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A few hours later, Eric was drawn back to the kitchen at the mouthwatering aroma that floated through the house. Entering the dining room, he watched as Rebecca was serving up dinner and setting the table. His knees nearly buckled at the sight of the food she was putting out. Rebecca had made beef stroganoff with freshly made bread rolls. She'd prepared a salad as well, but he knew that he wouldn't be touching that rabbit food.

He was nearly knocked over as his children came barreling down the stairs and straight into the dining room. He watched with as Emma and Travis hovered around Rebecca at the stove; attempting to get a closer look at the food she was dishing out.

“Go sit down.” She said, effectively shooing the twins from the kitchen as she finished her task.

Moving back to the dining area, Travis and Emma raised their perplexed faces to him as they seemed to notice their father leaning against the wall for the first time. He could understand their confusion. It was rare that he got to eat with his children. Pack concerns and his architecture business kept him busy. But tonight nothing would pull him away; he'd made certain of that.

When Rebecca had exited the kitchen area carrying several plates, she froze too at the sight of him. Smirking at her with a knowing look, he settled into a chair without as much as a word. Almost immediately his children followed his suit and climbed into their seats, eyeing Rebecca eagerly as she approached the table with their food.

“You're eating with us, Dad?” Travis asked snatching up his fork as soon as Rebecca placed a bowl of stroganoff in front of him.

“Yes, I am. That is if I can have some. Rebecca?” he asked with false innocence, gesturing to his empty plate. Glaring back at him she all roughly slid a full bowl at him, nearly dumping the contents in his lap had he not caught the dish.

Rebecca made several more trips back to the kitchen; bringing out the large salad bowl, drinks and a bread basket before taking her seat between Emma and Travis. Attempting to ignore the fact that Eric was sitting with them, Rebecca attempted to turn her attention solely on her food.

Taking a bite of the pasta dish in front of him, Eric nearly swore as the creamy sauce covered noodles and meat exploded on his tongue. “Rebecca?” he groaned out with pleasure, drawing her attention.

Rebecca’s eyes drifted up from her bowl with a raised brow. “What is it?”

“This,” he began, motioning at his food. “...is incredible. If you always cook like this I may just have to keep you.” His eyes watched her for a reaction. She didn’t disappoint him as her cheeks flushed before she quickly looked away.

“Thank you...” she mumbled, attempting to cover up her embarrassment.

Reaching for a dinner roll, Eric dipped it in his bowl before bringing it to his mouth. Half way through their dinner, Emma’s small innocent voice cut through the silence that swelled within the room.

“Can we have ice cream after dinner, Daddy?” Emma asked, flashing him her best pleading look.

“Sure, I think I might need something sweet too.” He glanced conspiringly at Rebecca across the table. “How about it, Rebecca? Do you know where I can get something creamy and sweet?” he asked with a grin. He couldn’t help but smirk at the wash of color that flooded her cheeks once more as she caught his hidden meaning.

All through the remainder of dinner, Rebecca did her best to avoid talking to him, much less even looking at him. Phase one of his plan was accomplished, she was aware of his interest, and she wasn’t as indifferent as she’d like him to believe. As soon as Emma and Travis were in bed for the night she would have nowhere to run, he’d begin laying phase two into motion.

After the twins had eaten as if it were the last scraps of food on the planet; they smiled with happiness as Rebecca collected their plates and returned with two small bowls of chocolate ice cream. Eric noted with a soft scoff that she had purposely not brought him one as well. After they had practically licked their bowls clean, Eric leaned back in his chair, folding his arms behind his head.

“Time for bed.” Almost instantly both of the twins groaned in despair. Shooting them a firm look before they could begin to barter for more time, Eric shook his head. “Go get ready for bed.”

For a brief moment the twins cast a glance toward Rebecca as she was collecting the dishes and carrying them to the sink to be washed. Seeing that she would not aid them

against their father's wishes; with frowning faces, the twins slid from their chairs and headed off to do as they were told.

After collecting the last dish from the table, Rebecca returned with a damp wash cloth and began to whip the table clean. His eyes never strayed from her for a moment.

"Stop it!" she huffed out in loss of patience as she tossed a damp wash cloth in his face. Jerking the wet cloth off his face, he smiled up at her as she headed back into the kitchen.

"What did I do now?"

"Stop looking at me like that."

"Like what? Am I making you nervous?" he teased.

"No." she mumbled. Filling the sink with soapy water, all the while she was too aware that he followed behind her.

Dumping the dishes in a sink full of wash water, Rebecca stiffened as she felt his body heat at her back. He didn't move to touch her or even to speak. Ignoring him the best she could, her hands moved quickly through the water. When she found herself all too focused on her task, Eric started her by wrapping his arms around her waist and pulling her back tightly against his front.

"You should be nervous, Rebecca. If you knew the things you make me want to do to you."

"Why are you doing this? Why can't you just leave me alone? I work for you! Don't you have any self respect?"

His eyes flashed over her with amusement and unhidden interest. "What does self respect have to do with it? I want you and I know you want me. Why fight it?"

"So what? You just decide that I'm to be your new sex toy and I fall in line?"

Rolling his eyes, Eric scoffed. "If only."

"Look." Rubbing her tired eyes, she took a step closer to him. "I need this job, Eric. I like this job and I'm not going to risk it."

"Tough. I am willing to risk it." Quickly moving forward, Eric backed her against one of the counters.

Wrapping her fingers around the edge of the counter, Rebecca lifted her chin; refusing to shrink away from him like the rabbit he'd called her. Reaching out; Eric wrapped the length of her ponytail around his fist, using her hair like a handle to tip her head back as he pressed against her.

"Be as stubborn as you wish, but I have never backed down from a challenge and I will win." Rebecca answered him with a doubtful glare. Before she could throw a barbed insult at his arrogant statement, his lips covered hers as if she were the last drop of water in the desert. His teeth nipped at her bottom lip demanding entrance. Rebecca tried to remain motionless beneath his lips, but his kiss made her blood sing. Made her body ache in ways she'd only read about.

How she wanted to give herself to him, to love him as she desired to. But the image of her parent's bloody, mangled bodies flittered into her mind. It very may have been one of his pack members that killed her parents. Would he take her side against his own kind, people he'd played with and grew up with? No. he wouldn't.

Shoving her hands between their hypersensitive bodies, she shoved with all her might against an impenetrable wall of hard muscle. However, she succeeding in only pushing his lips off of hers. Taking a steady breathe, her hands struggled to pry his strong arms from around her waist.

"We need to stop." She whispered breathlessly, refusing to meet his eyes as he looked curiously down at her.

Eric shook his head. "There is no stopping this now. There is no going back for either of us. That chance became out of reach the moment you let me touch you."

"I won't accept." She argued in a haunting voice. Shaking her head with worried eyes, she took a step backwards, forcing a safe distance between them. "Just because we..." her hand waved between them, awkwardly indicating to what had happened between them. "...did that, doesn't mean that you get to suddenly own me."

"I may not own you, but you are mine and I refuse to let you run away from this cause you are scared." Eric bit out.

"I am not scared of you, Eric." It was a lie. The truth was; she was terrified of him...of her need of him. Eric had this pull about him, drawing her closer to him even as she struggled to stay away from him.

"Then prove it." Eric replied gently. Stepping closer to her, He reached out. His large hand cupped her chin and forced her eyes to meet his. "Stop fighting this. I don't

understand this need I have for you, but the thought of being forced from you shreds my insides. I want to explore it. Give whatever is between us a chance.”

Briefly, Rebecca’s eyes searched his. She didn’t know what she expected to see within his emerald eyes. It was honesty mixed with pleading. Eric...was pleading? That was a mind-boggling concept. Not once in the couple of months that she’d known Eric had he ever looked or acted pleadingly. Deep down, she wanted trust what he was saying, but she couldn’t. Her chest ached with as a terrifying voice from a distant memory echoed through her mind.

None of my kind will let you live now. Others will come for you and you will never know mercy from my kind...

Jerking her head away, she forced herself to look at him with indifference. “I don’t want to give it a chance.” she whispered with a flat tone. “The other night was a mistake; one I don’t want to repeat with you.” Taking in a deep breath, she forced her next words out as a knot twisted her stomach tightly. “I don’t want you.”

For a moment, Eric had no expression or reaction to her words as he took in her words. Had he even heard her? Soon his relaxed expression shifted. His eyes darkened in reaction to her lifeless words. His lips pressed together into a tight line before he finally spoke. “Fine.” his voice came out sounding more like a growl than anything and it made Rebecca shiver with fear. She flinched back as he pointed at her accusingly. “I know you feel the need—the connection between us. That won’t go away. Sooner or later; you will be forced to acknowledge it and when that happens, you will come to me.”

Rebecca scoffed, tossing her head back. “Get a grip! You just want sex and I’m convenient. I don’t even like you, Eric, and I know you definitely don’t like me. Why in the world would I ever come to you if I wanted a relationship?” she asked, sarcastically holding her arms out at her sides.

Eric’s eyes narrowed.”You think Damon can give you what I did?” he growled out.

Turning around, Rebecca grabbed her purse off the back counter. Spinning back to Eric’s stubborn face, she smirked coldly up at him. “Perhaps. If not; I am sure I can find someone else.”

Moving toward the front door, Rebecca was jerked to a stop when Eric’s hand clamped roughly around her forearm. Jerking her fully against his front, he looked down at her, his eyes burning with anger and jealousy at her words.

“Know that if someone touches you, they will be taking their life out of their hands. You are under my protection.”

“I don’t need your stupid protection!” she frowned; attempting to break free of Eric’s restraining hand.

Eric lowered his head until their noses were touching. “I. Am. Serious.” He bit out. “Don’t put an obstacle between us that I will have to remove.” He warned in a low voice. Tangling his freehand in her loose hair, he held her immobile as his lips came crashing down over hers. He dominated her mouth with a near punishing force. His teeth captured her bottom lip, nipping at it before sliding his tongue over the tempting flesh. Rebecca gasped against his lips. The force of his kiss made her want to return it; all the while she knew she should fight it.

Twisting out of grip, Rebecca broke the kiss. Her lungs burned for air, and left her panting heavily. Without saying a word, she ran. Jerking the front door open, she rushed out of the house, allowing the door to slam behind her. She didn’t stop her running legs until she had slid into her small car, pressing her back tightly against her seat. Her chest rose and fell with her heavy breaths, her heart thundering in her ears.

Her trembling hand reached up to touch her pulsing lips. She could still feel him touching her, kissing her as only Eric could. Her stomach clenched and trembled all at once with need. She wouldn’t go through this again, she silently promised. Eric didn’t own her or own her reaction to him. She was needy and that was easily fixed. Perhaps it was time that she did.

Then prove it... Eric’s rumbling words from earlier echoed in her mind.

That’s just what she would do. The only way to prove that Eric had no hold; sexual or otherwise, over her was to prove it. The only way that she could prove it to Eric was to prove it to herself.

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Gulping against the lump in her throat that threatened to choke her, Rebecca stared up at the glowing red lights of the Red Horns Bar and Grill sign. With apprehension she looked up at the angry image on the sign of a fiery red bull’s face. Within the small town of Ravenwillow the Red Horns was the only bar within miles, which meant this was her only option.

Rebecca had succeeded in avoiding Eric for the last few days thanks to Sarah wanting to spend for time with her grandchildren. She knew eventually she wouldn’t be able to

hide from him. All it would take was a touch or a kiss and she'd melt, just as she'd done that night at her apartment and a few days ago in his kitchen. There was no way she was letting that happen again.

Which was why she had to do this and she couldn't back out now. Just go in there, get it over with and get on with your life... she told herself, pushing away her uncertainty. She could do this. She would do this.

Releasing a held breath out slowly, She pulled away from the red brick wall she had planted herself against, when her mind began filling with doubts. Walking around the corner of the red brick building, she entered the side entrance to the Red Horns bar. With every step she took, she tried to prepare herself; mentally, for what she was about to do.

She was dressed in a dark scarlet blouse that hid her scars yet dipped low over her breasts and a short black skirt that fell just a little above her knees. Her feet were cupped tenderly within the sexy pair of black high heeled sandals that she wore. Her sinful outfit combined with her dark makeup, she was dressed to tempt.

Tonight she was going to find some hot stud, work out this need that had built up within her and forget all about Eric Daniels. Looking around, the bar was flowing with people, people ready to have fun and hopefully a mouth-watering man looking to get laid tonight.

Spying an attractive man sitting at the bar, she was just about to walk up and introduce herself when she noticed Jason; one of Eric's friends that she'd met, sitting at the bar. His eyes were focused on the flat screen TV mounted on one of the side walls as he brought his beer bottle to his lips. She wasn't getting close to him. With no doubt, he'd call Eric and then she'd have a bigger problem than she already did.

Turning to look back at the bar as patrons took drinks handed to them; she noticed that her hands slightly trembled with apprehension. A bit of liquid courage may just be what she needed. Walking up as served customers moved away from the bar, Rebecca stood across from a tall, burly man that stood on the other side of the bar. He looked more like a bouncer than a bartender. Made nearly entirely of heavy muscle and wide shoulders, the man stood nearly seven feet. He possessed dark wavy hair that he held back in a small ponytail. His expression as he served customers was far from inviting and made Rebecca want to back away. Forcing herself not to turn around and flee, she waited for him to notice her.

"What can I get you?" His tone was harsh as his dark hazel eyes bore into hers.

Jerking her eyes away from his, she nodded. Normally, she was the furthest thing from a heavy drinker, but tonight she would need the extra courage to go through with her plan. "I'll just have a scotch." She replied. With a curt the rough looking bartender moved to get her drink. Inhaling a calming breath, she turned to look up and down the length of the bar for any appealing men, but none seemed to catch her interest. Turning around she took notice of a small group of men at a table, enjoying a pitcher of beer and laughing. For some reason none of them seemed appealing either.

She was startled when a glass was slammed down on the bar in front of her. The amber liquid sloshing over the sides of the small, ice filled glass. Murmuring a thank you, she slipped the money into his hand and pick up her drink, tipping it against her lips. The fiery liquid burned her throat as she took a small sip, causing her to cough at the sensation. She had never been much of a drinker, but now was a good time as any to learn.

Finding a table, unoccupied in a dark corner, she sat down; taking another small sip of her beverage and surveying the crowd. Several men looked her way, when they caught her looking at them, but none approached her. Hopefully she get so drunk, some guy would just take advantage of her and make it easier on her.

So caught up in her own thoughts, Rebecca didn't realize that she was no longer alone until she turned to adjust her seat. "Oh God!" She exclaimed with surprise, her free hand flatting over her heart. "You scared me." She whispered.

"So I see." Jason smiled friendly at her as he leaned back in his seat. "I saw you sitting alone, thought you'd like the company."

"Maybe I was just waiting for you." She murmured softly as she leaned into him with an "I want you" smile.

Jason's friendly smile fell. "Rebecca, what are you doing?" He asked, confused.

Moving away from him, she slouched in her chair looking suddenly depressed, she took another swig of her drink. "Forget it."

Reaching over, Jason pulled her glass from her hand, bring it to his face, he sniffed the contents. "Why are you drinking scotch? I never pegged you for a heavy drinker."

"I have my reasons." Reaching over she jerked the glass out of his hand, "Give me that! It's mine." She said stubbornly, as she finished off the remaining liquor, making a face of disgust and shivering as she swallowed it down.

Turning back to look at the crowd, she suddenly felt eyes on her. Her gaze swept the room until her eye met a pair of bright blue ones. On the other end of the dance floor; lounging relaxed against the wall, was a tall, blonde haired man whom was watching her with visible interest. He was attractive in a college jock way; but she could only feel her skin crawl at his gaze. Unwilling to back down from the reason that she came here tonight; she attempted to shoot the man an interested glance.

“Rebecca.” Jason called out next to her, attempting to get her attention. “Rebecca!”

“What?” She asked; irritated. If her plan was to succeed she was going to have to get rid of Jason. With his looks and presence, Jason was surly bound to scare off any potential men.

“What do you think you’re doing?”

“Browsing,”

“Browsing?” Following her gaze, Jason noticed the tall man that leered at Rebecca like she was a treat to be devoured. This was not good. “Rebecca, why don’t you just let me take you home?”

Rebecca whirled around to face him with a dark scowl on her face. “Why?” she bit out.

“Rebecca. What do you think you’re doing?” He asked again, cupping the side of her face, forcing her to remain looking at him, when she turned back to her eye candy. “How do you think Eric would react if he knew what you were doing?”

Rebecca’s face paled for a brief moment before she shrugged off the weight of her uncertainty. “Eric has nothing to do with this or me. I came here for a reason tonight and I’m not leaving until I do it. You can either help me or leave me alone.” She stated plainly, daring him to say anything otherwise.

“You know, once you do this; you can’t take it back.”

“That’s the idea.”

Resting his forearm against the tabletop, Jason leaned closer to Rebecca. “I thought you were Eric’s, did something happen?” his gaze softened and nearly pled with her to listen to him.

Teeth grinded together, her lips pressed together in a thin line, as her anger flared. “I am not Eric’s anything.” She bit out. “I work for him—that’s it. He has no control over who I sleep with or see outside of the conditions of my contract with him.”

“I don’t think Eric would see it that way.”

Refusing to listen to Jason’s attempt to reason with her, she turned away and searched for her mystery man again; only to find he’d vanished. Rebecca immediately felt a wave of disappointment wash over her.

So much for that one, she thought bitterly. Perhaps Jason was right. Maybe she should just go home and call it a night. There was always another night.

“Excuse me.” A masculine voice whispered on her from beside her. Looking up, her eyes met the familiar blue ones that belonged to her blonde, mystery man.

“H-Hey.” Her words stumbled out. Get it together! Straightening in her chair, she attempted to look as confident that she wished she was in that moment.

“You look like your searching for someone, anyone I know?” He teased with a wolfish grin.

“Depends,” She replied coyly. Laughing at her teasing he sat down in an empty seat on her other side.

“I’m Josh.”

“Rebecca.”

“Rebecca.” He whispered. “Nice to meet you,” Smiling at her, he lifted her hand to his lips, planting a soft kiss in the center of her palm. On the other side of her she could practically see Jason rolling his eyes.

I can do this...she told herself, Eric is nothing to me.

Even though the very voice of this man, promise hot, sweaty nights in the bedroom. Strangely, something about the idea of going home with Josh didn’t sound at all appealing. Gazing out over the small dance floor, she watched as couples clutched at each other, while dancing to the up tempo number that played.

“Are you alright? Did I say something wrong?”

“Rebecca?” Jason asked concerned. She could have mentally slapped herself. What was wrong with her?! She was going through with this even if it killed her!

Shaking her head, she smiled up at him “Not at all.” Gesturing to the dance floor, she stood up. “Let’s dance.”

Reaching out, Jason grasped a hold of Rebecca wrist, preventing her from moving out of her chair. “Think about this, Rebecca. This will end badly.” He cautioned quietly, preventing Josh from hearing them over top of the pounding music.

“I’m done thinking.” She’d made up her mind and nothing would make her change it. Not Eric, not Jason, and most importantly; not even herself.

Not waiting for an answer from Jason, Rebecca grasped a hold of Josh’s hand, pulling him onto the dance floor. Finding an unoccupied space on the dance floor she fitted her back against his strong frame. As the beat of the music picked up, she attempted to dance as she once had with friends before her life had been forever changed. Thrusted back against him, she grinded her ass against his groin as she teased his swelling cock.

In result; he in turn wrapped his arm around her waist, while the other stroked down the underside of her arm as she lifted her arms to circle his neck from behind. Their bodies moved as one. Thrusting and stroking against one another, leaving them panting for air—well; one of them panting, but Rebecca was determined to see this through.

Leaning his mouth close to her ear, his hot breath fanned over her neck and bare shoulder. “I never would have thought that I’d be dancing with someone as sexy as you tonight.” He whispered.

Be strong, you can do this...

“Who says I just gonna dance with you.”

The words tasted like bile in her mouth. She had lost her edge—if she’d even possessed one to begin with. It wasn’t as if she’d never done this before or anything close to it. she was a virgin. The word was like a shameful badge in her mind. A reminder of how much her attack had paralyzed her in her life. No longer...

In the past; she would have instantly went for someone like Josh, but now...it somehow felt wrong. Why did her skin crawl when Jason touched her? Whenever she was near Eric, it was never like this. Just the feel of his body heat pressing to hers, his

hands on her skin or his lips brushing enticingly against hers; it was explosive with Eric. What made him so special!

As Josh nuzzled his face into her neck and her loose hair, Rebecca forced herself not to shrink away from him. “Really? What did you have in mind?” He breathed out, his voice weighted down with desire.

“Maybe I should take you some place and show you what other type of dancing I can do...” The words were meant to entice and from the hard evidence that stirred against her, it was working.

“Sounds like the best idea, I’ve heard all week.” He murmured, as his fingertips grazed the edge of her breast and down the side of her body with deliberate slowness. Her head began slightly swimming with a feeling of floating, a delicious buzz as the effects of her drink hit her.

This is going to be easier than I thought...

“This is going to be the best night of your life.” She whispered temptingly, whether it was to him or herself; she didn’t know.