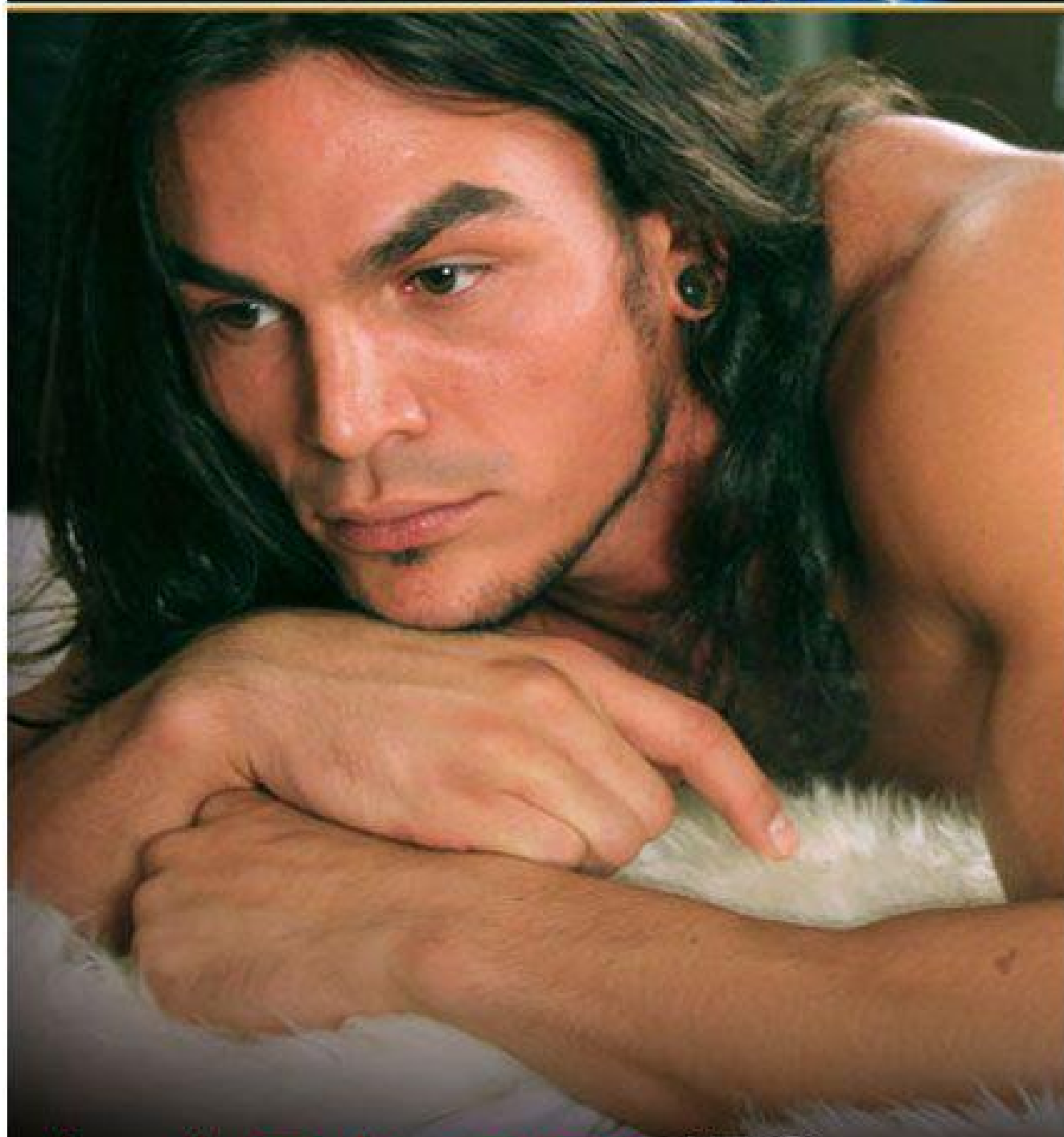


ELLORA'S CAVE TWILIGHT



# MINE TO CHASE

NY Times and USA Today Bestselling Author

**LAURANN DOHNER**

## Mine to Chase

Laurann Dohner

*This book is loosely related to Scarred and Kilt from the anthology Something Wicked This Way Comes, Volume 2.*

Jasmine met the guy of her dreams, who unfortunately wasn't interested. She's spent a year filled with lustful fantasies and soul-deep yearning for a man who doesn't want her. Now she's locked away in a dark hole, kidnapped by a madman, her life almost over. She'll never know what could have been, if only he'd felt the same.

She was supposed to be his a year ago, but Chase had walked away to protect her from his world. He's a mixed-breed—vampire and werewolf—and his list of enemies is endless. His current mission is to hunt down and kill a rogue vamp who's preying on humans, but what Chase finds changes everything. *Jasmine's* one of the victims. Instinct demands he protect her, possess her. He won't be denied again. This time, she's his—for keeps.

*A Romantica® paranormal erotic romance from Ellora's Cave*

# ***Mine to Chase***

**Laurann Dohner**

### *Dedication*

Ruben “Angelo” Dario Riguero-Brito—Thank you for being as beautiful on the inside as you were on the outside. You will be missed.

## Chapter One

The stench of death hit him the moment Chase crept inside the abandoned house on the outskirts of town. A human wouldn't have picked up those slight traces but he wasn't human. His nose flared as another scent teased his senses—sweet feminine fear. His predatory instincts immediately rose to the surface as his fangs began to ache. He raised a hand, motioning for the two werewolves to circle the property.

“We found him,” one of them confirmed before he disappeared, skirting the porch to make sure no one escaped out the back.

*Yes. We did.* Rage gripped Chase instantly. Rogue vampires were the enemy, risking discovery by humans of *all* Others. No one wanted that. It would mean the beginning of a war if the killings didn't stop. Humans far outnumbered Others. It was better to live in peace, their existence nothing but myth and entertainment, than the alternative.

A board above him creaked, betraying where the enemy hid. A smile curved Chase's lips as he stealthily maneuvered through the lower floor to the open stairwell. One whiff assured him he was close to the enemy as he withdrew two blades. His knees bent slightly before he leapt, effortlessly sailing over the upper railing to land gracefully on booted feet.

The vamp sitting in the chair appeared surprised as his eyes widened. “Who are you?” He paused, nostrils flaring. “*What* are you?”

“Your worst nightmare. You've been found guilty.”

Chase moved before the rogue could react, the speed he'd inherited from both sides of his bloodline assuring the outcome. With the slash of his hands, steel sliced into skin and bone and then he jumped back to avoid the tumbling head touching his trench coat.

The body fell forward, slumping on the carpet. It didn't turn to ash and he muttered a soft oath before whistling. In seconds feet pounded up the stairs. He turned to give his pack orders.

“He wasn't turned too long ago. Get rid of the body.”

“Damn, Chase.” The wolf smiled. “That was fast. You didn’t even allow him to make a run for it.”

“Should we burn down the house? I smell rotting bodies.” The other wolf breathed through his mouth. “Multiples. He probably hid them in the basement.”

“I’m aware.” Chase sighed. “It’s best to dispose of them without drawing notice. Fire and police would come if we torch his lair. They’d investigate and might discover remains in the rubble.”

“Gasoline would take care of it if we soaked the corpses first.”

Irritation rose and so did a menacing growl deep within his throat. “You heard my orders.”

Both wolves dropped their gazes in submission. “Yes, Chase.” They rushed to do his bidding.

He wiped the blades clean on his kill’s clothing before putting them away to use his cell phone. The call connected as he walked downstairs. It was answered on the third ring.

“We located the rogue who murdered Lacey’s sister. She’s been avenged, Lethal. Give her a kiss for me.” He disconnected with an amused grin when his friend snarled, more than a bit possessive of the woman he loved.

Chase’s job was done. He inhaled but then winced. *Almost done*. The bodies would have to be disposed of. He located the basement door right off the kitchen and paused, bracing for the worst. Running security for his vampire friends could sometimes get messy but corpses were rarely involved unless they were bad guys. This was different.

The stench intensified to a nauseating level when he jerked open the door. He regretted killing the rogue so swiftly. Human women had been slaughtered to feed the bastard. A needless waste. It was easy for the vampires to get blood without murdering their sources—just a quick mind swipe would clear their memories—but the rogue obviously enjoyed taking lives. Chase could guess why. The sick bastard got off on tormenting them first and watching them suffer. He breathed through his mouth to suppress some of the offensive odor as his eyes adjusted to the darkness below. The stairs creaked under his weight.

The unfinished basement had piles of dirt in at least six locations, the corpses under the thin layer of covering too obvious to be anything else. “Fuck.” His voice rose. “Get six body bags.” He didn’t wait for a response, knowing his pack heard. Their hearing was almost as keen as his.

He scanned the room for something to dig with, not a job he wanted to do with his bare hands. The state of decay he smelled promised to make it a messy task. The rogue had to have used a shovel to bury them. He located it leaning against the wall in the corner.

Jasmine held very still, her gaze locked on the tall, massive man standing at the bottom of the stairs. Light from above revealed enough of his features to scare her into absolute silence. A very masculine face turned slightly enough to make out full lips and a strong chin. It wasn’t the man who’d taken her but he appeared just as dangerous. Perhaps more so.

It had been days since Jasmine had slept, too terrified to close her eyes. The madman who’d kidnapped her was pure evil. He hadn’t given her food and had savagely bitten into her a few times. It wouldn’t surprise her if she was delusional from the wounds being infected.

No tears filled her eyes. She’d passed that stage already. First she’d been terrified, pleading for her life. It had pleased her kidnapper. Then she’d hit the acceptance phase that her death was imminent. The bastard had watched her cry as if it fascinated him. The bruises along her arms still hurt from where he’d pinched them to make her kick and hit at him in an attempt to protect her body. He’d liked that too. It was the only reason he said he wouldn’t kill her outright. He admitted to being bored and she amused him.

There was something familiar about this man but she figured it was her mind playing tricks. Then he lifted his face, turned toward the door at the top of the stairs and Jasmine recognized him. Chase Woods. A very memorable client from almost a year before.

The striking features were his. He was the man she’d dreamed about—muscular and big, with the sexiest brown eyes she’d ever peered into. He’d bought some land on the edge of town as an investment. She’d tried to tell him that the two hundred acres of forest were too dense for building. The cost of clearing and leveling the land would be extreme.

She’d liked him a little too much despite it not being mutual. He had never flirted, though she’d given him green lights to do so. He’d ignored her

subtle hints that she had been interested.

He'd claimed his work didn't allow time off and had wanted her to show him properties after hours. She probably would have been terrified of meeting a man in such remote locations at night but her attraction to him had made her shove common sense aside.

A memory surfaced in her mind. They'd been surveying a parcel of land after dark and she'd been distracted, a little unnerved by the odd request that she show it to him at night but there had been something about Chase that she couldn't resist. Something different...

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She never saw the tree root and nearly fell. A strong arm wrapped around her waist and she was in the circle of his arms, held against his body.

"Careful." His deep voice was sexy.

"I don't know how you see anything. Wouldn't it be better to return in the morning?"

"The moon is almost full and I have great eyesight."

She grabbed onto his biceps. Her hands didn't come close to encircling the thick muscles. He was strong, much bigger than her, and smelled wonderful.

"I'm almost blind out here." She realized she should release him but he kept hold of her. It seemed only fair to touch him back. She lifted her chin to stare up into his face. She couldn't make out much but she could tell he wasn't looking at her. He had turned his head to the side. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah." His voice came out even deeper. "I told you to wait in your car."

He had, but she'd wanted to spend as much time as possible with her client. There was something about him that drew her. It wasn't just his handsome face. She'd dated men who were good-looking before and had learned the hard way that some of them had less than stellar personalities. It could be how fit and muscular he was. Every woman would notice Chase Woods when he walked into a room. She discarded that as well. It was just *him*. He was sweet, mysterious, and looking into his eyes always did



something funny to her entire body. She'd never been more attracted to a man in her entire life.

"I wouldn't be doing my job if I made you view the properties alone. You might have questions."

He chuckled—a deep, rumbling sound. "Can you identify all the tree varieties? There are plenty of them out here."

Jasmine glanced to the side, seeing nothing more than a lot of dark shapes. "Um, no," she admitted. "I can tell you how long it's been on the market and how much we can haggle on the asking price."

He drew her closer when the wind suddenly picked up, shielding her from it. He really did smell wonderful and she suddenly had an urge to rest her head against his solid chest. Other thoughts came to mind as well. Wild, naughty ones that were shocking. Stripping naked in the woods with a man she barely knew wasn't something she'd ever considered before. It didn't stop the images from filling her head though.

She wanted him to kiss her while lifting her higher into his arms. The skirt she wore would be easy to shove up to her waist after she discarded her panties. Chase was strong enough to hold her up during sex. His jeans would be simple to unsnap to free his cock and then nothing would be between them. They'd be skin to skin. Her knees weakened slightly just imagining the way he'd feel entering her body.

Chase suddenly stepped back and his arms were gone from her body, leaving her feeling cold and sexually frustrated.

"I've seen enough." He cleared his throat. "I'll take it. Let's get back to your office and draw up an offer." He was brusque after that.

The next day, Chase agreed to the seller's first counteroffer. The paperwork was finalized for the sale and he refused to allow her to take him to dinner to celebrate his purchase. It hurt. The warmth and friendliness was gone. He was cold and withdrawn once their business was concluded.

The attraction was so powerful that it was almost unsettling. She couldn't stop wishing he'd call and ask to see her again.

It just hadn't ever happened. That had been the last time she'd seen Mr. Woods but his memory lingered in her dreams. It explained why her imagination would bring him into her nightmare.

His voice drew her out of her memories and back into the hellish basement...

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“Hurry up,” he demanded. “I don’t want to be here all night.”

That sexy voice was one she’d never forget. It still made the feminine parts of her respond. It was whiskey and honey, husky but full of strength. A bitter laugh threatened to burst forth. She was dying and her mind had decided to create more fantasies that included him. It beat fixating on the horrific way her life would end.

The slats in the door were wide enough to watch him cross the room to retrieve a shovel. She reached to touch the rough wood, wishing she could get closer. The chain jerked her in place when the length, shackled to her wrist, pulled taut. The cuts, caused by her struggles to wiggle free, hurt enough to make her whimper.

Mr. Woods suddenly spun her way. She couldn’t see his face in the shadows but his blue eyes seemed to glow and he was looking right at her. He dropped the shovel and headed toward the wall. She froze in place, barely breathing, as he crouched on the other side. The change in the color of his irises was stunning, only strengthening her belief that it was just her mind playing tricks.

“Hi,” she got out, not caring if she was talking to a figment of her imagination. Her voice came out rough, dry, and it hurt. She’d kill for a sip of water.

His eyes definitely radiated blue as they widened and his fingers suddenly dug between the slats. Wood snapped when he yanked hard, tearing it away.

“Son of a bitch.” His tone deepened into a snarl, his anger clear.

Jasmine swallowed, trying to stay in the fantasy. It beat the alternative. “Did you ever build those condos?” She wanted to wince at how horrible her voice sounded. It seemed pretty pathetic to screw up a daydream.

“Jasmine?” He leaned closer, a dark shadow.

He gently gripped her upper arms. It still hurt but she didn’t pull away. He had big hands and the warmth of them was worth the pain. His glowing

gaze traveled down her body where she sat in the dark, cramped space, before lifting to meet hers.

“I’ll get you free.” One hand released her and he magically withdrew a knife from his long coat. “Hang on.”

His other hand dropped away to grip the shackle on her wrist. It hurt enough to make her cry out but he didn’t stop. The tip of the metal stabbed the lock and he flicked his wrist. The shackle parted, releasing her. He tossed it aside and the chain fell to the dirt next to her knee. He repeated the process to free her from the other restraint.

“Come here.” The knife disappeared into his coat and his arms opened. “Crawl to me. I don’t want to drag you out.”

Every movement hurt but she managed to shift to her knees, careful of the low roof of the storage area she’d been confined inside. He backed up enough to give her room. She straightened the second she was clear and threw her arms around his broad shoulders. Her breasts were smashed against warm cotton and a firm torso.

His soft, silky hair was down now, testament to him being a fantasy. The real man had always kept it secured in a leather tie at the base of his neck. She’d always wanted to see how it would look free from that confinement.

Strong, thick arms wrapped around her waist. She breathed him in instead of the atrocious stench she’d adjusted to. Her nose buried into the long strands of his hair. “You smell so good.”

His massive body tensed.

“Don’t let me go.” She didn’t mind dying if she could just hold onto the memory of him. It meant she wasn’t alone, despite it not being real. “Please. Don’t leave me.”

He drew her closer by tightening his hug. “I’ve got you, Jasmine.”

She wished that were true. “I’m glad it’s you.”

He stroked her back. “You’re safe.”

Exhaustion took hold as his warmth surrounded her. Her eyes closed as she clung to him and the fantasy that had brought him.

Chase softly cursed as the woman in his arms turned limp. He could hear her steady heartbeat as he lifted her more securely into his arms. He stood and turned to stare at the wolves. One of them spoke.

“What do we do with her? Can you wipe her memory? It would be a shame to kill her after all she’s survived but there may be no choice.”

Chase hesitated. “She’s none of your concern. Clean this up and remove all evidence of what happened. I’m taking her somewhere safe. There’s been enough death here.”

He strode out of the basement with Jasmine cradled in his arms. He’d liked the sweet, soft-spoken woman a little too much. She’d bravely met him—a stranger—at night to show him possible sites for the pack to roam. She’d also easily bought into his lies, making it possible to avoid altering her thoughts. He’d found her attractive and had picked up her very subtle hints that she was interested, but he’d ignored every one. She was the type of woman he’d destroy. He refused to allow that to happen, despite the way his body had reacted to Jasmine. He’d never allow harm to befall her, even if that meant he was the one she needed to be protected from. Of course, now everything had changed.

“Chase?”

He clenched his teeth as the shadow near the front door moved. Arry stepped into his path, her green eyes narrowed. She shouldn’t be there, yet she was. Irritation flashed as he stared back at her, knowing she’d purposely arrived in hopes of him needing her somehow. It was never going to happen.

“Open it and move.”

“Who is she? Dinner?” A pink tongue darted out to swipe ruby-red lips. “Not very appealing.”

A growl of anger burst forth before he could halt his instinct. Arry might actually mean her words. He and Arry were as different as night and day. “Do as you’re told. She’s a survivor.”

“Not for long. She’s circling the drain.”

He trusted Arry’s sense of smell better than his own. She was older. “Get the door,” he snapped. “You’re visiting my territory and you’ll do as you’re told.”

“Fine.” She opened it wide, stepping out of his way. “You should let me drain her and just end it. She’s got twelve hours at most.”

Not if Chase had anything to do about it. He glanced around, certain no one watched. His senses didn’t tingle as he strode to his car and gently

adjusted Jasmine in his hold as he situated her in the passenger seat and closed the door. He paused at the driver's door to peer over the top of the car. Arry stood silent, her blonde hair white under the street lights.

"Help them clean up that mess inside."

"I'm here to see you, not dispose of rogue kill."

"It's an order. Do it or leave my territory."

"So forceful." Arry smiled. "I always liked that about you." She stepped closer, running her fingers over the curves of her breasts on their way to hug lean hips. "I'd rather help you."

The meaning was clear and he was tired of it. "Go help them or just leave, Arry. There's no reason for you to be here. Do as I say or I'll have to escort you out of my territory by force."

He climbed inside the car and started the engine. Chase didn't miss the way the blonde stormed back into the house. She was going to be a problem but she had been since her arrival a week before. Arry had always been determined and selfish about getting her way. She was set on him.

He pulled away from the curb, darting glances at the unconscious woman in the next seat. She was too pale, had lost weight since he'd last seen her, and Chase decided Arry was correct—Jasmine wouldn't survive the next day unless he saved her life.

"Shit."

The vampires in the area might have a problem with him taking in a human. They posed a threat but the werewolf pack wasn't strong enough to win a challenge if anyone protested. He'd kill any vampires who attacked. That would definitely piss off his two bosses, Blaron and Lethal, but they wouldn't be a problem. They were friends.

Taking Jasmine to the club wasn't an option. She would need his full attention while she recovered and he didn't want to deal with any bullshit. He headed to the place he kept on the sly. No one would find him until he decided how to deal with the consequences of what he planned to do. One more glance to his right assured him that the woman clung to life. He refused to allow Jasmine to die.

The long driveway was cracked from years of purposeful neglect to give it an abandoned appearance but the small light on the entry pad remained on when he stopped the car. He punched in the code and the gate blocking his

path slowly wobbled to the side. He drove through and up to the two-story hillside house.

As he lifted Jasmine out of the car he sensed a presence behind him. One sniff assured him it was Jenny. He didn't look back as he spoke.

"We have a guest."

"Is she one of us?"

He disliked being questioned but he had a soft spot for his half sister. "No."

"I smell vampire and death all over her. Is she turning?"

"No. She's just a human victim and a special friend."

"She's in bad shape."

"I know." He kicked the car door closed and quickly walked up the porch steps. "Open the door and prepare a bath in my room. I'm also going to need blood."

Jenny darted around him and threw open the front door. "Okay."

He went inside and turned, carrying his light burden down the basement steps, and paused near the wine racks. Jenny gripped two bottles, pushing them deeper into their slots to trigger the panel. The wall soundlessly slid open, revealing a hallway. He strode down it to his bedroom.

He laid Jasmine across the end of his bed and began undressing her. There wasn't much to remove. The sight of the bruising and bites on her pale form once again made him regret killing the rogue too quickly. He'd deserved to suffer.

"The tub is filling." Jenny paused. "Do you want me to wash her?"

It was tempting but Jasmine was his responsibility. "No. Do what I said. Bring me the blood. She'll need clothing when she wakes."

"I don't have anything sexy."

He growled, whipped his head in her direction and glared at her. "She's not my lover. Bring her one of those large nightshirts you wear. That will do. Go."

"Sorry." Her gaze dropped in submission. "You said special friend. I assumed wrong."

Jenny rushed off without another word. Chase slid his hands under Jasmine and lifted her into his arms again. It was going to be torture to his

libido to bathe her. He avoided looking at her breasts or other tempting sights. It seemed a violation of his duty to notice those things while she was so near death.

“You’re going to be fine,” he promised.

## Chapter Two

Jasmine was warm and something smelled wonderful. She tried to turn on her side but something held her firm. Her eyes opened to soft lights around her and a face hovered just over hers.

“Easy,” Chase rasped. “You’re safe.”

Memory returned. She was delusional, fantasizing that her sexy client had come to her rescue. His eyes were an incredible mocha brown with swirls of blue, as striking as his handsome, tan face. He had the best lips. They were full and lush, the kind she guessed would be wonderful to kiss. Chase Woods was a guy who probably did everything really well.

She lay on something soft and comfortable with her upper body slightly elevated so her head was higher than her legs. Dirt no longer clung to her skin from lying on the basement floor. It took effort to look away from Chase to glance at her surroundings. The room was spacious and a fire burned in a brick-rimmed fireplace. The bed she rested on was large with silky black sheets. She stared at Chase again.

“You need to help me help you.”

“Okay.” She would do anything he wanted as long as it kept her mind from returning to the hellish nightmare of the dank basement.

His eyes fascinated her. She remembered them being dark brown but they were lighter now and the hints of bright blue were an odd combination. More of the vibrant color flared, spreading as she watched until they glowed as if they were sapphires.

He took a deep breath and parted his lips. The sight of sharp canines made her gasp. They were long, terrifying fangs. The arm around her waist tightened.

“Don’t fight. I won’t hurt you.”

He lifted his other arm and she watched in rapt horror while he bit into his wrist. Chase jerked his mouth away and shoved the wound at her open mouth. Warm skin and blood touched her lips and tongue. It was instinct to



twist away but the arm at her waist lifted and his hand fisted into her hair to hold her head in place.

“Stop fighting and drink.”

It was as if she lost her will to do anything else. She was aware of swallowing the warm substance. It grossed her out but she didn't gag as she continued to do as he ordered. His voice sounded deeper and her daydream had turned into an entirely new nightmare.

“This will heal you. You've lost a lot of blood and some of your internal organs have begun to shut down. You're safe, Jasmine. You know me.” His eyes narrowed. “I'm sorry I have to force you, but this is for the best.”

He finally pulled his wrist away and licked it. The second he broke eye contact, she regained control of her body. She tried to twist away again but he held her firmly by the hair. She managed to wipe at the wetness on her mouth with her hand. Red blood smeared across her fingers.

A soft gasp drew her attention from the sight of it. A pretty woman with dark hair stood a few feet from the bed with wide eyes and a gaping mouth. “You're sharing your blood with her? You can't do that!”

Chase stared at the brunette. “Did you bring the blood?”

“Yes. It's on the table. I thought it was for you.”

“This is none of your concern. Leave.”

“How can you say that? You should have asked me first.”

“This is my house.” His voice deepened into a snarl. “You're welcome to move out if you have a problem.”

The woman spun and fled the room. Jasmine stared at Chase when he met her gaze. *Is that his girlfriend? Wife?* He seemed to guess her thoughts.

“That's my sister. I just surprised her but she'll adjust to you being here.”

“What is going on?” Jasmine hated how soft her voice sounded, a near whisper.

“You were attacked by a rogue vampire but you're safe now. This is my home.” He picked up a warm, wet washcloth and dabbed gently at her fingers. He then cleaned away the blood on her face. “It's your home now too.”

She wasn't sure what alarmed her the most. *Did he say vampire?* It would explain his fangs and that he'd made her drink blood. *What does he mean—it's my home too?* Fear edged up her spine but it wasn't as bad as being chained inside a basement with a homicidal madman.

"Your eyes..."

"Easy," Chase rasped, dropping the washcloth on a side table. He leaned in and cupped her cheek, brushing his thumb along her hairline. "I know this is a lot to learn after what you've suffered. I'll answer all your questions."

The first one that came to mind popped out of her mouth. "What are you?"

"I'm a rarity." His hand dropped from her skin but he stayed close. "I'm a mixed breed—werewolf and vampire."

She wondered why all the really handsome men had such major flaws. Chase Woods was nuts. Of course, it wasn't real. "Okay." There was no use arguing with a hallucination.

"That doesn't distress you?" One dark eyebrow arched.

"It would if this were real."

He drew in a deep breath then sighed. "What would it take to convince you it is?"

"I'd be in a hospital if I'd survived and the police had found me. Your eyes would be brown too."

"Humans aren't allowed to know about us. They usually scream and then promptly attempt to kill us. We police our own. The vampire who took you was bad and I was sent to kill him."

"So you're a vampire hunter?" She must have watched too many movies to create this fantasy. "With magical eyes?"

"I'm an enforcer."

"Nicer title."

Chase really was a good-looking man when he grinned. "Yes."

"Okay."

"You're being very agreeable."

"This beats reality. It isn't the kind of dream I usually have about you though."

Interest sparked in his eyes. "You dream about me?"

"All the time. You're hot, Chase. I flirted but you ignored me. I don't blame you," she went on. "I drove by that Goth club you work at a few times and saw some of the women going inside. They all looked like strippers, lingerie models or porn stars...and I don't."

"I don't date any of them." His hand returned and he stroked her cheek with his thumb. "You're much more attractive to me than any of those women."

Jasmine laughed. Her body didn't ache anymore and she felt good. "Now I know this is a dream. That's such a load of bullshit."

He grew solemn. "Never put yourself down."

"I'm not. My boobs are real, I like to eat, and no one is ever going to want to pay me to be on film without my clothes. I'm more of the girl-next-door type."

"Exactly. There's a sweetness about you that I find very appealing. You fascinate me."

"I would say you must lead a very boring life but I know better. Your club has a reputation for being pretty wild."

"It's not technically my club. I just work there, running security."

"Ah. Do you get tired of patting down all those super-skinny girls? Are they too bony?"

He chuckled, his eye color fading to brown. "Let's just say I prefer someone with curves and a personality. Those women didn't last long the few times I attempted relationships."

"You dumped them?"

He leaned back and stopped touching her. "No. They couldn't handle my lifestyle."

"Jealousy." She could understand that. "It would be tough knowing you were hanging around all those women with your looks. You must get hit on often." She paused, unable to resist. "You admitted to being part dog." She laughed at the joke. He didn't.

"You're almost fully recovered."

He took her hand to study her wrist. Jasmine looked too and the ugly injuries from the shackles she'd fought were gone. Pink, healthy skin

appeared unmarred.

“Very cool dream. I wonder if I can fly.”

His gaze held hers. “No. That’s one thing you can’t do. You’ll be a little bit stronger, faster, and you’ll heal quickly from most injuries.”

“Am I a vampire now?” The concept was intriguing.

“No.”

“You’re almost his mate.” The cold voice belonged to a rail-thin, tall blonde who stepped closer to the bed. Her eyes—fixed on Chase—resembled two chunks of jagged emeralds. “How could you?”

He rose to his feet. “How did you even find this place, Arry?”

“You were so worried about her that you didn’t notice my car trailing yours.” She glanced around. “Tell me you aren’t completing the bond. She’s *human*.”

Jasmine could hear the insult in the other woman’s tone and she looked to Chase for answers. “Who is she? What is she talking about?”

“Leave,” Chase ordered the blonde coldly, ignoring the questions. “You aren’t welcome here, Arry.” He took a threatening step forward. “I told you it wouldn’t happen when you showed up.”

Arry planted her hands on her hips. “Our clans fear us and we’re alone. It’s a given that we’ll mate.”

“We’re not feared. We’re pitied. Our vampire traits make it more difficult to mate in the wolf way.” He paused. “I chose her. There’s nothing for you here.”

Arry chewed on her bottom lip. “It’s easier if we mate.”

“I want to be happy.”

“Sex would be good between us.”

“It’s not enough.”

Arry glanced at Jasmine. “What can she give you that I can’t?”

“Her thoughts were easy to read. She’s sweet and funny.” He paused. “Smart. Honest. She’s everything I want in a mate.”

Jasmine slid out of bed and walked to Chase. One glance down her body revealed a frumpy, faded nightshirt that hit just above her knees. It was comfortable, covered her for the most part, though she’d never seen it

before in her life. Her attention returned to Chase and she tapped his shoulder. He turned, peering down at her. His eyes were blue again.

“You read my mind?”

“It’s a vampire trait. I can only read surface thoughts, but yes.”

“She isn’t even sure this is reality.” Arry chuckled. “It’s too crazy to be real. That’s what she’s thinking. That and something about infection from the bites. I see the attraction is mutual. She thinks you’re incredibly hot but your eyes are confusing her.”

Jasmine was stunned as she looked at the blonde. The dream was becoming more than a little disconcerting. “Stay out of my head.”

“It’s real. He saved you from that basement and healed your wounds. Vampires and werewolves do exist. His eyes change color when he’s angry, turned-on, or using our special traits.” Arry opened her mouth, fangs extending. “See? The better to bite with. You’re beginning to believe. You’re afraid.”

It was true. Everything seemed too real and denial was great but it could only last for so long. Jasmine dropped her hand and backed away from Chase as fear crept up her spine until the hairs at the base of her neck stood on end. He reached for her but she jumped out of the way to avoid his touch.

“Trouble in paradise.” The blonde snorted. “Wipe her memories and send her home.” She approached Chase. “Mate me. We’re the same.”

His head snapped forward. “We aren’t. Leave, Arry. Return to wherever you came from. We’ll never be mates.”

“We’re in a world that has no place for our kind.” She paused. “Vampires don’t trust us completely, regardless of your faith in them. While your little wolf pack tempts me to try to find one of my own, you know you only rule them because they fear your strength. They’d chop you into pieces if given the chance because you aren’t truly one of them. I catch some of their thoughts, the way you must too when their guards are down. It has to be tiring to always worry they will come at you. I’d have your back and you’d have mine.”

“My friends and pack are none of your business. I’d be more worried, if I were you, that they’ll come after you. They swore allegiance to me. You’re just a visitor who refuses to follow orders. Watch your own back and

get out of my house. Never return here or reveal the location. I'll hunt you down and kill you if you do."

Jasmine watched them stare at each other as more chills ran down her spine. It was obvious the two weren't friends, not even close, and the dangerous vibes pouring from Chase were strong enough for her to feel. The room seemed to grow colder as the seconds passed.

The blonde raised her hands in defeat. "I'll go but call me after this blows up in your face. No human is going to accept and love you for what you truly are. She's already frightened and it hasn't yet fully sunk in."

Arry spun around but hesitated by the open doorway, turning her head to peer at him. "Your den is safe. I'd never betray you regardless of the stupid mistakes I believe you make." She glanced at Jasmine, then retreated.

Chase watched Arry go and faced Jasmine. She'd backed into the corner by the fireplace. He knew her thoughts centered on using the fire poker as a weapon if he attacked. He wanted to assure that wouldn't happen.

"I'd never hurt you."

"You're really part vampire and werewolf?"

"Yes."

"How?"

She was too cute. Part of her wanted to bolt but she was also very curious. Her strong attraction to him helped. She'd fantasized about him often since they'd met. He could read all that as he concentrated on her thoughts. It would be easy to force her to agree to mating him but once the bond took, she'd have free will. It would be a bad way to start their future together. It was also forbidden.

"My parents had sex." She frowned, not appreciating his attempt at humor. "My father was a vampire, my mother a werewolf and vampire half-breed."

"Vampires don't have kids. They can't."

"You read that in a book."

"Yes."

"I don't sparkle or burst into flames in the sun. I bet you read that too." He continued before she could voice her thoughts. "I don't shift into a wolf.

My bloodlines aren't pure enough. I don't have a tail, nor do I howl at the moon when it's full. I don't kill people to drink blood but yes, I need it. We buy it from blood banks. There are always employees willing to make some extra income by selling contaminated blood instead of destroying it."

"Contaminated?"

"We can't catch human diseases. Contaminated blood doesn't affect us. They can't use it on humans so they believe they are helping medical research by selling it and reinvesting the profit."

Her lips parted.

"We set up a fake research company with a small office for deliveries. It avoids suspicion."

"You really drink blood?"

"Yes. You will too after we mate."

"That's gross."

He fought to hide his amusement when she purposely refused to acknowledge the part about mating. "You'd only drink mine. I promise you'll enjoy it." His dick hardened thinking about her at his neck or chest, taking from him while he fucked her.

"Why? I mean, if you want to turn me into a vampire, couldn't I drink anyone's blood?"

She was so enchanting and had inner strength he respected. His words disturbed her, she was afraid, but she was attempting to be brave. "I don't want you to be fully vampire. You couldn't withstand the sun. My blood will protect you from having that weakness."

"Because you're also a werewolf?"

It was difficult to follow her thoughts. Many of them were streaming so quickly he could only catch a word or two. Jasmine was smart, something he already knew. She was trying to make sense of it all, using books she'd read and logical guesses to fill in the blanks.

"Exactly."

Mate. That word kept popping into her thoughts and he concentrated harder, attempting to focus on just the ones on that subject. Mate. Sex. God, he's hot. It wouldn't be so bad. Who am I kidding? The guy would probably blow my mind with sex if he didn't suck me dry of blood and kill me first.

“I barely know you. I need to think about this,” came out of her mouth.

*I love his eyes, regardless of what color they are. And his chest. He's so big. I wonder if he's one of those guys who are all muscle because he uses steroids. Did it shrink his package to a tiny size? Don't you dare glance at his crotch. He's watching and he'd notice. That would be so embarrassing. Are you kidding? Who cares about that? He says he's a vampire who is also a werewolf. Of course, I'd have to be attracted to him, right? Of all the men to pick to obsess over. Good going, Jas. Oh my god. How can this be real? Do I run? Scream? Fight? What the hell do I do? I'm so out of my league. Shit! He's staring at me and his eyes are glowing again. Can he really read my mind? That disturbs the hell out of me. Who could date someone like that? There'd be no privacy at all. What relationship could survive that? Shit. I think he is reading my mind. La, la, la, la, la. Does that even work? Maybe I should start singing nursery rhymes. I know I'd want to get the hell out of my head if I had to hear them.*

Chase shielded her thoughts to prevent them from reaching him. He had expected her reservations about becoming his mate but not how bothered she'd be by his ability to read her mind. He decided to make it clear there really wasn't a choice. She was logical. “Your life was already taken. It belongs to me now.”

He regretted the words instantly when she lunged at the weapon, waving the curved point of the poker at him. It was the wrong approach.

“Get back!”

“Sweetheart, you couldn't hurt me with that.” To prove his point, he moved fast, removing it from her hold before she could gasp. One arm wrapped around her waist and hoisted her off her feet to pin her against the wall. “The important part is that we'll be together.”

Her hands flattened on his chest as her eyes widened with fear. He hated her reaction but could understand. He dropped the poker and slid his fingers into her hair to protect her head from the bricks if she attempted to pull back.

“Let me go.”

“I can't. You're mine, Jasmine. I wanted you when we met but I didn't want to introduce you to the darker side of life. Someone else did that when you were taken.”

“You could make me forget it all, couldn't you?”



“Yes.” He lowered his gaze to her mouth, wanting to kiss it. “But you were almost killed. It could happen again. I’m not willing to risk that. I wanted you and destiny brought us together for a second time for a reason.” His gaze held hers.

“Destiny? You believe in that?”

“Yes.” He was tempted to read her again but resisted. It made him feel guilty, considering she was probably singing *Old McDonald* or some other childhood song inside her head right now, believing it would protect her from that invasion of privacy.

“I don’t.”

“Not yet, but I’ll convince you.”

“I don’t think you can.”

“Kiss me.”

He’d show her there was passion between them. It had always been there but he’d resisted it when they’d spent those four evenings together. Seeing her in that basement, understanding how close she’d come to death, changed that. She was everything he’d always wanted but she deserved better than living in a dark world. She could have died and good intentions be damned.

The second her mouth parted to voice a protest, he was there. Jasmine’s lips were as soft as they looked when he covered them. She gasped but his tongue muffled the sound as he asserted his dominance to his mate. White-hot fervor rolled through him when she kissed him back, her hands fisting his shirt. The animal side of him snarled, wanting to claim her.

## Chapter Three

No one had ever kissed Jasmine the way Chase did. It wasn't just lips coming together. Her entire body seemed affected by each thrust of his tongue against hers. A spark of warmth turned into a burning need that flared to life and slowly spread to her lower belly. His fingers tangled in the hair at the base of her neck and tugged her head back to gain better access. Carnal images were forced into her mind.

She clawed at his shirt, tearing at the fabric in desperate need to feel skin. One of her legs wrapped around his waist to hook over his muscular ass. It was as if pure lust poured out of him and into her. Jasmine couldn't get close enough—rubbing against him, she moaned. She'd gone from frightened to burning alive with sexual need.

Her back flattened against the wall as Chase's body pressed tighter to her front. His pelvis ground between her thighs, rubbing his trapped, stiff cock along the seam of her panties.

The nightshirt she wore rode up, only the thin barrier separating them. The rigid length of his cock brushed back and forth, heightening her desire to feel him inside her. It was insane yet it all made sense. She didn't want to question—just feel.

This was the guy she'd fantasized about almost nightly. He had been a gentleman, holding her hand while they'd traipsed around woods in the dark, and he'd always opened her car door when she'd met him. He made her laugh with his quick wit. Chase had been mysterious with his short replies about his personal life but he was a good man. She'd known the difference after dealing with a lot of clients who hit on her at the first opportunity. Not once had he made her uncomfortable or afraid.

It had been the complete opposite instead. She'd felt safe with Chase—protected and comfortable. He was smart, talking about books he'd read and current events. They had things in common. He loved to watch the same action films she did and enjoyed cooking. He'd listened to her as if what she

said mattered and he was attentive. She'd just really liked him. It had been disappointing when he hadn't asked her out after she'd dropped hints that she'd welcome more time spent together. And his package was impressive, not small at all.

His hips slowly rocked against her clit, drawing her closer to climax. It felt so good she almost bit him when the pleasure grew too strong. He seemed to know it too as he tore his mouth away to shift attention to the column of her neck instead. Hot, wet kisses trailed from under her ear to the top of her shoulder where the nightshirt stopped him from going lower.

Teeth raked her sensitive skin and she moaned louder. She was pretty sure those were fangs and they felt amazing. He could bite into her but no fear rose over that concept. Instead she almost wanted to feel them just for the sake of knowing anything of his was inside her.

He untangled his hand from her hair, gripped the nightshirt and shoved it higher as he adjusted his body to put space between their hips. A slight tug was the only warning before her panties were ripped away. She opened her eyes to watch them sail across the room. It was a speak-now-or-this-is-happening moment as he worked his zipper open to free his cock. She wasn't a virgin and knew silence implied consent.

She wanted Chase Woods. Right or wrong, crazy or not, she wasn't going to say no. He didn't do what she expected. Instead of entering her, his fingers explored her sex. She was wet and ready but he pressed his thumb over the bundle of nerves, drawing circles over her clit. She moaned louder as the pleasure grew more intense, digging her fingernails into his shirt where she clutched at his shoulders to help support her weight, which he held with one arm. It seemed easy for him.

"Jasmine," he rasped, slightly out of breath. "Say yes."

"Yes!"

She had wanted him for a long time—too long. It had taken months for her to abandon all hope that he'd call to ask her on a date. It had been depressing. He wanted her now though, and it wasn't just a one-night stand. He was looking for a mate.

"Wait," she panted, suddenly filled with questions before they went any further. The memory of their past gave her pause.

He growled in frustration but stopped kissing her and his thumb stilled as he pulled his face back until their gazes met. "What?" His eyes narrowed

as he peered deeply into hers. "Yes," he said, obviously reading her mind. "I'm serious about the mating. We'll live together here where you'll be safe. I'll still have my job but you'll never have to worry about me cheating. You'll be it for me, the only one I want." He paused. "How can you be sure? Mates are bonded. You'll be able to read my thoughts and feelings. We'll feel a type of addiction to each other that nothing else can compare to."

"Do you have to keep reading my mind?" She glared at him, irritated. She didn't want to think about that.

"Sorry. I want you too." He adjusted her in his arms, pinning her tightly to the wall again. "I've wanted you since we met and I really need you to agree to spending your life with me." A smile tugged at his lips. "Yes. You'll live a lot longer. We could have hundreds, if not thousands of years together. No, we won't grow bored of each other. The bond won't allow it. The sex will be incredible and we'll be emotionally intertwined. Two becoming one is how it's been explained to me. We'll have our own identities but we will complement each other."

"I'm a little afraid," she admitted. "This is going way too fast."

"I know, but I can't give you the time you want. There's no way you're leaving here without becoming my mate. I almost lost you once and I won't risk it. You're too vulnerable as a human to return to the outside world. There won't be dinner dates and courtship first to assure you it's the right choice."

"What if I regret it after it's done? We don't know each other that well. Can't you give me a few days? I haven't seen you in almost a year and there was a lot you wouldn't tell me."

A pained expression crossed his handsome features. "You can't leave here but I understand your need for time to make the decision with confidence."

"What do you mean I can't leave?" That alarmed her. Was she a prisoner?

"No, you're not a prisoner," he answered, still seemingly aware of what she was thinking. "It's not safe for you to be anywhere else."

"I have a life, a job." A dozen other objections filled her head. Her friends and family would worry if they didn't hear from her. Who would pay the housekeeper and the gardener? They'd call the police if she went

missing. “You can’t expect me to give up my entire world to live in yours.” It was too much for any sane person to ask of another. “We need to discuss this.”

He glanced down between their bodies and growled. “There is plenty of time for that later. Do I have to keep my hands off you?” He looked up, reading her again. “We make love while sharing blood to mate. I’ll bite you to take yours while you drink mine to seal the mating bond.”

“You already gave me your blood.”

“To heal you. We have to exchange blood and sex at the same time to lock the mate bond.” He ground his hips against her again, this time nothing separated them. “I can’t get you pregnant. We’d have to be mates first for it to take. I don’t need a condom. I don’t have any diseases.”

All her questions and insecurities fled at the feel of Chase’s thick cock sliding against her bare clit when his pelvis pressed against her. Pleasure had her shaking in his hold, clutching him frantically just to keep grounded. He rubbed their bodies together in a slow, erotic dance, their hips rocking together.

She’d worry about the future later. The man she wanted most was making thought impossible as he seduced her. Chase was doing a fantastic job too. Need and desire conquered logic.

“Say yes.” His husky demand against her ear was too sexy. “Let me in.”

She couldn’t speak, too overcome with passion, but she managed a sharp nod. She wanted him and no way would she deny the sexual chemistry and mind-blowing orgasm he silently promised.

He kept moving, torturing her with each stroke of his rigid flesh sliding against her clit. He felt big, extremely hard, and knew how to take a woman to the edge of losing her mind enough to beg. It was on the tip of her tongue to do just that when he shifted her a little higher.

“Wrap your legs around my waist.”

She adjusted her thighs higher, wishing to feel skin instead of his shirt. Part of her regretted they weren’t naked. It would mean halting what he was doing though, separate to strip, and she was too close to coming to do that. She ached from the need and wasn’t strong-willed enough to find patience. She had none when it came to Chase Woods.

He growled low, an animalistic sound that just turned her on more. It reminded her that he wasn't all human. It wasn't a deterrent. Instead it just heightened the desire for him to take her. His pelvis shifted away but then he was back. The broad crown of his cock nudged against her wet vaginal opening and paused.

She wiggled, rolling her hips with him poised there, wanting him. "Chase," she urged. "Please?"

"There's no going back," he swore in that same rough tone. "You're mine."

He suddenly shifted and grabbed her ass with both his big hands while his hips slowly thrust upward. Jasmine moaned at the feel of him entering her. He was as wide as she'd estimated and the feel of being stretched and taken was all-consuming. She was wet, ready, and the nerve endings inside her pussy sent ecstasy straight to her brain as his cock completely filled her. It barely registered that she cried out his name.

"Fuck," he snarled. "I knew it."

She wondered what that meant somewhere in the back of her mind but then he was moving inside her, withdrawing, slamming home deep, over and over. There was nothing but their heavy breathing, sounds of their bodies slapping together, and the eager need to reach that wonderful place they both sought. It hit Jasmine first, the climax tearing through her with such force she wondered if she'd survive. Her body trembled and Chase followed when her vaginal muscles clamped around him, fluttering from her release.

"Son of a bitch," he panted, his body shaking too.

She felt him coming. Strong jets of semen filled her. She could feel every blast as he groaned and his face buried against her throat. It just drew out her own climax and she was sure he felt a little bigger, as if that were possible. His thrusts tightened into sharp jerks.

Chase barely remained on his feet. It was a miracle his knees hadn't buckled but he'd been too afraid of Jasmine getting hurt if they crashed to the floor. She was his weakness in every sense, both physically and emotionally, the way he felt with her in his arms.

He'd known she was special the moment they'd met and those indications had grown with every minute they'd spent together while searching prospective properties. It had been tough walking away from her when their business concluded but she'd been too sweet to horrify by introducing her into his world.

He'd chosen to let her go rather than damage her sweet innocence about all things Others. It would have been impossible to hide his true nature from her if they'd dated. He wouldn't have been able to keep his hands off her and she would have noticed when his eyes changed color and his fangs grew during the heat of passion. Making her forget by controlling her mind had been an option but long-term exposure to memory wipes could damage her sanity.

The rogue had changed all that. She could have died and Chase wouldn't allow it to happen again. Her job put her at risk of meeting unpleasant strangers and giving them opportunity to harm her when they were alone. He should have seen it coming but had been too focused on protecting her from the harsh reality that humans were lower on the food chain than they assumed.

Any residual doubts of her being his mate were gone. His werewolf traits weren't usually dominant but they had flared to life with a vengeance. The animal inside him recognized her for who she was—his. His dick was aching, swollen still—even after coming so hard—and wouldn't be leaving Jasmine's snug pussy any time soon. *I get it*, he told that part of himself. *She's mine. I'm paying attention so you don't have to lock inside her.*

It was tough to turn around and walk to the bed. He really did feel shaky and weak. It was another symptom of her being his mate. Nature's way of bitch slapping the toughest of his kind came with physical symptoms to emphasize it, making them realize they weren't complete without someone to share their lives with.

He stretched out on the mattress with Jasmine on top of him. She didn't protest, just shifted her legs to the sides of his. Her rapid breathing slowed as she recovered and he yanked up the nightshirt to stroke his fingers down her back and ass. She had a nice one and he'd marked it up a little when he'd gripped her too firmly. His blood inside her would assure there'd be no bruising but the red imprints of his hold were there when he lifted his head to peer down.

*Bastard.* He should have taken her on the bed, made love to her instead of nailing her against the wall. She deserved better but he'd denied himself far too long. He'd tried being noble by resisting his attraction to her. *No more.* He'd never forget seeing her in that basement with torn flesh where she'd been bitten, her wrists raw and bleeding, and how she'd trembled in his arms when he'd held her. One more day and she wouldn't have survived. He hadn't even known she'd been in trouble.

*I should have kept tabs on her. I should have watched out for her. I should have— Fuck!* He'd left her exposed to danger is what it boiled down to. She was his mate and he'd been too stubborn to admit the reality of it. He'd shrugged it off as strong attraction and nothing more. Seeing her so near death had been an instant wake-up call.

"How are you?" He nuzzled her cheek.

"Good."

He loved her voice, so feminine and pleasant to his ears. Her skin was soft and she had the sexiest curves. One hand slid to her hip, giving it a gentle squeeze. His mate wasn't bony the way most werewolves and vampires tended to be. She'd been right about the women who frequented the club. They were too perfect, thanks to their bloodlines. Or because of plastic surgery, if they were groupies there for the thrill of living dangerously. The humans thought it was just a place to meet rich, handsome men in the Goth scene and were interested in having sex with them in hopes of a fun time or a benefactor. They weren't aware they were volunteering to be late night snacks for any vamp whose eye they caught.

Jasmine was all his, perfect just the way she was, and he'd make sure that didn't change. He could protect her by keeping her hidden inside his den. No way did he plan to expose her to the people he knew. His vamp bosses were trustworthy but other vampires were pricks. They viewed humans as the weaker species, only good for drinking and fucking. There were rules in place to stop them from killing for either purpose but she'd view vamps as monsters. He could relate. Sometimes he hated their cold indifference to anyone they believed was inferior.

He cringed when thinking about his pack. He'd never intended to become their leader but they'd smelled the wolf inside him. Their alpha had challenged him the moment he'd taken the job as head of security at the



club, refusing to take orders or back down. He'd had to kill the idiot when he'd refused to submit.

Some of the females in the pack aggressively pursued Chase. He wasn't interested, but Jasmine wouldn't easily be accepted as his mate. He could think of two bitches who would challenge her for the right of being at his side. *Not going to happen.* He'd walk away from the pack, his job, everything just to keep Jasmine safe.

He and his sister would protect her if Arry ever gave away the location of his secret den. It was doubtful it would happen. They had too much in common, came from the same clan in Alaska, and while she was a pain in the ass, he didn't count her as a threat. She just annoyed him by believing they should settle for each other as mates. He'd set her straight.

Jasmine stirred on his chest and raised her chin. Uncertainty shone in her direct stare. He easily read all her concerns. It was good that she was taking all this better than he had guessed she would. Screaming and crying had been options he'd considered.

"You're safe here with me. I'd never allow anyone or anything to hurt you."

"What do you really want from me?"

It was a tough question. The answer would scare her. *Everything.* "Your life as you knew it is gone. The rogue might have friends and he was recently turned. That means he has a master. I didn't find any indications of anyone else living with him but it's a real possibility that someone is keeping tabs on him. A master would seek revenge. You could become a target."

Dismayed thoughts hit him in waves. She'd worked hard to buy a house she loved. Her family wasn't close but she worried about never speaking to them again. Real estate was all she knew. Financial concerns came next.

"Enough," he ordered. "I have more money than we could spend. You don't need to work. I know you enjoyed it but it's too dangerous. I am the alpha of a werewolf pack and we're always accepting new members who need homes. You could help find homes for them to avoid becoming bored. You'll be able to call your family and friends sometimes. It would be best if you tell them you fell in love and married someone from another country. I can handle the cell phones to block our location. I'm good at that. Your

house, well, I'm sorry. You'll have to sell it but I think you'll love this one once you take a tour."

"Married?"

She was stunned and it amused him more. "Mated is married. We could have an official ceremony if you want. I'm not opposed. What's a piece of paper and some guy saying words compared to the kind of bond we'll have?"

"I don't know what that means."

"It's deeper than anything you could imagine. You'll learn soon enough though." *Just as soon as she agrees.* He didn't want to rush her but he wanted to seal the bond. He closed down his ability to read her, swamped by how rapidly she could come up with new things to worry about. "It will be fine."

"Says you." She tried to wiggle away but his arms hooked around her waist to hold her secure.

"Kiss me."

"I know how that ends. Are you going to keep seducing me until I agree to stay here?"

It was a great plan. "Maybe." He chuckled. "I could do worse things." He hated the fear that ghosted in her eyes. "It was a joke. You have to believe I'd never hurt you."

"I kind of do but we've spent so little time together and I haven't seen you for all these months. You didn't even call but you want to get married? That's kind of nuts."

"Welcome to my world." He rolled, pinning her under him. She gasped but didn't fight when he lowered his mouth to her throat. "Wrap your thighs around me. You won't regret it."

The swelling had gone down but they were still joined at the hips. He loved being inside her welcoming body. She fit him perfectly, blew his mind, and he wanted her again. Jasmine lifted her thighs to press against his waist and her calves settled across his ass. He began to move slowly, kissing her lips and neck. Her moans of pleasure spurred him on.

*No, seducing her isn't a bad plan at all.* He'd do anything to assure she'd stay and be his. He lifted up slightly, adjusted the angle of his cock sliding in and out of her to make sure the shaft rubbed against the still-

swollen bundle of nerves at the top of her pussy. Louder moans came from her and her vaginal walls clamped tightly around him. He had to fight the pleasure to avoid embarrassment. He was ready to come as if he were an untried teenager again.

Jasmine was so hot, so wet and so his. She was heaven and hell, temptation and salvation. He'd spent a solitary life knowing he'd never fit in with his clan when his vampire bloodlines had become more pronounced. He couldn't shift at all and didn't stand a chance of taking a dominantly blooded mate. They'd fear he wasn't warm enough to love or feel deep emotions, and instead would be fixed on his need for blood. They were wrong. The woman under him was the most important thing in his life and would remain that way until death claimed him.

Her muscles tightened more until he clenched his teeth, fighting to move inside her without losing his control. He leaned in, so his mouth could reach her breast. Suckling on her taut nipple, he used his teeth to nip at her. It was enough to send her over the edge as she cried out, clawing at him with her fingernails. Her pussy milked his shaft until he threw back his head, let go and filled her with his seed.

## Chapter Four

Jasmine woke alone in the big bed. The fire had been tended recently, the flames high and bright in the room. Chase must have covered her with the sheet since the last thing she remembered was him making love to her until she'd passed out. She sat up and glanced around.

The room was big with brick walls and portions of old wood paneling. It was tastefully furnished with dark antiques. The dresser was massive and there was a matching wardrobe. A door to a bathroom was open. The two closed doors next to it were probably closets.

Her wrists were unmarred as she closely studied them. Not even a faded scar from her injuries remained. The infected area on her shoulder where she'd been bitten by the rogue had healed as well. Pink, healthy skin denied any proof of the attack. The other wounds had disappeared too. Chase had healed her.

The handsome man she'd obsessed about was part werewolf, part vampire. It screamed insanity but she believed. She shoved the covers back and put on the nightshirt Chase had relieved her of during one of their bouts of sex. The stone floor was cold under her bare feet as she padded to the bathroom. It was a nice room with a Jacuzzi tub. She longed for a bath but showered instead.

A new toothbrush had been left on the counter for her use. It touched her that Chase had obviously thought about her needs. He'd also left folded clean clothes next to it. She eyed the oversized T-shirt and boxers, assuming they were for her. They hung on her a little due to his size but after brushing her wet hair, she reentered the bedroom. He hadn't returned.

Hunger and curiosity drew her to the bedroom door. She gaped a little at the thick metal door and the locks on it. She gripped the knob, half expecting it to be locked, but it opened without difficulty until she pushed it. The thing was heavy and revealed that instead of just a typical frame,

there were ridges around it as though it could be completely sealed when closed.

The fact that she hadn't been locked in implied she wasn't a prisoner. It stunned Jasmine a little when she realized she was inside a large basement as she followed a hallway to an open doorway. She couldn't remember seeing any windows in Chase's bedroom or bathroom.

A surprise awaited as she realized it wasn't just another doorway at the end of the hall but instead there was a door with a wall on the other side. She pushed the wall, stepped into a basement, and turned to study the wine racks attached to the front of the wall. The bottles were dusty, as if they hadn't been touched in years. When closed, the hallway and bedroom would be concealed to the casual eye. She glanced around. The basement was large, appeared old, and a musty scent hung in the air.

The stairs were solid stone, reminding her of a castle. Part of her feared she wasn't in the town where she'd been raised anymore. There was a black hole in her memory between Chase finding her and reaching his home. Had he taken her out of the country?

The door at the top was metal and thick again. It creaked slightly when she eased it open to peer at a big modern kitchen. Sunlight streamed through a window. She padded over to look out into dense woods.

"You shouldn't be up."

The feminine voice startled her. She spun, gaping at the brunette from the night before whom Chase had claimed to be his sister.

"I'm Jenny. You're Jasmine." She smirked. "I guess 'J' names are popular."

"Where is Chase?"

"He had some business to attend to. He'll be back in a few hours." The woman's gaze dropped to her waist. "Hungry? I can hear your stomach rumbling."

"That's weird." Jasmine regretted saying it the moment the words were out, not wanting to offend.

"You'll adjust to keen hearing once you're fully mated. It will enhance your senses all around." Jenny pointed to a table. "Have a seat. I hope you don't mind cereal. I don't cook unless my brother demands it."

A hundred questions popped into Jasmine's head but she settled for a few while she watched the woman prepare a quick breakfast. "I could do that myself."

"It's easier if I just do it. You don't know your way around the kitchen yet." Jenny glanced at her. "But you'll need to learn at some point."

"You live here then? Why would Chase tell you to cook? Do you work for him?"

"He's my protector so I do whatever I'm told. It beats living on the streets and he's good to me. He isn't around much but I suppose that will change now that he has you." The woman stared at her.

"Protector?" A few hundred more questions resulted.

"We were asked to leave our clan. Our mother really loved to seek out older vampires, the stronger the better, so we got the vamp genes from them. It made some of the clan nervous, knowing we needed so much blood to survive. Mates don't mind you sinking fangs into them, they kind of get off on it, but they get testy if you drink otherwise. Blood banks weren't around where we come from."

"Where is that?"

"A very remote location in Alaska." Jenny put a bowl of cereal in front of her. "Eat. Ask Chase your questions."

"He's not here," Jasmine pointed out.

"Too bad for your curiosity then. I have things to do outside." Jenny left through the back door.

*So much for us becoming friends.* Jasmine ate, rinsed the bowl and then washed it. She wasn't sure if she was allowed to explore the house but no one had said she couldn't. Chase had mentioned it was her home too.

The first floor of the house was big, obviously a mansion built in the forties from the architectural details. Some were confusing, as if parts of the house had been remodeled sometime in the seventies. The formal dining room was dusty and it seemed no one had used it in a really long time. One door was locked. The living room had more modern furniture and a big screen television. A small sitting room held tons of older leather-bound volumes of books in the built-in shelves. Two bathrooms were located on the first floor and she paused at the steps, peering up the curved staircase to the second floor.

“Please don’t go up there.”

Jenny startled her again and Jasmine spun around. One hand rested on her racing heart. “You scared me. I didn’t hear you come in.”

“I’m quiet. It’s the predator in me.”

“Um, I’m not sure how to respond to that.”

A smile curved the brunette’s lips. She was pretty with blue eyes very similar to Chase’s when they glowed but slightly paler in color. “It’s what we are. We may appear human but never forget things aren’t what they seem.” She jerked her head toward the stairs. “That’s my space up there and I like my privacy. I can’t outright order you to never go to the second floor but I’d appreciate it if you didn’t. Chase doesn’t like to sleep above ground. It’s probably because of what happened twenty years ago after we left Alaska.”

“What happened?”

“Vampires attacked us. They knew what we were and tried to kill us. It was a deadly mistake.” She chuckled. “They sent only five of them after us.”

“Five vampires?” Jasmine was taken aback.

“They should have sent twice that many if they were serious about killing my brother and me.”

“So what does that have to do with sleeping upstairs?”

“They came in through the windows. It was a full breach in the dead of night.” Jenny waved her hand to a chair. “Sit.”

Jasmine took a seat on one of the sofa benches in the entryway. They weren’t the most comfortable things but they were attractive. Jenny sat on the opposite one ten feet away.

“I refuse to give up having a real bedroom with windows, fresh air and sunshine. My brother feels more secure underground. Less points of entry in case of another attack. That’s where he lives most of the time. Under that club he works at they supposedly have a lot of chambers, but it’s rumors. It’s not as though he’s ever taken me there so I’m not certain if it’s true.”

“You don’t like the club where he works?”

“It’s owned by two vampires.” Jenny watched her as if she were something fascinating. “Did you meet my brother there?”

“No. I was his realtor.”

Jenny studied her. “I’m glad. I’d hate to think he’d accept leftover goods.”

“What does that mean?” Jasmine wasn’t sure if she really wanted an answer or not.

“The women who frequent that club are playthings for the vamps. They fuck them, bleed them, and mess with their minds so they forget everything but the sex.” She paused. “It doesn’t even mean it’s good sex but they can make them believe it was the best they ever had so they return again and again. It’s how they keep a steady food supply.”

It was a little disturbing. “And Chase?”

“What about him?”

“Does he do that? Have sex and feed from women at the club?”

“Not anymore, if he ever did.” Jenny smirked. “You have no clue about mates, do you?”

“I didn’t even know vampires or werewolves were real until last night.”

“He wouldn’t bond with you if he wasn’t sure you were all he wanted. It’s very rare for a mate to cheat. They’d have to be mentally unstable and heartless. Your pain would become his and vice versa. It’s kind of like shooting yourself in the foot. Isn’t that the saying? The bond amplifies emotions, passion, and nothing else can compare to that. It would be unsatisfactory if he nailed another woman.”

“I’ll take that for a no. Why is Chase’s bedroom hidden? Because of the attack? I saw the fake wall.”

“Yes, it’s to protect him and now you in the event of another attack. There are four inches of steel and concrete surrounding his sleeping area. No one would be able to breach it without a lot of work and time. We have dangerous enemies. Chase and I argue often about my preference to sleep upstairs but he’s not here enough to make me comply with his wishes. I grew up living underground. I won’t continue to do it as an adult just in case a few assholes attack us.”

“Like the rogue vampire who grabbed me?”

“Try Chase’s own pack and the bloodsuckers in this area. He can never allow his guard down around the club members. Lethal and Blaron have



extended Chase their protection as their head of security but not all vamps are sane.”

“I’m confused,” Jasmine admitted. “What does protection from this Lethal and Blaron mean?”

“They are his vampire friends and their protection means they’ve warned other vampires to never target Chase because he’s a mixed breed. That doesn’t mean all of them will listen.”

“Do vampires hate mixed races?”

The other woman licked her lips and clasped her hands on her lap. “We’re stronger in a lot of ways than vampires or werewolves. It means we could kill them. None of them are comfortable with that. Vampires can’t day walk without burning to a crisp, while the sunlight only gives us a tan. They resent that we have that ability and they know he could attack them when they are at their weakest. We can do everything they can do but we’re *more*.”

Jasmine understood. “And the werewolves?”

“We can’t shift but we have all their other abilities, plus the vampire traits. Werewolves respect strength and dominance the most. Any alpha would have to challenge Chase. Most packs living within the cities work for the vamps. The pack would naturally attempt to follow the strongest wolf. Chase’s scent is wolf despite not being a full-blooded one.”

“You said they posed a danger.”

“Chase scares the shit out of them. Any of them would take him out if they were able. They are never going to trust him completely to put them first because he’s not fully wolf, yet they can’t help but follow him.”

“Have any of them attempted to kill him?”

“A few.”

“What happened?”

“Chase killed them first.”

The words were said so simply, without any emotion. A chill ran down Jasmine’s spine. “That’s horrible.”

“It’s survival of the fittest.” Jenny stood. “He’s home.” Her gaze turned. “Hello.”

Chase leaned against the wall just inside the room and appeared to have been there for a while, judging by his relaxed stance. His eyes were another matter, the blue nearly glowing as he regarded his sister with a cold stare.

“What are you doing?”

“Answering her questions.”

A deep growl rumbled from him. “You know better.”

His sister lowered her chin and gaze. “I apologize. I didn’t think you’d mind.”

“Bullshit. You didn’t expect me back so fast and didn’t hear me enter the house. Go upstairs and stay there until dinner. We’d like steaks and you’re cooking.”

“We don’t have any. I bought chicken.”

“Then go back to the store.”

She nodded quickly. “Of course.” Jenny fled up the stairs.

Jasmine got to her unsteady feet, a little afraid and nervous. Chase watched her, unmoving.

“I asked her those questions. Get angry at me if you’re upset.”

One eyebrow arched.

“She’s your sister, not your servant. You go to the store if you want steaks and I’ll cook them.”

It was slightly scary when he pushed away from the wall and stalked closer. He had exchanged his jeans for black leather pants that molded across muscular thighs and lean hips. The black cotton shirt outlined his broad shoulders, chest and thick muscular arms where it stretched tight around his upper body. He stopped a foot away. They almost touched.

Jasmine had to tilt her head to keep eye contact with him, a reminder of how tall he was. Her fear increased as the silence grew uncomfortable. “She didn’t do anything wrong.” Her voice came out soft—a whisper—but she refused to back down the way his sister had. “I had questions and you weren’t here to answer them.”

“Don’t interfere again with Jenny. She knows the rules.”

“Is this how mating works? I’m supposed to do everything you say? Are you going to punish me if I disobey?”

He shook his head. "I already told you I'd never hurt you and you can always speak your mind."

"Good. I planned to, regardless of how you'd react. I'm not the submissive type. You were just a jerk to your sister."

His lips twitched. "I see."

"She said she doesn't work for you but you just treated her as though she does. Worse, actually. I have a housekeeper and I'd never speak to her that way. I'd politely ask her to do something instead of just snap out orders."

"Any other suggestions?"

"There shouldn't be any rules concerning your sister and me talking. This mate thing is like marriage. That's what you said. That would mean she's going to be my sister-in-law if I agree, right?"

"Yes."

"Then there shouldn't be any rules about us talking."

"Fine."

It surprised her that he'd caved so easily. "You mean that?"

"I'm not accustomed to being corrected." Amusement sparked in his eyes. "I apologize."

"I think you should tell that to your sister."

"I will." His hand lifted and fingertips caressed her cheek. "How did you sleep?"

"Great."

"You've eaten."

"How did you know that?"

"By smell. You had cereal with milk."

Jasmine covered her mouth. "Do I have bad breath? I'm sorry."

"I love that brand of cereal and I drink milk."

*And blood.* She wasn't about to forget that. "You really do eat food then?"

He peered into her eyes and she felt something inside her head. It was a faint tingle at the back of her mind.

“Vampires don’t need to eat food but some of them do. They enjoy the taste of it and some believe it keeps them more human to partake in the experience. Werewolves eat a lot of food because they need it to survive. I love my meals and yes, I drink blood as well. I need both.” He paused. “It wouldn’t be good if I didn’t drink blood. My body needs it or there are side effects that would eventually kill me.”

“You’re reading my mind again.” She wasn’t comfortable with it and placed her hand on his chest. It was warm and firm. “Stop.”

“Sorry.” He shrugged. “It’s another adjustment I need to make. It comes naturally to me. I don’t mean to invade your privacy or make you uncomfortable.”

“It’s not fair. I can’t read your thoughts so just stay out of my head.”

“I’ll try.”

“Do you mean that?” The tingling stopped as if something withdrew from her mind. “I felt that!”

“What?” He frowned.

“You probing my head.”

The tingling returned sharply and she pushed at him. “You’re doing it again, aren’t you? Get out.”

He stepped back. “Amazing.”

“Get out!” The tingling stopped.

“You can feel it. It must be my blood inside you.”

“That would do it?” She wondered what else had changed about her.

“Yes. I gave you a lot. You were severely injured. Your organs were shutting down.” His hand wrapped around the back of her neck as he drew closer. “May I attempt something?”

“Stay out of my head.”

“Not that. I want to see if you can read my thoughts.”

“I can’t do that.”

“You might.” He paused. “Close your eyes and clear all thoughts away.”

Jasmine hesitated but then did as he asked. It took her time to push back all the questions she still had. It wasn’t possible to actually read minds but that belief wasn’t set in stone anymore since Chase had proven otherwise.

“Can you hear me?”

“Of course.”

“Damn.”

The deepness of his voice surprised her and she opened her eyes to look at him. “What is wrong? My hearing is fine.”

“Honey,” he whispered, “I didn’t say that aloud.”

“Say what?”

He stared at her.

“Say what aloud?”

His eyes narrowed. *Can you hear me?*

Jasmine gasped, almost tripping on her own feet when she stumbled back. No sound came from Chase but his voice was inside her head all the same.

“I’m shouting in my mind but you heard that, didn’t you?” he asked aloud.

“Yes.”

“It’s my blood. I knew I probably gave you too much.”

“What does that mean?” It was a frightening moment. “Am I turning into what you are?”

Anger tensed his features. “It’s the damn vampire traits.” He suddenly closed the distance and gripped her chin, forcing her head up. His other hand touched her face, pulling down her bottom eyelid for a second. “Shit.”

“What?” Alarm was a mild description for what she felt.

“I gave you too much. You’re slowly turning.”

“Turning into what? What you are?”

“Vampire.”

That wasn’t good. She didn’t need to be told that since he paled and his voice deepened into a snarl. Panic rose but she tried to fight it down, remain calm. Freaking out wouldn’t do anything but make the situation worse.

“I told you that I’d give you time but this changes things. We have to mate or you’re going to actually die.”

“You gave me blood to save me. Now it’s killing me?”

“It would be a vampire death. You won’t remain dead.”

Jasmine didn’t know what to say. Her mouth opened but no words came.

“It means you’ll be totally vampire if we don’t mate.”

“And that’s bad?” *Of course it is.* The shock of what he said made her heart race and her mind wanted to shut down to avoid the unpleasant truth.

“Do you like the sun, honey?”

She nodded, sealing her lips.

“Then yes, it would be bad. Even my blood wouldn’t protect you from burning in the sunlight if we allow you to fully turn. You need more of my blood on a regular basis to keep you alive. You were too drained from that damn rogue. Shit.” He released her, combing his fingers through his hair. “You were too close to death but I didn’t realize this would happen. I thought my blood would just heal you.”

“I don’t want to have to drink blood to survive.” More disturbing consequences filled her thoughts of what it would mean if she became the undead. That one just topped her list of what she’d hate most.

“It would only be mine. We’ve been through this.”

“How long do I have? I feel fine.”

“We need to mate within twenty-four hours. No longer than that or it’s going to be too late. You’ll go into an unnatural death and once your body dies, you will be completely vampire when you wake. I’d prefer we do it right now.”

That wasn’t good at all. Jasmine stared up at him and tried to remain calm. It wasn’t easy. The new world she’d been exposed to was too foreign and she had tough choices to make. Chase made it sound simple—just accept being his mate—but she wanted more time.

*Twenty-four hours.* She could almost hear the ticking of a clock inside her head. “I need to be alone. I need to think this through.”

He didn’t appear happy with her request but he nodded.

## Chapter Five

Chase paced the kitchen until his sister entered, just back from the grocery store. "Thank you."

"For what?"

"Jasmine pointed out that I don't appreciate you enough for all you do."

Jenny had started putting away the steaks but paused to gape at him.

"What?" Irritation flashed inside him. "Quit staring at me that way."

She recovered and closed the fridge. "You protect me and give me a home. I don't know what I'd do if you hadn't taken me in."

"It doesn't mean I should be an ass. I have been."

"Yes." She suddenly smiled. "I wasn't sure about you taking a mate but I like it so far."

"Why wouldn't you be happy about it?"

"She's human but I suppose it's better that you ended up with one of them instead of a werewolf."

He scowled. "What would it matter?"

"Most werewolf bitches are power hungry. I wanted more for you than to end up locked to someone who would never truly love you." She stepped closer. "Jasmine really didn't know what you were?"

"No."

"You met her before but waited until she nearly died to claim her? Why?"

"I was deeply attracted to her but she was too sweet and good to enter this life. I felt very protective."

Jenny nodded. "I understand. I met a human but avoid him now because he can't ever find out what I am."

That statement drew a frown from Chase and a sense of worry. "What human?"

“He’s a neighbor. I have run into him more than a few times where our land meets at the river. He enjoys fishing.”

“Single?”

“No scent of a woman is on him.”

“Is he interested in you?”

“He’s male, Chase.” She grinned. “What do you think?” She sobered. “I’m really attracted to him, he smells so good and he’s funny.”

“Why don’t you date him and see where it leads?”

“We both know what would happen. He’d either freak out if he learned what I am or, if I mated him, he’d go on a power trip. Sharing my blood would make him stronger, more aggressive, and change him for the worse. He wasn’t raised with that kind of strength.”

“He could be different than most.”

“He might not be.” She walked to the counter to unpack a bag. “You’d have to kill him and I couldn’t stand it.”

“I wouldn’t do that.”

She peered up at him. “You’d have to if he started showing off to his human friends. Can you imagine? ‘Hey, look at me. I can lift a car!’” She rolled her eyes. “Rule number one is keeping the secret of our existence.”

“You could return to Alaska and our clan.”

Jenny’s expression hardened. “No.”

“Mother?”

She gave a sharp nod. “She attempted to make me a vampire’s companion.”

Anger burned through Chase. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I knew you’d be furious. She thinks that’s what is best, Chase. I came to stay with you before she could get me to London. That’s where most of the old masters live.”

“I’m glad you came to me.” He silently swore to have a talk with their mother. “Is that where she is? I don’t keep in contact.”

“Probably.” Jenny shrugged. “I ditched her at the airport and haven’t spoken to her since. I refuse to return to Alaska, though, on the off chance that she’s returned.”



“You could mate with someone from the clan to get our mother off your back.”

“No thanks!” The sadness in her eyes belied her laugh.

“Do they believe you’d be too cold to mate?”

“No. That was just you because you were always such a hard ass. I just don’t find all that growling and aggressiveness charming.”

“Understood. I get enough of that shit from my pack.”

Her eyes sparkled with real amusement. “If the clan could only see you now.”

“Shut up.” He playfully swatted her arm. “It’s a necessity.”

“Why do you work for vampires?”

“Blaron and Lethal aren’t like the others. They are good souls.”

“Some say vampires don’t have those.”

“Those two do. They aren’t anything like our fathers.”

“You mean they wouldn’t abandon their companion and their young just because they’re an embarrassment with their mixed bloodlines?”

His humor died. “No.”

“Have you heard from your father?”

“Not since he wanted me to take out one of his vampire enemies.”

“You didn’t!”

He shook his head, sighing loudly. “I’m not a weapon to be used when he needs an assassin during daylight hours.”

“Mine was the one who suggested to our mother that I become a companion to one of his friends. I think she still loves him.”

“We don’t need them. We never did. Mother needs to realize she was used by them to have offspring. The concept fascinated them but the reality didn’t fulfill their expectations.”

Jenny suddenly stepped forward and pressed her hand to the center of his chest. “Do you love Jasmine?”

“I believe I do. I think I have since we first met.”

“Be sure. Mating is forever.”

“I’ve never felt anything this strong before. She makes me happy and I really look forward to a future with her. She’s all I think about.”

“You’re such a dork.” She laughed, grinning. “That’s love.”

“Now I just have to get her to immediately agree to mate with me.”

“I thought you were going to give her time.”

“She’s turning.”

“Shit.” Jenny backed away. “Why are you standing here talking to me? Get it done. You don’t want to doom her to an existence without sunshine and cause her to be weaker than she needs to be. Your mate shouldn’t have to endure vampire flaws.”

“I don’t want her to regret it.”

“She’d hate bursting into flames if she ventured outside during the day and having to drink blood on a daily basis. Jasmine doesn’t know enough to make that kind of decision, Chase, but you do. Do what is best for her.”

He knew his sister was right. “I’ll go find her.” He sniffed. “She’s not upstairs.”

“She headed downstairs last I saw.”

“She’ll be suffering exhaustion while her body goes through the first stages of transformation.”

“Go mate her.”

Chase spun on his heel and stalked to the basement. “Do you mind cooking dinner in an hour? She’ll be hungry.”

“I’ve got this. You deal with her.”

He paused by the door and turned, holding his sister’s stare. “About the human you mentioned?”

“What about him?”

“I wouldn’t kill him. I’d just guide him until he understood how important it was to protect you and what we are. I don’t want you to be alone.”

“You mean you’d scare him into submission and beat him if needed.”

“Better me than someone else attempt to kill him for revealing too much.”

“That’s true. I’ll think about it.”

“Good.”

He closed the door after him, following Jasmine’s faint scent still lingering in the air, tracking her to his bedroom.

Jasmine stared at the ceiling, trying to make sense of everything. A slight noise drew her attention and she sat up as Chase entered his room. It was a bit awkward since they didn't know each other that well. No words came to mind as he slowly stalked closer.

She noticed the way he moved, graceful but with an aura of danger. He wasn't a typical guy, had never been one, but now she knew what was so different about him. Being part werewolf and vampire was a lethal combination. His dark stare didn't frighten her though, but instead made her aware of various parts of her body. Her belly tightened and her nipples tingled. Another part of her reacted too but she tried to ignore that.

"How are you feeling?"

She wasn't sure why he didn't just read her mind. That ability still unnerved her. "Okay. A little tired but restless. I couldn't fall asleep."

He sat on the edge of the bed, his weight dipping that side slightly as he shifted to face her. "Are your eyes sensitive to the light in here? Any numbness in your body?"

She wished the second part was a symptom she experienced. Every time Chase was near it was impossible not to notice the way her body reacted to him. It had been that way since the first time they'd met at her office. One look and her heart rate had increased and her palms had been sweaty when they'd shaken hands.

"No. I'm good."

"It's a slow process, fortunately." He reached out but he didn't touch her. Instead his fingers traced a crease in the bedding. "We still have a few hours."

"Before I turn into a full-on vampire?"

"Yes."

"Will it hurt?" That was a real fear.

"No. Your body will start going numb while it shuts down until you fall asleep. Your heart will stop beating at that point and you'll die." He glanced anywhere but at her. "The next evening, after the process is finished, you'll wake."

"Will I still have a beating heart?"

He hesitated. "It does to a degree."

“What does that mean? It either does or it doesn’t.”

“It will slow to a standstill if you haven’t eaten or if you’re sleeping during the day. When you wake and feed, it accelerates. The fresher the blood in your system, the more it will pump at a normal rate.”

“What about air? Will I need to breathe?”

He hesitated. “You could go without for quite a while. You technically don’t need it but it isn’t pretty when your body is starved of oxygen for extended periods of time.”

“Can you elaborate? I don’t know any real facts about vampires, just the fiction I’ve read in books.”

“Think white or a greenish tint, depending on whether you’re in a dry or wet climate.” He grimaced. “We need to take care of this situation, Jasmine.”

She knew what that meant. “You want to make me your mate.”

“You know I do.” He leaned closer, holding her gaze. “I promise you’ll never regret it.”

“How can you possibly do that?”

He hesitated. “I’m over a hundred years old, Jasmine.”

She studied his features closely. He didn’t appear older than early thirties, if even that. She bit her lip, trying to guess his point, besides shocking her.

*You can hear me when I concentrate on projecting my thoughts to you.*

The sound of his voice inside her head was as clear as if he’d spoken the words aloud.

*Believe in what you think is impossible. I’m proof of that, my love. I’ll always keep my promises to you.*

Hot tears filled her eyes while she gazed into his. The brown irises turned cobalt as she watched, more proof that everything she’d once know to be factual wasn’t quite true. Chase changed everything. Her life turned upside down by his very existence.

“Take a chance,” he murmured, inching closer, staring deeply into her gaze. “You have everything to gain.” His voice deepened. “My love. Me. Happiness.” He paused before giving her a sexy, devastating grin. “Great sex.”

He wasn't playing fair. He was too close, smelled really good, and who was she kidding? She adored Chase Woods. It ran deeper than that though, had almost been an obsession since they'd first met. He was the man who'd captured her fantasies on a nightly basis, made other men insignificant in comparison, and he'd saved her life.

"I'll lose my house, my job, my friends and family if I agree, right?" *How can I do that to be with this man?* It went against everything she'd ever believed in. She was a strong, capable woman. The concept of walking away from her life to be with Chase left her feeling lost and confused.

"I know it's difficult but if the rogue had a master, you're still in danger. He will consider you his and come after you. He would destroy the people you care about to get to you. I'm strong enough to defeat him. You're my mate, Jasmine. I won't let anyone harm you. And there are other things to consider. How will you explain the changes you've undergone, especially over time? People will notice. That will put you at risk, cause you pain. That would hurt you more. And that would hurt me."

"I didn't ask for this." Bitterness rose over the impossible situation she'd been placed in.

"The rogue did this, not me. I walked away from you once when it was the last thing I wanted to do. I did it because your happiness came first. "His tone softened and so did the look in his eyes. "I'd do anything for you."

"Can't you fix me so I don't turn into a vampire? Can't we just date and my normal life can resume? I need more time."

Chase hesitated, a pained look crossing his handsome face. "I'd give you anything if it were possible. The rogue harmed you too much for a hospital to save your life. My blood was the only option to keep you alive. I didn't mean for this to happen, for you to start to turn into a vampire, but he'd taken you too close to death. You have only two options now—become one of them or agree to be my mate. Either way, I can't turn back the clock and undo what has been done."

Jasmine didn't like it but she knew he spoke the truth. He had supernatural powers but time travel wasn't one of them. Putting anyone else in danger wasn't something she'd ever willingly do.

"I'd die for you, Jasmine." Sincerity deepened his voice. "I know it's asking a lot, perhaps too much, but please agree to be my mate. I swear you

won't regret it. I'll do whatever it takes to make you happy. We'll work out all the issues."

Her heart squeezed inside tightly while she stared deeply into his beautiful eyes. He meant every word. She believed that and the love she felt for him grew stronger until it was tough to breathe. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be with him forever. Her concerns and fears faded as they watched each other.

"Yes." The one word came from her lips.

She wasn't sure who was more surprised by her agreement. Becoming his mate was a lifelong commitment. He'd made sure she understood there would be no turning back and they'd live for a very long time. Chase's smile faded as a low growl emanated from deep within his chest.

"You won't regret this."

Jasmine really hoped she wouldn't. "What do we do?"

He leaned closer. "What comes natural."

"That didn't answer my question."

"I'm going to make love to you." One warm hand gently cupped her cheek. "And when the time is right, I'm going to bleed for you. You'll drink more of my blood while I bite into you."

"Will it hurt?" It sounded oddly sexy but she didn't want to feel pain.

"Never."

The husky promise was one she wanted to believe as he closed the distance between them and his full lips brushed hers. Just the whisper-soft feel of their mouths touching was enough to make her heart race with excitement. His masculine scent and taste was arousing.

"Undress."

She leaned into him, kissing him when he would have pulled away to give her room to maneuver out of her T-shirt and boxers. She grabbed the curve of his shoulder and hung on. The shyness of their new relationship had her longing to get lost in the moment before she was naked. It would be easy to do with Chase. The man almost screamed raw sex appeal.

Another growl rumbled from him and her nipples tightened in anticipation. The sex between them had been amazing, wonderful and intense. She wanted to be that mindless again and pushed up against him,

going chest to chest with Chase. His free hand wrapped around her back, pulling her more snugly against him.

Tongue met tongue as they explored each other with an eagerness born of pure fervor. The memories of the last time they'd touched excited her as much as his kiss. No one had ever made her as hot as he did. It might have been the forbidden delight of being with the ultimate bad boy but her ability to think faded. Whatever the reason, she squirmed, wishing she'd stripped when he'd asked so no barriers were between them.

Chase pushed her onto her back and she didn't struggle when his weight pinned her down. He tore the T-shirt at the sides, the material easily giving way to his strength. The sound of it shredding only heightened her desire to be skin to skin with him. His knuckles caressed the skin he bared, teasing her where they skimmed.

His mouth pulled away, trailing from her lips to her throat as he lifted up just enough to yank her destroyed shirt away. With one tug, he ripped away the boxers. Jasmine's fingers tangled in his hair, seeking something to hold on to. The urgency and purely primal way Chase touched her was an exhilarating experience. No one had ever wanted her as much as he did.

"Mine," he growled in a deep, sensual voice before his teeth gently nipped just under her ear.

"Yes," she agreed, out of breath, despite his tone leaving it clear that it wasn't a question. He was staking his claim and she was willing to let him.

He released her and she wanted to protest when he sat up until she realized the cause. It was with regret that she stopped touching him too, unable to hold on as he shifted away. She instantly missed exploring his heated, muscular body. His shirt was quickly shed but he just unfastened his pants and shoved them down before he was on top of her again. Her thighs spread to give him access to settle over her once more. It made the ache to have him inside almost unbearable while she waited to see what he'd do.

Brilliant blue eyes blazed when their gazes met as his rigid cock nudged against her pussy. She was wet and ready to accept him as he entered her in one slow drive of his hips. The sensation of being filled and stretched—taken—was all-consuming to Jasmine. Chase froze, buried deep inside her.

"Mine," he repeated. "Forever." He leaned in closer until their noses pressed together. "Agree to be my mate."

“I do.” She meant it. She wanted to join with him in every way. “Take me.”

A snarl came from his parted lips. That animalistic sound might have frightened her at any other time but then he began to move in and out of her. She wrapped her legs around his waist, her heels finding purchase on the waistband of his leather pants, which were snagged on the back of his thighs. Every slide of his cock against sensitive nerve endings brought her closer to coming. Her nipples grew taut, her vaginal muscles clamping around his thick girth. The pleasure intensified until it threatened to drown her. Moans tore from her.

“Suck on me,” he demanded. “Don’t stop.”

Her first thought was he wanted oral sex but then his wrist was suddenly against her mouth. Hot liquid with a metallic taste coated her tongue and she knew it was his blood. At some point, without her realizing, he’d cut himself. His fingers curved around her jaw, turning her head away slightly but keeping his wrist bleeding over her parted lips.

He fucked her harder, the intense pleasure making her almost oblivious to the tingling inside her head. She swallowed his blood, too focused on the coming climax to care or think about what it meant. Teeth clamped onto her neck where it met her shoulder and Chase bit down. His fangs punctured her skin.

Pain and pleasure blurred together, making it impossible to distinguish one from the other as sheer ecstasy struck. She exploded from within, orgasms jolting through her in an endless loop. Chase bit deeper, sucking her blood, and groaned. Their bodies were locked together, trembling, when his hips finally stilled.

*Sweetheart? Can you hear me?*

She attempted to turn her face away from his wrist but the hand holding her jaw tightened.

*Don’t. Keep drinking. Send your thoughts to me. I’ll hear you.*

It was difficult to put words together while her body still twitched and reeled from making love. Chase’s voice was inside her head, his mouth still locked on her so it was impossible that he’d spoken aloud. She breathed through her nose and tried to calm her erratic breathing.

*Chase?*



*We're mates. No speaking is needed. You can let go of me now. I'm going to gently withdraw my teeth. Hold still. This won't hurt. Just relax. I'm blocking your pain.*

It stunned her that he could do that. He pulled his wrist away and she sucked air into her mouth. The taste of his blood wasn't gross but instead something she wanted more of. It worried her but her mate suddenly was speaking inside her mind again.

*It's normal, sweetheart. You're different now but you were already changing before we formed our life bond. You'll crave my blood and it will taste sweet to you.* His mouth pulled away and the area he'd bitten had gone numb.

Jasmine turned her head, staring up at him when he looked down at her. The way his eyes glowed was spectacular. His mouth was closed and none of her blood showed until he licked his bottom lip. His tongue was bright red.

"You're not comfortable with silent conversations." His voice came out husky. "You'll quickly adjust to our mate bond and learn to appreciate that we can communicate without others hearing us." He chuckled. "Read me. You can. Just try. It's all there for you if you open up."

She closed her eyes to concentrate, a tiny bit afraid of what she'd find if she were able to do the impossible. His thoughts didn't transfer to her but intense emotion suddenly filled her. Love. Tenderness. A deep sense of protectiveness. Passion. He wanted her again.

*Yes, I do. I'll always want you. I do feel all those things. Did you believe I'd want to mate you if I wasn't willing to die for you? You're mine and I'm yours until the end of our time.*

Jasmine's eyes opened to stare at him in wonder. Tears blinded her as her own emotions surfaced. She loved him and he loved her back. All doubt left.

*I'm still not comfortable talking this way. I love the sound of your voice. It's sexy.*

He laughed. "Okay, sweetheart. Anything you want."

"Anything?"

His eyes narrowed as he read her mind and lowered his mouth to hers for a kiss.

*Always. We can definitely do this more. My sister and our dinner can wait. I'm going to make love to you again.*

*Good. Stop thinking at me and do it.*

## Chapter Six

Chase was tense when he reached the club. He hadn't wanted to leave Jasmine but he needed to confront the fallout of taking a mate. The two guards stationed outside the doors whipped their heads in his direction. The sound of them sniffing seemed amplified as he approached. They'd smell the change in his scent now that Jasmine was his mate. Her scent was mingled with his.

The one on the right growled, shock clear in his dark eyes. The one on the left took a step back, his gaze instantly dropping. The threat was clear. Chase didn't hesitate to grab Jacob by his jacket and slam him hard against the wall.

"Do you have a problem, wolf?" He snarled.

"No." Jacob's eyes flared before he dropped his gaze, darting his eyes everywhere but at Chase's face.

Chase dropped the werewolf to his feet and stepped back, releasing him. "Good. You're my enforcer. I expect you to respect my decision and my mate. I'll leave it to you to notify the pack." He growled low in his throat. "Can I count on you to dissuade anyone from causing trouble? I want the truth."

"Of course." Jacob gave a sharp nod. "You're my alpha."

"Don't forget it," Chase warned. He glanced at Paul. "Do you have a problem?"

"No." He shook his head wildly, his chin tucked. "Congratulations. When do we get to meet her?"

"When I believe no one is stupid enough to challenge me or her."

Both werewolves were silent. Chase paused for a good minute but they refused to speak. It had gone better than he hoped. Otherwise he'd have had to fight and kill at least one of them.

"I'm going inside now. Hold your posts. Has there been any trouble tonight in the club?"

“No, alpha.” Jacob lifted his head and met his gaze, before glancing away. “It’s been quiet.”

“Full house but no disturbances,” Paul added. “Just the way you like it.”

Chase passed them and yanked open the door. The sound of music spilled out as he entered. All that soundproofing his friends had paid for worked. Flashing lights from the ceiling jumped around the dance floor to spotlight the swaying bodies. He breathed through his nose, taking in all the humans and vamps. He sniffed again, identifying the bartender and other members from his pack.

A few of the vamps turned their heads as he slowly strolled through the club toward the offices. Their senses of smell would note the change in him as well. Marcus, one of the club regulars, stood, blocking his path.

“Who is she?”

“None of your concern. Do you want to move or shall I put you back in your seat?”

The bloodsucker grinned, revealing his fangs. Blood coated his tongue, proof that the human at his table had already been tasted. “You know what they say about mates, freak. They are a weakness and now you have one.” His pupils dilated. “I won’t forget to share the good news with your fans.”

Chase gripped him by his throat. “I never forget a threat.” He growled. “You’re dead if you and any of your friends attempt to go after my mate.”

“Is the lad being a problem?”

The deep voice with the Iris brogue came from behind him. “No, Blaron.” It annoyed Chase that his friend could move so silently that he hadn’t heard his approach but the noise in the club had help mask his approach. “Just making friendly conversation with one of the customers.”

“Ah.” The big, kilt-wearing vamp stepped closer, pausing next to him. “Marcus, a bonny lass is at your table and you’re bothering my friend? Shame on you. That’s the thing I find most wrong with the younger generations. Stupidity and rudeness run rampant.”

Chase squeezed enough to prevent the vamp within his grip from responding. It would have crushed a human’s throat but the bloodsucker just winced in pain.

“I resent that. I’m younger but I have manners. His head is still on his shoulders. I know the staff hates to clean blood off the floors and it would

spook the guests who aren't aware of what he is."

"True." Blaron grinned, fingering the long blond braid that fell over his shoulder. "I take it this is about the lass you took as a mate?" He glanced at him. "I never forget a scent. I've smelled her before on you."

"Let's discuss this in a more private setting." He didn't want his friend to give anyone hints on the identity of Jasmine. She had family and friends that his enemies could target.

"Sure." The older vamp's humor disappeared as he circled around Marcus to stand at his back. He leaned in to put his lips near his ear. "You're in my house and that is my friend. Am I clear, young'un?" One hand clamped on the vampire's shoulder. "Should I allow him to rip off your head to save me the trouble?"

Marcus whimpered, panic widening his eyes.

"That's what I thought." Blaron stepped back. "The staff hates cleaning up piss too. Drop him before he wets his pants."

Chase grudgingly released Marcus. The frightened vamp would have returned to his table but Blaron halted him with a chilling glare. "Anyone who threatens or goes after someone under my protection won't see the following night. Am I clear?"

"Yes." The voice came out raspy but Marcus could talk.

"That includes mates. His, specifically, and any of her kin. Are you hearing me?"

Marcus gave a sharp nod.

"And don't be thinking you can have someone else do your bidding. Anyone so much as breathes on them and I'm blaming you."

Marcus nodded again.

"Now go sit your arse down and be nice to that bonny redhead waiting for you. She's a looker and I want her to return here often. It's good for business." Blaron stepped to the side. He glanced at Chase and jerked his head in the direction of the offices.

Part of Chase was relieved. His friend had just announced to the entire club that his protection extended to Jasmine. Every vamp in the place would have noted the exchange. He followed Blaron to the side doors, down a set of stairs and beyond the noise of the club once he sealed them inside the office.

Lethal sat behind a desk and peered up at him with lively blue eyes. “Interesting.” His nostrils flared. “The real estate agent?”

Alarm shot through Chase and a snarl burst from his mouth. “Were you having me followed? We are supposed to have trust.”

The tall vampire rose to his feet, his leather pants rubbing against the chair. “Easy.”

“How do you know about my Jasmine?”

“I can smell her.”

“How do you know what she does for a living?” Suspicion grew.

Dark eyebrows rose and a smirk twisted the male’s lips. “I recommended her to you, remember? I’ve used her a few times.”

Chase reacted, leaping over the desk and shoved the big bastard into a wall to pin him there with the claws that shot out from his fingertips. “You touched my mate?” The urge to kill his friend was so strong he barely resisted. “Fed from her?”

Blue eyes widened. “Hell no! The lass helped me buy a few homes. I never tossed her skirts up and bedded her. Nor did I bleed her.”

“She didn’t mention me to you.”

“She wouldn’t.” Lethal cleared his throat and frowned. “I just blurred her memory of my name and what she helped me acquire. I even paid the lass. You know I don’t like anyone knowing where I buy property. They were my safe houses.”

Blaron cleared his throat. “Gentlemen? Are we going to fight? Allow me to move the computers at least. It’s payroll day and nothing is worse than snarling employees bent out of shape.”

Chase withdrew his claws and stepped back. “We’re good.”

Lethal grinned. “She’s a bonny lass who will make you a wonderful mate. You hid her scent well. I had no idea you were even dating anyone.”

He hesitated, glancing at them both. “It was spur of the moment. You know that rogue you asked me to hunt? He’s dead but she was one of his victims.”

A growl sprang from Lethal. “Is she well?”

“I healed her. She will be fine.” Chase rounded the desk. “She was the only one who survived. We need to keep a closer eye on missing persons

reports.”

“Agreed.” Blaron fingered the sword attached to his belt. “We’ll dispatch those damn rogues from our city. We don’t need any more problems.”

“You’re going to hate to hear this then.” Chase sat in a chair. “My pack isn’t going to take it well that I mated.”

His friends took seats too. “What makes you believe that?”

He held Lethal’s curious gaze. “My lead enforcer backed down when I gave him the opportunity to challenge me outside but he didn’t want to. He’s not happy my mate isn’t a member of the pack and that means I can’t trust him as far as I can throw him. It will lead to strife in the ranks and they’ll eventually come after me once some of their anger overtakes their fear.”

“Aye,” Blaron mused. “They will. It would have bonded you to them if your mate happened to be a werewolf from the pack. They’ve been looking for a reason to spill your blood since you arrived. So have most of our regular customers. Your bloodlines are an issue. You’re of both worlds but they see how different you are.”

“I’m giving my notice.”

Lethal reached up to shove his long black hair over his shoulder. “No. We refuse to accept it. You’re our head of security and you’ll stay in that position.”

“We’re friends.” Blaron smiled. “You can’t leave us in the lurch. We trust you.”

“It’s going to make your club a target since I’m too smart to lead them to my den.”

“Is that where you’re hiding the bonny lass?” The dark-haired vamp grinned. “With your sister—the one you refuse to allow us to meet?”

“They are both safer far from here.” Chase sighed. “I don’t want my trouble coming to your door.”

“We love trouble.” Blaron winked. “It gets too boring around here otherwise. We’re friends ‘til the end but I’m not preparing to die.” He glanced at the other vampire. “Tell him we have his back.”

“You just did.” Lethal chuckled. “It goes double with me.”

Chase studied them. “You don’t owe me for saving your asses when you decided to visit Alaska. You didn’t know about the wars between wolves and vampires. It was before you came to America. You’re used to the city packs who depend on you for steady work. My clan has a long memory and they hated you both on sight. They shouldn’t have blamed you for a history you had no part in.”

“Your people decided to behead us yet you got us out of there.” Blaron leaned back in his chair. “You were the first mixed breed we’d ever met. We’re friends and we stand together when trouble comes.” He patted his trusted sword again. “I say we lay a trap and wait to see who comes.”

Chase didn’t like the idea. “It would be easier if I just didn’t work for you anymore.”

“We trust you, Chase.” Lethal grinned. “Friends don’t abandon friends in bad times. They stick together. You’re the best one for the job so forget quitting.”

“Shit.” Chase eyed both men with dread. He knew them well and they’d already made up their minds. They wanted to help him whether he wanted it or not. “And if it means losing an entire pack? Who is going to guard you when you sleep? I can’t do it every single day. I have a mate who might not enjoy being alone all the time.”

“We have our safe houses. I don’t plan on sleeping below the club any time soon.” Blaron stood. “Let’s plot our enemies’ demise. I’m sure they are doing the same.”

Chase stared at Lethal, hoping he’d be the voice of reason.

He rose to his feet with a deadly look on his features and gripped his sword, strapped it on and grabbed a leather trench coat. “To battle, men.” He chuckled. “May the blood of our adversaries flow so we may be victorious.”

“You both are nuts but I’m glad you’re on my side.” Chase pushed out of his seat and glanced at them. “I think I have an idea how we can pull this off tomorrow night. Let’s go upstairs and handle the customers. Afterward, we’ll talk strategies.”

\* \* \* \* \*



Jasmine set aside the book and slid off the bed to peer at Chase when he suddenly stormed into the bedroom. It was apparent he was angry but she didn't know why. His gaze fixed on her as a deep, scary growl burst from his parted lips.

"What did I do wrong?" She hated the fear that quickened her pulse.

"Nothing." He took a deep breath. "It was a rough night and the drive home didn't calm me any. I'd hoped it would."

"What happened?" Strong emotions of anger hit her suddenly but she had a feeling they were coming from him.

The sight of him shrugging off the leather jacket to reveal muscled arms in the black tank top was one she admired, distracting her from the feelings she picked up from him. Chase's body always had an effect on her. He tossed the jacket across the back of the chair by the door, sat down hard and tore off his biker boots. They were dumped on the floor.

"Chase?"

His intense gaze lifted to meet her curious stare. "Don't freak out." It was as if a mental door closed between them and suddenly she couldn't pick up anything he felt.

*That's not good.* She wondered why he thought she'd be alarmed but then realized he was snarling his words. "I know you're not going to hurt me. I believe that. I'm not going to run screaming from you just because you're in a bad mood."

"That's not what I meant." He stood. He reached down to fist his shirt, jerked it up his body and tossed it.

The bruising on his ribs was horrible but the smeared blood on his side had her stumbling closer. "What happened?"

"It's not mine. The damn jerk bled all over me though. The black clothes hide it well enough but it's all over me where I couldn't wash it off without undressing first."

To prove his point, he removed his belt and unfastened his leather pants. The red stain continued down one hip and thigh. Jasmine's mouth fell open.

"One of my pack decided to jump me in the parking lot. He thought it would be a good time to challenge me after I'd already fought some vamp ass when a few of them got out of line with customers at the club." He bent,

pushing the pants completely off. "I'm guessing he figured I'd be too tired to win."

Jasmine inched closer to get a better look. The blood trailed all the way down to his knee and it was worse when he turned to stalk into the bathroom. More blood covered his back but it was brighter red and wet. Four slash marks scored his shoulder blade.

"Chase? You're hurt."

He halted by the door with his back to her. "I could have undressed in the bathroom so you didn't have to see this but it's part of my life and now yours. There's no sense in hiding it from you. The enforcer got in a lucky strike with his claws before I got hold of his throat. I'll heal by morning. Everything is going to be okay." He glanced at her then. "I'm fine."

Jasmine stood statue still while Chase continued into the bathroom. The sad expression on his face didn't convince her. He'd left the door open so she didn't hesitate to follow him inside. The clear glass door allowed no privacy as she watched him stand under the showerhead.

"One of your pack tried to kill you?" She wanted clarification.

"Yes. It happens from time to time."

"He. Tried. To. Kill. You." She was horrified. "That's not okay. I thought packs were supposed to be like family."

He avoided looking at her as he dumped soap on a washcloth to scrub at the blood. "They are. Human family members kill each other too. Our worlds aren't so different in that regard."

"Your world sucks."

That drew a quick grin from him as he shot her an amused look. "Only the vampires."

"I'm not joking around. Someone tried to kill you." The rest of it sank into her perplexed mind. "Is he going to come after you again?"

"No." His gaze narrowed. "It was a fight to the death."

*You killed him.*

"I walked away. He wouldn't give it up. I had to carry him to my car and go dump the body."

Her knees weakened, causing her to sway a little on her feet and grab hold of the counter for support. Fear hit hard, more so than horror. She

figured that would come later. “Are the police going to be looking for you?” She thought quickly. “We need to leave the country.” She’d flee with him. She might not be too sure what exactly detailed being a mate but it was for life. Losing Chase wasn’t an option she wanted to consider.

“We?” Eyebrows lifted. “You’d come with me?”

“Of course.”

She pushed away the reason they needed to leave. It made it easier to handle. He’d saved her life and she’d made a serious commitment by agreeing to be his mate. He also wasn’t human so, in her mind, normal rules didn’t apply to him. It had been a case of self-defense.

His features softened. “Humans don’t get involved in our business. There won’t be any missing persons report filed. His family or friends will make it appear as if he left the country if anyone questions what happened to him. It’s what we do to stay under the radar.” He paused. “It’s his family and friends I have to worry about, along with any other wolves in the pack who have a problem with what I’ve done.”

“Because you had to kill him? Won’t they understand he attacked you and you had no choice?”

“Challenges and the resulting deaths are expected. It’s because I mated you.” He turned in the shower, facing away to duck his head under the spray.

Guilt nagged at Jasmine. She’d mourned the loss of her life as she’d known it while Chase had been at work. It didn’t seem fair that she had to give up her house, her career and the people she cared about to be with him. *It’s no picnic for him either*, she suddenly realized. People were trying to kill him because they were together.

“What can I do?” She wanted to help him.

Chase glanced at her over his shoulder. “You could come in here and wash my back. I’ll heal faster if the wounds are clean. My body won’t have to fight off infection as it mends the damage.”

One glance down his body had her more than willing to strip down and join him. Tan, muscled skin tempted her to do more than touch his back. There had been changes since the mating, ones that she couldn’t deny. Her sex drive seemed to have gone into overdrive. Just staring at him naked made her ache.

Her hands shook as she removed her clothes as he watched through the glass. Passion was an easy emotion to read as his eyes began to glow. They fascinated her. She slowly approached. He pushed open the door and stepped back to make room. Steamy hot water ran over her as she waited for him to reach around to secure the door.

He was so tall compared to her that she had to lift her chin to see his face. A soft growl rumbled from him and the muscles in her belly clenched. Her nipples also responded by growing taut. Desire rolled through her with a jolt. Chase inhaled and his hands gently cupped her hips.

“You’re so sexy and smell so good. So mine.”

All she wanted to do was reach up to cup his face and pull his mouth down for a kiss. It was difficult to remember that he was injured. “Your back.”

“It doesn’t hurt. Don’t worry about it.”

“I need to wash it.”

He snarled something under his breath, but dropped his hands and turned. “Do it fast. I’m impatient.”

He wanted her as much as she did him. She hadn’t missed the state of his dick before he’d spun around. Chase was sporting an impressive erection that matched the rest of him—all hard masculine perfection. The sight of the ugly slashes across his shoulder blade cooled her passion a bit as she stared at them.

“I don’t want to hurt you. Should I just use water but not soap?” She reached up to unhook the showerhead from the holder, making it easier to maneuver.

He grabbed the soapy sponge and handed it over his shoulder to her. “I’ll get a fever if infection sets in. It won’t kill me but it’s not pleasant. I need to be at one hundred percent by morning.”

“Why?” She accepted it and hesitantly began to wash the wounds. His muscles tensed but he held still, making no sound.

“I have to work early in the morning. It’s going to be a long day.”

Part of her was hurt by that. The least he could do was take some time off to spend with her. She had a lot of adjustments to make, ones that would be easier if he were with her. “Do your bosses know you took a mate?”

“Yes.”

She wondered how that had gone but kept silent. It was a distraction pondering their responses while she finished washing the gashes in his skin and washed away the soap. They appeared to be healing at an accelerated rate that would have been alarming if she hadn't known he was a supernatural being.

"All done. They aren't bleeding."

He spun back, grabbed the showerhead and replaced it in the holder. "I want you."

His hands returned to her hips and she gasped when he lifted her off her feet, pinning her to the tile wall. Overpowering emotions slammed into her. The mental door had been thrown wide open with an explosive charge.

"Do you feel how much I want you?" He brushed kisses across the top of her shoulder.

Jasmine moaned, spreading her legs and wrapping them around his waist as fiery need burned bright. His passion and hers seemed to combine until all she could think about was having him inside her. She clung to him, her nails digging into his wet skin as she used her hold on him to rub against his body.

"So mine," Chase softly growled. "You need to feed."

"I ate while you were gone." It annoyed her that he'd think about food while they were touching.

"Blood."

His lips returned to her throat, the points of his fangs drawing erotic twin lines down to her shoulder. He spun them around and pinned her against the wall. One shift of his hips and his cock nudged against her pussy. She was wet and ready for him as he slowly entered her.

"Chase!" Raw pleasure blinded her as her eyes closed and he drove into her deep.

He froze there and pulled his mouth away. "Drink."

Her hips twisted as she tried to ride his cock but he pressed against her tighter, making it impossible.

"Mine? Look at me."

Her eyes snapped open. His were glowing, staring directly at her. One hand lifted and she saw his fingernails had lengthened into claws. They

would have frightened her before but not anymore. His index finger dug into his muscular chest above his right nipple.

“Drink now if you want me.”

Her mate mentally sent her waves of lust. Her mind wasn't able to block them and she cried out, hurting for him to fuck her.

“Drink,” he demanded.

She sealed her mouth over the bleeding wound and the taste of blood wasn't gross. Instead, the flavor burst on her tongue, a mixture of something wonderful and delicious. She moaned, hungrily sucking. A snarl tore from Chase as he adjusted to grip her hips and began to slowly thrust in and out of her pussy. Pleasure rocked through her system as his thick, rigid cock rubbed against her sensitive nerve endings. All thought left Jasmine as ecstasy gripped her. She kept drinking, overloaded from his addictive taste and how wonderful he felt, until the climax struck and she had to pull her mouth away from his chest to scream out his name.

His release followed and she cried out with their thoughts linked, coming a second time when ecstasy tore through her again. She could feel his pleasure, making it her own, every jet of his semen filling her with another burst of rapture until blackness threatened to take her.

“Easy.” Chase tightened his arms more firmly around her, one shelving her ass while the other curled around her waist.

Her head fell forward to rest against his shoulder as he kicked open the shower door and carried her to the counter to gently place her there. Jasmine didn't want to let him go but she knew he wanted to dry her off and take her to bed. The link between them was wide open and while she couldn't hear his thoughts as words, she knew his intentions. Her hold loosened.

Jasmine hated the loss as he stepped back to grab towels but he returned immediately. Big hands were gentle as they patted her dry with the thick cotton. She peered into his eyes as he looked into hers. A strong sense of love filtered through but also fear.

“Why?”

He studied her closely with a frown. “You're confused and alarmed.”

“You're afraid of something.”

The link between them snapped closed. It hurt as if he'd rejected her.

“Chase?” She cupped his face. “Don’t just turn it off like that.”

He bit his bottom lip and opened up to her again as he stepped between her parted legs to stand there. “I’m sorry. You’re adjusting to being my mate and this bond is new to both of us. I felt your pain. I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

“What are you afraid of?”

His arms wrapped around her, lifted and carried her into the bedroom. “I didn’t want you to see that.”

“You can’t possibly be afraid of me. I’m not going to leave you or ever betray you by telling anyone what you are.”

He sat on the bed with her on his lap. “I know that. You’re a new mate and that makes you vulnerable. That worry is what you caught through our bond.”

“Why?”

“You’re fragile right now. In time you’ll grow stronger and gain some of my abilities.” He pulled her closer to his chest until they were nose to nose. “Your bone density will be tougher than human, you’ll heal faster and you’ll be harder to kill. You’ll be able to defend yourself better once I teach you how to fight.” He smiled. “I plan to do that.”

“Fight what?”

“My enemies. I have many but I’m working on dealing with them to make you safer. They will never get near you if I have my way but I want you to learn how to protect yourself just in case you ever need to. We’ll start your training in a few weeks when your physical changes are over.”

She allowed that information to sink in. “Am I going to look any different?”

“No, mine. Denser bones won’t make you physically larger. They’ll just be more difficult to break. You won’t grow fangs either. I’ll always have to cut my skin to feed you.”

Jasmine glanced down at his chest. The scratch had already begun to heal.

“I won’t have scars from feeding you. A wound has to be pretty deep to do that.” He suddenly turned, coming down on top of her where he caged her body on the bed. “Do you know what I want, mine?”

“Why are you calling me that?”

He brushed his lips over hers before smiling. "It's what you are. Mine."  
His mind opened up to her and strong emotions struck.

"You want me again." She wrapped her legs around his waist. "I want you too."



## Chapter Seven

Every muscle tensed as Chase tilted his head, listening for the slightest sound. The club was unusually quiet.

“Easy,” Blaron rasped from across the room. “They will come.”

A human wouldn’t have heard his words but they were clear to Chase. He glanced up into the rafters where lights were strung, immediately wishing he hadn’t spotted his friend standing on a narrow beam. The Irishman wore a kilt.

“Underwear,” he muttered, quickly looking away. “Wear it.”

His friend chuckled.

“Aye,” Lethal whispered from behind the bar. “I tell him but he won’t listen. I wear pants to avoid a breeze.”

“Leave me alone. I enjoy the freedom.” Blaron laughed.

“I’m not enjoying the view. I never want to see that much of you again.” Chase refused to look up a second time as he scanned the shadows in the club. “Did you hear that?”

“Aye.” Lethal crouched out of sight. “We have company.”

The scent of blood was strong as three recently fed vampires strolled into the main part of the club, their scent helping to mask the presence of his friends. Chase walked out to greet them, arms folded over his chest. “Gentlemen, the club is closed tonight. Private party.”

“We heard.” The brunet vamp grinned to reveal his fangs. “We came to introduce ourselves to your lovely bride. I hope we haven’t missed the wedding?” He glanced around. “Where are she and the minister?”

“In the back,” Chase lied, his fist tightening on the stake he hid between his forearm and ribs. “You need to leave.”

The second vampire positioned himself to Chase’s left. “Not without meeting your human.” He inhaled. “A-positive? That’s my favorite.”

Guilt struck Chase that he'd purposely cut Jasmine with his fingernail to stain his shirt with a little of her blood while she'd slept. He'd needed to fool anyone within range that his mate was nearby. She'd never know since he'd licked the tiny wound to heal it but he should have asked her permission. He just hadn't wanted her to worry if he shared his plans.

"I'm surprised you can smell anything over the stench of you three. I hope you weren't feeding in the parking lot? You know it's against the rules."

The third vampire moved to his right so they nearly surrounded him. "Of course not. We fed inside the club."

A new scent reached Chase and his shoulders tensed as he glanced at the hallway that led from the front door into the main area. Four of his pack males sauntered in. His jaw clenched and it took willpower to mute the snarl that wanted to rise.

"Feeding from my pack?" He glanced at the wolves. "Since when do you offer up a vein to vampires?"

Damon, one of his enforcers, growled. "Since you chose a human over us. Vamps are stronger when they are hyped up on our blood."

"You're no longer our alpha," Ronny snarled. "We've come to kill you and your new mate."

Fury burned inside Chase. "You mean you whored yourselves out to vamps, hoping they could kill me since you know you're too weak to do it." He glared at his pack members. "Which one of you thinks he's going to take my place?"

Damon stepped closer. "I will."

"Then you'll die first." Chase kept his gaze moving, watching, trying to judge which of them would strike first. "I won't be the one to do it though. That's unfortunate," he jerked his head toward the vampires, "but I have to deal with them first since you made this an unfair fight by giving them an advantage with your blood."

The brunet vampire hissed. "What does that mean? You're the one who will die. We'll allow you to watch us play with your mate first though while she begs you to save her. Her screams will be the last thing you hear. Where is the little bitch?"

Chase didn't wait to be attacked. The idea of them planning to torture Jasmine was enough to send him into a rage. He moved fast, threw out his arm and embedded the stake deeply into the vamp's chest. The idiot appeared stunned as his eyes widened a second before lines appeared on his face as it turned an ashen gray. The skin split as he turned to dust, his solid form disintegrating.

The other two vampires weren't going to be so easy to kill now that he didn't have the element of surprise. Chase saw Blaron drop from the rafters to land in a crouch next to Damon. His friend's sword flashed in the dim light as he rose to his full height and ended the life of the werewolf. Satisfaction was short-lived as both of the dead vampire's friends recovered from the shock of realizing they'd walked into an ambush.

Lethal lived up to his name as he sprinted across the room to join the fray and took out a second werewolf. The sound of bones popping as his pack members shifted wasn't a concern to Chase. His attention fixed on the two blood suckers intent on killing him.

One of them came at him with fangs and claws. Chase barely dodged away in time to avoid a painful slash at his throat. The wolf blood they'd sucked down was going to be a problem but nothing he couldn't handle. He'd make certain his enemies died, to ensure his mate's safety. He almost felt sorry for the stupid bastards for not understanding how deadly an opponent he'd become.

The second one leapt into the fray and Chase shoved the stake into his chest but missed his heart. The bloodsucker screamed in pain but managed to stagger away when Chase had to release his hold to avoid the first one grabbing him from behind. He unleashed his claws and drove them into the jerk's neck to bleed him out a bit to weaken him.

Swords clashed with claws across the room. Chase didn't have time to check on Blaron or Lethal. His friends could handle themselves. They were old vampires with battle skills. He had his own ass to worry about as both of the blood-drugged vampires tried to corner him. They were bleeding and hurt but they'd be harder to kill with the wolf blood in their systems.

Jasmine's image flashed in his mind and he howled in rage as he dodged and lashed out with his claws once more as one of the vamps came too close. He couldn't lose the fight. His enemies would track Jasmine down eventually and kill her just for the hell of it if they were able to take his life.

The bad thing about living for so long was the boredom that could take hold. She would become an obsession to the bastards.

Lethal was suddenly at his back and he beheaded one of the vampires with his sword. Chase launched himself at the remaining vampire, taking him to the floor. His claws tore through the bastard's chest as his opponent screamed. In seconds he'd removed his heart and watched in satisfaction as the solid body turned to ash.

He staggered to his feet and glanced around at the carnage of what had been his enemies. Four dead wolves and three ash piles were all that remained. His friends had both survived.

Lethal grinned, holding his bloodied sword. "That was fun."

Blaron's white shirt was torn and wet with blood where claws had marked his chest. "Aye. It's not over yet though." His gaze fixed on the door. "We have more company."

Six of Chase's pack mates entered the club. Four males and two females. He growled low in warning, waiting to see if they'd submit or challenge him. He wasn't surprised at seeing them. Tina led them. She was a pushy bitch who'd tried to tempt him into mating her since he'd first taken the alpha role.

"Surrender your mate to death and allow me to take her place," the she wolf growled, her fangs showing. "Don't force us to kill you, Chase. I want you."

"The feeling isn't mutual." He snarled and glanced at the other female. Her presence surprised him. Mora was one of the most docile females in the pack and he'd trusted her enough to make her his secretary. He'd just seen her an hour before. Her gaze dropped when he looked into her eyes. "You too?"

Fear showed as she glanced up. "They made me," she blurted.

He could believe that. Mora was half human, couldn't shift, and had mated to another half-breed who couldn't protect her against the full bloods. Tina's arm arched out and knocked the smaller female to the floor. Mora stayed down and the smell of her blood filled the air. Chase shook his head, giving Tina his attention.

"You'd make a cruel alpha bitch. You're supposed to protect the weakest members, not bully and abuse them." He moved slowly, placing his

body closer to Mora and getting between her and the other werewolves. "It's over."

Mora moved behind him but he didn't glance back. It might be a mistake to turn his back on her but he liked the little she wolf and her mate. They'd been the only pack members to actually welcome him when he'd arrived. The previous alpha had looked down on them for their weakened bloodlines while he hadn't, being a mixed breed himself.

"They made me steal your phone," Mora whispered. "Tina has it."

Rage gripped him as he glared at the bitch in question. "Why?"

Tina smiled. "We told her we'd kill her mate if she didn't bring it to me. She was quite helpful."

"I meant why did you want my phone?" He had a sinking feeling that he knew.

The club doors opened and his worst fear came true as a scent reached his nose. "Son of a bitch!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Jasmine was irritated as she glanced at Jenny. "I thought Chase didn't want me to leave the house. He said it was too dangerous because he has enemies that could target me. I had to promise him I wouldn't leave the house before he left this morning."

The woman behind the wheel shrugged. "Don't ask me why my brother does anything. I got the text message for both of us to come to the club so that's where we're going. I'm not thrilled either. I hate blood bags and howlers but my brother wants us there."

"Vampires and werewolves? Aren't you one of them?"

"I'm talking about the full bloods. They snub our kind but they also fear us. Some will attack without provocation just because of what we are."

"Is Chase the only family you have left?"

"No. We have cousins, aunts and uncles."

"In Alaska?"

"Yes."

"Why did you leave?"

Jenny glanced away from the road to frown. "You're full of questions."

“I’m curious and your brother isn’t around to answer them. You won’t get into trouble for telling me what I want to know.”

A chuckle broke from her new sister-in-law. “He told me. You laid down the law. Okay, I’ll share. Our people don’t think we’re werewolf enough to make good mates. They believe our vampire blood runs too strong since our fathers were ancients and really powerful. They fear we’re dead inside.”

“Fathers?”

“We’re half siblings. Chase left our clan before I did but I followed him here after spending ten years with our mother. She wanted me to follow in her footsteps.”

“What does she do for a living?”

“I am not talking professions. She wanted me to hook up with an ancient blood bag to give him a few children. They find it an ego boost to have the ability to create offspring if the circumstances are right but I didn’t want to become some jerk’s science project.”

“It sounds so cold.”

“It is.” Jenny sighed. “That’s why I went to my brother for his protection. I met my father a few times and he’s the cruelest, most vicious creature imaginable. It amazes me that my mother ever warmed up enough to allow him to touch her. Then again, our mother isn’t quite right. She’s got too much of her father’s blood in her.”

“Who is her father?”

“An ancient blood bag. Let’s just say that gramps isn’t the warm, cuddly type. He once grabbed Chase and took a bite out of him just to see how he’d taste. He enjoyed it enough to keep doing it until my brother grew strong enough to make him stop. No one likes to be an unwilling snack.”

Horror washed through Jasmine. “Your mother allowed it?” She couldn’t imagine that any woman wouldn’t protect her own child.

“That’s Mom.” Jenny snorted. “Very maternal, wouldn’t you say? Let me assure you that she’s one mother-in-law you don’t want to spend time with. Never pressure Chase into taking you to Alaska.”

“I won’t.” It was an easy promise to make. The concept of meeting someone so cold gave her chills and made her doubt what she’d signed up for as Chase’s mate.

Jenny seemed to read her mind. "Chase hates our mother and I can't blame him. He's nothing like her, I promise. That's why I came to him for protection."

More questions filled Jasmine. "Why do you need protection? Are the men stronger?"

"They are." She nodded. "Mother Nature or whoever you want to blame gave them bigger bodies, more muscle and a shitload of aggression. It's safer if we stick together." She paused. "I'm safer. He did fine on his own."

"He's pretty tough, isn't he?"

A smile curved her sister-in-law's mouth. "You did very well picking him for a mate. No one will be able to care for you better."

"I want him to really love me," she admitted softly.

"He does." Jenny laughed. "You doubt it? Many females tried to lure him into marking them but none succeeded."

"We barely know each other."

"It isn't always about how long you know someone. For us, it is more important how strongly you feel when you meet the right person. We're instinctual creatures."

"And you can read minds."

"That too. It helps us get to know someone really fast and well. He didn't make a mistake picking you for his mate."

Jasmine voiced her inner fear. "He did it to save my life."

"No. He did it because he wanted you. We're...older than we look and we chose to leave our people. Humans die faster than we do so death is something we've adjusted to. He would have allowed you to die if you weren't the one he wanted to mate. Don't think for a second that it was pity that prompted him to bring you home for keeps."

"Says you."

"I'm the only expert on our kind you know." Jenny glanced her way. "You'll just have to take my word for it."

"I guess I will."

"Haven't you felt it through the mate bond?"

Jasmine remembered all the sensations that had invaded her mind when Chase opened up to her. "Yes."

“He loves you. Stop rationalizing with your human side and trust your instincts. Mating bond links don’t lie. It’s impossible to fake emotions. You’d feel the deceit.”

“Okay. Thank you.”

Jenny chuckled. “Is it so hard for you to believe you mean everything to my brother after all you’ve seen since becoming a part of his life? Vampires and werewolves are real. True love exists and you have that with my brother. It will last as long as you two are alive.”

Jasmine silently wondered how long a life she’d lead with Chase. It was a question she wasn’t sure she wanted answered. Would they have fifty years together? A few hundred? Maybe more? In the end, it wouldn’t matter. Every day they had together would be one she spent with the man she loved.

The last of the sunlight faded as they drove into town. “I really hate these places,” Jenny muttered, parking in the lot beside the nightclub.

“It looks pretty dead. Does it open later since it’s geared for vampires?”

“They are out and about. The nonsense about them being totally helpless while they sleep during the day only applies to the newly turned. Even those wake about an hour before sunset. They can’t wait to leave their lairs once they can. I don’t like this.”

Jasmine glanced around at just a few cars in the parking lot. “Maybe they don’t open until later since I’m sure they probably don’t close until just before dawn.”

“Maybe.” Jenny didn’t sound so sure. “It’s not as if I hang out in blood bag hangouts. Let’s go. Chase doesn’t like to be kept waiting.”

“Are you sure we should go in there?” A bad feeling hit Jasmine.

“He wouldn’t order me to drive you here if it was dangerous. Maybe they are closed tonight so he can introduce you to his friends. He swears the two blood bags who own this joint aren’t soulless pricks.”

“That makes me feel better.” Jasmine hoped the sarcasm wasn’t missed as she climbed out of the car.

Jenny stared at her from across the roof as she jerked her head toward the front doors. “We should get inside.” She glanced around. “I don’t like being in the open in unfamiliar territory.”

“Okay.” Jasmine looked around as well. “I don’t see anyone.”



“I feel as if we’re being watched. The hair on the back of my neck is tingling.”

“Maybe we should leave.” A chill ran down her back as she watched the other woman tense up and circle the car to reach her side.

“No. Chase is waiting. I’m sure we’re safe. Let’s just get inside the building.” Jenny grabbed her hand and led her forward. “Hurry up.”

The front doors to the club were unlocked. They entered and Jenny jerked to a halt and snarled. The sound was aggressive and Jasmine gasped.

“What’s wrong?”

“Blood. Lots of it.”

“It’s a vampire club. Didn’t you say they drink it here?”

Jenny stepped in front of her and pulled something from beneath her shirt. It had been tucked inside the waistband of her pants—a wooden stake with a leather handle.

“Why do you have that?”

Jenny released her, reached back and withdrew a small gun. “I have this too. Just in case.” She paused. “One for vamps, one with silver bullets for wolves. Stay behind me and stick close.”

“Shit.”

The urge to flee was strong but Jasmine followed orders. She trailed her into a large room that wasn’t well lit but the bodies on the floor were visible due to a few overhead lights. She peeked around Jenny and her dinner nearly came up as she realized two of them had missing heads.

“Oh my God.”

“Defend my mate,” a deep voice roared.

Jasmine tore her attention from the horrific scene of death to locate Chase. He stood beside two tall men, one in a kilt, one in leather pants, and they faced off against a group of five people. The tension in the room was obvious, even if her mate’s face hadn’t been contorted in rage. His fangs were showing.

“Right on time,” a woman snickered.

Jasmine watched the woman turn around. She was pretty but it only lasted a few seconds before her features began to change. Her nose pushed

outward as hair grew rapidly along her cheeks. It was obvious she was a werewolf.

“Crap,” Jenny groaned, pushing Jasmine back when she bumped into her.

The four men dropped to their hands and knees to change into their werewolf forms too. The sickening sound of bones popping reached Jasmine.

“That is so wrong.”

Jenny glanced back. “Get against the wall now. They are here to kill you. Take this.” She lifted her arm, offering the gun over her shoulder, handle first. “Aim for the head or heart. Don’t hesitate to pull the trigger. They’ll tear you to shreds if you let them.”

Shock held Jasmine still for a few heartbeats before she swallowed hard and grabbed the weapon. “I’ve never fired one,” she whispered.

“It’s a good time to learn,” Jenny muttered. “Just don’t hit me.”

*Good advice.* Her hands trembled as she wrapped them around the cold metal and found the trigger. Her mind wanted to shut down but she didn’t allow it to happen. They were all in danger. “Is the safety off?”

“It’s never on.” Jenny suddenly crouched, stake fisted in one palm and braced her weight with the other. She growled in warning, taking a protective stance.

Chase and his two friends didn’t wait for the werewolves to finish their transformation before they withdrew swords and attacked. The second her mate moved, Jasmine noticed a short woman who’d been hiding behind him spin around to dash to a far door.

*Who is she? Why was she behind Chase?* Jealousy was short-lived as two of the werewolves rolled out of the way of the sharp blades. They righted themselves on four legs and their thick, furry bodies barreled in the direction of the front door.

*Right at us,* Jasmine realized. She couldn’t look away from their vicious teeth.

A big body suddenly landed just feet in front of Jenny. Jasmine wondered how Chase had gotten there. Light reflected off his long blade as he swung it and something slammed into the wall that almost hit her. She whimpered when she realized what it was as the thing thumped to the floor

and almost hit her foot. An arm was the next thing that came sailing up into the air as her mate took out the attackers.

“I’m going to be sick,” she warned.

“They are the enemy.” Jenny sounded calm. “Better them than us.”

*What the hell did I get myself into?* Jasmine thought just before everything went black.

## Chapter Eight

“Mine? Come on. Talk to me.”

Jasmine realized she was cradled in strong arms and knew that husky voice. She’d had a hellish nightmare. She opened her eyes to stare at Chase. His hair was damp and so was his chest, which she was pressed against, as if he’d just showered.

“How are you?” The concern in his eyes was clear.

“I...” She cleared her throat.

“It’s over. They are all dead. We’re in one of the apartments under the club. You’re safe.”

“That was real?”

His arms tightened. “Yeah. The stench of all that blood overwhelmed you. It’s to be expected, you being a new mate.”

“I think it was the flying body parts.”

His mouth curved into a smile. “Life with me is never boring.”

She would have used another description to explain how things had changed since her kidnapping and rescue.

Chase sobered. “You weren’t supposed to be here or see any of that.”

“Jenny said you wanted us to come to the club.”

“No. My phone was stolen and someone from my pack sent that message. I told you to stay at home where you’d be safe.”

Memory fully returned. “Who was that woman?”

“A bitch who got what was coming to her.”

“I saw her escape out a back door. Will she come after us again?”

“Oh. You must mean Mora. She’s one of the pack. I thought you were referring to Tina.”

“Who are they?”

“Mora and her mate are half-breeds. Tina is a full-blooded wolf who thought she could impress me by showing her cunning nature but it got her killed.” He shifted his hold and stroked her cheek with his thumb. “She made the unforgivable mistake of going after someone I love.”

The bond between them opened and his feelings warmed her, showing how strong his emotions were. Lust also hit, leaving her no doubt he wanted to lay her on the bed they sat on to make love to her.

“Chase.” She cupped his face to pull him down for a kiss.

His full lips brushed hers before he withdrew and smiled. “I have good and bad news before I allow you to seduce me.”

“Me?” She laughed. “You’re the one projecting images of bending me over in front of you and making me hot.”

A sense of seriousness cooled some of the heat between them. She took a deep breath. “Give me the good news first since you are determined that we talk before following through with what I just saw.”

“The deadliest of my enemies won’t be a problem anymore. It will send a strong message to anyone who considers coming after me or mine.”

“Okay. What’s the bad news?”

“You left the house after I told you not to. You’re in deep trouble.”

“Jenny thought the text was from you.”

His eyebrows arched. “She’s not your mate.”

Disbelief filled her. “She figured that you wanted me to meet your friends. It wasn’t her fault someone swiped your phone.”

“True. I’ll make sure it always stays in my possession at work from now on instead of leaving it in my jacket pocket at my desk. But...I gave you an order and you didn’t follow it. I’m going to have to punish you for disobeying.”

Her temper flared. “Disobeying? Did you really just say that?”

Humor sparked in his eyes. “Don’t you want to know what your punishment is?”

She tried to wiggle out of his arms but he was too strong. “No. I’m a person, not a pet. Don’t even think about spanking me because I’m not into that crap.”

“I’d never hit you.” He chuckled. “I took the next month off so we could spend time together. My vacation is effective as soon as I finish getting dressed and we leave the club.”

“You did?”

He nodded.

“I’m not the blind obedience type.”

“I’m glad to hear it. I like it when you stand up to me.” He leaned in, smiling again. “Besides, you project your thoughts forcefully at times. You weren’t happy when I left this morning. You want a honeymoon and I agree.”

“This all sounds like good news to me.”

He kissed her with a quick brush of his lips. “We’re going to get to know each other really well.” A memory of them together in the shower flashed through her mind as he shared it with her so she knew exactly what he meant.

“I’m still waiting for the bad stuff.”

“I heard what you said to my sister. You are going to learn how to use a gun and you should know how to fight. I want you to always be safe.”

“Honeymoons are supposed to be fun.”

“It will be.”

“Uh-huh.” She wasn’t convinced.

“Me. You. Mostly undressed.” He pressed a kiss to her forehead. “Wrestling around. Getting up close and personal. Sweating will be involved.” His lips moved lower as he tucked his head, homing in on her throat. “I’ll pin you down. You can try to pin me.”

She gave him freer access as his voice lowered into that sexy, soft growl that turned her on. “I’m still not hearing anything bad.”

He nipped her skin and a jolt of desire shot from her neck to her lap, drawing a moan from her.

“I have to deal with one last issue before the honeymoon starts.”

“What is it?” Worry struck. Will he have to fight again?

“I doubt it.” He read her mind. “At least I don’t believe I’ll meet any more resistance. The strongest wolves were already taken out and I need to assert my position as alpha with the pack. A little time will be good for

them to mull over what happened and how futile it would be to challenge me in the future. I just need to speak to them first.”

“Okay.” She’d worry but she could understand that he’d have to deal with the werewolves. “If you’re not expecting more fights, what is the bad part?”

“You’re looking at thirty days of me not leaving your side,” he rasped. “No respite. No reprieve. I really want you, mine.” He softly growled again. “And I’m going to have you over and over. I’m going to love you so much and so often, you’ll be sorry.”

“Never. I’m really happy to be your mate, Chase.”

He held her tighter. “Me too.”

## About Laurann Dohner

I'm a full-time "in-house supervisor" (sounds *much* better than plain ol' housewife), mother and writer. I'm addicted to caramel iced coffee, the occasional candy bar (or two) and trying to get at least five hours of sleep at night.

I love to write all kinds of stories. I think the best part about writing is the fact that real life is always uncertain, always tossing things at us that we have no control over, but when you write, you can make sure there's always a happy ending. I *love* that about writing. I love to sit down at my computer desk, put on my headphones and listen to loud music to block out the world around me, so I can create worlds in front of me.

Laurann welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email addresses on her [author bio page](#) at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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