

# MERIDIAN



gabbe de la parra  
love's landscapes

## MERIDIAN

Dissenting with his destiny as a Vampire Courtesan, Kutra “K” Lapin resolves to flee Los Angeles in 2125. His ticket to Meridian, the only human controlled city in an otherwise suprabeing-ruled US, is a transporter known as Tiger, who—by the way—has decided to keep calling K “Bunny.”

Three thousand miles of free-for-all superhighway separates Los Angeles from Meridian. In this journey, the courtesan and the transporter will face clingy former clients; bar brawls; Werewolf, Fae and Warlock outlaws; invisible, firebombing hovercrafts; discover unknown powers, and survive spells and enchantments, all to reach K’s freedom.

And perhaps, in the meantime, find a love that is beyond appearances.

## Table of Contents

Love's Landscapes.....	4
Meridian - Information .....	6
Meridian.....	8
Prologue .....	9
Chapter One .....	10
Chapter Two.....	15
Chapter Three.....	19
Chapter Four .....	23
Chapter Five.....	27
Chapter Six.....	32
Chapter Seven .....	35
Chapter Eight .....	39
Chapter Nine.....	44
Chapter Ten.....	47
Chapter Eleven.....	51
Chapter Twelve.....	55
Chapter Thirteen .....	59
Chapter Fourteen.....	62
Chapter Fifteen.....	65
Chapter Sixteen.....	68
Glossary .....	71
Author Bio .....	72

# Love's Landscapes

*An M/M Romance series*

## MERIDIAN

**By Gabbo de la Parra**

### 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.

All rights reserved worldwide.

This eBook may be distributed freely in its entirety courtesy of the Goodreads M/M Romance Group. This eBook may not be sold, manipulated or reproduced in any format without the express written permission of the author.

Story Title, Meridian © 2014 Gabbo de la Parra

Cover Design by Gabbo de la Parra

This ebook is published by the *M/M Romance Group* and is not directly endorsed by or affiliated with Goodreads Inc.

# MERIDIAN

By Gabbo de la Parra

## Photo Description

Anime-style depiction of two men embracing at night. A brightly lit, futuristic city is their background, as if they stand on a hill. One man is tall and blond, and the other is shorter with dark hair. They seem to have come to this place on the shiny motorcycle beside them.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*In futuristic/apocalypse USA, most cities are led by the supernaturals. We, humans, become the second class citizen. New York's leader is a werewolf, Chicago is led by a warlock, and Los Angeles? Los Angeles belongs to vampires. Los Angeles human citizens are marked by numbers on their wrists, based on our blood type, and we must donate our blood on scheduled days for those vampires.*

*This is where I live. I'm 18 years old, I'm blood type AB, and I dream of going out of this city. I hear that there is still a city where humans still have controls, where they are able to keep the supernaturals out. That is where I'm going—with this bad boy on a bike, whom everyone knows as "Tiger". I have a deep crush on him and well, on his bike (they both are just so sexy). Even if he annoys me by keep calling me "Bunny" (yes, I know I'm kinda lightweight). But heck, I'll survive this road trip and who knows, maybe I'll make him fall in love with me too \*smile\**

### Notes:

*Please keep the nickname of "Tiger" and "Bunny" in the story—basically I want this to be a futuristic/road-trip story, where the two MCs are going from Los Angeles to their destination, a haven city for humans, and along the way they banter, they fight some bad supernatural beings who try to stop them from reaching the city, they talk about each other's lives and dreams, they discuss "classic" music (and by classic, you can make music from our time \*lol\*), they kiss, and they fall in love. It **MUST NOT** be sex heavy, in fact, sex could be kept near the end. Also, don't make it a D/s or master/slave or depressing story just because humans are second class citizens... I don't want to read humans are being used as slaves and suffered from their supernatural masters and such.*

*Tags: futuristic, road-trip, light sex content, young adult-new adult.*

*Sincerely,*

*Ami*

## **Story Info**

**Genre:** alternate universe

**Tags:** fugitives, futuristic, road trip, sex industry, supernatural beings

**Word Count:** 19,218

**MERIDIAN**  
**By Gabbo de la Parra**



## PROLOGUE

*Los Angeles. 2120*

“Welcome, children of the San Pedro neighborhood. Today is a very special day. Your Assignment Day has finally arrived.”

Fourteen-year-old Kupra Lapin wasn't particularly excited about this day, or more accurately night, since all citizenship issues were conducted during the night, because the regents of the West Area were vampires.

The girl beside Kupra looked like she was about to receive the biggest ice cream cone her tiny mouth could devour. He didn't know any of the other kids around since his foster family had just moved to this area, and the school year wouldn't begin until next month.

“Okay, let's introduce the Assignment Board...” The vampire lady started saying names that didn't mean anything to Kupra. It wasn't like they would ask if he remembered any of this except for his final assignation. Each person named nodded boringly without even truly looking at them. “Well, now. The moment you've been waiting for. Your assignation determines your future within the West Area. Embrace it,” she said cheerfully.

Clearly wishing to be somewhere else, the members of the Assignment Board sat, as incandescent orbs emerged from an urn in the middle of the dais where they perched. One of these bored vampires must be really old, because Kupra had heard once that only really ancient vampires had magical powers of this kind, and there weren't that many of those here in America. They preferred the Old World. It could be just gossip though since he'd heard it back in the South Area.

Each luminous blob landed on a kid's outstretched hands. The one landing on Kupra's dissolved, and a little metal plate with a single word became visible.

### COMPANION

It was the modern word for courtesan.

\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER ONE

*Los Angeles. 2125*

*DAY ONE*

“You sure you wanna do this? Thirteen hundred miles ain’t gonna go easy on your tiny butt.”

“Listen, *Tiger*. I’m paying for this. How my butt fares the trip is none of your business.”

“Ain’t you a feisty little bunny?” *Tiger* pinched *K*’s cheek, using an annoying baby voice that was grossly at odds with his imposing frame.

*K* pushed *Tiger*’s hand away. “Would you stop that?”

“Alright.” *Tiger* put his hands up in surrender. “Where’s my gold?”

“I’ll give you your first half in our first stop for the night, when we are hours away from the city limits.”

*Tiger* arched an eyebrow. “You don’t trust me?”

“I don’t trust anybody. Don’t take it personal.”

“I ain’t the trustin’ kind either. I just wanna be sure you ain’t plannin’ on swindlin’ me.”

“You have got to be shitting me.” *K*’s laughter was full of sarcasm. “You’re the shady character here.”

“Moving people around ain’t nothing shady, *Bunny*. I’m ready to go, but you need to show me the gold first.” *Tiger* narrowed those weird, violet eyes of his. You didn’t see that color every day in Los Angeles. Lots of red eyes, but violet was seriously uncommon.

“Fine.” *K* pulled up his blue T-shirt, allowing *Tiger* to see the slim gold bars secure in the girdle-purse fastened around his waist. “Satisfied?”

“Yeah.” *Tiger* gave a crisp nod. “Hop on then.”

*K* let go of the hem of his tee, straightened his canvas jacket and adjusted his backpack. This was a two to three days tops trip to Meridian, where humans were not second-class citizens but owners of their destiny. After four years of excruciating training and a year suffering the paws of male and female

vampires having their way with him, it was enough. Many people would consider being a companion a glamorous job, but K hated it.

No amount of self-convincing would shake K's revulsion for the race of those drugged bloodsuckers that had killed his parents a few short months after moving to the city, even if the actual culprits had been convicted and eradicated. Ten-year-old K was left in the hands of a foster family thanks to the vampires' support system. Those strangers weren't bad people, but K had been old enough to remember his real parents and not become attached to those strangers.

The only good thing about his profession was that his rates afforded him his freedom quicker than other occupations would have. He was *sneaking* to freedom in the middle of his quote unquote vacation, but he wasn't going to argue semantics with himself.

Climbing onto the sexy-as-fuck bike, K wrapped his arms around Tiger's waist. He didn't know what was hotter, Tiger or his bike. He rested his head on Tiger's wide back as the bike growled to life. The man was warm, a wonderful contrast to the cold bodies of his vampire customers. Good thing his helmet would protect him from Tiger's long, blond hair whipping in the wind when they reached full speed on the road.

They zigzagged away from the park where they had agreed to meet without another word. Soon, they left behind the hundreds of ultratowers and those chivvying holoboads constantly advertising the wonders of living under the utopian Vampire Government.

Three hundred miles later, K's ass needed a break. Deep in Arizona, they stopped at a diner off the superhighway.

"You clear about our cover?"

"Yeah, we are on our honeymoon en route to Mega-Vegas."

"And?"

"We decided to drive to sightsee."

It wasn't common since the superhighway was essentially a free-for-all, but Tiger looked the part of road-warrior-husband perfectly. They were a pair of rough characters looking to add more adventure to their honeymoon.

"Perfect. Here, wear this." Tiger took two rings out of his pocket and put one on K's ring finger and the other on his own.

“This is so sudden.” K put the back of his hand over his forehead like someone overwhelmed by emotion. “Did we have a big wedding?”

“No,” said Tiger, narrowing his eyes and definitely trying not to laugh. “It was an intimate affair.”

“Shit. Can we eat now?” K wasn't going to tell Tiger his legs and his ass were killing him, so he faked boredom.

“Sure, Bunny.”

K had met Tiger the previous month when one of his customers had introduced them, joking that Tiger could take anyone and anything anywhere for a price. From the get-go, the rogue had called him “Bunny” in his sultry Southern drawl, which his vampire customer had found hilarious. They shared drinks until the vampire decided to take K to more private accommodations to use his services. They bumped into each other two days later, during a sunny afternoon, and sat to have a coffee.

Of course, what had piqued K's interest was the mention of Tiger's bike during their previous encounter, and he was glad to be able to see the masterpiece in bright daylight. A sleek monster, the *Owatatsumi* 2100 was a classic and a connoisseur's wet dream, and K knew about bikes as much as he knew about pleasure. Since K had already been contemplating an escape route, he took the chance, hoping the man was only loyal to profit, and asked Tiger how much it would cost to take him to Meridian.

When the four suprabeing groups (Vampires, Werewolves, Warlocks, and Fae) divided the United States among them, the 100th meridian became some sort of a limbo zone. Something about their common laws had reserved one thousand square miles radius out of all their jurisdictions, and humans, taking advantage of this esoteric technicality, had founded Meridian. One could think this should have caused a massive migration to this city, but not all humans were averse to live under supra-government; many thought it a blessing.

Luckily for K and Tiger's cover, the business people of Las Vegas decided to exchange one desert for another, and moved and expanded the city to an arid area of Kansas, almost in the middle of the country, where a lot more people could come and enjoy the new gambling mecca, which consequently fell under the jurisdiction of the North Area governed by warlocks and was ninety miles north of Meridian.

So, yeah, they were honeymooners on their way to Mega-Vegas if anyone asked. Technically, citizens were allowed to travel between Areas for short

periods of time, like for vacation or business purposes. Resettling was a different situation because it involved questioning and permits, especially in the West Area where citizens were basically food, even though they weren't called that but "contributors", as they were taxed in blood.

Transport from one Area to another was scarce and complicated to discourage wandering between them. That was why Transporters like Tiger existed. With so many obstacles, couples from different Areas were unusual, and this would make people wonder because they were going to see that K had the wrist numbers marking him as a citizen of the West Area, and Tiger didn't have any visible telltales of his area.

Tiger was from the South Area (the Fae region), the place from which K's real family had come. K never knew the reason his parents had moved to Vampire Los Angeles.

"You're seriously creepy when you're quiet like that." Tiger chuckled.

"I'm sorry." They had entered the diner, but it was his sore butt more than Tiger's words that had taken K out of his reverie.

"Not a problem, Bunny."

"You know, I have a name."

"Using a single letter is too badass for a little bunny like you."

"I'm big where it counts."

"Of course you are."

"Besides, companions can act as bodyguards for their clients, so you're aware I'm not defenseless."

"Never said you were."

"How yah doin', boys? What can I get yah?" The waitress was a wide woman with blue hair and hot pink spectacles. "I would recommend the lizard stew. It's finger lickin' yummy. I just had a spoonful myself."

"Ready for some desert delicatessen?" Tiger had a funny grin on his face.

"Oh," the waitress touched her ample chest. "I'm so sorry, love. I was looking at his wrist and didn't pay attention to yours. Thought you were both tourists. What's your type, love?"

In the West Area, everything revolved around blood type. Based on your blood type, you ate, exercised, and rested, everything to maximize your "happiness" *and* the wholesomeness of your blood.

“AB,” K said succinctly.

“Let me get you the list.” She punched several keys on her clipboard; a holographic menu emerged from the tabletop until it was floating at the perfect height for K to read it. “I’ll give you a minute to choose something.” She turned to Tiger. “You wanna tackle the lizard?”

“Bring it on.”

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER TWO

If everything went as planned, in less than three days, Tiger would be dumping his first charge in Meridian, after he had avoided the human city like the fucking plague during all his fourteen years of “transporting.” He didn’t want to know or learn anything about that city, but Tiger had recognized the desperation Bunny’s eyes had been trying to conceal. That touched a part of him he didn’t know was still active in some recondite recess of his soul.

With Bunny deposited in Meridian, Tiger would go back to Mega-Vegas and find a nice piece of hairy ass in the gambling mecca thanks to his pocket full of gold. He’d fuck to his heart’s content before leaving all his transporting days behind to find a good place to settle and become a decent man. Heck, he was even contemplating falling in love with a big, hardworking dude and forming a family. He would be twenty-eight in September, but that wasn’t too old to get settled and have kids.

As part of his trade, living on the crazy roads of the US, he had dodged bullets, swords, claws, fangs, and the occasional burst of dark magic, thus a cozy shack with the same sweet piece of ass waiting for him every day sounded like paradise.

“What is that silly grin? You look nauseatingly foolish,” Bunny observed like a spoiled brat.

“Really? Is that the way to talk to the man who’s takin’ you to your *freedom*?” Tiger did air quotes.

“Oh, don’t be ridiculous. It’s not like you’re doing me a favor. I’m paying.”

“Maybe in your line of work the customer is always right, but in mine, if I don’t like the customer, I can kick his ass out of my way.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“Behave like the nice little thing you are, Bunny, and we won’t have a problem.”

Bunny arched an eyebrow, and his blue eyes sparkled, almost in defiance, but he seemed to think better than to open his mouth to retort. Apparently, he decided on a more subtle approach. “Well, sweet husband of mine, tell me something I don’t know about you.” He put forward a winning smile and

grabbed Tiger's hand, probably because the waitress had come back to refill their drinks.

"Newlyweds? You two are the cutest thing. I'm pretty sure you had the most romantic first meeting."

"How did you know?" Bunny beamed at the woman, excited. Fucking companions knew how to fake it. "But Hubby here tells it better than me. If you have a minute I'm sure he'd indulge you."

"Darlin', I'm a sucker for a good story. The customers can wait." She waved her hand.

"Come on, love, tell the nice lady how we met."

*He's so payin' for this later.*

"Hmm, I know you're a busy woman, so I'll give you the short version." Tiger smiled. He knew how to fake it too.

"Huh-uh, darlin', don't spare me any details." She wagged her finger at Tiger.

Bunny's smugness deserved a smack. Tiger settled for a rough pat on the cheek. "Honey Bunny..."

"Oh my god." The waitress put her meaty hand over her mouth and squealed. "He calls cutie 'bunny!'"

The only way to satisfy this nosy woman was to tell his own fantasy first encounter. He would have to change the big, burly man of his dreams for little Bunny, but how else was he going to get rid of this woman?

"Well, it had rained and there were puddles on the streets. My sweet Bunny was standing in a corner." *Yeah, I said you were in a corner*, he told Bunny with an arched eyebrow. "And I wasn't payin' attention and splashed him as I passed by on my bike. He ended up wet from head to toe and, of course, cursed me out, his little fist waving in the air, callin' me every name in the book."

"How adorable." The waitress clapped her hands, eating Tiger's every word.

"I turned around," Tiger continued, "ready to confront him, but he looked so angrily beautiful, I couldn't do anything else than offer to take him to his place to change clothes. I didn't mind his wet outfit as he held on tight, his lithe body pressed against mine. When we arrived at his place, I told him I'd wait to take



him out for an apology lunch. His wonderful blue eyes flashed, ready to refuse me, but I took his hand and kissed it and said, *'pretty please.'* Bunny narrowed his eyes but accepted. He made me wait, lady. I tell you. He left me there on the street for two hours."

She turned to Bunny and tsked.

"I was pissed," Bunny said, shrugging.

"But it was all worth it. He came down lookin' like an angel, all dressed in white, a vision from heaven. I took him to a restaurant by the sea where the afternoon ocean was pale in comparison to his eyes."

"How romantic," she sighed

Bunny's puzzled face should have been funny, but it wasn't. There was something odd in the way he was staring at Tiger, just shy of gaping in disbelief.

"When did you realize you loved him?" she asked Bunny, her long pink nails close to her mouth, about to be bitten.

"Shh, let me tell her that, Bunny, 'cause I know the exact moment you fell for me." Tiger pressed his finger over Bunny's surprisingly soft lips.

Bunny's eyes widened like satellite dishes.

"Lady, it was the first night we made love after months of furtive kisses and hesitant touches. When I was inside him, I looked into his eyes and told him that he was the most beautiful man in the world, with hair like a moonless night, skin like the rosy dawn, and eyes so blue I didn't need sky or ocean anymore in my life to be happy."

"Oh..." The big waitress fainted.

It wasn't a pretty sight, that much woman sprawled and unconscious between tables.

After a collective gasp, the other six or seven customers moved to see what was happening. A man even bigger than the waitress, with a filthy apron and a scowl the size of Texas, came wielding a giant cleaver that seemed like a kid's toy in his hand. "What's going on?"

"She was just talking to us one second, and the next she was on the floor." Bunny gave the cleaver-wielding cook his most angelic smile. Tiger was sure he had gotten out of more than one tight spot using those fucking dimples.

The hardened features softened, and the cook shrugged almost apologetically; his gaze moved from Bunny to Tiger and back to Bunny. “Well, I guess you were telling her your love story. She’s very excitable.”

“We were, and right before she passed out she said our food was on the house.”

The imp batted his lashes!

“Of course she did. That sounds just like her.” The cook grabbed the fallen waitress by her chubby arms and pulled, then stopped, letting her go. “Let me get her out of the way, and I’ll bring you some dessert.” He picked up her clipboard and checked something. “You’re type AB, just like me.” He had the stupidest, most wistful, smitten look on his face when he smiled at Bunny.

“What a lovely coincidence,” said Bunny, with the smile and the dimples and the lashes in full force.

*Motherfuckin’ pretty Bunny.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER THREE

“You see? I’m not defenseless,” K said as they walked out of the diner.

“Pretty is not gonna get you out of a fight.”

“The trick is to know when to fight and when to charm.”

Tiger arched an eyebrow. “You sure you don’t have some fae in you? ’Em ears are awfully pointy for bein’ just human.”

K touched the tips of his ears and hissed, “Idiot.” He took a deep breath. “If I had fae in me, the vampires would not touch my blood.”

The sun was getting lower by the second. The mountains slowly melded with the sky.

“True.” Tiger put his hand over his brow like a visor. “I think we should find that Motel 69 the cook told us about and call it a day.”

“Afraid of riding at night?”

“You should know better than to say shit like that.” Tiger narrowed his eyes.

“I’m sorry, *Hubby*.”

Tiger gave him a once over, the semi-squint still in place. “Let’s get out of here.” He walked several paces toward the bike. He stopped and turned, offering his big hand to K. “Love?”

K was taken aback for a second, then remembered they were supposedly married and in love. He took the proffered hand. It was warm and calloused. Tiger pulled him in, and they ended up chest to chest, well, as much as their height difference permitted. Strong paws gripped K’s waist, and Tiger lowered his face toward him. K’s first instinct was to try to push Tiger away, but he relaxed; they were playing a part. Nevertheless, as Tiger’s mouth moved closer, something inside K very much wanted to learn the texture of those thin, dark lips.

The kiss landed on K’s forehead, and the hands moved upward, arms encircling him. The whole action seemed almost brotherly.

*Shit. What was I thinking?*

Now Tiger was towing him toward the bike, and K nearly tripped.

“Careful, my Bunny.” The three words felt like a caress.

They rode the four miles east (as the cook had instructed them) and found the structural nightmare that was a roadside Motel 69. Next to the svelte, tall buildings of Vampire Los Angeles, the squat, random design was anything but appealing.

After securing the bike in the parking lot, putting it in TON2 mode (so no one could move it), they entered the reception area.

“Ah, the honeymooners,” said the several-hundred-years-old-looking man behind the bulletproof glass desk booth. He was skinny and pale, and dressed like an unkempt teenager in a filthy hoodie boasting a million rock band insignias. In the old days, before vampire rule in this area, he would have been called an anemic.

Tiger and K looked at each other, puzzled.

Creepo waved a hand. “Oh, I’m not psychic. Caleb, the cook from the diner, vided to let me know you were heading this way. You’re paying with gold or credits?” He licked his lips and leered first at Tiger and then at K. “You two make a really fetching couple.” Creepo said the word *fetching* like a dog humping somebody’s leg.

“We’ll pay with credits.” K drew out his credit chip but wasn’t keen on putting it in the creep’s hand.

“I’ll take care of that, Bunny.” Tiger took the chip and, with his eyebrow hiked up and a menacing face, gave it to Creepo.

An ugly grimace emerged from the sunken face after the man read the credit info and personal details to make the charge. “Thank you, Mr. Lapin.”

Tiger pointed at K with his thumb. “*He* is Mister Lapin. I’m Tiger Jansen.” He unzipped his leather jacket and showed the tiger face tattooed prominently on his pectoral over his nipple, immediately visible because he wasn’t wearing anything else underneath the jacket. The six pack was a nice sight too.

Shocked, Creepo and K swallowed hard in unison.

“It’s a pleasure, Mr. Jansen.” The night clerk made that strangled, humping dog noise again.

“I’m sure it is.” Tiger yanked the chip from the gnarly fingers. “Room number?”

“Room 69. Honeymoon Suite.”

“*Of course.* Thank you.” A firm grip of Tiger’s hand over K’s upper arm accompanied the thanking. He hauled K out of the reception, hissing, “Fuckin’ ugly-ass zombie.”

“There’s no such thing as zombies,” K chuckled as they walked, looking at room numbers.

“If there were, that thing would be one,” Tiger growled.

“But instead of brains, he’d be eating cocks and butts...”

Tiger’s grip on his arm loosened, and he laughed, truly laughed. It was a very nice sound, the first time K had heard it, too.

“You’re funny, little Bunny.”

K shrugged, smiling.

They found the Honeymoon Suite and used the credit chip to open the door. It was pretty decent and clean. K had been expecting something that looked like the clerk.

Tiger plopped on the huge bed and patted the spot beside him. “The bed’s good, come.”

Throwing his backpack near the bed, K launched himself into it and landed beside Tiger. “Really comfy.”

“You know we gonna have to make at least some lovmakin’ noises.” Tiger waggled his eyebrows. “That zombie’s surely gonna be listenin’ through them damn walls.”

Very strict regulations prohibited anything beyond thermal recognition within hotel rooms and the likes. And it was a heat signature that could only be read by enforcement agencies in case of anomalies like murder or kidnapping. K still looked around the room for cameras. “Yeah, I guess we’re going to have to simulate something.” He stretched his body and activated the holo-remote for the wall screen facing the bed. It moved from the electronic headboard to K’s palm. “Let’s watch a movie first, and then I can simulate-fuck you.”

“Excuse me?” Tiger arched his almost invisible eyebrow. “When people see us, they see me fucking you, not the other way around.”

“Pfft, and you were supposed to be the man to go against all conventions, a rebel, an *edgy* badass.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“That if we were in a real relationship, I’d be the one doing the fucking.”

“Alright, let’s settle for taking turns. Is that good enough for you in this fake relationship?”

“It’s certainly a start.”

“So I’ll be the one doing the fake riding tonight?”

“Movie first, baby.”

Tiger rolled his eyes, and K stifled a chuckle.

This was definitely going to be a lot of fun.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DAY TWO

Tiger woke up with a start.

He didn't know how he felt about the lovemaking simulation the previous night, especially since Bunny got hard under him. The little bunny had a very nice, thick piece that fitted perfectly between Tiger's ass cheeks. Thankfully for him, they had decided to keep their underwear on. An even better thing had been the fact that Tiger was wearing underwear at all.

What wasn't propitious was his own cock revisiting last night's hardness. It didn't seem like a case of morning wood but one of unattended need. Tiger closed his eyes and sighed. That brought the image of Bunny under him, his long, slender arms covered in tribal tattoos that were sexy as fuck. He was a lot younger than Tiger and with a slim body, but he was all man, and as much as Tiger preferred burly, hairy men, there was something about Bunny that was disturbingly appealing.

"Good morning."

Bunny's husky morning voice made Tiger's cock perk. Tiger opened his eyes and turned his head. Bunny was looking at the ceiling and breathing softly. Tiger felt the urgent need to comb that disheveled moonless hair.

*Sweet Fanaqua, I didn't just think that cheesy shit.*

"Good morning to you," Tiger said, hoisting his body up and turning around to face Bunny more appropriately. "Did you rest?"

"I feel rested."

More husky voice.

More cock throbbing.

Tiger needed to find a distraction before Bunny noticed his stiffy and became offended. Well, there was no real reason for a companion to be offended by a hard cock, but... since Tiger wasn't a customer it could be construed as crossing the line, right? Their marriage was a pretense after all.

"You want some breakfast?" Yeah, Tiger just needed to get out of the room to save face.

Bunny moved his eyes from the ceiling toward him and scrunched his nose. "Not yet."

*Oh fuck.*

Those sexy tattooed arms came out from under the covers and pushed Bunny up. He sat, resting his back on the headboard. His nipples were pointy pebbles.

*Alright wrong place, up—look at his face.*

"Did you rest? You look a little flushed." Bunny blinked and smiled, and he seemed fully awake after that.

Tiger moved to a sitting position too and answered, looking at anything but Bunny. "I'm good."

"I'm glad. Can we stay in bed for a bit and have a nice chat?"

"With morning breath?"

*Really, Tiger, morning breath?*

Bunny chuckled, and the rough murmur went straight to Tiger's balls, caressing and rolling them like young, nimble fingers. Bunny took a glass of water from the nightstand on his side. "Here, swish and swallow." He offered the glass to Tiger.

*That is just wrong.*

"Not the kind of thing I should be swallowing," Tiger said before his tongue connected with his brain.

"I'm pretty sure you have swallowed worse things than breath water."

"Damn right you are." Tiger swished and swallowed. He noticed Bunny looking at his throat with a funny expression on his face. It wasn't exactly a grin.

Tiger needed something that would take them both away from their bodies and into a more focused area. "So... why do you wanna escape the West Area again? 'Cause I've been in all the Areas, and Vampire region is by far the best. You don't see homeless people. Nobody is poor if they wanna work. All have good health benefits. I mean, it's the American Dream come true."

"I have my reasons." Bunny's face darkened.

*Yes!*



“Obviously. I’m just intrigued. As a companion you make good money...”

“Can we talk about something else?”

“Sure. What’s your favorite color?”

“Yellow.”

“Like yolk?”

Bunny sighed. “No, moron, like the sun.”

“Damn, you really hate vamps.”

Stretching his body toward the floor, Bunny brought up his backpack; he rummaged through it and drew out a folded sheet of paper. The only people who used paper were preschool kids. He gave it to Tiger.

“What is this?”

“Would you just open it?”

Tiger unfolded it. It was a child’s drawing. Three stick people, what Tiger assumed was a mother, a father, and a son, but the most relevant thing in the composition was an enormous yellow sun in the background, occupying almost half the page.

“I loved the sun long before I had to live most of my life in the night.” Bunny’s expression was hard and serious. Tiger really preferred the fake, lovey-dovey husband.

“Okay... Let’s talk about music then.”

“Woodkid’s ‘Run Boy Run.’”

That smile was definitely better.

“Sweet Fanaqua, that old crap!” Tiger chuckled amused. He’d thought the kid would like things from this century.

“What? I could go way more retro with something from Madonna’s First Life, like ‘She’s Not Me’!”

“Is that sarcasm I hear in your Bunny voice? ‘Cause everything Madonna is a classic.”

“You understand that the whole concept of classic involves the singer or composer being long dead? That old bat found herself a vampire to turn her, and she still sings!”

“That’s why that period is called First Life!”

“I thought we were going to talk about music, not argue about it...”

“You’re right, Bunny. I like Woodkid’s ‘Iron’ a lot.”

And in those songs’ old videos, people were escaping from something too, just like Bunny.

“So... Tiger can’t be your real name.”

“My name’s Themistocles Jansen.”

Bunny snorted. “That *is not* a badass name.”

“The original Themistocles was a badass Greek general.”

“I know that. I saw the movie, and the remake, and the remake of the remake. Still, it’s not a fearsome name.” Bunny’s grin was actually beautiful, but also seriously annoying.

“That’s why I go by Tiger, Bunny.”

“Themistocles is a mouthful anyway.”

“I’m a mouthful. Everywhere.”

His client seemed uncomfortable beside him for a nanosecond. “I think it’s time we get dressed and head out.”

“Sure.” But far from diminishing, his hard-on stayed quite strong, perhaps waiting for a release that would not come from the man running for the bathroom hills.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER FIVE

When K came out of the bathroom, Tiger was sitting on the bed waiting for him with a pair of wine-colored pants and a black T-shirt folded beside him. He must have gone to get them out of the bike while K showered. The tee would help with the idea of K holding onto Tiger with nothing under his leather jacket. Yesterday he hadn't had this info, and today it would have been pure torture. K was a sucker for sexy abs, and abs plus bike plus long, blond hair wasn't helping in deflecting the turbulent, unresolved equation Tiger was becoming in K's head.

K channel surfed to keep his mind from wandering to Tiger lathering all that naked body in the shower. He found the most violent movie available and concentrated on all the gory details like never before in his life. Still, his wayward memory kept bringing up the way Tiger's hips had felt under his hands, the way the man rocked and undulated over him, and the disturbingly hot sounds he'd made during their fake lovemaking. His cock responded in the same way it had last night, engorging and hardening. Shit. No amount of beheading and explosions could drive K's mind away from the ghost of Tiger's weight on top of him.

Since the massacres on the screen weren't helping, K started fiddling with the panel on the headboard. He remembered all these establishments had satisfaction surveys, although theirs wasn't blinking. He activated it, and an ethereal female voice said, "Completed." Tiger had filled out even K's—how rude! The review option came up and K accepted it. The female voice started asking question about their satisfaction, but instead of short, logical answers, all were utter nonsense like: Mattress too plump—needs to be harder, taking my Bunny to Mega-Vegas to honeymoon the fuck out of my sick days at work, the walls could use more purple (they were soft blue), you should have complimentary baskets of fruits and vegetables peppered with dildoes.

By the time Tiger came out of the bathroom, K was laughing so hard his eyes were painfully wet.

"That's the reaction I was hoping for," Tiger said, fully dressed.

"Good thing they don't charge for this."

"You give stupid answers to stupid questions." Tiger set his dirty clothes from yesterday on the bed and folded them neatly one by one. "Hungry now?"

“Absolutely.”

“If we have a good breakfast now and do stretch stops every two hours, we will have crossed New Mexico by the end of the day to settle for the night near the state line with Texas. With an early start tomorrow we could be in Meridian by noon.”

“Sounds great.”

“Let’s get some food then.” Tiger stopped and gave K an appreciative glance before picking up K’s backpack. “I see you’re wearing yellow, like the sun.”

K nodded. “Like the sun.”

With their bellies full, they said goodbye to a really nice-looking girl at the front desk. Her name tag said “Adara,” and she had an *Early Morning Oldies But Goodies* music video blaring out on the giant screen behind her; K hadn’t noticed it the night before since he was so crept out by Creepo the night clerk. “There’s something really hot about that video of Dollar Sign Kesha,” K commented as they walked toward the bike.

“What, the killing of the unicorns or James Van Der Beek?” Tiger’s tone was a mix between amusement and annoyance.

“All I’m going to say is that I am against the murder of mythical creatures...”

“That’s what I thought.”

“You do look a bit like Van Der *Douche*,” K snickered, hoping that Tiger remembered that Dollar Sign Kesha called Van Der Beek *that* in the video.

“Oh, shut up and get your ass on that bike.”

They quickly rode out of Arizona. Following their two-hour-drive-and-stretch-stops plan, the day went by pretty fast. They spoke about music, movies and fashion in the shade of food chains sprouting from truck stops like desert flowers. Here K learned that Tiger was a Vine as they played Ogham Wars with a deck of cards they found abandoned on a table at one of their stops. Although they were born nine years apart, their birthdate equations (Tiger’s  $09-17-2097 = 35 = 3+5 = 8$  and K’s  $01-07-2106 = 17 = 1+7 = 8$ ) had them both starting the game with the same number of cards. Luckily for K, he was Birch, and thus was first to go. They had so much fun with it they kept the game going for several stops.

It always amazed K how things in human nature often returned to their roots, such as people dismissing that Sagittarius, Leo, Scorpio zodiac somewhere during the 2050s and embracing the Celtic Tree instead. This also made K aware of the fact that Birch and Vine were extremely compatible and complemented each other well.

Before K could dwell too much on this silly knowledge, the sun was ready to kiss the New Mexico hills. Soon they found a place that was a hybrid between a motel and a biker bar. The holoboard over the entrance had a giant cat, one leg in the air, giving itself a bath. Below, neon letters flashed the name of the establishment with relish: L. Minora's. K had to wonder if that L was for "labia."

The interior brought to mind a saloon from a Wild West movie—the only thing missing was the jolly pianist; instead, twenty-first century acid rock blared, unconcerned. They decided to stay around the brutish clientele and enjoy the raucous, unruly atmosphere before turning in. Werewolves, Fae, Vampires, and Warlocks mingled easily with humans in this sort of rough environment. It was freeing to be away from the intricacies of upscale vampire culture, and they had armed themselves after assessing the clientele of the locale. Fish and chips (*forget* eating for his blood type), jars of beer, games of pool and Texas Hold 'Em made the hours seem like minutes.

The rogues had embraced their cover and were surprisingly respectful until Tiger said, "I think it's time to go to bed, Bunny." Then it all was catcalls and lewd remarks. They waved their good-byes and moved toward the stairs to go to their room.

K's pleasant buzz evaporated instantly as they encountered a bloodsucker blocking their path.

"What a delicious surprise to find you here, K." Amusement laced the vampire's tone. He was K's most persistent customer. He had even offered to turn K, which was equal to a marriage proposal, giving K a better status within their society. An option K wouldn't contemplate even in the face of brutal annihilation.

"Marcus. You are far from the comforts of Los Angeles." K's voice was casual, but he felt Tiger tense behind him.

"You looked ravishing in that vid-response you left telling your clients you were on vacation. I just wanted to check if you were having fun without me."

He browsed the noisy place with predatory eyes and a disgusted grimace on his handsome but cruel face. "Not the place I'd have expected to find you in."

"Sometimes a boy needs a change of scenery." K tried to move past Marcus. "It was nice to see you."

Fuck, the vampires weren't supposed to notice he was gone until his scheduled tax-payment next month, when it would be too late for them to care about it. They got pissed off when people fled, but the runaways didn't become "most wanted", at least not visibly.

"Not so fast." Marcus grabbed K's upper arm, pulling him toward the cold body. "Who is this man taking you upstairs?" he hissed in K's ear, and K was sure he had done it looking at Tiger with disdain.

"I'm his fuckin' husband. We havin' a problem, vamp?"

"We do now." Fangs clicked, and K was launched toward the top of the stairs, landing on his ass, blinding pain paralyzing him for a moment.

By the time K was able to sit and focus on what was happening, Tiger and Marcus were fighting in a clearing in the middle of the barroom. In any other circumstances the fight would have become a massive bar brawl, but now the general consensus was one of astonishment, as Tiger was giving Marcus hell, matching his strength and inhuman speed. Punches, kicks, and head-butts were almost a blur; every time Marcus tried to sink his fangs in, Tiger did a counterattack and avoided the punctures. They disentangled for a moment as Tiger pushed Marcus away from him with a well-aimed kick in the stomach, and a warlock (who had been playing pool with them) thrust a sword into Tiger's hand.

In a swift move that was both beautifully hypnotic and terrifying, Tiger severed Marcus's head. It flew across the room to land on a broken table two seconds before both separated body parts exploded with a wet bang.

Then the bar brawl did begin because the other vampires in the bar tried to jump Tiger all at once, and every other suprabeing took Tiger and K's side. Crashes, screams, and growls surged as bottles were broken, chairs flew, and limbs were hurt. And because they were in L. Minora's, cats' yowls and screeches were an essential part of the cacophony.

K ran down the stairs to join the fracas, pulling out the gun he had tucked in the small of his back. A hand grabbed his wrist and hauled him toward the

doors. Somehow Tiger had managed to get away from the turmoil and was towing him out of the bar.

“I guess we ain’t stayin’ here tonight,” Tiger said almost laughing as they jumped onto the bike. “We’re gonna be in Meridian a lot sooner than we expected.”

They were not a pair of newlyweds on their way to Mega-Vegas anymore. Now, they were fugitives.

\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER SIX

That vampire asshole wasn't the first bloodsucker Tiger had killed, but it was the first time before so many witnesses. Even though he had dispatched the motherfucker in self-defense, there was no chance in hell a Vampire Council would acquit him. If this had happened in any other area he might have had a chance.

Alright, not the time to think about what could have been. Shit happened.

It was weird, but Bunny's weight on his back strangely soothed him. Tiger had seen the resolution in those pixie features when Bunny flew down the stairs ready to join the fight. He didn't have to do that. He could have easily gotten out, jumped on the bike and escaped to his freedom.

Self-preservation was the natural instinct of any human. This was why Tiger preferred to be around the wolves; they had a sense of community, of family, of loyalty to each other. He really didn't know what to make of Bunny's actions. Now his charge was squeezing him so hard it might have been painful if the kid was a bigger man.

They had been riding for at least an hour. Tiger brought the bike to a stop.

"Why are we stopping? Are you all right?"

Bunny's concern was simply adorable.

"Are you hurt?" Bunny asked again, getting off the bike. Bunny grabbed Tiger as he dismounted and turned him around, perhaps searching for some kind of injury. His young face was lightly illuminated by the waning moon, worry marring those almost angelic features.

"Slow down. I'm fine." Tiger grabbed Bunny's wrists. The hands immediately closed into fists.

Concern turned into fury in those bright eyes. "You scared the fuck out of me."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I thought you couldn't drive anymore. I don't know." Bunny unclenched his fists and rested his open hands over Tiger's chest. "For a minute there I saw you dying, and I was afraid I wasn't going to be able to save you."



Years of knowing how to disguise his emotions helped Tiger not to grin; not because he thought Bunny incapable of helping him but for the simple fact that he'd wanted to help Tiger. "Thank you." He kissed Bunny's bunched brow. "But I didn't give you that gun to help me. It was to protect yourself."

"I was not going to let those bloodsuckers kill you." As Tiger's grip lessened, Bunny freed one of his hands and punched Tiger in the stomach. "Why the fuck didn't you use *your* weapon?"

"Ouch." Tiger snickered. He rubbed the spot where Bunny had connected. It was a good punch. "Firearms don't work on vampires, you know that."

"It would have slowed him down!"

"Did I look like I needed to slow him down?"

Bunny blanched for a moment. "No." Then his blue eyes narrowed, full of suspicion. "How did you do that? Are you part supra?"

"Nah."

"What you did was humanly impossible."

"Not when you know the right techniques. It's ancient knowledge. You don't think all the supras just appeared one night and conquered the USA, right? They have been around for eons, and humans have been learnin' how to fight 'em since the dawn of time."

A snort.

"What?"

"Such a good thing, that ancient knowledge, since it didn't stop the supras from controlling the country."

Tiger grinned widely. "If everybody could learn this then it wouldn't be secret and sacred, don't you think?"

Bunny rolled his eyes. "You never said *secret and sacred*."

"All ancient knowledge is sacred." Tiger caressed Bunny's cheek. "Technology has made us humans lazy and comfortable. The supras just waited for the right time to emerge knowing that the majority of the population would simply accept their ruling as a fact, and not bother to fight it after the chaos the country had been waddling through before their takeover. Many have embraced it wholeheartedly."

It was a messed-up reality, but it was the one they were stuck with.

“Can I learn to do that?” Bunny’s hands moved to grasp Tiger’s lapels.

“It takes years.” Something caught in Tiger’s throat. “Besides, you’re about to live in Meridian, away from the supras. You don’t need to learn these things.”

“What if someday they decide to take Meridian from the humans?”

“They can’t do that. Their own laws prevent it.”

“Laws can be changed.”

“The changeable laws are human laws. Supras are bonded by things that are stronger and deeper than human understanding. The 100th meridian is, for some reason, sacred to them. That area is untouchable. The only downfall of that city will be by human hands.”

“We could go to Europe. They don’t have that much power there.”

*We?*

The thing in Tiger’s throat plummeted to his chest. Tiger pulled Bunny toward that thing that confused him, making the boy’s head rest over it. He smoothed Bunny’s hair. “You’ll be fine in Meridian. You will *not* need to run anymore.”

Tiger would take Bunny to Meridian, collect his money and seek the werewolves. He would find a nice wolfman and settle. The vampires could not touch him in the East Area.

Bunny’s arms encircled Tiger’s waist and squeezed him harder than when they were driving.

The action was worse than a thousand pleas.

And the idea of that unknown, burly werewolf in Tiger’s future started to dissolve.

\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *DAY THREE*

They had been riding for hours, and the road appeared endless. A faint glow was emerging from the east signaling the end of vampire time. This didn't exactly make them safe since the vampires had human enforcers who did their dirty work during daylight hours.

Suddenly, a wall of briars erupted from the superhighway, blocking their path.

Even with the howl of the wind and the roar of the bike and the muffling of his helmet, K heard Tiger's "Shit!" They skidded to a halt two feet before the painful-looking thorns, the bike almost toppling in the aftermath. Tiger took off his helmet and chucked it violently to the pavement. "What in the fucked fuck?!"

K dismounted, removing his helmet more quietly. "Magic?"

"Of course it is."

A horse neighing made them look the other way. One rider and four figures on foot advanced toward them in that strange fashion of the supras that was a mockery between speed and slow motion. Some people called it shimmering movement.

"What do we do now?" K asked, putting the bike between them and the supras. It was a shame they didn't have bigger weapons. A rocket launcher would be pretty handy now.

"By the way they move, we know they ain't no vampire enforcers. And they don't trust other supras to do their biddin'. We wait to see what they want."

Tiger pushed K behind him, covering him with his bigger body, but putting him dangerously close to the thorns blocking their escape route.

The supras were lean, all dressed like rejects from a punk band, except the one on the horse; that nut was wearing a Viking helmet and more furs than a werewolf orgy. If witches flew broomsticks, this idiot should be flying an oar. He was the most ridiculous warlock K had ever seen.

A blond, svelte... man? Yes, he was a man (there was a nice package between his legs), with an owl on his left shoulder moved toward them. "Well,

well, well. What have we here? Is that you Themistocles Jansen?" His voice was like a deep lullaby, the voice of a caring father singing to you before you fell asleep. It was unnerving.

"Deixis? You son of a fae bitch! What you doin' so far from New Orleans?" But as much as Tiger's tone was jovial and even excited, he didn't move from their spot behind the bike.

"You know, making a living with some friends, doing this and that."

"The owl's new." Tiger kept his weapon out of their line of sight and cocked.

"Are we gonna wait till the sun is fully up to get them?" The heavily tattooed, almost rawboned man had the guttural, cavernous voice of the werewolves. His hair was shaved on the sides, and what should have been a Mohawk was fashioned in a long braid that rested along his shoulder like a bored snake.

"What are we, fucking vamps that need to be running away from the sun?" The other werewolf elbowed the first, the long curtain of his coffee hair jostling with the move. Lank and regal, this one looked like a Navajo prince.

The tattooed one growled, but then blew a kiss to the prince. "Shut up."

"Get us? What's goin' on, Deixis?" Tiger didn't move an inch.

The fae grimaced. "You see, Themistocles, we heard through the grapevine about some fugitives, and we just wanted to be helpful citizens of Vampland."

"Helpful my ass," growled K. "None of you are vampires or citizens of the West Area."

"So, cutie speaks." Deixis stroked his owl.

"Gentlemen," the second warlock, wearing a jarring, flowered long-sleeved shirt, and floating like half a foot over the pavement on a blue cloud, called their attention. "The best course of action here is to listen to their story and then make our own conclusions. It is one thing to profit, but another to act like vamps' minions."

"Abattoir is right," the Viking impersonator offered. K should be more lenient; the fur hoarder was helping to give them a chance.

"Thank you, Gaol," the cloud rider said. "Let me take care of that monstrous bike." He chanted quickly, and Tiger's bike started to shrink until it was the size of a gun. "You can put it in your pocket now."

“Motherfucker,” said Tiger under his breath, keeping K behind him.

Deixis waved his right hand, and the briar wall evaporated in a purple mist. “Guess we’re taking them to Ami.”

“Hold on. There’s something fishy about these two.” The tattooed werewolf advanced toward them. He put his hand behind him like someone drawing a gun from their waist band.

Tiger aimed his gun at the werewolf’s heart. “Stay right there, mutt.”

Abbattoir floated gracefully and touched the werewolf’s arm. “What are you doing, Tats?”

“Something’s not right. I don’t think they are humans,” Tats growled. He pulled what he was keeping hidden. It was a reader.

The long-haired werewolf came and sniffed them. “They smell right to me.” He licked Tiger’s cheek. “Although there’s something flowery about this one that’s weird.”

“Stop that, you dog.” Tiger moved his arm to punch the werewolf.

K held it down. “We are outnumbered,” he whispered.

“I don’t care.” Tiger cleaned his cheek with a rough swipe.

Tats moved the reader around Tiger. His eyes narrowing with each inch inspected. Then he did the same operation with K. Here his face was one of confusion more than suspicion. He walked backward, regrouping with the supras and pulling Abbattoir and the other wolf with him. “The tall fucker is fae, and you knew that.” Tats was in Deixis’s face.

“I ain’t no fucking fae, you stupid-ass runt.” Tiger pulled K possessively to his side. “Bunny is the one with them pointy ears.”

“Hey,” K punched Tiger in the side. He waved his wrist for all to see. “Vampires have been taxing me since I was 18. They wouldn’t if I was fae.”

“I know you’re not fae, little thing. I don’t know what the fuck you are, but you’re not a hundred percent human.” Tats scrunched his face.

“What?” What was this moron talking about?

The long-haired werewolf took a step toward Tiger and K. “Let me lick him. I’ll figure it out.”

“NO!” Tiger and Tats yelled simultaneously. Tats grabbed the werewolf by the upper arm and pulled him. “Bones, let Ami decipher this shit.”

“This is bullshit.” Tiger still had his gun trained in the general direction of the supras. He elbowed K softly and pointed with his chin at the reduced bike. “Deixis, ain’t you gonna back me up here?”

K picked up the bike and tried to put it in his backpack. Tiger shook his head and pointed to K’s pocket.

*Right. In case we need to run. How are we going to make it big again though?*

Deixis gave Tiger a slight shake of his head then looked at Gaol. “Please help our guests to Ami.”

“Finally,” said Tats before turning into an impressive grey wolf. Bones followed suit, and his wolf form was a majestic brown beast.

Abattoir and K’s eyes found each other.

The warlock winked.

That was the last thing K saw before everything went black.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER EIGHT

Thud.

Bunny and Tiger found themselves in a heap in the middle of a well-lit cavern.

*Motherfuckin' supras.*

Deixis materialized beside him. The owl landed on his shoulder a second later. The two werewolves transformed into men. The warlocks joined the group.

"Are you alright?" Tiger asked Bunny, who was rubbing his butt and trying to get up.

"Yes. You?"

"My ego is more hurt than my body."

Bunny snickered. "That's something."

"Oh, shut up." But Tiger smiled. Bunny seemed fine, more surprised than afraid.

*Good.*

Deixis walked to a girl sitting in a lotus position in a corner of the cavern. He murmured something in her ear. She opened her eyes.

The girl, Bunny, and Tiger straightened up together. She walked toward them. She looked seventeen but could easily be a thousand years old. Her hair was the color of honey, her eyes green like a virgin field. Spiky boots and leather leggings seemed incongruent with her gauzy blouse that shimmered faintly in the surreal light. Now that Tiger had the chance to actually look, he realized that the light emanated from the walls.

"Welcome. I'm Ami." Her voice had a wind-chime quality that was soothing and scary at the same time, like a storm contained in a jar.

Maybe he'd hit his head when they landed because his mouth wasn't connected to his brain. "Ami doesn't sound like a fae name."

"My real name has twenty-six letters and it's unpronounceable for the non-fae. It might make your ears bleed." The last sentence was a threat delivered with a smile.

“Ami is fine.”

“Don't I look like an Ami to you?”

“You look like whatever you wanna look like, doll,” Tiger said, pulling Bunny toward him.

Bunny let his body melt into his and softly pushed Tiger's head toward his mouth to whisper, “If you do that again, I'm going to hurt your body *and* your ego in front of all these supras. I'm not a damsel in distress.” He kissed Tiger's cheek.

“I ain't promisin' shit.” Tiger chuckled and returned the kiss softly on Bunny's lips. He felt Bunny tremble.

“Tell me your story, Themistocles,” Ami said, appraising their joined bodies.

“I go by Tiger, lady.” Tiger smiled. “We're honeymooners on our way to Mega-Vegas, and a fucking bloodsucker decided my husband here looked tasty enough for a meal.” Good thing fae were not mind readers. That was a skill only very few witch people could manage. Gaol and Abattoir didn't look like the type, but he was about to discover if they were.

“Sounds reasonable enough,” Ami tilted her head, her honey-colored curls moving sideways in that uncanny way that only fae hair could, in a reverse motion.

“I don't believe them,” that asshole Tats griped. “Tall's a fae trying to pass as human. And the kid... I don't know what the fuck the kid is.”

Ami's eyes moved from Bunny and Tiger to Deixis; she narrowed them. “Quarter, eighth?”

“Probably eighth, lower than that would not register.” Deixis nodded with a semi-shrug.

*This is bullshit.*

Tiger blurted, “What the fuck are y'all talkin' about? I ain't no fae. I'd know if I was fae.”

“Shhhhh.” Ami put her hand over Tiger's forehead and closed her big eyes.

It prickled, and Tiger seriously wanted to smack her, but she was so pretty he felt like that would be an unforgivable sin.



“Swamp, spices, great-grandfather.” Her eyes snapped open. “You have to have some special abilities in you. Even an eighth fae makes you more than a normal human.”

Well, that might explain a lot of things, but Tiger kept his mouth shut. His hand was over Bunny's heart, and he noticed the acceleration of its tempo. *Time to move this thing along.*

“Listen, Ami. It was self-defense. If you'd be so kind as to tell the warlock gentleman to un-shrink my bike, we'll be out of y'all's hair in a jiffy.”

Ami did her head-tilting again.

“Hold up. There's a bounty on their heads. I don't even believe they're together. I'm not buying the whole 'my husband' thing.” Tats said “my husband” like someone doing vinegar gargles.

A growl emerged from Bunny. “What is your fucking problem, moron? From the get-go you've been questioning every little thing. What is it, blue balls? Why don't you let Bones give you a nice fuck and go on with your shitty life? Maybe you need to be gangbanged? We can all help with that. I'm pretty sure we could even get a dildo for Ami to join us.” Before Tats could jump him, Bunny shrugged Tiger off and pulled out his gun. “I'm tired of your bullshit.” But he didn't shoot.

“Unless you got silver bullets in that piece, you're just bluffing.” Tats smirked with fake nonchalance.

“I don't want to kill you. I just want to hurt you. Haven't you noticed I'm aiming at your dick?”

“You can't do that.” Bones sprang to shield Tats with his body.

The gun flew from Bunny's hand and landed on Gaol's waiting palm. “There's no need for violence. There's a way to prove if they're together.”

“What, you want me to fuck him in front of you? Just let me get the butt-juice.” Bunny had his fists clenched.

*What's with little Bunny thinking he's going to fuck me?*

“Nobody is getting butt-juice. Anyone can fuck, boy. Any of us could fuck you two and even enjoy it. No. Nothing says love like the eyes of a man on his knees.”

“Okay, I'll do it.”

“Bunny, no!”

They didn't have to prove anything to these supras. They would find another way. Tiger would appeal to Ami's female sensitivities. Surely there were things she could do to verify their self-defense claim. If they had to come clean and tell the entire truth, Tiger would rather do that than let these fuckers watch Bunny sucking him.

“Not you kid. Tiger.”

Tiger should be enraged, but something inside him sighed, relieved. The idea of him on his knees didn't seem as much of an aberration as the other option. He turned Bunny around to face him. He caressed a high cheekbone with his thumb. “It's alright.”

“But I'm a...”

Yes, Bunny was a companion and, as such, was an expert on showing attraction and desire and lust. Perhaps Gaol couldn't read minds but was able to sense things and suspected Bunny's profession.

“I'm a rebel, remember?” Tiger traced his lips over Bunny's before giving him a soft kiss. “It's our honeymoon after all.”

A tremor seized Bunny as Tiger's hands rested on those slim shoulders. “It's not right,” Bunny said throatily and turned to Ami. “You're their leader, do something.”

Ami shook her head and flailed her hands like someone disgusted. “I'm their guide, and sometimes you need to let those you're guiding get away with what they want.” She pointed an accusatory finger at them. “I don't know what you wish to accomplish other than a free show. There are places for that. I don't care if they're married or not. If they killed that vamp in self-defense we will let them go. I'm leaving you to have your fun, pervs, and will come back to verify their claim. Deixis come with me.”

“But...” Deixis opened his mouth and pointed at Bunny and Tiger—a kid not wanting to miss the destruction of the piñata. Even his owl seemed scandalized by Ami's request, flailing its wings.

“Really?” Ami huffed. “Stay then.” She vanished.

“Guys, I can do a spell...” Abattoir started. “We don't need to embarrass them.”

“Sugar, the werewolves always follow what we say without complaining. If Tats is uncomfortable with them, there must be a reason.” Gaol rested his hand on Abattoir’s shoulder then whispered something in his ear.

Abattoir snickered. “Okay.”

“Gentlemen, please ease Tats’s concerns.” Gaol waved his hand in a “go ahead” manner.

“The only thing that would ease that fucker is cock,” Bunny hissed.

“Bunny!”

*Sweet Fanaqua, the kid doesn't know when to shut it.*

“Well, you’re about to show him some,” Gaol riposted, amused.

“Hey,” Tats snarled, moving forward, but Bones held him back.

Tiger grabbed Bunny’s face with both hands. He liked that Bunny was feisty, but this wasn’t the moment for that. He pressed their brows together. “Please, love. Stop poking the mutt,” he whispered. A soft chuckle escaped those soft Bunny lips.

Slender arms encircled Tiger’s waist. It felt incredibly right. Their eyes met, and Bunny uttered gently, “I’m sorry.”

“I’m not.”

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER NINE

Violet eyes peered between thick white-blond lashes as Tiger, on his knees, unbuckled K's belt. They shouldn't be doing this. They shouldn't be giving these morons the show they wanted. Nevertheless, in his heart of hearts, K knew he wanted to see Tiger's lips wrapped around his cock, to see those cheeks hollow as Tiger sucked with purpose because perhaps their lives depended on his performance. Still, beyond the urgency of the moment, that unnamed thing inside K (stubbornly aware of Tiger's every move, every breath) desperately needed to savor the big man's submission.

K took a moment to scowl at the supras around them. All seemed eager for the spectacle, except Abattoir, who honestly looked like someone debating between shame and uninhibited interest.

"Don't pay attention to them. Focus on me and be sure that I'm doing this with pleasure because I love you," Tiger said, loud enough for the others to hear, with an open grin.

They were just playing a part, in full survival mode, but shoot K if his mulish, inner starry-eyed child didn't want it to be something more meaningful. Nevertheless, as much as his brain and his heart hoped for a deeper connection, his body was totally fine with the present scenario. His cock was hard and eager, his pulse was on hyperdrive, and even his hole was clenching expectantly.

Peeling K's pants apart, Tiger gave open kisses to the column concealed by thin underwear. K sighed, wanting to let his eyes roll back, but he would not give these fuckers the satisfaction of watching his pleasure. He forced his eyes to stay glued to Tiger's handsome face, in the same way those strange-colored eyes were trained on him, bewitching, enticing, challenging. K rested his hand on Tiger's cheek, not just to steady himself but to tell Tiger with the contact... he didn't know exactly what; he just hoped Tiger could sense his intention, even when it wasn't clear to K.

Tiger nodded briefly, then nuzzled K's awakened cock—a beast clamoring to be uncovered. He inhaled deeply, his face glowing with the satisfaction of someone thoroughly enjoying himself, but there was something in the liquidity of his eyes that was beyond enjoyment, and the promise languidly swimming in those violet oceans made K tremble.

“Enough!”

That one screamed word shattered the magic web their staring eyes were weaving.

“I believe them. Fuck this.” Tats sounded disgruntled.

Tiger stood up, zippering K up in the same motion. He embraced K and kissed him on the forehead. K hated these brotherly forehead kisses more and more by the second. This was the moment where Tiger should have been French-kissing the fuck out of him—to seal their cover, of course. He whispered in K's ear, “We're lucky wolves must honor the bond of soul mates in the same way they honor those of parents and their children.”

*Soul mates?*

Had they really seemed like soul mates to these wolves? K looked at Bones, and the werewolf gave him a thumbs up, accompanied by a seriously beautiful smile.

“Even better, they only wanted to get the reward; if their intention had been to kill, we'd have been doomed together. You know, 'cause they wouldn't be so cruel as to force someone to live without his mate.” Sarcasm flowed thick in Tiger's tone.

“Or a parent without his child,” K murmured, remembering that the murder rate in the East Area was practically zero. Werewolves followed the Talion Law, thus convicted murderers died along with their immediate family. A heavy hand on K's shoulder made him swivel.

“There's something about you two that is so dreamy, I've been rooting for you since the beginning,” Abattoir said, shaking K lightly.

“You're a nice warlock. You don't see many of those nowadays.” Tiger snickered.

“‘Witches are bitches,’ says the popular song.” Abattoir smiled.

“I heard that.” Gaol approached them, his many layers of fur shrinking into a fashionable vest. That was a lot better than his former fur fuck-fest, but there was no help for his obnoxious Viking helmet. He offered K his hand. “Sorry, kid, I was just trying to help you. Wolves can be cranky, and Tats is a very cranky motherfucker.” He eyed the werewolf, who was growling softly under his breath, his arms crossed in a very pissed off fashion.

“They can still be vamp-killers,” Tats grumbled.

“Aren't we all?” Bones elbowed Tats, chortling. “C'mon. Let's have something to drink while Ami returns.” He pulled Tats's braid. “Move.”

*Those two need to fuck ASAP.*

Deixis seemed a block of ice. Fae and vampires shared a way of standing still that was downright creepy. The owl on Deixis's shoulder acted as petrified as his master, making them both look like a strange statue. Tiger wagged a finger at the fae as they moved toward an opening in the wall K hadn't noticed before. “You and I are havin' a conversation later,” Tiger hissed.

This broke Deixis's stillness. Their eyes met, and there was a spark of challenge, and something else K couldn't quite decipher. The blond supra grumbled, “Yes, we are.”

The response made Tiger growl under his breath in a way so similar to Tats that K had to wonder if Tiger didn't have some unknown werewolf great-grandparent too.

\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER TEN

A century before, people had an expression: man cave, referring to a place within a household where the male of said house could be manly, which mostly involved doing disorderly manly things. This kept their gadgets, games, and other “man” stuff away from the ladies of the place to avoid upsetting them. They entered a room with an enormous pool table, arcade video game machines, sports paraphernalia (collectibles from the Golden Siroccos, the most popular fae soccer team, figured prominently in one corner), even ancient weapons from a mish-mash of cultures hung beside Formula 1 posters. It was the epitome of man cave, not just because they were literally in a cave, but because the only thing that could make the room any manlier would be for the rock-carved walls to have chest hair. Coming from Tiger, who was as hairless as an eight ball, to say that chest hair equated to manliness was ironic; nonetheless, life had given him other things that surpassed hairy pecs.

Abattoir opened a giant fridge bursting at the seams with beers and pitched one to each of the supras. “Too early for humans?”

It was the middle of the summer and the sun went up seriously early. So, yeah it was an ungodly time of day to be drinking, but Tiger said, “It’s got to be happy hour somewhere.” He caught a beer pitched his way.

Bunny opened his beer with his teeth, and the supras cheered, all except Tats.

A holo-remote appeared on Gaol’s palm; he turned on the giant screen on the only smooth wall of the supracave. A round, firm ass was the first thing occupying most of the wide space.

“I know that ass anywhere!” Tiger blurted without thinking. He saw the way Bunny flinched and snorted. Tiger flinched inwardly a little and added softly, “That’s Channing Tatum in *Magic Mike*.”

Typical early morning programming: last century movies, not necessarily the most enlightening, but entertaining.

“Damn, you know your asses.” Bones snickered as he sat cross-legged on a huge, circular leather seat.

“Yeah, yeah, Channing was hot, but that Manganiello guy was way hotter.” Gaol punched buttons in his palm and the movie fast-forwarded to Joe

Manganiello dancing on a stage dressed as an early 2000s firefighter. In 2125, they used bodysuits so bulky there was nothing sexy about them.

“You know Manganiello used to play a werewolf in a show called *True Blood*. It was mostly about vampires but it was a good show.” Abattoir took a pull of his beer as he also assumed a cross-legged position over the bluish mist cloud he favored to move around.

Obviously, old vampire shows were a hit in the West Area, except for the Twilight Saga. There was a ban on those movies. Vamps were not happy about those shiny misconceptions; according to them, it was an insult to their kind.

Tiger couldn't care less.

“Some people say that *True Blood* show was a prediction of the times we're living in.” Bunny turned a chair around and straddled it, using the back to rest his chest, crossing his forearms over it. Those tribal tattoos on his arms made him look rowdy.

Tiger had to admit the position showed how nice and solid Bunny's ass was. The kid looked intently at the screen as Gaol surfed options. The warlock found the *True Blood* show and chose an episode mostly focused on werewolves.

“That's one hot-ass beast,” commented Ami two seconds after she materialized in the room as Manganiello transformed from wolf to glorious nakedness.

“That idiot is no werewolf.” Tats shook his shoulders as if ready to shift.

Ami rolled her eyes. “Aren't you bitchy today? What's wrong with you? We're not even near the full moon. You're worse than a female human on her period.”

Her words made Tats flinch, and that added another one to the flinch score inside the supras' man cave. Ami moved to the fridge and got a beer for herself. “So, are they in love or what?” she asked, looking straight at Tats.

“Yes, they are.”

*Are we?*

True, there was maybe five percent of Tiger that wasn't acting. His attraction to Bunny was becoming stronger by the minute, but from that to actually looking like they were in love was a huge stretch. Still, both Bunny and he were excellent actors, thus there was no way to blame the supras for being so gullible.



Someone staked a vampire on the show; it exploded into a blob of red mess, just like they did in real life. Whoever wrote that show knew vampires. A collective whoop emerged, accompanied by the rise of beer bottles. Funny, because Tiger was almost sure they were still in the chunk of Texas that was part of the West Area, or as these supras would say, "Vampland."

"That's the thing I don't understand about vampires. They are quote unquote immortals, which means not subject to death, but you can kill them. Shouldn't they be called longevous or long-lived instead of immortals?" Bunny commented as he finished his beer. The way his Adam's apple moved with the last swallow had Tiger's cock thinking about becoming a rock.

*Well, desire ain't love, right?*

"Vampires have perpetuated that bullshit myth so people think they are invincible." Bones abandoned the leather seat and went for more beer. "Guys?" he asked to the room at large, waving a beer bottle.

Deixis sat with his elbows resting on his thighs, slowly turning the beer bottle and staring at it, as if in its rotation was the answer to all the mysteries of the universe. That two-timing, no good, son of a fae bitch knew Tiger had some extra genes in him and hadn't ever said a word. They were going to have words. He started to move toward the bastard when a firm grip held him in place; Tiger swiveled to face whoever it was, and was shocked to see it was Ami.

"It's time to check the veracity of your claims," she said with a hiked eyebrow.

"Be my guest, then." Tiger shrugged her off. "Do I need to be naked for that? 'Cause these fuckers didn't get their show."

"Nudity is unnecessary, but if you feel the need to flaunt all that—" she did an up and down motion, pointing at his body—"I wouldn't mind the show."

"Ahem." Bunny pulled him away from Ami. "Love, be nice."

Was that a faint trace of jealousy in Bunny's sweet voice? Nah, Tiger must be imagining things. Did he want to imagine things? No, no, he didn't.

"Someone doesn't want *you* to parade *all that*." Bones snickered.

"Dressed it is. Please lie down."

Tiger made himself comfortable on the large, circular leather seat. It was like a giant, navy blue cheese wheel.

She put up her hand so the holo-remote could float toward it. A few key punches, and *True Blood* turned into static.

“Now, close your eyes and let me do my thing.” Ami helped him to close his eyes with a soft hand gliding over his eyelids.

Immediately, Tiger felt weight over his eyes, like smooth stones or coins, and the image of how people burnt their dead in antiquity (putting coins on their eyes for the boatman) made him shudder.

That uneasiness was the last thing he remembered.

\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

K didn't know what to think about the stones (one white, the other black) that Ami set over Tiger's eyes. They didn't look heavy, but Tiger instantly went rigid and appeared not to be breathing. He tried to go to Tiger, but Abattoir held him in place. "He's all right. She knows what she's doing," he said soothingly and slowly released K.

Short of kicking and thrashing, the only option was to wait and see what would happen.

Ami chanted over Tiger's head, doing hand passes as if she was rifling through a really messy underwear drawer. K tried to stay alert (because they were still unsure of the supras' real intentions) but that unnamed thing inside him giggled. Amid a situation like this, any other person would have thought of Ami's actions as rummaging through a socks drawer, or something less lusty. But not him. For reasons K didn't have the courage to start investigating, he saw himself sneaking to sniff Tiger's used undies in a dark corner of a laundry room, even if his filthy mind insisted that Tiger usually went commando, which didn't help a bit with the growing bulge in his pants.

Tiger's lips were slightly parted, and that mouth looked kissable and inviting.

"Not so fast."

K wheeled around, startled by Marcus's voice within the cave. The vampire was supposed to be dead.

"Who is this man taking you upstairs?" The hiss came from the wall screen that had been full of static only a moment earlier. Marcus's murderous glare was aimed at K. No—not at K, but at Tiger. The screen was showing what happened from Tiger's perspective.

"I'm his fuckin' husband. We havin' a problem, vamp?" Tiger's narrowed eyes focused on Marcus's hand around K's arm, and the image had a red tinge to it.

"We do now." Marcus's fangs emerged, and K was thrown to the upper landing.

Now K saw those few seconds he had not witnessed before. Surprisingly, the images moved in slow motion as if Ami had activated the frame-by-frame

option. Marcus jumped, and Tiger caught him by the waist and threw him into the middle of the bar to land on a full table, all its occupants scattering before being clearly aware of what was happening. Jabs, kicks, headbutts, fangs, claws moved disturbingly fast in what was supposed to be an unhurried recollection.

“Why are you playing with the speed?” Tats asked in his usual gruff tone.

“I’m not doing anything. Tiger has the *bardagamaður* trait. During battle, the actions of others will slow for the warrior so he can make the right decisions to attack more effectively. That’s the fae in him.”

“Asshole,” Tats said under his breath this time.

*Where are some fucking silver bullets when you need them?*

“So what we’re seeing as fast must be happening at lightning speed.” Abattoir ran his hand over his face and whistled.

“He said he had special training,” K offered defiantly.

“That might be true, but without *bardagamaður* that would be for naught.” Ami smiled. “Perhaps one regular human in a million can learn to fight at vampire speed with training, but the fae in Tiger makes it second nature to him.”

Tiger beheaded Marcus, and all the supras in the room (except Ami) cheered, “YES.”

The images moved through the crowd, Tiger was looking for K. Vampires came out of the woodwork, and a brawl of epic proportions started. It was weird to see things from this disembodied perspective. K saw himself draw his weapon and move down the stairs two at a time. But there was something in him that wasn’t there before; some kind of glow was emerging from every surface of his body that wasn’t covered by clothes.

The supras looked at K askance.

“I told you he wasn’t human.”

*Okay, no silver bullets, what about a muzzle?*

“Tats, you need to chill out. I’m starting to think this is a kindergarten crush. You act like you hate him, but in reality you’ve got the hots for him.” Gaol’s tone was one of amusement, but his face was a terrifying mask of disdain. And that ridiculous Viking helmet paired with impossibly thick arms made it even worse. Gaol looked downright savage.

The wolf growled but didn't say another word. Back on the screen, Tiger was pulling K out of the bar, and, as they ran together, Tiger looked back several times, and the glow was less visible each time.

"I guess we ain't stayin' here tonight." Tiger's voice had the ring of someone enjoying himself far too much, then his eyes closed and something like a moan emerged.

K calculated it had been the moment when he circled Tiger's waist and held on for dear life. K felt his face on fire, and that was something that wasn't supposed to happen to a companion.

"You're an intriguing little thing," commented Deixis, suddenly beside him. He traced a finger downward along K's arm. "We need to find out what you are."

"Deixis," Ami warned. "He's not a thing, and he has a husband."

"How daring the fae when my husband is unconscious." K tilted his head a little. "Before that you were acting all suicidal. Just because he is blond doesn't mean I like all blonds."

"How dare you?" Deixis's eyes flashed red.

Abattoir stepped between them. "The boy is right. What's up with you?"

"He's not a supra." Deixis shrugged. "What if he's a threat to us?"

"Yeah," Tats agreed.

"Listen, wolf." K swiveled to face Tats. "You need to get the fuck out of my balls before whatever I am explodes in your face."

Ami made a placating gesture and walked to K. "Do you know what you are?"

K shook his head. "It's the first time I've heard something is different about me."

"Tiger didn't say anything about you glowing like that?"

"No."

"Do you want us to find out?"

*Do I?*

Ami had assured they would be left alone if the vampire's murder had been in self-defense, but what if these supras decided he was dangerous once they

discovered what made him different? K only wanted to be human, to be human in Meridian.

Perhaps with Tiger by his side.

“What I want right now is for you to wake my husband up.”

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER TWELVE

When Tiger woke up, his bike was full-size again, and it was in the middle of the supras' man cave. He was told in a rather firm tone to get a shower and change clothes as breakfast was put together.

Bunny had an undecipherable expression on his face, his hands in his pockets. He wore a red sleeveless hooded T-shirt that made him look like a little kid who had lost his parents in some supermall.

Showered and fed, Tiger was extremely ready to say *thanks-y'all-and-buh-bye* when they explained their intention to test Bunny.

"No fuckin' way. Y'all ain't doin' no experiments on him," Tiger spat as he pulled Bunny closer—by the shoulders because he didn't want the kid to kneel him in his testes.

Bunny circled Tiger's waist possessively. "You heard him. Can we go now?"

"But you saw the glow coming from him." Bones bobbed his head, his inquiring eyes devouring Tiger. "Aren't you curious at least?"

"I didn't see nothin'," Tiger lied. He had seen it, but (with all the shit happening around them) he hadn't given it too much thought. Right now his only concern was to get away from these supras. "Y'all as suprabein's are bonded to your word. Self-defense equals Freedom. You did your mumbo-jumbo, we leave."

"That was before we knew he was something weird." Tats stalked toward them.

"I thought Gaol muzzled you, werewolf. When are you going to shut the fuck up?" Bunny barked.

"Shhh, love." Tiger kissed the top of Bunny's head, moving his hand up and down along Bunny's arm in what he hoped was a soothing manner. "Remember your own words, we're outnumbered."

"I know that, but this idiot is trying my patience."

"I heard that." Tats shuddered, and his eyes flashed gold.

"He wasn't whispering," Bones said and pulled Tats by the wrist with a chuckle.

“Ami said this after we arrived and Tats had informed her of his concerns about Bunny and I, so yes, freedom was offered with the knowledge of our, er, differences on the table.”

Gaol moved from the wall where he had been leaning with his arms crossed. “Tiger’s right. Let’s let them go to be someone else’s problem. It is their right to defend themselves and their bond, as they did against that clingy bloodsucker.”

“What if he’s dangerous to us supras?” Deixis wasn’t looking at Bunny and Tiger but actually pleading with Ami.

“We chose to live in exile, so it isn’t up to us to protect the rest of the suprabeings.” Gaol stopped, facing Deixis.

Tiger forgot he was trying to be diplomatic. “Deixis, you motherfucker.”

“Oh, shut up, Themistocles. I know your only true love is gold. You probably just made him fall in love with you to take him some place where humans could study him and get a reward for your troubles.”

Before Deixis could close his mouth properly or Tiger could react to the words, Bunny had already launched himself at Deixis, delivering a right hook to the jaw and a well-aimed knee in the fae’s kiwis. They went to the floor together, and Bunny became a punch machine. Everybody was too startled for a moment to do anything, even Deixis.

Tiger jumped to pull Bunny away because he knew the moment the fae came back to his senses Bunny would be in a whole world of trouble. “Please, baby.” He embraced Bunny to restrain him. “I don’t want you to get hurt.”

Bunny froze in Tiger’s arms, and let Tiger pull him off Deixis. He turned around, still encircled by Tiger’s embrace, and hissed, “He doesn’t have the right to question your loyalty. I know you’ll never betray me like that.”

And with those words, just like that, Tiger knew he would never betray Bunny consciously. He brushed Bunny’s hair. “I’ll never hurt you, love.” He kissed the top of Bunny’s head, and Bunny grabbed his face and pulled Tiger down for a kiss that was desperate, hungry, demanding.

There were no supras, no cave, no vampire’s murder, just them, and Tiger hiked Bunny up, lean legs wrapping around Tiger’s waist, and their arms turning into the ferocious tentacles of the Kraken, vying to claim and conquer.

Yes, these weren’t the acres of hair Tiger loved; the weight he was so desperately clinging to lacked (at least) eighty pounds of the usual amount his



arms were used to handling. Still, everything in little Bunny was manly and glorious and abso-fucking-lutely delicious. And Tiger wanted this lightweight piece of heaven like he hadn't wanted anything in eons.

The thing was, amid all the *I-want-to-eat-you* and *I-don't-care-if-you-ain't-six-four-and-two-hundred-fifty-pounds* explosion of desire, there was something else, something more serene and grounding and freaking scary. But as Bunny's tongue inspected (with unquestionable authority) the depths of Tiger's mouth, Tiger didn't have the wherewithal to herd his brain cells to cohesion. He was all instincts and sweet, irrevocable need.

His hands found the hem of Bunny's tee, and he was in the frantic process of pulling it upward to get rid of it to lap at creamy, pale skin like a hungry beast when a cough stopped him short.

*Shit, we ain't alone in some seedy motel room, and I almost show the gold in his girdle-purse.*

"As much as I know that the boys wouldn't mind the show," said Ami, with a tiny hint of amusement in her ethereal voice, "and I can see various stages of hardness, I will recommend you two wait until you're somewhere else to continue your honeymoon."

"Sweet Fanaqua," Bunny groaned, clinging to Tiger's neck.

Tiger chuckled and kissed a high cheekbone. "That expression is mine," he whispered softly.

"I think I used my allotted amount of swearing for the month already," Bunny offered with a shrug and a wink. "I don't even know what it means, but it sounds like a really good alternative to the f-bomb."

"I read it in one of my mother's books when I was a teenager."

"Ahem."

*Right, monsters surrounding us.*

"Gaol is going to put you back on the superhighway, so you can be on your merry way to Mega-Vegas." Ami looked at Tiger pointedly, as if saying "put the kid down already."

"We're going to let them go just like that?" Deixis and Tats almost trampled each other as they moved to grab Ami, uttering the same words, one in the cavernous tone of the wolves, the other in the crystal ring of the fae.

Ami waved her hand, and both supras were flung toward different corners of the room, landing with resounding thuds. “Enough of you two. Bunny and Tiger are free to leave. End of discussion.”

Deixis's owl flew from its perch to comfort his master with soothing hoots.

As Bones and Abattoir approached them, Tiger let Bunny slide along his body until he was standing on his own feet. Tiger would analyze the shiver that had provoked later, when they were safe. Both took fighting stances. The supras held their hands up.

“We don't mean to harm you,” said Bones.

“We're on your side,” added Abattoir.

“Gaol, darling, take *us* to the surface.” Ami gave Tiger a nice, angelic grin.

Before he could reciprocate, all went black.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

This time the landing was a lot more dignified. K opened his eyes to find himself alongside Tiger and the supras (if his sense of orientation was correct) in the same spot where they had been captured? Taken into custody? He didn't know what to name their eye-rolling encounter with this band of supras.

They were beside the superhighway, the sun at its zenith with no clouds to threaten the oppressive summer heat. The vast, arid nothingness surrounded them in every direction except for the eight-lane strip of blacktop dividing this stretch of desert.

K turned to grasp Ami's hand and say good-bye when horrid whistles sounded.

Great balls of fire came out of nowhere, their long tails of black smoke making them seem like confused comets from a madman's inferno. The first fell on the middle of the superhighway, tar exploding in every direction.

"The fuck?" Bones cried.

"Jump on the motorcycle. We'll take care of this!" Ami pushed K toward Tiger.

Abattoir was zipping in his little cloud, dodging the falling bombs and turning them into less dangerous things before they touched the ground: sacks of potatoes, pillows, mattresses, crates of fruits (as if the same spell could not work the same way each time).

Gaol's horse emerged from the ground, and he pulled Bones up to straddle the horse behind him. He was casting spells upward, in the direction from which the bombs seemed to come, but K couldn't see an actual target. He could only see the fireworks-like energy launching from Gaol's hands.

"What are you waiting for? Run, boy, run!" Ami yelled. A translucent dome surged around her, and she sent it toward Tiger and K with a violent fling of her arms.

The shift in the energy around them was palpable, and a hand grabbed his wrist. "Bunny, please!" Tiger urged, and he dragged K away from the exploding bombs since Abattoir couldn't transform them all quick enough; they were too many.

“They’re going to die, Tiger. We need to help them!” K tried to wrench his wrist from Tiger’s hold.

“They have powers. We don’t, Bunny baby. Please!”

“No. NOOO!” K finally broke Tiger’s grasp, and with his physical scream came an inner scream. He felt scorching heat growing inside him, as if one of the bombs was erupting from deep within his body, turning him into a blazing mass of power. A power that wasn’t destroying him but surging forward like a tsunami, like an avalanche, like a million nukes launched in all directions at once.

His cry was the cry of all beasts, of all creatures, of all living things, and the light emanating from K expanded until it was more blinding than the sun above them. The fire bombs disintegrated in mid-air as the radius widened. Above them, the hovercrafts from where the bombs originated became visible, and they saw new explosions. Charred pieces fell in a meteor shower that turned rapidly into ashes by the power of the light still coming from K.

The supras swiveled, trying to find the source of the unknown power that had just saved their lives, and the masks of confusion and horror when they discovered it didn’t surprise K but made him feel dizzy as self-consciousness tried to seize him. The force pouring out of him squashed this second of doubt, and he stood tall and confident, knowing that he had done the right thing, especially after seeing the fanged-daggers of the Vampire Council etched under the attacking hovercrafts.

“It’s over, Bunny. You can stop.” Tiger’s voice was gentle in K’s ear as those strong arms embraced him and pulled him flush to the hard chest.

K nodded and called the brutal ocean of light and heat he had liberated back to his body. Slowly, it retraced its path, eager to return to its master. And as the destructive energy coalesced into him, K understood the origin of the power, the nature of his being. Freeing and overwhelming, the knowledge clarified a thousand things and posed a thousand more questions—not about his past, but about his future.

Those latter questions were the ones that finally made K sag into Tiger’s protective hug under their weight. “Fanaqua...”

“Yes. What you did does deserve a whooping, all capital letters Fanaqua,” Tiger chuckled.

Darkness descended upon K, and the last coherent thing he could grasp was the feeling of Tiger's whisper of a kiss on top of his head.

\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### DAY FOUR

“Welcome back,” Tiger offered as Bunny opened his eyes.

Blue eyes narrowed, smiling. “Hey.” Bunny moved his hands over the *whoknew-how-many-thousand-threads-count* Egyptian cotton sheets.

“You were out for twenty-eight hours. I’m glad you decided to come back to me.”

*Well, that didn’t come out right.*

Technically, Tiger didn’t have any claim on Bunny, but Fanaqua and a half if that feeling growing inside him didn’t scream otherwise.

Bunny pushed himself a little upward and took stock of his surroundings. “Where are the supras?”

“They’re fine. Apparently, Gaol’s transportation spell from their secret cave only takes you back to whatever place they took you from, so we were in the same spot on the superhighway, but after your, er, demonstration...” Tiger paused, not sure how to touch the issue. “After you destroyed the vampires’ hovercrafts, they transported us immediately to the outskirts of Mega-Vegas, away from the West Area limits.” He shrugged. “We’re in a suite of the Ultra.”

Tilting his head slightly and staring at Tiger, Bunny was silent for a moment. “They didn’t ask why I was unconscious?”

“There was a lot of fae glamour involved.”

This made Bunny snicker. He sobered up quickly though. “Sorry I didn’t give you your first half the other night.”

“What?”

“You know, your payment.”

“Oh. That. Well...”

This wasn’t the conversation Tiger wanted to have at the moment. His priorities had changed a lot in the last twenty-four hours.

“I understand if you’re horrified by me and just want to be on your way. I guess I can find a way to get to Meridian from here. It’s less than a hundred miles. It shouldn’t be a problem.”

“What crawled up your ass, Bunny? Why would I be horrified?”

“Your face spoke volumes when you said ‘demonstration.’”

“Are you fuckin’ serious now?”

“I’d not hold it against you if you just get your money and leave me here.” Bunny did his own nonchalant shrug. “It’s not like I’m helpless.”

“I thought we’d already established that. What I am doubtin’ right now is your intelligence.”

“Oh, fuck off, Tiger. What? Am I supposed to believe all the acting we did to get us here was something real?” Bunny shook his head with a sigh. “I might look young, but I’m not a starry-eyed child. I’m a grown-ass man, and I’ve seen a lot. More than you might think.”

Tiger took Bunny by the shoulders and gave him a shake. “Listen, you idiot...” But words would not do it. He pulled Bunny to him and kissed those tempting, rosy lips hard.

Bunny went stiff for a heartbeat. A heartbeat that seemed an eternity, but then teeth bit Tiger’s lips, and they became all snarls and growls and bites and clashing tongues.

The moment Tiger flung the covers aside, Bunny disentangled himself from Tiger. “Wait! I heard you talking in your sleep about going to live with the werewolves and find yourself a nice big beast to share your days.”

*Me and my big-mouthed sleep-talking.*

“That was before.”

“Before what?”

“Before I learned your value.”

*That came out wrong. Pull it together, man.*

Bunny narrowed his eyes again, and this time it wasn’t a pretty gesture. “Do I need to give credit to Deixis’s words?”

“Deixis is a giant fae hemorrhoid. You shouldn’t trust him to tell you the color of the sky even if he says it’s blue and you’re seein’ it with your own eyes.”

“That doesn’t answer my question.” Bunny shrugged away from Tiger’s embrace. The headboard stopped him from moving further.

“You said it yourself, you ain’t helpless. You could easily defend yourself if I try to pull a fast one on you.” Tiger winked, intent on lightening the mood and taking them back to *nearly-clothes-ripping* madness.

“That’s true.”

“Would you trust me?”

“I want to.”

“What’s stoppin’ you?”

“I don’t trust anyone.”

“Then we both need to work on our trustin’ skills.”

“Sounds like a reasonable enough goal.”

“I hope so.” Tiger took Bunny’s hand in his and made circles on the space between thumb and index finger. He smiled, not sure what else to say to ease Bunny’s distrust.

“Can we go back to kissing?” Bunny’s grin was unexpected and abso-fucking-lutely welcome.

“Just kissin’?” Tiger grinned back.

“For now.”

\*\*\*\*



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Was there something worse than a companion withholding sex when he really, truly wanted it as badly as the man he was holding onto?

They sped toward Meridian many hours after K awoke from his destruction-induced coma, with night approaching sluggishly toward them. He seriously needed to get naked and personal with Tiger, but he had decided to wait until they were within the limits of the human-controlled city. That way, if things went awry, he could ensure closeness to his freedom once he had finished using his newly discovered powers. This was his pragmatic side asserting its supremacy over his wishful side, which hoped that Tiger was feeling the same things he was feeling and would agree to stay with him in Meridian. Everything pointed to that scenario, but they still hadn't had a discussion about K's nature, and that was the third, ugly party, rubbing its hands sinisterly in one corner of K's mind and watching the turmoil with a nasty grin like some perverse villain in an old-fashioned movie.

What if Tiger couldn't live with what K was?

K himself wasn't sure what his purpose was. This knowledge was too new, too shiny, to be fully grasped and assimilated. Were there others like him? Should he try to find them? There must be others since he wasn't a mutation. Perhaps he could be called an aberration, but he was not going to start putting tags on himself. He was here, and he believed that everything had a reason, even if it wasn't evident from the get-go.

Squeezing Tiger's waist tighter than before, K wondered if his nature was what had pushed his parents to move to the West Area. Had they wanted him to be studied by the vampires? Was he squashing his parents' last wish by fleeing?

Tiger let go of one of the handles of the bike and moved his hand backward to touch K's helmet above his cheek. It was a comforting gesture; perhaps he had sensed K's distress through the squeeze. It was beyond stupid to torture himself with these silly interrogations. He could not know what his parents wanted or thought; they were out of reach and unable to give him guidance.

There was no other option than to accept the counsel of his own instincts, and those were telling him he had done the right thing by coming to Meridian. K would settle down there, and after he had found some rhythm in his new, populous city, he'd find a way to figure out the power and its purpose. Now,

figuring out Tiger was more important, even if it implied trusting, and that notion was as alien as his new-found powers to K.

*A first for everything, right?*

The inspection point neared. K didn't know what he had expected—at least a barbed wired fence, not the solitary almost shabby structure beside the road. It brought to mind a giant, abandoned shoebox; one only knew it was an active setting because a buzzing force field between two posts on each side of the superhighway blocked the path. A holoboard showed the steps to follow.

They parked the bike, dismounted, put away the helmets, dusted and straightened their jackets, and K adjusted his backpack. “Do you think it wise to have braided your hair like that?” K asked Tiger, who had tiny braids pulling his temple hair away from his face in a very fae fashion. K had to admit the style suited Tiger, and he also had to admit it wasn't helping to keep his libido at bay.

“Ain't nothing bad with embracin' your eighth. It's not like they can deny me entrance. I'm not fully fae.”

Since the light was slowly fading outside, the harsh glare inside the building was startling. “Welcome to Inspection Point 25, boys!” A perky woman in a lavender uniform, and sporting blue-black hair in a myriad corkscrew curls, approached them, a bounce in her step. She had big, violet eyes and seemed so happy to see them, her cheerfulness was overwhelming. “My name is Jaye, and I'll walk you through the admittance process. Identifications, please!” IDs were shown, and she asked, “What's your purpose for visiting Meridian?”

K opened his mouth, but Tiger stopped him, intertwining their fingers. “We're a couple, and we want a fresh start in your marvelous city.”

“How lovely,” she said in her spring-like, giggly tone. “Well, this is the part where I'm supposed to check you with my reader, but you see, that's pointless.”

*Huh?*

Both Tiger and K were ready to scratch their heads in confusion.

“The force field over the superhighway is a formality, sort of a visual reminder.” She punched some buttons on her clipboard. “The thousand miles reserved over the 100th meridian are bordered by all kinds of spells and incantations that prevent anything that is supra from crossing its limits. So even if you were able to cheat the reader, the boundaries will turn you into dust.” This time she openly giggled, and it was seriously disturbing.

But not more disturbing than the information they had just received.

Tiger snickered with her. "We'll be fine then, won't we?"

"Of course, sweeting." Her trillion curls bobbed as she nodded enthusiastically. A bell ding. She retrieved two plates that had emerged from an official-looking machine and handed one to Tiger and the other to K after inspecting the names on them. "Here you go. Have a lovely life!" She turned around, walked to a door and disappeared behind it with a resounding bang, leaving them baffled and speechless.

"What now?" K's eyes searched Tiger's for reassurance.

"We test the boundaries, Bunny. Ain't nothing else to do."

Outside, the stars were out and the force field was gone. They neared the bike. Tiger pulled K to his chest and kissed him, deep and needy. When they surfaced, because they needed to breathe, Tiger grasped K's face with both hands and whispered, "You wanted proof that you could trust me. If we survive the boundaries, I'll stay by your side as long as you want me to be."

*It's a start.*

"Thank you." K opened his lips slightly for another kiss. Tiger kissed his forehead. "Back to that?" K huffed.

With a chuckle, Tiger turned him around and guided him to the bike, his hand possessively grabbing K's ass.

They climbed on the bike, donned their helmets, and K circled Tiger's body, pressing his frame and pouring all his feelings into the action.

The bike roared to life.

It veered onto the superhighway.

They crossed the boundaries.

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Nothing happened.

Tiger threw his fist in the air triumphantly. K laughed happily, like he hadn't laughed in years.

Thirty minutes later the expanse of Meridian was visible by the lights competing with the starry sky. Tiger stopped the bike on the top of a hill, the city at their feet welcoming them. He waved a hand toward the vista and said happily, "All yours to eat it up."

"There's only one thing I want to eat right now. But before that, I need to tell you what I am."

"I don't care if you're the spawn of Cthulhu himself. There ain't nothing able to make me see you differently."

"Just let me tell you so we can put it behind us then."

"Alright."

"You know that old story about the sons of the Christian god mating with the daughters of men?"

Tiger looked at him for a moment like he had just caught K having an orgy with the band of supras in their secret lair. Then he snorted and guffawed, "That's a fuckin' myth!"

"Seriously?" K huffed. "The suprabeings were considered myth before they decided to become fully visible and take over the US."

This sobered Tiger up. "You're right. So you're a child of this human-god matin'?"

K nodded. "That's the knowledge that came to me as the power returned to my body after I destroyed the hovercrafts."

"Okay."

"That's it?"

"Uh-huh." Tiger shrugged. "I don't give a flyin', screamin' Fanaqua."

"So you're fine with me being Nephilim?"

Tiger bobbed his head and smiled broadly. "Hey, your parents are dead. I ain't gotta worry about some demonic in-laws or awkward holiday festivities."

*And here I am, worrying about this like an imbecile.*

“You fucker.” K fumbled with Tiger’s jacket to get rid of it.

Laughing and helping K out of his own jacket, Tiger asked, “Needy much?”

“Fuck yes.” K pushed Tiger to his knees. “You’d better finish what you started in those supras’ cave.” His pants pooled around his boots almost immediately.

“That’s an order, sir.” And Tiger’s wicked grin made K’s cock throb with anticipation.

An expert tongue circled his cock-head as an even more skillful hand pumped his shaft. K had to rest his hands on Tiger’s broad shoulders because he was losing consciousness and balance with every passing second. “Take your pants off,” he panted. Tiger gave him a quizzical look, his mouth busy with K’s girth.

Better than the most consummate companion, Tiger undid his boots, removed his pants and his underwear without missing a beat of the superb blowjob he was giving K. Nearing a climax he wanted to keep at bay, K pulled Tiger up and guided him toward the bike, using the transporter’s cock as if it was a controller. He punched the commands for TON2 mode on the bike, got the butt-juice from the compartment and made Tiger straddle the seat with his back to K.

“What are you doin’?” Tiger snickered, looking over his shoulder at K with mischievous eyes.

“I’m pretty sure you have done this before.”

“Not on my bike!”

“There’s a first time for everything.” K kissed from shoulder to shoulder as he squeezed a glob of butt-juice into his hand and applied it to Tiger’s wonderfully tight pucker. He was too wound up to take things slowly; he needed to be inside Tiger before he self-combusted.

Tiger hissed appreciatively as K’s fingers lubed the way. “I hate to sound like an inexperienced teenager, but the clock’s tickin’, and this nuke’s ready to explode.”

Two swipes of his cock-head over Tiger’s hole, a growled moan as invitation, and K was to the hilt inside Tiger. The *Fuck-yeah* came out of both

their mouths at the same time, and amid all the blinding lust, K couldn't help but chuckle.

Soon they found a nice rhythm, two pistons colliding, taking and receiving, invading and yielding, claiming and offering. K's hand roamed over Tiger's torso, his teeth leaving marks over hard, golden trapeziuses. Tiger's hands went the opposite direction, grabbing K's ass and squeezing and kneading and pulling him to ram his cock into Tiger's willing hole.

K wondered if the *bardagamaður* trait also worked while fucking, because Tiger seemed to anticipate his moves and counteract in a way that doubled his pleasure by the way his moans and pants became progressively louder.

"Tiger, I'm about to..."

"Fuck, Bunny. Mark me. Make me yours."

And those words were flint, trigger, and nuclear bomb passcode. As K's entire body trembled with his shattering climax, his companion reflexes made his hands seek Tiger's cock and, with a few pumps, bring another wave of ecstasy as Tiger's hole squeezed him anew with each spurt, until K was disoriented and satisfied.

A while later, after they had cleaned as best as they could the mess they'd made, K rested on top of Tiger's body, both over the immobile, *heavy-as-a-boulder* bike. "Told you I was going to be the one doing the fucking..."

"Yeah, just don't brag about it."

K nibbled on one of Tiger's nipples. "Why do you call me Bunny?"

"I call you Bunny 'cause no one else does. I gave you that name, and by givin' you a special name, I made you only mine. I did it unconsciously, but maybe my heart knew what you'd be to me even before I realized it. The day you're able to think about yourself as Bunny, you'll know this's true."

"Okay." K smiled.

After all, the ring on his finger didn't look bad, and it wasn't that hard to imagine himself as Tiger's Bunny.

**The End**

### **Glossary**

*Owatatsumi* – One of the various names of the Dragon God, the tutelary deity of the sea in Japanese mythology

*Fanaqua* – Well, to know what this word means you need to check out [Broken Phoenix by Edmond Manning](#)

*Bardagamaður* – Icelandic for “fighter”

## Author Bio

*Born a Sagittarius in the fabulous year of the Rooster of '69, at the hour when his cat was about to become a complete dragon, Gabbo de la Parra landed on the Caribbean Coast of the outlandish Republic of Panama to start the adventure of Life.*

*Love and the Internet brought him to Middle Tennessee to embrace the American Dream and his husbandly romance. Writing has been an important part of his life since a very early age, and it's a pleasure to share his stories with others thanks to the wonderful opportunities this land provides. He is the author of the Spaniards series, Septima Luna and other titles available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Smashwords.*

*Gabbo cherishes Life with a southern gentleman in a townhouse close to a lake, crowded with the spirits of his characters, and their pets: black esoteric kitty, Luna; white emo-twink Maltese, Chance; and street smart Russian Blue, Bella.*

His novel *Another Dawn on Planet X* (love child of his two stories for Love is Always Write) will come to your e-reading devices in Summer 2014, and *The Pompeiian Horse* in Autumn 2014.

## Contact & Media Info

[Blog](#) | [Twitter](#)