



All Night Long

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Description: Gray Strachan tolerates humans. Key might be the only exception, but since he is mated to Kelvin, a fellow vamp, he kind of has to. Humans were only good for two things: feeding and sex until he accidentally mates one.

Henry Boulder spent a few minutes with a hot man and now he's ill. When hot man turns up and reveals he's a vampire, Henry doesn't believe him. In fact, Henry is now concerned that hot man is in fact nuts.

Can they both overcome their issues and make their mating work?

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Chapter One

Gray Strachan watched Key tap away, moving from one camera to another as he watched one of Hutch's men. Maxim Hutch. A thorn in Gray's side. Maxim, who led a group of vampires that had broken away from the rest of the vampire society to form their own group. They didn't follow human or vampire law, deciding they would do whatever they wanted. They hunted, fed, fucked, and killed humans and vampires whenever they wanted.

Because of this, the vampire council had put Gray in charge of a team of enforcers who monitored them, as well as law-abiding vampires, to ensure the safety of everyone and, if possible, handle those who broke the law. Right now, Key was watching one such vampire as he tracked a human female. Gray knew that she would be attacked and then disappear.

Key mumbled something under his breath, and Gray knew he was talking to his mate. They shared a unique mind connection and were able to communicate telepathically. Key was human and his mate, Kelvin, was a vampire. A type of mating that had been forbidden for years.

The law forbidding humans and vampires mating had been altered due to them, but Kelvin had faced punishment for it. Sanitation work for five years, but Gray had managed to pull a few strings and now he was back doing the job he was meant to do. Tracking and capturing rogue vampires.

Key straightened and leaned closer to the monitor. "He's going to grab her at the next alley. Perfect location away from prying eyes."

“Kelvin?”

“Close and watching.”

Gray nodded and watched, knowing Key and Kelvin could handle the situation. Working with Key had made Gray face some of his own prejudices where humans were concerned. He saw them as fickle, too emotional, able to hurt each other with ease, and responsible for destroying the one thing that gave them all the life they loved. The planet.

He’d seen humans have what they call a soulmate, seen how they could love, but that was becoming a rarity. Only mates had a true bond, and watching Key and Kelvin together only enhanced that opinion. Even if Key was human. Not his fault.

Gray folded his arms across his chest and continued to monitor the situation, not feeling the need to intervene and send in back up. Kelvin had it under control, and when the woman reached the alley, the rogue vampire did exactly as predicted. He rushed her from behind, slapping his hand over her mouth, picking her up and carrying her into what he would consider the relative safety of a dark, out of the way alley.

He wasn’t aware that Kelvin was mere feet behind him.

“Any cameras in the alley?”

“No.”

Grunting, Gray relaxed, knowing Kelvin could handle one rogue vampire, and sure enough, a couple of minutes after he’d entered the alley, the woman ran out, clutching her bag to her chest, her face showing clear signs of distress.

Not long after, Key nodded. “Clean-up required.”

Gray tapped a few keys alerting clean-up they were needed and the location. “En route now.”

Key leaned back, stretching his arms over his head, and yawned. “What’re you doing later?”

“I’m going to hit some clubs. See if there is anyone worth my attention.” He grinned when he heard Key snort.

“The men will see you and your ego coming and run away from you.”

“I’ve never had that happen yet.”

“There’s time, or you could end up meeting the man of your dreams.”

“My mate won’t be human.” Gray furrowed his brow, ignoring Key’s deep sigh.

“Whatever it is, you need to get over it. We’re not all that bad.”

“I like you.”

“I’m overwhelmed with joy that you do.” Key arched an eyebrow. “I can see it now. You enter some club, the base is thumping, men all grinding together, hands touching, grabbing... And you do the restroom with one to have some fun and wake up mated.”

“Fuck you very much. Never happening. I’ll never have a human as a mate.”

“Yeah, cause we’re so detestable.” Key swung his chair around and glared at Gray.

“It’s such a joy to work here. I never feel like I shouldn’t be here. You’re always so warm and welcoming and you never say a bad word about my species. It’s all love and sunshine and unicorns with you.”

“Don’t like it, then you can go. I’m not forcing you to be here.”

“You know what? I might just do that.”

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Key stood and grabbed his coat off the back of his chair. “Fuck you and your speciesist attitude. When vampires have become extinct, us humans will still be here.”

Gray snorted. “No you won’t. The planet will have long killed you off and will be recovering in peace. But vampires will be here to see it.”

“Like you lot don’t fuck things up, either. You dump shit everywhere, you alter the land around, you create waste too. If anything, a single vampire does more damage than a single human because you live longer.”

“Maybe, but there are billions of you and barely a million of us, so who has the most destructive impact on this place we call home?”

“Such a lovely time to drop in to take my mate home,” Kelvin drawled as he leaned against the door. “I see you’re still getting on well together.”

“We’d get on better if he wasn’t so judgemental about my species or kept those thoughts to himself.”

Terrance, another enforcer, walked into the room and paused. “Bad time?”

“Nope. Just right as I’m leaving.” Gray concentrated and appeared in his bedroom and hardened his jaw. He did like Key. He liked working with him and he worked hard to forget he was human. Since mating with Kelvin, he’d taken on some of Kelvin’s abilities and their scents were now mingled. It helped Gray cope.

When he'd offered Key the job to work with the enforcement team, he had thought he could overcome his aversion to humans, because Key was that good at what he did, and to some extent he had, but only where Key was concerned.

Shaking his head, Gray dropped all thoughts about Key. He needed to get ready and go out. That was something humans were good for. A good fuck, and Gray needed to fuck.

A quick shower, fresh clothes, and Gray left his apartment, appearing near his fave nightclub. The Pentacle had a long line outside, but Gray had a pass that let him jump ahead. It helped that it was run by two vampires he knew well.

Walking inside, the base was indeed thumping, and Gray grinned as he approached the bar. The human saw him and nodded, grabbing his beer and putting it on the counter in the corner. Gray shouldered a couple of humans out of the way, ignoring the man when he puffed out his chest.

Grabbing his beer, he walked away and moved onto the dance floor, watching the humans and odd vampire dancing and making out. He was in the hunt for a human to fuck and he wasn't all that concerned with what they looked like. He didn't do the whole kissing thing. He wanted to get the human bent over the nearest flat surface and fuck, then leave.

When he saw a nicely built redhead in the corner, he changed direction, pushing past people to reach him. There was something about this human that intrigued Gray. Something he would think about later, but right now he wanted to fuck, and this human was smiling at him.

"Henry," Henry shouted to him above the music.

"Gray." Glancing around, he saw the rest room and nodded over to it.

“No small talk?”

“Is it necessary?”

Henry looked him up and down, and Gray knew he liked what he was seeing. The tight black T-shirt and equally tight black jeans highlighted the hard, fit body Gray had, and he knew he looked good. “Not at all.”

Gray headed toward the restroom, certain Henry followed, and once inside, he found an empty cubicle and entered. Once Henry had entered and locked the door, Gray spun him around so he faced the wall.

“Hey. I’m not just bending over.”

“Want me to suck your dick first?”

Henry slowly turned to face Gray and licked his lips. “Yeah, then we can fuck.”

Gray shrugged and dropped to his knees. “Fine.”

Henry pushed his jeans and underwear down, and Gray licked his lips. Nice. Not too long or thick, but a nice mouthful. He wasn’t one to give blowjobs to humans, but he didn’t mind this time. He licked around the head, moaning when he tasted the precome coating it. Nice; salty and bitter. Just how he liked it.

Gray held Henry’s dick at the base and then swallowed it down. Henry moaned when Gray hummed along the length, then sucked on the head before swallowing. As he pulled off, he kept the suction tight, feeling Henry’s legs tremble. He knew he gave good head and made sure to give Henry a great one. Why, he wasn’t sure.

He kept working Henry’s dick, his head bobbing up and down, humming and

swallowing, his tongue dipping into the slit, then running up and down the hard length. He fondled Henry's balls, feeling them pull up, and moved back, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

He stood and turned Henry around, then pushed his own jeans down. He was commando, so once he'd lubed up, he rubbed the head of his dick over Henry's hole, teasing them both. He moved back slightly and pushed two fingers inside, hearing the deep groan from Henry.

"Just fuck me."

Grinning, Gray slipped his fingers free, lined up and pushed inside. Hot heat covered his dick as he slid in deep, both men groaning. Once he was fully in, Gray paused, then pulled out and slammed back inside, feeling Henry's ass clench around him.

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Gray didn't pause but fucked Henry the way he wanted to, hard and deep. With one hand on Henry's hip and the other on his shoulder, Gray could control the human with ease and fuck him exactly how he wanted. He could hear Henry stroking his own dick, hear his harsh pants and moved faster.

Henry shuddered. "Close."

Gray didn't respond but kept fucking the human and when he suddenly clenched Gray's dick, Gray moved his hand from Henry's shoulder, grabbed his hair and tilted his head to one side. Gray's fangs dropped, and he struck, piercing Henry's skin. Henry gasped as Gray moaned at the first taste of Henry and his own body lit up, his orgasm washing over him in a tidal wave, his body shaking and stuttering.

When he could move, Gray pulled out and shoved his dick back in his jeans and fastened them. He checked to make sure the bite mark was healing nicely, then turned to leave. "Want to come back to mine?"

Gray glanced over his shoulder and shook his head. "I wanted to fuck. That's all."

Henry straightened and stared at the floor. "Okay." He went to fasten his jeans and frowned. "Did you use a condom?"

Gray shrugged. "I don't have anything." He was about to say more, but he felt... something. Shock, maybe? He couldn't quite pinpoint the emotion. It couldn't be shock because why would he feel that way?

"You didn't use a condom? I can't believe you fucking did that."

“You can go and get tested if you want...” He once again trailed off when he felt a wave of anger. He wasn’t angry, but the man in front of him was. Oh fuck. There was no way he was feeling Henry’s emotion.

You bastard

“Now there’s no need for name calling.”

“I never said anything. I’ve got nothing to say to you.”

Gray blinked. “Fuck.”

“Yeah, we did, and now I have a wet ass because the selfish bastard in front of me didn’t glove up.”

Gray didn’t respond. Oh fuck. Just fuck. He could hear Henry’s thoughts loud and clear in his mind. This wasn’t good. This wasn’t good at all.

Exiting the stall, Gray practically ran out of the club, and once he was a safe distance away, he disappeared and reappeared in his apartment. He closed his eyes, breathing deeply, and concentrated on Henry, and sure enough, he could hear him.

That bastard! Who does he think he is? He could have anything. Oh, shit. I could have anything.

Gray cut Henry off and dropped to his knees in the middle of his living room. “Fuck, no. Not a human. Not a fucking human.”

Chapter Two

Henry Boulder rolled over on his side and winced. His ass hurt in a good way, but

then he remembered. The bastard who made him feel amazing hadn't gloved up, and he had to get tested. "Fucker."

Getting out of bed, he rolled his head and winced a second time. Running his fingers over the spot where his neck hurt, Henry walked into the bathroom and checked his neck in the mirror. There was nothing there, but the area was tender when he touched it.

"Great."

He turned the shower on, and while he waited for the water to heat up, he brushed his teeth and went over the plans he had for the day. In the shower, he quickly scrubbed his body and washed his hair, then got out and dried. Once dressed, he checked his phone, seeing a message from his friend Birch asking what time they were meeting up.

Responding, Henry put his sneakers on, grabbed his wallet and coat, and left his apartment. It was Saturday and no work, so he could meet his friends for lunch and discuss their plans for that evening. After a quick visit to the clinic. Probably what they always did which was go out and get drunk.

It didn't take him long in the clinic—thankfully—so he walked on to the café, and when he entered, his friends were already there. As soon as he sat, the teasing started. "So who was he and how good was he?" Birch asked.

Henry chuckled. "Said his name was Gray, and he was good, but I didn't get a number." Taller than his own six foot, with intense dark blue eyes, and short blond hair, Gray had been good. Very good. However...

"Just a blowjob, then?" Dusty murmured in between sips of his coffee.

“More than that.”

Dusty arched an eyebrow and put his cup on the table. “Who has a certain rule about not fucking in the restrooms?”

“That would be me, and with good reason. Dude didn’t wear a condom, and I didn’t bother to check.”

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Leaning back in his chair, Henry closed his eyes as Birch muttered, “He did what?”

“I know.” He opened his eyes and glanced between Birch, Dusty, and Kofi. “I should have made sure, but...fuck. I’ve been to the clinic already, so I should know soon.”

“Then you have to wait for the more serious results to come in.” Kofi’s dark eyes stared into Henry’s own green ones. “It isn’t like you to not notice the lack of a condom.”

“I know. Maybe I was more drunk than I thought.” Henry ran his hands over his face. “I have a few tense days of waiting before I know for sure. The rapid test came back negative, but I want to make sure.”

“Shit, Henry.”

“I know. Shame, cause the guy can fuck.” Henry rubbed his stomach when it rolled. Maybe he shouldn’t have had that extra bottle last night. “Hungry?”

“I could eat.” Kofi picked up the menu even though they all knew it by heart. They ate at the cafe every week, but he liked to check in case anything new had been added. “Full English for me.” The same thing he always ordered and what Henry usually ordered as well, but today his stomach rolled at the thought of eating all that food.

Birch took their orders, arching an eyebrow when Henry asked for egg on toast, then went up to the counter to order. It was his turn to pay this week, and Henry sat back in his chair, waiting for his stomach to settle. Yeah, he’d had too many beers, and he

was now feeling it.

Kofi saw him rubbing his stomach. “You good?”

“Too many beers?” He shook his head when the other three laughed at him. You’d think he’d know what his limit was now that he’d hit thirty but no, he hadn’t.

“Told you last night to stop, but would you listen?” Dusty chuckled. “Now your stomach hates you.”

“It’ll settle once I’ve eaten.” Henry was certain his stomach would. It always had before, but even as he thought that, his stomach grumbled.

“Not sure it agrees.” Birch sat next to him and stared. “Sure an alien isn’t about to burst free?”

“Fuck off.” They all laughed and once their food was delivered, Henry tucked in, but almost immediately struggled to eat it. His stomach was definitely protesting, but he ignored it. He needed food to soak up all the beer from the night before.

He ate his food, but it was a struggle. Copious amounts of coffee helped, but after he’d finished eating, Henry sat rubbing his stomach, grimacing as it cramped in pain. Maybe he should have stuck with the coffee instead and not had the food. Too late now, and Henry was hoping it didn’t make a return visit.

They talked about their week and Birch suddenly spoke up. “I’m doing it.”

All three of them turned to look at Birch. “You’re going to ask her?” Kofi asked. “You’ve got the ring?”

“I have. Something simple. You know she doesn’t like those rings with huge rocks,

so it's a platinum band with a single diamond." Henry was genuinely happy for Birch. He'd been with his partner, Isla, since high school, and he'd never once been tempted to leave her.

"Do you have it all planned out?" Kofi grinned as he moved out of Birch's way. "Come on. We all know you have this night planned. Ring? Restaurant? Do you have something romantic for later? Hotel?"

Birch glared at Kofi and muttered, "All of it."

They all laughed and talked some more before they all left. Henry went back to his apartment and immediately went to bed. His churning stomach had him in bed, curled up on his side. Maybe a couple of hours' sleep would settle his stomach.

After an hour of trying to sleep, Henry gave up and just lay in the bed curled up and cradling his stomach. A cold sweat broke out, and he groaned as his stomach rolled. He was never drinking again. He was done. He was going sober and would be a teetotaler from now on. Never again would a drop of alcohol pass his lips.

His phone beeped, and he reached over to pick it up, moaning as a fresh wave of pain hit him. Seeing it was from Birch, Henry read it.

How you feeling lol

Like death.

Awww poor baby. Feel better soon.

Thanks. Going back to sleep.

Henry dropped the phone on the floor and pulled the covers up to his ears, shivering.

“Shit,” he mumbled. He felt like absolute crap and couldn’t wait to sleep it off, but sleep was off being elusive and Henry was tempted to take a sleeping pill he had in the bathroom. He’d been prescribed them a while ago when he’d had a bout of insomnia, and he still had a handful left. The thought of getting up to go to the bathroom though... yeah, he wasn’t looking forward to that.

Shoving the covers down, Henry sat up and wrapped an arm over his stomach as it protested him moving. He was so not going out again until he felt better. Fuck, he hoped the guy from the night before hadn’t given him anything. Bastard, not wearing a condom. At least his test had come back negative, but shit. Who did that today, knowing what could be transmitted?

Henry stood and staggered to the bathroom. He did what he had to do, then checked the bathroom cabinet and found the pills he needed. Taking one, Henry went back to bed. Hopefully tomorrow he would feel better.

Henry did not feel better when he woke up Sunday morning, but he didn't feel any worse, which was something. He puttered around his apartment, doing some odd jobs and catching up on laundry. He met his sister, Ariel, for lunch, and caught up with the family drama.

“Now Alan is threatening to make him a eunuch. Apparently.”

“Hmm. Sounds pleasant.” Henry was one of three siblings, and the youngest was Hick, who was in college and messing around. That meant having sex, doing drugs, and drinking to excess. Hick was the first in the family to go to college, even though Ariel wanted to go. Their father, Alan, had refused, stating women didn't need to go to college as they were the homemakers, intended to marry a good man and support him, raising the children while he provided for the family.

It had been several years since Ariel had spoken to Alan and was now taking night classes to earn her degree in business. She was married to Tisha, a gorgeous dark-skinned woman who Ariel loved and adored. They also had a little girl, Macy, who was the center of their world.

While they were having lunch, Tisha and Macy were baking cupcakes for their afternoon tea party with Macy's friends. Something Henry had been told he couldn't attend. At the time he'd pouted, earning a laugh and a kiss from Macy, but given the way he was feeling, he was actually relieved now.

“I need to go soon.” Ariel checked her watch. “I don't want Tish to do too much right

now.”

“How long has she got left to go?” Tisha was pregnant and Henry knew the due date was fast approaching.

“A month, but as you know, she was early with Macy, so we’re keeping an eye on her.” Ariel reached across the table and clenched Henry’s hand. “I can never say thank you enough.”

Henry rolled his eyes, earning a slap on his hand. “It was nothing. Well, a few minutes of work and that was it.”

“Not every brother would do what you did.”

“Ariel. I went in a cubicle and did what had to be done and now you have two gorgeous kids. Almost. Seeing you guys happy makes me happy and you know I don’t want kids. You do.”

“And biology had a way of saying no, didn’t it?” Henry went to say something, but Ariel shook her head. “I accepted it a long time ago and this way a bit of me is in our children because of you.” Ariel pushed a lock of her auburn hair over her shoulder. “I love you.”

“Love you too, sis. Now finish your cake, then you can go and see to your wife and daughter.”

“I’m looking forward to our afternoon tea party.”

“Girls only tea party.”

“It’s what Macy wants, but she promised next time Uncle Henry can come.”

“And I’ll be there. I might even bring some of the blueberry muffins Macy loves so much.”

“And you’d be her favorite uncle, too.” Ariel stood and grabbed her bag. Henry stood as well and gave her a hug. “My turn to pay, so eat up and I’ll see you next week.”

“Tell Tish and Mary I love them.”

Ariel smiled and left the table to pay the bill. Henry sat and stared at his half-eaten food, then sighed heavily. He wasn’t hungry and all he wanted to do was go back to bed. Tired. All he felt was tired. His body was sagging under it, his limbs heavy to move.

Pushing the plate away, Henry exhaled softly and stared out of the window as his stomach rumbled, but not in a good way. Sipping his coffee, he waited until it settled, then stood and left. He would be home soon and he could go back to bed and sleep it off.

The last thing he wanted was to feel like this when he had a twelve-hour shift ahead of him.

Twelve long hours. He was so looking forward to that.

Chapter Three

Afucking human for a mate. How was that possible, and why hadn’t he cared about the possibility while they were fucking or before they’d fucked? Why after they fucked and he’d bitten him? Why had he been cursed with a mate, and a human mate to top it off? Over two centuries walking this planet and he’d avoided mating and now this.

Fuck, he was mad as hell over it, and if what happened to Kelvin and Key did happen with all vampire and human matings, then any vampire who came near him would be able to scent whatever his name was on him. Well, not on him. The human's scent was now part of his, braided together like Kelvin's and Key's were.

“Fucking fuck. Just fuckity fuck fuck.”

Work. How the fuck was he meant to work when he reeked of a human mate? Gray growled and stomped into his kitchen, glaring at his fridge. He pulled the door open and stared inside the full fridge, not seeing anything to eat. Which just made his day even better.

A human mate and no food to eat.

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Slamming the door shut, Gray paced the kitchen, running his fingers through his hair. Life had fucked up. It had majorly fucked up, giving him a human mate. He tolerated them and when Kelvin found his mate in the human Key, Gray accepted it, but never would he accept a human mate for himself.

“Fuck.”

This was fate’s way of playing a dirty trick on him, wasn’t it? Because he had no problem fucking or feeding from humans, and as long as they enjoyed the sex, he could walk away. But no. Fate decided to be that bitch and give him the very thing he didn’t want.

“Fuck.”

A human for a mate.

“Fuck.”

At this rate, the only word he’d be saying would be fuck, and he felt every fucking letter of it, too.

“Fuck.”

His phone rang, and he checked the time, then groaned. Late. He was late for work, but there was no way in hell he was going in where everyone would know he’d mated a human. Grabbing his phone, he saw Key’s name on the screen and answered.

“What?”

“Well, hello to you, too. Where are you? It’s not like you’re sick, or do you guys get sick?”

“Ask your mate.”

“We have more important things to discuss.”

“I didn’t know fucking each other’s brains out constituted a discussion.”

“Well, there are certain phrases like ‘oh yeah,’ and ‘fuck me harder.’ I personally like ‘suck it, bitch,’ but you know everyone has their own preferences.”

“Thank you for the TMI.”

“You are so welcome, Gray. Now where is your skanky ass?”

“I’m ill.” Gray grinned when he heard Key snort. He liked the human, which was rare given his indifference, or really, borderline dislike, maybe hatred. No, he didn’t hate them, hate them. They were a disease on this planet and he was fucking mated to one.

“Kelvin said it is extremely rare for vampires to be ill.”

“Thought you hadn’t discussed it.”

“The mind linky thing does come in handy.”

Gray inhaled and counted to ten. Maybe liking Key was a mistake. “Rare, but we do, in fact, become ill on occasion.” He heard Key hum and ignored it. “I’ll poof in, grab some work, then poof out.” Poof. Key’s word for their ability to translocate, and

when had Gray started using it? Fucking humans.

“Seeya in a second then.” Grunting, Gray ended the call and stood next to Key, who jumped. “A fucking bell. That’s what you all need.”

“Nah, that would be boring. Nothing like scaring the human.”

“Get fucked.”

“I did actually, and it was good, too.”

“What’s really up with you?” Key looked him over and Gray stared at him.

“I’m ill. Can’t you tell?”

“No. You look like normal to me. Are you avoiding someone or something? I only called in sick when I was avoiding someone or something and it had to be really bad because I only had five sick days.”

“Working in the human world sucks.”

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“Worse here. You guys don’t know the meaning of the word sick, but I have you for a boss and you get it.”

Gray grabbed some papers from his desk. “Humans are more fragile than us.”

“Fragile? Interesting word there. I know we’re not as strong, but we’re not fragile. Maybe you are ill after all—”

“I told you I was.”

“—though you don’t look it.” Key arched an eyebrow at Gray and looked him over.

Gray coughed. “Sick. See?”

The other eyebrow arched up. “Right,” Key drawled the word.

Gray grinned, then walked over to his desk back at his apartment and dropped the papers on it. Pulling the chair out, he sat and spent a minute logging into all the systems. Lucky for him, he could remote work, but at some point he would have to actually go to work and then his secret would be out.

“Fuck.”

Yeah, that was the word for today and probably tomorrow, too. And who knows how long after that?

“Fuck.”

What was worse was he was stuck. He had a human mate and nothing he could do would break the bond now that it was in place. Only death would release him and he wanted to carry on living. And you know what was even worse than that? Was worse a word? Fuck it. Who cared? The worse thing was that he couldn't fuck around. Nope. His dick was tied to his mate. His human mate, who wouldn't have the same limitation placed on him.

Sure, it would feel off if his human mate fucked someone else, but he could still do it. Not like Gray. His dick was for his human mate only now, and he couldn't even remember his name. Why would he have bothered to remember it when a human was only good enough to feed on and fuck?

“Fuck.”

Life had screwed him over, and now Gray had to find a way to live with it. At least he could masturbate, but fisting his own dick would get boring quickly and he didn't want to whack off and never fuck a man's ass again.

“Fuck.”

He dropped his head into his hands, then growled when his phone rang. Seeing Kelvin's name on the screen, he rolled his eyes. Fucking telepathy. Shit. Telepathy. Could his mate 'hear' him? Did he actually give a shit if he could?

“What?”

“Sick, are you?”

“What's it to you?”

“Grumpy, yeah, sick no. What's going on?”

“Nothing.”

“You lie for shit.”

Gray stared at the phone. “That makes no sense.”

“You can’t lie to me. I’ve known you too long.” The phone buzzed, and Gray closed his eyes when Kelvin appeared next to him.

“Please make yourself at home.”

“I will, thanks.” Kelvin stood next to him, watching him. “What’s going on?”

Gray debated ignoring the question, but if any vampire could understand the predicament he was in, it was Kelvin. “Met some human in a bar. We fucked. I bit him and bam. Mated.” Kelvin stared at him for a full five seconds, then burst out laughing. “Not funny.”

“Oh it is. It really fucking is because every one of us knows your dislike for humans. Not hatred. I don’t think it’s that and you treat Key well, but we all know you would have to give it some serious consideration before helping a human if one needed it.”

“I run you guys. I help humans every single fucking day.”

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“But you do that because it’s us vampires causing the problems. If it didn’t involve vampires, you would walk away.” Kelvin scratched at the short beard on his jaw. “I thought you might be mellowing with Key being around you. Maybe I was wrong.”

“I like your mate, even if he is human. He’s responsible and smart and doesn’t put up with my shit. Gotta respect that, but all the other humans can fuck off.”

“Except your mate.” Kelvin sat on the edge of the sofa. “You need to find him. Did you even get his name?”

“What do you think?” Sighing when Kelvin stared at him, Gray added, “Got his first name.”

“Then you need to go back to the club and find him.”

“He’ll be fine.”

“No, he won’t.”

Gray shook his head. “What are you trying to tell me without telling me? I don’t have telepathy with you, so I can’t read your mind.”

“He’s human and is bonded to you. His body will be changing. Key was fine because I was with him, but mating a human had me curious about our past, so I looked into it.”

“And? Spit it out.”

“Humans need to have regular contact with their vampire mate during the first few days after mating or they become ill. I don’t know why and our histories weren’t sure why either. Maybe with technology today we could figure it out. Maybe hormones changing or how their biology alters so they have some of our abilities.”

“You’re saying he’ll be ill without me being around?”

“Yeah. From what I was able to find.”

“Fuck.”

Kelvin gave him a close-lipped smile. “Hack their CCTV and find him.”

“It’ll have to wait. Maxim’s men have been seen scoping a few human places out. They’re up to something.”

Standing, Kelvin stared at him. “Don’t leave it too long. I couldn’t find anything about what the long-term effects are for humans who aren’t around their vampire mate right after mating. What I did find wasn’t good, though.”

“Kelvin. Keep this quiet.”

“Don’t come into work, either. I can scent the changes on you and if I can...”

Nodding, Gray clenched his jaw. “Everyone can. Fuck.”

“I know a human mate isn’t something you want.” Kelvin spoke quietly, “But you have been given one. You know how rare it is now to find a mate. Don’t throw this chance to find true happiness away.”

“You can leave now. Head to Slater St. That’s where I’ve seen the most activity.”

Ignoring Kelvin's sigh, Gray stared at the monitor until Kelvin had left, then leaned back in his chair, rubbing his hands over his face. He had no choice. He couldn't let the human become ill, but he didn't want to be around him, either. Sure, he'd been a good fuck, but that was meant to be it. One quick fuck, then gone.

Staring at the words on the screen, Gray saw nothing. He knew he was going to struggle until he'd decided what to do and the fact he was even considering finding his mate had him questioning his sanity.

But, if what Kelvin has said was true...

"Fuck."

Standing, Gray walked over to the window and stared out. It was night now, so he didn't have to be cautious where the sun was concerned. Why they had to hide from the sun eluded him. They burned, and Gray had experienced that pain when he was younger and determined not to let a bit of sunlight stop him from going out and having fun.

Yeah, he wasn't going through that again. He'd healed but the pain had been intense and now he was careful to avoid the sun, but he wanted to know why it affected them the way it did. They had scientists looking into why, but so far nothing. That annoyed Gray.

He wanted to feel the warmth on his skin, feel the heat prickle his skin in a way that didn't cause immediate intense pain. One day he would have it, but when he didn't know.

A low hum in the back of his head had Gray tilting it. It triggered a memory of Kelvin saying that after mating Key he had a murmur, a hum that was a constant reminder of his mate. It had taken time to become used to it, but now that he was, he

never wanted to be without it.

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Gray wasn't so sure if he would ever feel comfortable knowing someone, a human, could pick up on his thoughts. Life was a bitch, it was fucking Gray up the ass with no lube, and it burned.

“Fuck.”

Chapter Four

Working at Gerry's had good and bad days, but today sucked so much. Gerry's was a good place to work, and the owner treated his staff fairly. Henry had worked in places where the staff had been treated like shit, but Gerry was okay.

It was a standard market, with plenty of aisles carrying everything a person would need and plenty of cameras to watch those people. The number of thefts had slowly been increasing, so now they had a full security system installed and Gerry was considering staff for the door.

Today wasn't a good day, and it didn't help that Henry still felt like shit. One minute he was hot and sweaty, then he was cold and clammy. Like his body couldn't decide how it wanted to feel and kept changing its mind.

He couldn't hide in the back, either. As supervisor, he would normally be in the office working, but one of the staff had been in a traffic accident and was off, so he was out front working the cash register. Working in a supermarket had its perks, but today wasn't one of them.

The number of rude people he'd served was in double figures. Why couldn't people

say please and thank you? Had the words been wiped from their vocabulary? And the fight he had to break up over a package of beef jerky had him shaking his head. Who cared who saw it first? It was whoever picked it up first that had the right to the product.

He couldn't wait to go home and get into bed. Three long days he'd felt like this, and he was beginning to be concerned. Maybe the guy who was allergic to condoms had actually given him something. The tests had all come back negative, but he wasn't so sure they'd been accurate. If he still felt this way by the time the weekend arrived, he'd be going back and redoing them all again.

His stomach clenched, and he smiled at the person in front of him, ignoring the pain. Breathing shallowly, he bagged the groceries and took the customer's cash, handing over their change. Once the customer was gone, Henry spotted Stan and went over to him.

"I need to finish some paperwork. If it gets busy again, come and get me."

Stan nodded. "Will do, boss."

Henry helped a customer out, then another store assistant before he managed to make it to his office. Once inside, he collapsed into his chair and grunted in pain. Rubbing his stomach, he picked up his bottle of water and finished what was inside.

It did little to quench his thirst. A thirst he'd had for days now. Probably something to do with that guy. Everything was that guy's fault. Nothing had felt right since they'd fucked. His body was constantly in pain and Henry was beginning to become worried. Or more worried than he already was.

Only a few more hours to go, then he could head home and do nothing but sleep and hope—again—that he'd feel better when he woke up, but he had a feeling this wasn't

going away. Whatever it was. The aches and pains and on off cramps needed to leave asap.

“Henry. Trouble.”

Sighing, Henry stood, then paused when his legs trembled like all the strength had been drained from them. Once he felt steady, he went onto the shop floor and sighed. Two women arguing over cereal. Cereal. Amanda was calmly telling them they had more stock out back and she would get what they needed, but at this point nothing was getting through. The two women were screaming at each other, hurling insults and ignoring Amanda.

Henry knew things would escalate to a physical fight if he didn't intervene, but he had to make sure there was space between them and the women. He'd had staff accused of assault for breaking up a fight and he couldn't risk that happening again.

Walking over, Henry placed himself in front of Amanda. “How can I help?” he asked and braced himself.

“That fucking bitch stole my cereal! I had my fucking hand on it and she took it right out of it,” the young blue-haired woman shouted.

The other woman screamed, “No you didn't you lying piece of shit!”

“What did you call me? Fucking ugly cow.”

Oh, it was going downhill fast and Henry wanted to be anywhere but there. “Less of the name calling, please. As Amanda has said, we have more stock out back, and if you could give us a minute, we'll get it for you. Amanda, if you could.”

Amanda nodded and practically ran from the floor, leaving Henry and now Stan

trying to deescalate the situation. He should have sent Stan, so at least one woman was here. He didn't want them to feel like they were being ganged up on by men.

"I'll take this one, then, and you can wait. I had my hand on it first." And it went downhill from there.

Blue-haired woman went to walk away with the cereal box but only managed two steps before the other woman snatched the box from her hand. Blue hair went nuts and jumped on the back of the other woman, trying to punch her in the face and take the box back.

Henry immediately reacted, trying to separate the two women as Stan shook his head and grabbed the cereal box. Neither woman noticed the box was now gone. Both were too busy trying to hit the other person. Henry forced his body between them and tried to move them apart, but took a slap to the face.

"Get out of the fucking way while I deck this bitch," blue hair screamed.

The other woman screamed in return and attempted to jump over Henry, arms and legs flailing. Security miraculously appeared and helped to separate the two women, who were still trading insults and trying to hit one another. One poor man ended up being kneed in the balls and dropping to the floor. Henry winced in sympathy, knowing how much a blow there hurt.

The remaining security guard had a look of resignation on his face as he stood between the two women, who continued to scream insults at each other. Once they'd calmed down, which took a long time, Henry stood, hands on his hips as he shook his head. "Out. You can come back when you've both calmed down."

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That set them both off again, but this time he was having insults shouted at him. The security guard tried to usher them out but all it did was inflame the situation more. Blue hair grabbed a jar of jam and threw it at Henry, who ducked as it sailed past his head.

Pointing at her, he said, “Banned. Get her face from CCTV and put it on the wall of customers who can no longer enter this store.”

“You fucking bastard. I’ll fucking kill you.” She reached into her bag and tried pulling something out. Henry felt his stomach drop, his heart rate shooting up.

“Cops are here!” Stan shouted.

The woman screamed and launched herself at Henry, still tugging at something in her bag. The gun came out and as she swung to point it at Henry, an officer shouted, “Drop the gun!”

She didn’t and a second later she was on the floor convulsing from the taser shot she’d taken to her back. Henry stepped back, panting harshly, a cold sweat covering his skin. All this over a box of fucking cereal? What the fuck was going on in the country that someone would shoot another human being over a fucking box of cereal?

He needed to change jobs, and soon. He was tired of dealing with people like this. Every single day something else happened that had Henry shaking his head in confusion at the state of the country. When had things deteriorated to this level?

It took far longer than Henry had wanted to get the shop back in order once the police

had arrested the woman, taken statements, and done whatever else it was they needed to do. Henry had stopped paying attention. His body was on a downward spiral and he needed to get home. At least he only had an hour to go before the end of his shift. One long hour.

Once he made it home, he collapsed fully dressed on his bed and closed his eyes. Fuck, he felt like he'd been hit by a car, reversed over, then hit again. He needed to take some pain meds, but that meant moving and he didn't want to move because of the pain, but he was already in pain so he needed the meds. Where was some telekinesis when you needed it?

"Shit," he mumbled as he rolled into a sitting position. Wincing, he stood and stopped, waiting for his body to adjust and for the waves of pain to dissipate. He stumbled to the bathroom and grabbed the bottle of pain meds. Pausing, he swallowed hard. Those few steps had wiped all the energy from his body.

Taking a couple of tablets, he managed to make it back to bed and slowly stripped, then slid under the covers. Fuck, he felt like shit. Closing his eyes, he grimaced when his stomach rolled. He wasn't going to throw up. Not when he'd just taken the tablets.

Rolling onto his left side, Henry closed his eyes and waited for his stomach to settle. God, when would he feel better? For days now, he'd been feeling ill. Ever since him. If he ever saw him again, he was going to kick the shit out of him.

After they'd had sex. Maybe.

The guy might have forgotten to glove up, but he had certainly made Henry see stars when he'd come. It had been a long time since a man had made him feel that good, but a condom was a must, and was he giving serious consideration to having sex with Mr. 'I'm allergic to condoms' again? Where was his head at? Sure, the guy could fuck, but without a condom?

Henry groaned as sweat broke out over his skin and his stomach somersaulted. He felt like death warmed up. The cold sweat, the shivers, the muscle cramps. He breathed through his mouth until his stomach settled. It couldn't be something he'd eaten because he'd eaten so little in the last couple of days that there was nothing in his stomach. Yet, his stomach was acting like it had to get rid of what he'd had to eat.

Being ill plain old sucked ass.

Once his stomach settled—finally—Henry sighed. Sleep. What he needed was sleep and to wake up in a much better position than he was then. He couldn't go through another day at work feeling like absolute shit. Not with the customers they had to deal with. He needed his wits and patience to get through the day.

Sighing softly, Henry relaxed as much as he could. Sleep. He needed to sleep.

Chapter Five

It took Gray far longer than he thought it would to access the club's CCTV system and find the man he'd fucked. He'd then had to track him until he located where he lived. From there he'd accessed all the occupants of the building and got finally got a name.

Henry Boulder.

Apartment 4C.

From there, he'd performed a thorough background search while tracking two of Maxim's men who were following a woman. Hugo, one of the enforcers, had managed to intervene, but he was alone, so when the two vampires ran, Hugo remained behind to ensure the human got home safely.

Maxim appeared to be up to something which, for now, Gray could only guess at. Years of hanging around the fringes of vampire and human society without being noticed had now changed. Maxim and his vampires had always been there committing various crimes, but there had been an escalation in recent months.

Gray needed to dig deeper and pinpoint exactly when their behavior had changed. The attack on Key wasn't the first time Gray had seen Maxim's men, but it had been the first time Maxim had been captured on CCTV.

This led Gray to believe they were up to something, or in the planning stages at least, and he had to find out what. He might not like humans much, but no one needed to be involved with Maxim and his merry band of fuckwits.

Checking the time, Gray closed his eyes and attempted to reach out to his mate. He got nothing, which could mean, well, nothing. What the fuck did he know about this mating mind linky thing? Shit, and now he sounded like Key. The human was rubbing off on him.

After searching social media, Gray had an idea of the layout of Henry's place from pictures he'd posted. Concentrating, Gray closed his eyes and 'saw' Henry's apartment and the next second he materialized in what was the living room and kitchen area. He didn't move, but let his senses drift outward, assessing the area. When he picked up on nothing, he tilted his head, listening. There. The bedroom. Soft breathing with the occasional moan. Was his mate fucking someone?

A flash of anger coursed through Gray, his hands clenching, and he stormed over to the bedroom, ready to barge in and demand what the fuck was going on, then he stopped. The human wouldn't understand why he was there, and he didn't want to have the cops called.

The moaning reached him again, but this time he detected something he hadn't the

first time he heard it. Pain. The moan was underlined with pain. Stepping carefully into the bedroom, Gray focused on the bed, seeing his mate curled up in a fetal position.

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He sniffed the air and grimaced. His mate was ill. Shit. Kelvin had mentioned something about human mates needing the vampire mate during the initial days after mating had occurred. Taking those few steps to reach Henry's side, Gray crouched and watched his mate's face contort with pain. He reached out a hand and touched his forehead, hissing at the heat he felt.

This wasn't good, and he shouldn't give a shit about a human, but this was his mate, even if he didn't want him. Running his fingers over Henry's cheek, Gray gasped softly when Henry turned into his touch and appeared to settle.

Pulling his phone free from his pocket, he called Kelvin and as soon as he answered, whispered, "He's sick."

"Who is?"

"Henry."

A pause then, "And who is Henry?"

"My mate."

"Ah, so he has a name other than human. Nice." Gray was about to swear because he had told Kelvin Henry's name, when Kelvin added, "From what I read, he needs touch. Your touch and not just your dick."

"Wonderful. I have to be all touchy feely with him." That was the last thing he wanted.

“Or you could leave and your mate may die. Not too sure on the dying part, but he will be ill, so if you don’t care, leave now.” Kelvin hung up and Gray ground his teeth together. Great. Just fucking great.

Sitting on the floor next to the bed, Gray took Henry’s clammy hand in his own and held it. How long he was going to sit there was anyone’s guess, but as soon as Henry woke up, Gray was leaving. He wasn’t going to hang around and talk. They’d fucked, and now Gray was living with the consequences. He didn’t want a human for a mate. Why the fuck did this have to happen to him, of all vampires?

Growling, Gray dropped his head and exhaled heavily. He had to be realistic and accept he had a human mate. It didn’t matter how fucked up that was to him, he wasn’t going to get another mate, so he had to deal with what fate had given him. Gray wouldn’t be surprised to find fate laughing its head off at him.

Looking up at his mate, Gray watched him sleep. He could barely remember him from the club. He’d been a human to fuck, and now he was tied to him for the rest of his very long life. The thick red wavy hair that first caught Gray’s attention was a deep auburn colour and suited Henry’s olive toned skin. He couldn’t remember what color his eyes had been. He hadn’t been interested then, and now that Henry was asleep, Gray still couldn’t see them.

His plans to disappear when Henry woke up were disappearing as reality set in. He had a human mate, and he had to accept that, even if it made his skin crawl at the thought. When everyone found out... The council. He had to inform the council he’d broken the law on mating. He didn’t think explaining to them that all he had meant it to be was a fuck would go over too well.

What would his punishment be for failing to follow one of their most important laws and one that had only been changed in the past year? Yeah, fate was being a cruel bitch to him and Gray had to suck it up and get used to the fact he was in deep shit

with the council and no doubt his mate when he woke up.

How the hell was he going to explain to his mate that he'd fucked him, and mated him? Oh yeah, and he was a vampire and vampires existed and had forever? Hidden among humans, coexisting on occasion. Several humans worked with the vampires to keep them safe, and Gray didn't like it, but he accepted it.

And now he had a human mate and he couldn't stop going back to that thought, that reality that he had fucked up.

What if he hadn't gone to the club that night? They would never have met, and Gray wouldn't have mated with him. Maybe they would never have met and Gray could continue to live his life the way he had been. Then he would never have met Henry and he would never have...

Fuck.

His head was a mess now that reality was right in front of his face. A mate. A human mate and Gray couldn't escape it. Escape reality and he was fairly certain he was going around in circles. The same thoughts running through his mind.

And he couldn't move on from the fact he had a human for a mate. A fucking human. Him. Of all vampires... yeah, he was going around in circles, but his mind wasn't ready to move on from the human mate that had been dropped in his lap.

Letting go of Henry's hand, Gray stood and stared at the apartment his mate was in. Just thinking about the word 'mate' had him growling softly. Sighing deeply, he moved around Henry's bedroom, noting the family photos. Parents and a brother who appeared younger than Henry. Two women and a young girl.

Gray could see Henry took after his father, not that he was concerned about that.

Wasn't like Gray was going to meet Henry's family... shit. Would have to do the whole family thing? Meet them and pretend to be human? And he couldn't forget the no aging thing, could he?

"Fuck," he muttered. He somehow managed not to say 'why me?' but only just.

He picked up a picture of a man with his arms around Henry and noticed how close they stood together. Boyfriend? Ex? He glanced at Henry asleep in his bed and arched an eyebrow. Who was this man and what relationship did he have with Gray's mate? Whatever it was, it was over now. Gray might not be impressed with his human mate, but no chance in hell would he have his mate fuck another man.

Henry was his. Reluctantly.

Barely resisting the urge to drop the photo to the floor, Gray placed it face down then wandered around the bedroom. Quickly bored, he stuck his head in the bathroom, grunted at the ordinariness of it, then left the bedroom. In the living room, Gray walked over to the cream sofa and dropped onto it.

Fuck his life. Fuck.

Exhaling heavily, Gray let his head drop back and closed his eyes. Could he break the bond between them? He would have to do some research to find out if anyone had successfully broken up with a mate and been able to move on. This wasn't for him. He wanted to fuck and move on, not have a mate.

He was too set in his ways, preferring his life the way it was now, and he had no time or space for a mate. A fucking human... opening his eyes, Gray swallowed, then tilted his head, hearing soft murmurs from the bedroom.

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Standing, he walked over to the doorway and watched Henry. He wasn't as peaceful as when Gray had left him, so he made his way over to the bed and sat on the edge, taking Henry's hand in his own again.

As soon as Gray did that, Henry settled. Great. Just great.

Knowing he had no choice but to remain close to his mate, Gray kicked off his sneakers and moved to lie next to Henry, maintaining contact with him. He was tired and the last place he wanted to be was where he currently was, but this was his life now and he had to suck it up and get on with it.

Henry hadn't asked for this and he was going to have one hell of a shock when he woke up and Gray filled him in. That's if Henry didn't immediately call the cops and have Gray arrested. Not like that would happen. Gray would simply go home and leave Henry staring at the spot he'd occupied. Good thing vampires could 'poof' whenever they wanted, and now Gray was using Key's word for it.

Moving around to find a comfortable spot, Gray settled and closed his eyes. The hand he was holding tightened for a second, then relaxed. Gray squeezed it back, then furrowed his brow at the move. Why him? Nope. Didn't matter, and he was done with that now. He'd had his pity party, such as it was, and now he was dealing with it.

Life had thrown him a curve ball and he would adapt. Somehow. Reluctantly.

His cell beeped and Gray pulled it out of his pocket and read the message from Kelvin. Has he settled?

Grunting, Gray typed out his reply then switched his phone off, a small satisfied smile on his face. Telling Kelvin to fuck off was petty, but he needed some pettiness right then. Sighing softly, Gray decided it was time to sleep. Whatever happened when he woke, he would face in his usual way.

Chapter Six

Henry woke slowly, blinking his eyes several times before they finally opened. He was warm and for the first time in days, he felt okay. No, he actually felt good. Stretching, he paused when he realized there was someone else in bed with him. Rolling his head on the pillow, he stared into the dark eyes of the man next to him.

Sitting up, he watched the stranger watch him. No, this man wasn't a stranger, not in the biblical sense. They'd fucked at the club. He was the one who had passed on whatever he had to Henry.

"How the fuck did you get into my apartment?"

The man gave him a sadistic smile, then disappeared. Henry scrambled back, blinking rapidly, unable to comprehend what had just happened. He landed with a thump on the floor, then almost screamed when the man reappeared next to him.

"I'm only going to say this once, because I can't be bothered to repeat this to you." He pointed to his chest, "My name is Gray and I'm a vampire and unfortunately for me, you are my mate."

Henry continued to stare up at the man, then shook his head, his mouth falling open. Nothing came out, but he couldn't move or do anything. His mind had stopped working.

The other man sighed heavily, rolling his eyes. "Henry, yeah?" Henry somehow

managed to nod once at the question. It had been a question, hadn't it? "I'm Gray."

"Gray."

"Yes, that's right, Gray."

And now the man was speaking to him like he was a child and that snapped Henry out of his stupor. Scrambling to stand, he glared at Gray. "How did you get into my apartment?"

"Need another demonstration, do you? Was the first one not good enough?" Gray disappeared, then reappeared on the opposite side of the bed. Holding his arms wide, he said, "Ta da!"

Henry stared at the spot Gray had been standing, then over to where he was now. "Teleportation?"

"Wow. You know words with more than one syllable. I am impressed."

Henry didn't respond. He wasn't going to engage in whatever Gray wanted. "Please leave." Being civil in this situation would be better.

"Oh, I wish I could, but unfortunately for both of us, we're fucked."

"Once and you didn't use protection. I had to get checked out because—"

"Vampire." Gray pointed to his chest. "Can't pass any of those human diseases so you're safe."

Henry pointed to Gray. "Insane. Deluded. Out of my apartment now or I'll call the cops." He spread his legs, steadying himself in case Gray attacked him. He needed to

be ready for anything.

“Go ahead and call them. I’ll just disappear when they arrive. You know, like I just did.” Gray suddenly appeared next to Henry, causing him to stumble back. “Boo.”

“Fuck off,” Henry snapped. “How old are you? I’ve seen children behave more mature.”

Gray growled. “I have a human mate—”

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“Henry. The name is Henry, so use it.”

“I won’t use your name even when we’re fucking.”

Snorting, Henry moved away from the insane man in front of him. “Like that’s going to happen again and I’m in a relationship.”

“Really? Yet there you were in the club, spreading your ass for me to fuck.”

“Open relationship, which we’re both happy with, and you weren’t that good of a fuck. Not for me to want to return for seconds.” Okay, he was lying about that. Gray had rocked his world, but no chance was he telling the deranged lunatic that.

“Now we both know you’re lying.”

Arching an eyebrow, Henry grabbed his cell and held it up. “Get out or I call the cops.”

Gray snarled, fangs flashing, and Henry swallowed. They sure looked real, and when Gray appeared in front of him again, Henry barely held back his scream. He scrambled with Gray when Gray grabbed his shoulder and neck and pulled his head to one side.

Henry’s eyes widened as Gray bit him, then his body shuddered. That shouldn’t feel good, but it did. His body trembled when he felt the bed against his back, and he moaned when Gray palmed his dick. He lay, his body heating up until he exploded and cried out.

He barely had time to come down from his orgasmic high before Gray grabbed him by his hair and snarled in his face. Henry swallowed, seeing blood, his blood on Gray's fangs. "You're mine and no one else's. I hate it, but it is what it is. No one touches you. No one. The casual boyfriend fucks off or I'll deal with him."

Gray stood and Henry stared at him, his body tense, waiting to see what he would do next. The man thing was clearly unhinged, and Henry had to be careful how he dealt with him. Ignoring the come drying in his boxers, Henry sat up slowly and watched Gray glare at him.

"I need some time to adjust to all of this," he murmured. "It's a lot to take in."

"Do what you have to."

One second Gray was standing watching him and the next he was gone, leaving Henry alone in his apartment. He didn't move one single inch, waiting in case the madman returned. When it became clear he had actually left, Henry slumped forward, running his hands through his hair.

What the fuck had just happened? Had it really happened or was he still ill and this was all a hallucination? Lifting his hand, he ran the tips of his fingers over his neck, feeling two raised bumps where Gray had bitten him. Swallowing, Henry sat up and stared at the wall in front of him.

His mind was blank. He didn't move. He barely breathed until he scratched his abs. Closing his eyes slowly, Henry breathed deeply for a minute, then snapped them open when the front door opened.

"Hey Henry. It's me. How are you feeling?"

Henry jumped up and ran to the bathroom, shutting and locking the door behind him.

He quickly turned the shower on and jumped inside, jerking when the ice cold water touched his skin. "In the shower!" he shouted.

He didn't need Jess right now. His casual boyfriend was the last person he needed to see. He shoved his wet boxers off and scrubbed them away, then tilted his head to one side so the water could rain on the bite mark. He touched it again and he could barely feel the raised bumps.

The knock on the door made him jump, and he turned the shower off and grabbed a towel. "One minute!"

"I'll be waiting in bed for you."

"Shit," he murmured. The last thing he wanted to do was fuck Jess, and that was strange. Jess and he had a great sex life, so his dick not reacting at all had Henry wondering if what Gray had said was true.

Unlocking the bathroom door, Henry opened it and smiled at Jess, who was naked and on his bed. Jess opened his arms and grinned. "Get over here. I haven't seen you in days. Lose the towel, babe."

Henry took a hesitant step toward Jess, then another. He knew how this would end. Him on the bottom with Jess fucking him hard and deep, and he loved sex, so why wasn't he rushing over there? He dropped the towel as he neared the bed and grunted when Jess sat up and pulled Henry onto the bed next to him.

Rolling on top of him, Jess took Henry's lips in a deep kiss, then lifted his head. "Missed you."

Henry nodded, then returned Jess' kiss, hoping his body would react. His dick did twitch, but he wasn't hard like he would normally be. Jess noticed and leaned back,

staring down at him. Then moved down to settle between Henry's thighs. Henry watched Jess lick his dick, then suck the head into his mouth, moaning softly. Jess knew what he was doing, and it didn't take him long to get Henry hard and ready.

A wet finger probing his ass had Henry arching up, all thoughts about Gray fluttering away. Gray who? When two fingers slid inside, he moaned again and spread his legs wider, but there was still a disconnect. It was like he was there but not, and Henry couldn't understand why he was feeling this way. He wanted sex, but he didn't at the same time. His body reacted to the things Jess did to it, but there was a distance between them, and Henry couldn't understand or even explain it.

If Jess stopped and left, Henry would be fine with that and that in itself was unusual. Henry couldn't find the words to explain how his body felt. He wanted sex, but again, he didn't. What the hell was going on with him? Why was he behaving this way?

Three fingers stretched him wide, and Henry shuddered when they brushed his prostate. It felt good, but there seemed to be something between him and the way his body felt, like a filter. When Jess rolled over him and slid inside, Henry arched up. Now maybe his body would fully be engaged.

He wrapped his arms and legs around Jess, holding him as Jess moved above him. Henry kissed him, moaning when Jess changed the angle and hit his prostate. He didn't loosen his grip on Jess, his body floating in pleasure, but it was still there. This distance that had Henry questioning why he was doing this, but it didn't stop him.

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When Jess came, Henry let his arms and legs fall to the side and said nothing as Jess slid free and lay next to him. Henry hadn't come, and he lifted his head, watching his erection wither away. Maybe Gray had been telling the truth, and that was something Henry didn't want to think about.

Jess stood and went to the bathroom to dispose of the condom, then came back and lay back on the bed. "What are you doing for the rest of the day?" He smiled at Henry in a way Henry knew. Jess wanted to spend the day in bed fucking, and normally Henry would be right on board with that, but one glance at his dick told another story.

"I have to go to work."

"I thought you had today off?"

"I did." Henry needed to think quick. "One of the guys phoned in sick, so I said I'd help out."

"Come on. I haven't seen you in days and I want to spend time with you. I changed today so we could spend it together."

"I'm sorry. I should have said something, but it slipped my mind. I haven't been feeling great myself but I'm better now."

"Yeah, I meant to ask how you were."

"I'm good now, but I have to shower and get ready for work."

“We could have a shower together.” Jess stood with his dick already hardening, and Henry swallowed. Hard. His body was not happy with that at all, so he gave Jess a small smile and shook his head. “What?”

“I have to be quick.” He made a show of looking at the clock. “I don’t have time.”

“When have you ever said no to sex?” Yeah, Jess was right to ask that, because Henry never turned down the opportunity to fuck.

“I know, I know, but this one time I have to even if I don’t want to.” Henry looked Jess up and down and leered at him. “I have you and here I am saying no. Can’t believe that’s actually happening.”

“Neither can I! Come on Henry. We can fit a quickie in.”

“Not right now. Get dressed while I shower.”

Jess narrowed his eyes at Henry. “You’re seriously saying no?”

“This one time. That’s all.”

Jess shook his head and grabbed his jeans off the floor. “Fine. When do you get off work?”

“Ten, I think.”

“We can go out and hit the clubs, then have some fun.”

“Sure we can.” Henry plastered a smile on his face and watched Jess finishing dressing. Once he was done, Jess left and Henry fell back on the bed, sighing heavily. “Fuck.”

Fuck Gray. What the fuck had the man done to him?

Chapter Seven

Stupid fucking human!

Gray stormed around his apartment, barely resisting the urge to throw something. “Fuck.”

A knock on the door had him pausing, staring at it. If anyone caught his scent, they would know and Gray would be in deep shit, which he wasn’t ready to face yet. “Gray! Open up!” Fuck, it was Kai. Thinking quickly, Gray grabbed some air freshener spray and liberally sprayed the entire room, coughing when he practically swallowed it.

Sneezing repeatedly, he opened the door and let Kai and Hugo in, staying back from them. Kai wrinkled his nose and coughed. “What the fuck happened in here?”

“I burned some toast.” Gray shut the door and watched Hugo, who had his eyes closed. He could see Hugo’s nostrils flare, a faint frown on his head. “Drink?” No way Hugo could figure out the scents. Not after Gray had emptied half a can of spray into the room.

Hugo opened his eyes and watched Gray; his head tilted to one side. “Interesting scent.”

“Huh? Yeah, it’s African Tiger or something.”

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“I can scent that, but there is something else. Underneath. Yours but not.”

“Really?” Kai sniffed up the shrugged. “Can’t smell anything except that spray.”

“Or burned toast.”

“Fuck off, Hugo. Do you want a drink, or am I kicking you out?”

Hugo watched him, then smiled slightly. “Sure, a drink sounds good.”

“Why are you here?”

“We wanted to talk about the new security measures, but you haven’t been at work, so figured we’d catch you here. Everything good?”

“They are now. I thought we all agreed to the new measures and new teams?”

“We do, but Key pointed out a possible blind spot we didn’t consider.”

“Helps he grew up in the area.” Hugo sat on Gray’s sofa, watching him.

Gray ignored him and made their drinks, then took a seat far, far away. This made Hugo frown. “I can scent someone else,” he murmured.

“I fucked a human. Haven’t showered.” That would account for the other scent and put Hugo off.

“Hmm.”

Gray glared at Hugo, but Hugo didn't look away. “You two just stop.” Kai sighed and sipped his drink, then picked up the conversation. “Key suggested altering one of the patrols, so we cover the whole area. I agree and so does Hugo, but you run security, so we thought we'd run it past you.”

“And you couldn't call or email me? It needed an in-person visit?”

“We haven't seen you—”

“Who is he?” Hugo leaned forward. “Your scent is like Kelvin's is now after mating Key.”

Gray stared at Hugo. How long could he keep the pretense up when it had barely lasted five minutes? “A human. Met him in a club. We fucked and look at me now.”

“You're mated?” Kai's eyes widened. “What about the law?”

“I wasn't thinking about the law when I was fucking the human and it was in a club, so I wasn't paying that much attention.”

“When will you tell the council? We just got Kelvin back. We can't afford to have you gone now.” Kai ran a hand through his hair.

“Well, said human thinks I'm a nut job, so not sure and I'm not out there searching for him.”

“We know you don't have a high opinion of humans,” Hugo murmured. “You let Key stay, though.”

“He has skills I can use to keep vampires safe.”

“Ah. I knew there was a reason. Didn’t think you were thawing out where humans were concerned.” Hugo stood and walked over to Gray, then inhaled. Gray stood and pushed him away, but all Hugo did was grin. “You smell interesting now.”

“Fuck off before I do something you’ll regret.”

Hugo held his hands up and backed away. “Poor Gray. Given the one thing he never wanted. A human for a mate and he actually mated him before realizing. You know, once this gets out, everyone will rip you apart. We all know how much you detest humans. Except Key, well, I think he has some idea that you’re not fond of humans, but for some reason, he actually thinks you’re nice. I wonder why Kelvin hasn’t said anything to him.”

“I asked him not to, and I told him I would be nice to his mate. Key’s not bad. For a human.” Gray shrugged.

“Ooh, listen to you. All nice and shit to Key and now you have your very own human for a mate. Oh, the fates must be pissing themselves over this. However will you cope? We know you have to be with him and does that mean you can’t fuck anyone else other than your mate? How will your dick cope?” Hugo laughed, then shouted when Gray launched himself at him. Dodging Gray, Hugo laughed again. “I hope he’s a good fuck, as he’s the only one you’re getting.”

“Humans can fuck other humans.” Kai watched Gray. “I don’t think the bond works quite as strongly with them as it does with us.

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“Won’t be pleasant though, from I what I remember my parents telling me.” Being older than both Gray and Kai, Hugo knew more about their history from his parents, but the scent changing had been a surprise to all.

“Wonder why the scent thing disappeared from records.”

“Turbulent times, Kai. Even my parents didn’t know about it.”

Kai nodded. “What are you going to do about it? The council will need to be informed at some point. I’d suggest talking to Kelvin, considering he went through this as well.”

“The human doesn’t want me. He has an open relationship with some dude. I was a onetime thing.”

“Kinda like he was for you, only not.” Hugo sipped his drink. “How the tides have turned.”

“You’re really fucking annoying me now.”

“No, I’m not. You’re annoyed at yourself for not noticing and being in this position now. You have no one to blame but yourself. The way you go around fucking any human you want when you openly disdain them, and now this happens. You hate humans, but they’re good enough for you to fuck. Have you heard yourself and the way you speak about them? Just a good hole to fuck, but don’t deserve any actual time with you? Like you’re too good for them. Then Kelvin mated a human, and you had to put on the ‘happy for you’ face whenever Kelvin’s around, and then you

kept Key, too.”

“Key has skills I can utilize to keep vampires safe. I would be stupid to ignore that. We all know what would happen if humans found out about us.”

“We do, yet we have some humans who work with us and help us. They haven’t revealed our existence.”

“Only because I threatened to eviscerate them if they did. Threats keep humans where they should be.”

“You sound like Maxim,” Kai muttered.

“I don’t think humans should be subjugated like he does. He wants to be lord of all and use humans as food and a hole to fuck.”

“Hmm. Like you, I guess.” Hugo sipped his drink again and smiled. “You have never realized how similar some of the things you say sound to what Maxim says, have you? Food? Hole to fuck? Keep humans where they belong?”

“I’m getting close to rearranging your face.”

“The truth hurts, doesn’t it?” Hugo snapped. “Just because you work with us doesn’t mean you think the same way as us. You see yourself as someone better than Maxim when you share many of the same thoughts where humans are concerned. Take a long hard look in the mirror.”

“If I’m so bad, why do you keep me around? Why does the council?”

“Because you’re on this side of the fight and not that one. You actually know Maxim for the danger he is, but you both have an intense dislike for humans.” Kai exhaled

heavily. “It has gotten worse over the years. When you let Key join the team, I thought you’d mellowed some, but I was wrong and now you’re fucked.”

“Or not. Appears this human has some common sense.”

“Hugo...” Kai murmured. “Stop.”

“Why should I? All these years I’ve had to listen to you belittle humans, call them weak and pathetic, parasites, and now here we are. You’ve been given the very thing you don’t want. I’m going to sit back and enjoy this because I wouldn’t give a single shit if my mate was human. I would cherish him or her because my life would have more meaning to it than it does now. My parents are mates, so I was raised in a place where there was love and understanding and two people working together. Sure, they had their fights, but they stood together when it counted. I had them as examples growing up and I want that too. You have that now and you’re gonna be a cunt over it. Well, I hope the human does go around fucking whoever he wants while you pull your head from your ass.”

“You need to get the fuck out,” Gray muttered, his jaw hard. “Fuck off now.”

“Or what? Don’t like hearing the truth, do you Gray? Don’t like hearing your own words repeated back to you?” Hugo stood. “I’d suggest having a long hard think about who you are and what you’ve been given before you fuck it all up. That human is your mate, and he is the most important person in your life, whether you like it or not. Grow the fuck up, Gray, and accept what you’ve been given. Your life will dramatically improve once you do.”

Hugo disappeared and Gray growled. “That’s my cue to leave as well. Good luck. You’re gonna need it.” Kai disappeared as well, leaving Gray staring at the chair he’d been sitting in. “Fuckers.”

Hugo was wrong, so fucking wrong. So what if he didn't like humans? Many vampires didn't like them, so Gray wasn't alone in feeling that way. He did his job to protect vampires and humans from those vampires who would harm them, so he was helping them.

So he'd said some shit about humans over the years. Who hadn't muttered something at some point in time? Humans could be so fucking destructive. Most didn't care about themselves or others or the world around them. They were out to get whatever they could and they didn't care who they trampled over to achieve it. Saying that didn't mean he was like Maxim.

He was nowhere near like Maxim. Humans would be too hard to control, and Gray wanted an easy life. As far as he was concerned, they could die out and he wouldn't be that bothered about it. He didn't want to subjugate them and force them to do what he wanted them to.

He wasn't like Maxim at all.

Hugo was wrong.

Licking his lips, Gray remembered what Hugo had said, and clenched his hands into fists. He wasn't like Maxim at all. Vampires needed humans, and so Gray helped to protect them. That was his job and any personal feeling he may have didn't come into it.

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Henry.

Gay rubbed his eyes, sighing softly. What the fuck did he do with a human mate? Why him? Hadn't he already had this discussion with himself? He had a human mate, and he had to live with it. What was the minimum time he could spend around his mate? An hour every other day or something?

He could manage that. Turn up, fuck, then leave. That would keep his mate healthy and alive and leave Gray to do his job and forget about Henry.

His phone beeped and Gray snarled when he saw Hugo's message. Picking his phone up, he read the message. You need to tell the council. How long do you think you have before someone scents you? Get it done sooner rather than later so we can deal with the fallout.

And life continued to go down the shitter. The fucking council. What the fuck was he going to do about them?

Chapter Eight

Henry woke and sat up, his heart pounding in his chest. A dream. A nightmare. That was all it was, but something nagged at him. Something in the back of his mind. Something that had happened when he was young. Something he'd witnessed.

He'd been walking home after school. It was dark, raining, and he knew he was being followed. He kept glancing behind him every time he'd felt that itch between his shoulder blades, but no one had ever been there. But he knew. Everything in his body

was screaming at him to run and run fast.

When a hand had clamped over his mouth and he'd been lifted off his feet, Henry had done everything in his power to fight his assailant, to no avail. The person who had him held him in a tight grip and ran. Ran so fast, and the street Henry had been walking along had disappeared as the building had shot by.

He'd been slammed up against a wall, his head twisted painfully to the side, then he'd fallen slumped to the ground, the sounds of a fight echoing around him. Lifting his head, he'd watched, stunned, as two men fought one another. Two vampires.

He'd seen their teeth, seen the speed they'd moved at, seen the way they took blows that would knock out a human but had appeared unaffected. One had disappeared right in front of him and the other had turned to face him, watching him, then did something that Henry had carried with him since.

"You should go, human."

Henry had nodded and stood, stumbling on shaky legs. He'd somehow run to the end of the alley he'd been in and when he'd turned to look back, the vampire had been gone.

"Gray," Henry whispered. The vampire who had saved him had been Gray. He looked exactly the same now as he had then. Why had he forgotten? Maybe because he'd seen something he couldn't believe in then. He'd been a child, had been kidnapped, had been attacked, and his savior had been something other than human.

Made sense he'd block the memory.

Leaning back against the headboard, Henry sighed deeply. They'd met before, he and Gray. It seemed as if destiny had wanted them to have a connection. Why hadn't

Gray noticed they were mates then? Well, Henry had been twelve, so that might have had something to do with it. Puberty changed things.

Rubbing his hands over his face, Henry pulled the duvet up around his chest. He felt tired, but he also felt his body aching like it had been before Gray had arrived. They'd been apart a day now, and Henry knew he would have to see Gray again if he wanted to remain well.

Now that just made his day. Seeing Gray again, who would no doubt blame Henry for what was happening, even though Henry had no idea who or what he was to Gray. He barely remembered their time together. It had been good, he knew that, but the rest was kind of a blur. He'd had a lot to drink that night and now he was tied to a vampire who clearly didn't like the idea.

Which made this just amazing. Not.

"How are you feeling?"

Henry almost screamed when he heard the question. His heart pounded in his chest and he glared at Gray. "Fucking come in the normal way."

"What? So you can tell me to leave?" Gray leaned against the door, arms crossed over his chest. "I think I'll come in this way, and you didn't answer my question."

"Why should I answer it?"

"Because you get ill if I'm away too long, that's why."

"Gee, you look so happy about that."

Gray pushed away from the door and stormed over to the bed. Henry shrank back, the

anger that radiated from Gray had him holding his breath waiting to see what the vampire would do. “I’m not happy, but we have to live with it. I need to know how long I can stay away from you before I have to come here.”

“Wow. How to make me feel all wanted and warm and fuzzy inside.”

“I don’t care how you feel, but we’re stuck together and I don’t want you dying on me.”

“Why not? Wouldn’t that set you free?” Gray glanced away and Henry realized something. “Does me dying affect you? Is that why you’re here, oh so concerned about my health?”

“Maybe,” Gray muttered, grudgingly.

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“Again, overwhelmed with positive emotions.”

“You asked, I answered. So now tell me how you feel.”

“Achy, like the beginning of the flu.” Henry could see Gray moving his jaw from side to side.

“I get twenty-four hours away from you, then.”

“You can do a lot with that. Fuck anyone you want. Spend the night with your dick buried in their ass.”

Gray’s jaw hardened and Henry furrowed his brow. “I can’t.”

“What? Why not? I had sex with Jess after you left.” And hadn’t that been fun? Not.

“You did what?” Gray roared, causing Henry to shrink back into the bed.

“I had sex with my partner, the one I told you about.”

Gray jumped on the bed and pulled Henry out, snarling in his face. “No one but me touches you.”

“But my touch repulses you,” Henry whispered. “Why does it bother you if I find a guy who actually wants to be with me? You don’t. You’ve made that clear, so why can’t I have someone who likes me, who doesn’t think I’m shit for being human?”

“Because you’re mine!” Gray shouted.

“But you don’t want me,” Henry murmured. “You don’t even like me.” He shook his head slowly. “Makes me wonder why you saved me all those years ago.” Holding up his wrist, Henry showed Gray the scar he carried. “You grabbed my wrist and bit me, leaving this scar. I forgot all about it. Probably blanked it from my mind, but I remembered and I knew it was you who saved me and marked me. Did you know then who I would be to you? Is that why you did this?” Henry rubbed the scar on his wrist. “A way to avoid me if you ever saw it again?”

Gray’s mouth had fallen open as he stared at Henry’s wrist. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. Stupid delusional human.”

Henry heard the words, but there was no heat or anger behind them. Just a voice that trembled. “You do. You remember.”

Gray’s eyes shifted from Henry’s wrist to him. “It meant nothing. It was years ago, and it was a way to scare a stupid child from walking home alone in the dark where the things that hunt humans could find him.”

“Well, that worked. Never did walk on my own again, until I was older.”

“A thank you would be nice.”

“Sarcasm will get you nowhere, mate.”

Henry saw Gray’s eyes widen, his nostrils flare and wondered if he was pushing the vampire too much. Not that he’d really done anything, but he didn’t know Gray and didn’t know how he would react. “Don’t call me that.”

“Why? It’s the truth. We fucked, you bit me, and now we’re mates. I’m the one who

has to live with that.”

“So do I,” Gray muttered harshly. “I’m the one who can’t fuck anyone else. It’s you from now until we die.”

“Whereas I can fuck another man or I wouldn’t have been able to with Jess.”

“I swear to god if you mention his name again I will find him and kill him.”

“Is murder a crime for your species?” Genuine concern for Jess flooded through him, and Henry waited. He didn’t think Gray would do anything to hurt Jess, but then again, he had no idea about the vampire he was mated to. His life had been altered and now he had to live with it, as did Gray.

Gray grimaced and turned away. Henry took the time to get out of bed and stand on the opposite side, away from Gray. “Yes.”

“I’m surprised you answered me.”

“Me too.” Henry watched the muscles tense in Gray’s back, then Gray spun around. “A bed won’t protect you.”

“It gives me a false sense of security which I need right now.”

Arching an eyebrow, Gray appeared directly in front of Henry, causing him to jump back. “Don’t do that.”

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“Why? I like doing it and it’s a faster way to travel. You poor humans are limited.”

“This poor human is very happy with the way he moves around.” Gray pushed Henry back against the wall. “Stop. You don’t have any right to touch me.”

“I’m your mate. That’s all I need.”

“You don’t like me.” Henry looked up into Gray’s eyes. “Why would you want to be near me?”

“I don’t want to be near you, but I do want to fuck you.”

“No.”

Gray chuckled softly. “That word doesn’t work on me.”

Henry smiled, then kneed Gray in the nuts. As Gray fell to the floor moaning in pain, Henry stepped over him and grabbed his jeans, pulling them on. “No seems to work just fine.”

“You fucker,” Gray gasped out.

“What a way to talk to your mate.” Henry pulled on a t-shirt then left his bedroom. Grabbing his sneakers, he put them on, then stood. “Enjoy your recovery time. I’ll be at some club fucking the night away.” He heard a growl and ran to his front door, but didn’t reach it before a hand yanked him back.

“No one gets to touch you.” Gray’s eyes glowed red and a second later, Henry’s mouth was taken in a blistering kiss.

He didn’t even consider hiding his moans. Henry needed to feel Gray’s hands on him and even though he still wasn’t completely convinced about being mated to Gray, Henry couldn’t deny the way his body responded to him. One second, his dick had been soft and the next he was hard.

The touch of Gray’s hands on his body had Henry burning up. He’d missed Gray’s touch, and he’d only experienced it once, but now that he was here again, he knew no other man would do. Gray tugged on Henry’s t-shirt and Henry lifted his arms so Gray could pull it off.

As soon as it was gone, Gray kissed him again, his tongue darting into Henry’s mouth. One hand gripped Henry’s hair, and the other wrapped around his waist. When Gray pushed Henry up against the wall, Henry moaned and arched up, rubbing his dick along Gray’s, feeling Gray’s own erection.

Gray’s hands moved and tugged on Henry’s jeans, pulling them open and pushing them down over his hips. Henry’s dick slapped his stomach and then Henry grunted when Gray’s lips wrapped around the wet head.

“Fuck.”

Gray didn’t respond. He continued to suck and lick Henry’s dick, then he moved back and spun Henry around. Spreading Henry’s ass cheeks wide, Gray dived straight in, his tongue linking over Henry’s wrinkled hole.

Henry pushed back, his head resting on his arms as he leaned on the wall. He heard a drawer open and lifted his head, then Gray was licking his ass again. When Henry felt a wet finger push inside, he knew Gray had grabbed the lube. That had been why he’d

heard the drawer being opened.

Pushing back, Henry moaned when a second finger slid inside. “More.”

“Wait.”

“I can take it.”

Gray didn’t respond but spread his fingers wide, stretching Henry and making him moan again. A third finger pushed inside and Henry hissed at the pain. It was brief, then morphed into something far better, his body shuddering when Gray rubbed his fingers over Henry’s prostate. The difference in how he felt now and how he felt when Jess did it staggered Henry, but now wasn’t the time to dwell on it, not when Gray made him feel this good.

Gray’s finger slid free and then Henry felt Gray against his back. “Now I’m gonna fuck you.”

Chapter Nine

Gray gritted his teeth as he slid into Henry’s ass. Tight heat covered his dick, then Henry clenched around him and Gray trembled. So good. Being inside Henry felt so good, and Gray had this for the rest of his life. He pushed away the negative feeling that rose with that thought and concentrated on making Henry feel good.

He pulled out then slammed back in and felt Henry tighten around him. He shuddered and bit his lip as he moved in and out of Henry’s tight ass. Henry moaned and pushed back, moving with Gray. Gray closed his eyes, inhaling Henry’s scent, recognizing the way his scent was now mingled with his mate’s. There was no escaping the reality of the situation, but right then, he wasn’t bothered. All he wanted was to fuck Henry, wanted to feel his body come apart beneath him. He ignored the fact that his partner’s

pleasure wasn't something he was usually concerned about.

Henry staggered forward as Gray hammered into him, so Gray pulled out, and moved them to the bed, placing Henry face down on it. Henry gasped, then groaned as Gray slipped back inside his ass. Henry pushed back until he was on his hands and knees, and Gray grinned. Now he could really fuck him.

Grabbing Henry by his hips, Gray fucked him hard and deep, feeling Henry's body shudder as he hit his prostate. Henry moaned and pushed back, their bodies moving in time together, and Gray bit his lip, his fangs piercing it. He didn't stop moving, didn't stop the delicious slide in and out of his mate.

When he felt his balls pull up, Gray pulled Henry up and tugged his head to one side. Exposing his neck, Gray licked across the throbbing vein, then bit. Henry cried out, his body jerking as Gray swallowed, and a few seconds later, he followed Henry over the edge into sweet oblivion.

Once he was able to move again, Gray licked the side of Henry's neck, ensuring the wounds were closed, then slid out of Henry's tight ass. Laying on the bed next to Henry, Gray turned his head and watched his mate, making sure he was breathing fine.

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Furrowing his brow at his own behavior, Gray immediately sat up. “Leaving so soon?” Henry drawled as he rolled onto his back. Grimacing, he glared at Gray. “No condom again?”

“Don’t need them and we’re mates, so no point in using them. Not like I can knock you up.”

“Diseases? Ever thought about them?” As Henry stood, Gray saw his come on the back of Henry’s thighs and ass and felt his body respond. He somehow didn’t think Henry would let him fuck him again, so he exhaled and ran a hand over his face.

“Don’t catch them and can’t pass them on either. You’re safe.”

“I only have your word for that.”

Gray sighed heavily. “Why would I lie to you? We’re mates, so you’re it for me. I’m not going to do anything that will harm you. It would be the same as hurting myself.”

Henry stared at him for a few seconds, then shook his head and walked into the bathroom, shutting the door behind him. When Gray heard the lock engage, he slumped back on the bed. This mating thing was shit. Whoever said it was the best thing ever, finding your mate, was a liar. Gray hated it, but he had to deal with it the best he could, and that included his human mate, who was also struggling to deal with it.

He heard a noise by the front door and sat back up as footsteps approached the bedroom. When a tall, slim man walked in, Gray stood, not caring that he was naked.

The man looked him up and down, licked his lips, then smiled. “Well, hello.”

“Well, fuck off.”

The man frowned. “That isn’t nice.”

“I don’t care. Who the fuck are you, and why are you here?”

The man shook his head, his dark spiky hair barely moving. His dark eyes lingered on Gray’s dick. “Henry has good taste.”

“Well, he is with me.”

“Hmm and had you, too.” The man slid his jacket off and walked over to Gray. He lifted a hand to touch him, but Gray intercepted it. “Come on. Henry’s had you and sometimes we like to share.”

“Sometimes, but not today or ever again. Henry is mine and I don’t share.”

A soft chuckle ghosted over Gray’s skin. “No, Henry is mine and you’re a fuck.”

“A fuck that’s going to keep on fucking his man. Not you.”

“Jess. What are you doing here?” Henry stood by the open bathroom door, a towel wrapped around his waist.

“I came to see you. You haven’t been answering my calls or messages, so I came over.” Looking at Gray, Jess grinned. “I can see why now. He is nice.”

“He is right here, and he is taken by him.” Gray pointed at Henry. “He’s mine and you can fuck off.”

Jess sighed and shook his head, a small smile on his lips. “He doesn’t know, does he, Henry? Such a shame. I wouldn’t mind getting my hands on you and my dick in you.” Jess leaned to one side to glance at Gray’s ass, and Gray pushed him away.

“Leave or I will make you leave.”

“Is he this aggressive in bed?” Jess shivered. “I do like a man who takes charge on occasion, but I’m the one in charge.”

“Jess, please leave.”

Jess frowned and glanced between Gray and Henry. Gray watched, becoming frustrated that the former boyfriend—who was a fucking idiot—was still in the bedroom with his mate. “Yeah. Fuck off.”

“Gray. I need a minute alone with Jess.”

Gray glared at Henry. His mate was telling him to leave. Okay. He grinned and disappeared into the living room. He kept on grinning when he heard Jess shout. “In here good enough?” he shouted.

Henry stormed into the living room and stabbed a finger into his chest. “You fucking idiot. Why the fuck did you do that?”

“What the hell are you?” Jess stood by the bedroom door, his eyes wide. “What... how...”

“I can sort him out,” Gray paused, then added, “Mate.”

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“Oh no. No, no, no, no, no. You don’t get to throw ‘mate’ around.”

Shrugging, Gray sat on the sofa. Still naked, he watched Jess stare at him, like he was something from another planet. “Why don’t you ignore him and come and sit on my dick?”

Henry’s eyes almost popped out they went so wide. “I... What?” Shaking his head, he pointed to the front door, “Get out, Gray.”

“No. Make me.” Gray spread his legs and wrapped a hand around his dick. He was hard, and watching his mate get worked up had his blood flowing. He could hear Henry’s heart beat in his chest, see the veins in his neck, and Gray wanted to pull his mate down and take what was his.

“I’ll do it. Don’t care what you are.” Jess began to unbutton his shirt, but Henry stopped him. “Leave, Jess, while I deal with him.”

“Oh no. If there is going to be sex, I’m involved.”

“My dick’s for him only.” Gray stroked, watching Henry’s eyes move over his body. His mate was pissed, but he was also aroused, his dick plumping up as Gray watched. Jess dropped his shirt to the floor, and Gray had had enough.

Teleporting to where Jess stood, Gray grabbed him around the throat then teleported to the roof, where he dangled Jess over the edge. Jess took a second to realize what was happening, then screamed and jerked in Gray’s hand. Throwing him onto the roof, Gray walked over to where Jess lay in a heap and crouched next to him.

Jess stared up at him, whimpering. “What are you?” he stuttered.

“Someone you will never see again. Stay away from Henry. He’s mine. I won’t warn you again. I’ll simply drop you from the edge.” Appearing in the living room, Gray grabbed Jess’ shirt, then picked up Jess’ jacket from the bedroom—along with something else—then threw Jess’ clothes at him when he reappeared on the roof. “Fuck off.”

Back in the living room, Gray grabbed Henry and kissed him, his tongue thrusting into Henry’s mouth. Henry jerked and pulled back. “Where is Jess?”

“Safe and on his way home.” Pulling Henry over to the sofa, Gray sat, dragging Henry down with him. Henry straddled him and leaned back, shaking his head. Gray gave Henry a pointed look then stared at Henry’s hard dick before arching an eyebrow up at his mate.

“So what? I’m hard.”

“You like being dominated. I like dominating you. Shout and scream at me later for being a cunt, but let’s fuck now and use this aggression in a way we’ll both enjoy.”

Henry muttered something Gray didn’t hear, then kissed Gray. Moaning, Gray sucked on Henry’s tongue as he moved him closer. Henry broke the kiss and murmured, “Lube.” Gray opened his hand and showed Henry the lube. He poured some on his fingers then ran them over Henry’s ass. Henry dropped his head back and moaned as Gray slid two fingers in deep. “I’m still mad at you.”

“I know and you can be mad at me later, too.” When he felt Henry relax, he slipped his fingers free and moved Henry, then groaned as he sank down, swallowing Gray’s dick in a tight embrace. Fuck, Henry’s ass had been made for Gray’s dick, and as Henry rose, then fell again, Gray closed his eyes and just felt.

Gray pulled Henry down so they could kiss; hot, hard, wet, open-mouthed kisses that made Gray moan. Henry sucked on Gray's tongue as he continued to ride his dick, and Gray's hands tightened on Henry's waist, moving him, holding him.

It wasn't long before Gray took over and slammed up into Henry. Henry shivered, his body trembling, and Gray took Henry's dick in his hand, stroking it, feeling it jerk in his grip. They were both close and Gray wanted Henry to come first so he could feel his mate squeeze him tight.

It only took another minute before Henry cried out, his body stiffening. Ropes of come erupted from his dick, and Gray closed his eyes as Henry clenched around him. Gritting his teeth, Gray continued to fuck Henry, until he felt his balls pull up.

Gasping, his hands grabbed Henry, pulling him down into another kiss as Gray came. He jerked and moaned as he shot deep into his mate's ass, knowing his scent was going to be all over Henry, and in him, too. Made him feel possessive and Gray wasn't sure if he liked it, but he pushed it away to let the bliss sweep over him.

When he opened his eyes, Henry had his head resting on Gray's shoulder, soft gusts of breath ghosting over Gray's skin. Gray sat for a minute before his skin tightened and he had to get away. Had to have a minute away from the intense emotions threatening to swamp him.

"Move," he muttered.

Henry lifted his head, soft eyes staring into Gray's. "What?"

Gray pushed him to one side, ignoring his dick sliding free from Henry's ass. He stood and grabbed his clothes, then appeared in his own bedroom. Gasping for breath, he paced his bedroom, dropping his clothes on the floor. Too much. Too much, and Gray wasn't prepared for it.

Emotions threatened him, made him want to tear at his own skin to claw them away from him. This wasn't meant to happen. Not to him. Not a human. A human making him feel something he swore he would never feel for one of them. Henry. His mate.

“Fuck.”

Sitting on the edge of his bed, Gray heard his name. A whisper in the wind. His mate reaching out to him with something he knew nothing about because Gray had told him next to nothing. Were these emotions supposed to develop this quickly, be this intense? Was he supposed to feel like he could drown in them at any second?

Too much too soon, and Gray wanted to run away.

Chapter Ten

Henry stared at the empty spot. One second Gray had been sitting there and the next he was gone. If it wasn't for the way his body felt, Henry could easily assume Gray had never been there at all.

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Standing, Henry winced when he felt Gray's come slip from his ass. He needed another shower and this time he was going to refuse to let that vampire anywhere near him. He didn't care if it made him feel sick. He was so done with him.

Who fucked his supposed mate and then disappeared the way Gray had done? Talk about making Henry feel like a piece of shit. Like he was good enough to fuck, and that was it. He'd had better interactions when he'd had one-night stands. At least there had been some form of mutual understanding between him and the man he was with. Gray took what he wanted, then disappeared. Literally.

Henry stomped into the bathroom and turned the shower on. Once it was warm enough, he stepped under it and made a point to clean his ass first, removing all traces of his so-called mate. Then he scrubbed his skin all over just to make sure nothing about Gray remained on his body.

"Should have kicked the fucker out, but no. My dick decided it needed another round, and me being the dumb shit that I am, went along with it, and now I'm in the shower talking to myself."

Henry turned the shower off and quickly dried himself off. In the bedroom, he dressed and grabbed his wallet, then left his apartment. He needed to get out and try to forget all about men and mates and vampires, and hopefully wake the fuck up and realize it had all been a fucked-up nightmare.

Hitting the sidewalk, Henry noticed how dark it was, and smiled. Maybe he should hit a club and find a man. An actual human being instead of a vampire who fucked and ran. It would be nice to be with someone who actually wanted him and not just

because he couldn't fuck anyone else.

Decision made, Henry waved down a cab and told the driver to take him to Mr. Smith's, a local gay club that was always busy. Henry knew he would find someone there and hopefully they would wipe away any lingering trace of Gray from Henry's body and mind.

He ignored how his body reacted. Ignored the way his stomach rolled at the thought of a man other than Gray touching him. He was going to do this and enjoy it, too. At the club, Henry paid the driver and walked inside, the music hitting him instantly. Yes, this was what he needed.

Only he didn't make it more than ten feet into the club before a hand grabbed his arm, dragged him back into the shadows, then teleported him into his apartment. Henry spun around and shoved Gray away. Gray did nothing, said nothing, but simply stared at him.

"Why?" he demanded.

"You're my mate and only I can touch you."

Shaking his head, Henry asked, "How did you know where the hell I was?"

"Telepathy." Gray tapped the side of his head. "We have it, and I picked up about you going out to find another man to fuck."

Closing his eyes slowly, Henry breathed in deeply. "And when were you going to reveal this little nugget of information to me? Hmm. Or were you going to keep it a little secret only you knew about it so you could listen in whenever you wanted?" Opening his eyes, he narrowed his eyes when Gray shrugged nonchalantly.

“I forgot about it.”

Henry scoffed. “Until now. Right now. As I was walking into a club—”

“You were going to find a human to fuck.”

“So?” Henry threw his arms in the air. “You don’t want me. Not really. You might like to fuck me, but that’s it. You can’t stand to be around me. As soon as you’ve shot your load, you’re gone.”

“You should be pleased I’m not hanging around.” Gray glared at Henry, but he didn’t give a shit how Gray felt.

“Yeah, then I don’t have to see how ecstatic you are to have me in your life. At least those men I pick up in clubs actually want to be with me. Jess wants to be with me. He cares about me. You don’t give a shit about me. As long as you get your dick wet, that’s it.”

“I’m adjusting!” Gray shouted at him as he paced the floor. “I need to figure shit out. This wasn’t meant to happen to me. I wasn’t meant to have a human as a mate.”

“Oh.” Henry sighed dramatically, placing a hand on his chest. “I’m so sorry your life had been disrupted. I’m so sorry you can’t fuck around anymore. I’m so—”

“Shut the fuck up.”

“You don’t get to tell me what to do.” Henry jabbed his finger at Gray. “Disappear. That’s what you’re good at. Go on. Fuck off and don’t come back.”

“This isn’t easy for me. I need time as well.”

“Oh I know. You’ve been very clear that I’m the last thing you want in your life. Makes me feel so fucking great.”

Henry could see Gray working his jaw from side to side, then he nodded once. “I’m sorry.”

Henry opened his mouth, then closed. “Say what now?” Did he just hear the s word?

“I am sorry.”

Henry opened and closed his mouth. “That... must have hurt.”

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“Someone may have pointed out what a dick I was being and how this might be difficult for you, being human and having no knowledge of us.”

“I think I want to meet this person.”

“You’ll like his human mate.”

Henry arched an eyebrow. “You don’t?”

“I’m... adjusting.” Gray sat on the sofa and slumped over. “I’m trying... going to try.”

“What did he say to you?”

“Words along the line of idiot, stupid, dick, bastard. The usual.”

Henry sat next to Gray, some of his anger disappearing. He hadn’t forgiven Gray for what he’d done, but he did feel some of the resentment floating away. “And you listened.”

“Not at first, but eventually I did. I can be a little stubborn.”

“You left about an hour ago and you managed to have some sense talked into you during that time?”

“Don’t push it,” Gray growled. “I don’t like humans, but I can adapt.”

“Oh, so you’re adapting to me. Nice.” Henry shook his head and glanced away. Gray made him feel so happy and warm and wanted. Not. Not at all, but he was trying in his own way. Whatever it was that made Gray hate humans must be pretty significant. “Why do you hate us?”

“You’re destructive. Selfish. Twist everything and anything if it will get you ahead. Lie and cheat and say whatever you want to whoever you want and destroy people carelessly. I could go on.”

“True.” Henry did have to accept that, even if he didn’t like it. However, he’d often thought the same thing, but he was human and he tended to stick up for other humans. The world would be a much better place if people tried to be nice to each other, tried to treat each other with respect.

“I’ve had years of watching humans destroy themselves, others, the planet.”

“Yeah. We could be great, but most choose to be the worst instead.”

“I’m tired of watching it, but there are instances when I see the good humans can be. How they come together to save people, places, animals. Why can’t you be like that all the time?”

“And vampires are perfect in comparison?”

“Fuck no, but we’re nowhere near as depraved as some humans. Sure, we have Maxim and his lot, but we can manage them.”

“Maxim?” Okay, this could be something he needed to know about.

“A vampire who wants to rule the world, pretty much. Hates most, if not all, humans and most vampires who aren’t in agreement with his ‘rule the world’ plans.”

“Sounds like a really nice guy to get to know. Remind me to never be on his invite list.”

Gray grunted. “He’s like smoke in the wind. He disappears for years at a time, then resurfaces, only to fucking disappear again. Annoys the shit out of me.”

Henry sucked his lips in, holding back his chuckle. The way Gray spoke was amusing. He was very unhappy about this Maxim person evading him. “Hmm. Can’t have that, can we?”

“Don’t be so smug. He went after a mate, a human mate, and got him, too. We had to find him and rescue him before Maxim made mincemeat out of him.”

“Yeah, keep me off the invite list. I’m more than happy living my life.”

Gray stood abruptly, surprising Henry. “I need to go.”

Standing, Henry faced Gray, narrowing his eyes. “So you do this ‘me vampire you mate’ crap at the club and then leave?”

“You were going to fuck a human, and as my mate, that’s a no. I’m not out there fucking other men, so you aren’t either.”

“You can’t. I can. Go on and fuck off. Just when I think I could actually grow to like you, you pull a stunt like this. What the fuck did I do to deserve a mate like you?”

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Gray shoved his face close to Henry's. "You will stay here."

"Oh, will I now? Who the fuck are you to dictate to me what the hell I can and can't do? You are no one. Nothing. I decide my life, not you. This whole mate thing isn't going to work. I want out. Figure out how to end this."

"Don't you think I've already tried? Would I be here putting up with you if I had found a way to get rid of you?"

"Oh yeah. The warm and fuzzy feeling you're giving me is growing. How will I cope without you near me?" Henry shoved Gray back. "Easily! Get out and never come back. See how easy that is? Problem solved."

"Small problem there, mate," Gray spat. "You die if I stay away too long and then I could die too and I like living, so I'll do the bare minimum to keep us going and that will include us fucking." Gray looked Henry up and down. "We both know you like it when I fuck you."

"And I'm not denying that, but that doesn't change the fact that I don't like you. If this mating thing hadn't happened, we wouldn't have seen each other again, let alone fucked."

Gray nodded. "We can't change it, can we? We're both stuck with each other. I'll be back tomorrow. Don't fuck any man." Gray disappeared and Henry stomped right out of his apartment, then stopped. He wasn't in the mood now, so he turned around and went back inside.

Sitting on his sofa, Henry stared at the wall opposite. Just his luck he'd end up with a man, no, vampire, who he was destined to spend the rest of his life with, and they couldn't stand each other. They had to work this out because if Henry was going to live a long life, he didn't want it to be like this every time they met.

It would wear him down and probably have the same effect on Gray as well.

They had to find something in common, something they could build this weird relationship on. If only Henry knew someone who had gone through something like this. Didn't Gray mention another human mate? Maybe Henry could talk to him and figure shit out. Would Gray let him talk to this other human?

Closing his eyes, Henry sighed. His life was changing, and he had no option but to go along with it. If Gray had been just a man, maybe he could have walked away, but having been ill because Gray hadn't been around made it apparent Henry couldn't do the same here.

They were both stuck.

Chapter Eleven

"How does the mating go?" Hugo asked as he sat on Gray's sofa.

"Just fucking peachy."

"Have you spoken to Kelvin or Key? They could help, you know."

"Nope and nope. Not gonna happen. I've said all I intend to say. We're gonna see each other when we have to and that's it."

"That's it?" Hugo raised his eyebrows. "What about sex?"

“When I feel the itch to fuck, I’ll go to him.” He didn’t want to discuss this with Hugo, but the fucker wouldn’t leave. If he didn’t leave in the next five minutes, then Gray would, even though they were sitting in his apartment.

“I’m sure he feels all warm inside, knowing he’s a hole for you to fuck.”

“It’s me or his hand. I told him he couldn’t fuck anyone else.” Gray ground his teeth together, thinking about the fact Henry had slept with Jess after they’d mated.

“And how did he take that?”

Gray shrugged. “Like I fucking care. He’ll do as he’s told. He’s my mate and that’s it.” Grinding his teeth together, Gray inhaled deeply, his nostrils flaring.

“I bet he felt all warm and cozy inside as you ordered him around.”

“Would you accept your mate sleeping around?”

Hugo leaned forward, resting his elbows on his thighs. “No, but I wouldn’t treat my mate like dogshit either, which is what you’re doing here. You’re the one in charge. You’re the one who lays down the law. Your mate has no choice but to agree to whatever you want. Some partnership that is, and he’ll know it too.”

“Well, we’re both stuck, aren’t we? The whole ‘dying without each other’ thing means we have no choice.” Gray rubbed his jaw. “Maybe there is a way to break it?” he murmured.

“Hmm. Is that what you want? Ask yourself the question honestly. He’s your mate, the one who is meant just for you. You’ve seen how other mates are together, haven’t you? The connection they share, the obvious bond between them, the way they look at each other. You’re willing to walk away from that over something he can’t

change? He's human. He will always be human, just like you'll always be a vampire."

"Are we talking about this again?" Kai asked as he appeared in Gray's living room.
"Still struggling?"

Grunting, Gray muttered, "What do you think?"

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“Awww, poor Gray has something we all dream of having and look at him pissing all over it.”

“Shut up.”

Kai pursed his lips. “Nah. This is too much fun.” Sitting, Kai placed one leg over the other and drummed his fingers on his thigh. “Is he a good fuck?”

Gray’s mouth fell open, and he narrowed his eyes at Kai as he snapped his mouth shut. “None of your fucking business.”

“Come on. You don’t want him, so why not let us share? Oh, that’s right. You only want to fuck him. A hole for you to stick your dick in and get off.”

“Get out.”

“Nah, I’m having way too much fun messing with you.”

“You bastard.” Gray stood and stomped over to Kai, glaring down at him. “You come over here to wind me the fuck up? Like some fucking kid’s toy?”

“Well, I didn’t want to use that as an example but...” Kai straightened and stared at Gray. “One mate,” he whispered. “We only have one and you’ve found yours, yet you’re here bitching about the fact he’s human rather than enjoying what you have been gifted.”

“Feels like mates are becoming this mythical thing,” Hugo murmured. “Before

Kelvin found his, I couldn't remember the last time we had a mating. Several decades ago, if not longer."

"Nah, longer than that." Kai shook his head and exhaled heavily. "Don't fuck this up. Don't let something like his species ruin the best thing in your life."

"You know how I feel about humans."

"We all know how you feel about humans. The fact you let Key work with you is astonishing, considering how much you detest them."

"I'm not stupid. He has skills that I need."

"So you can put up with him being human because he's skillful. Does he know about this?"

"I imagine if he doesn't, he will at some point." Gray went back to the sofa and sat. Rubbing his hands over his face, he bit his bottom lip. "I've hated humans for a long time."

"You have, and now you need to face that hate or lose your mate, because he will at some point become pissed off with how you're treating him and find a man who wants to be with him. We all know how you'll react to that."

"He's already fucked another man."

"Did he know what he was to you when he did?" Hugo glanced at Kai, who was watching Gray.

"No, he didn't, and the man is someone he was involved with." Gray detested admitting the truth, but no matter how it made him feel, he had messed up by not

telling Henry everything.

“So he had sex with his partner before he found out exactly what you two are. Not his fault then.”

“Never said it was. I can admit—just—when I’ve fucked up, and I did then.”

“And we all know how you reacted when you found out.”

“How would you have reacted?” Gray demanded from Kai.

“I wouldn’t have been in that position in the first place. I would have told my mate everything he or she needed to know. Not overreacted like a petulant child, and stormed off. For someone as smart as you, you can be incredibly dumb at times.”

“Finished insulting me yet?” Gray almost shouted. He was growing more and more annoyed with Kai and his attitude. The vampire didn’t need to keep reminding Gray that he’d messed up. He already knew all of that and was trying to move on, which, with him being him, was hard. He’d hated humans for decades and no one should expect him to erase all of that in a matter of days.

“No, not really. I’m enjoying myself.” Kai sat back and stretched his arm along the back of the sofa. “Not often I see the almighty Gray in this position. You’re normally looking down your nose at people.”

“I have never done that,” Gray spat out.

“No, you haven’t. Not to vampires at least. Now humans... that’s a different matter entirely.”

“I know!! I get it. I hate humans and didn’t care who knew about it. Fucking hell, get

off this horse because you've flogged it to death."

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“Interesting way to put it,” Hugo commented. “Though Gray is right, Kai. Let’s drop it for now.”

Gray grunted. “Gee, thanks for your support.”

“I could let Kai carry on if you like. He isn’t saying anything that’s a lie and you know it. Now that we’ve agreed to move on, what are you going to do about your mate?”

“I’m... trying...” Gray hardened his jaw. “It might take some time.”

Kai snorted and shook his head. “Take him out somewhere nice for a meal. Talk in public so you won’t shout at each other.”

“People scream and shout at each other all the time and no one cares.” Gray sighed. “I’ll ask him out. See if we can talk...” Gray caught the look Kai shot him and changed what he was saying. “...if I can talk without erupting.”

“Look.” Hugo paused. “You can’t change who your mate is, but you can change how you react to it. He is now the most important person in your life and we all know what will happen once Maxim finds out, and he will find out. Look what happened to Key. Do you want that to happen to Henry?”

“No, and I need to find out how Maxim knew Kelvin had mated.”

“We have a spy, but we’ve always known they had someone on the inside. We’re doing the same. Which reminds me that I have some files to look at.” Standing, Hugo

stretched, waved then disappeared, leaving Gray alone with Kai.

“We should lay a trap and find out who it is. We could use him or her to our advantage.”

“I was thinking the same thing, but for now I need to sort this out.”

Kai nodded and stood, then left. Gray stared at the spot Kai had been standing and slowly closed his eyes. He wasn't going to rehash everything. He knew who he was and how he'd responded, so going over it wasn't going to change anything. He had to learn to handle the situation and try not to lose his shit every other second. Fuck, why a human? Why?

Sighing heavily, Gray stood and walked into his bedroom. Stripping until he stood in his boxers, Gray went into the bathroom and turned the shower on. He needed to clean up and head into work and somehow take his mind off the mate he had but didn't want. Kinda.

He was slowly—sloth slowly—changing his mind about that. They were great in bed and Gray had no issues where that was concerned. It was just the small talk. Well, any talk because they didn't talk. They shouted. Mainly he shouted. A lot.

Stepping under the spray, he gasped when the cold water hit him. Gritting his teeth, Gray waited for the water to warm, forcing his mind from his mate and onto matters of work. He had to find out who they were so he could use it to their advantage. The thought of using Maxim's spy against him had Gray's lips lifting in a smile.

He wanted to be a fly on the wall when Maxim found out what they'd done and how much they'd infiltrated his network. Maxim would not be happy. At all. In fact, knowing Maxim the way Gray did, it was safe to say vampires would die at Maxim's hand, and that didn't bother him at all.

Those who served Maxim and rejected their laws deserved everything they got, and Gray would love to see it happen. Maxim would hunt them down and rip them apart, which meant there would be less of them for Gray and the others to hunt.

Once he'd finished in the shower, Gray quickly dried and dressed, grabbed what he needed, then appeared in his office. Key was already there, a frown on his face as he stared at the monitor in front of him. Okay, for a human, Key was alright, and Gray had helped Kelvin out when he'd mated Key, but they weren't best buds or anything like that.

Sitting, Gray waited for the system to log him in, listening to Key murmur to himself. "Who is he?" Key asked.

Gray pushed his chair over to Key and stared at the monitor. Watching the man on the screen, Gray furrowed his brow. "He looks familiar..."

"He doesn't appear often, but he's watching some guy."

"What made you watch him?" It wasn't like Key to become distracted by some random dude.

"His behavior. He knows where the cameras are, knows when to appear and disappear. Reminds me of that Maxim guy. He's only seen when he wants to be."

Gray watched for a few seconds more, then straightened when the man or vampire disappeared as he crossed the road. "Fucking idiot. We don't do that shit where humans could see and not on CCTV. What the fuck is he playing at?"

"First time he's done it out in the open like this. It's normally down some out of the way alley."

“He’ll end up on some rag like Minho.”

“Minho enjoys it. Nothing like flashing his abs and his fangs then telling them he is just a plain old human and the fangs are fake.”

“Keep an eye out for him, and I’ll let the others know as well. He isn’t one of ours.”

“I figured you would know. I only know a few vampires, but he didn’t look familiar at all.”

“He does remind me of someone, but I can’t think who. For now.” Pushing back to his work area, Gray said, “Leave him for now. Do you have the new shifts?”

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“All done and we have three new vampires who had asked to join. I’ve printed out their details and put them on your desk.”

Gray glanced at the pile he had and sighed. “Along with all of this?”

“Yep. Must be fun being the boss.”

“Yeah, but no.”

“You should have a deputy or someone like that.”

“You wanting the job?” Gray grinned when Key shuddered.

“Fuck no. I’ve seen the shit you put up with and there is no way in hell I’d put myself in that position. Some of the vamps who work here are... challenging.”

Gray snorted. Challenging was a good way of putting it, but Gray let some behaviors slide because they were damn good at their job and he needed vamps who could work under pressure.

Staring at his to do list, he exhaled heavily. At least he had something that would keep him busy and his mind away from a certain mate.

Chapter Twelve

Henry closed the door to his apartment and sagged against it. Two days without seeing Gray and he could feel the changes in his body. This was what he didn’t like

about being mated to a vampire. And everything else as well. He wasn't a booty call, and the sooner Gray realized that the better, because Henry was fed up.

Pushing away from the door, Henry rubbed his chest, something he'd been doing for the past day or so. His body wanted Gray, whether he wanted the vampire or not. And just that second, said vampire appeared.

Somehow Henry managed not to shout, but barely. Gray had his back to Henry, so Henry glared at him. When Gray turned, Henry blanked his expression. "Gray. So nice of you to appear. Without permission." Henry walked past Gray and sat watching the vampire as he moved around his small living room.

"We need to talk."

"Ah, those lovely words all people want to hear."

"I'm sorry for the way I've treated you." Gray straightened. "Would you like to go out for a meal?"

Henry's eyebrows shot up. "A meal? Me and you? Together and in public?"

"Yes."

"Oh." And now he had no idea what to say. Gray asking him out on a date was the last thing he ever thought he'd hear the vampire say. "Er, yeah, I guess."

"Wow. I'm bowled over with your enthusiasm."

"I'm surprised." He rubbed his chest again and Gray sat next to him, taking one of Henry's hands in his own. The instant their skin made contact, Henry's body relaxed.

"I hate how my body does that."

“It has a similar effect on me.”

“It does?”

“To a lesser extent, but yes, it does.”

“Why are you being nice?” This new Gray kinda scared Henry. He was used to the sarcastic bastard who spat out orders, expecting Henry to agree.

“I’ve had time to think?”

“How’s the brain doing?”

Gray smiled softly, which surprised Henry. Again. “It worked overtime.”

“I bet it did, and why are you being all nice to me and not ordering me around?”

“This isn’t going to work if I—not we—if I don’t try. We’re mated for life. If we don’t talk about it and all the implications, then we get nowhere. I don’t want it to be a case where we hate each other but have to have sex. Can you imagine how that would be for us?”

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There was no chance in hell Gray came up with that all on his own. “Who did you talk to?”

“Another mated vampire. He made me see some sense, as his mate puts it.”

“I think I like him and his mate.”

“They’re okay, I guess.”

“When?”

“When what?”

Henry rolled his eyes. “When are we going out for this meal?”

“Er... now?”

“I’ve just got in from work, so I’ll need a shower.”

“I can wash your back and we need to be close.”

“You want sex.” Henry didn’t want to admit it, but he wanted sex, too. With Gray. Wasn’t admitting that one either.

“That too.”

Chuckling softly, Henry smiled. “I think I like this version of Gray.”

Gray fidgeted on the sofa. “Let’s take it easy.”

Henry stood, surprised how much better he felt. Gray simply being there and holding his hand had helped to alleviate some of the symptoms he’d been feeling.

He tugged on Gray’s hand and Gray stood, following Henry into the bathroom. Henry turned the shower on, ignoring Gray’s presence behind him, and stripped. Turning, he faced his mate and watched his eyes travel over Henry’s body, pausing at Henry’s visible erection.

Henry swallowed as Gray removed his own clothes, then moaned when Gray pulled him close and kissed him. It wasn’t the hard, demanding kiss that Henry expected. Soft lips flowed across Henry’s once, twice, then again until Henry leaned against Gray.

Gray’s tongue swiped across Henry’s bottom lip and Henry sighed as he opened his mouth and let Gray’s tongue slip inside. The kiss remained the same, soft and gentle, sliding touches that caused Henry to heat up inside and want more.

Gray maneuvered them toward the shower, and Henry gasped as he stepped under the warm spray. Gray’s hands slid around Henry’s back, moving up so his fingers could bury into Henry’s hair. Henry tilted his head, deepening the kiss, and sucked Gray’s tongue into his mouth.

No matter how angry this vampire made him feel, Henry couldn’t deny their mutual sexual attraction. Even when he wanted to, it was there, pulling him back to Gray. Clearly, Gray felt the same way, because he was here now, pushing Henry up against the wall and Henry went willingly.

Spreading his legs, Henry arched into Gray, moaning softly when Gray broke the kiss and nibbled his ear. Henry closed his eyes and let the sensations Gray created flow

through his body. He was hard, and he wanted Gray to touch him, but he didn't want to rush this, either. Gray wasn't rushing. He was taking his sweet time, savoring their kisses, their touches, and Henry's body went limp.

Why couldn't Gray be like this more often, and why was he thinking this way right now? Gray's hands swept down Henry's body and gripped his ass, turning him around so he now faced the shower wall. Those same hands moved to Henry's hips and pulled at them. Henry understood and pushed his ass out, letting Gray have what he wanted.

Moaning softly, Henry shivered under the warm spray of water when Gray parted his cheeks. He trembled when Gray's finger ran over his wrinkled flesh, then moaned loudly when a tongue licked across him. He breathed deeply, waiting for the next touch and when Gray licked him again, he shuddered, his breath flowing out of him.

Gray only touched him once, then there was nothing until Henry tensed as Gray's fingers stroked across him again. There was no pressure to enter him, just soft touches, gentle caresses that had Henry needing more, but he knew Gray wanted to take his time. Torture him with pleasure.

Henry wasn't sure how he knew this. Because I want to pleasure you. I want to drive you wild.

Henry dropped his head, the water running down his face, and sighed when Gray's fingers touched him again, running repeatedly over his skin, over his ass, over his hole. Soft touches that stoked the fire building inside. The occasional swipe of Gray's tongue had Henry gasping in pleasure, then moaning in disappointment when it wasn't repeated.

Henry wasn't sure how long it went on for, how long Gray had him on edge, how long Gray made him wait. It was pleasure and torture mixed together, and Henry

didn't want it to end. When Gray's hand slid around his hip and took his hard leaking dick, Henry trembled, sensation flowing through him like the water that coursed over his skin.

A firm tight grip, slow strokes to his hard shaft, that wicked twist when he reached the soft spongy head, a tongue that taunted and teased, and Henry was ready. Ready for anything Gray wanted to give him.

Gray spun him around, causing Henry's eyes to shoot open and stare down at the vampire kneeling at his feet. His red eyes stared up at him and Henry watched Gray open his mouth, his pink tongue snaking out to lick over the head of Henry's dick.

Henry's mouth fell open, and he watched, enraptured, as Gray continued to lick the head, his tongue swiping over it, then dipping into the slit, then sliding away. Gray kissed down Henry's shaft, then nuzzled his tight balls before licking back up and sucking the head into his mouth.

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Fuck, Henry was ready to blow, and all Gray had been doing was teasing him with soft touches, but those touches had been felt throughout Henry's body and he was desperate. Desperate for more, but he didn't want this to end, either.

Gray went to stand, then slid. Furrowing his brow, Gray glanced at the sink. "Sink."

Henry blinked and stared at him. "Huh?"

Gray chuckled and pulled Henry from the shower, then bent him over the sink. "Here."

"Oh. Oh yeah." Henry tried to put a sentence together but thinking was hard at that moment.

Gray chuckled again, then spread Henry's ass cheeks and attacked his hole. Henry arched up onto his toes, his head falling back, mouth open as a long drawn-out moan came from deep inside. Gray's tongue licked and flicked, then his mouth sucked Henry's hole and Henry cried out.

"Aw fuck. Gray..."

Gray didn't respond. Henry heard the click and knew Gray had opened the lube. When he felt the cool liquid on his ass, he relaxed, waiting for Gray to push inside. Gray's fingers ran over his hole and one slipped inside, making Henry sigh in relief. He desperately needed Gray to fill him, to make him come alive, to make him fall apart.

Gray's finger moved in and out, slowly stretching Henry, and then a second slid in as well. Henry didn't feel any ache or sting or pain, and he wasn't sure if he would. All he wanted was for Gray to be inside of him, be over him, to take him to new heights.

A third finger moved inside and Henry groaned when he rubbed over his prostate, sending him spiraling mindlessly. A desperate need clawed inside of him and when Gray finally pushed inside, Henry whimpered. Being stretched and filled had him so close to the edge, his grip on the edge of the sink tightened until his knuckles turned white.

Gray paused, his breath ghosting over Henry's damp skin, making him shiver, the hairs on his body reacting as Gray pulled out. He pushed inside again, slow and steady, making Henry bite his bottom lip. He wanted more, but this was making him feel everything so much more.

Gray didn't go fast or hard, didn't change his pace, just kept it slow and steady, moving in and out. Henry gasped as Gray's fingers dug into his hips, pulling him farther from the sink, bending him over more, and when he sped up, Henry groaned.

The slow and steady rhythm Gray had established disappeared into long, hard pounding thrusts that pushed Henry against the sink and made him cry out in pleasure. Henry could feel his balls pulling up, his body tightening when Gray pulled out and replaced his dick with four fingers.

Henry grunted then moaned when those fingers stretched his hole and rubbed his prostate. The fingers on Gray's other hand circled the base of Henry's dick tightly, and Henry squeezed his eyes shut as wave after wave of intense pleasure rushed through him, but he couldn't come.

Not yet. Soon.

Grunting, Henry shoved back on Gray's fingers, then whimpered when they disappeared. Seconds later, Gray fucked him back over the sink and Henry held on under the pounding onslaught that drove Henry to the edge. He wanted to topple over and fall into the abyss.

"Come for me. Stroke your dick and come."

Henry grabbed his dick, pounding the hard flesh, eager to come as Gray continued to fuck him hard and deep. It took seconds, if that, then Henry cried out, come shooting over his hand and the sink as wave after wave cascaded over him, pulling him under in an intense orgasm that left him breathless. The room disappeared, a loud roaring in his ears, as pleasure flooded through his body, making him drown.

When he returned to the room, he could feel Gray's hot body draped over his own and slumped on to the sink, breathing rapidly, his heart beating erratically in his chest. Gray's hands ran over his damp skin and Henry didn't want to move. He wanted to savor the tingles of pleasure that still came to life.

Eventually Gray straightened and slowly pulled out, causing Henry to wrinkle his nose when Gray's come slid free. Gray helped him up and back into the shower. The water was now only lukewarm, but it was enough to do the job of cleaning them both before Gray switched it off.

"Still hungry?"

Henry stared at him and nodded. Yeah, he could eat and later they could come back to Henry's for round two.

Chapter Thirteen

Why had he agreed to this? Yes, he'd asked, but here he was now, sitting in a

restaurant full of humans. His mate glowed, no doubt from the sex, and Gray couldn't help but watch the vein on Henry's neck pulse with every beat his heart made.

He should have fed when they fucked, but he hadn't, and now he wanted nothing more than to sink his fangs into Henry's vein, taste his blood as they fucked. He'd do it now, right on the table, but somehow he didn't think anyone else would appreciate it. Well, who knew? There were some kinky people out there who got off on voyeurism.

Clenching his hands, Gray took several deep breaths, watching Henry as he smiled at their waiter. The waiter smiled back and Gray gritted his teeth at the obvious look of attraction the waiter was giving Henry. Henry ignored it or was unaware, but Gray wasn't and he wanted to jump over the table and smack the shit out of the guy.

"Beer?"

Gray smiled and glared at the waiter, who swallowed and stepped back. Good. "Yeah."

The waiter nodded and shot off, which Gray enjoyed until he felt a kick under the table. He glanced at Henry, who was frowning at him. "Was it necessary to scare five years off his life?"

"Yes." Henry continued to frown, and Gray shrugged. Did he need to say more?

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“He was being friendly because he wants a tip.”

“He wants more than a tip.” Gray wagged his eyebrows, causing Henry to snort. “He wants the length, too.”

“And you had to glare him out of it.”

“You’re mine,” Gray growled. “No one touches you but me, which reminds me, have you told him that he’s single?” Oh yeah. The boyfriend Henry was in an open relationship with, the one he’d cheated on Gray with. He was purposely ignoring the fact they were in a relationship before Gray mated him and the fact Gray hadn’t told Henry he’d mated him.

“I can’t remember if I have or haven’t spoken to Jess about us. I mean, is there an ‘us’ or is this a fuck and run relationship? Yeah, you seem more open-minded about it all, but how long before the fact you’re mated to me makes you insane with anger and you leave?”

“Such a high opinion of me,” Gray muttered darkly.

“I’m speaking the truth,” Henry spoke quietly as he fiddled with his cutlery. “I’m the one who feels the loss when you’re not around. I have to take care of my health and we’re stuck. It doesn’t matter whether we like it or not, but we’re tied together for life now and I want a good, healthy life. I don’t want to be walking on eggshells around you and I don’t want to be...” Henry paused. “Stuck. I don’t want to be the one waiting around until you decide to turn up when the need becomes too much for you. I might be human, but I’m a man and I have needs, and wants, and desires.”

Gray straightened in his chair and leaned on the table. "I can give them to you. Why do you have to force me to answer? Why can't you let me go at my pace?"

"Because I'm the one who ends up sick." Henry's quietly spoken words had Gray sitting back in his chair. He rubbed his hand over his chin, watching Henry watch him. "I don't want to be in this yo-yo situation where I'm sick and then you turn up and we fuck, then you disappear again until I'm sick and round and round we go. We need to find common ground where we can build something from this. This is for life, isn't it? Neither one of us can walk away."

"Don't you think I know that?" Gray snapped out louder than he meant to going by the number of heads that turned in their direction. He inhaled swiftly and slowly exhaled.

"Two beers?"

"Thank you," Henry responded before Gray could open his mouth, and he watched Henry take a large mouthful of beer. "I'm ready to order, are you?"

Gray grunted and picked up the menu, then put it down without looking at it. He wanted to leave, and he knew Henry could pick that up from the way he was behaving. "Burger and fries."

"Hmm. I'll have the same."

"Good."

"Yeah."

Gray glanced around the restaurant, ignoring Henry, and wondered what the fuck he was doing. When Kelvin had suggested a meal out, he'd agreed, thinking it was a

good place to start to get to know his mate, and now that he was here, he was so over it. He wanted out. He wanted to be at home on his own and away from humans.

“You don’t want to be here. Too many H people?”

“H people?” What the fuck was Henry talking about?

“Humans,” Henry whispered. “Too much too soon?”

“Huh?” Maybe Henry had a point. Maybe this was why he felt like scratching his skin off. Too many humans. It felt like Gray had jumped straight in at the deep end and he couldn’t swim.

“We can get our food to go.”

“No,” Gray snapped, then winced.

“Okay,” Henry drew out the word. “I’m so excited.”

That was it. He was done. Gray stood and stormed out, leaving Henry at the table, and paced outside the restaurant. Several minutes later, Henry came out and walked past him. “Hey!”

“Fuck you.” Gray jogged to catch up to Henry, grabbing his arm and spinning him around. Henry snatched his arm away and jabbed Gray in the chest. “Fuck. You.”

“No chance. I do the fucking between us.”

“No chance,” Henry smirked, “because there’ll be no more fucking between us. I would rather be dead than have you touch me again. We are done. Time after time, I’ve let you treat me like shit, but no more. I have far too much self-respect to put up

with your stupid speciesist shit any more. Or whatever the fucking word is to describe how you despise my species, which includes me. You're either in or you're out, but this stops now because I'm done."

Henry spun and stormed away, and Gray let him go. What was the point? Kelvin and Key worked, but he and Henry didn't, and they never would. He needed to work out how many days he could go before he had to be close to Henry. He'd push to the max, too.

Disappearing, he appeared in his apartment and opened the fridge, grabbing a can of beer. Fuck it, he needed a drink, and he didn't get the one he wanted at the restaurant. He cracked it open and took a long drink before sighing and wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

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Shutting the fridge door, Gray walked into his bedroom, placed the can on the floor, and stripped. Staring at his limp dick had him scowling over the shitty situation he was stuck in. One he had not long ago decided to make the best of, yet here he was, pissed off over his human mate.

A vampire mate would be so much easier to deal with, and Gray would be able to tolerate being in their presence for longer than it took to fuck.

Dropping onto his bed, Gray sighed and ran a hand over his head. He'd fucked up again. He knew he had, but he hated having to admit it. If he didn't sort his fucking head out, he would have a mate who would rather wither away and die than be with him, which meant Gray was approaching a flatline where their relationship was concerned.

He had to find a way past his fucked up emotions where humans were involved, or at least where one particular human was involved. He kinda liked Henry. More than liked, if he was being honest.

Here he was again, going over and over the same old thoughts, all leading him to the same place.

He had to make it work with Henry. He had no choice. Neither of them did, and Gray wanted to live a long life. If he could make it work with Henry, then it would be a long and happy life. He didn't have to like humans in general, but he had to make an effort where his mate was concerned.

He should message him and arrange another date but somewhere less crowded, or

maybe bring Henry back to his place and cook. Now he was being all domesticated and shit, but he was mated. His life had changed. Forever.

Grabbing his phone, he called Kelvin. As soon as he answered, Gray asked, “What’s a good meal to cook for your mate?”

Kelvin didn’t answer at first. All Gray heard was Kelvin panting softly and realized he might have interrupted something. “Steak and something.” Kelvin hung up and Gray was left staring at his phone. Oh yeah. He had interrupted something. He’d have to apologize later, once he’d finished laughing his ass off. He could only imagine the look on Key’s face.

First, he had to go in to work and dig deep for information on Maxim and his alleged son. If he could get a name for the kid, then Gray knew they would have an easier time locating him. That they could use to their advantage.

The kid was a weakness, and Gray was willing to exploit any and every weakness he found. Maxim and his bunch of merry fuckwits needed to be found and dealt with as soon as possible. Preying on humans and potentially revealing their existence was something the council had ordered a stop to.

Minho was dealing with it in his own unique way. That was going out and smiling and flashing fangs at all the women who swooned at his feet. Helped that he was a good-looking bastard who would use those looks any way he could, except to entice people to his bed.

Gray couldn’t recall a time Minho had mentioned a partner, but Gray knew the vampire wouldn’t be sleeping alone. No one that good looking slept alone. Turning his mind away from Minho, Gray concentrated and appeared in his office and sat, staring at the blank monitor.

Sighing heavily, he switched it on and began the program that would search CCTV for Maxim and hopefully capture an image of his son. A couple of hours into the search, Key entered and coughed.

“You have the best timing.”

“Yep.” Gray smirked and carried on staring at his monitor.

“We were busy.”

“I know.”

Key muttered something under his breath and sat at his station. “Message next time, unless it’s an emergency.”

“Will do.” Grinning, Gray carried on working, ignoring Key.

“I hope he makes your life hell.”

“He’s already doing that.”

“Most of that is because you’re an idiot and you’re treating him like a piece of shit. He can’t change the fact he’s human, just like you can’t change the fact you’re a vampire, so try harder with him.”

Gray swiveled on his chair and stared at Key. “When I need your advice—”

“You called for Kelvin’s advice while we were fucking, so deal with any shit I send your way.”

“Key,” Gray murmured.

“Yes? Got something to say? Should I have my mate here so he can hear it too?” Key arched an eyebrow at Gray and he sucked in a lungful of air and slowly released.

“I apologize.”

“Wow. Really? That must have been hard for you to say.”

“Now you sound like Henry.”

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“And you’re the common denominator. Wonder what that says?”

Grunting, Gray turned away. “I’m trying.”

“Try harder.”

Ignoring Key, because the fucker was right, Gray got back to work. He had a son to find and a weakness to exploit.

Chapter Fourteen

Thank fuck he was at work. At least he could keep busy and not think about a certain vampire who annoyed him more than anyone else ever had. He’d really thought Gray had changed. The night before had been good until the restaurant. It had all gone downhill from there and Henry had seen how much his mate detested humans.

The way he watched them, monitored their movements, glared at them and the poor waiter. Sighing heavily, Henry checked the stock on a shelf, then moved farther down the aisle to check another item. He heard a grunt, but didn’t think much of it. He’d seen and heard plenty of things, so he’d learned to ignore certain sounds.

Crouching, he froze when the cold muzzle of a gun touched his temple. He swallowed hard and waited. He was at the mercy of whoever held the gun.

“Stand,” the deep voice ordered.

Henry slowly stood and faced the man. The man stepped back, the gun held steady in

his hand. Henry couldn't see his face due to the hoodie and scarf covering it, but it didn't matter. He wanted to live, so he was doing what the man asked.

“Empty the tills.”

Henry walked down the aisle and shook his head when Jasmine, a staff member, gasped. The last thing he wanted was for her to be injured. He needed to keep the man's attention on him. “I'll empty both tills.”

He staggered forward from the blow to his head, the pain causing him to bend over. The push in the back kept him moving, and he ignored the warm trickle down his neck. He reached the till, and as soon as he opened it, he was pushed aside.

They'd been robbed before. This wasn't new, so Henry took several calming breaths and waited for the man to empty both of them. He kept his eyes on his staff and the few customers who had wisely disappeared and waited. He knew as soon as the tills were empty, the man would leave.

It only took a minute or so for the man to have everything he wanted, then he turned and ran out. Henry sagged in relief, then picked up the phone to call the police. Not that they would do much, but at least the crime will have been logged for insurance purposes.

Putting the phone down, he began to usher the customers outside, apologizing as he did so. Some took it fine, but others shouted and screamed at him. Those he ignored as he continued to work. The staff were fine as most had dealt with these situations as well.

The number of times they had been robbed was well into double figures, but if it carried on, the shop would eventually close. No matter how much money a business made, if it continued to make losses through theft, then the owners would close up

shop.

This was a business, at the end of the day, and it wasn't the people who continued to rob it who felt the consequences. It was those who were employed there and the local community who shopped there. Employees lost their jobs, and the community lost a place to go when they needed food. Henry liked working there, but having a gun shoved in his face was getting old, and he was close to quitting.

Just as he was about to shut the front doors, the same man who had robbed them came back in and shoved Henry to the floor. He waved his gun around, then ran behind the counter to grab cigarettes and some of the alcohol they kept there.

Henry stayed where he was and waited for the man to leave again. He'd had people do this as well. Leave then come back. The man ran back out from behind the counter, stared Henry in the eyes, raised his gun, then shot him.

Henry heard the sound and felt a punch to his chest, throwing him backwards. He hit the floor and grunted. A second later, a burning, intense pain flooded his chest. It felt like he'd been hit by a burning sledge hammer. He lay on the floor, trying to breathe, but his lungs didn't want to work.

"Ambulance is on its way."

Henry tried to swallow to answer, but he couldn't speak. He cried out when Jasmine applied pressure to the wound, then gritted his teeth.

Henry

Fuck off

You're in pain

No shit Sherlock

Why?

Why do you care? Why the fuck was he arguing with Gray now? Now wasn't the time. And of all the times to reach out to him it had to be now when he was writhing in pain. We were robbed and I've been shot. Ambulance is on its way now.

Fuck! I'll be there in a minute. Henry closed his eyes and sighed, then winced. Where do you work?

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Henry didn't respond. He couldn't. Everything dimmed around him like he was entering a dark tunnel. He could hear voices above him, but they sounded far away. A voice in his head shouted his name, and he whispered, "Gray."

Gray shot forward in his chair, pain exploding in his chest. Grabbing his chest, Gray swallowed hard and waited for the pain to disperse. When it didn't, he pulled his T-shirt away from his chest and looked down, but saw nothing.

The pain wasn't his. That realization had him freezing. Shit. Not him. Henry.

Henry

Fuck off

You're in pain

No shit Sherlock

Why?

Why do you care? Gray didn't respond, hoping Henry would tell him without Gary having to ask again. We were robbed and I've been shot. Ambulance is on its way now.

Fuck! I'll be there in a minute. He stood then stopped. Where do you work? He should

know this, but he hadn't bothered to do a thorough check on his mate because his mate was human, and now he might lose him.

"Gray, you okay?"

"No!" He ran his fingers through his hair, then glanced at Hugo standing next to Key. "Henry's been shot."

"When?" Hugo stood next to him. "Where is he?"

"At work?" Key asked.

"Yeah. Some fucker was robbing them, then shot Henry. Fuck!" Gray tugged on his hair and spun around, then turned back to his desk.

"Key. Find out which hospital he's likely to go to."

"Go to where he works. They will have to treat and stabilize him first."

You don't know where I work? Seriously?

Please Henry.

Henry told him and Gray appeared around the side of the building. There was no ambulance as he rushed to the front door. Pushing it, he realized it was shut. Seeing Henry on the floor, he concentrated and moved to an aisle near his mate.

Within seconds, he was next to Henry and looked him over. "I need to see your back."

Henry grunted. "No."

“I need to check if the bullet is still in there or not.” Gray didn’t wait, but carefully took Henry’s shoulder and rolled him over. Henry moaned as Gray checked the area, wincing when he felt the bones move under his fingers. “Clean through, but the bones are possibly broken.”

“I can feel them,” Henry paled, his lips blue and thin, stress and pain lining his face.

“When will the ambulance get here?”

“I don’t know.” A blonde-haired woman, her cheeks wet, shook her head. “I don’t know why he shot Henry. He did everything the man wanted, gave him everything.”

“It’s fine,” Henry mumbled.

Gray had to get his mate out of there and to a vampire medic. They were mated, and that will have had some effects on Henry. The connection they had would show up in blood work. Gray had bitten and fed from Henry, his saliva entering Henry’s bloodstream and altering him so he would live as long as Gray. Be stronger, faster, recover quicker. It would be noticed, especially by doctors, when Henry recovered from the gunshot far quicker than the average human.

Grabbing his phone, Gray stepped back and called the one person he should have spoken to when he’d mated Henry. “Alma. I need your help.” Alma was a female vampire and a sitting member of the council. It also helped that she was a good friend of Gray’s.

“What’s wrong?”

He liked that about her. She was straight to the point. “I mated a human and I will stand before the council, but I need help. He’s been shot and you know he can’t go to a human hospital. Not now he’s mated to me.”

“Gray,” Alma sighed. “Where is he? Is he at a hospital or en route?”

“He’s in a shop. They were robbed, and he was shot in the process. The bullet went through the shoulder, but the bone is a mess. He’ll need surgery.”

“I see. Can you bring him here? I’ll need to know his blood type so I can ensure we have some ready for him.”

“O positive and I’ll teleport him straight there. I need to get him out of here first. There’s a crowd.”

“I’ll send some people over to create a diversion. Make sure the cameras are off. Oh, and Gray? You’ll be spoken to as soon as he’s out of danger.”

Alma hung up and Gray quickly called Key. “I need you to mess the CCTV up here. Some vamps are coming to help me get Henry out.”

“On it.”

Gray shoved his phone in his pocket and as he approached Henry, he heard banging and shouting coming from the front of the shop. “Stop them!” he ordered. The

humans all ran over to the front door just as the glass shattered. Gray ignored it, leaned over Henry, and picked him up in his arms.

Henry cried out, but the sound didn't travel far. One second they were in the shop, and the next Gray stood in the emergency room at the vampire hospital. A bed quickly appeared and Gray lay Henry on it. He watched his mate as they wheeled him inside, and when he went to follow, a nurse shook her head.

"We need to take some of your blood in case your mate needs it."

"Why?"

"If he's lost too much blood, your blood will sustain him until we can replace his and it will help speed up his recovery. Councilwoman Alma called to inform us you would be arriving and what blood type we would need. We have some here for another human mate, so you're lucky we didn't have to borrow some."

"Borrow?"

The nurse shrugged her shoulders, her long black hair flowing down her back. "We don't normally carry human blood, but with a human mate living among us, we felt it wise to have some just in case, otherwise one of us would have to drop in at the local blood bank and borrow some."

"Ah. You mean steal some?"

The nurse shrugged again, then pointed to a door. "I need to take some of your blood. Follow me."

Gray went through the double doors and followed the nurse down a hallway and into a side room. He sat where she pointed and rolled up his sleeve, watching as she

grabbed what she needed to take his blood. He glanced away when she approached with the needle and hid the wince when it pierced his skin. Gray had been in fights, had knives and guns shoved in his face, but a needle? Fucking hated them.

Once the nurse finished, Gray rolled his sleeve down and left the room. In the waiting room, he paced until a nurse sighed. “Sit down. You’re making the place look untidy.”

“Where is the wonderful bedside manner I hear about?”

“See a bed around here?” The nurse scanned the waiting room, arched an eyebrow and returned to the paperwork in front of her. “All you can do is wait. We’ll let you know how he is when we can.”

Gray sat and dropped his face into his hands. He could have lost his mate and the last words they spoke were ones said in anger. His mate could have died and Gray would never have been able to apologize, to treat Henry the way he should be, to tell him he’ll try harder.

He was an idiot.

Chapter Fifteen

Henry woke alone, in a room he didn’t recognize. The scent told him he was in a hospital of some sort, but not one he’d ever been in before. It looked like one of those expensive ones that only the rich could afford. The sheets on the bed felt so soft and smooth, the furniture appeared to be solid oak.

It was a nice place to recover after being shot, which made him think about Gray.

Hearing a sound in the corner of the room, Henry glanced over, seeing his so-called

mate asleep in a chair. Gray had come for him and brought him to this place, and now he was here in the room with him. Kinda made Henry feel warm inside. If only that feeling would last.

When Gray stirred, Henry closed his eyes, ignoring the sounds Gray made as he sat up. “Henry.”

He should have known Gray would know he was awake. The difference in breathing in his heartbeat would have been picked up by Gray. “Yeah.”

“How do you feel?”

“Like I got shot.”

A scrape of a chair, then footsteps approached the bed. Henry kept his eyes shut, as the pain made itself known. “Here’s the button to the morphine if you need it.”

Opening his eyes, Henry stared up at Gray, seeing the fatigue on his face. The lines bracketing his mouth and eyes, the dark circles beneath them. “How long have you been here?”

“I haven’t left.”

Henry’s eyes widened. “You were here all this time? How long have I been here?”

“You had to have surgery, so twenty-four hours.”

“And you stayed here the whole time?” Ignoring the pain in his shoulder, Henry tried to sit, but hissed.

Gray leaned over him and put his hands under the uninjured arm and helped him upright. “Where else would I be?” he asked softly.

“Do people know?”

“About us being mated?” Henry nodded. “Yeah. I’m in trouble and have to speak to the council. We have a rule that we can’t mate with humans unless the council

agrees.”

“Really?” Henry grimaced and reached for the button, pressing it once.

“It used to be that we couldn’t mate with humans at all, but it’s changed since. It’s protecting us and humans. You don’t know we exist and if humans did find out and wanted to cause us harm, they could reveal our existence to the world. We’d be fucked.”

“Some humans wouldn’t care.” Even as Henry spoke the words, he knew some humans would hunt vampires down for fun and some would experiment on them. He wasn’t blind to the faults of his fellow humans.

“And you know not all humans are like that.”

“I know.” Swallowing, Henry searched the room for water and then gasped in surprise when Gray held a cup of water for him. “Thank you.”

“I’ve been a shitty mate.”

“Have you now? I wouldn’t have guessed.”

Wincing, Gray nodded. “I want to try. I know I’ll fuck up. I’ll say the wrong thing and hurt you, but I want to try.”

“I should have been shot sooner.”

Wincing again, Gray looked away. “It shouldn’t take you being shot for me to realize I’ve been a bastard. No, I knew I was being a bastard, and I didn’t care or I did and didn’t act on it. Fuck, I don’t know what I mean.”

Watching Gray struggle made Henry happy, but not too happy. He could see what Gray was trying to do. “We can start again.” He smiled, then giggled.

“And the morphine’s kicked in.”

“It’s nice and you look nice, but rough. And you smell.” Henry giggled again and hummed. Everything was so good right then. Lifting his hand, he giggled again. He was flouting on a cloud of happiness.

“So you’re one of those who get all giggly and shit on morphine.”

“Not you?”

“I throw up. Every time I have it, I’m sick.”

“It’s sucks to be you!” Henry sang the words and giggled again when Gray frowned at him.

There was a knock on the door and a nurse came in, smiling at Henry. “It’s nice to see you awake.”

“I’ve had morphine!” Henry grinned. “I feel so good!”

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The nurse nodded and checked the machine, pressing a few buttons. “That’s good to know. Any pain?”

“Nope! None! I feel good!” He giggled again. “I need this at home for when I deal with my mate. He has a stick up his ass.”

The nurse sucked her lips in and nodded. “I’m sure your mate is pleased to hear that.”

“The mate is sitting right here.”

“Yes, he is, and he’s a keeper... not!” Henry giggled again. “I might keep him, though. He’s a good fuck.”

“And it’s time for you to leave.” Gray stood and tried to usher the nurse out of the room, but she batted his hands away. “I’m sure you’ve taken all the measurements you need to.”

“I’ve heard far worse.” The nurse wrote down numbers and asked a few more questions, but Henry giggled instead of answering them. “Okay. I’ll come back in a couple of hours when the morphine has had time to wear off.”

Henry’s stomach churned and his mouth flooded with saliva. “I don’t feel so good.” Gray grabbed a bucket and shoved it under Henry’s face just as he vomited. Henry groaned and vomited again. “I don’t like drugs now.”

Closing his eyes, Henry sighed and lay back. He really didn’t like being shot.

Gray held the bucket at arm's length and watched his mate succumb to sleep, ignoring the stench of vomit. The nurse took the bucket from him and walked out of the room, saying, "let him sleep."

Gray pulled a chair closer to the bed and watched his mate. His gorgeous and sexy mate. He was an idiot, but he knew that and he would do everything he could to change the way he saw humans. It wouldn't happen overnight, but he would make the effort because Henry deserved a mate who could be there for him. Not a mate who turned up when he had to.

When the door opened behind him, Gray saw Kelvin and nodded. Standing, he kissed Henry's forehead and followed Kelvin out of the room.

"Alma understands, but you'll be in trouble."

"I know. I should have gone to them straight away when we'd mated. Kinda like how you should have."

Kelvin shrugged. "Hope they don't give you sanitation duty."

"I run our security, so I imagine it'll be something else."

Kelvin shrugged and disappeared, Gray quickly following. They stood outside the council chambers and Gray pushed open the door, walking to stand in front of the council members.

"How is your mate?" Council woman Alma asked.

"He's recovering well, though his reaction to morphine is interesting."

“You know why you’re here?”

“I broke our law regarding mating. It was accidental.” Wincing, Gray shook his head.

“I didn’t realize until after and then I denied it.”

“We’re aware of your...fondness for humans.”

“Well, I guess I have to work on that now.”

“Hmm. We’ve been discussing your punishment, and we’ve come to the agreement that you being mated to a human is your punishment.”

Gray glared at the councilman who’d spoken. “I’m honored to have Henry as my mate.”

“So honored you almost lost him.” The councilman moved on his chair. “You’re mated to the very species you hate, and you have to adapt. You have to face those emotions you have and learn to overcome them or your mating is doomed. You know this because you’ve been dealing with it. Unsatisfactorily, I would guess, as well.”

Gray nodded. “I haven’t treated my mate well, but I intend to do so from now on.”

“Good. An addition to your punishment is to help in the community outreach.”

The community outreach. A place where vampires worked with humans who knew about them and helped the local area. He would be around humans. “I see.”

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“We’re lucky to have those humans who work with us in improving the standards of those living in the area. All they want is to make everyone’s lives better. You’ll still have to work in security, but you have community service as well. You’re going to be busy.”

“I’m sure that will give your mate time to recover and adjust to his new life with us,” Councilwoman Alma smiled.

“I’ll help him in any way I can.”

“You start at the center tomorrow.”

Gray nodded and left the chambers, standing outside. “Shit.”

“Could have been worse.” Kelvin nodded then left.

“Yeah.” It could have been, as in him dying. Shit. How the fuck was he going to work with a bunch of humans?

Epilogue

One Year Later

Henry left work and walked around the corner, then smiled when he saw Gray leaning against a wall. Gray held out his hand and Henry closed his eyes as they moved locations. He was slowly getting used to this mode of travel, but it still took his stomach a few seconds to settle once he appeared in their apartment.

“How was work?” Gray stood in front of him and kissed his cheek, then slid his lips over Henry’s.

Henry moaned into the kiss. “The usual. We didn’t get robbed today.” He didn’t have to deal with that now that he worked at the outreach center. Gray didn’t work there now he’d finished his community service, which was a good thing. Working and living together didn’t work for them, and they’d had a few arguments until Gray had finished.

Once he’d stopped working there, their mating clicked. It had been a hard few months until then and many times Henry had threatened to walk, but here they were and he was happy he’d stayed and tried. Gray wasn’t all sunshine and rainbows, but he was working on improving himself.

Gray’s hands roamed over Henry’s back and Henry arched closer, needing more contact. Gray grabbed the hem of Henry’s T-shirt and pulled it up. Henry lifted his arms and once it was free, he wrapped them around Gray’s shoulders.

“I want you,” Gray murmured as he licked over the pulsing vein in Henry’s neck.

“Bite me.”

“I want to be inside you when I do.”

Henry stepped back and stripped, then grinned when Gray did the same. Gray took his hand and led him over to the sofa, sitting and pulling Henry onto his lap. Henry placed a leg on either side of Gray’s and moaned when he felt Gray’s hard length nudge his hole.

Gray grabbed the lube they kept next to the sofa and lubed his dick before spreading some over Henry’s hole. He pushed two fingers in and Henry rode them like they were Gray’s dick, which he wanted more. Henry moaned when they disappeared,

then sighed when he sank down on Gray's long, hard dick.

Henry didn't wait to adjust. They fucked often enough that he didn't need to, so he lifted then dropped until he had a nice rhythm. Gray held him by the hips and Henry dropped his head back, moaning softly. It felt so good to be filled, stretched by his mate.

Gray slid his hands up Henry's back and Henry knew what his mate wanted. He leaned down so their faces were close and kissed Gray, sweeping his tongue inside his mate's mouth. Gray moaned as he thrust up, his hands gripping Henry's shoulders just the way he liked.

"Need..."

Henry knew what Gray needed. He could feel it between them, feel the growing desire to bite in their bond and he bent his head to one side, whispering, "Bite me." Gray hissed and then Henry cried out, pleasure and pain flowing through him as Gray's fangs pierced his skin. His orgasm burst over him, the world disappearing in a sea of bliss.

Slumping over Gray, Henry panted softly, his heart beating fast in his chest. Gray ran his hands over his back as he licked the bite, sealing it. Henry could feel how Gray felt, feel the love through their bond even though his mate had never uttered the words. Henry hadn't either, but he knew Gray was aware of how he felt. Henry didn't think they needed to say the words when they could share the emotions in such an intimate way between them.

"Hungry?"

"I could eat," Henry murmured, his eyes closing.

"Eat before you sleep."

“Hmm.”

Gray chuckled and nudged Henry, causing him to open his eyes. “I’ve cooked. It’s in the oven.”

“You cooked?” Henry sat up, ignoring Gray’s dick slipping free from his ass and the come that followed. “Shower first?”

“You want more?”

Henry licked his lips. “I want to suck you.”

Gray grinned and kissed him deeply. “Who am I to say no?” Henry felt the pulse of love through their bond and smiled. They didn’t need to say the words. They knew how they felt about each other, and that was all Henry needed.

Gray picked him up, causing Henry to laugh. Time for more sexy fun with his mate, and who was he to complain about that?

The End