

JADED BLOOD

BLOOD BOUND SERIES BOOK 10



AMY BLANKENSHIP, R.K. MELTON

Amy Blankenship
Jaded Blood

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Аннотация

Being a werewolf, Jade has always been under the impression that all Alpha males are nothing more than self-centered, murdering macho-bullies that use pack members as nothing more than stepping stones to become king of the hill. She should know. Her brother, her fiancé, and her kidnapper were all Alphas of the worst kind. Having all the proof she needed that Alphas are bad news, Jade vowed to never trust a werewolf of any kind... much less fall for one. She struggles to keep that vow when she is rescued by a blond haired blue eyed Alpha with the body of a Greek God. No matter how hard she fights, Jade fears this is one Alpha that she will lose to.

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Amy Blankenship, RK Melton

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Chapter 1

Eleven years ago... LA, the Hogo Shrine.

Tasuki listened to the silence of the house and it was slowly starting to drive him crazy. He couldn't sleep right now if his life depended on it. Getting out of bed, he flipped his bedroom light on so he could see the picture tucked into the rim of his dresser mirror. The picture was of his best friend's sister Kyoko and he'd taken it from their house when no one was looking.

The photo had been taken at the perfect moment, catching her beautiful emerald eyes in the sunlight. The day it was taken must have been windy because it looked like her hair was lifting around her to frame her sweet face.

He'd never wanted a girlfriend before but the little girl staring back at him from the photo was all he could think about. Reaching for the picture, his hand stilled when he saw something white moving in the reflection behind him. Turning, he went to the window to gaze out at the house next door.

He frowned seeing Kyoko wearing a white nightgown and standing out on her balcony. What was she doing outside at this time of night? Tasuki unlocked his window hoping he could get it raised without the creaking sound waking his father up. He groaned when it stuck about halfway and he had to push harder only for it to then fly up with a loud thud.

Kyoko stepped out onto the small wooden deck that was

connected to her bedroom on the second floor. The cool night air felt good as it rustled around her knee length nightgown and blew her long auburn hair back from her face. Emerald eyes stared up at the stars and her lips formed the kind of smile that only a happy little girl could make.

It was close to midnight and she couldn't sleep. She was too excited. It was almost her birthday and she would be ten years old. All her friends from school were coming to her party, even some of her brother Tama's friends. Tama was a year younger and already so much taller than her, but she wasn't jealous at all. She loved her brother dearly.

Tama had taken up for her the other day while walking home from school. Some of the boys from school had started teasing her, saying she was being raised by a crazy old man who went around telling everyone that demons were real. One of them went as far as to say he'd heard his father telling his mother that it wouldn't be long before the people from the insane asylum would be coming to haul her grandfather off in a straitjacket.

Kyoko had thrown her book bag on the ground and tackled him for lying. He was a bad boy that Yohji!

The bullies hadn't stood a chance when Tama and Tasuki suddenly appeared. Tasuki had jerked her out of the fray and pushed her behind him while Tama grabbed up a big stick and held it like a baseball bat.

Yohji had only laughed feeling brave in front of his friends and accused Tama of being just as much a freak as his sister.

Tama whacked him good across the arm, making Yohji grab his arm and fall to his knees in pain.

When Yohji's big brother moved forward to retaliate, Tasuki didn't hesitate and decked the bigger boy making him crash backwards into his brother. Kyoko thought the fight was over and was glad... but Tama wasn't happy yet.

Her brother had turned on Tasuki and yelled, "I am her protector... me! Not you!"

Kyoko giggled at the memory of the furious look on Tasuki's face. It was that look that had really scared the bullies away. She'd had to step in to break up the fight between her brother and Tasuki before it was all over. They were best friends for heaven's sake, and to see the two of them fighting like that was just wrong.

In the end, they had both agreed to be her protector from then on. They were now calling themselves her guardians... they made a blood pact and everything. At least that's what Tama told her.

Just the thought of guardians surrounding her made Kyoko feel so warm inside that she didn't think anything would ever get her. With Tasuki living in the house right beside them, they could always walk to and from school together and the bullies would leave her alone.

Her smile got even brighter when she vaguely heard the big old clock downstairs chime twelve times. It was after midnight now and that meant she was officially ten years old.

She glanced toward Tasuki's house and smiled when she saw him standing in his bedroom window watching her. She started

to wave, but he suddenly looked behind him and his bedroom light went out just after he disappeared from the curtains.

Kyoko bit her bottom lip wondering if he'd gotten caught by his dad for being up so late. She didn't understand why Tasuki had a bedtime. He was twelve years old and, in her eyes, a big boy. When she grew up, he was going to be her boyfriend... he'd told her so just today.

She looked out at the pond that lay just beyond her grandpa's shrine house and sighed softly when she saw the reflection of the moon on its calm surface. Kyoko tilted her head a little when something from the shrine house caught her attention and she wondered if her grandpa was inside the wooden walls. She could have sworn he was in bed.

Staring hard at the building, she could see a blue glow coming from the inside. She chewed her bottom lip as she leaned over the banister trying to get a better look. The light showing through the cracks in the wood was... like a black light but bluer. Her emerald eyes narrowed when she thought she saw a shadow move across the light making her want to go down and get a better look.

Making a face, Kyoko blew her dark bangs out of her eyes remembering what happened the last time she had dared go near that sacred shrine house. Her grandpa had gone inside of it leaving the door cracked open just a little. All she had done was peek inside and he had flipped his lid.

"I don't see what the big deal is... it's only a statue of a princess," Kyoko whispered the same words she had that day.

Grandpa had responded by slamming the door shut and padlocking it. He had looked so frightened when he'd turned around and told her to never, ever go in there. She'd readily agreed because something that would scare her grandpa like that... she didn't want anything to do with. That had happened a couple months ago though and her curiosity was slowly starting to eat away at her.

Smiling mischievously, Kyoko looked over her shoulder into her bedroom to make sure the coast was still clear before climbing up on the banister rail and daggling her legs over the side of it. If anyone had been awake to see her do this, she would have been in big trouble. But sitting like this was worth the lecture on safety. With everything behind her so she couldn't see it, sitting up here made her feel like she was floating in the night as she looked out over the water.

Her attention turned back to the shrine house when that blue light suddenly got brighter like a star being born. In a blinding flash, the light soundlessly exploded outwards. The door of the shrine house fell off its hinges with a soft thud followed by a big splash.

'A splash?' Kyoko thought to herself.

She jerked her gaze back to the glistening water of the pond seeing the ripples growing into bigger circles where something had just fell in. Without thinking about the dangerous height, she turned around on the banister and slid down one of the metal poles that held the deck up.

As soon as her small feet hit the grass, she took off running thinking grandpa had somehow been blown into the water. Using the small bridge, Kyoko jumped into the water aiming for the center of the ripples. She didn't have time to think about the icy pinpricks of the cold water surrounding her as she kicked her way down into the deepest part of the pond.

She knew it would be too dark to see anything, but she opened her eyes under the murky water anyway. Her grandpa was down here somewhere and she had to help him. Her lips parted in awe when she did see something in the water... something so bright it was almost blinding. Right there in the center of all that light was an angel and he was sinking slowly to the bottom of the pond.

She could feel the icy water rushing into her lungs as she desperately reached out for the glowing hand. He was beautiful and looked like he was sleeping. Wings... he had silver wings. Grabbing a hold of his hand, she pulled as hard as she could but it only made her come closer to him. She tried to cry out for him to wake up but more water rushed in filling her up. It didn't hurt but she felt cold... and she was so very sleepy.

Kyoko felt his fingers tighten around hers and her last thought was that an angel had come to take her to heaven so she could be with her mommy and daddy again.

Toya jerked as consciousness crashed back into him and he opened his eyes. Water? Why was he in water? He felt someone touching his hand and turned his head to see a young girl in the water with him. Her floating hair framed the sweetest face but

her eyes were closed and her heart shaped lips were parted.

Realizing what that meant, Toya pulled her into his arms and shot out of the water so fast it left a waterspout trailing behind them.

Looking down at the small bundle in his arms, his own breathing stopped... she was beautiful and so fragile looking. Folding his wings upward, he descended onto a soft patch of grass and gently laid her down. Placing his hand over her heart, Toya prayed to feel it beating.

His golden eyes widened and his own heartbeat sped up as he felt his guardian power pooling into his palm. Hot tears sprang to his eyes making her image swim within his vision. His golden eyes widened when he felt his guardian powers were reaching for her.

“Kyoko?” Toya could feel her power mingling with his, centering between his palm and her heart and he knew he was right. He had finally found her again, but in this world she was just a child. He raised his eyes to the heavens and pleaded, “You brought me here for a reason... didn’t you? Please tell me it wasn’t to watch her die again. I can’t do it... I won’t.”

When nothing happened, Toya pulled her into his arms and the echo of his forlorn whimper could be heard when she remained limp. He pressed his face into the arc of her neck and pushed his chest tightly against hers wanting her heart to feel his beating.

“Damn it Kyoko, I’m here... feel me.” Toya's nerves shattered

with every passing second until he couldn't take it anymore and screamed, "Please... let me save her this time."

As if on instinct, he turned his tear filled gaze to the small structure only a couple feet away. There... just inside the open doorway was the Maiden Statue. Seeing the glowing gaze of the Heart of Time, Toya felt himself fall from grace as his anger surfaced.

"I don't care if the demons are coming and you can have your damn crystal. Neither one of them matter... she does! I love her. I have always loved only her. Don't you dare take her from me again."

The statue's glowing eyes seemed to regard him for a moment then a soft burst of light shown from them. Without hearing a voice, Toya knew what the Heart of Time was asking. He felt a sense of calm wash his anger away and he pulled his gaze from the statue to look back down at the dying child in his arms.

"If that's what it takes," Toya whispered willing to sacrifice anything if only she would live. Her small body began to glow in sync with his and the soft blue light expanded around them. Lowering his lips to hers, Toya gave her his breath... sealing their fates as her heart kicked back into rhythm.

The water in her lungs evaporated as Kyoko inhaled the warming air and fought her way up from the drowning darkness that clung to her. Warmth, she was surrounded by it. She struggled to open her eyes remembering the angel she was trying to save.

Blinking the water from her dark lashes, she waited on the blinding blue light to die down. When it finally faded, she found herself in the arms of the angel and he was watching her. Feeling her lips tingling, she touched her fingertips to them in wonder.

Toya couldn't take his eyes off her as she opened those emerald green eyes that glowed with warm curiosity and intelligence. He felt his chest constrict painfully when she smiled up at him. He felt the bleeding wound of it all as she innocently reached up and pressed her small fingers against her lips as if she could sense that he'd kissed her.

"What would make an angel cry?" Kyoko asked as she watched tears run trails down his cheeks.

Toya saw her smile start to fade and realized... he was crying. "I'm not," he blinked back the tears and wiped his arm across his cheek. He had to wipe more tears away unable to stop them. "Just promise me you won't go back in the water until you learn how to swim."

He could already feel himself disappearing from this world... but if she lived, he didn't care.

Kyoko rose up in his arms and looked at the pond then back at him. "I forgot I couldn't," she whispered wondering how she could have forgotten such a thing.

Toya could see the glow of the statue over her shoulder and knew his time was running out. The Maiden's hands had begun to glow brighter and in the distance, he could hear the monsters of his world trying to break through the rift. The barrier between

worlds was always the weakest where Kyoko could be found.

Without warning, he reached out and pulled Kyoko into a tight embrace already missing her. Rubbing his cheek against her auburn hair, his voice shook as he whispered, "I have to return to the other side and keep the demons from coming here."

"You sound like Grandpa... he knows all about the demons," Kyoko said pressing her ear against his chest so she could listen to his heartbeat. She slid one of her arms around his back and wondered why she couldn't feel his wings even though she knew they were there.

Glancing back down at her innocence, he cupped her chin and turned those stunning emerald eyes up to his. "Do not fear the demons Kyoko... you have the power to send them out of this world." With that confession, Toya glanced toward the maiden statue. He could feel the demons coming through the Heart of Time at a dangerously rapid pace.

Setting her on the grass, Toya stood up and moved toward the statue, drawing his twin daggers as he went. "And I am not an angel... I am your guardian. My name is Toya."

Still kneeling in the grass, Kyoko leaned forward watching as he entered the shrine house and it lit up in a blue mist. She screamed when a set of arms suddenly reached out of the light and gripped the angel then several more demons emerged around him. As her scream and the angel's roar rang out in the night, the light from the statue started imploding backwards as if being sucked up by a vacuum cleaner

Kyoko could hear the back door of the house slam but she couldn't take her eyes off the angel and demons. Stumbling to her feet, she took off running toward the open doorway of the shrine house. She could hear her grandfather and brother screaming her name but it was Tasuki that was closing in on her.

Just as she reached out to grip the angel's hand, Tasuki's arms went around her, hauling her into the air a second too late. When Kyoko's index finger barely brushed the outstretched hands of the statue, it caused large beams of light to erupt from the exact spot she had touched. To Tasuki, it looked as though a barrel of Fourth of July fireworks had just been set off right in their face.

One of those beams of light hit the left side of Tasuki's chest making the twelve year old wince in surprise. Instead of pain from the impact, he felt the sensation of something rushing in to fill him up... like he'd been missing something all his life and it had finally come home.

His eyes widened when he saw a beautiful ribbon of florescent blue light still connecting the hands of the statue to Kyoko's fingertips as though it were trying to keep them linked together. Tasuki blinked when, for a split second, he saw a beautiful crystal spinning around inside the ribbon. Wanting Kyoko away from it, he stumbled backwards with her held tightly in his arms.

The crystal spun faster and faster until it exploded, sending more shards of light straight up this time and out across the city... looking like a beautiful starburst in the dark night.

Tasuki breathed heavily. When he had snuck back to his

bedroom window, he'd seen the strange man with Kyoko in his arms and panicked seeing that she was limp. He wasn't sure what that man had done to her but he'd felt satisfaction when that light had sucked him up and taken those red eyed demons with him.

"The angel needs our help," Kyoko screamed trying to wiggle loose from Tasuki but he was too strong. Seeing her grandpa step in between her and the statue, she cried out not understanding, "There are demons inside that statue and they're going to hurt him. You fight demons... go help him... please!"

Leaning back against Tasuki, she sobbed when she saw that fearful expression once again cross her grandpa's face, except this time it was much worse. "You can't... help him?"

Grandpa Hogo turned around and looked inside the shrine. The barrier scrolls he'd placed all over the inside of the small structure were still smoldering, now mostly ash. Backing out of the shrine, he glanced at the young boy that was holding his granddaughter and felt chills crawl up his spine. Tasuki's eyes were normally a soft brown... not the angry amethyst he was now using to glare at the statue.

His blood had ran colder than ice when he'd witnessed the connection Kyoko made with the Maiden Statue and Grandpa knew their time had finally run out. The appearance of the crystal was bad enough, but seeing it shatter like that filled him with dread. He also hadn't missed the fact that a piece of the crystal had slammed into young Tasuki's chest.

"The scrolls were right," he whispered hoarsely, wishing it had

been a lie.

Grandpa Hogo lifted his eyes skyward and sent a silent prayer to whatever deity was listening to guide him. He needed to get the children away from here and, more importantly... he needed to get Kyoko away from Tasuki. Without meaning too, that boy would lead the demons right to Kyoko, and the guardians of the crystal would soon follow.

Tasuki flinched when Kyoko was pulled out of his arms. He turned his amethyst gaze on the one that had taken her from him... her grandfather. He really shouldn't be gripping her shoulders like that.

"Tasuki, you shouldn't be out here after dark. If you don't want me waking your father, then I'd advise you to go home. Now," Grandpa Hogo demanded in a harsh voice. He shoved Kyoko into Tama's waiting arms and turned on the two grandchildren that had been left in his care.

Tasuki stared at Kyoko, watching as she buried her face in Tama's chest and continued to cry for the angel that she was sure had been killed by the demons.

"Kyoko, I'll be waiting to walk you to school in the morning," Tasuki stated and sent one last glare at the shrine before heading back toward his own home.

Grandpa Hogo waited until Tasuki crawled back through his bedroom window. He took a deep breath knowing he was going to be in for a severe tongue lashing once his grandchildren understood what they were about to do.

“Pack up kids... we are leaving within the hour,” He instructed.

Present day... PIT Headquarters, the Castle.

Storm leaned back in the chair and stared up at the ceiling, lost in his own thoughts about the guardians. The legend behind the original guardians told of a strange love story that was paradoxical in nature.

He had become curious after finding the strange legend and traced it back to a powerful crystal known as the Guardian Heart Crystal. That alone had been no easy feat seeing as how the legend would be written on paper or carved into a stone one minute and gone the next, leaving no proof that it had ever even existed. It was an enigma even to a Time Walker.

The oldest legend he'd found on the dimensional crystal told the story of guardian twins, two immortals that protected all of the human parallel worlds from overlapping into the demon realm. These two powerful immortals had fallen in love with a human girl that had come through a tear between the dimensions with the help of a crystal her father had created.

The two guardians had fought over her, almost destroying the seal they were supposed to be protecting.

One of the twins had sought to end the dangerous conflict by taking the paradoxical crystal and merging it with the girl's soul along with a statue he'd created of her that was made out of the fabric that separated all dimensions. He thought that by

merging the three, she would appear in every parallel world they protected.

He had intended to then shove his twin brother into one of those parallel worlds and seal it off from the demon world so that they could both have her. Things didn't go as planned though. When the girl, the statue, and the crystal had merged, she'd suddenly disappeared from the demon realm and the rip was once again sealed.

When the other brother found out what his twin had done to separate them from the girl, he'd flown into a jealous rage and killed his brother, shattering both of their souls. Because they were immortal and can never truly die, the souls reformed and five new guardians had stepped forward still feeling the pull of the girl who now existed in all parallel worlds.

He looked up at the ceiling knowing those were the same five guardians that had taken residence on the third floor of the castle.

The riddle was hard for Storm to understand, because not only did the crystal shift space and time... it also shifted dimensions. He'd learned a long time ago to just stay out of things that were beyond a Time Walker's ability to manipulate. With the demons invading LA and his powers already on the fritz, it wasn't the best time for him to be pressing his luck unless he wanted to wind up in a parallel world with no way back to this one.

Nope... the guardians were on their own.

Chapter 2

Tasuki's mood hadn't improved much since returning to the station. All the way here, he could hear other officers over the radio reporting in on demon sightings. It kept reminding him of the first time he had ever seen a demon... the same night Kyoko disappeared.

He touched the place on his side where the light had entered him that night and frowned in remembrance of his fear and disappointment when he found the Hogo family gone the next morning. He'd showed up to walk Kyoko to school like he had promised, only to find the house abandoned.

It was something that had haunted him for a long time and he still hadn't gotten over it. Hell, he still had Kyoko's birthday present. It was a small golden promise ring that his grandmother Mrs. Tully had helped him pick out.

For the last eleven years, he'd been having dreams about Kyoko and demons. Strangely enough, as he'd grown up, so had she in his dreams and the dreams were getting more frequent and disturbing. The thought of her out there somewhere in danger was what kept him up at night.

Sighing, he pushed Kyoko from his mind and watched as four of the five guards from the raided warehouse were taken across the street to the precinct so they could be questioned by Boris and his crew.

The guard that had almost shot Micah was going to be placed in the special interrogation room right here in the detective's department. The room had been set up and reinforced just in case they brought in any type of paranormal... even some low level demons if they had to.

Looking around at the SWAT team, Tasuki almost snorted at the way some of the officers were acting all proud of themselves, puffing out their chests and patting each other's backs for a job well done.

Personally, the only thing Tasuki thought they'd done was save three of the many kidnapped women and capture a few guards that were more muscle than brains. He wasn't going to even consider celebrating unless one of those guards spilled the beans on where Lucca was holding the rest of the captives. He seriously doubted these lackeys knew much outside their own little jobs and their next cigarette.

He leaned against the wall watching as the big van backed up into the side garage of their building. His guess was that it would be Titus overseeing the removal of the she-wolf from the back of the van... Titus being Alpha and all. If it had been up to him, she'd walk into this building on her own two legs... or four... either way it would be her own choice.

As it stood now, her rescuers were keeping her just as much of a prisoner as the slave traders had done.

Tasuki just watched with a heavy glare as Titus got out of the driver's side of the van and slammed the door. The main reason

for the glare was the small crowd of men standing around the back of the van waiting for a glimpse of the so called she-wolf. His attention was taken when Micah came around the other side of the van with the fifth guard... none too gently he might add.

Micah had a firm hold of the guard's jacket collar and was pushing him past the van. Tasuki smiled inwardly seeing that the cougar was getting a small slice of revenge as he forced the struggling man ahead of him. The werewolf's feet were shackled very close together, making it hard for him to take more than a baby step at a time.

"Having fun?" Tasuki asked as Micah approached.

"Not yet," Micah said with a smirk and pulled back hard on the werewolf's collar so that the material of the shirt under the jacket pulled tight around his throat. The man made a strangling sound as he reared backwards. "But getting there."

Tasuki arched an eyebrow at Micah's behavior but had to agree that if someone had put a gun to his head... he'd be acting the same way. The guard saw him and snarled, showing all of his human looking teeth and Tasuki tilted his head wondering why the werewolf would even think that was scary when he was in his human form.

"Yeah, yeah. Roar, snarl, drool to you too asshole," Tasuki shot back in a bored tone of voice.

Micah laughed at Tasuki's courage in the face of a pissed off werewolf. He was starting to think that there was a good chance Tasuki would be the one to walk away from it if a fight broke out.

Something about the rookie always made him look twice and a shifter never ignored gut instinct.

He pushed the guard ahead of him toward the special interrogation room and gave him a kick in the ass for good measure. The guard stumbled forward making his shoulder hit the steel edge of the door jamb. An involuntary yelp escaped the man's lips... sounding distinctly like a kicked puppy instead of a ferocious werewolf.

"Oops," Micah's voice dripped with sarcasm. "Did that hurt? I would be gentler, but I seem to have a problem with people who try to put bullet holes in my brain. So if I seem moody, please... take it personally."

He took additional pleasure by literally throwing the werewolf inside the room. He sighed in contentment when the male crashed into the titanium table that was bolted to the floor in the center of the room.

Walking in behind him, Micah grabbed the werewolf and forced him into the matching titanium chair that looked much like the electrocution chairs they used for executions in the prisons. As soon as the werewolf noticed what kind of chair it was, he seemed to get another burst of energy and attempted to fight. Micah actually enjoyed wrestling the guard's wrists into the bands on the arms of the chair and locking them in place.

"Now, no gnawing off of the limbs until we're done... okay?" Micah instructed ignoring the long stream of curses being flung at him.

Tasuki shook his head at Micah's antics then turned his gaze back toward the van where he could see the edges of the cage through the open doors. Just knowing there was a female inside that cage was disturbing him on many levels but only he understood the full extent of why.

Blocking the memory, he pushed away from the wall when Titus walked toward him empty handed.

"So, what are you going to do?" Tasuki asked quietly. "Put her cage inside of the cell?"

Titus frowned at the sarcastic edge of Tasuki's voice. "I'll open her cage and put her in a cell in a few minutes. Double caging her would be overkill at this point but we need a place for her to stay until we can figure out what will be the safest for her."

"Why not let her stay at Night Light with the rest of the werewolves? At least that way she'd be under supervision," Tasuki offered having thought about it on the way over.

Titus shook his head, "That's a worse idea than putting her in a jail cell."

Tasuki frowned, "I don't get it."

"You see the way they're all gathered around her cage... right?" Titus asked giving the crowd a disapproving gaze.

"Yeah... it's getting on my nerves," Tasuki pointed out.

Titus locked eyes with him feeling a little more respect for the new recruit. "Then maybe we should break up the sightseeing tour."

Micah chose that moment to join them and glared at the

officers, “Yeah, they’re acting like dogs in heat.”

Tasuki cocked an eyebrow at the similarity, “In this case... it’s probably true.”

“More than you know,” Titus offered and turned on the men in question. “All right boys, time to get back to work,” he informed them. “It’s not like you guys haven’t seen a female werewolf before.”

Titus frowned when a couple of them looked like they weren’t going to obey... their sex drive already making them think with the wrong head. He really wasn’t in the mood to flex his Alpha muscles. As far as he was concerned, he was only the temporary Alpha... but Boris seemed to think it was permanent. With Lucca the only other acting Alpha in the city, it looked like temporary role play wasn’t an option.

“Now!” Titus thundered making the men jump and scatter. Once they were gone, he walked up to the cage door and unlocked it in preparation to move the she-wolf into a holding cell where she would be safe.

“Isn’t there an officer not living at Night Light that you can get to watch over her so she isn’t in another cage?” Tasuki asked feeling his skin crawl the closer he got to the cage.

“She needs the steel bars as extra protection from the pack your so gung-ho on exposing her to,” Micah explained. “You see, we’re not keeping her locked away just for the sake of keeping her prisoner. This is for her protection. An unmated female werewolf is a very valuable thing and Titus really doesn’t

want to have to reprimand his pack for thinking with their nether regions... if you get my drift.”

“And to make matters worse... we found empty vials and syringes in the trashcan next to her cage after you’d walked off. The labels on the vials indicate that they were shooting her up with hormones.”

“Hormones?” Tasuki asked feeling like whatever Micah was pointing out went right over his head and kept going.

“They were trying to make her go into heat so they could breed her,” Titus supplied in a cold tone. “Over seventy percent of the wolves on the force are single and most married have human mates. It wouldn’t take much to start a riot. As far as I know... she’s probably the only female werewolf in the city that is of age and doesn’t have a mate. Our breed tends to start fighting over the females long before she becomes of age.”

Tasuki frowned now having a new perspective, “When you put it that way, I actually get it... but it still sucks.”

Micah clapped him on the shoulder, “No harm done... there’s still a lot you don’t know about shifters but you’re a quick learner. Before long, you’ll probably be able to read off our bylaws without batting an eyelash.”

“Great,” Tasuki grumbled, “more laws to learn.”

Titus climbed up and into the cage but when he bent down to take her up in his arms he caught her scent and cursed. The last time he’d been around a shifter in heat, he’d received a face full of fist via a jealous Sun God. If nothing else he was a fast learner.

“Hey Micah, do you still have that scent masker on you?”

He caught it in midair when the small spritzer bottle came sailing toward him. It took him a few minutes to empty the rest of the clear bottle before slipping it into his pocket. Lifting her gently in his arms he made his way out of the cage.

Tasuki couldn't help but admire how beautiful she was as a wolf when Titus brought her out into the light of the building. Her fur was solid black and from the few moments she'd stared at him through the bars at the warehouse, he knew her eyes were a beautiful golden color with flecks of blue and green in them.

“I wonder how old she is,” Tasuki mused quietly, not wanting to wake her even though they'd said the tranquilizer would make her sleep for a while yet.

“Boris thinks she's about twenty years old based on the size of her feet,” Micah answered with a frown. “It looks like she's had a hard time of it in captivity though.”

Taking her into the empty holding cell, Titus gently placed the she-wolf down on the bed. He'd been listening to the conversation between Micah and Tasuki and took a closer look at her.

He had to silently agree about her treatment while in Lucca's care. Her fur, while dark and beautiful, was dirty and matted in some places indicating that she had refused to shift back into her human form for quite a while. The pads of her feet were scratched and rough and a few burn marks from the cattle prod were visible as well.

He knew why she'd refused to shift and admired her stubbornness. If they'd caught her in her human form... that's when they would have raped her. She'd used the only weapon she had against them... the fact that a female werewolf cannot become pregnant in her animal form. It showed not only her strong will but her intelligence as well.

Reining in his temper for the time being, Titus exited the cell and secured the door behind him. When she woke up she'd still be pissed off, but at least this jail cell was a far cry better than that cage they'd had her in.

"Shouldn't we start questioning the guard that we have and see if he knows where they keep other hostages?" Tasuki asked as he started towards the observation room.

Titus was about to answer when one of the officers that missed the raid slipped in through the front door and started back toward the holding cells.

"Where the hell are you going Phillip?" Titus demanded.

The officer, one of the younger werewolves on the squad, froze and smiled sheepishly. "I missed the raid and wanted to see if she'd shifted to her human form yet."

Micah elbowed Tasuki, "See what I mean?"

Tasuki scowled and crossed his arms over his chest, "Unfortunately."

The officer's reason for stopping by raised red flags in Tasuki's mind, causing his anger to come back full force. If the she-wolf shifted back to her human form, she wouldn't have any modesty

left because she'd be naked right now. That fact made it very apparent that Micah's warning about wolf instincts was correct.

"She's a living being just like you are, not some damn peep show," Tasuki growled at the officer before storming into the observation room.

"Kid's got guts, I'll give him that," Micah muttered.

Titus arched an eyebrow at Phillip, "I think you have our answer. Until otherwise stated, everyone is to keep their distance from this department... got it? As a matter of fact, why don't you guard the door and make sure no one else gets the same idea you did."

"What do I tell them?" Phillip was dumb enough to ask then took several quick steps back when Titus started toward him.

"You tell them that I said the first idiot that sticks his head in that door is going to get it blown off," Titus thundered. He glared at Phillip who practically tripped over his own feet as he hastily made his exit.

"Has anyone ever told you that you make one hell of an Alpha?" Micah laughed and patted Titus on the back.

Titus shook his head and added, "We might want to go around locking all of the damn doors and windows just in case we get a couple brave ones. I don't want to get sidetracked once we start in on the idiot chained in the other room."

"We might need to talk about rotating shifts so someone is always here to watch out for her," Micah offered. "But right now, I think Tasuki might go all crazy on our man in there if we don't

follow him.”

Titus arched an eyebrow, “Good point.”

In the observation room, Tasuki gripped the back of the chair and glared at the werewolf on the other side of the two way mirror. He closed his eyes unable to stop the damned memory from coming back to haunt him. It was the last dream he'd had of her... but that had been the last time he had slept.

This time there had been a cage that loomed in the center of a massive cavern and Kyoko was trapped within its bars. But in the dream it had felt like she'd been stolen from him by a monster. He frantically circled the cage looking for the latch that would free her from the monster that had locked her up, but thick iron bars was all he found. He'd promised to save her... but how could he do that if the damned thing didn't even have a door on it?

He'd glanced up and locked eyes with Kyoko just as hands came from the darkness and drug him backwards to his death... he remembered dying.

Tasuki opened his eyes as the memory vanished. No matter how many times he'd had that dream, it always ended the same way... with him dying and Kyoko still trapped in the freakin' cage. He ran his hand through his bangs trying to get a grip. No matter how real the memory of the dreams seemed... they were only in his head and he needed to keep them there.

Looking at the kidnapper in the other room, he decided to take his anger out on the real monsters who had a fetish for locking girls in cages. Why not... he didn't have anything better to do.

Micah followed Titus into the observation room to find Tasuki leaning against a chair glaring at the restrained guard through the two way mirror. If looks could kill then the other man would now be a greasy spot in the chair.

“Can we get an electrical current running through that chair in there and make him dance?” Tasuki asked... only half joking.

“Tempting, but no,” Titus responded. “Phillip’s reason for coming over here did bring up a genuine concern though.”

Tasuki nodded, “You need to get some clothes to put in there with her just in case she does wake up and decides to shift back.” He looked over at the two shifters when neither of them moved. “Maybe the female officer that was in on the raid has a change of clothes in her locker. Want me to go check?”

“No, she’s going to have her hands full getting the other girls checked out by a doctor,” Micah informed him then rubbed his chin when a solution to both of his problems dawned on him. “But I’ve got an idea.”

“That’s a first,” Titus said then smirked when Micah elbowed him.

“Ha, ha,” Micah growled. “As I was saying... let me call Alicia and have her bring over some clothes.”

“Who’s Alicia?” Tasuki asked.

“Micah’s kid sister,” Titus informed him. “He’s been a little moody since she got herself mated to a Sun God recently.”

“A Sun God?” Tasuki asked with a confused expression. That was a new one on him, though he didn’t know why he bothered

being surprised. You'd think he'd be immune by now.

“Stop letting everyone know what I had for breakfast,” Micah grumbled and took out his cell phone. As he dialed the number he sighed knowing that Titus was right. He'd definitely been in a funk lately because he missed his sister and Damon was being an ass keeping her hidden for days at a time. This just so happened to be a great excuse to get to see her and find out if she was still happy with Mr. Possessive.

“You'd have Alicia come clear across town just to bring us a set of clothes?” Titus cocked an eyebrow. “Desperate much?”

“What the hell is a Sun God?” Tasuki really wanted to know so he could add it to his growing list of things to put on his mental Wall of Weird.

Micah had been about to hit send on his phone when Titus had questioned his motives. Thinking quickly, he immediately came up with an even better excuse.

“Actually, I think we can kill two birds with one stone,” Micah smirked. “Alicia told me that Damon has been teaching her how to put people under her thrall.”

He pointed to the man on the other side of the mirror. “We could probably beat the hell out of that worthless lamebrain and not get as much out of him as Alicia could with a couple simple questions. Plus, he'd have to tell her the truth where with us... we have no way of knowing if he's feeding us a line of bull to keep his ass out of hot water with Lucca.”

“It's okay,” Tasuki sighed accepting the fact that he was being

completely ignored. “I’m sure that I’ll figure it out eventually.”

Chapter 3

Alicia had just finished making herself a cup of coffee when her cell phone started ringing. Rushing toward her purse, she grabbed the device taking a quick glance at the caller ID. She put it to her ear with a bright smile.

“Hey Micah, what’s up?”

“Do you have some time to spare for your big brother?” Micah asked turning his back on the other two men in the room so they couldn’t see the relieved expression on his face. He’d half expected Damon to answer her phone.

Alicia shrugged, “Yeah, I guess so. Damon went out with Michael and Kane. He probably won’t be back for a while yet.”

“Good, because I really need a favor,” Micah began. “We’ve got a she-wolf in one of the holding cells here that we just rescued from a raid on the underground slave trading. She hasn’t shifted back yet, but when she does... she’s going to need a change of clothing. Do you think you can bring something down to the station for her?”

Alicia looked over at her huge closet full of clothes before nodding, “Yeah, I think I can dig up something. When do you want me there?”

“As soon as you can get ready,” Micah answered. “We don’t know when she’ll wake up from the tranquilizer.”

“I’ll be there,” Alicia said. “Anything else you need?”

“I’m so glad you asked that,” Micah said letting Alicia hear the smile in his voice. “I need you to put another wolf under your thrall and get him to answer a few questions for us. Do you think you can do it?”

“Yes,” Alicia answered a little too quickly. “Give me some time to get dressed and grab a few things for the poor girl and I’ll be down.”

She hung up the phone and a wide grin spread across her face as she rushed around getting dressed. It was nice to have something to do while Damon was away. At least now she felt useful and, with any luck, she might be able to prove to Damon that she really could do things on her own.

Throwing on her favorite pair of jeans and one of Damon’s black button-up shirts, she got out a black leather duffle bag and removed two set of clothes from the closet. One set in case she liked soft frilly things and another set that would make her feel tough and in control. Why not give the girl a choice between dressy or badass. Besides, Damon had stocked over half of her closet with bad girl outfits so she would match the bad boy act he had going on.

Once the clothes were packed, she went through some of the new undergarments she hadn’t worn yet and something for the girl to sleep in before putting them in the bag as well. She figured after being held prisoner, any girl would appreciate the little things like clean underwear, toothbrush, and maybe a little makeup.

As an afterthought, she took one last look around the room to make sure she hadn't missed anything. Spotting her collection of hair things, she grabbed up a comb and brush along with a few hair ties so the girl could put her hair up if she wanted to.

Alicia smiled as she put the strap of the bag over her shoulder and headed toward the bedroom door. It felt good to know that she was going to be seeing Micah again even though it had only been a few days. She missed him.

The fact that he'd called for her help specifically was exciting enough. Putting someone under her thrall for legit reasons, and the fact that her target was a werewolf and not just some human would mean a challenge for her.

Humans were far easier to place under a thrall because they had no real immunity to it unless the human was psychic or wore a charm like her necklace. Damon had told her that shifters were harder to penetrate because all of their five senses were higher. Unfortunately, she hadn't had much of an opportunity to even test it out on humans with Damon barely letting her out of the bedroom.

Alicia squared her shoulders. This was a prime opportunity for her to get some real practice in without the sexual distractions. Just as she walked out of her and Damon's bedroom, Kane stormed in the front door muttering under his breath.

"Is something wrong?" Alicia asked.

Kane didn't appear to hear her and continued muttering about a woman named Olivia. Suddenly he froze and cursed loudly.

“Damn it!” Kane shouted. “Not Olivia... Victoria.”

Michael and Damon walked in at that very moment, both snickering at Kane’s antics.

Alicia almost groaned at Damon’s timing. While she was happy to see him back safe and sound, she’d hoped to have time to go to the police department and be back before he returned.

“So, you’re the man who remembers the name of every woman he’s ever been with,” Damon drawled.

“I do remember them,” Kane growled.

“Then who’s Olivia?” Michael asked.

“Go to hell!” Kane muttered before heading toward his bedroom.

“Guess that’s the answer to that question,” Michael stated and headed toward the stairwell but paused seeing Alicia standing near her bedroom door looking a lot like she’d just got caught with her hand in the cookie jar.

Kane shut the bedroom door behind him and saw Tabatha standing there with her arms crossed over her chest.

“So, who’s Olivia and Victoria?” she asked.

“Damon and Michael’s ex-girlfriends,” Kane answered with no hesitation and sealed his lips over hers.

In the main room, Damon’s gaze was instantly drawn to Alicia and he almost smiled when he saw her wearing one of his shirts. However, the way she was biting her bottom lip made him frown and he slowly looked her over. His eyes narrowed dangerously when he saw the overnight bag that she hadn't zipped hanging

from her shoulder.

Alicia blinked when Damon suddenly appeared less than a foot in front of her, blocking her path by putting a palm on either side of the doorframe... effectively trapping her against the wooden surface. He leaned forward and studied her without saying a word but she'd be damned if that look in his eyes wasn't speaking volumes.

She felt herself becoming a little nervous and tried to hide it by smiling, "I'm glad you're back."

"Are you?" Damon asked unable to keep his dark side from raising its head. "If I had been a few minutes later... would you still be here waiting for me?"

Alicia couldn't resist the self-preservation instinct and raised her hand to touch the necklace that was no longer around her neck. She suddenly remembered she'd given it to Nick and inwardly cringed when she noticed Damon's eyes had followed her nervous movement then flashed back up to pin her with a darkening amethyst gaze.

At this point, Alicia knew lying was liable to set him off and with that came the risk of many things... including a repeat of a spanking. Feeling the hot blush rise to her cheeks at the visual, she lifted her chin in defiance and calmly told him the truth.

"No."

She sighed when Damon turned the doorknob and backed her into the bedroom. She flinched when he slammed the door behind him. The split second glance at the expression on

Michael's face before it was blocked was definitely enough to make her worry.

"Where were you going?" Damon asked making sure to put the question in past tense.

"I was just going to go see Micah," Alicia said in an attempt to correct the misunderstanding before she found herself face down across his lap again.

"Did you think you were going to spend the night with Micah?" Damon demanded softly.

A confused look crossed Alicia's face before she jerked her gaze down to the open overnight bag. She saw the pretty black underwear and hairbrush lying on top in plain sight and sighed. Okay... she could actually see Damon's point of view but that wasn't going to stop her from giving him a tongue lashing for his perverted thoughts.

"He needs me," Alicia wanted to growl when he immediately cut her off.

"I just bet he does." Damon took a quick step closer, towering over her smaller frame. What Micah really needed was a priest to reside over his funeral.

"You know what?" Alicia said slowly as she lifted her eyes to meet his head on. "You're... an idiot."

"If stopping you from leaving me makes me an idiot... then so be it," Damon countered.

"No, you're an idiot for thinking I was leaving you," Alicia snapped feeling her own anger grow at the fact he was still

jumping to conclusions. “The clothes... are not... for me... Damon,” she said through gritted teeth.

“Oh yeah, well let’s go see how they look on Micah,” Damon threatened, already visualizing himself strangling Micah with Alicia’s lacy black panties.

Alicia wanted to growl in annoyance but refrained because there was glass in the room. Actually, she was proud of Damon for not shattering all of it already. She flinched when the vanity mirror beside her cracked... Murphy’s Law at its best.

“Damn it Damon, stop being so stupid!” Alicia hissed stepping even closer to him and grabbing the front of his shirt to pull his face down to hers. She’d learned how to intimidate from the best teacher in the world... him. “Micah and his detective team rescued a female werewolf from slave traders tonight. I was taking the clothes to her so she’d have something to put on when she shifted back. I was about to go meet them at the police station because I’m a big girl Damon and would have been just fine.”

“Oh, you think so do you?” Damon demanded knowing she’d completely forgotten the fact that this city was full of demons.

“I know so. You just finished helping your brother... now it’s time for me to help mine. And since when is it illegal for me to help my family when they ask for it?” Alicia raised an eyebrow daring him to tell her no.

“Then you don’t have a problem with me going with you ... right?” Damon growled not liking the image of her standing there clutching the makeshift suitcase like a little runaway.

Alicia smirked, “Fine, and when I prove your first theory wrong... you have to let me handcuff you to the bed.”

“This isn’t a negotiation,” Damon stated crossing his arms over his chest.

“No, you’re right... it’s a bet,” Alicia shot back with an arrogant expression on her face. “And if you follow me out that door... then you are agreeing to the deal.” With that said, she raised her chin a notch higher as she moved around Damon and out the door.

Damon's lips thinned and his eyes darted over to the mirror when a few more cracks appeared across its surface. He calmed his anger, glad he’d misunderstood what she was doing. Besides, he had to admit letting Alicia handcuff him to the bed was a rather interesting prospect.

Michael couldn’t stand the confines of four walls and headed up to the roof once Alicia and Damon disappeared back into their room. He smirked at the door that no longer shut correctly and knew they’d have to fix that before long. The early evening promised to be a cool one and he closed his eyes in bliss as the breeze swept over him.

The sound of the front door opening made him walk to the edge of the roof and look down. He watched as Damon and Alicia emerged from the building with Alicia almost stalking across the parking lot. He felt a smile tug at his lips when Damon actually had to catch up with her in order to reach for her hand.

He may not have thought so at first but he could admit it

now... Alicia was the perfect girl for his brother. She knew how to handle his temper and still get what she wanted.

He cocked an eyebrow when Damon swung her around for a kiss. The couple took a moment to reacquaint themselves before Damon glanced up at him and arched an eyebrow of his own. Michael tilted his head to the side and shrugged, resisting the urge to call down to them. As if sensing what was going on in Michael's head, Damon hugged Alicia closer to him and pulled her into the shadows.

Michael shook his head and allowed a smirk to cross his face before turning around with thoughts of going back inside. He paused in mid-step when he felt Tabatha and Kane's passion rising up from inside the building.

"So much for that," he muttered and turned his attention toward the tall buildings around the renovated club.

He rolled his shoulders and neck, suddenly feeling a surge of pent up energy building inside of him. His mind turned to Aurora and the urgent passion they had shared when their paths collided. She was like a force of nature making him harden with just one glance. He closed his eyes, envisioning his teeth sinking into her as they came together... feeding her as he took her blood.

The sweet flavor still lingered on his lips and he wet them with his tongue as the craving for another taste began to overwhelm him. He wanted... no, he needed to be deep inside her as he tasted her blood again.

Michael's eyes snapped open recognizing addiction when he

saw it. Shaking his head, he decided that what he really needed was to work off some of this energy coursing through him from the Fallen blood he'd taken from Aurora. Would the rush ever completely go away or was he damned to forever crave the high of his first taste?

Stepping off the edge of the roof, he traced out into the city in search of something... anything to take his mind off of the temptation. He had fought to give Aurora the freedom she wanted from Samuel and he would not take Samuel's place as her master.

He remembered the way she was holding hands with the one she had called her brother... the beautiful one called Skye. It was a gentle grip of hands... soft and childish, not the passion she had shown him. He would readily allow her the love of her brother and he would keep busy while he waited on her to come back to him.

As he moved through the streets, Michael began to sense more and more demons... the ones that came out late in the day and preyed on the poor souls that ventured out into the darkness. The urge to fight swept over him and he smiled knowing that he could help rid the world of a few demons and maybe work off some of the buzz he had. He'd found his distraction.

His direction led him into the Slums and his sharp gaze darted from person to person, looking for the perfect victim much like the soulless vampires hunted their preference of human... his target lived more on the dark side. He passed up a few low level

demons that were huddled together on a street corner. By all appearances, they looked like a normal street gang and Michael eyed them as he walked by.

Before his approach they'd been loud and rambunctious, but as he closed the distance they fell silent. One corner of his lips pulled up into something of a smirk as though he was silently telling them that he knew exactly what they were. He didn't bother to turn back when he heard the sound of footsteps behind him rapidly vanishing into the distance. Maybe the low level demons were smarter than he gave them credit for.

Reaching the next intersection, Michael looked around at the buildings and dirty streets still searching. He was about to venture further when he felt a spike in power... pure, sweet, and dangerous power. His eyes narrowed when the very smell of it drifted through his senses and a dizzying sensation filled his head. It wasn't a large power but strong enough to make him want to smother it.

The sound of a bell jingling made him turn his head and his amethyst gaze lingered on the woman that stepped out of the rundown liquor store across the street. She was wearing a leather tube top and a short, see-through lace miniskirt with fishnet stockings and a pair of black stiletto heels. Her hair was a myriad of colors ranging from neon green and pink to purple, black, and blonde.

She slid a bottle of liquor out of the bag she was holding and unscrewed the cap. Tilting the bottle back, she drank down about

half of it in one breath and then wiped her mouth with the back of her hand. While she looked completely human on the outside, he could see the true face of the demon underneath.

Michael mentally and physically relaxed his body. Most demons he'd encountered in the past were clueless to what he really was... the closest they ever came was to mistakenly think he was a vampire. Feeling the false calm wash over him, he stepped off the sidewalk.

The demon turned her head toward him and smiled using the flesh it had stolen to entice her victim. Michael knew demons had been known to feed off vampires in the past... even Misery had used them in such a way.

“Good evening gorgeous,” the demon purred batting long eyelashes.

Michael stepped up to her and brushed his left shoulder with her left shoulder, walking around her while keeping the brushing contact with her body.

“Yes it is,” Michael whispered playing the game. “And who are you?”

“Anybody you want me to be,” She whispered back.

“I want you to be you,” Michael said in her ear as he came around to stand in front of her. He let a slow smile part his lips showing the fangs that always confused him and his brothers for vampires.

The demon tilted her head to the side and smiled back, “I see.” Michael nodded as he relaxed his smile, “Of course you do.”

“You can call me Morgana,” She wrapped her hands around one of his arms and the two began walking toward an old one story building at the end of the block.

They stepped into the building and Morgana closed the door behind them. Michael looked around the open space and took in the number of dead bodies lying around. The place reeked of old blood and decay... a fitting place for the flesh eating demon clutching his elbow.

“Do you like my place?” Morgana whispered then giggled as she turned away to appraise her handiwork.

Michael shrugged, “It will look better once your lifeless body is lying among them.”

He ducked just in time to miss Morgana’s suddenly long claws trying to separate his head from the rest of his body. Twisting his upper body, Michael rammed his elbow into her midsection making her double over. His fist came up, cracking her across the nose hard enough to send her flying back.

Morgana landed hard on the floor and glared up at the vampire, her face twisting into a grotesque mask showing her true colors. Her hazel eyes elongated and turned red while her eyebrows slanted and her once fairly pretty mouth stretched into a horrid smile full of mismatched jagged teeth. Her long tongue slithered out and licked her lips of the blood that dripped from her flat nose.

Michael made a face... she was sickening. He would definitely be doing the city a favor by getting rid of this one. Such ugliness

completely ruined the scenery.

Climbing backwards up the wall, she used it as a rebounding board to come at him again, swiping her elongated claws in front of her. This time they caught the front of his shirt and left a few scratches... not dangerous but enough to make them bleed. He closed his right fist and backhanded the demon across the face, making her head whip around at an unnatural angle. With a swift kick to the side of the knee, he heard the bones shatter. He felt no remorse knowing the demon was already wearing a corpse.

When she went down a second time, Michael slowly approached and grabbed Morgana by her hair. Lifting her off the floor, he paused for half a second and briefly closed his eyes when the scent of the demon's blood finally hit him.

"Demons are nothing but monstrous hybrids cast out by the Fallen that sired you," Michael hissed, suddenly getting a better understanding of what a demon really was. He had never noticed the faint traces of Fallen blood within the demons before... but now he knew what they tasted like.

The Fallen and the Sun Gods were similar in this manner... creating monsters of their choosing. The only difference was in the way they sired them.

Morgana reached back for the arm holding her hair and sank her right claws into the flesh she found. She gasped when she suddenly found herself hovering above the floor and staring down into angry amethyst eyes. The cheap stilettos fell to the ground below and she wrapped her other hand around the back of his

neck hoping to sever his spinal cord and free herself.

Feeling that amethyst gaze penetrate her, she couldn't stop herself from going limp... now hanging from only her hair.

“Let me go,” Morgana whispered suddenly afraid. She was strong, one of the strongest in this part of the Slums, but this vampire she'd thought was an easy kill was by far stronger than anything she'd ever encountered.

“Let you go?” Michael asked as though the concept were foreign to him. “You killed all of these humans and demons for food based on their appearances and you want me to let you go?”

“I'll give you all the human blood you want,” Morgana half whimpered half hissed. “I'll be your servant... I'll lure them in and bring them to you.”

“I do not need help in catching my next meal,” Michael said sardonically. His voice abruptly softened, “but my dear... I'm willing to bet demons taste better than humans.”

Morgana gasped when a sudden excruciating pain erupted from her shoulder and the feel of the vampire pulling the life out of her made her emit an inhuman wail. Her struggles renewed and she clawed at him with zeal but the true darkness was beginning to climb around the edges of her vision.

“Who are you?” she whispered with her last breath.

Michael held on and drew in the last drop of Morgana's life force before dropping her. He smirked when he heard the dull thump of her corpse. Who knew he could kill a demon by draining them... he bet even the demons didn't know that little

trick since the soulless vampires only craved human blood.

He gazed down at the shriveled demon in disgust, “You can call me Michael.”

He landed lightly on the floor and stepped toward the door. Using his sleeves, he wiped at the remnants of blood on his lips then stared down at the black blood... tainted blood. Opening the door, he stepped out onto the sidewalk and arranged his jacket so the rips in his shirt wouldn't be noticed.

Michael then turned and started back the way he came, noticing that a large group of demons had now gathered near the entrance of the building. They must have been Morgana's underlings coming to gaze upon the man that had killed their master. These creatures showed no sign of human life and Michael paid them no heed as he calmly walked past them.

He'd done what he set out to do and no other creatures here could hold his attention... their low-level power wasn't worth his time. The more power a demon had the more they would taste of Fallen blood... he was sure of it.

The rush Morgana's blood had given him was now pulsing through his veins in a warm and fuzzy thrum. It heated him and heightened his senses... this he remembered from the times he'd drank from Aurora.

Michael froze as he fully realized his train of thought. Panic immediately joined the high he was on and the thought of Aurora made a mass of fear settle in his belly accompanied by a bone deep chill. He remembered Kane's warning on the roof top after

killing Samuel. He'd pointed out to Aurora the dangers of letting him taste her blood.

Looking for a reason, he latched on to the memory of Samuel taunting Aurora by telling her about the demons loose in the city that were strong enough to easily kill a Fallen... demons that already held a Fallen body count. These demon masters were a danger to Aurora... Samuel hadn't lied about that.

A slow smile caressed Michael's lips. He now had a valid reason to feed off the demons that had been released into Los Angeles. Not only would he be protecting Aurora, he could also fulfill his craving with the diluted blood of a hybrid. By taking such small amounts he could keep better control over the unwanted side effects like earthquakes and death by Syn.

"A win-win scenario," Michael mused and buried his hands in his pockets as he enjoyed his high and searched for his next victim.

Chapter 4

Micah sighed for the hundredth time since calling Alicia. So far Tasuki had gone to check on the she-wolf six times, Titus had run off three more officers when Phillip started having trouble keeping them out, and the captive guard had started gnawing on his wrist in an attempt to get out of the chair.

Of course it wasn't exactly the guard's fault he was suddenly desperate to escape. They had gotten bored and started taunting him on the intercom about the things Lucca would do to him when the mob found out he was a snitch.

"This is not how I wanted to spend my day," Tasuki complained.

"I hear that," Micah muttered wishing Alicia would hurry. She'd said Damon wasn't with her and that made him want to see her even more.

Tasuki glanced over at Micah, "I'm curious, how many cougars and jaguars are in this city?"

"A few hundred at least," Micah answered. "But not all of them hang around with the pack. Some of them are satisfied with their mates and try to live a normal human life. I even know of several who try to act completely human... to the point that their mate doesn't even know they are shifters."

"Don't you guys get urges or something like that?" Tasuki asked with a shrug.

Micah smiled, “Yeah, it’s one of the very few things Hollywood got right. At least once every few months, we need to get out of the city and run wild. All that the shifters that are pretending to be human have to do is say that they are going rock climbing for the weekend or something like that. We can survive just fine on regular food and a regular life, but if we don’t follow our instinct to shift and run once in a while, we tend to get a little snappy... or worse.”

Tasuki grinned, “I take it that it’s been quite a while since you went for a run on the wild side.”

Micah’s retort died on his lips when the main door opened and he heard two people walk in to the building. He went over to the observation room door and cracked it open to see. Some of his excitement faded seeing that Damon had decided to tag along.

“Don’t get your hopes up on a Sun God being awe inspiring... you’re about to meet one,” Micah said with a touch of sarcasm. “I’m still under the illusion it’s just another name for Dickhead.”

Tasuki cocked an eyebrow, “Is it smart to call someone with the sub-title God a dickhead?”

“If the shoe fits,” Micah shrugged.

Damon smirked wondering how long the uniformed cop outside the door would continue to stand on one leg. That’s what the punk gets for telling Alicia she couldn’t enter. Seeing Titus striding toward them, he silently wondered what an Alpha werewolf would look like walking around on his hands issuing orders to his pack. Damon sighed deciding he was already bored.

“Alicia, glad you could make it,” Titus said then gave Damon a weary nod of acknowledgement. He had to keep himself from rubbing his chin in remembrance of the force Damon had put behind that punch on their first meeting. Turning his attention back to Alicia, he noted the black leather duffle bag she was carrying. “Is that the stuff you brought for her?”

Alicia nodded and handed him the duffle bag, “Yeah, I even packed a brush and a little bit of makeup for her just in case.”

Titus smiled, “I’m sure anything at this point will be appreciated. I put her in the only cell we have that has a built in shower. She’s not a prisoner, but when we rescued her she was showing signs of being feral so we had to tranquilize her.” he said skipping the speech about her being in heat. “Hopefully, finding this stuff when she wakes up will calm her down. Let me take this back to her and then we’ll get started.”

The muscles in Damon’s jaw jumped as he gritted his teeth. He looked down at the top of Alicia’s head wondering just what Titus had meant by ‘we’ll get started’.

Alicia bit her lip remembering she’d never told Damon about the other reason she’d agreed to come. Wanting to stall Titus she quickly asked, “Can I see her?”

Titus shrugged, “I don’t see why not.”

He led Alicia and her imposing mate through the doorway leading back to the holding cells. When they approached the cell, Titus quickly took out the keys and unlocked the door. Placing the bag on the floor next to the bed, he carefully backed out.

“She’s lovely,” Alicia whispered feeling sorry for her. “It looks like she’s been in her wolf form for weeks... that’s dangerous isn’t it?”

“Yeah, I’m hoping she’ll feel safe enough to shift back when she awakens,” Titus said.

“She’s barely out of her teenage years.” Damon observed slipping his arm around Alicia when he felt her sadness.

“Boris guessed around twenty,” Titus responded.

“Poor girl,” Alicia said under her breath and was suddenly looking forward to putting that man under her thrall. If he was responsible for this... her eyes narrowed a fraction trying to think of a punishment to fit the crime.

Micah timed it perfectly and came out of the observation room just as they arrived near it. He even let his eyes widen with surprise as if he hadn't known she'd showed up several minutes ago.

“There’s my elusive sister,” he said playfully and was rewarded with a tight hug. She hurriedly released him much to Micah’s disappointment but he figured Damon would get jealous if they held on to each other too long.

“How are you?” Micah asked while brushing her blonde bangs out of her eyes.

“Doing good,” Alicia answered then gave Damon a sly look hoping to put him in a better mood before they dropped the f-bomb by blurting out the other reason she’d come to the station. “Sorry about the disappearing act but my mate tends to keep me

a willing prisoner for days on end.”

Damon smirked at Alicia’s choice of words then looked over Micah’s shoulder when he noticed another man come out of the same room Micah had been in. A slight frown crossed his features at the man’s strange aura. While he couldn’t read souls like the Fallen, he could usually see the aura around people if he tried. He didn’t have to strain to see this guy’s aura... he was glowing a florescent blue from the inside.

“This is Tasuki, one of our human detectives,” Micah introduced. “Trevor accidentally found out Tasuki here knew about the existence of the paranormal, so he got stuck with us.”

Human? Damon smirked at their ignorance. That man was so much more than mere human.

“You must be Alicia,” Tasuki said with a disarming smile and then extended his hand toward Damon after hearing about Damon’s temperament from Micah’s rants. “It’s a pleasure to meet both of you.”

Damon stared at the hand for a moment and finally took it. This man was no threat to Alicia so he would let him pass.

“So where’s the werewolf you want me to enthrall?” Alicia asked. “I take it he’s one of the SOB’s who kidnapped the girl?”

Damon again looked down at the top of his mate’s head and glared. “You said nothing about putting a werewolf under your thrall.”

“You didn’t exactly give me a chance,” Alicia accused. “And you owe me by the way.”

“I didn’t accept the bet,” Damon said with a devious smirk.

“That’s too bad,” Alicia said sympathetically and almost laughed when she saw Damon’s eyes narrow on her. She returned her attention to the matter at hand before Damon thought of a way to stop her. “I’ll have this creep singing like a jailbird if you’ll just lead the way.”

Tasuki moved aside and gestured toward the observation room. “Your target is right in there.”

Alicia stepped into the small room with Damon and Micah right behind her.

Tasuki sent a knowing grin toward Titus at their protective behavior before joining them inside the room.

Titus merely smirked and shook his head. Those two would probably never change but at least it was entertaining to watch.

The five of them looked through the two way mirror at the werewolf in the interrogation room on the other side of the glass. The damned idiot was still trying to fight his way out of that chair. Both of his wrists were in the titanium restraints and his ankles were manacled to the chair legs. At the moment, he had loosened the chair from its floor bolts and was now rocking back and forth trying to tip the chair over.

“Five bucks says he’ll fall over and hit his head,” Tasuki said out of the blue.

Damon smirked at the ‘human’s’ attempt at humor.

“Ten bucks says he’ll just fall over and try kicking his way toward the door,” Micah challenged and the two men settled in

to watch.

Damon's smirk widened and he decided to... help out a little. When the wolf tipped his chair again, it fell over and the man hit his head on the floor... hard enough to knock himself out.

Tasuki snorted and held out his hand for the money Micah now owed him.

"Yeah, yeah, you got lucky rookie," Micah said good naturally as he flipped his wallet open and plucked a ten.

"Nice doing business with you," Tasuki said and pocketed the bill. "Want to bet on how long he stays out?"

Alicia had been calmly watching the werewolf. She thought she'd at least be a little nervous but amazingly the emotion never came. Feeling brave, she took a deep breath knowing Damon wasn't going to like what she had to say.

"Let me have a few minutes alone with him," Alicia said.

"I don't think so," Damon growled not at all amused.

Alicia pouted up at him, "How do you expect me to learn anything if you're always there to help me?"

"I'll always be there to help you," Damon corrected.

"Oh really," Alicia put her hands on her hips deciding that batting her eyelashes wasn't going to get her what she wanted so she again tried the truth. "What if we somehow become separated and I'm left to face something dangerous... alone?"

"You will not go into that room by yourself," Damon insisted and crossed his arms over his chest.

"You know, it would be nice to be trusted enough to do

something on my own for once instead of having a damn nursemaid.” She turned her back on him. “You’re worse than my brothers.”

Damon narrowed his eyes at Alicia’s back while Micah looked at her with a hurt expression.

“Couldn’t you go in with her and let her at least try it alone before you attempt to help?” Micah asked, for once trying to make peace with Damon.

Alicia looked over her shoulder at Damon liking Micah’s compromise.

“We really need every ounce of information we can get from him. I know for a fact that the girls we rescued tonight aren’t the only girls needing our help,” Titus offered as an incentive. “This guy might know where more are hidden.”

Damon inwardly sighed as he watched a stricken look cross Alicia’s face. He was getting too soft. “Very well Alicia, we will both enter that room but the werewolf is all yours.”

Alicia’s expression changed and she smiled up at Damon before sliding her arms around him in a soft grateful hug. Some people might not understand Damon but she did... and she loved every single inch of him.

Tasuki led the couple into the interrogation room and shut the door behind them. He quickly returned to Micah and Titus so he could watch. Micah pulled a chair around and straddled it, crossing his arms over the back of it. Titus leaned against the wall next to the two way mirror while Tasuki made himself

comfortable on the other side.

“What’s she going to do exactly?” Tasuki asked as he watched Damon reach down and right the man’s chair even though he was still out cold.

“You know how vampires will hypnotize people in the movies and make them do stuff they normally wouldn’t do?” Micah asked.

Tasuki shrugged, “Well, yeah... but I figured since she was a shifter like you, it wouldn’t apply and I’ve kind of given up on the movies being anywhere near accurate.”

“Ordinarily, a shifter would not have that kind of ability,” Titus agreed then added, “But Alicia is a special case. Being mated to a Sun God does have its advantages.”

Tasuki sighed heavily, “When are you going to tell me what a Sun God is?”

“When we find out,” Micah answered as if that solved world hunger.

The werewolf opened his eyes and suddenly lurched forward in his chair toward Alicia, snarling and growling. “Just my luck... they send in a damn pussy cat.”

The emphasis on Alicia’s feline heritage caused Damon to react and, before anyone could blink, he was standing less than a foot away from the werewolf with a hand gripping the man’s neck. Much to everyone’s shock, Alicia was standing between the two of them with a scowl on her face directed at Damon.

“You promised,” Alicia hissed. “And if I’m right... the hardest

thing to put under a thrall would be a dead person.”

Releasing his neck, Damon glared at the werewolf and his amethyst eyes darkened.

The werewolf swallowed when his chair started shaking and the table strained against the bolts that were holding it to the floor. One of the bolts popped loose from the floor sounding almost like a gunshot in the dead silence.

“Damon!” Alicia shouted.

“Just making sure he gets the point,” Damon said and went to lean against the wall on the other side of the table.

“If he didn’t get the point... I did,” Tasuki whispered even though the intercom was turned off at the moment.

Alicia approached the other chair at the table and sat down to stare at the werewolf who was now brooding.

“What the hell do you want?” the wolf asked coming to the conclusion that he was going to die whether he talked or not. “Do they think by sending a pretty girl in here that’ll make me talk?” He leaned toward her a little bit, “Ain’t nothin’ you can do that’d make me turn on Lucca. I got news for you Sweetheart. I got a freakin’ harem waiting for me out there.”

Alicia gave him a small smile and leaned closer, “I’m sure you do, but before you leave you really want to answer my questions. I’m looking for a girlfriend of mine... she’s missing and I was wondering if you’d seen her.”

“I’ve seen more than my fair share of women,” he said with a conceited smirk, not realizing he was already obeying. “But ain’t

had any cougars under my tender care for a while now.”

“She’s not a cougar,” Alicia said and tilted her head to the side, feeling giddy when the wolf’s head mimicked her movement. She showed no outward surprise when she suddenly got a strange visual of another girl and realized it was his thoughts she was seeing... not hers.

Pulling on the few flashes of memory she found within his mind’s eye, Alicia decided to use them to her advantage. “My friend is human, reddish-blond hair, green eyes, and has the tattoo of hands holding a crystal ball across her lower back.”

The guard frowned in displeasure, “Yeah... we had that hot little number a couple weeks ago. Lucca took her for himself. He always takes the good ones.”

Alicia tilted her head the other way and he followed. “Where is Lucca?” she asked gently.

“Don’t know,” the wolf answered groggily. “He’s smart that one... doesn’t tell everyone everything... ya know? He’s got so many of us working for him in different areas... no one knows where the other areas are. That way if we get busted we can’t sell out everyone else.”

Alicia’s eyes widened allowing her pupils to enlarge and pulled the werewolf even further into her control. His answers were tempting her anger but she held it in check.

“Where do you find most of the girls you kidnap?” she inquired.

“Sometimes in the dance clubs or the bad part of town where

the homeless are easy prey... no one cares enough to report them missing”

“The Slums,” Micah mused. “That actually makes sense.”

“Why’s that?” Titus asked.

“Alicia got into some trouble in that area a while back,” Micah answered remembering the two werewolves she’d drained in an ally. He shoved the memory away. “It’s not a nice area... a lot of drug activity and prostitution. There’s also a lot of demon activity down there too.”

“And my friend? Where did you find her?” Alicia asked since the man’s vision of the girl’s clothing had looked more like a rich girl’s party dress.

“Her and that she-wolf were dancing together at Night Light over a month ago. Parker slipped a drug into their drink and they didn’t know what hit them.”

Micah’s chair fell over he came out of it so fast. “They’ve had her in a cage like that for a month,” he thundered pissed beyond reason that girls had been kidnapped from his bar. “I suspected as much. That’s why I confronted Anthony about it.”

Titus held his hand up at Micah and pressed the button on the intercom, “Alicia, is there any way you can brainwash this guy?”

“There are many things I could do to him right now,” she said not looking away from the werewolf prisoner.

“He might be of good use later,” Titus answered.

“So you want me to brainwash him into being good for the rest of his life?”

Titus arched an eyebrow, “That’s not a bad idea... convince him he’s part of my pack and that Lucca is the pack enemy. Then, if you don’t mind, I’d like you to do the same thing to the other four guards we found.”

“You could make him loyal to you then send him back to Lucca as a spy,” Damon suggested knowing Titus could hear him.

Titus hesitated before clicking the intercom again, “Will I be able to trust him completely?”

“Alicia?” Damon smirked knowing she was just itching to make this guy claw his own eyes out and swallow his tongue.

“Oh I got this,” Alicia said with a saucy smile.

Titus smiled in satisfaction when Alicia added a couple rules of her own... like visiting gay biker bars on his night off and never again being turned on by a female of any race.

“Ouch,” Micah said grinning from ear to ear.

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” Tasuki whispered.

Micah snorted, “Welcome to our world. This is regular everyday bullshit compared to some of the stuff that goes on around here.”

“Looks like she’s done,” Titus said and pushed away from the wall just as the door opened.

“Was that good enough for you?” Alicia asked with a grin.

“Perfect as always,” Micah praised.

“I’ll take you over to the precinct so you can work on the others,” Titus reminded her but glanced toward Damon for approval.

Alicia stepped over and gave Micah another hug. “Thank you for letting me help out on this. I really enjoyed being needed, so if you catch any more bad guys that could use an adjustment, just let me know.” She quickly slid from his arms and eagerly followed Titus out the door.

Micah smirked at her retreating form but his expression melted away when he saw Damon glaring at him. With a heavy sigh, he shook his head and rolled his eyes before turning away from the man. Micah leaned close to the two way mirror to take a good look at the werewolf and blinked when a small crack suddenly appeared right in front of his face.

Tasuki took a step back from the cougar when he saw a golden hue appear in his eyes. The sight of golden eyes needled at his memory and the vision of the golden eyed man Kyoko had called an angel came back to haunt him. The sounds out in the hall faded away and Tasuki shook the vision away when Micah abruptly punched the two-way mirror with his fist. The glass shattered startling the werewolf still held inside the interrogation room.

“Calm down,” Tasuki said softly.

Micah shook his head, “He keeps Alicia away from her family and thinks everyone is out to take her from him.”

Tasuki left the small room and headed toward the break room, his destination... the coffee machine. He had a feeling that with all of the flashes he was having... sleep was probably a really bad idea. He'd made it two days without sleep so far... what would another one hurt. It wasn't like he would suddenly go crazy or

anything... you had to be sane to do that.

After a few minutes of complete silence, Tasuki headed toward the holding cells but paused when the front door opened and Titus stepped in with a grin on his face.

“Damon seems to be in a bit of a rush so he’s reprogramming three of the guards while Alicia works on the last one,” he announced.

“Figures,” Micah yelled sarcastically from inside the observation room.

Tasuki decided to ignore the remark. “What about ‘Mr. Loves Gay Biker Bars’ in there?” he asked tilting his head toward the interrogation room where the werewolf was still shackled to the chair.

“We are going to transport him and the other guards to the larger jail on the other end of town. Too bad they’re going to overpower the driver and make their grand escape along the way,” Titus answered with a smirk.

Tasuki frowned, “What if Lucca suspects them?”

“If we had only let one of the guards go, then you’re right... Lucca would be very suspicious. That’s why I’m letting them escape as a group, fighting their way out of police custody. Lucca will probably give them a damn promotion for putting one over on us,” Titus answered silently thanking Damon for the idea. “By the way, I need you to do something for me.”

“What’s that?” Tasuki asked.

Titus held up the empty bottle of spritzer, “Stop by The

Witch's Brew and pick up another bottle of this stuff.”

Tasuki took the bottle and looked at its small size, “Want me to pick up more than one?”

“Not a bad idea.” Titus answered and turned his head when he heard Micah growl. “I'd better get in there and give him something to do before Micah releases some of his frustrations on the poor guy.”

Chapter 5

Jade flinched when she heard the sound of breaking glass and cracked her eyes open to thin slits. Expecting to see the cage she'd been locked in for the last month, she was confused for a moment finding herself on a small cot of some kind. She'd been drugged again... that much she knew. She still remembered the sting of the tranquilizer dart she had been shot with.

She slowly inhaled, testing the air for hints of her surroundings. The scents here were different... cleaner... not dirty like the warehouse she'd been in.

As the effects of the tranquilizer wore off and her vision started to clear, Jade noticed the bars were a different kind and seemed further away. Keeping very still so as not to give her alertness away, she moved her gaze just enough to see that she was right... she was in a jail cell rather than her normal cage. It wasn't much of an improvement, but at least she could move far enough away from the bars if they came at her with that stupid cattle prod again.

She could hear muted voices in the distance and remained still, waiting on all of her senses to wake the rest of the way up so she could make out what they were saying. She recognized the scent of the human that had wanted to release her from her cage and felt comfort knowing he was near. There had been no faking the scent of concern and worry seeping from his pores.

She wrinkled her nose slightly when she caught the scent of one of the guards from the warehouse in close proximity but that paled in comparison to the undeniable scent of an Alpha. She swallowed her growl hating all Alpha's with good reason... it had been the conceit of more than one Alpha that had landed her in this mess to begin with.

She watched through her thick lashes as one of the men... the Alpha obviously, stepped out of a room to the right and walked past her cell. She remembered him standing right beside the older werewolf that had shot her with the tranquilizer gun. Again, she had to stop herself from growling at his powerful scent. He'd probably given the order to have her drugged.

Not far behind him was the human male. She held her breath when the man stopped long enough to look at her and sigh before he moved on.

"Go on and get him out of here," Titus instructed. "And make sure you don't tangle with Damon if he is still over there. He and your sister have actually been a lot of help.

Jade waited as she heard movement and a new voice muttering about needing a vacation before footsteps started moving toward her cell. First she saw the feline... a strong looking male with dirty-blond hair and strange blue eyes walking with one of the guards from the warehouse.

Everything around her screamed law enforcement but here her torturer was walking around free and she was still locked in a cage. Unable to control her reaction, Jade leapt off the cot and

charged at the bars separating them.

“No!” Tasuki cried out when he saw that the she-wolf was awake and beating herself against the bars to get at the bad guy turned pack mate. “Calm down,” Tasuki said and approached the cell carefully, “you’re going to hurt yourself.”

Jade continued to snarl and growl at her previous captor, trying to push herself between the bars. This was the bastard that had the sick fetish of continuously telling her what he was going to do to her once the hormones they’d injected her with kicked in. If she ever got the chance, he would lose the one part of his body he boasted the most about.

The guard froze and stared through the bars at the she-wolf feeling his new conscience kick in so hard that he almost felt sick for the way he’d treated her. He inhaled sharply and squared his shoulders, determined to help rescue the other girls to make up for what he’d done in the past.

“Come on,” Micah grumbled and continued forward, pulling the male werewolf behind him by the arm. He hoped that once they were out of the building the she-wolf would calm down a little.

“Control yourself,” Titus ordered with a growl, kneeling so he was eye to eye with the she-wolf. “This is a public place and you will adhere to the sacred rules that have kept our kind from being exposed.”

Jade growled and actually snapped her teeth at him but backed away from the bars feeling his power flare to the point of heating

her skin. How dare he give her orders just because he was an Alpha? She didn't know him and he still had her in a damn cage. She bared her teeth and continued a long growl in warning as she locked her angry eyes with his.

Titus narrowed his own gaze seeing the hate shining in her eyes and silently wondered if he'd been right about her being feral. If he let her out right now, she would only follow her animal instinct and attack someone. He couldn't let that happen... not within the city. The last thing they needed right now was more animal attacks in the morning paper. Already, gun sales in the city were through the roof due to the strangeness of the stories that had already leaked out because of the demons.

"I can only imagine what she's thinking right now," Tasuki said softly, wanting nothing more than to open the damned door for her... at least this cage had a door.

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