

BLOOD RAIN

BLOOD BOUND SERIES BOOK 13



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Blood Rain

«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

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Blood Bound Series Book 13

Amy Blankenship, RK Melton

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Chapter 1

Ren rematerialized in the front room of The Witch's Brew right back in the same spot he'd disappeared from and glared down at the top of Lacey's head. She was sitting on the floor with her back to him holding and rocking Vincent like a damn baby with his head pressed against her breasts no less. The muscles around his eyes tightened in irritation.

Lacey jerked her head up and frowned when the black lights in the room started to flicker, making her worry that the thunderstorm was going to take out the power here, like it had at the Museum of the Damned. She flinched and tightened her hold on Vincent when a deafening crack of thunder slammed through the atmosphere, at the same second she saw the flash of lightning.

Vincent let a smirk pull at his lips when he noticed the man shaped shadow the lightning had fleetingly cast on the floor right beside them. Just for the hell of it, he snuggled his cheek deeper into Lacey's soft chest before murmuring, "I think your boyfriend's back love."

Lacey felt the tiny hairs on the back of her neck stand on end and dance. All of her brand-new paranormal senses were telling her that Ren was so close to her that, if she leaned back even slightly, she would feel his legs. She mentally blamed it on morbid curiosity and tilted her head back to look up. Sure enough Ren was leaning over her and glaring down at the both of them.

That definitely wasn't the same gentle gaze he'd given her when he'd left only a few minutes ago and Lacey silently wondered what had happened to sour his mood when he'd returned to the museum. Before she could ask what his problem was, she felt the floor under her vibrate and swung her gaze around the room when everything started to rattle from what she was sure was an earthquake.

Ren gritted his teeth when he heard the crystals and other breakables in the room start vibrating off their shelves. Not in the mood to have the shop destroyed yet again, he stood to his full height and, with a resounding growl, focused his concentration on steadying the store until the quake moved past it.

Vincent pushed himself into a sitting position when the motion inside the store suddenly stopped but the streetlight right outside the front window continued to swing back and forth, casting a moving shadow in the room.

"What on earth is that?" Vincent asked softly when a cloud of dust and debris moved across the window almost obscuring the view of the street.

Ren didn't have to guess he knew. He could feel the demons fleeing the destruction. Once the shockwave had passed he answered, "I do believe the city is now down one demon run museum seeing as how the building is no longer standing." His gaze followed Vincent, who was now making his way toward the window and away from Lacey's smart man.

Vincent gripped the windowsill still feeling weak as he watched the cloud of heavy dust roll past the building in billowing waves. He made a face when he started seeing bodies moving within the dust and realized it was actually demons fleeing the area, using it as dirty camouflage.

He couldn't stop himself from taking a quick step back when a skinless demon came within touching distance of the window in front of him. He could see remnants of what was left of its skin actually hanging on in tatters from the blood soaked muscles. It turned its head to look directly at him and its mouth opened wide in a silently grotesque scream before fading back into the cloud of dust.

"Tell me again this place is warded against demons," Vincent demanded having a feeling there were more demons out there on the street than there'd been in the museum.

Lacey quickly leaned backwards having just seen the demonic image at the window only to wind up pressed against Ren's legs. At the moment she didn't care and welcomed the comforting strength behind her.

“They can’t come in without an invite,” she repeated in a frightened whisper then yelped out of fear when a bloody hand came out of the dust like something from a horror movie and pressed up against the glass, leaving a long crimson streak all the way across as it passed.

“Bloody hell,” Vincent whispered as he slowly turned around and slid down the wall leaning back against it just under the windowsill.

He would much rather deal with the powerful ones any day; at least they weren’t so damn creepy. It was displays like this that always turned Vincent’s stomach. He didn’t have to look again to know they were still out there; he could tell by the frightened look on Lacey’s face as she stared out the window just above his head.

“Close your eyes love. You don’t need this memory coming back to haunt you. They should be gone by the time the dust settles,” he coaxed in a soothing voice.

The muscles in Ren’s jaw flexed as he continued to stare at the man across the room from them. “There are many memories she could have done without,” he said in a dangerous voice, unaware that his eyes were bright enough to look like silver penlights glowing behind the sunglasses. He tried to keep a tight rein on his rage but with so much evil crossing his path it was taking a huge effort. The higher levels of power drifting in and out of his range were trying to push him past the breaking point and leaving him a bit disturbed.

Vincent gave Ren a bored look but when he noticed the silver glow of the other man’s eyes he felt his own temper spike. Those eyes were a bloody reminder of the Fallen who had damned him to this existence.

“And some memories were never meant to be shared,” he shot back with a huge bucket of sarcasm. “But then, she didn’t share them with you willingly; did she? What makes you think that you’re so much better than me?”

Seeing darker shadows streak past the window, Lacey decided to take Vincent’s advice and closed her eyes. The second she was surrounded by darkness her other senses kicked into overdrive. She could feel the demons as they passed close to the store and the longer she concentrated on them the more intense the sensations became.

She could sense so many emotions around her; anger and fear mostly, but even that was warped with malicious intent. It felt like she was mentally touching things that were just out of reach and she wouldn’t lie; it was frightening but equally addicting.

A tantalizing sensation caught her attention and she zeroed in on it, only to suck in a sharp breath when she suddenly felt very hot and heady with passion that didn’t fit in with the scene going on just outside. She blinked when she felt what was damn near close to an orgasm rocket through her and shivered visibly.

Hearing her gasp, Ren reached down and grabbed her wrist pulling her up in front of him. “Where does it hurt,” he asked, completely forgetting about the man he’d just been giving a death glare to.

Lacey’s cheeks went up in flames not knowing how to answer that loaded question. Feeling Ren’s hard body pressed against her back and his warm breath in her ear, her eyes widened. Damn, if that didn’t turn her on.

She squeezed her thighs together and focused on the only person in sight; Vincent. To her horror, he seemed to know exactly what was wrong with her. She wanted to die when his gaze slowly lowered down her body to the apex of her thighs making her fidget. Of course he knew; they had been lovers many times.

Vincent cocked an eyebrow when their gazes met. He knew that heated look; had caused it actually but at the moment it was so out of place that it worried him. Forgetting about the horrors outside, he stood to his full height not wanting her in the arms of a demon while under the influence of lust.

Noticing the way Vincent was looking at Lacey, Ren used his hold on her to turn her around so that she was now facing him instead of the other man. Gazing down at her overly bright eyes and feverish cheeks he growled when he caught the scent of her heavy arousal. It wasn't the demons that had her heart racing.

The image of Vincent's face being pressed against her breasts when he'd first teleported back into the store flashed in Ren's mind making him growl again and glare down at her in stern warning.

"I think you might want to let go of her mate," Vincent demanded. He didn't like the way Ren was looking at her or the animalistic growling for that matter. He started to close the distance between them but his steps faltered when he heard Lacey's breathless voice.

"When I closed my eyes just then, I couldn't see the demons anymore but I could feel them as they passed by. I could almost taste their maliciousness and evil auras. And without meaning to, I turned away from it and tapped into what Gypsy and Nick are doing in the bomb shelter just below us."

Ren fought to concentrate through the red haze of evil that was relentlessly clawing its way into his brain and gradually understood what had spiked her passion but the fact that she'd silently called out to Vincent instead of him was not allowed never again. He slowly lifted his gaze over her head to stare directly at the man he was about to kill.

When Ren's fingers suddenly tightened to the point of pain, Lacey jerked her wrist out of his grip and took a hurried step back from him. Lifting her hand to rub the wrist he'd been gripping so hard she frowned. "And your anger stings, so how about toning it down since this unwanted ability is entirely your fault not mine."

When she caught the flash of silver behind the dark shades he was wearing, she took another step back only to watch as arms came around her from behind. Still dealing with the aftershocks of being turned on and climaxing so quickly, she leaned back into Vincent's familiar embrace.

Vincent tightened his arms around her protectively and narrowed his gaze on Ren. "Just what is she accusing you of doing to her?"

"Vincent don't," Lacey warned when an even stronger wave of evil energy pushed away the delicious vibes she'd been getting from the bomb shelter below. She frowned when it dawned on her that if she was sensing these disturbing auras so strongly then there was a very good chance Ren was getting an evil overdose of them.

"Don't make the mistake of thinking I'm scared of him dove," Vincent said calmly, meaning every word.

Ren focused on the way one of Vincent's arms crossed just above Lacey's full breasts, while the other was a mere inch below. The hold looked a tad bit too seductive and possessive for his tastes and she was right about Nick and Gypsy; he could feel them making love along with the enormous amount of evil that had yet to make it safely out of his succubus range. It wasn't a good combination to be adding jealousy and anger too.

"Hey Vincent, I'm curious about something. How long does it take to revive after having your neck snapped?" The corner of Ren's lips lifted in the barest hint of a wicked smile. "Never mind, I know how to find out the answer."

Lacey's lips parted and she threw her arms out to stop Ren but to her surprise Vincent's body literally vanished into thin air making her stumble backwards. The next thing she knew, her back was against the cold glass of the window. Her eyes widened wondering what Ren had done to Vincent to make him disappear without even touching him.

Ren barely registered the fact that Storm had just stolen his target from him as his attention returned to Lacey. He shot forward and slammed a palm on each side of her, trapping his prey against the shuddering glass. As he stared down at his prisoner, he could see the shadowy forms of demons

on the other side of her passing so close that he could have thrust his hand through the window and grabbed them.

Lacey slowly turned her head to look at one of his hands and noticed it was aligned with the bloody handprint on the other side of the glass. A hairline crack formed in the window where he was touching it and started a zigzagged path toward her. She felt fear wash across her when one of the shadows slammed against the window with a thump. She swallowed knowing shadows really shouldn't make a sound or be able to vibrate the glass like that.

Not wanting the only thing between her and the demons to break, Lacey jerked her frightened gaze back up to Ren. She needed to calm him down before it was too late and did the first thing that came to mind.

Grabbing his shoulder with one hand, Lacey surged upwards pressing her lips hard against his, while her other hand slid down across the crotch of his pants. She quickly found proof that he was not only out of control but obviously turned on. She wrapped her hand over the huge bulge and gripped him, as she aggressively licked and sucked at his bottom lip.

Ren closed his eyes and growled, as his world tried to narrow down with the need to be so far inside Lacey that she would never again want to be in the arms of another man.

When the first thing Ren did was growl ominously, Lacey started to push away from him with all intentions of running like hell but his arm quickly wrapped around her and lifted her up against him. She blinked when his thigh forced its way between her legs and quickly found herself straddling it, making her dress ride up high on her hips.

The arousal she'd been feeling slammed back into her without mercy but this time the overwhelming sensation wasn't coming from the couple downstairs. It was coming from the dangerous man that now had her in his grasp.

Ren gripped the back of her hair and tilted her face upwards as he took the control of the kiss away from her.

Vincent growled in frustration when his scenery changed and his arms were suddenly missing the female he'd had such a protective hold on a mere second ago. Looking for Lacey, he turned full circle and gritted his teeth when he realized he was in a completely different place, some kind of huge office from the looks of it.

"Bloody hell," he ranted, now totally confused.

"Welcome to PIT," Storm said from his seat behind the desk. He had been looking forward to this and tried hard not to smile.

"PIT," Vincent asked, swinging around to locate the voice. "I've heard of you blokes, never thought I'd get a chance to meet any of you though."

"You'll meet more than a few of us" with Ren being the first, Storm informed him.

Vincent stiffened at Ren's name. "No wonder the big jerkoff is so bloody confident. He damn near has an army to back him up."

Storm suppressed his smirk. "Ren doesn't need an army but that's not the reason I brought you here."

"Then what is the reason," Vincent inquired, actually feeling impatient. He needed to get back to Lacey and make sure she was safe.

"If you are finished pretending to be a slave for the demons, I want you to join PIT," Storm said, getting to the root of the matter. "Your abilities make you a perfect match for PIT and your slight addiction can be dealt with."

Vincent sent a glare at the other man. "What addiction would that be mate?"

"The one where you're hooked on getting yourself killed," Storm answered with a steady gaze. "I assure you, going up against the demons with us, there is a good possibility you'll still get your fix."

That's all fine and dandy but I think I'll pass. The only reason I'm in this bloody city is for Lacey and leaving her alone with that silver eyed demon is not on my agenda," Vincent said becoming agitated.

Ren is a human at heart, which means he bleeds just as red as you do," Storm corrected. "You two actually have a lot in common since you both have rare powers. Where you have the ability to revive from any injury including death, Ren has the ability to siphon the power from any type of supernatural being that's within his siphoning range. The animosity you hold for Ren is unfounded; he is not of the Fallen race," he explained.

Vincent's glare darkened, "What do you know about the Fallen?"

"I know enough," Storm said cryptically.

So his kidnapper was a fan of big, moody, and broody awesome. In his opinion, that only made this man a bloody idiot.

"If Ren can siphon power from those around him, then he's on overload right now since that little magic shop they're in happens to be surrounded by demons at the moment," Vincent pointed out. "The man didn't seem very stable when you jerked me out of there and I do believe he had every intention of timing me on how long it took me to revive from a broken neck."

"It would have taken twenty-five minutes and thirteen seconds to revive," Storm smirked when Vincent's face lost all expression. He shrugged, "It had to have already happened for me to know the right moment to show up. You do seem to know what buttons to press in order to tick Ren off. As for Lacey, she's perfectly safe in his presence."

"Sorry if I'm having trouble believing you mate," Vincent nearly growled not wanting to waste any more time with this nonsense. He'd met his share of powerful entities and to his knowledge none of them were capable of reversing time.

"It's completely up to you what you choose to believe," Storm shrugged his shoulders knowing what was coming. "If you agree to join PIT then you will have the opportunity to see for yourself."

Vincent shook his head, "Not a chance in hell. You can damn well put me right back where you kidnapped me from."

Storm's expression was haunted and he paid no attention to the quick rejection. "Just because you have been hiding among the demons doesn't erase your true nature. You were once a Knight for one of the most powerful kingdoms in history and have saved many lives. You protected the weak from their oppressors and, even at the time of your true death, you still went down fighting a demon you knew you couldn't beat all because you thought that you were protecting a small defenseless child."

"How in the hell would you know about that," Vincent whispered, as the vivid memory flashed in his mind's eye.

"Maybe you would better understand if I introduced myself properly," Storm said, just before vanishing.

Vincent flinched when Storm was suddenly standing right beside him gripping his arm and his scenery had once again changed. To his confusion, they were back in the museum hidden in a shadowed alcove. He swung his gaze around the main room seeing the demons were still getting ready for the auction that obviously hadn't taken place yet.

He instinctively sank deeper into the darkness when David came into the room followed by the same demons that had tortured him; he could even see his blood still fresh on their hands.

The museum vanished and the office was suddenly surrounding them again. "My name is Storm and I am a Time Walker. In order to do a thorough background check on someone, I simply go see the truth for myself."

Vincent's lips thinned; caught between the need to be amazed and the need to check on Lacey. A Time Walker; PIT; this city just got a hell of a lot more interesting.

“You do realize that you are still striving to protect someone weaker than you, it’s just your true nature to do so. Let’s make a deal,” Storm offered, feeling no remorse for breaking his own rule about making deals, since neither one of them were demons. “I will go retrieve Lacey right now if you agree to join us. After all, she is already a member of PIT and belongs here with us.”

Vincent didn’t even bother thinking it over. Honestly, at this point, what did he have to lose?

Chapter 2

Ren palmed the small of Lacey's back and pulled her closer, making her heat slide deliciously the rest of the way up his thigh. He ground his erection against her stroking hand and deepened the kiss with a harsh growl, moving in an erotic rhythm that she was willingly matching. Most of the demons had moved on, allowing him to slowly come down off the paranormal power surge but he was unwilling to let her in on that little secret just yet, due to the new high he was caught up in.

Lacey stilled when she realized she was no longer feeling the creepy sensation down her spine that had been caused by the demons outside the window. Remembering the demons had a domino effect on her, reminding her of the fact that only a few moments ago, Vincent's arms had mysteriously disappeared from around her. The scene flashed in her mind making her flinch.

The second she stopped riding his thigh and returning the kiss with such abandon, Ren released her lips and pulled back enough to stare down into her eyes. Seeing the startled look on her face, he lowered his leg, letting her slide down his body until she was standing there trembling, forcing her to hold onto his shoulders for balance.

"I was just trying to calm you down," Lacey said breathlessly. She silently wished for her own chill pill now that her thighs were once again going up in flames. Trying to distract herself, she peeked around Ren to where Vincent would have been, if he hadn't vanished. "Where did Vincent go?"

Ren ran a hand through his bangs when it dawned on him that she'd only kissed him to keep him distracted. He sighed, attempting to block out the fact that Nick and Gypsy were still below them, going at it like bunnies. His lips thinned figuring it was the power of PIT members he was still feeding off of, since the demons seemed to have scattered.

"Storm took him," Ren informed her, as if he couldn't care less.

He refused to move back from her, causing her to have to slide out from between him and the window. He stared at the bloody handprint on the window then moved his gaze from the glass to follow her movements around him.

"Took him where," Lacey whispered, now that she had her back to him. She felt an almost imperceptible shiver when he stalked up behind her.

Ren dipped his lips close to the shell of her ear and returned the whisper in a husky voice, "I hear Hades is nice this time of the year. Maybe Storm teleported him there for a nice long vacation."

"He probably just took him to the castle," Lacey corrected a little too loudly as she spun around to face him rather than let him do that again. Damn, that had about made her knees buckle. "He could have given us a teleport too," she mumbled, feeling her cheeks flame as she wondered if Storm had seen her sexual assault on Ren and decided not to interrupt.

"What's your rush," Ren asked, not ready to reunite her with her dead lover just yet. He did a bad job of hiding his smirk knowing he could turn that fictional thought into reality as many times as he wanted considering the jerk would be dumb enough to revive every time.

Lacey glanced down at the floor, accidentally getting a lock on Gypsy and Nick again. She felt the heat spread back across her cheeks. "There's only one bed here and I think it's taken. Besides, I want to make sure Vincent is safe."

"Vincent's just fine," Storm informed her, having teleported them into the castle office before she even finished her sentence. He was quick to teleport himself over to the desk so he wouldn't be so close to Ren's anger at having been interrupted. It wasn't his fault that Vincent fearlessly stayed within the danger zone.

"Twenty-five minutes and thirteen seconds," Vincent said, glaring right at Ren.

"What?" Ren snapped, feeling his temper spike now that the idiot was back in his sight.

“That’s how long it takes to revive from a broken neck,” Vincent smirked. “Sorry to put a damper on your curiosity.”

“Ren wasn’t exactly himself,” Lacey said, stepping in between them, but the fact that her back was to Ren made it obvious just whom she was taking up for.

Vincent watched the slow devious smile appear across Ren’s lips; too bad Lacey couldn’t see it. That was okay, he knew how to pop things that were full of hot air. “I assume Ren isn’t himself quite often, seeing as how he’s a succubus and hanging out in a city that’s infested with bloody demons. I wouldn’t trust him as far as I could throw him.”

“Well, too bad, since he helped save both our lives tonight,” Lacey countered stubbornly.

“I don’t need anyone to save my life, or have you forgotten my little disability,” Vincent thundered, stepping closer so he could glare down at her. He watched her lips part with her sharp intake of breath and instantly regretted the fact that he knew exactly how to hurt her the most.

His features softened when she reached out as if to touch his cheek, but the resounding smack that echoed across the room caused his frown to return full force. “Fine, maybe he deserved that, though he couldn’t fathom why.”

“That’s for killing yourself right in front of me you heartless ass,” Lacey said harshly, before adding a little louder, “and just because you don’t remember it doesn’t mean I forgive you.”

“Duly noted,” Vincent responded sarcastically when Lacey spun on her heels and strode to the desk Storm was sitting behind.

Lacey placed her palms on the desk top and leaned forward to whisper to Storm. “Sorry, I wasn’t supposed to say anything about that, was I?”

Storm tried like hell to keep eye contact with her but, even in doing so, he could still see almost all of her breasts because of the way she was leaning forward in the sexy little dress he’d picked out for her. Sometimes he outsmarted himself.

“Someone was bound to mention it to him sooner or later,” he answered, having teleported beside her but now facing the other two men. He rubbed his chin to hide his smirk when Lacey slowly turned her head to stare at him but didn’t rise up from her sexy little position. “Ren, how about filling in the database on tonight’s undertaking?”

Ren was suddenly behind the desk, startling Lacey enough for her to jerk her gaze up to him, only to find that he wasn’t staring at her face. She glanced down in confusion then stilled, seeing just what he was staring at; her breasts. Refusing to take the embarrassment, she gave him a wicked smile before slowly rising up and turning her back on him.

Storm cocked an amused eyebrow when Ren turned to look at him accusingly. That little slice of eye candy wasn’t his fault; at least he’d shared a tasty bite. He returned his attention to Vincent, who was still standing there stroking his chin thoughtfully while watching Lacey.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” Lacey informed him, ending the line of questioning before it could even start.

Vincent raised his hands in surrender, “Fine.”

“Did you agree to join PIT,” she asked, softening her voice. She tried not to pay attention to the fact that one of his cheeks was now several shades redder due to her temper.

“I reckon I did love,” Vincent responded, now knowing Storm had gotten him good on that little deal. She obviously hadn’t been in any danger at all and the Time Walker would have known that for a fact.

“Hey, I told you she was fine,” Storm defended himself with a shrug, when Vincent gave him a brooding look.

“What’s the catch,” Vincent asked, not really all that upset he’d been tricked into making a deal that bound him to a legendary Time Walker and the elusive PIT organization.

“You have to have a partner,” Lacey quickly answered, remembering the reasoning behind the rule.

“Are you offering?” Vincent smirked, liking the deal more and more by the minute.

“No,” Ren answered for her. “She’s mine.”

Lacey blinked at the possessiveness in Ren’s voice, but she didn’t call him a liar. She glanced over at Storm curiously. “Has there ever been a threesome?” She didn’t catch the wrongness of the question until she noticed Vincent’s right eyebrow rise several notches and heard a low growl coming from behind her.

“Oh geez, get over it you perverts. I didn’t mean it that way and you know it,” Lacey insisted, crossing her arms over her chest. She blinked, having to block out all kinds of dirty thoughts that were suddenly trying to become images in her dirty little mind.

Storm rubbed his temple trying not to laugh. Someone had to come to her rescue, and it looked like it was going to have to be him. “Sometimes PIT teams do go out together in groups, but even then, you have that one special person that you keep an extra eye out for, and vice versa. I happen to know the perfect temporary partner for Vincent, since it just so happens that person’s partner is missing in action at the moment.”

“Well, it doesn’t sound like this person kept a very good eye on his last partner now does it,” Vincent pointed out, feeling a bit sarcastic and not caring if they liked it or not. He frowned at Lacey wondering when he’d become so attached to her. The fact that he’d seen red when Ren had boldly announced “she’s mine” was not a good sign.

“It’s kind of hard to keep your eyes on a shape shifter that’s gone into stealth mode. I’m sure Trevor is around here somewhere, but in what form even I don’t know,” Storm defended.

“A shape shifter really,” Vincent asked, feeling like he was suddenly in a paranormal candy store with all kinds of exotic flavors. He understood true shape shifters weren’t fables but the demons in the thievery ring had searched for one forever and never been successful in locating such an enigma.

“You’re going to put him with Chad,” Ren asked, though he wasn’t really against the idea if it got the other man away from Lacey.

“Think about it,” they both seem to have the same affliction,” Storm pointed out helpfully knowing Ren would catch the hidden meaning.

“You mean he has a fetish for dying?” Vincent made a face since that was the affliction Storm had rightfully accused him of having. He ignored the sharp glare Lacey was suddenly giving him. She hated it when he talked about dying as if it was no big deal. “If you were going to put me with a demon, then why didn’t you just leave me with the demons I was already used to?”

“Chad is one hundred percent human but Storm is right. He was murdered recently,” stabbed in the heart,” Ren paused, seeing a warning look from Storm and secretly tapped into Storm’s inner voice only to find out he wasn’t to say a single word about the Fallen,” neither Kriss nor Dean. He had to concentrate to keep a straight face as he connected the dots.

Returning his full attention to Vincent, Ren continued. “Chad is back up walking around and still just as human as you are. So far, Chad’s only died once and that was against his will, so I wouldn’t call it a fetish.”

“The next time he dies he could stay dead or not,” Storm offered. “Either way, I’m not allowed to tell spoilers.”

“Yeah right,” Vincent said, feeling his sarcasm kick back in.

“He’s not lying,” Lacey insisted, stepping closer to Storm. “If he tells someone what’s going to happen in the future or even hints at it, he starts to bleed from injuries we can’t even see.”

She turned to gaze up at Storm and reached out to tenderly touch his upper arm. "I've seen it happen," she said sadly. "You broke the rule and bled for me. Those horrible things went all of the way through me tonight. I would be dead right now if you hadn't warned Ren of what was coming."

Storm tried to keep the love from shining in his eyes as he stared down at Lacey and felt her gentle touch, but he did love her dearly, so it was hard. "You being here right now made it worth every drop," he said honestly, before lifting his gaze to lock with Ren's. "Besides, the consequences of you dying seriously sucked and that's not a spoiler since it didn't happen."

"But it obviously did happen and you erased it." Lacey gave him an adoring smile before pressing herself against him and giving him a heartfelt hug. "You and Ren chose to save me," she amended before backing away to look at Vincent. "If Storm wants you with Chad, then there's probably a very good reason for it."

Vincent sobered, suddenly getting it. These two powerful men could protect Lacey way better than he ever could; they'd already proven that fact. Who was he to take that kind of safety away from her?

Sighing dramatically, he fluttered his eyelashes at her. "Fine, you've sold me. We can both be fan girls of the Time Walker." He purposely left Ren's name off the fan list because he wasn't sold on the big guy being her boyfriend; just a damn good bodyguard.

Ren ignored the fact that he could hear Vincent's inner thoughts loud and clear. As far as he was concerned, he'd already won the war for the mere fact that Lacey hadn't begged to be Vincent's partner.

"So, you agree to be teamed up with Chad," Lacey asked with a happy smile. She couldn't stay mad at Vincent if someone paid her; not when she adored him so much. She flinched when the screen of the huge monitor on the wall to her right suddenly cracked loudly and sent sparks cascading down to the floor.

Ren rubbed the bridge of his nose before glaring at the broken monitor long enough to use his powers to quickly fix the damage he'd just done to it.

Vincent sent a suspicious glance in Ren's direction before returning Lacey's smile. "Sure, for all I know, Chad was scratched by a demon's pet cat and now has nine lives; oops, eight lives," He corrected and shrugged. "I guess I can show him the ropes."

He strode right up to Lacey and fearlessly placed his arm around her shoulders before turning them to face Storm. "So what exactly does Chad do for PIT?"

"Chad's a high ranking cop, though he's one of the only human cops left in the city. With a lot of the 911 calls coming in being more than a little on the strange side, we've had to fill the city with paranormal police officers, along with infiltrating the rescue workers, hospitals, and fire departments," Storm answered.

"That's understandable," Vincent nodded, silently doing the math of just how many paranormals it would take to pull a citywide trick like that off. "After the stampede I witnessed tonight outside the Witches Brew, it's a wonder the humans aren't dropping like flies."

Storm was becoming drained from flickering in and out of the room so fast that no one would catch on to what he was doing. Thankfully, Ren was too busy to notice his weakening state, since he was concentrating on the fact that Vincent was once again touching Lacey.

Focusing back on the topic, Storm continued. "It's because of PIT's combined efforts that the human casualties have been kept to a minimum, but even that amount has the city morgues overflowing. The demons are trying to stay off our radar but don't get me wrong; it's a very dangerous job and right up your alley."

"Yeah, the worst thing that could happen is you get painfully killed; constantly," Ren agreed, making it sound like the best thing in the world. Who knew he could be so petty.

“Ooh!” I think I just got one whole goose bump!” try harder,” Vincent responded to the barb in his most bored tone.

Storm interrupted their verbal war before it escalated into Vincent’s first painful death as an official PIT member. “With your expertise on the different types of demons and what their weaknesses might be, you’d be a lot of help. And don’t worry! you will have an arsenal of weapons and I’m not talking about standard police issue! we have the kind that tends to ruin a demon’s day.”

Lacey glanced at Ren when Storm mentioned weapons. The truth was! she was looking at their best weapon, yet after what happened back at the Witch’s Brew, she understood that he was also the unstable fuck-bomb that could take them all out if he lost control. Remembering just how she’d given him that control back, she blushed and looked away.

“But don’t forget,” Storm reminded Vincent, “your number one job is to keep Chad safe until Trevor comes out of hiding. If you get careless and taken out by a demon, that leaves Chad without true backup until you revive.”

“Speaking of weapons,” Vincent said and gave Storm a slow smile. “Once the babysitting job is done, I suggest me and you team up and go retrieve some very unique items I know of! things the demons have hidden away.”

“You honestly think you’re going to be teamed up with Storm,” Ren asked, with an arched eyebrow, again feeling an overpowering need to rip Vincent to shreds.

Lacey frowned at him once again, hearing the jealousy in his voice. The man seemed to have a possessive streak a mile long and obviously didn’t want to share her or Storm.

“Stingy,” she accused.

Ren shrugged, “It just amazes me how highly the newbie thinks of himself.”

Lacey rolled her eyes. “Oh get over it, what are you! five?” She moved away from Vincent and approached Ren, watching his face for any sign that it would improve his mood and prove her theory right.

“I’m a lot older than you,” Ren mocked, with a wide grin now that Vincent was left standing alone.

“You made the water heater break while I was in the shower,” Lacey countered playfully, now that she had proof of her nearness being the equivalent of his chill pill. “So mentally, you’re a lot younger than me.”

“Shall I take you to meet Chad,” Storm asked, trying to distract Vincent and keep him out of trouble. Lacey was quickly learning how to calm Ren’s dark side but Vincent was a hell of a lot slower on the uptake.

“Is it safe to leave them alone,” Vincent whispered, then daringly raised his voice to get their attention. “By the way! I’m pretty sure I’m older than either one of you and you’re both grounded! though I might let Lacey off with a spanking, if she agrees to play nice.” He gave her a suggestive little smile when she swung around to look at him with wide eyes.

Storm quickly reached out and teleported Vincent out of harm’s way, making a point to remember the expression on Ren’s face. Maybe he would make a special trip back with a camera while he was at it.

Unable to ignore the strange flash of light that went off right in his face, Ren blinked. Instead of grabbing the idiot he had been aiming for, he wound up gripping thin air and staring at a piece of paper left fluttering in front of him. He snatched it from the air with a frustrated growl.

“What’s that?” Lacey asked, completely at peace with the fact that Storm had once again disappeared with Vincent. At least she trusted Storm to keep him safe and alive.

“It seems your ex-partner is going to be out of range for the rest of the day,” Ren frowned, when the note suddenly vanished and was replaced with a snapshot of his face distorted with rage.

Haâ#! Ha. Storm was just a barrel of laughs lately. He gave a wicked smile as the snapshot turned to dust and slipped through his fingers.

Ren turned his head to look at Lacey and noticed her eyes flashing with humor. She was still staring at his hand where the picture had just been.

â##Liked that did you,â## he asked with a cocked eyebrow. She was making it hard for him to hold on to his anger. Her nodding vigorously was just way too cute.

Chapter 3

“I need to get out of these clothes,” Lacey said, glancing down at the cocktail dress she was still wearing. The dress had been really pretty when she’d first put it on, but after the frightening night she’d had, it was dirty and actually ripped in a couple of places where she’d been pierced by those demon strands.

A shockwave of intense sexual need hit her hard and Lacey snapped her startled gaze back up to Ren's stone faced expression. Had that come from her or him? She hadn't been thinking about sex when she'd mentioned taking her clothes off but damn if it wasn't on her mind now.

“And obviously another ice cold shower is in order,” she added, placing the palm of her hand against the tightening of her stomach muscles. She’d never been shy when it came to talking about sex and she wasn't going to start biting her lip now. “Am I leeching this sexual need from you?”

Ren had practically stopped breathing when he’d imagined removing her dress for her in one fluid movement, then lifting her naked body up on the desk behind her. He blinked as the bluntness of her question sank in. The answer was a resounding YES. She’d known exactly what Nick and Gypsy had been up to in the bomb shelter, but it never dawned on him that she would also be able to tap into his emotions or desires.

Hopefully she had only received a fraction of that ability or she wouldn't last very long in this castle. He made a mental note to ask Guy if he could create some kind of spell or charm for her to wear that would tone the ability down but, for now, he could at least give her the truth.

“This castle is full of paranormals with heightened emotions,” he informed her, trying to get his own under control. Sensing she was in need right now wasn't helping and it was causing a boomerang affect between them. “Paranormals have emotions just like humans. The difference is they feel each emotion much stronger than a normal human ever would and you're tapping in to that overload.”

He started towards her feeling much like a predator stalking its prey. Ren felt a satisfied smirk try to tug at his lips when she backed up against the desk right in the same spot he had envisioned lifting her from.

“Their anger could cause a normal human to go on a killing spree and their brand of love is what we would call a dangerous obsession.” He suddenly leaned forward, placing his hands against the desk on each side of her to trap her beneath him. He then dipped his lips very close to her ear. “And their carnal lust is so hot it burns.”

Lacey closed her eyes as she felt his breath touch her neck. Yeah, he was right about burning because she was on fire. Her lips parted as her breathing sped up. “Their bodies must also be hypersensitive to touch because your breath against my neck feels way too good to be anywhere near normal.”

The growl next to her ear was her only reply but the sound was so seductive that Lacey heard the answer within it. He was so close to her yet he wasn't touching her anywhere. It was as if he had complete control while she was left swimming in a whirlpool of passion, waiting for the slightest tug to pull her under. She really wanted to experiment with this yummy little side effect right now, if he was game.

Mentally deleting the seduction at the Witch's Brew less than an hour ago since it had happened under duress, Lacey thought about the last time they had touched one another. It had happened right here in this office. She'd believed that she would be dead by dawn and had wanted to spend the last remaining hours lost in sensual pleasure with him. Ren had been the one to put a stop to it because he'd been listening in on her thoughts.

Well, she didn't have a death threat hanging over her head anymore thanks to him, so he couldn't hold that against her. If she had her way, he would hold something else against her very soon and, with the mood she was in, she hoped it was big and throbbing.

“Since you're the one who gave me the power to accidentally set myself on fire like this, do you want to be the one to help me extinguish the flame, or do I need to find someone else who is willing to be my firefighter,” she asked, remembering the sting of his last rejection.

Ren tightened his grip on the desk when the rush of heat he'd been feeling quickly morphed into hot as hell anger. Had she really just threatened to go find someone else to quench her desire? The image of her and Vincent making love in the not so distant past seared through his head like a locomotive.

He should have also warned her about extreme jealousy but it was a moot point, since he seemed to be the only one feeling that particular emotion.

“I will teach you not only how to use the powers that have been awakened inside you, but how to control the ones that will put others in danger,” he whispered deceptively, before taking her in his arms.

Lacey blinked when Ren pulled her close and she noticed the office fading into the distance. Within seconds, she found herself in the same bedroom she had woken up in his. Her gaze strayed to the bed hoping she was finally going to get what she'd been secretly craving since she'd met him. Instead, he gripped her arm and pulled her past the bed, making her frown in confusion.

Being propelled into a connecting bathroom, she couldn't suppress the shocked scream when she suddenly found herself in the shower with icy cold water cascading down on the top of her head. Shivering, she reached out and turned the water off realizing she was still fully dressed. She was now seeing her sensitive skin statement in a whole new light. That was freakin colder than cold ever thought about being.

“What the hell was that for,” Lacey demanded, glaring over at Ren with murder in her eyes.

“Lesson number one,” Ren growled, leaning toward her for emphasis, “don't let siphoned sexual heat get to you so bad that you would sleep with just anyone to get a fix.”

Lacey's glare didn't lessen as her teeth chattered. “You're right. What the hell was I thinking asking you? I promise, next time I'll choose who I ask a little wiser.” She waited for a comeback from him but was met with complete silence that made her a bit nervous, and the fact that she couldn't see his eyes for the stupid sunglasses wasn't helping.

She wondered where the desire Ren had been feeling a moment ago went and why the hell it had suddenly been replaced by rage. The emotion was so strong that she struggled to contain it. She had spent the last year guarding her thoughts and emotions from dangerous people and now she was almost a pro at it, except around him for some damn reason.

Instead of hitting the big jerk like she wanted to, she grabbed the frosted shower door and slammed it in his face so she wouldn't have to look at him. Taking the dress off, she threw the sodden thing over the shower door and smirked when the sound of slung water hitting something reached her ears. She hoped the cold rain from it got him right in the face. He so deserved it and much more.

Glancing back towards the frosted glass, Lacey wanted to do a happy dance when she saw the distorted shape of Ren's body and could tell that he was taking his sunglasses off to dry them. The small taste of revenge cooled her anger for the moment. Turning on the hot water, Lacey stepped under it and groaned in ecstasy as it warmed her chilled flesh.

Ren gritted his teeth, still seething over the easy way she'd just informed him that she would ask for someone else's help the next time she got horny. Throwing her in the cold shower had been his temper's idea and his temper had never been that smart. He would have to fix the mistake

before she attempted to make good on the threat— attempt being the operative word because he would never allow someone else to touch her in such a way.

His lips parted to warn her that she would be giving a death sentence to anyone she tried to seduce but he gritted his teeth to keep the angry words from forming. She would only take it as a challenge anyway and probably run straight to her lover boy, since killing the idiot wouldn't matter.

Ren ran a hand through his bangs to get them out of his eyes and started pacing back and forth as his mind raced. It was true that he would have to test her limits on how much of the world around her she was ciphering. The last thing they needed was for her to go into a blood rage just because the demon beside her was in a bad mood. He'd been practicing at this a lot longer than her— and he would be the one that would teach her how to deal with it.

His pacing slowed realizing she wasn't the only one who needed to get a handle on new things. For heaven's sake, he hadn't even left the bathroom so she could take a shower in peace. Was he that afraid to let her out of his sight? Again— the answer to that question was obvious.

Ren slowly turned his gaze toward the lightly frosted glass that separated them. His eyesight was way too good for him to be hanging out in here.

With a frustrated sigh, he spun on his heels and left the bathroom in quick strides. He needed to distance himself from her nakedness so he could think clearly. He came to a stop in the middle of his bedroom when he noticed Storm, who was casually leaning against the bed post with a couple of shopping bags at his feet.

—I'll make this quick because in just a few minutes, she is going to come out of there butt naked and blaming you.— Storm smirked, knowing his friend was having a hard time. It seemed neither one of them was having a good day but Ren's was about to get a lot shorter.

—Then by all means hurry up before I teleport your slow ass out of here myself,— Ren stated, returning the smirk, which quickly died on his lips when he realized just how Storm would know that Lacey would emerge naked. He tilted his head seeing the blood pooling in Storm's ear when the Time Walker looked away from him.

—She will need these,— Storm said, indicating the bags before vanishing.

Knowing Storm was evading the tongue lashing he'd been about to give him didn't help Ren's mood in the least. What the hell was Storm doing that was making him bleed? He stalked over to glare down at the bags seeing the clothing inside. The sight made him remember the fact that she was at the moment wearing only water.

He slowly glanced back at the door that separated them wondering if he shouldn't just leave the clothes right where they were.

Lacey's heartbeat was still racing as she lathered up and scrubbed at her fevered skin in quick, almost painful movements. She was mad as hell and, oddly enough, still highly aroused, which was just pissing her off more. Hell— the pain from scrubbing too hard was even feeling good.

This was Ren's fault. She was positive that it had been his sexual need that she'd been leeching off of in the office just then. The craving had been so strong that she could taste it. There was also no mistaking the fact that he'd been turned on when he'd backed her up against the desk like that— the huge bulge in his pants made it undeniable.

How dare he preach control to her when she'd just watched him lose control at The Witch's Brew only a little while ago? She closed her eyes and bit her bottom lip trying to suppress a moan when that little memory sent a bolt of white hot heat straight down her abs to thump hard against her core.

Damn him. She wished it worked both ways so she could pay him back for the sexual frustration she was experiencing. The soapy rag paused just under her breasts, as she stilled. Maybe it was a two way street. He siphoned on others emotions so who was to say he wouldn't feel her arousal right now— especially if she magnified it on purpose. No hot blooded woman in her right mind was above masturbation if left without any other options.

Her shoulders slumped wondering why she was trying to pick a fight with the man that had saved her life just a couple hours ago. Granted, he was bossy and could be a real jerk but that wasn't all there was to him and she knew it. She slowly reached out and turned the cold water on, raising her face to meet the chilly spray.

Ren opened his eyes when he felt her arousal fade, only to find himself with his hand already gripping the bathroom doorknob. He knew damn well he would lose this little battle of wills with her if she emerged naked as Storm had suggested. He swung around and glared at the bags of clothing Storm had brought for her.

Lacey shivered and turned the water off before glancing up at the wet dress Storm had given her. No way was she wiggling back into that thing. The way she looked at it, only two things could happen if she walked out of here in the buff—she'd either get laid or he would sling some oversized clothes at her.

She could already imagine his expression and smirked, wondering why it was that every time she decided to be a good girl, fate would present the perfect opportunity for her to be very bad.

Stepping out of the shower, she frowned seeing several shopping bags sitting on the long marble sink. It only took a moment to shift through the contents and come to the conclusion that this was exactly what she would have bought if she'd done the shopping herself.

Her lips parted as it dawned on her just who had stopped her from performing the streak in front of Ren. She hurriedly stepped into her clothes figuring if Storm wanted her dressed then there was probably a very good reason for it. Finally dressed and feeling a little more in control, she glanced in the mirror seeing the door behind her and her thoughts instantly went back to the man who was waiting just on the other side.

She really needed to stop pressing his buttons like that. Besides, it wasn't a whole lot of fun since he had a way of winning every single argument. The sudden cold shower had been a little heavy-handed but she wasn't stupid—she'd felt the heat of his anger as soon as she'd teased him. She thought back to her exact words.

“Since you're the one who gave me the power to accidentally set myself on fire like this—do you want to be the one to help me extinguish the flame, or do I need to find someone else who is willing to be my firefighter.”

She'd only said it that way in self-defense since he'd turned her down the first time she'd wanted to have sex with him. But in all honesty—she had also been half joking, hoping he would agree to be her firefighter. Vincent had always taken her teasing in stride and even teased back, but she understood it was because they were friends more than true lovers—she would have to keep that in mind.

Ren had given her a part of himself to save her life and she could feel the strong bond that now tethered them together—closer than she and Vincent had ever been. She wanted only Ren and she could tell he wanted her too—his possessiveness of her had made that loud and clear. She took a deep breath then fluffed her hair up deciding if she wanted him then she would just have to seduce him until he couldn't take it anymore. Blowing herself a kiss in the mirror, she turned and headed for the room that had the big bed in it.

Her theory of needing to be fully clothed was proven right when she stepped out of the bathroom only to see Ren's bedroom disappear from around her.

Chapter 4

Angelica slipped through her bedroom door and quickly shut it behind her. Sliding the lock in place, she leaned her forehead against the thick wood wishing it was made of something stronger—titanium maybe.

Releasing a heavy sigh, she frowned and stepped away from the door, staring at the lock like it was her only hope. In a way it was. That little lock was the only thing between her and the craving she had to see Syn now that he wasn't here watching her—stalking her.

Lifting her hand, she rubbed her right temple in furious little circles trying to piece together the fact that she had just ran away from the man—or whatever he was, only to now miss him so much that her chest was actually aching.

I don't need anyone, Angelica reminded herself but her fingers paused in mid circle. She jerked her hand down from her temple tasting the lie within the words. Considering she felt the withdrawal symptoms, she might as well label him as what he was—an addiction.

Slowly backing further away from the door, she closed her eyes allowing her thoughts to deepen. It didn't take a rocket scientist to see that Syn was messing with her mind and God help her if she wasn't beginning to second guess herself. It was a dangerous line to cross because if she dared—there would be no turning back.

They shouldn't be partners—why hadn't Storm foreseen this? All Syn had done down in that tunnel was make a fool out of her. It wasn't like he really needed a partner when all he had to do was place a damn barrier around the exits and the job was done.

The memory came back to haunt her like a vivid nightmare. Down in the tunnels under the museum—she'd felt an intense feeling of claustrophobia wash over her as the ceiling of the tunnel suddenly rumbled and cracked. It was an ominous sensation to realize she was standing in her own grave.

Just as large jagged rocks began breaking off and falling around her, she saw a number of demons racing down the hidden stairway trying to escape into the tunnels—and she was standing directly in their path. There was a tidal wave of debris on their heels swallowing up some of the demons that weren't fast enough to escape it.

She had been frozen to the spot, completely terrified, when arms suddenly came around her and the stairway faded into the distance before disappearing entirely. Angelica shivered again and wrapped her arms around herself remembering the feeling of the tunnel collapsing around her but it was what had happened next that had been her true downfall.

When her world had stabilized again, she found that they were on the roof of a building instead of underneath one. Still feeling the slight vibration under her feet, she'd turned her head just in time to witness the museum collapsing into the underground tunnels she'd only seconds ago been standing in.

Slowly looking back at the warm chest she was being held against, she'd noticed her hands were fisted in his shirt, giving away the fact that she had been frightened and needed him. At that moment, she had wanted nothing more than to bury herself in his strong arms and stay there—where nothing could hurt her.

She had then made the mistake of gazing up at the beautiful man she was clinging to. The ends of his dark hair lifted in the updraft from the collapsing building but he appeared so irrationally calm—or at least she had thought so, until she'd locked gazes with those amethyst eyes that stared back down at her, full of heat and untamed power.

The sight had reminded her of the first time she'd seen a hauntingly beautiful vision of him—in the cave the same night the symbol had appeared on her palm.

Her breath quickened as her gaze lowered to his sensual lips. Realizing that she wanted him had made her take a quick step back in denial. The moment she was out of his arms, Syn had dropped them, his eyes instantly becoming dark and brooding, a touch dangerous and she had to suppress a shiver.

Snapping out of the memory, Angelica raised her palm seeing that nothing had changed since their first encounter, the symbol was still there in flawless detail. It had been there for a while now. She inwardly flinched when it dawned on her that she had never put any real effort into removing it.

Syn had told her that he had given it to her for protection and for some strange reason she had believed him. When had she started trusting him so completely?

In the past, she would have been questioning every movement, every motive of a creature as powerful as Syn. But in the last couple weeks, her natural suspicious nature had taken a back seat to the curiosity and heat Syn had a way of fueling within her.

PIT members usually described her as a loner that wasn't interested in making friends. That was the way she had wanted everyone to see her, so they would keep their distance. Since Syn's appearance in her life, he had left her feeling exposed. She was starting to obsess over him, just as much as he appeared to be obsessing over her and she wanted it to stop, or did she? The ache in her chest seemed to spread out several inches at the thought.

«Welcome to the land of confusion, population one,» she informed the silence of the room then made a face at how pathetic she sounded. She was stronger than this.

Angelica glared back down at the mark on her palm wondering if it was the cause of these strange feelings she was having for him, the same way a vampire's thrall would work. After all, Syn was the progenitor of the vampire race, wasn't he? She needed to stop overlooking that dangerous little fact. He had already admitted that he didn't care about the war against the demons, so why was he here distracting her? Why was he helping only her?

«This started with you,» she accused the symbol.

Raising her other hand, she held it over the intricate design on her palm, intending to treat it the same way she would treat any other demon mark that she had removed from victims in the past.

The tip of her index finger ghosted over the shape of it, probing for the slightest hint of evil to tether her search to. A soft frown appeared on her face finding no underlying malicious intent beneath the lines. Concentrating harder on the complex symbol, she bit her bottom lip as she began to follow the deepening path, until she could finally push past its powerful barrier.

Angelica's lips parted and she inhaled sharply at the sensations that suddenly washed over her. There was a moment of lightheadedness followed by a hard tug from the seal, the very instant her powers tapped into it. The action surprised her so much that she actually panicked and jerked her power back, feeling the symbol's magic lash around her and lick at her skin before disappearing back wherever it had come from.

If she didn't know better, she would swear the damned mark had just tasted her.

Syn silently appeared behind Angelica, having felt her tamper with the link that enabled her access to his power for her own protection. He had thought to leave her alone for a few hours, so that he could regain his calm after seeing her rejection of him once again. However, with her breaching his seal on her palm, she had unknowingly summoned him here to witness her useless attempt to break their bond.

This made his anger resurface, was she that anxious to be rid of him just so she could stop lying to herself? After searching for so many millennia and finally finding her, he was not about to let her sever even the slightest link he had managed to reform with her.

«Coward,» Angelica lectured herself over her reaction, and opened her fisted hand to try again. She sucked in a sharp breath when the seal instantly started glowing with reinforced power.

«Why don't you try taking your frustration out on the one that caused it,» Syn asked, from right behind her.

Angelica flinched at his close proximity and spun around to pin her stalker with a glare. It was hard to hold the glare when he looked a hell of a lot angrier than she felt.

Before she realized his intent, he'd snagged her around the waist with one of his arms and pulled her against his hard body. She just as quickly pressed her palm against his chest to keep some semblance of distance between them. Seriously, if he was trying to drive her crazy then he was in for a short trip.

"You're right. I should take it out on you," She said pointedly, and pushed away from him, surprised when he let go so easily she almost lost her footing. She gritted her teeth, trying to bury the odd disappointment she was feeling because he'd let her go so quickly.

Closing her hand around the mark on her palm, she said the first thing that came to mind. "What the hell have you done to me?"

"Do I frighten you," Syn asked, leaning against her bedpost and crossing his arms over his chest.

Angelica was caught off guard by the question, making her frown slightly at his crossed arms, before lifting her gaze to meet his bright amethyst eyes. They were glowing in what she could swear was anger but he seemed so calm it was serene.

"I am not scared of you," she boldly informed him, then took a quick step back, when he pushed away from the bedpost and started toward her.

"I have done nothing to harm you," Syn defended through a barely suppressed growl, knowing they had danced this dance before. She had fought him in the past to the point of insanity before finally admitting defeat and he wasn't interested in history repeating itself. He felt a mental flinch remembering how that history had ended. "You are the only reason I'm here."

Angelica shook her head not wanting the responsibility of being anyone's reason for anything. She had placed so many walls around herself that the only one who had even come close to breaching them was Zachary. Or to be honest, it was his alter ego Zach who unmercifully plowed his way past them. She was momentarily saddened by that fact because now she missed his friendship and his unwanted advice.

Syn's eyes narrowed hearing her mourn the closeness she'd had with the phoenix. It was regretful she'd forgotten the fact that he, Syn, was a very possessive man and had never easily shared her with others. He had killed to keep her before and he would do it again with no hesitation.

He pulled his power inward when it tried to spike at the memory, and Syn realized that he was teetering on the edge of his limit. How had she reduced him to this impatient state so quickly?

"You didn't come here for me," Angelica frowned, pointing out what she thought was the obvious. "You came because your boys are here, who I might add look the same age as you! more like your brothers, not your children. And now you're staying to help Storm fight the demons." Her voice faltered when her back hit the wall at the same time that his palms hit it on each side of her, efficiently trapping her against the painted rock of the castle.

"My mate is the one helping Storm, not me," Syn growled harshly. "I am only here to protect her from foolishly getting herself killed again!"

"I've never been killed," Angelica shot back in denial then flinched when the wall cracked under his palms causing jagged lines to creep up through the rock near her head and shoulders.

"Stop," she whispered, barely breathing the word.

Something was definitely wrong with him but instead of it frightening her, it was suddenly breaking her heart. She slowed her breathing, wanting to be careful right now, because she felt if she wasn't, this powerful man in front of her would shatter and that would be the beginning of her truest fear.

"I am going to hold you until I calm down," Syn warned, just as he leaned forward and dragged her against him.

When Angelica didn't resist him, Syn felt some of the overwhelming grief leave his tense shoulders. She may not remember her death, but it was a memory he still struggled to keep buried deep within for his own sanity. Keeping her trapped, he slowly lowered himself to his knees, pulling her down the wall with him. He let one shaking hand trail up and under her dark silky hair to press her cheek into the arc of his neck, laying his lips against her temple as he did so.

Angelica blinked when she felt his body tremble against hers and heard his breath labored in her ear. It was as if he was fighting against something she couldn't see. Using this as a reason to give in for the moment, she slowly relaxed against him and let him hold her. She was stunned by how warm and protected she suddenly felt, being held by him. He was so big and strong, yet she could sense his restraint as he held her.

Summoning the courage to appease her own curiosity, she kept her voice soft and calm as she spoke. "I don't understand what I did to gain your attention."

"No, you wouldn't understand," Syn agreed, and gently kissed her dark hair before laying his cheek against it.

A part of him didn't want to remind her of their tainted past, didn't want to see the flash of hatred in her eyes for what he'd done. Not when he had no intention of asking her forgiveness. They had deserved to die all of them.

"You're not very helpful," Angelica added feeling slightly drained from all of the adrenalin rushes she'd experienced in the last couple hours.

She hadn't lied, she wasn't scared of him, not really. She had watched him almost kill himself to bring a room full of murdered children back to life. How could she ever truly fear him when it was all she could do to keep from reaching out to him? She was going to have to find a way to distance herself from him permanently.

"You are cruel to me Angelica," Syn whispered having heard her deepest thoughts. "If you keep your soul locked away, you will learn just how cruel you have made me."

Her fear rose at his words and Angelica unsuccessfully tried to push away from him. Did he want to take her soul as he had so many other humans? Was that the true reason he was stalking her?

"You have no claim over my soul and you never will," she insisted as the fight or flight instinct slammed through her, causing her struggle to intensify.

"Don't I?" Syn growled feeling his sanity snap. "Shall I destroy yet another world just to prove it to you?"

Angelica's eyes widened and she stilled. What did he mean destroy another world? She just as quickly decided not to ask, because seriously, who in the hell would want to know. She felt the unwanted fear clinging to her even after she shoved the disturbing questions into the darkest corner of her mind.

He could feel her breath quicken, feathering against his neck in soft puffs and although the sensation was soothing, it was heating his blood, which wasn't good for his self-control right now. This world had kept him at a distance for long enough. Syn tightened his hold and curved his body around her protectively when the small light bulbs of the beautiful chandelier in the center of the room burst, sending several quick showers of sparks streaming downward before fizzling out.

Angelica started to look up at the ceiling but Syn wouldn't allow her to lift her head, so she remained pressed against him wondering what to do. It was dawn now, causing the room to be softly shadowed, instead of completely dark.

"Are we fighting," she asked in a whisper. Because if they were, she already knew she would lose.

"No," he growled harshly then glared at the oval mirror of the dressing table when it dared to crack with a loud pop.

"Then, how about you tell me what's wrong before you destroy my bedroom again," Angelica snapped before she could stop herself.

Syn froze hearing her say again. Was she finally remembering things that had not happened in this lifetime or world for that matter? Was her soul strong enough to finally rattle the cage of its mortal prison? He gently fisted his hand in the dark hair his fingers were tangled in, so he could lean back from her and search her eyes for the truth.

Again? His voice sounded haunted even to his own ears.

What, Angelica asked in confusion. Gee he was all over the place making it hard for her to keep up. It was truly exhausting.

You said to tell you what was wrong before I destroyed your bedroom again, he repeated, putting emphasis on the word again.

Did I, Angelica whispered, feeling cold chills prick at the skin on her arms. Her lips parted to deny it, but she had said again and she couldn't take it back now, because it suddenly felt like the truth.

Syn let the frustration drain from him and a slow tainted smile touched his lips. He had destroyed her bedroom on more than one occasion, and although he had no way of knowing which memory was struggling to break through, he no longer cared. Good or bad, he awaited it eagerly, along with the battle they would probably have over it.

Her soul was her inner most self and had already forgiven him it was the rest of her that he would have to force to surrender.

Catching him smirking at her confusion, Angelica shoved away from him, thankful that he let go of her hair before she could give herself whiplash.

Fine, you like to redecorate bedrooms in your spare time whatever. If you don't leave and let me rest I'm going to redecorate you. She frowned when he promptly vanished, leaving the sound of his parting laughter echoing through the room.

Angelica listened to the warm laughter until it faded into the distance. She couldn't recall having ever heard him laugh like that or even truly smile. So why did the sound make her chest hurt as if she had both regained and lost something dear to her.

Feeling drained, she crawled over to the bed and pulled herself up onto the mattress trying hard to ignore the sensation that she was falling backwards the whole time. She caught the vague flash of his warmhearted smile the same smile she'd just claimed to have never witnessed. The fleeting vision made her yearn to see more.

Closing her eyes in exhaustion, she gave up and let herself follow whatever it was relentlessly tugging at her.

Syn reappeared on the roof of the castle. He had noticed the barest hint of amethyst glittering in her dark eyes and decided not to distract her from searching her thoughts. He had seen the color of her irises change before but only when she used her powers. That seemed to be the only time she allowed herself to feel the powerful soul she had imprisoned deep within her.

He understood why she unconsciously protected her soul from a world where mortal life and death happened in the blink of an eye. It was pure instinct but that fear was no longer valid. The second she'd called to him from that dark cave he'd sent her his power in the form of the mark on her palm. He'd later reinforced that power by breathing his life-force into her though she was not aware of the significance of such an exchange.

She now had abilities that she was not even aware of and he hadn't helped her figure it out for purely selfish reasons. She was already too independent for his liking. Although time was no longer her enemy and most injuries would instantly heal she was still in danger from the powerful immortals, who had declared war on this city.

There was one more thing he could do for her that would help even out the odds, but he was trying to be patient, knowing she was not yet ready for the side effects of mixing their blood. He had made that mistake before. It was not the same as when their children shared their blood with their soul mates.

He lowered his gaze to the roof hearing the silence coming from the room below him. Besides, if he bit her now, she would see it as proof that he was exactly what sheâ##d convinced herself he wasâ# a monster.

Being gentle with her was putting her at risk and it wouldnâ##t take much more to tempt him into becoming the monster she needed. After allâ# he had played that role before.

Chapter 5

Kriss stood in front of the huge picture window of their penthouse with a bottle of Kat's famous Heat in one hand and an oversized wineglass in the other. He wanted to get drunk but his annoyingly swift metabolism wouldn't allow him to gain the release he craved for more than a few moments at a time.

Becoming frustrated, his hand tightened around the glass, accidentally shattering it in his palm as he remembered seeing Vincent's face for the first time in countless years. Granted, Vincent wouldn't remember the encounter since Storm had turned time around but Kriss would never forget that expression of hatred Vincent had directed at him.

In rejection of that hatred, he rebelliously looked back on memories of his childhood, to the time when Vincent had felt the exact opposite for him.

He hadn't been in this world long when Dean had taken off to stop a horde of demons that were headed right in their direction. He'd waited, alone, hiding among the huge rocks at the base of a cliff, following Dean's strict orders to stay hidden and quiet that this place was safe.

Dean had been right for the most part though. For days, Kriss hadn't seen any animals much less humans or demons. It was the first time in his life that he had ever been left alone. The surrounding silence was only feeding the feeling of abandonment and fear as he waited, missing the love he'd received in his home world, missing the warmth and security that Dean had given him in this one.

It had been in the middle of the night when Kriss heard the sound of falling pebbles coming from somewhere above him. He'd leaned back against one of the rocks and looked up at the face of the cliff where the light of the crescent moon barely touched it, only to see shadowy figures of several demons crawling down the face of it towards him.

His attention was riveted on the way their blood red eyes glowed as they watched him watching them, and the way their almost human like bodies contorted in the creepiest of ways as they descended. His eyesight sharpened, allowing him to see that their unclothed flesh appeared to be burnt and deeply scarred, as if they had just emerged from some unseen fire. Kriss could even smell the rotting of roasted meat as they grew closer.

He had been so frightened that he'd crawled backwards over the high bolder and fell off the other side, landing hard on a cluster of small sharp rocks that jutted up from the ground much like spikes. Finding that he'd been stabbed in several places, he struggled to rise from the rocks without doing more damage to his already wounded body.

The moment the scent of his untainted Fallen blood caught the breeze, he could hear their sharp claws scraping the rocks quicker as their descent became frantic, and several hard thuds, indicating some of the demons had simply jumped from their height in order to reach him first.

The silence was gone now, their disturbing screams echoing off the rocks, making it sound like there was so many more than there really were.

Scrambling across the rocks to get away, he only succeeded in ripping his clothes and tearing his flesh in several more places before he could get to solid footing and finally stand up.

Turning full circle, Kriss realized it was too late to run or hide, he was surrounded by demons and they were so much bigger than his small child's size. He stood, frozen to the spot, as long clawed fingers came from behind him to wrap around his face. The sharp claws sliced into the bridge of his nose and soft cheeks as the demon drug him backwards, then abruptly jerked him up into the air as if showing him off to the other demons.

He'd never had to fight in his world and Dean had never allowed him to fight in this one. There was a fleeting moment where he wondered if letting them gobble him up wouldn't be better

than being left alone in this scary place. That thought quickly vanished when pain suddenly penetrated his shock, causing his instinct for survival to kick in with a vengeance.

With tears blurring his vision, Kriss had barely won his first fight to the death. Silence once again reigned across the area and he glanced down at what was in his hand just in time to see the illuminated Fallen Blade vanish from his bloody grip.

Feeling something weighing down his other hand, he slowly turned his head to look and saw the demonic eyes staring blankly up at him. His hand was in the thing's mouth, gripping its jaw... he didn't know where the rest of its body had gone. He accidentally scraped his knuckles on its pointed teeth when he quickly yanked his hand out of the demon's mouth and dropped the head to the ground.

Kriss felt nothing as it rolled away from him then got hung up on a rock that had poked it right in its ugly eye. He thought he heard someone laughing but decided it must have come from inside him somewhere because everything else was dead.

Unable to handle the rancid smell or the sight of their mutilated bodies, he'd turned away and started numbly walking toward the streaks of light that were just appearing over the hills in the distance.

Kriss didn't know how long he had walked or even how many days it had been before he heard the strange sound of rhythmic stomping somewhere ahead of him. He'd stood there swaying, trying not to cry, and waiting to see if he would have to fight yet again. Demon blood, he could smell it.

It wasn't long before he saw a human man riding an animal towards him. Parts of the man's body was covered in some kind of woven metal and Kriss could see the long sword strapped to his back, the hilt of it sticking out within easy reach. Not seeing any blood on the man, he realized that he was the one covered in demon blood, had been wearing it this whole time.

That had been his first encounter with Vincent. They had stared at each other as the man approached and Kriss took several steps back when he quickly slid from the big animal. His frightened gaze went back to the dangerous looking sword.

"Don't trust anyone except me." The memory of Dean's voice echoed inside his head in warning and Kriss turned around to flee.

"Wait, don't run," Vincent had called out.

The tone of his voice reminded Kriss of Dean, making him become confused in what he should do. He was so tired of trying to figure it all out. He glanced back to make sure that the man hadn't drawn his sword while he wasn't looking.

Vincent breathed a sigh of relief when the child paused and glanced back at him with a mixture of curiosity and skepticism. The last couple villages he'd passed were a bloody mess and he hadn't found any survivors until now. Even dirty and covered in blood, the boy seemed healthy and very scared, leading him to draw the conclusion that he was indeed a survivor of one of the villages.

"Where are your parents?" he asked, letting the concern lace his voice in hope of winning the child's trust.

Where were his parents? The question had made Kriss feel so sad. His father wasn't even in this dimension and had probably forgotten all about him by now. Dean had left him and never returned. Kriss felt the warmth of tears make new trails down his cheeks. The only answer he could give was a slow shake of his head as he turned around to face the man.

"Are you hurt," Vincent had asked as he came and knelt down in front of Kriss so his height wouldn't be as intimidating to the young boy, he couldn't have been more than nine or ten years old. He slowly reached out and palmed the dirty cheek, rubbing with the pad of his thumb to wipe away the tears.

Kriss reminded himself of what this human man must be thinking when he looked at him that he was covered in blood and wearing clothes that were barely more than tatters. Since almost all of his injuries had already healed and knowing better than to tell a human what had really happened, he answered with the only other thing that was the truth.

I'm all alone now. He started crying for real then loud wails mixed with the sound of hick-ups, causing Vincent to pull him into his arms whispering that it was alright now that he would protect and care for him.

And Vincent had protected him to the point of sacrificing his own life.

The pain of glass cutting into his palm brought Kriss back to the present. He opened his fist seeing the glass shard sticking out of it.

This was what Dean found when he stepped out of the bathroom from his shower. He frowned seeing Kriss standing there picking a glass shard out of his palm. Slamming the door behind him caused the other Fallen to flinch and their eyes locked in the window's reflection. He wasn't in the mood to watch his lover mourn his childhood crush all over again. Once had been more than enough.

Kriss took a deep breath trying to ease the ache in his chest. I never thought I'd see him again Dean. Part of me actually hoped he would have forgiven me by now. I was just trying to save his life.

He was mortal Kriss. You did much more than simply save his life and you know it, Dean said tonelessly. Because of you, he can now experience the pain of death for eternity and revive to bitch about it. The human mind can only take so much. That's why their lifespan is made to be short.

I know, Kriss growled. You've never hesitated in reminding me of that fact. I made a selfish decision but I was all alone in a world where demons roamed free, and I didn't think you were coming back. You were gone so long that I was afraid the demons had killed you. I didn't want to lose him too.

Dean sighed and tried to keep his temper under control. You would have known the moment something happened to me, so your fear was for nothing.

I was a child Dean, Kriss snapped back. All I wanted was someone to care for me and to let me care for them in return.

You're such a bleeding heart, Dean mocked, well aware that the adolescent prince had fallen in love with the Knight during his absence. That little fact had been a hard pill to swallow as he'd watched Kriss mourn the loss of his love. He gritted his teeth wondering if Kriss would once more become obsessed with his childhood crush.

Kriss flung the bottle of Heat across the room making Dean lean slightly to the side so he didn't get hit by it. Go screw yourself Dean.

Dean squared his shoulders, There's my bratty prince in all his spoiled glory.

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