

Chapter 18

She's standing in the doorway, on the other side of the room, looking around at her defeated people on the floor. The disappointment is clear on her face as she steps into the room. Six women in heavy armor follow her in and place themselves three on each side. They're holding high caliber rifles.

My stomach cramps and I lean against the wall. "What have you done to me?"

"I've poisoned you. All the weapons were coated with a cyanide derivative. It's worthless against demons, but quite effective against you. I expect you'll be dead rather soon."

I have no trouble believing her. My insides feel like they are on fire and my stomach keeps churning painfully.

"I'm surprised he hasn't killed you, let alone that he accompanied you all the way down here. What exactly are you going to do with our soul stones?"

"They are not yours," Claws growls.

Amanda gasps and I look up.

"You can talk? There were two...?" She glares at me. "You told me you killed him."

I smile. "I lied." the look of disbelief on her face makes me laugh, then I double over in pain. It takes a moment to regain my breath. "You should be pleased," I gasp. "I followed your example." My stomach contorts itself, and I throw up.

for a moment I can't move, so I have no choice to look at the sickly green goo streaked with black stuff spreading on the floor. I wipe my mouth on the sleeve of my trench coat and use the wall to help me stand. My limbs are shaking, I feel weak, but somehow, I also feel better.

"That's disgusting." Amanda looks up at me, and I smile again. "Now. You're going to give me my stones back and we're going to end the both of you quick and painlessly."

Claws growls and his fingers extend into long claws.

"I don't think so," I reply, my voice steady. "We're leaving, and anyone who stands in our way ends up like them." I indicate the bodies on the floor.

She frowns. "How come you're looking better?"

I shrug and lifts my hand up, extending the darkness to make it more visible. "It might have something to do with this."

"Kill..."

But Claws' already next to them, and three of the women go flying through the broken wall. one of the other aims at me and I put my hand over my face, extending the darkness to cover my upper chest and hardening it as much as I can.

The bullet impact send me back against the wall, and my hand hurts, but it stopped. I peek over my shield. Claws as

punched the other three to the ground and he's stalking Amanda, who is backing toward me.

I shake my hand, and the darkness melts back in. I push myself off the wall and walk to her. Before she realizes I'm there I punch her across the jaw. She crumples to the floor and I walk over her.

"You are leaving her like this?"

I look over my shoulder and shrug. "I'm not killing her." then I add. "Neither are you."

"She has hurt you, she should pay."

"Without the stones, she can't do anything. That's going to hurt her enough." I leave the room and Claws follows me.

"She should hurt more, for what she did."

"I don't care. She isn't going to do anything to me anymore, that's all I care about." I make my way to the stairs, go up to floors and exit.

"Is there a way outside here?" Claws asks.

"No. There's a cafeteria. I'm famished. However I managed not to die from that poison, it's taken it out of me."

I follow my nose to it. There's always someone there to cook, since people work her around the clock. I go in and the half dozen people eating look up at me, then gasp as Claws follows me in. I head to the counter and I hear the others scramble out of their chairs and out of the room.

"Do you want something to eat?" I ask Claws.

The demon watches the cook run out the opposing end of the counter and then out of the room. He shakes his head. "I am not hungry."

I go around the counter and rummage through the fridge and throw four steaks on the cook top and they sizzle. I add a few herbs to them and eat them as soon as they are done, accompanying them with two cokes and various vegetables.

Once I'm done I sigh in satisfaction and I clean my plate and bowl. Claws looks at me with a puzzled expression.

"You eat like a human."

"It's the only way I know how to eat. I've never felt the urge to chase humans and eat them."

He nods, then looks at the door. I hear them too.

I smile. "I guess it's time we left."

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We're walking down the road. Claws says that following it will take us out of the city. We left broken bodies after broken bodies in our wake as we left headquarter. We didn't encounter Jason, and I'm disappointed. I would have liked to give him a piece of my mind about what he put me through.

The night is cool, and dark. Clouds hide the moon. Claws again looks like a human with a hood covering his head so the few people we walk by don't pay us any attention.

When the sky begins to lighten so does the density of the houses. Once the sun is above the horizon, there are only a few houses in the distance around us.

Claws stops. "My people are in that direction." He points in perpendicular to the road.

"How far?"

"If I run, I will reach them by the time the sun sets."

I nod.

He looks at me. "You should come with me."

I chuckle. "And do what? I'm not like you."

"Part of you is."

"And the other part is human."

"If you don't come with me, what will you do?"

I look down the road. "I'll follow the road. See where it leads."

"It leads to another city."

"Then that's where I'll go. Maybe I can see if I can be human."

"You aren't human."

I shrug. "If I can pass as human then."

"Will you continue hunting my kind?"

I think it over then sigh. "I can't let them kill humans, so I may have to."

"You don't owe humans anything. You don't need to protect them."

"It's all I know."

"Come with me Derick. We can show you another way."

The use of my name surprises me and his red eyes are pleading. I shake my head and start walking. "I hope you have a good trip home Claws in the Darkness."

I can feel his eyes on me for a long time. When I don't anymore I look over my shoulder and I can't see him. I set my gaze ahead and wonder what that new city will be like.