



Rebellious Harmony

(Covenant Omegaverse #1)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: She is my greatest inspiration...and my darkest temptation.

Sweet, bubbly, donut loving Ava Keats should be tucked safely behind her phone screen, where she belongs.

Not on my tour bus, teasing and tempting me with her scent.

The more I'm forced to be around her, the more I crave her. The taste of the blood running through her veins, the feel of her skin beneath my palm, her cries of ecstasy as I finally claim her as my own.

My muse.

My Omega.

My everything.

But unless I claim her now, she'll be whisked away to our Lord's sanctuary with the other omegas.

And I will have damned myself to eternity on this Earth without my mate by my side...

Total Pages (Source): 21

Page 1

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 3:22 pm

Nolan

As an Alpha vampire, I have everything I want in life. My band, fame and freedom, and no relationship. No girlfriend clinging to me, asking for things I don't want to give her. Well, that's not entirely true. My ex is still trying to sink her claws into me to force me to change my mind.

In a few minutes, she will no longer be an issue.

The summer months have been mild, making way for the warm September air. Gusty Santa Ana Winds beat against darkened windows that showcase the luminous full moon outside.

The backstage greenroom in this LA arena is fairly large and atmospheric, its low lamps casting a warm glow over the room.

Gold-framed mirrors give the space an elegant, artsy feel, and the evergreen walls and red brocade carpets add to the vibe.

The green armchairs and brown and red leather couches scattered throughout are filled with my bandmates and our fans.

Rex, Torin, Eli, and Ian are sitting around a coffee table covered in food and candy, talking among themselves as groupies try to butt into their conversation. Clusters of fans talk among themselves throughout the room.

The human groupie to my right is breathing down my neck and inching her gaudy

nails up my thigh.

She's one of the hangers-on who moves with us from one city to the next.

The petite blonde on my left is a local.

She's drifted off to sleep on my shoulder and is breathing gently.

My band can't survive without the fans who buy our music and come to our shows—they make our lifestyle possible.

But right now, I'm exhausted and wish they'd all just disappear.

I keep telling myself that I'll snap out of this malaise, but it's settled over me like a heavy fog that won't clear.

In a few nights, Death by Dawn will play to our largest crowd of the tour, and I hope the show will spark inspiration so I can write music again.

I fear my muse has left me, and if I don't snap out of this writing block soon, we may not have a next album.

Not that it would hurt my financial state significantly, but I need the next album to sell well so we don't lose our record contract.

If we succeed, then Stella and the band will be set for life. It will fully support them.

"Sweetheart, it's time to go." I give the groupie my best smile. "You know the drill."

With a pout, she stands, flicks her brown hair over her shoulder, and walks out of the room.

I gently shake the blond-haired comatose girl, and she comes to and looks up at me with sleepy hazel eyes. “Time to go. You need to crash somewhere else, cutie.”

“Oh, did I fall asleep?” Her eyes go wide. “God, I am so stupid. You put on a great show, Nolan.” She smiles and gives me a peck on the cheek.

“Thanks! Glad you enjoyed yourself. Get home safe.”

“Yes, of course. See you next time you’re in LA. I can’t wait to hear your new songs!”

Her words nauseate me. She can’t wait for my new material?

She needs to get in line because I too would love to hear my new songs.

How can the lead singer and songwriter of the most popular band in the country just stop creating music?

Rex and I write the songs together, but his musical arrangements are meaningless without my lyrics.

We’ve worked so hard to make Death by Dawn a household name, and we need to maintain our trajectory.

Other bands would kill to be where we are.

Our manager, Stella, walks into the room. Long black hair frames her pale face, and her bangs are spiked over her light brown eyes. Her signature leather leggings and off-the-shoulder sweater suit her rock and roll style well, and her steel-capped boots scream Don’t fuck with me .

After shooing all the fans out, she turns to me. “You ready to do this?” Her expression says it all. Even Stella is over my ex. Unlike me, my Beta manager never hides her true feelings. She doesn’t have to keep up appearances like I do.

“I’m beyond ready. Time to cut her loose and get rid of the toxicity in my life.”

“Come on then.” She tilts her head toward a corner away from the guys, and I follow. “I’ve already changed the passwords on our accounts.”

I lean against the wall and look up as the thorn in my side saunters into the room, searching for me like a heat-seeking missile.

When our eyes lock, Larissa smirks, and I tense.

We didn’t used to be like this. We used to have fun messing around, until she decided she wanted more than I was willing to give.

As she makes her way to us, I can’t help but feel relief that I’ll finally be able to move on from the drama and mess of our bad breakup. Working with her has become nearly impossible, and I know the toxicity isn’t helping my creativity.

Her long blonde hair is twisted at the back of her head, and wisps of hair frame her face.

Her lips are stained dark red, like wine, and smoky eye makeup frames her moss-colored eyes.

She’s wearing a sheer dress that shows off the ivory-colored shapewear underneath that hugs her long, lean body.

She looks like she just stepped off the runway in Paris, and I know she dressed

specifically to capture my interest.

The reality is that I no longer care how she dresses. She no longer holds any space in my mind.

When she reaches us, she looks me up and down and then glances at Stella. “Hi, guys. You wanted to talk to me? Nolan, it’s nice to finally see you without girls hanging all over you. You know they can’t replace me.” She rolls her eyes and laughs.

The sound makes me feel like lashing out.

Everything about her makes me pissed off at myself for stupidly getting involved with the band’s social media manager.

Mixing business with pleasure has been my worst mistake to date, especially while we were on tour.

I’ve now sworn off relationships. They only cause trouble.

I wanted to enjoy this tour, but recently, I’ve been spending all my free time avoiding Larissa.

Stella clears her throat and looks Larissa in the eye, “We’ve been discussing the state of affairs between you two, and Nolan and I have decided that it’s best we cut ties and that you move on.”

Watching Larissa intently, I can see her wheels turning, and I brace for her response.

“What does that mean, exactly?” she asks.

“Well, to be blunt, we’re letting you go. Effective immediately.” Straight and to the point, which is why I keep Stella in my inner circle.

Raising her voice and bringing the band’s attention to us, she squawks, “You can’t be serious.”

“We are quite serious,” Stella says.

“Nolan, we’re so good together. I’ve done a great job for you and the band, building your social media platforms, and I know our break is only temporary. You’ll regret this—I know you will. I’ve been nothing but loyal to you and the guys!”

Crossing my arms, I steel my resolve. “Larissa, I broke up with you. This is not a break, and having you on tour with us is no longer working. We’re through.”

“Nolan....” she whines, stomping her foot. “You’ll regret this. You’ll miss what we had when your skanks no longer hold your fleeting interest. I don’t understand why you can’t see that I’d make a great vampire and life partner for you! I gave you everything .”

Stella takes over. “It’s time to move on. Nolan has tried to make that clear to you, and you’ve refused to listen. He’s through with this fling, and the band no longer needs your services. You’ll be leaving the tour tonight.”

Fire blazes in Larissa’s eyes. “You and your stupid band will regret this. You’ll wish you’d stuck with me. I’ll make your lives a living hell! That’s my promise to you, Nolan. Your actions have left me no choice but to become your worst nightmare.”

The Alpha in me rises, preparing for war. Threatening an Alpha is unwise, and the fact that she threatened my friends makes me want to show her she’s no match for my anger. However, I hold back and smile at her, throwing her off.

“It was good while it lasted, Larissa. I’m sorry for giving you the impression that this thing between us would ever be more.

I don’t want to turn you and have a scion, let alone be with you for the rest of my life.

We shouldn’t have slept together. I see that now.

You can threaten me and my inner circle all you want, but it’s a waste of time. Move on. I already have.”

She glares at me and then at Stella, turns on her heels, and storms away in a flurry of anger and aggression. Security comes into the room and escorts her out.

I look over at the guys, and Rex smiles at me. “You dodged a bullet, my man. She is a clinger like nothing I have seen before.”

I can’t help but laugh, and the band goes back to their conversation.

“There, problem solved. You owe me—I just handled your mess,” Stella says.

“You’re so good to me. I appreciate you more than words can convey.” I hope she can hear the sincerity in my voice.

She pats my shoulder. “At least you’ve learned your lesson. Please be more discerning about where you put your dick. At least stick with less clingy humans. Or even better, Betas.”

“You read my mind,” I say, grinning at her back as she leaves the room, probably to make sure Larissa actually leaves the area.

My phone vibrates in my pocket, and the relief I was enjoying disappears when I

glance down and see my dad's name dance across the screen. I answer but cringe as I hold the phone to my ear.

“Hi, Son. You know you can call us. I feel like I’m always the one reaching out to you.” My dad’s warm voice rumbles in my ear.

He’s right. Even though he’s busy running House Stryker as Lord Stryker’s chief of staff, he always makes time for me.

“Sorry. You know how it is on tour.”

“Yeah, I know the nonsense that always comes from your mouth. Too busy for your family, but never for your fans and music.” His teasing tone stings.

I grimace. “That’s not true, and you know it. Besides, my music isn’t playing nice right now.”

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“Problems with the new album?” Concern laces his tone.

I move my jaw back and forth to unclench my teeth. “Yeah, you could say that. Nothing’s happening. No new lyrics or even full arrangements?. I fear my muse is gone.”

“Mmm, I see. Well, that would be stressful.”

“That’s an understatement. And I cut ties with Larissa, finally. We just let her go. It was pretty ugly.”

“You know what I think would help you?”

Looking up at the ceiling, I wince. My father’s suggestions are rarely helpful. “What’s that, Dad?”

“An Omega. If you had one in your life, she’d be a source of inspiration for you. Like a permanent muse.”

I release a heavy breath. My parents’ relationship is the stuff of legend—my Alpha father worships the ground that my petite Omega mother walks on. Their lives revolve around each other, and their love looks like it’s made of magic.

Do I want that for myself? A small part of me does.

A deeper connection with a vampire mate would be nice.

However, I don't want to lose control of my freedom.

I want to regain the status quo as it was before the bomb that was Larissa.

An Omega would consume every breath I take, and I'm not signing up for that.

Humans and Betas come with less baggage and—my ex aside—fewer strings.

Although, at times, despite myself, I can't help but feel like I'm missing out on something made only for me.

I shut that thought down hard. "You know how I feel about Omegas. They aren't for me."

"You'll be home soon. While you're here, you can visit the Sanctuary, see who's there. You never know—your Omega could be waiting for you to find her."

And this is why I've been avoiding my parents. They're constantly on me to visit the Sanctuary.

I don't even try to hold back my laughter. "I can't take a mate on the road with me. I barely survived Larissa. An Omega would get jealous of the groupies, and it wouldn't last. She'd also get bored quickly."

"That's not necessarily true. Your Omega mate might love being on the road with her Alpha. You need a mate, Nolan. Eternity is a long time to be alone."

"I'm hardly alone. If you were here a few minutes ago and saw the women lined up to be with the band, you wouldn't be talking the nonsense you are."

"If you knew what you were missing by refusing to claim an Omega for yourself,

you'd be kicking your own ass right now. Your mother and I want what we have for our only son. You deserve joy, connection, and love. There's nothing like bonding with your mate."

"So you've been telling me for years, Dad. I've heard it all before."

"Yeah, because you're a stubborn mule. You'd be an excellent mate for the right Omega, Nolan.

With your wealth and success, you could support a mate for the rest of eternity, and there's nothing like the pride of providing for your Omega.

Nothing makes me prouder than providing your mother with everything her heart desires.

In fact, right now, I'm about to pick up the donuts she's been craving. "

"That's good for you and Mom. It's just not for me."

He releases a heavy sigh into the phone.

"You aren't getting any younger. It hurts us to know what you're rejecting for yourself.

As an Alpha, you're ignoring your nature.

Alphas and Omegas were made for each other.

One can't flourish without the other. Every day, I hope that you'll uncloak one of your fans and she'll turn out to be your Omega, but it never happens. "

In his dreams, that's how my happy-ever-after unfolds, but for me, that would be hell.

I can't imagine uncloaking an Omega on the road.

I'd have to take her home to make the vow to Lord Stryker that she'll abide by the Covenant, and I can't just leave the tour.

And what if she's clingy, like Larissa? She'd probably expect me to claim her as my mate just because I uncloaked her, when any Alpha can uncloak any Omega.

It doesn't have anything to do with being right for each other.

"Dad, if the only reason you called is to get on me about being single, then it's a fruitless attempt. I don't want a mate or a relationship. I'm happy for you and Mom, but that's not for me. I'm sorry to disappoint you."

"Fine." I can tell by his silence it's not fine. "When can we expect you home?"

"After Vegas. The tour's almost finished, and then I'll be home. Please give Mom a big hug for me."

"Will do, and good luck finding your elusive muse. I hope she walks into your life and solves all your problems. And makes your head spin."

"Whatever you say."

He chuckles into the phone. "Alright. I'll see you soon. Love you."

"I love you too, Dad."

We hang up, and the heavy sensation in my body makes the surrounding noise

disappear.

I know he wants me to be happy, and he thinks that means claiming an Omega, but my dad is becoming more forceful in his approach.

I understand it's partly to do with him being an Alpha and used to getting what he wants, but what about what I want?

The Alpha in me will push back every time, especially now, after the issues with Larissa.

I need to focus on writing new material, not on a relationship.

This time, I hope my dad's wishes for me never come true.

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Ava

The smell of sugar and chocolate permeates the night air, contrasting with my mood.

After taking my colorful pictures for the night, I'm still down, feeling alone after recently losing both of my elderly parents, my mother to pneumonia, and my father a month later to a broken heart. His doctor called it Widowhood.

Lately, I've found myself longing for a relationship with the kind of deep love and affection my parents had.

My life became even more dull when my best friend moved away from San Diego, but there's hope and light at the end of the tunnel. Sticky sweet warm hope. Midnight Donuts is my lifeline, and I'm here to feature their wares to my followers.

The tall giant of a man in front of me clears his throat, and I'm about to ask him if he's willing to be interviewed for my post on Midnight Donut's feed.

This job doesn't allow for shyness. To receive my end of the deal—fresh donuts anytime I want—I need to keep their social media presence popular and growing.

Casting aside my apathy, I reach out and tap his shoulder. "Excuse me, sir. Have you tried the donuts here before?"

He turns and smiles at me, and I get a good look at the white, very pointy fangs resting on his lower lip.

Oh, my God! This is the first time I've met an actual vampire.

I mean, sure, I'm low-key obsessed with vampires, but I've never actually spoken to one before.

They keep to themselves for the most part.

In San Diego, people don't know a whole lot about them—only what their PR firms allow us to know.

My shock has sucked all the oxygen from my lungs. Deep breaths, Ava, deep breaths.

“Well, hello. No, I can't say I've ever had them before.

I'm getting them for my wife. She has a bit of a sweet tooth.

” He stares at me, and I can't help but feel self-conscious.

I mean, this man is wearing dress slacks and a button-up shirt, rolled at the sleeves.

He looks like he just stepped off a runway, or he's just come from a late-night business meeting.

His brown hair is pulled back in a man bun, and his full beard makes him look rather bohemian.

I snap out of my stupor. “Oh, you can eat food too? I thought vampires only drank blood. You learn something new every day. Your wife is in for a real treat! These are the best donuts in the city. You should have one, too.”

“I'll have to try one, now that I've heard the rave review.” He nods at me, and I rack

my brain for more to say. I'm dying to know more about vampires.

He runs a hand over his face, and I notice his eyes. I startle. They're almost otherworldly, like glowing rubies. "Um, sir. Has anyone ever told you that your eyes glow a deep red?"

"Please, call me Marcello. And my eyes are red only because I'm in the vicinity of an Omega. They're usually a boring brown color."

His thoughtful expression makes me curious. "Well, Marcello, I have no idea what an Omega is." I chuckle. "I'm Ava."

"Lovely to meet you, Ava." He pauses. " You are an Omega. Your eyes have changed color, too. Right now, they're silver, in fact, because you are in the presence of an Alpha. Me."

I frown. How can I be an Omega? I'm a human. "Okay...Is that one of the vampire things we lowly humans don't know about? I've never met a vampire before. I've just seen them on Instagram, but they—I mean you, your kind anyway—are fascinating." Stupid mouth, stop babbling.

"Fascinating? Interesting." He glances at the line in front of him, then lowers his voice.

"Being uncloaked as an Omega makes your eyes a shiny silver, and it's one of the signs that you're a compatible mate for an Alpha vampire.

All Alphas and Omegas can see each other's inner lights through our eyes. "

" Me ? A mate for a vampire?"

He looks around again, but no one's paying us any attention. "Yes. For an Alpha vampire, to be specific. Does that alarm you? You seem to be taking this news rather well."

If by "rather well" he means the world is shifting under my feet? Sure. "I mean, I'm processing it, is all. I didn't know vampires had mates, let alone that I might be one." Now I'm laughing at the situation. "A mate is like a wife, right?"

"In a way. To us—my kind—a mate is more than just a wife." He watches me closely, as if I'm a skittish animal.

"So, your wife who wants donuts is your Omega mate? Should you be telling me this?" Please, Ava, snap out of it and start asking important questions. He doesn't owe you his life story!

"Yes, my wife is my Omega." His entire face lights up, I want a man to look like that when he thinks of me. "Tell me, Ava, what do you do for a living?"

"Umm, well, I'm a social media influencer—a donut influencer.

"I wave my phone and realize I forgot to hit record on any of this, my task forgotten with this bizarre news.

Some influencer. "I'm a bit famous—I have five hundred thousand followers, and the number is growing daily.

I'm here working for Midnight Donuts, actually.

I was going to ask your permission to interview you for a post." Stop it, mouth, stop it.

I bounce on my heels, trying to feel the ground beneath my feet, solid and immovable. Real. This is nuts.

“A donut influencer.” He grins down at me, “Hence the rave review of Midnight Donuts. You are a breath of fresh air, Miss Ava. You’re a modern influencer who looks like a 1950s secretary, with your high ponytail and vintage glasses.”

I swallow and try to process this news, compliments aside. Apparently, I’m the future mate of a real, actual vampire. “Marcello...What now? Now that I know of my Omega status, I mean. I thought I was human.”

“Well, that’s a little complicated, actually.” He clears his throat and moves forward with the line, still looking around a bit furtively.

“Complicated.” I take a deep, calming breath. Of course, it’s complicated. You’re a potential mate to a vampire. Breathe, Ava. No big deal, right? You’re just no longer a regular human. How did you not know this?

“Well, it doesn’t have to be. The usual first step would be for you to come to my vampire house, House Stryker. You would meet my lord, Kestrel Stryker, make a vow to Lord Stryker in exchange for his protection, and then live in luxury in our Omega sanctuary until you meet your Alpha mate.”

Wait, wait, wait. I would go with him to meet his lord?

An actual vampire lord? I can’t believe this is happening to me.

Living in luxury, whatever that means to a vampire, would surely beat staying in my small, run-down, and now lonely family home, with its aging roof and never-ending list of repairs, all of which cost more than I’m making now. “Is Lord Stryker vampire royalty?”

“A bit like that, yes. He’s our leader, and a very good man.” He studies me for a moment. “Tell me something. What do you love about being an influencer, Ava?”

That’s easy. “The community. In some ways, my followers are like an extended family. We share a passion for donuts, and the social nature of being an influencer suits me. I’m able to show them my love for donuts and meet other passionate people who share my love of sugar. I would never have met them otherwise.”

“You must be quite creative, to have built such a popular Instagram feed.” He studies me again, and I start to fidget. What is he looking for? “Does your popularity ever make you uncomfortable?”

“No, not really. I see my followers as friends. Some of them have become really special to me.”

Marcello glances over my shoulder and then down at his loafers.

He meets my gaze. “Well, Ava. An Omega is supposed to be brought to live in an Omega sanctuary until she meets her future mate, but I have a proposition for you. I want you to meet my son instead and consider working for him. I think you would hit it off, and with your job, I imagine that you already understand some of the nuances of fame. You may have heard of him, and he’s in need of someone with your skills.”

I stare at him, confused. “You think I would know of your son? That’s not likely. You’re the first and only vampire I’ve ever met.”

He smirks. “My son is Nolan Szasz.”

Oh, my God! I must be living in an alternate universe. He can’t be for real.

“Your son...is Nolan Szasz. The lead singer of Death by Dawn. You must be joking.”

I try to close my mouth—by now, my jaw has got to be grazing the ground. Their latest and greatest hit, “Cold Dead Heart” has been playing all over the internet.

“I’m quite serious, actually. It just so happens that Death by Dawn needs a new social media manager.

And while we’ve just met, I have a strong sense that you’re the right person for the job.

” He laughs at my expression, then turns to the counter to order his donuts.

Donuts for his Omega. Nolan Szasz’s mom. What the hell?

I pull out my phone, needing a distraction while my world spins off its axis. I’ve gained four new followers and have fifteen new comments on my latest post, but I don’t care about that right now.

Catching my reflection on the screen, I realize that my eyes really are shining silver.

Before I realize what I’m doing, my thumbs type Nolan Szasz.

Death by Dawn has fifteen million followers.

Fifteen million! I can’t even relate to that.

Marcello wants me to meet his famous rock star son—the most famous vampire in the world.

I see the resemblance between father and son.

Clearly, Marcello is telling the truth, and something in the pit of my stomach—a

knowing feeling—tells me I can trust him at his word. There is nothing insincere about him.

When I woke up this morning feeling down about my life, I had no idea this was coming, not at all. People's lives don't change like this in real life, only in movies.

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Maybe a vampire husband is what I've been missing in my life. I've always wanted a partner who makes butterflies swirl in my stomach. Someone who wants me for me, deeper than a surface-level attraction. My father loved my mother so much he couldn't live without her; I want that in my life, too.

I trace Nolan Szasz's selfie with my thumb. He looks a lot like Marcello. His wavy shoulder-length hair is the color of a chai tea latte—my favorite—and his brown eyes look like cinnamon. His caramel complexion suits him. There's no denying that Nolan Szasz is gorgeous.

I would be stupid not to jump at this opportunity.

Going on the road with the band might be the kind of adventure I need in my life.

There's nothing keeping me here, no family, no close friends, only donuts and loneliness and a sea of followers whom I can chat with from anywhere.

And at least I would have a job I would excel at.

What would being around a vampire be like? I mean, Marcello seems nice and friendly. He's getting his Omega donuts, for God's sake. The best donuts in San Diego County. I can hope Nolan Szasz is as nice as his dad.

I can't believe this is my actual life.

Marcello leaves the window with his pink box of goodness and waits to one side for me to order. "Hi, Ava! What can I get for you tonight?" Vinny, the cashier, says.

“Six cinnamon sugar croissant donuts and six chocolate donuts with rainbow sprinkles. For my bonus, I’ll have a raspberry cream with powdered sugar.” I think I sound a bit stunned, but Vinny doesn’t seem to notice.

“Sure. Any coffee?”

“A lavender chai tea latte, please.” Chai tea, like Nolan Szasz’s stunning hair.

Marcello reaches over me and puts his card down to pay for my donuts. Hesitating, I look at him, and his warm smile wipes away any objections to his chivalry. “Thank you for the offer, Marcello, but I get free donuts as part of my gig.”

“Oh, don’t mention it. It’s my pleasure.” He smiles. “I’m sure you have many questions. Nolan can help you transition to your life as an Omega and teach you about becoming a vampire. But is there more you’d like to ask me now?”

I’m staring at him again. “I’m sorry, I missed a step—I’m becoming a vampire? Do Omegas become vampires?”

“Omega mates get turned into vampires, yes,” he confirms, and I remind myself to breathe.

I’ve always loved the idea of vampires, and part of me is thrilled that my dull, depressing life has changed.

If I accept this job, I’ll get to meet Nolan Szasz and a vampire lord.

Someday, I’ll marry a vampire—and be one.

This can’t be a bad thing, right? I’m an Omega—technically, this was always meant to happen.

Vinny hands me my box of donuts and the chai tea, and I follow Marcello to a bench and sit down with him.

Marcello glances at my phone and laughs. “You checked out Nolan’s Instagram profile?”

“Yeah, I needed a distraction,” I say, looking up at the moon. The air is mild, and the stars are bright. “This is a lot to take in.”

“This is the way of things. Uncloaking around an Alpha happens to all Omegas. I know my mate, Gianna, would happily answer any of your questions too.”

“That’s helpful, thank you.” I sip my drink and organize my thoughts. “Why wouldn’t my parents have known I’m an Omega?”

“The Omega gene is recessive and skips generations, and your most recent ancestors most likely were never in close enough proximity to an Alpha vampire to be uncloaked. Odds are that neither of your parents expressed the gene. Many Omegas slip through the cracks undetected.”

“This is all so wild. I can barely get my head around it all.” Marcello smiles at me reassuringly. “So, if I accept this position, what are the next steps?”

“I will put you on a private jet tomorrow so you can join the band on the last leg of their tour.”

And again, I’m gaping at him like a fish. “I’m sorry, what? You want to put me on a plane tomorrow ?”

“Yes, I do. They need a new social media manager, and you are just the person for the role. I think you and Nolan will hit it off well. You’re outgoing and understand

how to deal with the public, enough to survive the fame that follows my son.

Plus, he can help you learn the ins and outs of being a new Omega.

Technically, I should be bringing you to our sanctuary tonight, to keep you safe from other vampire houses and away from unaligned Alphas.

I'll admit I'm slightly bending the rules here, and even with my position in House Stryker, I can get away with only so much.

Alphas in House Stryker will be dying to meet you as soon as they learn of your existence.

But I believe my son needs you more, and he will keep you safe. ”

“Your rock star son needs me?”

“Yes. Beyond the band’s need for a social media manager, his creativity is stifled, and I think you’ll help him find his spark again.

You’re unlike other Omegas, Ava—you’re taking all of this very well.

He can help you, and you can help him. Now that your Omega nature has been uncloaked, things will change for you.

As an Alpha, Nolan can guide you through these changes. ”

Marcello takes out his phone and begins texting.

He looks up again. “Well, good. This makes things easy—Stella, my son’s band manager, is also one of our kind, and she says she would love to have you, if you

want the position. What do you think?"

"Looks like this lonely girl won't be so alone anymore," I say, chuckling, thinking about all the reasons that this could be a bad idea. But mostly, I'm excited. I'll get to meet more vampires, learn about my new nature, and get a break from the monotony of my life.

Marcello regards me. "I'm sorry you were ever lonely, Ava.

I'm glad we met tonight. You are quite the quirky girl.

The first donut influencer I've ever met.

" He winks at me. I know you'll hit it off with Nolan and the rest of his band.

And when you get back into town, you can meet my mate, and we'll introduce you to Lord Stryker.

You can also move into the sanctuary with the other Omegas.

It's a great place. How does that sound? "

Smiling, I take a sip of my latte. The spicy flavor bursts on my tongue, and I feel a sense of rightness.

"I say...yes. To all of it. I would love to meet your mate and hear what she thought of the donuts." I'm stepping into an unknown world.

A world of vampires and their mates. Royal houses and rock stars. This can't be my life.

Marcello grins, “I’ll need you to pack tonight and tie up any loose ends tomorrow. You’ll find yourself in LA, and then Las Vegas. It should be an adventure.”

Taking another deep breath, I inhale the cool night air. Although Marcello Szasz is a stranger, I see the sincerity in his eyes. He loves and trusts his family and is confident they’ll help me and that I’m what Death by Dawn needs.

Let’s just hope Nolan agrees.

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Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 3:22 pm

Nolan

Stepping off the stage, I take the in-ear monitor out, and it takes a while to adjust to the quiet surrounding us. Rehearsal and sound check for our last show in LA before heading to Vegas has gone by quickly.

My phone rings in my jacket, draped on the couch. The guys sit down on the sofas and chairs in the wings, relaxing after hours of practice. Stella should be back with our food soon.

Grabbing my phone, I glance at the screen and see my dad's smirking face. A video call. Just great. Swiping my finger across the screen, I accept the call. His eyes are alight with happiness, and it makes me smile. His good moods are infectious. That's probably where I get my charm from.

"Hi, Dad. Can't get enough of me?"

"Am I interrupting something?"

"No, we're taking a break from sound check for lunch."

"Perfect timing." He chuckles with a suspicious grin. "Listen, I have a surprise for you."

Great. I hate surprises, much to the dismay of my parents, who loved nothing more than surprising me at every turn during my childhood. "What do I have to look forward to this time?"

“Well....” He pauses and runs his fingers through his hair, pushing it back from his face.

“I found you a new social media manager. Stella picked her up from the airport, and they should arrive any minute.” He looks at me as if assessing my mood.

“She’s different. Very different. Nolan, be kind to her. ”

My mind blanks for a second, and I stare at my father on the screen, trying to process that he’s flown a new social media manager here to join our tour. “Why wouldn’t I be nice to her? She’s here to do a job. What aren’t you telling me?” He meddles often.

“You’ll see when you meet her. She’ll be great. She’s already an influencer with a lot of experience building a platform.”

“Okay. That doesn’t sound bad. It’s great that we can replace Larissa so soon. Maybe she’ll stop flooding our comments with her spiteful hate.”

My dad’s facial expression changes to one of an Alpha predator, no longer the warm, inviting man. “Is she threatening you guys?”

“Yeah, a little. I thought firing her would get rid of her. Only now she has a new mission, to tell everyone who’ll listen about how I wronged her.” Brushing my hair out of my eyes, I sigh heavily.

Rex and Torin glance at me, and I see concern in their eyes.

“She’ll move on eventually. You can’t hold her interest forever.”

“God, I hope you’re right. She’s becoming a real pain. I just want to move on with my life.”

“You will. I know you will. Maybe the new social media manager will help.” A devilish smirk lights up his face, and I can’t repress my urge to smile.

“Yeah, maybe.”

“Listen, I’ve gotta go. I just called to give you a heads up.”

“Thanks, Dad. It’s one less thing I need to worry about. I appreciate it.”

“Don’t mention it. Say hello to everyone for me.”

“Will do. Love you.”

“Love you too. Bye.”

Looking at Rex, I lift my chin, soundlessly telling him to get his ass over here so I can feed. I can enjoy the food humans eat, but I also need regular feedings of human blood to survive. My drummer is my human contributor while I’m on tour, an agreement that benefits us both.

Drinking a human’s blood can be a sensual affair, but it’s not with Rex.

Sure, I could feed from a groupie, but that might cause problems. Feeding from a human gives them the orgasm of their lives, and once they experience it, the sensual haze is something most humans want more of.

I don’t want to give a groupie another reason to hang around.

Rex is down to earth and doesn’t use me like others might.

He and I have done this routine so often that he and his girlfriend Lucy use my need

for blood to their advantage, their own never-ending aphrodisiac.

Because of this perk, his girlfriend is all for me feeding off her man.

She knows our relationship is purely platonic.

“Hey man, hungry?” Rex asks, standing over me. His shaggy brown hair hangs in his eyes, and he’s still sweaty from rehearsing.

“Yeah, Rex, let’s do this. I’m starving.” Scooting back on the couch, I make space for him to sit between my legs so I can get to his neck.

Feeding with him facing me would be too intimate.

The only contributor I’d ever face would be an Omega, and that will never happen.

An Alpha’s relationship with an Omega is sacrosanct.

Apart from my mother, I can’t stand being around Omegas.

The allure and power an Omega holds over an unmated Alpha makes me agitated and uneasy.

Rex sits down and tilts his neck, getting into position.

As soon as he presents his throat for me submissively, the need to dominate and feed is awakened, and my fangs descend and ache for blood.

Without hesitation, I bite down and hit the vein with precision.

His blood coats my lips and teeth, and I work my tongue against his skin to coax the

warm liquid into my mouth, gulping down his offering, filling my belly with as much as possible.

The more heavily I feed now, the longer it will sustain me.

As a younger vampire, I need more blood than my elders or my lord.

Lord Stryker rules our house, and he's so old that he hardly needs to feed anymore.

Draining other Alpha vampires of their blood makes the leaders of the vampire houses the strongest of our kind.

Lord Stryker is still not mated. I'm not sure why, but I know he's looking forward to the day when he can feed from his Omega mate.

He needs to meet her first, court her, and, if he's lucky, win the Omega's heart, just like the rest of the Alphas in his house.

"Man, I'm homesick. I'm ready for a break."

I pull away from Rex and watch his crimson blood drip down his throat to his shirt. I feel bad about his shirt, but it's his fault for talking while I'm feeding. "Yeah, me too. We'll be home soon. Only a few more shows."

He nods, and I latch onto his throat again.

His body tenses, telling me that I've almost reached his limit.

Humans can give only so much before they cum all over themselves.

The release of oxytocin in their bloodstream makes human blood taste sweeter.

Contributors could die if a vampire drains them, but gorging and death are punishable offenses.

“Speaking of home, you should call your mom, man. She’s been commenting on all my posts, telling me to harass you into calling her.” He chuckles, and the movement makes my fangs slip deeper into his flesh.

He’s right. I need to stop avoiding my mom; it’s just that my parents are constantly on me to visit the sanctuary and meet an Omega. If I wanted an Omega mate, I would do that, but courting a promised Omega seems like too much effort. Everything to do with an Omega seems like too much effort.

Rex’s body seizes, breaking my reverie. “God, so good, fuck, man. That shit never gets old,” Rex says shakily through his release.

I take one last pull, his sweet blood filling my mouth, and then I swipe my tongue across the puncture holes, closing and healing his skin.

This feeding will keep me satiated and calm for the rest of the day.

When I tap Rex on the shoulder, he stands and leaves to clean up and change his pants.

He’ll probably fuck his girl into oblivion. A by-product of a vampire bite.

I look at Torin as he stares across the arena floor. “Stella just got here with our lunch and the tiniest girl I have ever seen.”

Leaning forward, I watch Stella and the new social media manager walk across the vast empty arena. I can’t see the girl’s features from this distance. She’s so petite that she makes Stella look like a giant. To say I’m not curious would be a lie; she has my

attention.

I watch intently as Stella and the stranger come closer.

I can hear them talking to each other, but I can't hear what they're saying.

Both women wear smiles, and it seems they're getting along, a good sign.

Over the years of being our manager, Stella has honed her bullshit filter to be the best in the business.

If anyone can sniff out someone's ill intentions, it's Stella.

They fall out of view as they walk up the steps, and I find my body tensing, bracing for the woman's presence. I've never had a problem being around women, but Larissa did a number on me.

Stella and the woman finally come through the curtains, and I take a deep breath to force my muscles to release the built-up tension.

I'm experiencing a sensation similar to stage fright, which I haven't felt in years.

What am I even stressing about? Just because she'll be on tour with us doesn't mean she'll be like Larissa. We probably won't even interact much.

"Hi, guys. Lunch has arrived, and there's someone I want you to meet." Stella waves a hand. "This is Ava. Ava, these are the guys."

"Umm, hi. It's so nice to meet you," Ava says.

Her eyes flash, and shiny silver pools meet mine. Chills run up my spine when I

realize she isn't just our new social media manager. She's an Omega. My dad sent an Omega to join us on tour. His meddling knows no bounds.

I tense, and it takes everything in me not to glare at her.

The Omega's voice is sweet and alluring. Great, just what I need.

"Ian, our bassist. Eli, our guitarist, and Torin, our keyboardist," Stella says, and the guys all greet Ava with their waves and grunts. "Rex, our drummer, isn't here, but you'll meet him soon. And you know Nolan."

She knows who I am? Is she another groupie?

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Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 3:22 pm

When I look her over, the tension in my body evaporates, and I breathe a little easier.

She's a petite girl who looks like she stepped out of a 1950s sitcom.

Just my type. Her lime green cardigan is paired with a fluffy cream skirt, and her sparkling silver eyes are framed with tortoiseshell glasses.

Her natural red hair is pulled into a ponytail that bounces behind her in one elegant curl, tied with a pink polka dot scarf.

Cream and white low heels complete the look.

To say that this girl has a distinct style would be an understatement.

Her fair skin looks rosy and healthy, and her lips are a shade darker, like they're berry stained.

Her smile is radiant and warm. She's gorgeous in an unassuming—and dare I say pleasant—way.

It changes nothing, though; she's still an Omega. Her eyes shine and shimmer silver when she stands in my proximity, telling me what I already know. My father set me up. She may look like an ordinary girl, a human, but she's far more than that, and now she's on my tour.

Ava approaches me and holds out her small hand, fingers tipped with a flawless French manicure. "Hi. Ava Keats. It's so nice to meet you."

Not wanting to be rude, I take her tiny hand and notice my large one engulfs hers. I swear I feel tingles, and the hairs on my arm rise as we shake. What magic is this girl casting over me?

I school my features and tap into my rock star vibe, turning on the charm. “Nice to meet you, Ava. My father spoke highly of you.” Smiling at her, I notice her eyes shift, and I glimpse their true color for a split second, a beautiful sunburst hazel with gradients of forest green and gold.

“Oh, your dad is great!” she says, and I feel her trembling a little.

“Yeah, he is.” Unless he’s hand delivering a tiny little Omega to me and playing matchmaker from hell.

“Is all of Death by Dawn vampires, or is it just you? Not to say that it would be bad, it’s just that your dad is the first real vampire I’ve had the pleasure of meeting. Oh! I’m kinda rambling, aren’t I? Stop it, Ava!”

I clear my throat and release her hand. This girl is strange and fascinating. “Well, I hope this doesn’t disappoint you, but I’m the only vampire in the band. Do you always chastise yourself?”

She giggles, and it sounds almost like small tinkling bells, “Oh God, no, only when I’m nervous.”

“Do I make you nervous?” I hope I make her nervous; then, we’ll be on even footing. Being this close to her makes me feel uncertain, like I don’t know what to expect, my Alpha tendencies clawing at me and begging me to do something stupid...like claim her.

She swallows and takes me in from head to toe, then keeps babbling. “Well, I mean,

yeah, you make me nervous. You're huge. What did they feed you as a kid? Growth hormone? Or blood? Oh, we just brought you food, didn't we? I didn't mean to keep you from your lunch!"

I turn and grab my lunch from Stella, who winks at me, eyes filled with mirth. When I straighten to my full height, I can't help but notice how small Ava is, even for an Omega.

Her babbling is funny. I'm used to women being nervous around me, but the way Ava's words fly out of her mouth makes me smile. I find that I'm curious, wondering what she'll say next. My eyes want to track her every move, and I realize I'm enjoying having her undivided attention.

I need to find a reason to hate her and fast, but I have nothing so far.

I answer one of her questions. "Just blood. You know, because I'm a vampire." I grin, flashing her my fangs.

"Of course." She rolls her eyes, and the Alpha in me stands at attention, wanting to reprimand her for not looking at me briefly. This girl is shockingly holding my attention and focus, which scares me. It must be our Alpha-Omega biology. It can't be anything else.

I sit on the couch and open my lunch. I can't help but wonder if she's eaten yet, and that's when I know that my biology is riding me hard. The Alpha in me needs to ensure that the pretty little Omega has what she needs.

"Have you eaten, Ava?" I look at her and watch as she processes my question.

"Oh, me? Yeah, I ate on the plane. Well, I guess it wasn't just a simple plane. Flying in a private jet was insane. Talk about luxury."

She sits down next to me, and I breathe a sigh of relief. I didn't want her sitting beside Ian or Torin, which is weird. I usually couldn't care less where anyone sits.

Chuckling at her continued babbling, I say, "Yeah, private jets are nice. You'll get used to it. Lord Stryker and those in his house are very wealthy."

"I'm not sure I'll ever get used to it. My parents had me late in life and didn't travel, and we didn't come from money. Not the kind where we rode in private jets, anyway."

Her not coming from money isn't surprising. I can spot that kind of posh superiority from a mile away. "When you go to House Stryker and promise yourself to the house, you'll be surrounded by luxury. The palace is really fancy," I say.

"It really is a palace," Rex says, coming back to the stage in a new shirt and pants. "Lord Stryker had it moved from Prague and rebuilt in San Diego. How nuts is that?"

Stella quickly makes the introductions, and Rex grabs his food and takes a seat nearby.

Ava looks down. "I figure being an immortal vampire does wonders for the bank balance."

"One of many perks," I say, and take a bite of my lunch.

"I hope you can fill me in on the rest of the perks, because when I woke up yesterday, I had no idea that I was anything but human. To say my life changed after meeting your father is putting it mildly."

"Yeah, that would be intense," Rex pipes back up. "When I learned about vampires, after meeting Nolan, I was like, 'Oh, vampires are chill, man.'"

“We’re just people, Rex,” I say, grinning at him.

“Yeah, true, man, true.”

I’m leaning toward Ava again, and I give a start. I didn’t even realize I’d shifted closer to her. My biology makes being around an Omega unpredictable and intense. It’s part of why I avoid them with everything in me. The lack of control makes me feel uneasy, and I hate it with all my being.

I’m starting to worry about my dad’s mental state, sending a newly uncloaked Omega here.

Going against Lord Stryker—his boss—could be hazardous to his health and life.

At a minimum, he could be banished from House Stryker.

He could lose everything—his position as Lord Stryker’s chief of staff, even the security of my parents’ suite in the palace.

I need to call him. Sending Ava here was a mistake. She shouldn’t be on tour with us. She should be in San Diego, at the Omega Sanctuary.

Nodding at Stella, I step away from everyone and call my dad, needing to figure this out. He answers the video call on the second ring and clears his throat, and I see defiance in his eyes.

Marcello Szasz is never defiant. He’s always calculated, to a fault.

“What were you thinking, Dad? Does Lord Stryker know? Tell me he knows.”

“Well....” He glances behind him as if someone might overhear.

“She’s not yet known to Lord Stryker. She’ll be promised to House Stryker once you return from tour.

It’s only a few extra days. You’ll need to protect her and teach her what she needs to know.

I’m sure I don’t need to stress the importance of that.

But listen, she’s great! You’ll like her, trust me, and you guys need her more than she needs to be sequestered away immediately.

She’s creative and good at her job, and hiring her takes care of this nasty Larissa business in two ways. ”

I stare at him. “Dad, this is such a bad idea. I’m focused on the end of the tour—I don’t need another woman hanging around. We have plenty of those.”

He looks at me sternly. “You will teach her everything she needs to know about Alphas. You can give her a perspective that the sanctuary can’t. She also needs to learn about Omegas and becoming a vampire.”

“I’m not a preschool teacher, and I don’t know many Omegas apart from Mom. I’m a busy musician.”

“Ava is unlike other Omegas. She was barely phased when she learned about her Omega status, and she’s famous in her own right as an influencer.

Your fame is a nonissue for her. Plus, when she told me what she did for a living, I would have been stupid to let this opportunity pass.

I wouldn’t have sent her to you if she wasn’t special.

If it doesn't work out, and I'm wrong, she'll return to San Diego and join the rest of the Omegas in the sanctuary sooner, but I don't see that happening. She's very much her own person."

"Well, there's nothing I can do about it now, thanks for that. I guess it's only for a few shows. But I'm not happy about this."

I guess rebelliousness runs in the family. It shouldn't surprise me that my dad always seems to get away with things when it comes to Lord Stryker. That uncanny ability just might need to save us both in this situation.

"I know." He smirks. "Just help her by answering her questions. Omegas aren't bad, Nolan."

"Sure, Dad, whatever you say. I gotta go."

I can't believe he put me in this position. If anything happens to this Omega—Ava—both my dad and I will be in some serious shit. Thankfully, it's only for a few nights—a little more than a week in all.

"Okay, Nolan. Call me in a few days and let me know how it's going. I trust that the two of you will get along. She's a sweet girl. I've never met someone quite like her—Ava will fit in well with the band. Your mom and I are looking forward to having you home again. We miss you. Love you."

"Love you too, Dad. See you soon."

He disconnects the call, and I'm unsure how to feel about all of this.

An Omega has been thrust into my life against my will. Ava can't be all that special. Where did my dad even meet her?

I lean against a wall and stare out onto the stage, lost in my thoughts. This is going to end horribly. Ava will be a pain in my side, and now, this tour can't end soon enough. We head to Vegas tonight after the show, and I dread being stuck on my bus with her, an absolute stranger.

I know what he's trying to do. He wants me to fall for her. I'll tell her what she needs to know, but after the tour is through, it's straight to Lord Stryker and the sanctuary for her. I need to offload her as quickly as possible, for all our sakes.

As I go back to the group, Ian and Torin are talking about the set list, and Rex laughs at their bickering, but I'm checked out.

I should be pissed at my dad, but I can't be.

He's wanted me to meet the Omega who would make him a grandfather ever since I was born.

My father has always been a hopeless romantic.

The only person worse than him is my mother.

Ava is probably a master manipulator and gave Dad the wrong impression.

Sending her here out of the blue to work for us is crazy, even for him.

I sit down beside Ava again, studying her. "How much has my dad told you?"

Those damn hazel eyes flash to silver, and I try not to be mesmerized. "Not much. We just met last night."

"And then you just...packed up your things and got on a stranger's jet?" With this

girl's lack of judgment about her own safety, I need to teach her more than just about being an Omega and becoming a vampire. The Alpha in me wants to punish her for putting herself at risk.

She must hear something in my tone because she frowns. "Yeah, I guess it was kind of sudden, but your dad was so kind, and I'm an excellent judge of character."

I can't help but disagree with her assessment. If she'd known my father was sending her here to become my eternal life mate, would she have hopped on the plane then?

Who am I kidding? If she's anything like the thousands of groupies I've met during my career, she would have jumped on that plane to meet me, the famous Nolan Szasz. Maybe she did .

Maybe I need to keep my guard up, for both our sakes.

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Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 3:22 pm

Ava

The screaming, cheering crowd is electrifying, like endless waves crashing into the shore. The guys step on stage and pick up their instruments, and the blinding stage lights burst on and illuminate Death by Dawn.

I've been to concerts before but have never watched from backstage in the wings. I can see and feel everything. With the roadies and production crew bustling by and with Stella beside me, I feel like I'm part of the in-crowd.

Nolan introduces the band, and they begin the first song.

Nolan's voice is deep and smooth like velvet and has me hanging on every word.

The men respond with bellowing roars and the women scream even louder.

I wonder how Nolan feels about his fame.

Does he like the attention, or does he loathe it?

I'm not sure which option I would feel if I were him.

Just yesterday, I had no idea this would be in my future.

It's better than front-row seats to the hottest show in the country, maybe even the world.

Yesterday, I struggled with loneliness, and today I'm surrounded by a rock band and all their adoring fans at their last show in LA before departing for Las Vegas.

As the band's first song builds in speed and intensity, the audience erupts in another flurry of sound. I look into the crowd.

From the wings, the sound of the crowd is almost abrasive to my ears, but I wouldn't miss this experience for the world.

These people paid a lot to be here, and I have access for free.

I wonder how many women are here hoping to gain Nolan's attention.

His natural charm is off the charts. He doesn't need to try; his charisma is like a second skin.

I wonder if I'll have the same allure and effortless attractiveness once I'm a vampire.

Will I enjoy the attention? I'm not sure.

Until now, I've been a pretty uninteresting girl, and now my future is going to be all about Alphas, blood, and mating.

I squirm a little at that thought. I've hooked up with only one guy in my life, when I was eighteen, and it wasn't memorable; in fact, it was quite the opposite.

Lame, quick, and undesirable. I suspect being with a vampire will be different.

What about my life outside of House Stryker?

Stella and Nolan have careers. I wonder what the rules are about outside interests. I

hope the same can be said for me.

It's a lot to take in, but I can't change it.

I know it's just a matter of time before I'm thrust into vampire society more actively.

I need to learn everything I can, and quickly.

The things I knew about vampires before my uncloaking were clearly surface level, and only what the vampires allow humans to know about their world.

I can already see the unending attention Nolan garners.

He's the kind of attractive that makes you want to drop everything and just stare for hours.

He's even more handsome in person than in the media and on his Instagram posts.

His eyes looked like tempered chocolate, until he looked at me, and then they shone red like rubies or the freshest strawberries.

His light chestnut-colored hair falls in waves, and his sense of fashion seems relaxed and effortless, making me wonder if he really doesn't try to come off as sexy.

He was voted sexiest man alive last year, which I find funny—I don't think he cares much about it.

At least, that's the vibe I got from him when we were getting to know each other earlier.

Being around an artist feels like peering into a mysterious hidden room.

Hearing Nolan and Rex talk about their music was thrilling.

Being around the band will have a positive impact on my personal feed as well as theirs.

I'm inspired to show more depth and creativity in Death by Dawn's posts.

The feed is well established and popular, but I see a focus mainly on Nolan, and mainly on his looks rather than talent, and I know their fans would love to have a deeper connection with the entire band.

I can already tell they're like a tight family unit, looking out for each other.

Only a foot away, Stella shouts to me, and I can barely hear her voice over the melody and harmony that Nolan and Ian are singing. "How do you like the show so far? They're good, right?"

Nodding, I agree with her; they are good. I can see why they're so popular. Their live show differs from the recorded tracks playing on streaming services. "They're killer! Seeing them play live is soul-stirring." I feel like I need to pinch myself to prove this is real.

Stella smiles. "Are you having a good time? I know the last twenty-four hours have been a little insane. Most newly uncloaked Omegas would be more stressed out than you are," she says with a hint of concern.

I sense that she's trying to get a read on me. I'm glad she's been so welcoming and genuine. She could have treated me with suspicion, but she's been the opposite. It makes this situation so much easier to navigate.

"Yeah, it's been wild. I'm having fun. I just have so many questions, you know?"

“Yeah, I bet. Feel free to ask me anything—like Nolan, I’ll try to help when possible. House Stryker is one of the best vampire houses in the United States.”

The next song is slower and quieter, a ballad, making it easier to hear each other. “You’re part of House Stryker? I noticed the fangs, but I didn’t want to assume.”

“Yeah, I’m a Beta pledged to Lord Stryker and the Szasz household.”

“Excuse my asking, but what’s the difference between an Alpha and a Beta?”

“Don’t ever feel bad about asking me anything.

You need to learn this somehow.” She holds my stare.

“Alphas are at the top of the hierarchy and mate and turn Omegas. They have responsibilities for the rest of us. Betas are below them in our social hierarchy—we’re your normal, everyday vampires.

There are more Betas than Alphas. Your kind, Omegas, are on the rare side.

That’s why vampire houses promise to protect you from Alphas who might mean to do you harm. ”

“Why would Alphas harm Omegas? Should I be worried about this?”

“Alphas can get territorial and aggressive when they’re challenged by another house. Omegas are a prize that most Alphas desire, and if an Omega is caught between two opposing Alphas, they can be harmed in the process. Vampire houses are competitive and so are their Alphas, some more than others.”

“Nolan and his dad seem normal.”

“Yeah, they’re great, but if you were promised to Nolan as the Omega he’s courting and another Alpha tried to gain your attention and interest, Nolan would feel challenged. Even though he is low-key, all Alphas become territorial and protective around their mates.”

“Are Betas ever bonded with Omegas?”

“No, never. Alphas can only produce offspring with Omegas, and your biology pulls you toward Alphas, not Betas. A Beta is bonded to an Omega only if there’s also an Alpha in the relationship. Betas bond with Alphas who have no interest in offspring.”

“I think I understand. When you say my biology will push me toward Alphas, what does that mean?”

“Now that Marcello has uncloaked you, your instincts will draw you toward unclaimed Alphas until you find and accept your future mate, and they claim you. Being around Nolan will exacerbate the instinct. Omegas are wired to find a suitable partner. You’ll probably crave a connection with him.

There are worse Alphas to be around. Nolan is a good Alpha. ”

“What, without my free will and choice?”

“No. Well, I mean, yes, in some ways. You can’t turn off your biology, but you can always choose your partner, Ava. You wouldn’t want to bond with the wrong person for eternity.”

My eyes widen. “No, definitely not.” I turn back to the stage.

Watching Nolan move through the set, I can’t help but wonder...He could probably have any woman he wanted. If biology is urging him to find an Omega, why doesn’t

he have one yet?

Nolan glances toward the wings, and the most breathtaking smile lights up his face. I can't help the giddiness swirling in my stomach. I look behind me to see who he's smiling at, and Stella isn't even next to me anymore—she's talking with a group of roadies.

That gorgeous smile was directed at me.

Heat creeps up my skin, and I'm relieved it's dark where I stand. There's no way he could see my reaction. Now I know what all the fuss is about, why women are obsessed with him. When he gives me his attention, it makes me feel like I'm the only girl in existence.

The band plays a few more songs, and I'm a little tired of being on my feet in heels.

I walk to the nearest wall and lean against it, feeling Nolan's sonorous voice move through my body and up the nape of my neck.

His voice grabs you by the throat, and the music washes you into a current of exhilaration.

I've been lulled into the energetic beat.

The band is so in sync with their audience that it feels magnetic when the song ends and the crowd roars louder than ever.

There's no place any of them would rather be than in this moment.

I take another picture of the band playing their last notes in front of the enraptured crowd. This shot is my favorite of the night, and I know fans that couldn't be here

tonight will wish they had been.

Nolan says their goodbyes, and the band steps off the stage to take a break before the encore. The crowd cheers and chants for more, and Stella comes back to stand beside me. “So, your first Death by Dawn show was good, right?”

“So great! I loved it. I’ll post my photos online and interact with the fans who comment.”

As the band passes by, Stella nods and bumps fists with Rex, Ian, Eli, and Torin. Nolan is the last to step off the stage, and he stops in front of us. His skin shines with a slight sheen of sweat. I can only imagine how hot it is under those lights.

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“Your concert is fantastic!” I say, smiling.

He nods. “We feed off the energy of the crowd. Their excitement is contagious.”

“I can tell. Hey, I have a question for you.”

He moves a little closer to me, and I can’t tell if it’s to hear me better or if he wants to be more in my space. Either way, I don’t mind. I glance at Stella, who grins at me.

“Are you going to ask it, or just stare at me all night?” Nolan smirks, and I can see the playfulness in his blood-red eyes, his inner light shining through.

“Why don’t you have an Omega mate?”

He pauses, and something passes through his eyes. He swallows, and it seems he’s collecting his thoughts. “I have my reasons. I can’t get into it now.”

I understand. He doesn’t have to tell me his innermost thoughts. “No worries. Sorry if it was too personal. It’s just that Stella was telling me about Alphas and Omegas, and I was curious. You could have literally any woman you want.”

Does he even do relationships? Would he want a relationship with a human?

He smiles at me and inches closer; his hand brushes my cheek as he tucks a loose lock of my long bangs behind my ear. I shiver. There he goes with his charismatic pull again. Does he even know what he does to a girl?

“That might be true, but maybe I just haven’t met the woman I want for a mate yet.” His serious expression only makes me more curious. “Do you have someone special in your life, Ava?”

I laugh at his question, and he raises a brow. “I’m sorry, but that’s funny. No, I don’t have a boyfriend.”

“Well, that’s lucky for you. Your Alpha would change that quickly if you did. Alphas rarely share their Omegas. They tend to be possessive.”

“You make Alphas sound like animals.”

“Alphas can be very aggressive over something that they want.” His hand drops from my cheek, and I miss his warm touch.

“Are Omegas the same?”

“What, possessive? Sometimes. If their Alpha is threatened, or someone they deem a threat to their relationship creeps in, they can be quite vicious.” He grins, flashing his fangs, and I can’t help but wonder if they cut his partner when he kisses her.

“I don’t think I could ever be vicious. It’s not my style. I’m also not sure I’m ready to become a vampire. Not yet, anyway.”

Nolan places his hands on the wall on either side of me and leans in, invading my space. “Why not? Being a vampire is fantastic.”

“But you’ve never seen the sun. Aren’t you curious about what the world looks like while you sleep?” It’s well known that vampires get severe sun poisoning and can die in excruciating pain from sunlight.

He shakes his head. “No, I can’t say I’m curious. The night has its beauty, and why should I wonder what the world is like when I sleep? I prefer my dreams over a little warmth on my skin, and the night has a special energy that the day could never have. Do you worry you’ll miss it?”

“I think so. Being human is all I’ve known.”

“Well, being a vampire is all I’ve ever known. I would miss the night if I had to give it up, too, but there’s so much you’ll gain as a vampire.”

“I’m not sure I’ll really understand until I become one.”

Looking into his eyes, I can see the happiness there. “Your Alpha will help you with the transition. You won’t go through the experience alone, and if your Alpha is a good man, you’ll want for nothing.”

“You make it sound so nice. Being cared for that way.”

His face inches closer, his lips hovering over mine. I can feel his warm breath against my skin, and I can’t help but close my eyes. Nolan Szasz is about to kiss me. Thousands of women beyond this stage would give anything to take this moment from me and have it for themselves.

He exhales on my skin, and as our lips almost touch, Torin comes up and tells Nolan it’s time to go back on stage. With the interruption, the moment evaporates. All the anticipation I was feeling dissipates in the blink of an eye.

Nolan pulls away and grabs my hand, squeezing it.

“Sorry, Ava, the show must go on. Come up with more questions for me. We can go over them tonight on my tour bus. You’ll share my bus with me as we head to the

next show.

There's plenty of room for the both of us.

There isn't room for you on the other bus with the band.

" He winks at me and walks onto the stage.

As Rex walks by, he smiles and gives me a fist bump.

I feel so let down. Nolan was about to kiss me, and I know it would have been the type of kiss I've always wanted. I can't imagine he does things by halves. No, Nolan would have given me the best kiss of my life.

One thing I know for sure is that Nolan Szasz could easily trample my fragile heart. I almost shared a kiss with the most famous man in the world, and now I'm sharing a bus with him for the foreseeable future. What am I doing? I should have stayed in San Diego. I see that now.

He offered to answer more questions tonight, but my mind is blank, and I can't think of anything to ask, except, Can you please give me the kiss that was so cruelly stolen from me? What do I want to know now, other than how his lips would feel on mine?

I try to focus on the music of the encore to feel more grounded and less in my head, but it's not working. Getting caught up with a vampire rock star could be hazardous to my health and maybe even my sanity.

Nolan said that there were other perks to being a vampire, and I can't help but feel curious about that.

Eternity is a long time—talk about a commitment.

That's scary in and of itself, when half of all human marriages end in divorce.

Maybe that's why Nolan doesn't have an Omega.

Or perhaps he just likes the variety of women offered to him, like a buffet.

Living in an enormous home full of friends and acquaintances would be nice.

It would certainly be different from being the only child of older parents.

I've always felt a bit alone. I'm curious what the famous palace of House Stryker is actually like.

To have a palace transported around the world is no joke. Or maybe Rex was just messing with me.

I guess I should ask how many Alphas there really are and whether they're all searching for their Omega mates.

I don't know what I want in a mate. Although I'm sure I want love, and maybe a family in the future, now the focus of my desire needs to shift to a vampire instead of a human.

Until now, I thought I'd get married in my thirties, but by the sound of things, it'll be much sooner than I thought.

Maybe I should ask Marcello and his mate these questions since Nolan doesn't have a mate and can't share that specific experience with me.

The tour moves to Las Vegas tonight, and all I can think about is this new, confusing world I find myself in.

What is Lord Stryker like? Does he have an Omega mate?

He must. He's the leader and has a residence full of Omegas.

I wonder if the sanctuary is like speed dating for vampires. Do they have dating profiles?

Ava Keats snores in her sleep, lives on a steady diet of donuts, loves Death by Dawn's live shows, and at twenty-one, has had one horrible sexual experience in the back seat of a smelly car at an old defunct drive-in movie theater.

I should probably work on that a bit. It's not selling me as eternal life partner material. Maybe I need new hobbies. Photographing donuts for Instagram might not be the selling point I'm looking for. Maybe long walks on the beach or bowling. Do vampires like to bowl?

Nolan would have a much better dating profile than me. Rock star who fills stadiums and travels the world.

I look through the Death by Dawn feed, preparing to add pictures of the performance and an introduction post about myself.

I grimace. Some rather vicious comments about Nolan in particular were added to several posts about twenty minutes ago. This could be an issue. Other fans are coming to Nolan's defense, but the comments have also gotten a handful of likes.

I quickly delete them and block the account. I may need to do more damage control, but for now, the band doesn't need to know about one disgruntled fan.

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Nolan

Moving through the crowd of groupies surrounding my bus, I ignore their pleas, their grabbing hands, and the dirty looks directed at Ava. Since I didn't spend much time backstage, the fans have followed me here. I step up into the bus, my only true place of solace while on tour.

My driver, Ezra, looks up from his book and greets me, "Good evening, Nolan."

I give him a quick nod and introduce Ava, then step into the kitchenette and begin to give Ava the grand tour of my home away from home. The sound of the fans shouting and pleading for me to let them into my personal space continues outside. Supernatural hearing gets old.

"So, this is the kitchen and dining area, with couches to relax."

The interior is exactly how I wanted it, designed in my favorite sage green and gray colors. The kitchen space is nice, but the TV and electric fireplace are even better. A rich dark wood dining table and couch make the space inviting. It's just what I need after performing all night.

"Geez, your bus is crazy nice. So open and calming. I never knew they looked this luxurious on the inside. It's so fancy. There's an electric fireplace and everything."

"Yeah, it was custom-made to my specifications. Everything I need to feel comfortable while on tour is here. Come on, there's more to show you."

I walk down the corridor that runs the length of the bus and point out the two comfortable bunks built into the wall and the bathroom with a full shower and tub.

When I get to the stairs at the end of the bus, I wait for her to catch up.

She takes in every detail, which I find fascinating.

When she doesn't realize anyone is looking at her, her emotions are apparent on her pretty face. I can see her excitement and wonder.

It's annoying that I don't hate her. She fascinates me in a way that other women don't, including other Omegas. She fits in with the band and Stella. There is no strained weirdness, like there was with Larissa. She holds my attention.

"Let's go upstairs to the main rooms and my recording space."

"You have a recording space on your bus? That's convenient."

"I'm often inspired to write after a show, but that hasn't happened lately. Rex does the arrangements, and I write the lyrics, for the most part."

"I can't wait to see it."

We make our way up the stairs, and her jaw drops. The seating area with my laptop and mixing board is nothing fancy to me, but Ava seems to find everything impressive.

"Nolan, this is a dream space. You have everything you need to create music here." She wanders to the photos and record albums hanging on the wall, smiling at the snapshots of the band's rise to where we are today.

“You all look so young and happy. You guys are so close, and with Stella too. I love that.” She sounds wistful and lively even this late at night.

She’s also oblivious to me watching her, lost in her own world.

“Yeah. We’re happy with our success.” I glance at the old photos, remembering each day as if it was yesterday. “The band and Stella mean the world to me. I would do anything for them.”

“Is a vampire interacting with humans looked down upon?”

“My dad thinks I should be around vampires more often. He wants me to have more ties and connections to the house. Vampires often struggle outside of houses. And, of course, he wants me to settle down with an Omega.”

“Oh.” She sounds intrigued. Her eyes take in my expression. “I see. Is that not what you want? You’re young—you have time. I mean, you look young, like twenty-five. How old are you really?”

“I don’t want to claim an Omega yet, if ever.

” Chuckling at her question, I answer, “I’m thirty.

Vampires age like humans do until around twenty-five.

We age visibly only a little bit each year from then on.

” I didn’t mean to open up to her, but she’s easy to talk to and seems to view the world on a deeper level that most people overlook.

I looked at her feed, and she’s a great photographer.

An artist in her own right. I hate to admit it, but I can sort of see why my father thought she'd be a good fit for the band.

I continue to the second bedroom and open the honey-hued wood door. "So, this is the spare room. You can sleep here when we aren't in a hotel."

She walks past me into space and turns around numerous times, taking it all in. "This is amazing. There's a full-size bed and my own bathroom. This is better than a hotel."

"I hope so. I get tired of hotels." I'm smiling at her. She gets blown away by the simplest things. "From the look on your face, I'm assuming you love it."

"Well, I like a nice hotel room. It makes me feel like I'm worth the extra expense. But this is amazing."

Nodding, I take in her small stature. The room looks bigger with her in it. She's about 5'1" to my 6'5". The height difference between us is almost comical, but her size brings my protectiveness to the surface. I want to keep her close and safe.

My instincts need to chill out.

She looks more flushed than when we were backstage at the show, and I wonder if her Omega nature is kicking in.

My presence in her space and our biology will impact us both.

My dad's actions have put us in a tricky situation, and there's another possible complication that could affect the tour.

She could go into heat. I hope it'll hold off until I can get her to the sanctuary after the Las Vegas show.

Of course, she had to be twenty-one when she crossed paths with my dad, the average age at which Omegas can be uncloaked.

“How are you feeling, Ava?”

Her eyes meet mine and widen. She pushes her glasses up her nose and blows her bangs out of her face, “I’m good. Why do you ask?”

“You look a little warm.”

She studies me as if assessing my words, and then smiles. “Now that you mention it, I am feeling warm.”

She looks at the ceiling and sees the fan, and her shoulders relax. Interesting. Temperature changes are the first sign of an Omega needing to nest, and nesting is the first in a long list of signs of an Omega’s oncoming heat.

I’m thankful right now for the Alpha education required of all Alphas in our house.

“Come on, let me show you my room, and then we’ll get you settled in here. We’ll hit the road soon. Vegas is our next and final stop. Then back home to San Diego.”

“Okay, although I’m not exhausted.” She looks at me, her eyes shimmering silver.

“I’m not either. I want to play some guitar and see if inspiration strikes me.”

“That sounds cool. Your dad said that you lost your muse. That must be nerve-racking.”

I narrow my eyes. My father needs to keep his mouth shut.

I don't need any undue pressure or other people knowing that I can't seem to produce any music.

Why would he even tell her that? She's easy to talk to; it's like she pulls others to open up, because she gives the impression of being so open herself.

I find that I have a hard time holding back from her.

I'm not sure if it's an Omega thing or something unique to her.

The band needs this next album, and it's driving me insane that I can't write. Of all times to get writer's block. Once we deliver the final album on our contract, we can create our own label and have a lot more creative freedom.

But first, I have to create.

"Yeah, I hope that will change tonight. Come on, let me show you my room so you know where to find me if you need me."

We enter my private space, and I try to look at it as she might. Will she judge me from what she sees in my room? What does she see when she looks at me? I know what other women think of me, but not Ava. Would she, as an Omega, feel safe in my life? I've never questioned it until now.

My king-size bed sits in the center of the room with wooden cabinets and drawers along the adjacent wall where the flatscreen TV hangs.

The windows showcase the night sky, but the blackout screens can be lowered at the press of a button, keeping me safe from the bright and deadly sun.

My bathroom is large enough for two people, though I never let others in my

space—well, until now.

Ava looks at herself in the full-length mirror and peeks into the bathroom. She runs her fingers over the comforter on my bed, another indication that her need to nest is coming on. Seeking out soft things is typical Omega nesting behavior. She glances at the oversized plush chair in the corner.

“What’s wrong, Ava?”

“Oh, um, I just have the most bizarre need to remove the pillows, climb on the chair, and get comfortable.”

I grin at her. It’s confirmed. Being around an Alpha—me—has awoken her need for comfort.

Then I frown. I hope her heat holds off until after the final show; I really don’t want to go into rut with an Omega. Uncontrollable mating is not what I want...but maybe with Ava, it would be different.

No . That’s just my Alpha instincts fighting for dominance.

I can see the appeal of the chair. It’s soft and plush, with arms and the wall near it providing some security.

Perfect for a pseudo-Omega nest. The second bedroom has no such place.

She would need to use the bed, which isn’t bad, but for her first nest, her instincts must be riding her hard.

This is just the kind of thing I don’t need on the road.

Just as I get rid of Larissa and her drama, I now have an Omega in preheat to worry about.

If it happens on the road, I'll need to send her home on a jet to get her to the Sanctuary.

What's the harm? I kind of want to see what she does. I move to my bed and remove a blanket, then place it on the chair.

"What are you doing?" she asks a little intensely.

"Well, Omegas like comfort, and they need to build nests in safe spaces. From the way you're looking at the chair, I get the sense that you want to build a nest on this chair."

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Her eyes widen, and she shakes her head slightly in disagreement; but while she might not think she needs to nest, her body tells me otherwise.

Her skin is even more pink than before, and she keeps hugging herself, wanting to enclose herself.

As an Alpha, I know better than she does as a newly uncloaked Omega.

“Why are nests such a big deal for Omegas? I mean, I love a pillow fort, but it seems different.”

“It is. Omegas create safe, comfortable places to relax and center themselves, but also for mating with their Alpha.” I expect her to freak out or shut down, but her expression remains open and curious.

“Alphas treat a nest as a sacred space and have to earn the right to join an Omega inside it. They need to earn the trust of their Omega. That’s what courting is for.

To build the necessary bond to claim each other as mates. ”

“I see.” She chuckles. “Right now, I just want to rest, not get freaky for my nonexistent Alpha mate.”

I remove some pillows from the couch and check that they’re fluffed up, then place them next to the chair. Then I grab another blanket and hand it to her. She immediately rubs the fabric along her cheek and neck with a heavy sigh.

“So nice. It even smells like you. Like the finest incense and leather.” She removes her cardigan and drapes it on the couch, then wraps the blanket around herself and closes her eyes. It shouldn’t feel this good that she notices my scent and relaxes as a result.

Speaking softly, I ask, “Feeling better now, Omega?”

I don’t want to see her suffer. No Alpha wants that. Part of me is proud that I made the right call and saw what she needed before she did.

“Yeah, I didn’t realize how out of sorts I was feeling until now.”

I should be worried about my Alpha pheromones and spicy scent being all over that blanket, but I find I don’t care. She’s not my Omega, and I’m not her Alpha, no matter how badly I wanted to kiss her earlier.

She continues looking at the empty chair, and with a huff, she crawls onto it. She looks at me, a little dazed, and scoots herself into one corner of the oversized chair.

Grinning at her, I sit on the bed next to the chair and bundle the blanket around her body.

“Omegas need security, like the walls here, and the softness of the blanket. In my room, with an Alpha to protect you when you’re at your most vulnerable, you have a sense of safety, which is important for Omegas when they nest.”

“It feels like I’m missing something.” She looks at me, dismayed.

Seeing her beside my bed should make me nervous, but the opposite is true.

I’m taken by how cute she looks all bundled up.

“What do you need, Ava? I can help you.” My inner Alpha wants to provide her with simple comforts no matter the warning signs.

I shouldn’t be helping her; I might give her the wrong message.

Her instincts might tell her that I’m a worthy mate, when really I’m the only Alpha she’s been around.

I’ve only been around one nesting Omega before—my mother. My mind is screaming at me that this is a bad idea.

“I need more soft stuff. Even though there’s not much room here.”

I grab another pillow off my bed and place it in front of her. She immediately plops down on the chair’s cushion and puts her head on the pillow. She hums, and it almost sounds like a purr.

“Anything else you need?”

“Play me some music, Nolan?”

I’m taken aback by her request, but if music is what her heart desires, then that I can handle.

I suddenly feel a burst of creative juices, like I could finally write new music, but I don’t want to leave her side.

Maybe hearing me mess around will be enough to please her and let her drift off to sleep.

“I might want to just play around with cords. Would that be okay with you?”

“Yeah, I think so,” she says in a tired voice.

“Okay then.” Grabbing my guitar, I settle in against my remaining pillow and headboard and begin to strum a new tune.

The fact that I feel inspired to compose with an Omega in my room brings my dad’s words back to me.

His certainty that an Omega of my own would inspire my music scares me a little.

Could he be right? Could the nesting Omega be my new muse?

Or is it just a coincidence? That’s a scary thought, but I’m excited to be inspired again.

Ava opens her eyes, and in a sleepy voice, she says, “You have a pissed off fan who’s leaving hurtful messages on the Death by Dawn feed, and now she’s moved her hostility to my own posts. Is she someone I should worry about?”

Great. Larissa has begun to target Ava. Her behavior is annoying, and I can take her crap, but Ava shouldn’t have to. She didn’t ask for the drama.

“Just delete the comments and keep blocking her new accounts. She’ll eventually get bored when she realizes she’s not making an impact.”

“She seems intent on riling up your fans and upsetting me.”

“Don’t let her bother you. She’s not worth it. She’s my ex and our former social media manager. She’s upset, but she’ll move on.”

Mindlessly strumming the notes that flow out of me, I find myself continually

looking at Ava.

She seems content and cozy, and my heart feels settled.

That she feels safe in my private space gives me a sense of pride I've never felt before.

Not even after my best performances. She's doing things to me, and I feel a little untethered, but I would be stupid not to enjoy her company.

Playing for her shouldn't bring me this much peace, but it does.

I'm pleased that she's intently watching my every move.

"That sounds so nice. You're a true artist." Her eyes drift closed, and she rolls over and slips off the chair. My muscles tense, and with my supernatural speed, I catch her in my arms and we fall back onto the mattress. "Oops." She giggles sleepily, and I can't help but smile.

"You're not supposed to fall out of your nest."

"I didn't mean to. Maybe I shouldn't have built my first nest on a chair. Bad move, Ava, duly noted."

"I think your first nest is perfect." I caress her cheek, and she blushes. Her nest is small and compact, just like her.

This girl is making me feel things that should make me nervous and uncomfortable but strangely feel right, and I'm happy as a result. Like in my arms is where she's supposed to be.

“Well, I’ll take the compliment. Maybe I just need more practice. It felt nice and comfortable, but not as comfortable as being held by you.” She smirks and blushes, which makes me smile. She feels great in my arms.

“Ava, you’re so different.” Different from every other woman I’ve found myself in the company of.

“I hope you don’t mean that as a bad thing. It didn’t sound bad.”

“No, sweetness. Take it as intended—as a compliment.”

She smiles, and I see the radiant happiness in her eyes. She is quite beautiful. If I were looking, I could see myself claiming her as my Omega, but that’s crazy. I have no business with an Omega. I need my own life; I don’t want to be beholden to someone else.

I say that, but it feels nice to comfort her in my arms. Almost too nice.

“I like your dad. It’s sweet how smitten he is with your mom.”

“Yeah?” The fact that she knows that about my dad is surprising. “He’s the standard Alpha mate who puts his Omega’s needs first. Their relationship is what an Alpha-Omega relationship should be.”

“It sounds perfect. That’s what I want in my partner. Someone who cares about my well-being and happiness. Like my dad did for my mom. They were madly in love.”

I have no doubt that some Alpha will make her very happy someday.

If she were in the sanctuary right now, she would have Alpha suitors courting her in no time, all vying for her affection.

Omegas are treated lavishly with treats, gifts, and dates.

Not to mention anything else they need. She would learn from the experience of the other Omegas, and most importantly, she would be safe from undesirable Alphas.

“Nolan?”

“Yeah, Ava.”

“Are you going to give me the kiss you owe me?”

My heart skips a beat. “Do I owe you a kiss? I didn’t realize.”

Kissing her is a slippery slope, but I find that I don’t care about the consequences. She gets along with my band and Stella, unlike Larissa, who always vied for my attention.

“Our moment was stolen from us earlier at the show.”

We go quiet. She licks her soft lips, and her eyes sparkle. I can read anticipation flickering in her eyes. Her body is strung tight, like a guitar string, and I realize I want to oblige the radiant Omega before me.

Moving in before we can overthink things, I kiss her.

When our lips meet, time stops. Kissing her is amazing, and I slip my tongue in her warm mouth.

She moans and pushes her lips into mine, deepening the kiss.

She kisses like I thought she would. With exuberance and pleasure, like she does

everything.

I could kiss her for hours. I can't help but think that this feels right—that she feels right, like she's meant to be mine.

But that's insane; I shouldn't want her.

Unlike the groupies who follow the band, Ava is different.

I'm enjoying this, and I feel relaxed and alive.

She smells like blooming roses as her Omega scent perfumes the air, telling me she's enjoying our kiss just as much as I am.

The smell of our combined scents is a rich mixture hanging thick in the air.

She moans again, which only makes me want to consume her more. What is she doing to me? This isn't helping; now I want more of her like nothing I've wanted before.

Ava isn't my Omega, but God, part of me wants her to be.

The Alpha drive in me wants to be the one to give her all of her first experiences as an Omega, her first everything.

I would spoil her rotten. She might be my new muse, but maybe I want her to be more.

An Omega is the last thing I wanted, but Ava is fascinating.

She's curious and strange, constantly babbling with wonder and delight, and I love

that about her.

New experiences excite her, and she seems genuinely unfazed by my fame.

She could quickly become a habit I can't shake.

I should push her away, and yet she's too irresistible.

Something in me wants to find her faults and convince myself of her imperfections to make her more human.

I'm seeking reasons to get rid of her. I feel so conflicted, but my Alpha instincts are winning at this moment.

I pull away from her lips, and when she lets out a disgruntled moan, it goes straight to my cock.

Holding her close feels good, and I'm terrified.

I don't know if I could be a good Alpha for her.

It's never been a concern before. Can I give a shit about someone other than myself?

I've never wanted to become someone's Alpha, but do I want to be Ava's Alpha?

Could it work? I could get used to her kisses and her stream of consciousness babbling.

She seems unshakable, a quality I would want in my mate.

Someone who'd be confident in her role in my life, not jealous of my fans or

overwhelmed by my fame.

She's also creative like me. Her photos are beautiful, even the ones of donuts.

Would she want me as her Alpha?

No. She doesn't even fully grasp what that means.

"That was better than I thought it would be," she says, looking at me like I hung the stars.

"Did you think kissing me would be terrible?"

"Oh God, no. I thought you'd be a great kisser, but you're dangerous."

I smirk. "Dangerous? I'm not dangerous." If anything, she's the dangerous one. She's confronting me with questions I wasn't prepared for, quickly pulling me under her spell, and I'm unsure I want to fight it.

"You are Nolan Szasz. The most dangerous kind of man." She blinks, and I want to hear more of her assessment.

"What makes me so dangerous?"

"You make a girl fall hard for you, and I'm not sure if that's good or awful."

If it's a good, albeit foolish, thing, I'm not sure what I'm doing to make her fall for me.

I'm just helping a newly uncloaked Omega find her way into my world and adjust to her new life.

I'm not trying to persuade her heart or mine.

What would it be like if I actually courted her?

My creativity is bubbling at the surface, and I feel compelled to write, but I don't want to put Ava back in her nest just yet.

I want to kiss her again. I'm compelled to write a song in her honor and share with the world how this Omega is stirring feelings in me that never existed before.

She seems genuinely happy to help promote the band, and Stella likes her; she could fit in with my closest friends, and her infectious happiness is contagious.

The fact that she shares her passion and enthusiasm for donuts with her fans mirrors what I do through my music.

I don't doubt that she understands my lifestyle and how important it is to cater to the people who make that life possible.

She's also not a starfucker, like so many groupies are. She's grounded, not starstruck, which I find rare in most humans.

I find myself unable to push her away.

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Ava

Bubbling over with excitement, I can hardly stay still.

Nolan's warm hand rests on my thigh as he drives us somewhere unknown.

When he told me he had a surprise for me, I wanted to know what it was so badly, so I started guessing, but to no avail.

When he knocked on my door after working on music to tell me he was taking me somewhere, I got ready to go so fast I surprised even myself.

We had to wait for the sun to go down, and I found myself impatient to explore Vegas for our first night here.

Being off of the Strip seems more intimate, with old gray brick buildings and sidewalks dressed in bright green bushes and tall iron streetlights. There are fewer people around, and I find I can take in more of the shops and their uniqueness without the loud bright lights that consume the Strip.

Since our kiss, Nolan's affection has increased, and I love it. His touch is welcome, and it gives me butterflies as I catch more feelings for the Alpha sitting next to me in the driver's seat of his ridiculously flashy sports car.

"It's late at night. Is it a walk around a secluded park?" I guess. "I hope you can protect me against serial killers!"

He laughs at my nonsense, and I'm pleased that he handles my jokes well. It would suck if he had a dry sense of humor. Honestly, I don't know what his surprise for me is, so I keep coming up with ridiculous scenarios.

"No, Ava, the surprise is not a secluded walk with a serial killer. I don't know about my skills for murdering someone who tries to harm you, but I think I have your personal security handled with my size alone."

I can't help but agree. He's tall and muscular. So was his dad. I wonder if it's a family trait or an Alpha vampire thing. Maybe both. I like our size discrepancy—I feel safer with him around.

"Is it seeing strippers at the Pussy Cat Theatre? I've always wanted to see how they swing those sparkly tassels around with their ginormous boobs. I mean, that takes some skill." I look over to catch his expression.

He gives a wolfish grin then bites his lip, holding in his laughter. "Not this time, but I'll add it to the list for the future. For your research purposes, of course. I wouldn't want your curiosity to get the best of you."

I like that we're becoming more comfortable with each other and that he can dish it back to me. The more witty our banter gets, the closer I feel to him. He seems to like my quirks.

"Well, I guess I need to think of more possibilities."

"No, you don't, sweetness, because we're here."

He parks his fancy car at the curb, and I look over to see a brightly lit shop.

The interior looks like an explosion of hot pink and white.

Glancing at the sign, I realize it's a donut shop.

I smile so big that it hurts my face. I'm touched that he came up with this idea.

So personal and thoughtful. Since our night of nesting and kisses, we've been getting to know each other between his sound checks and publicity interviews.

The band has really warmed up to me too, with Rex checking out each photo before I post them.

Nolan is more than a famous rock star and vampire—he's thoughtful and a true artist, something he hides from the rest of the world with the charming persona he projects like a mask.

He's warm and unruffled with his band, joking around with the guys and Stella, and they function like an unbreakable family unit.

I wonder if it's similar to or different from the atmosphere at House Stryker.

"Nolan, you know how to speak to my heart. Are you secretly a sugar pusher who's giving me my next fix? Or maybe you're trying to seduce me?"

"Maybe both." He brushes my hair from my eyes. "Come on, let's get you your next high. I'm sure your followers will love that you're in Vegas."

He's right. My followers might be thrown that I'm not in California, but I know they'll be excited.

I haven't been to Vegas before and can't wait to share this new place with them.

Nolan climbs out, walks around the front, and opens the door of the low-slung car.

Holding out his hand, he helps me out of the car, probably so I don't flash my hoo ha to anyone who might be around.

He locks the car and places his hand on my lower back as he ushers me inside the shop. The door chimes with a bell overhead, and there are only a few people at this hour enjoying the sweet treats.

I would have thought Nolan's nighttime schedule would be a hard adjustment for me, but for the past few nights, so much has been happening that I've been going to bed when the sun comes up. I guess adjusting to a vampire's schedule is part of preparing to become one myself.

We walk to the glass cases, and I scope out my mainstays while perusing my other options. I shouldn't have more than two before bed, but I can't pass up the opportunity to try a new place. Nolan greets the man behind the counter and starts looking as well.

I snap a few pictures for my post. When I know which donuts I want, I wait patiently for Nolan to choose his own. He looks at me and stands by the register. "You ready, Ava? Made up your mind yet?"

"I have." I walk to him, and he grabs my waist and pulls me close. "Well, tell the man what you want."

He kisses my cheek, and I can't help but blush.

I feel more wanted with each touch and small kiss he gives me.

Could Nolan become my Alpha? He would be a great Alpha mate.

He's thoughtful and kind to those he considers friends, and he always looks out for

me.

Makes sure all my questions are answered.

“I’ll take a devil’s food with coconut, a raspberry filled with powdered sugar, a glazed twist, and a Boston cream, please.” I look at Nolan, and he nods to the man.

“And please add a crumb cake, apple filled, apple fritter, bear claw...oh, and a cinnamon roll. The rest can be a mound of donut holes, please.”

I grin at him, “You have good taste in donuts, Mr. Szasz. You like apples, huh?”

“Yeah, I do. Glad you approve. You’re the expert, after all. I wouldn’t want to disappoint Ava, the Grand Duchess of Donuts, the famous donut influencer. I think your follower count will increase after they learn you’re on the road with Death by Dawn.” He looks down at me.

“I’m sure it will. I’ll get your thirsty fans loving donuts in no time.”

“My thirsty fans? I’m offended.” He smirks, and I can’t help the laughter that escapes me.

Our circumstances are similar. Our fans know only what we show them, and we’re both pretty isolated, Nolan as a result of his career, and me as a result of my friends leaving San Diego and my parents’ deaths.

He pulls me out of my thoughts and asks, “Do you want a drink?”

“Umm, I should stick with chamomile tea, or I’ll be too buzzy to sleep in a few hours. Will I have to give up coffee as a vampire bride? That would suck so bad! Ugh.”

“You mean when you become a vampire mate . Remember, it’s deeper than just a bride, and if your Alpha mate keeps you away from your beloved lattes, you tell me, and I’ll sort his shit out.”

Picturing anyone other than Nolan as my Alpha feels strange. I know he’s the only Alpha I’ve gotten to know, and maybe that’s a bad thing, but I feel like he’s the right Alpha for me. I can’t help how my heart feels when he looks at me.

“Add a chamomile tea and a decaf white chocolate mocha, please.”

“Damn, I forgot about decaf. It’s sacrilegious, you know.”

“Oh, is it? You’ll need to revoke my coffee drinker membership.” He winks at me, and I know I’m falling dangerously deep for this man. “Just don’t tell anyone—it’ll be our little secret.”

What if my future Alpha doesn’t like my friendship with Nolan? There is so much about vampire society that I don’t yet understand. I hope my Alpha, whoever he is, is as accepting and kind and understanding as Nolan.

Who am I kidding? The small voice inside my head screams at me that it should be Nolan. I don’t know if I’m reading too much into our growing connection. Maybe it’s my Omega instincts that Nolan keeps talking about.

I grab our drinks as Nolan pays, and he takes our pink box to the table in the corner furthest from others.

We sit, and I look around. There’s a woman across the room, and two men deep in conversation.

There’s also a round table filled with what looks to be a motorcycle club enjoying

their late-night treats.

Nolan opens the box, grabs his apple fritter, and places it on a napkin. He takes a sip of his mocha and stares at me. I choose the devil's food and take a bite, loving the rich, chocolaty goodness the instant it hits my tongue.

"Good, huh?" He smiles and takes another sip.

"Can I take a picture of you eating your donut? My followers would flip."

"Sure." He poses with his donut, and he looks good. Is he always this hot?

I take a few more shots but hold off on posting so the shop doesn't get flooded with hordes of fans. I want to be present with him, not rude.

Nolan grabs my phone and pulls up my feed, looking at the last few posts. "You're so sweet and approachable. I can tell our fans really like that about you, and it's showing in our feed. My ex wasn't like that."

He hands me back my phone and looks me in the eye, glancing behind his shoulder. "So, it's question time. Throw 'em at me, Omega."

He and Stella have been really considerate about answering my questions as they come up.

When I think about the most burning one, what comes up is blood and feeding.

I watched him feed from Rex yesterday, and I was surprised to learn that contributors get off from that.

I'm surprised that mates don't get possessive of their mates feeding on others. Maybe

to vampires, it's just food?

“Tell me about feeding. I don't want to accidentally kill anyone. Does the Alpha possessiveness not cross over to humans? I also don't know how I'll react to the taste of blood.”

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Nolan laughs, drawing some attention our way. “Most Alphas wouldn’t see your human contributor as a threat. No offense—it’s just after Alpha cock, you wouldn’t want a human’s.” He gives me a feral grin. “They don’t have knots.”

My blush warms my cheeks as he continues as if he didn’t just mention cocks in public. “I’d be worried if you killed someone accidentally or intentionally. Murder is frowned upon, even if the murderer is a tiny little thing with a penchant for sugar.”

“I mean, I don’t want to kill anyone, period. I’m a good person. I can’t carry that kind of karma, you know?”

“I do know. There’s no killing involved—well, unless your Alpha loses his shit because a serial killer in the park or another Alpha is going after what’s his.

” He grins. “As a vampire, your sense of the taste of blood will change. You’ll like it, but you’ll be choosy about which human contributors become your favorites. You’ll get used to it.”

“Like my taste in wine or something?”

“Very much like that.”

He takes a bite of his fritter as I ponder my next question. He grabs my hand over the table, and the touch is nice. I’m a bit surprised by how affectionate he’s being in public. He probably doesn’t even realize he’s doing it.

“Tell me why you don’t have a mate yet.”

He chokes a little on his donut and takes a big sip of coffee. I almost think he won't answer me, but then he clears his throat.

“Well, I had no interest. It takes a lot of energy and time to properly court an Omega, and I've been focused on my music career. I don't have time for anything or anyone else. Plus, I just got free of a pretty toxic relationship.”

Before I can stop it, I blurt out, “Well, maybe you just haven't met the right girl.” I can't help but wonder if I've overstepped and said something too personal. “Maybe your right girl doesn't need all the fancy courting.”

He nods and takes another bite. “The right Omega would definitely deserve all the courting I can give her. A good Alpha should lavish his intended mate with gifts, affection, love, and at a bare minimum, his undivided time and attention.”

“But that's not fair. Surely an Alpha worth anything would already have a life before and outside his relationship with his future mate.”

“Yes, that's true, but an important part of courting is for an Alpha to show his mate how he would care for her and their future kids. If that's what they both want.”

“It just seems one-sided.” He stares at me, eyes narrowed, looking thrown, and I find myself blurting out, “Do you want kids?”

He looks away, then down at his hands. “I'm not sure. Procreation is a big part of claiming a mate. For my father and mother, there was a more profound relationship before I was added to the mix as their only child. Because of them, I fear my standards for a relationship are higher than most.”

“Your dad lit up like a Christmas tree when he spoke about your mom. It was clear that he loves her very much.”

Nolan smiles and takes another bite, seeming to mull over my comment as he swallows. “He does. It’s almost gross at times.” He studies me, and I have to stop myself from squirming under that intense gaze. “Do you want kids, sweetness?”

I inhale at the vision of a little Nolan. Too fast, Ava. Deflect . “Oh, I don’t know. Probably. I haven’t given it much thought. I’m only twenty-one. Plus, having kids that live forever is a major deal. I can see why your parents would have taken time to be together before they had you.”

He grins. “You say that like vampire kids are the kiss of death to a relationship.” He caresses my cheek, and I can’t help but lean into his touch.

“Kids are always a major commitment, but vampire kids must be even more so.”

“Maybe. I guess you’d need to ask my mom.”

“I would love to meet your mom. Talking with another Omega would be great.”

“My dad kind of set you on the path traveling backward. I can give you her number if you want it.”

“I’d like that. Thank you.” He and Stella have both been so open, and it’s eased my mind about who I’ll become, but only another Omega can really tell me what I’m in for.

“Tell me why you’re so comfortable with my fame. It doesn’t seem to affect you.”

That’s easy to answer. I smile. “My dad was a famous installation artist, and I grew up around it. I guess it became normal for me.” I hear the chime of the door opening, and I move on to my Boston cream and give a little moan as I bite it.

These donuts are so good. I'm already composing my post in my head.

Icy chills move up my spine, and I have the sudden sense that we're being watched. I glance behind me and see a woman walking into the shop, staring at us intently. Her rapt attention is a little creepy.

Nolan follows my gaze. He turns back to me and squeezes my hand. "Ignore her. She's just here to bug me. I'm sorry. I had no idea there might be drama when I brought you out tonight. I shouldn't have left my security team at the hotel."

Taking a deep breath and another bite of the Boston cream, I put all my focus into looking at him and do my best to ignore the woman. I can imagine the craziness he and the guys deal with regularly. I've seen a little of it. There's always a downside to fame.

Taking another sip of my tea, out of the corner of my eye, I watch the woman take the long way around to the counter.

I look back at Nolan and take him in. He's striking and exudes aloof rock star energy.

How would his fans react if he were off the market?

I can't imagine them taking it too well, if the women who hang around backstage and outside his bus are any indication.

Nolan's distracted now, keeping an eye on the woman. "My friend Bakari is meeting us at Nocturnal Casino tomorrow, although I'm starting to think that's not a great idea."

I'd started to perk up at the thought of meeting another vampire, but his tone is discouraging. "Why not?"

“Because he’s an Alpha, and you’re not in the Sanctuary.” He looks at his phone.

“Is he a danger to me?” Why does it matter that I’m not in the Sanctuary?

“No, nothing like that. He’s a good guy, and he won’t harm you...It’s just that you’re unclaimed, and he might want to court you.”

“Oh.” Nolan seems irritated at the thought of his friend courting me, and I can’t help but feel my heart pick up its rhythm.

A shadow crosses the table, and Nolan pulls his shoulders back and growls softly.

I startle and turn to look at the woman beside us.

She has green eyes and long blonde hair styled like a porcelain doll, a short ruffly cream-colored dress, and pink heels.

I look back at Nolan and take a bite of my donut to settle the unease I feel with this woman present. Donuts can get you through anything.

“Hi, Nolan. Miss me, baby?”

Nolan tenses and clears his throat, and his entire demeanor changes. He looks at the woman and glares, “No, Larissa. You know I don’t. What are you doing here?”

“I want to see you guys play in Vegas. I was really looking forward to the final show.” Her smile vanishes when she notices our hands touching, and her gaze pivots to me.

She must be the ex. My stomach sours. I’m her replacement.

“I thought I made it clear that I don’t want you around. The shows are sold out.”

The woman glares at me and then looks back at Nolan. Something that I can’t quite decipher crosses her face, but she wipes her expression quickly. “Well, isn’t this interesting? You and your new social media manager do look rather cozy.”

I freeze. She knows who I am.

“Larissa, don’t. Leave her alone.” He squeezes my hand in what I assume is an apology.

She catches the movement and glares again at our joined hands, making me even more uncomfortable. I’m not sure how Nolan can stand it.

“I had no idea that you were seeing anyone already. You haven’t said anything to the media. It must be quite the secret.” She smirks, and Nolan tenses.

He carefully releases my hand and grabs his mocha. I can’t help but feel the sting of his rejection, even though I know he’s trying to defuse the situation. He sips his drink, and Larissa smiles at him. My stomach tightens. Am I just one of many girls in his life?

She looks at me with pity. “You know he does this regularly, right?” I don’t respond, and she laughs.

“He makes you feel like you’re special, but you’re really just the next girl he’s stringing along.

Soon, you’ll learn you mean nothing to him, like all the rest of us before you.

He has no intention of committing to one woman. ”

“Oh, I know. He’s been upfront with me from the start. I don’t have the same unrealistic expectations that you apparently did.” He did say he doesn’t want a relationship. Why would he want a lifetime commitment with this type of drama?

I briefly catch a flicker of hurt cross his eyes. Nolan turns from me and looks at her with such hostility that it makes me cringe. He seems ready to rip her throat out. “We gotta go.” He stands up, grabs the box of donuts, and waits for me at the door.

I guess our time here has ended. I glare at her as I devour the last bite of my donut.

“Lovely meeting you. Always a pleasure meeting the ex.” Only then do I follow him to the car.

I can’t help but feel like I’ve been slapped in the face.

The switch in Nolan’s mood was instant, and I miss his sweet touches and closeness.

Whatever is going through his mind that shut him down hurts.

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Nolan

Ava and I step off the elevator and onto the gambling floor.

Large glass chandeliers sparkle like rain, hanging in a cascade of glittering crystals.

Nocturnal's opulence is on another level, surpassing all the other hotels and casinos on the Strip in Vegas.

The walls are dressed in silver and lavender wallpaper, and dim lighting gives the gambling floor a dreamy nighttime feel.

The large open space is divided into separate areas with the table games to the room's right, the high-stakes slot machines to the left, and the lower stakes games downstairs.

The noise isn't too bad on my hearing; I'm grateful for that.

Humans tend to fill any space with loud chatter that can grate on my senses.

I want to grab Ava's hand, but after our night at the donut shop, I've been repeating a mantra, Keep your distance.

Pull away. It's for the best. I need to stop blurring the lines between us.

She didn't deserve to be hunted and intimidated by my ex.

Larissa showing up was a worst-case scenario, and now our fragile relationship feels strained.

Ava's too sweet to be mistreated by Larissa, who wants to tear us down.

Do I want Ava? More than anything. Is she the perfect Omega—or even worse, the perfect Omega for me? Again, yes. But I could never ask her to join my world, my life on the road, my life of fame; she deserves a normal drama-free life.

The press caught word of the drama in the donut shop and the nasty comments on our feed, and now questions are swirling around about Ava, as though she's the other woman who pushed “poor Larissa” aside. All nonsense.

I can see her shoulders slump every time she checks her phone.

Larissa rudely interrupting us last night is a perfect example of why I can't keep an Omega private.

A relationship with me would thrust Ava into the spotlight, and the intense scrutiny that comes with my fame wouldn't be fair to her or any other potential mate.

No one deserves that kind of attention unless they signed up for it like I and the rest of the guys in the band did.

We knew what we were getting ourselves into.

Ava doesn't, and it's unfair for me to expect her to put up with the results.

Does this realization hurt? Absolutely.

All I want to do is take her in my arms and ask if she'll accept me as her eternal mate.

The distance between us is eating me up.

I feel my inspiration and music slipping away again.

I miss Ava's deep understanding of me, and she would fit seamlessly into my personal life with Stella and the guys.

She would make a great mate. My parents would love her—my dad already does—and I have no doubt she could hold my interest and fascination for the rest of our lives.

Those she cares about, she cares for deeply, and as the days progress, she gets closer to Stella.

My manager may never speak to me again if I drive Ava away.

I'm curious if Ava's even open to me like that. Does she see me as a potential mate to court her and claim her? But given how she pulled away from me after last night, I suspect the answer is no.

I also know it's for the best.

My actions haven't helped. If any other Alpha saw what I've been doing with the gorgeous little Omega, they would say that I've already been courting her with treats, meals, and experiences. But I haven't told her that, and I've been in denial about it until now.

Bakari is waiting for us at the bar, and although I'm happy to have my closest friend here in Vegas for our final show, I hate how his gaze keeps drifting to Ava. He's drawn to her like waves to the shore, making my skin crawl and my shoulders tight.

It doesn't help that he's the most flirtatious single Alpha in House Stryker. He is working his way through the Beta population like he's insatiable.

He hugs me and shakes Ava's hand. He's dressed casually, in a charcoal T-shirt and black jeans, not caring that we're on the high-stakes floor. His dark brown hair is loose, and his eyes are locked on the Omega.

"Hi. You must be Ava."

"In the flesh," she says with an infectious smile.

"How are you liking being on tour with the guys?"

"It's great. I enjoy it very much." She smiles at him and glances at me. "How do you like House Stryker?"

"I have lived in the palace with my parents, sisters, and brother all my life. It's all I know.

You've not met Lord Stryker, right?" He glances at her neck, which, if she'd met our lord and given her vow, would bear the necklace with Lord Stryker's crest to indicate she's promised to the house and protected.

He glares at me, no doubt judging me that she's here instead of in the Sanctuary.

"Not yet. I will when we go back to San Diego."

"That's good. You'll meet other house members then. We love meeting new Omegas. You'll cause quite a stir." He smiles and winks at her.

She blushes, and it pisses me off that she's looking at him and not at me.

The thought of Ava with another Alpha is making the voice in my head respond with murderous intent.

Seeing her with another Alpha in House Stryker would be a daily reminder that I missed out on my potentially perfect mate.

My dad was right; she has quickly become an all-consuming obsession.

She's been the only person I want to see at dawn these past few days, and I've continued to avoid our groupies.

It's been nice not having any of them hanging all over me.

Repressing the instinct to grab and pull her into my side, I watch her intently to see which part of the gambling floor catches her attention. At least I can ensure she has some fun. Tonight is the last show of the tour. We wrap everything up tomorrow.

"What do you want to play, sweetness?"

"I think the slot machines look good. Sitting sounds nice—I'm a little low on energy. I don't know what's come over me. I'm not usually this tired."

Her declining energy is another sign she's going into heat soon; it means her hormones are fluctuating and her temperature is rising.

I want to ignore it and enjoy the time I have with her before we return on the road heading home, but her rosewater scent is like a beacon to me, and I can see it impacting Bakari.

She's more in need of an Alpha than ever before.

I wouldn't want her to slip into madness with an unassisted heat, but part of me believes I can keep her safe.

I want to be the one to help her when she needs it.

Me. Not Bakari, not my dad, only me. Her heat could throw off my last performance tonight but my last moments with her are worth the risk of her heat starting.

"Okay then, let's pick your machine and get you settled in."

She gives me a small smile that doesn't quite reach her eyes as she seeks out a secluded set of machines, walking closer to Bakari than me.

I'm not sure if she's even aware that she's putting distance between us, but it puts me on edge.

She looks around the room. "This casino is so nice; the luxury is insane. If the arena is anything like the casino, then your fans will enjoy themselves, for sure."

"Yeah, I hope so. The last show is always a good time. The fans really go all out, and they always seem more wild and loud."

"I always love coming to the last show. The energy gets crazy," Bakari says.

Ava sits in a plush gray velvet chair, removes her credit card from her purse, and quickly swipes it before I can take out my wallet. I bite back unexpected frustration because she beat me to it. I shouldn't be taking care of her. I know I shouldn't, but my inner Alpha wants to meet her needs.

Instead, I swipe my card into my own machine, next to hers, and the games start up.

The light from the machine's screen makes her soft features glow, capturing my attention.

It's torture. I know I want her. She's incredible.

She wants a family in the future, and I could give her a found family with Stella and the band.

She already loves my dad. My suite at the palace is ready for an Omega to join me with very little need to change much.

I would purchase her the nest alcove of her dreams. The Stella's sister who designs Omega alcoves in House Stryker would have a field day helping me spoil Ava to her heart's content.

With my economic status, I could ensure that we live comfortably for the rest of eternity. She and I would want for nothing, and if we were blessed with children someday, money wouldn't be an issue.

Now she's got me thinking of kids for the first time in my thirty years.

But I just can't get my head around giving up part of my life and settling down with an Omega.

Bakari sits at his machine next to me and pulls my attention from Ava.

He bumps my shoulder and whispers, "Man, what was your dad thinking? She's perfuming, and soon she'll attract every Alpha in this damn casino.

I don't think the two of us should be near her right now.

Either of us could go into rut. I don't know about you, but I don't want to lose my grip on my control and you shouldn't want to either.

Even though she is superhot and funny, she's vulnerable, man. ”

“I'm just as responsible for this mess. My dad delivered her to me, and I didn't make the call to Lord Stryker so she could take the vow. I knew I was playing a dangerous game, keeping her on tour, but I couldn't bring myself to send her away.”

Bakari looks me over and grins. “You're not claiming her. Interesting. What's wrong with her? She seems great.” He leans forward and stares past me at Ava.

The fact that he's looking at her fills me with hostility and dread. I hate his eyes on her. In reality, however, she's fair game.

“Your loss, man. I would claim her in a heartbeat...Maybe I will.” He smirks at me and then moves around me to sit on Ava's other side.

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I take a deep breath and watch them out of the corner of my eye, getting more and more irritated with every giggle and smile she gives Bakari, ignoring me altogether.

A cocktail waitress arrives. “What can I get you all?” I toss a chip on her tray, and I look at Ava.

“What can she get you, sweetness?” She glances at me and then looks back at her machine. I tense. I hate that I no longer have her undivided attention.

“Umm, I’ll have a seltzer with lime.” Her gaze moves to me again. “I probably shouldn’t start drinking. I feel a bit off.”

Now I’m clenching my fists. I give Ava my guarded rock star smile.

I want to rush her out of here, away from my friend, and ensure her safety in our suite, with my security, but I know that would confuse her.

The concert’s in a couple hours, there’s still plenty of time to get her situated and comfortable.

If an unmated Alpha from another vampire house catches her scent, all hell could break loose.

It’s bad enough to have Bakari near her and showing interest. I can’t tolerate the thought of a strange Alpha placing a mate claim on her, biting her, taking her away from me, and promising her to their lord.

As an unclaimed Omega with no necklace to signify her promise to Lord Stryker, any Alpha would have every right to take her from me.

She has a say in our house but might not in others.

It's fine. She's safe with me.

"I'll have a Sazerac," I say, smirking.

"Oh my gosh, that is hilarious; Nolan Szasz wants a Sazerac...What are the odds?" Ava says, laughing.

I drape my arm across her chair to get as close to her as possible. I want to eat up her joy and bathe in her intoxicating scent. Bakari looks at my arm with an unreadable expression.

Joining in her laughter, I can't help but think I'll miss these moments once her Alpha mate claims her.

Some other guy will hear her bright laughter, hold her warm hand, and the intensity of the jealousy that reaches up my throat is sharp and biting.

Until Ava, I never had a reason to feel envious of anyone.

The waitress looks seductively at Bakari. "And for you?"

"Black Russian, gorgeous."

The waitress smiles. "I'll get your drinks to you right away."

"Are you having fun yet?" I ask Ava, willing her to look only at me.

“Who, me? Yeah, I’m ready to lose all my money. Who needs money anyway?” she says, and chuckles to herself. Her soft laughter is infectious.

I haven’t told her, but since she was thrust into my life and has become a fixture in my tour bus, new lyrics are flowing effortlessly.

One song in particular is about my new muse.

I’m not sure I can share that part. Should a muse know of their role in an ’artist’s creations?

It might make her feel like she has a more permanent role in my life than I’m prepared for. I can’t hurt her like that.

Sharing space with her has gotten difficult . Her enticing rosewater scent is getting stronger by the second, her Omega perfume encircling me like a delicious fog. I could bathe in her scent with the pleasure it provides me. Shit! Yet another sign that her heat is approaching.

“Whoo-hoo. Yes! I’m up by ten dollars.” Ava’s smirk is just as charming as her arresting smile.

“Are you doing dollar pulls?” I ask her, acting affronted.

“Yeah, what’s wrong with that? I’m not loaded.” Before she can stop me, I swipe my black card into her machine and wink at her. “Nolan, what are you doing? You can’t just give me your money to gamble with.”

“You are so wrong, sweetness. I just did. You should bet more. This will just make it more interesting. I’m curious how much of my money you can lose tonight.”

“That’s the whole point. I don’t want to lose your money.”

“Well, it looks like that decision has been taken from you,” I say, grinning at her,
“Have fun, beautiful.”

Bakari looks at me and shakes his head. He knows I need to step up as an Alpha; if I don’t, he truly might take my place.

She glares at me when I wink and continue with my pulls.

She might want to fight me on this, but we both know I have access to more money than I could ever need.

Unlike Larissa, she’s more cautious of it than hungry for it.

It’s just another reason to want her in my life.

It’s my money; I can give it to whoever I want.

What’s the point of having it if I don’t spend it?

Giving it to the happy, gorgeous Omega sitting next to me feels right.

..and that’s terrifying. If I were her Alpha, I would slaughter anyone who even looked at her with desire.

Continuing to bask in her amazing scent, I try to focus on my games.

She moves, and I watch as she removes her cream jacket and drapes it over the back of her chair.

Her navy and white shirt shows off her collarbone, and I can't help but look at her neck.

I wonder what it would be like to taste her blood.

She's teasing me and doesn't even know it.

If her scent is any indication, feeding from her during claiming would be heaven.

I glance at her gray skirt and then down at her blue heels to stop the thoughts of biting her and her delicious curves. Curves that are driving me to madness.

Bakari watches me shamelessly checking her out and laughs, shaking his head. I'm worried that she's getting more warm. I need to take her up to the suite and tuck her safely away from Bakari and other Alphas.

My phone vibrates in my pocket, and I pull it out and see my dad's name flash across the screen. I nod at Bakari and look at Ava. "I need to get this. I'll be right over there." I gesture to a nearby alcove. "My dad is calling."

"Oh yeah, sure. Tell him donut girl says hi."

Smiling at her words, I nod and walk to the side of the room, keeping watch over her while I take the call. Bakari bumps her shoulder and has her laughing at something he's saying, and I want to go over there and knock him out. I know her scent is getting to him, too.

"Hey...How's it going?"

"Hi. I'm just calling to see how you and Ava are getting along and how you feel about wrapping up your tour tonight."

Looking around the casino, I glance at the time on my cell's screen and watch Bakari continue to joke around with Ava.

"Ava and I are doing well." Hesitating, I'm unsure if I should tell him about her looming heat. "She's great."

"I thought you two would hit it off." He sounds smug, and I want to lay into him for the position he's put me in.

"Yeah, the tour has been long. We're all ready for a break." Looking up at the chandeliers I can't help but feel annoyed. What's the point of small talk? He knows what he did. We both know.

"I see. Well, there's an issue. Stryker knows about Ava and has ordered that she be returned home to be supported in the Sanctuary." He clears his throat and pauses, "How have things with Ava been going? Is she your future mate?" I can hear new urgency in his tone.

Seeing Bakari hitting on Ava only adds to my annoyance. "Straight to the point, huh?"

Ava is bathed in light from her machine, telling me she won even more money. I would do anything to see her stay happy and carefree; she's positively delighted.

"Nolan, you and I both know that when an Omega is in the presence of an unmated Alpha, it can bring on her heat. Has she been showing signs?"

I can't help but think that he wants her to be in heat, so I'll go into rut and finally claim an Omega and, better yet, one he approves of.

My dad's scheming ways irritate me to no end.

I could lie to him, but there's no point.

As the Alpha who uncloaked her, it's really his prerogative to know, since it's his neck on the line.

Now that Stryker knows about her, the situation is more precarious.

"Yeah, she has," I say, sounding resigned even to my own ears. "She just started showing signs in the last hour. Her heat should arrive in the next day or so."

"I see. What do you plan to do about it? Do you want to claim her?"

With a heavy sigh, I push down what I really want to say. Yes, of course I want to claim Ava. Nothing would make me happier. "No, Dad. She deserves someone with more stability. She doesn't deserve the chaos Larissa started."

My dad sighs into the phone. "You're making a poor choice, and I think you know it.

You may end up regretting this. Plenty of Alphas in House Stryker would jump at the opportunity to court her and claim her as their own.

Time isn't on your side. Once she has chosen her Alpha, she'll be untouchable to you and anyone else. "

Watching the waitress deliver our drinks, I can't help but feel a heavy sense of loss and shame. She deserves the world, and I could easily give it to her. But she doesn't deserve the intense scrutiny that would follow her once the world discovers who she is.

"Nolan, you know you can make her happy. Do you really not want Ava for a mate?"

“Of course, I want her!” I hiss. “It’s why you sent her here. But Larissa interrupted us last night and made her uncomfortable, and she’s since pulled away from me. I don’t want that drama thrown into her life. Larissa may never stop. The scrutiny and chaos may never go away.”

“Shouldn’t Ava make that choice for herself?”

I take a deep breath and try to release the heavy weight in my chest. “Maybe. But she doesn’t really know what she’d be agreeing to as my Omega.”

“Maybe not. Or maybe you’re wrong. I can’t help but feel disappointed. You’re missing out on so much.”

“Believe me, Dad, I know.”

He sighs. “What am I going to do with you? If you give up on her and yourself, this door will close forever. You know what I have to do now that she’s showing signs of heat, right? Stryker wants her back in San Diego as soon as possible.”

“Yeah, you need to take her home and get her into the Sanctuary. I get it, Dad.”

“When do you and the guys leave Vegas to return home?”

“Two nights from now.” I feel devastated. “When are you coming?”

“Your mother and I will arrive around dinnertime tomorrow night. We’ll take you both out to eat so you can gain some closure, and then we’ll take her home with us on the Stryker jet.”

“Part of me hates this.”

“Well, that’s the part you should be listening to, but you’re too stubborn and rebellious for your own good.”

“Geez, kick a guy when he’s down.”

“You wouldn’t be down if you chose her and your happiness. You both deserve all the love and satisfaction a mate gives you. Does she not seem interested in you? Is that the problem?”

“Not at all. There’s chemistry between us for sure.” But is her attraction to me due to her oncoming heat, her biological response to an Alpha? Is it masking her true feelings?

“Well, if I can do nothing to change your mind from this utter stupidity, I guess we’ll see you tomorrow evening.”

“Alright. See you and Mom soon.”

The call disconnects, and the pain and tension in my chest become almost unbearable. I can barely breathe. I’ve been lying to myself that I’d have more time with her on the road while we head home.

I look up and see Ava and Bakari hug while he whispers in her ear.

I feel my anger build, burning me from the inside.

My emotions hit me like a raging storm. Every muscle in my body clenches and my grinding jaw feels painful.

First, anger at myself and now hostility toward my friend.

I want to rip him away from her and hold her close, never letting her go. ..but I can't.

I know going to the sanctuary is for her benefit.

A newly uncloaked Omega in heat deserves comfort and special care.

I can't entertain the idea of being the person to provide it.

She'll make someone in my own house the luckiest bastard alive.

Ava deserves everything a mate will give her—treats, soft things, endless pleasure.

I'm unwilling to give what would be required to claim her.

My tours would need to be scheduled around her heats, and my albums would require more time to release new material.

My relationship with my fans will change.

I would need to stay home more. Her protection and safety would be crucial.

I can hire more security, which would help.

Still, her safety would ultimately be my responsibility as her mate.

Her presence in my life would make writing new music easy, if the last few days are any indication of what the future would be like. We'd have a new album in no time. In exchange for her freedom, I would make all her dreams come true. It's the least I could do.

But with the countdown looming to when she'll be taken from me, I need to focus on

tonight's show. That's my priority. I need to give my fans what they expect from me. Entertainment and my attention.

It's too bad I can't provide the same to Ava. Tomorrow, I will lose her completely, the perfect Omega, my muse.

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 3:22 pm

Nolan

The energy of the vast crowd washes over the arena like a torrential downpour.

Still, all I can think about is Ava leaving me tomorrow night.

Bakari, Stella, and I stand in the wings at the edge of the stage, counting down to the start of the show when the band and I step on stage.

Rex and the guys are currently doing their preshow rituals behind me but I can't seem to channel my focus.

Rex hops from one foot to the other, getting his heart rate up in preparation for the sustained energy of the show.

Ian is doing yoga, and Torin and Eli are downing shots of tequila.

Stella pulls out her phone from her pocket and stares intently at the screen. She's so focused on what she's watching that she doesn't notice Rex joking around behind her, trying to get her attention.

She grins with a pleased look in her eye. "Ava's amazing. She is fighting for you guys with everything she's got. Nolan, you need to watch this."

"What is it? Who's fighting whom?" I say.

Bakari pulls out his phone, too. "Where am I going to watch? I want to see what has

you so excited.”

“The band’s social media feed. Ava’s doing a live stream now, but you should watch it from the beginning.”

Bakari puts in an earbud and passes me the other one. Slipping it into my ear, I nod at Bakari, and he starts the video.

“Hi, everyone.” Ava waves at the camera, and I grin at her friendliness. “You’ve probably seen that I’m Death by Dawn’s new social media manager. I need to address some things that have happened in the past few days.”

She pauses, and her shoulders slump. My breath stalls. Ava looks hot and uncomfortable, with a sheen of sweat on her forehead. She blows her bangs out of her face.

“You see, the previous social media manager has been malicious and spiteful. She has done everything she can to drag Nolan and Death by Dawn through the wringer, and some of you have been eating it up. What you don’t know, because he’s too much of a stand-up guy to tell you, is that she’s Nolan’s ex and means to harm the band you love so much. ”

She adjusts her sleeves and looks into the camera with so much anger it makes my inner Alpha claw up my spine with a need to fix it. I don’t like seeing her upset. I’m blown away that she’s doing this.

“I care about this band. They’re even better than you know.

I am sick of seeing them mistreated, and I know you feel as passionately about them as I do.

Nolan doesn't deserve this nonsense, and neither does the band.

Are you going to let some jilted lover treat them like this? I know I won't. Not anymore."

My mind is reeling. Seeing her stand up for me and the guys warms my heart. This girl is absolutely stunning, even more so when she's angry. She takes off her sweater and slams it down on the couch.

"It's time to show Death by Dawn how much you care about them. It's time to give this Larissa a taste of her own medicine. I'm sick of deleting her hateful comments and blocking every new account she creates. It's time to let her know how you feel about her crap."

She clenches her fist and then adjusts her glasses. The fact that she's standing up for us is heartwarming. I want to grab her and kiss her to show her how I feel. Bakari looks at Stella, bouncing on her heels with excitement.

"It's time to let your voices be heard. Flood her with your hearts and your positive comments.

Do what your heart tells you, and don't let her get away with it, but also don't sink to her level.

It's time for her to let go and leave her relationship with Nolan Szasz in the past. He's done and is moving on. It's time for him to be happy."

She looks down and collects herself. All I can feel is my heart expanding in size. Taking deep breaths to hold back the overwhelming awe that's making me tear up, I watch as she continues.

“If you love Death by Dawn as much as I do, then now is the time to show them you care. It’s time to stand up for them.

Don’t let Larissa and her vindictiveness win.

Working for them this week has truly been a dream and a pleasure, and for those of you who are seeing them in Las Vegas tonight, enjoy the show! ”

She clicks off the live stream, and I can only stand in stunned silence.

The sounds of the crowd fade away, and the excitement in the arena feels less important than it did before watching Ava just now.

I wish I didn’t have to perform. I want to run to the hotel suite and give her my gratitude. But I can’t.

It’s showtime.

I glance at the guys, give them a nod, and Torin, Rex, and Ian walk on stage. The crowd goes wild.

As Eli walks past, I glance at Stella and Bakari. “I’m worried about Ava. It looks like her heat may be right around the corner. Go check on her, please, Stella.”

My manager nods and heads for the hotel.

Bakari gives me a fist bump, and then I step out onto the stage.

The lights shut off, and I step up to the microphone.

As the stage lights turn back on, we begin to play, and the crowd goes wild.

The words flow out of me. We've played these songs at every show on this tour, and I'm excited about the new songs I've put together the last few nights. Rex just needs to arrange the music.

Ava has genuinely been a blessing; she is my muse, and I'm absolutely mad about her. I can only imagine how good the new album will be with her presence in my life. Thoughts of Ava threaten to pull me out of every song, and thankfully, only the guys notice; the audience is none the wiser.

I'm worried about her fluctuating discomfort in the casino and during tonight's live stream. Her heat is coming, and she's going back to San Diego. On Lord Stryker's order, she's being ripped away from me. What am I doing? I can't help but think I'm making a mistake in letting her go.

I'm barely present with each song. Just playing the notes and singing on autopilot.

When did doing what I love become so tedious?

Looking into the wings, I can't help but hope that a particular pixie of a girl will be standing there, watching me.

But all I see are Bakari with our roadies.

The song is almost at the bridge, and I try to shake my thoughts and focus on what I do best. Making music. What I've worked so hard for.

I could feel Ava's care, concern, and passion for us—for me—in every word she spoke. Part of me wants to keep her and claim the girl who was meant to become mine.

I'm sick of feeling tied up in knots, fighting myself. An Alpha is supposed to be

confident and decisive, and I haven't been either of those things. Before tonight on the gaming floor, I thought I'd have more time with her, at least a few more days, until we reached San Diego.

I don't know if I can take seeing her with another man. Just watching Bakari embrace her made me livid, and that's not like me. The idea of seeing Ava's adorable fangs and another Alpha's claiming mark on her porcelain skin makes me fiercely hostile toward her future mate.

Ava is the perfect girl, a perfect Omega.

..perfect for me. Fame doesn't faze her.

She understands the importance of family, whether bound by blood like my parents or chosen and developed like my band.

She's creative and passionate, things we both share.

With her vibrant and bubbly personality, I know she'll be scooped up, courted, and claimed quickly.

I already miss her. I want her here with me as I finish out the tour. She's become an essential part of it, and I'm surprised by how fast she charmed her way into my life.

The roar of the crowd turns incendiary as I raise my arms to them.

This is by far the largest crowd of the entire tour.

The double balconies that wrap around the arena are packed, and the floor is a sea of faces taking in every word, every note, every harmony Rex and I sing.

I used to love this, but tonight, it all feels rote.

Like I'm just here to finish something I started months ago.

I'm not giving my everything to the deserving crowd.

Tonight, I can't help but feel that the person most deserving of my attention is the girl in my hotel suite.

Ava would never resent my career. I'm starting to see now that I was being ridiculous. We could make a relationship work on the road. We've been great together for the past four days. Hell, Rex and Lucy make it work.

It would be a privilege to reward and provide for Ava.

With proper planning, we could schedule our tours around her future heats without much issue.

The guys and Stella would understand. A relationship with Ava would be nothing like the toxic mess I was immersed in before. Larissa was never right for me.

As the guys and I wrap up the song, I glance at the side of the stage for what must be the millionth time and see Stella standing there with a worried expression marring her face. She beckons to me.

Fear takes hold of my lungs.

Walking over to Rex, I call, "Hey man, can you handle the next song with a drum solo and play for a while? The guys can riff off you. Stella needs me, and she looks tense." The crowd is screaming and cheering for the next song.

“Yeah, sure, no problem. You go find out what’s happening,” Rex says, making eye contact with Ian. “Hopefully, it’s nothing too bad.”

“It’s probably nothing.” I nod at Rex and walk off stage to Stella and Bakari.

“What’s up, Stella?”

“You won’t like this.” She pauses, and I’m hanging on her words. “Ava has gone into heat. She’s tearing apart the suite, frantically trying to nest.”

Fuck! A wave of protectiveness rips at my throat. An unassisted heat could send Ava into madness for days.

Bakari looks at me with a calculating stare. “She needs an Alpha to soothe her. It’s her first heat. She can’t be alone. You know this.”

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I do. “Put our two best security guys on her door. No one but Stella or I are allowed inside.” I stare at Bakari, waiting for him to challenge me. Watching the tension build in his body language.

“Okay, that’s easily done, but she needs real nesting materials and food. We don’t know how long her unassisted heat will last,” Stella says.

Stella calling Ava’s heat unassisted is accurate, and that makes me furious.

I’m nauseated, thinking that Ava will be alone and unsatisfied during her first heat.

She deserves reassurance and the best blankets and pillows possible.

She deserves an Alpha’s attention, his care, and his knot.

Ava should be cuddled, spoiled, and thoroughly fucked.

Sure, the suite is nice, and huge, but she’ll still be needy for an Alpha.

“Get her everything she could possibly need. More bedding from the hotel and the bus. Whatever she demands. And order her food from room service. Enough to keep her well-fed until I return from the media blitz after the show and can take over.”

Stella’s face contorts in annoyance. “Sure, Nolan, I can do all of that, no problem, but I’m a Beta—you’re the Alpha. Catering to her every whim is kind of your job.”

Bakari looks upset, and I know the Alpha in him wants to offer to assist Ava. But the

idea of him going anywhere near her right now makes me want to rip him apart.

“Stella, I’m not her Alpha.” I swallow my misery. “You and I need to help Ava as her friends. I can’t help her in every way she might need, but I can provide the basics, and I need you to help me do that. I can’t be in two places at once.”

She swallows thickly. “Hey, I get that, I do, but aren’t you being an idiot right now?”

You and Ava have been inseparable for days.

I’ve seen the way you look at her. She holds your attention like no one else has in all the time I’ve known you.

As your friend and manager, I’ve seen it all, and no other woman compares to your reverence for Ava. ”

“Stella, she’s not?—”

“If you don’t help her, Nolan, I will,” Bakari says, fire in his eyes.

I snarl and step toward him, ready to punch him. He’s insane if he thinks I’ll give him access to our suite. He’s not going near her.

“No!” Stella thrusts herself between us and rounds on me. “You stubborn jackass. That sweet girl is yours, Nolan. She is your Omega. You’ve been courting her for days now. You’re just too blind to see your own actions.”

I flinch. I have been courting Ava. I can see that. But that doesn’t change the fact that she’s not mine. I can’t help her the way she truly needs during her heat. Her first heat. I feel like I’m going insane, torturing myself.

“Whatever, Stella. I have to go back on stage. Give her everything you can and send someone to get her dozens of donuts. She’ll need them, crave them. It will make her happy.”

“You are so annoying. I can’t believe how ridiculous you’re being!” she retorts.

I step back on stage, and the crowd goes crazy.

Still, I can’t help the urgent pull telling me I shouldn’t be performing in front of thousands of people, but back at the hotel, present and attentive to Ava.

Sure, I trust Stella to follow my instructions, but there’s something inherently wrong with it all.

I should be the one getting Ava those damn donuts.

I didn’t even have enough time to tell Stella which ones are Ava’s favorites.

Only I know that. Well, me and her fans on Instagram.

Only three more songs—two and the encore.

Almost there, we’re almost done. I should be enjoying this final show, but I can think only about getting off stage.

When an Omega needs her Alpha, everything else becomes less necessary.

I can’t bear thinking about my beautiful Omega, all bundled up alone in her nest, becoming unstable and slipping into madness.

She can’t suffer like that. What if she feels unsettled in the big room?

Maybe I should have told Stella to set her up in the closet.

My Omega needs to feel secure, like she did in my room on my bus. My Omega?

My heart hammers in my chest when I picture her smile, remember her babbling when she can't keep random thoughts from escaping her mouth and her zeal for life's little pleasures, like her beloved donuts.

What she just did, confronting Larissa. How she stood up for me and the band.

If I kept her in my life, her fame, reach, and influence would flourish as she grows her own Instagram account.

My popularity and the public's curiosity would drive them to discover her and how amazing she is.

Her follower count would become insane if she was my girl.

If she was mine, the world would know it, and nobody could take her from me, not even Lord Stryker. She would be mine for eternity.

The comfort that thought brings me feels right.

Is she mine? My girl, my Omega, my mate? My heart is screaming the truth that I've been denying. I've been needlessly torturing myself, and for what? I want Ava. I want everything with her. I want her smiles and her giggles. God, how I love this girl. What the fuck? Do I actually love her?

With the sudden realization, I almost miss a line of the song I'm singing.

I love Ava. It may have been quick, but during the past few days, Ava has become the

most important thing in my world.

There is no one better than me to give her everything she needs.

A family, close friendships, a home with me in the palace.

She wants to become a vampire mate. Then she should be mine— my mate.

She wants happiness. I would make it my life's mission.

Hell, I would even give her the kids she wants in the future.

There are no limits to how much I cherish and love this girl.

When the last note of the song is played, I look out into the crowd, and a woman flashes her tits at us.

Has this shit ever held an appeal? I'm not even remotely interested in the girl and her penchant for nudity.

The woman I would give all my attention to is alone right now, and she shouldn't be.

I need to wrap everything up as quickly as possible.

I need to be with my Omega and help her.

I shouldn't have pulled away from her tonight. It could be our last together.

Would she reject me? Part of me wonders whether Ava will accept me as her mate. After how I acted earlier tonight, I can't be sure.

The band and I leave the stage to build up excitement and anticipation for the night's last song. The crowd is chanting and cheering to get us to come back on. Rex and the guys shake out their bodies to remain warm and loose, but all I can think about is my girl.

I couldn't be happier with my realization.

Ava has my heart. She's had me for days, maybe since we first met.

God, it pisses me off that my dad was right, and now I owe him.

I owe him big for taking this risk, breaking the rules, and gifting me my Ava.

For knowing the truth before I did; Ava should have always been mine.

"Hey guys, we need to make this a one-song encore. I need to get to Ava," I say.

"Now I get it! That's why you weren't all there tonight." Ian smirks at me.

"What happened to Ava?" Rex asks, sounding concerned.

"I can't get into it, but I probably won't be around for the next few days until we head home on the buses."

All four of them smile at me with knowing grins. "Man, I get it. You need time with your girl. Yeah, Nolan, we'll keep ourselves occupied," Rex says.

Hearing Ava referred to as "my girl" thrills me. I'll be the happiest man alive if my tiny girl lets me into her nest to claim her.

Bakari comes over and gives me a big hug. "You know I was just trying to look after

an Omega in need. I didn't want to step on your toes, but you were being a pain in the ass. She's yours. I'm happy for you. She's awesome."

Relief washes over me. I hug him and feel all the tension leave my body.

Ava might not be ready yet to be turned into one of my kind, but she's my mate until the end of our days...unless she rejects me. I can't help but worry that I've failed her. I have some serious making up to do.

The guys and I step back on the stage; it's now or never.

The sooner we wrap up this show, the sooner I can be with my Omega.

There are media interviews to do, but maybe I can rush through them or make up some excuse to avoid them entirely.

No, probably not. With Stella helping with Ava, she isn't available to assist me in avoiding the press.

I look out into the crowd with a beaming smile on my face.

After tonight's show, my life will never be the same.

No more groupies, no more nights where my mind is blank, unable to write new material.

I'll have my muse irrevocably tied to me, and I can't help but feel inspired and energized.

I'll no longer be single, and though I might lose some freedoms, I will gain so much more.

If I'm lucky, I'll gain my girl's heart and her love. God, I hope she feels the same way I do. There is nothing I want more than her undying love. Her heart will be the biggest gift I could ever receive.

As I walk up to the microphone, the stage lights come back on.

I look out at the sea of rapt faces. Some are ready to record the last song on their phones, and a twinge of regret grips me.

We agreed we would sing the new song I finished writing on the bus a few nights ago.

The song I wrote when my muse brought my creativity back from the dead.

The new music is about Ava, and how she makes me feel alive again.

"So, this is our last song, and I want to thank you for coming out and joining us tonight. It's been a great tour, and you've all been fantastic. You're the best fans we could ever hope for. Good night, Las Vegas!"

The crowd goes wild, and the people from the back run and push to the front of the stage. It's always the same. The same songs, same faces, same cities. When did my life become so repetitive? My Omega brought newness into my life. New joy. New feelings of love. New music.

I'm about to strum the first note, but I can't help but feel a sense of profound sadness because Ava isn't here to hear the song she inspired. I wrote the song for her. I thought she'd be standing in the wings with us, but she's not. I pray she's not suffering. I miss her.

It's not right to share this song with anyone until she's heard it first.

I look at the crowd. “I’m sorry. I was going to play a new song, but this isn’t the right time. I wrote it for someone special, and she hasn’t heard it yet—it’s not right for my girl to hear her song only after you have. I hope you all understand. It belongs to her.”

Instead, I cue the guys to play our biggest hit, “Dark of Night , ” the song they all came to hear. The crowd roars in approval, and all my stress and frustration drop from my shoulders. I made the right decision.

As I sing, I feel lighter than I have in months, and I have to work hard not to rush through the lyrics.

The fans deserve this final moment, and I’m committed to giving it to them.

After I tell Ava how I feel, who knows when our next tour will be.

A break to spend much-needed time with my soon-to-be mate sounds like bliss.

Cellphone screens are lit throughout the arena, and my excitement overrides my worry. If I’m lucky, I won’t get much sleep until my Omega’s heat breaks.

We finish the song, and the crowd screams. I breathe a sigh of relief. Now I just have to breeze through the press and sign a few autographs, and then I can see how my girl is faring and apologize for withholding myself from her. God, I hope she isn’t too miserable without me .

“Nolan, can I ask you some questions?” the first reporter says as I step through the curtains.

“Yeah, but there’s been a change of plans,” I say, glancing around at the crowd of reporters and photographers lucky enough to hold press passes. “I have somewhere I need to be, so we must make this quick. Why don’t you all gather around, and we’ll

do this together in one go instead of separately.”

The reporters look at each other with irritation on their faces, and I can’t help but grin. They’ll have to deal with it and be happy with what I give them.

The reporters surround us, and photographers snap pictures of me and the guys. I suck it up and give them my best smile.

“First question?” I ask them, guessing what it will be.

“Are you seeing someone new?”

“There is someone new in my life, but I won’t talk about her tonight. Not until she’s ready for the spotlight that will undoubtedly be on her.”

“How do you think your fans will react to the news that the rock star bachelor Nolan Szasz is off the market?”

I couldn’t care less about how the groupies and fans will respond to the news, as long as they leave me and Ava alone. “I don’t know, but if they’re true fans, they’ll be happy for me. I hope they’ll all love her as much as I do.”

“Do you have new music coming? Is there a new album in the works?”

“Yeah, there is. There will be, thanks to her.”

I give them my best smile and take off. That’s all they get tonight. I’m done making Ava wait. I just hope she wants me as much as I want her. I’m coming for you, sweetness.

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 3:22 pm

Nolan

I disconnect the call as the elevator stops at the fifty-third floor. Informing my dad that Ava and I would be missing dinner tomorrow night brought a huge smile to my face. Telling your dad that your girl is in heat is a special kind of awkward, but there was no way around it.

I step off the elevator. My security stands in front of the door to our shared suite, and the relief that washes over me makes me realize just how tense I am. Ava's heat has me by the throat, and I need to see her with my own eyes.

"Mr. Szasz, good evening," Rick, my head of security, says.

"Hey, guys. No one is to open this door. When room service arrives, text me."

"Not a problem, sir," the other guard, Jamison, confirms.

I swipe my card across the panel, the door swings open, and I catch the subtle scent of my Omega. She smells like the most intoxicating bouquet of roses and sweet almond cake sprinkled with powdered sugar. I wouldn't be surprised if her Omega scent is embedded in every surface throughout the suite.

Looking around, I see different levels of destruction and disassembly in the once-pristine suite.

The casino spared no expense with the VIP suite, but it wasn't designed with my Omega's heat in mind.

There are pillows from the couch and spare blankets from the wide-open cabinet strewn all over the floor.

I glance at the minibar, where a variety of unopened snacks are scattered on the surface.

The kitchenette counter holds the food Stella must have brought for Ava earlier, but none looks touched. She hasn't eaten, and I know I must remedy that immediately. I'll have no problem helping her break her heat, no matter how long it takes, but she'll need her energy. We both will.

I load a plate with a sandwich and some fruit. Treats for a distressed Omega are paramount. I look for her favorite donut, raspberry filled topped with powdered sugar, but there aren't any in the box. I settle on a simple glazed donut, which, even though it's not her favorite, will have to do.

The lights have been dimmed to a subdued glow, telling me Ava's sensitive to light in her current state. As I move toward the stairs, I make a note of every change in the suite, cataloging her preferences for her future heats. My role as her Alpha is important, and her comfort is my priority.

I take the stairs three at a time and enter the upstairs walkway with its glass railing, overlooking the suite below.

When I reach the guest room where Ava slept last night, her scent is stronger.

Blooming roses and almonds are fast becoming my favorite combination.

Entering the room, I take in the destruction.

All the blankets and pillows have been stripped from the bed, leaving only the crisp

white sheets.

Her suitcase is overturned, and all her clothes are in a heap on the floor.

Glancing at the open closet, I notice the extra pillows and blankets are missing.

I can't help but grin. My tiny Omega has no problem taking what she needs.

I can't help but feel a little dismayed at how long I had to leave her alone in this state, but there wasn't much I could do without upsetting someone.

Her, or my band and our fans, an impossible choice.

I just hope I made the right call. If she's upset with me, I deserve everything she throws my way.

I glance in the bathroom, and it's empty. Where is she? The shower is dry, and her clothes from today are piled in the corner. My heart thunders in my chest at the thought of finally seeing my girl naked and ready for me. My cock hardens, and I can't help but move on in search of my needy Omega.

Walking farther down the hall, I take in the view of the Strip below us through the suite's floor-to-ceiling windows.

I know it will pale in comparison to the beautiful girl waiting for me.

Flashes of my Ava and her delicious curves have me desperately seeking her out.

I've seen hundreds of girls naked, but they're all meaningless memories.

I can't picture a single one as I reach the master bedroom.

Taking a deep breath, I taste her roses and almond sweetness in the air. She smells divine. I open the door, and her scent hits me like a sledgehammer. I inhale...and freeze.

In the center of my large bed is the most breathtaking sight I have ever seen.

My girl is buried in the center of a meticulous nest, like an offering.

She's splayed out on top of my favorite shirt.

The one I wore when I met her for the first time.

If that's not a sign of fate, I don't know what is.

This girl was mine from the taking from the moment she entered my life.

As I walk to the foot of the bed, I take in the sight of her slick-drenched thighs, spread to accommodate her wet fingers as they frantically beat against her clit and thrust into her soaked pussy.

Her lacey cream-colored bra has been yanked down under her beautiful breasts, and the rest of her is bare.

Her hair is a disheveled mess, and her eyes are closed.

I clear my throat. Her eyes snap open, and the grin she gives me is nothing short of wicked. This girl is killing me with one look. She aims straight for my heart, and I need her.

Two fingers slide in deep, "Nolan?" she practically whines. My name on her lips is like the sweetest song.

“Yeah, baby. I’m here.” I move closer to her nest of white sheets, colorful pillows, and blue and purple blankets woven in, providing her comfort.

“I’ve been waiting. I need you.”

“I’m so sorry. I’ll make it up to you.” I swallow thickly. “Ava, I need to ask you something. It’s important.”

“Go ahead and ask me.”

“Do you want me to break your heat, or do you just want me to assist you in breaking your own?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Nolan. I want you so badly.”

I zero in on her wet fingers, now leisurely stroking her clit, and I shake my thoughts loose.

I try to focus on anything but my needy girl getting herself off unsuccessfully in her nest. Licking my lips, I lean over the bed, careful of the piled-up pillows surrounding her.

“Sweetness, are you gonna give me a taste?”

My words register, and she scrambles to her knees, giving me an unobstructed view of her pale creamy tits and tight rosy nipples.

I open my mouth, begging for a taste of her.

She smiles sweetly and carefully slips her moist fingers past my lips and glides them over my tongue.

The flavor of her slick has me nearly crashing to the floor on my knees in supplication to her.

Her rich honey flavor explodes in my mouth, with sweetness and subtle rosewater notes.

My rattled groan as I savor it has her moaning in response.

Swiping my tongue around her fingers, I suck hard to take in every last drop and then pull away from the little vixen in my bed.

“Delicious. You taste so good.”

She perfumes at my praise, her scent getting even more potent.

I know that pleasing my girl with sweet words and giving her the attention she deserves as my Omega is important.

“You’ve been such a good girl for me, building your soft nest for us, but I need to take care of your needs, sweetness.

” Holding the food out to her in offering, I say sternly, “I need you to eat everything on this plate.”

She rolls her eyes at me and glares. “But I don’t need food. If I did, I would have eaten it.”

The saucy minx. “Omega, you need as much energy as you can get for what I have in store for you. You need to eat everything on this plate while I shower to clean up after the show. I don’t want to ruin your nest with unwelcome scents.”

Her head tilts, and she breathes deeply, smelling the surrounding air. She can probably smell the remnants of the show, scents other than my own. She nods in agreement and holds out her hands.

I hand her the food and grin when she grabs the donut first. “No, Ava. You need to eat everything else first. The donut is for last.”

She gives me an angry pout, and it’s almost funny coming from her; I’ve never seen her so upset. “Why?”

“I need to ensure you eat nutritious food first.”

She glares at me again with the heat of a thousand suns, and I can’t hold in my laugh. Seeing this side of her makes me feel like the luckiest bastard alive. No one else will ever see my Omega naked again. Mine, only mine.

She grabs the sandwich and takes a big, aggressive bite, proving that she’s still my good girl underneath her frustration. There’s nothing about her I don’t love. I can’t believe that this woman will be mine for the rest of eternity. What did I do to get so lucky?

“That’s my girl.” I push her hair out of her face and look into her beautiful silver eyes. “You’re making me so happy. After my shower, I’ll make you feel better.”

She nods and sits back in her nest with her plate in her lap. I remind myself to get her some water when I finish taking my shower.

I smirk as I make my way to the bathroom. My room hasn’t fared well. The lights on either side of the bed are so dim they’re almost pointless. My closet has been dismantled, there are empty hangers strewn about on the floor, and all that’s left inside are my jacket, my shoes, and my empty suitcase.

In the bathroom I undress and turn on the water.

With Ava this deep into her heat, if I entered her nest smelling of the concert and the women in the crowd, or even of Stella, Ava's brain wouldn't be able to differentiate between friends and what her instincts would tell her is competition.

She might have gone feral and rejected me on sight.

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I step into the shower and wash every part of my body with my own body wash; I would hate to mess up her precious nest with anything other than our usual scents.

Seeing Ava nesting in my room, on my bed, tells me everything I need to know.

She wants and needs me , and I know I will be welcomed into her nest. The placement is invitation enough.

My Omega isn't subtle in her seduction, and I couldn't be happier.

My hard cock is throbbing with need for her.

This needs to be both the quickest and the most thorough shower of my life.

Lathering the body wash over myself feels like I'm participating in a sacred act.

So does stroking my turgid cock with the sudsy soap as I prepare myself for my mate.

I look down at myself and realize she's probably in for a surprise. I hope she loves it.

Tonight, I will lose myself to the woman I love.

Rinsing off, I anxiously clear my throat.

In a few minutes, I will finally make Ava mine.

I've been careless and stupid for not realizing my dad was right.

I suppose I should thank him, even though his underhanded method for getting me mated still annoys me, no matter how grateful I truly am.

Seeing Ava near Bakari tonight made me nearly lose my shit, even though he's one of my closest friends.

His offer to help her during her heat almost made our friendship null and void.

I dry off, run the towel over my hair, and drop it on the floor.

Tonight, I become an Alpha mate to the most deserving girl.

I fill a water glass and head into the room, not bothering to cover my body.

The time for hiding from each other has passed.

Ava will have all of me tonight and well into the morning.

If I don't have her soon, I might slip into rut and lose control.

I'm pleased that I've kept a clear head so far, but the need to claim Ava is scratching at the edges of my mind.

Ava

Nolan enters the room with a glass of water in his hand, and I take in the tight, toned muscles of his large body. His skin looks flawless and flushed, and all I can think about is how much I hunger for him. Glancing down I notice his hard cock and a moan escapes my lips.

Part of me is upset that I had to wait alone for so long, but the rational part of me

knows he had work to do.

His last show. What does that mean for us?

Will we go our separate ways after returning to San Diego?

The drive to seduce him is riding me hard.

I have to show him we were meant to be together.

I want to be his vampire bride and no one else's; now I just have to make him understand that we're meant to be.

I have to show him that his fame doesn't bother me, and that Stella and the band are my found family. Together, we can have everything we both desire—a family, and an endless well of creativity and love. Goodbye, isolation and loneliness. Together, we'll have it all.

He draws the drapes, blocking out the lights from the Strip, blanketing the room into near darkness.

The only light that remains is the dim glow from the side lamps illuminating my nest. I take the last bite of my donut and lick the traces of sweet icing off my fingers, watching my vampire prowl toward me.

Our eyes meet, and he gives me the most sincere smile, sending warmth down my spine.

I'm grateful that he's no longer pulling away from me.

After the donut shop incident, I mourned the loss of his flirtatious touches and heart-

stopping kisses.

I missed him and what had been building between us.

“Good, sweetness. I’m glad you ate every bite, including your precious donut.” The heat that warms his eyes makes more wetness coat my thighs.

I pass him the empty plate and marvel at his hard, dripping cock.

Is that for me? I inch closer and see the light glint on something metal along the underside.

He has piercings...maybe nine barbells that run over his length, and now I’m breathless.

What is that even going to feel like? Nolan—my vampire—is full of surprises.

He passes me the water glass and smiles, clearly enjoying having my eyes on him.

God, he’s so handsome. He is the most attractive man I’ve ever seen, and if I’m lucky, tonight, he might just become mine.

“Drink it all. You’ll need it. I have no plans to leave your side anytime soon, so gather your energy.

” The wicked glint in his eyes sends shivers up my spine.

This man will be the death of me, and I’m here for it. Nolan Szasz is a threat to my health in the best possible way. I’m ready for everything he wants to give me. I’ve been thinking about him in every way imaginable for hours, and my need makes me dizzy.

“Drink it all.”

Following his command, I down the glass, then hand it to him and watch him place it on the dresser alongside my plate. He’s like a big cat with proud and sure movements and a charged energy, dangerous and hungry.

“You are such a good Omega, Ava. Making your Alpha happy with your submission.” His exotic incense scent hits my nose and warms my soul.

My Alpha?

Yes. Mine.

Tears flood my eyes, pooling at the edges. He just said, “Making my Alpha happy.” Do I make him happy? Questions cloud my mind, and I try to calm myself.

“I need to apologize, baby. I would have been here sooner if I could. Please tell me you know that. I always want you. I wasn’t rejecting you.”

Now he’s apologizing to me? He needn’t worry. I knew why he wasn’t here. “I understand Nolan. My heat came on at a bad time.”

He shakes his head. “No, sweetheart. It came at the right time for you and your body.” He pauses, “Are you going to invite me into your nest? The nest you made for us is perfect.”

He’s right. I did make my nest for us. Even in the deepest recesses of my mind, I knew in my heart that he would be here to help me relieve this unbearable warmth and these overwhelming sensations.

He helped me all week by supporting my Omega instincts to create my first nest and

answering my endless questions.

Has it really been only a week? I can't even remember my life without this man.

"Yes, Alpha, please join me in my nest." The words fly out of my mouth, and I'm not sure if I said the right thing, but when Nolan kneels on the mattress at the edge of my nest, my heart skips a beat.

Having him loom over me makes me feel as if I'm his prey.

His sandy brown hair is curling at the edges, still damp from his shower, and his ruby-glowing eyes take in my every move.

He smirks, and white fangs catch on his lower lip.

"Ava, you are gorgeous. The most beautiful woman I have ever seen." His voice is husky and rough. He carefully crawls into my nest, and I feel the heat radiating from his skin. His body is so close to mine.

"Thank you."

He caresses my cheek and lowers himself into the softness of the blankets and pillows. He cradles my body, being careful with every move. "There is something very important I need to tell you."

"Yeah, what's that?" I purr, curling into his chest.

He places his fingers under my chin, tilting my face up so I'm looking at him directly. "Ava, I love you so much. You would make me the happiest man alive if you said yes to becoming my eternal mate."

I smile so big it almost hurts. Nolan Szasz, my eternal vampire mate. Nodding frantically, I try to take deep, calming breaths, my heart racing.

“No, sweetness, say the words. I need your words.”

“Yes, make me yours. I love you too,” I whisper, overcome with joy.

He smiles, and then he moves quickly, grabbing my ankles to part my legs, and lowers his head and licks my pussy. My breath hitches with the sudden sensations and warmth. When his tongue dances over my clit, I’ve had enough of waiting.

“Nolan, I need you. Please give me your cock.”

He releases my ankles and props himself up, taking in my body from head to toe.

I feel like the most desirable woman ever.

As he moves over me and cradles my head between his delicious forearms, my mind won’t stop.

When did I ever find arms so sexy? This is happening.

Nolan Szasz is about to make love to me.

“Line me up, sweetness. Welcome me home,” he says, his voice rough.

I take his stiff shaft in my hand, my fingertips brushing the metal, and line him up at my entrance.

When his tip slides in, he groans and shivers.

As he glides in slowly, I feel every rivet of his piercings inch their way into me.

The coolness of the metal is a contrast to my warmth.

Every inch of his cock feels like heaven.

He bottoms out and lets out a deep guttural growl. I can't help but smile at his response. He fills me deeply, and I feel completely present with him in the moment.

"God, you are perfect." He smiles down at me.

"You feel so good." I squirm a little. "Huge."

He grins and flashes his fangs as he begins to move in earnest. With every thrust, I feel his piercings rubbing spots inside me. I had no idea I could be stimulated like this; it takes my breath away.

"You still with me, baby?"

"Your piercings feel so good. Your cock is amazing."

He kisses my forehead softly, and his hips meet mine with more urgency.

I feel as if I'm bursting at the seams with pleasure.

My heart and body are totally full of this man.

As he moves in a steady rhythm, I feel my muscles coaxing him into me, begging for more.

I never knew that loving this vampire would feel like this.

“That feel good, baby? Your pussy is magic.” He groans, and it makes my own moan slip past my lips. “My new favorite sound. Your moans for me are the best song ever.”

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My heart stumbles at his sweet words. I will never get enough of them.

I feel him throb inside me, and I start to feel my pussy clench and ripple every time he fills me entirely.

Deep inside me, something swells and creates more intense pressure, and I realize it must be the start of his knot at the base of his cock, stretching me further with each steady thrust. Making me yearn to grasp him and hold it deep within me.

“Do you feel my knot getting ready for your slick, sweet pussy? It’s all for you, Ava. Tell me when you want it.”

Unbearable longing takes over, and my body begs for more. I want him to fill me with his cum. “I need it, Nolan. Please give it to me. I need more!”

“Sweetness, it’s been yours this whole time.

” He kisses me softly as his swelling knot slides through my core, making me so full it’s almost painful.

His knot settles into place, growing even larger in size.

I try to breathe through it, and then his fangs nick my lip and I taste my own blood. “So good, Ava,” he whispers.

He caresses my clit, and an orgasm suddenly overwhelms me in a cascade of pressure and tingles as my pelvic floor pulses around his knot, wringing deep groans from

both of us as we cum together.

I'm consumed. He owns my thoughts, has captured my every breath, and holds all my dreams for the future.

He kisses me and pants against my lips, and my release continues to wash over me, sending pinpricks up my body in a crescendo of colorful light and sensation.

My body tenses and releases, and I'm utterly spent.

Before I can even come down, Nolan kisses my neck and then bites down hard.

The sudden sting is brief, and then his tongue caresses my neck, sending ripples of pleasure like water down my spine.

My pulse thunders in my ears as he takes long pulls of my blood.

With each swipe of his soft tongue, I feel his knot pulse inside me.

Grabbing hold of his arms to ground myself, I feel him empty inside me, filling me up further, sending even more waves of pleasurable tingles through my body, my full pussy nearly overflowing with our combined pleasure.

As he takes a few more drags of my life force, my pleasure crashes over us again, and his name passes from my lips in a gasp. "Nolan."

As I come down from the high he pulls away from my neck and bites his wrist, staring intently into my eyes. Blood starts to drip down his arm as he holds it over my mouth. "Open wide, Omega."

Doing as he demands, I open my lips, welcoming his offering, and swallow his blood

in large gulps. It tastes like caramelized sugar, buttery, almost nutty. Sweet and heavy. His beautiful face contorts in pleasure.

He pulls his arm away from my mouth and licks his dripping wound, and the bleeding stops. He smiles at me, and the sheer bliss in his eyes has me giggling with delight.

He places his finger at my lips and slips it into my mouth.

He gently massages my canines, and I feel them lengthen and descend against his touch.

When I accidentally nip his finger, he grins at me.

“God, I love you. You’re about ready to become mine.

Ready to bite your vampire mate to complete the bond? ”

I nod and run my tongue along my new fangs, reveling in their smoothness. Flipping us over so that I’m on top, his cock still locked deep inside of me, he holds me to his body, and his heartbeat thumps against my chest in a steady rhythm.

“Bite down on my neck and bind us forever, Ava, my gorgeous mate. Finish what you started when you made me fall in love with you. Make me yours.”

Before he even finishes his thought, I bite into his warm skin and instinctively start drinking from my Alpha. Using my tongue to coax more of his sweet blood into my mouth, I swallow large mouthfuls. My hips jerk involuntarily in an undulating rhythm with each new sip of his blood.

His hand snakes its way into my hair, and he holds me to him, fully locked in place by his thick knot and unbreakable hold. He shudders and shakes as he cums again,

filling me with more of his essence. With a guttural growl, he sends my pleasure rolling through my body like a warm electric current.

I feel drunk on his blood and high off my feelings for him.

My vampire mate . Shivers raise the hairs on my body, and I feel like I'm floating in an endless ocean.

With the headiness, my heart stutters, and I feel a thrumming, scorching hot bond tingling and snapping into place from deep in my heart to his.

Connecting me to my Alpha. Making us whole.

I can feel the depth of his love for me through the mate bond, and I know he can feel my own.

The harmony of sensations race through the connection, and I know we are irrevocably intertwined.

“Thank you, sweetness. You have made me the luckiest bastard alive. I can't wait to share my life with you. I will give you my all, Ava. I will give you everything.”

I pull away from his neck and lick my lips, moving in for another kiss. Our first kiss as mates.

Pulling back, he gazes up at me with longing, “God, your fangs are sexy. Let's rest now. We're gonna need it. Your heat hasn't broken yet. Your vampire senses will take time to settle, so rest well, my beautiful mate.”

His hands tangle in my hair, and his knot is still firmly in place and showing no signs of going down.

His strong arms cradle me close, cocooning me in his warmth, and I rest my head on his chest and feel satiated and spent.

My senses are sharper, and everything feels like a steady flow of energy blanketing my mind.

Pride and joy emanate through the bond, and I don't know if I'm sensing myself, or him.

I can hear security talking outside the suite.

The smell of our combined scents is intoxicating.

My new heightened senses are almost too much.

As I slowly drift off to sleep to the steady beat of my mate's heart, I can still taste him on my lips. I am completely safe and loved, mated to the man of every girl's dreams but, most importantly, my own.

Source Creation Date: July 27, 2025, 3:22 pm

Ava

Two nights ago, I became forever changed. Becoming Nolan's vampire mate is a privilege and a joy. We decided to stay in Las Vegas, and everyone has been helping in preparation for this day. Nolan's only request was that we get hitched at the Elvis-themed wedding chapel.

Deep navy wood-paneled walls form the space, and teal couches and chairs rest on the natural wood floors. Stunning white orchids sit on the coffee table. The vanity mirror is surrounded by warm lights that make my skin look radiant.

Marcello watches me get ready from across the room, relaxed with his arms draped across the back of the velvet couch.

He looks great in his gray suit, mauve tie, and boutonniere of the same shade.

Gianna stands next to me, and Marcello's eyes never waver from his mate for too long.

She looks lovely as my matron of honor in a dusty pink knee-length dress that brings out the highlights in her blonde hair and looks fabulous.

There's no denying that her son has her facial features.

Her gray eyes are the only thing Nolan didn't get from his beautiful mother.

"You look stunning, Ava. These are for you."

She passes me a beautiful bouquet of roses. They're mauve colored with deep magenta edges that make the radiant blooms pop. Pearls are nestled throughout the bouquet.

"Thank you, Gianna. You've helped make this day even more special. I feel like the happiest woman alive."

My future mother-in-law smiles at me, and I catch the hungry look Marcello gives his mate. If Nolan's and my relationship has just a fraction of the passion his parents have for each other, I will be a lucky woman.

"I think we're all set," I say, feeling a touch nervous, which is silly. Nothing could possibly go wrong. My mate will be waiting for me at the altar, as expected.

"I'll tell everyone that you're ready." Gianna gives Marcello a quick kiss and leaves the room.

"Ava, tonight, you're making my dreams for my son come true. You're all I ever wanted for him." He grins. "I knew you would capture his heart the minute you and I met."

"I might not have grasped your diabolical plan then, but I'm grateful you didn't take me directly to meet Lord Stryker so your son could claim me first." I grin back. "Nolan is the most amazing mate I could have ever asked for."

"I'm glad." His smile brightens his entire face.

"Wedding March" echoes through the walls, and that's our cue to head down the aisle.

Marcello leads me out of the small room and walks me to the wide double doors, then

offers me his arm.

Sliding my arm in his, I take a deep breath.

I'm smiling so wide it almost hurts my face.

Today, Nolan is making many of my dreams come true.

Marry a rock star. Check. Marry an inspiring, creative artist whom my father would have loved.

Check. Marry the most intriguing man I've ever met, who has been endlessly supportive.

Check. Feel like the most beautiful bride imaginable. Double check.

Marcello walks me down the aisle, and I can't help but stare at my mate, waiting for me at the altar.

He looks incredibly handsome in a crisp black tuxedo with his caramel-colored hair pulled into a bun at the back of his head.

The black bow tie around his neck draws my attention, reminding me of when I fed from him two nights ago.

The beauty of his smile as he watches me nearly makes my heart stop.

The Elvis impersonator behind him says something I can't hear, and Nolan chuckles.

Gianna and Stella sit in the front row with the band seated behind them as our witnesses. I can't help but feel thrilled with this new family. I know I still have to

meet Lord Stryker and the rest of House Stryker, but with Nolan by my side, there is nothing I can't endure.

Marcello and I reach the end of the aisle, and he twirls me around, making Nolan grin.

He places my hand in Nolan's and then stands behind his son.

Marcello takes my bouquet and passes it to Gianna.

I'm so glad Nolan's parents are here, joining us for this moment.

We aren't really eloping, since we already bonded, but the ceremony and tradition were still important to me.

I tear up, thinking how much my parents would have loved to share this moment with us.

We return to San Diego tonight, and tomorrow night, we'll take part in the official mating ceremony at Stryker Palace in front of most of House Stryker. I will be presented to Lord Stryker as Nolan's mate and move into Nolan's suite in the palace.

I gaze into my mate's crimson eyes. I still can't believe that Nolan Szasz is my mate for eternity. Just a little more than a week ago, he was this untouchable force of nature, and now he's mine.

"Ready to become my vampire bride, sweetness?"

Grinning, I nod, and he releases my hands and carefully raises my veil over my head, revealing my face. The hunger in his eyes will never get old. This man wears his love for me as clear as day.

“You look radiant, my beautiful mate,” he says, clearing his throat and taking both my hands in his.

“Thank you. You look very handsome.”

The Elvis impersonator marrying us clears his throat. “Ready to recite your vows?”

“Yes!” we say in unison.

Everyone chuckles at our exuberance, and Nolan looks me in the eye.

“Ava, my love, I promise to be by your side from this day forward, for better, for worse, for everything. Your happy days and your endless photos. Your babbling thoughts and your uncomfortable days. I want your playful spirit and your awkward moments. I want it all, as long as I’m with you.

I will protect you from the spotlight as best I can.

Thank you for becoming my muse and helping me to reach my dream of starting my own label.

Because of you, I know I’ll always be able to write the next song.

You are the best surprise I could have ever received. Thank you for rocking my world.”

Nolan slips a huge champagne diamond ring on my finger, and I can’t help but watch the dazzling facets sparkle in the light.

“Your turn, little lady,” Elvis says to me.

“This is a lot of pressure...I hope I don’t blow this.

” Marcello winks at me, and Nolan just smiles, waiting patiently.

“Nolan,” I say, steeling my nerves and wiping tears from my eyes, “I promise to love you and covet you for all eternity, and I promise you will be as important to me as sugary sweet donuts and warm chai lattes. I will always stand in the wings and support you at your shows. You are a dream come true for me. I didn’t know what my life would become that night when your dad decided to play matchmaker, and now, I’m grateful for it all.

You make my dreams come true, and I am the happiest woman alive because I get to call you mine. ”

I slide his platinum wedding band onto his finger and kiss his hand, needing to ground myself to him in some way.

Nolan wipes a tear from his eye and grins at me. “I’m as important as donuts, huh? Wow, I must be quite a catch.”

Everyone, including Elvis, laughs, and I want Nolan to kiss me now . I breathe a sigh of relief that I got my words out as intended.

“Now we get to the fun part—my performance!” Elvis pauses and slaps Nolan on the back. “Nah, I’m just kidding. It’s time to say the most important part. Nolan, do you take Ava to be your wedded wife?”

“Of course, I do.”

Tears stream down my face. This man brings a brightness and meaning to my life that I had no idea I was missing.

“And Ava, do you take Nolan as your hunka hunka burnin’ love?”

We all laugh, and I wait until everyone collects themselves before I answer, “I do.”

Nolan squeezes my hands, and I know he’s just as impatient as I am. The ceremony might be quick, but not quick enough.

“Well, you may now kiss your little wife and seal the deal,” Elvis says, stepping back from us.

Nolan pulls my body to his and grabs the back of my neck, holding me for the first time as husband and wife.

When our lips meet, I feel ripples of our love through our mate bond, and waves of intense emotion stir in my soul.

The depth of his love for me caresses me like warm rain.

He kisses me with an intensity that feels like I’m being blown over by a violent gale.

I know if it wasn’t for him holding me close, my knees would have given out.

Nolan’s kiss is perfect, and at the end, he sneaks his tongue between my lips for a quick tease of what’s to come in our near future.

“Well, if that’s not the sweetest thing in the world. I now pronounce you Mr. and Mrs. Nolan Szasz!”

I might not have known that I was an Omega, and I might not have dreamed that I would ever become a vampire, but I’m thankful for that night that I went to work when I was feeling low and out of sorts.

Now, I'm filled with more happiness than I have ever experienced.

Being Nolan Szasz's mate and now his wife is everything I could have ever wished for.

Getting to spend eternity with him is a blessing I will never take for granted.

My life will never be the same, and finally, I have become Nolan's vampire bride. His Omega mate.

* * *

Thank you for reading *Rebellious Harmony*. I hope you loved Nolan and Ava's story.

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As we walk hand in hand, I can't help but feel defeated. Nolan and I have been trying to get pregnant for the last year without success, and with every new heat that comes, what should be a time of pleasure breaks my heart.

I've wanted to be a mom since the day after our wedding, and life has been insane. Nolan keeps telling me that the last year would have been too hectic for a kid, but in my heart, I know that I have more love to give. Between the new tour and the press surrounding our wedding, my once quiet life has become a whirlwind of cameras and interviews with the press. Nolan has been a godsend through it all.