



Ache For Her

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Category: Erotic, Romance

Description: With a past this dark, only one thing could save him. Simon prefers the vamp life. Feeding, pleasure, and living for his own immediate desires. But what he desires now more than anything is revenge against the man who took everything from him. He watches. He waits. He executes his unshakable plan until the plan becomes the one thing grounding him...and it's all because of her.

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Chapter One

Simon

Take some time, Galen told me.

Fuck that.

Why? Just because I didn't like seeing his perfect fucking life with Kayleigh?

I closed my eyes and breathed in deep. I had to get my anger under control or my plans weren't going to happen as I wanted. I was taking time—a lot of time—to do something I should've done a long fucking time ago.

Weird how one thing that happened in your life would make you think of something completely different. Somehow, my mind had made the connection between Kayleigh and my mother. Or maybe it was just Kayleigh's pre-vamp life that sparked an intense rage inside me. She had it all. A doting family, college. I grew up on the streets with nothing. Then, she comes into my house, my world, and takes away the one person who was always mine. Galen. My sire. My friend. My father figure. So, not only did she have the life I should've had growing up, she was now at the estate living the life I had.

Take some time.

The words still rattled around in my head. I should've just killed Kayleigh when I had the chance. Killed her before Galen fell for her. Fuck, I should've just done what I'd

intended to do when I saw her walking back to her place that night. If I would've drunk her blood then, Galen would never have known.

Just like he sure as fuck wasn't going to find out about my plans now. He always thought I was ignorant, and immature, and even I could admit this was a risk. But, this was what happened when he left me to my own devices.

I peered through the bushes to the opposite side of the street where the Spanish-style mansion rose up from a manicured lawn. Down the street, a teeter totter blew in the wind, one side hitting the dirt, then the other. It was a perfect little gated community for the presumably perfect little families inside.

Only, I knew the truth. Inside that house with the pristine lawn and the flowers that bloomed under the moon was one fucked up man. Greene. Jacob Greene. My mother called him Greenie. In her high stupor, she used to tell me she needed to go see 'Greenie' for some more. Always with his name over and over again. From what I could tell after watching the house for a few days, he was head of that drug ring now. Back when my mother was an addict, he was probably just the dealer. But with his grayed hair and wrinkles, he'd retired to an easier life, living off the pain of others.

I wondered if he'd remember my mother. If he'd even known what became of her, or if he ever actually thought about her at all. He certainly hadn't given a fuck then. No one had showed up at the funeral Galen arranged for her, and he certainly hadn't been there when she went into tremors with the needles sticking out of her arms. If he thought about her at all, it was probably that he missed the money she gave him or whatever else she used to pay him with.

I sat back on my haunches and stretched my hands out to the side. I needed another train of thought. That one always took me into murder-inducing territory. Too much of that would make me run over there, kick the door down, and just slash his throat.

That wasn't going to happen though.

The fucker was going to suffer just like I had. Just like my mother. No more living high off the people he helped destroy. He needed to atone for everything he'd done. I was sure my mother wasn't the only victim. Not for as many years as he'd been doing this. There was probably a list a mile long, and he'd feel every single one when I was done with him. Every. Single. One.

A black sedan pulled up in front of the house. The night went still as I watched. I leaned forward, my claws descending into the earth in front of me as my gaze zeroed in. I sniffed the air as the door opened. Not him.

Her.

My insides constricted. After I'd asked around to find out where Greenie was nowadays, I followed the trail here. His people had big mouths. Then again, they probably weren't all that worried. This place was like a fortress. It might keep out humans, but if I wanted a way in, I'd find one. Especially since I didn't care. I'd leave a trail of bodies behind me as long as I got my revenge. What I didn't expect to find here was her.

She stood, her head popping above the car for a moment before she reached back in. She pulled a strap up onto her shoulder and then closed the door behind her as her grandfather's guard waited by her side. She was the picture of perfection. Straight, dark hair of which the longest strands flirted with the roundness of her ass. She had on a pair of designer shades even though it was already dark out. And no, she wasn't high. She smelled like the perfect mixture of floral scents. Those who did drugs smelled like rotten meat. I didn't know if it had something to do with the drugs mixing with their bodies as a poison, but I could always tell when I was near someone who was high. It made me want to gag.

Not her though. She was the exact opposite. She was in her early twenties, living off her grandfather's money. And he doted on her too. She got everything she wanted. Didn't work at all, didn't go to school, but still living the life. Almost like a celebrity. She had guards, those who waited on her hand and foot, but she didn't even have the talent to back it up.

If I didn't want to sink my fangs into her so badly, I'd probably kill her. She was perfect. My only restraint was Galen's voice in my head telling me I was too impulsive, too immature. I could've taken his granddaughter the moment I first saw her. Like how I felt when I first saw Kayleigh. I'd just taken her without a thought to the consequences. This girl would be different. I had plans for her, this girl who lived off drug money without a care in the world. It made me sick, so she'd have to pay too.

All of them were going to pay.

I bit down on my lip as I watched her turn toward the walk, the alert guard by her side. Tonight was the night I'd finally put my plan into motion. In an instant, I retracted my claws and was at the sidewalk next to her by the time she took her first step. The power of my approach made the air spin around us and she teetered on her heels. My hand shot out and righted her.

"Excuse me, are you okay?" I said in the deepest, most trusting voice I could muster. Her skin on mine made my own flare with heat. I tore my hand away at the contact.

She turned moments later, her hand immediately going to her chest as she started.

"What the—?" the guard said. He was about five seconds too slow. If I'd wanted, they both would've already been dead.

I was still tinkering with the idea until her gaze leveled on me. She looked me up and

down, taking her time perusing me. It was no doubt she was beautiful, but how she attained that beauty made me hate her. Squelching every knee-jerk reaction I had to just break her neck right then and there took a lot of effort. I had a plan, I reminded myself. I was not going to go out half-cocked and fuck everything up. This was too important.

I smirked at her the moment her eyes caught mine. I was dressed in a pair of jeans and a white t-shirt, my hair gelled to perfection. Her gaze heated, the same stupid response of all humans, but what I didn't expect was my own response. My heart beat once in my chest, slamming against my rib cage. My claws simultaneously tried to come out as my fangs itched to descend.

The guard pushed forward. "Sir, step back please."

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The girl laughed. “Oh, it’s okay, Ronnie.” She looked back, her face sultry as she held her hand out. “I’m Lilah.”

I swallowed, staring at her hand. The polite thing to do would be to reach out and shake it. It wasn’t usually my goal to be gentlemanly, but in order for my plan to work, it was. She had to trust me, but those weren’t the thoughts pouring through my head now. Her bright, flawless skin. Her perfect pouty lips. Her rich scent. But most of all, it was the pulse at her wrists as her hand was still suspended in the air toward me.

I calculated how long it would take to murder the guard and drag the girl back to the bushes to drain her. If I did that, I’d have to immediately run in and take out Greenie afterward.

No, I needed better revenge than that. There had to be suffering, like all the moments I suffered without my mother.

My impulsive nature wasn’t going to get the better of me this time. I was going to carry out the plan I’d perfected the past few nights while I lingered in my suite in downtown Philly. A place way too posh for the little boy who’d grown up with an addict. Not now though. Now I could have whatever I wanted.

I smiled and took Lilah’s hand. “Simon,” I told her, giving her my name. Sure, I could’ve used a fake name, but I wanted them to die knowing who I was. It would all come out eventually, and then Greenie would understand why I was taking his life. He’d understand why I was taking so much joy out of it too.

“Hi, Simon,” Lilah said, her perfect little smile still there.

Just like Kayleigh.

My stomach rolled. These dumb bitches who had everything made me sick. My teeth clenched, and I bit back a growl threatening to the surface.

The guard eyed me. “We need to get you inside now, Delilah.”

Her face faltered, annoyed by the guard trying to tell her what to do. I held my hands up in a perfect passive stance. I knew how to take girls. It was kind of my thing as Galen’s top Feeder scout. I went into places with one thing in mind: finding the trash that could be turned into jewels with a little polish. “I swear I’m not a weirdo,” I said, making sure to put the perfect amount of amusement in my voice. “I just moved in down the street.”

Lilah looked the way I pointed. “Oh, did you buy the Custer’s house?”

I shrugged. If there was anything I learned, it was never to fully commit to something I hadn’t researched ahead of time. Humans could smell bullshit more than they realized. An intuition or something. “I don’t know. Maybe,” I told her.

Her smile grew wider and a sense of accomplishment rang through me. I already had her on the string. It didn’t hurt that humans were always attracted to my kind. Maybe it was because we were all extremely good looking, but I was pretty sure it also had something to do with the fact that we always had a hint of danger to us. Stupid humans. Then again, people always trusted those who were good looking. If I cared to look, I was sure I could find some actual scientific evidence to back that theory up, but I didn’t need it. I had years of vamp experience to prove it. People were enamored with good looking people, even more so if they looked like they could be trouble.

“Well, welcome to the neighborhood,” she said, her brown eyes twinkling.

The guard’s lips thinned. He surveyed the area, looking from the house to Delilah again and again. He was actually doing his job well, but he would be no match for me. “Thanks,” I told her. “You lived here long?”

“My whole life,” she said. “I live here with my grandfather.”

I nodded. I already knew all this. I knew that her parents had died when she was younger and that her grandfather and his cohorts had raised her. Because of who he was, she was treated like a princess. She had a car, but she never drove it. She was carted around like the Queen of England. If she wanted to go shopping, her bodyguards took her. If she wanted anything, she could expect it the next day.

Revenge was almost mine. There was no way her grandfather was giving her up, and that was what I was banking on.

“I moved down here for work,” I told her. “Not sure how long I’ll be staying, I tend to move around a lot.”

Her smile faltered a little. I swear I could write the whole of this conversation before it even started. She was already enamored with me and we’d barely spoken to one another. It was the vamp gift. The perfect predators. We easily pulled in prey for the kill. Too easy sometimes.

Not this time though. I was going to drag it out.

“Well,” I said, giving her a smile. “Maybe I’ll see you around sometime?”

The guard, finally seeing an end to the conversation, took up his stance next to Delilah. He placed his hand on her elbow and I had to quell the surge of anger that

threatened to flare.

“See you around,” she said.

I walked down the sidewalk as if I was taking a moonlit stroll. Once I hit the shadows, I put on my vamp speed and hid in the bushes opposite the house again.

Despite my greedy thoughts, everything was going to happen right on track. Take the girl. Ransom the grandfather. But not for money, for his life.

I smiled as I watched Delilah walk up the main walk to the house. Her head twisted around to try to see me, but I was already gone.

Game on.

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Chapter Two

Delilah

Wow. What a hottie for a neighbor. I guessed I'd have to drag out my running gear and make sure I got outside more often. Damn, but he was dreamy.

I set my sunglasses down on the table in the foyer. Ronnie, Mr. Buzzkill, stood just inside the door. I'd have to talk to Gramps again about getting some extra space. The bodyguards were always up my ass. Though, sometimes I didn't mind it. It depended on what we were doing.

A smile tugged at my lips as I walked into the living room. I found Gramps in there, lounging while watching an old Western movie. "Hi, Grandpa." I leaned over and gave him a kiss. His unshaven face tickled my nose.

He started and turned as if he wasn't expecting me to walk in on him. "Oh, Lilah. How was the movies?"

I cocked my head to the side. I swear the old man never listened to me. "I went out dancing tonight, Gramps. You know that."

"Oh, right," he said, already turned toward the TV again. He'd really started to lose his hair over the last couple of years. He had more of a dome now than any real hairstyle. "Glad you had fun," he said.

I gave him a quick kiss on the cheek again and ventured upstairs. His age had taken a

toll on him lately. He had a hard time hearing, listening, and preferred to stay to himself. I made sure to stop in and say hi at least several times a day, but he was always so distracted with one thing or the other. It made me nervous that someone I'd always believed to be so ageless might be having problems.

I dropped my purse just inside my room and then kicked the door shut. I had a huge room on the second floor. It was practically a suite. Grandpa had put it in for me after I finished high school. I had my own attached bath, makeup area, walk-in closet, the works. It was pretty much every woman's dream, especially the fact that Grandpa made sure I had everything I wanted, which meant fully stocked closets and drawers of makeup I'd only used once.

I drifted toward the window and looked down, telling myself I wasn't looking for the hottie next door. Looking both ways down the sidewalk, there was no one to be seen. I sighed, but a smile immediately pulled my lips apart. Nothing exciting ever happened at the house. Grandpa had this place locked up tight. In fact, Ronnie was probably down there right now filling him in about our handsome new neighbor. Gramps always wanted to know everything that was going on, and I wasn't exaggerating—everything. His guards gave him a play-by-play of my activities every day. I didn't really mind it. I'd grown up that way, so I didn't really know any different. And besides, he was doing it for my own safety.

Throwing myself down on the bed, I stared up at my bedroom ceiling. The club had been lame tonight. There was hardly anyone there. I asked my friends to join me, but they all begged off because they had to work in the morning. It must be so inconvenient to have to wake up early for a job. It was for me. I'd stayed and had a few drinks, but nothing caught my attention, so I decided to go home. Maybe take a bath or something.

I bit my lip as I thought about Simon. He had the most appealing gray eyes I'd ever seen, almost silvery in the moonlight. So dark and mysterious, too. Who met their

new neighbors at night? Then again, I didn't think he'd planned it that way. He was just out for a stroll and happened upon me.

I conjured up the image of Simon in my head, wondering what kind of guy he was. I always fell for the wrong ones. Easy to do when my grandfather led the life he did. I wasn't supposed to even go for those guys, but who didn't love a little forbidden romance?

A smile teased my lips as I thought about it. Going behind Gramp's back with one of his guys was fun. Exhilarating, even. No matter how many times he threatened them not to go after me, it didn't matter. One look from me was all it took.

Maybe this Simon guy would be the same. He seemed older though. Older could be good. More experience... That was always a plus. A lot of times when I snuck around with the guys around here, they were only good for just one night. They weren't the type I'd stick around for. Unfortunately, that was Ronnie's problem now. One night and he thought he owned me. Little did he know all I had to do was let it slip what we'd done, and Gramps would have him fired in a heartbeat.

I rolled to my side and pushed the pillow underneath me. Closing my eyes, all I saw was Simon on the other side. His perfect hair, that cocky smile. Fuck, he was gorgeous. Maybe it was time to broaden my horizons and look elsewhere for a little fun. A tryst with a neighbor sounded juicy. Especially with those bicep muscles I saw peeking out from his sleeves. And those chest muscles. God damn. A girl could dream.

I unbuttoned my jeans and pulled them down. Simon was definitely the kind of guy you thought about when you wanted to pleasure yourself. All dark and handsome. That hint of mysteriousness, and that cocky glare like he knew he was as good looking as he was.

Heat pooled between my legs. I fumbled for the vibrator in my drawer next to the bed, still picturing Simon. Though now, he had his shirt off and he was staring at me as if the only thing he wanted to do was eat me up. I gripped what I'd been searching for, took it out, and pulled my underwear down with my other hand.

Shit. I hadn't been this turned on in a long time. I turned on the vibrator, felt it pulsing in my hand as I moved it between my legs. As soon as it hit my flesh, I cried out. "Fuck yes."

Simon was between my legs now, his tongue darting out, caressing my clit. I worked the vibrator up higher. Holy shit.

With my other hand, I reached out and pulled my shirt up, taking my bra with it. I rubbed my nipple between my fingers. They were hard, waiting for Simon's hand to worship them. They'd have to deal with mine though. At least, until I figured out a way to seduce him.

I rubbed harder and harder while the vibrator did its thing. Damn, this felt too fucking good. I heard Simon growl. In my head, I saw his eyes glow that silvery color. "Fuck yes, give it to me."

Now, I pictured him thrusting inside me, holding onto my headboard for leverage as he gave me every thick inch he had. Fuck, I hoped the actual sex was this good. My body built and built, the vibrator teasing in the most glorious way. I tensed when I felt it coming. "Oh, Simon, yes," I cried.

Another growl sounded.

So close. So, so close.

A hand clenched mine and ripped it away from my legs. My eyes flew open, and I

stared into the gray eyes of the very person I'd been picturing. My body pulsed, my orgasm coming, but not as scream-worthy as it had been heading. It died as a scream worked its way up my throat. I didn't care how hot he was, what the fuck was he doing in my bedroom? And watching me touch myself?

His hand came down on my mouth, stopping the scream. He pulled my other hand away from my breast and pinned it to the bed. "You're thinking of me?" he growled.

His eyes swam with evil. Shadows overcame his face as he stared down at my body. I screamed, kicking out at him. For a brief second, his hand came off mine and I made a startled cry before he was on top of me again.

"But isn't this what you wanted?" Simon asked, his eyes warning danger. Between us, his cock grew, pitching a tent in his jeans. I looked around the room. There was nothing to defend myself with and no one here besides us. How the hell had this happened? This was supposed to be the safest place for me.

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My heart beating like mad in my chest, I stared up at him. “Let go of me.”

It was muffled, but he understood it. “Not a chance,” he said, his eyes glowing.

“Please,” I said, tears threatening now. Half in shame, half in terror. How had he gotten up here? Was Gramps okay? What about Ronnie? This should never have happened. What happened to everyone?

“Oh,” he said, a mischievous glint to his eyes. “You’re the begging type.”

“No,” I said, shaking my head at his insinuation. I was Delilah Greene. I did not beg.

His stare worked its way down my body. It responded to him, almost vibrating as he took me in, though I wish it hadn’t. Of course, it did though. I’d just been picturing his thick cock driving into me over and over again until I was about to scream his name.

“How...?”

Simon grinned as he sat back on the bed, his hand still over my mouth. He was so strong, no wonder I’d gotten a glimpse of his muscles escaping his shirt. “This really isn’t your fault, Delilah,” he sing-songed. His voice wasn’t the deep tone that melted my knees from earlier, it was predatory, making my stomach turn over.

I eyed the door, but Simon only laughed.

“They won’t be coming up here.”

“What did you do?” I tried to scream, but it came out no louder than his own words. I tried to push him away again, but his strength was overpowering. I couldn’t even move him.

“Oh, they’re fine,” he said. “They just don’t even know I’m up here. I’m sneaky like that.” He took another long look at my body and then stretched himself out beside me.

Bile rose in my throat as my chest heaved. I could feel every inch of him holding me down. I’d gone from ready to explode in pleasure to the worst fear I’d ever felt. “Please leave me alone,” I said, his fingers muffling my words. “My grandfather. He’ll give you whatever you want. Just please, don’t hurt me.”

Trying to negotiate with him did the opposite of what I wanted. Instead of making Simon think, his smile pulled back wider. “I know. I’m counting on it, Delilah. Except, I think we’ll disagree on what I’ll ask for.”

I shook my head. “Whatever you want. I promise. He’ll do it.”

Simon’s lips tipped up in a smile that if it wasn’t at my expense, would’ve been a turn on.

The doorknob to the room rattled.

Simon sat back, and my eyes rounded.

“Delilah,” a man’s voice whispered.

At the same time I realized it was Ronnie, so did Simon. Except, he looked back at me with a glare. “Aww, I see. Fucking the help behind your grandfather’s back? What would poor Ronnie think about you pleasuring yourself with me in mind?

Hmm?” With a hand still over my mouth, he moved his head lower and lower down my body, his heated breath caressing my skin. It simultaneously turned my stomach and made me wet. I glared at him as he poised himself between my legs, his hot breath caressing my center.

I wiggled on the bed.

A knock came on the door. “Lilah?” the voice said, a little louder this time.

“Maybe scream my name again?” Simon asked, winking. “That ought to give him an idea of what’s going on in here.”

His tongue darted out, expertly rolling over my clit. Fuck. Fuck. That felt amazing, but so wrong at the same time.

“Stay away from me!” I screamed. The sound came out muffled, but it must have been enough to alert Ronnie because he came bursting in the door.

Simon immediately rolled off me. I scurried away from him, my back hitting the headboard as Ronnie took in the situation. “Now, you’ve done it,” Simon said casually, sighing.

Ronnie went for the walkie talkie on his shoulder, but Simon darted forward. Before I even saw what happened, Ronnie fell to the floor in a heap. A scream worked its way up my throat, but before it could even get past my lips, Simon’s hand was on my mouth again.

I struggled against him, trying to see what had happened to Ronnie, but instead, I felt a prick. Almost immediately, my limbs felt like heavy bricks. I tried to talk and scream, but I couldn’t force anything to my lips. My eyelids started to droop.

He'd given me something. He pulled his hand away from my mouth and turned my head toward Ronnie. "That was your fault, Delilah."

Through a foggy haze I saw the deep, red blood pooling around Ronnie's head.

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“Well, yours and his own. If he hadn’t been trying to be a knight in shining armor, this could’ve gone off without a hitch.”

“Y-you killed him?” I mumbled.

“Gladly,” Simon said. “He was a nuisance from the beginning.”

My eyes blurred. Instead of one bleeding Ronnie, there were now four. “You’re terrible...”

Simon laughed, the sound so jarring to the scene around us. People shouldn’t laugh at death. That was horrible.

I felt my body lift from the bed and droop over Simon’s shoulder. Then, it was as if we were flying. I was almost weightless. My hair blew by my head in dark swirls, and then I passed out.

There was nothing but pitch black, and the memories of what had just happened.

I really sucked at picking guys.

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Chapter Three

Simon

The footman didn't even blink when I carried Delilah through the lobby of the hotel. I'd just smiled and told him she'd had too much to drink. That was after I wrapped her in a blanket I'd found at the foot of her bed. Otherwise, she would've been naked from the waist down still. I'd already had to pull her shirt back down over her bare breasts.

My cock stood at attention again just thinking about what I walked in on when I came in through the window. The way her body twisted on the bed, her eyes tightly closed. It was mesmerizing watching her before I realized she was even picturing me. Then, it became too much. She'd sucked in a breath, saying my name on a gasp. I had to stop her. I already ached in all the right ways and fucking the woman who was going to help me take down her grandfather was not part of the plan—yet.

The concoction I shot her up with was still having its effect on her as she snoozed on the couch. Her wild, dark hair was around her in a halo. Her thin stomach raised and lowered, and her lower half was as naked as when I first stepped foot into her bedroom. Her ass was perfectly toned and round. With no commitments like work or school, she could probably make it to the gym as often as she wanted. Not that it mattered. I may take Delilah Greene when this was over, but it wouldn't be for my own sexual pleasure. For revenge, yes. I would take her to make her pay, and to make her grandfather pay. Sexual gratification would have nothing to do with it.

I hadn't intended on killing anyone when I took Delilah, but the fact that Ronnie had bust the door down changed the plan quickly. When I thought about it though, it sent a nice message. It proved I meant business. An extra cautionary tale about what could happen to his beloved granddaughter if he didn't do exactly what I said.

Smiling, I stared up at the ceiling wondering what Greenie was doing right now. Freaking out? Gathering his guys? Crying? I hoped so. I hoped the loss of his precious Delilah had him broken and grasping at straws just as I felt all those years ago.

I crossed my hands across my stomach and stared over at Delilah. I'd have to tie her up and gag her soon. The crap I knocked her out with would be wearing off and I couldn't have her trying to fight me off like she'd done in her bedroom. Not that it did her any good. She didn't know who she was up against. Plus, a few pictures to send the grandfather half naked and tied up couldn't hurt. It might even spur him to hurry the fuck up, so I could have my revenge and be done with it.

My cell rang. My heart surged as I pulled it from my pocket. Maybe Greenie was calling to negotiate. I no doubt believed he'd hate my terms, so that's why I'd left my number. Instead, Galen's name rolled across the screen. I debated not answering it, but like the dutiful servant I was, I answered on the second ring. "Yes, Master Galen?"

He cleared his throat, breaking away from a laugh. He must've suspected I wouldn't have answered so quickly.

The mirth in his voice made my stomach twist when he greeted me. We used to find enjoyment in many of the same things, but now those things weren't the same for him.

"Is Kayleigh with you?" I asked, my voice dripping in sarcasm. "Do tell her I say hi."

"Fuck off."

I smiled into the phone. There were some moments when Galen and I returned to normal, usually when I said shit about his mate.

"I'm just calling to see how you're doing."

"I'm just fine," I answered, watching Delilah's sleeping body. My nerves twisted. The anticipation of seeing what Greenie would do was almost too much to keep quiet.

“Where are you?” Galen asked.

I bit down on my lip, debating on whether to tell him the truth or not. He would disapprove of what I was doing. Not for wanting to take Greenie out but doing it in this way. Kidnapping a high-profile person with plans to show evidence of exactly what I was doing to her wouldn't sit well with him at all. Then again, he was Galen Dumont and seemed to find this shit out whether I wanted him to or not. Better just to tell him the truth. “Philly.”

Silence met me on the other side of the line. Then, slowly, he asked, “Philly? Why?”

Suspicion laced his voice. It was time to play the situation down. “Just looking up my old haunts. That kind of thing.”

“Just torturing yourself, you mean?” he snapped.

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His concern touched me. He'd been the only being alive to see me at my most vulnerable. I'd sworn a long time ago nothing like that would ever happen to me again. It hadn't and wouldn't. "You say tomay-to. I say tomah-to."

Footsteps sounded from his end of the line, echoing off the large estate walls at the castle he'd moved the clan to. Finally, a door shut. "Simon, I'm serious. Are you okay?"

His voice was strained. I looked over at Delilah who still lay asleep on the luxury sofa in the suite I'd rented. To a normal person, this may not have seemed like I was okay, but in actuality, I was feeling alive. More alive than I'd felt in a long time. What could I tell Galen though? That I'd be okay as soon as I finished this thing I felt compelled to do? As soon as I got my revenge on the person who'd ruined my life? He'd told me to take some time, and this was what I was doing with that time. He wouldn't have stopped me from doing this, but he would've wanted me to be smart about it, and sometimes, I just didn't want to be smart, I wanted to be ruthless. "Yes, I'm fine," I told him, trying to sound bored. He loved it when I did that.

"Do you need me?"

A surprised laugh tore through me. That was something I hadn't heard from him since I brought Kayleigh into our lives. "Need you? Aren't you busy?"

I could hear Galen walking around the room he was in, the floorboards creaking underneath his feet. "Simon, you know I'll always be there for you. Why Philly? Why now?"

I dribbled my fingers over the armrest. “I’m just looking around. Taking a walk down memory lane as they say.”

“Then I’m going to ask you one more time, do you need me?”

I clamped my mouth shut. Part of me wanted to say I did need him, ask him to come help me do this. It was fitting since he’d saved me from that life that he could also help me get retribution from it, but I also wondered if he really would or if his newly found happiness with Kayleigh had changed him.

“You know you can come back any time,” Galen said. He’d told me that many times already, but I’d been too busy planning and now executing this wonderful plan. “It’s not Kayleigh or you, it’s both of you. You’ll understand one day when you find someone.”

If I had a heart that worked, it would’ve just stopped beating. What the actual fuck? We were vampires. We didn’t just find someone. Since when had Galen Dumont turned into a fucking Hallmark card. I liked the way it was before when we lived for food and sex. That was the life. “We both know that’s not going to happen, Galen. I’m afraid I’m far beyond caring about any of that nonsense.”

He was silent for a few beats, then said, “That’s a shame, Simon, because I think you need it the most.”

My temper flared, and a ripping noise tore through the suite. I looked down to find my nails had gone straight through the arm of the chair. Well, fuck. I was going to have to replace this now. “Spare me the humanity advice, Galen. Yes, you found love. Yes, now you have a partner for life. Have you ever thought that maybe some people don’t want that? I was perfectly happy with the way things were before.”

“I thought I was too.”

My stomach flipped. “Fuck you.”

The line went dead. It was dead so long I thought Galen had hung up. I still pressed the phone to my ear in hope. Finally, Galen breathed out. “You can still have that life here. There are still feeders here, Simon.”

I urged to go back, but it wasn’t the same. To see Galen and Kayleigh with one another was like a blow to my whole existence. Maybe it was exactly like he was getting at. Maybe it was seeing them that made me realize my life was meaningless. But it didn’t matter. It only made me want to go in the complete opposite direction. We were vampires. We were fucking blood-sucking predators, and that was how I intended to live. I didn’t want to see how much Galen had changed every day. “I don’t think I belong there anymore,” I told him truthfully. It was something that was eating away at me that I didn’t want to acknowledge, but there it was now—and it was the truth.

It was like our lives had taken a complete right turn out of nowhere. He’d went down the soft path while the wicked ways still itched at my fingertips. I wanted to sink my fangs into a pretty girl and fuck her until she cried out. I wanted to rip her fucking throat out and lick the blood from her cold skin. I didn’t want to fuck the same girl day in and day out like it was a job. He’d completely given up his feeders. Sure, he still fed from them, but he didn’t fuck them.

That was just completely mind-blowing to me.

“It’s not as if I’m the first vampire in history to have a mate, Simon, for Christ’s sake.”

But he was a Dumont. Dumont’s didn’t do shit like that. Dumont’s conquered the world, made the world bend to their needs instead of the other way around. At least, that’s what he’d always taught me.

“I don’t believe I’ll be back today,” I told him, mimicking what I’d been saying to him the past month.

“Fine,” Galen growled. Then, the line really did go dead.

I squeezed my cell phone so hard the interior started to crack. Immediately, I slammed the phone down on the table next to me. The last thing I needed was to have to replace my phone again. I went through them like a whore went through condoms.

Glancing over at Delilah, I noticed her eyes start to flutter. I sniffed the air, trying to see how much of the concoction still lingered in her system. Not much, which meant she was probably on the verge of waking up soon. I ran to the bedroom and ripped a pillow case from a pillow and ran back to the room. Her limbs were still dead, but her eyes were trying to force themselves open. Quickly, I wrapped her hands behind her back and returned to my seat in the chair across from the couch, waiting.

She moaned. The sound shouldn’t have made my body react, but it did. It was breathy, like how she’d sounded with the vibrator pressed to her pussy. Her eyes blinked rapidly until they lazily opened as if each one weighed a hundred pounds. Her eyes widened as she took everything in. Then, when her gaze landed on me, her cheeks burned red and she struggled to stand.

She didn’t get far. I imagined the heavy dose of sleep additives I’d slipped her made her mind groggy and her limbs heavy. “You,” she choked out.

“Me,” I said smiling, pleased with myself.

I brought the tips of my fingers to my lips in a triangle formation and stared. I waited until she dragged herself into a sitting position, grimacing when she realized her hands were tied behind her. “What the hell do you want with me?” she spat, disgust twisting her features. Dark flyaways haloed her hair. It wasn’t the sleek, straight hair

of a goddess from earlier tonight. She looked like she'd been put through the ringer already and I hadn't even done anything to her yet. Well, besides kidnapping her, I guessed, but I did that shit all the time.

“You, my dear, are leverage.”

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She shook her head, confusion riddling her features. “Is this because I was touching myself to you? I’m not some sort of freak, and this kidnapping kink doesn’t turn me on. If you brought me here thinking I was just going to roll over and fuck you, you’re mistaken. I don’t want you. Let me go.”

I chuckled. The point about her wanting me or not wanting me was neither here nor there, but the fact that she was trying to deny it to herself amused me. “I didn’t take you to fuck you, Delilah. In fact, what I came across in your room was just a happy little accident. I certainly didn’t think I’d find you screaming my name into your pillow when we’d met only a few minutes before. Is that how you get your kicks?”

Her face turned hard. She nibbled on her lip, and I could almost see her think through what I said. I didn’t fault her. I’d gotten what I wanted plenty of times on a whim. Met someone I had to have, took her, and then walked away. She’d essentially done the same thing just in the privacy of her own bedroom. This girl may even make a good vampire...

“Don’t worry,” I told her. “All will go well for you as long as your grandfather complies.”

Her eyebrows furrowed until dawning hit. “My grandfather?” she asked. All the drugs I’d pumped into her system seemed to all but evaporate in that moment. She was of sound mind and body again, her arms twisting in the pillowcase to free themselves. She smirked. “My grandfather.” Then, she laughed as if the funniest thing in the world was happening right in front of her eyes. “I should have known it was about him. Whatever you want, my grandfather will give it to you. Just call him up and let’s get this over with. I’d like to get back to my life today. Or tonight. Or

whatever the fuck time it is.”

So confident. Then again, I was too because I’d thought up the plan in the first place. “I already left the ransom note, dear. I don’t plan on wasting time either.”

She smiled and nodded. “Excellent.” She laid her head back on the sofa, staring up at the ceiling. She wiggled down into the cushions as if to get comfortable. She wasn’t the scared woman anymore. Taking a page out of my book, she actually looked bored. “So, you’re not a neighbor, are you?”

I shook my head. “I lived in Philly a long time ago, but no, not anymore.”

She sighed. “I don’t know why I always meet the crazy, weird, psycho ones.”

“You’ll have to ask your therapist.”

She frowned in the next instant, and something inside me told me it wasn’t because of my comeback. Her lips thinned. I ground my teeth together to refrain from asking her what was going through her head. She was so expressive, but I didn’t care. She was here for only one purpose.

I stared at the cell phone, hoping it would ring. On the ransom note, I’d left my number along with the instructions to get his granddaughter back. Surprised it hadn’t rung already, I picked it up to check the screen, making sure I hadn’t done any damage to it when I’d been talking to Galen.

It seemed fine, so I placed it back down again.

“Ronnie,” she said, the name coming off her lips with a breath.

My lips turned up. “Oh, I’m sorry, did you really care for him?”

She shook her head, her eyes turning glassy. “No. That’s what makes me sad. He tried to fight for me and I hadn’t even cared.”

I shrugged it off. “He’s paid to fight for you.”

“That’s not why he did it,” she said, her voice hard. She swallowed, and red blotches worked up her neck.

I nodded, finally understanding. So, this girl liked to take a ride on the wild side now and then. If I wasn’t using her for another purpose, she may have even been a good distraction while I stayed away from Galen.

“How long have I been out?” she asked, getting antsy again.

“A few hours.”

Her head whipped toward me. Mouth dropping, I could see the fear in her eyes. “And he hasn’t called yet?”

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Chapter Four

Delilah

The next few hours were filled with silence. I stared at the phone, willing it to ring. Why hadn’t Gramps called yet? Part of me filled with doubt, but the other part of me knew something else was up. Maybe he knew who took me and was rounding the guys up to come in guns blazing. One thing I knew for sure was that he wasn’t going to leave me here with this creepy child predator. As long as Simon wasn’t lying and had actually left a ransom note, I was getting out of here. For all I knew, though,

Gramps could be dead along with the rest of the guards. He'd killed Ronnie so easily. What was to stop him from doing that to every other person in the house, Gramps included?

My mouth dried as I pictured Ronnie falling to the floor. His throat had been cut, but it happened so fast I hadn't seen a knife or anything. That meant he was skilled. Perhaps another drug ring worker who had problems with my grandfather?

I eyed Simon who was flipping through a magazine across the room. He looked too young to be anyone of importance but looks could be deceiving. When I was little, Gramps told me how young he'd been when he'd gained control of his business. For all I knew, Simon could be the head honcho of a rival business using me as bait to get at Grandpa. He hadn't moved from his position on the chair across from me this whole time. I had a feeling he enjoyed the silence more than my questions. I only wished I could think of anything to say just to annoy him, but at this point, I really wanted this whole thing to be over. Gramps had protocols for this sort of thing. I didn't exactly agree with what my grandfather did for a living, but it had given me my life, and I loved my life. And I loved my grandfather too despite what he did. He was the only family I had.

When I was in elementary school, he'd warned me something like this could happen, but I'd gone through twenty-three years of nothing even remotely bad happening. No threats to my life. No close calls. Of course, now, when the hot guy comes strolling into my life, shit hits the fan. The least he could do is tell me what this was all about.

"So, Simon, since I know you're not my neighbor, who are you? What's this problem you have with my grandfather that you're using me for leverage?"

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Simon eyed me from the top of the magazine. “Oh joy. She wants to talk.” He threw the magazine down on the table between us. Without any fanfare, he sat back and said, “He killed my mother.”

My eyes rounded, and I felt the gasp leave my throat before I could temper it. “No,” I said to him, already shaking my head. My grandfather was a lot of things, but he was not a murderer. What he said was impossible.

“It’s true,” Simon said, his eyes darkening. A chill went up my spine as I looked at him. “I was young when it happened, and I’ve wanted revenge ever since.”

I just sat there, my head moving back and forth, still unable to believe it. It wasn’t possible. Not at all. I cleared my throat to stop myself from outright denying it. Maybe if he told me the story, I could figure something out. “Well, tell me what happened.”

Simon looked at me curiously. He shifted in his chair, his eyes never leaving mine. When he finally spoke, he talked about his mother’s death as easily as most people talked about the weather. “My mother was hooked on your grandfather’s drugs. He was a dealer at that time and kept selling to her and selling to her. Eventually, she OD’d.”

Relief swept through me. So, he hadn’t killed her with his own hands. It was the drugs. My jaw ticked as I stared at him. Misplaced anger. He was more than likely not from a rival business then. I wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. Grandpa always said people like him had a different set of ethics, but at least they had them. “Your mother,” I started, unsure of what to say, but knew I needed to try to

dissuade him for blaming my grandfather. “It was terrible what happened to her, but she should’ve taken responsibility for herself, and for you. Gramps didn’t kill your mom, she killed herself.”

He moved in a blur. So fast he looked like a black streak darting for me just before my cheek stung and a slap reverberated through the room. Falling to the side, I cried out. My hands twitched to cover my burning cheek, but they were tied tight. I breathed out, anger welling inside me before I lifted myself back into a sitting position and stared up at him. I should’ve guessed that would set him off. We weren’t dealing with a sane person here.

Simon placed his hands behind his body and in a perfect even tone said, “Don’t you ever say that at about my mother again.”

Tears sprang to my eyes. I tried to push them back, not wanting to show weakness, but they were on automatic pilot. My skin still stung from the slap. I’d be surprised if I didn’t already have a welt growing there. He was impossibly strong. He barely touched me, yet it was one of the worst pains I’d ever felt. My jaw even ticked when I moved it. “Don’t hit me again,” I said with all the strength I could muster.

Simon turned away. A few moments later, I heard what caught his attention. The cell phone on the table rang, the lifeless tones perfect for the occasion. My heart flew up through my throat as he crossed the room, answering the phone within a second. “Yes?” He turned with a smile before falling back into the chair. “Yes, she’s here.”

Relief flooded through me. I leaned forward on the couch. “Gramps?”

Simon eyed me, shaking his head no. But no it wasn’t my grandfather, or no he didn’t want me talking? Desperation clawed at me. My ears strained to hear what was going on, but at the same time, it felt as if I was stuck in a vacuum. My mind was simultaneously trying to do too many things at once that I couldn’t concentrate. I

tried to wiggle out of my holds as if I could grab the phone from Simon and tell him exactly where I was, so he could come get me out of this mess like he always did. Except, I didn't even know where we were. I didn't even know what to tell him. My only guess was that we were in a hotel room due to the general layout of the rooms and the unoriginal furniture.

I stayed silent for a little while longer until I knew I'd never be able to hear what was going on. Then, I called out, "Gramps! Help!"

Simon frowned. He covered the phone with his hand and glared. "Excuse me, two adults are trying to have a conversation."

My stomach twisted. I itched to say something smartass back, but I bit my tongue, not wanting a repeat of the slap.

"Yes, she's fine," Simon said, his voice even. He nodded his head while he listened, the corner of his lips turning up. "Of course, I'll give her back, but I'm going to need something in return." There was a beat of silence from Simon, then, his smile grew wider. "No, I don't want your money, old man. Did you not understand the note I left? I thought I made it perfectly clear that nothing else would do, only your life."

Terror ripped through me. His life? No, I hadn't just heard that. "What?"

Simon ignored me. He spoke into the phone, slow and deliberate, his eyes focused on me. "Yes, that's correct. I don't want your dirty money. I don't want anything except what you took from me. Since I can't get that, I'll take an even exchange. You killed my mother many years ago, Greenie. For that, I want your dead body delivered to me. Then, I'll let your granddaughter go unharmed."

Panic swept through me as I listened to Simon calmly explain his plans to my grandfather. But Grandpa was all I had. My parents died before I'd even gone to

school as a child. He was the only parent I'd ever known. To lose him... I shook my head, tears spilling down my cheeks now.

"I assure you," Simon said, his voice rising. "The photo I left you of me and my mother is not a fake. I'll want that returned as well, maybe stapled to your lifeless chest? Yes, that would do very well. Please add that to my demands."

I bit back a cry, picturing my balding grandfather dragged into the room by this maniac with a picture stapled to his chest. But something about this didn't make sense. My grandfather hadn't been a dealer for many, many years. Simon didn't look that much older than me. There was no way my grandfather was even a dealer when he was a kid. The timeline was way off.

"You have twenty-four hours to think it through. Oh, and Greenie?" Simon flew to the couch I sat on, almost literally. One second, he was in a seated position across the room. The next, his hands were closed around my throat. His mouth opened. Long, pointy fangs descended from his mouth. I screamed. In a flash, his teeth sank into my skin, tearing through until I was in a haze and effectively cutting off my cry. Simon hummed, a sound usually reserved for the bedroom, then pulled his mouth from my neck while my eyes went out of focus. "Don't think I won't punish perfect little Delilah here until you make up your mind. You better be quick."

Simon gave my cheek a tiny slap. I gasped, choking. The pain in my neck intensified, but in the same moment, there was an odd pleasure too. He'd just bit me. With fangs. What in the actual fuck?

Simon hissed, throwing the phone down in the chair, and then lunged for me again. There was nothing I could do to stop him. His fangs sank right where they had before, staying there until I felt my blood sing. It flowed to his mouth like water from a faucet. He swallowed and swallowed. My eyelids fluttered.

What the hell was he?

I didn't know how long he drank from me. It could've easily been a second or an hour. Time seemed to almost stop as my blood willingly flowed toward him. I'd even leaned in closer, so that when he finally pulled away, I was practically in his lap. My blood ran down his face as I stared up at him, blinking. He smiled, and more red liquid spilled over his lips. His teeth were stained red too.

"Yes," Simon said carefully as I gazed up at him. "Your grandfather chose to fuck with the wrong creature."

Creature? My mind was in a fog. Nothing was making sense. I must've been having delusions. Maybe from the aftereffects of whatever he gave me to knock me out.

He grinned again as if he enjoyed seeing me in pain. His fangs were displayed prominently this time, clearly cutting through his gumline.

The fast movements. The fucked-up timeline. The blood drinking. My stomach rolled, and I felt like I could vomit at any moment. "Vampire?" I asked, not even thinking the words before they left my mouth.

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The notion was ridiculous, but nothing else made sense. Vampires weren't real though. They were just a myth.

"Why yes, dear," Simon said. His grin grew wider and his tongue came out to play with his fangs. "And my, you were tasty. I'm going to have to get my fill of you before your grandfather does what I ask."

The world spun in front of me, and then everything went black.

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Chapter Five

Simon

Fury washed over me. Not only had my food passed out, but Greenie sounded so pompous over the phone. So dismissive of the situation we'd found ourselves in. That's when I'd given in to the sweet smell of Delilah's blood. Maybe hearing her desperation, or pain, might spur him on. If not, he'd find out sooner or later that it was not smart to trifle with me.

My body boiled with need. I still smelled and tasted Delilah's blood as it made its way through my system. I hadn't indulged in a long time. Sure, I'd kept myself fed, but I'd been too busy planning my revenge to choose the fine ones. The ones who tasted like nectar from the Gods themselves. Now that the gates had been opened, I wanted more. And Delilah was like the sweetest prize. Her flavor called to me, but equal—if not better than that—was how I could use her to get what I wanted.

I grabbed another pillowcase from the bed and tied Delilah's feet. She barely moved as I wound the fabric around her ankles. I hadn't taken too much blood, so her motionless state had to have been from something else. Maybe just the shock of it all. Finding out what I really was along with my bite could've been overpowering. She fought against it initially, but like with everyone we'd fed from, she'd given in. Our bite called to them. The act meshed perfectly with the tune of their bodies until they craved it.

That was why it was no shock when Kayleigh fell for Galen. The shock was when he did the same.

Me? I was too heartless for that.

Case in point, I stared down at Delilah and slapped her again when she showed no signs of moving any time soon. A pretty pink mark showed up on her cheek. Her eyes fluttered in response. "Wake up, Princess."

I slapped her again. This time, her eyes flew open, and she looked around, her eyes darting everywhere around the hotel suite until she realized it was still just the two of us. "Grandpa," she said. Her voice was soft, too tiny for her, almost a plea into the void.

"Not here," I snarled. Need she point out the fact that I still hadn't gotten my way yet? This might've been getting old except I had Delilah, and Delilah was sweet. "Just you and me still," I purred.

I turned to the small kitchen area in the suite. There, I'd placed all the tools I'd need for my plan. I eyed the voice recorder and smiled. Delilah had been so obliging when I'd wanted her desperate pleas before. Walking over, I grabbed it off the countertop and turned back, placing it on the table in front of her. Switching it on, I smiled. My fangs were still out, aching for more relief. Once they had a taste, it was almost

impossible to stop. My blood thrummed in my veins, mixing with Delilah's. "Please beg," I told her, motioning toward the recorder. "Tell your Gramps all about how you want him to come save you. Tell him."

She clamped down on her jaw and shook her head.

A growl ripped from my throat. I walked over and bent near her. "Fine, I will." I let my claws descend from my fingertips and dragged them over her skin. My scratches were venomous. They would make her skin burn like a fire had started on the surface and then she'd go numb. She cried out, her eyes widening with the pain. "Hear that, Greenie," I cooed. "Delilah's in pain. What should I do?" I did it again, this time dragging my claws down her bare thighs. Rivulets of blood sprouted up, making my throat ache. Delilah's nostrils flared as she clamped her mouth shut to hold in the pain. She grunted, her breaths coming out in rasps, but she refused to scream. "Oh, Greenie, you should see how scared she is. She's a fighter, I'll give you that, but I. Always. Win. I'll keep going, too. She's not leaving here until I have your corpse." Next to her knee, I let my claw sink in deeper and deeper still until she cried out. Smirking, I continued, "The longer you wait, the worse shape she'll be in. All that pretty, flawless skin, is now marred, ugly. You do want her to carry on your legacy, right, Greenie?" I leaned forward, and she tried to back away into the couch, but there was nowhere for her to go.

"Don't," she finally cried.

I hissed at her, my fangs descending again, and she finally screamed. With my free hand, I stopped the recorder, but still descended over her, sinking my fangs into her once more, unable to stop myself. She struggled against me at first, then fell back, content with need coursing through her. Her breathing turned heavy, heady. At that, I pulled away before it went too far.

She lay against the sofa cushions, just staring up at me. "You're evil," she said.

I wiped her blood from my chin. “And yet, still not as evil as your grandfather.”

She shook her head slowly. “You’re wrong. He’s only doing a job, but you’re sadistic. You’re enjoying this.”

I shrugged. Couldn’t argue with her there. It was exactly what I’d been trying to tell Galen for weeks. We couldn’t fight our nature. One mate? I didn’t see how it could work.

She struggled to talk, starting and re-starting several times before she asked, “Why does it feel like that?”

“Feel like what?” I said, making her ask the words.

She stared at my mouth. “Why does your bite feel like that?” she asked, her voice turning harder. “It hurts at first, but then it’s different.”

“Different how?” I urged, enjoying this line of questioning. All the new feeders asked the same questions too.

She shrugged. “Just different.”

I pushed my claw into the mark I’d already made by her knee.

She cried out again, struggling. Then, she fell back, exhausted. “Different good. It feels good. Why?”

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I smiled smugly. “It’s because we’re the perfect predators, Delilah. We hurt you and hurt you, yet you keep coming back for more.”

Her face paled, and her breathing shallowed. She stared at her thighs and knees in confusion. They were probably going numb at this point. Discreetly, I pricked my thumb with my fang until blood sprouted. Then, I came forward.

She shook her head and careened back into the couch to get away from me. “Not me. I won’t come back for more. Don’t bite me again.”

Fixated on my mouth again, I used that opportunity to heal the scratches I made. I hadn’t been lying when I said we were the perfect predators. I could play this game with her all day. Hurt her, heal her, and then hurt her again without her even passing out. I could have hours and hours of audio before I sent it off to Greenie.

“Did you hear me?” Delilah asked. “Don’t bite me again.”

Ah, human threats. They made me laugh. “Well, that’s really up to your grandfather, isn’t it? The sooner he delivers his dead body to me, the less you have to go through. I guess we’ll see just how much he cares about you, hmm?”

Tears welled up from her eyes. They stayed in the corners, making them look glassy, but refusing to shed them at the same time. Her jaw hardened. “Don’t touch me.”

I leaned over her again. Her chest raised, and her body pulled taut as if she was waiting for my next move. I could smell the want emanating from her. Her mind may have not wanted me, but her body sure as hell did. That was why we always won.

“Don’t worry. I’m really not in the mood for you right now.”

I moved away. All the air escaped her lungs. Half in relief, half in agony. I could only imagine what the stupid, fragile human bodies went through when they were around us. I’d say they were a waste, but they were an intricate part of our existence too. Without them, we wouldn’t survive.

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Chapter Six

Delilah

After packaging up the voice recorder and calling a delivery guy to take it to my grandfather, Simon fell asleep in the chair.

While he slept, I worked on the cloth around my hands. I was pretty sure I was loosening the knot. I was going to get the fuck out of here. Waiting on my grandfather was taking entirely too long. Simon was crazy. I’d never seen such evil incarnate. When he’d hurt me, he’d taken pleasure in it. He reveled in it. I could see it in the silvery glint to his gray eyes.

What the hell was my grandfather doing? Did he think this was a cakewalk?

Calm down, I tried to tell myself. He was doing what he could. I was sure of it. He wasn’t going to let me stay here. He was figuring something else out because I was also sure he wasn’t going to kill himself to save me. I didn’t want him to kill himself to save me either. That wasn’t an option. He would fix this. I had faith in him. He’d been keeping me out of trouble my whole life. The run-ins at the private schools. The jobs I kept getting fired from. I knew I was blessed, and yes, there were times I knew I didn’t deserve a second chance, but being a Greene had its advantages, and I

worked those to suit my life. This time would be no different. It was only a matter of time before I walked out of this place free again, and hopefully, get to see Simon punished for this.

My skin crawled as I thought about how the vampire had made me feel. I'd almost orgasmed from his bite. My pussy throbbed with want and juices dampened the cushion underneath me. I didn't understand it. Why? He'd hurt me. He wanted to kill my grandfather, yet I couldn't get my body to understand that fact. I was disgusting.

I worked on my restraints harder. I had information now that I didn't have before. I knew where we were. We were at the Ritz in Downtown Philly. I'd heard Simon give the room number and everything else to the delivery guy before he came to pick up the package. If I could just get to Simon's phone, I could call my grandfather and tell him how to come save me. Maybe that was what they were waiting on, my exact location. Simon wouldn't have given him that, or else Gramps would've already been here by now.

I pulled on the soft fabric again. I breathed out in relief when they loosened. Yes! It was working. I made the same movement again and again until I could slip one of my wrists through. The ache in my shoulders released immediately when I brought my hands forward. I watched Simon, making sure he wasn't awake as I carefully slipped my other wrist through the fabric, letting it fall to the sofa. I worked my wrists around and around, trying to get feeling back into them. My feet were next. I bent over, trying to be as quiet as possible as I pulled at the knot Simon had made. Within a few moments, I'd worked it loose and now I was completely free from my ties.

I eyed Simon's sleeping form and then the cell phone that lay next to him. I also looked at the door, wondering if I should just head that way first. If we were in a hotel room, I was sure I could just start knocking on doors and someone would come to my aid. I fretted over my lip, worrying over the best course of action. My grandfather was my only hope. He was the only one with ties large enough to save

me. Simon was a...vampire. I knew in my heart I was right. I could still feel his fangs in my neck. He was strong and fast. He'd already killed Ronnie. No ordinary person could help save me from him, but my grandfather had access to weapons, weapons that might just be able to take out a vampire.

I moved forward on the sofa. My body cringed in pain from not moving for several hours. The sofa also creaked like my joints. Slowly I went, eyeing Simon the whole time. When I was to my feet, I stood there watching him. I looked around for some sort of weapon but found none. Were the myths true? The only thing that could kill them was a wooden stake? If that were the case, it was going to be difficult for me to find something right here and now. All the furniture was made of metal and glass, except for maybe the sofa and chair, but I was in no condition to tear the sofa apart to use it as a weapon. Even if I was, Simon would hear me.

No, the phone or a direct escape attempt was my only option.

I chose the phone. I tiptoed toward it. It sat on the table like a beacon, calling my name. One call was all it would take. One call and a short sentence for me to tell my grandfather where I was and then I would be saved from this maniac who shouldn't even exist.

I crept closer, tiptoeing toward the table and subsequently Simon. He was still so handsome. An evil asshole, but still handsome. One of the most gorgeous men I'd ever seen in my life. I should've known something was up with him when I first met him. No one should be that good looking, that perfect. I reached out, my hands closing around the phone. My heart was in my throat as I turned. At the last second, I decided I would call my grandfather and flee the room at the same time. I flipped the phone open. It was one of those cheap, disposable ones. Perfect for kidnapping, I thought begrudgingly. The phone beeped as I pressed in the number. Excited now that I had everything I needed, I ran toward the door. I was just pressing in the last number, my other hand around the door knob when hands slid roughly around me.

“Where are you going, Delilah?”

“No!” I pushed Send. The phone started to ring. I heard my grandfather answer and then Simon laugh maniacally in my ear. He batted the phone away, and it fell to the carpeted floor. “That was very naughty of you, Delilah.”

He pulled me back into him, his hips thrusting forward. It was then I remembered I was still naked from the waist down. His cock thickened. I shook my head. “No,” I said forcefully, though at the same time, my body responded. I should never have pictured him while trying to get myself off. “Don’t,” I said again, trying to act unafraid and forceful at the same time.

I knew his mind was already there. He pulled my chest back toward him, his hand snaking around me to cover my breast. I cried out, half pleasure, half incredulous.

“Oh, shh, now, Delilah. You brought this on. We could’ve just waited for your grandfather to come, but no, you wanted to be the hero and escape. Now you have to pay the consequences.”

His hips circled into mine. My body responded, heat pooling at my center. Flashes of my vibrator at my clit rang through my mind. I’d wanted this once. When he drank from me, I wanted it even more. It was a kind of euphoria. My body betrayed me as my brain rebelled against the idea. “Don’t,” I told him again, trying to push him away. He was so impossibly strong though. It was like trying to move a tree with deep-seated roots. He wasn’t going anywhere.

“You know you like it.”

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His hand came up to pinch my ass. Pleasure and confusion raced through me, and I didn't know which would get to the finish line first. I didn't want this. I didn't. But at the same time, my body trembled with need.

He moved his hand over my hip, tangling in my pubic hair and then lower. He plunged his finger deep between my legs and my knees went weak. "Already so wet."

"No," I said, but even as I said it, he started working his finger inside me, and I knew he was right. I was dripping with my juices.

He growled. "Fuck, Delilah. So ready for me. I'm half tempted not to fuck you just because you want it so bad."

"I don't," I said, closing my eyes, warring with myself. This was wrong. So wrong. He hit me. He took me from my home. He didn't give a fuck about me. He wanted to kill my grandfather. He was sick, deranged. Psycho. "I don't want this."

He pulled his fingers from me and in one moment, I thought I'd won.

I was wrong.

His hands yanked at my shirt, and I heard it tear. My back was bare except for my bra. He tore the remnants of my shirt off me, throwing them to the floor. My bra was next. He pulled at it until the clasps gave way, my breasts spilling out as the bra dropped to the floor too. His hands came up to knead my breasts. They were skilled, almost artful as they pinched and massaged. I struggled against him, pulling at his fingers, but all it made him do was move harder, faster, and my body still betrayed

me. My knees quaked so that he had to force his hips against mine to keep me standing.

“Stop,” I told him, tears of desperation springing to my eyes. I couldn’t win. I wanted him to stop and to take me at the same time. I was hopeless. There was no end in sight for me, no end that had me coming out ahead.

I heard the zipper on his pants as he pushed his clothes to the floor. His flesh met mine. His impressive cock nuzzled my backside.

“No,” I said softly. Even to my own ears, it sounded non-committal. What the fuck was wrong with me? I’d always suspected I was fucked up in the head. I screwed the guys who worked with my grandfather knowing nothing good could come from it. There was real danger in it. They would get fired—or worse—and I didn’t care. It was all about my own wants. And here I was, the victim of some ransom with my grandfather and the guy was about to rape me and I wanted it, which technically didn’t make it rape it all. My stomach squeezed.

His hands smoothed over my abdomen and down to my pussy again. “Fucking Christ,” he swore, his fingers diving between my legs.

I bit down on my lip to keep from crying out. This felt a thousand times better than the vibrator did. This was Simon’s actual hand, his actual cock straining against my skin. Fuck me.

Simon snarled. “This is all your fault, Greenie. I hope you know that all of this could’ve been avoided if you’d just given yourself up already.”

For a moment, confusion swept through me. Then, I looked down, seeing the phone was still open. My grandfather was hearing all of this. “Please help,” I called out.

“Exactly,” Simon whispered in my ear. “Tell him you want to be saved. Tell him I’m hurting you.”

“Gramps, please,” I said, choking on a sob. I did want to be saved. I didn’t want this life. I wanted my old life back. I wanted to touch myself in the fantasy and still wake up in the comfort of my own bed. I wanted to wake up and go to the mall, talk with my girlfriends and buy clothes. “Please, he’s hurting me,” I yelled, not caring anymore about sparing my grandfather the details anymore.

At that, Simon snatched the phone up from the floor and closed it, then threw it on the chair. Returning to his place right behind me, his body rumbled against mine. His fingers dug into my skin. The surrounding air was thick. Simon’s breath came out in thick gasps as if he was trying to control himself but failing.

“I shouldn’t do this because I know you want it as much as I do but that’s the problem. I want it too.”

His hand swept up my thigh and to my pussy again. His finger parted my lips and dove inside. I cried out as he worked inside me. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. It felt so fucking good. But this was so wrong. “Stop,” I told him.

“I can’t now,” he said, breathless. “It’s not in my nature. I see something. I take it.”

His hips circled against my ass, and his hand came up to fondle my breast again. “Simon,” I said, a warning in my voice. I knew I had nothing to go on though. He had the upper hand, and he knew it. It was obvious how much I wanted him.

“Such perfect breasts,” he purred. “I’m used to having my way, Delilah. There are girls like you back home. We use them for fucking and feeding. We take their blood and revel in their bodies.”

“That’s sick,” I spat.

“They love us,” he murmured, his lips by my ear, sending a shiver up my spine. “We saved them.”

“They’re prisoners,” I said. He dipped two fingers inside me this time, and I bit hard on my lip to keep from crying out. My legs widened on instinct for better access as I fought against the emotions rolling through me. My body reacted, wanting everything Simon was giving me and then some.

He pushed on my back, his hand clamping inside my pussy for leverage as he bent me over. His cock moved between my legs. Oh fuck. This was it. He was really going to do it.

He removed his fingers and pushed inside in one solid stroke. He let out an animalistic growl as my insides clenched him. It was like the purest ecstasy, but fury rang through me at the same time. He’d just penetrated me without my permission. Fucking asshole. “No!” I screamed.

“Oh, fuck yes,” Simon said as his movements lengthened. He pulled out of me and then sank deep inside. My knees buckled. He whirled me around until the arm of the sofa was in front of me. I clasped onto it as he fucked me.

“No,” I said, moving back against him when he came forward. He was not going to do this against my will. I was going to take everything I wanted from him and more. It felt fucking fantastic.

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I bucked against him and Simon groaned.

That's it, I told myself. I was going to make him want me. I was going to make him regret doing this to me. I was Delilah Greene. Shit like this didn't happen to me.

"Sweet fucking pussy," he purred.

"Uh-huh," I said, moving against him.

He tweaked my nipple, and I cried out. I grimaced, moving against him harder.

"Fuck, Delilah. You want it like that. Hold the fuck on, baby."

He wasn't kidding. His thick cock pounded into me. I grasped the sofa, my nails digging into the material. For every rush of pleasure, I pushed against him harder, making him want me more than I wanted him. Fuck him. This was about me.

The sofa started to move with his barrage. My breasts bounced in front of me as he took us both higher and higher. "Simon!"

My body was so close to the edge, I was flirting with the oncoming orgasm. He was fucking me so hard it was a wonder I didn't rip in half, but part of that was my fault. For everything he gave me, I gave it right back, moving forcefully against him at the same time he came forward.

His fist gripped my hair and yanked. At the same time, I arched my back, and he slid even deeper than before. I went running off the edge, crashing down in a flurry of

pleasure. My insides clenched his hard cock as I screamed my release. He followed soon after, his head coming down to sink his fangs into my shoulder, which sent me into another spiraling orgasm.

I moved my ass against him, milking all his cum from him until he shuddered and released my shoulder. He stood over me, his chest caressing my back with every deep breath he took. Then, he pulled out and walked away. I looked up to see him moving toward the hallway, his shoulders tense. I fell onto the couch cushions, gulping in breaths.

For fuck's sake. That was the best sex I ever had. Dried blood caked my thighs and arms from earlier. Even now, I could feel the trickle of blood springing up from my shoulder and running down my breast. I lay against the couch, almost in a dream-like state as I waited for my body to calm itself.

God, I fucking hated him.

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Chapter Seven

Simon

Delilah's blood—and her body—called to me from the other room while I sat on the edge of the bed in the lone bedroom in the suite. I hadn't even bothered to tie her up again. With the way I fucked her, she wouldn't be able to walk properly for a couple days anyway let alone leave the room. Not that she'd even want to anymore.

My fingers trembled. I clamped my hands together to stop the tremors. What the fuck was wrong with me? I hadn't done that to prove anything. I'd done that because I wanted to. I'd done that because sinking so deep inside her was the only thing I could

think about.

It didn't matter. All this meant was that instead of sparing her life at the end of all this, she had to die too. I could take her to Galen at the end of this so she could become a feeder, the thing she automatically rejected straight out, though she didn't seem to mind when my fangs struck her. She'd be great at it. But my body rejected that idea. I wasn't taking her there.

Fuck me. I should've never let it get that far, but the desire for her overcame me and sticking to the plan was the last thing I wanted to do. She'd tried to deny that she wanted me, and I couldn't let her get away with that.

I glanced at the cell phone I'd managed to grab from the floor when I left the room. Her grandfather still hadn't called. I'd slipped out earlier while she slept to check the perimeter of the hotel. No one watched us. No one surrounded the hotel to free her. How disappointing. I hadn't even made it that difficult to hide where I was staying. If the old man had tried at all, he'd have figured it out by now. He could've sent people to get her even if he refused to take his own life to save his granddaughter's. Whatever way he decided to play this, I was ready. But the fact that he hadn't decided at all was fucked up.

That pretty thing in there waited on him though. She thought he'd come for her no matter what. That was where her confidence came from. Her confidence to try to escape. Her confidence that she could withstand my cock. She thought she was going to be saved just like she'd always been.

It was time to pull out all the stops I had. Evidently, I had to take things further to try to induce him to do fucking something in response.

I grabbed the video camera I'd purchased at the corner store the other day and walked from the room. Delilah slept soundly on the sofa, her dark hair in tangles around her.

I wondered if it even passed her mind that she wasn't tied up anymore. Stupid girl.

I set the camera down on the counter next to the little kitchenette and hit record. Then, I ran the faucet, filling up a glass of water before returning to Delilah's side. "Think I won't hurt her?" I asked, looking at the camera. Then, I threw the water at her face.

She awoke with a jerk, gasping for air. She sat straight up, staring at me. She lashed out, her hand thrusting toward my abdomen, but I grabbed it and twisted. She still didn't have any clothes on and her naked body was on full display. Perhaps Greenie would get the message then. The longer he refused to cooperate, the more trouble she'd be in.

"What the fuck?" Delilah cried, water still running down her face.

"Time to wake up," I said, my words clipped. "Guess who still hasn't called?"

I angled my head toward the camera and Delilah looked over. She glared at it and sat back, ripping her hand from my grip. She crossed her arms over her chest, sparing her grandfather her nakedness.

She really shouldn't have bothered. It was about to get even worse in here. Though, I had to give her credit for being feisty. My dick twitched in my pants.

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“I don’t know what to tell you,” she said, choking on her words.

“Aren’t you a good granddaughter?” I asked. “Or is there a reason why he doesn’t seem to give a fuck about you?”

She glared up at me, tears already at the surface. Her once beautifully straight hair was oily and now plastered to her head with the water I’d thrown at her. “I thought he loved me,” she said, her voice breaking.

“You’re just not doing enough,” I said. It was a ridiculous thing to say at that moment, but it was the first thing to pop in my head.

“Maybe you’re not doing enough,” she snapped.

I lifted my hand and struck her.

She gasped, her hand immediately covering her cheek again. She glared at me as if I’d just backstabbed her. If that were the case, she had no idea what betrayal was. One release of my cum inside her didn’t mean shit.

“Fuck you.”

“I’m going to disfigure her, Greenie. The only thing she has going for her is her looks, and she’s about to be the ugliest bitch you’ve ever seen.”

“No,” Delilah said, her voice trembling. Her gaze tracked from me to the video camera and back again.

I reached out. She tried to slap my hand away, but it only felt like annoying gnats. She was no match for me.

Revenge would still be mine. If I couldn't get Greenie to send me his dead body, I could take away something he loved just like he'd taken away something I'd loved all those years ago. Then, I would kill him. At the end of all this, he didn't get to live. No, death was always in his future. There was no escaping it.

My claws broke through my fingers' surface and lengthened. I raked them down her cheeks in one neat motion. Blood dripped onto her naked chest and Delilah started crying immediately. The tears mixed with her blood, making a pink mixture as it fell to her chest and thighs and then rolled onto the couch.

Well, fuck. I was going to have to replace this damn thing too before all this was over.

My fangs ached. The smell of her blood was overwhelming. They strained to break through to get their rightful taste. I'd already claimed Delilah. She was mine.

I groaned in frustration, then took a handful of her hair and forced her head back. Leaning over her, I bared her throat, then used my claws to slit a line across her skin there.

She started to choke, probably more from fear than anything else. The cut hadn't been deep enough to kill, just damage her perfect skin.

Within the next half hour, I clawed her entire body while she wept. Her spirit was broken. Eyes lifeless, she just sat there while I did so, choking on sobs and sometimes wailing. When I was done with her, she looked like a badly sewn puppet. Then, I turned toward the camera. "I'm giving you twenty-four hours, Greenie. Then, it'll be her body I send to you. And you still won't get away with it either. I know where you

live. I was able to get to Delilah, wasn't I? After her, you're next."

"Please," Delilah said, her voice catching. I turned in time to see her reach out.

I spun and walked to the camera, giving the red blinking light my best scowl. When I shut it off, I turned toward the bloody mess I'd just made.

"Please," Delilah said again.

It took me a moment to realize she hadn't been talking to her grandfather at all. She'd reached out for me, begged me. "Please, what?" I snapped.

"Don't hurt me."

I laughed. "It's too late for that. You're hideous."

"No," she said, her chin quivering. She tried to pull herself to a sitting position. Her knees quaked as she moved closer to the edge of the sofa.

"What are you doing?"

She ignored me. Finally, she pulled herself to her feet, but when she took one step, she buckled. She would've hit the floor hard, but I snatched her up.

"What?"

"I want to see," she said. Her hands came up to her face, smearing the blood there. Some of the cuts were already starting to dry. Caked red crust came off on her wet fingertips which induced another round of hysterics. "What did you do to me?"

"It's called revenge."

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“Revenge?” She finally looked up at me. “I never did anything to you. I don’t even like what my grandfather does for a living.”

“But you know about it,” I seethed.

She shook her head.

I threw her back onto the couch. “And what does he do, Delilah? Explain it to me.”

“He runs the biggest drug ring in and out of Philly,” she said, her voice heightening along with her anger. “He’s basically a mob boss, a fucking Don Corleone.”

She had it half right. On the surface, that’s what he did. It wasn’t a legitimate business, but it was a business. That wasn’t what I was talking about though. “He doesn’t just run drugs, Delilah,” I said, trying to make her see deeper into it. I knew I was no saint, but at least I was aware of what I did—what I was. “What does hedo?”

“I just told you!” she screamed. “He distributes drugs to people in the area.”

“Then what?” I asked, charging right toward her. Fangs bared, I stopped mere inches from her face. She withdrew, and I snapped my mouth shut. Softer now, I asked, “Then what happens?”

She shook her head. “I don’t know. What do you mean?”

“What happens after the drugs get into the hands of the people, Delilah?”

She shrugged. “They take them. I don’t know. That’s their business.”

“Fuck that. That’s a lame excuse. Then what happens?”

“I. Don’t. Know.”

Anger surged inside me. “I already told you one thing that happens. Mothers die. Kids are left without parents. Whole lives are disrupted. Do you think I’m the only fucking one who wants revenge against your grandfather for the hurt he caused? If you do, you’re lying to yourself. There could be hundreds lining up behind me to get their hands on him, and here you are, just fucking living off that money like it’s nothing.”

I pulled her hand to me, staring down at her fake nails. She tried to pull it back, but I gripped it tightly.

“Where’d you get these, huh?” I asked, flicking one of the perfectly shaped and colored nails.

“Don’t,” she seethed, trying to twist her hand away from me.

“I want to know. Where’d you get them?”

“The nail parlor. Of course.”

“Nope.” I ripped one of the nails from her fingers.

She screamed in agony.

“That was a bag of cocaine that got a businessman high. On his way home from work, he got into an accident, killing a hard-working father of three.” I grabbed

another one.

“Don’t, please,” she said.

Her face was blotchy. Through the cuts I’d made on her face, I saw the makeup that had run from her eyes, making her look like an angel of death. She certainly looked nothing like the posh woman who stepped out of the black sedan the night I took her. I ripped the second nail off. “That was from a school teacher who fucking ruined her life after she got hooked on your grandfather’s drugs. Her husband divorced her and now she lives in an abandoned factory downtown and gets raped every fucking night by the homeless guys, but she’s too fucked up to stop them.”

One-by-one, I ripped her nails off, telling her every fucking story I could remember about how her grandfather’s drugs ruined people. These weren’t just tales I made up on the spots. These were the ones I remembered as a child. The ones that stayed with me all these years as regaled to my mother from the other high, lost souls on the street.

I saved my story for last. She’d already heard it before, but it was worth telling again and again. She needed to understand why I was doing this.

Fat tears tracked down her cheeks. “But I didn’t do anything,” she sobbed.

“You hold yourself high with his blood money!” I roared.

“You’re not some princess, Delilah. You’re a fucking money whore.”

I slid the fly down on my jeans and forced them to the floor along with my boxers. I shoved my hard cock in her face.

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She spat at me.

I moved my hands to her jaw, forcing it open and my cock inside. “You’re just a whore, an ugly one at that. Suck my cock.”

She looked up at me. Her jaw twitched, and I grabbed it fiercely before she could even think about biting down. Holding it there, I slid in and out of her mouth. I fucked her until she gagged on me, but I didn’t relent.

“All that money...the blind eye you gave to your grandfather’s business...it made you just like them. Someone who would do anything for their next hit without a care as to where it came from. That’s all you turned out to be. A rich junkie.”

I kept going until her mouth closed and her eyes fluttered into the back of her head.

She grabbed my ass and yanked me forward, taking all of me in.

“Fuck yes.”

She moaned, her tongue teasing my tip. The blood from her hands teased my skin wherever she touched, heightening my pleasure.

“Tell me,” I said as I ran my hand through her hair.

“I’m ugly,” she said, lapping me up. “I’m a whore. I’m a terrible person.”

Her hand came up to play with my balls. “That’s right,” I said, coaxing her on.

The more she played and sucked, the higher my balls drew up. At length, I grabbed her neck and held her to me as I spasmed inside her hot little mouth. She gobbled it up like I was fucking Thanksgiving dinner. Before I was spent, I pushed her away and came on her chest, rivulets spurting from my tip down to her bloody skin.

She stared up at me wide eyed. The innocence on her face wasn't lost on me. There was terror there, and sadness. I swallowed, my conscience eating at me.

I looked away before I started feeling bad for her. She'd enabled her grandfather to do the kinds of things he did. No one told him it was wrong, so why would he stop? If just one person had told him that what he did was bad, maybe he would've decided to do something different. Maybe all those years ago when his son died and he was left with a beautiful granddaughter, but no. Money and power was everything to him.

She stared at me, her gaze narrowing, almost calculatingly so. It was as if she could see right down to my very soul. I wasn't one to preach, but I knew what I was. I did what I did and soaked up every minute. I didn't do it and then pretend I was something different, or put on rose-colored glasses, deciding to see what I did through prettier colored lenses. Nope. I was a fucking vamp. Evil was in my nature, and so was taking what I could get when I could get it. Right now, I still wanted nothing but revenge, even if it meant fucking up the mind of this enabler.

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Chapter Eight

Delilah

My heart split down the center after Simon walked away. No, it wasn't because he threw me away like I was last week's trash. It was something much deeper than that.

I'd always looked up to my grandfather. Of course, I only saw the positive side of things. I saw the nice house and the cars. I saw how he was able to manipulate my life from being a broken girl with no parents to having everything I needed and more. Much, much more.

But it was all a lie. I was living high off other people's broken dreams.

I knew what my grandfather did. I would never pretend I didn't, but in the same token, I never much cared. I never saw the other side of it like Simon tried to show me. I never saw a family's despair. Before, if someone was stupid enough to get hooked on drugs, I would've said it was their fault. But, that wasn't everything, was it? What about the people that introduced the drugs to them? What about the people who were forced to take drugs? What about what my grandfather did to people like Simon's mom? And here Simon was, living with that. He took that hatred and internalized it, making him barely human.

He wasn't human.

He was a predator through and through. Broken, directionless, living from day-to-day off his pitiful fancies because of what was taken from him by my grandfather.

The pain festering in my heart was far worse than any pain Simon inflicted on me. I liked to think I was genuinely a nice person, but after today, after everything was so blatantly slapped in front of me, I couldn't deny it. I'd been a selfish bitch, and I'd been wrong.

My grandfather's stain was on me now.

My stomach lurched. Quickly, I crept toward the side of the couch. I gagged as my stomach unleashed what little contents it had in it, then I just dry heaved over the side until my eyes stung and my insides could only cramp.

Slowly, I pulled myself up and walked around the room. I caught myself in the mirror. Instead of crying at what I'd become, I just stared. All Simon had done was make my outside match my inside. I was an ugly person. I looked to my left, finding the hallway. I'd seen Simon move that way before. Careful not to touch the walls, I walked down it until I found a door that led to the bathroom.

I flicked on the light. It was harsh, stinging my irises. I blinked until I could finally stand to have my eyes open. Everything in here was pristine, top-of-the-line, just like my bathroom at home. I walked forward, my footprints making small bloody marks on the floor. I grasped hold of the shower curtain and pushed it aside before stepping onto the bright white porcelain. I fiddled with the faucet until hot spray came from the showerhead. It hit me in the face, making me gasp for air. Then, the water doused me, cleaning away the remnants of tonight. Hopefully it washed everything down the drain, never to return. Except the knowledge I now held. That was one thing I didn't want to get rid of. In that moment, I swore I'd be a better person. Someone who cared about what happened to others.

My skin stung like tiny little needles had been stuck in one-by-one. I waited under the showerhead until the water ran clear, no more pink staining the tub. Then, I took the hotel offered shampoo and conditioner and began to clean myself up. I didn't know why washing had suddenly seemed so important to me, but I scrubbed and scrubbed until my skin was pink and raw. In the places where Simon had cut me, I'd opened the wounds again. My skin was still somewhat numb from whatever his claws did to me, but eventually, they healed, leaving tiny little slices everywhere. Eventually, they would probably turn into puckered scars, white instead of the red of right now. I hope they stayed there forever, reminding me of the realization I just had.

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When I was done cleaning myself, I stood under the shower and waited until I didn't feel dirty anymore, until the shame of what I realized today wore off.

It didn't work.

Eventually, the shower door opened. A hand moved the curtain away, and there was Simon. He was perfectly put together again. Jeans on low with a white shirt over his torso. He must've owned a hundred of those shirts for the way each one of them looked perfectly brand new, almost tailored specifically for him.

He reached in and shut the shower off. I just stood there dripping wet, staring at him. I started to shiver. The moment the air from outside the shower hit me, I realized how cold the water had become as I just stood there, waiting for it to do its job.

He offered me a towel, and I plucked it from his hands, immediately pulling it around myself for its warmth.

He didn't move from the bathroom as I stepped out, so I went through my usual routine as if he wasn't there. I dried my hair with the towel, running my hands through it since I didn't have a hairbrush. Then, I looked around for something to put on. Simon grabbed the white bathrobe off the back of the door and handed it to me. "Thank you," I told him. Even to my own ears my voice was thick and raw.

"I ordered room service," he said.

My eyebrows raised at his words. Finding his gaze in the bathroom mirror, I searched them. I couldn't help but be surprised. He was always either torturing me or fucking

me. I didn't even know if his kind ate real food. He'd drank from me. For all I knew, that was enough to sustain him, as well as living off my despair.

Maybe he wasn't like that though. Maybe all he'd ever wanted me to understand was the type of person I'd become. Maybe he even had hope for me. Did I have hope for him?

"O-okay," I said.

He stared at me a little while longer before he turned on his heel and left the room. I followed him, almost chasing after him as if he was a beacon in the dark. After all, he'd been the one to enlighten me. An apology was on the tip of my tongue, but I bit it back. An apology was probably the last thing he ever wanted to hear, but besides that, he probably didn't really give a fuck. An 'I'm sorry' didn't bring his mom back. It didn't turn his childhood into something every child deserved to have. No. He would have to live with that for the rest of his life just as I would have to live with what I'd turned a blind eye to. I may have been brought into my grandfather's world when I was young, but I sure as fuck wasn't young now. I was old enough to know better and did know better—I just didn't care. And not caring was my worst trait yet.

We were both silent as we waited for the kitchen staff to bring up the food. I didn't know how long I'd been in the bathroom, but there was a completely different couch than the one I'd picked myself up from. No blood. No holes where I'd dug my nails in when he'd taken me from behind. In fact, the room looked even lighter. The sun shone through slits in the curtains, and if I strained my ears, I could hear the beeping noises from cars down on the busy streets below.

After taking that in, my gaze moved to Simon. I stared at him so long while he pretended not to notice, but eventually, I got up the courage to ask him the one thing that was on my mind. "He never cared for me, did he?"

Simon's shoulders stiffened. He turned toward me, his gaze finally latching onto mine. "It doesn't appear that way, does it?"

I ground my teeth together and stared straight ahead. "I hate him."

His gaze narrowed as if he didn't believe me, but I felt the truth of it down to my very marrow. He'd turned me into this uncaring monster. What family didn't do everything they could to protect one another? How wrong was I to think that he would've come right after me once he noticed I was gone and that Ronnie was dead? Surely, the dead body was a giveaway as to what Simon was capable of. Instead, my grandfather had done nothing. For all the connections he was always boasting of, did he not even try?

It was as if Simon answered my unspoken question. "He's made no attempt to barter, to plead, or even a rescue. I didn't think he'd fork himself over to me easily, but I thought at least that he could be persuaded."

I nodded, my stomach turning. I really needed to get some food in me because as of right now, it was feeling emptier than ever.

"While you were in the shower, I ran there."

I looked up at him slowly. "—You ran there? It's at least four miles away."

He lifted his legs off the carpet lazily, showing me the bottom of his sneakers. "I'm fast. Anyway, it's business as usual at the home front. No extra security. No buzz of electricity or personnel gathered for meetings or anything I would've expected if someone I cared for had been taken. Fuck, if Galen was in trouble, I'd be burning the whole fucking city down. Your grandfather is truly more of a worthless piece of shit than I'd even imagined. You are his family, Delilah," he said, his voice hard.

I tried not to grind my teeth as I thought about what I was to my grandfather. Sure, he'd given me everything I always wanted, but he was barely ever there. Even when I was still in mourning over my parents, he'd hired a nanny to take care of me, someone who I could cry to. When I turned eighteen, he fired her. I was old enough to be on my own, he told me. I didn't realize until just this very moment that she was the last personal connection I had in that house. Maybe that was why I liked to flirt with the security team there. Maybe that was why I seduced Ronnie. A plea for help? For someone to just notice me? Or was it something more? A deep-seated urge for something more that I just wasn't getting.

"He was never really around, you know?" I said, not even talking to Simon. I just wanted to hear myself talk about it out loud as if hearing myself say it would make it true. "He never played with me as a child and we never did anything together when I grew up. His help cared for me. The chef cooked my meals, the tutor educated me, the nanny was my friend and disciplinarian. He made the rules of the house without even knowing me, and I blindly followed them because he's the only family I have—had," I said, correcting myself at the last second. "I know when people look at me they see just the exterior things. They see the girl who has all the right clothes and the nice house and the posh car, but no one's ever seen the real me. Not even me. I thought I was happy, but I was so wrong. I've just been going through the motions in a life that wasn't even mine. How sad is that?"

Simon's jaw ticked, and I looked away, wondering when he was going to tell me to quit complaining, and that I was just a spoiled brat.

A knock sounded on the door, shaking me out of staring at him. He gave me a hard look before getting to his feet. "Wait here. And don't even think about calling for help."

I gave him a look. Help? Where was I going to go? Back to a grandfather who didn't even care if I got raped and tortured? Who was too busy worrying about his damn self

instead of saving his own family? No, that wasn't happening. I'd stay just where I was because even though Simon was broken, he was beautifully broken. Something my grandfather would know nothing about.

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Chapter Nine

Simon

My phone rang as Delilah ate the seafood I had delivered. Both of us stopped at once, eyeing the contraption for far longer than necessary like it was a trap. A part of me almost hated to see who it was. What if it was Greenie? What if he was giving in? That would mean I'd have to give her up, and I didn't know if I was ready to do that. I'd helped her see things in a different way. What I'd said to her mattered, and for all the darkness inside me, there was now a halo of light.

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It didn't fucking matter. I was who I was, and she was who she was. Then again, as soon as the thought entered my mind, I knew there was more to it than that. She was as fucked up as I was, and maybe I wasn't even that terrible of a person.

Taking a deep breath, I turned the cell over and stared down at the screen. Galen.

I picked it up. "Hey."

I hadn't spoken to him since I ransomed Delilah. At the thought of her name, I looked up. She stared at me intently, no doubt wondering if it was her grandfather on the line. I just shook my head.

Her eyes were dead. She looked away, continuing to eat slowly as if nothing mattered anymore. She probably worried about her future. If Greenie never gave himself up, what was going to happen to her?

Hell if I knew. I never thought about what I would do if he didn't do anything. I assumed he would make some sort of move, and I would react from there. I never expected a non-reaction.

"What's up with you?" Galen asked.

"Same old shit," I answered, realizing how true that was. Kidnapping girls, torturing them, fucking them, drinking from them... But this one, this one was different. I didn't even want to admit that to myself, but I was in over my fucking head. My very being balked at the idea of getting rid of Delilah. Hadn't she been through enough?

“You sound weird,” Galen said.

I shrugged, knowing full well he couldn’t see me through the phone, but I had no intention of responding to his comment either. “How are things? Bored yet?”

“Never.”

I peeked up at Delilah as she took slow, deliberate bites. I’d done a number on her skin, thinking it would somehow make me feel better. Maybe even unintentionally I’d wanted to do that, so I wouldn’t be attracted to her. It didn’t work. She was still beautiful. “So you keep saying.”

“Coming home yet?”

“No. I’m in the middle of something here.”

“In Philly?” His voice immediately changed. Panic rising in his words. “What are you doing there?”

I cringed. Fucking Delilah distracted me. I hadn’t thought about the words that were coming out of my mouth. “Nothing big,” I said nonchalantly.

“Don’t lie to me, Simon. Do you need something?”

“No, I’m good.”

Delilah looked up, searching my face. She saw far more than I ever meant for her to see, and I didn’t even have to say anything out loud.

“You sure?”

“Positive.”

“Because you know all you have to do is call and I’m right there.”

“I know, Galen.” My throat closed as I said the words. My heart flooded with something like compassion. Galen had always been there for me. Even now that he had Kayleigh he was concerned about me, and I’d been nothing but a dick to the both of them since he brought her into our lives for good. “I have to go,” I said quickly. Before he could say another word, I hung up the phone.

Delilah pushed the rolling tray away from her. “Who’s Galen? You said the name before, but you didn’t say who it was.”

“A friend,” I said, my voice coming out harsher than I wanted it to.

“Vampire?”

I nodded. Wasn’t that obvious? “I only hang out with vampires. It’s easier that way.”

“Do you want to kill all humans or just the ones that piss you off?”

I snickered at that. I couldn’t help myself. “All of them. I’ve never met a human who didn’t piss me off in some way or another.”

“We are a rare breed, aren’t we?”

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I watched as she tried to smile. The look behind her eyes was still dead, detached with no feeling behind it. Galen had saved me from what she was going through now. He took me from my mother, gave her a proper burial, and then showed me what life with a family could be like. We may not have been the traditional family, but we were one. What Delilah had couldn't even be considered that. It was all a fucking lie.

If mine and Delilah's situations were reversed, Galen would've torn the city apart trying to get to me, yet there was no one in Delilah's life who would do that for her. It was sick, and sad. Maybe everything I thought I knew about our kind was a lie too. Those were just basic instincts I thought came natural to everyone, but that wasn't true. What if we did have the capacity to love differently like Galen was telling me?

I couldn't believe the words that were about to come out of my mouth, but they came out anyway and I couldn't snatch it back even if I tried. I felt compelled to say them. "I'm sorry."

She glowered at me initially, but then her face changed.

"Not about taking you," I said immediately. I would never apologize for that. I meant every fucking part of that because I still wanted revenge on her worthless grandfather. Maybe even more so now.

"I knew you weren't talking about that," she said softly. "But about what?"

My jaw tensed as I thought about how to word it. "I guess I'm sorry your grandfather's a fucking dick. He's something worse than that, but I don't even think there's a word in the English language that describes the type of foul being he is."

She sat back on the couch and wrapped her thin arms around herself. “I don’t think he’s going to come for me, Simon,” she said matter-of-factly like we were running a business transaction. She looked up after I didn’t say anything, her gaze catching on mine. “What are you going to do about that?”

The answer was easy. I was going to fucking kill him. What to do with her though? Now that wasn’t going to be an easy answer. The thought of her petrified me, but it was because of what I saw when I looked at her.

Fuck this. It was a good thing I hadn’t replaced this chair yet because my claws ripped new gouges into the fabric of the arms.

I wanted to scream my frustration into the night. I had half a mind just to jump up from the chair and slit her throat and be done with it. That way I wouldn’t have to worry about what the fuck I would do with her. I could just carry on with what I’d been doing, leaving my emotions out of everything. Everything would be a hell of a lot easier if I didn’t have to look at her or think about her.

My fingers tensed as I thought about it. It would be so easy to move across the room to do it. She wouldn’t even have time to react. I wouldn’t even have time to react. All I had to do was tell myself it was okay. Then, as soon as Delilah was out of the picture, I could return to Greenie’s and do what I’d set out to do—kill the fucker. He deserved it now more than ever.

My claws descended, and the familiar rage swept through my body. I told myself it would be okay. Three seconds tops and then it would be over with. Then I wouldn’t have to deal with this anymore.

No matter how much I tried to talk myself into it though, I couldn’t make myself move. I ran a hand down my face. “Fuck me.”

She eyed me, confused.

She didn't even know the half of it. This was all getting too much. I couldn't decide what to do, so there was only one thing to do. I needed help. "You want to go somewhere?"

"Go somewhere?" Her eyebrows arched into her forehead.

"Yeah. I need to go see someone, so you have to come with me."

"O-okay," she said. "When?"

"Now."

She got right to her feet and pulled her bathrobe around herself tighter.

Well, that won't do, I thought as I eyed her. I held up a finger and then ran from the suite. I was good at sniffing out young women. Perfume led me straight to a hotel room down the hall from me. I hurried inside, raided a suitcase on the bed and pulled out a pair of jeans and a shirt that looked like something Delilah could wear in her other life.

When I returned, she still stared at the open door. I walked up to her, holding the clothes out. "Here. Now get ready."

Her hair was almost dried now, and I couldn't resist pulling my fingers through it as she stared at me in shock. "Where are we going?"

I crossed my arms over my chest. "To see Galen."

Her jaw locked, but she did as I asked. She walked from my grasp and toward the

bathroom. Returning a little while later with an outfit that looked like it was made just for her, she stopped just in front of me, hands on her hips as if she was ready to take on anything.

Made just for her?

Fuck. I was in some serious shit.

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Chapter Ten

Delilah

The compartment we were in jostled back and forth as the train swayed on the tracks. Simon had been right. We hadn't run into any problems getting on the train. He'd said it would take us a while to get to Galen, a lot longer than if we had flown, but it was a lot easier to catch a train than a plane. Especially when he was smuggling me with him.

Simon had a way of charming people, of making people forget what their original intention was. He sweet-talked everyone into getting me a ticket, and then even arranged it so we had our own compartment. I'd never ridden on a train before. I'd flown tons of times. Went to Italy last year for the whole summer but had yet to see the Western part of the U.S. It wasn't difficult to figure out where we were going. All I had to do was pay attention to the signs and listen to people talk about their travel plans. Galen lived in Oregon. Was that where Simon lived when he wasn't in Philly trying to ruin my life?

I bit my lip as I laid on the bed. He sat in a chair on the other side of the tiny room, one leg crossed over the other as he read a book he pulled from a bag the minute we got settled in the room. I stared at him, watching how intently his eyes moved over the page and the way his jaw ticked when he read the words. I wondered what had him so enthralled, but the book's cover was hidden from view. Most of all, I stared at his lips, thinking about the way they moved over my skin. But under those lips were his fangs, and that's what made my skin tingle with want. It was pure bliss when they pierced me, euphoric even. It made my pussy ache.

There were other things to be worried about too. Why were we going to see his

vampire friend? Wasn't that the one who had the feeders he talked about? Was he going to try to make me one of them?

My heart was in my throat. I simultaneously wanted to jump Simon, which was the problem, wasn't it? And wanted to run as far away from him as I could. There were so many times when we were at the train station that I could have ran off. I'd even went to the bathroom by myself. There were other ladies in there. All I had to do was tell one of them what was happening and hide out in there until the police came. I did none of those things. I struggled with my why. A few words were all it would've taken. I liked to think it was because I thought I was sparing their lives in some way. Simon could've come in the bathroom and murdered everyone if I'd said anything, but it wasn't that. Deep down in my heart, I knew it wasn't that.

I hated myself for even letting this happen. Letting me be the victim...and enjoying it.

What the actual fuck was wrong with me? Regardless of what he'd made me see, or the fact that he could turn me on without even trying, that didn't make him a good person. I needed to be a good person from now on.

"You seem very intent on something," Simon said, his voice ringing through the air and making me pause my downward spiral of thought.

"Nothing," I said immediately. Even to my own ears it sounded as if I had something to hide. I pulled myself up and leaned on my arm. On second thought, since he initiated conversation... "Actually, I do have a question. Why are we going to see Galen? I thought you were trying to get my grandfather to kill himself. This seems like the exact opposite of that."

Simon, who hadn't even bothered to look up during this exchange, flipped his book to the next page. "Galen is my most trusted friend. He was there for me after your

grandfather killed my mother. I go to him for advice from time-to-time.”

“Advice on...”

“Things,” he said sharply, his gaze still roaming over the page of his book.

“What do vampires worry about?” I asked, genuinely curious. What the hell did these guys do with their day? Were they just running around trying to find someone they could torture and use for ransom? Or was I some sort of special case that warranted advice?

“Two things,” Simon said, turning the page nonchalantly. “Food and fucking.”

My core throbbed, and I made a short intake of breath. For a moment, it looked as if Simon was affected, too, but then his eyes kept wandering over the page. “In that order?”

“Hopefully simultaneously,” he said, sounding bored.

I bit my lip thinking about his cock massaging my insides at the same time his bite sliced through my skin.

I’d been drawn to Simon since the very beginning. He’d kidnapped me when I was masturbating to him for Christ’s sake. I should’ve known this would be fucked up from the start. “Is it natural for the feeders to want you too?”

Simon stumbled again, his stare stopping for one brief moment. “Yes, of course. It’s in your nature to be drawn to us or else we would never survive.”

“How do you survive?” I asked, hundreds of questions still rattling through my brain. It was hard not to find the whole thing fascinating. Simon was such a juxtaposition.

He was evil, yet, there was something more to him too. “Isn’t it weird that people don’t know you exist?”

“No, Delilah. It’s not.” He sighed, finally looking over the top of the book at me. “It’s because we’re smart, cunning. Years of doing this have made me almost impossible to kill.”

Years? “How old are you, anyway?”

He smiled a toothy grin. “Let’s just say I’m finely aged.”

That was the truth. I’d always liked sex a little on the dangerous side. Screwing my grandfather’s employees was a good start, but that was nothing like being with Simon. He was like the purest excitement, knowing it was so, so wrong, but felt so good at the same time. I couldn’t resist him. Even after he’d tortured me, hurt me, I laid here getting wet just thinking about him entering me.

“Your heartrate picked up,” Simon said.

Fuck. It was hard to keep anything from him. Did I want to though? It wasn’t as if I had my trusty vibrator here, and besides, why would I ever use that again when I knew Simon existed? There was something to be said for pure lust. Maybe like me, Simon could change. Maybe he didn’t have to be the ruthless vampire anymore. He could be sweet, I already knew that. He could be something more...

I pulled myself into a sitting position while Simon eyed me. I stood and walked over to him, placing my hand on the top of his book and closing it before placing it on the small round table next to him.

“You lost my page.”

“I don’t care. And neither do you.”

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His eyebrows rose. “So confident.”

I placed my hands on his shoulders and moved forward, placing my knees on either side of his thighs so I sat on top of him. He eyed me with curiosity but didn’t move. “Feeding and fucking, right?” I asked, using my best seductress voice. My skin crawled with nerves, but I wanted Simon more. I moved my hair over to one shoulder, baring my neck to him. The same part of my neck that he’d bit before. My pussy throbbed. Once my neck was exposed, there was a stillness to the room as I waited for his reaction. It felt like dangling myself over the ledge, hoping to get pitched off.

I wanted a vampire to bite me. Hard.

“Yes,” Simon said. “I think you’ll do just fine at the estate.”

I didn’t even have a chance to think about what he said before he lunged forward, his teeth piercing my skin. I cried out, tensing for a moment before the delicious feeling enveloped me. He pulled me closer, the soft massage of his lips on my neck as if he kissed me at the same time he drank.

I sank on top of him, a puddle starting between my legs. I sighed when I felt his hard cock pushing against me. I rubbed against him, the friction heightening the sensation of him drinking from me.

He pulled away, his fangs retracting easily. “Fuck, Delilah.”

“I intend to,” I said, smirking.

He growled, his hands coming up to my shirt as he ripped it from me. Braless, I was now bare chested in front of him. He bit the swell of my breast, sending sparks through me.

“Yes, Simon.”

He bit my other one, then swirled his tongue over the ache. “Wild, unrestrained,” he cooed. “You think you know what you’re getting into.”

Euphoria took over. I fumbled with my borrowed jeans, needing to get them off so I could feel him next to me. Simon’s hand slid down my ass to hold me up, so I could wiggle out of the barrier. When he sat me back down, I was naked, blood trickling from my neck and my breast. He stared at me, his eyes watching the rivulets of red run down me. His tongue flicked out, tasting his life source as delicately as licking an ice cream cone.

“It’s feeding and fucking, right?” I asked, getting impatient. My skin burned with thoughts of him. This wasn’t about getting the upper hand like last time. It wasn’t about spurring my grandfather to act. This was just about me and him, our need for one another.

His lips turned up. “In due time.”

“Now,” I said, wiggling on top of him, trying to get the feeling back by sliding over him, but his clothes were in the way. I went for his jeans. His whole body went rigid. I smiled inwardly. Anytime I could make a vampire forget what he was doing seemed like a plus one in my column. I pulled down his zipper, then pulled his fly apart. I reached my hands inside, moving his pants down at the same time until I saw the bulge of his boxers. God, I wanted that cock. I wanted that feeling of being wanted. These past few days were so fucked up. Simon had taken me away from my family, but I also hadn’t felt this wanted in a long time. I knew he wanted me as much as I

wanted him.

I was practically salivating when his silky soft head appeared around the band of his boxers. Frustration coursed through me when I couldn't free him any more than he already was. I looked up at Simon, his face a mask of serenity.

I groaned. "Don't I do anything to you?" How could he be so sensible about this when I felt like I needed him right this very second or I would combust?

His lips thinned. He pushed me away, practically holding me until my feet hit the floor and I was in a standing position. He stood after me. In one swift movement, his jeans and boxers were on the floor. He ripped his shirt over his head until he was in front of me in all his muscled perfection. He gripped his cock hard. "You're wondering if you do anything to me? Take a look, Delilah." His face strained as he worked his fist up and down his long, thick shaft. "Don't ask me if you do anything to me ever again." His eyes fluttered as he worked himself. "I just like to take my time. I like to enjoy my partner."

I moved forward, pushing his hand away and replacing it with my own. Stepping closer, I went up to my tiptoes, working him toward my center. "I've never had it slow before. When I want it, I get it."

Simon's gray eyes glinted. He picked me up, moved me to the wall, and entered me all at the same time.

"Oh fuck," I breathed as he impaled me against the wall.

"Was this what you wanted?" Simon asked. He rocked inside me, pinning me to the hard surface at my back with just his cock moving in and out of me. He held me so effortlessly, it made me feel like a queen being worked on for my own pleasure and nothing else.

“Yes,” I said, locking gazes with him. “More.”

He pushed inside harder. I grabbed his face and kissed him, my lips easily melding with his.

He stilled, but I barely noticed as I continued to kiss him.

God, his lips. They were so soft, so firm. I bit down on his lip, enticing a growl from him. Then, he was all over me. My head hit the wall as he kissed me forcefully. His tongue swept inside my mouth, sending a jolt of pleasure through my entire being. A low moan came from the back of his throat. “Mmm, Delilah.” My name was like a sexy lullaby on his lips.

I wound my hands around his neck, deepening the kiss until I couldn’t tell where he ended and I began. I kissed him with a fury, like it was the last thing I’d do on this earth. The kiss was hot, as pulse-pounding as the attention he gave my pussy. He felt it too. I ran my hands through his hair, gripping at the nape of his neck and pulling until I sank my teeth gently into his lower lips again.

He stilled, then grabbed my hips and plunged inside me again and again.

“Oh, Simon,” I cried.

His lip popped out of my mouth and he made an inhuman growl before piercing me with one last stroke.

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He caught me by surprise as his dick convulsed inside me. “Oh, oh.” My eyes rounded as my orgasm started out slow, but then grew and grew. “Oh fuck, I’m coming,” I breathed, digging my fingers into his shoulders. He rocked his hips into me, massaging my clit until my release hit. “Simon!”

I shuddered, and he held me close, both of us trying to catch our breaths.

Before long, he set me down on my feet and pulled out. I lay back against the wall, cool air brushing my skin where I’d started to perspire in the frenzy of it all. His tongue flicked out, catching a bead of sweat. “Mmm, Lilah. You taste so sweet.”

I was warm, content, brain on a high as he sank lower and lower without my noticing. His tongue trailed down my stomach to my belly button. Then lower, tangling in my hair before it hit the sweet spot. Heat swamped me as his tongue circled my straining bud. Oh shit. I was so sensitive down there that he’d just jacked it up a few notches, anyway.

“Fuck me,” Simon said. He yanked me up, my back moving against the wall as he hiked my thighs up over his shoulders, his face between my legs.

“What the—?”

He bit the inside of my thigh, and I screamed. His tongue swept over me and then continued tasting my pussy.

Holy shit. Surprise riddled me. I’d just come, and so did he. This was more than just getting off.

He moaned along with his attentions. God, this was hot.

It felt amazing, it always did, but nothing would come of it. I knew from experience that I'd never orgasm this way. My body just wasn't set up for it. I pulled my hands through his dark hair. "I won't be able to," I told him, voice breathy.

He smirked, his lips brushing against my sensitive skin. "Now that sounds like a challenge."

"No, I mean it," I told him. "I've never been able to."

He pulled back, his gaze tracking up my body to mine. "Never?"

I shook my head.

"Well, that's about to change."

He looked back at my pussy, new focus in his eyes, but we were interrupted by a knock on the door. Simon's shoulders deflated. "Come in," he barked.

"Come in?" I asked, shocked, trying to push Simon away and cover myself, but he was too strong. "Simon!"

A man, a little younger than myself peeked in. His eyes grew wide as he looked at us, Simon's face buried between my legs and my upper half on full display. "S-sorry. There's been noise complaints," he said, avoiding his gaze.

"Come in," Simon said.

"Simon!" I yelled again, still struggling against him. What the fuck?

He pinned me against the wall, then turned back toward the intruder. “Come in,” he said, his voice forceful, melodic.

The guy’s face morphed infinitesimally. He moved inside the room, shutting the door behind him.

“Lock the door.”

He did as Simon told him.

“This here is Delilah. Tell her hello.”

“Hello, Delilah,” the guy said, his gaze searching every inch of my body. His cheeks reddened as he took his fill, but his eyes sparked sensually.

“Good,” Simon said, smirking. He turned back to me. “Don’t worry, dear. Everything’s going to be fine.”

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Chapter Eleven

Simon

Source Creation Date: July 7, 2025, 10:50 am

Lust filled the train worker's eyes. I knew this guy would do anything I asked, which I was already counting on. He probably didn't even need as much motivation as I was going to give him. Delilah was quite a prize. When we moved through the train station, people just stared at her, mesmerized by her beauty as I'd noticed at first glance too. They didn't know what sat underneath though, the tiny glimpses I'd been able to get lately. On the outside, she was picture perfect, but on the inside...oh, on the inside, she was more like me than she'd ever want to admit to herself.

"What are you doing to him?" Delilah whispered as she watched the man draw closer. He was drawn to her like a magnet.

"Oh, nothing," I grinned, staring up at her. Then, I looked over my shoulder at him. "Delilah here thinks she can't come by oral pleasure. What do you think?"

"I think you're doing it wrong then."

I snarled, and the boy shied away. Stupid human.

"Don't do that to him, Simon," Lilah said.

I tempered my reaction, knowing he was just an ignorant boy. Instead of reacting further, I sank my fingers into her ass, massaging her sweet skin. She practically purred. The stranger's arousal heightened as he watched her, as did Delilah's. Her skin was on fire, and she couldn't keep from looking from me to the newcomer. As poised as she was in my arms, she looked like a goddess. She should feel like one too.

"This will be my first time trying, boy," I said to him, a hint of alpha in my voice. He

noded in response. I knew I didn't need any extra help getting Delilah off, but I wanted it to be special. For fuck's sake, she'd made me come inside her just from the taste of her lips on my own. So intimate, so sensual.

Even now, I felt myself lengthen just from the memory.

"Boy, do you find Delilah attractive?"

He nodded. "Very."

I worked my hand up her body and fondled her breasts, stroking them lightly before dropping her in my arms so I could reach her nipple with my tongue. I closed my mouth around it, sucking her skin inside while I ravished her nipple with quick lashes of my tongue. Her fists gripped my shoulders. "Simon," she warned, her body tensing.

"Don't be afraid," I told her, as I gave her a slight nibble. "The boy wants to watch."

I hoisted her up until I was between her legs again, my hot breath caressing her creamy center. She stilled, her head landing back against the wall. I flicked her clit with my tongue and she moaned.

"Let it all out for our audience, baby."

"But the noise," she said, even though her hips were already straining toward me.

"Tell her you don't care about the noise," I instructed our guest.

I pierced her with my tongue at the same time the railway worker said, "I don't care about the noise."

Her hole was like velvet. I penetrated her again and again before curling my tongue around her clit again. “Simon,” she called out. “You’re just going to rile me up and have to finish me another way.”

I grinned into her pussy. The air smelled like straight lust. It was coming from all three of us, yet the boy’s was overpowering. He hadn’t had his satiated only moments before. I peeked back at him. He wrung his hands in front of himself, practically drooling. “Tell her how much you want her,” I said, ignoring her pleas. She would climax like this.

“Oh fuck,” the guy said, his voice deep and husky from his arousal. “You look like sin itself.”

I reached up to cup her breasts as I continued my attention on her clit. The guy talked and talked, his words making me harder and harder as I worked on Delilah. She trembled in my arms. “Do you like this, Delilah?” I whispered. “Do you like him watching me eat you?”

“Oh God,” Lilah moaned. Her whole body trembled as she surged closer and closer to the edge. Whoever had tried to make her orgasm this way before just hadn’t done it right. Her body was primed for it. Such a shame she hadn’t felt it before. The body’s pleasures were to be explored in every way imaginable. For someone who thought herself so worldly, she had little experience.

At least I could be her first. “Was that an answer? Do you like having an audience?”

“Yes,” she said, her voice breathless. “Yes, I like it. A lot.”

“Tell him what to do, Lilah.”

Her eyes rounded as I stared up at her. She shook her head.

“He’ll do whatever you ask. Won’t you?”

“Fuck. Anything,” his gruff voice responded.

Lilah’s eyes flicked to him, then back to me. “You tell him,” she said. She pulled her hand through my hair. “Tell him what to do to me.”

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My balls throbbed. “Disrobe, boy, and stroke yourself like you were inside her.”

Delilah’s gaze switched from me to him and then back again as I teased her nub. I was drawing this out now. If feisty Delilah wanted to come out to play, I’d let her.

“Don’t look at me,” I said to her. “Watch him.”

She did as I asked, her throat working. From the corner of my eye, I saw the guy take his uniform off, peeling his clothes right down to nothing. Then, he took his cock in his hand and without any airs, got down to business.

“Oh, fuck yes,” he groaned.

He didn’t know the half of it. If he tasted this pussy, he’d come all over himself right now. I only hoped the guy could last long enough. Not that I was one to talk considering I hadn’t just been able to when I was seated inside her.

“Keep talking to her,” I demanded.

“You’re so fucking gorgeous. Hot as fuck pussy.”

I punctuated his words with my movements.

“I ache for you,” he said. “Fuck, I’m so hard.”

I groaned as I dove my tongue inside her again. I knew all about that. I knew about wanting her so bad, but not being able to form it into words. It went against

everything I believed in. I was teetering between the normal fuck and feed and something more, much, much more.

“Simon, please,” Lilah begged. “I want you inside me.”

“That would defeat the purpose, wouldn’t it?” I teased.

“I’m not going to be able to,” she said. Her body shook, and her voice matched it. “I can’t. I can’t.”

“The fuck you can’t,” I said, returning my full attention back to her. “It feels good, doesn’t it?”

“Amazing,” she gasped.

“And boy here is clearly about to lose it.”

His movements had quickened as did his heartrate. This was clearly the hottest thing this sheltered fuck had ever seen.

“All for you, Delilah. All of this is for you.”

The boy moved closer, and I growled, something predatory. I had every intention of letting him come in and take his fill, possibly even letting him fuck her for my own amusement, but now that he was here, his audacity filled me with irritation, and nothing was worse than when I was irritated.

“I’m gonna spew, man. At least let me touch her once.”

I looked at him, the full force of my predatory nature hitting him smack in the face. His face went slack.

“You will wait for her. It’s all about her.”

The boy’s movements slowed. He glared at me, then turned back toward Delilah, his strokes more methodical now.

“That’s it,” I said. Then, I turned back to her. “It’s up to the lady if she wants you touching her.”

My stomach dropped as I waited for her answer. I didn’t know why I even left it up to her. I was pretty sure if he came any closer I was going to bleed him dry.

Her lips thinned, then her fingers curled around my neck as she nudged me closer. “I think he’s getting enough of a show, isn’t he?”

I swallowed as I took her in. Exactly the words I wanted to hear. I was hard again, almost straining, but this was about her. Her sexy confidence rising as she truly believed she was the queen of the room.

“Lick me,” she said, her gaze narrowing. “Right...” She moved my mouth to exactly where she wanted me, poised above her nub. “...there.”

I did as she said, paying extra attention to her, groaning and sinking my fingers into her ass.

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“Yes,” she cried out. “Yes, Simon. More.” She turned her head toward the guy. “What do you see?”

“An angel,” he said.

She bit down on her lip, a small smile playing on her lips. “Mmm, I like that. The devil fucking an angel, and the angel wants more.”

I pinched her ass, and she laughed. In the next instant, her whole body tensed, and she let out a delicious moan.

“Oh my God, Simon.”

I felt the change in her too. She was going to come.

I moved my hand from her ass and sank two fingers into her pussy, thrusting in and out as I circled her clit again and again.

“Oh my God, Simon, I’m going to. Fuck.” She delved her fingers into my hair, pulling me closer.

The boy grunted, his arousal heightening with hers. He was going to ruin this for me. His Neanderthal like voice was going to shout over her pleasure, I could already tell. “Stop,” I said.

“What?” Lilah cried. “I can’t.” She pushed her hips closer to me.

“Not you. Boy.” I swirled over her nub.

“Fuck you,” he said, his strokes quickening.

I looked over, his face was strained as he jerked wildly.

A growl started deep in my throat.

“Oh, Simon. Don’t stop. Please.”

He was close to us. I hadn’t realized he’d gotten within touching distance. Our audience wanted to mingle, but that sure as fuck wasn’t going to happen. Why were humans so insipid?

I cocked him one. I knew the force of my blow would knock him out. Sure enough, he fell over, hitting the wall and then crashing down onto the bed.

Lilah cried out, her eyes widening, but then I was stroking her with my tongue again, distracting her. Her head fell back against the wall and she held my face to her pussy as her climax threatened. The boy was all but forgotten when she said, “Please make me. Oh, God, please make me.”

If it was the last thing I did, I was going to make her convulse over my tongue.

I continued pumping inside her with my fingers as my tongue did its magic. Her breathing escalated until she panted loudly. I liked her like this. Fucking and making noise without a care in the world.

“Simon,” she called out. A half plea, half warning.

“You’ve got this, baby.”

I removed my hands and forced my tongue inside her.

She came on a scream, her body spasming around me.

Fucking Christ, she was exquisite. Her tiny pleas as she came down off her high were like music to my ears. I licked her clit, and she convulsed in my arms once. We didn't move for several moments until her body relaxed. Then, I gingerly took her feet off my shoulders and set her down. She wobbled before leaning back against the wall. A small smile formed on her lips. "We're going to have to do that again."

No shit.

Cold air doused me when that thought entered my brain. Do that again? Did I want to? My body sure as fuck screamed yes, but what the hell was this? I wanted her again and again. I'd never wanted anyone like that before. I usually craved different women at different times. This was all new. Why did I just crave her? I'd wanted her to come. Was it because there was no one else around?

Even as I thought it, I disregarded the thought. There were women who eyed me as we'd made our way to the compartment. I could've easily had one of them in here by now, but no, I'd been waiting for Delilah to make the move, and when she did, my body sung as if it moved only to her tune.

Caught up in my own thoughts, I hadn't realized Delilah had bent over the boy. "Stay away from him," I snapped. I gripped her arm and threw her on the bed. She bounced there, then stared up at me in confusion. "Don't fucking touch him."

"Did you hurt him?" she asked.

“Does it matter?” I spat back.

She played over her lip, negotiating with herself. I’d seen it a thousand times. The idea of not caring warring with the part of her that still gave a fuck. Mirrored in her eyes was what was inside me all the time. It was what drove me to Philly in the first place. If I was truly as heartless as I made myself out to be, I wouldn’t have given a fuck about getting revenge on some senior with a disappearing hairline. No, I wanted the world to pay for what they did to me. Just as I wanted him to equally pay for what he’d done to his granddaughter, making her feel unimportant as if her life didn’t even matter.

The goal was still the same, but the reasonings were different.

The guy on the floor moaned. I picked him up by the shoulder and set him down on his feet. He shook his head as if trying to make himself wake up. When he did, he got a glimpse full of Delilah again. He smiled, then moved toward her. I yanked him back, bringing him close to me. “Touch her and it’ll be the last fucking thing you ever do.” I turned his face toward me, my lengthening claw on his chin. “Do you understand?”

He nodded once.

“Thank you for your assistance,” I told him, all business like now. “But we’re all set, boy. Get dressed and remove yourself from the room. You can tell your superiors that there won’t be any more loud noises coming from this room.”

The young man swallowed, then yanked his clothes from the floor and put them on

with a blank stare. It was easy to get people to do what I wanted. It proved difficult during highly emotional states like the one he was just in when he was all about Delilah, but now that had passed, he'd do whatever I said. Had he been a woman and was all about me during sex, she would've been easier to control. Well, unless, that person was equally as attracted to Delilah, which I couldn't blame them. Regardless, our audience didn't matter anymore and now that I knew how I would react, I would never invite anyone else in again. More trouble than it was worth.

The boy dressed himself and then left the room without a word, exactly as I instructed.

As soon as he was gone, I locked the door behind him and turned toward Lilah. She fought against sleep, her hand under the pillow as she lay on her side. The caked-on blood from her neck wound and tiny bite on her breast were dried and smeared. I stared at her until she passed out in sleep, having no idea the war I waged inside myself.

She'd called me the devil earlier, and she was one-hundred percent correct on that front. Now just to decide what to do about it.

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Chapter Twelve

Delilah

I awoke with a new set of clothes waiting for me. No doubt Simon had gone out and fished them from somewhere. It was a stupid thing, but I missed my wardrobe back home. One thing I did not find myself missing, though, was my grandfather. I tried not to think about it because it made this whole thing more real, but he was the reason why I was here. Still here. If I didn't think about that part, I could pretend I'd met this

charming, sensual guy in a flurry of sex and pleasure. But if I remembered what my grandfather had to do with it, I felt abandoned, and then I felt the torture pleasure-pain Simon put me through.

He wasn't in the compartment at the moment, so I got up, showered, and dressed. When I walked back out, he was there, sitting in the same seat reading the same book. "Good morning."

This time, I didn't have to beg him to look at me. He stared at me over the top of the book. "Good morning, Lilah."

His rich voice sent a shiver through me. "Are we almost there?"

His gray eyes glinted again. I'd noticed they did that when he was up to something. "We're getting off in about a half hour."

I narrowed my eyes at him. There was just something about the way he said that that I didn't like.

"You better eat some breakfast." He motioned toward the bowl of cereal and apple that lay on the table next to him.

I sauntered over to it, taking my finger and running it down the cereal box. "What about you? Have you had enough to eat?"

He grinned. "I admire how insatiable you are."

He didn't know the half of it.

He looked away. "Please eat. We have little time left, and I want to make sure you're fed for the journey."

“Journey? How far away is it?”

“Not too far.”

“So...?”

He looked at me again, annoyance tugging at his features. “We’re going on foot though. It’s quicker that way.”

Quicker? Last time I checked walking was never as quick as driving.

He gestured toward the food again, so I picked up the tray and took it to the bed. I didn’t realize until I started eating how hungry I was. I made short work of the offered food. As soon as I was finished, Simon took the tray away from me and then took my hand. He turned, grabbed his small bag, and we both left the room. His hand solidly in mine, we went to the end of that car and kept going until we were in the caboose. He peered out the very last window. “Yes, right on time.”

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He made his way for the door which had an array of emergency warnings on it about not opening the door while the train was moving. I held back on his arm. “What are you doing?”

“We’re getting off here.”

“What?” I cried. “We’re not even at the station. We can’t get off here.”

He forced my head to look out the window. “See those bluffs? That’s where the compound is.”

My stomach dropped. He had to be joking. “Simon—?”

Without any warning, he threw the door open. A siren wailed. In one instant, my feet were firmly on the train, and in the next, they were suspended in the air. I curled into Simon who’d picked me up right as the ground came up quick to meet us. I winced, waiting for the impact, but it was smooth. So smooth I hadn’t even realized we were on the ground until I looked around and saw the trees flying past us as if Simon and I were a train all ourselves. I looked out, finding the train tracks in the distance now.

“Don’t look,” Simon chastised. “I heard it’s not fun for you humans.”

Whatever we were doing, he was right. I clutched at his shirt, burying my face into it. “What are you doing?”

“Running,” he said.

“Running?” My heart beat like mad in my chest. “It feels like we’re back on the train.”

His hand came up to rub my back, which immediately soothed my apprehension. It was such a sweet gesture, so unlike the Simon he pretended to be.

“How long until we get there?”

“Another half hour or so. Rest, Delilah.”

I couldn’t. I thought about what lay ahead for me. We were going to Galen, his oldest friend. His friend who had the feeders he and Simon lived off. I couldn’t help but wonder if that’s what Simon was taking me here for. Part of me rebelled against it. There was something else that made me turn away from that idea, too. The way Simon didn’t want the train worker to touch me. The way he’d just rubbed my back to take my worries away. For being such a feral predator, he had other instincts too.

If I thought about it, could I really blame him for wanting to kill my grandfather? He took his mother, the only family he had, away from him. He left him alone, and lonely, and scared. Just as I felt right now. I thought he’d cared for me, but he obviously didn’t. He made no motion to try to save me.

I just couldn’t accept that though. My grandfather had saved me from being an orphan after my parents’ death. That didn’t sound like someone who just wouldn’t care that something had happened to me. Sure, he may not have been there for me emotionally, but he was always there for me in every other way. I had everything I always wanted. That should count for something, right? Maybe Grandpa was working out the logistics to come get me, and now we were running away from Philly all together. Maybe Simon had figured that out, and that was why we came here....

No. I didn’t believe that. I didn’t want to believe it either.

Too many questions, and not enough answers.

By the time I'd thought through everything, and then continued to think it through another four more times, Simon finally slowed. His breaths were labored, the first time I'd ever seen anything affect him. He kept me in his arms, snuggled there like a cocoon until I started to wriggle free. I wanted to face everything that was here headfirst. I didn't want to be blindsided by it.

He gripped me harder. "I'm just trying to get you used to the sudden drop in motion. Wait a second."

"Oh," I said, feeling stupid. Here I had thoughts of vamps jumping from the bushes at me when he was just trying to help me.

He dropped me on my feet anyway, and I turned. A monstrosity of a house was directly in front of me. My mouth dropped as I looked up at it. My family was rich, but even our house wasn't as grand as this. And this was antique, too, as if everything had an intrinsic value as well as a monetary one.

Simon grabbed my arm and marched me up the stairs. He pushed the door open. Inside was just as antique looking. It was as if we were in a medieval castle with all the beautiful wooden furnishings.

Terror ripped through me as a figure lunged at us.

Simon shielded me. "Oh, calm down."

The woman jerked to a stop. She had blonde hair and a fierce look. "Master Simon? I didn't know you were returning today." She stood straight, holding her hands behind her back.

A door opened in the corner of the room, bouncing off the wall with a deafening boom as it echoed. A man emerged. Tall, cut, dark and dangerous looking. I shrank into Simon, not that his look was much different, but the threat you knew was better than the one you didn't.

"Simon," the man said, smiling.

Simon dropped his head into a bit of a nod. "Sire."

My eyes widened. This must be Galen, the one who saved him from his life without a mother.

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Galen's gaze dropped to me. Taking in our situation, his eyes only narrowed. "You may leave Allison. Thank you for alerting me to the intruder." The woman, who I could only describe as a guard turned and left the room. When she was out of sight, Galen asked, "Who's this?"

"This is Delilah Greene."

The vampire blinked. "Simon."

Simon shrugged, a dark chuckle piercing the air that made my stomach turn.

"Just what kind of trouble have you been getting yourself into?" Galen asked, sighing.

I clamped my jaw shut, holding everything in. My body pricked in warning. I didn't like this place one bit. At least back in the human world, I could pretend that Simon was an anomaly. Now, I was faced with someone who was just like him and felt the tremor in my hands to prove it.

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Chapter Thirteen

Simon

Even as I walked into the compound, I didn't understand why I'd brought Delilah here. To settle her here? Because I wanted her with me? None of those things seemed

exactly right, so it wasn't a lie when I told her I needed Galen's advice. He'd been there for me for so many years. He could probably read my face without me even trying.

Kayleigh walked up behind Galen, sliding her hand around his waist. Delilah's eyes practically bugged out of her head. Kayleigh was a stunning human, but she was even more stunning as a vampire.

What would Delilah—?

No. My mind was not going there.

"This is Delilah," I told them, "... and there's no trouble, is there, Delilah?"

Delilah didn't even speak. She sat there and blinked at Kayleigh and Galen. I imagined trying to see them through her eyes. They must have been a sight together. I could feel her skin turn cold and step ever so slightly into me for protection.

"Perhaps I should take Delilah into the other room and let you and Galen talk," Kayleigh said.

I smiled at her. She didn't meet my eyes when she came to take Delilah away. There was that pesky time I tried to kill her, but I'd also brought her back to Galen. You'd think that would mean something, but the fledgling was holding onto her grudge, apparently.

Delilah stepped closer to me when Kayleigh neared. It made me chuckle. The fact that she thought I was less intimidating than bleeding heart Kayleigh made me think I was losing it. "It's okay," I told her.

Kayleigh rolled her eyes. "Yes, it is. I won't hurt you." She took her by the shoulders

gently and walked her into the big room.

Galen turned on his heel and moved back toward his office. I followed him, my brain firing, trying to think of a reason why I brought her here other than that it felt natural to do so. Where else would I take her?

Galen held the door open for me and then shut it when I walked in. He laid a hand on my shoulder. "It's good to see you."

"You, too," I told him.

He squeezed my shoulder and then walked past. "I admit, when you said you were in Philly I was quite worried. I didn't know whether to come find you or not." He leaned against his desk and crossed his arms over his chest. "Now I see you've brought someone with you?" He arched an eyebrow.

"Delilah," I said again.

"Yes, Delilah Greene, but who exactly is she, Simon? And why do you have her? I can only venture a guess, but I'd rather not."

"She's Greenie's granddaughter."

He nodded as if he'd already surmised as much. "And you...?" he trailed off, waiting for me to get to the point.

"I'm ransoming her, Galen. I'm ransoming her for that prick who took my mother's life."

"Oh," Galen said, a frown creasing his lips. "And how's that going?"

I shrugged. “Not very well. The old bastard doesn’t care that I have his granddaughter. He’s made no attempt to meet my demands,” I growled, and before I knew it, I was shouting, my words coming out in angry clips. “And no attempt to even rescue her.”

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“Greenie has no value for life,” Galen said, as if we already knew that.

I growled in frustration as Galen took what I’d been feeling right out of my head and put it into words. He hadn’t cared he’d killed my mother all those years ago, and he didn’t care about Delilah now. What kind of monster just didn’t care about anything?

“And they say we’re the heartless ones,” Galen mused, rolling his eyes. He tilted his head. “So, you went to Philly hoping you’d get some sort of satisfaction out of seeing Greenie dead, but instead, all it has done is make you angrier.”

“He hasn’t come for her,” I seethed.

Galen’s eyebrows furrowed, but as he stared, he seemed to understand something I didn’t. His eyes lit. “Oh.” He stood from his perch on the desk and moved forward. “It’s more than that then. You care for her.”

I closed my eyes. My very being denied it, but at the same time, there was a little inkling inside me that said it was true. How could that be though? Her grandfather killed my mother. She should be tainted by association. “No,” I said. “I just feel bad for her, and I’m pissed I haven’t been able to make him pay. How can I get my rightful revenge on someone who doesn’t care about anyone but himself?”

When I opened my eyes, Galen had his head cocked even further. “She makes you think of you. The little boy who had nowhere to go and nothing to live for. I see why you brought her here now.”

I hadn’t. I hadn’t just then until Galen put it into words.

Galen had fixed me. Surely, he could fix Delilah too. No one in this world wanted her. She was the little boy who cried over his mom's dead body knowing she would never wake up again, but also not knowing what to do with a dead body. The little boy who scraped for food, taking anything he could get. He had a miserable existence before, but he knew what was coming would be far worse. "I don't know what to do," I admitted.

Galen looked toward the door. "She knows her grandfather won't come for her?"

My hands clenched to fists. "She thought he would at first. But I sent him audio, video of me torturing her, and nothing has spurred him to respond. I think she understands now."

Galen's jaw clenched, and I knew it wasn't because of what I admitted I'd done to her, it was because of Greenie's complete lack of interest in her life. "Everyone should have one person in this world who cares whether they exist or not," Galen said, his anger finally sparking. "Someone who would notice if they were gone and mourn them."

I nodded. I'd been my mother's. After that, Galen had always been that one person for me, and I for him. Maybe that was why I hated Kayleigh so much when she first got here. When I could see Galen slipping through the cracks and into her arms more than relying on me. It used to be just us for one another, but not anymore. I was the odd one out in a table made for two.

"What do you want to do?" Galen asked.

"He needs to pay," I said, my temper flaring. "Not just for my mother, but for Delilah too, his own blood."

"How do you want to do it?"

“I’d like to see him suffer, Galen. He has no idea what he did to me, and what he’s going to do to Delilah once she really realizes he never had any intention of coming for her. I went to his house after I sent the torture video. Things were carrying on like normal. Delilah’s room had been cleaned and made up like new. But worse yet?” This was the part I hadn’t told Delilah yet. This was the part that really sank home how much he didn’t care. “All aspects of her were gone from the room. No pictures, no mementos. Hell, her scent wasn’t even there anymore. It was as if he completely washed her away from his house.”

“Does Delilah know?”

“No.”

“Why does she think she’s here then?”

I blew out a breath. “I don’t know what she thinks. I just told her I needed to see you and that she was coming with me.”

Galen came up to me and put his hands on my forearms. My tight body relaxed instantly. “She’ll be safe here.”

“I don’t care,” I said, forcing the words from my mouth.

Galen didn’t push it even though both of us knew I was lying. “Let’s get to planning then,” Galen said. I looked up at him, confusion riddling my face. He mirrored my look. “It’s what you want, right? Retribution? Don’t tell me you want to stop now.”

“You’re going to help me?”

“Isn’t it what we do?” Galen asked, a hint of a smile on his lips.

“Yeah, but you’re all soft now.”

Galen grunted in amusement. His mouth opened to say something, but it was interrupted by a loud hiss from the other room.

Galen and I got to the door at the same time. His reaction bolstered because the hiss was unmistakably Kayleigh’s. But for me, it was the reason why she hissed, and that fact that I could smell Delilah’s fear from here.

“She’s not a Feeder,” Kayleigh growled, standing up to Luca who stared down at her.

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I needed only to hear that and then I ran at him, barreling through his midsection. We both fell onto the floor in a tangle of limbs.

“Jesus fuck, Simon,” Luca growled, pushing me from him.

I slid across the floor and looked up, anger still pulsing through me. When I looked up though, Luca had his hands in the air and a smile on his face. “What’s up, man?”

I pulled myself to a standing position and went to pull Luca to his feet. When he gave me his hand to help hoist him up, I shoved him back down again instead. “Not yours to play with,” I told him.

Then, we both chuckled. “Alright, I got the point,” Luca said. “Maybe just put a sign on her next time saying, ‘Simon’s property’ to avoid any confusion.”

“Fucking vampires,” Kayleigh said, shaking her head.

I looked up to find Galen right behind her, shielding her while Kayleigh shielded Delilah simultaneously. Delilah was pale, frozen in terror. I pushed away from Luca and went to her, my heart in my throat. “You okay?”

“Fucker tried to bite her,” Kayleigh snapped.

I whipped around to pierce Luca with another stare. He held his hands in the air again.

“It’s not as if you don’t have enough food around here with Simon gone,” Kayleigh

said, chastising as if she'd taken on the mothering role to all of us with her new position as Galen's mate.

"She looked too delectable to pass up," Luca drawled, his voice sounding off from behind me.

That she did. Always had, and it wouldn't change.

She looked me straight in the eyes as if I had tried to bite her myself. "How many of you are there?"

"Here? A few."

"What about everywhere?" she asked, her heart still fluttering in her chest.

"More than you want to know," Galen said menacingly.

It was true. If humans knew how many of us there were, there would be widespread panic before the fighting began. Some humans already knew about us and fought back when they could. Most other humans just thought they were crazy, which was a good thing for us. Crisis avoided. But who knew what would happen in the future.

Delilah took in a deep, shaky breath. It sawed out of her before she did it again and again. She swayed on her feet and Kayleigh slowly lowered her to the couch. She sat next to her. "I know. It's a lot to take in."

"You're all vampires," she said, as if she were losing it. She knew we would all be vampires. Well, except for the feeders, possibly, but what did she expect?

Kayleigh tried to calm her, but Delilah forced herself into the couch to try to get away from her.

“Simon...? Simon!” a high voice rang out from behind us. I turned just in time to see one of the new feeders fly across the room. She launched herself into my arms and I caught her.

“I’ve missed you,” she said, practically purring as she slid down my body.

“Hey now,” Luca said. “I thought I was keeping you company enough.”

The girl chuckled. “But of course, but you know how I like my different flavors.” She gave Luca a wink and then looked around me, finally seeing Delilah on the couch. “Who’s this?”

“Delilah,” Delilah answered, eyeing me the entire time.

Red hot jealousy rose inside her. It made me furious. Not at her, but at me for letting this happen. I’d felt similarly when I’d invited the railway worker into our room. I’d done it plenty of times before and had never been overcome by something so insipid as jealousy, but Delilah was different.

She stuck out at her chin. “Who are you?”

“Sasha.”

“You’re a Feeder?” she asked, struggling to get the word out.

“Feeder. Lover,” she shrugged as if this was just another casual conversation. It kind of was in this house.

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I moved toward Delilah, but she moved away. She found herself pressed against Kayleigh and stilled a moment before pulling herself up and then flipping herself over the back of the couch. “Stay away from me. All of you.” Her eyes darted to each one of us like we were an imminent threat. She even grabbed a vase off a nearby table and held it up like she would chuck it at someone.

I couldn’t help myself, I laughed.

She launched it at me. Surprise only took me off guard for a second before I plucked it out of the air and placed it safely down on the coffee table in front of me. “Delilah, did you really think throwing a vase at me would stop me from getting to you if I really wanted to?”

I stepped closer, and she took another step back. “Don’t, Simon. I want to leave.”

Fury washed over me. Leave? I’d brought her here. Here. To my fucking home, and now she wanted to leave? A growl ripped from my throat, and I was in front of her in an instant, my hands at her chin. “And go where?” I seethed. “Back home? To a man who doesn’t even want you?”

Behind me, I heard Kayleigh urging the others from the room. Sasha balked, but eventually, Luca enticed her with a quickie in his room. If only Delilah had heard that. She’d understand it wasn’t about feelings with the feeders, it was all just about how we made one another feel. Why else would she want to go if it wasn’t about jealousy?

Soon, we were alone again.

“You don’t know that he doesn’t want me,” she said. “You probably took me here right when he was closing in on you. Actually, I know you did, Simon. I want to go home.”

Understanding dawned. This was about trust. Something happened that made her not trust me. Anger seized control of me, made worse by the fear brewing underneath. I didn’t want to lose her. She was the only person who’d ever made me feel like maybe I wasn’t a monster. Not even Galen had done that. In fact, we used to pride ourselves on being monsters until he woke up one day and decided that Kayleigh was more important to him than that. Maybe that was what was happening to me now. If so, I couldn’t lose her. “And what makes you think I would even let you go? I took you, remember? Took you when you had your little plaything pressed against your pussy while you murmured my name over and over again. You don’t want to go anywhere, especially not away from me.”

She shook her head. “This isn’t right,” she said, her voice quaking. She looked all around the room as if something or someone would save her. “Vampires, and Feeders whomissedyou,” she said. “This place isn’t real. It’s disgusting.”

“So, that’s the real reason, isn’t it?” I asked, glaring at her. “You’re jealous. You’re making this big scene because you think I’ll bow down to your every wish. You think I’ll relent and give up who I am. I won’t, Delilah. This is who I am.”

She clutched my wrists. “And this is who I am, Simon. I don’t want to be here. I don’t know what I was thinking before. You kidnapped me. You tortured me. Still somehow, through all that, I let it go.” A tear ran down her face. “But I just can’t do it anymore, Simon. We’re not from the same world, and I’m not going to stay here and watch you continue to be you when the very thought of it sickens me.”

“Sickens you? You don’t mind when my cock is buried so deep in your pussy you can’t think straight, but the moment you see something you don’t like, you don’t want

to be here anymore? If that's not hypocritical, I don't know what is."

"Don't pretend like you care," she said, throwing the words at me. "You've never given me any reason to believe you actually do. The only reason why you even took me is to get revenge, and you can't get it anymore because my grandfather doesn't care. You don't need me anymore, so let me go."

"No," I bellowed.

"I'm not staying."

She ripped her chin from my grip. My nails cut through her skin leaving deep scratches. She turned to make her way out the door, but I was right there. I twisted her around and pinned her against the door. Need pulsed through me. She wasn't going anywhere.

I covered her mouth with my own, kissing her like we had back on the train. Emotions swam through me, each of them bumping against one another as if I didn't know what to think at all.

I wanted Delilah. I couldn't deny it any longer. But how? Why? And for what purpose?

I tasted blood. I pulled back to see that some of the blood from the scratch on her chin had smeared on her face while we kissed. I licked her, and she trembled. I did it again, and she sighed. "Don't deny that you want me."

Her hips circled against mine, and we both groaned in need. "I'm not," she said. I moved forward, licking her wounds until the blood stopped flowing. Then I kissed my way down her neck, pulling down the collar of her shirt to kiss the very tip of her shoulder.

Her hand reached out and cupped me through my jeans. I ground against her. “You’re staying.”

“No.”

I growled, then bit her neck. I pulled long swallows of her sweet draught from her body, reveling in its taste. It made my body tingle. She worked me through my jeans until I meticulously undressed her from the waist down. She fumbled with my own pants, so I moved her hands out of the way and pushed them to the floor along with my boxers until there was nothing between us physically. Mentally, there were a thousand barriers, but we’d never had a physical one. Even when I was supposed to be torturing her for her grandfather’s sins, I ended up torturing her for the sensual pleasure of it. And she loved it too. She could deny it all she wanted, but she loved the pleasure pain I put her through. Maybe that was her problem, and why she wanted to leave. She didn’t want to be that kind of person, but she hadn’t realized she was already that person.

I pinned her against the door and slid inside her warmth. “This isn’t going to be pretty,” I warned.

She cried out as I started to pound inside her. Already, I could feel her slipping away. She didn’t know she was already too much like me to go back, but I couldn’t make her see it either. She had to get there all by herself. Shit. I stumbled as when I came to the realization. Even though I was straining inside her, as soon as this was over, I would let her leave if she wanted to. I couldn’t keep her against her will. Maybe I’d changed too much.

“Fuck, Simon!”

I didn’t relent. If this was the last time I was going to be buried inside her, it was going to be memorable.

I wound my hand around her hip and then between us. She trembled as I started playing with her clit as I fucked her. She tried to move my hand out of the way, but I didn't let her. "Too much," she said.

It was never too much.

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Her hair fell in front of her face and cascaded down her shirt. It was like silky raven feathers, swishing with my strokes.

Keeping one finger pressed to her clit, I snuck my other hand behind her and massaged her ass. She rocked into me happily, cooing my name. I reached further, inching closer and closer to my intended target until I swirled my finger around her tight hole. “Oh God, oh God,” she said. It puckered, and I kept circling.

She struggled against me, grinding her pelvis against mine as I came at her. “No, Delilah. Not God. I’m the devil, remember?”

I slipped the tip of my finger into her hole and she screamed out her release instantly. She rocked into me again and again, locking eyes with me. “You,” she said, like a threat.

Her hands came around my shoulders for leverage and she started sliding up and down my cock with authority. I let her control everything. She kissed my neck, flicked her fingers over my nipples, and pressed her fingers into my ass. Sweat dotted her temples as she moved her body on mine. Her cries rang out as she worked herself up for another explosion but trying damn hard to get me there too. She didn’t need to try that hard, but I had fun being the willing participant.

“Fuck, Simon, you’re so hard. I want...more.”

She bit down on my neck, and it spring-loaded my climax. I screamed her name and then dug my hands into her ass as I pounded my release into her. During the middle of mine, I felt her clench around me again, strangling my cock until it felt so good I

thought I might pass out.

We fell back toward the door and I rested my forehead against it as I tried to think sanely again. I wanted to keep her here. Lock her up if I had to again, but then I realized it wouldn't be the same if I did that. I wanted her to want to be that person who cared whether I ceased to exist or not. I didn't want to have to make her do it.

I stepped back, pulling out of her as I did so. I worked my own clothes up, situating myself. When I looked up, she was still leaning against the door, watching me. I bent over, helping her put her clothes back on.

Her face was a mix of turmoil as we went through the motions. If she went to her grandfather's, she wouldn't like what she would find. But I knew it would be better if she saw for herself instead of everything coming from me. Once her clothes were on, I stepped back. "Kayleigh?" I called out.

I barely yelled it, but I knew no matter where the newborn vampire was in the estate, she'd be able to hear me. I needed someone to help Delilah out of here and it couldn't be me. I wouldn't be able to bring myself to do it.

Within a few moments, Kayleigh emerged, "Yes?"

"Can you take Delilah where she wants to go?"

"You're leaving?" Kayleigh asked, pure shock in her voice.

Delilah only nodded.

I didn't need to read minds to know what Kayleigh was thinking. She could never hide her own thoughts. Sure, she didn't like me, but the way she looked back and forth between us, she clearly thought we were both being dumb. I had to agree with

her, but I wasn't going to force Lilah. Not anymore.

Galen came up behind us then. He put his hand on my shoulder and I watched as Kayleigh led Delilah from the house. They disappeared into the garage and then one of the cars started. I heard the telltale crunch of the tires against the gravel as they pulled down the driveway. I imagined my feet as big cement blocks, unable to move.

When they were long gone, I turned toward Galen. "Don't tell me where they end up going. I don't want to know." If I did, there was nothing stopping me from going after her. At that moment, I had just enough willpower to listen to them leave the house, and nothing more.

I ran right up to my room and locked the door behind me, throwing my body down on the bed and staring up at the ceiling. I willed sleep to come. I'd gone without it for so long, and it did, eventually. But even in sleep, Delilah tortured me.

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Chapter Fourteen

Delilah

For a vampire, I guessed Kayleigh was okay. She wasn't intimidating like Simon or Galen. Galen, damn. I thought Simon was ferocious, but Galen had something more. Though he looked just as young as Simon, he had an air of authority, like he'd lived a thousand hard years and was still here to talk about it. It was almost like looking at my grandfather, someone who you knew was weathered from experience and not just the passing of time. Much like my grandfather, when Galen came into the room, his essence was overpowering, but mostly, I could see how much he loved Simon.

I fretted over my lip. I tried to keep him out of my thoughts, but as I was in the same

vicinity as another vampire, it was difficult. She'd been quiet on the way to the train station, quiet as she bought us tickets. I had told her I could make the journey alone, but she nearly only looked at me like I was crazy. "Do you want Simon to kill me?" Then, she laughed as if that was the funniest thing in the world. There must've been a backstory there I didn't know about. All I knew was the stares she received as we made our way onto the train. There would be no compartment for us this time. Kayleigh didn't try to impose her will on anyone like Simon had. She inquired after a sleeping car, but they were all filled, so she left it at that.

Though we were seated right next to one another, we hadn't spoken to one another yet. The lack of talking was making me continuously antsy as she just sat there stoically, gazing in front of her. I looked at her, wondering if she was still awake even though her eyes were open. Before long, I couldn't handle it anymore. "Do you guys sleep?"

Kayleigh blinked, then looked over at me slowly. "I'm sorry?"

I groaned and leaned closer to her. A wash of cold brushed that side of her body as I neared. "Sleep?" I whispered. "Do you guys sleep?"

She smiled. "Of course. I suppose we don't need to, but it's something all of us hold on to as part of our human selves."

"How long have you been...this way?" I didn't quite know how to ask the question. Was it an intimate one? Would it offend her?

"A vampire?" She chuckled. "A month."

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“A month!” I blurted. A few people in our section of train turned to look at me, but there weren’t very many. I lowered my voice anyway. “Only a month?” I looked at her with more appreciation. Maybe that was why she hadn’t initially bothered me like Galen had. They were so obviously together, which begged a lot of questions to creep up my throat, but I bit them back. “I bet Galen is way older than that.”

Her tinkling laugh filled the space between us. “You would guess right. He’s been around a long time.”

“And Simon?” I cringed as soon as I said it. Why had I asked that? I didn’t care. I was going back to my old life where I would stay and be happy. Where I could pretend that things didn’t exist like vampires and people who abused others for fun, and—

“Didn’t Simon tell you?”

I leaned back in my seat, letting thoughts of Simon fill me. I’d tried putting a barrier up, but it just wasn’t working. It only succeeded in making me feel exhausted. “No. He was very cryptic about it.”

“Well, he’s not as old as Galen. I don’t know exactly how old he is. Simon or Galen would have to tell you that.”

“I know Simon met Galen when he was still human, but I’m guessing now that Galen was not. He was a vampire already?”

Kayleigh nodded. “I’m surprised Simon didn’t tell you all this.”

Why? I wasn't. "He doesn't like to talk much, and he was pretty intent on getting revenge on my grandfather."

"Yeah, but..."

She trailed off, and I watched as she fretted over her lip. "But what?"

"It's just that it's obvious Simon has feelings for you. I mean, I'm as shocked as you are right now. I didn't think he had an ounce of humanity left in him to be honest. If you can't tell, Simon and I aren't exactly the best of friends."

"Is he friends with anyone?" I muttered dryly. It seemed highly unlikely given the kind of person he was.

"Galen," Kayleigh said resolutely. "He and Galen have a bond that—even though I understand it—still baffles me."

I turned my head to watch the scenery whisk by. Trees and rivers. Lakes and mountains. The journey would be a long one back home, but at least I was free from the restraints Simon had put me in. No one liked to be forced to do anything, especially me. "What's it like being with a vampire, anyway?"

"You know that already," she said, her voice serious.

I froze. She was right. I'd been with Simon, and not just when he was forcing me either. We'd been together on our own terms, and because we both wanted it. I doodled on the glass with my finger.

"Do you like Simon?" she asked, genuinely curious.

I laughed at that. She asked as if she would be surprised if I'd said yes.

“I don’t mean anything by it,” she said automatically. “I can tell he’s different with you, so it’s possible, but—”

“Unlikely?” I guessed. I thought long and hard on what she asked. Mostly, I knew the truth, I just kept trying to find reasons to deny it yet came up with nothing. The truth was, even when he tortured me, I enjoyed it. It may have started out maliciously, but by the end of everything, both of us found a sadistic pleasure in it. “I do,” I told her.

I wasn’t looking at her, but I could feel her body respond. “Galen was right then.”

I turned to her. “About?”

“He said Simon only needed someone like me, someone who could show him that even though he is what he is, he’s not soulless. Their...activities...may be different than we’re used to, but look at the things we—well, humans—do for survival. Can we really say that we’re—you’re—,” she said, correcting herself again. “....better than them?”

“But the Feeders?” I said, my voice rising. “It’s disgusting.”

She nodded. “I thought so, too. It was my biggest hurdle, but I can tell you that the Feeders like being where they are. They came from worse situations. They’re happy having a home and being fed and clothed. They’re basically given everything they want, and in return, they just give up some of their blood and mostly have fun doing it.”

I tried to picture it in my head, but it just wasn’t working. “But you,” I whispered. “Do you do things with them?”

“I only drink from them,” she said. “Galen, too. He used to partake in every single way, but when he found me, he didn’t feel the need to find pleasure in them because

he had me.”

“So, both of you only feed from them?”

She nodded. “It’s kind of like going to the grocery store except you never have to leave your house and the items just kind of willingly fall into your lap.”

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She chuckled and smiled, but the thought of it still repulsed me. I didn't care how she tried to spin things, the idea of vampires wasn't something I could easily get past even if the ones they fed from were willing donors. I shrugged. "I don't think Simon would ever stop."

Kayleigh didn't answer. She turned away and stared straight ahead again. I took that as agreeing with what I said without actually forming the words. What was her aim in all this? Did she actually want me to stay with Simon? She said herself that she didn't even like him.

"Galen said he just needs someone like me..." What was her point?

I supposed I could be a reminder of his humanity. For all the terrifying things he did, though, it seemed highly unlikely he had much left. Most of all, I didn't think I could get past those things. It was time to start thinking with my head and not just all about myself, and my whims, and wants. I was older now. If anything, this was teaching me that it was time to start caring for myself. Grandpa wasn't the person I thought he was. I could go off and live on my own.

I could support myself if I had to. I'd gotten myself out of this mess, hadn't I?

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Chapter Fifteen

Delilah

Kayleigh rented a car at the train station and drove me straight to the front door of my grandfather's house. She wanted to get out of the car and walk with me up to the house, but I told her not to. My grandfather didn't like strangers near his things. She wouldn't have even made it inside the house, anyway. She would've been turned away at the front door.

"Are you sure?" she asked again. She dipped her head low and looked out the window. She'd spoken to Galen a dozen different times on the last half of the trip. If I didn't know any better, I'd say that the fiercest vampire of them all was genuinely worried about her, and he asked a lot of questions about me too from what I could hear.

"I'll be fine," I told her. "Listen, um, don't tell anyone where I live, okay?" I asked. It wouldn't matter because I was already determined to move out and find my own life, but just in case anyone came snooping. Simon already knew where I lived, but I also didn't think I'd have to worry about him anymore. He wouldn't come back for me at least, that much I was sure of.

"No problem," Kayleigh said. "You don't have to worry about us. We prefer to stick to ourselves, anyway. Now, Simon, I don't know. Once he gets something in his head, it's hard for him to get it out."

"My grandfather?" I asked. I looked up at the house. I knew already that the guards would be assembling, scoping out the strange car parked near the driveway. I'd have to go in soon before they came out.

"And you."

My head whipped around to stare at her. "I don't think that will be a problem."

"I think if you wanted it to it could be."

I shook my head. What was she? Some sort of vampire matchmaker? No, I was done with this conversation, and I was done with this whole terrible episode of my life. “Look, the only good thing that came out of all this is that I finally realized something. My life’s on me to make it what I want it to be. I’d been too dependent on my grandfather, a man who may not even care. That’s all I want to take out of this.”

I pushed the door open and started to get out, but Kayleigh grabbed my hand. “Take care, Delilah.”

A shiver ran through me. She must’ve noticed because she pulled her grip from mine. I turned around, giving her a half smile. As vampires went, she was pretty cool even if her skin was ice cold. “I will.” I got out of the car and shut the door behind me.

That was the last time I’d ever think about vampires again. That would be my saving grace.

I went up to the gate. A guard peeked around the corner. His eyes rounded when he saw me. “Lilah?”

Nodding, I ran my hands through my hair and touched my face, knowing that I probably looked like shit. I never would’ve been caught dead going out of the house like this before.

He put the code into the computer and the gate opened. His hand still on the gun in his side pocket, he put his arm around me. “We thought you were dead.”

“Dead?” I asked, my body involuntarily shivering. I couldn’t tell if it was because of what he’d said or if it was because he was touching me, and it felt nothing like when Simon did.

“Yeah. With Ronnie dead in your room and your grandfather refusing to talk about

it....well, we all just assumed.”

“Well, I’m alive,” I told him, itching to get his hands off me.

He looked at me from the corner of his eye, his gaze moving down me slowly. I could only imagine what he was thinking. That I only looked remotely alive.

How did he not know what had happened to me? The audio and video Simon sent... None of this made sense.

“Let’s get you inside,” he said. “I bet your grandfather will be so happy to see you.”

My stomach churned. I wasn’t so sure about that. Maybe it was a misunderstanding. Maybe he did think I was dead...but still, wouldn’t he have tried to find out? And there was still the issue of Simon sending the video of me clearly alive. Simon said my grandfather had gotten it, but maybe he hadn’t...

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The guard pushed the main door open for me. Sights and smells assaulted me. It had only been a week since Simon stole me from my room, but it felt like a lifetime ago. Coming into the house before, I would've had a huge purse in one hand and sunglasses in the other that I would plop down on the counter. Right now, it was just ratty old me in borrowed clothes. "Where is he?"

"In the family room."

Family room. Huh. Surely, someone told him of my presence here by now. There were cameras all over this place, and nothing went by without him being informed.

I walked slowly to the room I last saw my grandfather in. Sure enough, he sat in the same position, watching TV without a care in the world. Emotion swam toward the surface. My vision broke in front of me, fractured by the tears threatening. I didn't know if I'd be able to hold any of this back. "G-grandpa?"

His head turned slightly, just enough to make sure it was me. "Yes, Dear?"

"It's me," I said, searching for words. "It's Delilah. I'm back."

He only nodded.

I hobbled into the room. It was like all the aches and pains, both physically and mentally, from the last few days were just now crippling me. I dropped to my knees right before I was in front of him and then crawled toward him. "Grandpa. I'm alive." I didn't know what I wanted from him, but whatever it was made my heart break in two.

He looked down at me, his gaze narrowing, though his face was as blank as it always was. “I can see that.”

I grabbed onto his knobby knees. “You didn’t come for me.”

He grabbed the remote from the side table and turned the TV off with a sigh. He brushed my hands from his lap and peered down at me. “Rightfully so, I see. You’re alive,” his gaze wandered to my body briefly and then back up to my face. “...and intact as far as I can tell. There was no need to come for you after all.”

My stomach dropped. Couldn’t he see how broken I was? Couldn’t he see the hell I’d been through? I looked and felt like death. I had scars all over my body. My hands started to shake. “This was because of you,” I said, my voice growing louder. “Because of you I was raped,” I spat. “And tortured.” I leaned closer to him, pointing out all the little cuts over my body that Simon had made with his freaky vampire claws. “What do you call these? Do you call these intact? I’m scarred...for life.” Tears dripped down my cheeks like a running faucet. I couldn’t even stop them if I tried.

Grandpa’s face turned hard. “Superficial wounds. I don’t know what you’re up to, Delilah, ransoming me, threatening me. I knew it all along.”

My mouth dropped open, and I started to shake so severely I could barely stand on my feet. What was he even saying? “I was kidnapped, Grandpa. Simon, he-he killed Ronnie. What is wrong with you? Didn’t you fear for me at all?”

“I heard and saw enough to know that you were in on the whole thing. You are no granddaughter of mine.”

A surge of anger rose up hard and fast. How dare he dismiss everything that happened to me? How dare he act as if everything didn’t matter when I loved him so?

He was the only family I had, and he so easily dismissed me as someone who would do that to him. “You’re right. I’m not like you,” I breathed out, my nostrils flaring. “I don’t treat people the way you do, especially not my own family.”

“You’re no longer my family.”

I lunged at him. Fist closed, I hit him upside the head and kept going. I hit him and kept hitting him. His hand blindly reached out for the emergency button that went straight to the guards, but I clawed at his hand to stop him. “Why don’t you care about me? Why?”

Grandpa, for as old as he was, was still spry. He was able to push me off. I fell to the floor in front of him. When I looked up, he was standing over me, a gun pointed to my chest. A flurry of activity sounded just beyond the family room doors. He cocked the gun. “I can’t believe you would show back up here expecting me to believe your lies.”

I wept as fear rose inside me. I was sure I wanted to come back here, but for what? For this? For someone who so easily distrusted me? I scrambled backwards, staring at the barrel of the gun. “I loved you.”

Voices from the walkie talkies went off. “She has no weapons. I checked her when she returned.”

I blinked. “You were waiting for me to come back?” That guard, he wasn’t looking for injuries, he was looking for weapons. This was all a set up.

“Waiting for you to make your last desperate attempt to overthrow me. Who else would want me dead, Delilah? You’re the heir. You’re the one who is set up to gain everything when I die.” A sneaky smile made its way onto his cracked lips. “Little did you know it’s never been set up like that. Your attempt at blackmailing me for my

life was doomed to fail from the beginning. It might interest you to know that you were never my heir, Delilah.”

His words were hardly computing. It was difficult to think about anything when a gun was pointed at you. I just shook my head. “There are more things to life than money, Grandpa. You can’t possibly see that someone would want to kill you for what you did to them, not what they can get from you? He left you a note. He told you why.”

“That story’s a ruse. Drop it. Which family are you working with Delilah? Is it the Irish? The Polish? Which one of them convinced you to do this, huh?”

“Neither,” I shouted.

He reached out and hit me with the butt of the gun. A splitting ache ran across my head. My vision blurred, and I blinked rapidly. I reached up, feeling something sticky on my forehead.

“Tell me now!” Grandpa growled. “You’re going to die either way, Delilah, but I want to know who you’re working with, so I can make them suffer too. No one tries to take out Jacob Greene and gets away with it. You know that. You’ve heard me say that a million times before. You’re no different. I don’t care if you’re blood or not.”

I brought my bloodied hands in front of my face. Tears of blood ran down the side of my face and fell from my chin to my clothes. “I’m not working with anyone,” I slurred. “I’m—I was kidnapped. I was taken. Beaten.”

Grandpa only laughed.

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The door to the room finally burst open. Grandpa held a hand up and the flurry of activity ceased. “I’m dealing with it,” he said.

I looked that way. Guards sneered at me, silhouetted by the light of the hallway. I’d grown up with most of these guys. They’d known me since I was little. Didn’t anyone believe me just a little bit? “Please,” I said, begging now. “I didn’t do anything.”

The guard who’d walked me in frowned. He shifted from foot-to-foot but said nothing.

“Tell me who you’re working with.”

“No one! I was taken for ransom. I had no part of it. He wanted you dead because you killed his mother with drugs. He—”

“Lies!”

The gun started to come down again, but this time, it halted. About a second later, I heard the crash of a window breaking. In a blink, I looked up, and saw Simon standing there, his hand on my grandfather’s stopping his forward momentum. The look on his face was pure fury. He ripped the gun from my grandfather’s hand and then threw him to the ground.

Shots rang out. I cowered down on the floor, my heart beating a mile a minute. Simon. What was he doing here?

Another shout rang out as more glass broke. “I told you to fucking wait.”

I cringed, recognizing the deep tenor as Galen's. Galen and Simon? Was Kayleigh here too?

There were more shots. I crawled to the side and looked up. Guards kept running into the room shooting, but Simon and Galen were making quick work of them. I peered over at my grandfather. He crawled toward the bookcase, his hands shaking. My stomach bottomed out. There was another gun hidden there. I'd seen him retrieve it from there once.

I crawled after him, but I was too late. He'd already reached it. "Watch out!" I screamed. Grandfather turned and shot while I lunged for him. Fire ripped through my shoulder as I tackled my grandfather to the floor. I cried out in pain as he struggled underneath me. Through the blinding ache, I fought for the gun until hands came over and pulled me off. I recognized that feel, that touch.

"Give me the gun," the voice whispered.

My whole body relaxed. Simon. He'd saved me. He'd been trying to save me this whole time. Maybe that was never his intention, but it's what happened. First, he showed me I didn't have to live with my grandfather. He showed me I was more than just a Greene. He showed me what a lie my life had been. He showed me that even though there were all different kinds of love, that didn't mean that his was any less.

I shook my head, only just realizing that I'd gained control of the gun. "He shot me." I peered down. Grandpa was on his back in front of me. I stood above him, leaning heavily on Simon.

"I know baby," Simon said, his voice strong. He put his hands on my wound, and I cried out. "I know, I know. We'll get you fixed, just give me the gun so I can end this."

“He thought I did it.”

“Your grandfather’s a coward,” he seethed. “He has only one care in this world, and you never fit into that.”

I raised the gun, my hands shaking. Grandpa cowered into the bookcase. I felt a body at our side. I knew without looking that it was Galen. He would never leave Simon to do this for himself. Another one neared, too. Since all the gunfire had stopped, I imagined the guards were all dead, so the only other person in the room alive would have to be Kayleigh. “Don’t let her do this,” she said. “She’ll never forgive herself.”

“He never loved me,” I said, my insides breaking.

“Maybe she’s more like me,” Simon said. “Revenge heals the heart.”

“No one’s like you,” Kayleigh snapped, her tone harsh.

It made me flinch.

“Galen,” Kayleigh warned.

My finger tensed on the trigger. I could do it. I could pull this tiny little lever and then work out all my sorrow over his dead body. He never loved me. He tried to kill me. He didn’t care or come after me when I was kidnapped. He never thought of me as a family when I loved him. He was the only family I’d ever known, and he never cared.

A sob ripped through my chest.

Kayleigh tensed. “It’s not worth it.”

“So you say,” Simon said.

“W-who are you?” Grandpa asked, his eyes wide, fear finally striking him as we all stood before him like one unit.

“They’re not the Irish,” I said coldly. “They’re not the Polish either, Grandpa.” I gestured toward Simon. “Meet Simon. He’s the one who took me.”

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Grandpa's gaze narrowed. "But you were in on it."

"Sorry to disappoint you," Simon said, "But that's not the case. Everything Delilah told you was the truth. I raped her. I beat her."

I gritted my teeth. It just didn't sound right coming from him. "He saved me," I whispered. I totally believed that. I'd lived only a mirage of a real life, never knowing that my grandfather didn't even care. It was just a shell, waiting to break. Simon had made the first crack, thankfully, awakening me to what was really going on. "I can live my life now."

"Exactly," Kayleigh said, "Which is why you need to put the gun down and let Simon handle this."

My finger tensed over the trigger. Memories flicked by one-by-one while I saw them for what they really were. I never had good, quality time with my grandfather. He was standoffish. When I was younger, I excelled at trying to make him happy. None of it made a difference. By the time I was an older teenager, I must've realized that nothing I did mattered because I dropped all my extracurricular activities and filled my life with things that I thought made me happy. The shopping. The clothes. Showering myself with things that filled my life, but only on the exterior. My interior was still broken.

Simon pressed against my backside. His hand slid up my arm, past my elbow to the hand that held the gun. "Give me the gun, Delilah."

"I could do it," I said, tensing once more.

“I know,” he said. “And I don’t blame you for wanting to, but you know how much I wanted to kill him.”

I nodded. That was his intention through it all. He wanted justice for that little kid. What about justice for my little kid? The one who tried so hard to please someone who never cared? All the disappointment. All the feelings like I was never good enough rose to the surface. The gun wobbled in front of me and it took me a long time to realize that it was coming from me. Hard tremors shook my body.

Simon continued up my hand. He placed his finger over mine on the trigger. “This is for my mother, Greenie. Rot in hell.”

He pressed down, and the gun fired.

The crack of the bullet rang through my ears and I closed my eyes immediately, but not quickly enough to avoid the hole in my grandfather’s chest.

I turned away, wiggling my hand away from the gun. Simon let me, and I turned into Kayleigh who took me from the room. We passed through the familiar house and right out onto the lawn. “The boys will clean this up and then we can get out of here.”

“He didn’t love me.”

“I know,” Kayleigh said. “I’m so sorry, Delilah. Family should never be like that.”

“We killed him.”

Her jaw ticked, and a murderous look crossed over her face. “I know.”

I wasn’t sure how I felt about that. Maybe I should be pissed like Kayleigh, or maybe it was like Simon said. I was more like him. He wanted things his way. He had a set

of rules all his own he expected people to comply with, but he wasn't without heart. He wasn't without feeling. And because of that, he was the exact opposite of my grandfather. One, a soulless creature, the other, a grandfather, and yet, they were the exact opposite of their logical descriptions.

I slid to the ground, and Kayleigh followed. I couldn't help but feel that although I barely knew them, these vampires had been there for me more than my grandfather ever had.

That had to mean something.

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Chapter Sixteen

Simon

I pulled out Jacob Greene's will and snarled. Sure enough, the senile asshole hadn't been joking. He hadn't left Delilah a single cent. She wasn't mentioned in the will at all.

"And they call us monsters," Galen said from behind me.

Anger ripped through me. "We need to do something about this. It isn't right."

He set to work, calling in someone he used to know who was discreet. While we waited, Galen told me he was going to send Delilah and Kayleigh to a nearby hotel while we figured out what to do with the scene. When he came back a short while later, I looked up. "How is she?"

"Shook up," Galen said. "When we figure all this out, we'll bring her back over. We

can make it seem like one of the other big drug runner families in the city raided them, hurting her and killing Greenie. Once my guy gets here, he'll fix the will and then Delilah will be set to do whatever she wants."

I nodded, trying to take it all in. "What about the bullet wound?"

"She's in pain, but we probably can't do anything about that right now. It has to still be open when the police get here."

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My jaw ticked. “We need to hurry then.” The emotional pain I couldn’t help, but the physical pain was a different story.

For the next twenty minutes, we went over the story until we were sure it would fly. As soon as Galen’s guy got there, I left for the hotel to tell Kayleigh and Delilah what the story was and bring her back. After texting Kayleigh to find out exactly where they were, I walked into a dumpsy motel, scowling at the place. I never would’ve let Delilah set foot in a place like this. It was disgusting.

“It was the closest I could find,” Kayleigh muttered when she answered the door to my angry face.

I glared at her, and then turned toward Delilah on the couch. She tried to smile up at me, but then she hissed in a breath. I immediately dropped to my knees. “Don’t try to move. We’re almost done over there and then we need you to call 911 and tell the cops what happened.”

Her eyes widened.

I held a hand up. “Well, our version of events.”

She nodded.

I didn’t like the look of her. She was pale, and her breathing was labored. “Has she been like this a while?”

“She got shot, Simon. It’s not as if it’s going to be a walk in the park for her. She’s

not one of us.”

A growl ripped through my throat, but Kayleigh only rolled her eyes.

“Don’t fight,” Delilah said. She stared up at the ceiling, trying to regulate her breathing. “Please.”

I took her hand and squeezed. I didn’t know what was going to happen after this, but I wasn’t going to let Delilah out of my sight again. I’d woken from that short nap at the estate with a horrible feeling that Delilah wasn’t going to be okay. I’d been right. Galen hadn’t needed much convincing to follow the girls here. And then we’d waited, using our super hearing to hear what was going on inside. Lowlife. To think that Delilah could’ve played any part in what I’d planned. Greenie must’ve been deranged.

I pulled her up in my arms, apologizing when she grimaced. I sank my nose into her neck, breathing in deep. She smelled like the metallic scent of blood and injury, which usually would’ve sent me into a hungry spiral, but we were talking about Delilah here.

Maybe I had more of a heart than I realized.

I carried her out to the car, and Kayleigh drove us back over to the house. By the time we got there, Galen’s guy was gone, and that left us with the last thing to do. I laid Delilah on the couch, placing the phone in her hand. “Like we discussed,” I whispered. “All the cameras were cut as of midnight yesterday, so it looks like they just stopped recording and no one knows why. They’ll be going off your descriptions alone then.”

She nodded. “I remember.”

I looked at Galen and Kayleigh, and they began to walk back out of the house. When they were gone, I crouched down next to Delilah. “You can do this.”

“Where are you going to be?” she asked. Her eyes turned glassy once more. When I’d first met her, she was a determined thing, larger than life. Now she just looked broken. I wanted to mend her. I wanted to build her up again. For all the tearing down her grandfather did, I wanted her to live her life to the absolute fullest, whether she wanted me in it or not.

“I’ll be wherever you want me to be.”

“Don’t go too far then,” she said, her voice thick.

With those few words, my insides cracked. I closed my eyes. Right in front of me was everything I never knew I’d need. I bent over and kissed her forehead. “I’m right here. I’m everywhere.”

I stood. She held onto my hand as long as she could while I walked away, but finally it dropped. I was torn on whether to leave her or not. These next couple hours would be hell on her, but on the other hand, I was ready to start rebuilding her life. She deserved so much more than what he’d ever given her.

There was one thing I was certain of now. There were a lot of things that did not matter in our lives. Things that we placed on pedestals. Money, titles, stature. But in reality, it was the things that came more easily that mattered most. Love, and loyalty. I used to think that feelings—that love—were the hard things in life. But, it was the easiest thing I’d ever done.

I looked behind me to find Delilah pushing the call button on the phone and realized I was a goner from the moment I met her. It had happened just like that, and there was nothing I, or her, could’ve done to stop it.

* * * * *

I sat in the hospital room night after night. Delilah had to have surgery to fix tendons in her shoulder, so she could use it properly again. I was a fixture at her bedside. The nurses all knew me as her boyfriend. My decrepit, damaged heart fluttered when Delilah introduced me as that. Stupid, but true.

Galen and Kayleigh returned to the estate right away to keep things in line there. I'd been gone so long, Galen had to tell me about the trouble they'd been having with the local humans. It turned out there was a sect nearby of vampire haters. Not many knew we existed, but if they did, they usually hated us. Unless they were Kayleigh, or Delilah. And even then, it took some convincing.

I wasn't sure where Delilah and I would go. I would go wherever she wanted. If she wanted to live at the estate, fine. If she wanted to live in Hawaii, fine. Wherever she wanted, we would go.

The lawyers had been in to talk to her. She was inheriting everything from her grandfather, a legacy in the millions of dollars. She was shutting down his business and moving away. That much I'd already heard her say. It wasn't safe for her at the house anymore, but she would have to worry about the people who got their livelihood from her grandfather who wouldn't be getting it now. They were just lowlifes, drug runners, dealers, but she couldn't stay on the chance they would act out when she took their livelihoods away.

I looked up at her from my spot next to her bed. She was dressed in regular clothes. Not clothes from the house because her grandfather had thrown away all that, but clothes she'd ordered from some website and had delivered to the hospital, so we could leave this place for good.

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“I can’t believe you’re still here,” she said when she caught my gaze.

I narrowed my eyes at her. “Why wouldn’t I be?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. Sometimes I feel like it was all just a dream. An awful one...maybe...but with a silver lining too.”

“Silver?” I scoffed. “I’d say yours is rimmed in gold.”

She smirked. “I don’t care about the money.” She stood from the bed and moved closer, linking her arm with mine. “This is what I care about.”

I leaned down and kissed her on the temple. “Where to, Miss Carstairs?”

Her eyebrows raised. “Carstairs?”

“Well, you can’t keep the name Greene anymore, right? I thought you might take my given name.”

Her eyes lit. “Simon Carstairs. I had no idea that was your last name.”

“I’m a vampire. I don’t need a last name,” I said, whispering in her ear.

She chuckled. “I suppose. You could be like Prince and just go by a symbol.”

“There’s nothing menacing about a symbol.”

She reached up and kissed me on the cheek. “There’s nothing menacing about you either.”

My steps faltered. “Now I know you didn’t just say that.”

She nodded. “It’s true. You’re about as ferocious as a butterfly.”

We were out in the hallway now, walking toward the rest of our lives. I pushed her down an intersecting hall and pulled the handle on the closest door I could find. We stepped into an empty patient room, and I pushed Delilah right into the bathroom and slid the lock closed. Turning, I found her smiling at me from ear-to-ear. I pressed her against the tiled wall, letting my body once again feel the feeling of wanting her. She’d been so fractured before, but now I felt as if I could have her without hurting her. “I’m about to show you how ferocious I can be.”

She squealed in delight as I lifted her into my arms. The squeal died on her lips when I forced my hips forward. Carefully, I placed her hand over my shoulder. “Don’t hurt me,” she said, fear lacing her voice.

“I’ll never hurt you.”

She looked up at me, her own eyes filling with emotion. Tipping my head forward, I brushed my lips with hers. That was all I needed to ignite the fire inside me.

Delilah Carstairs was mine. Forever.