

Valle

Book 2 of the Heku Series

Published by T.M. Nielsen

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Chapter 1 - The Valle

Emily stretched out on the large bed and realized she was alone. She sat up and searched the bedroom, but didn't see him, then sighed and laid back down. The bed felt amazing this morning and she didn't want to get up. Only a few minutes later, she stumbled out of bed and ran into the bathroom.

Morning sickness had gotten stronger over the last few days, and she'd spent a good part of her day sitting on the cold tile floor. Chevalier didn't know, she somehow managed to keep it from him, afraid of how he would react even though it was perfectly normal.

“Em?” Chevalier called into the room.

Emily cleared her throat and called back to him, “Will be out in a sec.”

“I have some breakfast for you, Gordon sent up biscuits and gravy.” She heard the sound of a tray being placed on the small table by the fire.

Emily fought against the lurch in her stomach at the thought of gravy, but it was too much and she turned back to the toilet.

“Emily?” She heard him run into the bathroom, his voice was worried.

“Go away,” she finally managed to say.

“Can I get you something?” He knelt down by her as she laid her cheek on the cold floor.

“Get that food out of here,” she told him, and then shut her eyes.

Chevalier sighed, “Maybe you should see the doctor.”

“I’m fine, just don’t bring food into the bedroom.” She wished he would leave so she could take a nap on the floor.

He was out the door and removed the tray from the room, then returned to her side before she even realized he’d left.

“Let me put you to bed,” he said, sliding his hands under her.

“No, this feels better.” She moved her face to a new spot and sighed as the cold tile cooled her cheek.

He watched her for a few minutes, wishing there was something he could do.

“Go away,” she said again.

“If you need me, just call,” he told her as he left hesitantly.

Chevalier stepped into the ante-chamber and told Anna to leave Emily alone, then went down to his office and picked up the phone, dialing quickly.

“Doctor Edwards, please,” he said hurriedly.

“He’s with a patient, may I help you?” the nurse asked.

“No, tell him it’s Chevalier and tell him, now.” She could tell by the tone in his voice that he wasn’t to be messed with.

“One moment please.” Her voice was irritated.

It was only a few minutes later that Dr. Edwards was on the phone, “This is Dr. Edwards.”

“Doctor, this is Chevalier, from the island.”

“Yes, I remember.” He honestly sounded pleased.

“My wife, she’s pregnant and...”

“Yes I know. I saw her last week.”

Chevalier paused and then smiled slightly, “Yes, I guess you did. She’s pretty sick now, can you come?”

“Sick as in a fever, or sick as in nauseous?” the doctor asked, concerned.

“Nauseous”

“It’s morning sickness. She’ll be fine in a month or so.”

“A month?!?” Chevalier couldn’t believe how blasé the doctor was about it.

“Yes, get her some soda crackers and Sprite, that’ll help.”

“Right, I’ll do that.” He wrote the two items down on a slip of paper.

“Call if she gets worse. As long as she’s eating and gaining weight, she’ll be fine,” the doctor said kindly.

“Sure, ok,” Chevalier said, and hung up the phone.

He stepped out of his office and called for a young heku that was walking past, “You... come here.”

The young heku turned to him, terrified, “Y.. yes, Sir?”

“Can you sail a yacht?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“There’s one docked to the south of the pier, take it and go into town immediately and get these. When you get back, give them to Anna,” he demanded, and handed him the list before heading up to Emily’s room.

Emily wasn’t in bed yet. He rounded the corner and was about to tell her he was taking her to bed when he saw her sound asleep on the floor. He sat down beside her and leaned up against the wall to wait.

Several hours passed and Chevalier was debating moving her to bed when he heard Anna in the next room. He got up quietly to meet her, “Did he get it?”

Anna nodded and set down a box of crackers and some cold Sprite in a glass, “You didn’t specify, though, so he brought back 16 cases of crackers and 64 big bottles of Sprite.”

Chevalier smiled. He was pleased at the amount, he’d rather have too much than not enough.

Anna looked toward the bathroom, “How is she, Sir?”

He glanced at the door, then back to Anna, “She’s asleep on the floor.”

Anna gasped, “You should move her to the bed. She can’t be comfortable.”

“I tried that,” Chevalier said, a little irritated Anna assumed he hadn’t thought of that on his own. “She said it felt better on the floor.”

“Hrm,” Anna sighed, and left the room.

Chevalier returned to the bathroom and Emily looked up at him from the floor. He reached down and picked her up, “You can come back to the floor after you eat.”

“Ugh, I can’t eat,” she told him, and rested her head in the crook of his neck.

“These are doctor’s orders... Sprite and crackers.” He sat her down on the edge of the bed and handed her a cracker.

Emily took it and looked at it for a while before taking a tiny bite.

“You’re going to have to do better than that.”

“If it stays down, I’ll take another,” she said, not moving.

Chevalier studied her. She was pale, but otherwise looked fine for having slept on the bathroom floor. He did notice a twinge of annoyance in her voice, but was able to refrain from chuckling.

She took another bite and then sighed, “Please go away.”

He looked at her and raised an eyebrow, “What if I say no?”

She glared at him and he again found the restraint not to laugh.

“You’re driving me insane, Chev.” She took another bite of the cracker.

“I’m not leaving, not if you’re sick. Maybe I can help.”

“I’m not sick... and you’ve done enough.” Her voice was icy.

Chevalier considered it for a moment, and then figured he better leave. He wasn’t sure why her irritation was endearing, but he knew she wouldn’t find his observation amusing.

“Ok, call if you need me then,” he said, and kissed her forehead before leaving.

Emily took a drink of Sprite and then got up and got dressed. She wouldn’t admit it to Chevalier, but she was feeling better after eating some.

Finally managing to pull herself together, she headed out to the barn. She knew that in the barn, she wouldn't have someone making comments or watching her like she was about to die suddenly.

Peanut came to greet her as she entered the barn and she sat on the hay to pet him, "How's it going, Peanut?"

The cat curled up in his favorite spot on her lap and purred as she pet him.

"So I guess you heard too, eh?" she asked, talking to Peanut as she rubbed his head.

The cat glanced up at her and then curled up against her chest.

"Got myself into a mess." Emily found some comfort in talking to the cat. She wondered briefly if that was odd, "Just what I needed, a baby, huh?"

The cat tensed up and she moved her hand away, "What's wrong?"

Suddenly, Peanut arched his back and lashed out at her with his claw, leaving a deep bleeding gash down her arm.

"Damnit, Peanut!" she yelled, and pushed the cat off of her before getting up. Peanut ran off deeper into the barn after hissing at her again.

Emily wandered back inside to clean the scratches.

"Good morning," Kyle said, heading toward her.

"Whatever," she grumbled, and walked past him.

He paused and then followed her, “What’s wrong? I smell blood.”

She turned on him angrily, “Let’s see, it could be either that I’m knocked up, or I just got attacked by my cat.”

Kyle smiled broadly, “That’s great, Em! Wait… what cat?” His face grew serious.

“We’ll see if it’s great when I can stop sleeping on the bathroom floor,” she said, walking away. She stopped when she felt his hand on her arm.

“What cat?”

“My cat, Peanut, out in the barn.” She tried to pull away, but wasn’t able to, “What!?”

Kyle studied the scratches on her arm, “Come with me,” he said, pulling her toward Chevalier’s office.

“No,” she told him, and planted her feet. “I’m not in the mood for this, Kyle. I just want to clean out this scratch, and then go back and feed the cows.”

“Emily, we don’t have a cat,” he said, tugging on her arm.

“Stop it!” she yelled, and jerked her arm angrily away from him.

“What’s going on?” Chevalier asked, approaching them.

“Kyle’s freaking out because I got scratched by my barn cat,” she said, and then glared at Kyle.

Chevalier froze, “What cat?”

“Freak!” Emily yelled, and stalked away from the two of them, wondering how they could be so upset about a cat.

“Emily, stop,” Chevalier said, putting his hand on her shoulder. “Cat’s hate the heku, they won’t come near us. There’s no way a cat is living on this island.”

“Yeah, well, he’s my cat. Maybe he knows you all don’t come to the barn,” she said, still irritated.

“Kyle, find that cat,” Chevalier said, and Kyle ran for the barn suddenly.

“No! Don’t hurt my cat,” Emily yelled, running after him.

“Emily,” Chevalier said, quickly catching up to her and stopping her. “No cat is going to be this near to the heku. I don’t know if I’ve told you this, but Ulrich had a familiar, a cat. It’s Sam.”

“What’s Sam?”

“Ulrich’s familiar, and his natural form is a cat.”

Emily frowned, “My Sam?”

He nodded.

“Well... I’ll kill him myself then,” she said, heading for the barn.

“Let Kyle handle it. If he can’t find Sam, we may have to get out of here in a hurry,” Chevalier said, and then shouted orders out to the shadows in an unfamiliar language.

“Why?” She turned to him, suddenly nervous.

“Ulrich’s one threat to me... was that if you ever ended up pregnant by a heku, he was going to come and take you away.” He was holding her hand now, gently pulling her toward the stairs.

“He wouldn’t!” she said angrily, but he didn’t answer.

“Sir, there’s no sign of the cat,” Kyle said, catching up with them.

Chevalier growled, “It has to be Sam.”

Kyle nodded in agreement.

“So we have what? A week before they come for her?” Kyle asked.

“Maybe less. Sam has to figure out how to get off this island to inform Ulrich, and then it’ll take a few days to get here.” Chevalier was calculating his defensive forces in his head.

“We can fight them off. We’re the largest coven in the Equites,” Kyle said, setting his jaw.

“No, I’m not going to risk your coven for my life,” Emily said. She winced a bit when both heku looked at her.

“You’re one of us, Em. We protect our own,” Kyle said softly.

Emily rolled her eyes, “He’s not going to take me. I’m not going to be the damsel and faint when they try... I’ll fight back.”

“You can’t fight those numbers, just let us do this,” Kyle said to her.

Emily nodded, “Fine, when you’re done planning a war, come get me.”

When she left, Kyle looked at Chevalier and smiled, “She’s grouchy.”

Chevalier couldn't help but chuckle, "Yeah, she is."

"Congratulations, Sir."

Chevalier's face lit up and Kyle couldn't help but grin, "Unexpected, actually."

Kyle nodded, "I would imagine."

"Let's go find that cat," Chevalier said seriously. Kyle nodded and they both left toward the barn.

Chapter 2 - Travis

After numerous meetings and sessions with the Elders, plans were being made to whisk Emily away to an undisclosed location. She was irritated with the entire process and spent most of her time in the barn. Things were tense around the castle because of her strong scent, which Chevalier finally explained to her. She felt better being outside, away from the heku.

Emily stepped into her room after being away in the barn all day and smiled when she saw the roses and a note on her bed. She smelled the flowers and read the note.

Em,

Let's ignore the Elders and go away together on the boat. We'll be safe there and we won't have to put up with guards or worry about anything but us.

Meet me there as soon as you can pack and get away unnoticed,

Chev

Emily's insides jumped. She wasn't going to have to run away and be guarded 24/7 by the heku. She'd be where she preferred, out on the ocean with Chevalier. She hurried and packed a bag, then went to the wardrobe where she'd stuffed the sheets she used the last time she had to get away. It was easy enough to tie it off to the balcony, and then she nimbly swung over the side and worked her way to the ground.

She hid in shadows the entire way, moving quickly through the streets of the island. With dusk approaching, there were plenty of hiding spots and she was soon within sight of the pier. All seemed quiet there and she knew the guards on duty wouldn't question when she passed them and headed down the beach.

"Evenin', Travis," Emily said as she rounded the corner of the tall cement fence and stepped out onto the pier.

She gasped, there was blood covering the pier. She saw pieces of heku piled into a macabre heap just as someone grabbed her from behind. She struggled to kick at the knee of her attacker, but he brought a rag to her face and she started drifting into unconsciousness. Just as blackness took over, she saw a head roll out from the pile, it was Travis.

“I think we’re ready then,” Chevalier said to the group in the conference room. “We’ll leave in the morning.

Kyle nodded and then excused the rest of the guards on duty that were assigned to escort them to the staging area.

“I’ll just feel better when we’re off the island,” Kyle said, walking with Chevalier up the stairs.

“I agree. It’s taken too long to get this put together, thanks to the hesitancy by the Elders.” He was still frustrated with their slow reaction.

The two walked into Emily’s room. Chevalier saw her shoes and headed to the bathroom, “Hey, Em?”

He glanced into the bathroom and frowned when he didn’t see her.

“Chevalier!” Kyle yelled from behind him, frantic.

Chevalier turned as Kyle handed him the roses and the note from Emily’s bed. He read the note and crumpled it in his hand, his eyes burned red with fury.

An alarm sounded in the town, the alarm of an attack. Chevalier growled and ran to the balcony, quickly jumping out and landing hard on the ground. Kyle was on his heels as they ran for the pier. They both stopped suddenly as they caught sight of the blood and bodies that were piled high on the wooden planks.

Kyle reached down and picked up a rag. Smelling it, he turned to Chevalier, “It’s chloroform,” he said, and handed it to the Chief Enforcer.

Chevalier took the rag and smelled it, inhaling deeply, “Emily too... they got her, Kyle.”

Kyle’s heart sank as he looked out across the ocean and saw nothing but waves as the sun set.

Others began to appear on the pier, and a small vigil had begun to bury the remains of the four pier guards and their dogs. Shutters were closed across the island, clocks were stopped, and lights were put out.

“Get me the location of the Valle Elders, now!” he yelled to Storm, who had just arrived on the scene.

Storm didn’t respond, but quickly ran off to do as she was told. She’d never seen this amount of rage coming out of the Chief Enforcer, and it scared her.

Emily was finally able to pull herself out of the fog. She wasn’t sure why she felt so dizzy and disoriented. As she repositioned in bed, she felt even more confused. The bed was hard and the covers were stiff and scratchy.

“Chev?” she whispered into the dark, her words were slurred.

He didn't answer, and the room seemed quieter than she remembered. Finally, she opened her eyes and then sat bolt upright, looking around the small room.

"Chev? Kyle?" she called out louder, starting to panic.

Emily jumped out of bed, but when her feet hit the floor, it moved out from under her and she fell to the floor, the world spinning. She finally managed to get to her knees and pulled herself to standing using the bed as support. A desk lamp was the only light in the room, but she was able to make out the dark blues and grays of the room's decoration. There weren't any windows, and she felt trapped.

Stumbling, Emily made it to the door and swung it open to another unfamiliar room. The room was dark and she felt along the wall until she found a light switch. She looked around, confused, as she tried to figure out where she was.

This room was larger than the other. There was a TV and couch on one end, and a small kitchen on the other. There were no windows here either, and the same blue and gray décor was also throughout this room. She saw a metal door on the far end by the TV, and she steadied herself as she went to it. When she couldn't open it, she began to pound on the door.

After several minutes, she stopped when no one answered and turned back to the room. The TV was turned off and there was no sound in the room, the silence was eerie. She walked past the couch and ran her hand along a tall bookshelf full of books, then looked around for some hint of familiarity.

Emily's eye caught sight of something strange in the far corner, something that was moving. She got closer and looked up at it, it was a camera, and it was facing her. She moved to the side and it moved with her.

Emily had an idea on how to get some attention. She picked up one of the kitchen chairs and swung it at the camera, knocking it loose and leaving only exposed wires in its place. She went into the bathroom and looked around, but didn't see a camera. Hesitating, she walked back into the cave-like bedroom and saw a camera face her. She used the chair again to knock it off the wall.

"Emily?" someone called from the larger room.

Emily emerged from the bedroom, still carrying the chair, figuring it would work rather well for self-defense. She stopped when she saw three heku at the large metal door. They were all wearing hospital masks. She wrinkled her nose when she got closer because they smelled like strong menthol.

"Who are you?" she asked, still holding the chair.

"We're here to protect you, Child," the one in front said.

"Then let me go."

"No, you will be staying with us for a while. We are going to replace the cameras, and there will be a punishment if you destroy them again," he said calmly.

Emily frowned, "Excuse me?"

“A punishment, you will follow our rules or face the consequences.”

“Are you Equites?”

The three looked at one another nervously, “Leave the cameras alone. This is your only warning.”

Emily threw the chair she was holding at the head of the front heku, but he blocked it easily.

“Last warning, Emily,” he said, and then walked out, locking the heavy metal door behind him.

Emily was starting to understand. She wasn't sure when, but the Valle must have gotten her. She sat on the couch and curled up into a ball. Her mind was still foggy about when she was taken. She couldn't remember if there had been a wide-scale attack and if Chevalier was alive. She buried her head in her arms and felt a tug on her arm, then looked over and saw the remains of a small puncture wound, one a needle leaves.

She wasn't sure of the time. There were no clocks in the rooms, but a short time after the three left her room, five more of them came back. Two grabbed her and pinned her to the wall, while the three others replaced the cameras. The two held her arms and kept away from her legs, she couldn't get a decent shot off. As soon as the cameras were replaced, the five left quietly, never saying a word to her.

When they left, she grabbed another chair and smashed the two cameras again. Her eyes flared when the metal doors opened, and she held the

chair in front of her, ready for a fight. Three heku entered the room again, wearing hospital masks and smelling of menthol.

“We warned you, Child,” the first one said calmly.

Emily readied the chair in front of her, “Come and get me then.”

They descended on her and she managed to break the shorter one’s jawbone with the chair before they restrained her. They forced her onto the bed and pulled leather straps up, then restrained her to the bed. The soft padded leather straps around her wrists and ankles trapped her in an uncomfortable X position.

Emily screamed out in fury as they left the small bedroom and she heard the heavy door lock.

She pulled and tugged at the restraints, but couldn’t slip her hands or feet out of them. Her back began to ache miserably as she rested to catch her breath before starting again to find a way out of this. Hours passed before she finally gave up, and her exhausted body succumbed to sleep.

Emily jerked awake as soft, warm hands began working at the restraint on her wrist. She looked up and saw an unfamiliar man, a mortal. She frowned and fought against the restraints.

“Wait, let me get you out,” he said, working on straps.

“Don’t touch me!” she yelled at him.

“You want to stay there?” he asked, looking over at her. She ignored him as he went back to getting her out of them.

Within a few minutes, she was free of the bed and stood up quickly to face the man.

“Who are you?” she asked, watching him carefully.

“My name is Tim. Do you know how we got here?” he asked, and looked around the room.

She frowned at him, “You don’t know?”

He shook his head, “I’m not sure. I was just heading in to work when some guys grabbed me and pulled me into a van.”

“Uh hu,” she said, not buying his story.

“Let’s get out of here,” Tim said, heading into the front room. He tried the handle of the heavy door and then pounded, “Let us out!”

No one came, so Emily just watched him. The cameras were now on Tim instead of her, and he turned to look at them.

“First off... we get rid of those,” he said, looking around for something to use.

“That’s what landed me in straps. I broke their cameras one too many times,” she said, staying away from him. She still didn’t trust him, “I’m Emily, by the way.”

Tim just nodded at her and started hunting around the room.

“What are you looking for?” she asked.

“Anything to use as a weapon. There has to be a way out of here.”

Emily sat down on the couch and watched as he went through every drawer and every cupboard, even thumbing through books looking for something he could use. She eventually turned on the TV and groaned when the shows weren't in English.

"Is that Finnish?" Tim asked, looking at the TV.

Emily shrugged. She grabbed a book and began to read, still watching Tim pace out of the corner of her eye.

"You have to know something," he said, turning on her.

"Yeah, well I don't," she told him, irritated.

"Are you from Atlanta?"

"No"

"Do you know anyone from Atlanta?"

"No"

"How long have you been here?" he asked, sitting beside her on the couch.

"I don't see any clocks around here, do you?" she snapped. "I'm guessing a day or two."

An awkward silence fell over them as Emily read and Tim watched muted TV. They glanced at each other every so often. It was obvious that neither trusted the other. When it seemed like a lot of time had passed, Emily stood up and went to the bedroom, followed by Tim.

Emily figured Tim was a few years older than she was. He was almost as tall as Keith, but wasn't as muscular. He had a nice tan that contrasted with his blond hair, pretty blue eyes, and an attractive smile.

"Oh no ya don't, bed's mine," she said, lying down.

"How do you figure?" Tim asked. "There's room for both of us."

"In your dreams," she said, pulling the covers over her.

"Fine," Tim said, and went to make his bed on the couch.

Emily woke up to the smell of pancakes, and she wandered out into the larger room.

"Breakfast is ready," Tim said, smiling.

Emily narrowed her eyes at him. She didn't trust him and wouldn't put it past him to poison her food, but she was starting to feel sick and she didn't see any crackers lying around.

"Here, sit," Tim told her, putting a plate of pancakes down on the small table.

"Thanks," she said, and then hesitated before sitting down.

"To make up for last night. I was just edgy, and I apologize." He sat down with a plate for himself.

They ate in silence, and the hot food helped Emily's stomach settle down.

“Thank you, that was good,” Emily said as she stood up and began washing the dishes.

“Don’t do those, I have it,” he said, standing up.

“I’ll wash,” she said, and tossed him a towel. “You dry.”

“Sounds good, and then let’s see how we can get out of here.” He glanced toward the door again.

“Not sure we can. Do you have any idea what kind of environment you are in?” she asked, picking up a dish and washing it.

“What do you mean?”

“We aren’t being held in some government controlled camp or by some strange lunatic. This is all carefully orchestrated and maliciously carried out,” she said softly.

“You know more than I do... fill me in,” Tim said, watching her, the clean yet wet dishes piling up in the sink.

“I don’t trust you enough to tell you, and until I figure out how you work into the scheme of things, I’m going to keep it that way.” She finished and went to sit down with her book.

“How is that fair? How is it you know more about this than I do?” He sat down beside her.

“Because I’m smarter than you are,” she said, still looking at her book.

His eyes narrowed, “Tell me one thing... why us?”

Emily sighed and looked up at him, “I don’t know why you... and the why me part is none of your business.”

While she pretended to read her book, Emily’s mind struggled to remember when she was taken. Something terrible happened, she could feel it in the pit of her stomach, but she couldn’t remember what. She turned away from Tim when tears came into her eyes. She couldn’t remember if something happened to Chevalier or even to Kyle. What if no one was looking for her? What if this was her new life, tucked away and tormented by these heku?

Emily felt her stomach turn, so she casually walked into the bathroom, shut and locked the door, and then collapsed onto the floor. She didn’t know how long she had been going between the toilet and the cool floor, but apparently it was long enough for Tim to become suspicious.

“Are you ok in there?” he asked, knocking on the door.

“Yes,” she managed to say weakly.

“Ok,” he responded, but he didn’t sound convinced.

Once she felt her stomach settled enough, she walked directly to the bedroom and laid down on the bed.

There were bodies lined up along the pier. Everywhere she looked she saw faces she knew, watching from unseeing eyes. There was blood dripping off the wooden planks, turning the water scarlet red. She searched through the bodies trying to find him. She was being watched, she could tell. When she turned around, there were more bodies piled up. Someone was killing everyone she knew.

“Emily, Emily, wake up.” Tim shook her gently.

Emily gasped and sat up quickly, her body shaking

“You were having a nightmare,” he said, still sitting by her on the bed. He reached out and put an arm around her, testing to see if she would fight back.

When she didn’t, he pulled her into a tight hug, “It’s ok, it’s over,” he whispered, rocking her slowly.

Emily wanted to let go, but she needed the warmth. The arms that wrapped around her were strange and unfamiliar, but they held some comfort and she buried her head into his shoulder and cried.

Chapter 3 - Decisions

“This is taking too long! I demand a resolution immediately. It’s been 7 days,” Chevalier scowled at the Elders, both Equites and Valle, that were seated before him.

“We’re doing what we can. It’s a fine line between getting Emily back and preventing a full-scale war,” Selest said to him.

“I don’t care if it causes World War III, as long as we get her back where she belongs.” He turned his attention to the Valle Elders.

The Valle Elders glanced at each other and spoke, too softly for Chevalier to hear.

“What are you doing about this? They attacked and murdered my guards unprovoked and then kidnapped my wife!” Chevalier growled.

“Your wife?” Selest asked.

“Yes mine.” He turned his angry eyes to her.

“I thought she was bonded to Kyle.”

“You thought what I told you... *carte blanche* remember? She is my wife, and she’s carrying my child.” His voice dropped a bit.

The Equites Elders turned and put their heads together, talking quickly among themselves.

Leonid was the first to turn around, “What other lies have you told us, Chevalier?”

“I told you what I needed to, to get my job done. My orders were to observe Emily Russo and to discover if she held any extra powers,” he reminded them.

“And?”

“And I won’t discuss it in mixed company.” He glared at the Valle Elders.

“We will be back then,” the oldest Valle Elder said with a huff, and the three of them walked out of the room.

Selest turned back to Chevalier and Kyle, “What have you found?”

Kyle cleared his throat.

Chevalier glanced at him quickly and then spoke, “She has the powers we were looking for, but they are controlled. She uses them when she’s being attacked and no other time.”

“She has full control?” Leonid wanted to verify he heard correctly.

“Yes,” Chevalier said, watching them.

“So you are telling me that the Valle are now in possession of an active member of the Winchester family?” Selest was beginning to get angry.

Chevalier glared at her, “Yes.”

“You are positive that the girl is with child?” she asked.

“Yes”

“And you are the father?”

Chevalier growled, “Yes.”

The Elders looked horrified as the implications were starting to dawn on them.

“Very well,” Maleth said, standing up. “We will get her back at all costs.”

Chevalier grinned maliciously, and walked out, followed closely by Kyle.

Tim and Emily both turned to the heavy metal door when it swung open. Seven heku walked in and stood by the door.

“What do you want?” Tim asked, standing up.

“Your cooperation,” the tallest said as two grabbed Tim and pinned him against the wall.

Emily stood up and backed away as the other five moved toward her, “Calm, Child, we won’t hurt you.”

She kicked one hard in the knee, dropping him to the floor before the other four grabbed her and drug her into the bedroom. She fought as they restrained her in the uncomfortable X position.

“This would be easier if you wouldn’t fight us,” the tall one said calmly.

Emily spit in his face and struggled as one of the heku rolled her shirt up and tucked it into the band of her bra. He then pulled her pants down low on her abdomen, exposing most of her torso.

“Stop it!” she screamed at them.

The shortest of the heku took out a measuring tape and carefully measured from her breastbone down to her pubic bone and wrote it into a notebook. Another of them painfully shoved a needle into her arm and drew a vial of blood.

Emily screamed in pain and outrage. Her back arched as she struggled to get loose.

“Calm down. You don’t want to hurt yourself,” the taller one told her, and then he held his hand over her lower abdomen and smiled.

The five left the room, leaving Emily in the X position and she heard a struggle from Tim moments before the heavy door shut. He came into the room and gasped at what they had done to her, then immediately began to untie her wrists.

“What did they do?” he asked angrily.

“Some sort of demented physical,” she said as she sat up and readjusted her clothing. She looked at the crook of her arm and saw that the large needle left a stream of blood dripping down her arm. Tim handed her a rag and she covered it.

“They took blood?” he asked.

“Yes”

“Why would they do that?” His face was full of questions.

“I don’t know what makes you think I have her,” Ulrich said calmly from across the table.

“I’m not an idiot. A week after we found out she is pregnant, she disappears? I want her returned to me immediately,” Chevalier yelled, and pounded his fist on the table.

“It’s an unfortunate coincidence... but I did warn you about not falling in love with her.” Ulrich was getting mad also.

“This has nothing to do with my feelings toward Emily. It has to do with your misguided interpretation of protecting your family.”

“Maybe she is dead,” Ulrich said coldly.

Chevalier hissed as Kyle sprang to his feet.

“She is not! Now return her immediately, or we will end this ourselves,” Kyle hissed.

“Meddling with the affairs of the Winchester family leads only to heartache. You should resign yourself now to the fact you will never see her again. It will make your life easier,” Ulrich said, sitting back in his chair.

“We will find her,” Chevalier said through clenched teeth.

“You will let me know when you do though, right? I’d like to know she’s ok,” Ulrich said, and it looked like he was hiding a grin.

“It’s only been two weeks. We will find her, and when we do, you will be next,” Chevalier said as he stood and left the room with Kyle and Storm following.

Tim untied Emily’s hands and feet again, “That’s what? Six times so far they’ve done that?”

Emily sat up and readjusted her clothes, “Yes.”

“What do you figure, every other day?” he asked, watching her closely.

She nodded and ran into the bathroom, locking the door behind her. She looked closely at her arm. It was swollen and bruised from all of the blood draws. Emily sat down on the cold tile and pulled her knees up to her body, wrapping her arms around them she rocked slowly.

“Please, Chevalier, find me,” she said softly. She glanced at her ring and watched it as if it could somehow whisk her away to its maker.

Several hundred miles away, Chevalier shivered. He heard Emily’s words echo in his head and he suddenly felt she was alone and afraid. He yelled more orders to his coven and concentrated on their training mission.

Emily knew he was alive at least. She remembered that if one of them were to die, it would break the bond and she would be able to remove it. It was still securely fastened to her finger.

“Emily? Are you ok, Hun?” Tim asked, worried.

She didn’t answer, but simply rocked in her secure ball and cried.

As she rocked, her mind replayed the bond in her mind, going over every intricate detail, which in turn led to how to break the bond, *“Infidelity by one of the bonded, death or a betrayal.”*

Something suddenly jumped into her mind, how Paul said that Ulrich would try to break the bond between her and Chevalier. How Travis mentioned that the Valle had employed donors in their quest to find her. Her eyes were furious when she looked at the door and wondered if Tim was a helpless pawn in all of this, or if he was in on it.

A plan formed in her mind for fishing out the truth from Tim. Her skin recoiled at the thought of him touching her, but she would be in full control at all times. It would never get to the point of breaking the bond she had with Chevalier. She only hoped the bond wouldn't be fooled by desperate measures.

Emily stepped out from the bathroom and went right into Tim's arms. He wrapped them around her and kissed her head lightly, "Are you ok?"

She nodded, "I'm ok, really. I'm just glad you're here and that I'm not alone."

He smiled and winked at the camera above her head where she couldn't see.

"Are you missing your husband again?" Tim asked in a soft, caring voice.

"I'm afraid he's dead. I just feel that he is." She played off of it, letting herself cry the tears she started in the bathroom.

"I'm so sorry," Tim said, and he tightened his arms around her.

"I'm just going to go to bed now," she said, taking a step toward the bedroom. "You can come lie down if you want. I know your back has to be hurting from sleeping on that old couch."

He smiled enthusiastically and crawled into the bed beside her.

"No touching, just sleep," she said to him, and yawned, then rolled onto her side away from him.

She felt when he nodded.

Chevalier was alarmed. He was suddenly overwhelmed with the feelings that a plan was set in motion. He looked over at Kyle, his eyes angry.

“What’s wrong?” Kyle asked, and stopped to look at him.

“She has a plan... she’s doing something,” Chevalier said, his eyes far away.

Kyle hissed, “A plan? Like what?”

“I can’t tell, but so far it’s working. It’s given her hope, but there’s some edge to it, like it could turn on her.” Chevalier finally glanced at Kyle.

“Can’t you get through to her? Tell her to stop and wait for us?” Kyle asked.

“It doesn’t work that way, I’ve already tried.”

“Tim, I’m cold,” Emily said sleepily, and she felt him wrap an arm around her. She smiled into the dark blankets where no one could see her.

She felt him lightly brush her hair back away from her face as she drifted off to sleep. Both awoke to the sound of the metal door opening. They rushed into the living room and were immediately faced with the seven heku.

As Tim was held against the wall by two heku, Emily was hauled again into the bedroom. When she hit the bed, she doubled up and screamed.

The five heku froze and looked at her as tears poured out of her eyes and she was groaning, clutching her stomach.

“What is wrong, Child?” one of them asked nervously, and glanced up at the cameras.

Emily groaned, but didn't answer, her breathing turned into a pant.

“Something's wrong, get her to Turbac,” one of them yelled, and she was scooped up and whisked out of where she'd spent the last four weeks.

She watched carefully as the hallways flew past her, remembering to groan occasionally and scream. It looked like she was under an encampment. The weather was cold, everything was iced over, and it was snowing. One of the heku threw a blanket over her as they ran through the icy streets and into a small office.

“Turbac!” one of the heku yelled.

An old heku came out of the adjacent room, his face a mixture of fear and worry, “What happened?”

“She's in pain, something's wrong.”

Emily managed to squirm to another view. She saw a table full of vials of colorful liquid and a drawer full of empty syringes.

“Get her in here, lay her down,” the one they called Turbac ordered. He was a shorter heku with graying blue eyes and only a thin strip of hair left that ringed the back of his head.

She was pleased to see they put her in what appeared to be an operating room. There was a small silver table full of scalpels and other odd looking devices.

As she was set on the table, Turbac came to her quickly and began poking painfully at her stomach. She screamed when he touched her, but her eyes didn't leave the table with the scalpel.

“Turn her over, I need her on her back,” he ordered the two heku who had made it into the office.

Before they understood what she was doing, she was standing beside the old man with a scalpel at her neck.

The three heku froze.

“I dare you, come closer to me. I'd rather die than let you have this baby,” Emily said as she cut her neck slightly.

The three of them gasped and looked nervously at each other.

“I bet your orders were to keep me alive, eh? How much trouble will you get into if I bleed out right here on the floor?” She watched them, her jaw set.

“Child, let's talk about this,” Turbac said.

“Oh? You mean like how much we've talked since you kidnapped me from my home? Should we talk about how much trouble you're going to be in when Chevalier gets here? Hmm?” She held the scalpel precariously over her carotid artery.

Turbac winced as she pressed the blade into her skin, not yet cutting into it.

“Please, Child, don’t do anything rash,” he begged.

“Aww, does your life depend on it?” she asked with mocking concern.

“We’re just following orders. You don’t want to harm yourself... let me have the scalpel.” He reached out for it, and she sliced ever so slightly into her neck.

The two heku by the door gasped and stepped back.

“Don’t!” Turbac screamed.

“What exactly are your orders then? Tell me. Do you wait until I deliver and then kill me and take the baby?” She watched their eyes, and her insides turned when she saw their reaction.

“Child...” Turbac said.

“Oh that’s it then? You wait until I deliver and then kill the baby? What kind of sick orders are those?” Her eyes flared, the green swimming angrily.

“We wouldn’t do that,” Turbac tried to assure her, and his hand came out again for the scalpel.

“Whose orders? Ulrich?” She noticed how they flinched at his name, and she knew she was right.

“You don’t know who you are dealing with.” Turbac looked at the horrified heku by the door.

“Oh I think I do. What you don’t know is that Chevalier won’t stop looking until he’s found me, if I’m still alive that is.” She felt herself stand taller as she spoke.

“Put the scalpel down, we can discuss matters. Is it the exams you don’t like? The blood draws maybe? We can discuss keeping your baby alive after you deliver, too.” Turbac thought that would convince her, and he relaxed until she cut a hair deeper into her neck.

“Stop!” he screamed.

She glared at Turbac, “What do you need the blood for?”

“Just for testing. We need to discover how strong the baby will be, that’s all.” He sounded pleading.

Chevalier growled and Kyle’s eyes fell on him, “What’s happening?”

Chevalier hissed, “She’s losing. She’s backed into a corner now, and she’s starting to panic.”

Kyle turned to the first team and ordered them to begin their preparations.

Emily felt the weight of the wall behind her as it caved in, knocking her to the ground as strong arms wrapped around her. She screamed when Turbac took the scalpel from her and brushed the rubble off of himself.

“Return her,” he said sternly, and Emily was whisked back down the long tunnel to the rooms where she was being held.

Tim stood when the door opened, and Emily was thrown into the room. He grabbed her just before she hit the floor.

“Are you ok?” he asked, watching as the heku slammed the door and locked it.

She sat up and glared at the door, “Yes, I’m ok.”

“Where did you go? I thought you were hurt,” he said, looking at the cuts on her neck. “What did they do to you?”

“I did that... got some answers too,” she said proudly.

“About what?” he asked, and pressed a tissue to the drops of blood on her neck.

“About our captures, about whose idea all of this is.” She watched him.

“Please tell me. I have a right to know!” He was now watching her eyes.

“It’s a baron of some sort, named Korin. You didn’t tell me you worked for the Government, why didn’t you tell me that? That would have helped!” She glared at him.

She was inwardly pleased when he fell for it, “I didn’t know it mattered.”

“Everything matters, now we know it’s a government operation.” She watched him as he nodded.

“Yeah, I think I can see that now,” he said, and her eyes narrowed.

Suddenly, she was in his arms as they wrapped tightly around her waist, “I was so afraid they would take you away and I wouldn’t see you again.”

Grimacing inside, Emily reached up and kissed Tim lightly on the lips and tried not to react when he responded forcefully, returning her kiss as his arms moved up to hold her head tightly.

She let him lead her into the bedroom and as he turned and laid her on the bed, her body froze and then she sat up and looked at the cameras.

Tim sat up, frustrated, “What’s wrong?”

“The cameras, they are always watching,” she said, and she slipped out of bed and went back into the other room. Before Tim emerged, she grabbed her book and was reading again, pleased with her progress.

Chevalier sighed, “Whatever she’s doing worked, and she’s positive again. I don’t like this. I can hear voices, but can’t make out what they are saying. All I’m getting are bursts of emotions.”

Kyle smiled, “It’s something at least.”

Chevalier nodded and turned back to his squadron.

When the heavy door opened two days later, Emily was ready for them. She braced herself against the back wall and waited with a gleam in her eye. Tim was, as usual, restrained first and then five came for her.

She smiled as they approached, “Ready to tangle?”

The five heku glanced at each other, not entirely sure what to think. The tallest one stepped forward, “Let’s do this easy, Child. No more jokes like last time.”

“Oh... didn’t like my joke?” she asked, grinning.

She had thought this through in her mind over and over, and when it was about to happen, time slowed down. Emily ducked under the first arm that came to grab her and she turned a somersault, coming up behind them. She jumped onto the back of one of the surprised heku, and twisted his head violently to the side, dropping him to his knees.

As the first fell, she landed deftly on her feet and ducked down, bringing one foot out to catch the closest heku in the kneecap. She heard a sickening grinding as his kneecap was pushed out of place, and he screamed.

Their formation was thrown off. The next heku grabbed her from behind, trapping her waist with one hand, and her upper chest with the other. Emily drew her head forward and let it thrust back into his nose. He screamed and let her go.

She spun on the other two and dropped into a crouch she’d seen the heku do often. She hissed at them, her hands balled into fists. The two remaining heku were unsure and glanced around the room nervously.

Emily was tackled from behind by the heku who had managed to return his head to the correct position. She felt her body slam into the floor and

it knocked the wind out of her. Before she could regain control, she was dragged to the bed and tied up again.

She screamed angrily.

“For that, Child, you must be punished,” the tallest heku said to her.

Once they were done measuring her and drawing her blood, they left. This time, Tim didn’t come to untie her, and she laid in the painfully awkward position for hours. Her back was sent into spasms and she cried out in pain. Her wrists and ankles were swollen and bruised from the restraints. Hours later, she couldn’t scream any more as her voice gave out and her mouth ran dry.

Chevalier dropped to his knees, alone in his quarters. The pain was excruciating, and he had to fight the urge to scream. The pain suddenly stopped and as he stood up, he realized that it was from Emily.

“We’re coming, Em, hold on,” he said to the dark room.

The pain became worse, and all Emily could think of was how to get release from the intense spasms that shot through her body. She squeezed her eyes shut as she concentrated to try to make her muscles relax. She had broken out in a sweat, and the pain made her entire body shake.

A long sigh escaped her parched lips when someone released her binds. She wasn’t sure who it was, they didn’t speak. The muscles in her body

were so tightly knotted, that all she could do was roll onto her side to relieve some of the pressure. She drifted into unconsciousness, the darkness was soothing and welcomed.

“Emily?” Tim touched her hair lightly, “Emily, are you ok?”

She was barely able to open her eyes at the sound of his voice. She whispered something he couldn’t hear, and then fell back asleep. She was aware he covered her with a blanket, moments before submitting again to the darkness.

“You need to drink something,” Tim said the next day. He put his arm under her shoulders and lifted her up. She felt the cold water touch her lips and drank deeply.

“Emily,” Tim said, and kissed her lightly. “You can’t do that again, do you promise? Don’t fight them, please.”

Emily nodded, “How long did I sleep?”

“I think it’s been about two days. You really had me worried,” he said, touching her cheek softly.

She sat up in the bed and winced at her sore muscles. Standing slowly, she noticed the camera in the room wasn’t lit up, “You broke it?”

“I did... and I guess they decided it wasn’t worth fixing,” Tim said proudly.

This time, Emily truly smiled.

“I’m going to get a bite to eat, are you hungry?” she asked, heading into the kitchen. She walked slowly, every muscle in her body screamed at

her movement as she disappeared into the bathroom to get changed before heading into the kitchen.

“Sure,” Tim said, following her into the kitchen.

She grabbed some fresh potatoes out of the fridge and began to slice them, talking easily with Tim. Her plan was in motion and was moving quickly. The only thing she hadn’t accounted for was her prolonged punishment in restraints. She hoped this plan didn’t lead to even longer time in them.

When she was done cooking, she sat out the fried potatoes and sausage and sat down with Tim to eat. The smell was nauseating to her, so she pushed the food around nonchalantly on the plate and visited. Emily took a deep breath, praying that Chevalier hadn’t been lying to her about her impact on men.

“It’s so hot in here today,” she said, and pulled off her over shirt. She planned ahead and was now wearing a sheer camisole that clung nicely to her body and exposed some of her abdomen, still toned and muscular.

Tim grinned, “Yes, it is.”

His eyes ran down her body and her insides jumped.

She smiled at him and blinked her green eyes, accentuating the long lashes that framed them.

Tim moved to her quickly and embraced her, kissing her forcefully. She hated the way his face stubble pricked at her skin and how his forcefulness made her mouth ache. He held her too tightly and cut off circulation to parts of her arm, but she slowly pressed her body into his

and kissed him back. Her ring seemed to weight a thousand pounds as she secretly felt to make sure it was still firmly attached.

Tim picked her up, cradling her in his arms, and their lips never parted. He slowly lowered her to the bed and knelt above her.

Emily broke the kiss and smiled up at him, “I have an idea.”

Tim was undressing, “Yeah?”

“Something fun... how open are you to new adventures?” She was now kneeling on the bed.

“Oh, very open,” Tim said, too anxiously. He knelt beside her in the bed, now naked.

“Let me tie you up. We can put those restraints to some good use,” she said, and before he could answer, her lips were slowly moving along the contours of his chest. He shuddered as he laid back on the bed.

Emily kissed up his arm to his hand and pulled the padded leather restraint around it, fastening it tightly. She did the same with his other hand, and his body broke out in goose bumps. Next, she knelt between his legs and ran her nails lightly down his thighs to his calves and fastened the restraints at his ankles.

When she finished, she stood up and blew him a kiss, then grabbed her shirt and slipped it back on.

“Hey!” Tim said, pulling at the restraints.

Emily moved out of the room, shut off the lights, and shut the door behind her, laughing when she heard him scream.

She grabbed some fresh fruit from a bowl on the counter and sat down with her book. His screams turned to agonizing pleas for help, so she reached over to turn on the TV. She turned the knob so the TV was blasting louder than his screams, and watched a news report in a language she didn't understand.

Chevalier couldn't help but grin at the emotions Emily was going through. She was pleased, excited, and entertained all at the same time.

[Chapter 4 - Emily](#)

Emily was so engrossed in her book that she failed to notice the screams anymore. She kicked back on the couch and slept most of what felt like the night as the TV blared in the background, then got up, ravished, made pancakes, and sat alone at the table to eat. The camera in the living area kept scanning the room and she just grinned.

After breakfast, she cleaned the kitchen and then dusted the living area, all the while being watched closely by whoever was manning the camera. After cleaning up, she stepped into the bathroom to take a hot shower, savoring how the hot water felt against her sore muscles.

Emily stood by the bedroom door and listened closely. All she could hear were sobs coming from Tim. He sounded like he was in pain and she smiled and returned to her book. She was curled up there, reading, when the heavy metal door opened. The seven heku came in with customary masks and menthol smell. They scanned the room for Tim and then advanced on Emily, pinning her to the couch while they searched for Tim.

“He’s in here!” one of the heku yelled, heading into the bedroom. The sound of sobbing came from inside.

Emily sat quietly while the three heku guarded her and wondered what was going on inside the bedroom. They hauled Tim out, his head lolling to the side and a heku under each arm. They walked him gently up the stairs as Emily watched.

The tallest heku came out and addressed Emily, who was still sitting on the couch surrounded by heku guards.

“That is enough disobedience!” He stopped talking when Emily held up a hand.

“It wasn’t disobedience. I don’t believe there was ever an order that I wasn’t to tie him up.” She raised her eyebrows at him.

He struck her hard and fast across her face.

“I’ve had worse,” Emily said, turning to face him again.

“You will learn true respect and obedience, Child. No more of this insolence! The punishments will begin to get worse and worse until you comply with our desires,” he said, watching her.

“Your desires? What exactly are your desires?” she asked angrily.

“Your devotion and loyalty to the Valle.”

“Oh is that all?” she asked sweetly.

He watched her.

“I’ll die first,” she yelled at him.

“Enough! Bring her,” he demanded to the two heku at her side. They each grabbed an arm and hauled her out of the room and up the stairs.

Chevalier gave the order for the first team to descend into the Valle coven. Their instructions were clear, kill anyone they see.

Kyle led the first battalion into the city. They outnumbered the residents of this cold land, two to one. Their informer inside of Valle said that this Godforsaken frozen wasteland was where Ulrich chose to call his home.

The sounds of battle began just as Chevalier thought over the last thing he picked up from Emily, more pain. This time the pain was excruciating and relentless. He tried to focus on the battle and waited for Kyle’s call for the second attack. Heku tradition dictated the Commander came in the second round. The first attack was led by the second in command to show respect, but Chevalier now doubted this tradition.

He knew that somewhere, down in that frozen city, Emily was in pain. The call came, the lone signal heard clearly and Chevalier advanced his troops. As planned, they fanned out to the south end of the city, killing

anyone they came across. Blood from the Valle stained the icy roads red and the smell only caused the heku to fight harder.

Chevalier brought his sword to many Valle heku, tearing them into shreds and feverishly moving on to the next and doing it again. As planned, he questioned any high-ranking Valle about Emily's whereabouts before killing them, but so far, no one knew where she was being housed. One swears he had seen her, but couldn't give any details about her location.

Covered in the blood of the Valle, Chevalier came face-to-face with Kyle and his team in front of the city's castle.

"Any word?" Kyle asked.

Chevalier shook his head, "Head around back, we're entering the castle in 5 minutes."

Kyle nodded and headed his troops along the wall, toward the back, leading half to the west and the rest went around to the north. He knew these orders well. No one was to be killed until they were questioned by either himself or the Chief Enforcer. Informants suggested Emily was being held in the palace with Ulrich.

When the time came, Chevalier stormed into the palace, quickly dispatching the front guards and heading into the cold marble home of Lord Ulrich.

"Ulrich, I've come for you!" Chevalier yelled into the palace, his words echoing off of the polished marble.

“Find her,” he called to his troops, and they spread out, checking every door and every wall for secret passages.

Chevalier left his fighting for Ulrich and watched as his troops searched the castle. Kyle came up from the back of the castle to stand by him.

“I don’t get anything from her anymore, it’s been almost three days,” Chevalier said, the anger in his voice was stifling.

Kyle looked around the castle, “If she’s here, we’ll find her.”

Chevalier nodded, but his heart sank. He reached further out and couldn’t find her. No emotions, no memories, no murmur of voices.

“Sir! We have three Commanders cornered for you,” an Equites guard reported. He then led Chevalier and Kyle to a small room.

Inside, there were three Valle heku cowering in the corner. Their weapons had been removed, and they were covered in blood and wounds.

Chevalier walked up and stood threateningly in front of them, “Where is Emily?”

The three looked at each other nervously, but didn’t speak.

He walked up and knocked one onto his back and then stepped on his throat, cutting off his airway. The Valle heku gasped for breath and clawed at Chevalier’s boot, “You can either die or tell me where she is.”

The Commander gasped and nodded.

“Talk,” Chevalier ordered, and let up on the pressure only slightly.

“She’s underground, not here in the castle,” he whispered hoarsely.

“Where?” His eyes burned toward him.

“I don’t know. They just said she’s underground.” The Commander pushed at Chevalier’s boot, frantically trying to free his airway.

With one swift movement, Chevalier brought his sword down and decapitated the man before he had a chance to draw a single, unrestricted breath.

“Next,” he said, and pointed his sword at the next Valle Commander.

“Stop please. We don’t know, it was kept from us where exactly the underground bunker is,” he said, begging for his life only a second before he was cut in half by Chevalier’s sword.

He turned it onto the third, who was sobbing, “The entrance is by the tailor in town. There’s a vent that leads down to the bunker where she’s being held.”

Chevalier watched the Commander’s eyes and then cut off his hand, “Kyle, go check it out. If he lied, I’ll cut him up slowly.”

Kyle disappeared out the front door of the castle. He had seen the tailor on his way to the castle and was able to run there in just a few seconds. He located the vent and pulled it up, smiling when he saw the stairs leading down into the darkness. He descended quickly, but his heart sank when he saw the door ajar.

“Emily?” he yelled into the first room in the bunker.

He caught her scent, but it was days old. He quickly searched the bathroom and the bedroom, but the scent was no stronger there. Angrily, he ran faster back to Chevalier.

“She was there, but she’s been gone for days,” Kyle said as he approached the Chief Enforcer.

Chevalier brought his blade down and severed the left arm of the Commander, “Don’t lie to me.”

“I swear, that’s where she was being held,” he screamed.

“Was... where is she now?” Kyle demanded.

“She was causing problems... they moved her, but I don’t know where.” His eyes fell on Chevalier.

His sword came down swiftly and removed the Commander’s left foot, “Wrong again.”

“I swear! No one was supposed to know where she was being moved,” he said, screaming as he began to panic.

“What problems? Why was she moved?” Kyle asked.

“She was disobedient... she refused to submit to the Valle and then tortured the one brought in to bring her a new mortal mate.” He was telling everything he could to save his life.

Chevalier growled, “Mortal mate?”

“It was an order. We were to find her a replacement for the heku she is bonded to. She found out somehow and tortured him.” He was now begging.

“Tell me more,” Chevalier said, and brought his sword to the heku’s neck.

“She assaulted four heku guards. She also refused to swear her allegiance to the Valle,” he said, panting. “She faked an injury and tried to cut her own throat when she was taken to the infirmary.”

Chevalier’s heart sank. He knew she would fight back, but he hadn’t known how hard, “More,” he demanded.

“They punished her, but she wouldn’t behave... they moved her for a stronger punishment.” He was crying tearlessly again.

“What kind of punishment?” Kyle hissed.

“It was one of the doctor’s ideas, it wouldn’t hurt the baby. She was restrained in such a way that her muscles would contract and spasm. I don’t know where they were taking her for the next level.” His desperation to cooperate was evident.

Chevalier brought his sword down and cut off the Commander’s head as he roared with fury.

“Ulrich!” he bellowed, and set off to find him personally.

Chevalier headed up the stairs and scanned the castle. The carnage left by his troops was everywhere as Chevalier inhaled and caught the scent

of Ulrich. He jumped over a railing and headed deeper into the castle, past where his troops were still killing servants by his orders.

Chevalier followed the now familiar scent of Ulrich as he swung open a heavy door and entered, coming face-to-face with the Coven's Lord. He took a step inside the large room and his eyes locked on his enemy.

"You came as promised, I see," Ulrich said, standing his ground.

Chevalier hissed, "You tortured your own granddaughter? For what? Her allegiance?"

"I did as I saw fit. I had to rid her of her taste for the heku." Ulrich took a step to the side.

"Her taste? You mean you wanted to drive her from me." His eyes raged.

Chevalier took a step toward the Old One.

"Pain is a great deterrent, the strongest," Ulrich growled at Chevalier. "I will not have you ruining century's worth of my work.

"Your pursuit for a pure mortal family has driven you insane. You can't even see straight. If you care so much about the heku harassing your precious family line, then you wouldn't have allowed the torture to happen within your walls." He took a step closer, and Ulrich raised his sword.

"Anything to keep heku, like you, from taking advantage of my Elizabeth's daughters," Ulrich hissed.

“I’m sure your precious Elizabeth would have approved of you kidnapping a pregnant mortal girl and putting her through such cruelty.” With that, Chevalier advanced and slashed at Ulrich, who brought his sword up to block.

“You know nothing!” Ulrich screamed. He slashed at Chevalier’s hulking form and missed as Chevalier stealthily dodged the attack.

“Give up old man. You aren’t the only Old One who cares about Emily, except that I watch out for her entire well-being. I protect her.” Chevalier circled.

“You think you’re in love with her? It’s the blood... nothing but the blood! There’s no love between a Winchester and a heku. If you took away the sweet scent of her blood, then your infatuation would be taken away also,” he said, smiling.

“You don’t even know the truth in front of your own eyes, old man.” He nimbly tossed his sword between his hands, “Where is she?”

“I won’t tell you. She’s where she belongs, learning where her priorities should be,” Ulrich said, his eyes aglow with the passion of his words.

“You mean she’s being tortured until she submits to what you think her priorities should be. What about the baby? What were you planning on doing with it?” Chevalier raised his sword and took another step toward Ulrich.

“Ahh... that unfortunate problem. We’ve done away with the baby already. It’s the girl I wanted, not her half-breed fetus.” Ulrich heard a roar moments before his head rolled across the floor. Chevalier

dismembered him in a matter of seconds, his fury fueling his innate ability to kill without thought or remorse.

Grabbing Ulrich's head by the hair, Chevalier descended the stairs and stood in front of his troops.

"Their Lord has fallen, find her," he demanded, and the wrath in his eyes commanded an immediate response. The Equites troops scattered again throughout the city.

"Sir!" Kyle called to Chevalier from across the foyer. Chevalier tossed Ulrich's head hard against a wall, smashing it into pieces, and then went to Kyle.

"I found a dungeon," he said, leading Chevalier quickly down a stone passageway. They emerged into a large dirt room with cells lining all four sides. There were heku in almost every cell, all calling out to Chevalier and Kyle to save them.

"Please, I'll swear allegiance to Equites if you let me out!" one called after he hissed at Kyle.

Chevalier walked around, looking in each cell and ignoring each beg, but he spun suddenly when he heard the calm voice call to him.

"Kind Sirs, I know where the girl is."

Kyle approached his cell and looked inside, "Speak, Encala."

"Let me go, and I will take you to her," he said. He was sitting quietly on a cot in the 4x6 foot cell.

"Agreed, where is she?" Kyle asked as Chevalier joined him.

“Open my door, Equites, and I’ll show you.” He stood and walked over to the cell door. He was different from the other heku in the cells. He was clean and well-spoken.

Chevalier grabbed the keys off of a dead guard and opened his door, then raised his sword, “Lead.”

The freed prisoner walked a few steps up the stone walkway and turned to the side, then pressed two stones and the wall slid silently aside. The enemy heku looked at them and stepped back.

Chevalier rounded the corner first and his heart constricted in his chest. A hiss from behind him let him know Kyle was also there.

The room they entered was a cold, small room made of stone. In the center, a chain hung from the rafters and from it, a lone form hung by her wrists, suspended above the ground, her back to them. She wore only a bra and a simple pair of shorts. Red welts stood out on her back and her red hair was draped over her face. As they stepped closer, she raised her head.

Kyle dropped to his knees and screamed, clutching his chest tightly.

Chevalier ran to her, “Emily, stop!”

Kyle fell to the ground behind him, breathing hard, but no longer in pain.

“Chev?” Emily cried out, trying to look around at him.

Chevalier lifted her up so her arms no longer bore her weight, and then he reached up to unhook the chains. She fell into his arms, and he lowered her to the ground.

“Is it really you?” she asked weakly.

“I’m here now,” Chevalier said as he removed his shirt and laid it across her. He quickly tore the leather restraints from her bleeding, swollen wrists.

Emily’s eyes fell on Kyle. He was sitting on the ground watching them, “Did I hurt you?”

Kyle smiled, “Just for a bit. I’m ok.”

Chevalier picked Emily up and she leaned her head against his shoulder as he spoke, “Let’s get her out of here.”

Kyle flew to his feet and headed out the door.

As they walked into the blood stained foyer, the Equites troops fell back against the walls, making room for Chevalier to pass unhindered. Their eyes fell with respect as he carried Emily over to a small couch and laid her down.

“Get the helicopter,” Chevalier said, watching Emily.

A few of the guards broke rank and ran out the door, immediately following his orders.

Chevalier and Kyle knelt beside Emily.

“Where do you hurt?” Chevalier asked, lightly touching a dark bruise on her cheek.

She looked down, “I can’t feel my arms.”

“I don’t doubt that,” Kyle said, and touched the swollen puncture wounds on her inner arm.

“Sir,” an Equites guard said.

Kyle got up and pulled the guard to the side to talk to him.

Emily smiled, “You came.”

He brushed her hair away from her face, “Of course, I can’t let you have all the fun.”

She grinned, “I got them.”

Chevalier laughed, “Yes, you did.”

Emily sat up slowly and smiled at the nearest Equites guard. She tried to ignore the blood and body parts scattered around the room.

“Are you ok?” she asked him.

The heku glanced at Chevalier and then grinned at Emily, “Yes, Ma’am.”

“We didn’t lose anyone, Em, lay back down,” Chevalier said. He suddenly understood why his troops were so eager to help him retrieve Emily.

The heku guard nearest her removed his uniform jacket and laid it across her legs, then returned to his post.

Emily looked up as the building shook.

“Helicopter is here,” Chevalier said, and picked Emily up. He looked one last time at the destroyed castle and then carried her outside. She

watched the troops as she passed, scanning for signs of injury, but found none. Her arms were numb and lifeless, trapped in her lap.

Kyle was already in the helicopter when the two of them arrived, and they were soon up above the snowy compound, headed for the island.

Dr. Edwards was waiting in Emily's room when she walked in, being supported by Chevalier. She smiled at him and sat down on the bed.

"What have we here?" the doctor asked, and looked over the many cuts and bruises on her.

"It's good to see you again," Emily said as he began checking her over. When he saw bloody welts from the lashes on her back, he stood up and faced Chevalier.

Chevalier frowned when the doctor swallowed hard, his eyes nervous.

"I'll need her to come to the hospital," the doctor said.

"Is it that bad?" Kyle asked.

"No, I just..." Dr. Edwards' eyes looked nervously at the heku. "I just need to make sure she's... well... safe."

"We didn't do this!" Kyle yelled, but Chevalier stopped him before he could say more. He looked at the doctor, not angry, but grateful at the concern and bravery he showed for Emily.

"It's ok. She's safe here. She was held captive for the last four weeks, and we just barely got her back."

The doctor relaxed some, “Oh, well then, let’s see.” He pulled out a harsh chemical and started applying it to Emily’s back. She winced as the chemical did its job.

“Lay back,” the doctor said when he was done with her back. She laid down on the soft bed and reveled at how wonderful it felt.

The doctor checked the cuts and bruises over her entire body, and then grabbed his bag when Emily screamed as he moved her arm.

Her eyes widened when he brought out a small bottle and a syringe, “No!”

He jumped and looked up at her, “What?”

Chevalier grinned, “Just do it. It’s faster if you don’t ask her.”

Emily glared at Chevalier, “No shots.”

She turned to protest, but the pinch in her thigh let her know she was too late, “Hey! I said, no.”

The doctor looked at Chevalier nervously, but the heku smiled back.

“Emily, what is this?” Dr. Edwards asked, motioning to the crook of her arm where numerous puncture wounds were visible and the area was highly inflamed.

“They took blood,” Emily said, her words starting to slur.

“How often!?” the doctor asked, frowning.

Everyone looked up at her to see why she didn't respond, but she was asleep.

"Ahh, its working," the doctor said, and turned to her shoulder. He lifted her arm, rotated it gently, and then did the same with the other.

"Her shoulders are badly sprained, was she...?" He didn't know how to finish.

"Yes, she was hanging by her wrists," Kyle said, looking at the floor.

The doctor huffed and felt along her arms, and then studied her bloody wrists, "Wrists are sprained, too."

He pulled a bottle from his bag, and spread a thick yellow medicine over the torn skin around her wrists, and then wrapped them tightly with gauze before covering that with an ace bandage.

Lastly, the doctor moved to her abdomen and poked around a bit. Chevalier avoided his glance and focused on Emily's peaceful face.

Finally, he spoke, his jaw clenched, "Did they hurt her when they..."

The doctor looked up at him, "When they what?"

Chevalier sighed, "Took the baby."

Kyle winced.

"They didn't take the baby," the doctor said, frowning.

Chevalier looked up at him, "Ulrich said they aborted the fetus."

“I don’t think so,” the doctor said, pulling out an odd looking electrical device. He placed it against Emily’s lower abdomen and moved it around a bit, finally settling on a rapid heartbeat.

“Baby sounds good to me,” he said, looking up at Chevalier confused.

Chevalier’s eyes widened, “That’s the baby?”

The doctor nodded, “Yes, and the heartbeat is good.”

His face lightened and he kissed Emily’s hand.

“How long is she out for?” Kyle asked, looking down at Emily.

Dr. Edwards grinned, “A while. I’ll call tomorrow to check on her. Keep ice on that bruise on her face.”

Chevalier nodded.

The doctor hesitated, and then left the room.

“We have the video surveillance tapes from inside of Emily’s room,” Kyle said as soon as the doctor left.

Chevalier looked up at him, “We do?”

Kyle nodded and disappeared, returning with a laptop.

“Let’s have a look,” Chevalier told him and moved to the table.

For the next seven hours, Chevalier and Kyle watched the four weeks’ worth of surveillance video on Emily. They fast forwarded through the parts when nothing was happening, and concentrated in on when there

was. Chevalier watched carefully and his eyes flared as Emily was repeatedly tied to the bed and examined by the strange heku.

Kyle hissed as she was left restrained for hours, and both heku watched the agony on her face. Chevalier paused the video when a clear shot of Tim appeared. He memorized his face, automatically committing every part of him to memory.

They grinned as Emily fought the enemy heku and was able to single-handedly floor four of them, but the punishment that followed was torturous to watch. Chevalier leaned forward and growled when Emily ran into Tim's arms and began to kiss him. Kyle looked away. When she slipped off her over-shirt, Chevalier looked over at her on the bed and glanced quickly at the ring on her finger.

He looked back to the video as the two of them went into the bedroom and from the angle of the tape, he could see Tim undressing. He gasped loudly, and Kyle turned around just in time to see Emily tie Tim to the bed and leave, shutting the door behind her. They both grinned at the pleased expression on her face. They timed it, and she left him tied to the bed for almost 14 hours before the heku came and took her away.

As the video ended, Kyle deleted the file and bent the laptop, breaking it in half.

He tossed the laptop off the balcony and came back, smiling, "She put up quite a fight."

Chevalier smiled at her as she slept, "That she did."

"But at what price?"

He moved over to the bed and looked at Kyle, “You may go.”

Kyle nodded and left the room quickly.

Chevalier joined Emily in bed and wrapped his arms around her. She pulled closer to him in her sleep.

Chapter 5 - Chevalier

“Why do you have to go?” Emily asked. She was sitting up in the bed, resting her arms in her lap.

“The Elders called Kyle and I to a meeting about the attack on the Valle. I have to go,” he explained, and continued to brush her hair gently.

“Then let me go,” she said, turning to him as he finished. She didn’t have full use of her arms yet, any time she extended them past her waist her shoulders screamed.

“You’re not ready for travel,” he told her, and put the brush down.

“I am too, there’s nothing wrong with me,” she said, and set her jaw.

“Em, I don’t know what all is going to happen at this meeting. I killed the lord of a large Valle coven, and I also let it slip that I’m bonded to

you, and now the Elders know of your abilities... it's too dangerous to have you there." He was getting frustrated that she couldn't see the danger.

Emily grinned up at him, "Fine... as soon as you and Kyle leave, I'll just go back to the mainland for a bit."

Chevalier growled, "Emily."

She smiled up at him sweetly.

"Damn it, Em, you need to stay here until I get back." His hands were balled into fists.

"No," she said. She knew she was winning.

Chevalier growled, "Fine."

Emily kissed him lightly and smiled.

The helicopter taking off sent Emily's stomach into a spin. She turned away quickly before Kyle or Chevalier could see her face and she watched the ocean fly by. It seemed like an eternity to Emily before the helicopter started to descend into a good-sized city in the middle of a dense forest.

The helicopter was greeted by four large heku dressed in deep green robes with their faces hidden. Emily hugged Chevalier's arm tightly as they were led into the largest of the buildings. He smiled reassuringly at her.

The Council was already convened and waiting their arrival. Emily looked up, wide eyed, as the twelve heku looked down at them. The chair to the right of Elder Maleth was empty. The Council erupted in an odd murmur as they caught the scent of Emily. Members of the Council were turning in their seat, away from the enticing aroma.

Emily shifted uneasily and Chevalier glared at them as they turned back around. He was ready to spring if anyone attacked. These were the eldest and most respected of the Equites, and they were able to resist what others could not.

Selest stood, “Thank you for coming so quickly, Chief Enforcer.” She was speaking to Chevalier, but looking curiously at Emily.

Emily shifted nervously and grasped Chevalier’s arm tighter.

“I see you brought your second in Command.” She nodded to Kyle.

She flashed a warm smile to Emily, “Good to see you again, Child.”

Emily looked up at her and fought to keep from running. She didn’t realize how intimidating the council chambers were, with their bright lights pointed directly at whoever was addressing the Council and the way the Council looked so far down on them.

Selest sat and Maleth stood, “Let’s get started. We have numerous complaints from the Valle Elders. We’ll read them now.”

As Elder Maleth read the accusations, Emily could feel Chevalier tense.

Destroyed Valle coven city Debalih

Maliciously slaughtered innocent heku

Sought out and killed the unarmed Lord of Debalih

Freed two prisoners from the dungeons of the castle

Tortured and killed top Debalih officers

Kidnapped the granddaughter of the Lord of Debalih

Viciously tortured a mortal man found within the city of Debalih

Stole the city crest that was housed in the castle

When he was done, he looked at Chevalier, “You had a busy day.”

Chevalier glared up at him, “Lies, they are lies. Surely you know that.”

Maleth nodded and turned to Kyle, “Let’s address each one, shall we? Begin with destroying the city of Debalih.”

Kyle stepped forward, “We didn’t harm the actual city, but we did kill anyone we came across, as ordered.”

“Did you order such?” Maleth asked Chevalier.

“Yes, I did.” He stood tall.

“Under what power do you call upon to order the killing of innocent heku?”

Chevalier looked straight into his eyes, “Under the power I was given to do all I could to retrieve what we were after.”

Elder Selest grinned, “We did give him that power.”

Maleth nodded, “That also answers the second accusation. Did you seek out and kill the unarmed lord, Lord Ulrich?”

Chevalier looked up at him, “He wasn’t unarmed, just over matched.”

“Easy enough,” Maleth said, then paused before continuing, “Did you free two prisoners from the dungeons?”

Kyle answered, “We freed one prisoner, the one who led us to Emily, and I’m guessing she was the second prisoner we freed.”

Maleth frowned, “Was she in the prison?”

Chevalier nodded, “Yes, hanging by her wrists from the rafters after having been beaten.”

Emily blushed and looked at the floor.

“Is this correct, Child?” She was too embarrassed and simply nodded to the floor.

“We will return to that,” Maleth said. “Did you torture high-ranking officials?”

Chevalier stifled a grin, “Yes I did, when they wouldn’t give me straight answers.”

“I see, and the granddaughter?” he asked.

Chevalier looked at Emily, “I don’t think it was a kidnap as much as a rescue.”

Maleth nodded, “We will make sure they understand that.”

Maleth turned to Chevalier, “I don’t understand how you can justify torturing a mortal man, though, Chief Enforcer.”

Chevalier began to speak, but Emily interrupted him, “I think that was me.”

Maleth frowned at Emily, “What was you, Child?”

“I tortured him.”

The entire council chambers fell quiet.

Selest stood, “Explain please.”

Emily sighed, “He was living with me and was... pushy.” She winced and looked up at them, “So I restrained him to the bed for a while.”

Chevalier added, “Restraints used on Emily frequently, restraints there were situated as to cause muscle spasms and intense pain.”

A rumble roared across the Council.

“Is he speaking the truth, Emily? Did you put the mortal in the same restraints that were regularly used on you and caused pain?” Selest asked softly.

Emily nodded, “I’ll take responsibility for that. That happened before Chevalier and Kyle even got to the city. Send the punishment to me.”

Leonid rose angrily, “There will be no repercussions for that.”

Chevalier growled, “She was already punished by the Valle for that.”

Selest spoke, “Everyone calm down, let’s get on with this.”

Maleth spoke again, “Lastly, did you take the city crest?”

Chevalier looked into his eyes, “We took nothing but what we came for.”

The Elders turned away from them and spoke quickly.

Selest stood, “Very well, now leave us with Emily.”

Emily’s hand tightened on Chevalier’s arm.

“Why?” he hissed.

“We wish to speak to the child... alone.” She smiled down at Emily.

Chevalier’s body tensed, but he pulled away from her grasp and whispered in her ear, “It’ll be ok. Kyle and I will be right outside.”

Soon, Emily found herself standing alone in the bright lights with the twelve heku looking down at her. Without thinking, she wrapped her arms around herself.

“Breathe, Child,” Leonid said, smiling at her.

She took a deep breath and ran her eyes along the heku.

“You are safe here with us. We can control ourselves,” he said reassuringly.

“What is the cause of your enticing blood, Child?” one of the Council members asked, inhaling slightly.

Emily blushed, “Chevalier thinks it’s because I’m pregnant.”

Selest clapped her hands together, “That is great news, Child! So glad the doctors were wrong.”

Emily blushed deeper and dropped her eyes.

Maleth stayed in his chair and addressed Emily, “Are you well, Child?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Do you mind talking about what happened?”

Emily looked up at him, “Ok.”

“How were you taken?” She could feel all of the eyes on her.

“I don’t remember that... but others tell me I was taken from the pier.”

“Very well, where were you kept?”

“It was under the ground, just a living area, bathroom, and bedroom. They watched me on cameras in the bedroom and living area.” She shuddered as she thought of those rooms.

“Were you alone?”

“No, there was a guy there, Tim. He’s the one I... well... tortured.” She felt the heat rising back to her cheeks.

“I see,” Leonid said, writing something down. “What was his purpose?”

“He, um.” Emily fidgeted, “He was supposed to break the bond I have with Chevalier.”

A murmur ran through the Council, and Emily shifted nervously.

“It is ok. We’re trying to help,” Selest said.

Leonid continued, “Were you tortured?”

Emily knew they could see the bruise on her cheek and the bandages on her wrists, but answered anyway, “Yes.”

“Was there a reason?”

Emily nodded.

“What were their reasons?”

Emily sighed, “The first was because I broke their cameras, I... um... smashed them with a chair a few times. Then I got in trouble for attacking their guards... erm... twice. Then because of what I did to Tim.”

Leonid wrote frantically on the paper in front of him, “What do you mean, attacked their guards?”

“They came in every other day and tied me to the bed to take blood.” She didn’t want to mention the embarrassing measurements.

“Forcibly took blood from you?”

Emily held up her arm, and watched as their eyes fell to the many puncture wounds surrounded by bruises and red, swollen skin.

“Did they say why?” the heku on the end asked.

“To see how strong the baby is.”

He nodded and sat back in his chair.

“So when they had done it enough, I decided to try to fight back. I broke one of their noses... and then took out a kneecap and... one guy... I broke his neck.” She dropped her eyes again and blushed when a few of the Council members laughed.

“It’s ok, Child. We are not here to judge you,” Leonid said, glaring at those who laughed and they promptly stopped.

“You were able to do that much damage to a heku?” Selest asked, impressed.

Emily nodded, “Travis and Kyle taught me that.”

“What was the punishment for your actions?” Leonid asked when everyone was again under control.

“Longer time in the restraints on the bed.”

“Did that cause pain?”

Emily nodded and wrapped her arms tighter around herself, ignoring the painful pull in her shoulders.

Noting the change in Emily’s body posture, Selest took over the questioning, “After you injured the mortal, what was said?”

Emily sighed, “Well... the tall heku told me I needed to swear my allegiance to the Valle, and when I said no, they...”

Selest noticed Emily’s heart began to race.

“They... took me somewhere and tied me up by my wrists and hung me in a room.” Emily’s eyes were far away, picturing the awful scene in her head.

“For how long?”

“I don’t know.”

“Did anyone come to you?” Selest asked softly.

“Yes... they came in regularly and told me if I swore allegiance to the Valle, they would let me go.” She was watching Selest’s pitch black eyes.

Selest grimaced and frowned, “You did not agree to this?”

Emily shook her head, “No, I did not.”

“Even to stop the pain that must have caused?”

“No”

“Anything else?” Selest asked, watching Emily with more respect.

“They came in once and told me if I were to join the Valle, they would not only let me go, but would give me anything I wanted. So I spit in his face, and then...” She shivered, “They got a strap.”

She didn’t need to go on. They all knew the rest of what happened and all of them looked at her, astonished. Never had they known a mortal to show such devotion, and to endure that kind of pain, just to stay loyal to a heku faction.

“Lastly, Child, did you turn any of the Valle into ash?” Leonid asked respectfully. The Council all looked nervously at her.

“No, I did not.”

“Why? When it was in your power to do so, numerous times?”

“I was outnumbered. I knew I could take down the few in the room, but then there was the entire coven. There’s no way I could do that many without someone killing me first. Then I was afraid if they knew what I could do... they would attack the Equites for keeping it from them.” As she finished, the Elders all nodded, it made sense.

“Can you control that power then?” Selest asked.

Emily nodded.

“Right now, if we brought in a heku, could you turn him to ash?”

Emily looked up, terrified, “Please, please don’t make me.” She took a step back.

“It’s ok, we do not wish to see a demonstration,” Maleth assured her.

The heku were surprised that she wasn’t eager to show her abilities. Most mortals found the heku so inhuman that killing them wasn’t a problem.

Chevalier wrapped his arms around her from behind and looked over her head at the Council. Kyle stood beside her.

“That is quite the mortal you have, Chief Enforcer,” Leonid said, impressed.

“We think so,” Chevalier responded.

“She brought some light to the Council,” Leonid told him, and stood. “You won’t be surprised to learn that we were bringing you here today to remove your position as Chief Enforcer. What she said has shed some light on the situation though, and we wish to keep you at your command.”

Chevalier nodded, “Thank you, Sir.” He wondered what transpired that had instilled the Council’s faith in him.

“Now, please, come and join us in a more casual setting,” Selest said, and smiled. The Council members all filed out through a door on the top level.

Emily looked nervously at Kyle.

He smiled at her, “Apparently, you made quite an impression.”

Chevalier’s arms tightened around her, “I guess now we go make nice with them.” He didn’t sound happy.

Kyle smiled at Chevalier and turned to Emily, “He’s always hated socializing with the Council, even though he’s one of them.”

Kyle laughed and walked out the door, followed by Emily and Chevalier.

They were led into a large banquet room that was decorated from floor to ceiling with odd looking runes and old drawings. The room was dimly lit, and everyone turned to smile at them when they entered.

The first to greet them was one of the younger looking council members. He shook hands with Chevalier and Kyle, then smiled down at Emily, “It

was a pleasure to meet you, Child. We do look forward to meeting with you again.”

She nodded politely.

“I was also...” He thought for a word, “Surprised, to smell the Winchester blood for myself. The rumors and stories weren’t at all exaggerated.”

Emily wasn’t sure how to answer, so she just smiled.

Chevalier’s eyes narrowed and the council member walked off quickly.

Emily was aware throughout the evening that the heku would all happen by her, and she could hear as they inhaled slightly, then walked quickly away. She grimaced each time, halfway expecting one of them to attack her. Chevalier kept her close to his side as he talked about the attack on the Valle to eager ears.

The room grew quiet when a newer heku servant entered with a silver tray in his hand. He met Emily’s eye, and then came to her and lifted the top off of the tray, revealing small dainty pastries inside.

Emily smiled sweetly and took one, thanking the heku.

Chevalier moved her quickly behind him when the heku inhaled deeply and slowly dropped his eyes to her neck as the tray of pastries banged loudly as it hit the floor. The young servant crouched down slightly and ran his tongue along his exposed teeth. It all happened too fast for Emily to react. Suddenly, the entire room seemed to descend onto the young heku, and she heard the grotesque tearing of flesh as Kyle whipped her

around and covered her eyes, pressing her against his chest so she couldn't see.

When all was silent, she pulled away from him and turned around. The council members were all looking at her apologetically.

“We are sorry, Child. We should have considered you when inviting in younger members of our staff,” Leonid said.

“I think it's time we go,” Chevalier said, irritated. He hurriedly put his blood covered hand in his pocket.

Emily was horrified, “You didn't kill him!”

Leonid nodded, “He knew better than to attack a guest.”

“No!” she screamed. “No, you don't kill anyone because me.”

Leonid frowned at her, confused, “He savored you, and he was going to attack.”

“He didn't need to die for it.” She stepped forward to look Leonid in the eyes.

Leonid began to laugh, “Never ceases to surprise me, this one.”

Emily's eyes turned to an icy glare.

Chevalier quickly ushered her out of the room as she began to argue with the Elder. He grinned as they left the room.

“Why did you stop me?” Emily asked angrily.

“Because nothing you could have said would have helped. I didn’t think the Council could survive a standoff with you.” She glared at Chevalier when she noticed he was amused.

Kyle turned and looked away, concealing a grin.

“They killed that poor heku because of me,” she grumbled.

“And as I’ve said before... that’s not the point. He disobeyed an order,” Chevalier said, trying to control his voice. He found her temper amusing at times.

Emily spun suddenly under Chevalier’s arm and began to storm back to the banquet room, “They need to hear me out.”

Chevalier grabbed her arm to stop her, and then he jerked his hand away when she screamed out in pain.

Kyle was suddenly standing in her way, “It’s best if we just leave.”

Emily turned and headed back to the helicopter as she rubbed her shoulder. Chevalier and Kyle followed her with stifled laughs.

“Irish blood,” Chevalier said to Kyle, too low for Emily to hear.

Emily curled up on the seat in the helicopter and shut her eyes, facing away from the other two.

“I’m still shocked. I knew they were going to release you,” Kyle whispered to Chevalier.

“I was sure too. I was ready to plead my case against the mandatory banishment after being released from the Council.”

“Yeah that too,” Kyle said, relieved.

“What do you think Emily said to them that changed their minds?” Chevalier asked.

“There’s no telling with her,” Kyle said, and laughed.

Chevalier chuckled, “I wish I had heard it.”

“Ever considered the trouble you are going to be in when there are two mortals on the island with that Irish temper?” Kyle grinned.

“Yes I have. I figure I’ll spend a lot of time in the office.” He laughed as Emily glared towards the back of the chair.

Chapter 6 - Fighting Back

Hard knocking interrupted the conversation that Chevalier and Kyle were having about security.

“Come!” growled Chevalier.

One of Emily's guards stepped into the office, panicked, "I can't find Lady Emily."

Chevalier sighed, "She's in her room."

"I looked and she's not there," he said, his eyes were terrified.

Kyle rolled his eyes at Chevalier. Emily had been going through personal guards quickly. Her ability to elude them and escape by herself was becoming a weekly problem. Neither Chevalier nor Kyle could seem to get any control over it.

"Tell me what happened," Kyle asked the young guard.

"She came and told me she was going for a run. I told her that I'd go change as soon as I could get a replacement, and then we'd go. She said 'alone' and I told her she couldn't go alone," he said quickly.

"Kyle, go find her," Chevalier sighed, and Kyle nodded and ran off.

"How did she get away this time?" Chevalier asked the guard, trying to calm him down.

"I don't know! She got mad when I told her she couldn't go out alone, and then she said she'd changed her mind. So a few minutes later I heard her call my name, and when I got inside, she was gone," the guard said, and then looked down at his hands.

"Damn it, how is she getting out?" Chevalier grumbled. "Did you talk to the balcony guard?"

"Yes and he hasn't seen her. I will go report myself to my Commander," he replied, standing up.

“No, no, you’re fine. If I demoted everyone Emily got away from, we wouldn’t have any guards left. Go back to your post.” He shut his eyes. He knew that if he got headaches, he would have one now.

Kyle knew where she’d gone as he’d gone on runs with her before. He reached the pier quickly, and one of the guards pointed him to the south, where he saw Emily jogging along the sand. He watched her for a moment. She’d started jogging a lot lately, and she always wore the sports bra and low shorts that she trained in a few months ago, so he knew it was her. She ran with her hair tied high and her iPod booming in her ears.

Emily felt elated as she ran along the beach. She didn’t have to wear shoes to run on the sand, and the warmth felt good to her feet. She had her favorite music playing and let her mind wander as she ran. That’s why she didn’t see Kyle suddenly appear in front of her and she ran right into him, landing on her butt in the sand.

“Gah, Kyle!” she yelled, getting up and brushing the sand off of herself.

“Emily... why?” he asked, irritated.

She pulled the earphones from her ears and stepped to the side, “Leave me alone. I’m just running.”

“Alone,” he said, stepping in front of her.

“Yeah... alone... get the hint?” She put the earphones back in, but he blocked her way again.

“What???” she yelled at him.

“You know what... time to go back.” He took a hold of her arm.

“Stop being Chevalier’s little stooge and let me be for once! I’m not hurting anything.” She put her hands on her hips.

“We’re not worried about you hurting anything, and you know it. It’s not safe out here. You aren’t even inside the cement walls,” he said, pointing to the high gray wall.

“Neither you, nor your Chief Enforcer, are my father, so I can do what I want.” She turned and ran back the way she came.

Kyle growled and ran after her, when she arrived at the pier and kept going along the beach. He caught up to her again and picked her up.

“Put me down,” she demanded.

“No,” he said, heading toward the castle.

“Now!” She tried to squirm free.

“No”

Emily sulked the rest of the way to the castle and her temper flared when Kyle set her down in Chevalier’s office.

“What now, Em?” he asked, frustrated.

“Apparently, a little harmless running upset the grouch over here,” she said, nodding to Kyle.

“You’re scaring my guards to death. They are afraid I’m going to punish them every time you skip out... which happens to be way too often and way too easily.” He watched her for a reaction.

“Maybe I don’t need a guard.”

“Of course you do.” Chevalier hated to remind her of the Valle kidnapping, “How are you getting out?”

“Yeah, like I’m going to tell you,” she said angrily.

“It’s ok, Kyle, I have it,” Chevalier said, and Kyle left his office.

Emily turned to face him and it was obvious that she was ready for a fight.

“What’s going through your mind? You know it’s dangerous.” He tried to reason with her.

“I’m penned up all the time. All I want is some alone time. How hard is that?” she asked, irritated.

“Then go to the barn,” he suggested.

“I spent all morning in the barn, and as you won’t let me ride Patra, or even toss hay, then there’s not much to do.” She glared at him.

“That’s not fair, Emily. You know those were doctor’s orders,” he said, and frowned at her.

Chevalier moved to her back and wrapped his arms around her waist, one hand coming to rest of the small bulge in her abdomen, then kissed her neck.

Emily pulled away from him, “Just leave me alone.” She left his office and slammed the door.

Frustrated, Emily walked the halls of the castle for a few minutes then stopped suddenly. Her eyes fell on the door that led down to the dungeon. She thought for a moment, and then walked down the stairs.

“Ma’am?” the closest guard said as she walked into the cell area.

She ignored him and walked toward the first row of cells.

“Ma’am, you can’t be in here,” he said, following her.

Emily spun on him, “You going to stop me?”

His eyes grew wide, “Ma’am, the Chief Enforcer said you weren’t to be down here.”

“Oh did he? Didn’t the Chief Enforcer also tell you all not to savor me?” She raised her eyebrows.

“I... I didn’t!” he said, horrified.

“Then I suggest you let me be, or we’ll find out who he believes more, you or me.” She stared at him and he turned and walked away, confused.

Emily went cell to cell and watched the reaction of the prisoners. Most ran to the bars, slamming into them and reaching out for her. She didn’t flinch or jump back, she just walked past them, not sure exactly what she was looking for. In the last cell on the second row, she noticed a heku who sat calmly on his bed and watched her.

She stopped at his cell, “Hello.”

“Hello, Child,” he said politely.

She watched him for a moment, “I don’t like being called Child.”

“My apologies then,” he said, then stood up and walked slowly to the bars. His face was sincere.

“What’s your name?” she asked the prisoner.

“David”

She looked into his eyes, “You aren’t like the others in here.”

“No, I am not,” he said matter-of-factly.

“Are you Equites?” She stepped a little closer to him.

“I am Encala.” He took a step away from the bars.

“Why are you here?”

He smiled, “Are you supposed to be down here?”

“No, I guess I’m not.”

“Then why are you? You are with child, no? It’s not safe for you down here,” he said, watching her.

Emily reached down and touched the small bump on her abdomen. She forgot that she was still wearing her jogging clothes.

“Why are you here?” she asked again.

He studied her carefully, “You first. Why are you down here among the violent when you should be upstairs where it is safe?”

Emily sighed, "I'm down here because I was curious who else was."

"Why is that?"

"I spent some time in a dungeon recently, and I suspect not everyone in the dungeon belongs there." She sat down across from his cell with her back against the wall.

"Fair enough... I am here because I was a spy." He sat down by the bars across from her.

"A spy? What were you spying on?" she asked. She knew it was being nosey.

"You, of course," he said, smiling slightly.

"Me? Why would you spy on me?"

"The Encala are curious why the Valle would kidnap a mortal, and why the Equites would fight so hard to rescue you."

"How long do you have to stay here?" She looked at the dark, gloomy cell.

"Forever"

"Seriously? Just for spying? Did you intend to kidnap me?"

"No, all I sought was information."

"Who sentenced you to life for such a small crime?"

"The Chief Enforcer of the Equites."

Emily sighed, "That'd be my husband."

"All the more reason you shouldn't be down here," he said, amused.

"You too, eh... can no one let me do what I want?"

"Do what you want around me, that is fine. I was just expressing my concerns that there might be some down here who intend you harm." He brought one knee up and placed his arm on it.

"What do you do all day down here?" Her eyes looked past him to his cell, and all she could see was a small metal bed.

"Think mostly, it's quite boring." He turned around and looked at the stark cell.

"Can I get you anything?" Emily asked seriously.

He frowned, "Don't get yourself into trouble over me, please."

"You said I could do what I want, and I want to help. I don't think you belong down here."

"A book would be nice."

"I can do that. What would you like?"

"Anything is fine. You choose your favorite book and I will read it. It will be interesting."

"How so?"

"I've studied you, yet never really knew anything about you. You seem enchanting." He smiled as she blushed.

“Not really, but I’ll do what you suggest.” She stood up.

“Leaving?”

“Yeah, I better get back before they notice I’m gone. One book for tomorrow though.” She smiled at David, and then left the cells.

Emily opened the door that led into the castle and slowly peeked around it. Opening it further, she slipped out and shut it quickly behind her, then looked around. No one had seen her. She smiled and went into the library.

“Ugh!” Emily growled into the mirror.

“What’s wrong?” Chevalier asked, looking over at her.

“My jeans won’t zip.” She tried again, but the gap was too large.

“Em, just wear something else. Margaret brought you a lot of new clothes,” he suggested.

“These?” she asked, pointing at a large pile of clothing. “These make me look pregnant.”

Chevalier chuckled, “You are, Dear.”

“That’s not the point,” she said, angrily picking up an outfit before disappearing into the bathroom.

He watched after her and grinned.

“Are you going to be in meetings all day again?” she called out to him from the bathroom.

“Yes, we are still training.”

He heard her growl and he grinned again.

She finally came out, and he realized that she was right. The clothing did make her look more pregnant. The lavender baby doll top and shorts accentuated her growing tummy.

“Ok, time to weigh,” he said, pulling scales out from by the door.

“I’m not getting on that thing,” she said.

“The doctor said you need to weigh once a week.”

“No”

“Why are you fighting me at everything?”

“Because you are pushing too hard.” She turned toward him.

“Fine, not today then,” he said before he could get angry at her. He’d watched his temper a lot lately as she pushed it to the limit.

Emily watched as he walked out the door and stuck her tongue out at him.

Hours later, knocking interrupted his conversation with Kyle, and Chevalier cringed.

“Come,” he said.

Emily's guard walked in nervously, "Sir."

"Go find her, Kyle," Chevalier said.

"Sure," Kyle said, irritated.

"Any idea how she got out?" Chevalier asked.

"No, Sir, again... the balcony guard didn't see her."

Chevalier frowned, wracking his brain as to how she was getting out.

"That's it then... tell Captain Remoin to send another guard for in her room," Chevalier said, looking tired.

"Yes, Sir," he replied, and left to go talk to his Captain.

"Hello, Emily." The voice was soft and controlled.

"Hi David, got you a book." She handed it through the bars and sat down, this time close enough her knees were touching the bars.

"Let's see then..." He looked down at the book and smiled, "The Scarlet Letter?"

"Yes, always one of my favorites," she said, and smiled.

"Did you get in trouble for being down here yesterday?" he asked, concerned.

"Chev never found out. These guards are too afraid to tell him." She motioned to the two guards who were fidgeting in the corner.

“How did you get them to let you in?” he asked, impressed.

“It was mean...” She looked at the ground.

David laughed, “I’m glad you did, it gets boring down here.”

She smiled and admitted to herself it felt good to be needed, “Is there anything else I can get you?”

“I’ll think about it and let you know.”

“Ok”

“May I ask you some questions?”

Her eyes narrowed, “What about?”

He shrugged, “Just something to get to know you a bit, nothing too personal, I promise.”

She laughed, “Sure.”

“When is the baby due?” he asked and he looked sincerely curious.

“Five more months.” She looked down at herself.

“Pregnancy suits you, you are quite beautiful,” he said, and laughed when she blushed.

“Next,” she said, trying to get him to change the subject.

“Ok, what is your favorite food?”

She grinned, “Pizza.”

“What’s your favorite color?”

“Pink”

“Favorite movie?”

“Cleopatra”

“Really?”

Emily laughed, “Is that so hard to believe?”

David shrugged.

“My turn,” she said.

“Fair enough.”

“How old are you?” She leaned closer to him.

“It’s hard to remember, its somewhere around 3100 years though.”

“Really? Wow.” She was impressed.

“Yes, really.”

“Favorite place.”

“Easy, the Louvre.”

“An art lover huh?” She felt so comfortable talking to him.

“Yes.” He leaned back against the bed.

“Favorite... hmm... blood type.”

“B positive.”

“That’s mine!” She was surprised.

“I know.” He watched her nervously, but relaxed when she laughed.

“That was a trick question. I didn’t know the heku had a favorite blood type.”

“Oh most of us do, I’m sure.”

“Are you very hungry down here?” she asked, suddenly concerned.

“At times.”

“Will you die if you don’t eat?”

“No”

“Will anything happen to you?”

“I will become weaker, that is all. If it’s long enough, heku tend to turn... gray, sort of,” he said, and grinned slightly.

“Are the Encala trying to get you back?” She was genuinely concerned for this heku. He was exceptionally kind and soft spoken.

“Probably not.”

“Why not?”

“It was my fault I got caught, and they would let me know that,” David explained.

“That’s awful.” Emily thought about her time in captivity and how she’d been afraid no one was coming for her.

“I’m ok, don’t worry about me,” he said. Looking into her eyes, he reached a hand out to her.

Emily looked at his hand, and then took it, “I can ask Chev if he’ll let you go.”

“No don’t. He mustn’t know you’ve been down here. His temper is quite famous.” David let go of her hand and sat down again.

“I can handle him.” She set her jaw.

David smiled, “I bet you can, but please, don’t ask him for my freedom.”

“I better go,” she said, looking toward the door.

“Yes... before you are caught.”

“Tomorrow, would you like some music to listen to?”

His face lit up, “That would be great, thank you.”

Emily again made it out of the doorway before anyone noticed and managed to do so for the next week.

She was almost to the kitchen when Kyle caught up with her.

“Where have you been?” he asked, more confused than mad.

“Around the castle, why?” she asked, and grabbed an apple from a bowl on the counter.

“I’ve been looking for you since you slipped out.”

“Well... not hard enough I’d say,” she said, walking past him and up the stairs to her room.

Emily stepped into her room, and her mouth fell open at the guard standing inside the door, “Who are you?”

“I’m Russ,” he said, staring straight ahead.

“Why are you here?”

“Orders from the Chief Enforcer.” His voice was even and annoying.

“He ordered you to guard inside my room?” She stared at him, surprised.

“Yes, Ma’am... was supposed to start a week ago, but we got busy with new strategical maneuvers.”

“Get out!” Her eyes flared.

“No, Ma’am,” he said, again staring straight ahead.

Emily screamed and ran down the stairs to Chevalier’s office. She knocked hard.

“Come,” he demanded angrily.

“Don’t come me... get him out of my room!” she growled, stepping into his room.

“Not until you understand how important it is to stay safe.” Chevalier looked up at her and winced, her temper was raging.

“I am not your child. I am not your ward. I am not your minion, and I expect you will treat me as an equal adult.”

“Emily...” he started, but she cut him off.

“If you can’t accept that I do what I want, when I want, then I will just be on my way.” She turned to leave, but he was suddenly in front of the door.

“No, you listen to me. The Encala and the Valle want you. They will get you if they find you alone, and I won’t have it.” He could feel his temper getting out of control, but she wouldn’t let it drop.

Emily took a step forward and glared up at him, “I can protect myself.”

“No, you can’t... and the further along you get, the less you are able to do.” He tried to make her see reason.

“Get... him... out... of... my... room.” She stomped at him.

Chevalier stood his ground, “No.”

“I am not weak. I can protect myself,” she said, stepping toward him angrily.

“No you cannot.” He didn’t back down.

Emily gritted her teeth and let go of the anger that had been growing within her. Chevalier growled deeply and clutched at his chest, the burning pain stabbed through him like a hot sword. It stopped as

suddenly as it started, and when he caught his breath, it was too late for reason.

Emily took a step back when she saw the out of control fury in his eyes. He was on her in less than a second, and she was pinned against the wall, his hand around her neck and her feet inches from the floor.

“Never... do that again,” he hissed into her face.

She glared at him and dug at his hands to let go. The lack of submission to his request angered him more, and he tightened his grip.

“Is that understood?”

Emily fought to make him let go. She could feel his hand tighten and cut off her airway. She couldn't breathe, and dug helplessly at his hands trying to force them off of her neck.

His mind grasped what he was doing, and he let her go. She fell to her knees and gasped for breath.

“Emily,” he said, bending down to help her.

She pushed his hands away, and he saw the dark bruises starting on her neck, “Leave me alone.”

“Emily, I'm so sorry,” he said, and reached out to help her to her feet.

She pushed his hands away again and stood up, still breathing hard. He took a step toward her as she ran out of his office and he felt it better to let her go.

“Kyle?” he whispered, loathing himself for what he had done.

“Yes, Sir?” Kyle asked, worried by the look on Chevalier’s face.

“I... I lost it with her,” Chevalier said angrily.

Kyle’s face dropped, “Is she ok?”

“I don’t know. She ran off,” he said.

“What happened?” Kyle asked quietly.

“She got mad at me and... she used her ability on me.” He looked at the door, willing her to come back.

Kyle sighed, “Sounds like you didn’t have a choice. I’ll go talk to her.”

Chevalier nodded and sat down in his chair. Kyle returned several minutes later.

“She’s leaving,” he said sadly.

Chevalier was out of his chair and in her room in a blur. She was packing a large bag that was sitting on the bed. Emily didn’t look at him when he entered.

“Please, don’t leave,” he said softly.

She didn’t answer, but threw more clothes into the bag.

“Emily, don’t go,” he asked again, placing his hand on her suitcase to stop her.

She glared at him, and when he moved his hand, she shut the suitcase and sat on it to zip it.

“Where will you go?” he asked softly.

She went into the bathroom to gather her things.

“You can’t go alone, please. It’s not safe.” He was ready to beg if she would forgive him.

“Oh, I’m not going alone,” she said as she came back into the room.

Chevalier frowned, “Who are you going with?”

“None of your business now is it? Once I’m gone, I’m no longer your concern,” she grumbled at him.

“You know that’s not true. You and the baby are my concern no matter where you are,” he whispered.

“Yeah, well, it’ll be pretty hard to control when I get where I’m going,” she said, and sat on the floor to slip on her shoes.

“Where are you going then?”

“Again, none of your business.”

“You swear to me you are taking someone with you?”

“Oh yeah, I am taking a heku with me,” she promised.

Chevalier watched her, and as his eyes fell to her expanding middle, his heart ached.

“I’m begging you, please stay. I’m sorry for what I did. What can I do to make it up to you?” He stood and walked over to her.

“You can let me go with whatever heku I choose.” Emily turned to look at him.

“Take whoever you want, just don’t go, please.” He was starting to panic as she pulled her suitcase off of her bed and extended the handle. Chevalier took her hand softly in his.

She pulled her hand away, “Don’t, Chev. It’s too late. We’re not good for each other.”

Her words stung him deeply, “Don’t say that. We just had a fight, nothing more.”

“Nothing more? I wanted to kill you and could have.” She looked into his eyes.

“But you didn’t,” he said, pulling her close to him and wrapping his arms around her.

For one brief moment, she let him hold her and felt tears welling up in her eyes. She leaned her head on his chest briefly, and then it jerked up.

“Good-bye, Chev,” she said, and kissed his lips gently before grabbing her suitcase.

“What can I do to get you to stay?” he asked.

“Nothing, it’s best if I go now.” She looked around the room and headed out the door. Chevalier followed her, unsure where she was going.

When she took the door down to the prison cells, he put out his arm to stop her, “Where are you going?”

She shook his hand free and walked down the stairs. The guards saw Chevalier with her this time, and both winced, knowing they would be punished for letting her down there, threats or no.

She reached out to the closest guard, "Give me your keys."

He nervously looked up at Chevalier

"Emily, you can't let them go," he sighed.

"I'm not letting them all go... just one," she said, snapping her fingers at the guard.

"No, you can't let our prisoners go," he told her sternly.

She turned on Chevalier, "You said I could take any heku that I wanted."

"I didn't know you meant a prisoner."

"Well I did and do not go back on your word again," she said furiously.

"Emily? Are you ok?" A voice rang out from the cells.

"I'm getting you out. We're going back to your home," she said, and snatched the keys out of the guard's hand.

"Emily, no," Chevalier said, and followed her.

She rounded the corner into the second set of cells and stopped at the end, thumbing through the keys to find the one for David's cell.

"Are you ok?" he asked, reaching out of the cell to touch her arm.

Chevalier hissed at him and he drew his hand back.

“Emily?” David asked, looking at her. “What happened to your neck?”

Chevalier was infuriated that this prisoner knew her well enough to care about her already.

When Emily didn’t answer, David turned to Chevalier, “This was you? You assaulted a pregnant woman?”

“Shut up, Encala, before I shut you up,” he hissed at the prisoner.

“Are you sure you can shut me up or do you only pick on women?” David crouched slightly and faced Chevalier.

Chevalier grabbed the keys from Emily and opened the cell door quickly. She stepped in between them, her back to David.

“Stop it,” she said, glaring at Chevalier as she put her hands on his chest.

“Emily, let’s get out of here. You’ll be safer with the Encala,” David said, taking her arm.

“Over my dead body,” Chevalier yelled, taking her other arm.

Kyle appeared in the cell doorway, his eyes wide.

“What’s going on here?” he asked them, looking from Emily, to David, to Chevalier.

“I’m taking David, and we’re going to stay with the Encala,” Emily said, still watching Chevalier.

“What?” Kyle yelled, outraged.

“She thinks she’s leaving with him,” Chevalier said, his eyes locked on David’s.

“Emily?” Kyle said as he saw her neck. “Let me see your neck.”

Emily glared at him, “You stay away from me, too.”

“Everyone calm down!” Kyle said sternly.

“Emily?” David said suddenly, and then reached out to catch her when she fell.

He laid Emily down on the floor and she began to convulse and her eyes rolled back in her head.

David reached out and took her head in his hands so she didn’t hurt herself.

“What did you do to her?” Chevalier growled at David as he knelt down by Emily.

“Me? You’re the one that choked her,” David said, struggling to keep her head still.

“I’m going to get Dr. Edwards,” Kyle said, and blurred up the stairs.

When her body fell silent, Chevalier picked her up and ran up the stairs. The two guards advanced on David and managed to get him back into his cell.

Chevalier kicked her bag against the wall and laid her down on her bed. She still wasn’t moving. He yelled at the guard to leave her room, and his order was followed immediately.

“Em?” he asked, touching her cheek softly.

She didn't respond.

He watched her for the hour it took Kyle to return with the doctor, who immediately went to work on Emily.

“Did she hit her head when she fell?”

“No,” Kyle answered.

“What was she doing when she seized?” he asked, taking her blood pressure.

Chevalier sighed, “We were... sort of... fighting.”

“Fighting?” the doctor asked as he touched the bruises on her neck.

“It's not what you think! That was an accident.” He said it more to himself than to the doctor.

“Was she without oxygen?” The doctor was angry.

“No,” he said softly.

The doctor sighed softly as he took her blood pressure, “Her blood pressure is way too high.”

“Fix it,” Chevalier told him.

“I can't just fix it... it takes time, a calm environment, no upsets, no arguments, nothing.” The doctor looked over at Chevalier, irritated.

“Why isn't she waking up?” Kyle asked, worried.

“She’s post-ictal. After a seizure, it takes time for the body to regain energy back.” He pulled her shirt off of her abdomen and began pressing around gently with his hand.

Finally, the doctor stood up, “You can’t let her blood pressure get back up there. It’s not good, and it can kill both her and the baby. For now, make her stay in bed.”

“That’ll cause her blood pressure to rise!” Kyle said, frustrated.

“Do what you can, but try to lessen her stress.” The doctor was glaring at Chevalier, who was holding Emily’s hand and watching her closely.

“Is the baby ok?” Kyle asked, watching Chevalier. He could feel the hatred coming from the Chief Enforcer.

“Yes, the baby is fine and growing well it seems.” The doctor finally looked pleased about one thing.

“We’ll call you if anything changes,” Kyle said, and showed the doctor to the door. He then walked back and stood on the other side of the bed from Chevalier.

“I could have killed her,” Chevalier said sadly.

“Yes, but she could have killed you, too,” Kyle whispered.

“Her’s was a warning. She wasn’t trying to kill me. She was trying to show me that she can defend herself.”

“She knows we’re dangerous creatures. She knows the risks of doing what she did.”

“Maybe I should let her go with the Encala, she may be safer there.”

“You don’t mean that, Sir,” Kyle said. “Tempers just flared, tomorrow you can calmly talk to her.”

“If she will even talk to me,” he said, watching her.

“She will. She will probably feel bad too.”

“I drove her to find a friend in an Encala prisoner.”

“We don’t know how she came to know him.”

“It doesn’t matter. She does know him and knows him well enough that he cares about her.”

Kyle sighed, “Tomorrow, Chevalier, we’ll try to talk to her tomorrow.”

“If she still wants to leave, I will let her. I can’t hurt her again,” he said, looking up at Kyle.

Kyle nodded, and then left the room quietly.

“Emily,” Chevalier said, and then kissed her forehead lightly. “I’m so sorry.”

“Chev?” she whispered.

“I’m here.”

She didn’t respond. He sat and watched her all night.

Just before noon, Emily stirred and finally opened her eyes. Chevalier waited for her to talk to him.

Her eyes fell on him, “Hi.”

“Hi, yourself,” he said, not moving toward her.

She tried to sit up, but her sore muscles prevented it.

“The doctor wants you to stay in bed,” Chevalier said softly, still careful not to move too close to her.

Emily looked over at him, “Guess it got out of hand.”

He nodded.

“Don’t be mad at David.”

“I’m not.”

“Are you mad at me?”

He shook his head and touched her cheek softly.

“I wasn’t trying to kill you,” Emily said to him.

“I know.” He stayed kneeling beside her, “If you still want to leave, I won’t stand in your way.”

“Do you want me to go?”

“No, I don’t.”

She looked into his eyes and saw the pain, “I’m not mad, either.”

“I’m so sorry.” He looked down at the covers.

Emily struggled and sat up. Chevalier was afraid to even make her lay back down. She swung her legs over the side of the bed.

“Em,” was all he said.

“I need to talk to David,” she said, trying to stretch the soreness out of her muscles.

He sighed, “If you’ll lie down, I’ll bring him here.”

“You will?” She was shocked.

He smiled, “For you, yes.”

She laid back down and waited for him to return. When he did, he had David and four guards.

Emily frowned, “Isn’t that a bit much?”

“Precautions, that’s all,” he told her and stopped, letting David walk closer to her.

David knelt down beside the bed, “I’ve been worried about you.”

She smiled, “I’m sorry. I thought I could free you.”

“That’s ok, maybe this way I can still see you once in a while.” He smiled.

“Stay here, join the Equites,” she said.

“Em,” Chevalier sighed from by the door.

“It’s not that easy to switch sides,” David said, nodding to Chevalier.

“Why? Factions are just stupid gangs all fighting for the same thing,” she said, her voice weak.

David smiled, “Yeah it is, isn’t it?”

The four guards bowed to Chevalier and left the room as he approached the bed.

“You’re a free heku, David,” Chevalier said, sitting on the edge of the bed.

“I am?” he asked with wide eyes.

Chevalier nodded, “It’ll be easier than keeping her out of the prison.”

David laughed, “That’s true. I told her it wasn’t safe down there.”

Emily frowned, “Behave.”

David thought for a moment, “She keeps slipping away from her guard?”

Chevalier nodded.

“What if I can keep an eye on her?”

He looked at the Encala, “You?”

David laughed, “Yes, me, I know how she’s slipping out.”

Emily gasped, “I never told you how!”

“I figured it out.” He grinned to Chevalier.

“I don’t know if I can trust you, you were here to spy on her,” Chevalier said, looking at David suspiciously.

“Then double guard her... that would have solved the problem anyway.” He smiled at Emily and she scowled back at him.

“How so?” Chevalier asked.

“Oooh, I can’t give away her secrets.” He winked at Emily.

Emily rolled her eyes, “I don’t need a guard.”

“Yes, you do,” both Chevalier and David said together.

“My God,” Emily said, irritated.

“I can swear allegiance to the Equites, but I can’t make up for what I did as an Encala” David said.

“You’d turn so quickly?” Chevalier’s eyes narrowed.

“Wouldn’t you, if she were on the other side?”

Chevalier tensed, “She’s mine.”

“Oh, I’m well aware of that. Wouldn’t you like to have someone watching over her that’s not afraid of you? Maybe she needs protected from you too,” David said.

“Those are brave words.” Chevalier was getting mad.

“Think about it, I’ll be around,” he said before taking Emily’s hand and kissing it. “Stay safe, Kid.”

“That’s no better than Child,” she said, frowning.

“Oh that’s right, you’re an adult.” David stood up and started for the door.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“To stay on the beach north of the pier for a few days... in case I’m needed.” He left the room smiling.

Chapter 7 - Time

Chevalier took a deep breath and walked into Emily’s room. She was sitting up in bed reading a book and didn’t see him enter, so she jumped a little when he sat down, and then put her book down.

“You’re out of the meeting early,” she said, pleased.

“Yeah, well... I have a mission.”

“What kind of mission?” Her eyes narrowed.

“An important one, and I’m leaving tonight.” He took her hand.

“For how long?”

“I don’t know, until the job is done.” He kissed her hand lightly.

“Send someone else,” she told him, it sounded like a good idea to her.

“I’m the Chief Enforcer... this is faction business.”

“Then I’ll just come with you.” She swung her legs out of the bed, but he put a restraining hand on her shoulder.

“No, Em, this isn’t a joke. It’s going to be dangerous... and I need to go alone.”

“Why?”

“It’s my job.” He put his hand under her chin and moved her so she looked at him, “I’m good at my job, and I’ll be home before you know it.”

Emily frowned.

“Kyle and David are here if you need anything. Try, for me, to behave.” He smiled softly.

Emily saw Chevalier off from the pier. He waved, and then got into his black Bugatti. Kyle and David stood by her, unhappy that she was able to talk the Chief Enforcer into letting her out of bed.

Chevalier waited until the pier was out of sight and pulled out the file he had with him. He scanned the documents, carefully committing them to memory. It was an easy job. There had been numerous heku attacks in a small town in Delaware. The Elders felt whoever was responsible, needed to be dealt with by the Chief Enforcer himself. As Chevalier read the file, he agreed. There were four unexplained exsanguinations, three

men and one woman, all within a 24 hour period. The newspapers were claiming it was a cult attack, but the tell tale signs were there that it was a heku.

As Chevalier pulled the Bugatti off of the ferry, he turned into the fast lane of traffic and hit 100 mph within seconds. He reached down and turned up his music, his heart pumping with excitement. It was always fun to do his job.

He reached Smyrna, Delaware, after dark and pulled his car into a service station. He had already burned the file on the ferry, and his car was clean, in case anyone checked. Looking around, he carefully surveyed the area and headed north toward where three of the four bodies were found. He kept his senses alert, all working in sync with each other. He knew there was a heku close. He could smell it on the wind. There were still outlines of the bodies on the sidewalk where they had been found. He knelt down by the macabre outlines and ran his fingers through the accumulated dust.

His innate tracking abilities were focused to the west. He stood slowly and made his way carefully through the back alleyways. The scent of the heku became stronger as he neared the warehouse district. He was shocked when the distinct heku smell was overshadowed by fresh blood. The sounds of a struggle echoed through the steel walls of the warehouses as he made his way closer to his target. This job would be easier than he'd imagined if he could catch the offender in the act.

He rounded a large manufacturing plant and saw the heku, hovered over a newly dead mortal. Chevalier was able to get close as the heku was too engrossed in feeding to notice anything else around him.

Chevalier looked down at the wide eyes of the newly dead woman and growled deeply. The heku jumped up, placing himself between his prey and Chevalier, then crouched defensively and hissed.

“She is mine,” he said, baring his teeth at Chevalier.

“Do not speak to me like that. Do you know who I am?” Chevalier asked. He stood tall and looked down ominously at the offending heku.

The smaller heku’s eyes scanned Chevalier and he dropped out of his crouch and cowered, “I am sorry, Sir. You may finish it if you wish.”

“Finish it?” Chevalier took a step toward him, “You mean finish off the girl?”

“Yes, your highest honor, please feel free.” The heku took one step away from the dead mortal.

“What is your name?” Chevalier asked as he reached down and shut the eyes of the dead girl.

“Jay, Sir,” he answered, watching the menacing Chief Enforcer.

“Well, Jay, there’s a slight problem.”

Jay fidgeted, “What kind of problem?”

“It’s come to the attention of the Equites Council that there have been some mortals killed by a heku in this area... know anything about that?” Chevalier circled Jay as the heku cowered in the corner.

“No, Sir, it’s not me. This is the first time I’ve done it, I swear,” he stammered.

“I see... your first.” Chevalier looked down at her and sighed, “I’m assuming it was consensual too, well, other than the death part.”

“Oh! Of course, Sir, it was her idea even. I said no, but she insisted.” He smiled widely.

“Yes of course. You’re saying the broken arm was her idea too?” Chevalier asked, and leaned against the wall to watch Jay.

“That was an accident, she fell, you see.”

“Uh hu.” Chevalier was enjoying this, “At what point did she agree to be completely drained?”

“That was, well...” His eyes darted around quickly looking for an easy out, “It was an accident.”

“It’s odd how I can still smell the fear in the air. Funny how she was afraid even though she agreed to this.”

True fear filled Jay’s eyes and his face fell, “Ok, ok, it wasn’t consensual, ok? Haven’t you ever made a mistake? It was the first time, I swear.”

“Of course, we all make mistakes.” Chevalier was grinning.

“Good, then, I’ll just go. I won’t do it again I promise.” Jay took a step to the left and Chevalier matched it.

“Just a few more problems though... the other four bodies.”

“Those weren’t mine, I swear.” His voice had taken on a high pitched squeak as he began to panic.

“Don’t lie to me, Jay,” Chevalier said coolly.

“I’m not! I didn’t kill those others.” His eyes were wide.

Chevalier pulled the intricately carved dagger from his pocket and turned it expertly in his hand, “I hate being lied to.”

“I’m not, I swear!” Jay took that opportunity to try to run from the Old One and found himself pinned to the wall behind him by Chevalier’s strong hand around his neck.

“Then why run, Jay?” Chevalier hissed at him.

“I didn’t do it,” Jay managed to choke out.

“I’m surprised at you, but I guess that won’t matter in a moment. You see, I know you did it, and I won’t stand for it.” He completely closed off Jay’s airway and calmly watched him fight to breathe.

Jay’s body turned limp and his eyes shut slowly. Chevalier tightened his hand as the bones in Jay’s neck crushed under his grip. With one swift movement, the young heku’s head tumbled from his shoulders and landed with a thud by the dead woman. Chevalier wiped the blood from his hand onto the headless body’s shirt, and then moved aside as it crumpled to the ground.

He shut his eyes and reveled in the exhilaration it felt to bring justice again. His mind was able to forget, for a moment, all of the happenings of the past few months and he could focus on how the bones crushed easily under his fingers and the smell of fear that blew off the terrified heku, moments before he died.

Walking away from the carnage was easy and he pulled out his cell phone and dialed the Elders.

“It is done,” he said into the phone, his voice husky and menacing.

Chevalier clicked the little phone shut and it snapped in half in his hands. He dropped it into a nearby dumpster and laughed, then growled with triumph and appeared beside the Bugatti instantly. He climbed inside and spun the tires, rushing toward Maine at almost 190 mph.

Chevalier glanced in his rear-view mirror. The car behind him matched his speed and was close to his bumper. He frowned and pushed the engine up to 210 mph, quickly passing any car that came in his path. The car behind his kept up and the dark windows hid the driver.

Chevalier slammed hard on the brakes as a black Suburban appeared ahead of him, heading straight for him. The impact between the Suburban and the Bugatti was tremendous. Chevalier flew out of the car as it rolled down an embankment. Parts from both cars were intermingled and strewn around a mile in every direction. He got to his knees slowly, feeling broken bones throughout his body. Chevalier looked up just as a shock of electricity flew through his body and his world was engulfed in darkness.

“Wake up,” a harsh voice sounded through the dark, and someone dumped a bucket of cold water over Chevalier.

Chevalier looked up and tried to stand, but he was restrained. He angrily looked at the owner of the voice.

“It’s about time.” The voice belonged to Sotomar, one of the eldest Valle Elders.

“What did you do?” he hissed at Sotomar, testing his bindings. He didn’t seem to be able to break them easily.

“You can’t break those... trust me... we’ve taken all precautions,” Sotomar said proudly.

Chevalier glared icily at the enemy Elder.

“Oh don’t act so surprised. You didn’t think we’d let you get away after what you did to our city?” Sotomar pulled up a chair and sat down, facing Chevalier.

“Let me go,” Chevalier demanded.

“No,” he said, grinning.

“What is it you want?” Chevalier’s hands worked quickly behind his body where they were bound. He tried to find some way to free himself.

“You know what we want, but you’ll do for now.” He smiled pleasantly.

“This is all about Emily, again?” Chevalier asked, irritated.

“Of course. You are in possession of one of the greatest weapons ever to cross the heku. We only want our share.” He grinned as Chevalier’s eyes darkened.

“You want your share?” he asked.

“It’s obvious, isn’t it? Soon you will have two of the Winchesters, not fair as far as we can see.” Sotomar raised an eyebrow.

“Keep me then. It won’t help you get Emily.” Chevalier relaxed some. He would need to find a way to free himself later.

“Oh, we learned a lot about her the few precious weeks we had her. She has a temper, and she’s stubborn. If she thinks she can save you, she’ll come right to us.”

Chevalier froze, the enemy Elder was right. He hissed slightly and pulled at the chains.

“I’m sure you think your Elders will send someone to get you... we don’t really think that’s going to happen. We’re sure they will be glad to get rid of you. You are a liability, falling in love with a mortal.” Sotomar sat back comfortably in his chair.

“Emily is well protected. They won’t let her risk her life to come and get me,” Chevalier growled.

“Oh yes, she is, isn’t she? Kyle is a problem. We’ve had to take precautions against him. However, David’s not a problem. You honestly think someone that well-spoken and educated would be an Encala? It was so convenient when you released him. It’s too bad you never fully trusted him, though. It would have made this all unnecessary if you allowed him to guard Emily alone.”

Chevalier sat still and watched the Valle.

“Our problem was that we can’t kill you. She would know instantly if we did that... that essence ring has been making things more difficult.

So how to keep you alive yet restrained? Not an easy task, I tell you, not one of the Old Ones. Then we figured it out, and... well... here we are.”

“You know this will mean war,” Chevalier hissed.

“Oh, of course, but as soon as we get the baby, we’ll be too strong. We don’t want Emily, our blood tests showed us she has none of the Winchester abilities... but the baby does. You keep your mortal, and we’ll take the new born.” He grinned.

Sotomar stood up and left the room quickly, shutting and locking the door behind him.

“Emily, calm down. We don’t know anything yet,” Kyle said, forcing her back onto the bed.

“You said they found his car destroyed... what else needs to be said?” she yelled, fighting against Kyle.

“Nothing... heku can easily survive a car wreck with a little time. He’s out there, and we’ll find him. I sent over 75 guards to the area. We’ll find him.” He tried to assure her.

“I should go. I can find him,” she said angrily.

“No, you need to stay here. This is where Chevalier would want you to be,” he said, and then stood up.

Emily screamed. She knew she couldn’t fight off the heku in her room, yet she felt helpless sitting in bed while he was out there alone and hurt.

“He’s right, Emily,” David said, kneeling beside the bed. “You have to think of your health and the baby right now. We’ll find him.”

Emily turned her face away from him angrily. She could feel her temper burning. She knew she could take them both out if she wanted, and then she would be free to leave. Her head began to hurt as her blood pressure rose and flashes of light swam before her eyes. She knew she was losing. Her body had given up on her. Not wanting to show a weakness, she turned onto her side away from Kyle and David.

Chevalier could feel her. He knew she found out about him and was worried. He was relieved to feel her frustration. He knew that meant that the others weren’t allowing her to come and find him. She was afraid, and that feeling sent a new rush of anger through him.

Opening his eyes, he let his senses out into the room. They had taken a lot of precautions against his strengths, and that infuriated him. There was metal and strings of wires everywhere he looked. Electricity was one mortal finding that could incapacitate even the strongest heku. He was bound with a chain that electrified if he pulled too hard and closed the circuit.

Chevalier jerked his head up and looked at the door as a heku in gray robes walked in and sat down in the chair across from him.

“This will go smoothly, if you will cooperate,” the heku said.

“Depends on what it is you want.”

“Merely to talk... about your Emily,” he said.

“What do you want to know?” Chevalier’s eyes narrowed.

“Nothing too important. I’m sure you will find the questions harmless.”

“Uh hu,” Chevalier answered slowly.

“Simple enough... your baby... when is it due?”

“In 6 months,” Chevalier said, watching the heku. He couldn’t see his eyes because of the hood of the robe.

“See... this is where we come to a problem. We know when she is due, and you have lied already.” As the Valle spoke, Chevalier’s body was wracked with stabs of electricity from the chains around him. The muscles in his neck stood out violently as he stiffened in pain and groaned.

The pain finally stopped and Chevalier dropped his eyes back to the Valle.

“Let’s try another. Did you kill Emily’s husband?”

“Yes,” Chevalier hissed.

“See, easy enough if you don’t lie to me.”

He didn’t respond, but just glared at the Valle.

“Does Emily possess any of the powers of a Winchester?”

“No.” His teeth were clenched.

“Good, good. Now we’ll get more general. Was Emily’s morning sickness very bad or extended beyond expected?”

Chevalier frowned, “No.”

“Has she had any telepathy or precognition since becoming pregnant?”

“No.” Chevalier was getting irritated at the stupid questions.

“Has she had any medical conditions that could hinder a successful pregnancy?”

“Yes,” Chevalier hissed.

“What?”

“Blood pressure... and I’m sure this is really helping.”

“I see.” The Valle stood and left the room quickly.

“For me? Do it then,” Emily said, moving a step toward Kyle.

“No, we’re not meeting their demands. There’s no way we’re going to exchange you for him,” Kyle said, frustrated.

“Why not? He could be hurt, right? It’s not that easy to keep a heku captive, which means that he could be in bad shape. What if he dies?” she yelled at him.

“No, Emily, it’s out of the question. Now that we know the Valle have him, we can go and get him,” David said finally.

“That’s right, we’ll go and get him,” Kyle said, agreeing.

“When?” She turned on them.

Kyle couldn't help but take a step back as the fierceness in her eyes fell on him.

“As soon as we can get ready. We already have the Council's approval, now it's just a matter of tactics.” Kyle put his hand softly on Emily's shoulder, “Now it's more important than ever for you to stay in bed, keep your blood pressure down.”

“Get your hands off of me,” she hissed at him.

“Don't do this, not now. We can't concentrate on getting Chevalier back if we have to worry about you.” He was pleased with the look on her face. She hadn't thought about that.

“Where is he?” she asked, sitting down on the edge of the bed.

“We don't know yet. We have eyes all over the Valle though, and it's only a matter of time before they find him,” he assured her.

“Get out,” she said, looking out the window.

Kyle and David both bowed and headed out of the room.

The next morning, Emily watched as Equites from different covens gathered outside of the castle on the north lawn. Lined up in perfect rows, they stood straight and still. Kyle moved among them, pinning different colors on each of them to differentiate the squadrons. The heku were all in black, head to foot, and from this distance, looked like one gigantic clone army.

Emily watched them from her balcony as more arrived. She did a quick head count and there were almost 700. It seemed to her that although

there were at least four standing to face the others, Kyle was in charge. She could hear him shouting orders, but from this distance, she couldn't tell what was being said.

Emily watched them until well after dark when she could no longer see them, but still heard the shouts of instruction and training. She shivered and looked up at the clear sky and the stars, then brought her knees as close as her expanding middle would allow and wrapped her arms around them tightly, rocking slowly into the night. Emily cried silently as the baby kicked from inside, a subtle reminder of the one she missed.

When electricity suddenly flowed through Chevalier's body, he pulled hard against the restraints as his muscles contracted.

"Let's try that again shall we? What is the gender of the baby?" the Valle asked patiently.

"I don't know," Chevalier said, growling.

"Very well. We might try that one again later. What food is she craving?"

"Why do you care?" Chevalier hissed.

"What food is she craving?" he asked again.

"Brussels sprouts and pizza." Chevalier's shoulders sunk. He felt like he was betraying Emily in revealing anything about her.

"How much weight has she gained?"

“She won’t get on the scales, no one knows.” Chevalier couldn’t help but grin slightly. Now it seemed so insignificant, but at the time, it infuriated him.

“It amazes me how much you let that mere mortal get away with,” the Valle said matter-of-factly.

“Then you don’t know her well. She’s not a mere mortal.”

“Hrmph,” he said writing something down. “Any falls?”

Chevalier frowned, “No.”

“Any injuries at all?”

“Just those you inflicted.” Chevalier emphasized each word.

The Valle ignored the implication and went on, “Is she openly ready to do anything necessary to ensure the safety of the baby?”

Chevalier couldn’t help but laugh, “Yes, if she thinks it’ll help... She doesn’t usually agree with the doctors though, so that’s a trick question.”

“Hm, I see. Any food aversions?”

“You mean besides blood?”

The Valle glared at him, “Don’t push it.”

“No”

“That will be all for now,” the Valle said, standing up and leaving Chevalier alone again.

Chevalier's internal clock was perfect, and he had been held in that chair for twelve days. He knew that the Equites were coming for him. He could feel the hope in Emily's emotions. He also knew they wouldn't let her go with them, which pleased him. Each day the Valle would come and ask him questions about Emily. Most of them were small and meaningless, but those that mattered, he normally got punished for lying. Some lies they believed, others they didn't.

He reached out again and again, trying to get some sort of message to Emily. If she knew he was not in pain, not injured or dying, she may be happier to stay put in the castle where she belonged. He knew in the end, that neither Kyle nor David would be able to stop her if she set her mind to it. He admitted that's one of the things he loved about her, no matter how much trouble it caused.

Again he shut his eyes and focused on her emotions. She was sleeping. He could always tell when she was asleep because her emotions were slow and flowing. She wasn't sleeping much lately, which worried him, so he was glad she was finally getting some rest. He growled softly when he felt her wake up and become excited. He knew she had another one of her plans.

Emily slipped into the black pregnancy jeans she loathed so much and pulled on a black sweater that fit tightly against her stomach. She tied her hair up into a bun and pulled on her black running shoes, then headed out to join Kyle and David on the north lawn. The plan was formulated in her head. It made sense, and as she felt the time was nearing to attack the Valle, she knew she couldn't put it off any longer.

“Ooooh no you don’t,” Kyle said as she approached.

“Emily, what are you doing?” David asked, walking towards her.

“I’m coming with you,” she said, and took her place among those facing the troops.

Kyle sighed and took her arm, “You aren’t coming.”

“Yes I am,” she said sternly.

“No, you’re not.” He met her gaze and stood his ground.

“You can’t leave me behind. I’m the best weapon you have,” she said, then grinned when Kyle glanced nervously around to see if anyone heard what she said.

“Hush, Emily, now is not the time,” he hissed.

Emily got right in his face and whispered, “Unless you want me to demonstrate what I can do, I suggest you let me go with you.”

“No, period. Chevalier would kill us all if we let you join, and I’d rather turn to ash than to face him.” Kyle was serious.

David was now with them, “We could let her go. I’ll watch her, and that way we don’t have to worry about her here alone, getting into trouble.”

Kyle turned to David angrily, “What?”

“It makes sense. We take her, and then we can watch her.” David shrugged.

“That’s insane,” Kyle scowled at David.

“Think about it... If we leave her here, she’s going to elude the guards and possibly try to follow us. We’ll be lucky if we can save her before the Valle find her,” David said, watching Emily intently.

Kyle turned to look at Emily and was surprised at the look on her face. He glanced from Emily to David, unsure what to do.

“You will let me go with you?” Emily asked David, though it didn’t sound like a question.

“I will if I feel that that is what’s right for you,” he answered, meeting her eyes.

“That doesn’t work on me,” she said, staring back at David.

“What doesn’t?” Kyle asked, confused.

Suddenly, David looked paler and afraid.

“No use trying again,” she said, smiling slightly.

“What’s going on?” Kyle asked.

Emily took a step toward David, “He’s trying to control my mind.”

“What??” Kyle asked, turning on David.

“What were you going to do? Tell me how to leave here? He wants me to go with you,” she said, advancing on David.

David took a step back, “That’s not true! I thought if I could get control of her mind, I could make her stay.”

The image struck Kyle, the hulking heku was backing down from the tiny mortal woman whose pregnant bulge made her look even more fragile. The look in David's eyes was terrified.

"You are a Valle," Emily said, coming toe-to-toe with him.

"I am not, don't be silly," David said uneasily.

"Where is he?" Emily asked angrily.

David glanced at Kyle, "I don't know, I swear... I swore my allegiance to the Equites."

All eyes were on Emily and David. The foreign Equites troops were shocked that a heku would back down to a mortal. The troops that knew Emily were ready to attack David.

David's eyes grew wide as he screamed and fell to the ground, clutching his chest. His body convulsed against the cold ground and his screams continued to pierce the darkness.

Emily felt a hand on her shoulder, "Stop," Kyle said, too quietly for the others to hear.

Emily looked up at him, and then back to David as he lay, cowering on the ground.

She walked over to him and knelt down, "Where is he?"

David looked up into Emily's eyes and understood, "Please... don't..."

"Where is he?" she demanded, in a voice that was uncharacteristic for her size.

David's body shook with fear, "He's in Nevada."

Kyle looked at Emily, amazed. She was getting more information out of this one heku than all of the death crews combined.

"Nevada is a big state, David," Emily said, almost sweetly.

"I don't know anything more, I swear," David whispered, his entire body shaking. He dropped back to the ground and screamed. Murmurs came from the troops as they watched curiously. One of the heku they understood as a superior officer was writhing around on the ground in pain as the frail mortal girl watched him.

David's body finally fell silent and he began to beg, "Stop please... he's in Orovada."

Emily stood up and scanned the troops, then blushed when she realized they were all watching her. She glanced down to David, who was still crying on the ground.

"Get him back to the prison," Kyle said, watching David. Three of the guards broke rank and picked him up by the arms, hauling him off to the dungeons.

Emily turned to Kyle, "I'm going, and we're leaving now."

He whispered to her, "We can't leave tonight. We aren't ready."

Emily looked at the Equites, "When?"

"When we are ready. This isn't going to be as easy as the last time. This time they are ready and waiting for us. I'm sure David has filled them in

on everything we've done, so we have to re-do all of the strategy and tactics. We have to come up with a whole new plan," he said sadly.

Emily set her jaw, "I'm going."

"Em..." He looked at her.

"I can kill more heku than any of them," she said, pointing toward the gathered forces.

"I know, but they want you. We'd be handing you over." He was watching her eyes and knew he couldn't stop her.

"I'm going, and we leave in the morning," she said as she walked past him and stood with the commanding ranks.

Kyle sighed, "He's going to kill me," he grumbled as he faced the troops.

"We leave in the morning. Get with your troop Commanders and make final preparations," Kyle called out to the 725 gathered heku.

Emily joined Kyle as he talked to his troops. "We're the second in, we take the southernmost side of the city and work our way to the middle. The orders are simple... kill anyone you see, check every door, every vent, every wall."

Deep into the night the troops were given orders, practiced formations, and finalized orders for the morning.

"Sir," one of the heku called to Kyle.

"What?" he asked, not paying much attention.

“We’ve already lost a troop member,” the heku said, laughing.

Kyle turned to him and followed his stare. Off to the side, Emily was curled up on the grass, asleep.

Kyle shook his head, “Just let her sleep.” He slipped off his coat and laid it over her.

“Is she really coming with us?” one of the heku asked from the ranks nervously.

Kyle nodded, “Yes, she is.”

“The Chief Enforcer will kill us if anything happens to her.”

“No, he’ll kill me. It was my decision,” Kyle assured them.

“Is there a team assigned to protect her?”

“No, I’ll do that myself. You focus on your task and leave Emily to me,” Kyle said sternly.

Chapter 8 - Nevada

Emily crawled into the front of the black Suburban and Kyle slid in next to her.

“Feels weird leading a war in a Suburban,” Emily said, looking out the heavily shaded windows.

“How else were we supposed to get there?” Kyle asked as he pulled off the ferry and set out for Nevada.

“How long?” Emily watched the terrain fly by.

“48 hours should be about right,” he said.

Emily picked up her book and began to read with her feet perched on the dashboard.

“Em,” Kyle said quietly.

She looked over at him.

“You and I, we aren’t going with the rest of them.”

“What?” she asked angrily.

“No, no, we’ll be there... but we’re going to break off. You need to find Chevalier,” he said, watching the road.

“I am? How? You’re the one with the senses,” she said, confused.

“I need you to at least try to find him. Your bond is tight, and I think if you try, you may be able to find him before we do.” Kyle was hopeful.

Chevalier glared at the door. He could feel Emily moving closer to him, and his mind raged. How could they let her come? What did she do to

talk Kyle into this dangerous situation? He swore under his breath to make them pay if one hair on her head was harmed.

Chevalier was suddenly assaulted by the shock of electricity. His body tensed and pulled against the chains as the electricity flowed uninterrupted.

“You said this should work?” a heku said from the doorway.

“Yes, it won’t kill him, but it’ll keep him in enough pain he won’t be able to get loose. We’ll give him a few days, and then we’ll see if he’s willing to cooperate,” the other said, and they left, shutting the door behind him.

“Emily, wake up,” Kyle said, touching her shoulder lightly.

She looked up and saw sand, miles and miles of sand, “We’re here?”

“Close enough... we’re running the rest of the way, it’s quieter.” He got out of the Suburban and the others followed suit, leaving a long line of black Suburban’s and buses along the Nevada desert road.

Emily got out and moved to Kyle, “Run?”

Kyle grinned, “It’s ok, I’ll carry you.”

“Ugh, seriously?” she asked, embarrassed.

“You can’t keep up with us, and you’d not make it the 90 miles anyway.”

Kyle was adjusting a belt with odd tools around it.

“You’re going to carry me, running, for 90 miles?” She doubted he was being serious.

“Yes, I am.” He left to talk to another command.

Emily looked down at her hands and flexed them slowly, her brow wrinkled. She noticed how the ache ran up her arms and into her shoulders. She knew better than to tell Kyle about the odd sensation, the tingling that had started a few days ago and was growing stronger.

“Ready, Em?” Kyle asked at her back.

She jerked and turned around quickly.

Kyle grinned, “Didn’t mean to scare you.”

“You didn’t,” she lied.

Emily cringed as he cradled her in his arms and began to run quickly. The darkness was full of heku in black suits all intent on going in after one lost Commander. Emily thought about the loyalty the heku showed toward each other, and then frowned at her own race. A race famous for turning on themselves, wars pitting brother against brother, deaths over things such as shoes and money. She wondered how her race considered the heku to be evil and sinister.

Emily woke up as the feeling of wind flowing past her faded. Kyle put her onto her feet and she looked around at the large encampment. They stood on a hill above it, invisible to those below. She watched as the heku went about their daily lives, some visited, some went to work, some were walking hand in hand. A sudden pang of sadness gripped her when she thought that they would have to kill them. Kill them as they went

about their daily lives, unaware that their faction leaders had kidnapped a high-ranking Equites.

“Do we have to kill them all?” she asked no one in particular.

“They won’t let us by. We’ll have to kill them all,” a strange voice sounded behind her.

Kyle gave the order for the first team to move out, and a black shadow suddenly descended on the city. Within minutes, screams could be heard echoing from around the small valley. Emily flexed her hands and stretched her arms as she watched.

“What’s wrong?” Kyle whispered to her.

“Nothing,” she lied.

“Remember what I said, try to pick anything up from him,” he whispered.

“I am, but I don’t know what I’m looking for.”

“Anything at all.”

Emily nodded as Kyle gave the motion for his troops to fall to the south. Another black cloud fell on the city, and as she and Kyle drew nearer, the screams grew louder and the sound of crushing and tearing echoed through the city. Emily tried to ignore the images that came with the sounds.

She glanced up as two more swarms of black came from the mountains above and fell into the city.

Kyle frowned and hissed into the dark.

“What?” Emily asked.

He whisked her into a dark alleyway, and whispered into her ear, “They were waiting for us. It’s not going well.”

He looked around cautiously as his body pressed Emily into a wall.

“Let me go, I can help,” she said.

“Not yet, you try to find Chevalier.” He kept glancing around nervously.

Kyle growled low.

“Kyle?” Emily asked, watching him.

“Team one is gone... we have to get you out of here,” he said, grabbing her arm and leading her out of the city.

She spun out from under his grasp and turned, running into the city.

“Stop, Em,” Kyle said, appearing ahead of her.

“I can stop them, Kyle, and you know it.”

“You can’t stop an entire city.”

“I don’t have to... I just have to even up the numbers,” she said, stomping past him.

Kyle headed after her and almost ran into her when she froze suddenly.

“Hello there, sweet girl,” the heku said, looking at her pregnant belly and grinning.

Kyle gasped as the Valle clutched at his chest, and then fell to ash. She was getting faster.

Emily didn’t hesitate. She ran into the small square and stopped when eight heku ran towards her with their hands out. Within seconds, they all turned to ash and Emily continued.

Kyle followed her through the city, watching as heku after heku fell. Emily was unstoppable and moved quickly from sight to sight without pausing. He heard whispers from the troops that they were pulling ahead, but there was no word on the Chief Enforcer.

Emily stopped after an hour and flexed her hands, then rubbed her arms.

“What is it?” Kyle asked, taking her arm in his hands and rubbing it.

“They hurt so badly.” She winced.

“When did it start?”

“A few days ago, but it’s getting worse.”

Kyle frowned, “Explain the pain to me.”

“It’s a vibration... and my hands feel like they are buzzing.” She flexed her hands.

“I think it’s from him.”

She looked up at him, “You do?”

“Is it too painful to go on?” he asked, watching her.

She frowned at him, “No.”

Kyle watched her carefully. It was taking her longer and longer to turn heku into ash. At first it was seconds, now the heku suffered for twenty to thirty seconds before falling. He saw her face beginning to pale, and she started moving slower than before.

“Emily, it’s time to stop,” he said, and put his hand on her shoulder.

“No? Why? We haven’t found him,” she asked, walking in a panic toward the sounds of battle.

Kyle decided it was time, “No more.”

She tried to pull away from him, “We have to find him.”

“We will, Em,” he tried to reassure her.

“Sir! We found a secret underground area,” one of the heku said, running to Kyle.

Kyle took Emily’s hand and he helped her run along with the heku to the underground. Kyle ordered everyone to stay in the city as he and Emily descended together. The smell was horrible. It was moldy and smelled of decay. Emily put her hand over her stomach as it rolled with the smell, and covered her nose with her sleeve.

Kyle crouched low and peered around the corner. In the room were 13 heku, feeding off of one mortal donor who looked like he might be dead. Kyle looked back at Emily’s pale complexion and debated.

“There are a lot of them,” he whispered into her ear.

“How many?”

“Thirteen that I can see, and they are newly fed, so they’ll be stronger.”
He watched her reaction.

“Can you keep them busy while I pick them off?” she asked, watching his eyes.

Kyle nodded and stood up, took a deep breath, and then rounded the corner. There was a loud shout and the sound of fighting erupted into the small quarters. Emily stepped around the corner and concentrated on the one closest to her. He fell within almost half a minute and she moved on to the next. By the time the second one fell, Emily saw Kyle laying unconscious on the floor as the others came toward her slowly.

At first she was confused as to why the Valle were being so careful as they approached her. Then it dawned on her, she wasn’t to be harmed, and broken orders resulted in harsh punishments.

Emily concentrated hard and let her fear go. She could feel it turning to anger. She screamed in anger, and the advancing heku began to fall one after another in quick succession. Kyle was on his feet now, staggering, and headed into a back room without looking at her.

Emily followed after him just as the last heku fell. She stumbled through the dark, feeling with her hands until she found Kyle. He was standing still, staring at a chair and Emily frowned and stepped ahead of him.

“Chev!” she gasped, and ran to grab him.

Kyle held her back and she turned angrily toward him.

“Don’t touch him yet. We have to turn it off,” he said to her, but his eyes were searching the room.

Emily turned back to Chevalier and could see him clearly now. She could hear the electricity running through the chains and saw the strain on his body as it was gripped in pain. That was the vibrating sensation she had in her arms, though it was a mere fraction of what he was feeling.

Emily ran out of the room to the hallway and searched for something to kill the electricity. She flipped switches on the wall, but the sound continued. Kyle flew past her and down the hallway, disappearing into the first large room.

The hallway suddenly fell quiet as the loud sound of electricity stopped. Emily went back into the room with Chevalier, and froze. He was sitting up in the chair, his head had fallen forward and he was breathing fast.

“Chev?” Emily said, taking a step toward him.

His head snapped up, shocked, “Emily?”

Kyle stepped between them, “Chief Enforcer?”

Chevalier frowned, confused.

“Emily?” he asked again.

She tried to step around Kyle, but he held his hand out and blocked her, “Stay back, Em.”

Chevalier glared up at Kyle, “Get your hands off of her.”

Kyle looked at Emily, then back at the angry heku, “Are you in control?”

The question sounded odd to Emily. Of course he was in control, he knew who she was and he was awake.

“No,” he whispered, shutting his eyes.

Emily frowned, “What’s wrong?”

Kyle didn’t turn away from Chevalier, “It’s your scent. He’s not used to it. Just give him a moment.”

She watched as Chevalier concentrated. She hated how he was bound to the chair and the fierce red welts stood out on his arms where the electricity burned him.

After a few minutes, Chevalier opened his eyes and looked calmly at Kyle, “Ok.”

Kyle walked forward and began to unchain Chevalier. Emily was unsure what to do. She was feeling dizzy and confused. Chevalier was acting strangely and watching her with thirst in his eyes. She didn’t like the way he was watching her neck, or the way his tongue ran across his sharp canines. She stepped back and protectively put her hands on her stomach.

Chevalier smiled warmly, and she saw a glimmer of his old self back. She felt an odd tingle on her lip and she reached up to touch it, and then looked, she had a bloody nose.

“Kyle?” Chevalier asked nervously.

Kyle looked at Emily and moved to her, “Em?”

“I’m ok,” she said. “Get him out.”

Kyle returned and had the chains off within a few minutes. Chevalier stood slowly and walked with sore muscles towards Emily. She watched him cautiously, then felt the world begin to spin and willed herself to stay standing. Chevalier growled and clenched his fists.

“Go, Chief, I’ll get Emily. The troops need help,” Kyle said hurriedly.

Chevalier didn’t hesitate as he disappeared in a blur out of the room.

“Do you need to sit down?” Kyle asked, taking her arm.

“It’s just a bloody nose, I’m fine,” she said. The world began to spin faster and soon she found herself in Kyle’s arms again.

Kyle started moving through the underground rooms to get back up to the top.

“Put me down,” Emily said as he stepped out into the warm night air.

“You sure?”

“Yes”

As he set her back onto her feet, she looked around and gasped at the destruction and carnage that surrounded them. The buildings were barely standing. Glass was scattered across the streets and mixed with the same dark blood that covered every surface. There were pieces of bodies strewn around, and injured heku as far as she could see. No one was fighting anymore, and the city was hauntingly silent.

Emily went to a familiar looking heku and knelt down beside him. He was lying on the cement, fighting to breathe. She pulled his hands away from his chest and turned her head away from what she saw. Drawing a deep breath, she turned back to him.

Her eyes were caring as she pulled his tattered shirt aside and looked down on his lungs. His rib cage had been torn away and was hanging by skin at his side. Hoping his body could still heal, she grimaced and lifted the broken rib cage and gently put it back in place, then held it and smiled at the heku as she felt the rib cage repairing itself. He looked into her eyes as his breathing began to return to normal.

“Are you hurt anywhere else?” she asked, touching his forehead gently.

He shook his head, but couldn’t pull his gaze away from her warm, green eyes.

Kyle watched her, stunned, as she helped the strange heku. He would have been able to fix himself eventually, but the caring way she went about it made his heart ache.

“Let’s go,” Kyle said, helping her to her feet.

She saw another heku leaning against a wall, then moved to him and placed a warm hand against his shoulder, “Are you hurt?”

He smiled up at her and shook his head, “No, Lady Emily, thank you.”

Kyle followed as Emily walked through the streets, checking on anyone she came across. She didn’t care if they were Valle or Equites, she wanted to help. He winced as she helped a Valle warrior heal. He knew

as soon as she left, one of the Equites would kill him, but was pleased to see that none did it in front of her. They waited until she'd left.

“Why are you still in the city?” Chevalier asked, walking up to Kyle.

Kyle motioned to Emily, and they both turned to her. She was kneeling by a heku that was already in the process of healing, but was in pain. She held his hand and touched his cheek lightly. He watched her face and she smiled down at him.

“You’ll be ok. It’s almost done,” she whispered to him as his body healed itself.

Once he was healed, he sat up and thanked her, then frowned. Emily wiped a drop of blood from under her nose and the world began to spin again. She stumbled, trying to stand up, and the strange heku held her steady.

“That’s enough,” Chevalier said, and picked her up.

“No, please, I can help,” she told him, struggling in his arms.

“Enough,” he said, and headed out of the city, followed by Kyle.

Emily reached up and touched his face, “Are you ok?”

He smiled at her, “Perfect.”

She reached her arms around his neck and laid her head on his shoulder, suddenly feeling extremely tired. Kyle climbed into the driver’s seat of the Suburban while Chevalier and Emily got into the back. They drove off silently, and Emily was soon fast asleep with her head in Chevalier’s

lap. Their quiet voices turned into her dream, talking of strategy and tactics, and what they had seen and done over the last few weeks.

They were still driving when Emily woke up and sat up, stretching.

“Where are we?” she asked, looking at the unfamiliar landscape.

“Ohio,” Kyle said.

It was dark outside and the dashboard clock read 2am. Emily climbed onto Chevalier’s lap, facing him, with a knee on each side of his legs. She looked at his face and ran her fingers along his forehead and cheekbones.

“Are you hurt?” She wasn’t watching his eyes, but was studying every part of his face, scanning for any sign that something had changed.

“No,” he told her.

He reached out and kissed her, but she pulled away.

“Stop,” she said, and unbuttoned his torn shirt.

“Emily, what are you...”

She cut him off with a, “Shhh.”

She slipped his shirt off and took his right arm and laid it to rest on her stomach, then ran her fingers along the muscles and veins in his arm, gently touching every inch of his skin. He shivered and tried to kiss her again.

“Stop,” she said, touching his hand and exploring his palm and each finger.

When she was done, she took his left arm and also laid it against her stomach. Her fingers ran lightly along his shoulder and down onto the muscles in his arm, again tracing the veins and contours lightly.

“Em...”

“Shhh,” she said again, her eyes following her fingers as they lightly felt to their way to his forearms.

He brought his hands up and took her face in them and kissed her passionately. He growled when she pulled away.

“Stop,” she told him sternly.

She carefully ran her fingers along the back of his neck, feeling along his spine and the way his skin goose bumped at her touch.

Her fingers softly worked their way to the front of his neck and along his jaw line, then gently outlined his shoulders and traced their way back to his upper chest.

He shivered as her hands traced the chiseled contours of his chest and he grabbed her again to kiss her.

Emily pushed him away, “Stop.”

Her eyes were focused on his chest. Her fingers delicately brushed every part of it as she meticulously touched the skin, and outlined each muscle in his torso.

“What exa...” She shushed him again. He glanced at Kyle in the rear-view mirror, and saw Kyle shrugged slightly.

Chevalier let his eyes take in Emily to get his mind off of the way her touch felt. He noticed how much she had changed in the last few weeks. Her breasts were fuller, and her stomach had grown quite a bit, even her hair seemed longer. He reached out to brush it off of her shoulder, but his hand was pushed away.

“I said stop.” Her eyes never left his chest.

He shivered again as she ran her fingers ever so lightly down his sides to the edge of his pants, and then traced his belt line across his stomach to the center.

Chevalier reached out and took her hands in his, “Emily, if you don’t stop, I’m going to have to rip Kyle’s eyes out.”

She tried to pull her hands away from his, but couldn’t, “I’m not done, turn around.”

“What are you doing exactly?” he asked, meeting her eyes.

His insides cringed as her striking green eyes began to fill with tears, “You were burned, all over.”

He nodded, “I’ve healed.”

“I want to make sure,” she said, and started to slide off of his lap. She was determined to check out his back now.

He stopped her from leaving his lap, “Emily, look at me.”

Her eyes met his again, and he wondered if their intensity would ever stop piercing into his soul.

“I’m ok.” He wrapped his arms around her.

“I want to see your legs.” She undid his belt, deciding to see if his legs were burned.

His hands were quickly on hers again, “Seriously, Emily... I only have so much control.”

“How can you be sure that you aren’t injured anywhere?” She didn’t pull her hands away this time.

“I just know. I’m fine.” He reached up and wiped the blood away from under her nose, “When did this start?”

She shrugged, not taking her eyes away from him.

“Just after she destroyed about 13 heku at once,” Kyle said from the front seat.

Chevalier’s eyes narrowed, “How many did you kill total?”

She shrugged again.

“Eighty three,” Kyle replied.

Chevalier sighed, “Do you have a headache?”

“Let me see your back,” she said again, and tried to slide off of him.

He stopped her, “Headaches?”

She nodded, “Sort of.”

He thought for a moment, “Maybe you did too many, Emily. I hadn’t thought about what it could do your body.”

Emily wrapped her arms around his neck and pulled close against him, “Promise me you’re ok,” she whispered.

“I promise,” he said, and kissed her softly.

Her arms tightened around his neck as she pressed her lips against his. Her body pressed closer to him as he gasped and broke the kiss.

“What?” she asked, looking at up at him.

“What was that?” he asked, looking down.

She grinned, “You got kicked.”

“Hmm,” he said, and kissed her again.

Chapter 9 - Familiar

Emily floated on the top of the warm water, her arms were extended and relaxed, and her eyes were closed. The water sloshed softly against the

side of the pool and she could feel the baby moving inside of her. She was able to let her mind wander. Things had returned to normal with the exception that David was now back in prison. He asked to see her daily, but she hadn't yet been down to see him. Chevalier stopped working such long days, and Kyle was back as her personal guard.

The pool was one place she was allowed to be alone. She grinned because she knew why she was allowed to swim by herself. She had outgrown the one piece swim suit and the bikini left nothing to the imagination. Chevalier had become more jealous as her body changed with the pregnancy. He watched the shadows closely when she walked, making sure no servant looked at her for too long.

Emily was sure the only reason Kyle was allowed near her, was because it almost caused an argument between she and Chevalier. He had been extra careful to watch his temper around her.

The Equites offered the Valle a peace treaty, for now, and they accepted. They had already taken out not only Ulrich's coven but also a large coven that housed a lot of the Valle guards. The Valle had limited troops and limited funds and could not afford another skirmish. For now, they were leaving Emily alone and she was finally feeling safe again.

Emily slowly began to work her way to the edge of the pool. Once her fingers began to prune she knew it was time to get out. She'd spent time every day in the pool. It lessened some of the normal aches and pains of pregnancy.

She stepped out of the pool a little awkwardly. Her petite form had some problems keeping balanced the heavier the baby became. She grabbed a towel from the warmer, and buried her face into the soft fibers. As she

dried her legs, she felt an arm around her waist and a hand over her mouth before she could scream.

“Calm, Emily, I won’t hurt you,” Sam said, holding her tight enough she couldn’t get loose.

Emily tried to scream, but couldn’t get a sound out through his hand.

“I’ll let you go if you promise not to scream,” he whispered.

She clawed at his hand on her mouth, drawing blood with her fingernails.

“Stop, I’m not here to hurt you... please trust me,” he said as she struggled to get loose. Emily tried to concentrate, to turn him to ash, but it didn’t work and she again tried to scream.

“Emily, stop! I belong to you now... don’t you understand? Lord Ulrich is dead. I’m now your familiar.” His words came out quickly and Emily stopped struggling.

He slipped his hand off of her mouth so she could speak, “Your what?”

“Your familiar,” he said, finally letting her go.

She turned on him and took a step backwards, “No, no you turned me into the Valle and I was tortured, Sam. You were like a father to me.”

The pain in her eyes made him recoil, “I didn’t know they would do that, I swear. In the past when Lord Ulrich has taken a Winchester into protection, he kept them safe in the castle.”

“That is nice for them, but I was tortured in a prison,” she scowled at him.

His eyes fell, “I know.”

“You did that. Sam, my father was your friend and you... you let them hurt me. You always promised me, from the time I was a toddler, that you wouldn’t let anyone hurt me.”

“I know,” was all he could think of to say. “Still, I am yours to command.”

She glared at him, “Then go kill yourself.”

He winced, “I can’t do that, though. I am your familiar until the time of your death.”

“Kyle!” she yelled.

Kyle appeared in the door, and a growl echoed off of the walls in the room as he appeared between Emily and Sam. Sam didn’t flinch or wince away from the fierceness in Kyle’s eyes.

“Did he touch you?” Kyle asked, and watched Sam.

“He said he’s my familiar now that Ulrich is dead,” she explained quickly.

Kyle glared at Sam and blurred behind him, grabbing him by the throat and around his shoulders, “We’ll see about that.”

Emily quickly slipped on some shorts and followed Kyle and Sam out into the hallway as they headed for the prison. Kyle was too mad to realize Emily was behind him as he stepped into the cell area and ordered the guard to open a cell. He threw Sam roughly inside and Sam’s body

crashed into the wall of the cell. The guard slammed the cell door shut and locked it.

“Emily?” David called from the adjacent cell, and Emily froze.

Kyle turned to David, “Do not speak to her,” he hissed.

David stood up and walked to the cell door, “Emily, please, talk to me.”

Emily moved back a step. Her eyes went from Sam, to David, and back again as she walked backwards stiffly.

“Leave her alone,” Sam hissed at David.

“Both of you shut up!” Kyle growled.

The familiar and the Valle both became silent.

“Emily, order Sam to stay in the cell... tell him not to turn into a cat,” Kyle told her softly.

She looked at him, “Do what?”

“Tell him... please.”

Emily turned to Sam and frowned, “Stay here. No turning into a cat.”

“As you wish,” Sam said, bowing.

Emily stiffened as Sam agreed to what she had said.

“Come on, Emily,” Kyle said, taking her arm gently.

“Emily, please... just a moment. Talk to me, I can’t live like this... I can’t live without you,” David begged.

“One more word and I’ll end this now,” Kyle hissed at the Valle.

Emily let Kyle lead her back up the stairs. She was confused and her mind was sifting through what Sam said. Her eyes were far away and when Chevalier spoke, she didn’t hear him.

“Emily?” he said again.

She looked up at him, and the confusion was evident on her face, “What?”

“Kyle, what’s going on?” Chevalier demanded.

“Sam’s back,” he said, and hurried on when Chevalier’s eyes flared. “He’s Emily’s familiar now that Ulrich is dead. I... I should have seen this coming. I didn’t think that he wouldn’t have another heir.”

Chevalier met Emily’s eyes, “Emily, breathe.”

She inhaled and looked around the room. Somehow she’d gotten up to the main foyer.

Chevalier nodded, “We need to decide what to do with him. I don’t care whose familiar he is, he betrayed her.”

“I agree... they aren’t that easy to get rid of, though. He’s now bound to her by blood.”

“What? How?” Emily asked.

“You’re the only blood relative left of Ulrich, so when he died, the familiar passed to you,” Kyle explained.

“Let’s go talk to him,” Chevalier said, and started toward the prison.

“Wait, Sir,” Kyle said, and he left Emily’s side and whispered to Chevalier. The words were too soft and too fast for Emily to make out.

Chevalier looked at Emily, and she took a step back when she saw how angry he was.

“How dare he talk to her,” he hissed.

Emily suddenly understood and relaxed.

“Bring Sam up here, into the library,” Chevalier said, and he took Emily’s hand and led her to the library as Kyle went to get the familiar.

Emily sat down in a chair in the library, and looked high up among the rows and columns of books.

“We’ll figure this out, this isn’t bad... ok? This is not a bad thing,” Chevalier said.

She nodded.

“If he is yours... then he can’t hurt you. He can’t do anything but what you say,” he explained.

“I don’t want him,” she told him, and turned to look at the door when Kyle walked in alone.

He sighed at Chevalier, “He won’t leave the cell because Emily told him to stay. He put up a fight when we tried to force him, and I thought maybe it wasn’t worth it.”

“Fine... we’ll go down and maybe take care of David while we’re at it,” Chevalier said.

Chevalier slipped off his shirt and handed it to Emily. She was so shocked by what happened, she’d forgotten she only had on a pair of shorts and the bikini top. She slipped on the shirt and followed them down into the prison as she rolled up the sleeves to free her hands.

The two guards bowed to the Chief Enforcer as he stepped into the cell room. The prison fell eerily quiet in his presence. He glared across the cells, making sure they all knew he was there. His threatening stare brought fear into them.

“Emily... Emily, please, I love you. Talk to me,” David said, coming to the bars of his cell.

“I’m warning you, Valle,” Kyle said, and kicked the bars roughly. “You hold your tongue around her. We have business that doesn’t include you.”

“Chevalier will kill you eventually, Emily!” David said.

Kyle grabbed his keys and started to open David’s cell while he continued, “You know he will. I love you Emily. I would never hurt you. You know that.”

Emily looked at him with wide eyes as Kyle stepped into the cell and shut the door behind him.

Chevalier spun her around and pressed her face into his chest as the screaming began. Her body tensed at the crunching and tearing sounds coming from behind her. She jumped as a loud crash echoed off the walls of the cell area, and turned slowly when the room fell silent.

Kyle was crouched in the corner of the cell, covered in blood. His fists were clenched tightly and his breathing was harsh and fast. He slowly stood up and adjusted his shirt and looked down, then quickly ripped it off and threw it into the corner. Emily wondered briefly what he was trying to hide.

As he stepped, shirtless, out of the cell and locked the door, Emily gasped. David was still alive, but his feet and hands had been ripped from his body and were strewn around the cell. He was gasping for breath and groaning in pain.

“Kill him. Don’t leave him like that,” she whispered.

“We can’t kill him, not yet,” Chevalier said, and turned her away from David’s cell.

“Why not?” she asked, squeezing her eyes shut, trying to forget the image behind her.

“He’s a prisoner of war. He can’t be killed until the Valle have a chance to petition for his return,” he growled, obviously not pleased with that.

“I can kill him, Emily, just ask,” Sam told her.

Emily opened her eyes and looked at Sam, “I don’t want a familiar, Sam.”

“It’s not up to you. I’m bound to you by blood, and have been for hundreds of years,” he said softly.

“Bonds can be broken,” she whispered.

“Not this one,” he said, looking into her eyes.

Chevalier watched them carefully. He knew that Sam was right, but he also knew that Emily wasn’t going to understand. He knew she had to see it for herself and grasp the reality of it. Sam was hers in every way, shape, and form. Sam, who once betrayed the strong trust she had for him. Chevalier didn’t envy Sam for having to become the familiar of a woman he so strongly deceived.

“Then I can order you to go away... forever,” she said.

“Yes you can, but I’d be around... It is my job to watch over you for the rest of your life.” Sam’s eyes were intense.

“Then what? When I die what happens?” She already knew, but wanted to hear him say it.

“Then I will become the familiar to your eldest child.”

Emily turned to Chevalier, “The bond can’t be broken?”

He shook his head.

“Do you trust him?” she asked.

Chevalier nodded, “He can’t hurt you. It’s not a question now, he cannot do it.”

“He turned me over to the Valle,” she said, shocked.

“On Ulrich’s orders. Don’t misunderstand, I don’t like him, but as a familiar... he’s unable to betray you now.”

“Emily, I love you,” David said softly from behind her.

“Are you kidding me?” Kyle yelled, turning to him. David had healed and was standing at the door reaching for Emily.

Chevalier let Sam out of his cell, and Emily told him to follow them just as Kyle stepped into David’s cell again. Emily, Chevalier, and Sam headed up the stairs as the screaming began.

Emily kept a close eye on Sam. She didn’t care what Chevalier said, she didn’t trust him. His betrayal was still too fresh in her mind. The muscle spasms in restraints and the humiliating exams were still his doing, and she was very much aware of that right now.

Chevalier opened the bedroom door for Emily and let both her and Sam inside. She turned and glared at Sam.

“Did you kill my Dad?” she asked him angrily.

“No! I wouldn’t ever have hurt him,” Sam said quickly.

“Emily, bed,” Chevalier said, pointing.

She spun on him and glared, “No.”

“Doctor’s orders, your blood pressure was up again, remember?” He sat on the edge of the bed.

She scowled at him and sat on the bed cross-legged.

“Listen to the doctor, Emily. Do what’s best for your health and the baby,” Sam said, agreeing with Chevalier.

Emily flew out of the bed and landed hard against Sam, knocking him to the floor and pinning him to the ground with her body and hands. He didn’t resist, it wasn’t his place to stop her.

She looked down into his eyes enraged and screamed, “You have no right to tell me what to do for my health!”

“Em,” Chevalier said, amused, as he picked her up off of the floor. “I don’t think tackling anyone was part of the doctor’s orders.”

He sat her down on the bed and her temper flared when she saw the humor in his eyes.

Sam got up and brushed himself off, “The Winchester women were historically temperamental when with child.”

Emily started off the bed again, but Chevalier held her back.

“Why don’t you shut up, Sam?” he asked, fighting another chuckle.

Through clenched teeth, Emily asked, “Why can’t I ash him?”

This time Chevalier did laugh, “He’s not a heku. He’s a familiar, they are their own animal.”

“Ok, then go jump off a cliff,” she growled at him.

“As you wish,” Sam said politely, and headed for the door.

“Emily!” Chevalier said, surprised.

“Fine... stay,” she said, glaring at Sam.

Sam stopped in place and turned back to her.

“Ok, let’s do this. Tell Sam to obey me. It might be easier if I have some control too,” Chevalier said, and smiled when Sam cringed.

“Sam, obey Chevalier,” she grumbled.

“Yes, Emily,” he replied calmly.

“Good, then get the door, Sam,” Chevalier said, moments before Emily heard a knock.

Sam went to the door and came back with a silver tray. He set it down beside Emily as she glared at him suspiciously. He lifted the silver dome and stepped back.

Emily hadn’t realized how hungry she was until she smelled the fried chicken and Brussels sprouts on the plate. She stabbed a small green cabbage with a fork and started to eat.

Emily looked up and blushed when she realized both Sam and Chevalier were watching her eat.

“Go away,” she said to Sam, and he left the room quickly.

Chevalier laughed, “You should be nicer to him. He could actually come in handy.”

“Then you take him,” she said between bites of chicken.

“Oooh no, he’s yours.” He was grinning, and it was starting to irritate her.

She knew how to stop that, “I’d rather have David up here than Sam.”

Chevalier’s eye widened, then he realized her motive and turned his head so she didn’t see him smile.

“I’m glad you find me so funny,” she said, and hit him in the back of the head with the saucer from her plate.

“I can’t help it,” he told her when he grabbed the saucer and put it back on her tray.

“Well... try harder,” she said, grabbing another piece of chicken.

“You have no idea how absolutely adorable you are.” Part of his mind told him to shut up, but he ignored it, “You are just so tiny and the baby makes you look fragile and about to fall forward all the time. You have such a vicious attitude and it’s endearing when I realize that you actually think you are tough.”

Just as he’d finished with a warm smile on his face, he felt the heel of Emily’s left foot connect with his lower jaw, breaking it in two and displacing half of it.

“Damnit, Em,” he said as his jaw reattached. “Did you hurt yourself?”

She kicked at him again and her eyes flared as he dodged the kick.

He put his hands on her feet and held them to the bed, “Stop it.”

“I’m not tiny,” she said, glaring at him.

“Ok,” he told her, holding his face steady.

“I’m not fragile.”

“Ok”

“I’m not weak.”

“Dear, you are far from weak,” he agreed.

“Get out,” she said angrily.

Chevalier nodded and stood up. He felt a piece of chicken bone hit him in the back as he stepped out the door and shut it behind him. Both Kyle and Sam were out in the ante-chamber and looked up at him.

“Temperamental?” he asked Sam.

Sam nodded, “Every one of them.”

“That’s an understatement,” he said, leaving the ante-chamber and disappearing into the hallway.

Emily looked down the hallway curiously, and watched as a row of tall heku in dark blue robes visited with each other with the full hoods covering their faces. She inched closer to see if she could see who they were or what they were talking about, then became irritated when she got even closer and all she could hear was the tone of their voices.

Crouching low, Emily quickly maneuvered into the room and slipped under the table to hide under the table cloth. She crawled under the table

toward them, and stopped when she came face-to-face with Kyle. He was looking at her, frustrated.

“What are you doing?” he whispered angrily. He was also in a long blue robe, but his hood was pulled back.

Emily cringed and crawled back the way she came. She knew she was about to get chastised for this. Once she was safely in the hallway, away from the robed figures, Kyle grabbed her arm.

“You promised,” he whispered harshly, leading her back to her room.

“I want to know what’s going on,” she said.

“We told you, it’s more important today than ever that you stay in your room. You swore to us you’d do that and here I find you running around.” He was glaring at her.

“Just tell me,” she begged.

“No, get back upstairs.”

Emily set her jaw and crossed her arms, “No.”

Chevalier grabbed her arm from behind her, “What are you doing out here?” he hissed.

“I want to know what’s going on,” she told him again, and her eyes widened when she saw he was also in a long blue robe.

“Get upstairs, now,” he said, through gritted teeth.

Emily knew when she was about to cross the line, and she allowed Chevalier to lead her back upstairs, not saying a word.

The guard on duty at her door gasped when he saw Chevalier leading Emily down the hallway. It had been his job to keep her in her room. He watched Chevalier nervously as he roughly pulled Emily into her room. Kyle followed them and shut the door, glaring at the guard.

“What do you think you’re doing, Emily?” Chevalier asked her angrily.

“I don’t like being a prisoner in my own room,” she said, facing him and rubbing her arm.

“You promised,” he said.

“Oh, I see, and neither of us ever breaks a promise,” she hissed at him.

“Stay up here,” he said, and headed for the door.

“No”

Chevalier spun toward her, “Your blood could cost you your life today. These heku do not know you. They aren’t used to the scent, and I’m personally not up to fighting off the eleven of them that are coming.”

“Then just tell me what’s going on.”

“Fine... we’re making a new heku,” he said, angry.

She smiled, “Oh, can I watch?”

“No!” he shouted at her, and she jumped.

“Stay here. If I catch you out again, I’ll have no choice but to stick you in prison for the day,” Kyle said to her.

“You wouldn’t!” She knew as soon as she said it, that he wasn’t lying.

“Watch me,” Kyle hissed, and left as he pulled his hood up.

“How are you getting out? Just tell me.” Chevalier’s voice was softer now that Kyle was gone.

She frowned, “Why should I tell you? So you can lock me up any time you think I might stub my toe?”

“It’s more dangerous than that and you know it.”

“Why? Just because the heku can’t resist my blood?” She wasn’t convinced.

“Making a heku is dangerous. We have to turn ourselves over to our instincts and it’s not safe for any mortal, let alone you. I realize you don’t understand how appetizing you smell to the heku, but trust me on this, you wouldn’t last long.” He reached up and touched her cheek softly.

She lowered her eyes and sat on the bed watching him. He knew she still wasn’t happy, but at least she would be safe here away from what was going on.

“Fine”

“Stay here. I can’t protect you from that many heku.” He smiled slightly and walked out of the room, pulling his hood up.

He joined the other heku in the foyer moments later.

“Shall we head down?” he asked and they nodded and followed him through a hidden wall and down into a large room.

The room was round, with no windows or seats, and the only door was the one they had come in through. The dirt floors and low ceiling made the entire room feel stuffy and uncomfortably closed.

Quietly, the twelve heku in blue robes lined the walls and a low hum escaped them. They were as still as statues when the door opened again. A heku in a black robe stepped into the room followed by a mortal. He was tall and slender with black hair and a long goatee. He glanced at them nervously and moved to the center of the room and looked around.

Chevalier spoke, though it was hard to tell who was speaking, the hoods blocked all light from their faces and they were all perfectly still.

“Mortal, do you know where you are?” Chevalier asked.

“I do,” he said, turning slightly toward the voice.

“Do you know what is about to happen?”

“I do.” He was sweating nervously.

“Do you do so willingly and without coercion?”

“I do.” His voice began to shake.

“Proceed,” Chevalier said to the heku in black.

The mortal dropped to his knees and looked up at the heku in black. He heard hisses from around the room as the heku held him down while the twelve heku in blue converged on him and began to feed. He screamed in agony as thirteen sets of sharp teeth sank into his soft flesh and he could feel the life draining out of him.

Just when the mortal was about to lose consciousness, he felt something pressed against his lips and he opened his mouth. At first, the salty blood was repulsive, but as he tasted more of it, he found himself drawn to it. It numbed the pain of the bites that covered his body, and replenished the blood that was ceremoniously being drained from him.

The twelve heku in the blue robes pulled away from the man and stood back along the circular walls. The heku in the black robe stayed knelt by the man as the man drank heartily from her wrist. After a few minutes, the heku stood up and pulled herself forcefully away from the almost dead man.

The heku then took a stick and wrote runes in the dirt around the man as he began to convulse, his eyes rolled back in his head. The twelve in blue began to chant and sway slightly in place as the runes were written. When she was done, she took the stick she had written with and brought it high above the seizing man, and then plunged it deep into his chest, piercing his heart.

The screams echoed off of the walls as blood poured from his chest and congealed around the runes. Slowly, they began to glow and the light from them shone brightly on the stone ceiling. The heku in the room all grew silent and watched as the mortal man began to change into the immortal.

When his seizing stopped, he fell motionless to the cold, dirt floor. Blood no longer poured from him, and his chest was no longer rising and falling.

Chevalier pulled back his hood quickly and went to the man and knelt.

“What happened?” Kyle asked, joining him.

Chevalier reached out and touched the man’s neck, “He’s dead.”

“He can’t be dead,” Elder Selest said, also dropping her hood.

Chevalier stood up, his eyes wide, “What happened?” He scanned the room as the rest of the heku dropped their hoods and looked at the man, surprised.

“No one has ever died during the process,” Selest said, kneeling down to verify for herself.

Selest sharply inhaled as she found no traces of life in the man.

Elder Leonid stepped forward, “If he’s dead, then what killed him?”

Chevalier shook his head, “I don’t know.”

The heku in the black robe pulled her hood down and fell beside the man.

“Mike?” Her eyes were horrified as she took his hand in hers and looked over his body.

Kyle touched her shoulder lightly, “He’s gone, Corine.”

“No, he can’t be!” she yelled, lowering her head. If the immortal could cry, she would be.

Elder Selest was still looking around at the heku gathered, “This has never failed. For thousands of years, this has never killed a mortal.”

Chevalier looked around the room, “Someone... something had to have been done wrong.”

Elder Leonid moved to Chevalier’s side, “This is an experienced group of heku, what could have gone wrong?”

Elder Selest spoke up first, “We all saw what happened, and nothing went wrong.”

“Could he have been sick?” Kyle asked.

“No,” Corine told him. “He passed the physical requirements, he was healthy.”

“We are sorry, Corine, there’s nothing we could do,” Elder Selest told her, and touched her shoulder lightly.

The robed figures all walked out of the round ceremonial room and back into the foyer. They were quietly contemplating what happened and no one spoke. The tension in the air was thick. Each heku looked at the others, wondering who had done something wrong.

The two Elders present said their good-byes first and headed out to the helicopter that was waiting for them. The rest left on foot for their houses out on the island. Chevalier and Kyle were all that was left in the

foyer, and they were deep in conversation in the corner when a commotion sounded up the stairs.

Shouting came from up the white marble staircase. Kyle looked up the stairs, his mind finding it hard to grasp another tragedy when the body of the mortal still lay downstairs on the cold earth. Chevalier sighed and headed back toward his office, any emergency could be handled by his staff. He had to find out how a mortal died in his house during a routine ceremony that had been done successfully for thousands of years.

When he heard Emily's name, he flew up the stairs barely passing Kyle on his way. Chevalier entered Emily's room and focused in on her.

Emily was lying in bed, unmoving. A trickle of blood fell from her nose. Chevalier yelled at her guard to call Dr. Edwards and get him here on the helicopter. Kyle noticed the hesitation by the guard and took the orders himself.

Chevalier sat down beside Emily and touched her softly, "Em?"

Sam shifted from one corner of her room to the next and watched everyone carefully.

Emily didn't move. The red stain below her head told him she had been bleeding for a while before it was noticed. He watched her breathing, it was slow and steady, as if she were simply sleeping.

"What happened?" he yelled at the guard.

"We just had a feeling that we needed to check on her, and when we knocked, she didn't answer. We thought she'd snuck out again, so we came in and found her here like this. She wouldn't answer us, and there

was blood pooling under her head.” He was in a panic, afraid of what the Chief Enforcer would do to them. His temper was legendary.

Chevalier took Emily’s hand in his, “Em, if you can hear me, squeeze my hand.”

He waited a few seconds, “Come on Emily, just squeeze it.”

He sat with her, holding her hand and watching her breathe as he waited for Kyle to return with the doctor. He breathed a sigh of relief when he heard the familiar sounds of the helicopter landing on the roof.

Dr. Edwards ran into the room, his black bag ready, “What happened?”

He began by pulling out his stethoscope and listening to her heart and lungs while Chevalier explained.

“The guards found her like this. She was fine when I saw her two hours ago.” He watched the doctor carefully.

He put the stethoscope away and began pressing his hands down her back, on her abdomen, desperately trying to find a reason for her to be unconscious.

“Has she had nosebleeds before?” the doctor asked.

“Yes, some lately, they come with a headache,” Chevalier explained.

“She’s bleeding from her ears, too. Have you seen that?”

“No”

“Any triggers for the nosebleeds? Stress? Hunger?” the doctor grabbed a small monitor and pricked Emily’s finger. He put a drop of her blood onto the monitor, and then waited for it to finish.

Chevalier suddenly looked up at Kyle, and both of them had wide eyes. There was a trigger, overuse of her abilities, abilities that could kill a heku.

Kyle finally spoke, “No, no triggers we can find.”

Chevalier turned and looked at Emily. He wondered if that small person, who looked so pale and delicate on the bed, could prevent a ritual older than her own species.

He could tell the doctor was getting frustrated, “Her blood pressure is good, her blood sugar is good, and I can’t find an injury. I may need to get her back to the hospital.”

“Make arrangements to move her to the hospital in Bangor,” Chevalier said to the doctor. He nodded and went to the balcony to make the calls.

Kyle ordered everyone out of the room and moved up to Chevalier, “Sir, could she have done that?” he whispered.

Chevalier hesitated, and then answered, “It’s the only explanation. But was it a conscious effort?”

Sam hissed at them from the corner, and when they turned to him, they saw he was glaring at them both. They turned back to each other, ignoring the moody familiar.

“She wouldn’t do that, would she?” Kyle asked.

“I hope not,” Chevalier said, taking her hand. “I’m not sure how I’d deal with that.”

Emily brought her hands to her head and groaned.

“Emily?” Chevalier asked, looking down at her.

“My head,” she whispered.

Kyle ran to the balcony and got the doctor, who came back in instantly.

“Emily?” he asked, sitting on the edge of her bed.

“Make it stop,” she whispered, her hands digging into the hair on the side of her head.

“What’s wrong, Emily?” the doctor asked and pulled a small pen light out of his pocket.

“Please, make it stop,” she whispered again.

“She said it was her head,” Chevalier told the doctor.

The doctor readied his light, then pulled her eyelid back and gasped. Chevalier looked down and saw that the whites of her eyes were now blood-red and her pupils were dilated. He checked her other eye and it was the same.

“What causes that?” Chevalier asked.

The doctor shook his head, “With the headache... I’m thinking either an infection or a tumor.”

Chevalier stiffened.

“I’ve made the arrangements, let’s get her to the hospital,” the doctor said, grabbing his bag.

Chevalier picked Emily up and she screamed out in pain. He threw a blanket over her, and beat the doctor to the helicopter, then cradled Emily in his lap and fastened the belt over them both. When the doctor climbed in, he dropped a bag on the floor that Sam had packed, and the helicopter rose and quickly took off. Emily was unconscious again.

Chapter 10 - Bangor

Chevalier watched from behind safety glass as Emily was moved into the long MRI tube and the loud machines started up. He didn’t need the safety glass. He wanted to be in there with her, but he had to keep up pretenses. Dr. Edwards had turned Emily over to Dr. Bell, a neurosurgeon at the University of Maine Medical Center. It was Dr. Bell that was there with him now, watching the monitors. He opted to keep Emily sedated during the MRI, so she hadn’t been awake since the last few moments in the bedroom.

Dr. Bell turned when the door opened and two other doctors entered.

“Chevalier, this is Dr. Nelson, she is a neonatal specialist.” Chevalier shook hands with the older woman.

“And this is Dr. Anderson, he is a Perinatologist.” Chevalier nodded and also shook this doctor’s hand.

Doctor Bell continued, “I’ve called them in case we need to deliver the baby because of Emily’s health.”

Chevalier froze, “Deliver the baby? Now?”

“We have to be ready for anything. These two are as good as you’ll find in the U.S. and I’ve called them to consult on what we find on the MRI,” Dr. Bell said.

“We need to make sure that what’s happening isn’t going to affect the rest of the pregnancy. If it does, we have to make the choice whether to take the baby 3 months early or try to let Emily make it until she’s closer to 35 weeks,” Dr. Anderson said.

“Can the baby make it now?” Chevalier asked, his eyes concerned.

Dr. Nelson spoke, “It is possible, but not without great risk. The only way we would take the baby is if it’s a risk to Emily’s life to continue the pregnancy. As far as we can tell, the baby is fine.”

Chevalier nodded as two nurses pulled Emily out of the MRI tube and moved her to a gurney. They wheeled her out and Chevalier met them out in the hallway, and then followed them to a private room in the ICU.

“We’re turning off the sedative,” one nurse told him. “She should wake up in a few minutes.”

Chevalier nodded and watched them leave. He pulled the curtains for more privacy, and moved the chair up by the bed as he took her hand in his.

As Emily began to stir, Chevalier put one hand over the I.V. in her arm and took her hand in his other.

“Emily?” he asked softly.

She looked up at him and her eyes were no longer red, “Chev? Where am I?”

“In Bangor, you’re in the hospital,” he said, putting his hand against her shoulder as she tried to sit up.

“Why? What happened?” She looked around shocked.

“What’s the last thing you remember?” he asked.

“I was going to lay down and take a nap. I was feeling kind of tired,” she told him.

“How bad is the headache?” He touched his lips lightly to her forehead.

“I don’t have a headache.”

He looked into her eyes and she looked alert and full of energy. Chevalier frowned, slightly confused, and pushed the button.

“Yes?” the voice asked over the speaker.

“Send in Dr. Bell, please,” Chevalier said, still watching Emily.

“Let me sit up,” she said, pushing against his hand. He relented and helped her sit up, still holding his hand over her I.V.

Emily looked around, and her eyes focused on the I.V. bag. She paled a bit and pulled on Chevalier’s hand, “Let me have it.”

He couldn’t help but grin, “No, this time you’re leaving it in.”

“What have we here?” Dr. Bell asked, walking into the room. He stopped just inside the door and looked at Emily, surprised.

She frowned, “Where’s Dr. Edwards?”

“He’s not based out of this hospital. I’m Dr. Bell.” He stepped forward and shook her hand, “How are you feeling?”

“Fine,” she said as he shined a light in her eyes.

“The headache?” He checked the monitors.

“No headache.” She watched as he checked her I.V. and pulled a strip off of the heart monitor.

“Hm, none at all?” He felt along her jaw and the back of her head.

“None”

“Any pain? Tingles? Anything at all?” He picked up her chart and skimmed through it.

“Nothing, can I get my I.V. out?” she asked. The doctor looked up at her, and then down to her hand. She was pulling at Chevalier’s fingers as he held tightly over the I.V. sight.

“She’ll take it out if you give her half a chance,” Chevalier said when the doctor looked up questioningly.

“I won’t, I promise, let go.”

Chevalier grinned at her, “No.”

Before the doctor could stop her, Emily stood up and pulled her arm, “Let go, Chev.”

“Lay down!” the doctor said sternly.

Emily winced and sat down on the edge of the bed.

“You’ll have to teach me how to do that,” Chevalier mumbled to the doctor.

“Well I don’t know... I guess we’ll watch you tonight and, if nothing changes, you can go home.” He glanced again at her chart and left with a confused look on his face.

“Em, I have to ask you something,” Chevalier said, trying to get up the nerve.

She looked over at him, “You want to know if I’ll leave my I.V. in... which I will, I promise.”

“I’m serious,” he said, watching her eyes.

Emily frowned, “What’s wrong?”

“Yesterday, during the ceremony, the man died.”

“I’m so sorry. Does that happen a lot?” She took his hand in hers.

“Never, not in thousands of years of turning mortals into heku.”

“What happened?” She wasn’t quite sure she liked where this was going.

“How mad were you when we made you stay in your room?”

Emily let go of his hand and crossed her arms over her chest, “What are you implying?”

“I’m not saying you did it on purpose, Em.”

“You think I killed him?” She turned away from him, too mad to even look at him.

“It’s all I can come up with. I don’t think you did it on purpose, but you have to see the similarities. The nose bleeds, feeling dizzy, all of that happened after you killed the Valle in their city.” He tried to touch her shoulder, but she jerked away from him.

“Just go,” she snapped at him.

“Emily, please, I’m not blaming you. I just wanted to know what you remember,” he said softly.

She didn’t answer him, but laid down on the bed and pulled the covers up, then turned off the lights in the room with the remote.

Chevalier sighed, “I’ll be back in the morning to get you.”

Emily glared at the door long after he left. How could he blame her for killing that poor man? How could he even insinuate that she would do such a thing? She realized that he did have a point about the nosebleeds and the headaches. She didn’t remember anything after going to bed.

She sat up and looked at the wall while the night replayed in her mind. She'd gotten kind of dizzy, so she laid down when she felt extremely tired. That's all she remembered. She wasn't mad when she laid down, she was infuriated. She remembered thinking about sneaking out, it wasn't hard.

What if she had done it? She sat and wondered about how dangerous she was to the heku. What if she didn't have the control she thought she did? What if her being on that island constantly put everyone at risk? She thought she had control. She could do it when she wanted, but what if she couldn't stop it?

Her mind whirred with the realization that she wasn't in control. She had killed that man. There were just too many signs. There's only one thing she could think of to do. She went through the bag that Sam packed for her and found it buried deep, her wallet.

Emily winced as she yanked out her I.V. and dressed quickly. An ICU nurse saw her and came into the room.

"You are supposed to be lying down," she said sternly.

"I'm checking out," Emily told her, and tied her hair into a low pony.

"You can't just leave!" The nurse's eyes were wide.

"Watch me," Emily said, looking around the room for anything she might have left.

The nurse ran out of the room to get the doctor and Emily sat down to slip on her shoes, another item Sam thought to pack. She noticed that

Chevalier had left his coat, so she pulled it on and headed out to the nurse's station.

Dr. Bell ran at her as she stepped out of her room, "Emily, you can't go."

"Nothing's wrong with me," she said, watching him.

"We don't know that. We need to keep watching you," he said, frustrated.

Emily knew it was wrong, but she had to get away. She hoped this wouldn't get Chevalier into too much trouble. The entire reason she was leaving was to save him the pain of another unexpected death.

"Doctor, I have to get away, now, while he's gone," she said softly, not meeting his eyes.

The doctor gasped, "Did he? My God... did he do something to you?"

Emily cringed inside and nodded.

"We can call the police." The doctor nodded to the nurse.

"No, I'm going to just go away while he's not here."

The doctor nodded and handed her a form marked AMA and Emily signed it. She hated the look in his eyes. He was furious with Chevalier, and angry that a patient had to sneak out, one that may still need medical attention.

"Thank you, Dr. Bell," Emily said, and left the hospital with her bag. She caught a taxi easily and watched the city roll by as he made his way to the airport.

“Bangor International, Ma’am,” the driver said as he pulled up to the terminal.

She handed him the fare and a hefty tip, “Please, do me a favor?”

The driver was watching her suspiciously, “Depends, Ma’am.”

“My husband... he can’t know where you took me. Please, if he contacts you, don’t tell him anything.” She gave him a teary look and he stiffened.

“Are you in some kind of trouble?” he asked her.

“You could say that,” she said as she climbed out of the taxi and grabbed her bag.

Emily decided she would go to New Mexico. Her father had some family there. She’d last seen them at her Dad’s funeral. The Flynn’s were nice to her and always sent Christmas cards with cryptic messages. She knew they had a large ranch outside of Carlsbad, and hoped that they could use a field hand while she got back on her feet, once the baby was born, that is.

Emily tried to call her Uncle from the airport, but no one answered. She left a fast message about coming for a visit, and told them she’d call again from Albuquerque.

The ticket booth was busy, and the lady behind the desk seemed irritated, “The next flight we have to Albuquerque isn’t until 3:30am.”

“What about a connecting flight that may come out earlier?”

“That’s all we have, lady. How far along are you anyway? We won’t let anyone fly without a doctor’s note if they are further than 32 weeks

along.” Her nasally voice carried well, and the other passengers all glanced at Emily.

“I’m only 30 weeks... and I’ll take that flight,” she said nervously. She mentally calculated the funds Sam left her and what she had in her bank account. She had just enough after the flight to get a hotel room and some food if the need arose. After that, she would be broke. She was mad at herself for not finding out where the money from the sale of the Montana ranch was.

The flight attendant took Emily’s bag and gave her a ticket. The wait through security was brutal. The line was long and Emily kept glancing around her for any sign of a heku. She knew it wasn’t only Chevalier that would be looking for her, but she also knew the scent of her blood sent strange heku into a feeding frenzy. She felt relieved when she got out of the security line after two long hours.

Her flight was still six hours away when she sat down at the terminal. She had thought to pull her book out of her bag before checking it. She glanced around the terminal again and began to read, then put it down when she read the same page three times and still didn’t know what happened. There was no use trying to read, she kept scanning the crowd for any sign of a heku.

“What do you mean she checked out?” Chevalier asked the doctor, shocked.

The doctor glared at him, “Just what it sounds like. She checked out, and you’re lucky I didn’t call the police.”

Chevalier frowned, “Why would you do that?”

“You know... I still have half a mind to have you arrested.” The doctor put down a clipboard and watched Chevalier angrily.

“Where did she go?” Chevalier was confused.

“Like I would tell you,” Dr. Bell, snapped.

“What is going on?” Chevalier asked, getting angry. “Why would you call the police and I demand to know where she went.”

Dr. Bell stood up and leaned across the table toward Chevalier. Chevalier took a step back. No one talked to him like this, and no one confronted him in such a manner. His eyes flared, the doctor was overstepping.

“You listen to me. That girl was very anxious to get away from you, and I won’t be a part of the sadistic pleasures you must get out of hurting someone half your size. I hope she’s gone far away, and I hope you never find her,” he said irately.

Chevalier fought his instincts to rip the doctor’s head from his body and left the hospital. He sat in the rental car next to Kyle and slammed the car into gear, speeding away from the hospital.

“Where’s Em?” Kyle asked warily.

“She checked herself out,” Chevalier gritted his teeth.

“What? When?”

“They won’t tell me. They seem to think I did something to her.” Chevalier’s eyes were on the road, but Kyle could tell they were dark and furious.

“Why would she do that?” Kyle asked, mostly to himself.

“Probably because I told her that I suspect she accidentally killed our mortal,” Chevalier sighed.

“Ok, so where would she go? Let’s just go get her back.”

“I don’t know where she would go. As far as I know, she doesn’t have any family and Keith pretty much did away with friends. She couldn’t have had any money unless...”

“Sam,” both Chevalier and Kyle said together.

Chevalier kicked the car into high gear, and within minutes, they were at the hangar and climbing into the helicopter. Chevalier hissed at the pilot to get going, and the beaches of Maine soon gave way to the ocean.

“Uncle Alec?” Emily asked when a man answered.

“Emily? I got your message,” he said, and he sounded excited to talk to her.

“I’m glad. I hate to just drop in on you like this.”

“No, no, we’re glad to have you. Jess was so excited, she started getting the room ready the second she got home.”

“It won’t be for long, just until... well I’ll talk more when I get there,” Emily said, relieved.

“I’ll send Pat up to get you, just wait there ok?” Alec said.

“Yeah, ok, I’ll wait out front for him,” Emily said before hanging up. She scanned the crowds again for any sign of a heku, but so far, she’d been lucky. She no longer looked for Chevalier or any of the Equites. She was too far away from their usual territory.

Emily waited for almost two hours before she heard her name called. She stood up and turned to her cousin, Pat, and smiled. Pat froze on the sidewalk and looked over her, and then grinned.

“Good to see you!” he said, hugging her.

“You too, Pat, thanks for this,” she said, and watched him put her bag in the back of the truck.

He looked at her tummy again, and then crawled into the truck. Emily hoisted herself up into the extra tall cab and buckled in. She always enjoyed the time with her cousin. He was fun to be around, and he seemed glad to see her.

As he pulled out onto I-40, he kicked the truck into high gear and turned up the air conditioner.

“How are things?” he asked, watching the road.

“You don’t have to beat around the bush,” she said softly.

“Fine then... who are you running from?”

“My husband, actually.” She watched the sandy dunes pass by the truck.

“Keith?”

“No, my new husband.” She’d forgotten that they would all still think she was with Keith.

“Good, I never liked him,” Pat said, and then hesitated. “When’s the baby due?”

“In 3 months.”

Pat nodded, and they sat in silence for a while.

“Mom will be even happier to have you around when she knows a baby is coming,” Pat said, grinning.

“I hope to not be here that long. I just need to find a job and get me an apartment.” She watched her hands.

“It’s none of my business, I know that, but you’re family. Did he hurt you?” Pat asked, his hands tight on the steering wheel.

She looked at him, “No.”

“Then why are you running from him?” he questioned.

“It’s a long story.”

“If you want to talk...” He offered, but didn’t ask any more about that.

“Where is she?” Chevalier asked, pushing Sam into the wall.

“I have no idea. She didn’t tell me she was leaving,” Sam said, standing up straight.

“You helped her, though, didn’t you? What was in that bag? Money?” He took a step toward Sam, his hands clenched into tight fists.

“Clothes, shoes, and yes, money.”

“Where would she go? She must have family or friends she’s gone to,” Kyle asked, and grabbed Sam’s shoulder.

“If she wanted you to know, she would have told you,” Sam said, moments before he was knocked to the ground by a backhand from Kyle.

“Tell me.” Chevalier stood over him, crouched to attack.

“No,” Sam said, and ducked low to the ground.

Chevalier picked Sam up by his neck, “Tell me... now!”

Sam shook his head, unable to catch a breath.

“Let’s all calm down and try this again,” Kyle suggested, and Chevalier put Sam back on his feet.

“I’m not going to tell you where she could have gone, and to be honest, I don’t know as though she’d have gone there anyway. I don’t know what the big deal is, she’d be gone in three months anyway,” Sam said, straightening his clothing.

“Why don’t you tell us where she ‘could’ have gone then,” Kyle said, trying to be calm.

“What do you mean she’d be gone in three months anyway?” Chevalier hissed.

“No,” he told Kyle, and then turned to Chevalier. “You know... Winchester women... most of them die during childbirth.”

“What?” Chevalier and Kyle both said together.

“You didn’t study the Winchester family enough then. The women are small boned. Most of them die during childbirth,” Sam said casually.

Chevalier growled deeply.

“Define most,” Kyle said, and took a step toward Sam.

“Come now, you had to have known. Why do you think there were so few descendants from Elizabeth and Lord Ulrich, even after three hundred years? Most of the Winchester women only had one child.” Sam backed away as he saw the look on Chevalier’s face.

“Does Emily know this?” Kyle asked.

“Probably not.” Sam raised his eyebrows.

“Emily’s mother had two children,” Chevalier snapped.

“Yes, she did, and she didn’t die during the second birth either. I said most... not all. But look at Emily’s size, and then yours, that baby is going to be too big for her.” Sam seemed unconcerned and uncaring.

“Where is she?” Chevalier asked, again advancing on Sam.

“I won’t tell you without her permission,” Sam told him, stepping back. He found himself backed against the wall.

Chevalier grabbed Sam by the throat and threw him violently across the room. He smashed into the stone wall and crumpled to the floor.

“Thank you, this is perfect,” Emily said, looking around the tiny bunk house.

Her Aunt Jess had been excited to see Emily and was even more excited that Emily was pregnant. Neither her Aunt, nor her Uncle, asked about her reasons for being there. They welcomed her with open arms and an invitation to join their staff on the ranch. Emily accepted and agreed to start a month after the baby was born.

Aunt Jess offered to watch the baby during the days, and Emily was given one of the bunk houses as her own. They left her alone in the tiny bunkhouse so she could get settled. Emily looked around the room, and then buried her face in her hands to cry.

“She’s upset damnit. How can I tell what she’s feeling, but can’t tell where she is?” Chevalier growled.

“There has to be a way to find out where she went. Maybe we should check with Bangor International, see if she’s on a manifest,” Kyle suggested.

“Storm’s already on it. So far, the red tape is stopping her from finding anything out.” Chevalier was standing on Emily’s balcony, watching out over the ocean.

“Maybe she’ll come back, Chief.”

“Depends on why she left. If she left for her benefit, then she’ll re-think it and come back. If she left for my benefit, then she won’t be back,” he said quietly.

Kyle nodded. He knew it was true. Emily wouldn’t stay away from Chevalier for long unless she felt she was a danger or a threat to him. After what happened at the ceremony, Kyle felt pretty sure he knew which reason she had.

Chevalier sighed when his cell phone rang. He hesitated, and then clicked it open, “What?”

“Chev,” she said softly.

“Emily! Emily, where are you?” he asked, gasping. Kyle watched him carefully.

“I... I just wanted to let you know I’m ok,” she whispered.

“Please, come back.” His voice was pleading.

“No, I can’t.”

“Why not? You belong here.”

“It’s too dangerous. I can’t hurt anyone here.”

“Where are you?”

“I love you,” she said, and he heard the phone disconnect.

Chevalier pushed through the last call, and the ID came up as “Restricted.” He growled and slammed the phone down on the table.

“She’s not coming back?” Kyle assumed, but had to ask.

“No, she thinks she’ll hurt someone here,” Chevalier hissed, and blurred out of the room.

Emily woke up at the crack of dawn. Pregnant or not, she wasn’t going to be a burden to her Aunt and Uncle. She dressed quickly and headed out to do some of the early chores. Easiest, she figured, was to collect the eggs and feed the chickens. That task was done in only half an hour. She put the basket full of eggs on the kitchen table in the ranch house, and then put on some coffee.

The other ranch hands were beginning to come out as she went into the barn to feed the horses. Emily remembered when she was growing up, her Dad would bring her here and she always loved their barn. It was much larger than hers back in Montana, and housed twice as many horses, all lined up in shiny, clean stalls. She pried open the feed and scooped out a bucket full, then headed to the first of the horse stalls.

“What do we have here?” she heard a gruff voice say from behind her.

She turned and smiled at the man standing behind her, watching her suspiciously, “Hi, I’m Emily.” She put the feed down and went to shake his hand.

“Ahh that’s right, Pat mentioned you’d be helping out.” He was grinning broadly, and Emily felt uncomfortable at the way his eyes trailed down her body.

She turned and grabbed the bucket and went back to feeding the horses.

“You need any help, Tiny?” he asked. Emily cringed at the tiny comment, but kept working, trying to ignore the feel of his eyes on her back.

“No, I’m good,” she said.

“Yeah... you are, aren’t you?” he asked, laughing as he left the barn.

“Em? You in here?” Pat called from the doorway.

“Yeah... back here,” she yelled from the back stall in the barn.

“Mom said she doesn’t think you should be working... you know... until after the baby.” She could hear his footsteps coming closer.

“I’m fine, Pat. I can’t sit around doing nothing for three months,” she said, dumping a bucket full of oats into the feeder.

“Well, anyway, she wants you to come eat breakfast,” Pat told her, and then leaned up against the stall.

“Tell her I’ll be right there.”

“Heard you met Jeff,” Pat said, grinning.

Emily handed Pat the bucket and headed toward the door.

“Don’t mind him, he’s a jerk.” Pat dropped the bucket and ran to catch up with her.

“Yes, he’s quite friendly, isn’t he?” Pat smiled at her sarcasm.

“He does a good job, that’s why we keep him, not for his people skills.” Pat held the door open for Emily. She stepped into the house and the smell of fresh bacon and eggs filled the kitchen.

“Smells great, Jess,” Emily said, sitting at the table.

“I talked to Alec, and we decided we don’t want you working until after the baby comes,” Jess said, piling large amounts of food on Emily’s plate.

“I can’t sit around. I only got the eggs and fed the horses, easy enough,” Emily told her. She hadn’t eaten since the previous day on the airplane, and she was starving.

“I guess that should be ok. Nothing more though, ok?” Jess said, and poured Emily a cup of coffee before sitting down.

“Agreed,” Emily said, still eating.

“Do you need to talk, Dear?” Jess asked, watching Emily carefully.

Emily shook her head. She couldn’t talk about any of that now.

“We’re worried about you. We didn’t hear from you after Allen died, and then we heard you sold the ranch.” Jess wasn’t going to drop it like Pat had.

“I had to. I couldn’t handle the ranch on my own after Keith left.” Emily thought that sounded like a compelling enough reason.

“Where is the baby’s father?” Jess asked suddenly.

Emily swallowed a dry bite of egg, no longer hungry, “He’s back east.”

Jess touched Emily’s ring, “That’s a very beautiful ring, so unique.”

Emily glanced down at the ring and felt the sting of tears in her eyes. She turned back to her food to hide it from Jess.

“Does he know where you are?” Jess whispered, touching Emily’s hand lightly.

Emily shook her head, still pretending to be eating.

“Do you need help getting a divorce?” Jess was only trying to be helpful, but that was too much and Emily buried her face in her hands.

Jess wrapped her arms around her niece, “Please, Emi, let me help.”

Emily shook her head again, “There’s nothing anyone can do. You’re helping me more than I could ever ask for.”

Jess kissed her on the top of her head and let her go, “If you need anything, just ask. “

“I will, I promise,” Emily said, and got up to clean her plate.

“No, no, let me do that,” her aunt said, pulling the dish rag from Emily’s hand.

“Honestly, Jess, I have to do something. I’ll go crazy sitting around.” Emily took the dish from Jess and began to dry them.

“Too much thinking time?” Jess guessed.

“Yes”

“Why don’t you take a horse out, go explore the property,” Jess suggested, and Emily’s face lit up.

“Would that be ok?”

“Of course, Dear, take whichever horse you’d like,” Jess said, smiling. She felt better now that Emily seemed excited about something, “Actually, don’t take that Arabian, he’s not broken in very well and he’s moody.”

Emily’s heart ached at her aunt’s words, so she hurried out of the house and into the barn.

She entered the barn and checked out what options she had. The Arabian looked nothing like Chevalier’s horse, so she felt a little better, less to remind her of him.

Emily chose a quiet thoroughbred mare and slipped a bridle on her before taking her out of the stall. She eyed the saddles, and decided bareback would probably be best. She wasn’t sure she could get the saddle onto the tall horse.

“You need help, Tiny?” She heard the gruff voice from behind her and sighed.

“No, I’m pretty sure I can handle this,” she said, irritated, and turned toward Jeff.

Jeff was scanning her body again, and she gritted her teeth.

“Fine, fine, you sure you can bareback such a strong horse? That’s a lot of power between those little legs.” He was grinning.

Emily’s eyes narrowed, “Guess that’s something you wouldn’t know anything about then, eh?”

“Oh well aren’t you a little spitfire.” Jeff walked past her and patted her butt quickly before disappearing into the next room.

Emily growled and got onto a bale of hay to hoist herself onto the horse. She clicked her tongue and took off slowly across the closest pasture. The sheep looked up at her lazily. She’d always preferred cows, something about the sheep made her annoyed. Soon she was past the pasture and following a small stream. The ranch was beautiful. It was quiet and serene, just what she needed to clear her head.

Her Aunt and Uncle’s ranch was a lot bigger than she remembered. She’d ridden for almost an hour before she reached the property line. She glanced around her, and then decided to head back the way she’d come. It was amazing to her how good it felt to be out on a horse again. Chevalier had been so concerned about her on a horse while pregnant, that she hadn’t taken Patra out in a few months. Sam was watching the

animals now. She'd left him strict orders to watch over them if she wasn't able.

Her heart sank as she thought of Sam. She hadn't forgiven him for his betrayal, but he'd somehow known she may need to make a hasty departure, and packed her bag for it. Because of that, she was able to get away quickly and without any trouble.

"Howdy, Shortcake." She cringed when she heard Jeff's voice behind her.

"What do you want?" she asked, irritated.

Jeff pulled his mare up beside Emily, "You always this cranky or just when you're knocked up?"

Emily turned and glared at him, "Are you always an asshole or just... oh wait... never mind, must be all the time."

Jeff grinned at her, "You all talk or are you as tough as you act, Tiny?"

"It's Emily." She scowled at him.

"Yes I know." He was still grinning.

She looked back toward the path she was following, "Are you just here to irritate me or did you want something?"

"Oh I want something," he said, and she could feel his eyes on her again.

She glared at him, "Why don't you go away?"

“Whooo eeee. How I love me a red head,” Jeff said, and pulled his horse closer to Emily.

She tried to ignore him and just focused on the sound of the wind through the trees, but then he kept talking.

“If you ever get lonely in that bunkhouse, I’m in the one next to yours. I bet you could use a real man to roll with,” he said, pulling his horse away from her and galloping toward the ranch house.

Emily shuddered and wrinkled her nose. She suddenly missed Chevalier. He’d never treated her like an object, never treated her as if she were good for only one thing. She felt her eyes filling with tears again as she thought of him, the way he wrapped his arms around her, and kissed the top of her head. She missed the way he chuckled at her temper or got angry when she escaped. Things that irritated her a few days ago were now something she missed.

A sound off into the trees made Emily stop and turn. She watched the trees, sure she’d heard someone hiss. After a few minutes of scanning the woods, she kicked her horse and headed back to the ranch.

“What is she doing in New Mexico?” Chevalier asked when Storm told him about her flight.

“I don’t know. It took me a week just to find out where she’d flown to.” Storm looked down at the manifest.

Chevalier sighed, “Anything else?”

“Nothing, Sir. I’ve called every taxi company in Albuquerque, and no one matching her description got a ride from the airport.” She watched him for a second, and then left his office when he didn’t answer.

Chevalier stared down at his little silver phone. He warned everyone not to use it. He wanted it available for Emily if she ever decided to call again. He was watching it when it began to ring and vibrate across the table.

“Emily?” he answered.

Her voice was timid and soft, “Hi.”

“Please, tell me where you are,” he begged.

“I can’t, Chev, this is safer. I just.... I just wanted to hear your voice.” She sounded scared and alone.

“I miss you.”

It was silent for a few moments while she composed herself, “I miss you, too.”

“Come back, we can work on this. It was one accident.” His voice was panicked. He wasn’t used to being out of control, but she held the reins on this one. She had to initiate the phone call, she knew how to get in touch with him, and he knew nothing, which infuriated him.

“Only one innocent life taken by me, is that what you’re saying?” She tried to sound mad, but wasn’t able to pull it off.

“We can work on this, together,” Chevalier said, and then growled when he heard the click of the disconnected line.

Emily ducked into the chicken coup. She'd forgotten how much she hated chickens as she booted the hens off of their nests and gathered the eggs. She already had a routine, and her aunt and uncle stopped asking her personal questions and just let her get on with her life.

Jess hooked Emily up with an obstetrician in town, and she had an appointment that morning. She already came up with a lie for the doctor, so he wouldn't need to contact Dr. Edwards for her records. She had to be careful not to lead Chevalier anywhere near New Mexico.

"Emily! Come on, you're going to be late," Pat called from outside.

Emily grabbed the basket of eggs and ducked out of the small coup. She handed the basket to Jess, who was waiting by the truck for them.

"Ok, I'm ready," she said, and crawled into the truck with Pat. He offered to drive her in to the doctor because she didn't have a car yet.

The doctor's office was small and quaint and smelled like disinfectant. Emily filled out form after form, making sure her previous address was listed in Montana, and her previous doctor listed as deceased. It seemed macabre to her, but she couldn't risk it.

"Emily?" she heard the nurse call, and she smiled at Pat before following the nurse into the room.

The nurse was quiet and efficient and didn't ask many questions. She took Emily's blood pressure, frowned, took it again, and then weighed Emily as she blushed.

The doctor was pleasant. He was older and had a twinkling smile. He glanced over her chart carefully then sat down.

“It’s very good to meet you, Emily. I was surprised when Jess called and told me about you.” He smiled at her and she instantly liked him.

“Yeah, it was unexpected.” She didn’t know what else to say.

“Your blood pressure is running high, have you had that problem?” he asked, concerned.

“No,” she lied.

“We’ll keep an eye on it. I see your due date is still two months away?”

“Yes”

“That’s one big baby then.” He smiled warmly. She loved to watch his eyes, and the way they twinkled when he spoke.

“Big Dad,” she said, looking at the ground.

“Is the Dad around?” he asked as he poked around her belly.

“No,” she replied, and then turned her face away from him.

“I see. Any complaints? Complications? Anything out of the ordinary?” he asked, sitting down with her chart.

“Not really.”

“Ok, all looks well then. I’ll want you back in a week. I want to keep track of the size of that baby. If it gets much bigger, we’ll have to

deliver early.” He sounded like it was no big deal, but Emily’s insides turned.

“Early?” Her voice was shaky.

“Yes, if he gets too big, it’ll make the delivery difficult. It’s purely routine.” She believed him when he smiled.

Emily nodded, she suddenly wasn’t sure she could do this alone.

“Next week then?” the doctor asked, shaking her hand.

“Sure, next week.” She slipped off the table and met Pat in the front office.

They drove in silence for a while before Pat spoke, “How’d it go?”

“Fine, baby’s too big, though, so I have to come back next week,” Emily said, looking out the window.

“Maybe the baby’s not big, maybe you’re just small.” He laughed.

Emily didn’t respond. Her mind was miles away on a small island in the Atlantic.

“Get the Encala on it if you have to. That’s their area... tell them to sniff her out,” Chevalier said angrily.

“Chevalier!” Kyle yelled. “We can’t do that and you know it.”

“I just don’t see how a small mortal woman can elude the Equites like this. How many are in New Mexico now?”

“We have just over fifty of them out looking for her. There are a lot of open spaces, it’s not easy.” Kyle reminded him.

“Maybe it’s time to get some information out of Sam,” Chevalier said, looking at Kyle.

“I’ve tried, he won’t talk,” Kyle told him, and threw his arms in the air.

“Then maybe it’s my turn,” Chevalier said with a malicious look.

Emily laid down in the dark bunkhouse and listened to the strange sounds around her. She missed the sound of the ocean and the smell of the salty air. She turned to her side and curled up with the pillow. For hours, she tossed and turned, and began to think she forgot how to sleep. When she did finally fall asleep, she was plagued by dreams. Dreams where she died in childbirth and the baby was left with Jeff.

She started the morning off the same as every morning for the past four weeks. She got up, showered, ate a bowl of cereal, and then went out to collect eggs, feed the horses, and milk the two dairy cows that were on the ranch.

She enjoyed milking the cows, much more than anything to do with the sheep. Emily thought the sheep smelled badly and were profoundly stupid. She missed her cows, but tried not to think about it too much. It was awkward milking, though. She sat on the low stool, and then had to reach around her large stomach to even get to the cow. There was a small barn cat that came to meet her each morning.

“Open up,” she said, and squirted milk directly into the cat’s mouth.

She laughed when the cat caught a mouthful, and then pawed at the few drops that had landed on his whiskers.

“Oh, so you can laugh,” Jeff said from behind her.

Emily ignored him and kept milking the cow.

“Been thinking about you, Teeny,” Jeff told her, now directly behind her. He reached down under her arms and pulled her off the chair.

“Get your hands off of me, Jeff,” Emily said, turning on him.

His grin widened and he stepped toward her. She stepped back, watching him, but was soon stopped by the barn wall at her back.

“I know you have a thing for me, Shortcake,” he said, and put his hands on the wall by her shoulders.

“In your dreams.” She tried to get out from his arms, but he stopped her with his body.

Jeff grinned at her, “You must be pretty lonely without your husband around.”

Emily brought her knee up hard, but he dodged her and laughed.

“You can fight me, but I know you’ll love it,” he said, and ran the back of his hand down the side of her breast.

“If you want to keep that hand, I suggest you get it off of my wife.” The voice came from behind Jeff and he spun.

Chevalier and Kyle walked into the barn and Emily gasped, wide eyed.

“She apparently don’t want you no more,” Jeff said, clenching his fists. “That makes her free game.”

“Don’t make me hurt you, Boy,” Chevalier said, taking a step toward Jeff. Jeff was a lot shorter than Chevalier, but solidly built. He didn’t back down as the heku approached him.

Jeff took a swing at Chevalier, but he dodged it and brought his knee up into Jeff’s stomach. Jeff dropped to his knees, gasping for breath.

“I warned you,” Chevalier said, watching Jeff on the ground.

Emily watched it all and she wasn’t sure what to do. Part of her wanted to nab a horse and run, but part of her wanted to feel his arms wrapped around her.

Jeff finally managed to get to his feet, and he took another swing at Chevalier. Chevalier caught Jeff’s fist in his hand and clenched it. Jeff screamed when the bones in his hand began to break.

“Chev, stop!” Emily screamed at him.

He dropped Jeff’s hand and looked at her. As soon as Jeff was free, he ran from the barn.

Kyle walked toward Emily, while Chevalier stayed at the door and looked at her.

Emily blushed and brushed the hay off of her clothes. She’d started wearing old blue coveralls that were several sizes too big for her, but ones she didn’t mind getting dirty. Her boots were caked with manure and she was sure she smelled like the sheep.

Kyle hugged her tightly, and she buried her face into his chest and wrapped her arms around him.

“Come back with us,” he asked.

“I can’t,” she whispered, not letting go of him.

Jeff appeared in the other doorway with four of the ranch hands, “It’s time you fella’s left,” he said, holding ice in his broken hand.

Kyle glanced up at Chevalier, and then headed for the five men. He grabbed Jeff hard by the arm and threw him out of the barn, following him out.

Chevalier and Emily were now alone. Neither of them knew what to do or what to say. Both wanted to run to the other, but neither of them moved.

“You look good, Em,” Chevalier said finally.

She looked down at herself and cringed, “You too,” she whispered and finally looked up at him. The sight of him made her heart ache.

“What can I do to get you to come back with us?” he asked, and took a step towards her.

“I told you, I’m too dangerous to go back,” she said softly.

“That’s not true. I got some information from Sam, and we can work around this,” Chevalier said as he approached her. He reached out and took her hand in his.

“I killed an innocent man, Chev.” She looked at his hand, afraid to meet his eyes.

“It wasn’t your fault. I should have realized that you might affect the process.” He took her other hand in his.

“What else do we not realize about me that might hurt someone else?”

“Come home,” he said. Chevalier lifted her chin with his hand so she had to look at him. Her piercing green eyes sent a panic through him, what if he never saw them again?

“I can’t risk it,” she told him, and looked deeply into his eyes.

“There is no risk.” He brushed his lips softly against hers.

Kyle stepped in, grinning, and Chevalier glared up at him.

“Sorry, Chief,” he said, stopping where he was. He quickly backed back out of the barn.

“Emily...” Chevalier was cut off by a younger, higher pitched voice behind him.

“He bothering you?” Pat asked nervously. Pat was only sixteen, and he was scrawny and much shorter than Chevalier.

Chevalier turned on him angrily, but his posture changed when he saw that the boy was only worried about Emily’s safety.

“It’s ok, Pat... this is my husband,” Emily assured him.

Pat looked around nervously. He obviously wanted to leave, but part of him was afraid to leave Emily alone with this large man.

“Umm... ok well... I’ll just wait here,” he said finally, and he looked at Emily to avoid Chevalier’s gaze.

“No, Pat, really, go back inside. I’ll be in in a minute.” She smiled at him, and he finally left.

Chevalier knew he couldn’t force her to leave. He could physically, but he’d risk hurting her in the process. He moved back toward the door slowly, watching her and wondering if he would be able to live without her.

Emily hesitated, and then ran into his arms. She felt his strong arms wrap tightly around her, and she buried her face in his chest and cried. She realized she’d been crying a lot lately, but these tears she couldn’t stop.

“I can’t go back,” she whispered before pressing her lips to his briefly.

“You don’t belong here, you belong with me,” he said, and stared into her eyes.

She shook her head, “It’s too dangerous.”

“No it’s not, I swear to you. Kyle and I have figured out how to do what we need to without the risk of death.” He was already leading her out the barn door.

“Emi?” her Uncle Alec asked, approaching the barn.

Chevalier had to take a second look. Alec looked exactly like Emily's father, "I'm taking her home."

Alec smiled broadly, "I wondered how long before she went back."

"I told you I was staying," she said, shocked.

"I've never seen a more miserable creature than you have been these last few weeks. Go home." He was smiling.

Jess joined them, "Oh good, he came for you."

"I... I thought I was helping you," Emily said, a little hurt.

"You were, Dear, you were. You were also unhappy, we could see that," Jess said, and kissed Emily on the cheek. "Keep in touch please."

Emily nodded and turned to look at the Humvee sitting by the barn with the black paint and dark windows, it was obviously Chevalier's.

Kyle walked out from behind the barn, grinning, and Emily frowned at him, "What did you do to Jeff?"

Kyle looked over her head to Alec, "When we leave, you might want to untie your field hands. They're hanging, chained together, from the top of the grain silo."

Alec shook his head and laughed, "I told him to leave Emily alone."

The three of them climbed into the Humvee and headed back to Maine.

"How did you find me?" Emily asked as they hit I-40.

“Well, Storm found your flight to Albuquerque, and Sam,” Chevalier sighed. “Sam took some doing, but finally told us about Allen’s brother.”

Emily nodded, “Here’s the deal though. One more accidental death and I’m gone, no looking for me.”

Chevalier looked at her, “Fine, as long as you let me buy you a place instead of field-handing at your uncle’s ranch.”

“That would negate the no looking for me part if you already knew where I was,” she pointed out.

“Oh true... ok, so I’ll give you an account when we get back, with enough money for your own ranch,” he said.

She nodded and watched the farmlands fly past.

“When we get back, you need to see Dr. Edwards immediately. He’s been bugging us daily,” Kyle remembered.

“I’ve seen a doctor and everything is fine... well mostly.”

Chevalier frowned, “Mostly?”

“Just a big baby, he said. The doctor was worried about his size and said I may have to deliver early.” She held Chevalier’s hand. She didn’t tell him how terrified she was that heku would die while she was in labor. She had less control of her abilities when there was pain involved.

Kyle glanced at Chevalier in the rear-view mirror.

Chapter 11 - Soon

Kyle pulled the Humvee into the Hilton just as the sun began to set. Emily got out of the back of the Humvee and stretched. Chevalier grabbed her bag, and they checked into a room with Kyle in an adjacent room.

The room was warm and spacious and Emily immediately began filling the jetted tub. The long ride made her back ache. She shut the door and climbed into the hot, steamy water, then leaned back and shut her eyes. She opened them again when she realized her belly was sticking out of the water and getting cold. She wet a wash rag and draped it over her, then shut her eyes again.

“Getting big there, Em,” Chevalier said, chuckling.

She didn’t look up, “Mmhmm.”

“Do you have any idea how crazy I’ve been? Not knowing where you were,” he said, picking her foot up out of the hot water and massaging it.

Emily shrugged and still didn’t look up.

He sighed, “Do it again and I’ll lock you in the prison.”

She could tell by his voice he was joking, “Oh good, then I can spend more time with David.”

Chevalier grinned, “I could always go back and get the smooth talker from Alec’s ranch.”

“Oh Jeff, yes, he’s definitely my type.”

Chevalier reached down and pressed his lips against Emily’s. She wrapped her arms around him and laughed as he picked her up out of the water and laid her down on the bed.

“Well, I agree with the doctor in New Mexico. If this baby doesn’t stop growing, we’re going to have to take it early,” Dr. Edwards said after looking Emily over.

“How early? When’s the earliest we can take it?” Chevalier asked, a little too anxiously.

“It’d be nice if we could at least make it to 37 weeks, but I won’t risk Emily’s health so when I feel it’s time, we’ll take it,” Dr. Edwards told them.

“Not too early.” She looked from Chevalier to Dr. Edwards.

“How are the headaches?” he asked, looking into her eyes with a scope.

“Fine”

“Bloody noses?”

“No”

“Your blood pressure is still higher than I like so... bed rest,” he said, writing something in her chart.

“What?” Emily’s eyes were wide. “Are you kidding?”

“Nope, full bed rest.”

“But... no,” she said after a few seconds.

“That’s my orders, full bed rest.” He looked at her, “I’m not kidding either. If you won’t follow my orders, then I’ll admit you.”

Emily gasped and Chevalier stifled a laugh.

They were back in the helicopter before Emily said anything to him.

“I suppose you’re enjoying this,” she scowled at him.

“Nope,” he said seriously.

“I figured you’d think it was funny.”

“No I don’t... Who does he think has to put up with your grouchy self for the next few weeks while you’re bored in bed?” Chevalier grinned.

Emily slapped him on the chest and looked out the window of the helicopter.

When they arrived, she dutifully sat down in her bed, then looked at the boring room and wondered how she was going to keep entertained for the next few weeks. The book on her bedside table no longer looked appealing. She didn’t want to watch TV, even though Kyle bought a big

screen TV for her room. She wasn't hungry, didn't want to sleep, and didn't want to stare at the ceiling again.

The day finally drew to a close, and she watched the colors out the window turn from bright yellows and oranges, to dark blues and grays.

"Hungry, Em?" Chevalier asked, bringing her tray into the room.

"Not really."

"Oh? I thought you'd be starving." He lifted the top and wrinkled his nose at the Brussels sprouts, "Those smell awful."

"I don't feel like eating." She laughed. Chevalier always questioned her taste in food, but then again, she wasn't that happy with his choice either.

"Are you sick?"

"Sort of, just kinda... blah." She flipped on the TV. Chevalier curled up with her as she watched the news.

"There's a hurricane coming!" She sat up and looked at him.

"Yes, I know."

"Here?"

"Yes"

"Shouldn't we leave?"

Chevalier grinned, "No, we have it under control."

"How?" Her eyes narrowed.

“We’ve been here for hundreds of years. In the morning, we’ll board up the windows. It’s nothing to worry about.”

Emily ignored his blasé attitude and turned back to the TV. According to the weatherman, the hurricane was going to hit Maine the following evening and was currently a category 4. She shivered just thinking about it. Blizzards, fine. Tornadoes, not too bad. Hurricanes, very bad.

“Gah, Emily,” Chevalier growled as she got out of bed and walked over to the balcony. She stepped out and looked up at the sky. It was perfectly clear and the stars were shining brightly.

“Come back,” Chevalier said, gently taking her hand.

Emily nodded and went back to the bed, grabbing a Brussels sprout as she passed the table. The rest of the news was the usual, wars in Iraq, deaths in Russia, and gang wars in Bangor.

Late into the night she channel surfed, occasionally stopping on a cooking show or a show about maximum-security prisons.

“Why don’t you go to sleep?” Chevalier asked as she started to watch an old episode of *The Man from Atlantis*.

“Not tired.”

“How can you not be tired? It’s 2am.”

“I’ve been sleeping on an off all day in this stupid bed, how could I not be awake?” She decided against that show and began to go through more channels.

“Do you want me to get you a movie?” he asked, cringing as she landed on a show featuring a woman and the sixteen possible fathers for her baby.

“No, but if you want to be useful, why don’t you go get me some ice cream and more Brussels sprouts.” She turned the volume up a little on the TV.

Chevalier kissed her on the forehead and left the room. As soon as he was gone, Emily got back out of bed and went out onto the balcony. In the last few hours, some clouds had appeared. She watched them for a few minutes. They were coming in fast and dark. The moon was now gone, and the wind was picking up. Movement caught Emily’s eye and she glanced over toward the barn, and saw Patra and her colt out in the corral.

“I’m going to kill him,” she mumbled, and grabbed a robe before running out of the bedroom.

She knew she had limited time, so she ran as fast as she could, though she admitted it was more like a swift waddle.

Emily stepped out onto the cold grass in her bare feet and went into the barn.

“Sam?” she yelled, grabbing a bridle.

“Yes, Ma’am?” He appeared in the loft.

“Why is Patra outside? There’s a storm coming,” she said, irritated.

“They were restless. I let them out to get some energy out.” He started down the ladder.

“There’s a hurricane coming.” She walked out into the corral as Sam followed.

“Yes, I know.”

She glared at him, “Why am I the only one that didn’t know this?”

“I don’t know.” He watched her put the reins on Patra.

A sudden sharp pain shot up Emily’s abdomen, and she doubled over against the mare. Sam was on her in an instant, supporting her.

“Emily?” he asked, concerned.

The pain eased up and she stood back up, catching her breath.

“What happened?” Sam asked, tugging on her arm. He was trying to get her back into the house.

“Nothing.” She adjusted the reins on Patra and took a rope over to the colt. She rubbed her belly, trying to get the last of the pain to go away.

“You better get inside. The doctor will want to know about that,” Sam said, taking the rope from her.

She turned to him, “No one will know, Sam, that’s an order.”

She took the rope from him, and was pleased when his shoulders fell. Now he wasn’t able to tell anyone. She was kind of impressed at how he had to obey her.

“Don’t say that, please,” he said in a panic.

“No one includes Chev,” she said, taking the rope from the colt and the reins on Patra, and walking them back into the barn.

“I know, Ma’am,” Sam said sadly.

At the barn door, Emily froze and winced. An irate Chevalier was standing in the barn, glaring at her. Sam came up behind her and sighed. Chevalier’s eyes narrowed. He thought Sam looked guilty, and wrongly assumed it was because of the horses.

“Good evening,” Sam said to Chevalier as he took the ropes from Emily and led the horses back into their stalls.

“Want to explain this?” Chevalier asked, through clenched teeth.

Emily took a step toward him, “I saw Patra and the colt out, and the storm is coming.”

“What do you think Sam is for?” His face was dark and furious.

Emily looked at the ground, “It was Patra, Chev.”

Chevalier was at her in one step and swept her up into his arms a little roughly. Without a word, he headed back into the house.

“I can walk,” she said, a little softly. She wasn’t sure how much trouble she was in.

He didn’t answer, but headed up the stairs and put her down on the bed and left the room. Emily watched him leave, and then curled up on her side to watch more TV. Eventually, she drifted off to sleep.

Another sharp pain woke her up and she sat up, clutching her stomach. She moaned softly, squeezing her eyes shut tightly as she fought to breathe. It eased up again, and she looked around the room, glad she was alone. She swung her legs over the side of the bed and stretched as soon as the pain stopped entirely.

The melted ice cream and cold Brussels sprouts were still sitting on her table.

“Kyle?” she asked softly, and he blurred to her side.

She looked up at him. She wanted to ask how mad Chevalier was, but the fury in his eyes kept her from asking.

“Never mind,” she said, looking at the floor.

Kyle grabbed the old tray and disappeared from the room, never saying a word. She watched as figures appeared on her balcony and began to board up the large plate glass doors. Soon, her room was shrouded in darkness. She debated for a few minutes. She should ask Kyle to turn on her lights, but she cringed at the thought of seeing his furious face again. She stood up and lightly walked to the wall and flipped on the light.

“Damnit, Emily,” Kyle yelled when he appeared in her room. She’d hoped his keen hearing wouldn’t catch her bare feet against the wood, but she was wrong. She could feel her temper rising.

“I turned on a light, Kyle. I didn’t even sprain my finger, look.” She childishly flipped him off and returned to bed. As she sat down, she saw Kyle walking away and he was laughing.

Emily looked around the room, irritated. There was nothing to do, and she was feeling fidgety after sitting in bed for so long. She debated taking a bath, but figured she would probably get either Kyle or Chevalier mad. Her face flushed as she thought about them treating her like a child. She often wondered if they did consider her a child, they called her one often enough. Here she sat, almost 25, and very much pregnant, yet they still acted as though she needed a babysitter.

She suddenly felt an odd tightening in her abdomen and touched her belly lightly. It was hard, like the muscles were tensing. It wasn't painful, it was just weird, and she watched in wonder as the muscles relaxed and she felt the baby kick her. She grinned, and hoped the baby had her temper, just so Chevalier would think twice about having another.

She drew her feet back into bed when someone knocked on her door. Before she even had time to speak, Kyle entered, carrying a tray. She glared at him as he set it down beside her bed and left. It infuriated her that he was grinning.

Emily was out of bed as soon as he left and she headed into the bathroom awkwardly. She realized it was harder to walk this morning and that just made her even madder. She heard the door open as she got into the bathroom, but it shut quickly again.

She sat down on the edge of the tub when the world began to spin. Emily realized she wasn't feeling that well and her heart was racing in her chest. She steadied her breathing and waited for the world to stop moving. When it did, she felt the odd tightening in her stomach and this

time it hurt some. A panic set in as she recognized that she was starting labor.

At first she wanted to yell out to Kyle, but she couldn't. Again she was gripped with the fear that while in pain, she may accidentally kill a heku. She looked around the bathroom, terrified.

She knew what she needed to do. Her first plans were to leave the island in secret, but with the windows boarded up, that took away that option. She could still get out of her room with no problems, no one found out yet how she did it. The problem was that everyone in the castle was watching her, waiting for her to make a mistake so they could alert Chevalier. She would never make it out of the building.

The second option wasn't as safe for the heku. The second option would only move her further away from them, but wouldn't fully protect them.

Kyle heard her footsteps again, and he figured she was getting back in bed. He knew she hated being watched, but his orders were clear, and he would much rather face Emily's wrath than that of his Chief Enforcer. He waited long enough for her to get back in bed, and then peeked in on her to make sure.

Kyle frowned and stepped into the room when he saw that she wasn't in bed, "Emily?"

When she didn't answer, he went to the bathroom, "Emily?" he asked again, but there was no answer. He growled and blurred down the stairs and into the barn.

Sam looked up when Kyle entered.

“Is she in here?” Kyle asked angrily.

“No, Sir,” Sam said as he returned to feeding the horses.

Kyle appeared back in the house. He was faster when he was mad. He checked the TV room, the pool, library, even the prison, but her scent wasn't anywhere. Sighing, he knew he had to enlist help.

“Come,” he heard Chevalier say.

Kyle opened the office door and stepped inside, shutting it behind him, “She's gone.”

“What?” Chevalier asked, surprised.

“Yup, not in her room. I checked the barn and all over the castle, I can't find her.” He winced as the fury rose to Chevalier's eyes.

Chevalier shut his eyes to focus on Emily. He felt fear, intense fear. His eyes shot open and he inhaled sharply, “Find her, she's afraid.”

“Afraid? Of what?” Kyle gasped.

“I don't know, put out an all call, find her,” Chevalier said, getting to his feet.

“It could be the hurricane. The wind has started up,” Kyle said, heading off to give the orders.

Chevalier nodded, he hadn't thought of that. He could see how she would find the hurricane frightening, and he couldn't help but smile. He

went back to his paperwork and let the others find her. He knew hiding was partly a game to her, so he decided that if she was afraid of the storm, he'd let her hide for now.

Emily sat on the stone cold floor, shivering. She looked out into the darkness, trying to see if her eyes would adjust so she could see something, anything, but as of yet, they hadn't. She wasn't sure if she was far enough away to keep the heku in the castle safe. This was as far as she could get without attracting attention. She knew they wouldn't find her here easily. She wasn't supposed to know how to get down here.

The tightening in her stomach was getting more painful, but she was easily able to breathe through it and relax when it went away. Emily was glad she couldn't hear the wind. As she descended, she caught the sound that the hurricane was near. She adjusted her weight as her back started to ache.

“Still?” Chevalier asked, shocked. “How can she hide from us? We're bred to seek out prey.”

“I know, but so far nothing.” Kyle was flustered.

“Fine, we'll just let her hide. Maybe if we stop playing her hide-and-seek game, she'll stop initiating it,” Chevalier said, irritated.

Kyle smiled, “Ok, I'll call off the troops.”

Emily's back began to ache, and the pain was worse than the tightening in her abdomen. She felt around until she found the bed and crawled up to sit on it. She hoped sitting on the soft bed would help. She leaned back against the headboard and groaned as another pain came.

The pains were coming faster now and the ache in her back was relentless. She was having problems concentrating, and the panic was stronger. Emily suddenly no longer wanted to be alone. She had a vision of dying down here in the dark by herself. She wasn't sure how long she'd been down there, it seemed like hours had passed. After a strong contraction ended, she got to her feet, but her legs buckled out from under her and she hit the ground hard.

Emily fought to breathe through the pain, and felt wetness spread across the floor, soaking her nightgown. She stared into the darkness, trapped by her own body. The pains were coming faster now, and she counted off the seconds in the darkness. The contractions were only three minutes apart. The room grew colder now that her nightgown was wet, and she finally managed to crawl into the bed and pull the covers up around her.

"Chevalier," she called into the darkness, just as another pain wracked her body and she groaned, tightly gripping the covers.

Chevalier's body tensed as a small voice whispered his name. Hours had passed since he called off the search for Emily, but now he felt a different emotion from her. She was more terrified than before, but he also picked up pain. He cursed himself as he left his office, he shouldn't have called off the search.

“Kyle!” he bellowed from the hallway.

“Yes, Chevalier?” Kyle asked casually from behind him.

“She’s injured, find her.” Chevalier saw Kyle’s body stiffen as he blurred away. He heard Kyle barking orders into the shadows and the entire castle came alive. The wind outside beat against the side of the castle viciously, the hurricane had arrived.

Chevalier fought against the wind as he made his way to the barn. Sam had the animals tucked in safely, but hadn’t seen Emily. Chevalier ordered him to join the hunt and Sam disappeared into the house.

Emily heard footsteps outside of the room.

“Who is it?” she asked, panting.

“It’s Sam.” She felt him sit on the bed next to her.

“Help me,” she said as another contraction ripped through her. She groaned and strained against the pain.

“Just breathe,” he told her, and took her hand.

“Don’t tell them, Sam. It’s not safe for them,” she said, controlling her breathing.

“Ok, Child.” He had to agree, he didn’t have a choice. He tried to find a way to let them know without breaking her order. He’d lost enough of his charges to childbirth and only now did he begin to panic about also losing this one.

Emily screamed as the pain hit and she squeezed Sam's hand, breaking two of his fingers.

Chevalier looked at the heku gathered around him. They called everyone to the foyer to begin searching again. The wind blew the roof violently, and a loose board banged from above.

Kyle looked around, "I thought Sam was with us."

"He is." Chevalier looked around, but didn't see the short, squat man.

Kyle hissed, "He found her didn't he?"

Chevalier could feel that Emily was no longer alone, and he growled deeply. She was still in pain and still afraid.

"Yes, he better hope I don't find him." Chevalier ordered the gathered heku to check again, to check every inch including hidden rooms.

Kyle froze and touched Chevalier's arm, "The cave, beneath her room."

Chevalier blurred up the stairs the moment Kyle spoke. He could feel Kyle close on his heels as they appeared in her room. They activated the security door and heard a scream the second the door opened. Halfway down the stairs, Sam met them, blocking the way.

"She doesn't want you down here," he said, hoping they wouldn't obey.

"Why?" Chevalier asked angrily.

“She is afraid she will lose control and kill you,” Sam said, and he grimaced at the angry way Kyle looked at him.

“She’s hurt, let me by.” Chevalier didn’t want to hurt Sam just yet, but knew he would make the familiar pay for this later.

“She’s not injured,” Sam said quietly.

Chevalier began to ask questions, then it hit him and he pushed past Sam and appeared in the dark cave room. He could hear Emily on the bed, her breathing was hard.

“Emily,” he said, sitting on the bed beside her.

“Go, please, go away,” she whispered, almost too softly to hear.

“I’m not leaving you.” He kissed her forehead softly, “Let’s move you back up to your room.”

“No, don’t touch me.” She pushed his hands away.

“Leave her alone,” Sam said, standing beside them.

Kyle turned and pushed Sam against the wall, “Get lost, Sam.”

Emily let out a small scream that turned to a groan as another contraction hit. Chevalier watched helplessly as her body tensed in pain.

“Get the helicopter,” he ordered Kyle.

“We can’t fly... the hurricane,” he reminded Chevalier.

“Then get the doctor on the phone, do something.” He was watching Emily as she slowly relaxed.

Kyle ran up the stairs to make the call, but returned less than a minute later, “No phones, it must have knocked out a tower.”

Emily began to groan again and clutched the blankets tightly.

“Won’t be long now, the contractions are close together,” Sam said, still sitting by the wall.

Chevalier glared at him, “Do you know how to deliver?”

Sam nodded, “Yes, never done it alone, but I’ve been around for many of the Winchester deliveries.”

“Fine,” Chevalier growled. “Get up here and do it.”

“Nothing to do yet but wait until she needs to push,” he said, not moving from the floor.

They waited for hours in the darkness, talking softly while Emily rested between contractions and watching helplessly during them. The bed sheets were soaked with sweat and the sound of the strong winds could be heard above them.

Kyle stood by the wall, watching Emily as Chevalier sat beside her. She yelled at him any time he tried to touch her, which seemed to please Sam. Sam sat on the floor, well away from Chevalier and watched them.

Emily groaned as another contraction hit her, but the sound was different and Chevalier studied her carefully to determine why.

It wasn’t until he noticed her holding her breath that he hissed at Sam, “She’s pushing.”

Sam stood up finally and touched her stomach lightly. He nodded to Chevalier, "It's time."

Emily was tired, she just wanted to sleep. Every muscle in her body hurt, and the contractions were unrelenting. They came faster and harder each time. She hated the way the three in the room watched her, but they ignored her pleas to leave. Something new happened, and instead of just the pain shooting from her back to her front, it was coupled with the urge to push, to bear down and end this.

She kicked at Sam when he situated himself between her feet, but he dodged her and put his hands on her knees. Emily tried to get up, but the pains sent her back onto the bed and she pushed, groaning loudly.

Chevalier watched Sam closely and growled.

"Do you want to do this?" Sam snapped when he heard the growl.

Chevalier turned back to Emily. He took her hand in his and cringed when her hand crushed the bones in his fingers.

When her body relaxed, Chevalier flexed his hand as it healed. He'd barely healed when Emily was up again. Her body shook with the pain and she pushed, screaming as Sam encouraged her.

"Push hard, Emi, come on, Child," Sam said in a harsh whisper.

She fell back against the bed, exhausted, and almost immediately fell asleep.

It seemed like an eternity that she had been pushing, but no progress was made. The storm raged above, but down in the small cave room, things

were quiet as the heku and Sam watched her. Sam was nervous. He was afraid he might lose Emily and have to face the wrath of the heku.

Emily's body shook as she began to push again. She was too tired to scream, too exhausted to do more than groan with the pain.

"Come on, Child. You have to push," Sam said to her.

"Can't," she whispered before falling asleep.

"Is this supposed to go on this long?" Chevalier whispered to the familiar.

"No, the baby is too big," Sam whispered back.

"If she dies, you're next," Chevalier hissed at him.

"Chevalier, it's not his fault," Kyle said, sitting on the bed across from him.

"No, it's mine," Chevalier snapped at Kyle.

"Lord Ulrich told you to stay away from her," Sam said mockingly.

"Shut up, Sam," Kyle told him.

Emily was up again. Chevalier reached his arm behind her and helped her curl into a ball as she pushed, "Come on, Em."

"I see a head," Sam said, excited. "Keep pushing Emily."

Emily fell back to the bed panting, "I'm too tired."

“I know,” Chevalier said, touching her arm lightly. “You can do this, we’re close.”

Emily was too tired to care, too tired to do anything, she just wanted to sleep. The pain that wracked her body had become constant and brutal. She wanted to lash out at those around her, but couldn’t summon the energy to do so. The brief periods of the need to push were all that separated the time of perpetual pain.

“Now, Emily,” Sam said as he readied his hands.

Emily summoned every ounce of energy left in her body to push. She felt Chevalier’s arm behind her, pushing her forward as her scream echoed off the walls in the castle.

“Get him,” Sam said, and handed the baby off to Kyle, who wrapped him in a blanket. The small baby boy began to cry almost immediately, and Kyle looked at him in awe.

Emily could feel herself dying. She felt the life draining out of her and the voices in the room began to fade away. There was a baby crying, but she couldn’t remember whose baby it was. Someone was calling her name. She knew she should answer, but it didn’t matter. She was going to be gone soon and she welcomed it. She welcomed the chance to get away from the pain.

“What’s wrong?” Chevalier asked Sam anxiously as Emily’s eyes rolled back in her head.

“I told you, the baby was too big for her. She’s bleeding out,” Sam said, sitting back.

“Do something!” he growled at Sam.

“What? I don’t know what to do,” Sam said, panicking. “I don’t know how to stop it.”

“Emily, stay with me,” Chevalier said, and watched her face turn pale as blood stained the sheets around her.

Emily tried to tell him it was ok, she was going where there was no more pain. She wanted to ask him to help the crying baby, it seemed essential that she tell him that, but no noise escaped her lips.

“I think the bleeding is stopping,” Sam said, surprised.

“Is it?” Chevalier asked, taking Emily’s hand.

The baby was still screaming angrily, and Kyle held him with inexperienced hands, unsure what to do.

“I think so. I’m not sure,” Sam said, still watching as the blood pooled around Emily.

“Come on, Emily,” Chevalier said again as he pressed her hand against his lips.

“Can’t you make him be quiet?” Sam snapped at Kyle.

“Oh yeah... sure... I’ll just ask him to stop crying.” Kyle glared at him.

Emily could feel herself rising out of the dark tunnel toward the voices. The pain was intense, and she wanted to go back where there was no pain. The crying wouldn’t stop. It seemed to her that someone should help it. Where was the baby’s mother? Why didn’t someone help him?

“Hush up you two,” Chevalier hissed at them.

“He’s just hungry,” Kyle said, looking down at the infant screaming in his arms.

“There’s milk upstairs,” Sam said, still watching Emily.

“Can we do that? Just give him milk?” Kyle asked, unsure.

“How should I know?” Sam snapped.

“Both of you shut up!” Chevalier growled.

“Here,” Emily managed to whisper, and all three of them looked at her.

“What, Em?” Chevalier asked her, bending down closer.

“Give me the baby,” she said, bringing her hands up toward Kyle.

“Are you sure?” Chevalier asked, but Kyle was already laying the baby in her arms.

“Turn around,” Emily said with a slight smile.

“Why?” Sam asked, confused.

“Turn!” Chevalier yelled at him.

Sam joined Kyle by the wall as both faced away from the bed. Suddenly, the baby stopped crying and both Sam and Kyle wondered what she’d done to it. The sound of grunting and groaning came from the bed as the baby settled down to nurse.

“Ahh,” Kyle said, grinning, still facing the wall.

“So... we turn when she nurses, even though we just saw...” Sam shut up when Kyle hit him upside the head.

Emily watched the baby, wondering how this tiny thing could have caused so much pain. As the baby nursed, she held his hand and watched as his delicate fingers wrapped around hers. Her hand looked large compared to his. She touched his black, wispy hair. It was so soft that she almost couldn't feel it against her skin.

Chevalier leaned over and kissed Emily's forehead. He couldn't explain what it felt like to watch his son and his wife together. It seemed too natural to be in an environment filled with the immortal. Emily still looked ill and her pale face was bright against the dark room. He didn't like how her lips were colorless or the bland color of the green in her eyes.

Emily shivered. The cave room was cold, and her nightgown was wet with sweat and blood.

This time without asking, Chevalier picked her up as she cradled the baby and took her up into the warmth of the upper room. The wind was still howling outside, but seemed to have calmed down a little. Sam and Kyle followed silently up the stairs.

Dr. Edwards stepped out of Emily's room and smiled at Chevalier. Kyle and Sam stood to the side of him, waiting.

“You did well,” he said, and smiled.

Chevalier sighed, “She'll be ok then? There was a lot of blood.”

The doctor nodded, “I would imagine. She’s pretty torn up, but not as badly as I would expect with the size of the baby. You make ’em big, don’t you?” He smiled at Chevalier.

“And the baby?” Kyle asked.

“Healthy as a horse. He’s a good eater, too,” the doctor said, and gathered his things into the black bag he carried.

“Keep her in bed for at least a week. She needs lots of red meat and good food to get her back up to par. Nights are the worst until the baby gets old enough to sleep through.” The doctor frowned, and then laughed, “Of course, you have an advantage.”

“What’s that?” Chevalier asked, anxious to get into Emily’s room.

“You are already up all night,” he said, and slapped Chevalier on the back. He drew his hand back quickly, unsure if he should have done that.

Chevalier turned to the doctor and smiled, then disappeared into Emily’s room. Emily was lying down in bed on her side and the baby was asleep, curled up next to her. She looked up when he sat on the bed.

“How are you?” he asked, lightly touching her cheek.

“Ever been hit by a train?” She halfway smiled, but he could tell she was in pain and exceedingly tired.

“Get some rest. I’ll be here when you wake up,” he said, and she shut her eyes and immediately fell asleep.

Emily began to wake up. She could feel every muscle in her body scream as she breathed. She felt the baby wiggle at her side, and she looked over at him. He was starting to cry, so she pulled him close to her to nurse.

“Can I get you anything?” Chevalier asked, watching them. It fascinated him how Emily’s body had immediately been ready to feed the baby. He marveled at what he’d just seen, something so foreign to his kind. He gave the mortals credit for their strength, the strength to create, carry, and then give life.

“I’m kind of hungry,” she said, and his eyes lit up.

“I can fix that!” he told her, and left the room quickly.

Emily watched the baby nurse as she felt his toes, rubbed his soft cheeks, and marveled at the way he held her finger tightly in his hand. She saw he had a diaper on, but couldn’t remember who put it on. It was on backwards, though, and she laughed a bit.

Chevalier appeared a few minutes later with a tray. She handed the baby off to him and sat up, wincing as her muscles complained with the movement. She set the tray on the bed and began to eat immediately. She was extremely hungry and the food tasted incredible.

Emily glanced up at Chevalier and couldn’t help but laugh. He was standing perfectly still with the baby held carefully at arm’s length.

“What?” Chevalier asked when she laughed.

“Hold him closer, up against you, and support his head,” she explained, and then took another bite.

Chevalier carefully pulled the baby against his chest and relaxed the tiniest bit.

“You aren’t going to break him,” she said, still eating.

“You sure?” Chevalier asked, raising an eyebrow.

Emily nodded and set the fork down, then swung her legs out of bed and stood up carefully, testing their strength.

“You’re supposed to stay in bed,” Chevalier said, looking from her to the baby. He wanted to stop her, but wasn’t sure what to do with the baby while he did so.

“I’m pretty sure I’m allowed to take a shower and get clean clothes,” she told him, and walked slowly and stiffly into the bathroom.

“Oh, right,” he said, glancing away from her. The sight of her blood covered nightgown made him feel guilty. He couldn’t help but think that this was his fault.

Chevalier opened the ante-chamber door and handed the sleeping baby off to Kyle, “Get some clean sheets in here,” he said to Sam.

“Is it clear?” Kyle asked, and then headed into the room when Chevalier nodded.

Servants began to file into the room bearing large bouquets of flowers and gifts for the baby. There were several large fruit baskets and boxes with pictures of baby toys and baby furniture on them. Chevalier frowned when a mortal man entered.

“Who are you?” he asked.

“I’m the donor,” the man said, looking around the room.

“A donor?” Chevalier asked, confused.

“Yes, for the new mother,” he said, smiling. “I’m a gift.”

“I see,” Chevalier said, ushering him out the door. “Tell your giver that Emily doesn’t need a donor.”

“Oh, ok,” he said as a servant came to take him down the stairs.

Chevalier heard the shower turn off and ordered everyone to leave the room. He wondered how so many heku sent gifts already. It had only been about 24 hours. He decided not to tell Emily about the donor gift though, and made a path from the bathroom to the bed through the flowers.

Emily stepped out in a clean nightgown and gasped, “Where did this all come from?”

“The city,” he said, smiling. “It’s our first baby... ever.”

Emily took a rose and smelled it on the way to the bed where she sat cross-legged.

“Feeling better?” he asked as he sat down beside her.

“Lots,” she said. “Where’s the baby?”

“Oh, Kyle has him. Do you have a name?” he asked, and kissed her softly.

“We have to figure out a name,” she said, brushing her hair.

“I don’t know how to name a baby,” Chevalier said, shocked.

“Yes and I have a ton of practice with it.” She laughed slightly, and then clutched her side when it hurt.

“Are you ok?” he asked, jumping up.

“I hurt everywhere,” she told him, and curled up in bed and pulled the covers over her.

“Just leave the baby with me and get some sleep,” he said, pulling another blanket over her.

“You going to feed him too?” She smiled and shut her eyes.

“Oh, right, well I’ll bring him to you for that.” Chevalier left as she fell asleep and took the baby from Kyle.

Chapter 12 - Allen

“Hand him up, Sam,” Emily said, and leaned over from up on Patra to take the one-year-old.

“He sure loves riding Patra with you,” Sam said, looking up at Emily and the toddler as she sat him in front of her.

She situated herself so she had a secure hold on the reins in one hand, and the one-year-old in the other, “I hope so. I’m going to break that horse soon and I’ll give him to Allen.”

“Chevalier doesn’t want you breaking him. He said he’s too mean and wants to hire a professional,” Sam said, and then grinned. He knew what saying that would do to her.

“He said what?” Emily raised an eyebrow.

Sam nodded, “Asked me to find someone to come break him.”

Emily glared, “Seriously? Sam, don’t do it, that’s an order. I’ll break him myself.” She clicked her tongue and Patra broke into a trot out into the pasture.

Allen looked around as they rode through the cattle, his wide green eyes catching every movement and wondering at the noises around him. He and Emily were out every day looking over the ever expanding herd of cattle. Emily pointed out things to him like the different breeds they had and the types of feed and grain to use.

She enjoyed her time out away from dreary castle life. Chevalier was working long hours again and was getting ready for another mission. Kyle had taken his position back as head of the guard and Emily was finally left to fend for herself, something which she cherished every day.

Emily pulled Patra to a stop and looked over at some cattle to the west of her. They were starting to get jumpy, and a few were running quickly toward the east. She frowned and turned Patra to investigate, kicking the

mare into a gallop. Allen laughed as the wind swept through his black hair.

Stopping the horse where the cattle had come from, she listened carefully and heard nothing out of the ordinary. There was a storm coming, so the ocean beat rhythmically against the cement wall by the beach and the wind was blowing noisily through the evergreen trees.

“Hear anything?” Emily asked, smiling down at Allen, and he shook his head with a grin.

Allen had his father’s grin and Emily’s temper. He loved being outdoors and hated nothing more than any kind of confinement or restriction.

“I don’t either,” she said, and carefully looked back across the tree line. She pulled the rifle out from the saddle pack and held it up, using the scope to get a closer look through the trees.

“No, no,” Allen said, reaching up for the rifle.

Emily slipped it back into the saddle pack, “I know Daddy says no gun, but Mommy says yes.”

“No, no,” he said, again frowning.

“Shhhh,” Emily whispered to him as she caught a strange hiss on the wind. Her eyes scanned the trees again, slower this time. She squinted when she saw a shadow move and immediately grabbed the rifle again.

Leveling it toward the shadow, she squinted through the scope and caught a brief glimpse of someone stooped over with his arms dragging

along the ground. She slipped the gun into her pack and kicked Patra into a fast gallop back to the barn.

“You’re back early,” Sam said, coming out to greet her.

“Take Allen,” she said, and then handed the now screaming toddler down to Sam.

Sam knew better than to ask what she was doing. He took Allen and promised him a ride later to calm him down. Allen and Emily were rarely apart, and when they were, Allen became stubborn and defiant.

Emily kicked Patra back into a gallop and returned to the spot in the pasture closest to the dark figure she’d seen in the trees. She pulled the rifle out again and chambered a bullet, then slid off of the mare. She lowered the brim of her hat a bit to shade her eyes better from the sun, and slipped a gloved finger around the trigger.

“Who’s in there?” she yelled into the trees.

When no one answered, she walked slowly forward toward the spot she had seen the stooped figure. She wrinkled her nose at the smell of decay and jumped when she heard a sound behind her.

She turned to face what she thought must be a heku, one that was old and wrinkled. He was stooped so low that his vertebrae stuck out against the skin on his back. He was smiling at her with rotten teeth and his claw like hands were curled into fists.

“Hello, Child,” he said, taking a step to the side. Emily could tell he meant to circle around her and block her way out of the woods.

“Stand still, I’m warning you,” she said, and lowered the rifle. She didn’t plan on using it against this being, she had better weapons.

“No guns, Child, no guns. I don’t want to hurt you.” His voice was cracked and uneven.

“I don’t need a gun to fight you. Who are you?” she asked.

“Mmm smells good, she does,” the heku said, running his cracked tongue along the shattered teeth in his mouth.

“I asked who you are.” Emily’s eyes narrowed.

“I have many names, pretty one.” His eyes scanned down her body, and then back up to her neck.

She knew that, historically, each heku had many names, “Ok, then what are you doing here?”

“I live here, young one,” he said, meeting her eyes for a moment before they dropped back to the vein in her neck.

“You aren’t going to feed from me, so I suggest you stop the savoring crap and explain yourself.” She held her voice calm, but her hands were shaking.

He bowed slowly, his head almost touching the mossy ground, “I am Elder Larsen, of the Equites.”

Emily sighed, “If you don’t want to tell me, then fine, but don’t lie to me.”

“I am, Child. I should try that again though, I was... Elder Larsen.” He was looking hard into her eyes.

“That doesn’t work on me, and if you try it again you’ll...” His words cut her off.

“Turn me into ash?” he asked, smiling.

She wasn’t entirely surprised. The word had gotten out quickly who she was and what she could do. It was the casual way he talked about her abilities that shocked her.

“Yes,” she said, watching him. “If you were an Elder of the Equites, what happened to you?”

“Do you not know, Child? The Council is powerful. The only way to replace one is to banish them to the ground. I was not ready when they came for me, and alas, didn’t put up much of a fight, but I have found my way above ground.” He took a step toward her.

“You don’t look much like a civilized heku.” She glared at him, and something in the back of her mind was telling her to run.

“I am no longer. I have starved and weakened over the last six hundred years. As I feed, I will become stronger and will soon return to my former glory.” His eyes were far away as he remembered how he once looked.

“I don’t believe you,” she said, not taking her eyes away from his ragged teeth.

“You, Child, are you a donor?” he asked, running a long, thin finger across his lips.

“I am not. I live here,” she told him, and took a few steps back toward the clearing.

“Pity,” he said, taking a step toward her.

“I don’t want to kill you, so I suggest you go back where you came from.” She was out in the clearing now, and Patra shied away from the smell of the heku.

“Please, Child, just one taste. Once you see me as I truly am, you will be amazed.” His smile sent shivers down her spine.

The heku quickly looked behind her, and then ran back into the dark forest. She turned to see who was approaching as the hoof beats grew nearer.

“Emily?” Kyle asked, looking at her strangely. She was standing at the tree line with the rifle in her hand and an odd expression on her face.

“Did you see him?” she asked, looking back into the trees.

“See who?” Kyle looked toward the trees.

“A very old, wrinkly heku that claims to be Elder Larsen.” She started back into the trees.

“Emily, wait!” Kyle said, dismounting his buckskin mare. “Was he in there?”

“Come here, I’ll show you.” She disappeared into the trees.

Kyle caught up with her quickly and he grabbed her shoulder to stop her when he smelled the decay.

“What’s wrong?” she asked, turning to him.

Kyle put his fingers to his lips, and took a step toward the trees, “I can smell you in there, heku. Come out or I’ll come and find you.”

Emily turned when she saw the withered heku step out from behind a tree. Kyle stepped quickly between them and crouched defensively.

“Who are you?” he hissed, and his hands balled into fists.

“Do not address me as a commoner, Boy.” The heku stared at him angrily, “I was once an Elder of the Equites and will be treated with the respect that is owed.”

“I don’t care who you used to be, get off of this island. You have no business here.” Kyle didn’t move a muscle.

“Please, Child, tell him I didn’t hurt you when I could have... tell him I am to be trusted.” His eyes locked on Emily’s.

“Tell him yourself and stop trying to control my mind. I told you, it doesn’t work.” She glared around Kyle at him.

The heku looked nervously at Kyle, “I wasn’t trying to control her mind. I wouldn’t do that.”

“I’m not going to tell you again, get off of this island,” Kyle hissed at him.

The heku looked sadly at Kyle and Emily, then nodded and returned to the trees.

“How do you find this stuff?” Kyle asked, turning to her.

“Is it true? Was he an Elder?” Emily asked, walking back to Patra.

Kyle nodded, “Yes, he was banished to the ground about 600 years ago.”

“For what?” She jumped up on Patra and took the reins.

“We don’t speak of it anymore.” He slid easily up on the buckskin mare and started back for the barn.

“Why are you out here anyway?” she asked, looking at him.

“I saw the cows bothered and came to see what was up.” He was looking toward the barn, “I should have known you would be in the middle of it.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she snapped at him.

“Just that if there’s trouble... somehow you always seem to be there.”

Emily reached out and slapped the buckskin mare on the rump and sent her flying toward the barn. It was only a second before Kyle steadied himself and allowed the mare to run.

By the time Emily got to the barn, Kyle was gone. Sam took Patra’s reins, and Emily slipped off the horse, “Get the corral cleared out, I’m going to break in that colt.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Sam said, heading out to the corral. Emily grinned. She noticed that Sam only called her ma’am when he didn’t agree with what she was doing.

Emily picked up Allen and watched Sam get things ready. It was long past time to break in Patra’s colt. She hadn’t even named him yet, but it was time he was ready to ride. She wanted to give the stallion to Allen, but he needed to be entirely broken in first.

Sam took Allen back when Emily headed out to the corral. She easily slipped a bridle onto the stallion, but he pulled violently once she got it fastened. She stood back as he struggled with the feel of the bit in his mouth. Once he calmed, Emily threw a blanket over his back and stood back again, watching him fight to get it off.

“He’s a mean one,” Sam called out to her.

Emily nodded and tied the reins to the fence. She walked over and got the saddle from the stand and headed over to the unhappy stallion. The horse stood 17 hands tall, and Emily had to get a good hoist on the saddle to land it on his back. She hadn’t even gotten the tie strap around his chest when he reared back and kicked her in the chest. She flew back and landed hard against the ground.

“Damnit!” she screamed, and scrambled to her feet.

“Ouch,” Allen said to Sam, and Sam just winced and nodded.

Emily tried again and got the tie strap securely around his chest, but the Paint watched her carefully. She reached under him slowly and grabbed

the flank cinch. She fastened it quickly, and then stepped back as the stallion began to buck angrily.

Emily slipped off her long sleeved flannel shirt and flexed her hands within the leather gloves, then approached the young stallion carefully, and calmly talked to him. She stood alongside his left side and pet his neck. She slowly lifted her left foot and put it into the stirrup and the young horse immediately began to fidget nervously.

Emily mentally counted to three, then hoisted herself up into the saddle, gripping the horn tightly as the horse began to buck and kick. She was able to hold on for almost thirty seconds before she lost her grip and flew back into the fence. She fell to the ground, gasping for breath. The fence post had knocked the wind out of her.

“Emily!” Sam yelled, running up to her.

“I’m fine,” she growled.

“Ouch,” Allen said again from Sam’s arms.

Emily got to her feet and headed back to the angry stallion.

“Let’s try again tomorrow... just leave the saddle on him and let him get used to it,” Sam said, taking Allen back into the barn. He knew Emily was taking this personally, and he didn’t think Allen needed to see his mom get trampled.

“Alright you Sonofabitch, we can do this nicely or we can both die trying,” she said, grabbing his bridle and jerking it.

As soon as she jerked his bridle, the horse reared back again and kicked her to the ground. She quickly rolled out of his reach.

“Damnit!” she yelled again, and slowly got to her feet.

Emily approached him slowly and was able to get securely in the saddle before he began to buck and kick. She held onto the horn and squeezed her knees together, hanging on while the raging horse tried to get her off. Her body thrashed with his kicking, but she set her jaw and managed to stay on top.

After a few minutes, the horse stopped kicking and whinnied madly. Emily sat in the saddle, still holding on tight, though he didn’t buck again. She kicked her feet gently against his sides, but he stood firm and crooked his neck to look back at her.

She grinned, “Fine, we’ll finish tomorrow.”

As Emily slid off the stallion, she saw the anger in his eyes and wondered if he would ever be gentle enough for Allen.

“Leave him in the saddle and bridle tonight, Sam,” she said, and took Allen from his arms, then put him on the ground to walk.

“Miss Emily?” Sam asked, walking behind her.

“What, Sam?” She turned to him.

“How are you going to explain your back to Chevalier?” He brushed the dirt and weeds off of her back, but the blood was obvious.

“How bad is it?” she asked, trying to see for herself.

Sam halfway grinned, “I’m going to plead the fifth and tell him I tried to stop you.”

She sighed and headed inside, holding hands with Allen. Emily managed to get into her room without Chevalier seeing her, and she put the toddler in his play pen while she went into the bathroom to clean up.

She glanced in the mirror and rolled her eyes, “Great.”

Her clothes were covered in dirt and were torn. She noticed her left shoulder was bruised and scratched, and she had a small scratch under her right eye. She slipped off her shirt and turned in the mirror to see her back.

She gasped. Her back was a mess of bruises, cuts, and scrapes. She could distinctly see the bruised outline of a fence post traveling up the middle of her back. She heard Chevalier come into the room and begin to talk to Allen.

“Be right out, going to shower!” she called out to him.

Chevalier picked Allen up from his play pen and threw him into the air. Emily hated when he did that. She said it wasn’t safe, but she wasn’t around, and it made Allen laugh.

“How was your day little guy?” Chevalier asked, sitting down on the bed with him.

“Ouch,” he said, pointing off into nowhere.

“Aw, did you get hurt today?” Chevalier asked, grinning.

Allen nodded excitedly, “Damnit.”

Chevalier fought against laughing and raised an eyebrow at his son, “Damn it, eh?”

Allen nodded.

“Did Mommy say that?” He smiled when Allen nodded.

He heard Emily get out of the shower, “Had a rough day, Em?” he called to her.

“Not really, why?” she asked from inside the bathroom.

“Just thought it was an interesting word to teach our son.”

“What word?” she asked, and came out of the bathroom in an oversized fuzzy robe. Her hair fell over her face just enough to cover the scratch under her eye.

“Damn it,” he said, and Allen repeated it.

“Great,” she said, sitting on the bed by them. “Allen that’s a no-no word.”

“Ouch,” the toddler said, pointing at Emily.

Chevalier turned to Allen, “Oh! Is the ouch for Mommy?”

Emily’s eyes widened as Allen nodded and repeated the word, pointing directly to her. She figured it wasn’t worth fighting over, “I started to break in the colt.”

Chevalier’s eyes narrowed, “I told Sam to hire someone to do that.”

“Yes, and I told Sam I would do it.”

Chevalier looked closely at her face, and he saw the scrapes, “Why must you always put yourself in danger?”

“I wasn’t in danger. You act like I’ve never broken in a horse before.” She looked squarely at him.

“Not one like this, Sam even told me how mean that one is.” Chevalier could feel a fight coming on and called Anna to take Allen. He screamed as the heku carried him from the room.

Emily winced as they left the room. Chevalier sending Allen away only meant one thing.

“Before you get angry, just hear me out,” Emily said. “I’ve broken horses before, even mean ones, and I’ll do this one too. I’m not going to bring someone in to do my job for me.”

“How badly were you hurt?” he asked, moving closer to her. His words were caring, but his voice was angry.

She scooted away from him, “I’m not going to let you turn this into a big thing. I’m not hurt, and I will break that horse myself.”

“Emily,” he growled and reached out for her. His fingers barely grasped her injured shoulder as she pulled away from him.

“Stop it,” she said, and frowned at him.

“You don’t seem to have the self-preservation that God gave a turnip.” He grabbed the back of her robe when she tried to get away, and it pulled down far enough he could see the damage to her back.

Emily yanked the fabric from his hand and stood up, adjusting her robe, “It’s not as bad as it looks.”

“Emily,” Chevalier hissed. “Let me see it better.”

“No”

“What?” He frowned. He would never get used to his orders not being followed immediately and without question.

“I said no.” She set her jaw and turned to face him.

“Damn it, Emily,” he hissed, and took a step toward her.

“I said, no. You’ll see it and get all over protective and make a big deal out of it, and then we’ll get into a huge fight and honestly, right now, I will probably win, which will just tick you off more.” She crossed her arms and stood her ground.

“At least let me put some peroxide on it, so it doesn’t get infected,” he said, still mad.

“No”

“You know what... fine... get yourself killed breaking in some stupid horse,” he growled, and then headed for the door.

She hated when he left mad, “I met Elder Larsen today,” she said to him.

Chevalier spun, shocked, “Who?”

“Elder Larsen? Said he used to be one of the Elders for the Equites.” She noticed her plan worked. The worry and anger left his face and now he was shocked.

“You met him... where?” he asked, taking a step toward her.

“Out by the pasture in the trees. He spooked the cows and I went to see what was up,” she hurried and said, trying to keep his attention.

Chevalier’s eyes seemed far away, “I need to call the Council,” he told her, and left quickly.

Emily hurried out after him and stepped into his office just as he was making the call.

“Emily, this is private,” he said, impatiently tapping his pen against this desk.

Emily sat down and smiled. Chevalier just shook his head.

“Elder Larsen has...” He paused, looking up at Emily, “Resurfaced.”

“Here on the island.”

“Emily found him.” He looked up at her and chuckled, “Yes she does, doesn’t she?”

“Yes, right away,” he said before setting the phone down.

“Yes she does what?” Emily asked, narrowing her eyes.

“Find trouble easily,” he chuckled. “Come show me where he is.”

Emily ran up to the room and got dressed, then went back down to the barn. Chevalier was already seated on his moody Arabian, and Sam had Patra ready for her. She mounted the Painted mare and headed her across the pasture at a slow walk.

“You never go riding anymore,” she said, watching the trees grow closer.

“Seemed to me that was kind of your thing with Kyle,” he told her quietly. He’d never felt comfortable with how close Emily and Kyle were, but the fighting wasn’t worth it so now he just tolerated it and tried to look the other way.

“Hm, no law says you can’t come out once in a while. Allen loves to ride,” she said as she stopped the mare and slid out of the saddle.

Chevalier jumped off of his stallion and put his hand on Emily’s shoulder, “Stay out here.”

She rolled her eyes, “I’ve already met him alone, and if he was going to hurt me, he would have already.” She walked into the trees a bit.

“Larsen?” she called out to the trees.

Chevalier waited a moment, “I demand you come here this instant,” he growled.

Emily slapped him on the chest, “Be nice.”

“What?”

“Larsen? Can I talk to you?” Emily asked, louder. They waited for a few minutes in silence as Chevalier scanned the dark woods.

“Coward,” Chevalier grumbled.

Emily grinned, “Oh I can get him to come out.”

Chevalier eyed her suspiciously, “How’s that?”

She turned to Chevalier and pressed her body up close to his. He reached down and kissed her softly, “What are you up to?”

She smiled sweetly and slipped her hands into both of his front pockets. She felt the sharp blade of the ceremonial dagger he kept on him at all times and ran the blade along the palm of her hand, wincing slightly.

“Emily, what in God’s name...” he said, pulling away from her when he smelled blood.

She pulled her hands out of his pockets and let a few drops of blood fall to the mossy floor of the small woods. She used the edge of her shirt to stop the blood as she heard a commotion ahead of them in the trees.

“Mmmm... smell it, smell it.” The words were hissed from behind a tree.

The gaunt heku slowly began to move toward her, his eyes fixed on her hand. Chevalier stepped in front of her and blocked his path.

“No, no, not him... not him, I smell it,” Larsen said, stopping a few feet from Chevalier.

“You no longer belong here,” Chevalier said to him, and Larsen recoiled with the command in his voice.

“I do, I am an Elder.” He took a step to the side to get a better look at Emily.

“You were an Elder. Now you are a haggard old heku, and it’s time you left.” Chevalier watched him carefully. He could still smell the blood on Emily.

“I belong on the Council, back on the Council, not in the ground,” Larsen chanted, and locked his eyes on Emily’s. He growled, frustrated, when she broke the gaze and glared.

“There’s a reason you were in the ground for 600 years. After that time, it was well stated you were to be out of the Equites. Go join the Valle or the Encala if you wish, but the Equites won’t have you.” Chevalier’s words were sharp and harsh.

“Please, I belong with the Equites. Just one drink and I will be strong again.” He took a step toward Emily.

Chevalier blocked him again, “I’m going to have you escorted out, and if I catch you anywhere near an Equites, you will have to deal with me.”

“Chief Enforcer is right, but please, Sir, just one taste of the blood.” Larsen lunged at Emily, but found himself tightly gripped by Chevalier.

“I better not catch you feeding without consent, either.”

Emily wasn’t sure from where, but seven of the Island’s guards appeared beside her and Chevalier threw Larsen hard at them. They restrained him and hauled him toward the pier as he kicked and screamed for Emily.

“What did he do that was so bad?” Emily asked, watching the haggard heku hauled away.

“What was that?” Chevalier growled at her.

She turned to face him, her eyes wide, “What?”

Emily took a step back when she saw the look in his eyes. She’d seen that look, the feral eyes of a predator, “Chevalier, no.”

She didn’t have time to react before he picked her up by her shoulders, and sunk his sharp teeth into her neck. Emily tried to push him away, but his grip on her shoulders was too tight and she couldn’t move her arms. She felt the warm numbing sensation in her neck as he finished and gently kissed her, then set her back down, grinning.

“I’ve told you, never tease a heku. We don’t have the restraint,” he chuckled.

Emily swung as hard as she could and felt her fist connect with his jaw as the crack of bones echoed off of the trees. Her eyes were fierce as she watched him feel his jaw and look over at her.

“You’re lucky I don’t ash you where you stand,” she screamed at him.

“You needed a good bite, now let me see your hand.” He reached his hand out to her.

Emily turned on her heels and walked back to Patra angrily. She mounted the mare and kicked her hard into a gallop. She was acutely aware that Chevalier was right behind her. As she got closer to the barn, her adrenaline wore off and she felt the harsh pounding pain in her hand. She pulled it up to her chest and rode into the barn one-handed, then glared when she saw both Kyle and Sam waiting for her.

“What?!?” she yelled at them as she slid off her horse. Sam took the reins quickly, not meeting her eyes.

“What’s wrong?” Kyle asked curiously, noting she was only using one hand.

“You thirsty too, Kyle? You want some of this?” She pulled her collar away from her neck as he stepped away from her with wide eyes.

“Erm... no,” he said, watching the vein throb in her neck. He could smell fresh blood on her, and had to use full control to keep from taking her up on her offer.

“Oh, but why not? It’s open buffet night, didn’t you hear?” She took another step toward him.

Kyle felt thousands of years of instincts rise to the surface, and he couldn’t help but inhale deeply. The burn in the back of his throat was painful. Regaining some control, he turned his face to the side, away from her scent, “Stop it.”

Emily stormed past him into the castle. Kyle bent over and put his hands on his knees and breathed slowly to clear his head.

“I hear you,” Chevalier said, slapped him on the back, and then following Emily into the castle.

He caught up easily to Emily on the stairs and took her good hand, then chuckled when she ripped her hand out of his.

“Come on,” he said, walking behind her.

Emily didn't answer him as she stepped into her ante-chamber, took Allen from Anna, and walked into her room before slamming the door shut.

"Damnit," Allen said when the door shut, and Chevalier grinned.

Anna looked at Chevalier and shook her head.

"What?" he asked.

She held her tongue because he was still her superior. Deciding against yelling at the Chief Enforcer, she walked out of the ante-chamber.

Chevalier knocked on the door, "Emily?"

She didn't answer, but he could hear Allen laughing inside.

"Emily, I really want to look at your hand," he said, trying the door handle, it was locked.

"I'm sorry, ok? I won't do it again... can I come in now?" he called through the door. When she didn't answer, he put just enough pressure on the door to tear it from its hinges.

Emily was sitting on the floor playing with Allen and she didn't look up when he entered. He saw her swollen and bruised hand sitting in her lap as she tickled Allen with the other.

"Em..." he started, but she cut him off.

"You know what, Chev? I can't even deal with you right now," she told him, still playing with Allen.

“You know as well as I do that I’m going to see your hand, whether you like it or not,” he said, trying to sound angry, but she picked up the hint of amusement.

“Anna,” Emily said. Within a few seconds, Anna appeared with a cookie and took Allen away.

“Is that what you’re thinking?” she asked, standing up. He saw the mistake in what he just said. He made this into a challenge for her.

“That’s not what I meant, Emily.” He took a step back, his grin fading.

“Then get out,” she snapped at him.

“No, I want to see your hand.” He watched her carefully.

“How old am I?” she asked, her green eyes glared at him.

“Are we comparing age?” he asked. He fought to control the look on his face. He still found it amusing when she stood up to him.

“Do I need to remind you that I can take care of myself?” She took another step toward him, and her words made Chevalier take a step back.

“No, I’m perfectly aware that you can take care of yourself.” He braced himself, waiting for the burning pain to start.

“Then get out,” she said through gritted teeth.

Chevalier sighed, “Let’s just calm down, ok? I’m sorry I bit you. I’m sorry I treated you like a child... again.”

She watched him suspiciously.

“Now, I’m not treating you like a child, I just want to see your hand, to see if it’s broken.” He took a step toward her.

“It is,” she said icily.

“Then let’s go get it taken care of.” He held his hand out for her.

She set her jaw and her eyes narrowed, “No.”

“Now you’re just being difficult, we have to have it looked at.” He wondered how such a tiny thing could put out so much rage.

“Get out.” She pointed to the door.

“You want to be stubborn? Then fine,” he said, and appeared behind her. He put one restraining arm around her waist and one around her chest.

Emily screamed, frustrated. She reached down and sunk her teeth deep into the flesh on his arm. He pulled his arm away quickly when she pulled off a chunk and spit it onto the ground.

“Damnit, Em, that hurts,” he growled before pushing her onto the bed and out of his way for her own safety.

He watched as his arm healed, and then went toward the bed, “This isn’t a game. This isn’t some ruse to get your Irish blood boiling.”

When he got close enough to her, she kicked out at him, and he dodged easily and landed on top of her, pinning her to the bed, “Stop it.”

Emily leaned up and kissed him, crushing her lips to his and wrapping her arms around him. Chevalier tried to pull away, but she grabbed a handful of his hair with her good hand and the argument ended.

Chevalier brushed the hair off of her face and smiled as they curled up in next to each other.

“No fair, you distracted me,” he said, and then grinned.

“You want to talk about fair? You bit me,” she reminded him.

He laughed, “Oh yeah... well... you bit me back.”

“That’s not the same, and you know it.” She rolled over to look at him.

“I’m sorry, really, Em,” he said, and then kissed her softly.

“Next time you try that... I will fight back.” Her eyes were serious.

“Fair enough.” He ran his hand gently from her neck down to her shoulder.

“What did Larsen do?” She propped herself up on one elbow.

Chevalier watched her for a moment, “It was a long time ago, don’t worry about it, ok?”

“Tell me.”

He sighed, “Larsen became weak and was released from the Council.”

Emily frowned, “That’s it?”

“That’s enough. We can’t have weakness on the Council. The second you show a sign of losing your edge, your position will be taken over by

someone else, and then you are banished.” He bent over and kissed her shoulder.

“Wait... so if you show the slightest sign of weakness, you are buried for 600 years? Then you turn into this old haggard thing and are kicked out of the faction?”

“Not always 600 years, but yes, that’s the general idea.” He looked into her eyes, wondering what was going through her mind.

Emily sat up, holding the covers over her, “They were going to do that to you, weren’t they? That day after the Valle attack, when Selest said they were going to replace you.”

He nodded and sat up.

“They were going to bury you and let you starve?” she asked, frowning.

“Emily, it didn’t happen.” He touched her arm softly.

“When were you going to tell me that? Were you just going to go into the ground and avoid having to tell me?”

“No, I would have had time to tell you.” He wrapped a hand around her neck and pulled her to him.

“I’m so not ok with that!” she said, pulling away from him. “Is that what’s going to happen someday? Someday someone will think you’re showing a weakness, and then the next day you’ll just be gone?”

“It’s not going to happen. I’m good at my job, and I don’t have a weakness.” He grinned slightly, but stopped when he saw the look of terror in her eyes.

“Quit”

“I can’t quit.”

“Why not?”

“Same thing would happen. It’s for the good of the faction. They can’t have ex-council members running around trying to cause problems.” This was all common and well known. He couldn’t figure out why she was making such a big deal out of it.

“So you’re perfectly ok with that? Ooooooh sure, kill me off because someone thinks I’m a wimp? What if it’s tomorrow? What if they use me as an excuse like they already tried to?”

She pulled the sheets off the bed, wrapped them around herself, and disappeared into the bathroom, still cradling her injured hand.

“It’s not going to happen. You have to trust me on that.” He watched her go, and then dressed quickly.

A short while later, Emily came out dressed, “Why do you suppose we fight so much?” she asked, sitting down to slip on some shoes.

“I’m guessing for the making-up.”

“I’m serious, one of these days one of us is going to end up dead.”

Chevalier sighed, “I know.”

Emily got up and sat down in one of the chairs by the fireplace, “What do we do about it?”

“I wish I knew.” He sat down next to her.

“Do you still love me?” she asked, watching for a reaction.

Chevalier frowned, “Of course I do.”

“Are you happy?”

“Yes, what’s all this? Are you still in love with me?” he asked, unsure what caused all of this.

Emily smiled softly, “Very much so.”

“Then why the questions?”

She shrugged, “I guess just making sure. We don’t do anything but fight anymore it seems.”

“We’ll work on it, ok? Maybe we should take the yacht out for a while.”
He ran through his schedule in his mind, looking for a free week.

Emily stood up, excited, and sat in his lap, “Really? Just us?”

He looked into her green eyes and smiled, “Yes, really. As soon as we get your hand fixed.”

She kissed him and threw her arms around his neck, “Thank you.”

“I’ll make the arrangements.” He wrapped his arms around her waist and kissed her.

Chapter 13 - Complacency

“Enter,” Chevalier said, and wondered who was knocking on his office door at 3am.

Anna entered with Allen in her arms, and he was crying, “Sorry to bother you, Sir. I can’t calm him down.”

Chevalier took Allen in his arms and he immediately settled down.

“What’s wrong?” he asked the toddler.

“Bu bye,” he said, waving to the hallway.

Chevalier pulled Allen close to him, and Allen rested his head on his Dad’s shoulder.

“Where’s Em?” he asked Anna.

“I don’t know. I found Allen scooting down the stairs by himself, and she isn’t in her room,” Anna said, worry sounding in her voice.

“She left Allen alone?” Chevalier frowned, that wasn’t like her.

Anna shrugged, “She must have.”

“Take Allen back upstairs. Kyle and I will see if we can find her,” he said, and handed the half asleep toddler back to Anna.

Anna left quickly before Allen could realize he wasn't with his Dad anymore.

"Kyle?" Chevalier called, stepping out of his office.

"Yes, Sir?" Kyle asked, blurring by his side.

"Em's gone, we need to find her," he said to Kyle.

Kyle grinned, "Fight again and she took off?"

Chevalier frowned, "Anna found Allen coming down the stairs alone, and she's not in her room."

"Wait... she left Allen alone?" Kyle was beginning to become concerned.

Both of the heku headed out to the barn.

"Sam?" Chevalier called out, and the familiar quickly appeared.

"A bit late for a ride isn't it?" he asked, yawning.

Chevalier looked around the barn and saw Patra in her stall, "Have you seen Emily tonight?"

"No, I haven't. I take it you two fought again and she took off?" Sam asked, stifling another yawn.

"Would you both stop saying that? We don't fight all the time," he growled at Sam and turned, but Kyle was gone.

"Hey, Chevalier?" he heard Kyle call from outside, and the heku appeared at his side.

Chevalier didn't need to ask what Kyle called him for. He could smell the sweet blood strongly outside of the barn, "What in the hell is she doing out here?"

Kyle shrugged, "Odd that she didn't get Patra," he said, following the scent.

They walked through the dark pastures, following her trail for almost thirty minutes before Chevalier stopped suddenly, "Is that her?"

Kyle looked where Chevalier pointed and saw a still figure standing along the trees, unmoving.

As he blurred closer to the form, he could tell it was Emily. She was standing perfectly still and looking into the trees. Although it was a cold, rainy night, she was wearing only her nightgown and her hair fell down her back.

"Emily, what are you doing out here?" Chevalier asked.

"Em?" Kyle said, appearing by her side.

They both waited for her to respond, and then followed her gaze into the trees, but didn't see anything.

"Emily?" Chevalier said, stepping in front of her and looking at her face. She didn't move, and her eyes didn't pull away from wherever it was she was staring.

"Em?" Kyle said again, and snapped his fingers in front of her face.

"Emily," Chevalier said louder as he put his hand under her chin and lifted her face to look at him. Her eyes were dull and unfocused.

He slipped off his shirt and put it around her shoulders. His hand brushed her shoulder and her skin was freezing.

“What’s wrong with her?” Kyle asked, watching her.

“I don’t know, but she’s freezing, let’s get her inside.” Chevalier picked her up easily and headed quickly back inside.

Kyle followed beside them. He looked over at her and she was staring blankly into the night.

“Is she sick?” he finally asked when they stepped into the warmth of the castle.

“I don’t know, I mean... she wasn’t sick earlier,” Chevalier explained, and headed up the stairs.

Anna watched as Chevalier carried Emily into the bedroom and she took Allen into Chevalier’s room to sleep.

Chevalier laid Emily down on the bed and was shocked when she rolled onto her side and fell asleep. He frowned at Kyle and shrugged before pulling the covers up over her. Kyle was already stoking the fire.

Kyle motioned for Chevalier to follow him out of the room.

“Ok... what was that?” Chevalier asked, shutting the door behind him.

“That’s the weirdest thing,” Kyle said, watching the door.

“I guess I’ll just watch her carefully tomorrow. Oh damn, I can’t... I have to be in council meetings all day,” Chevalier said, thinking.

“I’ll do it. It’s been so calm around here lately it’d be a nice break,”

“Her scent is off too, close, but something’s changed,” Chevalier said, and glanced back at the door.

“I’ll watch her.”

Chevalier nodded and headed back into Emily’s room. He shut the doors and crawled into bed with her, then wrapped his arms around her and watched her sleep.

Kyle heard Emily get out of bed and walk around the room a bit. He and Chevalier decided not to bring up the following night unless she brought it up first. Chevalier had left a few hours before, and wouldn’t be home until well after midnight.

“Good morni...” Kyle began, but froze. Emily came out and he looked at her oddly.

She smiled sweetly at him, “Good morning.”

“You ok?” he asked her.

“Of course,” Emily said, and walked past him and out into the hallway. Her hair was hanging loosely down to her waist, and she wore a light pink sun dress. Kyle took a second look, and was sure she had on make-up, too.

He followed Emily down the stairs silently, and each heku they passed turned to take a second look at her.

“What are your plans for today?” Kyle asked, knowing she would fight him over the question, but he decided he’d take a fight over the uncharacteristic way she walked in the sun dress and ran her fingers along her necklace.

“Once I get breakfast, I thought I might take Allen to do something fun,” she said pleasantly.

Kyle couldn’t even answer. He simply followed her into the kitchen where Gordon was waiting for her.

“Good morning, Emily,” he said, and looked at her dress oddly. “I have your favorite this morning, bacon and eggs.”

“Oh no, that’s way too fattening. I’ll take half a grapefruit and some cottage cheese, please.” She sat at the table and pulled the napkin onto her lap.

Gordon stopped with the plate in his hand, looked questioningly at Kyle, and then disappeared into the kitchen to make her another breakfast.

Kyle watched as Emily ate slowly, and then thanked Gordon before leaving the dining room. She ran up the stairs, and Kyle couldn’t help but watch suspiciously. Everything from the way she flipped her hair, to the way she held her hand out to her side was unlike Emily.

“Hello, my sweet boy,” Emily crooned when she saw Allen playing on the floor with Anna.

Allen walked quickly to Emily and she picked him up and kissed all over his face, “What do you want to do today?”

“TV,” Allen said, and looked into Emily’s eyes. Kyle wasn’t sure, but he thought Allen had taken an extra hard look at his Mom.

“TV?” She thought, “Ok, we can do those. See if you can remember how to get there, lead me.”

Kyle frowned at the wording. He was positive something wasn’t right with Emily.

“You will both come along, right? It’d be safer if there were two guards with us,” Emily said, and headed out the door.

Anna stopped in her tracks and looked at Kyle, “She wants us?”

Kyle shrugged, “I guess.”

“I’m not technically a guard.”

“I know, just come.”

The two heku followed Emily and Allen up to the TV room and stood outside of the door until Emily asked them to step inside, just to be safe. They watched, glancing at each other often, as Emily cuddled and baby talked Allen. Allen tried to wrestle with Emily like they always did on the soft pillows, but she insisted he sit properly and watch the educational program.

“Anna, will you take Allen up for a nap? He seems tired,” Emily said, and handed the toddler over to her. Kyle thought that this was the first time Allen had ever willingly left his mother.

“I’m going to get some flowers to see if I can brighten this castle up,” Emily said, and took Kyle’s hand before heading down the stairs.

Kyle pulled his hand out from Emily's. He didn't need rumors to start on top of everything else.

"Why don't we take the horses out to the north pasture? There are tons of wild flowers out there," Kyle suggested. He was ready to get Emily out on a horse and get some of her normal self back.

Emily smiled, "It's too smelly in the barn and I'd ruin my dress on a horse. Let's just walk, it's such a beautiful day."

Kyle nodded, eyes wide, and followed her out the door. She went to the closest wild flowers she could find and began picking random flowers, smelling them and smiling as she went. She talked to Kyle the entire time about how the different flowers would look in the castle and what type of furniture and color schemes they would improve.

Kyle had plenty of time to consider the changes in Emily as she spent hours rounding up vases and placing flowers throughout the castle. She talked animatedly to the heku servants, and they politely answered, but then scurried away at the first chance they got.

"I should really go get changed for the evening. When will my honey be back?" she asked Kyle as they headed up the stairs.

"Your honey?" he asked, the concern filling his voice.

"I miss him so much. I can't wait until he gets home." She looked up at the clock dreamily.

Emily changed quickly into a little black dress with black stiletto pumps and brushed her hair up into an intricate bun. She dabbed on some fresh lipstick and smiled at Kyle, spinning.

“How do I look?” she asked, and then giggled coyly.

“You look fine. Let’s go eat.” His eyes shied away from her. She looked more than fine, and he felt guilty at the way his eyes trailed from the hint of cleavage down to her perfectly toned legs. He knew though, that Emily wouldn’t be caught dead in that dress.

Emily sat down at the end of the dining table and ordered one of the heku servants to light the candles. Gordon came in with steak and potatoes and set it in front of Emily.

“There you go, Emily,” he said, smiling.

“This won’t do. Please keep fat to a minimum. I’ll take a salad,” she said before handing the plate back to Gordon. “All greens, no cheese or meat, and the salad dressing on the side.”

Gordon frowned at Kyle as he walked back into the kitchen.

“If he can’t follow instructions, he’ll need to be fired,” Emily said pleasantly to Kyle.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Kyle told her.

Gordon returned a few minutes later with Emily’s salad and set it down in front of her. She didn’t even thank him before starting to eat.

“What’s up?” Gordon whispered to Kyle, low enough that Emily couldn’t hear.

“I don’t know, she’s been acting strange all day,” Kyle replied.

“We sure that’s not an evil twin?” Gordon asked. He was smiling, but his eyes were worried.

“I honestly am starting to wonder if I should lock her up until we find out who she is.” Kyle was partially joking.

“If I were you, I’d think twice about that... the Chief Enforcer’s not going to be happy if you lock her up,” Gordon said, concerned. “Though, her scent is off a bit.”

“I know... but I’m not sure that’s her. You know,” he paused and then decided to continue. “We found her outside this morning around 3am. She was staring into the trees and wouldn’t respond.”

Gordon frowned, “You think there could be a doppelganger?”

Kyle smiled when Emily turned to look at him, and then turned back to Gordon when she returned to eating.

“I honestly don’t know. There haven’t been doppelgangers around since the early 12th century.” Kyle hadn’t considered the possible return of the fabled body double.

“What are you going to do?” Gordon asked after watching her for a few minutes.

“I’m not sure yet, just watch her I guess.” Kyle stopped when Emily raised her hand and snapped.

“You need something, Em?” Kyle asked.

“Yes, I’ve been waiting for almost ten seconds for Gordon to take my plate, that’s unacceptable,” she scoffed.

Gordon quickly gathered up her dishes and disappeared into the kitchen.

“You probably shouldn’t call me Em either, Kyle. It’s improper and as I’m Lady of the castle you should address me as such.” She stood and daintily laid her napkin on the table.

“Ok,” he said, surprised.

“I’m going to go spend some time with Allen. I’m assuming you’ll be coming along as protection?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Of course, Em... erm... Lady Emily,” he said coldly.

His phone rang as he walked up the stairs behind Emily.

“Kyle here.”

“Kyle, bad news, I’m not going to be home until tomorrow,” Chevalier said hurriedly. “How are things going?”

“Well...” Kyle looked up and saw Emily was too close to him to say much, “Things are ok.”

“You sound concerned about something, do I need to cancel my plans and come back?” Chevalier asked.

“No, no, we’re fine,” Kyle assured him.

“Ok, call me if you need me,” Chevalier said before hanging up.

“Was that Chevalier?” Emily asked as she reached the second-floor landing.

“Yes, he’s not going to be home until tomorrow,” Kyle said, watching for a reaction.

“Oh dear, I had plans too,” she sighed, and walked into Chevalier’s room.

Allen looked up at her suspiciously when she entered. She put her hands out to him, and he leaned back toward Anna.

“No,” he said to Emily.

Emily frowned, “Come here this instant, Allen.”

“No,” Allen said again, and held tightly to Anna’s hand.

“Allen, come here now... or you will be spanked,” she said sternly.

Kyle winced. He knew that neither Emily, nor Chevalier, had ever allowed Allen to be physically punished. They both knew their tempers too well and would never trust themselves with that type of punishment.

“Emily,” Kyle said.

“Kyle, Anna, both of you may go,” Emily said, then walked up to Allen and grabbed his arm roughly. Allen began to scream.

“Let go of him,” Kyle told her, and took a step toward her.

“Let me take him.” Anna tried to comfort Allen.

“Do as I say or I’ll have you both fired,” Emily said, looking down her nose at Allen.

“That’s enough,” Kyle said, and he forcibly picked Emily up and threw her over his shoulder.

“Where are you taking her?” Anna gasped.

“To the prison until I find out who she is,” Kyle said as Emily struggled in his arms. He realized on his way down the stairs that even her fight wasn’t the same. Emily could get out of this position easily, yet she just struggled weakly and cried.

Anna started to argue, and then nodded, “Come, Child,” she said, and took Allen into her arms to comfort him.

The guards looked at Kyle as he hauled the crying Emily toward an empty cell, “Open it,” he snapped at the guard, who opened the door as quickly as he could.

“You can’t leave me here. It’s dirty, and I’m in charge while Chevalier is away,” she said, looking at them angrily.

Kyle locked the cell door and stepped back, waiting for the tongue lashing he was going to get. This new, calmer, more proper Emily just sat on the bed and cried.

“What do we do with her?” the guard asked Kyle.

“I don’t even know,” Kyle snapped at him. “I guess get her what she wants, but don’t let her out.”

“He’s going to kill us for this,” the guard said.

“I’m not so sure about that.” Kyle looked back at the crying Emily and sighed.

“What do we do if she turns one of us to ash?”

“That’s part of the problem. If that were Emily, she already would have made herself known with her abilities. She never would have sat in a cell and cried,” Kyle said, shaking his head as he walked up the stairs.

Kyle met Chevalier at the pier. He frowned and opened the door to the Humvee, “Good to see you, Kyle. I wasn’t expecting you at the pier though.”

Kyle hopped into the Humvee, “We need to talk, before we get to the castle.”

Chevalier frowned, “That doesn’t sound good, is something wrong?”

“Yeah, well, Emily...” He rubbed his neck with his hand, “I had to put her in prison.”

“What?” Chevalier yelled, stomping on the brakes. “Why would you do that?”

“Listen to me before you kill me... you know I had a reason,” Kyle said quickly. “Something’s changed with her and... well, honestly... I wonder if she’s not truly Emily.”

“What do you mean... she’s changed?” Chevalier watched him carefully.

“Lots of things. She’s been ordering the servants around. She tried to fire Anna and I. She’s skipping... and putting flowers around.”

“So for that you put her in prison?” Chevalier frowned.

“No, that was when she tried to spank Allen, and then handled him roughly.” Kyle saw his expression change from angry to confused.

“Why would she spank him?” he asked, in a daze.

“Because he wouldn’t go to her. You have to trust me on this, something has changed,” Kyle said. He waited for it to sink in, and then continued, “You know, when I put her in the prison cell... guess what she did?”

Chevalier grinned, “Did it hurt much?”

“She cried... that’s it... she sat and cried.” Kyle nodded when Chevalier looked at him.

“She cried?” he asked, frowning.

“That’s all... she didn’t threaten me, she didn’t use her abilities on me, she didn’t even yell at me... She cried as I carried her down and put her in the cell.” Kyle watched as Chevalier put the Humvee back in gear and started up to the castle.

“I’ll talk to her as soon as I get back. Bring her to my office,” Chevalier said, his thoughts far away.

“I’ll understand if there’s a punishment for putting her in the prison,” Kyle said, and watched out the window.

Chevalier didn’t answer. His mind whirled with information, and he was anxious to talk to Emily himself. He walked slowly to his office, giving Kyle time to retrieve Emily.

“Chevalier!” Emily yelled, and ran into his arms. She jumped and wrapped her legs around him.

Kyle bowed slightly and left the office, shutting the door behind him.

“I’m so glad you’re home, it’s been awful here. I want Kyle fired immediately,” she said, accentuating each word with a kiss to his face.

“Let’s just talk for a sec, Em,” he said before pulling her off of him and sitting her in a chair. He frowned slightly at the frilly orange dress she was wearing. He’d seen the look on her face when Margaret presented it to her. Emily had been polite, but then tried to mail it to Good Will the second Margaret was out of the room.

“I wanted to talk to you, too,” she said, smoothing down the layers of her skirt.

“You feeling ok?” he asked, and then sat on the edge of his desk to watch her.

“As well as can be expected, being in that dirty prison all day.” She stuck out her lower lip and looked up at him sadly. The expression was off. He’d never seen Emily stick her lip out and was positive she hadn’t pouted a day in her life.

“I see. Kyle, however, is very worried about you.”

“Oh sure, stick up for Kyle! You don’t love me or you wouldn’t have left me with such a mean heku,” she said, and then checked her hair in the mirror on the wall.

Her words shocked him. He watched the way she primped in the mirror, and how her pinky stuck up as she re-inserted a hair pin.

“You... um... you wanted to talk to me about something?” He wasn’t sure what else to say. He immediately saw what Kyle had seen, and it also concerned him.

“Yes, I was thinking it’s time to have another baby.” She smiled sweetly up at him.

“You... you do?” He was stunned.

Emily stood up and walked slowly over to him. She leaned into him and kissed him while sliding her arms under his and around to his back, “Don’t you?”

Chevalier cringed, he’d never felt a kiss like that, and couldn’t remember a time when Emily held him like she was now.

“I thought we agreed that Allen was enough,” he said, pulling away from her. His eyes scrutinized her every movement and analyzed everything she said.

“Well, I don’t agree anymore. We should fill the castle with children.” Emily began to unbutton his shirt.

He reached up and took her hands in his, “Stop.”

Her bottom lip stuck out again, “How come?”

“I’ve decided a few things while I was away. It’s time to get rid of the horses and cows. They’re too much work for you.” He watched her expression.

She thought for a moment and nodded, “If that’s how you feel.”

“Emily, look at me,” he yelled at her. She looked up at him, timidly,
“Ash me.”

“Why would I do that?” she asked, running her hand down his chest.

“I want you to give me just a little bit of it... or are you afraid?” he asked, grinning.

“I’m not afraid,” she said, kissing his neck roughly. The feel of her lips on his skin made him cringe.

“Kyle,” Chevalier said toward the door, and it immediately opened.

Kyle stepped in and shut the door.

“This isn’t Emily,” Chevalier said, prying her hands off of him.

Kyle nodded, “Then who is it?”

“Let’s find out,” Chevalier said before grabbing Emily’s arm roughly and pulling her into the interrogation room next to his office. He quickly sat her down in a hard chair and wrapped the chain around her.

“Why are you being mean to me, Chevalier? I love you,” Emily said, eyeing the button that would start the electricity flowing.

His hand dangled over the button, “Ready to ash me?”

“I wouldn’t hurt you. I love you too much.” Her eyes were pleading and she began to cry.

Kyle stood at the chair with his arms crossed. If he had any doubts at all that this was an imposter, he would have stopped it immediately. The way Emily sat in the chair and cried made him want to rip her apart.

“Are you going to tell me who you are?” Chevalier asked.

“I’m Emily, your wife. Please don’t do this,” she said, watching his hand on the button.

Chevalier pressed the button briefly, and watched as Emily’s body stiffened and she screamed. When her body relaxed, she looked up at him and her eyes were now pitch black.

“Who are you?” he asked again.

“Help me, Kyle, please, he’s going to kill me,” she pleaded to him.

“Ash him if you don’t want to die Emily... oh sorry... Lady Emily,” Kyle said, grinning.

Chevalier looked up at him questioningly.

“She wants me to address her properly from now on,” Kyle told him.

“Oh, well of course,” Chevalier said, and pressed the button again. Emily screamed in pain as her muscles contracted with the electricity. He released the button.

“Let’s try that again, who are you?” he asked, watching her.

“Your wife! I’m everything you want... I just changed... for you!” she said, her eyes wide.

“What if Emily was already everything I wanted?” Chevalier asked, pushing the button again and watching her as she screamed in pain.

“If you want him to stop... ash him,” Kyle reminded her.

“I’m better... obedient... I can make you happier,” Emily begged.

“Wrong answer,” Chevalier said, and he held the button down again. Emily’s screams were different. They were more guttural, almost feral.

Chevalier lifted his finger off of the button, “Who are you?”

“Ego sum vestry uxor,” Emily said in a harsh whisper.

Kyle jumped to the table and hit the button himself. The Emily in the chair bellowed loudly, screaming words in a language neither Kyle nor Chevalier had ever heard before.

Chevalier pushed Kyle’s hand off of the button, “Where is she?”

“You’ll never find her, Boy.” When Emily looked up at him, her face was dark and menacing and her black eyes were flat and dead.

“Boy?” Chevalier asked, and his eyebrows rose. “You called me boy?”

“You are but a boy.” She grinned, “Silly boy shouldn’t mess with me.”

“Tell me where Emily is or I’ll hit the button and leave,” Chevalier said to her.

“You should be ashamed! You brought a mortal into this castle, and let her walk around like she was as good as a heku. You even gave her a child, and you should be killed for such atrocities,” Emily hissed at him.

“Who are you to say such things to me? You know nothing about Emily,” Chevalier said, then pressed the button. He grinned as Emily writhed in pain and screamed out curses in Latin.

The one posing as Emily looked up when the electricity was turned off, “I am an Ancient... I am one of the original heku and as such you will respect me and let me go!”

Kyle took a step back, shocked.

Chevalier’s eyes narrowed, “An Ancient, you claim?”

Emily nodded, “So let me go before I destroy you.”

“Get the Elders on the phone,” Chevalier hissed at Kyle.

“Where is Emily?” Chevalier growled.

“She isn’t worthy to live among us, Boy.” She looked up at him, and her black eyes were haunting.

“You know nothing about her,” he said angrily.

“I know she’s a mortal, and you allowed yourself to procreate with her. In my day, you would have died for that.” Emily glared at him.

“If you are what you say you are. Then things have changed, and this is no ordinary mortal.”

“Selest is sure this is an Ancient,” Kyle said, returning. “Her orders were to dispose of him immediately.”

Emily hissed and fought with the chains.

“I may let you live if you tell me where she is.” Chevalier leaned down to look at the Ancient.

“I won’t allow her to continue to live among the great heku,” the Ancient said.

Kyle pushed the button and set a book on it as he turned to Chevalier, “How can an Ancient be back? I haven’t heard of an Ancient in over 2,000 years.”

Chevalier shook his head, “I’m not sure... but I can guarantee this Ancient won’t be back.”

The screaming became inhuman and Kyle checked the chains to make sure they were still secure. Chevalier took the book off of the button.

“Stop this!” the Ancient screamed. “You won’t find her anywhere on this earth. You’re too late.”

Chevalier sent his senses out to her and got nothing. He hadn’t expected to pick up any of her feelings in the presence of an Ancient, but had hoped.

“Where is she?” Kyle yelled at him.

“She has you both under her evil spell. Trust me... you are better off without her.” The Ancient grinned up at them.

“She has to be on the island,” Chevalier said, mainly to himself. “The ferry driver said I was the only one off the island in three days.”

“Then she’s here... we just have to search,” Kyle said hopefully.

“Kill him and make it hurt,” Chevalier told Kyle as he headed out of the room.

Kyle grinned and the sound of screaming filled the hallways.

Chevalier was out in the trees and could hear the other heku searching for Emily. They weren't calling to her anymore. If she had been able to answer them, they would have found her already. The Ancient was dead and buried six feet under the ground in pieces. The immunity they were once granted was erased when he attacked a mortal.

“Kyle, I've been thinking about what the Ancient said... how we'll not find her anywhere on earth,” Chevalier said.

“I have too, it doesn't make much sense.” Kyle was scanning the dark trees.

“I wonder if it's because she's under the earth.” Chevalier turned to Kyle, “What if he buried her?”

Kyle gasped, “Buried?”

Chevalier nodded, “Make sure everyone scans the ground for new earth, anything that could indicate a recent dig.”

Kyle nodded and ran off in search of the guards.

Just before dawn, the rain began and the heku sloshed through the mud looking for dig spots.

“Over here!” Chevalier heard a voice from off to his left. He blurred and appeared beside the heku.

The guard was digging where a mound of extra soft mud was sitting among leaves and twigs. Chevalier and the other guards dropped and began to dig through the soft ground with their hands.

Chevalier’s fingers touched cement and the digging heku were able to clean off a perfectly square patch of cement. Chevalier dug his fingers under the heavy cement block and picked it up easily, something that would have taken a machine to lift had he been a mortal.

Below the cement block was a set of stairs, which Chevalier descended quickly, followed by Kyle. The air in the room below the ground was stale and smelled moldy.

“Emily?” Chevalier called out to the dark. No one answered, so he went further into what appeared to be a crypt. Dried bones scattered the ground, and Kyle accidentally kicked a skull across the room. It smashed into dust as it hit the wall, and the crash echoed off the walls.

Chevalier inhaled deeply, “She’s down here.”

Kyle nodded, he also picked up her scent. They ran through the crypt going room to room, looking for her. It was obvious by the smell of the sweet blood if Emily was in the room or not, and Chevalier grew angrier and angrier as they passed room after room through the labyrinth of tombs.

Both of the heku stopped suddenly when they entered a room and her scent became stronger.

“Emily?” Chevalier called out again, but no one answered.

There were four large cement tombs in the small room, and Chevalier tipped the lid off of one while Kyle did the other.

“Em!” Kyle gasped as he pushed the heavy cement lid off of the last tomb.

Chevalier spun and was instantly at the tomb. He looked down, and fury rose into his face.

Emily was lying in the tomb on her side, wearing only her under clothes. Her wrists and ankles were bound with heavy chain. Her eyes were fully covered and she had padding covering her ears and a gag in her mouth. Both of them looked at her, lying there on the cold cement. She had no idea anyone was even near her. The Ancient made sure to cut off all of her senses. There were two red, swollen wounds on her neck that looked like they were infected. The Ancient had fed off of her savagely.

Chevalier reached for her, but Kyle pushed his hand away.

“What?” he hissed at Kyle.

“She’s going to burn anyone that touches her. It’ll be better if it’s me she uses her abilities on. You can stop her faster than I can,” Kyle said.

Chevalier sighed and nodded, Kyle had a point.

Kyle shut his eyes and readied himself for the pain. He reached out and swiftly pulled the padding from around her ears, then curled up on the tomb, clutching his chest and screaming. He writhed in pain as Emily scrambled to sit up and screamed against the gag.

“Em... Emily, it’s Chev, stop, that’s Kyle,” he said as fast as he could, and pulled her blind fold off.

Emily looked around, her eyes wide, but she still couldn’t see in the dark.

“Emily, stop it,” he said again before pulling the gag away from her mouth.

Kyle’s body relaxed, and he lay on the cement, panting. He was still gripping his chest and groaned.

Emily was struggling to adjust her eyes so she could see.

“It’s ok, I’m here,” Chevalier said, but when he touched the chains on her wrist, she pulled away from him and screamed.

“Shhh, it’s ok,” he said, and quickly broke the chains that bound her.

Emily stood up suddenly and fell against the wall of the tomb, then tumbled onto the cold floor. Chevalier was at her side instantly, and he touched her on the shoulder.

“Emily?” She was freezing, and he could see her body shiver violently, “Listen to me.”

“Don’t touch me,” she screamed, and pushed his hands away.

Chevalier slipped off his shirt and laid it across her shoulders, “You have to trust me.”

She pulled the shirt off and threw it into the wall, “Go away,” she yelled, then got on her hands and knees and felt around the floor to the wall.

He watched as she quickly felt her way up the wall until she was standing. He could see her body was tense and shaking uncontrollably.

“Emily,” Kyle said, finally getting to his feet.

She spun, putting her back against the wall and her eyes were fighting to see in the pitch darkness, “Go away.”

“It’s me, Kyle. Let me help you,” he said, reaching out for her.

Kyle screamed and fell to his knees, his back arched and he fell to the dirt stiffly.

“Emily, stop it, you’ll kill him,” Chevalier said, and moved to her side.

Kyle fell silent at her feet, and she began to edge away from them, feeling her way along the stone walls. She was breathing rapidly and he could see the vapors disappear into the cold air.

“Listen to me,” Chevalier said softly, and she spun quickly toward him.

“No, no more listening,” she hissed. She finally found the door and stepped out into another room full of dried bones.

He was beginning to understand, “I’m not the one that put you in here. Listen to my voice, you can tell the difference.”

She stopped and listened to him.

“It was an Ancient, the first of our kind. They were banished thousands of years ago because of their unwarranted aggression to the new beings on their planet, the humans. Ok? They killed mortals, tormented them,

and used them as toys.” He moved slowly toward her, glad she couldn’t see him.

He lowered his voice so she wouldn’t know how close he was, “The new heku, those like me, we banished them to the ground for eternity for what they did. I don’t know how one got out, but he’s been destroyed. The ancient ones, some have powers we don’t have any more. One of them was a shape shifter.”

Emily stopped and looked toward his voice, “He got out and was furious about how you lived among us and about how we had Allen. He tried to take your place. He thought if he could replace you, that he would have finally had his revenge on me, an Old One.”

“Do you understand?” he asked from right beside her.

“I don’t... I don’t know who you are,” she said, her voice was shaky.

“If you come back up above ground where you can see, we’ll show you. For now, though, you have to stop using your abilities on Kyle.” He reached out and touched her cold hand.

She jerked it away, “Don’t touch me.”

“Ok, ok, that’s fine. Follow my voice, I’ll lead you out,” he said, stepping ahead of her. She turned toward him with blind eyes and nodded slightly.

“You ok, Kyle?” Chevalier asked, looking at his first officer.

Kyle nodded and stepped ahead of Chevalier.

“Ok, follow my voice. Let’s get out of here. We need to get you warm,” he said softly. He wanted to reach out and take her in his arms, to rush her to the castle where it was warm.

“Talk to me... who was it that got you down here? Was it me or Kyle?” he asked, watching her feel her way along the cold, wet walls of the crypt.

“It was Chevalier,” she whispered.

He nodded, glad she couldn’t see the fury in his eyes, “Will you let Kyle touch you then? Can he just help you out of here?”

“No!” she screamed, and crouched down on the wall.

“It’s ok... he won’t touch you, I promise,” he told her, and she stood up slowly, dragging her back along the wall.

“Keep talking to me... how did he get you out of the castle?” Chevalier asked her softly. He could see light ahead, but knew her eyes wouldn’t be able to pick it up yet.

She shook her head and her teeth chattered in the dark.

“Ok then, I’ll talk. I had a meeting, I was out of town. When I came back, Kyle had locked the Ancient in the prison... he knew that wasn’t you.” He tried to keep her mind off of fighting them.

Emily stumbled over old bones and continued along the wall.

“The Ancient pretended to be you... but he thought you needed improved. He had you in frilly dresses, yelling at the staff, he even tried

to get Kyle fired.” He watched her, but she didn’t deviate from her current course of feeling along the wall.

“He didn’t realize that you don’t need improved. He thought I wanted a submissive, timid wife who was a tyrant to the castle and its servants. What he didn’t bank on was Kyle figuring it out so early and locking him up.” Chevalier reached his foot out and kicked a skull out of her way.

“I’m pretty sure he was planning on leaving you here until you died and hoping we’d never know. It was a bad plan. He didn’t have your temper.” He laughed and saw her wince, so he quickly changed tactics, “Allen hated him. He was probably the first that knew.”

Chevalier saw Emily turn her face toward the growing light, “There, you see, we’re almost out.”

She stopped as soon as she could see him and looked at him suspiciously.

“Prove it,” she hissed at him. Chevalier didn’t realize until that moment how many of the heku traits Emily acquired after living with them for so long.

“Prove that I’m me?” he asked, unsure exactly how.

She nodded.

He looked at Kyle, who shrugged, “Well, let me think.”

Emily rubbed her arms with her hand, trying to warm up a little.

“What do you want, Em? I don’t know how to prove it’s me.” He was getting frustrated with the way she shivered and was so close to getting warm.

Her eyes scanned him, “Then leave.”

“Leave?” He looked at the stairs and then back to Emily, “If I leave, are you going to come up?”

“As soon as no one is up there,” she said, and then crouched again when she heard the voices calling down to see if they needed help.

He nodded, “Ok... I’ll move everyone away. Head directly southwest to the castle.”

“Southwest?” she whispered.

“Away from the ocean.” He smiled and headed up the stairs.

Emily stood alone in the dark crypt, and listened as the voices grew quieter. She waited as long as she could stand it, and headed up the stairs slowly. It was still raining, and the drops were cold against her already frozen body. She wrapped her arms around herself and listened for the ocean, then headed away from it. She kept a keen eye out and listened for even the smallest noise of a heku, ready to ash them.

When she got free of the tree line, she could see the castle and stumbled through the mud, twigs, and rocks as they cut into her bare feet. The rain soaked her hair and she shivered worse now, her teeth clattered and she couldn’t seem to focus.

Chevalier watched her from behind the trees. His heart ached as she shivered and stumbled her way through the muddy pasture. Her hair was soaked and clung to her already cold body. He wanted to reach out and take her, grab her and run into the castle, but he knew getting close to her could get him killed.

Chevalier was never so happy to see Sam. Sam ran out of the barn toward Emily and threw a horse blanket over her shoulders. He growled when she threw the blanket to the ground and pushed Sam's hands away.

"When do we get to help her?" Kyle whispered from behind him.

"I don't know," Chevalier said, irritated.

Emily fell against the door to the castle and opened it, stepping inside she shut the door. Waiting a few minutes, Chevalier and Kyle stepped into the castle and followed the muddy footprints up the stairs and looked into her bedroom.

Emily was curled up on the floor in front of the fire. Her arms were wrapped tightly around her knees, which were pressed to her chest.

Chevalier cleared his throat, and she sat up quickly and looked over at him, "May we come in?"

Emily nodded slowly, but kept her eyes on both of them.

"Can I run you a bath? You have to warm up," Chevalier said as she sat shivering on the floor.

She nodded again, and he disappeared into the bathroom.

Kyle smiled at her, "I'll just say this for later... I'm not mad about the burning thing."

Her eyes narrowed.

Chevalier came back out, "It's ready."

He watched her as she lowered her forehead to her knees and trembled forcefully. She wanted to get into the warmth, but couldn't move her legs. The more she shivered, the harder it became to coordinate her muscles to move.

"To hell with it... ash me," Chevalier said before picking her up and taking her into the bathroom. He sat her down slowly into the hot, steamy water.

The heat seeped into her muscles, and they relaxed enough she could let go of her legs and stretch out in the water. She slipped off her underclothes and threw them out onto the floor.

"Thank you," she whispered, leaning back against the tub and shutting her eyes.

He touched her cheek softly, frowning when she winced, "You know it's me now?"

She nodded.

"How?" he asked curiously.

"You risked your life to get me warm... it had to be you," she whispered as the shivering began to die down.

Chevalier reached over and flipped on the jets, "Just sit back and relax. I'll go get you something to eat."

Emily nodded, unable to speak through her chattering teeth. She was hungrier than she could ever imagine. As far as she could tell, it was over two days since she'd had anything to eat or drink and her lips were

painfully dry. She looked around the bathroom. It all seemed surreal as she remembered the cold, dark tomb.

“Hungry?” Chevalier asked, setting down two trays on the counter.

She nodded.

“Gordon was confused... he sent two trays up.” He pulled off the domes, “Hrm, do you want a salad or a cheeseburger.”

Emily whispered, “Cheeseburger.”

He handed her the cheeseburger, and she ate it quickly, and then looked up at him embarrassed.

Chevalier laughed, “Eat it all, you have to be starving.” He handed over a plate of fries, and she leaned back in the tub and ate them more slowly.

Emily handed back the plate with half of it gone. He took the plate and when he turned around. She was standing up and slipping on her robe.

“Hrm, let me see,” he said, taking her wrist. She flinched, but he kept a firm grip. He looked at the deep red cuts where she had pulled against the chains, “How is it this keeps happening to you?”

She shrugged and stepped out of the tub. He saw the red cuts on her ankles too, and sighed, “I still have some gauze, we can bandage those up.”

She nodded again and went to the mirror to brush her wet hair.

Chevalier stood behind her and pulled her head down toward the side, “Let me see this.”

She avoided watching in the mirror as he examined the bite marks. She concentrated on his face and his eyes and how his look went from concerned to livid so quickly.

He inhaled sharply, "It's infected."

She pulled away from him and ran a brush through her hair, still avoiding the look of her neck. Chevalier moved to stand against the wall and watched her. She dried off and slipped on a nightgown.

"I'm ok," she said, turning to him.

He nodded, too irate to speak.

She smiled at him slightly and walked into the bedroom, looking around the room, "Where is Allen?"

"Anna has him, he's asleep in my room," Chevalier said, still keeping his distance.

Emily picked up the glass of ice water on the table and took a long drink, then placed it by the bed. She then laid down and pulled the down blankets up over her. The hot water had warmed her up, but the second she left its heat, she started to get cold again.

Chevalier wasn't sure what to do. He wanted to curl up next to her and wrap his arms protectively around her, but he wasn't sure what she needed.

"Em?" he asked, sitting by the bed.

She looked over the comforter at him.

“Where do you want me tonight?” He tried to make his voice light, so she wasn’t afraid to hurt his feelings.

She met his eyes, “Stay with Allen tonight, so he’s not alone.”

He nodded, it was as he’d expected. He kissed her forehead lightly, and then stood up.

“Please, no guards in the room tonight, lock the door and keep everyone out,” she said softly.

“Sure, Em,” he told her, and left the room, doing exactly as she said.

Chapter 14 - Ancients

Chevalier jumped out of the bed beside Allen when he heard the blood-curdling screams coming from the next room. He blurred into Emily’s room and quickly ascertained that she wasn’t in trouble. He sat down beside her and touched her shoulder softly as her body thrashed under the covers.

“Em,” he said, shaking her softly.

Emily sat up and began to claw at him, “Don’t touch me!”

“Emily, Em, it was a bad dream,” he said, pulling his hand back quickly.

She stopped suddenly and looked at him, breathing hard, “Chev?”

“It’s ok. It was a dream,” he said, touching her cheek softly as she laid back down.

She curled up on her side away from him and pulled the covers back up. He waited until she fell asleep, and then returned to Allen.

Emily woke up with the morning sun and felt every muscle in her body ache. She sat up slowly and groaned. Her neck was throbbing, and she explored the puncture site with her fingers. The area was hot and swollen. Getting stiffly to her feet, she headed toward the bathroom, trying on the way to stretch out her sore muscles.

She heard someone come into her room as she stepped into the steamy shower, but ignored them and shut her eyes as the hot water ran down her sore back. When she began to prune, she shut off the shower and slipped on a robe to see if her breakfast was here yet.

“Chev?” she asked, stepping out into the room.

“Good morning,” he said, smiling. He was seated at the small table and he lifted the dome off of the silver tray.

“That smells good,” she told him, and sat at the table before grabbing a slice of bacon. She curled up in the chair, her knees pulled against her chest, and started to eat.

“I have the yacht ready and the next week is clear... do you still want to go?” he asked, handing her a large glass of orange juice.

“We’re still going?” she asked, then took a long drink. Her lips were still dry and cracked from dehydration.

“Yes, I think now is as good a time as any. Anna is going to watch Allen for us.” He took the glass and put it back on the table.

Emily’s eyes narrowed, “We’re leaving Allen?”

“I really think you and I need to be alone.”

“But leaving him? What if something happens?” She dropped the second piece of bacon back onto the plate, no longer hungry. Wrapping her arms tightly around her legs, she laid her cheek on her knees and watched him.

“They know where we are going, this time I told Kyle. If anything happens, we’ll know, I promise,” he assured her. His expression was sad as he saw Emily sit in her defensive ball. He hadn’t seen her do that in a while.

She nodded, and then headed to the bathroom to get dressed. She quickly reappeared in jeans and a t-shirt and started packing a bag.

“Why don’t you finish eating?” he asked, eyeing the nearly full tray.

“Not that hungry I guess,” she told him, and dropped her bag by the table. “I’m ready.”

He nodded and wrapped the bacon and toast up in a napkin, “Just in case.”

The yacht was just south of the pier and Chevalier easily lifted her onto it. She looked around at the sparkling boat as he talked to the guards

quickly, and then took his spot on the bridge. As soon as they were away from land, Emily stripped down to her bikini and laid down on one of the cushioned deck chairs. The sun's heat felt amazing against her skin and she quickly relaxed.

Chevalier watched Emily from above and smiled. He pulled his eyes away from her and back to the instruments, then headed out to a predetermined spot on the Atlantic. Cutting the engines, he let down the anchor and joined Emily on the deck.

"You make it pretty hard to stay on the bridge," he said, adjusting his sunglasses as he sat down on the deck chair beside Emily.

"Mmm, the sun feels so good, I'm still cold," she said to him, never opening her eyes.

"Still? I knew I should have brought some B12," he sighed as he brushed a strand of hair off of her face. He pulled his hand back quickly when she flinched at his touch.

"I'll warm up. So are we going to chit-chat about my low blood supply or are you going to reveal why we're really out here?" she asked, turning her head to look at him.

"Am I that predictable?"

Emily nodded and shut her eyes again.

"Let's just enjoy the day, ok? We'll talk later," he suggested, then leaned back against his chair.

"Sure, whatever you say," she said lazily.

Chevalier grinned, “Whatever I say, eh? That’s new.”

“Yeah, well... don’t get used to it.”

Chevalier wanted to touch her, to cradle her and hold her in his arms. This entire trip was to break her out of whatever it was she was going through, but he felt she needed to get comfortable with him again. He cursed the Ancient who used his image to lure her into the crypt. Chevalier wished he could bring him back and make him feel more pain for what he did. Emily was guarded, untrusting, and on edge. Chevalier was reminded of her time with Keith and how long it had taken her to trust again.

Emily spent all morning out in the sun. She threw on a robe and came in only when it was time for lunch, then made a quick sandwich and sat at the table to eat.

“You’re turning pink,” Chevalier said, sitting next to her.

She glanced at her skin and wrinkled her nose, “I forgot sun screen. It’s ok, a little burn never hurt anyone.”

Emily ate in awkward silence. She’d gotten used to him watching her eat, but today it was uncomfortable. When she was done, she washed up the dish and went back out into the sun. This time she laid down on her front, so her back could get some color.

Chevalier sat down by her and squirted some sun screen into his hand. He warmed it up, and then touched her back. She jumped at his touch and balled her hands into fists, clinging to the towel. He ignored her and

rubbed the lotion into her back and legs, then began to massage the muscles he knew must be tight from lying on cement for two days.

His hand found nothing but knots in her back and her entire body was tense, “Emily, relax.”

“Please don’t... don’t touch me,” she said, pressing her face into the cushion of the chair.

“Just breathe. I’m not going to hurt you,” he whispered, noticing she was holding her breath.

She breathed in harsh gasps, “Don’t.” Emily tried to get up, but he held her down.

“I’m not hurting you. Now just let me work on these knots.” He truly thought he could help her, but part of him wasn’t sure he should touch her when she told him no.

Emily tried again to get up, and this time he let her. He watched her slip on a robe and disappear down into the living area. He sighed and followed her.

“Em,” he said softly as she went through the movies.

She ignored him and pulled out a movie, slipped it into the DVD player, and sat on the couch, drawing her knees up tightly to her chest and wrapping her arms around them. Chevalier sat down beside her, making sure to leave a gap of safety between them. He turned his attention to the TV, but his mind was far away.

Emily sat motionless through the two-hour movie, never once looking at Chevalier. He watched her through part of it and wished he could read her mind to find out what she was going through and what she was thinking.

As soon as the movie was over, Emily dropped her robe and slipped on an oversized t-shirt, then laid down on the bed.

“Are you ok?” he asked, watching her.

“Just going to take a nap,” she said, and shut her eyes.

Chevalier returned to the helm and watched the ocean around them. He sent his senses out to Emily and relaxed in her flowing emotions as she dreamed. A sudden jolt of fear rang through him, and he blurred to her side, just as she began to scream.

“Emily?” he whispered, gently touching her arm.

She jerked hard away from him, and tumbled off the bed, “Don’t touch me.”

“I’m sorry, I wasn’t thinking,” he said, leaning over the bed. “You were having a nightmare.”

Emily sank her head into her hands. Chevalier had enough, he leaned over and picked her up before she could complain, and sat her in the bed next to him.

“Enough waiting... what’s going on?” he asked, watching her closely.

“Nothing’s going on, ok?” she said, then got up and grabbed a drink before heading out into the sun. Chevalier followed her and sat down in the deck chair next to her.

“The Ancient...” he said, watching for a reaction, but saw none.

“Yeah?”

“He came to you as me right?”

“Yes.” She rolled onto her stomach and settled down in the chair.

“What did he say?”

“When?”

Chevalier sighed, “Your stubborn streak is showing... when he lured you out of bed.”

“I thought we were going to talk about this tomorrow.” She turned her head and looked at him.

“I changed my mind.”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” she said, shutting her eyes.

“I want to know.”

“It’s nothing,” she whispered, turning her face away from him.

“If it’s nothing then tell me how he lured you out of the castle.”

“Why do you want to know so badly?”

“It’s important for me to know. I want to know why you flinch when I touch you. I want to know why the nightmares.” He so badly wanted to reach out and touch her.

“Maybe I just don’t want touched right now.”

“It’s more than that.”

“No... it’s not.”

Chevalier touched the small of her back, lightly running his fingers along the curve of her spine. He watched as her skin twitched at this touch and she inhaled sharply. To further prove his point, he slowly moved his fingertips lightly down her side and slipped them under her bikini-bottom at her hip, and then watched as her body tensed and she sat up quickly.

“What did he do?” he asked, moving to sit in the chair beside her with his hand on her knee.

She brushed his hand away and tried to move away from him, but he held her in place and scooted so he was sitting up against her.

“Please, don’t,” she said, sitting straight backed and still, her eyes fixed on the horizon.

Chevalier growled and returned to the helm angrily. He watched her as she sat still and watched the waves for an unnaturally long time. As the sun was setting, she moved back to the living area and he stayed in his chair at the helm.

Darkness came quickly, and he headed back down to the room as soon as his temper calmed. One quick scan let him know she’d gone to sleep, so

he sat in a chair and watched her. He didn't have to send out his senses to see that she was having another nightmare. She began to thrash in bed and her hands clutched the bed sheets tightly.

She sat bolt upright in bed, and her eyes scanned the dark as she gasped.

Her eyes fell on Chevalier, "I couldn't ash him... ash you," she said in whispers.

He didn't know if he should answer, so he simply nodded. When she didn't move, he slowly slipped into the bed beside her and touched her hand lightly, she didn't pull away.

"Emily, how did he get you out of the castle?" he whispered, hoping they weren't about to move backwards.

She buried her face in her hands and shuttered, "God, I thought it was you."

"He fooled us, too." He watched her, the urge to take her in his arms growing stronger.

"We started kissing." Her voice was almost too soft to hear, "It wasn't right, he... he was grabbing my arms and it hurt. His lips were hard and Allen was sleeping right there. He wouldn't stop, it wasn't you."

"No, Em, it wasn't," he said, pulling the covers over her shoulders.

"I got away. He came at me like he was going to..." He could tell by the way her eyes scanned the room that she was watching it all happen again, "I told Allen to go to Anna, and he left, he was afraid."

“You were mad, kept saying I owed it to you. You kept touching my back, and my stomach and my arms. It was rough... like...” She swallowed hard, “It was like Keith. I ran, I don’t know where I was going, but I ran. I didn’t know where to go. It was you. Who would protect me from you?”

Chevalier watched her and was glad it was dark, so she couldn’t see the rage in his face.

“You caught up with me by the trees and dragged me down. I couldn’t see, it was too dark and it smelled so bad.” She shivered and her voice became softer, “I couldn’t see you. You would reach out and touch me, my face, my hand, my leg, but you weren’t there when I tried to find you. You were everywhere. Then you pinned me and I could feel your teeth against my neck, it hurt, it hurt like before.”

She didn’t need to specify before. Chevalier knew that before he came along, she was the unwilling victim to a slew of thirsty heku.

“I was glad when you tied me up and left me... when I couldn’t feel your hands on my skin. I thought I would die down there, alone... cold... Then you would come back... you would come back... and curl up with me in the dark. The hands always touching me and you would kiss my face and my neck then you would feed again while your hands touched my back and my legs. Always touching.”

Chevalier’s hands tightened into fists and he exhaled slowly.

“I wanted to turn you to ash, to stop the cold hands... but it was you... I couldn’t kill you. You said I didn’t deserve you.” She turned her eyes down to watch her hands, “That the baby was a mistake. How could you

love someone like me? I am just a vile, filthy mortal, and you only... only want sex.”

“That was not me,” he said, gritting his teeth.

She ignored him and continued, “You said... you wouldn’t kill me... and you’d bring me food if I would still... still sleep with you... in the crypt. I fought him until I was alone again, it was better.” She nodded, her eyes still a million miles away, “Better... yes it was better.”

Emily was finally silent and she lay back in bed and pulled the covers over her. He watched as her eyes shut and she drifted back to sleep.

Chevalier watched her sleep, this time she was still. He watched and wondered how she survived what she had gone through. She spent over 48 hours in the crypt with her unwanted visitor the only company. There was no food, no water, and no warmth. She hadn’t killed the Ancient when she could have because she still thought it might be Chevalier. He felt a surge of violence swell up inside of him and he blurred to the back deck and smashed the furniture into the side of the yacht, growling into the night.

He was calm again when the sun rose over the horizon, and he sat in the chair and watched her sleep. He was unmoving, his eyes never leaving her as the morning drew to a close, the sun directly above them. The cabin became stifling hot in the afternoon sun, and he quietly opened the windows to let cool air into the room, then he sat back down to wait.

She began to stir as the brisk evening air filtered into the room. Chevalier got up and started making some fried chicken, a meal Gordon taught him late one night while Emily was asleep.

“Are you mad?” He turned when her soft voice sounded behind him.

He frowned, “Why would I be mad?”

She shrugged and pulled her legs up close to her chest, then wrapped her arms around them and rocked as she watched him.

He turned back to the chicken, “I’m sure this won’t be as good as Gordon’s, but I’m hoping you’re hungry enough it’ll do.”

She smiled crookedly, “Smells good actually.”

Emily watched as he cut up potatoes and threw them in the pan with the chicken. Her stomach growled as the smell filled the night air. He filled a plate and set it on the table. She took the hint and sat down at the table to eat.

“This is really good,” she said, between bites.

He grinned, “Well, it’s no B positive.”

She wrinkled her nose and took another bite.

“Why would I be mad at you, Em?” he asked after a few minutes.

She shrugged and stabbed a piece of potato, “I should have known it wasn’t you.”

“He fooled both Kyle and I, too. Shape-shifters are good. This one had a lot of experience. Not good enough though, or Kyle wouldn’t have thrown him into the prison,” he chuckled.

“Tell me more about the Ancients. Were they the first heku?” She got up and got a glass of orange juice, and then sat down on the couch.

Chevalier joined her, still keeping his distance, “Yes, the very first.”

“How were they made then?”

“No one knows.”

“How old is he?” She ran her finger along the top of the glass.

“No one really knows. If you ask an Ancient, they will tell you they have always been.” He pulled a blanket off the back of the couch and laid it over her legs.

“Did an Ancient make you?”

“Yes, those of us directly made by the Ancients are known as Old Ones. That one didn’t make me, though. I’ve never seen him before.”

“You said the Ancients used mortals as toys.”

“Yes”

“That’s all I was then... a game.”

“I don’t think so. I think at first he wanted some fun, but then... well I think he may have fallen for you. There was no other reason he tried to... well... it’s just a theory.” He took her glass and went to the fridge to refill it.

“Did you help get rid of the Ancients?” She watched him and took the glass when he returned.

“Yes,” he said softly.

“Tell me.”

“Their games were getting old. The humans were become civilized and learning quickly. We knew it wouldn’t be long before we were outnumbered. We... meaning myself and the first Council, decided to talk to them and try to get the Ancients to leave the mortals alone. It didn’t work though, it made things worse. They thought nothing of kidnapping small children to torture and feed off of.” He watched the waves out the window.

“We did what we had to to protect ourselves, to protect our species.” He finally smiled at her, “We couldn’t kill them though, they were our past, our history. So they were banished to the ground for eternity.”

“Are they all on the island?” She shuddered.

“No, I didn’t even know one was here. Actually, I didn’t know about that crypt either.” He frowned.

“Then how did he get there?”

“When we finally decided to banish the Ancients, the call was given and heku everywhere did what they could. There must have been a colony on this island already, and when they banished him, they either didn’t tell anyone, or swore them to secrecy. Their secret followed them when they left.”

Emily thought for a moment, “So how did he get out?”

Chevalier shrugged, “That’s been bothering me. All I can come up with is that Larsen did it, though I don’t know why.”

“Larsen?” Her eyes narrowed.

“It’s the only explanation. Someone had to have dug up the Ancient, and then opened the sealed casket. He couldn’t have gotten out by himself.”

“There could be more then.” It wasn’t a question, and she watched the blank TV screen.

“No, the Ancients were scattered. They couldn’t even stand each other long enough to live together. He was alone.”

“So how did you get the island?” She’d wondered that before, but hadn’t bothered asking.

“It was three hundred years ago, and the Council got word of an out of control coven here. I was sent in to... well... exterminate the offenders.”

“But you didn’t... you saved them?”

“No, I did what I was sent to do. But I loved this place and the castle, so I moved my coven here.” He saw the shock on Emily’s face, “I told you, I’m good at my job.”

“How many did you kill?” she whispered.

“It’s not important.” He reached out to touch her, but she jerked slightly.

“You have to stop doing that.” He reached out slower and brushed the back of his hand against her arm.

She fought to calm her breathing.

“It wasn’t me,” he said, scooting closer to her.

She shut her eyes tightly, “I know.”

Chevalier reached around to the counter and grabbed a small yellow bottle of medicated gel and some gauze, “Let me see your wrist.”

Her eyes flew open, “Why?”

He sighed, “You know why. I just want to change the bandages.”

She reached her shaking hand out to him. He tore off the old bandage and smeared the yellow goo around her wrist as she watched him, scrutinizing his every move. He wrapped new gauze around it, and then started on the next.

Chevalier reached quickly for the gauze on her neck and she gasped and shied away from him, her hands by her face.

“Sorry, sorry, Em... it’s ok.” He slowly moved his hand closer to her and pulled off the gauze.

The puncture wounds were still red and swollen, but he thought they were getting better. It took a very careless heku to do that, one with no concern for the one from whom he drank. It infuriated Chevalier. He’d spent his entire life killing heku for less than that.

He pressed new, clean gauze against her neck and gently taped it into place as she stifled a yawn.

Chevalier smiled, “Bed time again?”

“I’ve slept a lot today already. Maybe a movie?” she asked, watching him get up.

He held a hand out for her, “Come on, I’ll tuck you in.”

She took his hand after a few moments and let him walk her to the bed, “I don’t want to sleep though, I slept all day.”

“It’s good for you, you’re still anemic and PTSD.”

She sat on the edge of the bed, and then thought for a moment before swinging her legs into bed, “P.T.S. what?”

He covered her up, “Post traumatic stress disorder.”

She frowned, “Are you making up diseases now?”

“No, that one’s real.”

Emily turned onto her side, “Chev?”

“Yeah?” he asked, turning out the light.

“Nothing, it’s ok, good night,” she said, snuggling down into the covers.

“Tell me,” he said, sitting on the bed beside her.

She reached out and took his hand, “Stay with me?”

“Of course.”

She rested her head against the back of his hand and shut her eyes, falling asleep quickly.

The night went better. She had only one nightmare, but otherwise slept peacefully. He could read her emotions and pick up parts of her dream as long as he could touch her. Chevalier spent the night delving into her dreams and feeling the foreign emotions flow through him. He marveled at how intricate and expressive her dreams were and how she was very much unlike her waking self in them.

She woke up feeling much better and smiled when she smelled the hot coffee brewing.

“Good morning,” she said, sitting up to watch him in the kitchen.

He walked over and kissed her forehead. She only jerked back slightly when he approached her, “Good morning.”

Emily stretched and then stood up. Her muscles were still stiff and sore, but not as bad as the day before. She poured herself some coffee and sat down at the table.

“What’s on the agenda for today?” she asked, sipping the hot coffee slowly.

He grinned, “First off... I’m giving you a massage.”

She frowned, “Why?”

“Because you’re still sore from being on the cement and also... let’s call it therapy.”

“Oh so now you’re Freud?” She could feel the panic begin to swell inside of her.

He chuckled, "I met the man and I'm not like him at all... I'm not claiming to be a psychiatrist."

"You met Sigmund Freud?" She couldn't help but sound shocked.

"Yes, interesting man, but not one I spent a great amount of time with."
He passed a bowl of fruit over to her.

"I still don't need a massage. I'm not even sore today," she lied.

He chuckled again, "Yes you are."

She grabbed a few grapes and sat back in her chair again, drawing her legs up to her chest. She winced slightly as her muscles screamed at her, but she fought to keep her face from showing it.

"No massages," she snapped at him. She hated when he was right, but the thought of his hands on her made her panic.

"I'm not fighting with you today," he said, watching her.

"Good, no massage... no fight."

"Oh you're getting a massage. Your entire back is full of knots."

"Fine... then let's go back to the island, and I'll hit the mainland and find a masseuse." She thought that sounded reasonable.

He grinned, "No."

"Why are you so set on this?" She watched him carefully.

"Hmm let's see. You're sore, you flinch when I come near you, you're stressed out, not sleeping, and, well... because I can think of no better

way to spend the day than running my hands all over you. ” He said the last part with a grin.

“Ever consider maybe I just don’t want to be touched?” She glared at him.

“Yes I have, and if it was a regular thing... even something I had seen once in the past, then I would respect your wishes, but I know why and I’m not going to have you afraid of me.” His amused expression left.

“I’m not afraid of you,” she said, looking deep into his eyes.

“Maybe that wasn’t the right terminology.” He thought for a moment, “How about, repulsed by my touch.”

She frowned, “That sounds awful.”

“Well, how would you explain it?”

“It’s not you. I don’t want touched by anyone right now.” She grabbed a knife from the counter and began to cut up a fresh mango.

“Just a strange mainland masseuse?”

She sighed, “Ok, so maybe I wouldn’t have actually done that.”

Chevalier laid his head back and laughed.

Emily threw a piece of sticky mango at him and hit him on the cheek. He wiped off his face with a napkin and grinned.

“You’re trying way too hard to start a fight with me. It’s not going to work,” he said. He was prepared for this.

“I am not,” she snapped at him. Chevalier laughed again and she roughly pushed her chair away from the table and stood up, then stormed up the stairs.

Emily sat down on the deck chair, slid on her sunglasses, and leaned back. She sat up quickly when she felt Chevalier sit by her on the chair. When she saw a bottle of massage oil in his hand, she tried to stand up quickly, but he held her to the chair.

“Let me up,” she said, pulling against his hands.

“Nope... roll over,” he told her, and flipped her over quickly before straddling her hips to help hold her down.

“Let me go... please.” She was starting to panic. He could feel her muscles tighten up and her breathing quicken.

Emily fought to get up, but the weight of him on her hips kept her from moving much. She knew he was holding most of his own weight himself, but she still couldn’t manage to maneuver out from under him. She gasped when she felt his hands undo her bikini top and slip it off.

“Hey!” she yelled. Emily pushed herself up onto her elbows.

“Hush,” he said as he warmed the liquid in his hands. He rubbed the oil into his hands and placed his hands squarely on her back, then left them there as she fought to get out from under him. Slowly, he began to work at the knots in her neck and shoulders. He suddenly realized she wasn’t breathing anymore and her body was trembling.

“Emily, breathe,” he reminded her, and she took a short shallow breath.

She couldn't think. Every ounce of her wanted to run away from him. The feel of his hands on her back made her entire body ache. She couldn't move and hated to be pinned. It was hard to breathe, and she felt like she was back in that tomb, back with the rough, cold hands. She pulled at the edge of the chair, trying to pull out from under him. Her head swam. She could feel darkness coming from around her, the cold darkness of the crypt.

"Emily!" Chevalier said harshly. "Stop it."

His words brought her back to the present. She felt the warm sun on her back and the cool breeze coming over the deck. She pressed her face into the pillow. His hands moved expertly across her shoulders. As she concentrated on the feel of his hands, she recognized they weren't the same. His hands were touching her gently and moving slowly from her shoulder to her neck. She calmed as his fingertips lightly glided down her back, following the natural curves of her body.

Emily focused on his touch, on the differences. The hands in the crypt had been cold and rough. The uncaring hands were forceful and painful. Chevalier's were nothing like that. She knew he possessed the strength to kill her in an instant, to sink his hands into her chest if he wanted. Instead, his touch was soft and gentle. His fingers were carefully outlining the muscles in her back. Even when he kneaded the knots in her back, he was tender and soothing.

Chevalier was pleasantly surprised when she stopped fighting and began to relax. He was able to work on the knots in her neck, and he smiled as they began to disappear. She didn't flinch when he ran his hands along her back, and her breathing was calm.

Emily rolled over on the deck chair and this time, he let her. Her green eyes were no longer afraid. She looked up at him and he felt the intensity of her gaze. Reaching down, he kissed her softly and felt her hands wrap around his neck.

Chapter 15 - Exploring

“Hey, Baby!” Emily said, holding her hands out for Allen. He ran to her and jumped into her arms. She hugged him tightly to her.

Chevalier smiled at them and ruffled Allen’s hair with his hand.

“How was it?” Chevalier asked Anna.

“Oh he’s an angel, you know that, though,” she told him, and smiled. Never, in her 1200 years, had she ever thought she could be this attached to a mortal.

“Hopefully you didn’t spoil him too badly,” Chevalier said, laughing.

“Oh, not at all,” Anna replied, and winked at him.

Kyle walked in and eyed Emily quickly before turning away from her. He was caught off guard by her bikini and sarong. She normally didn’t

wear such things around others and he was afraid of Chevalier's jealous streak.

"Chief Enforcer," Kyle said, walking over to him.

"Good afternoon," he said, his eyes still on Emily and Allen. "Anything new?"

"Nothing, it's been very quiet. The Elders would like a phone call though, they've called a few times." He quickly glanced at Emily, and then back to Chevalier.

"Oh? Did they say why?" he asked, finally turning to face Kyle.

"No, they said it wasn't an emergency, but wanted to talk to us both when you got back."

Chevalier nodded, "Em, we're going down to my office for a bit."

She nodded and sat Allen down, "That's ok, I'm going to go check on the horses."

"Come on, Allen, let's go get lunch," Anna said, taking Allen's hand.

Emily headed to her room to change. She knew perfectly well that she wasn't going to check on the horses. She wondered a lot during the week long yacht trip about something, and she was anxious to check it out. She changed quickly into jeans and a t-shirt, and then grabbed a jacket from the closet before heading out to the barn.

"Welcome back," Sam said, smiling at her.

“I’m taking Patra out for a bit,” she told him, and grabbed a bridle and the backpack she sometimes carried for longer trips.

“Sure thing,” Sam told her, opening the stall door for her.

Emily threw a bridle on Patra, and then stepped on a bale of hay to slide up onto her back. She clicked her tongue and headed Patra out to the west pasture. She wanted the illusion that she was headed toward the beach.

Once she hit the west beach, Emily checked to make sure she was alone, and then followed the beach up toward the tree line. From there, she watched the trees closely, looking for the familiar oak. When she found it, she slid off of Patra and grabbed a flashlight out of her backpack. She dropped the pack by the mare and secured her reins to a strong branch.

Emily headed into the trees. She hoped she could still find it and that it hadn’t been covered. She was looking around her when she almost fell into the hole, but caught herself against a branch. The cement slab was still set off to the side of the crypt entrance. She took a deep breath and descended the stairs, turning her flashlight on when she reached the bottom.

Emily scanned the first room. It was a small room with stone walls and a single doorway. She headed off through the doorway, carefully watching ahead of her. Each room she came to, she scanned with the flashlight, and stopped often to examine the skeletons. Most seemed human, but once in a while, the elongated and sharp canines of the heku were present.

She looked through each room. She wasn't sure what she was looking for exactly, but she was driven. Hours passed, and she wondered if anyone was looking for her yet. She hoped not, if her plan worked, they still thought she was out taking a casual ride.

Something glittery caught Emily's eye and she walked over to a small alcove as she slipped the flashlight into the pocket of her jacket. The skeleton was human and was laid out alone on a long cement bed. She reached out and gently touched the golden crown on his head. She brushed a thin layer of dust off of it and ran her fingers along the inlaid jewels, then looked around the cement bed and saw a long sword lying alongside the skeleton. Emily used all of her strength to pick the sword up and slide it off of the slab, but it was extremely heavy, and the tip hit the ground with a loud crash.

She cringed, and looked around her, but nothing moved. She grinned and set the heavy sword down on the ground.

Dusting off her hands and pants, she grabbed the flashlight and headed back down the passageway. There was one door she couldn't open, a heavy stone door with intricate runes carved into it. She pushed as hard as she could, but wasn't able to move it at all. As Emily came to each room, she looked around carefully, being sure not to miss anything.

In one room, she frowned and moved over to something lying on the ground. Emily picked it up and smiled, it was Chevalier's shirt. She'd forgotten that he tried to give it to her. That would mean she found the room in which she was kept.

Emily looked around the room and into each of the four tombs. Their lids were scattered around the room, so she wasn't sure which she had

been in, there were no signs of anything in any of them. She looked around the room with her flashlight. There was nothing remarkable about this room. The stone walls were bare and the four crypts were lying empty. If it hadn't been for Chevalier's shirt, she wouldn't have been able to distinguish this room from any of the others.

Emily froze when she heard a soft sound from outside the room. She turned quickly and pointed the flashlight into the hallway. Nothing was there and nothing moved. She peeked around the wall slowly, and then down the narrow stone hallway.

"Is someone down there?" she asked. Her voice echoed off of the walls and she smiled to herself.

Her flashlight lit up several more doors, and she decided to keep on with her task of exploring the crypt. Two of the rooms were empty, and one had two skeletons lying on the dirt floor, side by side. She went closer to look at the skulls and saw that they were heku. She looked at how their arms were folded across their chests, and how the scattered pieces of decayed fabric that covered them were the same dark green color.

"I buried them." She heard the voice from behind her and spun quickly, shining her flashlight on the heku.

"Larsen?" she asked, taking a step back.

"Welcome back, Child," he said, and took a step toward her.

"What are you doing in here?" she asked, shocked. She couldn't step back any further because her back was against the cold wall.

"I live down here," he said, smiling.

“You... you live down here?”

“Yes.” His smile was menacing.

“Why... why... you let the Ancient out,” she said, stammering. He was now blocking the door.

“Yes I did.” It shocked her that he didn’t deny it.

“Then you were down here while I was.”

“I was.”

“Why didn’t you help me?”

“Help you, Child? It was my idea. Why would I help you?”

“What? Why?”

He took a step toward her, “I’ve been watching you for over a year... listening to your conversations... I know what you can do, and I need that.”

Emily took a step to the side, “Need it for what?”

Larsen laughed, “My return, of course.”

“You were in the castle then? Watching me?” She frowned, beginning to get angry.

“No, no. I can’t go into the castle unnoticed. The tunnels from this crypt go under the castle and from there I could hear everything. The Ancient and I spent months studying everything, every voice, every conversation... every fight.” He smiled, amused.

Emily could already feel her temper rising.

Larsen sighed, “You ruined my plans, you know that? Well... the Ancient partially did. He wasn’t supposed to improve on you... he was supposed to be you.”

“Why?” She was feeling trapped, far underground with a strange heku.

“If the current occupants of the castle didn’t know you were missing, you would have eventually done as we asked just to survive. Oh to have a Winchester child on our side.”

She cringed, “Wouldn’t have happened.”

He smiled, “It would have happened. The perfect plan destroyed because the Ancient couldn’t control himself, pity.”

“It wouldn’t have happened, everyone knew that wasn’t me.”

“That was the problem, the months studying you and he messed it up. I’m thinking though... maybe I don’t need him after all. No one knows you’re down here. Why would you come back to this awful place?” He moved a step toward her and tried to lock her eyes.

“That doesn’t work on me,” she hissed.

“I had to try... odd how that doesn’t affect you.”

Emily stared at him and let her rage and fear go. She concentrated on him. It was time to turn him to ash.

Larsen laid his head back and laughed, “Silly child, we wouldn’t have done this if we hadn’t protected ourselves from you.”

She frowned, “How?”

“I’m not going to tell you.” He moved to her and pressed his body against hers. Larsen leaned his head down and smelled deeply as he ran his nose along her neck.

He sighed, “I guess I don’t need the Ancient... myself and a Winchester is all I need to start my own, perfect faction of heku.”

“I’m not going to follow you,” she said, her body tensing.

Larsen grinned and ran his hand down her neck, “I don’t need you to follow me. That’s what the baby is for.”

Emily pushed against him furiously, “You can’t have Allen.”

He stood still, she wasn’t able to move him, “Allen is useless to me. I need a female.”

She cringed as she felt his cold tongue against the skin on her neck. Emily brought her knee up hard into his groin and he doubled over, giving her just enough time to run through the doorway. She headed down the hallway as quickly as she could, but soon felt cold hands push her to the ground. She turned toward him.

“Lost, Emily? You ran the wrong way,” Larsen said, laughing.

“I’m not going to let you do this.”

Larsen raised an eyebrow, “Oh? You know... this would be much easier if you would just join me now. I don’t really want to wait any longer.”

She laughed, “I’m not going to join you.”

“Think about it. Our own faction, stronger than the other three, more powerful than all of them combined. We could have our own country, we would be royalty.” He stepped toward her and ran his tongue along his sharp canines.

Emily smiled, “I’m not going to join you, and let me just forewarn you, I’m not afraid of you either.”

Larsen was taken aback for a moment, then regained his smugness, “You will be, Child, unless you do as I ask.”

“Did you hear that?” Chevalier asked, and turned to look down the hallway behind him.

“Hear what?” Kyle asked, turning also.

“Emily, but she sounded weird, like she called from far away.”

“I didn’t hear anything.” Kyle shrugged.

Chevalier turned back and started walking again, “It’s not going to be hard to get Emily out for it. She understands that she interferes with the process. Maybe I’ll send her to Colorado for a bit.”

“You sure she’ll go to Colorado without you?”

“No I’m not... there, did you hear that?” Chevalier froze again.

Kyle stopped and listened carefully, “I’m not hearing anything.”

“She said something about the crypt. She’s too quiet and I only heard part of it.” He frowned and looked around again.

“Didn’t we have the crypt sealed?”

“Not yet, I wanted to go check it out first, but I haven’t had the time.”

Kyle thought for a moment, “Well let’s go now.”

“Good idea. I just want to make sure nothing else is hiding in there,” Chevalier said, turning for the back door.

“As for Colorado, I’m sure that would work if you can get her to go. This one’s important, all three Elders are coming for it,” Kyle reminded him.

“I know, and I’m sure she’ll help in any way she can.”

As the two heku walked past the barn, Kyle pointed to the corral, “Patra’s missing.”

Chevalier turned to look, “She wouldn’t go into the crypt alone, would she?”

Kyle shrugged, “With Emily… no one knows.”

Chevalier growled slightly, and then blurred toward the crypt, stopping at Patra.

“Well, what have we here?” Kyle asked, patting Patra’s nose and picking up the backpack.

“You know, my life would be easier if I’d just kill her myself,” Chevalier hissed.

Kyle smiled, “But how boring that’d be.”

Chevalier couldn’t help but smile, “Yeah it would be. Well let’s go see what trouble she’s found now.”

“What makes you think the Elders from the other three factions are going to let you get away with this?” Emily asked as she looked up at him from the ground.

“They won’t have a choice, will they? Not with one of the fabled Winchesters. If they fight, then you will turn them to ash.” He had it all worked out and his confidence was evident.

“That’s assuming I will do as you say... which would be a mistake.”

“You will, Child. That I promise you.” He grinned and leaned against the wall.

“Oh... don’t make promises you can’t keep,” Chevalier said from behind them.

Emily looked up and grinned as Kyle and Chevalier came into the light. Larsen turned and crouched, hissing.

Kyle met his crouch, his hands balling into fists.

“Are you ok, Em?” Chevalier asked, giving her a hand.

“Sure,” she told him, and stood up before brushing herself off.

Chevalier turned back to Larsen, “Fancy meeting you down here.”

“He lives here,” Emily explained.

Chevalier raised an eyebrow, “I see.”

“He raised the Ancient, and then they came up with the plan to replace me in the castle. These tunnels go under the castle and from there, they listened to us over the past year. That’s how they were able to find out so much about me,” she explained, watching as Kyle moved to Larsen and grabbed his shoulders.

“That’s not right... she’s lying!” Larsen yelled, glaring at Emily.

Emily gasped, “So much for our combined effort to start a new, superior faction.”

Larsen’s eyes darted from Emily to Chevalier.

“Your idea was it? Were you down here with her?” Chevalier asked, his eyes furious.

“No... no I would have helped her,” Larsen said quickly.

“Hmm, thought you said it was you in the tomb with me and not the Ancient,” Emily said, cringing back as Chevalier jumped at Larsen and pinned him against the wall, his hand firmly around the former Elder’s neck.

The smaller heku tried to push Chevalier away, but he couldn't get enough strength. He watched, with wide eyes, as Kyle took Emily's arm and began leading her down the hallway away from them.

"Come on, let's go," Kyle said to her.

Emily watched for as long as she could, and then turned her flashlight toward where she and Kyle were walking. As soon as she saw the light filtering down from the staircase, she heard the screams begin. The sudden noise made her jump, and she dropped her flashlight.

"Come on, keep going," Kyle said, helping her up the stairs.

Emily shielded her eyes against the strong sunlight and moved quickly to Patra. She grabbed her backpack from the ground and turned to look at Kyle.

"So, how mad is he?" she asked softly.

Kyle laughed, "I'm not sure he'll be mad when he comes back up."

"Are you kidding? He was livid."

"Was... he's getting some much needed... erm... aggression therapy," Kyle explained.

Emily released the reins from the branch and hoisted herself up onto Patra, "Well I hope he gets it all out. I'm not in the mood for a fight."

"Why were you down there?" Kyle asked, frowning.

"I don't know. I just wanted to see."

“You didn’t think it might be dangerous?”

“No. You know, I don’t walk around looking for trouble. I don’t purposely get myself into odd situations that could be potentially fatal,” she snapped.

“You seem to find them a lot, though,” he mused.

Emily leaned over and put her hands under her head on Patra’s back and hooked her feet together on Patra’s rump.

Kyle looked at her and laughed.

“What?” she asked, irritated.

“How tall are you?” Kyle asked, grinning.

Her eyes narrowed, but she didn’t answer.

“Oh come on, you can’t be mad at me for that,” he chuckled.

“What’d you do to her now?” Chevalier asked, coming out of the trees. He was covered in blood and his eyes were energetic and bright.

“I just asked how tall she is,” Kyle said, smiling at Chevalier. It wasn’t often he got to see the Chief Enforcer so euphoric.

Chevalier leaned his head back and laughed.

Emily scowled at them. Slowly, she sat back up and took the reins with a glint in her eyes.

“Come on, Patra, let’s show them who runs this place,” Emily said, and kicked Patra into a gallop.

Kyle and Chevalier each blurred to her side, laughing as she ducked lower to help speed up the mare. The mare seemed to understand the challenge and lowered her head, pushing harder. Kyle was laughing at her side, but holding steady as Chevalier pulled a little ahead.

The barn came into view as the three flew across the pasture. Emily fell behind Chevalier and Kyle and watched as they egged each other on. She could see their lips moving as they pushed each other and continued to pull further away from her. Chevalier made it into the barn first and turned just as Kyle ran through the door.

Emily slowed Patra when she got in, and patted the mare's head, "It's ok, they cheat."

She screamed as Chevalier pulled her from the horse and tossed her over his shoulder, "Put me down!"

"What do we do to the loser?" Chevalier asked, turning to Kyle.

"Hmm, let's see... I seem to remember something about showing who runs this place."

Chevalier glanced around.

"We could find out exactly how tall she is," Kyle suggested.

Emily screamed, "Don't do it!"

"Oh, I know how tall she is," Chevalier said.

"No you don't!" She fought, but couldn't get away from him. He held his hand against her back so she couldn't fling herself backwards and get loose.

“We could weigh her,” Kyle said, and jumped back as she took a swing at him.

Chevalier laughed, “I know how much she weighs, too.”

Emily slumped against his back, “I hate you.”

“Oh I know, Dear,” Chevalier said. “I have an idea.”

Emily looked up as best as she could when Chevalier walked out toward the cow pasture.

“What? Where are we going?” she asked, panicking.

Kyle was smiling, “Good call, Boss.”

“What? Tell me!” she yelled.

Emily felt herself falling backwards moments before she was submerged in freezing cold water as he threw her into the cow’s water trough. She gasped and stood up quickly, glaring as Kyle and Chevalier laughed.

“Now we know who’s boss,” Kyle said, laughing.

Emily caught her breath, “Oh I am, and I’ll get you back for this.”

Thunder sounded from above and they all looked up.

“Let’s get inside,” Chevalier said, reaching out for Emily’s hand. She faked being mad and swatted his hand away, and then quickly jumped onto his back. He gasped as her wet shirt soaked through to him.

“You asked for that,” Kyle said, starting for the house.

Chevalier shook his head and followed Kyle back to the house with Emily on his back. Once in the castle, Kyle headed off when Storm called him, and Chevalier took Emily up to her room. She slid off of his back and went into the bathroom to change. She emerged a short time later wearing her bikini.

“Mmm,” Chevalier sighed, wrapping his arms around her waist.

Emily put her hands on his face and kissed him softly.

“Want to go swimming with Allen and I?” she asked, pulling away from him.

“Nope,” he said as his eyes followed her perfect body from her face to her feet.

“Can you even swim?” she asked, heading toward the door.

“Yes”

“Sure you can.” She grinned and took Allen from Anna.

Chevalier just smiled and followed them down into the pool room. He held the door for her because she still wasn't able to open it.

Emily cradled Allen as she walked down into the warm water, and then leaned back, floating on the water as Allen laid back against her stomach and kicked his feet.

Chevalier watched them in awe. He would never understand the mother/child bond, but it fascinated him. He slipped out of the pool area when he heard Storm call for him from his office.

Chapter 16 - Selest

“Emily,” Kyle said, kneeling down by the pool.

“Hiya, Kyle, coming for a swim?” Emily asked, and caught Allen as he jumped off the side of the pool.

“Ky sim,” Allen said when he saw the heku.

Kyle grinned, “I can’t come swim right now... Emily, the Elders are here and they want to talk to you, immediately.”

Emily frowned, “Why?”

“Not my place to ask, come on. I’ll take Allen,” Kyle said, standing up.

Emily hesitantly crawled out of the pool and handed Allen over, “Tell them I’ll be right there after I change.”

“Sorry, no time,” he explained, and handed her a towel.

She gasped, “I can’t change?”

Kyle started ushering her out of the room, “No, we need to hurry.”

Emily wrapped the towel around her as best she could and scowled all the way to the conference room. Kyle opened the door and Emily stepped in, then spun and tried to get out the door, but he blocked her. There were three heku at the table wearing dark green robes with their hoods pulled up over their heads so she couldn't see their faces.

“Emily, sit, please,” one of the Elders said. She blushed profusely. They were in traditional Equites robes, and she was in a bikini wrapped in a towel.

“I should ash you,” Emily whispered to Kyle, but blushed worse when he laughed.

“Sit,” he said, shutting the door. Emily turned and sat down at the head of the table, a seat or two away from the others.

“Can we get you anything, Emily?” Maleth asked.

“No, thank you,” she said, and shifted uncomfortably in the seat.

“Ok, let's get on with it then,” Chevalier said. Emily's eyes widened. She didn't know Chevalier was even here. She realized that meant only two were Elders. She changed seats to sit beside him.

Maleth sighed, “It's time, Chevalier.”

Chevalier's hands tightened into fists, “Already?”

Emily's body tensed. She could tell by the tone in his voice that something was wrong.

“It's getting worse. We can't have this,” Leonid said.

“Now though? It seems like an unstable time for such a change,” Chevalier said dryly.

“It has to be now,” Leonid said.

“Why are you telling me?” Chevalier asked.

“It’s going to be you,” Maleth said.

Emily felt Chevalier’s hands ball into tight fists and she started to panic as he growled deeply.

She cleared her throat and felt all three look at her, “What’s going to be him?”

Chevalier sighed, “They want me to take Selest’s place as an Elder.”

She frowned, “No.”

“Excuse me?” Maleth asked, shocked.

“I don’t want him to be an Elder.” Her voice was higher than usual as the panic grew.

“Emily, not now,” Chevalier hissed at her, and her eyes grew wide.

“When?” He turned and asked the others.

“Soon, things have gotten bad,” Maleth told them.

Chevalier turned to Emily, and then back to the Elders, “Why did you have Emily come?”

Leonid sighed, “We hope to avoid the nasty battle with her supporters... Emily gives us the advantage of a clean kill.”

She gasped and pushed her chair back to stand, but Chevalier’s hand shot out and held her in her chair.

“No, I can do it,” Chevalier said angrily.

“You know how many supporters Selest has. It’s more than just doing away with her. We would need to get through her protectors. If Emily could simply... turn her to ash... it would avoid any unexpected complications,” Leonid explained.

“No,” Emily whispered.

“Emily, it’s for the good of the faction,” Maleth said, and pulled his hood back so she could see his face.

She shook her head.

Leonid brought his hood down, followed by Chevalier. She looked into his eyes and could tell he wasn’t happy.

“She can’t kill an Elder. You know what the implications would be,” Chevalier said.

“No one would know what happened, that’s the beauty of it,” Maleth said excitedly. “Never have we been able to replace a member of the Council without fighting and innocent heku dying.”

“I said I can do it... alone,” Chevalier growled at them.

“That would be too messy... then we would have the years and years until the faction members all trusted you again,” Leonid reminded him.

Emily’s mind swam. She thought of Larsen and how he was ousted for being thought of as weak. Everything involved in being an Elder scared her. The Elders were above reproach and they were both hated and feared by anyone outside of the Council. She didn’t want to move off of the island. She didn’t want her husband to have endless meetings and missions.

Maleth reached out and touched her arm lightly, “We can’t order you, Emily, you aren’t a heku. So we have no right to force you to do this.”

She pulled away from his touch and looked at Chevalier, “Don’t do it.”

“I have to. They can’t order you, but once the decision is made to replace an Elder, it’s permanent,” he said to her.

“No,” she said, and turned to the Elders. “Pick someone else.”

“The decision is made,” Leonid said to her. His eyes were warm and understanding.

“I saw what happened to Larsen,” she whispered, her eyes quickly darting across the table.

Maleth stiffened, “Larsen?”

“Yes, the former Elder. He’s been living in a crypt under the island for 600 years,” she said, not looking up from the wood pattern on the desk.

“How do you know this?” Leonid asked quietly.

Emily looked at Chevalier and frowned.

Chevalier turned to them, “Larsen broke out of the crypt and took Emily for a few days. I told this all to Selest.”

“She failed to pass that information on to us,” Leonid hissed.

“Has he...” Maleth began, but Chevalier nodded.

“I took care of him.”

“My point is that he was banished for being weak and turned into this old... shrivel... slumped over thing that spent his days plotting revenge. He was vile, he smelled, he hated...” Emily shivered.

“That won’t happen to Chevalier, Emily. He’s stronger than Selest and Larsen combined. It’s unfortunate you had to see that, and we apologize for any harm he might have done,” Leonid said.

“Pick someone else,” she said angrily.

“We can’t,” Maleth said. “Chevalier is the strongest of the Council, probably even more so than Leonid or I. We need that on the Council.”

“What happens to Emily when I’m made an Elder?” Chevalier asked softly.

“What do you mean what happens to me?” she asked, her eyes scanning them.

“An Elder can’t have a mortal wife, it’s a sign of weakness. It’s never been done,” Maleth said, sighing.

Emily was so angry she felt tears in her eyes, “So that’s it then? I kill off an Elder, Chevalier takes her place, and then what... I go back to Montana? Take Allen and start over without him? Sounds easy to you I would imagine.”

“Except, we can’t let a Winchester out of our protection,” Leonid said, rather coldly.

Emily stood up and glared at them, “How about I ash you both right now and we start a new Council.”

Maleth and Leonid jerked and pushed their chairs back away from her, horrified.

“Emily, stop,” Chevalier said kindly, and touched her arm.

Emily continued to glare at the two Elders.

“She’s not going to turn you to ash,” Chevalier told the Elders.

Emily sat down and gave the Elders an icy stare. The Elders calmed some and pushed their chairs back to the table.

“We will have to discuss the bonding later, for now we just need to take care of Selest,” Maleth said as he watched Emily carefully.

“Oh you think? I say we discuss the bond now, or I walk,” Emily yelled at them.

“Child, you can’t just walk... there are a thousand heku on this island that will do our bidding. You know, at least for now, you can’t get away,” Leonid said, amused.

“Is that a challenge?” Emily asked, trying again to stand up, but Chevalier stopped her.

“I wouldn’t do that, Leonid. She’s escaped from here often enough,” Chevalier said, grinning, and then he nodded when Maleth looked at him questioningly.

“Very well... what are our options?” Maleth asked Leonid.

“Simple,” Leonid said thoughtfully. “We break the bond or...”

Both Emily and Chevalier shouted, “No.”

“Or,” he emphasized. “We go with her being bonded to Kyle.”

“I don’t want to pretend to be with Kyle,” Emily said, crossing her arms.

“Why can’t we just use the Winchester thing... she’s not merely a mortal and everyone in this room knows that,” Chevalier suggested.

“That might work, but of course, then we would have to let everyone know who she is and what she can do. Do you want that?” Leonid asked Emily.

“Perfect, so I keep my husband, but now everyone’s afraid of me,” Emily said icily.

“Do you have any suggestions?” Maleth asked her.

“Yes, I do... find someone else,” she hissed.

“Let’s just calm down,” Chevalier said, taking Emily’s hand. “I’ll take care of Selest alone, and then the heku will just have to live with the fact

I'm bonded to Emily and if they have a problem with it, I'll take care of them, too. A few missing heku and no one will mention it again. If they think I'm weak... then bring them on."

"You can't take on Selest and her supporters alone," Leonid said.

"I can and I will. I'm not going to bring Emily into this," Chevalier said dryly.

Leonid looked at Maleth, and then back to Chevalier, "Very well."

"Wait," Emily said. "I'm not ok with this."

Chevalier smiled at her, "It's going to be easy, Em. Don't worry about it."

She frowned, "No, find someone else or I'll disappear."

Leonid gasped, his eyes wide, "What?"

"Yeah... if I'm that valuable, then you'll meet my demands or I'll disappear. Ask Chev, I can do it." She looked at them boldly.

"Em," Chevalier whispered. "They can't find someone else."

"We can have you restrained," Maleth said bluntly

Emily stood up and glared at him, "I dare you."

"Sit, Em," Chevalier said to her, and then turned to Maleth. "If you threaten my wife again, you'll be an Elder short."

"Find someone else." Emily gritted her teeth and accentuated each word.

“They can’t, Emily, it’s done,” Chevalier said to her calmly.

“Fine... I’m leaving then.” She tried to storm out of the conference room, but found her way blocked by Kyle, “Move.”

Kyle glanced at Chevalier and held his position.

Emily spun and glared at Chevalier, “I won’t stand for this. I’m not going to sit by and watch our lives upended by this. I don’t want to leave the island, and I don’t want to watch you buried for 600 years. It’ll be easier if I just go, then I don’t have to watch.”

“You don’t have to leave the island. This will still be Chevalier’s coven, and he can come back on weekends,” Maleth said, and recoiled when Emily jumped at him angrily.

“Then what? Then if he needs a booty call he comes back? Is that what I am?” she asked, seething.

“That’s not what I meant,” Maleth said quickly. “I just meant he’s not restricted from coming back when he wants.”

Emily screamed and walked to the door, when Kyle met her, she glared at him, “Get out of my way or I’ll make you.”

Kyle looked at Chevalier, and then stepped back. He looked into the room, and then shut the door.

“That little one has a temper,” Maleth said, shocked.

Chevalier nodded, “Yes... I’m aware of that.”

“That could be a problem while you are an Elder,” Leonid said.

“How so?” Chevalier asked.

“If her temper interferes with the everyday workings of Council City... if she’s seen as a liability,” he answered.

“My coven loves her. I’m amazed at the lengths they will go to protect her. They know of her temper, they know of her abilities, but they are loyal and devoted to her. Sometimes I wonder if she leaves, if they would follow her.” Chevalier smiled.

Maleth nodded, “I can see that. We’ll be watching her though.”

“Unless she disappears as threatened,” Leonid said.

“I’ll handle that. If she insists on going, then I’m not going to stop her... not that I really could. She’s headstrong, and once she makes up her mind, there’s no stopping her,” Chevalier explained.

“We can’t have an unprotected Winchester.”

“I would, of course, keep an eye on her,” he promised.

Maleth sighed, “Get her to move to Council City, into the palace with us. Things will be easier there, and we can help keep an eye on her.”

“It’s not going to be easy to get her to move to the palace. She loves it here, her horses are here, and her cattle.” Chevalier tried to make them understand, “Kyle is here also, and they are close friends. She’s not going to want to leave him.”

“Then bring Kyle with, he can keep an eye on her,” Maleth said.

Chevalier chuckled, “Just don’t tell Emily she has another... what does she call it... babysitter. She’ll disappear before you can count to ten if she thinks she’s being personally guarded.”

Maleth nodded, “Bring Kyle along, if that will help her.”

Chevalier nodded.

“He can help protect her from the heku servants... They aren’t going to tolerate the mortal well.”

“Emily can handle herself, trust me. I’m more worried about them than her,” Chevalier said, chuckling.

“So it’s set then? You are going to take care of Selest yourself,” Leonid confirmed.

“Yes, she’ll be banished within the next two weeks,” he promised.

“We will make preparations for the coronation,” Maleth said, then stood and replaced his hood.

Chevalier nodded and escorted Maleth and Leonid to the helicopter pad.

Once he saw them off, he slowly walked to Emily’s room. His mind whirled as he thought of how he could get her to go along with this. He wasn’t kidding when he said he would let her go, but he doubted he could live without her. She had somehow weaseled her way into his soul, and without her, he would be incomplete. Chevalier looked around the castle on his way to her room, he would miss this place. It would always be here and he would still be in charge, but he would no longer be living here as he had for the past three hundred years.

Chevalier stood at the door to Emily's room and watched her frantically throwing clothes into a bag. She was crying and mumbling under her breath. Allen was sitting on the bed playing with her cell phone.

He walked up behind her and wrapped his arms around her. She turned into him and buried her face in his chest.

"Emily, this is not bad, ok? This is good, it's a promotion." He tried to sound excited.

"Don't do it... let's run... let's go to Colorado and stay there," she begged.

"I can't let my faction down."

"Please," she said softly.

He kissed the top of her head. "Try it out, for me. If you hate it, then I'll buy you your ranch and the heku will be out of your life forever. That's a promise."

"Maybe I don't want all heku out of my life, Chev. Why are you doing this? Is this a power trip? Is it not enough to run your own coven and be Chief Enforcer?" She was trying to understand.

"It's not the power. It's my responsibility to see that the Council, and especially the Elders, are strong and formidable. It's time for Selest to be replaced, and I'm the only logical replacement." He ran his fingers through her hair.

"This is my home," she said softly.

He pulled her tighter to him, “Try it, for me. At least give it a few months.”

“Will we have our own home in the new city?” She tried to find something positive about moving.

“No, we’ll be in the Elder’s palace.”

She winced, and he couldn’t help but grin.

“Will they have a place for Patra?”

He sighed. He knew this was coming, “Em, there’s no barn in the city. Sam can stay with them, and you can come back any time you want. I’ll even buy you your own helicopter.”

“I like Selest,” she said softly.

“I know.”

“I’m not ready to live in a palace.”

Chevalier chuckled, “Dear, that palace isn’t ready for you.”

She looked up at him, “What do you mean?”

“No one in that palace is less than 1700 years old and never has a mortal lived there... especially one with your... hrm... temper and appeal.” He grinned.

Her eyes narrowed, “Appeal?”

He kissed her forehead, “Trust me. They’ve never seen anything like you before.”

“How so?” She pressed.

“Well... Selest is currently the only female heku living in the palace. It is often attacked, and only the most elite guards live there. Maleth and Leonid aren't bonded, so that leaves just her.” He felt her wince.

“Perfect”

He laughed, “It'll be ok.”

“When are you going to... you know... Selest?” she asked, pulling away from him.

“Within the next two weeks.”

“So soon?”

He nodded, “The sooner the better.”

“Will Kyle help you?”

“No, I need to do this alone. It's going to cause quite the commotion, and the least amount of heku involved the better,” he said, and gently ran his thumb under her eye to wipe away a tear.

“They were right then, it would be easier if I just did it,” she said, mainly to herself.

“I am not going to ask you to kill her. I can do it.”

“I know you can, but if I do, it won't cause World War III.”

He brushed his lips softly across hers, “I have it covered, and you need to trust me.”

“Perfect,” she said again. “You’re taking me to the capital city of a species that more-or-less hates mortals and doesn’t think that we’re fit to share this planet with them except to feed off of.”

“Normally true,” he said, “But you know from your experience here that with you, it’s not the same.”

She sighed and rolled her eyes.

“There’s one other thing... about the palace.” He couldn’t help but grin.

She looked up at him, “What?”

“The Elders are... well... like royalty.” He saw her grimace.

“What does that have to do with me?” She was almost afraid to ask.

“Never mind, we’ll discuss it later.”

“No tell me now, I don’t want any surprises.”

“There’s a coronation... and... well... you’ll need to be there too.”

“No crowns.”

He laughed, “No, no crowns.”

Emily pulled away from him, “I don’t like this.”

“I know,” he said, watching her as she quickly changed into jeans and a t-shirt.

“I’m not going to be paraded around in frou-frou dresses and putting on balls and crap,” she said, slipping on her Ropers.

He chuckled, "I'm not asking you to do anything out of character."

"You already have."

"Fair enough. I won't ask you to throw a ball, deal?" he asked, amused.

Emily rummaged through the suitcase she brought when she left Montana and pulled out a pair of spurs, then slipped them onto the back of her boots.

Chevalier raised an eyebrow, "Spurs?"

"Yeah well... I need to get out some frustration," she said, and grabbed her leather gloves and cowboy hat.

"Who is getting your wrath today then?" He was shocked. He couldn't imagine her using spurs on one of her beloved horses.

"Damn it is," she said, kissing him lightly.

"Damn it? Em, you didn't name that poor colt, Damn it." He shook his head, and then laughed when she nodded.

"It fit," she said, grinning slightly.

"You're going to kill yourself trying to break that monster. He turned into one huge horse," he said, starting to get worried.

"Oh I can take care of that," she told him, and headed out of the room.

Chevalier picked up Allen and followed her, "Oddly enough, I'm feeling sorry for the horse."

"You should, because your Arabian is next."

“My Arabian is already broken,” he reminded her.

“Yeah, but he needs some manors.” The way she walked, the way she spoke and carried herself was impressive to Chevalier. He’d never seen such a tiny figure command so much respect and authority. He knew she was going to fit in perfectly in the palace, but couldn’t tell her that.

“Try not to kill him, Em,” Chevalier said, taking Allen and heading for the kitchen.

“Damn it,” Allen said, pointing to Emily.

He sighed, “Yes I know.”

Chevalier sat Allen down at the table and watched as he began to eat his peanut butter and jelly sandwich happily. Gordon hated how he wouldn’t eat anything more intricate, but finally caved when Allen would look at him with his beautiful green eyes.

“Is Emily packing?” Kyle asked, joining them at the table.

“Sort of... and I need you to get ready to move also,” he said, not taking his eyes off of his son.

“Yes, Sir, for how long will I be gone?” Kyle asked, knowing better than to question any further.

Chevalier looked at him, “Permanently.”

Kyle cringed and nodded. Chevalier couldn’t tell him anything else, and he knew Kyle wasn’t happy about moving away from the island. He also knew Kyle would be ok with it when he found out the reasons.

Kyle stood up, but Chevalier held out a hand, “Stay, please... there’s more.”

He sat back down slowly, and Chevalier continued, “I’m going away for a few weeks.”

Kyle nodded.

“I would never tell Emily this, but there’s a chance... however small... that I won’t be back,” Chevalier whispered. He watched Allen to make sure he hadn’t heard or understood.

Kyle nodded again slowly, “Let me come with you then. It will up your chances of whatever it is you’re doing.”

“I can’t, I have to do this alone,” he said, and caught Allen’s sandwich moments before it hit the floor. He handed it back to him and returned his attention to Kyle.

“I understand,” Kyle said, but he wasn’t happy.

“This is just between us. I need help with Emily,” he said, and when he had Kyle’s full attention again, he continued. “If anything happens to me... if you don’t hear from me by day 15, I want you to take her away. I have a house on one of the islands in Palau. Take her there... no one knows I have it, I’ll get you directions. Once you get there, stay... never come back.”

Kyle dropped his eyes and nodded.

“No one, not even the Elders, can know where she’s gone.”

“I will do as you ask,” Kyle said. Chevalier knew this was an enormous personal risk for Kyle. Whisking away the Winchester would be grounds for banishment, and out on that small remote island, Kyle would be a factionless heku, a great danger.

“Be ready to move in two weeks, but don’t make it too obvious,” Chevalier said after a few minutes of silence.

Kyle nodded.

“Here, take Allen up for his nap, I need to go to the office for a bit,” Chevalier said.

Kyle took Allen and left the dining room. Chevalier thought for a moment, and then went to his office to prepare.

Chevalier was just finishing up his plans for taking out Selest when there was a knock on his door.

“Enter,” he said, quieter than usual.

Kyle entered, “I’m running Em to the mainland, but I can have the helicopter back by morning.”

Chevalier sighed, “What’d she do now?”

Kyle grinned, “She got into a fight with your horse.”

Chevalier raised an eyebrow, “How bad?”

“I think she dislocated her shoulder. Dr. Edwards is waiting for her at the hospital.” Kyle fought not to grin.

“How bad is the horse?”

“Oh your horse won. She says it’s because breaking in Damnit... erm... the colt, wore her out. I’m pretty sure you’re going to need a new horse when she gets back, she’s pretty mad.” Kyle started to shut his door.

“I’ll be gone when you get back,” Chevalier said, following him out. “I’ll go say good-bye to Em.”

They walked in silence up to the small infirmary on the 3rd floor. Chevalier was dreading telling Emily good-bye and Kyle was afraid of losing a good friend and Commanding Officer. He also dreaded having to make the decision when it was time to move Emily out of civilization.

“No, Emily,” Sam said. Kyle and Chevalier heard them yelling from down the hall.

“You can’t tell me no. I tell you what to do,” she ordered.

“Fine then... but I have a feeling in a few seconds it won’t matter what you want.” Sam sounded pleased.

Chevalier and Kyle walked around the corner and saw Emily standing close to Sam, glaring up at him.

“What’s wrong?” Chevalier asked, watching them.

“He’s going to hire someone to break that colt.” She glared at Sam.

“Emily...” Chevalier turned to Kyle and Kyle ushered Sam out of the small room.

She looked at him sideways, “What’s wrong?”

“When you get back from the hospital... I’ll be gone. I need to get this all taken care of,” he said, wrapping his arms around her.

“So soon? Don’t go, please. If you wait until I get back I’ll go with you,” she said.

“I’ll be back before you know it. Try not to give Kyle and Sam a hard time, and do what the doctor says,” Chevalier told her, and kissed the top of her head.

“Please don’t go,” she begged.

“I have to. Be good.” He took her face in his hands and kissed her passionately.

She pulled away and looked into his eyes, “I changed my mind, let me do it.”

He grinned, “And let you take the credit? I’ll be back soon, I promise.”

She frowned, “You don’t know that. I can see it in your eyes.”

Chevalier kissed her forehead and left for his mission.

Chevalier watched from outside of the city. He could see the regular happenings of Selest’s coven. Heku everywhere were doing their everyday things, shopping, training, spending time with their family. He truly hoped he wouldn’t have to kill too many of the innocents. He’d been to the castle in the center of the city many times, but showing up uninvited would surely cause panic.

This wasn't the first time for him to banish a member of the Council. It was his job to banish them any time a council member was slated to be replaced, but never before had he been given the task to take out an Elder, let alone to replace her. Things were different now, now he had Emily and Allen, a reason to return.

Chevalier's plans were well laid out and precise. He was going to take his time, slowly moving through the city and taking as few innocent lives as he could. He hoped that the six days of recognizance would pay off, and he wouldn't run into any surprises. Tonight was the night he chose for the attack. A storm was coming, the high wind would help mask his scent and hopefully buy him a few extra seconds of lead time.

Chevalier put on his black jacket and quickly painted his face with black paint. Stealth would be the trick here, especially when he entered the castle. He knew that Selest was never heavily guarded. She was safer at the Council City Palace, but Selest had chosen to spend some time with her coven for the next few weeks. It would be easier here to find her unguarded, but also would be harder to keep from killing the innocents.

Crouching low, Chevalier moved from tree, to rock, to tree, keeping out of sight yet moving slowly closer to the city. This city had no high cement walls, careless on her part as far as Chevalier was concerned. His first staging point was just beyond the first house, an alcove between several small commercial buildings, all but abandoned for the night. He made it there slowly, taking extra time to carefully watch his step and avoid contact with the heku at all costs.

From the first alcove, there was a straight shot to his next well-planned out location, an abandoned store. There, he could set up a secondary

staging area. Making it to the store without any difficulty, he sat down his backpack and waited. He had two hours to go before the row of houses to his south would turn out their lights and pretend to sleep for the night to keep up the mortal pretenses. Chevalier preferred his island, mortals didn't make it past the pier. There was no reason to put up the façade.

The two hours passed quickly, his thoughts shifted between his mission at hand and his family back on the island. He smiled when he thought of Emily getting hurt trying to tame his wild horse. He knew it was wrong, but he liked his stallion ornery, it suited him well. Still, he hated when Emily was injured, though it happened often enough. He wondered, jokingly, if she could get injured in a padded room and figured she of all people could. Her green eyes filled his mind as the night grew on, those flowing, piercing eyes that somehow managed to drill deep into his soul with a simple glance.

Chevalier heard the sounds of the evening coming to a close. The heku were now in their houses and the lights slowly turned out. He peered around the door and saw a clear pathway to his next stop, an alleyway behind a small tailor's shop. He almost ran into a group of heku coming out of a bar, but managed to slip into the shadows as they passed him, unknowing how close they came to dying. He smiled at the thought of a heku bar. It was a place for donors to gather because they were well paid for their services.

The night drew on, and Chevalier counted himself lucky as he ran into no one, and went undetected through the night. He was over halfway to the palace when he heard the sounds of the city coming alive. He made it to his third staging area, a place he planned to spend the entire day. He'd

seen the area when he last visited Selest and she had given him a tour of the city. He thought it was a dangerous spot, a place for someone to hide and it came quickly to his mind again when it was he who needed to disappear.

He crouched in the small area just below one of the city streets. The area was to collect excess rain water during flooding season, but was perfectly dry during this time of year. He watched as people passed and talked about their day. He carefully listened to their conversations, seeing if there was anything he could find useful. He could gather from their conversations that Selest was only planning on being there for another few days, and then she was heading back to Council City. Little did she know that she wouldn't be returning to her beloved palace, she would be banished just outside of this city.

Chevalier had already prepared the ground. The hole was 6 feet deep and surrounded with runes. A simple wooden coffin sat in the hole with the top laying off to the side. Once he put her inside and sealed the coffin, she would be unable to escape for the 525 years that the Elders decided on, slowly regaining most of her natural form over the first ten years. It was a horrific experience. The heku banished would spend that time with the pains of hunger and the memory of their life slowly fading. It was a punishment that was too harsh for the infraction, but needed to keep peace within their species.

Darkness fell on his seventh night away from his island and he set out again. Tonight he would reach the castle and would either drag Selest's dead body away, or they would drag his. Either way, it would be over. His first obstacle was only a hundred yards away. The castle in this city was surrounded by a sharp iron fence with two guards at the entryway.

He knew he could easily handle two guards, his experience taught him that. Once he had them dead, he could take one of their robes and more easily walk through the castle.

He watched as the changing of the guard occurred and saw that the two in the front were young and seemed inexperienced. He understood further why it was time to get rid of Selest. She should have known better than to post anything but the most experienced guard at the entrance to where she stayed.

Chevalier was at the first guard before the young heku could even turn his head. His strong hands wound around the heku's head and tore it off in one swift movement. The second guard was stunned and only brought his sword up when Chevalier appeared at his back and tore at his neck with his teeth. The second guard fell easily, and Chevalier was able to move them out of sight and steal a robe from the taller one. The robes were dark green and smelled of strange incense.

With the robe on, he covered his face with the hood and crossed his hands in front of his chest, as was customary in this coven. He'd seen the entire guard staff walk in this form, though he wasn't sure why they did it, it wasn't hard to imitate. He was surprised at how easily he walked through this castle and his desire to get Selest off of the Council grew stronger. She was careless, and her security was lacking, an inexcusable offense.

He wondered if the two guards would be the only innocent lives he would need to kill today as he stopped in front of her office. He could hear her inside, talking to someone with a soft, timid voice. They were

just visiting, casually. He picked up no conversation of any importance. He knocked hard, and their conversation stopped.

“Enter,” she said, and he opened the door and stepped into the room.

“Yes?” Selest asked the one she thought was a guard.

Chevalier reached behind him and locked the door. The mortal in the chair looked at him coyly. He had a new bandage on his wrist. Chevalier thought quickly that at least she went to banishment with no immediate thirst.

“What do you want? I’m busy,” Selest asked, standing up.

Chevalier lowered his hood, and Selest gasped, then dropped into a defensive crouch. He reached over and quickly killed the mortal, who put up no fight and his neck was easily broken without so much as a scream.

“Don’t do it, Chevalier,” Selest hissed at him.

“You’ve become lax, Selest. The Council has spoken,” he told her, and crouched low as his hands balled into tight fists.

“I’m surprised the cowards didn’t send your mortal to do me in... what an inconvenience to lose their Chief Enforcer when his little girl could have done it,” she said, grinning.

“Five hundred and twenty five years,” he said to her. He was required to give her that small piece of information.

“So long? What have I done to deserve such a long sentence?” she asked, shocked.

“Five hundred and twenty five years,” he said again, and took a step toward her.

“You won’t get out of here alive, you know that,” she said in a panic.

“Maybe, but neither will you.”

“You’ll leave Emily and your son. How can you do that to them? Let me go and I won’t tell anyone. I’ll let you walk out of here and return to them.” Her eyes were pleading. Selest knew nothing could change the Chief Enforcer’s mind. That’s why he was such a strong force on the Council. She wasn’t surprised at all that he had been chosen to take her place.

“You underestimate me, Selest. That is one of the reasons why you need some time away.” He was surprised at how she froze as he approached her.

“Please, Chevalier, don’t do this. Emily will...” Her words were cut off by his hand around her neck.

“If I don’t, then someone else will,” he said, tightening his fingers.

Chevalier could feel her vertebrae crush under his fingers. Once she crumbled to the floor, he grabbed the dagger from his pocket and pricked his finger, then let a drop of blood fall onto the body of the Elder. Selest healed enough to gasp just as her body turned to ash.

He fell into a chair. He hated this part, the energy it took to turn a heku ceremoniously to ash was extreme. He sat on the chair and put his hands on his knees, grinning slightly at the thought of how easily Emily could turn a heku to ash. Though he felt weakened and tired, there was

urgency. He had limited time to regain his strength enough to make it out alive. He looked around her office as he recovered. She had piles of papers waiting for her attention, papers that would never be signed, orders gone unanswered. The mortal laying on the ground looked up at him with unseeing eyes.

The few minutes it took Chevalier to regain his strength allowed him to study her room. He smelled incense in here, strongly, and thought it might have been a way to relieve stress. She'd had more than one donor today. The one he killed was the fifth mortal in that office in the past few hours.

It only took Chevalier a few minutes to move Selest's ashes into the small leather draw-string bag. He slipped it into his pocket and pulled the hood back over his face. Just as he reached for the door handle, a knock sounded. He froze, unable to even breathe.

A second knock made his heart race.

He heard a man outside the door say, "Maybe she left for her room?"

"No, I checked in there and her guard said she's in her office," a female said.

"Ok, go see if she's taken her donor to the bus," the male suggested.

Chevalier waited until the voices disappeared to slowly open the door and look out into the hallway. He locked the door from the inside and then shut it softly behind him. He slowed his breathing and squared his shoulders after pulling the hood a little further over his face, then took the long way to the front door, going down past the kitchen façade and

around through the library. He hoped by taking the back way to the door he wouldn't be seen and identified as an intruder.

Chevalier could see the front door from the shadows under the stairs. He was just about to calmly walk to it, when an alarm sounded and the entire castle came alive. All of the robed figures were running toward the back of the castle. He took off with them, needing to blend in with others from the coven. He couldn't risk be seen as the only robed heku going out the west doors.

In the mad rush to get to the meeting area, none of the panicked heku saw anything wrong with someone taking off into a side room. Chevalier shut the door softly behind him and opened the large window. He looked down and saw it was only ten feet to the grass. Hoisting himself into the window sill, he dropped into a crouch on the ground below.

The shrill alarm was still sounding as Chevalier ran through his mental image of the city and found a suitable location he could use to wait out the panic. He had no problems getting to the abandoned house. No windows were unlocked, but he was able to break one of the locks and slide the window open. The house was damaged on the inside, and he easily found a suitable hiding spot. One of the closets had caved in, leaving a small area that he was able to crawl into.

Chevalier waited and watched as the hours flew by. Two hours after the alarm sounded, it ended, but the rush of feet and angry voices in the streets continued. He could smell the tension and the terror. He heard voices yelling about the missing Elder and Valle Warriors attacking as he came face-to-face with several of Selest's guards.

The job had been too easy, further proof that it was past time for Selest to be removed from office.

Chapter 17 - Moving

“Emily, wake up.” Kyle’s voice was in whispers, but urgent.

“What’s wrong?” Emily sat up and put her hand on Allen’s back. He was still asleep.

“Come on, we’re in lockdown,” he explained, and pulled the covers off of them before picking Allen up. A piercing alarm sounded through the island.

Emily followed Kyle through the secret wall and down the stairs to the cave bedroom, “Kyle, tell me what’s going on.”

“There’s been an attack on one of the Elders,” he said, lying Allen down on the bed. He turned to comfort Emily, but was surprised because she was smiling slightly.

“Is she dead?” Emily asked, watching his eyes.

Kyle’s eyes narrowed, “How did you know it was Selest?”

She sat down and rubbed Allen's back as he began to wake up. They were both silent until he fell back asleep.

"My God, it's Chevalier," Kyle said, shocked.

Emily shrugged.

"Tell me what's going on," he said sternly.

She frowned, "I'm not supposed to. I'll be good and stay down here until the alert is over."

Kyle leaned over and looked directly into her face, "What did he do, Emily?"

"You know I can't say," she told him, her hand still on Allen.

Kyle stood up and walked out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

"Gah, Kyle..." Emily hissed when Allen woke up. She rubbed his back softly and curled up next to him.

"Daddy?" Allen asked sleepily.

"He'll be home soon," she said, and kissed his cheek softly.

Emily drifted off to sleep curled up next to Allen.

Chevalier put the last of the dirt over the former Elder's banishment sight and sat down to lean against a tree. As he watched the mound of dirt, his mind whirled. He'd done it. He killed an Elder, which in heku tradition,

made him an Elder. He pulled a cell phone out of his pocket and dialed the number.

“It’s done,” he said when he heard Leonid’s voice.

Leonid sighed, “Come back to Council City.”

“I need to go and get Emily first,” Chevalier replied. “Then I’ll be there.”

“No, come directly here. We’ll have Kyle bring her and the boy.” Leonid hung up, and Chevalier growled slightly. Leonid had no right to tell him what to do, at the moment of Selest’s burial, he became Leonid’s equal. He opted to go to Council City and wait until his coronation to begin exploring his new powers.

“Emily?” Kyle said, touching her shoulder. She woke up with a jerk.

“It’s ok, it’s just me,” he said, sitting on the edge of the bed. “I got word from the Elders. It’s time for us to go to Council City.”

She nodded and picked up Allen.

“Are you sure about this?” Kyle asked, unmoving.

She looked at him, “No, I’m not. In fact, I’m very much not sure about any of this, but tell me what my options are.”

He shook his head, “I can’t believe he did it.”

“It sounded like he didn’t have a choice to me.”

“Still... Chevalier’s an Elder now. That makes you part of the faction’s royalty, for lack of another word. I’m just shocked.”

“I promised Chev two months. If I don’t like it, then... I’m gone,” she said sadly as she watched Allen sleep in her arms.

“Then what?” Kyle asked anxiously. “Then you disappear and go back to being plagued with heku attacks? Running a ranch by yourself, being a single parent?”

“What am I supposed to do?” she whispered angrily.

“I could go with you,” he said, taking her hand.

“Kyle...” She didn’t know what else to say. He’d kissed her once, she hadn’t forgotten that, but since then they had been only friends.

He leaned toward her and pressed his lips to hers gently as his hand slipped behind her neck to hold her close. She was still able to pull away from him and look down. He stood up, shut his eyes, then opened them slowly, “Let’s get ready to leave.”

Emily nodded and carried Allen up the stairs. Anna was waiting for them in Emily’s bedroom.

“I’ll get him ready,” she said softly.

Emily nodded and then turned when she felt a hand on her arm, “The Chief Enforcer had me make this for you. You’ll need to wear it tonight,” said Margaret.

Margaret held up a simple, dark blue slip dress. She smiled when Emily took it and thanked her. Emily was surprised because her dresses were

usually a lot more revealing. Margaret also handed her a box and hugged her.

“We’ll miss you, Child,” she said, then left quickly.

“So everyone knows now?” Emily asked Kyle.

Kyle nodded, “Official word came down from the Elders an hour ago.”

As Emily headed to the bathroom to change, she felt a hand on her shoulder, “Em?”

She turned and looked at Kyle, “Keep it in mind, ok?”

Emily nodded and went to change. The dress was elegant and beautiful, and she loved the feel of the satiny material against her skin. She was a little embarrassed at the way it clung to every curve of her body, but it was modest by Margaret’s standards. She pinned her hair up into a bun and let soft tendrils fall down to frame her face and cascade down her back.

Lastly, Emily opened the box Margaret gave her and gasped. Inside of the black box was a diamond necklace. She ran her fingers along the clusters of diamonds in a delicate platinum setting. She picked it up, almost afraid to touch it. She’d never seen anything so beautiful.

“Let me help you,” Kyle said from behind her. He reached around and took the necklace from her and gently laid it across her neck. He brushed her hair away from the clasp and fastened it. Emily pulled away from him when she felt the soft caress of his lips against her shoulder.

“Kyle, don’t,” she said, stepping away.

“You look amazing,” he said.

“Thanks,” Emily whispered, and then headed back out into the bedroom. It looked so empty. Her things were all packed in boxes that were stacked high in the corners. She picked up a blue scarf from the table and wrapped it around her shoulders, then wondered when she would be back. She already said her good-byes to Sam and to her horses, but at this moment, everything seemed so final.

“Come on, let’s go,” Kyle said, taking her arm.

Anna kissed Emily on the cheek and put Allen down on the ground. Emily took his hand, and they walked up to the roof where the helicopter was waiting. Kyle helped her crawl inside and then handed Allen up to her. They seat belted in, and Emily watched her beloved island slip out of view.

Emily drifted off to sleep, watching the terrain fly by, and only the sound of the pilot’s voice woke her up.

“The coronation has started, we’re right on time,” he said to Kyle.

“Thank you,” Kyle said, and smiled at Emily.

“It’s started already?”

Kyle nodded, “Yes, your arrival is toward the end. They will be done with the heku ceremony before we get there.”

“Why did I have to dress up if I’m going to miss it?”

“You have to be presented to the Elders.”

“What do you mean... presented?” she asked, wide eyed.

Kyle laughed, “It’s all ceremonial. The coronation will make Chevalier officially an Elder, but you still have to be accepted.”

Her eyes narrowed, “What do you mean accepted?”

“Don’t worry, you just walk in and take your place with Chevalier. It’s simple.” He watched her getting flustered and panicky.

“How many heku are we talking?” she asked nervously.

Kyle just grinned, “I’ll be behind you carrying Allen.”

“That didn’t answer my question.” She scowled at him.

Emily looked out over the city. The lights twinkled, and she thought the city was surprisingly beautiful. Finally, she saw the palace. It was enormous and stood ominously at the head of the large city. The helicopter circled once and then landed smoothly on the roof. She saw an army of guards form a line out from the door.

The pilot powered down the helicopter before Kyle opened the door. Allen reached for Kyle when he put his hands out. One of the guards stepped up and reached out to help Emily out of the helicopter. She blushed when he put his hands around her waist and easily lifted her out. The same guard then extended an arm to her.

She looked at Kyle and he chuckled, “It’s ok, I’ll be right behind you.”

The heku led her past the line of guards and into the door. Emily studied the large palace. It was full of intricately carved statues and polished

marble floors. She was looking around so intently that she barely noticed when the guard stopped at a set of double doors.

“One moment longer,” he said to Emily, though he never looked at her.

Emily checked behind her, and Kyle smiled. Allen reached for her, but Kyle whispered into his ear and he pulled his arms back.

When the guard opened the double doors, Emily turned quickly and pulled away from him as she caught sight of the massive room filled with thousands of heku in dark green robes. They all turned to her as she headed the other way. The guard looked at her, shocked, and reached out to take her arm again. He forcibly pulled her through the door. Emily turned and looked wide eyed at the room. She couldn't breathe. The heku was cutting off the circulation to her arm and she wanted to run.

“Emily, breathe,” Kyle whispered and grinned. “Just walk to him.”

Emily's eyes met Chevalier's. He was sitting at the other end of the room, watching her. She focused on him as the guard escorted her through the room, then felt the eyes of thousands of heku on her and began to blush. She prayed silently that she wouldn't trip over the floor-length dress and pulled the scarf tighter around her shoulders. As she walked, she felt the dress pressing against the curves of her body and she cursed Margaret silently.

She couldn't help but notice the reaction of the heku as she passed. Some quickly turned their heads away from her, while others inhaled deeply and shut their eyes. She realized her blood was affecting them already.

At the foot of the stairs leading up to the platform with the Elders, the guard stopped and Emily looked up at him.

Elder Leonid stood and smiled at Emily. She watched him as he spoke to those gathered in a language she didn't understand. The heku in the room all responded with an unfamiliar word. Maleth then stood and addressed them, and again, Emily wasn't able to understand what was being said.

Finally, Chevalier stood and held his hand out for Emily. She picked her dress up a bit and walked up the stairs to take his hand. He squeezed her hand tightly and smiled at her. She tried to avoid turning around to face the heku, but once he sat in his chair, he motioned for her to stand by his side.

Kyle put Allen on the ground, and he ran up the stairs and into Chevalier's lap. He hugged Allen tightly and then took Emily's hand again. Emily stood, horrified, as everyone watched her. Some seemed mad, others confused, while still others smiled broadly. She could feel herself blushing more and she glared at Kyle as he bowed and walked out of the room. She wanted to go with him. She would do anything to get away from the eyes.

It seemed like an eternity to Emily before Maleth excused the heku and they began to file out of the room. Chevalier stood when the coronation hall was empty and sat Allen down in his chair. He took Emily in his arms and held her tightly.

"Welcome home, Em," he said, kissing the top of her head.

"We are so glad to have you here, Emily," Maleth said, smiling.

“At least someone is,” she said, pulling away from Chevalier.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

She shook her head, “Nothing.” Her mind ran through the different emotions from the crowd of heku, from angry, to happy, to disappointed.

Leonid knew what she had seen, “It’s ok, Child, they are just not used to a mortal in the palace.”

Chevalier’s eyes narrowed, “They better watch themselves.”

Leonid broke the tension, “Why don’t you show Emily to your new room. I’m sure she’d like to get settled. I will have some dinner brought up.”

“Good idea,” Chevalier said, and then took Emily’s hand and picked Allen up with one arm.

Emily followed silently through the enormous palace. She watched the servants bow to Chevalier and eye her suspiciously. It seemed like they walked forever when he turned into a silent hallway and opened the door at the end. She stepped into a massive bedroom made up in deep purples and reds. The bed was larger than hers on the island, and the room had two fireplaces.

She let go of Chevalier’s hand and looked around. There were candles burning instead of lamps, which threw most of the room into dark shadows. She opened the first door to reveal a large bathroom, it only contained a shower. She sighed, there was no sink, no tub, or toilet. This was going to be worse than she had thought.

“I’ll have something put in that. They aren’t used to needing bathrooms,” he said, watching her.

She nodded and opened the next door and walked inside. She entered into a light blue nursery full of toys and stuffed pillows. The crib was cherry wood and matched the small wardrobe and changing table. She wondered who made this and how they thought her sixteen-month-old still slept in a crib and wore diapers.

The next door by the nursery, to her shock, was another nursery. It was decorated in light pinks and had a beautiful white bassinet and rocking chair. She quickly stepped out and looked at Chevalier.

“I didn’t tell them to put in another nursery, I swear,” he said, knowing she’d be mad at that. She always made it abundantly clear that one baby was enough.

Emily walked over to the next door. This one was a walk-in closet larger than her room on the ranch and full of clothing. She looked through them and noticed most were dresses, so she sighed and closed the door as she left.

“What do you think?” Chevalier asked.

She shrugged.

He sat Allen on the bed and wrapped his arms around her waist, “I’m glad you’re here.”

“That was humiliating,” she said, laying her head against his chest. She became irritated when he laughed.

“How was that humiliating?”

“Everyone but me was in green robes, and you didn’t tell me I had to be paraded through them. They hate me,” she said, looking up at him.

“No they don’t, they hate me. It’ll take a while before they forgive me for killing Selest,” he said, and touched her cheek softly.

“You didn’t see their eyes. Some of them seriously hate me. I could see it.” Emily pulled away from him and sat down by Allen on the bed.

“They better hope I don’t see it.” He sat down by her and took her hand.

“You can’t kill everyone who doesn’t like me, Chev.”

He grinned, “I don’t have to, just a few before they will learn.”

She frowned, “Two months?”

He nodded, “Just give me two months.”

“They don’t like mortals then I take it?”

“Some,” he admitted.

“What about the heku who live in the palace?” She hated to ask, maybe she didn’t want to know if she was in danger.

“They are devoted to the Elders. When the Elders said you were to be part of the palace, they accepted that also,” he explained.

“So no thirsty attacks?” she asked, wincing.

He laughed, “No, Em, not from the ones that work here.”

“Right,” she said, and stood up to look around again. She opened up her suitcase and took out a nightgown as Chevalier watched her.

“It’s going to be ok, Emily.”

“It’s cold in here,” she said softly to herself. When she turned to the bathroom to get dressed, she jumped as a heku appeared by the fireplace next to her.

“Out,” Chevalier hissed at him.

The heku looked up at Emily, terrified, and blurred from the room. She turned questioningly to Chevalier.

“They are anxious to make a good impression on you. They will calm down, I promise,” he explained.

“Why are they trying to impress me?” she asked curiously.

Chevalier smiled, “They are under the impression that if you don’t like them, they may be out of a job.”

She put her hands on her hips, “How is it they came to be under this impression?”

“I think Maleth may have let it slip. They are just trying to make you feel at home. They know if you are comfortable, I am comfortable, and right now, I am their worst nightmare.”

“I don’t like this,” she said, disappearing into the bathroom.

Emily slipped off the dress in the cold bathroom and felt tears well up in her eyes. The empty bathroom was scary, and the mirrors showed the

vast darkness behind her. She put on the nightgown quickly and wrapped her arms around herself, trying to warm up. Her bathroom on the island was always warm and pleasant.

When she stepped out of the bathroom, she noticed that both fireplaces were roaring and there were plates on the table. Allen was already at the table eating when she sat down. She looked at the food and suddenly wasn't hungry. Emily pushed the duck ala o'range away and sat back to cut up Allen's sandwich.

“What's wrong? Not hungry?” Chevalier asked.

She shook her head.

“Where is Kyle?” she asked, looking around the room. It was too large. She couldn't see into the dark corners when the only light came from candles.

“His room is across the hall from us. He'll be close to you at all times,” Chevalier said, smiling.

“Tell me he's not a babysitter.”

“He's not a babysitter. He's just going to help you. The palace is a lot bigger than the castle, and he can help show you around,” Chevalier said, but Emily could tell he was leaving something out.

“And to make sure no one bites me,” she said blatantly.

He growled, “They know better.”

“Do I have free run of the palace?”

He thought and then nodded, “I can’t see why not.”

“Anywhere?”

“Anywhere”

“Where is your office?”

“On the third floor. Kyle can show you tomorrow.”

“I don’t want to do this,” she mumbled to herself.

“I know, Em,” he said, touching her arm. “Trust me... it’s going to be ok.”

Emily rolled onto her side and curled up next to Allen, who was already asleep.

Chevalier watched them sleep. He knew how hard this was on her and knew it was going to get harder. He wondered if he’d been rash to move a mortal into the city, a city that prided itself for millennia on being full heku. If they would get to know her, she would be ok. The other Elders already considered her more than a mortal, but the rest of the city didn’t know of her heritage, or her abilities.

Chevalier’s mind was brought back when he saw Emily sit up in bed.

“Em? What’s wrong?” he whispered into the darkness.

She didn’t respond, but stood up slowly. Her eyes were unfocussed and empty as she began to walk toward the door.

“Emily?” he asked, touching her arm. She didn’t deviate from her slow path.

He followed her as she continued out the door and into the hallway. Kyle met them there and frowned slightly, then looked at Chevalier, who shrugged.

“Em?” Kyle asked her, but she didn’t respond to him either.

Emily walked slowly toward the stairs. Her body was relaxed, and her face was emotionless as she began to descend. Emily was almost at the bottom when Chevalier took her arm and she stopped walking.

“Emily?” he asked again, but she didn’t respond. He gently lifted her up and carried her back to bed.

Kyle opened the door for Chevalier and watched as he put Emily back into bed. Not once did she say anything or respond to anyone. He covered her up and then went out to meet Kyle.

“What was that?” Kyle asked Chevalier.

“Sleep walking? Don’t mortals do that?” Chevalier wondered.

“Seems like I’ve heard that before.”

“Yeah, well, not a good thing to do here. I don’t trust these heku as much as in my own coven, and I can’t have her running around. One strong whiff of her blood and she may get attacked,” he growled slightly.

“I know, that’s what I’m here for though... don’t worry about it when she’s with me.”

“You are going to be sworn in in about an hour, which will help,” Chevalier reminded him.

“Yes, I’m ready,” Kyle said, and looked back at the bedroom door.

“Do me a favor, see what you can find on mortal sleep walking when you get the chance. There’s a library here with computers, the Internet is bound to have something useful for once,” he said. Most heku didn’t much care for the Internet, with it’s over abundance of lies and places for odd mortal fixations.

Kyle nodded, “I’ll do that now.”

Chevalier watched as Kyle blurred down the stairs and then he returned to the bedroom. Emily and Allen were both deep asleep.

A couple of hours later, Emily sat up in bed and began to walk toward the door. Chevalier stopped her before she left the room this time and sat her back in bed. Like before, she laid down and curled up without ever saying a word.

Chevalier heard Kyle approaching and blurred out to meet him. Kyle was now wearing a dark green cape which he had thrown over one shoulder. A golden crest pin held the cloak together, the signature sign of the top commanding officers of the Equites.

Chevaliers grinned, “Looks good, Captain.”

Kyle smiled, “Seems odd, but you are right, this will help when it comes to Emily.”

“Speaking of Em, she got up again.”

Kyle frowned, "From what I could gather, mortals do walk in their sleep. It's usually a sign of stress."

Chevalier nodded, "Ok, that makes sense then. She hates it here so far."

"Can you blame her?" Kyle asked. "She's too observant and she's got to be picking up the feeling that she's an unwelcome outsider."

Chevalier growled, "That will change soon."

"I know that, and you know that, but for her, it's not going to be soon enough."

"Just keep her safe until they get to know her."

Kyle nodded.

"Oh and I'm having some work done on the room today. They tried to prepare for a mortal, but forgot some key points... See if you can keep her out of the bedroom for a few hours. It's going to be full of working heku," Chevalier told him.

"Will do, I'll show her around the palace," Kyle said. "There's one other thing that's been bothering me about her sleep walking though."

"What's that?"

"According to the article I read, you should never speak to or wake up a sleep walker, it'll scare them."

"I'll keep that in mind," Chevalier said.

“No, that’s the thing… we both spoke to her, touched her on the arm, and you picked her up. None of that woke her up.”

Chevalier frowned, “You’re right, that should have woken her.”

“We’ll keep an eye on her when she sleeps.”

Chevalier nodded, “For now, I need to get to the office. Keep an extra close eye on her today. She wants to explore the castle and I don’t trust a soul.”

Kyle nodded and walked into the bedroom. He sat in a chair where he could watch Emily sleep. He knew the feelings he had for her would get him killed if the Elder found out, but when Chevalier asked him to take her away, his mind began to run through the possibility that he could be with her for the rest of her life. The idea was amazingly attractive to him, and when it didn’t happen, his mind still hoped that some day it might come true.

Just after dawn, Emily began to stir and eventually sat up and stretched. She looked over at Kyle and pulled the covers over her. The nightgown she was wearing wasn’t the most modest one with its sheer pink chiffon.

“Good morning,” Kyle said, smiling at her.

She nodded and then pulled the covers over Allen, “Good morning. Where’s Chevalier?”

“He’s down in his office, I can show you if you’d like. He said you wanted the grand tour.”

“Ok, let me get dressed. I don’t suppose I can find a bathroom?” she asked, slipping the blanket off the bed to wrap around her before standing up.

“Sorry, no, Chevalier’s having one put in today though while we’re out.”

“They better hurry,” she grumbled.

She disappeared into the massive closet. Allen woke while she was gone, so Kyle got him out of bed and held him. He looked afraid and confused by his surroundings. Emily appeared a short time later and went into the bathroom to get dressed.

She stepped out and looked extremely unhappy, “I can’t find my suitcase, and all that’s in that closet are dresses.”

Kyle smiled. He liked the way the peach, floor-length babydoll fit her, “I like it.”

“Of course you do,” she said, taking Allen from him. “How about breakfast first?”

He nodded, “I’ll have some trays brought up.”

“No, let’s go to the kitchen, I’ll make us something,” she said, remembering the extravagant dinner that was brought up the night before.

Emily carried Allen and followed Kyle through the palace to the kitchen. It seemed like quite a distance from her room, and then it dawned on her that until her arrival, there probably wasn’t a need for a kitchen.

“What’s with the cape?” she asked as she began making some pancakes. The kitchen was exceptionally well stocked.

“I’ve been made a Captain of the Guard. This is just part of the uniform.” He watched her work quickly and played with Allen to keep him busy.

“Nice,” she said, impressed.

Emily turned quickly when a strange heku walked into the kitchen. Kyle stood up and took a step to place himself between them.

The heku’s eyes grew wide when he saw the Captain, “So sorry, I was coming to make breakfast for the mortal.”

“Her name is Emily, and this morning, she’s chosen to make her own,” Kyle said sternly.

Emily frowned. It seemed rude of Kyle, so she stepped around him and held her hand out for the heku. He looked terrified as he took her hand, unsure what to do with it. Emily laughed and repositioned his hand for a hand-shake.

“It’s nice to meet you...” She paused for a name.

He didn’t respond. He was watching the ominous eyes of the Captain of the Guard.

“Your name?” Kyle ordered.

“Atkinson, Sir,” he said before pulling his hand away from Emily and leaving quickly.

She turned and frowned at Kyle, “What was that all about?”

“Em, you’re going to have to get used to the heku in this palace being afraid of you. If they upset you or do something wrong, they have to face the wrath of the Elders,” he explained, turning back to Allen.

“Great,” she grumbled and went back to making breakfast. When she finished, she set a plate of pancakes in front of Allen and sat down with hers. She ate quickly, still hungry from the night before.

“Anything in particular you want to see today?” Kyle asked, watching them eat.

“I don’t need a babysitter, Kyle. I can explore the palace on my own,” she said, eating.

“Well not today. I don’t want to have to find you when you get lost.”

“Who says I’ll get lost?”

Kyle grinned, “I do.”

“Fine, first I want to see Chevalier,” she said, and picked up her plate. She started the water in the sink to clean the dishes.

“Emily, we have servants for that,” he told her, laughing.

“Daddy,” Allen said, pointing out the door.

Kyle picked Allen up and took Emily’s arm, “Leave it,” he said to her.

She sighed and turned away, then followed him out the door. She had to admit to herself that there was no way she’d be able to find her way in

this palace. It looked larger than her entire ranch and possibly the neighboring ones, too. They walked through endless corridors past innumerable doors and entryways. She saw no one, which made the stark interior seem all the more uncomfortable.

Finally, they came to a large mahogany door and Kyle knocked. He opened the door for her and stepped back. Emily walked into the office and her eyes took in the large surroundings. Chevalier's office was more like a library with full bookshelves lining the walls. He sat behind a large mahogany desk filled with more books and stacks of papers. He got up and moved to her.

"Good morning," he said, pulling her close to him in an embrace.

She wrapped her arms around him and leaned her head against his chest, "They hate me here."

Chevalier looked at Kyle, who explained, "She wanted to make her own breakfast."

Chevalier laughed, "They don't hate you."

"Oh yeah? Let's see... they are terrified of doing something wrong around me because then they would have to face you... and then you put the Captain of the Guard with me and that makes it all worse."

Kyle grinned, "It's not that."

"Kyle's right, they will get used to you," Chevalier said.

"Then let me go around by myself... I'm sure Allen would love to spend some time in his new room with Kyle," she said, crossing her arms.

“Not now, ok? Maybe later, when you know the palace better and when the heku here know you better,” he suggested.

Her eyes narrowed.

“No, promise me... I know that look. Neither Kyle nor myself doubt for an instant that you can get away from us, so I’m asking you to promise me you’ll stay with him,” Chevalier said, taking her hand.

“Fine,” she said, but he knew she was mad about it.

He kissed her lightly and then sat behind the desk, “Go look around. I’ll come find you when I’m done here.”

She sighed and headed out the door with Kyle in tow, and Allen in his arms.

“Where would you like to go?” Kyle asked.

Emily didn’t answer. She was still mad about being guarded and just started walking, taking turns at random and opening doors along the way. She found nothing interesting. Most of the rooms were guest or servant quarters. The library was impressive, but there were heku in there reading. They looked up and panicked when they saw her, so she stepped back out.

She turned one corner, not paying attention, and ran right into a large heku guard. She slammed against him and fell backwards to the floor. He turned, irritated, and then gasped when he saw who it was. Before she could react, he reached down and picked her up, standing her on her feet.

“I’m so sorry,” she said, brushing her skirt down.

Kyle stepped between them and glared at the guard, “Never touch her,” he hissed.

The guard took a step away from them and saluted his Captain, “It was my mistake, Sir. I will report immediately for punishment.”

“Wait!” Emily said as he turned to walk away, and he froze and looked back at her.

“That was my fault,” she said, and his eyes opened wide.

Kyle hissed at him and he turned and walked away quickly.

Emily spun on him, “He’s not going to be punished for that!?”

“He knew better than to pick you up,” Kyle said angrily as he watched the guard disappear around a corner.

Kyle turned to walk down the hallway and missed when she broke into a run after the guard, disappearing around the corner. He took off after her and stopped just as Emily put a hand on the guard’s arm. The guard looked massive beside her, over a foot and a half taller than her, and his muscular build made him look like he could crush her.

“Please,” she said, and when he turned, his terrified eyes fell on Kyle.

The guard froze. He didn’t know what to do. The Elders issued strict orders that Emily wasn’t to be touched, but she was touching him this time.

“That was my fault, not yours... you were only being polite helping me up and I appreciate it,” she said to him, and he looked down at her.

“Return to your post,” Kyle said angrily, and the guard pulled away from Emily and disappeared.

She turned and glared at him, “What was that?”

“You can’t interfere with how we run things around here,” Kyle said, glaring at her.

“Then don’t punish them for something I’ve done to myself,” she said, squaring off against him.

“He knew not to touch you. Those were strict orders.”

“He touched me because I’m a klutz and he was being polite.”

“Doesn’t matter. He knew better than to touch you and he’s not off the hook. I’ll report him when we’re done.”

Emily just growled, spun on her heels, and walked down the hallway. Kyle glared at the eyes in the shadows that had just watched what happened. He saw them slink back to their jobs.

The rest of the tour was done in silence, broken only when Allen would ask Kyle a question. He answered pleasantly, but kept an extra close eye on Emily.

“Take me back,” she said finally. The palace was boring. She didn’t find any sort of entertainment, just offices and guest quarters, and she was tired of being watched from the shadows.

Kyle turned and headed back to her room. He figured the heku had enough time to finish the renovations Chevalier ordered.

She stepped into the room and smiled. The room was now well lit with lamps and there were soft chairs and cushions in one corner surrounding a large TV. She peeked into the bathroom and saw a toilet and jetted tub along with mirrors and sinks set into a beautiful granite counter.

“Better?” Kyle asked.

Emily nodded, “Will you watch Allen? I need a shower.”

“Sure,” Kyle said, and sat down on the cushions next to the TV after handing Allen the remote.

Emily walked into the bathroom and quickly stripped, then stepped into the steamy shower. The hot water felt incredible, and she laid her head back and let it stream down her body.

Kyle watched silently, leaning against a wall by the bathroom so he could see through the cracked door. The glass shower door was slightly tinted, but showed Emily’s silhouette. He let his eyes run over her toned thighs to the curve of her breasts and her tiny waist. When she turned off the water, he blurred back to Allen.

Moments later, she came out towel drying her hair and she was back in the peach dress, “Find anything good to watch?”

“Not yet, I think he just likes to switch through the channels,” Kyle said, smiling up at her.

She grabbed a brush and brushed through her hair then quickly put it in a French braid. She picked Allen up when he yawned, "He needs a nap."

Kyle nodded.

"I need to do one more thing in the bathroom, would you rock him to sleep and put him down for me?" she asked, heading into the bathroom.

Kyle picked Allen up, tossed him into the air, and then took him into the nursery as the toddler giggled.

Emily, bare footed to help hide her movements, was out the door the second Kyle disappeared into the nursery. She looked behind her as she quickly ran down the stairs, holding her dress up so she didn't trip. Once her feet hit the polished marble on the ground floor, she took a random corner, running as fast as she could. She ran for a while, rounding corners and taking no time at all to decide which path to take when the corridor split. When she thought she was well away from Kyle, she leaned against a wall to catch her breath.

The shadows stirred slightly and she heard voices whispering.

"Please," she said to the shadows. "Don't tell anyone where I am."

The whispers stopped suddenly, and she continued. Emily loved the sense of freedom, of doing something she wasn't supposed to do. She thought of the look on Kyle's face when he saw she was gone and grinned. That'd teach them to guard her.

She turned corner after corner, and they were all beginning to look alike. She checked doors once in a while, some were locked, and some opened up into the usual offices and servant's quarters. She was beginning to

wonder if this was the most boring place on the planet when she saw a guard up ahead of her. He pushed against a wall and disappeared behind it when it revolved.

She smiled and walked up to the same wall, then pushed on it, but it didn't budge. She pushed harder and it gave a little, but not enough that she could get through to the room on the other side.

"Are you lost, Lady Emily?" She heard the voice behind her and spun quickly.

"No, no I'm fine," she said to Elder Maleth.

He smiled at her, "You have slipped your guard, have you not?"

Emily didn't answer. She just leaned back against the revolving door.

Maleth laughed, "Come, let me show you to your room."

"Do I have to go back right now?" she asked him.

He smiled, "No, I suppose you don't, but you shouldn't be running around the palace alone either."

Emily shrugged, watching him.

"Was there something you were looking for?" he asked, watching her with an amused expression.

"Not really."

"Come, Child, let me show you something," he said, and reached his hand out to her.

She hesitated and then took his hand and let him lead her down unfamiliar hallways in silence. He stopped in front of a large door and opened it for her. She stepped through and smiled broadly. Elder Maleth had led her to a large game room full of pool tables, video games, and a large entertainment center with a projection TV and shelves full of movies.

She stepped inside and walked through the room as she ran her hand along the felt of the poker table and pulled at the arm on a video poker machine.

“I must be off, Child,” Maleth said as he shut the door behind him.

Emily was ecstatic. She was alone in a room full of games and entertainment. She walked quickly to the movies and looked through them one at a time, there were thousands of titles. This was just what she was looking for, something to break up the monotony of her day. She picked out a fun science fiction movie and fell into an overstuffed beanbag.

Emily pulled a soft blanket off of the rack and put it over herself as she settled down to watch the movie. About an hour later, she heard the door open and several strange voices began talking about some sort of wager. She froze, unsure if she should make herself known or just stay where she was, hidden behind the layers of pillows and blankets. She decided to just stay and watch her movie, she knew if she made herself known, that whoever was in the room with her would leave.

Emily’s attention turned from the movie to the conversation of the heku as they sat at the poker table. They were betting each other and boasting about past games. She stifled a giggle. They were no different from

mortal men when they were alone at a poker game. Keith had hosted several poker games at the ranch, and she loved to listen to the men interact. It was almost primal the way they tried to always show each other up, and these heku were no different.

The loud bang of the door opening made Emily jump, then she cringed when she heard the heku at the table.

“Elder!” she heard one shout as they pushed their chairs away from the table.

Emily buried herself deeper in the cushion.

“Where is she?” Chevalier asked angrily.

“Who, Elder?” one of the heku asked.

One of the guards at the poker table spoke up, “I told you I smelled a mortal in here! Didn’t I tell you that?”

“The smell wasn’t like a mortal, though! It’s different, so I thought you were imagining things,” another guard said.

She heard footsteps near her and she watched the TV, afraid to look away. The movie was just ending, so she watched the names scroll by quickly. Emily gasped when she felt Chevalier’s hand on her arm as he pulled her roughly to her feet.

The guards began to look nervous, “We didn’t know, Sir! Honestly, we didn’t know she was there.”

Chevalier pulled her from the room without acknowledging the guards. Her arm ached under his fingers and he was pulling her so fast she had a

hard time keeping up. She was afraid to talk to him, his face was furious and his body language let her know exactly how mad he was.

A few times, he stepped forward too fast and she stumbled, but he held her up by her arm, never stopping. When he got to his office, he slammed open the door and threw her inside. She landed on the floor on her knees and quickly spun to look up at him.

His eyes were seething as he slammed the door and locked it.

“What do you think you were doing, Emily?” he growled.

She knew she was in trouble. He rarely called her Emily anymore.

“I was bored,” she said, getting to her feet. She rubbed her arm where his fingers had dug into her flesh.

“This isn’t the island. You are to have Kyle with you at all times, do you understand?” he asked, slamming his fist against the desk.

She could feel her temper surfacing, “No, I can take care of myself and I’m not going to be followed around like a helpless child.”

“Because of your need to go out alone, I now get to punish five guards for not being observant, is that what you want?” he asked her.

“No!” She glared at him, “That wasn’t their fault, I hid from them.”

“Kyle has been frantically looking for you all over this palace.”

“He didn’t need to come after me, I can look out for myself,” she said, squaring her shoulders and setting her jaw.

“You can’t undermine my authority or that of Kyle in this place,” he said to her coldly.

“Then don’t put those kinds of restrictions on me.”

“Those restrictions were put on you for your protection.”

“I don’t need protected. You have these heku so afraid of me, they can’t even function if I’m around. It’s embarrassing and unnecessary.”

“It is necessary, and life would be easier for us all if you would get that through your thick head,” Chevalier said, watching her.

“Oh I get it! Why don’t I just lie naked in bed and you can come get some when you want. While you’re not there, I’ll just sit patiently and wait for you to come back,” she scowled at him.

Chevalier tried to calm himself, “I’m not saying you have to stay in the room. I’m saying when you are out, you are to have a guard with you.”

“No”

“No?” he growled.

“No... I’m not going to walk around with a babysitter. Did you know I ran into a guard today? Knocked myself straight onto my ass and you know what? He politely helped me to my feet and Kyle was ready to behead him for it. I’m not going to stand for that.”

Chevalier hissed, “He touched you?”

Emily stepped to him quickly and slapped him hard across his cheek, “Get over it.”

He grabbed her wrist roughly, “Don’t do that.”

She glared at him.

“This isn’t the island. I’m an Elder, my word here is law. If you undermine my authority, I’ll send you back to the island for good, do you understand me?”

“Loud and clear, but I’m not going back to the island... you might as well open the doors and let me walk out because then I can go wherever it is you’re not.” She pulled her wrist out from his grasp.

“This is exactly what the Elders were worried about when I chose to bring you here with me,” he said, turning away from her to look out the window.

“What exactly would that be?” she asked, glaring at his back.

“That a mortal would come in, break the rules, not follow the procedures, and lessen the authority the Elders have. One weak link can bring down the entire faction.”

“Is that what I am then? The weak link? The poor little weak human came and destroyed everything? Fine then... you don’t have to worry about that anymore,” she said, trying to open his office door. She unlocked it and pulled, but it wouldn’t open.

“What do you mean by that?” he asked, spinning to look at her.

“I’ll abide by your rules. I promised you two months and I don’t break promises. After that, I’m not guaranteeing anything.” She pulled at the

door again, “And who in the hell made all of these doors so damn heavy?”

“You’re going to abide by all of my rules?” he asked, watching her suspiciously.

“Yes... you have two months, and I have my bank account to buy my own ranch,” she said, pulling again on the door, using her body as leverage, but it still wouldn’t budge.

“That means keeping Kyle with you at all times, if he’s busy, then it’ll be another guard. That means staying where we put you and not sneaking off,” he said sternly.

She nodded but glared.

He reached out and easily opened the door, “Take her to her room,” he ordered a heku guard that was standing outside of his door.

“Yes, but don’t touch me or he’ll have you beheaded,” she told him, walking off.

The guard looked nervously at Chevalier and then followed behind Emily as she walked out of Chevalier’s office. She stepped into her room and slammed the door. Kyle appeared from the nursery and she could tell that he was livid.

“Don’t start with me, Kyle,” she said, sitting down hard in the chair.

He walked past her and out the front door, slamming it behind him.

She sat and sulked until she heard Allen wake up. She picked him up out of his crib, and sat with him on the floor to play. She tried to keep a smile up for him.

“’S Daddy?” he asked her.

“He’s at work,” she said, pulling out a fire truck and turning on the lights and sirens.

“’S Ky?”

“He’s probably standing outside Mommy’s door, sulking,” she said, trying to distract him with a large toy robot.

She heard a knock on the nursery door and Kyle spoke, “Your dinner is on the table.”

She didn’t answer, and didn’t move until she heard the outer door shut.

“Hungry?” she asked Allen, standing up.

He nodded and walked out into the large bedroom. He ran to the table and crawled into the chair. Emily sat next to him and cut his sandwich in half before handing it to him. He began to eat as she looked at her plate. She wrinkled her nose at the harsh smell. She wasn’t sure, but it looked like a caviar quiche. She pushed it away and stole a chip from Allen’s plate, then sat and watched him eat.

After he ate, she got the bathtub ready for Allen and knelt by the side of it while he played. He giggled when she made a shampoo Mohawk out of his hair and then screamed when she rinsed him off. Wrapping him in a towel, she carried him out into the bedroom and stopped when she saw

Chevalier sitting in a chair by the fire. She ignored him and took Allen into his room for some clean clothes.

“Go say goodnight to Daddy,” she said when he was ready for bed. Allen ran out into the bedroom and jumped into Chevalier’s lap. Emily stayed in the nursery and rocked in the chair. Chevalier brought Allen in and tucked him into bed, not saying a word to Emily. When he left, Emily kissed Allen goodnight and shut the door behind her when she left.

She stepped into the bathroom to change for bed and looked, irritated, at the night clothes waiting for her. They were pink and frilly, so she tore them in two and tossed them into the trash, opting instead for just a short tank top and panties. It had to be better than those annoyingly feminine nightgowns the heku tailors seemed to think she needed.

She left the bathroom and crawled into bed, ignoring Chevalier’s eyes on her.

Chevalier sighed when she crawled into bed without a word. She kicked the covers off, so he shut down one of the fireplaces to cool the room off. He walked over and sat down on the bed. He wanted to reach out and run his fingers along her soft smooth hips and the curve of her waist, but knew she would probably not appreciate that.

“Em?” he asked softly.

She ignored him and after a few minutes, he sighed and walked out of the room.

“She wouldn’t talk to me,” Kyle said to the Elder.

“Me either,” Chevalier said.

“What happened? I saw her arm,” Kyle said, holding back his anger.

“She agreed to follow the rules for two months, but then said she’s leaving. She wants to go start her own ranch,” he told Kyle and then sat on a chair in the hallway.

Kyle frowned, “Maybe it won’t come to that.”

“I hope not, I don’t know if I can live without her,” Chevalier said, looking at the door.

Kyle agreed, but couldn’t tell the Elder his feelings for Emily.

“How was your first day as Elder?” Kyle asked, smiling.

Chevalier grinned, “It’s going to be great. I get to perform the duties of the Chief Enforcer, but more. I think it’s going to fit me nicely.”

Both Chevalier and Kyle turned toward the door when it opened. Emily appeared and walked slowly past them, her eyes far away.

“Emily?” Kyle asked, standing up just as Chevalier moved to her side.

“Em? Where are you going?” Chevalier asked her. He took her hand and stopped her forward movement just before she stepped out into the fifth-floor foyer. She was still wearing the short tank top and high-cut panties, and he knew that was way more skin than she would want to walk through the palace showing.

Emily didn’t move or look at him when he took her hand.

“Don’t wake her,” Kyle reminded Chevalier.

“I’m not sure I can,” Chevalier told him, looking at her expressionless face.

“Where do you suppose she’s going?” Kyle asked.

Chevalier shrugged, “I’m not sure she knows how to get anywhere yet. Maybe she’s just going to wander?”

“Maybe”

Chevalier picked her up and carried her back to bed where she curled onto her side, never waking up.

Chevalier had to take her back to bed three more times that night. He went into the bedroom just after dawn when he heard her get up again.

“Emily, go to bed,” he said sternly.

She turned and frowned at him, “Is that an order?”

He smiled, “Never mind, I see you’re awake.”

She shook her head and walked into the bathroom, then came out in a light blue summer dress, “Is it within my abilities to get some jeans and t-shirts in here?”

Chevalier sighed, disappointed. He loved how she looked in flowing dresses, “I can have some made.”

She nodded and headed into the nursery, shutting the door. Chevalier stepped out of the room.

“How is she this morning?” Kyle asked.

“Still mad,” he said. “I’m going down to the office. You shouldn’t have any problems today.”

Kyle nodded and then watched the Elder walk away. Once Chevalier was out of sight, he headed into the bedroom. When he saw she wasn’t in there, he knocked on the nursery door.

“Em?”

“Come in,” she said softly.

Kyle came into the room and smiled at Allen, “You hungry?”

“Hungry!” he said, crawling off of Emily’s lap and running toward Kyle.

“You two go eat, I’m fine,” she said, watching out the window.

“Em, you haven’t eaten since yesterday morning, come with us,” he said.

“Is that an order?” She glared at him.

“I’m not going to order you to eat.”

“Then I’m not going.” She didn’t move.

“Can I bring you something?” he asked, taking Allen into his arms.

“Coffee? Eggs and bacon?”

“No,” she said bluntly.

“Fine, stay in the room, ok?” he asked, and started toward the bedroom door.

“Anything you say,” she said, and then mumbled, barely loud enough for Kyle to hear. “Master.”

A few minutes after they left, Emily realized she was still extremely tired. She laid down on the top of her bed and curled up with a pillow.

Kyle came back from getting Allen some breakfast and saw Emily asleep. He took Allen back out into the hallway and played games with him, letting her sleep. At noon, he took Allen down for lunch and when he returned, he heard Emily walking around the room, so he knocked on the door.

“Come in,” she said, turning to him when he entered.

“Sleep well?” he asked, setting Allen down.

“I need to go to the library,” Emily told him, and took Allen’s hand and headed for the door.

Kyle sighed and followed her out. He led her to the library and then ordered all of the heku to leave. This put a scowl on Emily’s face. The library was more than large enough for her to share with the residents of the palace.

She started going through the endless expanse of books, one at a time, reading the back to see if it interested her. While she went through the books, Kyle held Allen as he slept. He watched uncomfortably as she climbed high up on the ladder to see the books that were more than fifteen feet from the ground.

Emily finally found a book and headed back down the ladder. She sat down in an overstuffed chair and began to read with her knees pulled

tightly against her chest. Kyle was glad he had patience as he sat for hours while she read and Allen napped. Emily looked up only when Allen stretched and yawned. He crawled off of Kyle's lap and ran over to Emily.

"Keem" he said, pulling on her hand.

"He wants ice cream, can you take him?" she asked Kyle.

"I can't leave you here alone." He sighed when she slammed her book shut.

"Fine... let's go get ice cream, Allen," she said, and then tucked the book under her arm before taking Allen's hand.

Kyle led them silently to the kitchen and held the door open for them. Emily took her place beside Allen at the table and waited while Kyle found the chef and got him some ice cream.

Emily read while Allen scarfed down the strawberry ice cream, and Kyle stood silently beside them.

The rest of the evening was the same. Emily did things with Allen and ignored Kyle completely. He was relieved when Emily put Allen down for the night. When she came back out, she grabbed her book, but Kyle interrupted her.

"Emily?"

She looked at him.

"Come sit, let's talk," he said, patting the couch beside him. She hesitated and then sat down by him.

“What?” she snapped.

“I want to talk about what’s going on with you at night,” he said, bringing up the topic he promised Chevalier he would.

“What do you mean?”

“You’re walking in your sleep.”

“I don’t walk in my sleep,” she said, narrowing her eyes.

“Well... you have been lately.”

“So?”

“So? That means you’re either stressed or anxious about something.”

“Oh great, complete obedience isn’t enough for you two is it? Now you want to delve into my psyche?” she mumbled, irritated.

“Don’t say it like that. That makes you sound like a slave.”

“Oh... so define slave... let’s see. Forced into obedience... check. Held against my will... check.”

“Emily...”

She cut him off, “Every move watched and studied... check.”

“Emily, you aren’t a slave and you know it,” he said, frustrated.

“Yes I am. I guess if Chevalier wants to get a little then I may upgrade, but until then I only earn the slave title,” she said, and glared at him.

Kyle gasped, wide eyed. She'd never talked to him like that and he truly hoped that wasn't how she felt. He reached out and put his hand on hers softly.

"I suppose now you'll order me into bed too. Shall I go naked or would you rather do that yourself?"

"Emily!" he said, pulling his hand back quickly.

"Why else would he bring me here? This is a palace full of men, he needed a little sex once in a while," she snapped.

"You know that's not true, he loves you."

"Yeah, sure he does," she said. "That's why I keep having to cover bruises... he loves me about as much as Keith did."

Kyle's eyes narrowed, "That's the Elder you're talking about, and your husband. You know as well as I do that he's nothing like Keith."

"Do I?"

"Yes you do. Now calm down and stop acting like a martyr." He stood up angrily and she stood up to face him.

"You're lucky I have to have permission to move or I'd slap you," she scowled at him.

"Permission granted," he hissed, less than a second before her hand connected with his face. He was shocked. He didn't think she'd actually do it.

"Go to bed," he said, and stormed out of the room.

“Is that an order?” he heard her yell as he shut the door.

He walked across the hallway and slammed his head into the wall.

“That bad?” he heard Chevalier say from behind him.

“How do you put up with that temper?” Kyle asked, turning to him.

“With a lot of patience,” Chevalier said, patting Kyle on the shoulder.

“She slapped me,” Kyle chuckled.

“Oh? Me too... she’s on a roll.” Chevalier laughed and sat down on the chair.

“Yes, but I gave her permission.”

“Why did you do that?” Chevalier asked, looking at Kyle questioningly.

“I didn’t think she’d do it,” Kyle laughed.

He sighed, “How was your day?”

“Boring, she won’t talk to me at all... We went to the library, she took Allen for ice cream, which reminds me, she hasn’t eaten in two days,” Kyle said, looking at the door.

“Damn she’s stubborn,” Chevalier sighed.

Kyle nodded.

“My time is running out. I’m going to hit the two-month mark too soon,” he said softly.

“I know.”

“She needs something to do, something so she’s not bored.”

“Like what?”

“I don’t know yet, but I’m thinking about it. Emily doesn’t handle boredom well, and here, there’s nothing for her to do but sneak out.”

Emily appeared in the doorway fully dressed and walked past them slowly.

“Here we go again,” Chevalier said, standing up.

“Maybe we should follow her, at least today she’s dressed,” Kyle suggested.

“Ok, let’s do that,” Chevalier said, following slowly behind Emily.

She walked out into the fifth-floor foyer and down the long set of marble stairs. Once she hit the ground floor, she turned and walked down the right hallway. Her eyes never focused and she never looked around or changed her expression.

“Where is she going?” Kyle asked.

Chevalier shrugged.

Emily came to a long dark hallway and turned to face the wall. Her hand moved out slowly and she pressed a brick, opening a secret door.

“Oh... no we don’t,” Chevalier said, picking her up.

“How did she know that was there?” Kyle asked, surprised.

“I don’t know, but she’s not going down there,” he said, and carried her back upstairs.

Chevalier laid her back in bed and covered her up. He watched her for a moment, but she didn’t stir.

Kyle and Chevalier went back out into the hallway and shut her door quietly.

“Do you think she found her way down into the prison yesterday?” Kyle asked.

Chevalier shrugged, “There’s no telling what she did, but when I found her, she was at the other end of the palace.”

“Ok, back to a job of some sort,” Kyle said, thinking.

“She prefers animals, but there’s not a barn in the entire city.”

Both of them were deep in thought when Emily emerged again. Chevalier let Kyle take her back to bed this time, while he thought about something to keep Emily busy during the day, something to give her a purpose.

“She may like something working with the heku,” Kyle suggested.

“That defeats the purpose of keeping her away from them though.”

“Yeah, well maybe if she has an official job with them, she’d stop finding ways to interact on her own.”

Chevalier smiled, “You may have something there.”

“All there are in this palace are guards and servants though.”

“What if we start a mounted guard unit?” Chevalier asked, raising an eyebrow.

Kyle looked at him, “Would the other Elders go for that?”

He shrugged, “If I can find a place for some stables, maybe. She could take care of the horses and teach the heku guards how to ride.”

“That could be perfect. Thukil Coven has a Cavalry, and I’ve always thought it sounded interesting,” Kyle said, smiling.

“We’d need someone to watch Allen.”

“Ugh, yeah we would. We could bring Anna over,” Kyle suggested.

“She’s doing something else now, and I can’t take her away.”

“Emily’s not going to let us pick someone from the city at random.”

“I don’t much like that idea either,” Chevalier said.

“We could get a guard to do it, but they would consider that a demotion,” Kyle said as he thought.

Chevalier smiled, “Send for Sam.”

Kyle rolled his eyes, “Why didn’t I think of that? I’ll have him here in the morning.”

“As soon as I find a stable location, we’ll bring Patra over, too.”

Chevalier sighed when Emily appeared in the doorway, “I’m going to start tying her in bed,” he said, standing up to carry her back to bed.

This time he curled up next to her and watched her sleep. She stayed in bed the rest of the night.

Chapter 18 - Cavalry

It took only four weeks to get the location and the stables built, one of the advantages of having non-sleeping workers. Emily was so excited to see Sam, that she forgot about being mad at Kyle and Chevalier and her mood improved. Sam was happy to help with Allen, and the Elders loved the idea of a mounted Cavalry. A heku could run faster than a horse, but having them up on horses set them apart from the everyday heku guards of the city. It was unanimously decided on in the Council that the Cavalry would be home to the elite guards.

Chevalier guided Emily out the doors and along the neatly trimmed grass, she was blindfolded.

“Tell me again where we’re going,” she said as she held tightly to Chevalier’s arm so she wouldn’t hit anything.

“It’s a surprise.” He grinned, “We’re almost there.”

Chevalier got Emily into position, and Kyle brought Patra out to the front doors of the stables. When he pulled the blindfold off, she gasped and ran to Patra, hugging her tightly.

“Oh thank you,” she said, rubbing her nose on the mare’s muzzle.

“It’s not all fun, Em. We have a job for you,” Chevalier said, smiling.

She looked up, “A job?”

“The Elders have decided on a mounted Cavalry. It’ll be your job to tend to the horses and to teach the heku how to ride,” Kyle explained.

Chevalier was still smiling, “Kyle will be the battalion Captain, so he’ll be here with you every day.”

Emily tied Patra up to a post and went into the stables. There were rows and rows of stalls full of horses of all breeds and colors. The stables were pristine and smelled like new wood. She knew that would all pass soon enough.

Emily ran out and jumped into Chevalier’s arms and wrapped her arms around his neck, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome,” he said, hugging her tightly.

She pulled back and looked into his eyes, “When do we start?”

Kyle chuckled and pointed to seven guards heading their way, “There’s your first set.”

Emily looked over at the unhappy heku and frowned, “They don’t want to do this?”

“They don’t have a choice,” Chevalier said, setting her down on her feet.

Emily sighed and then went to meet the seven guards. They wouldn’t even look at her as she introduced herself. She thought for a moment and then went back to Chevalier.

“I’ll talk to them,” he said angrily, but she put her hand against his chest.

“It will go smoother if an Elder isn’t watching, and send Kyle away for a few minutes,” she suggested.

Kyle started to argue, but Chevalier held a hand up, “Fine... he’ll be gone for 5 minutes... that’s it.”

Kyle frowned and went into the stables as Chevalier walked away. Emily went back to the guards.

“Now... there’s no Elder and no Captain watching. I’m Emily,” she said, and they looked down at her. She rarely felt small, but at this moment she did. They towered over her.

“I know you don’t want to be here,” she started, and they shifted uncomfortably.

“I understand that it’ll be hard taking instructions from a mere mortal.” She grinned and watched as they relaxed slightly.

“I’ll make this as painless as possible. Besides, as my first group, you’ll get to see me fall on my ass on a regular basis so at least this will be entertaining for you.” She smiled when they laughed, “I don’t give orders, ok? I don’t want anything more than to help you get up on a horse and not injure the animal or yourself.”

They nodded, and she felt a small glimmer that they were less mad, “Let’s get going. The Captain’s inside, seething, because he can’t see me, so we’ll give him a break and go in.”

She walked into the stables and heard them follow behind her. Kyle turned around when she came in, and looked at the heku guards, surprised that they seemed in much better moods.

“First off... pick a horse,” she said, looking around the stables, and then she walked over to Patra. “Except this one, this one’s mine.”

The heku looked around hesitantly.

“Do you have a suggestion?” one finally asked.

“Let’s see.” She went over to the guards and looked at each one of them.

Emily took the hand of one of the guards and he froze and looked at Kyle. Kyle sighed and turned away. She pulled on his hand and led him over to the stables.

“You’re the tallest, so you are going to need a larger horse.” She led him through the stables and stopped at a tall Appaloosa.

“Here, this will be yours.” She opened the stable and handed a brush to the heku, “Start brushing him, you need to bond.”

She left him with the stallion and shut the stall door, then repeated that with each guard, taking their hand and leading them up and down the rows of horses until she found one that suited them.

She gathered up seven bridles and passed them out, showing each heku in turn how to put it on correctly.

“Once you get them on, lead them out here to me,” she called down toward the stalls.

She smiled at Kyle, “This is fun.”

Kyle glared, “You don’t have to touch them.”

She slapped him playfully on the chest, “Trust me.”

“Oh that’s part of your plan? To break all of the ‘don’t touch the Elder’s wife’ rules?” he scowled.

“No, it’s part of getting them to trust me,” she said, and Kyle relaxed some, that made sense.

Over the next two hours, Emily walked them through putting a saddle on their horses. She had to watch carefully so they didn’t over cinch the straps and injure the horse. She lost count of how many times she had to tell them to be gentle with the horses.

“Ok... now... all together, you’re going to go to the horse’s left side, put your foot in the stirrup, and hoist up,” she said, and cringed slightly. She wasn’t sure how this was going to go.

She smiled when they all swiftly mounted their horses. She often forgot how naturally graceful the heku were.

“Great! Now sit there and get comfortable while I adjust the stirrups.”

Kyle watched as Emily went horse to horse and adjusted the stirrups to fit the long legs of the heku guards. He hated how much she had to struggle to do it. He could more easily have done the adjustments, but she pushed him away when he came to try.

When she was finished with the last one, she came over to Kyle, “We need to talk shoes.”

“What’s wrong with their shoes?” he asked, looking at the guard issued steel toed boots.

“Cowboy boots are made that way for a reason, it helps keep their feet in the stirrups,” she explained.

“Ok, we’ll get some here in the next few days,” he promised.

“Great guys, now get off of the horse the same way you got on, going to their left.” She watched as they slipped off of their horses.

Emily smiled. They had made considerable progress today, and she noticed it was getting late, “Let’s get them all back to their stalls and feed them.”

Kyle and Emily watched as they headed back to the stalls with their horses. She jumped toward one of the horses when it lowered its ears, she’d seen that too many times before. There was a heku guard standing directly behind his mare, and she didn’t like it. Kyle reached out for Emily, but his hand barely touched her shoulder when she pushed the heku out of the way just as the horse kicked backwards. Her hoof caught Emily in the back, and sent her flying into the wall of the barn. Emily slumped down onto the floor and bent over, trying to catch her breath.

Suddenly, she found herself surrounded by eight frantic heku.

“We should call an ambulance,” one said.

“No, I can run her to the hospital in the city,” another said.

“Stop,” she gasped, and they all looked at her.

“How badly are you hurt?” Kyle asked, running his hands along her back.

“Ouch! Stop touching my back,” she said, trying to get to her feet. She sat back down hard, when someone’s hands pushed against her.

“Go put your horses away and don’t stand behind them,” she said to them. They looked at Kyle and he nodded. The heku guards walked over to their horses, glancing back at Emily, each wondering how much trouble they would get into for this, and on their first day.

As they rounded the corner back to Emily, they gasped. She had her shirt hiked up in back, and Kyle was looking at a hoof shaped bruise to the left of her spine.

“See, it’s not bad,” she said, pulling her shirt down.

Kyle helped her to her feet and he spun to the guard angrily, “Never, ever, stand behind a horse.”

Emily frowned and turned to Kyle, “Did you hear me tell them that?”

“Well, no,” he said angrily.

“Then if you want to be mad at someone... be mad at me,” she said to him, and put her hands on her hips.

The heku guards watched, shocked. They couldn’t believe that the little mortal woman was standing up for them with their Captain.

“Still, Emily, why would you push a heku out of the way for that? He would already be healed,” he asked, a little softer.

“Because he didn’t know. There’s no reason he should get hurt because I forgot to mention it.” She turned back to the guards, “Good job today, now let’s get them fresh food and water.”

“Lady Emily?” one guard asked.

“Yes?” she said, turning to him.

“You really should have let me get kicked, Ma’am,” he said softly.

She smiled, “I’m ok, seriously. This wasn’t the first and won’t be the last time I get kicked by a horse.”

Emily went over to the oats and tried pulling up the lid. When it didn’t come off, she put her fingers under the edge and leaned her body back when she felt a hand on her shoulder.

“Let me get it, Ma’am,” a member of the new Cavalry said, and he easily pulled the lid off.

Kyle watched their interaction in shock. In their short amount of time with Emily, she had managed to gain the respect and admiration that normally would have taken years. He shook his head as he saw them intermingle with her easily. She walked them through feeding the horses and getting them fresh water. They helped her reach the buckets, helped her turn the water crank, anything they could to make it easier for her.

“Thank you and I will see you tomorrow,” she said, shaking each of their hands as they bowed slightly to her and walked away.

Kyle walked Emily back into the palace and smiled at the change in her. She was walking proudly, and smiled sweetly at heku she walked by, and was talking to him again about horses and how well it went that day. When they reached the bedroom, she turned to him.

“Thank you. I know that was hard for you,” she said.

He nodded, “I’ll get used to it. Want me to tell Chevalier about the bruise?”

“Think he’ll notice?” she asked.

Kyle nodded, “Most definitely.”

“What will I notice?” Chevalier asked, walking up to them.

“Don’t panic, ok?” she asked, and put her hands against his chest. She felt his body tense, “Calm down, Chev, I just got kicked by a horse.”

“Yes... after she pushed one of the guards out of the way,” Kyle added.

She glared at him, “I wasn’t going to mention that.”

Chevalier sighed, “You pushed a heku out of the way so he wouldn’t get kicked by a horse, and then you took the kick?”

She nodded, “Well... when you say it like that it doesn’t sound very smart.”

“How bad is it?” he asked.

“Just a bruise.” She smiled and headed into the bedroom, “You coming in?”

“I’ll be in in a second,” Chevalier said, and watched as she shut the door.

“How did it go, other than the kick?” he asked Kyle.

Kyle shook his head, “She amazes me, you know? Those guards did not want to be there. They wouldn’t even look at her.”

Chevalier growled.

“But by the time they left,” Kyle said quickly. “They were eating out of the palm of her hand, helping her lift, helping her feed and water. I can’t figure out how she charmed them so quickly.”

Chevalier smiled, “She did it because she’s Emily.”

Kyle nodded, “I’m off, apparently I need to go order a few dozen pairs of black cowboy boots.”

Chevalier laughed and walked into the room. He sat down by Allen and Emily as they started to eat. He was glad to see she was eating again. It was better after he’d talked to the chef about her favorite foods. Emily was talking to Allen and Chevalier about her day, and he listened intently. His plan was working better than expected, and he was able to relax, she now had a reason to stay.

Emily took Allen to the entertainment corner and held him while they watched a movie together. Chevalier sat beside them and held her hand, things were finally back to normal.

After they put Allen down to bed, Emily crawled into bed and curled up next to Chevalier.

“Can I ask you something?” he asked her.

“Sure,” she said, pulling closer to him.

“Do you remember your dreams lately?”

She frowned, “Not really. Why?”

“You’re still walking at night.”

“Oh”

“Tonight, would you let me hold you? When I touch you, I can see your dreams. I’d like to know what’s causing it.”

She thought a moment and then nodded, “Sure.”

He kissed her softly and then ran his hands around her, but she flinched when his hand brushed the bruise.

“Let me see,” he said, sitting up.

“It’s just a bruise,” she told him, not moving.

“We can argue, or you can just relent now and let me see it,” he said, grinning.

She sighed and sat up before pulling her nightgown up in back. She heard him inhale sharply.

“That looks pretty bad,” he said, pulling her nightgown back down.

“I’ve had worse,” she reminded him as she laid down.

He smiled, “Good night, Em.”

She started to wish him good night too, but his lips pressed against hers and cut her off.

Chevalier held her all night and let his mind wander into her dreams. Her dreams were odd and cryptic, first a horse and then a pond, nothing abnormal. He began to think she wouldn't walk tonight when he heard someone calling.

“Come to me, Child,” the voice said.

Chevalier opened his eyes and stood up, looking around the room. Just as he ascertained that no one was in there, Emily stood up and began to walk out of the room. He carried her back to bed and laid down next to her, taking her hand.

Her dreams hadn't stopped. Images flashed through her mind, images of places she'd been and people she knew. Then the voice sounded again.

“Hurry, Child, come now,” he heard the soft voice say just before Emily pulled her hand away from him as she stood up. He blocked her way and she laid back in bed. As soon as she settled in, he walked out into the hallway and called for Kyle.

“Yes, Elder?” Kyle asked, stepping out of his room.

“Someone is calling her,” he said.

“Calling her?”

“Yes, I can hear it in her dreams... someone calls her, and then she gets out of bed,” Chevalier explained.

Kyle frowned.

“Go down into the prison. I wonder if one of the prisoners knows there’s a mortal, maybe they can smell her. See if anyone there would be able to call her in her sleep.”

Kyle nodded and blurred down the stairs. Chevalier walked into the room just in time to put Emily back to bed. This time he wrapped his arms around her and held her in bed so she couldn’t get up.

Emily stretched and got out of bed just after the sun came up. Chevalier watched her as she walked toward the bathroom and then he jumped out of bed when she gasped as a strange heku stepped out of the shadows and took a step toward her.

Chevalier was between them immediately, “Who do you think you are?”

“I... I’m just bringing food for the mortals,” the little heku said weakly.

“Report immediately to the Captain for punishment. You’re lucky I don’t kill you right now,” he said angrily.

The strange heku looked at Emily and then nodded and walked out of the room, followed by Chevalier. Emily took a deep breath, and walked into the bathroom. She hated that he was about to get punished, but she also didn’t like the thought that he was in their room without permission. She showered quickly and threw on jeans and a t-shirt. When she got out, Kyle was waiting for her at the table while Allen ate.

“Chevalier’s gone to work already,” Kyle told her.

“There was a heku in the room this morning,” she said as she sat down and picked up a slice of bacon.

“Yes, I know, unacceptable,” he said, obviously mad.

She nodded and drank some orange juice. Once she was done eating, she kissed Allen good-bye and then walked out toward the stables with Kyle.

The seven guards were already in the stables brushing their horses.

“Good morning, Ma’am,” one of them said, and smiled at her when she arrived.

“Good morning all, did you have a nice night?” She went over and slipped a bridle on Patra and let her out to the front of the stables as they all answered her about their evenings.

“Ok, put the bridles on and bring them out here. I want to see you put the saddles on them... just be gentle, please,” she said, and stood back to watch them.

Emily watched carefully as the seven led their horses out and put on their saddles. She helped each one to make sure they didn’t injure the horse and then climbed up on Patra when they were all saddled.

“Ok, mount up,” she said, and watched as they easily slid onto their horses.

“Good job.” She smiled.

“Ma’am?” one of them asked.

“Yes?”

“How is your back?” he asked softly, unsure if he had the right to ask.

She smiled, "I'm fine, really. It's not the first time I've been kicked."

He nodded and smiled at her.

"Ok, now, we're going to start out in a walk... easy enough. You click your tongue like this," she said, clicking. "Then lightly... very lightly... kick your horse."

She demonstrated, and Patra started off in a slow walk.

Before long, everyone joined her and she turned around to make sure they were all with her. She thought for sure they would have balance issues, but then remembered who she was working with and smiled at their stable forms on the horses. They all caught up to her and formed a line to each side of her.

"Ready for some fun?" she asked them, and they looked at her, confused.

"Ok, Patra, let's show the heku who's faster," she said. Kicking her horse hard, Patra broke into a gallop.

She laughed as she looked behind her and saw a few running along with her, some falling behind in more of a trot, and one heku even had his horse going backwards, not an easy feat. She urged Patra on, and soon all seven of the guards were racing her across the city as heku jumped to get out of their way.

She turned Patra onto a side street and shut her eyes as she felt the wind through her hair. The fast sound of hoof beats behind her was comforting and she led the guards back toward the stables. She hit the stables first and pulled Patra back to stop her, then turned around and

watched the guards come, one at a time, into the stable yards and stop their horses. She was glad to see most of them were laughing.

“That... is a gallop,” she told them when they had all joined her.

“That... was cheating,” one said, laughing.

Emily looked around and didn't see Kyle, so she turned to the guards, “No, my dear, I don't cheat, I just... well... yeah, ok, so I cheated.”

She smiled and ordered them all off of their horses, then slid off Patra and gasped as one of the horses began to shy and buck. She ran forward and took the reins, but was pushed back by the horse's strong hoof. One of the guards moved between her and the horse and took the reins just as the heku on his back was bucked off and landed hard against a thick tree.

She crawled quickly over to him and put her hands on his chest when he started to get up, “Are you hurt?”

He coughed some, “Ok,” he managed to say, but she didn't believe him.

She put her hands on his neck and felt down his spine. His eyes were wide as she touched him gently. She gasped, “I think he broke your back.”

“It'll be fine in a second, I promise,” he said, watching her concerned expression.

“Just lay still,” she told him, and grabbed a horse blanket from the stack nearby and covered him.

“Honestly, Ma’am, I’m ok.” He started to get up, but she held him down. She realized he wasn’t trying very hard to get up. There was no way she could have held him down if he’d really wanted to get up.

Another guard knelt down by her, “You got kicked, how are you?”

“I’m fine,” she said, ignoring the stinging in her chest. She could only imagine how mad Chevalier was going to be over this one.

“What happened, did anyone see?” she asked them all, still holding the one heku down.

“Bee,” one of them said.

Emily nodded, “That’ll do it every time. Did anyone get stung?”

“No, I killed it,” a heku guard said, and she raised her eyebrows impressed.

“Can I get up now?” the heku that was lying down asked.

“Not yet,” she said, and again ran her fingers down his back. The bones seemed to have healed.

“Ok, you can get up,” she told him, and pulled her hands off of his chest.

Emily stood up and the world began to spin. The next thing she knew, she was being laid down gently onto the ground.

She looked up at the seven guards, “I’m ok.”

She tried to sit up, but she felt hands holding her down, “Seriously, let me up before Kyle gets here.”

“It’s not safe, we should have someone take a look at you,” one of them said.

“Ugh, if you treat me like this every time I get hurt, you’ll spend most of your time on the ground. Now let me up,” she said, sitting up with help. She shook her head and then stood up slower.

“See, all good,” she said, smiling at them.

The heku guards watched her nervously and looked like they were about to whisk her to an emergency room.

“Let’s get them ready for the night. Get the saddles off, and get them brushed, fed, and watered.” She walked slowly over to Patra and rubbed her chest where the horse pushed her. She could just hear Chevalier berating her for this, too.

She got Patra ready for the night, and when she turned to check on the guards, they were already done.

“Oh, good job,” she said, smiling.

“We think we should walk you in. The Captain was called away on an emergency,” one of them said.

“I think I can make my own way into the palace. Go home, you’re off duty,” she said, starting for the front door. She stopped when she heard footsteps behind her and turned to face them.

“We’re walking you in,” the front one told her.

“Ok, one of you can walk me in,” she said, heading inside. She wasn’t sure how they decided, but one of them blurred to her side.

“What’s going on here?” Chevalier growled when he saw Emily with a strange heku guard.

Emily grinned, “Being overprotective, I do believe. Must be something in the species.”

Chevalier nodded to him, “Thank you, Mark, for bringing her home.”

He stepped forward, “Sir…” He looked at Emily and her eyes narrowed.

“Yes?”

He looked from Emily to the Elder, “Umm… watch her, she got hit pretty hard and passed out.”

Emily glared at him, “Hey! What’s up with that?”

“Friends with you, but he’s my Elder,” the heku said, and walked off.

Emily sighed and walked into the room, “Where’s Allen?”

Chevalier shut the door behind her, “Sam has him down in the game room. To give us some alone time.”

She smiled and turned toward him, “Alone time, eh?”

He smiled and wrapped his arms around her waist then kissed her softly. She got on her tip toes so she could put her hands on his face and kissed him passionately. Chevalier slipped off her shirt and began to kiss her neck softly, but then pulled back and frowned.

“What?” she asked.

“That’s some bruise, Em,” he said, touching just above the bruise softly.

Emily began to unbutton his shirt and soon her bruise was forgotten.

“Alright, today we start the tactical training from horseback,” Emily said to the seven mounted heku.

They nodded and looked at each other excitedly.

“The Captain is going to help with this as... well I have no idea how to tackle a heku from horseback,” she said, laughing.

The heku grinned and watched as Kyle rode up and stopped by Emily.

“First it’s going to be... well just what Emily said... how to get off of a horse quickly for a tackle,” Kyle said. “Horses are moody, as you’ve seen, and they aren’t going to like a lot of these moves, so we need to do them often and get them used to it.”

Kyle moved his horse forward, “Nathan, get down off the horse and I want you to run from me.”

Nathan slid off of his horse, looked at his Captain, and then blurred across the lawn. Kyle was on him quickly and in one smooth movement, managed to kick off from his buckskin mare and land squarely on Nathan, pinning him to the ground.

Emily flew past them on Patra and soon caught up with the mare. The heku watched, amazed, as she brought a lasso up off of her hip, twirled it in the air a few times, and then threw it easily over the mare’s head. She wrapped the end quickly around the horn on her saddle, and pulled Patra to a stop, which in turn brought the mare to a sudden halt.

She returned to the group with the mare in tow.

“When do we learn how to do that?” one of the heku asked, grinning at Emily.

“Oh, you’ll never be that good.” She laughed and winked at him.

Kyle smiled as he watched her fun banter with the guards. He always liked to watch her on horseback. She was graceful and beautiful as she did what she loved and the blissful expression she had only when on a horse gave her an attractive glow.

“Ok, who wants to try that?” Kyle asked from the ground. One of the heku raised his hand. Emily watched as Kyle blurred and the heku kicked his horse into a fast gallop. When he approached Kyle, he pushed off from the horse, got his foot tangled in the stirrups, and then was dragged alongside as the horse ran in a panic.

Emily was on the horse in a few seconds and quickly had the lasso around his neck and pulled him to a stop. Once the horse stopped, she jumped off of Patra and pulled the heku’s foot out of the stirrups before kneeling down beside him. There was blood all over him, and his eyes were shut.

“Mark?” she asked, touching his face lightly.

He looked up at her and gasped for breath.

She looked into his eyes and took his hand, “It’s ok. I’ll stay with you while you heal.”

The heku was in pain and Emily stayed with him. She could hear the others surround them, and she gently touched his cheek as he groaned in pain. Within a few minutes, his breathing slowed and the bleeding stopped. He pulled his hand out of hers and sat up.

“Shake it off, Mark,” Kyle told him, and helped him up.

“I’m ok,” he said, stretching.

Emily stood up and brushed the dirt off of her jeans, “I have an idea.”

Kyle looked over at her, “You do?”

“Yes, there’s a way you have to turn your foot if you’re going to jump off of a horse in motion,” she said.

“And you jumped off of a moving horse because...?” Kyle asked, amused.

She looked at him and smiled, “I was in a rodeo. I had to jump off the horse and tie down a cow.”

Kyle raised his eye, impressed, “Ok then... what are we doing wrong?”

Emily hoisted herself up on Patra and adjusted her feet, “Before you jump, you need to turn your foot like this... otherwise, as we saw, you can get your foot caught.”

“Looks easy enough,” Kyle said.

“Go,” Emily said.

Kyle looked up at her, “Do what?”

“Run,” she said.

“Emily...”

“I can show them how to do it properly. I can’t tackle correctly, but I can show them how to jump from a moving horse,” she explained.

Kyle sighed and then blurred across the field.

The seven heku watched, grinning, as Emily took off after him and pulled her horse quickly to his side. They watched her feet carefully as she positioned herself, shifted her foot, and flew off of the horse and landed squarely on Kyle’s back. Emily slammed into him, but didn’t even knock him forward as he wrapped his arms back around her and steadied her.

The other heku blurred to them as Kyle turned around with Emily on his back.

“You know... you could at least do me a favor and pretend I knocked you down,” she said, crawling off of his back.

“Oh sorry, Em,” he said, and laughed.

She turned to the other heku and ignored their laughing, “Did you see how I did that?”

They nodded.

“Fine... let me get Patra and we’ll try again.” She whistled loudly and Patra came running back to her. She put her foot in the stirrup, then took a deep breath. She was sore from her flying pseudo-tackle onto Kyle. Before she could push off, she felt strong hands lift her onto the horse.

Emily pointed Patra back to the starting point.

“You know we’re all jealous now, Captain,” one of the heku whispered, so softly that Emily could barely hear him.

She was glad she was facing the other way when she felt the blush rising to her cheeks.

“Ok... ready,” she called to them as Kyle took off across the lawn.

They repeated this pattern over and over until Patra was panting and covered with sweat. Emily was sore from all of the lassoing and also from tackling Kyle, so she called it a day.

“Good job,” she said to them and slid off of Patra stiffly.

“Em, let me put Patra up tonight,” Kyle said, taking the reins from her. She agreed and sat down on a bale of hay, then watched the heku all put away their horses as she rubbed her sore arm. It’d been a while since her rodeo days, and she wasn’t used to that kind of thing yet.

When the horses were all down for the night, she stood up stiffly and stretched her legs. Kyle smiled when he walked up to her, “That was pretty interesting.”

“What was?” she asked, heading into the palace.

“Your attempt at a tackle. I thought Travis and I taught you how to take down a heku.”

She sighed, “Not from horseback.”

Emily felt his hand on her lower back and they walked in silence. She wasn't sure how far he was willing to take his attraction to her, but she knew at some point she would have to deal with it. Kyle was her friend and trusted guard. She wouldn't have him beheaded, and she knew that's exactly what Chevalier would do if he knew that Kyle had kissed her.

“What's on the agenda for tomorrow?” she asked finally.

“I haven't decided yet, maybe shooting.”

She frowned, “Guns? I thought guns couldn't kill a heku.”

“They can't,” he said, “But they can slow us down enough and give the guards time to... well... do more.”

She nodded, “That's right up my alley.”

Kyle laughed, “Yes it is. Oh, I'm supposed to meet with the Elder about our progress. I have another guard coming, he's almost here.”

She nodded, “Who?”

“No one you know.” He smiled and walked away as the strange heku came to her door.

Chapter 19 - Encala

Emily shook her head, then stepped into her room and shut the door. Allen immediately ran into her arms and she picked him up, despite the ache in her arm. Sam nodded and left. He had been staying in the stables to watch over the horses at night.

She kissed Allen's peanut butter covered face, "Did you have a good day?"

Allen smiled up at her and nodded. Emily took him into the bathroom to wash his face off. When she got into the better light, she saw it was more than his face that was covered, so she ran a bath for him and sat on the edge of the tub to watch him play.

She heard someone out in the bedroom, "Sam?"

No one answered.

"Chev?" she called out.

When still no one answered, Emily picked Allen up out of the water and wrapped him in a towel, then carried him into the next room.

Emily looked around the large bedroom and didn't see anyone. She sat Allen down on the floor when she got the feeling that she was being watched. Allen quickly ditched his towel and began to play with a toy truck on the floor.

A sound behind her made Emily jump, and she turned to face a strange heku. He wore dark red robes and bore the signature tattoo of the Encala. Emily narrowed her eyes and dropped into a defensive crouch.

The Encala grinned and took a step towards her.

“Who are you?” she asked, her hands balled into fists.

“A friend. I came to see why the Equites have allowed a mortal in their palace,” he said, and took a step to the side. He was now between her and the door.

“Get out,” she ordered.

The Encala inhaled deeply and looked back at her with the look of a predator, “Seems to me, they just needed a donor close.”

She glared at him, “Get out, now.”

He took a step toward her and ran his tongue across his lips, then crouched down, ready to spring.

“Allen, run!” Emily screamed just as the Encala jumped at her, pinning her to the ground with his teeth at her neck.

Emily’s training flooded back to her, and she saw Allen open the door and run out as the Encala sunk his teeth into her. She knew she wouldn’t be able to fight for long, so she positioned her hands on his head and cranked his head to the side. The grotesque sound of crunching bones sounded through the room.

The Encala screamed. A scream that echoed through the hallway and she heard the rush of feet coming toward her. She tried to move the heku off

of her, but he weighed too much and was quickly healing and his hands still pinned her to the ground.

The heavy weight on her chest was lifted suddenly as the Encala was thrown across the room and smashed into the stone walls. Emily quickly got to her feet and covered her neck as the blood seeped through her fingers. She swayed a bit before stumbling into the bathroom and locked the door. She could hear the sounds of a heku being torn apart in her bedroom and she squeezed her eyes shut, trying not to imagine it.

Emily grabbed a towel from the warming rack and pushed it tightly against her neck to stop the bleeding. When she wrenched the heku's head to the side, he took a small chunk of her with him.

As the sounds in the bedroom stopped, she heard a light knock on the bathroom door.

“Lady Emily?” she heard a strange voice call to her. She wasn't about to open the door to another strange heku.

“Get Chevalier,” she said, sinking to the ground.

Emily heard footsteps as the heku ran off, but the voices in her room let her know she still wasn't alone. Grabbing the counter for support, she stood up, still shaky, and opened the door to her room, then stepped out and looked around, astonished. There was blood everywhere and pieces of heku strewn around.

Emily tried to take a few steps, still clutching the towel to her neck, but she stumbled and felt strong arms lift her. She looked into the eyes of a

strange heku as the world began to spin, then she saw his dark green cape and Equites crest pin, and laid her head against his shoulder.

She heard Chevalier growl as he entered the bedroom and she looked up to see a horde of guards follow him in, one of them carrying naked Allen.

“Clean this up,” he ordered, and took Emily from the guard.

“I can walk,” she said, and he put her down, but kept an arm on her shoulder. She followed him out of the room and into Kyle’s room across the hallway where she sat down on his bed.

Chevalier knelt down beside her and took the towel away from her neck, “It’s not too bad,” he said angrily.

Emily leaned back on Kyle’s bed.

“Emily?” Chevalier asked in a panic.

“I’m ok, just let me lay down for a second.” She shut her eyes and took some deep breaths.

“What happened?” She felt him sit down beside her.

“I heard someone out in the bedroom, it was an Encala. He just... well... attacked,” she said, and heard a low growl.

“Stay lying down, I’ll be right back,” Chevalier told her, and then stormed out of the room.

Emily tried not to listen to him, but it was hard, he was shouting. She heard the other Elders join him in their bedroom and the door slammed. With the outer door shut, she could only hear voices shouting angrily, but

couldn't make out the words. She cringed, thinking how badly someone was going to get into trouble for this. The door opened and slammed again and then Kyle's voice joined in the angry shouting.

Emily got to her feet and found she was steady again. She dropped the towel by the door and walked out into the hallway. She gasped, the guard assigned to her while Kyle was away was lying in a bloody heap outside of her door. She knelt down beside him and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Are you ok?" she asked him, rolling him over.

She looked down into his face. His eyes were open and fixed, and she wasn't sure he was even breathing. She put a hand on his chest and waited, but it didn't move. Tears came to her eyes. He died trying to protect her.

Kyle stepped out of the doorway and put a hand on her arm, pulling her up.

"Is he dead?" she asked, looking into his eyes.

He nodded, "Come in here, Em."

Emily nodded and walked into her room. There had to be more than thirty heku guards in there, but at least the blood and body parts were gone. They all looked at her when she walked in, and she covered the gash on her neck. She knew they were staring at it.

"You said he was Encala?" Chevalier asked her, concerned.

She nodded.

“Did he say why he was here?”

“The Encala wondered why the Equites allowed a mortal to live in the palace,” she said guiltily.

“Then he attacked?” Elder Leonid asked.

Emily nodded and then whispered, “I think I better go live on the island.”

“You belong here with us,” Elder Maleth said.

She shook her head, “That poor heku out there died trying to protect me. I’m not worth it. I’m just a mortal, and no one else needs to die.”

There was a rumble through the guard ranks. One heku stepped forward, he was one of the guards Emily was helping train for the Cavalry.

“I’ll guard her, and I’d die to protect her,” he said proudly.

Emily reached down and picked up Allen, then disappeared into the nursery, shutting the door. She didn’t want to cry in front of the guards. They didn’t get it. It would be safer for them all if she left.

She got Allen dressed and interested in a toy and then walked back out into the room. There were only the Elders and a handful of guards left, and they all watched as she slipped a suitcase out from under the bed and started to pack.

“Emily,” Chevalier said, putting his hand on her shoulder.

“He didn’t need to die,” she said, and threw some clothes into the suitcase.

“Don’t leave, please,” Elder Leonid asked.

“I’ve done what I can to teach your guards how to take care of and ride a horse. Kyle can do the rest, and then they can train the others,” she suggested, and looked around the room for her riding gloves.

“You aren’t a mere mortal, Emily. You’re the last Winchester,” Maleth said. She cringed as the guards all looked at her and began to talk among themselves.

Chevalier turned to them and silenced them with a glare, “Get out.”

They all turned immediately and blurred from the room. Kyle shut the door behind them and walked over beside Chevalier.

“If you’re worried about losing your precious weapon, then don’t be... I’ll be safer on the island now that the other factions think I’m here.” She jumped up onto her suitcase and zipped it shut.

“Emily, when we swore you in at the coronation, you became more than a weapon, you became one of us, royalty, if you will. You belong here in the palace with Chevalier,” Maleth said softly.

“I’m tired of heku dying for me,” she told Maleth, turning to look at him.

“It’s their duty,” Leonid said plainly.

There was a knock on the door and an older heku walked in with a black bag.

“Oh good,” Chevalier said, pointing to Emily.

She backed up, “What?”

Chevalier grinned, “Don’t worry. He was a doctor before joining the heku.”

Emily moved back more, “How handy for you... but no, I don’t need a doctor.”

The doctor looked at Chevalier questioningly. Chevalier turned to the others in the room, “If you would, please, give us a moment.”

Emily headed out with them, but Chevalier pulled her back by her arm, “Not you.”

He held her arm when she tried to pull free, “I don’t need a doctor.”

“Yes you do,” Chevalier countered.

“Look, it already quit bleeding,” she said, and pointed at her neck, careful not to touch it, it was extremely tender.

The doctor looked at her neck and moved toward her, “Let me see.”

She tried to back away from him, but Chevalier held her tightly. Emily glared at him the entire time the doctor poked and prodded her neck wound.

“Pretty nasty, but it is clotted already. She’ll need B12 and Folic Acid. There’s a lot of scarred tissue on her neck. That’s going to start taking longer to heal if the bites don’t stop,” he said, and wrote something down in a small notebook.

Chevalier growled and Emily pulled her collar up to cover her neck.

“What about the bruises?” Chevalier asked.

“What?” she gasped.

“Bruises?” the doctor asked, looking up.

“Let it go,” she said to Chevalier icily.

“She got kicked by a horse, back and front of her chest,” Chevalier said, ignoring her.

Emily ripped her arm away from him and crossed her arms on her chest, “I am fine.”

“I could take a quick look, Child...” He started, but her glare stopped him.

“Not if you want to keep your hands,” she snapped.

Chevalier laughed, “Just let him look at your back at least.”

“Let him look at your back.”

“Mine’s not injured,” he said, amused.

“Neither is mine.” She turned to the doctor, “And for your information... I’m not a child.”

“I’m sorry, I did not mean to offend you,” the doctor said. He had kind eyes and an angelic face. Emily was trying not to like him, but his smile was warm and sincere.

Chevalier nodded at the doctor and he left, still smiling. Emily could hear him talking softly to the heku outside of her room.

“What the hell was that?” Emily asked, turning to Chevalier.

“I just wanted him to take a look, Em,” he said, squaring his shoulders off. Emily’s eyes narrowed. She recognized his stance, and he was ready for an argument.

“Next time you decide to treat me like your child instead of your wife, why don’t you warn me first and I’ll be sure to leave,” she scowled.

“Calm down, all I saw was you covered in blood.” She looked down and saw that her shirt was drenched in blood.

“And the bruises? Nice funny afterthought?”

“I figured while he was here…” Chevalier seemed truly honest.

“I should leave,” she said to him, no longer angry.

He shook his head, “You are more protected here.”

“Someone died defending me, and that’s not right.”

Chevalier walked to her and wrapped his arms around her, “It is right. You have to understand that the people here in this palace will defend you to the death, it’s their choice.”

“The attacks haven’t been any better since I left the ranch,” she said softly.

“Why didn’t you ash him?” Chevalier asked, the question on everyone’s mind.

“I thought we didn’t want anyone to know,” she reminded him, looking into his eyes.

He smiled, “Ash them, Em, don’t let them get near you.”

She nodded and yawned into her hand.

Chevalier smiled, “Go to bed, I’ll put Allen down.

She walked into the bathroom, changed into a nightgown, and then curled up in bed. She watched Chevalier walk past her with Allen, and disappear into his room. Emily thought for a few minutes, though she was so tired, it was hard to stay awake. She wasn’t sure if it was the long hours with the Cavalry or just stress, but she was always tired.

Chevalier smiled when Allen finally fell asleep in his arms. The toddler didn’t want to sleep anymore, and it was taking longer and longer to get him to bed. Chevalier heard footsteps in the next room and stepped out of the nursery, shutting the door softly. He headed across the room and stopped when Kyle came in carrying Emily. He gently laid her down in bed and went back to the hallway.

Chevalier followed Kyle out of the room and shut the door behind him.

“Headed downstairs again,” Kyle said, sitting in a chair by another guard.

“That’s it... I say we follow her all the way tonight,” Chevalier said, sitting down. Both Kyle and the guard nodded.

It wasn’t more than two hours later when Emily appeared in the doorway again. Chevalier, Kyle, and the other guard followed her as she slowly descended the stairs, never talking, never looking around. It was almost ethereal, the way she moved, gliding along with no expression. Again

she got to the brick wall, then reached out and touched the trigger to open the secret door.

The guard raised an eyebrow at Kyle, who motioned for him to follow. Emily walked slowly down the stairs, making no noise in her bare feet. Chevalier noticed that, although pitch black, she didn't bump into anything and was always sure of her footing. As they entered the expanse of underground caves that made up the prison, she walked past the three stunned prison guards and took the left-most passage.

Now she was followed by Chevalier, Kyle, and four heku guards. Kyle motioned for them all to stay back a ways. Emily reached the end of the corridor and pushed against another rock, which opened yet another secret passageway. Chevalier frowned, she was headed into the medium level security prison section.

Quietly, they followed her inside. Heku were coming to their cell doors and looking out at the mortal walking through their prison. They had seen no one but guards in hundreds of years, so she was drawing attention. She turned at last toward a cell and faced whoever was inside.

Chevalier and Kyle jumped as soon as hands reached out and took her arms. Chevalier ripped the hands away from Emily and ordered the guard to return her to her room and stay with her. The guard didn't hesitate and picked her up easily and carried her off, still unresponsive.

Kyle started unlocking the cell, but Chevalier stopped him.

“Who are you?” he asked the occupant, a haggard and wrinkled heku.

“I am merely a Valle, locked here unwarranted,” he said with a scratchy voice.

“Why are you calling her to you?” Kyle hissed.

“I would never harm her, the pretty child. I just wanted a taste... I smelled her delicious fragrance when she entered. Just one small taste is all I want, no harm,” he said, inhaling deeply and savoring the trace of Emily that was left.

“Incubus,” one of the guards said, disgusted.

Kyle nodded.

“Take care of him, immediately,” Chevalier ordered, turning on his heels and walking away quickly. He actually felt relieved to know why Emily had been sleep walking, and also relieved that they always caught up with her in time to stop her.

Emily sat up and rubbed her eyes. The sun was already up, she was late. She threw her legs out of bed and stood up too quickly, then sat down hard on the bed when the floor began to slip out from under her.

Chevalier sat beside her, “Don’t worry, I called a day of rest.”

“You did? Why?” she asked, yawning.

“Because I think you need to spend the day relaxing,” he said, brushing the hair off of her shoulder.

“I’m just so tired,” she told him and laid back on the bed.

He nodded, "I would imagine."

"Did I walk last night?" she asked, pulling the covers over her.

"Nope," he lied. "Here, take some of these vitamins."

He reached over and grabbed them, along with a glass of orange juice, but when he turned back to her, she was already asleep. He watched her sleep. She didn't even turn over once, nor did she respond when Allen called her name as Sam ushered him quickly out of the room.

As darkness fell, Chevalier made the decision to wake her up for some food. The doctor mentioned that she needed to eat well for a few days.

"Em?" he said, gently touching her shoulder.

She opened her eyes and frowned, a little confused. She sat up quickly and threw the covers back.

"No, Em, don't get out of bed," he said, and pulled the covers back over her.

"What time is it?" she asked, looking outside.

"It's almost 9pm. You need to eat," he told her, and pulled a lap tray over to her. She grabbed half of the grilled cheese and began to eat.

Emily was still tired, so she ate quickly, and then took the pills Chevalier handed her. When she went to grab the second half of the sandwich, she noticed a row of flowers in her room.

"Where did those come from?" she asked before taking a bite.

“Your Cavalry. They were worried when they heard about the attack,” he said softly.

She smiled, “Probably glad I wasn’t going to abuse them for the day.”

Chevalier chuckled, “They’ve been out with their horses all day, brushing, washing, and feeding. I think they really like the idea of being in a Cavalry.”

She nodded, “I’ll get back with them in the morning. I don’t know why, but I’m just so tired.”

He refilled her cup and handed her more juice, “Drink up.”

Once she was finished, she curled up back in bed and pulled the covers up, “Just a little longer, then I’ll get up.”

Chevalier smiled, knowing she was going to be out for the night, “Ok, Em.”

“You know,” she whispered. “I know I’m not your sex slave.”

He frowned, “What was that?”

Emily was asleep. Chevalier decided to not bring it up again, though his mind wondered what exactly she meant by it. The rest of the night he laid beside her and watched her sleep, she never once tried to get up.

The morning light came in the window and Emily looked up and then stretched. She got up and got dressed, then checked on Allen. He wasn’t in his room, so she figured Sam must already have him. She grabbed her riding gloves and hat, and then left for the stables. There were two strange guards outside of her door, and she smiled at them as she walked

down the stairs, the two of them in tow. They didn't say a word to her as she made her way out to the stables.

"Good morning," Kyle said, smiling. He waved the two guards away.

Emily looked into the stables and smiled. The seven heku guards were already brushing their horses down for the day.

"Good morning," she said to Kyle, and then walked to each of the guards to see how they were doing. Kyle watched as each smiled broadly when she approached and talked excitedly about their horses.

"Oh, don't saddle up today," she said to them as she walked to Patra's stall. Sam had already gotten Patra ready and Emily slid onto her bareback. She walked Patra out to the front lawn and waited while the seven members of the Cavalry led their horses out by their reins.

"Sorry about yesterday," she said, but they all mumbled about it not being a problem. The stark white bandage on her neck suddenly seemed the focal point.

"Today, we're going to start learning how to shoot from horseback," she said, and they all grinned.

"The hard part isn't shooting... the hard part is not getting bucked off the horse when they hear the gun go off," she explained, and pulled a Remington long rifle out of Patra's pack.

"Hold your horses steady, don't let them go... I want to see how they react," she said, leveling the rifle across her arm and aiming at an old tree by the west lawn.

She fired off one shot and quickly glanced at the horses. Four of them were looking at her curiously, one was taking a step back, and two were putting up quite a fight. The heku were pulling hard against their reins to keep them from running off. Emily slipped off Patra and took one of the more upset horses by the reins. She pulled hard until the horse was looking at her face on and calmed down.

The heku with the other panicked horse did the same, but only got nipped at. Emily walked over and took the reins from him, then yanked down hard on the bridle until that horse also looked at her calmly.

“I thought you weren’t going to move us out of the way of a mad horse anymore,” one of the guards said, laughing.

“Oh yeah,” she sighed, and climbed back onto Patra. “I forgot about that.”

Kyle leaned his head back and laughed, “Em, you’d take a bullet for us if you could and don’t deny it.”

He knew that was part of her charm. While most mortals viewed them as evil, unnatural creatures, she somehow immediately respected and cared about them as a species.

She shrugged and grinned, “Let’s try that again.”

Emily leveled her gun and shot. She glanced around, and all seven horses were standing calmly and watching their new masters.

“Good, they just needed to hear it to get used to the sound.”

Emily moved Patra over to a locked box and pointed, “Get your guns out of there. We’re going to have each of you shoot off a thousand rounds or so with your horses by your side.”

The seven Cavalry members moved off to a spot marked by Kyle as a shooting range. They held onto their horses and shot feverishly at wooden targets. Emily watched them closely to make sure their horses didn’t panic. After a few hundred rounds, she leaned forward on Patra and locked her feet behind her on the mare’s rump. She felt her eyes getting heavier and fought it for as long as she could.

Kyle watched as the heku fired over and over, then reloaded and did the same. It wasn’t hard for heku to do redundant tasks, and this fell into that category, they did as they were told. He wondered if they had shot enough and turned to ask Emily, but found her sound asleep on Patra’s back.

Kyle grinned and motioned for the guards to stop shooting. They turned around and followed his gaze to the sleeping mortal.

“She’s still tired from blood loss,” one of them said sadly.

“I’ll take her to her room,” the tallest heku said.

“No, I’ll take her,” Kyle said, walking toward her.

“Actually, Sir, we wanted to talk to you,” the guard closest to him whispered.

Kyle nodded to the tall heku, and he slipped Emily off of her horse and cradled her gently before walking into the palace.

“Ok, talk,” Kyle said, taking Patra’s reins and leading her into the stall.

“We were talking, after the attack on Emily, and decided that we want to be her personal guards,” Mark said to Kyle.

“You’re Cavalry,” he reminded them.

“Right, which is led by you, and you are her guard. She spends a lot of time in the stables, which is where we will be a lot of the time. If we have two guards with her at all times, that would leave five of us out on the streets at a time. Once we get more Cavalry, things will be less hectic,” he said, watching Kyle for a reaction.

Kyle slid Patra’s door shut and turned to them, “Seems you have put a lot of thought into this.”

“We have,” another heku said. “Emily is important to us, and what happened the other night... wouldn’t have happened if we had been watching her.”

“Ok, I’ll ask Elder Chevalier and let you know in the morning,” Kyle said, then stood back while his Cavalry unit got their horses settled.

“Who are you?” Chevalier asked when the strange guard came in carrying Emily.

“Cavalry, Sir,” he whispered, laying her on the bed.

“Is she injured?”

“No, Sir... she fell asleep,” he said, and bowed before leaving the room.

Chevalier shook his head and gently pulled her clothes off, then covered her with a blanket. He watched her for a few minutes and then went out to call the doctor. He wasn't sure she should be sleeping this much. Once the doctor assured him it was perfectly normal, he sat outside of her door and waited for Kyle.

Kyle came up finally and sat in the chair by Chevalier.

"Fell asleep, eh?" Chevalier asked.

"Yeah, curled up on Patra, again."

Chevalier smiled.

"The Cavalry has an idea," Kyle said.

"What kind of idea?"

"They want to be Emily's personal bodyguards. They had some valid points... they are with her a lot during the day, there's enough to have two with her at all times and still have the streets covered. Then, as more Cavalry are trained, her ranks will grow. I'm her guard right now, and I'm over the Cavalry," he explained.

Chevalier thought for a moment, "Two guards at all times... are they loyal to her?"

Kyle grinned, "You have no idea. She has them completely charmed."

Chevalier shook his head and smiled, "Yeah she has that affect."

"I think it's a good idea."

“So do I. Let’s wait until their promotions to the Cavalry, and then we’ll add that to their duties. How close are they?”

“Just a few weeks away, things are coming along smoothly. Emily wants me to order paint ball guns though, and I’m not sure I want to,” Kyle said thoughtfully.

“If Em wants them…” Chevalier said, and shrugged.

“I’ll get them ordered right away,” Kyle said, and headed down stairs.

Chevalier sat deep in thought throughout the night, trying to come up with a better plan for Emily’s protection. He was shocked when she came out and then realized he’d been there all night.

“Mornin,” she said, pulling her hair up into her hat.

Chevalier stood up and hugged her tightly, “Good morning. Going to stay awake today?”

She blushed, “I’m so sorry, it won’t happen again.”

He laughed, “It’s ok, we all know you’re tired from the blood loss. How’s the neck?”

“Fine,” she said, and he eyed the clean bandages taped to the side of her neck. He figured she must have changed them when she got up.

“Don’t hurt’em too bad,” he said, kissing the top of her head. They walked down the stairs, hand-in-hand, and then split up on the fourth-floor. Chevalier headed to the council chambers, and Emily went outside. She stopped at the doors when a heku guard put his hand out.

“There’s been a delivery,” he told her, and pointed at large box.

“Oh, thank you,” she said, and eyed the box. It took several tries, but she was finally able to pick up the heavy box and stumble out the front door. She thought it was odd that the heku guard at the door didn’t help her, but she hated to complain. She knew she was heading for the barn, but wasn’t able to see where she was going.

“Gah, Em,” she heard Kyle hiss as he lifted the box from her arms.

“I think the guns are here, that was fast.” She smiled and stretched her arms out.

“You should have called us to get this,” he said, and set the box down to open it.

“Ok all,” Emily said as the Cavalry unit came. “I got some guns to play with.”

She held up the paintball gun and smiled, “While I’m sure Kyle had no qualms about using real guns on you, this will just have to do.”

She watched as the heku each took a gun and looked at it.

“See, this will be fun,” Emily said, and then grabbed a gun and loaded it. She looked around and saw Kyle deep in conversation on a cell phone in the corner of the stables. She grinned at the Cavalry and held her finger up to her lips. Their eyes grew wide as she aimed carefully, pumped the gun, and shot him square in the back.

“What!?” Kyle yelled, and shut his cell phone before turning around, his hand against the paint on his back.

Emily was already turned around and looking innocently at her horse while the seven Cavalry members looked around nervously.

Kyle's eyes narrowed and he walked over to her, "Problems with the gun? Misfire maybe?"

She turned and smiled sweetly, "Yes, that's it, it was a misfire."

Kyle took the gun from her and grinned, "Now no more misfires. Get your horses ready," he called to his guards.

He set her gun down and went to saddle his buckskin mare, then winced when another shot slammed into the back of his leg.

"Damnit, Emily," he said, and blurred to her, then threw her over his shoulder. The guards watched, shocked. They were told that no one was to touch the Elder's wife.

"Put me down!" she yelled, laughing. She aimed her gun at one of the guards and shot him in the hip. He grabbed his leg and then looked up at her, smiling.

"Did she shoot you?" Kyle asked, spinning to look at the guard.

"Nope," he answered as green paint dripped down his leg.

"Get her gun," Kyle said, turning so she was toward the guards. One of them came up and took the gun from her hand. She struggled, but couldn't hold onto it.

"Ok, ok, got my gun now put me down." Emily laughed.

"Are you going to behave?" Kyle asked.

“Of course!” She sounded offended, but he could feel her laughing.

Kyle set her on her feet, “Shall we get started?”

Emily nodded and climbed up on Patra, suddenly serious, “Here’s what we’re going to do. One of you will wait here where I am, and one of you will take off running. Once the running heku hits the blue line drawn on the lawn, the mounted heku will take off and try to shoot him. Remember, center mass. You won’t kill the heku you are aiming for, but if you can at least stop them, then you have time to get off of your horse and do...” She frowned, “Whatever it is you do.”

“Ok, who wants to be the runner while I do the shooting?” She laughed as all of their hands shot up.

“You,” she said, pointing to a heku at random. “Ready? Run!”

The heku took off across the field, and the second he touched the blue line, Emily kicked Patra in a full gallop. By the time she caught up to him, she had her rifle perched on her shoulder and pulled the trigger, hitting him between the shoulders.

He laughed and turned to her just as she extended her hand out to him. He looked back at Kyle, and then hopped behind her on Patra and she gave him a ride back to the others.

“See, easy enough,” she said as the guard slipped off of the mare. “Pair up and get going.”

Emily and Kyle watched and commented as the heku practiced the drill. She was impressed. They were exceptionally good with the guns, naturals.

“I was thinking, Em. Why don’t you do the promotions at the ceremony.”

“Me?” she asked, shocked. “Aren’t you supposed to? You’re their Captain.”

“I’ll be there, but I was thinking maybe you should actually pin on their Cavalry insignia.” He smiled when her face lit up.

“Really?”

He nodded, “They would appreciate it too, I’m sure.”

“When is it?” she asked.

“Three weeks, I think we’ll be done by then,” he told her, and then went into his plans with Emily for the next week of training. Once the exercise was over, they gathered in a semi-circle around Kyle and Emily.

“Great job! Hope that helped. We have new recruits coming in a few weeks, and I want them to leave your horses alone, so I’m going to order name plates. I’ll need your name and your horses name by tomorrow.” She watched as they looked around at each other.

Emily was getting nervous. Tonight was the promotion ceremony for the Cavalry, and while she had been excited, now she was starting to panic. Chevalier brought in the palace tailor and requested something western. She wasn’t sure what that meant, but she was too nervous to question any further.

The tailor dropped off her dress in a black dress bag and she'd been staring at it for an hour. Chevalier had already joined the other Elders for the promotions that were ahead of the Cavalry. They were to be promoted last, as it made each of them a Lieutenant.

Sighing, Emily stood up and unzipped the garment bag and pulled off her clothes right in the bedroom. Sam and Allen were already at the ceremony that was to be attended by the entire Council City guard staff and most of the city. She was extremely nervous, and remembered the look on the faces the first time they saw her, most hated her and glared as she walked down the center aisle.

Emily first pulled out the top and turned it around several times before she figured out how to put it on. She sighed, it was too late now, and from the looks of the outfit, Chevalier would be less inclined to have a dress made for her in the future. He'd been pretty protective of how much skin she showed around the palace, and she suspected that this might teach him a lesson.

Emily slipped off her bra and pulled on the cross-top. The top of the X wrapped behind her neck and crossed high on her chest with the bottom portions of the X all that covered her chest and then it hooked behind her. She pulled out the leather skirt and slipped it on. It fit dangerously low over her hips and fastened with a wide leather belt, the buckle a copy of the Equites crest. It was calf length and trimmed in leather fringe. Lastly was a pair of knee high leather boots with 4 inch heels.

Dressed, Emily turned to the mirror and had to laugh out loud. Chevalier was going to be livid over this dress. He expressly requested a country look, but modest. She thought it was weird how he'd changed since

becoming Elder. He suddenly felt that anyone that looked at her should be beheaded. On the island, he was casual about her appearance and didn't even care when she went down to the pool in a bikini.

Emily sighed and grabbed the seven Cavalry pins. They were intricately carved horse shoes in platinum with an emerald E in the center. She kept saying in her mind that they went on the left collar.

She heard a knock on her door and opened it to a strange heku guard. He looked down at her and immediately stared above her head, then stammered, "It's... it's go... I mean, time to go."

Emily smiled and followed him down to the large coronation room. She could hear Elder Leonid announcing the introduction of the new Cavalry unit, and that their promotion would end the ceremony for the night. Emily waited in a room behind the stage. The instructions handed to her said she was to walk to the center front stage, stand on the stool, and pin each guard as they walked by.

Kyle took the stage and called each of the Cavalry up by name and as they lined up beside him.

"The Equites are also proud to present the woman who helped us with the horse training, and also the one that will be bestowing the Cavalry pins." After Kyle spoke, he turned toward Emily and motioned for her to come out.

Emily froze. She felt all of the eyes on her and it was by sheer will alone that she moved forward and took one of the guard's hands as she stepped up on a small platform. She was assured it was only so she could easily

reach the lapel of the guards, but she suddenly felt on display, and felt all of the guard's eyes on her as the entire room fell silent.

She looked pleadingly at Kyle, who jumped slightly and finally spoke, "First up... Mark, Battalion Leader."

Mark walked over and faced Emily. With shaking hands, she put the pin on his left collar and then hugged him as a gasp ran out through the guards present. Mark nodded, glanced nervously at Chevalier, and then moved to the side.

She repeated this with the other six guards and then took Kyle's hand as she stepped off of the platform. Unsure where to go from there, she stood to the side of Chevalier's chair and looked down at him. He looked extremely angry and was scowling at the Cavalry.

Emily felt that the coronation couldn't end fast enough. Kyle announced that the Cavalry would also be in charge of her security, and she felt herself blushing. The end finally came and the guard staff filed out of the large room. Elder Maleth and Elder Leonid left when the guards were gone, leaving just Emily and Chevalier in the room by themselves.

"Are you going to tell me why you're mad?" she asked, not moving.

"Did you have to hug them?" he snapped at her.

"Is that what this is about, jealousy?" She moved to stand in front of him.

"Jealousy and that outfit. Could you not show more skin?" He stood up and glared down at her.

“Oh this? First off... you didn’t seem to care when it was the island and secondly... you chose the tailor. How was I supposed to know what it looked like? You’re so controlling lately I’m lucky if I get to brush my own hair.” She glared back at him.

He balled his hands into fists, “I’m not controlling.”

“You are too, and I’ve done nothing to make you even think there’s anyone else. Jealousy is juvenile, and petty, and I’m insulted by it.” She could feel her temper rising.

“I’m only trying to protect you,” he said, through gritted teeth.

“Oh yeah? Well don’t,” she told him before turning and walking away. She could tell he was following her.

“Emily, don’t walk away from me,” he said, and grabbed her arm.

She stopped outside of her door and turned to him, “Or what? You going to order me into submission?”

“I’m not looking for submission. You are free to do whatever you want.”

“Oh really?” She turned as Kyle stepped out of his room. She took a step toward him, put her hands on his face, and pressed her lips to his.

Kyle froze, not sure what to do. He put his hands on her shoulders and quickly pushed her away, then looked at Chevalier. He was growling low in his chest and glaring at Kyle. Kyle tried to stammer out an apology, but opted to turn back into his room and shut the door.

Emily glared at Chevalier and walked into their room. He followed her and slammed the door behind her.

“What was that?” he asked angrily.

“Me, expressing my ability to do whatever in the hell I want,” she said, and turned to him as she put her hands on her hips.

“So that’s what you want? To kiss Kyle?”

“No, what I want is freedom... something you’re not really willing to give,” she said, unzipping her boots and slipping them off.

“You are free,” he scowled.

“Oh yeah? What do you want from me, Chev? Do you want me to play the ‘yes sir’ game? Do you want me to be the obedient wife with no opinion?” She threw her boot at him, but he easily caught it and set it down.

“No, that’s not what I want. I want a wife that’s aware of her dangerous surroundings, one that understands that I’m only trying to protect her.”

“So what part of that did I break today? Was it wearing this ridiculous outfit that you had made, or was it hugging someone I consider a good friend?”

Chevalier sighed, he knew she was right. He felt himself becoming out of control jealous over everyone around her, yet felt himself losing her the tighter he clung.

“When were you going to tell me that the Cavalry had a second assignment... guarding me?” she asked, and then slipped off her skirt before reaching around to her back to pull at the clasp on the top.

“I thought you knew. When Kyle suggested it, I assumed he talked to you about it,” he said softly. He was tired of fighting.

“Yeah, well he didn’t,” she told him, still irritated. Chevalier went behind her and unfastened her top, then wrapped his arms around her.

She pulled away from him and went into the bathroom to change.

“I’m sorry. I don’t know what’s going on. You keep getting attacked right under my nose. You keep making friends with heku I don’t know and don’t trust,” he said, sitting on the edge of the bed.

“What do you want me to do?” Emily asked, stepping out of the bathroom in her nightgown.

“Be patient,” he suggested.

“Then don’t hold on so tightly,” she said, and straddled his hips to sit on his lap, facing him.

He looked into her eyes, “Let the Cavalry guard you, and I’ll lighten up.”

“Starting when?”

“Let’s go for four days from now, they have a mission first.”

She nodded, “Deal. And you can burn that dress.”

He grinned, “Can we keep it just for us?”

Sneak Peak : Encala (Book 3 of the Heku Series)

****Unedited****

“Damnit,” Allen said, smiling.

“Want to go out today?” Emily asked and took his hand.

She grinned at the name of Allen’s horse. It had fit when he was an unbroken colt, but now as a gentle stallion, he was the perfect horse for a small boy.

She led him out to the hallway and frowned, there were no guards at her door. She knew the cavalry was out on a mission and off of her bodyguard duty for two more days, but she’d had random guards posted outside of her door since the cavalry were made lieutenants.

Emily walked Allen through the palace, feeling a sense of freedom. She didn’t pass any heku on her way out and then she remembered the council was meeting today. They were swearing in a new Chief Enforcer, someone named Damon. All she knew about him was that he was another one of the Old Ones and Chevalier had known him for a long time.

Emily picked up Allen and threw him onto her shoulders as he giggled. He loved to ride up there. She walked the short distance to the stables and looked around, still no heku. The stable was empty also, except for Patra and Damnit.

Emily slipped a bridle on Patra and let her out of the stall. She kept glancing behind her as she put on the saddle, cinched it, and then put Allen up by the horn. Emily slipped her foot into the stirrup and swung herself up behind him. She wrapped a hand around Allen's waist and held the reins with the other and then clicked her tongue, heading the mare out slowly.

Emily had seen the rolling hills to the west of the city but hadn't had time to explore yet. She tapped her heels against Patra and the mare broke into a trot. The city was quiet during the day. Most of the business was done in the protection of the night. She could still hear people talking from behind their doors and once in a while she caught sight of a curtain pulling to the side. She was a little irritated by the peeking but knew she was an odd sight for them.

After many turns and a lot of dead ends, she finally found her way to the green hills. She grinned and broke Patra into a gallop. She loved the way the wind felt through her hair, and she could hear Allen laughing. It

was good to get the painted mare out on the open grass. She'd been working hard getting the cavalry ready and hadn't gotten to stretch her legs in a while. The afternoon passed slowly as she explored the hillside and talked to Allen.

As she topped one of the hills, Patra reared angrily and Emily tightened her grip on Allen. She calmed the mare down and then saw what spooked her, someone was walking toward them. She watched as he got closer and her brow furrowed.

"Emily?" she heard him ask, and she tightened her grip so hard on Allen that he began to complain.

"Tim," she said, watching him. She hadn't seen the man since her time as a prisoner for the Valle when he was sent to try to break the bond she had with Chevalier. The last time she saw him, he was fading in and out of consciousness and in pain from her torture.

He stopped a few yards from her and smiled, "I see you had a boy."

She nodded and pulled the reins, forcing Patra to take a step back, "What are you doing here?"

"I'm a donor, didn't you know?" he asked casually.

“For the Equites? What happened to the Valle?” She didn’t trust him at all.

“I’m a donor for whoever needs me. I’m making a call in Council City.” He slid his hands into his pockets and ran his eyes over her.

“I suggest you go back where you came from.”

He frowned, “You aren’t still mad, are you? That wasn’t my fault! They forced me to do it.”

“I don’t care who forced whom, you don’t belong in this city.”

“Don’t be mad, Emily, please. I’ve wanted to apologize for a while now, but didn’t know where to find you,” he said, taking a step toward her.

Emily pulled Patra back another step, “Come near me and I’ll have this entire city on you in an instant.”

“I don’t doubt that, I’ve heard that your husband became an Elder.”

“You heard correctly.”

“I really cared about you, you know that right?” He smiled slightly.

“Oh sure, you let them torture me.”

“No I didn’t, they would take me away until it was time to let you go, I had no say in it.” He desperately wanted her to believe him.

“But you knew, the entire time you were helping them.”

“It’s right, I knew, but I wasn’t helping them.”

“So you weren’t trying to break the bond with Chev?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Ok, so maybe... but I cared about you and I fought to get back to you when you were in restraints.” He slipped his hands out of his pockets and reached out for the mare.

“Get back,” she said, warning him.

He pulled his hands back, “Don’t be like this, it’s been a long time and now that I’ve found you, I want to apologize.”

“Get lost, you aren’t welcome in the city,” she said again.

“I am welcome, I have a donor appointment with some heku,” he said, taking a step to the side.

“I’m pretty sure I outrank whoever it is your appointment is with, and I say you aren’t welcome.”

He looked toward the city and then back to Emily, “Don’t be like that, Em, I won’t be in the city for more than an hour.”

“Then what? Return to the Valle with information on council?”

“I told you, I’m not with the Valle.”

“Oh right... and I’m supposed to trust everything you say.”

Tim smiled and looked at Allen, “He’s beautiful, Emily.”

“I’m not kidding, go away, right now,” she warned again.

“I’ll do what I want, you may be the wife of an Elder, but you’re still mortal, which means to them... you are nothing.” He grinned and winked at her.

“Emily?” she heard from behind her and turned just as Tim peered around her.

Tim’s eyes grew wide when he saw the seven mounted heku. He glanced to the sides, unsure which way to run, but soon found he and Emily surrounded.

“Are you ok, Lady Emily?” one of the cavalry asked.

“This man, I know him... he works for the Valle, even helped them kidnap me once,” she said, smiling at the terrified expression on Tim’s face.

“That’s not true! I ... well... ok so I was there... when the Valle had Emily, but I don’t work for them,” he said, fidgeting nervously.

“Let’s see what the Elder has to say about that,” one of the cavalry said before moving his horse toward Tim and slipping out of the saddle.

“That’s not necessary, I was just leaving,” Tim told them, moving away from the advancing heku. Tim felt a strong hand on his shoulder and he gasped, “Please, I didn’t come to hurt anyone.”

The guard looked at Emily, “What do you want us to do with him?”

She smiled, “Take him to Chevalier, see if he can talk his way out of that one.”

The heku nodded and pushed Tim ahead, walking back into the city. One of the other heku took the reins from his horse and the cavalry followed them. Emily watched them go and then sighed when they turned around.

“We’ll need you to come with us,” one of them called to her.

She figured it was useless to try to get more time out of the city and followed them in, talking to Allen about anything he pointed at.

One of the guards fell back and matched Emily's pace, "Where's your guard?"

She shrugged, "I didn't have one today, apparently."

"Did you not have one, or did you skip out on him?"

"Hey, I don't need the attitude," she snapped, "I didn't have a guard when I left my room, so I decided to take Allen out for a ride."

He nodded, his eyes straight ahead.

"I suppose you are going to tell Chev that you found me out here."

He nodded.

"Great"

Emily and the guard by her fell behind the others, she wasn't in any hurry to get back into the stuffy palace. When they arrived at the stables, the other horses were put away and the rest of the cavalry was gone. She took her time putting Patra away and helped as Allen carried the bucket of oats to her feeding trough.

“Welcome back,” Sam said, peering around the corner. Allen ran into his arms.

“Are we all set for the training next week, Sam?” she asked, shutting Patra’s stall.

“Yes, we are,” he told her and threw Allen into the air and catching him.

“We have those new horses coming in tomorrow.”

She nodded, then watched Sam and Allen until she heard the heku clear his throat, “Let’s get inside, the Elder wants to speak to you.”

She frowned, “I hate that.”

“What?” he asked as he ushered her toward the front door.

“How you all can talk to each other from far away, it’s kind of annoying.”

He smiled, “It comes in handy.”

“Yeah I bet,” she said, her mood turning.

She had been so happy out on the open fields with Allen. Now she was heading in for another round of fighting. She was tired of fighting with Chevalier, it seemed like all they did was fight, then make up, and then

fight more. She suddenly had an idea, what if she didn't fight with him tonight? What if she agreed she made a mistake and took whatever punishment he doled out?

Emily smiled, she knew it was perfect. It would alleviate a fight, yet she knew Chevalier would be skeptical. The palace door opened ahead of her and she felt the guard right behind her. He led her to the fourth floor and into the council chambers. She'd been there once before, but this time it didn't seem nearly as intimidating.

All thirteen chairs were filled this time and she looked closely at Damon, sitting in what used to be Chevalier's chair. He was younger looking but had dark brown eyes and short, cropped brown hair. Leonid and Maleth were watching her, smiling, but Chevalier was scowling. Tim was on the floor in front of the council, down on his knees. The rest of the cavalry stood around the walls, and the one with her moved into position beside them.

"Step forward, Lady Emily," Maleth said, motioning her forward.

Emily sighed and then stepped up to stand behind Tim, though she didn't even look down at him.

"Are you injured, Lady Emily?" Maleth asked her, concerned.

“No, not at all.”

“We aren’t here to find out what you were doing outside of the city walls alone, though, we would like to stress that it is not safe for you outside of the palace,” Maleth said, glancing quickly at Chevalier.

“Ok,” she said curiously.

“It was brought to the council’s attention that this mortal was involved with your capture by the Valle last year,” Maleth motioned toward Tim.

Tim looked up at him and then turned to Emily, his eyes pleading.

“Yes, he was. He was the one I was accused of torturing,” she said, slipping her hands into her pockets.

Leonid looked down at Tim as he lowered his head.

“Do you believe him to still be Valle?” Leonid asked her.

She thought, “It’s hard to say... but I did warn him not to come into the city.”

“Did he say why he was heading in?” Leonid asked.

“He said he had a donor appointment.”

“Was he, at any time, a part of your torture at the hands of the Valle?”

Maleth questioned, scowling down at Tim.

“I don’t know, he was there, and he knew he was supposed to break my bond with Chevalier.”

“Tim,” Leonid asked, “Where were you when Emily was tied for long periods of time to the bed?”

Tim looked up, “I was taken away, I swear. As soon as I was let back into the room I let her go.”

“What was your purpose?”

“She was right, I was supposed to break the bond with her heku,” Tim said softly.

Chevalier growled.

“I didn’t hurt her, I swear,” he said, pleadingly.

Leonid said something to Maleth and Chevalier, too softly for Emily to hear, and when they turned back, Chevalier stood.

“We have no proof that you left the Valle, therefore, you are to be imprisoned in the Council City prison for ten years,” he said, glaring down at the mortal.

“No, please,” Tim yelled before standing up and turning toward Emily. Two sets of heku hands were on his shoulders in an instant.

“Please, Emily, don’t do this. I wasn’t mean to you,” he said, pleading.

“It’s not my place to question the Council,” she said, smiling sweetly at him. She saw Chevalier frown out of the corner of her eye.

Tim was hauled out of the council chambers by two of the cavalry guards. Emily turned to leave but was called back.

“Yes?” she asked, looking up at them. She went to cross her arms but instead relaxed them at her side.

“This is Chief Enforcer, Damon,” Leonid said, pointing out the new member of the council.

She smiled at him, and then looked back to Leonid.

“He has asked for a demonstration of your abilities,” Leonid said, and Emily gasped.

Chevalier growled, "That request wasn't approved."

"No, I won't do it," she said, wide eyed.

"It was merely a request, Child. I am interested to see what you can do,"

Damon said, raising an eyebrow at her.

"I'm not a child," she said through clenched teeth.

"Very well, we won't force you," Maleth said, "Your talents are a mystery to us all and I, myself, am curious to see the Winchester ability for myself, if you ever wish to show us."

Emily turned and noticed the shocked look on the faces of the cavalry. Apparently, they hadn't been informed of her heritage.

"Lady Emily," Maleth said again, and she turned to look at him. "Today will start the cavalry's new position as your guard. Two at a time as discussed."

Emily cringed and then smiled, "Of course."

She saw Chevalier's eyes narrow as she left the room with two guards behind her.

Emily walked into her room, leaving the two guards outside of the door, and walked over to where Sam and Allen were sitting at the table. She sat down and scooped some of the macaroni and cheese onto her plate.

“Are you ok?” Sam asked, watching her.

“I’m fine, why?” she asked and smiled at Allen. He was covered head to toe in cheese and smiled broadly at her, he had Chevalier’s smile.

“Nothing,” Sam said and pushed away from the table, “I’ll go to the stables.”

Emily watched him leave and turned back to Allen.

“Es Daddy?” he asked, digging into his plate with his hands.

“I’m sure he’ll be here soon,” she said before taking a bite.

The rest of their dinner went smoothly and then Emily ran Allen a bath and sat him in the water. Allen immediately began to play and splash, the water instantly turning orange.

“Emily?” she heard Chevalier call to her. She sighed, when he called her Emily, it usually wasn’t a good sign.

“In the bathroom,” she called to him as she gave Allen a shampoo Mohawk.

She heard Chevalier come in and stand against the counter behind her.

“Daddy!” Allen reached up for him.

“After your bath,” he said, and Emily couldn’t help but notice that his voice was tense.

Emily hurried and finished Allen’s bath and then pulled him out so she could dry him off with a towel. He escaped from her grasp and ran naked to Chevalier, holding up his hands. He picked Allen up and hugged him closely.

“Damnit,” Allen said, smiling.

“Yes I heard you went riding today,” Chevalier looked at Emily.

“Ay go?” Allen asked, shrugging.

“I was at work,” Chevalier told him and handed the toddler back to Emily.

Emily took him into his room and put on his pajamas. She sat in the rocking chair and shut her eyes with Allen cuddled against her chest. It

was almost 30 minutes before he was asleep and she laid him in bed and went back into the bedroom, shutting the door quietly.

Emily walked up to Chevalier after he sat on the bed and she straddled his thighs, sitting on his lap facing him.

She decided to preempt his speech, “I won’t do it again, I’m sorry. I wasn’t thinking, and I know it was reckless.”

He frowned at her, “What are you up to?”

“What?” she asked, watching his eyes.

“What happened to ‘I can protect myself?’”

“I can, most of the time, but as we ran into a mortal, that pretty much put he and I on even ground. I’m sorry, Chev,” she said sincerely.

“I still want to know what you’re up to.”

“I’m not up to anything. I noticed I didn’t have a guard and Allen wanted to go for a ride. I’ve seen those hills for a long time and I just wanted to let Patra free for a while. I should’ve considered the danger first.” She ran her hands around his neck and kissed him softly.

“Aren’t you going to complain about Tim’s sentence?” he asked, watching her carefully.

“No, it’s not my place,” she said and laughed when he tensed.

“Since when?”

She shrugged and began to kiss his neck softly.

“Oh I get it... you are just trying to avoid a fight,” he said and shivered slightly.

She nodded and kissed along his jaw line.

“So it’s not that you actually believe what you’re saying, you’re just trying not to get me mad?” He used his hand to lift her face so she was looking at him.

“There’s no good way to answer that. I don’t want to fight. I’m so beyond tired of fighting.”

“I am too.”

She laid her head against his shoulder and wrapped her arms around him. She pulled closer to him when she felt his strong arms slide around her waist.

Emily pulled back and looked him in the eye, “Do you want me to show the council?”

“Show them what?” he asked, pushing the hair back off of her shoulders.

“Ashing”

“Not if you don’t want to.”

“Do you want me to though?”

He sighed, “They really do want to see.”

She bit her bottom lip, “I have one condition.”

His eyes were wide, “You’ll do it?”

“If you meet my condition.”

“Ok... what is it?”

“I get to pick who.”

“Did you have someone in mind?”

“No, but I want to know what they did and if it warrants ashing them,” she said, scooting off of his lap.

Chevalier reached over and pulled her back onto his lap and brushed his lips against hers, then smiled, “It’s a deal. They’ve been chomping at the bit to see you in action.”

She thought for a moment, “Ok, tomorrow I’m going to go outside and get some sun. Bring me the files of your worst offenses and I’ll see if I like any.”

He raised an eyebrow, “You’re going to get some sun?”

Emily laughed, “It’s actually good for some of us... Allen’s looking pale and I could use some of that Vitamin D I so love.”

Chevalier looked uncertain.

“Hey, thought you were going to calm down with the jealous streak.”

He sighed, “You’re right, I am.”

She kissed him and scooted off of his lap again. He growled and tried to pull her back.

“Nope, not tonight,” she said before grabbing a nightgown and disappearing into the bathroom.

“Why’s that?” he asked, concerned.

She came back out a few minutes later, “Because... I need a trip into a real city first, unless you plan on knocking me up again.”

He thought about that while she laid down, and then he curled up next to her, “I’m not following.”

She raised an eyebrow, “I’m out of birth control pills.”

“There are pills for that?” he asked, shocked.

Emily laughed, “Of course!”

“You mortals think of everything,” he said, turning out the light.

Books in The Heku Series

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Book 3 : Encala

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Book 5 : Proditor

Book 6 : Ferus

Book 7 : Eternity of Vengeance

Book 8 : Ancients and Old Ones