

Si?"

"He's done a lot for me too, Flo. We're even." I frowned down at that purple dress. Six to eight weeks for delivery. But Flo would figure out a way around that minor technicality, probably by throwing money at it.

The major issue? Ray and Jerry at Flo's wedding. Sounded like a recipe for disaster to me. The two men hated each other. Because I loved both of them. And Rafe would be there, of course. I'd ask him to be my date. He'd love to jump into a brawl with my name on it. I smiled. The future looked positively Glorious(Sorry, couldn't resist.).

by the shop. I'd been his mentor and it had only been a few weeks since Ray had claimed he loved me. But then I'd dumped him. Not an action guaranteed to keep his love light burning.

"Glory? Look at me." Flo fiddled with a bottle of nail polish remover. "That favor?"

"What is it, Flo?" I threw down the paper. How pathetic. I'd been on my own for less than a month and I was already imagining scenarios where both men in my life were begging for me to come back to them. And then there'd been Rafe's interesting behavior. I'd looked like hell. Surely he'd been playing me, hadn't really meant that he--

"Glory, would you quit ignoring me? And blocking your thoughts?" Flo frowned at me and shook my arm. "This is serious, *amiga*."

I hid my smile. Didn't everything to do with my friend's wedding rank right up there with the desire for world peace and half price sales? "Okay, Flo, I'm riveted. What's up?"

"Ray, Israel Caine. He'll be in Austin right before my wedding, *si*?"

"Yes." I didn't like the calculating look on Flo's face. She was blocking her thoughts too. But then she always blocked her thoughts. Not that I usually tried to pry into them anyway. But this was an emergency. "What do you want, Flo?"

"I want Israel Caine to sing at my wedding, Glory. You must ask him for me. Please. He'll do it for you. You saved his life.

puff sleeves. Make my arms look fat. But Jerry liked me in purple. And loved a plunging neckline. I had visions of him seeing me walk down the aisle and..

"Glory! I said I'm trying out colors for my wedding day." Flo held out her hand. "Which one do you like?"

I focused. Okay. The differences would probably not be apparent to the casual observer, but Flo and I compared colors to the fabric swatch from her wedding dress until we finally settled on "Blush."

"Es perfecto. Grazi, Glory." She hugged me again. "I knew you would help me. Now I have another favor. Did you see this?" She pulled a local newspaper out from under her magazine.

"What is it?" I glanced down and recognized the picture. "Ray? He's coming to town too?" Ray aka Israel Caine. The other man I'd left in L.A. Okay, I admit it. My heart, which barely beats anyway, gave a little jig of happiness. Both my guys, hot vampires who I loved and had decided I should give up, were coming to town. Would either of them want to see me after the way I'd given them the brush off?

Well, Jerry wouldn't have a choice, would he? And Ray? I grabbed the paper. He was singing at a venue at the South by Southwest Music Festival. The festival was held every spring in Austin to give music producers a chance to hear new talent. The article claimed Ray was coming with the owner of his record label, another vampire, believe it or not. Maybe Ray would drop

"Jerry won't be seeing me. He's not here, remember?" I didn't resist when Flo dragged me into the back room. She slammed the door. I hoped customers weren't scared off, but couldn't get worked up about it. Jerry. I missed him. But I'd told him we needed a break. So we were broken. Sniff.

"He'll be here. For the wedding. He's going to be Ricardo's best man." Flo hugged me. "You'll see. I fix everything for my BFF."

Ricardo or Richard Mainwaring was Flo's husband. They'd been married at one ceremony, but it hadn't been up to Flo's standards. She'd decided she wanted a big wedding and had turned into Bridezilla with fangs. Her rich brother Damian was footing the bill so this was guaranteed to be the wedding of several centuries.

"Jerry said yes? He'll stand up for Richard?" I sounded a little skeptical because the guys got along fine, but Jerry is a hard headed Scot and Richard is English through and through. I guess I thought Richard would bring over one of his old Vatican cronies for the occasion. Richard is a former priest. Long story.

"He was honored, of course." Flo flipped open a magazine and stabbed a picture. "This dress. Cute? No?"

"What's with the manicure?" I couldn't help noticing that each nail wore a slightly different color. I lifted her finger to examine the dress under it. It was cute. Actually might work on my size twelve figure, if there was elastic involved. Forget

antique store was on trendy Sixth Street, between Mugs and Muffins, a coffee shop owned by a fellow vamp, and a tattoo parlor. The location for Rafe's nightclub was a few blocks down. We weren't far from the University of Texas and my shop had become a hang-out for some of the students. Since I called my place Vintage Vamp's Emporium and my bud Florence Da Vinci, the not so blushing bride, had painted a vampire mural on the wall, we were really popular with Goths and vampire wannabes. I'd tried to discourage that at first, then played along, even passing out fake fangs at Halloween.

"Where's Flo now? I'm not trying on any more bridesmaid dresses." I'm Maid of Honor and had finally persuaded my former roomie to go with black, slimming, and a bodice that would cover a double D cup. Being a tiny size six herself, Flo really didn't get a full figured gal's issues with some of the cute little numbers she liked.

"I'm right here, cara. Come see what I have in the back." Flo had thrown open the door to my storeroom and rushed forward to grab my hand. "You'll love this dress. Purple. Your color. It will look fabulous on you. Jeremiah will take one look at you and--boom!--he's yours again."

Jeremiah. Jeremy Blade. Whatever the hell he chose to call himself this week, he was my maker and once and almost always lover. We'd parted ways in Los Angeles. He was there, I was here. One of the reasons for my recent crying jags.

He moved his hands from my shoulders to my neck, his thumbs doing funny things to the skin behind my ears.

"Uh." I shivered, absolutely speechless for once.

His grin was slow and knowing. "Don't worry, Glory. I'm not going to rush you. But one of these nights I'm going to end up in your bed again and it's not going to be lying at your feet."

He stepped back and headed down the hall, his towel hitting the floor as he walked into the bedroom and shut the door.

I was left with the image of his perfect taut butt burned into my brain. Dimples there too. Damn.

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"Glory, I'm glad you're here. Things have been crazy." Lacy Devereau, my day manager and right-hand girl in the shop, looked me over. "You okay?"

"Fine. V's been torturing me with his cooking again, that's all." I smiled at a customer who was heading toward a dressing room with a vintage dress over her arm. "Business good then?"

"Okay, but that's not the crazy part. It's Flo. She's made this place into wedding central. You know I'm one of her bridesmaids." Lacy glanced behind her and lowered her voice. "You've got to stop her, Glory. She's talking about changing the dresses again. I don't care if she is paying. With the wedding only a few weeks away, they'll never get here on time."

"You're right. I'm on it." I picked up a pile of receipts. The daily take hadn't been too shabby. My vintage clothing and

the first time in my life, the concept freaked me out more than a little. But I'd told my over-protective maker and longtime lover, Jeremy Blade, to give me my space. That included no more freebies like the twenty-four/seven security he'd provided for the past, oh, four hundred years. Stupid me had even turned down the chance to stay in Hollywood and play house with amazing rock star Israel Caine.

Sure I'm insane. But that's me. Now I was out to prove that I could stand on my own two vampire feet. In cute shoes, of course. The fact that I'd cried myself to sleep ever since I'd come back from Hollywood was just me being stupid.

"You deserve to be safe. How I sleep is my business, Glory. Don't stress about it." Rafe put his hands on my shoulders. "And get this, lady." He stared down at me, suddenly serious. No sign of a dimple. "Yeah, I'm your friend and I'll protect you if I see the need, with or without a paycheck."

"You shouldn't--" I blinked when he backed me up to the wall.

"I don't take orders from you any more. Right?"

"Right. Rafe, what's the deal"" His body felt almost hot compared to my vamp subhuman temperature and it was so close. I inhaled again but this time instead of "safe" I got a sizzle of something I hadn't expected.

"The deal is I've watched you with Blade and Caine and I figure there's a reason you won't commit to either one of them."

"Good luck with that. Now I'm going down to the shop. Up here we need some rules. You've got to shower during the day. While I'm conked out in my death sleep. The hot water heater here only has one good shower a night in it and I have a feeling you just took it." I strode over to the door leading to the bathroom, dreading what I'd get when I tried the water for my shower.

"Sorry. My body clock's still on vamp time. Work all night, sleep all day, but with one eye open. You know?" Rafe got up and sauntered over to face me.

"Right. You went way above and beyond what any paycheck required to protect me." I kept my eyes on his. Otherwise, I'd be checking out that truly great chest just inches from my nose. Didn't help that his scent was as familiar as my own. Hey, Valdez the dog had slept on the foot of my bed for years. One inhale and I felt safe and cared for.

"We're even. You saved my furry butt a time or two." He grinned. "Like from a crowd of energy sucking psychos."

"We'll never be even." I couldn't smile about that memory. He'd almost been killed by a group of vampires who'd been trying to get to me. "I'll always be grateful to you. But you're off the payroll. And I've got to learn to deal without a bodyguard now. We're friends. Roommates. So sleep with both eyes closed, buddy. You deserve that."

I admit that, while I was determined to be independent for

feel better would be if you put on some clothes. Bought some underwear, for crying out loud."

"Whoa. Guess I am getting to you." He laughed. "Cut me a break. I spent years naked inside a dog body. No wardrobe necessary." He dragged a finger through a puddle of icing and licked it clean. "And I've never been too crazy about underwear. But for you, I'll deal. I just haven't had a chance to shop. I've been trying to get this nightclub off the ground."

"Yeah, how's that going?" I picked up my bottle of synthetic blood. Yawn. Not even my favorite type. Because my fave is expensive. And Glory St. Clair is always on a budget.

"Not great. Everything costs more than I'd thought it would. So today I finally caved and called an old friend. She has plenty of money and likes the club scene. Unfortunately, knowing Nadia, she won't be a silent partner." Rafe picked up his empty plate, rinsed it off and set it in the sink.

"Nadia? Is she a shifter too?" Even the name sounded exotic.

"Vampire. I worked for her back in the seventies. She's got bars and nightclubs all over the world. Austin will be a new scene for her so she's coming tomorrow to scope it out. She wasn't about to invest just on my say-so. If she likes what she sees, we'll strike a deal." Rafe plopped into a chair across from me.

Oh, he did not just flash me. I stood and stalked into the kitchen to rinse out my glass bottle. We recycle.

I mean, wouldn't you if your best friend had been weighing in mere feet away?

"Forget it, V. I'm a mess. Doesn't take much to set me off these days." My voice cracked. Oops. Was another meltdown coming? Personally, I was sick of myself. Made some tough decisions lately and regretted at least one of them almost instantly.

"No, Glory, I've been an ass. I get it. Vampires can't eat. I know what it's like to crave what you can't have." He pulled me into his arms and I felt weepy enough to actually lean into him. Damn those cinnamon rolls. Out of a can, but still.

"It's, it's just that they smell so good." And he looked so fine. And felt so warm and strong and... I sucked it up and pushed back. "We need to get some things straight here." I didn't have to glance down to know that, hello, part of him was already headed that direction under the stupid skimpy towel. Nice to know Mr. Tall, Dark and Shifty wasn't immune to my dubious charms.

Oh, who was I kidding? I still had on my shapeless Snoopy nightshirt and hadn't combed my hair since yesterday. It was probably his breakfast Rafe was excited about.

"Yeah, well. It's your place. But I've got to eat." His dimples were showing again as he headed back to sit at the kitchen table. "I'll scarf these down, then spray some air freshener. Will that make you feel better?"

I sighed and collapsed on the couch. "What would make me

was a gourmet cook? Of course popping open a can of sweet rolls may not be gourmet in some books, but I knew Nirvana when I smelled it.

He polished off roll number six—yes, I'd been counting—then stood. I would not notice the towel flapping open. He strolled over—flap, flap—to lay a gentle hand on my shoulder. Someone in this apartment was making a trip to the nearest discount store to get jumbo beach towels tonight. Since Rafe obviously didn't care who ogled his family jewels, that someone would have to be me. Serve him right if I bought hot pink Hello Kitty. Let him strut his stuff in that.

"I'm sorry, Glory." He smiled, his dimples showing.

It was still a shock to see Valdez the human hunk. He'd been a cute dog, usually a Labradoodle with wavy black hair. Still had the thick curly locks, with dark eyes to match, but now there was a whole Latin lover thing going on, complete with those teasing dimples that were an absolute killer where the ladies were concerned.

Not me, of course. We were friends. Nothing more. V knew way too much about me. He'd been an up close and personal witness to my love life, a tangled mess at the moment. And he'd listened to me wail *ad nauseam* about my issues. Which were numerous. I'm even afraid he knows my deepest, darkest secret—the number when I stepped on a bathroom scale. I'd just been through a weight loss experiment and had a feeling he'd peeked.

Chapter One

"Would you quit walking around here naked?" I'd tolerated the smell of coffee and--much, much worse--baking cinnamon rolls, but I'd be damned if I'd watch my new roommate eat and drink wearing nothing more than a damp towel.

"Why, Glory? Is the sight of my bare chest getting to you?" Rafael Valdez licked white icing off one fingertip and my fangs stabbed through my gums.

"Listen. I've put up with your marathon showers until there's no hot water left for mine. And your cooking smells." Oh, great. Tears. But was it fair? Rafe's a shape-shifter and seemed to have an insatiable appetite. He'd spent nearly five years stuck in dog form acting as my bodyguard. Now he was staying all too human and no longer at my mercy for his menu. Who knew he