

He looked . . . offended.

“You didn’t tell me you were a telepath.”

She shrugged. “You didn’t ask.”

“You applied for a job. I assumed you would have shared your complete resume.” He leaned down, wrapping her in the scent of clean male skin and scotch. “Or were you keeping secrets even back then?”

His lips brushed the top of her ear, sending streaks of lightning through her body.

Danger, excitement, and pure lust twisted her stomach into a knot.

Dammit. She’d spent the past four years isolated in the bowels of a Russian monastery. She wasn’t prepared to deal with the cascade of sensations.

She struggled to suck air into her lungs. “I wasn’t a telepath when I applied for the job,” she said in hoarse tones.

He frowned, his fingers resuming their absent path up and down her arm. Was he even aware of what he was doing?

Her skin shivered with delight.

“Is that supposed to be a joke?” he demanded.

She grimaced, understanding his annoyance. High-bloods were born with their mutations, even if some didn’t reveal themselves until after puberty. Most people only had one, but a rare few could claim a combination.

Like Bas, who’d been born with both the magic of a witch and the superior strength of a Sentinel. And even more rare were those powers that appeared later in life, seemingly out of nowhere.

None of the healers had an explanation.

It simply happened.

“The talent didn’t reveal itself until I was pregnant,” she grudgingly confessed.

He lifted his head, genuine amazement in his eyes. “A spontaneous manifestation?”

“Yes.”

He studied her with a searing intensity. “Fine. You should have told me you were in contact with Molly.”

She forced herself to hold that raptor gaze. Bas was a natural leader with a male confidence that easily intimidated others.

In other words . . . an arrogant ass.

He would run her over completely if she didn’t try to stand her ground.

“As I said, you’re not my boss.”

“No, but I am Molly’s father.”

“I know that—” she started to snap, only to bite her tongue. Well, hell.

He was right.

“And?” he prompted.

She grimaced. It was true he was an arrogant ass, but he’d taken in a baby that he hadn’t known existed, without question and without hesitation, and surrounded her with the sort of love every little girl deserved.

As much as it might pain her to stroke his bloated ego, she owed him her eternal gratitude.

“I’m truly appreciative that you’ve done such a wonderful job with Molly.” She managed to force the words past her stiff lips. “She’s a very special little girl and I know that you had a very large part in that.”

He blinked, a flare of color staining the sharp line of his cheekbones.

Had she managed to knock him off guard?

Amazing.

Then his lips abruptly thinned. "You're very good at deflecting my questions," he accused.

She dropped her gaze to his thousand-dollar Italian shoes. "Then stop asking them."

"Myst." His finger curled beneath her chin, tilting her head up. "Why didn't you let me know you were in contact with my daughter?"

A fresh pain sliced through her heart. "Our daughter," she corrected in fierce tones.

His lips parted, but before he could deny her right to be a mother, Molly's plaintive voice interrupted their tense confrontation.

"Daddy, I want Mommy to tell the story."

Myst glanced toward the tiny girl who was perched on the edge of the bed before returning her wary gaze to the predator who was nearly vibrating with the urge to toss her through the nearest window.

"Let me go to her, Bas," she said in low tones. "Please."

Frustration tightened his stark features, but dropping his hands, he forced himself to take a step back.

"Tell her the story. Then we talk," he warned, turning his head to send his daughter a smile that held uncomplicated affection. "Good night, pet."

Bas stalked from the room, his phone pressed to his ear as he reached the main room of the suite.

"Kaede," he snapped as soon as his enforcer picked up. "I need you in Kansas City. I'll explain when you get here."

He shoved the phone back into his pocket and paced to the bank of windows that overlooked the Kansas City skyline.

Unfucking believable.

After five years of paying a fortune to trackers, witches, and even a human private investigator to hunt down Myst, she waltzes into his penthouse as if she had every right to be there.

Worse, he discovered that she'd been in constant contact with Molly.

A short, humorless laugh was wrenched from his throat.

No, that wasn't the worst.

The worst was the undeniable fact that he found her just as damned exquisite as the first time she'd sashayed that tiny body into his office.

His fingers had twitched with the urge to run through the moonlit silk of her hair. To yank off her pretty sundress and explore the pale ivory skin that had haunted his dreams. To crush the soft curve of her lips until they parted in help-less surrender.

*Emotions are the enemy.*

He'd been taught that by the monks who'd honed him into the perfect killer.

But Myst managed to shatter a lifetime of training, stir-ring his passions with an ease that was frankly terrifying.

He needed her gone.

Now.

Pacing toward the long bar that was set near the leather sectional couch, Bas grimly poured himself a scotch. Tomorrow he would have the suite cleaned from top to bottom. Maybe that would get rid of the lingering scent of honeysuckle.

He was on his second drink when he heard the sound of approaching footsteps and he whirled to study the woman who came to a hesitant halt in the center of the room.

His brows snapped together. He told himself it was because she was an unwelcome interloper and not because she looked as delicate and ethereal as a moonbeam.

A very sexy moonbeam.

She wrapped her arms around her slender waist, making a visible effort to meet his gaze.

“There’s no need to glare at me,” she chided.

He set aside his empty glass, smoothing his face to an unreadable mask.

It was something that should have come easily. He was a cold, ruthless assassin, wasn’t he? Unfortunately, this woman had a unique talent of getting under his skin.

In more ways than one.

“You’ve been screwing with my daughter’s mind,” he said between clenched teeth, still unnerved by the revelation that this woman had been speaking with Molly without his knowledge.

Her chin jutted to a defensive angle. “I’ll admit that I’ve often communicated with Molly, but I was hardly screwing with her mind. We talked like any other mother and daughter.”

He narrowed his gaze. “You knew very well that I was unaware of your telepathic powers. You deliberately used that lack of awareness to take advantage.”

“Molly was the one to reach out to me.”

His scowl deepened. “How? You’re not trying to claim she’s a telepath?”

“No, but I could sense her,” Myst muttered. “She needed to know that her mother loved her.”

“A mother who loves her child doesn’t abandon her.”

She flinched at his deliberate attack. “I didn’t . . .”

“Didn’t what?” “Nothing.”

He studied her pale face.

She was hiding something. But what?

“Why are you here?”

“You know why.” She hunched a shoulder. “I’m here to see my daughter.”

“Why?” he pressed again. “Four years ago you left her on my bed and walked away without looking back. Surely you can understand my confusion why you were struck with a burning need to see her now.”

Her lovely face, which looked far too young to be a mother, flushed at his accusation.

“Molly was traumatized when she was kidnapped.” His breath hissed between his teeth.

The memory of Molly’s kidnapping was still a raw wound that made him think about killing things.

“You don’t have to remind me,” he snapped. “We were all traumatized when she was taken.”

The velvet-brown eyes widened with something that might have been confusion. “I’m not blaming you.”

“Then what are you doing?” he asked.

“Trying to explain that after Molly was taken she reached out to me in terror,” she said, her voice trembling as if she’d been as tormented as he’d been by her abduction. “She couldn’t

tell me where she was, or who'd taken her, so all I could do was try to give her comfort and swear to her that I would come and visit if she would be a good girl and do everything they told her to do until you could come for her."

Her soft words should have infuriated him. What right did she have to make promises to his daughter?

Instead, he went hunter-still. "You were so certain I would find her?"

"Yes," she said without hesitation.

Shit.

He struggled to keep his face devoid of emotion at the insane flare of pleasure that raced through him at her absolute confidence in his skills.

What the hell was wrong with him?

It wasn't as if this woman's opinion mattered, did it?

"Is that why it took you a week to get here?" he snapped, angered by his ridiculous reaction to this female. "Or were you just too busy to care that your daughter was in danger?"

Her head snapped back, an unexpected fury tightening her delicate features.

"Don't ever say I don't care about Molly," she spit out, her hands clenched into tiny balls. "I left the second I knew she'd been taken. If I hadn't had to make sure I wasn't being followed I would have—"

She bit off her impulsive words, stiffly turning to walk toward the bank of windows.

"Followed?" he instantly pounced. Was this a trick? A lame excuse for not rushing to help in the search for Molly?

"By who?"

"It doesn't matter."

Bas kept his gaze locked on the fragile profile reflected in the window.

"It does if you're in danger."

She hunched her shoulders, a visible shiver shaking her body.

"All I'm asking is a few days to spend with my daughter," she said in low tones.

Bas was moving before he could halt his forward progress, grabbing her shoulders so he could turn her to meet his searching gaze.

"I want to know why you think you're being followed," he insisted.

Her ridiculously thick lashes lowered to hide her expressive eyes. A sure sign she was about to lie.

"You're always in hiding," she muttered. "I didn't want to accidentally give away your location."

"Bullshit."

Her jaw tightened, but her gaze stayed lowered. "Can I stay?"

His grip eased on her shoulders, his fingers compulsively stroking the satin-soft skin of her back.

"For how long?" he demanded.

"A few days."

"And then you intend to disappear into the ether once again?"

"Yes."

Some undefinable emotion clenched his stomach at her blunt admission that she couldn't be bothered to spend more than a handful of hours with her child.

His hand moved from her shoulder to grasp her chin, tilting back her head so he could study her delicate features.

So innocent.

The face of an angel.

How the hell could she be so cruel toward her only child?

Unless . . .

“Do you have another family?” he abruptly demanded.

She blinked, as if confused by his question. “Do you mean parents or siblings?”

His lips thinned. “I’m asking if you have a husband and pack of kids. Is that why you treat Molly like a dirty secret?”

“Of course not,” she breathed, a genuine outrage darkening her eyes. “And I don’t treat Molly like a dirty secret.”

Dropping his hands as if he’d been scalded, Bas took a step back.

He didn’t want to feel a sharp-edged relief that he’d been wrong in his suspicion that Myst was already claimed by another male.

He didn’t want to feel anything for this woman.

“No,” he said abruptly.

“No what?” she asked in bewilderment.

“No, you can’t stay,” he informed, retreating behind his icy composure. “It isn’t fair to Molly.”

She sucked in a sharp breath, her expression stricken. “A visit from her mother isn’t fair?”

“You can’t just appear and disappear from her life when-ever you want.” He shrugged. “It’s too confusing.”

“All I’m asking is a few days.”

“No.”

“Bas . . .” She held out a slender hand. “Please.”

Her soft, pleading expression didn’t touch him, he fiercely assured himself.

He was turning away and heading out of the room because he needed to check on Molly, not because he was trying to avoid the blatant yearning on her beautiful face.

And the strange emotion that was currently twisting his gut into tight knots wasn’t guilt.

Or regret.

No way.

“Lock the door on your way out,” he commanded, refusing to glance at her.

“I’ll return in the morning,” she said, the words soft but stubborn.

His steps never faltered. “You’re wasting your time.”

“It’s my time to waste,” she muttered. “I’ll be back.”

Bas had reached the end of the short hallway when he heard the sound of Myst’s retreating footsteps, followed by the closing of the door.

Coming to a sharp halt, he pulled out his phone and made a swift call to his security team.

“There’s a silver-haired woman leaving the building,” he said in clipped tones. “I want her followed.”

Keeping the phone in his hand, he quietly entered his daughter’s room, standing beside her bed to savor the sight of her tiny body curled beneath the blankets.

Usually he loved these moments. When the world was quiet and he could enjoy the knowledge his daughter was safe in his care.

But tonight his peace was disrupted by the lingering scent of honeysuckle that stirred sensations he hadn’t felt in far too long.

Damn, Myst.

Damn her to hell.

His phone vibrated and with long strides he headed out the door and into his bedroom across the hallway.

“You got her?” he demanded as he pressed the phone to his ear. He stiffened as the hunter Sentinel shared the bad news that Myst had somehow managed to slip past them unnoticed. “Shit.”

Throwing the phone across the room, Bas watched with satisfaction as it shattered in a spray of worthless technology.