



By The Moon

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Description: Louis Brown had met his mate when he was a child. Waiting for him to mature had been difficult but worth it. His mate had grown into a smart, kind, and gorgeous man. One, Louis was proud to call his mate.

The moment Jerome Owens met Louis he knew his life was about to change. He felt a strange connection to him and when he found out Louis was a vampire, he wasn't frightened. Instead, it explained why Jerome felt so drawn to him.

When Jerome woke up in a strange room with a deranged vampire, he knew his mate would come for him, but would Louis reach him in time, or would Jerome be lost forever?

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Chapter One

Louis Brown laughed as Hugo grinned. They were talking about Gray and how he'd pissed off his mate, Henry. Again. It was a regular occurrence for Gray to put his foot in it but he was lucky to have a mate who understood that Gray was trying hard to make their mating work.

Gray detested humans but had ended up mated to one, and watching the two collide had been fun. Right up until the point when Henry had been shot in an armed robbery. At that point, Gray had put his feelings regarding humans to one side and worked on being a damn good mate.

Most times he succeeded, but old feelings were hard to completely banish and Gray could be one sarcastic motherfucker who spoke his mind. That made his mate speak his mind, and then they came to blows. Not physical ones, but enough words would be spoken that they would end up not talking.

According to Henry, however, the make-up sex was more than worth it and he loved Gray.

Louis knew how it felt to love your mate, not that he was mated to anyone. Physically, that is. He had a mate, but Louis had held back because when he'd met his mate, he'd been twelve. A boy, still growing, and Louis had walked away. What else could he do?

Jerome Owens, his mate, needed to grow, needed to live and without Louis hanging over him. Jerome would have felt the pull, the connection, the need to be together,

and he was far too young to understand why, plus Louis wasn't going to take someone when they were a child. He wasn't that kind of vampire.

Louis had stayed away and watched his mate grow from a distance, watched him become a man. He was in college now, studying biochemistry, and Louis couldn't be prouder of the kind of man Jerome was growing into.

He could still remember the day they'd met like it was yesterday. Jerome had been waiting outside his school when Louis had caught sight of him. He'd been there chasing one of Maxim's vampires and had changed course when he'd seen the human boy, as had the other vampire. He'd managed to keep the vampire away, forcing him to go in another direction.

If Maxim's man had reached Jerome, then he would have become a victim, a shield, and more than likely would have died. When Louis had scented him he'd known instantly who the young boy was to him and that he had to stay far, far away from him.

Maxim's man had spotted Jerome and gone after him, as Louis had expected. They'd fought, no doubt scaring Jerome, and Louis had managed to chase the rogue vampire away. Once he was gone, Louis had gone back to check on the boy. Huge mistake. Jerome had embraced him, staring up at him with gorgeous brown eyes, and Louis had made some excuse and left the area, but he couldn't stay away. Not completely. He'd watched from a distance. Watched as his mate had matured and grown into a man, and he liked who he was becoming.

The only time Louis had given in and gone to his mate's side was when Jerome's mother had passed. He couldn't stay away, not when he was needed, and he'd visited him while Jerome had slept, or tried to. The whimpering in his sleep had caused Louis to put aside his promise to stay away. Taking his young mate in his arms, Jerome had helped him sleep peacefully for the first time in days.

He hadn't touched him in any way that would have crossed a line, but he'd held him and stroked his hair, murmuring softly. At least at this time he'd been able to offer comfort, even though his mate wouldn't have known it was from him.

After holding his mate, Louis had found it incredibly hard to stay away, but it had to be done. Holding his mate, feeling his soft hair and smooth skin, had pushed Louis to the edge, but he'd never gone over. No, he'd never crossed a line no matter how much the need to mate had clawed at him.

Now Jerome was eighteen and Louis had thought about how they would accidentally meet. Accidentally bump into one another.

“What are your plans for tonight?”

Louis had completely forgotten Hugo was in the bar with him. It was a vampire bar near where they lived so they didn't have to hide what they were, and Louis liked to go there to wind down after a long shift at work.

“I'm going to hit a club. Need to go out and have some fun.”

“Tell me about it. I've been ‘all work and no play’ and my hand is getting friction burns.”

“Thanks Hugo. Just the image I wanted before heading out to get laid.”

Hugo grinned and waggled his eyebrows. “You know me. Always here to help.”

“What's the bet on how long Gray can go without pissing Henry off?”

“We started the bet after the last big blow out and he's doing well this time. Up to a full two weeks and no arguments.”

Louis grunted and sipped his beer. “Henry has to have a shit ton of will power and patience.”

“Being mated helps.”

“I wonder if Henry screams at him verbally and mentally at the same time?” Louis winced. “No wonder Gray looks like death warmed over some days.”

“Nah, that will be because they spent all day fucking. I’ve been in his apartment and they’re both pretty vocal.”

“All that passion has to be used up somehow. Fighting and fucking. Maybe it’s their thing.” Louis once again thought about his mate. The dark curls, dark skin and deep hazel eyes. He had never seen a man as gorgeous as his mate, and he knew he never would.

Even though Jerome had been twelve when they met, Louis had remained faithful to him. He wouldn’t cheat on his mate, even if his mate was a child. He knew Jerome hadn’t played around either. Jerome had had a few boyfriends, but nothing serious. Nothing that had lasted. He’d watched him enough over the years to know how focused he was on his education.

“Anyone will do or are you looking for someone in particular?” Hugo asked, and Louis glanced at him.

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Leaning back in his chair, he asked, “why the sudden interest?”

Shrugging, Hugo glanced away. “Two of us have found their mates. Wondering when it’ll be my turn, you know.”

“Get out there and he or she will turn up.” Louis knew Hugo was bi and had no problems sleeping with either sex. He didn’t lean one way or the other. He was an equal opportunity kinda guy.

“I’m doing extra patrols since Maxim’s reappearance.”

“Bastard.” Louis sighed heavily. “Why can’t he just fuck off and die? We could all move on with our lives then. The other side would slowly wither away and die too.”

“If only. If Maxim disappeared, we both know there would be someone else to take his place.”

“Yeah but a vamp can dream.”

“Heard about the son?”

Louis sipped his beer and nodded. “Yeah but we don’t have any accurate information. Just rumors and some vague comments.”

“Gray’s working on getting some solid intel. A son could be a potential weakness we can exploit.” Hugo hissed. “Hate dragging a kid into this, but we need to stop that bastard and his merry band of fuckwits.”

“I know what you mean, but this kid is probably a mini me, you know. Like father, like son.” Louis hoped not, but the chances weren’t great. Maxim demanded absolute obedience.

“The apple didn’t fall too far from the tree? I hope not but you’re probably right. When you grow up in that type of environment, it affects you. It affects how you see the world.”

“What’s the saying? No child is born to hate. It’s the people around them, the environment they grow up in. That’s what sets them up on the path they travel.”

“Getting away from it helps, too. Hearing views that don’t align with your own and actually listening to them.” Hugo finished his drink and sighed. “We’ll just have to wait and see.”

“We’re being all heavy here. I came here to relax and unwind and we’re talking shop.” Louis finished his drink and signalled the bar staff. “Another?”

“Yeah. I’ll have one more then go back. I’m on the early shift tomorrow.”

“I’m off, thankfully. Feels like I’ve worked non-stop for days and I need a break.”

“We need more people now that we have humans. I like Key and Henry but they are a weakness that could be used against us.”

“I guess that’s why Gray makes sure all the cameras are working.”

Hugo grunted. “Did you say something about a club?”

Louis nodded but didn’t respond immediately while he ordered their drinks from the guy behind the bar. Once he’d paid, he nodded. “Yeah. Once I finish this I’ll go out

and see what's available."

"You could do with having a night of fun. Find someone willing to dirty up the sheets with you. You could do with some release." Hugo grinned and waggled his eyebrows. "You're all tense."

"I plan to, and you should as well. Weren't you the one talking about friction burns?"

"And weren't you the one saying too much info?" Hugo grinned and took a mouthful of beer. Sighing, he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "I wish I could but I don't want to be hung over tomorrow. With Maxim around we all need to be level-headed."

Louis nodded and took a mouthful of beer. The need to see Jerome was pulling at him, and he knew he'd be at Jerome's home before the night was through. He knew Jerome went home every other weekend, so that was where Louis was going to go after his beer. Just to see him and make sure he was safe.

"We need to find where Maxim is currently staying and take care of him. Him and his men are beginning to cause us problems—more so than normal, that is. It feels like he's gearing up for something."

Hugo sipped his beer and nodded. "He's been quiet for too long. He's had years to plan as well. Wonder if he's going to start something."

"I think that's what we're seeing now. As you said he's had years, and now he's out and about, showing up after years of nothing. And the son. Where is he?" Louis wanted to get his hands on the kid, if he existed. They still had nothing to prove Maxim had a child, so where had the rumor of a son come from? They needed to chase that down and investigate whether the rumors were true or not.

“Let Gray deal with it.”

Louis grunted. “You know he’ll pass it off to one of us. He has too much to deal with as it is, and then there’s Henry.”

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“Who he loves even if it did take him a long time to get his head out of his ass.”

Louis had no such problem with his mate. He didn't care that Jerome was human. The only problem he'd had was meeting Jerome at such a young age, but that was over now. Jerome was at university and a man, an adult, and one Louis could now meet, could have a conversation with.

Would Jerome remember him?

Finishing his beer, Louis stood, stretched his six foot tall body, said goodbye to Hugo and thought of Jerome. A second later he was standing outside his mate's house, watching him leave. “I'll be fine, Dad.”

“Make sure you are and take things with you.”

Take things with you? Where was his mate going? “I'm going out with friends. Why do I need to take things? I'm not hitting the clubs, you know.”

“Really? Like I wasn't your age once. Be careful.”

Jerome waved and got in the car. Louis was close enough to hear the name of a club mentioned. So his mate was going clubbing. Maybe now was the time to introduce himself.

Chapter Two

Jerome watched his latest and now ex-boyfriend leave and sighed in relief. He wasn't

sure why he couldn't go beyond kissing with the men he was with, but as soon as they wanted more, he broke out in a cold sweat and backed away. They usually left at some point when he wouldn't put out, and Den was the last in a what felt like a long line of men. It was actually three, but still.

Maybe it was because of him. The man he'd met when he was younger, the one who had saved him. There was something about him. Something that had made Jerome dream of him, of them both. Naked, under the sheets, kissing and touching, licking and fucking.

He'd never had sex, never had a hand job, but he wanted them all with his mysterious savior. Could meeting someone for a few minutes make you avoid all men? Jerome believed so. The man who he'd met, the one he was sure had comforted him when his mom had passed, was the only one Jerome wanted. He tried with men, but nothing worked even when he'd been desperate for something. A spark of lust, of arousal, but nothing happened.

Here he was. Single. Again.

He didn't care, not that much.

Standing, Jerome left his dorm room and knocked on the door of the room next door. His friend Sage bunked there and hated Stan, his roommate. He hated him so much he faked a break in so he could destroy Stan's work.

Jerome hadn't agreed, especially as he knew how much time and effort went into assignments. Sage was unrepentant, and that was when he found out his roommate had come onto him one night and Sage had had to physically fight him off. A kick to the nuts had done the job. Sage had asked to transfer but there had been nowhere to go, so he was stuck.

Sage opened the door, glanced up and down the hallway. “Come in.”

Jerome entered and winced. Sage’s side of the room was neat and tidy. The other side... not so much. There was food all over the floor, dirty clothes, papers, notes, books, used glasses, cups and more as well. Jerome skirted the edge of the destruction and sat on Sage’s bed.

“Is anything living in there?”

“I heard rustling the other night so who the fuck knows? The dirty bastard.”

“Still giving you problems?”

Jerome moved back on the bed until he reached the wall and leaned against it as Sage answered. “He likes to walk around naked and don’t ask me how I know he doesn’t clean his ass after taking a shit.”

“Sage. You need to speak to someone.”

“Don’t you think I haven’t tried that like a thousand times already? There is nowhere else for me to go. I even said I’d sleep on the floor, but nope. Rules and regulations and health and safety. Blah fucking blah.” Sage dropped onto the bed next to him, his blond hair falling over his forehead. He moved it out of the way and glared at the mess across from them, his blue eyes growing frosty. “I hope he falls and breaks his legs.”

“Sage—”

“Don’t give me the ‘don’t be mean’ talk. You don’t have to live in this. I’ve taken photos and shown them what it’s like. All they did was issue a warning. Pretty sure I saw a cockroach the other day, but if I complain too much they’ll have a word with

me.” Sage kicked some of the shit on the floor. “Where’s what’s his face?”

Jerome sighed because he knew why. “We broke up.”

“No surprise there.” Sage gave Jerome a pointed look. “It’s him. Your mystery man.”

“I don’t even know who he is,” Jerome murmured, then pulled his feet back when he heard rustling from the other side of the room. “You know what? Grab some things and crash with us. Alan won’t mind.”

“Yeah he’s good, you know and I think he hates dickhead as much as we do.”

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Jerome scooted off the bed and almost jumped over the disgusting pile of crap on the floor. He waited as Sage packed a few things, including his college work, and left the room. Back inside Jerome's, he created some space on his desk and let Sage use it.

"It even smells better in here." Sage dropped his bag and stretched. "Aren't you going home this weekend?"

"Just grabbing a few more things then I'll be on my way. You're welcome to stay the weekend. You know Alan doesn't mind." Alan was Jerome's roommate and an all-around nice guy, who detested Stan as much as Sage did.

"I like Alan. Nice guy who just goes with the flow."

Jerome pulled his backpack out from under his bed and finished putting his work inside. He'd packed it earlier and was waiting to see what would happen with Den. He knew, but still he'd wanted to see what would happen.

After sending a quick message to Alan to let him know Sage was staying, Jerome picked up his bag. "I'll be back Sunday."

"Make sure you hit the clubs."

Laughing, Jerome fist bumped Sage and left the dorm, taking the elevator down to the front. His dad, Shaun, sat waiting outside and as soon as Jerome got in the car, he drove off. "How was it?"

"Good. Glad to be home though." Jerome waited a beat, then added, "Den broke up

with me.”

“His loss.” Shaun grunted. “The right man will come along, son. Just you wait and see.” As Shaun drove, he asked, “Going out tonight?”

“I need a night out,” Jerome mused. Grinning at Shaun, he asked, “What if I don’t come home?”

“I’d say good because your sister is home too.”

“No,” Jerome wailed then laughed. “Final year stress. Not looking forward to it.”

“You with biochemistry, Candice with molecular biology and me somehow managing to get a high school diploma.”

“We’re only where we are because of you and Mom. You gave us everything we needed to be where we are today. Wasn’t it you who always told us to not put ourselves down?”

“Don’t use my words against me, boy.” Shaun grinned. “You going to Craig’s?”

“Yeah. A few of us are going over to his house. Might play some games, you know.”

“Hmm. I know. I was your age once.”

Jerome and Shaun talked on the drive home and, at some point, Jerome fell asleep. He was nudged awake by Shaun and sat up, seeing his home in front of him. “I fell asleep?”

“Didn’t take long, and you needed it. I even stopped at McD’s and you didn’t wake up.”

“Damn. I must have been tired.” Jerome got out of the car, yawned and stretched, then grabbed his bag from the back seat. Following Shaun inside, he went to his bedroom and emptied his bag, grabbing his dirty clothes and putting them in the utility room. One bonus of going home was making sure all his clothes were washed. Not that he didn’t do laundry at college, but there was something about being home and having them cleaned there.

Seeing the items he’d packed for hitting the clubs later, Jerome smiled. Maybe it was time to put his mystery man from his mind, but when he thought about it, he lost his breath. What was it about the man who’d saved him that night? Why did Jerome always think about him?

“Jerome!”

Jerome shook his head and jogged downstairs and into the kitchen. Shaun had put a coffee on the counter for him, and some chocolate. “Thanks Dad. I need this.”

“I’m making quesadillas for dinner.”

“Nice. Haven’t had them in a while. Food at college isn’t great.” That made Jerome remember the food package that had mysteriously arrived for him the week before. It wasn’t the first time, either. “I meant to thank you for the food you sent.”

“Wasn’t me this time.” Shaun arched an eyebrow. “Seems you have an admirer.”

“Who sends me food?” Not that he was really complaining. The food had lasted him all week. “It had all my faves in it, too,” he mumbled around a piece of chocolate he’d shoved in his mouth.

“An admirer and a stalker?” Shaun looked at Jerome. “Just to be safe, keep your eyes open when you’re out.”

“It isn’t the first time.”

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“You’ve mentioned it happening before, but you still need to be careful.”

“I will. Did I tell you Sage is staying in my place this weekend?”

“The school needs to sort that shit out. He shouldn’t be afraid to stay in his own room because of his roommate. He said no and now look what he’s dealing with.”

“I was in there earlier. I’m pretty sure there is something living under his bed. Sage’s side is clean and tidy, but Stan’s side...” Jerome shivered. “I had to be careful where I stood.”

“He needs to take photos and show them what he’s living with.”

“You think he hasn’t?” Jerome shook his head. “The place was clean for a week then went downhill again and Sage had to deal with more abuse. He told me earlier this week he’s considering changing schools. Me and Alan talked about Sage crashing at ours. It would be crowded but we’d manage.”

“None of you should have to put up with him.” Shaun almost spat the word out. “Have Sage’s parents been in contact?”

“No, because he hasn’t said anything. They talk when they have to.” Sage didn’t have the best home life, so the less contact he made with his parents, the better. Sage only told Jerome small things, but it was enough for Jerome to understand some people should never be parents. Just because you could didn’t mean you should.

“Next time you come home, bring him with you.”

“Thanks, Dad. I will.” Shoving another piece of chocolate in his mouth, Jerome asked, “When we going to eat?”

“When Candice has finished her assignment.” Shaun side eyed Jerome. “You could go and say hello to her.”

“And disturb her when she’s working? I hate it when someone does it to me.”

“I’m finished anyway.” Candice walked into the kitchen, her long dark curls bouncing around her head, and gave Jerome a hug. “How are classes?”

“Hard, a lot of information, but good. I like it. Exams?” Jerome sympathized. He had exams coming up, but these were Candice's final year ones so there was more pressure.

“Soon, the same as you.” Candice snatched a piece of Jerome’s chocolate and popped in her mouth. “I heard Sage mentioned. I like him.”

“He likes you too.” Jerome waggled his eyebrows and jumped out of the way when Candice went to hit him.

“Not like that and you know it.”

“I think I’ll get the food started.” Shaun gave them both a look.

“I’ll do the salad.” Jerome rushed over to the fridge, nudging Candice out of the way. “I called it!”

“You big kid!” Candice tried to push him but Jerome refused to move.

“Jerome can do the salad and Candice can help me prepare the veggies and cheese.”

Jerome grinned at Candice, who flipped him off. He grabbed what he needed from the fridge and spent the next few minutes making the salad. By the time he was done, he could smell food cooking and his stomach rumbled. Damn, he was starving. Nothing beat home cooking.

Once everything was cooked, they sat and ate, talking about friends they knew, people from their classes. After everything had been cleaned and put away, Jerome went to his bedroom to shower and change. Staring at his reflection in the mirror, Jerome nodded to himself. Not too bad.

In the living room, Shaun looked him up and down. “Craig’s, huh?”

“Yes, and we may do something after.” His phone beeped telling him his cab had arrived. “See ya later!” Shaun followed him outside and Jerome shook his head. “I’ll be fine, Dad.”

“Make sure you are and take things with you.”

Jerome rolled his eyes. “I’m going out with friends. Why do I need to take things? I’m not hitting the clubs, you know.”

“Really? Like I wasn’t your age once. Be careful.”

Jerome waved and got in the car. Time to have some fun.

Chapter Three

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Louis entered the club and scanned the area. It was crowded, which was no surprise. It was the weekend, and people came out to celebrate the end of the working week. Relax and have some fun. Whatever that may be. Louis searched until he found the person he was looking for. His mate sat at the bar.

Hardening his jaw, his lean, toned body tensing, Louis saw a man approach his mate and try to engage him in conversation. Nope, that wasn't happening. Jerome was his and Louis was finally going to do something about it. The man needed to get the hell away from Louis' mate.

Why was Jerome here, though? In a fucking gay bar. His mate in a fucking gay bar. The ID must be good considering Jerome wasn't old enough to be in one. Or maybe someone thought he was fresh meat and let him inside. Didn't matter either way.

Louis walked over to the bar, making sure he could see his mate and the man trying to chat him up. His mate's dark skin glowed under the lights and Louis' mouth watered with the need to taste it. As he reached his mate, he heard Jerome tell the man he didn't want to go anywhere with him.

The man shrugged a shoulder and leaned on the bar all casual, and that made Louis pull his lips back in a snarl. His fangs elongated, and he struggled to pull his vampire instincts back. Now wasn't the time to let his mate side out, not when his mate didn't even know what Louis was.

Louis wasn't even sure if Jerome remembered him.

Jerome shook his head. "I said no, so please leave me alone. If I was interested, we

would already be doing something, but I'm not, so go."

"Come on. I can tell you're playing hard to get. Let's find a nice dark corner and I can show you what this mouth can do."

Jerome chuckled and Louis stepped closer. "Thanks, but no."

Louis took another step closer at the same time as the man did but Jerome held his hand up. "Come on. You come to a gay club and say no? Why the fuck you here if you're not gonna put out?"

"Put out? Such a nice way of saying fucking."

The guy shrugged and smirked. "Or I could just drop to my knees and blow you. Bet you got a nice long thick cock."

And now it was time for Louis to make himself known. "Jerome."

His mate slowly turned to face him, his eyes growing wide when he saw Louis. He said nothing for a few seconds, then whispered, "You."

"Can't you see we're busy here?"

Louis looked at the human before dismissing him. "He's here with me. Leave us."

"I'm here with him," Jerome echoed.

The man glared, then disappeared into the growing crowd, and Louis was finally standing next to his mate. "Hi."

"I remember you."

Louis closed his eyes briefly. "I'd hoped you would, but it was a long time ago."

"You kept me safe."

Nodding, Louis asked, "How are you?"

Jerome stood and looked into Louis' eyes. Louis wanted to get closer, but resisted the urge. "You came to me, didn't you?"

"What do you mean?" Louis furrowed his brow. He'd only gone near Jerome when he was sleeping. Jerome should have no memory.

"When Mom...passed. You came at night. Helped me sleep. I remember you. I dreamed about you." Tilting his head, Jerome continued to look into Louis' eyes. "Who are you?"

Louis shook his head, glancing around the club. "It's not something to discuss here."

Nodding, Jerome glanced around the club. "Then we should leave."

Jerome pushed past Louis and he breathed deep, inhaling his mate's tantalizing aroma. His fangs threatened to drop again as Louis spun on his heel, following Jerome outside. Once there, he paused and searched the area, finding his mate standing over near the main road.

Louis followed. "Cab?" Jerome asked when Louis reached him.

"Your place or mine?"

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“Yours?” Jerome answered immediately. “My sister is home from college.”

Crowding Jerome, Louis asked, “Can I trust you?”

Without hesitating, Jerome answered, “Yes.”

Taking Jerome’s hand in his, he concentrated on his apartment and took them there. He grabbed Jerome as he sagged and held him as he panted. “Deep breaths.”

“Now that’s one way to get around.” Straightening, Jerome stared at Louis, but he didn’t appear afraid of him, only more curious. “What are you?”

“Vampire.”

Jerome nodded. “I always knew there was something different about you. Even back then when you saved me. I knew you weren’t the same as me.”

“I’ve watched over you. Kept you safe.”

“I’ve felt you from time to time and I knew you wouldn’t hurt me. How would I know that?”

“Because you’re mine.”

“I feel like I’m yours,” Jerome whispered. “I feel like I’ve been waiting for you to come back to me.”

“We should talk before anything happens.”

Jerome smiled. “What’s going to happen, and what’s your name? You never told me when I was younger.”

“Louis. My name is Louis.” Louis reached out to touch Jerome but dropped his hand before sliding his fingers over Jerome’s honey skin.

Jerome closed the gap between them and took Louis’ hand in his own. “Are you mine too, Louis?”

“Since the moment we met.” From that second, Jerome was the only person Louis thought about, the only one he had on his mind. The one he lived his life for.

“I was twelve. That’s why you stayed away.”

Nodding, Louis moved over to the sofa and sat. “Please sit with me so we can talk.”

“How am I yours?” Jerome sat next to him, close enough that Louis could feel his body heat. He leaned into it, closing his eyes and didn’t open them when he felt a puff of air on his lips. “Please,” he murmured. Jerome’s lips touched his once, twice, then a third time before moving away. “I want more.”

Opening his eyes, Louis nodded. “Me too, but we need to talk.”

“Why? What’s that important that we pause to talk?”

“If we have sex and I bite you, you’re mine.”

“Okay.” Jerome smiled. “I’m not seeing the bad in that. I’ve waited years for you. I knew you existed, knew there was something between us, but you never appeared.

When I was awake, that is.”

“I couldn’t see you then. The need to be with you was overwhelming and you were just a child. I had to stay away. The only time I gave in was when your mother passed away, but you know that already. I knew you needed me and I needed to be there for you.”

“And what do you want now?”

Louis licked his lips, his eyes dropping to Jerome’s plump ones. “You know,” he whispered.

“I do,” Jerome murmured, “But we need to talk.” Jerome gave a slight smile. “Isn’t that what you said?”

“Us being mates is forever. Once I bite you during sex you can’t decide you’ve had enough. There is no walking away once that happens.”

“What about my degree?”

“I would never stop you from pursuing it, because I know how hard you’ve worked to earn your place. I would want you to be careful, though. There are bad vampires.”

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“Like there are bad humans. I have to be careful either way.”

“You’ll live longer, too. Maybe gain some of my speed, strength, agility.”

“Awesome.” Jerome paused, a frown developing. “What about my family? Can I tell them?”

Louis winced and turned away. “I don’t want to tell you what to do.”

“I would have to be careful when I visit them.”

His mate was far too understanding. “You’re taking this much more calmly than I thought you would.”

Smiling, Jerome leaned forward and slid his lips over Louis’, making Louis gasp and want more. “I’ve always known you meant something to me. I’ve waited for you for what feels like forever. I understand why you stayed away. If we’d seen each other when I was going through puberty I wouldn’t have cared about whether I was old enough or not. I would have jumped you.”

“You were hard to resist, especially when you grew your hair long.”

Jerome chuckled softly and Louis remembered seeing him with his hair loose around his shoulders. Jerome had always kept it tied back, but then one day it was down and all Louis could think about was grabbing it as they fucked. That summer had been a long and hard one, and no matter how many times Louis had jacked off, he was constantly hard and leaking and desperate for his mate.

“My so called rebellious year. Dad threatened to cut it himself if I didn’t go to the barbers. Probably because he was tired of me always complaining about it.”

“I liked it. I had... it kept me entertained.”

“I bet it did,” Jerome murmured. Louis grinned, then sighed when Jerome kissed him. “Have we talked enough now?”

“I don’t know.”

“Let’s take this somewhere else. I don’t want my first time to be on a sofa.”

“I knew you hadn’t been with another man.” Knowing he would be the first man to touch his mate, to do things to his mate, had him fighting back the urge to go all caveman on Jerome.

Staring at his gorgeous mate, feeling all the love he had for Jerome almost reduced Louis to tears. He was so unbelievably lucky and he was never going to walk away now he had his mate. “Jerome,” he whispered. “I’ve only wanted you and now I can have you.”

“You can, so no more talk. I think we’ve both waited enough, don’t you?”

Louis nodded and lead Jerome to his bedroom. He’d anticipated this moment, so his room was clean with fresh bedding. He let go of Jerome’s hand and lit the candles he had around the room then turned to his mate. “Too much?”

Jerome smiled, shaking his head as he approached and looped his arms over Louis’ shoulders. “Perfect. You’ve thought about this moment.”

“I want to make it special for you.”

“You are. I finally have you and now I know why I had this need to find you, to speak to you. We were always meant to be together.”

Louis closed his eyes and lowered his head until their foreheads touched. There was only an inch or so difference in their height, so for him, it was perfect. This moment was perfect. All the years he'd watched and waited, wanting his mate to experience life, had been worth it, because they were here now.

“No more words, Louis. No more thinking. Kiss me.”

Louis opened his eyes and stared into Jerome's hazel ones. “Whatever you want.” He slid his lips over Jerome's, feeling the puff of air as Jerome sighed into their kiss. Jerome slipped his tongue out and Louis licked it then sucked it into his mouth.

Shivering, Jerome clung to Louis and Louis held him tight as he deepened the kiss, sliding his tongue into Jerome's mouth and tangling their tongues together. Moaning, Louis slid his hands into Jerome's curls and tugged on them, moving Jerome's head so he could deepen the kiss more.

Jerome moaned and arched into Louis, and Louis fought back the urge to strip his mate naked and fuck him. Jerome hadn't had sex before, so Louis needed to take his time and prepare his mate properly so there was as little pain as possible when they finally came together.

“Louis,” Jerome whispered.

“Tell me what you want.”

“You. I want you. Make me yours.”

Louis picked Jerome up and lay him on the bed. Staring down at his gorgeous mate,

Louis traced his fingers over Jerome's face, smiling when Jerome tilted his head and kissed them. Removing his hand, Louis slowly unbuttoned his shirt and let it slip from his shoulders.

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Jerome sat up and ran his hand over Louis' abs and chest. "Mine."

"Always."

Chapter Four

Staring up into Louis' bright blue eyes, Jerome licked his lips, his hands trailing over warm skin, feeling the chest hairs tickle his palms. Louis let Jerome touch him, his hand cupping the side of Jerome's face, and Jerome leaned into his touch.

Something settled inside him. A constant itch in the background that Jerome had never been able to remove. Now it was gone, nowhere to be found, and Louis was the reason why. Finally, Jerome was where he should be and with the man meant for him.

He could feel him in his mind, his body, and his soul. Louis.

"Shirt." Louis tugged on Jerome's shirt and he sat up, undid a couple of buttons then pulled it off. Throwing it to the floor, Jerome slid his hands up Louis' back and pulled closer. Louis kissed him and Jerome sighed, his hands sliding into Louis' blond hair. His fingers slid through the thick strands, and Jerome tightened his grip. "Jerome."

Jerome parted his lips and moaned when Louis licked into his mouth. When their tongues entwined, Jerome arched up, his hands gripping Louis' shoulders. So long he'd waited for this moment, for this man, and now he was finally here.

Hard. He was achingly hard and desperate for Louis to touch him. "Louis please."

“In time. I don’t want to rush.” Louis kissed him again and Jerome moaned softly, his tongue dancing with Louis’ as his hands slid over Louis’ back to grab his ass. And what an ass. It felt firm, muscular, and Jerome wanted to take a bite out of it.

Louis broke the kiss and bit Jerome’s jaw before licking down his neck. Jerome turned his head, giving Louis more room, and gasped when Louis bit him again. He felt them. The fangs. Louis had said he was a vampire and Jerome had believed him instantly, and now he could feel them scrape over his neck. It made him shiver in anticipation, knowing when they had sex, Louis would bite him, and make them one.

This man was who he had been waiting for. For years he’d been dreaming about him, thinking about him, wanting to meet him again, and now he was here, and everything was falling into place. “Louis,” he whispered.

Louis scraped his teeth up and down Jerome’s neck. “Soon.” He moved down and Jerome trembled when he felt a puff of air on his nipple. It hardened as Louis licked it, and Jerome lifted his head, seeing Louis’ eyes glow, his fangs on show, and whimpered when Louis bit him, his fangs sliding through his skin. It didn’t hurt. No, it felt good, and Jerome’s head fell back as he tugged on Louis’ hair, urging him closer.

Louis sucked his nipple and Jerome shivered, his body arching up. Every touch felt perfect, like Louis was the one who should be making Jerome feel this way. When Louis moved to his other nipple, Jerome shuddered. He didn’t stay there long before sliding down Jerome’s body and tugging on his jeans.

“Time to lose these.” Jerome lifted his ass when Louis pulled and then he was naked. Louis stared at him and licked his lips. “Fucking gorgeous. You’re perfect.”

“And you?” Louis grinned and removed his clothes and Jerome whimpered. “Louis,” he murmured. He was hung. Jerome had length but Louis had girth. He was wide and

Jerome knew he would feel him.

Louis leaned over him. “You can do me first. I want your first time to be perfect.”

Jerome shook his head. “I’ve always wanted you to be my first.”

“And last.” Louis detected a hint of a growl and smiled. “Say it.”

Jerome palmed Louis’ face. “My first and last.”

Louis gave him a quick hard kiss then slid down to settle between Jerome’s legs. “I can’t wait to have you in my mouth, taste you on my tongue.” Louis licked up Jerome’s shaft and suckled the head. “Jerome. You taste amazing.”

Jerome shuddered when Louis took his dick in his mouth and swallowed. His legs trembled and he looked up just as Louis buried his face in his pubes. Louis had taken all of him. When Louis hummed, Jerome jerked, his balls pulling up. Louis had barely done anything and Jerome was ready to come. Louis pulled off then sank back down, rolling Jerome’s balls in his fingers, and tugging on them.

“Louis,” Jerome warned.

Louis lifted and paid attention to the head, his tongue sliding around it, and dipping into the slit. As he licked and sucked, Louis stroked, causing Jerome to moan loudly, and thrust up. His balls tightened, a tingling wrapping around them and traveling along his cock. “Louis,” Jerome cried out. Waves of pleasure spread out over him and Jerome arched up, his body tightening. The room disappeared as sensation rushed over him and he lost sense of everything except how Louis made him fall apart.

By the time he sagged back on the bed, panting hard, Louis was licking up his chest and playing with his nipples. “Sounded good.”

“It was,” Jerome gasped out. His body still trembled and the way Louis was touching and kissing him somehow revved it up again.

“You taste good. Just like I knew you would.” Louis leaned over him, kissing him deeply, sharing the taste of his come. “Going to make you come again.”

“With you inside me.”

Louis kissed him and nodded. “Yeah.” He moved back down Jerome’s body and lifted his dick in his hand, stroking it and kissing the head. Usually Jerome was too sensitive but not this time. He could actually feel his dick waking up, trying to stiffen in Louis’ hand. “Hold your legs up for me. Spread them wide.”

Jerome held his breath. Was Louis going to...? No, he wouldn’t, would he? He did what Louis asked, exposing himself to Louis’ eyes, and bit his lip when Louis trailed a finger over his hole. No one had touched him there, and he was glad he’d waited. Louis kept stroking his hole, his fingers trailing over and around it and Jerome gasped at how good it felt.

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When he felt a puff of air, Jerome whined then groaned when Louis' tongue licked his asshole. "Fuck."

The tip of Louis' tongue licked around the edge then flicked his hole before moving back to the edge. "Good?"

Jerome nodded, then realized Louis couldn't see him. "Why does it feel so good? It shouldn't but it does."

"Sensitive area." Louis licked him again. "I'm going to push my tongue inside your ass, fuck you with it."

"Oh fuck."

Louis didn't do that right away, but played more, licking and flicking, applying pressure then moving away. Jerome waited, then arched back when one of Louis' fingers pushed inside. He felt it, how tight he was, but relaxed because this was Louis, and Jerome knew he would never hurt him. He was safe in this space with this man. Or vampire. Jerome didn't care which. All he knew was Louis was his, just like he was Louis'. Nothing had ever felt more right in his life than being with Louis.

Louis worked his finger in and out until the initial discomfort faded away, and it wasn't long before Jerome moved, riding Louis' finger. Louis' tongue kept licking his ass and Jerome arched up, his hips having a life of their own. When a second finger pushed inside, Jerome gasped, but the pain disappeared when Louis touched something inside.

“Louis!”

“Prostate. Feels good, doesn’t it? I love having mine touched and rubbed.” Jerome shoved down the surge of jealousy but somehow Louis sensed it. “There has been no one since I met you. I wouldn’t cheat on you.”

“You didn’t know me,” Jerome barely got the sentence out, moaning as Louis rubbed his gland.

“Doesn’t matter.” Louis kissed the inside of Jerome’s thigh. “I knew you existed. My mate. There was never going to be anyone else for me once I met you.”

Jerome didn’t respond. He couldn’t do anything more than moan and gasp as Louis used his fingers on him, sliding them in and out of his ass and playing with him. He kept licking and kissing him, making Jerome soar higher and higher until a third finger slid inside.

“Oh.”

“The pain will go away.” Louis rubbed his gland again and Jerome cried out. Before he knew it, he was riding Louis’ fingers, begging for more, and when Louis pulled them free, Jeromewatched him coat his dick. “I brought it with me thinking about you.”

Covering Jerome, Louis stared down at him and Jerome’s eyes widened when he felt Louis’ cock nudge his hole. There was pressure, then more, and when the head pushed inside, Jerome’s mouth fell open. Louis remained still but Jerome could see tension line his face, the lines bracketing his mouth, and he lifted his hand, grabbing Louis around the neck to tug him down into a kiss.

As they kissed, Louis pushed inside, and Jerome wrapped his legs around him,

arching up into every thrust, needing to feel it all. The brief pain morphed into something more, and Jerome whined and whimpered as Louis set a steady pace. Jerome kissed Louis, their tongues tangling together, his body heating up. When Louis bit his lip then sucked it, Jerome stared up into Louis' eyes, the glow beautiful.

Louis moved faster, causing Jerome to cry out and hold onto him tighter. Louis plundered his mouth, nipping Jerome's lips as their tongues slid together. Jerome could feel his body tightening, feel his orgasm growing and he broke the kiss and stared at Louis before tilting his head and exposing his neck.

Louis growled and slammed into Jerome's ass repeatedly then hissed a split second before his fangs pierced Jerome's skin. Jerome felt it, the pain as his fangs punched through his skin, but he barely had any time to react before his body exploded in pleasure.

A minute or so later, Jerome blinked open his eyes, and realized Louis was cleaning him. He lifted his head and watched, feeling a presence inside him that hadn't been there before. "I can feel you."

"We're connected now." Louis tapped his head. "We can talk this way, too." Jerome closed his eyes. "I've been told it can hurt at first."

"There's no pain. Just the sense of being right." Like this?

Yes. Just like this. So when we're apart, we can reach out to each other. "I like knowing I can talk to you when I'm working or you're studying."

"Me too." Knowing I can say your name and you'll be there.

"Yeah." Louis finished cleaning him and then moved to another room that Jerome figured was the bathroom. He should have felt some embarrassment at Louis taking

care of him but he didn't. It was what they should do.

“Do you want something to drink?” Louis stood naked and Jerome couldn't help but stare at his body. All muscles and gorgeous skin, a splattering of light hair covering his chest, his pink nipples begging for Jerome to suck them. “You're gorgeous.”

“I am? Have you looked in a mirror? You are amazing.” Louis held his hand out and Jerome took it, letting him pull him out of bed. “Water? Beer? Juice? What would you like?”

“Which juice?” Jerome had a feeling it would be his favorite one, and when Louis grinned he knew he was right. “Apple?”

“Yep, because you like it.”

“You have been watching me. Did you leave the food package as well?”

Louis nodded a grin on his face. “Did you like it?”

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“Not at all.” Jerome giggled. “All my faves too. You know so much about me.”

“I’ve watched over you but I think if you thought about it you would know some things about me too.”

“You’re loyal.” He knew that after Louis had told him there had been no other person once they’d met. Staring into the fridge he saw several varieties of cheese. “You seem to like cheese.”

“Like isn’t the word I’d use. I love cheese. You could feed me anything as long as there was cheese included.”

“So cheese is the way to your heart?” Jerome glanced at Louis and saw the soft smile on his face. “Do I have your heart?”

“Since the moment we met, which sounds all sorts of wrong.”

“Only to someone who isn’t us, and you’ve had mine. I knew those relationships wouldn’t last but I kept trying. Deep down I knew it was because of you, my mystery man. For a while I thought I was going a little mad, you know. Dreaming of you but never knowing you.”

“I’m sorry.” Louis kissed him. “I had to wait.”

“And I understand. Puberty would have been hard on both of us. Pun intended.”

“I think we should take your juice back into the bedroom. I want to ride you; feel you

push inside.”

Jerome sucked in a breath. “I think that’s a great idea.”

Chapter Five

Lying on the bed, Louis stared up at his mate, watching him. Jerome straddled him, his hands sliding over Louis’ chest, tugging on his hair and pinching his nipples. Gasping, Louis arched up when Jerome leaned down and sucked one into his mouth, his tongue teasing the hard nub. Smiling softly, Jerome flicked the nub then moved back up Louis’ chest to kiss him.

Louis wrapped his arms around Jerome and rolled them over, chuckling when Jerome murmured, “I’m not finished.”

Louis grabbed the lube and held it up. “Want to watch or stretch me yourself?”

“Both?”

Louis grinned and poured some lube on his fingers then passed the tube to Jerome. “Get it on your fingers then watch me. You can do it after.” Louis moved off Jerome and got on his hands and knees with his ass facing Jerome. Warm hands ran over his ass and Louis’ breath stuttered when a wet finger ran over his asshole. “Want to try now?”

“No. Let me watch you.” The words were low and husky. “I want to see you finger your ass.”

“Such dirty words.”

“You like them?”

“I like everything about you, my mate.” Louis spread his legs then ran his wet fingers over his ass. “I like to tease myself first. Small touches, running the tips of my fingers over my ass. Maybe push them in a little.” Louis put actions to words and ran his fingers over his ass several times then the tip around the puckered edge. He could hear Jerome’s breathing pick up and smiled to himself. Once he was nice and wet, he pushed one finger inside to the first knuckle then pulled it out. In and out he moved it then he moaned when Jerome’s hands spread him wider.

“You look so hot like this. I want to touch you as well.”

Louis pulled his finger out. “Do what I just did.”

Dropping his chest down onto the bed, Louis kept his ass in the air. Jerome’s fingers ran over his hole then one slid inside. He kept the movements slow, which Louis appreciated. One finger only, sliding in and out, until Louis whispered, “push it in more now.”

Louis trembled when Jerome pushed his finger fully inside Louis’ ass. The sensation had him pushing back wanting more. “Two,” he gasped. “I need two fingers now.”

When two slid inside, Louis groaned, the flash of pain arousing him. “Louis. The way your ass stretches around my fingers.”

“Hmm. Bend them and search for a bump. That’s my prostate and you’ll know when you’ve hit it.”

Louis held his breath then moaned loudly when Jerome’s fingers ran over it. “There,” Jerome whispered.

“Yes. Tease it, tap it, rub it. God I’m dripping, Jerome. You do this to me. Make me so hot.”

“I want to taste...”

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Louis cried out when Jerome's tongue got in on the action and licked around his fingers in Louis' ass. So soft and warm and wet, the touch of it along with the thrust of Jerome's fingers had Louis scrambling on the bed. "Need to ride your dick." As he moved, Jerome's fingers disappeared and Louis pushed his mate down on the bed and straddled him. "Hold your dick up so I can ride it."

Jerome groaned and grabbed the base of his cock and Louis positioned himself above it, lowering until he felt the spongy head against his asshole. Taking a deep breath, Louis slid down, groaning at the stretch and burn. Jerome's dick filled him to capacity and he paused when he had it fully inside, needing a second to adjust.

"Oh fuck. You make me feel so full."

Jerome punched his hips up as his hands grabbed Louis' hips. "I kinda need you to move."

Chuckling, Louis swivelled his hips then lifted an inch before dropping back down. "Like that?"

"Are you teasing me?" Jerome's hands tightened on Louis' hips. He trailed a hand over Louis' chest and tweaked a nipple. Louis gasped then grinned before slowly moving up and down. Not too fast or slow just a nice steady pace that made Louis feel every inch of Jerome's dick in his ass. So long it touched everywhere, and Louis let his head fall back as pleasure built inside.

Jerome's hand on his cock had him lifting his head and watching his mate. He knew his eyes glowed, his fangs throbbed, but he wasn't rushing this moment. Being like

this with his mate had him feeling emotions he'd never had before, and he wanted it to last as long as it could. Jerome stroked him slowly, his thumb caressing the head of his cock, making Louis' dick throb and jerk in response.

"I want to take over."

Louis nodded and lay over Jerome, holding still as his mate rolled them. Lying beneath him, Louis tangled his hands in Jerome's hair and pulled his mouth closer so he could kiss him. Louis moaned into the kiss as Jerome picked up speed, moving faster, sliding into him harder. Louis lifted his legs, resting his feet on Jerome's ass, feeling it move beneath them. Jerome moaned into their kiss, his tongue dancing with Louis', his hand sliding up Louis' arm and behind his neck. His grip held Louis in place as Jerome devoured Louis' mouth and Louis loved it. Loved that his mate was dominating him in this way. He arched up, his body moving in time with Jerome's, their mouths connected, sharing their breath, being one.

"I'm gonna come."

"Don't hold back," Louis told Jerome. "Come inside me. Mark me as yours."

Louis cried out, his body stuttering and Louis pulled his head to one side and bit. Jerome cried out again and Louis fell over the edge, his body spasming as waves of bliss flowed over him. The world disappeared and Louis held on to the one person who was his—Jerome.

#

"I wish I could go with you." Morning had arrived after a night of untold pleasure, and Louis lay in bed watching Jerome dress. They'd discussed Jerome telling Shaun, and Louis had eventually agreed.

“You can drop me off at home.” Jerome sat on the edge of the bed as he pulled his socks on. “It won’t delay you, will it?”

“Not at all and I want to make sure you get home safe. I just don’t want to move right now. I’m happy here with you.”

“You’ll see me again soon.” Jerome leaned over and softly kissed him. With a sigh he pulled back and finished dressing. “What do you want to do later?” Louis arched an eyebrow and Jerome chuckled. “After that. Or before. Or both.”

“Eat, then spend time in you.”

Jerome’s eyes widened. “You can’t say that. I have to go see my dad.”

“Okay. I’ll think it instead. Hey, do you have any toys?” Louis laughed when Jerome ducked his head, blushing heavily. “I think someone does,” Louis teased.

“Maybe one or two.”

“We should find time to play with them.” Louis sat up and pulled Jerome closer. “I want to stay here with you.”

“Me too but I have studying to do and my dad. He needs to know about you. He’s heard me talk about you for years.”

“I’m still a little surprised you told him about me.” Louis knew how close Jerome was to his family. He’d watched him grow, watched him mourn the death of his mother, but he hadn’t anticipated Jerome talking to Shaun about him as much as it appeared Jerome had.

“Of course I would. He’s my dad. We don’t have secrets, and he’s going to like you.”

Louis smiled. He hoped Shaun did like him because they were now mated for life.

Chapter Six

“Dad?” Jerome walked inside his house and went straight to the kitchen when he heard Shaun respond. Candice leaned against the counter and looked him up and down as her lips spread into a wide smile. Ignoring her, Jerome opened the fridge and grabbed the apple juice.

“Looks like someone had fun last night.”

“And this morning too.”

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“I’m going to pretend I didn’t hear that.”

“I found him.” He knew they would know who he was talking about. He’d mentioned Louis hundreds of times, the man who had saved him. He’d known they hadn’t fully believed him, but that hadn’t stopped him, and when Louis had comforted him after his mother had passed, he’d known for sure.

“Him? The mystery man who saved you?” Candice glanced at Shaun as she pushed away from the counter. “He actually exists?”

“Yeah, he does.”

“What does he look like?”

“A little taller than me. Blond hair, blue eyes. Gorgeous smile. Kind and caring.”

“White?”

“And?” Jerome stared at Candice. “What of it?”

“Nothing at all. I’ve dated white men and they’re some of the nicest men I’ve met.”

“That’s because a white man knows the worth of a black woman.” Shaun passed Jerome a glass. “Corina’s married to one and said he dotes on her and their kids. Blake’s dating a white woman and adores her. You should see the way she looks at him.” Shaun patted Jerome back. “He remembered you?”

“Yeah and I have some things to tell you and you’re not going to believe me.”

“Okay. Go ahead and make me not believe you.” Shaun leaned back on the counter and folded his arms over his chest.

“So, Louis—that’s his name—is a vampire and I’m his mate. That’s why he’s been watching over me. To make sure I was safe and cared for. Like those romance books about mates and shifters. And before you say anything, I saw the fangs, felt them too.” Jerome rubbed his neck. “His eyes glow with intense emotions as well and I can talk to him telepathically now we’ve... er... you know.”

“Had sex.” Candice stared at him open mouthed then snapped it shut. Narrowing her eyes, she said, “Prove it.”

“Close the curtains and I will.”

“Not the old sunlight shit.” Candice rolled her eyes. Shaun pulled the kitchen blind down and nodded. “What? Dad! You can’t believe this.”

“I believe Jerome.”

I’m home, in the kitchen. Want to pop in by the fridge?

Coming now.

“Hi.” Candice screamed and threw her can of soda at Louis who caught it and pulled a face. “What the fuck?”

“You can’t just do whatever you did and appear without saying something!”

“How do I say something if I’m not here?” Louis glanced at Jerome. “Is she okay?”

“Candice is having trouble adapting to you appearing out of thin air. Me too, but I can hide it better.” Shaun held his hand out. “I’m Shaun, Jerome’s father, but you know that.”

“I do and it’s nice to meet you.” Louis shook Shaun’s hand. “I wasn’t planning on meeting you so soon.”

“And why is that?”

“I wanted to spend time with Jerome first.”

“You watched over him. Not sure how I feel about that.” Shaun moved closer to Louis, peering at his face.

“You want to see the fangs.” Louis sighed then opened his mouth and Jerome watched as they dropped from the roof of his mouth.

“Holy shit, they’re real. Can I touch them?” Shaun lifted his hand.

“Dad!” Jerome grabbed Shaun’s arm, pulling back.

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“Only if I can touch your dick.” Louis stared at Shaun who blanched and backed away. “They’re sensitive.”

“Are you hungry?” Shaun glanced between Jerome and Louis. “Do you eat food? Can you eat food or does it make you ill?”

“I can and do eat food. Steak is one of my faves, cooked over a grill. When it’s dark outside I like to grill for my friends.”

“Are any of them humans?” Candice moved closer, staring intently at Louis. “Do you know about humans?”

Keeping a straight face, Louis answered, “No. I’ve never met one in my life.”

“I swear to you she isn’t normally this stupid.” Jerome pushed Candice to one side and stood next to Louis, giving him a soft kiss. “Hungry?”

“I could eat but I can’t stay long. I’ve been called into work.”

“I thought you had today off?” Jerome cuddled into Louis’ side, sighing softly when Louis cuddled him.

“You know I said there were bad vampires?” Jerome nodded. “Well one of them has made a reappearance after being off the radar for a few decades.”

“Decades? And bad vampires? What have you gotten my son into?”

“There are bad vampires like there are bad humans.” Louis shrugged. “Neither species is perfect, and yes, decades. We live far longer than humans do and now that Jerome and I are mated he’ll live longer too.”

Shaun inhaled and Jerome bit his lip. Seeing his dad in front of him and knowing he would watch him grow old and die... “How much longer?”

“Centuries. My boss is over three hundred years old.”

Shaun pointed his finger at Louis then Jerome. “I need to sit down.”

Jerome glanced at Louis then followed Shaun into the living room, sitting next to him on the sofa. “Dad?”

“I always knew I would die before you so that doesn’t bother me at all. But Candice? Any children she has?”

“I’m sorry.” Jerome blinked and felt a tear roll down his face. Oh shit. He was going to stay young and they were going to grow old and die and leave him. He searched for Louis seeing the sad look on his face. “Louis.”

“I can’t change it. We’re mated now so we’re bound together. You’ll live as long as I do. I don’t know how to pass that on to your family. I don’t even think it’s possible. Maybe talk to Key. He’s human too.” Shrugging, Louis licked his lips. “I’m so sorry. I can’t...” Louis stared at the floor. “I’m sorry.”

It’s okay. I understand, but it hurts to know that one day they’ll be gone.

If I could change it I would. I know how much you love your family.

“Dad.”

“It’s fine. It’s just a lot to take in and I know you’ve waited for him. I’m not blind, and we’ve talked about him. I knew what you’d told me but didn’t quite believe in this mystery saver and now he’s here but he’s something else.” Shaun inhaled then slowly exhaled. “I don’t want to lose you.”

“I would never come between Jerome and his family. I know how much he loves you. And before you say anything, I would never stop him from earning his degree. He’s worked hard for it and I won’t stand in his way. I only ask that he’s more careful now we’ve mated.”

“I don’t even know you and now my son is stuck with you for life.”

“Stuck? Dad. How can you say that?” Jerome pushed away from Shaun and stood.

“Because I don’t know what to think right now.”

“I understand. This is a lot to take in. I’ll go and let you all talk about this.” Tapping his head, Louis asked, “Please let me know when you’re free.” Jerome nodded then found himself staring at the empty spot Louis had been standing in.

“Louis,” he murmured.

“That’s a great way to travel.” Candice moved to where Louis had stood and waved her hands in the air. “He’s really gone.”

“It wasn’t some party trick. He moved me like that last night. The room spun like I was on some ride.” Jerome sat next to Shaun. “Are we good?”

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“I need some time. This is a lot to take in, like he said.”

“Louis.”

“Louis.” Shaun smiled, but it didn’t last long. “This mating thing.”

“It’s kinda like marriage, but no divorce, apparently. Mates rarely break up. Ever since he met me he hasn’t been with anyone else. Even though I was a kid he wanted to stay faithful to me. Said it wouldn’t be right, like he was cheating. He waited for me to grow up. Kept me safe. He came to me when Mom died. I remember him hugging me as I cried myself to sleep.”

“You said once that he was there but I didn’t believe you. Thought you were making it up.” Shaun sighed heavily. “I don’t know what to think. Vampires. Damn, they do exist.”

“They don’t want people to know about them. Can you imagine what would happen?”

“Oh yeah. Nothing good. His secret is safe with me and I can see how much you care for him. You’re the happiest I’ve ever seen you.”

“He makes me feel good. I’m not alone anymore. I can reach out and talk to him anytime I want. That’s how I was able to tell him to come over before. Imagine it, Dad. Being able to talk to the person you care about by simply thinking of them.”

“That does sound good.”

“I think it sounds great. Any single men vampires I could meet?”

Jerome closed his eyes. “What?”

“You know, try and hook me up with one. If you’re a mate then maybe I will be too, and the way he looks at you? I want a man to look at me like that as well.” Candice took a breath. “Is he good in bed? My last boyfriend couldn’t find my—” Shaun coughed. “You know what. Maybe vampires don’t have that disability.”

“I can’t believe this is happening.” Jerome opened his eyes. “You want me to ask Louis if there are any single men who want to date my sister.”

“Your hot as fuck sister. Sorry Dad, but you can’t blame me for asking. Look at Jerome! I’ve never seen him this relaxed. Louis knows what to do in bed.”

“Dad. Please save me,” Jerome begged.

“Only if you save me too. Candice. No father needs to know about his daughter’s sex life.”

Why did you leave? Candice wants me to find her a single vampire who could be her mate and knows what to do with her girl parts. Humans have a disability and can’t find it.

Can’t find it? Her clitoris?

Please don’t. This is my sister. I don’t need to talk about her and sex. I don’t even want to think about it. Now I know how my dad feels. Thank god I can’t have kids.

“I’m going to cook. And think. Candice, don’t ask Jerome to find you a vampire. He’s not some dating app.”

Who said we can't have kids?

What? You want kids? Jerome almost spoke out loud, but somehow managed to keep his mouth shut.

One day. Maybe. Who knows?

I think I need to sit down but I am already sitting down. Jerome could almost hear Louis laughing at him. Stop it.

I have to go. I'll speak to you later.

Be safe.

I will. I have you to come home to.

Jerome smiled then went into the kitchen to watch Shaun cook. "I'm sorry." He wasn't sure what he was apologizing for, but he felt the need to.

"It's a lot to take in, but part of me is happy you have him and that you'll be together for a long time. He seemed nice, too."

"He is. I like being with him. It doesn't feel like he's a stranger. I feel like I've been waiting for him and Louis said we're mates, so I guess that makes sense."

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“I guess it does if what you’ve said about mates is true.”

“I want you to like him, Dad. He means a lot to me. Maybe more.” Jerome stared down at the floor. “He feels like home.” Looking up at Shaun, Jerome shrugged slightly. “I can’t explain it.”

“You don’t need to. I felt the same way with your mom. Like I said, Jerome, I need some time to...” Shaun shook his head. “Vampires and mates and us humans aren’t actually alone. How many of those stories out there could be based on truth? Do werewolves exist? What about fairies?”

“I don’t know.” Why was he being asked these questions? He only met Louis last night.

Do fairies exist?

What? Fairies?

Yeah. Fairies.

No idea and why would I need to know?

Werewolves? Jerome tapped his head when Shaun looked at him.

Come again? What?

Now you know how I feel! Dad is asking me about them, and I don’t know what to

say.

Neither do I. Sorry but you're on your own. I have to go now.

Of course you do.

Stay safe.

You too.

“Well? Do any of them exist?”

Jerome stared at Shaun, hoping someone would save him. Today was not going how he thought it would.

Chapter Seven

“I can scent him on you.” Hugo banged his shoulder into Louis’. “You found your mate.”

“I found him when he was twelve.” Hugo stared at him, his eyes growing wide. “Yeah. Twelve.”

“Shit, and you waited. How old is he now?”

“Eighteen. I wanted to wait longer but... I couldn't stay away.”

“I'm surprised you managed to stay away as long as you did.”

Louis nodded. “Puberty was hard. He was so fucking gorgeous.”

“Look, Louis. I’m happy you found him and have finally mated him, but does the council know?”

“No. I’m going there after I’ve finished here.”

“You have time to practice your begging skills.”

Louis snorted but didn’t respond because Hugo was right. He should have spoken to the council first. They’d become more lenient since Kelvin had mated Key but they still wanted to know about a human mate before the mating occurred. Louis had messed up and he knew there would be a price to pay. Probably some nasty job like Kelvin had to do as punishment. He didn’t mind so much now that he had Jerome in his life.

What he did want was Jerome in his life. He was now that they were mated, but Louis wanted him in his home and his bed every night and morning. Knowing his mate was safe and where Louis could keep an eye on him meant Louis could work better. With Jerome sleeping in a dorm, Louis didn’t feel like he could keep him safe, and with Maxim and his merry band of trolls back on the scene, Louis had to make sure his mate was safe.

“I’m thinking of asking Jerome to move in with me.”

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“He’s human.” Hugo widened his eyes. “You know they don’t jump into these things like we do.”

“We’ve kinda known each other for a long time. It wasn’t like we needed the whole ‘getting to know you’ conversation. He wasn’t surprised when I told him what I am.”

“How was he?” Hugo turned and walked backwards, facing Louis. They were patrolling the east area of the city and even though it was late, the pavement was still busy.

“He said he’d been waiting for me.” Louis smiled softly. “That he knew I’d kept him safe.”

“I hope I have it that easy when I meet my mate. None of this freaking out when I drop fang, you know?”

“He had me appear in his dad’s kitchen. Freaked Shaun and Jerome’s sister Candice out but now she wants me to find some hot young single vampires who know their way around a woman’s body because human men are shit at it.”

Hugo threw his hand up in the air. “I’m free, hot, youngish, and very much available. Plus, there is no better taste than—”

“Stop right there.”

“You’ve slept with men and women. Most vampires have. I tend to prefer women but if my mate is a man I’d have no problem. Cock or pussy I love them both.” Hugo

licked his lips. “Though you’ve gone for men more than women.”

Louis nodded. He had before he’d seen Jerome and then there was only him. “Shaun asked him if fairies existed.”

Hugo laughed and turned around, walking next to Louis. “What else?”

“Werewolves.” Louis grinned. “Poor Jerome. Shame I had to work and wasn’t around to help.”

“Some mate you are. I started work earlier and I’m now out here. When will I have a day off?”

“Ask Gray, or better yet, ask Key. He’ll get you a couple of days off together. With the number of days you’ve worked without a day off you deserve a nice break.”

Louis and Hugo found an area where CCTV couldn’t see them and with a wave, Hugo disappeared. Louis moved on and carried on walking along the sidewalk, moving around humans. A fight broke out ahead of him and he crossed the street to avoid becoming involved. Within a minute the fight was broken up and then the two men laughed and hugged each other.

Shaking his head, Louis muttered, “I don’t think I’ll ever understand that.”

Carrying on, Louis licked his lips when he thought about the council and how they would react when he informed them of his mating. The rules had been relaxed in regards to mating humans but you had to inform them prior to mating so they could perform a background check. Louis wasn’t sure how that would affect him and Jerome. Jerome was young and at university so his background check would come up clean. His family were hard working and law abiding so that would be fine as well.

Even with that, Louis knew he would have to be punished. He hoped it wasn't a job like the one Kelvin had to do. He didn't want to be collecting and disposing of trash, but if that was what he had to do then so be it. He'd cross that bridge when he came to it.

Louis?

Louis smiled when he heard Jerome's voice in his mind. Yeah?

Do we date now?

Louis slowed. Do you want to? He wanted Jerome in his home and in his bed but he could wait if he had to. Jerome's education was far too important and Louis was more than willing to wait until he had completed it. No, that was a lie. He wanted Jerome with him now but he would wait if he had to. Do you want to date? We do need to get to know one another.

I feel like I've known you all my life. I've been waiting for you. I knew you were out there somewhere and now you're here.

Louis felt the exact same way, but he'd known what Jerome was to him. This was new to his mate so they should go slow. What do you want to do?

I'd like to date if we can. Go the movies and for meals out but I don't want to go home alone at night. I want to be with you now I've found you.

I feel the same way but I don't want to rush you into anything. You have your studies, and friends and family.

And you. I have you. I can still do my degree no matter where I live unless you live somewhere like outer Mongolia.

Louis snorted then chuckled.I don't live far from your family home.

You moved there after finding me? That's sweet.

Louis rolled his eyes because yes, he had moved after finding Jerome.I did.

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I can move in with you then? I can drive to school or catch the bus, or you could drop me off.

I could, but are you sure this is what you want to do?

Would you stop me seeing my friends, or going out with them?

Louis sucked his lips in. He wouldn't because he didn't want to control Jerome's life, but he also didn't want his mate to be outwhere other people could take advantage. He trusted Jerome. He didn't trust others. I would only ask that you were careful.

Of course I would be. I have you now. There's no one else for me.

Louis sighed and closed his eyes sending warmth to his mate through their connection. I miss you.

I miss you too. How long before you finish?

I'm on a long one so I won't see you until tomorrow now.

I'll still be at home. Want me to save you some food?

Louis grinned. Homemade food someone else made? Yep!

He felt Louis' happiness. Such an amazing feeling that made him feel so much better. I'll make sure Dad saves you some.

Louis saw movement ahead and slowed. He wasn't sure what it was that made him pay attention but the hairs on the back of his neck rose, his skin tightened. I need to go.

Jerome understood immediately. Be careful.

I will. I have you now. Louis broke contact and moved toward the mouth of the alley, pausing when he reached it. He listened, hearing the faint rustle of movement, and glanced around the corner, quickly assessing the scene in front of him. A young man—or vampire—was leaning against a wall staring down the alley away from where Louis stood.

Louis heard movement farther down and watched as the vampire stood and walked toward a young man, human, who came toward him. The human smiled and easily stepped into the vampire's arms when he held them open.

"I've missed you."

The human kissed the vampire. "Same. I had to come up with an excuse so I could get away from my dad."

"At least your dad doesn't want to end the world and make humans slaves."

The human winced. "Let's get away from here. Let's go home."

The two disappeared and Louis stepped out, staring at the spot where they'd been standing. That had been an interesting conversation to overhear. 'At least your dad doesn't want to end the world.' Could this be the son they'd heard about but had nothing on? Maxim's son. Glancing around, Louis noticed the absence of cameras. Good spot to meet and disappear.

Moving away, Louis called Gray. “What?”

“I just saw something that you might be interested in.”

Gray grunted. “Go on.”

“A young vampire, male, meeting a young man. Human. In a relationship, by the looks of it.”

The sigh was loud on the phone. “Shit. We need to make sure everyone knows about vampire/human relationships.”

“The kid knew he was with a vampire. They teleported away.”

“What the fuck! That’s some dumb shit right—”

“The vampire mentioned his dad wanting to end the world and enslave humans.”

Gray stopped talking. “Say that again?”

Louis licked his lips. “You heard. I didn’t get to see his face clearly. They knew each other well enough that the human knew about the vampire’s dad and what he’s like. I think it was him. Maxim’s son.”

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“Where are you?”

Louis told Gray and waited, knowing Gray would be pulling up all the CCTV footage in the area. “Black hoodie and jeans?”

“Yep.”

“I have him on camera for a second. No image of his face. Shit.”

“This vampire’s in a relationship with a human, knowing how Maxim feels about them.”

Louis heard the intake of breath. “Mate?”

“Could be. I wasn’t close enough to scent either of them. He mentioned their home just before they left. They must have a place they go to. Somewhere they consider safe.”

“Did you see the human? What did he look like?”

“Tall, broad. Wearing a black hoodie, pulled up.” Louis hadn’t been paying full attention to the human. He’d been watching the vampire, and making sure he didn’t attack.

“They were being careful to keep their faces hidden.”

“Maxim could be watching CCTV like us.”

“He will be. No doubt about it, so they both know to be careful.” There was a pause then, “Got him. Came in from the opposite direction. I’m backtracking his movements now.” Another pause then, “Fucker knows where the cameras are. Can’t get a clear picture of him.” A sigh then, “At least we can confirm he exists. Kind of. Without an actual visual we only have what you heard. Could be one of Maxim’s followers’ kids.”

“Could be but I have a feeling it was his kid. The way they both hid, and avoided cameras. The words he said. His dad wanted to enslave humans, but you could be right.”

“I need to inform the council but... shit. This could be something or nothing.”

“We should increase patrols around here. They know the area well. Might be a meeting point for them.”

“I will. I’ll do a thorough search of the area. Great find, Louis.”

Gray hung up and Louis pocketed his phone. The son could well exist. After hearing all the rumors, they could now have solid evidence, and if he was Maxim’s son then he was playing a dangerous game. If Maxim found out about the human, who knew how he would react. Whoever the vampire was, he had to be careful.

Chapter Eight

Jerome dropped the last of his bags in the living room and smiled at Louis. “That’s all of it, and now Sage can move into my dorm.”

“And away from the creep?”

“Yep.” Jerome walked into Louis’ arms and sighed as he rested his head on Louis’

shoulder. “This feels right. Being here with you. This feels like home.”

“It does now that you’re here with me.”

Jerome took Louis’ hand and led him into the bedroom, and when he released it he pulled his T-shirt off and let it fall to the floor. His jeans and underwear quickly followed and he stood naked in front of his mate. Sliding his arms over Louis’ shoulders, he let his fingers slide in the hair at the nape of Louis’ neck. Louis bared his fangs then smiled before sliding his lips over Jerome’s. Jerome sighed and moved closer until they touched and arched up, rubbing his hard dick along Louis’.

“Louis.”

“Trying to tell me something?” Louis nibbled along Jerome’s jaw, scraping the skin with his fangs, and Jerome tilted his head to one side. He hummed when Louis licked his neck, then scraped the skin with his fangs again. Arching, Jerome trembled, then gasped when Louis picked him up and lay him on the bed.

He watched Louis strip naked, all his gorgeous skin revealed to him, and sat up, sliding his hands over Louis’ firm thighs. He ignored Louis’ dick and continued upwards until he reached Louis’ nipples. He licked them, hearing the swift intake of breath, then smiled when Louis lay over him and kissed him. Their tongues slid together, dancing erotically, and Jerome moaned when Louis settled between his thighs.

Jerome lifted his legs, wrapping them around Louis’ waist and rubbing their cocks together as Louis murmured, “I want to eat your ass. I want to taste you on my tongue, fuck you with it and make you come.”

“You say the best things.” Jerome returned Louis’ kiss then moaned when Louis moved away and placed a hand on his hip. Rolling over, Jerome spread his legs and

waited, feeling the bed move as Louis settled between his thighs.

“You look so good. Can’t wait to taste you.”

Jerome gasped then moaned when Louis licked his ass, the tongue sliding over his wrinkled flesh. The long licks had Jerome moaning, the warm wet flesh making his ass light up with pleasure. Louis moved down towards Jerome’s balls and sucked one into his mouth, causing Jerome to gasp. Louis tugged the other one and rolled it between his fingers before swapping to lick and suck it.

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When he moved back up, Louis flicked his tongue over Jerome's asshole, then used the tip to circle it before sliding the flat of his tongue over it. Jerome gasped and groaned, pushing back on Louis' tongue, wanting to feel it inside his ass, but Louis took his time. Licking Jerome's ass, then teasing him with the tip, making Jerome shudder as the pleasure built inside.

When the tip of Louis' tongue slid inside then retreated, Jerome groaned in frustration. Louis' hands spread Jerome's ass wider and his tongue pushed inside, a little more than before but not enough for Jerome.

"Louis," Jerome whined. "Please."

"Be patient."

"I don't wanna."

Louis chuckled then licked Jerome's ass again before pushing his tongue inside and fucking him slowly with it. More and more slid inside and Jerome trembled, his body breaking out in a sweat. His balls pulled up and he pushed back on Louis' tongue, needing more. Louis gave it to him, his hands keeping him spread wide, his tongue darting in and out of his ass.

When one of Louis' hands tugged on Jerome's dick, he keened and arched up, gasping in pleasure. "Please."

Louis released him and Jerome cried out. "Not yet." Before Jerome could respond, a finger pushed inside and rubbed that spot that made lights flash in front of his eyes.

He shuddered and pushed back, wanting more, eager to feel Louis in his ass. A second finger pushed in and Jerome hissed at the slight sting of pain that quickly morphed into something more when Louis tapped his prostate. He shivered, his body demanding more, but Louis was in charge and Jerome was merely a passenger.

A third made Jerome wince then groan loudly. "Louis."

The fingers disappeared and Jerome panted when Louis' dick rubbed over his hole. The head pushed inside and Jerome hissed. It hurt but he knew the pain would soon disappear. After a few seconds, Louis pushed all the way in then grabbed Jerome's shoulders. "Come here." Jerome moved back, settling on Louis so he was sitting on his thighs. In this position, he could feel all of Louis, and he squeezed his ass muscles, hearing Louis' deep groan.

"Do that again."

Jerome did, and Louis ran his fangs along Jerome's neck. Jerome lifted and slowly sat back on Louis' dick as Louis' hands gripped his hips. He lifted again then slowly sank back down, squeezing his muscles. Louis' hands tightened, and he kissed Jerome's neck and shoulders.

Jerome moved slowly at first, enjoying the slow slide of Louis' dick in and out of his ass until he needed more. Louis must have felt the same because he moved Jerome onto his hands and knees, whispering, "Gonna fuck you now, my mate."

Jerome whimpered then cried out. Louis fucked him hard and deep, and Jerome's hands scrambled on the sheets until he could grip them tight. He pushed back, hearing their bodies slap together, their moans filling the air. His balls pulled up and just as he was about to come, Louis cried out and slammed inside. Jerome panted, on the edge as Louis shot deep in his ass. Then Louis was gone.

Pushing Jerome on his back, Louis grinned down at him and quickly lubed Jerome's dick before swinging his leg over Jerome's hip and taking his hard dick in his hand. Watching Louis, Jerome whimpered when Louis slid down his cock, taking Jerome in his ass. Jerome grabbed Louis' thighs and cried out when Louis moved, setting a hard, fast pace.

"Come, Jerome. I want to feel you come inside me."

Jerome arched up, his mouth falling open, watching Louis ride him. Suddenly Louis lowered and grabbed Jerome's head, pulling it to one side. Jerome heard the hiss then felt the fangs before he shouted, his dick pulsing in Louis' ass, his balls unloading. The world disappeared as pleasure swamped him, his body jerking, and Jerome forgot about everything but the ecstasy he felt.

Blinking his eyes open, Jerome rolled his head to one side. Louis lay next to him, panting, his hand stroking Jerome's chest. "Louis."

"Give me five minutes then we'll do that again."

"Is this moving-in sex?" Smiling, Jerome rolled onto his side and kissed Louis, who moaned quietly.

"This is us. We get to do this every day."

"I think I like that."

"Hmm. You think?" Louis smiled softly and ran his fingers over Jerome's face. "I'm so happy we're finally here together."

"Thank you for waiting." Kissing him again, Jerome sat up and stretched. "I think we need a shower."

“Yeah and I think you need to bend me over in the shower and fuck the come out of me.”

“Fuck the what?” Jerome burst out laughing as Louis waggled his eyebrows at him. “I think I can do that.”

“Now?” Louis jumped up, his hard cock bouncing. Stroking it slowly, he bit his lip. “See what you do to me?”

“And me.” Taking the hand Louis held out for him, Jerome let Louis pull him off the bed and lead him to the bathroom.

Louis turned the shower on and tested the water then pulled Jerome inside. He sighed when the warm water sprayed over him, then grinned when Jerome bent over. Jerome ran a finger over Louis’ crack, then dropped to his knees behind him and licked his ass. Louis cried out and pushed back. “Do that again,” he demanded.

Knowing how good it felt, Jerome licked again and again. The taste of Louis coated his tongue and it was one Jerome couldn’t get enough of. He pushed his tongue in Louis’ ass then paused. He could taste himself and Louis and it made his dick pulse with need. How could something so dirty be so good? He wanted more and spread Louis’ asscheeks wider, his tongue spearing Louis’ hole time and time again.

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Louis cried out, his body jerking. “Fuck, Jerome. I’m close. Fuck me. Please.”

Jerome gave Louis’ ass a final swipe of his tongue then picked up the lube and poured some on his dick, stroking it and moaning at how good it felt. He rubbed the mushroom head along Louis’ ass, teasing them both, then slowly pushed inside. Louis groaned loudly, the sounds echoing in the small room. “Louis,” Jerome gasped.

“Don’t stop. Fuck me, Jerome.”

Pushing inside, Jerome rubbed against Louis’ ass then pulled out. He wanted to go slow and steady but Louis had other ideas, pushing back when Jerome slid inside. “Louis.”

“Fuck me, Jerome. Fuck me hard. Make me feel you.”

Gritting his teeth, Jerome’s grip on Louis’ hips tightened and he moved faster. “Oh fuck. You’re so tight.”

It wasn’t long before he was fucking Louis the way he wanted, his hips pistoning in and out of Louis’ tight ass. “Like that. Fuck me like that.”

“Close,” he muttered when he felt his balls pull up. He heard Louis stroking his cock and it all added to the intense pleasure Jerome felt. The tingling in his groin grew and he threw his head back, crying out when he came, shooting deep into Louis’ ass. Louis cried out as well and his ass squeezed Jerome’s dick, making his orgasm intensify.

Jerome slumped over Louis' back, gasping hard, his cock twitching in Louis' ass. Louis chuckled softly then moved slowly and Jerome felt his dick slide free. He leaned on Louis when Louis hugged him and sighed. "I'm glad we're living together now."

"Yeah? My ass did it for you?"

"It won me over."

Louis chuckled then lifted Jerome's face and kissed him softly. "I love you."

"I love you too."

"Let's clean up and finishing putting your things away, then I think take out is required."

Jerome stood and let Louis clean him then wrap a towel around his waist once they were finished. They dressed quickly and Jerome unpacked his belongings as Louis ordered pizza. His home. It felt right to be there, in this place, and he wasn't far from Shaun's so Jerome could go there more often.

His campus wasn't as near, but Louis had mentioned having a car, so that would help with traveling to and from classes. Sitting on the edge of the bed, their bed, Jerome looked around the bedroom and noticed the lack of pictures. "Twenty minutes." Glancing at the doorway, he saw Louis watching him, a soft smile on his face.

"Why don't you have any pictures?" Seeing the blush on Louis' skin, Jerome tilted his head. "What?"

Louis pushed away from the door and walked over to the closet, opened it and pulled out a box. Picking it up, he carried it over to where Louis sat and placed it next to

him. "Look inside."

Louis didn't need to. "Me?"

"Yeah." Shrugging, Louis pulled the top off the box. "I couldn't be with you but I had to see you so I took pictures." He lifted one out and handed it to Louis. "I took this the first day we met. I made sure you were safe then quickly took it."

Louis stared at it. He looked so young, but he had been when they'd first met. Placing it on the bed, he peered inside the box, seeing many pictures. "Not a stalker at all." He grinned and reached up to touch Louis' face. "Now we can have pictures of both of us. We can hang them on the wall."

"We can. This is our home now."

Louis nodded. "It is. Our home."

Chapter Nine

One week later...

"The party went well." Hugo stretched as he yawned. "Not sure the council was impressed. You'll be getting a call for sure."

"I will, but whatever punishment they give me will be worth it." When Jerome had suggested a moving-in party, Louis hadn't agreed. At first. His persistent mate had worn him down and he'd eventually given in and now he was glad he had. The vampires had been warned humans would be present and had to be careful but it had turned out okay. Everyone had enjoyed themselves and Jerome had loved having his friends and family there. Plus, he met lots of vampires Louis worked with. Gray, Hugo, Kelvin, Skylar and many others.

The council hadn't been impressed at all, but they couldn't stop his mating now that it had happened. Louis knew he'd face his day in front of them so was enjoying the time with Jerome before then.

“Let me know when the next one is. Jerome's sister is super-hot and asked to see my fangs.”

“Be careful with her. Jerome and Shaun won't be happy if she gets hurt.”

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“I’m not going to hurt her at all.” Hugo pushed the door open and walked into the security office where Gray and Key sat. “Any luck tracing the human kid?”

Gray had informed them all about what Louis had seen and they were all being extra vigilant. The sighting could potentially be a game changer for them, and tracking down the human kid and the one they believed was Maxim’s son had become top priority.

“Not so far. He knows the area well. Knows where all the cameras are so knows how to avoid them or make sure we can’t make out what he looks like if he’s near one.”

“Wonder how long they’ve known each other?” Louis asked as he sat next to Gray, watching him work his magic.

“I wonder if they’re mates.” Key turned around on his chair and faced them. “The human knows who this guy is and what he can do. How many vampires tell humans that?”

“Key’s got a point and that would make sense. It could also be why they’re being careful and making sure we can’t see them.” Louis smiled at Key. “If they’re mates then the human will know everything. He asked to go home, so he knows that we can teleport. The human has to be someone Maxim’s son could trust.”

“So, mate. Won’t that chap Maxim’s ass.” Hugo grinned. “His son, mated to the very thing Maxim hates.” The grin fell off Hugo’s face. “Shit. Poor kid. Finding his mate and having to hide it from his dad.”

“They haven’t mated, then.” Gray tapped on the keyboard. “Maxim would know the second he scented his son.”

“Yeah, he wouldn’t risk his mate’s life, but that’s if they are mates.”

“They kissed,” Louis murmured. “Hugged. I think Key’s right. I think they’re mates.”

“We have a weakness then, that we can use to lure Maxim out. Or lure the son out who will give us Maxim.” Gray raised his hands when Louis and Hugo argued with him. “I’m not advocating us hurting either of them. It appears the son is in a shitty situation, but if we can find out who the human is then maybe we can do something to get to Maxim. We all want that bastard found.”

“We could do something like that.” Key tapped his chin. “I’ll spend some more time searching the area, running analysis. If we can find him, track him, then we could get a name and go from there.” Key shook his head. “Poor kid.”

“Yeah. Imagine your mate being the very species your old man hates. Hey, Gray. How is Henry?”

Gray flipped Hugo off. “Henry is very happy or he was when I left him in bed earlier.” Gray pulled up Hugo’s work week. “Just remember, a few taps from me and you could be working the shittiest area of the city.”

Hugo grinned. “It’s funny and you know it is. If it was anyone else but you, you’d be laughing your ass off too.”

“But it is me, so stop.”

Hugo held his hands up. “Fine. I’ll drop it.”

“You’re smelling all mated, Louis...”

“Like you don’t know about being mated, Gray.” Louis smiled when Gray swiveled on his chair to face him.

“We never did get to talk properly at the party. How long have you known him, and has the council been in contact?”

“I’ve known him since he was twelve and I waited until now to mate him. The council does know but haven’t requested me to attend yet. I’m waiting for it.” Shrugging, Louis added, “I know they’ll punish me, but I waited six years for him. I’ve waited enough and he was of legal age and knew what would happen. We live together now. I’m happy and the council and whatever they decide won’t change that.”

“I’m happy for you too, and it explains why you never went out with anyone. You could have said something. Feel like shit now for giving you a hard time.” Hugo glared at Louis. “All the times I tried to get you to meet someone and you had a mate all along.”

He did feel guilty over that and apologized. “I didn’t want anyone to know. I was waiting for him to grow up.” Louis grinned. “He’s going to be a biochemist.”

“He can work in our labs.” Gray scanned the monitor. “This is where I lose the human kid.” The screen showed an image of him disappearing into an alley. “He always has his face covered.” Sitting back, Gray rubbed his fingers over his lips. “He’s good. Maxim’s son has coached him well.”

“If we could create a timeline of how often they meet we could estimate the next time.” Key pulled up several images on his monitor. “It’ll take time but it could be worth it.”

“Do it, but we can’t let it interfere with our other work.”

“Good thing I can multitask.” Key carried on working, his fingers moving quickly over the keyboard. “I’ll have something ready by the end of the week. Like you said, finding the human could be the start of the end of this, and I want Kelvin to come home and not be stressed.”

“Same here.”

How are your friends? When Jerome didn’t respond, Louis didn’t think much of it. For all he knew, Jerome could be in the lab doing something technical for an assignment that would go right over Louis’ head. His mate was smart and intelligent, and Louis was lucky and proud to have him.

“You want us to go out to that area and have a look?” Louis focused back on the conversation, realizing Hugo now stood and was leaning over Gray’s shoulder, staring at the monitor.

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“The alley where Louis first saw them. I know it’s been a couple of days, but have a look around. I’ll get Minh to go by later too.” Gray drummed his fingers on the table. “We need to track him down. He’s the weak link we can exploit. Shit, I hate saying that, but let’s be practical about it. We find the human, we find the son, then we find Maxim.”

“We’ll pop over there. There are no cameras, obviously, given the fact they used that location.” Louis looked at Hugo and willed himself to the location where he’d seen the two meet. Within seconds, Hugo stood next to him. They both walked up and down the alley, not seeing very much.

“Like you said. Good location. No cameras, no windows in the buildings on either side of the alley, and plenty of places to hide away and not be noticed. I’d choose this place in their position.”

Louis squatted on the ground where he’d seen them standing. There was nothing to see, and he sighed as he stood. “We should put a camera up so we can watch this area.”

“Gray’s already on it. Should be in place in the next couple of hours.” Hugo turned slowly on the spot. “I wonder if there are more places like this around here?”

“What shops are close by?”

“A coffee shop.”

Louis spun around, seeing Minh standing behind them. “A warning would be nice,

and how do you know about the shop?"

"I've been in a few times. It stays open late. There are a few shops around here that do that. People walking past." Louis watched the entry, seeing a steady stream of people walking past even at the late hour. "I wouldn't meet here unless there was a specific reason why."

"We need to find out what it is, then. It was luck I was here and spotted him."

Louis.

Hey babe. You home yet?

Hurt.

Louis held a hand up, then pointed to his head. Have you had an accident? Where are you?

I thought he was a friend.

"What?" "What?"

"What's happening?" Minho stood in front of him. "Your mate?" Louis nodded. "In danger?" He nodded again, trying to reach Jerome, but there was nothing.

"Nothing. He said he's hurt and he thought he was a friend and now nothing."

"Head back to Gray and have them pull up CCTV in and around the university. We'll find him and track him from there."

"Shit." Louis nodded, and as soon as he appeared next to Gray, he said, "Jerome's

hurt, and I can't reach him now. Said he thought he was a friend." The words came out in a rush, Louis' heart racing at the thought of something happening to Jerome.

"Slow down and breathe." Gray pointed to a chair. "Sit and tell me where your mate should be right now."

Louis did and waited as Key accessed the university's CCTV. It took several minutes before Key located Jerome and then tracked him as he attended lectures, met friends, and went to the library. After thirty minutes of following Jerome, Louis was beginning to lose patience when Key muttered something.

"What?"

"Jerome met Skylar. I didn't know they'd become friends."

Louis watched the monitor, seeing Jerome leave with Skylar. "It's daytime as well. Notice how he stands in the shadows." Key tracked their movements until they entered a room and didn't come out. "They only met at the party we had the other night. Why would he be there?"

"They go in but don't come out, so I'm guessing Skylar moved them somewhere, but where?" Key glanced at him then back to the monitor. "What did Jerome say to you?"

"That he was hurt and that he thought he was a friend." Louis bit his bottom lip, staring at the monitor. "Why would he go with him?"

"Maybe Skylar said something to him? Something he wouldn't think to question?"

Louis tapped the side of his head. "He could have reached out to me."

"Not if he assumes he's your friend, and he has no reason to think he isn't." Gray

swung around and glanced at the monitor then at Louis. “He was at the party you held. He would have no reason to think he was being anything other than a friend. Why would he reach out to you?”

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“Shit.” Louis stood and rubbed his face with his hands. “Shit.”

“We need to find Skylar and have a word with him. As you said, Jerome enters but doesn’t leave. We can only assume Skylar moved them.”

“Where though? Jerome said he was hurt.” Louis could feel his heart racing in his chest and took several deep breaths to calm himself. He needed to remain in control now more than ever. Jerome needed him.

“Try talking to him again.”

Jerome? He waited but when nothing happened, he tried again. Jerome? Talk to me. Where are you?

Again nothing and he looked at Gray, shaking his head. “Nothing.”

“He’s either asleep or drugged.” Gray swung back to his computer and pulled up details on Skylar. “He lives here. Why don’t we pop over and pay him a visit? I’d be interested to hear what he has to say about this.”

“Me too. Why Jerome? Why go after him?”

“Hate to say it but what if he’s attracted to Jerome and wants him?” Key shrugged. “We all know when you mate that’s it but what if Skylar can’t accept it? They’ve met once and now he’s potentially kidnapped him.”

“We need to go to his house and question him.” Gray stood and grabbed his coat.

“Tell Kelvin to meet us there and continue to try and locate Jerome and Skylar.”

Key nodded. “He’s going there now.”

“Let’s go and find your mate.”

Chapter Ten

Jerome shivered, a cold breeze striking his skin, and he opened his eyes, wincing at the throb in his head. Rolling over, Jerome hissed. The floor was cold, and why was he naked? Slowly pushing himself up into a sitting position, Jerome stilled, waiting for the room to stop spinning and for his stomach to stop rolling. He swallowed, his mouth dry like it had been stuffed with cotton, and glanced around the room he was in.

It was bare, with no windows. The floor appeared to be concrete. The walls were the same but that was it. There was only one way in or out, but as Jerome concentrated on the door, he realized there was no handle on the inside. Furrowing his brow, he attempted to stand, but his legs gave out and he fell heavily back on the floor.

Closing his eyes, he tried to reach out to Louis but there was nothing. After several attempts, he opened his eyes and rubbed a hand over his face. Moving slowly, he got up onto his hands and knees then pushed up so he was standing but leaning against the nearest wall.

Louis? Again, nothing but a dull throb in his mouth.

This wasn’t good. The last thing he remembered was his surprise at seeing Skylar. It was still daylight outside and the last person he expected to see was a vampire. He was standing in the shadows, keeping him from the sun’s reach, but still, why had he been there?

Skylar had appeared nice, friendly. Had said he was visiting a friend and thought he'd come and say hi. Jerome had asked about this friend and Skylar had winced, saying she was human so didn't know about him. It seemed so plausible to him but he knew very little about vampires and how they interacted with humans.

When Skylar had suggested getting a drink together, Jerome had thought he was being nice, so had agreed. Entering the store room had also seemed a good idea. That way Skylar could move them to a shop without being seen. It never occurred to Jerome that stepping inside the room put him in danger, but here he was. Naked. Alone. Lost.

Taking a deep breath, Jerome placed a hand on his chest and willed his heart to slow. He shook out his hands when he felt adrenaline rush through them. Panicking wouldn't solve a thing. Jerome needed to think, and fast. He had to find a way out or attract attention so when Skylar came in, Jerome could attack and get free.

It would have to be quick. Vampires were faster and stronger so Jerome knew he would only have one chance and that chance had to work. Licking his dry lips, Jerome studied the room again. Nothing. No pipes, no nails or screws in the walls, no areas of the floor that Jerome could try to dig up and use. He hated to admit it, but it was capable of holding him. Skylar had thought this out well and made sure the room would do the job he'd intended it to.

Louis? Jerome paused, waiting for Louis to respond, but again, there was nothing. Tilting his head, Jerome gave his body a check, noting where he hurt or areas that didn't feel quite right. His head pounded, his mouth still felt like crap and Jerome had to assume he'd been drugged. That could potentially stop him from reaching out to Louis.

"Shit," he murmured softly.

Jerome stared at the door when he heard movement there, and squinted, turning his head away when the door opened and bright light flooded the room. "I see you're awake."

He recognized that voice. "Skylar."

"That's me." Skylar kicked a bucket over to him. "Piss in this." A plastic bottle full of water rolled his way. "Drink that. I'll be back later."

"What? Wait!" The door shut and Jerome shouted again but Skylar was gone. Reaching for the bottle of water, Jerome examined it as best he could in the dim light then opened it. Sniffing it, he took a mouthful and sighed when the cool liquid hit his throat.

Drugged. Damn, and he had no idea with what, but it had to be strong because he couldn't reach Louis. Something vampires had created? How would he know? He was still new to this world and had no idea of what they could and couldn't do. He never imagined this would happen to him. He and Louis were still so new and still learning about each other. They'd barely begun and now he was here and he couldn't reach his mate.

Sipping the water, Jerome searched the room again and still found nothing. He shivered as the cold breeze reached him again and he scanned the door, finding a crack at the bottom where it wasn't flush with the floor. He could see a strip of light as well, but no moving shadows indicating if Skylar was outside.

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Jerome needed a plan. Something that would make Skylar come into the room. Something that meant he would have no choice but to enter the room and check on Jerome. Maybe he was sick because of the drugs Skylar had given him. That could potentially work.

“Skylar,” he shouted feebly. He needed Skylar to hear him, but also hear that he wasn’t well or was weak. “Skylar. I feel ill. My head hurts. I feel sick. What did you give me? I have allergies.” Allergies? Well, if it got the vampire inside the room with Jerome, he’d say anything.

There was movement outside. Jerome could see the shadow under the door and moved into a kneeling position, bent over and holding his stomach. He groaned as the door opened, then cried out when Skylar punched him. Jerome didn’t have time to defend himself before Skylar dragged him from the room by his hair. Jerome grabbed Skylar’s hands, trying to get himself free. At the same time, he tried to get his feet under himself so he could stand and walk, but Skylar moved fast.

Jerome was aware of entering a new room and then being picked up and thrown onto a mattress. Skylar leapt the distance and punched him again. As Jerome lay disoriented, Skylar yanked his arm above his head and cuffed it to the wall. Twisting as he sat up, Jerome pulled on the cuff then stared at Skylar who now stood by the door.

“Why are you doing this?”

“He won’t find you here. You’re all alone now.”

Skylar left the room and Jerome slumped on the mattress. What the hell? Skylar had kidnapped him over Louis? Didn't Skylar know they were mates? Louis had assured him no one interfered with mates, how important they were, how cared for. So why had Skylar taken him? Was he jealous of Jerome? Or was he jealous of Louis?

Louis?

Jerome waited but there was still nothing. How long before the drug left his system, and would Skylar drug him again? He didn't have an answer but he knew he had to fight no matter what. He wouldn't be a victim to some vampire he'd just met. Louis had waited for him, let him grow up, and had told him everything before they'd mated. Skylar wanted something and so he'd done this instead of talking to him or Louis.

Jerome shook his head. Why was he trying to figure the nutjob out? He barely knew Skylar, so he had no idea why he'd done what he had. All he knew was that he could be in danger. Was more than likely in danger, and he couldn't reach the one person who meant more to him than anyone else in his life.

The door suddenly swung open and Skylar leapt on the bed, causing Jerome to be jostled and the cuff to dig into his skin. He stared at Jerome intently and Jerome stared back. He wasn't backing down and showing any fear to this vampire.

"Pathetic human," Skylar whispered, sending shivers of alarm through Jerome. "No one will find you here. I can do whatever I want to you and no one would know."

"They'd know when you went to work. They'd scent me on you."

"Would they?" Skylar smiled but it wasn't friendly. "Good thing we aren't at my house. I can go there, shower and change and no one would be the wiser that I'd spent time with you." Skylar looked down Jerome's naked body. "I can see why he

would be attracted to you.”

Jerome resisted the urge to cover himself. Staring defiantly at Skylar, he muttered, “He likes it too.”

Skylar’s hand whipped out so fast, Jerome didn’t see it coming. He felt it, though. The hard slap to the face had him gasping in shock and pain. “Feisty. I’m going to enjoy breaking you.”

“Louis will find me.”

“How? He has no idea where you are, and I know you can’t communicate with him.” Skylar chuckled. “I took care of that straight away.” Jumping off the bed, Skylar waved. “See you soon.”

Jerome watched the door slam shut then stared at the cuff, searching for a weak link. It was clear Skylar thought very little of him because he was human, and that could work to his advantage. The cuff was hard, thick leather but there was some stitching that Jerome could pick at.

He clearly was supposed to be here for some time, so Jerome breathed deeply, calming himself. Staring at the cuff, he dug his nails into the leather around one of the stitches so he could get underneath it and hopefully loosen it enough so he could break the stitch. Then he would move to the next one. It would take some time, but it was clear he had plenty of that and it kept him busy and kept his mind off where he was.

As soon as the drugs wore off he would reach out to Louis, though going by what Skylar had said he was aware they could talk telepathically. Jerome knew Skylar would have to drug him again before the ones he had already been given were expelled from his system. It was simply a matter of when.

If only he knew what time it was, then he could figure out how long the drugs were in his system for. Without knowing that, Jerome wouldn't be able to figure out how long to delay taking food or water. He could feasibly manage two to three days without water but he was certain Skylar would force him to drink before then. That's if he was still alive.

No, he had to keep Jerome alive because if he died Louis would know. He'd feel it through their bond and then he too would die.

So Jerome was kind of formulating a plan with what little he knew, which was better than nothing. He wasn't going to sit there and do nothing. He was going to do everything in his power to escape the cuff or reach out to Louis. No, he was not going to be an easy victim. Not Jerome. His parents didn't raise him that way, and he knew Louis would be searching for him. They always talked to each other, and by now it had been several hours, so Louis would know something was wrong.

Jerome was certain about that. Certain about Louis. The vampire hadn't waited years for Jerome to grow up to then not be concerned when they couldn't communicate. Louis always stayed in touch, even if it was to ask how his day was going or to tell him how proud he was. Louis would search for him and when he found him, he would come for him. Jerome actually felt a small amount of sympathy for Skylar.

If Skylar knew Louis as well as he believed he did then he would also know the kind of vampire he was. Jerome relaxed slightly. He still had to survive the next few hours or days before Louis found him, but he knew Louis would. Louis would save him.

Chapter Eleven

Louis stood outside Skylar's home, noticing how dark it was. No one was home, or if they were they were keeping the lights off. Kelvin stood to his right, Gray to his left, and it was Gray who spoke. "Gives the impression no one is home, but we don't need

lights on to see.”

Kelvin walked up the short path and knocked on the door. Louis scanned the area, seeing other homes with lights on, cars in the driveway. It was a predominantly human neighborhood, and not one where most vampires lived. Vampires tended to live close together, formed their own community. It kept them safe, being close to their own kind.

Kelvin knocked again and looked at Louis and Gray. Gray nodded then disappeared and Louis knew he was searching the rear of the property. When no one answered again, Kelvin checked the street then worked his magic to open the front door.

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Louis followed him inside, closing the door behind him, and paused. He listened to the house, hearing nothing. No creaks, or steps, no rustling of covers. The house was silent.

Gray murmured, “Clear,” from somewhere towards the back and Kelvin responded that their area was clear as well. They split up when they reached the stairs, Louis moving toward Gray as Kelvin carefully made his way upstairs. It didn’t take long for Gray and Louis to check all the rooms downstairs, finding no Skylar or Jerome.

“Clear,” Gray murmured again, knowing Kelvin would hear him.

“Clear up here too.”

“Let’s search and see what we can find.”

“I still can’t believe Skylar took him. I’ve known Skylar for years. I invited him to our party.” Louis shook his head as he opened drawers in the kitchen, searching through the junk drawer everyone had.

“Me too. Hard to think that someone we know would do something like this. Why now? Why Jerome? It doesn’t make sense. He knows Henry and Key. He’s had plenty of opportunity to take one of them.”

“I think it’s not the human he’s after but the vampire.” Kelvin stood in the doorway.

“It’s you.”

Louis shrugged as he continued to search. “I have never been interested in Skylar.

He's a friend and nothing more."

"Maybe he wanted to be more and when you announced your mate, he knew he couldn't have you."

Gray pushed past Kelvin and into the living area. "Doesn't matter why he did it. All that matters is he did do it. Jerome could be in danger. What we find here could lead us to Jerome's location."

Kelvin rummaged through the shelves, pulling out books and flipping through them before dropping them to the floor. "We'll find him, and if not, Louis can deal with Skylar."

Louis grunted. "I'll be dealing with him either way." He walked into a room that appeared to be a study and went through all the drawers, pulling out paperwork, checking pictures. Bills and more bills. Pictures of all of them together, pictures of vacations Skylar had taken. Once he'd cleared the room, he shouted to Gray. "There's a computer in here. Can you access it?"

As Gray walked into the room, Louis heard Kelvin going up the stairs. "If I can't I know a human who can." Gray switched it on and Louis waited. Gray had his phone to his ear and as soon as it was answered said, "I have Skylar's home computer. Getting you access now."

Louis had no idea how it was done, but before he knew it, Key had control. Gray put him on loudspeaker then said, "He isn't here and it looks like he hasn't been for a number of days. He has another location which we have yet to find paperwork on. Search the computer while we carry on here."

"On it."

Gray stood and nodded to the filing cabinet. “Has that been searched?”

“Not yet. I’ve done the drawers so far. They were next.”

“I’ll do them now. Key?”

“Nothing interesting yet. There is something...”

“What?”

“A hidden file. Not that well-hidden for us. Password protected and encrypted. Interesting.”

Gray grunted and carried on searching the cabinet, pulling files out and checking them before dropping them to the floor. “Keep searching.”

“The house you’re in is the only one he owns?”

Louis paused. “That we know of.”

“Hmm. Okay. Let me follow this and see where it leads.”

Gray glanced at the computer then his phone then Louis. “A second location. Makes sense.”

“It does, and shows this has been thought out.”

“Before he knew Jerome existed unless he followed you and you never noticed.”

“Could be.” Louis shook his head. “Why would I bother checking if someone was following me around? I would never suspect a fellow vampire.”

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“I think he might have been interested in you for some time and you finding your mate made him act.”

“And we have a second location. Just a name so far, which is fairly common, so I’m going deeper.”

“What’s the name?” Louis stopped searching completely and focused on Key.

“Victoria Lane, of which there are eight in this city alone and we all know how far you guys can travel. Give me a few more minutes to narrow it down. He’s good at hiding his tracks, but not that good.”

“Keep searching, Louis. We might find something useful here.”

Louis watched Gray for a few seconds, then tried to contact Jerome. Jerome? Where are you? Is Skylar with you? When he got no response, his shoulders sagged. “Shit.”

“We’ll find him. There is nowhere Skylar could have taken him that we won’t find.”

“I’ve narrowed it down to three potential locations. That’s the best I can do. Two aren’t on Victoria Lane but are close to it and that’s why I think it’s this Victoria Lane and not any of the others. These two streets are mentioned as well.”

“Three locations to scope and access. Got it. Send the info to our phones and we’ll go there now.”

Louis’ phone pinged and he quickly read the message. Victoria Lane, Sandy Lane,

and Cromwell Lane. All three were close together. “Should we check Victoria Lane out first?”

“I’m getting more people involved. We’ll hit all three at the same time in case he owns more than one and has them rigged. Last thing we want to do is trigger an alarm and he grabs Jerome and disappears.”

“I never thought of that.”

“He has your mate. Your focus is on getting him back.” Gray stared at his phone then nodded. “We jump in five.” He grinned and waggled his eyebrows. “Always wanted to say that.”

“Gray. Please.” Louis closed his eyes. His mate had been kidnapped and Gray was doing this?

“We’ll find Jerome and bring him back to you.”

Kelvin walked in and pulled his shoulders back, rolling his head from side to side. “We’re all going to Victoria Lane?”

“We are and I have teams ready to hit the other two locations now. Ready to go?”

Louis checked the pictures Key had sent. “I’ll go in through the front.”

“I’ll take the rear.” Kelvin shoved his phone in his pocket. “Let’s go.”

Louis appeared outside the front of a rundown one story house on Victoria Lane. The porch was sagging, the paint hanging in strips in several places. Gray appeared in front of him and nodded. They moved toward the house, Gray hopping up onto the porch and searching it, before opening the door. He glanced back at Louis when the

door opened easily. “Eyes and ears open.”

Louis followed him inside, gun in his hand, and scanned the living area they stepped into. There was furniture, but it clearly had seen better days. Dust covered everything; cobwebs hung all over. The rug on the hardwood floor was dirty and Louis was certain he’d seen things jumping in it when he’d stepped on it.

Grimacing, he carried on forward, trailing Gray, keeping an eye out behind them to ensure no one sneaked up on them. The place was dark, but not dark enough that Louis couldn’t see. The street light outside did little to help. The curtains had beendrawn and Louis didn’t want to touch them considering how bad they looked. The place had been empty and left this way for some time.

“Why this place?” he whispered.

“Not sure. It clearly isn’t being lived in. Decoy?”

Kelvin entered the room. “All clear here.”

Gray pulled his phone out and checked it, frowning as he read the messages. “Nothing in the two other locations.”

“Key doesn’t make mistakes.”

“I know, so Jerome must be around here somewhere. Tell your mate to keep searching.”

Kelvin nodded and stared off for a few seconds. “He’s on it.”

“There’s no way us accessing his computer tripped something that told him we were in his house?” Louis watched Gray who shook his head. “Are you sure?”

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“Positive, and look at this place. No one has lived here for months, if not years. Why buy it and then leave it?”

“Key’s found purchase documents. Skylar bought this fifteen years ago.” Kelvin frowned. “Paid cash too.”

“Cash?” Gray stood with his hands on his hips. “It doesn’t look like he’s ever lived here. If he’d bought the place to go to when he needed a break, then I could understand, but look at this dump. Why buy a house then do nothing with it?”

“Like you said. Decoy.”

“Louis, he bought this dump fifteen years ago and has done nothing with it.” Kelvin went over to a bookcase and ran his finger along one of the empty shelves. Lifting his finger up, Louis could see the dust covering it. “Why buy a house and leave it to rot?”

“Again. Decoy.” Gray pinched his lips together at the two vampires.

“Or there is something here we’re not seeing.” Louis glanced around the room.

Gray snarled, flashing his fangs. “Is there a basement?” He looked at Kelvin, who answered a couple of seconds later.

“No, but he’s pulling up aerial of this location now. The rear garden is large and there are a couple of sheds out there. Possible locations.”

“Let’s go and be ready. If he is there then he may know we’re here. Just because

we've been quiet doesn't mean he doesn't have eyes on this location. Ask Key if the other locations have basements or outbuildings."

"One does but the other doesn't. They're being searched now. He'll update us when he knows."

Louis followed Kelvin through the kitchen and out into the rear garden. He could see the shed a few meters ahead and a path that lead to it. The garden was overgrown, more like a jungle than a garden, and he pushed his way through the tall grass and small trees to reach the path. The flagstones were loose, with weeds all over them, and Louis shook his head.

"This doesn't look like it's seen any use in some time. Not that he'd need to actually use it."

"If this is the place then it's the perfect cover. No human would think someone was here." Gray pulled a knife free and hacked at a bramble that had caught in his jeans.

Kelvin reached the door to the shed and waited. "Try to contact Jerome again."

Louis nodded. Jerome. Where are you? Why aren't you answering me? He waited but there was no response. Shaking his head, he stared at the door and noticed the shiny new locks. "Seen the locks?"

"Yep. Interesting." Gray checked the gun in his hand and nodded. "Let's do this."

Chapter Twelve

The door banged open and Skylar walked in, dragging a chair behind him. He smirked at Jerome and placed the chair by the side of the mattress then closed and locked the door. Sitting on the chair, he watched Jerome and smiled.

“They’re looking for you but they won’t find you.”

“Louis will. We’re mates. He won’t give up until he finds me.”

“Then he’ll have a long hard life searching for someone he’ll never find.”

“Why do this? What have I done to you? I’ve only just met you.” Jerome watched Skylar who leaned back in his chair, smiling. He’d met him once, spoken to him maybe three times at the party, so why had Skylar kidnapped him?

“You have what I want.”

“What?” What was he on about? What did Jerome have that Skylar wanted? “I don’t have anything. We just met.” What was he going on about?

“Louis.”

Jerome’s eyes widened. Louis? “We’re mates. No one comes between mates.” He knew that much thanks to Louis, so why would Skylar take him, knowing Louis would never be with him? “I’m the only one for him. You know this. Mates don’t cheat.”

“Mates can and have cheated. Rare, but it does happen, and while he’s depressed because he can’t find you and you’ve cut him off, I’ll be there to help him pick up the pieces.”

“That sounds... he’d never do that. He waited years for me. He’d wait even more to find me.”

“You think you’re so special that no man will turn Louis from you? I’ve known him for years. I know what he likes, what he doesn’t like. I know his friends. I’m a

vampire so I know the life he lives. You're human. What can you possibly give him that I can't?"

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“Blood,” Jerome whispered.

“One slight issue that I plan to resolve. Once you’re dead, the bond between you dies and he’ll no longer need your blood. Problem solved.”

And Louis would die too, or had Skylar forgotten about that? “You’re going to kill me?” Jerome pushed back on the mattress until his back was flat against the wall. “Why can’t you let me go?”

“Louis is mine. He’s always been mine and he’ll be mine again. You showing up threw a wrench in our relationship, but once you’re dealt with we’ll get back to how we were. I’ve known him all my life, in every sense of the word.” Jerome knew what he meant. Louis and Skylar had had sex, maybe even had a relationship, but that was in the past. Jerome was now and always.

“Killing me won’t make Louis fall into your arms. He loves me.”

“Love is such a fickle emotion. I’ve seen you humans fall in and out of love as often as you change your underwear. Pathetic, really. Rarely do two humans commit to each other and stick to it. It’s not like that for vampires. We make a promise to each other and keep it. We work through our problems, we don’t walk away when things are a little rough. Humans.” Skylar spat the word. “The world would be a much better place without you screwing everything up.”

Louis! Where are you?

Jerome winced and Skylar laughed. “Trying to reach him?” He tapped his head. “Not

gonna happen. Some drugs are great for altering the brain's chemistry.” He stood and pulled a hypodermic needle from his pocket and then lunged at Jerome.

Jerome barely saw Skylar coming before he was pushed into the mattress. He cried out when he felt the needle stab into his asscheeks and pushed back, trying to throw Skylar off. Suddenly the weight disappeared and Jerome lifted his head, seeing Skylar sit back on the chair.

“What did you use?”

“Like I’m going to tell you that.” Skylar chuckled as he shook his head. “I heard you were smart, intelligent, but here you are asking stupid fucking questions like that. What does Louis see in you? Why would you be his mate when I’m here? You’re a weak, pathetic, human. I’m a strong, smart, vampire. We’re worlds apart and I know which of us is better than the other. Still while you’re here, you have a hole I can fuck before I kill you.”

“Don’t touch me.”

“I already have.” Skylar leaned forward on his chair, resting his elbows on his thighs. “Who do you think stripped you naked? For all you know, I touched you all over, as much as I wanted to. You do have a nice dick. I can see why Louis would like that, but that’s all you have going for you. Oh, apart from the hole. That’s all humans are. A hole for us to fuck.”

“Don’t fucking touch me.”

“Like you have a choice. I’ll do whatever I want to you, when I want, and there is nothing you can do to stop me. I’ll hold you down, fuck you hard, make you bleed. Ruin you for any other man. Who’d want a used up hole like you?”

Standing, Skylar grabbed the chair and disappeared, leaving Jerome alone. “Let me go,” he whispered to the empty room. Skylar was insane. That’s all he could come up with. He’d taken Jerome because he was Louis’ mate, planned to rape him, and then kill him. All so he could comfort Louis and make a move on him? Start some relationship with him?

If they’d known each other for as long as Skylar had stated, then why hadn’t they had a relationship in the past? Or had it been just sex or a friends with benefits kind of thing? He needed Louis to find him now. No more waiting, Just pop in here and rescue him. It would all be done in seconds and Skylar would never know until Louis came back and punched the shit out of him.

Jerome wasn’t a man who condoned violence but right now he could well and truly get behind Skylar being punched. A lot. And he’d watch too. He would stand there and watch Louis go to town all over Skylar’s smug face. In fact, Jerome wanted to smack him one as well.

Louis?Sighing heavily, Jerome sat back against the wall and closed his eyes. He was thirsty, hungry, and wanted a shower. He hoped his dad didn’t know. Shaun would tear the place apart searching for him and then would demand Jerome never saw Louis again. That would never happen. Louis was Jerome’s other half. He’d waited for him even when he wasn’t certain Louis was a living, breathing man. Or vampire.

If only he could reach out to him to tell him where he was. But he didn’t know where he was. There was no sound so he must be in an area away from most people. A wooded area? A house in a field somewhere? Was he even in America? That made his breath catch and his heart skip a beat. What if he wasn’tanywhere near Louis? How could Louis find him if he was on another continent?

Pulling his knees up to his chest, Jerome wrapped his arms around them and bit his lip. He had to get out. He had to find a way to free himself. Glancing down at his

wrist, Jerome studied it and sighed heavily. If he could get it off then he might stand a chance of getting out of the room he was being held in. When Skylar opened the door, Jerome could attack from behind and maybe he'd stand a chance of freedom.

What the hell was he thinking? He didn't know how to fight, and it wasn't like he'd be throwing a punch at an ordinary man. Skylar was a vampire and could do things Jerome couldn't. He was fucked or he had to be incredibly lucky.

A loud bang snapped Jerome from his thoughts. He concentrated, closing his eyes to focus on any sound that he could hear. Funny how you close your eyes to concentrate on your hearing. After a minute, Jerome sagged. He'd hoped the sound meant he'd been found, but nope.

Skylar appeared in his room and Jerome screamed. Skylar stared at him. "Time to leave."

"What? Now?" Jerome rattled the chain attached to the wall. "You need to release me then."

Skylar narrowed his eyes at him, his lips thinning. "I know. I'm not stupid, unlike you."

Jerome didn't say anything but as soon as he was freed he kicked Skylar in the nuts. Skylar's mouth opened, but no sound came out and he collapsed on the mattress. Jerome ran to the door and tugged on it but it wouldn't budge. Running back to Skylar he kicked him over then rummaged through his pockets, trying to find the keys. When he found some, he kicked Skylar in the nuts again, wincing at the high pitched scream Skylar made.

When he got to the door, his hands shook so much he struggled to push the key in the lock. He managed to get one in but it didn't work. He could hear movement behind

him and whimpered as he tried another key. Hands still shaking, Jerome missed the lock, the key scraping across it before he managed to insert it.

“Bastard.”

The key turned and Jerome threw the door open but was hit from behind and thrown into the wall opposite. He lay stunned, hearing harsh panting next to him, and looked over to see Skylar lying on the floor. Kicking out, Jerome’s foot connected with Skylar’s shoulder and Jerome pushed up off the floor, staggering toward a light he saw ahead of him.

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He staggered through a doorway and stumbled to a stop. The room was empty. There was no furniture, no window. The walls and floor were the same as the ones he'd been held in. Spinning around, Jerome noticed a door in the corner of the room and rushed over to it but never reached it. Skylar appeared in front of him and Jerome skidded to a stop, falling back on his ass.

Skylar's eyes glowed, his lips pulled back revealing his fangs, hands clenched. "You fucker. You're going to be sorry for what you've just done." He stepped toward Jerome, then stopped tilting his head. "I'll deal with you later. We need to go."

Jerome scrambled back away from Skylar as he approached and kicked out, trying to hit him. Skylar growled and batted Jerome's feet away as he tried to grab hold of him. Jerome knew if Skylar managed to grab him then he was gone. Skylar would move them to another location, maybe even farther away from Louis.

Louis!

There was nothing, but Jerome expected it considering the drug Skylar had injected him with. "Leave me alone!" Jerome kept moving away, glancing over his shoulder, seeing the space between him and the wall diminishing. Soon he'd have nowhere to go. He needed to reach the door and escape.

Skylar jumped toward him and Jerome cried out, crawling away on his hands and knees. Skylar managed to grab his ankle but Jerome kicked out, dislodging him. Whimpering, Jerome swung a fist out and hit Skylar's shoulder but Skylar shrugged it off.

“I’m going to fucking kill you when I get my hands on you. Fuck torturing you and making you do what I want. I’m just going to rip your head right off.”

Jerome screamed and rushed for the door, knowing it could be his only way out. Maybe. He had no idea where the way out was but he had to do something. He wasn’t going to die. He had a life ahead of him with the man he loved and Skylar wasn’t taking that from him.

“Louis!” he screamed.

“Think he’s here? Think he’s going to help you? You’re going to be dead soon enough and I’m going to be the one to help him get over it.”

“Fuck you! You’re fucking nuts!” Jerome lashed out, trying to keep Skylar away. He had to fight. He had to survive so Louis could find him

Skylar lunged and grabbed Jerome’s ankle then grinned. “He ain’t gonna find you, bitch. You’re mine.”

Chapter Thirteen

“No, he’s mine.” Louis lunged at Skylar and punched him in the face hard enough to knock Skylar on his ass. Kelvin rushed forward and grabbed Skylar, pulling his hands behind his back and handcuffing him. “And now you’re not going anywhere.”

“Fuck you.” Skylar spat at Louis, who slapped him across the face. Louis shook his head and turned away, going over to Jerome, who lay naked on the floor. Pulling his coat off, he draped it over Jerome and pulled him up off the ground and into his arms.

“Louis,” Jerome whispered his name, his body trembling in Louis’ arms.

“I’m sorry it took so long. I never thought this would happen to you.” Louis leaned back, framed Jerome’s face in his hands and kissed him softly. “Did he hurt you? Did he touch you in any way at all?” That was his fear. That Skylar had raped his mate.

“No. He told me he was going to and then he was going to kill me. He wants you to himself. I think he loves you or he thinks he loves you and I got in the way.”

Louis stared over his shoulder at Skylar. “You were going to rape him then kill him?”

“He’s human!” Skylar’s face reddened. He narrowed his eyes and glared at Louis and Jerome. “We deserve better than that. Look at him, all weak and pathetic. What kind of mate can a human be?”

“That’s a dangerous thing to say considering all of us here have humans for mates. I’m sure I could accidentally drop you into the sea and forget where you were.” Kelvin growled at Skylar. “My mate means everything to me and you just insulted him.”

“Like I give a fuck about the human you’re stuck with. We are better than them. They should be bowing at our feet, worshipping us like the gods we are.”

Gray circled his finger at the side of his head. “You’re nuts. You need a full psych eval when we get back.”

“I’m not going anywhere with you and you can’t make me.”

“Really?” Gray folded his arms across his chest. “And just how are you going to escape? You can’t ‘port because you have the cuffs on, and there is no one here to save you, so just how are you going to get away from us?”

“Maxim will come for me.”

“Maxim?” Kelvin yanked the cuffs up, forcing Skylar to bend over as his arms were raised high. “That vampire put his hands on my mate. I hope he does come for you. I really do.”

Skylar cried out and tried to move away from Kelvin. “Let my arms go, you bastard.”

“Now, now. Less of the language. We have humans around and you know how weak they are.” Gray rolled his eyes and shook his head. “Louis. Take your mate to the hospital and get him treated. I’ll deal with the council for now, but you’ll have to see them too.”

“Understood.” Louis took Jerome in his arms and thought of home. Once he was there, he grabbed some sweats for Jerome and helped him put them on. “Hospital now.”

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“You didn’t want them to see me naked.”

“No, not really.” Louis held Jerome again and appeared outside the hospital. Walking inside, they were met by one of the nurses on duty. “He needs help.”

“Gray’s called and informed us. Let’s get you through to one of the rooms so we can examine you.” The blonde haired vampire pointed down a corridor and walked ahead of them.

“I’m sorry. I don’t want to be a bother to you.”

“No bother at all and I’m sorry you’ve had to deal with that. Skylar of all people.” Shaking her head, she looked Jerome up and down. “You have a few bruises so let me get one of the doctors to examine you. I’m Shirley, by the way.” Opening the door to an exam room, she waited for them to enter before closing it behind her. “Get on the bed, Jerome. It is Jerome, isn’t it?”

“It is.” Louis helped Jerome onto the bed then pulled a chair closer and sat next to him, holding Jerome’s hand in his own.

“Good. Stay here and I’ll let the doctor on duty know where you are. It should only be a few minutes.”

Shirley left the room and Louis squeezed Jerome’s hand. “I’m sorry.”

“What for? It wasn’t your fault. I take it this Skylar works for one of the bad vampires?”

Louis winced but nodded. “By the sounds of it.”

“That must be difficult for you. It seems you’ve known him for a long time and now you find out he’s been betraying you.”

Louis stared at Jerome and wondered again how he could be so lucky to have a mate like him. He’d been kidnapped and hurt, but he was showing concern for Jerome. “What matters to me is what happened to you. I should have spotted something and I didn’t. I failed you.”

“Stop.” Jerome squeezed Louis’ hand. “How could you have possibly known he’d do something like this? Has he ever made you think he was anything other than your friend?”

“No, but—”

“No buts, Louis. I met him for the first time at our party and he was nice to me. He never made me feel like I was in the way. I never felt like I had to be careful around him. Now Gray clearly has issues with humans and he told me he was working on them, which I appreciated, but Skylar? No idea at all.”

“I’ve known him for decades. I should have picked something up.”

“Are we doing the blame game?” A male vampire entered the room holding a tablet in one hand. “I take it you’re Jerome, Louis’ mate. It’s nice to meet you. I’d hoped it would be under better circumstances but here we are.”

“Steve.” Louis felt most of his tension drain away when he recognized Steve.

“Louis.” Steve approached the bed and looked Jerome over. “I need you to wear one of those lovely hospital gowns so I can do a thorough exam. I believe I heard you

couldn't communicate?" Jerome nodded. "We'll take bloods and do a full workup. We need to know what drug you were given so we can find a counteragent. I'll stand outside. Give me a shout when you're ready and I'll examine you."

Steve left the room and Jerome quickly changed into the green hospital gown. "Sexy," Louis murmured, earning him a small smile.

"Yeah?"

"No." They both smiled at each other and once Jerome was back on the bed, Louis shouted for Steve.

"Much better. Let's check you out."

Louis sat and watched Steve perform Jerome's exam, noting all the marks, abrasions, and bruising on his skin. "Luckily there are no broken bones. You put up a good fight. Right. I'll get one of the nurses to come in and take your blood and leave a prescription for some pain medication." Steve walked to the door. "I hope to see you again but under better circumstances."

"Thanks, Steve."

Steve left and Jerome changed back into his clothes. They waited for the nurse to take his blood, get his prescription filled, then Louis took them home. "Fancy a bath?"

Jerome groaned and nodded. "It might help me loosen up. I'm all stiff and achy."

"Get undressed and I'll get the bath started for you. Coffee?"

"Please." Louis kissed Jerome and left him in their bedroom, entering the bathroom to start the bath. Once that was underway, he went into the kitchen and put the kettle

on. He could hear Jerome's soft groans and clothing rustling as he undressed.

Leaning on the counter, Louis closed his eyes. He could have lost his mate. Skylar knew they were coming and was in the process of trying to leave with Jerome. If Louis had entered the room a few seconds later, Jerome wouldn't have been there and he might have never seen him again.

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Skylar. Why him of all vampires? They'd been friends for decades. Had he been one of Maxim's men the entire time or had he been turned at some point and hidden it from all of them? Louis would find out even if he had to tear Skylar apart. No one touched his mate.

When the kettle boiled, Louis made Jerome's drink, picked up the pain meds and carried them through to the bathroom. Jerome was already in the bath, letting it fill around him, and smiled when he saw Louis enter the room.

"Thanks."

"Take some pain meds now, then relax. When you're ready I'll help you get out and you can have something to eat and then go to bed. You need to rest and let your body heal."

"Are you going to question him?"

Louis sat on the edge of the bath and watched Jerome before answering. "I want to be there but if you need me here then I'll stay."

"No. He was your friend and he betrayed your trust. You should be there when they speak to him. I'll be fine here. This place has great security. There's no way one of those vampires can get in here without an alarm sounding. We'd know the second they teleported inside."

"You really don't mind?"

“No and it’s you who should question him. It’s me he kidnapped and I’m your mate so you need to be there.” Jerome took his pills and hissed. “Hate taking them.” Leaning back in the bath, he sighed. “How long was I gone for? It felt like it was days but it can’t be that long.”

“Less than twenty-four hours. Felt like a lifetime.”

Jerome raised his hand and Louis took it, kissing the palm. “I knew you would come. I might have been scared at times but I knew you would find me. I knew you would never stop looking for me until you knew what had happened to me. I trust you.”

“I love you.” Louis bent over Jerome and kissed him softly on the lips. “I would have never stopped searching for you. Never.”

“I know,” Jerome whispered. “I love you, too. I have waited years for my mystery man, my savior, to come to me and I’m not letting you go now you’re here. You’re mine, Louis.”

“I am yours and only yours. Now and forever. Let me cook you something to eat and then I’ll go and speak to Skylar. I want this over and done with as soon as possible, then I can come home to you and we can live the rest of our lives together.”

“You say the sweetest things. I fancy waffles and bacon with syrup. Not healthy but screw it. I deserve it.”

Louis chuckled, kissed Jerome again and stood. “Waffles, bacon, and syrup it is. I’ll do it now.”

It didn’t take long for the food to cook, and by the time it was finished Jerome was in bed, tucked under the covers. Louis watched him eat, and when he’d finished, cleaned up then tucked him into bed. Trailing his fingers over Jerome’s cheek, Louis

kissed him softly then left.

Walking into their security building, Louis headed toward the cells, where he knew Skylar would be held. He could already hear the screaming and winced when Skylar threatened to castrate Gray. Gray grinned and waved at Louis as he entered the cell.

“He’s having a gay old time in there.” Louis arched an eyebrow at Gray. “Gay used to mean happy in the old days. So gay old time meant happy time but now you can’t say it. I miss saying it.” Shrugging, Gray pushed away from the wall and bowed. “He’s all yours.”

“No one’s been in?”

“A doctor, to check him over. He accidentally hit a few items as we put him inside. The wall, door, floor, Kelvin’s fist. You know. Everyday things.”

Louis snorted. “He’s so accident prone. I’m glad he had you and Kelvin there to help him.”

“Well, what’s a good vampire to do but to help his fellow citizen.”

“And I salute you for that.” Facing the door, Louis straightened. “Let’s see what he has to say.”

Chapter Fourteen

Louis stood in front of Skylar, who was seated in a chair that was bolted to the floor. His hands were held down so he couldn’t leave the room, and as soon as he saw Louis he said, “I didn’t mean it.”

“You said enough when we tracked your location and rescued my mate Jerome.

You'd drugged him, stripped him naked, had him held in a room he couldn't escape from. You planned to harm him, hurt him, and then kill him and dispose of his body." Louis paused and breathed deeply. He could feel his hands clench, his chest tightened and he took several seconds to relax. "Maxim. How long have you been one of his people?"

"I'm not. I only mentioned him because I was angry and scared."

Louis arched an eyebrow. So it was going to be like that. As if Louis hadn't been in the room, hearing everything Skylar screamed as they'd captured him. "I heard you. We all did, and we're tracking your bank accounts, the properties you own and your movements over the past few days. We know you've been in contact with Maxim. We know you work with him. Make this easier for yourself and tell us the truth."

Skylar shook his head. "I am telling you the truth. I said those things in the heat of the moment. I didn't mean any of them."

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“Why did you take my mate?” The door opened behind him and Louis picked up on Gray’s scent. “Why take Jerome?”

Skylar worked his jaw from side to side, his eyes flickering between Louis and Gray. “I thought he’d do something like this. I have what we need to make him talk.”

“I’ll talk if I’m granted immunity.”

Louis coughed out a laugh. “Fuck no.”

Gray stepped forward. “I can grant you immunity. Tell us what you know.”

“I don’t agree to that.”

“Not your call to make, Louis. I’m in charge here so I can grant what he wants. I alone grant you immunity. Tell us about Maxim. Where is he? Where is his son? How long have you worked for him?”

“Why Jerome?” Louis added. “Why take my mate?”

“I was there in front of you the whole time. Years and you never wanted me.”

“We had a short relationship that fizzled out. You agreed to remain friends. There was nothing there between us anymore except friendship.”

“For you, maybe, but I cared about you. I waited for you to appreciate what you had with me but then you showed up with him? A human? How is a human better than

me? I'm vampire. We're so much better than them. You lowered yourself to be with a human. They are only worth drinking from and fucking. That's it. Vampires are stronger, smarter, better. How can you not see that?"

"He's my mate. My other half. I've known him for years. I've waited for him. I'm lucky to have him in my life."

"Pfft. Like fuck you are. He's pathetic, a weakness. He can't even defend himself from attack. I had to rein my strength in when dealing with him in case I accidentally hurt him. He couldn't do shit when I was there. He only cried and tried to reach out to you. He would never have escaped if you hadn't arrived. We'd both be somewhere else and you would have never found us."

"You took him for what? Because he had Louis and you couldn't? Or did you plan to take him to Maxim and use him as bait?"

"What does it matter? It's not going to happen now, is it? You fuckers ruined it. I was going to have some fun with him then dump him used and broken. Leave him with Maxim to finish the job and you would have been searching for him. Once he was dead I would have been here to help you get over his loss. I would have helped you pick up the pieces. Me, your friend, the one who should have been your mate."

Louis looked at Gray and shook his head. What the fuck? Skylar had to have a screw loose. It didn't make sense. They knew Skylar had taken Jerome, so how would he have been able to help Louis put his life back together if Jerome had died? Skylar would be here, in this room, being questioned.

"So you took Jerome, planned to use and abuse him then discard him for Maxim to do whatever he wanted with him."

Skylar shrugged. "Until you ruined my plans."

“You sound like the bad guy from that cartoon with the dog detective.”

“He sounds unhinged.” Louis ignored Skylar’s outburst. “Where is Maxim? If you were going to leave my mate with Maxim, that means you know where he is. Where is he?”

“I have no idea what you mean. I don’t know where he is. He moves around. He’s never in the same place for too long in case you find him.”

“So how would you arrange to meet him if you don’t know where he is? A number? An email, maybe?”

“Don’t know.”

“You do know, and don’t forget I—that’s me—promised you immunity if you cooperate. You seem to have forgotten that, so answer the questions or you face the full punishment of our people for your crimes.”

“An email.” Skylar narrowed his eyes and bared his teeth. “I send an email then wait for one of his men to respond.”

“We need that email address. What is it?” Gray pulled out his phone and stood waiting. “I need it.”

Skylar growled and muttered the address. “There, now you have it. I want out. I want money and a new name and location. No one is to follow me there.”

“What about Jerome?”

“What about him? He wasn’t part of the deal unless you’re going to let me at his hole. Bet it’s nice if you keep going back to it. I know how much you like fucking and with

me you don't have to hold yourself back. You can use your vampire strength as you hold me down and fuck me the way we both remember."

"I can't believe you were that hard up you fucked him." Gray put his phone away.

"I'd rather fuck a pencil sharpener."

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“It was one of those things you try to forget.”

“You bastard! We had a good thing going and you walked away. Look at me. Men fall over themselves to be with me.”

Louis did take a good look. Skylar was attractive with his short black hair and light blue eyes. Shame it was only skin deep. The rot was all the way through to the core. “I thought you were nice too, once. Now I see you for who you truly are. I think I’ll need a good scrub when I get home.”

“I will never let you keep Jerome. I will find him and take him and you’ll spend the rest of your miserable life searching for him. I will fuck him as many times as I want and let Maxim’s men take a turn as well. He’ll be our toy to use and abuse. See how much a human body can take. How much his ass can take as we fuck him till he bleeds.”

“So nice.” Gray stepped forward, grabbed Skylar’s head and snapped his neck.

“You gave him full immunity.”

“Shame he didn’t know only the council can do that.”

“Still he was a perpetrator to a crime and may have had more information.”

“Key’s already in their system.” Gray shrugged. “His whiny voice was grating on my nerves.” Turning to face Louis, Gray said, “We both know he wanted Jerome. He would have never let you two live a peaceful life. If he left here, he would have

plotted and schemed to grab Jerome again. You would constantly be watching over your shoulder. And forget about Jerome finishing his degree. That would have to stop because we wouldn't be able to guarantee his safety, especially during the day. He's better off dead or I could have left him alive and made sure Maxim found him. How do you think Maxim would treat him after he'd fucked up the way he has done?" Gray kicked Skylar's foot. "Maybe I should have left him alive. He's a traitor and that's treason. What is the penalty for treason?"

"Death," Louis murmured. Yes, he'd wanted Skylar to suffer, wanted him to know pain. He hadn't expected Gray to end his life the way he had. Louis had wanted longer with him, to ask more questions, to try and figure out why Skylar had turned against them, but now he would never know.

"He was dead the second he placed his hands on Jerome. He just didn't know it. He was one of Maxim's men and he was jealous of your mating to Jerome. A human who Maxim and his people hate. Go home. I'll deal with this. Key is working his magic so we'll have answers soon enough. Maybe enough that we can find Maxim and end this once and for all. It would be nice to go to bed knowing he was behind bars, or better yet, dead."

Louis had to agree with Gray where Maxim was concerned. He was a constant thorn in their sides because they didn't know where he was or what he was doing. All they knew was that he was out there and more than likely plotting something.

"Let me know if you need me for anything."

"A statement, but I'll get that later. Go home to your mate."

Louis left and walked into his bedroom, watching Jerome sleep. He'd almost lost his mate before they'd had the chance to build a future together. Skylar. The betrayal dug deep; hurt in a way he hadn't anticipated. He'd never noticed how Skylar felt about

him. They'd had their fling, a few months together, then decided to be friends, but that was years ago. Before Jerome was even born. Had Skylar hoped they'd get back together all that time? Once Jerome was on the scene, he would have known he would never be with Louis again.

Sighing softly, Louis had a quick shower then crawled into bed with Jerome and held him in his arms. "Okay?" Jerome murmured softly.

"He told us what we needed to know. He's never going to bother you again."

"Or you." Jerome blinked up at him, his eyes barely open.

"No. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to wake you. I only wanted to hold you."

"You can hold me whenever you want." Jerome cuddled closer, closing his eyes. "I'm glad you're home."

"Me too."

Louis held Jerome, listening to his breathing as it evened out. Asleep, Louis could look at Jerome, see the marks on his face, the bruises developing and he was glad Skylar was dead. His mate would've been in constant danger if Skylar was still alive. But it also saddened Louis. They had been friends, had been lovers once and he now had to question how much of that had been a lie. Skylar had wanted him back, but at what cost? Jerome's life? Selling him and other vampires out to Maxim? How many secrets had he passed on? How many vampires had gone missing or died because of Skylar? It made Louis sick thinking about it.

At least Gray and Key were digging into Skylar. They'd leave no stone unturned. They would find everything they could and put it all together and present it to the council. Security would have to change as well. There was no doubt in Louis' mind

that Skylar had told Maxim everything he could about how they operated. Gray would be pissed about that but Louis knew he would already be in the process of changing everything he could.

Jerome snuggled closer. “Go to sleep,” he mumbled.

Kissing his forehead, Louis settled and closed his eyes. He could deal with the aftermath when he woke.

Chapter Fifteen

Jerome woke alone but he wasn't surprised. He had known Louis would have to go and speak to Gray and there was also the issue with the council. Louis should have told them about Jerome before mating him.

Louis.

In with the council now.

How are they? Are they angry?

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Nah, not really. It helped that Gray was with me and told them about Skylar and Maxim. That made them less angry at me.

Do you need me to come and speak on your behalf?

They would like to meet you at some point but not today. How are you feeling? Do you need me to bring anything home?

Jerome smiled. Home. He liked that word. He was home with his wonderful mate. Just you. I need to call my dad though.

He phoned earlier. Told him you were sleeping and you'd call him when you woke.

Thank you. I'll call him once I feel semi-human.

Are you sure you're okay?

Jerome felt his smile widen. He had hit the jackpot where men were concerned. He couldn't ask for a better man in his life than Louis, who was a vampire. Just a little stiff is all. I'll have a shower then call him.

Don't do too much. Take it easy.

I will. Love you.

Love you too.

Throwing the covers back, Jerome groaned when he sat up. His body did ache, the muscles protesting when he moved. “Shit.” Standing, he shuffled over to the bathroom and switched the shower on. As it was heating up, he did what he needed to then stood under the spray, letting his body relax.

When a cold draft hit his back, Jerome spun around and found a naked smiling Louis behind him. “I didn’t think I’d see you for a while.”

“They kicked me out of the meeting. I have to wait to find out what they decide so I came home to spend an hour with you.” Louis picked up the washcloth. “Let me wash you. You’ve been through enough.”

Jerome moaned as Louis scrubbed his back then his legs. When Louis asked him to turn around, he did, and watched his mate tend to him. As he stood, Jerome ran his fingers through Louis’ wet hair. “I want you to fuck me.”

“After what happened?”

“There’s lube here.” He turned back around and placed his hands on the wall, bending over so his ass was available. “I want you, Louis.”

“Damn, Jerome. You have no idea how hot you look.”

Louis spread Jerome’s cheeks and Jerome closed his eyes. “Please.”

“I love you. Can’t wait to taste you.”

The touch of Louis’ tongue on his asshole made Jerome shiver. “Yes,” he murmured. “More.”

Louis didn’t go slow. He licked and sucked Jerome’s ass, his tongue sliding in and

out as his fingers pulled and tugged Jerome's balls. Jerome groaned, his nails scratching the tiled wall. It felt amazing and he wanted more.

Louis continued to slide his tongue in and out of Jerome's ass and Jerome rocked with him, needing more until he begged, "Please Louis. I need you."

Louis groaned and Jerome heard the cap on the lube and then shuddered when the spongy mushroom head of Louis' dick brushed his ass. As Louis pushed in, Jerome pushed out, groaning at the stretch and brief bite of pain. It felt so good knowing he and Louis were one, connected together, and once Louis was fully inside, Jerome moved, encouraging Louis without saying a word.

Jerome pushed back when Louis slid inside, then moved forward when Louis pulled out. They moved together, slow and steady until Jerome needed more. "Louis."

Louis' hands gripped his hips and he thrust into him, setting a fast pace that had Jerome moaning and gasping in pleasure. After everything he'd been through, he needed to feel connected to Louis again, needed to feel him deep inside.

Balls tightening, Jerome shuddered. "Close."

"Me too. I love you, Jerome. My mate."

Jerome trembled at the intensity of emotions in those words, the same feelings coming through their bond. Gasping, Jerome arched back, mouth falling open as he cried out. A second later, Louis' fangs pierced his skin, and pleasure so intense pulled him away, leaving everything behind.

Opening his eyes, Jerome smiled when he felt Louis cleaning him, and when the shower switched off, he stepped into the towel Louis held out to him. Louis stared into his eyes then ran a finger under one of them. "You still look tired."

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“Maybe I should go back to bed.” Smiling softly, Jerome added, “Maybe you should come with me to make sure I’m recovering.”

Smiling back at him, Louis kissed him softly. “Maybe I should. We can’t be too careful, can we?”

“No, we can’t.” Returning Louis’ kiss, Jerome sighed. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

Epilogue

“Dad,” Jerome whined. “Don’t do that. It’s embarrassing.”

“My house so I’ll do what I want. Louis. Answer the question.”

Louis’ lips twitched. “No. I never met President George Washington.”

“Were you even alive then?” Candice sat at the table, head resting on her hand as she watched Louis. Jerome groaned and shook his head.

“No, he wasn’t.”

“It was a little before my time. Most vampires I work with are around one hundred to two hundred years old. There are some younger vampires but we don’t have as many young as you do. We tend to live longer so I guess it’s nature’s way of balancing everything out.”

“You’ve seen some things though, right?” Shaun cut into his lamb. “How old are you again?”

“I’m one hundred and fifty years old.”

“So the invention of planes and cars and you are way older than any man I could have imagined for my son.”

“I saw planes, yes. The Wright brothers were nice men.”

“You met them?” Shaun’s fork dropped onto his plate.

“Once. Briefly. There were less humans then so it was easier to mingle and no cameras like there are today. They were in a bar sometime after their history making flight. I asked a quick question and they answered it. Like I said it was brief but they were nice men.”

“Woah, that’s awesome.” Candice fluttered her eyelashes and Jerome reached across the table to smack her. “Hey! What was that for?”

“Stop making googly eyes at my man.” Jerome glared at Candice. “I’ve got my eyes on you.”

“I’m not. Not really. I met someone.”

“Who? What’s his job? How old is he? Where does he work? What does he drive?” Shaun rapid fired the questions at Candice and Jerome actually felt sorry for her. A tiny little bit sorry.

“He’s actually a vampire, like Louis here.”

“A mate?” Louis watched and smiled when she nodded, her skin reddening. “What’s his name?”

“Hugo.”

“Hugo!” Jerome leapt up and pointed at Candice then at Louis then stared at Shaun. “I know him. I’ve met him.”

Louis chuckled. “He’s a good guy and I know he’s been searching for his mate. I’m happy for you.”

“We’re taking it slow.”

“Wow! Just...yeah...wow. Your theory about both of us having mates was right.” Jerome sat and stared open mouthed at Candice.

“I’m not just a gorgeous face.” Candice flipped her curls over her shoulder. “We’re going slow. I had exams and he didn’t want to interfere with that and then the situation with Jerome and this Skylar, plus he’s working more.”

“He needs to tell the council and Gray so they can let him take some time off. Congratulations.”

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“Both my kids with vampires. This wasn’t something I ever expected to say or even think.”

“Does it bother you, Dad?” Jerome glanced at Louis then watched his dad, biting his lip as he waited for Shaun to answer.

“Not really. It takes some adjusting to that’s all. You’ll both live long and full lives and I’ll have grandkids.” Shaun pushed his chair back and stood. “I think I need a few minutes and a few drinks. I’m not unhappy, just surprised. Both of you?”

Candice nodded and Jerome gave a forced smile as Louis spoke. “Both I and Hugo are very lucky to have found our mates.”

“Yeah. Right. Drink.” Shaun grabbed a beer from the fridge and appeared to drink half the can before moving it away from his lips.

“Dad.” Jerome stood and moved next to Shaun. “I...” He looked at Louis who pursed his lips then shrugged. “I’m sorry?”

“Nope. We’re good. It just takes some time and alcohol to get used to.” Sitting back at the table, Shaun said, “When do I get to meet him?”

“Soon. He wants to meet you and he knows Louis too.”

“I’ve known Hugo for many years. He’s a good man.”

They finished the meal then Louis took them home. Once there, Jerome kicked his

sneakers off and dropped onto the couch. “That was hard, or easy. I can’t decide.”

“He’s had a few shocks in recent months. Give him some time.”

“Did you know about my sister and Hugo?”

“No. I knew he was happier but when I asked him about it he wouldn’t say much. Now we know why.” Louis sat next to Jerome and Jerome snuggled into him. “We can double date.”

Jerome shot up. “Oh hell no!”

Louis burst out laughing, throwing his head back and pushing Jerome. “Your face.”

“Not funny.” He cuddled close again then pinched Louis side. “Lucky I love you.”

“I love you too. We have a couple of weeks before college starts back up. What do you want to do?”

“How far can you travel?”

“As far as you want.”

“Paris? France? That far?”

“I’ll book us a hotel and we’ll go.”

“You are the best mate ever. I love you.”

Chuckling, Louis kissed Jerome’s forehead. “Love you too.”

Elsewhere...

“We have to be careful. No one can know, especially not Maxim. Not now that we know he’s planning something.”

“Maybe we shouldn’t see each other for a while. I don’t want Maxim to find out about us and hurt you.”

“He wouldn’t hurt me but he would hurt you. You’re human.”

“And we both know how much he hates humans.”

A soft kiss. “I’ll keep you safe. He won’t ever find out about you. I love you.”

“I love you too.”

The End