboli](#). Zāl had heard of her immense beauty and went in search of her to bed. But he became enraptured and fell deeply in love with her. The story says, Zal came to the walls of Rudaba's palace where Rudaba let down her tresses to Zal as a rope for him to climb. Rudaba seated Zal on the roof and they both talked to each other for hours, which was unacceptable in accordance to Persian tradition. In the legend that followed, after being accepted by each father they married and when Rudaba was giving birth to the unusually large baby, he soon realized his love was going to die. Near to giving up, Zal remembered the feather of the Simurgh, and followed the instructions which he’d been given that day. He placed the feather on the sacred fire causing the Simurgh to appear and instructed him upon how to perform a [caesarean section](#), thus saving Rudaba and the child.” He finished the story like he’d been telling it for years and I almost clapped at the ending. What a nice story, better even than the Brothers Grimm version. I was about to tell him so when he carried on.

“Of course, this is where the story that is written differs from the truth.” He looked as though still not sure whether or not to tell me.

“How so?”

“What is written is not what happened. Zāl fell in love with Rūdāba, yes but she was a Demon that had possessed Rūdāba as a willing sacrifice. Don’t look so horrified Keira.” He smirked at my scrunched up face before continuing,

“See, her past love and betrothed had been murdered in battle and she was so fraught with grief she gave herself to the Gods to be reborn. Of course by the time Zāl came to find her she was not what she appeared.” I placed my hands at my mouth and covered my shock.

“Oh no, what happened?” He smiled and pulled my hands away from my

face and brushed the back of his hand down my cheek.

“When Zāl found out the truth, there was no other choice but to kill himself to be with her but it worked, as to this day they are still together, it was the only way for her to have him. She appealed to have his soul re-used once sold to Lucifer and he could see no reason against it.” Draven was talking about this part like any business man would about politics.

“They are still around? Like living together... after so long?” I could barely get my head around it.

“Yes Keira...and, well...you know them.” Ok, this was a bombshell! I was still shaking my head, thinking that I’m sure I would remember something like that, then it hit me like thunder clapped over head. I even jumped like it had actually happened. I knew who they were...My God... could it be?

“Sophia and Zagan!” I shouted making the bed vibrate.

“You are such a clever girl.” Was Draven’s only response before without warning my head hit the pillow and I fell into a misty sleep hearing the last words from Draven’s lips drift through my mind....

“Time for sleep my princess...”

Chapter 60

Making Plans.

I woke up to hear Draven's voice and when I heard no reply I knew he was on the phone. I was in his bed as I was before and it felt like groundhog day. I seemed to have had an entire night of waking from dreams and I didn't know what to expect from one wake to the other. I remembered my first dream and quickly shook it away. Then the next one came and I savoured it for a while, even recalling the smell of the Persian sun on Draven's skin. His kiss, his strong desperate touch. It made my insides go gooey. I rolled over and smiled into the pillow as I stretched out like a lazy cat. It was strange, like all the pain I had endured was like it had happened to somebody else and I had a clouded memory of it all. I mean, I knew what had happened but the pain...I'm sure it had been intense but it's hard to even compare it to anything...I just didn't remember the feeling and I knew this was a damn good thing! Something like that could leave more than just visible scars.

"Yes, I will tell her, no she's waking up now...alright Libby, Not to worry.... Goodbye." I rolled around and was surprised to find Draven stood

next to the bed staring down at me. From his voice it had sounded as though he was on the other side of the room. Well not anymore!

“Good morning.” I said smiling and stretching once again until my toes curled.

“Well technically, it’s the afternoon.” He said smiling back.

“Draven! You let me sleep too late, I missed classes!” I sat up and realized I was *now* naked, as the covers rolled off me and rested around my waist. Draven’s eyes flash purple once and then simmered down.

“Keira my dear, I hardly think today was going to be one of those days when you went to class!” He sounded exasperated at the idea.

“Why not?”

“You need rest, not history class.” He lifted the covers to my shoulders like a mother hen and I rolled my eyes.

“You gave me a history class this morning if I remember,” I said teasing him making him now the one to roll his eyes.

“That was to help you sleep so don’t make me regret it. Besides all you have been through lately, you need taking care of with some peace and quiet. Therefore, that is what you shall receive.” He sounded happy on the matter, which had me worried. Dear God, what did he have planned...knitting and sounds of the ocean on repeat?

“I’m fi...” I stopped when he tilted his head and frowned at the word I was about to use.

“I’m all good. I don’t feel tired and I feel all fit and healthy.” He wasn’t looking convinced so I tried a different route.

“I gather Lib’s rang and wanted to know where I was?”

“No, I rang her.” He said before leaving the bedside to get me some

water.

“Why?” I asked without leaving the concern out of my voice.

“Drink!” He ordered and I gave up trying, so did as I was told. He wouldn't even let me hold the bloody glass!

“I rang her to explain why you left.” He saw my face drop and hurried out the next bit.

“Don't worry, obviously I didn't tell her the truth. No, I merely said how you came to me in the night to give me what for and we quickly made up after that. I think she got the message because she didn't ask me any more after that. I also told her how we needed to spend some quality time together and that I was taking you away to make up for my behaviour.” This was said very offhand, like the fact he was telling people I was going on a trip, when I clearly wasn't, was something normal...well I guess to him it was.

“Umm...why did you do that? We both know I'm not going anywhere, well apart from home in a week's time but...” he cut me off by banging the glass down on the side table.

“Keira! Of course I'm taking you away!” He was angry now and if this was his idea of peace and quiet then Hell must be a quiet place to live!

“Draven listen to me...I am not leaving!” I said folding my arms across my chest like a child. He huffed and raised his arms above his head in a dramatic fashion.

“Stubborn like a mule!” He said angrily. Of course I laughed which really didn't help the situation.

“Are you calling me an Arse?” He stopped and looked at me to find humour in that question.

“NO! Look Keira I need to protect you, I cannot have that happen again. So you will just have to trust me and do as I say.” Ok, that was so not happening!

“Draven I will agree to stay here with you every night but I will not hide away from my life and I’m sorry but you can’t stop me.” He was shaking at this point with fists held tight to his sides as if trying to regain just a shred of control. He looked damn close to shaking me!

“Why won’t you listen to me, do you think I do this for my own gain? My only care is to keep you safe and if, as you say, keeping you locked in a tower achieves this then I will do it, you can be damn sure of it!” Draven was trying to push me to the point of me agreeing but my will on this matter was beyond yielding.

“We both know that will not happen.” I said calmly before continuing,

“Think what you are saying. I am not your prisoner and you would never treat me so. I know you too well and I would bet my life on it.”

“Not funny Keira.” Ok, so saying about betting my life was probably not the best way to put it but it was not intended to be funny.

“Look, I am not saying that I am about to do anything stupid. I know I still need Ragnar guarding me and I know never to spend a night away from you, not that I would want to anyway, but you have to meet me halfway.”

“And where would this halfway be exactly because no matter what I seem to do it is never enough!” At this point I really did feel sorry for him, he clearly was fighting a losing battle and with no glory in sight.

“Well, I guess halfway would be that we now know Lucius can’t get in my defected mind! So glass half full on that one.” I tried to joke but Draven was so not in the mood for Northern humour.

“Defected?” Trust him to pick up on my terminology.

“Well, there must be something wrong with my head...right?” At this he groaned and came to my side to grab both my hands in his.

“Keira, there is nothing wrong with your head!”

“Well there must be something because according to you and your brother I am the only Being on earth that Lucius can’t control.” This statement sure got his attention.

“You heard that?”

“Umm, well yeah, but at first I thought I was dreaming but now I know it must have been right after...umm...the healing.” I said this last part cautiously, not wanting to bring up what was obviously painful memories for him and me both. As expected, he winced at the flashback.

“To be honest Keira if you’re expecting answers as to why, then I am afraid I don’t have any for you. We both know you are different but just how different is still left to be discovered.” Oh great, so I was a freak without knowing why...bloody marvellous!

“Well as long as I don’t start shooting webs from my hands and glowing in the dark, I think we can class the inability of not being controlled as a plus.” At this he finally laughed making my tensed shoulders relax at the sound.

“Maybe we should get you some stretchy spandex suit to wear if you are going to be a comic book superhero, that way I get to peel it off you.” He winked at me and wore a crooked smile as his naughty thoughts came out to play. Now I was laughing and I playfully punched him.

“So do we have an understanding on the whole me leaving thing?” His playfulness quickly diminished and was replaced by yet another broody frown.

“How do you expect me to protect you if you...”

“Draven please stop. We can take precautions but I will not live a life of fear because of what *might* happen again. I am going home in a week and until then I have a mountain of course work to worry about...so near death experiences are not even in the equation at the moment.” I laughed trying to lighten the mood but his was getting darker with every word out of my

mouth. He didn't look at all happy but must have decided now was not the time to try and *reason* with me.

The rest of the day went by in blissful ignorance of last night's events and we were both happy to put it behind us and for the first time since knowing Draven this was one night that the VIP went without it's King. We spent the whole day and night hidden away in his room like we were a pair of love struck teenagers. No one came, not even Vincent or Sophia, so I guessed this was at his orders. Well if that was the case then this was one order I was more than happy to comply with! Of course the fact that I was a human with basic needs didn't go amiss as every time I returned from the bathroom there were drinks and a wide array of food waiting for me. It turned out to be one of the best days of my life and when the night crept in like an unwanted visitor I found myself not wanting it to ever end.

"You know if you came away with me it could be like this every day." He hummed in my ear as I leaned against him on the couch. I sighed as the thought took me to my very idea of Heaven but I knew it was a false promise. Not that Draven wasn't a man of his word, but for someone who controlled a world full of supernatural beings, I doubted this promise could be achieved for long. But I smiled at his tactics anyway without answering him the way I would have liked.

All throughout the day I hadn't been successful in getting him to take his kisses further thanks to his belief that my body need time to relax and sex with Draven was definitely anything but relaxing.... mind blowing, orgasmic and truly breathtaking yes, but relaxing...umm I think not! If you asked me I think he was enjoying all my efforts more than he was letting on. I felt like some bloody leech trying to suck the life out of him! But alas every time it started to get serious and I could feel him getting worked up...and I mean all the way up...He would groan and restrain me back so as he could regain his granite like will. I was starting to feel like a sledge hammer going at it without even causing a dint.

When he convinced me it was time we got some sleep I told him to go

lay down and I would be with him once I used the bathroom. Once there I brushed my hair until soft and falling in smooth waves down my back. I brushed my teeth until squeaky clean and minty fresh. I had already had a shower earlier that day and shaved my legs, under Draven's watchful eye which was embarrassing at first, especially when I nicked myself and Draven overreacted like I'd slashed open a vein! I checked myself in the mirror one last time and tied my kimono a little looser so as my pushed cleavage was showing thanks to a black lacy bra. I was also wearing a thong to match which made me walk a little funny back to the bed. Well my seduction idea wasn't going to happen until I was on the bed so it didn't matter if I was walking a little sideways.

As soon as he saw me coming I smiled to myself as he turned his head to the other side. Oh this was going to be so easy! I stepped up to the bed and walked on the bed so that I was stood above him. I got a great view from up here although I would have preferred a naked Draven to be below me. He was still wearing a tight black vest showing off his perfectly sculpted arms that could crush every bone in my body. His long solid legs encased in light colour denim topped with a thick leather belt, which had a thick metal belt buckle with an Arabic symbol for "Strength" crudely hammered in the centre. I had asked him about it earlier and he explained it had been a gift from his brother. It was a hard thing to imagine...Draven unwrapping gifts, such a human thing to do, I had told him, to which I had only received a shrug of the shoulders as my response.

He finally raised his eyes to me and I saw his face tense as he held on to his last shreds of will. I smiled making it even harder for him.

"Come down here!" He asked through gritted teeth. So instead of sidestepping and joining him on one side I fell down to my knees landing so that our sexes were knitted together. He groaned as the impact caused a reaction he was hoping to avoid. The silk robe fell from one shoulder and exposed one lace covered breast that looked as though it would like nothing more than to pop out and be played with.

"What's wrong Draven?" I asked as innocent as a child with his hand

caught in the cookie jar. I let my hair fall forward and at this his eyes flashed purple and I knew that I had him! He growled and grabbed the tie of my robe to use it to aid his control. He gripped it tight and pulled me until my lips met his. This action ignited the fire deep in my belly that was bubbling up and I tensed my body around him to get closer to the bulge that pressed painfully against his jeans. His hands pulled my hair up and twisted it to control my head. I almost came right then! I, in turn, bit his lips causing his own fire to erupt to a new level. He ripped the kimono from me and I saw the seams unravel at every point. Soon I became a milky white body covered only in thin lace, quivering beneath him.

“You are an unstoppable Vixen that teases a man’s will till it is destruction at your feet. What have you to say in your defence?” He teased back making me blush and beam at his compliment. He buried his head in my hair and inhaled me in as if stealing my essence.

“What can I say...I’m a girl with needs that only you can satisfy.” This made him smile before he crushed his lips to mine and kissed me solidly while he took me from below. I ended up having all my orgasms screaming in his mouth, every time feeling him smile over my quivering lips. At my last one he found his release as I bit into his shoulder not being able to control, understand or help myself. He arched back as one last thrust pounded into me as we came together. I could barely hear my own scream over his deep animal roar at the ceiling. It was like I had just been ravished by a wild beast and now he was calling his pleasure to the moon.

Well one thing I was wrong about, sex sure could be relaxing...well that was the aftermath of six orgasms. I collapsed in a sticky mess of sweat dripping down every curve of my body and buried my head in his side under his arm. He held me closer to him and we both found sleep this way without uttering another word that wasn’t needed to end this perfect day.

The next week was a complete rat race. I spent every free minute doing an endless amount of studying for finals and handing in papers just barely before deadlines. Draven had kindly given me the week off work to make the

time, the perks of dating your boss! Of course nobody working there complained as Draven gave everyone a Christmas bonus for the first time. I wouldn't accept mine which was no surprise to Draven, although when checking my account there was a considerable amount greater than there should have been. However, when I queried it, Draven simply shrugged his shoulders and played dumb, which we both knew he most certainly wasn't! Mike seemed happy with the extra money over the holiday season and could now afford to go skiing with his family for Christmas instead of letting his parents fork out for it. He was such a good guy, anyone else would have let his family pay and bought themselves a new snowboard. Ok, so I knew quite a lot of people here that wouldn't have done that but you know what I mean.

No-one working at Afterlife really had anything to complain about as the wages Draven paid were the best around and people usually tipped the bar well which got shared fairly, taking into account the amount of hours we all did. Of course everyone put the bonus down to me and no one believed me when I said that I had nothing to do with it.

“I think keeping the boss this happy helps Kaz.” Mike had replied with a sly grin that forced me to flick water in his face after washing my hands. It was my last shift before I travelled back to England tomorrow and one night that Draven let me work. It was the Christmas party and Afterlife knew how to hold one heck of a party! The entire place had been decorated in thick rich colours of green, red and gold. Wreaths and holly swags hung from the tall arched windows and doors. A huge black Christmas tree dominated one corner of the room, which was covered with blood red ribbon the width of a body cascading down to the floor. Massive gold baubles, the size of melons were decorated with the same blood red drips in glossy paint. There were thousands of red twinkling fairy lights not only covering the tree but the whole club. It was like a gothic Christmas fairyland had replaced the usual Afterlife and I knew straight away one girl who was responsible for the transformation.... the sensational Sophia!

The first drinks of the night were on the house and at one point of the night the lights dimmed and the music stopped for everyone to raise their glasses to the VIP and to a man they couldn't see to thank. I wore a hidden

smile the rest of the night. The night carried on in full swing and when my shift was over I joined my friends in the party. We all danced in a group and I even let down my hair to whip round as the mixture of rock classics and dance music gripped me enough to dance until sweating. All my friends knew I was leaving for the holidays as a few of them were doing the same. Chaz was leaving his aunt's house to go back to his mum's or mom's as he kept saying.

“So is Dreamy Draven going back with you for the holidays?” RJ asked me when we were both in the ladies trying to cool ourselves after our workout on the dance floor. I had been told not to tell anyone the plan me, Draven and his siblings had constructed so I didn't know how to answer this one without lying. In the end I didn't need to as Lanie came in with streaming mascara down her face. She was in floods of tears and between sobs told us how Drew had just broke up with her. I spent the next half hour rubbing her back and scowling at RJ every time she tactlessly mentioned how she was going to rip his head off! This just made Lanie give way to fresh new tears. In the end Draven must have been worried at not seeing me in the club because he walked through the door in the body of a nineteen year old cyber Goth with electric blue and fuchsia pink hair. I only knew it was Draven when her eyes flashed purple and she winked at me. I tried so hard not to laugh at the situation but failed miserably. Both my friends shot me a shocked look at my tactless behaviour.

“Umm...sorry...I guess I don't handle crying in the right way.” I said lamely whilst giving Draven evils as his female host left the bathroom.

“You've been doing fine up until now.” RJ commented under her breath.

It only took us another ten minutes to clean Lanie up and convince her that Drew was a moron and therefore not worth her tears. It hadn't really worked as she was still sniffing but it did get us out of the loo. After that things started to wind down and I soon found myself being crushed by Jack's embrace. I could almost hear Draven's growl in my head as no doubt he was watching. After saying goodbye to all my friends in turn I decided to go and help Mike with the bar close down.

I was acting on autopilot as my thoughts wandered to tomorrow. I had already packed that day and my black case with a smiley sticker on the side lay on my bed ready for the last few items before zipping it up and heading home for the first time this winter. We had planned for Draven to follow shortly afterwards in his private jet but Ragnar was to guard me on the actual flight. At first Draven had wanted me to fly with him but I knew my mum would have been upset to know that the expensive ticket home wasn't going to get used. Draven had wanted to keep my departure date a secret, with only my family and his knowing the ins and outs. Ragnar was going to be instructed on the day. He told me this was so no one's mind could betray them. I guess they knew mine wasn't an issue with that problem anymore. It had been a week since the last time I had heard Lucius' voice and my dreams were no longer being controlled or intruded on. It was becoming a distant memory, one Draven was happy for me to forget.

Draven had gone as far as not making any plans for England and I had told my family that as far as I knew his work was keeping him in the US for the holidays. My mum thought it a shame but was just happy to have us all home for Christmas so didn't make a big deal out of it. I was just glad to be turning my back on the past few weeks and hoping to come back to start a fresh new year...nightmare free.

My sister sent Frank up to get my suitcase and after saying a mental goodbye to the view I was going to miss, I met them all downstairs. It was hard to pretend to say goodbye to the waiting Draven at my doorstep. For him it was hard, as he looked far too vulnerable to be the one in control.

Frank, Libby and Hilary had all wished him a Happy Christmas and said their goodbyes before quickly giving us some space. I walked around the side of the house to gaze at the sweeping valley and snow covered national park. Draven wrapped his arms around me and pulled me into him for a tight embrace.

“We don't have to do this, you could change your mind and your family will understand after time. I could take you away where you wish to go,

somewhere only you and I know the whereabouts.” I had heard these words all week. It was the same pleading voice and another twist on him hiding me away from the world.

“Draven it will be fine, we have planned it so that nothing could go wrong. Even my family are convinced you won’t be meeting me. No-one knows I’m not spending Christmas in Liverpool, that I’m actually going to my Grandparents in Cornwall to be with the rest of my family.” At this point he was looking deep into my eyes and caressing the side of my face in his palm. He looked so sad, like it was the last time he might see me.

“I can’t let anyone harm you...I can’t let them take you Keira...it would finish me.” He said before burying his head into the top of mine.

“Nothing is going to take me, don’t talk like that! Look at me!” He didn’t so I turned my head up so he had no choice. His face was riddled with pain and angst, it was the closest I came to giving into him and letting him take me wherever in the world he considered safe.

“We have a plan, you are going to ring Ragnar if there are any problems and he will do the same. If anyone is watching they will just think I am in the car with you and getting on your jet, not getting on a conventional flight with over a hundred other humans where they can do nothing. If anything I am worried about Ragnar!” He grunted at this.

“No human eyes apart from yours can see him.” He said, although I already knew this.

“I know, but that’s not what worries me. I am just wondering how he is going to get his huge body into one of those tiny seats.” At this he finally eased up and laughed.

We remained entwined until Draven loosened his hold and reluctantly said,

“It’s time, they are waiting.” At which point I found I really wasn’t ready to let go. I turned into him and held him around the waist, making him

wrap his arms around my body like he could protect me from anything the earth held against us. I knew this was silly of us both acting like this, as I knew he would be with me only hours after I landed but I couldn't help feeling the little nagging at the back of my mind...what if something did go wrong?

“Honey, sorry, but we're gonna have to leave now before we hit traffic.” Libby's head popped around the corner and looked guilty as hell for dragging me away. I just nodded in a sullen way before looking up to find Draven looking far off towards the mountains, like this is where he would have liked to have hidden me. Well, it was too late now, I thought with a touch of regret. I looked back and saw Libby had gone to wait in the car, and Frank had the engine started already to warm up. Another hint for me to hurry up, I thought bitterly.

“Ragnar will follow you in the black Range Rover behind and once you're at the airport he will board the plane. My jet won't be far behind and I should be knocking on your door tomorrow around noon, but Ragnar won't let you out of his sight until then.” He had gone through this over and over but I just nodded as though it was the first time. I knew poor Ragnar wouldn't dare let me even go to the bathroom without guarding the door, not if his life depended on it!

“Ok, don't look so worried or is the idea of meeting my parents for the first time is what worries you?” I joked and it looked like it took all the effort in the world for him to smile.

“You forget, if they don't like me I can just alter their minds so they think I'm the only man around they want dating their beautiful daughter.” He winked and now I was laughing, just glad we were saying goodbye on a high note.

“I will miss you.” I said reaching up to kiss him. He bent his head down and kissed me with all the passion of a love starved man. I locked my arms around his neck and kissed him back with equal starvation. A shiver shot down my back when it ended as the nagging feeling sunk deeper to my core and I knew why.

It felt like...

A last kiss.

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Chapter 61

The Wrong Flight.

Before I knew it I had waved goodbye to the owner of my heart and left feeling slightly empty inside. The nagging feeling was beginning to grow, the further the car took me from Draven. I kept giving myself a mental shake, saying it was only for a day, two at the most. Everyone else around me was buzzing with excitement and even had Christmas songs playing through the car's stereo. I found myself just moving my lips, trying to act as if I felt the same excitement but one look from Libby in the mirror and I knew I wasn't fooling anyone. Libby had felt for me when I told her that Draven couldn't join us for the holiday season and I had felt even guiltier lying about it and receiving undeserved sympathy. But like Draven had said it was for everyone's own good.

They had discovered that someone must be leaking information from somewhere inside the VIP and Draven suspected it was one of the new guests as Lucius came to me not long after they had arrived. As far as Draven knew, this was his first encounter. I had tried in vain to tell him it wasn't but I was met with the same problem as usual. Every time I opened my mouth to speak I found blank words behind my lips. It was as though I was cast with some spell that wouldn't let me form the words, so as a result Draven went on thinking this was the first incident. One thing became clear though, whoever had made that phone call to Libby pretending to be Draven was surely the traitor. It didn't take me long to find out that Draven had never needed time alone and he was only waiting for me to forgive him.

I soon spotted the black four wheel drive two cars back and I felt my shoulders relax to know my Viking beast of a Demon was back there keeping his guardian eyes on me. It was strange to think that it wasn't long ago that I had hated the idea of being *guarded*, but now I seemed to be relying on it for comfort. Maybe it was down to all the bad things that had happened since.

Once at the airport I had to play blind and dumb, not reacting to Ragnar right next to me clung like a bodyguard to a celebrity. It was only when we reached the checkout desk when things started to get complicated.

“What do you mean it’s the wrong date?” I said staring at the lady in a smart red and navy airline suit.

“I am afraid this ticket is for the day after tomorrow.” She said trying to be pleasant in telling someone their horrible news for the day.

“That can’t be right.” Libby said coming to my side. She grabbed the ticket from the lady whose name tag read ‘Jean is happy to help’. Well I didn’t really care for the happy part but the help was surely needed!

“I am afraid you booked the tickets for a separate day.” Well that sure wasn’t helpful and I had to stop myself from saying, “Well no shit Sherlock!”

“Our mother booked the tickets...Oh No, look Kaz she did.” Horror filled my sister’s eyes as she scanned the ticket over and over before letting me see the evidence for myself. She was damn right, my mother had only gone and booked my ticket for a different day!

“Well can’t we buy another ticket?” Me and Libby both asked at the same time.

“Umm...I’m sorry but that flight is fully booked and the flight will be boarding soon, so those of you with tickets will have to hurry to the right departure gate.” I felt sorry for ‘Jean’ at this point because Libby turned to scowl at her. I had to drag Libby over to where Frank and Hilary waited for us with anxious faces.

“Mum went and booked Kазzy on the wrong bloody date!” Libby screeched to Frank.

“Can’t she swap the dates?” Frank added unhelpfully, bless him.

“I don’t think it works like that Frank, the flight is fully booked.” I said as Libby was muttering about our mother’s incapability to use computers and

all modern technology in general, while also blaming herself for not checking each ticket.

“Look it will be fine, I will just call Dominic and get him to pick me up and then fly out to you guys in two days...problem solved.” Well at least it seemed so for them, now I was wondering how this affected Draven’s plans? Once I got these guys on their way I could find a quiet place and ask Ragnar, who was still at my side frowning at our current situation.

“I can’t let you fly out on your own!” Libby said but Frank was nervously looking at his watch and the flight numbers on the checking board.

“Lib’s, I flew out here on my own remember? Look if you guys don’t go, you will miss the flight...is the spare key still hidden in that old jar in the shed?” Frank nodded before pulling me in for a hug.

“We will see you in a few days,” he said making Libby curse under her breath.

“Lib’s it will be fine, don’t be too hard on mum and give everyone my love until I get there.” I hugged her even though I could tell her mind was still running through every possibility. I hugged Hilary and waved them off until out of sight, watching my sister being pulled through security with Frank’s strong arm around her shoulders. She looked like a lost sheep amongst the cattle of travellers.

“Well, what are we going to do now?” I said in a low whisper trying not to gain too much attention, but when a passerby stopped and stared, I decided to get out my phone and pretend to be talking to someone on it.

“I will call my Lord, come with me.” Ragnar held onto my arm and we walked through the crowded airport until we were outside one of the main terminals. It was still far too crowded to go unnoticed, but no-one could hear Ragnar let alone see him so it was only me being paranoid for no good reason. He dug in his dark tan jacket and pulled out a phone that looked tiny in his hands. He pressed one button and began talking immediately.

“The mother made the mistake.” He added after explaining our new situation. I wished I could hear the other side of this conversation because Ragnar’s head bobbing wasn’t easing my irritation.

“Yes I will, no, the car left after we did. I cannot detect any of our kind nearby. We will wait for the car and I will bring her back to Afterlife directly...Yes my Lord, with my life.” He said and passed the phone down to me, which must have looked mighty strange for anyone walking past, me taking a phone from thin air!

“Hi,” I said very forlorn.

“Keira are you alright?” Draven sounded concerned and hyped up as if he had been waiting phone in hand ready for something to go wrong.

“Yeah I’m fine, so what will happen now?” I asked, trying to sound a little less ‘end of the world’.

“I am sending a car to pick you up and then we will decide when you get here. It will be alright Keira, soon you will be safely in my arms once again.” The thought made me smile and the nagging feeling I had all day seemed to evaporate.

“Good, I will see you soon then.” I was about to hand it back when I heard Draven’s words enter me to the core.

“Keira, I love you.” I smiled and although he couldn’t see me I think he heard it in my reply.

“And I love you.”

Ragnar had arranged for us to be picked up in a quieter part of the Airport, when his phone rang.

“My Lord?” He seemed surprised but nodded again and again as new orders were being given. I, meanwhile, was sat on my suitcase like a bored

child.

“You want us to get to the jet?” Ragnar looked surprised, which brought my nagging fear rushing back to me in a heartbeat. He nodded a few more times and muttered acknowledgements down the phone but his frown never left his harsh red face. The little potted scars seemed to stand out further when he looked this agitated and it automatically made me wonder what had gone wrong.

“But my Lord, that is not what we had planned...the girl she...” Ragnar shut up immediately once I heard shouting from the other end and we both flinched simultaneously.

“No, My Lord I am sorry to question you... No it will not happen again.” He said after obviously being reprimanded but still his frown remained. It was quite clear whatever Draven’s changes, Ragnar did not approve.

“Yes, I will take her there now, you will meet us?” He waited for his answer and then nodded. Once he had received his new orders he snapped the phone shut and looked down at me with his dark red eyebrows closely knitted together and emitted a low growl.

“What is it...what’s wrong?” I asked placing my hand on his arm, which felt a bit like comforting a tree trunk against the rain.

“My Lord wants me to take you to the hanger where one of his jets is being fuelled.” He said looking around the airport like he was scanning for enemies.

“But I thought it was only a minute ago he was sending a car for us?”

“It was, but now he has decided to change his plans.” His usual husky voice had an uncertain edge to it that I needed to question.

“And you’re not happy?” It was an obvious question.

“No, I don’t like it because it is not like my Lord to be so unpredictable, but his word is law so I do not question it. We have to move,” he said taking

my suitcase in one hand and me in the other. That was the end to our conversation but I felt his tension flow through me like it was sticking to my skin in the form of a nervous sweat. I found myself being pulled along until Ragnar found what he was looking for. The next thing I knew I was being pulled into a taxi and sitting back while Ragnar took over the Driver's mind. He sat back with a faded expression on his face like he was listening to bird calls in the distance. It almost made me want to shake him but I wouldn't have dared. So I did all I could do...I sat there and worried.

I had no idea how we got there but the one lot of security we did encounter after a few words from the driver we passed without trouble. Soon we were driving towards a big aircraft hanger where the doors were opening to allow for the sleek black jet rolling out. That's when the brakes slammed on and thrust me forward hitting into the back of the front seat. I made a noise as the air had been knocked out of me, but before I had time to complain, Ragnar had released his hold over the driver and forced him into a deep sleep.

"Something's wrong!" He said in the worst tone to hear from a former Viking King...that was panic!

"Why?" I was so scared to ask but I gripped onto his arm as I waited for an answer I was sure I didn't want to know. He was staring at the Jet like he was waiting for it to blow up or something and when I jerked him for a response, he turned to stare at me so slowly I felt my skin prick with fear.

"Draven's jet is white" These were the last words I heard before all Hell broke loose.

I didn't even have time to scream as the car suddenly filled with a blinding light like someone had just released a flash bomb inside. I couldn't see a thing but when the car's metal frame around us started to shake, I heard all the glass shattering outwards and landing in thousands of pieces on the tarmac like the falling snow had turned into icy shards.

Ragnar's roar soon became a distant noise as an ear splitting, high pitched hum filled the small space and made it near impossible to think of

anything other than covering my ears and closing my eyes. It was only when I felt the cold air being inhaled did I realize that it was so I could carry on screaming through the fog of disaster. Then I felt myself being moved. First I heard the rest of the window crash as the door was being opened on my side and then hands were on me dragging me from the car. I still couldn't see and my hearing was playing on and off as though someone was flipping a switch. The hands gripped onto my shoulders and yanked until my body slid out onto the tarmac, landing on my back with a painful thud. I was so scared, I was shaking but I was trying desperately to hold onto whatever shred of control I had left.

“KEIRA RUN!” I heard Ragnar's thundering voice shouting through the craziness but for me there was no going anywhere. Once I had fallen, I was quickly pulled roughly to my feet and held on either side by towering men above me. My eyes were still in blur mode but I could just make out their shadows looming so close to me, holding on to me at the tops of my arms. I tried to squirm away but it became too painful when their fingertips started to dig into my flesh like they were pointed at the ends.

“Enough!” A man's voice shouted without anger, it was more a controlled manner, almost business like. That's when my sight cleared as though water had just been splashed in my eyes and my hearing was no longer consumed by the high pitched hum that was causing my head to hurt. Of course, although all my senses were back, it only brought a new level to our dire situation into perspective.

Ragnar was fighting off a large group of men all going at him from all angles. It also looked like he had grown twice his size and all the figures around him looked like they could barely touch him. Ragnar was unstoppable and my hopes rose at the sight of three men being flung backwards like bowling pins. Two behind him were approaching him with thick iron chains and I almost laughed at the idea of them holding this Viking beast. They sidestepped in sync and then ran for him at an incredible speed but for the size of my giant protector, he was as swift as a hawk and as nibble as a jungle cat. He spun on his heel and met them head on. He grabbed the chains before they hit him and he wrapped them around his trunk arms a few times to get a

grip. He began to run backwards taking the two men with him. He then whipped the chains out to the sides and back causing the two men to collide with each other in the middle knocking themselves out with the force.

I almost started shouting in encouragement at the sight of him beating them down but when the ones who had hold of me started to drag me backwards, my shouts turned into ones of desperation instead. Ragnar stopped after grabbing one by the neck and breaking it with one distinct snap.

“LET THE GIRL GO OR DIE!” Ragnar roared in his Demon voice which sounded as though it could command Hell itself!

Meanwhile the voice of the man who shouted “Enough” was making himself known as he emerged from the black Jet. Ragnar took one look at me before seeing him coming down the plane’s steps...then his face crumpled in confusing defeat. I couldn’t understand, he was just one man, but one thing I was sure of, Ragnar knew this man.

Everyone froze as if God himself had just popped down to state his claim in this, but considering I didn’t know who he was, I was going to use this opportunity to run like Hell! I used my body weight to aid me and let my legs drop and then pushed back with all my strength. It wasn’t a lot but it was enough to take them off guard. They lost their grip on me and I made my legs power forward over to Ragnar thinking behind him would be my only hope at surviving this. The men behind me cursed as they ran towards me but I remained out of reach, and seeing what the other men had endured, they stopped before Ragnar was within reach to do the same to them. He saw me coming and growled out at the men behind as a warning, they didn’t need. He scooped me up with both arms and held me back like I was a frightened child, he needed to prevent from witnessing this.

“Ragnar, the Viking King. It has been a long time since I have seen you. And now it seems you have a charge to take care of. This is unfortunate, as now I will have to take her from you...unless you are willing to stand down.” He was a tall thin man with silvery white hair and had a handsome face with sharp features. A long, straight nose and a point to his chin made his high cheekbones seem all the higher. He didn’t look like your typical bad guy, all

dressed in a tailored beige suit and red tie...he even carried a briefcase for heaven's sake! Was he here to kidnap me or make me a business deal in buying real-estate.

“Carrick! Doing errands for Vampires now...I would have thought that beneath you, soul collector!” Ragnar had let me slide down to the ground and he was holding me back with one arm and hiding the rest of me with his colossal frame. I could see his muscular back tensed and ready for another fight, although something told me this next one he wouldn't find so easy. There was something in Ragnar's voice that told me as much, like a respect he had to give this man and I knew he must be a big player in the Supernatural world.

At Ragnar's words he cocked his head to one side amused for a moment.

“It is not your concern why, but the *will* is. Hand the girl over to me and not only with I give you my word that she will not be harmed but you too will walk away with your life...Although I cannot vouch for your Master's wrath on the matter, I hear he is quite fond of this little human.” He seemed intrigued with me as I arched my head round to see him at my mention.

“She is the ‘Electus’” Ragnar said and if he hoped to shock him into submission he failed, all he got was one raised white eyebrow.

“Is she...ah well that explains the circumstances but unfortunately for you my friend it does not change them. I am neutral in this fighting prophecy but when commissioned I *always* fulfil my contract. The girl is still mine and I grow weary of discussing it with one of Dominic's servants, so I ask only once more...hand her over or face the consequences!” He said this last part with a venomous bite but Ragnar stood his ground. He widened his stance and braced himself for what looked to be his death.

“Ragnar don't,” I whispered, placing my hand on his arm but he glared down at me and shook his head.

“I have sworn to protect her with my life and I am a man of my word!” He barked back making Carrick roll his eyes as though bored.

“Very well Viking, then let your life be the price you pay for your loyalty, I hope you die with dignity old soul for it will not be lacking in courage.” He said these words like a prayer and they did hold respect which I found surprising, considering he was the one that was going to take this life.

I made the decision that if I was going to be any help to him, I was going to have to *really* see what was going on, so I did something I rarely do...I dropped my guard and let the other sight take hold. I closed my eyes tight for seconds until I was sure I had freed my gift, like letting loose the evil side of me. When I opened my eyes the first thing I saw was Ragnar in his Demon form, and being that this was the first time I had seen him this way I couldn't stop my reaction. He knew instantly what I had done.

He turned to look at me and I also couldn't help the frightened gasp that escaped. His face had no skin, just a fleshless bone skull with tiny holes pierced all over it, like he had been locked in one of those medieval iron maiden's that shut a person into a standing coffin full of nails. His nose was just made of two elongated holes and his mouth was covered in was looked like metal cladding hammered in sections over his jaw line to hold it in place. I felt the tears roll down my cheeks as I looked into the hollow where his eyes had turned into a small white dot in the middle of a dark mist that was flowing freely from his body. It could only be described as his energy that was making his body pulsate with anger. I automatically stood back and saw two twisted horns brake through his clothes and curl up around his exposed skull like a helmet. They had combined at the front once they covered his face and met down at his chin to interlock like a bone beard. Now to look at him there was only twisted horn coming from either side of his exposed bloody spine to protect his entire head.

I kept taking steps back to give his growing body room as his pulsating had reached it height and he stood ready for the war against us. He was the size of a Transit van making me look like a toddler. Carrick's men pulled together and were ready to hit Ragnar with his first wave but Carrick's hand went up to stop them. Maybe the sight of Ragnar looking like a Demon tank was enough to make him change his mind. Then I received my answer.

The skies started to grow dark, like a storm was quickly taking hold and I felt an icy chill seep through every layer of my clothing. The clouds look angry with us all as they moved at such speeds, I could barely believe what my eyes were seeing. Clouds never moved like that, not even in a hurricane! Who was this man that could command the skies? There was only one man I knew with that kind of power...Draven!

“All in vain, Viking!” Carrick shouted shaking his head, causing me to really look at him for the first time. He was no longer a man but had now turned into death. That was the only way to describe him, he was Death! His suit had faded to the dark cloak that cut off at his chest. The hood raised, hiding his face under a black plastic looking material...or was it skin? It stretched across powerful, large shoulders and floated down stronger looking arms. This was different as the man before was tall and of a slim build but not now...no now he too was a warrior!

All of this was caught in a blink compared to what my eyes were now fixated on. His torso was only half muscle and flesh as it had been stripped away on most of his ribcage. There was left bloody ribs that encased a light glow behind, like his own energy source was being protected by bone. As I raked my sight further down I saw that his waist didn't exist and only his dripping spine was holding him upright. The start of his pelvis was also on show but then his cloak returned and flowed as though alive around the rest of his body. Literally it looked as though a cloaked figure had had a section of his body removed and we were all looking at the result of only a remaining skeleton. If I thought Ragnar was frightening then this guy took first prize for that award!

The Soul collector, as Ragnar had called him, still had hold of his briefcase and this also had changed. Now he held a case that looked as though someone had filled it with blood, set the edges alight and dipped it in black tar. This was now being held back and made ready to throw. It flew through the air and landed in between the two Demons that were ready for the fight. But I was wrong, there was no epic fight about to take place but only an easy defeat. Ragnar didn't have a chance and the way his body reacted told me this. He actually was moving backwards away from the open

black case. At first I couldn't see why, but once I stepped to the side I saw the black wave coming towards him like a black ocean coming crashing to the shore.

“Get back!” He ordered me in a Demonic voice that was so guttural it was all throat and no mouth! I stepped back again and again, not wanting to make any sudden movements, like sprinting into a run. As the wave got closer I saw it wasn't mist, or water. It was no element of the earth coming to claim us. No, this was made of the black souls that hadn't walked the earth for only Carrick knew how many years. They were scrabbling towards us like insects clawing their way across the space. It was as though, after centuries of being trapped, they had forgotten how to walk, talk or what it was to be human. Twisted, broken bodies, barely made from anything but dust and fears, came closer to Ragnar. Black soulless eyes ringed with rather a crystal blue or a deadly blood red, shifted around, searching out their prey. Their long thin bodies were within arm's reach when they sniffed the air surrounding Ragnar and then they suddenly began to change and shift into other forms.

I screamed in vain, as I realised what forms they had chosen to torture my guard and friend. It was his greatest fear... his only fear and now it was here to claim him like his past had come back to once again finish the job!

Every black soul had turned into twenty snakes each causing hundreds to go slithering up Ragnar's body, infesting themselves over every inch of him. He threw his head back and roared to the sky in his pain before falling to his knees in defeat. He curled up after a few pointless attempts at getting free but soon the horrors of his past had him writhing around the ground in an unspeakable pain.

We had lost the fight.

I screamed over and over until I was out of breath. I ran over to him but as I got near, snakes lashed out at me in warning.

“STOP THIS!” I shouted towards Death himself. I couldn't even tell if he could hear me or even see me so I decided to put an end to my sight. It had

only helped in seeing something I had absolutely no control over. I closed my eyes and listened to the chaos around me trying to find some last shred of my world to focus on. Then I heard her. She was calling in the night, flying around in the storm trying to find us.

“AVA!” I screamed out her name and everything went back to normal when I heard her replying call over the wind. I looked at Ragnar who was now back to the Viking I knew, apart from still being on the ground groaning in pain. Carrick had returned into the man in the beige suit and I had run towards him to beg of Ragnar’s life.

“Please stop this! You don’t have to kill him...Please! I will come with you!” I said sobbing but still managing to find the words. Carrick cocked his head to look at me with a strange expression.

“You wish to give your life to save a... A Demon?” He was shocked and I gathered that didn’t happen very often in his line of work.

“He’s my friend and I don’t want him to die!” I cried out again turning around to see him barely moving on the floor and a scream erupted at the thought that he might be dead. Meanwhile, Ava came into view, circling above us and she seemed to be mirroring my fears with her own cries.

“How strange...A human girl, friends with the Viking.” He mused to himself while stroking the lower half of his face.

“Very well, a deal is set, come now and save your friend, if you so wish it.” He replied and he held out his hand for me to take in his. I cringed at the thought but when I heard one last cry from Ragnar for me to run I placed my hand in his, knowing his fate was left with me. What choice did I have, I could not have him die, just to see me taken anyway. He grasped my shaky hand in his and gently pulled me back towards the plane.

“Come my dear, he will live...ah but wait.” He stopped and let go of my hand to go over to his open briefcase.

“Our deal!” He said before uttering words I couldn’t hear. Then

Ragnar's body went still and relaxed somewhat, almost like he was sleeping peacefully. His suitcase closed of its accord and he leaned down to pick it up. He casually brushed the dirt off the leather and said,

“A true workman looks after his tools,” and smiled at me sending fear coursing down my back. He walked back over to me and picked up my hand without uttering another word to me. Some of the others had got into a white rusty van parked closer to the hanger and four others followed us into the plane.

The next minutes went by in a horror struck blur. I was placed in a comfy, white leather seat next to a window and Carrick sat down opposite. He was quickly given a glass of water by a stewardess as if this was standard procedure. He then nodded towards me and then to the glass on the tray the girl held out to me. I just looked away without answering. The window shade was up and I saw Ragnar still hadn't moved from his secure, curled foetal position.

“He will be alright my dear, you saved his Demon soul through a selfless act. You should be happy at least about that.” He said like a true business man that had just received news on high stocks. The plane had began to move ready to take off on the runway, and I realised right up until this point I had been counting on Draven to come and save me. Even now, when my hope was useless and at the end of its thread...I still was expecting him to save me.

“I am being kidnapped, I don't really see the silver lining,” I said bitterly making him laugh.

“But you saved another in doing so, this is a noble act and a rare one at that.”

“Are you going to let me go because of it?” I asked devoid of all emotion but a deep fear I was hiding.

“No my dear but I will praise you all the same. I am afraid my contract is life binding. No, I am sorry but it is off to Lucius you go.” At this I broke down! The mention of the very name I loathed struck in me like a dagger

protruding from my heart. It wouldn't let it pump my blood or beat my body into action, it had just stopped. I couldn't breathe for the sobbing flood of raw emotion bubbling up and erupting from me. This was it!

This was my end.....

And Lucius' beginning.

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Read on for first chapter of Book 3
The Triple Goddess coming soon in 2013.

The Triple Goddess
Book 3
Afterlife Saga

Chapter 1
Flight of Fears

My new life was born in the sky high above the world, riding along waves of a calm atmosphere where clouds were the only sight seen and now...well, it only seemed fitting that my death would begin the same way. It was a flight that had taken me to Draven and now it was one taking me away.

It may seem a tad bit dramatic but when sat opposite death himself, it was hard to see any other outcome. I had been in the plane for hours now without any shining, heroic attempt of a rescue being made and my hopes for such had plummeted with all other ideas of surviving.

The silvery head of hair that kept catching the sun's rays flashed in my peripheral vision and was becoming harder to ignore. Who would have thought that Death would have had kind and handsome features? He reminded me of some typical ageing businessman that had a big white house, complete with picket fence, golden Labrador and a loyal wife baking cookies in a country style kitchen. Someone that went fishing in a small boat on the lake at weekends with his son before coming home with the catch of the day to cook up on a grill for the family feast.

“As quaint and perfectly idyllic that picture portrays I do however hate

boats and get quite seasick.” My head whipped up to see the man himself staring at me with a soft expression and his head cocked to one side as though studying me for more visions on what I believed would have suited this man more than that of the gruesome truth.

“How did you see that?” I asked, opening my mouth for the first time since the airstrip in Portland.

“Ah well, although it is clear my dear, that you possess a most extraordinary mind, it is quite easily accessible when such turmoil and despair enters one’s state of thought. I find you like an open book, only one I wouldn’t wish to read...no, no...far too depressing.” He closed his eyes and shook his head as if to emphasise this point.

“Well, please excuse my manners, how terrible of me to be thinking things as depressing as my death and never seeing the man I love again when I should what?...be thinking of happy little unicorns racing over golden hills under rainbow covered blue skies...how inconsiderate of me.” I said, laced in sarcasm. I am sure somewhere deep down I should be cowering in fear from my plane journey with Death, but for some reason I just couldn’t find the point, let alone the energy.

“Oh my dear, please do call me by my name, Death sounds so very dreary.” At this my mouth actually fell open, cartoon style.

“My name is Carrick, young one and I don’t see where you get this notion of your end being so near?”

“Are you joking?” I almost found myself screaming or laughing hysterically, either one I think would have been acceptable conduct for such a conversation.

“Where I am taking you is not to your grave, but most likely your destiny.” At this I snorted.

“I don’t think so, you’re taking me to Lucius, right?” He nodded at my question.

“Then you are escorting me to my end just like any other poor soul you encounter.”

“And what makes you so sure?” I kept expecting Mr Death Carrick to keep losing his cool but for someone who was in charge of taking life, I was very surprised at how chilled out a guy he actually was.

“Well, it’s just that the last time I saw Lucius we didn’t exactly play checkers and sip iced tea.” At this he laughed heartily, throwing his head

back, making the sun dance in silver streaks, almost like a halo.

“Well, let me be the one to assure you, your life is not on my books and Lucius will need you quite alive for him to accomplish his plans.”

“And that being?” I raised my hand and made little circles as if this might help to prompt him to elaborate.

“Oh no my young one, it is not for me to say but I will go as far as to promise you this, for if the Gods will your safe return to their instrumental son Dominic Draven then no Vampire King and his growing army will prevent such actions from taking place.”

“Then what on earth would he want with me? I mean, it's not like he can defeat Gods, then why even bother trying?” This conversation was draining my mental ability to stay calm. I mean here I was, just been ripped away from my life, with the only notion that my death is all that is left to follow, filling my every thought and the man in front of me tells me what?...that I'm not on his bloody books! Like life and death is just another number for an accountant to consider. I bet tax season was a riot for this guy.

“These are questions beyond my pay grade so to speak. But have no fear, if Lucius wanted you dead, he would have commissioned me to.” I couldn't believe at this, he actually smiled at me like this was a comforting thought. I shook my head at him in disbelief.

I took his silence for what it was, nothing more to be said on the matter but one thing was for sure, I was secretly shitting myself for what was to come next. If there was one man in this world that scared me more than my past, psycho stalker Morgan, then that was the Vampire King, Lucius. Weeks of endless nightmares mixed with a very gruesome crescendo, which I foolishly allowed myself to think was the end of my torment, was to be a constant reminder of Draven's arch nemesis.

However, every attempt to get to me had been crushed by Draven's protective nature...that is, up until now. No, no, now I was on my way to become a puppet in the man's attempts at getting back at my boyfriend. Oh, of course, it would have helped my situation if I had been forewarned what it was exactly that the two had been feuding over all these years. All I knew was Lucius wasn't the King's first name or life for that matter. He began his existence as one of Jesus' disciples and his name is what the common world knew as the meaning of betrayal.

Judas.

The very mention of this name can be used to hurt or dismiss the one that has wronged us in some way. History has taught us many valuable lessons in life but not all are to be believed in the ways in which they are written. As a huge history buff, I was used to relying on the evidence, but after being thrown into the supernatural world of the Dravens, I soon learnt that everything has its place in the world and its importance for those that rule our lives yet couldn't be seen.

Judas played such a part, that of being the important role of wrongly accused, guilty in Jesus' death. Draven said it best once, in which the memory of a great man outlives that of a great man. Jesus asked one of his most faithful followers to help him accomplish his wishes and that of his Holy Father. Of course word of Judas' compliance and not his betrayal never found its way to the other disciples as it should have done. Nothing could have prevented what came next in the way of his most brutal death, but the renouncing of his faith by dying, sun cracked lips was what altered his afterlife by the hands of a very different god.

Bitterness carried into his next life for all things that were once his strength, his life and his worshipping faith, now lost in a hateful vengeance for the Gods themselves for what he believed was *his* betrayal. In a way, I felt sorry for him, although difficult to believe, all things considered. He started his life a man like any other, only to let the all-consuming hate twist and grow with the power within him. After all, he and Draven were once friends and coexisted, often working together but now, well that was another matter entirely and one I knew very little about. For some reason, Draven not only neglected to tell me any details on these events but outright refused. So here I was now, with only Death for company under the name of Carrick, and a stomach that felt like it had been pumped full of lead.

Carrick kept noticing the way I would wipe my sweaty palms on my jeans but thankfully refrained from comment. I think if he would have told me not to worry again I would have pulled some hair out and thrown it at him in a full out hissy fit. He might think that no harm would come to me but he didn't remember in detail the last nightmare Lucius bestowed on me and the

everlasting mark of the most painful experience of my life. Think flesh melting from bone and molten lava replacing the blood in my veins and you will have some small concept of why such an event remains firmly embedded in the darkest corner of my brain. And that was only a dream! Now of course, I was to meet the man and to think of what hell he could put me through, how much could my body endure and how far would he take his new instrument of revenge too? I wondered what the state of my body and my mind would be in if I was ever to make it back to the arms of my Dark Night.

A shell of myself, was all my thoughts could conjure.

“That is quite enough my dear.” Carrick spoke bringing my mind back to the now.

“You will be a mere shell before I even get you to my employer if you carry on with this despair.” I merely shrugged my shoulders and said,

“I already am, without Draven.”

“Ah young, dramatic love, or for Draven, a lifetime in waiting. How sad it is to have lost you now after only a short time.” I couldn't believe he actually looked sad for my situation. His eyes met ones of disbelief and then turned cold in a heartbeat.

“I am not without feelings, young one, and I can only sympathise to your future but if you think now is bad then you have very little idea on what is in store for one that is ‘Chosen’. He cannot save you from fate nor can he prevent it playing out, like the dawn brings the light and the dusk that brings the night, for a son of the Gods knows this. But you are not only young and human, but also ignorant of the ways of our world and that does you no favours.”

“Then if you're not without feelings and can sympathise then why not let me go?” Ok, it was a long shot but what did I have to lose?

“I am afraid your safety on getting you to Lucius is all I can provide. Once my blood is given in bond, then my life also is in the hands of my employer. If I was to fail then my life would be given in return for the life I am commissioned.” This was said so matter of fact I snorted.

“But nice try!” He said laughing to himself.

“So what you're trying to say is that I should just give up, is that it! Just resign myself on the inevitable, is that what you would do Carrick, just lay down and give up?” I was getting angry now and worked up, to the point that my hands made their way into fists and my nails penetrated the skin on my

palms.

“But not at all dear one, my you are feisty indeed, much suited to a king such as Draven. I merely state that, given the inner strength you surely possess, you should rise above your fear and never lose faith in the extraordinary gifts you have been blessed with. After all, they will save your soul more than once, I am sure of it. Keep your mind locked firmly shut out to those who wish to control it and you will find you hold more power than even that of the man you so deeply love.” Again, another cartoon jaw dropping moment.

“Heed my advice young one and take it with you, if nothing else of our time together.” At this I lost all my anger like a deflating balloon in the hands of a child. I had nothing else to lose but a lifetime of understanding to gain. It seemed to me that the advice of this man was the most important I was ever to receive in my life and I was not arrogant or stubborn enough not to see it for what it was....a warning.

So with this in mind, I did what I knew was all that was in my power to do, I blocked my mind off to the world. I built not only walls keeping out any intruders but a mental fortress. I spent what felt like a great deal of time picturing my mind as some priceless artefact that needed castle walls ten feet thick and when that didn't feel enough I would place the most important emotions inside a locked vault made of pure titanium, this is where Draven would be safe and nothing else mattered.

“Ah peace at last, you have done well dear one, your mind is nothing but a blank and for one of my kind that is quite rare indeed.” At this I actually found myself smiling. It felt a bit like getting praise from a teacher or a pat on the head from your father for cleaning your room.

“A drink to celebrate?” He said, motioning with his hand a stewardess forward who I had quite forgotten was even on the same plane. She was like every other flight attendant I had seen. Dressed in a tight navy blue suit with a blood red neckerchief tied firmly in place around the slim column of her swan like neck. Hair pulled back into a twisted roll, held there by what could have been magic for all I knew as not a clip or grip could be seen. And to top off the generic similarities, a killer smile covered in thick glossy red to match her perfectly manicured nails.

I felt like anything but celebrating, but as the tray was placed before me after Carrick himself had helped himself I felt somewhat compelled to accept

his hospitality. After all, better to be on the good side of the devil you know than the devil you don't. I took the champagne flute that's lower half was in the design of a metal spine and the glass held by the ribcage, I shuddered at the thought of how I had seen Carrick in his true form as a master of death.

It was hard to think of the man that sat so casually in front of me now had the ability to strike fear into the most courageous man at just one second of insight to how he truly looked. Death you imagine to be cloaked in black from head to foot, long staff held in the icy grip of a fleshless hand, with most of the horrors thankfully hidden, but some think what is concealed is more frightening than knowing, that one's imagination is scarier than the truth the eyes see...

They would be wrong.

Carrick, a walking torture that you prayed wouldn't be taking you to a place where he had once walked and been subjected to the horrors that had resulted in his ghoulish appearance. For what could have caused half his body to start decaying before the rest, I do not know, nor do I ever wish too, but I will never forget the taste of bile that rose upon seeing it. Half a black cloak, hooded to hide his face, only looked more like an oily second skin of burnt plastic. It had moulded to a powerful frame of solid shoulders, down to bulging biceps and hands that could crush skulls with very little effort. But that's where the flesh ended and bloodied skeleton continued. How only a twisted spine could hold so much without added muscle and tissue, I couldn't fathom, but the truth remained and his immense power was a testament to the fact. He had brought the mighty Ragnar, my Viking protector to his knees, something I didn't think possible. And in order to save his life, I had given myself to Carrick as a willing soul for him to take far, far away from the one man that owned that soul.

Dominic Draven.

As my mind had wandered to only hours ago, I saw that we seemed to be descending through the cloud bank. My heart instantly raised a couple of notches at the thought that my journey was coming to an end, one I didn't want to ever meet in person.

“Are we landing?”

“Shortly yes, but do not get yourself in a flurry, try and relax, I assure you the champagne is the best of the region, you should try it.” He nodded to the glass that remained untouched and in a tight death grip from my thoughts.

I looked down at the golden liquid and saw a sad reflection staring back, so without further prompting I gulped it down to the last drop. Carrick at least looked satisfied and turned back to the window to watch our descent. Meanwhile, as if being on standby, the stewardess came hurrying past to collect our empty glasses and returned back to remain unseen somewhere on the plane.

My grip, now without my glass, had turned to the thick leather armrests that held my body snug to the lazy boy style chair. If not for the circumstances that brought me to my first encounter of the luxury of a private jet then I would be enjoying this flight. However, no matter how comfy my butt was, I couldn't help trying to will the ground to get smaller instead of bigger. The patches of urban jungle were getting closer until soon the tiny insects running along strips of grey were seen to be cars on freeways making their way in life. That's when my vision started to blur slightly, like a heavy night of drinking was finally catching up with me.

I could see in the distance the sun getting lower and dusk fast approaching. My body was torn between wanting to run for the door and throw myself out and being rooted to the seat. I didn't want the next part of this nightmare to play out and there was nothing more terrifying than knowing what waited for me at the end of my destination. Carrick was scary enough, but I would rather provoke his wrath than meet Lucius in living flesh any day of the week. So I mentally prepared myself for the landing of a lifetime. As soon as the plane stopped I would bolt for the door and hoped...no, no, more like prayed that I would make it to freedom.

I think Carrick took my tightly closed eyes for one of fear as the plane's wheels hit the tarmac. Of course, thanks to the solid walls I had built, my mind was no longer accessible and my thoughts were far from the plane hitting land. I was gearing myself up until my blood pumped at a greater speed, thanks to the adrenaline now coursing its way around my body like an unstoppable river. Just a little bit longer and then there was a chance, just a small chance that I could make it...I had to.

The plane made its stop outside a hanger, pretty much like the one it left from, and I gathered they didn't want to draw too much attention to the fact that they were kidnapping, to customs, the question "Do you have anything to declare?" sprang to mind.

I was close to bouncing in my seat trying to choose the right moment and hoping that Carrick didn't get up before me, these things were racing around my mind when the sound of the door opening made my final decision for me. Without a second thought, I jumped out of my seat and raced down in between seats like the one I had just vacated. I saw my chance and didn't hold back as my legs pushed me to the only freedom I could see. I was surprised at the speed I seemed to travel, as with one turn of my head, I saw that Carrick hadn't even made it out of his seat by the time I reached the door. I turned back and soon realised why.

The door was fully open and a figure stood in its opening preventing all chances of escape. My eyes tried to fully understand the trick they were playing. Surely this couldn't be real...it just couldn't be.

I was losing my mind, or was this some mind control, a cruel game, anything but the truth that now faced me. This person was my friend, not an enemy...how did this happen? When had my friends turned against me?

"Hello Keira." The voice that had greeted me so many times before didn't sound right with the picture in front of me.

"It...it... can't be!" I finally managed to get out as tears streamed down my flushed cheeks. I turned round now, understanding why Carrick hadn't even bothered to try and stop me, he never needed to. He actually looked sorry for me, until I saw the nod he gave the betrayer behind me. That's when things started to get numb. Like my brain was shutting itself down from shock but when my legs started to cave I knew the horrible truth...

I had been drugged.

Hands grabbed me and pulled me securely so that I wouldn't fall and I couldn't help but shout out at the contact,

"HOW COULD YOU?"

"I'm sorry, but there was no other way." That voice, the voice of a friend, was the last I heard before a sickening blackness took over me,

leaving me feeling cold, frozen to the bone with a bitterness so deep I could lose myself in it.

Trust was a clever thing, one that occurred so blindly that it didn't take thinking about. That was, until you discovered the reason for every bad thing that had happened the last few months now had a name...

Traitor.

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