

“Why aren’t you saying anything?” Althea Adams was not a happy camper. Not at all. She sat in the back seat, scooted forward, her hands gripping the head rests of the Audi, her attention for one person and one alone. “You know I hate it when you don’t say anything! I highly suspect you are doing this on purpose!”

Alex Wilder held his amusement, hastily turning his head to gaze out at the passing scenery. He also highly suspected Christopher Colton was ‘doing it on purpose’...but, he decided not to add his two cents into an already volatile situation.

“You wouldn’t like what I had to say anyway, trust me.” Christopher maneuvered the auto along the narrow lanes at a very high rate of speed, his hands clenching the wheel, his mouth set determinedly.

Alex chanced a glance at the other vampire, secretly enjoying Christopher’s predicament. Not many things could rattle or upset Colton. The Master usually appeared unflappable.

Alex could sense an underlying need to maim and kill emanating from his friend and mentor.

It kind of made him...well? Happy.

“It was your fault this all came about.” Althea pointed out. “I was just trying to please you and look at the thanks I get!”

“Althea!” Christopher yelled back at her. “You do not ever go against your Master for any purpose! Your loyalties lie with Marcus...had you asked, I would have told you as much and this stupid farce would never have taken place!”

“It would too!” Althea was relatively sure. “He...” She pointed at Alex Wilder. “Went and got himself mixed up with a human and that is why we are in this stupid farce not because...”

“Don’t even go there!” Christopher put a stop to that line of talk. Alex blinked his shock. Christopher was raising his voice. Christopher never raised his voice.

The veins in Christopher’s neck were straining. His hands were about to tear the steering column off its base, Alex was pretty sure.

“Edwin is the problem here! I could have handled the rest! I would have handled the rest! It is my fault for ever entrusting the task to you!”

The female sat back, folding her arms, her face sullen and unhappy. The ride continued in tense silence for a very long time.

Alex sought a topic to ease the strain. “Hey, she’s right. If I hadn’t...”

"Shut the hell up!" Christopher snapped, his anger still for Althea, obviously. Alex held his grin for the other being's state. "I have to think!"

"You require complete silence for that process?" Alex pushed his luck gleefully, keeping his face innocently 'straight'.

Christopher cut him a glare.

"Well, it's hard to think in a 'vacuum.'" Althea explained the anomaly to her satisfaction, which brought a 'lethal' glare from the front seat. The female ignored Christopher, returning to her nail filing.

The rest of the trip finished in silence. Heathrow Airport was crowded and bustling. The Audi was left at the rental garage, the trio making their way to the terminals.

"I have to pee." Althea sulked the statement. She was a pretty good sulker, Alex had to admit.

"Don't take all night." Christopher continued down the wide passageway, Alex Wilder by his side, the beings stepping in stride. "We'll be at the tarmac."

"Whatever." Althea rolled her eyes, making for the restrooms off to their left.

Alex Wilder waited until the female was out of ear range. "Don't you think you're being a little hard on her, Christopher? Shit happens. Cut her some slack."

"You don't understand the gravity of the situation, Alex." Christopher turned, waiting for the official to check his passport. "Our asses could be grass if this is not handled delicately."

"Well, you know more about it than I do but, she was just trying to impress you...to help out and she took a big risk to do it." Alex reminded. "Are you sure this has nothing to do with Edwin?"

Christopher slid his passport back into his inside pocket making room for Alex to hand his credentials over to the waiting Airport 'cop'. "It has everything to do with Edwin...like I pointed out to Pea Brain."

"I meant, Edwin and... Pea Brain."

"Get serious." Christopher dismissed disdainfully. "Thea is just another vamp, Alex. You know me." He lifted his brows. "And right now, I'm not happy with her at all."

The two beings fell silent, stepping behind the designated lines to wait for 'Pea Brain'.

Unfortunately, they were going to have a long wait.

Because 'Pea Brain' had decided she did not like the current situation and so she headed past the women's rest room down the corridor to a connecting corridor which led...out into the back side

of an alley that led to...another alley which led to...the street.

Althea hailed a taxi, wondering fleetingly how she would pay the fare. Oh well. If she could not talk a human male into letting that little tidbit slide, she didn't deserve the title God had granted her of...woman.

A half hour later found her deposited right back where this farce had all started. The same alleyway where Edwin, the bastard, had staked her ass.

Althea glanced down the darkened shadowy corridor.

It took longer to go around the buildings, but she started off, her bare feet cold on the pavement.

Her thoughts turned to Christopher Colton and for one horrible moment, she felt like crying but then, her anger resurfaced, and she refused to allow the emotion.

Althea lifted her head, marching onward determinedly...for all of half a block. To the intersection of the next alleyway and the street.

It happened so quickly, she did not even have time to gasp her shock.

A powerful force hurled her bodily into the darkness of alley overhangs, and she crumbled with a groan, up against the brick of the building, sliding down into the muck of dank water and grime that ran from a nearby dumpster.

The 'thing' advanced slowly, as if savoring the trek that would lead him finally to his prey.

The female shook the disorientation, her fangs unfolding, her strength heightening but when she looked up, Thea's hope faded quickly enough. The thing that advanced on her was indeed, one of her own kind but...

Thea held no false expectation that she could ever win a victory over...an Enforcer.

He was a large being with enormous shoulders that blocked most of the dim light of the street post behind him. His face was unpleasant looking, saliva dripping from the corners of its mouth. He was in a feeding frenzy, and more than determined to taste blood.

How he procured that substance would only add to the pleasure of the act.

The green glowing eyes glared down at Althea Adams. There was disdain and scorn in their depths for such a puny, unimportant thing.

Althea settled back, knowing defeat when she felt it. She would meet her demise with what little dignity she could muster. Fuck! She had not wanted to die this night! Not at all. Was there ever any good night in which to perish?

Well...she watched the thing approach, making peace with herself. "It could be worse." She quoted an old Mel Brooks film she knew by heart, her words whispered shakily. "It could be raining."

Overhead an ominous thunderclap announced just that possibility.

Althea looked up to the sky, thinking, even the elements were against her this shitty night.

She glanced back, knowing she had only seconds to savor what life remained for her.

The alleyway was...empty.

The female looked frantically about herself, searching for the icky thing that had threatened her seconds before.

Silence and a rising wind met her efforts. Slowly...Thea arose. Her eyes scanned the surrounding areas cautiously, warily.

She leaned slightly to peek around the corner of the dumpster. "...Hello?" She ventured a soft greeting.

"What would you do if he answered?"

Thea startled visibly; her nerves having been tightly wound as is. "Sweet Baby Jesus!" She had no problem voicing her displeasure in this instance. "Will...you...stop?????"

Edwin chuckled lowly, the sound vibrating along her hypersensitive nerve endings.

"Colton doesn't protect you very well, does he."

"Have you been following me?" Althea demanded indignantly.

"I did not have to, Althea." Edwin sighed heavily. "Your movements are quite easily discernable well in advance."

"What?"

"I knew you and Colton would argue, and since you have nowhere else to go, I assumed..." The being explained patiently. "You would come back to this area. You must have lodgings nearby. Yes?"

"No." She denied hastily. "No..I .." She gave up. "Well, yeah...actually."

"Ummm." The Enforcer nodded slowly, standing, hands in the pockets of a cashmere coat. He had donned a black silk scarf which hung about his neck so effectively, lending his attire that 'GQ' look Althea so admired on men.

“Where...where is he? Why did he...just...go?” The young vampire was stumped, lifting confused eyes.

“Because I told him to go.” The explanation seemed simple enough to the Enforcer.

“I.. I didn’t hear...”

“I did not say anything.” Edwin cocked his head to one side to study the female more intently.

“Oh.” Thea analyzed the reply and all its meanings. “But. He was so...large!”

“So am I. Have you forgotten so soon?” He held his amusement for her state. “Because I have not forgotten, Althea. I remember it all. Quite vividly.”

The female lowered her eyes, her system certainly getting a workout this night. “I r-remember.”

“Good.” The being caressed her with his tone and his eyes. “So... where do we go from here?”

Althea sought him out. In the dim light of the lamp post, The Enforcer’s features were more sharply defined, the dark eyes that could be soft and inviting, were shielded. He seemed so very much more imposing somehow.

“My...apartment?” Her voice had trembled slightly, she noted.

"Good....girl." Pride was in his voice, and the thought that she had somehow pleased him made the sound vibrate across her skin, leaving goose flesh in its wake.

Edwin lifted his hand indicating she should lead the way. He fell into step beside her, matching his strides to her much shorter ones.

“Where the hell are your shoes?” He had noted her bare feet. “Colton is a cheap ass bastard! Why did he not..”

“He doesn’t know I’m gone...well..”Thea defended Christopher then, wondered why she should have.“He probably does now.”

Edwin chuckled his amusement. “You gave them the slip?”

“He was being mean.”

“I imagine he was.” Edwin made a mental note for later. “And he paid the price, I see. All well and good...for me.”

She looked up to him, her expression benign. “I don’t like mean people.”

“I know.” He glanced around the almost deserted streets. “Humans...they rather ask for it, do they not.” He had noted two women across the street, laughing rather boisterously. Althea noted they had a bottle of liquor. She imagined that is where the ‘good times’ had come from.

“Yes.” She agreed wholeheartedly, moving on down the street.

Edwin glanced down at her. He noted the blond hair, so long and silky moving almost hypnotically with her strides. It was very attractive.

“Would you like me to kill them for you?”

Thea jerked her eyes to the being’s face. “Why would you say something like that?”

“Anna Lisa becomes...aroused when I kill for her.”

“That is just...” Althea sought the word. “Ewwww. I don’t need ‘that’ to get aroused, thank you very much!”

“What do you need?” The vampire was quick to pick up on the opening.

“If you’re truly interested enough.” She stopped her steps in front of an older building. Six steps led to a weathered door with two glass panels that were etched with a Grecian design. “You’ll find out on your own.”

Edwin smiled slowly down at the pretty turned up features. “I am interested enough.” he crooned silkily, his green eyes deepening.

Thea settled. “Well, good then.” She glanced at her surroundings aimlessly. “This is it.”

“Invite me in.” His eyes dropped meaningfully to a spot decidedly lower on her body, his tone doing all sorts of nice things to her nether regions. Althea chose to ignore the implication for the moment.

“I don’t have the key. It was in my purse.” she lifted a scolding stare.

Edwin glanced at the door. He lifted noble brows, asking the rhetorical question.

“I don’t see any other way.” it was philosophized. “But you’re going to pay for any damages...okay?”

“You lost the key.” Edwin climbed the steps holding his amusement. The small form halted, her look one of censorship. “Which means...I will pay in the end, correct?” He was beginning to understand her ‘value system’.

“You’re the one that is going to break in.” Thea’s value system was intact in her world.

“I see.” Edwin hid his humor. “Mercenary little bitch, aren’t you. I like that in my females.” He smiled down at her, continuing onto his assigned ‘task’.

“You said... Anna Lisa becomes aroused.” Things had to ‘click’ in Thea’s mind and this oddity had been bothering her for several moments now.

Edwin halted his shove against the door, his shoulders braced to take the impact. He dreaded the impact he was about to take far more. “It was a long time ago. A very long time.”

“No... that is fine.” She wasn’t jealous or anything, not seriously so, Thea didn’t think. Just curious. “You...killed people for her so that she could...you guys could...eh..”

“You know what I am, Althea.” The Enforcer scolded her. “I cannot change that...even for a taste of your cunt, no matter how delicious it might be.”

“I..” She stammered at such bluntness, her cheeks tinting an amber hue. “I only meant...” She wasn’t sure what she meant, the vulgarity having thrown her a bit. If she could have blushed, she would have. She realized, she came pretty damned close just then, all the same.

“Tell me now.” Edwin allowed his hand to drop from the doorknob. “The parameters of any relationship we might conceivably share, must be defined and understood. By all, agreed?”

She nodded, the wind whipping her hair about playfully, small ringlets of rain spotting the soft cotton blouse she wore. “I understand.”

“What...is it, you understand?” He demanded to know.

“I’m cold.”

He broke the lock easily, proceeding her into the darkened apartment. She flipped a switch, and the living area was bathed in light.

Edwin closed the door, stepping the few steps from the narrow hallway into the room. He watched the female move about her flat.

His keen eyes took in the uncluttered area with its colorful sofa and lounge chair, the many stacks of books and papers that frequented the space. It was organized and precise but, clearly, Althea had a lot of ‘projects’ going on at one time.

“Would you like something?”

The Vampire shook his head. “What is it you ‘understand’?” He brought matters back on course.

“You...you are just interested in. The eh, you know. The sex.” Thea tried nonchalance, sitting, having found a pair of warm socks, which she pulled on her feet now. “It’s all Christopher is interested in too.” She stood, her hands primly folded now, before her. “Or...it was. But that’s

okay, really. I don't need or expect anything more. I get it."

"Then you 'understand'...shit." Edwin was a blunt kind of being. "I can have any number of sexual encounters. I wish for something...more."

Thea blinked. "Ohh!" That shocked her. "Then you and Anna Lisa are...eh..umm.. 'together'?"

"No." Edwin replied quietly.

Althea was lost. But then again...she didn't wish to pry. "Oh. Okay."

She smiled brightly at the being. "Well...eh. I should thank you...again, for saving my ass tonight."

"I have plans for it." Edwin's mood was going downhill fast, for he sensed, the female did not grasp his needs. "I am interested in you, Althea. I want you to be with me. And that does not include any future dalliances with Christopher Colton or any other male. Be it Vampire or human."

"But..."

"You expect faithfulness in return, yes." The being nodded minutely, his gaze a steady one. "...I will comply."

"You will?????" The young vampire's eyes widened with shock. Her system reacting before her brain. "Get out!" she expressed her awe for such an unexpected statement.

Edwin glanced at the door. "When I have finished what I have to say."

"Eh..no." Althea arose, shaking her head at the obvious misunderstanding. "I meant...I am shocked that you would agree to such stipulations where a female is concerned."

"Why would I not?" It was Edwin's turn to be confused.

"Because you clearly don't have to." Thea shook her head woefully, the long hair swishing softly with the movements. She glanced at the stocky form, trying to keep her gaze a neutral one.

"It is a horrible night outside." She listened to the sound of the wind and rain pelting the windowpanes. "Can you stay?" Her tone had softened ten-fold, her eyes open and vulnerable for once.

"...Do you wish me to stay?" Edwin's tone matched hers, his own stare, a brooding one.

Althea knew he was asking more than, did she wish him to stay, as in...out of the elements.

She thought of Christopher Colton and the 'stipulation' Edwin had stated.

“I guess...not.” She sighed heavily, knowing the restriction was one, she was not ready for.

“Fine.” He turned and... left. With no further words.

Althea stared at the empty doorway. She crossed, closing it gently. She had to place the potted plant against it to make the portal stay shut.

She glanced out the etched glass panels into the now deserted street. “I am low on supplies anyway.” There was a definite sadness to her voice for she felt infinitely sad.

She had lost Christopher Colton as a friend and Edwin as a lover all in one shitty night. “Breakfast would have been a wipe out.”

The young vampire fell into the large lounge chair, grasping the cushion that supplied a flash of color to the brown suede material, hugging it close to her breast.

Althea listened to the sound of the storm outside. She wanted to go to Marcus because she knew...he could make it all better.

No matter what life did, all she ever had to do was go to her Master. He could take the darkest day and fill it with light.

Even that was denied her these days. She began to wonder if Edwin had done her such a swell favor when he had interfered with the other Enforcer.

She lay her head back, tugging a coverlet over her body, snuggling down into the comfort. She closed her eyes, eventually falling into a restless sleep.

Fuck them all. She didn't need any of them. Not really. She would think of something. She always did.

After all, 'tomorra was another day'.

A quote to live by. Scarlett O'Hara was one smart female. And although most thought of Althea as stupid, she was not. And another thing she was good at...surviving.

The storm soothed her, and if another Enforcer came...so be it. She would cross that bridge when it was on the horizon. She was weary and she would sleep...rest. So... she did.