**The Birth of an Apocalypse**

PART THREE: KINDRED SERIES

The series is loosely based on White Wolfe’s Vampire the Eternal Struggle and the short lived FOX television show Kindred: The Embraced.

The Birth of an Apocalypse is a combination of two fandoms, **QAF and Buffy the Vampire Slayer**.

Warnings

Crossover, Anti-Mikey, Anti-Buffy, OOC!Whiny!Justin, Abuse, Minor Character Death, Mpreg, References to Abuse, Violence

WIP

Index

Chapter 1: Prologue: The Slayer, the Witch and the Vampire

Chapter 2: When Everything Is New

Chapter 3: Getting Into Trouble

Chapter 4: First Meeting

Chapter 5: I Am Home

Chapter 6: The Rise of a New Family

Chapter 7: The Awakening

Chapter 8: Week One: And a Garden Grows

Chapter 9: Week Two: Strange Fathers

Chapter 10: Week Three: Bringing Out the Demon

Chapter 11: Week Four: The Great Cover Up

Chapter 1: Prologue: The Slayer, the Witch and the Vampire

"Into each generation a Slayer is born. One girl in all the world, a Chosen One. One born with the strength and skill to fight the vampires, to stop the spread of their evil and the swell of their numbers."

It had been foretold...

Joss Whedon

Buffy the Vampire Slayer

Vampire Slayers were created to tame the growing numbers of vampires in the world. No average humans, Slayers were stronger, quicker and more perceptive, more so than most of their vampire counterparts. The Slayer lived a life of solitude, with only their mentor or Watcher to guide them. All but for the most famous of Slayers.

Buffy Summers never wanted to be a Slayer. In fact, all she ever wanted was to shop, be the head cheerleader and date the cutest guy in school. However, that wasn't her destiny. Her future lay in the destruction of vampires: a gift which she originally detested, but eventually mastered. With the help of her friends, she defeated some of the great vampire masters and eventually some power demons and demigods. And she saved the world...a lot. Not bad work for a Slayer that was killed not once, but twice.

The first time Buffy was killed it was easy to come back. A little mouth to mouth resuscitation and she was on her feet again ready to drop kick her foes into oblivion. The second time Buffy rose from the dead was a little more complex. The difficult feat was achieved by a powerful magical spell performed by Buffy's best friends, Xander, Anya, Tara and Willow. Instead of retrieving Buffy from some hell dimension they believed she was damned to, the Slayer's friends ripped her from the only place she had been truly happy: heaven.

So what is a Slayer to do after coming back from heaven? Others would trudge back into the battle, but not this Slayer. This Slayer became a little self destructive, which included sleeping with a vampire named Spike. Sound a little strange? It really isn't when you consider Buffy's first real boyfriend was a vampire with a soul named Angel. Just to make things more complicated, Angel was Spike's Sire, or Grand Sire depending on whose story you believe. Everyone's got a story and from time to time, they seem to contradict themselves.

Xander was always the ‘nice guy', unless you consider that he left his fiancée at the altar...literally. Anya, the fiancée, was a harmless human, unless you considered the thousands of years she had been a vengeance demon when she killed hundreds of thousands of people. Tara...well...Tara was always sweet. Of course she didn't start dating Willow until after a couple of averted apocalypses. It was a sweet girl meets girl, girl falls in love with girl, girl is killed by a lame bad guy so other girl flays the bad guy alive, turns evil and tries to destroy the world to stop all the pain. Never piss off a powerful witch, especially one as deadly as Willow. You might lose your skin...literally.

In the end, it really doesn't matter if you're a Slayer, a witch or a vampire. Life is pretty fucked up. People aren't always reliable. Not friends, not family and sometimes, not even yourself. But then again, sometimes they are.

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"Packing?" Buffy asked, watching Willow shove clothes half heartedly into a suitcase.

"Inserting clothes in suitcase," Willow sighed, not bothering to look up. "Yep, packing."

"Do you really have to go?"

"No, I can stay here," Willow replied sarcastically, "then I can rip the skin off the next guy who really pisses me off. Or I can possibly suck the world into another worm holey thingie again...that was fun."

"Don't use magic anymore," Buffy retorted, only to look away sadly. "I guess it wouldn't be enough since..."

"I was a magic junkie?" Willow finished. She knew she sounded harsh, but there was no other way. She had to leave to learn how to control her powers. Her need to use magic had gotten out of hand and now she had no way to control it. The redhead smiled at Buffy and took her best friend's hand in her own. "Giles said there's this coven that could help me focus my magical energy into good. I need to go. I need to do this for Tara...for you and for myself."

Buffy smiled and hugged Willow. Though she didn't want her best friend gone, she knew it was best. Willow had the type of power that could end the world. That was something a bad guy did and Willow was no bad guy.

Buffy looked around the room and saw a shirt, so she picked it up and placed it in the suitcase. She grabbed a few more items then stopped when the phone rang. She picked up the phone and looked at Willow questioningly.

"Giles? What's up?" Buffy listened then shrugged her shoulders when Willow asked what was going on. "Giles calm down, it's not like we haven't had an apocalypse before. What are we on...six or seven? We live on top of a hellmouth...stuff happens. Where? You sure? Where does it...alright, I'll call you when I get there. What? I don't think she can. I can do it by myself, Giles, I am the Slayer. Always a Watcher aren't you? If you're insistent, I guess there's always Xander and Anya. Don't laugh, with your English accent you always sound like you're making fun of me."

Buffy rolled her eyes and put her hand on her hip when she heard her Watcher's reply. She looked at Willow and said a little surprised, "Oh, you are making fun of me. Fine, I'll go and I'll take someone with me...and by the way Giles..." She paused just to make sure she got his full attention. "I had nasty sex with Spike a few weeks ago."

Buffy hung up the phone and laughed.

"Why'd you tell him that?" Willow asked, a little shocked by her best friend's declaration.

"There has to be some sort of good in sleeping with Spike," Buffy answered. "And since it can't be Spike, I guess it'll have to be me grossing out Giles. I'll bet you that he's washing his ears out as we speak."

"Probably true," Willow agreed, sitting on the bed in her room. "So what was he saying about another apocalypse? It's not in Sunnydale?"

"Nope, the end of the world has changed locations," Buffy replied nonchalantly. She sat next to the redhead and linked their arms. "Pittsburgh."

"Sounds fitting."

"Apparently it's some big brouhaha," Buffy said. "The Watcher's Council doesn't want me to go it alone."

"I'll come."

"What about-"

"Who else is going to go?" Willow interrupted. "Xander and Anya?"

"You sound like Giles."

"He's right."

"I know," Buffy sighed. "Honestly, I was going to get Spike."

"Even after he-"

"He didn't do anything," Buffy stopped Willow. "Like I told Xander, you guys just don't understand."

"Explain it to me."

"I can't," Buffy replied. "Not now. I kinda think I have to talk to Spike first."

"I'm going with you."

"Figured."

"Only this time I'm going to try and save it," Willow assured her best friend. "Instead of, you know, trying to make it go kablooie."

"Always a bonus," Buffy said, pushing Willow's suitcase aside and standing up. "I guess I'd better start packing myself. I might have to go shopping. I'd hate to wear the same thing I wore to the last apocalypse. It's like wearing the same dress to your junior and senior proms."

"Ooh, bring your new green outfit and the leather pants."

"A must," Buffy agreed. "Only I think maybe this time we should take more winter clothes. You know, the vinylly Matrixy type wear. I'm thinking sort of the Trinity or Niobe thing, only with poufier hair."

"I'm thinking winter in Pittsburgh will need something warmer," Willow disagreed. "Think me in sophomore year or those poofy jackets that look like floatation devices...ooh, think the movie Fargo, only with not so much snow."

"Sounds really ‘brrr'," Buffy replied, "but I was thinking more of what Giles had to say about the apocalypse which had something to do with the birth of something."

"Oh."

"Birth means gooey, slimy stuff," Buffy reasoned. "I'm thinking much easier to wipe of Matrixy clothes than my new Versace blouse. Even on sale that thing cost me most of my paycheck."

"Nice find," Willow said with a smile. "That would totally suck if you messed it up the first apocalypse after you bought it."

"Tell me about it." Buffy looked at the clock and sighed. "I guess I better start packing. Giles said we have a little over a month to stop it and considering we don't even know what the hell it is, I'd say we have our work cut out for us, especially since we'll probably have to drive there."

"I vote we take a plane."

"Vampires don't do well on planes," Buffy chuckled. "So since Spike's the third wheel, I vote that we make him drive the whole way."

"It's a good plan."

"Glad we can agree," Buffy replied confidently. "And since we're voting, I'll make one last one. I vote we kill the mother before she has a chance to give birth to anything much less the end of the world."

"I second that."

"Then it's all agreed." Buffy smiled, taking a sword in her hand. "The mother dies."

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Justin stood at the window, sweating. It was broad daylight and he hadn't eaten. Though the curtains were drawn, the warmth of the sun tanned his flesh. He closed his eyes and gripped the wall concentrating when his body flashed in and out of sight. The baby was trying to teleport them again. He guessed the baby wanted to be with his father and Justin couldn't blame him. His cravings for Brian never ceased. His body didn't understand that he needed to be with his clan at that time. His body only knew that it needed Brian. He needed Brian.

Justin turned around and ignored the praises from his clansmen. Though he cared for them dearly, it seemed hollow. Maybe it just seemed hollow because they weren't Brian. Justin sat down and took the glass given to him. It was full of his mate's blood. Brian had made sure Justin always had plenty. It wasn't fresh like taking it directly from his mate, but Justin drank it happily. Brian was still taking care of him. The more he thought about it, the more he wasn't surprised.

"Call Isis," Justin ordered. "Tell her I need to see her immediately."

"Yes, My Lord."

Justin waved Regilio away. When the Nosferatu left, his plump belly was exposed and he began to rub it. He felt a magical charge coming from within and he concentrated. The baby wanted its father and was doing everything in its power to get to him, including magic. Not that Justin could blame his child, but he had other things to do. There had been a conspiracy from within his clan which caused the death of his mother and he had yet to punish all of the traitors. He still had work to do and he was sure Brian wouldn't disagree, if Brian wanted him back at all. Justin wasn't so sure. All he knew was that his baby wanted to be with Brian. He had no idea what Brian wanted. He never really did, did anyone...even Brian?

Justin held his large belly and concentrated. The baby wasn't stopping, it wanted its father and was using magic to try and accomplish something its mother wouldn't do. Justin couldn't do, even though he wanted to. There he was, a Toreador Primogen, surrounded by beauty and love and all he wanted was Brian. Justin supposed it was because that was where his heart truly belonged. With his mate.

"We'll be back home with Daddy," Justin whispered to his belly. "I'm not sure when, but we will."

A twinge of pain hit Justin and the future parent knew his unborn wasn't pleased. Maybe that was because there was no lying to the baby. Justin didn't know when or if ever he'd return to his mate. Things were just so uncertain. And though he knew they could, Justin hoped that things wouldn't get worse. The worse things got, the more he felt obligated to stay with his clan.

Justin couldn't believe he had gotten himself into yet another strange situation. He was Primogen, he was mated to the Prince and he was about to give birth to the Prince's child. Things should be perfect. He sighed and shook his head knowing that things would get worse. They always did.

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"Was that the phone?" Buffy asked as Willow walked into her room.

"Yep, talked to Giles again," Willow answered. "He said that he forgot to warn us about going to the East Coast."

"As opposed to living on the hellmouth?"

"He says slayers don't live long there," Willow explained, "something about the vamps being highly organized or something. He said he wished he could tell us more, but that the Watcher's Council didn't know anything either. You know the Council...with the rhyming and the funny accents."

"Yeah, they always give advice in Seussian," Buffy agreed. "Would you, could you slay a vamp? Would you, could you on their face stamp?"

"Would you, could you be less of a tramp?"

"Hey!"

"Sorry," Willow laughed. "Couldn't help it."

"S'ok," Buffy replied. "We'll need lots of good vibe to kill the Big Bad."

"Speaking of Big Bads, did you contact Spike?"

"Sent Xander over to his crypt," Buffy answered a bit concerned. "He said when he went there, Spike had someone crypt-sitting for him. So no Spike. I told Xander that if Spike were to come back to tell him where we are, we can use all the help we can get."

"So it's just me and you," Willow sighed. "Ok...we can do this. We can kill the apocalypse birthing mother and her army protecting her."

"Army?"

"That's what Giles said," Willow explained. "He said he was still trying to decipher all of the ancient text, but there was something about the birth of a great evil and some royal something or other protecting it."

"Again with the vagueness."

"Of course we can't forget the leader of the vampires," Willow continued. "Giles said that there's a leader for all the vamps in Pitts and that he won't be so pleased a Slayer's in town if he finds out."

"Well you know how subtle I am," Buffy said straight faced. "So what do we do when the leader of the vamps knows I'm there?"

"Kill him," Willow replied. "And the rest will fall by the wayside."

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Brian thrust over and over until he finally spent himself. His eyes still closed, he imagined the perfect ass, the perfect face he wanted to be inside of. He wiped away the sweat from his brow and pulled out of his trick. After a few unneeded breaths, he looked down into his trick's face and snarled.

"You growl like you fuck," the trick giggled, "like an animal. This has got to be one of the best fucks I've ever had."

"Whatever."

"Nice," the trick said sarcastically. "Do you think I can use your shower?"

"No," Brian replied sternly. "There's no need."

"Do you expect me to drive home with cum all over me?"

"No," Brian answered, taking the trick by his neck. "I don't expect you to drive home at all."

Brian took a bite from his sex partner and fed until there was nothing left. He quickly slipped on his pants and ordered his minion to remove the dead man. When they came and left with the corpse, Brian strolled to the window and opened the shade. The sun hit his skin and though it stung, he basked in its ray impervious to its deadly effects.

"My Lord," Daedalus said. When Brian turned to face him, he kept in the shadows. "No matter how much I feed, we Nosferatu are susceptible to the rays of the sun."

"Then speak from there," Brian replied, clearly not in the mood for small talk.

"Lord Justin asked for Isis' presence," Daedalus notified. "She sent me here to notify you of her location...since you were otherwise occupied when she tried to contact you telepathically."

"Fine," Brian sighed, waving the Nosferatu Primogen away. He didn't move until he was alone again, but for Bartox who was as still as a statue. Brian stared at the Gargoyle long and hard, never saying a word.

"Lord Justin is sitting amidst many of his Clan," Bartox told his Prince. "I see what my childer see and it is clear that Lord Justin isn't pleased about something. His belly is full and he rubs it constantly."

Brian turned from his protector and walked away stating, "Like I care."

"Of course, Your Majesty," Bartox replied, knowing full well Brian would want another report on his mate in an hour or so. It was a game they played...or Brian played with himself, though the Gargoyle never really understood why.

Brian sat in the sun and tanned while he could. It was something to pass the time when he wasn't bombarded with work. He closed his eyes and let the rays tan his skin until he felt the presence of his father. Without opening his eyes, he smirked and asked his father what he wanted.

"To inform you, my son."

"What of?" Brian asked, finally looking up.

"I have heard word that she will arrive soon," Ulugh replied.

"Who?"

"The Slayer."

"The who?"

"I have so much to tell you, my son," Ulugh said, sitting down next to his boy. "You must listen to me and listen to me well. This Slayer that I speak of can cause great trouble, for she is well known amongst our people."

"Then how come I don't know shit about her?"

"Listen," Ulugh replied softly. "For if you do not listen, it can cost you your life and the lives of your childer, your mate and your unborn."

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"We ready?" Buffy asked, putting her suitcase in Xander's car.

"Xander's inside making sure our flight is on schedule," Willow replied. "Other than that, we're ready to go."

"Alright ladies," Xander said, jogging out to the two women. "You ready?"

"All ready to go kill some bad guys," Buffy sang, getting in the car. "Calling shotgun!"

"Like I wanted shotgun," Willow retorted, looking very disappointed.

"Hey Will," Xander said, pulling his friend aside. "While I was inside, I got a call from Spike. I told him you guys were going to Pittsburgh and he totally freaked, said you should stay away from there. After we exchanged some choice words, he hung up the phone on me."

"Did he say he'd meet us there?"

"No," Xander answered. "But you shouldn't depend on him...he's a vampire for crying out loud. In fact, I want to know why I can't go with you."

"You're the responsible one," Willow replied. "You have to take care of the fort around here, while we go off to kill a vampire leader and the mother of the end of the world."

"You guys always have all the fun," Xander chuckled.

"Should I be a part of this meeting?" Buffy wondered aloud, sticking her head out of the car.

"Just telling Xander our goals for this little vacation from the hellmouth."

"We have to get going or we'll miss our flight," Buffy said. "So let me sum it up for you...kill, kill and kill. Any questions?"

"Where to start?"

"I dunno," Buffy replied with a smile. "I've always been fond of the beginning...so let's get there."

Chapter 2: When Everything Is New

It has been said that it is better to put the old aside and start anew. People can sometimes get caught in their old, tired lifestyles where everything is the same. It doesn't even matter if it's good or bad. Life can, at times, just be boring when it is constant repetition. To change the feeling of boredom, it can be better to let the old pass by and start again, where things are novel and fresh. It can be refreshing to wipe away the past and exist where all prior faults mean little.

However this isn't always the case.

New isn't always better. New can remind us what we once had. For some it becomes a fond memory; one which nothing would ever compare. For others it becomes the "what could have been". The worst of it all comes for those who can not let the past go. Many Kindred fall into this trap. They are unable to exist in the ‘now', preferring to grip onto the ‘what was'. Those lost Kindred hang on the ripping seams of the past until there is little left but a pile of string. But this isn't merely a fault of Kindred. Most Kindred were once humans. And for those that weren't, there's only Caine to blame.

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Brian closed his eyes while he stood in the shower and left the water cascade down his back. He felt arms wrap around his body and just for a moment, he pretended they belonged to someone else. It was then a pain surged through his body and he felt his unborn child calling to him. His face changed and he turned around to a very shocked man whose only intentions that evening was a sexual encounter with Liberty Avenue's biggest stud. What the trick got was a mouthful of teeth in his neck. What Brian got was a meal and nothing more. There was only one thing that could stop the pain within him, but there was nothing Brian could do about it. Rather, there was nothing he would do about it.

Instead of going to his mate and unborn child, Brian dried himself, got dressed and headed downstairs. He opened the door to the second floor and saw Cash sitting by Sasha's bedside. There lay the Brujah Primogen, still in Torpor, and all he could think about was Justin. He tried to push the thoughts away, but they always returned no matter what he did. He had to force himself to keep focus, even though he knew he should be concentrating on his pregnant mate. Only he had no control over Justin and Justin chose his clan over their...well, he really didn't have a name for what they were.

Brian quietly made his way into the room to assure that the last thing he had wouldn't be taken away from him. Work. It was the only thing he was still in complete control of. And that wasn't always true, though since Lillie's downfall the attempts on his and Justin's life had dwindled to nothing. Brian guessed Julian and Chris had other things in mind for them, but he was prepared. One false move and not only was Chris a dead Kindred, Julian would have to pay and his father would make sure that would happen.

"Any news?" Brian asked, looking away from Sasha.

"Julian and Chris haven't so much as jaywalked." Cash stood up and addressed his Prince respectfully. "But don't worry. I've got my people on both of those bastards."

"Good."

"I've also been keeping an eye on Justin," Cash said softly, knowing full well what his Prince's reaction would be. "He's doing fine."

"What the fuck!?"

"Don't be upset-"

"Who the fuck are you to..." Brian stopped mid sentence and took a deep breath. He wasn't out of control. He didn't care what Justin was doing. So what if Cash was watching him? He didn't care. He didn't care and he'd repeat it until he believed it himself.

Brian closed his eyes and took a deep breath. When he opened them, his face was emotionless and he was on to something new. "Did my father tell you about the Slayer?"

"Yeah," Cash answered, glad his Prince no longer seemed mad. "I wonder what the fuck she's doing over here. I thought they were supposed to make sure she stayed on the Hellmouth."

"Something's going on...and I'm not exactly sure what it is," Brian admitted. "All my dad said was that she's needed here. We'll still need to be on alert, but he says that if she goes too far we're allowed to kill her."

"Sweet," Cash growled. "I've never bagged a Slayer."

"You don't get to kill her yet," Brian said with a smile. "I want to know what she's here for. My dad's being all vague, which means he thinks I need to learn something. Fuck, I hate it when he and Isis get together and decide I need a fucking lesson. Why don't they just tell me what the fuck's going on for a change?"

"Maybe they don't know."

"That's a frightening prospect."

"You want to know what the Slayer's here for?" Cash asked, though he knew his Prince's answer. "I'll find her and you can ask her yourself."

"I'll send word when I'm ready for a meeting with her, but watch out," Brian warned. "She's deadly."

"This should be interesting," Cash replied, grinning, "if I don't end up dead."

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Buffy punched a vampire, crushing the man against a wall. With a quick twist of her body, she flipped him over her shoulder and slammed him onto the ground. She took him by the arm then twisted it until a bone cracked.

"We can keep doing this all night long," Buffy said. "I don't mind a good workout."

"Screw you!"

"I'd do what she says," Willow warned the man.

"I don't think he understands," Buffy remarked as she stomped on the man, breaking his ribs. She turned to Willow, ignoring the man's squeals of pain. "You'd think vampires would get it by now. But, oh no...they have to play all cool and thick skulled, when they know in the end what a Slayer wants a Slayer gets."

"Slayer?"

"I think you got his attention," Willow said as the man squirmed under Buffy's grip.

"What's a Slayer doing here?"

"You don't get to ask the questions," Buffy snapped, twisting the man's arm until it got limp. "I ask, you answer...capiche?"

"Yeah!"

"Who's your leader?" Willow asked. "And where can we find him?"

The vampire laughed, choking on his own blood. He sat up when Buffy loosened her grip and held his mangled arm.

"I'll tell you where to find that asshole," the vampire said. "He deserves to go face to face with a Slayer after what he did to her. My Cla...group could have been great with her, but now we're just lapdogs."

"She?" Buffy wondered aloud. "Who's she?"

"My leader," the vampire said. "Her name was Lillie."

"And who's the new head honcho?" Willow asked.

"His name's Justin, Justin Taylor," the vampire answered. "He stays right off of Liberty Avenue. You better watch out, though...he's got a bunch of bodyguards, most of which you can't even see."

"Thanks," Buffy said smiling, before she pulled out her stake and shoved it in his heart.

The Slayer didn't even watch the vampire turn into dust before whipping out her map and going over her destination with Willow.

"Liberty Ave, huh?" Willow remarked. "We're pretty close by, but what do you think he meant by ‘a bunch of bodyguards you can't see?'"

"Who knows?" Buffy replied confidently. "We kill the leader, Justin, then the mother of the apocalypse, save the world and...how about after that we grab a real Philly Cheese steak then head back to the hotel?"

"Sounds like a plan."

"Cool," Buffy replied, shoving the map back into her pocket. "Let's go kill some vamps."

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"A million praises," a Toreador said, taking Justin's hand in his own. "We all knew that you would lead us justly."

"Thanks."

"We cannot give you enough praise," another of the Primogen's people added. "Your love is well received."

"Thanks," Justin repeated.

"We love you dearly, My Lord."

Justin thanked his group again and though he smiled to them, he felt sick inside. All he ever wanted was to be loved, but when it finally surrounded him he found it lacking. He guessed he should have been more specific. He wanted to be loved by Brian.

The Toreador Primogen rubbed his belly and thought of his mate. He ignored his brethren as they left the room and stared at a picture on the wall. It was an original Picasso given to him by a Toreador Prince from Canada. Normally he could see a painting and imagine all the possible meanings behind it, but not this time. Now all he saw was Brian. It seemed the lines and colors moved to create his face then his slim figure. At one point Justin wondered if it wasn't just his mind tricking him, or possibly his baby. It seemed to always find a way to get what it wanted and now all it wanted was Brian.

"Quite possibly," Isis said interrupting Justin's train of thought. "Your unborn is quite powerful. Must be his father and grandfather's blood."

"Are you reading my mind?" Justin asked, going to Isis' side and giving her a hug.

"Not by magic," Isis assured the young man. "I can see that you're staring at a picture which is being morphed by magic. Since the picture of our Prince seems to be causing you great pain, I can only assume that it's not by your hands, but by the hands of your unborn child. Am I correct?"

"Yeah," Justin sighed. "So I'm not going mad."

"Not yet," Isis laughed, giving him a hug. "You called for me. Is there something I can help you with?"

"There are a couple of things," Justin told the Brit. "For one, I'm opening a new art gallery. I was hoping you and Father Beg would show up."

"Of course I will," Isis answered, sitting down and placing her bag on the floor by her side. "I'll inform Master Beg, though it might be better if you asked him yourself. Though you no longer live with the Tremere, he still considers you one of his childer."

"I will."

"And of Brian?"

"Sure," Justin replied hesitantly. "He probably won't want to come, but...yeah. Of course he can, he's my Prince."

"I'll inform him," Isis sighed.

Isis was quickly tiring of these two men who clearly loved each other, but somehow found a way to separate themselves. She wondered what was wrong with Justin, thinking the young man had the more sense of the two. And though she cared dearly for Brian, she found that in matters of the heart he seemed quite out of his league. Something had to give between the two men and soon.

"Was there something else on your mind, childe?"

"Yeah," Justin said, feeling almost ashamed to ask her for such a favor. "I was hoping that you could cast that spell on me to prevent the baby from teleporting us anywhere."

"Of course," Isis replied. She had been expecting the call from Justin the moment he left. Not wanting to dwell on what she couldn't fix, she reached into her bag and pulled out several containers filled with blood. She placed them on the table and walked towards the front door. "I'll need some ingredients first, but I'll be back as soon as I retrieve them. Until then, feed well, childe."

Justin said goodbye to his mentor and picked up one of the containers. When he opened it, he smelled Brian and immediately drank. Ambrosia. Though it was only for a moment, he and his unborn were content. He finished off the container then picked up the others and took them to the refrigerator where he placed them next to the containers that Cash and Matt gave him.

Justin smiled. Brian was still taking care of him. Somehow he wasn't surprised. He concentrated to keep from teleporting again and chuckled. Somehow he was missing something and he guessed his unborn knew. Now all he had to do was figure it out for himself.

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Matt twisted his body around, ending with a kick to Trish's face. He didn't wait for her to fall before grabbing her arm and slamming her body to the floor. Though she found her way to her feet, Matt twisted her wrist around until she submitted.

"You have our master's blood in you," Trish pouted. "I can't think of any other way you could beat me, seeing as you're still a fledgling."

"I'm blessed to be a childe of my Prince and of Master Beg," Matt replied with a cocky grin. "Though I think I could kick your ass either way."

"I'm not so sure about that," Ted said, shaking his head. "When Trish and Michael fought the first time, she kicked his ass all over the place."

"She did not," Michael disagreed.

"I sure as hell did," Trish laughed. "And considering you're also a childe of the Prince, I wonder what's wrong with you."

"We all have our strengths," Ted suggested, glancing sympathetically towards his friend. "Michael just isn't the physical type."

"I have other strengths," Michael agreed.

"Yes you do," Ted agreed. "You've been hitting the books pretty hard lately."

"I have," Michael replied, turning his attention to his brother. "And you should be hitting them more often, Matt. Sparring with Trish isn't going to get you anywhere in this Clan. Brian prefers brains over brawn."

"Books are boring as shit," Matt snorted. "I'd rather fight...or get laid."

"Well at least he sounds like Brian," Ted chuckled.

"I think Brian would go apeshit if he knew you even thought about comparing him to a straight guy," Michael barked.

"I'm not just a straight guy," Matt retorted coldly. "I'm his childe. And he isn't Brian...he's our Sire...our father. There's order to everything. You seem to forget that."

"He's not our father!" Michael snapped. There was one thing that disgusted him and that was being called a ‘childe' of Brian's. It was a name that he'd have to deal with, but there was no way he would ever consider Brian his ‘father'. Brian was his Sire, which he felt was closer to an idol than anything else. "He's our Sire, not our father, Matt, don't confuse the two."

"You're the one confusing the two," Matt disagreed.

"You have no idea what's it's like to be Brian's childe," Michael said. "You sure as hell have no idea what's it's like to be Brian's friend...his best friend at that. I do."

"I guess I'm lucky then," Matt replied, looking over Michael's shoulder. "I don't have to take the time to relearn how things are. I already know my place."

"That's a good thing," Brian said, strolling into the room. He glanced around at the group, walking past Michael and Trish only to momentarily pause by Ted. "Did you get those numbers for me?"

"Your bankroll is still fatter than your dick," Ted replied. "I was wondering what you were thinking about that other venture I was talking about."

"The porn site?" Brian chuckled. "I'll lend you the money for a hefty percentage, but I'll need numbers on all of that before I'll commit."

"Sweet," Ted mumbled, his mind already thinking of figures and percentages.

Brian felt Michael's presence close behind him, but he had no intention of speaking to his eldest childe. He had business to do and Michael just didn't fit into his schedule. Well...that and he didn't have the patience to deal with Michael. He had come to speak to his youngest.

"Matt," Brian began. He smiled when his youngest childe stood before him, fell to his knees and held him. Brian, for a moment, thought that his straight childe was about to switch hit, but was glad that wasn't the case. He had other things in mind for the man. "I need you to go with Cash and tell him it's time to find her."

"Her who?" Michael asked.

"Of course," Matt answered, leaving without another word.

"Don't worry about it," Brian told Michael.

"Brian!"

The Prince turned around and glared at Michael. But he had no one to blame but himself. He should have known better.

"Sire," Michael quietly said with the most innocent look he could muster. "I need to speak to you in private."

"I don't have the time."

"Please."

"Mikey-"

"It won't take long at all..."

Brian closed his eyes and sighed. There was still so much to do and so little time to do it all. He would never mention what his worries were, especially any concerning a certain Toreador. He would never say anything about the possible threat Craig Taylor presented being a Prince so nearby. He would also never speak the name of the Slayer whose job was to kill every Kindred she met. There was only one thing Brian Kinney could say.

"I need a blow job."

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On her knees, Buffy looked up at a vampire, ignoring his smug smile. Though the vampire thought he had the upper hand, it was clear he wasn't expecting a Slayer as an opponent. With a grab to the groin, Buffy flipped backwards kicking the vampire in the face. After releasing her grip, Buffy twisted and landed on her feet. She did a back flip then pulled out her stake named Mr. Pointy and made the vampire dust. She put the stake back in its place and wiped her hand on her pants a little disgusted.

"Icky," Buffy said, shrugging off the attack and heading down the street like normal.

"You won't catch me grabbing some guys' package," Willow said, moving next to the Slayer. "I mean...I wouldn't grab some chick vamp's boobs either...well...unless there was a reason...you know...other than just feeling her up. Like for some reason it's-"

"It's cool, Willow," Buffy interrupted.

Buffy knew what Willow meant and though it would have been funny to watch her best friend try and talk her way out of that conversation, they had other things to do. In fact, as they walked down the street, they saw a horde of mean looking vampires looking very much like a biker gang standing in front of a bar.

"Alright, I'll start with the butt kicking," Buffy whispered, "then if necessary, you follow up with the magic hoodoo."

"You sure?" Willow asked, wondering if she should try magic at all.

Willow recalled her past as a ‘magic junkie' and her time as the Big Bad trying to end the world. Nothing about any of that was good. In fact, she, out of all the prior Big Bads, had come closest to ending the world. Willow had no idea how powerful she was. One thing was for certain, there was more power within her that was still untapped. There was no telling what she was capable of.

"You'll be fine," Buffy assured her, already moving toward the group.

Buffy hid behind a car then another, making her way to the gang. In no time she was in ears distance and was shocked by what she heard.

"I ain't worried bout no Slayer in these parts," a large man said.

"Yeah," a woman with more earrings than face agreed. "Our Prince will make short work of a Slayer. Tremere's are kinda funny ‘bout that."

"I'd like to see that," Buffy said, coming out from her hiding place. She strolled to the group confidently and struck a pose, showing off Mr. Pointy. "In fact, take me to your leader...you know, so I can kill him."

"Wrong Coast, Slayer," the woman growled.

"I want to kill her first, Uma," the man snarled. "Our Prince will be pleased."

"Why don't you just take me to him?" Buffy asked, looking more like a child wanting to go to Disneyland rather than to a vampire leader. "Come on! It'll be fun!"

"Kill her!"

"No?" Buffy said innocently. "I guess I can send him a message using your dust."

"Bloody hell, Buffy," a vampire with an English accent said, coming from behind several others.

"Spike?"

"Alright," Spike said, getting in between one petite, blonde Slayer and a gang of Brujah. "There'll be no killing of any kind." He turned to the vampires and tried to assure them, "We'll be out of here in no time flat, mates."

"And pass up killing a Slayer?" Uma wondered out loud.

"Spike," Buffy said, getting the vampire's attention. She moved to him and asked him softly, "Where've ya been?"

"This isn't the time," Spike whispered.

"We're like in the middle of a big battle and then you're totally ‘poof'," Buffy complained. "I mean, the world could've ended and you're off doing...what were you doing?"

"Not now, Buffy..."

"I didn't mean to try and end the world," Willow said as she walked up to the group. "It was a one time thing, you know...as in never to be repeated...and I said I was sorry."

"Are you people crazy?" Uma asked, flabbergasted by all the nonsensical chatter.

"Apparently," Spike mused, turning to his former lover. "Just trust me, Buffy. You can't kill any of these vampires...I mean...Kin..." Spike glanced towards the Brujah and sighed. There was no way he was going to win in this sticky situation. He took a deep breath and looked deep in Buffy's eyes. "You can't kill any vampires in this city."

"Too late," Buffy replied, shrugging her shoulders.

"Buffy!"

"Why can't we kill any vampires?" Willow asked. "And what's so bad about this city?"

"Yeah," Buffy concurred. "We do live on top of the Hellmouth. What makes this city all oogy boogy? Is it their leader...that Prince guy, Justin Taylor?"

"'Nuff with the bloody twenty questions!" Spike snapped.

"Dim Slayer," Uma said, shaking her head. She approached Spike and spoke to him. "I see you changed from killing Slayers to bedding them. Some would say that was a smart way to stay alive. I, however, would never.

"You know your choices, William the Bloody. You're better off taking your Slayer and leaving the East Coast, but if you're insistent on staying, may I suggest going to Philadelphia or another city. This place isn't safe for the likes of you, especially since your Sire's nowhere to be found."

"Soddin' Pouf," Spike cursed under his breath. "Was never good for much."

"But, if you insist on staying in the city, you are obligated to pay homage to the Prince," Uma continued. "That is if he doesn't kill you first."

"How do I find him?"

"I wouldn't worry about that, William the Bloody," Uma replied, walking away with her gang following. "He'll find you."

"What's the hub bub?" Buffy asked. "Is this about Angel?"

"This is about us leaving ‘ere," Spike corrected. "You don't understand anything. We're better off in Philly, if anywhere, Buffy."

"No can do," Willow disagreed. "Giles said the apocalypse is starting in Pittsburgh. So...in Pittsburgh we be."

"Apocalypse, huh?" Spike replied, not believing that he had found himself in that situation yet again. He remembered the old days when he would kill and torture at will: now he was relegated to being a back up for a Slayer. It wouldn't make any sense if he wasn't so in love with her...or so he kept telling himself. "I suppose that means my unlife's about to get a whole bloody lot shorter then."

"It's not like this is our first apocalypse," Willow said. "I mean, we've saved the world like five times...six if you include the last one....but if you didn't want to, I'd appreciate it since like I said before, I really didn't mean it."

"That isn't what I meant," Spike sighed. "I meant the Prince is more likely to kill me than to listen to one word I say. Tremeres are funny like that."

"What's a Tremere?" Buffy asked.

"I wish I could tell you," Spike sighed.

Spike hadn't yet broken a Tradition and wasn't planning to anytime soon. He would keep the Masquerade even if it killed him and it probably would. There had to be another way to stop the apocalypse and get out of town before he was put to death by the Tremere Prince. Well...there didn't have to be, but it was wishful thinking. Spike racked his mind until the thought of something, or someone, that hadn't occurred to him before.

"Hold on," Spike said when a plan finally came to mind. "I think I have a way to get us out of this...I'm not the only vampire who actually likes the world like it is. I have a contact I'll need to talk to first. You staying somewhere?"

"Generic hotel off of Liberty Ave," Willow answered. "The big one with the rainbow flags everywhere. It's a right at some diner or something."

"I know the one," Spike said. "You two go back there and wait for me. I'll come back with word if I'm not dust. Give me a few hours."

Buffy and Willow watched Spike leave patiently. The moment he was out of site, Willow turned to Buffy and asked, "So...back to the hotel?"

Buffy looked up at the sky and gazed at the moon, deep in thought. She sighed, mulling over her choices. She could trust Spike and though he was always faithful and loyal even after she died (a second time), he was still a vampire.

Decisions, decisions...

"This Prince knows we're in town," Buffy reasoned. "So we can go back to the hotel and wait for Spike who might never show up because the Prince killed him...or we can go kill the Prince? I dunno, Will, what do you think?"

"I think Justin Taylor better watch his back."

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"What?" Justin asked, hoping he'd heard one of his clansmen incorrectly.

"I know for a fact," the man said. "I don't feel my childe any longer. He's been killed!"

"I'll find out what happened," Justin tried to assure the man.

"The Prince wouldn't allow this, would he?" the man beseeched. "We stood by his side, by your mother's side and by your side when all seemed lost for the legacy of the Toreador. This is how he repays us?"

"I'm sure it wasn't one of his people," Justin swore.

"You must find out from the Prince!"

"I can handle it," Justin declared, about to lose his patience. "I am your Primogen and can't run to the Prince every time an issue comes up. I'll find the murderer and enact justice upon him, as is my right."

"Thank you, Lord Justin."

Justin sighed when the man left and wondered how he was going to find the murderer of one of his own clan. It wasn't something he could just leave up to Brian. It was something he had to do for himself. He would face the threat and destroy it. It couldn't possibly be that difficult...could it?

Chapter 3: Getting Into Trouble

The easiest way to get into trouble is to act upon something you have no knowledge of. Ignorance isn't always bliss, sometimes it's a means to cause great difficulty. Some have been known to argue a point when they have no idea about the topic at hand. Others have been known to react to an issue they don't have all the facts on. Either way it can cause more problems that it solves.

Then again, there are always those who get into trouble by not doing anything at all. They allow life to move past them and choose to react instead of acting. But these fools can never match those who go in search for trouble. It's one thing to step in shit, another to let shit hit you in the face and another thing altogether to go looking for shit. Sometimes it will hit you in the face.

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Brian sat in his chair and listened to Michael's rant. He wanted to just leave but, somehow, his body wasn't moving. The Prince had always ignored Michael's feelings for Justin, but today he felt the need to listen. There would be no more illusions on his part, or so he told himself.

"I'm so glad," Michael continued. "It's like he was bringing you down or something..."

Brian closed his eyes and let his best friend's words seep in. If Michael had ever hid his dislike for Justin, he was no longer doing it. In the words of his oldest friend, Justin was a silly kid who never cared about anything but himself. What Michael seemed to forget was that though Justin had left the Clan, he was still carrying Brian's unborn child.

"You're better off without the little fucker," Michael huffed. "You can move on with your life now that Boy Wonder has tipped toed the fuck out of here."

Brian turned to Michael with a growl, but stopped when Isis entered the room. He sneered at his childe, but only could roll his eyes when it seemed as if Michael didn't understand why his Sire was so upset. It was something Isis noticed the moment she entered the room.

"Keep your bloody tongue in your mouth, boy," Isis snapped, approaching the pair. She sneered at Michael and pointed a finger at him, "I'll not remind you again to behave, childe."

"I was just talking to my Sire."

"Don't dare talk back to me!"

Brian tuned his mentor and his childe out and left the conference room, heading to his loft. There he found his father sitting, reading. He had intended to find a trick to appease his sexual appetite, but opted instead to pick up a book and read next to his father. He hadn't finished a paragraph before one sensation hit him and he felt the presence of another.

Turning to his father, Brian asked, "Do you feel that?"

"I was wondering when you would sense it," Ulugh replied, putting down his book and looking at his son. "I've felt it for quite some time."

"What is it?"

"That, my childe, is something you must discern for yourself."

"I've never felt anything like it," Brian said, hand at his chest as the sensation filled him. "It's powerful."

"You use my blood well."

"Can others feel it?"

"Only those who have our blood," Ulugh replied with a soft smile. "They also must open their minds to experience." Ulugh picked up Brian's book and remarked, "I gather you weren't entirely absorbed in your book?"

Brian rolled his eyes and laughed. He was caught, so he could only admit nothing and move onto the next topic. Seeing Isis enter the loft, he closed his eyes and linked telepathically with his youngest childe, Matt.

"I need you to concentrate for me," Brian told his childe.

"Of course, Sire."

"Tell me when you feel it."

"There's something out there, Sire," Matt finally said after several moments of silence. "I can't exactly tell, but it's powerful."

"Can you find it?"

"I can sense the direction it's coming from," Matt replied. "I'm not sure I can pinpoint it, but I can get close."

"If you find the source," Brian said, "bring it to me."

"Of course."

Brian broke the link to his youngest childe and turned to his father. When he saw Ulugh nod his approval, he leaned back in his chair and put his feet up on the table.

"So how long have you known, Isis?" Brian asked.

"About the power?" Isis said innocently. "Longer than you."

"Bitch."

"Thank you," Isis replied, sitting down with a smile. "I'll make sure someone else backs Matt up. You wouldn't want to lose your second childe, would you?"

"He'll be fine."

"Is this how you rule everything?" Isis wondered aloud. "As well as your mate?"

"Justin's none of your business," Brian snapped.

"He's invited you to the opening of his new art gallery," Isis countered, hoping to get some reaction out of the man.

"I've heard," Brian replied smoothly. "Linds and Mel already asked me and I told them what I'll tell you, ‘no'. Why the fuck would I want to go to some silly fucking art gallery opening?"

"Who knows?" Isis answered, glancing at Ulugh. It appeared they did.

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"I'm so glad he isn't coming," Mel whispered to Lindsay. "He has a way of fucking things up."

Lindsay glared at Mel then glanced over at Justin. Although she didn't want to admit it, it appeared that Mel was probably right. Justin was becoming a man and Brian...well, Brian was still Brian.

"I suppose so," Lindsay replied, sighing then strolling over to the young Primogen.

"I don't like it," Justin complained to a surrounding group of clansmen. "This isn't a cheap hotel in Vegas, this is supposed to be an elegant art gallery opening. I don't want a buffet."

"I agree," Lindsay said, glancing at the drawing of the proposed catering arrangements. "Buffets don't seem particularly elegant to me. Hmm...perhaps cookies? We can make them like small impressionist paintings. It'll be so cute."

"Cookies?" Justin mumbled. "I dunno..."

"I have a good idea," Mel said, seeing the look on Justin's face and feeling quite the same about impressionist cookies. "Maybe we all know someone who is very qualified at throwing parties..."

"Who?" Lindsay wondered aloud.

"The person who put together one of the most beautiful weddings between two women who love each other very much," Mel replied with a smile. "And if it wasn't for this someone, we might not be married right now."

"What a wonderful idea!"

Justin stared at the two women and wondered why they would want Brian to throw the party? He recalled distinctly that both women explained how much they both thought it was a bad idea for Brian to show up at the party at all. Justin was about to open his mouth and ask them when Lindsay ran to the phone.

"I'll call Emmett," she said, picking up the phone and dialing.

"Oh," Justin sighed, glad it wasn't Brian, but also a little upset. He wondered why everyone always seem to forget the good things Brian did for them....including himself. He shook his head, regretting his past decision to leave although he wasn't able to do anything about it. "I need some fresh air."

Though Justin's body didn't require air, he wanted to feel the breeze cooling his lungs. He stood outside and concentrated, knowing full well that the baby would try and teleport him to Brian. When it appeared that wasn't going to happen, he sensed something he hadn't before. It was powerful and it was heading his way.

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"This way or this way?" Willow asked, pointing in opposite directions. "I mean, I knew Penn was a big street, but I didn't know it was this big."

"I wish we had a better addy," Buffy replied, staring down each side of the street, but still not knowing which direction to take. "I mean it's not like the street is long or anything and we've been walking for hours. Have I seen this place before?" Buffy turned around, then changed directions to turn around again. "Huh...are we going in circles?"

"Well, unless there's two bars named Woody's...wait...we're on Liberty Avenue again," Willow sighed. "Good grief!"

"How about this..." Buffy began, when she saw the sign to Penn street not too far away. "You go that way and I'll go this way. I'll meet you back at the hotel in an hour."

"Want to set our watches?"

"I don't have a watch."

"Cells?"

"We don't have cells."

"We so need to get into this millennium," Willow replied, shaking her head. "Meet you in an hour."

Buffy agreed and walked in the opposite direction from the witch, thinking to herself how easy this was compared to the hell she had to deal with in Sunnydale...literally. Pittsburgh had nothing next to the drama on the Hellmouth.

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Spike walked up to the hotel cursing himself for not asking more about which room Buffy and Willow were staying. Knowing her smell, he used his vampire senses and made his way to her room. Not that he was in a rush to find her since he had no new information to tell her. His old contact was dead...in fact most of his clansmen were nowhere to be found.

Sighing, Spike knocked on the door and rolled his eyes when no one answered. Using his usual subtlety, he chose to kick the door open with his steel toed combat boot instead of picking the lock or even trying the doorknob. Looking around the room he saw what he had already smelled. Neither Buffy nor Willow were there. He shouldn't have been surprised: Buffy always did do things her own way. However, this wasn't a normal situation and the proof was standing at the door to Buffy's hotel room.

"You're new," Cash said, Matt by his side. "I haven't seen you, which means the Prince hasn't seen you...any explanation for that?"

"Hadn't had me hair done yet, mate," Spike replied smoothly. "Wouldn't want to meet the Prince without a little wash up first. Isn't proper, don't you think?"

"He looks like a Brujah," Matt stated, staring at Spike then sniffing the bleached blond vampire. A little confused, he stepped closer, only to move back when Spike quickly removed his large black leather jacket. "But he's not."

"Very good," Cash told the young Tremere.

"Lessons for the infant?" Spike chuckled.

"Yes," Matt hissed, though he had an eerie grin on his face. "With manners like yours, you'll be getting some soon. Only your lessons won't be as pleasant."

"Just know that I'm not intimidated by some bloody Prince," Spike snorted. "I've seen quite a few in me time and all of ‘em weren't much to ‘member."

"There are many reasons you'll remember my Sire," Matt chuckled, his eye steely and confident. "The least of which being the royal blood running through his veins."

Spike gripped onto his prized jacket and knew he was in trouble. Not only was the Prince a Tremere, but he was a Royal Blood. Spike knew that unlike other clans, Tremere prized their strongest, especially those with the closest link to Caine. Whoever this Prince was, he wasn't one to be trifled with. If he had forgotten, Spike now remembered why he stayed away from the East Coast: the Clans here were worse than organized crime.

"‘Spose it's time to meet the Prince?" Spike said, putting down his jacket. He hoped Buffy would get the clue since Spike treasured the jacket more than anything else that he owned. Well...it was the only thing he really owned and it wasn't really his since he stole it off the Slayer he killed sometime in the ‘70's. Either way, he hoped Buffy would get it...or at least Willow would. "Unless I have a choice?"

"No choice," Cash replied.

"Didn't think so."

"Could be worse," Matt said with a smile. "At least you look more like a Brujah than your own clan...Sire don't like you pricks much."

"Most Tremere don't," Spike agreed, wondering why it had to be like this.

Spike, strangely, liked Tremere more than he liked his own clan. He preferred the Brujah because they were as chaotic as his state of mind, but the Tremere were always better conversationalists. He could never run from what he was, though. It was in the blood. And though he never had a problem with Tremere, they always seem to have a problem with him. He, however, didn't blame them. He had to agree that most of his ‘brothers' weren't worth much. Given the choice, he would have chosen another clan, but Spike hadn't had a choice. He was a Ventrue...and more specifically, he was a Ventrue in deep shit.

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Justin glanced around the opening, glad of their last minute party planner. Though Justin would never give Emmett total credit for putting together Mel and Lindsay's wedding at the last minute, he had to give his friend and confidant credit for the gallery opening. They called him in the morning and later in the afternoon, everything was up and running. The exhibit rooms looked a bit frantic, but it seemed to fit with the Moulin Rouge theme. It was all very theatrical, which was something Toreadors lived for.

"How do you like it?" Emmett asked, carrying a tray of hors d'oeuvres. "Do you know I've already gotten a bunch of people's cards? Everyone's asking me to plan their little events!"

"It's spectacular," Justin replied, wanting to rub a plump belly, but not able to with Regilio hard at work obfuscating his stomach.

"It's fucking fabulous," Debbie added next to Vic. "I've never seen a spectacle like this since...well, since last Tuesday at Woody's."

"Subtle, Ma," Michael snickered, turning his attention to Justin. "But I like it, I guess. I don't know about the art, though...seems a little overdone."

"Leave it up to you to call Picasso and Monet overdone," Justin mocked, rolling his eyes. "Too bad we couldn't get any original Marvel comic book pictures...they just might be up to snuff."

"They had some good stuff," Michael retorted, knowing full well Justin meant to insult him. "Some of the original printings cost a pretty penny."

"Well I couldn't afford any of that shit," Deb laughed, giddy as always. "Picasso or the latest Superman."

"You're not the only one," Mel said, glancing over Deb's shoulder to see someone she would have rather not. "Oh shit, I thought he wasn't coming."

Justin looked in the direction Mel was glaring and saw Brian. Something inside of him ached but another, stronger, part of him tried to push him in the direction of his mate. He wanted to go to him and possibly would have if Michael hadn't rushed to the Prince, all smiles. Instead he grabbed onto a fellow Toreador and told Regilio to stay nearby. He hadn't much choice, the baby wanted its father and was using magic to try and push Justin to Brian.

It was all quite innocent...when explained. Justin wasn't grabbing onto to the handsome Toreador for any reason but for the baby's push towards its father. Only, Brian was never one to ask for explanations. He preferred to let actions do all the talking, which is what he wished Michael would do. Brian rolled his eyes when his eldest childe ran up to him and began to talk. He tried to tune his best friend out when Mel and Lindsay walked to him, complaining before they even got there.

"You said you wouldn't be here," Lindsay said, her voice low but intense. "This is Justin's gallery opening and honestly, Brian, it's not like you give a shit about art."

"You fucking prick," Mel added, louder and to the point. "You've got some nerve to show up here."

"He's the Prince of this city," Michael snapped in Brian's defense. "He can be anywhere he wants."

"You promised not to be here," Lindsay replied directly to Brian. "This is Justin's day!"

"Considering you've been nothing but an asshole to the kid since he smartened up and left you," Mel continued, "I'm really not that surprised you're here. God forbid he live his life without the almighty Brian Kinney."

"Like I was telling Brian before you rudely interrupted," Michael said, turning to the two women. "He's better off without the little blonde nit wit. All we need is for him to drop off the face of the planet and everything will be better!"

If Michael had the ability to go back in time and say something different knowing what Brian's reaction would be, he would have. However that wouldn't be the case. Michael would have to live with his own harsh words...well, after he woke up after being struck by Brian. That wouldn't be for quite some time. When Brian hit Michael, it sent the younger Tremere across the room and through a glass window.

Justin was just happy that Michael missed all the expensive paintings. That was the only thing he was happy about. He had heard Michael. Justin was hoping Brian would say something, but it didn't surprise him when the Tremere didn't. The Toreador Primogen wasn't stupid. He felt anger radiating from Brian and something that felt like jealousy. It seemed to be a light in his darkness, so Justin took a small chance. He smiled at Brian. What Justin received in return was a glare that would freeze boiling water.

"Fine," Justin mumbled to himself. If Brian was upset, then so was he. In fact, he had a better reason to be upset...not only did Brian crash his party, he beat up a guest. So what that guest was Michael?

Justin's intent was to walk up to Brian and inform his mate that beating up others in a civilized social gathering was unacceptable. In fact, he worded it in his head exactly that way. Justin took a deep, unneeded breath and turned to Brian only to see that his former lover was gone. Frustrated, Justin slammed his fist on a table then walked out of the gallery with Regillio and a few Toreador guards following. All he could think of was what other catastrophe would find him next.

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Buffy strolled down the hotel corridor towards her room eating an ice cream. When she saw the broken door, she peeked her head inside the room and saw that nothing appeared in disarray. The only thing of note was Spike's leather jacket sitting on one of the beds. There was one thing she knew about Spike and his jacket...he got it from killing a Slayer and it was his most prized possession. If it was there and he wasn't, there was probably something wrong.

"Maybe Spike wasn't kidding about this city," Buffy said to herself between licks of her ice cream.

After thinking about it for a moment, Buffy came to the conclusion that she needed more information. First she called Giles who had nothing to say except that doom was impending. No new news there.

Who else would know besides Spike? Buffy thought about it and picked up the phone a little excited. Angel. Buffy's first real boyfriend. Her first lover. Her first betrayal. Her first vampire. Angel was a lot of firsts. In fact, he was the first vampire with a cursed soul, but that's something he preferred not to discuss.

"Angel Investigations."

"Hey, is Angel there?" Buffy asked.

"No."

"Is there a way I can get a hold of him?"

"No."

"Who's this?" Buffy asked.

"Conner," the young man replied. "Angel's...son."

"Heard a little bit about you," Buffy said weary. "Do you know when...your dad will be back? I need his help ASAP."

"Not in the near future...if at all."

"Is he in trouble?" Buffy questioned frantically.

"Isn't he always?" Conner replied, his voice never wavering. "What did you need him for?"

"Another apocalypse," Buffy answered. "I was hoping he would tell me about the vampires on the East Coast. Somehow they're supposed to be different or organized or something. I figure it has something to do with some Prince or other-" Buffy paused when she heard a click. "Hello? Hello?"

She waved the phone around and then pressed the talk button.

"Little jerk hung up on me," she snickered. She made her way to the window and looked out. "I hope Willow's having more luck than me."

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Justin walked up to the Toreador Headquarters and immediately felt a powerful presence. He wondered what it was but didn't think that much of it until a Gargoyle came from atop his building to stop him.

"My Lord," the Gargoyle said respectfully. "There is a young woman inside of your keep."

"Why did you fucking let her in?"

"All Gargoyles were instructed to keep lookout for the Slayer and the powerful one," the Gargoyle explained. "Prince Kinney wants both in his presence as soon as they can be contained."

"So?"

"My Sire, Bartox, gave me specific instructions," the Gargoyle said almost embarrassed. "If either the Slayer or the presence make their way to you, I am to inform you so that you can apprehend them and take them to the Prince."

"Brian?" Justin wondered aloud hopeful. When he saw the look on the Gargoyles face he made another guess. "Isis."

"I am just a guardian, My Lord."

"I suppose you'd better guard me then," Justin snipped, not really sure how to take it all.

Justin went inside and saw a redhead who dressed like every other Wiccan he had ever met. She didn't look intimidating, but for her aura. She was the powerful presence. There was no mistaking that. There was also no mistaking that she was riffling through his financial documents.

"Can I help you?" Justin asked. He would have had Regilio hide or the Gargoyle appear as a statue, but there was something about this woman that told him she had seen so much more than that.

"Oh...sorry," Willow replied. "I just...I mean I was just..."

"Snooping?"

"Sort of..."

Justin smiled. For a powerful woman she seemed too nerdy, too sweet to be of any harm. If it wasn't for rumble is his flat appearing belly, he might have forgotten who he was in front of.

"What's your name?" Justin asked with a smile. If she appeared innocent, the young Toreador looked angelic. "Red?"

"This guy I know calls me that," the Wiccan answered. "My name's Willow though." Willow grinned and approached the young fair haired man. "What's yours?"

"Justin," the Toreador replied. "Justin Taylor."

"You're him," Willow gasped, stepping back. "You're a vampire."

"That I am," Justin agreed, waving his hand to order Toreadors to surround her. In a flash of an eye, there were several Gargoyles entering the room, blocking off the redhead's exits. "And you are the one with power. So...we can do this the easy way...or we can do this the hard..."

"I vote for hard," Willow replied. She grasped her fists, fixating on her power which turned her eyes and hair black. She was lifted off the ground by a force of concentrated air which blew her hair in all different directions.

The sight was intimidating, but Justin had seen worse. Not even flinching, the Toreador Primogen ordered a Gargoyle to approach the Wiccan. Justin wasn't concerned until the Gargoyle exploded into many large pieces with the mere wave of the woman's hand.

"Is this the only army you have?" Willow asked, her voice low and rough. "I'd expect something more for someone who calls himself a Prince."

All Justin could think of was that this powerful, crazy looking redhead thought he was Brian. He wondered how he and Brian kept getting into trouble without even trying. It was a skill he wish he could get rid of. Though if he had a choice of anything to get rid of at that moment it would be the pissed off witch with lighting spewing from her fingertips. She looked ready to kill and it appeared as if Justin was her target.

"Shit."

Chapter 4: First Meeting

The moment Brian teleported back to the Loft he smelled Ventrue in the building. He snarled, made his way downstairs and slammed the loft door open to the conference room. With a growl, he panned his eyes around the room and saw the small framed bleached blond man standing next to Cash. At Babylon or Woody's Brian might have given the man some attention, but sadly for the Ventrue, they weren't.

"My Lord, your youngest is..." Cash began, only to pause and look at his prisoner, "...doing that other thing."

"Where is she?" Brian asked, glancing around the room dramatically. "I sent you for the Slayer and I'm not seeing her."

"Her room was empty," Cash replied. "But we found this Ventrue in the room waiting for her. The Brujah say that he's her lackey."

"Those buggers can't get a bloody thing right," Spike said in his defense. Only when he thought about the truth of the situation, he opened his mouth and found that he was in bigger trouble than he could ever imagine. "I've only helped her a few times to save the world...I mean, well...bloody hell! It's not me fault, she did this thing where I...and I kind of fell for...no...that's not what I meant, I meant-"

"Stop," Brian interrupted quietly. He chuckled when bleached blond silenced quickly, knowing full well the man just wanted to keep his mouth shut. "Do you have a name?"

"Spike," he replied with a smile. It appeared that the Prince had not heard of him before he tried another of his names. "They also call me William the Bloody." When it was clear that neither of his monikers had any affect, he mentioned his claim to fame. "I've killed two slayers, you know! I'm known all throughout Europe."

"We're not in Europe," Cash snickered.

"Alright," Spike sighed, resigned to the fact that he was in a sticky situation. He turned to the Prince and bowed respectfully. He rid himself of his cockney accent and spoke as he did before he was Embraced over 100 years ago. "I apologize for entering your city without permission, My Lord. I did so because I thought the Slayer would listen to me and leave your city. I understand that I broke Tradition and it is your right to pass judgment on me as you please."

"Why would you want her to leave my city?" Brian asked, not believing the kindness coming from the man in front of him. "If she's as powerful as everyone's saying she is, she could kill me and you could take over the city."

"Why the bloody hell would I want to do that?" Spike wondered aloud, slipping back into his learned accent. "No offence but your position ain't all that it's cracked up to be...and anyways, I much prefer the West Coast. Living on the Hellmouth's really spoiled me. Nobody really gets surprised when someone's killed ‘round there. Walking Happy Meals...the lot of ‘em."

"I'm not in the mood for this," Brian mumbled, turning around and peering outside.

Brian felt a tingle in his chest and new it was his unborn calling to him. Here he was a Prince of an entire city and he didn't have control over the two things he needed most...not that he'd ever admit that to anyone, let alone himself. Not only did Justin need to learn things for himself, he was carrying their child. Brian rolled his eyes thinking that Justin wasn't even aware of the power he had.

"Princess," Brian whispered as he stared into the night.

"You should go see him," Isis said, startling Brian as she walked into the room. She went into the adjoining library and removed a spellbook. "Stop by the gallery opening. I think he'd like that."

"Where have you been?" Brian asked, moving closer to his mentor.

"Getting some ingredients for a complicated spell," Isis answered, turning around and seeing the look on Brian's face. "Bloody hell! What did you do, childe?"

"I did what you told me," Brian said with a forced smile. "I went to the party."

"What did you do?"

"I sort of punched Michael," Brian replied, "and started a fight."

"And what did Princess do?"

"Left pissed."

Isis shook her head and shoved the book in her bag. She glanced around the room and saw an old, ancient book that seemed out of place. She wondered who would be playing with such a powerful spellbook, then pushed it to the back of her mind. She had other things to worry about, namely Brian.

"Who'd you punch?" Isis asked.

"Michael."

"I would normally laugh at that," Isis responded, forcing herself not to smile. "Only you shouldn't be demeaning your childer in public. It's not good for the Clan. It makes us seem as lowly as the Ventrue or as ignorant as the Brujah."

"I agree with you about the Ventrue," Spike said shaking his head. "Sire's treat their childer like shite, but Brujah are more protective even if they are stupider."

"My girl's a Brujah," Cash snarled, shoving Spike away from him. "And if she were here, she'd kick your bleached ass all around this room."

"A Gangrel and a Brujah?" Spike laughed. "That might have been the first sign that the apocalypse was beginning."

"You making fun of me?" Cash growled.

"Why not?" Spike replied with a smile. "Gangrels make it so easy. Your clan is as pointless as those soddin' Toreadors."

"I'd watch your mouth if I were you," Cash warned. "Like you said, Ventrue aren't taking well around these parts."

"Soddin' wankers, the lot of ya," Spike snapped. "You don't even know who the bloody hell I am."

"William the Bloody," Isis said, finally turning her attention to the prisoner. "So called because of his bloody awful poetry."

"I've killed two Slayers!" Spike protested.

"I'm fully aware of who you are," Isis replied, turning to Brian. "I also know that you've been shagging the Slayer who's in town."

"Everyone's got to have a hobby," Spike pouted. "I like doing Slayers...and if I can't kill ‘em, I suppose a shag never hurt anyone."

"You've got to be fucking kidding me," Brian laughed, shaking his head in disbelief. "When is my day going to get any better?"

"Maybe after I complete my spell," Isis told the Prince. "I'm currently off to the Toreador Headquarters where I'll cast a spell to stop your unborn from teleporting to you...as per his mother's request."

"Fuck," Brian mumbled under his breath.

"I'll be off then," Isis said, turning and walking out the door to let her Prince think things over. "If you need me, you know how to get in touch."

"Wonderful," Brian replied sarcastically.

Anger filled Brian, but no one would know it by looking at him. By all appearances he was calm. Instead of screaming or yelling, he calmly strolled to Spike and grinned so coolly that it made the hair on the bleached blond's arms to stand on end.

"A Ventrue who's trying to pass himself off as a Brujah," Brian sneered. "A slayer of Slayers who's currently fucking Slayer." Brian paused and slipped his hand down Spike's shirt where he felt the Ventrue's ripped abs. "And a hot guy fucking a woman...you're full of contradictions aren't you?"

"You wouldn't believe what I'm full of," Spike replied, licking his lips.

"Kill him," Brian ordered Cash.

"We're here to stop an apocalypse," Spike said as Cash put a gun to his head.

"I don't see anyone's doom but your own," Brian told the man. "Cash..."

"That's why we're here," Spike pleaded. "Please Prince Taylor, you've got to listen to me!"

"What?" Brian asked shocked.

"The Watcher's Council sent Buffy here to stop an apocalypse," Spike clarified.

"No, fucking twit," Brian snapped. "What the fuck did you just call me?"

"Prince Taylor..."

"Fuck, fuck, fuck!" Brian screeched, turning around and sensing Justin. "Oh shit!"

"My Lord there is trouble!" Bartox yelled, storming into the room. "Master Taylor has company!"

"Son of a bitch!"

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"That son of a bitch!" Deb complained, tending to Michael's black eye. "He's a fucking monster, hitting my baby!"

"He's an asshole!" Mel added. "Michael, you don't deserve to be treated like that."

"I can't believe he would do this," Lindsay agreed. "I know he's an asshole, but this just went too far. Not only did he hit Michael, Michael hit a poor guy who didn't even know what was going on."

"Considering he's a Prince, it's really unacceptable," Ted said, shaking his head. "What a bastard. He hit his own childe."

"Absolutely," Em chimed in. "I mean really...people were giving me their cards asking me if I could set up their parties. I could have been fabulous."

"You were fabulous, Em," Ted told his best friend. "But you know Brian. He always has to be the center of attention."

"You guys just don't understand," Michael said softly, knowing full well what he'd hear in response.

"Don't you dare!" Deb told her son. "Don't you dare defend him!"

"I can't even defend him this time," Lindsay concurred. "It's outrageous!"

"That's why we need to leave," Mel said, looking at her partner. It was clear this wasn't the first time they had had this conversation. "Gus shouldn't have to live around this type of violence. If he's going to be a vampire later in his life, he should live as normal a life as possible while he's young."

"He'll never let you go with Gus," Michael snapped. "You don't understand what it's like to belong to him."

"Gus doesn't belong to him," Lindsay explained as if she were practicing for her conversation with Brian. "The agreement was that Gus would belong to me and Mel. I carried him in my belly for nine months and gave birth to him. Brian...didn't do anything but show up after the fact."

"Brian will want what's best for Gus," Ted deduced. "So if you two really want to take Gus away, you'll have to approach Brian that way. Any other way and Brian will stop you and who knows what he'll do."

"Too bad you two didn't think about this two weeks ago," Deb chimed in, "you could have gone to Sunshine for help. I'm sure he would have seen your side, Linds."

"Only now Justin sees Brian for what he is," Mel snickered, "an asshole."

"It's not Brian's fault," Michael disagreed, separating himself from the group. "If it weren't for Justin, none of this would have happened. Brian wouldn't be a vampire and he wouldn't have taken Gus away from you. It's all Justin's fault."

"Sunshine didn't know," Deb defended. "Honey, you know that."

"At least we know that after that brat has the baby Brian will be done with him," Michael assured himself. "He loves Gus. He'll love the new baby and Justin will find out that Brian will always be Brian. He'll never settle down with anyone."

"I wonder," Deb mused, thinking about the infamous Brian Kinney. "I've always seen Brian without the same rose colored glassed you seem to wear, son. I agree that he probably won't just give up Gus, but Brian always seems to do what's right in the end...even when it came to Justin. Brian was just stupid for letting the one person he loves go."

"Bullshit," Michael snapped. "If it wasn't for the baby, Justin would be gone already. Brian wouldn't care if Justin was dead or alive. Trust me...I know."

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"Brian," Justin shrieked as he stared up at a floating and very pissed off witch. "Brian!"

"None of your soldiers are going to help you," Willow told the Toreador. Her once red hair was now black as were her eyes. Her warm features had paled as the power surged through her. An old chest appeared from thin air and when it opened, daggers rose from inside. "But call them if you want."

When daggers flew towards Justin, one of his Toreador bodyguards jumped in front of him. Though the bodyguard took five daggers in the back, one of the daggers still found its way to Justin, missing the Toreador's belly by an inch or so and hitting his heart.

Justin screamed and grabbed for his bodyguard only to find the man on the floor. He started backing up wondering what else could possibly come next. He could only curse when he saw the witch chant, bringing forth a dozen more chests. Justin wasn't worried until the chests opened up and instead of daggers there were stakes.

"Oh fuck!" Justin screamed closing his eyes and covering his head. "Brian!"

"What?"

Justin opened his eyes and though he was dazed, he saw that he was back in his old home at the Loft. He quickly scanned the room and saw his mate standing by the window.

"Brian," Justin squealed, rushing to his mate.

"What the fuck?" Brian screeched when he saw the dagger protruding from the Toreador's chest. He quickly removed the weapon from his lover then licked the wound. He cursed when the wound didn't shut. He growled, trying to push back the anger and demanded, "Feed."

Without a word Justin sunk his teeth into Brian's neck. It was like he hadn't tasted his lover in years. He wondered if addicts felt the same sort of withdrawals as he had or the same type of erotic satisfaction after taking a bite of forbidden fruit. But when had Brian become forbidden? The more Justin thought about it, the more he wasn't sure. It really didn't make sense anymore, not when his love, his safety was so nearby.

"I'm so sorry Brian."

"Who did this to you?"

"I mean about us...or me and you," Justin clarified, looking up into Brian's eyes. "I shouldn't have gone. I should have stayed here with you. What you give me is ten times...no a million times more than I could ever get anywhere else with anyone else in the world...in a million lifetimes."

"We'll talk about this later," Brian replied, sitting Justin down. "Right now you have to tell me who did this to you."

"A redhead...no her hair turned black," Justin described, wishing he had told Brian not to change subjects. As much as he would have preferred to discuss their non relationship, there was still the matter of the woman trying to kill him. "Her eyes turned black too. I think she said her name was Willow."

"Bartox, fetch her for me," Brian demanded.

"I don't know what's going on, Bri," Justin said very much confused. "I think she thought I was the Prince or something."

"It's going to be fine."

"I know," Justin sighed. With Regillio no longer there, his belly was large and he rubbed it feeling his baby's heartbeat. "I wasn't before and I didn't even know it, but I am now. I'm protected now that I'm with you."

Justin smiled and didn't allow Brian to reply. He simply grabbed onto Brian allowing his mate to feel and hear their unborn baby's heartbeat. He closed his eyes and felt the sensation when the sensation hit him. Ventrue. Justin turned his head and looked at Spike.

"Who the fuck is he?" Justin asked, grabbing onto Brian tightly.

"I'm still figuring that out," Brian replied. "So far I know his name's Spike and he's currently fucking the Slayer."

"Ew."

"Not currently, mate," Spike corrected. He couldn't help but stare at Justin's belly. There was more to this situation than meets the eye, he was sure of. A pregnant male Toreador and a Tremere as his lover. There was only one way to describe what type of situation Buffy and Willow had gotten him into. He was fucked. Pure and simple. "Think I've had me fill of twat as of late."

"It's the smartest thing you've said yet," Brian snickered. "Although you and your Slayer are still dead."

"What the fuck is he doing here?" Justin wondered aloud.

"I'm about to get fucked," Spike replied. "I'm hoping literally, but I haven't had much luck since I got to these parts."

"That's not going to change anytime soon," Justin snapped, sniffing in Spike's direction. "Especially since I can smell that girl Willow's scent on you."

"Is that so?" Brian asked with a grin.

"Bloody hell!"

"I want him dead, Bri," Justin demanded. "Him and that bitch Willow! I want them dead before they try and kill me and our baby again!"

Brian smirked.

"Done."

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As Toreador ran from the fiery witch, Willow levitated in the air with lightning surrounding her. Breathing heavily, she flung her arms directing arrows at any Kindred that weren't smart enough to leave. Only the Gargoyles stayed at their place, still as statues.

Buffy passed the statues and ran to her best friend. She didn't like the look on the witch's face, knowing the redhead to have started the end of the world all by herself.

"Willow!" Buffy screeched, holding out a hand to her friend. "Please, Will!"

Willow looked down and Buffy. She had to remember it was all within her. She closed her eyes and struggled with the power flowing through her veins, prompting her to cause damage. Any amount of damage, it didn't matter. Instead she thought of kittens and butterflies or anything else that made her smile like a math problem or a scientific equation.

"Puppies, roses," Willow whispered to herself, "grapes, rainbows, Heather Locklear naked..."

Willow finally came back to the ground saying calming words. She looked at Buffy, very much ashamed that she allowed the magic to posses her again. It was too much power, power she didn't have control of.

"I'm so sorry," Willow said, almost in tears. "I had to..."

"It's OK," Buffy assured her friend, "just as long as you were after the bad guy."

"I met up with Justin Taylor," Willow replied, a tear falling down her cheek. "He sorta seemed nice, but he was a vampire. He said so himself. I had to do it, he's a vampire and all."

"It's OK now," Buffy repeated. "Everything's OK now."

Willow glanced around and new that although her friend meant well, they were in fact not OK. She had destroyed a Gargoyle and it appeared that several of its siblings were there waiting patiently to their revenge.

"Buff," Willow said, alerting her friend to their foes. "Those statues..."

"Very cool...those would be sorta cool at my house. Kinda gothicy, but cool."

"Buffy, they're bad guys," Willow explained. Just to prove her correct, the Gargoyles moved wielding weapons or bearing their claws. "And I think I pissed them off."

"Oh."

Buffy scoped the situation and found that one Slayer, one drained witch versus four...no five Gargoyles presented a problem. The blonde sighed and prepared herself for battle.

"Is this anything like getting stoned?" Buffy wondered aloud, staring them down. "Cause I'm a ‘Just say no' kinda girl."

"That would be witty," a voice said from behind one of the Gargoyles, "if it weren't so stupid."

"Who said that?" Buffy asked.

"My name is Matt of the Kinney brood," the vampire said, glancing at both women. "You're fortunate that I found you. My Sire has been looking for you since you came into town."

"That's funny," Buffy snickered. "Vampires don't usually go looking for Slayers."

"I guess it's not funny since I'm not looking for you," Matt replied, turning his attention from Buffy to Willow. "Although the Prince does care to meet with the Slayer, his wish is to meet with the powerful one."

"Maybe another time," Buffy answered for her friend. "On our own terms. You'd think he'd want to wait after Will just kicked the Prince's ass."

"You did what to the Princess?" Matt asked, eyeing the Toreador Headquarters.

"Kicked his ass," Buffy repeated.

"Unlikely," Matt sneered, snapping his fingers and bringing the Gargoyles to attention. "But I'm afraid you misunderstood me. I'm not giving you a choice. You can walk to meet with the Prince and your whelp, Spike, or the Gargoyles can drag your beaten bodies to his Majesty."

Buffy looked to Willow and nodded her head.

"Well after some consideration, we think we'll walk."

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Lindsay and Mel packed their bags, quieting their son from time to time. They weren't sure how they'd get out of the Loft, but their plan was to do the only thing they could think of...lie.

"It's the only way," Mel whispered, seeing Lindsay struggle with the decision to remove Gus from his father. "This place is a death trap."

"I know," Lindsay quietly replied. "I just..."

"I know," Mel assured her, zipping up her suitcase. "I have family in Chicago and from what that guard said the Tremere control the city. We get to be protected and not have Brian's drama surrounding us at all times."

"I know," Lindsay sighed. "But my new job..."

"Justin will put in a good word with the Toreador in Chicago," Mel guaranteed her partner. "We'll both have jobs. Honestly, I don't think I'd want to pass up the position at the new firm either way."

"I can't believe we're doing this," Lindsay replied, slinging her suitcase over her shoulder.

Mel kissed her partner and smiled. She opened the front door to their loft and stopped in their tracks.

"Going somewhere?" Ulugh asked, looking very unpleased with the women. "If you are I hope you've informed my son."

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"Brian is everything," Michael told Ted and Emmett. He was glad that his mother was gone, but he wished his friends saw what he did in his sire. "And there's something special about being so close to him. We have the same blood in us now."

"The only benefit I see is financial," Ted said, his face planted in an accounting books. "The amount he's letting me borrow for the site is unreal."

"Why wouldn't it be?" Em questioned. "He's big fan of fucking."

"He's just a big fan of money," Ted added.

"But he's still an asshole," Em said, to which Ted could only agree. "Sadly, he's as proud of that as he is his fucking."

"He'll never change," Ted told the men. "Although I have to admit Justin's changed him more than I thought anyone ever would."

"Justin's a spot in reality," Michael barked.

"Justin's spot just happens to be in his belly," Em replied with a raised eyebrow. "And as much as I love you, Mikey, there's no way that you can compete with Justin, let alone that bump in his belly."

"Like hell," Michael said with a low growl that got both of his friend's attention. "Justin's history and Brian will never take him back."

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Brian rubbed against Justin's plump stomach as slipped in and out of his mate. It was like he had been waiting forever to be inside of Justin and now that he was, he was in ecstasy. He had to slow himself down on more than one occasion and it didn't help that Justin kept pushing his butt back, wanting more. Brian reveled in rubbing Justin and occasionally licking his lover's neck. His favorite was to take a taste from Justin's neck, but he had to be careful. Justin needed the energy...there was more sex to be had.

They had tried many different positions, but found that the only way that worked was on their side. Both wanted to try a different position the second time around, but without Regillio to Obfuscate Justin's belly, they'd had to resign to the same position twice. Brian never thought he'd ever do that, but there was always a first time for everything...well almost everything.

"Oh Brian!"

"Is this common?" Spike asked, flipping down a pair of jacks.

"This is nothing," Cash replied, putting down three queens and collecting the few dollars they had bet. "You should have seen them before Justin was pregnant. Talk about fucking constantly. I got a hard on more than once and I'm not even gay."

"Hot blokes ‘ve been known to do that."

"You're queer?"

"Depends on the bloke," Spike replied with a grin. "But don't fret mate, you're not me style."

"Let's hope not," Cash chuckled, glancing up when he saw Matt enter with Buffy and Willow. He looked towards the windows and saw Gargoyles perched outside ready to attack at any minute. However he wasn't worried. He hadn't met a person who could fight the likes of Bartox and the Sire of the Gargoyles was poised ready for anything that tried to harm his Lord and Master.

"It's ‘bout time you showed up," Spike said, tossing his cards on the table. "I was wondering when you'd come to save the day."

"You OK?" Buffy asked.

"Spot on," Spike replied. "Hey Red. Heard you caused a ruckus."

"Just a little one."

"So where's this Prince?" Buffy asked.

Justin groaned as Brian picked up his pace. He had wanted it, but every time he pushed back Brian tried to slow him down. Justin didn't know how much he missed his lover until he was filled with Brian. 100% pure beef. Justin thought he almost felt his heart beat. Shoving his butt back, Brian hit the spot and Justin wailed, cumming and grunting with pleasure. He must have screamed loud, but it didn't matter. He was home and everyone in the Loft should take notice.

"He sounds busy," Buffy surmised.

"You don't know the half of it," Spike laughed.

"Maybe we should reschedule," Willow suggested. "We're open next Thursday."

"That's not necessary," Brian said, strolling into the main room. "I think it's time for us to get acquainted."

"I think I'd like to get acquainted," Spike thought.

"I think you're like way hot," Buffy thought.

"I think," Willow mused in her head, staring at Brian. "Who the hell is this guy?"

Chapter 5: I Am Home

Home is where the heart is, which is another way of saying that home is wherever you may be. Though this saying is sometimes true, it is most often misleading. For Kindred, home is where your Clan is. It is why the clanless, or Caitiff, are the most reviled of Kindred. Clans fight fiercely to stay a close knit unit. It not only keeps the Clan strong, it stays other clans' attempts to bring it down. But then again, it's not all about the Clan or the heart. For Kindred, home is where your blood flows for, in the end, that is what connects us together. Dead or not.

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Brian stared at the group before him. He glanced over to the bleached blond Kindred who called himself Spike. Though Spike was a Ventrue and could be trouble, the man didn't worry Brian. Even the small blonde Slayer didn't daunt the Prince. She was clearly feisty and strong, but in the end she was just another human. The only one who interested Brian was the redhead who reeked power. There was more to her and Brian would stop at nothing to find out what it was.

Wearing only a pair of loose fitting pants, Brian strolled into the living room and draped himself across his sofa. There was much to be explained and he wondered if he had the patience to sit through it all. He could feel anger coming from his bedroom. He knew his young lover wanted their opponents dead. Not that he blamed Justin, but there was still business to attend to. Brian still needed to find out about the Slayer and, more importantly, about her redheaded side kick.

"So what's the hub-bub, Justin?" Buffy asked, making her way to Brian and sitting in a chair directly across from him. "I know why I wanted to see you, but why do you want to see me? Needing to die quickly?"

"Umm...Buff..." Willow said, making her way to the group.

"Hold on, Will," Buffy interrupted, slouching into her seat confidently. "I'm talking to this Royal Prince guy with the lack of clothing Taylor who's going to explain to me why I shouldn't just stake him in the heart right now."

"Ummm, I think we may have made a little miscalculation," Willow continued, feeling the burn of the cocky look in Brian's eyes. "So let's start with who you are....the guy who's half naked and not Justin Taylor."

"Wha?" Buffy wondered aloud.

"Not Justin Taylor," Brian repeated chuckling. "Name's Kinney. Brian Kinney. Prince Kinney, if you're trying to kill me."

"What-ever, Prince Kinney," Buffy said, kicking her feet up on a glass table. She was a little surprised by the revelation, but it didn't matter in the least. Justin Taylor, Brian Kinney or whomever he said he was, one thing was a fact...the man before her was a vampire and she was the vampire Slayer. "Either way, we can do this the easy way or the hard way."

"I vote for hard," Justin replied, entering the room wearing nothing but a smile.

"Who the hell are you?"

"Hey, Justin," Willow said, waving her hand innocently. When she noticed the large belly on the man, she stared, shaking her head in disbelief. "Are you..."

"This is what happens when you assume," Spike told the group, still sitting opposite Cash. He kicked his feet up on the table and snorted with an evil grin. "You make an ass out of you and me...well, mostly you Buffy, but who's keeping track?" He pretended to think and chuckled, "Oh yeah, that would be me."

"I'm pregnant, if you hadn't noticed," Justin clarified. "And you two twats think my baby's going to start some sort of apocalypse or something. Let me just tell you how wrong you are."

"You're like..." Buffy said, not knowing how to put it politely. "...a vampire!"

"Well, Angel did have a kid too," Willow mentioned. "And he's a vampire. Well, Darla had Angel's kid, but Darla was a vampire before she killed herself or whatever."

"He's a guy!" Buffy exclaimed, looking Justin up and down then looking away. "As can be noted by his other parts, which are totally out there and in the needing to be put away as in not in view."

"You're so observant," Justin snickered. "You give the rest of us blonds a bad name."

"I told ‘em, Buffy," Spike explained to his friends. "I told them what Giles told us, because like me, these blokes don't want to see the end of the world either. They like it just the way it is. Full of edibles, quite like yourself."

"You wish you could have eaten us," Willow snapped.

"Ummm," Buffy said, which made Spike laugh. "On to other more non sexual things not having to do with eating or...yeah...Hey, pregnant guy, can you cover your more saluting parts?"

"'Fraid it might squirt somethin' at ya?" Spike chuckled. "Having flashbacks of us maybe? Well, just know that these blokes don't care what's wet between your legs, though I will admit I had a jolly time when I was there."

"Ew," Justin snapped, turning to his lover. "I just had a visual of a vagina...Brian, you promised you'd kill them for me! They're still here!"

"He's just waiting for me, lad," Isis told the angry Toreador as she entered the room. "Seems as if there's another apocalypse coming and, from what I've been told, it affects you and the Prince."

"They're full of shit," Justin protested. "They think my baby's going to end the world or some crap like that."

"Please tell me you're here to say that it's all bullshit," Brian said to Isis. He took Justin by the waist and held his lover close. "My baby isn't going to end the fucking world. He's going to cry a shitload, drive me crazy and make Justin even more insane than he already is, but he's not going to end the fucking world."

"Hey!" Buffy screeched, getting everyone's attention. Even though she didn't want everyone looking at her, she had to address something that absolutely boggled her mind. "What's with the language?"

"That's exactly what I was going to say," Willow gasped. "I mean you guys and all the cursing."

Brian and Justin looked at each other and couldn't help but laugh. Cursing? When was saying bad words anything extraordinary? The Prince looked around the room and saw Isis, Cash and Spike laughing with him. Apparently, to Spike, cursing wasn't an issue and wondered in what world these two women lived.

"Cursing," Spike said as if remembering a fond memory. "Bloody well forgot about all the fun stuff living with the likes of the goody-goodies. They always talk like they're being censored or something. Let me see if I can recall this...ah yes, shite, fuck, arse, motherfucker, cock, cunt...hmmm, the good ole days."

"Way with the potty mouth, Spike," Buffy replied.

"It's not so bad, Buffy," Willow told her friend. "Could be worse. We could have to listen to the whole Southpark soundtrack. I mean an entire song dedicated to somebody fucking their uncle?"

"Willow!"

"Did I just say that?"

"I would say this discussion was interesting, but it's not," Brian announced. "What I really want to know is what's going to cause the end of the world and why it's in Pittsburgh."

"It's your baby," Buffy stated matter of factly.

"Better to be positive than not," Isis replied before Justin could say anything. "I've got a grand idea, if you approve, Brian. How about I take the Slayer and her people to the library and we could do some research...real research as opposed to the miniscule knowledge given by the Watcher's Council?"

"Sounds good."

"Wait a minute," Buffy said. "We're supposed to kill the baby or the mother before sh-he...whatever...gives birth and the royal whatever and his army who tries to protect...it. Why should you help us? We're here to kill you!"

"Bloody hell, Buffy!" Spike screeched.

"Because like your friend told you," Brian explained. "For better or for worse, I like this world. I like sucking a juicy fat cock. I like fucking nice plump bubble butts. It really doesn't matter where: in the backroom of Babylon, in the bathroom at Woody's, in my old office, in the alley, on the floor, in the shower, alone, in front of all of you, I don't fucking care. Just as long as I'm fucking on this fucking planet, I'm a happier fucking Prince."

"That was descriptive," Willow replied.

"The only rule while you're here is that you're not allow to kill any of my people," Brian warned. "And for that, we won't kill you."

"I'm supposed to just take your word on that?"

"Or we can just go to war right now, I don't care," Brian replied. "I'd rather not...I'd prefer you go do some research while I get a blow job...unless you want to stand here while I get a blow job? Because I won't allow any fighting until I get a blow job."

"It's a general rule around these parts," Justin conceded.

"Study, watch you get a blow...yeah...or war?" Willow pondered. "I'm thinking knowledge is power."

"Fine," Buffy relented. "Deal."

"Then let's get going," Isis said, leading the group out of the room.

Brian stood and approached his angry lover. He put his finger over his mouth suggesting to Justin not to speak. He was happy that this one time, the pregnant Toreador listened. Brian wrapped his arms around Justin and back them both into their bedroom.

"Don't worry," Brian whispered. "This is all business-well, most of it. Some of it is personal, but we'll deal with that later."

"But Brian..."

"I gave them some choices, now I'm giving some to you," Brian whispered into Justin's ear. "A. fucking. B. blowing or C. licking?"

"Hmm..." Justin pondered as if in deep thought. "D...all of the above?"

"Good answer."

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"I hate to mention this, Ulugh," Melanie began as Brian's father their departure with Gus, "but...I have known Brian a whole lot longer than you."

"Do not insult me, human."

"I don't mean to sound insulting," Mel sighed. "But the truth is that I have. Brian thinks about himself, but he doesn't think about others, even Gus. When was the last time you saw him around his son? The last time I can remember is when he forced us to move in this building. After that, the only people who bothered to show up were Michael, sometimes Justin and bunch of bodyguards."

"There is a reason for that."

"People are always trying to kill him," Michael stated.

"We're worried about Gus' life," Lindsay said, hoping that her words would affect Ulugh differently. "He's always in danger here. I mean when we're not being attacked from some outside Clan, we have to worry about someone on the inside turning on us...you must understand, Father Beg. It is difficult for Melanie and myself to allow Gus to stay in such harmful situation and not do anything about it."

"I understand your plight," Ulugh told the mother of his grandson. "However, you must understand that no matter where you go, Gus' bloodline will follow. Brian as well as myself will always be present, even if we're not there to protect him."

"That's what I hate the most," Melanie bemoaned. "I have no control over my life. I have no control over my own house, my living arrangement, my jobs. Did you know if Brian needs my legal assistance, he just demands me?"

"Worst of all Gus was supposed to be for Mel and me," Lindsay pleaded. "I love Brian, you know that, but I can't stand this. You have to help us, Father Beg."

"I see," Ulugh said with a knowing smile. "This isn't about Gus. This is about power or your lack thereof."

"Something like that," Melanie admitted.

"Of course," Ulugh chuckled. "Power and control has always been an issue...and it always will be."

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"I am Primogen of the Ventrue," Chris said to Julian and Craig, "but somehow it seems like you're making all the rules."

"He's catching on quickly," Julian snorted, staring out a window. He looked over Philadelphia and shook his head. There were still so many things to accomplish back home in Pittsburgh. Home? Julian laughed at the thought and returned his attention to his Primogen. "You have risen to power and yet you still lack it...sounds like everyone in Pittsburgh."

"There is a reason for that," Craig declared. Craig glared at his young childe and wished he had chosen more wisely. His favorite childe was Lisa, but he needed her in Philadelphia to ensure his weak position there wouldn't diminish. She was a strong force and he needed that in the town he possessed. He just wished he had been so wise when he held Pittsburgh.

Now that Craig wanted his old city back, he had to acquire it slowly. There would be no easy takeover. He had a plan, but that plan took a lot of time and patience. Most of all, his plan took a great deal of power. He wasn't dealing with something on such a small scale anymore. He had to think big to take out his enemy, especially if his enemy had the Master Justicar as a father. Luckily for Craig, he had a plan for Ulugh Beg. However that could not be discussed. Until its day, everyone would have to stay in the dark. It didn't seem like a problem for Julian, but it did for Chris.

"There is a reason it seems like you have to power," Craig informed his childe. "You have none. Is that clear?" When Chris did not answer, Craig repeated himself even more loudly, "Is that clear?!"

"Yes, Master."

"Good," Craig snarled. "I control all the Ventrue in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Never forget that, boy."

"Except for me," Julian replied with a sly grin. When Craig looked at him menacingly, he smirked and sat next to the Prince. "However, it does appear that we're on the same page."

"How can I know that?" Chris asked.

"Brian must die," the Prince and Justicar replied together, which made the men chuckle. All but Chris.

"I can deal with him!"

"He's overtaken your Sire," Julian said, shaking his head. "And thwarted me...what on Caine's Earth do you think you'll do with him? Besides getting fucked, that is?"

"There's only one thing I'm going to do with that faggot," Chris announced, leaving the room upset. "Kill him!"

Julian watched the young Ventrue leave angrily and smiled. He turned his attention to Chris' Sire and leaned back in his chair.

"Who would you choose, My Lord?" Julian asked. "Seeing the state of your childe?"

"To replace him," Craig mulled, "Maybe Avery. She's easily handled and won't be upset when Brian kills the boy."

"Yes," Julian agreed. "Brian will enjoy toying with Chris if given the chance."

"True...but don't worry," Craig told the Justicar. "Brian will get his...very soon."

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Brian looked down at Justin's bobbing head, his mouth open, ready to cum. There was so much energy coming from the young Toreador that Brian felt almost paralyzed. All that he could feel were the sensations of Justin's mouth and tongue.

"Ah fuck!" Brian screeched, cumming into Justin's mouth. The Prince's body jolted with a few spasms before he attempted to move.

"Feeling better?" Justin asked, licking his lips. When he saw the calm smile on the Tremere's face, he pressed his body next to Brian's, pinning his lover to the wall. "So when are you going to do what you promised?"

"Which is?"

"Kill that Slayer and that redhead!"

"Justin," Brian said, looking around the bedroom for his pants. "If there's an apocalypse coming, then I want to know about it. It's my job or some shit like that."

"The end of the world?" Justin snickered. "Yeah right."

"There is something going on," Brian continued, finding a pair of sweatpants and slipping them on. They rested on his hips loosely and exposed his flat stomach. "You have to feel it...seeing as it's my baby in...there." Brian motioned to Justin's belly and smiled. He put on his protective braces then found a cowboy hat which he tried to model in front of a mirror then sighed when he couldn't see himself.

"Willow?"

"Yeah."

"Sort of."

"Let's try then," Brian said, going to his lover and taking Justin's hand in his own. "All we need to do is open our minds and concentrate."

As Brian and Justin concentrated on the witch below, Matt entered the room and stood patiently. He didn't know what they were doing, but it didn't matter. His job was to obey his master. It was something he was exceptional at.

"Whoa..." Justin gasped, feeling a powerful sensation run through him. "I didn't know..."

"Me either," Brian replied, helping Justin to the bed.

"Sire," Matt said, getting both men's attention. "The Clan Toreador is here to see Master Justin."

"Oh shit."

"I wonder what took them so long," Brian snorted.

Brian waited for Justin to put on some clothes before telling Matt to allow the Toreador to enter. He told the clan to forgo formalities and just say what they came to say. He already knew what was on their minds.

"After the attack on our Headquarters we were frightened for Primogen Taylor," Masika said. When he saw his young leader emerge from his bedroom, the man sighed in relief. "We worried about you, Justin. We thought you might have been taken from us again!"

"I was almost afraid of that as well," Justin replied, approaching his clansmen and giving each a hug. "But the baby saved me. He teleported me out of there in time."

"Thank Caine," Anson sighed in relief.

"We want you to know that our Headquarters is now secured," Masika informed the pregnant man. "The Gargoyles are in place and more Kindred have been brought in for your protection."

Justin looked at his clansmen and couldn't hide his remorse. He fidgeted where he stood and it was clear to everyone what he was finding difficult to say.

"When I was accepted as Primogen you knew there would be a time when I would take my place by my mate's side once again," Justin explained, hoping all would understand. "But this time it's not all up to me. As much as I'd like to rule by your side, I need to be protected by my Prince as much as the baby needs to be near his father."

"We need you-" Anson began, only to have Masika stop him.

"I can lead my clan from anywhere in the city," Justin continued. "As my mother did from within the Ventrue stronghold. At this moment I need to be with Brian. All I need from you is your faith, your love and your loyalty."

"As you have always had it," Masika replied.

"Thank you," Justin sighed, giving his old friend a hug.

"A Hallmark moment," Brian mumbled, rolling his eyes. "I hate to cut this meeting short, but Justin and I have some things to do."

"Of course, Prince Kinney," Masika said, motioning to Justin that he would call him. "We'll take our leave now."

"Matt, get that girl, Willow, up here," Brian ordered, turning his attention to Justin with a sly smile. "Now for that other thing I wanted to do."

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"You think they're..." Buffy began pointing up at the ceiling. "You know..."

"Shagging? Having sex," Spike answered snidely. "Bumping uglies, Plugging the bum, fucking?"

"That's way more descriptive than I ever wanted," Buffy snorted. "I mean, really..."

"So," Willow spoke up a bit more defensively than she wanted. "It's okay when you bump uglies with Spike, but not when two guys do it? Is that how you felt about me and Tara?"

"No! I just meant," Buffy sighed, slumping in her seat and sliding her book away from her. "I don't know. This place is just so different. You know I'm no prude, but there's nothing but cursing and nakedness."

"Oh," Willow replied, turning her attention back to the books. She read for a few moments before finding something that that piqued her interest. "This is such an awesome library. It's even better than the books Giles had. Did you know that a male Ingor demon gives birth and that the babies eat their way out of the womb?"

"Sounds important," Spike snorted sarcastically. "How ‘bout I write that one down. Might need it if we go back in time five thousand years in a hell dimension when they existed."

"How about we continue to research?" Isis said, looking up from her book. "Seems as if the quicker we find the cause of this apocalypse, the quicker you can return to the Hellmouth."

"We know the cause," Buffy sniped, shoving her book away. "Anyways, this whole researching isn't really my thing. Normally Willow finds the bad guys' weaknesses and I go kill it."

"It's a wonder you're still alive," Isis replied.

"It didn't always work," Spike told the old vampire. "Seeing as she kicked the bucket twice, once for a bloody well long time. Had to get her mates to bring her back from the dead for that one."

"You did that, Willow?" Isis asked with great interest.

"We sorta all did it," the redhead explained. "But yeah, I pulled the energy from inside of me...which I probably shouldn't have."

"Probably not," Isis conceded. "You don't know anything about the power inside of you to do anything that powerful. It probably controlled you in the end."

"No kidding," Buffy snorted.

"How do you know so much about that?" Willow asked.

"I know quite a bit about magicks," Isis replied, stealing a look with Spike. It was clear that he knew all about Tremeres and she wondered why Spike never said anything to the humans. Maybe he was still loyal to Kindred. That, she would have to find out later. "I'll be more than happy to teach you after this is all done, Willow."

"I'm trying to stop," Willow explained.

"Which is why you threatened Justin using your abilities," Isis observed. "You'll find that magic is inside of you and no matter what you do, it always will be. I can teach you a thing or two."

"She doesn't need to be taught about magic by a vampire," Buffy interrupted. She knew Willow had a weakness and there was no way she'd allow her friend to slip into the magic which corrupted her not so long ago.

"You need to learn respect, girl," Isis growled.

"I have respect for others," Buffy replied. "I don't in any way, shape or form have any respect for a vampire. You're all killers and I'm a Slayer of killers. And quite honestly, I don't think this whole working together thing is really panning out for us."

"You can't respect a vampire, but you can shag one?" Isis scoffed, stealing a look at an unpleased Spike. "You need to be taught a lesson, girl."

To prove her point, Isis cut a wound on her palm and rubbed her hands together until a glow began. The glow started out red then worked its way through the color chart until it ended at violet.

"Calculus concresco," Isis said, turning Spike's body into stone. She had a point to make and she didn't want the Ventrue to be a part of it. "Now that that's taken care of..." Isis stood up and moved away from the table. "Shall we dance, girl?"

Buffy moved towards Isis only to find the vampire was a lot quicker than the vamps she had to deal with. Every time she punched, Isis was somewhere else laughing at her. When Buffy finally got to kick then punch her adversary, it was almost like hitting concrete.

"Will!"

"Oh no," Willow mumbled, allowing the magic to take over her. Her hair and eyes turned black as her body was lifted from the ground. "I wouldn't do that if I were you, Isis."

"I was just about to tell you the same thing," Isis replied licking her blood from her palms. "Silentio veneficus, declino vires"

Willow opened her mouth and found that she could not speak. Although she was daunted, she still had magic that didn't rest in the power of her words. She raised her hand and pointed at Isis sending a bolt of lightning in the direction of her foe only to find that it bounced off the vampire and head back in her direction. When the lighting hit Willow, it sent her to the floor, returning her hair to its red shade and her eyes back to their normal state.

"You're pulling from the wrong power, girl," Isis warned looking down at Willow. "Magicks against magicks, you will find the eldest shall always win. Yet I see you go for the newest blend of Wiccan garbage. You will find that around these parts you will need more power than the ability to destroy a fledgling Gargoyle, for his Sire is a thousand times more powerful."

"Ouchy," Willow moaned, getting up with the help of Buffy.

"Your parlor tricks are no match for the power of the Tremere," Isis continued. "And no match for blood."

"Our blood is already spoken for," Buffy warned.

"I've no need for Willow's blood," Isis explained, looking into the redhead's eyes. "All I need is for you to close your eyes, feel all that is around you and then tell me what you feel."

Willow closed her eyes and felt a rush that she had never experienced before.

"I feel," Willow said, almost stuttering on her own words, "like I should go back upstairs..."

"What a coincidence," Matt replied, standing at the doorway, "since Sire beckons you."

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"The second Ulugh tells Brian, he's going to kill me," Mel screeched, pacing around the room. "He'll try and manipulate what we did and say that we were trying to steal Gus from him when Gus is ours!"

"I'm sure Father Beg will explain our side of the situation," Lindsay disagreed.

"Your side of what?" Ted asked, entering the room with Emmett.

"Look at this!" Mel gasped. "We can't even have any privacy! People can just come and go as they please without any mind to us!"

"Thought we would just stop by to say hi," Em sneered. "I guess we'll just leave then."

"No, no, no..." Lindsay grabbed Emmett's arm and pulled the man back into the room. She put on her most apologetic look and tried to explain her partner's position. "She doesn't mean you, she means Brian's being an asshole again."

"What did he do now?"

"Does it really matter?" Ted asked, going to Mel and comforting her. "He's going to end up getting his way in the end like he always does."

"I wish there was someway we could help," Emmett sighed. "But we're just powerless humans like you."

"I think we need to take Deb's advice," Mel finally said, holding Ted's hand. "We need to talk to Justin and see what he can do to help us. I know he and Brian aren't talking, but maybe that's where we can get some leverage."

"I'm not sure that's going to help," Lindsay replied.

"It might," Emmett disagreed with a sly smile. "And Brian might stop fucking."

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Brian came inside of Justin and lay there content. He thought at one point that he would exhaust his young lover, but it seemed Justin was as insatiable as he was. Though he would have preferred to change locations, he knew that there were still other things to deal with.

"More?" Justin mumbled in a husky voice.

Brian chuckled at the thought. He was always up for more. Brian sat up in the bed and grabbed a cigarette. He looked down at Justin, who rubbed his large belly, and put the cigarette in his mouth. He tossed the lighter on the nightstand without lighting the cigarette and decided to run his fingers across Justin's stomach. He and Justin would live forever and until his childe was immortal as well, he wouldn't take the change of harming it in any way. He was an admitted asshole, but he wasn't a stupid asshole.

"Give me a few."

"I'm wearing you down?" Justin asked proudly.

"You wish."

"Whatever," Justin replied, sitting up. "But if you're not fucking me, then you should be killing the Slayer for me...for our baby."

"The Slayer isn't a problem," Brian told his young lover. "Especially since Isis just put her in her place."

"What happened?" Justin asked, very much excited.

"We'll ask her later," Brian replied, standing up and putting on the same loose sweatpants he had on earlier. "Right now we have a guest."

Justin quickly put on some clothes and went to the living room in enough time to greet Matt and Willow. Where he once felt nothing but hatred towards the redhead, he now felt something different. He didn't know what it was, but he was going to find out.

It seemed as if Willow was thinking the same thing. There was a power that was pushing her and she didn't know what to make of it. She had always blamed it on the magic, but it appeared that there was something more. Something she didn't understand.

"Right to the point," Willow said, more bluntly than she had anticipated. "Who are you?"

"Brian Kinney, Prince of Pittsburgh," he replied with a grin. "Give me your hand."

Although Willow was hesitant, she did as she was requested. She flinched when Brian brought out a dagger, but something inside of her told her to trust him. It seemed absurd to trust a vampire, but Willow couldn't help herself. She felt like she did when the magicks possessed her. She could do nothing when she saw her own blood flow, except watch like a spectator. First Brian drank from her hand then Justin tasted her as well. She didn't know what to expect when she saw the smiles on their faces.

"Um..." she stuttered, "t-t-tast-ty?"

"Very," Brian answered, cutting his own hand, "considering you're a chick."

"No, no..."

"It's OK," Brian promised, putting his bloodied hand to Willow's mouth.

Though she tried to resist, Brian used his strength to force blood into Willow's mouth. When it seemed she had had enough, Brian moved his hand away. He smiled when she took his hand again and continued to feed. As tempting as it seemed to let her drink until she died, that wasn't to be her fate...not yet.

"Is that what I feel?" Willow asked, dazed. She saw Justin and sat at his feet, looking at his belly. "I understand now...I didn't before, but I do now."

Justin allowed Willow to feed from him, but only a taste. There only needed to be a link between them. Willow now belonged to Brian and he didn't want to challenge that. He wasn't sure if Willow understood what had just happened, but something told him that she wouldn't mind at this point. There was something special about being Bloodbound to Brian. Justin knew that best.

"What do you understand?" Brian asked.

"We're family," Willow replied. "I am home."

Chapter 6: The Rise of a New Family

A close knit family can be a wonderful thing. In times of need, they can be the support that helps you pull through. They are often the shoulders to cry on or the back up when it seems like you are alone. But sometimes a family can do too much. At times they can think they know what's better for you than you do yourself. They can also help even if you don't want it or need it. They'll stick their noses in your business just because they are your family. If humans are funny that way...Kindred can be truly scary. Either way, family can be a pain in the ass.

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"I wanna go out," Justin said, sitting across from Willow and Buffy. He ignored their shocked faces and turned to his lover and repeated, "Brian, did you hear me? I wanna go out and have some fun. How about Babylon?"

"Sounds possible, if you're a good boy," Brian replied with a sly grin. "Let's just make sure Will and Buff understand the realities of the situation."

"She's not a vampire," Buffy protested. "She's not a blood sucker...see?" Buffy grabbed Willow's face and checked her teeth. "She doesn't have the pointy teeth and those mountainy ridges on her forehead. And she's way with the not needing sucking of blood. I would have noticed that. Kinda can't miss that."

"I'm not dead, Buff," Willow said softly. She cringed at the thought and looked at Brian. "And I way don't want to be. I'm a Royal Blood or someone whose ancestors are vampires...or Kindred. We're called Kindred, right? It's like a cool name for family. Kindred. See? Sounds not evil and very not blood sucking."

"Makes sense you're a Tremere, Red," Spike mentioned as he flipped through pages of a magazine. "I mean most humans just can't pop off and do that hocus pocus shite. It's a blood thing, you know. Blokes would give their right eye for your skill...and I know a Cretedden demon who did."

"Demons," Justin snickered. "Ick. I don't like demons."

"They're not allowed in Pittsburgh," Brian replied, snaking himself behind Justin and then propping his young lover onto his lap. "It's one of the few rules of your dad's that I kept."

"I'm glad we got rid of some of those other rules, like being queer," Justin sighed. "I like sucking cock."

"Me too," Willow agreed, then explained when the others glanced at her questioningly. "That came out wrong. I like being queer...not...sucking...anything on a guy." And just to make it clear she added, "I like women...and vaginas and boobies and stuff."

"Next topic of conversation. How do you keep demons out of Pittsburgh?" Buffy asked, giving Brian all of her attention. "I kill them and they just keep coming back. They hide and all that, but if you go to a couple of underground spots...there they are, ready to be killed again."

"She's stupid," Justin declared, rolling his eyes and leaning back into Brian's arms.

"Am not!"

"Are so!"

"Alright, children," Brian sighed. "The fact remains that although you are a Vampire Slayer, you know nothing about Kindred."

"I thought Kindred were vampires," Willow stated, a bit confused. "It was just another name for something like Barney and purple dinosaur or Robert Downey Jr. and smack head."

"Vampire is a name humans gave us," Justin clarified. "Kindred is the name given to us by the father of us all."

Justin sunk into Brian's arms, tiring of the conversation. He knew Brian wanted to make certain Willow understood her own situation, but wondered why the Slayer had to be there. It felt like he was giving all their best secrets to their biggest enemy. Maybe he was making it too personal; he had to admit to himself that Buffy irritated him no end. Justin couldn't say exactly why, but it probably had something to do with the fact that she was the type of person those stupid blonde jokes were made for.

"The father of you all?" Buffy snickered. "That's that guy from the Bible, right?"

"Caine," Willow answered. "As in the slayer of his brother, Abel." Willow thought about what Brian had told her and tried to recite it back to him. "And Caine had children...I mean childer, each of whom started their own clan. Spike's a Ventrue. Justin's a Toreador and I'm a Tremere...just like Brian."

"Way not getting it," Buffy sighed.

"Way not surprised," Justin snapped.

"Just ‘cause you're pregnant doesn't mean you get to be all bitchy and complainy," Buffy snapped back at Justin. She turned her attention to Willow and tried to understand. "Besides those other vampires...or Kindred or whatever...there're Malkavians who are crazies like Dru, Nosferatu who looked icky like The Master, Assamites who are assassins, Gangrels who, like, turn into wolves or something, Ravnos who are the gypsies and...for crying out loud! Who the hell have I been fighting all this time?"

"Tzmisce," Justin chuckled. "They are outcasts, even amongst Kindred. They kill for the sake of killing. They are in constant torment just for existing. They want everyone to be in the same sort of pain that they are always in...they are the types of vampires that try and end the world. They're poisonous creatures that don't deserve to exist. The elders of all the clans were correct to banish them to the Hellmouth where they would be killed off by the Slayer. It's the only thing you're good at Buffy...killing the lowliest of us all." Justin paused and ended with an evil smile. "And Kindred allow you that because we can't be bothered by such lowly cretins."

"You're a little..." Buffy began.

Justin laughed as he leaned into his lover and stroked the hair at the nape of Brian's neck. He wanted to tell Buffy that she had no idea what real Kindred power was, but he dared not. That was something she would see later, no doubt.

"I don't believe any of this," Buffy snickered, shaking her head. She looked at Willow who seemed to be absorbing all the information. "This is crap."

"I'm used to hearing shit like this," Justin sighed with a smile that brightened up the room. He intertwined his fingers in Brian's and squeezed. "You're not the only one in denial around these parts."

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"Bullshit!" Michael snapped, trying to walk away from Matt only to have his new brother stop him. "Let me go!"

"I just wanted to warn you, brother," Matt replied calmly. "I didn't want you to see our Sire to find out only then that Justin's back."

"Bullshit!"

"You're not thinking," Matt sighed. "If you calmed down, you could feel Justin."

Michael took a deep breath and paused for a moment. It was then he could feel Brian's unborn baby and the blond who carried it. He wondered why he hadn't felt it earlier and supposed it was because he didn't want to. He had thought Brian was over the little brat. He had assumed. Then his Sire punched him in the face. But when that happened he thought that something else might have been wrong with Brian.

"Fuck!"

"You should be happy," Matt said.

"Happy?" Michael answered, laughing so hard it made him seem a bit deranged. "Justin is the reason all of this has happened. He's the cause of every problem that has ever happened around here, but you'd know that if you weren't so new."

"I can't change the past," Matt replied, shaking his head. It was clear Michael wouldn't listen, but he had to do his duty and try. "Neither can you. Right now you should be happy Sire's mate and their unborn child is here for us to protect. They are family and they need to be close...just like Gus."

"Justin isn't a part of my family," Michael protested, slapping Matt's hand away. "You kiss his bubble butt if you want, I have other things to do."

Michael turned and walked away before Matt had an opportunity to stop him again. His first mission was to see his Sire, so he headed upstairs and ordered to be let in. After a moment, he was allowed in a room full of people, most of whom he didn't know. There was one face he did know, however. He could never forget Justin and his smug smile, no matter how much he tried.

"Brian, can I speak to you alone?" Michael asked.

"No," Justin answered. He held Brian's hand in his own and rubbed his large belly. "We have company, if you haven't noticed the blond twat who calls herself the Slayer, the Royal Blood redhead Tremere and the bleached blond wannabe Brujah over there."

"I resent that," Spike snickered.

"Brian..."

"You and Buffy should get together and start a club," Justin sighed. "You could call it People in Denial or Idiots and Assholes."

"Fuck you," Michael snapped.

"It's time for you to go, Mikey," Brian said softly. When Michael tried to open his mouth, Brian gave him a stern look and ran his hand down Justin's stomach all the way to the Toreador's groin. "Now."

Michael watched Brian's display, turned around and slammed the door as he left. After all the trouble he went through, Justin was still a thorn in his side. Maybe that was because he didn't go all the way. He opened the book of spells, Liber Utercumque Turbatus Sedatus. Michael had worked through the first chapter, but he'd let it go after that. Justin was gone, so he thought it had done did its job. He should have known better.

Trudging upstairs, Michael decided that no matter what happened he would finish what he had begun. He went into the library [c] happy that no one was there. Obviously, someone had stopped in the middle of their research. Ignoring the books on pregnancies, he went for Liber Utercumque Turbatus Sedatus. He flipped past the first chapter, Genitus, Mei Sinus or My Sire, My Heart, and went directly to the second, Mei Impendeo, Saevio or My threat, My Action.

As Michael read, the information rang in his mind. He was never good in school, but the information in this book seemed to fit his way of learning. It felt like the book was made for him and him alone. It knew what he needed and how he needed to fix his problems.

Within this chapter you will find that there is always a beginning. There is a beginning to love. There is a beginning to hate and there is a beginning to the end...

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"It's about to begin, I see," Julian said, pouring himself a drink and then pouring Craig one as well when asked.

"The time is almost here," Craig chuckled. "Brian's got his hands more than full as of late. Those lesbians of his are trying to steal his son. His eldest childe resents Justin and Justin...well, the Slayer is more than a handful. To think Brian allowed the wench into his home."

"How do you know so much?"

"I still have people in Pittsburgh," Craig replied, taking his drink, finishing it in one gulp. "Kinney would be surprised."

Julian poured Craig another drink and put his down without even a taste. He had much on his mind. Both men were delving into a situation where they had once been beaten. The strangest part was that Brian didn't even know what he was doing until it had already been done. Kinney's luck made it difficult to find a way to attack him. Julian wondered how Craig was planning to defeat someone who had fate on his side. If he was going to put himself in another situation where he'd have to deal with Brian's powerful father, he was going to find out.

"What is your plan of attack?"

"In due time, Luna," Craig smiled. "The only way that I know things will go my way, is to keep my plans to myself. You would have been wise to do so yourself when you had your own opportunity against Kinney."

"With that I will agree," Julian sighed, remembering his own downfall. "I will say that I do not like being put in such a precarious situation. Even though I'm not in his domain right now, Brian would throw a fit if he knew I was meeting with you."

"You are a Ventrue," Craig declared as if he needed to. "You are allowed to visit Ventrue in other cities if you so choose. If I didn't need you in Pittsburgh, I'd have you here in Philadelphia by my side."

"Even though we don't always agree?"

"Especially since we don't always agree," Craig clarified. "I would have stood a better chance against Kinney if I had others to go to for guidance."

"You have me now," Julian told the man. "But how to guide a person who won't tell me his plans?"

"My plans will be made clear to you soon enough, Julian," Craig assured the worried Justicar. "And this time I will not make the same mistakes I did before. This time I plan to start at the top."

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Ulugh teleported into the meeting and acknowledged Justin and Brian, though quickly turned his attention to the redhead sitting before them. He could sense her power and knew their lineages linked. She was not his childe, but the grandchilde of his long dead brother. It seemed, however, his son was quick to bring the young woman back into the fold. She smelled of Brian and Ulugh knew his son would have little to do with a woman. The only things women were useful for, to his son, were as mentors or soldiers. Ulugh felt exactly what Brian had in mind for Willow. The extent of her power surprised even him.

"Good evening, young Willow."

"Ummm...hey?"

"Willow, this is my father, Ulugh Beg," Brian introduced, though he never got up from his place behind Justin, who fidgeted on his lap. He quickly linked to Matt and told his youngest that they'd be going to Babylon soon. Like Justin, he needed a little quiet time surrounded by hundreds of mostly naked men in g-strings and cowboy hats. But, back to the conversation at hand..."I think I mentioned him."

"All powerful Kindred who can make things go boom," Willow summed up. "Yep, you mentioned that."

"Master Beg," Spike politely said, standing and bowing to the elder vampire. "I am William the Bloody. It is an honor, Me Lord."

"Our eyes are upon you, the one who calls himself Spike," Ulugh replied with a raised eyebrow.

"Sorry," Willow quickly said, hearing how formal Spike was. "I mean Master Borg...Bag...Bug...Beg. I meant to say Master Beg."

"No need for formalities, Willow," the old Justicar told the newest member of his brood. "You are family and now you are home."

"Our family keeps getting bigger and bigger, wouldn't you say, Father Beg?" Justin asked as he happily rubbed his belly.

"For that I am greatly pleased," Ulugh replied, motioning for his son to follow him. Ulugh led Brian out of the loft and into the elevator where he pressed the button for the bottom floor. He waited for the elevator to move, its chains loud in motion, before he began.

"Something wrong?" Brian asked softly.

"I have urgent business in the old country," Ulugh explained. "The matter is so pressing I have no knowledge when I will return."

"You'll keep in contact?"

"Of course, My Son."

"Anything you want to talk about?"

"No," Ulugh replied with a smile. "I did wish to speak to you about the mothers of your only born child."

"They wouldn't have gotten far," Brian said.

Ulugh laughed. It pleased him to know his son was aware of the goings on within his home. Although he knew there would be other, more dangerous, issues to be dealt with, the ancient Justicar was pleased that his son had the smaller issues in hand. He was certain the others would show themselves soon enough.

"Do not forget your childer..."

"Don't worry, Dad," Brian replied. The words rolled from his lips so easily he forgot there was ever another man he called father. It was ironic that the human had been so cold and the vampire only showed him love.

"I cannot help but worry."

"I'll keep an eye on my childer."

The last word Ulugh said before teleporting was, "good". Brian smiled and returned to the top floor. One day he'd learn how to teleport at will. Then everyone would have to watch their backs for him...starting with his childer.

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"Arcesso genetrix perago venio..."

"What are you doing?" Matt asked Michael as he entered the room.

"None of your business!"

"Where did you get that book?"

"Lazarus gave them to me to study," Michael retorted, slamming the book shut. "Maybe when you get to my level you'll get to read it too. Then again, it's not your area of expertise."

"Give me a fight any day," Matt growled back. "Which you'll get, considering where we're going."

"Where?"

"Babylon," Matt replied with a grin. "Though Father didn't mention you specifically, I can only imagine he'd want his actual gay childe to be there."

"He's not our father!"

"Maybe I shouldn't have told you," Matt sighed, shaking his head sadly. "If you did go, you wouldn't be going for fun. You'd be there to protect our Sire and his mate. Somehow, I don't think that would be your top priority."

Michael opened his mouth to reply, but kept quiet when Matt turned and left. He wanted to shout obscenities until he couldn't think of anymore, but decided against it. He had other things to attend to first. His silly brother had interrupted his spell and that needed attending to. After that, he could go to Babylon and dance with Brian. It would be like his gift for a job well done. A celebration with Brian...a day they'd never forget.

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Three men stood at the bar amidst scantily clad men and flashing lights, nursing their beers. It didn't matter that no one bothered to talk to any of them because the men weren't there to find a date or even a bedmate for the night. Though humans at Babylon didn't know who these men were, the Kindred did. Though they were mostly Toreadors, the Kindred in the club recognized the new Ventrue Primogen when they saw him.

"How long do we have to stay?"

"Until he gets here," Chris replied, flashing a steely glare to his guard. "All you have to do is follow my plan."

"He's powerful..."

"Mate or no mate, he's also horny," Chris retorted. "My sources tell me that he comes down here often and when he doesn't, he sends his people down here to fetch him a boy to play with. Mostly humans...probably to eat after he finishes...eating them."

"What does Master Taylor say about this?"

"I am Primogen of Pittsburgh!" Chris snapped, happy the music was so loud he could hardly hear his comrades. He took a deep breath and regained his composure. "You know your goal..."

The guards nodded their heads and whispered under their breaths, "Brian Kinney."

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Brian strolled back into the loft hearing voices he didn't want to. Though he smelled the return of Regillio, he ignored the Nosferatu and went into his bedroom. He picked out one of his favorite designer shirts and put it on.

"Just to make it perfectly clear," Em began, waving his arms flippantly at Brian. "We are not walking meals for Brian or Princess..." After thinking about it for a moment, he had to add an aside, "But occasional I do allow Justin to feed when he's really hungry and only because he's pregnant. And in no way shape or form have I ever fed from either of them."

"We're not ghouls," Ted clarified.

"Absolutely not," Em concurred. He straightened out his puce satin shirt and picked lint from his velvet leopard print pants.

"We're Michael's friends," Ted said, smiling.

When Em saw Justin shoot him a pouty look he added, "And we have grown to love Princess since the moment we saw him stalking Brian...or the first time we saw him give Brian a blow job...or the first time we saw him heels over head getting rammed pretty efficiently by the asshole over there."

"Memories," Justin recalled fondly. The Toreador glanced at Brian and laughed. "Didn't we do that earlier?"

"Most likely," Brian replied, buttoning up his shirt. "I think that was before cumming in your mouth the second time, but after I licked your balls."

"Was that what you were doing?" Buffy wondered aloud, shaking her head.

"Don't pretend like you never did that," Spike snorted. "I recollect you liking the taste of me tickle. I know for a fact that you liked an occasional finger digging you from the backside. Just watching you made me want to squirt all over."

"Way more information than I ever needed to hear!" Em screeched. "One of Brian's silly rules that I actually agree on is no hetero talk."

"Yeah," Willow agreed. "This lesbian would rather not hear about penises and...liquids..."

"OK, let's not talk about sex anymore," Buffy declared, which seemed to appease everyone.

The group sat in silence as Brian put on his Italian shoes and new platinum watch. He ran his fingers through his hair and assumed he looked great. Didn't he always? Brian smiled and watched as the group sat uncomfortably. Not talking about sex apparently left the room open for a topic of conversation. None seemed to be forthcoming. Lucky for Brian he didn't have to stand there in bare silence: his youngest childe entered the loft.

"Babylon has been secured for your entry," Matt declared, turning his attention to his Sire's mate. "There are many Toreadors there who wish to spend time with their Primogen. They appeared a little on edge...I think there might be some issues."

"Aren't there always?" Justin sighed, getting up. He looked down at the Obfuscated belly then back to Brian. "Save the last dance for me?"

"Always," The Prince replied with a smile.

"Why are we going to a gay club?" Buffy asked as everyone got up, ready to leave.

"You can stay here if you want," Justin snorted, rolling his eyes. He grabbed his jacket and headed out saying, "I feel the need to be surrounded by a roomful of hot sweaty men."

"That's a good reason to go," Buffy agreed, following the Toreador.

Em took Ted by the arm and followed Justin. He checked Buffy out from behind and shook his head as if he saw a car wreck, "As if any of those guys would be interested in snatch."

"I'm interested in snatch," Willow said innocently while holding up her hand. When she saw the look on Brian's face she amended, "Well, not right now, but eventually I have needs too."

"Stay and study all you want, Red," Spike declared before following the group. "If I've got to exist as a bloody Ventrue, I might as well break every one of my Clan's sodding rules."

Matt watched as everyone but Brian left the room. His Sire didn't have to say anything, he knew Brian wanted to know why Michael wasn't there. What was Matt to say? Michael was acting suspiciously? The truth was...when wasn't he acting suspiciously? No words needed to be exchanged. It was something that would have to be dealt with...among other things.

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Michael chanted the last word and spread his blood across the open pages of the spellbook. Though there were only a few drops, the blood increased, swirling like a tornado on top of the pages. It began as a slow swirl then increased until Michael began to see a picture like an old movie reel. He saw two vague liquid figures start off red, and then change into color until it was clear he was looking at Brian and Justin.

The young Tremere watched the strange show, not knowing what to make of it. It started off as two men standing then quickly went to two men kissing, and then two men having sex. If he hadn't seen it with his own eyes he wouldn't have believed the clarity of Brian's body even though it was licking down Justin's back, stopping at the young man's plump butt.

Michael watched, waiting for something else to happen, but he sat there as the figure of Brian twisted the figure of Justin around switching his area of interest from butt to cock. It was always like that with Brian...not that Michael would know that personally. After Brian was done with that, Justin's legs were over the figure's shoulders. The figure of Brian began a slow melodic movement, inserting himself while at the same time holding Justin's hand. It was then Michael began to hear Justin grunt and Brian groan, "I can do this all night long."

"No!"

The moment the words came out of Michael's mouth, the figure of Brian began a steadier pace. The sounds, like the picture, became more distinct as the slapping of flesh against flesh could be heard with every thrust. The drips of sweat and spray of cum was as real as Justin's screech when he came. But it wouldn't end there. Brian made sure of it when he promised Justin, "I'm not done with you yet..."

The anger within Michael grew so much he didn't know how much longer he could take the display. To him it wasn't even a display anymore. For Michael, it was just as bad as having to watch Brian and Justin have sex in real life. Agony. The figures of Brian and Justin were moving at a fast pace, grunting and groaning, breaths heavy and guttural. At first Michael didn't hear it, but the second time the figure of Brian said it, it was clear, "I love you...I love you, Justin."

"No!"

Michael screamed and shoved his fist into the swirling blood, slashing it about the room. Although the blood spread everywhere, it had found a home. Within moments of Michael's outburst, the blood slid and slicked its way back to the book and into the pages forming the words of the next chapter.

Venio Denuo Familia

The Rise of the New Family

Chapter 7: The Awakening

Loud music thumped as Brian and his crew entered the Mecca of sweaty, scantily clad men. Lights flashed and bodies gyrated on the dance floor where music drowned out the sound of groans and sticky sex in the backroom. It was a little piece of wonderland as many men stopped and watched as the gang strolled in. A few might have believed that they did so because it was the Prince and his pregnant mate or because of the Slayer, but it was not. Eyes followed the group because its leader was Brian Kinney, the King of Liberty Avenue.

Many hoped for a moment alone with the godlike figure, yet others wanted time with his mate. Justin saw the Toreadors and was ready for them, leaving his mate's side as they led him to another part of Babylon. He was followed by Regilio who Obfuscated the pregnant Toreador's belly and Matt, who kept a watchful eye on the keeper of his unborn sibling. There were three other Gangrel that kept by Justin's side to protect him in place of their absent Primogen.

Brian made certain there were Gangrel and Tremere all around to protect them. He was especially mindful of Justin's needs considering many of the later attacks had been focused on his young lover. It seemed a bit much for a night out on the town, but since becoming Prince it was necessary. Pittsburgh was still a place in turmoil and probably would be until he had established himself, considering the lifespan of a vampire, he could only imagine how long that could take.

However, Brian wasn't one to sit back and be a captive to his own life. If he was going to die, he would do so doing his favorite thing. Fucking. Making his way to the dance floor, he shook his butt a bit and was immediately surrounded by men. He chose the two most appealing, then snaked his arms around them and led them into the orgy filled back room.

"Where is he going?" Willow asked as Ted sat down, bringing drinks for the remaining members of the group.

"The back room," Ted answered, flashing a knowing look at Emmett. "It's where men go to get to know each other better."

"And fuck," Em added.

Buffy flashed a look of disbelief at the two men. She looked to Spike who only laughed, so she decided to see for herself. It took her some time to make her way and back through the barrage of almost naked men, but when she did so her pink complexion showed she had seen more than she had expected.

"So what'd you see?" Willow asked as she sipped on her drink.

"I saw..." Buffy began, trying to figure out how to say what she saw politely, "...that two guys can do it missionary style."

"You have so much to learn," Em snickered, stealing a look at his old friend. "Wanna trip the light fantastic, Teddy?"

"I think I need to drink a little bit more before I embarrass myself," Ted replied.

"It doesn't seem to bother Brian. He can't dance to save his undead life," Em chuckled, glancing back and seeing the Prince already gone. "Doesn't take him long, does it?"

"Never did," Ted sighed.

"I'd like to dance," Buffy declared. "If you don't mind dancing with a girl."

"I don't," Em said, taking Buffy's arm as they headed to the dance floor. "You know I even had sex with a woman once? It wasn't my thing, but it did remind me how much I love cock..."

Willow watched her friend leave her with Spike and Ted and sighed, "I guess it's just us three...and some bodyguards."

"Sorry, but I'm not going to be much fun," Ted replied, taking out a notebook. "I still have some figures to go over about the website."

"Figures?" Willow gasped. "Can I help?"

"You blokes are sick," Spike snorted, standing up.

"Where are you going?" Willow asked. "Or do I care?" After thinking about it a moment she answered her own question. "That's right, I don't."

"Good," Spike answered, leaving the pair to see what sort of trouble he could get into. After passing a group of men, he smelled great possibilities. "Well, well, well..." He snorted getting the men's attention. "It's good to see a Ventrue or two in the house..."

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Michael grabbed Liber Utercumque Turbatus Sedatus and took it upstairs with him. He had heard Brian and his group leave and though he wanted to go to Babylon and have some fun, there was work to be done. The next chapter, The Rise of the New Family, held great promise and he wanted to get through it as soon as possible. To be sure that he wasn't interrupted he wanted to go to the one place he knew he wouldn't be found: Brian's quarters. He was sure Brian and the twat wouldn't be back for hours, which would give him ample time to go through the next chapter.

After gaining permission from the guards, Michael entered the loft and looked around. He had stopped by on occasion, but was only there for moments, having been told to leave because Brian was upset or in a meeting. Both were especially true when Justin had left not so long ago. He thought he would have more time with Brian, but that would not be the case. Instead he found himself fighting for his Sire's attention or trying to prove himself to the likes of Lazarus. It seemed strange that the man he had once called his best friend seemed so far away, so out of reach.

That fact was glaringly obvious when Michael closed the loft door and saw a room filled with roses. The sweet smell was overwhelming and it sickened him. At one time he had felt that roses were the most beautiful of flowers, that is until he knew it was the emblem of the Toreador. He hated the Toreador, even more than he hated the Ventrue.

Michael went to the table and sat down. He placed the spellbook in front of him and opened it to The Rise of the New Family. He began to read slowly, making sure he didn't miss any instructions within the text. Trying to concentrate he flickered his eyes in the direction of a vase full of red roses. He couldn't avoid them, for the sweet smell wafted to his senses as though they meant to taunt him. The corner of his mouth twisted up cruelly as the new found power he possessed filled his brain. With a twitch of his finger and a well spoken word the vase flew, breaking against the wall and sending the flowers to the floor. Using a spell so rotten, so tainted, Michael grinned as the flowers decayed before his eyes. There was so much more to do. This was only the beginning.

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Chris crossed his arms and looked down at the spectacle before him. He saw Justin with his fellow Toreadors as well as a dozen or so Tremere soldiers guarding the establishment. He saw the Slayer and smiled. She might be useful at a later date, but at the moment she was nothing but eye candy for him. He wondered who the other woman was, but pushed the idea aside. She was nobody, just a silly woman. The one who interested him was the fair haired man. At first he ignored the man in black. It wasn't until the fair haired man approached his men that Chris actually assessed the situation. Though the man looked like a Brujah, he sensed otherwise. The man was Ventrue and any brother of theirs only meant a quicker downfall for the Tremere Prince.

Everything was in place and Chris' plans were about to begin. Brian had walked right into his trap. There was one way in and out of the backroom and Chris had control of it. Inside, along with other nameless faces and dicks, were his men masquerading as some of...them. The thought sickened him, but it was necessary so that his greater goals would be accomplished.

Counting his guards to those of the Prince's, Chris felt confident. He outnumbered them by at least two dozen. It didn't even matter that many of his men were young, he knew Brian's crew were younger. The best part was that there were but a few Gangrel in the group and no Brujah.

Chris glanced over to Justin and saw the Toreador who surrounded the young Royal Blood. They were no threat. He knew that Justin would be more than a handful, but hurting the pregnant man wasn't on his agenda. Well...not tonight.

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Justin sat and listened patiently as his clansmen told him of their woes. The young Primogen had expected matters of greater importance, but their issues sounded like high school gossip.

"I've sung at Kino's parties for 81 years," a woman pleaded. "Suddenly, Janice takes an interest in him and I can't sing for his party anymore? I can't help it if she looks like Carol Channing and sings like Britney Spears. Her bra has a better chance of holding those sagging tits of hers than she does holding a note..."

Justin wondered when listening about women's tits had become his problem. He supposed any problems that were his Clan's were indeed his problems. His mother had always been so good at making everyone happy all the time. He hoped he would inherit that trait, but at the moment he didn't care. All that he cared about was that Brian had just entered the backroom without him with two guys that were to drool for. Seeing Brian leave so quickly bothered Justin. He felt a rumble in his stomach and guessed it bothered his unborn as well.

"...are you going to talk to her? She said that since you weren't around that I had to obey her since her sire's an elder. What a crock of bullshit, but, of course, I can't say anything because you aren't there to settle this."

"Calm down, Tabitha," Justin finally said, prying his eyes from the open doorway of the backroom. "Does Kino want you to sing?"

"He said he did."

"It's his party," Justin replied. "If he wants you to sing then sing. If she gives him or you any grief, just call me and I'll talk to her."

"It would be better if you were there."

"I can't be," Justin sighed. "My unborn needs to be near his father."

The truth was that Justin needed Brian as much as their child, but he wasn't about to say that out loud. Of the things that were right, there were so many things wrong with this situation. The least of his problems was who was singing at some old Toreador's party. Justin still wanted the Slayer dead, though he knew that wasn't going to happen while she was working with Brian.

Then there was Michael and all the grief Brian's best friend was putting him through. He knew the Tremere was up to something the moment he'd found out that Michael wasn't joining them at Babylon. There was also...pain. Justin grabbed his stomach when another painful cramp hit him.

"Are you alright?" A man asked, kneeling down to assist the Toreador Primogen.

"Just a little...queasiness," Justin replied, taking a deep breath to regain his composure.

Justin looked up at the man and was taken aback. Though the man was a Toreador, Justin had never seen him before.

"You are new to town?" Justin asked.

"Yes, in fact..."

"Have you presented yourself to the Prince?"

"Well, no..."

"You know the Traditions," Justin snapped. "Who is your Sire?"

"She is with Caine," the man answered. "I was told that because you were mated with the Prince that I didn't need to..."

"You do," Justin quickly said. "Just because I am mated to the Prince doesn't mean that the Toreadors can pretend the Traditions don't exist."

"I apologize, My Lord."

"What is your name and what is your gift?"

"I am called Ethan Gold," the man replied, "and I am a violinist."

"Welcome to Pittsburgh, Ethan Gold," Justin said. "I hope you're lucky...you'll need it around here."

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Michael opened up his book and began to read. Although the words first appeared in Latin, they mysteriously changed to English before his eyes. It was as if they were meant for him. Each word was scripted in Old English and written in his own blood. The strange part was that as he read, his blood disappeared into the air, twirling until it was no more.

"An event will occur on every seventh hour. A trial will occur on every seventh day until the birth occurs on the seventh week and the new family shall arise. On the seventh hour of every time of resting and the time of wake, these words shall be repeated and the blood of one Kindred from warring Clans shall be spilled upon the pages of this book," he read.

Abeo muto causa anima mei natio sponte mei effero regina.

Michael thought about his situation and saw a small problem. How was he supposed to get the blood of warring Clan members? He wasn't entirely sure with several members, especially the Ventrue, but he did know where to start. He immediately went downstairs to the room where Cash slept over a comatose Sasha.

"Hey," Michael said, waking up the groggy Gangrel. "I need a favor."

"Are you dying?"

"No," Michael replied to Cash's harsh tone. "But I will be if I don't get this spell right for Lazarus. He's been on my ass lately."

"I wonder why," Cash snorted. "What do you need me for?"

"Not just you," Michael clarified, "you and Sasha." When it seemed that Cash didn't seem to care, the resourceful Tremere tried to explain, using the best lie he could think of. "Lazarus wanted me to learn a spell and the different reactions I would get using different blood from different Kindred. I was going to ask Justin but he left with Brian to Babylon."

"I thought you were going..."

"I wanted to, but I had to finish this first," Michael quickly replied. "So are you going to help me out?"

Cash snickered and held out his hand, "Use it well, because it's the last you'll get from either of us."

"Thanks," Michael said, taking some blood from Cash and then Sasha.

Without another word Michael rushed upstairs and repeated the chant, "Abeo muto causa anima mei natio sponte mei effero regina." Though he did not know what it meant, he did as he was instructed by the book. He dripped the blood on the pages of the book and watched as it intermingled with his own. A gust of wind swept through the room, flipping the pages of the book, finally closing it shut.

At first, the whole building rumbled and when it was over a flash of light filled the room. When Michael opened his eyes he saw something moving out of the corner of his eye. When he looked at it, a vine had sprouted where the once dead roses lay scattered on the floor. Within moments roses shot out, filling the room with a powerful aroma of the beautiful flowers.

Michael stood and approached the roses when he saw another surprise through the window. His eyes grew large when branches from a nearby tree made their way into the room, breaking windows and taking out a small section of the wall.

"Holy shit..."

"You alright?"

"I didn't-"

"You stay here," Cash ordered Michael. He had a frantic look in his eyes as he glanced around the room. "I have to find Brian."

"Wait!"

Michael ran to the door as Cash left, but the Gangrel was much quicker than the Tremere. There was one thing Michael did notice: there were no guards at the door. Even if they knew Michael had caused this...they didn't need to know how, did they? Michael went back to table and picked up the book. He'd make sure he'd put it back where it belonged before anyone found out what he was up to. No one would be the wiser.

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Chris approached the platinum Ventrue and asked, "What do they call you?"

"A vampire," Spike chuckled. "What do they call you?"

"Kindred," Chris replied snidely.

"You say tomato, I say tom-ah-toe," Spike said, rolling his eyes. He scratched at his fingernail and flicked the dry black polish at the man before him. "Whatever the hell you prefer, I really don't give a shite."

"What is your name?"

Spike looked up at the man and grinned. If the Tremere in town didn't know who he was, he hoped his name had more prestige within his own clan, even if it were as a rebel.

"Name's Spike," the blond replied. "Or you can call me William the Bloody."

"The killer of two Slayers," Chris snickered, "and the bitch of one."

"We all have to ‘ave a purpose in life, mate."

"I am your Primogen," Chris continued. "I could have you put to death for not announcing yourself to me."

"No need to when I've already bumped heads with the Prince of Fucking," Spike laughed, leaning on the bar and ordering himself a drink. "And since the whole trying to kill him thing didn't work, I supposed I'd go out, have a drink and watch him nail anything with a dick and a pulse."

"You tried to kill him?"

"Some'in' like that," Spike lied.

"Would you like to prove your loyalty to me and to your Clan?"

Spike gulped his drink down and wiped his mouth with the sleeve of his leather jacket. With one hand he broke the thick glass he was holding and tossed its remnants on the floor with a smile.

"I always love a good fight, mate," Spike licking his lips with anticipation. "Show me the way."

Spike followed Chris into the depths of the backroom. As he and the Ventrue walked further into the sexual playground, most of the Kindred and their human companions made a quick retreat. He saw Brian leaning up against a wall as a man performed fellatio on him.

"I think it's time for you to get up," Brian announced to the man.

"Thank Caine," the man replied, showing a knife which he put to Brian's throat.

"I remember a time when I could fuck a variety of men without someone trying to kill me," Brian sighed, seemingly disinterested in the situation. He pulled up his designer pants then crossed his arms. "Now, every time I go out I need an army of men to protect me."

"That has been prepared for," Chris announced.

Brian moved forward, allowing the trick's knife to cause a wound in his neck. With a few spoken words and a wave of his finger, Brian sent his trick flying into the crowd of Ventrue.

"Got anything to say for yourself, Spike?" Brian asked.

"Sure," Spike replied as he walked towards Brian then stopped and faced the Ventrue. "What's a bloke to do to get into a fight round these parts?"

"Know me..."

"Done," Spike chuckled, taking a hand axe from the inside of his leather trench coat and handing it to Brian.

"Very nice..."

"Loved Mary Poppins," Spike replied. "You should hear my rendition of A Spoon Full of Sugar."

"Maybe a little-" Brian stopped when he felt a sharp pain all over his body. He could tell that it wasn't coming from him, it was coming from...

"Justin!"

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Em danced to the beat with Buffy, loving the attention he was getting. Not from Buffy, but from several men who couldn't keep their eyes off of him. He was almost tempted to leave Buffy where she boogied, but a clear head prevailed...and the fact that a few men bumped into him to leave Babylon. He didn't think much of it until several more men stormed right through him and Buffy on their way out. What started as a few quickly turned into almost every half naked, butt shaking man in the place.

Em didn't know what was going on exactly, but he could guess Brian and Justin had something to do with it. They always had to steal his good time. About to go with the flow and leave Babylon, Em was grabbed by a petite hand which took him against the horde of men leaving.

"Where are we going?"

"Into the fray," Buffy said over the screams and stomping.

After pushing through the men, Em and Buffy made their way to a group of people surrounding Justin. They saw the young man breathing heavily, holding his stomach.

"What's going on?" Buffy asked as Willow and Ted rushed up to the group.

"It's not us," Matt said. "Sire's in a pickle."

"Aren't you going to help him?" Willow asked frantically.

"Sire instructed me to care for Master Justin no matter what happens," Matt replied, picking up the pregnant young man. "My first priority is to get him to safety."

"Put me down!" Justin screamed. "Brian needs us!"

"He might be in labor," Ethan told the group.

"Who are you?" Em asked.

"We so officially could care less," Buffy snapped, grabbing Justin's hands to try and stop him from struggling. When she saw that wouldn't work, she did the only thing she could think of and punched Justin, knocking him out cold. "Let's get out of here!"

"You're not going anywhere," the leader of a group of Ventrue said, blocking the group. "I think you're taking our hostage."

"You got him?" Buffy asked, to which Matt nodded yes. "Give me one second and we'll be out of here."

Buffy tumbled over to the group and kicked the first vampire she saw. Before the other knew what was coming, she had her favorite stake out and shoved it into his heart. She got hit a few times, but she shook them off without much thought. A couple of punches and a few well placed jabs of her stake ended the fight without any more conversation.

"Time to vacate," Buffy announced.

Willow watched as Buffy and the group left. Though common sense told her to leave, she couldn't. She had other things to do.

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Brian faced changed, turning feral as Justin's pain hit him.

"Alright!" Spike screeched, his face changed as well. "It's time to get nasty!"

Brian wiped blood from his throat and rubbed it between his fingers chanting, "Calculus cruor." Several men in the group stopped where they stood, their bodies having turned into stone. Though the spell did its job on many of the men, the majority of the Ventrue were unaffected.

"Got something else up your sleeve, mate?" Spike asked.

"Sure, but that should have done it."

"We came prepared for your type," Chris snickered.

"Prepared for Brian's type?" Spike chuckled. "I guess you should be on your knees prepared to suck some cock, eh?"

"Faggot," Chris sneered, bringing out a small weapon of his own.

"Must be a spell block," Willow said from behind the group. "Not the hocusy-pocusy type. I bet it's more of the shiny type that's on a chain around your neck type."

"How'd she know that?" A man wondered aloud.

"Just guessing," Willow replied with a smile. "But I have a solution for that. Lamnia decoquo."

"You can't do blood magic!" Chris yelled as the necklace around his and his comrade's throats melted painfully onto their bodies.

"Not blood magic," Willow clarified. "Wiccan bullshit."

"Fuck all of you!" Chris screamed as several more of his men spilled into the room behind Willow. "Kill them all!"

"Wait a minute!" A woman's voice screamed, pushing through the Ventrue accompanied by a man. When she came into Brian's sight she smiled. "You guys do not get to start fighting without me!"

"Glad you could make it, Sasha," Brian said as Willow rushed over towards him. "Wouldn't want to do this without you."

"No shit," Sasha laughed, smiling at Brian, then at Cash, then at the Ventrue before her. "The second I get my hand around a Ventrue's neck, the better off I'll feel. I'm tired of dealing with the likes of my dear grandfather. Permission to kick these mutherfucker's asses, Bri!"

"Permission granted."

"Wooooo-hooooo!"

"Now that's what I'm bloody well talkin' ‘bout!" Spike yelled, sticking out his tongue and jumping at the Ventrue. He took his hand axe and struck a man saying a word every time he broke skin. "Bloody-Ventrue-always-starting-shite! Can't-a-man-get-laid-in-peace?"

"This is a gift for Julian," Sasha screeched, punching one man then turning to punch another.

Brian watched as Chris ran before either Sasha, Cash or Spike could end his unlife. He wasn't worried. With Sasha up and Cash on the ball, his army would defeat the small minded Ventrue. Spike was a nice addition and would prove to be useful, especially considering how old the wayward Ventrue was. His pride, however, lay with the small witch that stood next to him. There was only one Ventrue that made his way through the fighting to Brian and was immediately stopped by Willow.

Brian was told Willow's hair and eyes turned black when she used her magic, but that's not entirely what occurred on this occasion. Though her hair turned black, her eyes turned red.

"An eye for an eye," Willow said, pointing at the man. "Blood for blood...how ‘bout I just take yours?"

Blood spewed out of the man's eyes into Willow's finger until the man turned to dust. She stepped forward to assist the others, but was stopped by Brian's hand. He wanted her by his side and she didn't know why, but it filled her with pride.

"Let's finish this up, boys and girls," Brian announced when he saw there were only a few Ventrue left. He walked across the dust filled floor and stopped next to Spike and Sasha who were both beating the last man.

"I get to kill him!" Sasha said, tugging on the Ventrue and punching him.

"I had ‘im first, luv," Spike replied, grabbing the man's hair and slamming his face against the wall.

"Ladies first!"

"If you're a lady, I'm a vermicious Kinid," Spike snorted.

"Children," Willow sighed, putting her hand on the Ventrue's face. "Excuo laxus."

The man's face shriveled as blood disappeared into Willow's hand until he was dust.

"Willow!" Spike said, feigning shock.

"You are so going to have to teach me how to do that!" Sasha replied impressed.

"Later," Brian interrupted, eyeing everyone in his group. "Now you'll take me to Justin."

Brian smiled when his army ceased all conversation and went back to work, heading out of the backroom into the man dancehall. They followed Cash's Gangrel senses and left Babylon looking for the Prince's mate.

"Justin," Brian whispered. "I'm coming for you."

Chapter 8: Week One: And a Garden Grows

"An event will occur on every seventh hour. A trial will occur on every seventh day until the birth occurs on the seventh week and the new family shall arise. On the seventh hour of every time of resting and the time of wake, these words shall be repeated and the blood of one Kindred from warring Clans shall be spilled upon the pages of this book..."

Brian rushed into the loft to find Justin sound asleep. He saw the slight bruise on his lover's face but ignored it for the moment. He had been worried when Justin's pain hit him, but he'd become terrified when he could not link to his mate. Still, he didn't know what had happened in his absence...at Babylon or at his loft. Brian looked around his home and saw a rose bush growing from his floor and a tree jutting through his wall.

"What the fuck?" Brian snapped, glancing over at the crew left in the room. He scanned Em's and Ted's faces, then slid his glance past those that were protecting him at Babylon. "I'd better hear someone talking!"

"Sire," Matt said softly. "You said if there was any trouble, I was to make sure Master Justin was brought home safely. I did as you told me..."

"What happened to his face?"

"He didn't want to leave, Sire," Matt began only to find he had no way of explaining it. Sure he could say the Slayer punched him, but it was his job to protect Justin. "I um....she um..."

"What Mr. Smooth is trying to say is that I punched his lights out," Buffy clarified.

"You hit him?" Brian asked a bit confused.

"He wouldn't leave," Buffy continued, her head high and her hands on her hips. She wanted to speak with confidence, but she found herself speaking more apologetically with every word. "And there were a bunch of bad guys who were talking about kidnapping and you were...doing...with the nakedness and the slurping, so Matt picked Justin up and when Justin didn't want to go, I punched him so he wouldn't stand and try to fight, seeing as he's all pregnant and...really, he should be careful with the baby. They could have gotten hurt."

"How the fuck did you say that in one breath?" Sasha snipped, sniffing Buffy. "You must breathe, you're not Kindred."

"I don'tttt givve a fuckkkk whho ssshe ttthhinks ssshe isss," Justin stuttered, getting up. He held his head and pushed Matt aside when the fledgling approached him. "I wanttttt that bbbbitch ddeadd!"

"Justin, calm down," Brian said soothingly. He wrapped his arms around Justin's waist and caressed his lover's belly. "You're in pain."

"Daedalus is here," Bartox announced, startling Buffy and Willow.

The Nosferatu Primogen quickly made his way to Justin, examining the young Toreador. It didn't take him long to announce that Justin's pain was false labor though he expressed some concern to Brian.

"Too much excitement can speed up the process," Daedalus explained. "The unborn needs more time to grow within Justin. The pregnancy must be prolonged much further."

"I'm right here!" Justin snapped as he rose, his face red with anger. "Stop acting like I'm comatose."

"I could take offense to that," Sasha said, though few heard her.

"You shouldn't be so bitchy," Buffy remarked. "Your friends are just trying to look out for you, I mean, even me...against my better judgment, mind you, felt a natural instinct to protect a baby."

"I'm not a baby!"

"I meant your-"

"I'm gonna kill you!" Justin growled, turning to Brian. "I can't believe you still haven't killed that bitch. She hit me Bri!"

"I'm sorry, Justin," Matt softly apologized. "I should have protected you."

"You were just doing to your job," Justin replied, though harsher than he had intended. "And you didn't punch me in the face. You also haven't been trying to kill me!"

"Justin, calm down," Brian began, only to be cut off.

"Are you blind?" Justin snapped. "Just because she stands for good doesn't mean she's good for us or our people, Bri. She's a Slayer. She can't help what she is. In the end she has no choice but to try and kill us...our baby!"

"What's a Slayer?" Sasha asked, shrugging her shoulders.

"A little blonde bint who ain't good for much, but nag and a shag," Spike replied. "Oh yeah, she shops too."

"Hey," Buffy said defensively. "Mommy over there's way hormonal."

"Hello?" Sasha snipped, mocking the Slayer. "Princess is...like totally pregnant and when you're like totally pregnant you have, like, a total right to be hormonal and stuff."

"I so don't talk like that."

"The fact remains that Justin must be tended to," Daedalus said, trying to get the conversation back on track. "He needs to be protected and preferably not placed in a vulnerable situation as he was tonight."

"Yeah," Brian sighed, knowing full well he allowed the situation to occur in the first place.

"Stop treating me like some helpless woman!" Justin screamed, clinching his fists until he bled. "I'm a man and the Toreador Primogen!"

"What does toreador primo-geni-ture mean?" Buffy asked innocently. "Is that like a club?"

"I think he's the first born in the line of bullfighters," Spike chuckled sarcastically. "Or he could be the ancestor to a bullfighter...I'm not sure entirely."

"Oh," Buffy replied, glancing to Willow. "Is he being serious?"

"No," Willow answered, smiling at the pregnant male. "What it means is that Justin's a very powerful vampire...who's a man and even though he's pregnant, he can kick all of our butts if he wanted to."

Buffy began to protest, but didn't when she saw the look on Willow's and Brian's faces. She almost rolled her eyes, but instead chose to smile largely and agree. "Absolutely," Buffy agreed. "Justin, you're way with the...and the...I'm sure if we fought you'd so win."

"You're all mocking me," Justin said so softly most did not hear him. His eyes raged with anger as blood dripped from his palms. He could feel Brian trying to get near him, but at that moment he needed his distance, pushing Brian back with his mind alone, until his lover tripped on the stairs behind him.

The room shook as branches from the invading tree withdrew in the direction from which it had once invaded the loft, leaving a breach. The rose bush, on the other hand, snaked its way across the room, covering the holes and most the windows on the main wall. When the fresh smell of roses enveloped Justin's senses, the young Toreador turned his attention to the one he detested. Without a nod or a word, Buffy was tossed across the room, her back slamming into the kitchen's island, forcing her head into the marble and her feet into the pots and pans hanging above. She landed on the floor with a crash and a groan.

Justin had every intention on assaulting Buffy until the Slayer lay dead. The only thing that could have stopped him, did. Brian's arms enfolded him and his mate's husky voice whispered into his ear. All he could smell was Brian and it was enough to make his knees melt. By the time he could even attempt to focus back on Buffy, all of Justin's strength had been depleted. There was nothing left to do but curl into Brian's arms and allow his mate to take them to bed.

Brian held Justin until his mate stopped breathing. It was then he knew Justin had finally fallen asleep. He knew he should probably get up, but decided that he needed time to think. Holding Justin closely, his mind drifted to the possible apocalypse and the repercussions it could have on his life. Sure, it would absolve him from his parental responsibilities, but he didn't want to think about that. He was an admitted asshole, but even he would never wish harm on his child, any of his children...or childer for that matter. He wasn't Craig Taylor, nor would he ever become such a bastard. Instead, Brian thought of things he had more control over: The Ventrue Primogen. He wanted Chris dead, and though he hadn't said anything yet, his mind was working overtime thinking about how he would make the Ventrue dust.

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Running for dear life down a dark alley, Chris pushed aside a tin garbage can and slid in a puddle of muddy water, falling to the concrete. He quickly picked himself off the ground and though he struggled, he continued down the alley past cardboard boxes some unfortunate souls called home. He would have hid in one if he thought he could have. But there is no hiding from Kindred, especially when you've just tried to kill the Prince.

He knew there was a presence around him and his only safety was within the confines of the Ventrue Headquarters. Sadly, he wasn't entirely sure about that. He was certain a Blood Hunt would be called on him, but at the moment all he could think of was saving his neck in the here and now. Turning into another alley, Chris looked behind him to make sure that there were no Tremere following. There weren't, but while he was distracted, he crashed head on with a teenage boy.

"Get the fuck outta my way!" Chris screeched, getting to his feet.

"Someone should teach you some manners," the young man replied, standing. "Luckily for you I have nothing to do right now."

"Really?" Chris growled, showing his fangs. "I eat little boys like you for lunch."

"Is this where I'm supposed to be scared?" The young man asked. "I'm sort of new to these parts, so you're just going to have to fill me in."

"I'm a vampire," Chris growled, "and the more your heart beats, the hungrier I get, human."

Chris charged the young, skinny man who was faster than expected. Once he was caught, Chris grabbed the boy only to be punched, hard, in the face. He scrambled to his feet only to be kicked so violently that he crashed into a dumpster behind him.

"You little fucker!" Chris swore.

"Such language from a Ventrue," came a voice from the shadows of the dark alley. "I would expect more from one of my Clan."

"Who the fuck are you?" Chris asked, standing.

"It doesn't concern you," the voice replied. "All that should concern you is taking me to the Ventrue Primogen of this backwater town."

"I am the Ventrue Primogen!"

Chris didn't see the voice that laughed at him but it didn't matter, it was humiliating just the same. He charged the voice only to be struck by the young man once again. Apparently, the teenager had been kind in the last encounter. He was not being so polite this round, breaking Chris' knee with a stomp of his foot. Chris did try to get up only to be punched so hard in the face that he lost all consciousness.

"This is your fearless leader?" The boy mocked. "You've got to be kidding me."

"He's not my leader," the voice replied with a sigh. "It's because of guys like him I chose to distance myself from the Clan. Well, that and..."

"What?"

The voice paused before resigning to the answer, "They didn't like me much."

"I wonder why," the young man snorted, picking up Chris. "So, we off to that Prince guy you were talking about?"

"I'm not fond of Tremeres," the voice told the boy. "Our Clan's dislike for the Tremere goes back almost as far as our distaste for the Malkavians...or theirs for the Assamites."

"Your Clan," the young man corrected. "I'm just here to help save the world."

"Our Clan."

"Whatever," the young man scoffed. "Where to next?"

"To meet the person in charge of this town."

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Brian strolled into Michael's room without knocking. He sat next to his old friend on an old couch without a word.

"What's my punishment?" Michael asked.

"Punishment?" Brian replied, feigning ignorance. "For what?"

"You know what I did."

"What would that be, Mikey?"

"I fucked up your loft," Michael sighed. "I hoped you just might forgive me for creating a jungle in your loft, but then I forgot to magically create Tarzan."

"That would have been nice," Brian remarked, still hiding any emotion. "Especially since my trip to Babylon was cut short."

"I heard...the Ventrue?"

"Who else?" Brian replied, glancing over to his best friend. He tried to tap into his childe's thoughts, but the spell that had gotten Michael into so much trouble had faded. He wanted to sense the fledgling's feelings but that, too, seemed to be out of his capability. Instead, he waited for Michael to say something, so when his childe was silent, he leaned against his fledgling's side and smirked, "Next time you try that spell, could you grow some Iris'. They go much better with the décor."

"I was thinking Gardenias," Michael suggested, leaning his head on Brian's shoulder. "Though you know that's not what I was trying to do."

"Guessed as much," Brian said, finally sensing something from him. He smiled. Michael seemed content. "So this is when you tell me what you were planning."

"A growth spell," Michael lied.

"What for?" Brian wondered aloud, looking at his best friend. When Michael glanced downward, almost shamefully, Brian snorted trying not to laugh. "You do know bottoms don't have to worry about their size, just as long as they're tight."

"Yeah right!"

"I've fucked guys with small dicks before."

"Twice?" Michael snorted.

"I don't fuck guys twice."

"Since when?" Michael asked, looking at Brian, only to see his Sire immediately glance at the floor. "Justin?" When Brian didn't respond, Michael knew his answer. There was no way to fight this, not right now. Instead of pressing the matter like he would normally do, Michael decided to pull back. He finally had a connection, however small, with Brian again. He didn't want to lose that now. "Remember Jacob?"

Brian thought about it and answered, "Freckles, redhead, kinda stuttered when he saw me?"

"Yeah," Michael sighed. "He used to take these pills to try and make his dick larger."

"What?!"

"No shit," Michael replied, happy to get the conversation back in a lighter mood. "I found them in his sock drawer once. It didn't seem to make a difference though."

"You fell asleep while he was fucking you, right?"

"Yeah..."

"It could never happen with me."

"I'm sure Justin would agree," Michael chuckled. When he saw Brian's smile fade he added, "How is he? I felt some sorta pain earlier."

"You really care?"

"Of course," Michael replied with a sincere look. "He has a part of you inside of him."

Brian watched Michael's face and smiled. He knew his best friend and his lover would never really be the best of buddies, but any small step would help. He had to be cautious though; Brian knew how much Michael disliked Justin.

"It was a contraction or something. He's not in labor, though."

"Good to hear."

"That's even better to hear," Brian said with a smile. He kissed Michael full on the lips and stood up. "I have business; you should really practice your spell work. It needs some help."

Michael smiled until Brian left, feeling good about their conversation. The moment his Sire was gone, however, he brought out a pen and notepad. He immediately began to write down the name of every Clan he knew, but he was well aware it wouldn't be enough. He had to be precise.

Not only was there still so much to do, Michael had to be careful. Although he hadn't seen her, he knew Sasha was up and about. Her loud mouth could be heard from the first to fourth floors of The Loft. He knew that she would she be curious and vocal about any and everything, especially about magical events that had no obvious explanation. This meant that Michael had to find a new place to continue his spell. He had an idea, but there were a few other tasks he had to finish before another location could be sought out. There was still so much to do in such a short time...

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"So," Sasha began, walking slowly around Buffy. "A Slayer's job is to go around killing Kindred, huh? Seems like a crappy way to make a living."

"Sadly, I have to agree," Buffy concurred with a sigh. "Life seems to always come second."

"Cry me a bloody river, luv," Spike smirked. "There hasn't been a time when you haven't stepped up and kicked the winning goal."

"Doing it and wanting to do it are two different things," Buffy explained to her former lover. "Kind of like my pseudo relationship with you."

"It was the best you ever had," Spike retorted confidently.

"Angel was better."

"Angel was better at killing your mates, luv," Spike snapped, a bit offended. "But then my dear ole Sire never did respond well to love...with or without ‘is makeshift soul."

"You're discussing Angelus?" Isis asked, strolling into the room.

"Mr. Dark and Broodiness ‘imself," Spike answered, watching Isis. "Not only does he have the Big Sticky, the bloody bastard is stuck with that nasty human soul."

"Yes," Isis agreed. "At the time Tremere and Ventrue coexisted without much trouble. He would have been of great use to his people and to the Tremere for that matter. Sadly, when his time came he got the ‘Big Sticky', as Spike so aptly put it, and became ineffectual. However, in the end Angelus showed his prowess and became the pride of the Tzimisce."

"What do you mean?" Willow asked. "Infected?"

"His blood was tainted and poisoned by the Tzimisce," Isis replied. "I'll put it in terms you'll understand...he had kooties."

"Guess you should be getting yourself checked," Spike shot out at Buffy. "Been itching anywhere dark and warm?"

"OK, I'm straight and you're grossing me out," Sasha said. She sat next to Willow and addressed the eldest in the room. "How is his blood infected and by what?"

"What's the big commotion?" Em wondered aloud. "Aren't you guys immortal? I mean there must be a reason Brian reminds me about this every time I see him?"

"Is it like crabs?" Ted asked. "Cause one time I almost did it with a guy whose crotch looked like-"

"It is soooo important for your lifespan, that you so not finish that statement," Buffy interrupted. She turned to Isis and asked, "Can you just explain what you mean?"

Isis thought about what she should tell the humans. From what she knew, Buffy and Angelus had had a torrid affair until he lost his human soul and became one of the infected once again. Yet, even in his deranged state, Angelus kept the Masquerade intact. Nothing really ever made sense with him. Buffy, on the other hand, did not have Isis fooled. She was smarter than she looked and useful in certain circumstances. Isis had a plan and it seemed that she must divulge some information to see it come to fruition.

"Angelus was Embraced by a trumpet named Darla," Isis began.

"Killed her," Buffy shot out. "Well...the first time."

"Though borne a Ventrue, Darla was Embraced by an old Nosferatu who called himself The Master..."

"Killed him," Buffy proudly stated. "Twice."

"To keep Angelus and Darla obedient, The Master (as he called himself) bound them by blood," Isis continued, ignoring the Slayer's outbursts. "A Blood Bond isn't just about exchanging blood, it is about forever connecting one Kindred to another. This gives one power and makes the other subservient."

Willow thought about what Isis said and knew exactly what it meant. She was Blood Bound to Brian. Though a part of her was terrified, another part of her felt safe. There was so much she still didn't know.

"Royal Blood," Isis announced, knowing she was telling some of her people's secrets, "or Kindred lineage means little when your blood is tainted. Though you are not one of us, Slayer, I will tell you this...The Master, though old, was outcast from his people and our society long before the time of Angelus. He had allowed himself to be Bound by Blood to a retched Tzimisce, those putrid vampires who you take so much pride in killing.

"When the Master was infected, he did everything in his power to infect those of importance in our society. Because the elder Kindred knew better, he could only go after the mortal Royal Bloods."

Isis chuckled as she remembered those times. Though she had been young, she recalled having to protect her Sire's children. She also remembered the outcome of The Master's attempts to taint the Royal Bloods.

"He only succeeded once," Isis said, shaking her head. "Darla was a nice find, but she had been cast away from her people as a mortal girl. Though she was one of us...her lifestyle..."

"She was a whore," Spike clarified with a smile.

"-caused her to be infected by a disease as a mortal, therefore unworthy to be Embraced into Kindred and made immortal."

"You don't bite people that have..." Buffy wondered aloud, "...kooties?"

"Or that are dying," Em replied. "Just ask Brian's dad-or stepdad, I should say. I heard he's on his deathbed as we speak."

"Precisely, no person shall be Embraced if dying or infected by disease," Isis stated. "This is why the Master's conquest of Darla was not contested."

"Bitch never was worth anything," Spike spat out.

"I knew her as well and must agree. Angelus on the other hand was the Master's only true conquest," Isis informed the group. "Though he was a drunkard and a womanizer, he had Royal Blood. There are rumors that he was also diseased as a mortal, but it isn't entirely clear. It could be the Ventrue were justifying the loss to The Master, though Liam could have very well had any number of ailments."

"Who's Liam?" Sasha asked. "I'm getting confused here."

"Angelus' born name," Isis explained. "He was named after his grandfather...a man for whom I had great respect. Sadly, Angelus' father had no desire to be with his people and decided to become a Godly man."

"Like Brian's bitchy Mama?" Em asked.

"Exactly."

Buffy thought about everything she had just learned. She thought it could be a lie, but wondered why Isis would bother. It didn't make any sense. What was Royal Blood? What did Isis mean by mortal Kindred? What did this mean about Angel?

"Why are you telling us this?" Buffy asked. "I mean aren't I the enemy? And you've been way hush-hush so far. What's the skinny?"

"The skinny is, as you've so elegantly put it," Isis replied, "that I found out a few things about this apocalypse your Watchers notified you of."

Isis rolled her eyes when the group began talking, most asking questions, at once. Everyone was interested in what she had found out, but this was not the time, not yet...

"What the hell are you waiting for?" Sasha finally screamed out above everyone's chattering. "Spill the beans, chickie!"

"We must wait," Isis replied calmly.

"What the hell for?" Sasha and Buffy asked together.

"Our Prince."

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Michael sat staring at a blank piece of paper. He knew what he had to do, but his mind wandered to what always seemed to be on his mind: Brian. His best friend, his Sire, his dream was always there, yet out of his reach. There was a time when he would spend hours with Brian, smoking pot and talking about nothing or other times when they'd go to Babylon and dance all night long, laughing the night away. It seemed so long ago. That was before he became one of the undead, before Brian became Prince or any of them had met a twink named Justin.

The moment Michael thought of the fair haired Toreador, he snarled as he thought of the pain the boy had caused him. Michael wasn't as stupid as everyone thought he was. He knew it had been a great while since Brian or Justin had fed from him or he from them. The link had been diminishing for quite some time. Michael would have protested, but for the goals he had to accomplish. So, Michael wrote down each clan as he knew them...

Tremere

Toreador

Ventrue

Gangrel

Brujah

Malkavian

Nosferatu

Assamite

Tzimisce

Lasombra

Giovanni

Ravnos

Followers of Set

Michael crossed out Brujah and Gangrel. He had already successfully used their blood to complete his spell. There was still something missing, he thought. Maybe there was another Clan he was missing. Maybe he had forgotten a Clan. There had to be something missing since he needed a pair of warring Clans for each week, for seven weeks. But there were only 13 Clans!

Michael left his room and ventured outside with his book under his arm. Staring at the buildings around him, his eyes fell upon the window to Lazarus' room across the street. He bit his bottom lip and went to see his mentor. He passed the guards without issue and went upstairs to where the elder lived and knocked on the door.

"Come in, Michael," Lazarus said from behind the door.

Michael entered Lazarus' room for the first time and was surprised by the cleanliness of the elder man's room. For some reason he had expected something different. There were expensive items abound, from the original Renaissance paintings to the hand woven Oriental rugs. It was a room filled with wealth acquired over centuries.

"Nice place," Michael complimented.

"You're not here to redecorate are you?"

"No," Michael chuckled, following the voice into an office.

Lazarus sat at an old wooden desk, writing. The room was illuminated by a single candle, placed close by. Michael watched the Kindred elder finish his thoughts and lock his journal, using a few well spoken words.

"I thought we Tremere are supposed to be modernists," Michael said, sitting in a chair in front of the desk. "Want me to turn the light on?"

"I've written my memoirs by candlelight since I was a child," Lazarus said, leaning back in his chair. "I will not change that now." He cleared his throat and crossed his legs. "What is it that you need?"

Michael answered Lazarus' question by handing him his list of Clan names. He waited as Lazarus examined the page with arrows and lines pointing from one Clan to another.

"So, did I get them right?" Michael asked.

"What is this?"

"Warring Clans," Michael answered. "See I got it this way..."

Tremere vs. Ventrue

Toreador vs. Nosferatu

Gangrel vs. Brujah

Malkavian vs. Giovanni

Assamite vs. Ravnos

Tzimisce vs. Lasombra

Followers of Set

"Were you guessing?" Lazarus laughed. "Though we fight with the Ventrue, they are in no way our ancient adversary."

"I could use a little help..."

Lazarus looked at the page and shook his head. He took his pen and began to rewrite each Clan and the Clan they have warred with since the beginning. He knew Michael needed some tutoring, but by the looks of the page before him, he could see that Michael a required a more stringent education.

"There," Lazarus said, returning the paper to Michael. "You will see that Tremere have always and will always war with the Assamites. We stole their ability to live and they've not forgiven us for it yet, nor will they ever."

Tremere vs. Assamite

Toreador vs. Nosferatu

Gangrel vs. Brujah

Malkavian vs. Ventrue

Followers of Set vs. Ravnos

Tzimisce vs. Lasombra

Giovanni

Michael looked at the paper and asked, "What about the Giovanni?"

"They have no qualms with any Clan," Lazarus replied. "They have never been in any conflict with any Clans because if they do, all Clans will war with them. The Giovanni stay out of Kindred politics and stay in Italy, nothing more, nothing less. Why is it so important?"

"Seven wars," Michael answered. "I just thought there was one more."

"Hmm," Lazarus pondered. "There shall always be a war between the Prince and the Caitiff. Even in the time before the Camarilla, the war between the Lords and clanless raged. The thin blooded have always been a burden for those in power, especially the Royal Bloods."

"That's it!"

"What's it?"

Michael didn't answer, he just rushed out of Lazarus' apartment. He seemed to be on the right track. The only problem for him was to find the blood of each Clan. After thinking about it for a moment, Michael decided that wasn't his only problem. His ‘brother' Matt appeared to be bigger trouble than he had ever anticipated. It didn't matter than Matt appeared to be everyone's favorite, Michael knew he'd always have a special place with Brian, but his ‘brother' always seemed to be suspicious of him. Right now that was a thorn in his side, especially since Brian seemed to favor Matt for the moment. Michael would change that soon...very soon.

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Brian strolled into the room, not bothering to look at anyone but his youngest childe. He stopped in front of Matt and brushed a few loose hairs from his childe's face aside.

"You did exactly what I told you," Brian assured the fledgling. "So now that Sasha's awake and Cash can focus, I want you to learn from him, especially since Lazarus is better at plotting than fighting."

"Yes, Sire."

"What?" Sasha asked, feigning shock. "No kudos here? I did wake up from a fucking coma to save your skinny designer clad ass."

"Me too, mate," Spike agreed. "I came, I conquered, I kicked the shite out of vamps I wouldn't bother pissing on."

"I killed some of those guys and brought your pregnant boyfriend home," Buffy added only have Brian glare at her. "Sure I punched him, but who wouldn't have?" The Slayer looked around the room innocently and added, "I know some of you wanted to do the same thing."

"I watched, yet stood around and did nothing," Em chimed in. "Well...except criticize those Ventrues' fashion sense and their audacity to try and pass themselves off as proper gay men."

"Can you all shut the fuck up?" Brian replied, rolling his eyes. "Thanking the masses isn't really my thing and as good as I am, I can't suck multiple cock at one time."

"I've heard otherwise," Em scoffed under his breath, though everyone heard him. "I've heard the tales of the great Brian Kinney..."

Brian ignored Em and patted his childe on the cheek, commending the fledgling on his good work. If the others wanted compliments, they should know by now that Brian wasn't their man. As far as he was concerned, Sasha and Cash were just doing their jobs. Spike, on the other hand, was showing his loyalty. If the platinum blond hadn't, either Brian or Spike would be dead. In short, Spike did himself a favor since Brian had no intention of losing. Problem solved. Buffy was the Slayer and didn't deserve anything from him. He was about to commend Willow, but a quick nod from the witch told him he didn't need to. That made him proud. Brian knew he had to assign Willow a mentor to teach her more about Kindred, but...

"First things first," Brian said, ignoring Em altogether. "Cash, I need you to find that prick, Chris whatever his last name is, Primogen of the Ventrue Clan, and rip off his balls."

"Is that an official decree of Blood Hunt?" Sasha chuckled.

"It is," Brian announced. "Ted, call Justine at Vanguard and tell her to put the word out about the Blood Hunt."

"Got it," Ted replied, wondering when he became Brian's lackey yet feeling strangely proud.

"As for my grand estate here," Brian continued, "apparently we can thank Mikey for the extra shrubbery. You can also thank him for fucking up his spell so badly that he accidentally woke you up, Sasha."

"He did it?" Sasha asked.

"Yep."

"I suppose he's got to be good for something," Sasha snickered. "What was he doing anyway?"

"He was trying out a growth spell," Brian replied with a chuckle. "One that failed miserably."

The group laughed without a word. Everyone knew why Michael would want a growth spell, well, except for Buffy and Willow who easily caught on when Spike grabbed his crotch and moved his hand in mock self gratification.

Matt, on the other hand, kept quiet. He watched his Sire and didn't know if Brian completely believed Michael's story. One thing was for sure: Matt did not believe, in any way, one word out of his brother's mouth. Unless, that is, his conversation was anything negative about Justin. However, it wasn't his job to investigate Michael, it was Brian's.

Brian sat down and motioned for Matt to sit at his side, which his childe did. He listened to the group chat, but kept his eye on Isis. As always, his mentor was focused on the situation at hand. She had a plan...she always did.

"I know you're pissed that we went to Babylon," Brian began telepathically. "But can we get over it until later?"

"Schedule in your arse chewing later," Isis replied, using her mind. "And I don't mean a proper gesture from Justin."

"I would hope not," Brian smirked.

"Do you recall our discussion about the Slayer and her infected former lover, Angelus?"

"Sure," Brian recalled, still using his telepathy. "Darla, The Master and tainted Royal Blood...only now there's a spell that can cure it."

"I've been doing some plotting while you've been chatting with the little trouble maker," Isis informed him. "It will get the Slayer to do what we need her to do when the time comes."

"Is this about that stupid fucking apocalypse?"

"That and other very viable threats-"

"They're talking," Sasha announced. "You know I hate it when you guys talk, but don't actually talk."

"You can do that too?" Willow asked amazed. "It's kinda fun using telepathy."

"We share the same blood," Brian replied to the young witch, smiling seeing her face glow. "There's a lot more you'll learn when the right time shows itself."

"Tremeres always get to do the cool stuff," Sasha sighed. "All we Brujah get to do is kick some ass...hold on...I actually like doing that."

"What's a Brujah?" Buffy asked.

"A loudmouth redhead," Spike answered, turning to Willow. "All you need to do is shoot off at the mouth and you'll be as obnoxious as that bint."

"Fuck you," Sasha quipped back.

"Anytime, anywhere, luv," Spike retorted.

"You're lucky Cash isn't here," Sasha replied with a sly smile. "He'd kick your Ventrue ass all over the place."

"Now, now, kiddies," Brian said before anyone had more useless comments. "We could either listen to a bunch of bickering, and honestly I'd rather watch two dykes fuck, or we could listen to what Isis found out about this fucking apocalypse that so rudely interrupted my fucking life...and me fucking, period."

"Thank you, Brian," Isis began standing up and addressing the group. "Justicar Beg sent me a book he obtained from a high elder for the Ravnos Clan, deep in gypsy territory in Europe. This book tells of a prophecy called ‘The Rising of the New Family', which would bring upon this apocalypse Buffy has been trying to stop."

"The Watchers were right," Buffy replied, feeling vindicated.

"They were," Isis agreed. "They were also correct in assessing that it had to do with a magical birth of the first."

"The first Slayer?" Buffy asked. "I've met her already."

"Death," Isis read, after opening a small tattered book. "Death will birth the Bringer of Life. The Bringer of Life will annihilate childer of The Beast, Father of all Kindred..."

"The apocalypse is a vampire apocalypse?" Buffy wondered aloud, a whole lot happier than before. "You're joking right?"

"No, but I wasn't finished yet," Isis answered, her face stoic as she glanced at a stone faced Brian. She flipped a few pages forward and continued to read, "The Bringer of Life shall have His children as slaves, feeding upon their flesh, inflicting upon them what He had inflicted upon The Bringer of Life..."

"What did He inflict upon the Bringer of Life?" Em asked.

"You don't want to know," Isis replied.

"Who's He?" Buffy asked.

"He?" Isis chuckled. "He goes by many names. He, Him, Ancient One, Jehovah, Yahweh, Allah...God...whatever you choose to call him."

"So this Bringer of Life is going to come down," Em gasped, "Kill all the Kindred and enslave all the humans?"

"Pretty much sums that up," Isis said.

"This Bringer of Life is not really good at his job, is he?" Willow stated. "Shouldn't he try to, you know, bring life? He could make babies, flowers or little puppies with stubby tails."

"I'm taking it that's not on his agenda," Brian sighed, leaning back in his seat. "One thing is certain about this Bringer of Life."

"What's that?"

"He has to make some space for whatever it is he's bringing."

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Julian brought out a cigarette and flicked the lighter, frustrated he was unable to cause a spark. He stood in a dried out lake under a small wooden bridge, waiting on a damp Philadelphia night for Craig Taylor. He had been waiting for ten minutes and questioned his sanity for going to see the Prince's enemy once again. All he needed to do was lay low for a decade or two as Brian made examples of every Ventrue Primogen to step foot in Pittsburgh. But here he stood waiting for Craig Taylor, a man he did not trust, but had no choice except to follow.

"Sorry about that," Craig said, skidding down a slight hill to get to Craig. "Had some things to tie up and kill before I could come."

"It's about time."

"Don't start your complaining," Craig warned the Justicar. "Right now you need me."

"As you need me," Julian countered.

"I've done my part," Craig replied. "I got rid of Beg didn't I? That was something short of a miracle to accomplish if I don't say so myself."

"How about you don't say so," Julian snapped. "It's not safe to speak his name. He has ears everywhere."

"He's in Europe," Craig laughed. "And though the man's powerful, he can't eavesdrop from there. He's got his hands full anyway. I called in a few favors that will have him trying to save one of his childer's life."

"I thought Brian was his only."

"Birth childe," Craig corrected. "He's got a handful of childer to look after. And speaking of childer, have you heard from Chris?"

"No."

"I wonder where that boy is," Craig started, only to stop when he heard a crash.

Craig glanced up and saw his guards pummeled by a human teenaged boy. When he looked down, he saw Chris' beaten body at his feet. Before he had a chance to react, the boy was by a man's side. He could not see the man's face, only a sturdy frame wearing a trench coat, highlighted by the brightness of the moon. However, his face didn't matter. Both Craig and Julian knew the scent of the man.

"I know who you are," Julian said.

"Julian Luna and Craig Taylor," the man chuckled. "It hasn't been long enough."

"Feeling's likewise," Craig replied. "Though your timing couldn't be more perfect."

"What would you need me for?" The man asked.

"We need a Ventrue Primogen," Craig answered.

"And not have that piece of work representing our people?" The man asked sarcastically, motioning to Chris' limp body. "I'm surprised." He took a step forward and placed his arm on the young man's shoulder. "You know why I was exiled. Why me?"

"We're running out of bodies," Craig replied honestly. "We could also use someone with your reputation for blood and treachery. The Prince of Pittsburgh is a thorn in our side. I've known you to remove thorns much bigger than this fledgling Tremere."

"You're not answering my question," the man snapped. "Why would you want me? I'm tainted."

"With what, Tzimisce blood?" Julian asked, shaking his head. He wasn't sure what's Craig's plans were, but he'd play along...for now.

"Or that human heart of yours," Craig added.

"Both," Angel replied, walking towards the men. His son, Conner, stood by his side and waited for either man to make a move, though none did. "I ask you again...why would you want me?"

"We want the Scourge of Europe," Craig said. "We need someone strong enough, brave enough..."

"And stupid enough?" Angel asked.

"To get rid of this Tremere Prince," Craig conceded, "yes."

"He's that untouchable?" Angel wondered aloud.

"Yes."

"No one's that untouchable," Angel disagreed.

"Prove me wrong," Craig replied.

"What's in it for me?"

"What do you want?"

"Hmmm..." Angel pondered.

"I'll give you two million dollars to become the Ventrue Primogen in Pittsburgh," Craig announced. "When you've done that, I'll give you four more to kill the Prince."

Angel smiled so wickedly, it made Craig take a step back. He needed them to see that though he was tainted, he was still Kindred. But that was a small task. He had several larger ones to accomplish on his trip.

"Deal."

Chapter 9: Week Two: Strange Fathers

For some reason Justin felt more comfortable leaning against the stone figure of Bartox than on the couch or the bed. He drummed his finger against the Gargoyle's paw and listened as Melanie complained about her Brian woes. He rolled his eyes thinking she didn't know the least of it. At least he wasn't alone; it seemed Emmett was as bored with the conversation as he was.

"We're the ones who take care of Gus," Mel continued. "We're his parents. All Brian does is order us around and pretend he gives a shit. Justin, you and he are about to have your own child...tell him he needs to loosen his grip on us. You two will have your own family...you won't need ours."

"I can't tell Brian what to do," Justin said calmly.

"Who can?" Em snorted. "Well, unless you're naked, have a nice ass and the only words that come out of your mouth are, ‘please fuck me'."

"Or ‘Can I suck your cock?'" Justin laughed.

"Or possibly, ‘Did you know that Dolce and Gabanna have a new line of designer shirts out?'" Em added, slumping down into Brian's leather Italian sofa. "Of course a naked man with cheeks parted would have to tell him that, but that's beside the point."

"I'm being serious!" Mel snapped.

"So are we," Em retorted.

Mel went to Justin and leaned down to speak to him face to face. She didn't want to be pushy, but she didn't know what else to do. She was frustrated. She couldn't stand being stuck with nowhere else to go.

"Justin, you have to help us!" Mel pleaded. "Talk to him! You're the only one he even pretends to listen to."

"That's enough," Em responded, standing up and heading towards Mel. He waited for her face him before he grabbed her by the arm and drug her out of the loft. He closed the door and whispered hoping Justin wouldn't hear him. "Stop it."

"What the hell are you doing?"

"You better listen to me," Em whispered. "That ugly guy says that we need to keep Justin stress free, which means that you need to stop hounding him."

"I'm just talking to him."

"You're just leaving," Em declared when he saw Matt walk up the stairs behind Mel.

"I'm-" Mel began only to stop herself. She saw the look in Matt's eyes and cringed. She had so much more to say, to both Em and Justin, but she knew she wouldn't be allowed to say it then. Maybe later, she thought as she walked down the stairs, resigned to the fact that Brian won this round.

"Another problem with Brian?" Matt asked after Melanie had disappeared down the stairs.

"Isn't there always?"

"I worry about her," Matt said, opening the door for Emmett and closing it behind them.

"I worry about Brian," Justin responded before Em could.

"Me too," Matt agreed with a smile. "I worry about you too."

"It's your job," Justin chuckled.

"True," Matt conceded. "But I like my job and it is an honor to protect you and my Sire's unborn."

"You're such a sweet talker," Em said taking his seat on the sofa again. "Feel free to sweet talk your cute little ass right over next to me anytime."

"Well, you don't have to worry about protecting me anymore," Justin declared. "I'm housebound."

"Well, at least until the baby's born," Em corrected. "Then you can go out and cause as much havoc as you want. Then Matt can get all worried about you again with good reason."

"I will always worry about Master Justin," Matt proclaimed. "As much as I worry about some others."

"That's not such a bad thing," Justin said, running his fingers across Bartox's stone claws. He looked knowingly at Matt and smiled. "Especially since I hope you're watching who I think you should be keeping a very close eye on."

"Trying to," Matt replied, "I just need..."

"He probably won't do it, but will you take one from me?" Justin asked.

"It's my job," Matt answered with a smile.

"I order you to watch Michael," Justin replied. "Hopefully you can catch him doing something."

"Oh, I've caught him doing some things," Em said kicking his feet up on Brian's designer coffee table. "And I was almost blinded by the sight of him and that dildo..."

"Enough!" Justin gasped at the mere mention of Michael having sex. "It's bad enough I have cravings for Malkavian blood, but picturing the whiny one...uh! If he had the chance he'd get rid of me in a second."

Matt kneeled down to Justin's level, taking the Toreador's hand and firmly kissing it. He had so much he wanted to say, but found all his words lacking. When he saw Justin smile at him, he was reassured. He needn't say a thing: Justin understood. Matt would protect his Sire's mate from Michael. It seemed rather silly, but Matt knew that Michael was a real threat, even though to what extent wasn't known...yet.

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Michael stood in the middle of a deserted Pittsburgh street standing above a manhole. He stared down not wanting to go, but knowing no other way. After opening the cover, he made his way down the dirty metal ladder until he stood on wet concrete below. He looked at his hand written map and followed the direction for what seemed like a mile. He went down a corridor, then past a metal door, down another ladder and down another corridor filled with so much water he felt like he was wading down a stream. When he finally got to his destination he stood in front of a wooden door with the words ‘Keep Out' on the front.

He felt like a fool, but Michael knocked on the door just the same. After waiting several minutes with no one answering, he opened the decrepit door to see that it was just a stairway to another part of the sewage system. Michael closed the door behind him and went up a half flight of stairs then down a long passageway where he once again stood in front of another door.

"Hello?" Michael said after pounding on the door. "Is there anyone here?"

"What do you want?" A woman's voice replied.

"It's Michael. We spoke on the phone the other day."

"That we did," the woman said, opening the door. The pleasant voice seemed not to fit the grotesque figure that accompanied it. Her hair was thin and her nose long with warts and other things Michael couldn't describe. She had but one tooth in her moldy mouth, which she scratched with her long, wrinkled fingers. She smelled of urine and feces, but it seemed not to bother her. She was focused on the issue at hand. "Do you have that item we discussed? You shall get nothing unless you have the item I so desire!"

"I have it."

"Good," the woman replied, going to a cauldron and throwing on a few logs of wood to get the fire hotter. "You do know not to tell my Primogen. Daedalus will not be pleased to know one of his followers is practicing the arts without his permission."

"No problem," Michael told the woman, bringing out a small cloth bag and emptying its contents. "This is what you ordered: human hair, fingernail clippings and a drop of the woman's blood from where the other ingredients were taken. Just so you know, I got a small vial of blood just in case. You never know."

"Perfect," the woman screeched, taking the ingredients and placing them into her cauldron. "If this works, our relationship may prove beneficial for us both in the future."

"You know what I need..."

Michael watched as the Nosferatu cut herself, allowing her blood to drip into a beaker. The woman then closed the beaker with a rubber stopper and handed it to Michael, which he took.

"Muto exortus," the woman chanted as she dipped an old cup into her brew. She drank the hot liquid and then screamed in agony.

Michael took a step back as the Nosferatu changed. Her once ugly features morphed into a woman whose beauty impressed even Michael. It made sense now. He needed her blood and she needed to be beautiful. If all that it took was hair, nail clippings and some blood for her help, he was her man.

"I will need another dose," the woman said, pulling a tarp from the wall to expose a mirror. She admired her figure with a smile then turned to Michael. "I will see you in a week where you will bring me more...from the same woman."

"You get me what I need, I'll get you what you need."

"Blood from a Setite," she mused.

"And from Ravnos."

"Easily accomplished," she laughed. "Any other blood you care for, Michael, student of Lazarus?"

"I'll tell you later," Michael replied, backing out of the room. "But now I only have one thing on my mind."

The woman turned back to the mirror when Michael left and smiled. She had an idea what Michael needed, but was sure he wanted something more than that. Most men did. Just like her, she guessed this was all for a man and the young Tremere was in great need of the most important ingredient: blood.

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Brian ran his palm across his glass of blood, dipping his finger in the liquid only slightly. He wanted to drink, but didn't think his stomach could handle it. His other hand gripped the telephone as he listened to his mother. There was something about talking to his mother that made Brian want to rip out someone's throat and drink them dry. She had that effect on him.

"You have to come see him," Joanie continued. "He's on his death bed and he won't last much longer. Brian, he's asking for you."

"I thought he'd be dead by now," Brian replied dryly.

"He bribed some Kindred to feed him," Joanie explained. "Some hedonistic Toreador. I told him it was a way to hell, but he did it anyway. Son-"

"Don't go there."

"He's your father!"

"He isn't shit," Brian said softly. His instinct was to yell, but he wanted to keep his cool. His mother had the ability to make him lose it and normally he'd fall into her trap. Only now he had more than his reputation as ‘Liberty Avenue's biggest stud' to protect, he was the Prince. He was in control. "Tell Jack it was nice knowing him, but I have a meeting."

Brian hung up the phone and pushed back the urge to throw it. He licked the blood from his finger, but chose not to drink the lukewarm blood. He looked around not knowing what exactly to do. All he wanted was to wipe away the discussion with his mother.

"Cash," Brian said, putting on a shirt. "Who the hell's in the Loft?"

"Want a real headcount?" The Gangrel asked. "Or just those you can fuck?"

"I need a blow job."

"Since Justin is a no go," Cash replied coolly, "there's also Emmett or Ted. I'm sure they'd oblige."

"I'd rather masturbate," Brian sighed, slamming his door open and leaving his floor. A ball of nerves, he went up a flight and entered the Conclave room where Willow, Buffy, Spike and Isis continued their research on the Apocalypse.

"The one's I got were Macha, the Irish goddess of life and death," Willow said, "Astarte who is the Greek goddess of fertility, Flora, the Roman goddess of Spring and birth. Freys, the Scandinavian moon goddess, Isis, the Egyptian-"

"You can stop there," Isis interrupted, flicking her pen across the room. "Are you expecting me to believe that the goddess Isis would come here to destroy it? It makes no sense and quite honestly all of your suggestions are reaching. We know nothing."

"Which is why we're researching, Ms. Grumpy pants," Willow countered, slumping back into her seat. "I'm just mentioning all of the gods that have anything to do with life or fertility. You did say that you used ancient Egyptian magic to help Brian do his thing."

"I've never needed anyone to help me do my thing," Brian said smugly.

"Bloody right, Brian," Isis agreed, rolling her eyes. "You're a fucking machine...and a fucking piece of work as well, I gather. No one fucks quite like you."

"Kill the sarcasm."

"Just a little frustrated, is all," Isis sighed. "We've found bollocks in our search. All these ancient texts and the lot and we're better off watching the tele for any information."

"National Geographic rocks," Willow said excitedly. "They had a whole show on fertility throughout the ages. They even showed old parchment dedicated to the gods."

"Yeah," Buffy agreed. "Who knew they had porn all the way back then?"

"I still say we should go back to Lilith-" Willow began only to be interrupted by Spike.

"Next thing you'll be telling us is that Gehenna will be upon us and Justin's going to give birth to Caine. Bloody hell, woman."

"It's better than your idea," Buffy defended. "Only you would think that Aphrodite would come because there's not enough sex in the world."

"That's not such a bad idea," Brian said softly, though no one seemed to hear him over the escalating argument.

"One thing if for sure, you really need to get some, luv," Spike spat out. "Or something to clean out your system, you're a little tart down there. I should know..."

"You'll never know again!"

"Unless you jump my bones like you did before," Spike countered. "You couldn't get enough of me. How could you? I'm so much man."

"So little man," Buffy sniped. "And not even a third of the man Angel is. Maybe he did go evil after we made love, but at least the ride was worth it!"

"You kept coming back to me!"

"I thought I was in hell, remember?" Buffy said. "I didn't think I deserved any better than your rotting corpse."

Buffy watched Spike opened his mouth, but nothing came out. She knew he was enraged the moment he turned and left the room without a word. She felt bad, but there was no turning back now. She had said those words and she would stand behind them. Buffy looked around at everyone staring at her and felt a little uneasy. She had to get back to the issue at hand.

"Um," Buffy began, flipping the pages of her book back to the topic Spike had interrupted. "Caine is like the creator of Kindred and this Gehenna thing sounds sorta-"

"Silly," Isis interrupted. "Gehenna is a myth. It's sort of like Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. As for Caine, not only is he the Bringer of Death, not Life, but he'd kill a chunk of Kine and make Kindred his slaves."

"Lillith is much more viable," Willow pondered, biting her pencil and moving to a laptop. She tapped away, mumbling words no one could quite understand.

"Then what god then?" Buffy asked, exasperated.

"Well, there's only one God I give a shit about at the moment," Brian finally said. "The God of Fucking."

"Mmnskdmm," Willow mumbled. She spit out her pencil and flipped through her notes. "There's Aphrodite, of course, and Venus or maybe you're looking for Eros or possibly..."

Willow looked up and saw the expression on Brian's face. Only then did it dawn on her that Brian wasn't exactly interested in any god of sex as opposed to just having sex.

"Sorry..."

"There's no help for anyone here," Brian snickered as he walked out of the room.

"You think I upset him?" Willow asked.

"He's just horny," Isis replied, picking up another book and flipping open the pages. "After a while you'll just get used to it."

"Wow," Buffy said, staring at the door Brian just exited. "Justin better watch out, Brian looks like he's on a mission."

Willow glanced at Isis and pondered aloud, "Justin's off limits because of the baby isn't he?"

"That's why he's all Mr. Moody With a Tude," Buffy mentioned. "Justin's not supposed to give birth for another month or so. I wonder how he's going to make it that long?"

Isis glanced in Buffy's direction and laughed, "He was never planning to."

"What about Justin?"

"You'll find that relationships around here are never quite what they seem..."

\*\*\*\*

Mel stormed into the small apartment on the first floor she called home. She maneuvered past the cramped living room to her bedroom.

"What the --" Mel wondered aloud after she opened the door and saw Lindsay. "What did you do?"

Lindsay ran her fingers through her now shoulder length hair with a smile. She put out her fingers and wiggled them for her partner to see. It looked like she had had a complete make over.

"Michael gave me a manicure and pedicure," Lindsay replied, clearly happy with the changes. "And my hair is so much easier to handle. I showered, put in a little gel and that was it. You wouldn't believe how fast it dried." Lindsay giggled, then added, "I suppose you do."

"Michael cut your hair?" Mel asked. After thinking about it she added, "why the hell did he give you a manicure and pedicure?"

"He said I deserved it," Lindsay explained. "And he was right. I do."

Mel made her way to Lindsay and removed the hair from her lover's face. She wasn't sure about what was going on, but something wasn't right. Michael was up to something.

"That Tremere blood in him is really taking over, isn't it?"

"Who, Brian?" Lindsay asked,

"No, Michael," Mel corrected. "He's got something up his sleeve."

"You're in the mood," Lindsay guessed, shaking her head and folding clothes piled on their bed. "Let me guess -- Brian."

"Who else?"

"Mel, you know better than to agitate Brian..."

"Me?" Mel gasped. "What about him? It seems like he fucks everyone over, including Justin and Michael. And no one gives a shit!"

"He means well," Lindsay argued. "You just seem to always push to his buttons. In fact it's almost like a game between you two."

"This is no game! This is about our son! This is about our ability to be parents to our son without having to live by Brian's ludicrous rules."

"You heard Father Beg," Lindsay said softly. She pushed aside the pile of clothes and sat down with a sigh. There wasn't going to be an easy way to explain to Mel what she had concluded. However, she had no choice. If Brian had money and influence as a mortal, he had power she couldn't even he imagine as an immortal. "He won't let us go."

"Why don't we --"

"We can't leave," Lindsey interrupted slowly and firmly. "We are not leaving. We'll just have to find another way to get the freedom you want."

"I can't believe you are taking his side again!"

"I'm not!"

Mel couldn't believe what she was hearing and it made her enraged. She couldn't stay there, not with the woman she loved seemingly deserting her. All she could do was say one last thing before leaving, slamming the door in her wake, "Brian fucks anything with a dick, only now he's fucking us -- and you're letting him!"

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Brian walked outside and checked his pockets. No cigarettes. A little irritated he left them inside, he took a deep breath and followed the faint smoke that wafted towards him from the nearby alley. He looked up at the bright crescent moon as he approached Spike who flicked his cigarette stub against the loft's brick wall.

"Nice night," Brian stated.

"Guess so," Spike replied, putting another cigarette in his mouth and offering Brian one. He smiled when he saw that was exactly what Brian needed then added, "it could be raining piss and shite and I'd think it was better out here and in there with that lot."

Brian smiled smoothly, choosing to take a drag from his cigarette rather than respond. He eyed the man up and down, wondering how Spike lived so long. Though the platinum blond tried to hide it, it was clear to Brian that Spike was weak. Sure, the rebellious Ventrue was physically strong and intelligent, but the Englishman was unable to exist on his own. Spike had to live for something or someone else and lacked anything resembling independence. That, to Brian, was weak. Shamefully weak... however useful.

Brian let his cigarette slip from his fingers and pressed out the butt with the ball of his shoe. He watched as Spike offered him another cigarette, but instead of taking it he grabbed the Ventrue's arm instead.

"I don't need to be a brain surgeon to know what you want, mate," Spike said as Brian backed him up against the brick wall. "Just know if we're going to play this game you should know that I'm no soddin bottom."

Brian grinned at the remark and answered by pressing his lips against Spike's. Tongues intertwined as Brian fumbled with Spike's belt, finally opening it and dropping the Ventrue's pants on the concrete ground. Brian's face changed and he went for Spike's neck, only the other man to stop him.

"That may work for the other blokes, mate," Spike told the Prince, unbuckling Brian's pants. "But for the likes of an older vampire, such as meself, I don't care to be Blood Bound on the first date - or fuck -- or whatever the case may be. Wouldn't matter anyway, I'm technically already taken."

Brian's face changed back and he asked, "How are you with pain?"

"I've been a big fan of the nipple twist and the occasional spanking..."

Brian cut the conversation by turning Spike around and slamming the man into the brick wall. By the time Spike thought to complain Brian had already moved his trench coat aside and had entered him.

"Fuck! Bloody hell!"

Brian moved in and out, reminding himself to slow his pace. It must have been a while for Spike. How long, Brian didn't know. All he knew was the game he and Spike were playing...he had played it so many times before. Brian also knew the end, but he enjoyed the game just the same.

"Tell me to stop," Brian said, his voice husky. He reached around and began to stroke Spike whispering, "Just say the words."

Brian continued his pace as he waited for Spike's response. He waited for some sort of witty comment or barb about being no bottom, but when Spike just thrust his butt back, Brian continued steadily. It was clear to the Prince that this was not Spike's first time, however long it might have been. He wondered, briefly, who had had the pleasure before. It was as long before Spike groaned Brian's answer, "Sire..."

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Michael entered the room happy to sire wasn't there. Sure he had to deal with Justin, but there was a purpose for everything.

"Oh look who just came back for a visit," Justin announced, stroking Bartox's stone paw. "Just know Michael, that you can never be alone in this loft again. Is that clear?"

"It is," Bartox stated.

"Sorry ‘bout that," Michael replied. When he saw Justin didn't believe him, he continued, "I really am! I completely fucked up Brian's walls and floor! Say what you want about me, but I'm not that fucking stupid. I thought he was going to kill me...really!"

"We all have to have our priorities..." Em muttered, propping his feet on the glass table.

"Luckily for you, your stupid spell didn't touch the baby's area," Justin snapped. "If it had, you would see me pissed and I know you don't want to see me pissed. Then Brian would be the least of your worries."

"All this mess for a bigger dick," Em chuckled. "I wonder if it's really worth it?"

Em sat in his spot and pondered the idea. After some clearly obvious consideration, he concluded, "If you ever figure that out, get me a call... not for me, of course, but I do know a guy or two..."

"Next time practice in the Ventrue headquarters," Justin responded. "You think you'd know better by now."

"I should have," Michael pleaded. "That's why I came to say I'm sorry. I completely fucked up."

Justin's eyes got smaller, trying to figure out what Michael's angle was. Something very suspicious was going on, but Justin didn't know what. However, it was something he intended to find out.

"So what else do you want?" Justin asked bluntly.

"I just wanted to mention that I hardly felt it."

"Felt what?"

Michael hesitated and hung his head, "you're pain."

"You must be joking."

"I'm not," Michael replied. "Look at it this way. How am I supposed to do my job if I can't even feel when you're in pain."

"What job is that?" Em asked. "To make bigger dicks?"

"To watch over the boy wonder," Michael explained, "and Brian's baby."

"I think you're full of shit, but do you really want to prove yourself?" Justin snickered. "If you really want to show how useful you are, may I suggest getting me a banana split with some of Brian's blood on top... and three cherries."

"No problem," Michael quickly responded, turning around and walking to the door only to stop before leaving. He paused for moment before saying, "you can't hear me."

"Sadly, I can hear you just fine," Justin snickered. "Can you hear me? Banana split. Brian's blood. Three cherries."

Michael shook his head and pointed to his temple. He called Justin every bad name he could think of and when the Toreador didn't respond he shook his head again.

"That's why I like cell phones," Em responded. "They're much more reliable."

"I also like the fact that blood isn't a requirement," Ted added. "God forbid some of you can hear what I think."

"Like the rest of us aren't thinking about dick to," Justin chuckled.

"Well only one of us is thinking about Brian's dick," Em retorted. When he glanced over at Michael he couldn't help but add on, "possibly two..."

"That ship has sailed," Michael told the group, though it was clear none believe him. He sighed feeling a bit defeated, "I can't stop how I feel. Justin, you should know that better than anyone. All I'm trying to do is have some focus. Right now I just want to prove to everyone that I'm worthy to be a Tremere... that I'm worthy to be childe of the Prince...to be a grandchilde of the Legendary Ulugh Beg."

"Focus is good," Ted agreed. "It works for me in the world of porn."

"Maybe you should start your own business like Teddy," Em suggested. "You clearly have an interest in dick."

"You don't think I can prove myself worthy to be Tremere?" Michael gasped offended.

"Only time can tell that," Justin replied, holding out his wrist which Michael took and fed from. Justin grabbed Michael's wrist and bit, but stopped feeding when the Tremere's bitter blood hit his taste buds. "You know, never mind about the banana split. I'm not so hungry anymore."

Michael shrugged his shoulders and nodded his head before he turned and rushed out of the loft. He ignored Teddy talking to him and Em's comment as he left. He sure as hell didn't want to stand around and listen to Justin complain about stomach pain. He had other things to do, such as leave the loft, go down the street a few blocks and spit Justin's blood into a container.

Michael reached into his jacket pocket and retrieve two containers: one filled with the Nosferatu woman's blood and the other filled with Nightshade. He knew he had to exchange blood with Justin, but the idea of the Boy Wonder having tabs on everything he did would put a snag in his plans. He wasn't sure what to do until he got the bright idea of drinking a bitter poison that would linger in his blood. He'd do anything to put his plan into motion.

Michael placed the vials on the floor then looked in the bush next to him. He had to feel around a bit, but he found where he had hidden his spell book. It was time to begin again.

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Mel swigged the whiskey shot a bartender placed in front of her, then tossed a $20 bill on the counter. She wanted to take another shot or two, but something inside of her told her that she should go home. She swung her purse over her shoulder, headed outside and down the street. She cursed at herself for not driving, but remembered she needed to walk off some steam. She had also planned on getting drunk, so it didn't seem to make a difference at the time. All her reasoning didn't matter in the cold, so she sighed and watched her breath plume into the dark of the night. She was having a real bad day and it didn't seem to be getting any better.

Passing through a park, Mel started rehearsing what she was going to say to Lindsay. She definitely had a plan of attack when it came to getting Lindsey back on her side. She was going to make Lindsay see what Brian was doing to--

What the hell is Michael doing?

Mel saw Michael out of the corner of her eye and wondered why he was hiding in the bushes. She initially thought that Michael was with a man when she saw him hold up some sort of bowl with one hand and hold a book in another. Curious, she quietly made her way to a tree where she could watch without being noticed. The first thing she noticed was the containers of blood and Latin words Michael was chanting. Not knowing what to make of it, but knowing something was wrong, she took out a pen and small note pad and began writing down the words Michael chanted.

"Abeo muto causa anima mei natio sponte mei effero regina."

"What the hell is he saying?" She thought to herself. "Makes me wonder what the hell you are up to Michael."

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"Bloody, motherfucker...shite!" Spike screeched as he came on the side of the brick building.

Breathing heavily, Spike put on his jeans and buckled his belt before taking out two cigarettes, lighting them both and handing one to Brian.

"My arse is going to ache for a bit, mate" Spike chuckled, letting his cigarette hang from his lips as he zipped Brian's trousers, adjusting the Prince's sack. "Guess I should be happy; that was a bloody good shag."

"I hope you're not expecting flowers and candy," Sasha announced, strolling into the alleyway. "Our Prince here is more likely to eat me."

"I like to get my kicks were I can, luv" Spike replied, winking to Brian. "But, as good as you are, mate, my un-beating, dead heart belongs to someone else... no offense."

"None taken."

"Once the Slayer's Bitch, always the Slayer's Bitch," Sasha snickered. "For a Ventrue who likes Brujah, I take you for a guy with better taste."

Brian flicked his diminishing cigarette against the wall causing a flash of sparks. He purposefully exhaled the smoke slowly into Sasha's face before asking, "What do you want? Well, besides watching two guys fuck?" He shook his head and sighed, "Sometimes straight women scare me."

"What do I want? A world dominated by Brujah. Or Ben Affleck to take some acting lessons," she replied snidely. When she saw Brian didn't seem to be amused she added, "The Malkavian's called. They want to sit down with you. Mariel says she's having a bit of trouble."

Spike lit two more cigarettes and handed one to Brian before the Prince walked away with Sasha talking business. Brian hadn't said much to him, not that Spike had expected anything. As he inhaled the smoke his eyes drifted to his cum splattered on the wall. He couldn't help but flick his cigarette at it and walk away with his jaw clenched, feeling a bit disgusted with himself. He wasn't sure where he was going, he only knew he didn't want to be near the Tremere headquarters. Buffy was there. Brian was there and even worse, a very temperamental Justin was there.

Spike reached into his pocket and took out his last cigarette, tossing the empty pack on the ground. As his eyes followed pack, he noticed the grass growing so he stopped and stared at. He slowly took a look around to make sure time wasn't moving fast around him and noted that it wasn't. But, for some reason the grass had grown about 12 inches in the past minute. Not really unnerved by the situation, he took a toke from his cigarette and noticed flowers blooming before his eyes as the trees limbs grew more and more leaves.

"What the --?" Spike began as his train of thought was interrupted by someone bumping into him then rushing past. When he saw who it was he snarled, "Bloody prag." He wasn't sure what Michael spat out at him, but he knew the fledgling Tremere smelled Brian. How couldn't he? Spike could see it in Michael's eyes. Spike remember his mother always said misery liked company, so he smiled his normally smug grin and snorted, "Find a shag, mate... your sire did..."

Spike waited for Michael to respond, but when the Tremere walked off he did the same. He hoped for some witty response, but supposed it wasn't in Michael. It seemed like a waste for Spike. Here he was stuck in the cold with no where to go and no one to argue with. For a night that had so much potential, it had gone to waste quickly.

Bored and out of place, Spike strolled past the rapidly growing greenery until he finally saw it subside. "Of course the magic wouldn't affect here now would it?" Spike pondered aloud as he looked at the steel gate to the cemetery. He walked in feeling more at home that he had in a while. He made sure to walkover every grave he could on his exploration of the cemetery. He even kicked over a broken headstone just for fun.

"Well, well," Spike mused spying an array of half smoke cigarettes on the ground. He picked one up, straightened it out, lit it and inhaled the smoke like an addict.

"You are so predictable," a voice said, startling Spike.

Spike exhaled the smoke into Angel's face, his eye twitchy as he tried to assess who was standing before him.

"Sire?"

"You're about as pathetic as they come," Angel said, shaking his head in disgust. "He beat you and tortured you, yet you still want Angelus."

"Just thinking ‘bout old times, mate," Spike sighed disappointed. "What do you want, you tosser?"

"A sit down with the Prince."

"What makes you think I can oblige, Oh Broody One?"

"Got a call from Buffy..."

"Why not ask her?"

"Why do you always have to make things so difficult?" Angel barked, rushing to Spike and grabbing his childe by the lapels. He was expecting a fight, but when he got none he ordered, "Get me a sit down with..."

Angel's nose twitched before his face went feral and he slammed Spike's against a stone mausoleum. He ripped Spike's pants open with a growl. He then inhaled the scent on his childe, running his fingers down Spike's thighs, slipping them inside his childe's hole. Angel growled as he brought his now soiled fingers to his nose, smelling another man on what rightfully belong to him.

"He'll never let you in," Spike whimpered. "You're Royal-"

"Who!"

"The Prince."

"Take me to him!" Angel growled, taking a bite from Spike's neck.

"Yes, Sire."

Chapter 10: Week Three: Bringing Out the Demon

In every day life, anger is considered a bad thing. There are people who go to classes, seminars or psychiatrists to find the root of their anger. They do everything in their power to rid themselves of it, or at least find a way to diminish the fury within them. This is one of the many ways humans are different of Kindred. Unlike their mortal counterparts, Kindred have no disillusions concerning their anger. There will always be a demon within them waiting to show its fury. The only variable lies with their ability to control it...or possibly lack thereof.

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Brian hung up the phone content with the information given by the Malkavians. The amount of information they had was extensive and valuable, if translated correctly.

"I want everything prepared," Brian told the group. "If ‘you know who' is smart enough to decipher my message, he should be here any time now."

"I'll get the items," Isis said, leaving the research table. "I'll have to go to that Wiccan store for some crystals and that silly gypsy ball."

"I'll go over the spell again just to make sure," Willow informed the Prince. "We'll need at least four of us to pull it off. Isis, you and me...I know Justin's not a Tremere, but for the fourth, he's awfully powerf-"

"No."

"I know about the whole baby thing," Willow continued, "but he has more power that most Tremere."

"Too much risk," Brian solemnly replied. "I'm sure Justin would be up for it, but I'm not. I won't. We can always find a fourth...Justine, Lazarus or possibly Trish if she's capable."

"She's not," Isis intervened. "Both she and Matt are fighters. Their skills at magic are minimal at best. I will contact Justine at Vanguard. She'll enjoy the change of scenery...as for Lazarus..."

"'Nuff said," Brian stopped her.

"Well..." Buffy began sitting in a chair feeling ever so small. She thought that they had all forgotten she was there, that was until the vampires' language became cryptic. She didn't know what was going on and that bothered her. What bothered her more was that Willow seemed to be in the loop that she was standing outside of. But there were other things that were on her mind...

"Maybe Spike can help," Buffy offered. "Has anyone seen him? It seems like he's been gone for some time."

"Not in about a week," Willow remarked with a sly grin. "It doesn't matter anyway. He's of no use to us yet."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, who cares about Spike. Unless you care about Spike," Willow replied, glancing to Brian.

Not really knowing how to respond, Buffy mumbled, "no."

"I'm sure Spike will be back to irritate us all soon. Until then, we're pretty much set."

"Set? Set for what?" Buffy whined, her face childlike. "I don't know what I'm supposed to do...who am I supposed to kill? I don't even know what we're talking about."

"I'm surprised," Brian chuckled sarcastically.

"Can you guys be any vaguer?" Buffy asked. "I mean way with the secret undercover talkage. You guys are going way with the Bondish."

"Mmmm," Brian purred. "Now she's got me thinking about leather."

"I meant James Bondish," Buffy clarified with a disgusted look on her face. "You know secret undercover agent, spy guy sorta stuff. Mission Impossibly...that sorta thing."

"I was picturing Pierce Brosnan in leather..."

"However yummy that image is, we've other things at hand," Isis said interrupting Brian's fantasy. She turned to Buffy and snickered, "None of which you need to bother yourself with, lass. You've Slayer things to tend to...I suggest you do them. The world needs saving, I'm told."

"What about Willow?" Buffy asked flabbergasted. "She's like...like...my side kick!"

"And clearly the brains of your operation," Brian smoothly remarked.

"Hey!"

"She's got other things on her plate tonight," Brian continued, standing and approaching Willow. He ran his fingers through her short red hair never taking his eyes away from the Slayer. "Isn't that right, Childe?"

Willow smiled hoping it would make Buffy feel better. But when she saw the look on her best friends face, Willow guessed she didn't give the right impression. She hoped she didn't look maniacal, but she couldn't be sure anymore. She had fed from Brian earlier and could feel his power oozing through her body. It made her feel like she could move the world with her mind alone. As for Buffy, it didn't really seem to matter what her best friend thought at that moment anyway. Buffy would know the truth of the situation soon enough...everyone's situation.

"Yes, Sire," Willow answered with a smile, her eye twinkling with anticipation. "The deed will be done soon."

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Michael climbed out of the sewers, palming the vials of blood in his hand. He had traded more of Lindsay's hair and nails for the blood of a Ravnos and Setite, only he wasn't sure how he would get more. He thought it would be easy to continue his ruse with Lindsay, however, it was proving to be more difficult than planned. This time he came to give a free pedicure and manicure, Lindsay had nothing but questions and he was forced to dish out more lies. He settled with his need of ‘friendship'. He told her that without Brian, there was a void in his life. Maybe it wasn't a complete lie, but one thing was for sure, he only needed Lindsay for one thing, spare parts for trade.

Walking swiftly in the cool night Michael made his way to his secret hiding place. He made himself comfortable behind bushes after he retrieved all of the necessary ingredients for the spell.

"Time to begin again," he mumbled. "Let's just hope I don't create another Amazon in the process."

"Let's," a woman's voice said from behind him.

"Mel?!"

"Sorry I'm late," Mel replied, taking a seat in front of the Tremere. "I know exactly what you're up to."

"And you're not trying to stop me?"

"Why would I?"

Michael looked into Mel's eyes and wondered if she really knew what he was up to. Sometimes he wasn't entirely sure himself.

"So after you say the ritual," Mel began, "what happens next?"

"Usually...the plants go crazy."

"I knew it didn't have anything to do with your dick."

"Sadly, very little does as of late," Michael replied, looking down to find his spot in the book again. He glanced back up at Mel to see that she was just waiting for him. "Ready."

"Ready."

"Well...let's begin."

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Emmett glanced over when he heard Justin groan. His actions were automatic, though unnecessary. He knew he needn't worry; Matt sat beside Justin staring at his master's mate. Em thought the young Tremere's actions were a bit much when Sasha informed him that Matt had fed from Brian before being ordered to protect the Toreador. Brian had vocalized his order, but his true intent was made through his powerful blood. Whatever Brian felt coursed through his childe's veins.

"He's just sleeping," Em said, patting the seat next to him. "Come sit with us...a fourth would be better for a game of hearts. We could play teams."

"He's so restless," Matt replied, his eyes twitching as he stared at Justin. "What if there's something wrong. I can't let anything happen to him."

"He's probably just dreaming. He sometimes has nightmares about when he died. Sometimes it's about his mom. Either way, they're not real."

Matt simply shook his head rejecting the humans offer. The beast took over his features momentarily and he couldn't help but let a whimper out that sounded like a wounded puppy. His eyes once again frantically checked over Justin's sleeping figure before placing a shaking finger on the Toreador's cold skin. He listened for patter of the unborn's heart and allowed it to fill his being. Its rhythmic beats allowed a moment of comfort before feeling the need to time the beats to make sure the child was healthy.

"Is he ok?"

"He'll be fine," Sasha replied not bothering to look up from her hand.

"He's just doing his job," Cash agreed. "It's what Matt lives for."

"It's just a little scary looking, that's all," Em sighed. "I mean, look at him. The way he's acting towards Justin is a little psycho."

"I didn't say it wasn't psycho," Sasha said after dropping her Queen of Spades into a hand taken by Cash. "He is feeling a tenth of what Brian feels...and Brian's psycho. So, technically, he's psycho lite."

"You're shitting me right?!"

"Nope," Cash replied before being forced to take another hand full of hearts. "What Brian feels is a lot more intense. You can't feel it Emmett, but when Brian walks into a room, it feels like a mix of sex and anger...it's not hidden like it was when I first got here, it's front and center."

"But you can't really tell what it is," Sasha added, putting her hand down while she thought about it. "Take a good look at Matt, Em. You can tell he's worried about Justin and everything that is Matt, exists for Justin's well being. That's exactly what Brian feeling. But when Brian walks in the room his feelings are like organized chaos. It's like he's still hiding what he's feeling, even though he can't hide that he feels anymore. Know what I mean?"

"Not really."

"Endless anxiety," Cash explained, glancing towards his lover. "Like when Sasha was in torpor. I wanted to help, but couldn't. The only time I'd ever felt worse was when I died."

"That's sweet." Sasha smirked for a moment and brushed her finger by Cash's. "And we're not even blood bound."

"Like Brian and Justin are, right?"

"Correctamundo, Em," Cash continued. "I bet their blood is so intertwined, they don't really have their own anymore. Twice the person, twice the pain. I bet it's pretty overwhelming."

"Poor Matt," Em sighed.

"You really don't understand, do you?"

"Hm?"

"Not poor Matt," Sasha said after taking a hand with a heart, dooming Cash to loose the hand. "Poor Brian. It's gotta take loads of strength to be that fucked up inside and not really show it. Look at how Matt is acting; he's worried out of his gourd and he's staring right at Justin. Brian's mind must be on overload, even though he's only a couple of floors away."

"I never thought about it like that," Em conceded. "I'm sure he is worried...if he's not getting a blow job."

"He isn't," Matt said, never taking his eyes off the sleeping Toreador. "He's preparing."

"For what?" Em asked. He waited for an answer, but guessed none was coming when Matt's beast came. He stood to approach the pair, but stopped when Sasha grabbed his arm. Em understood why when Matt began to growl, a sound so guttural he could hardly believe it was coming from the comely young man. "What's going on?"

"Ventrue," Sasha stated a bit flustered, tossing her cards on the floor. "Why didn't Brian tell us? We need to prepare."

"Shh," Cash hushed, making sure Justin hadn't been woken. "I don't know exactly what's going on, but Brian told me that our job is to make sure Justin is safe. I don't know about any of you, but that job's been fucked up one too many times, even by myself, to question anything that's come out of my Prince's mouth. No matter what we hear or feel from downstairs, our job is right here. Everyone agree?"

The group agreed to protect Justin, even one that the others forgot was there. Bartox did not move, though his presence was felt, "Primogen Taylor will not be harmed."

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Brian's eyes were closed as he tapped into Matt's mind. He reassured his youngest turned childe before he opened his eyes. He couldn't help but chuckle before putting his heels on this desk, tipping his chair backwards.

"Finally smelling like the Ventrue you are, Spike," Brian said to the platinum haired Kindred. "Before there was some question, but I could smell you a mile away now."

"Changed cologne's," Spike muttered.

"I like it."

"I was thinking ‘bout Drakkar or One, but went for Au De Pissed Off Sire instead. You should try it. Bloody well changed me life."

"I'd have to meet your sire first."

"Funny you should say that, mate."

"Spike," Buffy said rushing into the room. She was about to go to her enemy/former lover/ally/friend, when she saw the bruises and cuts from his face. "What happened to you?"

"Bloody fuckin' hell, Buffy," Spike gasped, seemingly ashamed. "I think you'd better bugger off, luv. You won't like this party."

"I will not!"

"Bugger off!"

"No!"

"She might as well see this," Willow interrupted. She made sure both saw the crystal globe in her hand before continuing. "You guys know what this is?"

"Of course I do," Buffy said. She opened her mouth then closed it again reflectively. She knew exactly what it was, sort of. "It the thingie you used to put Angel's soul back. You think he lost his soul again?"

"Something like that. Listen..."

Brian mentally told Willow to stay silent and smiled when she did so. As the others were waiting for the Tremere witch to continue, Brian motioned for the guards. The silence wasn't that long, though it seemed to drag on for an eternity. Brian smiled when the wait was over and his guest had finally arrived.

"Angelus," Brian smoothly cooed as the elder Kindred was issued in by an handful of guards. Another handful had their attention on Angel's only birth child, Connor. "You know I could have you put to death for entering my city without my permission."

"You could try."

"Angel, thank God." Buffy said, feeling relieved seeing her first love. "Can you tell me what the hell is going on?"

"I got your message," Angel replied. "You know I never try to miss an apocalypse."

"Blah, blah, blah."

Brian got up abruptly, knocking over his own chair. He could see the affection in both Angel and Buffy's eyes and it nauseated him. Without a word he summoned Isis, smiling as his eyes never wavered from the old Ventrue.

"The mighty Isis," Angel said, "I'm insulted she wasn't here for my arrival. I thought you'd be smart enough to have your strongest here. Between me, Buffy, Conner and Willow, you really don't stand a chance. It's sort of a pitty, really."

"Not including your childe, are you?" Brian asked, seductively advancing in Spike's direction. He loomed over Spike's smaller frame, pressing his groin against the Ventrue's buttocks. "That's fine by me...I'll use him until Justin wants to kill him."

Brian smiled when Angel growled and lunged for an attack. Not even flinching, he laughed out loud when Angel was stopped in mid air by the mystical words of Isis. He held Spike closer, shoving his hand down the terrified Ventrue's pants.

"Tell me to stop..."

"Fuck you, mate."

"I thought we've already discussed you're a bottom," Brian said, never taking his hands from the platinum vampire. Brian held Spike, even as the Ventrue lightly struggled to distance himself from the Prince. He forced Spike to look in the direction of a crossbow wielding Trish. "Just like you're a bottom for your Sire. I don't mind sharing, but I don't think your Sugar Daddy will approve. If you gotta got, you gotta go."

"Kill him if you want to, mate," Spike announced, anger filling every inch of his body. "I don't bloody well care."

"Is that right?"

"Stop trying to help, Spike," Buffy snapped.

"I've tried to on more than one occasion and it's never worked," Spike growled. "As you can see it hasn't worked yet. So knock yourself out."

Brian winked and when he did the guard released an arrow into Angel's chest, merely inches from his heart. Brian kept his hold on Spike as the Ventrue tried to move away.

"Why are you so angry at me?" Brian asked, his voice a whisper in Spike's ear. "You should be grateful to me. You've done everything in your power for the last one hundred years to get his attention...who knew all you had to do was get fucked by me."

"Hurt him and I'll kill you myself, Brian," Buffy promised.

"Shut the fuck up, the lot of ya" Spike muttered. He shook his head trying not to blink because if he did he was sure tears would fall. "You don't know shite."

"I know he's going to die...unless you do something about it."

"Bloody hell," Spike mumbled, not able to take his eyes away from his paralyzed Sire's. He hated his sire...more than anything in the world, but if there was a chance...no matter how small...no matter how minute...

Hate and anger. Love and respect. Spike stood on the thin line and looked both ways. He closed his eyes and shook his head disgusted with himself. He was truly love's bitch. "Let ‘im go...please."

"You didn't tell me to stop before," Brian replied, looking at Buffy ever so smug. Feeling he had gotten his point across, he motioned to Isis who allowed the spell to finally be broken. "Seems you got my message, Angelus....or should I say Angel? Fuck it, who cares? You know, if I've got to send another message to you, I'd love to do it through your childe again. His ass has got to be one of the tightest I've ever been in...and I've been in a lot."

"He belongs to me," Angel growled, pulling out the arrow in one quick motion. He didn't even flinch as his eyes reddened with anger. "Never touch my childer!"

"Including that fresh little one right there?" Brian chuckled. "I bet his ass is nice and tight."

"You'll never find out!" Conner yelled.

"That's enough," Isis declared as Daedalus and Justine entered the room. "We have business to attend to, isn't that right, Angel?"

"It's been awhile, loverboy," Justine purred. "We should spend a little time reacquainting ourselves. A lot has changed since the 17th century."

"You have no idea," Angel snapped.

"Who's to say we'll be alive," Conner griped, clearly not liking the underdog position he was forced into.

"If we wanted you dead, you'd already be dust," Brian told the Ventrues.

"If a Tremere doesn't kill you, they need your help," Angel presumed. "Why would you need my help?"

"Need? No, no," Brian said confidently. "Prefer. I prefer to have your assistance then need to do shit by myself."

"The apocalypse."

"The one in the same."

"Of all of the apocalypses that have almost happened in the past years," Angel sighed. "What makes this one so special?"

"The others were a planned event by the Camarilla," Isis explained, taking the crystal globe from Willow and handing her an onyx one. "This one isn't. This one came quite by surprise. It is affecting the greater good."

"Don't you guy mean evil?" Buffy retorted.

"Whatever floats your boat," Brian replied, unaffected by her remarks. "Either way, Angelus can be of some use to us."

"Angelus is no more," Angel told the group. "But to stop the end of the world, I'm here to help."

"No good."

"Anima, animus," Isis began, holding the crystal globe in her hand. On the other side of her, Daedalus chimed in, in a sing song fashion. "Homo hominis, genus hominum. Regredior remeo homo hominis."

"What are you guys doing?" Buffy screeched as Angel's body began to shake. A white mist circled around her first love, lifting his body in the air. She saw Conner punch the guard next to him, so she did the same. She took out three guards before turning around to help Angel. "Willow!"

"I told you we were going to need an extra person," Brian mumbled before stepping in between the slayer and Angel. He shook his head in disgust when he saw Conner take out the rest of the guards. He smiled when Spike punched the blonde, sending her petite frame across the room. "Now all that's left is me and you, little one."

"I'm not that little," Conner protested.

"Just let them do what they're bloody well gonna do," Spike told his sire's born childe. "He wants to come out."

"Why would you bring back Angelus?!"

"In a way we are," Spike conceded. "In a way we're not."

"Nooo!" Conner charged, but was tackled by Spike.

"Sibling rivalry is tough," Brian sighed, stepping out of Isis' way as she circled Angel, chanting her spell. He never took his eyes from the slayer who came out from the wreckage.

"Willow," Buffy moaned. She looked at her best friend and couldn't help the tears from falling. Willow wasn't there to help her. She wondered when things had gone so wrong. "This isn't going to happen!"

"How are you planning on stopping us?" Willow asked before turning towards Angel and holding up the onyx ball. As she began her chant, Justine joined in mirroring every move Willow made. "Anima, animus. Anima, animus. Mortuus, silenti. Comperio, Animus. Mortuus, silenti."

Brian prepared for Buffy to charge, only to stop at the most unnerving sound he had ever heard. The sound was coming from inside of Angel, finally manifesting itself as a flash of white light. The white light whisked around the room frantically before finding its home inside the crystal ball Isis was holding. The potency of the spell sent Isis and Daedalus to the floor, stunned.

That is when Brian smelled it: Tzimisce stench. Angel was infested by it, the Sabbat's tainted blood inside the Ventrue and it showed in Angel's eyes. No. Angelus' evil, very pissed off eyes. He turned his attention to Angelus, no longer worried about Buffy. He knew she wouldn't allow Angelus to live. She was a slayer after all.

"Anima, animus. Mortuus, silenti. Comperio, Animus. Mortuus, silenti."

"Thank you so much," Angelus roared. "I needed to be woken up."

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"What the fuck?" Justin groaned, rubbing his eyes. "What the hell was that?"

The young Toreador assessed his situation: Sasha and Cash were armed and staring at the windows and doors respectively. Em was cowering in a corner armed with a stake and Matt was by his side, attentive as ordered.

"I smell Ventrue."

"Spike's downstairs," Cash reasoned.

"Pregnant, not stupid, people," Justin snarled. "What was that sound?"

"Not sure," Cash lied.

"Must be Brian removing Angel's human soul," Justin replied knowingly. "I wonder what type of sound he'll make when Brian puts back his Kindred soul."

"It depends on whether or not it's located in Angel's ass," Sasha laughed. "So, you knew this whole time?"

"Brian didn't want me to freak." Justin stood up and looked towards the windows. "You guys sense something?"

"Other than-"

Sasha stopped when another wail came from below. There were small wisps of black smoke coming from the floor, but they ceased when a horrifying cry filled the entire estate.

Justin headed towards the windows, but was cut off by both Cash and Matt who made sure there was nothing threatening nearby. He smiled at Matt before looking outside. He half expected to see something, but simply leaned against his lover's childe when he saw nothing but a few passerby, strolling on a beautiful Pittsburgh night.

"There's no one out there," Cash finally said, looking back at Sasha quite surprised. "Isn't someone supposed to attack us? Usually they attack right about now."

"Are we expecting someone?" Matt asked, a bit worried.

"Sort of," Sasha began. "Usually when Brian has a plan, someone attacks us at the same time. You know, like Lillie or Julian or Craig or the Malkavians...or you. That wasn't so much fun for me, but you get the drift."

"No Kindred will attack," Justin reasoned. "I'm sure the Ventrue would prefer Angel dead, although I'm not so sure my father wants another Ventrue Royal Blood in town. I think-"

"What's a matter?" Matt asked. Seeing Justin's attention on something outside, he turned to see what his master's mate was looking at. He saw the nearby trees and shrubbery that had grown vibrantly, turn orange, then brown. The once vivacious plants quickly became anemic, trees dropping plump, juicy fruit from their limbs only to be rotted, shriveled pits when they hit the pavement below.

"What is this?" Justin pondered aloud.

"Oh fuck," Sasha gasped. "Everything's dying."

"Wow," Em said, finally looking outside. He glanced at Matt then at Justin, his mind filling with very bad thoughts. "You mean putting back a Kindred soul can cause this much death?"

The truth was Justin didn't know. If someone would know it would be Isis and she wouldn't be available until later. He guessed he'd have to wait.

"Strangely, I hope so."

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Brian surveyed the room. He wasn't concerned with Isis, Daedalus, Willow and Justine, who were all laying on the floor exhausted from the spell. Connor and Spike had stopped their melee and they, along with Buffy, were staring at Angel's still figure on the hardwood floor. He smiled at Willow when she showed him the once black onyx sphere, which was now clear.

"Angel?" Buffy cried, gripping her stake. "Angelus?"

The man before the group struggled to get his bearings, but could not prop himself up. He looked to his borne childe, who did not dare approach him. He didn't wait long when his turned childe went to him and helped him to a chair.

"Hungry, Sire?" Spike asked.

"We have to remove the infection from you first," Brian told the platinum blond. "For those of us who in one shape or another got his kooties, a shot will clear us up. Until then, only he'll do." Brian motioned to Connor, his face expressionless.

"She asked you a question," Connor snapped at his father, seemingly ignoring the Prince. "Who are you?"

"Your father."

"Angel?" Buffy wished.

"Angelus," Connor assumed.

Brian motioned for Connor to approach his father. Though the young man was hesitant, he made his way to the older Ventrue. Brian knew what Connor's initial instinct would be, but saw that Spike was protecting his sire. But who was he protecting? Mass murdering demon or tortured soul? It didn't seem to bother Spike either way. Brian smiled.

"I'm free."

"Angel?" Buffy asked again, hearing calm in the man's voice. "Is that still you?"

"No."

"Angelus," Connor snarled, grabbing for his father. As quick and healthy as the young man was, we was still not as fast as his elder.

"No."

"It's sorta weird not being in the center of all the drama," Justin said as he entered the room. His group from upstairs followed, even as he made his way to Brian's arms. He rubbed his belly and smiled. "I'm not sure I like it. I guess I prefer to be the center of attention."

"You are," Brian replied.

"Good," Justin said with a cocky smile. For some reason the scene before him made him want to laugh, but he did his best not to. "I guess you're Angel."

"No," the stunned man stated.

"For fuck sake, don't you say anything else?" Brian scoffed, quickly boring of the much hyped event.

"You're a Tremere Prince."

"Yeah."

"I'm in your city."

"You're fucking brilliant, you know that."

The man who was once known as Angel or Angelus, leaned on Spike in an effort to stand. He struggled for a moment when Connor instinctively began to help his father.

"I have entered your city without your permission," the man said humbly. "And I owe you much for your gift. I ask permission for a respite for me and my childer, Connor and William. I have been ousted from Clan Ventrue. The Royal Blood that runs through my son and my own blood have no pull with our Elders and desire no claim on your throne. I just have to get my bearings."

"Yeah," Brian snorted, patting Justin's ass before plopping on a couch. "We'll talk again after you've had something to eat. Until then, I don't want to hear a peep from either you or your people...which means you can take the Slayer with you. I'm tired of hearing her mouth go on about a bunch of bullshit. Got me, Angel?"

"No," the man said, rejecting his given name. "I'm not Angel." When his son tensed under his arm, he added. "I'm not Angelus either."

"Then who the fuck are you?" Justin asked.

"Yeah," Buffy agreed.

"I don't bloody well give a shite," Spike snapped. "Me Sire's hurting and he needs his rest, you sods."

The man kissed Spike softly on the lips before, holding Connor closer. He smiled as if relieved and let out a deep sigh. "Liam. I was born Liam."

"Well, Liam," Brian said confidently. "Get nice and rested. You still have to prove you're of some use...or I'll have no need of you and Angel, Angelus or whatever the fuck you want to call yourself.

"The apocalypse," Liam responded, knowing what he was called for. "Maybe I can start now."

"How's that?"

"What if I told you that I didn't think your baby had anything to do with it?"

Brian smiled as Justin's heavy frame made its way onto his lap.

"That would be a good start."

Chapter 11: Week Four: The Great Cover Up

Author's Notes: Sorry this has taken so long, my daughter has been in and out of the hospital for months now. She's now doing fine and a new chapter is on the way.

Many things can be said of good intentions. Bad things may be their result, but they seem inconsequential next to what was intended. A simple “he meant well” can make a difference; it can be a cure all. Some things, however, have no cures. So what then? Something to ponder. Good intentions can go a long way. Then again…so can others.

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“You’re going to leave,” Justin said as he lay in bed. With the covers nestled beneath his neck, he closed his eyes, not wanting to look at his mate.

“I’ll be back, but since I’m no impressionist,” Brian replied, slipping on a tight fitting leather jacket. “Pretend I’m saying it like Arnie does.”

“Make sure he’s at least hot,” Justin sighed. “Not just Colin Farrell hot, but Benjamin Brat hot or even Brad Pitt hot.”

“Anything less would be unacceptable.”

“And don’t take too long.”

“It won’t take long at all,” Brian replied. Then upon hearing his own statement, he snickered and added, “I will take a while…but not…fuck. You know what I mean.”

Justin chuckled and opened his eyes just in time to see Brian lean in for a kiss. With barely a hint of tongue, Brian’s lips were so soft and sweet Justin wondered how he could stand being apart from his mate. He smirked when it dawned on him that he couldn’t, though it was lost on his lover. Justin inhaled Brian’s scent then shifted his body until he was comfortable. All he could think was he didn’t want Brian gone for long.

“Two hours,” Brian stated. “I’ll be back in two…or possibly three.”

Justin closed his eyes again as he heard Brian give orders to the others. He didn’t say much, but he didn’t need to. They all knew better. Justin thought about opening his eyes for a moment to check the clock. Three hours. An eternity. However, he kept his eyes shut. His body ached and his stomach rumbled. Sleep.

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“So, what did that guy tell you?” Connor asked as he stared out of his window toward The Loft. He turned to look at his father, “Angel…I mean Liam.”

“You mean Father,” the elder answered. “Or dad…I will accept nothing other from you.”

“Father,” the boy said resentfully. “You talked to that guy Craig. Was he the one who told you about the apocalypse?”

“Craig Taylor hasn’t changed in a hundred years,” Liam explained. He sat uncomfortably in his chair, his bitterness obvious. Julian Luna’s scent still filled the air in the modest apartment where Brian had jailed him and his childer. “All he cares about is himself and his clan…in that order. And no, he didn’t tell me anything about the apocalypse.”

“Then who did?” Buffy asked. She shook her head in disgust. “You know what? I don’t care! I don’t care who told you! All I care about is saving the world for the…whatever time. If that baby isn’t going to cause the apocalypse, then who is?”

“I don’t know.”

“What!!!???”

“Bloody ‘ell, Sire,” Spike chuckled. He sat next to the Slayer on a sofa across from his sire then decided to annoy Buffy while he was at it. He lay down and placed his head on her lap. “I thought it was my job to push everyone’s buttons. That not so little lie of yours is only gonna piss that bloke off. Brian ain’t one to take to bluffin’”

“So it is the baby,” Buffy concluded, shoving Spike off of her and sending him to the floor. “We have to end this and we have to do it now. We are all still on the same page about this aren’t we?”

“Yeah,” Connor agreed.

“We don’t have to do anything,” Liam told his group.

“Angel!” Connor screeched. He didn’t have to see the look on his father’s face to feel his anger.

“I mean, Dad…we have to do something. Some of us in this room are still alive…and care if we are in the future.”

“Maybe you’re right, my childe,” Liam replied, picking up a phone and dialing. He winked at Connor with a coy smile then turned his attention to his call. “How’d you like a trip to Pittsburgh? The weather may be shitty, but saving the world is a shitty job. How soon can you get here? A day will be too late. How about you talk to that old Gkdodig demon? He has a funny way of getting around. Tell him I sent you, he owes me. Thanks.”

“One of your old mates coming to our rescue?” Spike asked.

“Let’s hope so.”

“Why are we afraid of them?” Buffy asked, flabbergasted. “With all four of us, we could storm in and stop this right now! Odds are Brian will be too busy having sex with some guy to notice us killing Justin.”

“I’ve fought an army of Kindred before and since most are young, we could probably take them, but…” Liam sighed, as he wrapped his arms around his born childe. He cut a wound in his hand, which he placed in front of Connor. “How do we deal with Isis? Justine? The Gargoyles? Brian is the least of our problems.”

“Willow can destroy the stony thingies,” Buffy tried to rationalize. “You can deal with Isis, Spike can kill Justine and Trish. Connor can take care of Cash and Matt. I’ll take Justin and we can all get Barnabie.”

“Who?”

“Bartox,” Liam chuckled a bit amused by his former lover’s ignorance. “But you’re forgetting about someone just as powerful. Because that someone leaves us one redhead short and Brian one already trained witch ahead.”

“Willow?” Buffy guessed. “I know she’s been acting weird, but she’s still on our side. She’s one of us…or like me and Connor…she’s human. And though she tried to end the world once, she totally, like, didn’t mean it. She said she was sorry and she wouldn’t do it again.”

Liam knew there was no other way except to show Buffy what her best friend truly was. He held Connor firm in his grip, though the young man resisted. To claim his child, Liam grabbed the back of Connor’s neck and squeezed until the younger shrieked. It was then that Liam shoved his bloody wrist into Connor’s mouth. He glanced over to a now alert Buffy and smiled.

Initially, Connor gagged and rubbed his tongue, trying to remove his father’s blood from his mouth. He sneered at Liam in rage until the essence filled him and the hunger awoke the dormant Kindred inside. It was only then that Connor nuzzled into his father’s arm wanting more of his sire’s blood.

“What the hell is going on?” Buffy wondered aloud.

“Willow and Connor are of the same breed,” Liam explained as his child hungrily fed from his wrist. “Although they’re not technically dead, both are Kindred, or vampires as you call us. Both were born into this life with a destiny to live forever. Like me, Brian, is a child of Caine. Any humanity we might have had, died with him. You have more in common with Spike than you do with me or Willow.”

“She’s a vampire?”

“Ding, ding, ding, ding,” Spike cackled. He eased his way over to his sire and nuzzled into his sire’s side waiting for his turn. “Give the skirt a cupie doll.”

“She’s a vampire,” Buffy sighed, grasping her own hands until they were numb. She didn’t want to look at the feast before her so she allowed tears to blur her vision. She didn’t want to see this strange new world anymore. Angel didn’t seem to love her anymore, Spike didn’t even seem to be infatuated with her anymore and Willow, her best friend in all the world, was a vampire. It seemed like fate was mocking her. Her best friend, first love and former lovers were all vampires. Not so fun if you’re the one, the Vampire Slayer. She couldn’t help the tears that now streamed down her face. “Looks like I’ve got a lot of work to do.”

“You’ve got a lot of bloody nerve to say we vampires ‘ave no ‘eart,” Spike snapped. “You may mean well, you bloody cunt, but in the end you want to kill your best friend.”

“She may not be dead yet, but she’s still a vampire!”

Connor licked his father’s blood, then leaned into Liam’s arms. He looked back at Buffy and couldn’t help but growl, “I didn’t know it before, but I know it now. We are all vampires here.” He glanced at Spike with a shy grin. “Aren’t we brother?”

“Aye.”

“I’m alone.”

“That you are, luv.”

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Michael looked around the barren warehouse where he sat on the floor, pleased. It had taken him almost a week, but he had found a new place to cast his spell. Although he preferred the outdoors, he had to admit that he was attracting too much attention. The proof was sitting in from of him, bringing out the vials of blood he had collected from the Nosferatu woman.

“Well, if she wasn’t suspicious before,” Melanie told the Tremere, “she is now.” “

It’s alright,” Michael said. “I’m sure you’ll be able to sweet talk her for just a while longer. Go down on her…I’m sure she’ll like that.”

“I’m sure she will.”

“You’ll think of something, Mel,” Michael reassured her. “Next week, we’ll do the Lasombra and Tzimisce. We need the Nosferatu chick’s contacts for that. She can acquire all the blood we need. I mean I have no idea what a Lasombra looks like, let alone if there are any in town.”

“What about the Tzimisce?”

“Spike,” Michael replied softly as he recalled having to scrape the Englishman’s cum off the side of the Loft. Though the sample was a week old, he suspected or hoped it wouldn’t matter. And though Spike was a Ventrue, his blood was still tainted. It didn’t matter, or so Lazarus had told him. “We can also use it for the Ventrue after that.”

“Yeah,” she said, removing the bag of fruit from her bag. She placed it in from of Michael and took a look around. She and Michael sat in a design drawn in blood. It was a picture of a moon inside a sun. Michael had shown her a picture and asked if she could draw it. Apparently he had tried and failed, though it didn’t appear that difficult. Melanie took the picture he had given her and looked it up online. It had taken her a while, but she’d finally found the concepts behind it. The Moon. The Sun. Lucifer. Allies. Magic. Lilith. It didn’t take her long to make sense of it all. The only thing she didn’t know is if Michael knew exactly what he was doing.

“You ready?”

“Hold on.”

Michael flipped through his spellbook to find where he had left off. He mulled over the chant before looking at his cohort. He still wasn’t entirely sure why Melanie would help him, but he figured it had something to do with Brian. Everything always did. What he didn’t understand was why Mel cared if Brian ended up with him or Wonder Boy. In the end that’s what the spell was for. Not to mention the whole getting rid of Justin thing, but he was careful not to mention that part to her. Michael knew Mel could be a bitch but in the end she was still Kine. And as a human, she tended to favor life- ignoring that she was a lawyer, of course. “

Time’s running out,” Mel said, interrupting Michael’s train of thought. She tapped her watch and snapped the man back from his daze. “No more time to waste.”

“Sorry.”

“S’ok,” she sighed as Michael began. She allowed the melody of the chant to relax her as the words echoed in her mind. She didn’t know Latin, but a few minutes on the computer changed that. She thought that small fact put her ahead of Michael, knowing full well he hadn’t bothered to check what he was doing. He had his mind set full throttle on his goal and it didn’t seem to matter how he was getting there. Surely that had to be the case, because if he knew what he was saying he wouldn’t dare open his mouth. Not if he wanted his sire, the one and only Brian Kinney, to stay Prince in their fair city.

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Justin opened his eyes when he heard the door open. He knew it wasn’t Brian. Just moments ago, he had felt his lover climax even though they were apart. Their connection was so strong now it was impossible for Brian to mask anything anymore, which was probably the reason the Tremere had been so forthcoming regarding his sexual dalliances with others. Though he knew, Justin was still jealous…he couldn’t help it.

“What’s with the hand in the cookie jar look?”

“Wha?”

“You’re looking like the cat that ate the canary,” Willow expounded, taking a seat next to the Toreador. “Got Brian on the brain?”

“Not terribly uncommon,” Justin replied, rolling his eyes. “What’s up?”

“Nothing much. Just came back from talking to Isis and Daedalus. Neither could find out anything about why the vegetation went all Wonderlandy and grew then all Tim Burtony and, like, died. They said the whole dying part could have possibly been because of the spell to put Angel’s Kindred soul back, but they have no clue as to why everything started growing in the first place. It sorta did start weeks before Angel got into town.”

“Possibly?” “Little frustrating I know,” Willow sighed. “Isis wants you to know she’ll get on it as soon as she can. Still dealing with the possible apocalypse and all that jazz.”

“Hmm…” “What’cha thinking…that look on your face is sorta…weird.”

“I dunno, maybe it’s nothing.”

“Or maybe you’re thinking what I’m thinking,” Willow said with a raised eyebrow. “That this might have had something to do with the apocalypse. And if it did, then it didn’t originate from here, it originated from outside the Loft…Isis said it most possibly started from a park not too far from here.”

“Possibly."

"There’s that fucking word again.”

“Wish I could’ve brought better news,” she apologized.

“You’re here,” Justin replied with a smile. “That’s good news for me. And for all the rest, I have Matt.”

“Where is he anyway?” Willow asked. “It’s not like him not to be here staring at you incessantly. I mean I know Sasha’s here, but…” She glanced towards the Brujah who was fast asleep, “you know.”

“Em’s no better,” Justin chuckled as he nodded toward his friend who was sound asleep as well. “Well, I can hear Trish on the other side of the door and I have Bartox, as always. With you here I don’t have to worry about a thing. Anyway, Only a man who wished for Final Death would wake up Sasha. Even Cash isn’t that brave.”

“Those crazies won’t get you…the Malkavians, right?”

“The crazies are the Malkavians,” Justin said and put down his head when he corrected her error. “But, I’m not afraid of Malkavians. Not anymore. There aren’t many Kindred stupid enough to fuck with Brian right now, not even my father. It does look like there’s a Slayer though. I’ve seen her fight and she’s good. Real good.”

“Oh Buffy wouldn’t hurt you,” Willow quickly responded. Though as she thought about it, her confidence waned. “I wouldn’t let her. I couldn’t. I can’t.”

“You’d fight your best friend for me?”

“I wouldn’t want to,” she honestly replied. She looked embarrassed by the declaration. However, at this point it was bigger than either her or Buffy. The blood that coursed through her veins defined her decisions. She never understood the link before, but unfortunately now she did. Protect Justin. That was what she was called to do, or that’s what Brian’s blood told her she must do.

“But I can’t disappoint him…and I wouldn’t want her to kill you. I mean no one knows for a fact what starts the whole apocalypse and all that. Right?”

Justin took a deep breath and sighed, “Right.”

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“She belongs to him now,” Liam said softly. He stood by the same window Julian had not so long ago and stared at the stars outside. His eyes drifted softly to the loft where Brian ruled and took a deep breath.

“The night is so much darker here.”

“It’s not that much different from Sunnydale.”

Buffy never felt more uncomfortable with her former love than now. She had fought him and won before, but this was different. Angel was different…he was now Liam, a man she had never known. A vampire. Kindred. A term she had never heard before her visit to Pittsburgh. A word she wished she had never heard of. Kindred. The vampires here where much more then she could ever imagine. Stronger. More organized. Scarier. And though Brian seemed so scary to everyone else, including Angel, it was he, her first love, Angel…or rather Liam, that scared her more than anyone else. So much so that she wished Connor was still in the room with them, or even Spike. Alone in the room with Liam, she wondered for the first time ever if she could beat him in a fight. She really didn’t know anymore.

“With Isis, Justine and Willow by his side, Brian is a force to say the least,” Liam grumbled. He leaned his head against the window and exhaled, leaving no mark on the glass. “I hate it when Craig is right. If only I had known that Ulugh Beg was Brian’s father, I never would have agreed. He’s about as untouchable as any Kindred gets.”

“Willow? She isn’t by his side.”

“Any attempt to kill him must be done to the letter of the law,” Liam continues, ignoring the Slayer. “If not, Ulugh Beg would destroy me and my childer. For all that I have done to them, I cannot allow that to happen. Both have suffered so much because of me. Connor and William deserve my attention more than any other.”

“William,” Buffy snorted. “I don’t think I’ll get used to calling him anything but Spike. Same thing goes for the whole Liam thing. You’ll always be Angel to me.”

Liam momentarily turned his attention to the petite blonde and wondered how he could have ever loved her. Though she was strong and beautiful, she was still Kine. In the end the dead and living never mixed well. A perfect example was his William, his youngest turned childe. Spike or whatever he chose to call himself. No matter how he tried or how much he helped, Buffy and her friends had never accepted the Spike, nor would they ever. In the end, to them, he was still a vampire. What they didn’t’ know was that he was so much more.

“Angel? Liam?’” Liam grinned a bit embarrassed. Though he was staring right at her, he had been ignoring Buffy. “Something on your mind?”

“Just wondering if you knew.”

“About what?”

“You know,” she replied, sheepishly. “If you knew about me and Spike. That we-you know-sorta…um…”

“Had sex,” Liam finished. “Yes. William…Spike was sure to be very detailed in his description.”

Buffy blushed, wanting to crawl under a rock in shame. “You’re not mad?"

“No.”

“Why not?” She spurted out.

“I am not the man you think I am,” Liam sighed, turning his attention back to the stars outside. His patience was waning quickly. “Even if I did love you as Angel did, which I do not, I would not worry about my William’s affections. He only wanted you because I had you. At the time, it was as close to me as he could get.”

“I was actually talking about us. ”

Buffy’s eyes watered, but no tear fell. Her faced showed her confusion until her eyes finally met with Liam’s once again. His cold eyes brought a dismal clarity to her thoughts. She was jealous. The more she thought about it, the more it irked her. It wasn’t supposed like this. She wasn’t supposed to feel this way. Angel was supposed to be jealous, or at least Spike was.

“You said you would always love me,” Buffy reminded him. “And Spike…”

“Angel is dead,” Liam explained, still staring outside. “As for my childer…both will love me for eternity. And Spike, specifically, will do anything to please me. He will follow as he always does. It is his nature. I knew that when I turned him.” “

At least I bloody well know how to go with the flow,” Spike said, entering the room. He was a bit curious how long they’d been talking about him, but he put it out of his mind for now. “Unlike some others I know. I know better than to get bent every time you shag some gussied up bint. You almost bled me dry the first and last time I did that, eh Sire?”

“Even with tainted blood I would have never killed you,” Liam told the younger Ventrue. After rethinking it, however, he had to change his mind. “Or I might have. I guess I had killed a childe to two in my past…and set one on fire…”

“Not you,” Spike spat back,” Angelus…or Angel. Whoever the fuck. It wasn’t me Sire. You know, mate, I’ve been waiting for you for a hundred years and honestly, I don’t care who you stick your pipe in-even the nit-wit.”

“The nit wit can hear you!” Buffy snapped in her own defense. “I mean…I’m not a nit wit, but I’m sitting right here!”

“I serve me Sire,” Spike continued with only a glance to the Slayer. “I’d kill or be killed. Don’t matter much to me.”

“You’re all psychos.”

Liam placed a hand on Spike’s shoulder to reassure his childe. He had no intentions of allowing any of his childer to die. At first he’d wanted to order Spike and Connor out of the city, but he hadn’t wanted to insult either. Both were more than capable in battle and though his blood was no longer tainted, he was still a selfish Kindred.

“Brian would be so lucky to have such obedient childer as I.”

“Even that lucky bastard isn’t that bloody lucky.”

“Are you kidding?” Buffy snorted. “Considering he’s not gay, Matt does a great impression of the Queen of Hearts. Twice while I was in the library researching that friggin apocalypse, he told Brian that I’d be better off without my head. You'd think they were lovers or something.”

“I meant Michael.”

“Oh yeah,” Buffy agreed. “I almost forgot about him.”

“Who’s Michael?” Liam asked.

Spike grinned mischievously and sat in a chair next to his sire.

“Let me tell you about the Prince’s first turned childe.”

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Brian heard violin playing as he entered the elevator, but he had no idea it was coming from his own quarters. He opened the door to a flood of classical music and immediately went to the refrigerator for a beer.

“Don’t you think it’s beautiful, Bri?” Justin asked, never looking at his mate. He couldn’t help but stare at the violin player, Ethan, and absorb the music. “Isn’t it the best violin you’ve ever heard?”

“No.”

“What crawled up your ass?” Sasha snorted. She saw the Tremere open his mouth and immediately regretted her attempt at levity. “For the love of any good mental image, please don’t answer that.”

“Can you guys keep it down?” Em asked, clearly taken by the concert.

Brian walked over to Ethan, a mop hared Toreador, his beer bottle between two fingers, and stood between the violinist and his audience. He took another sip, never changing his grip and stared as Ethan continued to play. Brian quickly glanced back at Justin then rolled his eyes. He could feel the attraction between the two and all he would admit to himself was mild annoyance. Briefly mild. When he saw the sheepish look on Justin’s face, he snatched the violin from Ethan in mid tune and tossed it at Bartox who grabbed with stone claws, destroying the piece.

“I have a fucking headache,” Brian declared without apology. He sipped his beer as he strolled into the bedroom. “So can we keep the chatter to a minimum?”

“You’d think he’d be in a better mood after getting laid,” Justin said, dismissing Ethan with a wave of his hand. “I sure as hell know I would be.”

“I think it’s his strange Brianesque way of declaring his love,” Emmett concluded. “You know, ruining everyone’s fun and destroying people’s property.”

“Naw!” Sasha chuckled. “That’s a Brujah’s version of having fun.”

“Did I not mention the headache?” Brian snapped, appearing in the doorway nude. He saw Justin’s hungry look and smirked before turning back into the room to put on fresh clothing. “You people need a lesson in shutting the fuck up.”

“Thanks for showering,” Justin said softly.

“Wouldn’t want to show up to my meeting stinking like some Babylon turnip.” Brian appeared from his room, buttoning up his shirt. He walked past his mate without a glance towards Justin. “Who knows? Someone fuckable might be there.”

“I thought you were going to stay.”

“Can’t.”

“Fuck you, Brian.”

“Don’t get pissy,” Brian replied, slipping on a pair of shoes. He then felt the need to address Justin’s companions, though he was sure they knew what he was going to say. “You know the drill, Sasha, Matt-where the fuck’s Matt?”

“Running an errand for me,” Justin retorted.

“He’s supposed to be here,” Brian growled. He was thinking that Matt should be protecting Justin, but he felt it was better left unsaid. He wondered why he hadn’t noticed his childe was missing and rolled his eyes when it dawned on him. The violin player had distracted him. He snarled.

“He is helping me,” Justin said defensively. “I would have had Michael do it but I haven’t seen him in like forever. Matt, on the other hand, will be back in less than an hour. The Toreador paused thinking it would be best to hold his tongue. However, that had never been his strong point. “And you? When will you be back? I’m here pregnant with your baby and I never get to see you! You’re always in some sort of meeting or off fucking the greater part of Liberty Avenue!”

“It’s what I do best.”

“Why don’t you just cancel it for once and spend some time with me?”

“Such a drama princess,” Brian sighed. “Not even worth the title of Queen.”

“Fuck you.”

“If I could do that I might have actually stayed,” Brian smirked. “You are good for something.”

“You can be so mean.”

“Again, another one of my better traits,” Brian said, looking away from his lover as a tear fell down Justin’s cheek. “You really want me to cancel?”

“Yes.”

“I guess I could,” Brian replied, sitting next to Justin. He kissed Justin’s stomach then his mate’s palm. “I know I’ve put it off for a few days, but I guess I could put it off a few more. I mean Liam isn’t going anywhere and I guess what he knows about the apocalypse isn’t going anywhere either. I just figured I had given him enough time to contact all of his sources and I’d torture him until he told me something, but I suppose it could wait until later.”

Brian smiled sarcastically until Justin apologized, albeit telepathically. The Prince then stood up and kissed Justin firmly on the lips. He hated to admit it, but things were better when they were on the same page.

“You know if Liam doesn’t give you the right answer,” Justin said, smiling. “You should behead Spike and then ask him again.”

Brian didn’t respond, only smiled as he left the loft. The Tremere blood flowing through Justin was taking charge. It didn’t surprise Brian that Justin found out about his tryst with Spike. It was bound to happen. However, it did surprise him how Justin defended Matt. Matt. As Brian walked downstairs he remembered that he had forgotten the million-dollar question: What errand did Justin send Matt to do?

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“That’s it, right?” Melanie asked after Michael had finished chanting. “So, are things going to grow or die this time?”

“Not entirely sure about that.”

“Don’t you think you should-Oh Jesus!”

Melanie held her nose as a foul stench filled the air. Thick smoke rose from beneath where she and Michael sat and filled her lungs, choking her. Immediately, she began to grab items, stuffing them into her bag as Michael grabbed her arm and pulled her through a door out of the main warehouse. As she exited, she glanced back to see a figure loom through the smoke towards the symbol in blood on the floor. Michael led the way until they found themselves in Melanie’s car heading downtown.

“I’m pretty sure that was Matt.”

“Fuck, are you joking?”

“I wouldn’t joke about that,” Melanie quickly responded. “If Brian found out about what we’re up to he’d teach you some demented Kindred lesson. Me? He’d kill me, Michael. I don’t even think Linds could do anything to save me.” “

I think we’d be in the same boat,” Michael partially agreed.

“Fuck, why did I get myself into this? I could have just let it go, but nooo…” Melanie drove down one street then another, making sure to check behind her. It was bad enough they had left some things behind, but that was all she was willing to give. Their identity was much more precious.

“Look, Mikey,” Mel snapped. “I’m in this up to my ass, so it’s about time you tell me everything.”

“Blood. I just need more blood.”

“I know that, but how much more?!”

“About three weeks worth. After that…well, we’ll both get what we want,” Michael confessed. He sat next to Mel and checked the cars that followed them a little paranoid himself. When he was satisfied, he sat more comfortably, glancing in Mel’s direction.

“So…I know what I want…what is it that you want?”

“Brian off of my ass, of course.”

“And you’re going to get that when Brian dumps the human rabbit test?”

Melanie stopped at a light and turned to Michael. She looked at him and knew he wasn’t lying. Michael truly believed that the elaborate spell he had been doing was to get Brian’s love. It didn’t surprise her, though she did wonder if her research was incorrect. No. Michael had no idea what he was doing, but she did.

“Mel?”

“Yeah,” Mel finally replied, though it was the honking behind her that snapped her out of her daze. She glanced over to Michael and forced a smile. If he had no idea what he was doing, she had no intentions of telling him.

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“A sire with a problematic childe,” Liam mused, running his fingers through Spike’s short, platinum locks. The first stroke was smooth, but the second forced his childe to face him. “This is good news, however long it took to inform me.”

“I’m sorry Sire,” Spike whispered. “It’ll never happen again.”

Liam slipped his arm around Spike and kissed him firmly on the mouth. He smiled when Spike went under his pants and to his groin. His childe quickly unzipped his pants and leaned down, mouth open. He laughed when his eyes met with Buffy’s, who terror amused him terribly. Instead, he moved his childe’s head up by the chin and exposed his neck.

“Eat, boy.”

“Thought that’s what I was doing,” Spike snipped. He looked at Buffy, who began to cry and rolled his eyes. “Unless we care that the skirt’s sitting ‘ere.”

“I could fuck your brains out in front of anyone,” Liam replied, though his eyes were firmly planted on their front door. “But you’d tire and I need you right now, especially with your brother outside waiting for our guest. I think it’s best you have all your strength.”

Spike bit into Liam’ neck, his hand firmly grabbing onto his sire’s crotch. He had only sucked a bit when a short-lived knock came to the door. He wanted to continue, even when Trish barged in the apartment, but he knew better. It was time and Connor hadn’t even returned yet.

“I’m not ready,” Liam said softly, keeping Spike close to him.

“Brian doesn’t give a fuck,” she told the man.

“I’m feeding my childe,” Liam snapped, trying to assert his authority. “Can’t he wait?”

“Are you shitting me?” Trish snorted. “Prince Kinney says get your fucking ass over here or he’s going to destroy your family…starting with Spikey boy over here.”

Though Spike took the threat lightly, Liam did not. He simply zipped up his pants and followed Trish out of the apartment. He didn’t need to give orders, he knew Spike was following closely behind him. Even the Slayer followed, though he didn’t care whether or not she was there. They went outside and past Connor who still sat waiting on the stoop in front of the apartment. His boy was surrounded by Gangrel guards, but that’s not what alarmed the Ventrue. Liam looked up, following his born child’s eyes seeing a plethora of young Gargoyles protecting the loft.

The group quickly made their way across the street and upstairs to the Prince’s meeting room. Brian sat in a chair, his feet on the glass conference table filled with open books and ancient scrolls. Across from him sat Justine, who seemed less thrilled to be sitting there book in hand. Willow, on the other hand, paced behind Brian, flipping through a book, engrossed with the information she read.

“I’m not interrupting your evening, am I?” Brian snidely said.

“In fact,” Liam replied. “You were.”

“Well, then go back to do what you were doing,” Brian said, sneering when Liam turned around. “Spike stays. I really don’t care who I torture to get the information I need.”

“He doesn’t know anything.” Liam turned around and placed an arm around Spike.

“And from what I’m hearing you don’t know anything either,” Brian snapped. “You said you could tell me what starts the apocalypse-that it’s not the bun in Justin’s oven. Now all I’ve heard is bullshit delaying tactics. I’m tired of waiting.”

“Patience is a virtue.”

Brian allowed a cold smile to cross his face when Justine laughed. He was many things but patient or virtuous wasn’t any of them. At the moment he was beginning to loose what little composure he had left.

“Seems as if Spike’s life means dick to you,” Brian said, snapping his fingers. He stared at Liam as Trish and another guard brought blades to Spike’s neck. “So I guess I’ll give the orders to have my pets tear your boy outside to shreds.”

Liam bit his tongue and forced the words, “Apologies, Prince Kinney,” from his lips. “I just need a little more-” Liam stopped speaking as the room filled with a foul odor. He was unsure what to make of it when he saw Brian’s face cringe. “Did a sewer line break?”

“Uh,” Justine snickered. “Liam, you should make sure your childer are clean before meeting with your Prince.”

“It ain’t me,” Spike barked. He smelled himself to make sure and nodded, approving his own scent. “Maybe the human farted.”

“What, me?” Willow asked, finally looking away from her book. “You are the only human ‘ere luv.”

Lazarus barged into the room and bowed to Brian. He held a handkerchief on his nose as he walked to a television in the corner of a room. He turned on the TV and changed the station to a news broadcast.

“…knows were the smell started from. The Public Works and Sanitation Departments have both issued statements asserting that neither of them knows what is causing the foul stench or where it is emanating from. Local authorities say they are on a mission to find out what is causing the foul order as well as the freak happenings with the accelerated foliage growth around the city. A small group say that there is magical happenings running amok in Pittsburgh, but those not living in the world of Harry Potter believe that the strange events have something to do with the power plant located in…”

Brian had Lazarus turn off the TV. He had heard enough. Something magical was happening, but now that seemed the least of his problems. His father wasn’t going to be pleased. The outside world was beginning to see inside the Masquerade and that offence could be the end of Brian Kinney. Ulugh Beg wouldn’t even be able to save him them.

“Fuck.”

“Brian?” Justin spoke to his lover telepathically. “You should turn on the TV to channel 5.”

“I just watched it,” Brian replied silently.

“What’s that smell?”

“I’ll get back to you on that.”

“It’s beginning,” Willow said. “The apocalypse. It’s forming right now.”

“Nonsense,” Liam scoffed.

“Not nonsense,” Isis told the group and she stormed into the room with Daedalus. “We just found a passage that describes what’s happening…the plant growth and foul smell…it’s in a paragraph in a scroll. It says the original story came from within the Liber Utercumque Turbatus Sedatus. Brian, I tried to locate the spell book, but Brian…it’s not here…”

“I thought that’s the book that disappears,” Brian replied.

“Someone stole it, Brian,” Isis clarified. “We have to find it.”

“No one’s noticed it went missing?”

“Who uses that book?” Isis snickered. She turned her attention to the only person she knew had any interest in the ancient book. “Lazarus.”

“I’ve been too busy as of late,” Lazarus lied.

Brian watched the elder Tremere and knew something was amiss. He didn’t want to get into it in front of Liam, but knew he had to do something soon. Either way, he needed to use or get rid of Liam. If there was nothing to be learned about the apocalypse, then Liam was just another hindrance. Quick action was required before his father’s return. He had a lot of cleaning up to do. “Sit your ass down,” Brian snapped at Lazarus.

He turned his attention to Liam and growled, though the Ventrue didn’t budge, “You’ve lost your usefulness.”

“I’ll die fighting.”

“You’ll just die,” Willow hissed, her eyes changing hues. She saw Buffy charge her out of the corner of her eye, but stopped the Slayer with a flick of her finger. She sent Buffy flying backwards, slamming into a wall with a thud.

“Don’t do that again, Buffy. It’s just time for your boyfriend to go.”

The moment Spike moved towards Willow, Brian stood in front of her. He bit his finger and punched Spike, spouting off words causing a bolt of ice to surge through the Ventrue’s body.

“Brian!” Isis shouted. She pointed to the door where Connor stood with a green man with small red horns on his head. “Look!”

Brian stopped Willow by placing a hand on her shoulder. He watched as Connor rushed to Liam, only to have the elder have him tend to Spike on the floor.

“This better be what I was waiting for.”

“I hope so,” the demon said. “This is The Host,” Liam told the Prince. “He has the ability to tell you what you’ve done and what you can possibly do in the future.”

“Isis?”

“I’ve heard of this demon,” Isis informed Brian. “His kind is a rarity here in this realm and I’m told he is a rarity of his kind. They call him The Host. He owns a bar where Kindred and Demons can go within the Masquerade.”

“Can you tell me what starts the apocalypse?” Brian asked The Host.

“That all depends,” the demon replied.

“Can you sing?”

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Matt ran after the car until the stench overwhelmed him. He gagged then threw up before remembering he didn’t need to inhale. He was Kindred. He held his breath as he made his way back to the origin of the stench. Though is eyes watered, he got on his cell phone and spoke to Trish. He told her where he was and what he had found there.

“That’s where it’s coming from?"

“Just get the troops down here before the humans find out about this place,” Matt replied before finally succumbing and throwing up again. “Now!”

“Did you see who did it? Matt?” “I was following Michael when I found myself here,” Matt said. He waved his hand trying to bat away the thick smoke around him. “Aw God this stinks.”

“Michael’s a part of this?”

“That’s not important right now,” Matt exclaimed. “You better send someone before cops or the fucking fire department wash away all this shit.”

“What shit!?”

Matt rolled his eyes and opened his mouth to respond when he saw flashing lights heading his way. He took a defensive position as two police cars pulled up and approached him. At first he was hesitant, but then he sensed them.

“Ventrue are here,” Matt told Trish, panic overcoming him. “When are our people getting here? I’m outnumbered!”

“That’s your back up,” Trish stated apologetically. “I told Cash and he should be on his way.” “Are you fucking kidding me? Ventrue?!”

“We’re here to ensure the Masquerade,” the female cop said. She gagged, threw up then wiped her mouth. “What are the Prince’s orders?”

“They have no Primogen right now,” Trish explained. “And they are cops…”

“But-”

“Just do as your told, Matt.”

Though he didn’t like anything to do with the Ventrue, Matt did as he was ordered. He told the Ventrue cop, Lisa, what he had found and she immediately told her partner to take pictures, sketches and then remove all of the evidence for the Prince. He felt better when he saw four strangely dressed women and three bikers make their way through the stench filled fog.

“Malkavians and Brujah and here,” He told Trish.

“Problems be here?” Baby Doll asked. How there be fear? There is no lightning for little girls to peer.”

“I’m gonna puke,” Uma choked out. “

Can’t you smell it wench?” Lisa snapped. It was hard to tell what displeased her more, the Malkavians or the odor. We need you to do a sweep of the area. I mile radius is sufficient, then bring what or who you find to me.”

“Quack, quack, quack,” Baby Doll giggled.

“You people disgust me,” Lisa grumbled.

“It smells like shitty ass,” Uma cracked. “What the fuck’s going on here?”

“The solution is no far,” Baby Doll laughed. “Stinkies, stinkies out of the jar. Kill the Brujah and buy them in a car.”

“You’re fucking hilarious,” Uma snapped, though not taking the Malkavian seriously. She turned her attention to Matt. “If you’re in charge, there must be trouble. What’s going on here?”

“First collect evidence,” Lisa told the Brujah. “And then we fill in our Prince.”

“Speaks of things we need to do,” Baby Doll cooed. “My ears are deaf to Ventrue. A car, a crew and bad baby too. A sun, a moon and a sky that’s blue. Pig or rat? Who cares, my orders, my ears hear only Matt.”

“Do a sweep and report back to me,” Matt ordered the Malkavians. He rolled his eyes and turned his attention to Lisa. “Uma, go inside and make sure the Prince gets every piece of evidence in that warehouse.”

Uma pushed Lisa aside and made her way into the warehouse. She made it perfectly clear to the police officers inside who was in charge. Matt couldn’t help but chuckle, especially when a cop pulled a ziplock back from inside his pocket and handed it to the unruly Brujah. He wasn’t sure if it was Brian’s name that caused so much fear or Ulugh Beg’s. At this point, he didn’t care.

“Anything else you’d like to order Prince’s childe to do?”

“Sorry," Lisa sighed. “I didn’t mean disrespect to you or your Sire.” With a nod of his head, Matt dismissed Lisa. He then turned his attention back to the phone.

“What else should I do?”

“Just finish up and come home,” Trish said. “Brian’s wondering why you’re not with Justin and he’s pissed.”

“Fuck,”

“Come back with information and I’m sure you’ll be forgiven.”

“I’ll be back soon.”

Matt hung up the phone and looked into the warehouse. He hoped he had found something important. It didn’t even matter if Michael was involved or not. The last thing he wanted was for Brian to be displeased with him. He had seen his Sire angry before and he didn’t want to be in the same room when that happened, let alone be the cause. A pissed off Brian could be worse that any apocalypse.

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“If you don’t get started, I’ll be tempted to rip off your horns and stick it in your green ass,” Brian coolly informed The Host.

“Anytime Justin wants to begin,” the demon replied. He turned to Justin. “Preferably soon. My horns work better on my head.”

“What should I sing?”

“Anything you want” Justin thought about what song he want to sing. He ignored Brian’s pained looks until he thought of the perfect choice. He took a seat next to his mate and put a hand on Brian’s leg. He then began to sing Beautiful by Christina Aguilara.

“Hey, that didn’t suck ass,” Sasha snorted.

“That was lovely,” Em chimed in. “Don’t you agree, Brian?” “

Fucking spectacular,” Brian grumbled. “Give him a fucking Grammy…but first, can you please tell us if our baby is going to end the world. Pretty fucking please.”

“First things first,” The Host said before whispering into Justin’s ear. “Are we going to share?”

“No.”

“Please tell me you’re joking,” Sasha said disappointed.

“I want everyone to leave,” Justin replied, matter-of-factly. He smiled softy as he stood and waddled to the door, opening it. “Now.”

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“I wonder what’s going on up there,” Willow sighed, staring at the door. “Maybe that demon doesn’t know what he’s talking about.”

“He does,” Liam assured her.

“I agree,” Justine chimed in. “I’ve heard of this demon before, The Host, he provides a sanctuary for those within The Masquerade.”

“But what do we really know about him?” Willow wondered aloud. “I mean doesn’t he have a real name? Who calls himself The Host?”

“His name is Lorne,” Liam said sternly. “I said I vouched for him.”

“Who vouches for you?”

“What about you, Willow?” Buffy snapped. She glanced to Liam, who, in turn, gave her a knowing look. She could almost hear him tell her that Willow wasn’t human anymore, that she was like him. A vampire. “You seem more worried about a vampire than you do about saving the world.”

“Justin’s pregnant, Buffy.”

“Justin’s dead,” the Slayer said, feeling the ache of betrayal from her best friend. “You know it’s my job to kill vampires and hello? Willow? He’s a vampire.”

“I’m sorry Buffy, I don’t mean to really-”

“You’re apologizing?” Justine hissed, disgusted. “What for?”

“Brian would be disappointed,” Spike instigated.

“In that, the childe is correct,” Lazarus agreed.

“Who cares what Brian thinks?”

Willow opened her mouth to respond to Buffy, then changed her mind. Why was she trying to placate Buffy? Dead or not, she couldn’t help what flowed through her veins. This was her destiny, it always had been. She just didn’t know it until now. She couldn’t have it both ways.

“I do,” Willow admitted.

“Don’t do this, Willow,” Buffy cried.

“Buffy…”

“It’s that jerk, Brian,” Buffy screeched, turning towards the door. “He’s the one who did this to you.”

Spike smirked as his head turned from Buffy to Willow.

“You can’t just kill Brian, Buffy.”

“Like she could,” Justine snarled.

“Watch me!”

Willow lifted her hand and pointed it at Buffy. She had so much she wanted to say to her friend, but knew none made difference anymore. No more pretending. Willow’s eyes darkened as the magic possessed her. She smiled when a green bolt hit Buffy and tossed the Slayer across the room. The moment when Buffy stood, Willow showed her best friend (former, that is) who she was and where they now stood.

“I am Kindred,” Willow said softly. “And the day that I die, I will rise again and become a true childe of Brian.”

“Wil-”

“Shh,” Willow whispered. “I’m done with you now.”

A few words and a wave of Willow’s hand sent Buffy through the window and down four flights to the hard pavement below. The redhead then turned her attention to Liam, Spike and Connor. Without a word, she challenged them. None took her up on her offer. In fact, Liam seemed amused and Spike snorted as he laughed.

“Good.”

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Michael dusted off the glass on his shoulder as he entered the building. He didn’t look back as Mel went into her home without a word. He tried to bypass Trish, but that wasn’t going to happen.

“Where have you been!”

“What’s it to you?”

“Where have you been!”

“Dodging Slayers,” Michael replied. “Did you know they fall from the sky, like snowflakes or acid rain?”

A growl was Trish’s only response. Michael didn’t care one way or another. Everyone might give him a hard time, but he knew Brian was the only one who could punish him. He snickered as Trish led him upstairs knowing full well that Brian may have given many orders, but didn’t think he was really one of them. Once upstairs, he saw Lazarus and smiled. He had gotten the next part of the spell off without getting caught. The elder Kindred raised an eyebrow in response and Michael couldn’t help but cock his head proudly. He knew he had done well. And now, because of his reaction, Liam did as well. But done well at what?

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“I love you, Brian.”

“I know.”

“You love me back.” Brian smiled, though he said nothing. He held Justin in his arms and tried to rock the fear from his mate. “I didn’t want everyone to get all spastic on me.”

“Are you gonna tell me?”

“What The Host said?” Justin asked, keeping a firm grip on Brian.

“Yeah.”

“Something we already knew,” Justin replied, looking at his mate with a soft smile.

“Our baby is a Tremere…and I love you…and all encompassing love.”

“Anything else?”

“He couldn’t see anymore than that.”

“Figures.”

Brian’s matter of fact response made Justin cry. He had never wanted to believe, but it was hard not to. Not when everything was pointing at him and the baby. He didn’t know what he hated most, the possibility that his unborn child might end the world, or that the Slayer just might be right.

“I never wanted to believe.”

“Fuck it.”

“What?”

“I don’t give a rat’s ass if our little whippersnapper causes my dick to fall off let alone the fucking apocalypse,” Brian declared. “We’re having the little shit whether I like it or not.”

“You love it.”

“I better since my spawn is going to end the world.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that sire,” Matt said, getting both men’s attention.

“Where the fuck have you been?!”

“Disobeying you, Sire,” Matt replied

“He did it for me, Brian.”

Brian took a deep breath and held Justin close to him. He could argue or complain, but it would be wasted energy. Matt always followed orders, just not his at the moment. His childe was looking out for Justin’s best interest. At least both were on the same page in that regard. Needing to feel a bit better, Brian grabbed Justin’s ass and squeezed. It took everything in him not to slip a finger in. He looked at Justin and smiled. Justin knew exactly what was going through Brian’s mind.

“Don’t be mad at him, Bri.”

“I’m not,” Brian sighed, turning his attention to Matt. “You two have been at this for weeks…so...have you actually found something on Michael?”

“You knew?”

“Of course.”

Justin glanced towards Matt with a large grin.

“So, did we find something on him?”

“Oh yeah,” Matt replied. “He tried to cover it up, but I found him…short of catching him in the act.”

“The act of what?”

“I don’t know,” he said. “You’ll have to get that out of him, Sire.”

Brian had a million thoughts cross his mind, but all he could muster was a very somber, “Michael, Michael, Michael. Times up.”

[TO BE CONTINUED]