

KNIGHT STALKER

THE BLOOD TIES SERIES

Lora Leigh

Dedication:

To my Husband, RC (Tony) Leigh.
Thanks for the "bite".

Chapter One

Summer 2007

Bliss St. Claire stopped at the doorway to the private meeting room, her eyes widening considerably as she was held silent and still by the sight that met her gaze. She ignored the flaring regret, the green, blistering jealousy, and watched in awed amazement instead as her brother's friend, Cadan Gaelan, lowered his pants and released the monster of his cock.

She was salivating. It was thick and long—so thick he couldn't circle it, even with his big hand. The head was round and flared, tinted purple and drooling a copious amount of pre-cum as he aimed it at the inviting pussy spread out in front of him.

Bliss spared a hateful glance for Marissa Delareaux before her gaze went back to the stalk of male flesh disappearing between the woman's thighs. Marissa was nearly screaming as he began to work his cock inside her, but it was Cadan's expression, or rather the features of his face that held Bliss's horrified fascination.

"Oh God. Fuck me with that big dick. Fuck me, Cadan." Marissa was moaning like a damned bitch in heat, her eyes closed, her head rolling on the table, stupidly unaware of what was going on right in front of her.

But Bliss was aware. She told herself to run. She could hear the order screaming through her mind, but her legs refused to move. She watched in horrified fascination as Cadan's lips drew back, his cheekbones becoming more prominent as he lifted Marissa closer, holding her against his chest as he stood before the pool table, his cock moving slow and deep inside her cunt.

His head lowered, his tongue stroking Marissa's neck slowly, wetly, as she shuddered against him, her hips churning, moving her pussy on Cadan's huge cock as she grimaced, and slowly, horrifyingly, his canines lengthened, sharpened. The moment they pierced the tender skin of Marissa's neck, Bliss gasped in shock and fear.

Cadan's gaze met hers as his head jerked up. A small drop of blood fell from the pearly white dagger of his tooth to the sensual fullness of his lower lip where his tongue licked it casually away, his brooding gaze holding hers as he then licked the trail of blood that oozed slowly from Marissa's flesh.

Still watching Bliss, his lips covered the pinpricks, drawing on Marissa's neck as he held her close and began to fuck her harder, deeper, the tight clasp of Marissa's pussy sucking him in with a hollow, wet sound that seemed amplified in the small room.

Bliss shook her head, trying to run, terror beginning to build inside her at a rapid rate. She couldn't run. She couldn't make her legs move. She couldn't escape the horribly erotic sight of the dark creature sucking the blood from Marissa's neck as her pussy sucked his cock deep inside her.

Bliss fought to make sense of her paralysis as time seemed to stand still. Her gaze locked with Cadan's, her heart beating out of control as she told herself to run. She had to run, to hide. He had seen her; he knew she had seen him, had seen the lethal sharpness of his teeth piercing Marissa's flesh.

Fear was like a stain blooming through Bliss's mind, but even more horrifying was the arousal igniting in her pussy. It spread over her, throwing her off balance, confusing her. She liked to think she was an open-minded adventurous sort of girl, but she didn't know if she was quite ready for a vampire.

She watched him suck at Marissa's neck, his eyes black, his skin flushed as he laid the other woman back on the pool table. His hips thrust hard and fast between her thighs as his cock plowed inside her pussy. And through it all, he watched Bliss. Watched her, his eyes flaming, stroking over Bliss's body, making her incapable of tearing herself free of his gaze.

She would never escape him. She knew it. Death wasn't a concern, but at this moment she wondered about her soul. She was so fucked. And not in a good way.

Chapter Two

Release her, Cadan ordered the creatures holding Bliss captive as he lifted his lips from the slender throat beneath them, his tongue caressing over the flesh, healing the punctures that pierced Marissa's skin.

She has seen you, the voice whispered through his mind. *She must be dealt with.*

We must be dealt with, a feminine voice ordered imperatively. *You have not finished feeding, Cadan. We're weak.*

Release her or you can fucking starve to death, Cadan snarled silently as he continued to hold the woman beneath him enraptured. His cock slid slowly, easily up her slick pussy, her orgasms and the arousal caused by the symbiots he carried within his body holding her in thrall.

You're being unreasonable, the female creature, Cerise, snapped. *You can't let her just leave. We need her.*

He paused in the strokes that screwed his cock up Marissa's cunt, testing the creatures and their resolve.

Cadan, we can't. Not yet. Not until she's been dealt with. You know the rules... the male counterpart, Aldon, reminded him, resignation filling the thought.

Oh yeah, he knew the rules, but so did they.

You were supposed to watch my back, he reminded them. *You failed in that. Now release her.*

He refused to allow them to take her memory of him, her memory of their meeting, the small touches they had shared until now, the need growing between them as hot as the fiercest fire.

You're not being rational... Cerise thought irritably.

Why was it always irrational when the female didn't get her way?

He withdrew his dick from the hot, tight clasp of the woman's body, his stomach tightening as Bliss's gaze flew to the wet length, her pupils flaring, the scent of her arousal filling his head like nothing else ever had.

Release her. Now. His hand went to the dagger strapped to his thigh, his thought clear within his head. He would not be controlled by the creatures. In all the years of his existence he had never allowed the one who plagued him to control him and he would be damned if the unwanted second would do so now.

Very well, the female snarled furiously as she lifted the psychic command from the young woman, allowing her freedom of movement once again. Bliss turned immediately, flying down the hallway as he commanded the door to close and secured the room against other prying eyes.

Quickly, his head lowered once again, his teeth piercing the slender neck as he drew more of the needed, life giving fluid into his mouth, cradling her head in his hand, listening to the beat of her heart, gauging the amount he needed versus the amount she must have to sustain her.

He lifted his head and carefully licked over the wound as she shuddered in yet another orgasm, despite the fact that his cock was no longer inside her. She moaned tiredly, exhausted now, pale from the loss of blood and slack within his arms.

Sighing in resignation, he pulled the tight skirt over her hips, lifted her slender body in his arms and carried her to the low couch on the other side of the room. Her short, dark brown hair framed a plump little face that wasn't exactly beautiful, but pretty all the same.

Straightening, he restored order to his own clothes and strode determinedly to the door. If Bliss had screamed bloody murder and told everyone what she saw, there would be no proof of it, but he didn't really care to have her face the humiliation that would ensue.

She deserves to be embarrassed for watching, the female symbiot inside him snorted rudely.

Shut her up. His thought was directed to his own symbiot, an ages-old male who had once shown a reasonable amount of common sense.

He could feel the creature's resignation and the female's disgust. Just what he needed, a damned woman speaking inside his head and causing him more trouble than he already had.

I'm not the female you need to worry about, she informed him mockingly. *The one who just ran out on you is the one you should fear. I stopped her for a reason, you stubborn male.*

He rolled his eyes as he stalked down the hall. The female symbiot always had a reason. He just didn't always agree with it.

Smart-ass, she replied snidely. *If you hadn't been so male, you might have felt it yourself. She's host material, baby. You just lost your chance to get rid of my obnoxious self.*

Chapter Three

Okay, so she had prayed for adventure, freedom. Something that would shake her world up and make her live, for a change. A lover unlike any other. An event, an experience that would change her life. Bliss hadn't meant learning that the man she completely lusted after was a vampire. She could have lived without that knowledge. It wasn't one of those pieces of information that she felt she needed to know.

Bliss opened her apartment door slowly the next afternoon. As normal, the shades and curtains were flung wide, the early morning sunshine piercing the room in wonderful, vibrant rays. A whimper of thankfulness escaped her lips as she rushed into the living room and locked the door behind her quickly.

She couldn't believe what she had seen the night before. She couldn't make herself shake the prayer that it had all been a nightmare. She would awaken soon. All she had to do was pinch herself enough to wake up. Because, despite what she had seen, despite the fear, the overpowering need to run, she had been aroused. Aroused and drawn to the dark vision as nothing she had ever been in her life.

It had made her so damned hot she had needed to change her panties even as she ran for her life, because she had creamed them outrageously.

She tossed her keys to the table beside her and leaned her head against the panel, breathing heavily, exhausted from her fight to stay hidden the night before, certain that she was being stalked. That the monster she had glimpsed in the bar's private room was but one step behind her...

"Well, perhaps more than one step."

Shock exploded in her chest as she turned, eyes wide, and confronted the dark vision of her worst nightmares. He stood in front of the window. The bright rays of the sun surrounded his tall, muscular body, created a halo around his thick hair and held his expression in shadow.

She blinked, certain she was making him up.

"Shouldn't you be in a coffin or something?" she gasped, her eyes wide as she felt her pussy moistening further. This was too much. She wanted to fuck a monster. She must have lost her mind.

"You watch too much television." He tsked gently, his midnight-blue eyes filled with laughter and promise. "That is the trouble with the world and those who inhabit it. They rely only on the legends and the tales passed down from generation to generation or created within the pages of a fiction novel. Yes, my dear, vampires exist." His voice lowered to a dark, sensual throb. "And the rules were never truly recorded properly."

She could hear the amusement in his voice, the cool mocking knowledge that he had won. Wet pussy or not, she wasn't going to deal with this right now. Her hands gripped the doorknob as she tried to turn it, to escape, to find a way to process this new information.

Except the door wouldn't open. Her hands twisted the knob, while jerky whimpers that should have been violent screams tore from her throat.

"Bliss, chill out." He was right behind her.

Bliss swung around, her fist clenched, aiming for his head as she swung her arm. In an instant it was caught within his broad palm as he stared down at her with dark, hot eyes.

"Such violent tendencies," he murmured, his voice rough and deep as he pinned her against the door. "If I didn't know better, Bliss, I would think you didn't like me anymore."

He was laughing at her. She stared up at him in a haze of fury, fear and arousal, seeing the amusement in his gaze as he watched her. The fury and fear she understood, but the arousal made zero sense to her way of thinking.

"I would like you better with a stake in your heart," she snapped, struggling against him as he held her easily.

"Bliss, I am not going to hurt you," he said softly as he pushed her hands against the door, his body flush against hers, trapping her against the panel as he transferred her wrists to one hand. The other stroked over her neck gently.

Bliss stilled at the touch of his calloused fingers against her skin. They were warm, rough, sending erotic impulses of pleasure washing over her body despite the fear that filled her.

"Don't you dare try to bite me," she snapped as his head began to lower.

A smile tipped his lips, the sensual fullness of his lower lip curving sexily as his gaze continued to hold hers.

"I bet you would taste delicious," he whispered, his voice taunting her as his hand cupped the curve of her neck. "Hot and sweet. I've wondered these months how you would taste, Bliss."

Bliss trembled against him, swallowing tightly as his gaze centered on her lips rather than her eyes.

"You are not allowed to bite me," she told him desperately. "I mean it, Cadan. There has to be a rule against biting me somewhere."

She tried to clear her mind of the sexual haze wrapping around her. Now was not the time to be turned on, she reminded herself furiously.

"There are many rules about biting," he murmured as his fingers caressed her neck. "I promise, it wouldn't hurt."

Bliss tried to control the rapid race of her heart, the arousal building in her pussy and the weakening tremors of fear that shuddered through her body.

He was still laughing at her. She could see it in his eyes, feel it in the air around them.

"Cadan, let me go." She struggled against him with renewed strength, certain that if she didn't break free, within moments she was going to be begging him to bite her. To fuck her.

"Will you restrain this penchant for violence and bloodshed you seem to have developed?" His head lowered, his lips smoothing over her brow. "It's not fighting I want to do with you, beautiful."

She stared up at him in surprise. His voice was thick with growing lust, his eyes becoming darker as his expression tightened with hunger. Bliss knew she was in serious trouble when she felt the juices sliding from her cunt to moisten the plump lips beyond. Her clit was swollen, throbbing, demanding that she do something to ease the hunger that pulsed through her body now.

This was the temptation Cadan was. From the moment she had first met him she had craved him. Unfortunately, seeing him for what he was hadn't eased that craving in any way.

"Look, you really don't want to bite me." She shook her head firmly as his fingers continued to stroke her neck.

"I really want to do a lot of things to you, Bliss," he told her erotically, his voice stroking over her senses like dark, rough velvet. "Things you could never imagine."

Against her lower stomach she felt his erection. Thick, hard, barely contained by the dark leather of his pants as he pressed against her. For one blinding moment, the memory of his cock, thick and hard as it had pressed into the other woman's body, overwhelmed her.

"Oh, I think I have a good idea now." She twisted against him; if she didn't get away from him, if he didn't stop touching her, she would be turning her neck to him willingly for a chance to spread her thighs for him.

Bliss had never thought herself sexually easy, but she had known for weeks now that all Caden would have to do was crook his finger and she would come running, panting and eager for the fucking she needed from him.

She couldn't explain it until she saw him with Marissa the night before. It had to be some kind of weird sexual vampire energy, she told herself. They could control people—it was what all the books said. He had to be controlling her, that was the only thing that made sense to her.

It still didn't ease the arousal blooming in her womb, though. Nor did it slow down the insidious slide of the juices from her pussy.

"Women amaze me." He sighed as he watched her. "Must you fight against me like this, Bliss? I would never harm you, surely you know that."

He watched her as though it somehow offended him that she hadn't automatically trusted in him. She wanted to roll her eyes, but for now, her fear was making her a bit more guarded.

"Uh, aren't you the vampire I watched stick his teeth into Marissa's neck?" she asked him fiercely. "God, Caden. You fucking suck blood to survive and you want me to trust you?"

"Basically, yes." His smile was too charming, too *nice*. Nice was not Caden. Sensual. Seductive. A charming playboy filled with wicked appeal. Yes. Nice? No.

"Basically, not in this fucking lifetime," she told him incredulously. "You can just keep your teeth the hell away from me."

He stared down at her, wry amusement filtering into the cool depths.

"Well, we might have a slight problem with that, Bliss, my love," he said softly. "Because I really, really want to bite you."

His thumb caressed over the vein at the side of her neck. His eyes flared, his cheeks darkening with a flush of hunger as she stared up at him in shock and fear.

"Don't do it." She struggled violently against him now, seeing the hunger in his eyes. "Really, Caden. You wouldn't like it. Ask Walker, he says all the time I have ice water in my veins. I bet there's nothing good about my blood at all," she informed him imperatively as she bucked against him, fighting to find strength as each move ground his cock deeper into her lower stomach.

"I bet you taste like ambrosia," he whispered, smiling slightly as he easily restrained her movements, lifting her against him until the hard ridge of his erection pressed intimately against her pussy. "I saw you in that room, Bliss. I could see the hunger in your eyes as I fucked Marissa. Just as I've seen it for weeks. I could give you what you want."

Shock ran through her at his outrageous statement. A gasp of pure fury escaped her lips as she stilled, narrowing her eyes on him as offense swept through her body.

"You think I want your nasty cock now?" she demanded angrily. "Marissa's fucked every man in that bar. It's hard telling what kind of germs you're carrying."

He smiled slowly. "Vampires don't get sick, remember? Trust me, baby, any nasty little germs were quickly killed."

"Let me go, Caden." The knowledge that he had fucked the bar's plaything was infuriatingly worse than the fact that he sucked blood to live. "You're dirty. I bet you didn't even take a shower before coming here."

She should still be terrified. Frightened out of her mind by the fact that he was holding her so effortlessly, his black eyes watching her with hot demand, his hard body, aroused and clearly hungry, pressing against hers. Instead, she was anger because he had fucked another woman. Not just fucked her, but bit her neck and drew the blood from her.

She shuddered at the thought as he frowned down at her darkly; his navy blue eyes, so blue they were nearly black, were less than pleased as he watched her.

"You have a very smart mouth, Bliss," he said as he released her hands slowly. "Do not try to escape. If you do, I'll pin you to the wall and leave you there for the night."

Her eyes narrowed, remembering how easily he had held her still and silent in the doorway of the bar's private room.

He sauntered away from her; the smooth bunching motion of the muscles of his buttocks beneath those black leather pants wasn't helping her libido to chill out much. If anything, it was only making her hand itch to caress the smooth muscle.

"Why did you follow me, anyway?" Her hand gripped the doorknob. All she needed was to distract him a moment.

He stopped at the doorway to the kitchen, drew a deep breath and shook his head slowly. The long, thick strands of dark brown hair caressed the cotton of his black T-shirt as the metal under her hand suddenly became incredibly hot.

"Damn you," she cursed as she jumped away from the door. "Cadan, let me out of here or I swear I'll make you pay."

He turned, leaning against the doorframe as he arched his brow questioningly. "And you intend to do this how?"

She hated male arrogance. It really infuriated her.

He smiled back at her slowly, tauntingly.

"Tell me, little Bliss, how do you intend to make me pay?" he asked her teasingly.

Teasingly? Were those deep blue eyes really filled with such complete male playfulness as he advanced on her?

"I could tell you many ways to make me pay," he suggested in amusement. "Come, baby, tease me. Let me see that pretty body and know that you are never going to let me taste you." Her breasts swelled as he said the words with low, brooding emphasis. "Touch you." He licked his lower lip as her stomach clenched in arousal. "Fuck you until we both scream from the intensity of the pleasure."

He was too close. He was towering over her, surrounding her; the unique male aura that had drawn her in the past weeks was like a cloak around her now. She ached.

"Your vampire mojo isn't going to work on me." She moved quickly, trying to pass him, only to come up short as he suddenly blocked the attempt to escape.

"Vampire mojo?" He laughed silkily, his lips curving beguilingly. "What is vampire mojo, Bliss? This is a new one for me."

She backed away from him slowly. "You know what I mean," she snapped, watching him carefully as she sought another venue of escape. "That weird thing you're doing that is supposed to make me crazy with lust."

His eyes widened as laughter gleamed in his gaze.

"Is it working?" he asked her softly. "I was unaware of this mojo you're talking about, but I would be more than willing to learn to use it more effectively. I have dedicated my life to learning such things, you know."

She sneered back at him. "You think you're so smart." She slapped at his hand as he reached to touch her. She wanted to smack his face as she heard the chuckle that vibrated in his chest.

He stalked her around the room, his big body corded and ready, the bulge at the front of his pants impossible to miss as her gaze flickered downward. She wanted to groan at the sight of it. It made her pussy cream, spasm with hunger. She could feel the silky slide of her juices along the warm folds and knew she was in deep trouble. She had never desired a man this deeply. And it was just her luck that he sucked blood for a living.

"Why are you here torturing me?" She wanted to stomp her feet at him, wanted to smack the smirk from his face as his lips tilted in that sexy curve.

"How am I torturing you?" he asked her softly, spreading his hands wide as he watched her carefully. "I am just visiting, Bliss. Perhaps I want to get to know you better."

Were there insane vampires? Evidently there were, because this one wasn't sane in the least.

"You are just not right." She watched him sadly as she shook her head.

His smile was filled with male confidence and superiority. "I've heard that said many times." He nodded, watching her carefully. "I feel I should warn you, Bliss, if you sprint for that bedroom as you are so obviously intending, then I will chase you. I will catch you. And when I do, I will fuck you."

She stopped. Her gaze went to the bedroom door once again. So near and yet so far. She looked back at Cadan.

"You are not sucking my blood," she told him fiercely. "I need it, too, and it's mine."

He crossed his arms over his chest and arched a brow curiously. "How about just a little bitty taste?" he asked her as he tilted his head to the side and regarded her with those laughing eyes. "I promise you, you will enjoy it very much."

Her heart lurched. "Just what I need," she snorted. "Death made pleasurable. Why in the hell are you here, anyway? Why did you have to follow me? And how in the hell can you stand in full sunlight? You're a fucking vampire. Don't you know better than that?"

His teeth flashed in a full smile. "Perhaps I am not a vampire." He shrugged, his eyes widening innocently. "Are you certain you saw what you thought you did, Bliss? Perhaps it was the stress of watching me fuck another," he said with false regret. "I can understand you're upset, sweetheart, really. I would have been most displeased had I caught another man's cock up your sweet little pussy. I may have even had to resort to murder had I seen such a thing."

Bliss gaped at him. Surely he wasn't serious?

"This is so insane," she muttered, glancing from the door that led from the apartment to the bedroom doorway once again. There had to be escape somewhere.

"Are you hungry yet?" he asked her, completely changing the subject as though it meant nothing at all. "I was checking out your fridge earlier. I liked the look of those steaks..."

He turned from her, heading to the kitchen, and Bliss knew she would find no better opportunity. She sprinted for the bedroom and the French doors that would lead to freedom. If not freedom, then at least someone to hear her screams.

Chapter Four

Cadan could barely contain his shout of triumph as he felt her run. He turned, watching her flee through the doorway, and sprinted after her. He was faster. He was stronger. Besides that, his symbiot was damned powerful.

Stop her, he ordered the male creature that resided calmly inside him.

Immediately he felt the surge of power that began to flow through the apartment, sealing it off, blocking her from the doors through which she had tried so desperately to escape.

"You son of a bitch!" she screamed as his arm wrapped around her waist and he threw her to the bed.

She bounced against the mattress, gasping for breath as he shackled her wrists to the bed, rising above her, his legs straddling her thighs as he laughed down at her triumphantly.

Her creamy skin was flushed a delicious pink, her sea green eyes filled with fury as she cursed him, struggling weakly to escape. Her delicate hands were clenched into fists as he released her wrists. Immediately they slammed into his chest ineffectually, more amusing than harmful, but she wouldn't be pleased to know that. Above all things, he did want to please her at the moment.

He winced in false pain as one little fist struck his chin.

"Now, Bliss, you're going to hurt yourself." He frowned as he caught her wrists once again, pretending to struggle to hold her still.

"I'm going to hurt you," she raged, slapping at his head as he let go of her.

The leather strip holding his hair back broke free then, causing a flare of frustration to spark inside his loins.

"Stay still," he growled, as he leaned over her, his long hair sliding over his shoulders to curtain her surprised face. "Look what you have done, Bliss," he whispered. "You're going to make me get all rough and bad with you. Is that what you were after, baby?"

He knew many ways to get to Bliss St. Claire. She was a sensualist, a wild woman parading as a good girl. But he had seen her fantasies, had felt them, watched them as they played out within her imagination each time he was near. Cadan had little compunction against using the powers the symbiot gave him. He never killed while feeding, he didn't cheat, he didn't steal. But he did so enjoy many of the other little side benefits. Although, to be honest, he had rarely used the ability to peek inside a female's fantasies as he had with Bliss's. There was just something about her eyes. Something untamed, something that had always called to him, made him hard and reckless.

He watched her eyes widen at his question, felt her body tremble in response.

"This is a nightmare," she suddenly moaned. "I'm trapped in a nightmare and no one will wake me up."

He had to laugh at her exaggeration. She was amazingly cute, feisty, and handling what she had seen much better than he had expected her to. She should have been screaming, crying, completely hysterical. Instead, she was angry and aroused.

Some females do know how to conduct themselves, unlike certain males I am becoming acquainted with, the female symbiot injected sarcastically.

Shut her up, Cadan ordered the male counterpart. *So help me, if she bothers me right now I'll leave her in there to torment you forever. Do you understand me?*

There was silence, blessed silence within his head then.

"Now, where was I?" he whispered as he leaned over her slowly, smiling wickedly as her eyes widened. "Ah yes, I was seriously considering kissing you, Bliss St. Claire. What do you think of that?"

Her eyes narrowed again. She looked so damned cute when she did that.

"Did you wash your dick before you came here, at least?" she snapped.

"Of course I did," he murmured as his head lowered, his lips stroking over the soft shell of her ear. "Don't worry, baby, I would never fuck you with the leavings of another woman on me. Even I am not so inconsiderate as that."

She growled furiously. He loved that little sound. The vibration in the back of her throat made his cock harden, made him wonder what she would sound like as she became more heated, as she began to lose herself in the pleasure that would grow between them.

At that moment, though, he regretted the episode with Marissa more than he regretted anything within recent memory. Had he any clue what tonight's outcome would be, he would have never touched the other woman. But it had been fuck Marissa, or rape Bliss. That was not a crime he wanted to carry on his conscience, but his lust for her was becoming nearly as overwhelming as the physical hungers the symbiots caused within his body. Driving, desperate, a need rather than a mere desire.

"I'm going to regret this, aren't I?" she finally asked him with a small groan. "I know I am. I can feel it."

"Hmm, are you certain that is what you feel, or is it this?" He moved quickly, spreading her thighs as he pressed against her. "This hunger, Bliss. I would have spared you from it if I could have. But it will not go away, nor can another assuage it, as I learned last night. I don't want to fight it any longer. I won't fight it any longer. Today, Bliss St. Claire, I will make you mine."

As he said the words, he knew the truth of them. For three centuries he had roamed the earth, fighting against the demonic Knights, doing all he could to preserve the honor and the life forms that he had found so long ago. Through it all, he had searched and never realized what he had searched for. Now he knew. He had searched for this.

She was watching him curiously, instead of with the fear he had first expected.

"You're going to bite me, aren't you?" She sighed. "Really, Cadan, I don't like being bitten. I need to keep all my blood. And that's just gross. Do you have any idea how gross sucking blood is? It's just going to make me sick, I swear it will."

He wanted to laugh in sheer pleasure. She was unlike any woman he had ever known. How could he have known that his mission to this small town would bring him such an amazing woman?

But he had no illusions that this would be easy. When she learned what he was about to do, she would be furious. She might well kill him the moment she realized.

You are certain she is strong enough for this? He asked the female symbiot. She will not be pleased.

She is the one I have searched for all these ages, Cadan, Cerise assured him, her thought ringing with her conviction. *She's strong, and she will accept. I'm not wrong, I swear this.*

He lowered his head, resting it against Bliss's forehead as he stared down at her. He would take her. There would be no chance of losing her should the Knights find her. They would destroy her, turn her into a pale copy of the woman she truly was, and he couldn't allow that.

"Are you going to deny me?" he asked Bliss then, his body throbbing with desire.

He hadn't expected this. He had avoided her all these weeks, knowing that his response to her was too deep, too intense to ever let her go once he had her. He had no desire to fight against the incredible response. He had fought alone for many years, knowing instinctively that the women he had met, both with and without the sentient life forms that inhabited his own body, did not possess the temperament and the love of life he knew his woman would require.

Bliss St. Clair was different. She had that love for life, but she also had an innocence, an energy, that enchanted him.

"I should." She sighed. "I really should. Because I just know you're going to do something really weird to me. I mean it, Cadan, I don't want you doing any weird shit."

"And what would you classify as weird shit, Bliss?" he asked her suggestively, smiling down at her, knowing her fears, yet seeing the adventurous streak that shimmered in her gaze.

"I don't want to have to suck blood, Cadan. If fucking you requires sucking your blood, then I don't think it's going to be worth it."

"Hmm, what would you consider sucking then?" he asked her, pressing his lips to her forehead before trailing them to her cheek, her jaw.

Her breathing began to quicken, the smell of her arousal grew thicker. She was getting hot for him, the touch of his body doing the same to her that the touch of hers was doing to him. Making him go up in flames.

He was burning for her. His cock was already fully erect, the blood pumping hard and heavy through the thick flesh. He shouldn't have been so hard, so aroused after taking Marissa the night before, but he admitted that since meeting Bliss, no other woman had satisfied the strong sex drive that filled him.

"Oh, I could be convinced to do many things, Cadan," she told him suggestively. "But I draw the line at sucking blood."

"Perhaps, then, you would allow me a small taste of yours?" he whispered as his lips moved to her neck, his tongue caressing the throbbing vein there.

He felt her still beneath him. He licked at her neck once again before allowing his teeth to scrape over the tender flesh there. His body tightened; he could feel the hunger of the creatures growing inside him, both sexual and otherwise.

Finally, Bliss shivered and moaned roughly as his hands skimmed down her side, drawing her thighs apart as he settled more firmly against her. He pressed his hips tighter into the cradle he found there, grinding the length of his cock against the tender pad of her pussy.

She lifted to him, hot and sweet, a low moan sounding from her throat.

"This neck biting thing is really weird, Cadan," she moaned as his fingers moved to the buttons of her blouse, flicking them open as his head raised to watch the incredible green of her eyes darken with her lust.

"It is more erotic than you could ever know," he told her. "It will bring you to a peak you could never experience otherwise, Bliss. I can give you paradise, if you will but allow me to."

She watched him as he flipped open the last button of her shirt and pushed the edges slowly aside.

She wore no bra. Cadan swallowed tightly as he tried to hold onto his control. Her breasts were exquisite. High and round, with perfect delicate pink nipples that hardened as he watched them.

"And I see something besides your pretty neck that I long to suckle, Bliss," he told her roughly. "Your sweet pretty nipples beckon to my mouth."

She moaned with a low, soft sound of female hunger. He loved that sound from her throat. Loved what it did to his own excitement as he heard it.

"You're dangerous," she told him roughly as her head twisted against the bed. "You're using that funky vampire voodoo, Cadan. I know you are."

He smiled down at her. "No funky voodoo, sweetheart, I promise you this. Only you and me, Bliss, and the heat growing between us. Nothing more."

Chapter Five

Bliss opened her eyes, staring at Cadan in dazed fascination as his head lifted and his gaze met hers. She had wanted adventure. She had wanted Cadan and the passion and excitement he made her feel each time she was in his presence. She should be, by all counts, terrified of him. Instead, his amusement, his playful passion and the integrity she had glimpsed in him when she met him pulled at her.

She shouldn't trust him, yet she did. She shouldn't need him, but the hunger growing in her for this man was becoming more imperative than the air she breathed.

It was that funky vampire voodoo. It had to be.

"You're thinking," he whispered, the bad boy smile that drew her so strongly tilting his lips.

In retaliation, his hand cupped her breast, his thumb raking over her nipple as his tongue rimmed her lips slowly.

"You're not allowed to think right now, sweetheart," he crooned gently. "Turn that curious little mind off."

Bliss allowed her lips to curl with amusement, though her breath caught at the sensation of his tongue licking at them. He was heated, hard, his body corded with strength and tense with demand.

"If I don't keep my mind turned on, it's hard telling what you might try to sneak by me," she panted as his teeth nipped at her lips before his tongue soothed the small ache.

The sensuality of the caress had the breath halting for long seconds in her chest. She stared into his darkening eyes, seeing the glimmer of something more than the man he was, the excitement of sharing it with her, and felt as hedonistic, as free as the life she glimpsed in his eyes. It was a heady brew.

"It would be kind of hard to sneak what I have in you, sweetheart," he murmured against her lips as his fingers tightened on the taut bud of her nipple.

The sweet ache had her clenching, her body tightening beneath his as he ground his cock into her pussy once again. Her clit swelled in response as she felt the moisture flowing from her vagina.

She struggled against the invisible bonds holding her, her fingers curling in response to the sensations that flowed through her. She wanted to touch him, wanted to run her hands over his body and feel every delicious inch of him.

"Let me go, Cadan," she whispered as his head lowered again, his lips smoothing over her jaw.

"But I like you so well stretched out beneath me, restrained," he said roughly. "Your body open to me. All mine to explore as I see fit. Will you let me explore you, sweet Bliss? Let me take my fill of your body as I fill you with mine?"

The blatant question had her whimpering in arousal. She had never allowed another man to restrain her, to take her in such a way. But Cadan hadn't really given her a choice, had he?

"No biting." She arched to him with a strangled moan as his lips moved over her throat.

"Just little nips?" She felt his smile against the hard throb of her vein just before his tongue licked over it.

Warm and moist, the gentle caress had her shuddering with pleasure.

"I want to touch you," she moaned, twisting beneath him. "Let me touch you, Cadan."

"If you touch me, I'll lose all control, woman," he growled, his voice husky, playful, yet filled with a deep, heated yearning.

From that moment on, he gave her no chance to argue further. His lips moved down her throat, his long, dark hair caressing her collarbone as he covered a hard, tight nipple.

Fire exploded in her pussy as she arched to him, a ragged moan tearing from her throat as he began to suckle at her breast. His hands were never still. Calloused and warm, they ran down her sides, shaped her hips, then moved to her abdomen and quickly unsnapped her jeans.

Alternating sensations tore through her. She could feel electricity flaring across her nerve endings, the ache that centered deep inside her cunt echoing in hard pulsing need into her clit, through her womb.

Her fists clenched with the need to touch him, to hold him to her breast as his hands smoothed the jeans over her hips, down her thighs, his lips moving lower, past her breasts, down her stomach.

As he shed her pants, Bliss shed her inhibitions. She had waited for this. It didn't matter what he was. It didn't matter who he was. Nothing mattered except the exquisite pleasure streaking through her body.

Within minutes she lay beneath him, naked, restrained, her legs spread wide, open to his voracious gaze.

"Cadan," she groaned his name weakly as she arched her hips. The feel of his warm breath against her damp flesh was nearly too much to bear.

"Damn. I'm going to eat you up, sweetheart," he told her hoarsely. "Every sweet, hot drop of cream running out of your pussy is going to be mine."

Her womb flexed in near orgasm as his words washed over her senses. A second later, she nearly screamed in pleasure as his tongue swiped through the hot, slick folds of her pussy.

Intense and slightly rough, he licked at her hungrily. His tongue circled her clit, then arched down once again until it was flickering against the entrance to her vagina, before licking upward again. He sucked and licked at her until sweat dampened her flesh and she was writhing beneath him, desperate for more, desperate to be filled by the thick, engorged length of his cock.

"Stop torturing me." She struggled to free her hands from whatever bound them to the bed. The heated energy was impossible to break.

"You taste like paradise," he growled, sipping at the folds of her cunt, sucking at the juices seeping from her vagina.

His tongue pushed inside her heatedly. A strangled cry erupted from her throat as her muscles tightened around his tongue, desperate to hold him inside her, to find the pressure she needed to send her hurtling over the edge.

He chuckled against the sensitive mound.

"Did you think I would make it so easy for you, sweetheart?" The laughter that filled his voice had her gritting her teeth in agonized pleasure. "Not yet, baby. Soon, but not yet. It's not my tongue you're going to be coming around. It will be my cock."

For a moment, the memory of his cock, thick and long, spearing between Marissa's thighs flashed through her mind. He had to be over nine inches long, perhaps nearly ten. She shivered at the thought. She had never known a man so large.

He moved away from her then and stood by the side of the bed, watching her carefully as he shrugged away his shirt.

Cadan's chest was broad, darkly tanned, with a light arrowing of dark hair leading into the waistband of the leather pants he was quickly releasing. Bliss licked her lips slowly as he removed his boots, then began to pull off the pants.

Her heart raced in her chest, making breathing difficult as he undressed. She wanted to undress him. Wanted to peel away those pants as her lips tracked each inch of flesh she revealed.

As he kicked his pants away, her eyes widened at the sight of his powerful cock. The head was engorged, dark, the stalk thick and hard. Her pussy began to weep in need.

"I've been waiting for this, Bliss," he whispered as he moved to the bed, coming between her thighs as she stared up at him in dazed need.

She couldn't believe she was actually lying there, waiting for him. Weeks of watching him, wondering, needing him. She hadn't thought she would ever reach this point. That she would be here, restrained, her pussy slick and hot with hunger as he moved his powerful body between her spread thighs.

"God, I know this isn't going to be easy," she panted. "What are you going to do, turn me into a blood sucker before you're done with me?"

He smiled, a wicked flash of brilliant white teeth as he ran his fingers through the hot slit of her cunt.

"How about a cock sucker instead?" he asked her softly. "Could you handle that one?"

Her mouth watered.

"You're dangerous." She fought to breathe, to make sense of the overwhelming lust that flowed through her body.

She had never needed anyone or anything with the desperation that she needed Cadan now. It made no sense. But then, the attraction that had been steadily building for the past weeks had made no sense, either. As though fate, destiny, or some mad karmic blip of life had decreed that there would be no chance of her escaping whatever was to come from this mad rush to release.

"And you're beautiful," he told her. "The most beautiful woman I have ever known, Bliss. Lying there, open and willing, knowing me for what I am and wanting me anyway."

There was a small glimmer of confusion in his gaze, as though he couldn't understand how she could or would want him, knowing the truth. She hoped he wasn't expecting an answer from her, because she was damned if she could make sense of it herself.

Her gaze flickered to the heavy length of his cock, so close to her cunt, and yet too far away to do her much good.

"Are you going to use that weapon or just tease me with the sight of it?" she asked him breathlessly. "Just between you and me, Cadan, I suspect there's several inches there you're not going to be able to use."

He chuckled at that. "Were you any other woman, I would say this is true," he told her gently. "But I can make sure you take me, Bliss. I can make certain you know a pleasure you can never imagine. A pleasure you could never touch in any other way – if you're brave enough to take it."

Chapter Six

He didn't give her a chance to consider any drawbacks. Instead, Cadan rubbed the head of his cock gently against the soft, wet folds of her pussy as he watched her. His eyes were dark, filled with power and secrets and a glimmer of laughter that immediately made her feel challenged. Dared.

"Later," she groaned. "We can talk semantics later. I swear, Cadan, if you don't fuck me and do it now, I'm going to cut your black heart out of your chest the minute I'm free."

He laughed gently, a low, masculine sound that only made her hungrier.

"You had only to ask, sweetheart," he told her gently, moving closer, spreading the lips of her pussy apart slowly.

Bliss held her breath at what she knew was coming. He was huge and she knew she was built small. She hadn't been made to take a cock as big as the one getting ready to fill her now.

"Cadan." She strained closer, though the glimmer of doubt that edged her passion now could be heard in her voice. "Please don't hurt me too badly."

He stilled. Amazingly, his expression seemed to soften, to transform. There was none of the laughter that had been there minutes before, none of the playfulness. There was gentleness, warmth.

"I will ensure that you know only pleasure, Bliss," he promised her. "Only the fiercest, most heated pleasure you could ever experience."

She felt it then. A shimmer of alien heat invading her pussy. She had thought nothing could push her passion, her pleasure at his touch, higher, until she felt that unknown sensation. It tingled, stroked, soothed and relaxed muscles that were tense and bunched with need. It traveled along the tight channel, probed at hidden nerve endings and had her crying out in agonized lust.

This was like nothing she had ever known, or could have ever imagined.

A second later, it got better.

"Oh God, Cadan!" She nearly screamed his name as she felt the head of his cock begin to stretch her further.

The first, sharp burn of the entrance blazed past pleasure, past pain. She stared into his eyes, caught by the extreme emotions that glittered there, the grimace of sexual hunger that tightened his face and knew in that moment that her entire life was about to change.

"Damn. You're so tight," he groaned. "I've never taken a woman like this, Bliss..." His voice was rough, filling with a need she had never heard in another's voice. "Watch me, baby. Don't close your eyes, watch me as I fuck you, pleasure you."

She couldn't do anything else. She was only distantly aware that the restraints had loosened on her ankles. She bent her knees, her feet flat on the bed as she angled her hips to take him easier. She was shaking, sweat soaking her body as he began to work the thick length of his cock deeper inside her.

He used short, slow strokes to work her pussy open, to fill her with the thick, hungry head of his cock. As it popped fully inside her, she groaned harshly. It was so good. So blistering hot and filled with a pleasure/pain she couldn't deny.

"More," she groaned, her head thrashing on the bed as she became lost to each sensation. "More, Cadan. I need more."

She heard his harsh male cry as he began to fill her. She was pussy-stuffed. Never had such a phrase entered her mind until now. But there was no other way to describe it. He was filling her deeper, stretching her further with each stroke of his cock inside her.

Bliss moved beneath him, her hips thrusting slowly, helping him to impale her deeper, deeper. She struggled to breathe as each new inch filled her, separating muscle and tissue until every inner nerve was exposed to the caress of his cock moving inside her.

“Almost.” It was clear from the tone of his voice that he was breathless as well. “We’re almost there, baby. Just a little more. Please God, sweet Bliss, just a little more...”

“More...” she panted, dazed, desperate to take every inch, to feel the hard slap of his balls against her buttocks as he fucked inside her.

His hands gripped her legs, raising them, elevating her hips to allow for the extra penetration. Bliss could hear her own screams echoing in her head as he continued to fill her. It wasn’t pain, it wasn’t pleasure, it was rapture. It was an ecstasy unlike anything she could have ever imagined.

As Cadan pressed deep inside her, she braced her feet against his hard biceps and worked him even deeper into her convulsing cunt.

“Sweet God.” His groan coincided with an abrupt relaxing at the very depths of her pussy, allowing the final inches of his cock to slide home, his balls to press hard against her ass as the hard shaft flexed and throbbed with surging excitement.

Bliss gasped at the pleasure. She could feel her orgasm pounding at her womb and wondered if she would survive the violence of it. She could feel the power of it rapidly building inside her. Even her nipples felt as though they were pulsing with the need for release. Her clit was swollen, fully revealed by the stretching of the folds of flesh around the thick male stalk penetrating her. She was impaled, on fire, consumed by the pleasure streaking through her.

“Fuck me,” she moaned, moving against him.

He was filling her, consuming her. Bliss twisted beneath him, attempting to gain that final sensation that would push her past the brink and over the edge into complete ecstasy. Fire blazed from her pussy, through her clit and into her womb. Tension mounted along her nerve endings, sensitizing every portion of her flesh as she shuddered in his arms, screaming in pleasure as he thrust inside her, hard and heavy, his thick cock branding her with rapture.

She stared up at him as the pace began to increase. Cadan’s pleasure, his driving lust, were clearly reflected in the midnight-blue eyes, the glow of power that seemed to fill his gaze and the tightening of his flesh over his face. His chest heaved with his breathing, his muscles tensing as he began to fuck her harder, deeper.

“Yes,” he hissed hoarsely as every hard inch was sucked greedily into her yearning body. “Take me. Damn you, all of me. Fucking take me...”

He slammed into her, a series of jackhammer thrusts that stole her breath, her sanity as everything inside her exploded, disintegrated, swept her into a maelstrom of such sensation, such pleasure, that she feared there would be no surviving it.

Distantly, she heard his shattered male shout, then felt a sudden pulsing of his cock as it buried deep within her once again and his release began to surge inside the milking depths of her pussy. Lava-hot and pleasure-potent, it sent her spiraling once again into realms of sensation so exquisite she could only sink into it, allow it to explode around her, through her, until she dissolved into the sweet effervescent mists of peace.

Chapter Seven

The last tremors of release slowly shuddered through Cadan as he stared down at where his body met Bliss's. There, skin to skin, flesh to flesh, his cock was fully embedded inside the sweet haven of her pussy as he spilled the last of his seed inside her.

How long had it been since he had found a woman who could take every inch of his enflamed erection? Since he could bury himself to the hilt and know the glorious heat of a woman's vagina caressing the whole length of his cock? More years than he remembered.

I told you, she will be the perfect host, Cerise's thought drifted through his mind as he slowly pulled back, watching, entranced as his still-hard flesh slid from her cunt.

Bliss moaned beneath him, her eyes drifting open, drowsy, her expression replete.

Shut up, he thought absently to the symbiot as he reached out and touched Bliss's pale cheek gently.

She smiled back at him, her lips curving lazily.

"Is this where you suck my blood, stud?" she asked him, amusement coloring her voice.

If only he could.

He shook his head slowly. "Not yet," he whispered as his fingers trailed between her breasts, down the damp flesh of her stomach to the soft, curl-covered pad of her pussy.

"Not yet, huh?" Her legs shifted as her arms lowered from where they had once been restrained. "You wouldn't let me touch you, Cadan. I wanted to pleasure you as well."

Cadan shook his head slowly. "More pleasure than what you have already given me would have sent us both up in flames," he said ruefully as he rose from the bed, aware of the confusion in her eyes.

"You're leaving?" Bliss rose up on her elbows, staring back at him frankly.

There was no anger in her expression, only faint confusion.

He picked up his pants and pulled them on quickly. He wanted nothing more than to lay beside her, to gather her into his arms and send them both hurtling into the madness of the passion he had found within her once again.

"I have things to do." He nearly winced at the words. How callous he sounded, how cool and aloof when he felt anything but.

She watched him with a small, sad little smile.

"Of course you do," she said softly. "Necks to bite, blood to suck, women to fuck. It must be a busy life."

There was no heat in her voice, and perhaps that stung worse than true anger would have.

Aldon, your host is a fucking moron, Cerise informed his symbiot. *Do something with him, immediately.*

He knows what he's doing. As always, there was understanding in Aldon's thoughts. *He must work it out himself.*

She's a host. My host, dammit. Don't let him walk away like this.

Be still, Cerise. Cadan knows his duties. Allow him to fulfill them as he sees fit. Only he can live with them.

There was silence then. Cadan could feel the female symbiot's pain and confusion. Similar to the confusion he saw in Bliss's gaze.

"Take care, Cadan," Bliss said softly as he jerked his boots on then reached for his shirt.

He paused. Grimacing, he stared up at the ceiling for long moments, wondering at the choices that now must be made. He hadn't faced this situation in all his years as host. This choice had never confronted him; the needs of his symbiot had never been so powerful as they were now.

Perhaps because, for once, their needs were the same.

Cadan shook his head at that thought, aware of the silence within his consciousness as the alien presences watched him carefully. Just as Bliss was watching him now.

"I need the blood to survive," he told her softly. "The same as you need the air you breathe, the water you drink, I need the blood." He turned to her then, seeing the quiet concentration in her eyes as she took in each word. "I'm not dead. I don't turn into mist, nor can I take wings like a bat. I'm not a monster, though trust me, they exist, and neither am I some creature that can perform great feats of evil works. I'm a man, Bliss. One who made a choice ages ago, and until this day, gloried in the freedom it has always given me. But in this moment, I realize how tight the shackles about me truly are. I can only plead your forgiveness in involving you in such a way."

She tilted her head curiously as he finished speaking. Cadan jerked the shirt over his head as raw disgust filled him. For centuries he had fought and laughed and partied his way through the years, enjoying each second. Every battle, every wound, every triumph had been like a heady brew. But nothing had been as intoxicating as coming inside Bliss.

"We had sex." She shrugged carefully. "Now you're walking away. No recriminations, no tears or fury, Cadan. Yet, you're upset anyway. Why?"

She lay there in her nudity, her high up-thrust breasts tempting him. Her rounded stomach, the plump softness of her thighs, the sight of his seed marring the crisp dark curls between them filled him with such male satisfaction that it made him nearly euphoric.

His gaze came back to her. "I am just a man," he said again. "A host to a life form that requires the blood. One I can never live without, ever again. But since two evenings ago I have also been host to a female symbiot who lost her own in a battle with those I fight. You, Bliss, are a perfect companion for that life form. Strong, young, filled with the need for adventure, for freedom.

Make him stop! Cerise was screaming within his mind now. *Aldon, he will ruin it all. Make him stop.*

There was no answer from Aldon.

Bliss was watching Cadan in shock.

"The blood I take feeds those life forms. Without it, they will feed on mine until there is nothing left of either of us. To me, it is a more than adequate exchange. No one is harmed, and I live my life to the fullest."

"How..." She swallowed tightly. "You're saying there is something inside you?"

She was clearly struggling to understand and yet was fighting the knowledge.

"There are two somethings inside me," he told her. "And unless you want to learn what my life is about and the very nature of who and what I am firsthand, then you had better run, sweetheart. Run hard and fast because you would make the perfect mate, and I am a man desperate, not just for the woman my soul has claimed, but also for the host this damned big-mouthed symbiot inside me is raging for."

Cerise was screaming in his head. Fury pounded at him in waves, female fury, lightning-hot and filled with pain. She needed a host of her own or they would all die.

Bliss rose slowly, dragging the blanket around her as she stared back at him in disbelief.

"Vampires don't have life forms," she told him, her voice caustic. "They're infected or something. Not inhabited."

Cadan snorted with bitter amusement. "Baby, you've been reading way too many fiction novels," he drawled mockingly. "I'm not infected or damned or cursed, and the love of the perfect woman isn't going to save my black soul. Truth be told, my soul is no blacker now than it was in

fourteen hundred and fifty seven when my Druid father convinced me to sacrifice myself to what he believed was a god.”

He laughed over that one often. Mordan expected Cadan to emerge from the caves, depraved and filled with power. He had been more than astonished to find a stronger, undefeatable Cadan as filled with laughter and pranks as he ever had been, but also one who saw the black heart his father possessed. Ever since that day Cadan had fought to protect what Mordan would destroy. The honor and innate purity of the symbiots.

Bliss shook her head. “Fourteen fifty-seven?” she said hoarsely. “I think you’re too old for me, Cadan.” She inched slowly across the bed away from him.

Cadan had to restrain himself, to hold back, to keep from straddling her scrumptious little body and fucking her silly as he fed from her graceful neck. Damned symbiots. Sex and blood sucking were a powerful aphrodisiac. If it weren’t so important that Bliss be at full strength to accept Cerise...

He tensed at the thought.

No, he snapped at the silent female symbiot. I won't be worked so easily.

There was a measure of surprise that filtered through his brain.

Don't blame me for these small glimmers of intelligence you're showing, Cadan. I was being silent as ordered, Cerise mocked him, anger echoing in her thought.

He gritted his teeth, thankful that he couldn’t wring her damned neck.

“I am likely much too old for you, Bliss,” he said then. “Too old, too jaded and too much of a risk.”

He remembered seeing the wasted body of Cerise’s host. The woman, though experienced in fighting, had been an easy mark for the Dark Knights. They had surrounded her, catching her weak from lack of blood due to her hesitancy to feed from her own people. It had killed her. It was a hesitancy he feared Bliss would share.

She rose on the other side of the bed, her black hair framing her heart-shaped face like a cloud of midnight silk, her green eyes watching him warily.

“You’re agreeing too easily.” She narrowed her eyes in suspicion. “Why don’t I trust agreeable men?”

You are making me so mad, Cadan. She is perfect for me. If Cerise could stomp her foot in fury, she would have.

“You should trust no men.” He sighed wearily.

He didn’t want to leave her. He wanted to laze in that big bed the rest of the day. Nap with her, hold her, fuck her until they both collapsed from exhaustion. He wanted to laugh with her, fight with her and stay by her side—and that terrified him. He could see her watching his back, filled with fire and fury as she fought him with their enemies. He could see her broken and bloodless, staring through empty eyes, her face frozen in horror. Dead. Taken from him forever.

“Watch yourself,” he muttered as he turned quickly from her. “Goodbye, Bliss.”

He walked from the bedroom one step at a time, forcing himself to leave her, to walk away as he knew he should. Honor had never plagued him in the past and it bothered him that it did so now. Not that he wasn’t honorable, he assured himself, it was just that the choices had never been in conflict with what he desired for himself. But now, what he wanted most could well be the death of him, because he didn’t know if he could survive in a world that Bliss did not inhabit.

Chapter Eight

Oh, when I get my host I'm so going to kick your ass! The female symbiot wasn't in the least pleased, but neither was he, Cadan thought. Leaving Bliss had been incredibly hard to do.

Shut up, Cerise, before I turn you over to some ugly old toad with rotting teeth and stinking armpits, Cadan threatened her darkly. Her discontent was wearing on his nerves.

So she didn't have a host. Big fucking deal. He had to deal with a female symbiot with perpetual PMS and a bad attitude to boot and he was getting damned sick of it.

You wouldn't dare! The mental gasp was outraged.

Uh, yeah, he would. Perhaps it would be best if we allow Cadan to work this out himself. Cadan could hear Aldon's amusement at the female and he didn't appreciate it. He was being flooded with female hurt feelings, confusion and anger and he didn't like it a bit. Damn, the creature was as contrary as hell one minute and full of soft feminine hurt the next.

I can't believe you, of all symbiots, chose such a stubborn, intractable creature. It makes no sense to me at all. You've grown weak in your old age. Yep, there was the feminine hurt mixed with a sarcasm that could have cut the thickest skin.

At least I'm not a harpy with little else to do but torment the host providing me a haven in my time of need.

Cadan was stomping in anger by the time he entered his own apartment, several blocks from Bliss's. The symbiots were fighting amongst themselves now, which would have been fine indeed if they would have bothered to do it a little less strenuously within his head. They were giving him a frigging headache. Just what he needed.

He threw himself down on his bed and turned his head to look at the sunlight behind the curtains. The Knights would be moving out soon. They would creep from their shadowed places, their dark dens, and move about the city searching for the violence and pain they so enjoyed.

He closed his eyes at the thought. The Dark Knights had been created in his time by the newly arrived symbiots searching desperately for life. The last of the symbiots' energy had been used to escape their exploding spacecraft, after gaining their freedom from those who had stolen them from their home world.

The Dark Knights were a band of warriors, depraved, evil, searching for the riches and power that were rumored to be hidden within the land of Cadan's birth. Instead of riches they found the hidden power.

The Knights had burst into the cavern where the life pods had held nearly two dozen of the creatures. They had crushed the metal containers, releasing the sleeping symbiots, forms of energy and light that must have a host to survive.

Desperate to live, the symbiots had flowed into the human animals ravaging their resting place and fell victim to the madness that inhabited them. There had been no stopping them. For centuries Cadan had searched for the Knights in an attempt to release the symbiots from their prisons and to find pure hearts, worthy honorable hosts for them to inhabit instead.

Not that killing the Knights was easy. It was damned hard. They stayed bloated on terror-laced blood, strong and cunning. They were the most dangerous creatures on the face of the earth. And they were searching for the few remaining capsules that housed the symbiot warriors awaiting hosts. God help the world if they managed to find where Cadan had hidden those capsules.

If only he could find more of the lost containers that sustained the symbiots when there were no hosts. Then he could get rid of the smart-mouthed vixen arguing with his own symbiot in his head. Dammit, he needed to sleep, not to listen to the two of them trade insults.

Do you honestly believe just walking away from her is going to solve this little problem he has? Cerise questioned Aldon furiously. *You know what will happen, and yet you let him merrily walk away.*

Enough! The sudden strength of Aldon's thought had Cadan tensing in warning.

Silence filled his head now. Cadan sat up slowly, frowning.

Do we have a problem here? He asked them both carefully.

There wasn't a thought to be found from the two. For the first time in all the years he had fought with Aldon, he realized the symbiot was holding back. There was information, knowledge that Cadan hadn't been given access to.

You swore complete fealty to my life, my safety and my happiness, no matter what that might be, Cadan reminded him. *Withholding information would be a contract breaker, I believe.*

He could feel the discontent moving through him.

Cerise, would you like to find a new host on your own? He asked her silkily.

He could never rid himself of Aldon and live, but Cerise was another story.

If I could tell Bliss was host material, then the Knights can as well. Remember, their female symbiots inhabit male bodies, unable to breed or to reproduce. As long as this is true, then the world is safe from the creation of more like the Knights. But if they find her, it would be easy for Mordan to kill one of his followers and to have the girl awaiting the symbiot as it flows from its host. It would then be a simple matter to enchain her, rape her and breed her time and again.

If it would be so easy, then why has it not been done before? Cadan fought back the fury that the mention of his bastard father brought.

Because, the females have a cycle, Cadan. One century out of every six they are able to breed along with the female host. If impregnated by a male who carries One of the Light. It was a term Aldon often used to describe the symbiots, because of the pure white light of their energy forms. Then the child that is born will carry its own immature symbiot. Kill the child, the symbiot can then be taken, placed with a dark host and the instinct and power that grows within it will be at the mercy of the host. There will be no safeguards. There will be no handicaps. It will be pure evil.

Chapter Nine

The Knights. Cadan processed the information that Cerise gave him while a somberness he fought to keep buried moved through him. They were more than just Knights really. Several were family members, and despite the name they carried had never been knighted in any way.

The Knights were once the scourge of England, carrying the titles yet betraying the trust placed within them in ways that made Cadan cringe at the thought of the pain they had inflicted.

As he drew in a deep breath and headed back to Bliss's apartment, he realized that a time he had long feared had finally come. He had danced through the centuries, no responsibilities other than ones he had imposed on himself weighing him down. He had been careful with friendships; he didn't like losing friends. They aged and died far too quickly. Cadan retained his youth due to the symbiot's amazing powers and the immortality it afforded him. As long as he kept the being fed, he would enjoy an almost limitless life, as well as powers only dreamed of by others.

Powers that had drawn his father. He rubbed at his chin wearily, grimacing at the thought of Mordan. Another of those experiences he preferred to pretend didn't happen and yet he lived the consequences of it daily as he battled the Knights and struggled to find a way to save the symbiots they carried.

His life then hadn't been free of danger, but Cadan had embraced each day. He lived for knowledge and freedom of his father's dark life, awaiting the time that he could finally break free of the small tribe he lived within. It was on the dawn of that freedom that he had been brought to the sacred caves.

There, two dozen large pod-like casks had been discovered in the farthest cave. There, his father had convinced him to open the warmest cask, which sat in a place of prominence within the room.

Normally, he would have refused any directive his father gave. But as he touched the cask, relying on his own inner sixth sense, he had felt a peace and yet a cry for freedom that touched his soul. When he released the locks at the side, pure energy and light had swept over him, around him, then infused him with such power and strength he had collapsed against the onslaught.

Desperate, filled with hunger, the symbiot had fought itself as it tried to comfort Cadan into the transition. But the hunger had been impossible to deny. Before Cadan could give a care for the other pods he had searched first for blood. Not the evil, tainted blood of the father who watched with calculated greed, but the power of innocent life, lust, passion, laughter. He had gorged on the blood of the villagers, never killing one, but leaving them weak, weary, as he feasted.

Finally, days later he returned to the cavern. Many of the casks had been destroyed, broken open, their symbiots gone. Those that remained were damaged, the life forms inside slowly fading from existence. The race to save them had been filled with despair, yet he had done it.

Twelve of the beings had been taken by Mordan and the Dark Knights that had been the scourge of the countryside. Another dozen were left, protected within the frail pods until Cadan had been able to find them hosts worthy of their honor.

But even that had taken time, because by then Mordan and his Knights had destroyed the village. The people had been drained of their blood, men and women alike cruelly raped and abused as the evil minds that had taken the symbiots used their power for their own ends.

Cadan had spent his life fighting those Knights and searching for the remaining groups of beings that had come to Earth so long ago searching for peace. He had found hosts for those that Aldon had led. Two other groups were hidden safely now, until hosts could be found for them as

well. But still, the Master was missing. A group of three pods, the most powerful of the beings, the greatest warriors ever known to walk upon land, and they had disappeared without a trace.

It was those three that Cadan searched for now, because only one of the most powerful warriors could destroy Mordan and his group. Cadan had fought for centuries, but there was no way to save the symbiots until he managed to repair more of the pods. Killing Mordan's men meant destroying those symbiots if the pods weren't ready for them. The difficulty in his task was making him insane. Being without the backup he needed, namely the other warriors he had fought with, was making it worse.

It seemed there were more groups of the symbiots than even Aldon had known of, because suddenly, the presence of vampires across the world was being whispered of. He had sent the others to investigate those rumors. Were they vampire, or were they warrior?

He didn't bother knocking when he came to Bliss's door. He mentally ordered it to open and Aldon supplied the force that did just that.

He walked into a nightmare. There was no blood, no screams, no weapons or battle. There was soft, curvy female staring at him from the couch, her legs splayed as she slowly worked the shaft of a dildo into her overexcited pussy.

It might seem like a dream come true, but the jealousy that flared inside him for the inanimate object was more than he could contain. Before he could stop himself, before Aldon could caution him in regards to his temper, he enforced the mental demand that it be gone. Out of his sight. Away from the soft, tight channel he had marked as his own.

Instantly the dildo was pulled from her pussy. The soft sucking sound of her flesh as it exited had his blood pumping furiously through his body as the adult device was flung against a far wall.

Bliss's eyes rounded with fear, then with anger as she moved to jump to her feet. She wasn't going anywhere as far as he was concerned. Before she could do more than lever herself up on her elbows he was there. His head pushed between her thighs, his lips latching onto her swollen clit as his hands gripped her hips and held her in place.

She was his woman. His pussy. He would not let her find her pleasure without him. It was unnatural. It was wrong. His cock was throbbing like an open wound beneath his pants, demanding his possession of her. His mouth watered at the taste of her, spicy and hot, more addicting than the most lust-filled blood he had ever taken.

And speaking of blood. He could hear hers. It pounded through her veins with an edge of excitement that only spurred his own higher, reinforced the claim he was making on her, and assured him that in taking her, he would be pleasuring her rather than forcing her.

Her juices were thick upon the satiny flesh of her cunt. Her clit was hard, engorged; the smell of her need was like a potent aphrodisiac that had his head spinning. She was soft, slick and so hot upon his lips and tongue that he felt his heart sear with the sensation.

"For me," he growled against the sensitive little bud. "Come for me. Only for me."

His lips suckled at her, his tongue lashed at the throbbing nubbin as she writhed in his arms, crying out her pleasure.

Yes. Her pleasure. He could feel it pumping through her body, but he needed more. So much more. He needed her screaming. He needed to know, to reinforce upon her that her pleasure came from him. Only him. He alone would bring her to climax. Not a toy or another man, or her own fingers, only him.

He moved one hand between her thighs, pressed three fingers together and nudged at the slick opening of her vagina. She bucked against him. He held tightly to his patience, struggled to prepare her easily, but the sight of her fucking herself had stolen his control. He pressed inside her forcibly, feeling the soft tissue give way, hug his fingers, ripple around them in response and grow ever wetter.

"Cadan. Oh God, I can't stand it," she cried out desperately.

Yes, this was how he wanted her. Maddened with the carnal demand streaking through her body. He wanted her as insane for the coming climax as he was to taste it. To feel it flowing from her tight pussy and filling his mouth.

He thrust inside her hard and deep, glorying in her cries and finally, blessedly, her demanding screams.

“Damn you. Fuck me. Fuck me, Cadan, now.” Her hips were rising and falling quickly, following the movements of his fingers as he increased the pressure against her throbbing clit and edged her into the release she needed so desperately.

She exploded. Her cunt tightened on the plunging digits, her juices flowing eagerly as he pulled his fingers back and capped his lips over the small opening, his tongue plunging forcefully inside her as he tore at the snap and zipper of his too-tight leather pants.

She was still shuddering from the force of her release when he rose above her.

“I’m sorry,” he groaned, aligning his cock with the center of her body. “I’m sorry. I can’t wait.”

He rose to his knees, his fingers wrapping around the width of his erection, watching as the engorged head tucked between her delicate pink pussy lips. The folds of flesh spread around the purpled head, molding to it as the thick syrup of her juices heated it further.

He was shaking with his need to push inside her, to take her hard and deep as he had earlier.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he gritted out, his hands gripping her thighs and raising them as he spread her wide. He wanted, *needed* to watch as he possessed her.

“Damn you, I’m going to cut your heart out if you don’t do it,” she cried out passionately, filling his heart with emotions he was unaccustomed to. Tenderness, affection—no, more than affection. Deeper. Stronger. The emotions filling him were powerful, intense. And the lust was making him insane.

He could contain his own needs, he had done so for years, but he couldn’t fight hers as well.

He pressed inside her. He didn’t slowly work his cock in as he would have done at any other time. Instead, he forged inside, gritting his teeth at the tight heat, the rippling caress against his overly sensitive cock. Pushing into her was exquisite. It was paradise—her cries as she writhed beneath him, her demands that he fill her, take her harder. The tight, wet heat...

Cadan’s head fell back, his eyes closing as the pleasure swamped him. He pumped inside her, burying his cock to the hilt, groaning at the utter complete ecstasy of having her take every hard, thick inch he had to give her.

Gripping her hips, he lifted her, going to his back on the couch as he pulled her over him, never losing possession of the hot grip around his erection as he changed the position.

He stared up at her, grinning wickedly at the passionate confusion on her flushed face. When his legs were stretched out fully, he held her hip in one hand and pressed against her stomach with the other.

“Lay back,” he whispered, guiding her to lie flat along his legs as he gripped her knees. “Give me your legs.”

He guided her into the position, pulling her legs over his chest as she stretched out on top of his. He snapped his teeth together at the incredible tightness and friction of her rippling pussy along his cock.

She was whimpering now, shuddering, her hips rotating as his cock began to slide more fully into the uppermost portion of her vagina. There, where the thickness of the head or the shaft didn’t matter unless the position was just right to apply the correct amount of pressure against her sensitive G-spot.

Mewling, kittenish cries were coming from her now as sweat ran along his body. Holding back was killing him. Gripping her ankles in one hand he reached along her body until he found the little curl-covered patch of her mound and the swollen distention of her clit.

"Now," he muttered fiercely. "Now, baby..."

He began pumping fiercely inside her as the tips of his fingers raked her clit. The extreme grip she had on his flesh kept his thrusts shallow but hard, driving into her, raking over the little bunch of nerves deep inside her convulsing flesh.

"Oh God. Cadan..." Her voice rose as the sensations began to build.

His fingers and hips moved faster. Harder.

"Cadan. Oh God. It's killing me. It's killing..."

He felt her orgasm then as he had never felt another's. The muscles of her cunt clamped down, flexed, drawing his release from the head of his dick like the eruption of a geyser. His hoarse male shout mated with her feminine scream as she began to buck in his grip, orgasming with a violence that filled him with such a rush of male pride that his chest clenched with the emotion.

They were shaking, shuddering. The hard blasts of his semen overflowed the tight confines of her clutching grip, the warmth of their mingled release flowing between them as they collapsed against the couch in exhaustion.

Stud! Cerise's thought, no matter the awe that filled it, jarred him from the euphoria that had wrapped around him.

Go away. He didn't have the strength or the energy to push her back.

Our time is nearly up, Cadan. Regret emanated from her. *We must get her agreement soon.*

Not yet. He didn't want to spoil this. This connection, this bond, as he pulled Bliss back up his body, cradling her head against his chest as she attempted to regain her composure.

His arms wrapped around her, sheltering her, holding her against the heart that had searched forever for her.

"Not bad, stud," she murmured against his chest.

For one crazy moment he wondered if Cerise had disobeyed his mental commands to wait and had flowed into Bliss without his knowledge.

There goes the glimmer of intelligence I thought I glimpsed before, Cerise mocked his thought.

"Not bad yourself." He ignored the inner voice as he pressed his lips to Bliss's forehead gently. "Not bad at all, baby."

Chapter Ten

Silence stretched around them for long moments before Bliss sighed deeply and pushed herself out of his embrace. She kept her face turned away from him, kept her fears to herself as she stood shakily, found her bearings and then walked to the chair where she had thrown her robe earlier.

"So, what made you decide to come back?" she asked carefully.

She had thought he was gone forever. A part of her had even been glad he had left. The information he had given her still hadn't really sunk in. It was hard enough to believe that vampires existed to begin with. But vampires who refused to obey the rules she had read in countless books were even worse.

She heard him moving behind her. He hadn't even removed his pants and boots before taking her. He had done no more than push them below his well-rounded rear enough to give his cock freedom before he took her.

She should have been insulted. Instead, the muscles of her stomach clenched in pleasure at the thought. This was so weird, she told herself caustically. As though there could be a future with a blood sucker.

"I came back for you," he finally answered, his voice soft. Gentle. "Did you think I wouldn't?"

"Well, you sounded pretty determined not to." She shrugged as she pushed her hair from her face, tucking a loose strand behind her ear absently. "You don't seem the type to go back once you make up your mind."

She looked over at him. He sat on the edge of his couch, his elbows resting on his knees as his arms draped between them. His shirt was gone; his hard, tanned chest was broad, a scattering of coarse, dark hair marring the smooth perfection. A tattoo graced one of his muscular upper arms. A Celtic design that wrapped around the bulging bicep. It was incredibly sexy.

"I'm not," he said, his voice low, gentle. "And there is our problem, Bliss. I've decided I want you to keep me. I can't let you go."

Shock held her rigid. She turned fully to him, staring into his somber expression in disbelief.

"Keep you? The playboy vampire?" she asked him mockingly. "What kind of game are you playing here, Cadan? Whatever it is, I'm not in the mood for it."

She pushed her hands into the pockets of her robe. Her palms itched to smooth the long strands of his hair back from his face, to caress the sharp angles of his cheekbones, the fullness of his lower lip.

He was becoming an addiction. One she could ill afford.

"It's no game." He sighed roughly, watching her with a depth of emotion in his dark eyes that tugged at the feminine core of her soul. "I tried to walk away. To save you from my world, Bliss. A world I didn't want forced on you, but one you won't be able to escape now simply because of who you are."

"And what's that?" She tilted her head curiously.

He looked angry, but more at himself than at her.

"A host," he said regretfully. "Your body, mind and heart are all perfectly created to host a female symbiot, such as I currently have tormenting the hell out of my brain. This is what I wanted to save you from. From being like me. From terrifying you with the bond that's already growing between us."

Bliss stilled her shudder as he watched her so seriously.

"You know, when I asked for adventure and freedom, this wasn't what I meant, Cadan," she snapped. "A blazing affair. A trip abroad. A fucking cruise would have been nice. A vampire with a hero complex and a dick as thick as my wrist wasn't what I was asking for."

She meant to shock him, but his grin was nothing less than sin.

"You have a very delicate wrist, sweetheart," he murmured. "I actually think it's thicker than your wrist."

She wouldn't doubt that in the least.

"You aren't allowed to bite my neck," she told him fiercely. "I need my blood, I told you that already. And I'm sure as hell not into the taste of it myself. You can keep the little aggravation you have all to yourself."

He smiled wryly as he shook his head, watching her with a glimmer of amusement.

"You felt it both times we were together, Bliss," he told her. "You wanted it. You wanted my fangs buried in your neck, wanted to bite me just as fiercely as I needed you. You can't deny it."

"The hell I can't," she snapped. She had no remorse in lying when it meant life or death. "You're a mean, lean, fucking machine, Cadan. But becoming a corpse just isn't my thing."

"I really must burn your reading material," he chuckled. "You don't die, Bliss. You aren't a corpse. You can still walk in the sun, wear a cross and swim in a pool. Where these farcical rules came from I have no clue."

"You have to suck blood. That's just gross," she argued.

"You want to suck my blood." He stood to his feet, towering over her, his voice dropping, deepening with sensual undertones. "I can feel it. Your need to taste me, to know me. You want the freedom and the power, but even more, you want me." He stepped closer, holding her mesmerized with the rough, sexual quality of his voice. "Deny it, Bliss. Go ahead and lie for both of us, because we both know that need is there inside you."

She really should voice the lie, but she couldn't. She could only stare back at him, fighting herself more than him, terrified at the choices she wanted to make.

"I wanted to be a lion tamer when I was a teenager. I grew out of that, too," she finally snapped, moving away from him, watching him carefully.

"And you think you will 'grow out' of this need you have for me now?" He was clearly laughing at her. "Sweetheart, it won't happen. Take it from me. I've lived centuries and never known such powerful emotions as I do when I touch you, hear your voice, feel you touching me. I've fought it for nearly two months now, the same as you have. This isn't just going to go away. You know better than that."

"I can hope," she snarled back at him, hating the truth in his words. "Blood just isn't my meal of choice, Cadan."

"And you believe this is all that sustains me?" he asked her incredulously. "Really, Bliss, you've seen me eat."

"Have I?" she asked him fiercely. "How do I know I have? You could have been doing that voodoo thing that vampires do. How do I know what I've seen?"

Cadan growled. A sound of male frustration that almost, just almost, had her smiling. Her brothers did that around her often.

"I wish I knew vampire voodoo." He propped his hands on his hips as he watched her with brooding ire. "You wouldn't be arguing with me. You would be eagerly taking this smart-assed excuse from an alien out of my head and into yours. And why I am even suggesting it boggles the mind. You make me crazy enough on my own."

She arched her brow mockingly. "And become a blood sucker?"

Why wasn't that thought as nasty as it should be?

Cadan pushed his fingers wearily through his hair. "They are energy forms, Bliss. They survive on our blood; their incredible power is shared with us, their knowledge, their ability to heal us to keep us from aging. It's all given to us freely. They provide us with the ability to take in more blood, to replace what they lose. It's a small exchange."

"It's eternity," she whispered, thinking of her brother.

They were the last of their family. They had no one but each other.

"It's more than just immortality," he told her softly. "It's the chance to live all your dreams, all the adventures you've ever longed for. A chance to save a race of beings who are so much more than humans will ever be, Bliss. They deserve life as well."

Bliss stared back at him, confused. Aching.

His voice vibrated with his belief, with his love of life and who and what he was. He was as free as the wind, as wild as a storm. All the things she had longed for herself. And he could give her the chance to know it all.

"Give me a chance," he finally said. "We'll take it slow and easy, Bliss. You have time to decide if you can bear immortality with me. If you can live with the battles we'll have to fight. But your choices are limited; unfortunately, it will come down to accepting the banshee in my head, or the one my enemies would force on you. Because hosts are what they search desperately for, female hosts they would kill their own for. And I won't let them take you. Not as long as I live."

Silence stretched between them as Bliss tensed at this new bit of knowledge.

"You know, Cadan," she swallowed tightly, "I'm beginning to regret the fact that the books are wrong. Because honestly, right now, I could get very, very inventive with a stake. And I'm not talking the cooking kind."

She turned away from him and stomped to her bedroom.

"I need a shower. I need peace. Go away and at least let me think without the temptation of your cock making it worse. Go bite somebody or something. Just leave me the hell alone."

Chapter Eleven

Hours later, after Cadan informed her he was indeed going to go bite someone, Bliss slipped from her apartment and walked the short distance to the bar her brother owned and tended.

She couldn't believe the course of events she had managed to bumble her way into. It was just her luck. The man of her dreams and he sucked blood to live and came with enemies that she didn't need.

The thought of those enemies sent a strange shiver up her spine. Then again, the sudden silence of the night wasn't helping. Her steps faltered as she stared around the deserted street. It was never deserted.

"Well, look at the little pretty we've found, boys. And doesn't she just stink of our wayward son, Cadan?"

The group of men stepped from the shadows of the alley, blocking her access to the bar, crowding her toward the inky blackness they had come from.

Bliss stared at them, her heart in her throat, fear exploding through her chest. She had once thought she couldn't know more terror than she had the night she had seen Cadan feeding from Marissa's neck, but she had been wrong. That had been no more than shock, no more than surprise, because terror sounded like a serpent's hiss, smelled like death and stared at her with strangely red, glowing eyes.

Bliss moved back quickly before jumping to sidestep one of the three men waylaying her. A chuckle, dark and deadly, sounded an instant before one of the creatures blocked her escape, smiling back at her, his fangs long and sharp, deadly and shining in the moonlight.

"She's a pretty little breeder, Mordan," one of the others spoke up, the middle dude, the one with the red Mohawk that looked like a rooster's comb in the center of his head. If blood didn't stain his chin, lips and hands then she would have laughed at the picture he presented.

Then, the words sank into her head. Breeder? She didn't think so.

"Look, I'm sure you guys could show a girl a real fine time, but I have other plans tonight." When all else fails, smart-ass them. Bliss winced. She really didn't think it was going to work.

"She's a saucy one, Mordan," the tall, muscular creature that had blocked her moments before murmured softly. "She would make an excellent warrior. Not just a breeder."

"Neither is on my list of things to do this year," she retorted as she backed further away, aware that each step took her away from the bar and the chance of rescue.

"Only the breeding will be required," the leader assured her smoothly.

"Yeah, well, that's the one I have the most exception to." She stilled the tremor in her voice and in her knees. "Tell you what, check with me next year when my biological clock is getting closer to ticking. Maybe I will have changed my mind."

"By this time next year, you will have whelped and bled dry your first young and be growing heavy with the second," she was told coldly. "Breeders are chained in our cells, taken regularly, their young used to strengthen our warriors. You will be a very fertile breeder. I can smell the ripeness of your body..."

"Damn, and here I showered and everything." This wasn't happening.

She danced just out of reach of the hand that shot out, intent on grabbing her close. The muttered curse assured her that they were quickly running out of patience. This had not been her

week, she thought with hysterical humor. First, a horny vampire intent on breaking her heart and making her just like him, and now this.

“You know, this is really not fucking fair,” she yelled at the three approaching monsters.

Yep, she would agree with Cadan now. Monsters really did exist.

They paused as though surprised she had dared to scream out her fury in such a way.

“Life was not meant to be fair,” the one called Mordan observed.

“Fucking blood sucking philosopher—just what the hell I needed tonight. I wanted to get drunk. Dead dog puking drunk and you are messing up my plans. Do you hear me? I don’t like this.”

She hated having control taken from her, and she sure as hell didn’t like being called a breeder or being informed of exactly what that entailed. She preferred to choose the father of her children herself, thank you very much. And if it was all the same to these blood sucking morons she wouldn’t mind a bit if any children she had lived into old age rather than be killed by their mother. Not that she really believed that one, but the way her week was going, anything was possible.

“This mate your son has chosen does not seem very sane, Mordan. Is there not a chance of that insanity infecting the symbiot that would be bred from her?” the one on the end asked suspiciously.

“Insane?” she snapped back. “I’m not insane, you are. I’m perfectly reasonable. I think this sucks. Do you have any idea how long it’s been since I’ve been mad enough to get dog drunk? I don’t like having it ruined.”

Were they weak-minded or what? She stepped back further as the one called Mordan watched her carefully.

“Cadan would not choose for his mate one so weak as to be insane,” he informed the others. “Smell her. She reeks of him. Even now his seed searches for fertile ground.”

She trembled. “God, this is so unreal,” she muttered as they began to progress again. “You are breaking the fucking rules. Every damned one of them. Dead people don’t procreate. Vampires are not alive. This is not real.”

Mordan reached for her again. Bliss let her scream shriek through the night. Hell, she had a healthy set of lungs, or so her father had always claimed. Surely someone would hear her.

“Let me go, you freak.” Her shirt ripped as she tore herself loose from the fingers that snagged the material.

She ducked the next arm and took off running.

“Help me!” The night seemed to swallow her screams.

Chapter Twelve

For the first time in recent memory the street was deserted, the drunken fools normally laughing and falling all over themselves mysteriously absent. Bliss had taken no more than a few steps when she was caught from behind, a hand coming over her mouth as she opened her lips and bit down, hard. She screamed, scratched and clawed, kicking out with her feet and struggling violently as she was dragged back to the alley.

"You bastards. Sons of bitches. I'm going to get me a symbiot and fucking kick your asses. I'm going to rip your fucking balls from your bodies and shove them down your throats, you stupid rule breaking blood sucking creeps..."

She was still cursing when she was abruptly torn from the arms holding her and lifted against a hard, familiar chest. Laughter echoed in her ear, warm and inviting, as one strong arm circled her waist and held her firm.

"Bliss, baby, your language." Cadan laughed in amusement as her arms clawed at him, desperate to hold onto him and terrified that he was so well outnumbered that he couldn't possibly save her.

"Damn you," she cried against his chest. "I'm not a breeder. And I won't kill my babies, Cadan. And there aren't going to be any babies because I'm going to castrate every damned one of you."

She realized she was crying, sobbing against his chest as he held her close to him. Warmth surrounded her, not just in front of her but all around her now, as silence seemed to stretch throughout the street.

"I'm well fed, Father," Cadan said softly with an innate, curiously lethal danger that had her nerve endings fraying more than they were already. "Well fed and well defended. Would you prefer to fight another day?"

Bliss turned and stared at her would-be rapist in fury.

"That's your father?" she asked him, her breath hitching with her tears. "I have to tell you, Cadan, your family sucks. And not in a good way, either."

Cadan's laughter was low, brooding. "Meet my father, Mordan, my brother, the sloppy bleeder, Angus, and my uncle, Kiran." Kiran, of course, being the strange one who had doubted her sanity.

"It's not been a pleasure," she muttered, holding onto Cadan with a desperate grip.

"We will have her eventually, Cadan," his father warned him mockingly. "She may yet carry that female bitch Cerise, but that will not save her anymore than it saved the last host she possessed."

"Ahh, but there you are wrong," Cadan promised him lightly. "The last host didn't like feeding. I will ensure Bliss has no such problems. Imagine her, Father." His voice dropped, filled with humor, with triumph. "Cerise is one of the oldest, the strongest, as is Aldon. Well fed and healthy, they were the leaders for a reason. Bliss will know a power you can never comprehend. And she's perhaps just a bit irrational on top of that. She could sweep through your warriors like a plague and leave you lying in your own waste. That I am looking forward to in ways you can never imagine."

Okay, it sounded good, Bliss thought, restraining her shudder. Not realistic, but a hell of a threat.

Mordan snarled in fury. "Cerise is an insipid bitch. She can not defeat us."

"Not alone," Cadan agreed. "Not without her mate. But she has found her mate now. She and Aldon will only grow in strength. The host who shall shelter her is my woman. The power will grow, Father, our strength will be tenfold. Run. Run hard and run fast, because next time we meet, your blood will flow and vengeance will finally be mine. Both for myself and for my mother and sisters who loved you so unwisely. You will die."

Bliss could feel the hatred pouring from Cadan then. Black menace emanated from his hard body, swirled in the air like currents of electricity and snapped dangerously around them all.

"You guys are so melodramatic," she said, trying to still the tears of rage and fear. "You seriously need to chill out."

Mordan's gaze swung to her, his frown dark and promising retribution.

"I will cut your tongue from your mouth when I finally take you, bitch," he snarled. "You will be on your knees whimpering for mercy when I have finished with you."

Her fingernails dug into Cadan's waist, holding tightly to him, terrified that if she let go of him he might leave her to fend for herself.

"Or cutting off your tiny balls, you fruitcake," she snapped. "Don't you have things to do? Graves to dig or something? I thought vampires were smarter than this. Someone needs to give you guys lessons on how to do it right."

"She reads too many fiction novels." Cadan sighed. "I'm trying to break her of this habit."

His laughter soothed her, stroked over the terror-laced nerves and brought a measure of calm to her racing heart.

Mordan sneered before casting his son a dark, malevolent look then turning and stalking away. The brother followed closely behind, though the uncle stood silent, watching the scene with faint amusement.

"Do you think you can avoid the battle to come forever, nephew?" he asked curiously. "Mordan grows more powerful by the day and more angry. Allowing your woman to taunt him in such a way is foolhardy."

His voice was like a mellow spring, rippling with subtle power and wrapping around them now in a way it hadn't when the other two had been present.

"Watch your own back, Kiran, and I will watch mine," Cadan told him softly. "As long as you fight alongside my father, we are enemies. Nothing more."

"And yet, those who carry your blood have not shed a drop of it by your sword," Kiran said softly. "Something else stays your hand, nephew. Such foolishness could mean your death."

"And perhaps you see what you only choose to see," Cadan drawled with an edge of laughter. Did he never take anything seriously? "I will bid you goodnight now. I have a woman to prepare, and a symbiot shrieking in my head. And you might want to collect your dead on the next street over. I believe Father is now missing several of his warriors, as well as the symbiots who inhabited them. They're getting lazy in their feedings these days."

Kiran's eyes narrowed. He nodded abruptly then turned and strode quickly away, following the route the others had taken and leaving Cadan and Bliss alone with the night surrounding them.

"Well, that was interesting." She still hadn't let him go and she wasn't about to for a long while. "I have to say, though, your family doesn't impress me much, Cadan."

He breathed out deeply. "For this, I cannot blame you," he said wearily as both arms enfolded her. "I'm sorry you were frightened in such a way but I have to say, I did warn you."

"You would be an 'I told you so' type," she grunted as she felt his lips press against her hair.

He could say it all he wanted to as far as she was concerned, as long as he kept her wrapped in his arms, kept her sheltered from the terror of realizing everything he had told her was completely true.

"I am a realistic and very weary type," he finally told her. "And I must feed quickly, Bliss. I will take you to the bar..."

"No." She gripped his lean waist tighter. "Are you kidding me? There isn't a chance in hell I'm letting go of you. Those guys meant business, Cadan."

"I am well aware of this, Bliss, but I must feed. I cannot wait any longer or I will grow weak. Unless you're willing to watch, then we have no other choice. I promise it will not take long."

"Do you have to fuck them?" She remembered Marissa and jealousy blazed within her.

He chuckled gently. "No, dearest, I haven't taken another since you completed me that first night. But the act is still erotic, sensual. There is no hope for that. The adrenaline-laced blood is more powerful and lasts much longer than that which is taken from a body at rest. You will learn this yourself."

She felt his hands smoothing over her back as he spoke, attempting to calm the surge of emotion running through her.

"Why can't you just take my blood?" she whispered.

"Because, you must be strong, at your most healthy to accept the symbiot later. If I feed from you, it will weaken you. At the time of the bonding, we'll take blood from each other. And though that will be part of our sensuality, we always need to feed from others. There is no help for that."

"You wouldn't be jealous, watching me do that to another man?" She was barely aware of him leading her to the bar.

"I would never allow you to fuck another man, my love." His voice hardened a bit at the statement. "But watching you arouse him, feed from him, would make me mad to have you myself. Yes, that I could handle."

She could hear the arousal in his voice now.

"I want to watch." She tried to ignore the heat in her pussy at the thought of watching Cadan touch another woman. It was depraved. "For purely clinical purposes," she assured him. "I need to see how it's done before I decide if I can do it."

"Hmm." The soft sound of curious reflection was followed by a suspicious tremor in his chest.

She was certain he was laughing at her.

"No more little rips like Marissa, though," she told him. "She could be carrying nasty germs. Get someone clean at least."

"Clean, huh?" He cleared his throat. Yep, he was laughing at her. "Would you perhaps prefer to choose dinner for me?"

She grimaced at the description. "Might as well." She sighed. "Other than when you picked me, you've had lousy taste in women."

"Do you think so?" They entered the bar, standing close, staring around at the crowded room, listening to the cacophony of sound as Bliss tried to convince herself that she was indeed safe now.

"I know so." She breathed in deeply and patted his chest comfortingly. "Don't worry, honey, I'll pick you out a tasty little morsel. I have excellent taste in people. You'll see."

Chapter Thirteen

He had to agree she had excellent taste in choosing women. He wondered if that was a good thing, though.

The woman was a fiery redhead, small in stature, with full ripe breasts, though not nearly as fine as Bliss's were, he thought as he held her in thrall, his gaze locked with Bliss's as he bent his head to the woman's neck. There was no question that he would attempt to fuck the woman. Not that she wasn't well prepared. It had taken very little to arouse the seductive beauty. But Bliss's promise to cut his balls off if he attempted to fuck the woman still echoed in his head.

He licked at the graceful neck bent to him, watching his woman, seeing her eyes darken with arousal, curiosity. After preparing the flesh, his lips drew back, allowing her to see the slow lengthening of his canines, the tips becoming sharper, lethal.

The redhead was breathing heavier now, her nipples hardening beneath her shirt, her face flushing with arousal. Gently, careful to allow Bliss to see every move, he sank his teeth into the tender vein awaiting him.

The redhead orgasmed. He watched Bliss's eyes narrow as she caught the betraying shudder, heard the thick pleasure in the moan that whispered from lipsticked lips. Then his own lips covered the small wound as he began to draw the spicy fluid into his mouth.

His cock was harder now than it had been the first two times he had taken Bliss. He couldn't believe the lust she inspired in him. Just watching her, seeing the hunger in her expression, the excitement in her eyes, made him crazy to fuck her. That need transmitted through the psychic link that connected him to the redhead, making her shift in his arms, her body to rub against his in renewed passion.

The redhead's blood simmered with her lust. He could taste the excitement, feel it flowing through his body, replacing the blood that the symbiots slowly drained from him daily. It was an interesting process. One he had studied for years and still didn't fully understand. He could feel it, though. Sliding over his tongue, down his throat, then tingling through his cells, moving into his veins, replacing weariness with extraordinary power, recharging his body.

But the lust Bliss was filling him with was just as potent. He had never known anything quite like this. Watching her, seeing her desires, feeling her need to experience what the woman in his arms felt, her hunger to taste him as well. His muscles clenched at the sensation, his erection pulsing with the need to fill her once again.

"Cadan." Bliss whispered his name beseechingly as he slowly drew his lips from the redhead's neck, feeling her slump weakly in his arms, sleep overcoming her as he lowered her to the couch beside him.

"Get out of here," he growled, knowing if he touched her, neared her, he would be unable to keep himself from taking her blood. He could feel the powerful fluid flowing through her veins, calling to him, whispering seductively of a taste unlike any other, a power that he would never know otherwise.

"I can't," she whispered, leaning against the wall, her breathing harsh, labored. "I've never known anything like this, Cadan. What's wrong with me?"

He stopped, containing his arousal.

Cerise, he screamed within his mind. *What the fuck are you up to?*

Me? Cerise questioned him harshly. *It's all I can do to stay in place, Cadan. She's calling to me. Feel her. Hear her. She needs me; her mind and her soul are demanding my presence. Release me now. Desperation filled her thoughts. Now, Cadan, or it may be too late. Release me.*

He stared back at Bliss, seeing the glitter in her eyes, the hunger that transformed her expression, made her appear exotic, ethereal, impossible to resist.

"Bliss." He moved to her quickly, picking her up in his arms as he carried her swiftly from the billiards room, up the stairs and into the private rooms that Walker sometimes loaned to important guests.

He locked the door quickly behind them then laid her on the bed, moving beside her as he pushed her hair from her face, watching her carefully.

"Stop," he told her, his heart breaking in ways he hadn't imagined possible. "You're calling to the symbiot, Bliss. I cannot force her to stay inside me if you keep doing so."

She licked her lips slowly, her eyelids lowering with sensual promise.

"I can do this," she whispered. "I feel it, Cadan. I need this. Let her go."

Elation surged inside him.

"Damn you," he whispered. "Be certain, Bliss. Be very certain. You can never go back. You can never change your mind."

"You can never leave me," she said softly. "We're bound. We are, aren't we, Cadan? I can feel it."

He could feel it. The bonding. The drawing of two souls...soul mates.

"I can never leave you," he promised her gently. "I can never take another, nor can you. I can never harm you, can never see you harmed. We're entwined, Bliss. This is love. This is what we have both searched for. Longed for."

Her smile was radiant.

"You get to bite me now," she whispered, relaxing beneath him. "Let me have her, Cadan. Let me share this world with you."

There was no stopping Cerise. He felt the wrenching, the soul tightening feel of her pulling from his mind and body, and watched the shimmer of brilliant light as it began to leave him.

Bliss's eyes widened a second later. Pure joy filled her expression as Cerise's form settled over her, head to toes, a bright shimmer of color that slowly dissolved into Bliss's body.

Her back bowed, her body tightened, shuddered and for one long, heart stopping moment she moaned with exquisite pain that he knew bordered ecstasy.

It didn't take long. It never took females long to bond, he knew. Their acceptance, their grace and understanding made them the easiest symbiot sex to absorb. Males were painful to accept, the bonding process a blinding stroke of agony that came much too close to death.

Long minutes later, her eyes opened. The once pretty shade of green had intensified, deepened, filled now with the power and vibrancy of the energy form that shared her body.

"They are mates," she whispered. "Cerise and Aldon, your symbiot. Did you know they were mates, Cadan? Unable to touch, unable to bond because their hosts were not mates as well?"

He had suspected it.

"They are together now," he whispered. "Just as we are, Bliss. Forever. Together."

"Forever," she agreed, touching his cheek softly as she relaxed against his larger body. "Forever."

Chapter Fourteen

Two Weeks Later

He had created a monster. Not the type he needed to kill, but the type that would definitely kill him. Kill him with desire, with frustration, with sheer joy.

Cadan sat back on the couch, stroking his cock slowly as he watched the male attend to his woman. Bliss was laid back across the long coffee table, her legs held wide as the man lapped and sucked at her now hairless pussy.

It was glistening with her juices, plump and swollen with her arousal as the man sucked at her clit, licked at the silken folds of skin or tongue fucked her deep and hard as she cried out her need.

Of course, the puny-dicked little man wasn't ever going to fuck her, Cadan would make certain of that. But watching him arouse Bliss, seeing his lips and tongue paint her body had been incredibly erotic. Watching as the man's mouth prepared her tight little pussy for Cadan's thick cock had been even more exciting.

"Cadan, when?" Bliss was panting, hungry. Her lethal canines had dropped from her gums as the sexual tension flamed within her body.

"Soon," he promised her gently, watching as two long fingers penetrated her pussy and pushed inside her. "In a minute, baby."

She moaned at the refusal to allow her to feed immediately.

"I can't stand it. At least don't watch. Let me catch my breath."

It made her wild when he watched. Made her go to lengths he was certain she would have never gone to on her own. It made her brave, daring, free. His woman. Never had he thought he would find a woman who met life head-on and found the same exhilaration he did in each day lived.

She was a treasure to him. She was his heart, his very soul.

A low, feminine growl brought him out of his thoughts and back to the sight of her being pleased by another. Her cunt had flowered open; like silken petals the folds of flesh had become swollen, parting, revealing satiny-pink skin slick with the essence of her lust.

Her head was thrown back as she raced for release now, her lips parting over the sharp canines that had grown from her gums. The man pleasuring her was wrapped in his own fantasy of lust, unaware that he would never actually plunge his dick inside the hot channel his fingers were stroking, stretching. He would soon be beneath her delicate body, her teeth at his throat as Cadan himself took the honor of fucking her into a mind-blowing orgasm.

"Thomas, lay down for her now," Cadan ordered the pussy-feasting male.

At the order, the lanky male went to his back on the floor, his cock standing at full mast, gleaming wetly with his pre-seminal fluids. Bliss didn't wait for Cadan to give her permission to go to the man. Within seconds, she was straddling his body, his dick pressing against his lower stomach as she cushioned it against the pad of her hot pussy.

Cadan groaned at the sight of his woman bending over the other man. His cock twitched as he rose from the couch, moving to her spread thighs and the fiery cunt he so loved to fuck.

"Gently, beloved," he instructed her as her mouth caressed the neck that had been bared to her. "Hold off just a second longer. Let your own passions soar and he will feel your excitement, you pleasure, as though it were his own. It is then that you want to begin."

He knew her symbiot would be doing her part to hold Bliss back, to tutor her in the ways of feeding just as she tutored her host in the ways of fighting. If needed, she would take control of Bliss and restrain her mentally, ensuring that neither the male beneath her, nor Bliss, would know any harm from the experience.

He could feel his symbiot connecting with the female, bonding with her on their unique plane as Cadan prepared to bond with Bliss on the physical.

He ran the thick head of his cock through the heavy juices that covered her gleaming pussy. She was hot, so soft, so beckoning that he grimaced with the effort it took to hold back and not slam inside her.

“Tease me and I’ll make you pay.” Her voice was rich with hunger, with throbbing need. “Fuck me, damn you. I won’t break.”

She was panting now, and as Cadan watched he saw her sweet juices drip from her pussy to the heavy balls of the man beneath her. It was too much. Bliss wasn’t the only one walking the fine line of an overpowering lust.

Cadan gripped her hips in his hands, his cock lodged at the entrance of her pussy, and tried to take her gently. She was still so tiny, so damned tight around his thick flesh that he feared hurting her.

“Now,” she begged breathlessly, her head moving restlessly as her lips and tongue caressed the man’s strong throat. “Fuck me, Cadan. Fuck me hard and deep. Make me take it all.”

His breath was expelled from his throat as he groaned roughly at the plea. He didn’t want to hurt her. Didn’t want to shatter the trust that built between them.

“Easy, Bliss,” he groaned, beginning to work inside her slowly, closing his eyes against the incredible pleasure of her tight pussy.

“No,” she cried out, and before Cadan could halt her, could move back to lessen the effect of her movement, her hips had slammed backward, her pussy swallowing every hard, engorged inch of his pulsing cock.

She stole his control, stole his breath and replaced it with a pleasure he could have never imagined. He was aware of her fangs sinking into the throat beneath her, the hot, rich flow of blood into her strong body, the lust thickening around them, and the muscles of her cunt milking him as he gripped her hips tighter and began to thrust hard and deep inside her. Exquisite heat, electricity and primal sensation washed through him in ever increasing waves. It slammed into his body, into his brain, overpowered everything he was and every preconceived notion of pleasure he had ever had. This was paradise.

* * * * *

Bliss would have screamed if the driving hunger inside her body had allowed it. The abrupt shock of his wide cock searing past the sensitive muscles of her cunt sent her spiraling into an ecstasy she couldn’t attempt to fight. It was in that moment that Cerise demanded she sink her teeth into Thomas’s blood-rich vein. It was pumping with lust, with lush pleasure, as he believed his cock was caught in the hot grip of her pussy as he pumped his way to release.

The erotic taste of the lust-rich blood was intoxicating, powerful, fueling her own passions and her pleasure until she existed in a sensuous, ecstatic haze that she had no desire to escape.

Behind her, Cadan was fucking her with deep, hard, jackhammer strokes that pushed her closer to the brink, threw her into the maelstrom of eroticism and had her reaching, reaching...

Her head lifted from Thomas’s throat, the little pinpricks instantly closing as the flow of blood out of the vein halted. Her head pressed against his shoulder, her hips raising, pushing back to the driving force possessing her as she allowed the pleasure to overtake her.

Sensation whipped through her body like electricity gone wild, zapping into her clitoris, her womb, convulsing her pussy as it rippled around Cadan's driving cock until she exploded.

Light shimmered behind her closed eyelids, brilliant fire bursts of color and carnal bliss that blasted into her in violent waves of exquisite sensual gratification. The earth moved. The mountains shuddered...or she did. She wasn't certain. All she knew was the violent release quaking through her body and the hard, hot spurts of Cadan's seed filling her pussy.

Bliss collapsed over Thomas, her body strong and powerful, yet weak with the release of her pleasure. Her symbiot had sent the psychic demand to Thomas that he needed to sleep now, to rest. That his pleasure had been extreme and his body well satisfied.

Behind her, Cadan breathed harshly, and inside her, his cock twitched with the last tremors of release. They were adrift now on clouds of enchanting fulfillment, within a connection so deep that she could touch his heart, his soul, and know the passion and love that only grew daily.

"Come on, woman." He moved back slowly, groaning as his cock slid from the tight clasp of her pussy. "Bedtime."

They were both weary. Mordan hadn't given up in his fight to take Bliss and use her for his own evil purposes, and the battles were now being fought nightly. The only light in the darkness of the battles was the symbiots they had rescued from the dark warriors. They now awaited within the few life capsules that Cadan had found over the centuries.

Cadan lifted her into his arms, sheltering her against his chest as he carried her to the bed. After he tucked her in, he would awaken Thomas, prepare him a light meal and then send him on his way. Cadan took care of her like that. Sheltered her, loved her. Her blood sucking playboy stud was hers alone now. His heart, his soul, his body. Just as she was his.

He laid her back in the bed, pulled the blankets over her body and kissed her lips softly.

"Sleep well, beloved," he told her gently before dressing and moving from the room.

Bliss watched him with drowsy eyes, a smile curving her mouth.

You'll never tame that wild man, Cerise thought to her with an edge of amusement. *He's still a stud.*

But he's our stud, Bliss informed her with a smile.

Yes, our stud, Cerise agreed.

Cerise moved within the power that connected her to her mate. The bond Cadan and Bliss had formed was strong, vibrant. A pure, intense love that allowed Cerise to touch Aldon often, to experience through her host the touch, the feel of the mate she had longed for all these centuries.

Sleep, beloved, Aldon whispered to her mind, his presence a comfort that stilled the pain she had known for too long.

The bond filled her with warmth, with a glowing strength she had not known since the deaths of their mated hosts nearly a thousand years before on the planet they had once called home. It was good, Cerise thought, to be a part of him once again.

* * * * *

As Bliss slipped finally into deep sleep, a similar thought lingered within her mind. She was a part of that something more she had always dreamed of. Strong and free, sheltered and loved and yet trusted to do her part. She was, for the first time in her life, complete.