TAKEN FROM HIM

I DO NOT FEAR DEATH, FOR I KNOW HE WILL COME.

JACKIE NACHT

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Love's Landscapes

An M/M Romance series

TAKEN FROM HIM

By Jackie Nacht

Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love's Landscapes* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

What Is Love's Landscapes?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the Goodreads M/M Romance Group and visit the discussion section: *Love's Landscapes*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers.** It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

This story is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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Cover Art by Carmen Waters

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Photo Description

An extremely handsome, lean, muscular man with black hair stands with his hands overlapping and his eyes downcast. Around his neck is a stunning necklace of silver and rubies that trail down to the top of his abdomen.

Story Letter

Dear Author,

I am the ever obedient pet of the Vampire King. I live only for him and though he is harsh to me in the presence of others, he never fails to let me know how much I really mean to him in private. I know his cruelty is only to stave off his enemies. Something I am more than happy to play along with because I would never want to be the thing that is used against him.

You see, I am a bastard mutt, born from a human woman and passing vampire father, the lowest, seen as dirty by the 'true' vampire community. Neither accepted by humans nor vampires. I was left to die as a child, unwanted by my mother but somehow I survived on the streets and through a miracle, was found by his highness as I finally lay dying on the side of the street over two years ago.

I'm soon to be 28, an age in which he feels will be the time to make me a full vampire. I ache for that day to come, for though I age slower than a mortal I will still grow old and die, while he will continue to live on. I am glad, after many fights, he has agreed to make me his and turn me so we can be together in immortality. I do not need to be accepted by his coven, though they'd probably treat me better once I am fully vampire, I just want to be with him forever. I am his whole world and he his mine.

One day I am taken from him, someone close to him has betrayed him and knows his only weakness is me, and though I am hurt and they continue to hurt me for information that will never be theirs, I do not fear death. For I know he will come, because there is something they seem to have forgotten… The way he was before he found me. Ruthless and unforgiving. The epitome of Evil. Their world will crumble before his wrath. For ever daring to betray him, I, for one, can hardly wait to see their fear when he comes to annihilate them all. Snuffing

them out like death itself. He may have a weakness in me, but he is still the millennium-old Blood Lord.

Death is coming…

Please, tell my story of love, survival and eternity.

Sincerely,

Neko

PS. Please be a HEA! The only must! lol…

Hoping for modern time… though if it doesn't fit with how you see the story, I am more than Ok with any changes! <3

Thank you so much! Other than HEA, pretty much anything goes! I'm not really picky! <3 heh…

Story Info

Genre: paranormal

Tags: vampires, immortal, abduction, captivity, revenge, HEA, coven/secret societies, dark and gritty, hurt/comfort, soulmates

Content Warnings: graphic violence, torture

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Chapter 1

Liam stumbled along the dark, filthy alley. A bastard halfling getting what he finally deserved, death. He knew it was coming. The world wasn't blind. Humans knew that vampires existed, and along with that, there were halflings like Liam.

Oh, how he wished he had never been born. Holding the wound at his side, he could feel the hot blood spill between his fingers. At twenty-six, someone had finally done what so many others had wanted to do upon seeing him: kill him.

Humans couldn't help him, and vampires—well, he was considered viler than the garbage that littered this alley to them. They wished him dead; he was considered a shameful mistake to both humans and vampires.

A wave of dizziness hit him hard, and suddenly the ground came up and hit him in the face, or at least that's what it felt like. His cheek exploded in white hot pain as his face hit the pavement. Moaning, he rolled onto his back.

This was a fucking horrible way to go. He was going to die right there in this filthy alley, and no one gave a fuck. Liam had survived this long for no other reason than to give the world the big *fuck you*. However, even he could be taken unawares. The man who stabbed him had come from the shadows and struck the blade deep before Liam had ever seen him.

A numbness spread over Liam, along with acceptance. He had wanted so much more, knew he could have done many more things if he would have had time and a chance.

The sound of footsteps clapped along the pavement. Liam watched as a pair of highly polished black men's shoes came into view next to his head. Of all the things he could have thought at that moment, the first thing that came to mind was it was a pity the man had ruined his shoes by stepping in a pile of vomit. Here he was dying, and all he could worry about was a stranger's shoes. How absurd.

The man knelt down, black wool coat billowing around him, and that's when he saw the razor sharp fangs. The man hissed, staring down at him. A full blooded vampire. The length of the fangs were a huge tell. Liam's fangs looked pathetic in comparison, but they were far from human. The one physical feature that kept him banned all his life. That and his cerulean eyes, which were lined

in amethyst. All pure blood had amethyst eyes. This guy's were breathtakingly beautiful with black lashes surrounding them. They were also utterly cold.

Liam hoped the vampire would end him quickly, that his suffering wouldn't last.

"Please," Liam rasped. *Just finish me.*

The vampire tucked his arms under Liam's body and lifted him up.

"What—" Liam began but was cut off.

"Hush," the vampire said harshly as he carried Liam swiftly down the alley.

Liam rested his head on the vampire's chest, smelling a clean fresh scent that seemed to calm him even though he was sure he was going to his death. Liam was so busy burrowing into the vampire that before he knew it, he was being tucked into a large backseat.

The vampire held him as he shouted to the driver, "Home!"

Closing his eyes, Liam began to fade. The feeling of the warm body against him, even if it hated him, was a more comforting way to go than he thought possible. His heart rate began to slow, and he could feel himself fading.

Overhead, he heard the vampire murmur, "Christ, you're skin and bones. We need to get there faster. White, he doesn't have that much time."

Liam closed his eyes only to jerk them back open when he felt himself being tied to a bed. He fought weakly as he was bound. The vampire stared down at him with those cold eyes as he struggled.

"We already cleaned and sutured the wound, but you need to be given synthetic blood. With you being a halfling, your body will react poorly. By the looks of you, you've never had this done. Be prepared, it's painful."

Synthetic blood was the horrible stuff vampires gave to halflings. One couldn't be changed with it and the side effects were horrible. It was always better to have human blood, but injured, synthetic was the only way to go.

"Dragos, give him something to bite down on." Three other men surrounded him. Two of the men looked exactly alike and a lot like Liam's savior, while the other was prepping the procedure, his back to Liam.

Dragos!

Dragos was the Vampire King who was leader of the coven in the United States. Dragos ruled ruthlessly and had twin brothers. It was told he was utterly

cold, known to be heartless, and had been for millennia. He was above helping a bastard halfling. Liam was going to die.

Panic bubbled inside him and Liam struggled to get free of the bindings. His eyes widened as the Vampire King leaned down and stroked his damp hair back. "You will be okay. I give you my word."

Liam shifted his eyes over to the twin brothers to see them staring at their brother in shock. A hiss filled the air as Dragos turned on the two. "Leave!" he roared at them.

There wasn't much time to catch up with what was going on since Liam's body suddenly arched off the bed in agony. Dragos shoved a leather-wrapped stick in his mouth as Liam cried out. His body was on fire.

"My physician is here to help you. He'll get you back to normal in no time." Dragos leaned down next to him.

Normal? He had never been normal.

Body trembling, Liam endured what felt like lava filling him. He wasn't sure how long it lasted or if he was even going to live through it. After what seemed like hours, the pain began to lessen. His muscles ached from the strain, and he was soaked in sweat. Liam spat out the stick when he knew he was no longer going to chip his teeth from the agony.

Tired, Liam stared up at the Vampire King and murmured past a bone-dry throat, "I'm going to make it?"

"You are, my pet." Dragos stroked his hair back.

"Pet?" Liam murmured.

Dragos lifted him and gave him a cool drink. His throat was parched. "Yes, my pet. You'll no longer be alone."

"Yours." Liam almost wept in relief. For the first time, someone had helped him. Hell, Dragos wanted to claim him as his pet. Liam couldn't imagine why the Vampire King would want a halfling bastard like him. However, after the aid he had received, Liam would trust the Vampire King with his life completely.

Dragos stared down at Liam for a minute before he leaned and kissed him softly on the lips. "Mine."

<p align="center">****</p>

Dragos walked out of Liam's room two days later. He needed a shower badly, and if he behaved like this any longer, others in the coven would become suspicious.

When he'd gone out two nights before to check on a coven member, Dragos never expected to find the one meant for him. After millennia of being such a cold-hearted bastard, Dragos had assumed he was always meant to be alone. Hell, until he'd found Liam, he'd preferred it.

Thinking of his beloved mate still healing from the injuries inflicted on his human body brought vengeance to the forefront of his mind. When Liam was well enough to be on his own, Dragos would hunt the fucker down and end him.

Dragos walked down the hall to his own room. Once entering, he went straight to the en suite, turning on the shower and then stripping. Dragos stepped into the cold shower, lost in his thoughts. Over the last two days, he'd talked a lot to his little halfling. Liam was a light in his darkened world. He was kind and genuine, something Dragos hadn't seen in a very long time.

There was no way to hide what Liam was, and honestly, Dragos was already in love with him without the slightest change. Unlike most male vampires, Liam was smaller in height, probably no more than five foot ten. His skin was pale and soft with black hair. Liam was stunningly beautiful, but Dragos wasn't foolish enough to think kindness and beauty would have the halfling accepted into the coven.

The only two things his vampires cared for were blood and power. Liam wasn't a full-blooded vampire and would never be accepted into the coven. If others knew what Liam was already coming to mean to Dragos…

Fuck!

Dragos began washing his hair vigorously as he thought of what the coven would do if they knew Liam was his one. The harm and torture Liam would suffer just because of how much he meant to Dragos was unthinkable. Dragos was powerful and their king, but even a king could be brought to his knees if others knew the one weakness that could destroy him. Even such a powerful vampire could fall at the hands of hundreds of lessers. His coldness and power was what kept the coven in order. He'd never had a weakness that could be used against him until now.

After rinsing, he turned off the water and stepped out, grabbing a towel. He stared at himself in the steamy mirror, knowing what he was going to have to do to protect Liam. He would have to act as if the halfling meant nothing to

him. No one, not even his two younger twin brothers, could ever know what Liam was to him. He knew his brothers would help him, but Liam was his alone to protect.

Dragos' brothers, Stasio and Andrei, had always protected his back in the past. They'd grown up tight. But they'd been raised in a rigid household, and as children, they only had each other.

Their father had been a coven leader who'd paid them little attention until it came time to prepare them to rule their own covens. Their mother had been killed shortly after the twins were born by another coven.

Even as a young boy, he'd known he would need to protect Stasio and Andrei. The twins were so young when they would come back from their lessons, chubby cheeks bruised from another child in the class. His vampire blood seethed at seeing harm done to them. He didn't know how to show affection but if anyone fucked with his brothers, they paid dearly. They were his, dammit. His cold-hearted reputation was birthed during those encounters. From there, the three of them had grown into a powerful threesome. With him at the head, the three were feared above all. Their protection for each other made them close to this day. No one dared mess with them, especially Dragos. He had ended more than one coven member for crossing the three.

Dragos loved his brothers; he really did. Could he trust them with Liam's life? Probably, but how much danger would it put Stasio and Andrei in? No, he needed to handle this situation on his own. Liam's life depended on him treating his mate as if he were nothing more than a pet.

Dragos grabbed the sink, knowing there was no way he could do this full-time. He would have to explain his actions to Liam. He needed to protect his mate even from those he called family. Dragos had to give his mate a choice in the matter. If Liam wanted to leave, Dragos would let him. It would rip his soul apart, but he wouldn't take Liam's freedom.

However, just because he couldn't show his affections in front of others for fear of Liam's life didn't mean he would continue the pretense behind closed doors. Dragos would do everything in his power to let his mate know how important he was and how much Dragos cared. There would be nothing Liam would ever want for, including Dragos' love and respect.

He walked out of the bathroom and then got dressed. He left his room once again to return to Liam. He needed to talk to his mate and explain the danger Liam was in simply because the Vampire King was in love with him.

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Chapter 2

Two Years Later

Liam took a deep breath as he stared in the mirror. Behind him, the coven physician, Stefan, prepared the room for after the coven meeting. It wasn't flowers he placed on the bed but stuff that would be needed to help Liam recover.

For the last two years, he had put on a show. For the doctor, for the coven, and even he believed it at times. The ever obedient pet to the Vampire King. After putting on the stunningly-made silver necklace adorned with rubies that stated his status as such, Liam stared at his image in the mirror.

Liam had chosen this path. Two years before, when Dragos had sat him down after his wounds healed and explained the situation, Liam had stayed. He'd known even after two days that Dragos was going to be his future. He had always heard that vampires would be drawn to their mate; he just hadn't been sure it was possible for him since he was a halfling. But Dragos knew, and he knew. They were mates and had to protect each other.

He wouldn't walk out on his beloved because the path before them would be difficult. They would work together and find a solution. Liam even thought he might have one until Dragos shut him down on it numerous times.

Days away from his twenty-eighth birthday and he still looked much younger than his years. He looked like he was in college as opposed to his late twenties. However, he couldn't take the credit for that. It was the halfling blood that made him age slower. Oh, how he wished he could live forever with Dragos, immortal like a full vampire. They had fought endlessly about changing him. Dragos feared changing Liam. There was a small chance Liam wouldn't survive the change. Liam argued back that it was better to try than to slowly die of old age. Still, the Vampire King wouldn't budge on the matter. Doubt had crept into Liam over the last couple of months. *Does he not want me? Love me? He says he does.*

Stefan's image appeared behind him in the mirror. "It's time. The coven is arriving."

Liam stood, schooling his features, preparing for the role he would have to maintain in front of the others. The coven was ruthless, seeking weakness even

in their own Vampire King. They all had an unquenchable thirst for power. Liam would not be the weak link that brought his beloved Vampire King down.

With a grace he had picked up over the two years, Liam walked to the doors, looking beautiful and serene while dread filled him inside. It was going to be a long night.

Just think about how it will be later when they are all gone.

With that last thought, Liam bowed his head and crossed his wrists in front of his body; the obedient pose of a pet. The doors opened and Liam walked out to the vampires before him.

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Liam sat on the floor by Dragos' legs with his wrists crossed in front of him as the coven ate around him. Dragos was front and center along with his twin brothers, Andrei and Stasio. They were an imposing trio, but none as ruthless as Dragos. No one approached the trio of men, even though the congregation seemed to be enjoying themselves. The coven simply knew that Dragos would not welcome any of their company at his table.

That was the way of their world. Liam was the only halfling that had ever seen the inside of these private meetings. Only pure bloods were initiated into the coven. The world knew of vampires, but several covens held secret societies that even top notch governments didn't know about. Here, the laws were different. Here, human laws were not welcome. The laws of blood were all that mattered.

A tug to his hair had Liam exposing his neck, and Dragos lifted him into his lap. He ripped off the decorated necklace, which let everyone in the room know who Liam belonged to, before he ruthlessly bit down on Liam's shoulder. Liam could hear Dragos' cousins laugh from within the audience as Liam gasped in pain.

He doesn't want to do this to you. Dragos is trying to keep you safe. Someday, things will be different.

Liam repeated the mantra over and over as Dragos took heavy pulls on his vein. Spots began to sprout in his vision before Dragos leaned away with a roar.

Liam was put back on the floor, and he tipped over, laying his cheek on the cold stone. He blew out a breath, reminding himself this was to protect him. As a halfling, he was lucky to still be alive. The only reason he hadn't been killed

by the full vampires was that they thought he was a plaything for their Vampire King. If any of them ever knew the truth…

Observing from under the table, he could see Stefan watching him closely as he stood next to Dragos' cousins, Lew and Niklos. Stefan had a worried expression on his face while the other two laughed. Miko, another cousin, neared the pair and wrapped his arms around Stefan as if to comfort the physician's worry. The physician pasted a fake smile on his face before turning to kiss Miko tenderly on the lips.

Liam blew out a breath. The doctor was the soul of discretion.

Liam listened as the meeting started, his mind drifting as vampire after vampire discussed matters with the Vampire King. Dragos had been their leader for more than a century, and the only reason that Dragos had never been usurped was because he was ruthless. The vampire had never shown a weakness that could take him down. If he did… well… full blooded vampires could only be trusted so far. Family ties and coven loyalty didn't compare to their thirst for power. Over the last couple of years, Liam had seen brothers behead brothers over betrayal in the struggle to climb within the hierarchy. Just the thought sickened Liam. If he didn't love Dragos so much, he would wish to walk away from this world and never look back.

The meeting ended and the room cleared out, even Dragos, but Liam still lay on the floor. He didn't have the strength to get up after all the blood Dragos had taken. He knew Dragos' lack of concern was an act, just like he knew the footsteps coming back into the hall an hour later belonged to Dragos himself.

Kneeling before Liam, Dragos scooped him up, brushing his lips over Liam's forehead. "Liam," Dragos murmured before he turned and took the back stairs to his quarters.

Liam sighed, knowing that the nightmare of the night was over and that the better part was coming.

<center>****</center>

Chapter 3

Dragos carried Liam into the Vampire King's room, blood supplies set up already to make Liam whole again. He laid Liam gently on the bed, and Dragos stared down at him in concern.

"Did I take too much?"

"You timed it perfectly. I took a nice nap while you all talked politics." Liam tried to give Dragos an encouraging smile.

Dragos frowned. "On the stone floor. Next time, I'll have pillows down there."

"You can't change anything with regard to me." Liam frowned. "They'll see it."

"I can change one thing," Dragos growled as he began intravenously giving synthetic blood to Liam.

Like the first time, the pain was excruciating, but gritting his teeth, Liam never uttered a word. Dragos was already vexed by the position the two of them were in; Liam would not add to it.

As the pain lessened and Liam felt more like himself, Dragos sat next to him, staring down with those beautiful amethyst eyes. "I'm going to give you what you want. I'm going to change you on your birthday. I don't want to lose you to age. The coven cannot touch me."

Liam sat up, joy filling him. "You mean it? We're going to be together?"

Dragos cupped his face. "Yes, Liam. I want you by my side."

A sense of fear came over Liam. "The coven will not accept this. They'll turn on you."

"I am the Vampire King. I have to stop being handcuffed by the discriminating rules of my own people." Dragos began taking out the IV. Liam watched those large powerful hands work tenderly against his flesh.

"Make love to me." Liam stared up at Dragos, trying to convey all the love he had for his vampire. What once started as gratitude and a glimmer of acceptance in a world he had long since been denied, had grown to love in the last two years. To have to hide those feelings amongst other vampires had been necessary, but to know they wouldn't have to soon…

Dragos leaned down and kissed him deeply. There was nothing tender about this kiss. The kiss was meant to claim and consume, and Liam was all for that. Liam thrust his tongue into Dragos' mouth, making sure to scrape it along a sharp fang. There was a slight burn at the cut and a coppery taste as blood pooled. Dragos growled and, without breaking the kiss, maneuvered to lie atop of him.

Liam's body reacted instantly to the heat of Dragos as he covered him. His cock hardened and ached behind the soft pants. Dragos was already grinding his hard cloth-covered cock against him as the kiss turned feral. Dragos pulled back with a hiss, a spot of Liam's blood on the corner of his mouth.

"Get these pants off." Dragos stood next to the bed and began removing his clothes.

Liam lifted his hips and slid the soft fabric down. Dragos hated these types of clothes on him. His Vampire King always preferred him in modern clothes. Little did the coven know what Liam wore behind closed doors. The dark jeans and buttery soft shirts they lounged in as he and Dragos ate in private.

Dragos crawled to him from the end of the bed, a bottle of lube in his hand. The vampire was not small. The man had large muscles, and there wasn't an ounce of fat on him. He was the exact opposite to Liam's thin frame.

"Do you still have it in?" Dragos spread Liam's thighs.

"Yes," Liam whispered.

He felt Dragos' fingers working the ruby butt plug at his entrance, pulling it free. Liam wore it as much for himself as for Dragos. The nights of coven meetings were a series of ups and downs. The quicker he could get to Dragos and make love without any pain, the better.

Dragos sat up and uncapped the lube, pouring a generous amount on his thick cock. Liam watched, fascinated, as Dragos stroked himself a couple of times. Liam groaned and reached down to grab his own, trying to alleviate some of the ache. Precum leaked onto his stomach as he watched the handsome vampire above him lean his head back and hiss.

"I…" Liam began.

Dragos stared down at him, those beautiful amethyst eyes full of desire as he lined up his cock to Liam's entrance. Liam didn't even have to voice his request; the Vampire King just knew what he needed. *Dragos.*

Liam felt Dragos push inside of him slowly. With the lube and the plug he had used, there was little to no pain even though Dragos was large. Liam continued to stare at his lover as the vampire bottomed out inside him. The deeper Dragos was inside him, the more the Vampire King pushed Liam's legs until finally hooking them over his arms.

Liam closed his eyes, overwhelmed. It was always like this when the two of them were together.

"Open your eyes." Dragos groaned above him.

Liam slowly did as requested.

"Keep looking at me. Don't close them," Dragos whispered before he began pumping his cock in and out of Liam.

Slow and tender, Dragos was completely unlike the persona he presented to the rest of the world.

I love you, Dragos mouthed before he picked up the pace. Liam groaned as Dragos continually hit that spot inside him that brought him closer and closer to the edge.

Reaching down, Liam gripped his cock as Dragos' thrusts became erratic. He knew the Vampire King was close.

Dragos reached between them and replaced Liam's hand, stroking him with his already oiled hand. *Ooh!*

Dragos leaned down and kissed Liam, nipping at his lips, and that's all it took. With a hitch of his breath, Liam felt himself climax, cum splashing onto his stomach.

Dragos pulled back and, with a few more thrusts, sank deep and came. Liam felt the warmth of cum fill him as he watched the pleasure cross over Dragos' face.

After a few moments, Dragos pulled free and rolled to the side, going into the connecting bathroom. A moment later, he came back with a warm cloth and wiped Liam down. If the others ever knew this…

No, Liam wasn't going to think of all those assholes right then. He wasn't. Here, he could be himself. He didn't have to talk like them, think like them, or behave under their laws. Dragos loved Liam the way he was.

Dragos dropped the cloth on the floor and crawled back into bed with him. "I'll inform my brothers tomorrow, and then we'll let the coven know the morning of your birthday. I don't want any of them to ruin this day for us."

Liam rolled over and rested his head on Dragos' muscular chest. The night had taken its toll on him, and even completely content with the future, he was still exhausted.

Closing his eyes, Liam whispered, "I love you."

Dragos pressed a kiss to his head. "I love you, my pet. My Liam."

Liam drifted off to sleep with a smile on his face.

<center>****</center>

Chapter 4

A couple of days later, Liam was hard at work. Well, hard at work killing the boss in his computer game anyway. Rapidly tapping the keys, he was trying his best to help out his raid group, only to take one more hit and get killed.

"Fuck!" Liam yelled at the screen. Nothing like having to start all fucking over again.

If he'd owned any of the hardware he used, he might have thrown the headphones, breaking them. As it was, all the stuff was gifted to him by Dragos. Even as he ripped off his headphones and death-gripped them, he maintained enough control to keep from breaking the precious gift. Barely.

Where is Dragos anyway? Liam thought as he glanced at the time. The vampire had gone off earlier with his brother, Andrei, to talk to a coven family while the other twin, Stasio, stayed behind to keep an eye on their home and the *pet*. They had been gone for more than three hours. It wasn't like Dragos, but there had been a few times when he'd gone out with his brothers and had some fun well into the night.

After walking over to the closet, Liam pulled out a pair of pants and hiked them over his boxer briefs. With the house left just to him and Stasio, he could go down and get a bite to eat in the kitchen. Even pets had a right to eat in the king's home. There were just rules that Liam would have to follow. One was making sure he didn't talk to Stasio. Outside Dragos' room, Liam must always maintain the look of a pet.

Upon opening up the door, Liam immediately felt prickles on the back of his neck, letting him know that something was off. Running back into the room, he then grabbed the blade Dragos had given him and crept down the hallway. He wanted to yell out for Stasio but knew that would be foolish.

He silently made his way into the main living area, and that's when he knew he was in trouble. The entire room was upset. Tables were tipped, lamps broken, and even the couch was shredded. How did he not hear that? Then he thought of what he had been doing, blasting the game in his headphones, and he closed his eyes in dread.

"There he is. The precious pet of the Vampire King," Stefan venomously said from behind him.

Turning slowly, he took in the scene in the dining room. Stefan and Miko stood in the doorway, staring at him with such utter hate Liam wondered how he was still standing. Behind them, Niklos and Lew were dragging a bloody Stasio out of sight.

Liam whipped his gaze back over as Miko and Stefan approached him. Knowing that he couldn't take all four, especially without the help of Stasio, Liam turned and took off for the back door.

Liam wished he was faster, that he could be full blooded already. He was just a day away from the speed and strength that the other four possessed. Weak, he ran as fast as he could, whipping open the door and flying down the stairs.

The sounds of pounding footsteps behind him hiked up his fear. Stark terror made him push his legs harder than he ever had before. He was so close to the main gates and a busy street when he felt the impact from behind.

Liam let out a shout as he hit the ground hard, tangling limbs with a massive Miko. He didn't get oriented with his bearings before he felt the impact of a fist in his face once, twice, and three times. The last time, his nose made a sickening crunch, and warm blood covered his mouth and chin.

Moaning, Liam could barely see Miko sitting above him through his watering eyes. Miko grabbed his arms and pulled him up toward the vampire, "Fucking weak. I don't know what he saw in you, but I can't wait to end him. He'll suffer at every piece of you we send back to him, and the coven will turn on him like rabid dogs. Half the coven already can't stand that Dragos brought a bastard in and can't wait to destroy him."

They dragged Liam through the grass into the back of an SUV. The doors slammed, and he let out a whimper, knowing that his future was only going to be filled with pain.

<center>****</center>

Dragos pulled up to gate, putting in the key code to allow him entrance up the drive. Andrei sat next to him, cleaning Dragos' weapon. A few choice words to the head of one of the families about how he treated his bride had Dragos ending the vampire's life for abusing his family.

Dragos would not have abuse in his coven. Getting out of his luxury car, he could immediately smell it. The smell of Liam's blood, spilled within steps of him. Andrei stiffened on the other side of the car.

"Be ready," Dragos pulled a dagger and a gun from the holster he wore under his coat.

Scanning the area, he slowly followed the scent of Liam's blood, coming all the way back to the gate. Bending down, he brushed his fingers across the grass that showed a visible struggle. Pulling back, he turned his hand over to see the tips covered with Liam's blood.

Rage coursed through his veins, something that only the love of Liam had ever held at bay. Now it was like a beast was being unleashed from inside as he approached his large home. Going up the steps with murder on his mind, he entered to complete silence.

Andrei whispered next to him, "Stasio," and took off in search of his twin.

Taking a deep breath, Dragos made his way to his room where he had left Liam playing his game. In the last couple of years, Liam hardly asked for anything, and it broke Dragos' heart every time, knowing that his love still feared desiring something in this world. It was the longing look that Dragos observed one night when Liam had watched him on the computer. He immediately went out and got Liam everything that a young man could want. It was a place the man could go where he wasn't judged and found lacking in the world. The only other place was in Dragos' arms.

The door was already open, and he walked in to see it empty. He knew it would be. Dragos knew his love had been taken from him. The all-consuming rage broke free inside of him, and a roar filled the air.

Andrei came up behind him, and he took his own brother by the throat and held him against the wall. "Was it you? Stasio?" Dragos hissed.

Andrei grabbed his hands, gasping out, "Stasio is bad. I just fed him. He knows who betrayed you."

Dragos stepped back, dropping his brother. Andrei grabbed at his own throat as he took in great gulps of air. "Dragos, we've known since the beginning that you loved Liam. We have always been prepared to stand by you and him. You're our brother. We love you deeply. Have we not all proven throughout the years we can trust each other? Did we not all work together to move up the ranks of the coven? Did we not have each others' backs when a coven member turned against us when we were younger? Dragos, although this is the first time you have someone to protect, your brothers will sacrifice their lives to protect your Liam."

Dragos scrubbed his hands over his face. The three of them had always stuck tightly together. Dragos thought they might even be closer than most vampire brothers, and Dragos had just fucked up by not trusting them.

"Forgive me."

"There is nothing to forgive. If someone I loved was taken from me, hell would be unleashed." Andrei stood and put his hand to the wall to support himself for a moment. "Stasio is in the living room."

Andrei led the way to the living room, and Dragos saw the damage that had been done to his younger brother. Bruises marred his flesh, and his face was covered in blood and wounds. Looking closer, he could see a hole in the shirt near his brother's chest.

"You were shot?"

Stasio staggered to his feet. "Yes, but I'm coming with you to get Liam back."

"We need to call Stefan and have him check you out." Dragos pushed his brother back down on the couch.

Stasio was shaking his head. "You can't. It was him and our cousins. Miko, Lew, and Niklos all took Liam. I think they are going to try and overthrow the coven."

Of course they are.

The only other person in the coven that knew Dragos treated Liam different was the physician. All the supplies needed for post care had all gone through Stefan. The asshole wasn't the leader in this, but he gave his lover, Miko, the tool that could bring Dragos down. He had given them Liam.

Calm washed over Dragos, as cruel and ruthless as he had been before Liam. Now that his lover had been taken, that description seemed too minor for the hell that he was about to unleash upon his coven.

Holding out his arm, he commanded, "Stasio, feed and heal from me. I need your help, brother."

Stasio grabbed his arm and bowed his head. "Brother, you have it."

Andrei stepped closer. "I'll go to the armory and get everything we need."

As Dragos stood there feeding his brother, madness began to take over. Nothing would be left of those that took Liam, and those that survived would know to never fuck with what was his again.

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Chapter 5

Pain flared in Liam's subconscious. Moaning pitifully, he was determined to wake up, get his bearings, face what was to come.

The hiss was all he heard before he felt someone snap a whip against his back. Liam screamed as he woke. The searing pain came over and over; he struggled only to find his arms were tied between two poles. There was so much pain, even the feel of his blood running down his back was too much to bear.

Niklos stopped and laughed. "Look how well it tears his flesh. Such a weak half-breed."

Miko stepped closer and faced him, squatting into his line of vision. Behind him stood a nervous looking Stefan. "I never knew what he saw in you. All those times he brought you to the coven meetings, I expected… more. Nothing. You are nothing. Yet we can take over everything just by destroying a piece of shit like you."

Liam let out a hoarse laugh. "You think you have brought down the Vampire King by taking me from him. You have unleashed the harbinger of death. You will die, and I will relish every moment of it for your betrayal."

"If you live that long. Tell me, how are you with sun, halfling?" Miko laughed as he stood and turned, drawing a blade and stabbing Stefan in the heart. "Another weakness eliminated. Useful for information, but that was all he was good for."

Stefan eyed Miko with such shock at his betrayal as he grasped at the blade sticking out of his chest. He tried to say something before he fell face first in the dirt. The doctor bled out before Liam.

"Do you fear death, halfling?" Lew said as he circled him with the barbed whip, flipping the handle in his hand.

"No," Liam whispered. Dragos would come for him, and he would smile upon their deaths even if he was to go to the hereafter shortly. Even now, his Vampire King was on the hunt. He didn't only wish it; he knew.

Lew laughed as he swung the whip, lashing his stomach. Flesh tore under the barbs, and he could not contain his scream. Two more times, Lew whipped his stomach before he circled to his back to ravage it until Liam had to wonder if there was any flesh left.

Liam slumped in the bindings as rain began to fall. Unable to hold his head up any longer, he let his head drop forward, chin touching his chest. He hissed as even the droplets of water were too much for his tortured body.

Miko laughed, "Sun is up in half an hour. Let's see if a halfling can survive throughout the entire day. But before I go…" Miko lifted his hand, which held a pair of pliers. Liam tried to shake his head, but someone from behind held him tightly. His tiny fangs were pulled from him as if they had not been truly attached, but the pain, God, the pain was excruciating. There was only so much more he could take. Thankfully, his mind was in accord because he finally succumbed into blessed darkness.

<p style="text-align:center;">****</p>

The next time Liam woke, he could barely open his eyes. Blinding light bore down on him. Tugging at his hands, Liam realized he was still tied out in the yard. He was in so much agony that he couldn't even cry out in pain anymore.

The sun couldn't kill him like a full-blooded vampire, but it could do one hell of a lot of damage to him. Add in the hours of torture he'd gone through before daybreak, and Liam would be lucky to live out the day.

The sun's passage dragged on as his back painfully blistered.

"He'll come for me. He will." Liam whispered over and over through dry, cracked lips.

Finally, a small reprieve hit him during the day as dark clouds blew in, announcing more rain to come. The storm that hit would send others to hideaway in their basements. But Liam had to endure the painful hail and storm while still tied outside.

At last, the sun began to sink in the sky. He only wanted to see Dragos one last time. He knew his lover would come for him tonight. "I can make it. I just want to say goodbye," Liam whispered as he hung in his bindings, awaiting the night's torture.

All too soon, the sound of footsteps came from the direction of the house, and the three cousins approached along with several other coven members. Liam couldn't believe there were a dozen or so waiting to betray the Vampire King. Were they mad? Did they really think these assholes could overtake Dragos?

Miko approached with a whip in hand. Liam knew he could not survive another night. He was simply waiting to see the vengeance that would be meted out once Dragos arrived.

Miko began his punishment on sunburned, torn flesh, and Liam didn't even have the strength to do any more than hang there and take it.

Four, five, six… the whip hit his flesh. The crowd gathered around began to cheer at his pain. To laugh as each drop of blood spilled on the ground.

Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen… The smell of sex and blood filled the air as vampires became aroused and began feeding and copulating at the sight of his life being extinguished. They were more repulsive than the lowest creatures.

Too many strikes to count… The world blessedly went deathly quiet around him. Had he lost his senses, then? With the last of his strength, Liam lifted his head and locked gazes with Dragos. The Vampire King stood before him, flanked by his brothers in the center of the crowd. He was armed to the teeth with weapons Liam could not even recognize. The air around the Vampire King had stilled, as if it was even afraid to provoke the wrath of the vampire.

Liam mouthed, *I love you.*

His Dragos had come for him. It was okay to surrender to the darkness. Closing his eyes, Liam accepted death.

<center>****</center>

Chapter 6

Dragos stared as the only man he had ever loved closed his eyes. Even from his vantage point, Dragos could see that Liam was at death's door and about to journey through.

Coven members surrounded him and his brothers, and he pulled out his samurai sword, waiting for whatever stupid fuck was willing to try to take a piece of him first.

His own cousin stood across from him, smirking as he held the whip in his hand, a whip covered in Liam's blood.

Miko sauntered around Liam, cocky and sure of himself. How quickly his coven had forgotten the extent of his ruthlessness. He would not make that mistake again.

Miko stood next to Liam and patted his lover's dirty hair. "Unbelievable that you could love such a piece of scum. Have you no pride in your blood? This coven is sick of looking at this pet every fucking gathering. I'm sick of seeing our coven go into the gutter being led by something that could care for such trash."

A few of the coven members fidgeted in their spot at the words. Their discomfort would not save them. Those that chose to come and side with his cousins, to witness Liam's torture, would soon know the consequences.

"Have you nothing to say for yourself?" Miko spat at him. "It's time for a change. Lew, Niklos, and I are taking over."

"Who decided?" Dragos asked softly.

Miko raised a brow. "I did."

Before anyone could utter another word, Dragos moved with a speed none of his kind possessed, his sword sweeping with the same speed and precision. When Dragos stopped, he had returned to the same spot where he had stood, his expression grim as Lew's head dropped from his neck to the muddy earth. With a louder thump, Lew's body followed a moment later.

Miko whipped his gaze to his brother as he fell, then released a scream and charged Dragos. Dragos unleashed all his righteous anger upon the coven members. With a swing of his sword, he gutted one before turning his attention to beheading another. As blood poured, Dragos' mind craved vengeance even more.

Miko met him head-on, and Dragos took his time killing the foolish vampire. Limb by limb, he cut the vampire down. Stabbing and cutting until no one could recognize the vampire. He lay on the ground, looking as horrid in death as he had in his vampiric life.

Dragos turned to watch as Andrei and Stasio ran after a retreating Niklos, hacking at their last dearest cousin.

Then Dragos turned on the rest of the coven members who were present as screams filled the air. He had no mercy for any of them. They were no longer to be trusted. He would not let anyone live that could turn on him, his family, or those who chose loyalty to his leadership.

Madness crept in, and as each vampire fell before him, the more savage he became. This was who he was before Liam had tamed him, made him see the light in life. Without his Liam, the world was dark, and he would make sure anyone who betrayed him would never know light again.

The world around him grew quiet as his roar filled the night sky. Pain and anguish for the man he loved filled the sound. Crazed with grief, he yelled to Andrei. "Bring the fallen over here."

Dragos used his sword to untie Liam, who fell into his arms. Dragos felt for a pulse and shook with physical pain when he found none.

Stasio approached with two headless vampires. "What do you need?"

"I need their blood. All of them. Those who wronged Liam will bring him back." Dragos gently laid Liam on the grass, trembling as he realized that Liam's flesh was shredded. Making a decision, Dragos drew his dagger, and on Liam's neck, shoulder and arm, Dragos began carving the beautiful symbols with swift, efficient cuts. He would not have Liam remember his torture by having the marks of a whipping be permanent. His symbols with the combined blood would heal into a beautiful scarification where the others of Liam's torture would disappear.

"Dragos, all of their blood? Do you know how powerful…" Stasio trailed off.

Dragos turned to stare up at his brother. "That is why you need to prepare yourself as well. We will all do this, and no one will fuck with us ever again. Do you understand?"

Stasio nodded before he turned and rushed away to do his bidding. "Andrei, hurry up!"

As soon as the last carving was done on Liam, Dragos turned the blade on himself, cutting his wrist deeply. Taking the wrist, he dripped it over a carving on Liam's neckline, smearing the drops so that the cut turned dark crimson immediately.

Dragos was so intent on his task that he didn't notice as his brothers knelt beside him with their own wrists cut to aid in healing the markings, dripping their blood into the carvings on Liam's flesh. The wounds darkened and Liam soon began to moan.

Dragos pushed back Liam's hair, kissing pale lips. "I'm here, Liam."

Dragos, Stasio, and Andrei then got to work taking each coven member's blood and dripping it into one of Liam's carvings. The last one to be used was Miko. Dragos concentrated on a small carving on the back of the shoulder, dripping Miko's blood inside the cut.

Behind him, Dragos could feel his brothers begin carving new markings and covering his back with the betrayer's blood. Strength, the likes of which he had never felt, began to creep into each cell of his body.

No one knew why, but the blood of a deceased vampire was far more powerful than feeding off a live one. In fact, to keep from destroying their own kind, it had been law that you could never take the death blood of a vampire except under one circumstance, justice. These vampires had all done Dragos and his family wrong, and now their blood would be his payment. Other vampires would see it too, because death blood unnaturally marked flesh wounds to heal as a dark crimson scarification.

The amount of death blood they were all taking in would make them powerful enough to keep others fearfully at bay. Their bodies covered in scarifications would be the only warning others would have that they were greatly outmatched.

Liam's neck, shoulder, and arms carving darkened as the halfling began to turn from the blood scarifications. The other wounds to his body showed small signs of healing.

Dragos picked up his lover. "We need to get him back to the house. It'll take a couple of weeks for him to completely turn and heal, and I want to get him as comfortable as possible immediately."

Andrei nodded and ran to retrieve a vehicle.

Dragos leaned down and kissed Liam on the lips. It had taken two days to find him. Never again would they be apart.

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Chapter 7

Liam stirred in his sleep. Upon opening his eyes, he realized his feverish nightmares had him soaked through to the sheets again. For the last two weeks, all he'd done was sleep, change clothes, talk to Dragos, and have the worst fucking nightmares.

Scrubbing a hand over his face, Liam sat up, recalling what he had seen in the dream. In it, Dragos had been the one to be whipped and tortured. To him, there was nothing worse he could possibly imagine. Taking a deep breath, he tried to calm himself. He knew it had been a silly dream. No way could Dragos ever be put in that position. He was too powerful… especially now.

The door opened, and Dragos walked in with a tray in hand. Thoughts of the nightmare vanished as Dragos approached the bed and sat on it. "I brought you your favorite."

Liam stared down at the stack of fluffy blueberry pancakes. His stomach rumbled, and Liam chuckled. "Thank you. I guess I'm a little hungry."

Dragos situated the tray in front of Liam and maneuvered to straddle him from behind. Those powerful hands worked at the muscles on Liam's shoulder as he cut into his pancakes.

He ate heartily of the food, enjoying the massage to his aching muscles. Finally, when he couldn't take another bite, Liam pushed the tray away.

Dragos murmured from behind him, "Let's get you in the shower."

Liam turned and kissed Dragos softly. "Will you join me?"

Dragos nodded as he got up and grabbed Liam's hand. He led him to the luxurious bathroom. Liam stood by as Dragos started the shower, getting the water warm. Liam stripped off the pajama pants. He needed to wash off the effects of last night's nightmare.

Dragos stepped in, and Liam followed, feeling the warm water wash away the last traces of the night before. Moaning, Liam tilted his head up toward the double-headed shower. The body spray that lined the wall soothed the leftover tension.

Dragos swept his hands down Liam's arms from shoulder to wrist, along the lines of his new crimson scarifications.

"You haven't talked about these," Dragos murmured. "I wanted it to be more private when I changed you."

"I know why you had to do it, Dragos. I think they're beautiful." Liam saw Dragos didn't believe him. He knew what Dragos was thinking; they were a reminder of his capture. "These are to keep me safe, Dragos, and to keep you safe as well."

Dragos leaned down and kissed him. "I wish we had more time, but the coven will be here soon."

Liam reached up and pulled Dragos down in a deep kiss. His new fangs nicked Dragos' lips and Liam sucked the crimson into his mouth. Tongues dueled as Liam reached down and grabbed Dragos' cock, pressing it to his. Using two hands, he stroked both of them together.

Dragos pulled back from the kiss and hissed at the ceiling. "Feels good."

"Do we have time for this?" Liam nipped at Dragos' neck. The delicious slide of their cocks rubbing together caused Liam to moan. *Feels so fucking good!*

"We'll fucking make the time. I'm not going anywhere but…" Liam felt Dragos' hand move one of his to the side so they were both working their cocks together.

Liam moaned, already on the edge. Having their cocks rub against one another in Dragos' grip was more than he could take. With a huff, Liam came, splashing cum all over their hands and stomach. A few strokes later and Dragos joined him, shouting out his climax.

They held each other as they tried to get their breathing under control.

Dragos kissed the nape of his neck. "I love you. Forevermore."

Liam stared up at Dragos. God, how he loved this vampire, and he was lucky enough he would get to share their lives together forever. "I love you," Liam murmured before he brought Dragos down for a kiss. The coven could wait.

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An hour later, Liam stood with calm dignity at the front of the closed double doors. He had a new persona on this time. No more was he the obedient pet of the Vampire King. His throat bore no jewelry. His chest was bare for all to see as he stood adorned in black silk pants.

The double doors opened, and Liam held his head high as he kept his gaze directed to the end of the hall. Dragos stood in front of the coven with his two brothers. All three of them were wearing the same black silk pants that Liam wore, showing off each and every one of the crimson scarifications. They were a powerful sight to behold, and everyone in the coven knew it. Liam stepped forward and began walking, not turning as the murmurs and the shocked gasps began.

Each and every mark on his upper arms, neck, and shoulders was a testament to his strength. He might be a turned vampire, but he had enough crimson to never be thought of as a weakness to the Vampire King ever again. No one would fuck with him, or Liam would end them himself.

Strength coursed through his veins as he continued to gaze at his lover, his partner, his groom. Dragos didn't smile, but his eyes finally held what Liam always hoped would one day be possible. They showed his love for Liam.

Liam stepped up to where Dragos stood, flanked by his brother.

Dragos reached out and, without pausing, took Liam in a deep kiss in front of the coven. The coven remained quiet as Dragos claimed him for all to see. The kiss went on far longer than was necessary, but Liam couldn't care what the others thought. No one could hurt the four of them again.

Dragos pulled back and reached out his hand to his brother, Andrei. Into Dragos' grasp, his brother placed a beautiful yellow-gold necklace with dark rubies throughout. It wasn't as long as the other or even as big. It was more of a thin collar than anything else.

Dragos turned to stare at him. "I love you. I want to show everyone who is here now that we are united as one, that you are my equal. Will you wear this symbol that you are mine forevermore?"

Too overcome with emotion, Liam could only nod. Dragos wrapped the necklace around Liam's neck and leaned over his shoulder to clasp the collar.

Liam stared up at Dragos. "I wish I had something to give you."

"You have. You gave me love but…" Dragos trailed off as Stasio came forward and handed Liam an identical necklace.

Liam stared up at Dragos, and his lover whispered to him, "However, I want everyone to know you have just as much a claim on me."

Liam's hand shook as he clasped the necklace around Dragos' thick neck. Pulling back, Liam adjusted the necklace so it sat centered at Dragos' sternum.

Dragos wrapped his arms around Liam and kissed him. This kiss was for all to see, to claim and display that the two were equals, united, and that love was their most deadly weapon against those that threatened them.

Liam poured his love into the kiss, remembering how Dragos had taken him in and looked at him in a light that no one ever had. How Dragos had saved him from his enemies and changed him so they could be together eternally.

Pulling back, Liam whispered, "I love you."

Dragos held him and murmured into his shoulder, "I love you, my Liam."

The End

Author Bio

Short, sexy and sweet—where a little love goes a long way.

That's the best way to describe Jackie Nacht's stories. She was introduced to M/M Romance through her sister, Stephani, and read it for years. Then, she thought it was time to put her own stories on paper. Jackie began writing short and sweet stories that ended with a happily ever after.

Thinking back to her own book addiction, where there were many nights Jackie stayed up way too late so she could read just one more chapter—yeah, right—Jackie decided to write short romances for young adults as well as adults. Hopefully, they will give high school and college students, or working men and women something they can read during their lunch hour, in between classes or just when they want to briefly get away from the daily stresses of everyday life.

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