



Belling the Cat

Copyright © 2009 by Julia Talbot

All rights reserved. No part of this eBook may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews. For information address Torquere Press, Inc., PO Box 2545, Round Rock, TX 78680

Cover illustration copyright Alessia Brio
Used with permission

ISBN: 978-1-60370-799-2, 1-60370-799-9

Printed in the United States of America.

Torquere Press, Inc.: High Ball electronic edition / September 2009

Torquere Press eBooks are published by Torquere Press, Inc., PO Box 2545, Round Rock, TX 78680

Belling the Cat **Julia Talbot**

The club was running itself. The customers were happy, drinks were flowing as hard as the blood, and the smell of sex filled the air. Ah, a regular night at the Bloodrose.

Jonny smiled, watching Duke, his floor manager, smooth out some sort of dispute over a sweet little wolf and his contracted partners: two vampires, both possessive and toothy. Pretty.

Really, these days he wondered why he even came to work. He had made himself obsolete. Sighing, he shook off the ridiculous idea that someone as old as he would indulge in feeling sorry for himself. Especially since he had perhaps fifteen hours of work waiting for him. Obsolete, indeed.

He unlocked his office but didn't bother to turn on the light, sinking down into his cushy chair and debating whether he wanted to order a glass of the house red. He took a deep breath and... blinked. Something was askew.

Something that he should have noticed when he walked in, for a fact. The window was not closed entirely, which he never did, simply because sunlight could be deadly to someone like him.

Jonny stilled, listening hard. Life. He could hear a heartbeat.

Well, perhaps he should have turned on the light. His eyes adjusted with preternatural speed; a thief's eyes may not do so well. He moved with all of the speed he could muster, turning on his desk lamp.

A black blur streaked across the floor, heading toward the window, so quickly that he barely focused on it. Jonny leaped for it at the last minute, only his fancy metal blinds keeping the... whatever it was from getting away. His hand caught in heavy, plush fur, pulling.

The snarl was low, deep, the threat clear.

Oh. No, indeed. He did not think so. Jonny snarled right back, shaking the animal by the ruff.

Huge and sleek, black as pitch, the cat's huge paw batted at the blinds, fighting to tear them down.

"Damn you, stop that." Yanking mightily, Jonny sent them both flying back against the opposite wall, far from the windows. The heavy body landed fully against him, a lashing tail battering his legs.

What a magnificent creature. And... yes. It was male. Exceedingly male. Sort of... amazingly male.

The cat stilled, growling, trembling in his hands. He could feel the heavy, corded muscles, drawing up to spring.

"No." He said it clearly, sharply, knowing that somewhere the animal might win out over the man inside that cat.

The huge head swiveled on its neck, bright green eyes fastening on him with a glittering mix of aggravation and curiosity.

"Show me what you took." He knew it, now, knew that this big kitty was there to steal something from his collection. Or his safe.

The green eyes went wide in a patently obvious 'who me?' look.

"Mmm. Yes, so sweet. Nothing at all wrong with you being in my office. Looking for a club application?" That heavy body felt so warm.

The cat yawned, showing huge white teeth.

"I wonder what you look like as a man." He had drugs. If he could get to them, he might find out.

That tail thumped again, then the cat rolled away, flopping off his legs.

"Now, now." He sprinted to the window, blocking the way. "Give back what you took, and you may go."

The cat huffed, grumped, and crouched.

Keeping himself between the cat and the windows, Jonny scanned the room, his eyes flicking over everything. The safe. The wall panel was out, but the safe was still closed. Whatever it was he wanted, kitty hadn't gotten it.

And kitty didn't look too pleased about it, either.

Smiling, Jonny stepped aside. "You can go now, my dear."

The rowl was frustrated, that tail lashing furiously before the cat leapt, big body twisting, slipping out the window and into the night. Obviously, Jonny had something Mr. Kitty wanted. The cat would return. And if he didn't, well... Jonny smiled. That cat had a pheromone signature that would last for days.

The night had just gotten a lot more interesting.

Chapter Two

Luc watched the sun as it began to sink.

Ten minutes.

He had ten minutes

He stripped off quickly, stashing his clothes in a plastic bag inside another plastic bag inside a canvas backpack behind a dumpster. It only took a few seconds to shift, his body eager to be fuzzy, to be stronger.

Eight minutes.

Sticking to the shadows, he leapt from landing to landing, heading for the window he'd breached two nights ago. Mic had been... less than pleased to hear he hadn't retrieved the files. His jaw still ached a bit from the reminder that no one crossed Mic Salvia and lived.

No one.

Seven minutes 'til sundown.

Hurry.

It would take him two minutes to open the safe.

The windows were reinforced, but the very outside edges were caulked poorly, so it took no time to slide inside. The room was dark, cool, and he was alone. He made it to the safe and shifted back to man, needing his fingers. Five minutes.

Come on.

Come on.

The safe was in the same place, the little thing not very strong. Not very secure.

Very empty.

God damn it.

He told himself, very firmly, that he could panic later, after he was gone. After he was heading out of town. Luc went to the big desk, hunting, nostrils flaring. The files on Salvia's employer had to be here.

Had to.

Two minutes.

Fuck.

There was nothing. Even the sleek laptop was gone.

He was a dead man.

Okay.

Okay. Out. Home. Grab the stash and the car and run. Rio.

Rio was nice this time of year.

He thought of fur and fangs, claws and tail, muscles jerking and shifting.

The Rolodex caught his eye just about the time he finished changing. Someone had to have a home address. Right?

He hopped up on the desk, took the Rolodex in his mouth and hit the window.

Hopefully, he wouldn't get it too wet to read, but it was one of those fancy things with a lid. Ridiculous vampire of luxury.

He slid out the window as the sun set. Maybe he wasn't dead.

Not yet.

Chapter Three

Jonny sat back on his leather couch, his robe wrapped firmly around him, a glass of wine and blood in one hand. He was waiting for the show to start. In fact, as soon as the sun had gone down, he'd unlatched his metal blinds. Leaving a gap big enough for a cat.

The air in his office had been rife with panic and fear and a healthy dose of pure testosterone.

Lovely. Intriguing. Sometimes he was just so... bored. So, now he waited. Here, kitty kitty.

The cat waited almost an hour outside the window before daring to slip in, pitch black and sleek as midnight. His couch was not situated to watch the sunset, so he was fairly well hidden from the cat, but he could tell the moment the cat smelled him and knew it wasn't just residual scent.

The soft touch of claw to wood stopped and the air went charged. Electric.

Jonny didn't move this time, didn't turn on a light. He just watched. Waited.

The unmistakable energy of a shift tickled the base of his throat, and the beautiful sleek cat turned into a lean, tanned man with the greenest eyes he'd ever seen. Green eyes and a rather breathtaking array of fresh bruises.

"I need a file. One file. How much?"

"Did you get in trouble, kitty?" That made sense. Persistence like that meant someone was pushing.

"You could say that. How much?"

"How much for what?" He sipped his wine, admiring the man's form.

"I'm supposed to get a file for Mr. Jim Black." Like that could be a real name. Fuck.

"Ah." Sitting back, Jonny crossed one foot over the opposite knee. "Why would you want that?"

"How much?" He could see the man's pulse beat from where he sat.

"I don't want money." It surprised him, that it even came out of his mouth. He normally held on to his business files with an iron fist. One never knew when he would need dirt on someone powerful, and the man in the file had... interesting tastes and an obvious issue with telling the truth.

"What do you want? I have resources."

Jonny tilted his head, giving that the consideration it deserved. "I think you have what comes naturally, and that it what I want."

"What?" He saw the nostrils flare, knew the cat was scenting him, the air.

"I'm not sure if you're aware of the nature of my business." He paused, waiting for the bare nod that came. "I have never found someone I wished to make a contract with. I want you."

"Me?" The word was honestly confused.

"Yes." That surprised him as well, the simple, bald shock. "I want six weeks."

"Six weeks. And I get the file first?"

"You can have it tonight." Jonny knew that was taking a chance, but he had to believe that obligation would bring his cat burglar back at least once. After that, he knew he could hold someone's interest.

The man's head tilted. "I have one condition."

"What's that?" His cock twitched, but Jonny willed it down, not wanting his cat to smell anything afoot.

"If I don't come back tomorrow, someone makes Mic Silvia pay."

"That is a condition I can eagerly meet." Absolutely.

Those green eyes stared at him. "Six weeks. One file."

"And all I need is your nights." That surely didn't seem so bad.

"Agreed."

All this, and he didn't even know Mr. Kitty's name.

Impressive.

"Good." Standing, Jonny crossed the room in a flash, holding out his hand to shake.

Up close, the bruising was worse, the scent of male pheromones better. There was life, right there, right beneath that smooth skin. Jonny licked his lips. He owed the man a file first. He was a vampire of his word, after all. "Come."

The bare feet didn't make a single sound on the wood floors.

He led the way to the safe, silently retrieving the file. When his cat would have reached for it, Jonny pulled back. "Tell me your name."

"Luc. I know yours."

"I suppose you would." He handed over the file. "I don't have an electronic back up." He knew where most of the information could be compiled again. He didn't need one.

"I don't really care, to be honest. This is enough to keep me alive."

"Meet me one half hour after sundown at the Bloodrose. Tomorrow. If you prefer not to come in the front, you're conversant with my office, hmm?" For a tiny moment, Jonny couldn't resist the urge to touch that smooth skin. He trailed his fingers down one arm, just as he would pet a cat.

Warm. Incredibly warm, that skin fascinated his fingers.

Yes. Impulsive or not, he had made the right choice. Jonny stepped back, hand dropping to his side.

"I'll be there." Luc rolled the file up, hand coming up with a rubber band from his desk in a move so fast he barely saw it. Then the file was secured and the man rippled, shifting more rapidly than he had ever seen. The cat was huge, those lovely eyes staring at him.

"I shall count on it." Jonny watched the sleek creature leap out the window, excitement thrumming through him for the first time in... well, since he'd met a certain werewolf who was not his to take.

Chapter Four

Fool.

He was a fool.

Luc slipped into the office at the Bloodrose, paws padding as he carefully sat his bag of clothing down. Still, he was a live fool, which had been seriously in question a couple of days ago. The vamp wasn't in here, so he settled, cleaning his paws, his face.

The door slammed open, the light springing on to blind him. "Damn it, Duke. I don't care who you have to piss off, move the schedule around. I want that private room."

He jerked back, sliding into the shadows out of pure instinct.

The door slammed behind the vamp, who was alone, just on the phone. Those pale eyes scanned the room, searching.

He panted, fur standing up on end as he watched.

Those eyes finally focused on him, and Luc saw the pupils dilate, the flow of words hitching a moment. "No... Yes. Thank you. 'Night."

His nostrils twitched and he searched for the vampire's scent. Spicy. Somehow it shouldn't smell that good. Right? There should be the scent of... disease. Something.

Death.

His head tilted, his tail twitching. Interesting. He drew in a deep breath, rolling the flavors of the air on his tongue.

Jonny. His name was Jonny. Jonny came forward, one hand reaching out to scratch behind his ears. Normally he would bite that hand, but... Oh. There.

Right there.

His eyes crossed.

Long, strong fingers dug into his fur, knowing exactly where to stroke, where to scratch. His claws rolled out into the rug, his instincts taking the pleasure, wanting it.

"No one touches you, do they, Luc Kitty? I imagine you're starved for it." Almost contemplative, that voice, that touch. Slow, steady. Perfect.

He stood for the scratches as long as he could before his nerves and his pride made him slink away, tail high, twitching at the tip.

"Would you like something to eat? A drink?"

He yowled softly, exploring more thoroughly. This place had so many interesting sparkly things. Jonny let him go for quite a while. Let him wander. Then the man came and stood in front of him. He rumbled, stretched, then rubbed his cheek against the bulge in the man's slacks, scenting Jonny.

"Oh. Well, now. That's a very fine start." Jonny reached for him again, fingers sliding over his cheeks.

He nipped a bit, testing the vampire's fingers. Tasty.

"No eating. Licking and biting yes." The man stroked his ears one more time.

He growled softly, showing his teeth. He didn't take orders.

Really.

He nibbled again, then leapt onto the vamp's very large, very smooth desk. "Yowl."

"As charming as this is, I need you to be a man for the things I have planned." Standing back, Jonny folded his arms.

He stretched, considering sharpening his claws. He was much safer like this.

"Not on my desk, you don't." Maybe he was a little too obvious.

There were always the drapes.

Or the upholstered chair or...

Oh, look.

Sparklies.

He reached out, fascinated by the shine.

This time Jonny caught him, long fingers wrapping around his leg, just above his paw. "Now, if you please. We have a contract."

Forcing himself into human form was always more challenging. Always. He almost envied the dogboys. They were so much... closer to human.

"I... I came here." He stretched, slipped out of the vamp's fingers.

"You did." Now it seemed Jonny watched him even more warily, calculating his next move.

His clothes were in the bag and he went for them, smoothing his hair back as he moved.

"There's no need. A robe will be provided for you, if you like."

That had him bristling again. More orders.

"I brought clothes." He crouched down, unzipping his bag. Soft clothes. Silky clothes.

Why did Jonny keep staring at him?

"Yes, but you will not need them." Now Jonny was frowning, the short blond hair artfully arranged. Or maybe not. Maybe vamps were just... perfectly touseled. It was possible. "I would swear you said you understood the nature of my club."

"I..." He stopped, smoothed his hair again, refusing to stutter. "I understand."

"Oh. Well, then." Somehow it made him feel better to see Jonny smooth the crease on one pants leg, flick an invisible bit of lint off one sleeve. "A robe, then? Perhaps a drink?"

"Please." He was feeling very bare and in desperate need of his tail. "This is... awkward. Is it always like this?"

"Generally? Yes, it is when the principals don't know one another." The man finally unbent enough to smile, showing an impressive set of needle-like teeth.

"It makes me want to clean my whiskers." He stepped forward, eyes on those teeth. "Have you bitten many people?"

"Define many." One hand slid down his arm, fingers closing around his wrist. "For my age, probably not. I can be... remarkably discerning."

Luc stilled, vibrated. He wasn't used to being trapped.

"You really must get used to being touched, Luc." But Jonny let go of him, moved to hand him a robe made of a silky material.

The fabric had him purring happily, sliding the robe around him. The touch was cool, then warmed quickly, the cloth clinging to his skin.

"Better?" That smile made him relax even more. It was far less toothy.

"Mmm." He nodded, stretched. "Thank you. It's lovely. What do you want from me?" His eye was caught by the light under the door, feet passing by.

"I think tonight I simply want you to sit, have a drink, and we'll have a chat." The smile widened. "You're like, as they say, a cat in a room full of rocking chairs."

"My tail's been at risk for a bit. Makes one jittery." He approved of that smile, somehow. "I'm not like this." He motioned to his furless, de-clawed self. "Often."

"No? What a shame. You're quite beautiful either way." The slow appraisal that accompanied the words made him feel naked again.

The way his cheeks heated made him rumble softly, shift his weight to the balls of his feet. "Where do we sit?"

"What would you like to drink? And I intend to go to the sitting room."

"Kahlua and cream?"

"Absolutely." Jonny rang what had to be the bar, ordering drinks, and then pointed him toward a nearly hidden door that concealed a very comfortable room.

He grinned; he'd wanted to explore that door and what lay behind it. There was a soft chair, wide and overstuffed, that he contemplated for a moment, but he had a feeling Jonny would want to share a seat. The large sectional sofa looked just as good. He headed toward it, curling in the corner, feet tucked behind him.

"Good choice."

A discreet knock on another door, one he hadn't seen, sounded only moments later. He could smell cream, along with the coffee scent of Kahlua and something delicious. Some kind of snack, hidden under a silver dome, and it would have made his whiskers twitch if he had them.

He had no idea what he was expected to do, so he waited and wondered, nostrils flaring.

Jonny took the wheeled tray from the unseen waiter and brought it over, settling next to him. "I took the liberty of ordering some seared ahi tuna and some beef carpaccio."

"Oh..." He could purr. He honestly could. Purr and rub and... Oh. Fuzzy. Breathe, Luc. "It smells heavenly."

"It does, doesn't it? I might share the carpaccio." One hand slid over to lie on his thigh, warm and easy. Not creepy at all.

His muscles jerked and he reached for the Kahlua, telling himself to breathe. No one wanted to cage him, right?

"You are very uncomfortable. Is it me, or is it simply that you're unused to being with people?" Those fingers dug in a little, massaging his leg.

"Three days ago they were threatening to hollow out my teeth and take my balls. Twelve days ago I was..." Well, maybe telling a near-stranger that he'd been raiding a jewelry store for a particularly perfect pair of emeralds wasn't the best idea, but still. "Working. Today I'm drinking cream and smelling tuna. It's not you."

"Ah. Well, then. Indulge in the tuna. I have no interest in taking your balls. I might want to use them a bit." One finger crept dangerously close to said balls.

He yowled in a gentle warning, the cream sliding on his tongue.

"Hmm? Is the drink not to your liking?" That smooth voice held a distinct note of amusement.

"Don't laugh at me. I bite."

"Do you? So do I." Moving a fraction of an inch closer, Jonny bumped hips with him.

"Does it hurt?" He couldn't resist the urge to ask.

"Would you like to find out first hand?" The whole feeling in the room changed, becoming charged, Jonny leaning toward him.

He rumbled and leaned away, then back. Did he want to know? Yes. Did he want to find out? Maybe. Very definitely maybe with a side of maybe not.

"Are you sure?" One hand landed on his belly now, way too warm for a vamp, and Jonny's mouth hovered just over his throat. "Well, then, perhaps it's something we should explore." Smooth lips pressed to the skin of his throat, Jonny's fingers stroking through the thin robe.

Oh. Oh, that was odd. His instincts warred -- lift his chin, bite, roll, growl, something.

Then Jonny's fingers slid around and drew a circle in the small of his back and every nerve he had fired and he arched. Scratching lightly, Jonny drove him crazy, making him want to claw at the couch. This low sound tore out of him, and his chin lifted, the whole room spinning.

"Mmm. Yes, I thought that would get you. Such a kitty." Was that supposed to be a bad thing?

"Not all of us can be tail-chasers."

"Or wind-up teeth, hmm?" The warm puff of Jonny's laughter left a damp spot on his neck.

"Chomp, chomp, chomp." The idea amused him, had him chuffing with laughter.

"What a lovely sound." The man was pushing him and yet not, that hand working the spot that would be just above where his tail would be.

His body was caught, hips arched, everything attuned to that spot, that touch.

"So hot. I can feel it just under your skin. That hot, magical blood." The words moved against his skin, each one pressing against him.

His toes curled, his fingers wanted their claws. His heart thrummed, pounded like it was trying to get out, which was a gross thought, honestly. Who wanted their heart to do that?

Not even zombies.

"Let me taste it, Luc. Let me taste you." Jonny's fingers pushed against his back, and the tiniest prick of teeth stung his throat.

"Taste." The word came out as a long, hissed purr.

"Yes." The fangs sank into his skin so easily. Everyone described it as a needle. It was more like a hot knife through butter. All he felt was the pull.

Swaying with it, Luc purred. That sound turned into an all-too-human cry as the fingers on his spine dug in.

Then Jonny moved, those teeth slamming down into his skin, and the pull became a huge thing, everything in him flowing into Jonny, his cock hard as stone. Eyes wide, he humped, hips dragging his prick over skin, over silk, everything inside him screaming for release.

"So hot." Jonny murmured it against his skin, pulling free. Then the man kissed him, fangs pricking his lip.

He fought to hold onto his humanity, to hold onto his need.

"Luc. Now." The demand was plain, but it matched what he wanted. Matched his desire. Seed sprayed from him, and he yowled, nerves firing, pleasure suffusing him.

"Oh, yes. That was lovely." That mouth. It moved over his skin until Jonny could lick the bite mark on Luc's throat.

The lights seemed to swing, sway, back and forth, sparkling in his eyes. Those long fingers undid the silk robe, Jonny rubbing the come into Luc's skin. "You smell delicious."

The purrs rumbled out of him, one after another, the cat right behind his skin.

"Let him come," Jonny murmured, settling back against the couch.

His muscles rippled, the cat leaping to the fore before he could even offer his thanks. He stretched and purred, head-butting the vampire happily, the smell of sex and blood luscious.

Pushing the empty robe away, Jonny stood, hand on his ruff. "Shall we move to a room with a bed? I shall bring the food."

He pushed his nose against Jonny's balls, breathing in the rich, male scent. Beds. Beds meant pillows. Sheets. Comforters.

"Oh, now." Jonny laughed, the sound genuinely pleased. "Come along."

He licked once, then stretched, waiting for Jonny to lead the way. They made their way through the back door that the waiter had come in, through a private corridor. It was comforting rather than insulting, that Jonny didn't drag him through the club.

This place smelled interesting and he explored as he walked, sniffing and looking, peering through doors. There were all manner of men and not men. Vampires, wolves. There were many he could not identify by scent.

By the time they entered a room with a huge, soft bed, his whiskers were vibrating, his fur standing on end. The room had a tiny lingering odor of disinfectant, but it wasn't unpleasant, and the fine cotton sheets were very clean.

He stuck his head under the pillows, exploring, batting them before settling.

Jonny laughed out loud and slapped his butt. "You like it, yes?"

He spun around, taking Jonny's wrist between his teeth, holding carefully. No swatting. Jonny's eyes widened, and the smell of arousal suddenly overpowered the scent of cleaner. Completely.

He growled softly, letting it sink into a purr, his tongue tasting Jonny's skin.

"Now, now. Don't bite too hard. I bite back."

He knew.

He thought he might approve.

He shook his head a little.

"I had such plans for us tonight." Laughing a little, Jonny pushed at him until he sprawled, paws up and batting at the ceiling. "I suppose I was a bit ambitious."

He wasn't sure what that meant, but Jonny stripped, sat down and he rolled, cheek sliding on one thigh.

"Very soft." The muscles under his cheek twitched, like his touch tickled.

He nuzzled, pushing closer to the male scent of the delicate, soft balls.

"Mmm." The sound was almost like his purr, low and rumbly and happy.

He licked, testing the skin there, the flavor sure and sharp, male, but somehow dark.

"This is... I'm not at all sure that's a good idea."

He snorted. Silly man. Then he licked again.

Moaning, Jonny rocked back and forth, pressing against him a bit. The man's body certainly seemed to think it was a good idea. His tongue dragged up along the heavy shaft, moving to the delicate skin over the tip.

"Rough." Breath hitching, Jonny humped up, hands pushing against the bed sheets.

He growled, slowly letting the cat go, letting himself stretch out long, become soft-skinned and human.

"Oh..." That was even more like a purr. The sound was completely different to human ears, almost subvocal.

He licked again, this time lapping at the tip of Jonny's cock, playfully.

"That's it." Now Jonny's hands were on him, sliding over his shoulders.

His shoulders curled, rolled, sliding against those hands. Fingers slid into his hair, Jonny holding him, thumbs rubbing his cheeks. Then the man guided him down, trying to get more of the surprisingly thick cock into his mouth.

Luc pulled back, growling softly. "Careful." He wasn't sure about this... about the touching.

"Very well." Jonny lay back on the bed, robe open, letting him look his fill. "I shall let you touch me first."

That eased him, and he leaned forward, hands and mouth on the smooth skin, lips tracing the thick, heavy cock. Jonny stretched, muscle sliding smoothly under pale skin. It was almost catlike. Luc could appreciate that. He bit at one muscle before settling, focusing on the flavor at the tip of Jonny's prick.

He could almost hear Jonny's hands creak, clenching, wanting to touch him. The man was as good as his word, though, letting him have his way.

"Mmm." His tongue was fascinated, sliding over the slit in Jonny's prick, over and over.

"Luc. Your tongue. Rough." That wasn't a complaint. Not by a long shot.

He chuckled, pointed his tongue and pushed the tip in, tasting the bitter and salt. The skin under his tongue felt hot, smooth. The taste was deeper than most men. Richer. Earthy.

Good.

Jonny tasted good.

He rumbled happily, licking harder, wanting more.

"More." Jonny echoed his thoughts, pushing up, opening his mouth.

Deep, happy sounds rumbled out of him and his fingers rolled, pushing into the sheets as his tongue worked Jonny's prick. The world narrowed, his entire focus becoming bed and Jonny, sheets and skin. It felt decadent. Right. He started purring, letting the vibrations move around the hard cock spreading his lips.

Jonny pumped those hips up, pushing and pushing, need in every line of every muscle.

Luc reached up, dragged his nails along the length of Jonny's chest, scoring the skin, ever so lightly.

"Luc!" Jonny liked that, too. The man was very open to pleasure. It was heady.

Chuffing happily, Luc took Jonny down to the root, swallowing hard around the tip of the man's cock.

"Yes. Oh." The moan seemed to echo deep, right under his cheek.

He scratched again, demanding, needing to know that flavor. Slick drops of need slid out over his tongue, telling him how close Jonny was. Telling him that vampires weren't that different from men. Or cats.

He dared to slip his fingers behind Jonny's balls, fingers sliding around the tight little hole. Jonny's hole went tight, resisting him, but those balls drew up hard and fast. Every muscle quivered, Jonny grunting for him.

He tapped and growled and sucked, all at once. Come. Come. He wanted to know.

Jonny gave Luc what he wanted, growling for him, hands scrabbling at the bed. The taste was nothing short of amazing. The urge to lick and lap and taste took him, his tongue searching for every drop.

By the time he was done, Jonny was limp, panting, the sound odd. Like it was unnecessary but unavoidable.

Luc purred softly, nuzzling the flat belly, the scent of the tuna beginning to be as tempting as the man.

Jonny laughed. "You're hungry."

"Mmmhmm..." He bit a little, purring deep in his chest. "And there's tuna."

"The best kind." One long-fingered hand settled over his heart, as if feeling the vibrations. "I will spoil you rotten."

He wasn't sure how to feel about that, so he didn't bother. He nuzzled against the curve of Jonny's elbow, testing his teeth there. "Will you? Will I let you?"

"I think you will." Jonny's other hand slid down his back, nails scratching hard.

His spine arched, immediately, his fingers and toes curling.

"Mmm. I think you might let me do anything, if I asked the right way. Eventually."

"Nonsense." He didn't follow orders. At all. Luc nibbled up along Jonny's arm, tasting.

"Is that a wager?"

He tilted his head. Oh, that could be deliciously fun. "Absolutely."

"Oh, good. I love a little spice in my games, hmm?" Jonny bent, nipping hard at his shoulder.

His hips rolled and he pounced in response, yowling happily. His vampire laughed, biting him again, making his skin draw up in goose bumps. This might be the best bet he'd ever made.

Especially if there were sparkly things and tuna involved.

Chapter Five

Jonny woke alone.

He was used to that, as generally only when Kasey and Deke were feeling generous did he wake pressed against a firm, muscled body.

Too bad, in this case, however. He'd been looking forward to seeing if Luc woke as a man or a cat. He would bet on the cat. He sat up, eyes caught by a huge black rope dangling from the top of his wardrobe.

No.

Not a rope.

Not a rope at all.

Well now. Someone liked to sleep in high places. Jonny chuckled, going to get the fly swatter a patron had given him last year. The ridiculous thing had a diamond in the handle base.

Luc was comfortably perched, the tail the only thing moving. Beautiful, Luc was simply beautiful.

Absolutely a stunning animal.

Jonny grinned, feeling his fangs prick his lips. Then he swatted that tail with the swatter. Hard.

"Yowl!" The explosion of motion was stunning, the swatter bashed out of his hands as tail disappeared, clawed paw appeared and a snarl filled the air.

Grumpy kitty.

He dodged easily, laughing like a loon. "Here, kitty, kitty."

Luc answered him with a low growl that turned questioning as Luc licked the poor, affronted tail.

"Come down, hmm? It's still night. That means it is my time."

Luc arched, tail flicking, then leapt to the bed, landing with a thud on the mattress.

"Much better." Jonny smiled, stroking the offended tail.

The tip of said tail flicked and twitched, Luc staring at him, watching every motion he made. Jonny rolled to his back, baring his belly, enticing Luc to play. He scratched right under Luc's chin, too. Luc stretched, rocking into the touch for a long moment before the heavy body toppled over, right on top of him, whiskers tickling.

"Oof." Laughing, he dug his fingers into the fine, thick fur. It was like having a lover and a pet.

Loud purrs vibrated along his body, the sound echoing inside him. It made everything in him sit up and take notice. It was ridiculous how this... creature affected him. A rough tongue landed on his chest, scraping up along his skin.

"Now, now. No licking unless you're willing to follow through as a man." One had to draw a line somewhere.

Those eyes twinkled at him, challenged him. Then Luc licked again.

Laughing, Jonny pushed the heavy head away. "No. No biting, either."

A soft growl answered him, Luc nipping. Those teeth were almost as sharp as his. Almost. Luc's whiskers dragged over his arm, paws batting him playfully.

"Bad kitty." Really, none of this should be arousing.

Luc spun, that rough tongue dragging viciously across the tip of his cock. Jonny moaned, his whole body arching, bucking. That felt insanely naughty, which was silly. He'd seen and done it all, hadn't he?

Then the lick came again, and again, and he thought perhaps he'd missed one more lovely act. This was something that might ruin him for life, in fact. And he planned on a long, long life.

Luc's heavy head landed on his stomach, tongue catching each drop of liquid need that poured from him. He stroked Luc's ears, the urge to laugh when they twitched surprising him. Those bright eyes met his, the face shifting just the barest bit, like the human couldn't quite overtake the cat.

"Come on, sweet. You can do it. I want to touch all of you."

Luc pushed that broad, flat face into his hands, the muscles twitching and jerking, the man trying for him.

"Yes. Yes, Luc. I can feel you." Look at that. That was hotter than anything else that had happened all evening.

The struggle made his prick ache, made him begin to burn with need, with a surprising hunger. Slowly the cat faded, the panting, bare naked man in its place.

"Well. Hello." He smiled, his hands still cupping Luc's cheeks, his thumbs rubbing over smooth skin now.

"Hello." Luc's eyelids went heavy, the soft panting sounds filling the air between them.

"So pretty. You really are a lovely creature. Cat or man." Jonny let his leg rise, the bottom half sliding up between Luc's legs.

Luc arched, a low purr rumbling through him. "I'm not human often."

"No? Well, you are sensual and lovely, either way." He could see more possibility for biting without the fur, however.

"Thank you. You smell good." Luc's hands measured his hips, his waist, then moved up to touch his chest.

"So do you." Leaning into the touches, Jonny licked a trail along the side of Luc's neck. "You taste good, as well."

The simple touch had Luc vibrating, shifting against him.

"Mmm. I think you might be more hungry than I am." That was saying something. Jonny wanted to bite. Now.

"I ate tuna. It was luscious."

"For this, I mean." He let his fangs scrape the fine skin just over Luc's pulse-point.

"Biting." Luc growled softly, the sound fascinating, oddly confused. "No biting."

"No? I think you like it." He knew Luc liked it. That had been graphically pointed out to him.

"No."

He licked again and Luc arched against him, the scent of need most overwhelming.

Then Jonny gave in to the urge and bit, needing the hot pump of Luc's heart.

The rush of power was overwhelming, energy and heat flooding him. His eyes rolled back, and Jonny clutched at Luc's skin, drawing the man in, tasting the wildness of the cat. So good. He'd never tasted someone so... feline, so close to the edge. It was heady, addictive.

They rocked together to the beat of Luc's heart, which never stuttered, never slowed. It was... Jonny had never... Luc yowled softly, seed spraying against his belly without so much as a touch.

Moaning, Jonny drank for a few more heartbeats, his body bucking, his balls emptying with little ceremony. Really, it was extraordinary.

Soft purrs eased him down, Luc's face lax and still, the lovely eyes heavy-lidded.

"Oh. Thank you." He stroked Luc's cheek, knowing the cat would come back soon. Of course, so would the dawn, and his Luc's obligation to him would be over for the time being.

Luc purred for him again, louder this time, the soft cheek sliding against his paw. "You. You are different."

"Am I?" He'd like to think so, but he wasn't sure what he was being compared with.

"Mmm." His wrist was given a quick little nip.

His skin tingled, just from that tiny touch. "Now, now. No biting."

"That was my line." Luc's laughter tickled his skin.

"It was, hmm? I think you like it too much to say no." That suited him. He got something of a high from drinking Luc in.

"Should I come back tomorrow night? Will the window be open?" Luc's cheek slid against his, scenting him.

"It will. I'll be waiting." Jonny chuckled. "I have a feeling you'll be bad for business."

"Always." Those beautiful eyes laughed at him. "Always."

Chapter Six

Luc paced below the window, back and forth, over and over. He'd been starving when he got home and had slept the day away.

Now he was back.

Curious and questioning and hungry.

A sound from behind startled him and he leapt, bouncing from sill to sill to reach the one he needed.

The window in question was open. As promised.

He slid inside, his instincts keeping him in the shadows, his whiskers vibrating. He could hear Jonny moving around, humming a little. It made him want to yowl. He crouched down, butt in the air, readying to pounce.

The humming stopped abruptly, and he cocked his head, listening. Oh, his man was coming. Wait... His vampire?

He vibrated, waiting for the right time.

The right time came when Jonny's shadow fell across the windowsill. Perfect.

Luc pounced, twisting in the air to attack. Jonny sprang forward to meet him, grabbing him around the middle and spinning to toss him toward the desk in the center of the room. He landed on his feet, panting, tail twitching. Play!

Crouching, Jonny made a come on motion, taunting him. Oh, so fast.

Luc ducked his head, sliding to the floor and staying low in the shadows, watching as he circled.

Neither of them made a move for long moments. Jonny didn't make any sound when he breathed. If he breathed.

Luc's tail twitched, his whiskers vibrating. It was time.

Now.

No.

Now.

No.

Now.

Yes!

He rushed Jonny, going for the low shoulder-butt.

Jonny went down under his attack, obviously expecting him to come in high. Sometimes sleeping on armoires had its advantages.

He nibbled on Jonny's knees, then pounced the round butt with both front paws. Tag.

Up and after him as soon as he bounced off, Jonny caught up quickly, hand on his tail. He slid away, pushed up on his hind legs, batting at Jonny playfully. Laughing, Jonny bared his fangs, slapping at Luc's paws. Such strength. No man had ever had the strength to play with him.

He wrapped his arms around Jonny's neck, rubbing their cheeks together in a warm greeting before bouncing down and back again.

They played for what seemed like moments, but had to be nearly an hour. Finally Jonny just tackled him, rolling them across the floor so they slid into the wall.

He hugged Jonny tight, licked Jonny's jaw from chin to ear.

"Oh! Scratchy." That laughter made him happy, deep inside.

He nuzzled in again, then let the human out, trusting Jonny with it. "Evening."

"Good evening. I hope you don't mind. I ordered the fish."

"I like fish." He plucked at Jonny's fancy shirt. "You have clothes on."

"I do. You don't." Chuckling, Jonny pulled off his clothes, tossing them aside. "There are robes, when we decide to move to the private room."

"Mmm." He purred and slid downward, mouth open on the soft belly, teeth scraping gently.

"Good kitty." Long fingers curled into his hair, helping his motions along.

He growled softly, warning that he wasn't to be trifled with. Then he lapped at Jonny's navel. The skin there was thin, pale, smooth as anything could be. He nudged Jonny over onto his back, exploring with his mouth and fingers, butt swaying in the air. Stretching long, Jonny let him have everything, neck and chest, belly and cock.

A rap came to the door, and the sound had him springing back, growling low. "Boss? There's someone here asking to see you."

"Shit." Jonny sighed, rolling to his feet. "Sorry, sweet. I shall return, hmm?"

Gathering his clothes, Jonny dressed quickly and slipped out of the room, leaving him with the barest squeeze on his shoulder.

He sighed, shifting back to his natural form to explore. There were so many shiny things, on shelves and in boxes and on the huge desk. He gnawed on the leather chair for a while, then opened the safe, just to practice.

By the time the door opened again, there was a pile of letter openers, cuff links and pinky rings on the desk. The light came on, making him blink and growl. He slipped under the desk, peering out at the intruder.

"Luc? Where have you... Good god." Jonny broke off, staring about. "Well, you did find my silver ring, hmm?"

He chuffed, tail sliding on the floor. He found many things.

"I have not seen it for two years." Jonny lowered his voice conspiratorially. "To tell the truth, I thought Kasey stole it."

The thought of another thief in his territory made his ruff puffy. Jonny's was his to rob.

"We were at the same club at the same time, back in... Well. You don't wish to know how old I am, hmm?" Smiling, Jonny came to him, extending a hand.

He slipped out, wrapping around Jonny's legs, tail held high.

"You did eat my chair, however. For that, you might owe me a forfeit."

He tilted his head, yowled. Eat was a very strong word. He preferred... nibbled.

"Yes, eaten. Look how it will poke my bum." Every so often Jonny said something that reminded Luc that he just wasn't from the States. It was... cute.

He pounced the chair seat, paws landing with a thud.

"Yes, well, I do not have your fur carpet." The teasing made his tail twist happily, made his whiskers vibrate.

He headbutted Jonny, then stretched, muscles rippling.

"You're utterly repentant, I can tell." Those long fingers pushed through his fur, scratching hard.

Totally. Completely. Oh, there.

He arched. Right there.

"So pretty. I swear, you make me forget myself. I had such plans." He could smell Jonny, could tell what the man wanted.

He nosed Jonny's balls through the heavy slacks.

"Forward cat." But Jonny was rubbing against him, hips rocking slowly.

His paw landed on one thigh, claws just barely threatening.

"Are you threatening me, Luc?" One brow rose, Jonny's eyes seeming to glow a moment.

He considered that, but truly, what choice did he have? He rumbled deep and pushed. Jonny smiled, slow and delighted. Then the man jumped him, wrestling him to the floor. He yowled, batting and twisting, letting Jonny feel his strength. He could tell that Jonny was impressed, maybe proud, and the tussle got more serious when Jonny stopped holding back. Yes. Yes. Real play.

They slammed into furniture, bashing around together and crashing into the door, then back, Jonny coming to rest atop him. Jonny's eyes glowed, the light in them so bright for him. Happy. It was good. He slapped Jonny with his tail, right across the ass, chuffing happily.

"Now, how is that fair?" Strong fingers dug into his fur, scratching him nice and hard.

Oh.

Oh.

His head fell back and his throat worked, pure pleasure in his muscles, his fur.

Good.

He felt the touches all the way down to the tip of his tail. His body rolled, trying to get more. His claws pushed out, released, and he twisted. More.

"Don't you scratch my floors." Jonny laughed breathlessly, tickling and teasing before settling in to scratch again.

He tried to focus on fighting, on playing, but all he knew was a wild, restless joy.

"Come to me as a man, my cat. I'm beginning to have a terrible need." Jonny was hard for him, and those eyes... Jonny was going to eat him alive.

Luc chuffed softly, imagining himself bare and long, like a man. Like Jonny. The change was slow, but steady, coming to him.

"Beautiful. I love to watch you change. So different from..."

A little stab of jealousy hit him. He yowled softly and swatted. Different from who?

"I have a friend who is a wolf," Jonny explained, stroking his side. "It looks so painful for him."

He stretched, let himself become even more human. It was less painful than awkward for him.

"You're just so sleek. So lovely." Now Jonny was licking at his lips, leaning to kiss him.

"Jonny." He purred, his entire body vibrating.

"Yes. Luc." The kiss went deep and a little toothy, blood welling up along his lower lip.

He opened up, hands dragging down Jonny's back.

Wanted.

He wanted.

Jonny moaned for him, starting to rock a little, and that felt right, the slide of cool skin along his, a little slick with his sweat. Their cocks knocked together, then dragged, sensation rocketing up his spine.

"Oh." The small sound pressed against his skin. Jonny rocked against him, gasping.

"More." He leaned up, teeth on Jonny's shoulder, testing, teasing.

"More," Jonny agreed, licking at him, biting at his chin, his throat, leaving tiny stings.

His hands landed on Jonny's ass, sparks sliding up his spine as they ground together.

"Harder." He wasn't the only one who needed more, who wanted this so badly.

"Yes." One of his feet braced against the floor, letting his hips slam up.

Their skin slid together, the friction undeniable, the need trembling right on the edge. All they needed was... was something. He growled, fingers digging into Jonny's ass, and he bit Jonny's shoulders. Those lean legs came up to wrap around him, holding him closer. The scent of them together drove Luc crazy.

"I need." Luc couldn't think, couldn't breathe, could only ask.

"Yes. I do, too. I want inside you, Luc."

The words made his stomach go taut, his muscles singing as his cock throbbed. "In."

They could posture later, when his balls ached less.

"Thank God." Jonny ought to be thanking him, but he would point that out later, when Jonny's cock wasn't pressing against his hole.

Bearing down, Luc took the head in, let it scrape and stretch him. The burn had him shivering, his muscles bunching and releasing in unfamiliar ways. There were advantages to being human, though.

Human skin was so much more sensitive.

It worked for him because Jonny's hand was everywhere, sliding over his chest, tugging the curls above his cock, pinching his nipples. It was perfect. Well, he thought it was perfect. Then Jonny bit into the flesh of his shoulder.

His cry echoed, his ass clenching around Jonny's cock.

"Mmm." The moan seemed to make the fangs stuck in his skin vibrate, a sensation at once disturbing and amazing. Jonny bit a tiny bit deeper, his hand smacking against Luc's ass.

The world seemed to stop, to be nothing but heat and blood and need. Good. Good. Please. Drinking deep, Jonny slammed into him, opening him up, sending him soaring. Flying. Luc spun out of control, held close only by the teeth and cock piercing him.

It went on and on until he wanted to scream and claw at the sky. Then Jonny snapped against him, hips moving in short bursts, hot come filling him up. Luc grabbed his prick, tugging once, twice, the pulls almost vicious, but exactly what he needed to drive himself over the edge. When he came, Jonny's fangs sank deep into his skin and muscle, making everything in him fire like lightning.

The whole world had turned red.

They eased back down to the... floor? Desk? He didn't remember if they had even made it to the settee. It didn't matter. All he could feel was Jonny. Shuddering, he held on, hoping that Jonny would help him, would bring him back.

Stroking his back, Jonny helped him down, let him float down slowly. His purrs slid out of him, vibrating his chest.

"My pretty cat. Thank you." Sometimes his man seemed oddly formal, reminding Luc that he was from another age.

He nuzzled in, rumbling his thanks, his pleasure. "Smell good."

"Yes. We do." Jonny smiled, patting his butt. The phone rang not two seconds later, making him jump. "Damn."

"Busy busy." He suspected Jonny was too busy for a lover, even for six days, much less six weeks.

"I just need to make sure people know I'm occupied." Easing away, Jonny headed for the phone, back to him, ass tight and inviting.

He slipped back into his natural form and stretched, before leaping from floor to chair to bookcase. Jonny pulled on a robe and settled into a chair, tapping away at a sleek little laptop. Luc would have time for a nap.

He cleaned his tail and whiskers, then settled. Yes. A nice nap.

Chapter Seven

"No, no. I don't care how much he's offered. I told him he was no longer eligible for club membership." Jonny typed as fast as his fingers would go, looking up the vamp who had applied for membership at Bloodrose. Again.

"Honestly, you would think we were the only club that catered to... Well, we are, aren't we? Poor fellow." Actually, it gave Jonny great pleasure to turn the asshole down. A patron like that could ruin a whole business.

"I'll let him know, sir." Duke's low growl made him smile. The wolf was a grand assistant, barring the periodic worthless evenings every month, and was preternaturally efficient. Must have been the whole pack alpha instinct.

"Thank you. Anything else?"

"Would you require a private room tonight, sir?"

"I would like one, yes, if we have one available. Let Annabelle know I will be unavailable for a bit."

"Yes, sir. Have a good evening."

"Thank you, Duke." The idea of introducing Duke to Luc made him smile.

The phone line went dead, leaving him in the quiet luxury of his office. He turned, searching for Luc, finding a kernel of panic in his belly when the man was nowhere to be seen. He took a deep breath, the scent of musk sudden. Ah. His Luc.

Jonny turned, finding the slippery beast atop the cabinet, tail dangling. He'd been there before, hadn't he? Grinning, Jonny plucked a rubber band out of his desk drawer. Luc's tail was moving, slowly, lazily. Carefully taking aim, Jonny sent the heavy band winging toward Luc, aiming for high up. That was where the tail was stable enough to be a target. Right before it hit, Luc's tail snapped out of the way. Then bright green eyes stared down at him, challenging.

Oh, ho. Someone wanted to play. And they said werewolves were difficult. Jonny swiveled his chair, putting his back to Luc. He'd never met a were who was so... invested in his animal side, so curious. So...

Oof.

Luc landed on the desk in front of him, paws on his shoulders. Smiling, he rubbed noses with Luc, hands coming up to stroke the huge paws. So soft. Luc's purr vibrated through him, loud enough to tickle somehow.

He waited until Luc's eyes were half closed with pleasure, until the big cat was totally relaxed. Then he ducked under those long legs and ran, heading down the private hallway to the room Duke would have arranged by now. He could feel the cat moving behind him, could feel the unfamiliar sensation of being hunted instead of hunter.

It sent a little thrill up his spine. Such a lovely game. He almost purred himself. He felt a paw swack his ass, painless, but firm, pushing him faster. An extra burst of speed sent him shooting into the dark room, where he leaped over the bed and landed on the other side. Jonny slipped off his robe and crouched in the gloom, waiting.

He could see those eyes, glowing softly, a pure green searching for him. Going very still, he tested his cat's hunting skills, loving the little shivery feeling that ran up his spine. He'd grown bored over the years. Jaded. Luc took that feeling away.

He saw Luc blink, once, then the eyes were gone, leaving only inky blackness. There was no sound, except the hypnotic thump of Luc's heart. That sound moved, but in the darkness it was disorienting. Jonny was used to being able to see. He saw the faintest outline of black shift to his right, then a soft thump as the mattress dipped.

As stealthy as he could be, Jonny moved to the end of the bed, ready to leap. Could he take Luc off guard?

Luc went still and Jonny imagined he could hear the big ears twitching. Good thing he didn't have to breathe. Oh, he could, and did. Jonny quite enjoyed all the things that came with air. Like talking. For now, though, he was glad he could still even that.

One paw swiped out, reaching for him, just missing. Oh, Luc was good! Jonny sprang up, reaching for those scoop-like ears. They flickered in his fingers, Luc yowling as he was pounced.

Laughing like an idiot, Jonny tore about the room, wondering what his staff would think if they saw him playing. Luc's paws batted at him, painlessly; the big cat chuffed and snarled behind him. He turned suddenly, catching Luc in mid air before flinging him to one side. Luc landed on his feet, snarled softly, then crouched down.

"Come on, kitty. Come get me."

That heavy tail thudded on the floor and then, bang! Fur and fang and claw and rough, hot tongue. They tumbled to the bed, Jonny grunting, rolling, scrambling against the slippery sheets. Luc was strong, hot, and fast. Teeth grazed his shoulder, Luc fighting to stay on top. His fingers dug in on either side of the bed, and Jonny lifted up, tossing Luc off. The smell of his blood bloomed. Luc tearing his skin deliciously.

Luc snarled softly, lapping at his skin, tasting him carefully. Moaning, Jonny wiggled, the feeling sending little shocks all over him. The tongue on his skin was rough, the tingles shooting down his spine. Smiling, he moved again, as if he was trying to get away. Just to see what Luc

would do. Heavy paws wrapped around his waist, claws barely threatening. The message was incredibly clear. Stay.

Oh, that made him laugh, right out loud. Picky kitty.

Luc cleaned his shoulder, lapping at it gently until the flow of blood stopped, then the grooming and purring started, Luc holding him down with one huge paw. It was the oddest sensation, being cared for that way. It wasn't human affection at all. It was all cat. Luc rolled him over, cleaning him intimately, leaving nowhere untouched. By the end he was boneless, left feeling adored.

Jonny stretched, loving how Luc had made him feel. Needing it, really. The heavy fur was silken and soft against his back. They just rocked together a little, like he was just a man with a pet cat. Except no housecat would make him feel what Luc did. Luc's tail tapped against his leg, and Luc's whiskers tickled his shoulder, the back of his neck.

He thought about having a bit of a nap, but that seemed wasteful, somehow. As if he would be losing time. About that time Luc's stomach growled -- he had the unique sensation of feeling the sound rumbled against his lower back as well as hearing it.

"Hungry, my cat? I can have a feast sent. More fish? Perhaps chicken" It gave him a deep sense of satisfaction to provide for Luc, as Luc provided for him.

The growling shifted to a lovely, deep purr, Luc's cheeks rubbing his shoulder.

"Very well. I'm afraid you must let me up for that."

He was rolled again, his stomach given a lick before he was released to find Luc cleaning his own face.

"Greedy thing." Not that he minded. Jonny called the kitchen. "I need chicken. Something simple but good. And whatever the fish is on the menu as well. No bones."

"Yes, sir." The little chirpy voice was almost irritating.

Almost.

Jonny dropped the phone back in the cradle, rolling his head on his neck. He'd have to find out from Duke who that was and tell him never to let her work the phone again.

The touch of very human hands on his shoulders shocked him, surprised him badly. Whirling, he leaped back, hands up defensively. Luc stumbled away with a snarl, leaping over the bed. Shifting in midair, it was as if the man disappeared. He'd never seen anything shift so easily, move so fluidly.

"Oh." Damn. Damn it all. "I'm sorry, Luc. You startled me. I thought someone else had invaded our space."

A low huff and growl expressed clearly what Luc thought of that idea.

"You have never been a man without me asking first." That seemed a reasonable thing to point out.

Luc slinked out from behind the bed, whiskers vibrating.

"Much better." He held out a hand. "Please. Let me make it up to you?"

Luc came to him, nudging his fingers and demanding a scratch. Jonny gave it, wondering what Luc would think of what some of his customers required. Oh, not of him, though he had indulged in their games once in awhile.

Luc slowly morphed into a man, still kneeling, staring at him. "You looked like your shoulders hurt."

"Did I?" He was stiff, certainly. Something about that little voice on the phone had made him furious. "Would you like to rub me?"

"You did." Luc moved behind him, hands sliding on his shoulders, thumbs digging in.

"Mmm." Good. Yes, good. His head dropped forward, giving Luc more access.

"I like how you smell." Luc purred, the sound happy.

"Well, that's good. As strong as your sense of smell is, if you hated my scent it would all be over." He could stay there for, oh, millennia.

Strong thumbs pushed into the muscles of his back, forcing them to release their tension. He leaned forward, hands naturally falling to the desk to hold him up. Jonny spread his legs for balance, letting Luc care for him. Luc's hands explored him, as eagerly as that tongue had. It felt both erotic and luxurious, letting someone touch him like that, without thinking of anything else. Without trying to find the work angle in it.

"Pretty, pretty." Luc kept purring and rubbing, touching, constantly offering him more.

"I'm glad you like." He was very, very glad.

Those hands found his lower back, lips on his nape. Jonny moaned again, his body starting to undulate, his ass pushing back. More. That purr turned into a sweet growl, lips becoming teeth. Yes. That felt perfect. The sting made him want to shout.

Luc's cock was long, heavy, sliding along the crack of his ass, again and again. He would have given the man anything at the moment. Anything, if he would just use that amazing cock like it was meant to be used.

"I want." Luc's teeth grabbed his nape, shook him a little. "Let me in."

"In." Nodding, he offered, arching his back like the most practiced whore. He wanted, as well.

Luc growled softly, the slick tip of the long prick sliding hot against his hole before his cat pushed in, took him with one lazy push.

Electricity shot up his spine, making him grunt. "More. Luc. Faster."

"Mor-r-r-r-re." He felt that purred word all along his spine.

"You're a cruel kitty, hmm?" Not that Luc wasn't giving him what he needed. That cock split him, pushed into him again and again.

The soft chuff was punctuated by one thrust after another. Fangs sinking into his lower lip, Jonny pushed back, slamming his ass against Luc. His balls felt heavy, full, and his cock might just explode. Teeth sank into his nape, holding on, Luc shaking him, just slightly.

An explosive moan left him, his whole body shaking. That... "No-- No biting."

All that earned him was another shake, a growl, another deep, hard thrust. He laughed. Indeed, Luc took as well to that command as he did. Biting good. Luc shifted, cock finding his gland and lightning shot up his spine. Yes. Yes, so good.

Panting, Jonny hung his head, arms shaking where he held them both up. He... he was going to explode. Luc never touched his cock, just slammed into him, over and over, working his ass, driving him over the edge. Jonny couldn't remember the last time he'd come from being fucked. Maybe sometime in the century before last.

Luc purred softly, the thrusts becoming long and lazy, his cat taking time to orgasm, to let him feel every second. Shifting, Jonny pushed back harder, squeezing his muscles tight around Luc's cock. That was one advantage to being what he was. Excellent muscular control. That purr became a surprised yowl, Luc pushing in deep.

"Yes." Laughing, Jonny did it again. Then again.

"Jonny. Pretty. Pretty. Please." The thrust became wild, the feral sounds more so.

"Now, Luc." He put the command into his voice, into his body when he clamped down as hard as he could.

Heat filled him, Luc's cry deep and needy.

That was almost as good as drawing blood. Almost. That would come later, after he'd fed Luc well.

Chapter Eight

Luc woke up in his apartment, the sun pouring in, something... He smelled something. His nose twitched, but besides that he didn't move.

Who was there? Who was going to die?

The tiniest sounds rustled through the front room, almost like scurrying rodent. Except that mice were not men-sized. He slowly, slowly dragged his feet beneath him, setting himself up to attack. The hanging bed swayed, just a bit, and his claws dug in.

The sound of cloth scratching on wood came from just beyond the door. Someone was being very careless. He slid down to the floor, heading for the sound, claws bared. As soon as the door cracked open, he pounced, snarling.

He twisted in midair when a needle slammed into his rib muscles, piercing the skin and feeling like it scraped against bone. Cold, huge steel. Ice seemed to slide through his veins, even as rage heated him and he attacked the now-closed door. What had they done?

What was this?

He hit the floor, bare knees slamming into the hardwood.

Knees.

He groaned, fingers tearing the needle from him.

Fingers.

Knees.

The feline in him screamed, trying to claw out and it wouldn't come.

The sound of running feet was indistinct to his human ears, but the man was clearly running away from him. What could he do like this?

He found clothes, shoes, coat. Hat. Then he headed for the front door. There were people coming up the stairs, he could hear them. Fuck. Fuck. The world was beginning to get fuzzy, distant. Odd.

Luc ran for the window, racing for the fire escape. The Rose.

He'd go for the Rose.

Jonny would help him.

If he made it there before the world went black.

Jonny sat at his desk, feeling the sun beat on the building outside. Some days it was like that, even buried deep inside the Bloodrose. He rolled his head on his neck, glancing away from the computer.

Why he was so restless escaped him, but he was. As if he were waiting for something.

A rapping came to the door, "Sir? Sir, there's a bit of an..."

"Let me *see* him!" That roar was terribly familiar.

On his feet and at the door in a heartbeat, Jonny opened the panel to find a very naked, and very bedraggled, Luc. "What happened?"

"Help me." Luc fell onto the floor in front of him, a huge, vicious bruise on the tanned skin.

"Luc!" Waving off the attendant, Jonny hauled Luc the rest of the way into the room, needing to know they were safe so he could examine his cat.

Those bright eyes were dull, dazed, scared as they stared at him. "Jonny."

"Luc, what happened. Talk to me." He knew that had to be hard, but it was the only option. He rolled Luc gently, finding the bruise and checking it carefully.

"My place. A needle. I can't change."

"You can't..." A hot flash of rage lit Jonny from within. "Someone attacked you?"

"Yes. Let me stay? They were coming." Luc's eyes were rolling, throat working furiously.

"Of course you may stay." There. The tip of the needle was still stuck in Luc's skin. "Let me have someone analyze this?"

Luc nodded, hand hot where it wrapped around his calf. "I can't change."

"It's a drug of some sort. Don't panic, sweet. It will wear off." He had to get the piece of syringe out to Kasey. Then he could help Luc.

Luc groaned, curled up into himself, knees to chest.

Jonny threw open the door and snarled for someone to get Duke. Anyone. Run. Now. Someone had attacked what was his. Someone was going to pay. Jonny snarled, kicking the door shut and bending to lift Luc in his arms.

His cat was feverish, muscles twitching and jerking under his hands.

Duke was at the door in seconds. "Sir?"

"I need this to go to Deke and Kasey. I need them to make it their top priority." Kasey was a fellow vampire, and a private investigator with access to a lab. "I need to know how to reverse it."

"Yes, sir. Right away. Is there anything else?"

"Medical supplies. Something for Luc to drink. Something with protein." Damn it all.

"Yes, sir." The man was preternaturally efficient.

Jonny was glad for it now. Glad Duke didn't have the chirpy, irritating voice, too.

Luc's green eyes stared at him, begging him for answers.

"We'll know what it is soon, love." He stroked Luc's cheek, meeting those eyes sure and steady. "There's nothing in a drug that can damage you permanently."

Luc curled into him, cheek on his thigh, panting softly. "Did I wake you?"

"No, I was working." His hands touched every bit of Luc's skin, finding nothing else untoward.

"You work too much."

"Do I?" Smiling a little, Jonny pulled Luc back into his arms and lifted. "You need a bath."

"Water." Luc snorted softly.

"As a man, it has benefits." It would feel good on those bruises, on the sore muscles.

"I can't change." Luc nuzzled his jaw.

"We'll figure out what's wrong, I promise, hmm?" He nuzzled back, holding Luc close.

He headed them toward the bathroom, toward the huge, heady tub. He left the lights off, not needing them. The water came on hot and steamy under his hand, a single touch starting the jets when the tub was full. That would help. Luc tensed, until they were submerged, then the long, lean body relaxed.

"There. I told you that would be better." He smiled, stroking a hand down Luc's back.

Luc nodded, murmuring softly -- nonsense about bothering him and aching and running.

"Shh. You are not a bother." Not a bother, and his and hurt, and Jonny wanted to kill something.

Luc's tongue slid over his collarbone, the soft touch obviously one of care and comfort instead of arousal. If his cat had been able to change, that tongue would have been rough and heavy, pushing against him. It made him angry all over again that someone would do this.

He could feel those poor muscles, jerking and shifting, trying to relax, trying to do something they weren't allowed to do. Eventually, though, the hot water and his hands eased Luc, let the man relax.

"That's it, love. That's it." Jonny murmured it against Luc's skin, trying not to break the rhythm of his touches.

The quiet kisses and licks continued, Luc trying to purr for him.

"My cat. What am I to do with you, hmm?" He knew what to do, but that might have to wait a bit.

"Let me stay for the day."

"You can stay as long as you need to, love. We're going to fix this, and find out who wants you so badly." And kill them. Jonny would tear them apart.

"People in my line of work gather enemies."

"Indeed. They do in mine, as well." He understood that. He would still rip them to ribbons and tie the pieces around tree limbs. He thought Luc might quite like to watch that.

He kissed Luc's cheek, just below his ear, and let them float. The jets buffeted them a little, pushing them about. Jonny felt it when Luc fell into a deep sleep, the long body melted against him.

Humming, he stood, water pouring off him, and took Luc to the bed. It was a good thing he'd given up living anywhere but the club. He had all the comforts. His cat curled up into him, shivering until he drew the blankets up around them.

Jonny cursed his lack of body heat and thought about calling for hot water bottles. The way Luc clung told him not to move, though, and he stayed right where he was.

There would be time for everything later, from finding out about the drug to killing those who had done this.

Now was for Luc to heal and sleep. Somehow that had become the most important thing.

Chapter Nine

Cold.

He was cold.

He was cold and his tail was missing.

Luc blinked awake, growling under his breath. He hated waking up as a human, had since he started the change way back when. It was unnatural.

Distracting.

Wrong.

Wait.

He moved his shoulder, growling at the ache there, deep in the muscle.

"Well, I suppose asking how you're feeling is a bad idea."

Jonny. Jonny was there. Not holding him, like he had been when they went to sleep, but sitting in a chair with his little laptop.

"Better. Naked. My tail's missing." He wrapped the blankets around himself.

"I know." Jonny looked up, smiled. "But you look better than you did, I assure you. Are you hungry?"

"I don't know. Probably." He rolled his shoulder again, thought of his claws, his tail, his long, sharp teeth.

Nothing.

Nothing at all.

"Stop." Jonny closed the laptop with a click. "It will come back. It's the drug."

"How long?" He didn't know if he could stop.

"I don't know. Kasey has narrowed it down to a certain drug family, but he's not sure of the dose or the strength of what you got."

"Oh." He stood up, pacing a bit. He needed to go find out where the assholes were and kill them. After they fixed him.

"Are you? Hungry?" Jonny stopped him by stepping in front of him, hands on his upper arms.

"No. I don't think so. I have to go. I have to find them and make right again."

Jonny's hands were hot.

"Not until you have your strength back." Those warm, strong hands pulled him back to the bed, and Jonny sat with him.

He growled low, frustration and fear building inside him. "I can't *change*."

"I know." Stroking his cheek, Jonny stared into his eyes. "I can help."

"How?" He was vibrating, every inch of him awake and alive and screaming in pure aggravation.

Leaning in, Jonny bit down on the flesh of his shoulder. Hard. It made him cry out, which felt... good.

His head fell back, his muscles screaming happily at the sensations. "More."

"Mmm." The strong fangs sank farther into his skin, and Jonny pinched his ass, hard enough to make him jump.

"M...more." His own teeth bared, snapping at the air.

A rough groan was the only answer, but before he could blink he was facedown on the bed, Jonny on top of him. Those teeth sank into him, over and over. He yowled, hips bucking up, a raw joy filling him up with each stinging bite. A burning pleasure filled him, shooting higher and hotter when Jonny's hand landed on the side of his hip in a ringing slap.

Luc forgot about changing; he simply felt, his confused body caught by his Jonny. The slaps and bites had him arching, growling, digging into the sheets with his fingers. He was warm, finally, white hot and needing.

"Please. Mate. Mate. I need. I need you." He screamed out his need, heedless of who might hear.

"Need what?" There was no triumph in Jonny's voice. His mate didn't want to hear him beg. No, he could tell that Jonny wanted to give him exactly what he needed.

"More. More." He pushed back with his hips, grinding back toward Jonny. "Take me. Let me come."

Make him hot.

"Yes." Licking at the throbbing bruises on his skin, Jonny pulled back at the hips, one hand sliding down his back. Those fingers prodded his ass, pushing him open.

Purrs rumbled out of him, his thighs parting and his back bowed.

"More." Pressing deeper, Jonny opened him, letting him feel it. It burned, but it gave him something to focus on. Something to believe in.

"Yes. More." His head bobbed, his skin heated, all through.

"Now, Luc." The fingers slid out and Jonny's cock pushed in, scraping all the way. It made him yowl.

Those strong arms wrapped around his chest, drew him close as the heavy cock pierced him. Jonny slammed into him, hips smacking his ass, making the skin sting. Then Jonny's fangs pushed into him again, too, drawing blood to the surface. He screamed out his pleasure, body moving, working Jonny's cock

Growling, Jonny moved him, made him take all he could and then some. The biting, the fucking, and the sudden hard blow to the side of his thigh overloaded him. Spunk poured out of him, the orgasm making every nerve buzz and spark. Crying out, Jonny jerked behind him, filling him deep. The feeling made him complete for that one moment, made him forget that he had no tail, no ears.

Those arms stayed wrapped around him, kept him close and surrounded. Better.

So much better.

"We'll keep you safe, sweet. I promise."

He licked at Jonny's arm, wrist, almost purring. "Thank you."

"You're welcome." Relaxing against him, Jonny kissed his shoulder. "Anything for you, my cat."

Luc purred low, nodded, finding himself blinking slowly, the nap calling to him.

"Sleep now, love. I'll be here when you wake."

Luc nodded, letting himself drop away, trusting in his lover to protect him.

Soon he would eat the men who had done this to him. Until then, he would let Jonny ease the pain the way only he could.

Chapter Ten

Jonny paced, waiting for Kasey's call.

It shouldn't be taking this long, really. Kasey was usually the soul of efficiency. If nothing else, by now Kasey's partner Deke should have stopped by...

The phone rang, and Jonny snatched it up. "Did you find out what it was?"

"Like you thought. Looks like a massive dose of Cretaphin."

"Damn. So how long will it take?" Luc would be able to shift again, as soon as the drug worked out, but it was synthetic, specifically designed for just such events. Shifters generally took it voluntarily to keep from changing at inopportune times.

"My best guess? Three weeks to a month. He got a brutal dose."

"Shite. Fucking hell." Luc would go crazy. He would tear himself to pieces. He was already scratching at his arms, in his sleep. Jonny had seen it with Deke once, his friend going nuts after three days. "Anything else you can tell me?"

"Well, if I gave someone this dose, Boss, I would be intending to kill him. This was a high-dollar hit."

"Damn it all." Sighing, he rolled his head on his neck, glancing at Luc, who slept fitfully. "Thank you."

"Anytime. Keep him safe, boss, or show him the door, huh?"

"Yes." He hung up, knowing that now they had to find out who had done this and what they wanted. To kill or just maim?

When he looked back at Luc, those bright eyes were staring at him.

"Hello, sweet." He smiled, trying to bite back his worry.

"Jonny." Luc rubbed along the sheets, still staring. "What's wrong with me?"

"I was right. It was a drug. They overdosed you, however." Slowly, carefully, he made his way to Luc's side.

"It's not permanent?" There was pure, blind horror in Luc's eyes.

"No. It could last as long as a month, though." He knew that wouldn't help. but it was better than Luc dying.

"A month? No way. That's... days. There's a full moon between then and now." The panic was palpable.

"I know." It might just kill them both, keeping Luc busy.

Luc groaned, one hand sliding against his thigh.

"Mmm." Jonny encouraged the touches, moving closer, letting Luc take what he needed. Comfort. Reassurance.

Luc leaned down, cheek on his thigh, rubbing back and forth, over and over. "Is there an antidote?"

"Not that we've found." He paused, stroking Luc's ears. "The dose should have killed you."

Luc growled. "They sent someone to assure the job was done."

"Yes, but you got away." Thank the gods. Jonny couldn't imagine not having Luc, now that he'd been with him.

"I ran." Luc rubbed again, teeth testing his skin this time.

"It worked." Jonny shifted, his legs falling open, letting Luc have better access.

"It did. I can't survive a month like this, a moon like this."

"You will because I won't let you do otherwise." He might have to ask Deke to help him, however. Deke was a werewolf. He would understand.

Luc's chuckle was low, rough, husky. "I don't think you get a say in that, lovely."

"You don't think so?" He scratched lightly at Luc's back.

"I... Hrm?" Luc arched, butt shifting.

"I think I do have a say, sweet." His fingers dug in a bit harder.

"No..."

He chuckled as Luc's eyes crossed. "No?"

Human or cat, Luc seemed completely unable to resist a good scratch. "No." That pink tongue flicked out, Luc arching.

"Hmm. Well, then, I suppose I don't have to try to comfort you." Jonny pulled his fingers away.

That earned him a low, warning growl. Luc was surprisingly good at that, in his human form. Jonny laughed, feeling like Luc was far more there with him now than he had been. Sweet cat. His cat.

Luc's face pushed into his stomach, nudging against the fabric of his shirt. Jonny reached down and pulled the fabric out of the way. Really, if he didn't have a business to run, it would be much easier.

"You taste good." Luc groaned, licking and lapping, tongue dragging on his skin. "Touch me."

He groaned, struggling out of clothing, trying to get skin on skin. His nails scratched, his fingers pinched, offering Luc all the sensation he could stand.

Luc helped him, tearing at his slacks. "Mate."

The word burned like fire in his belly. Oh, fuck yes. The rest of his clothes fell in shreds, and he turned on Luc, pushing his cat down into the mattress, kissing Luc fiercely. Luc growled, the sound wild and, he thought, happy as it pushed into his lips. If he could make his cat happy, even when he couldn't change? Oh, that would mean the world to him.

When had Luc become his? Become more than a challenge, a dalliance? Perhaps from the very beginning.

Luc bit his bottom lip, tugged it. "Pay attention."

"I am," he murmured, smiling against Luc's mouth. "What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to touch me. It feels so wrong, being stuck like this. Cold."

"I know. I know, love." Though he didn't. Jonny honestly couldn't remember what it felt like to be human. He could touch, though, could feel smooth skin and hard muscle.

"No, you don't, but you make it better." Luc grinned for him, eyes sparkling with a hint of madness, for a moment.

"Good." All he could do was bite down on the nearest skin, give Luc something else to think about.

Luc answered him with a bite of his own, dull teeth scraping on his skin. It felt odd, not to have the cat right there, teetering on the edge of danger. Jonny pushed that thought aside. As odd as it was for him, it had to be worse for Luc. He heard Luc's aggravated half-growl, felt the frustration in the very air.

"Shh. I know what you need." He did. He could give it easily. Jonny rolled, pressing Luc down on his back, leaning close to push his fangs deep into one hip.

"Mate!" Luc's heels dug into the mattress, the scream gratifying.

Jonny drank deeply, needing the feel of Luc under him, inside him, even if the power was oddly muted by the drug. He wanted to go tear someone limb from limb all over again.

Luc whimpered, fingers on his hair, petting him, hips moving in slow circles as he fed. His cheek nudged the hard cock, and Jonny reached up, wrapping his fingers around it. He gentled to a slow suction, taking tiny sips to prolong the meal. Soft little words poured down over him -- rough-edged purrs and moans.

Chuffing much like Luc would, Jonny rose up and nipped the tip of Luc's cock. Gently. His sweet cat responded with a curious chirrup, but didn't tense, trusted him and his control. His tongue pushed into the slit, fucking it nice and hard. Oh, Luc tasted good. Sharp. Earthy.

He felt Luc moving, sliding and tugging at him, then that hungry mouth was at his crotch, seeking to return the favor. Jonny turned his hips, letting Luc suck him in. He went all the way down on Luc's cock, ready to pick up the pace. Luc was ravenous, mouth like a well of flames over his cock, the suction sweet and perfect.

Poor baby. Not that Jonny was above reaping the benefits of the need Luc had. He would wallow in it while he could. Then, when his cat was returned to him, he would rejoice.

Jonny sucked, licked, his hand coming up to cup the heavy balls, so warm and full for him. He heard the happy purr, then Luc pressed down toward his touch. More. He needed more. Jonny arched up, feeding Luc his cock. He pressed against Luc's balls with his hand, rubbing the whole sac in a slow circle.

Luc's purr vibrated around his skin, the suction growing stronger and stronger as Luc took him down to the root. They sucked and loved, both of them making these insane noises now, both of them moving hard enough to injure a less-hardy lover. Even human, Luc was not human. No, his Luc was unique. Special. Feline to the core.

His fingers pressed against the strip of skin behind Luc's balls, demanding more reaction. Nails scraped along his thighs in a clear, stinging answer. Jonny jerked, his ears ringing a little it felt so good. He let Luc feel his teeth again, a tiny prick of fang.

Long fingers pressed against his hole, even as Luc's throat jerked and squeezed about the tip of his prick. Jonny shot, shouting and bucking, his whole body feeling the shock of it. Luc undid him completely. Each and every purr vibrated around his cock, making each pulse of his orgasm seem somehow bigger. Jonny closed his eyes and sucked, hollowing his cheeks, his fingers pressing hard against sensitive skin. That was the last bit he needed to make it perfect.

Luc's hips rolled, the careful thrusts becoming random, rough. Jonny bit down, wanting Luc to scream for him. Wanting the fire. Blood and semen splashed over his tongue, Luc's wail loud enough to shake the foundations.

He reached for Luc's tail, looking for something solid in the spinning world, but of course, it wasn't there.

Goddamn it. They needed to fix that.

Chapter Eleven

Luc managed to stay in Jonny's rooms for ten days before he'd had enough. He waited until Jonny left to do whatever it was he did when he wasn't hiding a drugged cat in his rooms, then he slipped out the window and down onto the streets.

First, he'd head home, get his affairs in order, and then...

Well, if he could change, he'd start by hunting Mic Silvia's family and attacking there.

If he didn't get a cure or an answer, then he'd start with their enemies and work his way through the underbelly of town. Luc wasn't going to consider what he'd do if he managed all that, didn't get dead, and still couldn't shift.

It was like an itch in a place he couldn't scratch. It was maddening, making him want to tear off his human skin. That was a fine image.

He headed through the streets, feeling like every eye was looking for him. He swore he could feel people calculating the risk of robbing him, of attacking. Prickly heat rose up on the back of his neck. The growl bubbled up in his throat, low and threatening, and he wanted to slash his tail, more than anything.

"You know, if you don't want to get hauled off to the booby hatch, you should stop snarling at people."

"Huh?" He whirled around, fingers curling into claws.

The man behind him had shaggy blond hair and a rangy body. He smelled strongly of wolf. "Jonny told me to keep an eye out for you. Good thing, too. There are a lot of other folks looking for you."

"Who? Where?" He could deal with them now. "How do you know Jonny?"

"Oh, we're buds. Have been for awhile." The guy smiled a little. "Name's Deke."

"Luc." He'd heard Jonny mention Deke. "You don't have to keep following. I'm just going home."

"Uh-huh. Then where?" Deke jerked his head in the direction he'd been going, obviously not really there to stop him so much as protect him.

"I'm going to start killing people."

"Ah." Deke walked beside him, hands in his pockets. "I can help with that."

"Excellent." He slowed as they turned the corner to his place. "I'm in the big green building, third floor."

Were they there? Everywhere?

"Recon first?" Deke was easy to understand, easy to work with. Not bad for a stray dog.

Luc nodded, muscles screaming as they tried to shift, wanted to shift.

"Just hang on, man. It will get better."

How it could, he didn't know. "How? Have you done this? Is there a way to make it stop?" Maybe there was something Jonny didn't know.

"I was on a job. The guy I was after knew what I was, but I didn't know he did..." Deke shrugged. "I couldn't shift for two days, and it made me crazy. I can't imagine the dose you got. You should be dead."

"Yeah." He nodded, feeling like he needed to bite at the air.

"I hated it." Deke clapped him on the back, nodding to his building. "I'll circle west. Don't move in without me, okay? I'd have two vamps waiting to kick my ass if I lost you."

He chuffed softly. "Two? That's sort of overwhelming."

"You know it. Kasey and Jonny double teaming? Damn." Deke's smile was a lot wicked.

"Mmm. Jonny is mine now. My mate." He wanted that clear.

"I know. I can smell him all over you, man." The smile didn't falter, but it seemed more friendly than flirting now. "He's a biter."

Luc nodded. "I know. It's... good."

Very good.

Possibly extremely good.

"Yeah. I got a real thing for it when Kasey does it." Kasey. Yes. Jonny had mentioned this friend, as well.

"Does it scar, eventually?"

"If you want it to." Deke winked. "It's fucking hot."

"It's sort of mind-blowing, really. It makes my tail twitch."

"No shit." Deke moved close enough that Luc could smell him, how happy the thought made the wolf. "Makes me hard as a rock."

"We should eat after we're done, compare notes." They were close now, about to split up.

"We should." He got a slow nod and a slow once over.

Luc preened, just a bit. He wasn't as striking as a human, but he was passable.

"Okay. I'll meet you back here. Keep your ass in one piece. I want to see that tail when it comes back."

He nodded once, then scooted toward his home, toward his things, toward...

He stopped, sniffed. There was something...

Something acrid.

No. No, they couldn't have burned his place. His den.

Someone would have...

Something hit him from one side, pushing him hard. He snarled and twisted, but the cat still wasn't there. Deke grabbed his arm, yanked him, and he took a few steps, trying to understand what the wolf was telling him.

"Bomb. Bomb. Run, man. Run!"

Bomb. He registered what that meant, his feet began to move, and before he could blink, the world went up in a ball of flame.

Chapter Twelve

"Help me get him inside!"

Jonny heard the commotion, heard Deke's voice, even as his butt settled into his office chair. It sounded like quite an urgent thing. Jonny got back up and made for the door, a frown forming.

"What happened?"

"Oh, God."

"Deke?"

Well, that sounded... ominous.

Jonny threw the door open to find Deke standing there, Luc thrown over one shoulder, half a dozen club employees behind him. "Deke! What happened?"

His hands reached right out, relieving Deke of Luc's weight.

"What the Hell did your man *do*, Jonny? They blew it -- the whole fucking building. The front door was set!" Deke's eyes were wild.

"I..." Luc was still, pale, but breathing. Jonny could hear his heartbeat. "Are you all right, Deke? You're bleeding."

"I don't know, man. What the fuck is this?"

"A mess." Jonny laid Luc out on the leather sofa, beginning to check vitals. "Let Duke clean you up?"

"Yeah. Yeah, I guess. I..." Deke shook his head. "My ears are ringing."

Jonny reached out, touching Deke's arm. "Please. Let Duke make sure you're okay physically. Have Sandra call Kasey. Then we'll talk."

"Yeah. I guess."

Duke led Deke out, the big man still growling.

Jonny turned all of his attention to Luc, all of his senses. He needed Luc to be simply unconscious. Rather desperately.

The fine skin was peppered with tiny scratches, but the man's heartbeat was strong, pulse steady. There was no smell of internal bleeding, no sense of rapid decay as there would be with a bad injury. Maybe Luc's bell was simply rung. The bright eyes opened, the whites gone blood red.

"Luc?" Jonny didn't know where to touch, what to do or not to do. Luc might be in terrible pain.

"Jonny?"

"Luc. Can you hear me?" Poor Deke had said his ears were ringing. Maybe Luc's were, too.

"Yeah. Yeah." Luc blinked, blinked again, shook his head.

"Are you all right? Deke said they blew up your building?" Jonny watched his hands move on Luc's skin. They were shaking.

"Who did?" Luc's eyes dropped closed.

"I don't know. We're going to have to go, see what we can find." Giving up on being gentle, Jonny lifted Luc into his arms and sat.

Luc groaned, leaned into him, breath vibrating in a pseudo-purr.

"There. Oh, you scared me." God. He hadn't even known Luc was gone. Thank God he'd called Deke and Kasey in on the case.

"Mate." Luc rumbled, hands sliding over his arms, his back.

"Yes. Yes, my cat. No more wandering off."

"I wanted to gather my things, bring them home."

"Oh." Oh, he hadn't even thought. "Sweet. I'm sorry."

"Psht. It doesn't matter now."

Jonny couldn't imagine losing everything. Maybe that was the difference between cats and vampires. Of course, Luc could simply gather more... what did he call them? Sparkly things.

Jonny smiled, bending to kiss Luc's lower lip. "Do you hurt?"

"Not really." There was something, though.

"What is it, love? Tell me." He stroked Luc's arm, his ribs.

"You should check on your friend, huh?"

"Luc." He put a bit of a growl into his tone.

Those eyes opened up, stared at him, stared into him, the whites completely scarlet.

"I can't see."

It wasn't as awful as he'd thought it might be, being blind. Hell, it was easier than not shifting. It hurt less.

Luc explored the bumps and lumps of Jonny's couch, listening, waiting for the pacing and snapping and snarling to start again.

"I want to know everything about them, Kasey. I want to know who they are and where to find them, and how to hurt them. I am going to kill them all. Do you understand?" Yes. Jonny was way more upset than he was.

It was actually incredibly satisfying, to hear the rage.

"I understand." Kasey, who he had never met, had a British accent, and sounded amused.

Deke? Well, Deke was growly. It was pleasant.

Finally someone -- Deke, from the smell of it -- plopped down beside him. "So, who did you piss off, man?"

"Who didn't I piss off? That was, in effect, my business." He stole things -- information, items, whathaveyou. It wasn't a warm fuzzy occupation.

"Well, you sure did it, man." Deke's hand felt good on his leg. Warm. "You need anything?"

"No. I think I'm okay. Are there any clues? Any at all?"

"I don't know. We're gonna have to do some sifting." Deke sighed. "I might be able to trace the scent of the guy who set the bomb. It was pretty clear."

Luc tried to figure out who would want him dead. Everyone he dealt with, for information, tended to hire him again. Surely it was someone recent, someone he didn't know well enough to know their motives. He listened to Jonny rage, idly flipping through his mental Rolodex.

"Jonny? What was in the paperwork you gave me?"

"Club records. Why?"

"Well, they were my last big job. What did you have on him?"

"I..." Jonny stopped, and Luc would swear he could hear fangs scraping against a lower lip. "He was conducting business in my club. Illegal business."

"Yeah? That could be a little bit problematic, Mate."

"Yes, well. I was only thinking of your health when I handed them over."

He chuffed softly, pleased. "Liar. You were thinking of your cock."

"Then my cock was focused on you, hmm?" Jonny moved close, his presence like a beacon.

He reached out, hands wrapping around Jonny's thighs. He could smell his mate, rich and powerful. Strong.

"You all right, sweet?" Jonny didn't move away, muscles staying relaxed under his hands.

He could feel it, his true self, so close.

"Luc?" One of Jonny's hands ruffled his hair, fingers lingering on his temple.

He nodded, panting, his body screaming at him.

"Are you... Can you talk to me?" Now the worry was creeping into Jonny's voice.

"Mmmmmate." He growled, the change so close. So close. Please.

Please.

"Oh. Oh!" Jonny laughed, right out loud, reaching down to pinch his nipple. Hard.

He yowled, snapping at the air, body twisting. He could smell wolf, smell blood, smell his mate. His bones creaked, his joints changed, and he felt his tail. His tail! Finally. He leapt for his mate, his nose and whiskers leading him right where he needed to be. Jonny caught him, holding on, fingers digging into his fur. His fur. Oh, it felt good. Right.

His cheeks slid along Jonny's joining their scent as he vocalized, sharing his frustration, his joy, his *tail*.

"Yes. Yes, love. Oh, look at you." Jonny rubbed noses with him, holding his weight effortlessly.

He nipped at Jonny's ear, then licked along the strong jaw.

"He changed. Jonny, man. He shouldn't have been able to." He heard someone talking, but it didn't matter.

"Systemic shock. I imagine his body is trying to heal." They ended up on the sofa again, Jonny underneath him.

He ignored everything but the very important job of grooming and scenting his mate. Then he could nap.

Once he had a bit of sleep he could try to understand why he couldn't see. He had priorities, after all. Mates, naps. Then vengeance.

Chapter Thirteen

Jonny was going to rip someone's head off and shit down their neck. Well, not literally. He didn't do that anymore, really. But if he could, he would.

He watched Luc sleep, his hands constantly reaching for the long, black-furred body. It was amazing to see Luc as a cat again, but those poor eyes...

Deke and Kasey had gone, what little information Jonny had on the man who had hired Luc in their capable hands. They were detectives. Why not let them do the finding? Then the ripping and metaphorical pooping could commence.

Luc purred happily, pushed toward his touch, heavy tail swishing.

So much better blind and able to shift. It was stunning to him. Jonny smiled. Luc had called him Mate. Kasey and Deke had congratulated him well after Luc went to sleep, promising a real celebration later.

His cat rolled over onto his lap, heavy head on his thigh, paws stretching out. Kneading. Luc was kneading him in his sleep. Gracious. Thank goodness there were no claws popping out.

He reached down and started scratching, fingers digging into those poor abused muscles. Kasey had warned him that the changes would be less controllable for a few days, as Luc worked through the effects. It didn't matter. He was just so pleased that Luc could change, that his cat would not have to wait weeks to be, well, a cat.

Luc's eyes popped open, nose twitching madly.

"Shh. Shh. It's all right, love." He stroked Luc's ears, calming.

Luc yowled softly, head pushing into his touch, his cat panting heavily.

"I know, sweet. You just have to remember what happened. There was an explosion." He petted, talked, waiting for Luc to ease.

Luc slowly relaxed, face changing slowly, fur fading, then reappearing again.

"That's it, sweet. That's it. Kasey tells me the drug will make things unpredictable for now."

That earned him a nod, so Luc was with him, listening to him.

"They're out looking, love. They'll find out who I need to go and kill." Jonny still felt a jolt of icy cold rage in his chest every time he thought of that explosion. It could have taken both his mate and his best friend.

Luc bared his teeth, proving that he was right there, ready.

"Yes. Yes, you can help." Though if it was not simply flash-blindness, Jonny would never let Luc go on a rampage.

Luc chuffed, then stretched, muscles rippling, sliding under the pelt. Jonny smiled. Yes, things were much simpler to the cat than they were to the man. He stroked and scratched, letting himself sink into the simple physical touches. He found Luc soothed him, made it easy to forget the Rose for a moment, to forget his work.

That hadn't happened in a very long time. In fact, he couldn't remember the last time he'd thought of something as more important than the club.

Luc nibbled on his fingers, his wrist.

His elbow.

His upper arm.

"No biting." Really, wasn't it Luc who usually said that?

Luc chuffed, then bit his shoulder.

"Mmm. No. Only if you bite me as a man."

Luc growled softly, then shook him.

"Oh, bad kitty." Laughter took him, though, and he dug his fingers deep into Luc's fur.

Luc shifted again, lips on his ear, soft sounds leaving his lover.

"Mmm. Yes." He scratched and rubbed, loving how Luc responded to him. Loving Luc.

"Mate. I changed. I had my tail, my whiskers. You smell so good." His ear was nibbled. "Tell me we're going to destroy them all."

"We are. I promise." He'd given up vengeance a long time ago for himself. For his cat he would do a great deal.

"Yes." Luc nodded, wrapped around him, fingers moving randomly. "I like Deke."

"Do you? He's dear." Deke would sneer at that description, but the wolf and his vampire mate were Jonny's best friends. Possibly his only friends, really.

"Mmmhmm. He's solid. I'm ready for my eyes to work now."

"So am I, love. Do you..." He hated to ask, but he had to. "Do they feel as though they're healing?"

"They don't sting anymore."

"Oh, well." Was that good? Hell, he didn't know. Luc was still far closer to human than Jonny.

Luc's head tilted, nose twitching a bit. "You will not have to keep me, you know. I would not ask you to take a damaged mate."

"What?" When he worked out what Luc meant, he pinched that muscled ass. Pinched hard. "Stop that. I intend to keep you, one way or the other. You are mine, Luc."

"Yours?" Luc yelped, pushed him back onto the bed. "Are you sure?"

"I am. Very, very sure." He laughed, his hands all over that sweet body.

"Because I would want the best for you." Luc's actions did not match the words and those teeth scraped along his collarbone, marking him.

"You are the only one who has ever made me feel this way." He'd had a long life.

"Good." That single word had a wealth of satisfaction in it.

"It is." His hands followed the line of Luc's back, up and down. The feel of smooth skin and heat made him hum.

"You need to feed soon." Luc purred in response. "My skin feels tight."

"Do I?" The thought made his cock pull up strongly, his balls aching. "Are you sure you're up to it?"

Luc's answer was a sharp, strong bite on his shoulder, deep and bruising. Well, that was... definitive. Suddenly he was ravenous, too. Jonny slipped to one side, bending to lick at the long line of Luc's neck. The vein there pumped steadily, throbbing under his lips, and he groaned at the promise under the thin skin.

The need slammed into him, the desire for the hot, metallic taste of life. Luc's blood was addiction made flesh. Jonny sank his fangs in deep, pushing past muscle to find a vein. The yowl rang out, echoing, the rich throb of blood on his tongue perfect, wild.

Sinking into it, Jonny sucked hard, drawing Luc into him. It was feral, a bright light in his head, coursing through his body. This was what he craved, his wild one, pouring into him, sustaining him. Jonny didn't know if he would ever be able to feed from anyone else again. This was too perfect.

Luc's fingers scraped down his belly, dragging on his shirt, snagging the fabric.

"Sweet." He murmured the word against Luc's throat, moving down a scant few inches to bite again.

This time the scratches were deeper, stronger, more claw than nail. Jonny moaned, his hips beginning to rock, his cock aching and hard, suddenly coming to his notice.

"Mate." Luc tore at his clothes, ripping at his slacks.

"Yes." His fangs slid free on the single word, and he shoved Luc down, struggling out of the remaining clothing. He needed skin. Now.

Luc was in constant motion, hands dragging over skin, those muscles jerking furiously. Jonny bit down again, teeth sinking into Luc's shoulder. God, yes. He didn't care if Luc never saw again. Well, he did, but this was his regardless. His.

His and he would defend it.

"Fuck me." Luc yowled softly, fingers tugging his hair, dragging him closer.

"Are you sure?" He had to ask, despite the hard evidence of Luc's need against him.

"Now." That wasn't a request. That was a clear demand.

"Love." Jonny held his fingers to Luc's mouth, making a silent demand of his own.

His lover opened up to him, sucking and pulling, tongue dragging on the tips of Jonny's fingers until he wanted to scream. He took it as long as he could before pulling away, sliding his hand down between the long, spread thighs. So open. So accepting.

"Hurry. I'll get fuzzy soon. It's close."

Hurry. Nodding, Jonny pushed his fingers inside that hot, tight hole, opening Luc quickly. The entire club would be hearing Luc's pleasure, hearing the happy, wild roar as he quickly stretched and touched.

He couldn't wait anymore. Jonny pulled free, his cock pushing in where his fingers had been. That body was like a heated fist, gasping his prick, drawing him in deep. Jonny paused, licking blood off Luc's shoulder, where it trickled down the pale skin. Fire there, too. So good.

"Mate. Hungry mate." Luc began to move, shift, driving himself down and up, again and again.

Moaning, Jonny grabbed Luc's hips and started to control the rhythm, knowing he needed to get on with it.

"I feel you. Harder." Demanding man.

"Harder," Jonny agreed, willing to give anything he could. He smacked the side of Luc's hip, slamming into that tight body, opening Luc unmercifully.

"Yes. Make me yours." Luc bared his teeth, snapping at the air.

Jonny did the only thing he could to make it better. He bit down one last time, pulling Luc into him while he pushed his cock into Luc's body. He tasted the rich blood as Luc came, the heat spreading between them.

Crying out, Jonny let go, his head falling back as his hips punched forward. Oh. His cat. Sharp claws dragged down his spine. Jonny was amazed that he didn't explode into tiny pieces. His body felt as though it wanted to, like he would just disintegrate.

Of course, he thought, perhaps, Luc would complain about that. Pieces of undead in the fur was... complicated.

Chuckling, Jonny came, his body bucking against Luc's. He was in such trouble with this one. Such wonderful trouble.

Long term trouble, he believed.

Chapter Fourteen

Luc sniffed, daring to slide out of the room he'd been in for so many days. There were so many smells. So many, but Jonny's was strong, so he followed it, whiskers to the ground.

There was a hallway, a corner that he hit his head on. Then there was smell after smell, too many, too much. He crouched, growling low, trying to ignore the panic that was crawling up his spine.

"Hey, Luc! What the heck are you doing out here?" He had to sift through his memories to find the voice, the cat not knowing it as well as the man. Deke.

He moved close to the voice, offering a yowl.

Deke scratched his ears, which made him focus, made much of the clutter in his head go away. "Man, you're a brave one, I'll give you that."

Of course he was, but mainly, he was bored. He'd explored the room, smelled. Now he wanted to explore more.

"Man, I'd be going nuts, I was you. You want to take a walk?"

He purred, pushed against Deke's hand with his head. He did.

"Come on." One hand stayed on him, Deke's fingers sinking into his ruff. "We'll go to the kitchen, get some grub."

He followed close, shoulder against Deke's knee. He could hear the periodic gasps and noises, but they didn't matter. The smells here were fascinating. The closer they got to the kitchen, the more he smelled meat. Raw or cooked, red or white or fish. Oh.

He panted, his breath chuffing out of him, over and over.

"Yeah. Kind of amazing, huh? What do you want? I'll grab us some grub. Roast chicken?" Deke was fun, not talking down to him at all.

He bobbed his head. Chicken.

"Yeah. We get boneless, we can take it back to Jonny's room and I can shift, too. I could use some wolf time, man."

They could play. He wasn't scared of canines. In fact, he found them wickedly fun. Especially the tail-chasing part.

They got chicken and beef, and Deke got him a whole boned fish of some sort. He knew because Deke let him smell and approve each one. By the time they got back to the familiar smelling room, he was ravenous.

The air moved in waves around him, the magically-charged feel of a shift washing over him. Then Deke barked, hairy nose pushing his toward the chicken. He pounced it happily, tearing into the meat like he was starving. The wolf shared his chicken, but didn't fight him for it. Both of them were alpha enough. They didn't need to compete.

Luc ate until he was full, then his attention was captured by the swish and slide of the wolf's tail upon the floor. The tail thumped once more, twice, and then went silent. Oh. Someone wanted to play. His ears twitched, and he crouched, listening for the next motion.

The sound of licking chops came off to the right, several feet from where Deke had started out. Sneaky.

Luc turned on a dime, pounced, managing to land squarely on the firm backside and give it a swat as he yowled. Deke barked, the sound high and surprised, before scrabbling away, the sound of something crashing to the floor loud. He chuffed happily and followed, giving chase.

He didn't need to see for this.

His feet slid in chicken grease, making him slam into furniture. That was good, though, telling him where the desk was so he could jump over it. He scrambled over the top, landing in the spinny chair.

That was odd.

He shook his head, trying to clear it.

Deke barked, the sound grounding him, giving him a place to go next. He dug into the cushion of the chair and sprang forward, reaching for the wolf with his front paws. There was only the barest hint of fur before Deke scrabbled away. When he made to follow, though, Deke took him down, crashing and tackling.

Yowling happily, he wrapped his arms around Deke's ruff, claws digging in. Deke chuffed for him, the sound weirdly lupine, and bit at his nose before struggling away.

Play.

Play.

He followed slowly, almost lazily, sated and happy.

They romped, both of them slowing down a little, both making happy noises. He had no idea how long they played before Deke started yawning. He nudged and pushed Deke until he felt the

warmth of a sunbeam. There. Napping there was good. A low rumble of approval sounded, Deke curling up with him.

His purr vibrated all throughout him.

Yes.

Good.

Napping.

That was even better than chicken.

Especially when he had someone to nap with.

Jonny walked into his office and had a moment of absolute, blind panic. The blinds were open, sun streaming into the back third of the room. And the place was... ransacked. Absolutely destroyed.

He almost called for security, then he saw... two tails. Two furry tails and two furry heads and one huge cat and one wolf napping together, in the sunshine.

He slumped a little, relief making him stupid. He stepped back into the hall, hitting the button on the keypad beside the door that would summon someone to close the damned blinds. He couldn't get to the remote, which was under Deke's paw.

They had... rampaged. Eaten and played and rampaged. He couldn't wait to tell Kasey.

He might have to take pictures before he had the blinds closed. "Ah, Duke. I need a camera and then for you to get the remote for me."

Duke looked in, blinked once. "Of course, sir."

"Thank you." That was a Kodak moment, after all.

The camera was handed over, then Duke tiptoed through the wreckage, heading for the remote.

One of Deke's ears twitched, but the wolf obviously recognized his packmate, which was what Duke had quickly become. It was adorable. Thank goodness, too, because that way no one moved until after Jonny had set the camera on sports mode and taken twenty pictures in quick succession.

Luc obviously trusted Deke because, barring a half-hearted swipe to warn Duke away, his cat stayed asleep.

Once he had enough pictures to keep Kasey amused for weeks, Jonny closed the blinds with the remote, ventured in, and nudged Luc with his toe.

Luc yowled softly the sound making him smile, and curled around his leg.

"Mmm. Hello, my cat. Did you have a good day with Deke?"

His answer was a slow, lazy stretch, fangs glinting.

"Good for you. Did you know that you destroyed my office?"

Those empty eyes blinked, then the evil little bastard chuffed, laughing. Oh, someone deserved a beating.

"I think I might have to punish you, sweet."

Deke yawned, tail thumping the floor, and Jonny glared at him. "You can see. You know better."

Deke's tongue lolled out, lazy and wet. These two were nowhere near worried enough.

"I think I'll have to call Kasey in to kick your ass," Jonny said, bending to scratch Deke's ears. "I have this one to beat."

Luc curled around his legs, teeth sharp on his heel.

"No biting."

Deke turned and nipped at his calf, and Jonny got a little toothy, growling down at them. Deke backed off, but his cat bit again.

Jonny reached down and grabbed Luc by the scruff, shaking him a bit. "Will you excuse us?" he asked Deke before dragging Luc toward the door.

Luc yowled and hissed, the sound partially shocked, partially furious. Partially curious.

"We need a bed for what I have in mind, sweet." He was going to convince Luc to shift, if he could, and then beat that muscled ass purple.

That would do them both a world of good. He could feel Luc's strength, the heat in the palm of his hand. He let Luc feel his strength, as well. His resolve. No more bored kitty. Luc growled at him, protesting, teeth snapping at the air.

Jonny shook his prize a little before tossing him into the private room, the bed fresh and clean-smelling even from the door. Perfect. Luc leapt onto the bed, pouncing right in the center of it, and roared.

"Oh, if you have something to say to me, say it as a man." He only hoped Luc could, that he could control the change.

Luc shifted, the change becoming faster each time. The man was beautiful -- wild and fierce, untamed and all his. "Don't drag me."

"Then don't tear up my office." His muscles tensed, the predator in Jonny ready to pounce.

Luc snarled, fingers curling in the sheets. The cat was right there, ready to come again. Jonny circled to the other side of the bed, moving quiet as a mouse. More quietly, really. Mice could be bloody noisy.

Luc stilled, vibrating, crouching down as he listened. Yes. That was the focus, the narrow attention that Jonny needed. He let his foot slide just a bit, scraping. Luc spun around on the bed, one hand shooting out to scratch. It barely missed him, just scooping the air.

Growling, Jonny dove in, taking Luc around the waist, bowling him over. Luc needed to struggle. The long lean muscles worked, bunching and jerking, pushing against him, fighting him. It escaped Jonny's knowledge not at all, that Luc's cock was filling.

He hummed, happy to feel it, but not giving an inch. In fact, he tightened his grip and rolled them, landing on Luc's belly. Luc yowled, twisting to bite him, hard.

"No." Pulling back, Jonny flipped Luc over, smacking that hard, round ass. Luc went still for a moment, perfectly still, then Luc leaned forward and quite deliberately bit him again. Jonny bit back a laugh, knowing what Luc was asking for. He drew back and hit so hard that the shock traveled up his arm in waves.

"Jonny! Fuck!"

"Soon, love." He slapped again, knowing he required this as much as Luc, that he needed to give, needed to feel Luc respond.

He watched his cat, the long spine arcing and bending, hips swaying in rhythm with the blows. The most amazing sounds escaped from Luc, making a weird, yowling song. Jonny closed his eyes to savor it, his hearing so much more acute that way. Was that what Luc had now? The touch and smell and sound just overwhelming him?

He could feel Luc's cock, dripping and hard, wet for him, leaking on his slacks.

So lovely. Jonny opened his eyes to check the color of Luc's ass. Almost there. Rosy, but not glowing. He hit harder. Luc snarled, biting at the air, entire body stretched like a bow string.

"Yes. Love. Look at you." Well, Luc couldn't. Still, he could feel it every time Jonny's hand connected, and that was enough.

"Mate. Mate." The entire room rang with the word.

"Mine." He slapped one more time, catching the bottoms of Luc's cheeks, before flipping his cat over and grabbing the flushed cock.

"Please." The pointed chin lifted, vein beating strongly.

"Yes." Oh, fuck yes. Jonny bit down, slicing into Luc's flesh, pulling that rich, energy-filled blood into his body.

Luc's nails tore down his back in response, his shirt ripping as his cat screamed for him. Jonny grunted, his hips jerking, his whole body suffused with the pleasure of Luc's touch. Of Luc's blood. Luc's claws dug in, squeezed, pulled him closer.

Jonny stroked Luc's cock in time with the fast-beating heart, his head swimming, his prick diamond-hard in his trousers.

"Mate. Mate!" The energy slammed through him like a runaway train, Luc's prick heavy and dripping in his hand.

Moaning, Jonny bit harder, tearing a little. Luc would heal, and they both needed so badly. Heat sprayed -- on his hand, in his mouth -- pouring over him.

Yes. Jonny licked the wound, letting the scent and flavor carry him into his pleasure. Luc panted underneath him, fingers moved rhythmically on his back.

"Sweet. What you do to me."

"Mmm... You're an evil beast." Luc chuffed softly.

"Am I?" He reached beneath that lithe body and felt the heat of Luc's ass.

Luc hissed, but instead of pulling again, his cat pushed into his touch. "Careful, I bite."

"I know. I like a toothy lover." Though really, he loved Luc.

"You like me." That heady purr filled the air.

"I do. More than I wish to admit." That was something of a lie.

"I wouldn't tell. It can be your secret."

"Really?" He smiled, kissing Luc's throat. "Tell me a secret to keep for you."

Luc's lips were next to his ear. "I'm scared, Mate, that I'll never see again."

Jonny nodded. "I know. I worry, too, but I believe you will heal." He did. With all of his heart.

"If I don't, you can rip my throat out."

"Hmm. Perhaps." He thought not. They would find a way to deal with this.

Luc nipped him playfully. "You would not let another do it."

"No." That was true enough. "I would not."

Luc nodded, slowly stripping his clothes away, lips and fingers on his body. "I like Deke. He plays."

"He does. He tastes good, as well." Jonny chuckled at the little growl. "Not as good as you. You're addiction."

"That's right. I'm yours." His nipple was caught between Luc's teeth and tugged.

"As I am yours, sweet. Remember that when things seem darkest."

Luc's chuckle was nearly sweet, the bite to his nipple sweeter.

"Mmm." His cat was trying to distract him, to keep him from giving pep talks, he would imagine. Smart kitty.

"Mate." His nipple was rolled in those smart teeth, so carefully.

"Yes?" He stroked Luc's hair, his fingers lingering on each little circular pattern. So lovely.

"I have you on my tongue."

"You have me however you want me, love." He could use more of that tongue, though, certainly.

"I want to taste more." His nipple was explored, the deep purrs vibrating against him. "It's different now, bigger."

"Is it? How?" He wasn't sure he understood. He wanted to, wanted to know.

"I can smell my blood in you, smell you inside my skin."

"Oh." Oh, God. That was... Jonny wanted to bite Luc again, wanted to listen to that strong heartbeat and know that Luc could smell them.

Luc's teeth dragged down over his ribs, taunting him. It was maddening. The kind of pleasure that teetered right on the edge of too much without plunging over. His cat seemed more than happy to bite and tease, to explore every square inch of skin as it was exposed.

"Luc." He put a tiny bit of warning in his voice.

He smiled as Luc shivered, that reddened ass arching.

"So beautiful." He wanted to touch even more, wanted to feel that heat. So he did, bending and reaching.

That earned him a deep, rough yowl, Luc's body rippling for him. The skin he touched was still like fire, so hot and good that Jonny stroked it again, then again. It fascinated his fingers.

"Mate." Luc's teeth tested his thigh, hard enough to bruise.

Fuck. He... oh, that felt good. So good. He let Luc do again, just to feel it shoot up his hip and spine. His nails scored Luc's ass and his cat bit again, purring loudly.

"More." He didn't even know what he was truly asking for. He just knew he needed.

"Yes, Mate." The inside of his knee was nibbled, then his wrist was taken in the hot mouth and shaken.

He moaned, his whole body burning from the inside out. Luc was going to kill him all over again. Luc pressed him down, pressed him against the mattress, tongue dragging on his skin. He bucked, trying to get closer, better. More of that rough, inhuman tongue. His cat. His. Luc purred, body heavy, solid on him as he was loved and groomed and tasted. Jonny twisted, rubbing, their skin sliding together. He was going to explode.

"Mine." He got another bite, this one deeper, sharp.

"Yes. No matter what, sweet." Jonny would keep Luc by his side and not let him damage himself.

"I want you." Luc muscled up between his thighs. "I want to be inside you when you bite again."

"Yes." He might have taken anyone else's head off for suggesting it. Not Luc. This he wanted.

"I'm inside you, in your veins." Luc leaned down, lapped at the tip of his cock, the touch almost lazy.

"You are." He jerked, his hips rolling. His cock ached. Fucking ached.

Luc's fingers slipped over his hole, pushed in as his prick was taken into the hot mouth.

His head fell back against the pillow, his body undulating. "Luc. Sweet. Soon."

He felt Luc's purr, then that tongue slipped down, wetting his hole.

"More!" The word burst out of him, the feeling so strong it took him over.

Luc held nothing back from him, the licking and lapping lasting forever and yet only seconds before that heavy prick pushed into him, filling him up. Jonny tensed up, the unfamiliar stretch making him want to snarl and snap his fangs. Instead he held very still, letting Luc slide all the way in. Low subvocal rumbles rolled over him, sweet and obviously meant to ease. It made him smile. He relaxed into it, his hands starting to move, his hips not quite rolling.

"Mate." Luc licked up along his chest, his throat.

"Mmm. Move, lover. Move now." His fangs itched with the need to bite. Soon.

"Now. Now. I'm in you." Luc tossed his head, hips beginning to jerk, push into him in wild lunges.

"Yes." He didn't wait any longer; he just bit. Hard. The skin nearest him was Luc's upper arm, and Jonny sank his fangs in deep.

Luc's scream split the air, sharp and heated. Almost sweet. It made him buck and groan, his ass clenching around Luc's cock. He took the hot, rich blood in, Luc in him in all ways. His orgasm was secondary to the heat that flooded into him, his cat everywhere.

Jonny panted, the air cooling him, if not helping calm him. He understood why dogs did it, really. He chuckled, thinking how Luc would bite him if his cat knew Jonny was thinking dogs.

Luc purred softly, still moving slowly inside him, rocking and filling him up.

"My cat." He licked the spot he'd bitten, the tender skin bruised now, hot to the touch.

"Yours. My Mate."

"Yes. Oh, yes." They still had a lot of work ahead of them, trying to find Luc's assailants and get his sight back, but Jonny knew what really mattered. They were in each other now, bonded. All the way.

Luc would have to live with it. He would just have to.

Chapter Fifteen

The sun was down. He could smell it.

Luc followed his nose through the club, tail twitching happily. His ass burned, ached in the best way, his mate sunk into his skin.

A tiny shriek and the sound of dishes clattering to the floor told him he had startled someone. It wasn't crowded where he was, though. Just the one waitress.

Oh.

Tuna.

Yum.

He helped, licking up lost food, cleaning plates with his tongue.

"Thanks a lot, you." The girl's voice held laughter now, though, and the clink of a broom on crockery told him it was safe to walk again.

He kept wandering, sniffing as he moved, searching out Jonny's scent. He found Deke, swiping at the wolf's calves playfully.

Deke growled and laughed, before scratching his ears. "He's in the kitchen, man."

Mmm. Good scratches. He nipped at the strong fingers in thanks, then started moving again, staying low and close to the wall. The smells of the kitchen were completely disorienting, but they led him right where he could hear Jonny's voice. Someone was getting reamed.

Huh. Interesting.

He moved more carefully in here, trying to stay out of the way of the hot.

Hard fingers tangled in his ruff, Jonny's scent overwhelming the food. "Hello, my cat."

He leaned in, purring hard enough that his claws slid on the floor.

"Mmm. The chef will try for your balls if you mess up his new tile."

He chuffed. He'd dare the human to try.

"I said 'try', love.' Jonny sounded happier now, and the sound of footsteps hurrying away told him that whoever was getting a lecture was now getting away.

Jonny smelled amazing -- male and warm, solid. Jonny rubbed his back, rubbed all the way down to his tail. The scratching at the base of his tail was orgasmic. He arched and rocked, his purrs vibrating all through him.

"Come, my cat. We have more business to attend." Jonny guided him with the simplest pressure of one leg against his side.

It was imminently easier to move with Jonny, and he followed without worry. His vampire would not lead him astray. Well, not this way, at any rate. Jonny moved easily, not holding back for him. Periodically he scented something in the air, was distracted for a second, then Jonny put him back on track.

Jonny finally turned toward his office, leading him with a nudge or two. Oh, that was a good sign. He might have started bouncing a bit. It was inevitable. He was a kitten, deep in his heart.

Jonny laughed at him. "I have at least three tax reports to go over, kitty. Don't get excited."

Tax reports.

He snorted.

What fun was that?

He headed for the big chair by Jonny's desk, not even considering that it wouldn't be empty for him as he leapt. It was, and he settled in, listening to the murmur of the phone ringing, of Jonny talking to someone. His tail covered his nose and he dozed, ears twitching idly at every sound.

"Luc? Luc. Kasey thinks he has something."

His ears twitched, and he started asking questions, only realizing about halfway in that Jonny couldn't understand him.

"Come on, love. I need you here as a man." Jonny stroked his cheeks, focusing him.

He imagined himself human, male, solid. His fur melted away, his body stretching with the change.

"My beautiful cat." Jonny kissed his human mouth, smiling against it.

"Mmmm... mate." He kissed his bloodsucker back, fingers sliding up the silky material of Jonny's shirt.

"No distracting me." They pushed apart, but the way Jonny's fingers lingered on his skin told him it was reluctant.

He rumbled softly, but let Jonny go. "What did your man say?"

"He says that you do work for some very dangerous people, my love."

Luc nodded; there was no lie in that. Somehow he'd fallen into things and hadn't clawed his way out. "I tend to find trouble, or it finds me."

"Indeed. Well, Kasey thinks it is indeed the gentleman you took my files for." Jonny chuckled, a puff of air against his mouth.

"The one that hired me?" His mind was already making plans.

"Hired you. Blackmailed you. Whichever it was."

He chuffed softly. "In my line of business, those things are the same. I'll be back."

"Where are you going?" One strong hand caught him. "With no clothes?"

"I won't need clothes." He was much more effective as a cat. More pointed. And his nose worked.

"You will need eyes, love. Let us help you." Us had to mean Deke, who was suddenly just inside the door.

He bounced into the wolf, snarled softly in surprise. "I want him to pay."

"He will."

Jonny and Deke said it at the same time, Deke's hands steadying him.

The urge to just go was huge, to run out and sniff out the bastard almost painful, but... He couldn't see.

"Shh." Jonny was there, turning him back into the room, drawing him to sit. "We need a plan."

"We find him. I kill him." Was there more plan?

"Well, yes, but we cannot go rushing off."

Deke chuckled. "Jonny's trying to say we all want to end up alive but him."

He rolled his eyes. Pack mentality. It wasn't natural.

"We will find a way." Jonny sounded a little peeved.

"When?" Now worked for him.

"Soon, love."

"Chill." Deke moved farther into the room, and Luc heard the tapping of fingers on keyboard keys.

Soon. Right.

He shifted back into his true form and started pacing, tail swishing, claws digging into the carpet.

Patience was not a cat-like virtue.

Soon was not going to be soon enough.

"So, how do we get to Mic Silvia," Jonny asked, watching Luc pace.

"He moves around -- there's a condo here, a suite of rooms there. Even a warehouse. He's slippery." Deke shrugged, smiled over at him. "I vote for luring him with bait."

"You're not funny." No. He was not using a blind cat for bait.

"I wasn't joking. They want Luc."

"Yes, but isn't the point here to keep him safe?" Damn it. He was not going to do it.

"That's your point," Deke pointed out. "His is to eat the guy's face. Mine is to flush the guy out."

"Toilet references." He sighed. Luc, of course, had changed back into a cat and was not helping at all.

Luc stopped still, a deep, vicious snarl sounding.

"Luc?" Jonny looked at Deke before scanning the room with all of his senses.

Deke sniffed and leapt for him even as Luc sprang for the window, claws bared.

Jonny went crashing down under Deke, struggling. Damn it, he could take care of himself.

The windows broke in, three men coming in and face to face with his cat. The sun streamed in, and it occurred to him why Deke had tackled him down behind a table. He was helpless to assist. He could hear Luc's fury, the snarls and growls sharp on his ears.

"Help him, damn it!" He knew, now. Knew he had to be just a spectator. Deke could help.

"Stay down."

Luc's claws appeared at the edge of the desk, bloody and wet. Jonny hit the alarm button. The alarm whooped into life, the lights going red. Within seconds, they would have guards there, armed to the teeth.

He heard gunshots, then screams as the unmistakable scent of blood filled the air. No. It didn't smell like Luc's blood, but he had to know. Jonny poked his head above the table, the sun burning him for those few moments. Luc and Deke were tearing at flesh, working together to bring a pair of men down. One man was running.

"Duke!" Sometimes it was hard telling who he was yelling at, with Duke and Deke together, but he saw his assistant tear by and take the man down.

Suddenly there was a cat covering him, pressing him to the ground, as fierce snarls and yowls filled the air. He quite imagined someone was telling him off.

That meant there was no real damage, he hoped. "My Luc. I do hope that is not your blood."

In answer, Luc plopped down on him and started grooming him.

Laughing, Jonny scratched those sensitive ears. "Someone fix that window, hmm?"

"We're on it." A heavy, dark blanket was draped over him and Luc.

"How did they get past my emergency shutters?" Damn it, he'd paid thousands for those things.

"I don't know yet." Deke shrugged, popped under the blanket, face scratched and streaked with blood. "Good thing Luc smelled them."

"Very good." He smiled at Deke, pulling the blanket around him more closely. "Set us up with a private room?"

"You got it." Deke growled and nodded. "Duke, man. You got this?"

"I do." Duke sounded just as growly. It was amazing, how protective they all were.

"Luc, man." Deke nudged his cat with one toe. "Let's get him somewhere safe."

Luc rumbled and slid off while Deke grabbed him up and carried him, completely covered.

Ah, this was the life. He actually chuckled, which made both of the beasts with him growl. Quite loudly. Luc's teeth nibbled his ankles, warning him.

"What? I am traveling in style." He could feel it when they reached the windowless hallway, the sun blocked away.

"You're pushing your luck with Fuzzy back there. So, you want us to go do some interrogation? Those guys were pure muscle, but someone hired them."

He didn't have to think hard to guess who exactly that was.

"I do. I want him here, accounting for this mess." He wanted his pound of flesh and, from Luc's yowl, his cat agreed.

"Fine. We'll go do some talking and follow the trail. When we bring him in, you and Mr. Kitty can... discuss the situation."

"Thanks, Deke. Feel free to take a detail with you." He waited for Deke to leave before he turned to Luc. Luc was pacing, growling, fur all on end. "Come here, my cat."

That huge, flat head turned toward him, those empty eyes searching for him.

"Here, love." He moved closer, his fingers brushing Luc's muzzle.

Luc purred, tongue flicking out to taste him.

"That's it." That told him Luc was safe, that all he needed to do was clean his cat up. His lips twisted. Of course, getting Luc in a tub was infinitely less homicidal in human form...

"We should bathe, sweet."

Luc yowled for him, tongue sliding on his wrist.

"I know, but you are a bit... bloody." He needed to make sure Luc was all right.

He felt Luc's soft sigh and knew his cat was trying to change.

"That's it, love. Smart Deke. This room has a rather luxurious bath." He kept talking, simply easing Luc into it. He watched every second of the transformation, fascinated by it, by the way that Luc's face changed, the way the long muscles shifted.

"Are you safe, Mate?"

"I am. I am perfectly fine." There were no windows in this room, so even if they had another breach, they were good.

Luc stood, hands reaching for his clothes. "I need to see."

The irony of Luc's words did not escape him. He helped, though, taking Luc's wrists and leading them to his shirt, letting his cat pull it off.

"They were coming to hurt you." That growl sent shivers up his spine.

"They didn't." No, his cat had protected him, blind and all.

"No." Luc nuzzled his chest, leaving a streak of blood.

"Mmm. I imagine that's not nearly as tasty as yours." He pulled Luc with him to the bath.

He used the shower head to rinse Luc, his cat muttering softly until he began filling the tub with hot, clean water. They made the water as hot as they could stand it before sinking. Yes. That would soothe all the adrenaline-sore muscles.

Luc's hands explored every inch of him, sometimes grooming, sometimes searching. He did the same, without the grooming. There were cuts and scrapes, but they were all healing well. The air was redolent with purrs, and Luc's teeth on his throat were enough to make him want to attempt that lazy, low sound himself. Jonny settled for a happy moan, a deep, rough sound. The water, his cat, the blessed heat. It was perfect.

Well, except for that nasty business about someone believing they could invade his home. They had hopefully nipped in that the bud. Really, the club's reputation had to be upheld.

Luc bit his collarbone, teeth sharp. The feeling made his cock jump, made his nerve endings fire up. He wanted more, suddenly so hard he was shaking.

"Mine." Another bite hit him, right above his nipple.

"Scared me, love." No more scares with Luc. Maybe they should go on a holiday together.

"I protect you." Luc rubbed one cheek against his chest.

"You do." He supposed, in a way, that his sunlight weakness put him on level pegging with Luc's blindness.

"When he comes, I will kill him, too."

"We have to talk to him first, love." Really. Just in case there were more people out to get them.

Luc's eyebrows drew down, the frown fierce.

"We need to make sure he has no acquaintances who feel the same about us as he does."

"Me. This is about me." Luc sighed, fingers trailing along his arm.

"He wanted papers from my club." Luc might be collateral damage. Who knew, unless they talked to the man?

Luc nodded, a deep growl rumbling inside him. "They were willing to damage me to get it."

"They were." He wanted to tear out throats every time he thought about it. To distract himself, he stroked Luc's wet skin, fingers rubbing.

"You won't let them have me."

"You know I won't. Just as you protect me." He turned Luc's face so he could take a kiss, needing the flavor and heat.

Luc snarled, climbed up his body, rubbing all the way.

"Mmm." He gripped Luc's ass in both hands, holding them together. That way they could rock and rub and float.

"How can you be so calm?"

"What?" Jonny was far from calm. "I am not. I simply don't growl."

Luc bared his teeth. "That's unnatural."

"Kiss me." They could work out a great deal of that aggression this way.

He thought, for about a moment, that Luc would argue, then that hungry mouth crashed down on his, pressing hard enough he could taste blood in the kiss. Moaning, he pulled Luc closer, trying to get into his cat's skin. That was it. That was the way to channel the rage. He imagined he could feel the hint of claw in Luc's fingers as they scraped down his skin. The idea made him shiver, made his cock jump against Luc's skin. The water added an extra set of hands, lapping against them.

"Mate." Luc straddled him, cock hotter than the water, sliding on his belly.

"Yes." He bit at Luc's lip, a hard nip that drew more blood.

"Mine." His cock was taken in one, warm hand, rubbed against the tight hole.

"Now." Jonny knew what Luc wanted, what he needed. He pushed up, letting Luc slide down on top of him, around his cock.

He could hear those sounds -- the deep, rich yowls of pleasure -- for an eternity. His balls drew up, his hands clenching tight on Luc's skin, his nails digging deep. Luc's body gripped his prick, working him like a hand.

He gritted his teeth, his fangs biting into his lip. He needed to hold on, just a few moments longer. A tiny bit. He could do that.

"They can't have me. I'm staying here." Luc growled, squeezed harder.

"I know. I am keeping you." That was all there was to it.

"Good." Claws dragged over his shoulders, his chest.

"Luc!" Jonny spent, his cock jerking madly inside the hot, tight body he loved so well.

Luc hummed, head back, feeling him. He reached down for Luc's straining prick, wanting to feel it dance for him. Wanting to feel the final push around his flesh. He let his nails drag, all the way up its length, scratching the tip just a bit. Luc grunted, heat pouring over his fingers.

"Now we're all clean, hmm?" They were, after a fashion. They were still in the water, at least.

Luc's response was a low, lazy purr.

"We need to..." The next sound from Luc was a jaw-cracking yawn, and Jonny forgot all about interrogating anyone.

Soaking was healthy, healing, and his cat needed to store his energy.

The rest would work itself out later. For now they would just luxuriate in being alive. And together.

Chapter Sixteen

Luc spent an hour grooming himself, assuring himself that every hair was in place, every claw was sharp and shiny. He wanted to be ready when he had to kill the man.

They'd gone at night, so Jonny and Kasey could help Deke and Duke retrieve their prey. He had wanted to go, but they had all voted him down.

He snarled softly and quietly dragged his claws along Jonny's pillow, the fluff tickling his toes.

They were going to bring the man back, though. Bring him back and question him and then give him to Luc. Jonny had promised.

They had beaten Luc.

Tortured him.

Destroyed his home.

Taken his eyes.

The man would scream.

He arched, tail flat.

He heard it, when someone came in, heard the sound of a struggle. He could smell Deke, the wolf pumped. Excited.

He headed for the door, searching carefully, it case it had moved.

After the break-in, some things had changed drastically. They took the man to Jonny's office, and he knew the way there. He could hear Luc and Deke's man, talking, and he could smell Deke, close. He did not, however, smell someone he knew.

Not Salvia, then.

"There you are, kitty-man. Hang back while they talk, huh?" He leaned over, rubbed his cheek against Deke's leg in greeting. Deke stroked his ears, the touch affectionate. "You'll get your shot. This is the contractor, so to speak. His scent was all over your place, all over the bomb. Not our guy, but... Well, you know..."

Yowling in agreement, Luc dipped his head, pushed into the touch. So long as his mate was safe.

Jonny was safe. It was the Kasey-man, Deke's mate. He was doing the talking, voice hard as steel. Luc liked that, that hardness. He wanted it to hurt.

Deke scratched his head one more time before going to answer when Kasey called him. The sound of flesh hitting flesh came soon after.

He growled, head down as he headed for the door. His mate. No hurting his mate. No, the beating sound Deke, hitting the man. That was good. He approved of every grunt and groan.

Luc found Jonny easily, leaned against his leg.

"Hello, love. He's not talking very well. I suppose we'll just have to beat him some more." Jonny sounded dispassionate, completely at ease. The advantage of having a vampire lover.

He bared his teeth in a long, slow smile, then sauntered over and nosed up along the man's leg until he found the crotch. The man screamed, which he thought was a very good start. It felt good to have the upper hand in their dealings this time. It took one good swipe to split the fabric of the man's slacks and, if he drew blood, Luc assumed it was fair. If he'd been able to see, he wouldn't miss.

Jonny chuckled, and the man started babbling, but it wasn't in a language he understood. Wrong answer. He snarled softly, then simply tilted his head and took the soft sac in his teeth, and breathed.

"Wait! Wait! What is it you want to know? I'll tell you anything." There was fear, acrid and sour, right there in his nose. It smelled ugly.

Luc purred. Yes. Tell my mate everything.

The man began talking, Kasey guiding the questions.

He listened, idly, to the words falling down around him. Evidence. Loose ends. Withheld information. It was nonsense. In the end, it was enough to know that this was not the end of the trail.

This wasn't Salvia.

That simply wasn't good enough.

He growled softly, shaking his head from side to side, knowing it would scare, sting.

"Please! Please, I'll take you to him! I'll show you. Anything..."

Now was good for him. Incredibly good for him.

"Good." Jonny stroked his neck, calming him, pulling him gently away. "Take us."

"You leave that beast here."

Luc's hackles rose and his growl made the room shake.

"That beast is what got you into this mess in the first place." He could hear the smile in Jonny's voice. It wasn't a pleasant one. "I should let him eat your balls."

Let him? Like he took orders. He considered biting Jonny's ass, but he thought it might look bad.

Deke's chuckle told him maybe he had moved a little too close to doing just that. Maybe his mouth had even opened a tiny bit.

He snorted, tail flicking. Dogs.

Honestly.

Chapter Seventeen

Jonny loved a good hunt.

Oh, he didn't show it as much as, say, Deke. Or his bloodthirsty cat. But he loved it.

This was going to be a good hunt. He could tell.

Luc was on his leg, close, although he imagined his cat was taking cues more from Deke than him. Those two had an unholy friendship. When he had time to think about it, to discuss it with Kasey, he was sure they would both be horrified. For now, it worked.

"Okay, third floor, that lit window." Deke was relaying, Kasey across the way gathering information. "There's three of them, all armed, that he can see."

"That shouldn't be too difficult, then." Jonny stroked Luc's ears. "Promise me you will be careful, my cat."

Luc yowled softly, whiskers vibrating.

"Did I say you could not come?" No, he had never made that argument. Luc needed this.

His cat head butted him, muttering and vocalizing, and Jonny could swear he understood. How very odd. Surely he wasn't learning to speak cat...

Deke chuffed at him, laughing at him.

"Oh, stop it. Both of you." They were connected at the brain. Too bad there wasn't enough to go around.

"Yeah, yeah. So, we go upstairs, we do our business, we go home, right?"

"We do. We make sure, though, that there's no information on Luc or me. Or you or Kasey for that matter." They would take whatever they found.

"Right. You leave that to me." Deke met his eyes. "You and Luc, you stick together."

"I'll stay with him. I promise." He heard the little growl, but he couldn't lie. Luc would need his eyes.

He touched Luc's neck and they headed in, Luc's form a bare shadow on the stairs.

Jonny opened his senses, listening for the telltale heartbeats of the guards. If he could pinpoint them now, it would be a great help. There was one on the stairs Kasey hadn't seen, and he moved with Luc to take the man out, blood splashing soundlessly.

Jonny loved to watch Luc hunt. Even without his eyes, Luc was a fine stalker, and his claws and teeth were sharp as razors. He had no doubt that his cat could defend them, the club, him, with little trouble at all.

That time would come. For now, they needed to remove the biggest threat to their safety. Then they could work on healing Luc, on getting to know each other's quirks. Jonny couldn't wait. They slipped upstairs together, moving faster now. The door was there, Deke growling softly, warning them.

Jonny pushed Luc to one side of the door, letting Deke take the other. He nodded to Deke through the gloom, ready for the big wolf to break down the door.

He heard Kasey through Deke's earphones. "They know you're there."

Luc didn't wait. The big cat snarled and hit the door, full force, slamming back into whoever was unfortunate enough to be in front. Jonny didn't have time to spare for thinking about whether it was a trap. He simply stormed in, taking one guard by the shoulder and ripping his throat out.

He could hear screams, shots, then the snarls and growls from his cat. Deke roared, the sound of flesh hitting flesh closer than he would have expected. Jonny fought to get to Luc, needing to know his lover was well.

Luc had someone that he remembered, only vaguely, pinned full-body against the window, teeth snapping about the man's scarred, round face. The man had been at the club once, maybe twice as a guest of someone. He'd wanted to become a member. Jonny had turned him down. Simple. Easy. Painless. The whole scene flashed through his head that quickly.

But it wasn't fucking Salvia.

Not Salvia.

Why had this man attacked Luc? The club? Did Salvia hire him? Why all these layers? Why all the blasted drama? Why...

He strode forward to ask one or all of those questions, when the glass all around the man cracked, the panes shattering as if in slow motion before disappearing and falling through. They all stood for what seemed to be an eternity, time stopping completely before it started up again, the heavy weight of the man seemingly sucked out through the empty pane, hanging in the thick night air before gravity took hold. It was only then that he could move. The thin, high scream as the man plummeted toward the ground gave him the impetus to leap forward and grab Luc, his hands clutching at fur and muscle. No losing his cat. No. Luc arched back, weight twisting to help him, to keep them in.

For a moment - and, later, he quite thought that it was the longest moment of his life - he thought that his hands would not have the strength, that his beloved cat would follow out into the altogether-too-close-to-full-moonlit night.

His fingers held, however, and Luc's claws dug into the carpeting, refusing to release until Deke hauled them back in the window, so that all of them could collapse on the floor. Their prey, unfortunately, was a complete loss.

"You lot all right?" Kasey asked, voice crackling in his earphone. "I have to tell you, there's a very... mushy man leaking onto a Subaru out here. It's a touch awkward."

Ass.

"Deke? Is everyone... functional?"

They all panted in unison, then Luc yowled an affirmative, the sound sharp and aggravated.

"I'm sorry, love. I know you had plans for him." So had Jonny. Damn it all, he'd wanted his information. He hated being in the dark. Well, metaphorically.

Luc huffed and snorted, muzzle moving over his jaw and neck, making sure he was solid.

"I am well, my cat. Are you cut?"

Luc's answer was a very clear 'no'.

"Good." Good. Deke was fine. A quick glance told him that people were gathering below, however.

"Kasey. What is our easiest route out?"

"Down. There's a connecting tunnel to this building. I'll meet you there."

"Down it is." They could easily take the stairs, even with Luc's blindness. His cat was sure-footed.

They moved together, after Deke and Jonny swept the room for information, heading into the inky blackness. Deke carried a sheaf of papers and folders, but Jonny had a distinct suspicion that they were the ones Luc had taken from his office the night they'd made their bargain. What an unexpected pleasure that had turned out to be.

His mind questioned how this unknown had come into possession of the information, but only for the briefest moment as Jonny let his eyes drag down the long, sleek line of his cat, his mate, his Luc. As if Luc felt it, that heavy tail twitched. He had time to discover those irritating details.

He had, in fact, an eternity.

"I can smell you, Jonny. Please let us get down the stairs and out of here before you guys start humping."

Really, Deke could be so rude. Luc agreed, apparently, one heavy paw swooping out to snag Deke's ankle. Deke cackled, and Jonny could see the flash of his teeth in the dark. When they burst out of the stairwell, the low light was almost blinding.

Kasey was there, pulling them into another tunnel, moving them faster. Jonny made sure Luc was keeping up, but it didn't seem to be a problem. There were no obstacles, no bits of debris to trip him up. His cat was quite stunning, more than capable of hunting -- eyes or no. The thought reassured him. Luc seemed to understand this instinctively, and Jonny's worries that Luc would harm himself eased.

If nothing else, his mate would stay until Salvia was... dealt with.

"Keep walking. What happened up there?" Kasey sounded agitated.

"A window broke."

"It broke." Kasey blinked back at him.

"Yeah, baby." Deke backed him up. "Luc didn't even throw the guy at it hard."

Luc's muzzle split in a happy smile that simply dripped with maliciousness. Not hard at all. Jonny shook his head.

"Fascinating." Kasey did have a fine grasp of sarcasm.

"Well, you know how it goes." Jonny patted Kasey's ass, eliciting another growl from his Luc, which led to Kasey snapping idly at his mate, who hissed.

Deke chuffed. "Don't worry, Luc. Kasey's not into eating pussy."

Oh, that was terrible. Jonny laughed, trying to keep the noise down. He felt oddly light, happy, in spite of what had happened, what was sure to happen. Kasey started chuckling, then Deke, and it was all over. They had to stop, all of them shaking with mirth.

That was when Jonny decided it didn't matter who was after them or what would happen in the future. He had the best friends a man could ask for. They could get through anything together.

And if they didn't, his mate would simply shove any offenders out a window.