

## Valentine's Day Interview with Joey W. Hill & the Vampire Queen crew

*Setting:* It's after midnight on Valentine's Day in the penthouse apartment over Club Atlantis. The living area is an open space with high quality furnishings and window treatments for the three walls of windows that overlook the lighted industrial district and horizon of downtown buildings. The sliding glass doors are open to a rooftop garden, complete with an assortment of potted plants and trees, garden statuary and benches, unique pieces of sculpture and pottery. DaVinciKittie (DVK) and Joey are sitting on the comfortable sectional where they can feel the nighttime breeze, making the retracted blinds ripple on occasion. They're awaiting Lyssa and Jacob. Jacob has left a note on the glass coffee table, along with a pair of white roses with crimson edges...

*Will arrive for the interview promptly at one a.m. Lady Lyssa wanted to observe some of the planned performances tonight. Her servant, ever obedient, is hoping not to become one of them, but if I arrive naked, bruised and bloody, don't get alarmed. My lady is always a gentle soul.*

Joey chuckles, putting down her glass of wine. "His dry wit is one of the things I like most about him. Lyssa likes it, too, though of course she'd never admit it. Do you want a glass of wine before we get started with our one-on-one? I think Anwyn has a fully stocked bar back here. Though it's best to avoid the things in the refrigerator that look like blood, since they usually are."

**Your characters have such depth and emotional range, some of the most well-written I've ever read. Where does your inspiration for them come from?**

Thank you very much for that. Usually when my protagonists hit center stage in my mind, there is an emotional conflict of some kind. I'll use Lyssa as an example. In the beginning of [Vampire Queen's Servant](#), she didn't have a servant, needs one, but perhaps isn't ready to admit she needs one. Why? As the story unfolds, you learn her last servant was lost under tragic circumstances having to do with her deranged vampire mate. This 1000-year-old queen has a tremendous amount of loss, battle and accomplishment in her history, but the losses of the past two years have taken their toll. She's closing down emotionally, weary of all of it. That was the gateway, an arrow that told me which way to go to show her as a complex character who could draw readers into her story.

We all reach a point when we're overwhelmed, not sure which way to go next, or if we have any effort to go on at all. We've all lost loved ones, people we couldn't admit how strong our feelings were for them, until they were gone. Even though Lyssa is a powerful vampire, often seemingly cruel and unyielding, demanding of those around her, the challenge to me as an author becomes maintaining that strength while highlighting her vulnerabilities. I want to create a complex, compelling character we can relate to, hate, love, laugh with, cry with, etc. She's larger than life, but she's also each one of us, in a sense. A thousand years or forty, we all share certain things in common.

So in short, what drives my writing is exploring the territory of mind, heart and soul. My work is character-driven, because what interests me most is why people do the things they do, and getting past the surface layers and labels to really understand who they are. I guess that's what inspires me to dig as deeply as I do. In doing that, I have to dig into myself as well, give a piece of who I am to each character. A truly good author can't be detached. It's as much an exploration of my psyche as theirs.

**Does music help you storyboard and write? Does each character have their own type of music to help you define and shape them?**

Definitely. I usually time the planning/plotting of the next project when I'm on a trip. I listen to music on my Ipod that will get me in the mood/environment of the story, and then I record my scene, dialogue and character ideas into a recorder. Over time, I've created some basic playlists. "Scores" for paranormal/magic scenes, "SoftSultry" for the more erotic scenes, "FavFast" for the more high powered/upbeat scenes. My main playlist, however, is called "MiscEmote". A lot of love songs, searing ballads, etc, because I tend to have many dark, emotional and intense scenes (smile).

As I write a story, sometimes I'll create a sub-set playlist of these main lists that fit the project I'm doing. I also add to it as I find new music. Readers are great about suggesting new songs to me, and when *Glee* was doing good music (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> season), I received a lot of inspiration from their soundtracks. Some of the shows I watch, like *Criminal Minds*, *Covert Affairs*, etc, often offer lovely, poignant ballads during the course of the show or at the end of them. I found the most fitting song for Gideon of [Vampire Mistress/Vampire Trinity](#) at the end of a *Criminal Minds* episode – *Far From Home*, from Five Finger Death Punch.

I've put a handful of the playlists out on the forum – specific ones for [Hostile Takeover](#), [Beloved Vampire](#), [Vampire Mistress](#), and the infamous MiscEmote list!

**Your grasp of the psychology behind BDSM and the dom/sub relationship is masterful. I haven't read any other author who explains it as well as you do, such that I "get" it. Are you active in the lifestyle? Have you done much research into techniques and the overarching structure?**

I am a submissive, and figured that out about myself in my mid-twenties, so I've had about twenty years to explore it for myself personally (smile). Though I'm not in a location/situation that lends itself to me participating in more public environments, like local fetish clubs or group munches, I've researched the mechanics through the usual ways – book/Internet research, attending a fetish con, talking to those who have participated in public venues for D/s play. Those steps are to be sure I have the trappings right, and to validate my explorations into the psychology, which is what interests me most about D/s personally and as a writer. As one person told me, a Dom can command her simply with a light touch on her shoulder, a direct look and quiet order to "sit down". While the mechanics/dramatic sessions can be very important, I think if an author doesn't truly "get" the psychology - why that sub's knees went weak and she became wet from a simple command to sit down, then that richness can't be in your writing. I appreciate your compliment!

**DVK: Jacob and Lyssa's journey has been literally epic. Is there more in store for them? Can we look forward to more stories in the Vampire Queen series overall?**

Literally is right. Writing [Bound by the Vampire Queen](#) was an epic effort (lol). While I don't know if the muse will ever have another full-length book for them, I feel certain they'll reappear as important secondary characters in other works. I am contracted to write two more books in the series during the coming year. If you'd like to see the details of who they'll be about, be sure and go to the [Future Projects section](#) of my website and drop down to the [Vampire Queen series](#). However, I'll give you the names here – Evan and Niall made an appearance in the club scene of [Beloved Vampire](#) (Niall was the big Scot who danced with Jessica), and Alanna was the tragically doomed Inherited Servant in [Vampire Trinity](#). They'll be coming together for a ménage a trois story in the first book. The next book will likely be about Alistair and Nina, mentioned in [Vampire's Claim](#) – we'll be learning how they came together.

**Gideon's trinity relationship is complicated and deep, walking the edge both mentally and physically. Did you find it harder to write the nuances of their story? Is there anything special you do to help you get in the right mindset?**

While I loved all three of these characters, there were times that writing them was a tremendous challenge. It's hard enough to effectively communicate the nuances of two people interacting with one another. Three? Six potential interactive directions, and all three people had issues to resolve (lol). My husband lost count of the number of times I declared "What the hell was I thinking when I said I wanted to write a ménage?! Never again! Smack me if I ever even suggest it!" Sooo... what's the next planned vampire book? Yep. A ménage. The muse likes to yank my chain. She's the true sadist in my life.

However, each book in a series builds on the last, in terms of teaching me how to write emotional nuances. I couldn't have written Daegan, Anwyn and Gideon if I hadn't written Lyssa and Jacob first, because the complexity of their relationship in [Vampire Queen's Servant](#) was a testing ground for [Vampire Mistress](#). I like the challenge of taking strong-willed, difficult people and figuring out how to twine them together. When I get "in the groove" while writing, it's a great place to be.

To get into that groove takes a few steps, but the most important is sitting myself down and starting to write. For years, while I juggled a day job and volunteer responsibilities, I had to write whenever I found a few minutes, so I learned never to "need" any particular prop or environment to start writing. Once I start writing, I'm feeling around for that "groove". It may take me awhile to get there. Some days I don't make it, but I still fill up the pages. I can come back during the editing round and make that groove work. But some days, I'll hit a rich vein and the story will just take off. There are things that can help that – uninterrupted writing time, a good music score, a good mental place for myself, enough sleep (never have enough of that – lol). But to be honest, over ten years of doing this, you train yourself to be in the right mindset for writing, and you don't let yourself out of it. You keep fingers to the keyboard, pen to paper, and keep moving forward until you find your characters, who they really are.

**Ok let's lighten it up a little before Jacob and Lyssa join us! This is "the drill". Say the first thing that comes to your mind, short answers...**

**Boxers or briefs?** Snug boxers, the stretchy, short kind. Think Daniel Craig's swimsuit in Casino Royale.

**Favorite character in a book not yours?** Jamie Fraser in the Outlander series. I agree with Claire- if I was her, I'd follow him to the ends of the earth.

**Biggest food weakness/addiction?** Nestle Tollhouse chocolate chip cookies, fresh from the oven. Think I've mentioned them several times in my books. I can't resist them – I will eat two dozen in no time.

**Most outrageous modern day women's fashion?** The hiphugger jeans – really? If I wanted to wear pants that made my hips look twice as wide and showed my ass crack every time I bent over, I would have become a plumber. I can't wait until “at the waist” jeans return! (The ones that call themselves “at the waist” right now are big fat liars.)

**Favorite accessory on a man?** A white dress shirt on a broad-shouldered man always catches my eye. Especially if he has the sleeves rolled up. I think that's part of why I started my [Knights of the Board Room](#) series – love the way a man looks in a suit. Though a man wearing jeans in just the right way...that's a very close second!

**Weirdest fact about yourself most people wouldn't know?** I'm terrified of daddy longlegs. I know they're utterly harmless, but every time I try to let one crawl on me to overcome the fear, I freak out. I don't hurt them, though.

**Sneakers or stilettos?** Sneakers. Even though I like the way my legs look in high heels, the minute I start walking in them, I look like a constipated stork.

**If you could trade places with any current or historical figure, it would be...** Guinevere. Instead of destroying Camelot, I'd show Arthur and Lancelot the benefits of a threesome (lol).

**Do you still have your trusty steed... er, boat... Shadowfax? When I read your bio at the end of Board Resolution, I just had to ask!**

No, unfortunately. We loved that sailboat. However, as time went on, our interests moved away from boating, so we eventually sold her. It's a crime to have a sailboat you don't take out on the water. They're meant to be out there with their wings spread. We still live near the water and love it, but Shadowfax is now sailing with a new family, which is good.

\* \* \* \* \*

The sound of the elevator arriving on the floor, the security code engaging, alerts DVK to the arrival of Lyssa and Jacob. Jacob steps off first, his glance sweeping the room steadily before he focuses on them. His usual easy smile crosses his handsome features. Unfortunately, he's not naked, but it's obvious that Lyssa and he have been engaged in some provocative play below, because there's still a light sheen of sweat on his upper body, visible because the dark dress shirt he's wearing is open over his slacks and there are a few subtle bloodstains on his abdomen. He's also still impressively aroused, suggesting that Lyssa was continuing her “torment” of him in the elevator. The vampire queen steps out, grazing her nails over his chest, a track that leaves faint red lines. Her gaze also covers the area, reminding DVK that, though the vampire queen trusts Jacob's protective instincts, she's been a warrior herself too long to abandon caution.

Her jade green gaze lands on DVK, studying, assessing, before she gives a cool nod, dips her head toward Jacob. “A glass of Anwyn’s house red, please, Jacob. Flavored with your blood. Get yourself something as well.” Her gaze flicks over him. “You need to hydrate.”

**“It’s great to finally meet you both. Where is little Kane tonight?”**

“It’s our pleasure.” Jacob moves toward the kitchen as Lyssa settles on the sectional across from them. DVK notices he glances at their glasses to make sure they’re still full enough not to need topping. “He’s with Daegan in the lower apartment, dead to the world by now. Kane, not Daegan. Vampire children fall asleep well before dawn. Just like human toddlers, they have an earlier bedtime. And of course, Daegan was probably showing him how to fight, pinning him under barbells, that kind of thing, so he’s likely even more worn out.”

A look passes between him and Lyssa that suggests a communication. “Yeah, he’s asleep. We’re both connected to his mind on an emotional level, so to speak, like a baby monitor. Plus he has lungs that could decimate a brass band. Like the X-Men mutant that bursts ear drums when she opens her mouth.”

**“Ok, speaking of which... graphic novel showdown time, steel cage deathmatch: Marvel vs DC?”**

“That’s a tough one. DC has Superman, Green Lantern, etc, who can be pretty invincible, but then on the Marvel side, you have Spider-Man, Professor X, Iron Man... basically all the brainiacs, many of who also have special abilities and toys. The one I’d like to see would be a match-up between Batman and Iron Man, since it’s basically a test of minds. I’m betting Tony can kick Bruce’s butt, but they’d probably still go out for beer afterward and swap gadget ideas.”

**“Who is your favorite superhero or villain?”**

“My lady would be the answer to both of those questions.” Jacob sits down on the couch next to her, handing her the wine glass. When he lifts her other hand to his lips, he caresses her knuckles. In response, she curves wicked nails into his palm, deep enough to draw blood, her gaze glinting crimson at him. He slants DVK a look. “See what I mean? But I assume you mean from the Marvel Comics cast.

“For that, I would also have the same answer for both questions. Emma Frost, the Ice Queen. She’s been both villain and hero in the series. She’s powerful, unpredictable... complicated to understand, but always mesmerizing. Though my lady doesn’t see it, I find it pretty ironic that she was my favorite character long before I met her.”

Lyssa raises a brow. “Actually, I think you latched onto me because you couldn’t have this fictitious character.”

“And what about you, my lady? Weren’t you the one who told me if Wolverine offered to be your servant, I’d be out on my ass in a heartbeat?”

“Actually, that was Hugh Jackman, but...” She shrugs her elegant shoulders, gives that feline smile. “You’ll do until he arrives on my doorstep.”

“On that note,” Jacob adds with a wry smile, “she does occasionally read comic books with me, or lets me read them to her while she lays on my chest and looks at the pictures, but we both agree that my brother has a great deal of Wolverine in him – both the comic book and the movie character.”

**“Whose power would you just love to, ah, acquire... Rogue-style? Would you use it for good or eeeee-veel?”**

“Spider-Man, definitely. The ability to scale walls, swing off of skyscrapers – I’d never have to deal with traffic again. If the Twin Towers were still around, I’d spin a web between the two top floors like a hammock, bring my lady up there so she could lie on it and look up at the full moon with me.” He curves a hand over her bare foot, where she’s folded her legs up beneath her on the couch. Her high heels are tumbled on the floor. “Of course, that super flexibility wouldn’t be bad, what with some of the things she wants me to do. I have to remind her that third mark doesn’t necessarily mean I’m as flexible or stretchable as Mr. Fantastic.”

“Whine, whine, whine,” Lyssa murmurs with a demure eye roll. “You weren’t whining when I had you stretched on the rack. I believe you were asking for more.”

“I will always ask for more of what gives my lady pleasure.”

It’s obvious there’s a whole additional conversation happening between the two of them, but it doesn’t feel rude. In fact, DVK feels somehow included in the sensual warmth between the two, the lingering sexual vibes twining around them.

At this point, Joey squeezes her hand and whispers, “I need to go get a chapter written. Meet you back downstairs. Having them to yourself will be more fun for you, anyway. Scream if you need me.” DVK isn’t sure if she’s kidding or not, especially when the author gives her a significant look and moves toward the elevator.

**“Jacob, having experienced both sides, you're in a unique position to understand innate qualities about both human servants and made vampires, do you mind if I ask a few personal questions?”**

“Not at all. My lady will let you know if they’re too personal.” Jacob watches Lyssa sample the wine. At an arched brow, he nods, apparently receiving direction that the mix isn’t yet what she wants. DVK watches him draw a blade, nick his wrist with expert precision and catch the bloodstream in the glass. Then he hands it back to her. Lyssa touches her lips to the small channel of blood that has marked the inside of the bowl like a garnish. Handing him the glass, she brings his wrist to her mouth for a brief direct taste, staunching the blood flow. In that moment, it’s obvious there’s no one else in the room to Jacob, his blue eyes caressing her hair, her delicate features. It’s also obvious that her taking nourishment from him is deeply important

to him. When she's done and settles back, he hands her the glass, but he also holds up an apologetic hand toward DVK, draws a radio from his belt.

"Gideon? You there?"

"Yeah, bro. What you need?"

"You have any maraschinos up here? Lyssa wants one to flavor her wine."

"Tell her those fruity garnishes really undermine her badass image. Yeah. You'll find them in the upper cabinet, back behind the spices."

"She's ignoring you, as always. Hey, cage match between Spidey and Superman. Who wins?" Jacob slants a grin at DVK, waiting for the answer.

"As long as Superman doesn't catch Spidey in a bear grip, I say Spidey basically wraps him up in sticky thread all day long. Peter's smart and he's a scrapper. He'll keep coming back until he wins, no matter how often Superman beats him down."

Jacob clicks off, finds the cherry for Lyssa, places it in her wine before settling back on the couch. Then he looks back toward DVR. "I think you were about to ask some more personal questions?"

**"Sexual drive is increased for both vampire and servant and I know vampires have a higher natural aggression, but what about the skill to be a sexual Dominant? Is that a given vampire instinct or is there a learning curve?"**

"The instinct is given. When I was a vampire...well, let me go back. As a human, before I met my lady, I tended to lead in the bedroom, as long as the lady in question was comfortable with that, and I made sure she was." A smile here, another caress of Lyssa's foot, as if he knows he's heading into some tricky waters, referring to past lovers. "Being alpha isn't really the same thing as being a sexual Dominant, but when I started learning about vampire dinner parties, I found I could take that role with a female servant, when my lady desired it. I believe it was something within my makeup, but not the overriding part of who I was sexually.

"However, when I became a vampire, there was this...enhancement, for lack of a better word, of the alpha tendencies, particularly when it came to sexual interaction. A vampire sees almost everything in terms of prey and predator, and not just toward an enemy. They see it that way for sexual partners as well." He squeezed her foot, waited a moment. As Lyssa sips her wine, DVK realizes he's checking something with her before he says it. When she gives a nod, he resumes. "When I found my lady, after I was turned, it was there out front. I wanted to protect her, as I always did, but I also had to compel her submission. It was a hunger almost as strong as the craving for blood.

"That's the instinct." He gives a self-deprecating shrug. "As far as skill, being a vampire doesn't make you a more skilled lover, just a more insatiable one. You have to learn how to do the right

things, just like when you're human." He grins then. "I made a couple missteps during that time, but my lady was very quick to put me back on the right path. Fortunately, I'd been to enough gatherings and seen enough vampires at play to have a pretty good education on it...in theory."

**"Is it becoming more comfortable for you to see Gideon in his role as servant to a pair of vampires, especially with one of them being male?"**

"I'll admit, that one kind of took the ground out from under me. Before he hooked up with them, the last time I'd seen him...well, things were pretty rough for him. I'd hoped he'd find a girl somewhat like his high school sweetheart, somebody who would be a port in the storm. It didn't occur to me until I saw him with Anwyn and Daegan that he needed someone much stronger than that, and not just one someone. Two. And...I wouldn't have predicted it in a million years, not with how much he hated vampires, but the moment I saw the three of them together, it made sense. She understood it way before I did." He nods toward Lyssa. "She knew it the first time she met Gideon, that he would need someone who could break him open to help him find a better way, even if it took a sledge hammer. Someone soft, delicate, would have just kept all that crap sealed inside of him, because he couldn't trust her to be strong enough to handle all the dark shit he was carrying. When you hate your enemy so much they become the most important relationship of your life, that's going to be your avenue to salvation.

"Him and Daegan..." He pressed his lips together. "It was a little tough at first, but I did get it. I think me being around vampires before it happened helped me quite a bit, because I'd learned needs and desires can be a lot more fluid than what we think we are or aren't, label-wise. The most important thing is that they're good for him. He's healing, and sometimes I think he's actually happy. I wasn't sure I'd ever see that again, and it drove me to hell and back, thinking there was nothing I could do to fix it."

Lyssa covered his hand then. Though her expression remained as inscrutable as ever, her compassion was obvious in her words. "It nearly killed him, having to turn his back on Gideon, leaving him to fight vampires alone. He thought he'd failed Gideon, but in a way, it was what took Gideon down the right path. He doesn't give himself enough credit for that, but Gideon has, which just confirms my high opinion of his brother. Despite his constant impertinence toward me. I'll have to talk to Anwyn about a way to rectify that."

**"Are third-mark servants naturally fit through some benefit of the bond or do you have to work to keep that..." DVK delicately clears her throat, "impressive physique?"**

Before Jacob can answer, a response comes from the elevator, where Gideon is stepping off. "Vampires don't give you any time to get fat and lazy. If it's not their list of to-dos to keep their domestic affairs in order, it's their insatiable appetite for blood and sex. You divide your spare time between consuming carbs like crack and working out to keep battle and bedroom fit. Trust me, there aren't enough yoga and Pilates classes in the world to keep up with vampire demands." He gives Jacob a put-upon look. "Have you seen that silk-sweater thing Anwyn was wearing last night? She wants it and I think I left it up here."

"The Versace shrug?" Lyssa comments. "The one that cost her a small fortune?"



“Yeah, that thing.”

“It’s in the bedroom,” Lyssa nods toward it. As Gideon disappears in there, she glances at Jacob. “And do you agree with his assessment?”

Jacob’s expression is appropriately solemn, though there’s a quirk to his lips. “As I’m sure you can tell from my thoughts, while I agree with him wholeheartedly, I wouldn’t want it any other way. My lady.”

**“Jacob, your history, both recent and far past, suggests that you always seem to become exactly what your Mistress needs, when she needs it. Considering the adventures and major life changes that has precipitated so far, do you anticipate a leisurely next few decades with Lady Lyssa?”**

A fit of coughing comes from the bedroom, sounding suspiciously like a bark of sardonic laughter, with a muttered “yeah right”. Jacob grins then, stretching an arm along the couch back to twine a finger around his lady’s dark hair, stroking it in his fingertips, a soothe to his brother’s reaction but also a pleasure to himself. The solemnity of his expression is genuine this time. “No, I never expect life to be leisurely with her. But I hope we’ll always have enough moments for me to show her just how much I cherish her. As long as I can be at her side, her back, or in front of her, wherever she needs me, it doesn’t matter what kind of life we have. It will be a pleasure.”

“What an asskisser,” Gideon remarked, coming back through holding the shrug. “We’re getting ready to do closing. Keep an eye on the dawn, bro. You can come on downstairs whenever you all are ready. I’ll make us human rabble a pizza. Which I could have had all to myself if you’d stayed vampire.” However, despite the comment, he gives DVK a friendly look. “You’re welcome to have some with us. No fussy girl talk about calories and fat, though. You look just fine in that department, and remember the aforementioned caveat about carbs. We don’t eat heavy, we won’t survive the night.”

“It is Valentine’s Day,” Jacob agrees. “For vampires, the significance falls somewhere between the Valentine’s Day massacre and the actual hearts-and-flowers holiday.”

“I’m not seeing the problem with that,” Lyssa remarks, though DVK catches a hint of a smile as she takes another sip of her wine.

**“Lady Lyssa, having been around through pretty much all the major fashion crazes, what have been your absolute favorites?”**

“It doesn’t matter what ridiculous notions they come up with and call the latest fashion, when a woman wears tailored clothing – the well cut slacks and silk blouse, the little black dress, the tailored skirt with the simple slit in the back – no one calls her anything but elegant and well put together. The rest just gives fashion designers something to do and is honestly so much more work for a woman. The others are classics because they are sexy, attractive without being vulgar, and yet comfortable.”

“Loves flannel pajamas,” Jacob coughs into his hand, pretending to cover the comment. At his lady’s narrow look, he laughs, nods toward DVK. “I’ll pay for that dearly, but she does. In the winter, she loves flannel pajamas. And she looks just as sexy in them, though she ignores me when I tell her that.”

Lyssa settles her hand on his leg, fingers sliding along his inner thigh, an intimate touch. “A good attempt, Sir Vagabond, but you’ll still answer for that. I forgot to add that I do heartily approve of the introduction of jeans for men. Particularly certain men. And corsets engage male imagination in...intriguing ways. I’ve rarely seen a man who didn’t get aroused from seeing a woman laced into a corset. Jacob can’t lace or hook me into one without getting hard as a rock. It brings out that subtle Dom side quite intriguingly. Which is my favorite reason for wearing one. He’s very...challenging in that mode.”

**“What technological advances are you most thankful for?”**

“Most definitely indoor plumbing. Contrary to lore, vampires have bladders, too. Blood is mostly water, after all. I also admit to being very fond of my Mercedes, as well as gas logs on a winter night. The advent of computer technology – Internet, cell phones, etc – have made it much easier to function as a vampire, because less face-to-face interaction is required to accomplish basic things, if you aren’t fortunate enough to have a human servant to handle those things for you.

**“Speaking of face-to-face interaction, now that you’re heading up the Council, do you have plans to move away from Atlanta or are you looking for a location for the Council a little closer to home?”**

“I’m very fond of the Atlanta area, though I’m considering alternative venues to keep the Council from getting entrenched in one location, like they did Berlin. I want to keep them mindful that, while our traditions and history are important, so is the ability to change, when change is clearly needed. Given Lord Brian’s critical revelation about the reproductive nature of vampires, how our fertility seems to have a connection to vampires and servants who’ve exceeded our notion of how close that relationship should be, I have thought about rotating the Council meetings among locations where those vampire-servant pairings are. Lord Mason has kindly offered his estate as a meeting place whenever needed, though he wants Gideon in charge of security for any future Gatherings. Then he knows exactly who to blame for any unexpected explosions.”

“How about expected ones?” Jacob blinked at her, his lips quivering from the barely suppressed smile. “Just one or two, to shake them up a little bit.”

“Then again, we might start having a ritual sacrifice of at least one servant, to remind them of their place,” she continued without missing a beat. “There’s also an island off the eastern coast, a wild cat sanctuary that has been run for decades by a vampire named Malachi. There are magical elements to the island that might make it an excellent ‘border’ for the first meet between the Seelie and Unseelie royals and the Council. King Tabor and Queen Rhoswen have indicated they might be amenable to such a thing. Keldwyn, our liaison with the Fae, is hammering out the

details.” Lyssa’s lips pursed. “Of course the Fae handle time differently, so in their minds, a hundred years from now might be their idea of ‘soon’.”

**“How many third-marked human servants have you had over the years? How old were you when you took your first?”**

“About thirteen, though I practiced having first and second marks much earlier than that. In aristocratic families, it’s very typical to have a fully-marked servant when you begin sexual maturation. The sexual and blood urges are linked, and having a servant to experiment with them, under the supervision of parent or assigned guardian, is much safer and a more controlled environment. Otherwise you are likely to exercise those urges on anything human. I’ve almost always had a servant...” She stops, her elegant fingers with the sharp nails counting it off. “Besides Thomas and Jacob, I had three, all of whom stayed with me at least two to three centuries, until the end of their lifespan. My first was a female because, just like for human female teens, it’s usually safer to explore our initial carnal urges with our own sex. Gentler, in some senses, more patient.”

**“What you share with Jacob is very special and is obviously not the norm for the vampire/servant relationship. Were your others more similar to the stereotype?”**

“While I would say Thomas observed more of the proprieties, at least until the end,” she slants Jacob a disapproving look, “Yes, most of the others...I was fond of them, I grieved their loss deeply, but as a trusted companion, one who served me well. Thomas...I wish I could have said this while he lived, but I believe he is the first time I had a true best friend.”

Jacob covers her hand with his as her eyes darken with remembered pain. “I would not have thought to say such a thing even five years ago, but recent events have made it clear that the strength of a queen is not just in observing the proprieties, but also in facing and speaking the truth when that truth is a debt deeply owed. Perhaps it is my age that has made me more susceptible to maudlin urges, to feel more for servants than most vampires do.” She gives Jacob an unfathomable expression that, rather than offending him, makes a slow smile cross his face, again suggesting a lot going on between the two minds.

“I do try to observe the proprieties my lady values,” he returns. “But she’s proved to be somewhat more of a rebel than most would expect. I have to keep up with her demands and desires, after all. Both the physical and...less physical.”

**“I know not all vampires take a third-marked human servant, but for those who do, is there generally an acceptable age for it? Other guidelines we may not know about?”**

“The first fully-marked servant a born vampire chooses for him or herself, without parental involvement, can vary. My friend Lady Danny didn’t choose until she was two hundred. She preferred to make use of first and second-marks, eschewing the close bond of the third-mark until she happened upon her current servant, Devlin. While I’m still not quite as comfortable comparing humans and vampires as Jacob thinks I am, I think the best way to illustrate it is with a human comparison. It’s much how humans choose a mate. They’re often looking for an

indefinable quality they don't recognize until they stumble on it. However, just like humans, some vampires are more practical than others, viewing it merely as a functional, more intense form of an employer-employee contract. They only require a certain level of rapport and trust with the human chosen. Others are seeking a much deeper 'click'."

"She clicked with me the first night she met me at the salon to have her nails done," Jacob said. "She just won't admit it."

"I won't add to your inflated opinion of yourself. And you may be mistaking a 'click' for the annoying tic you instigated to my nerves." Threading her hand through his hair, she gives it a not-so-gentle tug. "Don't get too impertinent, Sir Vagabond. I'll decide you're getting overly exposed to your brother's rough edges."

He gives her an unperturbed look. "Should we adjourn below, my lady? It's getting close to dawn, and I know DVK wanted to see Anwyn before she retires for the day."

In agreement on that, Lyssa and Jacob draw DVK to the elevator and head down to the main floor of Atlantis. As Gideon described, the club has closed and now the wait and cleaning staff are clearing glasses, sweeping and mopping the floors, sanitizing and polishing the equipment to prepare it for the following night. Anwyn is in discussion with James, her head of security. Gideon is putting the chairs on the tables to make it easier for the cleaning staff to mop beneath, while carrying on with some of the staff mistresses, currently curled on a couple couches with their feet up. Their stilettos and thigh-high boots have been discarded to the side as they stretch out an assortment of pretty, painted toenails and aching feet, obviously recovering from a strenuous night. Noting DVK's regard, one of them, a tall Amazon, gives her a friendly nod. "Biker group tonight. Those boys like their women rough and mean."

Gideon grins. "You missed some fun there at the end, bro. Me and James had to get rowdy to make them hit the door. The ladies did their jobs too well. The biker boys didn't want to leave. One of them wanted to take Ella with him. She was a little too graphic about the things she could do on a moving motorcycle."

"You could have called," Jacob responded dryly.

Gideon shrugged. "The day I can't handle some bikers is the day I've gone soft. Daegan'd never let me live it down. They got in a couple rib punches, this jaw shot that loosened one of my molars, but good fun was had by all."

Anwyn rolled her eyes. "Obviously James hasn't explained the point of being a bouncer is to defuse a conflict before it becomes a brawl."

"He's explained it. Just the brawl is tons more fun. Even the bikers agreed. They said they'd be back, next trip through. Repeat business. Not that you ladies weren't incredible," Gideon nodded to the relaxing and amused mistresses, "but I think the brawl was the icing on the cake. James agrees with me. He's just too pussy-whipped to say so."

James, serious as always and apparently unaffected by Gideon's insult, nods politely to DVK. "Ma'am."

Gideon glances at Jacob. "We'll be down soon. Go interrupt Daegan's workout, the freaking machine. He'll be willing to answer a few questions before we get there."

They leave the main floor, though DVK is treated to a couple practice scenes, one of the staff Doms demonstrating a flogging technique on a sub who is gripping the handholds of a St. Andrews cross, her pale skin bare so he can show the other employees where the marks should show up, and what areas to avoid. Though it's a staff demonstration, the reason the Atlantis paid players are in such demand is obvious. Being a Dom or sub is blood deep for them, not just a job, so in between strikes, as he's speaking, he's casually running a hand over the girl's flanks, tracking her responses with an avid, steady gaze. She's quivering, obviously aroused by the treatment from her co-worker.

They pass a muscular male seated at one of the tables. He's wearing a pair of jeans, open in the front so it's possible to see the leather-studded thong beneath and the generously endowed genitalia that fills it. He's oiling up whips and cuffs for another night's use, and gives them a polite nod as they pass. As he's doing that, he's watching an ESPN recap on his phone and sipping a Coke between tasks.

When they reach the elevators, Ella, a red-headed submissive with doe-brown eyes, is coming out of the changing rooms. She's wearing sneakers and jeans, a tight ratty T-shirt. The way she smiles at them tells DVK she does a lot of smiling, and her warmth is infectious.

"Jacob, ma'am." She nods to the vampire, but DVK notices she doesn't meet Lyssa's eyes, skirting around her. She might not know what Lyssa is, but her human self-preservation instinct is enough to make her give the vampire wide berth. Jacob gives her a reassuring smile.

"Heard you tried to go on a motorcycle ride tonight."

Ella grimaced. "He was a nice guy. I think he would have given me a ride on his bike and not done me any harm, but Gideon and James are pretty strict. Anwyn says I have no intuition at all for those kinds of things, so I have to listen to them or I'll lose my job. Or she'll wear me out, and not in a good way." She dimples prettily, impossible to resist. "I keep trying to get James to do the spanking, but no luck yet. He did threaten once, and it turned me on like crazy. The clients got 110% from me for the next few nights."

Jacob nudged her. "Gideon knows how to handle a bike. Tell him to take you on a ride some day."

Her eyes brightened. "Excellent suggestion. He's such a softie with us girls. He won't be able to say no."

Jacob chuckles, escorts his lady onward and gestures to DVK to precede him onto the elevators as well, ever the gentleman. They take the elevator down to the lowest level, where Anwyn,

Gideon and Daegan have private living quarters. Just as Gideon said, once they enter, they can hear the sounds of physical exertion happening in the adjacent workout room. Heading that way with Jacob and Lyssa, DVK sees Daegan in his gi pants and white tank working out with a rather lethal looking samurai sword. Moving with elegant and deadly economy of motion, the blade sweeping up, around, the male vampire is synchronized with its movement, smooth muscles rippling in shoulders, arms, back and thighs. She notices Lyssa enjoying the display as much as herself. He gives them a nod, acknowledging them, but finishes the full cycle of the exercise before he comes to a stop in a relaxed stance, holding the blade at ready. "Lady Lyssa." He nods to the queen. "There's some fresh mango, if you want your servant to give you a sampling. Make yourself comfortable. Anwyn says she'll be down within the next thirty minutes." His gaze shifts to DVK. "Gideon said you had some questions for me?"

**DVK nods. "We know your father was an angel, but very little else about him. How much do you know... that you're willing to share?" She gives him a quick grin to show she won't be upset if he prefers this part of his life to remain private.**

Daegan shrugs and takes a cross-legged seat on one of the floor mats, balancing the blade on his knees. "Unfortunately, I have very little to share. He and my mother were together only a very short time. She said the night they came together was special...All Hallows Eve. Centuries ago, when there was a need for her to blend in her proximity to humans, she'd become a temple priestess. It was a matriarchal culture, where her 'otherness' was considered a gift of the Goddess's power. Samhain wasn't typically a time of sexual congress, more a night to speak to the dead. However, during the ritual her temple conducted, a dark winged angel with crimson eyes appeared in the circle. They accepted him as a sign of the Goddess, and she was his choice to raise power for the circle.

"Though they didn't know her as a vampire, merely a human with extraordinary powers, my mother recognized him as an angel because she herself was a different species. While she had little contact with angels, she believed he was something far different, even for angels. It was as if he was a direct conduit to the Goddess herself, such that, during their coupling, she felt the Goddess within her more strongly than she ever had before. She felt the Goddess was actually holding her in her arms while the angel took her. He spent some time with her after that, but only a few days. And on the date of my birth." Daegan reflected on that a moment. "She said he held me, looked upon me with love, and blessed us both. She never saw him again. The crimson lights in my eyes come from him, as do some other abilities that differ from other vampires."

Now he paused, as if considering his next words. "There are times...I believe he has checked in on me, for lack of a better description. Every once in awhile, in a particularly challenging fight, I have felt a touch behind me, warning me of an attack I didn't see coming from that flank. Or in a quiet moment, I have felt a presence, just in my peripheral vision. I can't explain why I know it's him. I just do. It happens very rarely...much more rarely since Gideon and Anwyn came into my life. It's best not to tell them this, because they often try to protect me more than they should, but I think he knows I have both of them watching my back and caring for me now.

**"We know Gideon won the bet between you two at the last Council meeting. Have the three of you talked about it since then?"**

“No.” Daegan rises, executes several slower, more precise moves, apparently integrating some martial arts into the movements of the sword. Balancing on one foot, he executes a back flip and lands on the other foot, eerily still, holding that perfect balance. “He is waiting. He knows what he has won. He will be allowed to...take me, but he also knows, as his Master, I hold the right to decide when. I am waiting until the anticipation is at the right level, for both of us.”

**“Did you intentionally pick the lower odds to give Gideon his boon or did you really think Lyssa would kill Belizar?”**

“I think I was indulging a private fantasy of Lady Lyssa ripping off Belizar’s head and I let that interfere with my analysis of the politics.” A flash of fangs. “No, I did not pick the lower odds to give Gideon his gift. He respects nothing he doesn’t fight for and earn, so I’d never let him win. If he’d lost this bet, he’d have figured out another path to get his way. I have no doubt he would have. Though he is highly unaware of it, in some things, he is irresistible.” He shifted his glance to Jacob. “You ever share that with him, and I will disembowel you, with my sincere apologies to your lady.”

Lyssa, sampling the mango Jacob has brought her, gives him a demure nod. “Send me a fruit basket with a dozen of these mangoes, and I’ll consider it proper recompense.”

“The way they dote on us is so moving,” Jacob remarks to DVK. “Brings a tear to my eye sometimes.”

DVK grins at Jacob before turning back to Daegan.

**“It's fairly common for male servants to be paired together during vampire entertainments, but Gideon hasn't really had to deal with any of those situations yet. Do you plan to keep him to yourself or do you think you'll all be more comfortable eventually seeing him with another male?”**

Daegan is now making controlled movements with the sword toward the vulnerable parts of a workout dummy set up in the corner. It’s obvious he has the ability to concentrate on the questions and what he’s doing with equal competence. However, at the moment she asks the last question, he slices through the dummy diagonally, sending both parts sliding to the floor and exposing the sturdy polyfoam core. As he studies it, looking mildly surprised, DVK notices his eyes have gone red, almost taking over the whites, an eerie effect. One that reminds her of Joey’s suggestion of screaming for help. “Hmm. Unfortunate. I’ll have Gideon clean that up.” Now he lifts his attention to DVK. “For the time being, to myself. I’m not of a mood to share him with another male. However,” he casually twirls the blade, “If a male wishes to challenge me over that, he’s more than willing to do so.”

“You know those things don’t grow on trees,” Gideon complains, coming in at this moment just behind Anwyn. “Nice clean stroke, but I thought the point was exercising your infamous control, getting the blade within a hair of the target? Or shaving it like deli ham. Unless...” Gideon

arches a brow at DVK. “Did she ask you something that ruined that perfect concentration of yours?”

“No, I was just imagining your hard head and what level of force it would take to slice through it.”

**“What has been the general reaction among the vampires and Atlantis club members to his collar and wrist brands?”**

DVK indicates the branded marks on Gideon’s throat and wrists as she asks the question. They’ve been enhanced at some point by some tattoo inking that emphasizes the initials D and A on the wrist bands and the trinity blood teardrop mark on the collaring, which she knows matches his third servant mark on his chest. Anwyn chuckles, running gentle fingers over Gideon’s throat, leaning into him with a Mistress’s satisfaction with her handiwork. “The Mistresses and subs were all delighted with them, almost as if it made him a formal possession of Atlantis as a whole. They all wanted to touch, and every one of them who asked politely I gave permission. It wasn’t generosity on my part.” Her eyes glinted, reminding DVK she was dealing with a formidable Mistress as well as a vampire, a scary combination. “Each time someone touched them, his eyes would go to me, and he’d give me that hungry look he did when we gave him the marks, telling me that he was mine and Daegan’s, all ours, now and forever. It arouses him, when they’re stroked, because it reminds him who owns him.” She cocked a head toward DVK. “Would you like to touch them?”

“Oh.” DVK blinks a few times, wide-eyed, trying to decide if Anywn is serious. “Yeah!” Realizing she may have overreacted, she looks at Gideon, as if for permission. “If that’s alright...”

Though Gideon can get gruff and embarrassed at certain references, in this instance, there is none of that. His hand has curved over his Mistress’s forearm, not to stop her, but to respond to her touching him there, and he is gazing at Anwyn almost exactly as she just described. Daegan has returned the sword to its wall rack and now joins them, unable to resist the pleasure their servant’s naked desire brings them. The male vampire curves his fingers over one of the wrist brands, brings it up to his mouth and punctures Gideon there, his still flickering crimson gaze on Gideon’s face.

It’s clear it’s getting very close to bedtime for these three, and their minds are already on what they plan to do to their servant when they get him alone. Or they might not wait that long. While DVK’s not averse to watching that, she knows she better get in her last questions fast. However, there’s no way she’s passing up the opportunity to accept that rare invitation to touch, especially when Gideon tears his gaze away from his Mistress long enough to give DVK a spare nod. “I won’t bite. That’s their area.”

“Don’t believe him, DVK. He shows his teeth quite frequently.” Anywn’s soft peal of laughter has an erotic edge. “But we’ll hold him back.”



Still a little uncertain about encroaching on what is obviously something private for the trio, DVK takes a moment to study the scene before her, making note of the little details... Gideon's fingers lightly stroking Anywn's forearm as he gazes at her with intense adoration, the sensual way he turns his head to gaze down his arm and up into Daegan's fiery eyes as the vampire continues to feed from his wrist, the almost palpable energy connecting the three together on a level that goes beyond physicality to a soul-deep bond.

Squaring her shoulders, DVK takes a deep breath and slowly approaches Gideon, taking in the sight of him, from his utilitarian black boots to his closely cropped hair. "Gideon Green. You are..." She stops mere inches away from him and lifts slightly trembling fingers to his jaw, tracing the light stubble there. Shaking her head a little, she smiles, raises her eyebrows, and finishes "... something special." Sliding her fingertips down the curve of his jaw, across his throat, her eyes follow as she finally reaches the edge of the branding near the tattooed trinity mark. The skin there is impeccably smooth, a testament to the incredible skill required to make such a perfect marking.

Knowing Daegan's sharp gaze is on her now, DVK runs the pad of her thumb across the three raised teardrop shapes, feeling the distinct difference in texture there, and notices slight fang impressions in the band of the collar just beneath where Anywn's fingers are lightly stroking him. She feels Gideon shudder a little each time Anwyn passes over that spot, and quickly moves her hand to his wrist, feeling as if she's intruding on a personal moment. The cuff brands are a little wider than the collar, but the "A" on the wrist of the hand still gripping Anwyn feels very similar to the trinity mark on his throat, and is apparently also a sensitive spot. Suddenly feeling his attention on her, DVK looks up at Gideon and leans in slightly to whisper, "Take good care of them." She grins and quirks an eyebrow. "I know you will." She gives a quick glance and gentle smile to Daegan, who appears to be leisurely finishing his feeding, then Anwyn, who looks as if she can't decide whether she wants to scowl at DVK or smile back.

Sliding her eyes back to Gideon, DVK inclines her head in thanks then steps away to a more respectful distance. As DVK retreats, Daegan takes advantage of the void in front of his servant to stand flush against his side, fangs still possessing Gideon's wrist, and the two have intently locked gazes. Anywn seems completely preoccupied by whatever is passing privately between them.

**"Ahem. Anwyn? If Lord Bryan's theory is correct, there's a very real possibility your relationship with Daegan and Gideon may result in children. Is that something you've all talked about, something you look forward to?"**

Daegan retracts his fangs, taking a swipe at the remaining blood with his tongue. Gideon, making an obvious effort to focus, snorts weakly. "Well, if she was, being around my nephew has probably made her think twice. Kid's a total terror."

"Hey," Jacob protests from the couch, where he and Lyssa drifted while they were teasing Gideon. He's reclined on the couch in a half sitting position, Lyssa curved between his thighs. She appears to be squeezing some of the mango on his bare chest and licking the juice off his nipple, since she's pushed the open dress shirt off the point of his broad shoulders. He's

occasionally picking up another piece of mango from the plate on the coffee table to let her sample it on her own tongue, though she seems equally pleased to make him her plate, grazing her fangs over his quivering flesh.

DVK gives Jacob credit for managing a spirited response to his brother, despite his obvious absorption in his vampire mistress's toying with him. "He's strong-willed. Not his fault he's got his uncle's genes."

Anwyn shakes her head at both of them. Then she reaches out, touches Daegan's face, even as she keeps her hand settled on Gideon's throat, maintaining that dual contact. "I've never thought much about having children. With Club Atlantis and the life I have, it's not something I want to undertake right away." A shadow passes through her gaze. "Plus, until I know for certain there's absolutely no chance I could have a seizure and hurt our child, I don't want a pregnancy to happen. It's not something vampires can control anyway, having or not having them. But since it occurs so rarely, if I conceive, I expect we'll take it as fated and figure it out then. I know both of them want children. For all his trash talk," she gives her servant a fond look, "Gideon adores his nephew."

"Yeah. Because he's like a carnival I can send home when the rides have tired me out."

**"Are the seizures becoming easier to manage? Do you feel optimistic about your progress, between Gideon and Daegan's support and Lord Brian's continued research on the serum?"**

"Control has always been important to me, so I admit, there are days I get frustrated about it." Anwyn drops her touch to Daegan's thigh as she leans back into the shelter of his body, running her knuckles down Gideon's jaw as he turns his lips to her hand. "But I am much more optimistic now than I have been. Not so much because I have any certainty that Lord Brian will find a cure—though if anyone can find it, it's him—but because it's clear that the three of us together..." She pauses, shakes her head at herself and abandons the carefully worded explanation. "Their love for me has convinced me that I can handle anything, endure anything. That, more than anything, has made the seizures easier to manage. They don't frighten me as much as they did initially, though they are never pleasant. Unfortunately, when I'm in the grip of one, there is no memory of how I've dealt with them before, or that I'll survive them, because that was the nature of the psychosis of my sire."

"*I'm your sire, cher,*" Daegan interjects unmistakable command into the tone, and DVK notices it rivets both Anwyn and Gideon's attention immediately. The male vampire slides his hands around her waist from behind and puts his mouth on her throat, stroking the artery there with his fangs. His knuckles press just under her breasts with possessive demand. "He was no more your sire than a sperm donor is a father."

She nods, arching into his touch, obviously drawing strength from the reminder. DVK can tell the arrival of dawn, and what the two males are doing to her, are starting to make her a little less focused. DVK doesn't blame her. She's getting a little lost in imaginings herself, just watching. Gideon has sunk to his knees and has his hands on Anwyn's thighs, his mouth brushing across

her hip bone. It's obvious Anwyn's males have far different things on their mind than the interview. Anwyn gives DVK a lazy, drifting smile. "As you can see, optimism is the only choice I have with the two of them around."

**"Ok ok, I can take a hint! Last question, I promise. Valentine's Day is almost over... okay technically, it IS over, being past midnight, but... in the spirit of the holiday, do you guys have any final plans or surprises for your sweeties before you get some sleep?"**

Jacob grins, drawing DVK's attention to the couch. Lyssa has now stretched out in a reclining position, her foot on his chest, and he is doing a massage of her bare toes while she watches him with heavy lidded eyes. Her other knee is bent and though she's wearing a long skirt that pools over his thighs, it's obvious she has her other foot on his groin, toes likely flexing on his aroused length. "It's hard to give a vampire queen a Valentine's Day gift, because anything she wants, she takes." Jacob jerks slightly, gives her a look torn between lust and amusement. "And she's got a hell of a pinch with her toes. Would you call that thing you did to me on the rack your Valentine's Day present, my lady?"

"Hmm. We'll see. The night's not over yet. Though of course, nothing you do will top your son's gift to me."

"Upstaged by the tricycle motor again. I've got to figure out a way to get rid of him before you decide you don't need me at all." Giving DVK a wink, Jacob rises, obviously with his lady's permission. Squeezing her foot, he goes to the counter and brings back a large handmade envelope of red, black and white construction paper, covered with hearts cut out of napkins, tinfoil, wall paper and fabric. "We made this for her together."

Jacob lays the valentine on the table so DVK can open it and see the large scrawled letters in a red glitter pin. *My Mommy, my Valentine. Mine. Forever.*

"Notice the kid uses the word 'my' and 'mine' as much as possible," Gideon observes. He doesn't turn away from his Mistress, obviously seeing the scene through her eyes. "Nope, not going to have any sharing problems with that one. God help his first servant."

Daegan lifts his head, his nostrils flaring. "Whose blood is that? Did he go out and make a kill for her?"

DVK notices then that there is an artful splatter around the words and heart. "Most of it's mine," Jacob assures them. "A little of it is Kane's. He doesn't verbalize well yet, but the gist of it was that, since his mother likes my blood so much, we should give her some in the card, and then he wanted to give her some, too." Dropping to a knee by the couch, he lays his hand on Lyssa's bare feet. "So I took just a little from his finger, to make him happy." He clears his throat. "There's a drop or two from Bran as well. That's our Irish wolfhound. One of them."

"I thought I smelled something a little different in there." Lyssa arched an accusing brow at him, and Jacob shrugged.

“I didn’t know what he was doing until I saw Bran go stiff as a board and look as surprised as a circus clown. I thought he was just hugging him. Kane wanted everyone to donate. Thank God he started with Bran, and that was when I caught him. That dog can rip the head off a rhinoceros, but he’ll let Kane do anything to him. We have to keep a close eye on him.”

“Obviously.” Lyssa shakes her head.

“Well, at least he didn’t start with Whiskers. The cat would have done her own bloodletting.”

“Would have taught him a good lesson.” But Lyssa picks up the card, runs her fingers over the letters, a soft look to her mouth. “He is a terror.”

“Yeah.” Jacob leans in to touch his mouth to her cheek, cruises up to her ear, then down to her throat, working his way to her sternum. “Like his mother.”

Lyssa’s reaction is to reach up, tug his hair, hold his mouth closer. Very few vampires allow servants to tease their throats, but the vampire queen has obviously recognized the benefits of letting Jacob’s clever mouth around the highly erogenous zone.

“Daegan gave me a very special gift,” Anwyn mentions. DVK notices she’s watching Jacob and Lyssa, getting further stirred by the sight. She’s obviously told Gideon to be still but stay on his knees, because his fingertips are still resting on her thighs, flexing slightly with lustful impatience, but otherwise not moving from that position. Daegan has moved around to her front, straddling Gideon’s curved back as he strokes their servant’s hair with one hand and Anwyn’s with the other, twining her sable locks around several long fingers. He gives DVK a glance that clearly says the interview is about to be over, at least for them, because he’s cognizant of Anwyn’s need as a fledgling vampire to retire for the day. DVK, hoping to get one extra moment, dares to prod.

“Oh? What did you get her?”

“Three dozen roses. Specially bred to have flexible yet resilient stems and longer, thicker thorns. She will bind Gideon in them, scatter the petals over his body. I will save one rose to bind her pretty throat. While I do that, I will take her from behind.”

Anwyn shivers under his touch, but lifts her gaze to his face, locking with the dark eyes. “And while you do that, I’ll taste our servant’s blood wherever the thorns pierce him. The roses have a light, delicate fragrance, DVK. The delicate with the primal. We’ll both enjoy feeding off him that way.”

“Once you’ve had some rest, cher.”

She makes a face at him, but when Gideon leans forward, pressing his mouth again to her thigh, staying there, she twines her hand in his hair, right next to Daegan’s grip, linking the three of them. “All right. But only because you’re bribing me. Not because you’re the boss of me.”

**Okay, it's obvious time to go, DVK thinks. "Thanks so much for allowing me to intrude on your personal time and ask you inappropriate questions!" She glances around the room and gives everyone a friendly smile, acknowledging their acceptance of her imposition on their holiday evening. "It's been so amazing getting to meet you all and chatting these last few hours." Then she grins at Gideon and says "Maybe next time we'll get to that pizza. I'm a sucker for a good pie!"**

As if summoned, and she probably was, Joey has reappeared. Now she quietly draws DVK to the elevator to make an unobtrusive exit. In the elevator, DVK turns to catch one more glimpse. It's clear that Lyssa and Jacob, as well as Daegan, Anwyn and Gideon, are entering that hazy dawn time when everything else disappears but the pleasure and slumber they'll find in one another's arms. It's enough to make a human envious. Or wish for a hidden video camera.

She turns to Joey. "Hey, what Jacob said about the rack thing? Didn't the forum admins say there were recording cameras in the playrooms...?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Originally written for and posted on GraveTells.com. See the original post at:  
<http://gravetells.com/2012/02/14/valentines-qa-giveaway-joe-hill-vampire-queen/>

*Copyright 2012 © Joey W. Hill and DaVinciKittie of GraveTells.com*