

ADDICTIVE BLOOD  
BLOOD BOUND SERIES BOOK 11



AMY BLANKENSHIP, R.K. MELTON

Blood Bound Book

Amy Blankenship

**Addictive Blood**

«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

## **Blankenship A.**

Addictive Blood / A. Blankenship — «Tektime S.r.l.s.», — (Blood Bound Book)

Michael finds that sometimes the blood of powerful immortals do not mix even when they are soul mates and in the heat of passion. A mating mark is a symbol of possession but for Michael that tiny taste of blood is his downfall. The blood of the Fallen is deceptively seductive to a Sun God and the powerful rush Michael receives is very addictive. In order to protect Aurora from himself, Michael begins to hunt down the most powerful demons in the city to satisfy his dark craving. As the black blood pulses within his veins Michael loses himself to the rush and becomes just as dangerous as the demons he is hunting.

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Addictive Blood  
Blood Bound Book 11  
Amy Blankenship, RK Melton  
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## Chapter 1

Toya crouched low on the roof of Kyoko's home and let his golden eyes drift down toward the small building that housed the Maiden Statue in the back yard. It had been a number of years since the night he'd slipped through the barrier and found her in this world but he still remembered every detail like it had happened yesterday.

A soft smile appeared on his face thinking about her jumping into that freezing cold water after him... the little idiot couldn't even swim but she hadn't cared.

His thoughts darkened as he recalled every time he'd met her in different realities. No matter what world, Kyoko never paused to think when it came to sacrificing herself in the heat of the moment to save someone she loved. Toya's lips thinned. He hoped to break her of that little habit or chain her headstrong ass to him so he could protect her this time.

Toya shifted his gaze and glared at the huge pond on the back area of the property. He really hoped she'd taken his advice and learned how to swim. She'd about given him a freakin' heart attack that night drowning on him like that and when he found her he was sure as hell going to yell at her for it.

When he found her... Toya's features softened already knowing why she hadn't been right here waiting on her guardians when they crossed over. He and his brothers had already figured it out since Kyoko hadn't recognized him when he'd shown up the first time. She didn't remember her guardians, which was about normal considering in every other dimension they'd found her in, she only held the memories of one lifetime and that was always the life she was living at that moment in that dimension.

Usually that dimensional amnesia affected all of the guardians too... including him. He couldn't count how many times he'd met Kyoko for the first time but this world was different. The Heart of Time had sent them here with a gift and a curse. For once, he and his brothers remembered everything about her... even the fact that they were all in love with her and had fought over her in parallel worlds.

His chest tightened at one memory he wished he didn't have. He could still feel the horror of Kyoko dying in his arms, their bodies moving together as they were both impaled by a death blow meant only for him. She'd been trying to save him from Hyakuhei... and she had saved him. Toya blinked as a lone tear slid down his cheek and he angrily shoved the memory away.

Hell, even Hyakuhei remembered it all, which seemed to be in their favor considering he hadn't attacked them on sight. Of course... he hadn't really been sociable either. They had already decided to stay the hell out of his way and not antagonize him this time.

Hyakuhei hadn't been with them when they'd followed the demons through the rip so they had no idea where he'd come from and that worried them a bit. So far he just seemed to be collecting the peaces of crystal that Kyoko had obviously shattered... again. It wasn't Kyoko's fault... she couldn't learn from her past mistakes if she wasn't allowed to remember making them. He forgave her knowing if she hadn't shattered the crystal then her guardians wouldn't have been drawn into this world to find her.

A frown appeared on Toya's lips when he sensed the familiar pull of a sliver of that same shattered crystal close by. The Guardian Heart Crystal was unbelievably powerful and every tiny shard held a piece of that power. Any human or demon that managed to get their hands on a piece of it would gain one hell of a power boost and as luck would have it, the things drew demons like flies to honey.

It was because the crystal had surfaced here in LA that this place had turned into this world's hot spot for all paranormal creatures. Everything non-human was drawn to this area, even if they didn't have a clue why.

Looking for the crystal he was feeling, Toya slowly swept his gaze over the houses surrounding the shrine and paused when he saw someone looking out the darkened window of the house next door. He rose to his feet and glared at the silhouette staring out at him then cocked an eyebrow when the shadowed form suddenly dropped below the edge of the window.

Toya smirked. It was about time he had a little fun. He promptly vanished from sight just as the man gathered enough bravery to take another look.

Tasuki took a deep breath still holding his gun in front of him like a shield. That was the man Kyoko had been with the night she'd disappeared... he was sure of it. What was he doing lurking on Kyoko's roof? Tasuki squared his shoulders in determination. There was only one way to find out and being a cop gave him every right to go investigate.

Making sure his Berretta had a full magazine, Tasuki clicked off the safety and headed out the front door. This wasn't the first time he'd set foot on the property since Kyoko vanished that night ten years ago, but it was the first time he'd seen someone besides the company that had been hired to keep up the grounds.

The first time he'd seen them over there on their zero turn mowers he'd confronted them only to find out they had been hired anonymously. When he'd tried to track down that lead it had been a dead end because the money simply showed up in the company's PO Box once a year and was always paid in cash.

Crossing the well-worn path between the two houses, Tasuki paused unable to stop the memories he had of Kyoko and her brother Tama from haunting him. If it hadn't been for that damned so called 'angel' Kyoko met that last night, she wouldn't have left... he was sure of it. Tasuki wasn't ashamed to admit it... he hated that man for taking Kyoko away from him, but if he was back, then there was a chance Kyoko might be back as well.

Not finding anyone in the immediate area, Tasuki crept toward the back of the house where the statue was locked up tight inside the small shrine house. Moving silently, he rounded the corner of the house and jerked back when he again saw the very man he'd just been thinking about standing right there in front of the shed... and the freakin' doors of it were wide open.

Having only seen him from afar as a child, Tasuki studied the man this time putting every detail to memory. His long dark hair had thick silver highlights running through it and he dressed just as strange as half the people he'd seen working with PIT. He didn't look normal but he sure as hell didn't have wings so Tasuki tossed Kyoko's 'angel' idea out the window.

"FREEZE," Tasuki yelled stepping out of the shadows and bringing his Berretta up, taking aim directly at the man's heart.

Toya's smirk widened and he slowly turned around to glare at the man who only thought he'd snuck up on him. His glare quickly turned into annoyance coming face to face with a blast from the past. Fucking Tasuki... he should have known that human would be lurking around here somewhere. Toya frowned at the next words out of Tasuki's mouth.

"I thought it was you," Tasuki exclaimed with a snarl. "I remember... you were here the night the demons came. Are you one of them? You did something to Kyoko... I saw you holding her limp body and don't you dare deny it."

Toya steadied his gaze on the human Kyoko was always so fond of and mentally laughed at the fact that Tasuki didn't remember all the times they'd met... which was probably a good thing. His eyes narrowed when he sensed the power of the broken crystal coming from Tasuki and the knowledge suddenly pissed him off.

"You have a talisman," Toya stated. "I want it."

It was Tasuki's turn to frown, "What?"

He didn't have a chance to fire the Berretta when the man came at him in a blur, knocking him down and pressing his fingertips hard against the muscle of his chest. Tasuki wrapped his hands around the man's wrist and pushed back with every ounce of strength he had.

"Angel... my... ass," Tasuki growled and planted his foot in the man's stomach, "you act more like a demon!" He managed to push him off with more strength than he realized he had.

Toya went flying backwards, landing on his feet and skidding across the well-manicured grass. His hand fisted at his side and he growled. So, the crystal was protecting him was it?

“What did you do to make Kyoko leave?” Tasuki demanded and he scrambled to his feet when his opponent’s eyes faded from pure gold to very scary silver. Tasuki didn’t back down as he met his gaze head on.

Toya snarled when he saw Tasuki’s eyes turn amethyst.

“Toya!”

The silver left Toya's eyes and he glared over his shoulder at his brother Shinbe, “What do you want Shinbe? Can’t you see I’m busy collecting the crystal?”

Shinbe calmly tilted his head to the side, “You do realize you’ll have to kill him in order to remove the talisman... correct?”

“I’m fine with that. Besides, we both know he can die,” Toya growled and snarled again when a gunshot rang out and he felt the bullet pierce his right shoulder. “You son of a bitch!”

Shinbe chuckled lightly, “In this instance Toya, I think you deserved that one. Now, leave Tasuki be... we must leave quickly.”

“You would take up for him,” Toya said sarcastically as one of his twin daggers came to life in his hand and he used the tip of it to dig the bullet out of his shoulder. “Why leave? The fun has just started,” he growled as the bullet flicked across the grass to land at Tasuki’s feet.

“He’s coming,” Shinbe answered cryptically.

Toya's dagger disappeared and his lips hinted at a smile as he glanced back over at Tasuki. “At least I won't be blamed for it.”

“Who’s coming?” Tasuki asked not quite sure who to aim at... though the one called Toya was still his first choice. That knowing smile of his was giving him the creeps.

Shinbe gave him a long stare, “Trust me Tasuki... you must leave now. If you do not, then at least hide until he is gone.” He recognized that stubborn look when Tasuki squared his shoulders and tightened his hold on the weapon. Shaking his head, Shinbe decided to give his wayward reincarnate a helpful little gift.

With a couple quick hand movements and a tilt of his staff, Shinbe erected a permanent barrier around the boy that would keep demons or anyone else from detecting the crystal shard that lay deep inside him. He mentally sighed knowing it was too late to hide that little fact from Toya.

Tasuki stared wide eyed when the large amethyst stone on Shinbe’s staff glowed softly and he disappeared along with the one called Toya. His gaze was drawn down to his own hands and then to the rest of his body as a soft amethyst light outlined him for a moment then faded away.

‘Perhaps this will help you stay alive this time,’ Shinbe’s voice echoed inside his head before it too was gone.

“This time?” Tasuki asked in confusion then flinched when the door of the shed slammed closed. A sudden sense of foreboding washed over him and he would swear to the fact that the sky darkened by several shades.

Tasuki couldn’t control the urgent need to hide in the shadows of the trees behind him. He crouched down, halfway hidden behind two tree trunks so he could peek through the middle and see what was going on.

A bone deep chill swept through him when he saw a man with long black hair appear out of nowhere right in the center of the back yard. The very air halted in his chest as overwhelming fear and complete calm froze him to the spot. It was him... the man from his nightmares was standing just ten feet away from his hiding place.

Hyakuhei walked toward the shed with a contemplative expression on his face. He was certain he’d just felt the presence of a talisman when it vanished. How ironic was it that a talisman would be here on the grounds of the very shrine where the Maiden resided? Stopping in front of the shed, the door once again opened as if obeying his silent command.

His dark eyes lightened to a soft brown as he gazed upon the likeness of his heart’s desire. Reaching out a hand, he touched his fingertips to hers and felt nothing but the coldness of the stone.

So, even after all this time she still rejected him... refusing to allow him back into the Heart of Time. He raised his eyes to hers and was rewarded when they softly glowed for a moment. A devilish smile appeared on his perfect lips... so be it.

His eyes narrowed when he felt the fading energies of Toya and Shinbe. It was obvious they'd gotten here first to claim the crystal's talisman. With a final glance at the statue, Hyakuhei spun on his heel and left the shrine property.

Tasuki didn't dare move until the monster from his nightmares had left the shrine. He slid the rest of the way to the ground releasing the breath he hadn't known he was holding and rolled over onto his back to look up at the stars. What the hell was going on? He was used to seeing the paranormal that thrived in LA but this was different... this hit too close to home.

Already knowing the answer he reached over and pinched his arm, hard. Okay... that was proof he wasn't dreaming. Jade was right... they had been more than just dreams. Never in his life had he ever experienced anything as frightening as that. He took a number of deep breaths and waited for it to pass before he slowly pushed back to his feet and stumbled toward the edge of the property between their houses.

When he reached the edge of his front yard Tasuki sprinted to his front door and almost forced his way through the obstruction when his hand fumbled on the knob. Closing the door behind him, he slid every lock into place and quickly backed away from it. Making his way over to the sofa he sat down and wrapped the blanket around him making sure to keep his finger on the trigger of his Berretta... not that it would do him any good.

He cringed remembering the one named Toya picking the bullet out with the tip of that dangerous looking dagger. He raised his eyes to the portrait hanging above his fireplace and his lips parted in a sense of déjà vu. In the painting, Kyoko was touching the statue's hands the same way tall, dark, and spooky had just done.

## Chapter 2

Jade could feel the serenity of sleep slipping away from her but she was so comfortable that she simply didn't want to face reality yet. She could feel the heated body pressed against her and almost groaned. On second thought... maybe waking up wasn't such a bad idea.

She slowly opened her eyes and saw a tanned bare chest rippling with muscles span across her vision. Judging by the steady heartbeat under her ear, Titus was still asleep and it would be cruel to jerk away or indignantly push him out of the bed just because they were touching. He wouldn't have completely healed yet so she decided to cut him a little slack... this time.

Snuggling up to him during the night had probably been her doing anyway since she usually had several pillows she tackled at night. Honestly, having a leg and arm thrown across him was no big surprise. He was definitely a good substitute for her normal body pillows.

She shifted her leg just a fraction, feeling the inside of her thigh laying right over the bulge between his legs and inwardly sighed. Though she hated to admit it, even when the man was soft, he was still very impressive. Jade felt his hard thigh move against her crotch and mentally forced herself not to flex against him. She was dying to do it. Actually, at the moment she was dying to do him.

Jade slowly inhaled his heady scent and closed her eyes, savoring the raw male that could so easily take the throbbing ache of her heat away. She was stubborn and so far it had been pretty easy not to give in to the overwhelming need for sex the hormone induced heat had brought on.

She felt a hot tickling sensation spiral downward and her stomach muscles tightened. Before she could stop herself, her body betrayed her and she flexed her hips. The feeling was so incredible that instead of pulling back, she held herself there needing the pressure.

Jade mentally rolled her eyes at the irony. Here Titus thought the smell of her heat was going to drive him crazy. Well, she had news for the mighty Alpha... she wasn't the only one that needed to be using the scent spritzer right now. She frowned knowing she'd never been attracted to the way a human male smelled, but then she wouldn't... would she?

This just confirmed her theory that it was far safer to wake up in bed with a human because now she had something to compare it with.

The harder she pressed herself against Titus, the faster her thoughts started going until her mind came to a screeching halt when she moved again. The next thing she knew, she was rubbing herself against the hardness of his thigh trying to bring herself to completion. Jade cringed damning the fact that she'd just bragged on her stubborn streak and she was making a liar out of herself.

The second Titus awoke from the deep healing sleep that he'd been in he immediately gripped the soft body beside him and rolled over until he was on top. He pinned her wrists to the bed and pressed his thigh harder against the hot dampness. Titus gazed down into Jade's face and knew with one glance that she needed him. Her eyes were bright and glassy, her cheeks were flushed with color, and those pouty lips were slightly parted from rapid breathing. How in the hell had he slept through this?

Jade stared up at Titus, stunned at how fast he had just moved to dominate her. She wanted to taste that speed and raw power... just once. She wanted to feel the difference between the passion of a human and the raw sexuality of the wolf on top of her. Jade rocked against him knowing it was too late to turn it off now and he wasn't to blame... she was.

Titus half groaned and half growled as he felt himself stiffen painfully hard and fast. He knew she was past her breaking point and although he was glad her prejudice walls had come down... he wanted to hear her say that she needed him so that she couldn't throw it in his face after.

Lowering his face to hover just above her lips he asked, "What do you want from me Jade?"

Hearing the husky deepness of his voice sent more heat racing through her. Jade strained upward against him and shivered. She was almost past the point of rational thought but steadied

herself and looked him directly in the eyes. She still had enough self-preservation to know she was dangerously close to stepping over more than one line.

In an almost panicked voice Jade answered his question. “You claim to be a man of honor so I want your word as an Alpha that you will not mark me and let me keep my freedom. Can you do that and still show me what it’s like to be with a wolf so I can get it out of my system?”

Titus felt the sting of her desperate words and glared down at her. “If you weren’t half out of your mind with heat, you would never want me simply because of what I am,” he accused. He did not like the thought of helping her get him out of her system. “Don’t worry... I have no intentions of marking you. You’re not the only one that has standards.”

Jade held her breath hearing the slight anger in his voice. She sank backward into the mattress to create distance between them. Unable to hold his gaze she lowered hers to the perfection of his lips. “Then we agree. Once we leave this bed there will be no strings attached,” she repeated praying she would have the willpower to get up if he refused her terms.

“If a pounding is all you want then a pounding is what I’ll give you... and you will know the difference between sleeping with a human and being with a wolf,” Titus said and didn’t care that the words sounded more like a threat than an agreement.

Jade’s lips parted with a sarcastic comeback but the words were stolen when his hot lips swiftly descended on hers in a fiery kiss. At this point, she no longer had a reason to fight with him... she was getting what she wanted. Jade strained her body upwards and moaned into the heated kiss. If she was going to do this then she wanted everything she could get out of it.

Titus had decided the same thing. If this was the only time she would willingly allow his touch, then he was going to make sure she never forgot it. Letting go of her hands, he deepened the kiss while grinding against her. Grabbing the fabric of the hot pink nightshirt, he jerked one side of it down to expose her breast to him.

Abruptly ending the kiss, he slid backwards across the bed grabbing her panties and pulling them down her legs in one swift motion. He felt satisfaction hearing her startled gasp.

Gazing at her with her dark hair spread across the white sheet and that one mound of creamy flesh above the rim of the loose shirt, Titus decided there was one more thing to complete the picture. Gripping the bottom of the nightshirt, he ripped it up the middle, stopping just inches before the rip reached the top and snapped in half.

He spread the nightshirt wide then let go of the soft fabric, watching as it opened like a curtain then fluttered down leaving her bare from her breasts down.

Jade smirked feeling like they were still fighting and she instinctively liked the energy of it. She rose up and put her palm against his chest to hold him at bay. Sliding her legs out from between his, she rose up on her knees facing him and smiled coyly when he let her force him to back up off the bed until he was out of her reach.

She let her gaze travel lower as Titus slid the jogging pants down his legs and kick them to the side. She thought he was hard the last time she’d seen him naked but now she could tell the difference... he was huge.

Crawling to the edge of the bed, Jade rose up on her knees and surged forward, slashing her lips across his in a heated kiss that he quickly dominated. She let her hands caress his hips then slid one of them around the front to wrap her hand around his thick length.

Knowing that she now had a firm hold of the one thing she wanted from him, Titus slid his fingers up into her hair and tilted her head as he growled into the kiss. He could feel her free nipple rubbing against his chest as he moved against her and rocked back and forth in her hand.

Titus smirked inwardly knowing he was about to teach her a lesson. His little she-wolf had no idea what she was getting herself into. She was used to the stamina of humans when even a normal werewolf couldn’t hold a candle to the stamina of an Alpha. Dragging her off the bed, he turned them around and lifted her against the wall.

Jade wrapped her legs around him and put her hands on his shoulders for leverage. Rising up, she fearlessly angled her hips until the swollen end of him was pressing against her opening. Oh god he was so big. She rocked her hips back and forth in a slow grinding motion as the first inch of him slid inside her stretching her.

Titus watched as she leaned her head back against the wall trying to take him slowly. Shaking his head, he wound his hands behind her and gripped her shoulders and, with one hard thrust upwards, he brought her down on him causing them both to lose their breath.

He hadn't expected her to be so tight and the squeezing sensation almost brought him to his knees.

Before she could recover, Titus eased halfway back out then pulled down on her shoulders again as he drove upward and held her there in a strong grip.

Jade pushed at his chest and moaned when she was suddenly swung around and her back hit the mattress. The tall bed was the perfect height for him to remain standing with her legs wrapped around his waist. She grabbed handfuls of the cover when he palmed her buttocks, pulling and pushing her back and forth against him.

With ragged breaths, Jade looked up at him only to find him watching himself slide in and out of her. The muscles of his arms tightened with each movement and she lowered her gaze to the eight-pack of muscles flexing at his abdomen. The image of him standing there tall and proud as he pounded into her was the sexiest thing she'd ever seen. The feel of him feeding her inch by wonderful inch in slow hard thrusts sent her over the edge.

Titus raised his heated gaze when he heard her cry out. She was so sensual in her orgasm that he had to concentrate to remember that to her, he was nothing but a tool to give her release from her heat. He or any other human would do. The thought of other men touching her... riding her into orgasm helped him keep his rigid control as he sank into her and pulled back out flexing his whole body with each movement.

Jade was fighting for breath when the spasm of her orgasms continued to the point that she was ready to beg for mercy. Tossing her head back and forth, she bowed her body upwards and opened her eyes. What little breath she had was lost when she saw the angry eyes of the Alpha wolf staring back at her. Panicking, she untangled her legs and tried to twist away from him.

"Enough," Jade said breathlessly and was glad when he released her. Still feeling the pulsation spasms between her legs, she tried to scramble away from him.

Titus watched as she turned over on her hands and knees to crawl away from him. He could smell her sudden spike of fear and he hated the fact that she was once again comparing him to other men she feared just because he was an Alpha. He shook his head and quickly crawled up and over her.

Jade inhaled sharply when she felt his body caress her back and his arms were suddenly beside hers. She could feel his thick head squeeze back into her opening and moaned as she lifted her upper body and laid her head back against his shoulder in surrender.

Titus caged her with his arms and pulled her back against his chest as he drove himself up inside her again. Lowering his lips to the shell of her ear, he whispered in a dark husky voice, "It's never enough." He nuzzled the side of her neck and felt her squeeze him even tighter.

Jade felt her heart flutter as his voice echoed in her mind but she was still lucid enough to be wary of the teeth that were so close to her skin. Almost all female weres were marked during sex and she couldn't stop her fear from rising at the same time another orgasm hit her hard.

Glancing up, Titus noticed their reflection in the huge mirror on the dresser. The sight of her with her eyes closed and lips slightly parted as she took his thrusts was erotic. Placing his hands on her hips, he lifted her up and brought her back down in a rhythm that kept her panting as her legs began to shake. He let one of his hands caress its way up until he was cupping her breast then he slid his other hand around the front of her and dipped it between her thighs.

“Open your eyes Jade,” he commanded in a harsh whisper and used his cheek to move her face to where she was facing the mirror.

Jade opened her eyes seeing their reflection just as he nudged her legs further apart. Her darker coloring held against the blond Greek God behind her was erotic as hell. When he ran the pad of his fingers across the bundle of nerves just above where he was entering her Jade moaned, biting her bottom lip as she came for him again. She felt like she was exploding when his fingers didn't stop their torture.

“Titus please,” Jade cried out, pressing back against him as she shivered and twitched in his arms.

Titus's eyes glowed as he watched her in the mirror. He was giving her something she'd never had before and he was nowhere near finished yet. If she was going to walk away from this bed thinking this was nothing but pity sex because of her heat, then he was going to make sure she had trouble walking away.

She felt him stroke that sweet spot between her legs again and again before his arms finally released her and she fell forward catching herself on the mattress. She sucked in her breath making a hissing sound when he placed one hand on her side and the other on the small of her back and slid almost all of the way out only to slowly, relentlessly push himself back in.

The seductive rocking motion was enough to keep her high and give her a chance to catch her breath at the same time. She gripped the sheet under her fingers when she realized in this position he could go in even deeper than he had before. Whatever he was touching inside of her had never been touched by anyone and this new sensation was making her tense and melt with every thrust. Before she could stop herself, she pushed back against him so that he would hit it even harder.

“Titus,” Jade cried out when he held her still for a second before moving again.

Titus growled low in his throat when his control almost slipped. Reaching forward, he pushed her long dark hair to one side and gripped her shoulder with one of his hands. Taking a deep unsteady breath, he pulled her back with a harder jerk, slamming into her and giving her what she was craving.

“Oh god Titus,” Jade moaned as he sped up giving her so much more than she'd ever anticipated. After several minutes, she finally felt like she was going to break and surged forward trying again to crawl away from him.

Titus was breathing hard as he grabbed her and rolled her over onto her back. She was limp and so flushed that it only made him grow harder if that was possible. Spreading her legs, he held her gaze as he eased his way inside her this time, holding himself above her by one arm. Taking his other hand, he looped it under one knee and brought her leg up, driving in and out of her at a slow torturous pace.

Slowing down backfired on him... he could feel every hot inch of her encasing him, squeezing and sucking at him. Smelling the mixture of their combined musk and seeing the glow of desire in her eyes surged inside him making him want to keep her. Titus gritted his teeth as he felt her pulse around him.

Grabbing her shoulder again, he pulled her down the mattress toward him, impaling her quickly, then ground himself against her. Sliding her back up the sheet, he repeated the movement again and again, using stubbornness to surpass even his own limit.

All Jade could do was hold on and drown in the sensations. When he lowered his forehead to hers, she wrapped her arms around his neck and was quickly lifted in his arms.

Titus held her tight against him and raised his head to glare up at the ceiling so he wouldn't mark her as he exploded deep inside her, the pulse of his seed matching the hard thump of his heartbeat. For a few minutes, they remained in that position breathing harshly and trembling before Titus suddenly released her to fall back to the mattress.

Jade frowned when Titus stretched out on the bed next to her without saying a word or trying to even hold her. She slowly turned her head toward him to find him lying on his back, his chest still rising and falling just as quickly as hers... but his eyes were closed and relaxed.

She frowned when the minutes ticked by and his breathing evened out as Titus slipped into sleep so easily. She felt the cool air of the dark room chill her heated flesh and gently pulled the cover up and over her in an odd moment of loneliness. Jade spent the next thirty minutes forcing herself to become just as relaxed as he was and fall asleep.

## Chapter 3

Dean stared down at the street below watching as Kane exited the building with the beautiful Skye and Aurora in tow. If Aurora wasn't already mated to Michael, he'd swear the two Fallen belonged together. The way they loved each other so unconditionally reminded him of things he had long forgotten and it left him with a slight case of melancholy.

Had he ever been like them or had he been born as cold and hard as he felt right now? Dean sighed not wanting to search his own soul in fear of the answer. He'd made up his mind a long time ago to become what he was now in order to protect those with softer hearts and he refused to regret that sacrifice.

He remained still when Skye turned and looked up at him as if sensing he was being watched. It was good that the boy's instincts were so sharp... he would need them to protect himself and the ones he loved in the coming days. He wished he had the time it would take to make sure Kriss and Skye became closer but his time was running out.

He felt a twinge of guilt and jealousy as he imagined Skye looking at Kriss the same way he looked at Aurora. He closed his eyes trying to stop the intrusive visual of them making love long after he was gone.

Hearing soft footsteps, Dean opened his eyes seeing Kriss in the reflection of the window as he approached from the kitchen and quickly hid his inner turmoil. Kriss hadn't said a word when the two younger Fallen had announced they were going with Kane to visit Michael but he could see the worry in his lover's eyes. He had always been able to read Kriss so well and was glad Kriss did not have the same ability.

"It's a good thing Kane is chaperoning them tonight," Kriss mused coming up behind Dean. "Do you think he can handle Michael if he begins to lose control?"

Dean cocked an eyebrow, not really sure what the answer to that question was. "Tell me, do you remember when we went head to head with Kane before Syn intervened and tossed us off the roof of that building like rag dolls?" He watched as Kriss's lips thinned at the memory.

"Yes," Kriss slid his arms around Dean and placed his chin on Dean's shoulder. "I am aware that Syn probably saved us from a serious hurting that night."

Dean hardened his voice so Kriss would be sure to listen. "Then you will agree with me when I tell you that we need to stay out of Michael's way for now. I trust Kane to know what to do and if he needs back up, he can always call on their father." Dean leaned back into Kriss' embrace enjoying the moment of peace it gave him.

"Hey Kriss," Tabatha called from the kitchen where she was emptying the dishwasher. "Your kitchen is like an immaculate maze. Where do you keep your salad spoons?"

Kriss pressed his lips against the most sensitive part of Dean's neck just under his earlobe and tightened his arms as a thank you for letting Tabatha visit for a while. He lifted his eyes back to their reflection catching sight of the shiver his lips had caused and took a step back.

"Coming," he called out over his shoulder and forced himself to turn and head toward the kitchen.

Dean watched him go with a soft smile on his face but the expression faded as soon as Kriss was out of sight. Gritting his teeth, he looked down at his throbbing arm. It was getting harder and harder to fight the pain but in truth, he was surprised he'd lasted this long without giving himself away.

Pushing the sleeve up, Dean frowned at the blackness that had formed there and hissed as the opening stretched and ripped open another inch of his flesh as if wanting him to see what was forming inside him before the edge of the wound narrowed.

If it had been a normal wound, it would have started out as an angry red gash that would probably be showing the final stages of healing by now. But this was no ordinary wound and there

was a long black rip where the Demon Blade had penetrated him... going in one side of his forearm and out the other.

As he stared down at the ugly wound, he noted that the blackness within was beginning to move around and grow stronger. He was losing the battle and he knew it. The black soul thriving inside him wanted to live... but then, so did Dean.

He remembered the way Kriss had screamed at him, yelling about him taking on the Demon Blade and nearly getting himself killed. Kriss was still under the impression that if you were struck by the blade that you would go down in overwhelming pain immediately and he was right... but only if the victim was human or at least tainted with human blood.

He'd lied to Kriss... assured him that he was immune to the Demon Blade and since he was still standing, Kriss had believed him because he wanted it to be true. It calmed Dean's soul just knowing that Kriss could no longer hide the love he had for him. His anger and worry had been a dead giveaway. Now it would all come to a quiet end. It would make Kriss stronger in the long run.

Dean was glad that Kriss had never been exposed to the real dangers of a Demon Blade during the demon wars since he hadn't arrived until the war was practically over. Because of that, Kriss didn't know what happened to a Fallen that had been struck by one... he only knew what happened to the human victims.

Many Fallen had died from such an attack during the demon wars and Samuel had thrown the weapon intending for the blade to give Aurora a slow and painful death... his final gift to the female Fallen that had betrayed him. The innocent Skye hadn't known the consequences of his actions when he tried to protect Aurora by swinging her around and presenting his own back to the deadly blade.

The boy would have paid the ultimate price and there would have been no coming back from it. He wouldn't regret saving Skye... he wouldn't regret any of it.

Dean closed his eyes and jerked the cloth back down his arm to hide the evidence of the demon growing inside him. He'd been one of the few of their kind to survive the wound of a Demon Blade... but it was only because of his strength, both physical and mental. He was captain of the royal guard and therefore had been trained to have the strength to withstand anything... even the pain and influence of sharing his body with the soul of a demon.

The problem that concerned Dean the most was that the demons 'born' from a Demon Blade were not newborns... the weapon actually created tiny dimensional rifts inside the ones the blade was used against. In short, the Demon Blade allowed the souls of ancient demons to cross back over and be reborn into the human realm through the body of its victim.

The survival of a Demon Blade attack depended on whose soul was the strongest... the victim or the resurrected demon. His soul had won the last time and the demon had died inside him tainting his own blood with the acidity of it but because of that he'd become that much stronger.

Samuel had been one of the originals, among the first demons to take a breath of Earth's air. These were powerful demons as they were spawned by the most powerful Fallen... mostly royalty as it was the scientists of the royal bloodline that had created the rift between dimensions. Because of this, there was a very good chance the soul growing inside him was also an original.

Another pain shot up his arm and Dean grimaced when he felt his skin around the wound move in a sickening manner. It wouldn't be long now and he knew he needed to leave in order to save Kriss the horror of what was about to happen. As it stood now, his chances of surviving this were dwindling by the hour.

With a heavy sigh, Dean walked toward the kitchen and leaned against the doorway just watching Kriss and Tabatha pretend to sword fight with long wooden cooking spoons. The expression didn't show on his face but at the moment he was content. Kriss was stronger now than he'd ever seen him and that was what mattered.

Kriss glanced up seeing Dean watching them from the doorway. He winked at Dean and gave him a bright smile before playfully whining, "Will you please tell Tabatha to stop teasing me?"

“Not a chance,” Dean said and approached the other Fallen. “I’ve got something I need to take care of... so you and Tabatha have fun.”

Locking eyes with Kriss, Dean slowly leaned forward and took possession of his lips in a searing, yet gentle kiss that lasted several seconds. Backing away, he took in Kriss’ dazed expression and etched it into his memory before nodding at Tabatha and leaving the apartment.

The two of them stood there staring at the place Dean had just been. His actions had startled Kriss to the point that he was speechless and Tabatha had a frown on her face.

“What in the world was that?” Tabatha asked softly having never seen Dean give such a soft display of affection. She hadn’t known he was capable of it.

Kriss shook his head still in shock. “I have no idea.” He rubbed his arms where cold chills had just appeared like a bad omen and his chest constricted painfully. He started to go after Dean but Tabatha’s voice gave him pause.

“That was the sweetest thing I’ve ever seen him do,” Tabatha giggled then sighed. “If I didn’t know any better... I’d say you were making Dean a very happy boy.” She elbowed him playfully.

Kriss blushed, feeling a little better when the strange sensation vanished. He hoped she was right. Feeling her watching him, he smiled and shrugged, “Either that or Dean just didn’t want to stick around for the vampire chick flick that’s lying on top of the DVD player.”

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“It’s huge,” Aurora breathed when Kane stopped in front of a large beautiful house directly across the street from an enormous gothic looking church. “Michael lives alone in there? It’s so big... too big for just one person. Isn’t he lonely?”

She slid a sideways glance at Skye wondering if he was remembering the small huts and tents they used to live in before their world had fallen apart. There had been no concept of a home in the demon world and she knew from Skye’s memories that he’d only known the cold darkness of a cave. Michael’s house may be intimidating in size but she could already feel the warmth radiating from it.

Kane couldn’t help but smile at the wonder that lit up Aurora’s eyes. He tilted his head and looked at the Victorian house as if he’d never seen it before and decided that she was right... it was kind of awesome looking.

“Yes, Michael lives alone, but I lived with him up until a couple weeks ago. So did our brother Damon and a female werewolf named Alicia. Trust me, that house was far from lonely or quiet,” he remarked but silently reminded himself that Michael had been living alone for the last forty years so maybe Aurora was on to something there.

Aurora made a slight face hearing Damon’s name mentioned. She still didn’t trust the one named Damon after hearing him say something about having to kill Michael. It didn’t matter if he could come back from the dead or not... you just didn’t talk about killing Michael around her. She found herself silently wishing it had been Damon she’d tossed down the stairs instead of Kane.

Kane smirked hearing Aurora’s thoughts as clearly as if she had spoken them out loud. If she really knew Damon, she would probably rethink the idea of attacking him. Damon didn’t care what gender his opponent was and all hell would have broken loose if he’d thought Alicia was in danger. Nope... Damon would not have been as gentle with her as he had.

“Who’s Alicia and why did everyone move out?” Skye asked trying to keep his own curiosity hidden behind the question.

Kane’s smirk widened knowing he was about to make Aurora’s day with the little story he was about to spin... well, the Damon part of it anyway.

“Alicia recently became Damon’s mate and she’s one of the only people I know that can keep him in line. Actually, he’s too busy watching after her to start trouble of his own. It’s a funny story really. They just met a couple weeks ago and the first thing Alicia did was stab Damon in the heart with a stake and leave him for dead.” Kane shrugged then tried not to laugh when Aurora turned wide eyes on him.

“And now they’re mates,” Aurora repeated questionably then bit her lower lip knowing when she’d first met Michael she’d made love to him then pushed him away from her and ran. But... at least she hadn't tried to kill him.

“Yes, love at first sight,” Kane nodded with a sly smile. “They moved into the building you so sweetly refer to as Sanctuary.” He skipped the story behind him and Tabatha's meeting since it wasn't much better than Damon and Alicia's story. “With Tabatha and I being newly mated and Damon being somewhat of a loose cannon, we thought it best that we roommate with them so we could help Alicia keep an eye on him.”

Aurora's expression became softer, “You look after your brothers... don't you?”

Kane actually felt a little embarrassed knowing the roles had been switched from time to time... recently. “Damon and Michael haven't had the best history together with their sibling rivalry and all and I still fight the darkness myself. But I am the eldest so yeah... I do try to look after them when they're not busy looking after me.”

He fleetingly thought about filling her in on the fact that Syn also watched after all of them but refrained. If Aurora held a grudge against Damon for his role in calming Michael down, then she would probably frown on daddy dearest recently killing him for almost leveling the subway.

As they moved toward the Victorian house, Kane narrowed his eyes wondering just how much trouble Michael was going to cause with his new infatuation with demon blood. He inhaled deeply and squared his shoulders deciding there was no time like the present to find out.

Reaching the front door, Kane knocked on the heavy wood and quickly shoved his hands into his pockets letting himself rock back and forth on his heels. This was going to be fun.

Aurora took a step forward then felt Skye's hand on her shoulder and looked up at him. Seeing that look of caution in his eyes, her lips parted remembering his warning about her not jumping Michael's bones the second she saw him. She made a face at Skye and took a step back, quickly rewarded when he removed the restraining hand and grinned.

Michael was standing in the library going through his collection of books. He'd started out only meaning to choose a couple of his favorites for Aurora's enjoyment but when he heard a knock on the front door it snapped him out of the daze he'd been in and he blinked realizing he'd wound up in front of the shelves that housed the books on demons. He pushed the black leather book back in place and looked down.

“Are you expecting someone?” he asked the small dog at his feet and smiled when Scrapy, who had stopped by for a visit, barked and took off running for the front door.

Michael followed the little canine and couldn't help but chuckle softly when he saw the dog jumping up and down in front of the door excitedly. His expression softened when he felt the warmth that only Aurora's nearness could cause and his blood heated as he thought of a way to distract himself from his momentary demon obsession.

He opened the door hoping for the urgent seduction that normally sidetracked them before they could even greet each other but his eyes widened when he saw Kane standing there with Aurora and Skye. Kane suddenly smirked and threw his arms out wide making Michael take a step back.

“HONEY, I'M HOME!” Kane shouted just before jumping through the door and wrapping himself around Michael like a slinky.

“Kane,” Michael complained and tried to disengage himself from his brother's death grip. This wasn't exactly the contact he had in mind not to mention the wrong person had their legs wrapped around him.

“I just missed you soooooo much,” Kane said with a fake sob. “You never call or write.”

All expression left Michael's face while Skye and Aurora looked on with amused smirks. “It's barely been twenty-four hours.”

Kane buried his face in Michael's neck, “I know... too long... right?”

Michael sighed and motioned the Fallen inside, “Welcome to my home, please make yourselves comfortable while I manage a new growth that’s sprung up.” He pushed at Kane trying to dislodge him but was again unsuccessful.

Aurora frowned not getting the joke, “A new growth?”

Skye shook his head and steered Aurora inside, “Pay them no mind. Some siblings are just that way. They tease one another just to be lovingly annoying.”

“Oh,” Aurora’s expression brightened and she wiggled her eyebrows. “Just like I used to beg you for piggy-back rides whenever you decided to flirt with a woman?”

“Yes,” Skye said with a grin and poked her forehead, “Like I said... siblings.”

Aurora looked down when she heard a bark and her eyes began to glitter when she saw a small puppy dancing around her feet. “Oh how sweet. Is this your puppy Michael?”

Kane quickly lifted his head from Michael’s neck, “Scrappy, so this is where you’ve been hiding out.”

Scrappy gave a half growl as if to say ‘where else would I be’ and started to hop around Aurora’s legs again. Giving in, Aurora stooped down to pick up the loveable puppy. Scrappy immediately began to wiggle around trying to lick Aurora’s face while sneaking quick peeks at Skye.

Skye reached out and ran his hand down the puppy’s back admiring the softness of its fur. “I think he likes you,” he winked.

“He’s adorable,” Aurora cooed. “You said his name is Scrappy?”

Kane pouted at Michael when he finally lost the hug fight they had been having. He nodded at Aurora, “Yeah, Scrappy has been with me for a while now but for some reason he’s felt the need to stay with Michael as of late. Probably because this house is so big that Michael would get lost in it without him.” He made the joke due to Aurora’s thoughts on Michael’s loneliness.

“I would not,” Michael said with an outraged tone in his voice. Hanging around Kane when his brother was in a goofy mood sometimes annoyingly rubbed off on him. “I’ll have you know that I have more hidey-holes in this place than you would ever find. And yes, unlike your inability to remember women’s names... I do remember where they all are.”

“What about the time you got lost on your way to the bathroom and opened the closet?” Kane asked with a smirk.

“I was drunk,” Michael answered glowering at him.

Kane looked over at Scrappy accusingly, “You seriously need to stop cheating on me with such a moody grouch.” He reached out to lift the puppy from Aurora’s arms but paused almost swearing he was being glared at by his normally adoring pet.

Scrappy looked at Kane and growled to show he disagreed with the suggestion of staying away from Michael and his master’s intent of taking him from the pretty girl’s well rounded bosom.

Skye stopped petting Scrappy and jerked his hand away when he saw the puppy’s eyes turn blood red. He quickly stepped back from the Yorkie with a startled expression.

“Is he a demon?” Skye asked in confusion.

Kane smiled fondly, “No, I happened to have found him during a very dark period in my life and... changed him accidentally. As far as I can tell, Scrappy will never grow old and never die... though he does seem quite happy with the arrangement.”

“So he’s a Sun God’s familiar?” Aurora asked curiously having seen demons take on animals in much the same way.

Kane and Michael looked at each other with thoughtful expressions.

“It would make sense,” Kane said with a shrug of his shoulders. “He’s just always been Scrappy... I’ve never thought of it that way.”

“Would either of you care for something to drink?” Michael asked but his eyes were on Aurora.

Kane raised his hand and wiggled his fingers, “I’ll take some of the best alcohol in the house.” He grabbed his ribs where Michael elbowed him and wheezed, “Never mind... I can wait.”

Aurora shook her head at their playfulness. “Not right now... but I’d really like to see your library.”

Michael smiled at the obvious glint in her eyes and gave her a slight bow, “Right this way my dear.”

When Aurora took Michael’s offered hand Kane leaned in close to him from the other side.

“Laying it on a little heavy aren’t we?” Kane asked in a stage whisper.

“You are just jealous because you didn’t think to try kindness as a way to woo Tabatha,” Michael shot back with a wicked grin.

“That was different,” Kane whined chasing after Michael and Aurora with Skye bringing up with rear laughing quietly at him.

“How was it different?” Michael asked with playful curiosity.

“Tabatha is my boss.” Kane stated with authority. “I had no choice but to fall for her charms and stalk her to the ends of the earth.” He paused for a moment and rubbed his chin thoughtfully, “Then again... she is my soul mate so I guess an eternity of servitude to the loveliest sexiest woman in the world is worth it.”

“Touché,” Michael muttered deciding Kane’s nonsense sometimes made perfect sense.

Aurora’s eyes widened again when Michael escorted her into the huge library. The room was circular with high windows all around and there were bookshelves filled from floor to ceiling with nothing but books of all shapes and sizes. Comfortable overstuffed chairs and loveseats were placed around the room accompanied by small elegantly carved tables.

“Oh wow,” Skye whispered and wandered over to one of the shelves. He ran his fingers over the bindings as he skimmed the titles. All of the ones in this section seemed to pertain to the laws of physics with everything from Plato to Albert Einstein and even more recent works from Nassim Haramein.

“Is something wrong?” Michael asked when he saw the overwhelmed expression on Aurora’s face.

Aurora let her gaze drift around the room trying not to feel intimidated. “Where... where would I even start?” she said and suddenly smiled remembering that Skye had said the more she read the less childish her reactions to things would be. She’d argued that she wasn’t a child but secretly, she knew Skye was right. She lifted her chin not wanting Michael to think she was childish.

“I actually picked out some of the fairytales for Skye to start you out with since that’s what most human’s read when they first learn how,” Michael said and leaned closer as if sharing a secret, “it’s the magic of fairytales that make most people fall in love with reading. I’m not sure what his teaching method is, but if he was able to learn how to read in such a short span of time then I’m guessing it will work the same way with you.”

“Skye,” Aurora called him over hoping Michael was right about how quickly she could learn to do this. “Can we start with these?”

Skye moved away from the shelf he was looking at and approached the stacks of books Aurora indicated. “These are good ones to start out with,” Skye agreed seeing some he had really enjoyed and a couple he had yet to read.

“Oh goody,” Kane said and rubbed his palms together. “I get to play with Michael while Aurora has her reading lessons.” He grabbed Michael by the arm and dragged him out of the library leaving the door open in case Aurora or Skye needed them.

He smirked at the slowness of Michael’s steps and the way he cast a longing glance back down the hall. “Come on lover-boy, you will only distract her from her studies. You want her to make straight A’s don’t you?”

Michael turned his head and gave Kane a mock glare, “I know how to behave.”

“So says the man that has sex in subway tunnels,” Kane shot back with a grin having read Michael’s wishful thoughts of bare skin before he’d even opened the door.

Back in the library, Skye shook his head when Aurora started flipping through the pages of one of the books, her eyes bright with curiosity. He sat down on the floor beside the stack of books Michael had set out and pointed at the spot in front of him, “Right here bright eyes... and bring the book.”

Aurora giggled at Skye’s choice of words and sat down facing him to where their knees were touching. She held the book out to Skye anxious to get started and wondering how he was going to teach her. However, instead of taking it from her, he gently pushed her hands down until the book was lying on the floor in the little circle between them.

“The first thing I want you to do is touch the book with your fingertips,” Skye instructed and smiled at her when she instantly obeyed. “Now, remember what we used to do when I’d go hunting or exploring with the boys from the tribe and you had to stay behind with the girls?”

“Yeah,” Aurora said with a conspiratorial nod. She leaned toward him and lowered her voice as if it were still their little secret. “You used to show me your memories when you got back. The memories were so vivid that I always felt like I’d been with you... sometimes I could even feel the rain on my face or smell the flowers.”

Skye nodded, “That’s right, and that’s exactly how I’m going to teach you to read. I’m going to give you my memories of learning how. Clear your mind and come into me.”

He smiled when he saw that she’d already closed her eyes. Reaching out, Skye laid his hands over hers and let his mind drift back into the past... more specifically to when he’d first found the storage room under the library. He felt Aurora’s hands flinch when she felt his loneliness but he couldn’t hide it from her.

He was lying on the old dusty sofa that had been stored in the basement of the building and out of boredom started flipping through pages of one of the many books that had pictures in it. His eyes snapped up when he heard the door above him slam followed by footsteps. Skye had promptly hid in the darkness on top of one of the high bookshelves as an elderly man came downstairs with a stack of books.

He listened as the old man muttered to himself, complaining about the wonderful classics being hidden away like something obscene and set his load of books down on one of the many boxes, coughing when a small cloud of dust rose from the impact. The man stood there a moment before lifting the top book from the pile and reading some of it out loud.

Skye was mesmerized by the spoken words enough to let his aura stretch out and touch the man’s mind while he read. Hearing the words and learning to navigate the letters using the intellect of the old man, Skye realized he’d opened a whole new world of vast information and contentment.

After the old man left the large storage area, Skye approached the stack of books and began to look through them more closely this time. It was no longer the pictures he was interested in. He’d spent the following days teaching himself to merely understand the contents of the books word for word just by letting his aura reach for the books the same way he’d reached for the man’s mind.

The words flew through his mind like a breeze of knowledge. The more he did it the faster he became until he could read an encyclopedia within the span of a few minutes and then topped it off with a work of fiction to stimulate his imagination.

“Oh wow,” Aurora breathed as she absorbed Skye’s knowledge through their link.

Skye left the past behind him and opened his eyes, “Now I want you to try it.”

He smiled again when Aurora tilted her head to the side and turned her attention to the book under her fingers. He quickly came into her mind and shared the experience as the first words she’d ever read began to drift through her mind and into his.

## Chapter 4

Needing something to do, the boys had made their way to the kitchen where Michael poured both of them a glass of red wine.

Michael inhaled deeply, still feeling a slight rush of power from the demon hunting he'd done earlier in the day. He smirked in satisfaction knowing he could give that rush a boost as soon as he got the chance to get back out there among the demons. He glanced up and caught Kane watching him closely then frowned when the blonde quickly lowered his eyes to the drink and picked it up.

"So," Michael picked his own glass up becoming suspicious, "how is it that you showed up at the same time that Aurora and Skye were coming to visit?"

Kane shrugged, "Kriss and Dean invited Tabatha and I over for dinner and they showed up so we turned it into a dinner party. They mentioned they were headed over here and I figured since I haven't really had a chance to talk to you I just wanted to... check in."

Michael frowned, "You weren't getting smokes this time?"

"Not this time," Kane answered with a grin but his humor abruptly vanished. Since Michael was already becoming paranoid he might as well do a little fishing. Not one to beat around the bush he opted for the truth. "Dean told me he saw you earlier today."

"Yeah, he did," Michael said evasively, already not liking the direction the conversation appeared to be heading.

"He also said you were drinking from a demon," Kane said bluntly and set his glass down. "When did you start doing that?"

Michael didn't miss a beat with the lie, "When the thing decided to bite me first."

Kane's lips parted to say something but what could he say to that? Picking his glass back up, he took another drink while he thought about that one.

Seeing Kane's sudden frown Michael laid it on a little thicker by adding some of the truth. "I caught the thing watching Aurora when I went to visit her earlier and followed its scent into an alley. I figured it would be an easy kill so I didn't exactly have my guard up. The next thing I knew, it had latched its teeth in to my shoulder. It pissed me off so bad that I decided to bite back... I don't think it was expecting that."

"Probably not," Kane murmured trying to hear Michael's thoughts but the only feedback he was getting was a sense of guilt and craving which was kind of confusing so he quit trying.

Michael smirked as if the whole thing was funny. "It just so happened that its blood healed my wound almost instantly so I drank until it was dead. Problem solved."

Kane cocked an eyebrow and saluted Michael with his glass before tipping it back and draining the rest of the red beverage. It sounded like a reasonable explanation but it still didn't answer the question of why he'd been such a hard ass with Dean. He started to ask Michael what the demon's blood had tasted like but decided to hold off for now. Besides... if he wanted to know bad enough, he could just bite one himself and find out.

For some misguided reason Misery's rotting face flashed in Kane's mind and he had to turn his back to Michael to keep his brother from seeing the disgusted expression that was twisting at his lips. He headed toward the refrigerator to find something that would wash the imaginary flavor out of his mouth.

Michael slid onto one of the barstools when he felt cold chills crawl across his body and he inwardly cursed when a thin film of perspiration formed on his forehead.

Talking about demon blood had only given him the urge to hunt and he desperately needed a distraction. He ran his hand through his long bangs hoping he hadn't just given Kane the idea of drinking demon blood. He could handle the power surges from it just fine but there was no telling

how Kane would handle it and the last thing they needed was another breach between LA and the demon realm.

Michael shook himself out of his thoughts and turned his head to see Kane's butt sticking out of the refrigerator.

"What the hell are you doing?" Michael demanded.

Kane reappeared with a pile of lunch meat, mayonnaise, mustard, black olives, lettuce, and a ripe tomato. "You have food... we're eating."

"I thought you just ate at Kriss' place," Michael growled still craving something much better than a sandwich. He wiped his sleeve across his forehead and focused on calming himself.

"Yeah, now I'm hungry again... and from the looks of things you've dropped a few pounds yourself," Kane retorted seeing a little bit of Michael's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality switch.

Hoping the very old and potent wine would at least take the edge off, Michael poured them both more while Kane busied himself with making food.

"So, anything else on your mind?" he asked not liking the heavy silence.

Kane frowned as he arranged his stash on the bar, "Actually yeah, there is. Dean's been hurt and I don't think it's healing all that well. It didn't look too bad when he first showed it to me but as the night wore on I began to feel the sickness inside of him."

"Samuel did manage to stab Dean with his Demon Blade," Michael offered knowing they were both there to witness the hurting that blade had put on Ren. "Is that the wound you're talking about?"

Kane nodded, "I've been thinking. If a Fallen Blade can kill Samuel... or any demon for that matter, then it stands to reason that a Demon Blade can kill a Fallen... right?"

"Right," Michael nodded having found his distraction.

Kane started slicing the tomato with obscene speed, "We both know the mess that same Demon Blade made out of Ren, but Ren isn't a Fallen and Dean is still alive. We cured Ren with the Fallen Blade which I'm assuming Dean and Kriss have since they are Fallen. But, if that's what it takes to heal Dean then they would have used it by now and they obviously haven't... so, a Fallen Blade must not be an option when it comes to healing a Fallen."

Michael's emotions stretched between anger over Samuel's attempt on Aurora, and worry for Dean's survival. "Samuel's intent was to kill Aurora with the Demon Blade so yes... it's safe to assume a Demon Blade can kill a Fallen."

"You and Dean seem to have a lot in common these days," Kane informed Michael, glaring down at the masterpiece of a sandwich he was making.

"And what would that be?" Michael asked.

"You are both pretending that you're fine when you are not," Kane said bluntly.

"Okay Doctor Feel Good, but I'm not the one dying so you might want to focus on Dean and let me take care of myself." Michael pointed out and gripped his glass a little tighter.

"True," Kane said with a sigh. He knew he'd pushed Michael enough for the moment and he was probably right about Dean needing the most attention.

"How are Kriss and Tabatha?" Michael asked to change the topic.

"Kriss is getting better," Kane smirked holding the knife up. "He doesn't flirt with Tabatha anymore which is a good thing for his continued health. As for Tabatha..." Kane sighed dramatically and wiggled his eyebrows.

"Don't want to know," Michael held up his hands in defeat.

"You would if you had more sex," Kane said coming to the quick conclusion that if Michael turned all of his attention to Aurora then whatever this demon thing was would probably be history.

Michael smirked and toasted Kane with his drink, "In an elevator... earlier today."

Kane slammed the knife down on the counter and stared at his younger brother. "Okay, first it's the subway, then the roof of Love Bites, and now you've had sex in an elevator? Who are you and what have you done with my Michael?"

“Michael has been converted into a sex fiend,” Michael answered with a straight face and stole the sandwich Kane just finished making.

“No,” Kane grumbled, “you’re an exhibitionist and a sandwich thief.”

“So, make another sandwich,” Michael offered then looked down at the one in his hand. “This is really good.”

Kane inwardly cheered that Michael was taking in something besides demon blood. He briefly played around with the idea of moving himself and Tabatha back into the house but quickly discarded the notion. If they did move back in, it might cramp Michael and Aurora’s weird sex fetishes.

Scrappy sat on the floor between them looking back and forth. When he felt they’d ignored him long enough he barked. They had food and he wanted some of it.

Kane looked down at Scrappy, “You want some of this roast beef don’t you?”

Scrappy twirled around in a circle on his hind feet while giving Kane a pitiful look.

“Here you go,” Kane said and dropped four thick slices on the floor which Scrappy began devouring right away.

Michael had just finished his sandwich when he heard Aurora’s light laughter coming from the library. He closed his eyes in enjoyment. The sound of her laughter was exactly what this cold and empty house had needed.

“What to go check on them?” Kane asked not having to be a mind reader to know what Michael was thinking. He smirked when Michael got up without answering and headed toward the door.

The two men walked back into the library and paused just inside the doorway when they saw an illumination surrounding the two Fallen where they set facing each other on the floor. There was a book hovering in the air between them and both were touching it but their eyes were closed. They couldn’t see Skye’s face at this angle but Aurora was smiling with small changes in her expression as if she were watching a movie.

Kane leaned back against the wall while Michael stood there entranced by what he was witnessing. The glowing light slowly imploded back toward their fingertips and the book descended to the floor.

Aurora’s lips parted in awe as she opened her eyes to focus on Skye. “But he left her there at the window,” she said feeling happy and confused at the same time. “Won’t they miss each other?” she grabbed the book up and hugged it as if she felt sorry for the people inside.

“You can already read?” Michael asked not quite believing his eyes.

“We kind of cheated,” Skye answered with a grin. “But to make sure she truly gets the hang of it, we started off with some of the fairy tales. Like all little girls... Disney seems to be her favorite.”

Michael approached Aurora and squatted down behind her so he could look over her shoulder at the book. His smiled softly once he realized exactly which book she was reading.

“Peter Pan. That’s always been one of my favorites,” he said gently, understanding it was probably the little boy she had felt sorry for.

Aurora smiled up at him and placed a kiss on his cheek, “Thank you for letting us come here and read your books.”

Michael was about to respond when Kane’s face was suddenly looking over her other shoulder. He scowled at the blonde wondering what he thought he was doing.

“Is that the copy I bought you in London?” Kane asked with a tilt of his head.

“Yes it is,” Michael answered. “Now please stop leaning over her like that.”

“Oh, it’s okay... I don’t mind,” Aurora said. “I still owe him for throwing him down the stairs.”

Skye frowned not having heard this story yet and leaned back on his hands trying to picture Aurora taking on the blond Sun God who was powerful enough to open portals into the demon realm.

“No worries about that love,” Kane informed her gallantly. “Michael will eventually realize I’m making a complete nuisance of myself on purpose and threaten to kill me while chasing me around the house with one of his broadswords.”

The words had barely left Kane's mouth when the tip of such a sword appeared under Kane's chin. He arched an eyebrow and slowly stood up, looking over at Michael as he did so. The two brothers stared at each other for a moment before Kane suddenly swatted the sword aside and ran like hell out the library door.

"Get back here!" Michael yelled.

"NO!" Kane yelled back. "You're gonna hurt me and I bruise easily."

Aurora and Skye remained in the library listening to the sounds of thumping before the sounds moved upstairs and more noise commenced. The Fallen looked at each other before they burst out laughing.

"Those two are funnier than I thought they'd be," Skye admitted. He hadn't really known what to expect when they'd first showed up. "You pick out the next book," he instructed nodding toward the stack.

Aurora looked through them and finally picked one that had a castle on the cover of it. Out of curiosity, she started flipping through the pages looking for pictures. She frowned not seeing any and quickly closed the book, hissing when she received a paper cut due to the quickness of her motions.

"Ouch," she frowned remembering getting such cuts from the sharp blades of grass she used to play in as a child. It had always amazed her how such a tiny little slice could sting so much.

Skye smirked watching her glare at her injured finger. "You know, the pictures you see in your mind are a lot better than anything you would find drawn in the pages anyway."

Upstairs, Kane found himself pinned to the wall in the game he and Michael were playing. He guessed he was wrong in thinking Michael was having trouble because he seemed just as much fun as he usually was.

"You bruise easily huh?" Michael mocked.

"I can still kick your ass into next week," Kane said cockily.

Michael smiled and released Kane, letting him fall to the floor. They looked at each other, Kane from the ground and Michael slowly landing on his feet. They started laughing because neither one of them had realized Michael had actually been holding Kane off the floor.

Kane was about to get up when a tantalizing scent reached him. He frowned when he noticed the obsidian color suddenly overwhelm the amethyst of Michael's eyes. He watched in morbid fascination as Michael inhaled deeply and looked over his shoulder toward the stairway.

Michael swallowed when he smelled Aurora's blood. It was a small amount but still enough to send his momentarily forgotten craving flooding back with a vengeance. With the next heartbeat, Michael traced down the hallway and disappeared from Kane's view.

All of the fun drained right out of Kane and the humor vanished from his face. The only time he'd ever ran across eyes that dark he'd been staring into the face of a demon.

"Well... that can't be good," he pointed out to the empty hallway.

Just as quickly, Kane was on his feet and following Michael down the stairs. It didn't take a rocket scientist to know what that sweet scent was and where it was coming from. He stepped into the library just in time to see Michael kneel down in a blur beside Aurora and take her hand in his.

Aurora flinched when Michael suddenly appeared beside her and took hold of her hand. The action broke hers and Skye's concentration and she wondered what he was doing until he held up her hand to inspect the small cut she'd gotten from the thin page of the book. A single drop of bright red blood had welled up and she frowned wondering if he just didn't want her to get it on his book.

Looking up into his eyes she was startled to find only small flecks of glowing amethyst scattered within a sea of darkness. "Michael?" She whispered knowing something was wrong with him.

All movement stilled as Michael slowly brought the injured finger to his lips and kissed the injury. Unable to resist the temptation, he drew the tip of her finger into his mouth and sucked on it sensuously. He wanted more of her flavor and let the edge of his fang gently glide across the cut.

Aurora gasped as heat began to spiral through her core and pool between her legs. The sensation of his tongue rubbing erotically against her finger caused her to whimper softly and she bit her lip when his sharp teeth grazed the injury, stinging and soothing at the same time.

Skye remained leaning back on his hands also watching the Sun God with rapt attention. The connection between him and Aurora hadn't completely been broken and he was inadvertently siphoning off some of what she was feeling... and it was amazing. He tried to hide the fact that his breathing had quickened by taking shallow breaths.

Michael closed his eyes and savored the small rush of power until it turned into an overwhelming craving to drain demon after demon. Noticing the deafening silence, he looked up to find Kane watching him closely from the entrance of the library. He inwardly cursed knowing he'd just given his weakness away to his very observant brother.

Kane knew for certain that Michael wasn't in his right mind but this was way out there. The moment their eyes met, Kane could see Michael's hunger as though it were something tangible... contagious and addicting. His brother had recently drained way more than just one demon and had lied about it.

His mind searched for answers and it suddenly made sense as to why Michael was drinking demon blood. If only a few drops of Fallen blood could cause this kind of reaction... then being able to drop all restraint and completely drain a Fallen's spawn would be the equivalent of dark chocolate.

Kane moved his gaze to Aurora seeing the high color spread across her cheeks and the way her breathing had become shaky. She was becoming aroused from Michael's lips on her, not understanding that if he lost his restraint then things could turn very dangerous for her. She was an innocent in all of this even though she'd inadvertently caused Michael's strange addiction.

'More proof that love is blind,' Kane thought to himself.

The floor vibrated through Kane's boots but he paid it no mind until he saw one of the books beginning to tremble out of its spot on the shelf. Glancing around the room, he noticed more than a few of the volumes shivering in place. Kane lifted his hand to push the book closest to him back in when he saw the lamp on the table near Michael start sliding across the polished surface toward the edge.

"Michael," Kane's soft whisper sounded loud in the silence of the room.

Michael could hear the warning in Kane's voice and he flinched realizing what he was doing. Drawing away from Aurora's injury, he placed a soft kiss on the tip of her finger before releasing her and forcing himself to calmly back away.

"You should be careful, sometimes the pages of these old books are sharp," he smiled distracting her from what he'd just done.

Aurora slowly drew her hand back and closed it, still feeling the heat of Michael's lips on her skin. She brought the hand to her chest and protectively shielded the wonderful feeling with her other hand before nodding at Michael with bright eyes.

"I promise to be careful," Aurora said shyly and Skye nodded his agreement. Neither one of them had noticed the vibrations in the room because their attention had been riveted on Michael's seductive kiss.

Much to Kane's relief, the light vibrations immediately ceased and the lamp stopped sliding less than an inch from its edge.

"Aurora, Skye, we will leave you to your reading while we go scout the area for anything that may pose a danger to the humans," Kane suggested, praying Michael would take the hint and come with him. "Besides, if we stay here we'll just be a distraction."

"I'd say." Skye's eyes widened realizing he'd just said that out loud. He smirked when Aurora giggled at him.

Michael was inwardly cursing himself and decided that Kane was right... leaving the room was the best idea for the moment. What he was not looking forward to was the fact that Kane would follow him and that was the last thing he needed right now.

Turning toward Kane, Michael smiled and added, "You can take the east while I search the west end of the area."

He stalked past his brother intending to do exactly as he'd just said and hoped the demons were stupid enough to be close by. He made it to the porch before his brother caught up with him and grabbed him by the arm jerking him around.

"What was that?" Kane demanded in a low hiss. "It was just a small injury, hardly worth that kind of attention."

"She was bleeding," Michael growled as though that would be answer enough... it wasn't and they both knew it.

Kane actually glared at him, "Bleeding..." he shook his head. "That's not going to do it Michael. You're acting more and more like an addict looking for their next fix and it's her blood you're addicted to." Kane steadied his gaze now that he'd figured it out. "That's why you're bleeding demons dry. Their blood is doing something to you," he accused.

Michael's face contorted with anger and he turned on Kane unaware that his eyes were now solid black. "You kill demons your way and let me kill them my way. Everyone's killing demons or haven't you heard about the damned war you started. Stop babysitting me. In case you've forgotten, I can handle myself... I did quite well while you were in the ground and nothing has changed."

Kane's eyes narrowed but he said nothing as Michael shoved away from him and stepped off the porch. He could overlook the insults but what he couldn't overlook was the blackness of his brother's eyes. This was the Michael Dean had been trying to warn him about.

Scrappy sat next to Kane's feet and whined low before looking up at the blonde man.

Kane looked down at the puppy and sighed wearily. "I know, I know... follow brother and spy on him. You and Syn must have a mental link I don't know about."

He didn't want to leave Aurora and Skye alone but he figured they'd be fine since the house was so heavily warded and luckily it looked like Michael had completely forgotten about them... at least for the time being. Deciding he'd given Michael a good enough of a head start, he traced after his brother using the blood he'd given Michael just a couple days ago as a tracker.

It didn't take Kane long to catch up, but when he did he observed discretely from a distance. What Michael was doing was wrong... well... not the killing demons part but the way he was going about it. He was using their blood like a drug and as with any drug you weighted the side effects to see if it was worth taking the pill. So far, the side effects were not looking so good.

Kane crouched on the apex of a slanted rooftop and glanced down at Michael who had slowed his pace to a brooding stride on the empty sidewalk. He felt a powerful presence behind him and stood up with a sigh.

"Will I need to interfere?"

Kane shook his head, "No papa, I've got it covered."

Soft laughter reverberated around him, "You just don't want to see Michael killed again, do you?"

"Not really," Kane sighed and looked over his shoulder. "I owe Michael this much."

"Sometimes awakening from death puts things in perspective," Syn mused but he would not take this feeling of redemption away from Kane unless he had to.

"We've tried that twice already," Kane felt the need to point out. "Tell Mom I said hi."

Syn nodded and vanished, leaving Kane alone on the roof. Turning back to Michael, he saw his brother walking up onto the porch of an old rundown house beside the railroad tracks. Kane tilted his head to the side wondering what Michael was up to.

## Chapter 5

Michael was in predator mode, bypassing several low level demons that didn't grab his interest when he suddenly slowed his pace near an old house. There... he felt it... a demon with a fair amount of power was lurking somewhere inside among the stench of rotting corpses.

A wicked smile appeared on his face. Michael approached the front door and politely knocked.

An elderly man wearing a stained shirt and frayed dress pants opened the door as far as the latch chain would allow. He eyed the well-dressed man up and down. "Whatever you're selling, I ain't buying," he slurred and brought a bottle of cheap liquor to his lips intending to spit it in the salesman's face.

Michael suddenly hit the door with his palm, breaking the chain lock and reached for the disguised demon. In one fluid movement he jerked him out the door, tossing him into the front yard like a rag doll.

Kane frowned when the old man looking every bit in his late eighties practically cart wheeled across the grass and slammed against the trunk of a tree. When he crumpled to the ground like any senior citizen would have, Kane started to stand up thinking maybe Michael had either lost his mind or made a horrible mistake.

He slowly lowered back into a crouch when the arms and legs of the body reminded him of a contortionist as broken bones righted themselves and popped back into place. The old man persona literally melted away revealing something that looked almost like a human sized bat, minus the wings.

"Gonna do that right here in public are we," Kane breathed knowing Michael was usually a hell of a lot more discreet than this when fighting demons.

The creature looked like it was made out of worn leather, its skin stretched taut over a wiry body showing a thin but defined muscle structure. The upper body appeared almost too wide for its legs to hold it upright and its fingers and toes sported long black claws. Its head was the worst, no hair whatsoever with two long pointed ears and what appeared to be a pig-like snout above two tiny rows of sharp teeth.

"Holy shit batman," Kane whispered and almost laughed at his own humor. Yeah, it was an old and cheesy joke but he didn't care... this was the perfect moment to use it.

Michael arched an eyebrow when the demon leapt at him, pushing him back against the front wall of the house with a bone jarring thud. The brick crumbled around them and Michael smirked in its hissing face.

"You're just the snack I've been looking for," Michael said and let the smirk widen so the demon could see his elongated fangs.

"We will see who eats who vampire," the demon's voice was full of conceit.

Grabbing the demon by the neck, Michael rolled against the wall but had to quickly release it when the demon's mouth opened and clear liquid began to drip hitting the sleeve of his coat. The liquid burned through the material like acid making Michael hastily discard it. He tossed the coat aside and watched, fascinated when the acid ate huge holes in the thick material.

Michael jerked his gaze back towards his opponent and growled knowing that's exactly what the demon had been up to when it had started to spit in his face.

The demon laughed and suddenly came at him, this time swiping its sharp claws through the air. Michael winced when they caught him on the arm and he could feel an intense burning where they made contact. Grabbing the demon, they tumbled down the steps and back out into the grass as they rolled, both trying to gain dominance.

The demon's acid was eating through his skin but he was healing just as quickly as the wounds could start. Michael let himself enjoy the pain and the fact that picking on the more powerful demons was definitely a learning experience and a hell of a lot more fun than the quick kills.

Michael caught the demon by both wrists in a tight grip and twisted until the bone shattered and crunched under his fingers. The demon's head snapped forward with intent to bite but Michael beat him to the punch by grabbing the head and sinking his teeth into the demon's neck. The demon screamed and tried to scratch at him with its broken hands doing very little damage.

He hadn't had time to completely drain the demon when somewhere below the pitch of the scream he heard a soft whimper from behind him and jerked his head back to look toward the source of the sound. Michael's black eyes widened and some of the amethyst resurfaced within them when he saw a young boy standing under a street lamp holding a soccer ball and wearing a sport uniform.

Michael relaxed his hold on the squalling demon when he noticed that it was him the boy was staring in horror at... not the deformed monster in his clutches.

Kane quickly rose to his feet glaring at the demon that had reverted back to its human disguise and was now crawling across the grass. "Don't even think about it ugly," he hissed softly hoping the demon would hear him.

The kid couldn't have been more than ten years old and since this was a rather safe neighborhood by human standards, he was probably on his way home from a friend's house. He regretted the fact that the humans weren't aware of the demon population. If they were, then they would know to keep better watch over their children this late at night.

A feral snarl erupted from Kane's throat when the demon ran toward the child obviously deciding the boy would be a good hostage to put between him and the vampire he was losing the fight too. Kane moved at the exact same moment Michael did. He traced from the roof hitting the sidewalk and took up the child just as Michael tackled the demon to the ground and pushed its ugly face into the pavement.

"I don't think so," Michael couldn't control his rage... it was one of the reasons he despised demons. Their need to prey on children was sickening to him and those that had taken the lives of the innocent deserved the most painful death imaginable.

His fury only fueled his blood hunger and Michael bared his fangs in a primal smile before sinking them into the back of the demon's neck. He growled in satisfaction when they actually grazed the bone of its spinal cord.

The demon thrashed on the ground, acid dripping from its claws in a vain attempt to get away. They made deep grooves in the sidewalk accompanied by the hissing noise associated with the corrosive substance.

"Shhh, it's all right. I've got you," Kane murmured softly and pressed the frightened boy's face against the arc of his neck so he wouldn't see any more than he already had. Just the sounds that the demon was making was probably enough to give a grown man nightmares... no need to add a visual.

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