

# BLOOD BOND

BLOOD BOUND SERIES BOOK 5



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# Amy Blankenship

## Blood Bond

Серия «Blood Bound Book», книга 5

### Аннотация

With the blood spell broken, Kane clawed his way out of the ground and searched for the soul mate that had freed him only to find that she'd vanished. With nothing left to lose and revenge on his mind, he started a war. The last thing he expected was to find his elusive soul mate in the path of destruction he'd caused. Quickly becoming obsessed, he watches when she isn't looking, listens when he's not been invited, and stalks her every move... and the demon that haunts him knows she is his weakness. To protect her, Kane vows to make her hate him, even if he has to join the demon side to do it. But how can he protect her from her greatest enemy of all when that enemy is himself?

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Blood Bound Series book 5

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### Chapter 1

The city of Los Angeles spread out around him in a kaleidoscope of flashing lights and colors. The distant sounds of urban life rang in his ears but Syn paid it no mind, listening instead to the whisper of the soft breeze moving over him. He stood, balanced on the highest peak of one of the tallest buildings in the city, the pinnacle of it being the only thing his feet touched.

Syn had his hands buried in the pockets of his pants while his trench coat whipped behind him like a long cape that seemed to disappear and reappear at random as though it were a living thing. His long dark hair had blown back from his face revealing an ageless beauty the likes of which was rarely seen in this world.

He had taken the precaution of shielding his aura from all creatures who could sense him but he could feel those auras on the ground far below... moving about their lives among the humans with almost no cares in the world.

Looking straight down at the penthouse balcony directly below him, he smirked when he heard Damon giving Alicia the bloodstone... placing it inside of her so she would always

be protected from the dangerous sunlight that threatened her new existence. Syn was proud to have such a daughter-in-law, someone who would keep Damon on his toes and challenge him in every way that was important.

His smirk widened when her screams of pain were soon followed by cries of pleasure and he nodded his head approvingly. He couldn't wait to meet her.

Syn focused his amethyst gaze on the city once more and saw the evil shades of darkness even in areas of light... things others could not see. He didn't understand why his children had decided to fight this war against the demons. In his mind, he saw demons the same way he saw humans... not really caring one way or the other about them. Yet his children and wayward soul mate had decided to take a stand... choosing to protect those who could not defend themselves against such a war.

A small smile appeared on his face as he remembered his wife... his soul mate. She had always rooted for the underdog, taking up for those who were considered weak. He supposed that not much had changed in her since her previous lifetimes... the soul was the same no matter how many times it was reborn. She had once looked at him as the enemy simply because his power was far greater than most in their world... it had taken years to change her mind.

The sun was just peeking over the horizon and Syn lifted his face to greet it, letting the light flow over him... feeling the vast amount of energy and filling his body with it. Syn knew that his

children had chosen to live a human life... something he had never attempted before now. Another hint of a smile crossed his perfect lips as an interesting idea occurred to him.

Yes, it might be a lot of fun to join them since his soul mate also thought she was a mere human and lived by their laws. He would join them... get closer to her and convince her that he was not hers or anyone else's enemy. This time he would keep most of his power hidden from her so she did not feel so threatened by him. He would become her ally, her friend, and then once more... her mate.

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Misery sat on a rock, swinging her legs back and forth making her blond curly hair bounce with each movement. She'd been very busy this week, collecting demons for her growing army. Even now, some of them were hidden in the darkness around her... watching curiously.

Most of the demons she'd collected were weak with no real power to speak of, but then that's what a soldier was. Standing alone, it was just one weakling. But if you called them together into an army, they could plow through the strongest of enemies with no worry to their own loss of numbers.

Tonight, Misery had felt the power of an ancient aura in the forest that surrounded one side of the city and followed it to a deep cave. The malevolent energy had surged toward her wanting to drive her away from its home but Misery had only been amused by the attempt... that was until the force physically

pushed her out.

When she rose to face the demon head on, all she saw was a crow sitting on a rock with its wings ruffled. Searching its black soul, Misery calmed realizing this bird was one of the ancient masters who had been overlooked when the fallen had driven the others to the underworld.

This demon had blended in with its surroundings and made a home for itself. The Native Americans of this land had seen the demon as a great spirit to be worshiped and revered and, from that adoration, the demonic master had grown stronger.

Misery could taste the rage this demon had against the pale-faced humans who roamed its lands freely and sought to take advantage of that. She'd struck a deal with the demon instead of battling it... a battle she now knew she would have lost. The old one seemed agreeable with her idea of releasing their kind from their dimensional prison and had instructed her to gather a blood sacrifice... one of the tools he would need to assist her before flying off into the forest.

When Misery returned to the cave with two vampires and an enthralled semiconscious male, the malevolent spirit was waiting. The crow's red beady eyes stared piercingly at her before the bird took flight. Misery followed it deep into the forest at the very edge of the game preserve. She had entered a small clearing and was surprised to see an old man sitting beside a large bonfire.

"I am called Black Crow," the old man stated.

Misery nodded in respect. She remembered the sacred ways

of dealing with a demon's power that surpassed her own. "I am Misery."

Black Crow laughed mockingly, "What do you know of true misery?"

Misery remained silent, biting her tongue to avoid being ripped to shreds. She had power and he knew it... she was sure he could feel her the same way she could feel him.

Black Crow stood up and approached them. She took in his humanlike appearance and couldn't understand why one so powerful would choose a body so frail. He looked ancient, very old and wrinkled, with long white hair and dressed in tanned deerskin pants. His shirt was made of the same deerskin and adorned with beads and feathers. A small pouch hung at his hip and more feathers had been braided into his hair above one ear.

Black Crow abruptly reached out and lifted the human man's head by the hair to look at his face. "This one will do nicely," He stated and returned to the bonfire.

"What do you wish me to do?" Misery asked.

"We must wait," Black Crow stated and added more wood to the bonfire.

Misery let her irritation rise, "Wait for what old one? I do not have eternity... my war will happen with or without you."

Ignoring her, Black Crow added more wood to the bonfire and started to sing. Misery was about to leave when she found herself frozen in place. She could feel her power being leeches from her and her child's form began to rot away. This was not the

effects of her corpse appearance... her entire being was slowly being drained of the power she'd stolen from humans.

“Your plan will fail without me.” Black Crow said condescendingly. “Your existence became mine when you made your bargain. You are weak and hold no power over me for you have nothing that I want.”

Misery was suddenly released but glared at him as she remained sitting on the huge rock waiting for who knew what. Black Crow had been constantly feeding the fire and the flames had risen to an amazing height. The old man stood up and walked to the far side of the clearing to an old redwood that Misery hadn't noticed earlier.

Black Crow kneeled down next to the massive roots and took up a fistful of dirt. Returning to the bonfire, his singing became very loud and rhythmic before throwing the dirt into the fire. The fire sparked and climbed higher when the dirt met the searing flames. His body began moving in a tribal dance while his chants grew louder.

The shadows around them stretched forward until only Black Crow remained untouched by them, dancing inside a perfect circle. He suddenly stopped and reached toward the shadows around his feet. The inky darkness pulled toward his hand, seeking the touch of warmth Black Crow exhumed before he pulled it from the ground. It too met the flames with a spark that quickly turned into an explosion, making Misery reach up to shade her eyes.

An inhuman wail filled the clearing and Misery watched as the shadow slithered up from the flames, glowing red from the heat. It flew across the clearing back to where Black Crow had grabbed the dirt and vanished into the ground. Moments later, the dirt began to heave like it was breathing and two withered boney arms thrust up out of it.

Black Crow immediately went to the blood sacrifice Misery's vampires had acquired and pulled him from their grasp.

The young man, a student at the local community college, awoke from the vampire's thrall when Black Crow took possession of him. Still disoriented, he didn't know what was happening until he saw the long blade approach his throat. By the time he could do anything about it, the blade ripped into his flesh and his scream was silent.

Blood sprayed over the open flames, feeding the bonfire with hisses and sparks. The arms that had thrust up from the ground were now pulling the rest of its body out into the dark night. Long, low pitched moaning erupted from its throat accompanied by grunts of hunger as it dragged itself toward the dying man.

Skeletal fingers fisted into the man's shirt and the creature lowered its head to the open wound, feasting on the blood and flesh. As it ate, muscle and flesh started to grow over the protruding bones and Misery found herself titillated by the scene. She couldn't take her eyes off of the work of art Black Crow had created and clapped her hands with glee.

"He will need more to feed upon before he is completely

revived... but this one will do for now,” Black Crow said with a touch of boredom caressing his graveled voice.

“Can we make more?” Misery asked as she watched the blood and gore glitter in the firelight.

“I can,” Black Crow said simply and Misery didn’t miss his implication... he could do it and she could not.

“Now young demoness... show me your power,” Black Crow ordered.

Misery smiled and touched the spider pendant hanging around her neck. The spider immediately scattered into thousands of its tiny counterparts before scuttling back together. Black Crow watched as two of the arachnids crawled down her legs and across the uneven ground. The creatures stopped about halfway between him and Misery before burrowing into the dirt.

Black Crow stood in silence as the ground began to shift and a thin blood red crack split the earth open accompanied by a small earthquake. The trees rustled and the cries of forest animals joined in as the ground rumbled in annoyance. Five shadow demons flew out of the opening and around the clearing. Their cries sounding more like screams filled the night with their song. They converged on the bonfire and flew in circles around it, coming closer before pulling back at the last second.

This continued on until the demons grew tired of the game and vanished into the darkness of the forest... toward the city where they could sense their prey. Black Crow stared at the rift into the underworld with an unreadable expression. However, when he

approached the jagged crack, he stepped down on it, closing the rift and preventing other demons from escaping.

“A fair effort,” Black Crow stated. “But you are young and foolish. Such a thin sliver between worlds will only allow simple shadow demons to enter back into this realm... leaving our real allies still trapped on the other side. You will need more power than this!” his voice rose then calmed. “While you gain that power, I will make your army... but they will ultimately answer to me.”

Misery had no choice but to nod her head in acquiescence and humility. As she turned away, her childish lips lifted in an evil smirk. The old demon was right about one thing, she needed more power... and she knew exactly how to get it.

Letting the darkness within her expand, she shot back toward the city leaving her underlings to follow. A plan had begun to form and she needed to track down the demon child who could help her. She would have to give up her remaining stash of Kane's blood but the end satisfied the means... it would be worth the sacrifice.

She flitted over the city toward the slums where she'd found a temporary home. Going from street to street searching the darkness, she tried to catch the scent of her target. The problem with this demon was that he had the ability to hide his demonic aura. To anything hunting him, he would appear to be human and that was the biggest lie of all.

Not long after she began her search, Misery felt the hybrid

Skye following her. He did not engage her activity and he would not come closer, but she could feel him haunting her every move. Did he miss being trapped in the cave with her? She would give him a refresher course if he tried to interfere with her plans. It was bad enough that the two fallen were tracking his every move... he would only lead them to her if he kept this up.

It was nearing daybreak when she finally found the little demon she was looking for. He came out of the shadows and scurried across the street and into another alley. Misery had stumbled across him out of sheer chance a few days before and had mistaken him for human... that was until he decimated the vampire underlings who had attacked him.

On the outside, the demon looked like nothing more than a little eight year old boy living as a street rat. His shoulder length dark hair hung in tangled, oily locks around his face, which was pale but sweetly angelic in every other way. It only lent to his human camouflage when he wanted to draw in the hearts and minds of his victims. His clothes were ragged and he had no shoes. When he lifted his head to look out at the street behind him, his eyes glittered like black diamonds.

Misery moved over the alley above him before dropping straight down in front of the other demon, taking on the form of the little blonde girl as she fell. She landed in a crouch in front of him before standing upright and dusting her frilly dress off.

“Hello Misery,” the boy said making Misery smile at the small voice.

“Hello Cyrus,” Misery mimicked.

“You’re the one that made all those humans kill each other on the bus the other night,” the boy whispered.

Misery smiled proudly, “Yes I am, and I have need of what you know how to do.”

Cyrus tilted his head to the side. “What can I do that you can’t already?”

Misery giggled and took off the spider necklace that had the remnant of Kane’s blood and slipped it over his head.

“You’d be surprised young one,” she whispered.

“Will I be able to play?” the boy asked making Misery realize just how young this demon was.

“Oh yes, you’ll be able to play all you want,” Misery answered.

The blackness of the boy’s eyes expanded, blocking out all color until they looked like two bottomless pits of nothingness.

“I like to play,” The boy said and a malicious smile appeared while his fingers played with the spider hanging on the end of the chain.

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Kriss lay in bed on the top floor penthouse of one of the more prestigious apartment buildings in downtown Los Angeles. He’d taken refuge here in order to avoid Tabatha and his growing feelings toward her.

His mind flashed back to the last time he had seen her. He’d steadfastly kept his distance from her for a couple days before the separation became too painful for him. His chest had

begun to ache from not being close to her and when he entered their apartment to find her asleep with dried tears staining her cheeks... his only thought was to hold her and make it all better.

He'd slipped under the covers with her, not realizing she was naked until he wrapped himself around her in a protective embrace. That's when he'd frozen, straining toward her and away from her at the same time. She'd turned toward him in her sleep, throwing her arm around him to cuddle like she often did her extra pillows. When her breasts pressed up against his chest, the self-control he'd always prided himself on snapped.

For months his thoughts had been drifting toward doing things to her... with her... things that couldn't be done regardless of how much he loved and wanted her. But in that instant, he'd wanted inside her enough to risk killing the woman he loved. He felt his hardness throb and brush against her soft flesh.

When an angry shadow fell across the bed, Kriss froze then slowly turned his head and looked up into Dean's accusing silver gaze. He knew he'd crossed the line from friendship into danger upon seeing that expression on his lover's face.

He'd left with Dean that night, determined that he would not commit the same sins as his father. He felt himself throb again at the memory. Until he got the emotion under control, he knew Dean was right... he had to stay away from Tabatha.

As a further precaution, he'd quit his job at Silk Stalkings just in case she went looking for him there. He'd done everything he could to make sure Tabatha was kept as far away as possible

from him, but the separation hurt him like nothing he'd ever felt. When a fallen loved someone... it was a step past what a human called love and the madness that the emotion often caused within humans when they couldn't have the one they loved was tenfold when compared to the reaction it caused within a fallen.

Kriss once again jerked on the bindings that secured one wrist... he'd hated Dean for restraining him. However, Kriss understood what had almost happened. If he had given into his lust... the pain of losing Dean and killing Tabatha at the same time would've destroyed his mind.

He closed his eyes when a cool breeze drifted through the open terrace doors and over his nude body. Although the restraints allowed him movement throughout the huge apartment, he'd laid down hours ago but couldn't sleep and the tumbled mess of covers on the floor was testament to that. Kriss was now lying on his belly with one knee bent against the mattress and the other leg was covered over with the very edge of the sheet.

Another breeze blew through the room bringing with it a familiar scent. Kriss opened his eyes, watching the shadows of the gauzy curtains against the wall in front of him. When a winged shadow joined them, Kriss remained silent and expectant.

Dean had been on the roof, giving his demons prey and an elusive fallen hybrid a rest for the night. Dropping down from the roof of the building to the terrace below, he stood in the open doorway watching Kriss. The white sheet had been kicked aside,

exposing his nude body to the glow of moonlight shining in. Dean felt the loneliness Kriss held in his heart and knew staying away from Tabatha long enough would be the only cure for such pain.

His gaze trailed across the supernatural binding that kept Kriss from leaving the apartment during his absence. He didn't want to hurt Kriss in such a manner, but he could feel Kriss' love for Tabatha growing every day. He'd reminded Kriss that to sleep with a woman from this world would be the same as killing her and he hadn't lied... the seed of a fallen would take root even in an infertile woman. It would heal the infertility in order to create life if it had to... but that life would kill the female who bore it.

Dean had told Kriss the truth of his own sins... the one sure way to keep Kriss from being with Tabatha. When he'd first been sent to this world he'd become entranced with a young girl around the same age as Tabatha. He'd spent too much time with her and one thing had led to another... he'd fallen in love with a human female.

Thinking the curse would not follow him... thinking with as much as he loved her that they would have a fallen child, he'd given into to his lust. She'd encouraged it because she wanted him just as badly. Making love to her had been heaven but it had only taken hours for the demon to fully form inside her. When she'd awoken him later in the night with her screams, he'd had to kill his own child when it began to eat her from the inside.

Kriss had been deceiving himself... thinking he could sleep with Tabatha night after night without making love to her but

Dean knew that was a lie... a dangerous one. Kriss would never be able to live with himself if he signed Tabatha's death warrant with the seed of his own love.

The fallen craved love, yet had been sent to a world where they could not touch the women... all they had left was each other. Kriss' beauty had always called to Dean, enchanted him even and he knew why... Kriss was royalty among their kind. He never should have been sent back to this place to fight the demons. He silently wondered how long it had taken one of the kings to realize their prince had vanished. Kriss was meant to be pampered, loved, and cherished.

Stepping into the room, Dean moved slowly making sure his shadow remained on the wall so Kriss could see what he was doing clearly and have time to stop it if he chose to.

"The demons are restless within the city tonight... can you feel them?" Dean kept his voice calm not expecting an answer. His lips parted when Kriss' melancholy voice sent a soft echo through the room.

"Let them come."

Dean pulled the jacket from his shoulders and tossed it onto a chair against the wall. Next came the shirt... he unbuttoned it and let it fall from his shoulders to the floor in a soft pile of cotton. He unbuttoned his pants and slowly lowered the zipper, almost smiling when Kriss' breath caught. Slipping off his shoes and socks, Dean pushed his jeans to the floor and stepped out of them.

Moving toward the bed, Dean gripped one of the canopy posts for a moment to stare down at Kriss before slipping in next to him. Pulling Kriss onto his side, Dean spooned behind him and jerked him close, giving into the jealousy that simmered within his heart.

He knew Kriss' sadness stemmed from his love for Tabatha... he'd felt a premonition of the danger coming the night Tabatha and Kriss had met. That's why he'd attacked Tabatha in the parking lot of Silk Stalkings. His intention had been to warn her of the threat but Kriss had stopped him, using his body as her shield... using Dean's obsession against him.

Kriss rolled over onto his back and turned his head to gaze at Dean. They stared at each other for what seemed to be an eternity before Dean swiftly closed the distance between them and brushed his lips sensuously against Kriss'.

When Kriss inhaled sharply, Dean took advantage and deepened the kiss... making it more demanding. He was tired of lying beside Kriss night after night watching him mourn for a girl he could never have. If he could, he would just inhale Kriss' pain and replace it with the furious love of the fallen.

Kriss felt the fire start to spread through his veins but his own guilt made him turn his face away, breaking the kiss. He tucked himself into Dean's arms, wrapping his own arms around Dean's body before threading their legs together.

Dean stared silently down at the top of Kriss' head and mentally sighed. The fact that Kriss was holding on to him so

tightly was the only thing that calmed him. He could feel the sadness ebb a little before it returned. He'd already decided to release Kriss from his bindings with the dawn but in the face of Kriss' rejection, Dean's eyes glowed and the bindings disappeared.

In an instant Kriss turned and gripped Dean's wrists, slamming them down into the mattress and holding them there.

Dean stared calmly up into disturbed silver eyes wondering what Kriss would do now that he had the freedom to return to Tabatha. When Kriss simply held him there, Dean lifted his head from the mattress gently brushing his lips across Kriss' collarbone to the arc of his neck. He was rewarded by Kriss' sharp hiss and his release.

Several hours later they lay entwined together as dawn broke. Dean knew, just as Kriss did, that he would be here when Kriss woke in the morning... he would always be here.

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Kane walked the city streets trying to clear his head of everything that had happened over the last few weeks. He'd even felt glimpses of his old personality come to the surface several times... mostly around Michael. He had to admit that he loved the guy.

The tight rein he'd kept on his emotions for the last ten years was slipping and he already missed the security the imaginary walls had allowed him. He was sure some well-paid fraud of a psychiatrist would say that was a good thing but he was also sure

he could change their minds in record time.

He used the numbness he brought out of the grave with him like a shield... keeping him half dead and the people around here safer for it. As it was, it was taking every ounce of control he had to keep his feelings for Tabatha bottled up and protect her from Misery at the same time.

He still got the chills knowing that Michael had finally figured out that it was Tabatha who had set him free from his grave. If he'd been thinking clearly, he would have found a way to keep Scrappy away from Tabatha for a while longer while he tried to figure out how to tell her... if he told her at all.

In his opinion, some secrets were meant to be kept. Truth was he'd never planned to tell Tabatha.

Kane growled becoming annoyed when his thoughts were interrupted. He could feel demonic eyes on him as he walked... watching every move he made. He wondered if they had been sent by Misery. He couldn't sense her among them, which actually made a lot of sense. Why should the bitch stalk him when she could have her underlings do it for her? The city was now crawling with her minions... dark entities he'd helped create.

He quickened his pace to the point where the headlights of the cars coming toward him were suddenly moving away behind him. The red glow of their taillights illuminated the street for a few short seconds before even that disappeared. He'd never been this fast before but, with the mood he was in lately, he'd been ignoring the upsurge in power.

Right now all he wanted was to be alone in his own bubble, instead of around Michael and whoever his best friend slash brother had with him. He wasn't so sure he was capable of wearing his 'I'm sane now' mask... not tonight. His true self was close to the surface and that was something Michael didn't need to see.

Shoving his hands into his pockets, Kane continued on in an attempt to ignore the spying bastards following him. He'd reached a more upscale area of the city now and he headed toward the section where a large majority of clubs were situated. He needed a good drink and perhaps a bit of a fight, even if it meant he had to start it himself. The clubs would provide the mind-dulling liquid, and it should be easy enough to locate a nest of vampires for the other.

Turning a corner onto a busy street, Kane caught a sweet scent on the wind and stopped, letting the sights and sounds of the city come back into focus. He could smell her very close by and looked around trying to determine her location. He inhaled deeply, wanting more of her, then wondered if he was a masochist for torturing himself.

He knew he should stay away from her since he seemed to be a homing beacon for demons, but his flip side instantly argued that his soul mate had a way of finding trouble on her own. If she was crazy enough to be roaming around in a demon hot spot, then maybe he should refresh her mind on how bad of an idea that really was.

His sharp gaze landed on a club called Silk Stalkings and he frowned knowing that's where the fallen, Kriss, worked as a dancer. It was an interesting career choice for a fallen but Kane wasn't one to judge. Sighing in resignation, Kane crossed the street and entered the club so he could take Tabatha home before she got herself into more trouble.

## Chapter 2

Tabatha stepped through the entrance of Silk Stalkings and looked around. She'd come here looking for Kriss... and prayed she would find him. He'd gone missing a few days ago and hadn't even called... and he'd been avoiding her longer than that. She missed him and was starting to worry. If he was gone for any length of time in the past, he'd at least called and let her know everything was all right.

Just catching a glimpse of him would take away her fear that Misery had eaten him or locked him in a cave somewhere.

Sitting down at one of the tall tables, she continued to watch the stage hoping Kriss would come out and perform his act. It was almost an hour later that she realized the time and knew Kriss should have hit the stage by now. One of the waiters walked by her and she touched him on the arm to gain his attention.

"Do you need something, Miss?" he asked.

Tabatha smiled, "I'm hoping you can help me. I'm looking for Kriss Reed. Can you tell me when his next shift is?"

The waiter sighed and shook his head, "You're the sixth woman to ask about him this week. Unfortunately, he quit a while

back, no one's seen him since.”

Tabatha felt like she'd been slapped in the face. A sinking feeling appeared in the pit of her stomach and she lowered her head to hide the tears that started to gather... she'd lost her best friend.

“Are you okay?” the waiter asked softly.

Tabatha looked up at him and smiled, wiping away the wetness that threatened to ruin her mascara. “Yeah, I'm fine. But you can get me a Malibu and pineapple?”

The waiter gave her a questioning look before sighing and going back to the bar. He recognized Tabatha as one of Kriss' close friends and figured Kriss had skipped town without telling her. It was shame too... she seemed to be a nice girl and Kriss leaving had obviously hurt her.

Tabatha made a show of taking her compact out of her clutch purse and examining her makeup. He'd left without even saying goodbye... he'd promised when they went to Florida with Devon and Envy that he'd never leave her. They had even become closer since her kidnapping... so much closer.

“Here you go,” the waiter announced and set her drink down in front of her.

Tabatha lowered the compact and smiled up at him, “Go ahead and start up a tab... I'm going to stay for a while.”

The waiter nodded and started weaving around his tables making sure everyone was all right, occasionally looking over to make sure his newest guest didn't drink herself into oblivion.

Tabatha quickly knocked back the drink and set it down on the tabletop. Why was she worried anyway? Kriss was one of the fallen... he had better things to do than mess with humans... much less humans that were his friends. God she hated being pouty and angry at the same time... it made one feel disturbed.

Another drink was set in front of her and she quickly drank that one down, too. About six drinks later she was nice and tipsy. Glancing toward the stage, she pouted seeing a new guy come out wearing only a silver thong and wings. She wondered where the crying drunk Guru was when she needed one and narrowed her eyes hating the dancer for unknowingly mocking her.

“One more before I leave?” she asked the waiter that had hovered close since she sat down.

The waiter smiled softly and shook his head. “I think you’ve had quite enough. Would you like me to call you a taxi?”

“No,” Tabatha said and stood up, grabbing her purse. “I want you to tell Kriss that if he remembers who his friends are, to give me a call.”

Of course she didn’t mean it, but at the moment she was very angry with Kriss... hurt that he didn’t think enough of their friendship to at least tell her he was leaving... or being kidnapped. Opening her purse, she took out her wallet and tried to pay for the drinks but the waiter shook his head again.

“Your tab has already been paid,” he said. “Now go home and sleep it off... I’m sure he’ll call you soon.”

Tabatha fished her car keys out of her purse and dropped them

on the floor. “Damn it!” she hissed, wanting to leave before she did something stupid like cry in public.

She bent over to pick them up but another hand closed around them and snatched them up. Tabatha followed the hand to an arm and then a shoulder. Her eyes widened when her gaze locked with Kane’s handsome face.

“Come on, Love,” he said seeing the way the lights shattered within her light blue eyes. She was on the verge of crying. It seemed he wasn’t the only one in a mood tonight. “Let’s get you home.”

Tabatha’s lower lip trembled as she looked up at him and she latched onto his arm instantly feeling his strength. Her bigger-than-life stalker had come for her and for once... she was glad.

Kane nodded over Tabatha’s head to the waiter and led her out of the club. He growled inwardly knowing why she’d chosen this club. She wanted to find the fallen bastard who was hiding from her.

Didn’t Kriss care what his negligence was doing to Tabatha, or had he listed himself as her potential enemy instead of her best friend? Kane wrapped his arm around Tabatha’s shoulders and took her other arm in a strong grip when she almost stumbled in her high heels.

“Have you seen him?” Tabatha asked looking up at Kane.

Kane shook his head sadly, “No I haven’t.” He refrained from telling her that the last time he’d run into Dean he could smell Kriss on him... the fallen was fine.

“He’s gone,” Tabatha swiped childishly at the tear that had finally managed to escape. “What if Misery ate him?”

Kane tried not to chuckle in the face of her drunken but sincere question. “Misery thinks the fallen taste foul,” he recited Misery’s own words.

“Then why didn’t he say goodbye?” Tabatha lowered her gaze to the floor as they walked.

Kane didn’t answer as he got Tabatha into her car and went around to the driver’s side. Images of ripping those silky soft wings off of Kriss’ back were running amuck through his head but Kane pushed them aside. Revenge could wait... right now he needed to get his personal angel home safe and sound before his revolving door of a personality shifted back to the dark side.

Tabatha stayed quiet as they drove, the blue of the dash lights giving the inside of the car a soft glow as if daring her to look at the man driving. She’d never really been one to turn down a dare and, although she could hold her alcohol better than the normal person... the drinks did help to suppress a healthy fear.

She slowly turned her head and bravely looked directly at Kane, “Why did Misery say that I belonged to you?”

Kane’s head quickly whipped around to pin her with a hard stare. She wasn’t supposed to remember what happened that night... he’d taken it from her memories. How in the hell did she recall something she was supposed to forget? Seeing car lights shine on her face, he glanced back at the road and swerved just in time to avoid hitting an oncoming car.

Her hand went to the door handle out of instinct when she saw his reaction to her question but she stilled herself. She wasn't quite drunk enough to jump from a moving car. The twinge of fear that crawled up her back only served to boost her courage level to the point of stupidity.

"Pick a lane," Tabatha grinned then blinked wanting to smack herself. 'Crap,' she thought mentally. 'Way to go dummy, piss off the guy with pointed teeth.'

"You remember that night?" Kane asked before he could stop himself.

"So what," she said and mentally shrugged. "Big deal, I remember. Well... most of it anyway. Maybe you're not as good at putting people under your thrall as you think you are."

"Maybe next time I won't be so gentle," Kane warned and watched her shiver at his dark words.

Tabatha narrowed her gaze at his stoic expression. How dare he call her bluff.

"Well, before you try to brainwash me again, how about telling me the answer to Misery's riddle?" she demanded and crossed her arms over her chest knowing she was taking her anger over Kriss' abandonment out on Kane... then again, maybe Kane deserved it. For all she knew, Kane was the one who had eaten Kriss.

"Either you tell me what she meant, or I swear I'll hang a big juicy cow heart around my neck and pimp myself out to Misery so I can ask her myself."

She gasped and quickly grabbed hold of the dashboard when Kane jerked the wheel, making the car swerve to the side of the road and over the curb. He slammed on the brakes and slid across the dirt embankment, making the car do a complete one-eighty before coming to a skidding stop.

Kane was hovering over her before the car stopped moving. Tabatha couldn't help looking up at his face and admiring the strong planes of his jaw... the amethyst color of his eyes. Her gaze lowered to his perfect lips and she wondered if they would be cold as ice or hot as fire.

Kane was beyond angry and wanted to throttle the woman for even thinking such a thing. Biting his own tongue, he waited until he could taste the quick flow of blood before taking Tabatha's lips in a searing kiss. Under normal circumstances he would kill to be able to do this... then again, she would have to be sober for it to count. The only reason he was kissing her so deeply now was to clear her mind of the dangerous plans the alcohol had put there.

Hot, his lips were hot and the lovely heat was spiraling through her to center between her legs. Tabatha suddenly felt the fear she'd been lacking just a moment before. It washed over her in vengeful waves and she felt her toes curl at the exact same time panic settled into her stomach. Her mind chose the fear and she started pushing against him as hard as she could. Unfortunately, it had the same effect as an ant trying to lift a house.

Kane felt her hands push against his chest, but if this was going

to be their last kiss, then he was going to savor it for a moment longer. He breathed in her warm breath as he softened the kiss only for him to quickly deepen it again.

Tabatha was assaulted with the sweet, salty flavor of Kane's blood and the overwhelming need to climb deep inside him overrode any lingering fear. That need intensified when his hand curled around her hip and raised her off the seat, pressing her against him as much as the small confines of the vehicle would allow. Her thighs went up in flames and, before she could stop herself, one of her hands slid up his chest to curve around his neck were she gripped his snow white hair in a tight fist.

Kane shivered when he felt her nails scrape against his sensitive skin, making his hips reflex and a growl form deep in his chest. He wanted her... god he wanted her so bad. A car horn blared and Kane was quickly reminded of where they were. It took more strength than he thought he had to release her body and practically slam himself back into the driver's seat.

"Sober yet?" he asked. The muscles in his jaw flexed and his knuckles turned white where he was gripping the steering wheel as he restrained his hunger.

Tabatha brought her hand up to cover her mouth as she thought about the strange question. After a couple seconds she nodded with a frown on her face. "Yeah, what are you, instant coffee?"

"What are you?" Kane mocked her. "Bloody insane is what you are... talking about cow hearts and demons."

Tabatha's eyes widened when a flash of lightning caught her attention as it lit up the street. She licked her bottom lip still tasting him then looked down at herself to make sure her thighs weren't really on fire. The lightning flashed again and she leaned forward, looking up at the sky to search for the storm clouds. Seeing none, she looked back at Kane and realized it was him making the storm.

"I think you might want to calm down. I was wrong... you're not instant coffee, you're instant storm," she said and straightened herself in the car seat. She hadn't noticed it before, but when Kane had leaned over her, her dress had slipped up nearly showing the frilly lace of her panties.

Kane rubbed his temple with his fingers and closed his eyes... he had to. "Just do this one thing... stay away from Misery."

"Is that how you healed me in Warren's office?" Tabatha whispered, somehow knowing his blood had just killed every drop of alcohol she'd consumed tonight. She missed the lack of inhibitions already but wasn't about to call him a party pooper with the mood he was in. But, she had to admit, that if he hadn't stopped the kiss it would have led to other things.

To say he was unstable would have been an understatement if the way he was gripping the wheel gave her any indication. After what she'd just been about to do... maybe they were both unstable.

When he didn't answer but just stared straight ahead and shrugged, Tabatha found herself getting angry all over again.

“Fine, just take me home... or better yet, get the hell out. I can drive myself now.”

Tabatha was slammed back against the seat when Kane put the car back in gear and gunned the engine, bouncing over the curb and reentering traffic... or what little there was this time of night.

“Maybe you should go find whatever bird’s nest Kriss is in and join him since both of you obviously enjoy keeping secrets from me!” she said sarcastically.

“Hasn’t anyone ever told you it’s not a good idea to antagonize a vampire?” Kane asked in a deceptively calm voice while refusing to look at her.

“I’m still alive,” Tabatha pointed out.

“For now,” Kane lied but felt satisfaction when the rest of the drive was made in irritated silence.

Tabatha sat in the passenger seat with her arms still crossed over her chest. She adamantly refused to think about that kiss and she sure as hell didn’t think about how sexy he had looked hovering over her... angry or otherwise.

As soon as Kane pulled the car into her driveway he sighed, running a hand through his hair when she jumped out of the car and took off like she’d been bitten. He found the thought rather ironic considering he had bitten her before. Getting out of the car, he silently followed her knowing it was the wrong thing to do.

Tabatha slammed the car door behind her and rushed to the front door of her apartment. As soon as she had the door safely

closed behind her, she turned and spent the next few seconds locking all four locks and the deadbolt then flipped the living room light on.

“For now my ass!” she glared at the door finally feeling vindicated... until she turned around. Tabatha screeched when she saw Kane sitting on the sofa like he owned the place and threw her small pocketbook at him.

“You’re uninvited!” she raged then waited to see if he would go poof and vanish. It was actually a good thing he didn’t because she would have hurt herself with the hysterical laughter that would have followed.

“Damn it, why are you still here?” she demanded and kicked her high heels off toward him, satisfied when he had to move his leg to avoid one of them.

To her amazement, Kane just sat there staring at her with that infuriating expression that looked like a cross between amusement and anger. He shimmered and vanished for a second then she heard the thump of something hitting the door on each side of her. Tabatha couldn’t move due to him pinning her against the wood behind her. She heard thunder outside and felt her fear rise with the sound.

Kane leaned forward a bit until his cheek was almost touching hers and inhaled the mixed scent of her anger and fear. It was like an aphrodisiac and served to remind him why he hadn’t taken his soul mate as soon as he’d found her. If anything, he was fighting the urge to take her against the door... hard and fast.

The gods may have linked them together, but they had been wrong in their pairing. For her sake... they had to be wrong. When he leaned back enough to see her face, he was satisfied to see her anger and fear were still present.

Tabatha felt her bangs move with every breath he was taking as he stared down at her with those heated eyes. She became entranced watching his amethyst pupils enlarge and then felt disappointment shudder through her... she didn't want to forget.

"Before you hocus pocus me... give me a truth," she whispered, "A real, honest to God truth."

"A truth love?" Kane dropped his gaze to her lips and lowered his head until his lips were barely brushing against hers... not a kiss but something far more intimate. "I'm more dangerous to you than any demon could ever be."

Tabatha blinked away the sunlight filtering in through the window and sat up in bed. She pulled her knees up and wrapped her arms around them, glaring out at the daylight that almost seemed to mock her. Growling to herself, she huffed blowing her bangs up in the air.

"Dangerous my foot," she grumbled. "He's so dangerous that he tucked me into bed before leaving."

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Zachary was looking at the map on the wall with his head tilted to the side. They had pinned every strange event that had occurred within the last few months trying to see if there was a pattern forming. They'd started out with only a few colored pegs

but, as more documentation was found, pins had started form a pattern.

Angelica took a black marker and drew a circle around the slums and the surrounding area. “Misery has been operating inside this area,” she stated. “The other occurrences we found appear to be other demons getting brave and coming out of hiding.”

“What about what happened at Love Bites?” Trevor asked. “That wasn’t exactly fitting with her MO.”

“We might need to enlarge her area before long,” Chad offered. “And what about the body we found earlier today?”

They all shivered remembering the scene. They had received a call from the police about the body of a young man being found and thought they needed to see it. The man had been about twenty years of age and was wearing the remnants of a tee shirt with the local college name on it.

When they got there, the police had taped off the entire area and about one hundred yards all around it. Chad had thought that odd and went to talk with a couple of his buddies on the force, when he came back his tan was noticeably paler.

“What is it?” Zachary asked.

“They said we need to see for ourselves... it’s just as bad as what you described about the bus the other day.”

As the four of them approached, Trevor had to breathe through his mouth in order to keep the smell from making him sick. The worst part of it was he could taste the acrid odor and

that was just as bad. Zach gave him a surgical mask from his jacket pocket... he always kept a few on hand for situations like this. When they saw the body, even Zachary had to turn away and take a few deep breaths.

The body had been literally ripped apart and everything that had been inside was on the outside. The worst part was they could all see where something had actually eaten parts out as whole chunks were gone. Long claw marks covered what little bit of flesh was left and the bones were visible, some of them broken and poking out.

The eye sockets were the worst as they stared straight up... the eyes had been dug out. Part of the scalp had been ripped away and the skull punctured with brain matter still slowly oozing out of the hole. The mouth had been pulled open and left hanging and the tongue also devoured.

Large portions had been gouged out all over the body and the stomach was lying wide open. Angelica turned away from the scene and covered her mouth with a hand to avoid nausea... it wasn't helping.

"Poor bastard," Zachary whispered and knelt down next to the boy. This past week had flown by with a frenzy of demon activity and it didn't look like it was slowing down. "What's the official word?"

"The police say it was an animal attack." Chad answered. Angelica shook her head, "No animal did this," she rasped and headed back to the car. "It was the grave."

Zachary shook away the memory and looked away from the map toward Angelica. “What did you mean when you say it was the grave?”

Angelica frowned, “It’s all I could feel from the body. The wounds were almost too old for me to even feel that. I don’t know how to better describe it but to say that it was the grave that killed him.”

Zachary stepped away from the map and went to his laptop sitting on the coffee table. Linking up with PIT, he sent a message to Storm documenting the latest events... his response was immediate.

“Looks like Storm’s pulling in PIT’s major players.” Zachary informed the others and paused before looking up at his teammates. “He’s brought in the fabled Ren... he’s already here.”

Trevor shivered visibly at the mention of Ren’s name. Ren had always been the phantom of the group... more of a legend than a real person because Storm was the only one who had ever met him. He’d once asked Storm who was the most powerful member of PIT and Storm hadn’t even hesitated in his response. But if Storm was sending his second in command, then that meant he was sending an army right behind him.

Zachary and Trevor both knew what that meant... the war was starting.

### Chapter 3

During his teenage years, Ren had made it a habit to log into the Paranormal Investigation Team’s database so he could keep

up on current events. He was also smart enough to then destroy whatever computer he had used so it couldn't be tracked back to him. It had been a thrill to breach the firewalls set up on a division of the government that supposedly didn't exist.

The paranormal investigation team, otherwise known as P.I.T., knew Ren was stalking their assignments and siphoning their encrypted information, but so far they had never caught up with him and they had never found a firewall thick enough to keep him out of their private system. Not only was he stealing their data, but Ren was leaving data behind from his own paranormal investigations.

After several years, the head of PIT had started leaving Rin messages behind the thickest, most encrypted firewalls Rin had ever seen. It was behind those walls that Rin had secretly joined the elusive P.I.T. group, but only on his own terms... that he worked alone.

Whoever was behind that wall not only knew his name, but also some other things about him that no one else knew... like the fact that he wasn't entirely human. It was only after he'd taken on a level seven demon that had started a flesh eating cult in the Congo and been severely wounded that the head man of P.I.T. had finally caught up with him.

Ren was in the middle of a fight with the skin-demon and very much on the losing end when a hand had gripped his shoulder... the next thing he knew, he was on a small private island in the middle of the ocean. Rin had turned around to come face to face

with the man behind the encrypted walls... Storm.

Rin shook his head at the memory of those first few moments. Storm looked like he should have been the lead singer for some 80's rock band instead of the mastermind behind the most secretive group of people in the world.

Storm had only smiled and removed the hand that had still been gripping his shoulder. "Trying to retire from P.I.T. the hard fast way? Why don't you stick around a while? I'd hate to lose my best friend, before we have a chance to become friends."

"What?" Ren winced, holding his hand over his chest where the demon had tried to scratch his heart out.

"Sorry," Storm sighed reaching for him again. They were suddenly in the half underground, half underwater facility that was hidden deep under the island. "There isn't anyone here with the power to heal, but I can always take you to someone that can if you'd prefer."

"No," Ren practically growled. "If you can give me some needle and thread, I think I can handle staying in one place for a few damn minutes." He leaned back against a counter trying to stay out of Storm's reach, "And if you touch me again, you're gonna lose your hand."

Storm laughed and opened one of the upper cabinets then waved his hand at all the medical supplies. His smile vanished when Ren unbuttoned his shirt and Storm saw the deep grooves the skin-demon had made. A couple more seconds and Ren would have been gone.

“I think that since you have a fetish for demons, you might need to learn a little about them before you challenge another one to a fight.” Storm looked away from the claw marks already knowing what the scars would look like. He’d known Rin for a long time... that friendship just hadn’t happened yet.

Ren reached into the open cabinet and grabbed what looked like a sterilized stitching kit then moved toward the mirror on the wall. “If you’ve met one demon then you’ve met them all... right?” He couldn’t keep the sarcasm from his voice as he tried to mentally block out the pain... it wasn’t working.

“Wrong.” Storm corrected, “You only know what I’ve allowed uploaded into the database.” He sat down on the hospital bed in the middle of the room.

Ren looked in the mirror at the man behind him. The things hidden in that database were enough to set the world on fire... enough to where just having the database was a danger. It was hard to believe there was more... but then, he knew some things that weren’t even in the database.

“I’m listening.” And listen he did... for weeks.

Storm was right to keep the information he shared out of the archives for the same reasons the Vatican held their stuff in secret vaults. If some of this information was to reach the normal population, it would be the end of the world as we know it.

Rin knew without a doubt that the man was still withholding information because whatever gods had handed him the power to jump through time and space had also made it dangerous for him

to tell anyone anything beyond the present moment. He could be the best history teacher in the world... but if Storm tried to tell anyone the future, it could rip the space-time link... and the link was Storm himself.

He was also right about their friendship. They had been friends from day one, and that was saying a lot since neither of them was the type to trust anyone. Truth was... they were both a lot alike in many ways.

Storm's little island getaway was actually somewhere in the past but Storm had given it all the comforts of a modern day mansion and a futuristic base. One side of the building made Ren feel like he was in a huge fish tank while the other side was built into the sturdy rock surrounding the island. The best part about it was the complete solitude. This was the one place Ren could come where nothing paranormal could touch him except for Storm's time jumping ability.

At first, he'd thought Storm was only in his mid-twenties, but after knowing him for over ten years, Storm had never aged a single day so he wondered just how long Storm had been around. Ren's own aging had even slowed down because he spent so much time near Storm and his power.

Ren flinched when a voice jerked him from his musing.

"I've just made you the proud owner of one of the oldest houses in LA," Storm announced as he appeared at the end of the long pier that stretched out from his island. He smirked seeing Ren almost jump out of his skin.

“Damn it, will you please make a noise when you pop out of nowhere like that?” Ren turned around and leaned back against the railing seeing the satisfied look in Storm’s face.

“You were expecting someone else?” Storm laughed.

Ren just gave him a deadpan look since no one else had ever stepped foot on his island. “Okay, I’ll bite. Why did you buy me an old rundown shack? It’s not even my birthday.”

Without warning, Storm reached out and gripped Ren’s shoulder and the ocean fell away leaving them standing in the grass and facing what could pass as a modern day gothic mansion made out of dark stone. Hearing the crash of waves, Ren looked off to the right seeing the ocean. Turning full circle, he frowned noticing the driveway went on as far as the eye could see and the left side was nothing but a thick forest of trees.

“Not bad for a rundown shack,” Storm nodded toward the house, “Fifty ocean front acres and remodeled with every update. It’s hard to believe this used to be a small castle.

“Not that hard,” Ren turned his head and stared at Storm, “What’s the catch?”

“LA needs you,” Storm shrugged and started forward. “Can you not feel it?”

Ren didn’t answer as he followed storm into the place. Truth was, his spider sense was telling him to run like hell. Los Angeles... so far it sounded more like a forced vacation.

Once inside, he found himself in a huge circular space with an open winding staircase across the room leading to the next floor

which split into two separate wings. Storm headed for the huge double doors on the right so Ren sighed and followed him.

“Now this is more my style,” Ren breathed seeing wall to wall monitoring systems and a glass desk with the computer built right into it.

“Thought you would like this,” Storm stretched out on the sofa that was set off by itself in an empty part of the huge room. He watched as Ren slid in behind the desk and started investigating the controls. “No one can trace you here except maybe you... and luckily, you don’t count.”

Storm watched his friend's eyes glow as Ren hovered his palms inches above the keyboard. It was a strange power to have and he didn’t know anyone else who could do it but that’s how Ren could break through the PIT fire walls that were one hundred years more advanced than what the government already had. He was literally sucking all the information from that computer and for all he knew teaching it a thing or two.

It was funny because Ren did not look like your average computer nerd... his looks were quite startling. He’d seen women almost trip over themselves when they caught sight of him.

His hair was a little longer than shoulder length, midnight black with blue highlights when the sun hit it the right way. But even without the sun, you couldn’t miss the thick silver streaks that made Ren look more like a wild child than he did. Add that to the dangling cross earring and the fact he always wore black and it was quite a striking combination. To add to the effect,

Ren's irises were like polished silver with blue highlights and a jet black ring around them. He kept sunglasses with him at all times because of the oddity.

What tripped him out the most about Ren was that computers were one of the things that made Ren happy as far as powers went. Ren was a succubus in every way that counted. If he was near a computer, then he fed off the computer's power almost like a download... but his form of succubus also allowed him to take anyone's power and use it for himself.

For example... if he was near a shifter, then he could shift. If he was near a demon, then he had all the power that type of demon had, but the downside was that it was like using a mirror. He couldn't strip the demon of its powers. Both sides would have the same power so it wasn't always a win-win situation... especially when your opponent had the power longer and knew how to use it better.

One way Ren could turn it to his favor was if there were more than one paranormal power within his succubus range... then look out because he could use them all to his advantage.

Another downfall was that Ren didn't play well with others, so he refused a partner which was a crying shame. Storm could have set him up with powerful people and he could have mirrored any of them. Even right now, if Ren wanted to teleport halfway around the world and fifty years into the past, he could. Luckily, he wasn't interested in that kind of stuff. He watched the light in Ren's eyes die down as he came back from the world of

cyberspace.

Ren blinked and moved his hands away from the keyboard to lean back in his swivel chair. “No one knows I’m here?”

“Just Zachary,” Storm admitted knowing he was going to be in for a fight with Ren on this, “I’m going to have Zachary watching over most of the ones that are already here.”

“Why do I not like the sound of that?” Ren narrowed his eyes but had a feeling this would be a losing battle. “What’s up with the mansion and set up? Why the bribe?”

Storm cocked an eyebrow, “It’s kind of hard to bribe someone who can walk up to an ATM and ask it for money.”

“You’re avoiding the question,” Ren pointed out.

“I’ve let you hide from the paranormal investigation teams for this long, and hell... I’ve even joined you in the solitude more times than I should have.” Storm held up his hand when Ren started to argue, “You’ve always claimed that you owed me one... I’m calling in the favor now.”

“And that favor would be,” Ren’s voice had lost its edge due to his honor. Storm was right... he owed him a life debt and Storm wouldn’t call him on it for something frivolous.

Storm started pacing back and forth in front of the desk. “The only real answer I can give you right now is you’re here to help me fight. I’m calling in many favors on this one. I’ll be bringing in the best of the PIT teams here to the city and you have now been upgraded to second in command.”

“Lucky me.” The fact that it was said with absolutely no

emotion was ignored by both of them.

“Zachary will be in charge if something happens to us,” Storm made a point of adding. “And sooner or later, you two will have to exchange information... especially if I can’t be contacted.”

“Well that doesn’t sound good,” Ren frowned silently wondering why Storm didn’t already have the answers to his own questions. For someone who could bounce into the future, it was odd not to know who would be on the winning side of a battle.

“I won't be around very much for a while because I'll have to hunt down most of the teams. Although they work in pairs, they do have the annoying habit of disappearing off radar and forming their own assignments as they run across them.” He ran his hands through his bangs, “They’re going to be hard for even me to track down.”

“And as you drop them off here, I get to baby sit?” Ren asked wanting clarification.

“No,” Storm shook his head and smiled at the thought. “These people are not children. Their job is the same as yours... to protect the city. Whether you communicate between each other is entirely up to you. But with your power, you can make a grid of the city to let them know where all the hot spots are. This is just the home base for now. You and Zachary will be the only ones who can contact me if I’m not here.”

“Really?” Ren rocked the chair back and forth becoming intrigued by all the mystery. “And here I thought I was the antisocial one between the two of us,” Ren pointed out. “Do you

plan on disappearing?” It was supposed to be a joke, but when he noticed Storm’s flinch he stopped rocking the chair.

Storm rubbed his neck having to be very careful with his words, “I’m a time walker within this dimension, but if there is an area where the dimensional walls have thinned or ruptured... it rejects my power.” That was putting it mildly.

Reading Storm had become a science to him and Ren suddenly understood Storm’s reason behind not knowing who would win the battle. “I’m following you so far,” he hinted.

Storm walked over to the huge window that was facing the ocean and tapped the glass. “This glass is a step beyond bullet proof.” He sighed as he turned around and leaned against it. “But it’s not evil proof.” He nodded his head toward the sofa he had just vacated and whispered words long forgotten by history.

Ren gasped when the ceiling and floor lit up in a wide circle surrounding a large area on the right side of the room with the sofa directly in the center of it. He could even see the luminescent barrier walls connecting the circle on the ceiling and the circle on the floor.

“What is that?” he tried to keep the amazement out of his voice but failed miserably.

“In Layman’s terms... it’s a demon trap.” Storm answered basking in the fact that he had officially awed Ren, which was a very hard thing to do. “Go ahead... walk through the barrier. It won't hurt you.”

Ren reached out but paused before touching it. “Am I

expecting a demonic visitor?”

Storm tilted his head, “Let me remind you of something. If a child of the fallen comes near you, then it is you that becomes... the demon.” He lowered his voice making it creepy while saying “the demon”. He and Ren didn’t quite agree on the subject. Ren was still prejudiced against anything he didn’t understand.

Ren took a step back from it as what Storm said sank in. It even took him a few seconds to think of a good comeback, “At least I’ll be the one who knows where the key to the cage is. Question is... how do I get them in it, put demon treats on the sofa?”

Storm smiled and pushed Ren into the circle.

Ren whirled around and started back toward Storm but ran into what reminded him of ice. Backing up, he shoved his palms against it and blinked seeing the walls of the barriers ripple where he touched it as if the surface of the barrier was made of water.

Smacking it again he growled at Storm, “I am not a demon!”

Storm cocked an eyebrow, “Well, I’m glad we got that out of our system.”

Ren smacked the wall of... whatever.

“Relax, I tweaked the spell enough to where it traps anything not human and since you’re a succubus and I’m within range...” he smiled again knowing this was one lesson Ren needed to learn, “Unless you want to call me a demon?”

“I got it. Shove the thing in the circle and don’t step in my own trap. Now let me out.”

Storm said the spell again much the same way he did the first time with just a couple syllables difference.

Ren was a quick study and had already committed both spells to memory before he made it back to the safety of his desk. The silence stretched before Storm felt the humor of the prior moment fade and he began to talk again.

“This castle used to be in Scotland. I had it brought here brick by brick and reconstructed during the land rush but the upgrades are more recent. There are demon traps in almost every room and you are the only one who can trigger them.”

“It’s very beautiful,” Ren nodded wondering what Storm was getting at. Sometimes his stories were longer than an old man’s as he drifted through his timeless memories. He was allowed to talk about the past as much as he wanted but it was dangerous for him to say anything about the future.

He’d once asked Storm why he didn’t spend his time going back in time and correcting all of mankind’s mistakes like offing Hitler. That’s when Ren had told him that his powers had limits... it seemed trying to change human history was one of them.

“This castle was a wedding gift for a very close friend of mine.” Storm looked out the window that held the view of open land falling off into the ocean... it truly was breathtaking. He swallowed, pushing the haunting memory aside for now.

Gazing back at Ren, Storm realized that for once someone besides him needed a hint of what was coming. Since his power decided to come with annoying rules that kept him from

seeing some of the most important things and barred him from tampering with affairs of the heart, he would have to come up with a very good reason for Ren to want to stay.

He could already feel the pain slice through his mind because of the rules he was about to break but he ignored it.

“This place won’t be here much longer unless I can make the future change.” His voice took on the anger he was feeling as he fought the pain, “Before I decided to bring you here, I stepped into the future several times... only a couple years from now. Every time was a different outcome and it’s because of a dimensional shift... or a lot of them, happening right here in LA.”

Storm swiped at the blood that started dripping from his eyes and nose. “The last time I tried to walk here... part of the castle had collapsed and the walls that were left standing had sun dried blood baked into the brick.”

“Shut up,” Ren glared at him not liking the way the color had just drained from Storm’s face as the bleeding started. Storm had always made jokes about not being able to tell anyone their future... saying it would kill him, but Ren didn’t think it was funny seeing it was the truth. “I get the gist of things and the rest I’ll figure out on my own.”

Storm staggered back to the chair holding his head, “I’m trying to even the odds by bringing LA as much backup as I can.”

Ren got up and walked around the desk, gripping Storm’s shoulder and in an instant they were back on the island. “If you

ever try to tell me the future again, I'm gonna kick your ass.”

By the time Storm was steady enough to realize where he was, Ren was gone. Feeling the splitting headache that would probably last for days he smiled knowing it had been worth it. Ren was in place, and now that Angelica was within the city limits, she should draw in another hidden power that could turn the tables completely in their favor... they needed the gods on their side.

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Ren had spent the last week mapping the city by walking the streets. He knew from the download of the PIT files where some of the non-humans were but as he walked or drove his motorcycle, he could feel power riding him that didn't belong to the things on that list.

He turned on the huge screen that covered one wall of the study, pulling the grid map up on it and leaned back in the chair behind the desk. To anyone else, the map might have resembled a Christmas decoration since it was littered with pinpricks of different colored lights.

It was the colors he was studying now. He could see exactly where the shifters were... had even visited Moon Dance and Night Light. The corner of his lip twitched at the memory. He'd made the mistake of ordering Heat and had done fine until he'd called it a night and come home. By the time he'd made it half way home, he was way out of the range of the shifters and completely drunk.

The shifter's territory was backlit mostly by green lights with

a couple pinpricks of red and blue... blue was the PIT team stationed in that area and everything that happened there he was leaving to them... the same with the wolf pack.

Michael, Damon, and Kane were all loose cannons as far as he was concerned, which had earned them yellow and their soulless progeny that were slinking around in the shadows city wide were tastefully a blood red. At least that cowardly group was nice enough to bed down during the day in groups and tended to stay in groups at night which made it easier to track their feeding ground.

Now, the fallen were a different story. They had been hard to track at first, but recently they were so unstable that he'd given up though he knew when they were close... he could feel them. He thought back to the history lesson he had gotten from Storm.

The short version was the fallen had almost destroyed their own world by breaking through to our dimension and stealing some of our women because they thought they were beautiful. Stealing humans had only been their first mistake. Once they were back on the other side of the wormhole, the fallen had taken turns breeding with the stolen women.

The problem was... the children that came from those unions were not what they expected and the birth always killed the human females.

Only a small percent of the children were born full-blooded fallen and only one out of hundreds were female. The rest were known as demons... hybrids that didn't turn out to be full blooded

anything. Most hybrids were what humans called monsters. As those monsters turned on their own creators, the fallen started eradicating their world of all the hybrids... whether they were monsters or not.

Once they were finished with their genocide, they found there was now dozens of males to each female in their world. So the idiots had come back through the wormhole, this time keeping their creations on our side as they mated with as many women as they could... as quickly as possible.

As the children were born and the mothers died, the fallen would pluck any full blooded fallen and take them back to their world, leaving the hybrids behind. Not needing the male children that were born, they took them and trained them to fight their half breed siblings.

Just before those boys hit puberty, the leaders of the fallen sent them back here and closed the wormhole between the two dimensions... stranding all children here except for the female fallen for whom they had sacrificed so many lives.

The story hadn't ended there. Those young warriors had been trained to do the same thing their fathers had done... rip openings into the bordering dimension... just not the one leading to their home world. This new one existed so close to us that it was only a breath away. One could only presume this was where the theory of Hell originated. So close that humans with heightened senses could feel it and sometimes see it.

As the warriors sought out the hybrids, they found that many

of their rivals were just as powerful as the full blood fallen. Bloodshed happened on both sides and it was also documented that some of the fallen were dragged into the alternate dimension with the hybrids.

The murdering masterminds that had sent their children here had known it was a death sentence. They had counted on the fact that their progeny would kill each other and clean up the mess they'd left behind.

Only a handful of those boys still roamed the earth and most were younger than the first batch, arriving after the war had died down and the surviving hybrids had scattered. In Ren's opinion, this was where things got muddled. Not all hybrids were what you would call demonic... and if undetected they could blend in with the humans and animals... again breeding hybrids for over a millennium.

The big secret Storm was protecting was the fact that most paranormal creatures, shifters and weres, or humans with even the slightest abnormal ability were more than likely the descendant of one of these hybrids... including the succubus powers he'd been using to track them then turn against them. It still made Ren uneasy to think of himself as part hybrid.

In his own defense, Ren was pretty sure the demons he'd killed in the past were not of the redeeming quality... either that or he would call it self-defense because they had sure been trying to kill him.

To make matters worse, Storm just had to drop the bomb on

him that some original hybrids are not evil, even though they give off the same aura as a high class demon would. And if that wasn't enough of a headache, then add the fact that a vampire is not a hybrid at all... but something entirely different that had invaded earth.

Ren rubbed his left temple still staring at the grid map. All area's he found where he'd felt a power boost were black-lighted and considering Misery never stayed in one place... that was most of the city. But taking into account that she had a fetish for soulless vampires, he could only allow her to claim the areas that were near the vampire nest.

That left a lot of unlisted power and somewhere among it was the reason for Storm's bloody prophecy. Speaking of Storm, he hadn't seen him since he'd tossed his fortune telling butt back on the island and so far no one had shown up claiming to be part of PIT.

Ren smirked knowing exactly how to get Storm's attention. He had become so in tune with the high-tech computer system that he no longer had to do anything but be in the same room with it. He watched the computer screen flash as it linked up to the main PIT system then fed the grid map behind the thick firewalls that only he and Storm could access.

It usually only took a few minutes before Storm would respond or pop into existence, so when the minutes ticked by with no response, Ren became worried. Then the screen flashed.

Storm appeared on the screen so Ren could see him and

lowered a crimson spotted cloth from his nose before he leaned back in his chair and smiled at Ren via the webcam.

Ren frowned at that and could also see that Storm was at home on the island. “I’m surprised you didn’t come yourself . . . but then it kind of looks like you’ve been breaking the rules again,” Ren chastised with an arched eyebrow.

“The time flux in your area is keeping me from jumping and giving me one hell of a headache.” Storm explained holding the bloody tissues in his fist.

“Then stop trying,” Ren glared.

Storm nodded, “We’re going to have to stay in touch this way until things settle down on your end. For now, you have incoming PIT teams and it’s time you start learning how to work with them for everyone’s sake. Since you have a photographic memory and have read their files, I’m sure you will know more about them than even they know about themselves.”

“So you’re finally putting me in the middle of a lot of people with powers? Is that a smart thing to do? What if I can’t control it?” Ren asked not relishing the idea of working with someone else besides Storm.

Storm grinned and lifted his shoulders in a shrug, “Practice makes perfect Ren and you’re about to get a crash course in human interaction. Zachary and Angelica are moving in with you so they can access the databank and all the equipment I’ve stored in the castle. They’ll also handle most of the PIT teams that are coming. As for you, your job is to try to find out what the hell is

causing the time flux and barring me from the area.”

He paused for a moment before leaning toward the screen. “Answer your door.”

The video link abruptly disconnected, leaving Ren staring at it with raised eyebrows. A loud knock at the door made him look in that direction then back at the blank screen.

“I hate it when he does that.” Ren grumbled and stood up from his chair grabbing his sunglasses to hide his eyes.

Walking through the open double doors that led into the foyer, Ren answered the door and stared at his visitors... soon to be roommates.

Zachary was smiling when he saw the young man standing on the other side of the entrance. “It’s nice to finally meet the real ‘ace in the hole’ that Storm has been talking about for as long as I’ve known him.”

Ren gritted his teeth but accepted Zachary’s outstretched hand and nodded at Angelica before standing aside and letting them in. He knew every face on PIT’s roster and what their gifts were. He’d made a point to memorize the profiles of all PIT members not long after Storm took him in.

Storm had added notes into the blocked version of the profiles and Ren had mentally downloaded those too. Storm was right... he probably knew more about them than they knew about themselves.

Zachary was a little bit of a wild child with what Storm had described as a double personality... one minute Zachary was

joking and the next he was as deadly as a ticked off cobra. He'd seen the news broadcasts of the fire that took out the home of a mob boss a while back and the whole situation had PIT, more specifically Zachary, written all over it. The next morning Zachary had filed the report into the PIT system and confirmed Ren's suspicions.

Angelica's power was a little more complicated, being able to kill demons using the magic she was born with. Storm had once called her the key but never said what the hell she unlocked.

Her file was thicker than anyone else's... it was as if Storm had been documenting her every move since birth. Ren couldn't figure out why... and he didn't really care at the moment. Without a word, he closed the door and headed into the room that served as his office. Somehow he'd known they would follow him.

"So," Zachary said after less than a minute of awkward silence, "Do you live here alone?"

"No," Ren said. "I have new roommates."

Angelica smirked at the dumbfounded expression that appeared on Zachary's face. "I think he's trying to break the ice."

"He's doing a bad job," Ren said already feeling crowded.

"I know," Angelica soothed recognizing a quiet loner type when she met one.

Zachary sent Angelica a mock glare. "Hey, you're supposed to be on my side."

"Why?" Angelica laughed. "Believe it or not, some of us can

go for days without running our mouths. You... I'm lucky to go two seconds without hearing you going on about something."

"I can to be quiet!" Zachary exclaimed. "Watch me!"

Zachary then commenced to slouch back on the sofa and cross his arms over his chest with his lips pressed into a thin line. Angelica rolled her eyes before getting up to take a closer look at the computer system Storm had set up.

Ren watched her closely, ready to answer any questions she might have and glanced over at Zachary. For some reason, the other man had found something very fascinating about the buttons on his shirt. Ren mentally counted down from five before the inevitable explosion occurred.

"GAH!" Zachary yelled. "I can't stand this."

Ren laughed making Angelica and Zachary look at him in surprise. It didn't last long and Ren ran a hand through his hair before taking in the others. "Go ahead and explore the castle, there are plenty of bedrooms." he said once all traces of humor vanished from his face.

Angelica nodded, "I'll go get my suitcase."

Once she was gone, Ren looked over at Zachary and found himself face to face with the other side of the fire starter's personality. "I'm curious... what powers do you have?"

"Yours," Ren smirked, "and Angelica's... and anyone else that comes within my succubus range."

Zachary flipped his palm up and opened it seemingly satisfied that his powers were still there.

“I didn’t say I took your power away,” Ren shrugged, refusing to resort to parlor tricks to prove what he was saying. He locked eyes with Zach and saw the disturbed man behind the mask. “By coming near me, you are giving me the same power,” he stated for clarity.

“I take care of Angelica while she’s here,” Zach announced out of the blue.

“I’m not a babysitter and you can take care of everyone who shows up,” Ren corrected him. “It’s not my job.”

Zach nodded as if he had just won a strategic war, “I know Storm is putting together an army.”

Ren nodded, “Yeah.”

“He’s going to need one,” Zach rubbed his hands on his pant legs and stood up. “Who else has he called in for this?”

“Almost everyone as far as I know,” Ren answered. “But there are a few he hasn’t been able to locate.”

“Anything I can do to help out?” Zach asked.

Ren nodded toward the computer, “Find those that Storm can’t. He’s listed all that are still missing in action.”

Zach grinned and walked over to the computer. “Let’s see who the almighty one missed.”

Ren watched, completely fascinated with this total switch in attitude. He didn’t know which side he liked best... but he knew which one he trusted more.

## Chapter 4

Angelica lay on the bed with a couple of pillows propped up

against the headboard behind her trying to avoid sleep... her new favorite pastime. As soon as she came back in with her suitcase, she knew Zachary had pulled his little switch on Ren as the other man was sitting on the sofa staring at him. Zachary had told her to go ahead and find a room and get some sleep so she'd happily pretended to do just that.

She'd walked the long halls for a few moments before choosing a door at random and opened it. Upon seeing the interior she smiled and placed her suitcase on the bed. The room was decorated in shades of purple accented with gold and lighter shades of lavender.

The bed was huge, probably emperor size, with a beautiful canopy accompanied by gold and purple throw pillows and comforter. The sheets and pillowcases were lavender and she almost giggled at the little gold tassels on the corners of them.

A large armoire sat on the far side of the room. When she opened it, she half expected to see it filled with old fashioned dresses from the ballroom area. To her disappointment, it was empty. On the wall across from the bed was an antique vanity table with a large mirror.

Next to the bed was a writing desk with a supply of pens and paper, along with a note telling her the data port for her lap top was on the wall underneath it. Angelica had almost laughed when she read this and bent over to take a look. Sure enough, she saw the access point and immediately dug out her laptop and hooked it up.

From her lazy position on the bed, she had a perfect view through the balcony doors at the moonlight shining down on the ocean. She smiled because it was an honest to god balcony.

Most people that knew her would have thought that she didn't go in for such girly things... but all little girls had the fantasy of being a princess in a castle and she was no different. She even used to pretend that she was Cinderella or Sleeping Beauty, waiting for her prince to come and take her away.

Too bad she no longer believed in the theory of a knight in shining armor coming to rescue her from the big bad demons who surrounded the castle.

With a sigh, Angelica looked back down at her drawing and sketched out a few more lines before putting the pencil down on the night table beside her. Placing it on her lap, she lifted her hand and studied her palm where the symbol was imprinted. It wasn't a burn nor a tattoo of any kind... it was just there.

Picking the paper back up, she looked at the picture she'd drawn of Syn and added the symbol in the bottom right corner of the page. She blinked when the picture started to blur and lowered it back to her lap, closing her eyes for a moment just to stop them from burning.

Syn appeared beside Angelica's bed as soon as she'd fallen asleep. He'd silently made his way through the castle and the city touching the minds of everyone she'd interacted with. He'd needed to gain knowledge about her life so he would know exactly what he was dealing with. So far the most interesting

information he'd gained had been from Zachary's mind.

The blonde man was sharp as a whip but hid that fact under so many layers. He also held power of his own right as a hybrid. Zachary had been assigned as her protector and he took the job seriously. Syn knew Zachary would have to quickly get over his crush on Angelica... she was not for the hybrid.

Zachary had read her dossier that PIT had on file, starting with her birth until now. The details were very accurate and siphoning that information from Zachary's mind let Syn know there were several people in her past, her childhood to be more precise, that would later meet a very uncomfortable fate.

Syn silently promised that he would erase them from existence without her knowledge. She would never again know the pain of rejection or violation of any kind.

Syn had watched through Zachary's eyes the memories of Angelica fighting the monsters of this world and knew it was sheer luck that she was still alive. He was sure she knew it as well, though with her interesting view of this world she would never admit it. His eyes trailed to her lips knowing the real reason he had come to her tonight.

Bending over her, Syn placed his hands gently on the pillow on each side of her head and let his lips hover tantalizingly close to hers. When she inhaled deep in her sleep, his lips parted and he blew softly. He watched the silver tendrils of power flow from his lips to hers. It was his promise... the gift of a sun god to bestow the breath of life on his soul mate for her protection. From now

on, any injury she received would heal just as quickly as it was given... and she would no longer age.

He stood back up and gazed down at her with soft eyes. Her dark brown hair tumbled over the pillows, shining in the soft light of the room. The rich brocade of the pillows reminded him of how she'd looked the last time while he watched her sleep in their bed on their home world.

The palm of her right hand was turned upward, revealing the mark he had placed there. It had already started its work, awakening her powers and soon her craving for him would follow.

He tried again to see into her mind but her ability to block him was just as strong in this life as it had been in the past. He found himself filled with jealousy knowing that Zachary could read her mind and he could not. He wondered over this but concluded it had to do with trust. She trusted Zachary enough to let her guard down around him... he planned on gaining that same amount of trust.

If she'd ever taught him anything, it was to have an obscene amount of patience, which he realized he was starting to grow a bit short on. Right now her mental shields were high but he was looking forward to working past them and convincing her to let him back in. Now that she was protected by his power, he would have all the time he needed.

Syn sat down on the edge of the bed and picked up the notebook to see what she had been working on. An intense

calmness stole over him when he saw his detailed likeness on the paper... she was already reaching for him and didn't even know it.

Angelica felt movement beside her and opened her eyes thinking it was Zachary. Only he would have the nerve to enter her room while she was sleeping.

She blinked finding the dark haired man she'd just drawn sitting on the edge of her bed holding the drawing she'd been working on. Angelica acted on instinct, diving toward him with her palm outstretched to exorcise him as she would any other demon.

"Hello wife," Syn caught her by the wrist without looking up from the drawing and finished his perusal of it before lifting his dark amethyst gaze to hers.

Angelica locked her elbow in place, making her arm taut. She cocked an elegant eyebrow deciding to ignore the wife remark... demons were delusional.

Syn abruptly pulled her toward him until there were only a few inches between them, close but not touching. Never lowering his eyes, he lifted her palm to his lips and kissed the suddenly glowing symbol.

Angelica stopped breathing for a few seconds... she felt like he'd set her on fire with such a simple and seductive move.

"You're a very stupid demon," she said trying to push away the sensation of his lips on her palm.

"I'm not a demon," Syn informed her. "And your magic will

never work on me.” He released her wrist when her arm relaxed in his hold.

Angelica slowly pulled her hand back, “Just because you say it, doesn’t mean it’s true.” She wrapped her own hand around her wrist trying to rub away the feel of his warm flesh touching hers. “Who are you?”

“You may call me Syn.”

Angelica felt cold chills race down her back at the implications of the name. She could already think of many ways that name would fit him. “Okay Syn, why are you here?”

“In your dream... or in your bed?” Syn asked with the ghost of a smile caressing his perfect lips.

Yep, she’d been right. He was completely sinful. Remembering her other dreams had all been nightmares, Angelica slowly glanced around the room then back at him, “I’m not dreaming... I felt you touch me... I... I felt your lips touch my hand.”

“Just because you are dreaming, does not mean it isn’t real.” Syn charmingly mocked her earlier statement.

Angelica’s gaze narrowed when he tore the picture she’d just drawn out of her sketch book. He carefully rolled it instead of folding it, and then placed it inside a deep pocket on the inner lining of his trench coat. She couldn’t help but watch his hands as they moved. They looked so smooth and untouched...like the way history books described those of royalty. Finally she glanced back up at his face and frowned when she saw the hint of a smile.

“Why are you really here?” she demanded.

“To keep the nightmares away while you sleep,” Syn answered and leaned back against the bedpost behind him. “Rest tonight Angelica, no nightmares or demons will haunt your sleep.”

Angelica jerked upright in bed with the sun streaming through the balcony window... it was morning. Looking down at the foot of the bed, she leaned forward and felt the place where Syn had been sitting. There was no trace that he'd been there and Angelica took a deep breath. It was only a dream after all.

Swinging her legs over the side of the bed, she stood up and heard something fall onto the floor. She picked up her sketchbook and started to close it but stopped when she remembered the dream.

Opening the book back up, she flipped through the pages and stopped when she saw that the drawing she had done last night was gone. In its place was a beautiful penciled sketch of her asleep in this bed. It had been done with as much soft detail as the one she'd done of him. In the picture, her hand was relaxed near her face and she noticed the symbol drawn there. Just under the drawing was the word 'Syn' written in elegant penmanship.

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Tabatha parked her car in the VIP parking space at Moon Dance and got out. Adjusting her short dress, she tucked her keys into the clutch purse and approached the front door. She was sick of hiding out in that lonely apartment waiting to see if Kriss would ever come home. Seeing the excitement of the crowd was

already making her feel a little better.

Nick smiled as he watched her approach and opened the rope to let her through ahead of everyone else waiting for admittance. He wasn't doing it because his brother's mate was her best friend... he was doing it because without Tabatha... they would not have found Micah in time to save him.

His gaze narrowed on her exposed shoulder. The last time he'd seen her... that shoulder had sported a pretty bad wound, but now it didn't have a single blemish on it. It seemed they had some kind of healing fairy running around town because the same thing had happened to Micah's wounds.

"How's it going tonight?" he asked curiously as he saw a trace of sadness in her eyes.

Tabatha gave him a small smile, "It's going okay."

"Has anyone told you that you look good enough to eat?" he inquired with a gleam in his eyes. It was the fastest way to cheer a girl up... he should know, he was surrounded by them every night.

Tabatha shook her head smiling, "You are incorrigible."

"Yes I am," Nick agreed. "So does that mean I get to take you home with me tonight?"

"Not a chance!" Tabatha shot back with a smirk then added, "Besides, with you living right above the dance floor, it would be way too easy."

Nick placed a hand over his heart and made a show of staggering back a couple of steps. "Tabby cat... you wound me.

My intentions were completely innocent.”

“I bet,” Tabatha laughed then winked at him. “But I may ask for a dance later.”

Nick leaned closer to her as he held the door open for her. “And I may take you up on that.”

Tabatha walked inside and took a deep breath, loving the familiar atmosphere. It had been a couple of days since her encounter with Kane and she still hadn’t heard a word from Kriss. Her worry was gone now, replaced by a slight depression that she knew only Kriss could get rid of.

The thumping of the music vibrated through her body and she walked to the railing so she could look out over the dance floor. It was late at night, closing in on midnight, and the club was in full swing. Bodies were grinding to the techno beats pumping out of the speakers and the bar section was almost full. Tabatha looked around trying to decide what to do first. She was sick of being alone and figured this was exactly what she needed to snap her out of her moody funk.

Walking up to the bar, Tabatha slammed her small purse on the surface. “What’s a lady gotta do to get a drink around here?” she demanded.

“Bite me!” Envy exclaimed and put a drink down in front of her. “Will that be all ma’am?”

“No,” Tabby said. “I still need to bite you.”

“Be careful,” Envy said. “I bite back.”

Tabatha picked up the drink and took half of it in one swallow,

remembering the drinks she'd had at Silk Stalkings a few nights before and the way Kane had kissed her sober. What annoyed her most was that every time she thought about it, she would feel a hot aching sensation spiral downwards toward her lower belly and thighs. Again she flinched as she felt it.

Envy took note of Tabatha's demeanor and could tell something was wrong with her friend. They'd been through too much together for Envy not to notice it. She went through the motions of making Tabatha another drink when she saw her friend place an empty glass back down on the bar.

As she slid the second drink in front of Tabatha, she noticed Tabby not really paying attention and, instead, looking distractedly out at all the other people enjoying themselves.

Kat was working just a little ways down from Envy's station and watched Tabatha out of the corner of her eye. She could tell Tabatha looked antsy and wondered what had happened in the last few days to make that happen. Picking up a bottle of Heat, she caught Envy's attention and pointed at the bottle before nodding her head toward Tabatha.

Envy looked over at her friend before giving Kat an approving nod. Kat fixed another drink and added a small shot of the potent alcohol to the mix before handing it over to Envy.

"Thanks," Envy said and took the glass to Tabatha. "Here you go Tabby, on the house."

Tabatha looked down at the drink and smiled. "Thank you!"

"So," Envy started leaning against the bar. "What's got you

down in the dumps?”

“Nothing that important I guess,” Tabatha answered.

“Yeah right,” Kat exclaimed walking up. “If your face was any longer your chin would still be at home watching television.”

“I’m just upset with Kriss right now,” Tabatha said after a couple of seconds. If she couldn’t tell her best friend then she might as well go home and stay there. “He’s never been gone this long before without calling or letting me know something. He quit his job at Silk Stalkings a few days ago and no one has seen him since.” She didn’t divulge the fact that it felt like she had been dumped... her chest hadn’t quit hurting for days.

Kat got a napkin from behind the bar and handed it over to Tabatha when the tears started to fall. If she didn’t know better, she’d swear this was the reaction a lover would have when their heart had been broken. Envy had told her Kriss was gay, but Kat wondered if something had happened between Kriss and Tabatha that Envy wasn’t aware of.

“Why did he leave without saying goodbye?” Tabatha demanded softly, dabbing at the wetness on her cheeks. She used the anger to stop crying... she hated to cry. “I thought I deserved that much at least.”

Envy pursed her lips together... Kriss would never do something like that without a good reason. Hell, she could tell that Kriss loved her but he loved Dean too. Her hands fisted on the bar when she realized why Kriss was staying away... Dean.

“I’m sure he’ll come back,” Kat said. “You are a good friend

and you do deserve to hear the truth.” She looked over at Envy, “Right?”

“Absolutely,” Envy said pushing her anger down into the pit of her stomach. “You know what we should do? Find Mr. Feathers, tie him down on top of an ant mound after covering him with honey and leave him there. That will teach him to call next time.”

Tabatha raised her eyebrows at the redhead, “Alrighty then.”

“Oh, oh,” Kat said excitedly. “Better yet, we strip him down and truss him up like a Thanksgiving turkey then drop him off at the biker bar on the other end of town. Some of those guys are truly frightening.”

Envy shook her head, “Nah, he’d like that too much.”

“I got it!” Kat exclaimed seeing Tabatha's lip begin to twitch at their antics. “We knock him out, keep him prisoner in Tabatha’s bedroom and feed him only bread and water until he gives in and agrees to be Tabatha’s sex slave for all eternity.”

Envy cocked her head to the side then smiled. “Now that idea I like.”

“I got a question for you that’s a little off the subject.” Tabatha said getting their attention. “What do you two know about Kane?”

Kat shrugged, “He’s a sexy as hell vampire with a great sense of humor.”

The three women started laughing but stopped when Devon slid up behind Envy and wrapped an arm around her waist.

“I’ll show you sexy as hell... dance with me,” Devon

whispered loud enough for the other women to hear.

Envy smirked at her friends before letting Devon lead her out from behind the bar and down to the dance floor. They could hear the crowd cheering when the cage door slammed and Tabatha smiled.

Getting up from her seat, Tabatha walked over to the railing and looked down on Envy and Devon dancing in the cage. She could see their mouths moving and could only imagine what they were talking about.

Envy was leaning back with her arms over her head holding on to the bars of the cage. Devon had her legs wrapped around his hips grinding into her. One hand was on her bottom, holding her up while the other hand was resting on her rib cage just below one of her breasts... threatening to touch but not actually doing so.

Devon smirked and pulled Envy away from the bars, catching her before she could fall backward and set her on her feet. He quickly spun her around so that her back was pressed against his chest, his hands trailing up her ribcage to cup the bottom of her breast, teasing her.

“Let’s give them a real show,” Devon whispered.

“No public sex,” Envy exclaimed breathlessly.

“Oh no,” Devon said. “That’s for me only and in private. This however,” Envy suddenly found herself in a lowered position with her legs spread by Devon’s thighs as he ground against her from behind. “This is for the crowd.”

Devon rotated his hips in small circles and Envy braced her

feet on the floor so she could move with him. She groaned softly and swore she could actually feel him deep inside of her, making love to her without removing a stitch of clothing.

“I love the way you move for me,” Devon growled. “So sexy... and hot.”

Envy pushed back against him, straightening, and then wound her arms back around Devon’s neck. She gasped when his hands lifted the front of her shirt to expose the soft skin of her belly to the crowd. Devon’s right hand slowly moved down until the very tips of his fingers disappeared into the waistband of her tight black shorts while the other pulled her shirt up the rest of the way, revealing the black lace bra she was wearing.

“You cheated,” Envy pouted up at him.

Devon moaned as he continued to create friction between his erection, the thin material of his pants, and Envy’s shorts.

Devon smirked, “Maybe so, but that won’t stop you from coming for me here in front of everyone.”

They rose back up to their feet and Envy turned to face him, sliding her thigh between his and he mimicked the action. Before she could protest, the fishnet shirt was off and they were grinding against each other sensuously. To anyone else it looked like they were dancing, but to everyone that knew them... they knew exactly what Envy and Devon were doing.

“Now,” Devon ordered and Envy had no choice but to obey.

Tabatha watched breathlessly as Envy tossed her head back and started bucking hard against Devon’s thigh. She felt heat

spread through her body and wished for a moment it was her in that cage with someone that wanted her the way Devon wanted Envy.

“I wish I could find someone like that,” Tabatha sighed longingly then turned to go back to the bar.

Reclaiming her seat she looked at Kat, “So you think Kane has a sense of humor... really nice guy huh?” She shook her head, “I seem to recall the fact that he’s the one that started the vampire mess and tried to set you guys up for all those murders. Mine and Envy’s names were almost added to that list of victims, remember?” She downed the rest of her drink, satisfied that she had chased the melancholy away. Now if she could just stop getting turned on every few minutes.

“He helped save you and Envy.” Kat tilted her head as she studied Tabatha. She was good at picking up vibes from people and it suddenly dawned on her that Kriss wasn’t the only man on Tabby’s mind.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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