



THE RECRUIT

BOOK ONE

ELIZABETH KELLY

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Adult Reading Material

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THE RECRUIT (BOOK ONE)

A life changed forever.

Hannah Torrington lives a perfectly normal and ordinary life until the night her sister is murdered by vampires. Saved by a Lycan named Will and thrust into a world she never knew existed, Hannah is taken to a secret facility that trains men and women to hunt vampires.

Determined to take her revenge for her sister's death, Hannah joins the recruit program. As she is pushed to the brink of physical and mental exhaustion by the intense training, she fights her forbidden attraction to her instructor Will and struggles to adjust to her new life.

* * *

To read more about Hannah and Will, check out the [Recruit Series](#)

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Chapter One

“Sara, this really isn’t a good idea.” Hannah stared nervously at the darkening sky.

Sara rolled her eyes. “God, Hannah. You’re just like dad – always worrying. It’s perfectly fine.”

“How well do you know these guys? I mean, you just met them last night.” Hannah chewed worriedly at her bottom lip.

As Sara turned off the highway and down a gravel road, she shook her head. “They’re perfectly nice, Hannah. You have to give people a chance sometimes. Live life on the edge, take a risk!” She winked at her.

Hannah laughed. Her baby sister was the exact opposite of her in nearly every way. Where Hannah was tall and dark haired with wide hips and full breasts, Sara was small and blonde and impossibly slender. At one point in her late teens Hannah had attempted to become like Sara by crash dieting and following an impossibly difficult exercise routine. She lost ten pounds before, weak with hunger and in agony from a torn hamstring, giving up. She learned to accept that her thighs would always touch a little, that she would always have a soft, round belly and that she would always jiggle just a bit when she walked.

It wasn’t just physical differences though. Sara was the life of the party. Her laughter and outgoing personality had people flocking to her while Hannah, quiet and reserved, tended to blend in and more times than not become lost in the crowd.

“Listen,” Sara glanced at her, “these guys are really nice and I think Justin could be the one.”

Hannah snorted. “You meet ‘the one’ every weekend, Sara. Although you normally don’t agree to party with guys you barely know, out in the middle of nowhere.”

“It’s not in the middle of nowhere. We’re only five miles from the city. Plus, there’s going to be a bunch of people at this party. It’s called a bush party, Hannah. If you hadn’t spent most of your younger years with your nose in a book, you’d know what a bush party was.”

Hannah sighed and stared out the window. Sara was right – she did prefer reading to partying. She wasn’t a complete hermit. She had a pretty serious boyfriend in high school and they had slept together on the night they graduated. They were both virgins and although it was pleasant enough, there was plenty of awkward fumbling and groping.

They had tried to do the long-distance thing when Hannah had left for college but that had lasted less than a month. One Friday night, in a moment of weakness, she had agreed to go to a frat party with her roommate. There, she had met Toby and they had started dating a week later. He was a nice boy, much like her high school boyfriend, and while he was more confident in bed than Mark was, she still wasn’t sure what all the fuss was about.

There was one night, feeling relaxed and tipsy after a few glasses of wine, where the usual warmth and tingling she felt during sex had started to become something more. There was a slow, spreading ache radiating from her core. As Toby grunted and thrust above her, she had closed her eyes and concentrated, digging her hands into the sheets and bucking her hips against Toby’s. The ache had grown with little spirals of pleasure circling in her belly and she had panted and moaned, feeling like she was standing on the edge of a crevice. Before she could take that last step, the step that would bring the release she was searching for, Toby had given one final thrust, gasping her name as he came violently. He had rolled off of her, snaking an arm around her waist and falling asleep almost immediately. She had laid there, body quivering with frustration and a need she didn’t fully understand, until finally she had drifted off into her own restless sleep.

She had dumped Toby after a few months of listening to his off-handed remarks about her weight, and his not-so-subtle suggestions that she should eat less and exercise more. She had stayed single for the remainder of her college years and now, her first summer back, Sara seemed hell-bent on making up for her lack of a social life.

They could see a few cars parked on the side of the road and Sara pulled in behind them, shifting the car into park and shutting off the engine. The wind was cool. It was an unusually damp summer and although it was only late August, it already felt like autumn. As they moved deeper into the woods, the flickering light of a campfire could be seen just ahead of them.

Sara smiled at Hannah and moved eagerly toward it. Hannah cursed when she stumbled over an exposed root in the darkness and fell forward, scraping her bare knee.

Sara helped her up. "Are you okay?"

"Fine," Hannah grumbled. Her knee was aching and she was pretty sure that was blood dripping down it but it was impossible to tell in the dark.

Limping, muttering softly to herself, Hannah followed Sara until they were both standing in a small clearing. A large fire crackled in the middle of it, shooting small sparks of light into the darkness above it.

Hannah glanced around as Sara walked over to Justin and slipped her arm around his waist. There were a couple of other girls as well as Justin's friend Nathan, who she had met last night, and two other men she didn't know.

Nathan waved at her and picked his way across the clearing. He threw a friendly arm around her shoulder and smiled down at her. "Hey, Hannah. It's good to see you again."

"Hi Nathan." She gave him a guarded smile and nonchalantly shrugged her way free of his arm. She had never cared much for having people in her personal space, especially people she barely knew, and she ignored his disappointed look and sat down on a log to examine her knee.

"Are there more people coming?" She asked. She hissed slightly as she ran her fingers over the large scrape on her knee. She was right – it was blood dripping down her knee.

When Nathan didn't answer, she glanced up at him. He was staring at her knee, his eyes glowing in the light from the fire.

"You're bleeding," he said.

"Yeah, I fell down," Hannah replied. "I don't suppose you have any band-aids?"

Justin and Sara had drawn closer, and Hannah frowned when a look she didn't understand passed between Justin and Nathan.

Nathan knelt at her feet and stared at her knee. He reached out with a slightly-shaking hand and ran his finger through the thin trail of blood that was dripping down her leg. He stuck his finger in his mouth and sucked the blood from it.

"Eww, Nathan! That's disgusting!" She cried out.

He looked up at her and her breath stopped in her throat. His eyes were glowing green in the light from the campfire and he smiled at her, revealing his very long, very sharp incisors.

"No, it's delicious," he growled. Hannah had one fleeting glance of Sara, her face pale and frightened, before Justin pulled her against him and sunk his teeth into her neck.

Hannah screamed and leaped to her feet but Nathan pounced on her, knocking her to the ground and pinning her down with his large body. She was vaguely aware of the screams of Sara and the other girls as Nathan nuzzled into her neck.

"Relax, baby. This'll only hurt a little," he whispered and she shrieked again as his teeth punctured her throat.

She struggled and kicked but she was no match for his strength and her struggles turned into helpless whimpers as he suckled at her neck.

She was growing weaker. The light from the campfire seemed to be dimming but as she faded toward the blackness, the crushing weight of Nathan was suddenly gone and she heard his growl of rage turn into a gurgling scream. She squinted as someone leaned over her and rough fingers prodded at her throat.

A deep voice said, "This one's still alive."

There was a sharp stinging pain against her face. "Wake up, girl. Girl!"

Another slap and she forced her eyelids open. A pair of startling blue eyes were staring into hers and, using the last of her strength, she raised her hand and clawed weakly at the face above hers.

"Sara," she whispered. The man grunted and there was the sensation of being lifted before she was placed over one broad shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

She whispered Sara's name once more before the darkness consumed her.

Chapter Two

“Good morning.”

Hannah stared blearily at the woman leaning over the bed.

“Are you thirsty? Here, let’s get you sitting up.” The woman gave Hannah a friendly smile before helping her into a sitting position. She tucked the pillows behind her back, and brushed her hair away from her face.

“How do you feel?” She held a glass of water to Hannah’s lips and urged her to drink it in small sips.

Hannah swallowed the water, easing her parched throat, and said hoarsely, “Tired.”

The woman nodded. “Yes, you’ll be tired for a while. You lost a lot of blood. Honestly, I’m surprised you even survived. My name is Barb, by the way. And you’re Hannah right? Hannah Torrington?”

“Yes. How do you know that?”

Barb smiled. “I checked in your purse.”

“What hospital am I in?” Hannah looked around with a deadened sort of curiosity. It didn’t look like a hospital room, with its walls covered in badly-fading wallpaper and its rough wooden floor.

“Well,” Barb hesitated, “it’s not exactly a hospital.”

The door opened and two men stepped into the room. Hannah shrank back as they approached the bed, but Barb patted her hand. “Don’t be frightened.”

They stood at the end of the bed and stared silently at her for a moment. The smaller of the two looked to be in his late fifties. He was short and lean with warm brown eyes. His bald head gleamed in the late afternoon light, and he reached up and ran his hand over his skull before smiling at her.

“Hello, Hannah. My name is Richard and this is Will.”

Hannah glanced at Will. He was tall with thick dark hair, broad shoulders and piercing blue eyes. He wasn’t conventionally handsome. His nose was just a little too large and the angle of his jaw a bit too severe, but as he stared at her she felt a little shiver run down her back. She gave him a weak smile and he nodded curtly.

Richard leaned forward, placing his hands on the footboard. “How much do you remember, Hannah?”

She frowned. “There was a man, his name was Nathan, and he attacked me. He – he bit me.” She touched her neck. There was a thin white bandage on her throat but when she tried to peel it off, Barb pulled her hands away gently.

“I don’t remember much else. Sara knew them –”

She stopped, her eyes widening, and stared at Richard.

“Sara,” she whispered. “Where’s Sara?”

“I don’t know who Sara is.” Richard told her gravely.

“She’s my sister. She’s small and blonde. She has blue eyes, and she was wearing a jean skirt with a pink tank top. We have to find her!” Hannah pushed back the covers and slid off the bed before Barb could stop her.

She took two steps from the bed and her knees buckled. Before she hit the ground, the man named Will had caught her neatly around the waist. She leaned against him, feeling light-headed and weak. She blushed when she realized she was wearing just a tank top and panties.

Will's large hand was wrapped around the bare skin of her waist, and the sight of his tanned skin against her pale flesh made a shiver run through her. His hand tightened a little and she looked up at him. He was staring at her, his light blue eyes had darkened considerably, and she was oddly fascinated by the curly brown hair peeking out from his open collared shirt. The heat was radiating from him, and she was very aware of how well their bodies fit together. She was a tall girl but the top of her head just brushed his chin, and with a weary sigh she let her head fall onto his shoulder.

"Please tell me where Sara is," she whispered.

Richard stared at Barb who sighed sadly. "Hannah the thing is - Sara is, well, we got there too late and she didn't --"

"Your sister is dead," Will said bluntly.

Hannah lifted her head and stared at him in horror. "You're lying."

He shook his head. "No, I'm not. She was killed by vampires. You would have suffered a similar fate if we hadn't found the camp when we did. Your sister and the other two girls are dead. You should be grateful you're not dead as well."

"Vampires don't exist! They're not real, you idiot!" Hannah could feel hot tears starting down her face. "I don't know what kind of sick joke this is, but I want you to take me to my sister right now. Do you hear me? Right now!" She started slamming her fists into his back and kicking at his shins.

"I want to see Sara!" She continued to punch and kick, but Will only stood there holding her passively. Enraged that her punching had no effect, she slapped him as hard as she could across the face.

His face rocked to the side and when he turned back to face her, a small whimper escaped her throat. His formerly blue eyes had turned golden, and they were glowing with a terrible inner fire. She was still tucked against him and as his arm tightened around her waist, squeezing the breath from her, she realized how defenseless and vulnerable she was.

"Never touch me again. Do you understand?" He growled with his face only inches from hers.

She nodded and let out a small squeak of fear when he dipped his head toward her neck and inhaled deeply.

"You smell of them," he whispered. "You reek of your own fear and their stench, and it disgusts me."

"That's enough, Will," Richard said quietly.

He looked coolly at the shorter man. His arm was still around Hannah's waist and his fingers were digging so tightly into her side that Hannah suspected she would be bruised. With a sudden, dismissive snort he pushed her away from him; Hannah stumbled and fell, banging her knee painfully against the wooden floor. He turned and left the room, letting the door close quietly behind him.

Richard helped her to her feet and back into the bed. "I'm sorry for your loss, Hannah."

The warmth and sincerity in his voice broke through the fog of disbelief that surrounded her and she began to sob. Barb moved to the bed and Hannah felt the sharp sting of a needle in her arm.

"This is just to help you sleep," Barb said softly.

Warmth spread through Hannah's body and she drifted into the dark.

Hannah sipped at her coffee and stared blankly out the window above the sink in the kitchen. It was just over three weeks since the night Sara was murdered and she thought, not for the first time, how much a person's life could change in less than a month. She had spent the first week after learning about Sara's death, in a state of shock so deep it was almost catatonic. She had begged to see Sara's body, but Barb had informed her gently that Sara and the other two girl's bodies were discovered by the authorities and that Hannah was missing and presumed dead.

A man, he said his name was Alan, had visited her at the farmhouse. He had sat and chatted with her for nearly half an hour before she realized what he was.

"You're a shrink."

"I am." He had confirmed. He was tall and thin with a receding hairline, and he wore thick-framed glasses that he was constantly pushing up his nose.

"How much is this conversation costing me?" She had asked dully. She was sitting on the couch in the living room of the farmhouse, wrapped in a blanket and staring out the window.

"This one's on the house." He had smiled. "I work for Richard. He thought it would be good if we chatted."

"Why?"

He had hesitated. "You've been through a terrible trauma, Hannah. You lost your sister and discovered that vampires exist. Your entire life changed in a moment. It can be helpful to talk to someone neutral about it."

Alan had visited her three more times, and she had to admit that it was helpful. Alan was kind, and had a quiet and thoughtful manner that made it easy for her to talk to him. He had given her suggestions on how to work through her grief, and had even given her a couple of books that dealt with the topic of losing a loved one.

About two weeks after she had woken to discover Sara was dead and that vampires existed, Richard had sat her down in the large, worn kitchen and regarded her soberly. "Are you ready to leave, Hannah?"

She frowned. "What do you mean?"

"You're not a prisoner here. You're a guest. If you would like to leave, you are free to do so."

Hannah stared at him. "And go where? Back to my parents' home?"

"No. I'm sorry, Hannah, but it's best if your parents believe you're dead. They wouldn't believe you even if you tried to tell them about the vampires and besides, once you've been bitten, it changes something in your body chemistry. Other vampires can sense you and there's a greater temptation to feed from you. Not many people survive a vampire attack and a vampire tends to want to finish what the other started so to speak. You'd be putting your parents at great risk."

Hannah laughed bitterly. "But I'm free to go huh? Tell me, Richard. Do you honestly think I would last ten minutes out there? I've been bitten by a vampire, I have the scars to prove it, and yet I'm still not entirely sure I believe in them. If what you say is true, then I'll be dead the first night."

Richard stared at her thoughtfully. "I just wanted to be clear that you can leave at any time."

"Are you telling me to leave?"

Richard shook his head immediately. "No. You're welcome to stay here for as long as you'd like."

"What exactly is this place, Richard?"

When he hesitated, she frowned. "What? Is it some big secret?"

"Here's the thing, Hannah." Richard leaned forward and placed one hand on top of hers. She immediately pulled it away.

"I'm sorry," he apologized.

"Don't be – I'm just not a very touchy-feely kind of person. What were you saying?"

He sat back in his chair and folded his hands neatly in his lap. "You're unique in that you're the first person to see this place who wasn't actively recruited by us."

"Recruited?" Hannah asked.

"What you see here?" Richard looked around the kitchen. "This is just a façade. Barb and I live here, but the real purpose of this place lies deep in the woods behind us."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

Richard nodded. "I know. For you to fully understand I must start at the beginning. Vampires have existed for thousands and thousands of years. They are the most ancient and evil of all the paranormal creatures."

"All paranormal creatures? Are you saying there are different kinds?" Hannah asked.

When Richard nodded, she let out a small snort. "Like what? Werewolves, shit like that?"

"Well, they refer to themselves as Lycans but yes."

Hannah absentmindedly rubbed the small round scars on her neck. "Oh this just gets better and better."

"Just listen, okay?" Richard admonished gently.

"Most paranormal creatures are like humans – there can be both good and evil within the race. Vampires are the exception to this rule. There is no goodness within them. They are soulless, malicious and wicked. Their very existence relies on our blood and without us, they would perish. For the most part they are content to stay within the shadows, to feed from us and to vanish into the dark. But every few hundred years there seems to be a surge in their numbers, and with that comes a desire to rule. They grow tired of hiding and feeding only when necessary, and inevitably a leader within their race emerges to encourage an uprising."

He scratched the top of his bald skull. "Vampires are solitary by nature. They tend to fight like a pack of wild dogs when forced to co-exist in large numbers, but they are capable of existing together when the need calls for it. Pods of vampires are formed throughout the country with their main purpose being not to feed, but to turn as many humans as they can. Their goal is to create a vast army – one that can enslave the remaining humans so they can feed from us like cattle. We're in the middle of such an uprising right now."

He rubbed a hand wearily across his forehead. "It is why those men lured you and your sister to their party. Most likely their instructions were to not just feed, but to turn you as well."

"But Sara and those other girls didn't turn - they died."

"When we found your group, the two other girls were in the middle of turning. We killed them before they could fully turn. The two men that were attacking you and your sister –"

"Justin and Nathan," Hannah whispered.

Richard nodded. "Will thinks they were still yearlings themselves. They weren't experienced enough to know how to stop feeding, and force you to drink their blood before you died. Your sister died before she could drink, and Will killed Nathan before he could either kill you or give you his blood to drink."

A vague memory of blue eyes and a rough voice slipped through Hannah's mind. She shook her head, clearing it, and said, "That's how you're turned - by drinking their blood?"

Richard nodded. "Yes."

"How do you know all of this?" Hannah whispered.

“Ten years ago my wife and I were driving home from a charity event. Our car broke down and a Good Samaritan stopped to help us. It turned out that the man was neither good nor a man. He was a vampire and he forced me to watch as he drained my wife of blood.”

He stopped and swallowed with difficulty. “He would have killed me as well, if not for Will. He was tracking the vampire for days and destroyed the creature – saving my life.”

“Why was Will tracking it?”

Richard smiled bitterly. “He has his own reasons for hating the vampires.”

“I’m sorry about your wife,” Hannah said softly.

“Thank you. Once I had recovered from the shock of both my wife’s death and the realization that vampires existed, I dedicated my life to destroying them.”

“Forgive me Richard, but that sounds like a terrible life.”

Richard’s normally kind face hardened. “They took my Maria from me and I will not rest until they have suffered like I have.” He stared at the floor, breathing heavily with his hands clenched into fists. After a few moments, he glanced up at her.

“I am a very wealthy man, Hannah. I don’t say this to brag, but to help you understand how this facility was created. I’ve spent a considerable fortune building and running this place.”

“But I don’t understand what this place is.” Hannah glanced around her. “I’m sorry, Richard. It looks like nothing more than a run-down farmhouse.”

He grinned at her, the amusement evident in his face. “Appearances can be deceiving, Hannah. Tomorrow morning I’ll show you the rest of the facility.”

Chapter Three

Richard was true to his word. The next morning, they drove deep into the woods that were behind the farmhouse. He parked next to a dilapidated shack and led her inside to reveal a modern and sleek elevator hidden within the building.

“My God,” Hannah murmured. “It’s like we’re in a spy movie.”

Richard frowned at her. “I assure you Hannah, it’s all very real and you need to take this seriously.”

They entered the elevator and Richard pushed a small green button. The elevator doors slid shut and carried them smoothly downwards.

“Most of the facility is deep underground,” Richard lectured. “It’s very large and is entirely self-sufficient. If necessary, it could support up to three hundred people for three months.”

As the doors opened up onto a wide hallway lit with fluorescent lights in the ceiling, Richard glanced at her anxiously. “You’re not claustrophobic are you?”

“No. Richard, I’m sorry but I still don’t understand exactly what this facility is for.”

Richard led her down the hallway to the large double doors at the end of it. “It’s a training facility, Hannah. We recruit men and women, and train them to kill vampires.”

She stopped before he could open the doors. “You’re kidding right? You’re creating an army of vampire slayers?”

He laughed. “Essentially, yes.”

He pushed open the doors and Hannah followed him into a maze of hallways and doors. There was an entire section that contained a common area, a kitchen and cafeteria, dormitories for the recruits, and single apartments for the people who trained them. There were training rooms, exercise rooms, and rooms whose sole purpose seemed to be to hold an astonishing variety of weapons.

As he was leading her down one hallway - Hannah had become completely turned around after the first two minutes - a young man in a leather jacket and jeans had appeared from a hallway to their left.

“Richard, do you have a minute? It’s important.” He glanced briefly at Hannah.

“Of course, Ryan. Hannah, excuse me for a moment.” The two men disappeared down a hallway leaving Hannah to look nervously around. All the doors in the facility had small square windows in them, and she glanced interestedly into the one closest to her.

It was a small room, and one of the few whose walls weren’t painted a stark white. Instead they were a warm blue, and honey-coloured planks of wood covered the floor. There was a small Asian man kneeling on a rug in the middle of the floor. He rose to his feet with a fluid grace she envied. There was a scabbard hanging from the belt around his waist and he withdrew a long, curved sword from it. He held the sword above his head, the lights glinting off of the cold metal, before beginning to swing it back and forth. She watched as his movements became larger and faster. It reminded her of a dance, and so intent was she on the man with the sword that she screamed softly when a voice behind her spoke.

“It’s called kenjutsu.”

Will was standing behind her. She hadn’t seen him since the day he had told her that Sara was dead, and she swallowed nervously. He was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, and she tried to ignore the way his biceps bulged against the sleeves of the shirt. His shoulders were broader than she remembered, and a thick scruff of dark hair covered his lower jaw. She could feel butterflies in her stomach as those remarkably blue eyes looked her up and down. She resisted the urge to pull

her own t-shirt away from her full breasts when his eyes lingered on them. With something close to horror, she realized that her nipples were starting to harden and she whipped back around, staring into the small room.

He moved closer, resting his hands on either side of the door and leaning in until she could feel his breath on the back of her neck. "How are you feeling, Hannah?"

Her stomach flip-flopped when he said her name.

"Fine," she squeaked and then cleared her throat. "I mean, I'm feeling better."

"Good." He leaned even closer, his chest almost touching her back and peered into the window beside her.

Hannah's breath grew shallow. She hated when people stood too close or touched her without her permission, but it usually just left her feeling irritated and anxious. She had no idea what was happening to her now. Her heart was pounding and small beads of sweat were breaking out on her forehead. Will's breath on her neck was heating her skin, and a blush was rising up her body, making her nipples hard and her skin tingle.

She stared at Will's hands. His fingers were long and tanned, and both hands were covered in scars. She had a brief vision of those long fingers cupping her breast, and her face went from pink to crimson.

Get a hold of yourself! She scolded herself fiercely. *You hate this guy, remember?*

She did hate him. He was coarse and rude and had delivered the news of her sister's death with a cold detachment. But he had also saved her life and dammit - why was he standing so close, and why the hell wasn't she asking him to give her space like she normally did.

She opened her mouth to ask him to move back but instead said quietly, "Thank you for saving my life."

"You're welcome."

She glanced up at him. He was staring down at her mouth, and something about the way he was looking at it made her legs tremble and her belly twinge with desire. He inhaled deeply and she flushed, remembering his words from before.

"Do I still smell?" She tried to adopt a sarcastic tone but it came out sounding hurt and defensive.

"No. In fact," he inhaled again, "you smell like strawberries."

"I had strawberries for breakfast," she said stupidly.

"I like strawberries," he murmured. He bent his head toward her and she leaned away from him.

He frowned. "Are you afraid of me, Hannah?"

She shook her head. "You told me never to touch you again. Remember?"

He grinned, showing even white teeth. "Right - I had forgotten. Forgive me, that was a particularly trying day and I lost my patience too quickly with you."

She arched her eyebrow at him. "I had just found out my sister was murdered by vampires and your day was trying? Are you always that sensitive to others or am I just lucky?"

This time he laughed, a warm rumble deep in his chest, and she ignored the warmth that surged through her belly at the sound. "You're much feistier than I would have suspected. I like it."

"Well thank God. Your approval means everything to me," she said sarcastically.

He laughed again as she turned to face him. It was a mistake; she knew that instantly. Her breasts were almost touching his chest, and the look in his eyes was nearly pinning her to the door.

She took a deep breath. "Could you step back, Will?"

"Of course." He stepped back and she felt a twinge of disappointment.

Richard rounded the corner. “Will – I was just giving Hannah a tour. Would you like to join us for the rest of it?”

“Thanks, but no. I should get back to the babies.” He continued down the hallway without looking at her again.

Hannah frowned. “The babies?”

Richard gave an embarrassed laugh. “It’s what we call the new recruits.”

* * *

Hannah was pulled from her memories by the sound of Richard or Barb coming down the stairs. She emptied the last of her coffee down the drain and rinsed the cup as Richard entered the kitchen.

“Good morning. You’re up early.” He yawned and poured himself a cup of coffee as the front door slammed and Will entered the room in a blast of cool air.

He nodded to them both and stood in front of Hannah, reaching behind her to get a mug from the cupboard. Hannah frowned and slid to the left.

He grinned. “Sorry – forgot you don’t like people in your space.”

He certainly didn’t look sorry, Hannah thought grumpily as he poured himself some coffee and sipped at it.

“We have five new babies starting tomorrow,” Richard said to Will. He put some bread in the toaster and yawned again.

Will rolled his eyes. “Hope they’re better than this last bunch. They still have their heads up their asses and it’s been nearly two months.”

“You’re too impatient, Will. We can’t expect them to be effective slayers in only a month or two.”

Hannah cleared her throat. “Richard, I want to join the new recruits.”

Richard stared at her, his mouth dropping open, and Will actually laughed out loud. She flushed and gave him a dirty look.

“Hannah, I don’t think that’s a good idea.” Richard buttered his toast.

“It’s an excellent idea. I can’t go back home, and I can’t sit around here being useless forever.”

“There is plenty of administrative work that needs to be done. You can work in the office.”

Hannah scowled. “No. I want revenge for Sara, and I won’t get that by sitting behind a desk. I want to be taught how to kill vampires.”

Richard stared at her thoughtfully. “I understand the desire for revenge Hannah, you know I do, but the recruiting program is terribly difficult. We usually only recruit people who we know can handle the emotional and physical aspects.”

“What he’s trying to say is that you’re not in good enough shape. You’re too, uh,” Will paused, “curvy to keep up with the rest of the babies.”

She gave him a withering look. “I can keep up.”

She turned to Richard with a pleading look. “Just give me a chance, Richard. That’s all I’m asking. If I can’t do it, you can cut me from the program and I won’t argue. At least give me the opportunity to try.”

Richard looked at Will. “What do you think?”

Will shook his head. “I vote no. She’ll never make it through the program – you know she won’t.”

She flashed him another dirty look that he ignored as Richard frowned at her. “Are you sure you want to do this, Hannah? It’s not just physically difficult. It’s one thing to say you want to kill vampires, it’s another to actually kill them.”

“I’m sure,” she said steadily.

Richard stared at her for a few more minutes and then nodded. “You’ll start tomorrow with the others.”

Hannah blew her breath out in a trembling sigh as Will snorted in disgust and left the farmhouse.

Chapter Four

"How's she doing?" Richard stood next to Will and watched as the new recruits trickled in from their morning run through the woods. Hannah was trailing behind the other five, her grey t-shirt completely soaked in sweat and her face pale. They stood panting in the cool sunshine, and Richard winced when Hannah suddenly staggered away from the others and vomited behind a large tree.

"It's been three weeks and she's still throwing up after the morning run," Will replied. "She can't do a pull-up to save her life, she can barely get through a hundred push-ups and her hand-to-hand combat training is, in a word, pathetic. She's not going to make it."

Richard frowned. "Give her a chance, Will."

"I am. Anyone else I would have kicked to the curb by now," Will answered. "I'm keeping her as a personal favour to you, Richard."

"I appreciate it."

"I'm not sure how much you'll appreciate it when she dies at the hands of a vampire," Will replied bluntly.

Richard sighed. "Her sister's death will destroy her if she isn't given the chance for revenge. It's better for her to die trying, then to stand by and wish she had."

"I'm worried about your conscience, Richard. How will you feel if she dies trying for this revenge?"

"We all die eventually, Will," Richard spat at him harshly. "I've never seen you care so much about the life of a human before."

Will flushed. "It means nothing to me if she lives or dies. But that doesn't mean I enjoy leading a lamb to slaughter. We should cut her out of the program now before she starts to think she has a chance."

"Give her another month."

"Richard, you're making a –"

"Enough, Will," Richard said starkly. "I have always trusted your judgment when it came to the babies. Now I'm asking you to trust mine."

"Whatever you say, boss." Will scowled. "I just work here."

* * *

Hannah cursed as the rice fell off her spoon and scattered on the table. Her hands were shaking so badly she could barely hold the utensil and Selena, sitting beside her, gave her a sympathetic look. Jeremy, Frank, Tyler and Allison shoveled the food hungrily into their mouths and ignored the two of them completely. In the last month, Hannah and Selena had bonded a bit, mostly over their mutual misery in what Jeremy called 'Slayer Boot Camp'. Her bed was next to Selena's in the women's dormitory, and they had begun the cautious process of getting to know each other.

Now, Selena patted her leg under the table and then continued to eat her dinner. The recruits did nearly everything together. Mannie, one of their three instructors, had informed them that it helped bond them as a team. They rarely spoke during dinner. The tough physical training schedule left them all ravenous, and none of them wasted precious eating time with casual chatter.

Hannah willed her hands to stop shaking and carefully spooned rice into her mouth. She shook nearly all the time from the lack of sleep and the intense physical exercise, and it made it difficult to do normal activities like eating.

Her stomach growled loudly as the spoon fell from her fingers and clattered to the table. She was considering just picking up her plate and tipping the food into her mouth when she realized Will was staring at her with a weird combination of pity and disgust. She blushed, stared fiercely at her hands until they went from a palsy-like shake to a mild tremble, and continued to eat her dinner.

“Five minutes, babies!” Will shouted from across the cafeteria. Hannah flinched and ate faster. She hated Will - loathed him from the depths of her soul. She could barely remember the Will from the hallway, the Will that had told her she smelled like strawberries and had made desire course through her body. That Will was long gone, replaced by a shouting, caustic hard-ass who seemed to enjoy breaking their spirits.

She was convinced he was hardest on her. Once, after a particularly brutal morning run, he had yelled at her for five minutes while she vomited helplessly. She had felt only slightly vindicated when later that evening, Selena had asked her in a quiet little whisper what she had done to piss Will off.

“He hates you, Hannah,” Selena had said. “I’m not sure why, but he definitely hates you.”

“Fuck Will,” she had responded grumpily. “I don’t give a rat’s ass whether he likes me or not.”

Now, as she stood with the other recruits and limped out of the cafeteria, she could feel Will’s eyes burning holes into her back. She straightened and forced herself to limp faster, breathing a sigh of relief when she was in the hallway and away from his hot stare.

* * *

Hannah peered into the hallway. It was empty, and she crept silently through the maze of hallways until she arrived at one of the training rooms. She eased the door open, moving confidently across the room in the dark. She reached up and grabbed the metal bar above her head, and with a grunt of effort pulled herself up. Her already tired and strained arm muscles screamed at her, but she fixed Sara’s sweet face in the front of her mind and continued to haul her body up and down.

After a few minutes she let her body drop to the floor. She was panting harshly and her arms were shaking and burning, but she had done nearly fifteen pull-ups – her best effort yet. She gave herself five minutes to rest, lying on her back on the soft mat and staring blindly at the ceiling.

She forced herself to stand and move to the far side of the gym. She knew from past experience that if she waited much longer her body would seize up and the rest of her exercises would be brutally painful. There was a heavy bag hanging from the ceiling, and using touch only she located a pair of gloves and fumbled into them.

She’d been in the program for five weeks now and for the last two weeks when the rest of the recruits had tumbled exhausted into their beds, she would sneak out of the dormitories and return to the gym. She forced herself to run laps, lift weights, and practice her pull-ups and push-ups. Afraid of being caught, she did all of it in the total darkness. The first few nights she had tripped over exercise machines, stubbed nearly every toe on rows of weights, and once even ran face first into a wall, but now it seemed her night vision was improving and she could easily navigate in the blackness.

She punched the heavy bag, the vibrations running back through her arms and into her aching shoulders and back. She ignored the pain; even with her extra work at night she was barely keeping

up with the other recruits, and she knew that Will was dangerously close to kicking her out of the program. She could see it every time he looked at her.

It wasn't just physical exhaustion either. When the recruits weren't training they were in classes with Isabelle. Isabelle was in her thirties with long blonde hair and a slender body. She was gorgeous. Her eyes were an impossible shade of blue and she had the softest-looking skin Hannah had ever seen. Over the last few weeks she had taught them the history of the vampire as well as, to a limited degree, other paranormal creatures.

Hannah could still remember the day that Will had joined them for one of their classes, sitting quietly in the back as they had discussed the various weapons that were used against vampires over the years. Alison and Frank were in the middle of a heated debate over whether make-shift weapons from household items would be useful in a pinch, when Will had snorted loudly and stood.

"If you find yourself weaponless around vampires, your greatest chance for survival is to run." He had looked at each of them, his gaze landing on Hannah's face last. "You run and you hide."

She shook her head, wiping his face from her mind, and concentrated on hitting the bag with firm, hard punches like Mannie had taught her. She snatched gulps of air into her burning lungs. She wanted to quit and go back to her bed in the dormitory. She wanted to soak her pillow with the tears that were always so close to the surface but she thought of Sara. She thought about Sara's tenth birthday, and how excited she was when her parents had rented out the movie theatre for her and her friends. She thought about the first night that Sara had come home drunk. Hannah had squirreled her away to the bathroom before their parents could see her. She had held Sara's hair back as she had thrown up wretchedly, vowing breathlessly between each bout of vomiting that she would never drink again.

Memory after memory of Sara flooded her mind, and she punched the bag in front of her harder and harder. Her breath was coming in short, shallow gasps and tears mixed freely with the sweat dripping down her face. So engrossed was she in her memories and the rhythmic thumping noise of her gloved hands that when a hard hand fell on to her shoulder she screamed and turned, punching wildly at the huge shadow behind her.

Will cursed as one of Hannah's gloves caught him on the chin. She had screamed only once before falling silent. As he wrapped one strong arm around her waist, she writhed and squirmed like a wild cat, panting harshly and pounding his back with her gloved fists.

"Hannah, stop!" He whispered just as her foot connected solidly with his knee. He yelped like a wounded puppy, stepped backward and tripped over his own feet. He fell onto his back, dragging Hannah down with him.

She head-butted him in the chin, and he just managed to protect his balls from her knee before she landed a blow to his stomach.

"Enough!" He roared and flipped her onto her back, covering her struggling body with his own and pinning her arms above her head.

"It's Will!" He spoke into her ear as she panted and wiggled under him.

Her body froze and then she sagged against the floor.

"Will?" She whispered.

"Yes."

"You scared the hell out of me!" She hissed furiously at him.

"What are you doing in here?" He asked.

"Nothing," she muttered.

"Don't lie to me," he warned.

“I’m just – just practicing okay? I’m not breaking any rules.”

“Actually,” he said mildly, “there is a rule about leaving the dormitory after lights out. You know that.”

“I highly doubt that going to the gym after lights out is what they meant by breaking the rules,” she scoffed and tried to heave him off of her, but he settled his weight more firmly against her.

“I would think you get enough physical activity during the day. If you’re looking for night activities, I can think of something entirely more pleasant for you to participate in,” he said the last sentence in a low whisper, and something about the tone in his voice made her shudder with involuntary pleasure against him.

She made herself remember the day he had humiliated her while she had vomited helplessly. “Could you get off me, Will? You’re too heavy,” she said firmly.

Will had excellent night vision and he studied her face. Her dark eyes were huge and, despite her steady tone, he could see her lips trembling and her entire body was shaking under his. He took a deep breath; he could smell the sharp tang of her sweat, and under that the scent of strawberries. She must eat a lot of strawberries he thought hazily, the scent almost always lingered on her.

“Will?” She prompted and pulled against his hands holding her arms captive.

“Why are you practicing at night?” He tugged the gloves from her hands, tossing them to the side before propping himself up on his elbows above her, but keeping her pinned to the floor with his lower body.

She flexed her fingers experimentally and then pushed at his chest. He refused to move and she sighed in frustration. “Because I need to get better. Because I’m not stupid and I know you’re this close to kicking me out of the program. Because every time I close my eyes at night all I see is Sara’s face.”

To her horror, she could feel tears beginning to drip down her cheeks. The last thing she wanted to do was cry in front of Will. He already thought she was pathetic enough.

To her surprise he roughly wiped away her tears with his thumbs. “It gets better.”

“Does it?” She muttered. “I don’t think it does.”

He nodded solemnly. “I promise it does.”

She could just make out his features in the dark. “Who did you lose?”

“My father, my mother,” he paused, “my brother and sister. They attacked us in our beds while we slept. I was still young, just a small child, and I had a nightmare. My mother was in my room when they broke in. She hid me in the closet before they drained her.”

“I’m so sorry, Will,” she whispered. Even in the darkness she could see the pain in his eyes and it started a strange twisting in her stomach. Filled with a sudden desire to comfort him, she lifted her head and pressed her lips against his.

He froze and then pulled away from her, sitting up and staring silently at her. She blushed and pushed herself into a sitting position, ignoring the way her muscles screamed at her.

“Oh God, I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that,” she whispered.

He didn’t say anything. With a small groan of embarrassment she struggled to stand, praying he wasn’t about to kick her out of the program. Before she could gain her feet, he reached out and yanked her into his lap. He cupped the back of her head and kissed her hungrily, forcing her mouth open so he could thrust his tongue into its warmth.

Hannah kissed him back, clutching his broad shoulders in her hands as she moaned into his mouth. He sucked on her tongue, forcing another moan from her throat, before he pushed his tongue back into her mouth and stroked hers with rough motions.

He tugged on her ponytail, pulling her head back so that he could kiss his way down her throat, before nipping and sucking at the delicate skin. She gasped and clung to his back as he nibbled across her collarbone and then down to the tops of her breasts peeking out from the sports bra she was wearing.

He shifted her in his lap until she was straddling him and he could press his erection directly against her warm center. Instead of feeling nervous or embarrassed, excitement coursed through her body and she groaned with desire and rubbed herself against him.

She hated Will. He was arrogant and rude and just plain mean, but she couldn't deny how attracted she was to him. He obviously hated her as well, but it wasn't stopping him from touching her everywhere.

His questing fingers found the edge of her sports bra and he tugged impatiently at it. She raised her arms and he pulled it roughly from her body, tossing it on the floor beside them. It was cold in the room and her nipples tightened as the cool air hit them. Despite the almost total blackness she had the strangest feeling that Will could see her clearly, and his sharp inhale of breath when her breasts were exposed only furthered that certainty.

He cupped her breast in his hand and ran his thumb over her hardened nipple. She moaned and he dipped his head and sucked her nipple into his mouth. He sucked hard on it as she wriggled against him, clutching his head in her hands. He nibbled and sucked on both nipples until she was panting and rubbing herself mindlessly against him.

"Please, Will," she moaned.

Her stomach was twisting and turning with a need she couldn't identify, and her entire lower body was throbbing. It had never been like this with either Mark or Toby. There had never been this driving need. She couldn't get enough of Will's body and mouth. His lips tugging on her nipples were sending spasms of pleasure through her.

He pushed her on to her back, pulled off his own shirt and hovered over her. She ran her fingers through the hair on his chest. He shuddered at her touch and kissed her again, almost shoving his tongue into her mouth.

She arched her back, shivering with delight when her sensitive nipples brushed against his hard chest. The ache between her thighs was almost unbearable now. She was just wondering if it would be too forward of her to push Will's hand between her legs, when he slipped one large hand into her yoga pants and underneath her panties.

She cried out when his hand cupped her warm center. He stared down at her and rubbed his fingers against her easily. She could just make out the small, satisfied smile on his face and for the first time she realized how wet she was. Her face flushed with embarrassment and again, despite the darkness, he seemed to see her clearly.

"Why are you blushing?" He asked as his fingers stilled their movement against her skin.

"Because I'm so..."

She stopped and shook her head, unable to actually say the words. His face was very close to hers now, and this time she could easily identify the wolf-like grin that crossed his face.

"Wet?" He whispered.

"Oh my God," she muttered, her face burning.

"You shouldn't be embarrassed by that," he breathed into her ear. "You have no idea how much it turns me on knowing I make you this wet so quickly."

She groaned again, her hand coming up to tug at his forearm as the ache in her belly was replaced with embarrassment. "Will, maybe we should stop. This doesn't seem like a good id –"

Her breath caught in her throat as Will's fingers moved again, this time against her small pink nub.

"What isn't a good idea?" He murmured into her ear.

"This?" He rubbed in a circular motion. "Or maybe this?" He pinched her clit lightly, and she cried out loudly and dug her fingers into his arms.

Hannah tossed her head back and forth as Will continued to touch her. The ache was back, beating ferociously inside of her, and all of her embarrassment had melted away. She was acutely aware of the feel of Will's cock against her hip, heavy and hard, and she slid her hand down his stomach and pushed it into his jeans. Boldly she gripped him in her hand, liking the way he shuddered above her, and stroked him firmly.

"Jesus, Hannah," he whispered. His hand stilled against her and he threw his head back, staring sightlessly at the ceiling as she stroked and rubbed. She ran her thumb over the tip of him, feeling the warm stickiness, and gave her own smile of satisfaction.

Suddenly, with a low growl of desire and frustration, Will yanked her hand free. She stared at him, noticing for the first time the thick beard that covered his lower jaw, and shivered. She was worried that he was going to stop, but one look into his eyes and she quickly realized that he had no intention of stopping.

She should have been afraid. She should have been telling him to stop. She was pretty sure that having sex with her instructor in the middle of the gym was, although not in the handbook, considered a rule-breaker. She was terrified that she would be kicked out of the program, that she would lose her chance to take her revenge for Sara's death, but her need and desire for Will was overriding her common sense.

She lifted her hips as he tugged at the waistband of her pants, making it easier for him to sweep down her pants and underwear, before he unbuttoned and unzipped his jeans. He didn't bother with pushing them down, just pulled his cock free as she opened her thighs wide. He settled between them and she gasped at the feel of his cock against her opening.

"Okay?" He paused and she nodded frantically.

"Yes. Please...oh please," she cried out.

With a low groan he entered her. He was large, much larger than either of her previous boyfriends, and she uttered a low cry under her breath as her body stiffened under his.

He stopped immediately and ran a gentle hand down her side. "Have I hurt you?"

She shook her head. "No. I just need a minute."

He nodded and waited patiently as she adjusted to his size. He clenched his teeth, his breath hissing out between them when, after a moment, she moved her hips.

She smiled a little and moved again, his groan sending another spasm of pleasure through her belly. She reached up and ran her fingers over his beard. He twisted his head and captured her fingers in his warm mouth, sucking hard on them. The unexpectedness of it, the pressure of his warm mouth and moving tongue against the sensitive skin on her fingers, made her gasp and buck her hips against him.

He groaned and grasped her thigh in his hand as she pulled her fingers free of his mouth and grabbed his broad shoulders. He pushed her thigh up and out, the small motion opening her up even wider, and they both groaned in mutual pleasure as he sunk the full length of his cock inside of her.

He started to move with long, slow strokes. Moaning, sweat covering her body, she met each of his thrusts. The warmth started almost immediately. The tingling quickly became a maddening ache, and she pushed her hips against him eagerly.

“Please, Will,” she moaned. She tried to silently urge him to go faster. The ache was driving her crazy and she was worried that he would finish before she could find relief from it. She dug her fingers into his arms and nipped at his neck.

“Faster,” she murmured.

He looked down at her and she was momentarily startled by his eyes. She was certain his eyes were blue but now they appeared almost yellow.

A trick of the light. What light?

She was distracted from her thoughts when he leaned down and kissed her. He pushed delicately at her closed lips and she moaned softly and allowed him access to her mouth. They kissed hungrily, their tongues tasting and darting and exploring, and she pulled back panting after a few minutes.

“Will – faster,” she demanded.

He grinned and did as she commanded. She hooked her legs around his hips as he propped himself up on his hands above her and thrust hard and fast. She arched her back, moaning softly as the ache grew within her.

The pleasure was circling in her belly and once again, she felt like she was standing at a deep divide. She was panting and thrusting her hips against him, her eyes shut tightly and her head tossing back and forth.

“Oh please, please,” she whispered. Vaguely she was aware of Will above her, his breath growing more ragged and his body starting to lose its steady rhythm within her. Even with her limited experience she knew what that meant, and she squeezed his arms tightly.

“No!” She cried out in frustration. She moved her hips faster, her breath catching in her throat as she searched for that final release.

“Hannah.” Will’s voice was strained and low. “Look at me.”

She opened her eyes and stared up at him just as he reached between their bodies and rubbed her clit firmly with his fingers.

It was enough to throw her into the abyss. As the most intense orgasm of her life roared through her, she closed her eyes and arched her back, her fingernails digging into Will’s forearms. He kissed her hard, swallowing her loud cry of pleasure with his mouth as she pulsated and trembled around him.

As the core of her squeezed him, she opened her eyes and smiled up at him. With a low moan he found his own relief, pumping his hips roughly against her as his eyes glowed with a warm yellow light. Hannah could feel the wetness flooding through her and she squeezed his waist tightly with her thighs as he collapsed against her, breathing heavily.

She stroked his back as he panted harshly against her throat before rolling off of her and onto his back. He pulled her up against him and she curled up like a contented cat, running one hand over his chest.

He looked down at her and she smiled at him. “Hi.”

“Hi. I’m sorry, Hannah. I lost control and I didn’t use a condom.” His eyes were burning with shame.

She gave him a cautious look. “I’m on the pill. And I haven’t been with anyone in a couple of years.”

He just looked at her and she blushed. “You can take a look at my medical records. I’m sure Barb will have a copy in her office that you can sneak a look at while she’s having lunch.”

Before she started the program, Barb had done numerous tests on her including blood and urine, to ensure she was healthy enough to join the other recruits. She was a little surprised that Barb had tested her for STD's, but hadn't questioned it.

"I'm not worried about that." He hesitated. "I'm clean as well, but I'll give you a copy of my records to look at."

"Thanks," she replied. She wondered if he was feeling as awkward as she was. She sighed and rested her head on his chest. It wasn't like her to just sleep with someone without thinking about a condom or whether they were healthy. She had no idea what had gotten into her.

Will. Will got into you and it was fucking amazing, remember?

She shivered as lust heated her lower body. Christ, she wanted him again. She rubbed her hand across his chest in what she hoped was a suggestive manner.

He kissed her forehead and buttoned his jeans. "You should get dressed."

Feeling slightly reproached she groped in the darkness for her pants and underwear, struggling into them. She was searching for her sports bra when the gym door opened and the main light was flipped on.

Will, still shirtless, cursed and held his hand up to block the light as Hannah darted behind his broad back, hiding her half-naked body. She looked around frantically for her sports bra, groaning to herself when she realized it was too far away for her to reach.

Cheeks burning, she risked a glance over Will's shoulder. A small Asian man was standing in the doorway and staring at them calmly. He looked slightly familiar to her, although she was certain she had never met him.

"Good evening, Will," he said softly. His voice was low and musical with a slight accent.

"Chen." Will nodded curtly.

"I heard noises and thought I should investigate. I didn't realize you were," he paused and his eyes considered Hannah thoughtfully, "entertaining a recruit."

Hannah groaned inwardly, her face bright red, as Will cleared his throat roughly but didn't reply.

After a moment, Chen nodded. "Good night, Will."

"Good night, Chen."

He left the gym. As soon as the door closed behind him, Hannah cursed loudly and grabbed her sports bra. She struggled into it as Will picked up his shirt and pulled it on.

"Oh my God," she muttered. "He's going to tell Richard and I'm going to be kicked out of the program."

"I make the decisions regarding whether the babies stay or go," Will replied arrogantly.

She couldn't look him in the eye. "Yeah, well I'm pretty sure having sex with an instructor is against the rules. There's no way Richard will let me stay."

He sighed impatiently. "One – Chen won't tell Richard and two – I told you, I have the final decision when it comes to the new recruits. You won't be kicked out of the program, Hannah. At least not for this. Your dismal hand-to-hand combat skills on the other hand..."

He gave her a small smile and she could feel an answering one on her lips.

She cocked her head and stared at him. Chen had left the light on when he left and she frowned. She could have sworn Will had a beard, she had touched it, but now she could see that he only had his usual thick scruff. She stepped closer and looked at his eyes. They were a light blue and she closed her eyes for a moment, recalling the warm yellow glow in his eyes as his hot seed had flooded into her. The memory of him inside of her brought another wave of dull heat to her belly,

and she popped her eyes open in a hurry. They had just been caught by another of the instructors, and all she could think about was coaxing him into another round. She was going insane.

He was still staring at her with those disconcerting blue eyes and she glanced at the ground. Feeling awkward and nervous, she tried to joke with him. “Maybe tonight will increase my chances for staying in the program huh?”

It was the wrong thing to say. His nostrils flared and he stalked towards her. She shrunk back as he stopped in front of her and glared at her. “Did you have sex with me to try and secure your spot in the program, Hannah?”

She shook her head. “No, I promise. I was just trying to be funny.”

He looked her up and down. The previous warmth in them had turned to an icy coldness. “Let’s get one thing straight, Hannah. I cannot be paid off with money or,” he paused and gave her such a look of fury that she took a step backward, “sexual favors. If you think you can keep your spot in the program by offering your body to me, you’re wrong. Do I make myself clear?”

“That isn’t what I was doing,” she said angrily. “I’m not a whore.”

“You will stay in this program if and only if, you prove you have the strength and ability to kill vampires. Do you understand?”

She nodded mutely and he cursed softly under his breath. “What happened between us was a mistake. I would appreciate it if you kept quiet about it. I acted inappropriately and I think the best idea would be for the both of us to forget about what happened. Can I trust you to not speak about this to anyone?”

“Of course.” She straightened her back and walked toward the door of the gym. She might be humiliated beyond belief, but she was damned if she was going to let him see that. She slipped out the door of the gym and hurried down the hallway towards the women’s dormitory.

Chapter Five

“That’s great, Hannah!” Selena cheered as Hannah pinned Jeremy to the mat. She held him down for a moment, panting and grinning happily at him.

Four more weeks of training had passed and with each passing day, Hannah had grown stronger and faster. She no longer vomited after their daily runs, she had surpassed all of her fellow recruits in both push-ups and sit-ups, and only Jeremy could beat her in pull-ups. She had continued her secret exercise training in the evenings and it had finally paid off.

Her only weakness was the hand-to-hand combat, and even that was improving if tonight’s practice was any indication.

Lost in her thoughts, she relaxed her grip and Jeremy quickly flipped her over and straddled her, pinning her arms down. He wiggled his eyebrows at her. “Never let your guard down, Hannah Banana.”

“Get off me, you lug.” Hannah laughed and tried to head-butt him.

He whipped his head back before she could connect and grinned at her. “You gotta be faster than that, baby.”

She gave him a mock glare and then heaved her body upward and tried to buck him off of her. He laughed and pressed his body down against hers before leaning down and kissing the tip of her nose. “You’re so cute when you’re angry, HB.”

“I’m going to kick your ass, Jeremy.” She scowled at him as he leaned in to kiss her nose again.

“What the hell is going on here?” Will’s angry voice filled the small training room, and Selena gave a small squeak of fear and twisted around.

“It’s late. You should be in your dorms,” Will snarled.

He was dressed in his usual attire of jeans and a t-shirt. He had obviously just come from the shower. His dark, thick hair was damp looking and he was freshly shaven. His smooth cheeks and chin was something Hannah had never seen on him before, and she was captivated by the small scar that ran across his chin.

“We were just practicing, sir. We were working on our combat skills,” Selena whispered.

“Get off of her – now!” Will barked at Jeremy who was still straddling Hannah.

Jeremy jumped to his feet before offering his hand to Hannah. He pulled her to her feet and they stood quietly on the mat.

“You’re breaking the rules,” Will growled. “I could have you all kicked out for this.”

Selena gave a gasp of dismay and Jeremy’s face reddened.

“It was my idea,” Hannah said quickly. “I needed practice on my hand-to-hand skills and I asked Jeremy and Selena to help me. They shouldn’t be punished for agreeing to help me.”

Will stared at her, his nostrils flaring. “Your testing is tomorrow. These tests will determine whether you are allowed to continue in the program or not. I would suggest that you retire to your beds. It’s late and based on your exercise drills, all of you are going to need to be as sharp as possible tomorrow.”

“Yes, sir,” Selena said quietly.

The three of them started for the door and Will shook his head.

“Not you, Ms. Torrington. You stay right where you are.”

Hannah’s stomach dropped but she stopped obediently, giving Selena a reassuring smile as she and Jeremy left the room. Two days after she had slept with Will, she had found a folded-up piece of paper under her pillow in the dorm. It was a copy of Will’s medical records, and she had

scanned it briefly before burning it in the bathroom sink. She was surprised he had kept his promise to give her a copy. He was obviously still furious with her and, if it was even possible, was even more miserable to her since the night they slept together. He yelled at her during every training session, and he had punished her with so many extra push-ups she could easily do over a hundred now without breaking a sweat.

It was so bad that the others had started to talk openly about his obvious hatred for her. Jeremy had even asked her bluntly what the hell she had done to him. She had laughed it off, saying something about Will being tough on them all, but none of the other recruits were buying it. Selena had suggested she go to Richard and complain but she refused. Will was trying to break her and she wouldn't allow him that satisfaction. She focused on Sara, brought her sweet face to her mind every time Will shouted at her or demanded she give him fifty extra push-ups, and carried on grimly.

Will stared silently at Hannah. The two months of daily exercise had firmed her body. She was wearing tight yoga pants and they clung enticingly to her. Although still curvy, her entire body had leaned out and he could see the hardness of her thighs through the tight pants. He let his eyes drift up her body, taking in the thin white tank top she was wearing over her blue sports bra. Her arms were folded protectively across her torso and they were taut with muscle. His eyes settled on her breasts. They were smaller than they used to be but still temptingly full. He felt his groin stirring as the memory of touching them, of kissing them while she moaned softly under him, flooded through him.

He was immediately angry with himself. Sleeping with Hannah was a very bad mistake. He was propositioned plenty by other recruits, but had never once considered sleeping with one. They were there to learn how to kill vampires, not to have sex with the instructors. He wouldn't deny that he was attracted to Hannah and that he had briefly considered seducing her until, that was, she had asked to join the program. He thought he had squashed his initial attraction. And then she had kissed him.

The soft, innocent pressure of her lips on his had sent an immediate arrow of desire straight to his groin. He was filled with an instant and undeniable urge to make her his. He sighed harshly. The wolf inside of him had demanded to mate and, for the first time in his life, he had failed to control it.

Hannah was still staring at him, apprehension mixed with desire on her face, and it sent an answering call of need through him. He groaned to himself. He had spent the last four weeks pushing the memory of being inside of her, out of his head. Up until tonight he had done an admirable job of it. Seeing Jeremy on top of her and the way she was smiling at him had filled him with anger and, he admitted grudgingly, jealousy and he kept his hands clenched in tight fists as he approached her.

"It isn't enough to put yourself into a position to be kicked out? You have to drag Jeremy and Selena down with you?" He asked quietly.

Her nostrils flared but she didn't answer. He stood next to her, inhaling her familiar scent of strawberries, and stared at the side of her head.

"Look at me, Ms. Torrington."

Scowling, she turned to face him, her brown eyes glaring into his blue ones. "Are you kicking me out or not, sir?" She asked quietly.

"Perhaps I should kick all three of you out. This is the second time I've caught you out of the dorms after hours, and this time you brought friends."

“It’s not their fault!” She said hotly. “They were being nice and helping me out. It’s what people do when they’re friends, Will. They help each other.”

He shrugged. “So you’re a bad influence on them.”

She rolled her eyes, not caring that it made his face tighten and his eyes narrow with anger. “It’s late and I’m tired. Should I be packing my bags or not?”

“What you don’t seem to understand, Ms. Torrington, is that this training isn’t just about the physical changes you need to make. You need to listen, to understand the rules and obey them. Doing exactly what I tell you to do could save your life someday.”

“I understand that perfectly, sir,” she said icily.

“Do you?” He stepped closer but she refused to step back. “As I mentioned before, this is the second time I’ve busted you for breaking the rules. And don’t think I am unaware of your continued midnight trips to the training room the last few weeks. I’ve chosen to turn a blind eye to your rule-breaking because for some crazy reason Richard has faith in you. Those late-night exercise trips have been the only thing that’s allowed you to keep up with the others.”

“I’ve been working my ass off for the last two months,” she hissed at him angrily. “I deserve to be here just as much as the others.”

He shrugged and then said something so unexpected she blinked at him in surprise.

“Are you sleeping with Jeremy?”

“What?”

“I asked if you’re sleeping with Jeremy.”

“That’s none of your business!” She snapped.

“Actually it is. Recruits sleeping with each other is strictly forbidden, and a reason for immediate dismissal.”

She gaped at him. “Why on earth would you think I was sleeping with Jeremy? We’re friends.”

He shrugged again. “You obviously have no problem sleeping with someone to get what you want. You need help with your training, and Jeremy seems more than eager to help. I saw him kissing you when I came in.”

“You son of a bitch!” She tried to punch him in the face but he pulled his head back and she missed. She stumbled but kept her balance and stared at him furiously.

“Are you sleeping with Jeremy?” He repeated softly.

“If you want to kick me out of the program for failing the physical requirements, go ahead. I won’t contest it. But if you even dare try to kick me out just because you think I’m sleeping with Jeremy, I swear to God you’ll be in for a fight,” she said, her voice seething with anger.

“Tell me if you’re sleeping with Jeremy or not!” He suddenly shouted.

“Make me,” she retorted childishly.

His nostrils flared angrily. She took a step backward, but then forced herself to stand still as he moved closer and she could feel his breath on her face. She would be damned if she would show any fear around him.

He was standing directly in front of her now with his chest rising and falling rapidly. She could almost see the steam leaking from his ears. She didn’t flinch when he reached out and gripped the back of her head, pulling her forward until the tips of her breasts brushed against his chest.

“I could make you tell me,” he whispered.

She didn’t reply. She hadn’t been this close to Will since the night in the gym, and her senses were being flooded with the memories of his mouth, his hard body and the incredible orgasm he had given her.

“You’re standing too close,” she whispered weakly. She had spent the last four weeks trying to forget what it was like being with Will. With his terrible treatment of her, she had found it surprisingly easy and thought she had lost all of her attraction to him. But now, after only a few seconds of him touching her, of looking at her, she was right back to that night in the training room. Minutes ago she was so angry with him she had wanted to strangle him, and now it was all she could do to stop herself from throwing him on the ground and having her way with him.

“Am I in your personal space?” He asked silkily. His anger seemed to have dissipated completely, and he was staring at her in a way that was all too familiar. He cupped her jaw and rubbed his thumb across her mouth, smiling a little at her soft moan.

She swallowed thickly and nodded, staring into Will’s eyes. The blue was fading, becoming lighter and lighter until they were a golden yellow. She frowned but before she could ask him about it, he bent his head until his mouth was almost touching hers.

“I like being in your personal space,” he whispered, his breath puffing against her lips. Still cupping her face, he reached down with his other hand and gripped her ass. He squeezed it roughly, making her gasp, and pulled her body flush against his. His hand drifted down her thigh and to the back of her knee, and she made no move to stop him when he pulled her leg up and hooked it around his hips. He used his leg to push against her other one, forcing her to widen her stance until he could fit himself between her legs. She moaned at the feel of his erection against her and tightened her leg around his hips, pressing her crotch against him.

With a low groan he kissed her hard. Her mouth opened to his insistent tongue, and she gave another moan of pleasure as they kissed deeply. He cupped her breast, kneading and squeezing it through her tank top and sports bra. She ran her fingers up his skull and tangled them into his damp hair, holding on tightly as he kissed his way down her neck. His beard tickled lightly and she giggled softly. He growled and nipped her throat.

“Find something funny, Ms. Torrington?”

“No,” she moaned as he licked his way across her collarbone.

He was reaching for her shirt when he suddenly froze. He stood with his head cocked to the side, an intent look on his face.

“What?” She asked hoarsely.

“Someone’s coming,” he muttered. He stepped away from her and she straightened her clothing as seconds later, voices were heard outside the training room. She held her breath and then released it in a harsh rush when the voices continued past the door and faded down the hallway.

“Come back to my room with me.” He held out his hand.

She laughed shakily. “I don’t think that’s a very good idea, Will.”

“I think it’s an excellent idea. In fact,” he stepped closer and snaked an arm around her waist, “it’s the best idea I’ve had in weeks.”

He bent his head to kiss her again and she leaned back. He frowned, his eyes glowing softly at her.

“Why are your eyes a different colour, Will?” She asked quietly. She touched his beard lightly, feeling the coarse hair under her fingers. “And how is it possible that you can grow a beard in minutes?”

He let go of her and turned away, staring at the wall behind him for a moment. When he turned around his eyes were their normal shade of blue and, while he still wasn’t clean-shaven, the hair on his cheeks had thinned considerably.

“You’re imagining things, Hannah.”

That made her laugh. “Bullshit, Will. When you walked into the room earlier you had light blue eyes and were clean-shaven. Then your eyes were yellow and you had a beard. Now,” she folded her arms across her torso, “your eyes are back to blue and you’re only scruffy.”

“I have no idea what you’re talking about,” he lied.

She stared at him for a moment. Her eyes went hazy as a memory of a lesson Isabelle had taught them tugged at her brain. He could pinpoint the moment she realized exactly what he was.

“You’re a werewolf,” she breathed.

“Lycan,” he corrected automatically.

“How? When? Were you bit?” She sputtered.

He shook his head. “No, I was born a Lycan. Both my parents were born as Lycans, as were their parents before them.”

“Jesus Christ, Will,” she said weakly. “You should have told me.”

“Why? It’s none of your concern,” he said dismissively.

“None of my - ”

She stared at him incredulously. “We had sex. If we hadn’t just been interrupted, we would have been having sex again.”

“So? Lycans have been mating with humans for years. It’s not encouraged but there are plenty of us who find human females attractive.”

“You still should have told me,” she said angrily.

“Let me guess.” He gave her a tight grin that didn’t reach his eyes. “Your delicate sensibilities are offended by the fact that you’ve mated with a half-human, half-beast.”

He rolled his eyes. “Before you freak out, let me assure you that sex with me won’t turn you into a Lycan. Only a bite during the full moon will do that.”

“That isn’t the issue, Will,” she said through clenched teeth.

“Then what is?” He raised his eyebrow at her. “You would prefer to fuck your way through the program with someone who’s completely human? I would suggest Mannie then. He’s as human as they come.”

“I hate you!” She shouted furiously at him. “I was just making a stupid, awkward joke. It’s what I do when I’m nervous! I didn’t have sex with you to try and earn my place in the program. I was lonely and sad, and I made a huge mistake that night. One I deeply regret, believe me. And I’m not some sort of goddamn Lycan racist – I just prefer to know who or what a person is before I sleep with them. It’s called getting to know someone, you asshole.”

“Then you must know everything there is to know about Jeremy,” he said sourly.

“Fuck you, Will! You touched me first tonight!” She shouted foolishly and stormed out of the room.

Will sighed and rubbed his hand wearily across his forehead. He would never admit this to anyone, but he was badly shaken by his lack of control when it came to Hannah. She was smart, too damn smart, and the fact that she had figured out he was a Lycan was bad news. Not that they kept it from the new recruits forever, but he preferred to tell them when he could control the situation.

He grimaced with disgust at himself. He was acting like a prepubescent Lycan pup. Only teenage boys and old men had trouble controlling the shift when they were mating. He had slept with human women before and had no problem controlling that side of him. At this point, all he had to do was think about Hannah’s naked body and he could feel himself wanting to shift.

He sighed again and thought about the way Hannah reacted when he touched her. He had never been with a woman so responsive to him, and he was being driven mad by the memories of

how she had tasted and felt. He smelled her scent everywhere now. It seemed to be permanently lodged in his brain, and the last four weeks were pure hell trying to stop from touching her.

He had taken his frustration and anger out on her and the other recruits. Although, if he was honest, mostly her. A week after they had slept together, on a morning after a long and brutal run, he could see her desperately trying not to vomit as she stood panting with the other recruits. She hadn't vomited after a run in four days and he had singled her out, taunting her and calling her weak in front of the others, until she was pale and shaking violently. Finally, she had turned and escaped into the trees, vomiting miserably as the others stared at him with a mixture of fear and disgust.

He had gone too far and had immediately regretted it. He was about to go to her, to apologize and carry her to the infirmary, when he had forced himself back to reality. Doing that would raise more than a few eyebrows, and he couldn't afford to let anyone find out that he had slept with Hannah. She'd be dismissed from the program and his reputation would be destroyed.

He had instructed Selena to help her to the infirmary. Hannah had returned two hours later, still pale with dark circles under her eyes and her long limbs trembling with exhaustion, but she had dropped gamely to the ground to join the others in sit-ups. He had scowled at her and ordered her back to her dormitory for the rest of the day.

He shook his head and left the training room, heading towards his room and doing his best to ignore Hannah's scent in the hallway.

Chapter Six

“What happened?” Selena whispered as soon as Hannah had crawled into the bed next to hers. Across the room Hannah could hear Alison’s soft snores and she turned and faced Selena, propping herself up on her arm.

“The usual. He screamed and yelled and threatened to kick me out of the program. “

“He should be happy you’re trying to improve your hand-to-hand combat. It’s your weakest area.” Selena pointed out.

“Thanks, Selena,” Hannah said sarcastically.

“Just keeping it real. Besides, you’re way faster at running now than I am, and you’re probably as strong as Jeremy and Tyler.”

“Stupid hand-to-hand,” Hannah grumbled. “It’s pointless anyway.”

“It’s not,” Selena insisted. “It’ll come in handy for us later.”

“Do you really think so?” Hannah asked. “A human would never win a hand-to-hand combat fight with a vampire, and all the instructors know it. They waste this much time on it when Will himself told us the best defense against vampires is to run and hide.” She rubbed the small round scars on her neck, remembering Nathan’s terrible strength.

“I’m sorry he yelled at you, Hannah. You didn’t have to take all the blame yourself.”

“I might as well. He already hates me and the feeling is mutual,” she finished darkly.

Selena stared thoughtfully at her. “I used to think he hated you but now I’m not so sure.”

Hannah’s stomach dropped to her knees but she forced herself to look questioningly at Selena. “What do you mean?”

“I dunno. You know what they say about boys in the schoolyard. They always torment the girl they like the most.”

Hannah laughed. “We aren’t children anymore, Selena. Trust me – Will hates my guts.” She flopped down on her pillow, hoping it would be the end of the conversation but Selena was on a roll.

“I know he’s plenty mean to you, but he watches you all the time.”

“He watches all of us,” she protested. “That’s his job – to weed out the weak.”

“Yeah well, all I know is I’ve never caught him looking at me like he’s wondering what colour my underwear is,” Selena said tartly.

Hannah rolled her eyes. “You’re imagining things.”

“Nope, I’m not,” Selena said calmly. “Will wants to screw your brains out. You can deny it all you want, but I recognize lust when I see it.”

“I’m not even remotely interested,” Hannah lied.

Selena frowned. “Really? Not one tiny bit?”

“Nope.”

“I’d do him,” Selena announced.

“Selena!” Hannah looked at her in shock, and Selena wiggled her eyebrows at her.

“What? He’s hot.”

“He doesn’t yell at you 24/7,” Hannah said grumpily.

She shrugged. “He’s yelled at me plenty. Besides,” she grinned at Hannah, “I don’t believe you when you say you’re not interested. Every woman at this place is interested in sleeping with Will. Honestly, you’d have to be half-dead not to be. Those broad shoulders and tight ass – yummy. A girl could get lost in those dreamy blue eyes of his. And that mouth...” Selena fanned herself.

“Maybe it’s different when those dreamy blue eyes are burning holes into you, and that mouth is screaming about how weak you are,” Hannah said.

Selena grinned. “Honey, in bed he could scream whatever he wanted at me.”

Hannah rolled her eyes again as Selena rubbed at a large bruise on her arm. “Unfortunately, they say that Will never sleeps with recruits. He prefers to keep his personal life separate from his job. Damn shame that is.”

“One – it’s against the rules for instructors to sleep with recruits and two – who are ‘they’?” Hannah asked.

“‘They’ are just the people here.” Selena waved her hands vaguely. “If you didn’t keep to yourself so much you’d be hearing all the rumours too. It’s like a goddamn soap opera at this place. Everyone is fucking everyone - I swear to God. Besides, you can’t tell me you haven’t noticed how practically all the women recruits start drooling when Will walks by? The rumour is that Leanne from the recruit group before us actually snuck into his room one night. She was planning on slipping into his bed, but I guess he woke up the minute she stepped into his room.”

“What happened then?” Hannah asked, curious despite herself.

“Well, I heard this from Alison, who got it from Melanie, but apparently Leanne basically stripped off her clothes and threw herself at him. Will politely declined and escorted her back to the dorms.”

“And she wasn’t kicked out?”

“She’s still here isn’t she? We ate breakfast with her this morning.”

“No.” Hannah shook her head. “I don’t believe it. There’s no way that the instructors are sleeping with the recruits.”

Selena grinned. “Get your head out of the clouds, Hannah. Apparently Will’s the only instructor who *hasn’t* slept with a recruit.”

She checked to see if Alison was still sleeping and lowered her voice conspiratorially. “Alison and Mannie have been having sex at least once a week since our third week here. Alison calls it her ‘stress reliever’. And apparently Isabelle hits on every new male recruit that walks through the door. Jeremy’s the only one out of our group who hasn’t slept with her yet. And that’s only because he has a crush on you.”

“No he doesn’t!” Hannah said indignantly.

Selena laughed. “Yes he does. Why do you think he was so eager to help you out tonight?”

Selena lay back down, and Hannah was just breathing a sigh of relief that the conversation was over when she said, “I wonder what Will’s like in bed? I bet he’s rough and demanding. He probably shouts out the different positions he wants you to get into.” She giggled softly to herself.

“What do you think, Hannah?” She frowned when there was no reply and glanced over. “Hannah? Hello...earth to Hannah?”

Hannah was staring at the ceiling. Selena’s comments about Will being rough in bed had unwillingly shoved her right back to the night in the training room. Despite their desire and their almost frantic need for each other, Will was surprisingly gentle. She could still remember how he had stopped immediately, concern etched across his face when he thought he had hurt her. Just remembering the way he had waited so patiently as she adjusted to him, and the warmth of his mouth as he had kissed her was sending shivers down her back.

She forced herself back to the present as Selena reached across and tapped her on the arm. “Hello! Hannah, what do you think?”

“About what?”

“What do you think Will is like in bed?” Selena repeated herself impatiently.

Hannah sighed. "I think it's late and I'm too tired to have this conversation. Go to sleep, Selena. We have a big day ahead of us tomorrow."

* * *

Hannah quickly gulped down the grilled chicken and heaping plate of vegetables. The morning was filled with exercises that had tested their endurance and strength. She had thought she would be nervous but she quickly realized that the tests were pretty much the same as their everyday exercise routine, only with Richard attending and less screaming from Will and Mannie.

After lunch they would be tested on their hand-to-hand combat skills, and Hannah felt her stomach clench a little. She was confident she had done well enough on the testing this morning, but she knew that failing even one section would be enough to kick her out of the program.

I can't let that happen, she thought fiercely. *Not after everything I've gone through to get this far.*

The final stage of training was weapons and she wanted desperately to make it through. She knew she would never have her revenge for Sara if she didn't learn how to use weapons.

She forced herself to concentrate on her lunch and on the others around her. She stared fixedly at the tiny redhead sitting across from her. Until last night she had shown no interest in Leanne. She had just been another face in the crowd but now, after what Selena had told her, Hannah found herself glancing repeatedly at her.

"Something on my face, Hannah?" Leanne asked.

"What? Oh no – I'm sorry. I was just lost in thought." Hannah smiled at her.

Leanne nodded and gave her a cool, appraising look. "How did your tests go this morning?"

"Good – I think."

"Just the hand-to-hand this afternoon?"

"Yes," Hannah replied.

"I hear that's your weakest – good luck."

"Thanks." Hannah gave her a tense smile. Did everyone know everything in this place? Leanne was the third person today to wish her luck at the combat test and she was starting to think Selena was right – she did have her head in the clouds.

She cleared her throat nervously as Leanne continued to stare at her. If this many people knew about her struggles with her training, how many of them knew she had slept with Will? She hadn't told anyone, and she was positive that Will hadn't said a word about it but what about Chen? She knew nothing about the man and he rarely joined the other instructors in the cafeteria. When he wasn't training the recruits, he spent most of his time in his private quarters.

"She'll be just fine," Selena said firmly.

Hannah realized that Leanne was no longer looking at her but at something beside her. A large smile crossed her face and she said in a low, seductive voice, "Hello Will."

Hannah groaned inwardly and glanced upward to see Will standing next to her.

"Ladies," Will said curtly.

"How are you today?" Leanne was practically purring and a strong thread of hatred for the girl shot through Hannah. Its ferociousness surprised her and she took a deep breath, willing herself to calm down.

"Fine thanks, Leanne," Will replied. He gave her a small smile and another emotion, Hannah recognized it reluctantly as jealousy, reared its ugly head within her.

Will glanced at Selena and Hannah, the smile dropping from his face. “Your final test is in an hour – don’t be late.”

“Yes, sir,” Selena squeaked.

“Wouldn’t dream of it, sir,” Hannah said with a fake brittle smile.

He frowned at her and walked away as Leanne turned in her seat to stare at his ass.

“Jesus, he’s so hot,” she moaned, turning back to Hannah and Selena. She grinned wickedly at them as Selena laughed and took a sip of her water.

“He seems fond of you.”

“I know, right?” Leanne said dreamily. “We have a special relationship.”

“Oh really?” Hannah arched an eyebrow at her. “My understanding is that you threw yourself at him and was quickly rejected.”

Leanne glared at her before pasting a smile back on her face. “The first time yes, but trust me – he couldn’t resist the second time.”

Another stabbing twinge of jealousy went through Hannah as Selena raised her hand and high-fived Leanne across the table. “You go, girl!”

She glanced around and leaned in. “Spill your guts. What’s he like in bed?”

Leanne grinned. “Let’s just say he knows his way around a woman’s body and leave it at that.”

“You’re killing me!” Selena said. “At least tell me if he’s as demanding in bed as he is in the training field.”

Leanne winked at her. “He knows exactly what he wants, and he goes right ahead and takes it. I don’t think that man has a gentle bone in his body.”

Hannah stood up abruptly. “If you’ll excuse me, I need to do some exercise and work off this lunch before the next test.”

* * *

Hannah winced as Selena rushed Mannie and leaped at him. The force of her small body propelled him to the ground but before she could pin him, he flipped her onto her back. With a loud grunt, she lifted her knees and shoved him away before leaping to her feet.

“Bring it, little baby.” Mannie grinned and crooked his finger at her.

“Ladies first,” Selena panted, and Mannie gave her another broad grin and dove for her legs. She leaped nimbly to her left, falling on to her shoulder and jumping back to her feet in a flash as Mannie stumbled and fell. She jumped on Mannie’s back and wrapped her arms around his head and neck, squeezing fiercely. Mannie staggered to his feet and tried to shake her but she clung like a monkey. After a few minutes Mannie’s face was nearly purple, and Richard blew the whistle that hung around his neck.

Grinning, Selena released her hold on him and dropped to the ground. She danced around the mat, fist-pumping the air as Hannah and the other recruits clapped and cheered.

“Well done, Selena.” Richard smiled and checked the clipboard he was holding. “Okay, last one. Hannah, you’re up.”

Selena squeezed her shoulder as they passed each other. “You can do it, Hannah.”

Hannah nodded nervously and waited for Ryan, one of the older recruits, to approach the mat. Mannie and Ryan were taking turns acting as the assailants for the recruit’s test, and she was thankful she had Ryan. He was smaller than Mannie and not as strong, and she could feel her confidence level rising as Ryan slipped off his shoes and started toward the mat.

Her newfound confidence turned to dread when Will clapped Ryan on the shoulder. “I’ve got this.”

Ryan nodded and stepped back as Will, wearing a t-shirt and sweats, took off his shoes and moved on to the mat. He stood in front of her. “Ready?”

She paused and glanced desperately at Richard who frowned. “Is there a problem, Hannah?”

She looked back at Will. He was staring silently at her, and she could clearly read the expression on his face. It practically screamed ‘chickenshit’ at her.

“No, Richard. I’m ready.” Hannah took a deep breath and thought quickly. She had to rethink her strategy. Will was big and strong, and she didn’t have a chance at besting him with strength. She would have to be fast on her feet and avoid getting caught up by him.

They circled each other silently as more recruits and instructors gathered around them. Hannah could see from the corner of her eye that even Chen was standing still and quiet at the edge of the crowd.

“What’s with all the people?” Selena whispered to Mannie.

He shrugged and said quietly, “No one’s ever seen Will engage in a combat test with a baby before.”

“Come on, little baby,” Will sneered softly. “You gonna just stare at me all day?”

“You want me – come and get me,” she taunted. “Or are you afraid of a little girl like me?”

With a low, angry growl he sprinted towards her.

“Breathe, Hannah,” she muttered to herself and as he reached for her, she grabbed his forearm and turned her body, socking her hip into his midsection, exactly as Mannie had taught them. The move worked like a charm. Will sailed over her hip, landing with a thud on the mats.

Before he could stagger to his feet, she had dropped onto his chest. She pinned his shoulders down with her knees and pushed all of her weight down.

“Give up?” She asked.

He looked up at her, his chin nestled firmly in her crotch, and wrapped his large hands around her thighs. She shuddered a little at his touch, cursing her traitorous body as he grinned.

“Oh it won’t be that easy, baby.”

He squeezed her thighs and heaved her body off of him as if she weighed no more than a feather. She hit the floor hard, her breath escaping in a harsh whoosh, but she immediately scrambled to her feet. She had just gained her feet when she felt Will’s hand snake around her ankle. She yelped as he yanked her feet out from under her and she fell onto her back, her head bouncing off the mat.

Quick as a flash he straddled her, pinning her arms down with his hands and leaning over her. He grinned wolfishly at her. “Give up?”

She wheezed something at him and he leaned further down. “What was that, baby?”

She head-butted him viciously and he roared in shock and pain, his grip loosening. She used his shock to her advantage, bucking her entire body upward and twisting violently to the left. He fell off of her and she scrabbled to her feet, backing up to the far end of the mat as the crowd cheered.

Panting, he stood and faced her. She could see the red mark on his cheek where she had hit him and as he rubbed it with his fingers, she grinned cheekily at him. “Give up?”

He started toward her and she surprised him and the crowd, by racing forward to meet him. When he reached for her she dropped to her knees and slid across the slippery mat under his arms. As she slid past him she punched him in the crotch.

He grunted loudly and dropped to his knees, cupping his balls as the entire crowd gasped and the men winced.

“No fair! She hit him in the jewels!” Mannie cried and Selena grinned at him.

“You’ve told us time and time again to do whatever it takes – remember, Mannie?”

She turned back to the fight just in time to see Hannah leap onto Will’s back, and wrap her arms around his head and neck like she had done with Mannie.

“Go Hannah go!” She shouted as Hannah wrapped her long legs around Will’s waist and locked them firmly around his sternum.

Will clambered to his feet. His face was bright red and Hannah was squeezing so hard, Selena had no idea how he was even breathing, let alone standing. With a loud wheeze he pulled her legs apart, the muscles in his arms bulging with the effort, and bent over, flipping her over his head. She lost her grip on his neck and slammed down to the floor, the breath knocked out of her. He fell on her, straddling her once more and pinning her arms above her head.

She squirmed furiously underneath him. He leaned over her and she tried to head butt him again, but this time he was ready and dodged it easily.

“Give up.” He demanded.

“Never!” She spat and continued to struggle.

Hannah writhed and twisted under Will. She was furious and, she realized with dismay, more than a little turned on. The feel of Will’s body on hers was making her ache with need despite her anger. As his gaze dropped first to her mouth and then her heaving breasts, she felt a thin thread of satisfaction when his eyes turned yellow.

Will stared at Hannah’s mouth. His balls ached with a deep, throbbing pain and his throat felt like it was on fire, but he had an almost undeniable urge to kiss her.

Fuck it, he thought and leaned his head down. Her eyes widened with shock but she made no attempt to avoid his mouth. Instead, her lips parted in anticipation.

Before he could kiss her, Richard’s voice broke through the haze. “Enough, Will.”

He looked up. The crowd had fallen silent, and they were staring at the two of them. He let her go and stood up, holding his hand out to her.

“Fuck!” Hannah shouted.

She ignored his hand and staggered to her feet. Her face was red and her body was shaking with anger. She stomped off the mat, pushed through the crowd and disappeared through the doors of the training room. Selena hesitated and then ran after her.

“Okay folks, show’s over – go on.” Richard addressed the crowd as Will slipped into his shoes.

“What was that about?” Richard frowned at him as the crowd broke up.

“Nothing,” Will muttered. He wasn’t about to tell Richard he had stepped in because the thought of another man touching Hannah, even in a mock training drill, made him crazy with jealousy. He left the training room and headed to his living quarters for a cold shower.

Chapter Seven

Hannah stared at the closed door of Richard's office. A combination of dread and anxiety was coursing through her, making her palms sweat and her stomach nauseous. It was early the next morning. The recruits had eaten breakfast together and then gathered in the common area, waiting nervously for Richard to call them individually into his office.

One by one they were called to his office until only Hannah was left. The others, who had all graduated to the next stage of training, were waiting patiently for her back in the common room. She swallowed hard before knocking lightly on the door with a badly-trembling hand.

"Come in," Richard called and she entered the room. She crossed the room and nearly collapsed into the chair in front of the desk. She gave Richard a small, sick smile while her hands twisted and turned in her lap.

"How are you today, Hannah?" He asked.

"Fine. I'm fine – good," she croaked out.

It was a complete lie. After her humiliating defeat at the hands of Will she had stormed back to her dorm and locked herself in the bathroom, ignoring Selena's pleas to come out and talk to her. She would be kicked out of the program, and the thought that she would never find revenge for her sweet Sara filled her with shame and anger.

Long after Selena had fallen asleep, Hannah had stared dry-eyed at the ceiling. She had alternated between thoughts of how long she would last back in the real world before a vampire tried to finish the job Nathan had started, and how to convince Richard to give her a second chance. Finally, as the alarm clock had edged towards three, she had fallen into a restless sleep.

Richard smiled gently at her. "You know, Hannah, you've done very well for yourself in the recruiting program. Will, of course, has his doubts but I'm impressed by how much you've improved."

She nodded. Her face was pale and her hands were clenched together in a tight fist.

He stared silently at her for a few minutes and then straightened the papers on his desk. "Well, let's not drag this out," he said briskly. "Congratulations, you're moving on to the next level."

"Richard, listen to me," Hannah blurted out, her voice heavy with desperation. "I am begging you for a second chance. I've excelled at every part of the program other than the combat section. And if you really think about it, hand-to-hand combat is completely useless against vampires anyway."

"Hannah –" Richard tried to interrupt her but she carried on, speaking even faster.

"Besides, it was an unfair fight. There's no way I could have beaten Will in hand-to-hand combat. None of us could – he's a Lycan for God's sake."

She paused. "Wait...what did you say?"

Richard laughed. "I said congratulations - you passed."

Hannah's mouth dropped open and she stared at him. "I passed? Are you – are you sure?"

He laughed again. "Very."

"Thank you," Hannah said thinly. Her heart was pounding, sending blood rushing through her body. "Richard, thank you so much."

He shrugged. "Don't thank me. Will, Mannie and Isabelle are the ones who have the final say on whether you pass or not."

She stood up on legs that were still shaking but Richard held up his hand. "One last thing, Hannah. How did you know Will's a Lycan?"

"I'm sorry – what?" She stuttered, trying to buy some time.

"A Lycan. How did you know Will is a Lycan? He normally doesn't tell the recruits until they've moved on to the weapons training."

"Oh um, I just kind of figured it out. You know...after the lessons from Isabelle and stuff," she said lamely.

Richard stared at her. She knew he didn't believe her but he let it go. "Very well. Go back to your friends and tell them the good news. It's been a while since every recruit in a group has moved on to the next level so you'll have extra to celebrate tonight."

"Celebrate?"

He grinned. "It's tradition. We give the babies a break from their training, and give them an evening off outside of the facility. Enjoy yourself. It'll be the last break you get for a very long time."

She nodded and walked composedly out of his office. She shut the door and stood quietly in the hallway for a moment with her eyes closed. She took a deep breath and then broke into a hip- gyrating, pelvis-thrusting, arms-waving-wildly-over-her-head dance.

Grinning hugely, she opened her eyes and jumped when she saw Will standing two feet away.

"Jesus! Stop sneaking up on me." She scowled.

He grinned at her. "Nice moves."

She gave him a sour look and pushed past him.

He grabbed her upper arm and pulled her to a stop. "I hear congratulations are in order."

She scowled at him again. "Yeah, no thanks to you."

The smile dropped from his face. "What do you mean?"

"Don't play dumb, Will," she hissed, yanking her arm free. "You intentionally tried to sabotage me by forcing me to fight you in the combat training. No human would have been able to beat you. You set me up for failure."

"I can assure you that was not my intention," he said dryly.

"Oh really? Then why did you step in yesterday? Hmm?" Her face was completely pale except for two red spots high on her cheekbones. Her absolute fury with him had turned her usual soft and pretty features into a ruthless and cold type of beauty.

He took a deep breath and tried to remember how incredibly inappropriate it would be to kiss her right now. He took a few steps backwards, wanting to put some space between them. She followed him, her body nearly touching his, and he backed up again until he felt the wall against his back.

"Well? I'm waiting," she said coolly.

"I thought it would be good for you," he lied. "Thought you could use the extra challenge."

"Fuck you," she said scornfully.

"You already have – remember?" He dropped his gaze to her mouth and she punched him solidly in the chest. He looked back up at her, barely feeling the blow, and his nostrils flared at the look in her eyes. The anger was still there, but underneath it was an emotion he recognized well. It was the same thing he felt every time he even thought of Hannah – lust, desire, and need.

He glanced both ways down the hallway. Although he was aching to kiss her, four feet outside of Richard's office in a busy corridor was definitely not the time or place.

"This is not a good idea, Hannah," he mimicked her from earlier, and she gave him a decidedly shark-like grin and leaned closer.

"What's not a good idea, Will?" She asked softly. "This?"

She ran her fingers over his mouth, making him inhale sharply. "Or maybe this?"

She raised his hand to her lips and sucked his index finger into her mouth. He groaned loudly and snatched his hand free.

“Stop that,” he muttered. As Hannah leaned closer, pressing her breasts against his chest, he rolled his hands into fists at his side. For the first time in his life he felt like the prey, and it was making him decidedly uncomfortable.

“You don’t like this?” She ran her fingers over his cheek. There was no mark or bruise to indicate where she had head-butted him. “You seem to be a fast healer.”

“It’s a Lycan thing,” he muttered again. “Listen, Richard is going to come walking out of his office at any moment.”

She slipped her hands under his shirt and across his flat abdomen before trailing them through the hair on his chest. Her thumb brushed across one flat nipple and a quiet moan escaped his lips.

She grinned again and circled her thumb around his nipple. “We’ll just tell him we’re having a grudge match – winner takes all.”

She pinched his nipple and he grabbed her around the hips and yanked her against him. She could feel his erection pushing against her and she stretched up, tilting her head until her lips were nearly touching his.

“How are your balls by the way?” She breathed with amusement in her voice.

His eyes popped open and he glared at her. “I spent the night with an ice pack on my crotch - thanks to you.”

“Poor baby.” She smiled innocently. “Hopefully it won’t affect any future bedroom performances.”

“Why don’t you come back to my room and I’ll show you exactly how well I can perform,” he growled. He tried to kiss her but she pulled her head back.

“Richard, remember?” She glanced at the closed door to Richard’s office. “What would he think if he came out here and saw you kissing me? Our grudge match cover story would be blown.”

She ran her hands down the bare skin of his back and then over his ass, squeezing it firmly through his jeans.

“Come back to my room with me, Hannah.” He paused. “Please.”

She smiled again. “Maybe I could make up for punching you in the crotch yesterday?”

She licked his upper lip lightly and quickly. “In fact, maybe it would help if I kissed it better.”

His hands dug painfully into her hips, and she glanced at him just in time to see his eyes change from their light blue to the now-familiar golden yellow in an instant. She could almost see the beard thickening on his cheeks and chin and, with a hard look of satisfaction, she tore free from his grip.

“Sorry, Will.” She sauntered away from him and down the hall. “I just remembered I have a previous engagement tonight. I’m celebrating with my friends.”

She winked at him and exited the hallway.

Chapter Eight

“To the babies! Who, after tonight, will no longer be the babies.” Mannie held up his shot glass of tequila and the others followed suit. They clinked and quickly swallowed the amber liquid. Selena made a face and bit into her lemon half.

“Ugh. Now I remember why I don’t drink tequila,” she choked out.

Hannah laughed. The tequila was burning a warm path down her throat and into her chest. She rarely drank and after only two beers and two shots of tequila, she was already feeling pleasantly tipsy.

“Another round!” Mannie roared. He, Tyler and Frank headed to the bar to order another round.

Hannah glanced around the bar. Mannie had loaded them into a van shortly after supper, and they had driven nearly an hour to the small, dusty bar. It was a country bar with garish neon signs on the wall and a decidedly redneck vibe to it. It was only eight o’clock but the place was already nearly full. It was an odd combination of young women in short skirts, men who were barely old enough to drink, and good old boys. There was a small stage in the far corner of the bar, and a dance floor barely big enough for ten people. Four guys in cowboy hats had taken the stage about half an hour ago, and were playing a mixture of classic rock and country.

“I wonder why Mannie brought us here,” Hannah said loudly to Selena.

Jeremy leaned forward. “So we don’t run into family or friends.”

Hannah blinked at him. She had never thought of the others and what their back stories were. She was too wrapped up in her depression over the loss of Sara.

She leaned towards Selena. “Does your family think you’re dead?”

Selena shook her head. “No. I was in the military before this – special ops. They think I’m currently deep undercover in the Middle East. I’ll be ‘overseas’ for at least a year.”

Hannah looked at Jeremy and Alison. Jeremy shrugged and took a gulp of beer.

“I’m not close to my parents. Gave them a lot of trouble when I was a teenager – drugs and alcohol, some time in juvie, that sort of thing. I cleaned up my act in my early twenties and joined the marines, but by then they were finished with me. I haven’t spoken to them in at least three years.”

Alison leaned in and spoke loudly over the sound of the music blaring from the band. “My parents died in a car accident when I was just a baby. I was raised by my aunt – she died when I was eighteen.”

“I’m sorry, Alison,” Hannah replied.

She shrugged. “Shit happens.”

Jeremy draped his arm casually over Hannah’s shoulders and smiled at her. “What about you? What’s your story?”

Before she could answer, Mannie and the others were back and carrying more shots of tequila.

“Now we must drink!” Frank shouted, and the table of cowboys sitting next to them glanced over and frowned.

“No more for me.” Hannah held up her hands but Tyler slammed a shot glass down in front of her anyway.

“No way, Hannah. You’re getting just as drunk as the rest of us.” He grinned at her as Frank and Mannie handed out the rest of the glasses.

“He’s right, HB,” Jeremy said. “Besides, you haven’t even done a tequila shot properly yet.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

Selena giggled. Her tanned skin was flushed and covered with a fine sheen of perspiration.

“Like this!” She scooted over to Frank and tipped his head to the side. She doused the side of his neck with salt and popped a lemon half into his mouth.

“Hold still, Frank.” She giggled. “It’s simple, Hannah – you lick, drink and suck. Watch.”

Selena leaned forward and licked Frank’s neck with her small, pink tongue. She drank the shot of tequila in one gulp, slammed the shot glass to the table and used her mouth to pull the lemon from Frank’s mouth. She sucked on it, her face squinching up as the others cheered and pounded the table.

“My turn!” Jeremy turned to Hannah and tilted her head to the side with gentle hands. He swept her hair back and sprinkled salt at the base of her neck. He carefully placed the lemon wedge in her mouth, and grinned at her before bending his head and licking her neck.

Hannah shivered at the feel of his warm wet tongue. Jeremy quickly downed the tequila and then leaned in to pull the lemon from her mouth. He let his lips rest on hers and Hannah casually loosened her grip on the lemon wedge. Jeremy had to grip it with his teeth and pull away to hang on to it.

He sucked on the sour juice and then put the lemon wedge on the table. “Your turn, Hannah.” He gave her a wicked grin and handed her the shaker of salt.

She had just shaken salt on his neck when Mannie yelled delightedly, “Will! You bastard! What are you doing here?”

She looked up to see Will crossing the crowded bar. He was wearing a leather jacket over a long sleeved shirt with his usual jeans and cowboy boots.

“Mannie.” Will nodded as Selena pulled out the chair beside her. With a small nod of thanks, he dropped in to the chair.

Mannie handed him a shot glass and Will took it, his gaze settling on Hannah. She stared stiffly back and Jeremy frowned a little.

“Hannah? It’s your turn.” He put a wedge of lemon in his mouth and handed her the shot glass of tequila.

“What’s going on?” Will asked casually.

“We’re teaching Hannah how to do tequila shots properly.” Selena giggled up at him. “She doesn’t know how to lick and suck.”

Hannah flushed and gave Selena a dirty look before Jeremy squeezed her arm. “I’m waiting,” he mumbled around the lemon wedge.

Butterflies in her stomach, ignoring the steady gaze of Will across the table, Hannah licked the salt from Jeremy’s neck as he snuck his arm around her waist. She swallowed the tequila quickly, shivering a little at the taste, and reached for the lemon in Jeremy’s mouth. Before she could grab it with her mouth, Jeremy let it fall to his lap and kissed her. He cupped her face and tightened his grip around her waist.

Completely surprised by the move, Hannah made no protest when he deepened the kiss. He stroked her tongue gently with his as the others whooped and hollered and pounded their fists against the table.

Hannah pulled herself free and pounded Jeremy lightly on the chest with her fist. “Jeremy, you asshole!” She sputtered.

He winked at her. “You taste good, Hannah Banana.”

She stared down at the table, willing herself not to look up at Will. She could feel his gaze burning into the top of her skull, and after only a few seconds she looked up. He was staring at her, his mouth set in a thin line, and she could see a muscle in his jaw ticking. He picked up a shot

of tequila and downed it quickly, slamming the glass back down on the table before continuing to stare at her. She flushed and glanced away.

“Another shot?” Jeremy whispered in her ear, his breath tickling and sending shivers down her spine.

“Not just yet.” She shook her head firmly. His hand drifted to her thigh under the table and squeezed familiarly. She rolled her eyes and moved Jeremy’s hand back to his own leg.

He smiled and leaned in closer. “C’mon, HB. Isn’t it time we got to know each other better?”

She pinched his cheek, trying to keep her tone light. “You’re so drunk you won’t remember a single thing I tell you in the morning.”

He laughed. “I’m not that drunk. I can still see how gorgeous you are.” He leaned in to kiss her again and she shoved him back.

“Slow down there, cowboy.” She grinned at him. I barely know you, remember?

He grinned back and stroked her arm leisurely. “I’m trying to change that.”

From the corner of her eye she could see Will starting to lean across the table. His brow furrowed angrily, and she knew she had to act fast before he beat the crap out of Jeremy.

“Bathroom break!” She sang out and shoved lightly at Alison who was sitting on her other side. Alison, who was rubbing Mannie’s crotch under the table, pushed her chair in further in so Hannah could squeeze past her and Mannie.

“I’ll go with you.” Selena stood and followed Hannah to the bathroom.

After using the toilet, the two of them washed their hands and primped in the mirror.

“God, my hair is flat already,” Selena sighed and scrunched her naturally curly hair with her fingers.

“Please, you look amazing.” Hannah laughed.

Selena eyed her critically. “You clean up real nice too, HB.”

“Gee, thanks.” Hannah laughed again and rolled her eyes.

“I’m serious. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you with your hair down before. I had no idea it was so long.”

“Yeah, it’s not that practical to keep it down when training. Who knows when I’m going to vomit in it,” Hannah said dryly.

She stood on her tiptoes and turned her body to look at her butt. She’d had to borrow a pair of jeans and a shirt from Alison. The program had provided her with workout clothes but nothing else, and she had thrown away the clothes she was wearing the night Sara had died.

The jeans were too short and both they and the t-shirt were definitely too tight. She smiled a little. She had never even imagined she would fit into a size ten pant. Two months of hard physical exercise had toned her body in a way she hadn’t dreamed possible.

She let out a squeal when Selena slapped her on the ass. “C’mon, let’s go back. I want to ogle Will some more. Maybe if I get him drunk enough, he’ll invite me back to his room.” She winked at Hannah and pulled her out of the bathroom.

Will took another drink of beer and watched as Hannah and Selena exited the bathroom. Before they could rejoin them, the band started playing a song with a catchy beat and Selena dragged Hannah to the dance floor.

He had no idea what he was doing here. He never joined the recruits on their night of celebration, preferring to keep it strictly professional with the recruits he trained. Tonight he had lasted only half an hour before he had jumped in his truck and headed for the bar.

He tried to tell himself it was because he was bored and restless but he knew better. He had joined them because he couldn’t stay away from Hannah. Earlier this morning she’d had him so

hot under the collar that he had practically begged her to sleep with him. He should have been angry with her, but all he felt was a grudging respect for how effectively she'd paid him back for his combat testing stunt.

He glanced back at the dance floor, his hand tightening around his beer bottle as he watched Hannah gyrate and twist her hips on the crowded dance floor. He had thought it was bad seeing her in the tight yoga pants and her skimpy sports bra day in and day out, but the tight jeans and low-cut t-shirt was infinitely worse.

He forced himself to look away before he had a full-blown erection. He realized Jeremy was staring at Hannah, a hungry look on his face, and it was all Will could do to not reach across the table and punch him. When Jeremy had kissed Hannah, his hand cupping her face familiarly, he had squeezed the shot glass in his hand so hard he was surprised it hadn't shattered.

Jeremy glanced at him, realized he was caught staring at Hannah, and gave Will a sheepish wink.

"What can I say man – she's a knockout," he said loudly and tipped his beer to Will.

They were distracted when Mannie poured a shot of tequila directly down Alison's shirt. She squealed loudly and slapped Mannie repeatedly on the chest and face as Frank and Tyler roared with laughter.

"Hey! Ya'll mind keeping it down over there? We're trying to enjoy the music." One of the cowboys at the table next to them shouted.

"How about you come over here and make us quiet down?" Jeremy said impudently.

The cowboy stood, and Jeremy started to get up from his chair but was stopped by Will's hard hand on his arm. "Cool it, Jeremy."

He looked at the man standing next to their table. "Sorry about the noise. We'll try and keep it down."

"Just make sure you do," the man retorted. "We don't care much for strangers in our –"

There was a shriek from the dance floor and Will looked over just in time to see Hannah punch a man twice her size, in the face. He stumbled back and then lunged for her and Will, cursing under his breath, stood and ran towards the dance floor.

* * *

"Well, hey pretty lady – how about you dance with me for a while?"

Hannah turned to see a man, he was dressed in a flannel shirt and jeans with a cowboy hat jammed firmly on his head, leering at her. She looked him up and down, taking in his tobacco stained teeth and his giant beer belly, before smiling coolly at him. "No thanks."

She turned back to Selena and froze when she felt the man's hand on her arm. She twisted around and stared pointedly at his hand.

"Let go of me."

"C'mon, sweetheart - just one dance," the man wheedled. "I promise you, you'll love every minute of it."

"I've asked you to let go of me," Hannah said loudly.

"And if I don't?"

"You'll regret it." Hannah smiled coldly.

Instead of letting her go, he glanced at his friends and then yanked her closer. "Don't play hard to get. I don't like stuck-up bitches."

She smiled sweetly at him. “Well, since you put it that way.” She stroked the top of his hand lightly and he grinned again and let go of her.

“That’s better. Now c’mere – “

He had just enough time to register Hannah’s fist heading for his face before it connected solidly with his nose. Pain exploded through his head and he stumbled back, holding his hand to his face and then looking in disbelief at the blood smeared across his palm.

“You bitch!” He screamed and lunged for her.

There was a blur of movement and the man went flying sideways. Hannah blinked as Will, his hand around the man’s throat, shoved him up against the wall until his feet dangled helplessly.

Will squeezed the man’s throat ruthlessly. “Touch her again and I’ll kill you. Do you understand me?” He snarled.

He squeezed the man’s throat again and slammed his head against the wall. The man’s face was turning purple, and his feet drummed helplessly against the wall as Will cut off his supply of oxygen.

“Will, stop!” Hannah grabbed Will’s arm and then stumbled back when Will looked at her. She had never seen him so angry. His eyes were glowing and he was snarling and growling low in his throat.

“Hannah, watch out!” Selena screamed shrilly and grabbed Hannah’s shoulder, yanking her back just as three men barrelled past her and jumped Will from behind.

There was a commotion behind them and Hannah turned and stared in disbelief. In a matter of seconds, the entire bar had exploded into chaos. She could see Jeremy and Tyler diving on top of the table next to theirs, attacking the cowboys who were currently punching Mannie and Frank as hard as they could. Alison, her face lit up with a huge smile, head-butted the cowboy in front of her before tackling him to the ground.

Women were screaming and ducking under tables, and Selena grabbed Hannah’s arm. “We need to get out of here!”

“No, we need to help Will!” Hannah shouted.

“He seems to be handling himself just fine!” Selena shouted back. Will had already knocked out two of the men who were attacking him, and was currently punching a third man repeatedly in the face.

Two other men ran forward and used their combined momentum to push Will towards the exit door at the back of the bar. With another angry roar, he slammed their heads together. They crumpled to the floor as the man Will had punched in the face, staggered to his feet and pulled a gun from inside his jacket.

“Will!” Hannah screamed as the man raised the gun and shot Will in the chest. The force of the shot knocked Will backwards against the exit door. The door popped open and Will tumbled out into the darkness and disappeared.

“Oh my God,” Selena whispered.

The whole bar had quieted. Men and women stared in shock at the man holding the gun as he looked blankly at the weapon in his hand.

“Will?” Hannah whispered. She stared at the exit door as the front door of the bar opened and a group of ten men and two women swept in.

“Well, well, well – what do we have here?” A tall man, his face perfectly void of colour, glanced delightedly around the room.

“So much destruction, so much chaos, so much...” he paused and inhaled deeply, “blood.”

“Oh fuck me,” Hannah whispered as the man grinned and she caught a glimpse of long white incisors. She grabbed Selena’s arm with a hand that had turned cold as ice, and began to back up.

“Hannah, what – “

Selena’s voice died as the twelve vampires hissed and bared their fangs before the bar was plunged into darkness.

There were screams and shouts of pain that turned into soft gurgles and Hannah, still gripping Selena’s arm, dropped to the floor dragging Selena with her.

“Selena move!” She whispered furiously and, keeping a firm grip on Selena’s arm, crawled across the dance floor as terrified screams filled the air.

Blind, her ears ringing with the screaming as the smell of blood filled the room, Hannah crawled towards what she hoped was the bathroom door. The exit door was too far away, and she knew their only chance of survival was the small window in the bathroom.

Panting, Selena’s soft sobs filling her ears, Hannah crawled forward until her reaching, questing hand hit the wall. She ran her hand across the wall to the right, sobbing with fear and anger when she encountered nothing but smooth wall. She switched directions, running her hand to the left and when her fingers found the doorway of the bathroom, she breathed a prayer of relief and opened the door just enough for her and Selena to slip through.

She shut the door softly behind them and leaned against it, panting lightly as Selena stared wide-eyed and trembling at her. There was a low buzzing and the emergency light in the corner above the mirror clicked on, bathing them in weak light.

“Hannah, what’s happening?”

“Vampires,” she whispered. “They’re vampires.”

“The others.” Selena swallowed. “We need to help them.”

Hannah nodded. “There’s a canvas bag full of wooden stakes in the van. I saw them under the seat when we were leaving the facility. We need to get to those first.”

Selena gave a small sob of dismay, and Hannah shook her roughly. “There’s no time for that. C’m on, we have to get to the van.”

She dragged Selena to her feet and led her to the far wall where there was a small window high up on the wall. She laced her fingers together and held them low. “Here, I’ll boost you.”

Selena shook her head. “No, I’ll boost you. I’m not strong enough to help you up through the window once I’m up there – you’re strong enough to help me.”

Hannah nodded and stepped into Selena’s laced hands. With a small grunt, Selena heaved her up toward the window and she quickly opened it. She was just struggling through the small opening when the door to the bathroom burst open and two vampires floated into the room.

“Ooh look... snacks!” The one vampire winked at the other and before either Hannah or Selena could move, they had raced across the room. The smaller one grabbed Selena and yanked her away from Hannah. He pinned her to the floor and Selena screamed as he sunk his fangs deep into her throat.

“Selena! No!” Hannah shrieked. She fell back on to the floor and scooted across it on her butt as the other vampire smiled gently at her.

“Don’t be frightened, dearie. I’m not going to hurt you.”

Hannah looked around desperately for a weapon. Under the counter, dusty and nearly hidden behind the garbage can, was a thin rod of rebar. She scooted closer to the counter as the vampire advanced towards her.

A loud howl from the bar made him freeze and as he glanced behind him at the door, Hannah rose to her knees and dove across the floor, sliding on her stomach and reaching for the rebar. The

vampire, moving quickly, grabbed her feet and Hannah screamed piercingly as he dragged her out from under the counter.

He flipped her easily onto her back and fell on her. As more howling and screaming was heard from the bar, his eyes widened with surprise and he looked down at the piece of rebar sticking out of his chest. Hannah had raised the rebar as he attacked, and skewered him like a piece of shrimp. He gazed at her in shock as blood spurted out of his chest and coated her hands and arms.

Hannah screamed and shoved as hard as she could. The rebar slid through his chest like butter and as he fell back, he made a low gurgling scream. His body burst into ash and the other vampire looked up from where he was feasting on Selena.

“Bitch!” It snarled and leaped on her. Hannah screamed as he sunk his fangs into the base of her neck and began to drink. The door to the bathroom burst open for a second time and a huge, snarling, wolf bounded into the small bathroom.

The vampire looked up, his mouth ringed with Hannah’s blood, and hissed like a cat. He backed into the corner and hissed again as the wolf, its fur standing up on its neck and its large sharp teeth glinting in the light, growled menacingly.

“I do not fear you, Lycan,” the vampire spat. He ran toward the wolf, and with a loud howl of rage the wolf leaped forward. It stood up on its hind legs and with one swipe of its paw, tore the head off the vampire. The head tumbled to the ground and spun across the floor under the stall, coming to rest next to the toilet.

As the body burst into a fine, cloudy ash, the wolf dropped to all fours and lifted its snout to the ceiling. It howled loudly, the small room nearly vibrating with the sound, and Hannah clapped her hands over her ears, wincing.

“No, please,” she whispered as the wolf advanced toward her. Moaning, weak from blood loss, she sat up and pedaled frantically with her feet, shoving her butt along the floor until her back hit the wall.

“Please don’t,” she breathed and closed her eyes as the wolf stopped in front of her. Its head was twice the size of hers and she flinched when it snuffed at her neck, blowing the hair back from her face and neck. It surprised her by licking gently at her neck where the vampire had bitten her, and she opened her eyes to see it staring at her. Its yellow eyes were strangely familiar.

“Will?” She whispered. He whined and she closed her eyes again.

“Hannah?”

She opened her eyes and Will was squatting in front of her. “Honey, are you okay?”

She nodded and let her eyes slip shut. The adrenaline was draining from her body, and she felt cold and weak. He patted her cheek lightly. “Open your eyes.”

“Tired,” she whispered.

“I know, honey, but I need you to look at me.”

She forced her eyelids up and stared at him.

“We need to leave. Can you stand?”

She nodded and he helped her to her feet. She staggered and he braced her against his naked body.

“Oh my God,” she whispered when she saw the small, crumpled figure on the floor next to the door. “Selena! Will – help her!”

He left her leaning against the wall and crouched next to Selena, his fingers looking for her pulse. He looked at Hannah and she could have sobbed with relief when he smiled.

“She’s still alive.”

He stood as the door opened and Jeremy, bleeding heavily from a gash on his forehead, stumbled into the room. "Hannah! Hannah – are you okay?"

She nodded as he ran to her and cupped her shoulders.

"Oh thank God," he whispered and kissed her forehead. "There was a werewolf. It ran in here."

Will picked up Selena and handed her off to Jeremy who took her with a soft grunt.

Jeremy studied Will for a moment. "You're the werewolf."

Will didn't answer him. Instead, he crossed the room and picked up Hannah. She clung to him, burying her face in his neck and breathing in his familiar scent

He left the bathroom and Hannah opened her eyes, her breath catching in her throat at the carnage surrounding them. There were dead bodies littered everywhere. Not a single person outside of their group had survived the attack, and Hannah's stomach rolled with nausea at the sight of so many dead bodies.

Tyler, his face pale and sick looking, was carrying Alison towards the front door. Mannie, covered in blood and ash, was lifting Frank over his shoulder in a fireman's carry. Frank hung limply and Hannah looked at Will, the question evident in her eyes.

"No, honey. I'm sorry. He didn't make it." She dropped her head to his shoulder and started crying weakly.

"Close your eyes," he whispered as he carried her toward the front door. She did as he instructed, keeping her eyes tightly closed as he walked through the bar. He walked out the front door, and she shivered when the cool air hit her bare skin.

He climbed into the van without letting her go, and she felt him settle into a seat as he shifted her on his lap. The others climbed in after them, and Mannie started the van as sirens were heard in the distance.

"What the fuck was that, Will?" Hannah could hear the panic in Mannie's voice. "There were too many of them to be a coincidence."

"Get us home, Mannie," Will murmured. "As fast as you can."

The van began to move and Hannah curled her body into Will's. He rubbed her back soothingly and she let herself drift into the darkness.

Chapter Nine

Hannah groaned and opened her eyes. She stared blearily at the unfamiliar ceiling before rubbing her eyes with her fists. With a sudden rush, she remembered everything that had happened and she sat up straight in the bed, her hand rising to her throat.

“Will!” She gasped.

“You’re okay, Hannah. Lay down.”

She looked at Barb, who was sitting beside her on the bed.

“Will,” she repeated herself. “Is he okay?”

“He’s fine,” Barb soothed. She pushed gently at Hannah’s shoulder. “Lie back please.”

Hannah collapsed on the bed as Barb felt her forehead and then peeled back the bandage on her neck. She made a soft tutting noise under her breath, and carefully removed the tape before dabbing antiseptic on the wounds.

“Where am I?” Hannah’s voice was hoarse and Barb handed her a glass of water. She lifted her head and took careful sips as she glanced around the room.

It was a large bachelor’s suite. One section of the room was obviously the living area with a small couch facing a wall that had a gas fireplace and a TV mounted on the wall above it. Bookshelves, crammed with books, flanked the fireplace, and there was an oversized easy chair to the left of the couch.

The bed she was lying in was nestled in a small nook in the wall. To her left were two doors. She could just see the bathroom sink and shower through the open door of the one closest to the bed.

There was a tiny kitchen, equipped with smaller-than-average appliances, and a short granite counter top with bright white cabinets above and below the counter. There was a narrow eating bar, its surface covered in matching granite, with two black leather stools tucked neatly under it.

“You’re in Will’s living quarters,” Barb said solemnly. “He brought you up here and insisted we keep you here.”

“The others?” Hannah whispered, almost afraid to know.

Barb sighed again. “Frank is dead. They drained him before Mannie and Will could save him. Jeremy is fine, as is Tyler. Selena lost a lot of blood but she’s recovering nicely. Alison is – she was drained nearly empty and she’s in a coma. We’re not sure if she’s going to survive or not.”

Hannah could see tears in Barb’s eyes, and she reached out and squeezed her hand. Barb squeezed back and then smiled at her. “You’ll be okay too. A day or two of rest, and you’ll be back to normal.”

She took the now-empty glass from Hannah and set it on the small bedside table. “Do you want something to eat? I can bring you something from the kitchen, or I can make you something here. The instructors all have food in their living quarters.”

Hannah shook her head as there was a soft knock at the door and Jeremy stuck his head in. He smiled delightedly when he saw she was awake.

“Hey, HB.” He crossed the room and sat down beside her on the bed opposite from Barb, taking her hand in his.

“How do you feel?”

She shrugged. “Okay. Tired.”

He glanced at Barb, who gathered the tape and bandage and stood. “I’ll just be in the kitchen if you need me.”

Jeremy smiled at Hannah again. "You're a sight for sore eyes. Will squirreled you away, and wouldn't let any of us come see you."

"How long have I been out for?" She sat up a bit, wincing, and Jeremy helped pile pillows behind her back.

"Sixteen hours, give or take." He stared solemnly at her. "I was worried about you."

"I'm fine. Have you seen Selena?"

He nodded. "She was sleeping but she's starting to get some colour back, and Richard says she should make a full recovery."

"Good," Hannah sighed. "What happened out there, Jeremy?" She whispered. "How did you survive?"

He shrugged. "When the emergency lights came on, the vampires had already killed half of us. There was one coming towards me. They're so quick, I didn't even have time to run, and suddenly Mannie was there."

He wiped a slightly-shaking hand across his forehead. "You should have seen him, Hannah. What he shows us in the training? It's only a quarter of what he can do. He's human, at least I think he is, but he moved nearly as fast as those goddamn vampires. He had broken off two table legs, and he used one of them to stake the vampire about to attack me. He tossed the other one at me, told me to 'do my best' and then just went into killing mode."

He stopped again, swallowing loudly, and Hannah took his hand in hers as he continued. "I managed to kill one, more from luck than any type of skill, but even with Mannie moving as fast as he was, we were losing. A vampire attacked Mannie from behind, was about to rip his head from his shoulders, when there was this - this growling and the vampire's head went flying across the room. Next thing you know there's a fucking werewolf in the bar."

He glanced at her. "I had no idea at the time that it was Will. He moved through the bar, taking out the vampires left and right. He was so fucking fast. He killed three of them in less than twenty seconds. The remaining two fled the bar, and then Will took off at full speed into the bathroom. I guess he figured it was the only place you and Selena could be."

He paused and squeezed her hand. "I can't believe you survived."

"I killed one of them." She could feel her lips trembling and she took a deep breath. "There was a piece of rebar under the counter. I used it to kill one of the vampires, and then Will came in and killed the other one."

"Lucky," he whispered and she nodded.

"Okay, Jeremy. You should go. Hannah needs to rest," Barb called softly from the kitchen.

He nodded and leaned forward to kiss Hannah on the mouth. She turned her face so he grazed her cheek instead, and he gave her a small smile.

"I'm glad you're okay, Hannah."

"I'm glad you're okay too, Jeremy. I'll see you later?"

She nodded as he stood and left the room.

"Hannah, I should get back to the infirmary but I can stay if you would prefer some company." Barb said.

Hannah shook her head and swung her legs over the bed. She stood, swaying slightly, feeling a little lightheaded but not as much as she thought she would. She glanced at her body, her face drawing down in a little moue of disgust. She was still wearing the clothes from the bar, and they were crusted with the blood of the vampire she had killed.

"Do you think Will would mind if I used his shower?" She asked Barb.

Barb shook her head. "No. Have a hot shower and have something to eat. Promise me, okay?"

“I will.”

Barb kissed her on the cheek and pointed to a phone hooked up to a wall next to the door.

“If you need anything, just pick up the phone and dial zero. You’ll go through to security.”

“Thanks, Barb,” Hannah said gratefully.

“You’re welcome, love. Try and get some more rest.”

* * *

Will sighed harshly as he headed down the hall to his living quarters. He had overheard Barb telling Richard half an hour ago that Hannah had woken and was doing well. Although he was happy she was recovering, a part of him was disappointed she had woken so soon.

He hadn’t even been back to his living quarters since he had dropped her on his bed and told Barb not to move her. She would be back in the dorms by now, and after what had happened at the bar he had selfishly hoped to have her to himself for a while. She had come close to dying last night and it had scared him badly. He refused to dwell too deeply on why exactly he was so scared. Instead, he told himself it was because of the time and effort they had put into training the new recruits. To lose a group of the most promising recruits they had seen in a long time would be a blow to the program.

He unlocked his door and slipped inside. He would have a hot shower, eat something and then check on the recruits in their dorms before getting some much-needed sleep.

Hannah. You’ll check on Hannah.

He slipped off his boots and was starting for the bathroom door when he realized he wasn’t alone. Hannah, her long hair loose and damp around her shoulders, was sitting in the large easy chair. Her feet were tucked up under her, and she had taken the afghan from the couch and draped it over her lap. She was holding a book and staring at him.

“Hi.” She smiled tentatively at him.

“You’re still here,” he blurted out. He could have slapped himself when she immediately blushed and untangled herself from the blanket.

“I’m sorry. I can go back to my dorm room.” She stood and nervously folded the afghan.

“You don’t have to – that isn’t what I meant. I was just surprised – “

“No, no, that’s okay. You’re tired and I should probably check on Selena.”

“Hannah, wait,” he protested.

“It’s fine. Really, Will. It was very nice of you to let me stay here but I’m sure you want your space back and – “

“Hannah – sit down!” He shouted in frustration and, startled by his sudden outburst, she plopped back down on the chair. She was wearing one of his t-shirts, and she smoothed it nervously over her bare knees.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to yell,” he said contritely. “You don’t have to leave. I want – I want you to stay. Have you eaten anything?”

She shook her head no and he frowned a little. “I’m just going to have a quick shower and then I’ll cook us something to eat, okay?”

“Okay.” She cleared her throat nervously and watched as he walked towards the bathroom.

He paused at the bathroom door. “Don’t leave, okay?” He said almost plaintively.

She smiled. “I won’t.”

He nodded and went into the bathroom, shutting the door firmly behind him.

* * *

Hannah frowned as Will placed a huge slab of steak on her plate. "Will, I can't eat all of that," she protested.

"Eat as much as you can," he insisted. "You lost blood last night. You need to rebuild your strength."

As promised, Will had started cooking as soon as he finished showering. He had come out of the bathroom wearing a pair of jeans but hadn't bothered with a shirt. As he had started cooking, Hannah found herself wishing he would put on a t-shirt. She found his naked torso incredibly distracting. Watching the large muscles rippling under the smooth skin of his back as he twisted and turned was making her girl parts tingle.

She had offered to help with dinner but he had instructed her to sit down and relax. He had started the steaks and then pulled a container of strawberries from the fridge. After washing them under running water he had set them down in front of her. She had smiled a little and bit into a berry, relishing the taste of the sweetness against her tongue.

"I didn't know you liked strawberries." She had smiled at Will. He had just shrugged and turned back to the steaks. He didn't want to admit to her that Lycans didn't eat much fruit or vegetables, and he had only taken them from the cafeteria kitchen because they reminded him of her.

Now, as he sat down across from her she gave him another tentative smile. "Thank you for dinner, Will."

He nodded and looked down at her plate. There was a steak on it and nothing else.

"Shit. Um, I should have made you some vegetables," he muttered. He had watched her eating in the cafeteria, and she was always eating salad or cooked vegetables of some kind.

"Oh no, this is fine. Really." She cut into her steak. At her request he had cooked it medium rare but had left his steak rare.

"Lycans don't eat many fruits or vegetables," he said apologetically.

"This is fine, honestly."

She ate a piece of steak. "It's really good. Thank you."

She drank some water and stared at him thoughtfully.

"What?" He took another bite of his steak.

"Do all Lycans cook or do they –"

She stopped, unsure of how to word it and afraid she would come across as ignorant.

He grinned. "Eat their meat raw?"

She blushed and he laughed. "It depends on the Lycan. Nowadays most of us are civilized and cook our meat, but there are plenty of Lycans who still hunt for their dinner."

"Do you ever hunt?" She asked him curiously.

"Yes, but usually just during the full moon. It's hard to resist hunting when the moon is full."

"What do you hunt?"

He shrugged. "Deer, mostly." He looked at her, afraid to see the disgust on her face but she was eating her steak, the look on her face one of curiosity, not repulsion.

"But you don't need the moon to shift," she said.

"No. I can shift whenever I want. When the moon is full there's more of an urge to shift though," he admitted.

She nodded and he continued. "People who were bitten, rather than born a Lycan, have a harder time controlling their shifts. Our children are taught from an early age how to control it.

They only have difficulty when the moon is full, but if you become a Lycan as an adult, it's more difficult to learn how to control the change."

He was nearly finished his steak, and he frowned when he realized she had eaten less than half of hers. "You need to eat more, Hannah," he chided gently.

"I'm full." She pushed her plate away.

"Eat some more strawberries then."

He pushed the bowl in front of her, and she obediently picked up one of the red berries and bit into it. He watched her lick the juice from her fingers and suddenly the room was too hot and he could feel sweat breaking out on his forehead. He tore his gaze away from her mouth and concentrated on the food in front of him. When he dared to look up again she was staring solemnly at him.

"I saw you get shot in the chest, Will." Her eyes dropped to his bare chest. His tanned skin was unmarked, without even a hint of a bruise.

"Sometimes the rumours about Lycans are true. If it isn't a silver bullet, being shot won't kill me."

"But it hurts?" She whispered.

"Yeah, it hurts."

"I'm sorry. It's my fault you were shot."

"Don't be ridiculous. You were only defending yourself. That guy is lucky I didn't kill him." His eyes glowed briefly.

"He did die, remember?" She reminded him and he nodded.

"They all did," she whispered and shivered.

"How did you kill the vampire in the bathroom?" He asked and she relayed the story of what happened.

"Well done." He gave her a look of admiration.

"It was luck, and nothing more than that. As soon as the lights went out I didn't even think. I just grabbed Selena and ran and hid."

"It's what you were supposed to do," he said gently.

"I couldn't really do it though. I had seen the bag of stakes in the van. Selena and I were going to the van so we could get the stakes and go back to help our friends. I was so frightened I could barely think, but I wouldn't have been able to live with myself if I had left them there to die."

She bent her head and he could see tears running down her face. He reached over and grasped her chin, forcing her to look up at him. "What you were going to do was very brave and incredibly stupid. I know you're faster and stronger now, but without proper weapons training you're still helpless against vampires. Do you understand me?"

She nodded and tugged her face free, wiping the tears from her cheeks with the palms of her hands. There was an awkward silence, and then she glanced behind her at the overflowing bookshelves.

"You like to read, huh?"

"Yeah."

"Me too." She smiled. "After I showered, uh," she paused, "I used your shower and," she tugged nervously at his t-shirt, "borrowed one of your shirts. I hope you don't mind. My clothes were covered in blood. I'll wash it and return it to you."

"It's fine." He already knew she had used his shower. He had stepped into the shower and her scent, a combination of strawberries and her own unique smell, had enveloped him. He had spent most of his shower trying to ignore his huge erection.

He let his eyes drift down her body. He knew she was naked under his shirt. He had found her clothes, including her bra and panties, balled up and thrown in the garbage under the bathroom sink.

She was saying something to him, and he forced himself to stop thinking about her naked body and concentrate on what she was saying.

"You and I have very similar taste in books." She smiled at him. "I love old mysteries. My sister Sara used to tell me I needed to stop burying my head in books and live in the real world for a change. She would flip out if she could see me now." Her smile faded and he could see the pain in her eyes.

"I'm sorry about your sister," he said quietly.

"Thank you, Will. I miss her very much. We were completely different and we fought often, but I'd give anything to hear her voice again." The tears were close again and she struggled to control her emotions.

"I miss my parents too. It's a bit easier knowing they're safe, but I can't stand that they think I'm dead. Sara and I were their only children."

His cell phone rang and he glanced at it, giving her an apologetic look. "It's Richard."

She nodded and slid off the bar stool, going into the bathroom and shutting the door.

"Richard."

"Hello, Will. How's Hannah?"

"She's doing a little better," Will replied.

"You should send her back to the dorms for the night," Richard said.

"Actually, she's still pretty weak and shaken up over what happened. I think it's best if she stays here tonight. I'll keep an eye on her."

"Will," Richard paused, "are you sure that's wise? You know how people like to gossip. There's already been talk about your behaviour during the combat testing."

"Let them talk," Will said harshly. "Like I give a shit what they say about me."

"It's not just your reputation," Richard said pointedly.

Will sighed. "I'm not sending her back to the dorms. Both Selena and Alison are still in the infirmary and she'll be alone. She's not ready for that yet."

"Will –" Richard started again.

"Jesus Christ, Richard," Will snapped, his temper beginning to fray. "I know the goddamn rules around here. I'll be sleeping on the couch."

"Fine." Richard gave in. "Listen, I'm calling because we need to have another briefing in the morning about what happened. The Board believes it was a random act but we need to go over the incident again in detail."

"Maybe it wasn't so random," Will muttered.

"It's time we talked to Mannie," Richard said solemnly.

"Yeah." He glanced up to see Hannah coming out of the bathroom. "Listen, I have to go. I'll meet you in your office at eleven tomorrow okay?"

He hung up as Hannah stood nervously by the couch. "Is everything okay?"

He nodded and tidied the kitchen as she pulled self-consciously at the hem of her shirt. "Well, thank you, Will but I guess I'd better get back to the dorms."

"Actually, Richard wants you to stay here tonight," Will lied. He kept his back turned to her. He was a terrible liar, mostly because he didn't care what other people thought of him and had no reason to lie. Even this little white lie would be evident on his face.

"Oh?" She said doubtfully.

“Yes. We’re keeping everyone who was attacked last night under close observation and since Barb and Richard are busy with the others, I volunteered to keep an eye on you.”

“Oh right. Yeah, that makes sense.”

He could still hear the doubt in her voice and he made himself face her, pasting a large fake smile on his face. “It’s only for tonight.”

“Of course - no problem.” He could see the blush rising in her cheeks but it took a minute for him to understand.

“I’ll sleep on the couch,” he grunted.

She shook her head. “No. That couch is way too small for you. I’ll sleep on it.”

“It’s fine,” he growled.

“You haven’t slept at all since it happened have you?” She accused.

“No, but Lycans don’t need much sleep. I’ll be fine.”

“Either you let me sleep on the couch or I go back to the dorms. I don’t care what Richard says,” she said firmly.

“Hannah –“

She shook her head stubbornly. “I mean it, Will. I’ve been sleeping in your bed for hours and I’m feeling much better. I’ll take the couch.”

He rolled his eyes. “You drive me crazy. Do you know that?”

She smiled at his defeat. “I know.”

Chapter Ten

Will opened his eyes and stared into the darkness. It took only seconds for his night vision to kick in and he frowned. Across the room he could hear Hannah moaning in her sleep. It was what had woken him.

Wearing just a pair of boxers, he slipped out of the bed and padded across the room to the couch. He crouched down and placed a hand on Hannah's arm. It was cold in the living room and he could see goose bumps on her skin. He cursed a little. Lycans ran hot and so he kept the heat low in his apartment. He hadn't thought of how it might affect her.

To make matters worse, she had thrown the blanket off in the midst of her nightmare. He tried not to notice how his t-shirt had ridden up until it was barely covering her lower body, and shook her arm again.

"Hannah, wake up."

"Sara?" She moaned. "Run, Sara. Please."

She moaned again and the despair in her voice sent a shiver down his back. She started to cry in her sleep and he couldn't stand it any longer.

"Hannah! Wake up!" He shook her roughly and she gasped and cried out, bouncing up and swinging wildly at him with her fists.

He ducked and grabbed her arms, pinning them at her sides. "Stop! Hannah – you were dreaming. Stop!"

Gasping and shaking, she stared wild-eyed at him. "Dreaming?"

He nodded. "Yes. About Sara."

"Sara," she whispered and started to cry. He hesitated and then gathered her into his arms.

"Shh. It's okay, honey. Shh." He lifted her and carried her to his bed. He set her down, tucking her under the covers, and crawled in beside her. He felt her tense and he tried to pat her arm in what he hoped was a soothing manner.

"You're freezing. I just want to warm you up." He patted her arm again awkwardly, and stifled a groan when she threw herself into his arms and pressed her shaking body against his.

He reached across her and turned on the bedside lamp. It cast a warm glow across the room, and he put his arms around her and rubbed her back through the t-shirt.

"It was just a nightmare. You're okay now," he whispered as she buried her face in his neck.

"I know – I have them every night," she murmured against his throat. The feel of her mouth on his skin was making his cock harden, and he tried to casually move back and put some distance between them.

"No," she whispered, wiggling closer. "I'm so cold."

"I'm sorry," he said. "I should have turned up the heat."

She shook her head. "No, it's fine. I just –"

She paused as she registered the hardness of his cock against her abdomen.

He groaned with embarrassment. She had almost died last night, had just woken from a terrible nightmare, and now she had to deal with a horny Lycan. He tried desperately to think of a reason to get out of the bed and give her some space.

"Here, I'll turn on the fireplace. It'll help warm you up." He tried to untangle himself from her but to his surprise she pulled him closer, twining her smooth legs around his and pressing herself firmly against his erection.

"No." She pressed her mouth against his in a quick kiss. "Make me warm, Will."

“Hannah – you’ve been through a terrible trauma. You’re vulnerable and not thinking straight. I won’t take advantage of that,” he said as her hands slipped around his waist.

She looked at him, her eyes wide and dark in the soft light, and kissed his throat. He shuddered as she nipped him hard and then soothed the area with soft strokes of her tongue.

“I know exactly what I’m doing,” she whispered into his ear before sucking lightly on the lobe. “Please, Will.”

She leaned back and looked at him, smiling encouragingly. He continued to hesitate and she shifted and pressed her pelvis against his erection, rubbing herself against him.

“Jesus, Hannah,” he moaned. “Are you sure about this?”

“Yes,” she whispered. “I want you. I need you.”

He groaned and pushed her onto her back. He shoved one hard thigh between hers and covered her upper body with his own. He kissed her, his mouth hard and demanding, and she opened her mouth eagerly to his tongue. They kissed for long minutes, their tongues stroking each other’s with increasing urgency until she broke away gasping for breath.

He lifted his body from hers, ignoring her sigh of dismay, and reached for the hem of his t-shirt. He pulled it up and over her head and dropped it to the floor. He stared down at her naked body, drinking in the sight of her pale, smooth skin. He smiled when she squirmed a bit, and stopped her from pulling up the covers.

“No, I want to look at you,” he whispered, making her blush.

The first time they had made love was quick and in the total darkness of the training room. This time he was determined to make it slow, to take his time and touch and explore every inch of her glorious body.

“Will, please, I...” She was blushing furiously now and he frowned.

“What’s wrong?”

“It’s just that I –”

She crossed her arms over her breasts, covering them from his hot gaze, and looked at him miserably.

Understanding was starting to dawn in his eyes and he brushed a long strand of her hair from her face. “How many men have you slept with, Hannah?”

She closed her eyes. “Oh my God, this is embarrassing.”

“Tell me,” he insisted.

“Two,” she said shyly. “But they weren’t – I mean I never could...”

She stopped and looked up at the ceiling. “The thing is - men don’t usually find me attractive. Until recently I was always well, chubby, and not many men were interested in sleeping with me. I had a boyfriend in high school and we slept together, and I had a boyfriend in college but I broke up with him when he kept hinting I was too fat. After that I just didn’t bother with men. I guess I’m still adjusting to being pretty and being, um, naked in front of someone as hot as you.”

He cupped her face, forcing her to look at him. “Do you remember when you woke up in the farmhouse?”

She nodded.

“You got out of bed and you stumbled and I caught you. Do you remember?”

“Yes.”

“I didn’t have to catch you. I caught you because I wanted to touch you, to see if your skin was as soft as it looked. I was rude and mean to you because I was thrown by how attracted I was to you.”

She stared at him and he nodded. "It's true. I've wanted you since that moment in the farmhouse. I like your curves." He ran his hand down her waist and over the gentle swell of her hip.

"Lycans like their women with curves. We're not known for our gentleness, and I'd hate to break your hip just because I get carried away," he teased lightly.

She giggled a little and then sobered. "Do you really think I'm pretty, Will?"

"No. I think you're gorgeous, Hannah. I can't get enough of you."

He kissed her, exploring her mouth leisurely until she was moaning and shivering beneath him.

He kissed the tip of her nose. "I'm going to ask you one more embarrassing question."

"What?" She whispered.

"The two men you were with before – did either of them make you come?"

She swallowed and shook her head. "No. Before that night with you in the training room, I'd never – never come during sex."

He shook his head, anger flashing in his eyes, and she flushed again. "I can give myself an orgasm." She seemed almost embarrassed by the admission.

"I'm just one of those women who uh, takes a long time to warm up. I mean, they tried and everything, but I think I require a little more effort," she said apologetically.

"Bullshit," he said bluntly. "You didn't come because they didn't know what they were doing."

She shrugged, obviously unconvinced, and he leaned over her and traced her ear with his tongue. "How much time did they spend touching your clit?"

"Jesus," she groaned. "I don't know – a few minutes maybe?"

He muttered an expletive. "Did they go down on you?"

Now she was practically glowing and she didn't answer him.

"Hannah, did they use their mouth to –"

"No! Both of them were standard missionary position kind of guys, okay? Neither of them ever offered and I didn't know how to ask. They certainly seemed to enjoy it when I went down on them though."

She sighed. "It wouldn't have made a difference anyway, Will. I told you – I don't come easily."

"I made you come," he said with more than a hint of arrogance in his voice.

She smiled a little. "I remember."

He nipped her earlobe. "Let's see if I can do it again."

He pulled her arms down and ran his finger down the hollow between her breasts. She gasped as he circled her navel and then traced the thin scar on her abdomen.

"What's this from?" He asked.

"Appendectomy when I was thirteen." She squirmed a little. She wanted him to touch her breasts but she was too shy to ask. Her stomach was churning with a slew of emotions – nervousness, desire, and embarrassment. It was dark in the training room, and it was so easy to just close her eyes and not think about anything except how it felt when Will touched her.

Here in his tiny apartment, in his bed with the light on exposing her entire body to Will's hot gaze and his determination to know everything about her rather dismal past sexual history, she could feel her usual awkwardness when it came to sex flooding back through her.

"Will, maybe this isn't –"

Her breath caught in her throat when Will suddenly dipped his head and took her nipple into his mouth. He sucked and laved it with his tongue until it hardened in his mouth, and then tugged lightly on it with his teeth.

“Oh my God,” she breathed. She wound her fingers through his hair and clutched his head to her breast, her back arching up off the bed with every pull of his mouth. He switched to her other breast, sucking and licking until that nipple was rock hard as well. He moved his mouth up to her collarbone, licking and nipping at it while his hand cupped her breast, rolling her nipple between his finger and thumb and plucking roughly on it.

“Oh God,” she moaned again. He kissed the hollow between her breasts before licking and kissing the sensitive underside of each breast. He pushed his thigh between hers, and she rubbed herself against his hard leg. She slipped her hands over his shoulders and down his back as he kissed her again. He ran his fingers across her flat abdomen and traced her hip bone as she thrust her pelvis at him.

“Please, Will,” she moaned into his mouth.

He pushed his hand between her thighs and cupped her sex. He found her small pink nub and rubbed it roughly with his thumb. It swelled and hardened under his touch, and he continued to rub it as she squirmed with pleasure.

“Oh, oh, oh,” she repeated breathlessly.

He slid his longest finger inside of her and they both groaned. When he slowly moved his finger in and out of her, she cried out loudly and dug her fingers into his back.

He increased the pressure of his thumb against her clit, rubbing in slow hard circles. She was panting, her breath heaving in and out of her chest, and he leaned down and licked her upper lip.

“Oh God, Will,” she moaned and he grinned.

“It sounds like you might be close to coming,” he murmured.

“Yes, oh yes.” She bit down on her bottom lip as he flicked her clit with his thumbnail.

“Maybe I should stop for a minute,” he teased gently and slowed the movements of his thumb and finger

“No! No, please!” She pounded him on the back.

She was so close to coming. Waves of pleasure were radiating through her pelvis, and the feel of his rough fingers on her sensitive skin was driving her crazy. Will’s thumb sped up against her clit and she arched her back, rising up from the bed and crying out with pleasure as she came violently. She collapsed back onto the bed, her pulse roaring in her ears and her breath coming in short, hard gasps.

“Look at that – two for two,” he murmured into her ear, and she could almost hear the grin in his voice.

Eyes still closed, she could feel him moving away for a moment. When he returned to her, pressing his body against her side, she could feel his hard, naked cock pushing against her thigh. He traced tiny circles on her arms and abdomen, giving her a moment to catch her breath before he leaned over and kissed her again. She was sleepy now. The strength of her orgasm had left her warm and trembling but he pushed his tongue into her mouth and stroked hers gently, coaxing her into responding to the gentle insistence of his lips and tongue.

He lay on his back and pulled her on top of him, running his large warm hands down her back to her bare ass, squeezing and kneading the firm flesh. She moaned a little, surprised by the almost immediate return of warmth spreading in her belly, and didn’t protest when he pushed her thighs apart until she was straddling his hips. He ground his hips against her, his cock rubbing back and forth against her pussy.

“You’re so wet, Hannah,” he whispered. He put his hands on her hips as she reached down and grasped his cock. She rubbed it slowly, smiling when his hands clamped down on her hips and a groan escaped his throat.

“Sounds like you might be getting close to coming,” she whispered mischievously.

“Yes.”

“Maybe I should stop?”

He growled and lifted her a little, moving her up until his cock was at her entrance.

“Will, wait – “

Her protest turned into a low moan as he thrust his hips upwards and she was filled with his hard cock. Still holding her hips, he thrust hard into her. She cried out and leaned forward, bracing her hands on his chest, and he watched as her full breasts bounced delightfully. He bent his knees and took her by the arms, pulling her back gently.

“Rest your hands on my legs,” he instructed. She hesitated and then leaned back, resting her hands on his knees. The position made her back arch, pushing her full breasts out and her pelvis forward. She lifted her hips up and down slowly, using his legs to brace herself. He watched his cock sliding in and out of her, her body gripping him firmly, and he groaned loudly and closed his eyes. If he kept watching that he wouldn’t be able to stop himself from coming.

She started to move faster and he gripped her hips and pumped into her furiously. She met him thrust for thrust until, with a loud cry, her body stiffened and her inner muscles tightened around him with excruciating pleasure as she came. He moaned and followed, thrusting wildly into her as his orgasm rushed through him.

She collapsed against him, breathing harshly, and he stroked her back for a moment before moving her off of him and rolling her to her side. He clicked off the light and then curled up behind her, cupping her breast and pulling her back against his chest.

“Sleep now,” he whispered and kissed her shoulder gently.

Chapter Eleven

Will shifted in the bed and stared up at the ceiling as the shower turned off. He rested his arm over his eyes and tried not to think about Hannah's wet and naked body less than ten feet away.

Last night was a mistake. He wasn't doing Hannah or himself any favours by sleeping with her. It wasn't just Richard they had to worry about. There were silent partners, men who had invested plenty of money into the organization, and with that came a certain expectation. If the higher-ups found out that he was sleeping with a recruit there would be hell to pay. Richard would probably have enough pull with the other board members to save his job, but Hannah would be thrown out of the program for sure. She'd been bitten twice now by vampires. No vampire within twenty-five feet of her would be able to resist going after her, and being kicked out of the program would mean certain death for her.

He sat on the side of the bed and rubbed his hand through his hair. He would just have to explain to Hannah that although last night was very enjoyable for him, it was something that couldn't happen again.

He stood and walked naked to the bathroom.

"It was amazing," he muttered to himself. "Don't say enjoyable, you asshole, say it was amazing."

He opened the bathroom door. "Hannah, we need to talk. Last night was –"

He stuttered to a stop and stared at her. She was standing in front of the bathroom sink examining the bite on her neck. Her soft dark hair was piled on top of her head in a messy bun and she was wrapped in one of his towels. It was a small towel and barely covered her nakedness.

He swallowed hard as his eyes traveled over her. He could see droplets of water on her back and shoulders where she had missed drying off with the towel, and he could see more tiny drops of water sliding down the backs of her thighs.

His mouth went dry as she tugged self-consciously at the top of the towel and smiled at him nervously. "Good morning, Will."

He inhaled deeply and she frowned a little. "Will? Uh – are you okay?"

"Fine," he croaked. He crossed the small room in two steps and stood behind her, staring at her in the large mirror over the bathroom sink.

"How did you sleep?"

"Good, actually. I mean, I probably didn't get enough but after we," she paused and he watched the flush rising up her neck, "um, I mean, once I was warm I slept really well. I didn't even have any more nightmares."

"Good," he muttered. He was only half-listening, fascinated by the drop of water that was slowly sliding down her back between her shoulder blades.

Later. I'll tell her later that we shouldn't do this anymore.

He leaned forward and licked away the drop of water with his tongue, grinning at the small moan she made. He kissed across her back, collecting the moisture in his mouth before he kissed the top of her shoulder with open mouth and roving tongue.

"Will, I –"

She caught her breath as he kissed up the side of her neck and sucked lightly on her earlobe.

"Yes?" He whispered as his hands came around and tugged on the towel. He pulled it free and it dropped to the floor around her feet. He pressed his cock against her soft ass and cupped both of her breasts, his fingers pulling on her already-hard nipples.

“What were you going to say?” He kissed her neck again as her hands came up and clutched the back of his head, pushing more of her breasts into his hands.

“I forget,” she moaned again.

Hannah looked in the mirror, her breath catching in her throat at the sight of Will’s large, tanned hands cupping her pale breasts. She watched as his fingers tugged on her nipples, rolling them and pinching them lightly, and her back arched in pleasure.

She studied their reflections in the mirror as he moved his right hand down her flat abdomen. He stopped to trace her scar with rough fingertips and when his fingers found the soft curls at the apex of her thighs she immediately opened her legs, silently urging him to move lower. He ignored her, running his fingers lightly over the soft curls, and she groaned in frustration. His cock was hard and throbbing against her ass and she pushed her ass back against it, rubbing herself against him.

He gasped sharply, one hand tightening on her breast while his other hand moved to where she wanted it most. Her hips thrust against his hand with involuntary pleasure as he rubbed her clit with the tips of his fingers. She watched fascinated as his fingers rubbed and circled. Watching him touch her was turning her on in ways she didn’t understand and when she finally tore her gaze away and realized that he was watching her, she flushed bright red with embarrassment.

He grinned at her in the mirror and stilled his hand, cupping her sex with warm familiarity. Embarrassed, she lowered her hands from where they still clutched his head and tugged at his arm.

“Let’s go back to the bed,” she whispered.

“Why?” He smiled at her. “You seem to like watching me touch you.”

Oh God. Hannah groaned and tugged again at his arm. “Please Will – the bed.”

“It turns you on doesn’t it, Hannah?” He whispered against her throat. She refused to answer, and he moved his hand lower and probed at her opening. She was soaking wet and his finger slid into her easily, making her cry out with pleasure.

“It certainly feels like it turns you on.” He grinned again at her in the mirror as his eyes turned yellow.

She turned her head then, capturing his mouth in an urgent kiss. She explored his mouth with her tongue, and he surprised her by suddenly closing his lips around her tongue and sucking hard. The sucking sent a spasm of pleasure through her body and she jerked against him, crying out when it pushed his finger deeper inside of her.

Suddenly frantic for him she tried to twist in his arms. She needed to feel his cock directly against her but he shook his head and moved his hands up to her arms, making her stay where she was. He kissed her throat again and then pushed gently on her back until she was bent over. She clutched the sides of the sink in her hands, feeling the smooth coldness of the porcelain against her fingers as he ran his hands over her ass and then between her thighs.

“Open your legs, Hannah,” he whispered and she spread her legs obediently. He grasped his cock in his hand and guided it between her legs. He rubbed it across her clit, making her moan, and then slipped just the head of his cock into her warm opening.

She shuddered and pushed her hips back, sheathing him entirely within her in one smooth motion. They both cried out and his hands tightened around her hips. She braced herself against the sink as he slowly thrust in and out of her.

He reached around and cupped her breasts as he moved closer, pushing her legs further apart and quickening his pace. She groaned and shuddered with pleasure. The different position was causing different sensations, and she could already feel herself drawing close to coming.

He wrapped his hands around her upper arms and pulled her up until she was standing straight against him. She shifted, closing her legs together to help her balance, and he groaned loudly as the motion made her tighten around him.

"You're so tight, so wet," he breathed into her ear. His hot breath and words brought an involuntary shudder to her body, making her squeeze his cock even more tightly.

"Open your eyes, Hannah," he whispered. Her eyelids fluttered open and she stared hazily at him in the bathroom mirror.

"Watch," he murmured and, as he started to thrust into her again, her eyes drifted down the mirror.

Pleasure flooded through her body at the sight of his cock disappearing into her. "Oh my God, Will," she moaned.

"We fit together so well, Hannah." He kissed the soft skin behind her ear, making her shiver. "Your body was made for mine."

He pushed deeper into her, pulling back on her arms so her back arched and her ass pushed against his pelvis. Holding her tightly he thrust in and out, listening as her cries loudened and her breathing quickened. He was so close to coming. He had never been turned on so quickly before and he tried desperately to hang on, wanting her to come before he did. He tried to slow his movements but his body had a mind of its own and it continued to thrust wildly into her.

"Hannah," he moaned, and at the sound of her name she cried out loudly and shuddered madly against him. He could feel himself wanting to shift. He controlled it fiercely as he shoved once more into her, and a cry of pleasure that was half-howl, half-groan tore from his throat as he came in her.

* * *

"Hannah! Hi!" Selena was sitting on the side of a bed in the infirmary when Hannah entered. Hannah hugged her hard before sitting on the bed beside her.

"How do you feel?"

Selena smiled. "Better. Barb says I can go back to the dorms tonight. How are you?"

"I'm good. I'm so glad to see you up and around." She glanced to the far end of the infirmary where curtains were drawn around the bed that Alison was in.

"Has Alison woken up yet?"

Selena shook her head. "No, not yet. Barb says that's not necessarily a bad thing. Her breathing is steady and so is her pulse. They've given her a ton of blood transfusions."

"Do you remember what happened?" Hannah asked.

"Not really. I mean, I remember the vampires and I remember being in the bathroom with you – after that it's a blank." She paused. "Barb says you saved my life."

Hannah put her arm around Selena's shoulders. "Not really. I killed a vampire but it was actually Will who saved both of us."

"Jeremy came by earlier this morning. He said that Will is a werewolf."

"Lycan," Hannah corrected her.

Selena frowned. "Did you know he was a Lycan?"

Hannah hesitated and then nodded. "Yeah, I had guessed it earlier."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"It wasn't my information to tell. Besides, why does it matter?"

“Hannah, werewolves are – well, they’re dangerous. Don’t you remember the lessons that Isabelle taught us about them?”

“Of course I do. Lycans are like humans – some are dangerous and some aren’t. Will would never hurt us, Selena. Did Jeremy also tell you that the only reason we lived is because Will is a Lycan?”

“Yes, and I’m grateful to him,” Selena said softly. She frowned a little. “I can’t believe that I was attracted to him.”

Hannah rolled her eyes. “I’m going to assume you didn’t mean that the way it sounded.”

Selena flushed. “I didn’t. Honestly, I didn’t. It’s just that I don’t think I could ever fully relax with a werewolf – I mean a Lycan. What if they lost control while we were –”

She stopped. “So that’s what Leanne meant when she said he didn’t have a gentle bone in his body. I guess if she likes that sort of thing...” She trailed off.

Hannah could feel a strong surge of jealousy at the mention of Leanne’s name. Will was nothing but gentle with her. Maybe Leanne was lying about sleeping with him.

Unless he’s rough with her because he knows she can handle it.

Hannah sighed. What did it matter now? What she and Will had done last night and this morning was finished. Before parting ways this morning, she had gathered her courage and shared her fear that a relationship with him would get her kicked out of the program, and that she believed it was best if they didn’t continue. She was filled with an odd combination of disappointment and relief when he had quickly agreed. She was not willing to admit that part of her, a large part of her, was hoping he would try to change her mind.

What does he care? He’ll probably be back in Leanne’s arms by tonight. Face it girl, you were nothing but a roll in the hay for him. Hannah savagely muzzled the small voice in her head and concentrated on what Selena was saying to her.

“Have you spoken with Alan yet?” Selena asked.

“No. But at my check-up this morning Barb told me I had an appointment to see him at one today. Have you talked to him?”

She had learned that Alan, the tall and gentle man who had spoken with her after Sara died, was the resident therapist. All of the recruits and the instructors were required to speak with him after every hunt. Although the night at the bar hadn’t been a hunt, Alan had already been making his rounds, speaking to each of the recruits about what had happened.

“Yeah. He dropped by this morning.” Selena looked down at her hands. “I hate talking about my feelings and shit. I just hate it.”

“I know. But Alan’s good at what he does.”

“He is,” Selena sighed. “I have to admit that I feel a little better after talking with him.”

She glanced at Hannah. “They’re having a service for Frank later this afternoon. Are you going?”

Hannah nodded. “Yes. How about you? Are you up to it?”

“I am,” Selena said solemnly, tears were welling in her dark eyes. “I can’t believe he’s dead.”

“I know.” Hannah hugged the smaller woman. “I know.”

* * *

“Will, do you believe it was just a coincidence?” Mannie stared at him.

“The vampires are in the middle of an uprising. I think we’d be foolish to believe they wouldn’t do whatever it took to eliminate any threats to that uprising,” Will said.

“Yeah. But how do they even know about the organization?” Mannie looked at Richard who sighed deeply.

“Mannie, an organization this size is impossible to keep hidden forever. The vampires have been aware of us for at least two years. Why do you think the facilities have been increasing their security over the last few years?”

Mannie stared at him. “They know where this place is?”

Richard shook his head. “No, if they did they would have attacked the centre by now. But I can assure you, it will only be a matter of time before our base is discovered. The Atlanta base has already been discovered. They were attacked last year, remember?”

“Yes, and we defeated them easily,” Mannie replied.

“True, but their centre has the benefit of being larger with a more modern defense system.”

“You should have told me,” Mannie said angrily. “We should never have taken the babies out to celebrate.”

“There’s no way we could have known that the vampires would attack you and the others at the bar,” Richard said gently.

“How did they even know we were there?” Mannie frowned. “We take the babies to a different place each celebration.”

Will watched silently as the light clicked for Mannie. “The only way they could know is if someone had told them.”

Will nodded. “There have been similar incidents in two of the other centres. We think there’s a mole in the organization.”

Mannie stared at him as another light went off. “You thought it was me?”

Richard shook his head. “We don’t know *who* it is, Mannie. We can’t trust anyone. Although there are seven separate centres across the country, we operate under one umbrella which means the mole could be in any one of the centres.”

“And you think it’s an instructor?”

Will shrugged. “That’s one of the possibilities. All of the instructors are being watched carefully until—“

“Until they almost die,” Mannie finished bitterly.

Will nodded. “Yes.”

“Can’t we just stop sharing information among the centres? That will help narrow down which centre has the traitor,” Mannie asked.

Richard shook his head again. “If we do that, they’ll know we’re on to them. We want to flush the traitor out which means keeping operations like we normally do.”

Mannie gave Richard and Will a hard look. “Did you let me take the babies out knowing that it could be a trap?”

“Of course not!” Richard’s temper flared and he slammed his hand down on the desk. “What kind of monsters do you think we are, Mannie?”

Will leaned forward in his seat. “We thought we had caught the mole. Last month in the Dallas centre, there was an instructor caught smuggling out computer data. We assumed he was the mole. We assumed incorrectly.”

“Not necessarily, Will,” Richard protested. “We don’t know for sure that this attack wasn’t just a coincidence.”

Will sighed. “Don’t be naïve, Richard. The attack at the bar was nearly identical to the one in New York.”

“So, what do we do now?” Mannie asked.

“We continue doing exactly what we did before,” Richard said. “We have people in each centre who are actively looking for the mole. Although we may have a tough time convincing the Board that this latest attack wasn’t just a chance vampire attack. They believe that because our centre is mostly a training centre and not located in a large city, the vampires aren’t interested in attacking us.”

Chapter Twelve

“Relax, Hannah. You’re too nervous.” Darren smiled cheerfully at her as he pulled her closer and put his hands over hers, helping her to aim the gun.

“Remember when you’re aiming the gun to keep your arms loose and relaxed. The gun is an extension of your hand.”

She nodded and squirmed free of his embrace. “I’ve got it, Darren. Thanks.”

He frowned fleetingly and then pasted the smile back on his face. “Let me see what you’ve got then.”

Hannah took a deep breath and put the sound-cancelling earphones over her ears. She raised the gun, aimed it carefully at the target and took another deep breath. She released it and squeezed the trigger.

Darren flipped the switch and the machine hummed to life, bringing the paper target towards them. There was a hole in the middle of the chest and he shrugged. “Not bad, Hannah. Way better than it was three weeks ago. But you need to aim more to the left. A direct shot to the heart is better.”

“But sir, if the bullets are filled with ultraviolet light, what does it matter if we don’t hit them in the heart?” Tyler asked curiously.

Darren looked back at him. “There have been instances where the more powerful vampires have survived a bullet filled with ultraviolet light. It’s best to get used to hitting them directly in the heart. No vampire will survive that.”

He took the gun from Hannah and crooked his finger at Selena. “C’mon, sweetheart. You’re up next.”

* * *

Selena collapsed on one of the couches in the common room with a soft groan. “Oh my God, I’m tired.”

Tyler sat down beside her and ruffled her hair. “Poor baby. Why don’t you come back to my room and I’ll give you a nice, relaxing massage?”

Selena laughed and punched him in the shoulder. “Nice try, Romeo.”

Hannah sat down in one of the easy chairs, curling her feet up under her. “We’ve only got fifteen minutes and then it’s training with Chen.”

The rest of them groaned and Jeremy swore under his breath. “God, I hate that sword training shit. We spend most of our time studying the theory of kenjutsu instead of doing the actual sword fighting. What the hell use is that?”

Hannah smiled to herself. Unlike the others, the kenjutsu training with Chen was her favourite of the weapons training. From the moment she had first held the bokuto, the thin wooden sword they used to train with, a thrill had gone through her.

After her initial awkwardness with Chen, he had after all seen her half-naked with Will, she had thrown herself into the training. It was nearly a month since the incident at the bar. When she wasn’t in training, she spent nearly all of her free time reading and studying the art of kenjutsu.

She sighed. Although she truly was fascinated by the kenjutsu, part of her reason for studying so hard was to take her mind off of Will. He had barely spoken to her since they had agreed to keep things strictly professional, and she was beginning to wonder if she would ever have a night where she didn’t have a nightmare about Sara or a sex dream about Will.

Jeremy sat on the arm of her chair and leaned companionably against her. “This sword, and stakes and knife training is a bunch of bullshit anyway. The only useful training is the gun training. Which in case you haven’t noticed, I am already awesome at.”

Alison, her face pale and drawn, shook her head. “I want to know every bit of weapons training that I can. The more ways I have to protect myself, the better.”

Hannah frowned worriedly. Alison had needed an extra week of rest before rejoining them in training, and she had come back a completely different person. She was quiet and withdrawn and spent most of her free time alone.

Once they had graduated to the next level, they were moved from the dorms to more private rooms. Selena and Hannah were sharing a room, and Alison was placed with Leanne. Selena had questioned Leanne at length if Alison had confided in her but Leanne had said no, that Alison avoided her and only used their room to sleep in.

“Do you think she’s still sleeping with Mannie?” Selena had asked one night after they had retired to their room.

“I don’t know. If she’s smart – no. She’ll be caught and kicked out eventually,” Hannah had responded. “Besides, I heard a rumour that Mannie was sleeping with one of the new recruits.”

Three days after they had started weapons training, four new recruits had joined the facility. Hannah and the others had twice run into the new babies during a morning run, and she couldn’t help feeling sorry for them as she listened to Will and Mannie scream at them.

The door to the common room opened and the new recruits limped in. They looked tired and weak and they huddled together in the far corner of the room as Jeremy frowned.

“Jesus, they certainly keep pumping the new recruits through here don’t they?”

Alison laughed bitterly. “Don’t you know why? The recruit mortality rate is incredibly high, Jeremy. At least fifty percent of us will die in the first year.”

“Well, that’s comforting,” Jeremy said wryly.

Tyler shrugged. “It’s true. Didn’t you read the fine print of the contract?”

Jeremy grinned. “Nah. I was too excited to be getting into the program. I just signed on the dotted line, man.”

Hannah looked up at him curiously. She already knew that Selena was recruited after witnessing her entire unit being massacred by vampires deep in the Middle East. Her vehicle had broken down and she was late to the meeting. It had saved her life. She had gotten there just in time to see the vampires finishing off her friends before disappearing into the darkness. The program had former recruits planted all over the world, and it hadn’t taken long for them to catch wind of Selena’s story. They had brought her to the facility and quickly recruited her.

She nudged Jeremy. “How did you find out about the program, Jeremy?”

He blushed a little. “I was at a club one night and this hot chick, I mean, the hottest chick I’d ever seen in my life, hit on me. She invited me back to her house and I said yes. Once there, she turned and went after me.”

“How did you survive?” Tyler asked curiously.

Jeremy shrugged. “One of the guys who had gone through the program was tracking her. He saved me. We got to talking. I told him about being in the marines, and the next thing I know he’s introducing me to Richard. The rest, as they say, is history.”

“What about you, Hannah?” Jeremy looked down at her. “How did you get recruited?”

Tyler leaned forward. “Yeah, Hannah. I’ve always been curious about that. No offense, but you weren’t exactly the normal recruit material when you first got here.” He made a curvy motion with his hands and winked at Jeremy who grinned.

“Ahh yes, Hannah when she first got here - delicious.” He slung his arm around Hannah’s shoulder and ignored her when she tried to shove his arm off of her.

“I volunteered actually,” Hannah said. “My sister was killed by vampires. I would have died too if it hadn’t been for Richard and Will. When I found out what this place was, I asked them to let me join. Richard agreed.”

“Well that explains why you didn’t have the typical look of a new recruit,” Jeremy said. “Don’t get me wrong – I love badass Hannah but curvy Hannah...”

He wiggled his eyebrows at her and leaned in to kiss her on the forehead. He let out a loud ‘oof’ when she punched him in the gut.

The others laughed and Jeremy joined them good-naturedly before pursing his lips at Hannah. “C’mon, HB. Give Jeremy a little kissie-wissie.”

“Do I need to remind you Mr. Weiss, about the strict code of conduct all recruits agree to adhere to when they first join the program?”

Will’s icy voice cut through their laughter and Jeremy stood up in a hurry, turning around to face Will who had slipped into the common room quietly.

“No sir, you do not.” For a moment Hannah thought he was going to salute him.

Will glared at him. “Relationships of a sexual nature are strictly forbidden between recruits. Don’t make me remind you again of this.”

“Yes, sir.”

Will glanced at Hannah, his eyes narrowing, before looking back at Jeremy. “Just because you are no longer under my direct supervision does not mean I cannot recommend your immediate dismissal. Am I making myself perfectly clear?”

“Yes, sir.” Jeremy’s back was ramrod straight and he stared straight ahead until Will turned back to the new recruits.

“On your feet, babies!” He shouted. “Break time is over.” He strode from the room, and the new recruits followed miserably behind him.

Jeremy blew out his breath and sat back down beside Hannah. “God, that guy is a fucking nightmare.”

“Jeremy!” Hannah scowled. “That guy saved our lives.”

“Yeah, I remember.” Jeremy arched his eyebrows. “But that doesn’t mean I have to like him. I’m surprised he’s lasted here this long. Everyone knows that Lycans can’t be trusted.”

Hannah shook her head. “That’s not true, Jeremy and you know it. Lycans are no different than humans – there are good ones and bad ones.”

Alison stared at her. “Will was the hardest on you during training, Hannah. Why are you defending him?”

Hannah shrugged. “Because I don’t think it’s fair to treat him differently just because he’s a Lycan. If you want to call him an asshole because he’s an asshole, then go ahead. But don’t make assumptions because he’s a Lycan. It isn’t fair.”

Selena cleared her throat nervously. “But he didn’t even tell us he was a Lycan, Hannah. We spent months with him and never knew. We only found out because we were attacked. Why would he keep it a secret?”

Hannah sighed impatiently. “You know as well as I do that Richard has asked Will not to tell the babies he’s a Lycan. He tells them when they graduate to the weapons training. We just happened to find out because he shifted and saved all of our goddamn asses.”

She paused. “Besides, it’s his job to remind us of the rules.”

Tyler laughed and looked around. "C'mon Hannah, no one follows the 'no sex between recruits' rule and you know it."

"I don't sleep with other recruits." Hannah snapped. "And neither does Selena."

Tyler looked at Selena who blushed deeply. He grinned and leaned over her, tugging gently at her dark curls. "I guess we're better at keeping secrets than I thought."

Hannah's mouth dropped open and both Jeremy and Alison laughed.

Selena punched Tyler hard on the arm. "You jackass."

She looked at Hannah. "Hannah I –"

Hannah held up her hand and laughed. "Forget it, Selena. I do not want to hear the details. Just tell me he hasn't snuck into our room while I'm in my bed sleeping."

Tyler grinned wickedly. "Now there's an idea, my love." He ran his finger down Selena's arm gently and she smacked it away.

"You'll be lucky if you ever *get* lucky again," she muttered.

Hannah laughed again and then glanced at her watch. "Shit! We're going to be late."

She stood and the others joined her, Tyler squeezing Selena's ass as they filed out of the common room.

* * *

"Okay, we've discussed the babies and their progress – thank you Will, Mannie and Isabelle." Richard shuffled the papers on his desk and glanced around the room. "Let's discuss the next group. Darren, go ahead."

Darren cleared his throat. "Selena and Jeremy have excelled at the gun training. Not surprising, considering their military backgrounds. Hannah is slightly below average. She shows promise. Tyler and Alison are dismal at it. I'd recommend that Selena, Jeremy and Hannah continue with the gun training. The other two should be actively training on the stakes and knives or," he paused, grinning a little, "sword training."

"Thank you. Aaron – you're up."

The small, blond man nodded. "Jeremy shows some potential with the stakes. He has a fearlessness to him that would serve him well for up close and personal encounters with vampires. Tyler is getting better. I'd be willing to keep him on, especially if he's that terrible with the guns. None of the women are what I would call a natural at it. Selena is too timid, as is Hannah. As far as Alison goes -" he sighed, "I hate to say this but I think the incident at the bar has weakened her."

Richard frowned as Will spoke up. "I agree with Aaron. She's lost her nerve, Richard. We should ask her to leave the program."

"And send her where, Will? She'll be hunted down in a matter of days."

"Then put her into administration," Will said harshly. "If you don't, I guarantee she'll die the first time we send them out hunting."

"I'll take your recommendation into consideration," Richard said quietly. He looked at the small Asian man sitting next to Will.

"Chen? Your turn."

Darren laughed. "This'll be quick. Go ahead Chen - tell us exactly how they're not right for you."

Will glared at him. Chen was quiet and didn't socialize with the others, and because of that the other instructors all but ignored him. They considered his specialty to be outdated and useless,

but Will had gone hunting with him on hundreds of different occasions. The speed and ruthlessness Chen displayed in killing vampires rivaled his own. He was a good man and an excellent fighter, and it would be a blow to the program if he left.

Ignoring Darren completely, Chen looked down at his papers and then glanced at Richard. "I'm recommending Hannah to continue with the training."

Mannie's mouth dropped open and he stared at Will. Will knew he had a matching look of shock on his own face.

Richard blinked. "Hannah? Chen, are you sure?" His voice was filled with doubt.

Will could understand his hesitation. Chen had not chosen a student to continue training with him in the last four groups of recruits, and in the six years he was with them he had never chosen a woman student to continue.

Chen nodded calmly. "Yes."

Richard leaned back in his chair and clasped his hands across his flat abdomen. "It's settled then. The recruits will continue to study all methods of weapons training but over the next week or so, we'll slowly start to move them into their specialized fields. Selena and Jeremy will continue with gun training. Tyler and Alison, for now, will work closely with Aaron, and Hannah belongs to Chen."

Chapter Thirteen

"I forgot my towel. I'll meet you back at the room." Hannah motioned for Selena to go on without her. They had just finished swimming in the facilities salt water pool, and, with an irritated sigh she turned back toward the pool room to gather her forgotten towel.

She rounded the corner in the hallway and bumped squarely into Will. Her wet body left a damp mark on his shirt and she suppressed a grin. "Will, I'm sorry!"

When he didn't reply she glanced at him curiously. "Will?"

She sucked in her breath; he was staring at her with a weird combination of fear and lust, and she could feel her body reacting immediately.

She gave him a nervous smile. In the month since she had spent the night with him, Will had acted like they'd never slept together and treated her exactly like he treated the rest of the recruits. The desire she had grown accustomed to seeing whenever he looked at her had completely disappeared, and she had reminded herself repeatedly that it was for the best.

Now, however, it was back and she wasn't sure what to do.

"Are you purposely trying to drive me crazy, Ms. Torrington?" Will asked softly.

"What?" She stared at him in confusion.

"You bump into me wet and half-naked. Did you do that on purpose?" Now he was almost growling.

She supposed she should have been afraid but instead she found herself flushing with indignation. "No, I certainly did not, Will. I was swimming. I wasn't aware I needed your permission to walk in the hallway afterwards."

His brow darkened and he took a step toward her. Despite herself, she took a step backward. "You should at least get dressed before you start roaming the hallways."

She looked down at herself. She was wearing a modest bikini with a sheer wrap around her waist. "Oh for God's sake, you act like I'm walking around in the nude."

He grabbed her arm and pulled her roughly into the alcove of the door of one of the classrooms. He pinned her up against the door, planting his hands on the door on either side of her head, with his body not quite touching hers. He leaned down and sniffed her neck, inhaling deeply with his eyes closed.

"I could smell you coming down the hallway," he whispered.

"Then you should have gotten out of my way," she muttered.

He grinned at her, and she realized he had never looked more wolfish to her than at that moment.

"What are you doing, Will?" She asked quietly.

"What do you mean?" He tilted his head, angling his mouth over hers until their lips were nearly touching.

She swallowed hard. "We agreed not to do this, remember?" Her lower body was starting to ache and throb.

"Do what?" He kissed her jaw and a soft moan escaped from her lips.

"This," she muttered again. "We agreed that having sex with each other was not a good idea."

"Did we?" He murmured. He nuzzled his face behind her ear, taking another deep breath of her damp hair and skin.

"I don't remember that. All I remember is how good it felt to fuck you."

She jerked, a spasm of pleasure surging through her body at his words.

"Christ, Will. Stop it," she whispered.

“Are you sure you want me to stop?” He asked. “It doesn’t look like you want me to stop.” She followed his gaze to her breasts. Her nipples were hard and swollen against the damp material of her bikini.

He bent his head and quickly sucked one nipple into his mouth. He sucked hard on it through the damp material, tasting the salt water from the pool as her hands threaded through his hair and gripped tightly.

He lifted his head and kissed her, thrusting his tongue into her mouth and shoving her back against the door. He took her leg, pulling it up roughly and settling his erection against her. She moaned and kissed him feverishly as he thrust hard against her.

Hannah wrapped her arms around Will’s broad shoulders, clinging to him as he kissed her. The fire was burning inside of her, and she couldn’t stop thinking about how easy it would be for Will to just pull aside her bikini bottom and sink his cock into her.

Tell him to stop! Someone will be walking by at any moment. Do you want to risk everything for a quickie in the hallway?

She shoved the voice out of her head. It was weeks since Will had touched and kissed her, and she realized with a small tingle of dismay that she couldn’t stop and didn’t care if they got caught.

With a loud growl, Will pulled away from her. He stood panting on the other side of the alcove, staring hungrily at her.

“Will?” She whispered. “What’s wrong?”

She reached for him and he shook his head, a look of panic crossing his face. “Don’t touch me, Hannah.”

She recoiled from him, hurt crossing her features, and he stared grimly at her for a moment.

“The moon is full tonight,” he whispered. He closed his eyes and a look of ecstasy crossed his face.

“The moon,” he repeated and his whole body shivered in pleasure.

“Will, are you okay?”

He opened his eyes and stared through her. “The moon is full. Stay away from me tonight, Hannah.”

His eyes cleared a little and he actually looked at her this time. “Do you hear me, Hannah? I’m leaving now but when I come back – stay away.

“Where are you going?” She whispered.

The dreamy look came back across his face. “To hunt. When the moon is full, we hunt.” He said the last sentence in a happy little mutter before shaking himself.

“Stay away from me. Do you understand?” He looked at her pleadingly.

She nodded and with a final haunted look at her, he disappeared down the hallway.

* * *

Hannah tossed and turned in her small bed. It was close to eleven and Selena was sleeping deeply. Hannah stared at her enviously. After her encounter with Will in the hallway she had spent the rest of the evening and night alternating between being worried for him and in a state of arousal so deep it almost hurt.

She had never seen Will like that before. He was always so tightly controlled. Seeing him lose control to the point where he nearly took her in the hallway should have frightened her. Instead, it made every part of her throb and burn with need. She cursed bitterly and wished for the hundredth time that Will had just taken her and damn the consequences.

She tucked her arms behind her head and stared up at the ceiling, doing her best to ignore the ache between her legs. She had to think of something else, stop remembering the way Will had pressed his –

She frowned and looked at the door, straining to hear over the sound of Selena's soft snoring. She waited patiently and then sat up in her bed when the snuffling noise happened again. She pushed the covers back and swung her legs out, sitting on the side of the bed and staring apprehensively at the door. There was the sound of scratching and she walked towards the door, glancing over her shoulder to see if Selena had woken.

She hadn't and when the scratching came again, she reached out and jerked the door open quickly. The wolf was sitting in the hallway and he grinned at her, his tongue lolling out of his mouth. He stood, his back was higher than her waist, and nosed his face into the palm of her hand. She ran her fingers through the soft thick fur on the side of his face and he whined softly.

"Will?" She whispered. "What's wrong?"

He turned and padded down the hallway, looking back to see if she was following him. He whined again, louder this time, and with another quick glance at Selena, she shut the door to their room and followed him.

He led her into the common room. The gas fireplace was left on but its flickering flames only illuminated a small section of the room, leaving the rest shrouded in darkness. Will had disappeared into the darkness, and she stood nervously by the fire. She was wearing just a long t-shirt and panties and it was cool in the room. She shivered delicately, squinting into the dark shadows.

"Will?" She whispered again. She gasped and her hand rose to her throat when eyes suddenly glowed in the darkness.

There was a soft popping noise and then Will was striding naked out of the darkness.

"Is everything okay? I thought you were hunting tonight," she said.

He didn't answer. He was in front of her, his hands reaching for her waist, before she knew what was happening. He lifted her and shoved her back. He pinned her against the wall, she could feel his erection huge and throbbing against her, and gripped her thighs tightly, wrapping them around his waist.

His skin was cold and she could smell the scent of snow and pine trees on him.

"Will, what –"

He stopped her with a hard kiss. His lips were cold but his mouth was warm, and she gasped into it as he pushed his tongue into her mouth.

She linked her feet around the small of his back as he used his lower body to keep her pinned to the wall. He cupped and rubbed her breasts through her shirt with rough hands as he continued to kiss her, growling low in his throat.

He yanked her head back and kissed down her throat, sucking and licking as she shivered beneath him and liquid soaked her panties. He stuck his hands up her shirt, kneading her bare breasts roughly as he stared at her, his hot breath washing over her face.

She made a low cry of pleasure and he grinned at her, his eyes glowing. Hannah kissed him, leaning forward and holding his head in her hands as she searched his mouth with her tongue. Her entire body was aching and throbbing for release, and she thrust her hips mindlessly at him as small whimpers and moans tore from her throat.

He moved his hands down to her hips, growling in frustration when he felt the material of her panties. He bunched the thin cotton in his hands and yanked on it. There was a soft ripping noise and her panties were hanging in tatters from one large hand.

He dropped them to the floor, spread her legs wide and shoved the entire length of his cock into her.

Hannah came immediately, covering her mouth with her hand to muffle her loud cry of pleasure. He felt the surge of wetness and groaned loudly before starting to plunge wildly into her. He wrapped her legs around his waist again, and she hooked her feet together as he slid his hands under her shirt to squeeze her breasts. He pulled at her sensitive nipples as she clung to his shoulders. She made small moans of pleasure as he drove into her, her back slamming against the wall. He reached between them and found her clit. He rubbed it roughly and before her body had recovered from the first one, a second orgasm was ripping through her body.

He moaned as her inner muscles tightened helplessly around his cock. Her legs fell away and he moved his hands down to her thighs. He held her up, his fingers pressing deep into her pale flesh as he searched for his own release.

Hannah opened her eyes to see Will throw his head back in ecstasy, the cords standing out in his neck as he came. A low howl was starting in his throat and she threw her hand over his mouth, muffling the sound.

He collapsed against her, keeping her pinned up against the wall as she put her arms around him and rested her head on one broad shoulder. Her breathing was just returning to normal when he suddenly jerked against her and pulled away. She would have dropped to the floor if he hadn't caught her and steadied her on her feet.

He backed away from her, and she frowned at the look of shame in his eyes.

"Will? What's wrong?"

"Oh my God. Hannah, I - I'm sorry," he moaned in a low, strangled voice as he continued to back away. He lifted his head, his face pointed to the ceiling, and she watched mesmerized as he transformed into a wolf. He howled, a loud and desolate sound that vibrated the walls, and she clapped her hands to her ears as he turned and bounded from the room.

Doors opened. Excited calls were starting to drift down the hallway, and with a muttered. "Shit!" Hannah grabbed her torn panties and fled back to her room.

She had just left the common room when a small figure, her red hair gleaming softly in the light of the fireplace, emerged from the shadows on the far side of the room. Leanne, her face an angry scowl, walked to the door of the room. She glanced both ways and then slipped unnoticed down the hallway.

* * *

Hannah, her lungs burning from the cold morning air, groaned as she stretched her sore thigh muscles. Beside her, Selena grinned. "What's up with you? That was barely a five mile run."

Hannah shrugged, willing herself not to blush. The soreness in her thighs had nothing to do with the morning run, and everything to do with last night in the common room with Will. Her stomach tightened with pleasure and need at the memory. She sighed irritably. Will had turned her into a sex maniac.

As if her very thoughts had summoned him, Will appeared in front of her. "Hannah, can I speak to you in private for a moment?"

He looked pointedly at Selena who gave him a weak grin, and left to join the others walking back to the facility.

As soon as she was out of earshot, Will turned to face her. He looked tired and drawn, his face filled with worry.

“Did I hurt you?” He asked hoarsely.

“What?”

“Last night – did I hurt you?” He said it again, his voice trembling anxiously.

“No, of course you didn’t.” She paused. “You don’t remember what happened?”

He nodded, his hands clenched behind his back in a tight fist. “I do – mostly.”

She had never seen him like this before. He was pale and trembling, and when he looked at her she could see the same look of shame in his eyes that was there last night.

“Will? What’s wrong?” She reached for his arm and he jerked away from her.

“I told you to stay away last night.” He looked at her accusingly. “Why didn’t you stay away from me?”

She didn’t know how to answer that so she just stared silently at him.

“Hannah, are you sure I didn’t hurt you last night? Tell me the truth please,” he said in a low whisper.

“I swear to God you didn’t hurt me. I –” she paused, blushing a little, “I enjoyed it, Will. Very much.”

She saw a flash of desire in his eyes before he looked away from her. When he turned back there was nothing but remorse and sorrow in them.

“Please don’t look at me like that,” she begged. “I’m fine – nothing bad happened.”

“But it could have,” he insisted. “When the moon is full, I - sometimes I lose control.”

The urge to mate, like the urge to hunt and feed, was always stronger during the full moon. Lycans who preferred the company of human women knew better than to be around them during the full moon. A Lycan female could easily handle them but a human woman could be badly hurt.

He thought back to how rough he was with Hannah last night. He had kept control, but just barely, and despite the cold air his entire body was sweating. If he had lost control, had done the unthinkable – he would never have been able to live with himself.

“Will,” Hannah said softly. “Look at me. You didn’t hurt me. I’m perfectly fine.” There was no way she was letting him see the deep bruises on her thighs from where his hands had clamped onto her.

“I could have bitten you!” He roared suddenly.

She glanced around nervously but the others had already disappeared into the old shack that served as the hidden entrance to the underground facility.

“But you didn’t,” she soothed.

“But I could have,” he argued. “Hannah, if I had bitten you during the full moon, you would have turned. Do you understand that?”

She nodded. “Yes. But you didn’t bite me and I’m not going to turn.”

“But I wanted to.” He gave her a look filled with such misery that her heart hurt for him. “I wanted to bite you and if I had, I would never have forgiven myself.”

“You didn’t,” she repeated, not knowing what else to say.

“We need to stay away from each other. Please,” he said pleadingly.

She bit her lip and nodded. “I know.”

“Promise me.”

“I promise.”

He nodded gratefully, and she turned and headed towards the facility before he could see the hot tears spilling down her cheeks.

Chapter Fourteen

She rolled off of him, her naked body slick with sweat. She stretched out on the bed, and hid the annoyance on her face when he leaned over her and kissed her lightly on the lips.

"That was amazing." Darren grinned at her and leaned down to kiss her again. She turned her face so his mouth grazed across her cheek instead.

He frowned a little and then kissed the tip of her nose. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing." She shrugged.

He laughed. "Liar. You're being too quiet."

She studied him carefully. "How many of the instructors sleep with recruits?"

"Why?"

"I'm just curious. What happens if you get caught?"

"No one ever gets caught. We all do it, so we all cover for each other."

"All of you?"

He leaned down and kissed her neck. "Almost all of us. Chen and Will don't."

She snorted. "Will does."

He frowned at her. "No, Leanne. I'm pretty sure he doesn't."

"After I left your apartment last night, I saw him having sex with Hannah in the common room."

He stared at her thunderstruck. "You're fucking kidding me."

She shook her head. "Nope."

He stared blankly at the ceiling. "On the night of a full moon. Christ, she's either bat shit crazy or has a death wish."

"What do you mean?"

He looked down at her. "I know you think being with a Lycan is no big deal. I get that all you girls giggle and fantasize about being fucked by the big, scary werewolf, but that's because Will is the only Lycan you've met. Trust me when I say that most werewolves are violent and unpredictable. Will has lived with humans for years. He has the most control of any Lycan I've ever met, but that doesn't mean he can't lose his shit like every other fucking Lycan I've run into."

She rolled her eyes. "Don't you think you're exaggerating, just a little?"

He shook her lightly. "No, I'm not. I've heard stories of human women being killed while having sex with a Lycan during the full moon. They didn't mean to kill them. They just – just lost control."

She was frowning at him and now it was his turn to roll his eyes. "Jesus, do you pay attention to anything Isabelle teaches you?"

He brushed his hand across her naked thigh. "Lycans, even the more civilized ones like Will, are different the night of the full moon. They have a harder time controlling the shift. Their basic urges for things like hunting and feeding and sex are stronger and harder to resist. If they don't want trouble, and most of them don't, they stay away from humans during the full moon - even the ones who are fully integrated into the human world. If a Lycan bites you the night of the full moon, you turn."

She sucked in her breath and he nodded with satisfaction. "Now you're getting it. The full moon makes it nearly impossible for Will to control himself, and yet he actually had sex with a human that night."

He looked down at her. "Are you sure he didn't bite her?"

"I'm sure."

“She’s damn lucky he didn’t kill her.”

“Trust me, she enjoyed every minute of it,” Leanne said bitterly.

He stared at her in disgust. “You’re jealous.”

“What does she have that I don’t?” She whined. “I’ve practically thrown myself at him a dozen times.”

He pinned her arms down. “Have you listened to anything I’ve just told you? Stay away from the Lycan. If you want it rough, baby, I can do rough.”

He tried to kiss her and she swore violently. “Get off me, Darren!”

He pushed away from her and stretched out on the bed as she stood and dressed. As she pulled on her shoes and walked toward the door of his tiny apartment, Darren sat up. “You come and see me any time you need that itch scratched, Leanne. Okay?”

She flipped him the bird, making him grin, and disappeared silently into the hallway.

Darren flopped back on the bed and stared thoughtfully at the ceiling. He’d flirted with Hannah since the moment she had started his class but she had completely ignored it. He had actually started to believe that she either didn’t understand flirting or wasn’t into men. Had wondered, in fact, if she maybe had a thing for that Selena bird, but apparently she just had a thing for freaks.

He grinned up at the ceiling and closed his eyes. He might just have a chance with her after all.

* * *

Early the next morning, Leanne stormed out of the west training room. Will was exercising in the room and she had taken the chance to be alone with him. Since the moment she had witnessed him and Hannah having sex, she couldn’t get it out of her head.

She had wanted Will even before she saw him fucking Hannah but now that she knew what he was capable of, the need was like a living thing inside of her. She had gone back to Darren in hopes of relieving some of that need but it hadn’t helped. Even Darren’s warnings couldn’t dissuade her. It was Will she wanted, and in her entire twenty-four years she had never been rejected so soundly by a man.

She had stumbled upon him this morning by sheer luck and, feeling desperate and horny, she had thrown herself at him. He had gently but firmly rejected her - just like he had the previous twenty times she had begged him to sleep with her.

“Leanne, it’s against the rules. You know that,” he had said gently.

She had kissed him then, shoving her tongue eagerly into his mouth and trying to slip her hand into his pants. A flash of annoyance had crossed his face and he had yanked her hand away.

“Enough, Leanne. I’ve been patient with you for long enough,” he had warned tersely. “If you keep up this behavior, I’ll have no choice but to report you to Richard. I do not sleep with recruits.”

“Of course you don’t, Will,” she had replied sulkily. “Especially not during a full moon.”

His hand had tightened painfully around her wrist and her body had filled with excitement.

“What did you say?” He had asked softly.

“I was just agreeing with you,” she had said innocently.

“Are you threatening me?” He had pulled her closer until she could feel the heat from his body.

She had licked her lips, so turned on she could feel her body trembling. “Kiss me – please, Will.”

He had stared at her for a long moment, noting the flush in her cheeks and the desire in her eyes. He had pushed her away then, his face filled with disgust. "Get out of here, Leanne."

Now, stumbling down the hallway with tears coursing down her face, she could feel the desire finally dissipating. It was replaced with a white hot anger and she made a sudden decision and headed in the direction of Richard's office.

* * *

Hannah sighed as Darren put his arms around her and steadied the gun she was holding. It was her final individual lesson with Darren, and she couldn't have been happier about it. For weeks he was hitting on her, both in the group and individual lessons, and she was tired of it. Yesterday Richard had told her that starting in a couple of days she would be training almost exclusively with Chen, and she had nearly hugged him with delight.

"Hannah? Hey - pay attention," Darren teased, his face only inches from hers.

She moved her head back. "I am. Can you give me a bit more space please?"

He shrugged lazily. "Learn to hold the gun properly and I won't have to keep putting my arms around you like this."

"I know how to hold a gun properly," she said hotly.

He laughed. "Yeah, you do." He leaned in and kissed her hard on the mouth.

She tore her mouth free, wiping her hand across her mouth in disgust before elbowing her way out of his embrace. "What the hell, Darren?"

He paused and then pushed her back against the wall, dipping his head and nipping her on her exposed collarbone. "I know you like it rough, honey. I can be rough."

"Get off me, asshole!" She snarled and shoved him back.

He stumbled but caught his balance before he fell on his ass. "Are you kidding me? I'm not good enough to have sex with, but you'll sleep with a fucking werewolf? He's no better than a dog."

Her face went white. "I have no idea what you're talking about."

He started to reply and there was a soft knock on the door. Isabelle, her face pale and worried looking, stuck her head in the room. "Hannah – you need to come with me. Richard needs to speak with you."

Darren frowned. "Can't it wait? We're not done the lesson."

"No, it can't wait. Hannah?" Isabelle held her hand out and with a final dirty look at Darren, Hannah followed her.

* * *

Will stretched, bracing his foot on the wall of the hallway and feeling the muscles burning in his legs. After his confrontation with Leanne this morning, he had left the facility to go for a run. Just thirty feet from the entrance to the facility he had stripped off his clothes, leaving them piled carefully at the base of a large tree, and shifted before taking off through the forest.

After a while, a long while, he had shifted back to his human form and jogged back to his clothing. He had dressed quickly and returned to the facility. The run had cleared his head like he knew it would. He would have to talk to Hannah. He needed to let her know that he suspected Leanne knew about them.

He walked by the common room for the recruits, and decided on a whim to look for Hannah. He would ask her to meet him after her afternoon lessons so they could talk. He opened the door

to the common room. It was just after lunch and the room was crowded with recruits, all of them talking and laughing at once.

He was walking through the room searching for Hannah, when he realized that nearly everyone had stopped talking and was staring at him. He frowned, spotted Selena standing next to Tyler, and made his way towards her. "Have you seen Hannah?"

There was whispering behind him and somebody laughed, a high, nervous bray that set his nerves on edge.

Selena was staring at him, and Tyler slipped his arm around her waist as she cleared her throat and said softly, "Um...not since this morning."

He frowned. "Selena, what's wrong?"

"Nothing," she squeaked. She was looking at him with a strange expression on her face, and she had paled visibly when he asked about Hannah.

"Has she been hurt?" He asked, alarmed. Visions of her being stuck through with a katana blade flipped through his mind.

"No," she whispered.

"Then where is she?" He sighed impatiently, and there were more whispers behind him.

"I think she might be with Chen." Selena leaned against Tyler nervously.

"Thanks." He turned and left. He was halfway to Chen's training room when Mannie called his name.

"Will! Richard needs to speak with you."

"It'll have to wait," he growled over his shoulder. He had a very bad feeling in the pit of his stomach, and he needed to see Hannah and confirm she was okay.

"It can't wait. Richard asked me to find you." Mannie jogged up behind him and pulled him to a stop.

"Tough shit. Tell Richard I have something I need to take care of first. I'll be there in –"

"He knows, Will," Mannie said softly.

Will looked at him. "Knows what?"

Mannie shifted on his feet and looked acutely uncomfortable. "He knows about you and Hannah."

Will's stomach dropped to his feet. "What about me and Hannah?"

"Someone saw you, Will. They saw you with Hannah in the common room on the night of the full moon." He rubbed his hand across his face. "Richard's already spoken with Hannah, and she's admitted to having sex with you. He hasn't told the Board. He's asking us to vote on whether she stays or not."

Will cursed vehemently before turning and sprinting down the hallway towards Richard's office.

Chapter Fifteen

"I seduced her, Richard." Will burst through the door of Richard's office without knocking. He slammed his hands down on the desk and stared steadily at Richard.

"She was lonely and upset over her sister's death, and I took advantage of her. If you're going to kick anyone out of the program, it should be me."

"Will, listen to me. I need you to –"

"No! Richard, you know if you send her out there she's as good as dead. She doesn't deserve a death sentence just because I seduced her into sleeping with me. You can't –"

"You aren't the only one, Will," Richard said quietly.

"What?"

"You aren't the only instructor she's slept with." He motioned for Will to sit down and Will collapsed in the chair across from him, staring dumbly at him.

"After one of the other recruits came to me with the accusation, I called in the other male instructors individually to ask if she had slept with them. One of them confirmed that she had."

"Who?" Will whispered.

"It doesn't matter. What matters is that –"

"Who is it, Richard?" Will snarled. "Tell me!"

Richard sighed. "You're going to find out eventually. Darren. She's been sleeping with Darren."

Will stared blankly at him. He felt like he'd been punched in the gut, and he had to force himself to focus on what Richard was saying.

"I brought Hannah in to question her about it. She admitted to sleeping with you."

"And Darren?" Will asked hoarsely. "Did she admit to fucking him?"

Richard paused. "No, she denied those allegations. She said that Darren was hitting on her for the last month or so and she's turned him down repeatedly."

Will took a deep breath, relief coursing through him and Richard frowned.

"Will, I'm not sure that she's telling the truth. Just because she won't admit it, doesn't mean she isn't having sex with him."

Will ignored his last comment. "Have you spoken with the Board?"

Richard shook his head. "No. I've decided that the Board doesn't need to know of this... indiscretion. I have, however, asked the other instructors to vote on whether we keep Hannah in the program or not."

"You've put me in an awkward position, Will. I need to do some serious damage control before the rest of the –"

"It's too late," Will said sullenly. "The whole goddamn building knows. Thanks to that stupid little bitch Leanne."

Richard twitched. "How do you know it was her who came to me?"

"She's been begging me for months to sleep with her. I've turned her down repeatedly. Obviously she saw me with Hannah and decided to get her revenge."

Richard sighed deeply. "She did the right thing coming to me, no matter what the reason. As for you and Darren," Richard sat back in his chair and tapped the arms of it nervously, "I've decided to give you both a written warning in your files."

Will laughed bitterly. "That's it? So you're turning Hannah into a scapegoat? Christ, Richard."

Richard suddenly leaned forward. “What do you want me to do, Will? Dismiss both you and Darren from the facility? For fuck’s sake, Darren is the best weapons instructor I’ve got, and you’re the most capable vampire killer I’ve ever seen.”

Will opened his mouth to protest and the usually mild-mannered Richard stood up, his face red with anger.

“Shut the fuck up, Will! You have no idea what kind of position you have put me in! Hannah was showing real promise, and you’ve gone and fucked everything up because you couldn’t keep your goddamn dick in your pants.”

Richard wiped his hand across his brow. “And dammit, Will – screwing her on the night of the full moon? What the hell were you thinking?”

“I wasn’t, Richard. I made a mistake. It’s fine though. She isn’t hurt and I didn’t – “

Richard held his hand up. “Don’t. You were lucky and you know it. What if you had bitten her? Or killed her? Did you think of that?”

“Of course I did!” Will shouted. “Don’t you think I know how badly I’ve fucked up?”

Richard sighed, his anger deflating like a balloon. “Be back in my office in two hours. We’ll take the vote then. You and Darren won’t be voting but you both need to be there.”

Will nodded and stood up to leave. Richard looked up at him, his face somber. “Do me a favour – stay away from Hannah.”

* * *

“Are you going to say something or just stare at me?” Hannah asked Selena grumpily.

Selena gave her a hurt look. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Because I was breaking the rules, Selena! Because I’m a private person and I didn’t think it was anyone’s business. Because I saw the way you reacted when you found out Will was a Lycan.” She buried her head in her hands. “Because you’re the only friend I have here, and I didn’t want to lose you.”

Selena hesitated and then sat down next to Hannah. She put her arm around her shoulders and leaned her head against Hannah’s. “I’m sorry, Hannah. I just – I don’t know what to say.”

“Just tell me we’re still friends.” Hannah said. “That’s all I need to hear right now.”

Selena smiled at her. “We’re still friends. But why Will? Can you tell me that? I mean, I understand Darren. He’s hot in a skeevey kind of way.”

Hannah scowled. “I am not sleeping with Darren. He’s lying through his teeth.”

Selena frowned. “Why would he lie about something like that? He could lose his job over it.”

“Probably to get back at me for rejecting him repeatedly. He knows Richard won’t fire him. I swear to you, I’m not sleeping with that douchebag.”

“Are you being kicked out of the program?” Selena asked tentatively.

“I don’t know. Richard is holding a vote in an hour or so with the instructors. They’re going to decide whether I get to stay or not.”

“I’m sure they’ll vote you to stay, Hannah. For God’s sake, Will isn’t the first instructor to sleep with a recruit. He’s just the first one to get caught. Maybe the others will – “

She was interrupted by a knock at the door and Jeremy stepped into the room.

“Hey.” He rubbed his hands nervously across the front of his jeans. “Selena, can I talk to Hannah alone for a minute?”

Selena glanced at Hannah who nodded, and she stood and left the room.

“Hey, Hannah.”

“Hello, Jeremy.”

He cleared his throat. “So, I guess I know why you were never interested in me. Your dance card was already pretty full.”

“Jeremy, I -”

“No, it’s fine Hannah, really. I mean I get sleeping with instructors to get through the program. You were behind the rest of us and you’re obviously desperate for revenge for your sister so, yeah, I can get why you would sleep with Darren.”

“I am not sleeping with Darren,” Hannah said through gritted teeth. “And if I was, I certainly wouldn’t be doing it to fuck my way to the top. I’ve worked just as hard as the rest of you to get through the training.”

He gave her a bitter look. “Whatever helps you sleep at night, Hannah.”

“Get out.” Hannah pointed to the door, her hand trembling.

“Fine.” He started towards the door but stopped with his hand on the door handle. “Just tell me one thing – why Will? Was it for the thrill of sleeping with a Lycan? Is that it? Did you get off on him touching you, knowing that he could kill you if he felt like it?”

“Why I slept with him is none of your goddamn business,” Hannah said harshly.

“Of course it isn’t.” He laughed bitterly. “Do you know that I actually thought I might be falling in love with you? That, of course, was before I found out you let that Lycan paw at you like a dog. You’re not the person I thought you were, Hannah.”

“I don’t give a fuck what you think of me,” Hannah said quietly. “Now get the hell out of my room.”

“Gladly,” he muttered and left, slamming the door behind him.

* * *

Richard stared solemnly at the six instructors gathered in his office. “You all know why we’re here. Rather than involve the other centres and the Board of Directors, I’ve made the decision to handle the situation in-house. I’ve asked all of you to carefully consider whether you believe Hannah should be allowed to continue within the program.”

He glanced at Will and Darren. “For obvious reasons, the two of you will be excluded from the vote.”

He turned back to the others. “You’ve had a few hours to decide. Are you ready to vote?”

They nodded and he sighed. “Fine. I’m voting yes. I think Hannah deserves a second chance. Isabelle, yes or no?”

She glanced nervously at Will before looking down at the floor. “I vote no. If she’s been using her – her body to advance through the program, it isn’t fair to the other recruits who are obeying the rules.”

Mannie snorted with disgust as Will squeezed the arms of the chair he was sitting in.

“Thank you, Isabelle.” Richard looked at Mannie. “Mannie?”

“Yes.” Mannie said immediately. “Hannah has improved by leaps and bounds over the last few months. She’s worked hard to keep up with the other recruits even though she was at a disadvantage at the beginning. Plus, she killed a vampire without any weapons training. She’s got goddamn balls of steel, and I don’t give a shit if she fucks her way through the whole goddamn facility.”

Richard raised his eyebrows. “Crude, but thank you for your input. Aaron?”

“I vote no. I agree with Isabelle – it’s not fair to the other recruits.”

The entire room looked to Chen. He was sitting quietly with an almost bored look on his face. Will's stomach was churning and he let his breath out in a nervous rush. It was up to Chen now, and he honestly didn't have a clue which way the man was going to vote.

Chen knew Will had slept with Hannah and had never spoken a word about it. He had chosen Hannah to continue training with him when he was notoriously picky about his students. Those two facts suggested that he would vote yes to keep her in the program, but it wasn't a guarantee. Despite all the years he had worked with the man, Will knew very little about him. He had a pretty good idea that Chen was a man who valued honesty and hard work. If he believed what the others did – that Hannah was sleeping her way through the program – he wouldn't hesitate to cut her loose.

"Chen?" Richard prompted softly. "You have the deciding vote."

Chen looked up at Richard. "I vote yes." He didn't elaborate further.

"Thank God," Will muttered.

"Then it's settled," Richard said briskly. "Hannah will stay in the program. She'll continue training with Chen and - "

"Hold on." Darren held up his hand. "Are we sure Chen should be allowed to vote? He obviously wants to keep Hannah as his student, which - let's face it – is a little strange. Hannah doesn't seem like the swordsmen type to me. She's been successful so far in sleeping her way through the program, who's to say – "

"Fuck you, Darren!" Will leaped up from his chair, knocking it clattering to the floor. "I did not advance Hannah through the program because she was sleeping with me!"

He started for Darren and Mannie jumped up and pushed him backwards. "Will, stop it. He's not worth it."

Richard held up his hand. "Will, enough!"

He looked at Darren through narrowed eyes. "Are you telling me the positive reports you've been giving Hannah have been based on her sleeping with you?"

Darren hesitated and Richard smiled thinly at him. "Think carefully before you speak, Darren. Your job depends on it."

"No, of course not," Darren replied. "But just because I'm not, doesn't mean that Will isn't or that Chen won't."

"It won't be an issue with Chen. Trust me," Richard said dryly.

"You can't know that, Richard," Darren argued. "She's already slept with two of us, what's to say she won't try it with Chen?"

He glanced at Chen. "No offense, Chen but she can be pretty persuasive."

"Darren, it won't be an issue," Richard repeated himself. "Chen, you can inform Hannah – "

"Richard, I have to protest this. You can't trust Hannah, and she'll be putting the lives of other recruits in danger if Chen is only allowing her to continue in training because she's spreading her legs for him."

Will let out another bellow of rage and leaped for Darren. Before he could grab him, Chen was standing in front of the gun instructor. His katana sword was in his hand and he had the tip of it against Darren's burly neck.

"Chen," Richard said nervously.

Ignoring him completely, Chen bent down until his face was only inches from Darren's.

"Do you question my honour?" He asked in his soft voice.

Darren swallowed, his eyes darting nervously to Richard and the others. "Of course not, Chen. It's just that Hannah is a beautiful woman, and she's used to using her body to get what she wants."

Chen pressed the sword against Darren's neck until Darren inhaled sharply. Will could see a thin trail of blood trickling down his neck from beneath the sword.

"Let me assure you that I am more than capable of resisting Hannah's... feminine wiles. In fact, you have a better chance of getting into my pants than Hannah does." He winked at Darren and then stepped back, releasing him. He used a tissue from the box on Richard's desk to wipe the blood from his sword as Darren swiped at his neck. He looked at the blood on his fingertips in disbelief.

Richard cleared his throat. "As I was saying, the matter is now closed. Chen, you'll inform Hannah she can continue in the program but let her know she's on probation."

He looked at Darren and Aaron. "Can I assume that you're no longer interested in allowing Hannah to continue her training with you?"

The men nodded and Richard put up his hand before Will could protest. "That's fine. Hannah's had enough training in the other fields and if she has as much potential as Chen believes she does, it's best that she spends most of her time with him anyway."

He sat back down and straightened some papers on his desk as the others looked at him silently. He glanced up, frowning a little. "You're dismissed."

The others filed out of his room and he sat back in his chair and put his hand over his eyes. He had a throbbing headache, and at this moment he was bitterly regretting the day he agreed to let Hannah join the program. With the possible mole in the organization, he needed Will more than ever. Based on Will's reactions today, Richard had a bad feeling that his obsession with Hannah wasn't about to end anytime soon.

Chapter Sixteen

“Will, wait up man.”

Will slowed down and allowed Mannie to catch up to him.

“You okay?”

“Just fine,” he muttered.

“So...Chen’s gay. Who knew huh?”

“Yeah,” Will grunted.

“Listen, I just want to let you know that if it came down to you losing your job, I would have ratted myself out.” His brow darkened. “And those two asshole hypocrites, Isabelle and Aaron.”

“Mannie, what the hell are you talking about?” Will asked.

Mannie gave him a cautious look. “You really don’t know?”

“Don’t know what?” Will said impatiently.

“Hell, Will. All of us have slept with recruits at one point or the other.”

“Are you kidding me?” Will said in disbelief.

Mannie shook his head. “No. Until Hannah came along, you and Chen were the only ones who hadn’t slept with a recruit. Now Chen’s the last man standing.”

“Oh my God,” Will groaned.

“And actually, most people thought you were sleeping with Leanne.”

“What? Why the hell would they think that?” Will nearly shouted.

“Um, because she went around telling everyone you were,” Mannie replied.

“I was not sleeping with Leanne,” Will said grimly.

“Yeah, I know, man. Anyway, people were pretty shocked when they found out you and Hannah were doing it.”

“But not when they thought I was fucking Leanne?”

Mannie shrugged. “Everyone knows that chick’s a freak, Will.”

He had the good grace to blush when Will glared at him. “Not that they’d have to be a freak to sleep with you. It’s just that Hannah seemed so... so quiet and goody two-shoes you know? People can’t get over the fact that she slept with a Lycan. Combine that with the fact that she was barely keeping up with the other recruits when she first got here, and people naturally think she slept with you and Darren to advance.”

“She isn’t sleeping with Darren,” Will growled.

“You sure?”

“Yes,” he replied, but there was doubt in his voice.

Mannie shrugged. “Fair enough.”

Will glanced at him. “So basically the only reason a woman in the program would sleep with me is if she’s a freak or trying to sleep her way through the program?”

Mannie flushed again. “No, that’s not what I meant. I mean, Leanne’s a freak for sure but for Christ’s sake Will, half the women in this building want to fuck your brains out.”

“Shut up, Mannie.”

“I’m not kidding. Listen, I’m not trying to insult you, really I’m not, but you know what most people think about Lycans. You goddamn werewolves are the bad boys of the supernatural world, and most women are dying to try and reform you. Or at least brag that they slept with a Lycan and lived to tell about it.”

“Sweet Jesus,” Will moaned. “Humans are so fucked up.”

“You’re telling me, man,” Mannie agreed amiably. “I personally don’t get it. Why the hell all those women want to sleep with your ugly, scruffy face when they’ve got the perfect human specimen right here, I’ll never know.”

Will rolled his eyes and then frowned. “I can’t believe the recruits would risk being kicked out just to sleep with their instructors. Or that the instructors would risk their jobs.”

Mannie laughed. “Are you kidding me, Will? They spend 24/7 with us, doing everything we tell them to. Of course they’re going to develop crushes on us. Few of us can resist them. Hell, Isabelle holds the record for sleeping with the most recruits. And it ain’t just been the male ones she’s slept with.”

Will’s mouth dropped open and Mannie laughed again. “Besides, if they aren’t sleeping with us, they’re sleeping with each other.”

Will hesitated. “I think Hannah might have slept with Jeremy.”

“Nope,” Mannie said immediately. “She didn’t.”

“How do you know that?”

Mannie reddened. “I was sleeping with Alison once a week. She and Selena talk, you know how women do, and Selena swore up and down to Alison that Hannah wasn’t sleeping with Jeremy. Not that he wasn’t trying to get in her pants, but Selena said all Hannah did was sleep and exercise. Apparently, she even snuck to the training rooms after lights out and exercised. Selena said she was afraid you were going to drop her from the program.”

“Are you still sleeping with Alison?”

Mannie shook his head. “Nah. She’s been different since the attack at the bar. She doesn’t have much interest in me anymore. I’m worried about her actually.”

They stopped in front of Will’s apartment and Mannie clapped him on the back. “Anyway, don’t worry about what’s happened. This will blow over in the next few weeks, I promise you. And I just wanted to let you know that I wouldn’t have let you go down in flames for sleeping with a recruit. I would have confessed to Richard. I swear.”

“Thanks, Mannie. I appreciate it.”

Mannie nodded and continued to his apartment as Will entered his own and closed the door. He shrugged out of his shirt, kicking off his shoes before collapsing on the bed. It was weeks since Hannah had slept in his bed and although he had washed the sheets numerous times since she was there, he was careful not to wash the pillowcase she had slept on. He turned and buried his face in the pillow, inhaling deeply. It still smelled faintly of her and even as he cursed himself for acting like a love-struck teenager, he couldn’t deny that just smelling her scent in his bed made him feel better.

* * *

Richard handed Chen a glass of brandy and the man took it with a nod of thanks. He sank into his chair with a loud sigh and scanned the papers in front of him.

“Okay, let’s see – you’ve got Alex, Paul and Hannah training exclusively with you at the moment. Are Alex or Paul ready to hunt yet?”

Chen shook his head and Richard swore softly. “Dammit, Chen. I’m not trying to tell you how to do your job, but Darren and Aaron both have recruits ready to hunt. They’re taking a group of them out in a week to go hunting. And this group started months behind Alex and Paul.”

Chen stared at him steadily and Richard flushed a little. "I get that this particular type of training takes more time but Jesus, half the people in this building already think what you teach is useless."

"You've seen me hunt. Do you think it's useless?" Chen asked. His voice was still the same soft tone it always was but his accent had thickened, and Richard knew the man well enough to know it meant he was angry.

"Of course I don't. But I'm starting to think that what you can do is just not attainable by the average person. If that's the case, I'd hate to waste your time with instructing. We have many other areas we can use you in."

He was taking a sip of his brandy when Chen said, "Hannah's ready to hunt."

Richard choked and coughed on the brandy. "You're kidding me," he croaked, coughing again before taking another sip of brandy.

Chen shook his head. "No."

"She's months behind Alex and Paul in training. They're not ready to hunt, but she is?"

Chen took his own sip of brandy. "Yes."

"So she's a natural then?"

A small smile slipped across the Asian man's face. "No, definitely not a natural."

"Then why – I mean, how is it even possible she's that much further ahead of your older students?" Richard frowned.

"Simple. She's a quick learner and she eats, breathes, and sleeps the art of kenjutsu. I've never had such a," he paused, "dedicated student in my life."

"That reminds me." Richard gave Chen a delicate look. "I wanted to ask if you have been aware of um, any of Hannah's uh, extracurricular activities in the last two months."

"Are you asking me if I've caught her having sex with Will?" Chen asked.

Richard cleared his throat. "Well – yeah I guess I am."

"No, I haven't. If she is still sleeping with him she's being extremely careful about it. But my opinion is that she hasn't gone near him since they were discovered."

"Why do you think that?"

"One – I already told you that she's consumed with training and two – Will's been in a particularly nasty mood the last two months. Did you know he put two recruits from the latest group of babies in the infirmary for exhaustion? I doubt he'd be acting like such a dick if he and Hannah were engaging in extracurricular activities, as you like to call it, with each other."

Richard sighed. "Yeah. I've been meaning to talk to him about that."

"You probably should." Chen smiled a little. "Before the recruits start quitting."

"Are you sure Hannah's ready to hunt?" Richard asked.

"Yes. She surpassed both Paul's and Alex's abilities weeks ago. Watching her spar with them is pathetic. She runs circles around them. I started training her on the double sword method over a month ago."

"Fine." Richard typed something in the small laptop on his desk and shut it with a flourish. "She'll go hunting with the others next week."

* * *

William spotted the light in Chen's training room and headed towards it. He needed to speak with him, and it was dinner time which meant that Hannah would be in the cafeteria with the other recruits. He pushed open the door and stepped into the small room.

“Chen, I need to speak with you about – “

He stopped when he realized that Hannah was kneeling on a small mat just a few feet away. Her head was bowed and a katana sword rested loosely in her lap.

She rose to her feet with a fluid grace that Will had never seen in her before. She turned and gave him a tentative smile. “Hello, Will.”

She was dressed in her usual training clothes, a sports bra, yoga pants and tank top, and his eyes traveled over her body before he could stop himself. It was weeks since he was this close to her and as he inhaled, smelling the sweet scent of strawberries, he could feel his pulse speeding up.

“What are you doing in here?” He asked, more harshly than he intended.

She shrugged. “Waiting for Chen. He’s meeting with Richard.”

“Why aren’t you having dinner with the other recruits?”

She smiled. “I usually eat a little later.”

He cursed in his head. He knew she didn’t spend much time with the other recruits, of course he did. Although it had only taken a few weeks for others to begin to treat him like they had before, Hannah hadn’t been so lucky. It was two months, and the other recruits still actively avoided her or talked about her behind her back. Mannie had told him that nearly everyone, recruits and instructors alike, believed that she was only in the program because she had slept with him and Darren.

Will sighed. He felt terrible about what he had done to her and the worst part was that she didn’t hate him for it. Everything that was happening to her was completely his fault and yet, as she stared quietly at him with her dark eyes, he could see the same warmth in them that had always been there.

“I’m sorry,” he said hoarsely.

She shrugged. “I made my bed. I can lie in it. In fact, I’m thinking of fashioning myself a big scarlet ‘L’ to stitch on the ass of my pants. If I’m going to be called a Lycan whore I might as well dress the part.”

He gave her a look of dismay and she smiled at him. “Stop worrying, Will. I’m a big girl and I can handle the gossip. Besides, I’ve still got Selena and Tyler and Alison on my side.”

“What the fuck is Jeremy’s problem?”

She smiled again. “Jealousy.”

He knew he should go. It was dangerous to stay in the same room with Hannah. If anyone saw them alone together, even if it was completely innocent, Hannah would not be given a second chance.

He didn’t want to go. All he had thought about for the last two months was Hannah. Her soft skin, her laugh, how good it felt to have her in his arms. For the first time in his life he had lost control, and he had no idea how to deal with it. He had thought that staying away from her would solve the problem but now, standing only a few feet away from her, his eyes drifting over the myriad of small scars on her bare arms, he realized it had only made it worse.

He took a step back, placing more distance between them, and pointed to her arms. “What happened to your arms?”

She glanced down at them, her lips pursed with amusement. “Swords are sharp, Will, and I’m slow.” She paused and he heard the smug satisfaction in her voice when she said, “At least I used to be.”

There was a moment of awkward silence and then Hannah asked softly, “Would you like me to tell Chen you’re looking for him?”

He nodded and turned to leave. Before he opened the door he looked back at her and blurted out, "I'm not sleeping with Leanne."

She blinked in surprise and he cleared his throat. "I've never slept with Leanne, not before or after you. I just thought you should know that."

"I've never slept with Darren or Jeremy," she replied softly. "Only you."

A little shiver of desire went down his back at her last sentence. The way she was looking at him was driving him crazy. He wondered if she would object if he kissed her right now. If he took her back to his room, stripped her bare and did all the things to her he'd been dreaming of for the last two months.

He took a step towards her, feeling the muscles in his body tightening and enlarging. His pulse beat loudly in his ears and the objects in the room started to sharpen. Hannah's scent filled his head. Only this time under the scent of strawberries, he could clearly smell her desire for him. The increased clarity of vision and the sharpened sense of smell were signs that he was about to shift, and he closed his eyes in a bid to control himself.

It didn't help. Immediately, a vision of Hannah lying naked under him, all soft moans and warm and willing flesh, flashed through his head. He would lead her deep into the forest where no one would find them. He would lay her down on the soft ground and make love to her under the cold light of the moon. And when she was coming, her body shaking with pleasure beneath his, he would bite her warm skin, taste her blood in his mouth and mark her forever as his. They would shift together. They would hunt and mate and there would be no fear of hurting her. His body shivered violently and he could feel it changing; the shift was happening and he couldn't - didn't want to - stop it.

"Will!" Hannah's voice broke through the haze, and with an enormous amount of effort he pulled himself back from the brink. He looked at her, his eyes a blazing, golden yellow, and her hand tightened around her sword.

"Will?"

"The moon will be full in two days," he said hoarsely.

He inhaled deeply. "You want me, Hannah. I can smell it. I want you too. I'm tired of fighting it."

Her body stiffened, and she took a step back. "You need to leave right now, Will. Do you hear me? Get out of this room."

"Please don't be afraid of me," he whispered.

"I'm not afraid of you," she spoke impatiently. "But I'll be damned if I get my ass kicked out of the program now."

"I can control it," he muttered.

"No, you can't, and neither can I. Do us both a favour and leave before we do something we'll regret." Her entire body was trembling and her cheeks were bright red.

"Please," she whispered. "You know how this will end if you don't leave right now."

"I'm sorry."

"I know. Please go now, okay?"

He nodded. "Good night, Hannah."

"Good night, Will."

Chapter Seventeen

“Ahh! You stupid bitch!” Alex dropped the sword and gripped his hand tightly. Chen could see bright blood dripping from between his fingers.

“Fuck, Hannah! What the hell is your problem tonight?” Alex said sullenly. He picked up his katana and wiped his hand across the padded shirt he was wearing. It left a smear of bright red.

“Poor baby. Should we switch back to the bokutos? It doesn’t seem like you can handle the live blades,” Hannah taunted.

“Goddammit!” Alex shouted and lunged for her. He jabbed his katana at her and she easily parried the attack. Before he could move out of striking range, Hannah used the quick strike method to flick her blade across the back of his forearm.

Alex shouted with pain and anger as more blood appeared on his arm. He looked down at his arm in disbelief and then up at Hannah.

She was circling around him, panting softly and grinning. “Ready to go again?” She arched her eyebrow at him.

“You’ll pay for that,” he whispered.

She laughed as she circled behind him. “We’ll see about that, little boy.”

His face red with rage, Alex turned to face her. Before they could start again, Chen’s soft voice interrupted them. “Enough.”

Alex immediately placed his sword on the ground and turned to Chen. He gave a short bow and then stood silently, staring down at the floor.

Chen looked at Hannah. She was pacing back and forth like a hungry tiger. Her eyes were too bright and her cheeks were flushed with colour.

“Hannah,” Chen said quietly.

“We’re not done yet, master. Five more minutes,” she panted.

She stalked around Alex. “Don’t be scared, Alex,” she goaded. “I’ll go easy on you.”

Alex’s back stiffened and his hands curled into tight fists. The wound on his hand had clotted, but the slash to his arm was deeper and it was steadily dripping blood onto the mat he was standing on.

“Hannah.” Chen’s voice was still quiet but there was anger in it now. Hannah glanced at him and then lowered her katana. A brief look of shame crossed her face.

“I’m sorry, master.”

He stared sternly at her and she turned to Alex. “Alex, I’m sorry. I went too far.” She looked at the blood on his arm. “I didn’t mean to – “

“Forget it, Hannah,” Alex said grumpily.

“Alex, go to the infirmary and have Barb stitch up your arm,” Chen instructed, handing him a towel. Refusing to look at Hannah, he bowed to Chen and left the room, holding the towel to his arm.

Hannah paced back and forth as Chen watched her quietly. He had come back from his meeting with Richard to find Hannah tense and jittery. She had told him Will was looking for him, her face flushing a little when she said his name, before beginning to practice her technique.

He had never seen her like this before. Out of all of his students, she was the quickest to understand that a clear head and a calm mind were their most valuable assets when fighting. She had progressed so much faster than the other two partly because of her ability to clear her mind and focus solely on defeating her opponent.

Tonight she was full of nervous energy. Her usual smooth and languid fighting technique was replaced with hard and short bursts of angry movements, which, while still effective, were much more difficult to control.

“Did it please you to cut Alex so deeply?” He asked.

She looked down at the network of fine scars on her arms. “It didn’t displease me,” she responded cheekily.

“You’ve achieved a greater fighting ability than Alex. You show no honour in throwing that in his face.” There was a hint of disappointment in Chen’s voice.

Hannah looked at him, her eyes blazing with anger. “Then perhaps it’s time I find someone more worthy to fight! I’m tired of sparring with Alex and Paul. Handing them their asses on a daily basis has lost its charm.”

Chen’s mouth twitched upwards briefly before he sighed deeply. “If it’s a challenge you’re asking for, then it’s a challenge you’ll get. Come with me.”

He paused at the door. “Bring both of your blades.”

* * *

“What’s going on?” Will snagged Ryan as he hurried past him in the hallway. In the last two minutes, seven recruits and Isabelle and Aaron had passed by him, their faces lit with excitement.

Ryan paused. “Chen and Hannah are fighting in the main training room.”

“So?” Will frowned. It was not uncommon for Chen to bring his students to the larger training room for sparring practice.

“They’re using live blades!” Ryan crowed. He ran down the hallway, disappearing around the corner.

Will’s body stiffened with shock. Although Chen’s students often fought each other with live blades, wearing padded clothing as protection, Chen insisted on the bokutos when sparring with his students. The chances of him seriously injuring or killing them were too high, and even his most advanced students were wary of using living blades against him.

With a muttered curse, Will raced down the hallway to the main training room. He pushed open the door, surprised to see the large crowd that had gathered in the room. It seemed like nearly every recruit was there, and the instructors had gathered to watch as well.

He stood at the back and looked over the heads of the crowd. The floor in the center of the training room was covered in a layer of mats and he could see Hannah, her upper body covered in a thick padded shirt and a katana blade in each hand, standing at the edge of them.

“She was doing better before the crowd showed up. I think all the people have thrown her off a bit,” a voice murmured in his ear. He looked down to see Mannie standing next to him.

“When they first came in here, it was just me and the babies. They started fighting. It took me a minute to realize they were using live blades. I mean, have you ever seen a student fight Chen with live blades?”

Will shook his head. In a voice filled with admiration, Mannie said, “I told you she had balls of goddamn steel.”

Will didn’t reply. He watched as Hannah jabbed and thrust her blades with deadly speed. Chen, his face serene, parried each attack. The crowd gasped when he feigned to the right and then brought his left blade up to Hannah’s throat. He stopped before he cut her and the two of them stepped apart. Hannah, her face red, circled around him, bouncing lightly on her bare feet.

Will watched in amazement. He had avoided Hannah for weeks now, and he had no idea how far she had progressed in the kenjutsu. Like Chen, she moved with an elegant, languid grace. Her body almost seemed to float across the ground as she raised her blades and attacked him again. She parried his counter-attack with her left blade before jabbing her right blade at his throat. He blocked it and the crowd gasped at the ringing clash of the steel blades. With a small grunt, Chen shoved Hannah backward. She fell on to her back and Chen attacked her again. She blocked and when he raised the blades to strike again, she rolled to her left, gaining her feet with catlike speed.

They circled each other warily. Hannah shifted and tugged impatiently at the bulky, padded shirt. It was obvious that it was impeding her movement and she made a sudden decision and ripped the heavy shirt off. She was wearing a thin, pink tank top underneath it, and she stretched and shrugged her shoulders like a boxer about to enter the ring before winking at Chen. A smile flashed across his usually solemn face, and the recruits cheered loudly in response.

“Oh man, that is not a good idea,” Mannie moaned. He glanced at Will. The Lycan was standing completely still, his nostrils flaring and his hands in tight fists. He was growling low in his throat, a continuous rumble of sound that Mannie could hear clearly as Hannah and Chen began again and the crowd quieted.

“Will, calm down.” He elbowed the Lycan in the side. Mannie’s breath caught in his throat when Will turned to face him. His eyes were a deep yellow, and they glowed at him with a terrible, inner rage. Mannie took a step back and raised his hands in supplication.

“Just relax, man. She’s fine. She’s holding her own,” he muttered.

Will continued to stare at him, Mannie was beginning to feel like a bug pinned to a board, until with a sudden shake Will returned to normal. Mannie released his breath in a low rush when Will turned his attention back to the fight.

Hannah and Chen twisted and turned. Their blades moved against each other’s so quickly they seemed to be just a blur of cold steel. The blades clashed and clashed again, neither opponent able to break past the barrier of the other’s blades.

They fought for long minutes until, with a quick jabbing motion, Hannah’s right blade slid past Chen’s and slipped across the left side of his neck, making a shallow but bloody cut. Chen touched his hand to his neck and looked at the red on his fingers.

She smiled triumphantly at him as the crowd abruptly cheered.

“Well done.” He gave her a short bow and she returned it before moving back into fighting position.

“Begin,” Chen said, and with newfound confidence she attacked him again. The crowd hollered and cheered as the two danced around the mats, the overhead lights glinting off their katana blades. So focused was Hannah on trying to break through Chen’s defenses that she didn’t even notice the burning in her side.

It wasn’t until Chen backed away, dropping his blades to his side and indicating for her to do the same, that she felt the liquid sliding down her skin. She frowned in confusion at the blood on the tip of Chen’s right blade and looked down at her side. Blood was welling up under her shirt. The crowd fell silent as she lifted her top and studied the short but deep slash on her side. Although she felt no pain, blood was flowing freely from it.

Chen frowned when Hannah dropped her shirt and turned back to him. She was just raising her blades when there was a loud growl. Will came pushing out of the crowd and headed straight toward Chen. His eyes were yellow, a thick beard was growing on his face and his entire body was rippling and shaking.

Chen stared at him calmly, leaving his blades at his side. The crowd watched in breathless horror as Will grew closer. The growling was louder now, a terrifying sound that came deep from his chest, and he snapped his teeth continuously as his body began to change.

He was only a few feet away from the slender Asian man when Hannah stepped in front of Chen. Without speaking, she raised her blades into an attack position. The blood flowed steadily down her side, soaking into her top and pants.

Will stopped immediately and the two stared at each other. A type of silent communication rippled through them, and she lowered her blades as Will stopped growling. The crowd released their breath in a collective sigh when he abruptly turned and left the training room.

Hannah, her arms trembling, turned to face Chen. She bowed and raised her blades.

He shook his head. "You need to go to the infirmary."

"I'm fine, master," she argued. "Let's begin again."

"No," he said firmly. "The infirmary – now."

She hesitated, bowed again and headed towards the door. Selena, her face pale, met her at the door and the two women left the training room.

* * *

Chen sighed and opened the door to his apartment. He had checked on Hannah before retiring. She had needed thirteen stitches to close the wound, and he could almost feel Barb's disapproving look burning through the back of his skull.

He had apologized but Hannah, grinning hugely, had shrugged it off. "Fighting with you is the most alive I've felt since," she paused, her face reddening, "well, in months. Besides, it hardly hurts."

He moved across the apartment in the dark. He hit the switch for the gas fireplace and the flames hissed quietly to life, casting a warm glow in the living room. He was just returning his swords to their place on the wall when his entire body stiffened. He gripped the handle of one blade firmly and turned around.

"It was an accident, Will," he said quietly as a pair of yellow eyes glowed from the shadows. A trickle of fear went down his back as the giant wolf moved into the light. Will growled deep in his throat, and Chen watched as his snout peeled back and he bared his large, white teeth at him.

He kept his blade at his side. "She's fine. I just came back from checking on her. She needed stitches, nothing more."

The wolf snarled. He stepped closer and Chen took a step backward. "This isn't you, Will. You can control yourself. Don't be the Lycan that everyone believes you are."

If he heard him, the wolf made no indication. He crouched low to the floor, grinning and snapping his teeth. His intent to attack was obvious, and Chen raised his blade before making one last desperate attempt to reason with the wolf.

"It will destroy her when I kill you."

The wolf hesitated. His growling turned into a low whine and he sat on his haunches. He stared at Chen with a very human-like look of misery.

Chen lowered his blade and gazed at him in sympathy. "You should leave this place for a while, Will. I know there are two days until the full moon but it's better for you – better for her – if you go now."

He whined again and stood. Chen's hand tightened on his sword but the wolf was moving past him towards the door. Chen followed him and opened the door to his apartment. As Will slipped out into the hallway he glanced back at Chen and half-whined, half-growled.

"I'll keep her safe until you return," Chen said softly.

This seemed to satisfy the wolf, and he turned and padded quietly down the hallway. Chen shut his door and leaned against it. He raised his hands to his face, not surprised to see them trembling.

Chapter Eighteen

“Sunglasses? Really? So, what? We’re going to kill the vampires with coolness?” Jeremy scoffed, staring down at the glasses nestled in the small wooden box Mannie had handed to him.

He put on the sunglasses and leaned in to Alison. “How you doin’, baby?”

“You’ll never be cool enough for me,” she said primly, and he grabbed his chest like he’d been shot.

“Why ya gotta hurt me like that, Alley-Cat?” He pulled the sunglasses down to the tip of his nose and winked at her over the top of them.

Alison laughed as Mannie cuffed Jeremy on the back of the head. “Knock it off, lover boy.”

He glanced around the room. He and Darren had gathered the recruits together who would be hunting. Along with Jeremy and Alison - Tyler, Selena, and Hannah were in the room. Ryan, Ben and Lucy from the recruit group ahead of them were also present.

Hannah pulled her pair of sunglasses out of the box and held them up to the light. Selena leaned over and said something to her, and Hannah laughed before wincing a little and touching her side.

Mannie frowned. It was three days since the training incident with Chen, and he wasn’t sure that she would be healed in time to hunt with them next week. Chen had insisted he include her in the preparations regardless, assuring him that Hannah would be more than ready by the time the day of the hunt came around.

“These sunglasses aren’t just sunglasses,” he began. “If you push the small black button on the side of them –”

He paused as the door opened and Will slipped in and sat in a chair at the back. Mannie grinned at him and Will gave a brief nod. He had disappeared for the last three days; no one had seen him since he’d nearly attacked Chen in the training room, and rumours were flying that Richard had dismissed him from the facility.

He turned his attention back to the recruits. Everyone, with the exception of Hannah, was staring at Will and Mannie banged his fist on the table. They swung back around and he continued. “Everyone put your sunglasses on. I’m going to ask Darren to hit the lights. When he does, push the black button on the side of your glasses.”

He nodded to Darren who flipped off the lights, plunging them into darkness. The recruits let out a collective gasp of delight, murmuring to each other as they stared around the room.

Mannie clapped his hands to get their attention. “So obviously what you’re wearing are not ordinary sunglasses. They’re the latest technology in night vision.”

“Sweet!” Jeremy cried. “Ladies, my name is Bond. James Bond.”

“Shut up, Jeremy,” Mannie said. “And be careful with the goddamn things. They cost a fortune.”

Will stared at Hannah in the darkness. She was sitting between Tyler and Selena, and Tyler leaned over and said something to both her and Selena. She grinned when Selena reached across her and smacked Tyler on the chest.

She tucked a stray strand of hair that had fallen from her ponytail behind her ear. As she did, she glanced casually behind her. She smiled shyly at him and he nodded to her before she twisted back in her seat. He frowned at her slight wince as she rubbed gently at her side.

“Okay, turn off your night vision please,” Mannie said. They obeyed and Darren turned the lights back on.

“We’re giving you these sunglasses because each one of you will be hunting for the first time next week. Without your night vision, you are effectively useless in hunting vampires. Put them on and keep them on during the hunt. If I see any of you at any point during the hunt not wearing your sunglasses, I’ll kill you myself. Am I clear?”

The others nodded and he smiled in satisfaction. “We’ve discovered a newly-formed pod of vampires about two hours from here. They’re living in one of the abandoned farmhouses along Highway 84. We’ll be hunting Friday night. I suggest you spend your time between now and then, working on your weapons training.”

Tyler raised his hand and Mannie nodded at him.

“How do you know which abandoned farmhouse they’re in? There’s got to be at least ten of them along that highway.”

“We have their location narrowed down to two. We’re going to set up a nice little bush party atmosphere between the farm houses and wait.”

“Wait?” Jeremy frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Vampires are cautious little fuckers. But they also can’t resist fresh meat,” Mannie replied. “We have three members of our hunting group who’ve been bitten by vampires - one of them twice.” The group glanced at Hannah, Selena and Alison as Mannie grinned coldly. “They’ll be drawn to us like moths to a flame.”

* * *

“Good to see you, man.” Mannie shook Will’s hand. As the others left, Will had stayed behind, waiting patiently for the room to clear.

“The rumour was you’d gotten your ass fired.” Mannie grinned at him.

Will laughed. “Nothing but rumours.”

He sobered. “I decided it would be better for everyone concerned to leave the facility for the full moon.”

As Mannie nodded in understanding, Will tugged at the collar of his shirt. He’d spent nearly all of the last three days in wolf form, and the clothing felt foreign and uncomfortable.

“Who gave the permission for Hannah to go on the hunt? She’s still recovering.” Will asked.

“Chen insisted and Richard agreed. We’ll take a look at her side the day of, and if it’s not healed enough we’ll pull her out.”

“I think it’s too soon for all of them.” Will frowned. “Jeremy and Selena are more prepared than the others, but Tyler and Alison are likely to get killed out there.”

“They’ll be fine. Ryan and Ben have been on lots of hunts, and Lucy has been on three. She handled herself well at all of them. They’ll watch out for the babies. Plus both Darren and I are going. Intel says the pod is a smaller one, mostly yearlings. They’ll be too distracted by the smell of the previously bitten to give us much trouble.”

“I don’t like that you’re using them as bait,” Will said.

Mannie sighed irritably. “We’ve done this a hundred times before and you never had an issue with it.”

When Will didn’t respond, Mannie clapped him on the back. “She’ll be fine. Chen says she’s the best student he’s ever had. She’s smart and fast and as long as she doesn’t freeze up when she sees the actual vampires, she’ll be fine.”

“Have you got the satellite images of the area? I want to go over the landscape with you. We should have a plan of escape if things don’t go the way we want them to.”

"Uh, you're not going," Mannie said.

"Like hell I'm not," Will said immediately.

"We've already got Darren as the second instructor. I asked Richard specifically to bring you on the hunt and he denied my request." He hesitated. "He believes being around Hannah will be too much of a distraction for you."

"Fuck Richard. I'm going," Will snarled.

"Jesus Christ, Will. You are going to get me fucking fired," Mannie moaned.

Will grinned. "I won't tell Richard I'm hunting if you don't."

* * *

Hannah sighed deeply and stared up at the ceiling. It was after midnight and she was trying unsuccessfully for the last hour or so to meditate. She couldn't sleep and her stomach was a bundle of nerves. Tomorrow they were going on their first real hunt, and she was simultaneously thrilled and terrified.

The door to their room eased open and Selena crept quietly into the room. She undressed in the dark and slipped into her bed.

"How's Tyler?" Hannah asked and Selena let out a breathless scream.

"Oh my God, Hannah! You scared the shit out of me!"

"Sorry." Hannah sat up in her bed and clasped her arms around her knees. "You and Tyler decided to release some nervous energy huh?"

Selena smiled. "Yeah, something like that."

"Are you in love with him?"

"Yeah, I am. He doesn't feel the same way though," Selena replied softly.

"Are you sure? He seems to care for you a great deal."

"Oh, he cares for me. But he's not in love with me. Not the way Will is with you."

Hannah snorted. "Will is not in love with me."

Selena rolled her eyes. "Now who's being obtuse?"

"Selena, Will is not in love with me," Hannah protested.

"Please. Whenever you're in the same room you could cut the sexual tension with a knife. One of these days he's just going to throw you over his shoulder, and carry you off to the nearest bed."

"Don't mistake lust for love, Selena," Hannah said dryly.

"Whatever, Hannah. The guy nearly killed Chen just because he accidentally cut your side."

Tired of arguing about it, Hannah said, "It doesn't matter anyway. At this point, just being in the same room alone could get both of us kicked out of here."

Selena sighed. "I'm sorry, Hannah. It's not fair that the rest of us can sleep with whoever we want and you're being treated like a goddamn pariah. All because of that stupid bitch Leanne. Alison said she started hitting on Mannie last week."

"Are Alison and Mannie back together?" Hannah asked curiously. Now that everyone avoided her like the plague, her knowledge of the gossip in the centre had dropped dramatically.

"Yeah, they started back up a couple weeks ago. I actually think Mannie is more serious about the relationship than Alison is. She hasn't been the same since the bar you know?"

Hannah nodded and Selena shrugged. "Anyway, Mannie turned her down pretty quick. Not just because he's with Alison either. I think he and Will are good friends."

She glanced at Hannah. “Alison said that Mannie told her he’d never seen Will so obsessed with a woman before. You won’t be a recruit forever, Hannah.”

“It doesn’t matter, Selena. When have you ever heard of a Lycan and a human having a long term relationship?”

“I – never I guess. Until you, I didn’t even know there were women who had sex with Lycans.”

“God, Selena. You make it sound like I slept with a monster.”

“I’m sorry. I just – can you honestly tell me that you never once worried for your safety when you were in bed with Will? The way Leanne talks about how rough he is, I –“

“He never slept with Leanne. She’s a liar,” Hannah said firmly. “And I knew she was lying the first time I heard her talk about how demanding and rough he was in bed. I had already been with him at that point, and he’s not like that. He’s gentle and very um, giving.”

She clasped her knees tighter and thought about the night of the full moon. He was rough that night but she had enjoyed it, welcomed it even. Her mind flashed to the look on his face when he had admitted to wanting to bite her. She dropped her head to her knees, her heart hurting all over again at the memory of the anguish on his face.

She sighed, feeling the burn of tears in the back of her throat. She was terrified that Will had been fired when he disappeared after her sparring match with Chen. In desperation, she had gone to Chen and asked him where Will was, not really expecting an answer. After a pause, he had explained that Will had left the facility early as a precaution to the full moon. When he had returned the day after the full moon, slipping into the room like he had never been away, the knot of tension in her belly had finally disappeared. She was overjoyed to see him, but her conversation with Selena was only confirming that a relationship with Will was impossible.

“Hannah? Honey, are you okay?” Selena asked timidly.

She lifted her head, blinking back the tears. “I’m fine. We should try and get some sleep. We have a big day tomorrow.”

Chapter Nineteen

The vampire stood quietly at the window of the old farmhouse. He stared out into the darkness, listening to the squabbling of the yearlings on the floor below him.

He sighed. He'd been stuck in this farmhouse for the last month, acting as a babysitter for a bunch of useless yearlings, and his patience was running thin. He hated the country. He hated the smells, the sounds and over the last century he had grown accustomed to his accommodations having a certain standard of elegance.

His nose wrinkling in disgust, he looked distastefully at the peeling wallpaper, the splintered wooden floor, and the decrepit furniture. He should be back in his penthouse in the city, wearing the finest clothing money could buy and slaking his never-ending thirst with a bevy of beautiful women.

As the squabbling grew louder, there was a timid knock at the door.

"Enter."

He stared moodily at the small, thin bald man standing nervously in front of him. "What is it?"

"Forgive me, Marcus. The yearlings are, well, they grow restless."

"And what would you have me do, Michael? Samuel's instructions were perfectly clear. We are to keep the yearlings here until he calls for us to join him. Has he called? Did I miss the message?" He stepped closer and wrapped his hand around the smaller vampire's neck. His nails were long and sharp, and Michael squeaked in pain when they sunk into his neck.

"No, my master. There has been no message."

With an indifferent snort, Marcus released his servant and returned to his window. He turned back impatiently when Michael stayed in the room.

"Why are you still here?"

"My master, the yearlings are so restless because they've caught a scent."

"What kind of scent?"

"Human," Michael whispered. "I sent Louise to investigate. She says that two miles from here there is a – a party with at least nine humans."

Marcus arched his eyebrow at Michael. "Are you suggesting we allow the yearlings to feast on them?"

"I'm sorry, Marcus. The yearlings are hungry. I thought perhaps if they fed, they would be less... noisy."

With a sudden burst of speed, Marcus crossed the room and grabbed Michael around the neck once more. He slammed the vampire against the wall, holding his thin body up in the air as if he weighed no more than a bird.

"Do you dare tell me what to do, Michael? Do you?" Marcus snarled, his fangs gleaming in the faint light.

"No! I only wish to please you. I know how much the yearling's noise bothers you. Plus I thought perhaps you would like to feed. It's been weeks and I am worried about you," Michael choked out.

Marcus released him so abruptly Michael fell to the floor. He stayed where he was, one cold pale hand rubbing his throat as Marcus stared down at him.

"Perhaps you are right, Michael. Come," he helped the vampire to his feet, "let us take the yearlings to their supper."

* * *

Hannah tried to concentrate on what Ben was saying to her. It was nearly impossible. Her stomach was in knots, and she had to force herself not to peer into the darkness every couple of minutes. They had allowed the campfire to die down until it was just a bed of softly-glowing coals, and Hannah shivered a little in the cold breeze.

"Relax, Hannah," Ben murmured. He put his arm around her shoulders and casually leaned into her as if he was nuzzling her neck.

"Try not to be so nervous," he breathed into her ear. "I know it's difficult, but try to pretend we're actually having a good time." He smiled down at her and pulled her a little closer.

Hannah nodded and leaned into Ben. Jeremy was staring moodily at them from across the fire, and she glanced away before he could catch her eye. Let him stare. At the briefing the night before, Ben had volunteered to be her 'date' for tonight and she had accepted gratefully. Considering that most of the other recruits either blatantly ignored her or talked about her behind her back, it was actually kind of nice to talk with someone other than Tyler, Selena or Alison.

She smiled up at Ben and tried to concentrate on what he and the others were talking about. It was only a minute or two before her mind was wandering. She wished for the hundredth time that Will was with them. During the briefing Ryan had asked Mannie if Will was joining them. Mannie had shaken his head but offered no explanation, and Hannah wasn't about to ask in front of everyone why Will wasn't coming with them.

She reached up and touched the sunglasses perched on the top of her head. They were still sitting firmly atop her skull and she took another deep breath, pulling her trench coat closer to her body as Ben shifted and let his arm drop to her waist.

His hand rested on the handle of one of her swords and she softly elbowed it away.

"Sorry." He leaned forward and placed an unexpected kiss on her mouth. She frowned at him when he pulled back, and he winked at her. He leaned in again, his mouth against her ear and whispered, "Just playing the part, Hannah."

"Uh-huh," she muttered.

Selena, who was sitting on the other side of her, leaned over and grinned at Ben. "It's the leather pants isn't it?"

"Shut up, Selena." Hannah could feel herself blushing. Earlier today she had spent nearly twenty minutes unsuccessfully arguing with Isabelle and Mannie about her outfit.

"I have never worn a pair of leather pants in my life." She scowled at Mannie.

"They're surprisingly comfortable." He grinned.

"They're too tight!" She protested. Mannie gave her a long, appraising look. They had dressed her in a plain white t-shirt with leather pants and a pair of leather boots. The pants hugged her lower body like a second skin, and he grinned again as she pulled at the ass of them.

"They're giving me a wedgie," she complained.

"Don't wear underwear," Mannie suggested innocently.

"Hannah, trust me. Wear them a couple of times and you'll love them," Isabelle assured her. "You'll need to move quickly, and you'll need clothes that don't impede you."

"My yoga pants don't impede me," Hannah grumbled.

"But they're not nearly as cool looking." Mannie handed her a long dark trench coat plus a pair of fingerless black gloves. "The coat will hide the swords."

Hannah pulled the coat on and looked at herself in the mirror. With her long dark hair pulled back into a high ponytail, the weight loss, and the leather, she looked nothing like the Hannah from six months ago.

"Jesus," she whispered.

"Are you okay?" Isabelle asked.

She nodded. "Yeah, it's just - I feel like a little kid playing dress up."

Mannie frowned. "This isn't a game, Hannah. It'll be life and death out there. You need to remember that."

"I'll remember."

Now, as Selena grinned at her and Ben placed one hand on her leg and stroked the soft leather, she fidgeted uncomfortably. They'd been out here for hours without any sign of vampires, and she was beginning to wonder if they had their information wrong.

She glanced up at the sky. Dark clouds were rolling in and there was the low, distant sound of thunder. "It's going to rain, I think."

"God." Tyler rolled his eyes and kept his voice low. "Should we start taking bets on whether Lucy and Ryan have sex before the night is over?"

Hannah glanced over to see Ryan and Lucy sitting together on a fallen log. They were kissing passionately, and Selena patted Tyler's leg. "At least she's getting some action."

He took the hint and placed a soft, lingering kiss on her mouth.

Ben squeezed her knee and smiled at her. "My turn."

She laughed. "I don't think so, Romeo."

"Excuse me." A low, musical voice floated into their campsite. A woman wearing a long woolen coat and thin leather gloves appeared from the darkness. She had long blonde hair and was stunningly beautiful. Hannah heard Ben's sharp inhale as she smiled at them.

"Would you be able to help a poor lost traveler find her way?" From the corner of her eye, Hannah saw Mannie stand and edge closer to the stranger. She slipped her hands inside her coat, feeling the comforting weight of the handles of her swords.

"Sure we can." Mannie grinned at the woman and stopped a few feet away from her. He had a beer in one hand and his other tucked into the pocket of his jacket.

"Excellent. That's so kind of you all." The woman let her eyes travel over each of them; Hannah felt a shiver go down her back when the woman's black eyes lingered on her face.

"Did your car break down?" Mannie asked as the woman carefully removed her gloves before stashing them in the pockets of her coat.

"Something like that." She smiled. "And actually, if you don't mind I have a few friends with me. Could they join us? They're cold and...thirsty."

"The more the merrier." Mannie smiled again. "We've got plenty of beer."

The woman nodded and snapped her fingers. There was a whisper of noise and Hannah and the others stood, moving closer to the dying fire as figures emerged from the darkness. There were at least twenty of them, and they stood in a loose circle around Hannah and the others.

Hannah glanced behind her. There was a young boy, he couldn't have been more than sixteen, standing behind her. She could see drool dripping down his chin as he stared hungrily at her. Her hands tightened on the swords as Ben stiffened beside her.

"It seems like more than a few," Mannie said as the woman stepped closer to him.

"I suppose I did underestimate how many of us would be having dinner tonight."

"It happens," Mannie said softly.

“Indeed.” With shocking speed, the woman closed the gap between them and grabbed Mannie by his collar.

“Dinner time,” she hissed. She bent her head to his neck as her friends ran toward the others. A fleeting expression of shock crossed the vampire’s face, and she pushed Mannie away with a soft grunt. She stared down at the knife handle, its blade embedded deep into her chest, with an expression of confusion.

“What?” She whispered before her body burst apart in a spray of blood and ash.

Hannah, her heart pounding madly in her chest, pulled her swords free and whirled around. The young boy was only a few steps away from her, mewling with hunger and his fangs glistening, and she had a moment of pure panic.

She took a deep breath and then thrust her left blade through the sternum of the young boy. He didn’t even seem to feel it. He was still growling and mewling with hunger, saliva dripping from his fangs as he reached for her. She raised her right blade and swung it into his neck. It sliced through his neck with surprising ease, and his body went limp on her blade as his head tumbled back into the darkness. His body exploded into ash and she pulled the sunglasses down onto her face, clicking the button on the side of them.

The darkness was immediately lit up with an eerie green light, and she shrugged out of her coat and turned. Chaos had erupted around the campsite. Everywhere she looked a vampire was hissing and attacking. Selena, looking very small and vulnerable in the dim light, raised her gun and shot a vampire in the chest. It fell to the ground, and Selena’s face wrinkled in disgust as the veins in its face and neck pulsed steadily with a blue light. It took only seconds for the ultraviolet light to kill it and with a low moan the vampire exploded, showering Selena with ash.

A young female vampire leaped for Hannah, flying through the air with astonishing speed. Hannah, every nerve and muscle tingling with adrenaline, watched her coming. With a quick flick of her wrist, she sliced off the vampire’s head easily. A huge smile broke out on her face as her fear and anxiety melted away to be replaced with a crackling sense of power.

There were more vampires coming out of the darkness and a switch seemed to flip in Hannah’s brain. She went on autopilot, slicing and thrusting as the vampires closed in around her. She plunged her right blade through the heart of a fat man, as she used her left blade to chop off the arm of another vampire reaching for her throat. It stumbled back, looked for a moment in disbelief at the blood pouring from its shoulder and its twitching limb on the ground, and then screamed in rage. Hannah shoved her sword through its open mouth and twisted violently. The head tore off and blood sprayed from its neck. As the body turned to ash, Hannah braced her foot on the vampire’s head and pulled her sword free with a loud squelching noise.

There was a snarling noise behind her and she turned to see a vampire about to grab her throat. Before she could raise her sword, there was a loud familiar growling and she had a fleeting glimpse of the Lycan before it hit the vampire and the two rolled across the ground. The vampire hissed and screamed, digging its long pale fingers into the thick fur around the Lycan’s neck. The wolf, snarling and snapping, shook them off as easily as a fly and sank its teeth into the vampire’s neck. He ripped its throat out in a single burst of flesh and blood. The vampire reached up weakly as the Lycan took its skull into his mouth and tore off its head with a hard pull. He dropped the vampire’s head, pointed his snout to the sky and howled piercingly as hard drops of rain began to fall from the dark sky.

“Is that Will?” Ben was suddenly next to her. His shirt was covered in ash, and both of the wooden stakes in his hands were drenched in blood.

Hannah nodded and then shouted, “Down!”

She swung her sword as Ben dropped to the ground. The vampire's head landed in Ben's lap, and with a look of disgust he shoved it out of his lap and stood up.

"Thanks."

She grinned and they went their separate ways. Will stopped howling and, with a brief look at her, bounded across the campsite toward a vampire about to attack Mannie.

There was a piercing scream and Hannah looked up to see Alison fleeing into the trees, a look of stark terror on her face.

"Alison, no!" She shouted. With a muttered curse she ran across the campsite and into the woods after her.

"Alison, stop! Come back!" She yelled. There was no answer and Hannah ran deeper into the trees. The rain had become a downpour. Her clothing was soaked, and her formerly blood-covered swords were rinsed clean. She stopped. The screaming from the campsite had faded and there was nothing around her but trees. She said a mental thank you for the night vision and held her breath, listening for any sounds of Alison. For a moment all she could hear was her own rapid pulse beating thickly in her ears and the rain pouring down, but after a minute or two she thought she heard soft murmuring ahead of her.

Frowning, she crept through the trees until she reached a natural clearing. Standing in the middle of the clearing was a tall, broad shouldered man. His hair was long and dark and swept back from his forehead. She could see a thin scar across his forehead. He was holding Alison against him, whispering quietly. She was staring up at him with a rapturous look as the rain fell on her pale face. She didn't flinch when he suddenly bit into her neck, his long white fangs sinking deep into her flesh.

Alison moaned, her hands clinging weakly to his large arms as he drank. Hannah circled around, trying to stay completely quiet, until the vampire's back was to her. She crept up until she was a few feet behind him and whistled piercingly.

The vampire dropped Alison and turned. As he did, Hannah swung her sword. The vampire dodged it easily and grinned when the force of her swing nearly dropped her to the ground. She recovered her balance quickly, and raised both her blades in an attack position as the vampire folded his fingers under his chin and looked at her delightedly.

"Another who has been bitten." He breathed deeply. "It's so hard to resist the previously bitten. I can hear your blood. Did you know that?" He smiled at her. "It sings to me."

She took another step forward and thrust for the vampire's chest with her right blade. He stepped back, lightning quick, and her sword sliced through thin air.

"Ooh, you're quick." He actually clapped his hands together. "You would make an excellent addition." He paused. "Yes, we would be very pleased to have you."

"My name is Marcus. Come." He held out his hand. "I offer you the gift of immortality. You will be young and beautiful forever. Wouldn't you like that, little lamb?"

"Fuck you," Hannah spat at him.

A look of anger settled on his face. "You'll have to learn manners first, but that can be easily taught." He reached for her again and Hannah, her sword a blur, sliced off his left hand.

He stared at her in shock, blood flowing from the wound, and she smiled at him. "I don't like to be touched."

He clapped his hand over the wound, squeezing tightly, and hissed at her. "You'll pay for that, bitch."

Five more vampires appeared out of the darkness beside him. He nodded toward Alison who was lying motionless on the ground. "You can kill her. The dark-haired one I want alive. Drain her until she's weak and then bring her to me. Do you understand?"

One of the vampires, small and nervous looking, nodded. "Yes, master."

The rest of them nodded eagerly and as Hannah stood protectively over Alison's body, the vampire disappeared into the trees.

"Hello, pretty," one of the vampires hissed excitedly. "You smell good. Why don't you come over here so I can have a little taste?"

Hannah, her body shaking with adrenaline, raised her swords as a large growling started behind her. The wolf stalked out of the trees and stood next to her as all the vampires but one, surrounded them in a tight circle. The fifth vampire, the one who had called Marcus 'master', had melted into the darkness the moment he had seen Will.

Hannah, her hands clenching the swords so tightly her knuckles were white, turned and faced them. She could hear Will behind her, snarling and snapping his teeth, and she grinned fearlessly at the vampire closest to her.

"You want me – come and get me."

* * *

"Selena – wait!" Tyler muttered a curse as he followed Selena through the trees. The battle had only lasted ten minutes, and Mannie and the others were currently destroying the last of the vampires. Selena, her face frantic, had pulled him into the woods.

"I saw both Alison and Hannah go this way. We have to find them!" She panted. Tyler jogged after her, and he cursed again when there was a scream from the woods in front of them. He caught up to Selena and took her hand, pulling her to a stop.

He put his finger to his lips and she nodded. Still holding her gun, she followed him quietly as the sounds of growling and screaming grew louder. Just ahead of them was a clearing and he felt, more than heard, Selena's gasp of surprise.

Hannah, her face serene, was plunging her sword through the chest of a vampire that was lying on the ash-covered ground. Its scream turned into a low gurgling moan that was masked by the sound of Will's growling. He rose up on his back legs and tore off the head of the last vampire with one swipe of his paw. Hannah looked around the clearing and then turned to Will. She stared at him silently, her nostrils flaring and her chest heaving, and Selena stumbled back against Tyler as Will transformed from wolf to human.

Naked, he strode the few steps to Hannah, yanked her against his chest and kissed her deeply.

"Oh my God," Tyler whispered.

At the sound of his voice, Will's head snapped up and he looked across the clearing at them. He growled low in his throat and Selena, squeezing Tyler's hand so tightly the circulation was cut off, stepped out into the clearing.

"Hannah? Are you okay?"

Hannah, her face flushed and her lips swollen from Will's kiss, nodded. Will pulled away from her and shifted into his wolf form. He rested his large head against her hip, and she rubbed her fingers through the thick, wet fur on the side of his face.

"Alison's been bit. We need to get her back to the others."

Tyler nodded and, keeping a wary eye on Will, knelt and picked up Alison. He followed the others back to the campsite.

Chapter Twenty

"Hannah, this is not a good idea," Tyler said worriedly.

"It'll be fine." She spoke absentmindedly, staring across the road where Will's truck was parked.

"If you get caught you'll be kicked out," Tyler protested.

"I won't get caught." Hannah looked at Selena. After a moment Selena nodded.

She took Tyler's hand, squeezing gently, and smiled up at him. "Looks like it's just you and me riding back together."

He frowned and she gave him a quick kiss. "Stop worrying. We'll wait for you at the turnoff before the farmhouse. Okay, Hannah?"

Hannah nodded and then impulsively hugged her. "Thank you, Selena."

Will opened the back door of his truck and reached inside for the clothes that were lying on the back seat. He pulled on his jeans and slipped into his boots. Mannie honked as he drove by and Will raised one hand in reply. He pulled his shirt over his head and slammed the door shut.

"Hello, Will."

"Jesus!" He staggered back and glared at Hannah. She was standing next to the driver's door. Her trench coat was over one arm, her swords hung from scabbards around her waist, and she had her arms crossed beneath her full breasts. Her white shirt was soaked through, and he could see the outline of her nipples against the damp fabric.

"What are you doing here?"

She smiled at him. Her eyes were dark and inviting, and his body responded with embarrassing quickness to her as she leaned against his truck. "My ride left without me."

He looked around. He was the last to leave and although the rain had stopped, the wind was blowing heavily. "You know you can't come with me."

She smiled. "That's too bad. I like coming with you."

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath. It was the wrong thing to do. The wind carried her scent to him, and he grimaced as his dick hardened in his pants.

"I'm serious, Hannah. If Richard finds out we were alone together, you'll be kicked out of the program."

"I guess I'm hitch-hiking then." She winked at him. "See you later, Will."

She turned and walked away, her hand trailing along his truck. He stared at her ass in the tight leather pants, and slammed his fist against the side of the truck.

"Shit." He jerked open the door of his truck. "Get in the goddamn truck, Hannah."

She smiled. "If you insist."

After removing her swords and placing them carefully in the back seat, she climbed into the passenger's side of the truck and clicked her seatbelt in place. He started the truck and turned the heat on. She angled the vents on her side toward her and sighed with pleasure as the hot air washed over her.

He pulled on to the road and started driving as she leaned back and smiled at him.

"What?"

"I thought you weren't hunting tonight."

He shrugged. "As far as Richard is concerned, I wasn't hunting."

She laughed. "He's going to find out you know. The others won't keep it a secret."

"It's not my problem that I was out for a drive and stumbled on to your hunt."

She laughed again and stretched, arching her back and rubbing the small of her back with her hands. He glanced at her and immediately looked back at the road. Her stretching was pushing her full breasts out, and he had no problem remembering how perfectly they fit into his hands. When he dared to look back at her, she was smiling at him in a knowing sort of way.

“You okay, Will?”

“Just fine,” he muttered.

“Good,” she said. “You seem a little distracted.”

He cleared his throat. “How did you enjoy your first hunt?”

She didn’t reply at first and he looked at her. She was staring dreamily through the windshield, one hand stroking the end of her ponytail.

“Hannah?” He prompted.

“It was so easy,” she said in a low voice. “Like leading lambs to the slaughter.”

He frowned. “It won’t always be that easy. You can’t let your guard down ever. This group was mostly yearlings, easily distracted by the smell of humans and blood. Older vampires are more powerful, faster and harder to kill.”

She was still staring out the windshield and he frowned again. “Hannah, did you hear me?”

“Yes. I’ll be careful, Will.” She shook her head and then shivered delicately. “I’m never going to get warm with my shirt this wet. Do you have an extra shirt I can borrow?”

“Yeah. There are a couple shirts in a bag in the back seat.”

She grinned. “Sometimes it’s handy hitching a ride with a Lycan.”

She unclicked her seatbelt and slid to the middle of the seat. She twisted on to her knees and leaned over the seat, rummaging through the bag. Will glanced at her ass, groaning quietly to himself at the way the smooth leather clung to it.

“A-ha!” She smiled triumphantly and sat back in the front seat. She stripped off her shirt, and his eyes automatically dropped to her breasts. Her bra was just as wet as her shirt and the thin, white fabric had become translucent.

Her nipples strained at the wet fabric and as she reached behind her to undo the clasp, she smiled teasingly at him. “No peeking, Will.”

He flushed and turned his attention back to the road as she pulled off her bra and slipped into his shirt. She dropped her wet t-shirt and bra into the back seat indifferently, and sat down next to him. Her thigh brushed against his and he cleared his throat nervously, his hands clenching around the steering wheel.

Hannah watched Will’s hands tighten around the steering wheel and smiled to herself. Her entire body was vibrating. It was a combination of the thrill of killing her first vampires and being so close to Will. When he had kissed her in the woods, his tongue pushing familiarly into her mouth as he pulled her against his wet body, everything else was immediately forgotten. She had returned his kiss eagerly, and was ready to push him to the ground and fuck his brains out when he had broken away from her much too soon. As they were walking back to the others, she had already begun to plan how she could be alone with him.

She rested her hand on his thigh, feeling the muscles tighten under her fingers, and smiled up at him. “When did you get to the campsite?”

“Just shortly after the group did.” He shifted away from her, and she smiled and moved closer.

“I was in the woods just outside of the campsite.” He inhaled sharply when her fingers trailed along the inside of his thigh. “I watched that asshole Ben put his hands all over you.”

She grinned and squeezed his thigh teasingly. “Were you jealous, Will?”

“You seemed to enjoy it,” he grunted.

"It was just for show."

"You kissed him."

"He kissed me," she corrected him.

"Whatever," he muttered.

"You are jealous." She ran her hand down his leg to his knee and then back up his thigh as he squirmed in the seat.

"I don't want him touching you again," he demanded.

"I'll let him know." She moved her hand off his thigh, but his sigh of relief turned into a low moan when she put her hand on his crotch and squeezed lightly.

"We made a good team tonight, didn't we?"

"Yes," he gritted out. She unbuttoned and unzipped his jeans before he could move his hands off the steering wheel.

She slipped her hand into his jeans and wrapped her fingers around his cock. She pulled it free of his pants and stroked it firmly, rubbing her thumb over the head of it before stroking downwards, twisting her hand a little at the base.

He moaned loudly. "Hannah, I think –"

"We make a good team in so many ways," she whispered.

She kissed his neck, licking her way to his earlobe as her hand tightened and loosened repeatedly around his cock.

"The whole time Ben had his arm around me, I was wishing it was you," she whispered into his ear. "I don't want anyone but you touching me."

He moaned again as she kissed the sensitive spot behind his ear. "I've missed the way you touch me. Do you miss touching me?"

"Yes," he groaned.

"Good." She leaned down, and he cried out at the feel of her warm, wet mouth sliding over his cock.

"Oh my God, Hannah," he moaned.

He cupped the back of her head with one hand as she gripped the base of his cock with her hand, and slid her mouth up and down. She swirled her tongue over the head, and then sucked hard on the tip as the truck swerved on the road.

"Maybe you should pull the truck over, Will." She giggled a little as he cursed and put both hands back on the wheel. There was a side road just ahead on the right, and he turned down it before stepping on the brake and shutting the truck off.

She sat up and looked around. "That's convenient." She shifted back down in the seat and took his cock into her mouth again.

He groaned and gasped, his hips thrusting against her as she sucked and licked and drove him crazy.

He ran his hand over her ass. The leather was soft and smooth, and he slipped his hand between her thighs and rubbed her through her pants. She gasped around his cock, her own moan slipping from her throat.

It was weeks since he had even been close to her and now, running his hands over her warm body as she licked him slowly and tortuously, he could feel himself already drawing close to coming. He tugged at her arm.

"Hannah, wait. Stop please," he said the last in a drawn-out moan as she tightened her lips around his cock and rubbed her tongue on the sensitive underside.

"Please," he pleaded and she took mercy on him and sat up.

"You taste so good, Will," she whispered.

He groaned and yanked her against him. He kissed her hard, tasting himself on her lips as she thrust her tongue into his mouth eagerly. He pulled her into his lap, wedging her between his body and the steering wheel, and grabbed the hem of her shirt. He pulled it up and over her head, tossing it into the back seat, and stared greedily at her naked breasts before cupping them. He ran his thumbs over her hardened nipples as she moaned and arched her back. He placed a soft kiss on one nipple then pulled gently on it with his teeth.

"Oh God, Will. Please." It was her turn to moan as he sucked hard on first one nipple than the other. He kissed his way up her chest, licking and nipping at her skin and she thrust her hips against him.

"Fuck me, Will," she breathed into his ear and his hands tightened around her waist.

"I don't want to hurt you."

"You won't." She kissed him lightly on the mouth. "I trust you."

"You promised you would stay away from me." His hands moved from her waist to stroke the bare skin of her back.

She smiled a little sadly at him. "I know and I'm sorry. I've tried – I can't do it anymore."

He groaned and kissed her softly. "I can't stay away from you either."

"Please, Will. Make love to me."

"Right here?" He looked around the front seat of his truck and she nodded.

"Yes, right here."

She scrambled off his lap and lay back on the seat, her hands reaching for the button on her pants. As she unbuttoned and unzipped them, he grabbed the waistband and helped her peel off the pants. He inhaled sharply when they slid past her hips and revealed her lack of underwear.

"No panties?" He arched an eyebrow at her and she giggled.

"It was Mannie's suggestion."

She giggled again at his look of confusion. "It's called a wedgie, Will. Do you have any idea how tight these goddamn pants are?"

He grinned and yanked off her boots before pulling her pants free of her legs. He kissed her smooth calf before ripping off his shirt and pulling his own jeans down. She spread her thighs and crooked her finger at him. He pushed himself eagerly between her thighs. She yelped as he nearly shoved her off the seat, grabbing on to his arms as half her body hung off the seat.

He wrapped his arm around her waist and hauled her back underneath him. He stared down at her, his brow furrowing at the thin, newly-healed scar on her abdomen just above her appendectomy scar. He kissed it lightly, making her shiver, and glanced up at her.

"I could kill him for that."

She rolled her eyes. "It was an accident, Will."

"He should never have let you fight him with a live blade," he grumbled.

"Do you really want to talk about this right now?" She cocked her eyebrow at him and poked playfully at his chest.

He grinned. "No, I do not."

She raised one thigh around his hips and he pushed his cock against her, groaning when he couldn't get the right position. She reached between them, took his cock in her hand and guided it into her wet opening.

They both gasped in pleasure and he propped himself up on his elbows and moved in her. She let out another yelp when his elbow slipped off the seat and his body landed on hers.

"Dammit!" He cursed, making her giggle.

With another frustrated curse, he put his arm around her waist and sat up, pulling her with him and keeping his cock seated firmly inside of her. He sat in the passenger's seat and she straddled him.

"Better?" He whispered.

"Yes," she moaned as she rocked her hips against him. Will's breath caught in his throat at the sight of Hannah riding him. He squeezed and cupped her pale breasts as she rocked and wriggled against him. With a loud groan, he grabbed her hips and thrust into her. She braced her hands on the ceiling of the truck as he plunged wildly into her.

"Oh, Will!" She cried. She suddenly shuddered around him, her muscles squeezing and releasing him in a quick succession of pleasure-inducing spasms that pulled his own orgasm from him.

She collapsed against his chest, breathing heavily, and he rubbed her back as she placed a series of light fluttering kisses against his neck.

"Thank you, Will." She said almost shyly.

He cupped her jaw and placed a slow, deep kiss on her mouth. "My pleasure, Hannah."

She rested her head on his chest, listening to the steady thud of his heart beating beneath her ear.

Chapter Twenty-One

“Will,” Richard eyed him suspiciously, “you’re really going to sit there and tell me that you just happened to stumble on to Mannie’s hunt.”

Will shrugged. “Yep.”

Richard shook his head. “I specifically didn’t want you on that hunt.”

“And why is that, Richard?” Will asked softly. “You’ve never refused to let me go on a hunt before.”

Richard shifted uncomfortably in his seat. “You know why. Hannah is too much of a distraction for you. You need to stay away from – “

“I have!” Will said harshly. “I’ve stayed away from her like you asked of me.”

His mind flashed back to the memory of making love to Hannah in the front seat of his truck, and he pushed it ruthlessly away. It was nearly a week since the night of the hunt. Although he was surprised that it had taken Richard this long to talk to him about his unauthorized hunting, he was suddenly and bitterly tired of Richard’s rules.

Richard sighed. “Will, I’m doing this because –“

“I know your reasons, Richard,” Will snapped. “I don’t need to hear them again. I’ll stay away from Hannah but I refuse to obey orders not to hunt. You brought me to this organization for a specific reason – to kill vampires. Take that away and what use does this place hold for me?”

“Stop blaming me for this, Will,” Richard snapped back. “I’m not the one who was sleeping with a recruit. I’m not the one who fucked a human on the night of a full – “

With a loud roar, Will stood and swept the computer and lamp off of Richard’s desk. Richard shrank back as Will’s body started to swell and change.

He was angry now - the fury and his seemingly unending need to be with Hannah were boiling under his skin in a heated rush. His usual iron-tight control was fading away to be replaced by a rage so great it was nearly insanity. Instead of suppressing it like usual, he welcomed it, embraced it. The man sitting across from him was the reason he couldn’t be with Hannah. The reason he lay sleepless in bed every night, his very skin on fire with need and want, and he was suddenly itching to reach across the desk and tear out Richard’s throat.

Richard was staring at him with wide eyes and a trembling mouth. Will could see the fear in his eyes and he growled low in his throat. Richard was his friend, had treated him as a brother for many years, but he had grown complacent about who and what Will really was. He closed his eyes, trying to control his desire to shift. When he opened his eyes again, they were a dark yellow and the shadow of hair on his face had grown to a full beard.

“Will, calm down,” Richard whispered.

Will leaned over the desk until he was only inches from Richard’s frightened face. “You would be wise, my friend, to remember that I am not a dog that you can leash and control. Do I make myself perfectly clear?”

Richard swallowed, the dry click of his throat very loud in the silence. “Yes.”

Will stared at him for a few minutes longer. The only sound in the room was the low and continuous growling emitting from deep within his chest.

“Do not forget again,” he warned quietly before leaving the office.

* * *

Will sighed heavily and opened the door to his dark apartment. He closed his eyes and leaned against the door. After leaving Richard's office he had escaped to the woods outside of the facility, shedding his clothes before shifting and running deep into the woods. He had run for hours, pushing his body to the limit, trying to tire himself out in the hopes that sheer physical exhaustion would force him into sleep.

He needed to sleep. He was losing it. The control he had always prided himself on was slowly corroding away, and he knew it was partially from lack of sleep and partially from the intense desire he felt for Hannah. He had barely seen her since they had met up with Tyler and Selena on the side of the road after the hunt. She had slid across the seat and kissed him deeply, her tongue sliding into his mouth and her hands threading through his dark hair before she had pulled away and joined the others in their car.

The quickie in his truck had only made it worse, he thought. It had reminded him of what he was missing and he cursed inwardly before rubbing a shaking hand over his face. Jesus, he had nearly attacked Richard in his office. He shuddered, remembering how deep the urge was to shift and bite, to show Richard that he would not be controlled like some cowardly dog.

He inhaled deeply with his eyes still closed. It was nearly ten and he had to be up early. He would shower, have a quick bite to eat and try to sleep before – he paused and inhaled again before groaning softly. He really was going insane. He could actually smell Hannah in his apartment. It was months since she'd been in his bed, and yet he could almost taste her scent in the air. He shook his head. He was –

“Where have you been, Will?”

He jerked against the door, his eyes popping open and his heart slamming in his chest. He flipped on the light switch, blinking as his eyes adjusted to the sudden light.

Hannah was sprawled across his bed, wearing a pair of panties and nothing else. She smiled at him. “I’ve been waiting hours for you.”

“Am I dreaming?” He whispered.

She laughed. “No, you’re not dreaming. Stop talking and get into bed. I can’t stay all night.”

He nearly ran across the room, pulling his t-shirt over his head and kicking off his boots. He yanked his jeans and underwear down, hopping and kicking them impatiently off his feet. She giggled a little and then let out a soft squeal of surprise when he grabbed her ankles and dragged her toward the edge of the bed. He grabbed her panties and tore them off with one hard yank.

The fire was burning inside of him, his cock so hard it hurt, and she blinked at him in shock as he fell on her.

“Will, are you – “

He stopped her mouth with a hard kiss, slanting his mouth over hers, pushing his tongue against her lips and demanding entrance. He cupped her breast roughly before tearing his mouth from hers and dipping his head to suckle at her nipple. He blew lightly on it, watching it tighten in the cool air before rubbing his rough, shadowed cheek against it. She moaned and he thrust his pelvis against her.

“Open your legs,” he growled.

She spread her legs immediately and he placed his cock against her. He needed to wait, needed to make sure she was completely ready for him, but he couldn't think about anything but his white-hot need to be inside of her. Praying silently that he didn't hurt her, he plunged deeply into her. The resistance he was expecting wasn't there. Instead there was only a slick, tight wetness that had him groaning uncontrollably. He thrust wildly in and out of her, feeling his groin tighten, knowing that he was going to come and having no control over it. With one more hard thrust he

came. A loud howl erupted from his throat as she squeezed her legs around him and clapped her hand over his mouth.

He collapsed against her, his breath tearing in and out of his throat, as she panted lightly beneath him. Shame flooded through him. He was like a teenage boy getting his first taste of sex and he rolled off of her, throwing his arm over his eyes, his face burning.

“Will?” Her soft voice came from above him and he squeezed his eyes shut. She tugged his arm off his face. “What’s wrong?”

“Jesus, I’m so sorry, Hannah.”

“For what?”

The genuine surprise in her voice, with no hint of the disappointment or hurt he was expecting, forced his eyes open. He stared at her for a long moment. “Did I – did I hurt you?”

“Of course you didn’t. Why are you sorry?”

He groaned, his face reddening again. “I lost control and I couldn’t stop. I didn’t even make you – “

He groaned again. Never in his life had he lost control like that. He prided himself on his ability to keep his own need in check, to make sure that the woman he was with was fully satisfied before he took his own satisfaction, and he couldn’t believe that he had done that to Hannah.

She leaned over him, rubbing her nipples against his chest and nibbling lightly on his throat. “I like making you lose control, Will.”

“Besides, there’s plenty of time for you to make me come.” She kissed him, pushing her tongue into his mouth and exploring it with a fierce sort of determination that made him shiver against her. She kissed his throat, trailing her tongue along the rough skin and moaning when he reached down and kneaded her firm, supple thighs.

“I have been meaning to return a favour,” he whispered into her ear.

She peered at him. “What do you mean?”

He grinned at her, his teeth glinting in the soft light and rolled her onto her back. “Let me show you.”

He kissed her upper chest and then licked between the hollow of her breasts. She moaned and arched her back as he moved his mouth to one breast and pulled gently on her nipple. It tightened in his mouth, and he sucked softly as she moved restlessly beneath him.

He kissed his way down her body, leaving no part of her creamy skin untouched by his tongue and lips. When he kissed her navel, his tongue dipping into the indent, she giggled and jerked beneath him.

He smiled up at her before slipping further down her body. Her giggling dried up at the first feel of his hot breath against her soft curls, and when he placed a gentle kiss on them she clutched his head in her hands.

“Will, what are you doing?” She moaned.

“Returning the favour, remember?” He whispered.

She moaned again in reply as he slid between her legs and slipped his hands under her. He cupped her ass, lifting her slightly before placing a soft kiss on her warm, pink folds. She jerked again, her breath hissing between her teeth and he smiled before licking her warm skin.

“Oh, sweet Jesus,” she whispered.

Her legs, which had closed around his wide shoulders in nervousness, fell open and his cock hardened again at the sight of her small pink clit. It glistened wetly and he slid one hand out from under her and parted her swollen lips. He used the tip of his tongue to lick the nub delicately and she moaned loudly, her hips rising upward. He flattened his tongue and licked her clit repeatedly,

tasting her on his tongue as she writhed under him. Her hands clenched in the bed sheets, pulling and yanking on them as he wrapped his lips around her clit and flicked his tongue repeatedly against it. It swelled and hardened in his mouth and he sucked lightly as her thighs tightened around his head.

“Oh, oh, oh,” she cried softly. Her head tossed back and forth before she arched her hips completely off the bed and came violently against his mouth.

She collapsed against the bed, her body shaking, and he slid up her body and entered her with a gentle push. He rocked back and forth gently, feeling her warm wet core gripping him tightly. He realized with a sinking dismay that he would never get enough of her and, as she wrapped her thighs around his hips and moved against him, he buried his face in the soft skin of her throat and lost himself in the pleasure of her warm body.

* * *

“Why did you come here tonight?” Will was lying on his back with his arm around Hannah, and she was curled up against him like a contented cat. He stroked her back with the tips of his fingers and stared up at the ceiling.

He could hear the amusement in her voice when she said, “I thought that might have been obvious.”

He grunted and pulled her closer. “What if someone saw you?”

“No one saw me.” She rubbed her hand through the hair on his chest. “I’m like a ninja now.”

He laughed despite himself and she sat up, leaning over him and grinning delightedly. “It’s good to hear you laugh. You’re always so serious, Will. Sara used to tell me I was the most serious person she knew, but I think you’d give me a run for the title.”

He stared at her. “If you’re caught – “

“I won’t be caught,” she said impatiently. “Besides, after listening to Selena sneak out to meet Tyler the last five nights in a row, I figured it was my turn to get what I wanted. Everyone else gets to sneak around this damn facility fucking whoever takes their fancy, why shouldn’t I?”

He tensed beneath her. “You’re mine. Don’t even think about – “

She rolled her eyes. “Relax, big boy. You’re the only one I fancy.”

She rested her elbow on his broad chest and propped her head on her hand, staring at him thoughtfully. “You look tired, Will.”

He shrugged. “I haven’t been sleeping well.”

She traced the dark shadows under his eyes with the tip of her finger. “Why not?”

“I don’t know,” he said gruffly.

Admitting to her that it was because she was not in his bed would only make things worse. She would not be a recruit forever but there was still no future for them. Many Lycans mated with humans. It was considered an acceptable breaking of the rules, an erotic break in the normal routine of their lives. He supposed it was similar to the way that the humans felt about sleeping with Lycans.

What Lycans most definitely did not do, was form any type of bond with a human. His kind already considered him strange for living so deeply within the human’s world. They had accepted it because of his history with the vampires, accepting if not understanding, that this was his way to exact revenge. But if they knew that he was sleeping with a human on a regular basis there would be hell to pay.

She smiled at him. “I should go.”

He shook his head, tightening his arm around her. "No, not yet."

He kissed her, licking at her lips as he cupped one firm breast.

She pulled her mouth away. "Stop distracting me. You need sleep, Will. Not to be rude, but you look terrible."

He shook his head stubbornly. "I'll be fine. I'd rather spend time with you."

She grinned when he suddenly yawned deeply.

She curled up on her side and opened her arms. He turned into her embrace, sliding one muscled thigh between her soft ones and wrapping his arm around her waist as she pulled his head into the curve of her shoulder.

"Sleep, my love," she whispered, stroking his hair. "There will be other nights."

Chapter Twenty-Two

She cleared her throat nervously and paced the small room. It was nearly dark, and she had only a little time left before she needed to return. It was getting more and more difficult to slip out of the facility unnoticed and the longer she was gone, the greater the chance of being caught.

She stared at the man sitting in the chair. He stared back at her calmly and she flushed a little. “Why do I have to meet him? I’ve never had to - to speak to one before.”

The man shrugged before adjusting the cuff links on his sleeves. “Marcus wishes to meet the woman who has been so helpful to his kind.”

She stared at the familiar, her eyes studying the mark on his neck. He was branded by them, she thought with a touch of fear and disgust, like all the humans who became the vampire’s pets.

The man noticed her gaze and smiled before running his fingers gently over the raised skin on his neck. “Perhaps you would like to bear the mark as well? You are, for all intents and purposes, one of us now.”

“I am not,” she hissed. “I hate vampires! I did this only because – “

She stopped as the door to the room opened and a tall, thin man with a scar across his face floated into the room.

“Hello, my dear,” he said warmly. “It’s so nice to finally meet you.” He kept his hands folded firmly behind his back.

She stepped back nervously as he approached, and he chuckled faintly. “Do not be frightened, my dear. I would never hurt you – the one who has been so helpful to us.”

“It’s getting more difficult,” she muttered.

“But of course it is.” He smiled at her. “There have been too many unexpected killings, too many vampires appearing when they shouldn’t have, for it to be a coincidence yes?”

She nodded. “I don’t think I can keep doing this.”

He grinned, his fangs gleaming softly at her. “Oh, my dear, you have no choice – do you not realize that? You are one of our chosen pets now.”

“I am not!” She shouted. “I help you only to exact my revenge for – “

She stopped, breathing heavily.

“Go on.” Marcus indicated. “Exact your revenge for what?”

She flushed. “Nothing.”

“I bet I could guess.” He tittered and glanced at the man still sitting in the chair. “Women are all the same are they not? So needlessly emotional, so terribly eager for revenge when they think they’ve been wronged.”

There was a soft whoosh and the vampire had crossed the room and was standing in front of her, his long fingers stroking her face, before she could react.

“Let me guess – you love him and he does not return that love. Or perhaps he says he loves you but does not mean it.”

She pulled away, her eyes spitting sparks at him. “I would give him everything. I love him more deeply than she ever did but all he can think about, the only thing that consumes his thoughts, is her. What did she have that I do not?”

He laughed and glanced at the man behind him. “I told you. I do wish the humans would allow a woman to run their country. If they did that, there would be no need for us to build our numbers against them. They would destroy themselves in a matter of months.”

“I want out,” the woman said suddenly. “It’s getting too dangerous. You’ll have to find another to help you.”

Marcus laughed again. "Oh, my dear. You really are too funny."

"I'm being serious," she said quietly. "I won't help you any longer."

She started for the door and he was suddenly in front of her again, pushing her against the wall, her scream of surprise cut off by Marcus' hand around her throat.

"It's too late for that," he whispered menacingly. "You will help us until Samuel says you are no longer needed."

He squeezed, cutting off her oxygen. "Your friends killed a number of our yearlings just over a week ago. Why did you not warn us of this?"

He released her throat and she drew in a gagging, gasping breath. "I cannot tell you everything. They would quickly find out that I was the mole and kill me. Then you would have nothing. Besides, they were new recruits – I did not expect them to have as much success as they did."

He gave her a bitter grin. "I want to know who the woman was."

"What woman?"

His patience suddenly gone, Marcus curled his hand around her throat again and slammed her against the wall.

"The woman! The woman who did this to me!" He screamed before showing her the stump of his missing left hand.

"I do not know!" She cried softly, tears beginning to run down her face.

He leaned closer and she gagged at his fetid breath. "She is tall, dark-haired and carries two swords. Michael tells me that a Lycan guards her most fiercely."

Her eyes widened, and he smiled. "You do know her. Give me her name."

"Why?" She whispered. "What interest do you –"

"Give me her name!" He suddenly roared, and she flinched and pressed herself against the wall behind her.

"Hannah!" She cried. "Her name is Hannah Torrington."

"Thank you, my dear." Marcus stepped back, straightening his tie with his remaining hand. "You are to bring her to us."

"What? No, I can't do that," she whispered.

"You can and you will. Two nights from now you will bring her to the old factory off of Route 27."

"Why? What are you going to do with her?"

"That is none of your concern."

"I can't bring her alone. It would raise too many suspicions," she whispered.

He waved his hand irritably. "Then bring others with you. There will be more than enough of us to deal with them. Pretend you have found another pod of the undead – that will bring them running will it not?"

She nodded, her hand rubbing at her throat as he stepped back and pointed towards the door. "Leave us."

She ran from the room, slamming the door behind her and Marcus smiled at the man in the chair.

"She'll have to die soon."

"Why do you not force her tell us where the facility is?" The man frowned at him. "We could end this in one night."

Marcus shook his head. "Samuel does not believe we have enough numbers to defeat them. The woman is weak but she won't tell us where the facility is. I guarantee it. We'll have to turn her in order for her to tell us, and Samuel believes she is more useful to us as a human."

“My master, if you brought the others in from across the country, we could easily defeat the facility.”

“Have you forgotten the attack on the Atlanta facility? Many of our brothers died that night because they were foolish enough to believe the humans would just roll over like dogs. It was shameful how easily the humans defeated us.”

“But the woman has already told us this is a training centre and the least protected of the facilities,” the man persisted. “They would have all the information we need on the other centres. If we could take it as ours, we could find out the locations of the other centres.”

“The humans are not stupid.” Marcus hid his impatience. “They will have fail-safes in place. If we attack the facility, the first thing they will do is destroy all traces of information that lead to the other locations.”

He looked out the window at the dark sky. “It is far better to have someone on the inside. Someone who is not as cowardly as our current informant, and who we can use to move the humans about like pawns. And I know exactly who I want.”

The man glanced doubtfully at Marcus’ missing hand. “This woman, this Hannah, does not seem to be the type to turn on her own kind.”

Marcus shrugged, “Perhaps not. If that is the case, we will simply make her one of us and choose another. There are always humans ready to betray their brothers.”

He gestured for the man to leave before turning back to the window. He stared thoughtfully at the street below him, watching the humans march like ants through the darkness. Even three stories up, their blood called to him and he swallowed hard. He would feed before he returned to Samuel. He had yet to tell him about the woman. He was most displeased when Michael had returned without her, and only a small thread of control had stopped him from ripping Michael’s head from his shoulders.

He had meant to tell Samuel immediately about her, to impress upon him how important he thought this woman could be, but something had held him back. The woman had captivated him from the moment he had laid eyes on her. It wasn’t just the fact that her blood sang more loudly to him than any other human he’d ever met. It was the curve of her mouth, the swell of her hip, even the way she held those damn swords.

He had felt very little but the thirst for decades, but now he could feel a thin thread of lust travelling through him. He knew without a doubt that Hannah would never tell him anything about the facility or the humans who lived there. He had only been in her presence a few short minutes, but he had witnessed her courage and her fierce determination to destroy him. No, she would never betray her kind while she was a human, but he would turn her and she would be by his side forever.

Chapter Twenty-Three

“Saddle up, cowboys and cowgirls – we’re going hunting.”

Hannah and the others, Selena, Jeremy, Tyler, Lucy and Ben, looked up in surprise at Darren.

“Right now?” Jeremy frowned.

“Yep.” Darren nodded cheerfully as Aaron stepped into the common room. “Intel’s informed us that we’ve got a small pod at a factory just off Route 27. We’ve been given the okay to take them out.”

“Are Will and Mannie coming with us?” Hannah asked.

Darren frowned. “They’re on a supply run. Why? You can’t hunt without your boyfriend holding your hand, sweetheart?”

“Fuck you, Darren,” Hannah spat at him.

“Anytime baby, anytime.” He winked at her and then clapped his hands together. “Grab your gear everyone – we leave in ten.”

* * *

“Jesus, why the hell do we need so many goddamn bags of rice anyway?” Mannie grumbled as he and Will unloaded the back of the truck.

Will laughed. “Too hard on your back, old man?”

“Shut up. Richard really needs to stop treating us like goddamn delivery boys,” Mannie replied.

“Hey, we all have to help out where we can,” Will said cheerfully.

Mannie stared at Will. “What’s with the sudden good mood?”

“What do you mean?” Will grunted as he picked up a few flats of canned mushrooms and set them next to the rice.

“Don’t play dumb with me. A week ago you looked like a bag of shit, and had all five of the new recruits reduced to tears and cowering in a corner of the common room. Now you look fresh as a daisy and you’re practically whistling Dixie out your ass.”

Will shrugged. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

He continued to move groceries from the back of the truck to the ground as the door to the dilapidated shack opened and Ryan stuck out his head.

“Hey guys.” He carried the groceries into the elevator in the shack as three other recruits joined him.

“Bullshit you don’t know,” Mannie said conversationally.

Will ignored him. Hannah had snuck into his room three more evenings since that first night and although he insisted that each time be the last time, they both knew he didn’t mean it. They couldn’t get enough of each other. Even now, just thinking about last night and the way she had moaned his name when he bent her over the arm of the couch and entered her from behind, was giving him an erection.

As the others disappeared into the shack, Mannie grabbed his arm and gave him a grave look. “I know why you’re suddenly so cheerful. It’s the same reason Hannah is in such a good mood. I’m not trying to tell you what to do but just – just be careful okay? If you’re caught she’ll be kicked out, you know she will.”

Will nodded, pulling his arm free and carrying the last of the groceries into the elevator. He knew Mannie was only trying to help, but it had shaken him badly that he had figured it out so easily. If he knew, how long was it before the others caught on?

* * *

“I don’t like this,” Hannah murmured to Tyler and Selena. “Something doesn’t feel right.”

They were standing in a tight group in front of a large abandoned factory. It rose creepily above them, surrounded by a high chain-link fence. The broken gate swung back and forth in the cold wind, making a squealing noise that set Hannah’s teeth on edge.

“What’s to like about it?” Tyler muttered. “It’s a goddamn ghost factory filled with the undead.”

Hannah shook her head. “No, I mean this whole hunt feels wrong. It usually takes days to organize one, and yet we’re sent out with ten minutes’ notice to this one? You don’t find anything strange about that?”

Selena opened her mouth but before she could speak, the others joined them.

“Okay, Intel says the pod is on the third floor of the building. There are less than ten of them and nearly all of them are yearlings. We move in, we dispatch them, we move out. Quick and easy,” Aaron said.

Darren glanced at the others. “We’ll break into two groups. Hannah, Selena and Tyler, you come with me. We’ll go through the front. Aaron, Jeremy, Ben and Lucy will go around the back.”

He pulled a blueprint from his back pocket and unfolded it. Aaron shone the flashlight on it as the others crowded around them.

“This room here,” Darren pointed to a small room with a large red x drawn on it, “is the room they’re holed up in. The hallway outside of it has two doors, one coming from the front and one from the back. We’ll do a quick sweep of the ground level to check for strays, and then meet at this room in fifteen minutes. Ready?”

“Darren, where did this information come in from?” Hannah asked.

He frowned at her. “Isabelle brought it to us, why?”

“Isabelle? Not Richard?”

Darren shrugged. “Isabelle was in the office when the info came in. It’s fine, Hannah. Richard knows about it as well.”

He looked around at the others. “Let’s go. And for Christ’s sake, keep your eyes open and don’t shoot each other.”

* * *

Will and Mannie were headed for the common room when Chen joined them. He gave the two men a troubled look.

“Hannah missed training tonight.”

Will stared at him. “What do you mean she missed training?”

“I mean she didn’t show up. She’s never done that before.”

“Maybe she’s not feeling well,” Mannie said.

Chen shook his head. “I checked her room, the common room – she’s not in the facility. And there are other recruits missing as well.”

Will turned abruptly and the two men trailed after him.

“Will, where are you going?” Mannie asked.

“Richard’s office,” he replied grimly.

* * *

“What do you mean they’re missing?” Richard gave Will a wary glance. They had hardly spoken since the night the Lycan had nearly turned on him, and Will sighed impatiently.

“Hannah missed her training with Chen, and apparently Jeremy, Tyler, Selena, Ben and Lucy are gone as well. Is there a hunt tonight?”

“Not that I’m aware of.” Richard frowned and checked the calendar on his computer.

“Alison,” Mannie said.

Will glanced at him. “What about her?”

“She’s in administration now. Let’s go to the office. Any authorized hunts go through administration.”

He turned and left Richard’s office, the others following closely behind him.

“Hi Mannie.” Alison gave him a warm smile, frowning a little when she saw the others. “What’s wrong?”

“Are there any hunts scheduled for tonight?” Mannie said urgently.

She frowned. “I don’t think so.”

“Check, would you?”

She quickly typed a few sentences into her computer and the others crowded around as a window popped up on her screen.

“Oh, I guess there is.” She pointed to the document.

Richard cursed loudly. “There aren’t supposed to be any hunts authorized without my approval.”

Alison gave him a cautious look before typing again. “It says here that Isabelle authorized it.”

“Isabelle?” Richard frowned. “Why would she authorize a hunt without my knowledge? She knows that’s not allowed.”

He stopped, staring wide-eyed at Will and Mannie. “Oh my God.”

“She’s the mole,” Will said grimly. “Did she go on the hunt tonight?”

Alison shook her head. “No, it looks like she sent Darren and Aaron.”

“Bitch,” Mannie swore loudly. “What do you want to bet she’s sent them into a trap?”

“Where’s the hunt?” Will asked.

“It doesn’t say.” Alison gave them a helpless look.

“Does anyone know where Isabelle is?” Chen asked softly.

“We find her,” Will growled. “Check the entire facility, starting with her apartment.”

* * *

Hannah followed Selena into the factory. She slipped on her glasses and clicked them into night vision. The room was lit up with the eerie green light and she pulled her swords from her belt. Their weight comforted her, and she gave a small nod to Selena who was holding guns in both hands.

Ahead of them Darren and Tyler were moving cautiously through the darkness, weaving their way around the boxes that littered the floor.

She nudged Selena and pointed to a door to their left. Selena nodded and whistled softly. Darren and Tyler looked behind them and Selena pointed to the door. She and Hannah picked their way through the debris and boxes towards the door, as Tyler and Darren continued forward.

Selena put her hand on the door handle and glanced at Hannah. Hannah nodded to her and Selena swung the door open. Hannah, her heart thumping in her chest, raised her swords but the door opened onto a hallway. It was empty and she could see a door at the far end of it.

She swung back around as Selena gave a soft gasp beside her. Hannah looked at her, all of the hair on her body trying to stand up in reaction to the look on Selena's face.

"TYLER! WATCH OUT!" Selena suddenly shrieked, and Hannah watched in horror as a vampire swooped down from the ceiling and fell on him.

It grabbed Tyler's skull in its long, slender hands and twisted violently to the right. Tyler's head ripped from his neck, a fountain of blood gushing upwards as Darren stumbled backwards. The vampire dropped the head to the ground and stuck his face into the blood jetting from Tyler's neck. He drank greedily as the rain of blood coated his face.

Darren raised his gun and shot the vampire in the chest. It bellowed with pain, the veins in its body immediately pulsing with a blue light before it exploded into ash. Darren ran toward them as more vampires descended from the ceiling. Selena, her face completely bloodless, raised her gun and shot the two closest to Darren.

Darren tripped over a large box and went sprawling. Before he could gain his feet, five vampires had latched on to him. He screamed weakly as they bit into his face and neck, the guns in his hands firing uselessly into the floor.

Hannah grabbed Selena. "We have to go!" She screamed, and yanked her back towards the door. She pulled Selena through the open door and then slammed it behind her. She ran down the hallway towards the far door, dragging Selena with her. They had just slipped through it, shutting it firmly behind them, when Hannah heard the hissing and moaning of the vampires in the hallway.

Still holding Selena's hand, she ran up the set of stairs in front of them. There was a door at the top of the stairs and the two women, panting harshly, paused on the landing.

"Are you ready?" Hannah whispered.

Selena nodded grimly and Hannah pushed the door open. Selena slipped through it, both guns held out in front of her, her eyes scanning the hallway from top to bottom. It was empty and the two women ran to the far end.

"Hannah, where are we going?" Selena whispered.

"Back downstairs," she whispered back. "We need to find the others and get out of here. It's a goddamn trap."

There was a sudden shriek, the sound echoing through the building, and Selena winced. "I think that was Lucy."

"C'mon. We go back downstairs and head to the back of the factory to find whoever is left," Hannah muttered.

"Then what?" Selena asked.

"Then we get the fuck out of Dodge."

Chapter Twenty-Four

"Isabelle, we know you're in there! Open the goddamn door!" Mannie shouted, pounding frantically on the locked door of Isabelle's apartment.

With a snarl, Will pushed him out of the way and kicked the door in with one boot-clad foot. It opened with a splintering crash and the four men ran into the small apartment.

"Isabelle," Richard breathed.

She stared at him from her spot on the couch and raised the gun to her head. "Don't come any closer, Richard."

She glanced at Will who was edging to the left. "You either, Will, or I'll blow my brains out and you'll never find her."

He stopped immediately, holding out his hands in a non-threatening manner. "Put the gun down, Isabelle. No one needs to get hurt. Tells us where they are and we'll bring them back. We know you're the mole but we can help you."

She laughed bitterly. "It's too late for that, Will. I'm in too deep now."

"Isabelle, why?" Richard whispered. "Why would you betray us like this?"

"Why?" She shook her head. "I loved you, Richard. I would have died for you. You used me for a few months to scratch your itch and then you just tossed me aside, like I didn't even matter. All that matters to you is your precious Maria."

He flinched. "Isabelle, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to hurt you."

"Didn't you?" She said indifferently. "Do you know how many nights I laid awake in your bed listening to you moan her name in your sleep? I thought if I just hung in there long enough, if I loved *you* enough, you would eventually forget her."

She sighed and looked at the gun in her hand. "But you didn't. You can't, can you? You will never love another like you love your Maria. It doesn't matter that she's dead, that her bones turned to dust years ago."

"So you decide to bring down the entire facility?" Richard cried softly. "Because I couldn't love you the way you wanted me to? You've gone mad, Isabelle."

She smiled gently at him. "I suppose I have. Goodbye, Richard."

She raised the gun to her head again.

"Wait!" Will cried. She paused, staring at him silently.

"You can still do the right thing," he spoke quickly. "Tell us where you sent them tonight. Please, Isabelle."

She gave him an appraising look. "Do you love her, Will?"

He hesitated and she cocked the gun. "Tell me the truth."

"Yes," he said hoarsely. "Yes, I love her."

She nodded. "They're at the old factory off Route 27."

She gave him a sad smile. "But you're too late. There's too many of them. By now they'll have killed Darren and the others, and he'll have taken Hannah."

"Who? Who will have taken her?" Will asked frantically.

"His name is Marcus," she said solemnly.

She looked at Richard. "I love you, Richard."

He ran forward. "Isabelle, don't –"

The gunshot was shockingly loud in the small apartment and as Richard moaned and cradled Isabelle's body in his arms, Will turned to Mannie and Chen.

"Gather as many of the older recruits as you can find. We're going after them."

* * *

“Hannah, do you know where you’re going?” Selena hissed frantically at her.

Hannah stopped, her head cocked to the side. “Be quiet.”

She strained to hear in the quiet; there was a soft fluttering noise above her, and she looked up in time to see a vampire dropping toward her. With a dreamy type of speed, she raised her sword and skewered it through the heart. It shrieked and exploded, covering her and Selena in blood and ash.

She glanced behind her at Selena, her eyes widening. Selena turned and shot the vampire reaching for her, directly in the face. It fell to the ground, rolling and moaning in agony as the ultraviolet pulsed through its veins before Hannah sliced off its head.

“Keep moving,” she advised grimly.

They crept down the hallway and opened the door. Selena let out a soft moan when she realized they were back in the main room of the factory. Hannah had somehow led them to the back section of it, and she could just make out Tyler’s body laying forgotten amid the dust and empty boxes. The five vampires were still feasting on Darren’s body, although Selena had no idea how the man had any blood left in him at all.

With a gentle tug, Hannah pulled Selena across the back of the room and into yet another hallway. They crept quietly towards the end of it. They were nearly at the door when it flew open and Jeremy stumbled through it, covered in blood.

“Jeremy!” Hannah cried out as he lurched towards them.

“Run!” He whispered. “RUN!”

She sheathed one of her swords and wrapped her arm around his waist as Selena slipped her arm around him on the other side. They stumbled back the way they came as the door behind them opened.

“Well, what do we have here? Just the little lamb I was looking for.” A silky smooth voice floated on the air.

Hannah, dread forming in her belly, turned around slowly.

“It’s so good to see you again, Hannah.” The vampire smiled. “Do you remember me?” He raised his left arm, showing her his missing hand.

“Perhaps I should introduce myself properly this time. My name is Marcus.” He gave her a short bow, holding his right hand up to stop the vampires from sliding around him. “Patience, my friends.”

“How do you know my name?” She whispered as the three of them slowly backed towards the door.

“Oh, I know a lot about you, my lamb.” He grinned as more vampires filled the hallway behind him. “In fact, you and I will soon know everything there is to know about each other.”

Selena twisted around as the door behind them opened. “Oh fuck...”

More vampires pressed through the doorway, slinking and slipping into the narrow hallway.

“We’re trapped,” Jeremy moaned.

Marcus smiled at them, tapping his smooth chin with one long finger. “Kill the other two, but bring her to me alive.”

He melted back out of the hallway as the vampires began to crowd in on them.

Hannah stared at the other two. "Back to back - now. Don't break formation." The other two turned immediately, and she could feel the comforting brush of Jeremy's shoulder on her left side and Selena's on her right.

"Hannah, what do we do?" Selena whispered frantically.

Hannah pulled her sword from her belt and raised both swords into attack position. "We fight."

* * *

"There! I can see the van!" Mannie pointed towards the side of the road and Ryan swung the truck to the left into the nearly-hidden driveway. He stomped on the gas, gravel spinning under the tires, and sped towards the large building rising out of the darkness. He stopped in front of the building, and Will opened the door and leaped out of the truck.

"Will, wait!" Mannie cried. With a piercing howl Will shifted into a wolf, his clothes exploding from his body, and ran towards the front door of the factory. Chen was out of the truck and following him before Mannie had even opened his door.

With a loud curse he glanced at Ryan and the three other recruits he had managed to round up. "C'mon, let's go. Remember your training, aim carefully and just stay cool."

Chen entered the factory, both his swords drawn, and waited for his eyes to adjust to the darkness. Beside him, Will was sniffing the air delicately and he glanced down at the wolf. Will's eyes glowed softly in the darkness and Chen murmured, "Above us."

The wolf chuffed in response and crouched down as three vampires dropped silently to the ground a few feet in front of them. They hissed, their fangs gleaming and dripping with saliva. Will snarled in response, snapping his teeth at them.

Chen raised his blades and smiled. "Begin."

Mannie raced into the building, followed by Ryan and the other recruits. A vampire was on him almost immediately and he twisted to the right, eluding its fangs before plunging the wooden stake in his right hand deep into the vampire's chest. It screamed and burst apart around the stake as beside him, Ryan adopted a shooter's stance and began to almost casually shoot the vampires rushing towards him.

Mannie glanced to his left. Chen and Will, working as a silent team, were wading through a group of vampires. Will was snarling and ripping them to shreds as Chen slashed them apart with astonishing speed. Within minutes, the floor around them was covered in ash and blood and the five men and wolf were alone in the room.

"We split up," Mannie said to Chen. "We'll have better luck if –"

Screams rang out from the far end of the room and they ran towards it. Mannie skidded to a stop, staring at the vampires that blocked the closed door. Behind the door they heard more screaming and Mannie shouted, "Hannah! Selena!"

"Mannie?" Selena's faint scream could be heard. "We're here! In the hallway! Help us!"

There was another scream, this one coming from Hannah, and it was filled with rage and fear. Will howled loudly in response, and the vampires in front of them shrieked and covered their ears in agony.

The five men and the wolf rushed forward as one and attacked. The vampires fell before them, shrieking and screaming as the guns and the blades and the teeth ripped into their soft bodies. Will roared in anger and pain as a vampire latched on to his throat, sinking its fangs through his thick pelt. Chen, his face calm, stepped forward and sliced off the vampire's head. He used the tip of the sword to pry the head from Will's throat, then suddenly turned and pierced another vampire

through the eye with the sword in his right hand. The vampire hissed and reached for him and Chen lopped off both of its hands with his left sword before stabbing it through the heart. He pulled the sword free, smiling with grim satisfaction as the vampire dropped to the ground and turned to ash.

Ryan shot the last vampire as Will shifted to his human form and reached for the door. He ripped it open and ran into the hallway as the others crowded in behind him. The floor of the hallway was slick with blood; his bare feet slipped in it, and he would have fallen if Mannie and Chen had not grabbed him firmly by the arms.

“Oh my sweet fucking Christ,” Mannie whispered as they stared in disbelief at the carnage around them. The entire hallway was splattered with blood and ash. It covered the walls and the ceiling, dripping down to meet the river of blood on the floor.

Jeremy was sitting on the floor, leaning weakly against the wall as Selena crouched beside him and pressed her shirt against his side. They were both covered in ash and blood, but it was Hannah, standing silently in the middle of the hallway that drew their attention.

Selena and Jeremy were covered in blood but she was soaked in it. Not a single inch of her pale skin could be seen under the thick spray of blood that coated her. It dripped from her hair, turned her blue t-shirt into a mottled purple colour and ran in tiny rivulets down her leather pants. Her swords were lowered at her sides, blood and ash splattered across them, blood dripping from the ends of both of them as she stared at the ground.

“Hannah?” Will whispered. He could see her chest rising and falling in harsh pants, but she didn’t raise her head or acknowledge him.

“Honey, look at me.” He took a few steps forward, his feet squelching in the blood, and after a moment she raised her head and stared at him with harsh murder in her eyes. He took an involuntary step backward as she blinked and shook her head. He sighed with relief when she looked at him again, and it was only his sweet Hannah once more.

“Will?”

“Yes, honey. It’s me. Are you – are you okay?”

She looked around blankly. “Where are Selena and Jeremy?”

“They’re right here. They’re fine,” he said soothingly.

Chen stood next to him, sheathing his swords in his belt and then holding his hand out to Hannah. “Give me your blades, Hannah.”

She stared at him, her hands tightening around the handles of her blades, before she nodded and handed them to him. Will stepped closer and put his arm around her, drawing her into his embrace. She stared down at his naked body for a moment before looking up at him. He reached out with a trembling hand and tried to wipe some of the blood and ash from her face, but only succeeded in smearing it into her soft skin.

“Have you been bitten?” He asked.

“Oh yes, many times.” She shrugged. “Nothing that will kill me though.”

She looked around at the blood-splattered walls and then at her blood-covered hands.

“So much blood,” she whispered.

She stared at Will again and he shivered at the terrible blankness in her eyes.

“I killed them, Will,” she said in a deep, toneless voice entirely unlike her normal speaking voice. “They were trying to kill Selena and Jeremy, and I couldn’t let that happen.”

“I know,” he soothed. He led her down the hallway as the others moved to help Jeremy and Selena. “Let’s get back to the facility and get you cleaned up. Okay?”

“The others.” She stopped. “Ben and Lucy and Aaron.”

Jeremy winced as Mannie helped him to his feet. “They’re dead.”

Mannie cursed under his breath. “Darren and Tyler?”

Selena began to sob quietly. “Dead.”

“We need to go,” Will said. “Before more bloodsuckers show up.”

Mannie nodded and led their small, battered group out of the hallway.

Chapter Twenty-Five

“How is she this morning?” Mannie asked as Will entered Richard’s office and sat down in the chair across from him and Chen.

“She’s better,” he said shortly.

He had taken Hannah to his apartment, putting her in the shower and washing the blood and ash from her pale body. Her arms and face and even her upper body, were covered in bites from the vampires and he had made soft sounds of distress over each one.

She had stood mutely in the shower, letting him clean her body before he tucked her into his bed. She refused to eat any of the food he offered her. He had finally crawled into the bed beside her, and held her tightly as she rested her head against his chest.

She had fallen asleep almost immediately and he had lain awake, staring up at the ceiling, until he had finally drifted into a restless sleep. She had woken him only a few hours later by moaning and crying out in her sleep. He had rubbed her back, and whispered soothingly in her ear until she had woken gasping and shivering. He had tried to comfort her as best as he could, and the comforting had quickly turned into something else.

He had hesitated and she had pulled his mouth to hers, kissing him repeatedly. “Please,” she had whispered pleadingly. “I need this. I need *you*.”

They had made love, a slow and gentle melding of their bodies that had them both shuddering with pleasure. This morning they had parted ways. He had a meeting with Richard and she wanted to check on Selena and Jeremy in the infirmary.

“I’ll see you tonight,” she had whispered against his mouth as they kissed goodbye in the hallway outside of his apartment.

Now, Mannie cleared his throat nervously. “Will, I spoke with Jeremy and Selena earlier this morning. They said that Hannah did most of the killing. Between the two of them they killed maybe five vampires, and Hannah took out the rest.”

Will stared silently at him as Mannie glanced at Chen. “They said there were at least twenty vampires in the hallway with them and that Hannah just – just took them out like it was nothing. They were attacking her, biting and clawing at her, and she just kept slicing through them with those goddamn swords of hers.”

“You’ve taught her well, Chen,” Richard said quietly.

“She’s not done her training yet,” Chen replied. “She still has more to learn.”

“Yes, well – we need to discuss what we’re going to do next.” Richard shuffled some papers on his desk before leaning back and staring at the three men.

“First things first – we shut down all the goddamn carrying on between the recruits and the instructors.”

“And perhaps between the instructors and our fearless leader as well,” Will said tightly.

Richard shot him a dirty look. “If you don’t think I’m not blaming myself entirely for this, you’re wrong. I take full responsibility for what happened with Isabelle. It’s the reason I’m introducing new rules and consequences for any recruit caught sleeping with an instructor. My goddamn dick nearly brought down the entire facility, everything I’ve worked so hard for during the last ten years, and I’ll be damned if I let it happen again.”

He looked at Will. “If a recruit is caught sleeping with an instructor, they’ll be dismissed from the program immediately. No second chances for the recruit. I don’t care if it’s a death sentence for them or not.”

Mannie leaned forward. "It isn't just Will. All of us, with the exception of Chen, have slept with a recruit at one point or another."

Richard shook his head wearily. "Jesus Christ, Mannie."

He rubbed at his forehead. "I'll be calling a meeting with everyone in the facility to discuss the rules and consequences. No one will be exempt from them." He glanced at Will. "I mean it, Will."

"She won't be a recruit forever," Will said softly.

Richard frowned at him. "Don't be an idiot, Will. This isn't just about the facility. You're a Lycan, she's a human. Your kind is already suspicious of your decision to live and work with humans. What do you think they'll say when they find out you're in love with one?"

Will stared angrily at him. "And just how are they going to find that out, Richard?"

Richard sighed. "I've spoken with the Board of Directors this morning."

"That was quick," Will grunted.

Richard ignored him. "They're sending us new instructors. They'll be arriving within the month. Two of them are Lycans."

Will gripped the arms of the chair tightly. "More Lycans, Richard? Do you really think you can put a leash on me that way?"

"For Christ sake, Will. I'm not trying to leash you!" Richard suddenly shouted. "The Board of Directors has been keeping a close eye on you. Your track record for killing vampires has impressed them, and they've been actively recruiting more Lycans for the last two years. Both the Dallas and the Seattle branches have had Lycans as instructors for over a year now."

He took a deep breath. "I've been given no choice in the matter. The Board's faith in me has been badly shaken in light of what happened with Isabelle. I'm lucky I still have a goddamn job."

He stared at Will, a fleeting look of sorrow crossing his face. "I'm sorry, Will. I know you love her but you need to let her go. She has no future with you and you know that."

"It's not strictly forbidden, Richard," Will said. A hint of desperation coloured his voice.

"No, it is not," Richard admitted. "But she will be shunned by her kind, hell she already is, and you will never be fully accepted in the Lycan world again. Is that what you want for her? For you? If you truly love her, you'll do what's best for the both of you. Let her find love with a human."

The silence spun out for long minutes until Mannie cleared his throat. "There's one other thing you need to know, Will. Selena said that there was a head vampire. He was missing his left hand and he said his name was Marcus. He – he knew Hannah's name."

Will stared at him thunderstruck. "What do you mean he knew her name?"

"Selena said he called her by name. He said that he knew everything about her, and that soon she would know everything about him. Both Jeremy and Selena told me that he instructed the other vampires to kill them both, but to bring Hannah to him alive."

"Jesus Christ!" Will jumped up from his chair. "What the fuck did Isabelle tell them?"

"We'll never know," Richard said quietly.

"We have to find this Marcus. We have to find him and destroy him before he gets to her." Will paced back and forth in Richard's office.

"She's perfectly safe here, Will. You know that," Richard said. "And we've sent people to watch her parents, just in case."

Will sank back into his chair, staring numbly at the floor. "You can't kick her out of the program, Richard. If the vampires find her, they'll turn her and she'll tell them everything."

“That doesn’t mean you can continue to have a relationship. The rules apply to everyone,” Richard snapped.

He sighed harshly. “We know that this Marcus has something special in mind for her and until we find out what it is, the safest place for her is here at the facility. We can’t risk having her feed any information to the vampires about the facility. If you’re caught sleeping together, we’ll transfer her to another centre and keep her location hidden from everyone, including you.”

“Maybe you should transfer her now,” Chen said quietly.

Will gave him a hurt look and Chen looked at him sympathetically. “It’s safer for her, Will. You know that.”

Richard shook his head. “No, the Board wants Hannah to stay right where she is.”

“Why?” Will frowned.

“I don’t know,” Richard replied softly.

Will stood and walked to the door of Richard’s office.

“Do we have an understanding? Will you end it with Hannah?” Richard asked.

Will paused in the doorway. “Yes we have an understanding and yes, I’ll end it with her.”

He left Richard’s office without looking back.

* * *

“Will – what are you doing in here?” Hannah gave him a pleased look, frowning a bit when she went to hug him and he stepped back.

He glanced around her room. “Is Selena still in the infirmary?”

“Yes. Barb won’t set her free until tomorrow.”

“You should probably go to the infirmary as well.” He looked at the numerous small pinholes on her arms and upper chest.

She shook her head. “They’re already starting to heal.”

“How do you feel?”

She shrugged. “Better. Last night was what I’ve been training for months to do and I did it. Killing the vampires made me feel good, made me feel,” she paused, “powerful.”

She reached for him again, sighing when he backed away again. “What’s wrong?”

“There’s going to be a meeting tomorrow. Richard will be going over the rules and consequences for any recruits discovered sleeping with instructors.”

“Will he be following them himself?” She laughed bitterly. “My understanding is that we lost three recruits and two instructors because he couldn’t keep his dick in his pants, and broke the heart of a madwoman.”

“He’s well aware of his role in what happened,” Will said quietly. “It’s why he now seeks so hard to bring order back to the facility.”

“If you’re caught sleeping with me, you’ll be kicked out immediately,” he lied. The thought of Hannah not being at the training centre, of never seeing her again, filled him with a wordless horror. It was better for her to believe she would be kicked out rather than just transferred. It would make her more hesitant to break the rules, and he would at least see her every day and be able to keep her safe.

“No second chances, Hannah.” He stared again at the bites on her upper body. “You’ll die if you leave the protection of the facility.”

He stared grimly at her. “I’m sorry. But it isn’t just that – Selena told us that the vampire knew your name.”

She stared at the floor. "He did. He said his name was Marcus. How did he know my name, Will?"

"I don't know," he admitted. "We'll find out. I promise you that. But it's more important now that we don't do anything to jeopardize your ability to stay here."

"So I'm to live here forever then?" She asked softly.

When he didn't respond, she shrugged. "It isn't anything I didn't already know. I don't want to leave anyway. I want revenge for Sara, and I won't stop until I've killed every vampire I can."

"Hannah, there's more to life than revenge," he said quietly.

"I know. There's you." She smiled at him and his chest tightened painfully.

"We can't, Hannah. I'm sorry."

"I won't be a recruit forever, Will." She gave him another small smile. "I'm willing to wait for you."

"Hannah - "

The way she was looking at him was making his chest ache.

She stepped towards him and wrapped her arms around his waist, kissing his broad chest through his t-shirt. "I'll just ask Chen to hurry up with my training."

"It's more than just that." Will resisted the urge to smooth her hair back from her face.

"What do you mean?"

He stared down at her, memorizing every part of her sweet face, before hardening his heart towards her. "Lycans and humans mating is one thing, but there can be nothing else between us. I thought you knew that."

She froze against him, staring up at him as hurt flooded through her face, reddening her pale cheeks and making her full mouth tremble.

"Will, I - "

He stepped out of the circle of her arms and she crossed them over her torso as he stared steadily at her. "What this was between us was nothing more than two consenting adults having a good time. It was fun and exciting to sneak around but now that the consequences are more severe, I can't, in good conscience, continue it. I'd feel bad if something happened to you."

"You'd feel bad?" She whispered. "You'd feel bad?"

He nodded, his heart thudding painfully in his chest and his stomach churning with nausea.

She gave him such a look of disgust that he recoiled a bit. "Well thank you, Will. It makes me feel so much better knowing that you'd feel bad if I died."

"I'm sorry if I misled you about what was happening between us, truly I am, but you can't honestly think that there was any type of future between us. You're a human. I'm a Lycan. Did you really expect a happily ever after for us?"

Now it was her turn to recoil from him and he had to clench his hands into fists to stop from reaching out to her.

"No, I suppose I didn't," she said icily. "Would you mind leaving, Will? I'm tired."

He nodded. "Of course." He echoed the words Richard had said to him earlier. "Do we have an understanding, Hannah?"

"Yes, we certainly do." She turned away from him.

He stared at her for a moment longer before leaving her room. Hannah broke into soft sobs the moment the door closed, collapsing on her bed and sobbing into her pillow.

Will stood outside her door, listening to her soft cries, his head throbbing and his fingers digging into his palms. He strode quickly down the hallway toward the elevator. He needed to leave. He needed to shift and to run through the trees and think of nothing for a while.

* * *

“So, it takes only a week for you to come crawling back to your master like a dog in the night.” The voice was deep and velvety smooth.

Marcus fell to his knees immediately. “Forgive me, master. Please.”

A hand reached out of the darkness and rested lightly on his bowed head. “This is twice you have failed me now, Marcus. What am I to do with you?”

“Master, please. I wish only to serve you.”

“Serve me?” Samuel laughed. “And how exactly have you been doing that? You have lost two groups of yearlings in the last month alone. And for what? A silly human woman.”

At Marcus’ soft intake of breath, Samuel nodded. “Yes, I know of your obsession with the human.”

“My master, she is unique. She has an ability I have not seen before in a human. She killed at least twenty of our kind with her swords alone. She would make a powerful ally to us.”

Samuel hissed in anger and wrapped his hand around Marcus’ throat. He lifted the vampire into the air easily. Marcus, his feet dangling helplessly, stared into Samuel’s glowing eyes.

“And how do you propose that we find this human? Twice now you have tried to capture her, and twice she has slipped through your fingers.”

“The woman, Isabelle, she can bring her to us.”

With an angry roar, Samuel threw Marcus across the room. He crashed into the wall and Samuel flew across the room and crouched in front of him. “The woman is dead by her own hand.”

“How – how do you know this?” Marcus stammered.

Samuel snorted in disgust. “You think the woman is our only informant? Believe me Marcus, the humans are weak. There are plenty of them willing to betray their own for the chance at immortality.”

He reached out and traced his long fingernail across the scar on Marcus’ face. “The good news is that I’ve decided not to kill you. Your instincts about this woman, this Hannah, were correct. She will be an excellent addition to our family. We will use her unique skills to our advantage, will we not?”

Marcus nodded as Samuel continued. “Unfortunately, I’m sure you understand that I cannot trust you to bring her to me. After all, you have failed me repeatedly in that regard.”

“Another chance, master. I beg you,” Marcus pleaded. “I can bring her to you. I will find out all there is to know about her, and use it to bring her into our family. I promise you.”

Samuel stared at him thoughtfully. “Perhaps you will, Marcus. Perhaps you will.”

He stood and walked quickly to the other side of the room, staring out the window into the darkness. “Start with her family.”

He looked behind him to where Marcus still sat on the floor. “Do not fail me again, Marcus.”

END

* * *

Please enjoy a sample excerpt of “The Recruit (Book Two)”
The Recruit (Book Two) is available [HERE](#)

* * *

“Humans are so stupid, are they not?” The vampire grinned to his companion before staring down at the frightened couple bound to chairs.

“They send five to protect you. FIVE! As if five would be nearly enough when the dark lord wants you.”

He knelt in front of the woman and traced her tear-stained cheek with one long nail. “We’ve been watching you for weeks. We’ve been watching *them* for weeks. We learned to know their habits, their signs of weariness and their shift changes, and we used it to our advantage. Our dark lord taught us to be oh so patient and watch. He is a tricky one, he is.”

He stared at the woman thoughtfully. “I suppose that isn’t entirely the truth. We did, after all, have some help from our friends.”

He bounced to his feet and paced back and forth in front of them. “Of course, even the dark lord’s patience does have its limits. It’s why we’re here now. We grow tired of waiting for her.”

He leaned in and smiled at the woman, and she turned her head at the smell of his rotting breath. “It’s why we’re going to kill one of you and use your blood to call for her. We’ll leave the other alive of course – she has to have some motivation to come home.”

“She’s dead! Don’t you understand that? Our daughter is dead!” The man cried angrily.

The vampire was standing in front of him before the man had realized it had moved. He leaned forward and breathed deeply. “I would like just a taste of you.”

“Don’t,” his companion warned, “the master will not be happy if you do.”

“Shut up,” the vampire hissed at him. “He won’t know if I take just a small sip.”

He stared at the man and then his wife. “We’ll kill the woman,” he decided. “I bet she’s a daddy’s girl and will come running to comfort him in his time of grief.”

He stepped toward her and the man struggled against his bonds. “Don’t you touch her!”

The creature grinned at him, and the man shrank back as the vampire’s teeth lengthened into sharp points.

“What are you?” He whispered.

“Yes, just a small sip,” the vampire murmured. “I’m so terribly thirsty.”

He leaned towards the man, the fangs lengthening until they were protruding from his mouth. Before he could sink them into the throbbing vein in the man’s neck, barking could be heard from outside. As the barking continued, he sighed and rolled his eyes, standing straight and glaring at his companion.

“What?”

“Go outside and kill the fucking dog, you idiot!”

His companion turned and left the room. Faintly, the vampire could hear the back door slamming and he sighed dramatically and turned back to the couple.

“It’s so difficult to find good help these days.”

* * *

The vampire stood on the back porch and stared into the yard. His night vision was excellent, and he quickly spotted the small, scruffy dog standing at the edge of the yard. It was staring into the bushes that flanked the yard and barking repeatedly.

He wondered briefly where the others were, but the shrill high-pitched barking was making it impossible to think clearly. The vampire winced and then flew across the yard, pouncing on the

dog. It gave a painful yelp as he snatched it from the ground and lifted it up until it was dangling in front of his eyes.

He sniffed, his face wrinkling with distaste. "I prefer human but you'll do for a quick snack," he muttered. He opened his mouth, his fangs popping out, and lowered his face toward the frightened animal.

There was sharp pressure on his back and a cold voice spoke, "Put down my dog, asshole."

He hesitated and a gun was cocked and put to his temple.

"You'd better listen to her," a tall, blond man said cheerfully as a dark-haired woman, dressed in a long trench coat and leather pants, circled around him. There was a sword in her hand, and it gleamed softly in the moonlight.

He lifted his lip and snarled at them, and the blond man made a tsking noise under his breath. "I wouldn't do that if I were you. I'm all for letting you live, because I'm just that kind of guy, but the hottie standing in front of you? Well, she's been in a bad mood all day. She'll probably kill you just for shits and giggles, you know?"

The vampire dropped the dog, and the woman in front of him caught it neatly with one hand before it could hit the ground.

He stared at her, a touch of fear trickling down his cold spine at her quickness. He had thought he would use his speed and his strength to overpower them but there was something in the way she held her sword, something in the way in which she had caught the dog with a silent, spooky speed that made him hesitate. He swallowed and forced himself to sound unafraid. "A gun won't stop me."

"That's an excellent point." The blond man nodded cheerfully, and the woman gave him a look of irritation.

"What? It is an excellent point. Guns don't kill vampires. Guns kill humans. But guns loaded with UV-filled bullets? They kill vampires. And in a rather nasty way too."

He cocked his head and gave the vampire a charming smile. "Have you ever wondered what it's like to burn from the inside out? I could show you – just make one wrong move and I'll be happy to demonstrate."

The vampire licked his lips nervously. "There's no need for violence."

The woman laughed bitterly. "That's rich coming from you. Turn around." She handed the dog to the blond man who took it without removing his gun from the vampire's temple.

The vampire turned around, feeling the muzzle of the gun drag through his hair. "What are you –"

He stopped, a look of shock coming over his face as the woman thrust her sword further into his back.

"It's only inches from the slab of meat you call a heart. Do you hear me?" She whispered.

He nodded.

"If you make one wrong move, if you even try to escape, I will puncture it. Now – move toward the house, nice and slow."

"Finally!" The vampire shook his head at the couple as the back door opened. "Seriously, how difficult is it to kill one small dog?"

He stopped and gave them a look of false sympathy. "Sorry about your dog by the way."

He turned, throwing his hands up, as his companion shuffled into the room. "It's about time. Did you get lost in the –"

He stopped. "What the hell is wrong with you? Why are you –"

His companion gave a sudden, sharp gasp, his back bowing, and then exploded. The vampire threw his hands over his face, crying out and falling back against the wall. Ash and blood rained down and before the vampire could stagger forward, she was standing in front of him, one hand gripping the collar of his jacket and her other holding a blood-drenched sword pointed directly over his heart.

“You,” he whispered.

“Me.” Her voice was a soft caress in the quiet.

“Please don’t – “

The woman plunged the sword through his breast. He opened his mouth, a glut of foul-smelling blood came pouring out of him and she stepped back, yanking her sword free and turning away as he slid down the wall and exploded.

The man and the woman, still bound to their chairs and their faces and bodies streaked with ash and blood, looked silently at her for a moment before the woman cleared her throat.

“Hello, Hannah.”

“Hello, mom.”

* * *

The Recruit (Book Two) is available [HERE](#)

Please enjoy a sample chapter of Elizabeth Kelly’s novel, “The Contract”.

THE CONTRACT

By Elizabeth Kelly

* * * *

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“It’s your turn, Mae.”

“My turn for what?” I gave Ida, the HR manager, an innocent look.

She rolled her eyes. “Don’t even bother pretending, Mae. You know for what.”

I sighed heavily and stared out the window of her disgustingly neat office. I’d worked for the law firm of Knight and Associates for over a year and, so far, had managed to avoid being Liam Knight’s personal assistant. I knew my luck would run out sooner or later, but I had hoped my perceived fragility would have netted me a few more months.

“You know how it works. All the PAs have to take their turn helping Mr. Knight.”

“I know.” I gave her what I hoped was a trembling smile. “It’s just, you know, he scares me.”

“He scares everyone,” Ida replied. “Yesterday he had Roxie sobbing hysterically in her office.”

“Is that why it’s my turn?” I asked.

Ida shrugged. “Roxie’s been his PA for nearly four months. We need to switch it up before she quits on us.”

I groaned and sat back in my chair, crossing my legs and straightening my skirt. Knight and Associates was one of the largest law firms in the city. Liam Knight had started the company at the age of twenty-five. He had hired a legal assistant and a receptionist and went to work. Ten years later, thanks to a combination of hard work and a good head for business, Liam Knight had propelled his company into a multi-million-dollar enterprise. It boasted a staff of over fifteen lawyers, as well as multiple legal assistants and other administrative staff.

It wasn't just the company that garnered a lot of attention. Liam Knight, with his utter ruthlessness in court and his brooding good looks, had quickly become popular with the local media. He spent most of his weekends at various charity events or high-profile business functions, always with a different woman at his side.

"I won't try and tell you it's not as bad as you think because honestly, it's probably worse." Ida shuffled the pile of papers on her gleaming desk. "You've been here long enough to know that Mr. Knight is very demanding of his PAs, and expects a great deal from them."

"Yeah," I muttered, "blood, sweat and tears."

Ida laughed. "I've seen a lot of sweat and tears from his PAs over the years, but no blood yet."

"Great. I'll probably be the first. Listen, Ida, have you ever thought of just hiring a permanent PA for Mr. Knight? There must be someone out there who can handle him on a regular basis." I asked.

Ida shook her head. "Don't you think we've tried that, Mae? All that ends up happening is the PA quits after a few months and we're back to square one. At least with the system we have now, we don't have to constantly retrain someone on Mr. Knight's likes and dislikes."

I sighed again. A few years ago, Ida had, in desperation, come up with the system we currently used. Every few months, the PAs in the office were shuffled among the lawyers. I frowned to myself. More accurately put – Mr. Knight's PA was shuffled.

Mr. Knight was nearly impossible to work with and after a bevy of PAs had quit, one after the other, Ida had come up with the brilliant idea of using the PAs who were currently employed. Knowing that they only had to put up with Liam Knight for a few hellish months before Ida took pity on them and moved them, had stopped the steady flow of PAs quitting.

My ability to avoid being his PA was nothing more than a combination of luck and timing. Two days after starting at the firm, my fiancé had called off our engagement. I was devastated and found it difficult to keep my emotions in check, even at my new job. The fact that I had spent the first few months randomly bursting into tears, had convinced Ida I was too fragile to work for Mr. Knight. She had pulled me out of the pool of revolving PAs, and assigned me to work for Kevin Thornton, one of the more easy-going lawyers in the firm.

The truth of the matter was - I wasn't nearly as fragile and emotional as the office believed me to be. But once I found out how difficult Liam Knight was to work for, I'm not ashamed to admit I worked the fragile and emotional bit for all it was worth. Unfortunately, it seemed its usefulness had worn off and now I had to find a new angle.

"Kevin's not going to be happy," I warned Ida. I had a great working relationship with Kevin, and I hoped he might go to bat for me.

"Kevin already knows," Ida said breezily. "He's upset but he understands how it works around here."

"This is ridiculous," I grumbled.

"It's only for a few months and then we'll move you to one of the other lawyers," Ida replied. "It's only fair, Mae. Some of the other PAs have noticed and started complaining."

"Fine, but when I'm crying hysterically in the bathroom you're going to feel terrible, Ida."

She grinned. "Oh, probably. I usually do. But don't think that crying hysterically in the bathroom on your first day will get you moved, Mae. You have to put in at least a few months."

Before I could reply, there was a knock on her door and the subject of our conversation walked into her office. I swallowed and looked quickly out the window. I would die before I admitted this to anyone in the office, but it wasn't just his cruelty that made me nervous about being his PA. I'd had a crush on the aloof and distant Mr. Knight for the past six months and I was growing increasingly aware of the fact that no matter how cruel my boss was, I was more than a little interested in sleeping with him.

I snorted to myself. I was as far from Liam Knight's type as you could get. The women who graced his arm at every business function and charity event were always tall and willowy with blonde hair and blue eyes. They walked like models – hell, half of them *were* models – and they had perfect skin and oodles of money.

At 5'4", I barely reached Liam Knight's chest and my dark hair and eyes were depressingly boring. Even at 29 years old, my skin still occasionally acted like it belonged to a teenager. More times than I cared to admit, I would wake to find a pimple had erupted on my face in the night.

None of that really mattered though. Even if I was tall and blonde, there was still the small matter of my weight. Or, more accurately put, the large matter. I was, as my mother liked to gently point out, pleasantly plump. Truth be told, I didn't mind all that much. My breasts might be large but they were perky enough, and the roundness of my belly could usually be hidden with some control-top underwear. Besides, as my friend Allie liked to tell me, there were plenty of chubby chasers out there.

Of course if there were, I certainly wasn't finding any of them. I hadn't gone on a single date since my dickhead fiancé, Neil, had broken my heart. For months there was nothing between my legs but my own hand, and my trusty vibrator "Paul". That was probably the reason I got so hot and bothered whenever I was close to my boss.

Or, maybe it was because the man was a walking, talking, and extremely lickable sex god. He was at least a foot taller than me, and the broadness of his shoulders sent me into very uncharacteristic swoonville. Although I had never actually seen him in anything but a tailored business suit, I was positive that under those clothes of his was an abdomen of steel and a chest that rippled with muscles. His dark hair and cold grey eyes were an odd combination, but they worked for him.

I risked a glance at him and shivered when I realized those cold grey eyes were staring right at me. He stared unblinkingly at me until I blushed and looked away.

"Hello, Mr. Knight." Ida smiled at him. "What can I do for you?"

"You need to do something about Ms. Falkner. She keeps crying in her office. It's impossible to get any work done with her blubbering away in there," he snapped.

"Actually," Ida stood, and after a moment's hesitation I did the same, "this is good timing. I was just telling Mae that she's going to be your new PA, starting tomorrow."

As Mr. Knight looked me up and down, from my dark hair piled in an unflattering bun on the top of my head to my cheap black heels, I forced myself to smile at him.

"I'm looking forward to working with you, Mr. Knight," I lied brightly.

"No."

"I'm sorry?" I frowned at him.

He turned to Ida. "I'm not working with her."

"Why not?" Ida looked as flabbergasted as I did.

“She’s too emotional. She’ll never survive being my PA and you know it, Ida,” Mr. Knight said grimly.

“She’ll be fine.” Ida glared at him.

I was always impressed by the way Ida handled Mr. Knight. Maybe it was just her personality, or maybe it was because she was his very first assistant when he started the business, but she never seemed to have a problem telling him what for.

“I said no, Ida.” He gave her a warning look that Ida pointedly ignored.

“Well, that’s too bad, Liam, because at this moment she’s the only PA in the pool that’s willing to work with you. The others all need a break.”

He snorted disdainfully. “Maybe we should look at hiring PAs who understand this is business and nothing personal.”

His gaze slid to me as he spoke, and the contempt in his eyes brought my usually well-hidden temper busting out.

“I can assure you, Mr. Knight,” I said icily, “that I will not cry in my office.” I figured since my emotional fragility was no longer working as a barrier to being his assistant, I might as well drop the act.

He cocked his eyebrow at me arrogantly, and I drew myself up to my full height as he strode across the room to stand directly in front of me. “We both know that’s not true, Ms. Temple.”

He stared down at my flushed and angry face and when his gaze fell on my breasts hidden beneath my cheap suit jacket, I poked him in the chest.

“Up here, Mr. Knight,” I said quietly, and he had the good grace to flush a little. I rolled my eyes. The man was standing in the office of the HR manager for God’s sake, and he had just blatantly ogled my tits. I ignored the little rush of heat that tingled through my girl bits and glared at him.

“I think you’ll find I’m more than capable of handling your insane work load demands.”

“Insane?” He looked back at Ida who shrugged.

“Yes, insane,” I replied. “Some of us have a social life.”

I wasn’t one of those people, but the man standing in front of me currently trying to burn a hole in my skull with his gaze didn’t need to know that.

He stared at me silently for a few minutes and then sighed harshly. “Fine, Ms. Temple. But the first time I catch you crying in your office, you’re reassigned to another lawyer. Do I make myself clear?”

“Perfectly,” I retorted.

He turned and left the office and Ida gave me a look of admiration. “You might not just get eaten alive after all, Mae.”

* * *

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