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THE VAMPIRE ORACLE

Shadow

In The Cards



THE VAMPIRE ORACLE:

SHADOW

By

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Dedication

This one's for you, Red Garnier! Love ya!

Chapter One

"Have you seen him?"

Susanna glanced up from her laptop with a grimace. "Who are you talking about?"

"Your neighbor, the guy you spy on at night." Jessica smirked. "The hot piece of man flesh who never seems to function in the light of day."

"Oh. Him." Susanna sighed, closed out her email program and set her laptop on the coffee table. "No, I haven't seen him for a few days, more like a couple of weeks. I'm starting to think he moved away."

She really didn't think that, just didn't feel like talking about her elusive neighbor with her younger friend and co-worker. The emotions she experienced when she saw the man, her mysterious handsome neighbor, were too hard for her to discuss. She could barely dissect them within her own mind let alone try to explain them to Jessica, who only had sex on the brain anyway.

Her reaction to her neighbor had everything to do with longing and sadness. She wasn't *really* sexually attracted to him. Or so she told herself. She remembered what it was like to be young and full of passion and eagerness like Jessica, something Susanna hadn't experienced in far too long. After dealing with so much tragedy during her thirty-two years, she'd pretty much given up hope.

Hope of finding true happiness, hope of finding true love again. She lived her life one day at a time, not thinking of her own needs or her own pleasure. She didn't know how to anymore.

“He better not have moved away. He’s the only bit of eye candy I’ve ever caught you looking at. Remember that one night we spied on him together? He had a bod that wouldn’t quit.”

Declan did have a bod that wouldn’t quit. Susanna clearly remembered the night Jessica referred to. They’d worked late and Jessica had come over to eat pizza and watch a terrible movie on cable. Susanna had seen a flash of movement coming from the house next door and she’d gone to the dining room window, transfixed when she realized she could stare directly into her neighbor’s bathroom. She watched, mesmerized as her very muscular neighbor came out of the shower and toweled off. Drank him in with hungry eyes as he rubbed the thick towel all over his damp muscular body, and when she caught sight of the impressive equipment that hung between his legs, her mouth had gone dry.

So dark, so gorgeous and a complete recluse, her neighbor. Her entire body had tingled upon first sight of him, her sex clenching with some sort of unspoken need and she wanted to cry out from the pleasure. Wanted to run over to his house and beg him to touch her, kiss her, fuck her.

The moment had been ruined when Jessica had caught her spying. Susanna had pretended it was no big deal, the both of them hanging out in the window giggling until he’d dressed and shut off the light, shrouding his entire house in darkness. He’d never turned on another light. They’d never even seen him leave that night.

She had no idea who the man was or what he did. Only knew his name because she’d received a piece of his mail in her mailbox by mistake. A utility bill with Declan Fontaine and his address on the envelope, she’d dropped it back into his mailbox, unable to gather the nerve to go to his front door and hand him the envelope personally.

God, she was a wimp.

“Hey, Jess, can you hand me the mail on the kitchen counter?” Thinking of that letter reminded her she hadn’t gone through her own pile of mail in a couple of days.

Scooping up the pile of mail, Jessica dropped it next to Susanna on the couch before plopping down beside her. “Want to go out tonight? I know a few people from work are going to be at Shenanigan’s.”

Susanna shook her head, flipping through each individual envelope. Bills, bills, credit card offer, refinance offer. Her fingers alighted on a plain white envelope, her skin tingling at the contact and she dropped it as if it burned her.

“What’s wrong?” Jessica nudged her with a pointy elbow. “You dropped that envelope like it was a snake about to bite.”

With a shake of her head, Susanna picked the envelope back up, turning it over to read the front. It was addressed to her in plain black script, no return address, postmarked from El Dorado Springs, Colorado.

“Who do you know in Colorado?”

Susanna shook her head again, slipping her finger beneath the flap of the envelope and tearing it open. “No one. I have no idea who this is from.”

Her fingers shook as they delved into the envelope and pulled out a card. Approximately five-by-seven in size, printed only on one side. The image was dark, swirling with shades of black and deep red and half of a man’s face, the other half hidden in shadow.

“Looks like a tarot card,” Jessica said from over Susanna’s shoulder.

Susanna stared at it, entranced. A single word was written at the bottom—*Shadow*.

She had no idea what it meant, no idea why someone would send it to her. Energy seemed to infuse her as she touched it, turning it round and round in her hands. The man’s face stared at her, his expression intriguing, mysterious.

Reminding her of Declan Fontaine.

“It looks like a tarot card but not from a deck I’ve ever seen before.” Jessica tried to grab the card, but Susanna jerked it away from her reaching fingers.

“I have no idea where it came from,” Susanna murmured, unable to tear her gaze away from it. The man seemed to reach out to her with his compelling brown eyes, the shape of his mouth, the tension that rested there.

She didn’t want Jessica to touch it. At all. A wave of possessiveness that she hadn’t felt in a long time took her over, made her want to hide the

card away so no one could see it but her.

"Who would send you something like this? Do you think it's some sort of joke?"

Susanna shrugged, didn't even look up. "I don't know who would send me this. And I definitely don't think it's a joke."

"Then what does it mean?"

"I have no idea."

"Hmm, so strange." Jessica stood, flipping her blond hair over her shoulder. "Well, I guess I'm gonna take off. Are you sure you don't want to come with me? I think we're going to start out at Shenanigan's but we'll probably end up going to another club or two. It'll be fun. I'll even be your sober driver."

"I never drink anymore," Susanna murmured, slipping the card back into its envelope. Her hands felt empty when she set it down on the coffee table, her heart felt empty too.

Strange.

"I know you don't need to remind me. When was the last time you had some fun?"

"I don't remember." Susanna looked up at her younger friend, saw all the life and joy in her unmarked face. Eyes sparkling, lips curved in a sweet smile.

When was the last time her eyes really sparkled? When was the last time she sincerely smiled?

She didn't know.

"I understand you've been through a lot, Sus, but you still need to live your life. You're young and so pretty and funny. Lots of people like you, you just don't let them get close enough to get to know you. Don't let your life slip by."

Susanna startled at Jessica's soft voice, her honest and wise beyond her years words. It was true. After she'd lost the two people that had meant everything to her, she hadn't done anything but work and occasionally hang out with Jessica. She didn't have sex anymore, hadn't since James died. That had been nearly three years ago.

Three years. How did she let that much time go by?

Easy. You gave up.

Straightening her shoulders, Susanna looked Jessica square in the eye. "All right, I'll go with you."

Jessica's mouth dropped open, eyes widening in what Susanna could only assume was shock. "Are you serious?"

"I am." Susanna stood, her gaze drifting to where the card lay on the table. A wave of warmth engulfed her, making her shiver and her nipples hardened beneath the confines of her bra.

She wished she knew where Declan went every night. Her mysterious neighbor intrigued her, made her want.

Wanting was an emotion she hadn't experienced in a long time.

"You want to go to Shenanigan's? Have a couple of drinks?" Jessica smiled, her expression switching from shock to excitement.

Susanna shook her head and started for her bedroom. "I want to go to a club. A loud, crowded nightclub. I want to dance."

She wanted to feel free.

* * * * *

Declan glanced about the crowded room, his eyes scanning slowly over every face, looking for what or who, he didn't know. An unfamiliar energy had infused him a while ago, making him edgy, tense.

Hungrier than he'd felt for a long while.

It was a typical Thursday night at the club. Drink specials brought the people out in droves, exactly what he wanted them to do. Come to his club so he could pick out a few special ones. Exchange heated glances, flatter them with choice words, fuck them senseless in the loft that overlooked the entire club while Frank watched and sometimes even participated.

Declan would drink from them when they were in the throes of orgasm, when they didn't even see it coming, wouldn't remember it happening afterwards either. He didn't trust himself to drink alone, afraid he might go over the edge, do something he'd regret afterwards.

He hadn't been a vampire for long and he'd slowly figured out what worked for him. He'd had no choice, especially since he'd wanted to reside amongst the living, not hide out like a savage beast searching for

his next kill. He didn't like to kill.

There were more than a few vampires like that where he lived, but he was more civilized than that.

"Hey."

A slim hand clutched his arm and Declan swung around to find the blonde he and Frank had been with last Saturday night. She stood before him, oozing sex from every pore and wearing an expectant smile. She waggled her fingers at him with her free hand in a little wave and he smiled back, couldn't help but notice the press of her nipples against the thin silk of her halter top.

Nipples he'd sucked on that Saturday night. Sweet nipples, supple skin, and a tasty cunt he'd feasted on, making her writhe with pleasure. She'd given in to him so easily, they all did, really. His gaze drifted upwards, resting where her pulse beat at the base of her neck and he couldn't help but lick his lips in remembrance. Her blood had been especially sweet but she was young, just twenty one, she'd told him.

The younger ones were always sweeter. He'd tasted plenty of them, tasted many of all ages. She'd been adventurous as well, more than willing to be fucked by him and Frank in numerous ways.

Christ, being a vampire made him depraved.

"How are you?" Leaning forward, he pressed a kiss to her soft cheek, his lips lingering. He felt her smile grow beneath his lips and when he pulled away, she watched him from beneath the thick veil of her lashes.

"I'm wonderful. How are you?" Her voice was husky, full of sexual promise yet he didn't experience his normal response.

He blamed the mysterious feeling that had overcome him. There was a crackling in the air, something was happening but he couldn't quite put his finger on it, which made him uneasy.

Shit.

"I'm—good." Declan shrugged, struggling to remember her name.

For the life of him, he couldn't recall it. He knew it started with a J. Jenny, Julie, Jenna?

"Jessica! There you are."

The feminine voice that sounded behind him made every hair on his body stand on end, his skin tingling with awareness. He swore he'd

heard that voice before though he couldn't place it. It did strange things to his insides, made his breathing accelerate, his cock harden beneath his jeans.

He had to know who it was.

Turning around, he was shocked to see the woman who lived next door to him headed in his direction, waving at the woman, Jessica.

How would she know this young girl? This woman, his neighbor, never went anywhere besides her job.

Yes, he'd been watching her but only because she made him curious. Elusive women with sad eyes always made him curious.

"Susanna! Come meet the owner of the club." Jessica roped her arm through Declan's and he cleared his throat, suddenly feeling awkward.

He'd had sex with this young woman in every way imaginable and was now about to be introduced to his neighbor by her. Normally he kept all of this separate. What happened at the club stayed at the club. What happened at home, which was absolutely nothing, stayed at home.

Now the two were coming together and he didn't like it.

"Susanna, meet Dex, he owns this place. Dex, this is Susanna. We work together."

Susanna made her approach with an open expression, her luscious pink lips curving into a friendly smile. She was lovely, a word he didn't use for any of the women he encountered. Wholesome in appearance with her thick shoulder length brown hair and smooth complexion, though her eyes were a dark, deep blue, tinged with a sadness most probably didn't notice.

This woman had experienced terrible loss in her life. He sensed it.

"Hello." The second her gaze met his, all of the color drained from her face and he was afraid she would drop to the ground in a dead faint.

"Welcome. I believe we're neighbors." He took her outstretched hand, the spark of electricity that shocked his palm at her touch making his head reel.

His cock grew harder with every second that he touched her, his entire body aching for this woman he didn't know.

"Yes, yes, I believe we are." She shook his hand slowly, her lashes fluttering, skin so pale he swore he could make out the various veins

showing through even in the dim light.

“Oh, holy shit, no way!” Jessica slapped her hand to her open mouth, eyes wide with surprise. “You’re not telling me this is...”

“Yes, it is,” Susanna said through tight lips, disengaging her hand from his grip.

Her fingers shook, he saw them and he realized his entire body trembled as well.

This woman held a power over him he’d never encountered before. Declan wanted to explore this realization more thoroughly.

Chapter Two

Susanna knew right away that Jessica had slept with Declan Fontaine. There was something about the way she stood next to him, arm looped through his, her lithe body pressed against his side.

Of all the men in this nightclub, hell, in the entire city, her friend had sex with the one man who actually piqued her interest after so many years.

Life was completely unfair.

"Wow, Sus, I had no idea when we, uh...I mean." Jessica blew out a heavy breath. "Boy, this is tough."

"I think I'm missing something here." Declan smiled, the sight of it sending a zap of awareness straight to Susanna's pussy. Her panties grew even wetter when his eyes met hers.

"It's nothing," she said quickly, shooting a *be quiet* look Jessica's way. There was no need to make a big deal about this, really. So Jessica had slept with him, so what? Maybe she could ask for the dirty details later and relive them in her head. Wishing everything had happened to her rather than her friend.

"Would you ladies care for a drink?"

His voice was deep and smooth, reminding her of fine aged whiskey. She could imagine him whispering in her ear with that voice, making her toes curl with his every word, his lips brushing against her flesh as he spoke.

A full body shiver moved through her and damn it, he noticed.

"Cold?" His smile grew and his gaze dropped pointedly to the

vicinity of her chest.

Glancing down, she noticed her hardened nipples pressing against the fabric of her simple black cotton tank top and she wanted to die of embarrassment.

Maybe she wasn't ready to get back into the saddle again. The nightclub was uncomfortably crowded and way too hot. The people who inhabited it were far too young for her and interested in only one thing, hooking up with each other. Declan was probably the first man she came across tonight who was around her age.

Really, though, she'd come to the club to dance, let loose for a while. Have a couple of drinks. Forget her worries and live a little.

Not find a hot man who studied her with even hotter eyes, like her elusive neighbor. No, that had definitely *not* been a part of her plan.

She watched as Declan removed himself from Jessica's touch, his eyes only for Susanna the entire time. She couldn't look away from him either, found herself drowning in his almost black gaze, even when she heard Jessica talking to her. Sounds seemed to narrow in and fade away, the people surrounding them disappearing until it was only her and him. His presence overwhelmed her, made her want to run far away.

It also made her want to throw herself at his feet and beg him to fuck her.

That startled her, shook her from the dream-like trance Declan seemed to induce in her.

"Sus, Robby is looking for us. I just saw him wave us over."

Blinking, Susanna shook her head, turning to find Jessica watching her with hands resting on her slim hips, an impatient expression on her face.

"Who's looking for us?"

"Robby, you know, the guy we work with that drove us here in the first place?" Jessica rolled her eyes and giggled. "You must've drank more than I thought."

"No, I'm fine, really."

"Why don't you go see what your friend wants? I'll keep Susanna company," Declan suggested, his voice allowing the both of them no argument.

What he said was final. No one could mistake that.

“Okay.” Jessica nodded and took off, calling over her shoulder, “I’ll be back.”

They watched her go, then turned to look at each other. Susanna’s heart beat slow and hard in her chest, and she was suddenly afraid to be left alone with this man. A man so large, so broad, so gorgeous he could ask her to do anything and she would probably agree.

A frightening—and exciting—thought.

“Would you like a drink?”

She shook her head, unable to form words, could only stare at him. A sudden hunger rose within her, making her dizzy and she wobbled on her feet.

Declan grabbed her arm, steadying her with his sure grip and she clung to him, fingers curling around his bicep, marveling at the strength she felt beneath her hands. “Thank you. I’m sorry I don’t know what came over me.”

“I do,” he murmured and she glanced up at him, her brows furrowing. She had no idea what he referred to. How in the world would he know?

“Come with me,” he continued as he started to walk, heading towards a metal spiral stairwell that sat against the far wall. “I’ll take you somewhere more comfortable. Fresher air, maybe even get you a glass of water. I think it’s too crowded for you.”

“Yes, that must be it,” she said with a nod, though she knew that wasn’t the problem at all.

The problem was *him*.

* * * * *

It was a mistake bringing this woman, his neighbor, up to his loft all alone but it was as if he couldn’t help himself. Like he had no control over his actions and he hadn’t felt that way in a long time.

He’d always prided himself on his control and when he’d turned, he’d lost all control for a long time. A man already consumed with the material things in life, he’d become a complete hedonist after that one

fateful night. Allowing his indulgences to rule his life, he'd nearly ended up in shambles.

No more of that. He'd gotten his shit together and now he controlled all of it. He had a plan for everything and a place for everything too, though he had a feeling this woman who walked beside him would ruin all of that if he allowed it.

And if he did allow it, he'd have a fucking good time doing it, too.

"Does someone live here?" Susanna's gaze swept over the entire room as they entered, her eyes wide, lush lips slightly parted.

Sweat beaded on his forehead and he inhaled deeply. The primal urge to fuck, to take her whether she was willing or not was so overwhelming he felt nearly drunk with it. He could only imagine her bent over the brown suede couch, her pale rounded ass tempting him, her pink cunt glistening with her juices, ready for him.

She watched him expectantly and he remembered she'd asked him a question.

"No, this is my office and occasionally I stay the night here when things run too late," he finally said, his voice hoarse with lust.

"Don't things always run late here? After all, it is a nightclub." A smile tickled the corners of Susanna's lips and it did wonders for her. It lit up her entire face, making her eyes twinkle, her lips curved invitingly.

"True." He inclined his head towards her, suddenly wishing Frank was with them. He would know what to say, send Declan subtle signals as to what to do next, maybe even take over the situation.

He wanted to fuck Susanna, wanted to taste her, but he knew he couldn't. She was his neighbor, a woman who would figure out what he was and still be around to deal with the consequences. He didn't need that.

If Frank were here, Declan would turn her over to him. Allow him to feed off of her, fuck her while Declan watched.

Damn it, he didn't want to watch, he wanted to participate.

His cock hardened and he grabbed his cell phone from his pocket, hitting a number on the speed dial.

"Frank, I need you up here when you get a chance," Declan said when Frank answered, not even giving him a chance to say anything.

“Who’s Frank?” she asked after he hung up the phone.

He smiled at her, resisting the urge to bare his fangs. He hadn’t felt this out of control since the first year after he turned.

“My business partner.” Well, it was a lie, but it worked when someone asked. Frank was one of the oldest and wisest vampires Declan knew. Had been there for him offering guidance and advice when Declan needed it and been too afraid to ask. He owed Frank a lot.

That’s why Declan shared all of his conquests with him. Frank calmed him, helped him stay in control, had even taught him a trick or two. Many thought they were a couple and Declan let them speculate. They knew the truth. He preferred women, as did Frank, they just always happened to share the same woman.

Always.

Looking at Susanna, Declan couldn’t even imagine sharing her with Frank. White hot jealousy coursed through his blood at the thought of Frank’s hands on her, his mouth pressed against hers, his cock stuffed in her cunt.

Fists clenching, he growled low, causing her to startle.

“Is everything all right?”

No, it wasn’t all right, everything was fucking crazed. The way he felt, the emotions this woman brought forth inside him, it didn’t sit well. She made him uncomfortable, edgy, restless.

She also aroused him beyond measure.

“I’m fine.” He forced a smile and waved a hand towards the couch. “Why don’t you have a seat?”

“Maybe I should go back downstairs, look for my friend.” Nibbling on her lower lip, she edged closer to the door, looking as uncomfortable as he felt.

“Your friend is fine, trust me.” He went to her, grabbing her by the arm and she stood completely still. Her breathing accelerated. He saw the rapid rise and fall of her full breasts, nipples pressing against the thin fabric of her top and he licked his lips, practically tasting them. “Stay with me, please.”

“I—I shouldn’t.” Her lids lifted, dark blue eyes meeting his and he drowned in them, dipping closer to her until their noses practically

touched, their breath mingling.

“You want to.” It wasn’t a question, he knew it was so.

“You had sex with Jessica.”

Ah, it bothered her, which didn’t surprise him. It would bother him, too, to know she’d fucked someone else. Ridiculous to feel that way but he couldn’t help it.

“I won’t deny I did.”

Sighing, she pulled her arm out of his grip. “I won’t consider doing anything with a man who’s been involved with a friend.”

“Who said anything about the two of us doing something beyond talking? It’s not like I was in a relationship with your friend, trust me. It was all very casual.” The second he said the words he knew he’d made a mistake.

She blushed prettily, the color of her skin causing all of those baser urges deep within him to rise to the top. Cock harder than stone in his jeans, muscles tense, fangs descending, he was this close to going into full attack mode.

“You didn’t tell me you had a guest, Dex. And a gorgeous one at that.”

Frank sauntered into the room with a crooked grin, causing both Declan and Susanna to turn and watch him with wary eyes. Frank didn’t seem to notice. He approached Susanna with a welcoming smile, his hands grasping both of hers in their grip and squeezing, pulling her close to him.

“Such a pleasure to meet you. I’m Frank, Dex’s business partner. And you are?”

Clearing her throat, Susanna answered in her strong, sweet voice, “Susanna. It’s nice to meet you, Frank.”

“Likewise.” His smile grew, not releasing her and she didn’t try to pull away.

Declan envied Frank’s power, his ability to keep everything straight even in the eye of a raging storm. Susanna reminded him of such a storm, her emotions swirling across her face, within her body, causing a similar reaction within him.

“Is Declan being his usual selfish self or has he shown you about

the loft?"

"There's not much to show, Frank. It's one room," Declan said with a snort.

Frank ignored him, his dark eyes still glued on Susanna's face which wore a rapt expression. "Would you care for something to drink, then?"

Her tongue darted out, licking her upper lip and Declan wanted to groan at the sight of it. "Please. Just some water. I don't need any more alcohol tonight."

"Whatever the lady wishes." Frank released her hands and bowed, a mischievous smile on his face and he glared pointedly at Declan when he walked by him. "Come with me."

Declan followed him, though he was reluctant to leave Susanna. He went to where Frank stood by the mini bar. "What's up?"

"Who is this woman? Where did you find her?" Frank hissed, grabbing a glass and filling it with ice.

"She was here at the club." Declan paused, shocked by the intensity of Frank's stare. "She's with the woman we fucked last Saturday."

"You already know her, don't you?" Grabbing a bottle of water, Frank filled the glass nearly to the rim, the ice cubes clinking against each other.

"Not formally no, we've never talked before tonight. She's my next door neighbor."

Frank shoved the glass hard into Declan's hand, spilling water over the edge. "She's marked for you. Can't you see it?"

Shock coursed through his veins at Frank's statement. "What do you mean, she's marked for me? What are you talking about?"

"I can smell it on her. I can always smell it when they're marked. You're too new I guess to be able to tell." Frank sighed, resting his hands on his hips. "Our dalliances are over, Declan. This woman is yours whether you want her to be or not."

"She's mine? Could've fooled me with the way you were flirting with her and how she looked at you."

"I was talking to her to see if I was correct, if she really wore the mark and guess what? She *does*. Are you attracted to her?"

Declan observed her on the couch, watching as she crossed and uncrossed her legs, even white teeth nibbling on her lower lip. She glanced up, her eyes meeting his, and a surge of lust moved through his body so strong it almost dropped him to his knees.

"You don't even have to answer my question, I can see it in your eyes." Frank stepped closer to him, cocking his head in Declan's direction. "Once you touch her, sink your cock inside of her, you won't be able to touch anyone else. No more sharing women, Declan, because you won't need me anymore."

Panic clawed at him and Declan released a shuddering breath. He hadn't been alone with a woman since he first turned and those experiences had not been...pleasant. "I can't do it."

"Oh, but you will. It's your destiny." Frank smiled and clapped him on the back. "You're lucky enough to have such a beautiful woman chosen for you. I, unfortunately, am doomed to walk this world alone forever. Consider yourself blessed."

"Wait, where are you going?" Declan followed Frank as he headed towards the door, absolutely aware that Susanna watched them with curious eyes.

"I am leaving you alone with your woman, Declan. Don't be afraid, trust your instincts." Frank smiled. "You won't hurt her. You've learned how to control yourself. And with this woman, nothing will happen that she doesn't want. Trust me. Trust in yourself."

And then Frank was gone, leaving Declan completely and totally alone with a woman who was supposedly his. Predestined.

It all sounded like a bunch of shit.

Sighing deeply, he stood straighter and walked toward the couch.

Chapter Three

Something strange had just happened between the two handsome men. Susanna knew it. No, more like she'd felt it, a creeping through her veins, tingles on her skin as she watched them speak, heads bent close together. She sensed Declan's unease as he approached her, his arm extended towards her with a glass of water clutched in his hand. She took it from him, their fingers brushing, and the brief contact sent sparks of electricity shooting up her arm, throughout her entire body.

Her nipples hardened to almost painful points, chafing against the fabric of her tank top. Glancing down, she knew Declan would notice the beads of her nipples, and she was upset with herself that she wore the top with the meager shelf bra built in.

Of course, he'd been the one who asked if she was cold earlier so no doubt he would notice her nipples. So embarrassing.

Yet also incredibly arousing. Here was a man who pushed all of her sexually charged buttons with just one glance. She'd never reacted so strongly to another man before, especially upon just meeting him. She couldn't remember reacting this way to James and he'd been the love of her life.

"Are you feeling better?" Declan asked after she took a sip of water.

"Yes, thank you." She set the glass on the coffee table in front of her and clasped her hands together, resting them on her knees. Not knowing what else to say, she sat there, quiet, staring at her lap.

She should leave. Just get up, walk out of the room and never look

back. The air in the club, specifically in the very room she sat in, was thick with mystery, heavy with unmistakable desire. A desire she shouldn't feel, couldn't feel. Not with this man who watched her with all-seeing eyes. His gaze was upon her this very minute, she could feel it and she lifted her head, found him watching her unabashedly.

"You're beautiful."

Her cheeks heated and she tore her gaze away from his. "Flattery isn't necessary. I'm sure you meet endless beautiful women here every night."

"None as lovely as you." Sincerity rang clear in his deep voice and she dared to look at him again, their gazes locking, leaving her breathless.

"Why did your friend leave?"

Declan scowled and stood, approaching the couch with sure, measured steps. She leaned back against the soft plump cushions as he loomed over her, his big body blocking everything out but a glimmer of light outlining his shape.

"He wanted to give us privacy."

"Why?" She whispered the word, startling when he sat next to her, so close his thigh pressed against hers. She felt the heat of his body, the hardness of his muscles.

He smiled, though it didn't reach his eyes. "If I told you what he said to me, you wouldn't believe it."

"Try me."

"No." Shaking his head, he leaned towards her, his warm breath fanning across her lips. "I'd rather try you in another way."

His mouth swooped in, taking hers with a gentle hunger and she could do nothing but whimper deep in her throat, giving in without a fight. How easily she caved as his tongue swept into her mouth, searching, dancing with hers. Large hands grasped her shoulders, pushing her deeper into the plush cushions of the couch. His wide chest brushed against hers, like a direct scrape against her aching nipples and she slipped her arms around him, marveling at the strength she felt as her hands slid up and down his back.

Declan broke the kiss, staring down at her for a moment, his breathing ragged, lips parted. He dipped his head, pressing his face

against the base of her throat. "Your taste is like a drug." His murmured words tickled when he spoke against her skin.

Addictive was the perfect word for his kisses. Whether they were on her mouth or on the sensitive flesh of her neck, his lips were soft and damp, causing shivers to ripple through her body. She clutched him closer, gasping when his hands wandered, cupping her breasts, thumbs brushing her nipples.

"So sweet," he murmured, a wide palm moving over her belly, further down until he cupped her between her legs.

His touch was powerful, making her arch against him in unbridled pleasure. Long fingers spreading, applying pressure directly to her crotch, he rubbed up and then down with a slow, steady friction. Pressing the ridge of her jeans between her pussy lips, the thick strip of fabric was rough against her clit, making it throb.

"Yes," she murmured, her hips moving of their own volition, thrusting against him unconsciously.

What was it about this man that made her so wanton? A sharp gasp escaped her when his other hand moved to her breasts, tugging the scooped neck down and allowing them to pop free. Hot breath grazed them, causing her nipples to tighten even more and then he was raining kisses along the plump flesh, his mouth edging dangerously close to a nipple.

When his lips enveloped the turgid nipple, her head lolled against the back of the couch, hands reaching to plunge into his hair, holding him close. Declan nibbled and sucked, driving her wild, speeding her to orgasm at a rapid pace and she clutched at his head, the silky strands of his dark hair curling around her fingers.

"Please." Susanna was begging but she didn't care. It had been so long since she had a man's hands on her, since she had an orgasm brought on by another's touch. She needed release, his fingers and mouth just a tease of what she was sure would be a mind-blowing sexual encounter. She wanted him naked, she wanted to be naked, to feel skin press against skin, a thick cock teasing her entry.

And then his middle finger pressed directly against her denim covered clit, circling fast and hard and she burst, the orgasm rippling

through her with powerful waves, taking her to heaven and back as her cunt spasmed again and again.

“So responsive,” he murmured against her throat again, his tongue licking, teeth nibbling. Harder, sharper and Susanna winced...

Declan thrust her away from him and leapt to his feet, his movements so quick she marveled at his speed. He moved more like an animal than a man, reminding her of a panther, fast and sleek.

Releasing a shuddering breath, she watched him pace back and forth, fingers thrusting through his hair, a hand resting on his hip.

“Wh—what’s wrong?” Did she do something to offend him? Did he regret what just happened between them?

“You need to leave.” Declan turned away from her and she stared at his muscular back, the firm curve of his ass beneath his perfectly tailored black trousers and her breath came in harsh pants, her heart still racing a million miles a second.

What the hell just happened?

“Why? What did I do?”

“You did nothing, you’re a beautiful woman and incredibly responsive but I can’t...do this.” He ran his hand over his hair, fingers clutched into a fist. “Now go.”

The commanding tone in his deep voice made her angry, made her want to throw something at him, punch him, make him hurt. Hurt like she did at being so carelessly tossed aside.

Yanking her tank top up to cover her breasts, she stood, smoothing her hands over her thighs. She couldn’t believe she’d had an orgasm on this man’s couch, with him just rubbing her through her jeans and now he was demanding she leave.

It was rude, downright humiliating.

“You by far are the rudest man I’ve ever met.” She tossed the words at him as she huffed by, heading straight for the door.

Declan grabbed her upper arm, startling her and she turned to glare at him.

“You don’t know what you’re messing with, little girl.” He glowered at her, his eyes dark and menacing, those sensuous lips now drawn into a tight line.

“Don’t call me little girl.” Jerking her arm away from him, she returned the glare, her entire body trembling with a combination of anger and arousal she hated to admit.

He was magnificent angry, his entire body tense, his strong neck corded with muscle, nostrils flaring. It was those eyes, though, that glittered, almost unnaturally, and she couldn’t tear her gaze away from him.

“I can’t be alone with you.” His voice was like a growl, so deep it moved through her body, touching the very heart of her. “I’m afraid of what I might do.”

“What are you talking about?” Panic rose within her, making her throat close and she shook her head, backing away from him. “Who are you?”

His expression grim, he finally spoke. “I’m your darkest nightmare.”

* * * * *

“You told her you were her darkest nightmare?” Frank laughed uproariously, actually clutching his stomach, and Declan was overwhelmed with the urge to smash his fist into his friend’s face.

“I am, damn it. Every time I came into contact with her pale smooth throat, I wanted to sink my teeth into her. And I was so afraid I wouldn’t be able to stop myself I kicked her out.”

“You kicked her out.”

Declan nodded, feeling miserable. It had been one of the hardest things he’d ever done, sending Susanna out of the loft, essentially out of his life, but he did what he’d had to do. Lacking the control of a seasoned vampire such as Frank, he knew once he sunk his teeth into her supple sweet flesh he’d drink and drink until she was dry. Dead. Limp in his arms.

“She is your woman, the woman meant for you and you sent her packing? You are a complete idiot.”

“What’s all this shit about Susanna being my woman anyway? I’ve never been a big believer in destiny and all that crap.” Declan grimaced

and sipped from his cup of coffee, his head pounding. Choosing to stay at the loft, not able to face going home, he hadn't been able to get a wink of sleep last night, too consumed with thoughts of Susanna. Memories of her responsiveness, the way she arched against his hand, the heat of her cunt even through the thick fabric of her jeans, the taste of her sweet nipples still lingering on his tongue.

He'd jerked off furiously in bed, the shots of semen coming in long streams when he'd finally found his release but it hadn't been enough. Now he was afraid it would never be enough. Not after he'd sampled Susanna.

"You weren't a big believer in vampires either, right?" Frank cocked his head towards him, his expression broaching no argument and Declan sighed.

"How do you know she's...for me?"

"She's received the card."

Declan's brow furrowed. "What card?"

"It's a representation of you, of your image, of your personality. She is the owner of that card now and once she's touched it, the scent of it, the mark of you, is all over it."

"What the fuck are you talking about?"

Frank shrugged, sipping from his coffee. "I've heard much about the cards during my time and they are rare, trust me. I've never seen one and I don't care to see one either, but once it's been determined, it will eventually become fact. At least, that's what the rumors claim. She is yours, Declan. Don't be a fool and let her slip away. If you do, you will be unsatisfied for the rest of your life."

"That's a lot of heavy shit, Frank." Declan shook his head.

"It is and it's also true, so don't be a dumb ass. Take this as a gift, an offering to you from your sire. It's not every day a vampire can find a mate for life."

"But she's not a vampire. How could we be together forever?"

"Ah, but see, that's the beauty of it. You can make her one of us, become her sire, her owner, so to speak. She will be your slave, show her undying love for you and she'll be yours for all time. She's ready for it. Mates aren't chosen lightly. They're people who have no faith in the

living, they can be easily convinced to come to the dark side, so to speak." Frank sighed, a wisp of a smile curving his lips. "I envy you, my friend. This opportunity doesn't happen to everyone."

"You speak of myths, I'm sure. I've never heard of these cards. I don't understand why I would be chosen anyway and not you, considering you turned so long ago." Declan grunted, didn't want to admit that he was intrigued. Aroused at the thought of Susanna really belonging to him forever. He imagined sinking his teeth into her flesh and drinking from her, just enough to turn her, make her like him.

He'd never turned anyone in his twenty short years as a vampire, had never planned to. The idea of turning Susanna though, of watching her eyelids flutter with the ecstasy of it, her skin paling as the blood slowly drained from her body, aroused him.

It also made him feel like a sick, deranged fuck.

"I guess it's not for me, finding a mate forever. You know how much I like sampling various women anyway, so truly, I'm not disappointed." Frank grinned, looking very much like the cocky thirty year old he was.

Just add about three hundred fifty years to that.

"After all of this time, you aren't sick of fucking a different woman every night?"

"Hell, no. Can you even comprehend how much pussy I've had over the years? Because I certainly can't." Frank chuckled, rather pleased with himself, Declan was sure. "I've seen it all, my friend. I've seen the trends come and go, I've been with meek women embarrassed to give themselves over to me and I've been with wild women who actually scare the shit out of me, though those have been rare. I've enjoyed fucking each and every one of them."

"Then you were made for this lifestyle while I clearly wasn't."

"Ah, but you were, at one point. You were right there fucking them with me, you still are somewhat. You've changed though, Dex. These last few years you've become more self-conscious, afraid of your abilities. You need to trust your instincts with this woman, follow your needs and wants."

"I need you with me when I fuck her, Frank. My instincts say I'll

tear into her until I can't see straight. The thought of that, of my urges, makes me think I'll go too far."

"You need to stop." The harshness of Frank's tone made Declan lift his head, startled. It sounded as if Frank meant business.

"What?"

"You heard me. Fuck all that negativity, all that whiny 'I'm afraid of what I might do' bullshit. Accept who you are and control it. You have it in you. You've just used me as a crutch for far too long."

Declan glared at his friend, found Frank staring hard at him right back. With a sigh, Declan leaned back in his chair.

Frank was right. It was easier to use Frank, keep him around, keep everything on the surface. Nothing deep, nothing where he had to exert himself, it was always free and easy sex with a willing woman and then seducing her into a semi-conscious state where the both of them fed.

Simple and with no complications.

"Now that you've been given a mate, you need to stop behaving like this. I can't touch her, hell, I probably shouldn't be in the same room with the two of you. She's yours, Dex, and you're hers. Once you two come together, that's it."

Declan closed his eyes, knew that Frank's words were true. He already felt consumed with her, unable to think of anyone or anything else. "So you won't help me."

"I can't, and there's no need anyway. You can do this, I know you can. Go to her, go to your woman and tell her you're sorry for treating her the way you did. Fuck her into oblivion and then turn her. She'll readily agree in that post-orgasmic state."

"That seems...deceitful." Declan grimaced.

"She'll forgive you, trust me. Now go. Go to her."

Fuck, he wouldn't be able to rest until he did so. He knew Frank would see to that.

What if it was all bullshit, that Susanna wasn't his mate, she didn't have a card or whatever the fuck it was? Would he go talk to her for nothing? Would she slam the door in his face if he even attempted to tell her this crazy theory?

Probably, yes.

Would she freak out to discover he was a vampire?

Oh, most definitely.

But what if it was true and she was predestined to be his? What if once he got her naked and buried his cock deep inside her, he'd never want to let her go?

He had to find out the truth. Now.

Chapter Four

Susanna had called in sick to work, barely able to get out of bed. It couldn't have been the little bit of alcohol she consumed yet she felt completely hung over, unable to function, as if all the energy had been drained out of her.

She had a sneaking suspicion it had everything to do with the most infuriating man she'd ever met. Declan.

He'd turned on her so abruptly that she'd left, luckily running into Jessica and able to convince Robby to take them out of there. Her skin had felt clammy, her body consumed with chills on the drive home, concerning her and Jessica both.

"Maybe you're coming down with something," Jessica had said, her expression full of worry.

That's what Susanna had thought as well but as the night went on, she knew it wasn't illness that consumed her. No, it was something more along the lines of complete and utter lust. Of being denied something that should have been her right, that had been meant to happen.

She should've had sex with Declan last night. But he'd demanded she leave, told her he was afraid of what he might do to her, which really made no sense. Nothing about her meeting with Declan last night made any sense. One minute they'd been talking and the next he'd attacked her and she'd let him. She'd more than let him, she'd encouraged him, urged him on, practically begging for more and then he'd turned her away from him as if she'd been repulsive.

All night she'd felt empty, unfulfilled. She had lain awake until

morning came, keeping a watchful eye on Declan's home, noticing that he never showed up.

Deep in her heart, she knew he'd done that on purpose, to avoid her. But why? What had she done to him to make him send her away like that? Why had his reaction been so intense?

It had been easier to stay at home and wallow in her misery rather than go to work. Run the scenario in her mind over and over again, trying to figure out where she'd gone wrong. Maybe he thought she was a slut for coming so fast but she hadn't been able to help herself. It had been too long since a man touched her like that and given her so much pleasure.

And he was a man she knew who would give her even more pleasure, if he'd only allow himself the chance.

Evening had come once more and Declan had still not come home. She forced herself to quit checking every five minutes, trying to drown herself in a movie on cable but it was no use. She closed her eyes and thought of him. Breathed deep and swore she could smell him. Licked her lips and tasted him.

It was a sickness.

Breathing deep, she stilled, shocked at the sensation that had just come over her. It felt like a shadow had just moved through her, lingering inside her. She left the couch and ran to the window to find the very man who'd haunted her for the last twenty four hours standing on his front porch, staring at her house. Hands resting on his hips, legs spread, his stance was tense, brimming with a sexual heat she could feel even within the confines of her home.

So strange yet completely what she expected.

"Come to me," Susanna whispered, watching him, able to detect the indecision on his face. "Please."

As if he heard her, his head lifted, eyes meeting hers as she stood in the window and she didn't shy away, couldn't really. His piercing gaze locked her there, stilled the breath in her throat, slowed the beating of her heart. He started to walk towards the house, his steps slow, his expression determined and everything deep within her went liquid.

Declan was coming to her house to fuck her. She knew it, had no doubts whatsoever. And she wanted it, burned for it, her nipples stabbing

against the thin T-shirt she wore, her panties dampening in anticipation.

A nagging voice whispered to her, *You should be mad at him. He dumped you, turned you away like you were nothing but a piece of trash.*

It didn't matter. She still wanted him. Possibly even more so than she did last night.

Her doorbell rang once, then once again and she hurried to answer it, throwing the door open to find him standing on her doorstep, his big body seeming to fill the entire doorway.

"Do you want to tell me to go to hell? If you do, I don't blame you."

She shook her head slowly, unable to speak, too entranced with the heated gleam in his eyes.

"Will you invite me in, Susanna? Be warned, once I step inside, I'm not leaving until I taste every delectable inch of your body."

Her skin tingled at his words, the deep timbre of his voice, the thread of promise that laced it. She knew he meant every word he said.

"So what'll it be? Will you let me in or will you tell me to fuck off?"

Without a word, she opened the door wider and stepped aside, her stomach fluttering when he walked inside, his scent lingering in his wake. He smelled like warm, spicy man and she breathed deep, shutting the door as she watched him enter her living room.

"Your house is nice." He glanced about the room, staring at the high beamed ceilings and she could only shake her head.

"You didn't come here for small talk."

"No, I didn't." His gaze met hers, his lips parting and she wanted to run to him. Claim his mouth with her own, run her hands all over his big muscular body.

But she didn't. She couldn't, not yet.

"I came here for you. I came here to claim you, Susanna...I want you."

Her chin lifted. "It's rather arrogant to assume I'd want you considering what happened before."

"I know and I'm sorry for what happened last night, Susanna. It was wrong of me to behave so rudely towards you and I apologize."

Exactly what she'd been waiting for, though she wasn't going to let him off so easy. "It *was* rude. I still can't believe you did that to me."

"I know." His voice was raw, he truly did sound sorry and she was glad. He should, damn him. "Nothing I can say could rectify what I did to you."

"Well, maybe there is nothing you could say but there are certainly a few things you could *do*." She approached him slowly until she stood directly in front of him, her hands itching to reach out and touch him.

He was so large, so broad, his figure formidable, intimidating. He could easily overpower her, hurt her even, but she wasn't worried. She barely knew him but she wasn't afraid.

She wanted him to overpower her, take her, claim her as his. Just the thought of having him above her, against her, his cock buried inside of her made her skin tingle and grow warm.

"What would you like me to do to make it better?" He cocked a brow at her, a glimmer of a smile threatening the corners of his mouth and she smiled in return.

The image of his dark head buried between her thighs, his long hot tongue licking her leisurely, flicking her clit, made her want to come on the spot. She'd never thought of a man in such a sexual manner before, especially a virtual stranger. Yes, the man had made her come last night but truly she didn't even know him.

And she'd had images of the both of them naked before, when she'd never even spoken to him.

"Touch me," she finally said, curling her fingers into fists so she wouldn't touch him first. "Please."

Long, sure fingers wrapped around her shoulders, so hot they burned her through the thin fabric of her shirt. A shudder moved through her at his touch and she looked up to find him staring down at her, his eyes blazing with an intensity that made her catch her breath.

"You're beautiful," he whispered, his voice strained, as if the words took everything out of him to say.

Before she could reply, he took her mouth in a kiss so possessive and gentle it made her knees quiver. Those thick sensuous lips molded to hers, his tongue dipping into and searching her mouth. His hands pulled her closer, her breasts brushing against his chest and he groaned against her lips.

"I can feel your nipples." Of course he could, she wore no bra. They rubbed against his shirt front, aching with the need to feel his mouth on them and she whimpered in frustration.

As if he knew exactly what she wanted, his fingers tugged at the hem of her shirt, yanking it up and over her head with eagerness. She thrust her chest out, not caring how hard her nipples were, not caring how needy she must appear. She wanted him to suck them, fuck her, all of it *now*.

Declan surprised her by gathering her into his arms with ease, holding her against his chest. She wasn't a small woman and she was startled at his show of strength, the utter ease he seemed to have in carrying her solid frame.

"Where's your bedroom?"

"Down the hall, last door on the right." She curled her arms around his neck, sinking her fingers into the thick, silky mass of hair at the back of his neck.

She felt cherished, protected, cradled in his strength.

Once they entered her bedroom, he disposed of her clothing with swift movements until she stood before him naked and trembling, though not from the temperature. The heat in his eyes, the tense stance of his body, the strain of his erection against the fly of his jeans, he was delicious. And soon all hers to sample as much as she wanted.

"Lie down." His voice was a command. She knew she wouldn't be able to argue with him even if she wanted to. She definitely didn't want to.

Susanna spread herself across the bed, the silky softness of her comforter sliding against her skin, making goose flesh appear. Watching as he tore off his shirt, she licked her lips when he revealed the muscular perfection of his chest. Muscles gleamed in the soft light, a smattering of dark hair between his pecs, that washboard stomach.

God, she had never been with such a beautiful man before in her life.

When he stepped out of his jeans, she couldn't contain the gasp that escaped her. His cock was long and thick, jutting from a dark patch of curls, curving upwards towards his stomach.

“Like what you see?” He smiled.

The hint of cockiness in his voice was undeniable and she figured he had reason to be the slightest bit cocky. He was built like a Greek God and she couldn't wait to get her hands on him.

Opening her arms wide, she waggled her fingers. “Hurry.”

Declan joined her on the bed, the mattress dipping beneath his weight, sinking her deeper. He hovered above her, arms braced, palms flat on either side of her head. The heat of him made her writhe in eagerness, his cock brushing against her lower belly, leaving a damp trail in its wake. She wanted him to plunge deep inside her, wanted to feel his hands all over her, his mouth slammed on hers, drinking from her.

“If I enter you now, it'll be over before it's even begun,” he said as if he could read her thoughts. “Let me savor you first.”

He went about his savoring, her eyes sliding closed when she felt his hot lips press against the cool flesh of her neck, burning a trail of steaming kisses and nibbles on her skin. One hand slid down her side slowly, as if memorizing her curves and he cupped her breast in his palm, his thumb flicking against the nipple. She arched, crying out in pleasure.

“So responsive,” he murmured, his tone pleased, and when she opened her eyes, the appreciative glow in his own was unmistakable.

“Yes.” Susanna drew the word out on a moan, her belly quivering when his fingers glided over it, dipping ever so closer to the tangle of curls that hid her pink depths.

“Are you wet for me, Susanna?” His fingers moved lower, hovering above her slit and her hips lurched, desperate to drive his touch within her.

“Mmm, so wet.” His index finger traced her slit, up and then down in a gentle brushing motion, teasing her lower lips. She whimpered in her throat, aching for more and when he finally parted her lips, sinking into her folds, she was tempted to plead her thanks.

“I want to taste you.” He moved lightning quick, adjusting his body so his face was above her aching cunt and his tongue snuck out, lapping at her cream.

Her hands sank into his hair, fingers gripping him tight, holding him to her. Nudging her legs wider with his shoulders, he lapped at her,

his tongue searching, circling around her clit, tasting her. So thorough, so slow, she wanted more, needed more. Her body demanded it.

As if reading her body's cues, he teased her entry and then plunged deep in the most sensual tongue fuck of her life. Over and over again, he entered her, mimicking the movements his cock would be making within moments she was sure.

She absolutely could not wait.

"Come, Susanna." His tongue tapped against her clit, one and then two long fingers slid deep within her, the deep in and out motion making her crazy, sending her headlong towards the inevitable goal. "Come for me, baby."

A keening cry escaped her as the waves of her orgasm washed over her, her entire body shuddering, her pussy clenching around his fingers in a rhythmic motion. His tongue teased her clit gently, riding out her orgasm and she'd barely had a moment to contemplate what just happened when Declan moved above her, plunging deep within her still spasming pussy.

"Ah, Christ, you feel so good. So tight," he said through gritted teeth.

She watched in fascination as he threw his head back, the corded muscles of his neck standing out in stark contrast, his entire body focused on their mutual pleasure.

"Harder, Declan." Susanna could tell he was being restrained, holding a piece of himself back. Why, she wasn't sure. Was he afraid he'd hurt her, scare her with his possible roughness?

Funny how she never craved it before, but she wanted this man to fuck her so hard it hurt, wanted to see him lose control.

His nostrils flared at her request, sweat beading on his brow and he pushed harder, his cock going so deep within her she swore it nudged her womb. Again and again he pumped, his hips bumping against hers, the harsh pants of his breath filling the room.

Matching his pace, Susanna slipped her arms around him, her hands sliding down over his firm buttocks, encouraging his movements. Already a second orgasm grew within her, more powerful than the first and she welcomed it, relished it as it grew and grew, leaving her hanging

in that delicious early moment before climax.

His buttocks tensed beneath her hands and she knew he was close, could tell by the shuddering of his body, the way he curled himself all around her. Burrowing his face in the crook of her neck, he nibbled there, teasing the sensitive flesh with his teeth, harder and harder and she winced.

“Declan, what are you doing?” Her voice was soft, he probably couldn’t hear her and he grunted, giving one last thrust within her body while his hot semen spilled inside of her, triggering her own orgasm.

And in the haze of her climax, she swore she felt his teeth pierce her skin, felt him drink from her body, her blood coursing through her, from her on a current of fire.

It felt too good to protest.

Chapter Five

Two weeks. It had been two weeks since that first fateful night Declan had made her come with barely a flick of his wrist and the touch of his lips and Susanna still felt as if she couldn't get enough. Couldn't get enough of his touch, his mouth, his cock, the things he said to her, the way he looked at her.

It consumed her, he consumed her. She couldn't concentrate at work, anxiously awaiting the hours, the minutes until she could go home and be with him. Most nights she went to the club, staying up in the loft, able to watch down below from the balcony and see him in action. Smiling, talking with patrons, making sure everything ran smoothly.

Frank was always there, a constant presence at the club and, if she hadn't known better, she'd start to suspect he and Declan were lovers. The camaraderie between them was genuine, easy, as if they'd been friends for years. Frank always had a woman on his arm, sometimes two and one night, she'd walked in on him in the loft in the midst of some sexy action.

The women were completely naked, one with her head buried in Frank's lap, his cock stuffed in her mouth. The other woman lay sprawled on the floor, licking at her companion's pussy with noisy abandon, her legs spread wide for Susanna to see. Susanna had watched, fascinated, unbearably aroused though she told herself it was wrong. It made her wonder, though, what it would be like, tasting another woman's pussy, having another woman taste her. Filling her mouth with Frank's cock, all while Declan watched, or maybe Declan would be fucking her as she

sucked Frank...

And then Frank's piercing gaze had met hers and he didn't say a word. He didn't even acknowledge that he caught her, though his mouth lifted at the corners in a secretive smile, his hand cupping the back of the woman's head and shoving her mouth farther down on his cock.

Susanna had fled, embarrassed, not because she'd been caught but because she'd been tempted. Not only tempted to talk to Declan about it, suggest to him she wanted to experience more with him, with others, but tempted to join Frank and his dalliances. Let him suck on her nipples, let the women touch her, even let him fuck her.

Those temptations had intrigued her but she knew from the possessive way Declan touched her, the intense way he studied her, that he would never agree to something like that. Really she didn't want him to, was too shy to ever indulge in something so decadent, so sinful. Preferring to hide in the shadows like she'd always done in her life and just watch.

Nothing wrong with watching, unless it stopped you from living.

It was weird, but she felt as if Declan already owned her. He seemed to control everything she did, every thought she had, though he was probably not even aware of it. She'd never felt so possessed, so out of control of her life before, besides the time when she'd lost everything, when her young son and husband had died in the tragic accident that had changed her life forever.

She'd shared those memories one night with Declan, after a particularly vigorous love making session that had brought tears to her eyes. Already deep in her sadness, she had told him the entire wretched story. The cops coming to inform her she'd lost her boy and husband. How they stood there on the doorstep with sympathetic expressions on their dour faces. Her in-laws abandoning her after the accident, how they seemed to almost blame her for the death of their son and only grandchild. The hard time she'd had getting back into the land of the living. How she still didn't feel a part of it, though Declan had certainly helped her.

He'd laughed at that last statement, then immediately grew somber when he'd caught her expression. His hands had wandered over her

body, fingers pushing within her, whispering words of comfort and arousal and sex against her skin. And then he'd taken her, fucking her with such intensity that she couldn't look away from his gaze, trapped by the power there, and the emotion. She'd felt downright slumberous as he continued to push within her, his mesmerizing gaze doing something to her, making her fall under a spell.

Susanna swore he bit her again that night. Truly, she thought he bit her almost every night though she never had any marks to show for it. Which was strange because sometimes it would hurt so badly but then she'd wake up the next day and it was like it never had happened. Until the next time she felt his teeth at her neck, puncturing her skin, her blood fizzing through her veins swiftly, leaving her.

Then the morning would break and she was blissfully unaware of anything ever happening.

Tonight, though, she was aware. She wanted to talk to him about it. About him biting her, about the way Frank aroused her, the way everything at the club aroused her. It was unnatural, it felt almost demonic, as if evil lurked within the club, but was washed over with a nice, glittering coat of sex.

She'd heard of vampires wandering the city, of course. Everyone had. Occasionally there were even reports of a vampire being caught, of vampire slayers roaming the city, looking for someone specific. Rumors had never abounded about Declan's club, not that she knew of. It had a strange feel to it, though, a mysterious vibe that ran through her no matter how many times she'd been there.

Something lurked there, unfamiliar and slightly wrong. She wished she could figure out what it was, but she was just as in the dark about it as when she first met Declan.

Not that he ever revealed anything to her. He was so tight-lipped about his previous personal life she was afraid she'd never find out anything.

That's why she needed to talk to him tonight. It had to be done.

Climbing the metal steps of the round staircase that lead to the loft, Susanna noticed the club was in full swing tonight. Of course, it was a Friday, the weekends were always busy. Special dancers were slated to

perform tonight as well, drawing out a varied crowd and she knew Declan would be busy.

Hopefully not too busy to hear what she had to say to him.

She startled when she walked into the loft, surprised to find Frank already there, sprawled across the couch with a drink in his hand. His shirt was halfway unbuttoned, revealing a stretch of toned, tanned skin covered in golden brown hair. His long legs were sprawled wide, shoes long gone, the button of his pants undone and she couldn't help the trickle of awareness that moved through her at the sight.

He was a fine specimen of a man, no denying it. Different than Declan, but still handsome in an arrogant yet sensual way.

"Why, Susanna, look at you, so pretty and fresh in your flirty dress." He smiled, sipping from his glass. "You've been here every night for the past two weeks. Declan is a lucky man."

A blush stole across her cheeks, she could feel her heated skin and she smiled wanly, moving as far away from him as possible. For whatever reason she couldn't pinpoint, he seemed to be in quite a mood.

"Are you in love with him?"

Nothing like getting right to the point. "I—I care for him, yes."

"But do you *love* him, Susanna? Are you willing to give up everything for him, to be with him forever?"

Her brow wrinkled. She wondered at his dramatic words, but he always seemed to have a flair for the dramatics. "I don't know yet, Frank. We haven't been together long enough for me to answer that."

"What a shame." He shook his head, draining the glass with one long swallow and slamming it down onto the coffee table. "Did you know he's willing to be with you forever? That it's in the cards for you two?"

*In the cards...*the words made her think of the very card she'd received in the mail, the one that reminded her of Declan. She'd stashed the card in a safe place, beneath her mattress of all places, and she swore she felt its power radiate through the mattress when she was unfortunate enough to be alone in her bed at night. When Declan sent her home because the club was too busy and he couldn't get away. Though he always came to her and spent at least a little bit of time with her. Inside of her.

She really hoped tonight wouldn't be one of those nights.

"I don't know about it being in the cards, but I definitely have strong feelings for him."

"He has strong feelings for you, too, Susanna. Declan doesn't give those up freely."

Susanna lifted her chin. "Neither do I."

Frank laughed, though it didn't sound humorous. "If I told you I desired you and that I wanted to fuck you every which way I can, would you turn me away?"

Her breath lodged in her throat. What was he talking about? Frank desired her? He wanted to fuck her? He and Declan were friends!

Oh, please, you know he desires you. You've seen the look in his eye.

"Yes, it's true. I'm jealous, jealous that my friend is able to sample your body in every way possible every night while I'm unable to. Sometimes I sit on the stairwell and listen to the two of you fuck. I can hear the slurp of your lips on his cock, I can hear the juiciness of your pussy while he eats you. I can hear your sweaty skin slapping against each other and it drives me insane with lust."

His words were driving her insane with lust but she didn't want him to know that.

"It arouses you, doesn't it? Hearing me speak of the two of you that way. Knowing that I listen, that I've even watched you fuck Declan. You're beautiful in the throes of orgasm, Susanna. And I know you've watched me, too."

"That was a...mistake." Her voice was low, her entire body trembled, with fear and the tiniest bit of arousal. She shouldn't feel like this, she should walk out of the loft right now, run away from Frank as far and fast as possible.

Yet it was as if she was frozen, her feet plastered to the floor.

"It doesn't matter if it was a mistake or not, you liked watching me. Do you know when I saw you that night watching those two women give me pleasure that I imagined you were one of those women? Sucking my cock, letting me come in your mouth, watching you lick another woman's cunt and like it."

She shook her head, her words lodged in her throat.

"I've thought of taking you ever since. Do you know that before you came along, Declan would only have sex with me in the room? We would share a woman, sometimes two, sometimes more, but always together. Sometimes he would fuck her and I would watch or I would fuck her and he would watch. Sometimes we would fuck her together, one cock in her cunt, another cock in her ass."

Frank paused, running his hand over his cheek. His erection strained against the fly of his pants, thick and ready to pop out and she held her breath, told herself she didn't want to see it, couldn't look at it.

What would Declan do if he came in right now and saw her? What could she say to him? She was already startled by Frank's revelations, the fact that they'd shared women. She knew Declan had led an adventurous life, he'd hinted at such during their conversations but he'd never shared any details. No wonder.

Funny thing was she should've been offended. She should've been disgusted. Instead, she was intrigued. Wondered what it would be like to have two men fuck her, two mouths on her, two cocks to hold. The idea of it aroused her to an almost painful sensation.

"Ah, you want Declan to share, don't you? Of course you do." Frank stood, his long strides bringing himself to her in seconds. "I knew you would agree. I knew you would give in. You're a woman who's just been unlocked, aren't you, sweetheart? You're ready to experience everything we can offer you."

"Yes," she whispered, drawing in a sharp breath when Frank cupped her face, the tips of his fingers stroking the skin of her cheek.

"We could bring you such pleasure, you could be our companion. Sharing you, taking you in all the ways you want to be taken. Have you ever been fucked up the ass, Susanna?" Frank dipped his head, his mouth so close to hers and she pulled away, suddenly overwhelmed.

For the first time she had let Declan take her there a few nights ago. She'd never been interested in it, but when Declan had touched her ass, teased her puckered hole with his finger, penetrating her while he licked her pussy, her entire body had been consumed with an unbearable fire. After much coaxing and lube, he'd entered her, fucked her with slow, smooth glides, her ass cradling his cock so tightly it hadn't taken long for

him to come hard within her. She'd come as well, her fingers playing with her clit, rubbing herself into oblivion, the sensation of his thick cock buried so deep in her ass. She knew it was something she wanted to experience again.

But not with Frank involved.

Right?

"This is wrong, Frank." She withdrew from him, turning away to stare at the door, planning her escape. "You shouldn't say these things to me."

"Ah, but you want to hear them, sweetheart, I know you do. You're a woman who wants to experiment and what better way to do so than with two men who trust each other? Two men who've shared many women but none as special as you." He approached her, she could feel him, his long tapered fingers clasp her shoulders and yanking her against his unyielding frame. He rubbed his erection against her buttocks, groaning in her ear and she stiffened, her nerves frayed beyond the breaking point.

"I'm flattered but I don't want to be with you like that, Frank. What I share with Declan is just between us."

"Fuck that!" His roar made her wince and he held her tighter, one arm coming across her neck, squeezing. She cried out when his free hand wandered down her back, cupping her ass briefly before she heard the unmistakable sound of his zipper being yanked down.

Terror filled her, clawing at her throat. "No, Frank, please, you don't know what you're doing."

"I know exactly what I'm doing, little girl. You're the one who doesn't know what's going on, you've been in a sexual fog for the last few weeks. I'm going to fuck you because that's what I do. I fuck every woman I want, whether they want it or not, and they always want it, trust me. Declan and I always shared and at first I told him I didn't want you, but I lied. I do want you, I want you more than any woman I've wanted in a long time and I'm going to have you."

He pulled his cock out then, rubbing the head of it in the cleft of her ass. The dress she wore was thin, she could feel the heat and dampness of his cock and she whimpered with fear. "I don't want this."

"Yes, you do, you lying bitch. You all want it, you're all the same. Once I'm done with you, Declan can do nothing but share you. He won't be able to let go of you since you belong to him."

"I...belong to him?" Confusion spread through her and she closed her eyes when Frank thrust against her.

He chuckled close to her ear, then licked it, making her shudder. "He hasn't told you yet, has he? Such a noob, so afraid of his instincts, his power, which makes me doubt him, if you must know."

"What are you talking about?"

"You've been fucking a vampire, my dear, one of the evil undead, so to speak. He drinks blood to stay alive, has drank your blood though you don't remember. He wants to make you a vampire, too." This time Frank threw back his head and laughed. He sounded downright maniacal. "Did you like it? Does that arouse you more to know that he'll be around forever? That the possibility is there that you could walk the earth forever as well?"

"What the fuck are you doing?"

Susanna slumped against Frank in relief at the sound of Declan's angry voice. Frank released her, shoving his cock back in his pants quickly, then holding his hands up into the air. She almost stumbled to the ground when he let go of her so fast.

"Hey, Dex, what's going on? Susanna and I, we were just having a little discussion." Frank smiled, looking like the affable man she was used to seeing.

Amazing.

"It looked like you were doing more than discussing." Declan's voice was a low growl, his eyes blazing with anger and he flicked a glance in Susanna's direction. "Are you all right?"

She nodded, afraid to say anything, scared at the intensity that seemed to fill the room.

"Your bitch threw herself at me, Dex. Told me she wanted to fuck me. I caught her spying on me a couple of nights ago and she's a dirty girl, she liked it. She wants us both, Dex, what we've always had, what you wanted in the first place. So let's do it."

"No." The one simple word rang throughout the room, echoing

with force and Susanna was surprised at the power she heard there.

Frank's brows drew together, his mouth tightening into a thin line. "No?"

"You heard me, asshole. *No*. You're the one who said she belonged only to me and you knew I didn't want to share. Now I can't share. She's mine, Susanna belongs to me."

"Forget that 'mine' shit! *You're* mine! We've been together for years, I've always waited for you to realize that we're the true couple, that the women were just diversions—pleasant diversions I've enjoyed, don't get me wrong. I've been satisfying my curiosity with other men occasionally because you're the one I've always wanted. We could make a triad, the three of us. We could all belong together in every sense of the word."

"Ah, holy shit." Declan shook his head and went to Susanna, wrapping an arm around her shoulders and drawing her close to his warmth. "What the hell are you talking about? I'm sorry, I just don't feel the same way about you, Frank. You know I owe you for everything you've done for me, everything we've shared, but I'm not attracted to you like that. I never have been."

"You're going to choose her over me then. I've been with you since the beginning, Dex, since you first turned! And you're going to turn me away all for some piece of ass who doesn't even know what you really are?"

"I hate to say this but, yes, I am. I have to. If you can't live with my decision then you need to go, Frank. Find some other dark club to hide in, find another city to live in, even. I want you gone, out of my club, out of my life. *Now*."

Frank stood there, immobilized, shock etching his fine features. His hands clenched and unclenched repeatedly, his wild gaze flickering back and forth between Declan and Susanna. Declan stood his ground, staring at him, waiting for him to leave and finally Frank bowed his head in defeat.

"Fine. I'll go, I don't need you anyway. You don't know what you're losing, though, my friend. She won't be there for you like I've always been. She won't even turn for you, of this I'm sure." Frank laughed. "I already told her your deep, dark secret, you know. You

should've seen the disgusted look on her face when I said you were a vampire."

Frank shook his head, his once stiff upper lip trembling. His entire face appeared ready to crumple. "You'll regret this, my friend. I hope you know what to do with yourself when she leaves you. You certainly don't need to bother calling me because I won't be there to help pick up the pieces."

"Quit being so damn dramatic." Declan took a step toward him and Susanna circled her arm around his. She didn't want him to reach out to Frank, not now. Now that Frank had scared her so much.

"Wait till she leaves you. Wait till you're left with no one and you're the one crying at night. We'll see how dramatic *you* are."

The both of them watched Frank go, the silence filling the room so thick Susanna wanted to scream to break it. Her mind whirled with all of the things revealed, the intensity of the moment, the realization that she could've almost been raped.

The shameful admission that for a few moments, she'd wanted Frank. His words had aroused her, the images in her mind had been so wickedly tempting. Thank goodness, she hadn't given in.

"So you know."

She jumped at Declan's words and looked at him, though he wasn't facing her. His broad back was to her, encased in a black blazer, looking so elegant, so sexy.

And a vampire. A man who would never die, who drank blood to stay alive, he'd even drunk from her.

She knew it. She'd always known it. She just didn't realize what had been happening to her.

"Yes, he told me."

"Are you...repulsed by me?"

Susanna detected the slight tremble in his voice and she wanted to go to him, wrap her arms around him and offer him comfort. Beg him to make love to her, to never let her go.

"No, I could never be repulsed by you." No, more like she was a little bit in love with him, as ridiculous as that seemed. She barely knew him.

Yet it felt like she'd known him her entire life.

Declan turned to face her, pain and fury in his expression, blazing in his eyes. "Would you do it for me, Susanna? Would you turn for me, so we could always be together?"

Could she? Would she?

She honestly had no clue.

Chapter Six

Fuck, he did not want it to go down like this. Declan had no idea how he was even going to approach her with it but looked like Frank had taken care of that little dilemma.

Damn Frank all to hell, throwing a wrench into his plans. When Declan had first walked into the room and saw the way the two of them were positioned, he'd wanted to smash Frank's face in. He'd also wanted to call Susanna every dirty name in the book.

But then he'd seen the look of fear in her eyes, the way Frank's own eyes were narrowed, his mouth drawn tight. She'd been scared, Frank had been threatening her and Declan had seen red.

When Frank revealed that he'd always wanted him, Declan couldn't fucking believe it. Frank, the ladies man, interested in him? Wanting to *fuck* him? It didn't make any sense. He wondered if Frank really believed that or was just so desperate he didn't want to lose him. What Declan offered his friend had been a nice deal—an endless supply of booze and women, asking for nothing in return but friendship.

All of it, though, everything that just went down, had blown his mind.

Now he was stuck with having to ask Susanna for the most precious gift she could offer him. Would she do it? Could she do it? He wouldn't hold it against her if she couldn't, though he would be disappointed, crushed. He knew what they'd shared during the last few weeks had been beyond amazing, electrifying, life altering. Did she feel

the same? Enough to want to change her life forever? Literally?

What he asked was probably too much, but he couldn't help wanting to know, he was so sure in his feelings towards her.

"I've felt for a long time that I had nothing to live for. When my son and husband had died, I even contemplated suicide."

He stood there, waiting for her to go on, not wanting to prompt her for fear it would make her say something rash.

"But I didn't kill myself, though I certainly would've had reason to. I didn't have the guts, even wondered if something magical would happen to me again, though at the time I doubted it." Her gaze lifted, meeting his. Her eyes shimmered with unshed tears. "You're magical, like a gift when I needed it most. Even though you're not really alive, you make me *feel* alive."

His heart ached for her, wanting to offer her nothing but comfort but he held his ground. She still hadn't given him an answer.

"You're not saying anything, Declan. What do you want from me? Do you love me? Can you see me being with you forever?"

"Yes." The word sounded as if it was ripped from his chest and he choked on the emotion that threatened to spill from him. "Now that I've had you, I can't imagine my life without you."

She rushed towards him then, her slim arms wrapping around him, delicate hands splayed across his back. Pressing a kiss to his chest, he felt the touch of her lips even through the fabric of his shirt and he closed his eyes.

It was as if she kissed him directly on his dead heart.

"Turn me, my love. We can do this together, be together forever."

He eased her away from him, staring down at her hard. Her expression was open and loving, her eyes a bright blue. As if she didn't have a care in the world.

"You'll have to drink blood, Susanna. You'll have to drink *my* blood first to complete the turn. Can you handle that? You might go through a transition period where you'll want to lock yourself away, not see anyone, not do anything. You'll have to quit your job, change your life completely and stay with me. Here, in the club, or at home. Is that what you really want?"

Susanna nodded, a smile brightening her beautiful face. "Yes. I love you, Declan. I can face all of this as long as I have you by my side. I believe we're meant to be together."

"You'll probably lose all of your friends, your family."

"I have no family, you know that. And my friends are really work acquaintances, except for Jessica." She wrinkled her nose. "Jessica is always here though, so I can probably still be friends with her."

Declan laughed, running a hand over her silky long hair. "I love you, too, Susanna."

"You do?"

"I do." He dipped his head, brushing his nose against hers. "So much. It's strange, since we haven't known each other long, but I feel it. What we have together is special."

"Turn me now," she breathed, her head tilting so her lips brushed against his.

"Patience, my love. First, we must prepare." His mouth took hers in a kiss that left him breathless though his mind raced with his new-found knowledge.

He would have a mate. Forever. He needed to make sure the transition ran smoothly so that he wouldn't hurt her. Briefly, he wished Frank was still here, so he could ask for his advice.

No. That wasn't possible. At least not now, not with the way things ended earlier, though someday he might be able to count on Frank once again. Now he would need to figure this out on his own.

For the love of his woman, he would have to. He had no other choice.

* * * * *

Declan had brought her to his home for the first time to share this moment, when he made her what he was. Susanna had been anxious all day, for the past two days, since the fateful night at the club, when Frank had attacked her, when everything had been revealed to her.

A moment in time that should've been scary but really it had felt so right, so perfect. Like everything was meant to happen.

Now she stood in his bedroom, candles flickering everywhere, red rose petals scattered all over the bed. He was already naked, his cock hard and curved towards his belly and she yearned to touch him. But not yet.

No, first she needed to undress. Prepare herself for him, for their mating that would bring them together forever.

She tugged the dress she wore up over her body, revealing her nude form beneath since she wore no panties or bra, until she had it over her head. Shucking it onto the ground, she stood before him straight and proud, for once not ashamed of her nakedness or what was about to happen. What occurred between her and Declan could only be described as beautiful, magical.

Her heart tripped in anticipation and she saw the answering gleam in his eyes that showed he was as excited as she was. She lay down on top of the bed without his urging, spreading her body wantonly as an offering and he licked his lips, staring down at her with love in his dark eyes.

"So beautiful, and all mine," he whispered reverently, joining her on the bed.

"Yes, all yours and you are mine." She slid her arms around his neck, guided his mouth to hers and they kissed, their tongues tangling, searching, driving up her already all encompassing need.

His cock nestled against her belly and she arched against him, already eager for him to be inside of her. Breaking the kiss, he smiled down at her and shook his head.

"Always so ready for it, aren't you?"

"Please, Declan, don't make me wait. I want this to happen and soon."

"Be patient, my love. It's going to happen no matter what."

She couldn't wait, really she couldn't. His hands wandered all over her body, sending sparks shooting along her nerve endings, making her writhe beneath him. When his mouth followed the same path as his hands, wrapping around first one then the other nipple, she moaned low in her throat, clutching him close to her chest.

"You taste so good."

"Do I really?" She wasn't referring to her skin.

He lifted his head, staring at her. "Yes, very sweet."

Hmm. Really, she didn't want to think about the future, of how she would have to drink blood in order to survive.

She only wanted to concentrate on the here and now, with Declan. Her newfound love.

In just moments though, she would drink from Declan. Could she really do it? Would she be able to go through with it?

She had no choice, wouldn't allow herself any other option.

The moment was hurried yet prolonged, his hands and mouth everywhere, her entire body aching for his cock, her desire for him so strong it was almost painful. Yet he took his time, smiling as he teased her, tasted her, making her insane. She wanted to pummel him with her fists.

She also wanted to spread her legs for him and beg him to take her.

"Do you want me inside of you?" His murmured words tickled her earlobe, making her shiver.

"Yes, Declan, please."

"I'm going to drain you of a lot of blood." He paused, staring down at her with glittering eyes. "To the point of almost death, my love. Are you sure you still want this?"

Shifting, she lifted her hips, allowing his cock to slip between her wet slit. "I trust you more than anyone else. You know I do. I need you to believe in this, believe in us. Do you?"

"Yes." He thrust against her, gaining entry and she exhaled her pleasure, her legs slipping around his hips. The position caused him to slide deeper and they groaned in unison, moving with each other.

He fucked her with sure and steady strokes, driving her deep into the mattress with his every thrust, her pleasure spiraling out of control within her body. As usual, her orgasm came upon her quickly, like a whirlwind, and she fought to stave it off, wanting to make this last.

His head lifted, his gaze meeting hers and she was captivated, captured by his eyes. He seemed to be communicating with her without saying a word, loving her with his body, begging her to trust him with his gaze. She stared back, smoothing her hands down his back, over his firm ass, squeezing him there in answer.

With a groan, he pressed his face against her neck, his mouth brushing hot, damp kisses on her skin. She thrust her head back, giving

him better access, eager for him to take it, yet he teased her. His teeth nibbled, she actually felt the sharpness of them grazing her flesh and she moaned in frustration.

“Please,” she whispered. “Do it, Declan. Do it.”

And he did, his teeth piercing her flesh, deeper, and deeper still. A rush of adrenaline hurried through her, the blood in her body whipping along her veins. He drank from her, his hands smoothing over her body, his cock slamming inside of her and her eyes slid closed. She could literally feel the life leaving her body.

Declan withdrew from her neck moments later. She felt him, yet she couldn't move, too limp with delirium. Her mind was mush, her body like liquid and yet he still fucked her, her orgasm teetering on the edge.

“Stay with me, my love. Come for me.”

She did, her entire body shuddering, consumed with the force of her climax. He followed suit, pumping hot semen deep inside her body, a low groan escaping him.

“Drink from me, sweet. Do it now.”

Withdrawing from her, he brought her to him, rolling over so she lay atop him. His hand curled around the back of her neck and she dipped her head, brushing her mouth against the firm, damp skin of his throat.

Her lips stung, her teeth tingled and she opened her mouth, licking at his salty skin. She heard him groan, felt it reverberate against her lips and she licked him again.

“Stop torturing me, Susanna. Just do it!”

Her teeth sank into him with ease, startling her. She'd thought the first taste of blood would disgust her, fill her with revulsion but it didn't. No, more like it aroused her, filling her body with an intoxicating sensation that coursed through her veins.

Rubbing his hand over her hair, Declan murmured words of encouragement and still she drank as if she couldn't get enough. Finally, she withdrew from him, overcome with emotions, exhaustion. He rolled to his side, taking her with him and she slumped against his solid form.

Lying there in a state of semi-consciousness, it felt as if her entire body floated above her, watching Declan curl himself around her side. His well muscled arm slid around her stomach, cradling her and he pressed

kisses to her forehead, along her temple, down her cheek.

So tenderly, with such love, it made her heart ache to watch, to experience it. It was as if she were doing one and the same and it was a weird sensation, watching yet living it all at the same time.

"Susanna." He still stroked her, as if trying to warm her skin. "Can you hear me?"

She murmured something unintelligible, as if her lips and tongue had weights on them and he snuggled her closer.

"Are you okay, baby?"

"Mmm hmm." She burrowed against him, the need to become one with him suddenly overwhelming.

"You're really mine now, love. I'm your sire, you're my woman. Forever."

"Forever..."

Author Bio

Karen Erickson's always been telling stories for as long as she can remember. She started handwriting terrible romance novels about her favorite 80s bands when she was in high school. She continued writing off and on until a year ago when she decided to get serious about becoming published. She loves to write a steamy romance, but when she's not doing that she's chasing after her three kids with her husband. She lives in central California.