

FATED MATES

10 years earlier.

She stared at him as he uttered the words she never wanted to hear, that she had convinced herself would never come. The buzzing in her ears as her heart pounded, made it almost impossible for her to fully take in and comprehend his meaning.

“I’m sorry Jenny. It’s not that I don’t like you, you know I do. I’m just not willing to take on a Chosen One. You know I’m waiting for my Soul Mate. It wouldn’t be fair on anyone if I found her while we were together. And I did warn you from the start that I didn’t want anything serious. I thought you understood that?” He took her hand in his, pressing a gentle kiss to her knuckles, his blue eyes dulled by sadness as he looked at her.

She shrugged him off, furious beyond words. Her sadness was morphing into anger and she clutched on to it like a security blanket, much preferring to scream than to cry.

“I thought I meant more to you than just an extra perk to your feedings, but I guess I was wrong. Stupid and wrong.” She poked her index finger in his general direction, ignoring the slight tremor in her hand that gave away just how deeply this was affecting her. “Well let me tell you this, Avery Callow, I will not go quietly. I will make your life a living hell, you see if I don’t. You cannot just use me and drop me on a whim. I’m worth more than that.”

Turning on her heel she stomped out of the cosy pub and into the night, only allowing the tears to fall when she knew she was out of sight.

She walked a good way, needing to put as much space between them as possible, before giving in to her misery and collapsing down on the nearest bench. She let her head drop into her hands, not even trying to hide her shoulders shaking as she allowed sobs to wrack her body.

She had given him everything and how had he replayed her? By discarding her like last week’s newspaper. She sighed, swiping at her wet cheeks as her tears finally slowed. She hugged her thin denim jacket closer around her body, suddenly freezing despite the mild night. The bench was slightly damp and the cool wetness seeped through the thin material of her mini skirt, making her shiver.

He had played her for a fool. Well never again would she allow someone to get the better of her. It was time to stop living in the romantic fantasy world in her head and start living in the real world. It was time to get serious and make something of her life. She didn’t need a man to do that, she didn’t need anyone but herself. The only person she could rely on.

Present day

Jenny sat in one of the many guest chairs in Logan McGregor's office, wondering why her presence had been requested. She had never been called in before, it was usually her that demanded a meeting if something went awry.

As far as she knew there wasn't anything that had gone wrong with their service. She had sent her girls when they were requested, making sure they were on time and adhered to the many rules set out by the Donors Guild, and handled any minor problems via email as she did with all her clients.

She shifted in her seat, equal parts impatient and uncomfortable. She pulled out her monogrammed handkerchief and dabbed delicately at the back of her neck, which was feeling slightly damp. She had felt an odd warmth creep over her from the second she had entered the club and it was getting steadily worse with every passing minute.

Finally, the door opened and in strode five men and a woman. One was Logan, the club's owner and she bestowed on him a nod of acknowledgement. Three others she didn't recognise looked her way, while the last ignored her presence. One was a Vampire, she could tell straight away, the unmistakable aura surrounded him and after eleven years in the Donor's Guild she knew a Vampire when she saw one.

The other two she couldn't quite place. They were identical, both tall and well built, muscles straining at the shoulders of their dark suits. Their hair was inky black and slicked back from their faces, their sharp cheek bones and strong jaws revealed in all their glory.

One nodded a brief hello at her and then, duty done, leaned back against the wall on one side of the door. But the other, he just stood, staring at her, his eyes roaming her body as if he couldn't get enough of the sight.

She shifted uncomfortably in her chair, not used to such blatant scrutiny. He took off his dark sunglasses and she caught her first look at his almost caramel coloured eyes. Her breath caught in her throat as in intense wave of heat swept over her, pooling low in her stomach. She squirmed slightly in her chair and looked away, a deep blush staining her cheeks. What was the matter with her? She didn't react this way to anyone, ever. She never felt instant attraction to someone she didn't even know and doing anything about it was definitely not in her life plan.

Dane couldn't help but stare at the woman in the chair beside Logan's desk. Her slender legs were crossed at the ankles and tucked daintily back under her chair. She looked like she should be standing up in court, not sitting in a goth club surrounded by Vampires. Her hair was a deep, shining chestnut that framed her face to perfection. Her nose was straight, her eyes a rich chocolate brown and seemed to hide an inner light of passion that instantly made his body stand up and pay attention.

He lifted his head slightly, his nostrils flaring as he inhaled the scent of her. Almost instantly his body rippled with pleasure, she smelt of innocence and spring rain, fresh and untainted, it reminded him of pleasant mornings spent romping with his brother and cousins, not a care in the world. It made him feel safe, it smelt like home.

He had felt the heat the moment she entered the building, and to say it had taken him by surprise was the understatement of the year. He had never thought he would find her, let alone that she would be a prissy little, buttoned up too tight, Donor.

“Hello,” he breathed, his pulse quickening as she turned her head back towards him, having regained her composure. He liked that he managed to affect her as much as she did him.

“Hello. Can I help you with something? ”

The sound of her voice had his dick hardening in his pants. Her words were clipped English but had a sultry undertone that made him want to hear more, especially if it involved her crooning in his ear, begging him to do all sorts of wonderful things to that luscious body of hers.

He wanted to be his usual smooth talking self, and scrabbled around for something witty to say rather than be honest and request that she strip off and straddle his lap in a timely fashion. He could tell that she was uncomfortable with his nearness and the effect it was having on her body, the remnants of her blush proved it.

“No, nothing right now.” He muttered, unable to say what was really on his mind for fear of embarrassing her further. She held his gaze for a second, one eyebrow quirking up in obvious disbelief before she turned away again, refocusing on Logan.

He inhaled again, giving himself a mental slap as he caught himself leaning closer. This won't do, his inner voice scolded as he forced himself to take up his position opposite Drake.

She felt, rather than saw him move, as he took up an almost identical position as his twin and tried to resist looking, but her gaze was pulled back towards him like a magnet. It was then that she registered who the fifth man was.

She hadn't seen him in over ten years but of course he hadn't changed a bit. His hair was still the same, down to his shoulders in luscious waves, the colour of ripe corn. His intense blue eyes just a striking. His sinewy body still perfect.

The urge to allow a self-satisfied smirk to form was almost too much, but she managed to hold back. Cool composed, professional women like herself would never stoop so low as to smirk. She thought of how she had done her best to make sure he had never forgotten her. Just 'accidentally' forgetting to send his donors, mixing up

the blood type her requested, little things that caused no real trouble but inconvenient none the less.

Over the years since their break up, or her dumping, but she tried not to think of it like that anymore, she had risen through the ranks, going from a regular Donor, to regional manager of the Guild. Yes, she had done well for herself and took great pleasure and satisfaction in her work, but that didn't stop her being lonely. She had refused to get involved with anyone after Avery, not wanting that kind of humiliation again. Romantic notions were for pathetic young girls that knew no better.

She waited for the pang of pain to hit her as it always did when she thought of Avery and was taken by surprise when it failed to make an appearance. All she felt was that heat, pulsing away in her stomach, making her feel damp and achy, a feeling she had managed to suppress for so many years.

She hardly noticed when Avery flopped down on the couch in the corner of the room and draped himself across it in a rather attractive pose. She forced herself to look away. Her eyes wanted to dart back to the men by the door, one in particular. She didn't know what was different about him, what he had that his brother didn't, but it was something. Luckily for her Logan decided that the meeting was official starting, clearing his throat, demanding all their attention.

She tried to pay full attention to what turned out to be a rather serious meeting. Logan explained that his Chosen One, she tried not to bristle over this but did let out an unlady like gasp of surprise, had been attacked by a bitten and still crazy Werewolf outside of the club the night before. And that one of the guilds Donors, Veronica Sims was missing.

The two men by the door stepped forward and listened as they were given the task of finding out where this turned were had come from. So that's what they are, Jenny thought, wolf Shifter's. She was jerked out of her perusal of the attractive one by Logan speaking again.

“Miss Jennifer, “ he began, pulling her out of her thoughts on Veronica. The Guild always called their employees Miss or Mr, they felt it showed the respect that the Donors deserved and kept them at a distance from their feeders. The Guild frowned on people who took the feeding further into a more intimate relationship, luckily she had managed to convince them that her indiscretion was a one off mistake and would never happen again.

“Miss Jennifer, if you could check your files and look in to who Miss Veronica had as clients that would be very helpful. Maybe the places she frequented or attended for feedings.”

Jenny nodded, hiding the irritation she felt at the rubbish job she had been given. Did they not think that she was capable of anything more than research, that she wouldn't

have immediately thought to do that herself? She wasn't some child to be steered in the right direction and patted on the head and sent on her way once she had outlived her usefulness.

People always did that, underestimated her, made her feel like she was being humoured rather than a valuable member of the team. She tried not to let the doubts take up space in her mind, but it was always so hard to do. She worried every day, worried that she only held her position because, unlike most other Donors, she hadn't moved on after a few years and got on with her life. She hadn't found herself a partner and gone off to make babies and live the normal life. She hadn't grown bored of the world around her, the world of supernatural beings and the things they could do. To her it was a strange kind of safety, to know where she stood. Being an occasional Donor meant that she had to keep herself separate from those she worked with, not allowing herself to get attached, and that suited her just fine.

Anger flared through her, something she hadn't felt in fully years, usually she kept such a tight rein on her emotions. Emotions made you weak, they forced you to act in ways that you had no control over, made you make stupid mistakes that would cost you in the long run. What was wrong with her? Usually she was so calm and collected, had worked very hard to achieve that state of mind, thank you very much.

She smoothed a hand down the front of her suddenly too hot suit as she tried to calm herself. What they failed to realise is that this was one of her girls that had gone missing, and she had every right to be involved with finding her. It would be career suicide to have something happen to one of her Donors, right under her nose.

She took a few moments to silently berate herself, sure that there must be some sign she had missed, something going on that she wasn't aware of, thought for the life of her, she couldn't put her finger on what it might be. They hadn't given many details but as someone who was used to dealing with disputes almost daily and quite adept at sorting out truth from lie to get to the bottom of things, she figured it couldn't be that hard to do some helping on her own. Logan hadn't said it in so many words but she was sure it was connected to the turned Were that had attacked his Chosen One, who claimed to be a friend of Veronica's staying at her house.

The meeting broke up soon after but she barely heard the rest of the conversation, not fully taking in the information they presented. Jenny already had her own plan forming in her head. It could get her into a lot of trouble if anyone from the Guild ever found out but it was a risk she was willing to take. She knew of a bar on the outskirts of the city, a slightly sleazy bar that she normally wouldn't be caught dead within a mile of, but desperate times called for desperate measures.

Donors as a rule were banned from visiting any Shifter establishments. It wasn't that the Guild didn't accept Shifter's as a part of their world, they did. They even had a

branch that catered for a Shifter's more specific needs at their time of the month, but vampire Donors were supposed to stick to their own job.

She knew that she should be the one setting an example to other Donors, that she was in a position of authority, but she just knew that she had to do all she could do to help find Veronica. There wasn't even a question of her sitting back and letting the Vampires and Shifters take over, doing all the hard work and then claiming the benefits. This was her chance to prove herself, to show that she was more than just a blood bank that was hot on organisation and could keep an office running smoothly. She was a person, with real needs and a understanding of the world they were part of, and she just bet she had some insights they would have completely overlooked.

Heading home, the plan formulated fully in her mind, coming in to sharp focus and she wasted no time. Jumping in the shower she had a quick wash to remove any scent traces of the people she had just been with.

The one thing you always had to keep in mind when working with anyone belonging to the secret world, was that they most likely had a sense of smell to rival an airports sniffer dog, and they didn't think twice about using it to their advantage. That and their increased hearing, sight and in the case of Vampires, special gifts, all contributed to making them hard to work with and even harder, in fact, downright impossible, to fool. The slightest increase in heart rate, breaking out in a light sweat, shifting even a millimetre, and they would notice, and know that you were either very nervous, or lying to them. And they would take advantage of anything.

It wasn't that they were bad people, or that they even intentionally used their gifts that way, you just couldn't overlook the fact that in the grand scheme of things, they were a predator and you were their prey. Just as an animal in the wild would use all their senses to achieve their goal, so would Shifter or a Vampire.

She cleansed her face, removing all traces of the days makeup, which wasn't a lot, she never wore much but subtle lip gloss and a little mascara. If she had had a bad nights sleep she might push the boat out and add a little concealer to the dark circles under her eyes, but that was the extend of her beauty routine.

She unpinned her hair and gave it a quick wash and condition before turning off the shower and getting out. She made short work of drying her hair, and then plugged in the curling tong she had bought a few years ago on a whim but never used. Being as careful as possible, she sectioned off parts of her thick hair, and wound one around the wand, narrowly avoiding a nasty burn to her forehead. She counted slowly to five then released the hair, watching in amazement as an almost perfect curl bounced down in front of her left eye. Emboldened she got to work on the rest, repeating the wrap and hold routine over and over until she thought her arms would fall off, but it was worth it.

Bending at the waist she ran her fingers gently through her now bouncing hair, giving it what the hairdressers referred to as a ‘fluff’ before flipping it back over her shoulders. She looked in the mirror, pleased with the result.

Next, she dug around in her dressing table drawer, right to the back, where she found a pallet of eye shadows that must have been there since she moved in more than a decade ago, along with an old, half used, bright red lipstick and the nub of a kohl pencil.

She paused, unsure what to do next. It had been so long since she had really used makeup or done anything to attract attention to herself that she wasn’t sure how to proceed.

“Come on, Jen. You’re a girl. Surely you haven’t been out of the game that long that you can’t remember how to stick on a bit of eyeliner? Just go for it, do it.” She shook her head, and still giving herself a mental prep talk, and picked up the eyeshadow brush. How hard could it be?

She looked like a panda. Or like she had two black eyes after a round in the boxing ring. She used way too much eyeshadow in too dark colours and lined her eyes with enough liner to make Cleopatra feel under-dressed. Sometimes bigger wasn’t better.

Sighing she returned to the bathroom and washed it all off before trying again. This time she concentrated on using a dark, smoky grey just on her eyelids, graduating to a lighter grey, one with almost a silvery quality to it. She used the liner just on her lower lid and waved the mascara brush over her lashes. She slicked on some of the lipstick and blew herself a kiss, actually pleased with the result.

Now for the clothes. Still wrapped in a towel, she stood in front of her wardrobe, flicking through the rails, waiting for inspiration to strike. She was searching for something that wouldn’t look too out of place in the bar she was planning to visit. Unfortunately, everything seemed to be sensible work clothes or gym wear, she didn’t own a single item of casual clothing. She refused to dwell on just how sad and boring her life had become and did as she always did, made the best of it.

She selected her shortest black suit skirt, one that she had abandoned years ago as being too tight for the office, and slipped into it, rolling it up at the waist to gain another few inches of thigh. Next she flicked through her blouses, finally picking out the thinnest one she could find. It had short, capped sleeves and was one she usually wore in the summer when the sun made anything else uncomfortable.

She slipped it on and buttoned it up. Standing in front of her full length mirror she actually burst out laughing. From the top of her head she looked OK, her hair was still sitting in bouncy waves, and her eyes had turned out better than she had expected, but the clothes. They wouldn’t do. She scrutinised everything with a harsh, critical eye

that she usually reserved for the Donors that came in to her office, looking at herself in total honesty for the first time in years.

Her face didn't match her clothes. From the head up she looked like a young woman heading out for the night with friends, but neck down she still looked like she was putting in overtime at work. Even with the shortness of her skirt and the sheerness of her shirt, she might as well be sitting in a library. Out of habit she had buttoned every single hole of her shirt, her collar closed over her throat, and she still held herself in a stiff, upright position. This wouldn't do, no one would believe that she was supposed to be there.

She had to do something about it, and fast, time was wasting and the night wasn't getting any younger. With grim determination, she made her decision.

Sitting on the bed, she rummaged around in her bedside drawer and extracted a pair of scissors. With careful snips she unpicked the stitching that attached the sleeve to the body of the shirt, removing them completely, trying not to focus on just how much the shirt had cost her, even though it had been on sale.

On a whim, she pulled off her skirt and took her scissors to the seams of that too, unpicking a little of the stitching, giving herself a slit that was longer than she felt comfortable with, but would definitely do the job.

She pulled her skirt back on and turned it sideways, leaving the slit, not at the back as it had been designed to do, but almost reaching the top of her underwear, displaying the long length of her thigh. She slipped into her shirt, buttoning it up again, but this time, leaving a few undone at the top.

She stood and checked out her reflection again. It was better, but she still wasn't happy. She undid the last few buttons of the shirt and trying not to imagine the creases it would leave, she tied the ends together above her navel, leaving another button undone to show as much cleavage as she dared.

Now when she looked in the mirror, a stranger seemed to stare back, someone that looked daring and fun, like she would happily down a shot and demand more. She looked like someone that wouldn't dream of living life in the slow lane, or always taking the safe path in life, hiding away from everything and everyone. She couldn't help but think of the man, the Shifter, that she'd met earlier in the day. Since the moment she had clapped eyes on him, something had changed within her, something that she had thought broken beyond repair had sat up and taken notice. Her heart had begun to race for something other than a workout and her body had demanded she do something about the ache between her legs that he had caused.

She turned sideways to look at herself from a different angle and for the first time in years, she actually thought she looked attractive. Something told her he would appreciate this outfit much more than the one she had been wearing for the meeting.

For once she wasn't trying to hide her body under a smart looking suit, she wasn't trying to intimidate someone in a meeting, she looked like she was ready for a night out. She wasn't in bad shape, regular yoga classes and the odd run took care of any sagging or thickening of the waistline that might have occurred due to her job keeping her behind a desk most days. She felt rather sexy in fact, and promised herself that if she managed to accomplish anything tonight, she would reward herself with a trip to Night Walkers, she was done playing safe. Maybe it was time to start living again.

Grabbing her bag she gave her hair one last fluff and decided she would have to do. Shutting the door behind her, she made her way across town from her nice, safe little flat to the bar shed heard of, but never, ever thought she would visit.

Dane couldn't stop thinking about the enticing female he'd met in Logan's office. She made his blood boil in his veins and his cock harden in his trousers. He'd had to fight the urge to go full caveman on her and simply pick her up and run away with her to the nearest bed.

He'd never had that kind of a reaction to a female before. Sure he'd felt attraction, he was male after all, and a Shifter, which meant his sex drive was higher than most mortals, and a sexy female was a sexy female no matter what way you looked at it. He had never been one to deny himself pleasure just for the sake of it. That was pure madness if you asked him.

He was well known for being a bit of a playboy. Not that he ever needed to chase a female to get her into his bed. He knew the look in a females eye when they had the hots for him just as much as he had for them, he just had the confidence to act on it. A cock of his eyebrow here, the odd wink there, always made his intentions clear enough that if they were interested in taking it further, they knew where to find him, and nine times out of ten, find him they did.

This female was hotter than hot. She didn't dress in the way he usually preferred, but there was something undeniably sexy about her. He didn't know if it was the straight laced clothes she wore, clothes that made him want to rip them off to see what she had hidden beneath them, or the way her hair was swept back from her face and pinned at the nape of her neck, exposing all that creamy flesh to his gaze. Or the way she bit her lip when she was thinking.

Her mouth was a thing of beauty, lush and plump and just begging to be kissed. He had allowed himself to imagine how she would taste, the little sounds she would make as their lips met, the breathy sighs she would utter as her lips parted... and just like that his head had been filled with the vision of those lips parting around his cock, that mouth sinking down to take it all the way in...he thought he might have groaned out loud, and he knew he'd had to discreetly adjust himself.

What she did to him, just the mere thought of her had him hard enough to hammer nails. He had to have her.

But now he was in a situation that was rather alien to him. He'd seen the look in her eyes, seen the spark of interest there, hell, he'd even smelt the proof of her arousal as she'd squirmed slightly in her seat, making an effort to look away from him and keep her eyes averted for the rest of the meeting. He didn't know what he had expected, but it wasn't for her to walk right on past him as if nothing had happened, as if she hadn't felt that jolt of recognition, that unspoken connection between them.

Watching that luscious arse wiggle its way past him had been like a new form of torture dreamed up to give him the biggest case of blue balls in the world. He'd wanted to run after her, to grab her and not let her go, but he hadn't. He might be a Shifter, but he wasn't an animal. Grabbing females when they clearly didn't want him to, was not something he was into.

As he watched her walk down the hallway, a plan began to form in his mind. He'd never had to make the first moves with a woman before, but damned if that would stop him. All his life he'd had thigs handed to him on a plate, it wasn't until he and his brother had made their way to Edinburgh from their little island and taken the position of doormen at Night Walkers, that they had had to work for a living. Yet, despite that, he was well aware that if something was worth having, it was worth making the effort and working for. If he wanted that female, he'd have to work for it. Maybe even do the one thing he'd never done, ask someone out on a date. But first, he had a job to do.

Piston Broke looked as bad on the inside as it did from the street and Jenny had to suppress a shudder as she tried to stroll confidently through the door. It was hot inside, stiflingly hot and almost immediately thin beads of sweat broke out down her back.

Trying to act like she had every right to be there, she wound her way through the crowd towards the bar, greeting the bar tender with what she hoped was a dazzling and sexy smile. He was a big beefy looking biker, dressed in what seemed to be standard issue leather jeans, black t-shirt with the logo of a heavy metal band, topped off by a leather waist coat. His arms where as thick as tree limbs and covered in tattoos with disturbing images of skulls and flames.

He sniffed deeply, as if sampling the air, breathing in her scent. She tensed, wondering what he would decide about her, would he think she was there to cause trouble? That she so obviously didn't belong there and should be chucked out immediately?

Thankfully he obviously thought that she wasn't worth bothering with.

“What can I get ya?” he growled out, polishing the dirty bar with an even dirtier cloth, she could practically see the germs romping all over it, multiplying at an alarming rate. Apparently done with the bar, thought it looked no cleaner, Jenny tried to hide her wince when he used the same cloth to start cleaning glasses.

“I’ll just have a beer, in the bottle,” she added, not wanting her lips to touch anything more than they had to.

He grunted again and popped the top on a very dusty bottle he plucked from under the bar and she had to resist the urge to wipe the top and check the date before she raised it to her lips and took the smallest sip she could manage. Trying to be casual she leaned over the bar to talk to the bar man.

“So, have you worked here long?” she fluttered her eyes and gave her hair a flick in what she hoped was a suitably sexy way.

“Aye,” he answered, not even bothering to look at her.

“So, you must see a lot of people here, huh?” She let her fingers trail the neck of the bottle in what passed as a seductive manner, hoping to draw his attention back to her. She failed, receiving nothing but a nod in return as he replaced the glasses back on what must have been a shelf under the bar.

She wasn’t getting anywhere with him and didn’t want to spend more time here than she had to. Logan had said that his Chosen One had been attacked by a Werewolf, and if anyone was involved with a rouge wolf, it would be someone from this bar. She would have to be brave and employ a tactic that worked well for her in the office, the element of surprise and straight shooting.

“I’m just going to come right out and ask, as you seem like an observant kind of guy. I’m looking for a friend of mine,” she slid a picture of Veronica across the bar, frowning slightly when he didn’t even glance at it. “I’d heard she might have been here.” Sighing she went with her backup plan and placed a folded twenty pound note down on the bar next to the picture.

Finally he looked down, just briefly but and if she wasn’t very much mistaken she spotted a flicker of recognition in his eyes.

“You’ve seen her, haven’t you? Is she here? Where is she?”

Jenny was so busy yelling at the bar tender trying to get him to answer she didn’t notice the big slab of biker beef that slid in behind her stool. Too quick for the eye to track his arms shot out, one banding round her waist, the other clamping over her mouth.

He barely used any of his considerable strength as he yanked her bodily off the stool, paying no attention to her kicking and struggling. He manhandled her through the crowd and kicked open a door near the back, dragging her through and slammed it shut behind him.

Dane looked around the crowded bar, trying to ignore the glares that bored into his back from the other Shifters that were assembled there. They didn't like that fact that he and Drake seemed to have more loyalty to a Vampire than to their own species, they saw it as going against their pack because they took their job seriously and wouldn't allow anyone in the bar if they were drunk or seemed to be ready to cause trouble. And trouble was the middle name for those that frequented Piston Broke. They were the dregs of Shifter society, the ones that saw the old ways of Vampire patrons as selling out, but no one knew even half of the twins story, and as long as they had their way, they never would. Logan had done them a great service, one they would never forget and were determined to pay back any way they could, he had earned their loyalty by proving his.

He automatically scented the air, taking the pungent smell of smoke and sale beer into his lungs, the animal part of his brain instantly searching through for anyone he recognized. He jerked to a stop when a scent cut through all the others - one he would know anywhere, one that reminded him a of damp spring morning- hitting him full force. Jennifer, she was here. But where, and why? Why would someone like her come to a place like this?

He quickly scanned the crowd for any sign of her, his heart pounding in his chest, needing to find her. This bar was no place for a decent female, especially one that was mortal and therefore vulnerable. His inner wolf strained at its leash, desperate to find her, not just because it wanted to rub all over her and bask in that sweet scent, but because she was his Mate and every instinct he possessed was screaming to him that she was in danger.

Jenny tried to scream around the hand that was clamped over her mouth but it emerged as nothing more than a muffled squeak. The arm around her middle tightened for a second before she was thrown roughly to the ground. Her knees scraped against hard concrete, her palms feeling grazed as she tried to catch herself before she landed in a heap.

It was dark in the room, the only light coming from a few televisions in a corner that appeared to be linked to the bars CCTV cameras. The lights flickered over the walls casting eerie shadows that only increased her sense of dread. Her attacker was nothing but a huge hunk of blackness towering over her. When he spoke his voice was low, rough, sounding like he'd been gargling with gravel.

“What do you know about this girl? What do you want her for? What is she to you? Do you have any idea what you just walked in on?” His questions shot out of his mouth like bullets barely giving her a chance to think, let alone answer.

“I...I..” she managed to stutter out.

“Speak up girl, aint got time for no rubbish, the boss, he'll be plenty mad if you muck up his plans.”

“Plans? What plans?” Jennifer asked, struggling to get her head around the sudden information overload that came from the barrage of questions. She was obviously in the right place if this goon knew anything about Veronica.

She didn’t know how to answer or what to do, she was locked in a room with the kind of person your father warned you about, and she could see no way of escaping. All she could do was buy herself some time and hope to convince him that she was nothing but a dumb female, and therefore, no threat to him or this mysterious boss of his.

She licked her suddenly dry lips and didn’t have to try very hard to make her voice sound scared, she was downright terrified.

“I don’t know anything about any plans, I don’t know your boss. I’m sorry, I was stupid to come here. I don’t know anything, I was just looking for my friend. That’s all, nothing more. Please, let me go home.”

Her heart was pounding in her chest like it would jump right out, her throat beginning to close as panic bubbled up inside her, making her feel faint as she struggled to suck air down into her lungs. She felt hot, so hot, sweat beaded on her forehead but she dared not raise her hand to wipe it away.

“Oh no, little girl. You can’t go home. Not now, I know you girls, you all flap your gums and tell all to your friends and then where will we be? You already did too much damage by coming round here, snooping into other people’s business and poking your nose in where it doesn’t belong.”

“I won’t talk to anyone, I won’t tell, I promise. I don’t even know what there is to tell. I know nothing.”

She was babbling and she hated it, hated the way she’d cowered to him, seeing him as such a threat. She was giving him the power, yet she wasn’t entirely powerless herself. She worked for a large organisation and she would be missed if anything happened to her. She took a deep breath, steeling her resolve as she spoke again, fighting to keep her voice level and calm as she looked him right in the eyes.

“You can’t keep me here, I work for the Donors Guild, I over see this area. Veronica, the girl in the picture, she’s a donor and she’s missing, and I’m not the only one looking for her. I’m perfectly within my rights, rights bestowed by the Council, to do anything I see fit to protect those under me, and that includes looking for one of my girls when they are in potential danger.” She paused in her rantings to study his face, seeing if her words had made any kind of impact, but he looked as impassive as ever.

“People will notice I’m gone, they’ll look for me if I don’t report in, they knew I was coming here.” She threw that last in on a gamble, knowing there was no real way he could prove otherwise. Sometimes bullshit and bravado was all you had to count on.

She saw his eyes narrow as he stretched his neck, tendons making an ominous popping sound that made her cringe, his stance shifted, as if preparing for something.

“Well then, little girl, this presents us with a problem. I don’t think you are being truly honest with me, are you?” he wagged his finger in a ‘tsk tsk’ motion as if she were a naughty school girl. “Surely the Guild, and indeed, the Council, wouldn’t be stupid enough to send a girl like you to a place like this, all on her lonesome. No. I think you came about this plan all by yourself. What did you think you would do, force us to spill our secrets like some James Bond villain?”

Jenny felt her face heat with embarrassment, because truthfully, he’d kinda hit the nail on the head. That was pretty much her entire plan. How stupid had she been? To honestly expect to waltz in and demand information, only to have them bow down and present it gift wrapped for her? She really was still the naive little idiot Avery had taken her for all those years ago. The one she had promised never to be again. Her captor took a step forward and she scooted backwards, trying to keep the distance between them.

“I didn’t want to do this but I guess you’ve left us no real choice. We’ll have to make sure that no one can find you and deal with any consequences as they come .”

Fear gripped her like a fist and she tried to get to her feet, desperate to get back on some kind of even footing with him, even if she were completely outmatched in size, strength and probably speed too.

But her legs felt like jelly and after stumbling, she had to settle for skittering backwards, pushing with her heels against the floor , yelping when her back hit the wall of the small room. He took a step forward and the air around him seemed to ripple, pulsing with energy. She had heard about it, when Shifters changed, allowing the animal within to surface.

She knew then she was never getting out of that room. She hadn’t had much time to prepare for her eminent death, but really, what did she have to live for? Unbidden an image of the male from the club swam before her eyes, and she found that the very thought of him calmed her.

She held on to that image, focusing on it as she closed her eyes, waiting for death to strike her down. She allowed her mind to spin a quick fantasy, conjuring up a mini video of what a life together would be like, of the children they could have, of what it would be like to kiss him and feel his strong arms around her as he held her close. She found that this image was a much more pleasant distraction than waiting for that final blow.

But to her surprise he didn’t change fully, the rippling stopped. She heard a rustling sound and a small click that echoed in the room. Her eyes popped open of their own

accord and in the flickering light from the TV's she saw something glint in his hand, realizing a split second later that she was staring down the barrel of a gun.

She squeezed her eyes shut tight again, not wanting to watch, to know when it was about to happen. She struggled to draw air into her lungs, trying to force down the panic, the fear she felt, trying to focus on the near perfection of her fantasy.

A loud crash echoed around the room, making her jump, for in that second she thought the gun had gone off, expected the flare of pain that would accompany a bullet ripping through her flesh. The pain never came and the crash was quickly followed by a grunt and her eyes snapped open.

Trembling, she opened her eyes once again, hardly daring to look. A man stood framed in the doorway, the light flooding in from outside seeming blinding in its brightness. He was panting, like he had rushed to get there. The other man, the bad one, was crumpled on the floor, the wicked looking gun laying beside him.

Her rescuer held out a hand to her, waiting patiently for her to make up her mind whether to go with him or not. Not knowing why she trusted him, he could be just as bad as the first guy, she reached out for it, feeling tingles of heat coming from his outstretched hand. She tentatively placed her hand in his, watched his fingers curl around hers as he pulled her gently to her feet.

“This is quite a new look for you,” he commented as he stepped back into the hallway. Light spilled over his face and she finally placed him. The Shifter from Logan’s office, the one she hadn’t been able to take her eyes off then and couldn’t now. The object of her most recent fantasies.

“I died, didn’t I?” she asked as he slid an arm around her waist, pulling her to his side as she wobbled on unsteady legs. Heat spread over her, soaking into her all the way down to her bones, chasing away the chill she felt from being in that cold, dank room.

“Why would you say that?” he questioned, sounding worried. “Are you hurt? Did he hurt you?” His hands began to search her body, obviously looking for some kind of grievous wound.

“Because you’re here, when I was just dreaming of you. So you can’t be real. I’m dead and this is heaven.” She was far too gone to temper her words or even feel the slightest hint of embarrassment at admitting.

Needing comfort, grounding, she lent into him, taking his strength, allowing him to hold her up. She closed her eyes, enjoying the heat but unable to deny the steady thump of arousal that had begun to beat inside her. She wanted this man, had done from the second he walked into that office. She didn’t know why, she didn’t know how, all she knew was that he had to be hers.

He chuckled and the sound delighted her, sending a shiver the length of her spine.

“I promise you, you’re not dead.”

“I’m not?” she wasn’t sure she believed him, having him come riding in to rescue her light a knight in shining armour was like something out of a fairy tale, there was no way that could be real.

“You’re not. And I’m very real.”

Her mind was whirling, trying to make sense of everything. Could he be telling the truth? Was it really over? Was she safe?

“Prove it.”

“OK.”

She took a deep breath and opened her mouth to talk, to ask him how he was planning on proving it, when he swooped. A small eep of surprise slipping out as his lips captured hers in a kiss that shook her from head to toes.

Heat spread through her body, her body melting against his, needing to be closer. Acting completely out of character she allowed her hands to wrap around him, her fingers sliding into the hair at the base of his neck, pulling him closer as his tongue slid between her parted lips, a low growl of possession rumbling through his chest.

Gasping she finally pulled away. “I don’t understand this. I don’t understand why I feel this way, why I want you so badly I can barely think.” She paused, trying to catch her breath from their soul searing lip lock, trying to regain some kind of composure. Nothing made sense to her, not their firey attraction, nor why he had turned up just when she needed him so badly.

“Actually, that’s a very good question,” she commented out loud to herself before addressing him again. “What are you doing here, how did you know where I was to save me?” So many questions had tumbled out of her mouth in one go, it was a wonder they formed coherent words.

He took a step back from her and she already missed the warmth she had come to associate with him. She had never felt this way about anyone before, everyone else paled in comparison, even Avery. She knew in that split second that Avery had been right, he hadn’t been the one for her, he had needed to be free to find his Soul Mate and he had acted in the most honourable way that he could. She would have to apologize to him soon, it was time to let go, he deserved it. She looked at Dane as he began to speak.

“I know it’s all very confusing for you, sweetheart and I’m sorry. I scented you the second I stepped through the door, I knew you were here. I’m just sorry I didn’t get to here sooner, before that goon attacked you, I’m so sorry you were scared, wolves are supposed to protect their Mates-”

“Mate?” she squeaked, interrupting his apologetic flow.

He nodded. “You’re my Mate, Jenny, you know it and I know it. I know you feel it, the heat, the attraction between us. We belong together, the fates made it so.” He took her hands in his, forcing her to look into his eyes. “I make you this promise, no one will ever hurt you again. I love you too much to ever let something like this happen again.”

She looked at him, shocked to the core, but unable to deny his words. She felt it too, just as he described, the heat, the arousal, and yes, she knew it was fast, she knew it was madness, but yes, the love, she felt that too.

“You love me?” a small tear trickled down her cheek as she struggled to control her emotions. This was all she had ever wanted, to love and be loved by someone as wonderful as Dane. And she never wanted him to let her go again.

“With everything I am,” he whispered as his lips descended on once again. “Let’s get out of here, baby, though before we leave, I have one question for you.”

“What’s that?” she asked, curious.

His face broke into a roguish grin that made his caramel eyes sparkle as they raked over her body. “Your place or mine?”

Feeling more daring than she ever had before, she reached up on her tip toes and gave into the urge she had had from the moment she laid eyes on him. She nibbled her way along his jaw up to his ear and whispered. “Which ever is closest.”

He let out a low groan at her words and yanked her closer his hand sliding down her back to cup her arse, giving it a loving squeeze.

“Damn, you make me so hot, baby.”

She lifted on tiptoes and kissed him again, giving his bottom lip a little nip.

“My place it is.” He declared grabbing her hand and towing her out of the bar. He paused to bestow a glare upon anyone who dared look their way, his look to the bartender sending the clear message for him to watch his back, he was nowhere near safe. He smirked slightly when he noticed that the man’s eye was already starting to swell and turn purple from the punch he had landed while convincing the idiot to tell him exactly where his girl was.

Jenny never even noticed their silent exchange, her blood felt like it was boiling in her veins. She had never felt such a need before, the need to touch and be touched, the burning need that demanded to be sated. She licked her lips, tasting him on them and shivered again. He squeezed her hand, obviously sensing her urgency and urged her through the main doors and out into the cool night air.

She expected the cold to make a difference to the heat raging between them but it didn't.

Dane bundled her quickly into his car and started the engine, with barely a look over his shoulder, he pulled out of the space and shot off down the road like a bat out of hell. Normally Jenny would be worried about being in a car with someone driving so fast, but not this time, she shared the same sense of urgency that he felt. The need building inside them both.

Dane screeched to a halt outside an apartment block that she driven past a number of times and had always liked the look of. She didn't have time to spare it more than a glance as he grabbed her hand and pulled her forward, locking the car behind them with a beep from his keys.

They made it through the doors in record time but were a little slower on the stairs, her smaller steps unable to keep up with his long strides. Apparently realising that she was the one slowing them down, he whirled around and scooped her up into his arms, cradling her to his chest as he raced up the stairs two at time.

He reached the door of his apartment and put her down briefly to fumble with his keys, unlocking the door and slamming it shut behind them. He picked her up again, locking his lips onto hers. She dangled in mid-air for a second of two before she gathered the courage to go with her instincts and raised her legs to wind them around his waist, a move that made her grind against his groin, feeling his growing hardness nudging against her suddenly aching core. She moaned into his mouth, letting him know with her body just how desperate she was for him.

She hadn't ever felt like this for any man before Dane. He was hers, she was his and she had to have him.

"Baby, you smell so good," he growled out, running his nose down her neck, causing little shivers of excitement to skitter down her spine. His lips followed the path his nose had taken, kissing and nipping at the soft skin of her neck.

"Want you," she groaned, almost incoherent with need, her head dropping back to give him better access to her neck, loving his kisses.

With one hand on the back of her neck and the other cupping her butt, he walked them quickly down a hall to what she assumed was his bedroom.

She looked around briefly as he pushed open the door with his foot and deposited her right in the centre of his bed. It was a nice room, decorated in a warm red. Mahogany furniture was dotted here and there, a dresser, a wardrobe, bedside tables. The curtains, a pale gold that matched the bed she was laying on were left open, allowing pale moonlight to flood the room. But all her attention was focused on the man in front of her.

He wasted no time and began to strip off his clothes, pulling his black t-shirt over his head and throwing it over his shoulder as he pulled his belt off and unsnapped his jeans. His trousers dropped to the floor and she let out a little gasp at the sight of him. He wore no underwear that she had seen and stood to full, glorious attention.

The wide muscles of his shoulders tapered down to a narrow waist, forming the perfect T shaped body. Thick ropes of muscles banded his torso, and his stomach was a thing of beauty she desperately wanted to lick every inch of. His chest was almost free of hair, just a sprinkling of dark curls dusted his pecs and around his nipples, with a thin trail that headed from his navel down to his groin.

He strode over to the bed, completely at ease with his nudity.

“Baby,” he pleaded, his voice harsh with arousal, “I need to see you, to feel your soft skin under my hands.”

Normally she was never comfortable with anyone seeing her sans clothes, it was her armour, her shield that protected her from the rest of the world. Her suits made her feel in control, powerful. But this time she put up no resistance, she wanted to feel him as much as he wanted her. She nodded, barely a movement but all the encouragement he needed.

He knelt onto the bed and crawled towards her, his body moving sensuously, his muscles rippling in a way she had never seen before.

His hands slid softly up her legs and eased the zip of her skirt down, pulling the material down over her thighs and off her legs, tossing it onto the floor to join his shirt. With deft fingers, he untied the ends of her blouse and worked open each button, sliding the material off her shoulder and off her body, leaving her in just her bra and panties. She sat up a little, her back arching as his fingers glided over her skin and around her back to work the clasp. She almost sighed when her heavy, aching breast spilled out into his waiting hands.

He stroked them softly, reverently, running just the tips of his fingers over the soft skin, moving in circles from the outside in to graze his knuckles over their aching peaks. She gasped, pleasure jolting through her, one hand clutching his head, her

fingers tangled in his hair as he lowered his mouth, his tongue flicking back and forth over first one nipple, then the other, drawing strained little moans from her mouth.

All too soon her began to move lower, his lips travelling down her body, nipping and kiss as they had at her neck. She moaned and writhed under him, her hips moving restlessly towards him, her body wanting, needing, feeling so hot she thought she might melt.

“I know, baby, I know. I’ll make it better soon, I promise,” he whispered indulgently as his fingers grazed the laced edge of her panties, slipping inside to ease them down over her thighs, raising each leg in turn to draw them off her body, leaving her exposed to his gaze.

He inhaled deeply, his eyes closing as he shuddered. “You smell so amazing, so perfect, my Mate.”

His Mate. His words send a thrill through her. It sounded so unbelievable, yet it was happening. This wonderful man was here, touching her, loving her. She dared not close her eyes, afraid that he would vanish if she did, proving that it really was just a dream.

“Kiss me,” she beseeched instead, sighing with happiness when his lips met hers, his tongue easing inside to brush against her own, his taste invading her senses as his hands trailed down her body to brush against her damp flesh.

She gasped into his mouth as his finger tunnelled through the small patch of hair that shielded her core, dipping down low. “So wet for me,” he praised, his finger brushing against the centre of her pleasure, tracing over the little bundle of nerves that caused her to moan deeply.

“I need you,” she begged, wanting him more than she had ever wanted anything in her life before.

He lifted his fingers to his mouth and licked, groaning at her taste. “So sweet, my Mate.”

He moved gently over her, parting her legs and settling between them, his arms either side of her head, cradling her to him. She lifted her legs, wrapping them back around his waist, her hips lifting.

“Now, please.” She felt the tip of him brush against her and cried out, pleasure sparking from that one small touch as he nudged his way to her entrance. She felt him breach her tightness, having not been with a man for so long she could barely remember. But this, this she would remember for the rest of her life.

He moved forward, slipping inside her just an inch, barely the head when she suddenly tensed. “Wait! What about protection?”

He groaned, his head dropping to her shoulder as he stilled. “Baby, I don’t have anything, I hadn’t planned on finding my mate today. Shifters are immune to disease and can only reproduce with someone they are mated to.”

He looked down at her, noting the way her eyes had gone scarily wide at the mention of reproducing. “Would that be so terrible?”

She thought for a second, looking up into his eyes, seeing the love he had for her shining out. She thought of the loneliness she felt, how empty her life was and then she flashed back to her fantasy, of the babies they could have. And in answer she bucked her hips up, drawing him deep inside her. She moaned as their bodies joined, almost in unison with his groan of pleasure, the sensations spiralling through her, taking her by surprise with just how good it felt.

He began to move, slowly at first, working away her tightness as he eased through muscles that had long since been abandoned. She moved with him, her hands roaming the planes of his back, stroking, her lips seeking his as he eased in and out. Small moans and whimpers escaped her lips, sounds that he eagerly swallowed, feeding her kiss after kiss as their movements became more frantic as the pleasure built between them.

She felt that low-down ache pooling inside her and knew that release was not far behind, she writhed beneath him, loving the feel of his slick skin against hers, his body moving inside her, his taste on her lips, it was too much. Her body began to shudder, her muscles tensing as the most powerful orgasm she had ever experienced ripped through her. It bowed her spine, throwing her head back as she screamed his name, almost boneless as heat washed over her.

“I love you, my Mate and claim you as mine. Do you accept me as yours?” his words were strained as he quickened his pace, trying to find his own release.

“I do, I accept,” she groaned, her inner muscles clamping down around him, trying to hold him captive.

With a groan that seemed to come from deep down inside he nuzzled against her neck, kissing to the curve where it met her shoulder. His teeth sank into her flesh, the sudden flare of pain was almost instantly washed away by the pleasure as they both stilled, his hands gripping her shoulders tight, his growl of completion the sweetest sound she had ever heard. His body trembled above hers as his hot seed spilled inside her, wave after wave that made her moan out loud.

“I love you,” he whispered as he collapsed down on top of her, their bodies still joined. She wrapped her arms around him, holding him tight as she rested her chin on his shoulder, turning her head to find his lips.

“I love you too.”