

I am pleased to show you the first three chapters of *Bound by Blood*, a paranormal romance with Vampires and Lycan. I hope you enjoy this teaser and please let me know what you think by signing my guest book with your thoughts!

~ Elizabeth

Chapter One

The tangy, metallic scent of living blood caresses my senses causing my mouth to water while alerting me that my prey is only a few miles ahead of me. After hunting Bryce D'Angelo, the Benandanti Lycan's leader, for two days it didn't take me long to realize the arrogant bastard has been too easy to follow. After a few cigarette butts, obvious footprints, and the pair of boxer briefs hanging from a tree branch he might as well be waving a sign that says, "Come and get me." Does he think I am stupid?

Streams of iridescent light filter through the lacy needles adorning the branches weaving a beautiful pattern along the forest floor. It is so vividly beautiful it makes me ache with the desire to feel the warmth of it caressing my skin. It is sweet torment to be able to see the filtered light from behind the polarized lenses of my goggles, yet not be able to embrace it.

Closing my eyes I scan the area, searching for another heartbeat or scent of a Vampire. The only hint of life other than the frolicking woodland creatures is the steady, tempting thrum of Bryce's heart. As far as I can tell he isn't planning an ambush, but why he wants me to find him is lost on me. Perhaps he is looking to achieve the same

thing I am after; live capture. I am going to have to collar his ass soon or he is going to know that I figured out he is just fucking with me.

Despite my general inappreciation for anything nature related I can appreciate the intense beauty of the moss covered forest with its lush green trees. Especially since they are one of the last green things remaining in Italy after the drought began to sweep the land, withering everything in its path.

Riffling through the folds of my cloak I locate the pocket housing my cell phone. Triumphant in my success I pull it out and check the time. Shit, at least another half hour before I can emerge from my cocoon of light blocking paraphernalia. I play a few games of snake on my phone to pass the time, once again marveling at the awesomeness that is my life and yes that was said with a sarcastic tone.

In what seems an eternity the last of the sunlight bows out giving the night her opportunity to flourish. My cloak falls in folds around my black leather boots as I release the clasp holding it together, allowing the cool night breeze to skim over my skin in an almost sensual caress. A welcome change after spending the day swaddled in thick, black fabric. Removing my goggles I tuck them in my pack and rebraid my waist length hair into a thick braid

admiring the bright purple streaks weaving through the black. Braiding is the only way to effectively keep my unruly strands of wavy hair out of my way.

The weight of my beautiful chrome Berta 92F 9mm semi-automatic pistol is so reassuring nestled up against me I hate to part ways with it. With a sigh I release the strap securing it in my shoulder holster and ease it from its home. Dropping a quick kiss to its pearlite handle I slide it lovingly into my pack. Tonight calls for a more subtle approach than usual in my dog catching techniques since my purpose unfortunately is only to collar, not kill. So I strap my silver daggers around my leather encased thighs, because they only inflict pain, not death. Although if my hunch is correct the famed Lycan leader won't put up much of a fight. Pity, because I would have enjoyed the challenge.

A peculiar lightness invades my body as I force myself to flicker into a mere shadow allowing me to move through the thick underbrush sightless and soundlessly towards my target. For years now I have been hearing stories of the greatness of the man I hunt, I have also heard stories of his legendary sex appeal. What can I say Vampires love to gossip. Obviously that last bit about the sex appeal has no bearing on me since I have no intention of getting wet over

some dog man. Yet, I find myself curious to see if the rumors are true. What can I say inquiring minds want to know! The smell of tobacco blends with the scent of his blood as I draw closer to him. If I don't kill him the cigarettes might! I have noticed several times while following him that he smokes like a freaking chimney.

Well, well! Brought up short at the sight of him, I was so not prepared for this! My gaze slides over Bryce's form as he stands facing away from me seemingly enjoying the heat from his campfire. I can't help but admire his lean muscular body, admiring the way the firelight draws attention to each secret hollow and indent.

The scent of sweat and something wilder lurking beneath has a ripple of desire rolling through me and awakening places that have been dormant for too long. Drinking in his devastatingly sexy tattoos wrapping around his sinewy muscles, I try desperately to tear my gaze away from him and the temptation he presents. If I can't snap out of it I am going to do something stupid, which is so not me.

Despite my resolve I find myself distracted by his shaved head and admiring the way it gives him an utterly masculine, dangerous quality that leaves me feeling flushed despite my inability to feel heat except when I feed. I

definitely see where the rumors originated, Bryce is utterly delicious! He is wearing nothing but a pair of leather pants that hug him in all the right places I have to check to make sure I am in fact not actually drooling. After my initial shot of lust I realize I can feel the undercurrent of his power radiating through the clearing where he has made camp. This is just the distraction I need, a shiver of slimy disgust creeps over me at my body's response to Bryce.

An involuntary gasp slips through my lips when he turns suddenly sending a taunting smile my way letting me know he is aware of my presence. As his piercing amber eyes meet mine their intensity burns into me, causing my already tumultuous body to betray me further. My breasts become too sensitive and each movement no matter how small causes the fabric of my t-shirt to scrape over every sensitive nerve ending. Leaving me a quivering mass of desire, over someone I loath entirely.

Slipping one of the daggers from its sheath I allow my form to flicker back into view. Since he knows I am here there is no point in being stealthy. "Fuck," I curse under my breath, I feel unsteady for the first time since I began my career hunting Lycans. Each movement is still sending jolts of pleasure racing through me as my mind screams in

protest. In an automatic movement I flick my braid from my shoulder as I prepare to stroll boldly into plain view hoping I appear far more in control than I feel.

Unfortunately, what I meant to be boldly feels more like I am gliding out to meet him, putting my body on display, good God am I pushing my breasts out?

What I wouldn't give to have my gun right now, although I would probably shoot him just to make myself feel better. As I advance he hasn't removed his gaze, he just holds it, yet I see a sly, knowing smile cross his gorgeous lips. A smile that says he can smell my arousal. Facing him I can't be sure if I want to kill him for his arrogance or capture him and have my way with him, I could justify it by saying it would help me focus better. An insane urge to laugh bubbles up, God I must need to get properly laid. Still Bryce is sexier than any man should be allowed and in a raw, earthy way, not pretty like the Vampires.

"Hey there handsome," I say with feigning casualty. Judging by the inferiorating cocky smile still fixed on his face he is confident in whatever outcome he has predetermined for our meeting. Considering the way he is holding his gun and the fact that the safety is on he has absolutely no intention of shooting me, so he either wants

me to collar him or he wants to capture me. I probably won't get lucky enough that he just wants to ravage me like the animal he is. "Why don't we cut the shit? I know you aren't going to shoot me and I know you knew I was following you. So what is it you want?" Damn it, my voice even sounds breathy and expectant, I am going to have to shoot myself to pull myself out of my lust induced daze.

"I want you to catch me. If it makes you feel better I will put up a fight," his intense amber eyes scrape over me slowly leaving a trail burning in their wake. When his eyes meet mine once more I know his judgment of me after his assessment, he thinks I am evil.

"Aren't you the gentleman?" I say trying to ignore the way his sinfully deep voice still has each word he uttered vibrating through me. I briefly consider fighting him enough to bloody him in an effort to quell the traitorous thoughts invading my mind. But since I am here on Coven business I reluctantly decide to take him up on his offer to come quietly. "You could have told me you wanted me to catch you like two days ago, so I didn't have to haul my ass through the bloody woods following you."

"Awww, what did you do break a nail Princess?" His words are light, but the anger lurking behind each one promises retribution.

Clenching my hands into a fist I briefly wonder how much trouble I would be in if I just brought his corpse back. "Yes that's exactly what I am upset about," I grind out through my teeth as my fingers itch to lodge my blade somewhere in his flesh. "How did you ever guess?" Confident he can't miss the sarcasm dripping from each word I add, "and for the record, it's Mila not Princess."

"Mila is it?" He says quirking an eyebrow as if he finds it hard to believe. "I've heard of you. Something about a nasty temper and quick trigger finger. Although in all honestly you don't really look worth worthy of the rumors Princess."

Unable to stop myself I fling the dagger I've been holding at him, they only told me not to kill him and it feels good, almost good enough to help me stop thinking thoughts too dirty for a porno. He barely flinches as the silver embeds itself in his arm, bastard. "If you don't learn to keep your comments to yourself you are going to find yourself gagged as well as chained for the trip back." My already prickly state of mind is quickly turning towards unadulterated anger with every smart-ass remark that leaves his lips and each scorching trail of desire racing through my body.

"You are charming Princess. My name is Bryce by the way. Are you going to stand here all day messing around with foreplay or are you going to come over here and get on with it?" He strokes a finger suggestively down the handle of my dagger before grasping it and pulling it from his flesh.

A part of me is pissed at the way he keeps addressing me and another part of me feels the unwelcome shiver of awareness snake down my spine. Of course the bastard can smell my arousal, being the filthy dog that he is. So he is using what he bets is his most effective weapon against me, the promise of sex. I am so not going to let him get away with manipulating me. Grabbing the collar with renewed resolve to get the job done and get home, I can't help but wish I had never been assigned to this mission. "Get down on your knees and put your gun on the ground. Then keep your hands where I can see them." Taking control of the situation I feel a little more balanced. This is who I am after all, a hunter of the Lycan, my coven's greatest enemy.

Approaching Bryce I keep all my senses on high alert. I could still be walking into a trap. Using the toe of my boot I kick his gun to the side and prepare to snap the collar into place, ignoring or I should say, trying to

ignore the way his scent curls around me, beckoning me. Shockingly, the last thing on my mind is feeding, even with the temptation of blood flowing, seriously this whole situation is just messed up.

“Is that really necessary? I already told you I wanted you to catch me.” His eyes have lost a bit of their disdain and taken on a sexy slumbered look, “Its not you specifically I want to kill. I can promise you that.”

The mocking superiority is suddenly missing from his voice and it now caresses my skin like velvet, sliding over it with the promise of fulfilling my every desire. For a brief moment I find myself considering his request. Giving myself a mental kick I glare at him and snap the collar in place, the bastard is just switching tactics. “You are really smooth I’ll give you that wolf man, too bad for you I am not interested,” I say while pulling the silver handcuffs from my belt. Tingles of pleasure mock me with each tiny brush of skin contact as I fasten the cuffs around his wrists.

The anger is radiating off of him in waves as the silver begins to drain his strength. Any promise not to hurt me is probably undone now that I acted the bitch and did my duty. I realize this is going to be the longest four days of my life as we journey back to the stronghold.

Chapter Two

A branch reaches its bony hand out and makes a grab for my cloak threatening to pull it back and expose the few scant inches of exposed pale flesh underneath to the sunlight. Swatting it away angrily I am not in the mood for bullshit from plant life or wolf men. It has been a stimulating day so far, trekking through mile after mile of dense forest with Bryce burning holes through my back with his piercing amber gaze, so filled with anger and pain I can't look at him without losing perspective. Hiking is already not my favorite past time and the unpleasantness of the situation is amplified by the fact that Bryce would happily kill me with a smile on his handsome face if he got a chance.

His anger is a palpable force surrounding me letting me know he is not to be underestimated even in his weakened state. There is an occasional glimmer of pure sorrow lurking in his eyes when he slips and lets his guard down. It is in these moments of softness that a feeling creeps over me, telling me I have seen those eyes before.

Stopping to let Bryce get a drink from a stream I kick around a stone with the toe of my boot and pretend to be studying a chip in my metallic purple fingernails while

trying to study Bryce objectively. The more I look at him the more I am sure I know those eyes from somewhere and fuck it, this is going to drive me crazy until I figure it out!

“Get your ass up Bryce we need to keep moving.”

Without waiting for him I start moving once more through the damp, manky woods and I have decided that trees really aren't majestic, they are just harborers of filthy bugs and dirt. Ok, I will admit that my mood is less than desirable since I haven't been able to quell the naughty thoughts of Bryce invading my mind. Honestly I don't even understand where this is coming from I have never found a Lycan attractive and with the exception of my last mission I have never even felt sorry for one.

The thought stopped me dead in my tracks, shit I know where I recognize those eyes from. It all makes sense, they both have the same intense amber eyes and even though the one I helped kill was a sleeker, kinder looking version of Bryce they are almost assuredly related. Brothers perhaps? Against my better judgment I find myself curious about the connection between them. Rolling my eyes at my apparent lack of discretion I can't help but think, “just what I need, to get further involved with the Lycan.”

"So Bryce, since we have all of this lovely time to connect, why don't you tell me exactly why you want me to haul you into the Vampire compound?" I make it more of a demand than a question, not wanting to give up my illusion of control over the situation. My own voice rings in my ears after the hours of silence stretching between us.

"That's none of your business Princess."

The mocking, superiority has returned to his voice, I destroyed whatever civility he might have extended me by collaring him. "I know why, so if you think you are trying to hide your noble quest from me, it is kind of pointless."

"If you are so damn sure you have the answer, why bother asking me about it?" His tone tells me I should tread carefully or he will happily shred me.

I never heed warning. "Your brother is the reason you wanted me to catch you isn't it?" His only answer is a deadly glare aimed at me, a weaker person might have withered under it. Despite the fact that it pretty much spells suicide I really want to find out more about him and his brother, as much as I hate the Lycan race something struck me as different about his brother. Different enough to make me curious about why we hate them so much.

"If you are going to rescue him, its too late," I regret the words as soon as they leave my lips, but there

is no taking them back now. There is a shift in the atmosphere as the wind starts to whip through the trees and dark clouds move across the jewel blue sky with a rippling of thunder weaving through them. Maybe I should have kept my mouth shut. The silver is supposed to weaken the Lycan, if Bryce is capable of this with silver I would hate to encounter him unfettered! Thankfully he won't be able to shift...at least I hope not! The last thing I need is a pissed off wolf man trying to maul me to death.

"What do you mean it is too late? You killed him didn't you?" Despite his anger there is the sheen of unshed tears veiling his amber gaze. "If you did I promise I will kill you and it will be a thousand times worse than whatever you did to him."

The raw anger and pain in his voice shakes me to the core and not because I am afraid of what he will do to me. I have been taught to believe that the Lycan are nothing more than animals, that they possess no emotion or thoughts that compare to ours. I know for a fact that Steele wouldn't shed a tear if any of us were murdered. We are pretty much an everyone for himself intensely dysfunctional kind of family and I use the term family in the loosest sense of the word. "If you had protected your brother and watched over him like a good pack leader, we could have

never gotten to him!" Despite my newfound feelings towards our enemies, I can't help but go on the defensive.

"If you and your kind weren't constantly attacking us and generally trying to destroy the world, maybe I would have had a chance to protect him." His eyes glitter menacingly, daring me to retaliate.

Stepping up to the challenge out of habit, my fist flies by its own violation and Bryce's face is my intended target. Outraged by his accusation and the fear that he is right I can't go against my nature and training. I swing first and will ask questions later. My fist never connects as his hand stops my arm midswing. Despite his crushing grip and the danger at hand my skin feels like an energy current is flowing through it at his touch.

"Don't try my patience princess, as I said you aren't my intended target, but if you keep it up I might change my mind."

How Bryce got out of the handcuffs I'm not sure, but its more clear then ever he has only been giving me the illusion of having the upper hand in this situation. Grasping both my wrists in his hands he pulls me up close to him in an intimate and angry embrace. His heart pounds against my chest reverberating through me giving me the brief illusion of possessing an actual heartbeat of my own.

Smelling the blood pumping through his veins mixed with his masculine scent my mouth waters. "Bryce if you want to learn what happened to your brother you had better let me live long enough to tell you, because you aren't going to get answers from any of my coven members I can assure you." My voice once again sounds breathy and wanting, not commanding as it should.

"Why would you tell me? Mila Deluca, famed killer of my people." His voice is a rough whisper that sends a shiver straight to my core, making me achy with need. "I know you aren't really afraid I will kill you, you were dead a long time ago."

If I had a heartbeat it would have stopped as his lips pause within inches of mine. It takes massive will power to resist running my fingers over the tingling wanting flesh of my lips to try and soothe away their urgent demands to make contact. Instead I just chew my lower lip with my fangs trying to get them to change their mind. My body's reaction to this man is really pissing me off he is my enemy and the last person I should ever desire. "I think despite the fact that you are a disgusting dog man that you at least deserve to know what happened to your brother. I am not completely heartless."

"Yes you are." Bryce says as his hand releases one of my wrists and comes to rest where my heart should beat, completing the full body assault. Every nerve is tingling consuming me with good old fashioned lust. "There is nothing there, which is why you can kill without discretion or thought. You call us the filthy animals, when really the Vampires are the animals."

My body is in a state of turmoil such as I haven't felt since I was turned, more years ago than I care to think about. "Maybe you are right and we are the animals, but unless you release me I will tell you nothing."

"Fine, have it your way princess." He releases my other wrist so suddenly that if I didn't have supernatural reflexes would have had me falling on my ass instead of just a slight bobble as I regain my balance.

I lean casually against a tree and pretend like he hasn't turned me into a raving nymphomaniac and that I am the unfeeling creature he believes. "So do you want to hear all the details or just the brief overview?" Observing the way his jaw clenches I can tell that the blasé way I am talking about his brother is getting to him. Good, I don't need him seeing past my kick ass exterior to the parts of me that sympathize with him and his loss. Sometimes I wish I had someone I was close enough to, to care if they lived

or died. The fact that he loved his brother is apparent in his eyes and expression despite his attempt to keep his mask of indifference up.

“Give me every detail. So that I may impart the same justice on whomever did this to Evan.” Bryce ground out through his teeth, his voice low and menacing and promising retribution.”

Chapter Three

Darkness is descending and brings with it a pounding headache that has me wanting to rip a head off, be it mine or someone else's. Having Bryce sending waves of pissed off energy my way isn't helping either. People have this funny notion that us Vampires are immortal corpses with no physical discomforts. Oh how I wish that was true right now. I would kill or perform sexual favors for some fresh blood and a steaming hot bubble bath right now.

Sliding the hood of my cloak down I am relieved to escape its stifling folds once more and let the gentle glow of the moon bath my face in the only light that may touch it. The moon is very near full and I fear that Bryce is going to become more lethal and unpredictable very soon. We really need to get moving, although no matter what we are going to have to weather out the full moon together. "Bryce stop pacing and get some rest. I only intend to stop for a few hours before pressing on."

"Why do you care if I sleep? Maybe if I don't I will drop dead from exhaustion before we get to your family of murdering fiends."

He is edgier than usual and I know the moon is to blame and perhaps some of the sexual tension is rubbing off

on him, I won't hold my breath on that thought though. The silver collar around his neck should keep him from changing into his wolf form, but he has broken every illusion that I had of the control we have over the Lycan race. My head throbs worse as I imagine what the moon will do to him when he can't heed her sway and change.

Massaging my temples I have no energy to fight, "I am too tired to argue right and wrong and my head hurts way too much to care if we are different species. So unless you want to donate blood, lets talk nicely or not at all please." Unable to keep up my tough front, I slide wearily to the forest's floor and let my head drop back against the rough bark of a tree, uncaring what creepy creatures might be climbing on me. Stupidity is me for not eating before I left, although my haste to get out of the compound was unavoidable. The lack of blood is taking its toll on me and until I get Bryce back to the compound eating isn't an option, I just hope I can make it.

"Having you suck the blood from my veins isn't high on my list of things to experience, so unless you think you can take it from me by force you are just going to have to starve. Sorry Princess." The sneer in his voice makes it perfectly clear he really doesn't give a crap about me.

What does it matter, no one cares about me. "Like I said, nice or nothing." My eyes are gritty feeling and all of my movements feel jerky and uncoordinated. Trying unsuccessfully to force myself to sleep a bit in hopes of escaping the pain radiating through me, I trust that Bryce won't take off in the interim. A faint scent is carried upon the breeze pulling me from the fog of impending sleep to full alertness in seconds. Vampires are near!

Bryce is crouching and growling, the urge to change is upon him. Damn, I wish I had the key to undo his collar, because I may very well need him in a few minutes. A group of turned Vampires are approaching and they are coming fast and well armed. They can only want one thing, Bryce. All I can think of is that I really should have eaten. There is no way that in my weakened state and Bryce's inability to shift that we can survive this assault. There are at least four, maybe five, too many.

"Let me out of this collar, I will help you fight and if it makes you feel better you can put it back on after," Bryce demands tugging at the offensive hunk of metal wrapped around his throat.

"I really wish I could, but we are never given the keys, to prevent a change of heart. Our coven leader trusts

no one," I answer while checking my guns for ammo and cocking them in preparation.

"Then we are royally screwed, you are in no shape to fight and I am only at half strength with this god damn silver on me." Any hint of emotion has fled his face, leaving him looking lethal and like the scary beast he is.

"We are out of time to think, they are going to be here in less than a minute." Tossing Bryce a couple of my daggers I cringe as I realize we are pitifully armed to fight this many. "Bryce get up the tree, they will smell your scent in the area, but maybe I can convince them that you ran and you can surprise them enough to give us an edge."

"For the record that is a lousy plan, but we have no time for anything else." Bryce jumps up in one smooth motion and grasps a branch allowing his muscles to flex deliciously as he swings effortlessly into the foliage. The irritating sound of his sexy voice filters down as he adds, "Oh and Princess don't go getting killed, I still need you to take me to the compound."

The rustle of bushes silences the comeback that was about to fly off my tongue. Leveling my guns at the oncoming group I let all my surroundings fade and focus completely on my targets. The vivid green eyes are the

first things I see shining at me through the darkness. They are soon connected to six flawlessly beautiful creatures, deadlier than almost any predator. Being the same race we usually try to give the courtesy of not killing each other even though we despise one another. Tonight, they have blood lust shining through their eyes. They won't kill Bryce, but I on the other hand am completely disposable to them. "Hello brethren, what can I do for you tonight?"

"You know why we are here and don't call us brethren, you are nothing like us. You are what keeps our kind from advancing, allowing yourself to be controlled by the pure bloods." The group starts to fan out and enclose me in a circle while the leader keeps talking, "However that is not why we have sought you out, where is the Lycan leader?"

"He ran off while I was sleeping, I was just about to go track him down." Reaching back without taking my eyes off of the Vampire talking to me I slowly unsheathe my sword from my back scabbard, while maintaining the aim I have on the Vampire's forehead with my gun. "If I show up without him Steele my coven's leader will kill me on sight. What do you want with him?"

"The same thing your coven wants with him I imagine and he is still here, his scent is strong and shows no sign of dissipating." The vampire advances two steps and the

rest of the circle also begins to slowly close the gaps,
"Lying to us was really unwise, now we will have to get the
truth from you in less, shall we say, diplomatic ways?"

My answer is to fire a shot into the leader's head. In
an instant I feel Bryce land behind me armed and dangerous
despite the silver collar. The irony of the situation
isn't lost on me. I never thought I would find myself glad
to have a Lycan fighting beside me. The Vampires exploded
into an angry rage, rushing us with the intent to kill.
"Just try and get as many wounds into them as possible,
heart and artery wounds are most effective, but any will
do. We just have to bleed them dry," I shout to Bryce.

"I know how to kill your kind Princess, but thanks for
the pointers," he responds more blandly than the situation
requires.

Even with the threat of the turned Vampires his
arrogance sets me on edge. Emptying my clips into the
leader of the group I manage to obliterate his heart and
practically sever his head from his body. He collapses
inches before he reaches me in a heap of carnage, his blood
pumping all over the ground as his body writhes in agony.
Throwing my gun to the ground in a practiced movement I
grab and launch a dagger from my thigh holster into the
heart of one of the followers that is attempting to provide

blood to revive his fallen leader and rush in with my sword. Killing them is probably not going to happen, but we should be able to weaken them enough to get away. As the stench of blood begins to fill the air I can feel my insides quiver and my fangs lengthen. I struggle to fight against the primitive side of me as the beast inside threatens to emerge and turn me into a mindless killing machine like the ones attacking us.

At the feel of a hand touching my arm I spin around sword raised ready to dismember whoever got close enough to touch me. My eyes meet Bryce's intense gaze and there is something that resembles concern maybe?

"Mila, fight the urge. Tuck your fangs back in and help me send these fuckers to the grave where they belong."

Sending Bryce a grateful look I find that his little distraction is just what I need to pull myself away from turning into an animal. The tiniest smile makes an appearance despite the carnage when I realize he actually used my name. The sounds of him slashing his way through the three attacking him reaches my ears and reassures me he has things under control and I turn my focus to the two I have to deal with. Starting to believe we might actually make it out of the fight alive I am in my element slashing and kicking my way to victory, when I feel a sharp searing

pain blaze through my entire being. Looking down I wished I hadn't when my eyes meet with the glint of silver that is attached to a blade sticking through my stomach.

The pain is enough to piss me off and cause visions of decapitated Vampires to cloud my vision. Despite my lust for vengeance, I have to watch my blood loss. Losing blood is really the only thing we have to worry about. Garlic, religious symbols and daylight are all myths and won't kill us. Sunlight isn't pleasant and will cause serious damage, but it won't kill us, but bleeding dry will. It's pretty hard to bleed dry before our body heals, but it does happen and I would rather it didn't happen to me. "Bryce, pull the damn sword out of me and help me stop these bastards before I bleed out." There is no way to stifle the scream that escapes my lips as he hastily pulls the sword from my flesh and begins using it to fight the remaining attackers. Despite my injury and his inability to shift we only have two attackers mobile.

Delivering a kick into the face of the attacker that I am working on the impact is hard enough to remove his fangs and make him lose his grip on his sword. Flicking it up with the toe of my boot I grab the handle, armed now with two blades I slice his head off with one smooth motion. As his body flops to the ground and begins to writhe I drive

one of the swords through the heart for good measure, it will take him forever to heal or if I am lucky he will die.

Bryce appears to also have immobilized his last attacker. I attempt to tell him that I am glad we survived and begrudge him a good fight, but I can't seem to form any words and the ground begins to approach my line of vision much too quickly. My mind tells me I need to stop myself from hitting the ground, but I can't seem to catch myself. Preparing myself for the impact I feel strong arms surround me, wrapping me in warmth, holding me more gently than I have ever been held. If I wasn't so disoriented I would actually enjoy being in Bryce's arms, which has me thinking I must be close to being bled dry to even imagine that as a possibility!

"God damn it Mila! How the fuck am I going to get to the stronghold without you? You absolutely can't die on me yet." Bryce needs to work on his nurturing skills as he jars me with every jerky movement he makes. "You are a fucking Vampire, you are tougher than this," I find the panic in his voice oddly endearing. In a final assault to my injured body he drops me to the ground and I can literally watch the conflict in his amazingly expressive eyes as he comes to terms with the only way to assure I

survive. A shudder of disgust reverberates through his entire body as he begins to lower his neck towards me.

Unable to control myself, my mouth opens automatically and with the last ounce of strength I have I let my fangs sink into his masculine flesh and welcome the rush of sweet, hot blood flowing down my throat. The sensuality of the moment rocks me all the way down to my toes, having my face buried against his warm skin I feel safe. Bryce's blood is like nothing I have ever tasted, it possesses a power so intense it feels like electricity humming through my veins. My whole body begins to heat up and tingle in more places than my veins.

Pulling myself back from taking too much of his intoxicating elixir is one of the most difficult things I have ever done. Even more difficult is pulling myself away from the warmth of his body. Carefully removing my fangs I sweep my tongue over the puncture wounds in a reverent caress, the shudder that flows through him doesn't feel like disgust to me. Meeting his dark, dangerous gaze I whisper, "thank you."