

Cagey Behavior

Stuck in the darkness, Dana found her confidence waning as she realized that the lock wasn't something she could pick. No amount of Youtube education was going to teach her how to undo a lock that was on the outside of her cage door. She couldn't even reach the thing with her fingertips. Unless she developed zombie telekinesis, she was stuck.

It also didn't help that she had to listen to Tasia ranting from the nearby cage. The werewolf was practically howling in human form, which seemed a little silly. It was a stream of consciousness that reminded Dana very much of Tink.

"Hey." Dana gave the wall of her cage a good kick and repeated the process until Tasia finally quieted down. "How strong are these cages?"

"Why do you care? We aren't getting out, and I suspect this is all your fault somehow."

"Me being in here is my fault. I have no idea why you're here. Have you wolfed out and tried forcing your way free?"

There was a growl in the darkness. "As a matter of fact, I can't change right now."

"Why?" asked Dana. When no answer came, she smacked the door. "Look, we're both in cages right now and none of this is about you. I had no idea you were even in Florida. We were tracking a demon and things went sideways. I'm sure you know what that's like. I'm not asking you about your weaknesses or whatever, but I think we should agree right now that our number one priority is escape."

Another moment passed, and Tasia sighed. "Silver bullet," she replied. "I was shot. It keeps me from transforming."

"Did they shoot you? The preacher people?"

"No." This time, the growl was deeper than before. "It was one of our own, someone in the Order. Killed a group of researchers and my team, then pinned the blame on me. I think they may have been mind controlled, I'm not sure and didn't get much of a chance to think about it before the bastard shot me. They brought me here to keep me until I could be collected later."

“That sounds messed up.” Dana tried rattling the door even harder, but that was no use. This left the option of sheer brute force. She gave the door a kick. When it didn’t budge, she tried again. Her current dilemma was that she was afraid she might break a leg or something. She wasn’t keen on revealing her strength to anyone, but the situation was pretty dire.

Tasia snorted. “Like you’re one to talk. Walking around with a succubus of all things. Tell me, how many innocent men and women have you fed to that bitch?”

“None, actually. I’m not her boss, I’m her friend.” Dana gave the door a few more exploratory kicks, then felt it with her fingers, reconstructing the build in her mind. There was a huge difference between kicking a door near the hinges versus near the deadbolt holding it shut. She made a mental note to start carrying a small flashlight in the future, doing this blind sucked.

“You can’t seriously expect me to believe that,” Tasia said.

“You’re a werewolf in a cage who was shot by one of her buddies and dropped off for safekeeping in a tour bus with a famous pastor’s face on it. Whose story is more believable right now?” Dana double checked the position of her foot and then kicked. When it didn’t give after the first few strikes, she stretched her body and pushed against the latch side of the door with her foot, bracing her back against the interior. The metal groaned, but held without bending. She felt around the cage some more, but it was smooth on the inside. There was the faint odor of dried sweat and blood, but it was overpowered by Tasia’s scent.

“These cages weren’t made for animals. I saw them when I came in. I think Osgrove has been using them for people.” Tasia shifted in her cage. “That pompous fucker.”

“He’s in league with a demon. We didn’t know that when we came, but we do now.” Dana felt a subtle shift in the trailer. “Shit. Time to play Andy’s Coming.”

“What does that even mean?” demanded Tasia, but Dana went limp in the cage, making sure that her wrist was by the door. She forced the air out of her lungs and stared straight ahead as someone came into the room and turned on the light. One of Deacon’s security detail stared at her, but she held perfectly still.

The man opened the cage and stuck his hand in far enough to check her pulse. When he didn’t get one, he let out a grunt and grabbed the walkie on his shoulder. “The intruder is dead,” he said. “Do you still want me to bring her up?”

There was a moment of interference, and then a harsh voice came through the speaker. "Do so."

The guy sighed and knelt down to grab Dana's wrist. "At least you aren't too heavy," he muttered, sliding her out of the cage. When he leaned over to lift her up into a fireman's carry, she put the man in a chokehold and squeezed the sides of his neck. He gasped for air, but it wasn't air she was cutting off. A proper choke cut off the flow of blood itself, and he slumped over, his brain temporarily deprived of oxygen.

"Damn, that was slick," Tasia muttered from her cell.

Dana , searched the man's pockets and took his keys before shoving him into her old cage and locking it shut. She took a peek out the door to the cage room. The trailer was empty, but that didn't mean someone wasn't outside.

"Let me out," Tasia begged, pressing her face against the bars.

"I'm not sure I should," Dana replied. "I don't have time to deal with you."

"Look, I'm in a bad spot and..." Tasia groaned. "The guy who captured me said I was going to be an experiment. This is absolutely an enemy of my enemy situation."

"I was never your enemy." Dana stared hard at Tasia, then unlocked her cage. "You might not know this, but I drowned your sorry ass in Hawaii and then helped bring it back. We had conflicting goals, but that was it. If the shoe had been on the other foot, I have no doubt you would have...damn, that's a lot of blood." Dana examined the giant stain that ran down the front of Tasia's outfit. She looked like an extra from a horror movie with blood down to her legs.

"I'll live," Tasia muttered. "But we need to get the bullets out."

The smell of Tasia's blood aroused something in Dana, and she subconsciously licked her lips. It was hunger, but in a way she hadn't experienced before. True, she had fed on the Nirumbi and even Mike's magic juice, but that had been out of necessity and instinct. This was something she wanted to eat for pleasure, to experience the taste of it on her tongue and feel it run down the back of her throat like hot chocolate on a cold day.

Tasia slid forward and stood, hunched over with a hand on her stomach. "You're drooling."

Dana wiped her mouth with a hand and walked out of the room. Her phone was sitting on a nearby table, along with her fake pass. She picked it up and saw that she had missed a text from Lily. When she opened it, she frowned at the one word missive.

Lily wanted her to run. But from what? And why? What could spook the succubus enough that she would try to chase Dana off? Dana was in the middle of typing her reply when someone else stepped onto the bus. She looked up and locked eyes with another security guard. This one was faster than the first and pulled out a baton with one hand and a stun gun with the other.

She leapt toward him, taking the baton across the face and slapping the stun gun aside. He struck her in the chest and knocked her to the ground, then tried to stomp on her neck. She twisted to the side and heard something snap. Thinking he had just broken one of her bones, she groaned when she saw the man lift his heel from remnants of her cell phone.

Tasia caught the man in the face with a flying knee, and both of them crumpled to the ground. Dana stood and picked up the remnants of her phone. Only the screen protector held the thing together. She shoved it in her pocket and helped the werewolf up.

"I thought he was going to take you out," Tasia muttered. "Should have known better. Where's the succubus?"

"Her name is Lily. She said we need to run." Dana pulled Tasia to her feet. "So I'm guessing that's what we need to do."

"Maybe you can run." Tasia lifted her hand away from her stomach, revealing fresh blood. "I guess this is where we part ways, witch."

"Call me Dana." She slapped the stun gun into Tasia's hand. "And you're coming with me."

The parking lot was dimly lit, but Tasia could see clearly as if it was the middle of the day. The convention center was abuzz with noise. The people inside were singing hymns right now, and she could smell the excitement in the air. The performance had reached a fever pitch and was likely going to end soon.

Dana slowly led the way, but Tasia directed her toward an area with fewer guards. They stank of hotdog meat, sweat, and...sulfur? It made sense, based on what the witch had told her.

No, not witch. If nothing else, Tasia needed to let that idea go. Dana clearly wasn't a witch. She did have an odd smell about her, but it was hard to parse what it was with so much other activity going on. The pain in her gut didn't help, either. The bullets burned like tiny fireballs in her belly, and the sensation was radiating down her legs. She stumbled a few times, but Dana caught her with those uncanny reflexes of hers.

"Once we get past the gates, I've got somewhere we can go. We'll meet up with Lily and figure out our next step." Dana knelt down behind a parked car. "But only if you agree to play nice."

Tasia wanted to argue that the succubus wouldn't make such an agreement, but realized that wasn't true. After so many hours inside that cage, she had come to the realization that she had stepped into something far bigger than what she could handle on her own.

"I should warn you that I'm not very reliable right now." Tasia pointed to her wound. "My strength comes and goes in waves."

Dana examined Tasia's wound. There was a look in Dana's eyes that was hungry, almost feral. "Do I need to carry you?"

"I'm mobile. Just...less than fresh." Tasia shrugged. "You don't happen to have my sword, do you?"

"Not here." Dana sniffed the air. "Do you smell that?"

Tasia tapped her nose. "You're going to have to narrow it down."

"It's sulfur and cheap perfume," said a woman from the other side of the car. "You two can come on out."

Dana stood and glared at an older woman wearing a shawl. Her pupils glowed like angry coals. Tasia leaned against the hood of the car, running her fingers along the stun gun.

"I'm guessing you're the demon." Dana walked out from behind the car. "You wouldn't happen to know where my friend is, do you?"

“I can take you right to her, if you want.” The woman shifted her gaze toward Tasia. “Not you, I’m afraid. You belong to someone else.”

“I belong to no one.” Tasia leaned heavily against the car, feigning exhaustion. “So why don’t you get out of our way?”

“Oh, honey.” The woman pouted. “You really think you’re going to get anywhere?”

Dana sniffed the air again. “There are more coming,” she said, then stared down the demon. “Out of curiosity, can you access your host’s memories?”

The demon frowned, suddenly confused. “Why would it matter?”

“Because it’s gonna be a bitch getting blood out of that shawl.” Dana lunged forward and swung a fist. The demon chuckled and casually sidestepped the attack, slapping her hand on Dana’s shoulder and squeezing.

Tasia made her move. She rushed forward and jammed the stun gun into the demon before pulling the trigger. The demon’s face contorted as the host jerked and spasmed. Dana smashed her elbow into the demon’s jaw, splattering blood on the ground. Tasia released the trigger and the two of them broke away, leaving the demon on the ground.

“That should have been harder,” Tasia commented. “Demons can handle way more abuse than that.”

They made it to the fence. Tasia looked up the chains wistfully, unsure how she was going to climb it. Dana grabbed the links and ripped them apart, showering the asphalt with metal threading.

“C’mon, let’s go.” They ran out into the street and ducked down an alleyway. Tasia lagged behind more than once, but Dana always came back to help her forward. Within an hour, they were running along the street by the beach, just outside all the rental homes full of tourists.

“We need to stop,” Tasia said, gasping for air. “We might have lost them, but I’m going to throw up.”

“Yeah, let’s take a moment.” Dana crouched down behind a garbage can and Tasia joined her. The blonde surveyed the street and walked toward a dark, hopefully empty, home. She pulled some shims from her waistband and moved toward the door. “Ah, shit. Digital keypad.”

“So how are you—” Tasia stared in horror as Dana shoved her way through the security door, causing the frame to splinter.

“They’re probably insured for worse than that,” Dana said, then walked into the dark house. “C’mon.”

Tasia followed her inside. They climbed a darkened stairwell and found themselves standing outside a living room with a kitchen nearby. Dana turned on a couple of lights and started opening drawers.

“What are you looking for?” Tasia asked.

“Need to get those bullets out of you. Here we go.” She pulled some knives out of the drawer and set them on the counter. “Will you be able to transform if I pull them out?”

Tasia wiggled her palm back and forth. “Not right away. Think of it like the silver purifies my blood, which keeps the transformation at bay. Eventually I’ll make new blood and then it’ll be fine.”

“Good.” She gestured for Tasia to lay down on the counter. “Let’s get started.”

Tasia backed away and found a stool to sit on. “I guess I’m not so sure about that,” she admitted. “We tried to kill each other only yesterday, after all.”

“False. You tried to kill me. I just wanted to get away.” Dana crossed her arms and sighed. “Look, I’ll level with you here. I highly suspect that something has happened to Lily, and I fully intend to find out what. I can do this with or without you, and the smart choice is to pull that shit out of your body.”

“How do I know you won’t double cross me? Carve out my heart and eat it? Stab me and be done with it?”

Dana rolled her eyes dramatically. “I held my own against you while you were a wolf. I could take you now if I wanted.”

“I’d like to see you—” Tasia closed her eyes and fought down the primal anger, the resentment. Now that they weren’t in cages, all those old feelings came flooding back. She wanted to rip Dana apart like paper, then stand over her corpse and howl. “You know what? Just do it.”

Tasia climbed onto the counter and winced in agony as Dana poked at her wounds. Frowning, Dana dug through a nearby drawer and handed over a wooden stirring spoon.

“What do you want me to do with this?” asked Tasia.

“Make some fucking soup, what do you think?” Dana took the spoon and held it sideways over Tasia’s mouth. “Bite down on it.”

Tasia bared her fangs, then opened wide. Dana lowered the spoon into her mouth. As Tasia bit down, she felt a finger press up and into her body cavity and she gasped.

“Yeah, sorry, I’m not even going to bother with alcohol or anything.” Dana looked over at the knives and picked up a thin one. “I can feel the tip of it. Let me know if you’re about to pass out or anything.”

“Jeth do ih,” Tasia hissed, and whimpered when Dana stuck the knife inside her.

“The muscle has healed around it,” Dana explained. “It’s all hot, too. Makes it easier to find.”

Tasia growled. She didn’t need a lesson in magical medicine right now, but couldn’t speak around her spoon. The pain was intense, but she had experienced worse before. Admittedly, not by much.

Dana’s brow furrowed in concentration as she pressed down hard on Tasia’s stomach. Tasia bit down so hard on the spoon that it snapped in half. That’s when Dana held up the silver bullet like she had won it.

“Ta da,” she announced, then shoved it in her pocket. “One more to go, I believe. It may have split in half, so it’ll be harder to dig out. Here.” She pulled another wooden utensil from the drawer and handed it over. “Will be a couple more minutes.”

Blood gushed out of Tasia’s wounds, but a tingling sensation filled her body. Even having one bullet pulled had made a world of difference and it only took Dana ten more minutes to retrieve both parts of the other. She stuck those in her pockets as well, then handed Tasia a dish cloth to clean herself up.

“How do you feel?” Dana asked, her crystalline blue eyes suddenly intense.

Tasia sat up and inspected her wound. The hole was getting smaller as new muscle tissue formed. The tingling in her body had transformed into a warm glow as she reconnected with her inner animal. She rubbed her stomach and frowned.

“Hungry.” It had been over a day since she had eaten.

“I understand that.” Dana walked over to the sink, but was interrupted when the windows of the living room shattered inward. Three figures had burst through the glass from outside and were crouched among the shards of glass.

“Did you really think it would be that easy?” asked a bald man with glasses who stood and brushed himself off.

“All it takes is a drop of blood or a hair clipping.” This came from the woman in the shawl. Her face was dirty, and she smelled of sweat and pee. Clearly the host body had recovered from its shocking experience. “And a demon can find you anywhere.”

“Please keep in mind that we prefer you in one piece, but it isn’t mandatory.” The third speaker was an elderly woman holding a wooden cane. She pointed it in Dana’s direction. “As for you, dear, Deacon would like a word.”

Tasia slid off the counter and stood next to Dana, whose breath had become ragged. She had lifted her hands as if in surrender, but was now staring at the blood soaked tips of her fingers. The three demons moved cautiously toward them, stepping around the furniture.

“I can hold them,” Tasia whispered. “You can run.”

Dana didn’t answer. She was so enthralled by the blood on her hands that she had become as still as a statue. The demons looked back and forth between the two of them as if unsure who would make the first move.

Tasia picked up one of the knives, coated in her own blood. “Hey, snap out of it!”

“So much blood,” Dana muttered. “Hot on my skin, splashed across the snow as if on a white canvas, footsteps as brushstrokes along the forest floor...”

“Dana? Dana!” Tasia elbowed her. “Hey, witch!”

“So cold, so hot, want to taste, want to—” Dana stuck a finger in her mouth and sucked Tasia’s blood free.

The demons looked at each other in confusion, then nodded as if agreeing on something. The bald man and shawl woman came toward Tasia.

“Stay back!” Tasia swung the knife, and the demons backed down. Remembering the stun gun, she pulled it from her pocket and held it out. “Dana, what the fuck are you—”

“Mmm!” Dana was now firmly engrossed in licking her fingers clean, groaning in pleasure. “You taste so good!”

Even the demons were taken aback. Tasia sniffed the air, startled by a sudden shift in scent. The odor of sulfur was strongest, but there was a hint of something else emerging. It was the smell of the forest, of anger and rage all bundled up in fur and claws.

It was the scent of the wolf, and it was coming from Dana.

The demons came. Tasia stuck her knife in the bald man’s shoulder, but was grabbed from behind by the woman in the shawl. She fought to aim the stun gun, but it seemed like the demon knew to avoid it. As they twisted around, she got a good look at the old woman with the cane.

“Time to go.” The old woman jabbed Dana in the stomach with her cane. Dana’s eyes narrowed in response, and she snatched the cane away and swung it against the counter so hard that the rubber tip snapped off.

The old woman tried to grab Dana, but she snatched the woman’s wrist from above and violently snapped it back, causing the forearm to break. The demon snarled. Dana responded by ramming the broken end of the cane into the old woman’s face. As the possessed woman fell limp to the ground, Dana turned her attention to the two holding Tasia.

Tasia used the distraction to grab another knife from the counter and stab the bald man in the chest, this time aiming for a lung. He fell back, pulling at the handle, as the woman in the shawl made a break for it. Dana grabbed her by the shawl and pulled, yanking her off her feet.

Tasia picked the woman up and slammed her head into the fridge, denting the exterior door. The bald man pulled his knife free and lunged for Tasia, but Dana moved between them, taking the blade deep in her own chest.

“See how you like it,” he sneered.

“I barely know you’re inside me,” said Dana with a grin, then punched him in the face with a sickening crack. He went down in a mess of gore, then went still on the floor.

“Are you okay?” asked Tasia, moving away from Dana.

“This is nothing new.” Dana took the knife out of her chest and moved to the sink. She scrubbed the blade clean, then looked over at Tasia. “You heard what they said. I don’t want them tracking me.”

“Shit, that’s right.” Tasia knelt down to examine the body closest to her. “Looks like it was just demons wearing humans like meat suits. Stronger than normal, but you lose a lot of power phoning it in like this.”

“Hmm.” Dana gave the old woman a kick. “It won’t be long before someone comes after us. We need to find a phone. There is someone I can call for help.”

“Help for this?” Tasia gestured at the bodies on the floor. “Dana, you don’t understand. Demons don’t gather. They don’t team up. There were three of them here, chasing me down. Something or someone out there killed my team. I’m being hunted by the Order, tracked by these assholes, I—”

They heard the front door slam open below. Looking at each other, Tasia took the lead and the two of them climbed through the nearest broken window. She looked back in time to see two security guards from the event center, more of Deacon’s men. The bodies slowed them down enough that she and Dana made it out to the beach, both of them running as fast as they could.

“Okay, so...priorities.” Dana slowed down to allow Tasia to catch up to her. “One, I need a new phone. Two, we need to figure out how they’re tracking you.”

“Two is easy. That’s blood tracking. The succubus could explain it better than I could. The demon is linked to me, like a disease. It’s similar to a curse.” Tasia was panting hard, her freshly healed wound still sore. “Also, there’s a really good chance the Order has a team out looking for me.”

“Well that sucks.” Dana looked back. “I can’t see them.”

Tasia looked over her shoulder. “I can. Five of them, they’re following our footprints. We’re outpacing them, no problem.”

Dana stopped running and sniffed the air. Tasia paused and did the same. She could smell the general stink of the men catching up, along with the odors of the ocean. Fish. Salt. Bird shit.

“If they aren’t running fast, they’re probably not possessed like the others.” Dana turned to look back the way they had come. “Do they have guns?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Then fuck these guys. I bet one of them has a phone.” Dana moved toward their pursuers, breaking into a sprint. Tasia watched her for several seconds before running after her. The last thing she was going to do was let some random witch show her up.

No, not a witch. Dana.

The sigil on the floor glowed ominously, the light casting dark shadows across the room. Lily had summoned up a tanning mirror and was on her back when Deacon returned to the room, holding a bible under one arm and a folding chair beneath the other.

“You comfy? Can I get you anything? A soda, maybe? Blood of the innocent?” Deacon looked over at the wall and Timotei emerged from the shadows as if he had been one with the darkness. “Have you been treating her well?”

The vampyr grunted, then glared at Lily.

“You’ll have to forgive him. Damnation can be quite taxing on the soul.” Deacon grinned and unfolded his chair before sitting. “You’ve caused quite the stir this evening. I wanted you to know that the show went on without any further problems, and book sales were pretty good. However, nothing sells like t-shirts though. Did you want one? I’ll let you pick.”

“By eternal damnation, do you mean Captain Fangs over there has to listen to you talk?” Lily arched an eyebrow when Timotei took a step forward and bared his fangs. “Does he suck your dick or what?”

“Now, now, friend, she’s antagonizing you on purpose.” Deacon’s smile faltered slightly and he held his bible out. “So Legion had a few questions for you, but thought it might be better if I asked. You see, they’re out trying to track down

that friend of yours, the pretty blonde. I was going to give her to Timotei to feed on, but it seems like she managed quite the heroic escape. Took some precious cargo with her as well.”

Lily said nothing. Instead, she transformed her shirt so that an arrow pointed up at her face and the words **Doesn't Give A Fuck** appeared below.

“Aw, there’s no reason to be like that. I’ve been dealing with demons for a couple of decades now. I think you’re clinging to the old ways a bit too tightly. Maybe try being friendly, a little less...spunky.”

“Answer me this.” Lily sat up and glared at Deacon. “I’m used to seeing men and women like you, fleecing people of hard earned cash as you sell real estate in the afterlife. The filth that drips from your mouth makes even me sick, but a pastor who is actually working with a demon? That’s new.”

“I’m all about thinking outside the box.” Deacon opened the book and looked at it. “I would like to speak to that a little bit. You see, Legion sought me out, not the other way around. We needed each other and found a way to be partners, equals, if you can believe it.”

“I don’t.” Lily shook her head. “You’re just another cautionary tale, waiting to happen. What did he promise you in exchange for your soul? Fame? Fortune?”

“Nothing, dear. My soul belongs only to me. We have a mutual interest, after all, and Legion may be a lot of things, but greedy isn’t one of them.”

“Since we’re talking about business, let’s discuss branding. Legion? Really?” Lily shook her head. “I mean, cute concept, but a little too on the nose. Would be like if Nike had told everyone to call them Shoe from now on. Or maybe even Jump Good Shoe. Run Fast Shoe? See, they sound dumber every time I—” She was cut off when Timotei grabbed her throat from behind and lifted.

“Now, now, you’ve upset Timotei.” Deacon tsked at her. “Put her down, please.”

Timotei dropped Lily on the ground. She took a swipe at him with her tail, knowing full well it wouldn’t do any good. He ignored her and resumed his post just outside the sigil. Sadly, he didn’t scuff the markings on the way through.

“I guess we should begin by establishing some facts. This prison we’ve made for you is of the highest order. We meet all sorts in this line of work and wanted to

ensure we were ready for any competitors. There was a fairly nasty one about two...three years back. Timotei remembers, don't you?"

Timotei said nothing, his eyes solely on Lily.

"Anyway, we trapped him in a space similar to this. He was all claws and hellfire, but he had been summoned up from below. He doesn't persist like your kind. The magic sustaining him ran out, and poof!" Deacon made a little explosion gesture with his hands. "Smelled terrible for days, he wasn't the dainty little thing you are."

Lily rolled her eyes. "You really love to hear yourself talk, don't you?"

Deacon nodded. "I do. You see, a humble man admits his own vices. I love to hear myself talk, to spread the word of the Lord—"

"You aren't a humble man," Lily countered. "You're a sack of shit with delusions of grandeur."

Timotei made to enter the sigil again, but Deacon stopped him with a raised hand. "We'll just have to agree to disagree. So who sent you? The last time a demon came my way, it was because I had misstepped and made some waves. It was no small amount of trouble to track down the demon's master and have them dealt with, and I'd prefer to spend my time and resources on better things."

"Ha! Nobody sent me. I came because I heard the world's biggest asshole was coming to Florida and thought I'd come look."

Deacon chewed his lip, then nodded. "Okay, so you aren't here on a direct command, I'm not going to get that out of you. So either a blanket order, or maybe even a request to investigate. You see, even in mishandling the truth, you leave behind fingerprints for me to examine."

"Oh, wow, I'm like, totally impressed." Lily lifted her shirt to reveal her breasts. "Now I'm so horny for you, Mr. Preacherman."

"Who is your master?" Deacon sat back in his chair and crossed his legs. "So either you dodge the question, or give me the truth. I know very well how this game is played. I learn from either experience."

"I don't have a master." Lily smirked. "I'm my own person."

"A succubus without a master? If that were true, I could just claim you for myself." He reached into his pocket and pulled out a gemstone.

Lily gasped, sensing the magic of the runes within it. Creating a permanent vessel for a demon was extremely high level magic, even Amir hadn't known how to do it. "Where did you get that?" she demanded.

"Legion." Deacon grinned. "Or rather, Legion taught me how to make it. He also taught me how to make this circle. Back before The Fall, he was the keeper of tremendous magical knowledge. Got caught up in Lucifer's attempted coup and received the boot. But I guess that's his story to tell, I—"

There was a knock on the door and Deacon's daughter walked in. She crossed the room without looking in Lily's direction. When she got next to her father, she whispered something in his ear and held out her tablet for him to look at.

Deacon's cheeks turned red for a second and lines of concern crossed his forehead. He looked up at Lily, then at his daughter. He put his hand on the back of his daughter's head and pulled her down far enough to plant a kiss on her forehead. He tilted his head toward the door and his daughter left.

"Tell me more about the woman you were with, the one in the disguise." Deacon smiled again, but it no longer reached his eyes. There was a coldness there that made Lily laugh aloud.

"No," Lily replied. "I don't think I will."

"This was all fun and games until your associate put me in quite the pickle regarding a time-sensitive issue. You see, I was holding a captive for a man of great power and ability who, I'm afraid, may do me harm upon learning that I have lost them." Deacon stood and rolled up his sleeves. "I always want to be honest with you. Honesty is a virtue."

"So is anal, with the right preparation." Lily swished her tail back and forth. "Anything is a virtue if you live by it, preacher man."

"Your friend also cost Legion three of his vessels. Three." Deacon threw a glance at Timotei. "You must understand that Legion is very upset by this. And when Legion is upset, I'm upset."

"Aw, I'm sorry. Why don't you pray to your sky daddy to make you feel better?" Lily moved to the edge of the barrier and pushed her hands against it. Crimson flames licked at her fingertips, but she didn't let the pain bother her.

Dana had escaped. That was all that mattered. “Oh, wait. That’s right. He won’t return your calls because you’re a massive dick.”

“Timotei?” Deacon looked over at the vampyr. “Hunt.”

Timotei gave a little bow and then left the room. As he exited, two people came in. It took a second for Lily to recognize more of Legion’s vessels as they took up position just outside the sigil.

Deacon opened up his bible and flipped through its pages. He muttered to himself and then locked eyes with Lily. “Last chance. Who is she? Where would she go?”

“Your mom’s house.” Lily stuck out her tongue, trying to hide the sensation of dread. If Timotei actually caught up to Dana, it would be a bloodbath. If the zombie was smart, she’d be back at the apartment, or better yet, back with Eulalie hundreds of miles away. The two of them would already be exchanging information and figuring out how to get Lily home.

Home. She bit her lip in frustration. Even if she could break out of here, the last thing she’d want was for Deacon or Legion to track her back to Mike’s house. It seemed like things had finally gotten quiet over there, despite the geas acting up. Deacon was yet another Amir waiting to happen, and she didn’t want anyone else to suffer like she had.

The pastor muttered to himself again and then looked up at Legion. “What do you think? Enochian exorcism?”

Both Legions shook their heads. “That might give her an out,” one of them said. “Or could open a hellgate and she disappears through it.”

“The Lost Prayer of John of Ephesus?”

“Excuse me, what?” Lily frowned. “John of Ephesus doesn’t have a special prayer.”

“I’m looking at the source material, hell spawn.” Deacon held up his book, revealing that it wasn’t a bible after all. The script on the front was ancient, the gilded letters flaring briefly in the light. “The stuff that didn’t get culled by the church.”

“Taken from the Vatican vaults,” Legion added. “Took me nearly two decades to get in.”

Lily scowled. "So even the Vatican isn't sacred anymore, is it?"

Legion snorted. "Hasn't been ever since they became more interested in money than salvation. They're more like a corporation these days, especially after the Crusades. You give men a taste of power and they want more, no matter what it takes. There are some really good people at the Vatican, but the rot runs quite deep in places. There are many people there that are just like me. You think of them as parasites, but I think of them as opportunists."

A buzzing sound formed in the back of Lily's head and she groaned, turning her attention toward Deacon. He was reading aloud from his book, but she couldn't hear the words. Instead, it felt like razor sharp blades were piercing her mind.

"What the hell?" she cried, clutching at her ears.

"That's John for you." Legion laughed. "The man invented his own method of tackling the supernatural, demons included. Some say the angels helped him develop the method, others say it was our Father, Himself. I personally think he made a deal with a deity for it. Regardless, this next part is really going to sting."

"Next part? I'm still trying to—" Intense pressure filled her head and Lily screamed as the pressure built from within. When she focused back on Deacon, she could tell he was singing, but the words were lost in a cacophony of pain.

Asshole, she thought to herself as her mind went blank.

It took Dana and Tasia less than thirty seconds to take the men down.

There had been a moment of shock on their faces when Dana had come sprinting toward them out of the darkness. She chalked most of that up to her wicked leap at the very last moment, which had carried her well over a dozen feet through the air and into her first victim. When the man had gone down, there was a strong impulse to bite into his tender flesh, but Dana had pushed it to the side.

Tasia's blood had been absolutely delicious and she was still riding that high. When the demon had ambushed them, Dana had been getting ready to wash it off her hands and shove away the temptation. Instead, she had been forced to endure another flashback of her fight with the Nirumbi and had sucked it off her fingers without a second thought.

Not one to mess with drugs other than some pot in high school, Dana was concerned about the immediate high the werewolf blood had given her. It had been like the muscles in her body had become bands of coiled steel. The world had come alive with smells she had never quite picked up before, which was saying something. The onslaught of information had been overridden by the strong desire to kick ass, and she barely remembered the fight in the vacation house.

Here on the beach, she was a bit more meticulous. There would be no killing these men or eating them. At least, she didn't think she killed anyone. The men felt fragile during their brief fight, and she held back as she kicked the last man standing in the shin and winced when the bone splintered, causing him to go down in a shrieking heap.

"Hot damn," Tasia muttered as she disarmed the injured men. "These guys are ex-military." She held up a KA-BAR knife and slid it into the waist of her pants.

"You. Give me your phone." Dana knelt by the guy with the broken shin and jabbed him with a finger.

The man gave her a defiant look, then reluctantly passed over his phone. Dana made him type in his password.

"Thanks." She left him groaning in the sand with the others as she and Tasia fled the scene. Already, a nearby porchlight had come on and someone was headed their way with a flashlight to investigate.

She and Tasia jogged down the beach a mile then began making their way back to the main road. Dana put in a couple of different phone calls to numbers that Eulalie had her memorize. On the third one, there was a click followed by Eulalie's voice.

"Operator," she stated flatly.

"The drama queen is missing and there's more than one target." Dana waited a moment, then continued. "Have picked up a potential asset, but are being tracked."

"Asset?" Eulalie's voice piqued in interest.

"Stray dog from earlier," Dana replied.

"Fuck you," Tasia said.

“Interesting. Who is tracking you?” In the background, Dana could hear the rapid fire clicking of keyboard keys. Eulalie was all business right now.

“The target. Line isn’t secure. My phone got broken.”

“Proceed to safe house. Will have a new phone for you, can discuss next steps there.” There was a long pause. “Do you need to come home, or...?”

Dana could sense the unspoken words. If necessary, she could portal hop home and not worry about what happened next. However, that would potentially expose the existence of the rat portals. The demon would know something was up if Tasia started bouncing across the globe.

However, Tasia didn’t have to come with her. If Dana wanted, she could ditch the werewolf and figure out what came next. A rescue mission could easily be thrown together by the other members of the house, but that meant leaving Tasia behind. The demon could find the werewolf with no issue, and the Order was probably on her trail as well. The safest choice for everyone was to leave Tasia to her own devices and hope she came out okay.

Scowling, Dana turned her gaze to the werewolf. She knew what Mike would do in this situation. He would want to help. The last thing she needed was to relive over and over for the next hundred years the exact moment she ditched Tasia. Even now, those calculating eyes watched with just a hint of anxiety behind them.

“Yeah, go ahead and close up shop after you leave. We should be there in about...” she paused, realizing that the information could give away their destination if someone was listening. The last thing she wanted was to walk into a trap. “We’re on the beach just east of Miami.”

“Roger roger.” Eulalie’s voice had a robotic lilt and then she hung up. Dana dropped the phone in the sand, unworried that the Arachne would be traced. The phone numbers were one-time use only and untraceable.

She hoped so, anyway. “You up for a run?” Dana was already moving toward someone else’s back deck. They needed to get to the main road and it would be way faster cutting across someone’s property than looking for public beach access.

“Yeah, just a sec.” Tasia did a couple of squats and groaned. “My legs are still cramped from being in that cage. I need to loosen up.”

“Then I suggest some downward dog.”

“Bitch,” Tasia muttered.

“Takes one to know one.” Dana had no idea why she was antagonizing the werewolf. Maybe it was because she missed Lily and it felt like there was a void of sarcasm. She checked over her shoulder to see that Tasia was behind her, then broke into a jog up the stairs to the condo. The home had a family sitting around a table eating chicken, and a couple of people rose when they saw trespassers on their deck, but Dana and Tasia ran around the side of the building and vaulted the railing together.

Out on the road, Dana smirked as she heard Tasia struggling to keep up. At some point, Tasia was able to catch up, panting with exertion. There was a part of Dana that wanted to leave the werewolf in the dust, some odd competitive compulsion, but she buried it away.

Speaking of odd compulsions, she licked her lips at the memory of Tasia’s blood. Even now, she could feel her muscles relaxing a bit, despite running. All that extra tension and power was leaking out of her as she processed the blood by whatever process her metabolism utilized. Zel had actually spent months testing Dana’s unique biology, but had been unable to learn much about it. The main theory was that her body converted anything Dana ate directly into magic that was deposited wherever magic was stored. The centaur had been disappointed with the results, but sometimes things just weren’t meant to be understood.

Even so, there was a direct link between consuming Tasia’s blood and the surge of strength afterward. Something similar had happened with the Nirumbi, but it had taken dozens of them before she had become nearly as strong. If Dana ate Tasia, would those characteristics somehow become permanent? The thought was academic only, and despite the fact that Tasia smelled and tasted like a rack of ribs with extra sauce and potatoes on the side...

Dana wiped her mouth with the back of her hand and focused on the streets. As fast as they ran, they made it back to the Airbnb building in just over twenty minutes. Instead of waiting for the elevator, they took the stairs. Tasia’s panting had subsided by then, but she was clearly winded. When they reached their floor, Dana looked back to see Tasia holding her stomach.

“Cramp?” she asked.

“I had a bullet in there thirty minutes ago.” Tasia winced. “Those muscles are still knitting.”

“Hmm.” Dana scratched absent-mindedly at her own wound and pushed open the door to the stairwell and walked up to the condo. She typed in the code and the two of them went inside. Tasia moved throughout the space, clearly doing a sweep of the place. On the counter was a small backpack and a new phone.

“If the demon is tracking you, how long until they get here?” Dana stripped out of her filthy disguise as she moved into the bedroom, making sure to shove her bloody shirt into the backpack. Tasia was peering under the bed on all fours, her muscular ass in the air. Dana couldn’t help but admire the view.

“There’s a weird smell,” Tasia said, then stood and turned around. “Reminds me of dark places, like a baseme—”

The werewolf stopped and stared at Dana, her eyes sliding down Dana’s body and lingering on some of the nastier wounds.

“I’m just getting changed,” Dana explained, moving to the dresser to pull out a new shirt and shorts. “The old outfit was for breaking and entering only.”

“Where did you get all those scars?” Tasia asked, her eyes wide. “What are you?”

“Not the time or the place for that. Here. You change, too.” Dana threw a pair of athletic shorts Tasia’s way. “You’re still covered in blood.”

“Right.” The two of them stripped all the way down and then got dressed. Dana’s shirts were too small for Tasia, so the werewolf wore the sundress with the shorts underneath. The skirt was dangerously high. Lily would have approved.

Lily. Thinking of the succubus, Dana checked her phone.

“Okay, so order of operations,” she declared. “Lily was last seen at the event center, and she’s still there. The Rat Queen has that covered, so even if they move her, we still have options. You’re being tracked by a demon, so we’re going to need magic. I know someone who could help, but I can’t take you there because of reasons.”

“You just can’t say because of reasons,” Tasia said. “That’s not an explanation.”

“You’re not invited and it would put us in danger,” Dana replied. “Reasons. Looks like we can get the trace removed with the help of a witch. Do you know any witches?”

Tasia chuckled. "Thought I did. But no, not in this area. But I know where we can find some."

"Great. Once we do that, we can..." Dana paused and turned toward the living room. A chill ran up her spine, then settled in her chest like a block of ice. It was almost like someone had stepped over her grave, only to stop and stare down at her through the soil.

"What's wrong?" Tasia sniffed the air and frowned. "What the hell is that?"

"What do you smell?" whispered Dana.

"Does impending doom have a smell?" Tasia sniffed again, then motioned for Dana to pick up her belongings. Dana complied, making sure her phone was tucked away safely. She opened her dresser and pulled out the swords, then tossed one to Tasia.

The werewolf snatched it out of the air and maneuvered out into the living room. She sniffed the air again, then unfolded her blade.

"I've felt this before," Tasia said, moving to the window and looking outside. "I remember what this is."

"And?" Dana picked up the backpack and slid it over her shoulders.

"It's that sensation you get when your body knows you are being hunted by a predator," Tasia explained, the hair on her neck standing on end. "But you haven't figured out where it is yet."

"The condo is empty. How do—" Dana stopped talking when she heard the keypad on the other side of the door beep. The code was only four numbers long, followed by the whirring sound of the deadbolt undoing itself.

"Oh, fuck me," Tasia whispered, and the door clicked open, revealing a skinny man in a black turtleneck. He stepped into the room and looked between the two of them.

"Ladies." He had a Slavic accent, and his lips quirked into a sneer. "You need to come with me."

"Never gonna happen." Dana unfolded her sword. "Now move, before you make me lose my deposit."

The man let out a sigh of disappointment, then shook his head as he closed the door. Dana noticed that the only odor she could smell on him was the faint whiff of blood. He wasn't a demon, that was for sure. But he wasn't quite human either.

Tasia roared and charged forward, but the man moved so fast that he became blurry. He grabbed the werewolf by the shoulder, spun her about, and kicked her in the gut so hard that she bounced off the cabinets above the stove, causing them to fall down and crack the glass top of the range. She groaned in pain when he grabbed her by the throat and lifted her up.

Dana vaulted the counter and brought her sword down, but was surprised when the newcomer twisted his hand sideways and caught the blade, pinching it between two fingers. He stared at her with intensely dark eyes that saw through her.

"I don't think so," he muttered, then slapped the blade aside and grabbed her by the throat. His fingers shifted along her neck, pressing hard against her carotid artery. It was amazing how easily he lifted both of them off the ground, holding them aloft like children who had started a fight with a bodybuilder. Dana swung the sword a couple of times, but the blade only sliced open his clothes, leaving his skin unmarked.

Tasia wriggled beneath his grasp, her body sprouting fur as she transformed. The newcomer hissed at her, revealing a pair of sharp fangs, then dropped the werewolf before her claws could rip open his face.

"He's a vampire. Run!" Tasia growled, her body still shifting. Dana noticed the transformation was only partially complete, as if Tasia was unable to do so fully. She couldn't even respond, because she was dangling perilously from the vampire's arm, so she kicked uselessly instead.

The vampire hissed, then pulled Dana in close to use her as a shield. Figuring her options were limited already, she grabbed him by the wrist and twisted herself around until she could sink her teeth into his palm. He ignored her at first, but she was determined, despite his skin being rock hard. She had no idea what her bite strength actually was, but when she pierced his skin, he threw her across the kitchen and into the fridge.

Tasia tackled the vampire, and the two of them fought for dominance in the kitchen. Despite Tasia's superior size, the vampire tossed her around, even going so far as to slam her through the counter.

Dana stood on wobbly legs, then noticed the fridge was now ajar. Inside, Mike's semen sat inside of the shot glasses she had brought along. Thinking back to what Tasia had said about demons being able to track people, she realized she couldn't let any of it fall into the wrong hands. While Tasia and the vampire fought, she pulled them out of the fridge, unsure what to do with them.

There was a shriek, followed by Tasia being hurled into the living room, where she fell through the table and shattered the wood. Dana turned to see the vampire staring at her, his eyebrow arched.

"What do you have there?" he asked.

Dana responded by shoving the Saran-wrapped shot glasses into her backpack, then leapt out of the way when he came for her. She shortened her sword and tried to stab him, but the blade slid along the flesh of his neck and left behind only a thin red line.

"Your weapons are worthless against me," he said, then grabbed the front of her shirt. She jammed a finger into his eye, but even the soft flesh of his corneas was like marble. He bared his teeth and pulled her in, sinking them into the soft skin of her neck.

She gasped when he entered her, then fell to the floor when he let go, his hands now on his throat. His whole face had turned red and he stumbled around, gasping for air. Dana moved to Tasia's side, helping the werewolf stand.

"How do we take him down?" Dana asked. "Stake through the heart?"

"That's just a precaution." Tasia's voice was thick with teeth. "Chop off his head. Sunlight. Holy symbol. All good."

Dana brought her blade down so fast it whistled through the air. It struck the vampire on the neck and bounced off his thick hide so hard that something in Dana's arm snapped.

"That should have worked." Tasia leapt across the counter and tried to grab the vampire, but he dodged away from her. His throat and face were inflamed, and he pointed a jagged finger in Dana's direction.

“You.” He spat a glob of black ichor on the floor. “I’ve never tasted the likes of you.” Tasia came at him from the side, this time with her sword. He took the attack across the face, the blade leaving a thin scratch on his cheek. The vampire hissed at Tasia, and the two of them fought. Casual punches destroyed walls and furniture, and Tasia finally hooked her arm under the vampire’s armpit before she threw him through the front door. The wood splintered outward, revealing a hallway full of people who had stepped outside to see what was going on.

At the sight of Tasia standing over the vampire, people screamed and ran. The vampire got up and tackled Tasia to the ground, then punched her in the face so hard that the werewolf’s eyes fluttered.

Running to what was left of the cabinet, Dana dug through the wreckage until she spotted a tin of garlic salt. Most rentals threw out perishable food, but kept any spices that had been left behind. Leaning out into the hallway, she opened the garlic salt and threw it at the vampire’s head. The spice was flung wide, and the vampire lifted his head in slow motion, his pupils dilating.

“I am not of weak blood,” he proclaimed, then drug a finger across his face to collect the salt. He stuck it in his mouth and grinned. “Delicious.”

Down on the floor, Tasia was bleeding heavily from her mouth. She clawed at the vampire’s face, but he dodged easily enough. Her eyelids fluttered once more and she went still.

“Your turn,” the vampire declared. Dana took a step back into the condo, then looked down at the spice drawer. Okay, so garlic didn’t work. Could she blind the vampire with paprika, maybe?

He was in front of her now, so she picked up what was left of the spice rack and broke it over his head. The vampire laughed as the air became choked with so many seasonings that the condo smelled like burnt curry.

“Is that the best you can do?” he asked, brushing off his shirt. “Did you really think that pepper could...pepper could...” He was looking down at the floor by his feet, where the jars and metal tins of seasonings had spilled. A jar of poppy seeds sat by his foot, and some of them had spilled out.

Puzzled at the man’s reaction, she could see his lips twitching. It took a moment for her to realize that he was counting.

Dana used the tip of her sword to flick the jar out into the hallway, spreading poppy seeds everywhere. The vampire yelled at her, then ran out into the hallway to try and pick the seeds up. He was trembling now, his gaze shifting from the poppy seeds to the werewolf on the ground. People who had fled into their condos were shouting through their doors that the police had been called.

“C’mon.” Dana moved forward and grabbed Tasia by the hand, making sure to stow away both swords. The werewolf groaned as she was dragged back into the condo. The vampire was a blur in the hallway, mumbling numbers under his tongue as he counted the poppy seeds that had been spilled.

Dana opened the door out onto the balcony and sighed. The drop was enough to break bones, easily, and that was without carrying a werewolf. Hoisting Tasia over her shoulder, she took a quick look to make sure that nobody was below, then jumped.

The three seconds of weightlessness ended with a jarring crunch as Dana crashed onto the ground. She dropped Tasia, then opened the backpack to get Mike’s semen out. Things might get awkward soon, but it would sure beat trying to fight whatever the hell that guy was.

She slammed a shot of spooze, then followed it up with another. Tasia was whimpering, but getting back on her feet, her muscles shrinking down.

“What happened?” she muttered.

“We got our asses kicked.” Dana managed to adjust one of her legs, but her left foot was backward. “I need you to give that a tug, please.”

Tasia looked down at Dana’s legs in horror, then paused to look up.

“Hey, eyes down here.” Dana slapped the pavement. “Grab the ankle and pull!”

Tasia obeyed, watching in horror as the bones realigned. Dana stood with a bit of help, but could tell the damage was worse than expected. Nothing a trip to Zel later wouldn’t fix. The two of them stumbled out toward the main street, but crouched down when the lights of a patrol car appeared.

“Shit, that was fast,” Dana muttered.

“Those aren’t regular cops,” Tasia whispered. “Think about it. The Order is looking for me, and they just got a call about a werewolf. These guys are probably on the payroll. They aren’t knights, but they know enough to be a problem.”

“That makes sense.” Dana grabbed Tasia’s hand. “This way.”

There were two police cars, and they had blocked off the street. The police were already shouting instructions to people gathering around the base of the building, but Dana wasn’t too concerned. Moving fast, she vaulted over the top of a parked car and was able to catch one officer in the jaw before collapsing in a heap on the ground when her ankle snapped.

“Shit,” she muttered, then rolled away when the officer’s partner opened fire. Screams filled the street as Tasia came from behind and tackled the officer into the hood of his own vehicle. There was now more gunfire, but Dana was able to pull the car keys off of the guy she had kicked and pull herself into the squadcar. She reached across the car and opened the passenger door.

“Who wants to go for a ride?” she shouted, patting the car seat and whistling. Tasia threw herself into the passenger seat, her features twisted in anger as she tried to sit up properly.

“Stop it with the stupid dog jokes already,” she growled, then yanked her door shut. Dana hit the gas and the tires spun out as the remaining officers opened fire. They were almost two hundred feet down the road when the vampire landed dramatically in front of the car with his arms outspread.

Dana turned the wheel at the last second, clipping him hard with the corner of the front bumper. The vampire tried to grab onto the grille guard, but was promptly run over. Dana felt a pair of bumps and looked in the rearview to see him rolling across the street.

“Holy shit,” Tasia gasped, looking over her shoulder. “That was insane!”

“Yep.” Dana pulled out her phone and opened the GPS. “We need to ditch this car soon, though. Do you think the vampire will catch up to us?”

“I don’t know. He wasn’t like any vampire I’ve ever fought before.” Tasia slid down in her seat and sighed. “They’re pretty strong, but not that strong. Our blades are enchanted to cut through most things, and a vampire is one of them. I know I’m in a weakened state, but he shouldn’t have overpowered me like that.”

“Uh huh.” Dana started pushing buttons on the dashboard until the lights above the car stopped flashing. She didn’t need to advertise their presence anymore than usual. “Hey. Can vampires fly?”

“Some,” Tasia admitted. She sat quietly for a couple of minutes, then looked at Dana’s chest. “You’re bleeding.”

“Got shot a few times.” Dana could feel the bullets being pushed out of her even now as she regenerated. However, the side effects of Mike’s sperm shooters were starting to kick in and it was now hard to focus on the road. Her thighs were uncomfortably close together, but spreading them apart didn’t help either. She kept her eyes on the road, but couldn’t help but notice the woman in the passenger seat. Tasia had reverted to human form, but the too small sundress and the black shorts were simply too much.

“You got shot?” Tasia leaned in front of Dana and gasped. “How many times?”

“At least four.” Dana dug a finger into one of the holes and teased the bullet inside. This one would come out easy since it was still in one piece.

“And you’re...okay?” There was a hesitation in the werewolf’s voice. “You’re not a witch, but you are something else, aren’t you?”

“Guilty. Out of curiosity, are werewolves immune to disease and all that?” Dana swerved onto a side street, then took them into a neighborhood less than a block away from the beach. The area was poorly lit, with plenty of rental cars parked along the side of the road. She felt far less guilty stealing a rental than the family minivan

Tasia licked her lips and stared straight ahead. After a few moments of silence, she spoke. “Lycanthropy is technically classified as an illness, but I know now that it’s a gift. One of those gifts is immunity to disease and infection. Anything that isn’t a part of me becomes purged. There isn’t room for anything other than the wolf.”

“Fascinating.” They parked on the side of the road and got out. Dana walked at a clipped pace, studying the cars they passed. She finally came upon a green Kia with one of the windows cracked open an inch. After hooking her fingers in the top, she pulled hard enough that the glass shifted down. Tasia kept watch from the other side of the vehicle, her hair pulled up into a messy ponytail. It revealed

the slender curve of a neck packed with muscle that looked so delicious that Dana wanted to bite it.

No, not bite. Lick, maybe. Suck. Her stomach was dancing now, doing all sorts of flip flops as it contemplated the muscular creature across from her.

Where was Lily when she needed her?

When they broke into the Kia, Dana contemplated the driver's seat. "Are you good to drive?" she asked, wondering if she could convince the werewolf to drive while she rubbed one out in the back seat. *Or two, or three, or...*

"Not really. Being in a car makes me sleepy. Even before this, Amida usually drove, so..." Tasia made a face, then slipped into the passenger seat without another word.

Damn. Dana got in the driver's seat and broke into the ignition. A few crossed wires later, and the car started. She pulled out of the neighborhood and stuck to the back roads for a bit before heading back to the highway. Her phone rang and she put it on speaker.

"I'm guessing things went poorly." Eulalie chuckled. "You guys made a pretty big splash down there. Looks like someone is already scrubbing footage, but I'm catching what they miss."

"A vampire is on our trail and we need somewhere safe to land. Demon is still tracking Tasia, so who knows when they'll show up." Dana looked over at Tasia, her gaze sliding down to her breasts.

"Vampire? Really?" Dana heard keys clacking. "Awesome! That explains some of the anomalies in the video. It's so cool."

"It isn't. He kicked our asses." Dana noticed there was a tear in Tasia's shorts, revealing tan skin just beneath.

"You sound distracted."

"Had to drink some special sauce." Dana gritted her teeth and looked at Tasia, who was now paying close attention. "And the scenery is enticing."

There was a long pause, punctuated by the sound of more keys. "What do you need from me?"

"Directions," Tasia said. "To the nearest library."

Dana looked at Tasia. “We don’t need a library. We’ve got a smartphone and the Rat Queen.”

“We need a witch,” Tasia countered. “And if you ever need to find a witch, you just need to go to the library.”

“Why would a witch be at the library?” asked Eulalie.

“For the same reason libraries were funded by the Order. To ensure there was a proper magical infrastructure in the US. Statistically, at least one librarian will be a witch.”

“I thought you hated witches.” Dana bit her lip and squirmed.

“Bad witches. There are good witches, too. Have you ever spent time at a library before? I guarantee you’ve seen the magic, you just never recognized it as such. It isn’t always flashy spells and transformations. Sometimes it’s just good advice and a little spiritual cleansing.” Tasia looked from Dana back to the phone. “If we can hide somewhere until sunrise, then we can head to the library and find our witch. They can undo the demon’s magic and come up with a plan to, I can’t believe I’m saying this, save the succubus.”

Tasia let out a breath, and visibly deflated. She had sunk back into her seat and was looking outside now. “I owe you all that much, at least.”

There was silence for nearly a mile before the phone chimed. “I’ve got you an address to a parking garage,” Eulalie said. “It’s two blocks away from a library. You two will be driving most of the night, I’m afraid. Based on the research I have here, you can stay ahead of the vampire if you keep moving. I’ll have our own librarian start pulling research now. There’s nothing in the archives yet.”

“Thanks, Queen.” Dana wiggled in her seat.

“As for your other problem, there is something in the bag, but it’ll probably only take the edge off.” The way Eulalie said edge, Dana could hear her smirking. “It’s in the front pocket.”

“Thanks again.” Dana hung up and then touched the notification on her phone, which took her to the phone’s map. She activated the route and sighed in frustration. After a few more minutes, she looked over at Tasia to see that she had fallen asleep.

“Dammit,” she muttered. Sticking her hand into the back seat, she found the bag and rummaged around in it until her fingers closed on a small box. When she pulled it out, she stared at the package in disbelief.

It was a vibrating egg with a pocket remote. The words Silver Bullet were written across the front.

Did this count as irony? She wasn't sure. However, she promptly slid the bullet beneath the waistband of her panties and sighed when it came to life. It wasn't going to satisfy her, that much was true. But as her first orgasm slowly built over the next twenty minutes, she finally got Eulalie's joke.

It really was gonna take the edge off.