

## Second Time Around

Chapter 1 The Life and Soul.....	1
Chapter 2 Moving Forward.....	17
Chapter 3 Integrating .....	37

**Author:** Beren ([Beren@dtwins.co.uk](mailto:Beren@dtwins.co.uk)) (beren\_writes at LJ)

**Website:** <http://www.plotbunny.co.uk>

**Fandom:** The Lair (can be summed up as gay vampires)

**Pairing:** Damian/Colin, Thom/Jonathan/Damian/Colin (and hints of lots of others along the way - gay vampires living in a sex club - it's quicker to point out who isn't getting any)

**Rating:** NC17/18

**Disclaimer:** This story is based on characters and situations created and owned by Fred Olen Ray, Liberation Entertainment and Here!TV. No money is being made and no copyright or trademark infringement is intended.

**Position in series:** Takes place directly after the end of season 1, since I haven't seen season 2 yet (I think it actually started showing on Sept 5th on Here!). Hence has spoilers for all of season 1.

**Warnings:** multiple partners, rimming

**Summary:** Thom wakes up a somewhat different person after the events in the Lair when the Sheriff and Jonathan staged the rescue. The first thing he has to do is sort out the mess his presence has managed to cause.

**Author's Notes:** Well I watched the whole of the Lair in one day and it seems to have established itself in my brain. The plot has lots of holes and is basically a fanfic writer's dream, not that the mostly naked, gay vampires don't help of course :). This is the result of my musings. Thanks to Soph for the beta.

### Chapter 1 The Life and Soul

Thom opened his eyes and blinked upwards, waiting for his sight to re-establish itself, or should that have been Richard? His mind was a little muddled and he sat up slowly, allowing the sheet to fall off of his face, which made the whole sight issue much easier. He was lying on a wide table and to one side was another body and on the other, a third. Both were covered in sheets, both of which were stained with blood. His teeth itched at the very thought, but he did not react ,because he seemed to be having a bit of an identity crisis.

For a while he sat there: was he Thom or Richard?

Finally he did reach out to one of the other sheets and pulled it back to reveal a face that was familiar and his rather confused mind jumped into gear. The body was Frankie, the janitor of the Lair, and he was Thom, however, he was also Richard. When Jonathan had bitten him, his lover must have awoken his sleeping memories. That of course begged the question, how long had he been dead?

"It seems my progeny's family are a little dysfunctional," he said, using the sound of his own voice to centre himself.

In this situation, Richard's knowledge was far more useful than Thom's, but he needed Thom's memories of events to make sense of everything, so he made a conscious choice and he mentally merged the two. It could quite easily have driven him mad, but he had had centuries to perfect his cognitive abilities and, although he had to sit there for a while and put his mind back in order, it was not too difficult.

"If you are Frankie," he spoke to himself again, looking down at the body he had revealed, "then you must be Sheriff Trout."

He pulled back the other sheet to find that he was right, and it was then he heard it; the faintest of heartbeats.

"And not quite dead yet, Sheriff," he said, shifting down the table so that he could climb off it.

They were in some kind of storeroom and he could feel that the sun was up outside even though he couldn't see it. He also noticed a third body wrapped in a sheet and stuffed into the corner of the room. Clearly the residents of the Lair had yet to take out the trash, which was overall a good thing as far as he was concerned.

Children could be so problematic and his current predicament was entirely his own fault, so now it was time to start sorting it out. At least he had the fact that someone had finally gotten around to biting him to be thankful for, otherwise his previous life might never have reasserted itself. Reincarnation was a tricky business.

Walking along the side of the table, he pulled the sheet all the way off of Sheriff Trout and dumped it on the floor. The two bullet holes in the sheriff's torso were very obvious and he wasted no time in ripping the man's shirt open so that he could see them properly. The holes were small, given that they were entrance wounds, but they had clearly done large amounts of damage and he doubted the sheriff would live long without help. Given their current predicament, it would not be good for the sheriff to expire and the man might have been a little overbearing, but Trout had tried to help Thom and he did not forget things like that.

He allowed his fangs to descend and then skewered his thumb on one of them, reaching out as blood began to well from the wound and allowing it to drip on first one wound and then the second. Little tendrils of smoke rose from the wounds as he concentrated on them, using his blood as a conduit for his power. Eventually Sheriff Trout groaned and moved and Thom pulled his hand back and waited for the man to open his eyes, which happened only a short time later.

"Welcome back, Sheriff," he said and smiled, "I would suggest you just lie there for a while."

He didn't really expect his advice to be taken and, sucking his finger, he walked around to the other side of the table and pulled the sheet off of Frankie, fully expecting the sheriff to try and move. It didn't take long and Trout tried to sit up and then collapsed back to the table with a loud groan.

"Your wounds are still healing," Thom said, considering Frankie's corpse; "lying still really is the wisest option at the moment."

"What the hell is going on?" was the unimpressed response.

"We are still in the Lair," Thom replied, placing his hand on Frankie's chest, "you were shot and I was bitten, but I have rectified the first issue. Frankie," he focused on the corpse under his hand, finding the taint of vampires that Frankie's position had given him and calling it forth, "it's time to wake up."

Frankie arched up under his hand, head falling back, mouth opening and long fangs descending as corpse became vampire under his command. When he had met Damian, he had never guessed where that association would lead him and he enjoyed the feeling of power being back in his veins. Like called to like, but it had been a close thing; Frankie had had only just enough vampire power within him to call him back. Damian had to have bitten Frankie at some point in the past, probably to cement his control of him.

Falling back on the table, Frankie collapsed with a gasp, opening dark eyes which immediately flicked to Sheriff Trout.

"No," Thom said, before Frankie could act on instinct; waking up the first time could induce the hunger, "we'll find you food later."

Frankie looked at him, frowning in confusion; it had to be difficult to understand what was going on, because he knew Frankie would be able to feel power coming from him which, as far as Frankie was concerned, he should not have had.

"My name used to be Richard DeVere," he said quite simply; "Damian was right. I have been bitten and reclaimed my power. Do you understand who is master now?"

The poor creature's eyes opened wide in what appeared close to abject terror, but Frankie nodded anyway and Thom smiled at him.

"You have no need to fear, Frankie," he said and removed his hand, "I am not going to hurt you, I merely wish you to understand."

Sheriff Trout chose that moment to sit up, grimacing all the way.

"Sheriff, you would be more comfortable lying down," Thom said and shook his head.

"And easier to eat I suppose?" was the rather unsurprising reply.

"I have no intention of eating anyone, Sheriff," Thom replied, moving over to the body on the floor and pulling back the sheet to reveal the Sheriff's deputy. "Death is not a required consequence of vampire feeding; it was my curse which has caused all this death and I intend to rectify it. I created Damian, but in my enthusiasm I did not explain everything before I made him a vampire and he reacted badly and chose to slay me. In my last moments of life I cursed him, for which I am truly sorry, and his immortality came at the cost of other's lives. I forgive him; the curse will be lifted and I am sure we can arrange things so they are much more civilised from now on. I just hope he can forgive me."

Trout was sitting there clutching his side and looking very dubious.

"Deputy," Thom turned his attention to the other corpse; the vampire taint was not faint in this one, "come back; I do not believe you wish to die."

The deputy's eyes snapped open, staring straight ahead and then the man blinked once and twice and finally looked at Thom.

"Welcome back," he said and stood back up, "just sit still until you have adjusted."

"You really expect me to believe that crap?" Sheriff Trout clearly hadn't finished with him.

He sighed and turned back to the man.

"Sheriff," he said, taking a step towards Trout and then halting when the man shied away, "why would I heal your wounds if I intended to eat you or let anyone else eat you for that matter? You were mostly dead, but quite edible."

That shut Trout up for a little while as Thom walked over and tried the door. It was not really a surprise that it was locked. With a twist of his wrist there was a clank and the lock gave, allowing the door to swing open.

"Is this some trick?" the sheriff seemed to be in a quandary.

"Not at all, Sheriff," Thom said, turning around and looking Trout directly in the eyes. "I intend to put right what I caused as well as I am able, which includes allowing you to leave once you are in a fit state to drive. I have no quarrel with you, Sheriff, and I hope to demonstrate that you no longer need have a quarrel with us."

"People have been dying," Trout said pointedly.

"And if you persist in a quest against us, more will die as well," Thom replied, hoping that he could get his message across. "A truce from both sides would be far more useful, don't you think?"

The sheriff tried to stand up and almost collapsed onto the floor.

"Frankie, if you would be so kind as to help Sheriff Trout," Thom said, turning and checking outside the door.

"Don't touch me," he heard Trout hiss and he turned back, putting his hands on his hips and glaring.

The sheriff was all but falling over, only standing up because of a death grip on the table and Frankie was hovering, looking worried.

"Sheriff, you cannot walk," he pointed out, "and the only exit is through the bar, which from my brief stay here, I know is that way. I would suggest you accept the help which is offered if you wish to leave."

"Why would you let me do that?" Trout responded, still not letting Frankie get close to him. "I could come back with an army with stakes."

Thom had had enough and looked directly at Trout, allowing his full power to come to the surface.

"That would make me very angry," he said, allowing the magic he controlled to alter the timbre of his voice, "and you don't want to do that."

He let the power fade as quickly as it had come.

"I am not anything you could understand, Sheriff," he said, calm again, "and I make a much better friend than foe. I could pack up this coven and take them elsewhere, but that would be inconvenient. I will guarantee there will be no more

mysterious deaths and you will keep our secret. Think how useful it would be to have friends like us."

The sheriff did not look convinced.

"It is up to you, Sheriff," Thom said, turning back to the door, "but, as I have pointed out before, if you return with a mob, people will die and it will not be us."

There was silence for a while and then the noise of the deputy climbing to his feet.

"How do I know you will, or even can, keep your word?" Trout finally asked.

"On that, Sheriff," he replied, "you will just have to trust me."

He took one more look out the door; he really would rather there were no confrontations on the way to do what needed to be done.

"Deputy," he said, looking back once more, "welcome to the family. This must be a shock, but I need you to do something for me. Would you help Sheriff Trout to the bar please?"

The new-born vampire still appeared dazed, but if there was one thing vampires recognised it was power and the deputy had to be feeling his. The deputy nodded and walked over to his former employer.

"Sheriff, please do not try to leave," Thom said, planning out his next move; "I do not want to have to pry your twisted corpse off the tree you have just driven into. You have my word you are safe."

The sheriff did not look as if he believed that for a second, but unlike when Frankie approached him, the man did let his deputy close.

"Handcuff him to the bar if necessary," Thom muttered under his breath, knowing that only the other two vampires would hear it. "Frankie, come with me," he said louder so the sheriff would understand as well.

And with that he walked out of the room, dragging up the memories of his time under Damian's thrawl to know where to go. It was very useful to now be able to see through the fog Damian's magic had caused in his mind; things were far less confusing.

"Frankie," he said as he walked and the new vampire scurried to keep up with him, "tell me everything that has happened between Colin and Damian and where Damian is now."

It was always better to have all the facts and he listened carefully as Frankie told him everything he knew. It was a sordid little tale and Thom had no trouble seeing the real motives behind it all. This little family was lacking balance and he was going to have to deal with that as well.

"Thank you, Frankie," he said, walking towards Damian's old chambers where he could all but feel Colin, "you stay here and wait for me."

He did not want the nervous vampire with him for this and Frankie looked unsure, but nodded when he smiled at his new child. Poor Frankie was in need of a little

tender loving care, that much was obvious, and he was going to have to make sure that Frankie had what he needed once everything was settled. He had so much to undo.

Walking into the next room, he was not surprised to find Colin lying on the couch in peaceful repose, arms crossed and in the perfect imitation of death. Vampires always slept like the dead. On the floor in the corner of the room, curled into a ball and chained to the wall from a collar was Jonathan. Jonathan's shirt was gone and his jeans had been ripped and shredded, although there wasn't a mark on him thanks to vampire healing.

Thom went to Jonathan first, the feelings from his current life overtaking those from his past for the moment.

Jonathan cringed away the moment he touched his lover's shoulder and scared eyes opened instantly. Thom placed his finger on Jonathan's lips before his terrified boyfriend could utter a sound.

[Shsh,] he said, mentally projecting his voice straight into his lover's mind as he looked into Jonathan's eyes, [you are safe now.]

Jonathan looked so afraid and confused that all he wanted to do was wrap his lover in his arms and keep him safe, but he had so many other things to do before he could allow himself that luxury.

[The nightmare is almost over,] he told Jonathan silently and then lent forward and placed a gentle kiss on the other vampire's lips. [Trust me, Jonathan.]

There was still fear in Jonathan's eyes, but Jonathan nodded and Thom smiled at him.

With that settled, Thom stood up straight again and refocused on the reason he had come here in the first place. He knew what was under the cover on the easel and he pulled off the cloth to reveal the painting beneath. The decay on the face made him close his eyes and sigh. He could not believe he had made such a stupid mistake, but rage was a powerful motivator and death had been so close at the time. The curse was unforgivable, but the least he could do was undo it.

Holding out his hand he splayed his fingers over that which had once been a beautiful face and he summoned fire.

"Forgive me, Damian," he said quietly, "it is the only way."

The almost fresh oil paint took the flames instantly and yellow ribbons lanced all across the canvas as he urged it on. From the other side of the Lair there was an inhuman howl of terror and pain and Thom closed his eyes, sending his power out to embrace the soul in torment. As he took away the power and the life given by his curse, he replaced it with his own, as it should always have been and he felt the proper connection form. He sensed pain and shock along the link and then nothing as Damian's mind retreated into the relief of darkness.

It was done, the curse was eradicated, which left only the aftermath to deal with.

He opened his eyes and was not surprised to find Colin on his feet staring at the burning painting.

"What have you done?" Colin demanded, anger causing all his vampire traits to come out.

"Freed us all," Thom said simply, turning and looking at the enraged vampire.

Colin made to lunge at him, but he held up his hand, palm settling over Colin's necklace and, with a small burst of power, he had the other vampire frozen in place.

"Poor Colin," he said, feeling out the magic in the necklace which bound the coven together, "you have been neglected. Jealousy really doesn't suit you."

The power of the coven was strong; Damian had built his family well, but it was not strong enough to stop him. It was possible that Damian at full strength might have been able to oppose him, but not now, especially since he had just taken his vampire child back. He wound his own magic in with that of the coven, taming the dark edge he found there and then he pulled his hand back.

Colin collapsed to his knees, eyes wide and staring, full of shock and incomprehension. The necklace now had an extra scroll design right in the centre.

Thom reached down and lifted Colin's chin, making the other vampire look up at him, gently stroking the side of Colin's face with his thumb.

"Love and hate," he said with a small smile, "so close and yet so different. You love Damian so much don't you, Colin; more than you would ever admit to yourself? How betrayed you must have felt when he found me again."

"You're him," Colin said, voice barely above a whisper.

"Part of me is," he replied, releasing Colin's chin and knowing that the other vampire would no longer look away, "and part of me is Thom. When you encouraged Jonathan to bite me it released the part of me that was buried and it is time I righted the wrong I committed all those years ago."

Colin clearly didn't understand his motivation, but then Damian's children would never have known real love, only their creator's obsession. The part of him that was Richard remembered his love for Damian and his obsessive nature that he had passed on in the curse, and the part of him that was Thom knew his love for Jonathan and he regretted taking that away from Damian the most.

"It is time to change," he said smiling again. "The curse is gone, Colin, can't you feel it? There is room in this family for more than primal need, now. We must set everything to rights."

There was a cry of fear from the corridor and Thom looked up to see Frankie being pushed into the room by one of Damian's brood. Destroying the portrait had woken the rest of the family it seemed. The scantily clad vampire snarled at him instantly.

"Wait," Colin said as the newcomer went to attack him, and then Colin slowly stood up.

Colin still appeared confused and unsure, but something had clearly gotten through and the other vampire looked to him.

"Are you going to take him away from me?" Colin asked and it was obvious who 'he' was.

"That is the thought furthest from my mind," Thom replied and reached out to gently stroke down the side of Colin's face again. "There should be no room for petty jealousies in this family."

It would take time for things to settle down properly, but the situation was going well so far. The only variable left was Damian.

"What should we do?" Colin asked and actually looked kind of relieved to be asking.

Thom didn't think Colin really liked the role of alpha male; Colin was much more a beta, ready to stamp his authority, but not really right as pack leader. He had to wonder if Colin had realised that when he had made his power play; he doubted it.

"We should go and retrieve Damian," Thom decided quickly, "and then it is time for a family meeting. Sheriff Trout is in the bar; he is not to be touched in any way."

Colin looked shocked.

"He was dead," Colin said, confused again, "as in really dead."

"Not quite," Thom replied, feeling a little like a teacher in a kindergarten. "I am very old, Colin, far older than I ever led Damian to believe and I have studied many things in my life; I have abilities you have only dreamed of."

He turned and looked at Jonathan, who was kneeling up watching them, and snapped his fingers. The metal collar around Jonathan's neck snapped open and fell to the floor. It was only a simple parlour trick, but it made his point.

"Gather the others," Colin told his underling almost immediately, "we will meet in the bar."

"Frankie," Thom added and smiled at his very nervous child, "go with him."

Frankie's eyes danced across the room one more time and then he did as he was told. Thom held out his hand to Jonathan, who stood up and came to him straight away. He curled his arm around Jonathan's waist protectively and gave him a little squeeze. He had always known that Jonathan was fragile, not in a physical way, but as far as his insecurities went, and he did not want his lover thinking they were over. Jonathan was the jealous type, so it was not going to be easy, but vampires had a different outlook on life to humans and he hoped Jonathan would adjust.

"Lead the way," he told Colin and gave the other vampire a smile.

If this worked then the past would be forgotten and there would only be the future; but that relied on Damian now.

It did not take them long to reach the store room with it's barely dry, new wall and Colin sent anyone they met along the way to the bar where they would meet



later. By the time they were inside it was obvious that Colin was nervous and worried and Thom slipped out of his hold on Jonathan and placed a calming hand on Colin's shoulder.

"We are all driven by our wild natures," he said, trying to keep his companion calm, "we will make sure he understands."

Colin looked him in the eye and nodded, but it was clear Colin thought Damian would not treat him kindly.

"Lend me the power of the coven," Thom said, facing the wall and this time Colin placed a hand on his shoulder.

Colin was not resisting him at all and he could feel the well of power that was the coven of vampires and he reached into it. He could have probably done what needed doing without it, but this was about the future and the future involved all of them. Holding out his hands, he focused the power on the wall and then simply let it go. The bricks began to shake, vibrating in place and slowly began to crumble. It took only minutes for the solid wall to turn into so much rubble, revealing Damian hanging from the manacles attached to the ceiling.

Thom stepped forward immediately, the moment the wall was demolished enough for him to do so, and took hold of Damian. With a thought he unsnapped the bonds on his one time child and took Damian's weight, lowering the other vampire to the floor. He could feel the turmoil in Damian's being and he reached out with his power and tried to settle the uproar that was still going on.

"Damian," he called to the unconscious vampire on a mental and physical level.

At first there was no response and he cradled Damian in his arms, brushing some of the brick dust off his one time lover.

"Damian," he tried again, putting more power behind the call.

This time Damian slowly began to stir and eventually confused, tired eyes blinked open and looked up at him.

"Welcome back, My Beauty," he said, smiling as he saw Damian recognise him.

There had always been something exotic about Damian, something which drew him, and he could see it clearly then. He had been drawn to paint and then to claim Damian as his own and he could still feel that.

"You remember," Damian said in a weak, unsure voice.

"I more than remember," he replied, looking into those wide, questioning eyes. "The curse is ended."

"You forgive me?" Damian seemed amazed.

"A thousand times over, if you can forgive the terrible curse I laid upon you," Thom said, gently running his fingers through Damian's short hair.

Colin shifted behind him nervously, making a noise, and for the first time Damian's eyes flicked away from his face. Then the confusion was back.

"I don't under..." Thom place his finger on Damian's lips before the other vampire could say more.

"There is more than I who love you, Damian," he said, holding his vampire child gently, "not all motives are always quite what they seem."

Damian looked at Colin again, eyes still clouded.

"Think about what you were willing to do to me," Thom pointed out and Damian's eyes opened slightly in realisation. "We all do foolish things when at the mercy of our emotions and it is time to move forward, not backwards."

For a while Damian was silent, penetrating gaze moving over his face and gauging him.

"How?" Damian finally asked.

"Let me show you," Thom replied and did his best to convey his complete sincerity.

There was one way to pass on knowledge without fear of deceit, one way that vampires could give of themselves and Damian had to know what that was, even though Thom had never been there to teach him. That Damian had thrived and become so strong was a credit to the other vampire's character and Thom never wanted to see that character bowed.

Their tableau held for long seconds of complete stillness and finally Damian turned his head slightly to the side, exposing his neck. Damian had understood and Thom gathered his thoughts, putting them in order so that he could pass on what needed to be known.

He lowered his head and allowed his vampire nature to rise to the surface and then he bit down on Damian's neck. Damian tensed immediately, gasping and clinging to him and he used the connection between them to share his vision of their future. He needed Damian to understand how different things were now and he needed him to understand completely. Damian's fingers grasped at his shoulders in a painful grip even after he withdrew his fangs and it took long seconds for Damian to slowly begin to relax.

Eventually Damian's expressive eyes opened again and looked at him for what seemed like the longest time. Now Damian understood it all and the lie the curse had created would be obvious, but there was no condemnation in Damian's expression.

"I understand," Damian said eventually and Thom was surprised how much relief he felt at that.

"Then it is time to explain it to the others," he said, helping Damian to sit up.

Colin was still hovering and appearing anything but the confident vampire Thom had met on previous occasions. As beta to Damian's alpha Colin needed that confidence and Thom knew of only one way to give it back.

"We must be united," he said, looking from one to the other, "in all things. The past is gone now."

Then he turned his attention to Damian; only Damian's forgiveness would bind the coven together again. Damian understood immediately, he could see that, but it took a moment for instinct and reality to come into line, then Damian held out his hand to Colin. Colin moved immediately and Thom backed out of the way as Colin helped Damian to stand. Damian was still weak and Colin pulled the older vampire against him, taking most of the strain, but what pleased Thom more was that Damian allowed it.

Neither of the pair was completely comfortable with the new situation, that much was obvious, but they were accepting it. He hoped that what he had planned next would take them that final step to what they needed to be.

"The others will be waiting for us," Thom said, turning back to the door.

He gestured Colin and Damian to proceed him and then he followed them, stopping in the doorway and holding out his hand to Jonathan who had watched the entire scene without a sound. Jonathan hesitated before coming to him and he could all but feel the jealousy in his lover.

"You want Damian," Jonathan said in a tone that was only just off accusatory.

"Yes," he said; he was not about to lie to save Jonathan's feelings when it could be disastrous, "I loved him a long time ago, just as I love you. I am two people in one body, Jonathan and one of those people is very old. I have loved many in my life and because I love Damian does not mean I love you less. Human ideas of love are so limited and as you understand what you have become you will understand that jealousy has no place here."

Jonathan frowned at that, but did not pull away when Thom pulled him close and kissed him.

"We have eternity," Thom said as he moved back a little way, settling his hand in Jonathan's, "and in eternity there is an infinite capacity for so many things. I will never abandon you, Jonathan, but neither will I abandon Damian and the rest of the family. Now we have to put things back in their proper order."

There was a half formed pout on Jonathan's lips, but his lover followed him when he led out of the door to find Colin and Damian waiting for them in the corridor.

They stopped briefly in Damian's rooms to allow Damian to change into clothes that were not covered in brick dust and blood, and for Thom to pick up a few things and then they all went to the bar. The whole family were sat around the stage looking towards the bar where Sheriff Trout who was handcuffed to a bar stool. Their newest member and Trout's ex-deputy was standing somewhere between and did not seem to be sure which side he should be on.

"Hello, Sheriff," Thom greeted before anyone else could say anything, "feeling better I hope."

He released his hold on Jonathan and walked over to where the sheriff was sitting.

"Nice bullshit," was the snide response; "I almost believed you for a while there, until I ended up handcuffed to a chair."

"A precaution only, Sheriff," he said and snapped his fingers, causing the handcuff on the sheriff's right wrist to unlock and fall away; "you were unfit to drive."

Trout looked honestly surprised, but then settled back into suspicion again. Thom let himself enjoy the view; the sheriff was a good looking specimen in his ripped shirt.

"You really expect me to believe that they aren't going to pounce on me the moment I try to leave?" was Trout's next play.

Thom rolled his eyes and shook his head.

"You are the most stubborn man, Sheriff," he said and almost laughed. "Do we really have to have the whole conversation about mobs and people dying again?"

"We could burn you out," the sheriff really was like a mule.

"I'm a sorcerer, Sheriff," he said and held out his hand, "I can control fire."

To demonstrate, he allowed a flame to dance on his palm for a few seconds. It actually took a lot more effort than he pretended, but he wanted Trout to believe he was all powerful.

"Now we," he indicated the residents of the Lair, "need to have a family meeting, but you are free to go. If you would deliver this to Laura, I would be most grateful."

He had written a very hasty letter to Laura while Damian changed and he was sure the sheriff would deliver it, even if the man read it first. All it did was offer help, but he wanted to make sure Laura knew she was not alone.

"Now I'm a delivery boy?" Trout was clearly in a very obstreperous mood.

"Sheriff," Thom said, beginning to lose patience, "Laura is my friend, I do not want her worrying. If you would be so kind as to help me with that I would be most grateful. Now clearly you will not trust us until we have proved ourselves, but please at least remember how dangerous we can be. The door is over there."

There was silence as the sheriff just glared at him.

"What about Rogers?" the man finally asked.

"He's one of us now," Thom said, reigning in his annoyance, he could understand the sheriff reluctance after all since, if had he not remembered being Richard, he would be in exactly the same position, "we will make sure he is looked after."

The deputy appeared worried and Thom gave him a smile to let him know he meant it. The new vampire was not really suited to residence in the Lair since all pointers were indicating that the man had been straight, but Thom was not about to kick him out to fend for himself. That was one of the reasons he wanted to speak to Laura as soon as possible.

"Sheriff, everyone you came to rescue no longer needs rescuing," he said simply, "and you have no proof anything is going on other than a shirt with bullet holes and no wounds to go with it. No one here will break ranks and if you mention

vampires to a judge you will be the one locked up. All we ask is a truce. There will be no more bodies, no more disappearances. Please, go your way peacefully."

Trout did not look convinced, but the man had little choice and Thom hoped everything would go smoothly when the sheriff finally stood up. It was a very tense moment, but eventually Trout headed for the door.

"And, Sheriff," Damian said, taking Thom's lead as the sheriff went to leave and waited until Trout looked back at him, "if you come in peace, you are always welcome here ... for any reason."

Damian spread his hands and gave a quick glance at the other residents of the Lair to make his point.

"I'm not gay," Trout said, turning back to the door and away from him.

"Could have fooled me," Thom heard Colin mutter and had to agree.

"I'm sure Damian didn't mean to suggest you were, Sheriff," he said just as Trout reached the door, "but pleasure is pleasure when it comes down to it. The door will always be open."

The sheriff did not pause, but there was a slight falter in the man's step as Trout walked out and Thom suspected that they would be seeing the sheriff again, and not just for business.

Turning his attention back to what was more important he looked around the room and headed for where Damian and Colin were.

"How can you say there will be no more bodies?" one of the younger vampires demanded almost as soon as the sheriff was gone.

It was a valid question, since the hunger the coven had known could never be interpreted as anything but deadly. That was the problem with curses; they tended to be extreme and Thom wanted there to be no doubt that this one was over.

"Because we no longer need to kill," Damian spoke up before Thom had to, which pleased him no end.

He stepped up onto the stage where Colin and Damian were now standing, taking Jonathan with him.

"The need to kill was induced by a curse," he said, making sure he made eye contact with each member of the coven in turn; "the curse is now broken. There will be no more killing."

He let his power flair to make sure his message was understood. All vampires were capable of bringing about death, he would just no longer allow it.

"We will still use the lure of sex," Damian said, standing straight and tall, even though Thom could still see some of the weakness in Damian's eyes, "but no one must die. Our victims will leave as they arrived, but a little lighter on blood with their memories edited to remember only the sex."

"And the bite marks?" one of the others asked.

"Sex games," it was Colin who spoke up this time, but there were some unhappy faces around the room; clearly this had upset the balance within the coven.

"Until I teach you how to overcome that little problem as well," Thom added; it would take time, but he was sure he could pass on some of his talents.

"So everything just goes back to the way it was except for that?" one of the group asked.

Now Damian looked at Thom, as did Colin.

"I claim leadership," he said in a tone that begged no argument. "I may have only just become a vampire as far as most of you are concerned, but you can all feel my power. I have lived before and that life was rekindled by my reawakening. I will protect you as Damian has, as Colin tried to do. My power is mingled with the coven's, all you have to do is accept it."

All eyes looked to Colin, which built Thom's confidence in the coven as a unit; they were loyal even in that face of what they had to perceive as danger.

"I have already accepted him," Colin said, sounding sure and confident, rather than as anxious as Thom knew the other vampire had to be.

"I failed you," Damian spoke next, "and you were right to question my leadership. My obsession blinded me to what this family needed and almost caused us disaster, but that is over now. We must remain strong and united."

Too many changes in such a short time had the whole group unsettled; they needed a sign and Thom knew what would speak to them the most.

"Colin," he said, turning to Damian's right hand man, "show them how much Damian means to you."

Damian looked a little surprised, Colin much less so and Thom finally saw the spark he expected in the blond vampire's eyes. Everyone was off balance, but when it came to vampires there were two levelling factors: blood and sex. At the moment sex was the order of the day.

Thom slipped his arm around Jonathan's waist and pulled his lover towards the back and side of the stage while Colin stepped round in front of Damian. The sexual energy in the room went up a notch just because of that and Thom could tell why the pair had made such a good partnership for so long. There was a definite spark between the two and, when Colin moved in for a kiss, Thom felt his cock twitch in appreciation.

The kiss was short and hard and Colin let Damian take control. It was almost animalistic in its intensity as Damian bit Colin's lip, drawing blood and stamping authority on the move. Every nose in the room flared at the smell of blood. Colin moved on quickly, kissing across Damian's jaw and down Damian's neck, leaving a tiny trail of red as he went. Damian just stood there allowing it. There was power in Damian's stance, power and dominance; exactly what the family needed to re-establish the lines that had been smudged by recent happenings.

Button by button Colin moved down Damian's chest, opening Damian's shirt and lavishing attention on the skin that was revealed. Damian's eyes fluttered just a

little when Colin attached to one nipple, sucking hard, but Damian stood strong and in control. It was a powerful image and Thom could not take his eyes off the pair.

Eventually, after long seconds of Colin attacking his chest, Damian reached out, lacing his fingers in Colin's hair and pulling Colin's head back forcefully. For a moment it almost looked as if Damian was trying to hurt his second, but all Thom could feel from the pair was unbridled lust. It was a show of dominance, nothing more and Colin allowed himself to be pushed to his knees.

The implication was obvious and Thom saw Colin's eyes zero in on where Damian's erection was tenting Damian's pants. With a swift, simple move, Damian loosened his own belt and released his fly and then stood there, waiting for Colin to pay homage.

Colin appeared to want to look for a while, savouring the anticipation, just the tiniest hint of rebellion as a good second should have, but soon he reached out. Damian just stared down as Colin pulled Damian's cock from the confines of silk underwear and smart black dress trousers and Thom found himself holding his breath in anticipation.

At first Colin just darted the tip of his tongue over the head of the cock in his hand. Damian's expression barely changed, dark rimmed eyes staring down at the vampire at his feet, not until Colin relented and took Damian's cock into his mouth. That was when Damian's iron control wavered and Damian finally let his eyes close and his head go up and back as Colin swallowed him whole. No one could have doubted that Colin had had a lot of practice in the move and, from the expression on Damian's face, it was obvious the blond vampire was very good at it.

Thom shifted the way he was standing to relieve a little of the pressure on his own cock. The atmosphere of sex had him more than a little aroused and what he was watching spoke to the most primitive parts of his brain. Damian and Colin were made for sex in the most sinful way and Thom could feel the display putting right the feelings of confusion and upheaval that had permeated the coven.

Damian stood there, eyes closed, head back, legs slightly apart and hand resting on Colin's shoulder as Colin plied his art and drove Damian higher. The only encouragement from Damian was the occasional hitch in breath, but Colin seemed very apt at deciphering the quiet noises of success.

It was a beautiful and sexually powerful scene to watch and Thom was quite sure that Colin could have kept Damian going for a very long time, but that wasn't the point. He made a very small noise, attracting Damian's attention without disturbing what was going on and pushed the demonstration to the next level.

"Claim him," Thom said and threw Damian the other thing he had brought from Damian's rooms; a tube of lube.

Colin drew back and knelt there looking up, waiting, and Damian stared down. Thom could see the passion bubbling beneath the surface of both vampires, but this was a display and neither was letting their desires get the better of them. It was quite incredible to watch and he found himself pulling Jonathan closer to him, needing to touch. His erection was pressing against his jeans and he wanted relief, but at the moment it was his place to watch.

"Undress," Damian said simply; "everything off."

There was no hesitation in Colin's movement, no rebellion and Thom watched every move as Colin quickly removed every garment he was wearing. Colin did not even try and stand up, just shucked off his pants, sat on the stage and pushed them off. When Colin was naked apart from the necklace around his neck, the blond vampire stilled and waited for the next instruction.

"Knees," was all Damian said and Colin turned, lifted onto hands and knees and offered Damian what Damian wanted.

Thom's dominance was virtual; he was from a different time, a different place, but Damian's was very physical and this was the epitome of it. Alpha wolf and beta wolf, neither cowed, but one submissive to the other; the most primal of instincts and it excited Thom to see it. Ultimately he had caused this; through him Damian had come to be and through Damian the coven had been formed. It was beautiful to perceive.

Damian did not take time to prepare Colin slowly, merely drizzled the lube onto the crack in Colin's ass and then slicked himself. There were no more clothes shed; Colin was naked, Damian was still half-dressed, clothes in place, but open, yet another sign of dominance.

Thom realised that his fingers were playing with the top of Jonathan's jeans as he watched the scene playing out before him and he knew what he wanted first. He was going to have to be careful with the balance between Jonathan and Damian, neither would take well to being second in his affections, but he wanted Jonathan writhing beneath him first; of that much he was sure. It would have to be soon as well, since the show in front of him was stirring up passions that had been buried a long time.

Damian slowly knelt down, one hand resting on Colin's hip and Thom had the perfect view of the other lining up cock and hole. This was not about slow, gentle love making, it was about claiming and Damian pushed into Colin slowly, but firmly. Vampire bodies were tuned to feeding and sex and Colin moaned low and loud as Damian slid into him. It was like sliding the puzzle pieces back into place as Thom felt the atmosphere in the room change. The air had been sexually charged before, but now it was alive with desire; the whole coven was focused on their two leaders.

Thom could see several of the younger vampires leaning out of their seats; they wanted to touch as well.

He watched Damian began to move his hips, sliding out and then back into Colin. Not far at first, but with enough force to make the submissive vampire groan and brace himself more firmly. Colin did not move, did not push back, just remained as still as possible given what Damian was doing to him. Thom could see the passion, could feel it and yet both Damian and Colin kept it controlled. Colin was hard, long thick cock hanging below his body, begging for attention, but Colin never made a move to help himself. As Damian continued to thrust, Colin seemed to accept his position, acting as a vessel for Damian's pleasure.

There was so much need and want just below the surface and Thom knew that every vampire in the room could feel it. Even Rogers was watching, fascinated, and there was not a male in the room not sporting a significant erection.



Damian's movements were smooth and hard, but slowly the signs began to show and Thom could tell that Damian was climbing closer to orgasm. The sex was carrying power, the power of the coven and Thom knew it was almost time for the most important part of the demonstration.

"Touch them," he said, letting the power moving through the room tinge his voice.

Surprisingly it was Frankie who moved first, slipping forward, hand raised, running it along Colin's back towards Damian. Colin gasped as soon as he was touched and Thom could feel the sex magic growing in the air. The others joined in quickly after that, all moving forward and reaching out their hands to touch Colin or Damian, building the power in the room with their acceptance.

Apart from him and Jonathan, the deputy was the last to move, but the new vampire was drawn in as well, called by the raw power moving through the room. That just left them and Thom urged Jonathan forward, letting his lover go and waiting for Jonathan to be drawn in. It was irresistible on so many levels and Jonathan went without fighting, joining the pack of enrapt vampires.

Damian still moved against and inside Colin, but Damian's rhythm was erratic now as hands touched both of the lead vampires. The rest of the family were touching them and each other adding to the arousal running through everyone in the room. It was time and Thom finally stepped forward. His primal instinct was to join the pack of writhing bodies, but he pushed that aside, instead reaching out one hand to place it on the back of Damian's neck.

He let his desire and passion flood out of him through that touch and Damian cried out, feeling his power as only his true child could. It pushed Damian on into the orgasm that had been building and with that outrush of sexual energy into the whole coven went his power as well. His magic interlaced properly with that of the coven's for the first time as they all opened and accepted it and it was like pouring his being into a bottomless pit as they took everything he had to give.

He heard Colin's matching cry to Damian's and the moans of the rest of the coven, but he could not react himself as he felt his mind being swallowed by the power around him. It was something of a shock to realise that he had underestimated the family quite considerably, but he did not resist what he felt. He opened that part of himself that was sure of the unity they needed, sure of what they all needed to be and he shared it, baring that part of his soul. In doing so he relinquished his connection with the real world and felt himself beginning to fall forward just as darkness reached up to claim him.

~

## Chapter 2 Moving Forward

Waking up in strange places seemed to be becoming a habit and Thom opened his eyes to find that he was once again not where he had been when unconsciousness originally descended. What was also very significant was that, soon after consciousness returned, he realised he was totally naked. Several other facts followed this one quite quickly: there was a rather possessive arm around his waist; he was spooned up against another naked body behind; he had an arm thrown over Jonathan who was lying in front of him; and they all appeared to be in a bed that was not the couch from Damian's rooms.

The moment he moved, the arm around his waist tightened a little and he half turned, realising that he was not the only person awake in the bed. He was not overly surprised to find that the firm body behind him belonged to Damian and he was even less surprised to see that a very much asleep Colin was curled up against Damian's back as well.

"Naked?" he asked, deciding that he would rather have an interesting conversation than a serious one.

"There are many things I allow in the Lair," Damian said, accepting his lead and smiling just a little, "grime is not one of them."

"I see your point," he replied, since he could not say he disliked the fact he was naked in close proximity to other naked men.

He could still feel the shift in the magic around him; it had not settled yet and it made his nerves tingle. It was impossible to say how long he had been unconscious, but it could not have been too long and he felt the need for sex beginning to make itself known again. Jonathan appeared to be sleeping peacefully in front of him, something that surprised and pleased him, but he was not sure he would be able to let it go on much longer.

"I can feel the need in you," Damian whispered to him quietly.

"You and Colin put on quite a show," Thom replied, feeling his cock beginning to stir at the memory.

"Orchestrated by you," Damian pointed out and the hand resting over him moved slowly over his skin. "You move people like chess pieces."

"Only when necessary," he said and gave a small moan as Damian kissed the side of his neck and clever fingers stroked down over his stomach, just brushing the hair nestling between his legs.

It was Damian who was making a move now and he almost gave in, but he managed to pull back control at the last moment. To his surprise he felt Damian smiling into his back.

"You have a will of iron," Damian said and seemed more amused than anything else.

"That is not the only thing made out of iron at the moment," he replied, feeling his cock throbbing as he rapidly hardened.

"Then I suggest you wake your sweet young thing," Damian told him, "and do something about it."

That did surprise Thom and he turned again.

"I am no longer the young man you met all those years ago," Damian said, no trace of the jealousy Thom had feared, "I am old enough to recognise necessity and I know the bonds which bind us can never be broken. He is young and we need to teach him how to share and be shared."

Now Thom slowly smiled; Damian really was the leader he had hoped.

"I cannot think of anyone I would rather share him with," he said and he genuinely meant it.

"Does that include me?" Colin sounded sleepy, but very much interested.

"Family is family," Thom said and looked back at Jonathan's slumbering face, "and I think it is time we taught Jonathan that."

Moving forward, he made sure he was nose to nose with Jonathan and then he let his fingers slowly trace over Jonathan's chest, causing the muscles under the taught skin to twitch just slightly. He smiled as Jonathan moved to clumsily brush his hand away and then settled back into sleep. Once his boyfriend was still, he started touching again, this time gently flicking over the one nipple he could easily reach. Now Jonathan made a low humming sound, clearly beginning to wake up, but not quite there and Thom kissed his boyfriend lightly on the nose.

Jonathan opened his eyes and blinked and Thom continued to play with the nipple below his fingers. He could tell the moment Jonathan's brain caught up with being awake at which point he moved even closer and all but demanded a kiss. Jonathan gave in easily, opening his mouth and allowing Thom to push his tongue in and Thom let one of his hands dance down Jonathan's chest to seek a bigger prize.

Damian's hands were fondling his arse and running slowly over his lower back, just reminding him that Damian was there as he took Jonathan in hand. Jonathan moaned into the kiss, clearly appreciating the touch and then Thom found himself moaning as well as a hand slipped between his legs and fondled his sac. Damian seemed very determined to make sure he remembered he and Jonathan were not alone. As Jonathan sucked on his tongue, he kind of forgot he was the one supposed to be initiating things for a while.

He enjoyed the attention for a while, from Damian behind and Jonathan in front, but it wasn't in line with his plan, so he eventually resisted it. They were covered in a light sheet, not really needing the warmth, but bowing to the niceties, but now it was in the way. Thom took the top of it, bunched it up and threw it towards the end to the bed, raising himself up into a half sitting position, twisted so that he was almost coming on to his knees.

"That's better," he said, letting his eyes run over all three other occupants of the bed, "now I can see."

Jonathan looked slightly uncomfortable to be suddenly without any cover in a bed with two other vampires he barely knew and Tom didn't want that to last for long.

"Time for proper introductions," he said with a mischievous smile and quickly climbed over Jonathan. "Move over," he instructed, while doing his very best not to fall out of the bed where he was now on the very edge.

That would definitely have crimped his style. Jonathan did as he was told, moving closer to Damian, but did not seem entirely comfortable with the action.

"What..?" Jonathan started to ask.

"Just relax," was all Thom said as he began to make himself comfortable, "you're going to like this."

He looked to Damian, who met his gaze and gave just the tiniest sign of acknowledgement; they were marching to the same tune. Thom felt the spark of excitement in his belly, making his body respond even more, but at that point he was more interested in his boyfriend than his own arousal.

Thom settled down behind Jonathan, aligning his body to Jonathan's and smoothing a hand over Jonathan's side, hopefully allaying any fears Jonathan might be feeling. He kissed the side of Jonathan's neck, pushing himself against his lover so that they were skin to skin and also making sure Jonathan could not move back. The next part was the first test and he let his eyes meet Damian's.

Colin was lying behind Damian in the same way he was behind Jonathan and seemed to be very interested in Damian's ear, but Thom could see Colin watching him and Jonathan as well. They were all still on the same page even as Colin caressed Damian.

Damian acknowledged Thom's look by leaning forward, moving a little way from Colin, although Colin's hands were still running over Damian's upper and lower body and they were only parted from the waist up. Damian stole a kiss from Jonathan and insinuated himself into a similar role as Thom had had before, while Thom caressed Jonathan from behind. For a few moments Jonathan was tense, Thom could feel it in his lover, but Damian was not easily put off and Jonathan slowly relaxed into the kiss. The fact that Thom could see Damian's hands moving over very less than innocent places on Jonathan had to have helped and Thom continued to lay gentle kisses on the back of Jonathan's neck and shoulders.

It wasn't long before Jonathan was kissing Damian back and moving to touch as well, at which point Thom decided to move on. Very slowly he began to work his way down Jonathan's back, curling himself round on the bed so that he didn't fall off the end. He layered kisses all over Jonathan's skin as he went until he reached Jonathan's back side, at which point he found it completely irresistible and he nipped at his lover's ass cheek quite hard. The resulting squeak was well worth the effort.

"Hey," Jonathan said, twisting and looking down at him, at which point he just grinned.

"It's not like you're going to bruise," he said in as cheeky a tone as he could manage.

"He has a point," Damian agreed and caused Jonathan to look between both of them and pout in the most adorable manner.

"Aww," Colin said, leaning up on one arm and all but leering at all three of them, "ganging up on poor Jonathan."

Thom's grin widened.

"Oh yes," he replied and had a good fondle for good measure.

He had very definite designs on Jonathan's ass and even as Jonathan tried to protest about the ganging up part, he urged his lover's top leg up and forward, eventually coming to rest over Damian's hip.

"Much better," he said and moved in on his target.

The puckered little hole right in front of his face was exactly what he was after and, spreading Jonathan with his fingers, he swiped his tongue across that particular spot. All protest from Jonathan died instantly and about the only sound Jonathan seemed to be capable of making was a low moaning, that Damian soon reduced even more by demanding yet another kiss.

If there was one thing Jonathan had never been able to resist it was a good tongue-lashing; it never ceased to relax Jonathan in a way just about nothing else could, which was why Thom had chosen his current form of attack. He gave the strong muscle another couple of swipes of his tongue, relishing the heightened experience that his vampire senses gave him. The quiet whimpering which resulted was very gratifying and he moved his attack up a gear, pushing his tongue against Jonathan hard. Jonathan broke out of the kiss with Damian then, head going back a way and breath coming in little gasps and Thom kept up his attack.

The way the muscle under his tongue quivered at his touch made him smile, or at least as well had he could without giving Jonathan any chance to gather himself. Thom was enjoying every second and he could feel Jonathan's hole giving in to his assault, relaxing in a trained response, which was exactly what he wanted. It took him a few more minutes, drawing quite a few vaguely strangled sounds from his lover, especially since Damian at no point gave up from the front either, but eventually he could feel that Jonathan was more than ready for the next step.

If the sigh was anything to go by, Jonathan thought he was having mercy when he finally pulled back, but he had no intention of being merciful for long. He wanted Jonathan to completely come apart under their touch; to surrender completely and finally realise that there was no threat from the others. Jonathan was territorial and overly paranoid and this was a physical demonstration that those instincts were now entirely redundant. This was love at its most primitive form and as such required very careful handling. Thom was going to claim what belonged to him, claim and then share.

As if Colin knew exactly what he was thinking, as he moved back up so he was lying along side Jonathan once more a small packet was thrown in his direction. It was a sachet of lube with the Lair's logo on it, which might have amused Thom had he not been more interested in what he was going to use it for. He gave Colin a nod of thanks and then ripped open the packet with his teeth, spreading it over his aching hard cock. To say he was looking forward to what was coming next would have been the understatement of the century. He had been ready to take Jonathan before all the build up and now he was practically dying for it.

"Ready for me, Lover?" he asked in Jonathan's ear.

"Always," was the just about coherent response.

They had done this enough times in the past and Jonathan was prepared enough that they were both ready and Thom manoeuvred himself into position before slowly pushing into Jonathan's waiting body. Jonathan was tight, but there was no real resistance and as Jonathan groaned and flexed around him, Thom pushed home. He gave a breathy moan of his own as he sank into his lover, feeling his power moving under his skin as well as the sexual arousal the whole act was causing. It made him breathless and almost shook the control he was trying to maintain.

What he would have liked to have done was drive into Jonathan over and over again until they both dived over the edge into sexual ecstasy, but that wasn't the point. Jonathan was definitely going to get there, but Thom had no intention of letting go himself, not until his objective was complete.

He moved slowly against and inside Jonathan, pulling away and then bringing their bodies back together again and he demanded tight control of his own flesh. This was about Jonathan; a demonstration that had to be handled perfectly and he held to his lover, fucking him as carefully as he knew how. Jonathan responded with sounds of pure sex, moving against him, trying to urge him on, clearly wanting more, but he would not give it.

Damian still demanded attention from Jonathan as well, although Damian had his own distractions now since, as far as Thom could tell, Colin was making sure Damian knew he was there. Colin was definitely not willing to play a passive bystander it seemed and Thom really couldn't blame him.

"Please," Jonathan eventually began to beg, needing more than Thom was willing to give.

Thom enjoyed Jonathan's need and had every intention of letting Jonathan reach orgasm eventually, but not quite yet.

"Soon," he promised, holding back his own pleasure as he drove Jonathan on.

The whine that came from Jonathan's mouth when he completely withdrew was completely bereft.

"Turn over onto your other side," he instructed quietly and Jonathan was so desperate that his lover did exactly as he was told straight away.

It took a few moments of shuffling, but soon Jonathan was facing him and he moved forward for a kiss. Out of the corner of his eye he could see Colin's hand, slick with lube, working Damian's cock. This was the second stage of the demonstration and he had to keep Jonathan in the zone. He reached down and took hold of Jonathan's thigh, urging Jonathan's leg forward, at which point Jonathan seemed to catch on to what he was trying to do. The moment Damian moved in behind Jonathan, Thom felt his lover try to move away, but Thom held Jonathan firm, demanding another kiss in an attempt to distract his lover.

It worked long enough so that Jonathan could not move away before Damian slid into him and Thom watched Jonathan's expression change to one of bliss as Damian moved. It did not last long as Jonathan's brain caught up with instinct, but Thom was looking his lover in the eyes and fondling him with one hand by the time reality made itself known.

"Let him have you," Thom said quietly, "let him love you."

Jonathan appeared conflicted, clearly wanting sex on a physical level, but not sure he wanted it the way he was getting it. It was time to blow Jonathan's mind, figuratively and practically. He fisted Jonathan's cock firmly, demanding that his lover focus only on the sex; there would be time for thinking later. Jonathan's eyes closed and Thom felt his lover relaxing into the pleasure rather than worrying about where it was coming from.

Once again he began his descent down Jonathan's body, this time his aim was much harder, longer and thicker, but he had every intention of using his mouth on it as well. Jonathan quite obviously knew what he intended as well, because he heard his lover's breath catching in anticipation before Jonathan was moaning in pleasure as Damian moved inside him. Jonathan was trembling now and Thom knew his lover was close; it would not take much more.

Jonathan's leg was looped over his shoulder when he came level with his prize and he moved in quickly. He opened his mouth and quite deliberately swallowed Jonathan just about whole, opening his throat and taking the thick cock deep inside him. He had been gay a very long time and Thom might not have been an expert at deep-throating, but Richard had known how to do it for quite some years. Jonathan whined in over-stimulation as he bobbed his head, releasing Jonathan's cock a little and then swallowing his lover whole again.

With the way Damian was taking Jonathan from behind and he continued to suck and move over Jonathan's cock, Jonathan could not hold out for long. They moved in perfect union, their magic moving as well as their bodies and it drove them on all the faster. Jonathan finally cried out, trying to buck into his mouth, but he held his lover firm, instead sucking Jonathan for all he had.

Jonathan was left gasping and sated and Thom quickly moved back up the bed so that they were once again face to face. He held Jonathan's flushed face between his hands, looking directly into his lover's eyes.

"Do you understand now?" he asked, praying the Jonathan could accept the reality. "There is no mine, only ours. I love you, I will always love you."

Jonathan was still breathing hard, but he nodded slowly and Thom leant forward to kiss him. At last, Jonathan was finally seeing the reality of their situation.

"Thank god," Damian said, kissing the junction between Jonathan's neck and shoulder, "and now, if you would pardon my rudeness; there is something I have been longing to do for an incredibly long time."

Thom grinned and shuffled backwards and rolled over as Damian all but climbed over Jonathan to settle above him. He spared a glance for Jonathan and was glad to see Colin pulling his lover close and distracting Jonathan with a distinct case of wandering palms.

"Care for round two?" he heard Colin whisper, but by that point he was far more interested in Damian.

He put his head back and arched his back as Damian went straight for his throat, actually biting him and drawing blood. It heightened his sense of arousal ten fold and he groaned as Damian pinned him to the bed. He needed friction, he needed anything to help the ache in his loins, but Damian had him flattened just so and his cock was free from any contact at all. He could have demanded the attention he wanted; in spirit at least he was older and stronger than Damian, but that would have been cheating. There were other possibilities, but he was pretty sure he was about to be thoroughly fucked and if that was what Damian wanted, then Damian could have it.

Damian did not seem to be in the mood to wait and the coven's ex-leader moved between his legs, urging him to raise them. He did so without much thought to anymore foreplay and he felt Damian lining himself up in only moments, still slick

from having taken Jonathan. Thom groaned as he was breached, his body giving in to the intrusion, but objecting at the rushed nature of it. There was a little pain, but he needed the connection more than he cared about that. He had been close to the edge since the first moment he had pushed into Jonathan and Damian's cock and Damian's magic were speaking to parts of him all at once.

This was not about finesse or stamina for either of them and after only a few moments for him to adjust, Damian was moving, demanding his surrender as he had demanded Jonathan's. They were both powerful vampires and magic users and it only made the experience headier for both of them. As Damian thrust into him, he strained to meet every move, almost animalistic in their intensity. No longer needing to be in control, he let himself go, moaning and grunting and rutting against Damian moving inside him.

Damian held him down, forcing him into the bed, pinning his arms beside his head and pushing their bodies together time after time. He could see the desperation in Damian's features, feel the need scorching both of their nerves in flames of passion. This was about dominance and power and love and unfinished business and they were almost in battle; each move increasing the intensity.

It could only end one way and despite his raw need, as Thom reached desperately for release, it was Damian who broke first. Damian bucked into him, crying out loudly, releasing semen and magic into him with equal measure. It felt incredible and even as he lay there, impaled, he came as his orgasm broke over him like a tidal wave. For a moment all he could see was white as his body shook under Damian's and it was quite honestly wonderful. As sex went it was right up there with the greatest ever.

Coming down was less fun as his ass complained about the rough treatment. He was a vampire; it wasn't as if it would last long, but it definitely made itself known for a few seconds and he found himself grimacing and breathing hard. Damian was still in him and above him and was looking down at him in a rather dazed fashion; clearly that had been a little more intense than Damian had expected as well.

"Wow," Colin's voice made him look over at the other two who appeared to have been watching them avidly; "do you two have friction burns now?"

It was typically irreverent and typically Colin and Thom found himself snorting with laughter. He wasn't really in a position to be laughing and he didn't really want to make light of what he and Damian had just done, but he couldn't help it. Thankfully Damian seemed to find it amusing as well and grinned before collapsing on top of him completely.

"Help," Thom said in a mock tortured tone, "I can't breathe."

"Then don't bother," was Colin's helpful hint.

Thom looked over at the cocky vampire; Colin was going to pay for that one. They had plenty of time and he was pretty sure he could make Colin beg in the end. When he and Damian moved apart by mutual consent and he looked Colin directly in the eye, Colin finally started to catch on and appeared kind of worried. This was going to be fun.

====



The club was closed with a notice placed on the door about emergency repairs, which meant there was time for the residents to adjust to their new arrangements. As far as Thom could tell, most of the coven were more interested in sex than anything else, and he couldn't blame them; the power surge had them all rather on one track at the moment. That was the problem with sex magic: it was distracting. However, there were other things that needed dealing with apart from personal gratification.

When they had finally fallen out of bed, he had stepped into the shower and just about managed to dissuade the others from joining him. That meant he had had some time to think and, when he turned off the water, he was glad to find his head was much clearer than it had been. It was time to make sure everything was going to continue as they wanted and to add a new dynamic.

He walked back into the bedroom to find that Damian, Colin and Jonathan had had all the will power of a group of horny teenagers and although Damian had managed to pull on a robe, all three were back on the bed. Thom stood in the doorway drying his hair and smiled as he shook his head; clearly he was the only one thinking about anything but sex. He threw his towel over his shoulder and leant on the doorframe, watching the others for a few moments and enjoying the view. Jonathan had a serious case of submission going on as Damian and Colin played with their willing victim; it was hot to watch and almost made Thom forget what he was supposed to be doing.

"Every family needs a mother," he said, eventually shaking himself out of his fixation and drawing the others' attention back to him.

All three gave him a once up and down and seemed to like the view as well, but then he was naked and that was a sure fire way to get their attention.

"Even a gay one?" Colin sounded as if he thought Thom was talking nonsense.

"Definitely a gay one when it happens to be a coven as well," Thom said, standing up straight and walking over to Damian's wardrobe.

They were close enough in size that he was pretty sure he could find something to fit.

"There is an element missing from our magic," he said, rummaging through Damian's clothes to see what he could find that wouldn't look ridiculous outside the Lair. "No matter how effeminate some of our members may be at times, they will never be female."

"You want to offer a place to your friend Laura," Damian said and Thom turned back to see his lover sitting up and looking at him seriously, all distraction gone.

Thom nodded and pulled out a pair of pants he thought would suit him.

"Her life out there is almost certainly over, whether the Sheriff believes her or not," he continued to speak as he picked a shirt. "Everything will have been entered into the computer and without telling the truth her defence sounds ridiculous. The Lair can offer her a haven and her inclusion will bring balance to our little family. We will be far more powerful when we can harness the feminine as well as the masculine."

Damian appeared thoughtful after his explanation, clearly considering the options.

"But how will she even fit in here?" Colin asked the first question.

"I think Rogers may be useful for one aspect of that," Thom said, smiling at how neatly the pieces were falling into place, "and you may be underestimating how appealing our lifestyle will be to a straight woman. You don't mind being mothered, just a little bit, do you, Colin?"

He looked to Damian to find out what his second had to say about that.

"The female of the species does not react to sex in the same way as the male," Damian said, showing far more knowledge of woman than Thom would have expected. "The controlling factor which unites us here is sex; she could bring chaos rather than balance."

Thom did not disagree immediately, he did not want Damian thinking he did not take the matter seriously, so he pulled on some underwear before answering.

"If we were just a coven I would agree," he eventually replied, "but we are a coven of vampires. A vampire's nature is inherently sexual and I have known several females of our kind. Laura will bring the softer, female aspect, but with no less passion."

"She deserves our help," Jonathan added to the conversation and to Thom's surprise his lover sounded very sure of himself.

Colin and Damian looked at each other, the years of having been a partnership showing through very clearly and then Damian looked back at Thom. Thom was pulling a shirt on, but paused to hear what Damian had to say.

"You have far more knowledge of this than we do, it seems," Damian said, climbing off the bed and walking over to him, "so we will bow to your experience, but if she becomes a problem she will have to be dealt with."

"Of course," Thom replied and smiled, he was as much a realist as Damian, "but we are getting ahead of ourselves. She may not even accept."

"You're going to her now?" Damian asked, ever ahead of the game.

Thom nodded, that was what he intended. The sooner this was done the better.

"Would you care for some company?" was Damian's next question.

"I think you are needed here," he replied, rather enjoying the way Damian's robe was hanging mostly open, but managing to drag his mind back on track, "but I was thinking of taking Colin, if he's willing."

He looked over to where Colin was still rather interested in Jonathan and was just in time to see Colin lift his head having realised that his name had been mentioned. It didn't look as if there was going to be any trouble between Jonathan and Colin from now on; the pair had adjusted very rapidly once Jonathan had exhibited his especially talented tongue. Thom had always been impressed and it appeared so was Colin, quite a change from the disdain Colin had shown Jonathan previously.

"Me?" Colin asked, obviously surprised. "But I was the one..."

Thom nodded.

"That is why I would like you with me," he explained, perfectly happy to explain his reasoning; "Laura has to know we are serious."

Colin looked to Damian, another indication that things were definitely settling down and Damian gave a slight nod.

"If you want to," Damian said and then looked back at Thom.

"I'll take a shower," Colin said, leaving Jonathan lying in the middle of the bed and headed for the bathroom.

Thom leant forward and gave Damian a quick kiss, then pulled back and began arranging his choice of clothing. He was in a very good mood, which considering the last few days was quite an amazing thing.

====

Thom walked into the Sheriff's station the normal way even though he and Colin could have just walked straight into the cells. Sheriff Trout saw him almost straight away and looked more than shocked, especially when Colin entered the frame.

"Hello, Sheriff," he greeted, as if he was any other person in any other place, "please may we see Laura?"

Trout clearly didn't quite know what to do when confronted by two vampires on his own turf.

"I gave her your letter," the sheriff eventually said, all but puffing out his chest and making it clear he was top dog here, "but I told her what happened as well."

"Good," Thom said, attempting to appear as unthreatening as possible; "it will save some time."

The sheriff narrowed his eyes and all but glared at him, but Thom just stood there and waited for the man to decide what to do.

"What do you want with her?" Trout asked in a way that suggested they were getting no further unless their reasons were better than average.

It was kind of amusing how the sheriff still thought he could stop them when it came down to it. The man really didn't seem to truly grasp what he was up against.

"If we could step into your office," Thom said in as pleasant a tone as he knew how without being completely patronising, "we'd be happy to explain."

Stubborn as ever Trout just stood there for a while, but finally led them into the next room.

"Right, now I want the truth," the sheriff said, hands on hips and stern expression on his face.

Thom inclined his head and acknowledged the challenge.

"We wish to offer her the chance to join us," he said calmly and simply. "Without revealing the whole truth, which we can never do, her prospects in your world are low; in ours we will make her special."

The sheriff looked aghast.

"You have got to be fucking kidding," Trout said as if it was the most ridiculous idea in the world.

"Sheriff," Thom said very loudly and very sharply, "you do not comprehend what we are, only what we were, so do not deem to judge us. Laura killed Jimmy with no provocation, even with a battered woman defence her chances are slim on being set free. We can offer her what you can't."

Trout seemed a little shocked by his vehemence and Thom just glared at the other man to make sure his point was made. This was very important to him, not least of all because Laura was his friend.

"But you want to turn her into a monster," Trout said eventually, clearly not able to comprehend how this could ever be good.

"Not a monster, Sheriff," Thom said, refusing to back down in the slightest, "a vampire."

The fact that he was completely adamant about the subject seemed to be having an effect on the sheriff.

"And you think I should let you just walk in there and make her one of you?" the sheriff finally spoke again.

"No," Thom replied, feeling as if he was actually making progress, "we think you should let us in to see Laura so we can offer her the choice. It is her life, after all."

Trout did not appear happy, but neither was the sheriff looking angry either.

"We are no longer the enemy, Sheriff," Colin chose that moment to speak; "if we were, you would be dead already."

"Do you understand, Sheriff?" Thom asked, speaking plainly. "We do not have to ask; we have the power to just take, but that is not what we want."

The sheriff did understand, finally, Thom could see it in the other man's eyes. At last they seemed to be getting through.

"You have a plan if Laura says yes, I take it?" Trout said, sounding resigned.

Thom nodded and then he proceeded to explain exactly what he was thinking.

====

"Thom," Laura stood up the moment she saw him enter the cell block and he could smell her fear.

It had taken a little while, but he and Colin had finally talked the sheriff into letting them see Laura. There were conditions and Trout was still completely paranoid about them, but the sheriff had let them in.

"There's no reason to be afraid, Laura," Thom said, walking up to the bars, "no one is going to hurt you."

Laura looked to where Colin was standing behind him.

"I remember you," she said, backing up against the wall, "you were in Thom's house."

"That's in the past, Laura, this is Colin," Thom said, doing his best to draw Laura's attention back to him, "everything is different now."

"Because you're one of them?" Laura spat it at him like an accusation.

Thom did not like seeing one of his friends so distressed.

"I take it that's all the sheriff told you?" he said, placing a hand on the bars. "Did he mention that I healed him and we let him go?"

Laura frowned, looking less sure of herself.

"What are you talking about?" she asked.

Thom gave her a little smile.

"Sheriff Trout was shot when he, Jonathan and Deputy Rogers served their warrant on the Lair," he said simply; "he was just about dead. I used magic to bring him back before releasing him."

The clearly confused Laura.

"How would you know how to do that?" she asked and it was obvious she did not believe him.

"I'm not just Thom anymore," he said, doing his best to explain, "I am also a man called Richard DeVere."

"Oh great," Laura said, closing her eyes for a moment and clearly gathering herself, "not only are you a vampire, you're possessed as well."

Thom couldn't help it, he laughed at that, something which didn't please Laura at all.

"There is nothing fucking funny about this situation," she all but snarled at him and he admired her courage.

"I'm not possessed," he said, doing his best not to laugh again, "I used to be Richard DeVere; becoming a vampire awoke those memories within me."

"And the return of DeVere has changed everything," Colin added in rather sultry tone.

He half smiled at the intimation he could read from that tone, but of course that was lost on Laura.

"You're a vampire, he's a vampire," Laura said from her position against the back wall, "how is everything changed."

"We no longer need to kill," Colin answered for him and Thom just watched Laura for her reaction.

Laura looked very unconvinced.

"The vampires here on the Island were under a curse," Thom began to explain; "my curse. They only survived because their leader, Damian formed them into a coven. Vampires do not normally live in large groups and they do not normally kill their victims; it is too dangerous. I created Damian and in fear and ignorance he killed me. With my dying breath I cursed him, something I should never have done and the Lair is the ultimate result. When I awoke I removed the curse; the killing is over."

"And you think I'll believe anything you say, because?" Laura asked.

Thom gave a small shrug; this was turning into a familiar conversation.

"You're my friend," he said and looked her directly in the eye.

"But you're a vampire," Laura insisted.

Simple talking wasn't getting through and so Thom decided to use a little shock to help things along.

"So because I can look like this," he said, allowing his vampire traits to surface, "and I can do this," he stepped straight through the bars, "you refuse to allow me to help you."

Laura flattened herself to the wall looking very afraid and Thom let himself return to normal.

"Laura," he said, leaning back against the bars and staying back from his friend, "we did not have to walk in here. If we wanted to hurt you we did not have to use the front door or even set foot in here. We want to help."

That brought Laura up short, but she still appeared more afraid than anything else.

"Look me in the eye, Laura," he said firmly and exerted his will onto her mind.

Her head came up almost instantly and as soon as her eyes locked with his her gaze went glassy.

"See the truth, Laura," he said, voice deep and steady and then he gave her just a brief look at his past and his present.

It took only seconds, but even as he broke the connection he realised it had been too much for Laura's tired psyche and he jumped forward to catch her as she fell. He very quickly lowered her onto the bunk next to where she had been standing.

"Laura," he said, holding her and gently patting her face, "come on back."

It took a few moments, but eventually Laura blinked slowly and opened her eyes properly, looking up at him.

"Thom?" she said, confused and not really with it.

"Sorry about that," he apologised immediately, smiling as she slowly came to properly.

For a few moments they just looked at each other and then Laura very carefully sat up and extricated herself from his grasp. He let her go and waited and eventually Laura turned from where she now had her back to him and looked him in the eye. This time he did nothing.

"That was real," she said, half question, half statement.

Thom nodded.

"Part of you really is Thom," Laura continued, thinking it through as she went as far as he could tell, "I felt that."

"Part of me will always be Thom," he replied, perfectly honestly, "and I think that is a very good thing. Thom's life has been far different from anything my other life ever showed me. I know far more about compassion because of being Thom."

"And the other part is very old," was Laura's next statement.

"Very," he affirmed. "You have been a very good friend to me, Laura, which is why I am here. Because of what has happened your life is ruined, but we may be able to help."

"You want to make me one of you," Laura said and surprised him.

If he had managed to let that slip in their brief connection, Laura was far more perceptive on a psychic level than he had given her credit for. His desire to have her join them went up a notch.

"We can offer you a safe haven," he said, trying to convey his genuine desire to help her, "and things you have probably never dreamed of."

"But why would I want what you have?" she asked and seemed to be genuinely asking.

Thom took her hand.

"Because we can offer you a family that will never hurt you and never betray you," he said plainly. "You will be powerful and no one will be able to abuse you again."

Laura's face went blank and he was well aware he had hit a nerve.

"Or, if you decide you do not want what we offer, the Lair retains very good lawyers," Colin said and made him look around.

Colin just looked at him and it was impossible to read the other vampire's motives.

"How would you do it?" Laura asked and Thom focussed back on her. "If I just disappear they won't stop looking for me; I'm wanted for murder."

"Fake suicide," he replied without trying to pretty it up. "As long as the sheriff is convinced you are doing this of your own free will he has agreed to help and he will talk to Dr Belmont for us. You will write a note, we will drain you and leave you here and it will be written up officially as suicide brought on by remorse. Then tomorrow night we will collect you from the morgue and take you home."

Talking about how you were going to die had to be an unpleasant experience and Laura did not appear at ease with it, but she was clearly considering it.

"One woman among an army of gay men," she said with a small smile, trying to make light of it.

"Well we do have one little straight boy we haven't quite corrupted yet," he replied, smiling as well, "and I distinctly remember finding you riffling through my porn collection at least twice."

Laura blushed at that and there was a little chuckle from Colin behind him, but it didn't take long for her to become serious again.

"I need to think about this, Thom," Laura said eventually; "it's a big decision."

Thom nodded, he hadn't really expected her to make up her mind straight away.

"Here," he said, pulling one of the coven's necklaces out of his pocket, "when you have decided, hold this and think of me. It will summon us back. We would wait, but the sheriff will want to speak with you and if we stay he will think we are influencing you."

Laura frowned.

"But you don't need to be here to do that," she pointed out since she was well aware that no one had been there when she had found Tom.

"We know that, you know that, but Sheriff Trout does not seem to have cottoned on to that yet," he replied with a conspiratorial grin. "Just remember, you're not alone."

He reached out and took her hand, squeezing it and he was very pleased when she reciprocated the gesture.

"Thank you, Thom," she said and she seemed to really mean it.

He couldn't say whether she would take them up on their offer or not, but the fear was definitely going and that, at least, was good.

"We'll see you soon," he said, standing up, "whether it is to make you one of us or to call in the legal team. Think carefully."

Laura nodded and so he turned and walked back through the bars, fading out and fading back in again on the other side.



"That is a really neat trick," Laura said, trying to sound brave and cheerful now.

"One of many," he said and gave her a throwaway smile, "one of many."

Colin gave Laura a quick nod and then they went to leave, for the sake of the sheriff, the conventional way. He only hoped that things would continue to go his way.

"Why did you offer her a lawyer?" Thom asked as they walked out; he was not sure whether to be angry or not.

Colin was being inscrutable, which was a somewhat annoying ability.

"Because people with no choice make stupid decisions," Colin said in a perfectly reasonable tone; "this way you are sure what Laura decides is what wants."

There was no reprimand in Colin's tone, but Thom knew there should have been; it seemed it was Colin's turn to be the wise one. Thom smiled ruefully to himself; his obsessive personality was as bad as any of them.

"Thank you," he said, acknowledging what Colin didn't say and Colin just gave him a wicked smile.

====

Thom had decided to be optimistic and when he and Colin returned to the Lair, while Colin went to take care of some of the details of running the club that had been forgotten over the previous few days, he decided to prepare where Laura would live as well as finding some rooms for himself (four in a bed was fun, but not conducive to sleeping). The Lair had a lot of unused space; it was a huge building and he found some unused rooms that had not been left closed up for too long and began planning.

Damian had found him about half an hour in, after he had decided which rooms were going to be his and which were going to be Laura's. There was some furniture in the rooms already and he was doing his best to decide what to keep and what to put into storage. He would be able to pick up the furniture from his home eventually, once it was no longer a crime scene, but that would be a few days at least.

"You may be an artist," Damian said, after watching him moving things for a while, "but you are no decorator. We're going to have to air out and paint these rooms completely before their usable. I'm going to find some of the boys; they can be useful for something other than sex this evening."

And that was it; Damian took over. Thom just backed out gracefully, especially when Jonathan got involved as well. When Jonathan had moved in with him, his boyfriend had just about remodelled the entire house, so Thom was well aware of when to keep his mouth shut and let the self appointed experts get on with it.

It was two hours later he felt the summons from Laura.

"Damian," he said, from where he was watching Damian order around semi-naked vampires in a bid to redecorate the rooms, "Laura called. If she has chosen us I will contact you; it should be you, Colin and I who bring her over."

Damian gave him a nod and then turned back to the task in hand without comment; there was no need to talk about what they had already decided.

On his way out, Thom gave Colin a similar message and took the details of the Lair's lawyers just in case, but he had an overriding feeling that he wouldn't be needing them. It took him very little time to reach the sheriff's station and the sheriff met him virtually the moment he walked through the doors.

"Swear to me you are not going to hurt her," Trout said in a very firm tone.

"Laura has been my friend for a long time, Sheriff," Thom replied, equally as direct, "and I would never hurt her. If you believe nothing else then believe that."

Trout looked him in the eye, assessing him and then finally unblocked his path with a nod.

"You know the way," Trout said and Thom headed to where he knew Laura was waiting.

Once again, as soon as he walked in, Laura stood up and he didn't bother with protocol, he simply walked straight into her cell. Laura appeared nervous and her body language was anxious, so he was pretty sure he knew what she had decided.

"Would I really be powerful?" she asked, fiddling with the necklace in her hands.

"You will be the only female in the coven," Thom decided to explain a little, "and magic has balance, male and female, hard and soft; you will be the focus of the softer side. It will give you status and power; enough so that you would never be weaker again."

Jimmy's affect on Laura had been obvious over the time he had known her and he could see the scars in her psyche.

"The balance is missing from the coven at the moment," he added, reaching out and taking her hand, "and we will treasure you for giving it to us."

Thom had seen a lot of different theories on magic and its uses in his time alive and some believed in only male or only female, but he had experienced the truth of true unification and he knew its significance.

Laura gave him a small, nervous smile.

"Then yes," she said in a quiet but firm voice, "I would rather be with friends than in jail alone."

Thom smiled and stepped up to his friend, pulling her into a hug before he really thought about what he was doing; that made him incredibly happy.

"I will need to go and speak to Sheriff Trout," he said, strangely excited, "but if you are sure, I will summon Damian and Colin. We are the power base for the coven and it will be all three of us who bring you over."

Laura looked kind of scared.

"Will it hurt?" she asked and Thom realised he was running away with everything.

"Not if I put you in thrall first," he said and gave her a reassuring smile. "We will be very gentle with you."

"Then hurry back before I lose my nerve," Laura said and pushed him towards the bard. "Don't give me too long to think about it."

Never one to ignore good advice, Thom set about everything he needed to do.

====

The sheriff was difficult to begin with, but that was entirely expected and Thom was beginning to think that their alliance would be forever prickly, but eventually Trout was convinced. Thom had decided that he would leave Dr Belmont to Trout unless Belmont became a real problem, so once everything was settled he summoned Damian and Colin. So as not to spook the sheriff anymore than necessary, they arrived through the front door, although there was no way they could have made it from the Lair in the time it took them had they been normal human beings.

"Laura," Thom greeted as they went back into the cells, "you know Colin and you've met Damian before, but he was pretending to be someone else."

"Hello," Laura said, clearly very nervous.

"Good evening," Damian said, turning on the charm, "it is lovely to finally meet you properly, Laura. Thom has been talking about you all night, so distracted was he that Jonathan and I had to rescue your new rooms from his clutches before he rearranged them into oblivion."

"New rooms?" Laura appeared surprised.

"I was erring on the side of optimism," Thom said with a little smile, "and, luckily for you, Damian took over before I totally wrecked the rooms we're clearing out for you."

"Jonathan is playing foreman while I am here," Damian added, clearly trying to set Laura at ease; "he's having to keep a close eye on the others; gay men can become so flamboyant."

That made Laura smile and Thom thought she might have relaxed a little. It was quite amusing seeing Damian putting someone at their ease rather than being dangerous and mysterious; it was a side of his vampire child that he enjoyed seeing.

Trout had insisted on being present, just to make sure everything was above board. What the man thought was above board Thom had no idea, but the idea was to keep the sheriff happy so Trout was hovering in the background. When he looked over to the man, the sheriff walked forward and unlocked the cell door; it wasn't necessary, but Thom hoped it would make Trout feel useful.

"So how do we do this?" Laura asked, eyes flicking between them all nervously.

"Just look into my eyes and let go," Thom said, not wishing to drag this out any longer than necessary for Laura's sake, "and leave the rest to us."

To her credit, Laura did look into his eyes almost immediately and he smiled and sent peaceful signals her way. He didn't even have to say anything as Laura's eyes fluttered closed and she swayed slightly where she was standing.

"She'll be okay, right?" Trout did not seem to be able to resist putting his oar in.

"Laura will be better than okay, Sheriff," Damian said as Thom continued to concentrate, making sure Laura was very deeply under.

They had not planned exactly how to do this, but they seemed to naturally fall into place: Thom behind Laura, Damian to the left and Colin to the right. Thom wound a steadying arm around his friend while Damian lifted her left wrist and Colin the right.

"If you're squeamish about bites, Sheriff," Thom said, looking over at the hovering man and letting his teeth elongate as he spoke, "now is the time to look away."

Moving with complete synchronicity he leant forward sinking his teeth into Laura's neck as Damian and Colin did the same for each wrist. Laura made a small noise and stiffened slightly, something reaching her even though Thom held her in deep thrall, but it lasted only a moment and she relaxed into his embrace. Her blood was sweet and velvety on his tongue and he drank deeply, allowing his power to move through Laura as he tasted the essence of her life. This was the ultimate power of the predator and it was liberating not to need to curb his instincts as he kept drinking way beyond the point where he felt Laura's body begin to fail.

He could feel Damian and Colin in unholy communion with him as they stole away Laura's life and he reached out to them on a psychic level, pulling them yet closer. They were the power base for the coven, the unholy three: father, son and possibly the most dangerous piece of ass between the island and the other side of the country and their powers mingled in Laura, leaving the foundation on which her reawakening would be built.

With all three of them drinking it didn't take long and he felt Laura's heartbeat faltering as her breathing became laboured. He was holding her up now completely and as Laura's last breath passed her lips, he pulled back, perfectly in time with Colin and Damian. The blood high was a powerful thing, but Thom reigned in his senses and with the help of the other two, carefully moved Laura to the bunk. Her heart was still beating, just, but as he listened it faltered one last time and he felt life leaving her.

It felt strange even knowing that they would bring her back and he carefully moved some stray hair out of her face, making sure she was comfortable, even though she would be senseless until the next night. He did not want to leave her side and it took him a moment to gather himself and stand back.

With one finger he wiped away the drop of blood which had escaped his mouth and then he put away his supernatural nature.

"She is all yours now, Sheriff," he said, turning and looking Trout straight in the eye, "please look after her for us."

Trout looked very uncomfortable with what he had just seen, but the man did nod and that was all Thom needed. Now all they could do was wait.

### Chapter 3 Integrating

When they returned to the Lair, Thom decided he needed a distraction and went to find Jonathan. As it turned out, his boyfriend was working on their rooms and he was impressed when he walked in. The walls had been painted, the carpet cleaned and there was a bed in the middle of the room.

"Wow," he said, honestly impressed, "this is going to look great."

"It will look better when we can get our stuff from home," Jonathan replied, frowning about something to do with the end wall. "We need a mirror, a really big one."

Thom just made noises of agreement; he really didn't mind how Jonathan put the room together. Walking up to his boyfriend, he wrapped his arms around Jonathan from behind and nuzzled Jonathan's neck. At first Jonathan relaxed into his grasp, but quickly stiffened again.

"Finished playing with Damian and Colin?" Jonathan asked and it was all too obvious Jonathan was feeling left out.

"Yes," he replied and smiled against Jonathan's neck; it was going to take a little more work to iron the jealousy out of his volatile lover. "Laura will be joining us tomorrow night. Of course, until then, I can think of some interesting things to do."

Jonathan had found a t-shirt from somewhere, probably Colin's since it was a little too big for him, and a new pair of jeans and Thom slipped his fingers underneath the top garment to play along the edge of the bottom one. His system was singing from the blood high and he wanted to put that energy to good use.

"I might be busy," Jonathan said in a petulant tone, clearly leaving Jonathan on his own had not been a good idea.

Thom was all but positive Jonathan would be pouting even though he couldn't see his boyfriend's face.

"Are you sure?" he asked, running his hand down over Jonathan's crotch and deliberately squeezing gently.

Jonathan gave a small gasp, even while continuing to try and sulk.

"You can come with us tomorrow to pick Laura up from the hospital morgue if you would like to," he said, kissing Jonathan's neck. "We can pick some things up from home at the same time if you like. The sheriff seemed to think the crime scene tape would be down by then thanks to Laura's apparent death."

"So I'm allowed out of the cage to run errands then?" Jonathan really had sulking down to an art form.

Thom span his boyfriend on the spot and then all but threw him on the bed, climbing on, on top and looking down at him.

"You're allowed out of the cage whenever you like," he said, refusing to budge when Jonathan tried to tip him off, "you're not listed as dead, but right now, I'd really like hard, gratuitous sex."

"So I'm a fuck toy."

Thom rolled his eyes, collapsed forward and put his face on Jonathan's chest.

"I love you, but god, you're hard work sometimes," he said and lifted himself up again to lean over Jonathan so they were almost nose to nose. "I am horny," he said, punctuating his words carefully, "I would really like to have sex with you and I really don't care what kind of sex. If you want to tie me to the bed and spank me into next week, please be my guest, but I'm dying here."

Jonathan raised an eyebrow at that.

"Wouldn't that be kind of difficult?" Jonathan asked.

"Semantics," Thom replied and sat back upright; "look at this," he pointed to where his erection was pressing against his pants, "this is your fault and being your fault I really think it would be sportsmanlike if you would help me out with it."

Jonathan cracked half a smile; it was a good thing they had both been sexually driven before they became vampires or Thom's tactics never would have worked. As it was, Jonathan had been distracted from a sulk many times before by sex and Thom was using this to his advantage. Of course a vampire sex drive helped.

"Maybe I want to punish you for leaving me here without so much as a good bye kiss?" Jonathan replied and the words could have been part of the sulk, but the tone was playful and that meant Jonathan was playing the game.

Thom breathed a silent sigh of relief and smiled down at his boyfriend.

"And how exactly, my kinky lover, do you plan to do that?" he asked, feeling the excitement pooling in his loins at the idea.

Now Jonathan's eyes were alight with lust and Thom had to wonder what he had let himself in for.

"Well first," Jonathan said pushing his hip up a little, "I think you can apologise for abandoning me by sucking my cock."

Thom went to move.

"After," Jonathan's voice stopped him, "you get naked..."

He went to climb off the bed.

"...and," Jonathan added, pulling something from his pocket, "I put this on you. I borrowed it from Damian."

It occurred to Thom then that he might have been played and Jonathan might not have really been sulking quite as much as it had seemed, but he couldn't prove it and now he was at his boyfriend's mercy. What Jonathan had in his hand was a cock ring, something they, as a couple, had only ever used once before and that

time Jonathan had kept him hard, aching and on the edge for hours. It had been, at the same time, one of the most incredible and terrible sexual experiences of his life and every other time Jonathan had suggested trying it again he had found an excuse not to. Now Jonathan had him and he'd already agreed and it didn't seem like regaining his old life of a centuries old vampire was going to help him in the slightest.

"Once I'm satisfied you really are sorry," Jonathan said, dangling the cock ring in front of him, "I'm going to fuck you until you're begging me to let you come and then, when I think you can't take it anymore, I might let you."

Thom made a mental note that Jonathan was picking up a wicked steak, and he would lay odds it was from Colin, and then he resigned himself to his fate. He had asked for it after all.

====

Thom woke up when something slapped him on the ass and he opened his eyes and lifted his head to see Colin standing next to the bed.

"Sorry, couldn't resist," Colin said in a very unrepentant tone with a smile that wasn't sorry in the slightest. "You must still be adjusting; it's coming on to evening and you've been sleeping all day."

"Blame Jonathan," Thom said as his boyfriend moved beside him; "he kept me up the rest of last night and into this morning and I mean up as in hard and aching up."

Colin seemed to find that highly amusing.

"Well done Jonathan," Colin commented, "glad to see you're adjusting to the lifestyle."

Thanks to the whole vampire business, when Tom pushed himself up and off the bed he found his whole body working perfectly, no aches or pains or embarrassing trouble walking, which was a blessing. He couldn't help noticing that Jonathan was lying next to where he had been, looking rather smug.

"Damian would like to see you as soon as you're up and dressed," Colin moved on to what was clearly his reason for being there; "there are things about the Lair which need to be discussed."

Thom nodded; that he could understand. With such upheaval among the ranks there were bound to be issues that needed addressing.

"We'll be there in a little while," he replied, turning and pushing himself into a sitting position. "Damian's rooms I assume, or are they yours and Damian's rooms now?"

It had been obvious that Damian and Colin often shared living space, but Thom had found out that Colin had had his own rooms, but from the rather pleased look on Colin's face he suspected this was no longer true.

"I might possibly have moved in permanently before Damian had a chance to object," Colin replied, about as smug as Jonathan was looking as well. "Of course you're always welcome to visit ... both of you that is."

Thom cracked a smile at that; Colin was definitely adapting well. There was hope for their mismatched family yet.

"Where's the nearest working bathroom?" he asked, as he realised that he had no idea where the closest one was in relation to his new rooms.

"Down the hall and to the right," Colin replied and turned to go; "I'm sure we can have a new one put in off this suite once everything has settled down."

"That would be perfect," Thom said, climbing out of bed.

It would take a little while to turn the Lair into home, but hopefully not too long, especially after he and Jonathan had retrieved their stuff from his house.

"See you soon," Colin said, with a dismissive wave.

As he went to find what he needed for the bathroom; he was looking forward to a nice hot shower, Jonathan came up behind him, pulling him into an embrace.

"We could shower together," Jonathan suggested, nibbling on his ear.

Thom knew that if they showered together it was not going to be a quick shower, but his resistance was low and his will caved.

"I'm sure Damian won't mind waiting a little longer," he said, more to himself than Jonathan and turned in his lover's embrace to instigate a full on kiss.

It wouldn't take them too long, he was sure.

====

Damian looked up as Thom and Jonathan walked into his suite and Thom had the decency to look sheepish; they had been a little longer than expected.

"Distracted?" Damian asked, giving them both the once up and down.

"You could say that," Thom replied, walking over and running his hand over Damian's neck and shoulder in a sudden need to touch. "What did you do to create this covenant? I'm sure I never used to be this sexually focused even after using sex magic."

Damian smiled at that, accepting his touch and resting a hand over his for a moment.

"We were vulnerable with only two of us," Damian explained openly, "but our natures were so violent that every time Colin and I created another we would come to blows. The only thing equally as compelling was sex so we used sex magic to create a binding between us and in all our children. It has heightened our sexual urges somewhat."

"At it like rabbits," was Jonathan's comment on the matter.

A covenant based on sex was not a new idea, but a covenant of vampires based on sex, that was and Thom rather liked it. Now that the dark cloud of the curse was lifted it left them with an interesting future. Already sexual creatures with an even



more ramped up sex drive were absolutely perfect residents of a sex club, a thought which brought Thom back to why they were there.

"So what was it you wanted to talk about?" he asked, just as Colin walked in.

"The Lair has certain protection spells on it to keep out unwanted supernatural visitors and to alert us if any manage to break in," Damian said, becoming businesslike in a heartbeat. "With all the changes within the coven, especially Laura's inclusion, they will need to be recast as soon as possible."

Human beings missed so much of the real world, being blind to most of the supernatural, but those who were part of the whole knew only too well the dangers that lurked in the shadows. Vampires were at virtually the top of the food chain, but that did not mean there weren't things they wanted to keep at bay. Thom nodded; it was a sensible suggestion.

"When?" he asked.

"Dawn," Damian replied. "We can use Colin, Laura, you and I as the four corners and the rest of the coven as the circle. That way we will be able to use our power to the maximum."

Thom nodded again; Damian seemed to have it all planned out. It seemed that without him as a distraction, Damian was a very well organised leader, which explained the success of the Lair up until his reappearance.

"A very good plan," he assured the other vampire, "and a good way to incorporate Laura into our group properly as well."

"Ah, magic," Colin commented, sounding very pleased with the idea; "what better way to get to know people?"

Jonathan appeared a little bemused, but then Jonathan knew absolutely nothing of ritual magic; it was going to be an education for them all, but most of all his boyfriend. It was going to be a very interesting night indeed and Thom was really looking forward to it. First they would bring Laura back from the dead and then they would integrate her into their family like the missing piece they needed. He had no doubt that the coven would change because of Laura, but he was certain it would be for the better. In a few hours Laura would be with them and then their future would be set.

====

"Hello, Dr Blemont," Thom said as he led the others into the hospital morgue.

They had been to his house first and collected everything he and Jonathan wanted and had it sent back to the Lair and he had changed into some of his own clothes. He hoped he looked far less threatening dressed like Thom rather than Damian and he smiled at Dr Belmont, trying to put the man at his ease.

To keep everything looking normal for those outside the circle of those who knew, Laura was laid out as normal in the room, on a gurney, under a sheet.

"You're looking different, Thom," Dr Belmont said, not hostile, but definitely not friendly.

"Dying can do that to a person," he replied with a polite smile.

The safest way to take Laura out of the hospital so that no one would see her was once she had risen. There would be no problem with the CCTV this time, Thom had made very sure of that, but there were still other employees to think about and stealth was better achieved by five vampires rather than four and one body. Thom would have liked to have taken Laura back to the Lair and made this transition easier on her, but it just didn't make logistical sense.

"If we may," he said, hoping that there would be no song and dance about what they needed to do now that it was actually time.

"Are you sure it's a gift you wish to give her and not a curse?" Dr Belmont asked even though the man did move out of the way.

"Perfectly sure," Thom replied, carefully pulling the sheet back from Laura's face. "We are supernatural creatures, Dr Belmont, but we do not have to be monsters."

Dr Belmont reached out and placed a hand on his arm and he turned, meeting the white haired man's gaze.

"You swear, no more killing?" Dr Belmont said, looking directly into his eyes.

"Not if we can avoid it," he replied firmly, "but we will protect ourselves if necessary."

"That is rather a broad exception," Dr Belmont pointed out.

"We are vampires, Doctor," he said, deciding that blunt was best, "when people come after us it tends to be bloody. We wish to remain in the Lair, peacefully, but should we be attacked we will retaliate."

It was not meant as a threat, it was simply a statement of fact.

"Now if we may," he continued, looking at the hand on his arm.

Dr Belmont held his gaze for a little longer and then finally stepped back. He turned his attention back to Laura and Damian placed a hand on one of his shoulders and Colin on the other. Their combined power was not necessary to call Laura back to them, but it would mean that integrating Laura into the coven would be that much easier.

He held out his arm, holding his hand just above Laura's face and then he focused his own power and that which Damian and Colin were feeding into his as well. It was like electricity beneath his skin and he found the spark of vampire taint in Laura easily, holding onto her spirit like a web.

"Laura," he said, surprising himself when his voice resonated, "return to us, now."

Contrary to popular belief it was impossible to call a soul back if they were determined to die, but it was not necessarily a conscious choice. The simple fact was, most human beings had a very strong will to live and when offered life they would take it.

Laura opened her eyes first, little more than a lifeless corpse under his guidance, but then she opened her mouth and breathed for the first time. Her eyes, still open and staring went completely black before clearing from the centre out and then Laura blinked and moved. Thom kept their power focused on Laura, helping her through the difficult transition, but it was no longer completely necessary.

Only when Laura slowly sat up, gaze still somewhat vacant did he allow his hand to drop and Laura to establish her own equilibrium. As he watched, Laura closed her eyes and opened her mouth and he saw her fangs descend for the first time; two little neat points on either side of her upper jaw. Then she licked her lips and finally opened her eyes again and actually looked at him.

For a few moments Laura's face was blank and then, to Thom's great pleasure, Laura smiled.

"Hi, Thom," she said in a voice that was huskier and sexier than he was used to hearing from her, "thank you."

"You're looking more beautiful than ever," he replied and offered her his hand.

Dr Belmont clearly looked surprised when Laura took the offered limb, allowed the sheet to fall away and slipped off of the gurney without any indication that she cared she was naked. Thom smiled; Laura was going to fit in perfectly, and if he had swung that way he would definitely have admired Laura's curves. There was no doubting that Laura was a fine figure of a woman and as she stood up, Thom was almost one hundred percent certain Laura made sure Sheriff Trout had an eye full where he was lurking against the side wall.

Colin stepped in then, holding out the robe they had brought with them like a true gentleman and Laura slipped it on.

Thom could already feel the difference that Laura brought to them and it prickled at the back of his mind; it actually felt quite different to how he had expected. This was going to be very interesting, very interesting indeed.

With her robe belted Laura walked over to where Dr Belmont was standing and gave the white haired man a quick peck on the cheek.

"Thank you, Dr Belmont," she said and Thom could see the genuine sentiment on her face.

Then Laura turned and walked over to Trout, who looked more than a little surprised and more than awkward, especially when Laura pecked him on the cheek as well. Thom couldn't help grinning as the hard bitten sheriff actually blushed.

"And thank you, Sheriff," Laura said, resting a hand lightly on the man's arm. "Don't worry, I will keep the boys in order."

Thom laughed at that; he had little doubt that she would make good on her promise. He hadn't bothered mentioning that bit to Damian and Colin.

"I think it may be time to go," he said, stepping in before anything could become awkward, "we have to make sure Laura is settled in."

Laura acquiesced immediately and walked over to stand beside him, linking one of her arms through his and then the other through Jonathan's as well, in a show of solidarity.

"Thank you, gentlemen," he said, as equally genuine in his sentiments as Laura, "I'm sure we will be see each other again soon."

"You're always welcome to come and visit to make sure we are behaving," Laura said and her eyes were definitely on Sheriff Trout.

Thom almost rolled his eyes; oh yes, Laura was as focused on certain things as the rest of them. What was very good about that is she seemed to have the sheriff completely off balance, which would definitely work to all their advantages.

"Good bye," Damian said, placing a hand on Laura's shoulder and then before either of the humans could reply, they faded out as a group.

====

The club was open for business as usual and so they did not use the main entrance to return. Colin and Damian immediately vanished to deal with the patrons and to make sure nothing had gone wrong while they were away. They had left Frankie in charge, of all people, but the nervous young man was turning out to be a little different as a vampire, now that things were beginning to settle down. Frankie was still nervous around Damian and Colin, but not around the other vampires, or it seemed the patrons of the club. It was quite a change, although Colin had mentioned finding Frankie cleaning that day; old habits died hard, obviously.

Thom and Jonathan escorted Laura to her new rooms, which had been hurriedly finished off as well as they could be to that point. No doubt Laura would be doing some of her own redecorating sooner or later, especially when they committed a bit of burglary and took everything she wanted from her house.

Waiting in Laura's rooms was a rather nervous looking vampire, ex-deputy Rogers. If he had been tied up with a big red bow it couldn't have been much more obvious.

"Laura, this is David," Thom said as they walked in; "you might have met him before at the sheriff's station. He's very much been looking forward to you joining us and he is, as they say, all yours."

Laura gave the half dressed young man the once over and walked up to David, walking around the poor dear as if she was examining a horse. Thom could see the delight dancing in her eyes and he knew she was just playing.

"David," she said, looping her arms over his shoulders, "I think we're going to be very good friends."

Thom laughed at the relief that appeared on David's face.

"I think our poor little straight boy has just been rescued," he commented to Jonathan, but loud enough so that Laura and David could hear.

"We'll corrupt him eventually," Jonathan replied with a smirk; Jonathan had been in a surprisingly good mood all evening.

Laura grinned at that.

"First things first though," Thom said, walking further into the room, "you need to feed, Laura. Damian is picking you out one of our patrons as we speak."

"Won't he object to being presented with a woman?" Laura asked, pulling away from David and appearing just a little nervous.

"By the time Damian has finished with him he probably won't remember his name," Thom replied, trying to put Laura at her ease. "Once you have fed, we'll return him to one of the private rooms and make sure he has such a good time he'll never suspect anything has happened at all."

Laura did look a little happier, but still nervous; she had to be wondering what the bite would be like. Thom still remembered his first taste of blood even though it had been so long ago and he knew Laura would not be nervous for long.

"So," he decided to change the subject for now, "while we're waiting, how do you like the décor? All I can say is thank god Damian and Jonathan took over."

"I think I am going to feel very at home here," Laura replied, wandering over to Jonathan and giving him a peck on the cheek. "Thank you for all your hard work."

Jonathan smiled at the thanks and Thom found himself very distracted by that smile. Vampires were sexual creatures, but the way his mind turned to sex quite so easily was beginning to become noticeable. It had to have something to do with the way Damian had formed the coven; it had never been this bad before. Of course he wasn't about to complain; he could think of far worse things with which to be obsessed.

In the end Damian arrived about fifteen minutes later, with an already half undressed young man in tow. Thom could only assume that the rest of the man's clothes were in one of the private rooms awaiting his return.

"This is Craig," Damian introduced, even though Craig's face was as blank as white canvas, "and he has kindly volunteered to make a small donation to the cause."

"You have an interesting definition of volunteered," Thom said with a grin and wandered over to where Damian had halted with Craig.

Craig was very nicely proportioned and Thom gave the enthralled man the once over. Being at the top of the pile in the Lair definitely had its advantages. He gave Damian a quick nod in appreciation and then flicked his eyes over to where Laura had stood up from where she had been sitting and was waiting somewhat nervously.

"Come, Craig," Damian said, "let's go and say hello to Laura."

Like the good little love slave Craig was at the moment, the man followed Damian across the room and came to a halt just in front of Laura.

"We had a little chat before I invited him to one of the back rooms," Damian said in a chatty tone, running a hand over Craig's bare shoulder and down the well muscled arm, "and it seems he's branching out from the ladies. Definitely a

pendulum player here, Laura, so I'm sure he will enjoy the touch of your power even though he will never consciously remember it."

That was an added bonus and Thom was very pleased in the way Damian was handling Laura's integration into the coven. He had not expected Damian's choice to be quite so careful.

"Thank you," Laura said, although it was clear she didn't quite know what to do next.

Damian carefully turned Craig round and moved in close beside the vacant eyed man. Then Damian took Craig's opposite arm and held it out to Laura. It was sensible for a first bite; the neck was trickier to control and the arm had plenty of blood vessels to tap into.

Thom nodded as Laura looked to him for reassurance and then she carefully took hold of the Craig's arm. Damian remained pressed up against his chosen victim's other side, drawing little circles on the man's chest with one finger and fondling the man's backside with his other hand. Physical contact did increase the potency of all magic and so in a way Damian was just making sure his catch remained under, but Thom half smiled at the groping. He was pretty sure he knew who would be making sure this client left happy. Damian had very good taste.

Thom found himself moving closer to Jonathan as seemed to be his usual behaviour these days and the atmosphere in the room changed significantly as Laura prepared to feed. He felt his teeth aching as he watched Laura carefully turn over the man's arm and almost delicately bite into the waiting skin.

Damian began whispering into Craig's ear. What Damian was saying, Thom couldn't hear, but the man gave no sign of knowing what was going on. Vampires were sustained by more than simple blood and so volume was not the only factor. They could survive without taking huge amounts of blood, they just had to make sure they could sate their urges. Thom knew that he and Jonathan were going to have to find their own donor later in the evening, but he did his best to concentrate on what was going on rather than what would be going on in the future.

There was little danger that Laura would take too much; she did not have a greedy personality, but the first time could be intoxicating so Thom was being careful. Laura moaned quietly and he wondered if he was going to have to intervene, but just afterwards Laura pulled back, placing her finger over the small wounds she had created with a confidence as if she had done this many times before.

What gave away Laura's inexperience was the trickle of blood that escaped from the side of her mouth, dripping down onto her robe. Thom felt a little like a proud parent as he saw Laura's eyes all but sparkling. His last worry melted away and he became completely sure that they were truly on the right path.

Just before dawn, after the club closed they would recast the protection spells over the Lair, dipping into the new power of the coven and then everything would be done. Their power base would be finalised and then nothing would be able to touch them.

====

When the underlying connection of your power was sex there was really only one way to perform a ritual and that was naked. Hence Thom walked out of his room in only a pair of silk pyjama bottoms and headed to the bar with an equally underdressed Jonathan in tow. The club was shut and all the patrons had gone and all the coven were looking relaxed and well fed; all pointers to the perfect time for the ritual. For the protection spells to be at their height the whole coven needed to be at their best and well sexed and well fed meant just that.

The tables and chairs in the bar had been pushed back to the sides and Damian had already drawn a circle on the floor in chalk, with the four points of the compass marked. Damian was going to be north and running the ritual, he was going to be south and acting as the foundation of it and Laura and Colin were taking east and west respectively with the rest of the coven interleaved between them.

It was not a complex ritual, just one that required a great deal of concentration and focused power. With the power moving through the coven now, Thom had no doubt they would complete it with ease. It was also a very good time to introduce Laura to the rest of the coven properly. The whole family knew that Laura had joined them, even the least sensitive of them had to have felt it as well, but this would be the formal meeting between them all.

As such, as soon as Laura walked into the room both he and Damian went over to her, taking a hand each and leading her fully into the bar.

"Gentlemen," Damian called the gathering to order, "today we welcome a very special new member of our family. This is Laura."

"She will be the ying to our yang, the soft to our hard, the balance of feminine against masculine," Thom continued, knowing that he was not overstating the importance of Laura's presence. "Tonight we become whole."

Laura was wearing only a thigh length satin robe, but she stood there amongst the coven and managed to appear regal.

They had planned this part carefully, and Laura closed her eyes, gently pulling her hands from his and Damian's grasp and spreading them out to the coven. He felt it when she allowed her power to rise, vampire traits revealing themselves as her softer, but no less strong magic flowed into the room.

"I offer this to you," she said in a formal tone, "and all that I have."

"We accept," Colin replied from the other side of the room, playing the voice of the coven.

It was a formality, but the atmosphere in the room seemed to warm as it was done.

"Then let us begin," Damian said and Thom stepped close to one side of Laura as Damian moved to the other.

Very quickly they each took one side of her robe, Damian released the bow on the belt and they efficiently removed her only item of clothing. Then they escorted her to her position in the circle, moving to their own and then stripping just as efficiently. On their example Colin and the rest of the coven followed suit,

moving into position around the circle. Even as the last stepped into place Thom could feel all of their energy coming together and it made his skin tingle.

"I cast this circle," Damian said the moment they were all ready, "to join our power and make us one. I stand at the head to orchestrate our designs."

"I stand at the south," Thom came in on cue, "as the foundation of what we build."

"We stand at east and west," Colin and Laura intoned at the same time, "as gates to the power of those with us."

Thom couldn't help the small gasp that escaped from him as he was all but hit by a wall of power. With the circle complete they were all joined and for the first time he felt the real difference Laura's presence made. He felt familiar and unfamiliar magic moving through him around the circle and it was breathtaking.

"I call on the powers of Earth and Air and Fire and Spirit," Damian continued the ritual, but Thom could hear the strain in the other vampire's voice; this was more than any of them had expected. "Come to us, join with us and grant us protection."

As foundation to the ritual, all magic had to pass through him as he bound it to where they were and Thom had about a second to realise that they had summoned more power than they could have dreamed of before his vision whited out for the second time in as many days. He had just enough time to throw it back at the circle, before all he could think about was desperately trying to stay focused. He felt the power lancing through him and for a moment it was as if he was above the island looking down at it as dawn broke over the sea and onto the land. It was beautiful and wonderful and just about blew his mind.

He felt the coven become truly one in the back of his mind as he gazed down on the captivating view and then they were breaking back into their separate parts and he found himself thrust back into his own body. It left him disorientated and confused and he eventually realised that he was sitting on the floor in a rather untidy heap. It took a while before he really knew which way was up and which way was down and then he began to understand that they had just done something rather extraordinary.

Thom climbed very slowly to his feet, leaning on the nearby bar to keep himself upright. His nerves were tingling and his head was spinning, but it was becoming more of a high than a low and he looked around the room as he did his best to drag his thoughts back on track. Everyone else was still on the floor, collapsed in on themselves as if they had fallen where they were standing, but everyone was beginning to move.

"Holy fuck," was about the only phrase he could find to describe what had just happened.

The amount of magic still singing in his veins told him quite how much had passed through him. For there to be that much residue meant that the power they had summoned had to have been simply enormous. He felt along the power trails with his mind, following them to the protection runes around the Lair and finding them highly charged and then he followed them beyond, out onto the island. The power trails went literally miles and it began to dawn on him that



although the protection spells were only complete within the Lair, the net of power extended much further, almost over the entire island.

So much for laying low and minding their own business, anything remotely magically sensitive in the area knew they were there now. Of course anything magically sensitive with any sense would stay as far away as possible after that little show of power, but Thom knew they had just entered the big time.

"Did we just do what I think we did?" Colin asked, doing his best to stand up to his left.

"We protected the whole island," Thom replied, since he was now absolutely sure that was what they had just done.

The island was a magical place, with lines of power already in it and what amazed him even more, was this place had accepted their power as they had thrown it outwards.

"That's impossible," Damian said, also picking himself up off the floor.

"Not when the natural places of power act as focus points," Thom replied, still reeling from the experience, but hoping to let the others understand.

Damian looked sceptical, but as the other vampire closed his eyes and did what Thom had already done, Damian's expression became one of understated amazement.

"What does that mean?" Laura asked and finally feeling strong enough, Thom moved to help his friend stand.

"That we are rather more literally a piece of the landscape than we would ever have expected," Damian said slowly.

"It also means that if hostile forces enter the island we will know," Thom added, moving over to help Jonathan up next, "and anyone wishing to attack us would have to be completely insane."

They were much more visible now, more than a supernatural blip, but it also meant they were that much more secure. He met gazes with Damian and he knew that they were both aware that this was going to change things considerably. Others would take interest in them now, but they were also that much stronger as well. The future was definitely going to be interesting, that much was for sure.

**The End**