

DARK FLAMES

BLOOD BOUND SERIES BOOK 6



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Dark Flames

Серия «Blood Bound Book», книга 6

Аннотация

Just as the vampire war escalates into a full-blown demon war, Zachary finds himself responsible for a beautiful necromancer who is connected to a dark moment in his past. He had watched her mother step across the thin line and straight into the arms of a demon. It was his job to make sure Tiara didn't choose the same lustful path... unless it was with him. Now, with the demons closing in, the last thing he expected was for Tiara to be kin to them. As tempers soar and secrets are kept, jealousy becomes a dangerous game. Someone should have warned her that when you play with fire you are bound to be burned.

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Blood Bound Series Book 6

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Chapter 1

Damon strode through the door of his penthouse and set Alicia on her feet. He hadn't said a word since they'd left Night Light, not quite trusting his voice or emotions.

The silence between them was deafening but Alicia didn't have the courage to break it. When she felt his hand on her back, pushing her ahead of him into the living room, she got a clue as to how angry he truly was. Quickly turning around to keep him in sight, she silently watched as he jerked off his coat and tossed it clear across the room.

The trench coat landed on the back of the sofa but Damon had already forgotten about it, choosing instead to stalk his escape artist of a mate.

“Damon, wait,” Alicia felt the need to beg as she backed up.

“Wait for what?” Damon asked with a slight tilt of his head. He slowly chased her with a seemingly relaxed gait. “Wait for you to disappear the first moment I turn my back? You have no clue what's lurking in the darkness out there. It's not safe.”

“I've lived out there all my life. I'm not helpless anymore...

you made sure of that when you turned me.” Alicia gave him a hard look but kept retreating, her self-confidence taking a beating as she felt his anger. “It’s not like I was running away from you.” She swallowed when he started unbuttoning his shirt with quick fingers.

Damon’s eyes narrowed, watching her as she slid behind the sofa... as if putting it between them would stop him. “Now where have I seen this before?” he asked with a tilt of his lips.

Alicia blanched at the frightening smile he gave her. “I asked you to take me to see him,” she pointed out.

“And I distinctly remember telling you no, not yet.” The muscles in Damon’s jaw jumped as he had a flash back of finding her hugging Micah. The way they had jerked away from each other was exactly why he hadn’t wanted her anywhere near the other werewolf.

“Micah was worried... he loves me Damon,” Alicia tried the calm approach since he was allowing her to keep the sofa between them... for now. She blinked when he was suddenly beside her... on her side of the sofa, softly touching her cheek with his palm.

“And you think now is a good time to rub that in my face?” Damon asked in a deceptively light tone.

Alicia’s lips parted to retort but he was suddenly gone. She spun around when she heard the refrigerator door slam shut and saw Damon pouring some of the blood into a glass. She frowned knowing he wasn’t injured... so why was he drinking blood?

Taking a couple tentative steps toward him but not brave enough to enter the kitchen she asked, “Why are you drinking that?”

They both flinched when the glass in his hand shattered.

Damon closed his eyes for a second then snapped them open, “I’m angry, as I’m sure you’ve noticed, and I was hoping this would give me the strength to hold it in.” He raised an eyebrow when Alicia used the speed he had given her to dart past him to the refrigerator. Within seconds she was putting a full glass of blood into the microwave.

Alicia felt a shiver when she turned around and Damon imprisoned her against the counter. He wasn’t saying anything... just trapping her there as he bent his head to her neck... not touching.

“What are you doing?” she whispered hoarsely.

“Testing myself,” Damon answered as he inhaled.

“What are you testing?” She leaned her head back due to the heat he was creating inside of her.

Damon pushed himself back so he could see her while he answered, “To see if I can keep my sanity while you smell like another man.”

He quickly caught the hand she aimed at his face and jerked her forward. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you,” he warned. He released her wrist when the microwave beeped.

Alicia moved out of the way so he could get the glass himself. She frowned, “He’s my brother... it shouldn’t count.”

“And maybe it wouldn’t if you hadn’t told him you were not true siblings.” The glass shattered in his hand again. “Damn it, I give up!” Damon growled in agitation looking down at the crimson liquid all over the tile. Tightening his fists at his sides, he brushed past her into the living room.

Alicia rubbed her temple now understanding, at least in his jealous mind, why he thought he had a right to be angry. She hadn’t known he was listening when she’d told Micah they weren’t siblings. She was trying to make Micah feel better... not make Damon hold a grudge for life. Turning her head, she could see him standing in front of the wall-sized windows.

Damon watched her come toward him in the reflection in the glass. He couldn’t help the soft smirk that tugged at his lips when she wrapped her arms around him from behind. She was so small she was all but hidden from his view. Gripping one of her wrists, he pulled until she was in front of him with her back pressed against his chest.

“How long have you known that the two of you were not brother and sister?” he asked, locking eyes with hers in the reflection.

“Only a couple hours before I told Micah,” She snuggled backwards into the security his arms offered, “We talked about it tonight.” She felt those arms tighten and quickly elaborated, “The three of us are the only ones who know... besides Mrs. Tully because she delivered me. We both decided that we don’t want anyone else to know.”

“Wise choice,” Damon offered.

Alicia bit her bottom lip wondering how to word it so that Damon would understand. “But I do love him, you know. He’s my big brother and we’ve always been close. You have to let me see him.”

“Do I now?” Damon asked curiously.

Alicia shook her head then turned in his arms so she could look up at him. “Listen to me,” she smiled softly. “Micah won first place on my hero list when I was a child because he didn’t agree with the rest of the family when they hid me away from the world. He would come to the school all the time and take me away from that prison... sometimes weeks at a time. He allowed me the freedom I craved.”

Damon didn’t trust himself enough to say anything, but just holding her and seeing the love shining in her amethyst eyes was soothing his anger.

“And he is a very smart man. He told me that one day I’d find someone who would show me what true love was.” Alicia reached up and cupped Damon’s cheek. “He was right... wasn’t he? You won’t lock me away will you?”

Damon pulled her tightly against him, wrapping her in the steel chains of his arms. He gazed out the window that overlooked what was fast becoming a very dangerous place. He had used this penthouse to hide from Michael... now he was using it to hide Alicia from anything that could harm her.

Truth was... after what happened last night, this place was

no longer safe enough to hide something so precious. He would have to find a place to call their own so he could ward it against demons. Besides... he was looking forward to fighting with Michael again.

“So to be your hero, I have to let you out of my sight in an unstable city full of demons? That’s not fair,” Damon chided.

“If I didn’t have to sneak around, then you’d always know where I am,” Alicia said then held her breath for a moment before continuing, “I don’t want to resent anything about you... I love you.”

Damon sighed softly, “I love you too... that’s why I will only agree to your freedom if it comes with conditions.”

“And those conditions would be?” she asked skeptically.

Damon smirked, “I will teach you how to protect yourself when I’m not around to do it for you.”

“Fighting lessons?” Alicia couldn’t help the excitement. “I’m game.”

“You should be, because you really suck at fighting.” When she tried to hit him, Damon just pinned her arms against him and knocked her feet out from under her. Lowering her to the floor, he felt himself harden as he came down on top of her.

“My point is made,” he said as he stared down into her eyes.

Alicia growled up at him, baring her teeth in an adorable display of defiance.

“And there will be no more secrets between us,” Damon finished with a hard look.

Alicia's growl stopped and she sent him an alluring smile, wiggling under him, "I want you." Her voice was pure seduction. She waited until he relaxed his grip and started to lower his lips to hers. Quickly, Alicia rolled over, taking him with her. She bounced down hard on his lower belly with a smirk as she stared down at him.

"My point is made," she mocked and wiggled seductively again.

"You think so?" Damon lifted them both off the floor and had her pinned to the wall before she could blink. He shoved his leg between hers, bringing it up so she was straddling his thigh. Leaning close to her ear, he sucked her sensitive earlobe between his lips then whispered, "Two can play at that game."

Alicia felt herself melt and rocked against his thigh wanting more. "I like the way you train me."

Damon growled at the sexual rush those words induced and slashed his lips across hers in a sudden frenzy of need. He would give her what she needed... but freedom wasn't on that list. After seeing only a fraction of what had come out of that rift, he'd stalk every move she made even if she wasn't aware of it. If she thought he was protective before... she didn't have a clue.

What Damon was holding back from her was his own fear... fear that if he let her out of his sight he would never see her again, alive or dead. He had experienced the pain of losing one woman he cared for in the past due to his and Michael's stupidity. The difference now was Damon more than cared for Alicia... he

loved her beyond reason.

Pulling back from the kiss, he smirked and picked her up when she tried to follow him. He strolled intently toward the bedroom but lost his momentum when Alicia's teeth slid across his right nipple followed by an upward stroke of her warm tongue. Her dainty hand was running across his exposed skin in a gentle caress, teasing him with things to come.

Seeing he was thoroughly distracted, Alicia quickly slid from his arms leaving four shallow claw marks across his chest in her wake. They weren't enough to hurt, but they would definitely be enough for him to give her exactly what she wanted... if he caught her.

Damon blinked when Alicia suddenly vanished from his sight and heard the bedroom door slam shut with a light thud. His eyebrow arched and he looked down at his chest, watching as the tiny claw marks healed over and vanished. Glancing back at the bedroom door, he narrowed his eyes hoping she only intended to use that sexually-induced fighting tactic with him... not the enemy.

Alicia had locked the door and was backing away from it waiting for Damon to come crashing through it.

"Hello dear, miss me?" Damon whispered in her ear.

Alicia screeched in surprise and rounded on him, taking a few steps away. They stared at each other for a moment before Alicia made a break for the balcony door. Damon smirked and easily caught up with her, wrapping his arms around her waist just as

her hand touched the handle.

She fought and squirmed against him, making a half-hearted attempt to get away and Damon felt himself harden with anticipation. His little hellcat liked to be chased and lovingly dominated and he would give that to her. He pulled her back against his chest and smirked at her sharp gasp when his hand latched onto one of her breasts.

“That was a very nice distraction,” Damon mused as he nuzzled her neck. He gently bit the place he’d just nuzzled and squeezed her breast softly when she leaned her head back onto his shoulder and groaned. “But I had better be the only one you use that trick on.

Alicia couldn’t help but giggle breathlessly. “That’s fine. I don’t think a demon’s nipples would taste as good as yours anyway.”

Damon growled and took hold of the hem of her shirt, lifting it over her head in one smooth movement.

Alicia’s humor flew out the window when Damon’s hands slid up the sides of her shirt and pulled it over her head. She gasped when his hands returned to her breasts, rubbing the lace over her already hard nipples and arched her back to strengthen the contact.

Wanting to feel his hands directly on her skin, she reached up to undo the front clasp on her bra. Damon grabbed her wrists and wrapped them around his neck.

“Do not remove your hands,” he ordered in a harsh whisper.

Alicia whimpered again when the heat of his hands returned to her breasts before slowly traveling down her belly. She moaned loudly when he lifted one of her legs with one hand while the other gently rubbed against the crease of her jeans. He was barely touching her but the whisper of sensation was enough to nearly make her come right then. Her hips moved with the motion of his hand, physically begging him for more pressure.

Damon abruptly released her leg and opened the front snap of her bra, quickly removing it and throwing it over his shoulder. Alicia's hands joined his in the removal of her jeans and they were soon forgotten somewhere on the floor. It didn't take long before there was nothing separating them and Alicia reveled in the feel of his skin against hers.

She flinched when the balcony doors suddenly opened and she was being propelled through them into the cool night air. "Damon, what are you doing?" she demanded.

"You wanted to go outside didn't you?" he asked softly then lifted her up, sitting her on the thick railing facing him.

Alicia grabbed a hold of Damon's wrist when she felt the breeze graze across her nipples in a tantalizing caress. "What if someone sees us?" she asked looking around at the buildings and feeling very exposed.

"Then they have a very expensive pair of binoculars and deserve to watch." Damon said with a smirk and let his gaze travel lower down her body. Flipping his hand around so that he was now gripping her wrist, he grabbed the other one so she

wouldn't fear falling. "Let's give them one hell of a show."

Leaning forward, Damon sucked her nipple into his mouth and pressed her backwards. He was quickly rewarded when she wrapped her legs around his waist in an effort to keep from falling. While her rational mind knew he would never let her fall, it was natural to fear it.

Damon slowly kissed his way down her body, stopping to lavish attention on his favorite spots before going lower. He worked his shoulders between her legs and stared heatedly at the gift presented to him. When he pressed his lips against her moist heat, he was rewarded with a humming moan of pleasure.

Alicia tossed her head back and cried out with the first stroke of his tongue. She arched back, not caring if she was dangling over the city streets far below her and opened her thighs further to allow Damon more access. His approving growl was more than enough to nearly send her over the edge.

A strong gust of wind blew over them making her hair almost float around her head and stimulated her scalp. It was scary, exhilarating, and the thought of being seen by someone started to take on a different light... exciting her beyond anything she'd ever experienced.

Angelica and Zachary walked into the castle, completely exhausted. Ren had told them to go home and rest up. PIT was going to start taking the job of eradicating the escaped demons in shifts so no one would get overtaxed. Neither of them had wanted

to leave but knew Ren was right... this wasn't the type of job to be falling asleep on. It wouldn't get you fired... just dead.

"Home sweet home," Angelica yawned.

The PIT members who had come back with them agreed with Angelica and split up to different areas of the castle to either rest up or grab some food. Angelica opted to go back up to the laboratory to check on Jason since they'd left him there unconscious. She smiled seeing someone had moved him to the sofa against the wall.

"He's probably going to sleep for a while," Zachary said from behind her.

She traced her fingers through Jason's soft blonde hair like one would do a child. To save people like him was why she'd started fighting demons in the first place. She only wished he could have stayed innocent instead of finding out the monsters under his bed were real. She had known they were real even as a child. In her opinion... knowing sucked.

Her lips curled into a grateful smile remembering the death of the demon who had tagged Jason for death. She had to admit Syn was going to come in handy... too bad he was also psycho.

"Go get some sleep," Zachary said softly. "We've got a lot of work ahead of us and we need everyone at their best."

Angelica nodded and slipped into her bedroom down the hall. Looking toward the huge bed then down at herself, she decided a shower was in order to get the demon stench off of her body.

Moving silently into her personal bathroom, she turned on the

hot water and stripped before turning to the mirror to check for wounds. Not finding any after all the fighting she'd done in the last couple hours was a little startling. Again the image of the man that had shadowed her all night taunted her... Syn.

Every time one of the demons would have gotten a hit in... he'd been there to interfere. What disturbed her most was that the times she hadn't seen him... she'd caught herself looking for him.

Turning, she stepped into the hot spray and tried to clear her mind of the man who had decided to become her shield against the demons. She'd learned a long time ago to only count on herself so she wouldn't be disappointed. She wasn't going to change that theory now.

She scrubbed her body until the skin shown pink then started on her hair. Angelica couldn't contain the groan as her nails gently scraped along her scalp and closed her eyes in bliss. Had she been paying attention, she would have seen the shadow of the dark figure standing just on the other side of the frosted shower doors.

Syn stood perfectly still in the steamy bathroom watching Angelica do something so simple and gaining pleasure from it. It reminded him of the times he had washed her hair for her and she'd welcomed his touch.

He placed one hand against the glass that separated them as he felt the need to touch her rise within him. To a sun god, the concept of time didn't hold the same meaning as it did to humans;

therefore, usually they were a patient race... but even the gods had their weaknesses. His was within reaching distance and very naked.

Angelica felt sudden heat blaze to life between her thighs and closed her eyes, loving the familiar yet seldom sensation. Quickly soaping up her rag again, she ran it back over her breasts and felt them swell under her touch.

Dropping the rag to the shower floor, she soaped up her hands with a good, thick lather and ran them over her breasts. Letting her fingers skim across her nipples one at a time for added sensation, her lips parted and her breath quickened.

Syn watched one of her hands lower from her breast and slide between her thighs in an attempt to ease the heat he had created in her. His gaze slowly trailed up to where she was biting her lower lip to keep herself from crying out and inhaled sharply. Syn moved his hand against the glass caressingly and smiled wickedly when the hand between her legs mimicked his movements.

Angelica leaned back against the glass of the shower when her fingers found her favorite pleasure spot and worked it in circular motions. This wasn't the first time she'd done this by far and it had been a while, but it was probably the best she had ever felt.

She thought again about one day finding someone to do this with and Syn's image flashed through her mind's eye. The vision of his dark eyes and long dark hair made the coil in her belly release and she opened her mouth in a silent scream as she came hard. It took all of her willpower to stay on her feet when she

felt the liquid heat slide over her fingers and her body twitched pleurably with the many aftershocks.

After several minutes, Angelica turned the water off and Syn vanished the moment she opened the shower door. Grabbing the towel, she wrapped herself up in it then caught her reflection in the mirror. It wasn't her body that drew her attention however... it was the handprint on the frosted shower door behind her.

Spinning around, she frowned and raised her hand to place it over the print on the door. Her frown deepened seeing how much bigger it was compared to hers. This place was warded against evil... or so Storm had assured them. Wouldn't that make her peeping tom on the side of the angels?

Backing away from the shower, she decided to worry about it later. Even though she felt much better, only sleep would completely recharge her batteries.

After drying and brushing her hair, she returned to the bedroom and pulled her black oversized nightshirt from the dresser, smiling at the name of her favorite rock band on the front. Going to that rock concert had been one of the only normal things she'd done as a teenager and she cherished the memory.

She slipped it on and slowly walked toward the bed, grinning as she pulled back the covers and turned off the lamp. Feeling for her I-pod, she turned the volume on low, letting the song Evil Angel fill the silence. Snuggling deep into the soft mattress, she closed her eyes and let it lull her to sleep.

Syn stepped from the shadows of the room and approached

the bed as he listened to the song. She'd known he was there and trusted him enough to do nothing about it. This was another sign that her true soul was awakening.

He had overheard her statement of 'home sweet home'... echoing Damon's thoughts almost exactly. Damon needed a home for his new mate Alicia, and Angelica would need the same when he finally reclaimed her. Kane and Tabatha... again, the same predicament... the women had to be protected and cherished above all others.

'Damon,' Syn called mentally as he turned away from the bed and approached the window. 'It is time to find a new family home... ours is beginning to grow.' Damon's contemplation was felt through their mental bond before Syn felt him come to a decision.

'I have the perfect place in mind,' Damon answered as he spooned Alicia against him. 'I'll look into it tomorrow.'

Syn's body seemed to dissolve in the soft breeze coming in through the window, only to reappear on the roof. He walked along the battlement that circumvented the inner courtyard of the castle, stopping occasionally to look up at the sky or down at the ocean beyond the property.

Feeling an old and familiar presence behind him, Syn turned his head to look over his shoulder.

"Long time no see," Storm said quietly. "I'm glad you have found your soul mate." He'd known Syn would come for her, that's why he'd had Zachary protecting her all this time.

The corner of Syn's lips curled upward slightly, "I see you have new recruits for your army... rather young aren't they?"

Storm shrugged, "No younger than your sons when you gave them eternity."

"What do you want time traveler?" His tone was a warning to his mood.

"You were there. You saw what came out of the rift," Storm stated.

Syn gave him a stoic look, "I care not for your petty wars."

Storm knew the truth behind those words. He'd heard the truth from Syn's own lips... though it hadn't happened yet in the sun god's time line. Syn would one day tell him that the last time he had been at war with anyone... he'd destroyed his own planet. The only reason Syn had shared that secret with him was because they were both gods. But for now... it gave him a better understanding of Syn.

"Angelica wants to protect the humans because she was raised as one... many times now, though she doesn't remember the past lives. Your children are also very protective of the innocent... as I know you are." Storm whispered calmly. The fact that Syn had not vanished meant he had agreed to listen.

Syn did not correct the time walker nor ask him where he'd gotten his information. A time walker could see all outcomes if he chooses to look for them. If Storm was worried about the future, then there was a reason for it. "What is your prophecy?"

"The humans are always looking for their Garden of Eden,

yet they are so vain they do not realize they are within it. It has always been left up to us, the guardians, to cast the serpents out. The humans do not have the power to protect themselves. If we don't help them, then the demons will turn this place into a city of blood."

"And it will not stop here," Syn concluded in a soft whisper.

Storm wiped at the blood that was now leaking in tear-like drops from his eyes. The only reason his head wasn't exploding was because he was talking to another god who would not share the secrets.

"Some of the demons who climbed out of that rip between dimensions almost destroyed this world during the dark ages... we almost lost to them." Storm let the weight of that statement hang between them.

"I remember," Syn said.

"Then you also remember the ones that went to the underworld of their own free will to protect the barrier seal and keep the demons from returning," Storm reminded.

Syn nodded, "The brothers... how could one forget."

"They have now returned to this world while giving chase to the fleeing demons. Once again the brothers have willingly given their vow to help rid this world of the demon threat. You and I are quite possibly the only creatures left in this world that can honestly say our power is almost equal to theirs. Would you deny that by hoarding your power for selfish reasons?"

"I could take my family and leave this place to your war," Syn

warned.

“And I can give you a reason to stay,” Storm countered. “You have three children here with you now... but you have many lost across the space of time. I can offer you your missing children.”

Syn turned his head to look at the time walker but seeing the blood this conversation was causing, he glanced away. “Regain your strength... then we will retrieve my children.”

Storm smiled as he disappeared from the roof.

Ren walked into his private office and sat down heavily in the chair at his desk. It had been a long night and just because the sun would be up in a few minutes did not mean it was over. There was a different kind of darkness now.

He'd promised himself he would work alone... pay no attention to the other PIT members. But as he'd looked around at the others fighting right along beside him, he could feel the ones who were weakening and the ones who had the strength to stay and fight longer.

No one questioned him when he started sending some of them back to the castle... some even looked thankful. He had sent Hunter to get some rest when he'd been injured. The Indian was stubborn and hadn't told anyone of his wound, but Ren could smell the blood. Trevor was almost dead on his feet. Wraiths tend to drain your life force for a while.

Luckily, some last minute reinforcements had arrived and Ren took his leave, needing to clear his mind of the rage of battle...

he could feel everyone's emotions including the blood lust of the demons. Now that he was within the castle walls, he concentrated on the powers surrounding him and smiled. Someone among them had the power to block out emotions. If he could figure out which one, he'd shake their hand.

That also led him to another conclusion... not everyone here at the castle had a PIT file. But that was all right, neither did he.

Looking up at the high ceiling, he felt five distinct life forces up on the third floor. He wondered who could be up there since Storm had told him that floor was locked and off limits. Ren had even looked at the floor plans of the castle to see if there was a hidden door, but found nothing.

He wasn't about to waste his time pulling out every book on the shelf or knocking on every wall in the place to find it either. Hidden doors remained hidden for a reason. If whoever was up there wanted to be left alone, Ren would respect their wishes.

The air in the room rippled and Ren glanced over at Storm who was now sitting on the end of the desk. He glared at the time walker when he saw the bloody nose Storm was currently trying to stifle.

"Telling secrets again are we?" Ren asked with a slight growl in his voice.

Storm ignored the look and the question, simply sitting there until his nose finally stopped bleeding. Dropping the handkerchief in the garbage can, he looked back up at Ren with a knowing expression on his face then glanced up at the ceiling

thoughtfully.

“You’re wondering how they got up there, right?” he smirked, “They won’t use the front door to come and go... windows seem better suited to them.”

“Whoever they are, you seem glad they are here,” Ren cocked a curious eyebrow.

Storm’s expression sobered, “Do not underestimate them... they have their reasons for being the way they are. If they wish to interact with the PIT teams, they will.”

“But they’re not part of the teams,” Ren wanted clarification.

Storm shook his head, “No, they’re not.”

“All right then,” Ren shrugged. “WHO are they?”

“Legend says they were the original guardians of seals between worlds. Up until last night, they had been in the demon realm protecting the seal from being breached from that side.”

Ren nodded and leaned back in his chair deciding he’d stop with the questions seeing how Storm had already broken his vow of silence recently. His eyes were beginning to burn from lack of sleep but knew he wouldn’t be able to rest for a while.

Chapter 2

Zachary leaned against the banister at the top of the stairs looking down on the main floor. He became very still when he spotted one of the youngest and newest members of PIT... Tiara. She’d always been an unofficial part of PIT, even though as a child she didn’t have any powers and never went out on assignment.

Because of her mother's necromancer abilities, Tiara had been dragged around with the PIT team all her life.

He'd heard from some of the others that it was kind of like being an army brat... just better protected. While the parents went out to war, the child was usually placed in a secure area... normally a hotel room that was guarded by the CIA. There was something about being different ... sometimes the last of your kind that made their lives harder than most. It tended to kick in their strongest instincts... too survive and protect their young.

Every PIT member had enemies... it was one of the drawbacks of being a trained demon assassin. Those same enemies had learned a long time ago that the fastest way to get a rival's attention was to steal their child. In this case, it would be a demon stealing the child of a PIT member that had crossed them. Lessons were a bitch to learn and the children being kept in seclusion was the price.

From what Zachary noticed, Tiara had been one of the most guarded children out of all of them. Even he'd only seen her a couple times and he had top clearance.

Well, the lack of contact could be blamed on the fact that for the last ten years, he'd gone out of his way to avoid her mother... Myra. But Tiara always had someone shadowing her, following her every move, especially if she ever ventured out into the occasional eye of the rest of the organization.

After Myra's death only a couple weeks ago, her team had dispersed into other areas of PIT, as was the tradition when the

leader of a team dies. Making that a golden rule had cut way down on distractions and complications... or so he'd heard.

He himself was more of a freelancer, a gun for hire, and he worked best when he was alone. Angelica had been the only stable person in his life because she could see past the mask he wore... the mask that led everyone to believe he was a bit of a comedian.

Myra's necromancy powers had passed on to her only child at the exact moment of her death. Tiara had taken the reins and stepped forward as a permanent player by showing up here. He thought it was a little strange that she was so quick to get over her mother's death... one would have thought she'd still be mourning.

Zachary had been privy to seeing her mother work several times. He'd been a teenager at the time, about sixteen years old actually. He still remembered the first time he'd watched Myra raise the dead. She'd done it in order to find the location of the demon that killed the victim she'd revived. Zachary shivered in remembrance of that night... it had filled him with fear and longing of the afterlife. It still haunted his dreams.

Myra had been the most beautiful and mysterious person he'd ever met and he was drawn to her... so were many men. He'd seen other guys beg to be put on her team for the night in hopes that they would get to sleep with her.

Rumor had it that those she slept with were more than simply lovers or one night stands... there was also a deep-seated friendship attached to it that kept the group together even when

they were between jobs. It was almost impossible to get on her team because the men never left her side willingly... only by way of body bag.

The PIT members with wives or mates were never allowed to accompany her on missions as a rule, much less become a member of her regular team.

The dead also seemed to flock to her like a siren's call. Unfortunately, demons were prone to the call as well. It was usually a powerful demon that had awakened the dead in the first place and when their underlings were called back to their graves, that demon would follow to see who was stealing from them. It was the reason why Myra had never been left alone in graveyards, funeral homes, or morgues.

The third time Zachary had been chosen for her team he'd shown up late, having been caught up in a fight with another demon. As he entered the graveyard, he'd witnessed something he knew he wasn't supposed to see... even at that distance.

Myra had just put the graveyard back to sleep when her necromancy was answered by a very powerful demon.

The other PIT members present abruptly crumbled to the ground, knocked unconscious by an unseen force. Zachary had still been young, with only a few demon killings under his belt and quickly took refuge behind a tombstone... uncertain of what else to do. The power coming off the demon was something he'd never felt before and he knew it had to be one of the few master demons that still roamed the earth.

After a few moments of nothing happening, he gathered his courage and peeked around the edge of the grave marker.

The shadows in front of Myra were writhing, almost breathing with anticipation. That was when a tall handsome man with long silver hair much like Myra's appeared from the darkness. Even with the distance separating them, Zachary could see the way the demon gazed at Myra... like he wanted to devour her. The demon then approached the necromancer who had just laid his zombies and ghosts to rest.

The panic that filled Zachary's mind overwhelmed him and fire leapt from his hands in anger. He stood up from his hiding place, desperately rushing to save the woman he was supposed to be protecting.

Zachary hadn't wanted the demon to hurt Myra and had every intention of rescuing her even if he had to burn the entire graveyard to the ground doing it. However, the demon had something else in mind. He slowly turned his head and locked his startling silver eyes with Zachary's.

Much to Zachary's horror, his fire went out... so had his control over his own body. Although he'd fought it with everything in him, he still hit the ground, unable to move or speak. The first thing that went through his mind was that he was still conscious... unlike the other men littering the graveyard, and he had a perfect view of what was about to happen.

Myra had let the demon touch her... appearing to welcome it as she smiled seductively and placed her hand on his chest. She'd

even called the demon by name... Deth.

Clothing was quickly removed and Zachary watched as the demon laid claim to Myra's body. They'd made love against the tombstone behind them multiple times before the demon had whispered something in her ear making her lock loving eyes with him. They had shared one more kiss before the demon vanished into the night.

Zachary watched as Myra had slowly turned her head and looked at him... she'd known he was watching the whole time. Without a word she'd gathered her clothing and gotten dressed then waited for the rest of the team to gain consciousness. Zachary had regained use of his body after only a couple minutes and sat up, remaining where he was... as far away from Myra as he could get without leaving and silently stared.

She still looked just as lovely and even wore a soft smile. He didn't understand... he didn't understand any of it.

When the others awoke, they had no memory of what attacked them and, when asked, Myra had simply explained that all was quiet and the 'attack' had been nothing more than the backlash of power from returning the dead to their grave.

Zachary never repeated what he'd seen that night to another soul. However, after that, his trust in Myra had been shattered. He'd even made it a point to request other jobs so he would not have to go near her.

He'd also done his research on the demon she'd met in the graveyard and discovered that he'd been right... Deth was an

ancient demon. The demon could have killed them that night, all of them including Myra if he'd wanted because he had killed in the past... killed many.

Myra was obviously playing for both teams... and that was a line none of them ever dared to cross. He found it mildly ironic that she'd met her end at the hands of a demon... or so the story had been told. Apparently, crossing that line had dire consequences.

Zachary refused to feel the sadness that tried to creep across his chest at her death... the last thing PIT needed was a traitor walking among them.

Pulling himself from the past, Zachary watched Tiara move across the large room below, listening to the India bells around her ankle jingle quietly and wondering how much like her mother she was. She could have been her mother's doppelganger... just a younger version. She resembled a child in a woman's body, completely innocent of the violence around her yet more than aware of it at the same time.

She possessed a golden tan, flawless skin, and the wide eyes of an innocent child. That innocence was somehow tainted by full pouty lips that made him want to feel them against his own. As he gazed at her, he realized he was wrong... her mother's beauty didn't hold a candle to Tiara's. Just watching her made him feel like a stalker but instead of backing off he looked closer.

Her way of dressing made her look like she'd been taken straight from the caravan of a gypsy clan that had been lost in

time. It was the same way Myra used to dress. He assumed it was tradition within that line of necromancers.

Tonight, her shirt was little more than a black square scarf folded into a triangle and tied around her chest, leaving her sides and back bare to show her temptingly flawless skin. Her skirt was dangerously low on her hips but covered everything else clear down to her ankles.

Doors started opening all around and people appeared from all corners of the castle, crossing the main room under him and he frowned at the distraction. Zachary's cell phone went off and he took it out to read Storm's text message.

'Meeting in Ren's office, bring Jason.'

"How the hell am I supposed to do that, use smelling salts?" Zachary muttered putting his phone away. Looking back toward the medical room, he blinked in surprise when the door opened and Jason poked his head out in the hall.

He cocked an eyebrow wondering if Storm spent every day popping in and out of existence to make things happen on the right time line. Just thinking about how long a day could stretch for the time traveler gave him a headache. But then again, if something was done wrong, couldn't Storm always go back and fix it if he wanted?

"Glad to see you're awake," Zachary said with a smirk. "I trust you slept nightmare free?"

Jason came the rest of the way out of the room and slowly approached Zachary. "Yeah, I feel a lot better now that the death

mark is gone.” He looked down at the activity below them and asked, “What’s going on?”

Zachary threw his arm around Jason’s shoulders and steered him toward the stairs. “Wanna see something really cool?”

Jason shrugged, “Sure, why not?”

“Good,” Zachary smirked, “your presence has been requested by our boss... your first official PIT meeting.”

Jason cocked an eyebrow. “But I’m not a member of PIT.”

Zachary smiled mischievously, “It’s either join us, or suddenly come down with a huge case of amnesia.”

Jason pulled away from Zachary with a worried frown. Holding his hands up in surrender, he nodded, “Lead the way.”

When Zachary laughed and took off down the stairs, Jason had no choice but to follow... though he did so at a safe distance.

“I’ve got something for you.” Storm said and took out a small USB drive from his shirt pocket.

Ren took it from him and plugged it into the computer. He smirked when he saw the same map he’d created... only this one was more updated. Where the original map had only a few blips on it focusing on the centralized power recorded, this map resembled a child’s Lite-Brite on speed. Different colored lights now lit up every inch of the city and were extending outward toward the slums, the preserve, and even the beaches... they were everywhere now.

“Where did you get this?” Ren asked in awe, slowly rising

from his chair in the process to get a better look at the huge screen on the wall.

Storm looked down at his nails and examined them with great interest, “You.”

Before Ren could say anything, the doors of his office suddenly opened and some of the PIT members who had filtered back to the castle walked in. Ren felt the accumulated power in the room and fought to keep his own power under control. Though his face was outwardly expressing boredom, inside he was almost panicking.

Reaching out for the blocking power he'd felt earlier, Ren latched onto it and felt his world stabilize again. He nodded at Zachary as the other man entered and joined him and Storm at the desk.

Zachary let his gaze slowly filter across the people, quickly skipping the area Tiara was standing in just to prove to himself he could do it. It was harder than he thought. When his gaze swung back to her, he noted her flinch and she quickly looked from him toward Storm. Zachary frowned and crossed his arms over his chest wondering why she'd reacted to him like that.

Jason looked around for Angelica and was disappointed when he didn't see her among the exotic looking group. He quickly drew back against the wall swearing he'd just seen a guy teleport into the room. One second the spot beside him had been empty... and the next it wasn't.

Guy immediately sought out Tiara with his gaze and tried to

think of the best way to approach her with his plan. He'd just spent the last couple of hours tearing his and Carley's room apart trying to find a spell for what he had in mind.

During his grief-fed rage, he had remembered Carley stumbling across it in one of her 'acquisitions' as she'd called the stolen scrolls. The two had shared a bit of amusement at the time, believing they would never have a need to bring the dead back to life.

The spell was an old one that had been transcribed from an ancient text... a way to bring the dead back. In this case however, it would only tie the spirit to the human realm while it remained attached to the spirit realm. In short, Carley would become a ghost.

Guy knew there was another part of the magic that would allow Carley to return to her body but you had to have the power of necromancy for that to work. Tiara was the only one who could help him bring Carley back... it would take Tiara's power to bond his sister's soul back to her body.

Tiara felt eyes on her and looked up wondering if it was Zachary. Instead, she found Guy staring longingly at her. She calmly met his gaze knowing what was going through his mind. She'd heard about his sister's death and hoped that he would change his mind. Her mother had often been approached by the loved ones of those who had been killed in the line of duty. She'd have to avoid him for a while... at least until he calmed down.

"Glad all of you could make it," Storm said once the doors

were closed. "I've got good news and bad news." He nodded toward the huge computerized map on the wall, "That's the bad news." There were several murmurs within the crowd.

"What's the good news?" Trevor frowned from the doorway as he entered the room.

"The good news is that the most powerful demons are smart. They just made it back into this world and they're not stupid so they're not going to out themselves right away by going on killing sprees.

In the past, the master demons liked to control humans... not kill them. They will set up shop first and try to claim a territory. My hope is that some of them will even kill each other in order to stake their claim on an area and it will narrow down the playing field."

"Are you saying they're all going to stick around this area instead of scattering to other states?" someone near the window asked. "Why would they do that when it'd be smarter to get the hell out of Dodge?"

"There is something that's keeping them bound to this area," Storm pointed at the map, "The area you see and about a hundred miles out in all directions." he decided to change the subject.

"More good news, the earthquake activity and the sudden oddities in the weather are forcing some of the humans to leave the area. I had to pull a couple strings but I arranged it for the press to announce that the series of quakes earlier tonight may be hinting at a larger earthquake... the 'big one' for lack of a better

phrase.”

“However, we all know this isn’t the case. We don’t want to attract too much attention to LA, but if we can get even ten percent of the human population to leave on their own, then it will make our jobs a lot easier. I’m also working on getting the weather modification technology to create a hurricane and keep it dangerously close to the coast for a while. That may drive even more people out of the city.”

“Fear mongering at its best,” someone agreed.

Storm nodded, “We need to attempt to keep as much of this out of the notice of the humans as possible. I’ll need all of you to watch out for anyone with a recorder; those of you able to do mind wipes will have to do double time as damage control. All 911 calls are also being monitored. And don’t let your guard down. It’s dangerous out there... we lost several PIT members last night.” He finished softly as he gazed at Guy.

Guy kept his gaze locked with Storm’s daring him to try to put him on the sidelines with the excuse of appropriate grieving time. What he truly needed was revenge, and getting out there among the demons was the only way he was going to achieve that.

Zachary leaned against the desk and shoved his hands in his pockets. “I was there... not everything that came out of the rift last night is evil.”

Storm nodded, “Yes, quite possibly the only good thing to come out of this mess. When Misery opened the rift, she freed not only demons, she also succeeded in freeing a number of fallen

and a few others who are, thankfully, on our side.”

“Like who?” Trevor asked.

“Like the ones who were protecting the seal from the other side of the rift.” A new voice said from the back of the room.

Everyone turned in the direction of the voice. A young man who didn't look a year over eighteen was leaning against the back wall with his arms crossed over his chest. His dark hair looked windblown and the way the light hit it at certain times gave it a purple hue. When he opened his eyes, colors were fading in and out resembling a glittering tourmaline stone causing many in the room to look away.

“What are you?” Ren asked, puzzled that he couldn't feel any power at all from the newbie.

The young man smirked, “To the demons... I'm the boogey man.”

“This is one of our allies from the other side.” Storm answered. “Kamui and his... brothers will be staying on the third floor.”

“I thought the third floor was sealed off.” Trevor questioned. “How can they get up there?”

The young man levitated off the floor by several feet and winked at the shapeshifter.

“A kid who can fly... great,” Trevor shook his head dismissively, “that will be a lot of help.”

Kamui smirked, “I'm older than the first of your kind. We weren't thrown into that rift against our will... we went willingly,

knowing exactly what we were getting into. And there were more demons on that side than there were here. We kept our side from being breeched... how'd you do?"

Ren cocked an eyebrow deciding he liked this boy already. He had to cough into his hand to keep from laughing out loud at Trevor, though he shouldn't have bothered because several others were laughing without sympathy.

"Most of the demons have now scattered throughout the city and are hiding," Zachary offered wanting to get the attention focused back on the meeting. "The ones who pose the most danger of being seen or attacking humans are the wraiths that were summoned."

"I hate those things," Trevor growled unable to suppress the shiver. "They hurt like hell when they pass through you."

Zachary nodded, "They're pretty much hanging out in every graveyard in the city and that's a real danger to the humans. Hunter can kill them but only one at a time." He paused in thought, "Actually, killing isn't even the right word."

"I'd like to kick their asses, but I can't freaking touch them," Trevor complained.

"You would be angry too if your rest was interrupted by a demon who wanted to bring you back only to be a servant." A young woman with long silver hair stated. "They're only expressing that anger... it's not personal."

"Tiara," Storm said her name for the people in the room who hadn't had a chance to meet her yet. "I'm glad you have come,

and I'm sorry about your mother.”

“Thank you,” Tiara replied but her gaze was on Trevor. “You attract them because you have the lives of so many animals within you.” She stepped in front of him and pulled a dagger from her belt making Trevor flinch at the quick action. She smiled softly, “Here, you can use this to protect yourself from them.”

“Will it kill them?” Trevor carefully took the dagger from her and held it up looking it over.

“They are already dead.” Tiara said calmly as if talking to a child. “This is a tool used for releasing... not killing.”

Trevor frowned but didn't give the dagger back. He knew what those things were capable of and he would take all the help he could get. “Thanks,” he slid it into his belt and covered the hilt over with his shirt.

“Tiara, are you sure you're ready for this?” Storm asked not really wanting to put any pressure on her knowing this would be her first time. “Vampires and wraiths aren't the only things out there... zombies are being sighted all over the place. That's not including master demons and the things we don't have a name for... we don't know what else is out there.”

“I'm ready,” Tiara answered with a slight defiant tilt of her chin. She tried to keep in mind that Storm thought she had only gained her power through her mother's death and that was true in a way. She'd just inherited Myra's powers but she'd been able to see ghosts since the day she was born.

Zachary pushed away from the desk in confusion as something

dawned on him. “Are you saying this will be her first time using her powers?”

“Yes, the gift of necromancy can only be passed down when the parent with the gift dies... Tiara has only had the power a couple weeks,” Storm explained

Tiara looked up at Zachary... this time locking eyes with him fearlessly. If he had a problem with her then she wanted it out in the open now instead of leaving it hanging over her head later. If fingers were going to be pointed then she'd rather him go ahead and do it.

“And you're going to send her out there all by herself?” Zachary suddenly didn't like this idea. Her mother had been using necromancy for years and had a team of fighters with her. And as Storm had just pointed out... she'd still died at the hands of a demon only a couple weeks ago.

“I'll go,” Trevor smiled laying his palm against the hilt of the dagger. “As long as this thing does what Tiara says it will, I don't have a problem keeping an eye on her.”

Zachary looked at Trevor thinking about the way the shapeshifter had been so distracted with Envy lately. He wasn't a good choice as far as the fire starter was concerned.

“Until Tiara chooses her own team, I propose that for starters, Trevor and Zachary accompany her. Zachary will be in charge of the team and he can also be back up in case someone witnesses her restoring the graveyards. He can easily erase the memory from them,” Storm announced.

Tiara's eyes widened a fraction hearing that Zachary was in charge of her team. Myra had told her a long time ago about Zachary seeing her with Deth... that he'd kept her secret all these years. Myra had also pointed Zachary out to her a couple times over the years, but it had only caused a childish fear and awe to grow within her for the man who knew her mother's secret.

Zachary relaxed some now that he knew Tiara wouldn't be alone out there tonight. It surprised him at how much better it made him feel knowing he'd be right beside her if anything happened.

"I'll join them," Guy announced.

Tiara felt a flutter of unease knowing Guy's true reason for wanting to come. Without looking at Guy she turned to Storm, "I only need three on my team for now, and one of them needs to be powerless."

Guy's expression darkened at Tiara's refusal to let him join her team.... She was lying.

Zachary noticed the silent exchange between them and frowned. He wasn't sure what Guy's motive was for suddenly wanting to be placed on another team so soon... but then again, it wasn't like they could take a bereavement leave. If that happened, no one would show up for work.

Storm nodded, getting the hint that Guy was not invited, "Then I have just the powerless man for the job."

"Who," Trevor asked suspiciously. He liked Guy and had seen his magic in action. It was a little disappointing that he wouldn't

be joining them.

“Jason.” Storm swung his hand toward the man hanging out at the back of the group.

“Oh hell no!” Jason exclaimed with a wide-eyed expression. “I’m not going out to chase dead things. If you ask me... it’s smarter to run from them.”

Zachary shrugged, “Okay, have it your way. But you know the alternative.”

Jason stumbled backwards, bumping into the young man with purplish hair as Zachary approached him with his hand raised toward Jason’s forehead.

“All right, all right,” Jason said while holding up both hands to ward off Zachary. “I’ll go. Put... the hand... down.”

Zachary smirked and clamped his hand firmly down on Jason’s shoulder, acting like that’s what he was going to do all along. “I knew you wouldn’t let us down.”

“Go to hell,” Jason grumbled making Kamui snort in amusement.

Chapter 3

“We need to wait until dusk,” Tiara said, as she looked out the window unable to face Guy’s angry disappointment or Zachary’s authority over her. She was nervous enough as it was.

“Why wait?” Jason asked, not liking the idea of going out in the dark after demons or ghosts or whatever it was this girl wanted to go after.

“Good question,” Trevor said. “I’m all for going out after these

things but going when it starts to get dark is like walking around carrying a big neon sign that says 'Free Dinner'."

"Because that is when the dead begin to wake," Tiara answered. "They are at their weakest because of the sunlight counteracting their darkness. That weakness has not faded... much like how weak you feel when you first awaken for the day. It is the same for them except they are nocturnal."

Trevor smirked, thinking of his mornings with Envy. "I'm not weak in the mornings. Whoever told you that has their information backwards."

"What's wrong, are your x-girlfriends spreading rumors again?" Zachary asked with an arched eyebrow causing a few people in the room to grin and Trevor to glare at him.

It was good to hear that most of the PIT members still had their sense of humor. "As for the other teams," Storm continued while glancing up at the huge map. "I'm sure you can find something to do."

Everyone looked from one to the other, knowing what his or her individual jobs were. The door opened and Kamui was the first to leave the meeting not bothering to shut the door behind him.

It was the sign some of the more curious PIT members were looking for and they rushed out to see if they could find out how the newcomer got up to the third floor. It was quickly becoming a betting match on what powers Kamui really had.

Storm chuckled when he heard someone growl about the new

guy vanishing into thin air and money started exchanging hands. That growl was immediately followed by a loud, muffled crash upstairs and voices shouting, leaving the PIT teams looking up at the ceiling when the chandelier in the main room started to rock back and forth.

“KAMUI, YOU LITTLE BASTARD!” The angry voice echoed loudly within the castle.

Everyone’s attention was grabbed when light suddenly shone in through the front window rivaling the sunlight that was already streaming through. The PIT members ran outside just in time to see two streaks of light flying erratically above them and out toward the ocean before slowing down enough for the onlookers to really see them.

They’d been going so fast that it caused thunder to vibrate loudly in their wake as they broke the sound barrier. The young man from the meeting was actually flying backwards, his eyes wide with what looked like fright as he stared at the wet, angry silver-winged man chasing him.

“I swear Toya, I didn’t mean to pop into the shower with you in it!” Kamui tried to defuse his brother’s hot temper.

Toya’s long black, silver-streaked hair swayed around him as he followed Kamui’s movements and Kamui was doing his best to stay just out of reach.

“Yeah, right, you didn’t mean to!” Toya shouted when he noticed his brother’s lip twitch in mirth.

Trevor watched the two fly dizzying paths above them and

spotted a third person out of the corner of his eye. Looking up toward the third floor terrace, he saw a man with long silver hair glaring at the other two with his arms crossed over his chest.

“Who’s that?” Trevor asked curiously.

“The current family patriarch... his name is Kyou.” Storm answered having come out to watch the amusing spectacle. “And the two putting on the show are Toya, the second oldest, and Kamui, the youngest.” He’d thought the brothers would stay to themselves but... the guardians had never been very predictable.

“They’re family?” Ren asked sensing the calming effect on his ability that he’d been siphoning was coming from Kyou. His right eyebrow rose noting that calm feeling was faltering at the moment but luckily, still kept a good measure of stability.

“They’re brothers, five of them to be accurate,” Storm answered.

The silver-haired man Storm had said was the older brother named Kyou looked down at the humans below him with a deep frown, as though the people milling around the grass were the ones responsible for this event.

“WOAH!” someone shouted as Toya punched Kamui in the stomach, sending his younger brother flying backwards... straight toward Kyou.

There were a few snickers, as Kamui slammed right into Kyou, knocking them both back inside and out of sight.

“YES!” Toya shouted and pumped his fist in the air as he hovered in front of the balcony. “I got a twofer.” With a smirk, he

flew back inside the balcony doors and everything got extremely quiet.

“I guess it’s over,” Zachary said shrugging.

Storm smirked, “Wait for it...” Suddenly two windows on the third floor exploded on each side of the castle, Toya going in one direction and Kamui in the other. Storm couldn’t help but laugh knowing they were now fleeing Kyou’s wrath.

“Okay,” Jason said after a moment. “Remind me again how the hell I got mixed up with you guys.”

Trevor slapped his hand on Jason’s shoulder, “You would still be demon bait with a lovely tattoo on your ankle.”

“If I go out in a graveyard tonight, doesn’t that mean I’m still demon bait?” Jason demanded in more of a statement than a question.

“Yeah, I guess it does,” Trevor smiled as if he’d just been granted a wish. “And just think... I’ll be one of the people protecting you.”

“Oh goody!” Jason deadpanned then frowned, “You’re not still sore about losing Envy are you?”

Trevor’s smile faded and he took a step toward Jason but Storm to step between them. He flinched when he was suddenly standing in the parking lot of the police station.

“Chad needs some help getting this place under control,” Storm instructed. “Play nice with the other children.”

Storm left him there and reappeared back at the castle where Jason was still in the process of taking a step backwards.

Jason blinked when Trevor just snapped out of existence and Storm grinned at him.

“Where’d Trevor go?” Jason asked looking around.

“He’s under restriction,” Storm answered with a smirk.

Zachary looked back up at the terrace then down at the window below it. He could see Angelica standing at her window holding the curtain open. She had a grin on her face and Zachary knew she’d seen what transpired. She looked down at him and waved before closing the curtain.

Everyone began to filter back inside now that the show was over. Tiara paused and followed Zachary’s gaze to the pretty girl in the window. Feeling a strange disappointment, she tried to shake it off by being thankful he wasn’t as mean as she’d feared... he couldn’t be if he had such a sweet-looking girlfriend. Not wanting to go back inside yet, she looked out toward the ocean and wandered off toward the long path that led to the shoreline.

Guy narrowed his eyes on Tiara wanting to talk to her. She hadn't even given him a chance to tell her his idea. Seeing her separate from the others, he saw his chance and followed at a discreet distance.

“I got a question for you,” Zachary said looking down from Angelica’s window and turning his attention to Storm.

“You want to know about Angelica,” Storm responded having seen him staring up at her.

Zachary nodded, “We’ve been partners for a long time and I think I have a right to know why we’re not going to be together

for this. Can't we include Angelica on Tiara's team?"

"Angelica's type of power is needed elsewhere, and she has a new partner... plain and simple," Storm said seriously.

Zachary narrowed his eyes, "Who, Syn? That guy gives me the creeps and Angelica doesn't think much of him either."

"It is how it should be," Storm looked Zachary straight in the eyes, "We have been keeping her safe for him... he's here now."

"She's my best friend," Zachary pointed out in case Storm had missed the memo.

"And you will probably always be her best friend," Storm smiled reassuringly. "But Syn is her destiny and there's no fighting that. As a matter of fact, I'd advise you not to even try. It may be the last thing you ever do."

"You're sure?" Zachary asked broodingly.

"You know that I am," Storm answered laying his hand on Zachary's shoulder. "Would it help if I told you that she's going to be happier than she's ever dreamed of being?"

Zachary inhaled deeply and slowly let it out as he felt heaviness settle over his chest. Hearing it from Storm sounded so final... probably because it was. He pressed his lips together as he tried to harden his heart and let Angelica go.

Changing the subject, Storm gestured toward Tiara who had almost made it to the cliff. "It's because you protected Angelica so well that I feel safe enough to place Tiara under your care now."

"What do you mean," Zachary frowned tearing his gaze from

Tiara and turning it on Storm, "It's just for tonight... right?"

Storm shook his head feeling no sympathy, "No, it's not just for tonight."

"Don't I get a say in this?" Zachary arched an eyebrow. He'd crossed necromancers off his list of teammates a long time ago.

"Tiara's going to need you more than Angelica ever did," Storm pointed out. "Myra trained her to use powers that the girl didn't even have yet. She may have learned the spells and rituals, but she hasn't learned how to control them."

"Like a human child pretending to be a wizard?" Zachary supplied.

Storm nodded and shrugged at the same time, "And now, she's only had those powers for a couple of weeks. To my knowledge, she has yet to actually use her necromancy. Do you remember how many fires you accidentally started when you were learning how to control your powers? Not to mention the fact that you made your own parents forget who you were."

"Don't remind me," Zachary ran a hand through his hair and glanced back toward Tiara just as she disappeared down a set of steps leading to the beach.

"Tonight will be her first time and the job she faces isn't just one zombie... it's a city of monsters that will try to raise the dead faster than she can keep them down." Storm insisted, "Everything she does from here on out will be a first for her."

"Her mother made everything look so easy," Zachary's voice was a little harsher than he'd meant it to be. He tried to cover his

anger up by asking, “Where’s her father?”

“He died before Tiara was born,” Storm repeated what Myra had always said.

“What you mean is that you don’t have a clue who Tiara’s father is because her mother slept with so many men,” Zachary mused darkly trying to block the disturbing flashback from resurfacing.

“That is a side effect of the necromancy,” Storm nodded.

Zachary frowned in confusion, “What do you mean... side effect?”

“The more a necromancer uses their power to control the dead, the more their soul craves life to keep itself from being pulled down by the dead into the next dimension,” Storm explained. “It was never Myra's fault that she craved sex after using her power... it’s an uncontrollable desire that has to be fulfilled.”

“So that’s why Myra did it?” Zachary whispered. If he was honest with himself... he’d had a crush on Myra all those years ago. But seeing her make love to the enemy had turned that crush into something closer to loathing.

“I thought you knew,” Storm admitted with a slightly shocked expression. “Necromancers are very sexual creatures for a reason... they want to live.”

Zachary made a face, “And because Myra never chose a mate, she opted to stay alive by being everyone’s one night stand.”

“She tried to fight the hunger at first, but the longer she

would abstain... the weaker her body became. Necromancers have always fed off the life-force of sex... though most of them did choose a mate,” Storm confirmed.

“Why didn’t Myra pick just one lover?” Zachary asked but his attention was on Guy who was disappearing down the same path Tiara had taken only a few minutes before. The man might as well have been wearing a t-shirt with the word ‘Stalker’ printed across the front of it.

“Never mind, I’ll see you later,” Zachary said over his shoulder as he took off toward the ocean.

Storm smiled secretively... Zachary was not truly happy unless he was fighting to save someone from themselves. If Tiara was anything like her mother, Zachary would have a headache for a long, long time. He turned to go back inside but paused seeing Ren come back out the double doors.

Ren took out his cell phone and read the text. He smirked before going around to the side of the castle where the huge garage was located but paused when he felt something crunch under his feet. Looking down, Ren noticed the once-beautiful stained glass that had graced the upper windows of the castle was now lying shattered in the grass.

He frowned... they couldn’t very well have a castle with broken windows. He lifted his hand slightly and the glass that had fallen during Kamui and Toya’s flight slowly lifted from the grass, righting itself like a thousand piece puzzle. Pushing his hand upwards, Ren watched as the glittering glass rose up

through the air, sliding back into place on the third floor.

Following Ren, Storm quirked an eyebrow when he saw a tow truck pulling out of the driveway and wondered if the driver had seen the sky show a few minutes ago. He smiled when he saw that it was Hunter in the driver's seat and raised a hand when Hunter waved.

Entering the garage, Storm's smile widened. Ren was walking around Trevor's car looking it over with a critical eye. He also took note of the high-tech circuit board Ren had in his hand.

Ren glanced up at Storm's approach and noted his smile before turning his attention back to the car.

"What are you smiling about?" Ren asked.

"Sometimes it's nice not to be able to see the future," Storm said truthfully.

"What does that mean?" Ren questioned.

"It means that for now at least... I am walking my own timeline," Storm stated.

Ren nodded deciding he wasn't even going to try to process that brainteaser and continued to run his hand across the edge of the car as though feeling it out.

"What are you planning to do with that?" Storm asked nodding toward the computer.

"I'm going to upgrade Trevor's car," Ren answered.

Storm leaned back against one of the other cars, "I'll bite, why are you upgrading Trevor's car?"

"Because I'm bored," Ren shrugged but the look on his face

said he was going to enjoy this. “And because I need an outlet for some of this power before I drown in it.”

“I got to see this,” Storm laughed.

Ren smirked as he placed the circuit board on the windshield and stepped back so he was facing the front of the car. He raised his palms toward the car and took a deep breath. The headlights suddenly flashed on and wires snaked out from the edge of the ruined hood, latching onto the circuit board and pulling it inside.

The body began to creak and groan, reshaping itself and another color began to appear in little splotches. Dents straightened themselves out as the body streamlined. The tires repaired themselves and filled with air while the rims started to shift. The hood flipped open and Storm watched the engine rebuild itself... the old oil slowly vanishing and the original chrome color taking its place.

The splotches of color were growing and soon a beautiful black sheen covered the entire body. The windows darkened so it was near impossible to see inside and Storm whistled softly as he walked around it. It had the same appearance as a classic Mustang. Storm couldn't help but smirk when he saw Ren's name in a small chrome insignia on the back instead of a well-known car maker's.

“At least you're not egotistical,” Storm laughed.

Ren finally lowered his hands and smiled proudly at the new and improved car. “I give you... Evey.”

Storm looked up at Ren and arched an eyebrow. “Evey?”

Ren shrugged, “Stephen King has Christine, so I can have Evey. Plus, it’s the closest thing I could get to Envy without it actually being her name.”

Storm couldn’t help but laugh, “You are so bad.”

“I like to think so,” a sexy feminine voice said.

Storm looked down at the car. “It talks?”

“Of course I can,” Evey said and the car door slowly opened. “Want to ride me?”

Storm shook his head only trusting his own mode of transportation, “I’m sorry, as beautiful as you are... I’m afraid I can’t do that.”

Evey sighed, “Very well, but you will one day ride in my back seat.”

Storm stared at Ren, “She’s very... flirtatious.”

Ren shoved his hands in his pockets, “Talking cars are sexy.”

“Thank you Ren,” Evey purred.

“What makes it perfect,” Ren continued, “is that Evey’s voice is an exact replica of Envy’s.”

Storm pressed his lips together to quell the laughter and nodded vigorously. Ren didn’t show this side of his personality very often but when he did, he always made it worth the wait.

“Evey,” Ren stated.

“Yes Ren,” Evey answered.

“You belong to Trevor, he is your owner.”

Evey hummed, “Trevor has always taken good care of me... now I will take good care of him.”

Storm opened his mouth to say something... anything, but his eyes started to water and his cheeks hurt like hell. He briskly walked to ward the closest door, which happened to be the walk in coat closet, before he started laughing again.

“Are you all right, Storm?” he heard Evey ask through the closed door.

“I’m okay,” Storm managed. “I’ll be out in a moment.”

Ren’s lip twitched while he and Evey waited on the boss to regain his sanity.

Chapter 4

Guy followed Tiara down the steps that had been cut into the side of the cliff through a combination of human hands and natural forces. He silently followed his target down to the private beach.

Tiara’s form came into view on the sand and he paused near the bottom long enough to look down on her lithe form. When his feet finally touched the sand, Guy had to stand in awe of the picture she was creating. With her long silky white hair and golden tan... she looked like a beautiful water nymph that had come ashore to lead men astray.

Tiara was standing at the shoreline letting the water wash up over her sandals. Even though the cold darkness called to her, she loved the feel of the warm sun on her skin. Staring out over the ocean, she could feel the lives the water had taken over the millennia and never given back.

Most humans who died went on to the next dimension... but

there were always those who refused the call. She cocked her head to the side wondering if those ghosts swam with the fish and were happy.

A soft smile appeared on her face as she recalled the many stories she'd heard over the years of men lost at sea and seeing someone in the water with them. That person would stay with them until rescue came. In each instance, the second person was never found and Tiara knew that other person was the ghost of one long dead that refused to leave their ocean home.

Ghosts were usually gentle whispering creatures that have no outward power. She should know... she'd even played with them as a child. Their true power resided within their spirit... that inner power is what drew demons to them. Once under the control of demons, ghosts became little more than puppets doing their master's bidding... innocent victims in the games demons played.

Guy's steps were silent as he closed the distance between himself and Tiara until the salty water surrounded the soles of his boots. The breeze was still warm, even though Halloween was just a couple weeks away... the night humans dressed up as monsters. He didn't even want to think about what that night would bring.

"Tiara," his voice was cold knowing she'd lied to Storm about the number of people she needed on her team just to keep him at arm's length. "We need to talk."

Tiara had been so lost in thought that hearing her name

so close to her had caused her to flinch. She inwardly sighed knowing she was about to hurt Guy and turned around to face him. She swallowed when she noticed the pain shimmering in his eyes.

“Guy, I am so sorry.” She meant every word.

Guy tightened his fists at his sides. She was telling him no and they both knew it. He tried to push away the thought of forcing her to do his bidding, but it was just on the edge of his mind... tempting him.

“Carley was a part of PIT and died to save another’s life... Mine. She deserves a second chance,” he insisted as if they’d already participated in a silent argument over it... and in a way, they had.

Tiara slowly shook her head but her expression was full of sympathy. Her voice remained calm and serene as she tried to explain why she couldn’t revive his sister, “To jerk someone back from death is to bring back a zombie without a soul. They can talk and move, but they are hollow... little more than shells their soul used to live in. My job is to free zombies from their creators... not create them myself.”

“Don’t give me that crap,” Guy lost the fragile hold he’d had on his anger. “Your mother could control souls and now that power is yours, so just tell Carley to get back in her body. Once she’s there, you can seal her in it. Come on, it’s only been a couple of hours. She’s barely cold.”

“You would bind her to a body in worse condition than it was

when she left it? You would want that for your sister?” Tiara asked in sad disappointment. “You haven’t thought this through Guy. What kind of life would that be for her?”

Guy was suddenly in front of her, grabbing her wrist and roughly jerking her forward until they were only a couple inches apart. Glaring down into Tiara’s startled face he growled, “I’ll do whatever it takes to bring her back. I took care of her before and I can take care of her again.”

“If you don’t want more than just sunburn, then I suggest you let go of her,” Zachary’s voice was close and full of warning.

Zachary had held back, listening in on the conversation between Tiara and Guy. He knew Guy was hurting... hell, everyone knew what Carley meant to the big man. However, when Guy grabbed hold of Tiara in a near violent manner, Zachary refused to stand back and let him manhandle her. She was so small and fragile compared to him. She looked like she would break.

Guy’s eyes narrowed on Tiara, not paying attention to Zachary’s threat. Instead, he continued to stare down into Tiara’s bright eyes, too bright for a normal human. Once more, the thought of forcing her to do what he wanted slipped into his subconscious. What did he really have to lose... he’d already lost everything he lived for.

“He isn’t hurting me,” Tiara’s voice was calm but she refused to break eye contact with Guy. He was hurting her, but what hurt most was the edge of madness forming in Guy’s angry gaze. He

wasn't really angry at her... he was feeling the normal sensation of survivor's guilt. In his mind, he should have been the one to die instead of Carley.

"Guy, if you let go of me, I'll use my necromancy to call to Carley. Then you can ask your sister what it is she wants now." Tiara didn't struggle against him. She wanted him to trust her.

Zachary shook his head and took a step toward them. "I don't think that's a very good idea," he stated darkly. He was a master at reading people and although Tiara was doing a damn good job of hiding it, he could tell she was frightened. "I said let her go Guy!"

"I'm not hurting her," Guy nearly shouted back at him.

Zachary ground his teeth and tried to keep a strangle hold on his own fiery temper that had abruptly surfaced. He knew Guy was grieving and it was obvious the other man wasn't handling it very well. Be that as it may, that didn't mean he was going to let Guy take it out on Tiara.

Without even realizing he was doing it, the air surrounding Guy became several degrees hotter.

Guy let go of Tiara's wrist and turned his glare on Zachary as he broke out in a sweat, "Stay the hell out of this."

"Oh, I think it's too late for that," Zachary's lips hinted at a dangerous smile.

Not wanting to be the reason someone was hurt, Tiara reached out and touched Guy's arm to get his attention back on her. "I will call Carley's soul... not her body," she whispered, "and you

can talk to her.” Now that she had his full attention she reached up, cupping his face between her palms. “I will need something from you first.”

“I’ll give you anything,” Guy said with desperation. “And after it’s done... if you need me.” He placed his hand over one of hers and turned his face toward it, kissing her palm softly and dropped to his knees so he wouldn’t be so tall for her. “I’ll be there for you.”

Zachary growled inwardly knowing exactly what Guy was suggesting and he didn’t like the sound of it. He moved his angry gaze to Tiara’s face wondering what she thought of the idea of trading necromancy favors for sex.

“Thank you, Guy,” her full lips lifted in the barest hint of a soft smile. “But what I need is for you to let all the love you feel for your sister wash through you. I can use it to call to her soul.”

Even from where Zachary was standing, he could see Guy’s eyes soften and his face relax but he couldn’t stop himself from taking another step forward when Guy wrapped his arms around Tiara’s waist and pressed himself against her as he closed his eyes.

Tiara took a deep breath and also closed her eyes feeling a brother’s overwhelming love for his little sister in the way he was holding on to her so tightly. She could even feel his hands shaking with emotion. It was so pure of heart that she felt a longing to know such a love.

Zachary watched in wonder as Tiara seemed to shimmer

and Carley's likeness melded within her own. Carley's soul was clinging to Tiara's and gazing down on her brother in confusion. In the span of a few seconds, Zachary's distrusting expression faded into something that could only be described as gentle.

"Guy," Carley said softly.

Guy's eyes shot open and he quickly lifted his head to look up at his sister standing in the circle of his arms.

"Carley," Guy's voice shook as tears started falling from his eyes. "Why did you do that? It should have been me."

Carley smiled, "It was my turn to protect you. I don't regret it and I wouldn't change a thing."

Guy shook his head in denial, "I didn't need protecting... what I needed was my sister." He tightened his arms around her possessively. "I promise I won't let you go this time."

"You were always taking care of me." Carley said. "But look at me now," she spun around in a circle since it was really Tiara's body he was holding... not hers. "I can walk again. If I want to... I can even fly."

"We can make things better this time. I'll find a way to make you happy," he promised and readied himself if she said no.

Carley sighed softly and leaned down to give him a tender kiss on his cheek. "I'm happy now Guy. The only thing I ask is for you to find a way to be happy... and for heaven's sake, find a girlfriend!"

Guy lowered his head drawing as much magic from the earth as he could, "Tiara can bring you back Carley. Don't you want

that as much as I do?”

Carley reached out and ruffled his hair like he used to do with her. “I’m sorry Guy, but no... please don’t take this away from me.”

Guy’s eyes widened guiltily and he jerked his tear blurred gaze back up to his sister, “There is a way for both of us to get what we want.”

Just as his sister’s lips parted in confusion, Guy thrust the palm of his hand hard against her and Tiara’s chest, quickly whispering the words of the spell he’d memorized less than an hour ago. The burst of power blew Tiara backwards, leaving behind a momentary shadow of herself before it faded into an image of Carley still standing in front of him.

“What have you done?” Carley whispered.

Guy blinked now that she was stabilized without Tiara’s connection. She hadn’t given him another option and he refused to let her leave him again. So, he’d made his decision and bound her spirit to this world.

Zachary lunged forward with his arms outstretched, catching Tiara before her head hit the sandy beach. Quickly making sure she still had a pulse and was breathing, he glared over at Guy noticing the warlock was still looking at the same spot Tiara had just been standing as if he could still see Carley.

Carley looked over her shoulder at Tiara then back at her brother disapprovingly, “That was mean... you could have at least warned Tiara what you were going to do.”

“I’ll make it up to her,” Guy smiled and wiped some of the tears off his cheek. “Now that you hold the link between worlds, we won’t need anyone to be a medium for us.”

Carley giggled knowing the spell was harmless but at least now she could visit, even if he and Tiara were the only ones that could see her. “Just remember not to talk to me in front of people. They will think you’ve lost your mind.” Looking up at the castle, she realized she could even be Guy’s secret spy if PIT needed her. She would talk to him later about it.

“I love you big brother, but you might want to go apologize to Tiara before Zachary decides to roast you.” She leaned down and swept her lips across Guy’s forehead again even though she knew he couldn’t feel it. “I’ll be right here.”

Guy watched as Carley smiled brightly at him before her image faded away leaving Zachary’s angry form in his direct line of vision.

“What the hell did you do to her?” Zachary growled while cradling Tiara’s limp form against his chest.

Looking down into Tiara’s relaxed face, he brushed some of her hair away when the wind lifted it across her cheek and lips. He immediately stilled, realizing several things all at once. Her skin was just as soft as it appeared to be... and so was her hair.

Zachary shivered as it fell from his fingers like silken thread. His gaze moved to her full lips in stunned silence when the urge to kiss her made his chest tighten. Her retained innocence made her so much more beautiful and tempting than he’d ever thought her

mother was... that knowledge frightened him in ways he couldn't grasp.

Guy watched the emotions play across Zachary's face as the other man interacted with Tiara's unconscious form. A tight ball formed in the pit of his stomach not at all liking that Zachary was so close to her... conveniently forgetting who'd had her in his arms just moments before.

Pushing himself up from the wet sand, Guy quickly closed the distance between them and stood over Zachary for a moment. He unconsciously fisted his hands before falling back to his knees beside Tiara and gazed lovingly down at her soft face.

"I didn't hurt her... I swear it. I would never hurt her." Guy said in a deep voice, meaning every word. He reached out and ran the back of his fingers across her soft cheek and almost growled when Zachary's arms tightened around her body but gained control of himself. "She gave me the one gift no one else could and I owe her everything for that." Guy tried again.

"I asked what the hell you did to her that knocked her out." Zachary demanded, pushing Guy's hand away from Tiara's cheek, not trusting the warlock to touch her. He'd already made that mistake once. "She's not like us when it comes to healing. She's human you idiot, and that makes her fragile."

Guy let his hand fall to his side understanding Zachary's protectiveness but didn't back away. "I combined a spell Carley and I found a few years ago with the necromancy power that was emanating from Tiara while she was allowing Carley to use her

body as a conduit.” He reached out for her again only for Zachary to knock his hand away a second time.

“Back off,” Zachary ordered.

“It’s because of her that I can now see Carley anytime I want.” Guy continued, ignoring the demand. “Tiara gave my sister back to me... and for that reason I will forever be in her debt.”

“If Tiara doesn’t wake up and tell me she’s alright, then I’ll send you to be with your sister the hard fast way.” Zachary threatened only to flinch when soft fingers ghosted across his lips.

Both men jerked their gazes down to the small woman but it was Zachary’s eyes Tiara sought out.

Zachary was nearly knocked breathless when he saw Tiara’s true eye color up close for the first time. They were full of shattering flecks of vivid gold and green that seemed to move at random, almost hypnotizing him, and they stared back at him with tantalizing innocence.

“I’m alright,” Tiara whispered finding herself wrapped in Zachary’s overwhelming protectiveness.

She quickly became infatuated with Zachary’s perfection. Wanting to touch the man that had visited her thoughts so many times over the years, she let her fingers trace his lips once more before she trailed them down his chin and neck in a caressing motion. When he inhaled sharply, she realized what she was doing.

Tiara abruptly pulled her hand back and sat up in an attempt

to scramble off his lap.

Zachary's brain had shut down when he felt her touch linger on his lips for a moment before grazing over his chin. He repressed a shiver when those same fingers delicately caress his neck and moved toward the back of his neck where the skin was unbelievably sensitive. When Tiara started to move, he had to force himself to let go of her so she could rise to her feet.

The second she was out of Zachary's arms, Tiara barely had time to sway on unsteady legs before Guy pulled her into his embrace. She blushed when she felt him pressing every inch of her body against his in a bear hug.

She could feel the small flare of hunger that had started while she was in Zachary's lap begin to burn brighter. Being held by a man was something new to her because no one except her mother had ever been allowed this close to her before.

"I can see Carley now," Guy exclaimed, lifting her up higher until her feet were dangling at least a foot off the ground. "Thank you."

Guy was happy he had his sister back but that feeling of desire for this little woman was starting to build once more. The urge to do more than simply hold her swept over him. When Tiara squirmed a little bit, he gazed down at her with hungry eyes. "I didn't hurt you, did I?"

Tiara looked up at the big man holding her and placed her hands on his broad shoulders. He was ecstatic... she could see it as well as feel it. She had felt his magic as soon as it hit her... the

amount of power Guy housed inside of him was unbelievable. She had been wrong in turning him away when he'd offered to join her team.

"You didn't hurt me," she said softly knowing it was a lie.

He hadn't meant to hurt her and she knew this. Her mother had told her more than once to choose her team wisely and she hadn't been talking about sleeping partners. Even though Guy hadn't asked permission to combine his power with hers, being faced with his sister's ghost was enough that she could forgive him.

"I want you," Tiara leaned backwards and put her fingers up, touching his lips the moment he started to lower his head toward her, "as part of my team."

Guy felt a momentary rush of disappointment when she finished speaking and kissed her fingertips instead. "You can want me for anything and I'll do it," he whispered seductively.

Tiara felt heat flash across her midsection to match the look in his eyes. This was another warning her mother had given her and Tiara knew she could not ignore it. Soon she would have to choose more than just team members if she wanted to survive. Her very life depended on finding a sexual partner to keep her alive if the call of the darkness became too much for her to handle.

Making sure someone was always available for that purpose wasn't going to pose a challenge at this rate.

Zachary's stomach was on fire and his body temperature had

risen a few degrees. He felt like he was about to spontaneously combust when Guy lowered his head to kiss Tiara. The feeling vanished when she elaborated on how she wanted Guy and Zachary had to fight the urge to smirk at the presumptuous man.

When Guy didn't immediately let go of her, Zachary decided at that point he was damn tired of being a spectator. Rising to his feet, he stepped forward in order to break up their annoying intimacy.

"Fine," Zachary growled, "you've proven yourself worthy to be on the team... at least in Tiara's eyes. But thanks to what you did, Tiara's weakened now and needs to rest so she can handle what's coming tonight."

Guy glared at Zachary wanting to tell him where to shove it, but again stopped himself. He didn't know all of the ins and outs of the relationship Tiara had with Zachary, nor did he really think he wanted to know.

"He's right, I am a little drained," Tiara said and locked eyes with Guy, waiting on him to put her down. She felt like such a child in his arms... small and helpless.

"Good idea," Guy agreed and cocked an eyebrow while looking toward all the steep steps leading back up the cliff. "You should rest."

Much to Zachary's chagrin, Guy lifted Tiara's legs and carried her bridal style up the path to the castle. He caught her quick glance when she turned to see if he was following them.

Growling silently to himself, Zachary followed not entirely

sure why he was angry to begin with. It didn't matter to him one bit that he wasn't the one carrying Tiara... although he did watch to make sure Guy's hands stayed in respectable places on her body. Guy's power merging with hers had weakened the necromancer... so Guy could damn well carry her.

Tiara smiled softly and relaxed her head against the curve of Guy's neck. She figured he had carried his sister around like this sometimes and let him continue to carry her. It was probably soothing some of the emptiness Carley's death had left in his heart. Minutes later, she found herself inside her room.

Zachary leaned against the doorframe with his arms folded over his chest as he watched Guy lower Tiara to the mattress. "So I guess we have a team of four instead of three tonight?" he asked.

Before Tiara could confirm it, Guy answered for her, "Her mother used to have six people with her at all times. Tiara lied about the headcount because she was avoiding me." He winked at Tiara causing her to blush and sit up.

Zachary frowned wondering why he hadn't figured that much out on his own... he'd been a part of Myra's team a couple times. For some reason, meeting Tiara had dimmed the memory of her mother. He was going to have to start paying closer attention to what was going on around him.

Tiara felt strange now that the two men were in her room... alone with her. Out of the two... she would have been more comfortable with Guy. She'd seen Zachary from afar a couple

times when she was younger and the PIT teams had crossed paths. Zachary had always looked at her mother so strangely that it had caused her to create a childish fear of him.

However way she looked at it, Zachary really was a man to be feared if you stopped to think about it. There was a lot about Zachary that no one really knew with the exception of Storm and maybe Ren. Even his profile in the PIT database was little more than his name and current mission. The simple fact that Storm had given him a top position spoke volumes about his power.

She'd heard stories about Zachary from some of the other PIT members. Tiara didn't put much stock in the stories and rumors, but it was enough for her to remain afraid of him. But that childish fear had always been tinged with a strong curiosity that was only growing stronger now that she'd met him.

When she'd first been summoned here, Storm had told her Zachary would be instructing her team. It had surprised her downstairs in the meeting when Storm announced that Zachary would be part of her actual team. She'd thought with someone as important as Zachary, that he'd simply be telling her team where to go and what to do on the jobs... not truly going with them.

Guy lifted her hand in his and gave it a quick kiss before releasing it, "You need to rest. I'll be back about an hour before dusk."

"Stay for a few more minutes," Storm said from behind Zachary, making him flinch and look over his shoulder. Zachary moved to let Storm into the room.

Chapter 5

“Storm,” Tiara acknowledged, then smiled warmly at him when he walked over and sat down on the bed beside her.

Storm looked over at Guy with an unreadable expression on his face. He’d seen Guy carrying Tiara up the stairs with the same care he had shown his sister. “Did I miss something?”

Guy refused to fidget as Storm looked directly at him. He’d seen the time walker grab a man once in a fit of anger and the man had simply disappeared never to be seen again. Considering what Storm was, Guy sure as hell did not want to end up in the Stone Age.

“I will protect Tiara as a permanent member of her group,” Guy informed the time walker stoically.

“So I did miss something,” Storm mused. This was new to him and he was getting a kick out of finding out things the old fashioned way. Looking over at Zachary, Storm noticed the not-so-happy expression on the other man’s face and sighed inwardly. “Zachary, care to fill me in?”

Tiara’s lips had parted to defend Guy but she stilled when Storm moved his gaze to Zachary inquiringly. She lifted her gaze to Zachary’s, feeling safe to do so now that his attention wasn’t trained on her.

Zachary flicked his gaze to Tiara’s, frowning when she immediately looked down at her hands. Why was it that she was more comfortable with the man that had just knocked her out than she was with the one that hadn’t hurt her?

Was she drawn to bad boys like her mother had been? Would she be attracted to a demon? Maybe Storm had been right in putting him in charge of her safety. There was a very good chance they would need to protect Tiara more from herself than the demons running around.

“Guy wanted his sister back so he and Tiara struck a deal and combined their powers. They didn’t raise Carley from the dead... but Guy can now summon his sister’s ghost and everything is hunky-dory,” Zachary told Storm sarcastically with a light shrug of his shoulders.

“Really now,” Storm tried to hide his smirk at the obvious feelings Zachary had and was doing a bad job of hiding. “And they did this with no side effects?”

Zachary pinned Guy with a dark look as he added, “None... if you don’t count the fact that the spell knocked Tiara back about ten feet and left her out cold for a few minutes.”

“I figured as much by the bruise that’s already forming on her chest and right wrist.” Storm said and raised an eyebrow at Guy.

Zachary growled under his breath and stalked across the room to the bed where Tiara was sitting with every intention of looking for the bruises in question.

Tiara grabbed a throw pillow from the bed and hugged it tight to hide the edge of the bruise that was visible above the cloth covering her breasts. She blinked up at Zachary feeling the temperature in the room rise by several degrees.

Storm looked at Guy curiously, “It is intriguing that you can

combine your power with Tiara's. That was a bit unexpected and might be handy in the future. But from now on, keep in mind that even though she is powerful, she's human and heals like one."

"That's what I told him," Zachary pointed out glaring at Guy. It didn't miss his attention the way Storm brought up the possibility of Guy's power being compatible with Tiara's necromancy. He fought back the urge to growl once more and crossed his arms over his chest to avoid hitting something... namely Guy.

"And Guy will heed that warning," Storm nodded his approval even though he could tell Zachary didn't agree with his judgment to let Guy join Tiara's group. Zachary's jealousy was very obvious to him. He just hoped once Zach emerged, he'd be able to keep it under control

"I will protect her," Guy repeated and returned Zachary's glare with the stubbornness of his own. "I owe it to her for what she's done for me and Carley."

With the lecture over Storm smiled, "Now, let's see that sister of yours."

"Carley," Guy had to keep from crossing his fingers and praying the spell would work as planned. He sighed thankfully when his sister suddenly appeared between him and Storm. She had a mischievous smile on her face and Guy could tell she was up to something.

"Can you see her?" Tiara asked Storm curiously.

"Not even a shadow," Storm admitted and rubbed his finger

across his chin thoughtfully. "This could be really good for PIT."

"What's he talking about?" Carley asked out loud even though Guy and Tiara were the only ones who could hear her. "Oh wait... great minds think alike." She smiled in excitement keeping her attention on Storm. "Come on... say it."

"Zachary, can you see her?" Storm asked.

"No," Zachary confirmed.

"Tiara, tell Storm I would be the perfect spy," Carley shot her brother another huge grin then pouted at him when he frowned at her. "It's not like it would be dangerous... I'm already dead, dummy."

Tiara echoed Carley's words for Storm and Zachary ... even the 'dummy' comeback she'd given her brother, making the other men in the room chuckle. She felt more confident now that she had proof Guy was a great choice for a prominent team member.

"Carley seems excited," she commented, smiling at the ghost only a couple feet in front of them.

"I would love to still be a part of PIT!" Carley nodded vigorously.

When Guy repeated her words to Storm, Storm glanced over at Zachary, seeing him just shrug as if it didn't make a difference to him. If he knew Zachary at all, it probably didn't.

"It's not like she'll bother me... I won't even know she's there." Zachary relaxed back against the wall leaving it up to Storm. Secretly, he thought it was a great idea because it would give Guy something to do besides worship Tiara. "As long as she doesn't

peep in on places she's not been invited, then everything will be fine."

"How would he know?" Carley muttered making Tiara grin and Guy stare at her like she'd just morphed into an alien.

This gave Storm another idea, "Guy, you and Carley put your heads together and see if you can come up with a spell that can be used for the members of this team."

"What kind of spell do you need?" Guy asked, tilting his head in curiosity.

"We need one that will allow the other people on this team to see Carley and communicate with her," Storm instructed.

Tiara felt the muscles in her stomach tighten. She remembered learning such a spell... except the way she'd been taught to do it had nothing to do with magic... it was done with necromancy.

It was hard for her mother to teach her how to do things that she couldn't even try to perform yet. Most of her training had been pretend and anything sexual had only been talked about... not acted out for obvious reasons. Her and her mother had always been left alone for training and even though she was born with some of her father's powers, Myra had forbid her to try to use them in fear of someone finding out.

"There is a way to make someone aware of ghosts but I've not had the chance to try it yet." Tiara hugged the pillow a little tighter as she added, "It's called the breath of sight but it will make the person I give it to aware of more than just Carley."

"Do you mean it will allow them to see everything you see?"

Storm questioned knowing that was a tall order. When Tiara nodded, Storm rubbed his hands together, “Now that’s more like it. It would be good for your team members to be aware of everything going on around you. Wouldn’t you agree?”

Tiara tried not to cringe but couldn’t help it, “Everyone?”

Seeing the slight blush creep up into her cheeks, Storm caught a hint of why Tiara was being so hesitant. Necromancer rituals were often preformed with a hint of sex included in the list of ingredients.

“Guy, you and Carley can still work on finding a spell that is only for those we want to see Carley. You can meet back in here later this evening.” Storm nodded toward the door.

“Sure,” Guy turned hearing the dismissal in Storm’s voice and left the bedroom thinking that Zachary was going to follow. He frowned deeply when the other man stayed in his spot against the wall.

Storm remained quiet until Guy and Carley were gone. What he had to speak with Tiara about didn’t need to be heard by anyone else. He glanced over at Zachary and waited for him to leave as well but when the other man didn’t budge, Storm mentally sighed. He supposed Zachary staying was to be expected since he was in charge of the team.

Turning back to Tiara, Storm placed his hand on her bare shoulder and tenderly caressed her skin with the pad of his thumb. Detecting a slight flinch when he touched her, Storm had the answer to his unasked question... she had never been touched

by a man before, least not in the way this would require.

Keeping his face calm he smiled gently, “Tiara, you do not have to do anything you do not want to do. Always remember that. But if you do decide to try and give the gift of it, then I want Zachary to be the one you share your breath of sight with.”

Zachary remained quiet, still leaning against the wall. He wanted to see where Storm was going with this hocus-pocus. He had a feeling there was more to this spell than just words. Storm was talking in riddles in order to hide something from him and Zachary didn’t like it one bit.

Tiara’s mind was going a mile a minute. She knew she was in the same position Myra had been in. She’d never used her powers and she’d never been touched by a man... tonight she’d have to do both whether she was ready or not. Tiara suddenly wished she could pick just one man from the group... she wanted what her mother now had.

“Zachary can and will protect you better than anyone else, even Guy.” Storm locked gazes with Tiara wanting her to catch the hint he was giving her. “His heat will keep the cold ones at bay, so it needs to be him you share your sight with... but only when you’re ready. Until then, maybe Carley and Guy will come up with something so Carley can communicate with the whole team,” Storm said reassuringly.

“Carley would like that,” Tiara said but she was thinking about what Storm had just said. “She’s very excited about everything going on.”

Storm shifted his gaze to Zachary to make sure he was following at least some of what he was telling Tiara. “Carley will be a great asset, but an even greater one if the whole team can see and talk to her. For example, if anyone of you get separated from the group and or wounded, then Carley can find that person and go back to one of the other members and tell them where they are.”

Zachary cocked an eyebrow actually liking the sound of that.

Tiara lowered the pillow to her lap and sat up a little straighter, “I have to be using the necromancy in order to try the spell,” she swept her gaze toward Zachary but lost her nerve as soon as she noticed all of his attention was on her.

She focused back on Storm and inhaled deeply. It was time to grow up and do her part to save humanity... even if she lost a part of herself alone the way. Tiara lowered her voice making it sound like the secret it truly was, “Myra said I can only give the breath of sight while I’m under the control of the hunger.”

Storms eyebrows lowered worriedly, “How far do you have to take the hunger in order to share the power to see what’s really there?”

Tiara repeated what her mother had told her with a bright blush on her cheeks. “The person doesn’t have to be inside me, but I have to reach... a climax in order to feed from their life-force. His life force is a gift to me and only during the exchange can I give a gift back. That’s when I can give the breath of a necromancer’s sight.”

Storm could feel Zach's anger vibrate throughout the room and knew Zachary was no longer with them. His double personality trigger had been flipped. Now was a good time to get the fireball out of here before he went off and embarrassed Tiara further. She was being so brave that it would be a shame to place stumbling blocks in front of her to trip over... especially a stumbling block as intimidating as Zach.

"You can trust Zachary not to go too far when you are ready to try the breath. For now you need to rest. It's going to be a long night." He slid off the bed and grabbed Zach by the upper arm, ushering the other man out the door with him.

The moment they were out of hearing range Zach turned on Storm and snapped, "Do you really think it's fair to her to ask her to let everyone on the team get her off just so she can share her damn sight with them?"

Storm gripped Zach's arm a little tighter and they were suddenly alone at the cliff. While Zach was tripping on the sudden change in scenery, Storm attempted to reason with him. "Stop for a minute and think about what Tiara just said."

"She just said she has to get off in order to share her sight." Zach thundered as fire erupted then sputtered when he found himself under the cold ocean water. Pushing off the bottom, he realized he could stand up because the water was only shoulder high.

"Damn it Storm, stop that!" he yelled.

Storm smirked because he was perfectly dry and standing on

the beach watching the steam rise from Zachary's skin. "Let's try this again shall we, this time with a cooler head on our shoulders?" he asked while Zachary trudged through the water toward him. "Tiara said the person doesn't have to be inside her."

"Yeah, I heard that part," Zachary said harshly but threw up a hand to let Storm know he didn't need another dunk. He'd just walked out of the water and was damn near dry thanks to his ability to raise the temperature around him. The last thing he needed was for his clothes to start smelling like seawater.

"Glad you were listening," Storm smirked. "Did you miss the part about reaching satisfaction in order to feed?" Zachary just glared at him so Storm enlightened him further, "I don't know if she is even aware of what she said, but if that statement is true then she doesn't ever have to sleep with anyone in order to feed. She only has to reach satisfaction and it will keep her alive."

Zachary stilled himself as he thought about it, his mind going a mile a minute. She had to do that in order to live through the experience? Is that why Myra had sex with the demon that night... because she had to? Not likely, he silently rationalized. The demon from that night hadn't been a stranger... Myra had known him.

"The thought of Tiara feeding the way Myra fed seems to bother you... but you do not fully understand the part about her dying if she doesn't feed. So, I am proposing an alternative. Get her to the point of satisfaction... then stop. If you don't want to do it, then I'm sure Guy will be more than happy to take your

place.”

“I’ll do it,” Zach snapped then blinked when Storm vanished. When the sand under his feet melted into a pool of glass, he growled and spun around... marching right back into the cold water. “No one even asked me if I wanted to see a damned ghost.”

Storm rematerialized inside Ren’s office laughing softly to himself.

“Oh god, what did you do this time?” Ren asked from behind his desk.

Storm shook his head at his own wicked sense of humor, “If we’re smart, we’ll stay away from Zach for the next couple days... or weeks. It kind of depends on how long he can stand torturing himself. That and we also need to warn everyone to stay away from the beach for another hour or so. Knowing Zachary, he’s probably turning it into a glass bottle right about now.”

“Has anyone ever told you that you have an evil streak about a mile wide?” Ren smirked enjoying Storm’s laughter over the dangers of a bloody nose any day.

Damon’s feet touched lightly in front of the entrance of Night Light and he set Alicia down, reluctantly giving up his claim he had on her lips.

He’d found flying was an aphrodisiac to Alicia and decided walking was out of the equation from now until eternity if he had his way. Though now that they were here, he was rethinking how smart it was to get her all hot and bothered then leaving her with

another man... even if she did call this man brother.

“Thanks for bringing me here,” Alicia said with a happy smile. She rose back up on her tiptoes and pressed her swollen lips back to his knowing how hard it was for him to share her right now.

“I love you,” she whispered before attempting to back away. She didn’t get very far.

Damon gave her a dark, possessive look and refused to relinquish his hold on her. When she looked up at him with an adorable pout, his chest rumbled with a deep growl before pressing his lips back to hers one more time. When her fingers brushed against the back of his neck with tantalizing softness, Damon lifted his head and took a shuddering breath.

“Keep that up and I will take us to a more private setting to finish what we’ve started.” Damon warned.

Alicia’s eyes lit up, “Please? The roof is always secluded.”

Damon smirked, “Minx,” he muttered before turning her around and ushering her toward the front door with an affectionate slap on the bottom.

He didn’t like leaving her alone with Micah but he’d be damned if he was taking her anywhere near those horny werewolves at Love Bites. He wanted to strike a deal with them and that wouldn’t happen if he was busy killing every wolf who looked sideways at her.

Alicia noticed that Micah had all the lights back on and was busy working when they walked in. Most of the shattered glass had been picked up off the floor and the heavy light fixture

had been moved out of the way. A sawhorse was set up on the floor with a long piece of two-by-four propped across it. The loud noise of the electric saw echoed loudly in the acoustic room making Alicia and Damon wince.

Damon let his irritated gaze follow the long line of the power cord to the wall and nonchalantly walked over to the outlet. He couldn't have brother dearest working when he was supposed to be babysitting his little sister. He pulled the plug and the saw went quiet making Micah look up with an annoyed expression.

When Micah saw Alicia standing inside the door, his face broke out into the kind of smile that made Damon's eyes narrow.

"Hey sis," Micah said and set the saw down. "What brings you here again so soon? Did you run away from your husband again?"

A clearing throat made him look over and smirk at Damon. "I guess that answers my question."

Damon growled making Micah and Alicia laugh softly.

"Calm down big man," Micah said. "Since you're part of the family, it's mandatory you get teased by everyone at least once a day."

Alicia stepped out on the main floor, taking a good look around. "You've gotten a lot done since I was here last night."

Micah shrugged, "Nothing better to do. Quinn and Warren are doing their thing over at Moon Dance and left this place to me."

"What can I do to help out?" Alicia asked.

"You two are offering to help out?" Micah answered her with a question of his own.

“She is,” Damon corrected. “I’m leaving her here with you while I go take care of something that needs my immediate attention.”

Alicia raised an eyebrow having thought Damon was staying here with her. Her eyes narrowed realizing he’d had an alternate agenda all along. “I thought we were going to stop keeping secrets,” Alicia accused.

Damon smiled softly at her and tapped her lightly on the chin. “It’s a surprise,” he said. “I can’t very well surprise my new wife if I don’t have a secret or two... now can I?”

Alicia crossed her arms over her chest. “What are you up to?” she demanded and then gasped when Damon was suddenly behind her pulling her back against him in a tight embrace before dipping his lips to brush the shell of her ear.

“You’ll find out soon enough. Now, do you want to stay here... or go back to our bed?” the corners of Damon’s lips lifted in a satisfied smile when Alicia melted backwards against him and he caught the scent of her arousal spike.

Micah refrained from rolling his eyes and turning away from them. He knew they were mates but the instinct to rip Damon away from her was a slow learner.

“I’ll stay,” Alicia whispered and tried to pull away from him but Damon kept her caged in arms of steel for a moment longer. Liking the feel, she wrapped her arms around his as if to keep him there.

“I am leaving her in your care.” Damon stated looking directly

at Micah... letting him see firsthand to whom it was she truly belonged. “Protect her until I get back.” Reaching for Alicia’s chin, he turned her face so he could place a scalding kiss there before exiting the club so fast that all they saw was the doors open and close.

Once Micah was sure Damon was gone he slammed his fist down on the bar. “Protect her until I get back,” he mimicked in a hostile voice. “You’d think I’ve never had to protect anyone before.”

“Speaking of which,” Alicia said, the blush Damon had caused now gone from her face. “I have a very big bone to pick with you dear brother. All those times you came to the boarding school to visit while I was growing up, you said you were teaching me how to fight.”

Micah froze and resisted the urge to take a step back.

“You were only pretending, weren’t you?” she demanded.

“Well,” Micah said with an expression of defeat. “I never thought you would need to learn that kind of thing. I only let you believe I was teaching you to fight but in truth it was just supposed to be fun.”

“You’re going to start teaching me to fight right now,” Alicia said with authority.

Micah’s eyebrows shot up into his bangs. “Say what?”

“You heard me.” Alicia growled wanting to be just as tough as the guys. “You’re going to teach me the right way or I’m turning around, walking right out this door, and explaining to Damon

that you couldn't keep a good enough eye on me.”

“You wouldn't,” Micah whispered.

Alicia smirked knowing she'd just won her way, “Watch me!”

Micah sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “Okay, okay, I'll... teach you how to fight.”

Alicia hopped around in a circle, “Yay!”

Micah rubbed his hand over his eyes trying to erase the fact that she was being the little sister he'd never wanted to have a reason to get into a fight. She was so cute when she acted every bit of five years old. This was why he'd never really taught her to fight... how was he supposed to spar with something so cute?

“Okay, but drop the ballerina act or I'll never be able to do this,” Micah instructed. “The first thing you have to realize is that if you're going to fight someone, then you can't be happy about it.”

“I must be angry at the target,” Alicia grumbled. “I got it.”

“And the second thing is always keep your eye on the enemy.”

Alicia blinked and he was gone... wonderful!

Chapter 6

Michael walked slowly through the big house that had suddenly become very empty since Kane went MIA. His only company now was Scrappy, who always came and went as he pleased. The little fur ball was currently following him around the house waiting for Michael to sit down somewhere.

When Michael finally took a seat on the sofa, Scrappy wasted no time in hopping up on his lap.

“So, what do you think, Dust Bunny?” Michael asked feeling more alone than he had in years.

Scrappy looked up at him with such an adorable expression that Michael couldn't help but laugh. He was missing Damon as well... though he had to admit that he was missing Alicia just a little bit more than his brother.

Unable to take the silence of the house, Michael stood up and went to get his trench coat. Scrappy followed after him again, hopping up and down around Michael's feet like a pogo stick. When Michael opened the door, Scrappy ran out ahead of him to the end of the walkway and waited by the street.

Michael locked the door and smiled when the Yorkie fell in step beside him. He could feel the malevolent energy in the air but ignored it for the time being. It was daylight and that alone was enough to make the most wicked of things hide and bide their time until the dark of night gave them back their freedom. Scrappy stopped occasionally to growl at something before trotting back after Michael.

It wasn't long before Michael realized where he was going and was soon standing in front of Night Light. He could feel Micah's energy inside the building along with another that he was very familiar with. A bright smile lit up his face as he strode up to the doors and pushed them open.

Once again Scrappy ran on ahead of him and right out onto the dance floor where Micah and Alicia were going through what looked like a knockdown, drag out brawl between the two of

them.

“Is this a private sibling rivalry, or can anyone join in?” Michael asked.

Micah and Alicia stopped in mid-step and looked over at Michael. Alicia released a loud squeal and ran full tilt at Michael, hopping up on him to wrap her arms around his neck and her legs around his waist, nearly toppling the vampire over.

“She conned me into teaching her how to fight,” Micah explained, though silently he knew Alicia could wipe the floor with him if she tried harder. He cocked an eyebrow at the way Alicia had wrapped herself around Michael. Someone was going to have to explain to his sister that she wasn’t five anymore and doing that to a grown man was hard on them in more ways than one.

Michael nearly groaned at the full body contact Alicia had granted him. She was Damon’s mate now and to stay in such close proximity for too long was sure to make Damon more than angry. He mentally smirked and wrapped his arms tightly around Alicia’s waist, making sure to press his face into her hair as he did so.

Micah strode over and reached out, grabbing Alicia by the waist. He gently lifted and pulled her away from Michael enough to set her feet on the floor and loosen her arms from around the vampire’s neck.

“That’s not the choke hold I taught you a few minutes ago.” He tried to make a joke out of it even though he could see the odd

look in Michael's eyes. It wasn't a look of which Damon would have approved.

"On the contrary, that was a pretty good choke hold," Michael laughed, suddenly in a much better mood. He lowered his lips to Alicia's cheek and gave her a quick kiss making sure to linger for just a second too long, "It's good to see you."

Scrappy barked up at Micah then rose up on his hind legs next to the cougar. Micah grinned and kneeled down to rub the small dog behind the ears.

"You brought more company with you," Micah said.

Alicia had perked up when she heard the bark and backed away from Michael. She couldn't control the blush that rose up on her cheeks when she felt his hands slide away from her waist.

"You were teaching Alicia how to fight?" Michael asked ignoring Alicia's reaction. That was the last thing he needed... but that didn't mean he couldn't flirt a little bit.

"Yes," Micah growled. "I didn't think the world would get to this point that I would have to teach my little sister to defend herself... much less fight back."

Michael tilted his head just a little as he stared at Alicia, "with the right training, no one would ever be able to hurt her again. That sounds like a wonderful plan to me. Mind if I join in?"

Micah smiled and nodded, "Help yourself."

Boris sat at one of the tables in the main area of the club Love Bites with a deep frown on his face. Titus sat across from him

with a matching expression with a mug of beer in front of him.

“All of them?” Titus asked.

Boris swallowed down his own beer before setting it on the table with a loud sounding thunk. “Because of the massive amount of demons that have been spotted on the streets, most of the clans have decided to make themselves scarce with the exception of Lucca and his werewolves. They’ve returned to the outer edges of the city and some of them are going as far as Mount Mitchell.”

Titus nearly choked on his beer. “That’s on the other side of the country.”

“It’s also the highest point east of the Mississippi,” Boris said. “About half the clans came out of the forests surrounding that area. They don’t want anything to do with what’s about to go down here in L.A.... and I can’t really say I blame them for returning home.”

“Do they actually know what’s going on?” Titus asked.

Boris shook his head, “Not really, but there have been too many demon sightings for their liking.”

“And what do you want to do?” Titus sighed wondering if he’d come back to this city for nothing.

“I’ll stay here with you and the rest of our clan,” Boris answered. “I don’t fear what might happen to me... I do fear what might happen if we don’t stay. This is our new turf and I find it a bit disturbing that the other clans are so willing to give up their territory.”

The front door of the club opened and both men turned their attention toward the visitor. Titus raised an eyebrow when Damon stepped in and closed the door behind him.

“Good evening.” Titus said without getting up from his seat. Why stand up when there was a risk of the vampire knocking him down again... depending on his mood. He couldn’t stop himself from rubbing a hand across his chin remembering the last punch.

Boris kept silent wondering why the vampire was here. He’d learned long ago to avoid the creatures that were stronger than him as much as possible.

The age-old story about vampires and werewolves constantly waging war on one another was a load of bull. It was the byproduct of some ancient human’s imagination that had happened to see one of their kind battling against a vampire-like creature a few centuries before... absolutely no truth to the legend at all.

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