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WINNING VIRGIN LOVE

Winning Virgin 2

Destiny Blaine

EROTIC ROMANCE



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Chapter 1

“So she’s leaving?” Almonzo didn’t face his brother. He held the composure of a man with influence and yet in that particular moment, he felt quite broken and anything but powerful.

“What did you expect?” Orlando demanded.

Almonzo realized his brother didn’t need to crash into a brick wall because then there would be hell to pay with the woman who shared his bed. Orlando kind of liked having his cute little bride keeping it warm for him.

Almonzo knew his brother would suffer his wife’s temper tantrums if he didn’t correct their pending problem and then it would ricochet from there. He didn’t want unnecessary headaches. His sister-in-law, Natasha, was often a general pain in the ass. Her sister, Tabitha, wasn’t much better.

Before he allowed his mind to wander with thoughts of Tabitha and the fantasies she often inspired, Almonzo turned around in a blaze of fury. “I knew she would be a little wench and she is. I anticipated hard times and she didn’t disappoint. I predicted she’d be the devil’s twin and she’s proven it to be a fact and I expected to...”

“Love her?” Orlando laughed. “And you sure as hell do.”

Almonzo closed a book with a loud bang and then tossed it across his desk. “This is your fault!”

“Mine?” The laughter grew louder as the room spun out the tension between siblings. “Do tell. I can’t wait to see where this is headed.” Orlando crossed his arms and leaned against one of the magnificent walnut desks.

“None of this would’ve happened if you didn’t tear through Las Vegas with your hips searching and chips falling wherever they may.” Almonzo’s eyes pierced through his twin’s identical pair.

With his chiseled jaw set, Orlando glared back at Almonzo. “And then you wouldn’t be able to drown in self pity because Tabitha didn’t plant *her* lips and *her hips* in *your* bed.” He shot his twin a knowing head to toe glance before he turned away. “She’s under your skin and what little blood you have left to savor, you would willingly shed to save her.”

“Don’t be so sure about that little brother.” Almonzo’s condescending tone stood on its own but since Almonzo was the older twin, if by only a minute, he took a jab at his double.

“It’s not like she doesn’t know it. Since she’s been here, you’ve pushed her away one minute and then followed her around like a blood-thirsty hound the very next.”

“A blood thirsty hound?” Almonzo didn’t like the analogy. He wrinkled his nose and then decided to give his carbon copy something to think about. “You were in a similar situation not long ago.”

“Yes, but...”

“Yes, but of course it is different, isn’t it? You were lucky enough to find your virgin bride and then lock her away in the desert until she saw things your way.” He let out a distorted sound, a cross between a grunt and a sigh. “I don’t have the same luxury. Tabitha has Natasha to protect her and never mind Mother and Father who seem to think the moon is only brighter with Tabitha under our roof.”

“You didn’t grumble when I first arrived with her.”

“I never realized she would be this difficult. Even your wife didn’t stir this much angst.” Almonzo paced a few steps and then turned back to his brother. “Yes, you went too far when you provoked the elders into a sentence better imposed on a mortal man with a shorter lifespan.”

“Natasha keeps me well entertained. I’m rather pleased with the outcome.” Orlando grinned from ear to ear.

Almonzo’s voice inflection changed. “Of course you are. You have Natasha in your bed, who is happy to be there and her vixen sister who

sticks around for one purpose—to drive me to the brink of lunacy. I imagine your life never tasted sweeter.”

The mirror images faced off. They were nose to nose with obvious sneering to remind each of the potential for battle wounds. Before sibling differences seared them both, the doors opened wide. The young men parted and separated but not fast enough. Their long, natural brown curls still swayed behind their shoulders as they tried to stand perfectly still.

Samuel Spenser joined his sons in the familiar office and if his facial expression was any indication, he disapproved of the argument he deliberately interrupted. “Good evening, boys.” He took a seat in the center of the room. Stretching his long legs in front of him, he propped his feet up on a marble-top coffee table.

The three men worked from home most of the time and enjoyed the lavish surroundings of opulent furnishings. Walnut desks were in the three corners of the triangular pod and an oriental rug in the middle lured the naked eye before inviting guests to a most comfortable lounging area. Generally, when the patriarch of the Spenser family worked, it was from this center.

Orlando joined his father in the seating area. He lounged easily on the over-sized stuffed chair. “Almonzo thinks Tabitha is the devil’s twin.”

“I imagine you never felt the same about her sister?” Samuel’s sarcasm oozed before he glanced up. Everyone in the family realized Orlando and Natasha went through their own trials before a new understanding of conquering tribulations ever began.

Almonzo joined them. “The hell he didn’t. You’re forgetting something, Father. I stayed with them. I saw firsthand what he went through and while it provided entertainment, it was not pretty but hell’s fury, Tabitha isn’t her sister. She is more difficult and far more stubborn and ...”

“He loves her more every day, yes?” Samuel looked at Orlando, the younger of the two twin brothers, and stifled a chuckle. Nodding, he continued. “It shows on you, Almonzo. Maybe there’s the problem.”

His troubles required him to wear his heart on his sleeve and he sat down on the arm of his brother’s chair ready to explain. “No. You don’t understand. She is hell on earth. The devil is a saint beside her. I try to get to know her, she spits on the ground where I walk. She tells me thirty, no, forty times a day that she’s not a virgin and if she were cursed with innocence

then she certainly wouldn't give it up to me." He rubbed his hand slowly over his face. "Why the elders did not allow me the opportunity to find a mate in Las Vegas is something I will never understand. Orlando all but chose her for me."

As quickly as he shared his sentiments, his father locked eyes with him. Of course, Orlando didn't choose Tabitha for him. Almonzo realized it because he saw her image long before he met her in the flesh. It was a fated union and one with a certain conclusion. Tabitha was his destiny.

"Ah, so she's not a virgin and this is where the problem lies?" Amused, Samuel gave his son his undivided attention.

"No, Father, the trouble is her blood is tainted never mind the other parts of her body." Almonzo stopped more words from spilling out and he stood quickly. His breath hitched in his chest making it impossible to breathe. "Damn it all!" His eyes turned a shade of lavender, only for a moment, and he turned toward the door. "If you must listen, you might as well show your face!" His arm rose and fell as he waited for her to appear.

The other two Spenser men stood as Tabitha reluctantly peered around the door. "What's wrong, love? Smell my blood, did ya?" Tabitha forced a thick Scottish accent. She managed it quite well.

Driven by pure spunk, the gorgeous siren trotted into the room with golden locks flowing behind her. If she didn't have the sinful body of a woman, age would've been difficult to determine because of her youthful appearance. The twinkle in her eye proved mischief fueled her twisted little brain and Almonzo provided motivation to ensure it worked overtime.

Almonzo growled. A low moan of pure dread and without a true hint of sexual intent, it still held a masculine and perverse meaning all the same. "Now do you see what I mean?" A sigh escaped his lips as his jaw and lips seemed to work against his inner animosities. He felt certain his expression displayed carnal hunger. It was an involuntary action, or more appropriately, *reaction*.

The young woman remained full of herself and she shot him a purpose driven smile before she looked straight at his cock. She knew how to clear a room with sudden fits of anger or she became the center of attention just by entering one. Her confidence held Almonzo at bay while her beauty stripped him of any practical defenses and when she gazed at certain parts of his body, she shackled him to his own unbridled emotions.

Tabitha rushed around the area in a hurry. She patted Orlando on the shoulder and then slid a kiss on Samuel's cheek. "I wanted to say goodbye." She stared at Almonzo and invited the challenge whether she acknowledged it or not.

"Goodbye?" The eldest of the three vampires took her hand in his. "We'll be most disappointed." A dimple formed in his cheek and lingered just a second before he continued. "*If* you choose to leave."

She quickly released his hand and stared straight ahead before she began working her hair up on top of her head. She twisted it until it piled high into a fashionable little style. She suddenly looked much taller than her five-foot-four frame with her new beauty-do and high heels too. Ocean blue eyes sparkled with defiance. They always held pure devilment.

"The hair becomes you, darling." Almonzo started them off. He wanted his father to see precisely what he meant.

"I knew you'd think so. Of course, *this is all for you*." Her hands moved over her hips in a prissy gesture and Almonzo's mouth watered as he watched. He really didn't care if everyone noticed.

The other Spenser men chuckled.

She continued. "After all, everything I do, *I do for you*." She shot him a devious little wink before she helped herself to a glass of water from the wet bar.

She returned to find her usual seat beside the head of the family. The young woman wormed her way into Samuel's heart soon after she walked through the imperial doors of the Spenser Edinburgh estate. It wasn't an easy task because he didn't typically show affection, but somehow Tabitha earned more and more of the patriarch's admiration. They bonded and Samuel Spenser treated her like family.

Almonzo studied her for a few quiet seconds. Her game was off. She continued to put on a show for the others but he knew something didn't seem quite right. Almonzo looked her up and down as he tried to figure it out.

She sat next to his father sipping her water. One leg crossed over the other and moved with an easy bounce. She didn't realize what a glorious image she offered. It wasn't the only thing providing a shake and, deliberately, his eyes dwelled just a little too long at her very full breasts. He knew his lingering gaze called out to the heart and soul of a vixen. His

temptress all but felt the warmth of a vampire's stare. He wouldn't care to wager large amounts on the fact as he watched her cheeks turn pink.

"So..." She shifted her weight back on one palm, leaning slightly to the side with only her arm there to support her. "I noticed there's a supplement out for you, Almonzo." She flashed a wicked smile, criminal to the point of driving an immediate execution. "You might want to ask Tate if he has various flavors in stock since you'll be sipping on a lot of those cocktails in the near future."

The caretaker wasn't around to hear Tabitha's remarks. Almonzo realized he would enjoy the underlying message. The family butler would find them quite amusing. Almonzo's lovely mate lived within his reach yet the only plasma resource he found was in the bottom of a supplement glass.

He thought of a quick comeback for Tabitha but he wasn't sure he wanted to use it in front of his father and brother. The supplements were made-to-order for vampires in need of a feed and sadly, since the broad in front of him invaded his private space, never mind his heart, it was the only blood-to-order keeping him sane, or alive.

His eyes narrowed as he thought about how he wanted to handle her. Her leg moved slower with deliberate calculation. She knew when he decided to go in for a kill; she was sunk, because he saw the proof of it flash in her eyes. She feared what came next. He saw her jaw twitch and swore her delicate little chin quivered. It only charged his determination.

"Sipping on cocktails, my love, is something I've been doing a lot here lately. Ask Orlando. I leave every evening after all bad boys and naughty women are tucked back in for the day. So you see, the supplement there remains untouched." He indicated with his forefinger while nodding in the direction of the tea cart service set up with a beautiful display of fruits as well as the damning supplement meant only for Almonzo.

Jealousy. He tried everything else over the last three months, so he might as well use the one element that seemed to appeal most to a mortal woman. He failed miserably.

"Well, darling, if you want to taste the blood of a real woman, then I suppose you'll have to kiss a lot of pigeons in skirts before you find one who will ever quench your thirst." She smiled sweetly as her leg came to an abrupt halt.

Maybe he wasn't as unsuccessful as he originally thought. Her tone carried as deadly more than rebellious.

Their father stood up, bent down to kiss Tabitha on the cheek and then nodded toward Almonzo, the son he likely dubbed as the troubled one. Orlando didn't have a care in the world after claiming Tabitha's sister as his mate. Then again, Orlando never carried burdens. It was the reason they all ended up in this mess in the first place. Orlando lost a pile of family money in Las Vegas and as punishment, the elders handed down an unusual order—mating for eternity.

Instructed to find a virgin bride in a city where innocent women were seldom found, Orlando returned to Las Vegas with one objective. He searched for a virgin winner to claim as his life partner. While the city hummed with losers, one woman hit the jackpot in more ways than one. Almonzo almost laughed as he now watched his brother with utter amusement. Natasha made sure she kept her vampire sated, if nothing else. Too bad her sister wasn't as easily persuaded to become his mate.

"I'll let you two work this out." Samuel glared meaningfully at his other son but Orlando didn't budge. He only crossed his arms and settled into his chair. He planned to stick around and watch the show and Almonzo assumed Tabitha planned to give them one.

Tabitha took the time to bring Orlando into the conversation as soon as the older man exited the room. "Why don't you tell your brother that I know what he does at night because I've had the occasion to run into him right after sunset and it isn't pretty. The women he flirts with are just *damn right ugly*."

The *brother* wasn't going to voice his opinion and suddenly didn't seem quite so eager to stick around for the pending theatrics. He scratched his head and looked down at his shoes.

Almonzo smirked. "Damn-right ugly, huh? Well, I know one thing; they're *downright* willing too."

The leg swing began again. Forceful and hard, she moved her calf to the tempo of the Russian tunes Tate blared through the intercom system on most days. She took a deep breath and Almonzo's satisfaction was hard to contain. He wanted her to fire back but she moved on to the next topic.

"So, which one of you handsome rogues would like to drive me to the airport?"

Orlando stood up with the obvious noticeable. “If anyone is going to take you, Almonzo will. I think your sister is calling me.” Since Orlando discovered his life partner in Natasha, half the time he walked around the house with bloodshot eyes and a hard dick. Trying to hold his hands in front of himself to prevent further embarrassment, he turned to his identical. “What can I say? I just want the same for you, true bliss.” He laughed as he headed out the door with nothing but bedding his wife on his easy-to-read mind.

Tabitha looked away and the blush of her skin made Almonzo stand at attention with full intentions of his own. She glanced up at him on an apparent dare from within. On rare occasions, she proved easy to read. Most of the time, he couldn’t tell if she liked him, hated him or just loved to dislike him altogether.

“I’m packed and I booked the midnight red-eye back to the States.”

“Did you?” He dismissed her with body language by returning to the pinnacle point of the room. He sat down on the edge of his desk and casually crossed his arms and ankles.

“We were expecting you to be around for awhile.” He began with an easy approach. He thought it might be worth a shot.

“No, love, you expected me to be blood bait. But let me remind you—”

“I know. Believe me, I know. You’ll poison me with yours.” He finished the sentence for her. He’d heard it a million times and he would never tire of hearing it if she would only try it once. The thought offered inspiration but he didn’t act on it. He easily gained his father’s permission to restrain her right after she arrived in Scotland but he never wanted to force her hand or lock her in a room, which actually worked well for Orlando. Almonzo wanted Tabitha to make the choice to stay but now, he was out of options.

She cleared her throat. “I think if circumstances were different, I might have been more...”

“Agreeable?” He resisted the urge to laugh. “I doubt it, because it isn’t in your personality.” He walked over to her with a slow, deliberate stride. “You’re defiant and you know it. You like a challenge but you want it on your terms.”

She wasted little time moving away from him. She immediately started for the door.

He grabbed her from behind and she wheeled around with an arm extended, ready to bring down a quick blow. He caught it mid-air. “Tabitha, do not strike unless you want a salacious counterattack.” He warned her with a tone he never used with her before and it only inspired the machine behind the motive. “I will swat back in the barest of places.” His upper lip curled to prevent his fangs from dropping. Nonetheless, he felt them underneath his swollen gum.

Tempered by desire raging out of control, he wanted her to realize she now treaded on a very different terrain. The new terms she set in motion piqued and then altered ground rules. She could thank her sassy little mouth for the slight adjustments.

“You wouldn’t dare.” After a few tugs, she relented proving she knew something changed when she threatened an unexpected leave. Perhaps it was her initial goal all along.

A firm grip only reminded him of facts once he felt her smooth skin under his fingertips. His soul, what he possessed of one, was already stamped by her insignia. He sure as hell didn’t want her hand imprint on his cheek. It would ignite anger and with it a lust-filled frenzy followed. Then, he would force her with some measure of contempt only because he first wanted her willing consent.

In the beginning, he did not want to take her if she opposed, but now she played with fire—his heat. It was possible, though doubtful, that she didn’t recognize the flames that now engulfed her because in the past, Almonzo kept his lust in check.

“Provoke me again, love and you’ll find out.”

Her body went limp under his verbal subpoena. Still, her eyes didn’t submit to the new order he deliberately set. “You can’t make me do anything I don’t want to do.”

“No. You’re right. I cannot. Well, I could and probably should, but I will not. Call me old-fashioned.” He thought one thing, said another and then mused over her fighting spirit. He wanted one taste of it. A simple sip of energy shooting through the woman’s distorted veins would be enough to satisfy him for a day, maybe two.

“Old-fashioned? You’re more like a bygone. After all, vampires are supposed to be extinct!” She allowed the remarks to fall from her over-sized and apparently over-confident chest and lungs.

He didn't waste time showing her something to prove her wrong. He twisted her body to his, melding it with a strong hold meant to bring bodies together for more intimate touching. "I think somewhere someone lied to you. As you can see, I'm anything but dead and right now, I am more alive than I have ever felt in my life."

His cock settled against her center. Clothing provided separation. It didn't prohibit stimulation. It washed over her quickly. If a tight upper lip and her knee to his groin allowed a better indication.

"Holy shit!" He doubled over in pain as he dropped to his knees. Completely down on the ground with the force he caught below the belt, he moaned out in agony. "Crippling me will not help things, love!"

"Don't you ever use your dick to vindicate yourself or the terms you want to set with me!" She shouted down at him and he quickly decided to bring on the hell. She deserved it and as far as he was concerned, even asked for it by name.

"Screw you." He grabbed both her ankles and her ass landed quickly beside his knees.

"Ouch!" Tears didn't spill on impact but her eyes watered soon after her unexpected landing. "Oh, hell. I can't move." She stared straight ahead. "I can't move, I tell you!" The moans and groans were real but oddly enough, she seemed rather stunned. The tears, while restrained for the first few moments, fell with the agony of defeat as well as the earned pain.

He watched the first one drift over her cheek and felt some measure of guilt. It was still hard to carry all of the blame when a woman used the force of a man's will against him. Now, he carried it in the pit of his gut.

"Damn you! My ass is molded to this floor! Ouch!" She continued to scream. "Tate! Help me! Help!" She screamed out for the family caretaker, another one in the household who quickly came whenever she beckoned or called. In fact, Almonzo felt like an outsider looking in, since the woman seemingly held everyone in his life under her spell.

"I despise you Almonzo Spenser! Damn you to your forbidden peace!"

"Go ahead, use condemnation all you want. It's not going to help us out here, Tabitha. You understand this already. Natasha told you everything." Still doubled over, he placed his palms down on the floor beside her butt and pushed himself up. He bowed his back as the pressure took him to a different position. He rolled his shoulders up and over before he tossed his

hair out of his face. "Damn it all!" The pain still existed. The woman knew how to disarm her man whether she wanted to claim him or not.

He stared down at her. For a moment, he really wanted to help her. That is, until the true ache of having his balls kicked upward brought him right back down from the pain. After shouting out his agony and heartfelt misery once more, he offered a solution. "Would you please consider a truce?"

"What is it that you don't understand?" The tears began to use her cheeks as landing docks. "I cannot fucking *move*! I couldn't care less about arguing with you right now, Almonzo."

He gave her a bewildered look and that's when it really sank in. "Your tailbone?"

"How should I know? Just help me, please. This is torture!"

Forgetting about his own problems or the main vein she drained of any remote possibility of immediate pleasure, he groaned. He forced himself up once again on unsteady feet.

Tate quickly entered the room with beads of sweat over his brow and a look of astonishment. "Is there something I can do to help?" Forever the caretaker, Almonzo knew Tate's sixth sense was alive when he showed up with wild eyes fully prepared to face the worst. After all, Tabitha squealed and yelped like a piglet suited for slaughter. He smiled at the thought and almost told her of the mental contrast knowing a swine comparison would send her into complete orbit.

"Sure, can you possibly go to the Board of Elder Appeals with me? I need this woman out of here before we kill each other." Sarcasm thick in his voice, he bent down to pick her up and she immediately clawed him. He turned his cheek to look the other way but the hellion still drew what little blood he possessed.

He imagined his lavender ice eyes now bulged to the brink of insanity. The woman in his arms pushed him there with a smile. In fact, she eloquently traced her fingernails across his chest in a back and forward fashion most would translate as sharpening her hooks before going for more flesh.

As soon as she was snug in his arms, the tears were gone and the screeching sound of pain diminished. He started to carry her toward the guest quarters she occupied.

Suddenly, he stopped in his tracks. "Fuck it."

He felt her breathing pick up with slight understanding. It didn't deter him or the course he intended to take. He didn't look down at her for approval because he wouldn't find it. He didn't try to analyze what he felt or question where it all came from because to do so would only waste more time.

It was day ninety-one, not that he placed time limitations on her, but their relationship wasn't progressing and the businessman within liked to see improvements. It was time to cut the games out of the equation and long past the moment of truce. They lived through and survived enough foreplay. It was time for a more intimate courtship.

Tate looked like an antsy pup ready to chase its first kitten. He practically foamed at the mouth in anticipation of the orders he fully expected to fall from Almonzo's mouth. "Please run Tabitha a sitz bath in my tub."

"I think not!" She began to squirm. "You will not use my ass to your advantage!"

He expected her to call foul but warded it off by pure arrogance and determination. He was capable of ignoring a woman and her female fits, especially if it benefited him to do so and in this situation, he realized it would.

He laughed openly at her statement after he caught the way he could turn it around on her. "I will most definitely find the advantages in *using your ass* and darling, I plan to start doing so as soon as possible."

Amused, he watched her temperature rise. He had to love the woman in his arms because if he didn't, he'd take her against her will just to prove how much he wanted to use her bodily gifts for his ultimate pleasure. He sneered when he thought of the strong feelings he had for Tabitha. It was the curse of the male mates. They often loved their life partners long before there were mutual feelings to explore.

He picked up his pace, following Tate at a close distance. "After you have Tabitha's bath drawn, please move her things to my room and cancel her flight to the States. She won't be able to sit in the tub alone, much less enjoy a long flight headed for nowhere in particular."

Seething eyes seared his skin. He felt the smoldering heat coming off her body and with any luck, she'd let him see just how hot and bothered a woman with a broken ass could be with a little inspiration.

“Fuck you, Almonzo.” Through gritted teeth, she managed to throw out what he translated as a seductive little phrase.

“Yes, love. Fuck you too.” The phrase held promise.

They stopped right outside the master suite and he provided rest assurance. “And fuck we shall, right after we make sure your ass can handle me.”

Chapter 2

Almonzo gently placed her on his bed and fought back his desire to caress her. It was significant having her there without a fight but it was also misleading. He tempted fate, one he didn't quite earn if he thought she'd stay in his bed without a whimper or an arsenal loaded with threats. He made the mistake of showing his hand. Orlando made similar errors when he pursued Natasha. Of course, they didn't take three months to work out the kinks in their relationship.

"You think I'm staying here?" She questioned.

"I know you are."

He looked back toward the door and hoped Orlando had Natasha on the way to help with her bath. Otherwise, he'd be forced to soothe her in ways she would not like, hardly an imposition for him.

Tate strolled out of the bathroom and smiled. "Tabitha, you'll find your therapeutic waters are ready." He nodded at Almonzo and added, "I left a bottle of wine from the family cellar along with two glasses." He loved to stir up trouble but while the number of goblets held meaning for Tabitha, the "family cellar" insinuation provided another. It was a code used to let Almonzo know Tabitha was going to be sedated.

Almonzo watched as the realization of what happened next tempted her to fight against it. He rubbed his chin and resisted the unexplainable laughter hanging in his lungs.

"Priceless." He finally let the words fall when Tate closed them off from the rest of the world.

Tabitha looked around the room. Almonzo noticed her approval as she studied the elaborate furnishings. While the Spenser home was adorned with antiques from all eras, Almonzo's quarters contained modern day motif with a good mix of yesteryear's finest. "You people live large, huh?"

Almonzo understood what she meant. His room showed off their wealth as much as the rest of the mansion and from the state-of-the-art electronics to the Pablo Picasso originals, his personal space housed a great display of the money he kept as his disposal. "We don't want for much."

"Really? Is that so? I tend to disagree since I happen to know you want me." Her eyes danced, her head tilted and her mouth formed a full pout. It held as intentional since he really thought of hers as the naughtiest of all delicious offerings.

"More than you could possibly know." *That's right, love, play me for an idiot with a hard dick.* He was amused at how quickly she wanted to begin another series of games.

"So you don't have to wait now, hmmm?" She motioned for him but he resisted the little forward and back movement of a forefinger ready to hook him with her dangerous charms. She only planned to leave him dangling from the turn-on fueled by contempt. He wasn't stupid. He watched her anger brew when he made the change from her room to his.

"I can keep my distance. Patience is something I have plenty of and I see little reason to rush things *now*." It happened to be true if the past three months were any indication.

"And I guess you'll lie to me every chance you get?" A wicked little tongue swiped twice at the corner of her mouth before settling on the rim of her top teeth.

"You better believe it. I like to keep *my women* guessing." He was ready. His cock was aimed and daring to fire but that wasn't going to happen without a war of words, or a battle of bodies.

He took his time undressing her with his eyes, stalling until his sister-in-law came to rescue them from one another. He disappeared behind the bathroom door long enough to gain some measure of composure and to make sure the sitz bath wasn't too warm.

"What are you doing in there, lighting candles?" The playful tone under her feminine voice was more seductive than he ever recalled.

"No. I'm checking the water. I wouldn't want you to burn that hot little ass of yours." He winked as soon as he reappeared and stared back at the bedroom door again before running his hand over the nape of his neck.

"Of course you wouldn't. Being the studly vamp-man that you are, you can help me break my tailbone but you wouldn't want to burn my bottom,

now would you?" A sassy little siren, her smartass comment came at the price of an unwanted trip to the tub, one she *would* take with him.

The decision was made before he heard Natasha's voice on the other side of the door. He would help Tabitha himself and to hell with being a gentleman and to hell with the elders who ordered him to take her as his wife. It was time to do things his way. He was tired of the rules she set in their games. It was time to have some fun.

Almonzo kept his back to her until he decided on his approach. He didn't want to frighten her but he damn sure wanted to have her. "First of all, your mouth is going to get you in trouble." He strode over to the door and turned the lock while speaking to the woman on the other side, before she even had a chance to knock. "Natasha, never mind. We're fine in here!"

He turned back with a quick snarl and a deliberate show of teeth.

"Oh no...oh no you don't." Tabitha's eyes held the newfound recognition. "Natasha! Come here! Help! Don't leave me!" She screamed with the realization.

A knock-knock turned into a tap-tap-tap and then a fist against the door. "Almonzo! I'm warning you, this is my sister you're playing with in there!"

Let her rant and rave all she wanted. Her lungs could rip with the warnings. Bloody hell, it was too late. Her dear little sister pissed off the wrong damn vampire. "Ah, ladies, play *is* what I intend to do." Carnal thoughts ran rampant as he shouted back over his shoulder making sure Natasha realized as much as Tabitha, the end and the beginning were near.

He heard his brother and Tate on the opposite side of the door. Natasha sounded furious. He wasn't sure why. She'd been there before with Orlando. Her sister wasn't in harm's way. Not really.

"Natasha! Help me!" Tabitha shrieked.

He went back into the bathroom and again Tabitha didn't have the good sense to stay silent. "What are you doing in there? Answer me!"

He reappeared. "Why, darling, I'm lighting candles. Just be patient. This new season is all we have now." He smirked and disappeared again.

"Almonzo! I am not having sex with you!"

"I know this, love. You couldn't if you wanted to, because remember?" He taunted her with false truths she wanted him to believe. "Your ass is broken. Shattered, in fact. I'm certain of it. Really, I am." He casually walked back into the bathroom.

He reappeared in a plush terry cloth robe and he could see a combination of lust, fear and an untrained wrath just beginning to rear its ugliness in her glare. The rage worried him, and it also invited.

She tried to scoot back on the bed. "I am capable of a bath without help and certainly without this sort of unnecessary charade."

"I'm sure you are." He reached for her and she slid away. "Get away from me!"

"When hell comes to reclaim you, I'll move aside, until then, you, my little wench, are all mine for the taking." His eyes burned from a mix of pleasure and pain.

"I'm hurt, damn you!" Her leg extended to kick at him. He caught her by the ankle and pulled her to the end of the bed.

Wiggling from left to right and right to left, she struggled hard against his closed hand.

"Stop it now, Tabitha." His eyes felt heavy and he stared through a thick glaze of conflict. He moved forward as he grasped the execution of quick decisions. Did he allow her to see the solid pink and lavender shade of lust mixed with anger or did he turn her ass-up and carry her off to the bath? He decided on the one that offered the most amusement and didn't waste time taking action.

Before she had the chance to prevent it, he tossed her small body over one broad shoulder. Her belly snug against him, his left hand pressed down on her lower back and his right pinned her ankles firmly against his side. He knew if he didn't hold her tight, she would deliver a violent kick. The stiff dick he wanted to find whenever he was with her felt weighted now with the painful reminder of how skillfully she empowered a loaded foot.

"Put...me...down!" She paused between each word before she quickly added, "Gently."

He set her down on a bench in front of a huge bay window. Her eyes drifted to the skylight showcasing a full moon. "Great. Just what I need, even the universe is on your side."

He sprinkled rose petals into the tub, turned off the overhead light and the room lit up with instant romance. "Now, let me take a look at that pretty little backside of yours."

"Like hell you will."

"Trust me, I can tell you the verdict with one glance."

“You’re not a doctor.” She shook her finger at him vehemently. “And you aren’t looking at my butt.”

“The hell I’m not. In fact, gawking comes to mind.” He ran the pad of his thumb over his lower lip. “I’m going to enjoy spanking it silly for every lie *you’ve* ever told *me*.”

“Lie? I don’t tell fibs!”

“You do. You’re good at it too.”

“The hell I do. What on earth would I have to lie about?”

“Well, for starters,” he took his time pointing out the obvious, “You didn’t break your ass. Your tailbone isn’t fractured or else the tears wouldn’t have stopped when I picked you up to carry you off to my room. Then there’s the more noticeable action. You damn sure wouldn’t have been able to move your pretty little bottom across my bed when I reached for you.”

Her eyes glassed over and her nostrils flared.

“Now, let’s see. What else.” His thumb moved back and forth again over his lip, indicating deep thought. “That flight you scheduled? You know the one, the one that was going back to the States with a nowhere destination? You never booked it.” He laughed because he recognized her anger. He almost tasted the animosity in the air. “Tate won’t find a flight to cancel because there is *not* one in your name.”

“Why would I lie about my booty?” She spat the words at him, obviously determined to avoid the question about her so-called travel plans.

“Because your damn backside was not hurt or in need of...repair.” He liked where he was going with this and he laughed again to prove it. “Your pride was the problem. I’ve noticed this trait in mortal women. When the female ego is properly injured, it’s an unbearable punch for someone like you, so you just came up with a practical reason to protect your coveted vainglory. You fibbed and exaggerated well enough to benefit us both so I thank you.”

Her mouth opened. This time her rebound was slower than usual and typically she proved to be a fast thinker. It must have just been an off-day for her overall.

He held up a solitary finger. “And I want to add, you did it beautifully. I almost bought it, about your ass, that is. I never thought for a second you had a flight booked.”

Her eyes narrowed. “I did have a ticket.”

“Sweetheart, that you do have. You’ve had one of those since day one and you can use it without any problem and book your return trip home anytime you want to go, although I’ll likely follow close behind. What I’m trying to say is that you did not book a flight today.”

“I did.”

“You didn’t. I know this for a fact.”

“You don’t know anything.” She snapped her response and stood up to look closer at the unique skylight. “Do you people have something for triangles?”

“You people?” He shrugged off the remark that nipped at him and walked closer. “Our *people* have a thing for beautiful women.” He reached out with his forefinger and thumb. He touched her hair by running a few strands of it through his fingertips. The silky locks felt warm to the touch.

“I’m talking about the hole in the ceiling.”

“I know.” He immediately backed away from her before he lost himself in just one simple exposure. “If you didn’t have a hole in your head, you’d pay attention to what you’re missing. Dipping your delicate little toes beyond the rose petals would become a priority. Just so your pretty little tail can find healing comfort, of course.”

Her distracted eyes went back up to the opening in the ceiling. “I’m sorry about the ‘you people’ slam.”

“There. Now, that’s a real start.” He crossed his arms.

“Don’t push it.” She backed away from him. “And you’re right. I lied about my butt, so I won’t need any help taking a whatever you call it.”

“Sitz bath?” He held her in his focus. *The little witch strikes again*. “So you’re sorry for classifying me in an unattractive way, you lied when it benefited you, apologized when you thought it would save you, and now you want me to move my ass out of here so you can take advantage of those rose petals in *my* bathtub?”

She laughed. “Pretty much. Yeah. Gee, I can’t get anything by you, now can I?” She raised her hand and slapped it against her thigh.

“No. You can’t. Strip. *Now*.”

She swallowed hard. “I will not. And,” she added with too much confidence, “you will not make me.”

“Fine, then I’ll enjoy your bath and you can sit there and watch. After all, your backside is in fine shape and my manhood is severely—” He

stopped himself from walking into a battle of words he would lose if he revealed a new truth. She brought about unforgettable pain when she kicked him but if he could fuck her, he would find an immediate and speedy recovery.

“Severely what? Small?” She threw her head back and laughed. “I know you were trying to impress me earlier ...”

Before she finished what she wanted to say in the most insulting of phrases, he picked her up, sat her on the vanity, plucked her shoes from her feet, tossed her over his shoulder and then plopped her tiny tail in the tub, clothes and all. She splashed as she found herself submerged in deep water.

“Now, darling. Strip and enjoy your bath. Maybe while you’re in there, you’ll learn how to tempt a man. I assure you it won’t be with insults.” Before she picked up a bottle of shampoo or something else to toss at him, he disappeared behind the bathroom door, taking the time to slam it on his way out.

“I hate you!” She screamed out at the scented air. “Damn you, Almonzo! I said I hate you!”

He listened to her scream her little lungs out for a few minutes and laughed to himself as she slapped around in the water. He knew he missed one of the most entertaining of shows but somehow resisted the urge to join her. Instead, he waited patiently right outside the door.

By the humming sound of her voice, a half-hour of a luxurious bath and a sedative in fine wine, Tabitha sounded like a woman in better humor. He finally heard the swatting sound of wet clothing as she slapped it against the side of the bathtub. After he was certain she was relaxed and ready for company, he called for Tate. Almonzo was ready to show her just exactly what she would miss if she missed out on him.

Chapter 3

Tate pushed a tea service cart into the room and smiled. “So, finally, she’s willing. If you don’t mind my saying so, it certainly took you longer than Orlando. I’m quite surprised.”

Almonzo gritted his teeth. “Tate, I do mind. My sex life or the bedding of a life partner is not your concern.” Tate made a valid point, something Almonzo decided must have placed him at the butt of family jokes.

Orlando and Natasha made their joining look simple. After the last few weeks and what he experienced with Tabitha, he deserved her as a lifetime reward. His little siren was an adventuresome woman and he believed she only wanted to be pursued but God help her, once he had her where he wanted her, he planned to chase her for a lifetime. His cock would stay fisted in his hand as he stalked her out of one century and then fucked her right into the next.

The older man’s smile only widened. “Of course it isn’t my business and when you finally don’t need a supplement for your nourishment, let me know. For now, you are pale and weak. It’s there on the tray for you since you *obviously* need to drink it.” He nodded politely and then excused himself.

Almonzo loathed the plasma gunk. He bypassed the tall glass and defiantly left it there. If he couldn’t talk Tabitha into a sip of her sweet nectar, he damn sure wasn’t going for a substitute, at least not yet.

Almonzo uncovered the fruit and cheese tray. He arranged a plate of assorted treats with several chocolate-covered strawberries and then he filled a flute with champagne. He moved into the bathroom slowly, cautiously. He entered the room ready to find a willing woman. Instead, he found sleeping beauty. The sedative worked its magic all too well.

Quietly, he placed the champagne and strawberries next to the tub. His eyes drifted over her. The bubbles and rose petals made for difficult

visibility. He was certain of the pleasures found underneath them but if he strained to see the beauty found there then his bold maneuver to slip in beside her would've been postponed. He took off the robe, the one he put on for nothing more than appearances, and then slide he did—right into the water without so much as a splash.

It was hard, he decided, to be quiet or still in water. He wanted to just sit close and watch. Take in the sight of heaven before she decided to wake up and stir a little hell. And she would. Sweet mercy, would she ever.

While he kept an attending eye on beauty's rebel, he noticed what he had to work with once the opportunity allowed it. Anytime he looked at her, he saw the face of an angel and he also knew, because he'd watched her in his dreams long before meeting her, she'd have a savage body meant for pleasing a man. With one knee showing, tipping the bubbles, he wasn't sure resisting a full flesh visual proved anything significant.

Her round face and button nose struck him as perfect and the long neck she sported defined pure perfection. He strained his own in hopes of a better view. Damn Tate for placing the bubbles next to the bath. Even when the man wasn't around, he seemed to screw things up for him.

While it was difficult to leave her body for a second, he wanted to see, was dying to know, what she had on underneath the clothes covering her. His breath caught in his lungs when he saw it. Hot pink panties and a lacy bra to match called out for his fingertips.

He reached out of the tub and touched the silk. *Damnation*. The best part wasn't what the garments looked like but what they felt like. He tossed them back to the tile step where she'd left them and laughed when he saw the ass of the panties. Like he needed something else to fuel a blazing fire, she tempted him without as much as a word ever spoken. "Bite this" was the logo stamped on the butt.

"Gladly." He chuckled again and, on instinct, reached for a leg only inches away from him. After he had her in his palms, the only choice was to massage, because Tabitha started to move and wake up.

"Damn it all!" She moved her leg and quickly stood before she thought and gave him the best bird's-eye view ever.

"Holy sweet mercy." His voice caught in his lungs. "Quite impressive for a woman who supposedly does not want a man to see what she's hiding." His balls tightened with an unfathomable heat lashing at them.

Damn, did they hurt. He was rock hard with solid strength and dying to show her *his* best assets, since she was kind enough to show hers first.

She sat back down fast and covered her breasts with her hands. “What are you doing in here?”

“Now there’s the sweetest question you’ve ever asked and I’ll just bet you have an idea or two.”

“When hell freezes over, then I’ll thaw out some tempting ideas.” She glared at him. “I feel violated.”

“Do you, now?” He rubbed his palm over the length of his face.

“Yes, I do.” The color flooded over her in patches.

“Well, explain to me how in the hell you can feel violated, as you so eloquently put it, when I’m sitting here in my fucking swim trunks?” He stood up to display a pair of long swim shorts. They still revealed too much, something he never stopped to consider when he stood up to prove he was an honorable man.

Making a splash, she released her arms and then covered her mounds completely from view by sliding further into the water. “You underestimated your abilities to hide obvious admiration! Your swim shorts, I don’t care about! It’s the *swimming trunk* I’m worried about!” She leaned her head back and closed her eyes tightly. “Please! Get out of my bath!”

Almonzo sat back down fast and a spray of water splattered to the floor. “Okay, enough.” He didn’t say anything else, nothing at all. He felt like they should either make plans to move forward or she should just get the fuck out. He didn’t have the stamina for anymore games. Not now. He released a long overdue sigh. He was going forward with a seduction ready or not. It was a must. He saw what he’d been missing. As far as he was concerned, it was a true shame, if not an unpardonable sin that he waited in the first place.

“What do you mean?” It took her about five seconds to comment.

He moved closer to her. He had the champagne flute between steady fingers and the chocolate-covered strawberries were close enough to grab one. He dipped the seedy fruit carefully over the rim of the glass and then smoothly, and he congratulated himself on his effectiveness, moved it to her lips. “Open.”

Her mouth formed a tighter line with just a slight movement.

He set the champagne down, held the berry to her lips and pressed once more. “Open, please.”

Still nothing.

“Now, *sweetheart*,” his sarcasm carried, “or else, I may find another place for this *luscious* berry.” His other hand dipped under the water and her eyes gave everything away. He moved closer and positioned his hand right above the only womanly cave he ever wanted to visit again. He didn’t touch her there, only allowed her to realize when he wanted his way, he generally took extreme measures to get it.

“Lay one hand on me and I scream.” Her eyes darkened with the lust she tried to deny, the wanton need she tried to avoid. The obvious infatuation covered her forehead with sweat beads and drove her body to shift to where her legs were only closer. Everything her lips told him she didn’t desire, her body only trumped with a different truth.

“Then I’ll scream, too.” He smirked. “No one will come but you.” He swatted her inner thigh with a quick clasp. “I promise. *Now bite*.” He shoved the berry into her mouth and then he carefully placed the glass in her hand. “Drink.”

“I see what Natasha meant. Do this. Do that. It’s what you Spensers want in a woman, huh?”

“I’ve never heard a complaint. Maybe there’s a *first time for everything*.” He pushed himself out of the warm heat that surrounded them in the tub. It was only because the tepid water combined with his personal male heat made his head swim.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Her eyes darted back to the berries.

“Like those, do you?” He reached for another one, dipped it again in her glass and fed it to her.

“What did you mean by a ‘first time for everything’ remark?”

She was going to wish she’d let it ride, he thought, before saying, “I know you’re a virgin.”

Swallowing hard, she looked past him again at the plate of berries. Her mouth fell open slightly and once more, he found she didn’t know what to say.

He took a bite of the berry and moved it to her mouth. She caught it between her lips and sucked slowly. His hand stayed in place until he felt her wicked little tongue on his thumb, forefinger and middle finger. He was completely passion-driven after the fact. It was the unleashing of the male vampire.

She chewed, then she swallowed hard. "I can't discuss this with you."

"Who says we have to talk about anything at all?" He took a sip of her champagne and then moved yet another berry to her mouth. Slowly, he crept closer. She knew what was next. He felt her jerk next to him. Damnation, if she didn't understand then too bad. The moisture painted on her lips might have something to do with the love of berry juice but no—it was what he realized he'd eventually see—sexual hunger. Berries didn't draw out a woman's tongue again and again, but a man, a vampire, was a different story.

Her lips closed around half of the fruit and he took his time nipping at his part. It was the side that belonged to him, the piece that would lead him in for a closer inspection of luscious lips, fruitful gifts and delicious promises.

A moan escaped her throat and he didn't deny them the opportunity to move somewhere. He understood the risks and he realized she would push him away and stop him. He still wanted it. He needed to know how she tasted and, heaven help him, how she felt.

His hand slid up to her belly before he planted his lips where they definitely fit. His mouth slanted over hers before she denied him. He took the kiss and, at the same time, moved his hand up to the valley between two mounds swollen to perfection—and that's where he seriously screwed up.

* * * *

He was slick heaven. He was everything her sister told her to expect—and Natasha should know—she was in his brother's bed but Tabitha wasn't ready. She wasn't sure she would ever *be ready* and since Orlando and Natasha refused to get involved, maybe she needed to tell Almonzo. Still, it was damn hard to think when the man's hands wandered all over her and never mind what his lips were doing to her.

"Please." Her voice sounded surprisingly calm. Of course, it would be, since she wanted him to go on and yet found she was compelled to make him stop. "I can't." She pushed him away before his hands worked to the left or right.

"You can. I know you can." His mouth moved to her ear, covering it with his hot breath.

“No. You don’t understand.”

He moved along her neck before he spoke the words into her mouth with a spicy promise smothered in dominant sex appeal. “My darling, I’m listening and I relate to everything you’re saying. Sweet mercy, do I ever.”

“You’re not going to like what I tell you.” She moved away and left him alone in the water. She took a towel from the nearby rack and didn’t hurry to cover herself. Why bother now. His eyes penetrated her in a way his manhood potentially never would and she liked the way he looked at her.

Remarkably, she was comfortable when his gaze lingered over her exposed skin. Almonzo was her twin soul regardless of how often she fought him and she realized it long before their charades began. In many ways, what she felt for him was comparable to love at first sight. Still, it didn’t move the obstacles standing in their paths and there were plenty.

His hand moved across her ass with a stroke designed to send shivers up and down her spine while his fingertips worked around her hip and thigh with a speed similar to that of sound. Trembling, she stood with her bare ass in front of him before she began to wrap the towel from front to back, tucking the corner of the thick cotton wrap under her arm.

“Nice, Mr. Spenser.” She actually thought so.

He patted her bottom. “We’re not going to start that shit. I listened to your sister call my brother by his surname until I wanted to place a wager on how often she’d use it in bed. I told Orlando if he didn’t put a stop to it she’d scream out Spenser in a fit of passion.” His expression turned wicked. “I want to be sure when you cry out mine, the only words I hear are, ‘Oh, holy hell, Almonzo. Don’t stop.’ And sweetheart, *I won’t*. I swear it.” He bit down on his lower lip and stepped closer with a devilish smile.

“Full of yourself, aren’t you?” She placed her fingertips over his lips and whispered just behind them when he inched closer. “So *cocksure* you’ll have your way with me.”

“Lover, you have no idea.” He clearly wanted her to get a better picture when he moved into her with a slow grind that would’ve moved Justin Timberlake to tears. “None at all.” His voice proved he held conquering intentions. It was heavy with carnal desires meant to lead two consenting adults into blissful runs of ecstasy and yet, she put on the brakes and shattered the moment when her cell phone rang.

The buzzing sound interrupted a time once destined to be theirs. She reluctantly moved into the bedroom to retrieve it and instantly relaxed until she saw the caller identification flash with the warning of a ‘protected call’ and then reality slammed into her chest with an undeniable force.

Chapter 4

“You have ten minutes and counting, starting now.” His voice transmitted pure evil, and it was as wicked as the lewd man who possessed it.

She was slow to speak. “I understand.”

Almonzo watched her from the doorway. He glanced at the supplement left for him and then looked back at her. She didn’t try to guess what he was thinking because she identified with those same sentiments. If she’d ignored the call, his nourishment shake would’ve remained forever untouched. The way he stared at her now, he must have sensed something was wrong. His brow narrowed. “Who is it?”

“I’ll be there.” She swallowed hard.

“Come alone or we’ll take the family’s most precious jewel.” He meant Constance, the youngest Spenser. Everyone in the inner circles of vampire royalty thought Constance Spenser held the keys to the family’s heart. “We’re at the gates.”

“I understand.” She watched Almonzo watching her.

Suddenly, she saw fear wash over him. It scared the hell out of her. His body became rigid, alive with the sudden terror swarming around him. He approached her fast and took the phone from her hand, hitting the speakerphone button as he did it.

“Who the hell is this?” he demanded with a voice few men crossed. In fact, only a vampire would be brave enough to rally an exchange. One vampire, in particular.

Silence fell on attentive ears.

Tabitha held her breath. She was scared to move. She recognized the voice on the other end of the phone. She knew the vampire who possessed it—Darian Sabbat. If he was in Scotland, he wasn’t here for sight-seeing. He was in Edinburgh for her and he wasn’t going home empty-handed.

Darian took women kicking and screaming or calmly, it didn't matter. When he chose a woman, they simply vanished with him. If Tabitha refused him, then he'd settle for the youngest Spenser. Her gut wrenched with the passing thought. He already had his bargaining chip.

Even before she encountered the vivacious youngster, Tabitha had been amused by stories and her antics. Once she met Constance, she understood why Orlando and Almonzo loved her so. The little girl held all of their hearts in the palm of her hand.

"I said who is this?" It was a growl, low and hungry, thirsty for the blood of another.

Time clicked away. "Please, Almonzo...the phone. I need ..."

The animalistic sound from the other end of the line was enough to send Almonzo into a fit of fury.

"Your brother took one and now, it's our turn." The laughter of a few men came across the receiver. "Enjoy your hell, because one way or another, you'll get there if you don't send Tabitha out now."

Almonzo's lavender pupils seemed enlarged until the whites of his eyes were no longer visible.

"Go fuck yourself!" He hit the panic-alert button, telling Tabitha, "We had this installed years ago. We've never had a circumstance to use it. Now, it's a must. The son-of-a-bitch on the other end of the phone is serious, Tabitha, and he is very dangerous. Of course, you grasp that part, don't you? I take it you know him well?"

She didn't respond so he continued. "We know all about Darian Sabbat and his brothers. They are numerous, dangerous, and hell-bent on taking what they want, when they want it. How in the hell did you get mixed up with them?" He demanded answers.

Tabitha quickly dressed in the same clothes she'd worn earlier. Almonzo kept his focus on her. She barely noticed.

She didn't tell him about Darian. Thankfully, Tate left her luggage packed because she was out of time. Maybe the old man with the notorious ESP knew she needed to be ready to run. By the time she was dressed, which was one for the record books, Orlando, Samuel, Tate and Marion, the family matriarch, were in the room with wild expressions covering their faces. They were all ready to prove they were capable of defending their own regardless of what was waiting for them.

Orlando must have quickly noticed the fight between life and death looming in the eyes of his twin. His eyes quickly transformed to match them. To Tabitha, they appeared jaded and vile. Death looked better and she hoped like hell her sister never witnessed what she was seeing now. The Spenser men were motivated to kill and it wasn't a pretty sight. They killed for their family, for one of their own. It was unquestionable.

Tabitha shivered. "This isn't going to help."

"Start talking, Tabitha. Now!" Orlando walked over to her and took her by the arm.

Almonzo snapped at his brother. "Don't you lay a hand on her! Damn it, she's been trying to tell us all something but none of us would listen to her! Including me." He turned to his parents. "It's the Sabbat clan." He only paused for a second before he raced forward spitting words in all different directions. "They're here for her but there must be some mistake."

He needed to believe there was an error somewhere and Tabitha saw him try to make sense of everything. She was still going to walk away. Darian made provisions to ensure it.

"No! You don't know what's going on here," Orlando said. "Natasha told me this morning that she was afraid Tabitha was mixed up with another family."

Almonzo turned on her with thick rage coloring his skin. It seemed to harden him, change his complexion. Never mind the discerning eyes she couldn't escape. "Is this true?"

She didn't answer him with a yes or no response. "He will destroy all of us. I have to go. I am so sorry." She turned quickly so she wouldn't have to gauge the pain her words caused him.

The heart of a vampire was found in their mates and their companions retained the ability to weaken them to the point that the strength within never resurfaced. Almonzo was teetering between weakness and true madness. It was something she wasn't able to understand as a mortal woman but looking at him then, she believed all of the myths.

"We can't die, Tabitha. You do understand this, right?" Orlando screamed in her face and Almonzo moved to stand in front of his brother.

"Then you'll suffer. That's why I have to go." She pushed by them, only to stop when Marion stepped in front of her.

"If you go and you choose to go, we'll petition the elders for Almonzo's release from you. He will not be bound by a woman who is going to throw herself into the arms of our enemies—business or otherwise."

She looked at her husband for reassurance and then continued, "If you go because you are trying to protect us, we are capable of self-preservation. Dear, you'll be lost to us forever if you walk out now. You can only stay and protect yourself." Her voice seemed to conceal controlled anger.

Tabitha felt her heart slowing to an unrecognizable beat before it leaped forward with the pace of nervous energy pressing against her chest. She looked at the family she wanted desperately to claim for her own. In a small voice, she simply said, "You don't understand. I already belong to him."

Almonzo's chin dropped and he stepped closer. "That's absurd! You lie to hide behind truths that scare you and now you're lying to protect those you love and I know—damn it to hell—I *know you will love me*. I feel it. There's no way I'd feel this way if you already belonged to someone else."

He quickly took her palm and put it over his heart. "You're already here and because you are, you are safe with me. There's no question about it. I feel you in a heart that doesn't even exist for a vampire. You don't belong to a fucking renegade like Darian Sabbat. I would know it. I would sense it."

The shade of his pupils returned to some level of normalcy. When they did, for a split second, Tabitha saw a soft mist move across them proving heartache existed as much for him as it did for her.

"He will not let me go." She made the statement with a flip, matter-of-fact resonance. She watched the shock wash over the Spenser clan.

"The hell he won't! He won't have a choice in the matter." Almonzo pulled at her wrist. "Don't do this." Over his shoulder, he told Orlando, "Go get Natasha." He never took his eyes off Tabitha. "I'm begging you. I never thought I would plead with a woman but I know the man waiting for you. He's a monster. He'll strip you of everything and you will live in a harem of hell."

"And if I don't go, he'll take Constance and that harem will raise her in the pits of it." She spat the words out, grabbed her suitcase, and made a run for it down the hall.

"Stop her!" Almonzo fled right behind her, staying on her heels. She was quick as lightning until she realized she couldn't get away lugging her suitcase around. She dropped it in the foyer and ran outside, slamming the

large wooden door behind her. The sunrise welcomed her and the only one left to evade was Tate, who struggled to maintain her pace.

She shot across the lawn and tripped over her own feet. Soon, she tumbled down the steep hill and landed in front of the stone entrance. The automatic gates were almost closed when she barely slipped through them. On the other side, the car waited and in it, along with Darian Sabbat, was the insurance policy she felt confident he already had in his possession. Natasha and Constance were gagged and bound, their hands tied behind them. Tears streamed down her sister's face while hostility settled in the little vampire's eyes.

As Tabitha suspected, Darian remained predictable. When the threat was made, it was anything but a bluff. Darian bled the Spenser heart. He took Orlando and Almonzo's sister and he made the grave mistake of taking their women.

* * * *

"I can't find them anywhere." Tate met the others back in the main hall. "I've searched the grounds only to come up empty-handed." He looked worried. Constance was his entire reason for wanting the coveted immunity clause the older Spenser handed down to ensure he was able to continue life with his chosen family. Samuel Spenser didn't give these out freely. Only one man earned the clause from the patriarch of the Spenser family and Tate took his duties and his privileges seriously. Very few vampire families even possessed the ability to grant them. The Spensers and Sabbats were among those chosen few. Typically, when immunity clauses were granted, the families expected ongoing servitude.

Orlando paced the floor. "You better start talking, damn you!" He pointed his finger in his brother's face. "This is more to do about the business than your woman, isn't it?"

Almonzo was in charge of the daily operations of their holdings which included resorts, casinos, banks, and hotels. Sometimes, in their business, bad deals ultimately finished in dirty deals gone wrong. Almonzo often cleaned them up but he never endangered their family.

Samuel Spenser locked eyes with his oldest son. He shook his head as if to warn off a reply.

Marion seemed to read their expressions. Her heart was breaking into small bits of jagged ice. She typically shut down and saved her strength in times of crisis because when the family needed her, she came forward with the strength and will of a man. It would take the chambers of hell's fury to hold the woman back once she became further enraged.

She stiffly shuffled her feet and started to leave the room. She stopped just inside the doorway. Her eyes shot daggers through her husband. "Don't make me regret the day I found you in my arms. If you've gotten us into a war with another family, I swear to you, I'll take my daughter and I will leave."

He held up a hand to silence her. "Let me remind you, as of this minute, you don't have a daughter *here* to flee with, so please, leave us!" His tone was loud, angry and roaring with something so perverse that the elders would be notified quickly of a pending wrath of immortal wars between warriors and a new dead rising. The elders were in tune with all of the vampire leaders and with the jolting energy spiraling throughout Samuel's home, it would not be ignored.

Her jaw set. It was obvious by her expression, she wanted to say more. Instead she left with tears in her eyes. She was expected to accept and avenge. Both acts were nearly impossible for a mother.

Turning to Tate, she issued instructions. "Bring the car to the basement. There's no reason for me to stay underground while daylight holds us at a disadvantage. We go now while there's a trail to follow. The Sabbat compound is in Spain. I have a feeling I know where they'll go while they're in Scotland. At least until they have time to negotiate."

* * * *

Samuel began speaking in a language most familiar to his boys. Professionalism ruled in times of crisis. Right now, he was a leader at the head of a massive hunt. "Okay, we need to think about this. First, I believe, unless—"

"Damn you," Orlando broke in furiously. "I saw the look Mother gave you. Tell me what it is that you and Almonzo are keeping from me and then we'll plot. Do you not know who is most at risk here?"

Almonzo did. He'd already thought about it. They would take Tabitha into the family. She wasn't marked. She wanted him to think she was but she wasn't. She wouldn't have been permitted to remain with them as long as she did if she already had the seed of a vampire mate. She did not ... but she would. The immediate danger, in his opinion, fell back to Constance and Natasha. Natasha was the wife of a Spenser, she would be used first for a negotiation tool, if they planned to have a bargaining session. If not, she would be the first tortured.

Orlando's eyes were cold. "Father? I'm asking you as a Spenser son who has a right to know." He gritted his teeth against a forbidden rage.

Almonzo didn't wait for their sire's permission to answer his twin. "It appears the Sabbat family is dabbling in crime as much as possible. They don't want any of the old families to have property, housing or businesses unless, of course, they are given something in return. We assessed the situation and didn't think there was anything we needed to worry about. We didn't seem to have anything they wanted. Until, now."

"You mean, until you couldn't move in on Tabitha quick enough to find out the secrets that might have saved Constance and Natasha?" Orlando's eyes fired smoke and venom all at once. "You knew she was hiding something. Natasha was able to see it. Why didn't you push? What were you thinking?" Orlando paced back and forth, his fury unconfined.

"Why didn't Natasha? Why didn't you or Father? Hell, she wouldn't even talk to me for longer than a five-minute jab-session before today." Almonzo didn't accept blame. He refused to carry it.

"Well, I sure as hell hope you enjoyed the foreplay, brother, because now it may just cost you the long-awaited ride." Orlando turned his focus then to his father and pointed an accusing finger. "You'd better do something to fix this. You wanted me to find a wife. I've found her. Now, let's all work together to see if I can keep her alive." He started to leave the room and stopped short as the sickening horror sunk in and cut his heart out. "Damn."

Almonzo waited. The new realization slammed into his twin and when it did, it brought him to his knees.

"Trafficking?" Orlando questioned. "Answer me." His temper exploded. "I will not ask twice!" His fury caused the dim lamps to flicker and the glasses on the shelf rattled.

The Spenser men didn't look at one another. The knowledge was something none of them were prepared to accept as an intended fate.

His fury settled and his voice was barely above a whisper when he said, "Constance? She's the one they wanted all along."

"No," Almonzo said. "I don't believe that. It was definitely Darian's infatuation with Tabitha. He used something to lure her out. I heard it in the way she responded to him. I think she realized he already had Constance and Natasha and that's why she was determined to go."

"Besides, he doesn't sell children," Samuel added. "He sells women. The reason he wants Constance is for amusement, maybe, or who knows, maybe he wants her to play with one of the Sabbath children. Perhaps he even wants to use the child to find out some kind of information, I don't know." Samuel dropped his head. "We rest now and we'll be ready to move at nightfall."

Tate walked in, gave the patriarch a nod, then just as silently walked back out.

"We've drugged your mother," Samuel told his sons. "She was going to sneak out and handle this on her own. She'll be mad as hell when she wakes up and realizes it. Still, I know my wife and the last thing we need is a mad mother hen running around flapping her wings and threatening to take blood. Hopefully, by the time she wakes up we'll have our girls back safe and sound."

Orlando's voice reached out far beyond anger-ridden when he turned to face off with his double. "Darian Sabbath's hatred for Spensers runs deep. If you think he took our women with the intent to return them, then lunacy becomes you as much as celibacy because he wanted *your woman* for the same reasons you do, I'm sure."

Samuel stood in between his sons. "Orlando, it's Almonzo's job to keep the peace between families. If he thought for a second the girls were in danger, you would've been the first to know."

"Maybe that's the problem. Since he met Tabitha he doesn't have the ability to think with *either* head."

Chapter 5

Natasha wasn't ready for Darian Sabbat but fire and ice swirled through Tabitha's veins. The limo door opened and Darian stepped forward as his men pulled Natasha, Constance, and Tabitha from the car. Tabitha leaped forward and snapped her teeth at Darian. He seemed amused at her suggestion and promptly dropped a show of fangs before he gave her a toothy kiss on the cheek. He then searched the car for personal effects before they moved toward the house.

As he walked by his guards, he made a sudden comment. "I didn't find a cell phone. They weren't followed but I wanted to check for myself." His hand went to Tabitha's cheek. "We can't afford mistakes this time. Can we, sweet honey?"

The sisters exchanged glances and then Tabitha's eyes narrowed as she studied the scared little girl who now clung to Natasha. False hope was the only thing they had to hold at the moment. As long as they were together, they had some measure of it but Darian liked the one on one intimidation so he'd soon separate them.

Six-foot-five and all rock hard male, Darian Sabbat earned his despicable reputation. A vampire who was a traitor to his own kind, Sabbat was the kingpin of his breed and he reveled in it. It was the reason Tabitha ran like hell after she spent time with the handsome cad. He scared the life out of her and it didn't take long.

When she'd first met Darian, Tabitha was infatuated by his rock-star appeal. His thick gold mane cascaded his shoulders and his cleft chin looked dignified underneath his full, sensual lips. The man retained the right for stark confidence and he defined sexy to the extreme.

Unfortunately, Darian was involved in illegal activities and he handled his enemies with a cruel hand, something Tabitha had the occasion to witness. Even his friends braced themselves for his volatile temper because

few were a match for any Sabbat. Only two other vampires held similar strength—Orlando and Almonzo. Would they even be a match for Darian? Tabitha really didn't think so without the evil spirit to match.

"You look like you've been taking great care of yourself, Tabitha." Darian slapped her bottom before he turned his attention to Natasha. "Your sister is the one I wanted. Spenser blood was what I needed to ensure she walked out willingly, you understand." He sneered.

He walked away from Tabitha but quickly returned to her side with a profound desire, apparently, to touch her skin. He waved his arms with glee before he stroked her face. "So lovely, you are so damn spectacular!" He called out his praise to the wind with an enthusiasm that made the room thick with a sick chill. His absurd laughter was as perverse as the pride he obviously possessed when he removed the Spensers from their home.

His moist lips went to Tabitha's earlobe. "This time, I will adorn you with all the love you need to keep you bound to me."

Tabitha felt his threat all the way to her pussy which wasn't all that unusual. He heated her with words or glares but he seldom acted on the stimulation. It was part of his twisted personality. When she was part of his entourage, they were intimate only on his terms. He never had sexual intercourse with her but the way he manipulated foreplay left her begging for it on several occasions.

When she lived with him, she overheard one of his men talking behind his back. All sorts of speculation generated around them at the time. Some thought he was gay while others believed Tabitha was marked by one of his enemies. Some assumed, as Tabitha believed, he waited for the right time to take her because he feared an everlasting commitment. Regardless of the reasons he didn't mark her, before she met Almonzo, no one ever made her feel sexier and no one ever scared her more.

When they entered the temporary Sabbat compound, just a few bodyguards, vampires no doubt, appeared to occupy the grounds. Some of them looked more mortal than most and these were men who were granted with immunity clauses similar to the one Tate received. Outside of the guards and Darian, no one else appeared to be there except the two sisters and one child, a very important little girl.

Natasha cleared her throat. "If you hurt us, my husband will kill you." Her threat seemed pointless and it fell from very nervous lips.

Darian chuckled. "I'll give your husband credit. He mated with a mortal woman worthy of a life extension. You're a rarity among your breed, are you not?" He quickly turned back to the woman who held the majority of his interest. "Your sister is a credit to the Spenser family as you will be to mine."

A loud huff and an exaggerated puff of air tumbled from the mouth of the small, daring vixen still clutched to Natasha's side. Constance's eyes changed colors rapidly. She exhibited anger more than fear, with her clenched teeth and fists, but since she wasn't of age to truly understand her powers yet, the lavender and pink shades in her eyes quickly diminished.

Natasha continued. "He will slay you in front of God and mortal man."

Darian watched Constance with blatant curiosity before turning his focus back to Natasha. "And you think your husband scares me?" His words commanded silence in the room if his sarcastic tone didn't warrant one of equal consideration.

Constance stepped in front of Natasha. "Yeah, mister, he should. You have no idea what my brothers and father will do. They'll cut your heart out and feed it to your guard dogs just because they can, and you know what? Orlando will do it and laugh about it!" Her arms crossed and her palms settled on her elbows as quickly as her lips puckered into a spiteful formation. Tabitha imagined Darian was only amused by Constance's willful spirit and spunk.

Darian wasn't a nice man but the little girl with rosy cheeks and long dark hair seemed to gain his admiration. "Is that right?" He patted her on the head. "I bet they would enjoy doing it too, darling child." He laughed before he moved closer to Tabitha. "It doesn't really matter what your brothers think, I plan to send you both home. I only have plans for this one." His tongue darted in and out in a perverse gesture meant for sexual translation.

Relief flooded Tabitha's body at his assertion. Her sister and Constance would go free. If he wanted to instill fear, he succeeded. She knew her fate and realized he would take her fast this time. He waited longer than he ever intended to do in the first place. Now, he would make sure he had her marked as his before Almonzo showed up. That is, if he came for her at all. She wasn't sure. She didn't know where they were, so how in the hell would Almonzo find them? Even if he did, he would arrive too late.

Darian's hands went to her neck and searched. Fingertips ran over every trace of skin. Then he moved her neck under full, damp palms. Clammy from nervousness, she felt her breath catch in her chest a few times because of the slow movement. He pushed her hair over to the side and looked closer. His hot breath cooled, rather than warmed, her skin.

Natasha placed a firm hand on Constance's shoulder as if to warn her not to move. Darian's obvious carnal pleasure in searching for a love bite wasn't something Tabitha wanted Constance to witness. It wouldn't help their predicament if she acknowledged she didn't belong to Almonzo.

The two sisters locked eyes. Both seemed to defy the art of breathing.

"You're untouched by him?" His eyes continued the search as if he didn't believe his good fortune.

"Please don't discuss this in front of the child. You said you planned to let them go, *then do it*. Let them go and take me back to Spain with you. I'll go and I'll never come back here." Tabitha knew Darian recognized opportunity, and as she expected, he cashed in quickly.

"All right. Since you suggested it without persuasion, then I'll let you have this request. Make no mistake, it will be the only favor you ever receive from me. Consider it a mating gift." He snarled.

Darian motioned for his men. "Give them three minutes, then take these women back to their compound. *Unharmmed*."

"Not good enough," Tabitha challenged him. "I want to know they are home safe and sound and I will not go with you willingly until I confirm this. I happen to know my cooperation is almost as important to you as I am. You don't want me unless I can appear well and I will not unless I first know they reached our home safely."

He seemed to steady himself against a brewing anger. "Our *home*? So you liked it there? I thought you might. It's just as well that I came for you when I did, then." His grimacing stare and his body language told her she would pay for the mere mention of Almonzo's home as her own. "There's no need for attachments that aren't destined to last, though, so you'll need to cut ties here and do it fast."

He studied her before locking himself in a stare-war full of animosity. He finally answered Tabitha's request regarding confirmation of her family's safe return. "I have arrangements to make for a few mortal women and since you'll be flying in a more traditional way, I have plans to make for

us also.” He further instructed his men, “Set up a temporary cellular number and give it to the redhead when they exit the limousine. Once they’re home, they can call to confirm they’re there and then that will be the last of the goodbyes needed.

“Tabitha,” he sneered, “I have high expectations. Spenser screwed up when he didn’t take you. Now, no man will ever tread where only my hands are destined to go.” He moved closer and dipped in for a kiss. Soft and gentle, he pecked her on the lips. “And no man, or vampire, will live if he ever tastes what I alone can sip.” He then backed away.

He walked by Constance and patted her head once more. “Gentlemen, be easy with the Spenser gem. You never know, she might come back here one day and decide to stay. I’ve always had a feeling about her and our innocent kid.”

The little girl with black eyes shot cold stares filled with translated icy death wishes. “I’ll never be back here.”

“You won’t?” He walked over to her and picked her little body up and carried her to the bay windows. She didn’t try to squirm from his grip but her eyes continued to change colors swiftly. It was obvious Constance was unable to control her runaway emotions of fear and anger. Her eyes rolled in the back of her head and then attempted to focus straight ahead. The vampire threatened to reach an age of maturity earlier than expected and Tabitha realized the little girl was in extreme pain. Rage often brought about an early maturation in the females. She grabbed her head a few times in agony, not realizing what powers she truly possessed even as a young child.

“You, my little Princess, need to meet my kid brother. He’ll be more than willing to entertain you in a few years. See?” He pointed down the lawn. “There he is playing with puppies and kittens.”

He was a young boy of about fifteen years old. The women exchanged silent, knowing glances. Darian would pay hell just for pointing the kid out to Orlando and Almonzo’s sister. The young boy waved to them and Darian waved back. “Now then, little Spenser, go tell Tabitha goodbye, and make sure to give her a big kiss for your brother because he’ll never see her again. He will want to remember her with a smile, so you can tell him you left her with one. Okay?”

Constance ran over to Tabitha and threw her arms around her. “I don’t want to say goodbye. I love you already!” Her dark eyes produced big tears and they fell in complete ruins on her collar.

Darian’s voice changed dramatically as soon as he released the child. He snapped the orders at his guards. “Three minutes. Let them say their farewells, then load them up, drop them off and get back here.”

With a wave of his hand, he started out of the room tossing his sunglasses on as he did. Then he stopped short to check out the red-haired vixen. “I guess you gave Orlando a run for it, didn’t you.”

“Fuck you.”

He moved closer, wrapping a lightning-fast arm around Natasha’s waist.

“That could be arranged because I don’t have a problem fucking the wife of a vampire rogue. It isn’t criminal. There’s no law against it and I would do it with a smile, I’m sure.” He moved his hands to her hips and brought her in hard against him. “You’d like that, wouldn’t you? Giving it up to strange blood?”

Tabitha held Constance’s face tightly against her so she didn’t have to see the gross enactment of a deranged male who should’ve been daggered through the heart years ago—if that was even a possibility for his kind. She really didn’t know. After their history and all the mixed emotions he stirred in her, she planned to make it her mission to find out.

She knelt down in front of Constance who still tried to cling to her. “I want you to listen to me, okay? This is very important.” Time worked against them and she needed most of it with her sister. “Make sure you tell your brother I would’ve loved being a part of your family. You tell him this for me, okay?” Tabitha strained against looming tears and fought hard against the sorrow working its way into her soul.

The little girl nodded. “I will. I’ll see you again, I just know it.” Her dark hair twirled around her head and then she quickly ran toward Natasha. “Let her go! You made a deal and our kind, we don’t break our deals!” Reluctantly, surprisingly, Darian released Natasha.

His eyes narrowed on the child. “I know I’ll look forward to the day when a brother brings you back here. I’ll enjoy everything about it, when the time is right.” He chuckled and then added to Natasha, “Tell your husband it will someday be my pleasure.” He then exited the room.

The young women clung to one another. Tabitha pulled back first and began with instructions. "Listen to me. I won't know you're safe unless someone else from the house is there too, so I want to talk to anyone. Someone there at the estate and anyone but ..." She choked on the words before she spat out the final request, "Do not put Almonzo on the phone. I cannot talk to him now. Not ever." Tabitha's eyes watered with the emotion only a woman in love can feel.

"You love him?" Natasha only wanted her sister to confirm it so she could tell Orlando. Tabitha realized it as she questioned her. "Why didn't you tell him?"

"Maybe because I don't even understand what it is I feel for him." Regret washed over her. "Natasha, don't." She gave her sister a firm warning. "I don't want him. Not now. I can't worry about him and survive Darian."

"You haven't bonded with Almonzo, have you?"

"No, and if I had, Darian would only kill me now, so this is the best for everyone. Eventually, our paths will cross and we'll meet again." She didn't bother telling Natasha about the new drugs Darian developed. It was pointless. There were a lot of rumors. Supposedly, these drugs were designed to kill a mated vampire and severely damage the immortal race.

"And you never told him how you felt about him?" Natasha choked out. Now, she probably wanted more than three minutes. They didn't have a minute remaining. "I want you to go home with us and find the kind of happiness I found with Orlando. He loves you, Tabitha. Oh, God, he loves you so." Tears ran freely over her face.

Tabitha shook her head. "Natasha, promise me, you have to swear to me you won't tell him what I've told you. I know what the Sabbat clan is capable of doing. It's why I left the country and stayed on the run for awhile. They have ways of killing their own kind..." There wasn't time for a warning based on nothing more than suspicions or what few facts she'd discovered during the time she'd spent previously with Darian and his family.

The older sister's arms fell to her sides. "How on earth am I supposed to leave you with this ... this monster?"

"You stop it now!" Tabitha backed away slightly, still holding Natasha's wrists to yank some sense into her. Then, she lowered her voice.

“You have a responsibility to that child over there. To her family, *our family*.” She couldn’t go on. She felt devastated by her chosen words and hardened almost the second she’d said them. She nodded toward the door. “Now go!”

The two women embraced and Constance ran over to hug her once more, taking the time to whisper into her ear. “My mother would want me to tell you this. You were the woman Almonzo was supposed to marry. He’s going to come and save you because that’s what my brothers do when they love.” She smiled gently and then turned away quickly. Tabitha couldn’t stand to watch them leave, so instead she went to the bay window and watched as the next generation of Sabbat children played on the compound grounds.

* * * *

The emergency panic button sounded as soon as Tate saw the limousine coming up the driveway. Marion continued to slumber and wouldn’t know about their return until later. By the time the limousine pulled up in front of the house, the Spenser men were running through the halls. They weren’t fast enough and were unable to stop the car from leaving after it dropped off Natasha and Constance. It didn’t matter. A dominant male enforcer like Darian wouldn’t care about losing a delivery driver. Most of the drivers were granted immunity clauses anyway, so they typically didn’t worry about the possibility of torture. These men were able to withstand it for long periods of time and they always survived.

Orlando hugged Constance tightly and then held onto Natasha like tomorrow would never come. They all talked at once. “Where did they take you? What exactly happened? Where is Tabitha? Is she all right?” The questions spilled and answers were slowly supplied.

Almonzo set a supplement down on the credenza. He’d nursed one throughout the day with the full intention of sipping one until they left. He needed energy stores and he wanted the strength of ten thousand men behind him.

After the men learned what they could from Natasha, Samuel disappeared with his daughter to have a talk with her. Perhaps the little girl

remembered something they would find helpful when they later left to find Tabitha.

“I need to know something, Natasha, and I need to know it now.” Almonzo wasn’t one to beat around the bush and he wasn’t like his brother. Leaving everything to chance and luck was fine if he was in Vegas but not here. Not in Scotland and damn sure not in Spain, if that was indeed where they were headed.

Constance ran back in to interrupt their pending talks. She motioned to Almonzo and he stooped down to accommodate her. A little mouth went to his ear and she cupped her hand to keep the secret from her other brother and his wife.

“She said to me strong words, Almonzo.” The little girl knew she delivered news he needed to hear.

“Is that right?”

She nodded her head slowly. She covered her mouth again with a dainty hand and moved closer. “She said to me, ‘Constance, I want you to listen to me, okay? This is very important.’” She stressed the words at the appropriate places, remaining true to her personality and forever the drama queen, even in times of trouble. She stepped away from him and nodded again before moving close once more.

“She did say this, Almonzo, and I bet you she told Natasha too, so just ask her.” She lowered her voice again. “She said to me, ‘Make sure you tell your brother I would’ve loved being a part of your family’ and I wanted to tell you so you can save her.” Her eyes batted and she waited for his response. He didn’t have one immediately so she gave him a firm request. “And you will bring her home to us.”

Constance leaned back and then opened and closed her little trap before finally adding. “She made me promise to tell you!” She squirmed out of his arms and ran back down the hall when she heard her father call for her. He was thankful because he knew his lavender eyes were suddenly streaked with blood as pain wracked his body with an unexplainable pulsating thumping harder in his chest.

Doubling over, he held tight to his sides. “Argh!”

Orlando patted him on the shoulder. “Hang on, brother, I’ll be right back.” He quickly returned and shoved another supplement into his brother’s hand. He then took Natasha down the hall and disappeared for a

few minutes. When he came back, Tate joined them with more of the red fluids in a crystal pitcher.

"He swears it is helping him. I think it makes the spells worse." Tate nodded toward the concoction.

"When did he start having these episodes?" Orlando questioned.

"The first one was about a month ago. He didn't want anyone to know."

Almonzo continued to hunch against the pain binding him. "Damn it! Don't talk around me!" A beastly sound growled in his throat.

Orlando nodded. "I guess I realized it. I didn't acknowledge it. He's too much like me, damn it. The supplements wear off too fast without the blood of the one he's supposed to have."

Almonzo regained some of his composure and returned to the work at hand. "Natasha is sure they were near water. Was it a river or the ocean? Which was it?"

"It was a lake. She's certain of it." Orlando stopped too abruptly. "She's also sure about something else."

Almonzo held his breath. After what their sister only just revealed, he could only imagine what else he'd learn. He read the expression found in his twin's face. He stood taller and with a newfound recognition before he replied. "I already know. I couldn't hurt like this if she didn't love me. Dear brother, I know she loves me."

"Natasha's getting ready to call her. They programmed a phone which allows her to call once at six o'clock to tell Tabitha she made it home okay. Evidently, Tabitha agreed to be agreeable if the terms she put in motion included the safe return of Natasha and Constance."

Almonzo's back straightened and he sprinted toward his twin's bedroom with Orlando at his heels. His dark hair cascaded behind him as he ran through the compound. "And let me guess, she doesn't want to talk to me?" He shot his brother a look loaded with contempt as he shouted back over his shoulder.

He rushed into his brother's matrimonial suite, which is what he thought of it now that Natasha had decorated it with frills and lace. She was already on the phone. He snatched it from her hand.

"I love you and I'm coming for you." Breathless, he spat the words into the phone.

He heard her breathing.

“Do you hear me?”

“I...” Her voice clearly shaken, Tabitha managed one syllable. Only one.

“Tabitha, listen to me. I will not let him have you. You belong to me. *Only me*. Understand? We’re calling in the elders and pulling out all the weight we can to stop him. Tell me what you see, tell me about where you are.”

A blood curdling scream pierced through the receiver, loud enough to ring throughout the room. Almonzo fell sick when he heard it.

“Damn you! Leave him alone! I love...” She screamed into the phone as the struggle began. He heard it all the same, the only confirmation needed to assure him she was worth the effort.

Clearly through the line, he heard the slap come down on her skin and the hair on his arms stood up as he winced from the pain he felt too. His anger exploded into the atmosphere and he recognized a newly discovered basic need. Killing the bastard on the other end of the phone would come easy.

“Oh, loverboy.” Darian’s voice oozed through the phone. “I’m waiting for you and Daddy Spenser.” He laughed wickedly. “Hell, let’s just make it a party. Why don’t you just go ahead and bring your brother too. You’re the honored guests and I think you’ll be quite impressed with the ceremony we have planned.”

His hand must have come down on Tabitha once more because Almonzo heard the hard hit and then her chilling vocal response. “On second thought, come alone. Your father won’t be all that interesting. I don’t think the elders would take too kindly to a father stepping in between matters that should be handled appropriately between the younger generation of true men.”

“You lay another hand on her and I will...”

“You’ll what? Kill me? Huh. I’m dead already and so are you. We just go around taking the mortal women who will have us long enough to make us feel alive. You know the kind, like the one lying on my bed right this minute.” The other vampire’s smug chuckle would cost him his life. Almonzo just needed to figure out where his weak points were and once he found them, he’d use them against him.

Tate came rushing in. He gave Almonzo a signal. Tate had the limo that dropped off Natasha and Constance followed and it went right back into the hills of its home camp. They had a lock on where to find Tabitha.

Motioning for Orlando to stay behind, Almonzo began walking toward the front of the house. He realized the caretaker knew what to do and how to handle himself once they found Tabitha. If he could keep the idiot talking, then it was safe to say Darian didn't have his hands or lips on Tabitha. If he kept him on the phone long enough, then it might help them sneak up on them unannounced.

Sliding into the backseat of the Spenser limo, Almonzo made up his mind to go alone. Their father would be in the way and he realized Orlando didn't want to leave the safety of his wife or their sister in the hands of fate. Almonzo understood Darian better than anyone. They'd been introduced before and since the earliest signs of trouble, Almonzo made it his business to find out all he could about the head of the Sabbat Empire. Now, he wanted to face him alone.

It took them about ten minutes to find the driveway where the Sabbat limo was last spotted. Nine of the ten, Almonzo kept Darian talking with an exchange of threats both men recognized as an invitation for nothing more than a never-ending fight. When the call disconnected, Tate reminded him of the obvious. "That cell phone is potentially wired with equipment to trace your every move."

Almonzo tossed it out the window and stared straight ahead into the distant forest. It looked like massive branches overshadowed whatever they would find behind the blanket of green spruce trees. "No matter what happens up here, you get her out. Do you hear me?"

"You have my word." Tate was the one they wouldn't be able to kill. The immunity clause clearly forbade it, never mind the other issues that it would take to terminate a man marked by a promise of forever.

Tate leaned over the seat and gave Almonzo a quick warning. "Remember, there's a rumor of a new potion or drug of some sort. Your father said it was the main topic at the emergency summit meeting the elders called several months back. Darian is believed to have an on-site chemist working on a new formula designed to destroy the vampires he wants terminated."

"I imagine if that's true, I'm at the top of his list."

Chapter 6

Almonzo wasn't a traditionalist. He typically used doors and stairways instead of flying everywhere but when time prohibited following his own code, he returned to his roots. As Almonzo stood on the ledge right outside the master suite, he cringed when his eyes went to the ground below. He knew he wouldn't fall but he still wasn't particularly fond of heights and hanging on windowsills never appealed to him or even his more adventurous side.

He heard Tabitha's voice ranting in the distance. A smile shaped his lips. "Give him hell, baby." Tabitha offered any man a little bit of cursed pleasure just by fighting with him but that was okay. If she fought him, she wasn't in his bed and it bought them some much needed time.

Almonzo leaned his head back against the exterior wall of the home. He closed his eyes and contemplated his first move.

"Well, since you're here, you might as well just come on inside."

Startled, Almonzo's eyes flew open as his head snapped to the left.

"Over here." Darian leaped over him from the right. He quickly disappeared through an open window. Almonzo sneered before he allowed himself to fall victim to a trap.

"Oh, darling!" Darian taunted. "Your lover is here!" Almonzo didn't wait for the scream he realized would soon follow. In one quick movement, he slid through the same open window and onto the floor, only to find several spears pointed straight at his heart.

"Tsk, ts!" Darian shook his head. His back was to Almonzo and he stood at the bar with a drink in his hand. "Damn dicks; leave it to a raging hard-on to get a man killed."

Almonzo slowly straightened and when he did, one pointed blade nicked him at the throat. He quickly put his hand over the wound to prevent what little blood he had from seeping through. If Darian saw the drip instead

of a squirt, he would quickly surmise that his opponent wasn't just stupid for falling into his trap but also weakened by the absence of human blood.

"I must say, Almonzo, you surprise me." Darian's amusement seemed to fade away after one sip of liquor touched his lips.

"How so?" Almonzo eyed the men standing around him. There were five of them. One was mortal, Darian's first mistake, and the others were enforcers by the immunity clauses they'd earned and he had a problem with them. He couldn't do anything about them and he was certain the rest were protected. They generally had a more ashen blue tone to their skin and he was most definitely surrounded by them.

Darian took a gulp of his drink and slammed the glass down on the bar. "I never took you for one to be led around by your cock...even if it was hardened by perfection." He chuckled and went on. "She does define exquisiteness, does she not?"

Almonzo couldn't see for a moment. His eyes blurred with the temper that found him quickly. "You'll wish you never..."

"Never what?" Darian turned to the door, probably realizing she would be there. He reached for Tabitha with one hand and gave his instructions. "Come."

She never looked at Almonzo.

"Kneel."

She knelt down in front of him.

"Sit."

She sat.

"Ha! It appears your lady isn't even aware of your presence." He glared into her empty eyes and tilted his head from side to side in mockery of her trance.

Almonzo felt like someone stabbed him through the heart. He started to move closer to her but the spears reminded him he could not. "Tabitha!"

She didn't respond at all.

"Tabitha, love, answer me!" He screamed out again, fiercely fighting for a control he would not gain quickly. All the spears pointed at his chest.

A cross between a grunt and a grimacing chuckle left Darian's lips. "She can't hear you unless I choose to allow it." He snapped his fingers to prove his point.

She seemed to literally snap out of her daze. She looked around the room and immediately spotted Almonzo. Fear jumped across her expression.

Almonzo's breathing became labored when he saw the love spread across her cheeks, and the pain. "Almonzo! The...poison!"

Snap! Snap! Snap! Darian reeled her in quickly by snapping his fingers.

"What the fuck have you done to her?" Almonzo lashed out his anger in words meant for all of them. He turned in a complete circle. "Whatever he is paying you, I'll triple it."

No one budged. In fact, the arrowhead tips only moved closer.

Darian's words proved he didn't worry about a traitor among them. "Sleep well, my friend. I'll see you in the desert." He nodded and one of his henchmen stepped forward. His arm dropped and the weapon fell into Almonzo's leg where it pierced the skin.

Before Almonzo tried to move or even contemplate his fate, he blacked out, entering into a world of darkness that seemingly swallowed him whole. *Poison, she said, it was poison....*

* * * *

He was unable to focus. He knew he was inside and he was somewhere vaguely familiar. He realized there was a bed in front of him and the music he heard was modern, similar to what he always heard in the casinos of Las Vegas. "Tabitha." He almost didn't recognize his own voice. Surely that distorted sound didn't leave his heavy lungs.

"I'm here, Almonzo. I'm over here." He couldn't see her, but her voice seemed stripped of all hope.

"Come closer." His words were tortured. Slow to speak, it took all of his energy just to call for her.

"I can't!"

The sound of her pain shook him and his head immediately snapped upright. She was near the head of the bed, naked. Her wrists were handcuffed and chained to the bedposts. He blinked to be sure she was there. "You're chained?" He fought against his own restraints and looked down to see he was securely tied to a chair.

"Don't use your energy, Almonzo. I'm begging you. Please, you are going to need it. Whatever you want to do, however you think you can try

and save me will not work. Think smart and work against your instincts. Trust me, you are going to need every ounce of strength you can find. I'm going to..." She stopped herself before she reluctantly continued, "I will need you and we're going to help each other."

Hearing her speak to him with such passion gave him an inner strength like nothing else he'd ever known. His vision cleared and he sat as straight as he could against the ties that bound him against the wooden chair.

He suddenly recognized the room. The Dark Castle of the Desert existed as a mating ground for mortal women and vampires. He was in Nevada, in the home where Natasha and Orlando spent their odd and strained courtship. Reality struck. "Oh, hell." He then looked down at his naked body. "Well, then." He seemed only slightly amused when he looked up at her again.

Tabitha blushed. He took his time looking over her perfect body, realizing she'd already granted herself the same opportunity with his nude form. She took his breath away with the first visual sweep but the second one, holy hell, the second time damn near killed him. "Are you cold?"

Laughter shook her for a second. "Is that all you can ask me?"

He locked his eyes on her breasts and then glanced up at her beautiful, tear-stained face. Hunger shook him with a power even the universe wouldn't be able to explain or accept. "Damn you, Tabitha. This wouldn't have happened if you only..." He stopped himself from scolding her. She knew what he wanted to say and by the look in her eyes, she accepted the responsibility.

"Listen to me, Almonzo. We have maybe a couple of hours. They've gone to the casinos. When they come back, Darian has plans."

Almonzo shook his head and closed his eyes. "He hasn't..."

"No. He plans to do it when he comes back and he will make you watch."

"Like hell." Almonzo began to work with the ties as his eyes took in the room. He made a joke when he saw the journal on the bedside table. "Your sister found some interesting reading in those pages."

"I'll just bet she did. I've read the same entry over and over again. I'm not sure I like this Dark Castle of the Desert. It sounds too much like..."

"It *is* too much like." He continued to pull and tug at his bonds. "It sounds like a home fit for our kind because it *is* one fit for a vampire." He yanked his arms back and called out against the restraints. "Damn it!"

“Stop! You aren’t going to be able to free yourself and if you do, you’re far too weak to escape.”

Almonzo’s eyes turned with his anger. “The hell I won’t, because as soon as I break free, I plan to dine on your little ass until I am stronger than I’ve ever been.”

Tabitha’s jaw twitched. “You aren’t going to take me against my will.”

“Tabitha, stop this and I mean stop it now. You have two options. You can give me what I know belongs to me or you can wait for Darian, because when he comes back here, he’ll waste little time taking it. I’m surprised he left us alone.”

“You were supposed to be out until later tonight. His rogues promised you were drugged enough.”

“How long have we been here?” His eyes watched her little butt move against the chains holding her close to the bedposts.

“I don’t know. A couple of hours, maybe.”

“You know where we are, right?”

She nodded. “Las Vegas, where Orlando brought Natasha. I was here before with them right after you left.”

“You cannot easily walk out of here, you know this too right?”

She nodded. “It’s thirty miles or better back into Las Vegas.”

“So you have to...” He suddenly lost his nerve. His erection became stout with the declaration he needed to make. “As soon as I break free, I’m marking you, because you cannot go with me by unconventional measures.”

Again, she nodded. He didn’t know if it was because she understood or because she agreed. He hoped for the latter but he wasn’t sure when he saw her shudder before looking away from him.

“I’m not going to hurt you but you played hard to get for so long that I swear I’ve had enough foreplay to last a lifetime.” He shook his head. While his body eagerly prepared for her, his mind wasn’t satisfied that his first time with her would be under these circumstances.

Wild blue eyes dared him to take her without some measure of foreplay. “You aren’t going to use this to your advantage!”

Almonzo’s feet wiggled free from the bonds at his ankles, the rope securing his arms and chest gave a few inches. Suddenly, his wrists popped out of the bindings and he tore away the last ties holding him back from her. “The hell you say.” He stormed to the bed without a second to waste.

She shook the cuffs at her wrists. "Get me out of these."

"Not on your life." His hands ran over her hips and thighs with warm strokes, heating his palms.

"Almonzo, please!" She glanced back at him over her shoulder.

"You don't have to worry about pleasing me, darling. I'll take care of everything."

"No! You don't understand. I can't do this now! Please! No, this is like rape. It's like...it's not the way I want my first time."

"Oh, so we're back to being virgins again, hmmm?"

Her breathing was labored. "*I am a virgin* and I can't...I won't let you take me like this."

Frustrated, Almonzo rose up off the bed and walked to the bedside table in search of keys for the handcuffs. "Tabitha, there's no time for you to resolve this. Either you want me or you don't. You've had three months to decide. You can't have it both ways now! If you don't give yourself to me, he will take you and leave you without a choice!"

He looked around for the keys. Nothing. "Where did he put the keys to the cuffs?" Impatience didn't begin to describe the problems he had at that moment. One hung as a hefty reminder, right between his legs.

"You broke free. Just break me out of these."

He set his jaw and spun around to face her. "Damn it all! Listen to me. I have time to mate with you. What I don't have is time to move you back into this position. He'll know you broke free and then I won't be able to take him by surprise."

"I don't want to stay here like this. Are you crazy mad or just an idiot?"

Almonzo stormed around the room with a ready cock losing its determination. "I'm anything but an idiot. You don't seem to understand, I need you in this position so I can return to that chair," he nodded to where he'd been seated earlier, "and surprise Mr. Sabbath when he returns."

"Fine. Have it your way." She agreed with a new defiant gaze in her eyes and a sexy-set chin. She cleared her throat then. "But if I do, then you aren't touching me."

"The hell I'm not." He moved to the bed quickly and before she spoke another word, he slid underneath her body in a move so fast that her knees didn't have time to buckle but her sinful little body reacted all the same.

He congratulated himself on a sleek maneuver. He spoke into her belly as he looked up on the best breasts a woman had a right to claim for her own. "I told myself when I lost you..." He paused as he remembered the pain. "I promised myself once I found you, I would take you. And you are going to enjoy this whether you want to or not." He snickered when he felt her body tremble. "Although, I think you'll find I know how to satisfy a woman, even when time is limited. And, darling, we are *very* short on time."

"And you like that fact, don't you!" She barked her words at him as she looked down with sudden fear washing over her.

"I do. I promise you." His mouth began to work magic as he left her navel and traveled up toward her breasts. Taking a nipple in his mouth, he licked around the little nub and moaned when he heard her breath catch in her chest. The rise and fall of her breathing hitched every time his teeth played with the hard gem and each sound she released only inspired more teasing nips.

"I wish, oh, darling, how I long for time to savor this moment."

Her moaning made him want to slide down lower. He knew better than to indulge but resisting all temptations proved impossible. He grabbed her knees in his palms and held her in place. With her scent driving him to an erection he wouldn't be able to satisfy if interrupted, he only lingered for a few swipes.

"You taste sweeter than anything I ever imagined." He swiped her nipple once more and after the second time, he lost his senses. He moved forward in a frantic lunge.

"Almonzo!" Her voice was heavy. "This is...wrong!" Her voice caught in her throat and she gasped hard against her words. He knew he'd taken her to the brink of a new experience. What he wouldn't have done to have finished her there, just let her feel the wave of ecstasy a willing man's tongue delivered to the perfect woman.

"If this were wrong, I swear it wouldn't feel this damn right." He slid out from under her and cupped her neck. His thumb went straight to work finding a vein that would be enough to empower him and mark her.

Tabitha swallowed hard. "I'm afraid."

"Hell's fury, woman. You have nothing to fear except life without me and that, my dear, is something anxiety alone will never bring." He moved closer, slanted his lips over hers and took one light kiss.

It took all the strength he retained to move in behind her. His finger ran down the length of her ass and he told her what he wanted to do, planned to do, would eventually make it his mission to accomplish. "Today, I'll take your virginity where it matters most but this ass, this perfect bottom, is all mine when the time is right." He nipped at her butt cheek and then moved in behind her with a perfect slant.

"Raise your hips, love."

"It's going to hurt, isn't..."

He was tired of assuring her. Hell, yeah, it would hurt. He'd make sure he hurt her with a newfound pleasure and when he did, he wanted her screaming, shuddering even, with the pain. He expected to slice through her womanly barriers to the point where she yelled out with a tremendous ache. The first thrust inside proved it because he went in deep. "Oh, sweet mercy!"

She cried out. "Almonzo! Don't!" Her back arched. "Please no!"

"Oh, but damnation, I already have. You are all but marked as mine." He cursed himself for refusing to wait. His hips gave some and the slow movement of time began. "That's it, baby. Just relax." His cock stroked inside and the tight walls expanded only a bit. Sure, they allowed him in but her body fought against accepting him all the way.

At first, he slid into her with a slow, deliberate beat. His hand moved around her waist and caressed her breast before dropping to cup her pussy.

Circling her clit with devious fingers, his lips went to her back. "I need you to come for me. I want you to relax and just let yourself go with me. You tell me all about what you're feeling."

"It hurts! I'm serious, Almonzo. You're quite..."

"Small? Remember, love, you said you expected something rather small." He chuckled as he pumped his hard cock into her moist center. "How small does it feel now?"

"I lied!" Her hips pushed upward and her ass only rubbed against him.

"I forgive you." He pushed himself into her again, enjoying every stroke but determined to rush the mating process. "Just as soon as you come for me. I'll make it all better for both of us."

Beads of sweat formed on her back as she tried to work toward a physical acceptance.

“Ah yeah, that’s it, Tabitha. Enjoy me.” He gave a throaty moan as her heat began to puddle around his shaft. “So good.” His pace picked up and his teeth dropped down. He felt his orgasm looming and his hands moved over her working her into a state of arousal with forbidden stimulation. “Come with me, Tabitha. Come to me, sweetheart. I want to feel you accept me.” He moved quicker, harder. Her hips rocked back and forth, harder against his length.

“Almonzo!”

“I’m here. I’m right here, and I’m not going anywhere.” He moved into her with agonizing thrusts timed to bring on exactly what they both needed even if they were up against a clock. Her movements were in rhythm with his strokes and when they increased, the sudden shift only drove him faster.

His teeth were sharp with the recognition. He moved his hand up her spine slowly. He felt the first ripple come and linger, tempt and claim. Yanking her head back to his shoulder, he pounded, oh, holy hell, how he fucked her, letting loose his own release. His lips were moist and her vein truly called out for him as it pulsed with her new life. He bit down. Sipped and sucked.

“Oh God! Almonzo! Stop!”

No, he wouldn’t stop. He would drink and enjoy. Lick her clean and drink her in. He would drive into her with his dick while his fangs latched onto the place he wanted her to know he’d visited.

She bucked against him. Moaning and crying, she believed she wanted to escape his cock and his mouth but it didn’t matter. It wasn’t happening today.

“Almonzo. Please, Almonzo. Finish this.” She shook under him and writhed with the orgasm that shook them both. “Oh, heaven help me.”

He withdrew his teeth from her neck and then moved into her with the rest of his spill still seeping into her body. He wanted to bite again just as soon as he left her but he didn’t allow himself the pleasure. “Dear Tabitha. You’re so fucking tight.”

“Please...”

“Please, what my lover...please, what?” He grabbed her hips and moved into her with three more hard strokes, thrusting in with a loud hungry growl, and back out into the air with the force of a cocksure male behind him encouraging him to revisit again and again. “Hell’s fury, Tabitha! You’re so

fucking tight and now, you're completely mine." He fell over her back and kissed her skin just so he could taste her sweetness one last time. "I can't wait to show you all the ways I can love you." He kissed a trail up her neck and moved her hair over to the side. "We've managed to do this perfectly."

Chapter 7

“You more or less raped me.” Tabitha’s eyes pierced through him where he sat in the hard wooden chair, the useless bindings arranged to make it look like they still held him. An expression of worn pleasure still stained her cheeks. The sass in her mouth didn’t just disappear with her first orgasm.

“You have heard the old saying haven’t you? I’m sure you have. It goes something like ‘You cannot rape a woman begging for it.’ Yeah, the damp crotch kind of gave you away, love.” Almonzo screwed the little wench fast and hard. He understood why it might have left her feeling a little resentful but harping about rape wasn’t something he would entertain in thought or conversation. Hell, he’d managed to take her under the worst circumstances and it didn’t matter that they had little choice about it. Did he take advantage of their situation? He didn’t think so.

His eyes drifted over her, lingering at strategic points. “You left us no other choice.”

“You left me without them! You did this when you decided you couldn’t live without me!” She shouted across the room at him and the growing fury in her eyes nearly cut his skin to shreds.

Almonzo stared back at her long and hard. She didn’t know the battle ahead would be well fought. She didn’t know he had fears of his own survival and really, she had very few reasons to worry about it now. He planned to protect her. She belonged to him. She had to realize he would jump fires or even lay his life down to save her, if he needed to do it. He swallowed hard and worked against the pain growing inside of him.

“I know you think I forced you, Tabitha. Let me explain something to you. Both you and Natasha were fated to become vampire brides. What you don’t know, what you didn’t realize is that only a select few could take you as their own. As much as my family has powers of its own, you and your sister were among several chosen few.”

Her eyes narrowed and the sweat beads on her forehead seemed to stay in one place as the heat of their passion began to slowly diminish. “What are you talking about?”

“Your father.”

“What does he have to do with any of this? You leave him out of this!” Madwoman rage took her to an anger he only witnessed once before.

“I would if it were remotely possible. It isn’t and you should know about this. Your father made a deal, a pact if you will, with the elders many years ago.”

“My father wouldn’t dare. My mother would leave him and never forgive him. Shut your mouth, Almonzo! I won’t listen! I won’t!” Tears began to run down her cheeks again and she fought against the cuffs still holding her to the bedpost, trying to bring her hands up to guard against hearing only painful revelations.

“If that’s so, where are they now?” He hated telling her here, like this, but somehow he didn’t think Darian planned to keep it to himself and Darian understood the circumstances surrounding all of the potential brides. He would love to tell her all about it because the Sabbats, like the Spensers, were well aware of the women lost in the games of the vampire-owned casinos.

“Your father lost you and Natasha in a poker game in this very city.” He looked down at his own nudity and his wide, spent cock, nestled closer to his body now.

“You are a liar!” She pierced him with her tone and her eyes shot bullets at his heart.

“I’m a lot of things, Tabitha. Lying isn’t my cup of tea. I have a great memory. Second to none, but I don’t have time or the recollection to make up lies as I go. And I’ll promise you, I will never lie to you. I love you too much.” He swallowed as he said the words. He didn’t regret saying them and in an act of defiance, he quickly moved his head to the side so his hair fell away from his face. “I said I love you.”

“You don’t love and hurt in the same sitting!” She spat the words in his direction and as she did, the door flew open and Darian Sabbat stepped inside.

* * * *

“Ah! So the dead will be brought back to watch hell unfold.” He walked closer to Almonzo and looked at the reassembled bindings.

He strutted across the room and signaled his guards to leave them. Just a simple hand gesture, and he was left to his own vices feeling all too confident that he could handle himself.

“I’ve learned a lot about you Spensers.” He watched Almonzo closely before he walked to the center of the room and took a seat on the settee found there. “You might say I’ve studied you for quite some time.”

Almonzo realized it would be crucial to catch Darian off his game so pretending to be weak proved very important. Darian made it easy.

He looked over at Tabitha still securely fastened to the bed, only now forced up on all fours because of the way Darian secured her body when he first left her there. “She’s lovely, isn’t she?” His eyes blinked sarcastically as he allowed Almonzo to note how much he enjoyed savoring the woman he thought would soon become his own.

“What do you want, Darian?” Almonzo forced himself to remain calm, to react according to the way he should act with a sedative strong enough to leave any vampire with side effects, especially one without a recent feeding.

Darian stood and walked slowly to the bed. He sat down on the edge of it and slowly tugged off his boots. He bit down on his lower lip and chuckled when he saw Almonzo flinch. “I want what you might have had in this one.” He reached behind him and smacked Tabitha’s ass hard. Taut skin didn’t give much and Tabitha’s firm rear never provided a visual or significant move.

He smacked her again and turned back to see the colorful pupils of anger in Almonzo’s eyes. Almonzo always felt his eyes change and many vampires watched for and gauged another opponent’s rage based on color. It was why Darian studied him closer now. He was evaluating the competition.

Laughter rang through the room. Darian stood up and began to slowly unbutton his shirt. Almonzo shot Tabitha a warning glance. He hoped she understood that they only had a small window of opportunity and with it came only one chance to do things right. Their success guaranteed they escaped unharmed.

Darian walked over to Almonzo and stood in front of him. “I took you for a smart man. A Spenser suited to carry on the family name with a

woman smart enough to help you. One of the few chosen girls perfect for mating royal blood—one lost in some of the finest casinos this city has ever known.” He snarled before turning away. “You fucked up like the honorable ass you’ve become!” His wicked voice trailed off and his shirt fell to his feet.

Almonzo watched him strut around the room. He walked over to the dressing screen in the corner and peered behind it before continued. “Let me guess. She wanted to keep herself for another?” He laughed. “She didn’t want you, did she, Spenser?” He shook his head and added the annoying “tsk, tsk” before he sat down beside Tabitha again.

“She only had eyes for me.” Darian stroked her face and Tabitha seemed to respond to the touch, almost setting off an all-out war in Almonzo’s soul. *The little vixen is mad.*

“Lover, why not tell our guest here how we first met.”

“Go fuck yourself, Darian.” She snapped.

“Only with you there to watch, darling.” He turned back to Almonzo. “We’ve enjoyed the occasional moment, you know.”

Almonzo refused to listen to him boast about time with Tabitha until she had time to explain her relationship with him. He realized now, one most definitely existed in her past.

Darian touched her cheek again and she bit him as his hand came across her lips. Profanity flew across the room and it brought Almonzo’s nerve endings to an upright stance.

“You fucking whore!” Darian raised his hand and quickly smacked Tabitha’s backside. “You’ll pay for that, bitch!”

“I’ve already paid a thousand times more than you can ever imagine just knowing you walk this earth!” She spat true venom in Darian’s direction. Almonzo cringed when he realized why. Almonzo didn’t know a lot about women but he understood enough to know that often when a woman hates strongly, it is because she first loved with just as much passion. He ached with the thought.

Darian moved across the room again and sat down once more to face off with Almonzo. “I believe in letting a man go to his grave well fed and well bred.” He sighed.

Almonzo’s eyes widened. “Oh holy...”

Darian's lips twisted and his chin gave a bit. "So, *now* you see what's happening here, don't you?" He walked over to one of the magnificent bookshelves and pulled down a box. From where Almonzo sat, it looked like a hard-bound novel. The book opened up to reveal a compartment. A large syringe with a very long needle nestled against a cloth holding what Almonzo assumed was Darian's poison along with another empty vial and syringe.

"And here you thought I wouldn't let you fuck her." Darian laughed. "Hell, I'm even willing to let you break her in for me." He took the syringe out and gave it a quick flip or two. "See, you are my test subject. The first one of our kind." He seemed too proud about his revelation.

Almonzo suddenly realized their fate. "You are one sick bastard." He wanted to kill him and take pleasure in using one of the poisonous daggers the Sabbats developed by piercing the place where a true pumping heart never existed.

"I'm the sick bastard who will raise your son or daughter." He clapped his hands with his own satisfaction. "Men!" He turned toward the door and they entered.

Several of the guards brought Almonzo to his feet and quickly realized he wasn't really bound at all. "He's been freed," one of his men quickly informed Darian of the discovery. Immediately, several other vampire guards rushed into the room.

Darian closed his eyes in an attempt to process the new information, no doubt. He quickly went to the woman positioned on all fours. Almonzo realized what he'd find and knew he'd determine her a spent mate. After all, Almonzo took her hard and fast and without much consideration for cleaning her afterwards. There wasn't time to undo Tabitha's restraints and now it might cost her because Darian would understand why he never freed her.

Darian ran his hands over Tabitha's body like he wanted to feel every inch of skin before he found the true mark. He rubbed his palm over her ass. Nice and slow, he didn't rush a complete assessment. The whole time he touched her, Darian's anger visibly grew through his shaded eyes. Almonzo's fury found a new incentive too. His hatred for Darian Sabbat ran deeper and deeper the longer he caressed her.

He questioned Almonzo. "Did you mark her?"

“Damn straight I did.”

The hissing sound followed and it warned of a pending battle.

* * * *

Darian patted her thigh. Tabitha flinched as he caressed her and Almonzo saw it. He realized his hands would go to an area that would cost them both if he touched her. She would pay the price because Almonzo didn't want to wait and leave things to chance. He wanted to watch how she responded to him. Darian would also face consequences because Almonzo wasn't a male who forgave another for touching what belonged to him. He was smart enough to recognize a vampire's mark as ownership on every intimate level.

Sabbat looked over his shoulder. “Is she still damp from you?” His upper lip turned inside out.

Tabitha's mouth fell open and she tossed her head back. The sexy-smart vixen cocked her neck so she granted him a full exposure. “You don't have to check, Darian. You only have to look.” She forced a smile and it provoked Darian. Once he found the deep bruising of fang imprints on her neck, hell's flames danced.

Almonzo read her mind with ease. He convinced himself he knew what she thought before she contemplated it. His feisty little hellcat showed off the imprint of their spent passion, and he was certainly proud. She did it with a gleam in her eye and pride swelling her precious little cheeks. Oh yes, he reminded himself, according to her it was a forced seduction she never would've considered under any other circumstances but who the hell cared right then. Darian earned what he deserved.

Arching her neck all the more, she flashed Darian a grin. “Set teeth, thick cock. I have to say, I really enjoyed my first time.” She deliberately moved her tongue slowly across her upper lip. “I bet he can still taste me.” Her raspy voice was criminally seductive. Her eyes darkened and set against the blow she most likely expected. Almonzo winced for her.

Darian didn't give *her* one. Instead, he looked at Almonzo. “Bring him to his feet!” His anger shook the room and his men began the truest of beatings. Fists were connected and shoes were removed so the heels of boots were used as weapons. The colors of the wallpaper began to spin and blend.

“Stop this! Stop, Darian! Stop and I’ll do anything you ask!” Tabitha seemed to agonize over every hit she’d brought on Almonzo, crying out each time a fist came down against his skin or another kick was delivered to the gut.

And there were many.

He bounced back from each blow, resilient to what he was given by angry men. Ready to accept one more strike against him, if Darian struck him, then he found placement for his anger. His fists, or palms, were not touching Tabitha. Willing to take anything he needed to give, each time urging him on all the more, Almonzo enjoyed the anger he fueled in Darian. After all, their kind didn’t suffer from a hit. It was more of an annoyance than anything else.

“Damn, Sabbat. Now I see why you tote these men around with you. Is that all you have?” Prodding him, Almonzo wanted to accept each punch his rival dealt because just like Orlando and Almonzo, Darian needed the blood of a mate to stay strong and now he wasn’t able to feast on Tabitha’s blood. Since he couldn’t, he would be weak and in need of a feed.

“She was mine, damn you!” Darian’s fist met flesh several more times before he finally exhausted all measures. Despite the sting, Almonzo never felt better. “Chain him!” Darian moved to the side of the bed and finished stripping.

“Almonzo!” Tabitha screamed in agony as Darian joined her on the bed.

“Care to share?” Darian moved closer to the woman chained for his pleasure.

“Actually, he’s always been a little selfish.”

The new voice shocked them all for a moment. Out of nowhere, Orlando and Tate rushed into the room, wielding syringes full of fluids to sedate the bodyguards before they knew what hit them. A scuffle broke out as men fought to avoid the needle.

“Took you long enough,” Almonzo called out to his brother as he worked to free his bonds, all the while keeping a keen eye on the bastard still moving closer to his woman.

Darian seemed unaffected by the commotion. He moved in behind Tabitha. Partially hidden behind the dressing screen, only Almonzo watched them now.

Almonzo worked as quickly as possible to free himself and immediately saw Sabbath's problem. Most men found a fast fuck with a soft cock impossible. He would've been amused if the woman Darian wanted to fuck wasn't *his* woman.

"Damn it! Open your legs!" Darian's open hand came down on her ass.

The guards continued to fight with Orlando and Tate. Almonzo worked only harder against metal and rope. His eyes never left Tabitha for a second. He wanted to be sure his gaze never deserted her. Harder and harder, he fought to break free. "I will see you in hell, Darian!"

"Open, now, sweet honey." Darian hissed. He glanced over at Almonzo one final time. "Well I'll be damned. He doesn't know everything there is to know about us, does he?" He snickered before he brought down another slap against her ass.

Tabitha squeezed her legs tightly together, refusing Darian's demands, and Almonzo saw her brow wrinkle as she seemed to focus on her kneecaps. If she could only force her knees to stay together. *That's it, baby, press tight. Hold on. We're almost home free.* Almonzo didn't want Sabbath inside of her. If she opened up to him and accepted him inside her body, if he penetrated her on the first day of the mating cycle, then he would become another life source for her. Another feeder—a secondary mate. His brother was right, he didn't share.

A true understanding of selfishness washed over him. Still, he held onto her with his thoughts. They were locked in mutual gape focusing on one another. The tears came and ran rampantly over her cheeks.

Understanding slammed into Almonzo's gut. "Tabitha! Look at me!" Desperation was now mutually observed.

The mattress seemed to give a bit and her eyes shut tightly. She must have thought he was going to take her. She must have only assumed he was successful. No, there wasn't any...

Her whimpers confirmed it. "Darian, not now. We can't...Oh God, Almonzo! Oh God!"

Her eyes remained closed. She thought he was going to enter her, feared it even. She must have been certain he would possess her in an intimate dance only meant for one couple, one romance, and one life.

Almonzo swallowed against the pain. No, damn it, he refused to watch. He didn't want to see another man take his vampire bride, his one true love.

Only a temporary moment of defeat encased them. His head snapped up and he glared back at her. “Tabitha! You look at me!”

Orlando and Tate rushed the other men and fought their way through one more group of stout rogues, vampires and those with clauses. It was unfathomable. Darian must have had a private army.

Darian yanked her neck up and back, holding her by a fistful of golden hair. It was wrapped and knotted, twisted through his fingers and around his wrist. “Yes, lover, tell him now! Explain why I can handle being your second provider now!” His voice was pure evil. “Why not? On so many other occasions, I was her very first!”

“Orlando! Fight harder! Get over there, now!” Almonzo yelled bloody hell for his brother.

The men continued to fight off Darian’s guards but they kept coming in droves.

Tabitha’s eyes widened and Almonzo witnessed the reason. Darian’s fangs dropped.

Wiggling against the confinement, Almonzo was almost free, but he realized when the pointed teeth dropped below Darian’s lips, the vampire was already positioned and ready. Yes, once they extended well enough for show, Tabitha felt the new evidence of Darian’s visibly hard cock against her buttocks and Almonzo’s endless denial didn’t change her fate.

She tried to fight him off but she didn’t have the means to do it and Almonzo now realized he left Tabitha in a position of vulnerability. He left her at a great disadvantage.

“Almonzo, please! He’s inside of me! Please! Oh Darian...Almonzo...me...again.” The act was in progress. There was no refuting it now—the shattered cries, the disruptive speech and the movement from the bed. Yeah, he was where Almonzo feared most and in the act, securely locked a position as Tabitha’s secondary mate.

“Hell will fall on you, Darian!” Almonzo broke free and everything in the room went from confusion to utter chaos. Death then danced and in the midst of the commotion, Tabitha’s confession did not go unnoticed, nor did her facial expressions while Darian occupied her body. Almonzo realized his first fears materialized. Before Tabitha hated Darian Sabbat, she first loved him.

Chapter 8

She woke up in a hotel room. Tabitha looked around at her surroundings and decided Spenser men truly rattled her nerves. The first time she found herself in a Las Vegas suite was only a few months before, and she had no recollection of how she arrived there. She thought back to the precise moment. She remembered being scared and totally disoriented. Of course, what woman wants a vampire to remove her from her bed in the middle of the night and move her not only to another mattress but another state altogether?

Ever since her sister became involved with the Spenser family, her life thrashed out of control. Never mind what it would be like now. She belonged, truly belonged, to Almonzo Spenser. She felt him in her soul and her heart just ached to see him.

No, she wouldn't become a girly-woman. She was still quite angry with him, she reminded herself.

She realized she was still in Las Vegas because the promo playing on the television let her know where she laid her head. She was at the Monte Carlo. The same infomercial ran again and again showcasing the casino, the hotel, the dining options and the recreational activities. It sounded like heaven. Maybe some people found Las Vegas enjoyable. So far, every time she came to the city, she'd walked through a little bit of hell. Damn shame too. She thought she would love it here if she ever had the chance to make it to a casino floor.

Her back hurt and her arms felt like they'd been bound together for days. She moved the bedspread back and looked at her knees. Sure enough, they were raw. She fought so hard to keep Darian from screwing the life out of her that her knees would likely have permanent scars. They looked black, not blue.

“Oh God. Oh God.” She looked around the room and began to panic. What if Darian brought her there? What if it wasn’t Almonzo? She sat up in bed and tried to move her legs over to the side.

A crashing sound came from behind the door of her bedroom and she heard voices. “Almonzo! Almonzo!” She screamed out. No one came. The horrifying realization hit her squarely in the face. Almonzo would’ve taken her home. He would’ve gotten her out of the city.

She looked around the room. One door led to another room. The lavish suite likely had a living room. She tiptoed to the door and put her ear up against it. She strained against the sound of a nearby heat pump and she couldn’t make out a distinct voice on the other side, only low muttering. She looked around again and fears over her hopeless situation began to consume her.

Tabitha felt like she’d died and landed in an inferno below hell. The vile nature of Darian Sabbat terrorized her mind. His demeanor would drive a woman to suicide even if she wanted to live. She knew from experience. She would truly rather die than be possessed by him even though at one time, she thought she would perish if he never touched her. That was a long, long time ago, she quickly reminded herself.

Her head began to swim and she sat back down on the bed and watched the door in front of her. He’d be through it any second. She knew how he thought. Darian never left her alone for more than a couple of hours. Her heart began to pound and she decided she would not go down without a fight. If Darian Sabbat stood on the other side, he’d be well served to stay there.

* * * *

Almonzo never saw the chair that fell on his shoulders. “Holy shit, woman! What in hell’s fury are you doing?” He shielded his body from her with two palms turned up in her direction.

The impact of the large chair falling on her intruder took all of her strength and her hair fell over her face with the force of the crashing blow she delivered. She looked up at Almonzo with amusement after she saw the surprise on his face.

Her hand quickly covered her mouth already forming a wide smile. "I'm so sorry! I thought...I thought..."

Almonzo moved to her quickly and slammed against her mouth with a bruising kiss. He pushed her back toward the bed. "I knew you would be mad if I wasn't beside you when you regained consciousness." He kissed the words right into her teeth and tongue, grinning all the more.

Palms meant to purposefully halt a man quickly flew to his chest. "Oh no you don't. You don't get to come in here and work me over like a piece of fresh meat. Not now. You brought me here and left me here." Her lips pursed and she shook a scolding finger in rhythm with every syllable spoken. "I've been sitting here for the last hour wondering where you were and wondering if you were safe and hoping..." her voice trailed off and she interrupted her own thoughts with more expression, "Oh, Almonzo, I just knew Darian waited on the other side of this door. I could've sworn I felt him here."

A peculiar silence filled the room

* * * *

Almonzo flinched when he heard her confession. If Tabitha was mindful of Sabbath's presence, their relationship had once been rather significant just as he suspected. Jealousy fueled curiosity. His heart pounded out different beats and with each new one, the agony of what he saw made him hurt all the more.

"You're right. He was here." The admittance came as he allowed his eyes to linger over every inch of her body.

"What?"

"We brought him here. Orlando just left with him."

"What? Why?"

"You might say Orlando had a score to settle with the elders and he wanted to do it publicly. He felt like there may have been more than what met the eye here." He paused and studied her. His brother's worries seemed warranted. Almonzo knew Tabitha well enough to know a squawking revelation would not fall from her lips.

"I don't understand."

Almonzo smiled and ignored her questioning. "You will." He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "So, how are you feeling?"

"Almonzo, don't shrug me off." Her eyes darted around the room before they settled on the more opulent living area. "Nice suite by the way."

"Glad you like it." He took her hand in his and moved toward her again. His lips were hungry and he wanted to savor her after their first time left so much to be desired, if not craved.

"Not so fast." Her voice broke and she stared at the ceiling to keep from crying. He knew why because he saw the expression in her eyes change and the look of pure regret stamped on her face. Tabitha had blacked out when the rumble between Darian and himself broke out. He realized she probably didn't hold a vivid recollection of the final events at the Dark Castle of the Desert.

"Come here." He pulled her close and held her for a long time before he let the words fall from his mouth. "He didn't," he choked out what he understood she needed to know. "He didn't get to you, inside of you, I mean." His hand moved over her back in a loving caress. "I don't think I could've lived if he had his..."

"Stop, Almonzo. I don't want to discuss it." She pushed out of his arms and looked up at him. She searched his eyes and perhaps found the truth in them. The hurt he was going to try and carry all on his own. Yes, Darian penetrated her and he did it right in front of Almonzo. Why he didn't want to admit it was for one reason alone. He knew *she* didn't find it repulsive or unpleasant but he didn't want to discuss that either, not until he had time to talk to the elders. He did not want Darian in place as her secondary. It was a matter to discuss with the elders before he mentioned anything more to Tabitha.

He brushed the hair out of her eyes. "So, little lady, where would you like to go tonight? My brother seems to think you love this town and tells me you didn't see much of it when you were here last."

"I didn't and, ahem, I don't want to see much of it now." Her sarcasm drifted into the open air with a suggestive flavor.

Almonzo moved closer. "You don't? Well, I certainly won't argue with you. I'm content to stay right here for the rest of the day and night."

A wicked laugh passed her lips and with it came a downright deplorable notion. "I want to go home."

He steadied himself with her request. It sounded like a beautiful melody just to hear her say the word. “What do you mean you want to go *home*?”

Her eyes danced. She looked around the suite with one uninterested sweep until she found something he imagined she found inviting. No, he hoped she found it enticing. She narrowed her eyes on the Italian marble surrounding the two-person Jacuzzi in the bathroom.

“Yours is bigger.” She read his mind. “It can all go to waste. I just want to go.” She moved closer to him and gently wrapped her arms around his neck. “I want to go back to Edinburgh. I want to go home with you and sleep in our bed and make love to you all night long in the safety of your arms. I don’t like it here and I don’t want to be here for another second.”

“You don’t like Las Vegas?” Orlando told him she loved it there. He loved it there.

“No, not anymore.”

“When did you...” He knew when she decided she didn’t like the town. Everything she experienced provided a sure and sudden change of an opinion. “Forget about it. You don’t have to ask me twice. Now, before we go...”

Her hands quickly dropped to her sides and she stood up. “Don’t even think about it. Not one kiss, not one inappropriate touch until you take me home to Edinburgh.”

“Damn, you like to push and shove a man until you get your way.” Almonzo ran his hand over the length of his face. “Holy hell, woman, I think I deserve something for my efforts.” He reached out for her and she smacked him away and drew her hair back in a makeshift ponytail. “You’ve already had enough blood to satisfy your thirst and I promise you, the next time, it won’t come easy for you.”

She snickered and then walked into the bathroom and slammed the door behind her. Almonzo called out to her. “By the way, we can’t travel yet. Not until dark.” He listened for her reply. “Damnation, you’re going to kill me here.”

Hearing his proclamation, Tabitha peered out from behind the door. “You’re supposed to be dead already so I imagine you’ll survive.”

“Why you little wench!” He ran over to the bathroom only to catch the door pushed up against his nose.

She called out to him from the other side. “If we aren’t able to travel, then I’ll at least enjoy our suite. I’m taking a bath. Go gamble or flirt with showgirls or something. What time are we going to leave for Scotland?”

“Just as soon as I spank some common sense into your little ass.” He grinned down at his growing erection and then quickly added, “Then, I’ll be ready to fly, baby.” His hands settled on the doorframe, one on each side. “Open up.”

“No!”

“I can come in there, I hope you know.” He would prefer an open invitation.

“You can, I’m sure of it. Even if you do, it won’t do you any good.”

He heard the door click into a locked position. “Such a smart lady.”

“Almonzo?”

“Yes.” He leaned his head against the wall.

“Do you want me? I mean, do you really *want me*?”

Her playful tone only drew another inch, two if he wanted to be cocky. “More than you know.”

“Is it because the elders handed down a rule for marriage?”

“No. I think I would’ve loved you regardless.”

“Do you *really* love me?” Uncertainty made her vulnerable and he recognized her despair. After what they’d been through together, they both developed a personal relationship with uneasiness.

“I love you more than you will ever have a need for love.” He gently reassured her and then added a bit of saucy temptation. “If you’ll open up, I’ll show you how much.”

He waited. Resting his cheek against the flat surface, he resigned himself to the fact she wasn’t going to open the door. Tabitha really wanted to go home and he accepted it. He reluctantly backed away from the temporary separation.

He sat down on the bed and tossed some pillows against the headboard. He heard the door unlock. Immediately, his senses came alive with just the simple click of sound.

* * * *

She wanted him and she wasn't sure she could wait until they reached Scotland to have him. Her need felt like a slow burn even as she sank into the tub of water. Desire flooded her. What if he didn't come for her? She smiled. *He'll come. Oh, heaven help me, will he come.*

Her heart fluttered and skipped a few beats as she patiently waited. She sank lower into the water and turned on the jets. Her aching bones throbbed and the water swirled around her, relaxing muscles she didn't know she owned. She watched the bubbles rise as the beating pressure of fast sprays hit just the right spots.

She leaned her head back and closed her eyes. "Ah, this is heaven."

"It's mighty close."

Her eyes slowly opened to Almonzo. He took his own sweet time stepping into the water, proud of his obvious endowment, no doubt. He wanted her to see him. He wanted her eyes to focus on the frontal view and she didn't mind staring with approval and acceptance. She almost reached out to touch him before deciding she liked it like this. She didn't mind looking. A woman didn't necessarily have to touch a man to feel him on her skin.

"I said no hanky-panky until we get to Scotland." She teased.

"You said one thing and then left me to believe another when you unlocked the door." His tongue moved back and forth over his bottom lip. Soon, the pad of his thumb moved there too. Sexy-hell, he knew how to tempt her.

Damn it, he drove her insane. He did it deliberately. She didn't surrender or admit it but it was true. Her nipples were pierced with pain as she waited for his first touch. "I knew you would take it off the hinges if you wanted in here bad enough so I saved you the trouble."

"It appears extreme measures weren't necessary."

She inched closer. "Actually, they are. In fact, I think you'll find an *extremely slow* penetration is in order to avoid drastic measures altogether."

"Sweet, sweet woman. I thought you didn't know how to ask." He moved her arms around his neck and at the same time, she used his shoulders and strong biceps to slide up on him in one motion meant to move mountains, the most intimate of which, she pressed into his chest. She giggled as her nipples peaked with the rise and fall of his labored breathing against them.

Her legs locked behind his back and his mouth accommodated and accepted a lavish appraisal. He didn't want to rush and she planned on enjoying everything he had to give.

They shared similar sentiments. They'd waited long enough. This time, they didn't have outer forces working against them. Now, he didn't have to worry about making her completely his. She already belonged to him and he could show her everything she wanted to learn. He would ruin her for all others and she anticipated the physical breakdown. Her body craved it.

Almonzo's hands grabbed her waist and pushed her from the water. Standing in front of his face, she anticipated what came next and stilled against the tongue moving over her hip. "I can't stand here while you touch me."

She took a deep breath and before she released it, his tongue dipped for the first taste and then he withdrew long enough to instruct. "Put your hands on my shoulders. I have you and you're not going anywhere. I promise." He moved into her again with a sweet swipe. His tongue circled the outside of her pussy and his mouth covered her clit. He fully intended to rob her of any possible self-control. The initial gentle suckling proved it.

Beyond the first, the others were the undoing of a woman. Heaven help her, she wanted to come after only feeling him cross over inside. She felt every invasion, reacted to each lick and moved with him every single time he curled his tongue inside of her. "Almonzo..." Breathless, how to define the experience left her only to marvel at another one. He gave several at various speeds.

His moist mouth lapped at her. Her body supplied enough evidence of her desire and provided only more with the appropriate, never mind skillful, stimulation.

Her back arched and he moved his hand to cradle her ass while the fingers of his other hand trailed up her torso. He reached for her nipple. Between his thumb and forefinger, he rolled it back and forth and back and forth and her hips soon rotated with the moves only he inspired.

"Almonzo, no." Her breathing stopped. She moved her fingers through his hair. "No. Not...yet."

He moved closer to her, his arch evident, his desire certain and his intent unmatched. "Don't tell me no. You never say no to me, sweetheart." He seemed to speak into her center and her body opened up to listen.

Licking in an upward motion, he held her hard against his tongue and soaked up each spill she gave him. “That’s it, baby. Let me taste you. Let me sip every flavor of your pleasure. Move it against my tongue.” He whispered soft words and the vibration he sent into her cave only echoed and chimed deeper into her soul.

If his moves weren’t enough encouragement for a woman who had waited far too long for this moment then the world came to an abrupt halt once he spoke to her with purpose. “That’s it, love. I want you to come with me.” He bit down on her clit and the verbal coaxing continued, more or less, through forced vibrations. His moans and growls fell into a slow pace with an orgasm meant to rock Las Vegas.

Her hands moved up against the marbled wall behind them. She scratched and clawed at it with every clenching sensation. “Almonzo! Don’t stop now. You can’t stop now.” Her body begged for more. Her inner walls clenched tighter, holding him and his tongue in one spot with pulsating pleasure closing in around a truly perfect delivery of oral sex.

He licked faster and then slower. Deeper and then wider, he moved his tongue into her with precision and skill and then withdrew just enough of it to make her body long for more.

She moved with him. Her pussy seemed to chase down the intimate affection of oral pampering, something she would forever enjoy with her mating partner.

His fingers dipped and his teeth secured the hard little nub driving her spasms. Licking, biting, sucking, ah yeah, he worked her over until she simply soared with more gratification than she ever experienced.

Hot spurts of pleasure forced her to grate forward against the wall. Her breasts mashed into the cool texture as her legs parted only more. “Oh God, Almonzo!” Her hips gyrated forward and his hands clamped her securely against his hips.

After the first orgasm took her, she started to slide back down in the water. He wouldn’t allow it. “Oh no you don’t.” He looked up at her while his tongue moved slowly around his own lips before he sipped, truly indulged, one final time. “You taste like hot cinnamon butter.”

Tabitha’s eyes nearly crossed. “I’m so dizzy.” Her breath, where did it go? She needed to catch it. She wanted to know what it felt like to breathe

again. “I’m crazy. I’m so...” she paused, leaned her forehead on her forearm and looked down on him, “I’m so *crazy for you*.”

A snicker of carnal acceptance left his lips. “If you think you love me now, wait until I tie you up and fuck that pretty little ass of yours. Then you’ll know what it’s like to see a room spin.”

She began to protest. “Almonzo, I’m not into kink.”

“You are now.” His handsome face spread into an expression that would have a mortal man locked up without the possibility of parole. Criminal intent, oh hell yeah, he had it.

And oh fuck, no, she saw where they were headed once he stood up to carry her there.

Chapter 9

Almonzo wanted her to know him. Really grasp the context of who he was as a sexual man. He needed her to feel him in a way no other woman was every permitted to enjoy him. He wanted her complete understanding and in order to have it, she needed to realize wherever she went now, he would shadow her. When they joined, an enduring desire drove him to be more than her lover or even her life mate. He wanted to exist as her alter ego.

Moving Tabitha to the bed, he stroked her hair as he carried her. He placed a light kiss on her forehead before he released her. He stood there before her, expectant. His tongue darted out in anticipation as he watched her handle his provocative cue with extreme charm.

A gentle and knowing smile curved her lips and she inched closer to the bedside. Her soft hands moved around his hips and she made a confession. "I almost did this once."

"You what?" The moment all but ruined, Almonzo thought he was about to hear an inappropriate confession. If his ears didn't deceive him, he would kill the son-of-a-bitch who parted his woman's lips with his cock.

Tabitha giggled. "You jealous man, you! I almost asked *you* if..." she stared up into his face. "Never mind."

Relief swarmed over him as her hands brought his tip into the moisture waiting for him. Her mouth parted and the tongue darting out of puckered lips swiped the precum off the tip.

"Mmm." She liked the taste and he loved the expression confirming it.

Heaven help him, he wanted to move in fast. He congratulated himself for the measure of respect he showed her and the restraint he proved he still exercised. He fought the urge to laugh at the way he patted himself on the back for showing her 'respect' because after all, a man doesn't think about respecting a woman when he has his cock backed up against her throat. No

matter who the woman is, he isn't weighing in with his reverence. Almonzo shrugged away his thoughts and his hips gave in to his man-needs as he moved closer to her sweet tongue, her obvious adoration.

Tabitha's small fingers wrapped around the base of his cock and she directed the tip with her sucking lips. Her longing gaze challenged him before her mouth agreed to join in the ultimate consumption.

As soon as his dick met her tongue again, her hot ready mouth closed around him and she immediately moaned with a pleasure so understood that he shivered. Knowing she liked his dick swollen between her jaws only drove his moves. His ass clenched as her hands moved to his butt cheeks and she began the glide with a profound obvious skill. Maybe it wasn't a learned or practiced ability but her cleverness for maneuvering cock didn't leave a lot to be desired. He wasn't afraid of hurting her now. No, she enjoyed it, and she liked it so much that her moans were only part of the proof because he knew where to find more evidence.

Her legs naturally fell apart in sudden invitation. Once or twice he glided back and forth into her mouth before he moved his fingers down to be sure she was happy to welcome him. Holy hell, she wanted it. Ah yeah, she liked his dick swelling between her cheeks almost as much as he liked sliding in and out of them, tempting them both with more.

Her fingers moved around him and kneaded the skin of his cock. Claws dug into his backside and she swallowed. Oh, holy hell, did she want him to come in her mouth? He had to ask her. He wanted her to expect it and, yes, oh hell yeah, look forward to it. The way she worked after his release, she recognized the building desire.

Long fingers weaved through the top of her soft blonde hair. "Sweetheart, I'm going to come if you keep this up."

She gave him permission by sucking harder and now with it granted, she'd get what she pleaded for, perhaps even waited for with the twinkle of lust he saw again in her eyes. He read it in her sultry expression and then her lips only tightened around his shaft more.

"Damnation, Tabitha. That's it, baby." His hips moved faster and she sucked him in more and more. His hand went to her damp center again and two fingers dipped and twirled, slowly they went for her core, for the pleasure control, the button with the ability to expose a woman.

Velvet waited for him there, slick heat, and it guaranteed them of a finest hour. But first, oh hell, that's it, right now he had silk to bypass and a tunnel of pleasure inviting him to sink on back into the lap of luxury. He had her now. Oh yeah, he had her where he wanted her.

"Oh God! Don't stop sucking, baby. Never stop." His hips moved in a short, fast pace. His cock throbbed and pulsed against her mouth and his pleasure oozed on down her sleek little throat.

She swallowed once before he realized she tasted him completely. His cum began to spray the back of her throat and he couldn't stop himself now. He drove beyond her sharp little teeth and past where he meant to go with just a simple stroke of tongue. He had to have her. He wanted her to know him, feel him. Damnation, she had to love him and in order to love him, she had to experience him, the flavor of this impeccable season—the mating of their new love. He wanted her to take the release and enjoy the taste. He gave it all to her and so help him, he didn't know if he would or could stop himself from coming all the more.

* * * *

After he came, he didn't waste time in pleasing her because he'd already played in her readiness. His fingers fucked her long enough to prepare her and if she wanted to come fast, and she did, he'd make it easy for her or so she thought.

"Come here, you." He started to pull her up. She shook her head and remained on the bed.

"No, I think you need to come on down here and love on me for a minute."

"Damn, you're mischievous." He bit his lower lip and grinned. "And mighty damn tempting, but hell no, you're going to have your little ass teased first."

"No, Almonzo." Her voice pleaded. "I need you."

He yanked her up to him. "Define need and then separate it from want." His hand stroked her hair and then his lips met hers with a gratifying exchange of lingering affection. First, he took the lead and then she stole it back. When she took charge, she kissed him deeply. When his mouth began

to search, he wandered down her neck to sip on a nipple for what she only defined as a divine evaluation.

She tried to find the mattress by backing up against it. He wouldn't let her find a seat there. Finally, he sat down and pulled her to him. She started to sit on his lap, but he stopped her. "No, bend over."

"When hell freezes over."

"It's ice now, baby. Global warming on earth..." he took her hand and wrapped it around his cock, "and shivering down in hell. I thought you knew."

"Funny." Her eyes narrowed and she glared at him. "Don't spank me. I don't like it." Darian smacked her ass and she didn't want to think about the pleasure and the pain she found from his hand.

"You're going to love it. If you don't, I'll stop. Just say the word." He moved her over his lap and started to caress her bottom.

Smoothing the skin, he made sure his palms didn't find a favored spot, or so she imagined. He felt so damn good. His hands just scanned and touched and moved a smoothing and gentle sensation throughout her body. Heaven on earth, she lived it. She felt like she floated among the angels whenever he touched her.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

"What the hell?" Sweet mercy, her pussy tingled with the three love-pats he gave her. She felt the slap in her center. Damn it all, she liked it from the first strike.

"Gentle, baby, gentle." His hands went back to work smoothing out the sting. He worked in a sensual massage with tender loving care.

Smack! Smack! Smack! They weren't easy slaps. He wanted them to burn. It was obvious in the way he prepared the skin before he struck his palm against it.

Her vagina responded again and she knew the evidence of her desire seeped onto his leg. Drenching need seeped from her body. Her pussy was on fire.

Hot and needy, his fingers went there to ascertain the damage. She harbored it. "Let me see how much you hate this." His hand separated her thighs and three fingers moved into her. "That's it, baby. Hate it some more." He leaned over and kissed her back and by the way his mouth scraped across her skin, he did it with a smile.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

“Damn you, Almonzo!” Her breathing picked up and her sex seemed to grind into his thigh with a rotation of desire-filled patterns.

Stroking sensations began again. He rubbed and soothed her ass before moving his fingers in behind her to reach for her damp pussy. This time, her walls were clenching tightly around his strokes. “Let me come.”

“Not yet.” He growled.

Sudden urgency hit them both. His hand covered her intimate space in guarded protection but then flattened above her as he shifted her shoulders and moved her to stare up at him.

Still across his lap, she licked tiny circles in his skin as his fingers moved into her cunt. “Did you hate it?”

“It’s torture.” She pressed her mound into his hand once or twice. “I’m on fire, Almonzo...please.”

Three fingers joined the first two and his jaw seemed to give a little with a moan following, no guiding, the movement. “How hot does it burn?” In and out, his fingers worked overtime and quickly earned their place there. “Tell me all about it.”

Her hips rose and fell with the slow manual screw. “Searing...sweltering...please, Almonzo!”

Reluctantly, he stopped the finger fucking.

“Like this, though, don’t you?” He withdrew his finger abruptly and moved his palm over the outside of her pussy. He pressed once with the ball of his hand and then he did it again—twice. Hell, she didn’t know what he was doing to her but one thing was certain, no other lover could ever be this attentive. All she craved, measured in with a higher motivation for sex than any woman should be permitted to experience with a new lover, even if he was one to keep forever.

She stopped breathing. She expected it to happen. She couldn’t live with physical torture. Pleasure so wonderful often moved into the realm of pain and damn it all, she hurt for it.

“Are you okay?” He must have sensed it and held onto his control again by inching a few fingers back in place.

“I need to...fuck.” She quit grinding against his hand and stopped welding around his fingers.

“Well, why didn’t you say so?”

She winked. “You’re a bright man. You always figure out the important things.”

He leaned back and brought her with him. If he thought for a second she was going to give him the opportunity to take a missionary position with her, he needed to reevaluate her situation. Proof dripped between her legs and she wasn’t going to let him control this. No way in hell.

He guided her over his hips. He adjusted the spread and moved up a bit before she shifted back and when she slid over him, she took him with her. Every single inch he had to give and before he asked, she took more and her body accommodated him well.

* * * *

“Sweet Tabitha.” He moaned as she surrounded him.

He closed his eyes and shielded her from the view. He didn’t want her to see his eyes color and change, not from anger or even desire. Hunger like no other took him with a death grip on his cock.

“Open your eyes, Almonzo. I want to see the lavender. I want to see you watch me.” She whispered as she moved. Her lips covered his.

And she unleashed the beast inside. The animalistic passion he held for her came to life and hell’s fury, she didn’t need to see the urgency of madness. Damn! He’d forgotten how tight her pussy felt. Maybe he took her so fast the first time, he was oblivious to how snug a made-to-order selection felt, but it slid over him like a brand new mitten.

When he thrust inside the first time, he had to hurry but he wasn’t going to rush now. He stroked her with fervor as his lungs released all types of distorted sound.

His mouth went to her ear. “I want you to know my place is not only beside of you but buried deep inside of your hot little pussy.” He planned to stay awhile too.

She giggled. “Then prove it. Open your beautiful eyes, Almonzo.” Her hips moved over him, with him, against and for him. She was on top for a reason.

He turned his head away from her. “I don’t want you to see this. I can’t deny myself or you but you can’t see me like this.”

She leaned down and slid him out of her pussy and he felt the loss. She moved closer to him. Her lips were right next to his. She slanted hers next to his. "Please look at me," she whispered. "I love your eyes when they change with passion. I can't stop myself from wanting you when you look at me with sheer, rugged-raw need."

"Damn you, Tabitha." His tongue swiped her lips and he locked eyes with her then.

"That's it, Almonzo. Now, you can fuck me." She moved back over him and captured his cock again in a show of permission granted and she revealed a true fact. She was drenched now with desire, her lust-ridden face only softened as he watched her.

"I can? Why, thank you." He watched her to see if a frightened young woman emerged but she only looked happier, consumed by joy, and he had plenty he wanted to give her. He only wanted to see contentment and he easily discovered it. Not one inch of fear lingered there. No, what he found defined something else altogether, fucking bliss.

"Come to me, Tabitha. That's it, sweetheart. Work those sweet little hips for me." He reached up and cupped her neck. Slowly, ever so gently, he pulled her closer and lavished her mouth with a kiss of promise and adoration.

He then moved to her vein and nipped it. She didn't have much to give right then so he took what he needed to survive the return trip home. He sucked in what she offered and deliberately drained only a smidgen of plasma. He then left her with a simple lick.

"Bleed me, Almonzo. More, please take more." Her mouth opened in a breathless attempt to encourage him and she looked as hungry to give as he was to receive.

The little vixen liked his mouth sucking her blood and as soon as she made the request, a spurt of cum jolted him forward and his body began to jerk with hers.

"That's it baby, keep moving with me." His hands clasped her wrists and he pulled her into a sexy kiss emulating the very tempo their bodies slapped out together.

Her hips moved and her orgasm shook them, proving she had enough energy to last for both of them. She didn't meet her release all on her own.

He met her with his own climax by the time she realized multiples existed for those women truly satisfied by their mates.

Chapter 10

“I will not ask her to do it!”

The sound of Almonzo’s voice woke her. His anger scared the hell out of her. It seemed to zoom throughout the room and the atmosphere must have unraveled with his obvious piercing pain.

“Almonzo?” She looked around for her clothes and when she didn’t find them, remembered the terrycloth robe in the bathroom. She quickly went there to retrieve it. She opened the door to find Almonzo’s eyes enraged with shades of colors she didn’t find particularly appealing. He held his palm up toward her as if to stall her where she stood.

Tabitha wasn’t a woman easily sent away. “What’s this screaming about?”

His voice lowered before he turned his back to her. “I’ll discuss this with Tabitha. She’s awake now, no thanks to you. Tell Father this is unacceptable!” He closed the cell phone and stared outside. Large bay windows allowed for an unobstructed view of the Las Vegas Strip.

Body language warned her to approach cautiously. She saw her hand reach for his back and noticed how it didn’t seem to belong to her. “Almonzo? What’s—”

He shrugged her off. “Don’t touch me!” His arms quickly extended in front of his body with his palms forward as if he planned to push someone away.

She swallowed hard. “Okay, I won’t.” She stared at his back. She didn’t know what to do and she damn sure didn’t like feeling helpless.

After a few minutes she turned away from him. “This is immature as hell. This is nonsense! If you’re mad at me or if I’ve done something, then tell me. Otherwise, you can come to terms with whatever you have to deal with on your own. I’m going back to Scotland and I’ll go by traditional means if necessary.”

Before she escaped back into the bedroom, he grabbed her arm and spun her around to face him. His eyes were a softer color than before but they were definitely pink with rage. "Sit down." He gritted his teeth and then turned away from her again. "I have to regain some strength here before we talk about this and I have to do it quickly. Before the elders arrive."

"The elders? Here? Why are they coming here?"

Almonzo's shoulders squared off and he stood taller. The silence divided them and instantly, she understood. She felt it in the pit of her gut. Why act shocked? She realized this day loomed and it threatened to tear them apart, even before Darian pushed his way into her body, he was in her life for eternity. He had something far more valuable than an intimate invasion.

She'd hoped someone, somewhere would intervene. She thought the Spensers were able to change her twisted fate when Almonzo decided to mark her as his own. She'd fought against her emotions and her desires for over three months. The Spensers had plenty of time to find out about all of her secrets and if they didn't, then they certainly had the power to stop whatever Darian put it motion now. Didn't they?

A bitterness she'd never heard in him before broke down her defenses. "Why don't you tell me what I need to know about you and Darian Sabbat."

The choking sensation she felt when she first entered the Dark Castle of the Desert quickly returned to claim her. She tried to gain her composure, prepare herself for the pain she would inevitably see in Almonzo's face once he focused on what was in front of him all along. She couldn't find the inner strength she desperately lacked right then.

"I'm asking you a question. Please understand. I have little patience left right now." He sat down in a chair across from her and his legs made a fanlike rotation. He rested his hands on each knee. He waited for her to begin.

She stood up and made her announcement. "I'm going home."

His blank expression lived on through horrifying glares. "I imagine you don't know where your home is now, do you?"

"I know my home is with you."

"The hell it is." He watched her for a reaction.

"Almonzo, I'm sorry. I didn't..."

“You didn’t what? You didn’t bother to tell me that you were his already? It didn’t occur to you that I might be interested in all of the torrid details of your promiscuous past. What exactly are you apologizing for, Tabitha?”

Tabitha let the promiscuous statement slide. It wasn’t true so why justify it with a reply when there were unavoidable issues at hand. “I’m not his woman. I’m not his mate and I have never—” She cut her own words off when she saw him look away from her and she moved quickly to stand in front of him, “Listen to me!” She continued to defend herself. “I have never felt anything like this for him!”

“It was only lust, right?” His eyes narrowed.

Tabitha swallowed against the word he dared to say to her. She did, for a short period of time, feel lust for Darian, and maybe even love but it never compared to what she experienced with Almonzo. It only lasted for a few months because she quickly saw the vampire behind the man and his existence was by far the most ruthless she’d ever known. She wasn’t going to confirm or deny Almonzo’s suspicions because she wasn’t going to revisit her past for anyone.

“How dare you!”

“I guess I have my answer.” He stood up and crossed the room. “Get dressed. I’ll be back when the elders arrive.”

She rushed to stop him but before she reached him, he was gone. The slamming of the door seemed to shake the walls of the room. More importantly, they wracked her body with heartache. Her fists pounded against the door he closed in her face. “I never cared for him or anyone else like this, damn it! I never wanted Darian or any other man for keeps! Never!” Shouting the words didn’t make them true because her inconceivable lust for Darian, no matter how short-lived, set a lot of events in motion. She realized it before she ever joined with Almonzo—this day would come—and so it arrived without any remorse.

* * * *

She was slumped down in a drained tub when he walked into the bathroom. Fully dressed, her head rested easily in the bent nook of her elbow.

She felt him there watching her. She didn't care. *Let him rot in his own hell.*

"They're here." He closed the door and she made the mistake of thinking he stood on the other side.

She thought she called out behind him, to an empty room, perhaps. "I don't give a rat's ass if they're here or not. They're his elders. They don't mean anything to me!"

A loud slam rang out in the tiny bathroom. His palm supported him against the granite countertop.

Her head snapped to an upright position.

Dark eyes glared at her. "Perhaps if you had a measure of respect for your elders, you'd have some fraction of it for yourself."

"Fuck you, Almonzo."

"You did, remember? Oh, that's right, it's probably a forgettable experience since Darian took his turn too."

"You bastard." The words were softly spoken but the impact of what he said to her and the disgust in each word shattered her heart.

"No, I know who my father is but unfortunately, at this point, if you are with child, you won't be so lucky now, will you?"

His venomous words sliced her chest in half and she wasn't sure there was a way to repair it. "So the games are over now, huh?" She shook her head as she revisited the night before. "You were the one who wanted to deny what *you* saw. I went along because I thought it was what you wanted."

"Don't pull this shit with me, Tabitha. I'm pretty sure you and Darian were already quite familiar with one another." He started to leave and then he turned around. "The only difference is blood, isn't it?"

"It's none of your business." She quipped.

"That's where you're wrong and you're about to see how quickly the truth is going to set your little ass on fire." He sneered.

Her brow creased and her lungs began to hurt with each sip of air. She felt like her heart was in the palm of his hand and he closed his fist around it to apply just the right amount of pressure.

"I want to see Natasha."

“Your sister isn’t going to get you out of this mess. Unfortunately, Tabitha, I’m all you have and unless you start talking, I’m not sure what I want to do to help you.”

Her eyes locked with his and her stubborn nature just came in and started kicking her ass. Her will took over and her common sense flew straight to hell. Heaven and earth would need to help Almonzo now because fury oozed through her blood and rage existed when she stepped from the dry bathtub.

Almonzo watched her. “Well?”

She stood in front of him. “Screw you!” Her blond hair framed her face and she moved rapidly to get away before he caught her around the waist and brought her back against his chest.

“I told you—”

Without warning, she drew back and smacked the shit out of him. “I don’t give a damn what you told me, Almonzo Spenser. You are one arrogant ass and if you think because I fucked you that I’ll take your shit, remember this whenever you have nothing but the wind to keep you chilled at night. A woman brought you into this world and a woman can sure as hell take your sorry ass out! *Now move out of my way!*”

Why he moved, she was not sure. She didn’t back down from a fight but he didn’t move over for a woman. The Spenser men loved their women but the truth always stared back at them. They were a bit chauvinistic.

Bit, hell.

She marched forward to face more of the same. Tabitha looked around the room. Suddenly, it hit her. She didn’t come to Las Vegas of her own free will and because she’d been brought against her knowledge, she didn’t have her personal effects. What few personal items she had, she wore. The handbag she clutched did not belong to her. Almonzo picked it up at a gift shop while she slept the day before and she certainly didn’t want anything he bought for her. She tossed it to the floor and then stepped over it.

“I’m a survivor.” She said the words to reassure herself more than him before she confidently walked past the bed where she’d given herself completely to a man, a hardened vampire, she thought would love and protect her. Glancing at it for a second, she looked back at him and noted he watched her with concern now.

It didn’t matter. It was too late.

She headed straight into the living room, where she came face to face with Darian Sabbat and three older men. All eyes focused on her, and the men stood to welcome her.

She glared at them one by one. Individually, she took her time lingering over the older men. They all looked like affluent individuals, elders.

The tallest one extended his hand. "You must be Tabitha."

She glared across the room at Almonzo once he joined them. "I was Tabitha. Tabitha Spenser. The best thing all of you can do now is forget you ever knew me at all."

Through moist eyes, she turned one final time and looked into a face ridden by the pain she'd placed there. "The best I can hope for is to never have cause or reason to find any of you in front of me again."

She quickly glared at Darian before she passed by him too. He was sprawled in a chair, his legs gently splayed out in front of him and she easily saw how Almonzo might be jealous. Each man certainly possessed his charms.

"Tabitha, hate me all you like but leave here and you will not survive." Darian's voice didn't hold compassion necessarily, but it did sound out with a fair enough warning.

She sneered. "I may not want a Spenser but I will never settle for you regardless of what I have to do in order to survive."

And just like that, she walked away from it all.

* * * *

Almonzo didn't try to stop her and the elders didn't have the capacity to care one way or the other. They weren't in love with her. His concerns over her fidelity and devotion slapped him with all of the reasons why he didn't try to restrain her.

He'd rather lose her altogether, let her run from all of them, than watch Darian Sabbat take her for his own. By force, he shared her once, but he would not allow her to spend her life with a Sabbat or face the possibility of Darian becoming a secondary feeding mate.

He ran his hand over his face before he glared at those staring back at him. Almonzo decided if he didn't have a ready audience, he might have enjoyed a good fit of anger. Tears existed for her but the heartache he

brought her wouldn't measure against his own if he had to hand her over to another.

Almonzo stood at the window where he'd braced himself against her response earlier. His chosen statement was sharp and pointed. "Sabbat, if you go after her, I will hunt you down like the animal you are and I will gut you with your own poisonous spears."

Darian chuckled. "She's a piece of ass, Spenser, nothing more than a simple tramp with a tight snatch."

Rage, deadly and dangerous, took hold of Almonzo and he threw himself at Darian, fangs showing as he held him in a chokehold against the cold marble floor. The untamed hissing sound filled the room as the vampires struggled against the weight and venom of one of their own. Punches were thrown and biting began. Displaced furniture tilted with the scuffle before decorative pieces crashed to the floor.

"Sabbat! Spenser! On your feet!" One of the elders called out to them with a powerful voice. His tone demanded compliance. "I won't ask twice!" The end tables and ornaments on them rumbled throughout the room before breaking into scattered pieces.

Almonzo snapped his fangs two or three times. "Next time, I'll spear your heart with my own teeth providing the means." He released him and sat down on an oversized chair in between two of the elders.

"I'll wait for you, Spenser." He chuckled. "Yeah, you'll find me right outside of *my* matrimonial bedroom." He sneered, smirked and then looked down at his feet appearing quite satisfied but the smug impression he offered disappeared. His jaw twitched and he looked back at the door Tabitha went out of before he glanced at the men who were undoubtedly interested in what he wanted to say.

Almonzo studied him closer. *He cares for her*. He wondered if Tabitha realized it or if she was truly repulsed by him.

Darian's mouth dropped in what presented a façade of sadness. He took a deep breath and then he spoke his mind. "She's going to die without you and you don't care. You claim her as your mate but yet you don't protect her. When she walked out of here, she left you behind but you had the power to stop her. You made a choice, Spenser, and it was the wrong one. Now, who will take the blood from her pretty neck when it begins to clot

and thicken with her pain? Not you. Oh no, you'll let her die first." He addressed one of the elders then. "I'm not sure I can let that happen."

The silence engulfed the room. The labor of tortured breathing divided men from their anger but it seethed on deep into the skins of two vampires.

"You will go after her and bring her back." One elder looked at Almonzo and demanded action.

"Gladly." Sabbath set his jaw.

Another of their superiors spoke up. "She doesn't trust you, Darian. Almonzo will find her. He is the only one who will be able to convince her to come back here."

"She will not return and I will not force her," Almonzo said.

"You do not have a choice in the matter. We need her as one of the virgin brides and you have already marked her. Without her, *you* will not survive."

"Then I will cease to exist." Almonzo glared at Darian.

"Good. I will look forward to the day of your death so I can take her." Darian snickered and snarled all at the same time.

"Boys! Enough!" The elders often referred to the twenty-something year old vampires as mere boys. Why wouldn't they? Many of the panelists were several hundred years old.

Another one confirmed Darian's earlier acknowledgement. "And...Tabitha will not survive."

Almonzo snapped his head upward. There were several things about his new mating relationship that he didn't know because it was a new experience for him. Darian understood more about the requirements for the mated vampires and their brides because from what Almonzo understood, Darian was a secondary for a number of the women.

"She's a feeder, and surely you know about the secondaries, Almonzo." One of the elders questioned and behind it was a significant message. If Almonzo didn't bring her back, the panel would require Darian to do it.

"I know about them but..."

"There isn't a timeline. Once she has the bite, she has the need to be a feeding bride and she will not be able to survive if she's not with a vampire. She will die."

“Does she know?” Darian narrowed his gaze on Almonzo. “Of course she doesn’t.” He shook his head in disgust as he more or less answered his own question.

One of the leaders continued, “Most of the mortal women figure it out when they experience swelling in the area which was first punctured but it is typically days before they realize they have a true need for a vampire. If they’ve left our families, then they often have no other choice but to go away to die. It’s a horrific—”

“I don’t want to hear this.” Almonzo stormed across the room. “I will not allow her to suffer because of me but I will not allow Sabbat to have her.”

He snickered. “Spenser, you may not have a choice.”

The chatter began between the three elders and Almonzo listened to everything they said. He hung onto each syllable spoken.

“Almonzo took her by default.” One of the panelist spoke in favor of Darian.

“We decided one sister for the Sabbats and one for the Spensers. It was determined over a decade ago. Through these girls, the division of two families would soon be brought back together as one.”

“Darian had his chance, he ruined it.” One voiced his approval of Almonzo.

“Someone should’ve told Almonzo he needed to wait for final permission.”

“She lived with them for three months. What the hell did you expect?” His supporter confirmed he wanted Tabitha to remain with the Spensers. “And his father confirmed his visions. She was the appropriate life partner for Almonzo from the beginning.”

The elder who opposed Almonzo continued. “This wouldn’t have been an issue if we required our own to stay out of the casinos. If we didn’t need to enforce order and respectability among our youth, the mating would begin between a mature mortal and a developed vampire. Here is where the problems lie.”

“Let’s just admit it. We made a mistake. Panelists in the east wanted a vampire bride, as did those in the west. We each chose the same bride for two young males. We had her sister and wanted to finish it. The left hand didn’t know what the right hand planned.”

The chatter rolled on between the three older men, who seemed to have forgotten they had an audience. While anger still existed between a Sabbat and a Spenser, the two focused their attention on the conversation exchanged.

Almonzo listened to the elders as they tried to determine the fate of one woman, his young bride. The more he heard them discuss her, the angrier he became. Finally, he wheeled his own argument. "Damn you. I agree with something I once heard. You play with us like puppets, pull our strings like madmen and then when everything goes to hell, you throw up your hands and yes indeed, you cry foul. Bullshit! It stops now."

The elders stared at him with disapproval. Almonzo's phone rang. He didn't excuse himself but instead answered it quickly.

"Yes, Tate?" He smiled as he listened to the information the Spenser custodian relayed. "Okay, I'll be there." He shut his cell phone and without a word to the elders or Darian, he walked to the bedroom. He disappeared behind the door. Once there, his eyes lingered on the bed. Damn, he already missed her. A dull ache gnawed at his soul. His eyes darted around the suite. There wasn't a trace of her belongings or his. He could go and know he didn't leave anything behind.

The more authoritative elder stood to stop him. "If you know where she is, you will tell us. We have to negotiate her desires and introduce her to the possibility of spending time with Darian should—"

Almonzo's eyes narrowed. "If you do this, I will demolish all you set out to destroy in me." His fiery temper threatened to take down an empire and he knew what kind of war he would wage on his own people. He did not care.

Darian seemed to anticipate a final decision. No one went up against the wrath of a Spenser. Typically, Samuel Spenser ran the family but more and more, the hot-headed older twin held the family reins. Some feared him and those who weren't smart enough to sense his danger, loathed him. Darian hated the ground Spensers tread across and Almonzo returned the sentiment.

The elders looked from one to the next. Finally, the older panelist spoke. "She has your mark?"

Almonzo nodded. "And..." he glared back at Darian before he continued, "she says she is untouched by him."

"Is this true?" One of the men asked Darian.

Darian looked over his shoulder and then yawned.

“Did you or did you not mate with Tabitha at the Dark Castle of the Desert?”

The room fell quiet. Almonzo knew he made a terrible mistake revealing false information. He watched Darian shrug off his malice with one wave of his hand.

“You will be punished accordingly if you don’t answer us now. Did you take her as your own or not?”

Gritting his teeth against revealing the truth, Darian finally spat the words at them. “She is his in blood. She’s mine too in every other way that matters but he can certainly have her for life. Hell hath no fury by the time she gets done with him now.”

“In every way that matters.” Almonzo winced as he thought about sharing the woman he loved with a creature he hated. He recognized what was required now. He realized Darian would become her secondary and in their world, it meant a trilogy of ceremonies—one which included a consenting vampire bride.

“You’ll need more than the luck of Vegas on your side now, Spenser.” He began to laugh out loud. “You know about the ceremonies, I’m assuming?”

Almonzo didn’t respond.

“A woman like Tabitha will never agree to such exposure.” Darian grinned. “If she does, I won’t complain.”

Almonzo’s anger burned only hotter. He may have won the battle for her hand but he wasn’t sure she would agree with old customs and allow him to keep it. Now, he just had to go to her and see if he would ever be worthy of winning her love because after hearing their choices, he didn’t have the luxury of time on his side.

Three elders nodded their approval before one gave his verbal consent. “So it seems two separate mating events took place during one season and because of it, Tabitha will have a secondary chosen for her. Go find your bride, Almonzo. I hope you will be able to work out your slight differences before the trilogy of ceremonies begins. Darian, are we in agreement to get this over with as soon as possible?”

“I can hardly wait.” He glared at Almonzo. “Don’t worry, honey.” He drawled, “I don’t kiss and tell.”

Before Almonzo bounced forward and took his best shot, another elder offered his parting words. “You will find Tabitha and meet with Darian at an agreed upon time. Please pass along our most sincere apologies to Tabitha. Perhaps if someone had bothered to explain ...”

“Somehow, I don’t think Tabitha cares about you or your so-called apologies.” Almonzo just hoped like hell she would be willing to hear one from him.

Chapter 11

Almonzo heard her screaming as he approached the property. It didn't matter. She needed to give her little lungs a workout and then after exhaustion set in, he'd try to explain. It wouldn't hurt her to lose some of her rage before he slipped into his room with her. By the sound of it, she missed him. Her yelling told quite the tale.

"I hate him! I hate him! Damn it, someone open up! He's nothing more than an arrogant ass! I'm sorry little Constance. I really am. I hate your brother! This is a grownup situation and I cannot stand him! I'll explain if you'll let me out! Tate? Are you out there? Unlock this door!"

Obviously, no one wanted to form an alliance with her.

He rushed in and kissed his mother on the cheek. "She misses me, I see."

Marion Spenser seemed amused. "Yes, I think so."

He then ran a playful hand through Constance's hair. "Sometimes grownups act so silly."

"She's not really acting grown up, Almonzo." She snarled her little nose and her cheeks puffed out when she pursed her lips. "In fact, she is starting to get on my nerves some."

Before he moved closer to the yelling, he smiled gently at Natasha, shook hands with his brother and father and then broke into an all-out sprint. Just knowing where to find her eased a lot of tension.

Tate brought her back to him. He'd found her in the airport, sedated her, called for Orlando's help and safely returned her to Scotland.

Down a few slanted hallways, he turned one corner and then another. Her loud screams of anger played out like a sweet melody to his ears. The pounding on the door seemed to echo out and just call for him all the more. Yes, when it came to Tabitha, he wasn't a simple madman. He acted like a raving lunatic.

“Natasha! Natasha!” She was relentless. “I wouldn’t let them lock you up like a caged animal! Get me out of here! I don’t want to be here! I want to go home! This isn’t my place anymore!” Her fists and what sounded like her feet seemed to take turns moving into the heavy wooden door of his room. “I don’t want to be here! Do you have any idea what they are going to make me do? Somebody, help me!”

Faster and faster, he ran through five thousand square feet of the compound until he stood outside his bedroom. As suddenly as he arrived there, her pounding stopped abruptly.

Mercy hell. *She feels me here.* He slumped down against the opposite wall and stared at the key dangling from the lock. Catching his breath, he slowly let it out so she wouldn’t hear him. It didn’t matter. She showed her hand when the wild rant stopped all at one time.

His broad shoulders continued to rise and fall as he sat on the floor. He wanted to go inside. He also wanted her to calm down first. Maybe she felt more at ease after she sensed him on the other side of their bedroom door. *Their matrimonial bedroom.* He liked the sound of it so much he almost said it out loud.

It took her at least twenty minutes to call out to him. “I know you’re out there.”

“You feel me here, don’t you?” He felt a sudden smile turn up the corners of his mouth.

“You shouldn’t have ordered Tate to bring me back here.” Her voice maintained amazingly calm.

“I can’t imagine anywhere else you’d rather be than here with me.” He snickered to himself.

“Fuck you!” Her feet went into the door with repetition once more.

“Yes, we’ve discussed this before, remember?” He smiled only wider.

“Damn you, Almonzo! I hate you!” Another round of booms and bams sounded off, this time into the wall. Perhaps the threshold panels needed a break from her swift little kicks or perhaps she thought the sound would be louder.

“You love me.” He stood up and walked over to the door. He put his palm on the frame. “And I love you.” His forehead went there next.

“I love you about as much as I like having menstrual cramps.” Disgust certainly fueled her chosen words. He wished he’d witnessed it.

“Pleasant. Nice image. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Being a smartass becomes you, love.”

“You become the company you keep. It’s one of the reasons why I plan to make immediate changes in people associations.”

“People associations? Hmmm, interesting.” He toyed with the key in the doorknob moving it back and forth between his fingers. With a grunt, and definitely against his better judgment, he turned it.

She was on the bed now and sat perfectly still when he entered. He wanted to pull her to him, but decided based on the expression covering her face, he should take things slow. He sat down beside her.

Tired eyes glared at him.

“I guess you broke your ass again.”

“Tailbone, and no, I didn’t.” She made a cute little sarcastic face at him and then looked away. “From what I understand, you sold my ass out.”

“Not quite.” He took a deep breath. “Tabitha, I don’t blame you for this.”

“Do you even understand what will happen if we go through with this ridiculous ceremony?” She questioned.

“Yes.”

“I don’t think you do.”

“Tabitha, you will die without a vampire to bleed you now. You don’t have a choice. Provisions are made for secondaries because without them, our women die.”

“I did have choices until you took them away from me.”

“Tabitha, if you’d only been honest with me about your relationship with Darian—”

“Don’t you dare make this my fault. Your heritage is to blame, your old laws and stupid elders who are more perverted than the vampires they claim to rule.”

Almonzo broke out into hysterics. He happened to agree with her about the elder perversion. “You could manage a smile too.”

“I’d rather kill you than laugh with you at the moment.” She didn’t have any trouble looking at him directly when she wanted to cut his heart out, he noticed.

Spreading his arms wide, he asked her what he felt confident would break the ice. “Then what is stopping you?”

“I don’t have a dagger or a sword to use. Give me one and I might.”

His hand went over his heart. “Hurt me more.”

She stood. “Just so you know, I’m going back to the States.”

He quickly jumped up to stand beside her. “When do you plan to leave?”

“Tomorrow.”

“I can be ready by midnight.” He grinned.

Her eyes narrowed. “I think not. Almonzo, this is serious and the sooner you can accept it, the better off...”

A hungry mouth tore across her lips and cheek before moving to her neck. Damnation, she didn’t fight it and he didn’t care if she tried. He’d heard her feisty little threats, and didn’t give a shit if she wanted to be angry. She could be mad until the elders called another Summit meeting for all he cared. He ached for her and just kissing her right then healed him. It soothed the hole in his heart, the one she left vacated whenever she wasn’t at his side.

Pulling away from him, she warned, “Stop. Stop it now!” She didn’t need the daggers she wanted to pierce through his body once she used her pupils for the same intended purposes.

A hand rested on her hip and her eyes blazed with a sexy-hot rage. Oh yeah, it burned hell-hot. “I can’t imagine what you would want with a *whore* like me.”

“Oh that promiscuous comment kind of pissed you off, I see.” He swept in for another kiss and came up short of stealing her lips. “Let’s forget about it.”

Her hands flew against his chest. “What did you and Darian do, gamble for me? Hmmm? That’s it, isn’t it? You sat down and played cards just for me. What were the stakes? A fuck for life?” Her skin turned redder with each sentence. Every question she asked seemed to anger her all the more.

“You want to know what the stakes were?” He moved into her fast and secured her arms in front of her. “This.” His lips slanted over hers. She tried to break free, turn her head one way or another but he followed her with a hungry mouth and tongue. Finally, he gave up. He continued to hold her arms out in front of her, one hand clasped around both tiny wrists.

They were practically nose to nose. Tempers challenged and fueled the mental animosity as much as the lingering sexual energy.

“You suck.” The words almost inspired a smirk.

“Not yet.” He grinned. “But I will.”

Her nostrils flared, really they did, because if they didn’t, there wouldn’t be a lot to laugh about and he couldn’t help but chuckle.

“What now? You think this is funny?”

“Not really, no, it isn’t.”

“Are you trying to apologize?”

“Will you accept one from me?” He started to move them toward the door. He kicked it closed and glared back at her.

“I don’t know. Should I?”

“Depends on a lot of things. Why do you need an apology from me?”

“You dumb, arrogant ass!” Her little cheeks colored a brighter shade of red. “You don’t think you owe me an apology, do you? Oh, but of course you don’t. Spenser men don’t apologize. Hell, no. Why would I be so simple-minded as to think such a thing? God! I hate you!” She tugged her arms free at the same time she spat her words.

“Fine. Then hate me.” He moved forward in pursuit. Backing her up against the wall next to the bed as he did so, his gaze stayed focused on her. “Hate me all you want but first, Tabitha, you are going to love me.”

His hand fell to his shirt and he unbuttoned the first round pearl and then another one. He decided to hell with it. He tugged at the third and then just ripped it off. He never liked himself in pink anyway.

A dimple formed in her cheek for a minute. It didn’t settle there but he saw its existence when it flashed there all the same. “No, I don’t think so. You basically doubt me and accused me of caring for Darian.”

“I did. I’m a jealous bastard.”

Her eyes watered. Maybe she needed him to apologize. Maybe he should get it out of the way. Hell, he had all but begged. Now, he just wanted to touch her.

His hands went to her face.

His pride went to hell.

His mouth moved closer and his lips slanted once more. Steady thumbs locked below her jaw. His apology and his promises stained his own lips before they burned into hers. “I love you.” A slow kiss proved it. “I’ll never

hurt you again if you'll just forgive me." A lingering tongue gently stroked against hers. "Damn it, when it comes to you I am nothing more than a jealous, arrogant ass who will stop at nothing to make sure no other man touches you—" Then the realization struck. "That is, after the ceremony is complete."

Tabitha's tears ran gently down her cheeks. "You destroyed me, Almonzo. I wanted to die. I never want to know this kind of pain again. And now, I'm not sure I will live if I have to go through with this thing your mother told me about. This ceremony seems so...so...wrong."

"I know, baby, I know. I am sorry." His lips dipped and he thought it made everything better.

But it didn't.

* * * *

Tabitha decided if a man needed sex, he would say anything. He would expose his soul just to vacate his pants and she didn't like playing by those rules. Damn, he did look good enough to eat. It didn't matter. He wasn't going to get off that easy. Hell, no. He let her walk out of the Monte Carlo onto the empty streets of Las Vegas and he didn't try to stop her.

She moved under his arm and headed to the dresser. There, she propped her elbow on the low rise of the heavy furniture. Casually, she cocked her hip out. "I want to know where your rage came from and what provoked it? Was it Darian or was it because you knew you were keeping this inevitable trilogy ceremony from happening or..."

"It does not matter now." He started toward her.

Her palms flew in front of his chest and she decided she was pretty good at halting his forward movements. "I need to know, Almonzo, or I won't get over this. Oh sure, we can fuck. We can mess around. It won't heal my aches and pains. I'm hurt. I want you to know all about it. I want you to know that you don't get to kiss me and make it better because my heart, *my heart, Almonzo*, is in a lot of pain."

Watching him accept what she had to say mattered to her. She wanted him to feel her agony and accept the same defeat she'd been forced to accept two days ago when he allowed her to walk away.

He sat down on the bed again. She watched him as he ran that sinful hand of his across the length of his face. She loved it when he did that. She didn't know why, she just did. She saw him do it only on occasion. Generally, if he did it in her presence, it signified she gained the upper hand, usually meaning he'd exasperated all options and couldn't meet her on common ground.

She also saw the gesture after he had a long, tiring day. More than once, she'd wanted to go to him and rub his masculine shoulders. Now, maybe she would have the opportunity. That is, after she made him understand that he didn't just toss her to the wayside whenever he felt like it.

"Okay." His arms stretched behind him and his legs fell open. What she'd give to be in between them. She quickly cursed herself for the twisted little thought.

He looks downright edible. She decided it wouldn't hurt her to sit down on the bed next to him.

She walked over and sat down. "Okay?"

He gave her that look—the one that said he played right into her hands so his needs would be met.

"Stop looking at me that way." She snapped.

"Ah, Tabitha, give it up. A man knows when he allows the woman in his life to have the upper hand, even if it is only for a minute here or there. He gives it to her with the full knowledge he's allowing her to have it outright. Why? Well, because to do so gives him an edge. One that will give him a *straight-up* advantage later on and right now, I'm willing to call a truce. It will benefit us both, I promise." His mouth met her neck and his lips parted around a vein he would soon take. She recognized the way he primed it just by a simple oral massage.

She congratulated herself on defining his motives before his eloquent revelation.

"Tabitha, I want to know, I need for you to tell me about you and Darian. I know you didn't sleep with him by your own free-will but I also know there had to be something between the two of you before you met me."

He just had to ruin a good thing. He turned the tables on her again.

Tabitha felt her airway constrict. "Why do you think I have something, or feel something for Darian?"

“I don’t really think it. I know it. Call it a gut feeling.”

“I think you’re *fairly* jealous, as you said before.” She sort of understood why. Darian Sabbat happened to be a hunk of a man. A woman wouldn’t consider it a misfortune to be in his presence. Never mind his bed.

Almonzo studied her before he spoke. “Remember who you are dealing with, Tabitha. I am your life partner, we’re together and will remain together whether you like the idea right now or not but keep in mind, I read other people well. I’m a businessman and I know what I see. You and Darian had ... something significant.”

Tabitha found it difficult to look at Almonzo and tell a white lie so she decided to fib and look the other way. “He never meant anything to me.”

“You choose to lie to me and that in itself says a lot about you and your relationship with Darian.”

The lying thing failed so plan B had to be straight-up honesty. “Fine, you want to know, I’ll tell you.” Her voice quivered. “I cared about him, okay? I liked him very much. He gave me everything in a short period of time. Thank goodness he was traveling a lot then and I didn’t have very many opportunities to have sex with him...” Her voice trailed off. Almonzo didn’t let her off the hook.

“You wanted to sleep with him?” He sneered. “And now I guess you’ll get your wish.” He sounded disgusted.

“Almonzo! Why do we have to do this?” Tabitha stalked around the room.

“Because, damn you, I love you and I want to know that you love me too! You’ve never once said it. Not one time. I need to know if you haven’t told me because you don’t know if you do or if it is by damned stubbornness or because of Darian Sabbat or, heaven help us all, some insignificant mortal man!”

“I do not love Darian Sabbat.” She defiantly glared at Almonzo.

His lips pursed and he nodded in acceptance. “And you do not love me either.”

No one said anything. No one moved. The air stopped circulating in the magnificent room. Slowly, her tears came again and even they fell in silence.

“Okay, then. I have my answer.” He stood, bent down to the floor to retrieve his shirt and then headed for the door.

“Almonzo, wait.” She reached for him and clung tightly to his upper arm.

“I have nothing left to ask you about. I believe you were honest. I also believe you told half-truths, something you mortal women seem to think serves you well in our world. I can’t compete with whatever it is you are trying to avoid. If it’s loving me, I can help you out by staying away from you until you make the decision to love me. If you have more secrets where Darian is concerned, then hell’s fury, you’d better tell me now before he takes a hostage again or worse, kills one of us with his new experimental potion. And you damn sure better tell me before we all end up in the same bed together.”

He yanked his arm free and glared at her. “Either way, Mother is having a dinner party here tonight. Dinner is at eight. I expect you to show up and act like a Spenser.”

The hurt she witnessed as it flashed across his face sliced through her chest and left her doubled over with a ripping pain. Her jaw fell open when she’d heard his tone and immediately she regretted everything she’d said, and everything she didn’t. Now, it was too late. He left her to sulk, if not wallow, in her sorrows alone.

Chapter 12

From the moment he left her, she felt the void. Her bones and muscles ached. She sat on the bed for a long time and rocked herself into a pity-party. When she heard the knock on the door and then the lock release, she expected to see Almonzo. Instead, she glanced up to find her sister.

Natasha's look of understanding only granted permission for Tabitha's tears to continue their fall. She fell into her embrace and Natasha hugged her tightly.

"Tabitha, you are a free spirit. I know what battles you've fought just to be with Almonzo. I understand what it's like better than anyone."

Dabbing at the corners of their eyes, the young women both held onto one more hug before separating. "I do love him," Tabitha admitted.

"Why, of course you do. I know you love him. Honey, he knows you love him."

"Then why the hell do I have to tell him?" She hated to whine but by God if her sister wanted to play the role of big sis, then she'd found the right place.

"Do you like to hear him tell you?" Natasha's gentle patience seemed out of place.

She swallowed hard. "It's like music to my ears." She giggled, and it sounded more like a snuffling snuffle rather than laughter.

"Don't you think he'd feel the same way?"

She didn't respond.

"Honey, what is it? Why can't you tell him how you feel?"

Finally, Tabitha's defense mechanisms went to hell and she cried harder making the sounds hum throughout the room with her heartier bawling.

"Tabitha? What is this about?" Natasha first cradled her sibling in a protective hold. When it didn't seem to work, she ran out of patience fast. She pushed her away, stood up and walked over to Almonzo's bay window,

where she pulled back the drapes. She stared outside for a long time before she turned back to give Tabitha a scolding stare.

“Okay, you’re going to start talking and you’re going to start spilling all of your secrets right now.”

It didn’t take a lot for Tabitha to ascertain what she faced. Her sister established by glares alone what she suspected before she ever voiced it.

“You’re hiding something and I think I know what it is.”

She hoped like hell Natasha realized it because then it would save her the trouble, never mind the heartache. “If you know so much, then you tell me,” Tabitha snapped back before going to the mirror to check her makeup. Ruined—a total train wreck. “Baby,” she criticized herself in the reflection and made a few faces before turning around.

“Interesting. You can cry like you have a broken heart, curse yourself like an insecure teenager and then face me with the defiance and will of a strong woman. I see where Almonzo is clearly frustrated. You are too many people living under one thick skin.”

“Don’t take his side.” Tabitha rested her hands on the small of her back.

Natasha strode over to the sitting area of the master suite and flopped down in a beanbag. “Gee, I love these things. It’s the only comfortable furniture in the house.”

The ensuing uncomfortable silence threatened to tear the two sisters apart after several minutes passed without a verbal exchange. The longer they didn’t speak, the more Natasha wouldn’t trust her own blood and Tabitha realized it.

“I want the truth. I know your tactics and you’re hiding something and running scared at the same time. I fear it will affect the entire family.”

Breathing was difficult and Tabitha nearly choked when she started to speak. As quickly as she opened her mouth, she snapped it shut.

“Damn it, answer me!” Natasha’s anger consumed her and while an outsider might have thought it came from out of nowhere, Tabitha felt it was well warranted.

The fiery redhead’s temper wouldn’t stay in check longer than maybe a minute now. Her fierce eyes were streaked with red and her skin almost matched her hair color. She buried her head in her palms. “Oh hell, you did it, didn’t you? You slept with that monster?” She spoke to her own hands

more than her sister but when she looked up again, she didn't peer up at her as her sibling but as a Spenser. Tabitha noticed it.

"Worse." She began pacing the room.

"Worse? There's nothing worse."

"I'm afraid there is." Tabitha lowered her voice. "You see, I believe the vampire legacy does live on through the virgin brides the royal families secure but more than their virginity, they want their blood."

Natasha's glare pierced through to her sister's soul before she answered her slowly. "You gave him your blood?"

"He took it."

"Oh holy hell." Natasha doubled over and held her chest, as if she'd just endured a direct hit.

Tabitha began to gain strength in her tone just because she no longer carried the weight of the world on her shoulders alone. "I didn't really give it to Darian. He took it and, Natasha, you have to listen to me, it is why he could destroy this family."

"She's right."

Both females quickly turned to see Almonzo standing in the doorway. Hurt consumed him. Fear lingered in his eyes as much as his body language held a much stronger meaning. "I knew it. I realized it all along. Did you not trust me enough to tell *me*?"

"I understand the blood he took from me could destroy us and I didn't want to risk losing you."

"Damn it, Tabitha! You didn't want to risk losing me? Do you realize you've now put us all at risk? This is why his potion is a death poison vile enough to destroy our clan. It's how he designs his formulas." He moved closer. "The elders asked if he took your blood. He would've stood a chance at keeping you, a good one actually, if he'd admitted it."

"He doesn't want to stay with me." She told him. "He wants to use me."

"Oh, he's done that and he's going to get to do it again—three more times!"

Natasha looked from Tabitha to Almonzo and back again at her sister. "I think I need to dress for dinner." She started to move by them but before she left the room, Almonzo called out to her.

"Tell the others to meet me in the pod and tell Mother to cancel the dinner party."

“What?” Natasha turned around full of questions. “Your mother has worked very hard on this party. She’s been planning it for weeks and wanted to introduce us to your family friends.”

He didn’t turn around to face her, just ordered, “Do it, Natasha!”

“I am not going to be the one to hurt your mother. She’s put a lot of effort into this and if you want the party cancelled, then you tell her yourself.”

Almonzo walked over to the wall, pressed the panic button and then sat down on the edge of the bed, glaring at the woman he claimed to love. He took a deep breath and slowly released it. “Have it your way, ladies. We’ll all meet here for a pow-wow. Believe me, I think the others will see the urgency of canceling the party.”

* * * *

The Spensers appeared shaken when they rushed into Almonzo’s suite. Marion’s eyes were haunted. Samuel and Orlando—deadly. Even Tate looked all rogue. They seemed surprised to find Almonzo calm, cool and dangerously collected.

“Son?” Samuel waited for an explanation.

“Damn you, Almonzo! Tell me you didn’t use the alert button for something foolish,” Orlando said.

A set jaw was ample proof enough. They should be able to see he was a determined and very angry man. He stood up and faced his family. He then turned to his mate, his wife and lover. *His world*. The impact this new revelation would have on his family sent a shiver down his spine. “We have trouble.”

Orlando looked around the room in antsy anticipation. “Where? What the hell is going on here?”

Slowly, Almonzo began to speak. “Darian Sabbat, as we’ve known for some time, has been trying to develop a chemical to destroy the vampires he cannot control. As Father knows, and you may, Orlando, the main problem the elders faced was in not knowing how or why this poison is apparently working for some when he had such a high rate of failure before.” He glared at Tabitha and watched as a bead of sweat formed on her forehead. If he didn’t love her so deeply, he’d ridicule her but he tried to keep in mind that

she didn't know their ways. She didn't know the importance of her own blood.

Samuel moved closer to Almonzo. "It's what you initially thought, yes?"

Almonzo nodded. "He takes the blood of virgin women but he doesn't take their virginity. He has a team of experts working to determine possible matches for virgin brides. Then he makes it a point to find them before they are mated with an unsuspecting vampire. He searches them out and tries to find a way to secure them as his friend, maybe even a lover, though I seriously doubt it. In Tabitha's case, he didn't bed her but he took something far more precious than her virginity."

Tabitha swallowed hard. He watched her and answered her unspoken question. "I thought you knew. Sure, I wanted your virtue, what man wouldn't, but your blood was just as important to me."

Marion looked at her new daughter-in-law. "Oh, for crying out loud." Her hand rose and fell at her side. "You're not a stupid woman!"

She shot Natasha a glare too. Both young women looked appalled. She turned to face her other son and husband before she looked back at Tabitha.

"Don't tell me," She paused before her anger rang through the room. "You didn't think it would be important to tell Almonzo you had played around with Darian and just happened to let him nip your neck?"

Almonzo's eyes glazed over with pain. "That's not what happened, is it Tabitha?"

She shook her head. "No."

Almonzo paced the room as he watched the others grasp what he had revealed. He also paced to walk off the rage. She'd just confirmed what he suspected. Tabitha had been sexually manipulated. He had enough proof of Darian Sabbat's ways to know how he convinced the women to willingly give up blood samples.

"Darian finds suitable matches. He then discovers their blood type and, believe it or not, convinces them he has a sick sibling or parent dying because they need blood. The unsuspecting, never mind naïve, women gladly donate. He arranges everything and then he washes his hands of them completely. If this doesn't work, then he uses, how should I put this..." He didn't want to offend his own wife by stating something far too painful but

it needed to be said. "He uses continual and ongoing sexual stimulation until the women are begging for him to take their blood or worse, bed them."

"He didn't seem to wash his hands of Tabitha." Natasha knew there must be more.

"No. He wanted Tabitha to lead him closer to us and I imagine he would've taken her for his own but he realized early on I wasn't going to let her go. He believed he tried and failed. Either way, he won because he had the opportunity to move in closer and learn more about us."

Samuel nodded. "This is the very reason he took you to the Dark Castle of the Desert. He's a mental case. For some reason, he took you to the very place Orlando and Natasha joined. It's insane."

"None of this makes sense to me." Natasha crossed her arms and looked at Orlando, who didn't offer an explanation.

Almonzo did. "In a nutshell, ladies, Tabitha's blood is like a reverse immunization. It doesn't belong to Sabbat but because he has it now, he can use it to destroy any Spenser he wants to. One injection and we're toast."

"That's impossible." Marion looked at her husband. "Samuel?"

"That's the way it is." His tight lips studied the young women before he spoke. "Tabitha, I wish you would've trusted us enough to let us know this because it might have changed things when we had Darian under our control."

Orlando rubbed the back of his neck. "It would've changed everything. I would've brought him here and the son-of-a-bitch would've remained here for eternity. We would've imprisoned him. We wouldn't have had a choice and crying to the elders would not have been an option for the little bastard."

Tabitha tightly closed her eyes. "I am so sorry. I didn't know. I swear it."

Samuel walked over and draped a paternal arm over her shoulders. "This is a setback. What I want you to know is something you need to understand. We are Spensers. We stick together and this, while it is devastating news, isn't going to be the death of us. We're not going to let him get away with this and he will not destroy what we have as a family." He kissed her lightly on the forehead and then turned to the others.

"Marion, love, I'm afraid you'll have to cancel the party. We are going on lockdown for a few weeks. Constance will play inside or in the courtyard. Marion, you and the girls will not shop or leave the compound for

anything. We cannot place ourselves at risk.” He turned to his sons. “Orlando and Almonzo, we know what we’ll need to do without discussion. We’ll start to work on it tomorrow. I need to speak with the elders and let them know we now have Sabbat’s formula for destruction. It took us damn long enough to figure it out.”

“What about the trilogy ceremony?” Tabitha questioned. “You don’t want us to go out because of Darian but yet I am going to be placed in his bed because of some kind of sick custom?”

Samuel winced. “Darian will come here. The elders are always present for the final negotiations, naturally not the ceremony itself, but arrangements will be made. Almonzo will be with you and you will be safe.”

“I don’t want him near her!”

“We don’t have a choice in this, son. This is the way we’ve done things for centuries. It’s scheduled for tomorrow at midnight. They’ll have to make arrangements to bring Darian here.”

“If Darian is so dangerous, then why are the elders forcing us to use him as a secondary?” Tabitha asked.

Samuel locked his gaze with Almonzo.

“You think they knew he had her blood?”

Samuel confirmed. “I’m certain of it now.”

Almonzo closed his eyes and for a minute seemed to be lost in his own mind. “I’ve thought of something and if after discussing it with Tabitha, she agrees, then I think I have a way around Darian as an assigned secondary. It will infuriate him because of the terms, but it will save her in the event of my...”

“Demise?” Samuel finished it for him. “Then I know what you’re thinking and she’ll never go for it.”

Chapter 13

Tabitha's eyes held with Natasha's as they both tried to tolerate the formal speech from those they dubbed as intellectual morons. They discussed a sex fest as if it were an agreement between men, vampires, that would go down in history as a formal binding made legitimate through the acts of sex.

Right now, looking at the three men who stood in front of her, she wasn't sure if she felt excited by them or scared to death. Almonzo winked as if to offer some sort of reassurance but she wasn't feeling it. She felt a little uneasy even though she had a great familiarity with Darian and found herself drawn to Richart, the younger man standing between Darian and Almonzo.

One of the elders turned to Tabitha and asked for her permission and she nodded for the third time. She wasn't sure what she was agreeing to but she followed her mate's cue. All good mortal brides probably responded in a similar fashion. She wanted to get this embarrassing part out of the way. There were more important things to do—like the three men waiting for her.

Since the beginning of this ceremonial disaster, she'd tried to act as unimpressed as possible but it proved difficult especially since Almonzo tried to sweeten the pot when he presented his case for adding another secondary.

She really didn't have the option to turn him down, even though he tried to act like she did. It was one of those damned-if-you-do and double-damned-if-you-don't kind of questions. Almonzo didn't want Darian to be her secondary provider and he went to extraordinary lengths to prevent it.

"I'm only doing this because I need to learn to make sacrifices, Natasha." Tabitha smiled sweetly at Richart.

"You're telling me." Natasha agreed.

Three hard and ready vampires, waited to bring her the most exquisite pleasure any one woman ever received. Even if she hated Darian, she knew his body in an intimate way she was unable to completely shake. He was gifted, and as talented as any other man of his stature. Still, she refused to let her mind wander into forbidden thoughts guided by her past with Darian. It was a different time and circumstances changed.

“Tabitha? Your permission?” The elder asked for it again.

Almonzo slowly nodded.

“You have it granted.” She closed her eyes then and before she opened them once more, Almonzo stepped forward and took her hand. “Tabitha, this is Richart.” He gently placed her hand in his cousin’s palm.

“Yes, Richart. I gathered as much. I’ve heard a lot about you.” Almonzo provided only minor details but she opted for polite small talk over public groping. Almonzo left out a few things when he described his cousin. For instance, he forgot to mention the man looked like he could fuck a woman into paradise and back.

Without thinking about it, she said, “I’m looking forward to...” *devouring you*. Thank God, she stopped herself mid-sentence. With the men involved in this ceremony, Tabitha was beginning to feel anxious.

Almonzo pulled her close to his side and kissed her on the head but she felt his body brace against hers. He clutched her only tighter.

“It’ll be my pleasure.” He winked and then elbowed Almonzo. “I always knew my cousin would find me more appealing than his own double.” He tried to make a joke and instantly released her hand when he saw Orlando motion for him.

“Speak of the devil.” He pointed at Orlando and then turned his attention back to Tabitha. His mouth twisted off a look of illicit lust. “I’ll see *you* as soon as I can.” His forefinger scraped under Tabitha’s chin and then he slapped Almonzo on the back. “Damn, I’m glad we’re friends.” Laughter shook him and he rushed the opportunity to tackle another cousin.

The elder in charge of formalities, an older man with long white hair, moved to the center of the formal dining room. He stood at the head of the table, where Samuel Spenser typically sat, with his hands pressed against the sleek mahogany wood.

As he leaned forward, he addressed everyone involved. His gaze independently met the eyes of each significant participant. “Today is one of

the rare instances where we are brought together to bring forward another mortal woman into our midst. Because of the unusual circumstances, a trilogy of ceremonies is required to complete the joining of Almonzo and Tabitha Spenser.”

After Almonzo explained all of the bylaws of their culture, Tabitha understood the reason she was unable to escape her fate. The elders most definitely realized Darian took and now possessed her blood which meant a secondary would need to be in place if she refused Darian. The alternate life source required a traditional establishment similar to what was determined for the female vampires and their mates.

Natasha didn't have to go through a ridiculous celebration because in the event of Orlando's unexpected death, she would be passed off to his next of kin to handle her assignment to another suitable life mate. Since Tabitha's blood was already shared, a secondary was pre-determined but Almonzo thought of a way to prevent Darian from the assignment of a life partnership. He brought in a third vampire. Richart, his trusted cousin, stepped in as a responsible party since there were certain animosities between the Sabbats and Spensers that were still left unresolved.

Tabitha and Richart never met before the start of the ceremonies. She was instantly comfortable around him and strangely enough, attracted to him. He resembled Almonzo and first cousins shared like features. He had curly dark hair only he kept his neatly trimmed and short. He was tall and solid, a given quality, she decided, for the Spenser clan. He had the cutest dimples she'd ever seen and when he smiled, she almost wanted to kiss him in hopes she could taste it for a particular flavor. He simply looked too good to pass up and unbelievably so, she wasn't going to have to resist the sweet temptation.

“Tabitha?” Almonzo glared at Richart and then back at her. “You don't have to gawk, love.”

“Oh yes I do. If he has the same equipment as his first cousin, then I have to ask myself, what *is* in this for you? I may end up enjoying both of you so much that I will want to keep him indefinitely.” She waved her forefinger over in Richart's direction.

He sneered. “Lose the thought as quickly as you found it.”

She laughed easily until she locked eyes with Darian. His gaze fell to her chest and he smirked. "Want to know what I'm thinking right now, sweet honey?"

It was his pet name for her and her eyes dropped to his belt. The evidence of his hard-on left nothing for her imagination. She was certain of the excitement he felt. She experienced it too and it made her uncomfortable in all the wrong places. She quickly reminded herself of one very important factor. Guilt was not a requirement when the sinful pleasures were an accepted part of their culture and viewed as customary.

The elderly man received signatures around the room after his eloquent spill ended. Natasha embraced Tabitha and her lips went to her ear. "I'm almost envious. Darian may be evil, but he has a few visible qualities and Richart? Oh hell, honey. He's a beautiful design!"

Orlando stepped forward. "I heard that and since I did, Father will be told, and Almonzo too, he can never become your secondary if—"

"Oh, stop it!" Natasha cut him off deliberately. "Nothing can ever happen to you because if it does, I'll die right along with you."

Gently, Orlando touched her face and seemed truly hurt by her revelation. Tabitha left them locked in their own world of safe admiration. She glanced over at Almonzo and witnessed his inner animosities begin. She saw a flash of it in his eyes and the shade of a softer purple trimmed them. She went to him.

"Can we have a moment first?"

He took her in his arms and held her against his chest. "Yes, we're allowed a few minutes." Kissing her forehead, he gestured to the others. "We'll be waiting." Then, he took her hand and they started toward the guest house where the terms of the trilogy agreement would unfold among those parties involved.

"I don't know if I can go through with this." Tabitha whispered as they walked. "I'm...nervous."

"I made a decision earlier tonight." He glanced around the sprawling lawn as they strolled across it. "I'm going to make this as easy for you as possible. I promise."

"You can't make this simple for me, Almonzo."

They reached the two-story home at the back of the property and he pushed the door open. "Yes I can. I can make sure you enjoy it and I intend

to put all jealousy aside and do exactly what I think you'd want me to do. We will leave who we are right here at this very door until all of this is behind us. Then, we'll never speak of it again." He touched her face with his fingertips.

"I'm not going to agree to that."

Almonzo winked. "You won't have to, and Tabitha, I've already told them both to treat you like the angel you are and to handle you with care. If they don't abide by my rules and find their own pleasure in them, I will rip their skin to shreds as soon as the first opportunity presents itself." He moved closer again and took her lips under his for a longer claiming. When he released her, he reminded again, "And we will never speak of this again."

Tabitha released a long, tortured sigh. "Richart is a gift, in a way, Almonzo. I am thankful he agreed to step in because if not, we didn't have a lot of options. It's not that three men excite me more than two but it's the end result." She sounded far too formal discussing the upcoming tryst.

"He's my cousin and I trust him. If something happened to me tomorrow, I know he would care for you and the children we later bring into this world."

Tabitha covered her mouth. "I almost forgot to tell you..."

"I know. Darian can't have children and the same goes for Richart, which is why I specifically chose him." Almonzo squeezed her hand. "Now, darling, let's just forget who we bring to our bed and have a good time doing it."

"I think you're going to enjoy this too much." She pinched his cheek and walked inside.

"You have no idea what's waiting for you but I'm going to promise you one full hour of mind-blowing sex." He slapped her ass and chased her up the front stairs.

By the time they reached the top of the steps, the excitement and energy stirred but when Almonzo whirled her around and then cradled her in his arms, his kisses changed everything in a bewitching second. Her arms curled around his neck as he walked over the threshold with her mouth melded to his. Before she thanked him for all of the ways he helped her feel acceptance, he placed her on the center of the large mattress. Rose petals were everywhere and candles danced with a new mood.

“Romantic, huh?” His hands crossed in front of him before he stripped off the shirt he really didn’t need.

“You only did this for us, didn’t you?”

“No, Tabitha. I did this part for you.”

She took a deep breath and allowed him to pull her up from the comfort of a soft safety, and that’s where it all really began. Music played softly in the distance and his arms seemed to encourage a slow sway to the tunes.

Tabitha wasn’t sure if his hands or his mouth undressed her because inner emotions ran wild, so completely untamed. She wasn’t certain of anything.

Earlier, she dressed in a simple sundress. Thin spaghetti straps barely held the ugly and dreadfully drab material in place. His hands fell to her shoulders and his lips locked over her nipple. It only took Almonzo a second to strip away the scant material and a few moments later he stood proudly naked too.

“Did you think you were able to downplay sexy?” His hot breath moved to her ear. “Clothing never hides what a man like me seeks.”

In an instant, she was dying for his sex as his hands pampered and prepared her for the delicious journey ahead. Damp palms slid down her sides as he curved her against his body. Her back arched as his mouth drifted over her breasts. Unable to avoid her belly button now, his tongue propelled over the indentation before his mouth trailed lower.

Even though his lips were everywhere, it never occurred to her how well he initiated the start of things until she felt the presence of the others and realized she was already drenching from dire need. Richart was there and inching closer. He approached with carnal wishes, yes pure sin, in his eyes and he never tore his gaze away from her.

If Tabitha cared to guess, a lot of his approach had to do with his age. She assumed he was only around twenty and it showed in the way he pursued her. He entered the room as naked as the day he was born and he was spectacular. From the width and length of his cock to his well defined six-pack abs, the man was a paragon for sexual excellence by physical beauty alone.

If Almonzo thought she gaped before, he only needed to dip his tongue a little lower now for a lust-filled confirmation. She was thirsty and one man wasn’t the sole instigator of the puddle forming between her legs.

“Oh beautiful woman.” Richart moved in behind her and caressed her shoulders with an array of unusual kisses. His mouth was hot syrup spinning from his tongue and then it was incredibly cool while he sucked in her skin. His hard body moved with her and easily simulated a slow erotic screw while his thick cock remained firmly planted against the seam of her ass. He handled her with extreme care and it made it difficult to remember he only joined them in the flesh.

“Oh God.” She moaned as Richart’s hands reached around her chest and cupped her breasts. They felt heavy once his palms held them and as his fingers pinched her nipples, she moved her hips against his length. She was suffering for penetration, and things were just beginning. A few more minutes of this and she would beg for it, and maybe even scream her demands.

Almonzo was on his knees one second and then the next, he hurriedly stood and framed her face. His hungry eyes probed past her own and he made love to her lips with a soul-stealing kiss. He realized who was joining them next.

Darian was under a strict panel order to behave which was another reason for Richart’s involvement. Richart was considered the most dangerous of the younger generation, something Tabitha was told only hours before she met him. He was notorious for killing the worst of vampires by using his sharp and long fangs as the weapon of choice.

She shuddered as she thought of his careful attention to her enjoyment. The man was nothing if not heaven on a platter and right then whatever he did to her seemingly worked her into a complete insatiable craving. She nearly asked for his bite.

Darian passed by them with a crooked smile allowing him to test the waters. “Sweet honey.” He sat on the edge of the bed. Breathtaking nude, he leaned back and cocked his head as his golden hair cascaded over his shoulders. His mouth dropped open and his tongue darted in and out for pleasure, for show.

A giant of a man with a cruel and unusual way of treating *some* women, Darian looked down at his dick and licked his lips before his gaze fell back to Richart. His initial focus bypassed her altogether and oh what a sweet image she gained as she watched Darian fist his cock. She was more than ready to observe whatever any of them offered.

Darian reminded her of the vampire living within, even now, especially now, when he mesmerized her and certainly turned her on. She saw the truth behind his haunting eyes and dangerous smile. Still, her taste for him never died and perhaps with this event, it never would.

She curved her arm behind her shoulder and she held onto the nape of Richart's neck while she pushed Almonzo's head only lower. "Please, Almonzo..."

Darian's upper lip curled. "Please, what? Tell him what you want, lover. Let him give you everything you need." His hand struck harder with a closed fist clamping the erection he held out to her one minute and stroked for her viewing pleasure the next.

Her jaw dropped. She was dying to taste him. Oh but she could die from all of this. "Please, lick me." Her hand applied more pressure to Almonzo's head as he took his sweet time going for his position and he earned the right to choose his place.

Darian winked. "I'll wait my turn but once I start, I'll never stop." He made the promise and she realized how quickly he coaxed her into asking for what she wanted *from him*. And even that dazzled her all the way to her core. She felt him in her veins now. He wanted to be there so he was there. By God, she hoped he liked it because at least for the time being, he existed in her world and she was going to rock his.

While Almonzo's sweet lips wandered up and down her belly, Richart rolled her nipples with precision and purpose. Almonzo's mouth covered her pussy and his body shifted in front of her. He moved her stance with his hands before he began his oral assault.

Tabitha's hand dropped to the back of his head and she guided him forward for a complete taste of heat. Richart stood behind her with his fisted cock and deliberately ran it across her bottom.

Darian watched and she became only more excited by his powerful gaze. He was literally fucking her with his eyes and mind, and as Almonzo had once told her, in every way that mattered. Darian lived in her skin and brain and God help her, right then, she wanted him there to witness it all.

Her mouth opened. She meant to speak but Darian's forefinger went to his lips as he continued to observe. She swallowed hard as she felt a flood of emotion surge through her body.

Almonzo's tongue was brash. He pushed his way beyond the folds and used the tip of it to find her little button. His teeth involved, he played with her clit and made sure she knew what it meant. He mumbled against her and Richart moved up and back with her now. His hands dropped to her waist as he emulated the act of fucking her ass again but his cock never found a willing source for guidance. He didn't cross the private barrier yet.

Almonzo refused to share her until he had his fill and it was obvious when his hands cupped her bottom and brought her closer to his lips. He wanted to taste her pleasure first, and she gave it to him in a continual dose.

Her legs parted more and his finger dipped for assurance. "That's right darling. Let me have you." His mouth covered her slit again and she rolled her head, straining her neck, expecting to see the ceiling above her but finding a new harvest of things to come. Richart's warm lips slanted over hers and he devoured her with a mixture of stored emotions. She felt the lust and admiration and God help her, the adrenaline rush.

Richart's three fingers and thumb cupped her face to the right as he kissed his enthusiasm into her mouth while forcing her left hand to hold his excitement by the shaft. Together they gripped it up and down, tighter and slower. The whole time, they put on their show, Darian watched and Almonzo licked her into the private realm of ecstasy.

Almonzo reaped the benefits now. Her thighs pushed forward as her waist began to circle in a fashion both men seemed to control. Richart growled as he released her but she didn't return the favor. Her hand steadily continued to thread him through trained fingers as her heart pumped only faster.

"That's it, Tabitha. Come for me." Darian was the one who made the request and it was then she noticed he had his cock gripped tight and in an engaging thrust, he was going for the spill of all men. Her mouth opened then and her weight shifted. She wanted him closer.

"Please...wait for me." She was hungry to taste him. She craved his sweet tang even though the relish of him was a forbidden spice. She wanted every drip on her lips.

Her hand dropped Richart and both palms slapped against Almonzo's shoulders. Her eyes locked in a war of wasted time with Darian in her focus. Richart continued to fondle her breasts while bracing her back against his solid chest and Almonzo continued to dine.

Richart's lips were at her ear. "Give him that sweet pussy, baby. Come for him, Tabitha. Let him taste you."

"Almonzo!" Her legs were going to buckle. "I can't!"

"You can...I've got you baby, I've got you." Richart whispered his assurances.

Almonzo's tongue snaked in and out of her center and he lapped at her juices. He gripped her hips tighter and held her only closer. His fingers plunged into her core as his teeth teased the nub in a defiant call for action.

Her body swayed but his lips followed wherever she leaned and Richart held her, offered her, in fact, to him. Ready or not, she was coming and she was working her movements to ensure she captured everything he was able to give.

It was another delicious reminder of the advantage in numbers as his encouragement only made her feel bolder, sexier. Her hands settled tighter against Almonzo then and she slammed against him as she stood on her tip-toes trying to reach with only one specific purpose in mind. "Oh... Almonzo. Don't stop. Don't ever...stop. Please...please fuck me."

Richart's mouth hovered over hers as her breathlessness continued to hammer the wind out of her chest. "He's fucking you baby. Feel that tongue sliding in and out and in again." He grinned widely and then dove into her mouth with a devastating kiss. If mouths hummed with the pulse of a climax, Richart accomplished it when he made his way into the song and dance shared between intimate lovers.

Another orgasm took her, it shook her forward and back and Richart helped with the rocking sensation. He held onto her body as it shattered around Almonzo's mouth and Darian came with her, even if it was in his own palm. As she broke free of Richart's kiss, her gaze covered Darian with a blanket of approval while Almonzo took his last sip of her pleasure.

Richart licked the side of her neck then and his gums were swollen with evidence of his direction. The white points of his fangs pressed through and warned of pending desires and one hand stroked her hip.

"No, not yet." Almonzo rose and advised against it. The passion running on overload, he swept her in his arms and cradled her closer to him. He sneered as he placed her on the bed. Directly behind Darian, she realized he was giving her to them now, turning her over to them with his blessing or permission. She wasn't sure which or how to interpret the act alone.

Richart was harder than what she initially imagined he might have been as he stood behind her and she couldn't take her eyes off of his engorged cock. He seemed to possess so many perfect qualities—some women would deem the man a god and with his size, many would run from feeling *that* between their legs.

He towered over her then as Almonzo stretched out beside her and Richart dropped to his knees pulling her legs over his shoulders. His nostrils flared as he seemed to know the scent of her was the spent pleasure representing all parties concerned. Tabitha brought Almonzo in for a long, indulgent kiss and as she caressed his cheek, Richart took his turn.

His tongue dipped and retreated before finding enough contentment to resist leaving her again. Darian's mouth began to water. She saw it when she looked at him. Almonzo's kisses covered her and he made sure he possessed her lips with his for the first more personal invasion Richart provided.

Almonzo's mouth and tongue proved hungrier than she ever remembered and her palms ached to touch him. One did and one found another. She slowly coiled her fingertips around the strength of both men—a Sabbat on one side and a Spenser on the other.

Her hips rose with the sudden thought and the slow grind of body to tongue connection began to undo the unplanned but perfect rhythm as a newly formed urgency crashed around her.

Her body pulsed around Richart's mouth and the wave of emotion washed from the inside out as her body began to adjust to the new waves found in seductive desire. Her womb clenched and his tongue swiped deeper. It was all she could do to keep up with the rekindling of fires.

Richart's teeth nibbled at her clit and he tried to draw out the personal pulse of her inner vixen and she never refused the temptation. Turning away from Almonzo's kiss, her mouth resisted a silent call. Oh no, she screamed out her release and as she did, Almonzo stroked her brow and looked on. "Richart! Please! Faster! Oh...please!"

Almonzo held her arms tightly above her head and he enjoyed the way he secured her for them because he focused on her breasts with a deplorable smile. At first he webbed his fingers through hers but soon he held her with only one clasp.

"No! Let me move. Oh please, let me touch you!" She tried to raise her hips forward but Richart held her more securely against the weight of his

arm. He moaned against her skin and clamped down gently on her clit rolling it with his tongue again and again until she spread wider and opened more willingly to accept his most gracious gratitude.

“Please Almonzo...oh...you don’t know the...pleasure!” She gazed into her loving mate’s eyes but his jaw only twitched with acknowledgement. He wanted her to writhe from it all and crave, oh yes, how he wanted her hungry. It showed all over his face and in every action he took to ensure she received pleasure.

“Give him what he wants baby, that’s it.” Darian chanted in her ear.

Almonzo smirked, a peculiar expression right then and there but he seemingly loved the act itself as his eyes left hers in order to watch the oral excursion of a secondary claim to his wife.

Darian’s lips hovered over hers and with a whisper he gave her the instruction. “That’s it, come for us.” It was the one that wracked her body forward earlier. His tongue swiped back and forth over her lips and then he dipped for a more sensual kiss.

Her back bowed as Richart slipped his tongue in tighter flicking through her cave of womanly needs. He was driving her forward, reaching for her, with her, wanting her to climax against his lips. She was going to come with all of them touching her. The kiss she gave Darian was hotter because hell’s fury swept the room with the sins of foreseeable destruction but it didn’t slow their pace.

Desperate for more control, leverage even, she tugged her arms free and closed her fists around two able cocks. Both men willingly drove into her hands. Her mouth moved away from Darian and on a short supply of breath, she screamed out a vehement request. “Somebody, anybody...please... fuck me.”

They all shuffled at one time.

Chapter 14

Tabitha was going to come for the next hundred years just revisiting this experience. The more they touched her, the longer they looked at her, the wetter she became. The orgasms were like a ricochet of pleasure bullets firing nothing but blanks one minute and a continual round of bliss the next.

One request for cock, and she had a ready volunteer.

“It will be your pleasure.” Richart held the advantage because his lips occupied the one place she wanted stroked. He whispered into her skin right before he grabbed her ass and used it to secure a fastened grip. He yanked her right under him.

Quickly, he pressed the mushroom head of his cock against her. Almonzo’s eyes forcibly changed to the lavender shade Tabitha recognized but he didn’t look angry or even jealous.

She still coaxed him. “Almonzo, take my mouth. It’s yours.”

“Come here.” He pressed his hungry lips against hers before he moved his cock over her willing tongue. With the tip of his dick waiting to slip forward, he reminded her. “It’s always mine.”

Richart penetrated her with his heat, and she took some of Almonzo’s for her own as the precum glistened from the tip and he gradually slipped inside her mouth. The timing was perfect as Richart secured himself with a locked fit deep inside her pussy. Darian rolled back on the balls of his feet and observed.

“What’s that feel like baby?” His hand moved over her belly and she moaned her reply. It felt like she was going to come! And he had to ask? She reached for him, tried to pull him into their experience. She wanted to hold all of them as she came and she was going to explode.

Richart’s cock was damn near in a league of its own. She felt him pulsing against her walls and driving in deeper with every stroke and his heat...oh God, the way he throbbed against her only provoked a bolt of

warmth. Every single time he slid inside her, he seemed to sheath himself in her moisture. And she was wet—no, more like flooding over—with desire.

“Oh man. What a tight little pussy...” Richart began to roll his body back and forth with the enjoyed strokes of a man who planned an erotic visit without the need to rush. “That’s it baby. Take it all.” His hands spread her legs wider and his mouth fell open as his lips curved in an erotic grin. “You know you gotta love this.”

Truer words were never spoken.

Darian’s mouth moved to her breasts and he did what she enjoyed best. His tongue rolled over her nipples before his teeth scraped them over and over again. He took a mouthful but never showed favoritism as he moved between them. His breathing labored, he made an urgent request as he held her hand only tighter around his dick. “Stroke it baby.”

“Ah but she is...and I’m going to stay right here until she comes.” Almonzo’s cock hung between her jaws, and he pushed his thickness to the back of her throat only more. His thighs bunched when her fingers went to his balls and she stroked the skin at the base as she continued to suck him down her throat between mumbles and groans.

Richart was thumping against her pussy in long, strong strokes. He used slow movements of unadulterated pleasure while beads of sweat formed over his brow and lip. He took her hips in his hands and worked his back as he moved into her with a perverse and twisted shift.

“That’s it, Tabitha. Feel me.” His voice was husky and Almonzo flinched when he heard Richart call her name.

She looked at Richart’s abs. She focused on them as she watched his pleasure ride in and claim him. “So beautiful.” She glanced up and lost herself in his gaze as his pupils changed. No, if beautiful had a first or last name, Richart deserved to wear both in his orgasmic state.

His face never expressed anything more than true pleasure and untainted joy while his cock danced for freedom. “That’s it, Tabitha. Let me have you now.” His head dipped and he playfully bit at the nipple Darian vacated.

“Ouch!” Tabitha’s hands flew to her breast but it didn’t stop her from grinding her hips forward. Oh no, nothing stopped an orgasm in progress.

Richart drew one drop of blood and Almonzo quickly lapped it away when he saw Darian’s fangs fall.

“That’s it, Richart. Now!”

Blood or come, it didn't matter.

Lick or suck, she didn't care.

Right now, she wanted the man inside of her to finish her. "Oh Richart. Faster!"

"Do that again, and you'll regret it." Almonzo only cautioned over her screams but he didn't have time to scowl. Hell no, only bliss existed on this bed. She quickly brought him back to her lips and sucked him in with a latch that demanded he forfeit all control—and she proved she understood how to take it when she wanted it.

Richart's eyes rolled upward and his dick plunged forward. "Ah, man. There's nothing but pure pleasure in *your* woman."

Richart and Tabitha were now committed to their goals. Her body was slick and eager and his cock delivered everything a man's full endowment guaranteed.

"That's it baby. You're coming for me, aren't you sweets?" He tapped her pussy with a hard stroke left then right and then to help her, he plunged faster and harder straight for the core—her G-spot had nothing on the place he hit.

A jet of his warmth with the strength of ammunition came fast and forceful and dear God, it brought such a sweet reminder of why he was in between her legs. Richart was her true secondary mate. They were already connected on so many levels and she swallowed Almonzo deeper as the pain of the truth slapped her with its vile dose.

She arched her back. Her mouth tightened around her mate with closed jaws and a lapping tongue. Her hips rose to meet each final jolt Richart shared with her and as the heat spilled from him, she knew it was truly a gift as she rode out her own orgasm and began climbing for another one.

Her murmurs ran across the ridge of Almonzo's shaft and he filled her with his cum as Richart collapsed against her lower half and stayed in place for her pleasure more than his own. She pumped the heat of Darian into her hand as she savored, like a fine wine, the fire of the one drifting across her tongue.

"That's it. Sweet mercy, Tabitha. Don't stop. Close around me. Swallow baby. That's it. Take it all." Almonzo's hands weaved through her hair as he fucked her mouth and she swallowed the taste of him before she finally released him.

She licked the salty aftermath, the heavenly reminder of him, from her lips. Oh but how she loved him then. The way he looked on with admiring eyes undid her in one solitary moment. She needed to come again now.

These new basic needs were hard on a woman.

Spent and exhausted, Richart moved to the side and before she asked, Darian was there. He wasted little time entering her and for a moment they were alone. Almonzo and Richart seemed unaware of it as they casually relaxed with simple conversation.

“Here’s the girl I knew I’d always find.” He winked and then bit on his lower lip. “Always ready, aren’t you sweet honey?”

Tabitha smiled in acceptance. Darian nodded his approval. He must have known she was ready to come and as soon as he stroked her once or twice, she released a sigh of relief and he only pressed further inside.

“Oh, Darian.” She whispered his name as he began to move and he closed his eyes after the first few rubs. She wasn’t sure if she’d ever witnessed anyone experiencing something so pleasurable but he was in heaven. She was sure she sent him there, if only for a second. And that’s when she realized she also had the ability to send him straight through hell.

His cock was brutal as it punished her for time lost and pleasure gained. She took it as a genuine endorsement, and a rare and unusual pleasure. Darian’s savage hair moved wildly across his shoulders. The blond cape brushed down his back, and after a few longer, harder strokes, he opened his eyes and then he looked all rogue. His palms pushed her thighs wider and knees higher, and he hooked his arm under her bent leg as he began to push himself deeper.

“Careful Darian!” Richart scooted against the mattress and he kissed her with soft lips. “You were sensational.” He complimented her and he must have truly meant it because his kiss was to die for and certainly one to crave. Her hand cupped his balls and she lightly massaged the base of his shaft as Darian began to look for his advantage and she saw the mischief in his twisted expression.

Almonzo appeared surprisingly proud but he didn’t leave Tabitha’s eyes. While he realized Darian was inside of her, he wanted to be with her—in her mind, heart, and spirit. “Watch me, Tabitha.”

“I love you.” He professed it once but one time wasn’t enough. “I love you always,” he whispered again.

She stroked his face and then she returned her gaze to Darian and couldn't resist the urge to lose herself in the act. He felt incredible and talented and he understood how to please a woman.

"Yeah, that's it baby. Let me feel that hot honey." His entire expression validated his hunger. His thighs bunched and his shoulders squared and damn it, she was going to come with him or die. His cock was wide and long and it reached a part of her no one needed to ever know existed. He took her beyond the place Richard stamped and she soared only more.

"Darian, please...don't take me this high and then...oh, help me...please!"

He knew. He touched it, stroked it, and caressed it. "What's wrong, honey?" His tongue snaked in and out of his lips as his cock worked in and out of her body.

"Take me...all the way! You can't just..."

"I can cause I've gotcha where I want you now, lover." His brow creased. He must have realized the pleasure he gave her and he allowed her everything he denied her years earlier. The man was cocksure full of himself and she savored every ripple of his truer confidence as it lashed against her pussy. She felt the veins bulge against her walls and she felt him all the way to places only Almonzo reserved the right to reach.

"No." It was a soft warning. It fell from her mouth before she stopped her body from defying all parties. She issued it because she watched the vampire within him come alive and he exhibited little self-control which only promised trouble loomed if he didn't regain it soon.

"Ah, yeah." His hands grabbed her waist then and he yanked her from the mattress as he greedily wrapped her legs around him. After a step forward, he sat down with her hips spread open. He was determined to own her pleasure all by himself. He pressed his cock harder and deeper into her center and she rode it. Heaven help her, she clenched him tighter with a force only lovers knew existed. Her nails scraped down his back as she screamed for her release.

"Ah, Tabitha." Darian covered her mouth with his and he held her tightly in the most diabolical kiss she'd ever received. It protected her from yelling his name and saved her from letting everyone else there know.

He was her first love but Almonzo was now her only love and in such a remarkable turn of events, the entire ceremony was bitter-sweet.

Darian's thick tongue ran over her lips and teeth and then he literally swiped her throat before he released her from his mouth. He snatched her hair back and forced her to watch them as his eyes drifted downward.

Together, they followed his cock as it entered her again and again, each time his thickness held onto the lust as he buried himself deeper inside of her. With a reckless expression, his eyes shaded faster then and his fangs snapped with a deliberate drop. Quickly, she shook her head as if to ask for and receive the favor of delayed gratification.

His lips curved in a wicked smile and he was more than willing to grant a spicy reply. "It's enough to fuck you and know you've enjoyed every inch."

Chapter 15

“How bad was it?” Natasha sat by the oversized bathtub talking to her sister casually as if Tabitha simply had a bad day at an undesirable job or something.

Tabitha’s painted toes appeared above the bubbles and she glared at her feet.

“That bad, huh?”

Tabitha smiled. “It was actually like a dream.”

“You mean a nightmare, I’m sure!”

“No, I mean like the wettest, hottest, most fascinating fantasy a woman can ever hope to experience.”

Natasha perked up. “You liked it?”

Tabitha leaned her arm against the tub and stared at her sister. “I know I shouldn’t have enjoyed it but Natasha, look at it from my point of view. It was going to happen with or without my permission and Almonzo agreed to let me enjoy the experiences. He only requested that we never talk about it again after the three ceremonies are complete. At first, that part bothered me but now, I have to tell you—it’s probably for the best.”

“You don’t think you’re in love with Richart or Darian now do you?”

“Oh, heavens no. Sex and love don’t always go together. Be practical.”

“I am. They go together more appropriately, if you ask me.”

“I don’t love either one of them.” She giggled. “But I can tell you one thing, Richart would have to run from me if we ever ended up together. The man has an animalistic cock. He’s hung like an elephant! I’m serious.

If something happens to Almonzo, I’m not going to take Richart as a mate, I’m going to take him and put him on display!”

Natasha’s mouth dropped. “Tabitha! You are so bad!”

The girls broke into uncontrollable laughter.

Almonzo appeared in the doorway. "Natasha." He nodded and then extended his thumb over his back. "Out." He snickered.

"Almonzo, she's probably had enough." She teased.

"Father wants to see you, sister-in-law." He grabbed a nearby towel for Tabitha and held it up for her.

"Natasha, we'll see you later." Tabitha was still giggling.

"Yes, don't let the door hit your well trained backside on the way out." He smirked and winked at Tabitha.

Natasha rolled her eyes and then slapped him on the back in passing. "Jealous boy."

"You have no idea how bad it will be when I don't have to share." He kissed Tabitha's lips as she fell into his arms. "Just you wait and see."

* * * *

Almonzo and Tabitha were tangled in sheets by the time Richart and Darian joined them. They'd been there for several minutes lip-locked in kissing games and after the hook ups she had with her husband, Tabitha didn't even care about foreplay. She wanted someone to put out a few raging fires and she had an idea it would take all three of them today.

The trilogy of ceremonies were allotted so much time for each mating period and each one was shorter than the session before. Today, they only had forty-five minutes.

Tabitha motioned for them and Darian inched forward with controlled discipline in his steps and stark defiance in his eyes. With his cock fisted in his hand, he brought it across her lips and she swiped her tongue over the slit again and again trying to draw out a better taste of man. Just a little pre-cum here and there sent her reeling for his passion.

With his chin tilted, he rubbed her knee in a circular motion. "What do you have in mind today? Do you want me to guess?" He moved his cock to her mouth again. "Tell me."

"How about I suck and show." She greedily devoured the engorged head and her mouth slid all the way to the base of his cock in less than a second.

"Sweet slippery honey..." He was definitely going to finger fuck her now and she expected it the second he called out to her.

His palm cupped under her center as Richart approached the bed. Tabitha tried to blink or wink or something foolish enough to let him know she was glad to see him. Her eyes fell to his cock and her pussy began to press down on Darian's hand. Spotting Richart's size made her walls pulse with newfound desire.

Her legs fell to the side and both men watched as his fingers slid in and out and in once again. As a reward, she kissed the tip of Darian's cock and then licked the tip of Richart's too.

"Let me have a taste." He dropped between her legs and Darian continued to slide his fingers in systematically as Richart's mouth covered the opening and licked around her slit.

Tabitha rolled back on her elbows. "Mmm...guys, don't stop." Her hips rose higher and higher. She reached behind her back and pulled Almonzo's hand over her shoulder. His mouth went to her ear. "All right lover, I know you want to tell us all what to do here but I've done this a few times." His mouth went to her neck and his fingers went straight for her nipples. He rolled them into perky points of ready pleasure and three men would find plenty in them.

Richart moved to the bed and Tabitha's hands settled behind her ass as she continued to watch Darian. She crossed her legs in front of her sitting Indian-style. Bracing herself against her palms, she rose and fell with his manual attention. Her head rolled to the left and then the right as Almonzo's kisses cascaded over her neck and shoulders.

Darian's hand began to move faster and faster as his fingers twirled inside her walls. Her hips rose and fell and right when she was ready to ask him to taste her, Almonzo grabbed her waist and pulled her up on all fours. "No! Not yet!" She whined. "I was about there!"

Almonzo grinned. "And I'll take you 'about' there again."

His palms began to massage her skin and he pushed her toward the edge of the bed. "Now, I want to fuck this pretty little ass of yours while I watch the three of you think of something creative." He growled into her lower back as he began to kiss his way up her spine. By the time his hot mouth covered her ear, he was truly famished because she heard it in his voice.

"Tell me where you want me."

"I want you everywhere." She hummed.

His mouth was moist as he bit playfully at her earlobe and he whispered all sorts of sweet nothings, carnal encouragements. "Tell them what you want to see, Tabitha. Anything you desire, they'll do it." He promised.

Darian was still on his knees massaging Tabitha's thighs and Richart stood as if he expected an unusual request and he didn't wait to hear it. Before her lips formed the words, Richart yanked Darian up with force and claimed him with a bruising kiss.

"Oh my God." Her mouth hung open as Almonzo's tongue scraped by her ear.

"What did I tell you?" His spicy breath was laced with peppermint and his pupils trimmed in lust. "Like that, don't you?"

She liked it enough to participate.

The men faced one another as if they felt she warranted a show. Her hands divided them and she struggled to pull at one cock and then the other. Each time she tugged at Darian, he growled with his unstoppable pleasure. She kissed his thigh and stroked Richart's cock before Almonzo grabbed her hips and pulled her back again.

Richart kissed Darian with as much passion as he sipped at any woman—particularly her. He tore his lips away from Darian and asked her simply. "Name it and it's yours."

Darian's expression made her believe he was willing to play them all like a sport. He'd also spent enough time with her to know what turned her on and *this* definitely whet her appetite.

Tabitha cocked her head. If Darian was game, then he was a player who went onto the field with all the right equipment.

He read her mind or her expression because he brought his solid cock to her mouth and greedily pushed it right into her parted lips. She sucked him in as she watched him give Richart a knowing look. With a saucy pop she released him. "I want to see you ...you know..."

Almonzo slapped her ass with a hard smack. "Behave, Tabitha." His finger ran down the seam of her ass and she licked the precum from Darian's tip once more.

She batted her eyes playfully. "Turns you on, doesn't it. You know what I'm going to ask and you can't wait to see what he'll say."

Richart bent down and tugged her forward. He slanted his lips over hers and then kissed her into the hell she was raising.

As if she'd already voiced her request, he wrapped Darian's neck in a strong grip and brought him crashing against his lips again. This time, he fisted Darian's cock and began pumping it slowly. He held him in a snug grip and every yank inspired a new gleam of pre-cum as well as a vocal grunt.

"Oh, God!" Tabitha's mouth fell open and Almonzo chuckled as he moved his mouth over her back in a chilling oral massage. His kisses stroked the innocence right out of her then and she was ready to guide them with her requests.

"Hold his cock in your hand."

Darian's smirk turned evil. "Baby, you think this is the first time I've had another man offer to play with my balls?"

Richart bit down on his lower lip. "Prison was too kind to a pretty boy like Darian, back in the day."

Almonzo whispered at her ear. "Darian served a year in a mortal state prison for punishment the elders didn't want him to avoid. He probably loves cock as much as I love this tight little snatch. His fingers plunged into her pussy then. Her center collapsed around him as he completely circled her walls with the intrusion. She clenched around his fingers. "Oh, Almonzo! Don't stop, right now, I can't stand it if you stop!"

Richart kissed Darian again and moved his cock to her lips. With the finger fuck Almonzo orchestrated and Richart's massive dick filling her cheeks, she couldn't imagine anything better..

Darian dropped to the bed breaking the kiss Richart claimed on his lips. He cupped her neck and pulled her in for an easy reminder of where he enjoyed his tongue best. The way he thrust it in and out and in and out, there was no question about it, he planned on giving a few favors during their time together. "Now, watch and learn, beautiful." He glanced over his shoulder at Almonzo who seemed just as anxious to enjoy the show.

Darian splayed his legs open and grabbed Richart's hips forcing him to balance between his legs. He moved him parallel to his mouth but before he latched on, he placed Tabitha's fingers around his stiff erection and covered her hand with his. Almonzo caught her around the middle and moved her tighter against his body.

"Ah yeah, this is worth every drip you're giving her here." Almonzo moved three fingers beyond her folds and with a slow and easy pace, he

began to stir more of his woman's desires. Tabitha's hips bucked against his cock and wildly implied she was a worthy ride. "Please, Almonzo, you're going to have to fuck me while I watch this."

Darian kissed her once and then dropped his head closer to Richart's cock. "Yeah, Almonzo. I'll trade spots if you aren't man enough for the job." He snickered and then he pulled Richart all the way into his mouth. His jaws swelled the more he moaned against Richart's stiff shaft.

"Oh jeez, man." Richart rolled his eyes up as his hips began to grind forward.

Tabitha's eyes remained wide as she watched the men next to her. Darian greedily sucked in Richart's cock while he kept one hand striking at his own while guiding her to provoke the right rhythm.

His other arm braced against Richart's lower back drawing him only closer. His fingers stayed laced between hers as his head bobbed with Richart's movements.

"God, I can't believe how good he is at this." Richart's head rolled over to the side as he began to fuck the mouth of one of the world's most powerful men.

When he began a ruthless grind, Darian dropped his hand from his own erection and slapped his palms against Richart's ass. He swallowed whole as he clawed and clutched Richart's butt cheeks and damn near made him scream.

Tabitha felt her breath hitch in her chest. "Holy hell. That is the sexiest thing I've ever witnessed in my life."

Almonzo brought down a slap against her bottom. "Sweet mercy, woman. Shame on you for provoking them." She barely felt the sting because she refused to vacate the erotic act unfolding before her.

She called out to her mate as her body pressed into his hand again. "Almonzo, please fuck me." It was a quiet call as her mouth watered and she longed to share something with someone involved in all of the sensual pleasures in front of her.

Darian read her mind and with a pop, released Richart. "Here baby. Suck his cock for me."

"Oh shit! You did not just stop *right then*." Richart's face was flushed and beads of sweat formed over his brow. He looked down at the shape of

his erection and then glared back at Darian. "If I give head, I finish what I start."

She smiled. "Me too. Come here. Now."

Richart gripped his cock as he moved it to her mouth and Almonzo paddled her backside much harder than before. Darian slid under her body and his long, delicious tongue reached her center with a newfound interest. His kisses warmed her belly but when his tongue slid past her folds, she rode out an oral pleasure like most women fuck a ready dick.

"So good. Darian, don't you quit on me!" Tabitha opened up to accommodate the mouth her body quickly consumed with a welcome stance.

Almonzo's hands pushed against her butt and then gently pulled her up. The act itself only tormented her more as Darian's tongue slid in and out of her folds ready to achieve all goals.

"Not a chance." His fingers traced the outline of her slit and his tongue lapped with the true purpose to please. Sharp teeth nibbled on the little button and guaranteed to set her off. She writhed under each swipe.

Her body held his tongue captive as he slipped deeper inside. The way he moaned against her instantly sent her body into spasms as he pulsated against her walls.

"Oh Darian, Suck...please lick. Harder, deeper." Her knees were going to fold and if she fell now, she would definitely be on top of his face. Her feet pressed into the soft covering of the bed and she rode out the forced tempo of a new erotic beat. There was nothing better than an insatiable man hungry to finish her with a lick here or a swipe there, except maybe the one behind her.

Almonzo was there and he was ready to fuck her, running the strength of his cock down her ass one minute and a palm ready to strike a slap, the next. She devoured Richart with a slurping sound, sucked him harder and harder until she felt him sliding halfway down her throat.

"I'm going to come sweetie." She clenched his hips in her hands and dug her fingernails into his thighs holding him tightly in place as he shot spurts of his hot fluid down her throat.

"That's it Tabitha. Suck my cock, darling. Oh God...it feels so good. Too good....take it all...ah yeah, baby."

She felt his ass tighten under her touch as he screamed out his release.

“That’s it. Much better. Swallow. Take it all now. You’ve got me. You’ve always got me.” She continued to suck until he stumbled away from her and then slid across the bed where his head fell into the lap of one very willing recipient.

Darian seemed to freeze under her the minute Richart started sucking his cock. Tabitha smiled over her shoulder as she stretched her neck and watched Richart curl around Darian’s body. She never realized sucking cock looked so downright sexy.

With Darian’s tongue still probing Tabitha’s center, Almonzo moved in front of her and fisted his dick. “Let me fuck that pretty little mouth, sweetheart.” He kissed her lips lightly before he moved inside with three fast strokes.

She mumbled against him as she tried to move him to the side. She wanted to watch Richart finish Darian. As hard as he’d been, and she’d watched as he’d grown thicker by the inch, he was going to detonate in Richart’s mouth if he allowed it and oh how she hoped he let him. Almonzo seemed to give them a signal then with just a little shake from his head.

Darian moved to her ass and Richart was right behind him only he laughed loudly when Almonzo warned him. “I can’t have this image of my cousin. It’s not happening here. This is Tabitha’s show.” He touched her cheek as if to apologize to her too.

“Almonzo, please let them fuck. I want to watch and ...”

His lips claimed hers and then he pushed her gently to the bed. He placed her on her side and slid in front of her to shower her breasts with kisses of his affection. Richart moved in behind her with a hard cock just waiting for entry and Darian was at her head brushing her hair from her brow.

“Please?” She was still interested in the Richart and Darian finish.

“Please what?” Darian taunted.

“Let me watch.”

Richart leaned over her side and brought Darian in for another mind-blowing kiss. She watched their tongues scrape at the tips as two of the world’s sexiest men fought for control and the most sensual lead. Darian wrapped his cock tighter and began to move it up and down, faster and faster. Her mouth moved under him. “Darian please...come...” She tried to

reach him with her lips as the urgency slammed into her chest. She wanted to taste the excitement of a well provoked man.

“Come for me, Darian.” Richart whispered into his lips and Darian’s hand stopped jerking and quickly wrapped Tabitha’s palm around him. “There, sweet honey. Finish me.”

Her lips slipped over Darian’s cock. Richart moved his swollen dick over the seam of her butt and that’s when she decided he was most definitely an ass-man. Almonzo still fingered her pussy until she was lapping at his nipples and begging to be fucked.

“Tell him baby. Tell him what you want.” Darian called out to her.

“I just want someone to kiss me, someone to fuck me, and someone to love me—now!”

And she found all of the above from the man she most loved—thank heavens Almonzo knew just how to love her with his tongue, cock and heart.

Chapter 16

Once they were dressed, Samuel Spenser joined them along with Tate and Orlando. No one mentioned the trilogy ceremony but the reason it was dubbed a trilogy was because of the three segments involved. The first, was the independent bonding of the life mates. The second served as the ridiculous ceremony which was nothing more than group sex and the third was the acceptance of her by the other family members which was basically a few insignificant verbal exchanges right before the final sex act. Something they'd already completed, more or less.

"Tabitha, I want you to know that our family will always be your family." Samuel kissed her on the cheek.

Orlando followed suit. "Yes, we will always protect you."

"And keep you safe." Tate stepped forward with a gift. A small box was placed in her hand and when she opened it up, she gasped. "It's beautiful."

"It is yours." Almonzo whispered.

A pearl choker like nothing she'd ever seen before was placed around her neck. She went to the mirror to look at it. A peculiar shade of pink seemed to stand out more than the white pearls. They were lined against a sturdier silver collar.

Samuel began talking to her then. "It's for you to wear out whenever you leave the property. Others like us will recognize you as a woman who has a mate and a secondary so it will keep you safer than even..."

"Natasha?" She questioned.

"Yes." Orlando said without any level of uncertainty.

"You won't let her have a secondary feeder. Why?"

Almonzo smacked him on the back. "He refuses."

"Shut up, Almonzo. If you were given choices, you would've refused."

"I don't know. It's pretty kinky." He watched Tabitha with a new lust in his eyes, one she hadn't failed to notice since the experience.

Samuel seemed ready to move them on to a more appropriate topic. “Young lady, this situation with the Sabbats won’t just go away and we know we still have a lot to overcome even though I’m under the impression the ceremonies have been successful. We have plenty of time to discuss it but right now, I want you to rest. You look like hell visited your doorstep and I’m worried about you.” He turned back to Tate. “I sense she may need some *testing*.”

“Testing? Oh, certainly,” Tate agreed. “Yes, I’m sure you are correct. It just hit me. Yes, I think so. She is certainly pale and...” He stopped abruptly when Samuel’s hand went up.

Almonzo and Orlando shared a dumbfounded look. Marion joined the others in the room right as Samuel made the observance. She locked gazes with her husband. He nodded slightly and the corners of Marion’s lips tilted up in a smile.

“Tate, please handle this at once,” Samuel said. “Boys, plan on spending tomorrow evening with me. We’ll work out a plan and stick to it until we are all safe once more.”

The family and Tate left, pulling the door closed behind them. Almonzo and Tabitha collided with one another by stares alone. A brewing passion was left to linger there. Almonzo paced the floor as Tabitha prepared for bed.

“I don’t really feel well, Almonzo.” She didn’t know why she felt the urge to complain now after all her body endured earlier. When Tate reappeared at the door, she didn’t have to wait to analyze it. She immediately noticed he seemed overly confident in his step and his chosen words. He walked into their suite like he’d been invited. He turned to Almonzo. “You’re father wants me to take her blood and type it as well as test her for deficiencies.”

Almonzo nodded and began to pull the shades on the suite’s windows. “Go ahead.”

“I’ve been instructed by your father to ask you to join him while these tests are conducted.”

“I’m not leaving her.” He glanced over at Tabitha.

She offered him a smile. “I’m sure Tate will take care of me.”

“I want to make sure he does.”

Orlando appeared in the doorway. "Almonzo, Father wants you in the study now." He laughed. "Tate will have news shortly. By the time your date with Darian is over, you should have some results."

He quickly disappeared and Almonzo started out behind him ready to wrestle him to the ground for using date and Darian in the same sentence. He stopped just short of leaving the room and turned around to question Tate. "You don't think there is anything wrong, do you?"

Tate shook his head. "No, not at all. In fact, everything will be fine very soon."

* * * *

It was the last ceremony. Tabitha didn't want to feel the sense of loss but she did. She was bonding with Richart and even Darian. It wasn't normal to feel what she felt for these men but she wasn't sure it was completely abnormal either.

She met Almonzo in the pod and he never looked more handsome. He wore faded blue jeans and an open white silk shirt. His face lit up the moment she walked in and he immediately slammed the paperwork against his desk. "Sweet hell and damnation. You are the sexiest thing alive."

She turned around with her arms wide and after a few spins, landed in the comfort of his arms. "You aren't so bad yourself..." Her voice trailed off and he must have noticed it.

"No, Tabitha, so don't ask. This is it, sweetheart. I've noticed you've enjoyed yourself. Most of the time, this is what happens but after today, this *is* it." He pecked her with a quick kiss on the lips and then held up a finger. "Give me a second and we'll go over there together, okay?"

She nodded. She walked over to the open terrace and watched curiously as she saw Darian and Richart enter the cottage. She immediately wondered what they were going to do over there until she and Almonzo walked over. Her panties were damp the minute she thought about it. "Heaven on earth," she whispered as she moved closer.

"Tabitha?" Almonzo's hand was outstretched and waiting.

"Almonzo, just give me a minute before we go."

"Is something wrong?" His concern was sincere. She saw it as she studied his face.

“Can I be honest with you?”

“Always. You know this. At least, I hope you realize it.”

“I care about them now.”

Almonzo placed his hand on her heart. “It’s because you are who you are, but Tabitha, my darling woman, you don’t have a clue who we’ve had in our bed.”

“Darian is...”

“I’m not just talking about Darian,” he snapped. “Darian is vile and he is dangerous but I’m talking about Richart too.”

Orlando walked in. Almonzo shook his head rapidly and his double made a speedy exit before Almonzo explained. Pulling her to him, he sat down on the desk and provided a seat for her on his lap.

“Oh come on, you’re jealous of Richart so you’re going to...”

Almonzo pressed his fingers to her lips. “I’m not envious of any other man alive now. Would you like to know why?”

“This is a trick-Tabitha question isn’t it?” She narrowed her eyes.

“Not at all.” He stroked her face. “I’ve watched you with the man you loved, and please don’t deny it, because we both know there’s a deep connection there. I’ve also watched you with my cousin, who thinks he’s a treasure to all civilizations regardless of their sex. I’ve discovered a lot about you.”

“Great. I didn’t know I was under a microscope.”

Almonzo’s face was full of love and he looked so content she wanted to just squeeze him in two. “And...”

“I’m waiting,” she said sarcastically.

“Me too, I thought you might want to interrupt again.” He pinched her nose and continued, “Tabitha, you definitely like sex.” He laughed.

She jabbed him with her elbow. “Funny.”

“No, I’m serious. No doubt about it. You fuck with a deliberate mouth and a sinfully beautiful body.” He pressed his lips to hers before she protested. “But you only make love to me. There’s a different look in your eyes and there’s the way you look at me when you are with them. I know what I have in you and no other man, or vampire, will ever take that away.”

“Almonzo...”

His fingers traced her mouth and he carefully watched her as he told her more. “I’m not jealous of Darian or Richart, but Richart was brought here to

control Darian and to get to know him. While I may have used our situation to lure him here to Edinburgh, you will be able to consider him your secondary and he was able to serve a greater purpose.”

“Almonzo, what are you trying to say?”

“I’m telling you, since we had to go to bed with the enemy, it helped me to know I had the wrath of ten thousand men in the sack with us too. Richart is every bit the monster Darian is. Don’t ever forget it. There’s a significant difference between the two. Richart loves his family.”

“Darian loves his family.”

Almonzo shook his head. “Darian is family oriented to an extent so long as no one crosses him but loyalty doesn’t appear to be one of his strong suits. From what I can gather, his brothers fear him, so there must be a reason for it.

“Richart is devoted to his family. He won’t let you down or fail you and he could, pardon the expression, give it to Darian straight up the ass and then spear his heart if he harmed a Spenser. That’s why he is here. He is here to protect, guard, and learn what he needs to know for the safe-keeping of our future.”

Tabitha’s lips pursed.

“I know you have feelings for them. It’s why these ceremonies exist. A mortal woman coming into our way of life needs the assurance of additional security, and you’ve bonded with your secondary, but Tabitha, it ends today. Hopefully, you’ll never have to know what it is to exist without me.” He took her lips under his then. “If I have my way with you, I’ll be around for a very long time.”

“You’ve promised me so I’m counting on it.”

His hands moved behind her neck and he knotted her hair into his fist. His forefinger tilted her chin up. “Look at me, Tabitha.”

“Gladly.” She smiled.

“I always keep my promises.” His erection pressed into her center and his lips turned up in an outrageous smile. “And I promise to love you in more ways than ten thousand men can think of and I’ll keep things interesting.” His lips crashed down against hers and his hips began to move forward. “Now, you have a couple of nasty boys waiting to get their dirty paws on you. Let’s go see if you can keep them busy for a few minutes because I’m ready to lose the extra baggage.”

* * * *

Undressing her was never more exciting. He followed her up the steps of the cottage and stopped her on the first landing. He pressed her back against the wall and thrust his tongue slowly inside her warm and delicious mouth. "What's your hurry, sweetheart."

She playfully slapped him away.

It didn't work.

He tugged her sweatshirt over her head and her hands dropped to his waist. "If you take something from me, I take something from you." She laughed.

"Then I want this." He reached underneath her sweatshirt and ran his hands over the front of her bra before he moved his fingers around her back and unclasped her bra. "Consider it off." His hands ran over her nipples and he raised her shirt. His mouth hovered and then covered her nipple.

Her back arched and her voice lowered. "Oh Almonzo, you have no idea what I want you to do to me when this is all over." Her breath seemed to hitch in her chest and she kissed his neck and collarbone before she licked down to the first button holding his white shirt together.

Her hands clasped both sides of the material and the little vixen ripped it wide open and stripped it from his chest and arms. "There, that's better."

"Much better. I agree."

Her mouth trailed down his stomach and her tongue leisurely moved across the waistline of his jeans. "I go first this time." She pushed him back and he caught her wrist.

"Not a chance. Turn about makes it my turn to have my way." He clutched the hem of her sweatshirt and lifted it over her head. "Sweet mercy, your nipples just perked to my attention." He grinned and he licked only he didn't take her nipples. Hell no, he made her arch for him and crave it but he didn't close his mouth around one of the pretty gems.

"Almonzo!" She blushed.

"I can't believe it, Mrs. Spenser has a little pink in her cheeks." He started to unhook his belt and her hand caught his.

"I'm in charge of your disrobing." She caught his lip in between her teeth and sucked it in as his hands dropped to his sides.

“Then do what you do best, sweetheart.”

“I will.” She raised her eyebrows. “Close your eyes.” She kissed his neck and then moved her hands to his cock. Over the material, she applied enough pressure to let him know she was there and then she stepped away from him.

His anticipation was working him over and if she wasn’t careful, he wasn’t going to take her into the last ceremony untouched. His mouth continued to water. “Let me taste one of those perky little nipples.” His mouth fell open and he started to take what he wanted but her hand slammed into his gut.

“Not so fast.” She winked and then grabbed his belt. With a quick hand, she unfastened the leather strap, dropped the zipper and popped the snap.

“Oh you’re good.” He laughed as his lips slanted over hers.

“I’m getting better.” With the speed of a siren who knows what she wants and fully intends to grab her man’s attention, she slid her hands down the side of his body and removed his pants and boxers in one sweep.

“You cheated.” His hand flattened against his cock before he moved into her fully clothed leg.

She warned him fairly. “These are my only white slacks.” She backed away from him. “Don’t you even think about it.”

“I liked my white shirt too.”

She started to back up the stairs. “I’m serious Almonzo.”

“What was it about turn-about is fair play that you missed in nursery school?” He stalked her.

She positioned her palms in front of her but he just used them to pull her toward him grasping her forearms as he did. He draped her arms down his back and dipped for the first taste of her perky ripe nipple. His lips puckered and he kissed the first one before he sucked, lavished really, the other one. “God, you’re beautiful.” He tried to breathe her in and truly absorb her into his skin.

Her neck fell to the side as her hands massaged his scalp. “Almonzo...”

It was now or never. He stripped those white pants right off of her shapely little bottom and watched in amusement as she screamed foul.

“I told you...” She yelped.

His mouth covered hers. “I told *you*...turn about is fair play.”

She turned her little butt around and started to march up the steps and that's when he slammed against her with the self-control of a horny teenager. He'd curse himself for it another day.

"I'm really mad about this. Those were my favorite..."

His forefinger ran over the crack of her butt. "I don't give a damn if those pants were your last pair. I swear I don't."

Her eyes narrowed and he wanted to punish her right then for making him so horny. Maybe he would.

"Come here." He growled.

"No. I know that look."

"I said...come here." He reached, grabbed, pulled and positioned. Not exactly his first plan but since his cock had a mind of its own, why not.

Her breathing was uneven and she conceded. Her back was flat against the wall again and his lips dropped to her neck. "Damn you for destroying my soul." His mouth tasted her mouth as he dipped in her lips and made them his own for a possessive second.

Darian and Richart appeared at the top of the steps and in a round of applause, followed by sarcastic snickers, they stopped Almonzo and Tabitha in the midst of their pursuits.

"I don't have all day, here, Almonzo." Darian glared at Tabitha with true emptiness in his gaze.

"You'll wait for this, I swear it." He slapped her ass and then glared up at them. "Didn't you have a cock to suck or a dick to twitch or something?"

"Almonzo!" Tabitha shot him a disapproving look.

Darian turned his back to them and walked inside the room with his cock hanging from his hand.

Richart winked. "Damn straight he did and I like him on his knees."

* * * *

As soon as Tabitha walked into their ceremonial bedroom, her eyes were wide in shock. "It looks like somebody was having a good time before we busted up the party."

"Lubricants are for you." Darian moved toward her with calculated steps guiding him closer.

Almonzo reminded them of the meeting time. “Thirty minutes tonight. Make them count,” he taunted.

“I intend to store them to memory, Spenser.” Darian grunted.

Richart stepped in between the two vamps before their snarls became toothy sneers. “Stop it, boys, or I’ll give you both something to blow on for awhile.” He slapped Tabitha’s bottom and then whispered, “Tonight is all for you, so take me where you want me.”

She glanced over at Almonzo. He suddenly seemed rigid.

“I know what I want.” She smiled as she slowly pursued Richart. Her hand rested against his belly and her eyes dropped to his cock. Her hand gathered the width of him in a long, lingering stroke and she watched as she threaded him through her palm. “I knew it.”

“You knew what?” His thighs bunched as the head of his penis pushed through her grip. He bit down on his lip and did it again as he tried to work his way through the tight grip she clasped around his engorged cock.

“I can’t get my hand all the way around it.”

He covered her mouth with his as his tongue pressed between her lips and truly worked some everlasting emotions into her mind. He broke the kiss and looked deeply into her eyes. She braced herself for some kind of great confession but she really didn’t know Richart that well and probably overestimated the impact she had in his life.

“Honey, you can barely get that tight little snatch to close around me. Your little fist isn’t much stronger.” His hand covered hers and together they stroked.

“I just wanted to see how big *it* is.” No harm done,” she purred and then looked at Almonzo who definitely didn’t find *it* all that important either.

Almonzo’s gaze narrowed. “*Big*. Just remember grotesquely big. Painfully large.” He slapped his cousin on the back and moved aside.

Richart glanced at Almonzo. “I guess I’ll have to leave her with a never-ending smile then.”

Almonzo groaned. “You better make it count because I swear, thirty minutes and you’re both out of here.” He draped his gaze over Tabitha and the hungry look he gave her only showered her with more of his undying love.

“Top.” Darian lurked in the shadows but he came out when the act of loving her again gained his attention.

“No, I’m on top first, Darian. Take a backseat or ride solo,” Richart snarled and then pushed her back on the bed. Almonzo gently showered her with kisses once Richart had her pinned between the mattress and his hard body.

Tabitha looked up at him before she reached for Almonzo. Cupping his chin in the palm of her hand, she made love to his mouth with an open mouth kiss as Richart moved his lips over her legs.

“Almonzo...” She didn’t know how to ask but for the first few moments, she wanted to have Richart to herself. Almonzo was willing and gently accepted, to an extent. He moved to the top of the mattress and sat with his back against the headboard. His fingertips played across her forehead as he watched Richart prepare to take her.

Darian joined too and he seemed content to standby as well. One hand reached for her nipple and his fingers rolled it into a tight nub. She knew he’d sip on her later so she didn’t miss his lips there instantly.

With the engorged head of his swollen penis, Richart arched her to him as he worked beyond her folds inch by inch. “Yeah, Tabitha. That’s it honey. Spread your legs for me.”

He kissed her and this time, he lingered more than simply nipped. He sensually moved in deep before he dipped in for the rest and she had plenty to offer as a reward. Her hips shifted under him and she spread her thighs wide as his mouth delivered a deeply satisfying kiss.

The first strokes were painful. Most of the ceremonies were full of foreplay, but today was different and Richart must’ve realized it as much as she did. He slowly withdrew and then pushed in again. It was agony and pleasure but ecstasy skated so close to the skirts of pain.

His hands webbed through hers then and he locked her palms against the bed as his lips searched. “God, you taste like my last sip of heaven.”

And that’s when Almonzo stopped the one-on-one, lust-filled journey.

Nodding to Darian, Richart slapped her hip and then helped her on her side. “Be gentle with her Darian. Stretch her for us.”

Darian’s lips curved in a smile. “Gentle?” His eyes closed as his mouth began to work down her belly. “This woman likes it rough, or have you two brutes failed to notice?”

Almonzo ignored him. The tip of his dick glistened with his excitement and he pressed his cock against her swollen lips. "Take me, sweetheart. Open wide for me."

Darian grabbed her hips and rolled her on top of him, penetrating her the second she was on top, his fingers kneaded her hips as his cock worked inside the walls of her pussy. "So help me, I'll come until you leave me." His hot breath delivered whispers against her chest as he latched onto her nipple.

Darian didn't necessarily exaggerate because by the time Almonzo's cock was stroking the inside of her mouth, Richart had his cock grinding against her ass and beads of sweat were dripping over Darian's brow as he fucked her pussy. For twenty-five lust-filled minutes, the cocks and wills of men kept her moaning and groaning against each of them.

Almonzo backed his cock up against the opening of her throat and she sucked him in. God help her, she wanted the others to leave right then and just give her a moment to dine on the best-tasting man alive. She locked herself into his gaze as Darian continued to stroke her vagina with slow, precise moves and Richart was meeting his first release.

His hands clamped down on her hips as his body tripped beyond the realms of pleasure. He scraped past her barriers and he pushed for the pain as his cock delivered one true thump after another inside her ass. When he was spent, he moved away from her and stroked her butt with a caring hand but Darian already had in mind becoming a runaway dick and he immediately moved with her.

Her legs draped around his waist as Darian balanced her body with both of his palms, cupping her ass. He somehow managed to fuck her pussy harder with a more ruthless, yet desired, penetration. She was completely damp with need and craving him all the more and yet he walked her across the room with her heels at his back.

As they rounded the corner to the bathroom, his fingers went to her ass and he massaged her cheeks as he pressed his lips to hers. "I love you."

She swallowed hard and almost choked on his confession. Loving her on the first date was better than loving her after all of this.

"Darian...no."

"Shh..." His lips came over hers with a bruising reminder. "You've always known it," he whispered into her mouth as he broke the kiss.

His fingers and thumb held her chin and his cock moved in and out of her pussy with the beat of a drum that only sounded off in her chest. His forehead held against hers and he continued to fuck her as he held her against the wall. They both seemed to lock their minds around slowing the movement of time as they lost one another in the eyes of the other.

“Darian.” Her quiet whispers left everything open for translation so she quickly added, “Don’t ruin this now. Take me back to Almonzo and Richart. Be the better man this time. Please be the better man for me.”

His lips came crashing down against hers and he walked back toward the bed where he quickly moved her to the mattress but it wasn’t in his nature to share now. The corrupt way he took her then, roughly and heavenly, had her reaching and begging.

Richart’s cock glistened next to her lips and he asked her to focus on it as he fisted it next to her chin. Focus hell. She sucked him in and enjoyed the rare indulgence of fucking Darian while staying locked in Almonzo’s eyes.

With a pop, she released Richart then as her orgasm began to wait for her with the patience of a runaway train. “Almonzo.” She tried to call for him but Darian gripped her tighter and held her closer. The truth would have to set them both free. He rocked with her and her body drank him in before releasing—yes, giving in—to the pleasure provided by the most available source. “No, Darian.” She called his name with agony but the release of her pleasure dripped around his cock and he braced her against him.

With her head turned toward the side, she almost bit Richart as she sucked in his cock swelling and beckoning her. She welcomed him because if his dick wasn’t filling her mouth now, she would’ve shouted the name of the one who truly sated her right then.

Darian screamed out her name, his gaze lingering on her. “Oh baby, that tight little snatch is such a fit. Hmmm, yeah.” He continued to push in and out of her pussy and Tabitha shook from the orgasm.

She kept Richart in her mouth and with a gasping swallow, it only took a few deep indulgences for Richart to moan with his quick pleasure. His spray of cum left a salty taste along her tongue before he slumped down to the bed behind them.

“Almonzo, your woman needed three of us. You’ll never keep up.” Richart closed his eyes and another man’s shut tightly too. Only, it was totally unexpected and for an entirely different reason.

Darian’s lips slammed against hers and a wicked smile curved them upward. “You were the best I’ve ever had.”

“Don’t forget it.” She teased back and everyone present seemed to allow for spicy rich conversation.

“She’s one of the few that can keep up with me,” Richart added.

Darian’s lips covered hers again and this time with a promise spoken and full of an unwarranted commitment. “I will always be ready for you. I will always care for you. I have always loved you.” His strokes inside her pussy were more complete now as he deliberately threaded himself into her with a slower beat. Before he completely pulled out, he kissed her tenderly once more and allowed her to know, he was capable of love.

After an uncomfortable silence, Tabitha eased her way over to Almonzo. His hand brushed her bangs away from her eyes. “Are you ready, love?”

She felt compelled to make them all wait, allow her time to adjust to the ravenous feast of the most carnal of meals but she was too excited to stomp on the breaks.

The orders were clear and positioning decided before the ceremony began. Each participant understood their place. Darian stretched out on the bed and pulled her to him. She straddled him as if she’d done it a thousand times before and she found a comfortable slant. His gawking was obvious as he focused only on her chest and his mouth watered. “I’ll always crave those beauties,” he growled.

“Darian...”

She hoped he wouldn’t look at her with the love he’d only just professed but it didn’t stop him from watching her. His eyes drifted down to her pussy and his tongue licked at the corner of his mouth. Then, before she realized what he had in mind, he rolled over her and lashed into her with a sudden need to fuck her solo once more.

It was allowed for only a minute before Richart moved in behind her. His tongue licked over her flesh in search of the vein he would take and bleed. One held his eye because she saw the alarming focus and the way he ran his fingertips over it. She now felt him there.

“Oh God!” She screamed out and Almonzo’s head immediately snapped as he stared at his cousin. His intrusion was obvious and Tabitha only had a slight warning. His finger dipped with a cool trace of lubricant and his cock then sank into her ass with a driving, perverse and hell yes—a dangerous purpose. And nothing of the flesh ever felt better. Darian pumped his cock into her pussy while Richart fucked her ass like it might be his last.

“I can’t hold still. I’m going to come right now!” She was ready to come and ready to fall apart and both men reluctantly pulled out and waited.

“What the hell?” She was breathless. She didn’t understand but as Almonzo hurriedly found his place, she soon fully saw the importance. This particular moment wasn’t left as a ‘to each his own’ pleasure. This was a joint union and apparently, togetherness was everything.

Almonzo glared at his cousin before he positioned himself at Tabitha’s head. His cock was at her mouth and she greedily consumed him then as Darian’s wickedness truly came alive when he worked his way inside her legs again.

“That’s it sweet, Tabitha.” Almonzo’s hands knotted in her hair. “Stay with me.” He requested devotion and yes, he deserved it but not now, not yet.

Richart moved his thick cock in and out of her ass and her rear walls clenched in pain and need. “Damn boys, I got the best view in the house.” His hand slapped across her ass and he pinched her butt cheek. It was meant as a distraction but it only inspired. She felt the slap but rode the heat.

She sucked in Almonzo, clenched her ass tighter for Richart and she wrapped her arms around Darian. “I’m coming,” she whispered.

Darian’s fingers brushed over her nipples as his strokes began to beat into her with a profound thumping sound rocking the bed. His forceful movements guaranteed he was taking her deep. “That’s it, Tabitha. Now, you have the power of all men, inside of you...now you can take the control.”

“No...losing...control.” Her hips arched again. Richart’s hand came down hard on her ass, Darian squeezed a nipple in between his lips and she sucked Almonzo down her throat as her fingertips played with his balls. Richart fucked her until his fangs dropped and his hands settled at her waist before he drove into her ass with an alarming amount of short thrusts.

“Move against me, baby,” he whispered into her ear with a hot, hellish breath. He wanted to snap against her delicate pale skin. Right as she realized it, her orgasm whipped through her body and Tabitha bucked back against him wildly and his mouth latched at her neck.

Almonzo’s eyes were in full lavender color as he screamed out his sudden release. His hand wrapped her wrist as he placed her palm upon his chest but he wasn’t gentle now, he was driven. “Take it all, Tabitha. Right now!” He pressed into her mouth faster and pulled her hair with an agonizing grip as he helped her bob up and down with his full dick bulging against her throat and now coming with his release.

Darian smiled. “That’s it sweet honey, that’s it. Give a vampire his due.” His hands carefully lingered over her chest as he gently covered her with a caring man’s touch, something she never expected. With two or three more deliberate and hard thrusts, Richart’s teeth connected as Almonzo’s spill completely filled her mouth.

Tabitha was in heat, not as before but with a hot building desire that she realized was part of the plan. She felt the spicy new rich flavor of Almonzo’s release rush down her throat as Richart’s hot cum spilled down her leg. Her throat was hot as the ripe blood spilled from her neck and Darian, once he saw it, was out of control.

He was forbidden to sip her finest nectar and he wanted it now, oh she saw how he hungered for it. She was leaving him vulnerable and she watched as his eyes changed into a multitude of colors so she tried harder and fed him more with her body than she was permitted to give him in blood.

“Darian. Take me,” she whispered to him as Almonzo withdrew from her lips. “I want you to have all of ...”

Almonzo shivered and he pushed himself away from her before he pulled her back for an earth-shattering deep-throated kiss. It ended with a simple warning. “He has enough of your blood. If he takes more, the elders will dispose of him.”

Tabitha understood and was reminded in an instant of everything they’d all done to ensure Darian wasn’t the secondary life mate for her. She tried to focus on other things now and it was relatively easy once Richart finished dining on her delicate veins. His strokes inside her ass began to slow and as he withdrew, Darian rolled on top of Tabitha and bent her knee to her chest

then. He glared at the incision made by another vampire and he fucked her pussy as if with a deliberate goal. And no one seemed to mind.

“I want to be forever embedded in your soul.” He kissed her as they met another climax and then he left her there among the Spensers as he strode across the floor with a pace to assure them he was leaving. When the door slammed, it was a sign, he had now left her willingly behind.

Chapter 17

A few days later, the three men stood on the balcony overlooking the lawn. Constance played beneath them in the courtyard. Hanging upside down from a large branch, she called to her brothers, “Look! Look at me! I’m waiting to turn into a bat!”

Orlando’s light humor immediately reappeared. “A bat? I don’t see your wings.”

Almonzo’s sour mood didn’t last long once his sister gained his attention and he quickly joined in and teased her. “You may not see her wings yet but look at her transformation. Hurry, look! Her feet are turning now. Look at her toes—they’re turning into claws!”

Samuel and Orlando joined in with laughter as they watched the little girl twist herself up and over the branch. She immediately fell to the ground and looked at her bare feet before staring up at them. “You’re not funny, Almonzo!”

“I think I am.” He sipped his drink and peered down at her. “By the way, bat, I mean brat, where are you going to fly first when you spread your wings?”

Constance’s little mouth formed a pout. “I’m going to fly off to Las Vegas and leave you all behind. I don’t want to be the one left behind anymore when you go to the States. Once I become a bat, I’ll fly wherever I want.”

Samuel’s grin widened. “Darling child, you’ll wait for eternity if you are waiting to sprout wings.” He then took a sip of his own nightcap and looked at his sons. “Of course, if she never sees Las Vegas I won’t be disappointed or feel sorry for her.”

They knew as much. Orlando started to speak. He was interrupted when Tate rushed onto the balcony with a breathless, “It’s positive.”

Orlando slapped his brother’s back. “Well, congratulations.”

Samuel beamed. “Well, I’ll be damned.” He slapped Almonzo hard on the back too.

Almonzo looked from his father to his brother. “What are you talking about?”

“You’re going to be a father.” Orlando slapped him again, this time a little softer as he grabbed him around the neck in a choke hold. “You handsome devil, you. I guess you work fast!”

At first, what they were saying didn’t sink in. “I’m what?”

Nodding with adamant approval, Samuel Spenser grinned from one ear to the other. “Your brother has been searching this compound for days looking for strange blood, sensing another being here. Only, it wasn’t really the blood of another. Then Constance came in four different times this week and asked if we had company.”

Almonzo stared back at them. “Are you serious? I’m going to be a father?”

Tate nodded. “The test came back proof positive.”

“Does she know?”

“Not yet. Your father thought you might...”

Before Tate finished or anyone else said another word, Almonzo broke out into a sprint across the front of the house. He ran hard to the opposite end of the balcony and began to beat on his own patio doors. He stared back at his family and then shook his head. “I’m going to be a father!” His face beamed and lit up the night with a true glow.

They laughed with him and the enthusiasm rang throughout the night air. Yes, the atmosphere suddenly changed and with it came the dawn of a new day—one where only a new life brought forward such adamant enthusiasm.

* * * *

Tabitha peered outside. She smiled weakly when she saw him. As soon as she must have noticed how happy he looked, she opened the door with a little more excitement and he watched her mouth turn up more. “Well, look at ...”

She stopped talking and her eyes narrowed. He stalked her. Damn right, he did. He wrapped his arms around her tiny waist and kicked the door shut. He moved into her with intent. Hell, yeah, he had it and he had plenty of it.

“What’s this? Did Tate put something in your drink?” She giggled as she backed away from him.

“No. He didn’t need to put something in my drink.” His lips moved over hers lightly, ever so slowly.

“I love you, Tabitha. I’ll love you for a thousand years.” He moved her over to the bed and pushed her against the soft sheets, coming down on top of her as they moved. His palms supported him as he kissed her deeply. He kissed away the separation and the uncertainty. He kissed away the secrets threatening to tear them apart. And he kissed her completely because he wanted to be sure she felt him in her heart, mind and soul.

Her arms wrapped easily around his neck as she accepted his adoration with nearly matched passion. He didn’t know how in the hell he could take her easily when all he wanted to do was feel her absolutely surround him. He wanted her more now than he’d wanted her the first time, or the second.

His hands unlaced her nightgown. Silk touched his face as he slid down over her breasts to lay his cheek on her belly. Her hands stroked his hair.

“Almonzo, are you all right?” She must have sensed something was different about him because her easy strokes seemed tortured, careful. Then again, they would be after she’d kept so many devastating secrets.

He rose up and towered over her again. With all the strength he could find, he moved away and when he rolled over, he propped himself up against the headboard.

Watching her came easy even with the hurt he’d felt earlier. Now, it simply just didn’t exist. Damnation, only perfection described Tabitha. She defined it.

“Are you all right?” she asked again.

“I’m perfect. You’re perfect.”

“You’re arrogant, at best.” She giggled as she snuggled closer.

His hands captured her wrists. “I’m haughty as hell and we’re going to have a compound full of rugrats just like me.”

She laughed at the picture he painted. “You think so, do you?”

He rubbed his hand firmly across her belly and lowered his lips to her mouth again. “I think so.”

“Well, then, if you want to start filling up the bedrooms around here with children, then you’re going to have to spend more time in bed.”

He chuckled. The sound came out hungry. Damn, he had it bad for her. His lips sank into her velvety mouth with ease and then he cupped her face before pulling back. “I don’t have a problem staying in your arms. I want children—as many as you want to give me.”

Her eyes locked on his and then she seemed to focus on his mouth. “That’s right, baby. Watch my lips move.” She glanced up at his eyes. “No, I don’t want your eyes on mine. I want you to see me say it.” He felt her shiver beneath his touch. “We are pregnant.” He said the words slowly again. “We are pregnant.”

“Don’t tease me, Almonzo.” She slapped him playfully on the chest.

“I’m not teasing you. You are pregnant *with my child*.” His hand ran over her stomach again.

Her baby blue eyes settled on his. “You’re sure?” Her voice broke and then regained some strength. “You’re sure about this? Really? When? How do you know? How did this happen?”

His joy matched hers and they both laughed. She straddled him as she questioned him more, with many of the same questions as before. “When did you find out? How did you find out? You’re really sure?”

Almonzo nuzzled her forehead with his own. “Oh yes, baby. I am *positive*.”

“Tell me. Tell me again!” She kissed his face entirely. Covering his lips, his cheeks, his eyes, she damn near smothered him with moist, sweet and sensual kisses.

His chest swelled with pride as he stopped her. “Well, let’s see. Orlando’s sixth sense kicked in, Constance kept telling Mother someone else was here, Mother thought you looked pale hours before the...the ceremony and Father asked Tate to run the tests and you did the rest.” He bit his lower lip, dipped in for another kiss and quickly added, “Well, I had a little something to do with it, I’m sure.”

Her eyes danced, sparkled really, with the news delivered. “And you’re not kidding me, Almonzo? You’re sure I’m pregnant?”

“I’m sure, baby.” His cock moved against her. “Damn sure.” He began to lavish her again with more mouth to mouth praise.

* * * *

Tabitha finally pushed him away. Her arms were casually around his waist and she hugged him tightly as her cheek rested against his belly. His hand moved over her hair gently and without any demands. Sure, his cock waited. His lust existed. The gift of a pending birth also brought an extension of fear. One more Spenser would need protection.

Tabitha cursed herself and began to mentally cane her own backside.

“Let me have your mouth again.” He tried to draw her to him but she resisted.

“You want my mouth?” She looked directly at his well-covered cock. “Come and get it.”

He shifted his weight with a hungry growl. “Damn, I thought you weren’t going to ask.”

She moved over slightly and allowed him just enough room to slide out of his pants. She moved to the bottom of the bed and helped him remove his socks and shoes while his arms crossed and muscles strained to find the freedom desired.

“You are...” She couldn’t think of the right masculine word so she just told him the first thing she thought. “Almonzo, you are a beautiful man.”

His wicked laugh held more meaning than she even hoped to translate. “I’ve never been called beautiful.” His black eyes followed her as she walked around the room. She lit a few candles on the dresser before she returned to the bed. “Sit up.” She made demands and he honored them with fervor. His legs moved to the side of the bed and fell open for her.

She sat down on the floor in front of him and he tossed a pillow there for her. A gentle smile curved her mouth. “Want me to get comfortable and stay awhile, huh?”

“I’m hoping you’ll like it down there.” His eyes danced and by God, his cock didn’t remain still either because she saw the twitch.

Before she touched him with her hands, her eyes fed on him in a feast meant to only fuel his hunger. She slowly licked her lips. Around the entire shape, she made sure he witnessed her need. Her palms fell to the mattress, one on each side of his hips and she pushed herself to her feet.

She released the first strap of her nightgown before she freed the other. Her lavender lace-cupped halter chemise fell over her hips and just as the

silky material fell to her ankles, he held out his hand. She stepped away from the gown and wrapped her arms around him. He moved his mouth immediately to her neck. "You are in trouble. All night long I'm going to love you. We'll sleep the day away. Tonight, you belong to me and me alone."

"Promises, promises," she teased.

"By the time I finish with you, I think you'll look back on my words as a true threat."

She shook intentionally. "Oh, you may be a rogue to those who fear you but you don't scare me."

His eyes shaded with desire and he looked up at her with pure lust. "I don't scare the hell out of you?"

"Not one bit." She dropped to her knees again and began to kiss his knee. She squeezed his other thigh as her lips trailed up his thick leg. Over muscle tone and flesh, she searched. She moved higher and lower over a leg she fully intended to devour before she finally drove him to what she wanted him to consider a newfound madness.

Her lips eased along his leg. Down his calf, she worked her mouth using a calculated procedure. Damn right, she wanted him to ache for her touch. Hot, hands touched her nipples. Tweaking them, the man earned an A for effort. He needed more than a persistent drive if he wanted her mouth around him. No, she wasn't ready yet. She wanted to work him into an element of true necessity and give him cause and reason to define it with passion.

His forefinger and thumb rolled her nipples one way and then gently reversed the maneuver. He tugged enough to deliver a twinge of pain into her pleasure. "You know what I want, baby."

"You can want anything. You can't have everything." She moved to his other thigh where her mouth outright kissed over inches of flesh. Her hand trailed in a sensual time to rub in the affection. Parting lips never left his leg. Up higher, she kissed. Down lower, her tongue swiped.

"Holy sweet mercy." His legs splayed open and his back stayed against the bed. When he shifted his weight, he leaned almost out of her reach. She moved up to the mattress and positioned her mouth over the tip of his dick. She saw the precum and instantly dripped with her own desire.

Her tongue licked away the slight glistening moisture before she began to inch her way closer to a hearty kiss of appreciation. Her lips outlined a trail of love from his stomach to his neck. When she found the kiss she wanted, when she stole the one she needed, she went back to where she knew bliss waited and she fully delivered it right back.

Chapter 18

“Damn, woman!”

His hips rose off the bed as he fought to gain the upper hand. He wanted to fuck her. Damn if he didn’t need to screw her silly. He told her once. Maybe she forgot. Memory loss possibly went hand in hand with pregnancy.

“No, damn it! Come here.” He gently tugged her upper arms. She didn’t give an inch.

Defiantly, with pure immoral purpose, she shook her head. Moans came easily and his own matched hers a few times. He tried to restrain himself. He fought a losing battle. He wanted to hold back but then she would swipe her sinful little tongue against his throbbing veins and suck only deeper. She nearly swallowed him whole.

He needed to...he wanted to... just fuck her. “Sweet, sweet woman. I can’t hold it.” She had him tight enough to squeeze every drop from his cock and he’d love to give her every last sip.

His hands gripped her head harder then and he drove his dick into her hot little mouth. Sweet mercy she felt fucking incredible. Hot lips held on and fiery velvet enveloped him. She sucked. Hell, yeah, she damn sure knew how to get exactly what she wanted.

His cum sprayed down her throat and she seemed to moan, sip, drink and beg for more. She gripped him with a hold even her tight little pussy couldn’t match, not with his cock drifting, hell, swelling to massive proportions.

“Incredible.” His hips moved faster. “You’re fucking unbeatable.” He didn’t want to hurt her and he damn sure didn’t want to turn her off of giving head but he had to go with the pressure. He had to release it. “Take me with your pretty little mouth, baby. That’s it. Take it all.” His hips slowed and just when he thought he was finished—hell no, she came back for more and he had it to give. Just a few strokes more.

“Baby, swallow. That’s it. Take it. Please me. Damn you for stealing my soul.” When he moved one final time, he waited. There, at the back of her throat, she seemed to suck him soft and then encouraged him to harden right back to perfection. The way she needed him... and always hoped to find him.

He pushed away from her and she looked up with a smile. “Stealing your soul?” She shuddered and then laughed. “As if you have one I can snatch.”

“Snatch?” His carnal growl told her she was only giving him more ideas.

She stretched her arms above her head and he playfully bit her nipple.

“I hope you’re ready to fuck me.” She moved closer as he slid his tongue between her lips and teeth.

“You know it.” And as much as he wanted her sweet little pussy over his ready lips, he had a need much stronger than he cared to describe. He needed to be inside her and he’d move heaven and earth to get there.

She looked exhausted. He didn’t care. His hand moved to her pussy just to be sure she had the desire and hell, yeah, she clenched his fingers with plenty of it. And he knew how to cure her aches and pains. He throbbed with some of his own and he had a remedy he couldn’t wait to show her.

He mounted her in the missionary position. “Moist and tight.” Forming sentences only wasted time. He just needed to fuck. He stroked inside her once and then cursed himself. “Damn, I can’t...” He looked down at her and then reached over to the bedside table. He pulled out something like handcuffs.

“Fuck you,” she said, her eyes dancing with amusement. “You’re not going to cuff me after I gave you an awesome blow job.”

“Sassy mouth.” He grinned, kissed her hard and then slapped a cuff on one of her ankles before he moved a strap over his back and caught the other one in a matching clasp. “How’s that?”

Her arms draped around his shoulders as her legs circled around his back. “Why didn’t you tell me you just wanted to make my life easy?” Her eyes danced.

“I want you in position,” he growled before his head lowered to her nipple and he took the little nub between his teeth, right as her pussy slid over his cock and made a grinding effort to stimulate a move.

“My tight woman, ah Tabitha...you’re so fucking tight.” His hips moved slowly into her. His thighs didn’t just bunch, they fucking knotted from the knees up. He reached behind him and moved the belt up higher on his back. When he did, her legs moved with him and he had her, damn did he have her right where she wanted to be and it didn’t take her long to realize the spot he intended to claim.

“You feel so good, Almonzo. So good.” Her eyes closed and she began her trip into sexual bliss. She could have it but the journey would be a solo one because, damn it all, he wanted to be as perverted as she would allow. He wanted to watch and he wanted to talk her through it.

He pressed his hand down on the pillow beside her head. “That’s it, baby, come for me.”

Her head moved from side to side, enjoying his dick stroking her. A moan took her and then a gasp.

He moved his hips into her and her cries let him know he watched her unravel around him. He wasn’t there yet and he resisted it until she finished. He wanted to witness her face twist into pleasure. “That’s it, Tabitha. Fuck me. Move closer. Now, don’t move at all.” In and out he slid into her hot heat. “Feel me, baby. Feel this.” Harder, he worked his way into her and still he thought he could go just a few inches more.

“Let your body just have me. Take it all.” He wanted her to ripple around him, with his cock driving into her all the more. He watched the beads of sweat form over her brow. He’d let her drift with her eyes closed as he took her to the brink but now it was time to take her over. He knew where to find her G-spot. He let her feel him there just for a moment when he slid into place. Now, he’d let her ride out an orgasm with his tip hitting it with every stroke.

“Open your eyes.” He pulled out, almost completely.

“I can’t, damn you.”

He bent down over her. One palm slightly above her head and the other tilting her chin, he kissed all the fervor he felt straight into her dangerous little mouth. “Now, open your eyes. Let me touch your heart. I want and need it.”

Compliance proved difficult and defiance flushed her skin.

“My little hellion.” He set the pace for them again and didn’t miss a beat. Not once did the tempo change, though her hands gripped his ass with

the intent to change it several times. He went for her spot and when he found it, took full advantage of the control it gave him.

“Almonzo!”

“I’m here, baby. See me. Feel me. I’m here.” His pace didn’t change but her voice did and each time, it soared one octave higher.

* * * *

“There.” He kissed her lightly before he withdrew from her completely.

“You didn’t?” She questioned him with a brow, showing a little bit of her discomfort.

“I did enough when your hot little mouth possessed the best of me.”

She climbed over him and peered down at him. “The best of you, huh?”

“Damn right.” He closed his eyes and his smile of satisfaction told quite a tale. He thought his husbandly duties were complete.

She snickered. “We’ll see what else you’ve got.” Her pussy slid over his belly, grinding against him and leaving his cock as ready as if the true fucking didn’t sate enough. He could come. He could’ve come several times when he felt her body wrack with more and more pleasure. He resisted. He resisted because he needed her blood the next time he came and he was afraid to take it. He didn’t want to greedily feast on what their baby needed.

“I know what you need.” Her eyes told him she understood and when his dick slid into place, the one place he felt certain she liked to have him, he didn’t doubt he’d come.

Her little neck twisted over and then moved right under his lips. “Smell it. Taste it. Take it.”

“Fuck.” His hips rose and fell against the mattress. Her delicious offer had him begging for it. Her tight pussy pressing into him pulsed with him. Need shook him quickly and, damn it all, he wanted to resist but she drew out his teeth. She tempted the bite.

“Hell, yeah, I want you to fuck and I want it hard.” She moved faster. Her hair draped over her shoulders and she sat taller and took her own breasts in her hands, taunting him as she played with her nipples.

His mouth watered. “Come here. Now.”

“No. Watch. Look.” She moved over him. Up and back she glided and then she added one final word. “Wait.”

“No way in hell.” He moved up and grabbed her neck. He stared into her heavy eyes, moving into her with a cock weighted down with the pleasure she allowed him. Ah yeah, he felt her. His forehead met hers and they both watched the in-and-out moves of pure sex.

He savored her scent and, God, he smelled her. The blood she promised all but scented the air. His nostrils flared.

“That’s it, baby,” she coaxed. Her head went back and to the side and her wicked grin banished him from a long, slow ride. They’d enjoyed one already. She wanted more and with her desire she needed him to carry her to another world. The one he created for them.

Her pussy clenched and he marveled at how easily the woman came, his woman came whenever he called.

“Harder, Almonzo. Give me all of it.” Her little fingers twisted her nipples and then fell into a smooth rotation. Her hips moved in a circular rhythm and her head dropped all the way back. “Come and get it. Please don’t make me beg.”

Her pussy drenched him. She fell wet with desire as soon as he raised his back slightly up from the mattress. “Don’t beg. Just give.” His teeth scraped over her lips as the words fell into her open mouth. He scraped by her cheek and chin and then he found their place. He bit down, just a nip. He wanted to sink. Hells fury, he fought it.

“Bite down, damn it!” Her orgasm took her and what man defies his woman’s needs? Not him. He couldn’t. He wanted to feed on her blood and she wanted to share it. Damn if he didn’t love her for her generosity. Her hot little body took from his cock but her divine little neck fed his heart and soul.

The earth seemed to move and if it didn’t, he didn’t care because he felt something shake when his orgasm met hers. Maybe the animosity, the elements of division, left them exhausted but the ruination of man and even that of a vampire seemed worth its weight in sexual satisfaction if it meant having a woman’s love. He had it. Tabitha willingly gave it. She just never bothered to translate it as such.

Chapter 19

“Well, if it isn’t the proud Papa,” Orlando teased as he watched his brother walk across the room.

“Jealous?”

“Hell, no. I don’t want kids yet. I’m still one myself.” Orlando hit the nail on the head there. He’d been more carefree than the older twin and didn’t manage well with added responsibilities. Natasha kept him on his toes and beyond her, Almonzo wondered if his double needed anything more. The woman defined pure trouble.

Orlando rubbed his chin for a second. “If you don’t mind my saying so, brother, you look like you’ve been rode hard and put up wet.”

Almonzo stared at the doorway and Orlando immediately turned to face it. Both brothers knew she stood on the other side.

“Tabitha?”

She peered around the opening. “Did you call for me?” She playfully batted her eyes.

“You know it, baby.”

Orlando rubbed the back of his neck. “Hell, go on. I’ll tell Father you were horny.” He laughed.

Almonzo didn’t hear him. He only focused on Tabitha. She watched him approach and then just fell in his arms when he met her at the door.

“Damn, you two have it almost as bad as Natasha has it for me.” Orlando snickered as he watched the couple fight to gain some measure of composure until they found some privacy.

Almonzo’s arms draped around Tabitha’s waist and he looked over his shoulder at his brother. “I think what you meant to say is almost as bad as you have it for your wife. Where is she anyway?”

Orlando shrugged. "She can't go shopping with Mother so they're online shopping for baby items or something. Mother is going to make sure your child comes into the world sipping on a golden bottle."

Almonzo's hands rubbed over Tabitha's stomach. "I can hardly wait to see him."

Tabitha shot Orlando a glance before she whispered into Almonzo's ear. She then turned back to Orlando with a simple request, "Tell your Father I needed to steal away my husband for a minute."

"You better hurry. My brother looks needy and I can promise you Father will not understand." He quickly added. "Then again, he's not the one who saw your ass chained up as naked as the day you were born, so I can feel my brother's pain. I have one like you sleeping in my bed after all."

Tabitha and Almonzo both shot him a glare.

"You'll pay for that one," Almonzo warned. "She'll make damn sure of it."

Tabitha's hand cupped over Almonzo's ear and he picked her up as she began to make all sorts of naughty little promises. Laughter rang out as they began to rush down the corridors of the compound. They were halted when they ran smack-dab into Tate and Samuel, whose expressions were enough to stop any kind of foreplay.

"Good evening, Father." Almonzo tried to avoid seeing it but he noticed the anxiety in the other men's expressions. Tate never showed his concern unless there happened to be cause for a lot of it.

"Tabitha, how are you feeling?" Samuel looked at her with an easy note of appreciation.

"I'm good." She reached for the patriarch and he moved closer so she could kiss his cheek.

Almonzo immediately felt warmth flood him. Tabitha had so many child-like qualities and it only projected further innocence. Sometimes he wondered if he should feel guilty for the way he loved her. She still had so much of her youth, so much playful vitality for a woman in her early twenties.

Samuel's knowing eyes drifted over them. "Sorry, son, this cannot wait."

He nodded. He didn't really have to be told. Damn it all. He hated business. "I'll be right there."

As he started to move by them, his father added, "This is important."

"Give me five minutes."

Tabitha's eyes widened as soon as they barreled through the bedroom door.

"When you're done, I'll be right here waiting," She promised after her feet hit the ground.

Almonzo pushed the door to and locked it. "I need an hour. I'll take a minute." His mouth needed to meet hers. His body needed to fill her with an easy reminder of their love. And, damn it all, after seeing his father's expression he knew trouble loomed and he wanted to hear her tell him she loved him—now.

She backed away from him. "You're acting like a mate in heat."

"No, I'm behaving like a man in love." Slowly, he walked toward her. He stepped out of his slacks after kicking off his shoes. By the time he reached her, he wore nothing but a hard on.

He should've told her, *And you look like a woman in love*. He didn't want to push her there, though. He wanted to fuck her there. If he had to demand it then he would make her say it when she meant it most.

"Come here. Father won't give me ten minutes. I promise." He reached for her. She pulled him back to her. He quickly pinned her up against the wall. His eyes tore into her. Knowingly, his lips met her skin. His hands moved over her hips as two palms massaged sensually through his scalp.

Quickly, he worked her short skirt up over her slender hips. "Oh God," he said.

"Thought you might appreciate the access—" She didn't even have the entire word pronounced before he stamped his genuine approval straight into her pussy. "Hot fire. Damn you for keeping it silky warm for me. I'm sorry, baby, no foreplay. No time." He growled as his teeth tempted her flesh.

"You need me. Take me." She moved her hips easily up as his hands held onto her thighs and guided her up around his waist.

Moving into her, the way he fucked her up against the wall should've been forbidden. A woman carrying a man's child shouldn't have allowed him to fuck her without one inch of self control but she only supported his endeavors by responding in much the same way.

“Almonzo! Harder! I need more of you!” Her lips searched and nibbled his flesh. Her mouth went to his ear.

“That’s it, baby. I have to hear you. I want to hear you say it.” He poured himself into her with pounding sensations meant to tear down walls, interior and exterior. The one supporting them could crumble. He needed to hear her scream his name and profess her love.

Her head tilted to the side. His hands clasped behind her. Damn her ass. He couldn’t wait to fuck it too. Oh but he became such a beast when he sank inside her pussy. He wanted to know what it felt like to just feel her tighten around him in every way possible. “Say it now.”

“Almonzo!”

“Damn you, Tabitha! I love you. Tell me you love me! Tell me.” His hips slowed and when his thighs bunched, his knees gave a little. When he moved back up with them, his back straightened and he fucked new life and new meaning into her little body.

Teeth dropped then. Hot fluid poured out of him as her body accepted his climax and he took that nick he wanted. He bit. Damnation, he bit hard and she still wouldn’t say the word. In and out, his cock pumped. She toyed with him. She played him like a fine-tuned instrument. “Tell me!” Anger nearly joined them as passion played on.

“Fuck me.”

“Love me!” His hips moved closer. He never realized he could get so close to her. His cum spilled into a warm pool of true acceptance. Her orgasm wouldn’t find her but her love did.

“I already do, Almonzo. I already have and I already do.” Her head tilted back and he closed his eyes as his forehead met hers.

Ripple against ripple, his climax continued. She admitted love. Saying it proved hard for his little vixen but admitting it, hearing her confess it, even if he coaxed her for it, carried him through more emotions than his cock reacted against. When he left her, his spent manhood slid out of her and instantly returned to some measure of normalcy. Unfortunately, yes, normal now meant a sizeable hard-on raging with only more desire.

* * * *

Almonzo quickly showered and left his wife sleeping on their bed. He met his father, Tate and Orlando in the family office. By the time he arrived, Samuel's rage was apparent as he spoke into the phone.

He'd used his influence to call a meeting with the elders. He'd leave for Spain quickly and meet near the main Sabbath compound. The elders expected to meet with him alone. Almonzo immediately decided his sire shouldn't be the one to go.

"Father, I don't think it is a good idea."

Samuel Spenser slammed down the phone in mid-conversation. Whoever was on the other end would call back. "Son, I've been the head of this family for decades. I don't need you or your light-hearted brother telling me how to run my home now."

Orlando glanced up at Almonzo. His expression said more than words.

"Father, I don't like this at all," Almonzo argued. "Besides, we're talking about Tabitha's blood. I would think if anyone would know how to test for the appropriate plasma and content, it would be me." Almonzo's sharp business tactics were evident and his tone drastically changed, which gave his father an immediate heads-up.

Samuel's jaw set and fury flashed in his eyes. Without significant warning, it moved across his face. "Son, I am only going to make this mild observation because walking around with a hard-on, as I'm sure you know, doesn't put things into perspective for you. My problem isn't with you handling business right now. I have enough faith in you. My immediate concern happens to be the welfare of your woman and the fact that it is quite noticeable she places you at an extreme disadvantage."

Orlando's snort of laughter fell on deaf ears because Almonzo evidently had chosen to ignore his father or to simply concentrate on business. "Father, I'm going."

"The hell you are!" The strength of time weighed in on the decision and the clatter and clank of glasses let the boys know who still remained in charge of the family.

As if sensing something was terribly wrong, Orlando turned and started running for the door, shouting, "Almonzo, quick! It's Tabitha!"

Five, maybe six steps out into the hallway, they found her listless body crumpled on the floor. Almonzo knelt down beside of her. "Tabitha? Darling, can you hear me?"

Samuel and Tate rushed to them, Samuel told Orlando, “Find Marion and Natasha. It’s not going to be good.”

Almonzo, sprinted toward their room with Tabitha’s limp form cradled in his arms. “The hell you say. She’s going to be okay because you are going to go find her some help now!”

Chapter 20

“She’ll be fine and dandy. That is, if you keep her hydrated.”

The country doctor they snatched from the airport looked like he had the very baby he now confirmed as being safe. He obviously didn’t know a lot of vampires.

Tabitha smiled sweetly. “Thank you, doctor.”

“You’re most welcome.” His eyes drifted over to the three men standing near the door.

“Ummm...if you don’t mind, I’d really like to try and catch the red-eye back to the States.”

Tate nodded. “I’ll take him back where I found him.”

Almonzo reached out and vigorously shook their unwilling physician’s hand. “Doctor, thank you very much. You don’t know how much I appreciate your help. If I can ever do anything at all to repay you, please, just let me know.”

The doctor’s eyes narrowed and he set his jaw when he replied. “I must ask you to never threaten me again if we meet on a crowded street and I would also like to ask you to let these women return to their homes.” He looked over at Natasha standing near the bathroom and then back at Tabitha propped up in the bed.

Natasha started to speak. Tabitha surprised the family by taking the lead. “Doctor, I don’t think you understand. My sister and I want to be here. We are loved here and we...” She looked over at Almonzo and her words caught on her tongue or maybe they just didn’t form profoundly enough to roll gently off her tongue. She knew what she wanted to say. She felt the words in her heart but damn it all, she couldn’t say them. Not until she knew she wouldn’t lose him. Not until the whole Darian Sabbat ordeal was laid to rest.

“We love being here, doctor,” Natasha finished her sister’s sentiments and went to stand by Orlando. “If you’ll follow us.” Her hand went out to the doctor as she waved him out of the room. “We’ll see you to the door and provide you with payment for your services.”

She shot a glare at Orlando, who moved his hand to his back pocket to retrieve his wallet. Leaning into him, she giggled when she realized what he planned to do. “You’ll have to go to the pod and pay him in U.S. dollars. I’m sure he can’t take plastic where he stands.” She walked on ahead calling out over her shoulder, “Tabitha, play this motherhood bit to the hilt. Almonzo, if you leave her for a second, I’ll kill you myself.”

Orlando’s eyes danced with his wife’s fiery threat. “See why I love her?” He smacked her playfully on her bottom and then looked back at his brother. “God, I love those wicked little hips.”

Almonzo laughed as he watched them leave. Samuel stood at the doorway and then dismissed Tate before he walked in. “May I?” He signaled Almonzo over to the side and they sat in the sitting area. Tabitha nodded off as the men began discussing business.

Samuel looked at his son with a great deal of pride. “Almonzo, the true measure of a man is never found in his girth or in his true size. It is discovered in the way he loves, the way he treats those who matter most to him.”

“You’ve taught us well, Father. You don’t have to leave me with words of wisdom. You are going to go to the elders and come back with the knowledge that once again, you have served your family well.”

Knowing eyes met. Instincts often destroyed their kind. It could guide them through life or haunt them with death’s call. Even though very few vampires found themselves delivered to a permanent resting place, some did. Often, fate played out a hand no one defied and when it did, vampires accepted it—often much better than mortals.

“I’m counting on you, Almonzo. Hell, your brother still walks around chasing his wife like a newlywed. It’s been long enough for him to stop this nonsense and he hasn’t, so you will carry on the family business in my absence.”

“Nonsense!”

From the bed, Tabitha turned her head on her pillow and watched from beneath hooded eyes the family patriarch who seemed hell-bent on letting

go of his family and the heir who seemed equally determined to save his sire from himself.

"Almonzo, it is written. I feel it in my bones and felt it long before she came here." Samuel nodded toward Tabitha. "I will not achieve immortality and I accept it. Now, son, you do the same."

He brought Almonzo in for a tight embrace and then released him. He started to leave the room but the sound of Tabitha's voice stopped him.

"Almonzo?"

"I'm here, baby." He went to her bedside.

"I want to speak to your father."

Before Almonzo could relay her request, Samuel walked over and sat in the ladder-back chair brought in for the doctor.

Tabitha propped herself up on two pillows and stared at Almonzo. "Alone." Her voice held firm for a weak little dehydrated vixen.

Almonzo nodded and left without a word.

Samuel's gentle smile put Tabitha at ease. Then, her words almost drew tears from a hard man.

"Father," she began, her tone sincere and filled with the knowledge that she loved him as her own flesh and blood. "I want you to know and I need you to understand me..."

He quickly took her hand and tried to stop her. "No, child. You don't have to apologize to me."

"Yes, I do." She felt her chin and mouth quiver. She fought it with determination. She didn't want to weep. Damn her tears for trying to stop her from saying what needed to be said. "I want you to know I didn't give my blood willingly. I haven't told Almonzo everything about this because I knew it would only breed anger. I want *you* to know and someday, I will tell him the whole truth."

At first, Samuel's gathered brow bothered her but in an instant the worry left his expression. "My darling child, my sweet, sweet daughter-in-law, Almonzo knows." He took a deep breath and then released it slowly. "Tabitha, all of the girls Darian Sabbat and his brothers took were put through torture in one form or another. I didn't want him to talk to you about it, but he knows and when you're ready to talk, he'll be ready to listen. He was warned not to push you until you are ready."

Her tears came then. "Will you listen?"

Samuel reluctantly nodded. "When you're ready, I'll listen."

"I'm ready now, then." She dabbed her eyes with a corner of the sheet and began telling her tale of a house of horrors to a man she trusted. Her lips moved over the syllables with gentle caution and a few times she backed up a bit before she allowed herself to speak freely.

She didn't tell much because a lot of what she remembered seemed distorted. She remembered the torture and the pain wasn't something she wanted to relive with her father-in-law but the events leading up to and thereafter exposed Sabbath and his family for criminal acts. "It wasn't Darian who inflicted the true torture of the women but one of his supervisors and I later discovered, he in fact, saved me."

After she touched on the main events, she quickly added what she knew about their labs and their intentions to ruin the undead among them, "In order for the poison to be effective, the blood must be perfectly tainted. I believe, and this is just my opinion, Sabbath may think tainted blood is what will kill those families who take in the virgin brides."

Samuel looked at his daughter-in-law. "Tainted?"

"Yes, after the...the..." it pained her to say it, "torture, he gives the women a choice. They can either give their blood freely and he'll have it drawn using conventional methods or they can choose to be satisfied. Some actually give in to the need he drives them to feel and choose to gratify themselves with sex and, of course, they expect him to feed off of them. He still has their blood drawn through conventional means because if he feeds off of them, he can't save their blood. Of course, you know all of this, I'm sure."

"I didn't realize he tortured the girls with continual sex acts."

She immediately blushed, suspecting the medication the doctor administered now encouraged her to talk about something she'd be well served to save for her husband. She suddenly felt uncomfortable and quickly changed the subject. "I know some of the girls they took, if it would help you, I can supply their first names and a brief description."

"It would help. Thank you." Samuel stood and moved the chair against the wall. "I'm going to let you rest. I'll travel soon. You take care of that little one until you see me again." His gentle smile lingered a little too long and she saw his eyes glisten. Maybe they watered with knowledge. Perhaps love. Either way, she felt the kinder love of a father.

“I hope you know I’d never hurt my family.”

He patted her arm. “I know and you need to realize that you have not damaged us whatsoever...or put us at a risk we can’t handle.”

She slowly closed her eyes but immediately opened them again when she heard him move away. “Father?”

He turned slightly.

“I love you. I really love your family too. I love your son. I love him with all my heart and I will love his children until they want to run away from my love.”

He didn’t really nod. His head just moved slightly forward and his jaw set as a lone tear left the man’s eye. “I never doubted it for a minute.”

Almonzo passed the older man in the doorway. He heard Tabitha profess her love for him and it was enough said, and yet, perhaps, never enough.

* * * *

He watched over her. She felt him while she drifted in and out of sleep. Constance came and went throughout the day and once she woke up to find a baby doll on her pillow. Constance returned an hour later to retrieve it. She felt the baby doll needed to be with its mother—the mother in question, of course, being a girl with coal black eyes and blacker hair who used all twelve years of knowledge to talk to her sister-in-law about motherhood.

Tabitha’s exhaustion encouraged sleep. When she finally woke up for longer than a minute, hunger hit her. She stretched before she opened her eyes. When she looked over at him, she smiled easily again.

“I love you.” Almonzo said it so naturally and yet for her to tell him the same, an inner struggle began.

“I know you do.” She motioned him over to her by extending and retracting her forefinger. “Come here and show me.”

“Are you serious? After the sick-stunt you pulled?” He chuckled as he slid next to her on their king-sized bed.

His hand ran over her stomach and she thought the caress felt heavenly. Closing her eyes, a sigh left her lips. “Promise me when I’m fat and round, you’ll still rub my belly?”

He growled as his lips moved to her middle. "I'll do one better. I'll kiss it every morning and every night and even go in for an inside-out observation."

She smacked him on top of his head. "That's sick."

"Baby, it's *slick*. It is not sick." His hand went between her legs and his palm cupped her warm pussy. "Damn, I hate that you wore panties to bed." His hand immediately moved to her hip and he yanked the string lose. "Thongs never serve a purpose. They only look pretty. You do that better nude."

His hand went to the other side too. *Snap!* The material fell away as if it never existed. "Now, then, what can I do to please you?" The pad of his thumb ran over his own bottom lip before he moved it to hers. Back and forth, he worked toward feeling the complete texture. She bit down playfully and her tongue darted in and out over the nail.

He moaned lightly. "You're the evil one aren't you?"

"I'm trying to learn fast."

"Then practice on me."

Her hand slid down to his cock and wrapped him in a gentle tug. "How about you teach me something new or we experience something new to us?"

Almonzo froze in his own skin. "Really? Like..."

Blue-hot eyes simmered with sexual hunger. "I asked the doctor about all acts of pleasure." She tempted him with a kiss and then rolled over to the nightstand. "I noticed you bought something for me."

She retrieved a package of assorted lubricants from their bedside drawer. "I take it you had good intentions to use these on me?"

"You certainly know how to get a man's attention."

She bit down on her lip and sighed slowly. "I know how to inspire one man's erection. That's not a problem." She moved her palm back around the size of Almonzo's cock. Squeezing him into her palm, she slid with him as he moved gently into her hand, enjoying her soothing hand job.

"Are you going to let me do what I think you're going to let me do?"

"I don't see why not. Something tells me you've waited a long time to fuck my ass." She laughed as soon as the proclamation fell from her lips.

"Baby, if you really knew when I first thought about it, I'd be in a lot of trouble." He moved over her and just her words hardened him to another

stiff size. One that would not diminish easily now with promises handed over as a true gift.

“You’ll have to swear you’ll be gentle.”

“I’ll be gentle but never a gentleman when you’re in my bed.” A hungry growl left his lips as he lowered his voice. “I promise if I’m not it’s only because you beg me to take you hard.” His hands dropped to her cami, working it up high over her head.

Instantly, his mouth went to her nipple. He rolled the little nub with his tongue and then bit down to play with it between his teeth. He sucked it in and blew imaginary circles around it before he simply devoured her with a need he wanted to find fulfilled soon.

Her hands fell into his scalp and she began to work her fingers through his curls. “Almonzo?”

“Hmmm?” He licked lightly over her breast before he peered up at her. “What is it, baby?” The look in her eyes made him stop altogether.

“I love you.” She felt tremendous relief, for some reason, just by saying those three little words.

“Oh, sweet mercy hell.” He held his palms over his heart for theatrics. “It sounds better to hear you say it *to me* rather than overhear you tell my father.”

Before she could protest or scold him for eavesdropping, he captured her lips and punished her for refusing to use them sooner. He kissed her sweet mouth into a natural pucker and then he danced with her tongue because he knew how to take the lead in any oral exploration. “You are going to be so happy you made me a loved man.”

“You are impossible.”

“No, I’m good. I’m *damn good*.” He moved in between her legs and urged them apart, using both hands to spread her open. “Tell me you at least know how fucking hot I am for you.” He ran his cock gently against her leg.

“Hmmm...I see,” she agreed as first one finger, then another tested her. Her little hips began to move with the invasion.

“Want more, don’t you, baby?” He bit hard on his lower lip because, if he didn’t, he might bite her instead.

Her hips arched forward and allowed her to press against his hand as he asked for a better compliment. “By the end of the night,” he began to scissor his fingers inside of her, moving with the stretching sensation he felt under

his touch, “you can just refer to me as Mr. Wonderful.” He chuckled as he watched her face dance with amusement.

“Show me what that tongue of yours can do and we’ll see if you earn the title there, big guy.” Her legs fell open even wider and her hips rotated upward.

He covered her pussy with his promises. “Maintaining my wife’s needs will always be my main priority.” He lowered his mouth to take the first taste. Swiping once wouldn’t be enough. He already smelled the sweet smell of honey sex and if she wasn’t ready for him, she would be by the time he finished working her into a lust-filled cave of pure, sweet passion. Then by God, he’d find out what her tight little ass could do for a man his size.

That was when someone started pounding on their door.

Chapter 21

The pounding wasn't going to go away. Almonzo's chin rested above her pussy on her pelvic bone. Her hand moved restlessly across his head as he shouted at the would-be intruder standing on the other side. "Damn it to hell! It's after dawn. That means I get to have time with my wife without interruptions! Go the hell back where you came!"

Tabitha's eyes were heavy. Damnation, they should be lust-filled with nothing but erotic need on her naughty little lips. After all, his were dripping with every taste of what she'd already ridden out as foreplay. If eliminating her desire for him soothed her tired little body, it only worked to motivate him more. And undoubtedly, after tasting her on his lips for a good half-hour, he damn sure possessed a hard incentive to finish what he'd started here.

Bang! Bang! Bang! "Damn you Almonzo! Open the fuck up!"

Almonzo detected the urgency and finally moved away from her. "Fuck it." He stood up and walked over to the door and opened it to find a wild-eyed Orlando.

"Get dressed. Now! It's Father." With a cell phone pressed to his ear, he motioned him back upstairs. "I'll meet you both in the pod."

Almonzo nodded and reached back to grab his pants. By the time he started up to the main foyer, Tabitha was only two or three feet behind him. Not a word exchanged between them. Maybe they already knew what to expect. Maybe silence spoke to them in a thousand different languages. Only one seemed loud and clear. Trouble loomed. Heartache would be found. Just one or two more steps forward and in the family pod, they would discover the fate Samuel Spenser met with her helpful hand.

* * * *

Marion's eyelids were swollen with grief as she cried into the phone. "Are you sure? Why? Why now when we are just starting to see our boys start their own families? No. No. No!"

Orlando stood at his mother's immediate left and his wife stood behind her chair. Natasha's hand rested easily on Marion's shoulder. Almonzo searched his brother's face for answers and he appeared resigned to the fate they were going to be forced to accept.

Almonzo listened to his mother's cries become more frantic.

"I can't do this without you. I cannot. I will not. Negotiate, Samuel. That's what we do. We are Spensers. Damn you, I said you will not give up! Samuel, listen to me! Listen to me now!"

Almonzo reached gently for the receiver. "Mother, give me the phone."

She clung to the phone with a death grip. "No! I will not let you talk to him. He's dying. He's dying without me there to hold him. The very least I can do is hold onto him now with my words." She jerked away from Almonzo and when she did, shrugged her shoulder away from her daughter-in-law.

"Mother, let him have the phone," Orlando coaxed. "We have to know what we're up against and we won't know if you don't give one of us the phone."

"Go away! Leave me alone with your father! Leave me!" Her raging eyes pierced through each of her boys and their chosen wives. Orlando motioned for Almonzo to go into another room and pick up an extension. He quickly returned with a handheld.

"Don't you pick up that phone," Marion threatened. He didn't have a choice so he ignored her.

"Father?"

"Son." He received the same monotone in return.

"Talk to me, Father. Tell me what you see."

"I see bars all around me, son."

"Okay, let's hang on here." Almonzo spoke with compassion. "What else do you see?"

"Death, son. I see death." Samuel Spenser didn't know the word quit, yet his voice shook with a profound certainty that his end came near.

“No, let me talk to your Father,” Marion interrupted. “I want my moments with him to be well spent. Please, Almonzo. Please let me go to his grave with him.”

Her whimpering hurt to hear but as painfully as her tears fell, more important issues were pending. His mother didn’t understand but perhaps later she would see why talking to him, understanding what he’d been through, needed to be heard.

“Mother, please!” Orlando stepped out into the hallway. “Tate! I need something for Mother now!”

Almost instantly, Tate appeared with a sedative. Marion wasn’t even aware her son injected her with the serum. It didn’t matter. She only wept more.

“Father, stay with me. Where are you?”

“Barcelona.”

“Okay, that’s good. Tell me where you are in Barcelona.” Almonzo glanced at Tabitha. She knew if he repeated everything to her, she would remember it. The woman owned an incredible memory.

“El Gordo.”

Almonzo looked at Natasha and then Tabitha. “He said El Gordo.”

“Father, how did you get a phone.”

“They...”

“Who? They—who?”

“El Gordo.”

“He keeps mentioning El Gordo.”

Tabitha blinked and he watched the little woman try to search her memory for a better understanding. “No, Almonzo. El Gordo is The Fat One. He’s talking about the lottery. It’s called El Gordo. Ask him if he’s in Madrid. ” She looked at Natasha for confirmation. “I think they draw winners in Madrid. I don’t know, maybe they have the El Gordo in Barcelona too.”

Natasha stared at Tabitha. “This is the largest lottery in the world. We can’t base where he is on El Gordo. It must have another meaning.”

“Father, are you in Madrid?”

“No, no—Barcelona. Son, listen to me. Listen to me carefully. I know what I say to you. El Gordo. El Gordo. El Gordo. Do not play El Gordo.” His voice trailed off and then the call disconnected.

* * * *

An hour later, the phone rang. Marion stared at it blankly. "You answer it. He's not going to be permitted to call back. They'll call for ransom."

As soon as she said the word, Tabitha held up her hand. "That's what your father was trying to tell you. El Gordo is the world's biggest lottery, whoever has him will likely ask for a billion plus. That's what he's trying to tell you. He doesn't want you to pay his ransom."

Almonzo picked up the phone.

"Mr. Spenser, do you know who this is?"

"Sabbat." Almonzo responded.

A loud chuckle came across the phone. "No, it would be far too easy for you if you could find a Sabbat with your family papa, yes?"

"What do you want?" Almonzo walked away from the women, motioning for his brother to follow as he moved into the foyer and away from the pod. He set the phone down slowly and hit the speaker phone option. Both men stood waiting to hear the demands of a monster.

The phone line went silent. Deadly with a stillness easily misunderstood. "We have killed your Papa. We now want you to give us a reason not to take your Mama. Give us one, say, two billion reasons not to take her next."

Orlando carefully listened to the man's voice, heard the demand, and fell to the bench next to the grand entrance. His hands cupped his face and he began to scream out his agony into sweaty palms. It sounded like a muffled, if not quite stifled cry. Agony rode through the room and threatened to claim both the surviving Spenser men as they listened to the man on the other end of the phone.

Almonzo rested a hand on his twin's shoulder as the voice continued to spill from the speaker phone. When the demands and terms were laid out, Almonzo didn't have a lot of options except to call their bluff.

"We want proof our father is dead and then we'll pay you whatever you want but we want the vial of blood you have in exchange for our family's safety." He shook his head at his brother to let him know he didn't buy it for a minute that the extortionist would honor his terms. "And just so you know,

we'll pay double for the safe return of Samuel Spenser, just in case you are under the misguided impression we wouldn't pay more for his safety."

Their father drew breath as surely as they both sat there together and Almonzo would bet the two billion they wanted on it. His father didn't die for rogues. He fought hard and it would be one reason many of their own would keep him alive. He'd be live game for those who wanted him dead. Many would consider him a prize catch. More would want to watch him suffer than to see him through the gates of hell. Escorting him there proved dangerous because retaliation forced a vampire's hand.

The voice of a true hellion meeting his match poured through the phone. "We'll see what we can arrange. But for the time being, assume your father is dead."

"For the time being, assume if he is, then everything you love from your mortal brides to your unborn children will be at risk. I will protect what I have here in Scotland as I'm sure a man of your stature protects what he holds dear but make no mistake about it. I will kill for my father and mother, and all I hold precious in this life." Almonzo disconnected the phone.

"Why'd you hang up?"

"I'm not going to get into a pissing contest with them. I'll kill their families and their future if they harm one hair on Father's head."

"He's dead." Orlando shook his head. "I feel it."

"Then your damn sixth sense you pride yourself on nurturing just malfunctioned, because our father is alive! Damn it, brother, they have no reason to kill him. Think about it and think about this too while you're doing something rather useful. If Sabbats were behind this, they would have taken me while they had the chance and they've had several. We have a pending problem and unfortunately, it's getting worse by the hour. I'd like to blame Darian or any other Sabbat but I fear we have a new enemy too."

Orlando looked at him for a long time before he dared to ask, "Who?"

"We have no idea who we're dealing with here and when you don't know who your enemies are, you have no other option but to guard yourself from your friends and acquaintances."

Orlando's lips pursed and he nodded slightly. "Then we'll stand ready. Father would expect nothing less."

Chapter 22

Orlando rose to meet his mother and Almonzo as they joined the rest of the family in the pod. The young Spenser women were dressed in black gowns and the rest of the family appropriately garbed in black attire as well. Suits and ties for the men and black dresses for the women and mourning the loss of one of their own came particularly easy. They looked the part.

Almonzo met several elders in the foyer. He greeted them with a handshake, a slap on the back and a polite palm placed easily on their shoulders. He turned them away and then nodded to Tate after they were gone. "No one comes in here. Everyone pays their respect on the lawn and everyone greets the family there. No one is coming through our doors tonight."

Tate nodded. "Understood."

Marion dabbed her eyes. "You're sure this isn't real?" She questioned Almonzo first and then Orlando.

"Mother, we're as sure as you are and that's not enough security for any of us but it will have to be enough for now."

Orlando moved his hand to her back and pressed gently between her shoulders, holding out the other hand to guide her forward. "Mother, just remember, we need to be believable. We need to grieve openly and we must do it with a keen eye on our family." He nodded back to Natasha and Tabitha and then slid out the front door.

Almonzo walked over to Constance and took her hand. "Okay, little one. Stick close."

Her black eyes looked up at her older brother. "You look very nice today, Almonzo." She turned back to glance at Tabitha. "He looks real *purdy*."

Tabitha giggled and brushed her hand across the little girl's cheek. "You look real *purdy* too."

“Don’t tempt her with the hillbilly slang, please. Before long she’ll be old enough to ride a cowboy, if you know what I mean.” Almonzo grunted against the thought and then passed by them.

He stood at the front door. “Remember, you don’t want anyone here to ever have a good shot at your heart. The bows on the rooftop are going to have their own sedatives in them to take a shot at intruders but they can’t stop an arrow intended for one of us.”

“Be careful.” She mouthed the words to him.

“You too.” He said them aloud. “I love you.”

“I know you do.” She smiled and he shot her a damn-you look so she added, “I love you too.”

He nodded. “You’re getting better at it.”

She snickered when she saw her sister’s face. “I’m getting better at saying I love him, that’s what he meant.”

“Oh, for a minute there, I thought he might have been talking about the sex.”

The girls laughed and then faced forward, ready to anticipate what they faced on the lawn.

Constance put her fingers over her little mouth and ran on ahead to take her brother’s hand again. The doors opened and immediately Almonzo stepped outside onto the lawn. He shot his brother and mother an unusual frown then turned back to look at Tabitha.

“No.” He put his arm up, stopping her from joining him. “I’ve changed my mind. It’s too dangerous. I can’t put you out here for someone to take their best shot at. You stay here.”

He looked down on Constance and immediately felt guilty. She’d be expected to pay her respects. She had to go. They had to parade a little girl around in front of the elders and their friends. And hell, yes, their damn enemies. He shivered when he faced the truth. The enemy was out there. He felt his presence.

“Tabitha, I’m going to walk her by the memorial and then bring her back here. Natasha, I think Orlando would feel better if you came back here to wait with Constance and Tabitha too.”

“I will not. Orlando needs me and you all need an extra set of eyes. I can help you there.” Natasha held her chin high. He knew a defiant mortal woman when he saw one and he looked head-on into pure determination.

“Okay.” Resigned to the danger beyond their patio, he stepped out with his little sister’s hand locked in his. Without Tabitha to worry about, he could keep Natasha and Constance safe. He knew his mother could take care of herself. He looked over at Orlando and Marion and tried to offer them a smile of encouragement. “Father would be proud.”

Marion nodded and a tear drifted down her cheek. “He’d better live to be told about it.” As soon as the word fell from her lips, the first arrow fell at her feet. And several more followed.

“Go! Go! Go!” Almonzo took off toward the house in an all-out sprint. He didn’t even know where or how he’d gathered Constance up so fast but he held her tightly against his chest. “Tate! Open now!”

As he’d been instructed, the caretaker hadn’t shut the doors completely, both because he’d been instructed to do so and because he loved Constance too much to leave her in harm’s way. Almonzo handed her off to Tate as soon as he ran through the foyer, immediately looking back for the others. Orlando rushed in with their mother. “Where’s Natasha?”

Both brothers glared at one another and without a second to discuss it, rushed back out to find her. “Lock it down, wait in the pod! We’ll enter there!” Almonzo didn’t look over at Tabitha as he shouted the orders. Damnation, if he had, he would’ve died a thousand deaths. Their own loomed. Their extinction existed now. Her blood caused it and yet it was given without choice. Now, he had to forgive her forever and he had to punish those who took it.

Orlando and Almonzo began to give the elders their requests. “Get this place cleared out now. We want everyone gone! We have their respects, they’ve paid them, now send them away.”

One of the elders caught him by the arm. “Your father is alive. If you meet the demands you’re required to meet, then it goes against everything we stand for, everything we believe in, and everything your Father worked to avoid in his youth.” Almonzo pushed by the elder and chose to ignore the warning now.

“Natasha!” Almonzo heard Orlando’s panic strike out at the night air.. “Natasha!”

The grounds began to clear as people hurried to waiting cars and limousines. And then the sky fell onto a clearing and there in the midst of it, stood Samuel Spenser—practically draped over his daughter-in-law’s back.

Breathless, Natasha called to Orlando and Almonzo.

“Help!” Her cry was barely above a whisper. The twins saw her before she moved too far from the shadows.

“Father! Father!” Orlando ran to them, grabbing the side of his parent’s face. He kissed his cheek and supported him from one side while Almonzo took the other.

Orlando resisted the help. “Please! Take Natasha inside. Hurry! Have Mother call in a few favors and find a doctor we can trust.”

Natasha pulled out of Almonzo’s grip and clung tighter to the older Spenser. “I’m helping. I’m not a helpless woman who can be sent away when catastrophe strikes. Now work with me here and let’s get him inside.”

Almonzo looked at his father’s battered face and shook his head. “Damnation, we can pick them. One sister is as stubborn as the next.”

* * * *

The pod doors opened as soon as Tate saw them. “I thought for a day or so you might have checked out on us,” he tried to tease as he moved Natasha away from the doors and securely closed them before setting the house’s electronic security in a locked-down state.

Constance ran in to join them. “Father! Father! You’re home.”

“Yes.” He seemed despondent and not at all like himself.

Tabitha leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. “Welcome back. We missed you.”

He smiled gently and then literally fell into his wife’s arms when she hesitantly stepped closer. “Oh, Samuel, you’re here. You’re finally back home where you belong.” Her arms surrounded him and before she was prepared for it, he slumped against her chest with his full weight.

Chapter 23

“How’s your father?” The look of worry spread easily over Tabitha’s brow when she saw Almonzo enter their bedroom.

“He’s tired.” He sat on the bed next to her and she draped herself easily over his back.

“I know someone else who could use a few days of rest too.”

He turned quickly to stare back at her. “Are you feeling stressed? Do I need to take you somewhere to get you away from everything here?”

Tabitha grinned. “Now, you know,” she beamed with possibilities and he imagined her devious little head reeled with quite a few of them, “we never had a real honeymoon.”

“A honeymoon?”

“Yeah, it’s a vacation after you get married.”

“I didn’t know.” He appeared dumbfounded.

Sometimes she forgot about the cultural differences. She kissed the top of his head and draped her arms around his shoulders in a loving embrace. “Well, it’s not really a big deal.” She kissed him on the cheek and then winked. “It’s not really a must-do. Most of the time, couples get married and have a lavish wedding ceremony, or not, and then follow it up with a honeymoon.”

“And you want a honeymoon?”

“Not particularly. After all, it’s more or less designed for men.”

Sudden interest captured him and he turned to face her. “What do you mean?”

“Well, basically you use the week or two for sex and romance. You know, breakfast in bed, loaded sex, more sex, and even more sex. I’m sure it is *very hard* on a woman’s body.” She moved away from him with laughter already leaving her feisty little lungs. And she almost escaped.

He grabbed her ankle and pulled her back to him. “You think I don’t know what a honeymoon is all about?”

“You said you didn’t.” She giggled and then rolled over as he tugged her closer.

“I lied.”

“You said you would never lie to me,” she teased.

“I will never lie to you about the important things in life. I will tease you about the more intimate moments couples often find, especially when I know it will win me your version of things.” He laughed as he leaned down to kiss her. “You promised me something and before we were interrupted, I had *large plans* for us.”

Tabitha’s forefinger rested on her cheek. “Hmmm. I can’t remember what I did this morning much less four days ago.”

“It’s been four days?” He playfully asked.

“Yes.”

“Four days since I’ve made love to my wife?” He kissed her lips softly as her hands began to remove his clothes.

“You have to make up for lost time.” She kissed his neck as his shirt began to fall back from his broad frame.

“I don’t have a problem with making up for all lost time. Every second I’ve missed with you.”

Her breath hitched in her lungs and he felt her stiffen under his touch.

“Oh, you caught that, did you?”

“Ninety-one days of lost time?”

“I’ll give you the one and make it an even ninety.”

“Okay.”

“So you’ll go away with me for ninety days?”

Her eyes widened. “Where would we go?”

His lips slanted above hers and he dipped in for a taste of sweet luxury. “We’re going to have a honeymoon. How does that sound?”

“You did know about honeymoons.”

Most men would punish a woman for looking downright edible and he quickly thought of various ways to discipline his spectacular beauty. A few salacious ideas came to mind.

“It’s my business to know about honeymoons, love. We’re in the travel business. You know—hospitality.”

“We are?”

“You might say we are.”

“How?”

“Hotels and casinos—our family owns plenty.”

“I didn’t know.”

“Didn’t you ever wonder what we did to make a living?”

“You’re vampires.”

“Yes. Still, we need money to survive.” He laughed. “And a lot of it since we aren’t real crazy about dying.”

“And you own hotels?”

“Yes.”

“How many?” She pushed him over on his back and began to work at freeing him from his pants.

“I don’t know. Maybe a thousand or more.” He said it casually.

“A thousand or more?” She grinned as if she really didn’t pay attention. Sex seemed more on her mind than vacation properties.

“Yes.”

“You’re serious.”

“Pretty much so.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Her hand brushed over his cock and her eyes widened.

“Nope, I’m for real.”

Her mouth dropped to his belly as she pulled the mushroom tip out of his shorts. “Oh, baby, I know you’re the real deal. I just didn’t know you were the fucking *big deal*.” She laughed as her mouth began to work a little bit of appreciation into his taunt abs.

“So, do you love me more with money?” He watched her with curiosity. He’d always heard mortal women liked a rich man.

“Do I get more sex if I like you rich?”

“You don’t even have to pay for it.” He chuckled as her mouth dropped over his swollen cock. Once she locked her tight lips around his shaft, she began to mumble something else and the sensation made his nerve endings tingle with every word.

“What’s that, love, I didn’t catch what you were trying to say.” He hoped she tried to further explain.

Her eyes batted and danced with the knowledge. She moaned and mumbled again.

“Damn. I didn’t get that at all. You’re going to have to speak up.” Her fingers went to his balls and slowly she began to run circles over the taunt skin and her mouth didn’t stop licking, sucking, moaning or groaning until she made sure he heard every word, and responded appropriately.

* * * *

His fingers ran over the crack of her butt. He wanted to take her gently but he didn’t see it happening. After the blow job the little wench gave him, he also wanted to fuck her into next week too. He dipped his fingers in the container of lubricant she opened and he recognized the smell.

“Strawberries.”

“You said I taste like strawberries.” She laughed as he dipped his fingers inside but then looked a bit frightened as she really took the time to notice the reappearance of his super-natural hard-on.

“Scared?”

“No.”

“Darling Tabitha, you really need to learn to tell a man what he wants to hear most.” His eyes focused on the rise and fall of her chest.

“Then maybe you should show me I have something to fear whenever you come near me with lubricants and creams.”

“You want me to make it hurt, do you?” His tongue swiped the taste of her off of his upper lip. His fingers attempted to fuck her silly but she kept moving away from him so he finally gave up the opportunity long enough to tongue-fuck her. And he still tasted her. Damnation, did he have her on his lips.

“I want you to punish me for being a very bad girl.” Her lips quivered and she arched her little rear up so he could see just how bad she wanted him to notice it.

The heels of his hands massaged into her ass. “I hope that kid doesn’t ruin your apple bottom butt.” He snickered.

“He’s going to ruin it, but I’ll get it back.” She looked over her shoulder and moved up on all fours. “And you’re going to sex me silly until I lose it again.”

His hands began to move over her rear. "My son better not tamper with perfection or else we're going to have a real problem from the very beginning." He nearly snorted with amusement as he spoke to her. He knew what buttons to push.

"Stop it, Almonzo. I'm not going to be fat."

He bit her on the hip and then rubbed the mark his teeth left. "You're going to gain weight and I'm going to encourage it just so I can work it off you once this kid of mine makes his way into the world."

Her eyes met his for a minute and seriousness inched into her voice. "Don't talk to me about kids while we fuck, please."

"Why not? We fucked to put you in this shape." His hand cupped her pussy and when his finger dipped in, he realized his hot little woman had definitely lost her desire. "Dried up on me, didn't you?"

Her pout began to become her as her little lip sulked. She tried to move away from him and he grabbed her around the waist. "Oh, no, you don't."

"You're hurting my feelings." Her puppy-dog eyes almost convinced him. Almost.

"Then let me paddle your ass and give you something to really bitch about." His hand came down gently as the first smacking sensation popped her skin. He immediately rubbed his palm over her as one finger slid down the crack of her ass again.

His mouth went to her hip and he bit into her skin with a soft nibble followed by a caressing tongue. "Hmmm. Tastes like heaven."

"Damn it, Almonzo. You drew blood."

"Damn straight. If I'm going to bite, I'm going to taste what lies under the skin." His tongue moved across the puncture and she immediately began to ooh and ahh.

After he licked his tiny little indentation dry, he moved his hand under her and dipped two fingers inside once more. "Wet now aren't you, love?"

"Drenching."

"Then tell me what you need, baby." *Smack! Smack! Smack!*

"Mmmm. You know what I need."

His hand began to work the sting away. "Damn straight I do and no one else will ever take care of you better than I do."

"I believe it."

"No, you don't. But you will." *Smack! Smack! Smack!*

“Almonzo, please!” He slapped the breath right out of her and her ass just burned hell-hot from the pressure, and pleasure.

He rubbed again and the intensity of a deep-tissue massage began to unravel her desires. She lost herself in the moment and didn’t even feel it when he changed positions.

His hand held onto the back of her neck almost in a pinching fashion. “Damn, what I’d give to have a collar around your sexy little neck.”

She gasped when she felt his cock go into place. All he had to do, all she wanted him to really do, was go for it. She didn’t believe in wasting time and she felt ready. He prepared her well and she was drowning with desire.

One hand stayed on her neck and the other went to the small of her back. Immediately she braced herself when she felt his palm settle. When he sank into her ass, she bucked him right back because she’d stilled herself against the penetration and fully expected the hurt to come right along with the full invasion of a well-stocked cock.

His strokes were quick. “I’m not able to hold it back here, baby.” His hand moved to her pussy again and he fucked her with fingers and a hard dick. “Doesn’t get any better than this.”

His hot breath whispered approval into her ear and she felt the orgasm quickly take them both. They flirted with it for a minute while he moved her hair to the side. Once he had it out of his way, he went in for the love bite he wanted. The one he made sure she felt when their quakes began to rock their bed.

“Don’t stop, Almonzo!” Screaming out didn’t ease her urgency and it didn’t cure his lust.

“Coming. So close to coming.” He moved faster and faster.

“Bite harder!”

His lips locked over the skin of her neck and his tongue licked again and again. It burned, downright hurt to swipe and he couldn’t help save her. He craved her more. He bit. Damn, did he hurt her? He took a hard sink inward and knew she felt him because his fingers plunged closer, closer and harder toward the treasured G-spot. What he didn’t reach with his fingers, his cock let her have anyway once the vibrating motions rocked them from one end of the bed to another.

The more he came undone inside of her, the more she crawled up the bed. “Can’t take it.”

“Liar. You’re handling me just fine.” He held her spill in the palm of his hand. The slow evidence leaked onto his skin and he coveted it like hot honey, sweet and spicy hot honey. His other hand came down on her butt right when he thought her orgasm left her in complete ruins only to find her groveling for more as she bucked against him again.

His teeth released her as her next climax pressured him into withdrawing slightly. He moved cautiously from her rear.

“No! Finish me, damn you! Don’t you leave me in need! I want this.”

He bit down harder on his lip and he sure as hell didn’t mind meeting his lady’s request. “Then you can have me.” His thighs bunched, his ass clenched and he fucked the hell out of her. Hells fury, he’d been put through enough of it since he’d met the woman. Screwing the pure-ass mischief out of her felt a lot better than anything he’d ever imagined and if his woman wanted to fuck, then by God they’d fuck.

Chapter 24

“There’s something wrong with your father.” Marion Spenser stared out over the lawn when her sons joined her.

“Mother, I think you’re just worried about him because of what he’s been through.” Almonzo kissed her on the cheek and joined his brother at the bar.

“You look like hell,” Orlando noted.

“Better than your sorry ass,” Almonzo shot back.

“Boys.” Marion turned to face them. “I’m telling you, something is off with your father.”

“Mother, did you ever think about how you would feel if you sat for thirty-six hours with a butt plug in your ass?”

“Orlando! That’s enough.” Almonzo shot his brother a glare. “Don’t you ever discuss this sort of thing with Mother again.”

Marion approached her sons with a stern glare before focusing her anger pointedly on Almonzo. “Don’t you dare think you can hold information back from me when it comes to your father.” Her hurt-filled eyes scoured over them. “I know what vampires are capable of when they torture their own.”

“Forgive me, Mother.” Almonzo sipped his drink with a distance about him. Truth be told, he sensed something different about his father too.

Marion nearly mumbled in reply. “You all think with your dicks so what else would I think but the very worst?”

Almonzo and Orlando exchanged glances until she left the room and took her hell-hot anger with her.

“Don’t you have a wife to fuck or something?” Almonzo shot Orlando a daring glance and a smirk. “I swear she’s ready when you are.”

Orlando smacked him on the back. “Damn right. And from the sounds coming from your room last night, you all but killed yours.”

“Funny.”

“Yes, I thought so. Very funny.” Tabitha strolled across the room. “Good morning, Orlando.” She kissed Almonzo on the cheek and then turned to face him. “Does my sister know you boys sit around and talk about your sex lives?”

Natasha appeared in the doorway then. “Of course I do. It’s all they think about.”

Orlando smiled when she entered and he went over to her immediately with solid, welcoming arms ready to embrace her. Tabitha took a seat on the edge of her husband’s barstool right between his legs.

The younger generation of Spensers were ready to start their day when they heard an alarm sound off, a very distinct alarm. “Orlando, quick, take the women to your room!” Almonzo broke out in a sprint as he tore through the hallways, headed for Constance’s suite.

* * * *

Constance glared at her father. “You are not my Father.”

Almonzo and Marion arrived at the same time. Tate soon followed. All three heard the little vixen pitch the damning words, if not a full-blown accusation.

Constance sat on the floor with her artwork and paints and didn’t bother to look up.

“Marion, I’ll handle this,” the older man told her.

“Father, did you sound the alarm?” Almonzo quickly studied them.

“No, I did. I want him out of my room.” Constance still didn’t look up. She just kept her little fingers busy with her paints.

Orlando joined them about the time she made the request. He immediately went to his sister and sat beside her. “What are you working on there?” He touched her gently on the shoulders.

“Constance,” Marion began but Almonzo interrupted her.

“Young lady, you cannot hit the panic alert button when you do not have an emergency.” His voice shook with anger. “We’ve discussed this before. You don’t cry wolf when you want attention because one day the wolves will come and no one will be here when they do if you have been so busy sending out false alarms.”

Constance's black eyes studied them then. She didn't look at her parents but instead took turns staring at her brothers. Finally, she spoke directly to Almonzo. "You don't understand. The wolves are already here in our very den."

* * * *

"She does anything she can for attention." Samuel Spenser didn't seem at all distressed over the earlier issue with his youngest child. "Surely you both understand how hard it must have been for her. The family planned a wake to celebrate my life for crying out loud."

Almonzo looked at his wife and smiled. "Celebrate? Hell, no. We were going to send you out in grand style and then blow the trumpets to kick off one hell of a party."

Orlando sipped his drink and watched his brother tease their father. Samuel Spenser didn't have much of a light personality but he seemed to enjoy having his entire family together.

"It's a good day to be alive." He held his glass high and after a few here-heres brought on a toast with a clinking of glasses.

Samuel glanced at Marion and with a wink looked beyond her at Constance, who sat in the corner by herself. Her eyes were coal black and set straight ahead. He shrugged and then moved about the room, taking in every bit of the study almost as if he wasn't accustomed to seeing it.

Orlando and Almonzo made a simple eye exchange and then Orlando sent Natasha to coax Constance from her intimate space. Tabitha and Marion discussed nursery plans.

"So you're expecting a child." Samuel turned to Tabitha with the unexpected question.

Tabitha immediately gasped and Almonzo noted it. "Yes. Yes, I am." She looked over at Almonzo with wide eyes.

Almonzo slammed the glass down on the bar. "You were fairly excited about this baby before you left for Spain."

Samuel took a sip of his drink and released an "ah" of appreciation. "And so I am still." He walked over to his daughter-in-law and patted her stomach. She flinched. "I'm looking forward to holding the little one in my arms."

Almonzo saw her reaction and immediately excused them. “Tabitha, you don’t look well. Let’s say goodnight, what do you think?”

She quickly nodded and they made a fast exit.

Orlando and Natasha excused themselves as well and five minutes later, the four of them stood in the sitting area of Almonzo’s suite.

Tabitha started it. “Almonzo, he’s not your father.”

“The hell he isn’t.” Orlando looked over at his double.

“She’s right,” Almonzo said. “Something is off and even Constance knows it.”

“Constance is spoiled. We can thank ourselves for her behavior. She’s pouting because Father left and, sure, she probably thought she would never see him again.”

“Damn it, Orlando! We relied on you for your ability to note change. Your damn nose and gut instinct saved us from surprise intrusions and now it doesn’t even exist.”

“What do you mean it doesn’t exist? I can smell trouble a mile away!”

“Then how come you didn’t know I was here?” Constance walked into the room and perched on the bed. “I may be a little girl but you have to listen to me. That man you brought here dressed up like Father is not our father.”

“Constance, you should be in bed.” Almonzo moved closer to her.

“I’m not going to bed because if I go to bed, he’ll come in there and begin singing to me in French.”

“French?” Orlando questioned. “Does Father even know French?”

“He speaks many languages. You know damn well he must know French.” Almonzo turned back to Constance. “But come to think of it, I’ve never known him to speak it fluently. What does he sing?”

“He sings things my father wouldn’t sing to me.”

Orlando and Almonzo both leaned closer and spoke in unison. “Like what?”

Constance stretched out her thin legs on the bed and braced herself by putting her arms behind her back. She crossed her ankles and moved them back and forth. “Things.” She then brought her lips together in a tight line.

Almonzo studied her. “This is not the time for dramatics, Constance.”

“I don’t know what some of it means.”

“Then tell us what you do know.” Orlando sat next to her. All eyes were hers and all ears waited to hear her reply.

“The lyrics are very strange.”

Natasha and Tabitha seemed to take the same deep breath and hold it. Tabitha saw the anger washing over her husband.

“Constance, this is very important. What does he say, damn it!” As soon as he raised his voice, her eyes watered but not from hurt. Hell, no. Anger brewed and both of her brothers nearly flinched when they witnessed it. Constance, whatever she knew, seemed to have a new understanding. With it came the coming of age. Her little-girl ways disappeared almost as surely as she spoke.

Her voice dropped an octave and she began to sing. “I’m coming for you, lover. I’m coming for you, my sweet love. No one will see me. No one will hear me. No one will know the day. I’m coming for you, lover. I’m coming for you, my sweet love. No one will see me. No one will hear me. *No one will know I’m already living in your veins.*” Her beautiful little haunting voice hit every note and then she sang it to them in French.

“It’s the same chorus over and over and over again. Every night since he came home.” Constance studied her brothers. “And do you know what else?”

“What?” Orlando answered because Almonzo’s demeanor darkened with his eyes just as soon as he heard the song. He watched and studied Tabitha. When she’d heard the song, she’d sat down with a blank expression on her face.

“He stares at me like he plans to kill me and then mother walks in the room and he immediately looks like the doting father he used to be. That man is not our father.”

Tabitha stared up at them. “She’s right.”

Almonzo set his jaw and watched her unfold the truths he’d already witnessed when he sensed she recognized the melody Constance sang. “You know the song.”

“I know the song. It’s Darian’s favorite.”

Chapter 25

Almonzo's fierce temper could kick ass and Orlando wasn't a reasonable man either when it came to protecting his family. The twins talked privately with Tate and he prepared a room in the cellar as the boys went to their parents' chambers. They literally pounced on the man posing as Samuel Spenser and struggled to gain control of him.

"Boys! What on earth are you doing to your father?" Marion Spenser's eyes were wild as Almonzo held Samuel's wrists tight behind his back. His shaded eyes were taut with his fury and Orlando spoke rapidly.

"Mother, this man is not Father. He's here to take Constance and maybe even you. He's an imposter. Constance has known it since his arrival, which is why he's all but stalked her in the middle of daylight."

Orlando sneered and moved closer to the older man. "That's why you were waiting. You expected us when you didn't find her in her room, didn't you?" His teeth glistened in the dim light of the moon and just when the man started to speak, Orlando's teeth dropped and he looked away from his mother.

Almonzo nodded to Orlando. "Let's get him out of here."

Marion continued to protest. "Boys, you are wrong! This is your father. I know. *Believe me, I know.*"

Hearing the hidden implication angered the hell out of both men. "Why you son of a bitch." Almonzo gripped his captive's wrists back harder and saw the sudden smirk.

"Samuel Spenser doesn't have anything to covet now." The man's lips formed into an easy smile. "I come into his life and bed his wife, hold his children, read his journals, and live, walked, actually, in the man's very big shoes." His loud chuckles brought a sudden paleness to Marion's face. She quickly pulled a sheet around her scantily clad body as she watched in horror.

“Mother, call the elders. Have them send someone over. We’re about to send one of our own straight to fucking hell!”

* * * *

The dim light in the basement looked like something out of a mob torture chambers from the 1940s. Tate worked diligently to sedate the man but to avoid knocking him out completely they pumped him full of a concoction of drugs.

Almonzo wanted one of the elders to verify who or what had been living with them. Determining the issue to be a matter of family, they were denied a visit from an elder. The translation became clear. They were dealing with Sabbats and right now, Sabbat had the elders in his back pocket.

Almonzo moved closer to the man. “Do you want to live?”

“I am living, just as you live.”

Tate shook his head.

Orlando and Almonzo both caught the meaning.

“You want me to think you have an immunity clause?” Almonzo’s anger reached another dimension altogether.

“I do have one.”

“The hell you do. You’re one of us, you sick prick.” Almonzo threw a few punches and immediately, unaffected by the blows, the vampire’s head came back to take more.

“Damn it!” He walked over to him again. “I want to know where my father is!”

The imposter sneered. “Dead.”

“Dead? I don’t think so.” A few more blows and a few more easy retreats. Hell and damnation. He could knock himself out. The vampire had the same stamina as they did. He came back each time with a smirk.

“How long do you think you can live without blood?” Orlando looked at the man with ease. He propped himself up against the brick foundation wall.

Almonzo began to pace around him, stalked him. Hell wanted this vampire’s kind. Damn, how he’d like to send him there. “You’d better start talking!”

“What’s it worth to you?” The vampire rogue possessed eyes just as shaded by anger as any of the Spenser eyes were typically found in fits of madness.

Orlando bargained when he should have kept his mouth shut. “We’ll free you if you tell us two things.”

Almonzo’s lavender pupils only darkened. “The hell we will.”

Orlando held up his hand. “Yes, we will. We need to know who sent him and if Father really is dead or alive.” He walked out of the shadows. “Two questions. Answer them and we have our driver take you to the middle of town and drop you off.”

“I assure you, men, I can leave on my own.” His words were slurred. Finally, the drugs they’d pumped into his neck seemed to be taking effect.

The room fell quiet.

“Fine, I’ll take your brother’s deal.” He glared at Almonzo. “I give you names and you give me freedom within the hour.”

“I’m listening.” Almonzo shot Tate a stare. Their caretaker apparently translated it well, because his eyes became just as deadly as the vampires’.

“Darian Sabbat hired me. Your father *is* dead. They used some kind of test drug on him. I don’t know the details. All I know is I watched him die as they pumped a clear and very thick fluid into his veins.” His voice lowered and his head moved high with defiance. “Samuel Spenser waited for death to take him as he’s lived his life—arrogantly.” Laughter fell from the vampire’s mouth as he seemed to revel in delivering the news of their father’s fate.

Orlando walked over and started to speak. Almonzo saw the fear and the hurt. He also saw acceptance. He believed him. Almonzo didn’t know what to believe. Hell’s fury. The twins had been so interested in fucking their lives away that they didn’t know the enemy lived in their den, just as their little sister warned.

Almonzo turned to Tate and damn near howled the order. “Pull the car around! We’re going to take this imposter to the center of town and stake him to the largest tree we can find.”

“You said—”

Almonzo didn’t wait to hear the rogue’s groveling. “I lied.”

He walked out and slammed the door behind him.

* * * *

Marion Spenser waited alone in her bedroom. She sat up in the bed with her arms crossed over her chest. When her boys came in, she looked up with a blank expression. "It is finished?"

Almonzo nodded. "It is. We took him to Glasgow.

"You took him to the River Clyde?"

"Yes, Mother." Orlando sat down on the bed.

"And my sons are now killers?"

"No, Mother."

She watched them closely. "I can smell his blood on your hands Almonzo! Don't you patronize me by lying to my face!" Her skin burned with the anger settling there. "I told your father this would happen. Vampires choose to lie because they think they don't have to tell the truth. What kind of example will you set for your children?" She continued to scold them. "I didn't raise you to lie, cheat, steal...or kill."

"I am the head of this family in Father's absence and I did what any Spenser would do. I protected my family." He watched her for a reaction. "And I at least took him to a town where he will be buried properly. He has family in Glasgow."

Orlando reached for her. "Mother..." She smacked his hand away.

Almonzo noted it and gave her what she needed to hear. He stood close enough to the door to make his escape once he said the words. "You may smell the blood on my hands but Orlando's are clean and if you had taken the time to question your own senses, then I assure you it would not have been necessary for my hands to become those stained with true tainted blood." He glared at her only for a moment and then started to leave.

He would've left and gone back to his little wife waiting for him but his mother's voice broke then and he could not leave. Orlando cradled her as she wept and that's when the three of them decided death had knocked on the door of a Spenser and their promised life of immortality changed with the course of time.

Epilogue

Tabitha looked beautiful holding their babies. She also seemed to lose herself in the mix. It had been a very long night and the doctors finally required total privacy for Tabitha as they waited for the last of their three children to be born.

When Almonzo slid in beside her and offered a free arm, he couldn't conceal his joy. "I've paced around like a caged animal waiting to come to you."

She gently gave him the smallest of the triplets. "I missed you every second."

"Have you decided on names?" Sweat seemed to pour from his forehead. He used the back of his hand to wipe away the evidence of the fear he'd felt since her labor began.

"I have."

"You have names for all three of them?" He looked down into the sleepy eyes of the tiny baby he held.

"Yes."

"What have you named them?" He decided months before their births, he would let her name their children. A woman who carries three babies to term has the lone right to name them.

"You are holding Kiril. Of course, he's the smallest. I'm holding Samuel to my left and he's every bit the fighter his grandfather *is* and to my right, meet little Irisa."

His brow gathered. "Irisa? I will not have a son named Irisa." He studied the baby closer and then looked back at little Samuel. His hand went to the little baby's soft face. "He looks like Father." He smiled and then glanced back to the one Tabitha named Irisa. "He looks like a girl, so I see where it is easy to give him..."

She laughed. "He *is* a girl."

“I have a daughter?” He moved closer for inspection. “She is a girl?”

“Yes! *She* is a girl!”

“Well, I’ll be damned!” Almonzo’s unrestrained enthusiasm fell over all of them. He kissed the baby he held, then gently moved across the other two before making his way back to his wife. “I am the luckiest damn rascal I know.”

“Rascal, huh? Don’t you dare start feeling frisky now.”

He cupped her breast in an attempt to tease. “Damn, lady. After a significant change in these, just try and fight me off. I can’t wait to see the improvements.”

“I promise, at this very moment, that’s precisely what I’ll do.” She giggled as she shrugged him away with her shoulder. “And you’re in trouble for suggesting they needed some enhancements!”

He chuckled. “Do you love me?”

Tabitha’s head fell back against the soft pillow cradling her neck. Her eyes lingered lazily on his before she answered. “Are you kidding? After twenty-four hours of hard labor? I damn near hate you.”

They both laughed.

“Well then, I can’t wait to bend your little ass over and change your mind all over again.”

“Almonzo, it’ll be awhile.” Her lips pursed against the pain in her face.

“I’ll gladly wait.”

“Is this a closed celebration?” Natasha inched inside the bedroom and then peered back around the door. “They’re hogging the babies. Tabitha needs her rest. I need some free arms to help.”

All of the Spenser clan rushed right in and eagerly met the new arrivals. The delightful surprise of a girl in the mix seemed to brighten everyone’s day. After all, three boys were expected. A girl to keep her brothers straight made everything perfect.

“Mother, are you all right?” Almonzo peered up at the family matriarch and he experienced the void of their loss as much as he saw it in his mother’s eyes.

“I am proud, Almonzo.” She smiled easily and fought to restrain her tears. “And your father would have been just as proud as I am of you and your family right now.”

He nodded. "Then it's enough."
"It's enough," she agreed.

The following is the first chapter from Winning Virgin Book 3: Winning Virgin Lust—Coming Soon

Sebastian Sabbat watched her from the side rail. She moved like a hellcat across the dance floor with sultry ease and precision. Such calculated motions would send Madonna back to the dance studio. *Hell yeah, they would.* His rising cock stood at enough attention to know why. If she twisted her ass in bed like her dancing proved, then those already persecuted would stand ready with envy when he took her there.

His dick twitched with the thought.

Sweet fucking mercy—bed bound babe—count on it. He all but mouthed the words to her. The way her hair moved wildly around her head and shoulders assured she read his mind, never mind his lips. Sleek charcoal locks stuck to her cheek and not only did she look fuck-minded, but she damn sure moved like she wanted it soon.

Constance Spenser lashed out her rebellion on public display for everyone to see and every which way she turned, his hunger grew. His thirst for her bled him dry and seared his soul, if he even still possessed one. Hell's fury, if he did, she could have it.

"She's a babe." Sebastian's friend joined him at the rail, watching with as much admiration as his buddy.

"She's off limits to you." His words sliced out at thick air dividing the room from the smokers and non-smokers. Only a simple statement of a few choice words, and most smart men listened when Sebastian spoke, especially when he dared to glare at his listener for more than a second. He shot the warning with the eyes of a tiger. Some would've translated the gesture with ease—possessive obsession.

"The hell she is man. That's young, fresh meat there and I swear to you, I'll step aside for you on the next one, but not *this one*. Not a chance." Milosh really didn't have a brain—only marbles. Hard ones.

Sebastian watched the young vampire move away from him and dance up to the Spenser woman. He moved into her with his hands on her slender waist shooting the youngest Sabbat a glare in the process.

“Are you going to let Milosh just move in for you?” Darian Sabbat joined his younger brother. He tilted his beer in the direction of the dance floor.

“What do you care?” He snapped at his brother before his eyes drifted over him in a somewhat condescending stare.

Darian, twenty years older than his brother, almost shadowed him. They resembled one another. Both men were over six feet tall give or take an inch between them. They held distinct features, just enough sex appeal to drive a woman wild—determined jaw, dimples, deeply set eyes, and perfect teeth. The female population found them irresistible because of their good-boy looks, but though the men were charming and handsome their bad boy image followed them everywhere. They were Sabbat men. Criminal-minded and dangerous—even their own kind feared them.

“*I care*. I really do.” He placed his palm over his heart and shot him a wicked grin. “I knew you’d like her. I’ve had her hand-picked for you since she turned twelve years old.”

Sebastian moved away from him following Constance and Milosh as they inched back toward the suites located near the rear of the club. “Yeah, well, would that have been before or after you kidnapped her and her sisters-in-law?”

“Ah, so you’ve taken the time to check her out?” Darian took pleasure in the news and he wanted it obvious. A wide smile covered his lips.

“I made it my business, for the time being.”

Darian nursed his beer. “I wonder,” he paused long enough to undress a woman walking by with a mere lustful stare, “how long Miss Spenser will be considered *your* business?”

Sebastian opened his mouth ready to argue, but then he chose to close it when his eyes widened with sudden acknowledgement. He realized where his friend planned to lead the adorable Constance Spenser. He shook his head in a warning, but Milosh waved him off and signaled his intentions by dropping his fangs quickly so only the Sabbats saw the evidence of his goals.

“Damn him!” Sebastian knew what he had on his mind. “He sure didn’t waste any time moving her away from the crowd.”

The dim lights in the club only led to darkness. On the opposite side of the bar, a mural hid a secret passage to various rooms—suites of bondage and wicked pleasure waited just beyond the wall.

Darian looked amused. “Let me guess, your dumb-ass friend doesn’t know he can’t drain blood from the very one who feeds on it?” Darian turned up his beer. “This should be interesting.”

Sebastian shot his brother a glare and started to make his way through the crowd. Darian quickly caught up to him. “This way.” He grabbed his arm and led him up a flight of stairs into a viewing room.

The youngest brother in the Sabbat clan looked around at his surroundings. Theatre-style seating provided a bird’s eye view of a room meant for sexual excursions. “What is this place?” Sebastian turned around and stared at his older brother. He watched as his friend and Constance entered the room below and quickly turned his back to the large glass shielding them from the room under them.

Darian seemed amused. “Don’t worry little brother. They can’t see you.” He dismissed him and walked over to the wet bar. When he returned to stand in front of him, he shoved a tumbler in his hand. “Drown your jealousy in Scotch before you go down there.”

Sebastian didn’t find his brother the least bit funny. “Answer me.”

“You do know we own this club, right?” Sarcasm oozed.

“Fuck you, Darian. I’m aware of the holdings in this family as much as you are. I can promise you.” He gritted his teeth as he watched Milosh move in for his first kiss. His cock throbbed just because he witnessed the deplorable act. What it would feel like to have the little wench under his lips—he wanted to know. No, maybe he needed to find out. His body seemed to think so.

“Then you should know this isn’t your typical—how can I say this lightly without offending you, but this isn’t your average club.” He smirked and then pointed down at the lovely Miss Spenser. “She seems to know what she’s doing here.”

Sebastian turned back around to catch a glimpse of lust running over. His best friend moved Miss Spenser to the bed in the room. There, he watched as his so-called friend pushed her down and brought her to him for

another kiss—a *real kiss*. Then he seemed to stop everything. A sudden halt. A grin upward, realizing no doubt where he'd find a receptive audience and then he introduced the woman he planned to victimize to one of the Sabbat club drugs.

"Trust me. Live a little." He heard his friend begin to make her some promises about sexual bliss and true enough torturous pleasure.

She brought him in closer, whispered in his ear. He saw her little teeth nip at Milosh's ear. She seemed willing. *Too damn willing*.

"That's it. I'm putting a stop to this before—"

"She can handle herself." Darian informed him and continued to watch Constance.

"I'm sure she can but she's not going to do it while I'm around. This is sick. *You* are twisted."

Sebastian stormed out the door, but before he slammed it he heard his brother's words at his back. "I've been called worse little brother. I promise you. And I own every single title I'm typically given."

* * * *

Sebastian's fist flew into the door with a rage he didn't even know how to handle. "Open this damn door now!" He kicked and pounded and hated like hell to do it, but he finally busted through it when no one answered. On the bed, spread out like a true seductress, Constance's hands and feet were bound and cuffed to the circular bed. A few toys were on the mattress.

Several of the club bouncers immediately came in behind him. His friend, Milosh shot him an angry stare "What the hell, man?"

Sebastian arrogantly walked by him. "Get this piece of shit out of here." He called out to his bouncers. He didn't look at his buddy—they were no longer friends. He told him—*off limits*. He did not stutter when he said it and he sure as hell meant what he said.

"What did you just call me?" Milosh followed him over to the corner where Constance laid strapped down against the mattress. "You're out of line, man!"

His eyes changed colors and Constance must have known she was dealing with one of her own kind. "I think I'd listen to him." She probably didn't know Milosh had similar capabilities and in that moment he wasn't

sure she even cared. The man staring down at her suddenly gained her interest and he realized it. Next to Milosh, he looked like a Greek god so he felt confident of Constance's approval.

Sebastian grabbed a blanket and tossed it over Constance's thin body. She looked like a petite china doll. Her ivory complexion and long coal black hair would be the death of him. He knew it as soon as he busted in and saw her. Hell, if he wanted to be honest with himself, not that he did, he felt his defenses leave him when he saw her on the dance floor of the club. The way she moved her sinful little ass should've been illegal or at least, determined illicit in a public place.

Milosh pointed his finger at Sebastian with a threat lingering on his lips. "She's off limits? Is that the way it is around here? You see a broad you want and you take her for yourself? Hmmm...it's your club man. Have at her. Her dainty little neck will be ripe with veins because I've primed them with a fluid meant for sluts like her."

Constance's eyes bugged. "What the hell did you just say?" Her neck struggled more against the restraints than her body. Her head barely made it off the pillow, but she managed a glare at both men.

Sebastian would have his moment or two to indulge in her anger, but first he wanted the room cleared. "Get him out of here and Milosh," he turned back to the other vampire to give him a fair enough warning, "*This one*, as you call her, is vampire royalty, you stupid fuck!" He moved closer to him and both men snarled their teeth while their eyes blazed through the other one. They circled the room a couple of times and then Milosh backed away throwing his arms up in the air several times when he did. Frustration understood and easily his to carry.

"Fine! Have at her. She's an easy mark. I gave her enough of that shit to have her begging to screw. You're a lucky son-of-a-bitch." He glanced back at Constance and then shrugged at his friend. "Maybe if you tap a tight little snatch like hers, you'll be ready to find your friends again."

Damn envy. Why he had it didn't even occur to him, but it consumed him to a fault. "Did you touch her?"

"Son-of-a-bitch. What do you think?" Milosh moved closer to the door sensing the trouble in the air. He nodded upward toward the viewing room and finally replied. "I'm willing to bet you saw me kiss her, man. What am I supposed to do, lie?"

"I want to know where your hands wandered." A calm ripped through the air. If a crowd had the ability to stir a room, Sebastian's anger to still one rocked all parties concerned into a fear-filled stance.

"Are you for real?" Milosh seemed to snort and it fell on the tranquil room. Deadly quiet.

The room sliced and diced the animosity and damn straight, Sebastian wanted answers. His fatal threat existed in the words he spoke and the questions he asked. He moved toward the man he spent some time with at parties. He played the buddy part for a minute. One way or the other, he'd find out if his friend touched her.

He smiled and then asked again. "Come on man, tell me. Did you touch that tight little ass?"

"Thank the elders for me when you see them. Hell no, I didn't touch her. I wouldn't touch her now if you paid me. Damn boy, bad ass like you falling quick huh? You don't see one submissive here you want and when you do, you could take them or leave them. Now, this is the golden one. Hell, I hope her little pussy is full of the diamonds you seem to think she deserves."

"Get him out of here and put this door back up now! No one and I mean no one comes in here." He glared at his employees before he turned around to study Constance carefully.

While a few of the bouncers and Sabbat bodyguards worked to put the door back in place, Sebastian fixed himself a drink. He looked around at the suite. Damn if he didn't wish he had the lovely vixen in a similar place without his brother's watchful eye to supervise.

When the room fell quiet again and the guards left them, he approached her. The drug Milosh gave her would eventually hit with a vengeance and the calm he saw on her face now would be warped with want and need.

"Miss Spenser." He nodded slightly as he addressed her with an element of respect, though he wasn't sure if what he felt for her went hand and hand with honorable intentions.

Constance's daring eyes challenged him. "So you are going to wait for the drug your friend gave me to kick in?"

Slowly, reluctantly really, he smiled.

"Fabulous." Sarcasm shook her.

“You’re twenty-one today. Happy Birthday.” A tilted rim in her direction, followed with a slow slip.

Her lip quivered a bit. “Yes, but dare I guess how you gained your information or can I be direct and just ask?”

“You can ask.”

“Then I’m asking.”

“And I’m not interesting in telling you.” He rubbed his head in a circular motion, sat across from the bed and leaned back in the oversized chair. His legs fell open and her eyes widened. *Sure as hell, she saw it.* Most women did. It wasn’t something to be missed when it made an appearance. His typical control didn’t allow him to show off his assets in public, but right at the moment, he had a need for sex—a profound unwarranted damn sinful urge. And he just didn’t care if she saw *it*.

The imprint there in his slacks proved impressionable. The light blush embedded in her cheeks all but guaranteed it.

“Fine. Would you at least remove these restraints, please, and allow me to sit up?”

She swiped her wicked little tongue across her lower lip every single time she looked at his cock.

Just watching her gave a man a hard one straight up and his didn’t need any further coaxing. “I can’t right now.”

“Cannot or will not?” Her eyes dropped to his waist and she smiled. Then, damn it all once more, she moved her gaze south again. Black eyes dared him and she moistened her lips deliberately. “Come on, I won’t bite. I promise. Besides, after seeing your eyes and anger, I know biting you wouldn’t bring about any measure of satisfaction.” She purred out her words.

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that.” He released a tortured sigh and stood up to pace. He liked to walk off his stress and he had it. He looked up at the frosted windows above. *I know you’re there. I feel you, Darian.* He cursed his brother for having rooms like these in the first place.

“I’ll make a deal with you. If you let me go, then my brothers won’t kill you.” She smiled sweetly and tilted her head in his direction.

“Constance, I can assure, your brothers will not kill me and in fact, once you are presentable enough to take home, they may even thank me.” He knew his arrogance would chap her ass and it did.

Her voice seemed to change tones and her eyes almost rolled back in her head when she released a sarcastic, and definitely forced, laugh. “Who are you?”

“I’m Sebastian.”

“Last name?” Her eyes dropped to his cock again.

“You won’t find it there, sweetheart.”

“Oh, you’re good.” She laughed.

Damn, if she didn’t stop tempting fate, she’d know his name. He might even share it with her. He smirked. Hell, maybe he liked the thought. “Constance, I’m assuming it’s okay to call you by your first name and correct me if I’m wrong, but I think we have a problem here.” Maybe he glanced at his own manhood troubles before he continued, but at this point who cared? “I think you should listen carefully so we can deal with this appropriately.”

Her head seemed to roll back a bit. The club drug the Sabbath brothers were involved in distributing happened to be one of the strongest in the world and evidence of it began to unfold. Those who took the drug would have a strong sex drive for nearly twelve hours and when they came down off of the high, they would have a vivid recollection of what they’d done and with whom, something many wanted to find in club drugs.

Unlike many of the drugs, it wasn’t necessarily dangerous, like meth, but it proved on more than one occasion to have a severe side affect. After engaged sex acts were performed with the drug, those seldom found intercourse without it fulfilling. Of course, Darian reminded them on several occasions, it happened to be great for business.

“Have you ever gone to bed with a complete stranger?” Constance boldly asked her question as the true measure of the drug began to weigh in on her tiny little frame.

“Constance, you have to listen to me.” He stood over her and moved closer. “I want you to look up at the frosted glass above me and pay attention to what I’m telling you. Upstairs, my brother is watching us. You know him and you don’t want him to see you like this.”

“Who is your brother? Maybe he’ll want to join us.” She slurred the words. “Do you like to screw strangers?” she asked again, this time with her lips curving into a full smile.

“No, I don’t. I want you to listen to me. You’ve been drugged with a highly potent date rape drug. Call it a club drug if you want, but many use it for date rape. Do you understand me?”

She nodded, but her head rolled off to the side. When she raised her eyes upward again, darkness filled them. Her hooded eyes were striking, but the red streaks proved dangerous.

“They’ll kill you.” She laughed outright and then twisted her body some as she rolled with the feeling of lightheaded ecstasy. “Almonzo and Orlando, they’ll cut your balls off and send them back to your last girlfriend for a souvenir.”

“I’m sure you take absolutely no blame here?” Maybe he presented the question as a statement, but he wanted her to admit some responsibility. Hell, if he didn’t come in to save her, she’d already be fucked. Literally. The thought made his teeth grit all the more. He would have killed Milosh—and enjoyed it.

“I need your cock.” She purred and whined as she rolled her body against the restraints.

“Constance, did you come to the club with anyone?”

Her body stopped moving and her ivory skin tone changed to a blush shade. Maybe she needed to stop squirming long enough to think.

She probably didn’t remember. He watched her eyes close and reopen again. Her cheeks seemed to stay rosy red with a flush of seduction lingering there. She did need to be fucked. He knew all about how the girls who took their drug immediately thought of sex as a sudden necessity.

“No. I’m supposed to go out with my family tomorrow and my friends are far too dull to walk into a BDSM club.”

“Why are you here?” He wanted to know. He sat down on the bed and watched her struggle continue. Her hips moved off the bed as she seemed to grind into a hand that didn’t exist.

“Come closer and I’ll tell you.” Damnation if he did, he felt confident he would lose himself to her right then and there.

He moved inches away from her, careful to stay just beyond her reach.

“Closer.” She bit her lower lip. “I told you, I won’t bite.”

“Would you lie to me?”

A child-like laugh rumbled through the room and yep, straight into his heart. For a smart vampire, a seasoned man, he sure let his guard down. This

one would lead him through a thousand hells and then she would trash his life because she would never be anything but off-limits to him. He knew better. Damnation, he understood, but he leaned down anyway.

His face hovered over hers and she raised her neck up off the pillow. Her mouth dropped. She expected a kiss. Her tongue reached for him and he chuckled. "Think you'll grab hold that easy?"

"I'm here because I belong here." She spoke the words slowly into his mouth. "Any complaints?"

He swallowed. *None, yet.* "Yes. You don't belong *here*." He lied and spoke the truth in one statement. A Spenser did not belong within five thousand feet of a Sabbat, but for some reason Sebastian wanted Constance within inches of him. Hell no, he wanted to sink right into her and become a part of her.

Damn it all.

He had a real problem on his hands. If love at first sight existed, he signed on for it.

She jerked the cuffs and when she strained against them, her little round nipples pressed harder into the cami holding her from his complete view. He watched her struggle all the more. He looked up at the vantage point his brothers would have if they were in fact still watching. He knew they were and knew Darian, in particular, would find the whole show worthy of a large audience.

He'd covered her once and she'd already moved with the blanket until she lay open for review. He covered her once more and watched her raise and lower her hips again reaching for something, searching for anything to comfort the ache in between her legs.

Her moaning began and he decided then and there, he wouldn't let her become Exhibit A. Constance Spenser made her way into the wrong club and he'd be damned if he would stand by and let her put on a free show. No, not on his watch—well, at least not while others witnessed it all.

WINNING VIRGIN LOVE

Winning Virgin 2

THE END

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Destiny Blaine lives in Tennessee with her husband of seventeen years and two teenagers. The family is sports-oriented and spends a lot of time in sports complex centers around the country, traveling with various high performance teams.

Destiny's favorite pastimes include reading, playing casino craps, or watching all sports ranging from volleyball to football. She always enjoys spending time with family and friends, and finds the best days spent are typically on a white sandy beach with a good book in hand and family nearby.

Destiny has various novels and novellas due out in 2008 and 2009. You can find out more about these works of fiction and non-fiction by logging on to her website at www.destinyblaine.com. Destiny also has an active MySpace site where she interacts with readers daily. Check her out at www.myspace.com/destinyblaine.



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