

soulbound



A.L. Wilson

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Love is an Open Road

An M/M Romance series

SOULBOUND

By A.L. Wilson

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love is an Open Road?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

Each year, a dedicated group of Volunteers from the M/M Romance Group work hard behind the scenes to bring these stories to you. Our Editors, Formatters, Proofreaders, and those working on Quality Assurance, spend many long hours over a course of several months so that each Event is a success. As

each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Photo Description

A slightly effeminate young blond man stands in a sensual, yet shy pose, his shirt cast aside to reveal his bare, freckled chest. One hand is placed upon his hip while the other holds a jacket over his shoulder. He stares at the camera as if asking, nearly begging, a secret question.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

I am an incubus and with the coming of my 18th birthday my hunger is awakening. But there is a problem—I still haven't found my mate. Without one I won't be able to start feeding and will die within weeks of my birthday. Everyone in my family hopes that will be exactly what will happen to me. Because I am their shame—I am too feminine for an incubus and truth is I have no interest in women, something unheard of in such a powerful family as mine. My parents and siblings hide their relations to me and won't help me find a mate. Please, help me!

Every incubus (male) mates with a succubus (female) by their 18th birthday (yes, I mean have sex, any additional rituals to the mating are author's choice). After that they start feeding, not necessary together (they don't have to share partners they feed on, but are still a couple and considered a family). Even though they have no problem feeding on both sexes, mating between 2 males or females is extremely rare to non-existent.

The MC's mate I see as an older incubus (but by not much—a year or two maybe), who somehow have lost his succubus mate. Everything else about him is for the author to think of.

I don't handle sexual abuse and rape well, so please leave those out.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Desislava

Story Info

Genre: paranormal

Tags: demons, bonded, coming of age, family drama, transformations

Word Count: 33,423

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Chapter 1

A Night To Remember

The music was a thundering roar of adrenaline stampeding through every sex-starved body pressed tightly within the concrete jungle. Flesh writhed, sweat dripped, and emotions swirled up into an uncontrollable maelstrom. Each thump brought with it a kaleidoscope of colored flashes, illuminating a grinding body that might not be the one that was beside you only moments before.

The young incubi and succubi called it The Riot Room. It was both a place for casual hook-ups and also a stomping ground of desperation when one neared the time of mating. There was nowhere better to find someone ready, willing, and able to pledge lifelong commitment, even if it meant regretting it the next morning.

One such individual was visiting for this uncomfortable reason. He had mere days to find someone willing to mate. A dull ache had already begun to settle into his veins. Each morning that he woke he felt extraordinarily thirsty, and no amount of drink could quell the dryness of his throat. Behind his eyes was a pain, like someone shoving rusty nails into his squishy sensitive bits.

Everything felt dry, and there was only one way to quench it. The boy would need to feed. Unfortunately, a young incubus or succubus had to go through a mating process in order to break the seal upon his or her spirit so that feeding could occur.

Mikhail Castoré was the second son of a prominent elemental magic dominant family. The Castoré were prestigious among the incubus/succubus world and held in good regard. Mikhail's father in particular held some political influence and was able to procure the right to breed with a family of higher rank in order to produce Mikhail. The child was meant to be his pride and joy. Unfortunately, instead of a strong incubus filled to the brim with magical energies and bloodlust, he got a tiny blond boy that resembled a human female.

Mikhail's magics were basic at best, even after his eighteenth birthday. He showed little dominant traits, and was far too polite for his father's liking. He was nothing like either of his parents who were both ruthless, cunning, and a little on the evil side if truth be told.

Mikhail was a thin, slender creature with blond hair, blue eyes, freckles, and a sunny disposition. Some were astonished he was an incubus at all. Had his

father somehow been deceived during the procreation process? Was Mikhail under some sort of horrible curse?

Before his birth he was thought to inherit all that the Castoré had to offer, now the inheritance had fallen back to his elder brother, Ereek, and much of the family shunned or simply ignored Mikhail. Ereek was a cruel obnoxious and venomous incubus. He bullied his younger brother and made it abundantly clear that he'd rather Mikhail leave the family entirely than have to put up with seeing such a strange incubus in their midst.

This was Mikhail's lot in life. Though an incubus raised in a world where demons, shadows, and things of the void were an everyday occurrence, he was gentle, studious, warm, and even kind. Now, he had broached the threshold of his eighteenth birthday and he absolutely had to choose a mate to lift the seal which bound his soul.

Every incubus and succubus is born sealed so that they cannot harm another living creature. Without breaking the seal, he or she will simply wither and die as the soul devours itself with the need to feed upon sexual energies. It was eons ago that the species found the seals could be broken by forming bonds with a "mate." The mating can be long and heartfelt, or quick and without meaning. An incubus and a succubus meet, determine they are at least somewhat spiritually compatible and they have sex. This breaks the seal and joins their souls together.

After this, both can feed at will and live productive lives. Some choose to form lasting relationships and have children; others choose never to speak to one another again. Typically mates are chosen at or around sixteen years, but some have difficulties choosing mates, and of course, a misfit of an incubus like Mikhail has had extreme difficulty.

At first his family introduced Mikhail to women of prominent families, but after dozens of introductions with him showing little to no interest, they began to get annoyed. Years passed with Mikhail refusing everyone that was brought to his attention. At times the introductions were almost volatile, with the succubus leaving in a violent huff. It was as if Mikhail practically repelled potential mates. He was not sure what it was about him, or about them, but they all seemed so very wrong. He could not even find them remotely attractive.

Eventually his family began to refuse aid to Mikhail. Before he knew it, his eighteenth birthday had actually passed him by without a single prospect. That was why he was at The Riot Room. His body was racked with pain and now

mating was not just some notion that his father was pushing upon him, but an absolute necessity. The gentle blond was faced with the very real possibility that he might die if he could not find someone that would have sex with him.

Sweat-drenched bodies rolled like waves on the ocean in front of Mikhail. There were plenty of people there and many of them smelled ready to fuck anything that would lie down. He sighed heavily and glanced at the glass of water in his hands. He hadn't bothered to order anything alcoholic. Absently he wondered if this was a mistake. Perhaps if he were drunk, this might be easier. Mikhail took a sip of his water, feeling as if he were drinking sand, the way it grated as it went down his parched throat. He needed someone in that crowd to touch him, but it all felt so false and wrong.

"What's wrong with me," he mumbled, unable to even hear his own musings over the thumping of the music. "It's like I'm not an incubus at all."

At the bar a young incubus hunkered over a shot of amber gold liquid. His hair was bleached white and thrust up into a short Mohawk. His skin was smooth olive and his eyes were the shape of almonds. He glared across the bar top, gulping his shot before tapping it down to ask for another.

"Why did you drag me here, Yaya?" The young incubus grunted, swinging his eyes to a figure who sat beside him.

Beside the grumpy incubus on a stool sat another incubus who turned to look at him. This incubus was tall, slender, and dressed in bondage gear. It was clear that he was ancient in years due to the fact that his form had already begun to warp. He no longer appeared like a youthful human. He had begun to take the shape of a demon. His left eye was that of a golden cat, and from his left temple grew a small black twisting horn. His nails were long and sharp, curling around a glass of something pink and glowing.

Under the irritable incubus' left eye was a small tattoo in the shape of a shadowed cross. A young succubus had pushed up her breasts and moved to approach, but when she spied that tattoo she stopped short, blanched white, turned on her spike heels, and marched back into the crowd.

"Talon, stop scaring away prospects with that terrible scowl on your pretty face." A singsong voice split the crowd. Yaya shot a look to his glaring friend. He too had a tattoo under his left eye, but instead of one black cross, he had four.

“I’ll scowl all I like, Yaya.” Talon snorted, swallowing down the contents of a second shot glass and then motioning for another.

Yaya rolled his mismatched eyes before brushing long inky black locks over his shoulder. His chest was mostly bare, save for some crisscrossing black leather straps that accentuated his pierced nipples. “It’s been two years, Talon. Do you really intend to remain in mourning? It is perfectly acceptable for an incubus to take on another mate after this amount of time. I have known some that take on mates immediately...” Yaya trailed off, swirling the straw around in his drink.

Talon let out a snarl, slamming an empty shot glass down on the counter so harshly that it shattered in his hand. “And what the Hell about you? How long has it been now?”

Yaya let out an exaggerated sigh and flipped his hair. “I’ve been mated four times; I’ve no intention of doing it again. I told you this. You on the other hand, are just a pup. You should find someone new. If nothing else, to get out of my hermit cave and see more of the world.”

Talon groaned and rolled his eyes. “Fuck the world and everyone in it.”

Yaya smiled, the twinkling of the lights making the black lacquer on his lips sparkle. “You don’t mean that. I’ve known you far too long, Talon Barch. Your bad boy image is nothing but a façade.”

The two fell into silence as Yaya spun back around to watch the writhing bodies in the room. It all seemed pretty dull. He was about to suggest they leave when the front door burst open and three women in long dresses marched in. Yaya perked, inching forward on the barstool. “Oooh, things just got interesting.”

Yaya reached out a hand and caught Talon by the chin, turning him so that he might watch the women as they moved about the crowd. One of them had two curled horns amongst a sea of crimson tresses. Her breasts were bouncing around in full view and the waves of powerful sex that came off her body were enough to give the two men erections even from across the room.

Talon stiffened where he sat and reached down to adjust his crotch. “Damned old bitches, what the Hell are they doing here?”

Yaya let out a twittering laugh behind his hand. “Isn’t it obvious? They’re looking for fresh meat. You could go introduce yourself. I’m sure they would take you on as a pool boy. Women like that look for things that are pretty to

make little love slaves. I mean, it gets boring when you're old, trust me I know. Humans break too easily... but a desperate young incubus..."

Talon snorted and rolled his eyes. "Nothing about me is desperate."

"*Mmm*, I guess not. But someone here must be. I've smelled it too. The crowd is really whipped up. There's a hungry incubus here without a mate." Yaya licked at his lips, running a forked tongue along the black color in a lustful fashion.

Talon stopped short, setting down another empty shot glass, and ignoring the splintered mess he'd made earlier. "Eh? You mean someone here is actually mateless? Like the real deal?"

Without waiting for an answer, Talon started to search the crowd. He didn't know why he was interested or what he thought he was looking for. It wasn't as if he'd ever been particularly interested in men. Sure he enjoyed screwing men, looking at men, taunting men... Men were just as good as women, he was an equal opportunity incubus and always had been. But what did he care about some pathetic incubus that couldn't find a mate?

Yaya quirked a brow while curiously watching his friend's reaction out of the corner of his cat eye. Talon had not shown any signs of life since his mate had died two years earlier. However, the situation before them seemed to have piqued his interest.

Talon Barch was the third son to the head of the current warrior clan of their people. There were few who didn't know Talon's family or Talon himself at least by looks or name. He had a reputation for being a troublemaker and though he would pick fights, he was mostly harmless. Talon was not truly a malicious incubus, more of a trickster, fun loving and rowdy.

Yaya met him when he was just a child, out romping in a shadowy forest where he should not have been. Talon would pick fights with fiends, shadows, and other things that would devour children. Yaya, the Hermit of the Forests would sit and watch the child, amused at such ridiculous antics. The boy was fearless, and perhaps that's what Benilial Warsor had seen in him.

Talon met his mate when they were eleven years of age. She was calm, analytical, but mischievous. The two could not be separated after the first time their eyes met. Beni simply proclaimed that Talon belonged to her, and that was the end of it. No one ever questioned the mating and everyone mourned when she was prematurely taken from the world.

After she died, Talon retreated into himself as if the universe no longer held meaning. He moved out of his family's home and into the forest with Yaya. They got along well enough, but the old hermit couldn't bear to see his friend wasting away like some old incubus on the verge of returning to the fold. Talon was just a youngling, and he needed to be out amongst the truly living. That was why he dragged him to places like The Riot Room. He hoped that a chance encounter would throw Talon back into life, whether he liked it or not.

Talon was still searching the crowd while Yaya watched him closely, lips pursed around a pink straw. It was as if instinct had taken over the young incubus. Then, Yaya nearly choked on his drink. The back of Talon's left hand had begun to glow. It was faint, and had he not been so close, he might have assumed it was the lights of the club. Yaya's mismatched eyes went wide, and then Talon froze up, his gaze trained on something, or someone, across the room.

Mikhail was still holding his glass of water tightly in one hand. The ice was all but melted and he'd not taken but a few sips. Somehow he'd managed to wedge his slender body against a wall and put a table in front of him so that gyrating bodies would not be bumping into him. He was absolutely miserable. He was wearing a black jacket with a hood, and he'd pulled the hood up over his golden locks, blue eyes peering out at the happy grinding crowd like each person was some sort of foreign species he could not possibly comprehend.

Every few seconds he scanned the crowd, more out of desperation than true interest. His chest ached and his eyes stung. Mikhail still hoped to find a succubus that would accept him as a mate. If only there was someone that wouldn't embarrass his family too badly. Once he was mated he would move away and they could forget about him, but this one task had to be completed successfully.

Unfortunately, as the night wore on, not only did few look his way, but he felt absolutely nothing toward any of those that made the gesture to glance upon his feminine features. He was inching in the direction of the back exit when the front door burst open and three women in flowing gowns came floating into the thumping club. This was not your average young succubus clique looking for a good time. Mikhail's eyes went wide and fear gripped his chest as the visage of one of the women cast a shadow over his body, complete with spiraling horns from the sides of her head.

Mikhail began to panic, nearly dropping his glass of water as he inched along the back wall. Though he was desperate to be mated, he wasn't *that* desperate. These were Man Eaters. There were some incubi who didn't mind being kept by ancient women as pets, but he wasn't one of them. He didn't particularly like the idea of being mated to a woman at all: adding a chain around his neck wasn't making the prospect look any better.

He managed to set the glass down despite the way his hands were shaking. He had to slip out without drawing attention to himself, but each time he tried to get through the crowd, sweat-drenched bodies tossed him away from his goal. Sexual energies were at their peak, and he had no idea that it was his own frustrations that were broadcasting them. He reeked with the desire to be set free from his seal and now eyes were turning toward him.

Across the room two dark almond-shaped eyes cut through the crowd and met frightened blue doe-eyes. Both Talon and Mikhail momentarily froze in place. Neither had seen the other before and yet a connection was formed from across that room. Mikhail felt his pulse race and his breath quicken. His sexual energy rushed throughout the room like fingers in search of a familiar hand. Each succubus or incubus his energy touched began to dance faster, harder, arms raised toward the ceiling in bliss.

Talon had begun to cross the room toward Mikhail when a dark and suppressive shadow broke his contact with those bright-blue eyes. He gave a snarl, motioning behind him. "Yaya, let's go!"

Mikhail shrank back from a pair of rather impressive breasts. His spirit recoiled into his body like someone snapped a rubber band. His back pressed against the wall and he turned his face away from the succubus. He had half a mind to scream. Though she was beautiful, powerful, and probably rich and influential, Mikhail felt fear, and something akin to loss, with her looming over him.

"My, my, my, aren't you a pretty little thing. I almost thought you were a woman as I gazed at you across the room. But no... this scent, you are definitely male." Her hand pushed his hood back and she threaded long clawed fingers through his hair.

Mikhail choked back tears, trying to think of something to say. Internally he chastised himself. He must have looked so utterly pathetic. He was an incubus! Why was he standing here sniveling like some sort of human? It was no wonder the Man Eaters were out in full-force. His lips parted and tried to speak, but no sound escaped.

And then, something warm gripped his hand, making a throb start where the heat touched and then pulse up his arm and throughout his entire body.

“There you are! Fuck, the crowd is crazy tonight. Come on, man! Let’s get out of here!” Talon tugged Mikhail against his body with a sharp jerk. His dark eyes glanced up and down the succubus before he winked boldly. “Nice tits.”

The succubus hissed sharply and made a swipe of her hand as if to scratch Talon but he moved like the wind. Darting away, he jumped onto a table, still holding Mikhail close to his chest. The crowd roared to life as Talon picked Mikhail up, and started to carry him bridal style while jumping from table to table, even using a few heads as platforms to make for the back door.

“That boy belongs to me, cretin,” the succubus growled out, the other two women appearing beside her. They moved like shadows through the crowd and were just about to catch up when a tall figure arose in front of them, pausing their progression.

Yaya’s golden cat eye peered at the women from beneath his mop of black hair. His shadow spread forward like black water and covered the room in darkness. The women hissed, shrinking back and glaring.

“The Hermit!? What business do you have...”

“Silence!” A booming deep voice came from Yaya, now only a shadow with one golden cat eye peering out. “Follow us, and I will devour you.” The shadow receded and Yaya’s back disappeared out the door following Talon.

Outside the air was cool and the demon moon shown down upon the trio in haunting trickles of blue, and purple. Talon took a deep breath and then started to jog, Mikhail still held against him. Mikhail’s golden hair seemed to glow, and his blue eyes were wide as he stared up at Talon.

After a moment of being thunderstruck, Mikhail squirmed. “I... I can walk,” he blurted out, with a bit more force than he intended.

Talon smirked, glancing down to the squirming young incubus in his arms. The boy was cute, slender, feminine, and soft-spoken. “Can you? Well, that’s good to know.” He winked a dark eye, but did not put Mikhail down, instead he moved swiftly over to a motorbike and half tossed Mikhail onto the back of it.

“Ah! What... what are you doing?” Mikhail exclaimed, feeling someone slithering up onto the bike behind him. He yelped and tried to get off, but slender arms wound around his waist, holding him in place.

“*Ssshhh*, be still, child. Though I have deterred the Man Eaters for now, you still look delicious. Let us escort you away,” Yaya purred into Mikhail’s ear.

Talon slid a leg over the front of the bike and pressed his palms against bizarre bone-decorations. He seemed to massage at the vehicle, rather than look for a keyhole. In fact, Mikhail didn’t see a keyhole at all. Furling his brows, he peered over Talon’s shoulder just in time to see runes light up all over the bike as it roared to life.

Mikhail gasped. “This bike is alive!”

Yaya thrust his hips forward, bumping into Mikhail’s rear and shoving the young incubus abruptly into Talon so all three were grinding lewdly together. Mikhail tried not to, but a moan escaped him, half drowned out by the bike thundering beneath him. The vibrations weren’t helping to quell his desire either.

Talon glanced over his shoulder. “You are correct. This is my baby, and she answers only to me. Oh, I’m Talon by the way. Talon of House Barch. And the weirdo behind you is Yaya. Sorry about the insanity, but you didn’t look like you wanted to become a pet. I dunno why, but I decided to lend a hand. Anyways, hello!” Talon laughed faintly, waving over his shoulder.

Mikhail felt his cheeks heat up and he cleared his throat. “Mikhail, my name is Mikhail. And thank you. I wasn’t interested in what those women had to offer, no.”

It had been a long time since Yaya had heard Talon laugh. Even if it was just a half chuckle from a ridiculous situation, it was enough to give the old incubus hope. These two young ones had similar energy and could synchronize from across a room. Shaking his head, he reached back to grip the bar behind him, stretching his long body as he spoke. “Mikhail, you might want to hang on.”

Mikhail glanced over his shoulder to Yaya, noting the one golden cat eye, and the horn that was growing out of Yaya’s left temple. Though Talon was clearly a young incubus, Yaya was as old, if not older than the women from the club. He was pondering this, along with the cross tattoos of loss under Yaya and Talon’s eyes. Both of these men had lost mates.

Then, the bike roared to life and jerked forward. Mikhail let out a shout before managing to clamp his arms around Talon’s waist. He shoved his face into the other’s back and clung tightly. With how close Mikhail was now, he could drink in Talon’s scent. The leather smell from Talon’s jacket slowly

parted to reveal Talon's natural musk and something sweet hot like cinnamon. Shivers ran up Mikhail's spine as he continued to take in Talon's scent. He smelled nice, strong, enticing, thrilling...

"You must be really close to your birthday. Even the vibrations of my bike are giving you a boner," Talon noted over his shoulder.

Mikhail barely made out the words over the roar of the engine, but he already knew what the other was indicating. Though try as he might, it was becoming increasingly difficult to stave off arousal in his body. Not to mention the pain that wracked him each time his organ twitched, which by now was when the wind blew. His cheeks burned with embarrassment, and so he kept his face pressed into Talon's back in an attempt to hide his shame.

It was interesting to think that an incubus could feel shame over the desire to have sex, or the need that dwelled beneath the surface. Again Mikhail heard his inner voice whisper of how there was something inherently *wrong* with him. His mind toiled in agony far worse than the aching throbs in his body. It wasn't as if he did not wish to be like "normal" young incubus men, he simply wasn't.

The scenery streaked by in rushes of sharp angles, drab urban colors, and bright lights. Yaya leaned back, letting his hair swirl in the air, and Talon leaned forward, his eyes focused on the outskirts of the small city area. It was all lost on Mikhail who kept his face pressed tightly into Talon's back. Though the strong scent of the incubus and warmth of his body helped somewhat to ease the physical and emotional pain, eventually Mikhail's shoulders began to shake and he felt wetness against his eyes.

Talon could feel the shivers against his back. He had no idea how to react, or if he should react. His eyes remained trained on the terrain in the distance as he considered the young incubus wedged between Yaya and himself. Talon was not exactly the best "people" person. Though he was considered an incubus' incubus at one time, and he could command a room with sheer presence if he so desired, being "tender" was awkward for him at best.

Dark eyes glanced to the deep purple and black swirling sky overhead. The moon had drifted behind smoky clouds and it looked ominous. "It's going to rain," he mumbled to himself before momentarily closing his eyes. An emotion was stirring in Talon's chest and he did not know how to deal with it. Benilial was always his emotional rock. Silently he called to her in the afterlife for strength and wisdom.

Mikhail let out a gasp and gripped tighter to Talon when the bike gave a sharp jerk and all three were sent into a spin. The momentum was enough to

make the young incubus believe he would fly off. His thighs squeezed the vibrating machine in an attempt to stay on and he let out a nasal-sounding cry before the bike finally drew to a stop.

Talon glanced over his shoulder with a flirtatious smirk. His teeth were just slightly sharper than a human's, and the straight white smile was enough to dazzle. Mikhail was momentarily dumbstruck, feeling his breath hitch in his throat.

"Sorry about that. I'm used to it only being me and Yaya. I tend to drive a little... aggressively." Talon's voice dipped into a sensual purr as he moved to swing a leg over and sat sideways on the bike so he could get a better look at Mikhail.

Mikhail's blue eyes were wide and his mouth hung open slightly before he managed to let out a squeaking sound. His voice cracked and he had to clear his throat so that he could speak. "It's fine, I was just startled."

Mikhail leaned back and attempted to scrub the tears from his face, but Talon interrupted the motion by gripping Mikhail by the chin. Leaning in close, Talon inspected the distressed and tear-streaked face. Mikhail was too surprised to respond.

"Tears don't suit your face," Talon stated matter-of-factly before reaching up with his thumbs and carefully brushing the tears out from beneath Mikhail's eyes.

Mikhail's heart thudded behind his ribcage and again he was thunderstruck by the incubus before him. The young incubus' mind completely emptied of any thoughts and he merely stared at Talon, as if the other had hung the moon above.

"Be careful Talon, or you'll make this sweet boy fall in love with you." Yaya slid down from the back of the bike, offering a smirk and a wink of his cat eye.

Talon had been enthralled with Mikhail's features. He stared into the blue eyes and before he knew it, had leaned in and started to sniff. Mikhail's scent was soft and airy, something akin to lilac flowers and baby powder. However, there was heat boiling beneath the surface. Talon could smell the need to mate and it was making his blood boil. His loins stirred and he leaned in closer, instinct drawing their lips together.

When he heard Yaya, Talon snapped at the spine to sit up straight. His hands drew away from Mikhail and he offered a snort. "Don't be ridiculous.

Who the Hell would love me? To say nothing of the fact that I'm an incubus and implying love is just fucking stupid. Let's look at the facts. I'm loud, I'm rude, I'm not considerate in the least, and I'm still hung up on my old mate who died two years ago. Who wants any part of this train wreck?" He motioned to himself with a thumb before crossing his arms over his chest and glaring in a random direction.

Yaya started to twitter a laugh against the back of his left hand. "Don't forget the fact that you pick fights just because you can." The twitters turned into full-on laughter before Yaya drew in a breath and reached for Mikhail's hands, drawing the young incubus' attention from Talon. "Now then, Mikhail, would I be correct in the assumption that you are from the House of Castoré?"

Mikhail had been certain that Talon was going to kiss him. Not only was Talon leaning in for a kiss, but Mikhail had wanted Talon to kiss him. His body ached and his mind was fuzzy. Places on his body tingled in ways they never had before, and on his cheeks where Talon's fingertips touched, he could still feel the warming presence of the other incubus.

Mikhail turned his attention down to the hands that grasped his own. It took him a moment to be able to form thoughts. His senses were permeated with Talon, and it was difficult to shake out of such drunken sexual revelry. He blinked a few times and then furled his brows. It almost looked like the back of his left hand was glowing, but Yaya quickly covered the oddity with his own hands and gave a squeeze in order to ground Mikhail further.

"Ah, oh, yes I am. How did you know that?" Mikhail looked up into Yaya's face. His mind still felt fuzzy, and he was slightly dizzy. He had the overwhelming desire to lie down, but he did his best to focus on Yaya's face.

"Call it intuition. When you have been around as long as I have, you pick up on certain cues. I have also heard a rumor that the heir to Castoré is dangerously close to his mating day." Again Yaya squeezed at Mikhail's hands.

Hearing Yaya's words made Mikhail turn his head away, frowning deeply. "My father would not be pleased to hear there are rumors circulating about me. At this point I believe he would rather I simply die and be done with it. He has already rescinded my claim to the family and given it to my brother." Mikhail shrugged, the motion weak and tired, as if he were trying to lift the entire world up with his shoulders.

Talon drew out of his brooding to snap his head back into the conversation. "What the Hell?" His nostrils flared and his brows drew close together. "What

the actual fuck kind of ship is your dad running over there? My dumb ass ran off and I've been living in the woods for two years, but I still have my station and my position within my house. No one would dare try to strip shit from me, let alone wish me dead." Talon was gritting his teeth, a bit of smoke trickling from his left nostril.

Yaya reached out a hand and rested it upon Talon's shoulder, giving a squeeze. He wanted to stop Talon before the other truly went on a blind raging rant. "This is why I hate politics. I left that life behind long ago. I can only imagine that your family expected something when you were born, and what you grew into was not what they expected. Now, instead of embracing the beauty that you are, they either condemn you, or ignore you."

Talon huffed, leaning back on his motorcycle. "What he said." He pointed toward Yaya and nodded.

Mikhail bit his bottom lip and glanced back and forth between the other two incubi. "I appreciate your sentiments, truly I do. However, that does not help my current situation. I must find a mate. At this point I'm desperate." His shoulders sank down, making the slight figure look even smaller. "I feel terrible at the idea I would be linking someone with me. It is not as if I have anything to offer a succubus. I suppose, by now I am simply trying to find someone to take pity on me, because despite everything... I don't want to die." Mikhail stared at the ground, his voice small and holding a bit of a tremble.

The words stabbed at Talon like a blade right through the heart. He had to swallow down a large, thick lump before he could respond. "Um, er, well me and Yaya could help, or something." He shifted awkwardly, glancing around at anything in the scenery other than Mikhail's pretty face.

Yaya clapped his hands. "Oh! That's a splendid idea. It is not as if the two of us do not have contacts in this world. We may be currently living out in the woods, but it was not always so. What do you say, Mikhail?"

Mikhail glanced up, gawking at the other two males incredulously. Finally, he was able to draw in a breath and nod. A smile lit up his face. It was as if someone turned on the sun and set it to shine directly upon his features. "Truly? I would be in your debt forever. Ah, but please, no more Riot Room." He let out a shy chuckle.

Talon was awestruck. The smile that lit up Mikhail's face made warmth pour all across his body. He was certain that illumination was radiating from the young incubus. Then the small laugh was like being shot with a high-

powered rifle. Was it possible that there had been a cosmic mistake? Mikhail shouldn't have been an incubus. Talon was slowly becoming convinced that he was in the presence of an angel.

Snorting and glaring at a random tree, Talon nodded. "Mmm, no Riot Room. Me and Yaya will come up with an idea. How about for now we take you home and you get some rest. Then maybe I can pick you up tomorrow night and we see about getting you hooked up?" Despite talking to Mikhail, Talon's face was turned to glare into the forest as he asked the question.

It had been a long time since Mikhail had felt any hope. Warmth spread from his chest and out through his body, ending in his fingertips and making them tingle. "Oh, thank you so much!" He lunged at Talon, throwing his arms around the other's neck.

Talon gasped as Mikhail launched forward into him. He caught the other and hesitated, his arms out to either side before slowly sliding around Mikhail's slender waist. He pressed his face into Mikhail's blond hair and took a deep breath. Holding him felt good, perhaps too good. He had to force himself to reach up and place his hands against Mikhail's shoulders and gently push backwards.

"Ahem! Well, let's get you home for now. Am I to assume you stay at the main house owned by your family? It's not too far from the Dead Forest. We can drop you." The idea of letting go of Mikhail made Talon's guts twist, but he forced a devilish smirk anyways.

Mikhail leaned up, his cheeks pink and eyes slightly distant. He was beginning to like being near Talon more than he wanted to admit. "Oh, yes, that's where I live. Wait, you and Yaya live in the Dead Forest?" Mikhail's eyes grew wide and he looked to the other two in awe.

Yaya chuckled and swung a leg up so he could slip back onto the bike. "Indeed we do. Now, you must realize what truly bad men you find yourself accompanying."

Before Mikhail had time to think up a response, Talon had maneuvered back to the front of the bike and started off again. The young blond squeezed his arms around Talon's waist and the three of them were puttering along a narrow path, passing towering mansions surrounded by foreboding wood. Each home was set a few miles apart from the next, with large iron gates and twisting gargoyles holding symbols indicating which family owned which.

Talon navigated the eerie neighborhood swiftly, intent on getting Mikhail out of his presence as soon as possible. The young incubus had mixed his feelings up and caused his mind to feel scrambled. He needed to be free of Mikhail's beauty and innocence so he could get his head on straight.

Talon was so engrossed in his own thoughts that he nearly passed Mikhail's house. From behind him he heard Mikhail cry out. "This one!"

A screech of tires filled the air and the bike rose up on the front wheel. It spun in a full circle before landing harshly back on both wheels and slid to a harsh stop. Talon glanced over his shoulder apologetically. "Ah, sorry about that. I was on autopilot there for a bit."

Mikhail panted, his body shivering as he clung to Talon. "It-It's okay. I suppose if you're going to be helping me, I need to get used to how you drive." He leaned up, smiling brightly with a twinkle to his blue eyes.

Talon bit his tongue sharply as he stared into that smiling face. Somewhere in the back of his mind he saw himself forcing Mikhail back into a mound of pillows and causing that smiling face to twist in orgasmic bliss. Though Mikhail was not human, there was something about him that made Talon want to touch him, and turn that innocence into sexual gratification. It had been a long time since Talon had had the actual desire to engage in nasty, sweaty, athletic, fun sex.

Shaking his head sharply, Talon cleared his throat. "I-I guess so! You have a good night and I'll be around tomorrow say... sundown? To pick you up?"

Mikhail slid down from the bike, his legs wobbling. He ended up leaning against the heavy iron gate at the front of the property. "Sounds good. I'll see you later." With a wave, Mikhail pushed open the gate and started to walk up the drive. Occasionally he would look over his shoulder and wave again, as if it was difficult to tear himself away from Talon.

Talon sat poised upon his bike, watching Mikhail slog his way up the drive toward the towering brick home. The further Mikhail got up the drive, the more loss Talon felt in his chest. Though he knew he would be picking Mikhail up the following night, something inside of him already ached and missed the blond.

Yaya slithered up behind Talon and curled his hands around the young incubus's body. He leaned over Talon's shoulder and purred into his ear, puffing hot breath upon the slightly pointed tip. "He's cute and oh so sweet. I bet he tastes delicious."

Talon jerked his eyes away from Mikhail's retreating figure and moved to turn the bike back onto the path. "Doesn't matter. We're going to find him a mate tomorrow, right?" There was a bitter edge to Talon's voice.

Yaya had no time to respond as Talon jerked the handlebars, rearing the bike up onto the back wheel before rolling forward to land roughly. The bike jerked from side-to-side momentarily before straightening and disappearing like a streak of lightning.

Chapter 2

A Dream To Forget

Mikhail had glanced over his shoulder several times, a feeling of loss pooling in the pit of his stomach. The further he got away from Talon the worse he felt. By the time he heard the bike roar away, he was on his doorstep and he felt absolutely nauseous.

Sighing heavily, Mikhail reached up to place his palm against the door. Runes alighted across the deep wood and began to swirl around his fingertips. Soft hues of blue and purple twirled around his slender digits, moving faster and faster, closing in on his palm, culminating in a flash of light and the click of a lock. When the glow died down, Mikhail reached for the door handle and gripped it tightly. He watched his knuckles go white as he debated turning the knob. Eventually, he accepted the inevitable and pushed the door open.

The scent of his house was like a miasma of despair pressing down on his slight shoulders. Mikhail dragged his feet across the threshold and stared at the floor as he began to walk from the door to a large set of stairs. The door slammed closed behind him, causing him to jump. It was almost like a cell door in a dungeon being shut behind him, and felt just as oppressive.

If Talon and Yaya had not already driven away, Mikhail felt as if he would rush right out of the house and run down the driveway to catch up with them. Continuing to stare at his feet, his steps thudded and echoed off the walls as he walked up the stairs. Silently he hoped he could avoid meeting anyone in the halls as he made his way toward his room. He wanted to simply shut himself away and hide until the following night.

Chewing his bottom lip to the point he tasted copper, Mikhail hugged his upper body. He could almost feel his elder brother lurking somewhere, waiting to jump out and berate him. There were times Mikhail was afraid that his brother might actually bring him harm. Life at home made him constantly feel as if he tiptoed around broken glass, just waiting for the moment that he would fall and be ravaged by shards.

His feet continued to thud throughout the long empty halls. When he turned a corner his eyes scanned left and right, limbs trembling in fear. His heart had begun to pound and his breath was coming in shaky puffs. Unable to continue on slowly anymore, he took off running, spying his door near the end of the

hall. He wanted to throw himself through that door and shut out the rest of the world. However, before he could reach sanctuary, a shadow appeared.

Mikhail was moving too fast to stop in time. He dug his feet into the carpeted floor, but he only managed to slow the inevitable. Colliding roughly with something taller and stouter than he, Mikhail opened his mouth to scream. He was certain that his elder brother had caught him and an unpleasant altercation was about to take place.

One slender arm wound round his upper body, keeping Mikhail from falling onto his rear, while a hand carefully clamped over his mouth to silence the scream that almost escaped. Mikhail's blue eyes looked up, wide and confused as he tried to comprehend what had just happened.

"*Ssshhh...*" whispered a kind voice. "I did not mean to startle you, Master Mikhail."

Mikhail let out a heavy sigh, ending up leaning into the arms that held him. The hand was removed from his mouth and he was set onto his feet, before gloved fingers went to fussing over his clothes and dusting at him like a mother hen. "Oh, Henry, it's you. Forgive me. I did not mean to bump into you like that."

A tall incubus with slicked back black hair and near black eyes looked down at Mikhail before shaking his head. "The fault was mine. I heard footsteps and became curious. I should have announced my presence. You must have thought me your brother. But pray, how did your search for a mate go this evening?"

Mikhail stretched a bit, offering Henry a bright smile before it faltered into a sour scrunching of his nose and mouth. "Eh, good news and bad news I guess? I didn't find a mate, but I met some nice men that have agreed to help me. An incubus named Talon should be along tomorrow to pick me up. He and his friend said they know some potential mates to introduce me to. It's at least a step in the right direction."

Henry nodded, offering a bow at the waist. "That is wonderful news, Master Mikhail."

Mikhail smiled again. "How's your daughter? A succubus woman gave birth to a little girl that's yours right? A few days ago?"

Henry looked startled before a wide smile broke out across his face, displaying rows of sharp pointy white teeth. "She is doing well, Master Mikhail. She is absolutely beautiful with dark hair and dark eyes like me. It

astounds me that you would concern yourself over such trivial things as the life of a servant in your household.”

Mikhail snorted, patting Henry on the arm as he walked past him, moving toward his bedroom door again. “You’re a person, Henry. You’re just as important as my father, my brother, or me. Besides, you treat me better than any of the ‘masters’ in this house ever have. What did you name your daughter?”

Henry turned to watch Mikhail walking toward his bedroom, tilting his head in thought. “Jessy, her name is Jessy.”

“That’s pretty. Anyways, I’m going to go have a bath and fall face-first into my bed.” Mikhail yawned, waving over his shoulder as he swung open the door near the end of the hall.

“If you are going to bathe, I will have Suzanna come retrieve your soiled clothes. Please, leave them somewhere she can gather them quickly without disturbing you,” Henry said at Mikhail’s retreating back, but Mikhail had already disappeared, lost deep in his own thoughts and no longer paying attention.

Turning sharply Mikhail pressed his back against his bedroom door and shut it with a click. He slid the length of it to his rear and let his arms rest upon his knees. Though his interaction with Henry had helped to pep up his spirits, he was still troubled. Reaching up he smacked both of his cheeks sharply and then pushed to his feet. “This is ridiculous. Pull yourself together, Mikhail. Things are starting to look up for the first time in a long time. Stop acting like a child and get your stuff together.”

Nodding to himself, Mikhail stomped across the room, hunkering his body forward like an animal trying to look imposing. He made his way into a large bathroom and went right to leaning over the tub. He wanted to take a long hot bath and prepare for some rest.

Ten minutes later Mikhail sank down into a foaming bubble bath and stared at the ceiling. His aching body felt somewhat better being submerged in the hot water. He stretched, groaning and roaming his hands up and down his chest. “I’m so tired...” His eyelids started to flutter and as he lazily dozed, a picture appeared inside his mind, slowly forming into a devilishly grinning face.

Mikhail’s hand trailed down his chest, fingertips ghosting against his sides and then roaming down to his thighs. He lightly scratched at his outer thighs,

moving inwards to his rapidly growing heat. He drew in a gasp, brushing his hand against his throbbing member. “*Mmm...*” His hand wrapped around his cock and he squeezed, remembering Talon’s scent as he clung to the other upon the bike.

Before he realized what was going on, Mikhail was firmly stroking, body trembling with need. His body ached all over and he began to whine, thrusting his hips forward. He panted, one blue eye cracking open and glancing around the room. He licked his lips, water sloshing around him.

“Shall I take your dirty clothing, Master Mikhail?” A singsong voice lit up the space.

Mikhail started, sitting up sharply and making water spill out onto the floor. His eyes were wide as he watched a shadow moving across his bedroom and then a figure appeared in the bathroom door. He was unable to speak as the young maid girl, Suzanna, went on with what she was doing, leaning forward to snag up the clothing he had discarded on the way to the bath.

Staring at the young woman owlishly, he watched her come closer, ending up bending over in front of him. He gulped hard, blinking a few times and shaking his head as if trying to clear a fog. A need burned in his chest and he winced. It was as if someone was driving a hot knife into him and twisting. His instincts told him to reach out and grab the woman. He gripped the edge of the tub his hands shaking as he attempted to resist.

Letting out a pain-filled cry, Mikhail launched out of the tub and tackled the young succubus to the floor. He loomed over her, leaning down toward her face while panting hot breath onto her features. She stared at him wide-eyed, and he gasped, jerking back as if being struck. “Forgive me!”

Slowly she sat up, looking wet and disheveled.

“I’m so sorry, Suzanna! I don’t know what got into me!”

“It looks as if you have lost control of yourself.” The voice of his elder brother made Mikhail’s blood run cold.

Slowly Mikhail looked over his shoulder. Color drained from his face and he wobbled, snagging a robe with a trembling hand. He fumbled with it, attempting to wrap it around his body.

“I believe it is time that we bring your condition to Father’s attention,” the tall figure stated, tapping his foot impatiently before lunging toward Mikhail and gripping him by the elbow.

Mikhail let out a cry as his brother began to bodily drag him from the bathroom and across his bedroom. “Stop! Wait! This isn’t what it looks like! She disturbed me in the bath! Brother, stop!”

The hand around his arm tightened to the point nails were digging into his flesh. Mikhail winced and tried to struggle free, but he was shoved into the hall, tumbling head over heels. Thankfully he’d managed to pull the robe around his body, hugging at himself to hide his shame. Lying face down he grunted, slowly looking up at two booted feet that made his breath catch and his heart thunder in his chest.

“My lords! Master Mikhail did nothing inappropriate!” Suzanna tried to defend, but Mikhail watched his father lift a single hand to silence her, and then make a shooing motion, sending her scurrying down the hallway with an armload of dirty clothes.

“...Reduced to trying to mate with the help? Can you shame this family any further?” The man looked down his nose at Mikhail on the floor.

Mikhail gasped, scrambling to his feet and attempting to push his trembling shoulders back. “No! That’s not what happened at all! She disturbed me in the bath! Anyone knows that when you... you come upon an incubus engaging in... self-pleasure, that... that they might lash out! I caught myself within seconds. I have perfect control.”

It was absolutely humiliating having to admit to his father that he was masturbating, but he was an incubus, and he would start acting like one. He thrust his shoulders back, and stood up as tall as he could muster in front of the two much more imposing figures. Mikhail’s father and brother were both dark haired and dark skinned. They were taller, broader, and carried an air of maliciousness about them. His father had an especially difficult gaze to meet. His eyes were mismatched, one near black and the other a faint maroon.

“Pleasuring yourself? How pedestrian.” His father huffed and shook his head with a heavy sigh.

Mikhail swallowed hard but kept his chest out, shoulders back and chin up. His eyes stung with the desire to cry but he would not let the tears fall. “It is true that I am still not mated, but I met two older incubi that have arranged introductions set for tomorrow night. I shall be mated before sunrise tomorrow.”

Two dark brows climbed up Mikhail’s father’s forehead. His brother bristled slightly, looking as if his very livelihood might be swirling down the drain.

“Oh? Who are these men that are arranging introductions?” his father asked, relaxing slightly and seemingly honestly interested.

A faint smile twitched at Mikhail’s lips as he continued. “A young heir to the Barch House, Talon, and an ancient incubus named Yaya.”

Mikhail’s father reached up to rub at his chin in thought. “Hmmm, Barch House, that might not be a... wait, Yaya? Where did you meet these men?” His eyes narrowed dangerously, making Mikhail’s heart leap up into his throat.

“Ah, well I met them at The Riot Room, but they dropped me off here on their way to the Dead Forest,” Mikhail offered with a shrug.

His father’s eyes went wide and before Mikhail could react the elder male had lunged forward and grabbed him by both shoulders. “You’ve been consorting with Yayandrial the Hermit!? Just when I thought you could not damage our reputation further! You go and consort with a traitor!”

Mikhail tried to struggle against his father’s grip. “What are you talking about!?”

His father growled menacingly down into his face. “Yayandrial is the King’s elder brother. How can you be so stupid? I will not allow you to run off and join insurgents!”

Mikhail gasped as he was thrust toward his bedroom so hard he tumbled, landing on his knees and getting carpet burns. He hissed, looking down to his palms and then his knees before blinking owlishly up at his father and brother staring at him from the threshold. “But I do not understand! If I truly spoke to who you say is he not the true heir to the throne? Did I not just make friends with the *real* king and his young vassal?”

Mikhail’s brother snorted, lifting his nose in the air. “Did you hear that, Father? Mikhail is planning a coup d’état against our beloved king who rules in his idiot brother’s absence. I think we have heard enough, haven’t we? You know what you have to do.”

His father let out a heavy sigh, holding a hand up toward the opening of the door. “I take no pleasure in this, but it is clear you cannot be trusted. In a few days’ time your soul will consume itself. You will be confined here, so that you do not cause incest within the home. I will have you buried in the family plot.”

His brother let out a laugh. “That is more than you deserve.”

Mikhail’s eyes flooded with tears and he lunged for the door, slamming into a ward as his father placed it around the room. Blue crackles of electricity

fizzled around his body and he collapsed backwards. He sputtered, convulsing and tasting copper against his tongue.

“Father... please...” One hand outstretched, the world growing black as the door was slammed closed.

Mikhail’s head rolled to the side and he fell unconscious, alone, locked in his room to die.

The bike ground to a halt in front of a rock wall and the engine cut out. Talon sighed heavily, his shoulders slumping. His head hung forward as he stared at nothing. The entire trip home he had been bemoaning his existence. He thought a lot about Beni and his time spent with her from when they were children until the night he held her and watched the light fade from her eyes. He tried to remember the memorial service, but it was still a blur of pats on the back and black flowers.

Yaya slid down from the bike and sauntered toward the granite slab, hips swaying back and forth. “Are you coming inside or are you going to sit out here and pout all night?”

Talon snorted and swung a leg off the bike to stand up; he stuffed his hands into his jacket pockets and lifted his nose into the air. “And what if I did? It’s my fucking life. I could sit out here and feel sorry for myself as long as I damned well please. I could run off and do like I did when Beni first died. I could go pick fights with fiends and drag myself home bloody and laughing hysterically. What would you do about it?”

Yaya shook his head, lifting a hand toward the smooth rock surface. When his flesh touched it, the rock vanished, leaving behind a quaint wooden door. He started to fiddle with a lock. “Nothing much. I would simply clean away the blood and patch you up like I have been doing since you were a child.”

Talon grunted, shrugging his shoulders as he followed Yaya into the cave, having to bend forward so he wouldn’t hit his head. Once inside, warmth hit his face and he let out a contented sigh. It was hard to feel comfortable, but the feel of “home” helped. He wriggled his shoulders, letting his jacket fall to the floor and then unceremoniously kicking it across the room.

“Fuck! Why am I so upset? What the Hell is wrong with me!?” He strode across a round room with a black bearskin rug on the floor in the center and two fluffy couches on either side. He threw himself onto one of the matching

couches, sinking down onto his back. One arm went over his eyes and he began kicking his boots off.

“I do believe it has to do with that pretty boy we left back at his house, but then what do I know?” Yaya shrugged and rounded the couch, patting Talon’s chest before disappearing through an entryway. Glowing lamps alighted in the rooms beyond and the tinkling sounds of dishes began.

“*Ugh!* But I don’t understand! We’re going to get him a mate and he’ll be fine. Why do I feel so... so... icky!?” Talon rolled to his side and punched at the back of the couch, scowling at nothing before closing his eyes. “Fuck everything.”

Talon wasn’t sure when, but he dozed off upon the couch. Yaya ended up lying upon the opposite couch with a book in his hands. Things were quiet in the quaint warm space, with the sound of dripping water in the background occasionally along with the *thwip* sound of Yaya turning old yellowed pages of the book he was reading. It was calm, peaceful, until Talon let out a shout and rolled off the couch.

Startled, Yaya jerked his head up from what he was reading and stared as his young friend growled, thrashed and otherwise seemed to be fighting an unseen attacker in the center of the room. He dared not approach the young incubus, as an ancient demonic tongue began to thunder out of his lips, booming threats.

Yaya shrank back against the couch, somewhat afraid that if Talon found a warm body in his fevered sleepy state that he might attack. The fight lasted a good five minutes before he collapsed against the bearskin rug, panting heavily and drenched in sweat. After a moment he rolled onto his back, eyes fluttering until he was blinking confusedly up at the ceiling.

“Wha... Where am I?” He moaned, struggling into a sitting position.

Yaya turned his book over and sat it on the opposite end of the couch, sitting up slowly and cautiously. “You fell off the couch. You’re in the living area, Talon. You’re home. You were sleeping up until a few moments ago.” Yaya’s voice was low, gentle with a purring undertone.

“Oh...” Talon managed to sit up, placing his hands against the floor and scooting around until he was facing Yaya. He reached up to scrub palms against his face and winced. “Shit... ah, my head feels like it’s going to split open.”

Yaya motioned to the young incubus and Talon obliged, scooting closer to the other on his rear and leaning his head forward. Yaya placed his hands at

Talon's temples and started to work his fingertips around in slow circle. "Mmm, I can feel horn nubs beneath the skin. It won't be long before you're sprouting."

Talon gasped and looked up at Yaya as if the other had grown a third arm. "Wha—!?! That's impossible! I'm far too young to be growing horns." His dark eyes continued to stare up at Yaya as if looking for guidance.

Yaya offered an encouraging smile. "You are a strong incubus, Talon. Did you think that Benilial chose you on a whim? You were chosen to be the bodyguard of royalty. Our blood, our souls... our instincts do not make mistakes."

Talon swallowed hard, staring up at Yaya his bottom lip beginning to quiver. "How do you do it? How can you remain so strong? I lost my mate, my best friend... but you lost your dau—"

Yaya lifted a hand and pressed his fingertips against Talon's lips. "Ssshhh, have I ever spoken those words?"

A look of realization flashed across Talon's face and he nodded slowly before tilting his head into the skillful massaging fingers of his friend. He remained silent for a moment before glancing down, watching his hands scratching at his midsection. "Why am I so itchy?" He lifted his shirt, gasping and falling backwards at what he saw. Upon his stomach and up his chest, red runes were pulsing and throbbing.

Yaya withdrew his hands, letting them fall into his lap. "Your true name. I see. After you fell off the couch you began speaking in the ancient tongue."

Talon looked up to his friend, mouth hanging open and eyes wide. "Do you know what I said?"

Yaya's head tilted and he furled his brows. "I'm a bit rusty, but it was something along the lines of... 'If you harm what belongs to me, I will destroy you.' I recall you saying something similar the night Beni died."

Talon wet his lips, letting his shirt drop before pushing to his feet. He ran his fingers through his hair and shook his head. "Maybe I was having a nightmare about that night."

Yaya pulled his legs to his chest, wrapping his slender arms around his knees. "Perhaps."

Sighing heavily Talon shook his head. "I'm going to go soak in the hot spring for a few and then get in bed. I'm absolutely worn out."

Yaya watched the young incubus' back as he disappeared through the next room. It was an easy explanation for the happenings, but he did not believe that was what was actually going on. It looked more like someone had called to Talon using his true demonic name. Yaya closed his eyes and let his cheek rest against his knees. "Who was your mother young Mikhail...?"

Mikhail drifted through a strange white space. He called for help, but all he heard was the echo of his own voice. After what seemed like hours he was exhausted and sick of heart. He collapsed against a blanched floor, surrounded in a suppressive fog. He began to cry, wondering if he was going to die in this place.

"Talon... Talon where are you? I'm scared." He gasped at the name that escaped his lips. He barely knew Talon and yet that was the person he was crying out for. Swallowing hard he blinked away his tears and looked through the fog again. He wasn't sure how, but he knew that if he could make Talon hear him, the strong incubus would come to his rescue.

"He will. You should wait, though. Conserve your energy for now." A singsong, slightly mischievous voice filled the empty space, causing Mikhail to startle.

Mikhail's head snapped up. He looked around the empty expanse finally, able to see a lone shadowy figure amongst the smoky white. Warily, he crawled closer, trying to get a better look. "Hello? Who's there?"

A twittering giggle echoed in every direction as a young succubus came into view. She was wearing a black mini-dress, fishnet stockings and combat boots. Her hair was sectioned into two incredibly long pigtails, one was a nearly white blonde, and the other raven black. One sparkling blue eye stared down at Mikhail, while the other was hidden behind a red and black eye patch. She was voluptuous, with a strong figure and more than just a little visible upper body strength.

Waving a hand, black nails glittering, the woman tilted her head. "Hi there! I'm Benilial Warsor, but call me Beni. It's nice to meet you, Mikhail. Though the scenery is less than desirable." She turned up her nose, hands going to her shapely hips.

Mikhail struggled to get onto his knees, looking to the woman with his brows furled. "Beni? Umm, hi. I'm sorry, but... who are you and how do you know who I am?"

Beni started to march back and forth in the empty space, a thoughtful look upon her face. “Oh, well I’m your cousin, and I know who you are because of Talon. You see, I used to be his mate.” She offered a nonchalant shrug.

Mikhail sputtered, nearly toppling over. “His what!? Wait, I don’t understand. Talon has a cross tattoo. If you *used* to be his mate, wouldn’t that make you...?” His face paled and he shrank back slightly, looking as if he might start crying again.

Beni stopped pacing, letting out a *tch* sound before rolling her eyes. “Oh stop it! Why does everyone make such a big deal out of me being dead? It’s not like it’s the end of the world. Listen up okay? When two people mate, their souls become permanently joined. It’s necessary in order to break the cursed seal upon an incubus’ or succubus’ spirit. A part of me remains with Talon and always will. My death made him stronger. Some individuals will mate with the pure intention of killing their mates. Why do you think Man Eaters even exist? They collect pieces of souls through mating after they get bored of their playmates.”

Mikhail swallowed hard, feeling his limbs tremble. “That’s horrible. I mean the last part. Not about you being part of Talon. I mean, that’s a good thing isn’t it? At least you’re not completely gone. I do not know him very well, but it seems like he cared for you very much.” Mikhail’s face fell and he looked to his hands. He didn’t want to be sad about Talon caring about his previous mate, but it did stab at his heart.

Beni let out a heavy sigh and rolled her eyes. Marching forward she put a hand under Mikhail’s chin and lifted it so that he would meet her gaze. “And he cares about you too. That big lug has a lot of heart for an incubus. Besides, you’ve already chosen him. As I was saying earlier, you’re right in your assumption that if you call to him, he will come. However, you’re weak right now, and need to conserve your energy.”

Mikhail was startled to have Beni’s hand on his chin, but there was something soothing and familiar about her touch. In the air lingered a soft willowy scent and he could not help but think that she smelled like his own pillow. Feeling somewhat daring, he reached up and grasped her by the wrist, carefully turning her hand over and sniffing her palm, before flicking out his tongue to lick at her fragrant skin. She tasted nice. He’d never known himself to do anything so bold. It was uncharacteristic for him and to be doing it to a woman no less.

He released her quickly and tumbled back, lowering his head nearly to the ground. "I'm so sorry!"

She laughed, the sound like wind chimes twirling in a spring breeze. He could feel her moving closer, bending down and wrapping her strong arms around his upper body. "Would you stop already? I told you. We're cousins. In fact, if I was still alive, I would come to bring you into the fold with Talon and I. In a way, your predicament with being unable to find a mate was my fault. If I had not died, you would have been set. But things don't always turn out the way we want. Listen, I can't linger here much longer."

Mikhail looked up, peering into that sparkling blue eye. It was then he realized that it was much like his own. "My mother..." he mused aloud, reaching up to brush fingertips against Beni's cheek.

Mikhail didn't know much about his mother, only that his father had done some twisted deals in order to sleep with someone that had a lot of influence. The coupling was supposed to produce a child of power, but instead, the Castoré head was passed this seemingly useless weakling of a male child. Beni seemed like a powerful succubus, and if she was kin to Mikhail's mother, then his mother must have been a woman of great power and wealth. He absently wondered what could have gone wrong to make him so frail and dependent.

"That's right, you and I are blood relatives. One's capable of naming anyone we choose as our mates. We bond strongly, and our spirits can call upon our mate's true names, compelling them to our sides. When the time is right, you can call Talon to you. But for right now, just rest. Sleep and know that Talon cares about you and will fight for you." She kissed Mikhail's eyelids, causing the blond incubus to close his eyes and lean heavily against her.

He felt warm and cared for in Benilial's arms. Trapped somewhere in a space that probably didn't exist, Mikhail felt more loved by a specter that was likely a figment of his imagination, than he ever had by his own family, or anyone that he ever called friend. He had hope that there was a person that might actually care about him, and it was relayed through a ghostly figure that claimed to be his dead cousin. It was ridiculous and impossible on the surface, but he dared to hope... dared to dream.

And then the dream faded and there was only blackness. Mikhail lay in the center of his room, surrounded by glowing blue and purple runes that pulsed eerie, angry marks on the walls. Occasionally a rune would appear on his flesh swirling bright before fizzling out and disappearing upwards in a twirl of

smoke. The lightning sparks that caused painful convulsions across his body had dispersed, and he rested more peacefully than before. His lips twitched and then slowly formed into a single word mouthed over and over again. "Talon..."

The next day Talon did a lot of pacing and watching the time. Yaya tried to get the young incubus to settle down, but nothing he said or did seemed to help. Around midday, Talon came bounding out of the shower, smelling of cologne and wearing a smart button up black shirt. He threw on his boots and grabbed his jacket from the floor on his way to the door.

"Where are you going?" Yaya asked at his back, sitting on the couch with a book in his hands.

Without looking over his shoulder, Talon grumped out, "I'm going to get Mikhail."

One perfectly sculpted brow arched up Yaya's forehead. "But we told him that we wouldn't be round until sundown."

Slipping his leather jacket round his shoulders, Talon offered a shrug. "I don't feel like waiting. I'm going to pick him up now."

Before Yaya could respond, Talon was out the door, practically slamming it behind him. There was the telltale roar of a motorcycle engine and then the rumble grew softer as Talon moved farther and farther away at a rapid pace.

Yaya chewed the inside of his jaw thoughtfully, but then offered a shrug and went back to his book.

Chapter 3

A Challenge To Overcome

Talon glared daggers at the imposing door. Runes danced across the surface and there was this crackle of blue electricity that was making him feel unsettled. Something smelled foul in the air and uneasiness twisted in his gut. Eventually, he reached up and banged heavily upon the entrance, wincing when it burned and made a tingling sensation rattle all the way up his arm to his shoulder. Several minutes ticked by and still no one had come to open it, and so this time he started kicking at the door and shouting.

“Hey! Anyone in there!?” He growled, kicking the door over and over until he heard shouting from the other side.

“What the bloody Hell!? Are all the servants asleep? You’d think we lived in a damned shack...” There was mumbling and then the door was tugged open just enough that Talon could see a tall, dark-skinned man with green eyes. “Who the Hell are you and what the Hell do you want?”

Talon bit back the desire to punch the other incubus in the face. For some reason, whoever this was, he didn’t like him. There was an aura around him that made a growl threaten to explode from the back of Talon’s throat. “Er, name’s Talon. I’m supposed to pick Mikhail up today. I’m a bit early, but tell him to hurry up will ya?”

The man stood in the doorway without moving, a sleek brow slowly arching upwards. After a moment, a sly grin that made Talon’s skin crawl spread across weasel-like features. “Oh, you must be the thug that was helping my brother find a mate. Ah, sorry but you missed him. Father found him a mate and Mikhail trotted off with her last night. Too bad you came all this way.” The man sneered, offering a wink that was not meant kindly or flirtatious before slamming the door in Talon’s face.

Talon had been so thunderstruck to hear that Mikhail had somehow found a mate already that he didn’t do much more than stand there as the door was mockingly thrust right into his nose. He tried to step forward, but the wards on the door sent a blast into him that stumbled him backwards.

Growling he shook his head, trying to clear the fog and confusion. “Already found a mate? But that can’t be right...” It was like someone stabbed a rusted

meat clever into his stomach and started to make sawing motions back and forth. Talon felt ripped open, raw, sick and somehow betrayed. He staggered back to his bike and swung a leg over it, his head hanging forward as he attempted to grasp his own mixed-up feelings.

“I don’t understand...” And then he got angry, his lip twitching as a snarl ripped from his throat. The bike roared to life and he peeled out in a random direction. He moved at neck-breaking speeds, intent upon finding the biggest, ugliest, and fiercest beast in the forest that he could and then beating it to death with his fists.

Hours passed, but Talon had not reappeared with Mikhail. Yaya had begun pacing the small living space, stepping over the head of the bearskin rug and counting each time. He had just muttered the words, “two thousand three hundred and seventy two” when he heard the rumble of a motorcycle outside. With a gasp he rushed to the door and threw it open, met immediately with a stumbling, sweaty, and bleeding, Talon.

Momentarily his one cat eye went wide, before arms encircled Talon and drew him inside. Using one foot to kick the door closed behind them, Yaya lovingly smothered Talon with hugs and a few kisses to his cheeks before pulling him to sit on the couch. “What happened?”

Talon didn’t say anything at first. He merely sat down, offering a shrug. He wriggled out of his jacket before reaching up to touch his forehead. Wincing he let out a hiss. “Why the Hell are these horns sprouting like this?”

Yaya blinked in surprise, inspecting the places where Talon was bleeding. There were two spots on his head where the bumps had risen the night before. Now, instead of tiny feverish lumps beneath the skin, there were two black horns pushing through the skin and causing it to split. A mixture of red and black blood oozed down Talon’s face, making it appear as if he’d injured his temples.

Yaya bit his bottom lip before rushing off to get a wet cloth. When he returned he bent beside Talon and reached up to start washing away the blood. With his voice as calm as he could muster, he asked, “Where’s Mikhail?”

Talon snorted, rolling his dark eyes. “Apparently he found a mate and is now off frolicking somewhere. Hell if I know. Fuck if I care. Fuck the world!” He swatted at Yaya’s hand sharply and tried to move away.

Yaya gritted his teeth, reaching out to snatch at Talon's wrist and hold him tightly. He gave a sharp jerk, his cat eye gleaming beneath his mop of raven hair. "And who told you this?"

Talon stopped short, giving Yaya a confused look. "I dunno. Some weird asshole-looking guy at his house."

Yaya squeezed harshly at Talon's hand and gave his arm another jerk. "Talon, I need you to tell me exactly what happened when you went to pick up Mikhail and do not leave anything out."

Talon looked to his wrist where Yaya was holding him firmly and then back to the other's face. He was startled at how authoritarian his friend was being. It meant that Yaya was serious and Talon had to obey. He nodded slowly and sat up. "I went there. I knocked on their stupid magical door that shocked the piss out of me. No one would come, so I had to kick the shit out of it. Eventually some green-eyed asshole answered. I asked for Mikhail, he sneered at me... called me 'oh that thug' ...Oh, wait. He said he was Mikhail's brother. Now that I think about it, yeah, I remember him saying he was Mikhail's brother. So yeah, he said their father found Mikhail a mate and that they both left before I arrived. Then, he slammed the door in my face after winking at me like he hoped I died."

Yaya shook his head furiously, long hair going everywhere. "Mikhail told us that his family refused to help him find a mate anymore. And as long as he has no mate his brother is the heir to his family. You said that when you touched the door it shocked you? ...That may mean that you are being prevented from entering."

Talon stood up sharply, looking confused and upset. "Wait, I don't understand! What are you saying!?"

Yaya grit his teeth and got to his feet, following Talon. He reached for the tail end of Talon's shirt, jerking it upwards. Upon Talon's chest were ancient demonic letters in black and red, burned into his flesh in a confused jumble.

Talon gasped and shrank back, clutching his abdomen. "This can't be. Only my mate can call my name like this."

"Or someone of strong enough blood that has chosen you as a mate. Someone that you could not refuse even if you wanted to." Yaya sat back on his heels, crossing his arms over his chest. "That is why your horns are sprouting. Your mate is in trouble and you're preparing for battle."

Talon's face drained of color and he looked up with his mouth slightly agape. "Wha-what are you saying? Are you saying that Mikhail is royalty and he's calling my True Name?"

Yaya let his eyes flutter closed, his voice falling to barely above a whisper. "Haven't you seen those big crystal blue eyes before? They might not have been that innocent, but the features are similar. It cannot be denied."

Talon grit his teeth, balling his hands up into fists. "Beni... How can I be so stupid?" Turning on his heels Talon bolted for the door.

Gasping Yaya jerked his head to follow Talon's motions, holding out a hand. "Talon wait! Let me go with you! Talon!"

The trip back to Mikhail's family home was a blur. In Talon's point of view, one moment Yaya was yelling at him to wait and then the next he was staring at that blasted door again. He glared at the dark wood and twisting runes before reaching up to bang on it. The electrical shock ran up his fist, and jarred the bones in his wrist, but by the time it reached his elbow, he didn't care about the pain any longer. The jolt had actually given him an adrenaline rush and now he was ready for action.

This time, instead of him having to shout profanities to make someone come to the door, it opened rather quickly. Talon was momentarily startled and he stared wide-eyed at a pasty-faced young man with slicked back black hair and a sad expression. Neither said anything for a short moment until there came the barking of a familiar voice in the background.

"Who is it, Henry!?" Came the voice of Ereek, Mikhail's brother, echoing somewhere from within the mansion.

The young man in butler's black clothing and a sharp red bowtie gave a jumping start and stepped closer to the small space where he'd cracked open the door, before calling over his shoulder. "It is just another child peddling sweets for the local school district Master Ereek. Do not fret, I will away with him promptly."

Talon quirked a brow while listening to the exchange. It occurred to him that while Mikhail's brother was an incubus yet among the incubi he probably wasn't very well liked. In just the short time that Talon had met him, he seemed rude, manipulative, stuck-up and obviously he was a liar that only thought of himself. The Castoré family, from what Talon understood, were once just poor

magic dabblers that clawed their way into rich society through assassination, mating, selective breeding, and theft. Now it seemed that some of the younger generation treated the working class like shit, effectively forgetting where they came from.

Then there was Mikhail. Talon had not known Mikhail very long, but from the short time he had spent with the young incubus, Mikhail seemed kind, genteel and intelligent. Talon imagined that Mikhail treated everyone fairly and perhaps when it came to those that worked in his household he was a bit better liked than his brother. This made a smirk twitch at the corner of Talon's lips and he eyed the butler thoughtfully.

Talon opened his mouth to speak but 'Henry' reached out with a white-gloved hand and silenced him, putting his palm over Talon's face and shaking his head quickly. Dark eyes jerked to the right and he indicated the direction pointedly with his chin. Lowering his voice barely above a whisper the incubus gasped out with a shaky voice. "He's been locked in his room. It's the top window, fifth to my right, the one with the balcony. It's magically sealed, but you must find a way in, and quickly."

There was a pleading look in Henry's eyes that stabbed at Talon's chest. Not only was Mikhail apparently on good terms with this butler, but also he seemed to care about Mikhail and he did not wish Mikhail to come to harm. Henry's voice was trembling as if he was genuinely frightened to tell Talon where Mikhail was, but he did anyways.

With a sharp nod Talon tore away from the door and took off running across the lawn. He heard the door close behind him and he hoped that Henry would not suffer for what he just did. After he rescued Mikhail, Talon was sure to do something about the state of Mikhail's family, but right then he had to worry about one thing at a time. Talon knew nothing of magical spells or how to break them; he was a berserker that just smashed his face and his fists into things until they died.

Skidding to a stop on damp grass he peered upwards. He counted off the ornate windows just to make sure, but there it was, an elaborate window with a balcony that had a small gargoyle sitting atop a short black iron fence. There was a blue gem set inside the gargoyle's left eye and every three seconds it gave a pulse that shimmered around the outside of the window and made complicated runes appear and twinkle in the air before disappearing in willowy wisps of blue smoke.

In Talon's mind he formed a plan, smash the gargoyle, save Mikhail. Unfortunately, the balcony railing upon which it sat was roughly twenty-five feet up in the air, and even his superior jumping skills would be taxed. Not that this was going to stop him.

Talon took off running across the lawn and jumped to the first floor window, gripping it with his hands and using it to push him upwards and vault toward the second floor window. He flailed in the air, trying to grasp the underside of the balcony, but caught only air, falling backwards rapidly. He managed to twist in the air and land in a crouch on the ground, but his failure sent a growl roiling up from his gut.

Staying down in his crouched state he took off running toward the building again, hurling himself upwards and crawling up the side of the wall like a spider before jumping for the balcony only to miss again.

On the third attempt he managed to barely touch a part of the balcony railing, but when he went to grasp it, a sharp flash of lightning zapped him so hard it sent him hurling to the ground with a thud. He spent a good thirty seconds shaking his head to get the ringing out of his ears before he stumbled to his feet and did the first thing that his angry mind called him to do.

"Mikhail!" He screamed at the top of his lungs, making his throat burn and his stomach clench.

Inside the bedroom all was silent. Mikhail lay in the center of the room, his limbs precariously bent and his cheek resting against the plush maroon rug. That was until his name was shouted from outside his window. His right eye fluttered open, but instead of a soft blue, it glowed an intense red, casting illumination in a halo around his head. Red and white demonic lettering appeared on his cheek, like tears spilling down from the red eye, twirling and dancing in no particular order. It was as if they were a puzzle, waiting for the right person to come along and fit them into words.

"Talon..." Mikhail whispered hoarsely into the darkness.

Slowly Mikhail looked up, turning his attention to the window. "Talon," he whispered again, with a bit more conviction.

His limbs felt heavy, as if a hundred sandbags weighted him down. However, in his gut was an undeniable need to get to Talon. Mikhail wanted to see Talon more than he wanted air to breath. He dug his fingers into the carpet and started to belly crawl toward the window. It was slow going at first. Every

inch felt like a mile, but eventually he began slithering more quickly until he managed to reach the window and place a hand upon it, scraping his nails down it in desperation.

Then, something inside of Mikhail reached out and he called a different name. His mouth moved in a slow sensual curling pout releasing a word of pure power, though no audible sound was made. Mikhail somehow knew that the incubus below would hear him and nothing would stop them from being together...

Talon was panting, his limbs trembling and eyes stinging. By now he was desperate for a way to break through that barrier. He was contemplating going to get his bike and driving straight through the house, or plucking a tree from the ground and using it as a battering ram. He stared up at the window, seeing movement that caused his heart to sputter in his chest. He clearly saw a hand scratching at the window and the tears that were only stings turned into glistening crystals against his lashes.

“M-Mikhail... what have they done to you... This is all my fault—” He did not get to finish his thought. Talon’s body lurched and he leaned forward, hunkering and then going still. He stood like a lumbering zombie on the lawn for about five seconds before a deep voice that rolled like thunder across the hills emanated from his body, seemingly coming from his entire spirit instead of his mouth. “I come,” was all it said, before he bolted forward, taking three long strides and then jumping.

As Talon sprang into the air two leathery wings made of shadows grew out of his back and gave three hard flaps. Now-clawed fists wrapped around the top of the balcony railing and his feet planted against the bottom so he was hanging from it, electrical shocks roaming all through his body. He gritted his teeth, black blood oozing down from the horns sprouting at the sides of his forehead as he peered in the window.

Mikhail looked up, seeing the visage of Talon on the other side of the window. He watched Talon’s lips move, and though no sound escaped, it was as if words went straight into him, ripping him open and searing his soul. Mikhail screamed, snapping at the spine and doing a backflip, bouncing neatly on his hands before landing on his feet. It was like a scene from a movie where someone gets possessed by an evil spirit. Once on his feet his long blond hair seemed to stretch out, growing longer, floating in the air like he were in water and then blanching white. At the tip of each long white strand snapped bits of blue electricity.

Mikhail's thin frame trembled with shaky breaths for a few seconds before a willowy echoing voice that was slightly feminine emanated from his body, "I come." And with that spoken he lunged, floating just a few inches above the floor and moving with incredible speed. Just before he collided with the window his arms came up to shield his face. The glass shattered in every direction and as he hit the barrier there was an explosion that shook the house.

Talon let go of the railing to catch Mikhail, both of them falling backwards and tumbling to the ground below. They rolled three times before stopping with Mikhail on top of Talon. Talon winced, panting heavily before sitting up and patting Mikhail's face. "Mikhail? Mikhail!?"

Mikhail was out cold, glass shards sticking out of his forearms and some glittering in his hair. Both he and Talon seemed to be back to normal, but Mikhail was deathly pale and his lips were blue around the edges.

Talon struggled to his feet, cradling Mikhail against his chest. He had started toward his bike, but stopped as he heard shouting and then dogs barking. "Shit!" Without looking over his shoulder he took off running as fast he could muster. Talon let out a sharp whistle and the bike came to life with a tremble of its engine, moving to roll in front of Talon. He swung a leg over and hopped on while it was still in motion. Leaning forward he clutched Mikhail tightly, shutting his eyes as the bike roared forward as fast as it dared.

Talon thought the worst of it was over, until something hot went soaring over his head and a tree nearby caught fire. The bike took a hard left to go around and Talon hissed through clenched teeth. "Crazy fuckers! Would they really rather you died? I swear... We're getting out of this and those bastards will know pain."

Another fireball flew close and Talon winced at the warmth, swerving to avoid debris.

They were already within the Dead Forest, now it was just a matter of passing into Yayandriel's territory. While some people were stupid enough to venture where there were big monsters and the like, there was no one dumb enough to cross the wayward prince.

Talon was trembling, his breath coming in gasping puffs as he stared at a particularly twisted tree with arbors that hung like the gnarled fingers of an old hag. He clenched his teeth and tensed every muscle in his body, praying to whatever creature in creation might listen to an incubus, until finally he lowered his head, feeling one of those eerie limbs brush his back.

He let out a heavy sigh, the tension fleeing his body, but he did not look back. Now they were deep within the Dead Forest, and if the men dared to follow him in, just to try and kill Mikhail, they would be dead by morning.

Navigating the forest beyond that tree was almost impossible. A thick fog settled in immediately and visibility dropped to zero. In order to get around, an individual had to go by feeling, familiarity and smell. The only reason that Talon knew where he was going was because he had been there so many times. He slowed the bike to a crawl and counted in his head. A large rock wall came into view and he turned right, he counted off again until he came to a mossy tree. He would follow directions like this until he rolled up in front of Yaya's cave.

Back at the twisted tree, three men on off-road vehicles slowed down in an attempt to ascertain where Talon had gone. The fog settled around their ankles and it was difficult to see beyond the bent limbs and mossy overgrowth.

As they puttered closer to the unnatural fog, a large shadow appeared high in the tree and a voice filled the entire space, bouncing and echoing off every nearby object. "Leave this place, or be devoured."

All three vehicles stopped and the men looked up. They seemed uncertain as to what to do at this point. One dared to raise his hand, a ball of fire forming in his palm. Before he had a chance to throw it, a shadowy hand appeared behind him and jerked him off the bike, wrapping all the way around his body and lifting him in the air. He screamed and flailed as he was dragged up into the tree. His comrades stared in awe as he disappeared into the black shadow. At first there were agonizing cries coming from overhead, and then it went quiet. There was a faint crunching sound, and then the body came tumbling down, landing with a sickening thud.

The body was emaciated, looking as if it had been completely drained of all life. While an incubus or succubus was able to drain life from other beings through sexual means, rarely did one mature to the point of being able to suck the vitality from another at a whim.

"Maker's breath... It's true. Yayandriel the Hermit... the True King..." one man stammered before slamming his vehicle in reverse, turning and peeling out with a screech of tires.

The second sat thunderstruck, staring at the corpse of his comrade. His limbs shook and all color drained from his face. While he sat staring the

shadow in the tree slithered downwards, moving like black water along the terrain. Soon one yellow cat eye moved right up into the thug's field of vision.

“Boo...” Yayandriel muttered in a sensual purr.

The man screamed, throttling his ATV and kicking up dust as he vanished through the underbrush on his way out of the Dead Forest.

Talon burst through the door and ducked into the cave with Mikhail tucked close to his chest. “Yaya!?” he called out frantically as he moved to lie Mikhail down on the bearskin rug. Carefully he settled Mikhail's head down and brushed blond locks from his eyes. The young incubus was still unresponsive and the pallor in his cheeks was not improving.

“Yaya!?” Talon called out again, looking around the room frantically before glancing back to Mikhail. His arms were bleeding and there were still bits of glass stuck in his flesh. “Yaya where are you!? I need help!” Talon's voice cracked and his eyes stung with unshed tears. Collapsing onto his rear he rubbed the back of his hand under his nose, looking confused and somewhat helpless.

Just before Talon began to cry, Yaya ducked into the open door and shut it softly behind him. “*Ssshhh*, you'll wake the dead. Goodness. Has there ever been a time that I didn't come when you called?” Yaya knelt beside Mikhail, looking the young man over before clucking his tongue. “Let me get him cleaned up and the glass out of his arms. Then you need to take him to the hot springs in the back and complete the mating immediately. If you don't break the seal before sun-up, he'll die.”

Talon watched mutely as Yaya walked in through the door and inspected Mikhail. Then, when the other mentioned “mating” Talon shook his head and sputtered. “Wait, what? Me? I can't... We can't... Look at him! How can you suggest sex at a time like this? And just where the Hell were you!?”

Yaya disappeared into the next room, the sound of running water and shuffling as he spoke. “I was out chasing away the men following you. They will think twice about ever entering my forest again. But Mikhail is the important one, now. His injuries are superficial, Talon. The only reason they haven't healed already is because he is beyond his eighteenth birthday. I should have realized earlier. The poor dear was probably ashamed. I cannot imagine what sort of pain he must have been in physically. He's a mature incubus,

Talon, a mature incubus with no mate. Do you know what happens to a mature incubus with no mate?"

The sound of Yaya's footsteps moved closer again and he appeared in the small living area with a cloth and a bowl of water. He knelt beside Mikhail and began carefully plucking glass out of little cuts and then washing away the blood. Taking a deep breath he let it out slowly. "A mature incubus with no mate will consume its own energy for nourishment until there is nothing left. He has fallen into a state of stasis to conserve energy. The boy is strong. His instincts put him to sleep so that he would not eat himself."

Talon had been listening with bated breath. His eyes were wide and his jaw set tight. Swallowing hard he sat up on his knees and then shook his head slowly. "I can't bring myself to have sex with someone that's asleep. Even if he did choose me. That's just..." He trailed off, reaching out to brush his fingertips against Mikhail's cheek.

Yaya began to chuckle softly. "Have you ever heard the human tale of *Sleeping Beauty*, Talon?"

Talon quirked a brow. "What the ever loving fuck are you going on about?"

Snorting, Yaya continued. "It's a fairy tale about a princess who falls into a coma-like magical sleep. The only way that she can wake is for her mate to kiss her. That is all you must do. If you arouse him, he will wake. He is an incubus, Talon, an incubus starving to mate. If you initiate what he needs, he will wake. I promise you this."

Sighing heavily, Talon's shoulders sank. It was as if the weight of the world was pressing down upon him and he was unable to hold it up any longer. He stared down at Mikhail before glancing to Yaya again. He started, giving a slight jump at seeing the state of his friend. "Yaya... your horn."

From Yaya's temple where the one black horn grew, black blood was dripping down from the base. It was clear that the sharp pointed appendage was much larger than before, moving up past his head and then bending outwards.

Yaya reached up to touch it thoughtfully before letting out a sigh. "Yes, it must have happened while I was fighting those men from Castoré. Don't worry about it. Your top priority is Mikhail."

Talon bit his bottom lip, chewing it to the point he tasted copper. "But that means that you... I'm so sorry. I know how it pains you to do things like that."

To Talon's surprise, Yaya smiled, looking up at him with a cheerful expression. He reached out and cupped Talon's cheek, holding his gaze with

that bright cat eye. “Talon, seeing you and Mikhail has made me realize that life is what you make of it. I have feared myself for longer than most men live. I have pitied myself and hated myself, but to what end? Tonight I used a power that I have so loathed to help two beautiful young men come together. The one my daughter adored, and the one that I’m certain shares mine and my daughter’s blood. I don’t feel broken anymore. Though I’m not quite ready to run out into the sun and take my brother’s hand to lead our people, I think maybe... just maybe, I can start heading in that direction. Perhaps even take a new mate one day if the Fates want it of me. And dammit Talon, if I can feel that way, then you can pick up this beautiful incubus, and kiss him the way you’ve wanted to since the moment you laid eyes upon him.”

Talon was stunned into silence. He sat staring at Yaya who quietly withdrew his hand, finished cleaning Mikhail and then stood with the soiled rag and bowl of rust-colored water in hand. Humming softly he moved out of the room and disappeared, leaving the two younger incubi to their own devices.

After a few moments of sitting on the floor slack-jawed and unable to form coherent thoughts, Talon snapped out of it. He snorted, nostrils flaring as he grunted. “Well, shit.” Leaning forward he wiggled his arms up under Mikhail’s limp body and hefted him into a bridal style carry.

Moving through the winding corridors of the cave, Talon did as Yaya bid him. After several twisting passages he came upon a dark curtain with soft mist billowing out from the bottom. He ducked his head, disappearing through the curtain with Mikhail in tow, and appeared inside a space occupied only by a bubbling hot spring. The water glowed a soft green and it threw eerie shadows upon the gray rock walls. The bubbles foamed and roiled, making rushing sounds echo. It was rather soothing, and Talon felt the tension in his shoulders begin to relax, just from being near the water.

Standing at the edge he stepped on his left heel with the right toe of his boot and then went to kicking, effectively removing one and then repeated the action to remove the other. Ignoring his clothing he moved to the water’s edge and stepped down the rocks until he was submerged up to his waist. Carefully, he placed Mikhail upon a flat rock and propped him up. One hand instantly went to a smooth, slightly freckled cheek.

“Fuck, you’re beautiful...” Talon muttered under his breath as he stared at Mikhail. Leaning forward he pressed their foreheads together. “Please, don’t hate me for this.”

One hand threaded through the back of Mikhail’s blond locks while the other lifted his chin. Talon’s thumb brushed back and forth across Mikhail’s

bottom lip, lightly toying with the silken flesh. Talon swallowed hard, suddenly feeling inadequate. It wasn't exactly a secret that he was a foul-mouthed lug that tended to start punching things rather than ask questions. Still, he would do his best to give Mikhail a better life than he had had with the Castoré family and that was something... wasn't it?

Shutting his eyes tight, Talon leaned forward and dared to touch his lips butterfly softly to Mikhail's. The feel of those lips sent shivers down Talon's spine and the warmth that immediately spread to his nether regions spurred him on to deepen the kiss. He pressed down more firmly, snaking out his tongue to taste the luscious plump flesh.

Mikhail's taste was intoxicating. Talon let out a long "mmm" and moved in closer, their chests butting together. He could feel Mikhail's heartbeat thudding slow and rhythmic, and then suddenly it sped up. It started to pound and arms wrapped around Talon's head. Two slender legs wound round his waist and jerked him in tight. Talon found himself kissed harshly, sharp teeth biting at his bottom lip. His eyes went wide and he tried to pull back, but Mikhail wasn't letting him go.

Chapter 4

A Seed To Be Sown

Mikhail let out a growl, one hand reaching back to grip the edge of the small pool of water and giving a push. He flipped Talon around, causing the man to splash in the water before landing seated on a rock with Mikhail sitting firmly atop of him. Mikhail continued to assault his lips for a moment, shoving his tongue halfway down Talon's throat before tugging his head back to gasp for air.

Mikhail's body arched and he swiveled his hips around in a grinding circle, rubbing his rock-hard cock against Talon's stomach. "You came for me." He panted, cheeks flushed and lips plump red from the rough kisses.

Talon sputtered for breath, licking his lips as he fought to comprehend what just happened. "Of course! You called to me. Of course, I came."

Mikhail looked down at Talon, his pupils so dilated his eyes looked black with rings of blue. "But did you come only because I called, or did you do it because you want me the way I want you?" There was a sadness mixed in with the obvious lust and need.

Talon furled his brows tightly together, reaching up to touch Mikhail's cheek. "So you realize that I cannot refuse you. Mikhail, I didn't offer to help you because of some mystic hold you have over me, I did it because I thought you were sweet and... and I couldn't stand the thought of you being hurt. I wanted to find someone special for you, someone that would take care of you. Then, I started to get angry and jealous at the thought of someone else having you. The person I wanted you to mate with was always me. From the moment our eyes met at The Riot Room, I wanted you too."

Mikhail let out a little twittering giggle, fisting his hands in Talon's hair while leaning down to rub their noses back and forth together. "For someone who constantly acts like a brainless tough-guy, you're kind of sappy. You realize that?"

Talon let out a rumbling grumble. Gripping Mikhail by the rear he flipped around, making the water splash again as he moved to pin Mikhail beneath him. Grinning he leaned down, purring into the other's ear. "And you act like a sweet little darling, but underneath those doe-eyes is a manipulative little shit."

Mikhail squeaked then started to laugh, arms and legs wrapping around Talon again. His hips rolled, using the other's body to stimulate his throbbing erection. "*Mmm*, maybe just a little. But I *am* a Castoré, even if I'm the black sheep of the family."

Talon snorted before reaching down, starting to push Mikhail's wet robe open, his fingertips brushing against the other's flesh. "So how do you want to do this?" he asked seriously, glancing back and forth from Mikhail's eyes to his smooth pale body.

Mikhail bit his bottom lip, cheeks burning pink. "Oh, I don't really have any experience, as if that wasn't obvious. I mean, I've masturbated before, but I'm not sure of what I want as far as..." He shut his eyes and took a deep breath. "I'm an incubus, I'm an incubus..." He started up a mantra and then shook his head. "I can talk about sex without freaking out."

A thudding sound made the two of them look up, just in time to see a flopping purple dildo and a tub of lubricant roll into the room, stopping at the edge of the water. Mikhail gasped and Talon blinked, both of them clearly surprised.

Talon barked out. "Seriously Yaya?" While Mikhail picked up the flopping dildo, attempting to stifle a giggle.

Mikhail flailed the dildo back and forth in his hands, watching as it wiggled before popping Talon lightly in the forehead with the head of it. "*Doink!*" he said before laughing. "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! It's just so floppy! Seems like this would be better for spanking someone with than... well anyways..."

Talon went cross-eyed before tugging the dildo from Mikhail's hand and tossing it over his shoulder with a splash. "I think we're good in the cock department. We have two raging boners that we can put to good use. The lube on the other hand is a good idea. We'll need plenty of that. Now, I just want to figure out what you like. It'll be better that way."

Mikhail wriggled his upper body, managing to slip his arms out of the tattered and dirty robe he was wearing, leaving it to float in the water. He licked his lips, reaching up to rest his arms at Talon's shoulders. "Well, shouldn't you get out of those wet clothes?" He grinned, dragging his nails down Talon's front before gripping the tail end of the other's shirt and starting to undo the buttons. It was difficult to peel the wet cloth off, but eventually the two managed to get it down Talon's shoulders and it was cast aside.

Mikhail took in a sharp breath, fingertips sliding down Talon's muscular front. He lightly scratched at defined pecks and let his fingers linger over pert nipples. He wanted the imprint of that tight body burned into his mind. "Dark Gods... your body..." He gulped visibly as he moved his hands to Talon's waistband and started to work at the button of his jeans.

Talon let Mikhail explore. His arms hung limp at his sides, watching Mikhail's face rather than his hands. He watched how his pupils dilated and constricted from each sight and touch. He noted where Mikhail seemed the most interested. Wetting his lips he spoke in a hushed purr. "I'm glad you enjoy me."

Mikhail gasped, looking up into Talon's face. He blushed at the intensity of Talon's dark eyes and looked away, only to have his face drawn back by a gentle hand upon his chin. "There's no need to look away. As your mate I give you permission to think of my body as just another part of me at your disposal. That being said, I still reserve the right to set limits, though I doubt I would ever be able to say 'no' to those blue eyes."

Mikhail curled up his nose before drawing in a breath. "The same goes for me. I mean, I don't know if you can enjoy me the way that I do you, but if you can... I'm yours for the taking, the touching..." He swallowed hard, grasping Talon's hand and tugging it away from his cheek to pull it down his chest. He dragged it downwards moving to smooth the other's fingertips against his stomach and then lower.

Talon let out a rumbling purr. "Oh, believe me. I want to do a lot of touching and taking. At least we've established that between us."

Mikhail swallowed hard then gripped Talon's zipper, dragging it down quickly and reaching to grip Talon's throbbing hard cock. He was rewarded with a growling groan. Spurred by the noises he leaned up, holding Talon's hard dick in one hand and using the other to try and work his wet jeans down. Talon was apparently sick of waiting, because he reached to aid in shoving his pants down, stomping back and forth in the water when they reached his knees.

Eventually, Talon was nude and he leaned to press his slick wet body against Mikhail's. "Fuck you're beautiful," he purred as he moved his nose into the crook of Mikhail's neck and breathed deep. "It's all I can do to hold back and try to keep this light. I don't want to scare or overwhelm you."

Mikhail arched, letting his head fall back to expose his throat while dragging his nails down Talon's upper arms. "Th-thank you." He managed to

choke out while rolling his hips against the other so that their hot pricks bumped together. “You feel so good, and I need you. Talon, it really hurts inside. I know you don’t want to rush but...”

Talon nuzzled his face in Mikhail’s throat before speaking against his flesh, puffing hot breath across him. “I understand. Do you want it like this? Face to face with me pumping into you? Watching you cum and scream? Or maybe you want to ride me the way you jumped on top of me after I kissed you... Or maybe...”

For reasons that Talon couldn’t express in words, he pulled back from Mikhail momentarily and moved to grip the other by the hips. Carefully he spun Mikhail like a top, flipping the other around so quickly that Mikhail had to grip the edge of the pool to keep from falling into it.

Talon spooned up behind Mikhail, his nails raking at the backs of the other’s thighs as he slid his cock back and forth between Mikhail’s ass cheeks. “Maybe you want me to fuck you from behind. Bend you over like an animal with my chest pressed against your back. To hold you down firmly so you can barely move. What do you say, Mikhail? How do you want it?”

When Mikhail was twirled around and pinned, ass up and vulnerable, a little cry escaped his lips and his body began to tremble. It was what Talon was looking for out of the motion, but he still waited for the words. He rolled his hips, brushing his wet dick between quivering thighs.

“Y-yes!” Mikhail cried out after some panting. He arched his back and pressed his rear firmly against Talon. “Like this! Oh, Dark Gods take me! I can’t stand it anymore! My insides are on fire, Talon! I’m going to die! It hurts! Please! I beg you! Break the seal! I am yours and you are mine!” He reached down and took his thickness into his palm, squeezing tightly as he shut his eyes.

Talon leaned forward, flicking out his tongue to lick Mikhail’s exposed spine. At first the warm wet muscle was normal pink flesh, but slowly it split down the middle and extended, morphing into a long serpent’s tongue. He licked from the center of Mikhail’s back all the way up to the base of his neck before biting sharply at his shoulder blade. He was rewarded with a chorus of blissful heated cries and desire-filled moans.

Grinning, Talon reached to the side of the bubbling pool, awkwardly juggling the tub of lube until he managed to get it open with one hand. His other hand was not willing to stop playing with Mikhail’s body. He scratched lightly at the backs of the other’s thighs and then squeezed roughly at an

exposed butt cheek. Finally, he had a hand drenched in goopy slick substance and then to his surprise, he noted that the same hand had a soft blue glow emanating from the back of it. Talon smirked and shook his head, looking down to Mikhail's hand that was gripping the edge of the pool. It too had begun to glow.

“Our spirits are in sync,” Talon stated in a rumbling voice, his hand dipping down into the water and slipping between Mikhail's cheeks. Slick fingertips began to swirl around Mikhail's tight pucker, one finger pressing into the ring of muscle. “Soon our inner beasts will reach out to embrace one another. Are you ready to open up to me? To reveal who you truly are?”

Mikhail whined, leaning forward so his elbow rested against the side of the tub. Drawing in a deep breath, he widened his stance and attempted to relax. He felt his insides stretch and the unpleasant burn brought with it a promise that the stabbing pains inside his chest would soon end and he would be set free. “I am ready, not only for you to see, but to see for myself. And I am ready to see you.” Mikhail cast a glance over his shoulder. His right eye had begun to glow red and ancient writing danced across the flesh of his cheek.

Talon smiled, his free hand reaching up to touch Mikhail's cheek. “I will show you all of me. I will not run and I will not hide. I belong to you as much as you belong to me.”

Talon pressed the finger toying with Mikhail's entrance in deeply. He wanted to be sweet and tender, but there was a bit of urgency in their lovemaking. Though he liked the idea of having sex with Mikhail and being his first, they were not humans and this was not a sappy romance. The truth of the matter was that if they did not mate and do so with quick intensity, Mikhail would die. Talon had to keep that in mind. He cared about Mikhail and truly wanted to be with him, but there would be time for fluffy fun sex later, once the danger was out of the way.

Mikhail let out a slight yelp as Talon's finger fully pierced his body. Though in the last few weeks he had masturbated more frequently, he had never played much with his back entrance. He was momentarily shocked by the sting, but slowly the pain began to ebb, giving way to an uncomfortable pressure. He shifted, taking in a breath and letting his cheek rest on his arm. His free hand stroked firmly at his cock, sending tingling prickles throughout his body. And then something wonderful happened. Talon's finger moved in and out slowly before pressing in a bit deeper and touching something that sent a shiver of pure pleasure flowing like waves through Mikhail's body.

Mikhail groaned, rolling his hips in attempt to feel more of that pleasant sensation. He forgot about the previous discomfort, and abandoned himself to the pleasure. Stroking more firmly, he began a rhythm of moving back against Talon's probing finger and then forward into his own palm. Before he knew it, Talon had added a second finger, swirling them around inside. Moaning cries erupted from his lips. "Ah! More! Talon!" His voice took on an airy undertone, echoing with a slightly more feminine ethereal ring.

Talon thrust his fingers in and out of Mikhail's body a few more times before pulling them out of the tight, wet hole. The sounds coming from his new lover were amazing. He was glad that he had been a sexually active incubus since his mid-teens, otherwise he might have prematurely spilled from the sights, sounds and smells of the interaction.

Leaning forward he whispered huskily into Mikhail's ear. "I think you're ready for my cock. It's hot and hard, not to mention a whole lot bigger than my finger." His voice was deeper than normal, with a growling undertone. It echoed off the walls of the small space, the bubbling of the water giving it an almost roaring effect.

Mikhail whimpered as Talon's fingers withdrew, his body rocking backwards against the other in an attempt to find more glorious touches. When Talon spoke into his ear Mikhail moaned, panting heavily and arching like a cat, thrusting his rear out at the ready to receive the blessed cock that Talon was going on about. "Yes, yes give it to me. I'm ready." Mikhail's hair lifted into the air, bits of electricity snapping at the ends like the space around them had been filled with a positive charge. Tiny lightning bolts danced across the surface of the water, having just enough spark to make their flesh jolt and tingle.

Talon momentarily marveled at the electricity bending and twisting around him before reaching out of the water to get another handful of lubrication. Wetting his lips in anticipation he reached down to coat his throbbing prick from base to tip. His stomach was quivering with need and as he touched himself, he realized just how much he needed to be inside of Mikhail. There was no more time to play games.

Holding his thickness with one hand, the other smoothed down Mikhail's spine while Talon inched forward, pressing himself to his lover's waiting hole. He took a deep breath and then held it, working the head in slowly before pressing deeper, listening for sounds of discomfort. He went as slowly as he

could, feeling his engorged member swallowed up by tight heat until the pleasure was so overwhelming that his hair tingled.

Mikhail whined when he felt the tip against him. He bit his bottom lip and waited for the inevitable. The first sting wasn't exactly pleasant, but a stabbing in his chest overshadowed it, like someone using a knife blade to pierce into a locking mechanism. Each bit of cock that was shoved further into him was a tumbler in the lock lining up. Soon the lock would click free; he would be free.

Before Mikhail realized, Talon was deep inside and pleasuring warmth spread through his body. He moaned, grinding his hips backwards in a wanton begging motion. There was blissful freedom in their coupling and he wanted—*needed*, more of it.

Mikhail's blond hair began to drain of color, becoming a soft snowy white floating in the air with prickles of electricity dancing in the strands. From his shoulder blades, misty tendrils spiraled almost like spider webs or the icy prickles of winter upon a pane of glass, causing glistening patterns to stretch upwards and out, forming into ice crystal wings. Out of the mop of white hair, white antlers sprouted jutting upwards proudly and then spreading out, branching further and further into an impressive rack. All the while he continued to roll his hips, panting and grunting as he enjoyed the thickness buried deep within his body.

"Talon..." an ethereal echoing feminine voice emanated from Mikhail's body.

Out of the water Talon had sprouted a long black tail that forked at the end. One fork had a black puffy tuft and the other was that of a serpent. From his head formed large black bull horns and shadowy wings flapped at his back. He leaned over his lover, growling and snorting, hot puffs of steam coming from his nostrils.

"There you are..." rumbled a deep voice from Talon.

Mikhail turned his head to peer at Talon over his shoulder. His right eye continued to glow cherry red while the lettering moved upon his cheek. Most of the letters had lined up; only a few remained out of order. Soon his name would take shape and the seal would be broken.

Talon let out a roaring growl, reaching down to grip Mikhail by the hips and pound harder, skin slapping and water sloshing. Mikhail gasped, a little white deer tail appearing at the base of his spine, popping up out of the water. He

lunged forward, using white claws against the side of the pool to tug away. He seemed to prance on two feet around the edge of the pool and then dashed upwards into the air. He hovered, stretching out his beautiful pale body before looking over his shoulder to Talon again, giving him a rather coy expression while wiggling his rear.

When Mikhail pulled away Talon let out a gasp. The wondrous sensation of having his tool sheathed into warmth was ended and he whined. There was a split second of wondering if he did something wrong, or if he'd hurt Mikhail. He watched the other race across the room and up into the air. Then slowly a grin spread across his lips, sharp white teeth showing.

“A white stag, that’s fitting. You’re beautiful, majestic, a bringer of good fortune, and for the simple minded, if they cannot have you the way they want... they would simply destroy you. Ah, but a playful sort you are as well, *hmm?* Well, I’m game for a little sport.” Talon let out a rumbling chuckle as he lumbered slowly up out of the pool, his forked tail whipping back and forth behind him.

Talon stalked slowly back and forth on the ground below, watching the beautiful stag floating above him. His wings twitched and his cock throbbed. He would have that stag. Lunging into the air he gave his wings two hard flaps, closing the gap between them and wrapping both arms around Mikhail. He maneuvered in quickly snapping his hips forward and burying himself in that waiting passage with a roaring grunt of triumph.

Mikhail had been hovering in the air, giving his glittering white wings a few flaps. He held his head high and chin up, an aura of royal majesty all around him. Occasionally he would glance over his shoulder to Talon and then wiggle his shapely hips, the little white puff of a deer tail wagging enthusiastically, as if to entice the raging bull below. When he was finally pounced upon and held tightly, he let out a gasping bleat before moaning as his body was speared on a throbbing cock. Another tumbler slid into place and he shuddered violently with the need to release.

By now the two were making an incredible amount of noise. A silent figure padded down the twisting corridors and ducked through the curtain to check on the two of them. One gleaming cat eye along with a black shadow appeared near the door, settling down to make certain they were all right. A black cat tail lazily flicked as the figure curled up amongst the shadows, only that one eye visible. “*Ah, so Mikhail is a stag. That shall be a calming addition to Talon’s bull.*” Yaya mused internally as he lie in the shadows along the wall.

Neither noticed someone had entered the room, they were too focused on each other. Talon reached a clawed hand around Mikhail, gripping his weeping heat and stroking. His hips snapped in time with his fondling as he panted hot breath on the back of his lover's neck. It was time he ended the mating ritual. Licking softly on the cone of Mikhail's ear he whispered. "I set you free," before biting sharply into his shoulder, nearly to the point of bringing blood.

Mikhail was at his limit. Each time Talon thrust he connected perfectly with his pleasure button, sending lightning bolts of ecstasy in every direction. Then with the addition of his stroking hand the need to release was overwhelming. Sweet words in his ear and then a promise of the ultimate gift pushed Mikhail to the edge of a precipice and kicked him over. He let out an earth-shattering scream and the final tumbler slid into place. The lock shattered and he was set free. Upon his cheek the letters formed into his true name, and the seal on his soul was broken. A piece of Talon's soul flowed into him, and white spots filled his vision as the most glorious orgasm he'd ever known overtook him, and he blacked out.

Talon felt Mikhail's insides clamp down tightly and his body tremble violently. When Mikhail cried out, warmth coated Talon's hand, but he kept thrusting, building his own body up to the breaking point. Something warm and gentle flowed into his spirit and he felt Mikhail touch him in a way that only one other person ever had. It made his eyes burn, but he wasn't sad. Talon felt glad to have connected with Mikhail in body, mind and spirit. He let out a growling grunt as his seed filled Mikhail's body and then rested his forehead against the other's back while he panted to catch his breath.

"Fuck that was amazing..." Talon managed to say after a moment. When there was no response he lifted his head, quirking a brow. "Uh... Mikhail?" He gave the other a gentle shake, slowly lowering the two of them to the floor with a few wing flaps.

"He's exhausted," came Yaya's purring voice from the shadows.

Talon let out a hiss before shaking his head. "Dammit Yaya, have you been creeping on us this whole time?" Carefully Talon inched his hips backwards, pulling his thickness out of Mikhail's body. He kept his arms tightly wound round the other. He hugged Mikhail to him, shifting his limp body until he could swing an arm up under Mikhail's legs and heft him into a carry.

Yaya chuckled. "Do not flatter yourself. I only came to check on you a few moments ago. It got pretty loud and rowdy in here toward the end. I wanted to

make sure the two of you weren't hurt. Sometimes the beast within us can be... violent."

Talon stared down at Mikhail's sleeping figure in his arms. The young blond incubus looked calm, at peace. There was a tender smile upon Mikhail's face and his color was peachy pink. The stag form had faded and he was back to his normal self, complete with a new fresh blush of health.

"He looks so much better now," Talon mused softly.

"*Mmm*, the seal is broken and energy passed between the two of you. He will likely awaken feeling like a new incubus. He will be hungry, however," Yaya stated, padding up on all fours and turning for the exit.

"Yeah, I'll take him to the human world and teach him how to ambient feed, tomorrow. I don't think he's ready to seduce people yet but feeding off sexual energy in the air should be all right," Talon said, still staring down at Mikhail.

Yaya looked over his shoulder, the dark hair sliding away from his one eye that typically remained hidden. His eyes were mismatched, one a golden cat eye and the other a soft blue round iris nearly identical to Mikhail's. "You two go get some sleep. Tomorrow is the start of the rest of your lives."

Chapter 5

A Candy To Be Eaten

Mikhail moaned and then let out a little groaning grunt. He stretched his arms up over his head and then rolled to his side. He expected to be met with fluffy pillows, but instead his face collided with something warm, smooth, and hard. Startling, he sat up and immediately winced. There was a stinging sensation in his rear and his body felt sore.

Reaching up to rub at his eyes he attempted to clear the fog from his mind. He was in a round room made of stone, upon a bed made of furs. There was a sleeping man beside him and none of it seemed familiar. He did not recall moving into this room, or even falling asleep.

Slowly he recalled being in a bubbling pool of water with Talon and then...

Mikhail blushed deeply, biting his bottom lip as he gazed down at Talon's sleeping figure. He wanted to let out a myriad of giggles, but kept silent. Swallowing down a nervous lump he lay back down, resting his cheek against Talon's chest. He listened to the other's slow thumping heartbeat and his rhythmic breathing.

"*Mmm*, morning..." Talon mumbled before glancing to a clock on a nearby nightstand. Snorting, he reached up and put an arm across his eyes. "Well, afternoon that is."

Mikhail gasped and hid his face in Talon's chest. "Ah, sorry. I didn't mean to wake you."

Talon lowered his arm from his face and wrapped it around Mikhail's shoulders. "Naw, I've been dozing on and off for an hour or so. You didn't wake me. How'd you sleep?"

Mikhail swallowed hard before settling awkwardly into the embrace. "I, well, good I guess. I don't recall falling asleep or dreaming at all. I just... woke up. I feel a lot better than I did, though. I've been sick and in pain for a couple of weeks, but today I feel... well I feel great to be honest!" Mikhail laughed, rubbing his nose softly against Talon's left pec.

Talon chuckled, raising a hand to brush Mikhail's blond locks behind his ears. "Good, that's what is supposed to happen after your first mating. You're

probably still ‘hungry’ though. I’ll take you to the human world and show you how to feed.”

Mikhail’s head popped up, his blue eyes wide and freckled face bright pink. “Wait... you mean...” he stammered.

Talon leaned up, kissing the tip of Mikhail’s nose. “We can feed from sexual energy in the air. It’s not as potent as having sex, but it works. I’ll show you how. Don’t go freaking out on me, I’m not going to push you at a random human and demand you fuck them. Some incubi think that’s the end-all, be-all of our people, but a lot of us just don’t get into it that much. There are other ways.”

Mikhail let out a heavy relieved sigh, his cheek resting against Talon once again. “Mmm, thank goodness. Maybe one day I can think flippantly about sleeping with someone, but I’m definitely not there yet. But, I don’t understand what happened last night. Or maybe the past few days, really.”

Talon let his eyes slide closed, his hands gently petting up and down at Mikhail’s spine. “I think the majority of our people go through life without understanding a whole lot. The king, and Yaya as well, do not like the blissful ignorance that our society lives in. It’s not like there’s any sort of mandate to teach children or even adults why we are the way we are or what it takes to survive. We live in a backbiting society where people grasp at power like it has some sort of meaning. Not even I truly understood until I was entrenched in the service of the crown, and became bonded to my first mate.”

Mikhail furled his brows, moving to cross his hands at Talon’s chest and rest his chin atop of them. “So tell me. Tell me what you know so that I can understand.”

Talon opened his eyes and looked at the ceiling. “*Mmm*, well the legend goes that the first of our kind were free to do as they pleased. They could drain life force to the point of death, with or without sex, and they were powerful forces to be reckoned with. They were also cunning, beautiful, but saw no reason to cause harm for no reason. Then, the very first, our originator, he or she, it’s rather vague, whomever from which royal blood flows, fell in love with a married mortal. Supposedly this mortal reciprocated those feelings and a sordid affair ensued.”

Mikhail puffed out his cheeks, furling his brows as he listened to the tale. It seemed odd, but at the same time rather splendid. He liked the idea of his

people being free from the cursed seal and forced mating, as well as truly falling in love, with another species no less.

“Unfortunately for the lovers, the third wheel in this tale was a powerful magi, and he or she, is the one who cursed our people, placing a seal upon our souls,” Talon continued, closing his eyes again, brows furling tightly together. “Now, we must mate in order to break that seal, whether we want to or not.”

“That’s horrible!” Mikhail chimed in with a frown. “That magi must not have actually loved the spouse, else he or she would have wanted the person to be happy, not have the lover cursed.”

Talon snorted, letting out a heavy sigh. “A sensible thought, but you’ll find that humans aren’t too sensible when it comes to love and betrayal. At any rate, the curse spread to all our people, and here we are. You tasted what happens first hand if you do not mate by a certain age.” Talon squeezed his arms around Mikhail before leaning up to kiss the other’s brow.

Mikhail let out a happy sigh from the embrace before pulling back, moving to straddle Talon’s waist and stare down at him thoughtfully. “But I still do not understand. I recall this weird pull within my chest and speaking a different language. I think I even turned into an animal at one point! What was all that?”

Talon smirked, reaching up to cup Mikhail’s cheek. “Ah, well, you are a descendent of the First. You have a touch of royal blood in you. It makes you just a little bit different from others of our kind. Granted, all of us have an inner beast. You have seen those of us with horns, tails, claws, and other such. It is the inner beast slowly forming from within. It is a sign of maturity, but also the use of our true powers. Our inner beast has a name, and that is our true demon name. You know my name, don’t you?”

Mikhail scrunched up his nose and pursed his lips, making a sour face. He tried to understand, slowly toiling the words over in his mind before nodding. “Ah, yes. I’m not sure how I know, but I know it. I don’t understand how I can be kin to royalty though, I’m just a Castoré!”

Talon shook his head slowly. “Your father is a Castoré, but what of your mother?”

Mikhail leaned back a bit. “I-I have never met my mother.”

Talon winked, leaning up to kiss the other with a big *mwa!* smooch to the lips. “Exactly. I believe she is either one of Yaya’s sisters, or perhaps a cousin. He will find out. Likely you were promised to Benilial, just as I was. It’s not

uncommon for princesses to have more than one mate. While princes tend to be small, late bloomers, princesses are large, commanding, and powerful even at a young age. You will grow into your powers. I imagine your father has never met a prince before. He expected you to be like a princess. He had no idea that you are just as you were meant to be, slight, beautiful, and with an allure that only people like me can understand.”

Mikhail’s head was spinning and he wasn’t sure he understood half of what was being said, let alone was able to process it. He reached up and gripped his forehead. “Wait, people like you? I’m so confused.”

Talon laughed, squeezing his arms around Mikhail. “My family has been in the service of the crown for centuries. We are bodyguards to people like you. Our spirits bond easily to those of royal blood. We are bred in order to do so. When I met you, I was still mixed up over Benilial’s death, but my instincts told me to protect you. I’ll always protect you...” Talon began to purr, nuzzling his nose under Mikhail’s chin and nipping at his neck.

Mikhail wriggled, letting out a gasp and then a giggle. He ran his fingers through Talon’s hair and then blinked out of the revelry. “Oh! There’s something I need to tell you about...”

A small round door burst open and Yaya’s head emerged into the room. “Afternoon kiddos! I made pancakes. Get your lazy buns out of the bed and come eat. Talon, you need to get him some energy. He’s gone far too long without feeding.” Yaya brandished a spatula at the couple before disappearing back into the hall.

Talon grumbled and then started to move around in the bed. “All right! All right! We’re coming. Shit... What were you about to say?”

Mikhail bit his bottom lip then shook his head. “Ah, we can talk about it later. I am really hungry and I’m excited to see how this air energy-draining thing works. I’ve never been to the human world before so...”

Talon let out a laugh as he gently lifted Mikhail off his lap and then jumped out of the bed. “It’s not as great as you’d think it would be. But sometimes it’s fun to hang out there. Come on, let’s go raid Yaya’s closet for some clothes for you. I can lend you a T-shirt, but there’s no way my pants will fit.”

After two full stacks of pancakes each and Yaya gushing about how cute Mikhail looked wearing a T-shirt that said “BITCH” across the front along with

tight black jeans and a little half jacket lined in fur, all three made their way to the furthest reaches of the cave. Mikhail marveled over a strange ritual circle upon the floor while clinging to Talon's arm.

"And this will take us to the human world?" Mikhail asked, turning his eyes to look up at Talon with no small amount of amazement reflected in his eyes.

Talon nodded in response. "*Mm hmm*, sure will. It's set to this shady motel where lots of sex goes on. It's a haunt of mine where I go to feed. Just ambient stuff, really. I haven't felt up to having sex in a long time. Well, I mean before you and I. Anyways, you ready?"

Mikhail nodded enthusiastically before looking back to the glowing circle, watching the way the markings shifted and swirled with energy.

Yaya slipped something small into Talon's hand, causing the younger incubus to look down with his brows furled. He stared at the tube of lubricant with his mouth slightly agape. "Seriously, Yaya?"

Chuckling, Yaya offered a shrug. "You think he won't? That you won't?"

Talon let out a hiss before stuffing the tube into his pocket. "All right, all right, just... *ssshhh*..." He spoke between clenched teeth.

Mikhail looked back to the other two with upped brows. "Is something wrong?"

Talon shook his head quickly, starting to tug Mikhail into the magical circle. "No! No, nothing at all. Let's get out of here and make you a real incubus!"

The second that Mikhail's feet touched the circle, he felt as if he was falling. Letting out a faint cry, he gripped onto Talon desperately. After a few seconds of rushing wind and nothing below his feet, they caught on something hard and the falling sensation stopped. He was standing on solid ground, asphalt to be exact.

Staring down at the black concrete beneath him, Mikhail swallowed down a nervous lump and then muttered. "Talon, I feel strange. My stomach is queasy and my head feels fuzzy."

Talon slid an arm around Mikhail's back and started to gently lead him toward the front of a long building. "There are people having sex behind these doors. You can feel it, can't you?"

Mikhail bit his bottom lip, chewing to the point he tasted copper. "I'm not sure I like this."

Talon stopped, turning to look at Mikhail, giving him a tender smile. “*Ssshhh*, it’s ok. You trust me, don’t you? Stand right here and don’t move. I’ll be back in just a minute. I’ll take you to a room where it’s only you and me. Will you be okay here standing by yourself?”

Mikhail swallowed hard before glancing around. There were cars parked nearby, a lazy street and a few people milling about, but nothing seemed particularly dangerous. All-in-all, the human world seemed slightly boring thus far. Drawing in a deep breath, Mikhail let it out slowly and nodded. “Yeah, I’ll be fine. Just hurry, the weird feeling is getting worse.”

Talon gave Mikhail a quick pat on the shoulder and then started to jog toward the front office of the motel. Mikhail tried to relax, but it was hard not to feel anxious when in a completely new plane of existence. He had heard stories about the human world and how there were demon hunters that could pelt their bodies with bullets that sucked the very essence of their life painfully away. How was he to know if there wasn’t one of those hunters lurking around a corner somewhere?

Shutting his eyes tight, Mikhail hugged at himself, taking deep shuddering breaths in order to steady his nerves. He did not sense anything dangerous about, there was only that odd gnawing sensation urging him to do... something. He wasn’t sure what it was he was supposed to do, but his instincts were in overdrive. His skin felt hot and itchy, and there was this luscious sent in the air. It was almost like something to eat. There was something nearby that Mikhail wanted to devour, it smelled so utterly delectable.

A good five minutes had passed and Mikhail’s anxiety was not fading. He had half a mind to follow in the direction that Talon had gone, when a voice arose behind him. “Hey there darlin’. You look lost and lonely.”

Mikhail spun on his heels, blue eyes wide and voice momentarily caught in his chest. There was a man standing a few paces away giving Mikhail a lecherous grin. “What? Ah, no, no. I’m not lonely. I mean, I’m not alone. I’m just waiting for a friend.”

The man was tall, rather scruffy looking in the face with a round belly. Mikhail took a step away from him, scrunching up his nose from the scent of cheap liquor and body odor. “Huh, looks like you’re a man. Thought you were a lady from the back. No matter... a hole’s a hole. How much?”

Mikhail sputtered and shook his head. “Excuse me!?” he asked, flabbergasted.

“He thinks you’re a prostitute.” Talon’s voice filled the space as he stepped up behind Mikhail and draped an arm around his shoulders. “Keep walking buddy. This ass ain’t for sale.”

The man snorted, crossing his arms over his chest. “Says you, punk. Let the pretty answer for himself.”

Mikhail’s mouth hung open as he looked back and forth between the stranger and Talon. Talon slowly drew his arm away from Mikhail and started to crack his knuckles. Mikhail knew what was about to happen next and he frantically searched his thoughts for a more pleasant and peaceful solution.

After a few seconds of agonizing over the situation, he reached out and gripped Talon by the elbow. “Wait, Talon, allow me.”

The stranger started to chuckle, throwing his head back and letting out a triumphant belt. “Oh, ho, ho, see that, blondie? Money really *does* talk.”

Mikhail cautiously approached the human, his limbs trembling as he drew closer. He had never been this close to a human before. The mortal creature was oddly unimposing, and as he stared up into bloodshot eyes, he absently wondered what he had been so afraid of. After a few seconds of contemplation, a wicked grin spread across his lips. His blue eyes swirled with light crackles of electricity and he spoke in a hushed whisper. “You feel sick and ashamed of yourself. You are going to turn around and go home. When you get there you will strip nude and masturbate, and you will cry desperately while you do it.”

The human blinked a few times, looking confused and lost. He reached up to run fingers through disheveled dark hair. “I... I gotta go home.” And with that, he turned on his heels and walked away.

Mikhail let out a little squealing laugh, lifting his fists to his face to keep from making too much noise.

Talon strode up behind him, wrapping both arms around his waist and rocking back and forth. “Wow, that was impressive. You should have made him piss his pants while you were at it. Damn, you arcane incubi are some scary little shits. Don’t go messing with my head like that okay?”

Mikhail grinned, leaning back against Talon while looking up at him. “Who says I haven’t already?”

The two laughed before turning and walking across the parking lot. Talon led Mikhail to a room and unlocked it with a key card. Mikhail was curious

about the card, but decided there were more pressing things to discuss. He walked back and forth around the small room, scrunching his nose up at the bed and poking the television.

“This all seems rather, umm...” Mikhail made a sour face, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Shitty?” Talon said with a laugh.

Sighing heavily Mikhail shrugged his shoulders. “Well, it’s not as grand as I thought the human world would be. The interaction with that man was a bit interesting, but now I’m just... well, that feeling is still clawing at me. I’m somewhere between absolutely starving and aroused in a way that I cannot explain.”

Talon nodded, reaching out to take Mikhail’s hand and lead him over to the wall near the bed. “Here, feel the wall.”

Mikhail looked at Talon as if the other incubus had lost his mind.

Talon squeezed Mikhail’s hand and then leaned in to whisper huskily into his ear. “Trust me.”

Shivering from head to toe, Mikhail leaned toward the wall, placing his palms against it. He received a rather pleasant jolt and before he knew it, he was rubbing his cheek against the ugly brown wallpaper. “What... what is going on?” There were noises coming from the other side of the wall. He could hear moaning sounds, thumps and the occasional grunt.

Talon smiled, turning to lean his back against the wall. “There are people having sex on the other side of this wall. You can feel the sexual energy filling the air, right? It’s passing through as if the walls were made of paper. They aren’t much thicker than that anyway. I want you to imagine that the energy is puffy clouds made of candy. It’s good if they have a color you enjoy. You can reach up and catch the clouds and eat them.”

Mikhail blinked owlishly at Talon before chewing his bottom lip. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly, closing his eyes and trying to imagine candy floating in the air, as Talon had suggested. At first it seemed ridiculous, but slowly he could see colors behind his eyelids. There were pink, blue and purple tufts floating in the air and each one seemed to gleam like beacons calling to him.

Gasping Mikhail dove toward one, ending up face-planting into the bed. He grasped the energy between his palms and drew it to his lips. He pursed them

and sucked. It was like an explosion in his mouth. No candy, no food, no experience could compare with having that energy touch his tongue. It flowed into his mouth, down his throat, and filled his entire being with a surge he had not realized he needed.

Flipping to his feet on the bed, he began frantically catching those little fluffy clouds with both hands, stuffing them into his mouth as if he were starving. Talon moved to get up on the bed with Mikhail, wrapping arms around his waist to steady the younger incubus. He nuzzled his nose into the back of Mikhail's neck and puffed hot breath against his flesh.

"Take it easy, don't go too fast or you'll make yourself sick. They aren't going anywhere. *Ssshhh*, it's good isn't it?" Talon kissed the back of Mikhail's neck and squeezed him tighter around the waist.

Mikhail moaned, wiggling his rear back against Talon's crotch. He drew in a breath, slowing his intake of the delicious candy energy. "Ah, *mmm*, yes it's wonderful. My whole body is tingling. For months I've had this constant thirst I could never quench. This is helping. The hunger pangs, the thirst... it's all going away. How often will I need to do this?" Mikhail reached back, roaming his hands up and draping his arms around Talon's neck.

Talon lightly bit at the side of Mikhail's neck, speaking around his flesh. "Couple times a week is more than sufficient. You don't want to do too much, or too little. Too much and you might become a glutton, needing more and more. Too little and you starve yourself and you end up overindulging like you are now. You're so hungry that you're having trouble knowing when to stop."

Mikhail let out a gasp and then a moan, pulling away from Talon and turning to face him. He began to wriggle out of his jacket, tossing it aside. "And what of actual sex? I imagine it's more potent yes?" He licked his lips lustfully while kicking his boots over the edge of the bed. He walked toward the headboard, tugging his T-shirt over his head and casting it aside.

Talon let out a faint growl before nodding. "Oh yes, sex with a human or two is much more potent. Sex with one of our kind is helpful as well, but that's a give and take so it doesn't always satiate. The problem with sleeping with humans is that it's so potent it can become addictive. Once you go down that route, it's hard to return to feeding this way." He mirrored Mikhail's motions as he spoke, tossing his jacket to the side and jerking his shirt over his head. He kicked his boots over the edge of the bed and reached for the button of his jeans.

Mikhail leaned against the wall, running a hand down his chest and then hooking his thumbs into the front of his jeans. “How did you and your former mate do it?”

Talon was watching the way that Mikhail moved; feeling his cock stiffen and the urge to pounce on the beautiful blond grew. But at the question he stopped and tilted his head to one side. Furling his brows he cleared his throat. “Well, we fed like this a lot. We drew energy from others having sex while we talked or screwed. Then, as we got a little older, Beni liked to get with couples that just wanted to have sex near each other or maybe wanted to do things like lick and touch but end in us fucking while they fucked. Not exactly your hardcore orgies, but fun light stuff. It gave us a major high and everyone was happy.”

Mikhail licked his lips, slowly unbuttoning his jeans and dragging the zipper down. “And what do you want? How do you want to feed?”

Talon looked completely taken aback. He stepped closer to Mikhail and cupped both his cheeks, staring into those beautiful blue eyes. “I’m happy just being near you. I can tell that as you come into your own, you are going to be playful, but still a bit shy. I will follow you and protect you... I would watch you cum on the on the faces of a thousand men if that’s what you wanted. Just please, always let me be by your side.”

Mikhail felt his eyes flood with tears and he choked. “Talon...”

Talon’s lips crushed against Mikhail’s and the two began a dizzying passionate kiss. Neither pulled back until they were both panting desperately for breath. Talon dropped to his knees, nuzzling his face into Mikhail’s belly. “I worship you.”

Mikhail took a moment to catch his breath, resting his hands atop his lover’s head. “Then worship my cock,” he stated with as much conviction as he could muster. His cheeks burned bright red and his voice cracked slightly.

Talon grinned, gripping Mikhail’s jeans by the waistband and starting to shimmy them down. “Gladly,” he said, eyebrows dancing up and down his forehead.

Mikhail’s head fell back, making a dull thud against the wall behind him. He closed his eyes and focused on the tender touches of Talon’s hand smoothing up and down his thighs. The night before was such a blur, and though he knew that he had enjoyed it, he wanted to savor being fully awake and coherent as they explored one another’s sexual desires.

Talon nuzzled his face along Mikhail's upper thigh and then ghosted the tip of his nose under his lover's jewels and along the length of his prick. The musky scent of need coupled with near satiated incubus was intoxicating. He flicked out his tongue to taste the bobbing tip, casting a look upwards at Mikhail's passion-filled face. "I'm surprised you haven't said anything about my new horns," he said, grinning as he ran his tongue in a circle around the head.

Mikhail was shivering from the gentle ministrations. His body felt incredibly sensitive and the thought of each touch belonging to Talon seemed to intensify the experience. Glancing down he moved to touch the black protrusions at Talon's forehead, gently massaging his fingertips around the flesh at the base. "I was afraid their appearance might be upsetting to you, so I didn't say anything. It's my fault isn't it?" Mikhail's voice sounded small and uncertain, even with the purring undertone of pleasure.

Talon chuckled, gripping Mikhail's cock firmly and giving a few gingerly strokes. "Do I look upset that I have a couple of bitchin' horns? It makes me look older than I am. What do you think of them?" He wiggled his hips as he jerked at Mikhail's cock, working his jeans down and kicking them over the edge of the bed.

Mikhail flicked out his tongue and licked his lips while shifting his hips to get more friction from Talon's hand. Moaning, he mumbled out, "I think they're sexy, but won't humans freak out?"

Talon shook his head, leaning toward Mikhail's cock again. "Humans can't see them unless we want them to." With that spoken he opened his mouth and wrapped his lips around Mikhail's thickness, swallowing it down to the back of his throat and letting out a hum.

Mikhail squeaked, his knees wobbling. "Ah! Talon! Ah, it feels so good. *Mmm*, shit..." Mikhail didn't curse often, but having that warm wet mouth around his cock was certainly worth the expletive. He shivered from head to toe, fighting the urge to snap his hips forward and sheathe even deeper into Talon's throat.

Talon was fairly well versed in giving head. He bobbed his head, enjoying the taste of Mikhail to the point he was drooling. His tongue flicked back and forth on the underside; while his hand worked at the base he couldn't quite fit into his mouth. His eyes stung from time to time, as he got a little too deep and gagged himself, but it was all the better that way. He wanted to train his throat

to take Mikhail all the way to the root one day. After just a few minutes, he felt Mikhail start to grow weak in the knees. His heart did cartwheels behind his ribcage from having put his lover in such a state.

“Ah! Talon!” Mikhail tugged at Talon’s hair and then started to jerk the other by the shoulders. “S-stop!”

Talon smirked around Mikhail’s length, slowly drawing back until the head dislodged from his lips with a wet popping sound. “What’s the matter?”

Mikhail shook his head furiously and took a few deep breaths. “I... I don’t want to cum yet!”

Talon licked his lips, greedily slurping up the taste of Mikhail off his lips before moving to stand up. His arms wound around his lover’s waist to help keep him from tumbling over. “Oh? And why is that?”

Mikhail took a deep breath, his hands coming to rest on Talon’s shoulders. “Because I want you to fuck me against this wall.” His blue eyes glittered as he reached up into the air, snagging a bit of floating energy and stuffing it into Talon’s mouth before the other could respond. Mikhail leaned forward; pressing his lips roughly against Talon’s to share in the spoils of that sweet nectar while hopping up, and wrapping both legs around Talon’s waist.

Talon’s eyebrows climbed up his forehead and he was about to say something witty when something warm and tasty was placed into his mouth. Until now he had not actually indulged in any feeding. He wanted it all to go to Mikhail, who needed it more. However, the act of kissing furiously while sharing the energy of the world was nearly enough to make him fall over.

Talon stumbled back on the bed before managing to lean forward. He placed a hand against the wall, wobbling with Mikhail’s weight now balanced. He moaned into the other’s lips, his cock rock hard and ready to fuck. “*Mmm...*” He managed to pull his head from Mikhail’s feverish kisses. “Shit where did I put that lube?”

Mikhail grinned, tilting his head to nibble kisses down Talon’s jawline. “You slipped it into your right jean pocket after Yaya gave it to you.”

Talon gasped, his eyes going wide. “Oh, shit. You saw that, huh?” For the first time since they had met, Talon managed to turn a bit pink in the cheeks.

Mikhail giggled, biting lightly at Talon’s collarbone. “Yep, I sure did.” Reluctantly he let his legs slide down and stepped back so Talon could rummage through his strewn clothing. He leaned against the wall, watching

Talon bend over and dig into his jean pocket. “Talon, better hurry up or I might start without you.”

Talon stood up, holding a small tube of lubricant. “That’s not making me want to hurry to be honest.” Both men laughed as Talon unscrewed the top of the tube and started to coat his thickness. “So you want it against the wall huh? Facing me with your legs wrapped around by the way you’ve been acting. I like that idea.”

Mikhail licked his lips, jumping at Talon again, wrapping his arms and legs around the other. “I like it too. Now hurry up and fuck me. I’m on fire.” Mikhail rocked his hips, dragging his ass against Talon’s dripping cock.

Talon swallowed hard. “You definitely are.” He backed Mikhail toward the wall again as he lined his throbbing prick up. “Are you sure you’re ready? Maybe I should take some time to finger you, like before.”

Mikhail snarled, reaching back and carefully positioning Talon’s cock. He moved to rock downwards, beginning to seat himself upon Talon’s throbbing member. At first he let out a faint whining sound, but soon the whining gave way to growling purrs. He went down a few inches and came back up, only to rock down again, moving further than the first attempt. After a few minutes he was seated to the hilt, squirming and kicking his feet behind Talon’s back.

Talon was awestruck by Mikhail’s determination. The feeling of having Mikhail around him made his eyes go crossed, and he leaned his head forward to rest against his lover’s shoulder. “Fuck, Mikhail you’re so tight. Don’t... hurt yourself.” He panted heavily, forcing his body not to move. He let Mikhail use him as a sex toy until the other was seated firmly and whining for more stimulation. Carefully, Talon drew back and then snapped his hips forward harshly, burying himself deeply while thudding Mikhail’s back against the wall. He was rewarded with a passionate cry that made him grin. He wanted to hear that scream over and over again.

Mikhail shrieked in bliss each time Talon drew slowly back only to slam into him, making his back collide with the wall. He gripped the other tightly, dragging his nails down Talon’s upper back and shoulders. “Yes! Yes! Don’t stop!” His tip leaked and his insides quivered with need. After that particularly fabulous blowjob, it wouldn’t be long before Mikhail was undone.

Talon had no intention of stopping. He concentrated on a brown stain beside Mikhail’s head on the wall and imagined driving the both of them through the wall until they collapsed into a heap of cum explosions. The thought ended up

being a bit sexier than he originally intended and he was driven to the edge quicker than he wanted. However, Mikhail was already quaking inside and out, so it wasn't as if he needed to keep going.

Reaching between them, Talon gripped Mikhail's weeping prick and stroked firmly. He pressed his lips to Mikhail's ear and whispered huskily. "Cum for me. I need to know how much you want and enjoy me. Show me, Mikhail... show me what I do to you."

Mikhail screamed, his voice going momentarily hoarse. The constant onslaught of Talon's snapping hips, along with the stroking hand and purring words caused him to erupt in a glorious white-hot spurt. Talon growled at the feeling of that hot ecstasy against his hand and let the warm feelings flow through his body, filling Mikhail to the brim with his own sticky mess.

Talon held Mikhail close as they attempted to steady their breathing. Mikhail was seeing spots and Talon felt like a wet noodle. As carefully as he could, Talon lowered to one knee and then rolled to lay Mikhail down on the bed. He grunted as he pulled out, pleasurable shivers tickling along his flesh from head to toe. Mikhail whimpered, putting an arm to his forehead and trying to wipe sweat-drenched blond locks out of his face.

"Was it good for you?" Talon panted out, grinning cheekily down at Mikhail.

Mikhail dropped his arm and looked up at his mate with a droll expression. Snorting he reached up and gave Talon a shove. "Don't be ridiculous."

Talon laughed as he tumbled to the bed beside Mikhail. "I think you rather liked that, if the screaming was any indication." His arms reached for Mikhail, pulling the blond to lie across his chest. He was surprised at how much he wanted to just cuddle and hold Mikhail.

Mikhail let out a heavy, contended sigh. He rested his cheek against Talon's chest and smiled. It felt good to make love with Talon, but it felt even better to be held afterwards. He felt warm and sated in ways that he didn't know were possible. "Is this what our life is going to be like from now on?"

Talon trailed tickling fingertips up and down Mikhail's spine. "If that's what you want."

Mikhail turned his head to kiss Talon's chest. "*Mmm*, for now, I'm really enjoying this."

Talon chuckled, leaning down to kiss the top of Mikhail's head. "Yeah, me too."

The two lay in silence for several minutes, just holding one another and enjoying postcoital bliss, until something occurred to Mikhail. His head popped up and he let out a faint exclamation. "Oh!"

Talon had lightly dozed, a bit of a rumble coming from his chest, almost like a purr. He opened one eye and glanced to Mikhail. "*Hm?*"

Mikhail chewed his bottom lip, reaching up to tuck a lock of blond hair behind his ear. "There was something I wanted to talk to you about. With you going on about how my mother has royal blood and that story and how I called you and... well, it jogged something in my memory. I thought perhaps I had just hallucinated it, but maybe it was real after all. I'm just afraid it might upset you."

Talon moved to sit up on his elbows, arching a brow at Mikhail. He stared at the other for a moment before gathering up pillows. He stuffed them under his back until he was lounging comfortably. He put one arm behind his head and kept the other around Mikhail's waist. "You can talk to me about anything. If it upsets me, I'll get over it. We are soulbound now. You and I are connected forever, not even death can separate us. There is no need to hide anything. So shoot... What's on your mind?"

Mikhail took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "When my father locked me in my room, something happened to me. I fell into this weird deep sleep. But in my mind I could see things, as if I was awake in another world. I was scared and alone, but then a woman appeared. She said..." Mikhail swallowed hard, doing his best to look Talon in the eye. "She said her name was Benilial."

Talon was listening, nodding faintly at what Mikhail was saying. Yaya had mentioned that Mikhail's body put itself to sleep so he didn't devour his own spirit, so the first of it sounded benign and truthful. Then Mikhail mentioned Benilial and Talon's eyebrows climbed up his forehead. "Uh... huh... Go on." It struck Talon rather sharply, but he truthfully wanted to hear the rest of this odd tale.

Mikhail furled his brows, but continued. "She was this beautiful, voluptuous woman with long pigtails. One was nearly white, and the other black. She had blue eyes... Well, I assume both were blue, she wore an eyepatch over one. She told me that she and I were kin, and that I must rest. She held me and told me

that you cared about me, and if I rested I could call to you and you would come save me.”

Talon pulled both hands to his face and started to rub them up and down. “Wow, give me a minute to wrap my head around the fact that you talked to Beni’s ghost or something. There’s no doubt who you just described.”

Mikhail thrust his face into Talon’s chest and rubbed it back and forth. “I’m so sorry. Please, don’t hate me. I just... I thought you should know. She told me that she was a part of you, and she would always be a part of you. I think... I think she was talking to me from inside of you.”

Talon lowered his hands from his face, reaching out to wrap his arms around Mikhail’s nude frame. “I don’t hate you. Don’t be ridiculous. There’s nothing to be sorry about. Even from the grave, Beni will do whatever the fuck she wants to do. It was just the kind of woman she was. Or perhaps I should say... still is. I’m glad you told me. It only makes being with you that much easier. Beni wanted you in our lives, and so I don’t have to feel guilty for wanting that. She knew you would tell me. You see, I know that Beni is inside of me, but... I’m a stubborn asshole that doesn’t listen to my own instincts. I need outside factors to punch me in the face a few times.”

Mikhail looked up into Talon’s dark eyes. “So it wasn’t just a message for me that it was okay to be with you, but a message for you as well?”

Talon smirked and nodded, leaning forward to kiss Mikhail’s brow. “Yeah, that’s it exactly.”

Mikhail closed his eyes, enjoying the closeness of the moment. “I suppose I shall need to go home and explain things to my family.”

Talon let out a grunt, his head tumbling back into the pillows. “*Mmm*, you don’t have to tell them that you mated me, if you’re too embarrassed about it. You can just tell them that you mated a Barch woman and you’ll be moving to stay with your new mate. I mean... assuming you *want* to stay with me.”

Mikhail’s eyes snapped open and he sat up. “Of course I do! Honestly, I do not wish to tell my family anything, but I need to retrieve my things from our home. I will have to go home eventually for that at least.”

Talon nodded a little, squeezing his arms around Mikhail. “Well, just rest a while. We can figure out the particulars later. And we’ll go and get your clothes and shit from your house. Don’t worry. I’ll never let them hurt you again.”

Mikhail let his body rest against Talon, but deep down he was still toiling over what to do when he returned to his family's home. While Talon's suggestion of lying about the situation was practical, it didn't sit well. Mikhail didn't want to lie about who he had mated or what his new life was like. He wanted to stand before his father and proudly announce what direction his life had taken. Whether or not he would have the strength to do so remained to be seen.

Chapter 6

A New Life To Live

Mikhail leaned his cheek against Talon's back, squeezing his arms around the other's waist as he fought to talk over the rushing wind. "So Yaya has had the power to drain a person's spirit completely, since he first mated?"

Talon nodded, his hair twisting in the breeze as he began slowing the bike near the front of Mikhail's family home. "Yep! That's the real reason that he fled from the crown. He was absolutely terrified of his own power. He hid away in the forest and his brother ascended as king. It's a complete fallacy that the two had some sort of falling out. The King understood completely and chose to take over the crown while Yaya left to try and get his powers under control and... well, do some soul searching."

Mikhail shook his head, squeezing at Talon again. "I can't imagine just waking up one day and having the ability to suck the life out of someone on a whim. That's so frightening!"

Talon pattered the vehicle to a stop and pursed his lips as he looked up to the large brick house. "I think as a people, we were lucky that Yaya inherited the power. Someone else might have gone power hungry or mad. You take after the family line. You're kind, shy, and think about stuff... perhaps to the point of overthinking. You see a power like that as scary, where others would see it as something to abuse."

Mikhail nuzzled Talon, not wanting to get off the bike and face the music. He'd learned so much about himself and his people in a short time. However, it wasn't enough to stave off the fear in his gut at seeing his family again. Slowly he turned his head to gaze at the house. It left him with a feeling of foreboding and a throbbing headache.

"You ready to do this?" Talon asked while patting at one of Mikhail's hands.

"No," Mikhail responded simply, before shaking his head and pulling back. "But it has to be done." He shrugged as he slid down.

"Well, it doesn't *have* to, but it will make things easier to move forward, won't it?" Talon quirked a brow as he watched Mikhail stand up and turn toward the house.

Mikhail shrugged, shoving his hands into his pockets as he started up the drive. “I suppose. I’m just not looking forward to seeing my father, and certainly not my brother. Perhaps I’ll get lucky and at least the latter will not be around.”

Talon swung a leg around and sat sideways on the bike. “I’ll stay here. Scream if you need me.”

Mikhail stopped, his feet making crunching noises against the gravel beneath him. Shaking his head, he pulled a hand out of his pocket and held it out. “No, I want you to come with me.”

Both Talon’s brows climbed up his forehead. “Are you sure?”

Mikhail nodded, a smile spreading across his face. “Yes, I’m sure. Come on.”

With a shrug, Talon got to his feet and took Mikhail’s hand. The two of them passed through the gate and walked up the drive toward the large door. Soon Mikhail was knocking while holding his breath. Every muscle in his body was tight as he waited to see what would happen beyond that door.

After a long agonizing moment the door cracked open and Henry stood wide-eyed staring out. “M-Master Mikhail!” Before Mikhail could respond, the dark-haired butler jumped forward and wrapped his arms around Mikhail’s neck. “I’m so glad you’re okay!”

Mikhail startled, his knees almost buckling as Henry hugged him. Laughing lightly, he put his arms around the other incubus and hugged back. “Yes, Henry, I’m okay. Thank you for worrying about me.”

Henry pulled back quickly, turning to look at Talon with sparkles clinging to dark lashes. “Thank you, sir. Thank you so much for saving, Master Mikhail.” He thrust a hand out toward Talon.

Talon watched the interchange quietly and then glanced down to Henry’s hand. He hesitated before reaching down to shake it. “Uh, you’re welcome I guess. It’s you I should be thanking, really. Without your help I never would have been able to...”

“Henry... Who is at the door?” A deep rumbling voice from within the home caused everyone to pause the happy reunion.

Henry jumped back and moved to open the door further. He bowed low and presented Mikhail and Talon to the master of the house. “M’Lord Castoré, Mikhail has returned. Forgive me I...”

The man held up a hand to silence the butler. Henry swallowed hard, keeping his gaze down to the floor, while sidestepping out of the way as quickly as he dared.

Mikhail's father stood in the entryway with his head held high and arms loosely crossed over his chest. "Mikhail, it is good to see you well. Am I to understand that this means you have found a proper mate?" The man seemed to be looking down his nose to all those gathered.

Mikhail drew in a deep breath and stepped into the house, keeping his head high and his shoulders back. His hands were trembling at his sides and he felt like his legs would give out from under him at any moment. His father's mismatched gaze bore into him and made Mikhail feel like he might throw up on the floor at his feet. "I have. I have been mated into the Barch family. My mate is a member of the Royal Guard and I have come for my things so that I might move into one of the Barch family homes. I intend to learn more of the royal family and hopefully join my mate tending to my mother's family matters."

Mikhail's father's lip twitched and his nostrils flared. "I see. Just what makes you believe you belong anywhere near the royal family? You have no special skills and your power barely registers. You will be nothing but a burden to such powerful individuals."

Talon let out a growl taking a step forward. "Who the Hell do you think you...!"

Mikhail's face had flushed, but he managed to put a hand up in front of Talon to stop his lover from moving forward any further. Talon immediately looked to Mikhail, then lowered his head, stepping back almost as if he'd been called to heel. "Father, I would like you to meet my mate. This is Talon Barch, decorated veteran of the Mangnite Aboriginal War, and Royal Guard. He is the former mate of Princess Benilial Warsor. The same princess that I was promised to by my mother, Princess Charlotta, sister to King Zandraiel and True King Yayandriel."

Mikhail felt for certain that he might faint. His stomach churned and there was sweat beading up on his brow. It had been a mouthful, but he wanted it spat in his father's face. He wanted to stand up for himself and show that he had grown. Now that it was out and his father was still sneering down at his nose, however, Mikhail wanted to crawl into a hole and cry. Was there nothing that could crack his father's shell?

“This is bullshit!” A voice that gave Mikhail shivers, exploded from the top of the stairs. Ereek came stomping down the stairs, pointing an accusing finger at his younger brother. “First you run off and shame us further by mating a *male* and now you dare to claim yourself a prince!? I will not listen to this farce any longer!”

Mikhail’s blue eyes went wide as he watched his brother raise both hands, a blazing mixture of fire and lightning forming into a ball over his head. “Talon! Look out!” Mikhail shoved his lover as hard as he could, knocking Talon out of the way before raising both hands in front of him. The fire connected with a hunk of ice that trickled with electricity, but it wasn’t enough to keep Mikhail from being blown off his feet. He tumbled backwards, rolling three times before skidding to a stop just shy of colliding with a wall.

Talon stumbled to the side, spinning around in time to watch Mikhail go rolling across the floor. “Mikhail!” Growling, he whirled toward Ereek. “Oh, I’ve been waiting to beat you to a bloody pulp.” Dropping to all fours, Talon began to bound across the floor toward Ereek. Leaping into the air, he lifted a fist, intent on punching Ereek with everything he had.

Mikhail wobbled to a sitting position, watching Talon move to attack Ereek. Ereek had already surrounded himself in more fire and lightning. Gritting his teeth, Mikhail lifted a hand, encasing Talon’s fist in shards of ice and licking tendrils of electricity. When Talon’s fist hit the wall of fire around Ereek, it shattered like glass. The punch connected to Ereek’s jaw with such force, he was sent spinning through the air before crashing into the banister so hard it broke, showering the floor in splinters.

Talon wasn’t done, however. Roaring like a wild animal, he snatched Ereek by the hair and dragged him down the stairs to the marble floor, rearing his fist back again.

“Talon don’t!” Mikhail had managed to get to his feet. “I will not lower myself to his level! Please!”

Talon hissed through clenched teeth, glaring down into Ereek’s bleeding face. “Count yourself lucky that your brother is such a tender person. If it were up to me, I would skin you alive and hang your carcass on your lawn as a warning. Your house is despicable and make no mistake... the king will hear every word of your transgressions from my lips.” Still using Ereek’s hair, Talon tossed the incubus down at his father’s feet.

Drawing in a deep breath, Talon let it out slowly. “Mikhail, please, go upstairs and get your things.”

Mikhail swallowed hard, walking up behind Talon and hugging his back. “I won’t be long.”

Talon nodded before watching Mikhail dash up the stairs out of the corner of his eye. When he was certain that Mikhail was out of earshot, he turned to look at Mikhail’s father. “You knew all along that Mikhail was of royal blood. In fact, you were the one that arranged the mating to have Mikhail born. You thought you’d hit the jackpot when Charlotta dumped a baby in your lap. What you don’t realize is that none of the princesses are particularly ‘motherly’ and they almost always dump their children off on their fathers. You weren’t special.”

Lord Castoré’s lip twitched, but he said nothing.

Talon continued. “You were hoping for someone strong and war-like. The princesses are like that. They’re all outspoken and gather up harems like people drink water. However, princes are just like Mikhail. They’re beautiful, timid, and don’t come into their own until long after they are technically ‘mature.’ Why do you think they live so damned long? Princes are bred for longevity, not for war.”

Castoré’s nostrils flared, and his eyes slid closed. “What is the point of this lecture?”

Talon scoffed, crossing his arms over his chest. “You tried to murder a member of the royal family. Do you know the penalty for something like that? Cuz I do, and it’s not fucking pretty. Then your boy there tried attacking us again...” Talon whistled. “You’re in a heap of trouble.”

Castoré’s eyebrows drew tightly together.

“So this is what’s going to happen. You’re going to declare Mikhail your heir. He is going to go off and live happily ever after with me and mine. He will be well liked, well respected, and one day one of the Barch women will give him children.” Talon wet his lips. “After Mikhail’s first child is born, you are going to step down as head of Castoré House and give all your rights and holdings to Mikhail. Don’t even think of arguing with me, or I’ll have you executed. Do we have a deal?”

Ereek tried to get to his feet. “Father you cannot possibly...!” A scorpion’s tail shot out from beneath Castoré’s long robe-like coat and wrapped around Ereek’s throat, dragging him to the ground and silencing his protests.

“Yes, we have an accord,” the man said without opening his eyes.

Talon's mouth hung open before he began to chuckle lightly, staring at the scorpion tail. "Ah, so you're a scorpion, which explains a lot." He thrust a thumb toward his own chest and grinned. "Well, I'm a bull. And I will trample everything you've ever cared about before you have a chance to sting me. So live out your life peacefully and leave Mikhail alone, or you will know just how stubborn I can be." He snorted, puffs of hot steam-like breaths coming from his nostrils.

The sound of banging and Mikhail huffing ended the conversation. Both men looked up to see Mikhail at the top of the stairs dragging a trunk, a suitcase and hefting a backpack. Talon smiled. "Did you get everything?"

Mikhail let out a heavy sigh and started down the stairs. "It's enough, I think."

Talon nodded, moving up a few steps to snag the heavy trunk away from his lover. He lifted the trunk up over his head and then set it upon his shoulder. Mikhail gawked at how easily Talon carried the trunk but then shook his head and started to double-step toward the door.

"Mikhail..." His father's voice made Mikhail freeze in place, uncertain as to what the other could possibly want to say.

"Yes?" Mikhail asked without turning to look.

"I have decided to return your claim as heir to Castoré. I hope there are no hard feelings about what has transpired between us the past few weeks." He put his hands at his back and stood tall, staring at Mikhail as if he was waiting to make up and for everything to be water under the bridge.

Mikhail furled his brows, finding that though he had wanted to hear those words for so long, now that they were out in the open they seemed hollow and meaningless. He turned slowly and looked to his father. "I am glad to hear you say that, but not because of any reason you might think. One day I will take over this family and make it a truly glorious and rich family. I will easily transcend the disgusting legacy that you leave behind and Castoré will be good and respectable. And there *are* hard feelings. You tried to kill me, your own child. For no other reason than I just wasn't what you thought I should be. You sicken me, and after today I never want to see your face again."

Mikhail took a deep breath and let it out slowly. It was as if a weight had been lifted off his shoulders and he was finally free. Tears flooded his eyes. He was not happy about having burned the bridge between him and his father, but he realized that there was no reason to try and live up to any expectation his

father set down for him. He was a mature incubus now and about to set off on his own path.

Talon leaned over and kissed Mikhail's temple. "Let's get out of here," he whispered softly.

At the door Henry was standing, holding it open for the two of them. Talon quirked a brow and tilted his head. "Hey, Henry right? Look, Mikhail and I are going to be moving into a guesthouse for a while as we slowly get used to things around House Barch. How would you like a new job? My father would hire you in a second, and give you more than you're making here, just because of... well you know." Talon smiled wide.

Mikhail stood up straighter, looking back and forth between Talon and Henry. "Oh! Oh, Henry please come! And Suzanna too! Oh, Talon, my maid Suzanna, she's so sweet and I got her mixed up in all this too. Can we take her with us?" Mikhail's eyes twinkled as he stared up at his lover.

Talon started to laugh as he stepped through the door. "I've told you, anything you desire is yours."

Henry stood silent in the doorway before removing his tie. He threw it sharply toward Lord Castoré. "I quit." He smiled toward Mikhail and offered a bow. "I am at your service. I will head straight to Suzanna's house and tell her the good news. After the incident in your room, your father fired her. I know she will come to work for you in a second."

Mikhail gasped as he moved down the gravel walkway toward the motorbike. "He *fired* her!? Oh, no! I'm so glad you thought of hiring Henry, Talon. I would never have known that happened."

Talon nodded a little. "*Mmm*, Henry, do you know where House Barch is located?"

Henry took a deep breath, reaching up to run fingers through his dark hair. He looked almost as free as Mikhail. His dark eyes glittered and he nodded toward Talon. "I do."

"Good, once you've got your affairs in order, head on over there. Tell the doorman that I sent you to speak with my father. My dad will be so freaked to hear from me that he'll see you right away. Tell him as little or as much about what has transpired as you like, and then let him know that Mikhail and I want to set up shop in the third guesthouse. Got it?"

Henry nodded a few times. "I believe so, Master Talon."

Talon snorted, shaking his head. “Just call me Talon, please.”

Mikhail meanwhile stared at the bike with his lips pursed. “Talon, how in the world are we going to get all this luggage to fit on the bike?”

Henry continued to walk, half strutting down the road before stopping to kick up and clack his heels together. He looked like a man who had just won his weight in gold.

Talon watched Henry walk away before turning back to Mikhail with a chuckle. After sitting the trunk down beside the bike, he gripped the seat and tugged it up. From inside he removed some rope. “Don’t forget that my sweetie is alive.” He winked as he pushed the seat back into place.

Mikhail glanced in Henry’s direction before turning his attention to Talon. He watched as the other massaged at the bike’s sides. Slowly it started to spread, forming into a three-wheeled vehicle with a compartment in the rear. Gasping, Mikhail nearly fell backwards. “That’s amazing!”

Talon chuckled as he did his best to fit the trunk into the compartment and tie it down. “We’ll have to drive slower than normal, but I can make it fit. Damn, it’s been a Hell of a few days, eh?”

Mikhail looked to his family’s house before nodding. “Yeah, but I have more purpose in my life than ever before. I actually know what I want to do with my future.”

Talon was down on one knee, looping the rope around under the bike as he replied. “Oh? Do tell.”

Mikhail smiled as he turned his face to the purple-gray sky overhead. “I want to discuss building an academy with the king. I know it’s a long shot, but you said that the king doesn’t like how the young are so ill-educated. Surely if there was an actual school to teach history, basics of feeding, the ins and outs of mating, maybe things like self-defense, magic control... our people could advance faster and in the right direction. Gosh the possibilities are limitless!”

Talon stood up, wiping his brow. “And you think that you could run a school like that?”

Mikhail gasped, stumbling slightly. “Oh! I don’t know about running it, just... I don’t know, perhaps helping to get the project going.”

Talon smirked, placing his hands on either side of Mikhail’s waist and lifting him into the air. He twirled the other around before settling Mikhail onto

the bike. “You sell yourself short. Besides, if you pitch something like that to the king, he’s going to expect you to have the balls to see it through.” Sliding onto the front of the bike, Talon cranked it up, glancing over his shoulder. “And I believe you could do it.”

Mikhail blushed, glancing away before looking back to Talon, his arms sliding around his lover’s waist. “Well, now is the beginning of the rest of our lives. Perhaps we’ll find ourselves the next headmasters of an all incubus and succubus academy in the near future.”

Talon laughed as he began to drive away. “Oh? Are you dragging me into this school thing as well?”

Mikhail grinned, rubbing his cheek against Talon’s back. “Of course I am! After all, we’re soulbound.”

The End

Author Bio

As a young child A. L. held three aspirations that she vocally proclaimed to anyone who listened. She was either going to be an author, an actress or a psychologist. It was only after her brother was diagnosed with Autism and Pervasive Development Disorder that her aspirations shifted from theater and prose to exclusively studying psychology. However, she never truly left her flare for the dramatic behind. At the tender age of eight she was taking a starring role in Tom Sawyer; the following year it was Alice in Wonderland. Then eventually her senior year of high school she wrote and starred in the school's senior play. The Case of the Murder that Wasn't had her bouncing around stage as a savvy detective with a bumbling sidekick, attempting to solve the murder of a rich aristocrat. The off-color humor had audiences in stitches for three days and nights—to the delight of her and her family. However, despite the success of her writing and acting, the young A. L. graduated high school with honors and then immediately went on to start college in search of her (three) subsequent degrees in Psychology. It wasn't until years later that things would come full-circle as indie publishing has become more and more popular and the itch to write more overwhelming. Momentarily hanging up her hat as a Child and Family Counselor, A. L. has once again plunged her hands back into writing; spinning wild tales for her own enjoyment and hopefully the enjoyment of her audiences.

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