



Stranded With An Alien Vampire

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Description: Staying in a charming cabin in the Montana wilderness, during off season, sounds like a lovely vacay because I'm cheap. But it turns out someone else has rented this small cabin at the same time as me (ugh) and I quickly learn three things about this ferocious guy I'm double-booked with:

He's handsome as hell in an edgy 'dressed always in black leather' kind of way.

He's not of this planet.

And he's got bags of alien blood stored in the fridge. Sharp, white fangs peek from his mouth and he licks his lips while gazing hungrily at the veins on my neck.

Is this guy a vampire?

Well, hell. And now there's a freaking snowstorm outside and we're both stuck here together with no way out.

And for some reason... this doesn't worry me as much as it should.

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Chapter1

Sabine

“Why the heck is someone parked in front of my rental cabin when I’m the only one staying here for the next week?” I mutter, shoving my car into park.

I turn off the engine.

This can’t be good.

A brand new, boxy, olive-green Mercedes Benz G-Class SUV is parked in the primary space next to the cabin. The kind of car I’ll never be able to afford in this lifetime, or the next. Meanwhile, I’m sitting in the oldest Toyota 4Runner known to mankind because it’s paid for, has all new tires and still works great. I need every penny available for the skyrocketing rent on my tiny studio apartment, because the ski town in Montana where I live and work is lately overwhelmed with filthy rich people looking for vacation homes, causing a lack of affordable housing for normies like me.

I’m not bitter about it though...okay, maybe a little. Just a teeny, tiny bit.

I pause, pout my lips and tap on the steering wheel as I gaze at that gorgeous luxury vehicle.

Who is this person?

All I want is a week's quiet vacay, alone, in this expansive, beautiful setting, away from my stressful job, which includes socializing nonstop at a fancy ski resort. I'm renting a simple one-bedroom cabin far off the main roads. It stands by itself next to a frosty meadow with no one else nearby for miles. Alone time in my "cave" is supposed to fill up my inner introvert well. No sounds through thin apartments walls, no one wanting anything from me because they can't even get a hold of me (because I'll soon turn off my phone).

I live in one of the most beautiful locations in the world, but I don't get out enough to see it—because I mainly spend my time happily ensuring guests have the luxurious ski vacation of their dreams. I make sure to provide amazing service for our guests at the five-star restaurant where I work, but it's now time for me to have a restful paid vacay away from those busy resorts in our town, alongside all the luxury shopping and the world-class skiing. The annual Montana Winter Special Olympics are to be held again a few months from now and everyone is hell bent on getting ready for the "show." It's completely nutty this time of year and I've managed to sneak away for a bit of quiet so I can recharge and return with a genuine smile.

I've been looking forward to this mental health self-care for months.

Finishing that blanket I've been trying to knit for a coworker's new baby, while cozied next to a crackling stone fireplace, with views of snowy meadows and epic mountaintops outside, sounds fabulous. I can read a few romance novels by my favorite authors. Maybe I can even get in a bit of snowshoeing on my favorite trail.

It's going to be lovely, and I've barely made it here prior to the rare, freezing storm front that's about to slam into this area in the next two hours. It's all over the news and we've all been warned to lock up and take shelter because the temperature is going to suddenly dip dangerously low.

I've stayed here before, so I know the exact layout of the cabin and what I need to

bring. This cabin has all the creature comforts, but due to this freak storm, I brought more supplies than normal.

I can't see anyone through my car window for me to easily flag down. What the heck is going on? A heavy feeling tightens my chest because now I'm worried my vacation is going to be a bust.

Dammit.

I glance up at the clouds again. This person parked in front of my cozy rental cabin needs to make sure they're gone quick and sheltered too. The skies are darkening, and the air is already more frigid than usual. I can't even see the mountains in the distance anymore. Maybe this storm is landing faster than originally forecasted? If this stranger doesn't leave in the next few minutes, I might end up stranded with this person overnight.

Oh shit.

And what if it's not just one person who drove that car here, but maybe there were two or three other guests included? Hell, no. There could be a whole group of them trying to squeeze themselves into that one-room cabin.

I open the car door and pull out my cell phone, ready to call property management to check if I've been accidentally double-booked—they can get to the bottom of this—but there's no reception, probably due to the storm front. "Great." I pace behind my car. "This is the worst timing."

I hear a crunch in the gravel and turn to see a large, mysterious man stride around the side of the cabin.

My jaw drops open.

He's very tall and slender yet obviously muscular and wears black leather clothes from head to toe. Thick, dark hair brushes against the top of his wide shoulders. His light skin is almost too pale—a startling contrast with his flashing black eyes and dark clothes. As he strides forward, I can see under his open, thigh-length black leather jacket he wears a white t shirt, showing off his tight stomach and pecs. It's tucked into black leather pants with a black belt and silver buckle. Heavy boots crunch across the light dusting of snow that's already on the ground.

Leather is not my scene, but I have to say it looks good on him. A cross between motorcycle club and The Matrix. Without black sunglasses. He's basically the most unusual-looking—as well as the most gorgeous man—I've ever seen in my entire life. And that's saying a lot considering all the attention-seeking “fashionable” celebrities I run into at the restaurant. I can't keep my eyes off him.

He catches sight of me and looks startled. Then marches straight for me and stops to frown at me, my car and then at the sky, which shows evidence of the turbulent weather and the storm that's about to drop on us. “Who are you and why are you here?” he demands with a luscious deep voice.

The space between my thighs instantly heats. And my mouth doesn't seem to work at the moment, which is unusual.

“Female, did you hear me? I'm about to go inside and ride out this storm. You need to leave, immediately, for your own safety, so you can shelter elsewhere.”

Female? Who talks like that? This sexy guy is certainly not from these parts. I shake my head and clear my throat. “Uh, no, you need to leave immediately,” I firmly reply, finally waking from my trance and getting back my mojo. This whole situation is time sensitive, therefore this handsome guy and his fancy car have to go, right away. “I don't know why you're visiting this site, but I'm parked here because I'm about to unload my luggage and groceries and move into this cabin for the week. I've booked

and paid for this location for the next seven days, so you need to get into your fancy SUV and leave immediately, before the storm arrives.”

His brow furrows. “No, I’m booked here for this entire week.”

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Oh hell. This is exactly what I suspected. “That isn’t right, this cabin is mine,” I insist. “There must be a mistake.”

Suddenly he’s so close I blink with confusion, not understanding how it all happened so fast. There was at least a car length of distance between us and now he’s right in front of me. I manage to stand my ground though and lift my chin, despite a wall of good-smelling leather and muscle mere inches away. Butterflies have taken flight in my stomach. Jeez, he’s even more handsome up close, with the wind blowing that glorious hair back from his proud features and off his wide shoulders. His nostrils flare, as if he’s scenting me or something. Good thing I took a shower this morning and even went for a spritz of perfume.

He glances over my shoulder, towards the main road. “Is your mate about to arrive?”

I blink at more of his strange word choice, then answer, “No.” I shake my head. Although sadness pinches at my chest because images of childhood extended family vacations in larger cabins float through my mind. Nowadays, it’s only me. “I’m the only one left who... I don’t have a husband or boyfriend arriving with me. I’m vacationing alone.” And then I wince, because that wasn’t smart, admitting to this stranger that I’m all alone out here. But for some reason I feel safe around “leather guy.”

He tips his chin and meets my gaze. “Good. That makes it easier for you to leave. Your information is incorrect. I am staying here alone this week, and you are not. Get in your vehicle and leave this area immediately and return from whence you came.”

I let out a heavy exhale. “No.No.I might’ve arrived after you, but I planned this

vacation a year ago, right after the last time I stayed. And it's not so easy for me to leave. The only way back home is a two-hour drive, directly into the storm. When did you book this cabin?"

He frowns. "Two diurnals ago."

"Diurnals? Does that mean days? You booked this cabin two days ago? See, I've had it booked longer. This cabin is mine for the week. You're the one who must go."

The wind picks up and then I'm shivering despite my heavy coat, layers of clothes and practical snow boots. The mysterious leather guy pulls out some kind of super fancy glass tablet, taps at the screen and frowns.

"There's no cell service right now," I confirm.

"I don't know if you're telling the truth."

"Well, I don't know if you're retelling the truth either," I grumble in response, pulling out thick gloves and tugging them on because it's really getting cold fast. "I already tried to call the property manager to get to the bottom of this, but there's no way to reach them." I zip my coat closed and pull over the hood. "Look, I'm telling you the truth. The rental company must've accidentally given you this week too, without realizing they'd already long ago given it to me. This is terrible and I feel bad for you, but you really must go, right now. Drive ahead of the storm, straight over to the rental company office in town and tell them the problem. I bet they can get you into something else, or at least find you a hotel room to shelter in. But the main worry is you need to leave immediately, because if you don't leave right this second, you're going to be stuck here at least overnight, which would be terrible for the both of us."

He nods in agreement. "There has been a mistake, but the solution is not for me to leave. I have already moved in and perused the perimeter. This domicile is perfect for

my needs because I require isolation. You are the one who must leave and shelter in town. Hurry, go now,” he growls, pointing at my car.

My eyes widen because it sounds like a literal animal growl.

He lets out a deep sigh. “I apologize, I did not mean to scare you, but I must keep you safe, from me.” He runs strong fingers through his inky black hair. “I cannot be in populous areas; I need to be isolated for the next week. When I say you need to leave so I can stay here alone, I am serious. I would gladly pay for your lodging in the nearby town.”

Oh hell, he sounds sincere. The man is offering to pay for my hotel, just so he can instantly have this cabin to himself? Who does that? Maybe I should be the one to leave.

And then nature makes the decision for the both of us.

Freezing wind hits hard, sharp and fast. It was cold before, but quickly turns unbearable. I gasp at the sudden drop in temperature. An ominous dark cloud now begins to hover overhead.

He looks up. “That was fast. We were supposed to have much more time.”

“Yeah, it happens like that sometimes out here that's why it's on the news and we're ordered to shelter in place because it's a dangerous flash freeze and we're...”

And then both of us can clearly see what looks like a wall of black storm bearing down on us fast.

“Oh my gawd,” I gasp.

“Run, female!” he shouts.

And then we're both sprinting for the front door.

Chapter2

Sabine

He's so close behind me, I feel his hand on the small of my back and hear his breath above my head.

We race up the porch steps together and I open the front door first, making sure I've gotten him in too. We both dash inside with wind and snow engulfing us from behind. Suddenly, in the midst of the chaos, he's pressed hard against me because we've both tried to close the door at the same time. My back is against the heavy closed door, which is cold and humming with the vibration of the roaring wind.

His palms are braced on either side of my head.

And I learn how good he smells and how hot his big body feels against mine.

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Our eyes lock.

I don't try and move and neither does he.

Oh no. I'm in big trouble. I love being this close to him. And despite the danger we're in all I can think of is how we're both wearing entirely too many layers of clothing. My nipples are tight and I want nothing more than to have a moment to rip off all that leather and press my naked skin against his equally naked body.

What is wrong with me?

I've been acting like this since the moment we met. I'm not known for my exciting dating life and I'm already attracted to this guy? I don't know anything about him except that he wasn't a total asshole outside and he rushed me ahead of him to the cabin, which was nice. At least I've already learned he's not the type to completely forget about someone in his haste to keep himself safe.

My gaze drops to his lips, wondering what it would be like to kiss this man.

His mouth opens slightly and I notice incisors that are really, really sharp. "Are those real fangs?" I gasp. "Or are they fake?"

A growl rumbles in his chest and he leaps away from me, panting.

I can't help but glance down his leather pants, below that belt buckle, and see the impressive bulge at his crotch. Hmm...I'm not the only one affected. This is good to know.

“I do have sharp teeth,” he grits.

The roar of the storm grows thunderous, and I forget about the mysterious, sharp-toothed stranger and rush to the front window to see what’s happening outside. “Oh hell,” I mutter. Trees and parked cars shake outside. The ground and the tops of the cars are already covered with another layer of ice and snow. “Look.” I point at the nearby porch. “Icicles are forming on the rails in the direction the wind is blowing. We really are getting hit with a sudden below-zero temperature drop. It’s even freakishly cold in here, despite the wood stove. We are so lucky we made it inside in time.”

“I will add more heat.” He kneels and places another log in the crackling wood stove.

I glance around at the inside of the small, welcoming cabin. “We’re both lucky you got here early and had the wood stove started and the cabin warmed before the storm hit. I was planning on doing this too, but I thought I had a few more hours.”

“It is good that I got you inside,” he agrees, returning to stand beside me in front of the window. “It’s too cold and dangerous for you to travel. The storm has decided our situation for the both of us. I needed to remain alone, but I will adjust. This is only overnight and not for the next week. The worst of the storm will clear by tomorrow and you can return home.”

“Yes.” I nod and pensively watch the storm and listen to every creak of the cabin’s frame.

“You are safe,” he says in a comforting tone. “I will make sure you do not come to any harm.”

“Oh, thanks... This is supposed to be a fast-moving freak storm. The sun should come out tomorrow and the temperature will rise enough that I’ll be able to leave.

More snow will arrive later in the week, but it won't be anything dangerous."

"That looks like a hearty vehicle," he says, pointing at my 4Runner through the window. "You can make it back later tomorrow. Tonight, you will sleep here. This must be done for your own safety." He looks to me. "One night. I can do this. I will not touch you."

I rear back. "Of course you won't touch me. No one's touching anybody."

A pained expression crosses his face before he turns away from me.

And then I feel bad for saying that so forcefully considering just moments ago I wanted to strip him naked. I'm a mess. I want someone I don't even know who has weirdly sharp teeth and refers constantly to the fact that he needs to stay away from me, for my own safety.

As Maya Angelou said, "When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time."

And yet...there's something there between us. He looks edgy and says things that categorize him as dangerous and yet he did in fact say that he'd keep me safe. I feel strangely comfortable around him, as if we've met before.

"Sorry. You just caught be off guard. I wasn't expecting you to say that."

He keeps his gaze firmly on the window and the events happening outside the cabin but gives me a curt nod.

"I really would leave and give you that solitude you wanted but..." I point out the window. "Except for that. I'm stuck here."

We both quietly stand side by side and continue to watch the storm rage outside and listen to the cabin creak with the force of the wind and the weight of the ice. More ice gathers on the windowpanes and the porch rail outside.

“Wow, I’ve heard about these sudden freeze storms, but I’ve never been caught in one. My food and luggage are all out there,” I comment. “I hope it’s still good tomorrow, even though it’s so cold. It’s too bad I can’t go and get it because I had yummy meals I planned to make.” I glance behind me, at the kitchen. “Would it be okay if we shared some of your food tonight since I can’t bring my supplies in?”

He clenches his jaw. “I will go out now and retrieve your bags.”

“What? No. I didn’t say that to try and get you to go out there. I was just chatting. Making conversation. Those are simply perishable items in my car. It’s not like I have a small child in my back seat or meds I need to take to live. It can all wait. You already told me not to go out there because it’s too dangerous and you’re right. That’s a sudden freeze outside and those can catch people and animals unaware and freeze them to death. That means you can’t go out either.”

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“Give me your keys so I can unlock your vehicle. I’m recently fed and more warm-skinned than usual. This weather would harm you, but that freeze will not affect me.”

I look him up and down. The man has no gloves and nothing on his head and he doesn’t even appear to be bothering to button up his coat. “What are you even talking about? This is crazy. You have to remain inside. You could literally die out there.”

He puts out a large hand, waiting for the keys, the epitome of calm focus.

I shake my head. “I didn’t lock my car. Please don’t go outside and tempt this weather. It might look like it’s gone down a little bit but it’s still terrible. I don’t want you to go. You’ll freeze out there.”

“I will return shortly.” And then he’s gone in the blink of an eye with a fast-paced stride and opens the door. “Stay behind and close it quickly,” he orders.

I stumble after him. “No,” I shriek with a high-pitched, wavery voice. “Wait. Don’t go.”

Freezing cold blasts inside for a moment as he completely ignores me, and every safety rule from the weather service, and steps out into the bitter frost. I hide behind the door and slam it shut as instructed. Then I race back to the front window to watch his progress and bite at my nails.

It all happened so fast; I couldn’t stop him.

How could he have done something so stupid and dangerous? This man insisted on

going out for my items and could die out there in the process. He's risking his life just to get my clothes, makeup and food from the car. This is madness and I'm watching him, scared that something bad will happen and I won't be able to save him.

I still don't even know his name.

Nor did I share mine yet.

He steps off the porch and I expect to see him on his knees already with ice painted all over his face and body, requiring rescue. But he's confidently striding across the ice. The wind blows back his long coat and he trudges forward, not even wearing gloves, a hat or a scarf as a barrier against the freeze. How is this man still alive? He should be on the ground, in pain from sudden frostbite. But he keeps going, as if he's not really bothered. Ice and frost aren't forming on him anywhere. The muscles of his strong thighs flex as he lifts each leg against the wind, taking confident steps on with his heavy black boots.

"I can't believe it," I say out loud. "How is he doing this?"

He makes it to the back of the frozen SUV, opens it nonchalantly, while chunks of ice break off and drop to the ground. He grabs my huge duffel bag and puts the strap over his shoulder and then starts grabbing a variety of other bags. I've got a lot in there because I'm a Montanan who knows how to stock up due to two-hour drives to "real" grocery stores. I'm worried he'll have to bring only half of it and think he needs to make a second trip. But miraculously he's got everything I've brought for the week loaded into his arms and hands. He even manages to shut the back of the SUV.

"I cannot believe how strong he is," I mutter while continuing to bite the same nail.

He turns back toward the cabin and keeps going despite another blast of freezing wind, and almost loses a bag but grabs it tight. This tall man, wearing only leather

and a T-shirt, marches back across the front of the cabin and doesn't lose his step on the ice.

I monitor his progress through the window and when he pounds up the steps of the porch, I open the door again. A blast of wind and flurries of snow enter with him, but I close the door superfast. A whole mess of water is all over the floor and everywhere, but the main point is he's alive. "I'm so happy you made it back in one piece," I gush, with a watery smile. "And don't ever scare me like that again. Understood?"

He gives a triumphant grin, still easily holding a pile of half-frozen luggage and bags. "Yes, female. I promise."

"Here, put down the duffle right here. And the bags here for now."

He does as instructed then sits heavily in a nearby chair and starts to take off his wet boots.

I pause to glance at his enormous feet and see he's wearing black socks with an almost shimmery sheen. And that's when I notice how wet he is from the melting ice. I rush out to the hall bathroom and come back with a towel and he's already standing again, having shrugged off his coat and hung it up on the peg.

I try to get the water off his hair and face.

And then I look up.

He's looking down at me very intently. A man on the edge with a vein throbbing in his temple. His gaze drops and I realize he's staring at my neck and licking his lips like he's hungry.

What the heck?

Suddenly I remember those sharp fangs.

He seems to sense a moment of tension and steps back. He sighs and turns away from me toward the bags on the ground.

I back away too and sit down abruptly and unlace my own boots and set them down alongside his, near the woodstove. My own coat is soon on the peg next to his.

He quietly moves over to the kitchen and deposits all my grocery bags on the table.

He's mysterious, sharp-toothed and yet kind. And sexy. Very sexy.

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I glance around the front room of the cabin, which holds only a tiny efficiency kitchen, a table with two chairs and a small living area with one very uncomfortable loveseat. Then I remember again that this cabin only has one bedroom.

He looks over at me. "I will sleep out here tonight," he announces. "You will sleep in the bedroom."

I walk over. "No, that doesn't make any sense. You're much taller than me. You're a big guy and I'm about five feet, five inches. It makes more sense for me to be out here because I'm shorter than you. I've stayed here before and I know there's a king-sized bed in there and it will totally fit you."

He frowns. "I will decide this later."

I assume this is code for "he gets the loveseat," but he's gonna have a fight on his hands for that. "Is everything out of your car too?" I ask, suddenly worried he's going to do something crazy, like go back outside for another trip of supplies.

"Yes, I got what I needed earlier and it's all packed away."

"That's good." I step between the table and the kitchen and start taking things out of my bags. Then I go over to the fridge to put some food away.

He turns towards me. "No, wait."

But I've already opened the fridge. I look inside. My grip tightens on the door handle and I slowly look up and meet his dark, troubled gaze. "Um, why are there bags of

blood in the fridge?”

Chapter3

Hale

Oh hells. Why did I not think of this earlier?

Of course, this smart, courageous, beautiful creature I’ve discovered in a section of this planet that was supposedly uninhabited, would immediately find the Korn blood I’d stored in the cooling unit.

“This blood is mine,” I admit, still surprised at this strange turn of events that has caused a human to shelter inside this small domicile with me while a freezing storm rages outside, unabated. I thought I’d planned everything so carefully, causing isolation during my blood frenzy, and yet I’m stranded with a human female—the exact situation I tried most to avoid. Arriving prior to this storm and staying in this remote cabin, was supposed to ensure my solitude and keep me from all other humans during the height of my frenzy.

But that plan has been blown to hell.

Her face pales. “This is your blood? Are you sicker than you first let on? Do we need to try and get ahold of emergency services? Do you need a hospital?”

I can’t keep my eyes off her and continue to stand much too close. She’s so beautiful and I’m fascinated by every expression and emotion that crosses her soft features. “No. This is not blood from my own body. It is synthetic blood I brought for this trip.”

She exhales. “Synthetic blood? Is there even such a thing? And why would you

bother to bring bags of that with you if you weren't sick?"

She has a point. This blood I've brought must seem fantastical to a human from the planet earth. They have blunt teeth and only exchange bodily fluids in times of great physical distress—in order to save each other's lives. But amongst my species blood is exchanged for many more cultural purposes, most importantly during mating.

I must tell this female the entire truth about myself because she's stuck here overnight with me and deserves the truth. Only the truth will keep her safe. "Yes, on my own planet there is such a thing as synthetic blood. And I brought bags of it with me because I need to ingest this blood to mitigate my blood frenzy."

"Your own planet?" Her beautiful blue eyes widen. "Blood frenzy? Who are you?"

"My name is Hale Bloodworth and I'm from the planet Korn." Luckily the humans have already had contact with another species, the Voltare. Hence, this female's calm demeanor at learning I'm from another planet.

She glances again at the bags of blood, then firmly shuts the door to the cooling unit. "Is your last name Bloodworth because...?"

"Yes, on my planet it is common to have surnames that include the root word 'blood' because blood has historically been considered very valuable. And what is your name?"

"I am Sabine Dawson. Born and raised in Montana."

"Sabine," I grin, loving the sound of her name on my lips. She's truly the most beautiful female I've ever met. Her skin is nearly the same pigment as the Korn, but we all have black hair and eyes. Her eyes are as blue as a clear sky and her hair is long, straight and blonde, a color never before seen on my planet. She is also shorter

than the average female of my species, but I do not find this unpleasant. She wears sensible clothing appropriate for the weather, which I find endearing.

I've met many females of her species since my arrival, but none have affected me as she does. Sabine smells fantastic. Her luscious blood scents like a flowering field. The thought of her human blood merging with mine causes my cock to again thicken in my trousers. She has no idea the danger she's in, being forced to stay here with me. I am a powerful Korn who wants nothing more than to sink my teeth into her neck and drink her blood while I fuck her blind, leaving my seed in her womb so I can later watch her stomach swell with our offspring.

Which is distressing, considering she's not of my own species.

The consequences of a joining with Sabine would be far-reaching and must be avoided.

I've never felt this type of pull towards any other Korn, or female of any other species, which means there is the distinct possibility that this human could in fact be my chosen mate. Before I left my home planet for this mission, I was assured that humans were not mating compatible with Korn, but apparently this information was incorrect because I was thrown into a blood frenzy not long after my arrival on the planet's surface.

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The warm buzz of the frenzy continues to hum in my veins.

“I enjoy your name, Sabine,” I tell her. “But it is a mistake for us to be stranded together. I am concerned that a human paired with me at this exact moment is not an ideal situation.”

“Because you’re an alien?” She waves a dismissive hand in the air. “That’s not a big deal. We’re all used to aliens now because we trade with the Voltare and I know that they have retractable tusks. But you are different. You...you have fangs and drink blood?”

I smile wider so she can indeed catch a better look at my two sharp fangs on either side of my upper teeth. “My species is called the Korn and we are new to humans. I have only arrived recently.”

“I’m stranded in this cabin overnight with an alien vampire?”

“What is a vampire?”

She points a finger at my chest. “You’re a vampire.”

I shake my head because I can smell a hint of fear and I don’t ever want Sabine to fear me. “I’ve never heard this word before.”

“Vampires are creatures that are technically dead and live off other people’s blood. They drink blood to stay alive. And they um, drain blood, or drink so much that the person dies or also becomes a vampire. They often sleep during the day and come out

to prowl at night. Or at least that's what the legends say."

My mouth twitches. "Legends?"

She nods. "But you're out during the daytime without turning to ash, so that's unusual."

"It's because I'm not a vampire."

"Half-vampire?"

"My name is Hale Bloodworth," I remind her. "My species are allies with the Voltare and now also allied with the humans of planet earth. I am here to begin trading relations with an earth organization called the United Nations. I am not a vampire. Not even an alien vampire. I consider humans to be the aliens."

She chuckles. "Well, you do drink blood."

"Yes, but I don't sleep during the day. My species is nocturnal. And I don't require blood daily to survive. It's only for special occasions."

"You said you're allies with the Voltare? I briefly met a Voltare and his human wife. They were staying at Big Sky and I served them at the restaurant where I work. They were nice."

"I want to hear all about your work," I answer truthfully.

"Heh. That's wonderful and we can talk about that later. First, I need to clear up the details of this frenzy thing you were talking about and the meaning of alien blood being stored in the fridge. Do you need to drink that blood to survive?" She points at the food she brought, still on the table. "Can you eat regular human food, or do you

live entirely on blood?”

“I normally eat traditional Korn dishes, but my blood frenzy has started unexpectedly, and I crave blood like never before. I need to drink those bags, but I can also try human food.”

“If I cook human food for the both of us today, you can eat it too?”

“Yes. I would like that.”

She starts rummaging through the bags and begins to put items away. “That’s good to know. Tell me again why you’re here and explain blood frenzy and how that will affect me now that we’re stuck here together.”

I lean against the cooling unit and cross my arms, pleased that I no longer scent her fear. “I’m here to initiate Korn trading relations with our new human allies. But there must be something about the environment on your planet because my body has been thrown into a frenzy without even me having matched with a mate. It happened so fast I can’t leave and get back to my planet in time. So here I am, trying to be in one of the most remote places on Earth, during a snowstorm thinking absolutely no one will be here while I ride out the frenzy.”

“And yet I’m here.”

“Yes. And I worry that you are not entirely safe around me.”

She pauses to meet my gaze. “Um, should I lock myself in the bathroom before you get worse?”

I swallow hard. “I hope it won’t come to that.”

“What exactly is a blood frenzy?”

“The pheromones in my blood are supercharged to find a mate. And I’ve already learned that I find you attractive.”

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“You do?” Her cheeks pinken attractively and her gaze drops down to my crotch. My shaft twitches in response. She coughs and looks back up at my face and I can scent her arousal again in the space between us. She has felt this way about me since the moment we met. I could literally scent her arousal for me when we first stood together next to the vehicles. And I feel the same.

This is not helping matters.

“A human can mate with your species?” she questions.

“Apparently so.” I repeat what I said earlier. “When I was originally sent to Earth to initiate trading relations, I was assured that humans and Korn were mating incompatible. This has proven false. Why else would I be in a blood frenzy now unless humans are compatible with Korn?”

“You’ve been attracted to many different women since you’ve arrived?”

“No. Only you,” I admit.

“Oh...” She reaches up and twirls a strand of hair between her fingers. “Just me? You mean...”

“My pheromones want only you. This is why I’m concerned about your safety.”

“Your feelings of attraction toward me are just a biological reaction? It’s something you’re fighting against and wish wasn’t happening?”

My brow furrows because I hate how she referred to my reaction towards her as simply biological, even if it's true. "Yes."

"Oh," she says with a hint of disappointment in her tone. "Are you married? You don't have a girlfriend or wife or kids back on your home planet?"

"No, I have none of those. Which is why I was sent here as the Korn representative. The trip from our planet to yours takes a full moon cycle and then I am going to be here for another human year. Only someone like me, without a mate or offspring yet, would agree to this mission. I am after all the first of my kind to come here, so it was not considered smart to bring more of us yet until it was understood that this planet was welcoming for our species. I was to stay with the Voltare delegation and get settled."

"This is good for me to know—that you're single."

This is odd. Why would she care about my availability as a mating partner unless she was considering going through the blood frenzy with me? Does Sabine understand that she's admitting she's contemplating the idea of being my mate? "Do you have a mate or offspring?" I question.

"No, no I have none of those either."

I groan because everything she says makes it easier to give in to the frenzy with this female, but I can't. "You need to keep me at a distance," I warn.

She lifts a bag from the table and places it on the small countertop. "Why would it be so terrible if we..." She turns toward me and leans against the counter. "Um...does the blood frenzy mean that you're going to start drinking from me, and you'll get so focused you might accidentally drain me and I'll die? Is that the real reason you want me to stay away?"

I take a step closer and gentle my voice. “No, Sabine, of course not. I would never harm you. Blood frenzy is simply our ancient way of sharing our bodily fluids with each other to solidify mating. Small amounts of blood are also exchanged amongst the Korn to ratify contracts or for cultural moments of significance. Normally we like to share the taste of each other's blood occasionally during pleasure mating.”

She tilts her head. “Is that something you usually do? Have you shared blood with a pleasure mate?”

“No. I have never placed my fangs in another's neck. I'm considered a blood virgin.”

“That sounds interesting.”

I roll my eyes because again, she is not understanding the danger.

Sabine steps past me, opens the cooling unit and nonchalantly places a container of white liquid inside, one shelf below the blood. “So tell me what happens between your species when they put their fangs in someone else's neck,” she questions. “Doesn't that hurt?”

“No, it doesn't. We have a substance in our saliva that we can deploy that acts as a painkiller.”

“Painkiller? That's good. So just hypothetically speaking if you were to do that to me—putting your fangs in my neck and drinking some of my blood, then it wouldn't even hurt?”

My jaw drops open and I shake my head. “No, it would not hurt but I am not doing that to you tonight.”

“Hypothetically speaking... Why? What would stop you from sinking your fangs in

my neck?”

I take a deep breath, trying to calm this incessant need to touch her face and body. I want her in my arms and in that king-sized bed in the bedroom I saw earlier. The gorgeous map of her veins under the curve of her neck is enchanting. “I can’t do that to you because I would be locking you to me for life without your consent. You’re a human and you don’t understand what you’re getting yourself into by accepting a blood frenzy with a Korn.”

“Oh.” She innocently blinks. “What do you mean ‘for life’?”

“Right now, you and I are calmly standing here talking. I have scented you. I’m being honest with you that my body finds you compatible and therefore irresistible.”

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A smile perks on either side of her full lips.

“And I can scent your arousal for me, so I know you also find me compatible.”

“Oh, you can? That's embarrassing. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to push myself on you like that. You're just handsome. I can't help it. But I wasn't going to do anything about it. We're stuck here together overnight, and I promise my goal is to help you get past this blood frenzy.”

“I understand. I'm trying to tell you that I can leave at this point. Even now it'll be difficult to let you leave tomorrow, but I can still allow you to carry on with your life and live in peace, despite the frenzy. But if I were to sink my fangs into your neck, it's all over. The choice is gone. My body would be latched on to yours and I physically would be unable to be parted from you. Being separated from you after that would cause me to lose my mind and possibly turn violent.”

A troubled expression crosses her delicate features.

“This version of Hale Bloodworth, prior to blood sharing, would never harm you. You are safe with me. I would die before I let any harm come to you, but after I sink my teeth into your neck and drink your blood, I'm afraid my own choice will be taken from me, and I will behave in a primitive manner. I would need to be quarantined by the Korn military indefinitely in order to keep myself separate from you.”

She continues to stare at me quietly.

I sense this is too much for her to process so I attempt to change the subject. “I apologize that I accused you earlier of lying when we were out front. That was wrong of me. I could hear the ring of truth in your words when you said you’d arrived for the week. I was simply irritated that a young, beautiful and unmated human female I was attracted to wasn’t leaving when I told her to go.”

She shrugs. “I really did book this cabin for the week.”

“I’m certain you did. And I did too. Neither of us was telling an untruth.”

“No, we weren’t. Okay, I’m going to start making lunch.” She opens a cabinet and places small metal containers of food on the shelf. “Meanwhile, tell me more about how your species mates in general so I can understand why this is so difficult for you.”

I pull out a chair and sit down. This situation is confusing for me as much as her. How can my body respond this way to a human? It is unprecedented. “The Korn pleasure mate, up until they find a mate that causes blood frenzy,” I explain. “After that, they are tied together in a life-long mating and breeding commitment and are then legally paired.”

“That’s a strong bond.”

“Yes, we mate for life. After we find our true mate, we no longer pleasure mate. I would be physically unable to be with anyone else.”

“You would never cheat on me?”

“No, I physically would be unable.”

“Oh.”

I narrow my eyes at her. “Therefore, one of my concerns would be that I should not be mated with a human.”

She places her hands on her hips. “Why not? What's wrong with being mated to a human?”

“Your species doesn’t mate for life. I've just recently arrived on this planet, but I've done my research. I have a universal translator implanted in my brain with many of your top languages. I've learned that in this area of the planet you do not mate for life and you might have many pleasure mates and even several actual mates during your lifetime. That is unacceptable. I can't be a human’s pleasure mate or enter into something called divorce when you tire of me as a mate.”

She winces. “I see what you're saying. Yeah, that's important because you’d still be stuck for life with a physical bond to me. I understand the enormity of what you’re saying. The moment you sink your teeth into my neck and drink my blood, then we would be mates for life. That’s why you’re trying to tell me that I need to stay away from you. Not that you’d harm me, but that there’d be consequences, like I’d be causing you to physically bond to me and I’d be married to you for life.”

“Not only that. There’s more.”

“There's more?” she squeaks. “How can there be more than that? Isn’t that enough?”

“Well, me sinking my teeth into your neck would only happen at the moment of release, when I am filling you with my seed.”

Chapter4

Sabine

What's crazy is that statement only makes him sexier.

What is wrong with me?

I take a step closer to the huge, virile Korn in a white T-shirt, seated in a nearby kitchen chair. "This wouldn't be something where you suddenly get hungry while we're sitting on the couch, fully dressed and you can't control yourself and you pull me into your arms and sink your teeth in my neck. It would have to happen with us both..."

"Naked and in bed," he says with that deep, luscious voice. "And I would be compelled to sink my teeth into your neck and drink from you right when I'm sinking inside of you and ready to release. This increases the intensity of orgasm for the both of us."

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I can literally feel the space between my thighs get wetter and hotter, which seems to happen often around this guy. “Oh wow.”

“And we would also be breeding at that moment. This is another thing that you must know. That's why I cannot touch you. If I touch you, you'll end up pregnant and mated.”

My jaw drops open. “You're going to knock me up? If I had sex with you tonight, I'd instantly be a mother and married to you for life?”

“Yes. Blood frenzy is our mating cycle.”

“But...but I have an IUD...”

He shakes his head. “No, this insignificant human birth control will not matter. The Korn are very potent.”

“Oh jeez.”

“This is why I've been telling you to keep your distance. And I am also concerned that I won't be able to stop if you become intimate with me but then change your mind at the last moment. Human and Korn are very different when it comes to mating and breeding. Don't start something with me that you are not ready to follow through.”

He's not kidding about this being a big deal.

Maybe I do need to keep away. It's going to be difficult because we're isolated in this cabin and there's the fact that I want to jump him right now and start making out, despite everything he's told me. But I can't do something so stupid as letting myself get impregnated by a vampiric guy from another planet I've just met. Right?

"Yes, that's a lot to process," I admit and glance back at the fridge that holds his bags of blood. I exhale and decide to continue making minestrone soup. I'm hungry and cooking is soothing. I like to bake and bring what I've made and leave it in the staff room. Knitting will also be a great activity later. It helps to take my mind off stressors, like the freezing storm that's still raging outside and causing the cabin to creak ominously. And the big, sexy guy with fangs who wants to drink my blood.

At least he's trying his best to keep me safe.

And I do want to keep my distance overnight and be ready to leave tomorrow. Although that means I might never see Hale Bloodworth ever again.

I take out a large pot from the cabinet and place it on the stove.

Do I want to make sure I can leave tomorrow, or do I want to stay and accept all this sexy Korn has to offer? "This must be hard for you," I comment. "I'm sorry this frenzy is happening while you're somewhere so distant."

Hale runs his fingers through his hair again. "Thank you. Yes, it is difficult. On my planet oftentimes a Korn comes into their frenzy when already pleasure mating someone destined to be a mate. This is very rare that it happens like this, without a known partner nearby. I don't understand what incited this frenzy."

"That's why you brought all that blood? This is what is done when you don't want to give in to the frenzy?" I question while I place ingredients on the counter, along with my cookbook opened to the right page. "You drink blood?"

“Yes. Luckily before the ship departed, they supplied me with an emergency supply of blood, which is normal protocol.”

I pause while opening a container of fresh, pre-diced carrots, onions, celery and zucchini. “Wait, you said that before, but I wasn’t listening closely enough. You have a spaceship?” I pour some olive oil in the heated pot along with the vegetables and add salt and pepper and stir it around in the sizzling pan. “Why can’t you just stay up there in orbit instead of down here in a cabin? Wouldn’t you be more comfortable up there? And also, that would be a perfect way for you to have been isolated.”

He watches intently as I begin to use a manual can opener to add cans of crushed tomatoes, tomato sauce and kidney beans to the pot. “I don’t have a personal ship,” he finally answers. “The Korn military brought me here and left for another mission.”

“Are you really the only one of your kind on my planet right now?”

“I am the only one. There will be more of us working here later though if trade relations are proven profitable.”

I stir the vegetables again, trying to monitor the state of the carrots. “So again, you don’t need to drink blood every day to survive? You can eat this soup?”

“Yes. Blood-drinking is private and usually between couples. It’s more like a dessert right after a meal.”

“That’s good to know.” And suddenly I feel nervous. A huge man from another planet, of an entirely different species, is in the kitchen with me. And he drinks blood on special occasions. It’s difficult to not stare at his cut muscles and that wide chest. Why does he have to be so handsome? It’s not fair. “What are we going to do next, after we eat?” I ask, pouring in the contents of the opened cans along with the vegetable broth, trying to keep my voice even. “We have to be here together. How are

we going to work this out? What are the rules?"

"Don't touch me," Hale says. "That's the first rule."

I let out a snort as I measure out tablespoons of Italian seasoning. "I told you already that I wasn't going to touch you."

"I know, but not even an accidental touch. Make sure our bare skin does not touch.

Remember when we were accidentally pressed together at the front door? Or when you were trying to be helpful and wipe water off me after I returned? You cannot do that again. I almost lost control. There can't be a next time."

He almost lost control? Why does that cause a pleasant swoop in my belly?

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I think more about the consequences of what he's saying. "We really cannot sleep together on the same bed? That's difficult considering you said you wouldn't let me sleep on the couch. I'd planned on just surprising you and sharing the bed with you."

His eyes widen.

I point a spoon at him. "I meant fully clothed. As friends."

"No...that's not a going to happen." He stands and steps close to the pot on the stove and looks down at the simmering soup. "That smells good. What is this food?"

I give it another good stir. "It's called minestrone soup and luckily for you it's a similar color to your bags of blood."

He grins, which only makes him more handsome. I'm loving the peek of fang.

"Oh, wait, actually we could sleep next to each other without touching if we just put pillows and bedding in between us. Then we could both sleep on a bed and no one has to squeeze onto the loveseat."

His brow furrows. "I think it sounds risky."

"I think it'll be fine."

Hale's jaw clenches. "Sabine, why aren't you trying to remain more distant? I've told you all kinds of things about me that should make a human terrified."

“And where would I run to? The bathroom? No, I believe I will remain safe. I mainly need to just not touch you, right?”

I look up because he’s quiet. Is he staring at my neck again? And why does the idea of his sharp teeth in my skin continue to sound sexy? It must be because I know how it will happen. I attempt to change the subject. “I’m making us lunch and this soup is enough for dinner too because you need to eat this too. You didn’t bring anything other than bags of blood.”

“I still need to drink that blood,” he says. “It is the antidote.”

“It will completely cure you of this blood frenzy?”

“No, no, no, it will not cure me. Nothing can decrease the frenzy except time and possibly distance from the pheromones of a compatible female. I had some blood earlier, before you arrived. It is the reason I was able to go outside during the freeze and the reason I’m able to remain sane in your presence.”

“Oh wow.”

“Yes.” Hale looks at the clock. “And I need to drink another bag in an hour.” Then he glances back at the fridge. “And I’m worried it won’t be enough.”

After the soup simmers for another ten minutes, I add a cup and a half of small ditalini pasta. I let it simmer ten more minutes and add most of a bag of fresh spinach.

Because I’m still nervous, I start oversharing while it’s cooking. The way I’m behaving, you’d think I’d had a glass of wine, but I’m entirely sober. I talk about my last trip to the cabin. I learn more about his first days on Earth and what that was like for him, which sounds interesting. Luckily, he seems to really like the humans he’s met so far and despite the frenzy hopes he can recover and later continue with his

trading mission.

Finally, our lunch is ready. “Are you sure this soup won’t make you sick?” I question.

“I can eat human food,” he confirms. “This soup of yours looks highly edible.”

I smile and pull out two ceramic bowls from the cabinet and real spoons from a drawer. Then I ladle steaming portions out along with grated parmesan on top. We’re seated at the tiny two-person table that divides the kitchen from the equally tiny living area. There is a window to our left that lets in what light remains outside. The wind howls and the window panes still shake. But the small cabin remains warm. The woodstove works like a champ and Hale is doing a great job of keeping it going.

I watch with fascination as Hale tentatively takes his first sip of the broth with a large spoon. He swallows and then a smile breaks across his face.

“You like it?”

He takes another spoonful. “I do. Thank you for making this for us.”

My chest swells with pride. “I like making this soup on the first day of my vacation,” I agree. “It tastes really good and makes a lot that I can reheat and eat for days afterwards.”

And then he’s soon eaten the entire bowl of soup, making sure to scrape every last morsel. He stands and walks over to the stove and uses the ladle to carefully refill his bowl.

And maybe I stare at his perfect ass a beat too long.

I quietly add some red pepper flakes to my own soup and eat the whole bowl too and

even get a bit more.

While I eat I quietly mull over the implications of stripping off all my clothes and falling into bed with this guy. He's told me many times that he's not safe.

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To stay away.

This would certainly not be a one-night stand. We couldn't even date and then decide to break up a few months from now.

Hale suffers from a mating compulsion that makes him want to have sex with me and get me pregnant. He'll fuck me and sink his teeth in my neck and drink my blood. I should be completely grossed out by this part but instead it turns me on more. Unfortunately, I can't just test out this sex-with-fangs thing and then leave tomorrow and never look back, because by his own admission he'd probably turn into some kind of crazed stalker. And I'd be pregnant with his baby.

I mentioned earlier about locking myself in the bathroom, but maybe I really should?

Instead, I've made the both of us lunch and continue to sit close and chat with this handsome alien vampire, Hale Bloodworth, of the planet Korn. He's easy to get along with and I enjoy talking with him. This is amazing, considering we were each born and raised on entirely different planets. It never ceases to amaze me how two people—even two species—can look so different on the outside and yet have the same fundamental qualities in common: a need for love, acceptance and understanding.

“Why did you choose this particular cabin?” he questions.

“I like to book this place during off season, because I'm cheap,” I admit as I take another bite of minestrone. “It's a nice cabin in an amazing location. I couldn't afford it for a whole week any other time of the year. This cabin is on the edge of a meadow

which overlooks the Grand Tetons. I used to vacation in this same general location, in a larger cabin with my family while growing up, a few miles away. During the summer we'd rent ATVs, or go fishing, hiking and swimming. In the winter we'd snow shoe, or just stay inside and play card and board games."

He swallows another spoonful of soup. "I chose this cabin because of the remote location, but it's still close enough to be in contact easily with humans in case of emergency."

"What a mess that neither of us will get the original vacation we planned for and what we'd planned was messed up...well this isn't a vacation for you..."

He puts down his spoon. "Sabine, I am sorry that your well-deserved vacation is 'messed up' as you say. I promise that the moment the weather clears and I can contact the network I will transfer human credits to your account to cover your lost expenses and enough for you to easily book another vacation for yourself to make up for this. It is the least I can do."

I blink. "Oh, thanks, that's very generous of you." I should tell him he doesn't need to do that, but I decide to accept this compensation because it would really help me out. Plus, he can easily afford it. And I do think it sounds fair. I'm not taking advantage of him, only getting my money back for my lost vacay. I let out a nervous cough and keep talking, "This is our lunch and later this soup will also be dinner," I remind him. "And don't worry, I've got food for breakfast too, and snacks. Cooking and sharing my food with you is the least I can do, considering you went through the bother of getting all those groceries in the dangerous, freezing cold."

"Thank you. I enjoy this human food more than I thought I would."

"Do you like spaghetti and meat sauce? With salad and garlic bread?" I question, my mind already planning tomorrow's meals.

“I have no idea what that is, but it sounds interesting.”

“It’s a simple meal I planned for while I was here. It’s warm and filling. If you like the taste of minestrone, you’d like that too.”

“That will be appropriate.”

“Oh wait.” I shake my head. “What am I thinking? I’ll be gone by then.” And suddenly I feel sad at the thought of only getting one day with him. For some weird reason, spending more than one day with Hale, in fact my entire week with him sounds...not so bad.

I’m officially losing my mind.

He leans back in his chair. “Why is a beautiful, sociable, unmated female not here with friends and family?”

I bite my lip because I can’t get enough of his compliments. I wipe my mouth and answer, “I used to go on yearly trips to mountain cabins similar to this in Montana with my extended family when I was young, but by the time I was a teenager the group who went was smaller and smaller. Aunts and uncles divorced. Cousins moved to different states. My dad passed away and my mom remarried and moved to Florida. My brother and older sister both moved to Chicago. I’m the only one who stayed in Montana. My dad was the main instigator of these vacations and I guess I’m like him—I’ve always loved these trips. Finally, last year I discovered I was the only one who wanted to still go. And that was when I got the idea to get a cabin just for myself. I love my family but to be truthful I think it was the setting that always thrilled me.”

“You live nearby?”

“Well, I live two hours away. But I’m in a tiny apartment in a busy resort town. The setting is spectacular but I’m usually too busy to take it in. Also, my job is highly social. When I came here last year all alone, I realized I loved the quiet time to recharge.”

“I’m continuing to ruin this vacation for you?”

I open my mouth to agree in the nicest way possible, that yes, he’s ruining my alone time, but... “No.” I shake my head and answer truthfully. “I don’t mind that you’re here. It was weird at first because you were a stranger, but now...now I’m simply happy to have the time to get to know you better. Just the two of us.”

“I’m enjoying spending time with you too, Sabine. Tell me more about your life on Earth. What is your family like?”

We spend more time in the kitchen, swapping stories of our childhood and life.

Hale stands up, stacking my empty bowl and spoon on top of his own. “I will clean the meal because you cooked. It is only right.”

I blink, impressed. “That sounds nice.”

I sit back and chat with him as he quickly and correctly, without having to ask me a million questions, hand washes the bowls and spoons. It’s not a half-assed job either. Everything he washes looks sparkly clean and doesn’t require me to go in behind him later for a secret rewash. He puts the leftover soup into a large plastic container and away in the fridge, under the bags of blood. Then he perfectly washes the pot too, dries everything and puts it away in the correct cabinets and drawers. He even spends time on detail work, making sure the counters and sink are clean and so is our table. Soon the kitchen is nice and tidy.

Hale returns to a chair beside me.

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“You’re my hero,” I comment.

He chuckles and tells stories of his home planet, Korn, which sounds similar to Earth. Hale shows me pictures on his tablet of his own “domicile” and the general area where he lives. It looks like his species mainly lives in a high-tech modernized medieval Europe-type setting, with lots of stone and wooden buildings and castles, thick forests and heavy snows. And Hale owns his own magnificent fairy-tale-looking castle, like something I’d only normally get to tour while on a fancy river cruise of the Danube.

We sit so close our thighs touch and our arms are next to each other. But this is through layers of clothing. I lean in and giggle at something funny he says, resting my cheek on his fabric-covered shoulder.

An animalistic growl emanates from his chest.

I sit up straight. “Oh gosh, I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking...”

“No, this is not your fault. It’s mine. But the symptoms are getting worse,” he says. “It’s time for more blood.” He scoots back his chair, stands and grabs a bag of blood out of the fridge.

I can’t help but wonder what he means by “worse”?

And then I blink with surprise because his crotch is tented with an impressive erection he can’t hide. And also, he’s lifting the cold bag to his lips. “Are you going to drink that blood in here, right now?”

He pauses, because it's obvious he was going to totally drink his synthetic blood in front of me as if it's as natural as drinking a soda. He's now second-guessing himself.

And I feel guilty. I shouldn't be grossed out by things that are natural to his species. If for instance I were to go ahead and become his mate, this is what would happen. I would have children who were half-Korn and most likely drank blood sometimes too. "No, don't leave. I'm sorry. I want you to feel comfortable." I give him a big, encouraging smile. "I hope you will also accept all my weird human attributes."

"I will." And then he picks up the bag and I watch as he opens a tab at the top that turns into a sort of straw. He puts it to his mouth and starts drinking the blood, sucking it all down in great gulps as if he's drinking a milkshake.

I do my best to not openly stare, but it's hard. His corded neck looks magnificent as he swallows the blood. Somehow he appears powerful as he ingests this synthetic blood. "I've never seen someone drink blood before," I admit afterwards. "But it doesn't look so bad. Does it taste good?"

"It tastes good. It's flavored, so that helps. It's only synthetic blood. Not the real thing." He licks his lips and I can see a drop of blood or two and some of the deep red stain on his two sharpest teeth, but then he licks it away and it's as if it was never there. He places the empty blood bag, that still contains drops of blood in the interior, back in the fridge. Then he turns toward the sink to wash his hands.

"It helps?"

"Yes, I already feel better."

I can't help but glance at his crotch again, and it's true that he's lost that magnificent hard-on. Although that package, even at rest, is still impressive. I shift on my seat, trying to relieve the heat between my thighs. "Tell me, if we did do something crazy,

like give in to these urges and I became your mate—what would that be like? For instance, how would you feel about having a mate not of your species? I would be human so your children would be half-human. How would your family feel about that?”

He shrugs. “It has happened before. Korn mate with other species. After we officially joined the four sectors and mingled more often with other species, we’ve had offspring that are half Korn. But one thing you need to know—it always seems that the offspring, no matter what species the parent is and the gender, the offspring always retain the fangs of the Korn and the ability to ingest blood as we do. They move forward in life finding their mates through blood frenzy.”

“Do you think it’s weird that I don’t drink blood?”

He sits back down next to me. “Yes, it’s odd to me that your species is similar to mine and yet does not have this ability. I am concerned that you have blunt teeth and that this makes you defenseless.”

I grin. “I’ve managed to take care of myself all this time.”

“How old are you?” he questions.

“I am twenty-seven. How old are you?”

“Thirty-two.”

We gaze at each other, a beat too long and our hands again much too close on the table.

This isn’t good. It’s not fair for me to do this to him.

“I’m getting my knitting,” I announce.

Chapter5

Hale

Time goes by and I'm beginning to lose my mind concerning Sabine.

I ingested the last bag of blood minutes ago, which allows me to sit near her and behave reasonably. Three bags were left when she arrived and they were supposed to get me through the next few diurnals, which included the worst of the frenzy. My isolation should have done the rest. But being stranded with Sabine has ruined this careful plan. I drank a bag of blood an hour after she arrived, then I needed to ingest the rest of the blood every hour, on the hour.

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And now it's all gone.

There was no ability to save it for later...not taking it while she is so close would have led to disaster.

The sun has set and it's not dark outside. We both recently had the rest of the soup. Soon I will lock myself in the bedroom and try to ignore her until she leaves tomorrow afternoon. This sounds rude, but it is the only way she will be able to avoid my fangs in her neck and my cock sinking inside of her beautiful body.

There have been times in recorded history when a Korn was kept from a mate during frenzy. The mate died suddenly or was killed, or they were kept apart. These documented episodes are well-known to be torturous and are now against the law. Eventually these devastated Korn are able to carry on and live their lives—without a mate. It is a sad half-life, but still a life, better than madness or death.

I will survive, but I will also be without the female my blood wants.

We sit on opposite ends of the small couch. I tap on my screen, unable to connect with the Earth network, or the Korn planetary network, or even the four sectors. It seems this weather misconnection has caused a cascade of errors. I should be uneasy about my inability to connect with the Korn military or our government, or even Earth government. But there is plenty of work to keep me busy that is loaded onto my screen. The weather is causing this lockdown, and it is only temporary.

My mind is also filled with intense mating urges I'm trying to ignore. My blood boils. My fangs have elongated. My cock is at attention. Just her scent causes my body to

enflame.

Despite my needs, I will treat this precious female with respect.

Somehow, I will not devolve into blood frenzy mating, with us naked in the bed, without her full consent. This is against the law on both of our planets. I am lucky to simply have this time in her vicinity, learning all her likes and dislikes and her past and present. All the while gazing at the outline of her breasts under her clothes, that perfect ass and those full lips. The exposed curve of her neck is spectacular. Her hair is pulled back from her face and neck into something called a “ponytail” and her shirt has a large opening at the top that seems to slide off one shoulder. She’s stunning. She has no idea that exposing her naked neck for my perusal when she knows I’m in frenzy—and I’ve already made my arousal for her known—is a mating call amongst my species.

Sabine is busy doing something she calls “knitting.” It is charming and restful. She has two sticks in either delicate hand with hooks on the end. She creates rows of intricate knots that form a colorful blanket. This is a handmade gift that she plans on giving away to a friend.

She is not only sexy and easy to talk to, but also kind and giving.

I want her more.

I’ve vowed to keep my distance from her so that she can remain unmated and have the ability to leave tomorrow. When the weather clears enough for her to safely depart I will stay behind, force myself to not follow and I will leave her alone and never see her again.

This means I might never have a blood frenzy for anyone else again.

I might never have offspring.

Korn are a quiet species, known for logic above emotion. The blood frenzy is that crack in our logic, but it is my job to lead with logic even while being slammed with biological and emotional mating needs. I was sent as the Korn trade representative, without a military escort remaining behind with me, in order to prove to the humans of our peaceful intentions. The government considers me a good representation of the Korn. Bloodworths are known for their blood honor, therefore I cannot behave with dishonor towards this gorgeous, blunt-toothed human.

I lean back into the couch and spread my thighs for more comfort. Strangely, I feel happy, despite the circumstance. Sabine is nearby on the couch and suddenly this is enough. I vowed to keep my distance but so far all I've been able to accomplish was not touching her again.

She glances over at me, her gaze lingering on my midsection then back up to my face. "Are you trying to seduce me? You keep staring at me with heat in your eyes and I think you must like my neck." She tugs the left side of her clothing down, exposing even more of her neck and shoulder.

Does this female want to become my mate?

"It's a distinct possibility," I wink. "This is why you need to get away from me."

"Did you just wink at me?" she laughs. "Blood frenzy means you become more charming and sexy?"

I move closer. "Yes. It is true that my species is known for less talk and more action. Logic over emotion. But blood frenzy changes us into...something different."

"You're going to try and charm me into your bed?"

“I’m all out of blood,” I admit. “It’s gone. The amount I had was supposed to last for a few days, and then I’d be isolated. But because you’re here I needed to take it more often, so I can remain reasonable. But I am going to have to lock myself in the bedroom soon because as I said, it’s all gone. Tomorrow you might have to leave with me still in that bedroom. Whatever sounds of anguish I make, ignore them. If I come out to the front room and plead with you to strip and suck my cock, tell me to leave and I will.”

A whimper escapes her lips.

The cabin creaks loudly and the front door rattles, startling the both of us into awareness of the storm that continues outside. I stand and check on the woodstove, which still heats the small cabin nicely. A nearby stack of perfectly sized logs is enough to easily last the entire week. I return to the couch. “Because the sun has dropped it is now so cold outside it is even dangerous for me, especially now that I don’t have more blood. If I could leave this area in order to create distance from you, I would. But that option is not available until tomorrow.”

“It’s become dangerous outside for you too?”

“Yes. I was able to go out earlier because I’d had the blood. I was heated and supercharged. But tonight, midway through any drive to another town, I’d lose my internal heat. We’re both truly sleeping here tonight.”

“This is what we’ve already planned for, except...I guess I thought your blood would last longer.”

“I thought the same. I didn’t try to leave right away because I thought the blood would make me able to remain in your presence until you could safely leave. I also thought it would be best if I remained in order to make sure you were safe in this weather. But I had to consume more blood, more quickly, than I ever expected and

now I am fearful that within another hour or so I will begin to behave inappropriately.”

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“No, it’s not as bad as you think. You will go into the bedroom and lock the door, like you said. And you can work on your tablet and sleep in there. I won’t disturb you. I need to finish this baby blanket for a coworker of mine who is going to have a baby soon. I will be fine sleeping on this couch. And you can sleep in the other room and I won’t bother you.”

I chuckle that she thinks it’s that easy.

“It’s not that easy?” she questions.

“No, I can still scent you. Your pheromones are nearby. I can sense your heat. It will be difficult for me to stay away. I want to apologize ahead of time for what I might possibly do. Fair warning that I will do my best to seduce you into taking off all your clothes and spreading your thighs for me.”

She swallows. “Does that mean you’ll try to force me to...”

I scent her fear, which I hate. “No, Sabine. You have nothing to worry about. It is against the law for Korn to drink blood without consent. We are all taught this from the time we first learn to walk and talk. This is a strong ethic that we do not break. You will have to clearly tell me to take you for it to happen. If you don’t do that—I will not drink from you. But, as I was trying to explain before, I will get better and better at talking you into giving that consent. I will definitely wait until you say yes, but it’s very likely that you’ll say yes.”

“Oh, you think you’re that good?”

I shrug. "I am Korn."

She gestures down at her perfect body. "I just want you to know I'm wearing my ugliest underwear. I'm dressed kind of frumpy today because I did nothing with my hair except put it into a ponytail. I'm not even wearing any makeup. You're lucky I brushed my teeth before I came over because I just thought I was going to be on vacation alone."

"None of this matters. You are the most beautiful female I've ever met. Your hair is glorious and your features exquisite. And your body begs to be touched."

"You're good at this," she confirms.

I grin then ask more questions about the blanket she's creating. She happily explains her knitting plan. Eventually Sabine asks more questions about my life too, which is nice. She's not the type of being to talk only of herself. She seems to naturally make sure our discourse is balanced.

"It sounds like you come from a wealthy and well-connected family. On Earth I'm none of those things," she warns. "I'm just a normal person from a middle-class family. Maybe you and I won't have anything in common because I wasn't raised amongst wealth and didn't go to a fancy college. You need to think of that before you decide to try and 'seduce' me. You might be getting a lemon."

"Is this considered a barrier to mating on your planet?"

"Well, yes. Socio-economic levels. Ethnicities. Religions...all these sometimes get in the way of marriages. Not that they should, but they do."

"On Korn we have different tribes and family lines that become important, but mates are paramount. Family feuds and wars came between mated blood pairs in ancient

times—those are considered tragedies and cautionary tales. Mates can be found anywhere and are considered sacrosanct.”

“If I were to become your blood mate your family and friends would truly accept me and try to befriend me, even though I’m not Korn and they’ve never met me before?”

“Of course. Would your human family and friends accept a Korn?”

She chuckles. “Oh, they would love you. My brother would want to take your car for a drive and talk your ear off about cars in general. My sister would love your black leather. And my mom would just love boasting about a Korn son-in-law to her friends. It would be a win-win.”

“I would like to meet your family,” I say, truthfully.

She gives me a sharp glance. “Wow, you really are good at this.”

I stare back with the challenge of Korn blood mating in my heated gaze.

She exhales and puts down her knitting. “Has it ever happened that Korn have said no to each other during the blood frenzy?”

“There have been a few times in our history. The stories told are rare. Once a secretly pleasure mating couple went into frenzy for each other, except their families were warring factions. They tried to deny, but only lasted so long and they gave in and were banished by their families. There was another one that was similar—two warring families. The couple was young and committed suicide together rather than give in to the blood frenzy because they were both worried that the families again would be angry.”

“It sounds like a story we call Romeo and Juliet.”

“Those are rare and sad stories. Legends told typically tell of Korn accepting blood mates during frenzy and being allowed to take the choice their bodies have matched, because the frenzy is never wrong. We deeply believe that who our body chooses is right for us.”

“But in this instance, I’m a human and you don't even know me. How can that choice be right? Maybe it’s a mistake?”

“You are the one,” I answer with complete confidence.

Her whole body softens and she moves a bit closer.

We both grow quiet again. Sabine continues with her knitting. I try to respond to a series of messages that I will keep and batch send later. But I find it hard to concentrate, especially as time goes by. An hour later the strength of the blood antidote recedes. I watch the movement of her fingers, wondering what they’d feel like wrapped around my leaking shaft.

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My cock thickens in my trousers again due to her nearness.

“Tell me more about your work,” I suddenly question.

“Oh, well...I’m a waitress at a top-of-the-line restaurant at a fancy ski resort here in Montana. The kind of place rich people and celebrities frequent. I enjoy working there. I’ve grown close with my coworkers, the owners and many of the repeat customers. I make a good living, with benefits and everything. The only problem is rent is crazy nowadays and only getting higher. I’m afraid I’ll have to move two hours away just to find a place to live. Which will make my job not as amazing. Right now I can simply walk to work, so moving two hours away would be devastating and might be a reason for me to have to quit.”

“You can’t purchase a domicile nearby?”

She laughs. “No. Never. That’s a fantasy that will never come true. I’d have to be a multi-millionaire to afford even a tiny condo in that town.”

“Hmm.”

“Hale, I have to say something important. I feel bad for you that you’re stuck feeling this blood frenzy towards me. There must be a few women on your own planet that you’d imagined as being your future mate. But you show up on Earth and now you’ve become accidentally latched on to me. Do you think I’m the one who’s taking advantage of you?”

How could this amazing human think such a thing? “Sabine, there was no one else on

Korn. I'm lucky to have found you. I've quickly come to understand your good qualities. I know you are hardworking and well liked. You were born and raised in this area and continue to stay here, which reveals a sense of loyalty, tradition and community. You've taken care of a stranger who isn't the same species as yourself which reveals your compassion as you try to understand my situation. Another human would probably have been screaming and flailing. Not you."

She shrugs. "You're not here to harm me. Since the first moment I saw you walking around the side of the cabin I felt a sense of comfort around you, like we've met before."

"I understand, Sabine, that is how I feel. I feel the same."

"But how can I feel that if I'm not Korn?"

"Maybe my presence has unlocked something within you? Maybe there's something primitive in our genes from millennia ago, something that links us because we're essentially similar?"

Then suddenly her lips thin. "You are very, very good at seduction." She wags a finger at me and begins to gather her knitting. "You're sneaky, getting me to open up to you like that. Asking questions about me. But I haven't made my mind up yet about anything between us. I've got to move to a kitchen chair so I can think clearly."

I take a deep breath and force myself to do the right thing.

I am a Bloodworth. I will not take her without genuine consent.

I stand up immediately and move away. "No, don't bother," I tell her. "I'm going into the bedroom. You stay, Sabine. I will do my best to stay in that room this night and tomorrow. You will leave tomorrow, without saying goodbye. If I come out later this

night know that I'm not myself. The blood antidote will wear away and I'll fall into the height of the frenzy. Watch what you say and do around me because I will only get worse in my need for you. But remember, I won't hurt you."

I go inside and shut the door.

My eyes blinkopen and I look around the darkened room, bleary-eyed.

I pat my hand on the bed beside me, find my tablet and learn that I've slept for hours and it's the middle of the night within an Earth diurnal.

The storm continues outside with the whistle of wind and the vibrations of window panes.

I let out a deep groan of need. The blood frenzy is stronger than ever before. My skin is burning hot even though I haven't had additional synthetic blood. My last dosage is no longer effective. The frenzy itself is heating my blood now.

I took off my boots and jacket hours ago, now I take off my white shirt too and toss it on the floor. Off comes my belt, pants and small clothes. I'm tempted to remain naked, but I cannot go into the next room that way, it would be wrong. So I pull on a pair of soft, black sleep pants.

And all I can think of is Sabine.

I can hear her even breaths through the thin wall.

I kept my distance for hours, remained within this room and did my best to sleep the frenzy off, but to no avail. I am awake and can scent her. All I want for the rest of my life is her nearby. I can clearly see her becoming my best friend, which is what happens within Korn mating. Sabine and I can join as a new family line. I have

always wanted a future mate, but I hadn't met even a pleasure mate to spend more than one night with, let alone one who caused a frenzy. None of this has happened to me. I've never been interested in tasting a pleasure mate's blood. And then tonight, if I continue to pursue her, I will be tasting a human's blood. Mingling human and Korn for the first time.

I lick my lips.

I need her in this bed. Not out there.

If I walk into the front room, she knows I'm not myself.

Old me said that. This new me tries to figure out how I can bypass that warning because she must agree to everything before I can touch her neck. Fully agree, not be tricked into agreeing. I sense that she would acquiesce if she thought that I was all in and had no reservations.

There is my plan.

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I stand, open the door and step into the front room. This cabin is not much bigger than my quarters on the military ship.

Sabine sits slouched on the couch, with her eyes closed and in deep sleep. This “knitting,” as she called it, still lies in her lap. She must have fallen asleep while working and I find it charming. Despite everything she still tries to keep busy and find ways to help others. The lights are off except for one small lamp next to her which I turn off, leaving only the red-orange glow in the woodstove.

I walk over and quietly tend to the woodstove, which has died down enough that I suspect it’s not keeping my female warm. My blazing body temperature keeps me unaware of how the cabin had grown cold enough to possibly cause Sabine discomfort. She was going to sleep the rest of the night, seated on this small couch when there is such a large, comfortable bed in the next room. She’s not even changed into sleep clothing and her luggage remains closed near the door.

I place a hand on her cold cheek and vow that I’m simply going to help this female sleep comfortably. My grand plans of seduction remain at the top of my list, but my need to protect Sabine, keep her safe, warm and comfortable is paramount. I will bundle her in the bed and return to the small living area to use the couch.

I will.

I bend down and scoop her into my arms and carry her into the bedroom.

Chapter6

Sabine

I wake up in his bed.

Somehow, I'm not surprised to find Hale setting me down.

Nor am I scared that he's looming over me because I'm already half in love with the amazing Hale Bloodworth. He's been trying to tell me to stay away from him because he's on a mission to sink his sharp teeth in my neck, drink my blood and make me his mate—meaning he's going to knock me up and we'll be married for life.

And maybe I don't think this is so bad.

I mulled this bizarre situation over very carefully, for hours, while he was “locked” in the bedroom. A Korn male is in the midst of a blood frenzy forme? The very ordinary Sabine Dawson, a waitress in Big Sky, Montana. He drank three bags of blood in order to keep his hands off of me and it didn't slow him down in the least. This is how much I affect him.

While he slept, I pulled out my emergency bottle of Chardonnay and tensely listened to the wind continue to thrash outside. A glass or two (okay, maybe three) of wine helped greatly, as did my stash of artisanal chocolate. I wanted to quietly whisper-conference about what to do with close girlfriends from work, but the cell service was still out.

I thought about all the ramifications while nibbling chocolates, then decided on my own that I was going to allow this to happen with Hale.

Sex with him tonight means I'll become a mother to children that are half Korn. I will be part of Hale's family and end up spending a lot of time on an alien planet because he could end up being sent back to Korn for years, and I need to be okay with that

possibility. And I am.

Yes, it would be nice if we could take this attraction between us slow and have the opportunity to date, then maybe move in together and have an engagement and an actual wedding. Then plan a family a bit later. But I've always wanted a husband and children, I just hadn't met the right man. In the short time I've known him, I'm already ninety-nine percent certain Hale is that right man.

I toss aside the half-finished baby blanket off my lap and listen as it lands on the floor with a click of needles. Hale's harsh features are even more handsome in the dim glow of the bedside lamp. "Please kiss me," I beg because this Korn isn't the only one throbbing with need. I've wanted this guy since the moment we met.

He backs away from the bed. "Sabine, I'm simply trying to drop you off here in the room so you can sleep somewhere comfortable. You were cold in the front room."

I sit up and swing my legs over the side of the bed. "Why aren't you wearing a shirt?"

"I was hot."

I grin. "For me?"

"Yes, for you. Sabine...my control is slipping."

I stand, move close and place my cold hands against his very, very warm bare chest. "You don't have to keep control anymore. I've thought about all of this while you were sleeping. I want this."

"No," he shakes his head. "You don't mean that. I can scent alcohol on your breath."

Shoot. "That was hours ago. I promise I'm totally sober now. I mean it. I give my

consent.”

“Female...”

I lick at my lips and realize I’ve got serious dry mouth and bad breath, left over from the wine and my nap. Also, I’ve really got to pee. And Hale is in pajamas and I’m still wearing the clothes I was in when I arrived. “Hold that thought. I’ll be right back.” And then I race back to the living area, rummage through my luggage and grab my toiletries bag and rush into the hall bath. In minutes I’ve used the restroom, brushed my teeth and taken my hair out of the ponytail. I’m now wearing an old nightshirt and not a speck of underwear. The wooden floors are cold against the soles of my bare feet. The cabin is still reasonably warm, but the wind can still be heard outside. What a bummer that I had no idea I’d be hooking up with someone. I brought none of my cute bras and matching panties. Oh well.

I open the bedroom door and suck in a sharp breath because he's naked.

Hale turns toward me. “You give consent?”

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“Yes,” I sigh. “That’s what I said.”

I examine him from head to toe. Hale Bloodworth is built like an Olympic swimmer, slender but muscular. And his leaking cock bobs in front of him. It looks very much like a human erection, but his shaft is ruddy and a shade darker than the rest of his body, I assume it’s because he’s in the midst of the blood frenzy. He doesn’t seem to have hair anywhere other than the gorgeous, thick hair on his head.

“I have to see all of you too.” He clicks on another bedside lamp. “Remove your clothes.”

First, I take a closer look at his thick, enormous erection and bite my lip. “Is that going to fit?”

He gives it a few rough strokes. “I’ll make sure it fits.”

I reach down and boldly remove my ratty nightshirt and toss it on the bed. His gaze travels down my neck, to the curve of my large breasts, down my stomach and back up to my face. A growl rumbles in his chest. Then his hands are on waist and in a moment I’m on my back on the bed. He’s between my thighs and I spread my legs for easier access. The sight of his shoulders and head between my thighs is unbearably sexy.

He pauses to gaze up at me. “You are beautiful.”

“Am I? Am I the same as...?”

“We are the same, but just different enough to make it interesting.” He pauses. “Are you certain, female? Do I have the right to mate with you? You understand what will happen? Soon I will be too far gone to stop. I will ready your body so you can take all of me, then I will feed from you and breed you.”

“I want you,” I pant.

And then his tongue is right where I need him. This alien knows where my clit is and how to use it better than any human guy I’ve ever dated. I’m a little embarrassed at how quickly he can get me from zero to about over the edge. His hands gently dig into my thighs as he does his work. I’m so wet I can hear the slick of my juices as he labors down there so diligently to bring me over the edge. I grab onto the covers and hold on tight as my back bows with the force of the orgasm that sweeps over me.

I lay there, panting and dazed.

In a moment he’s back on top of me with his hips between my thighs. His hard shaft is already notched at my entrance.

He delivers a series of passionate kisses on the side of my neck and then licks the exact spot he must want the most. “You will feel no pain.”

I grab onto his shoulders.

His fangs score my skin, which tingles instead of hurts. And then I feel the slow sink of the teeth. He’s right, it doesn’t hurt, instead it’s the most erotic sensation of my life. I moan, trying my best to keep still. I can feel the suction of his lips as he drinks my blood and I swear it feels more intimate than any kiss.

“Oh, don’t stop.”

His hips move and he sinks his erection inside of me at the same time, a slow steady slide that fills me up like never before. Soon the rhythm changes and he's pounding inside of me while his teeth are still latched onto my neck.

I continue to hold on tight.

The orgasm hits so hard and sharp, I choke and then I'm screaming.

Hale stills over me and his teeth somehow sink deeper. I can feel the warmth of his cum jetting inside of me.

It's all too much and I pass out.

Chapter 7

Sabine

I wake up the next morning and Hale is gone.

The storm is gone too.

At first, I think he's in the shower. But the room is quiet. In fact, too quiet. All I really want right now is more snuggle time with the new husband I'm falling for. And yet his side of the bed is empty and there's no sound from the nearby hall bath.

Oh, who am I kidding? I'm not simply in the midst of falling for Hale. I'm fully in love with this guy.

I was all over him prior to finding myself in his bed, and after that, it was game over. My stomach swoops pleasantly and the space between my thighs grows hot again as I remember all that epic fucking and those fangs in my neck. There was the first time,

when he drank my blood and I passed out from the orgasm. Then later there was the time he took me from behind and sank his fangs in my neck, in the exact same spot. And the time with me on top when I swear he spent a full thirty minutes just sucking and pinching my nipples and moaning about how much he loved my breasts. We slept for a long time and woke up and I reached for him and he groaned “yes, my female” and we were at it again, this time with him first licking me again to an amazing orgasm and then he was filling me again with that amazing cock.

He didn't drink from me each time, only twice, which was interesting, knowing sex with him each time didn't have to include the sharing of blood. And the times when he didn't drink from me were just as spectacular as without.

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My body is now covered in light red trails of fang and I smell like sex. Technically I need a shower asap, but I don't want to wash away his scent. I just want more.

Again, where is he?

I get out of bed, naked, and find my crumpled nightshirt on the floor and put it on again. Damn, it's cold without the warm layers of covers. Plus, Hale's hot body kept me nice and warm all night. I pause to use the restroom, then return to pull a blanket off the bed, wrap it around me and make my way fully into the front room.

Out the front window I get a better view of the sun and the sparkling icy wonderland. Both of us could leave now if we wanted. But I don't want to leave my new alien husband behind.

I find him sitting on the couch dressed in his black pajama pants with his face in his hands. He lifts his head and I let out a gasp of dismay. He looks truly upset. His dark eyes look wet and his features are filled with sadness.

I rush over, worried that he's in pain and I don't know why. "Hale, what is wrong? Are you hurt?"

He leans away from me and shakes his head. "You do not have to pretend Sabine. You must hate me. I am in anguish from my behavior last night."

I stare at him in shock because I can't even understand this line of reasoning. "Why would I hate you? What did you do wrong?"

“I didn’t allow you proper consent and now I am bonded to you and physically unable to leave. And there is our offspring to consider. I’d call Earth government and have the local military send an expert team to take me down and confine me until the Korn military returns to take me home. But our offspring can’t be raised here on this planet without me to provide Korn rituals for him or her.”

I sit down heavily beside him. “Hale, I don’t understand.”

“My mark is on your neck.”

I place a hand on my neck where he bit me last night and it’s true that I feel something different. I race to the bathroom because I’m super curious to see what this looks like. I flick on the light and see in the mirror two distinct fang marks on my skin. It’s pretty cool.

Hale suddenly stands behind me, his hands on my hips. “These are your permanent mating scars. Only given by one partner in a claiming to the other, usually a male to his breeding female to mark possession. It is a practice with primitive origins that we are still compelled to continue, even in the modern era.”

“This shows to all Korn that we are mates?”

“Yes.”

I blink. “How will everyone know you are mine too?”

“My proximity.” He guides me out of the bathroom and back to the front room. We sit again side by side on the couch. “You are strangely calm about this whole situation. I’ve been the one upset and you’ve been untroubled.”

“Maybe we were meant to get stranded here together overnight?”

“No, I was meant to be alone. Both of us were.”

“What I mean, is maybe you came into your frenzy because your body sensed I was near. When did your frenzy start?”

“When I arrived at a place called Big Sky. My Voltare friends like it there and they know my species enjoys the cold, so he suggested we meet there. He wanted to show me the beauty of this section of the planet Earth.”

I smile. “Hale, I work and live in Big Sky. Maybe that was where you scented me. That must’ve sent you into a blood frenzy. But then you couldn’t find me and luckily I arrived at the same cabin you’d rented.”

He lets out a deep sigh. “I still do not consider you having given full consent. I scented alcohol on your breath.”

“What do you consider full consent? I think there is a disconnect here. I think I’ve given all the consent and our sex last night was wonderful and I want more. But despite everything I’ve said and done, you still think you did something wrong. Give me this human the correct script, Hale. What exactly do I need to say for you to feel that we are mates and this subject is closed?”

“I carried you into my bedroom while you were asleep and took you while you were still slightly changed by the alcohol you ingested. You should be angry at me and wish for me to depart.”

“No, I love you.”

He blinks. “What did you say?”

“I said I love you. And I do. I met you yesterday and felt an immediate kinship. I was

almost never afraid of you. We've spent almost twenty-four hours now alone together in this cabin, just the two of us. We talked for a long time and spent time getting to know each other. And I appreciate how you waited for me to be ready."

"I pressured you."

"You did, a little, but it was more like you were trying to pick me up at a bar. It wasn't over the top."

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“I seduced you. I took my clothes off and presented my cock to you.”

“Yes,” I laugh, “that did happen.” It’s hilarious and he doesn’t even realize. “And I loved it. That’s what sealed the deal.” I look down and see that his crotch is again tented.

“You love me?” he chokes.

“Hale, I’ve been all over you since we met. I was truly upset and scared for you when you ran outside to get my stuff from my car. I cooked lunch and dinner for you. I’ve told you everything about myself and you weren’t bored or acting like you had to create distance between us. To be truthful my only worry...my only worry is that you don’t feel as strongly as I do towards you. You keep calling this a blood frenzy and a mating. But I don’t know if you truly...”

His hand moves to my shoulder and then cups the back of my neck. “I love you, Sabine,” he rasps. Hale pulls me into his arms and we’re kissing again, just as passionate as the night before. I realize I can’t even wait until we get back to the bedroom. I want him again right now.

I toss a leg over his hip and I’m on his lap, rubbing against him.

“You know what’s good about our situation? We can just both continue to stay here together for the rest of the week.”

He pulls down his pants and notches his erection at my entrance. “You truly don’t want to leave?”

“No, you’re mine.”

And then I sink down on him and show Hale how I plan to spend the next seven days.

Epilogue

Hale

I recently decided to purchase a domicile in the community where Sabine used to work. The exact location she said she couldn’t afford and would sadly have to leave.

The best part? She has no idea. I’ve kept the entire transaction secret so I can surprise her when the time is right.

My female recently quit her job because she is now six months pregnant. She had already decreased her work to “part time” and eventually decided that due to her pregnancy and the arrival of my family and all the work in planning our wedding, that it was time for her to step away.

I told her she did not need to change her life for me. I understand that her career is as important as mine. Sabine works hard and is excellent at what she does, which I admire. But she said that because we can easily afford for her to become “a stay-at-home mom” she wants to take advantage of this lucky opportunity, which she says is not common amongst her species. She will focus on our family while I continue to work. Maybe someday she will return to her career in hospitality, but not right now.

We live together in her small apartment in Big Sky.

I enjoy the location, which reminds me of villages on my home planet. Her small, tidy apartment is the same size as my previous quarters on the military spaceship. I enjoy living in her space and having more time together. I work via my screens and

I'm picked up often by Earth government officials for meetings in other locations on the planet and returned. But often the government officials want to meet with me in Big Sky, simply because of my desired location.

The only problem is the continued excitement over my presence by the residents and visitors to this resort town. I find myself wanting more solitude. Hence my purchase of a larger domicile on a large parcel of land a few miles out of town, but still close.

I am indeed happy living and working on this alien planet. Life is good. I am a mate and soon to become a first-time father.

I am so very lucky to have found Sabine Dawson (now Bloodworth) at that cabin.

Which is why today we're performing a wedding ceremony on the meadow in back of the cabin where we first met. It's now early summer and the weather is perfect. There are flowers blooming and green grass. The Grand Teton mountains are nearby and in full view. This really is a glorious location and a good place to help my family and friends understand why I find this planet and its inhabitants so charming. I hope to remain stationed on this mission for many years to come.

Many members of my family have managed to make the long journey to Earth for our ceremony. My mother was thrilled that I'd finally found my mate and that the arrival of her first grandchild was imminent. As expected, she's nonplussed over the fact that my female is of a different species. I've been gently teased by my siblings and friends for my "dramatic blood frenzy on an alien planet" but everyone has already met my mate and accepts Sabine fully. This first contact on an alien planet and with a new species is considered a great adventure for the Korn that have arrived. They are eager to meet and befriend these "hew-mans." It also helps that they were able to travel so far in comfort on a luxury spaceship provided by the Korn government.

Our human mating ceremony starts and I watch Sabine approach to the sounds of

music.

My female has no idea how beautiful she looks to me as she glides down the center aisle created between the rows of white chairs, wearing a simple white gown she refers to as “my Carolyn Bissette Kennedy look.” She’s heavily pregnant and I love seeing her swollen with our offspring. This ceremony is completely unnecessary because we are legal mates according to the laws of the Korn. My mark is on her neck and my offspring is growing in her womb. But she wants to confirm the legality of our mating amongst her own species. This is acceptable.

She reaches my location and we stand facing each other in front of a local official and I suddenly understand why this is important. The Korn have private matings, but humans prefer a public declaration of the bond. So I declare, in front of everyone who is important to Sabine, how much I love her and how I vow to take her as my mate for life. She does the same and we exchange rings.

Then the best part arrives and I pull her into my arms for a passionate kiss.

We are inundated with congratulations and then leave for pictures. We return as the sun sets to find a dinner and then dancing under the stars. I find I enjoy these festivities, as do my friends and family. It is odd that there is no formal ingesting or exchange of blood to solidify our commitment, only the simple exchange of rings, but humans must do this considering their blunt teeth.

After a series of speeches by drunk humans, there is a formal cutting and eating of cake and I perform a first dance with Sabine’s beaming mother. Music starts and Sabine tosses a bundle of flowers over shoulder to a group of eager females. I toss a scrap of fabric that was formerly surrounding Sabine’s thigh to a group of laughing males (a very odd custom). And now I am ready to leave.

I pull my sweaty and smiling mate aside. She’s happy but I can sense that she is also

doing her best to hide her exhaustion. “We are leaving,” I announce.

“Oh, really?”

“You are tired. You’ve been on your feet too long. Your friends love you and want you here until dawn to keep up with the festivities, but I am your mate and I need you and our offspring resting and quiet.”

She gives me a warm smile. “I understand. It’s true that my feet and back are killing me. The party can continue without us because the DJ is booked for a few more hours. The problem is that we were going to stay overnight at the cabin, but everyone is still out here. We’ll have no peace there until they all leave. I could just sit in a chair outside until...”

I take her hand. “No. I have a surprise for you. We are leaving this location.”

“A surprise?” she gasps.

My mate loves surprises. This is exactly why I did not tell her yet of my purchase of the luxury domicile in Big Sky. I sweep her into my arms and carry her away from the festivities in full view of the gasps of surprise of everyone in attendance.

I place her into the exact same vehicle in which I was driving when we first met. Then we take the long, two-hour drive back to Big Sky. She quickly falls asleep. I nudge her away when we are close enough for her to catch her first nighttime glimpse of our domicile.

“Where are we? Are we visiting someone? Did you rent this place?”

I park in the drive of a large home, that reminds me of domiciles on Korn, built with stone and logs, including many windows of the surrounding nature. “Surprise. This is our new home. I purchased this home for us. You said you could never possibly afford a home in Big Sky. Yes, you can. This home is both of ours—it is paid in full and both of our names are on the deed. Welcome home, Sabine.”

Tears instantly form in her eyes. “I love you.”

“I know.”

And then I kiss her and carry her over the threshold and into our new domicile.

Hope you enjoyed Hale and Sabine’s HEA! Looking for another Michele Mills book with similar feels? Try *Her Alien Priest*!

I’m the Hyrrokin High Priest of a remote monastery on the planet Salo. I spend my days in quiet contemplation, keeping my flame-throwing banked and nursing my war wounds. And I take my vows of silence and celibacy very seriously.

Very. Seriously.

Then one day a mouthy, gorgeous human female is dumped onto the stone steps of the main altar.

And suddenly I’m tempted like never before.