

THE CALL

A behind-the-scenes "extra" from Blood Father by Tessa Dawn

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A word to readers...

In fiction, dialogue serves a specific purpose: to advance the story or “move the action.” Although it should appear natural—and it’s always essential—it’s presented in a more condensed, purposeful form. Rarely do we get the opportunity to hear a full conversation the way it might unfold in real life. In addition to dialogue, there are dozens of scenes that take place “off stage.” Things that would slow down the book or make it far too long if they were included: driving to that restaurant, preparing to take a bath, sitting on the couch and watching TV. We all know it happens, but it doesn’t belong in the book for a number of reasons.

After completing *Blood Father*, I thought about some of the things that occurred behind the scenes, what it must have been like for the *destinies* when the males returned, and I decided to create an extra scene to share that perspective with my readers.

So here it is...*enjoy.*

The Call.

THE CALL ~ a behind-the-scenes “extra” from Blood Father

Jocelyn threw a load of laundry in the dryer and set the cycle on *steam*.

She bent over, rested her forehead against the cold silver appliance, and sighed. It had been five days already, not that long in the grand-scheme of things, but still—she was going insane.

She drew in a slow, deep breath and tried to think positive: Marquis was a beast, and so was Nathaniel. Kagen could certainly hold his own. And Nachari? Well, yeah; he could turn into a panther, perform incredible feats of magic, and generally kick some supernatural butt.

The vampires would be okay.

They had to be.

The phone rang at exactly 2:30 PM. She knew because she had been unconsciously checking her watch every five minutes, almost to the second, all

afternoon. It was silly, pointless, and nerve-racking—she got that—but it was the only thing she knew how to do.

Running through the butler's pantry into the kitchen, she reached for her cell and glanced at the display: *Deanna Silivasi*. *Oh gods*, she thought. *I wonder if she has any news.*

She hit the little round button to connect the call. "Hey, D."

"Hey, Jocelyn. How's it going?"

"I'm surviving... Any word?"

Deanna sighed, her voice practically quivering with emotion. "They're back."

Jocelyn's heart constricted in her chest, and her stomach did a nauseating little flip. She gripped the edge of the counter, clenched her eyes shut, and swallowed her fear. "All of them?" She literally held her breath.

"*All of them*," Deanna said, and her voice had never sounded so lovely.

"Oh, thank the gods," Jocelyn murmured as her eyes clouded with tears. "And Keitaro, their father?"

The phone went silent for a moment, and it felt like time stood still as Jocelyn waited in suspended animation to hear what had happened with Keitaro. Her legs shook beneath her, and she pressed her palms against her thighs to steady them.

"They got him, Joss."

She collapsed against the counter in relief. "Say that again."

"*They got him.*"

Jocelyn stood up straight, pumped her fist in the air, and shouted with exuberance. And then she spun around in a dizzying circle and squealed like a little girl. "Yes. Yes! Yes!" She placed her hand over her heart and tried to calm down. "Okay...okay...so how are they? How is Keitaro? When did they get back?"

"I don't have all the details yet. I just got off the phone with Nachari, but they arrived about twenty minutes ago, and they're all at the clinic."

Jocelyn held her breath...again.

The clinic?

If five immortal vampires chose to go to Kagen's clinic before calling their mates or heading home, that meant at least one of them was badly hurt.

"Nathaniel is fine." Deanna rushed the words, obviously sensing her sister-in-law's fear. "I mean, they're all a little beat up, but they're fine—it's nothing they can't heal. Except for Keitaro." She took a deep, steadying breath. "Nachari says he's in pretty bad shape. They don't know for sure if he's going to make it."

Jocelyn's eyes filled with instant tears. *Oh no, this could not be happening.* They had traveled so far. They had waited so long. Losing Keitaro now would be tragic beyond belief. "What's wrong with him?" she said softly. "I mean, other than the obvious, the things we would expect?"

Deanna grew pensive, her voice reflecting her angst. "I don't know. I really don't have very many details. They're working feverishly to try to save him, even as we speak."

"Oh, gods..." Jocelyn murmured. "Poor Kagen."

"I know," Deanna agreed.

Jocelyn tucked her hair behind her ear and rotated her earring in a nervous gesture before taking another deep breath. "Okay...so what next? What now?"

Deanna seemed to follow Jocelyn's lead—her voice grew calm and steady. "So, we're supposed to meet at the clinic, and they want us to bring the kids."

"Did Nachari say why?"

"I don't know—I didn't ask. I guess, in case Keitaro wakes up...or maybe to help with his recovery. I really don't know."

Jocelyn waved her hand through the air, shaking her head briskly. It didn't matter. She couldn't wait to see Nathaniel, and of course she wanted Storm to be there with her, although she would have to keep him insulated from the chaos. "Is there anything else?" she asked.

"Yeah," Deanna said matter-of-factly. "But...um...you might need to be sitting down for this one."

Sitting down?

Jocelyn turned around and leaned back against the counter, bracing herself for whatever Deanna was about to say. "Just tell me," she urged. She had never been one for protracted news.

"Kagen brought someone back with him, a woman from Mhier."

Jocelyn shot straight up, held the phone away from her ear for a couple of seconds, and then pressed it back to her lobe. "What?"

"A human...*from Mhier.*"

She leaned forward as if she could crawl through the phone and snatch the information from Deanna's mind. "You're kidding me! Why?"

"Are you ready for this?"

"Tell me."

"She's his *destiny.*"

Jocelyn's jaw dropped open. "Shut up! *You're lying?*"

"Nope."

"*Holy shit!* When did this happen? How? What's her name?"

Deanna exhaled softly. "I don't know. I don't have any of the backstory. All Nachari told me was that Kagen found her in Mhier – she was a slave or something."

"To the lycans?"

"I think so."

"*Oh, God* – that's awful."

"Yeah, tell me about it. And she already knew Keitaro from the slave camps."

Jocelyn could hardly believe her ears. "Wow." *So Kagen had finally met his destiny, and she had a history with Keitaro!* "Is she...is she all right?"

"I think so," Deanna said, and then her voice rose in pitch. "Oh, but there is something else."

"What's that?" Jocelyn asked.

"Kagen wants you to bring her some clothes."

Jocelyn waited for more details...

"I guess she's about the same size as you or something, and anyhow, she didn't bring anything with her except a bow and arrow. I guess they barely got out of there with their lives."

Jocelyn shivered as she tried to process what she was hearing, tried to picture this poor, unfortunate woman coming out of the land of the lycans with nothing but the shirt on her back...and the Silivasi brothers at her side. "She must be terrified."

Deanna snorted then. "You already know: I hid under a desk."

Jocelyn snickered, if only to release some tension. "Yeah, and I tried to shoot myself and then jump off the deck."

"Seriously, Joss?" Deanna sounded appalled. "*Damn*, you'll have to tell me that one later."

"Yeah, I will," Jocelyn said. "So what does she need?"

"Hold on." Deanna ruffled a piece of paper. "Nachari said to bring some casual day-wear, some hiking clothes, and a bathing suit."

"A bathing suit?" Jocelyn echoed.

"That's what he said."

Jocelyn nodded. "Okay. *If that's what Kagen wants...*" She reached for a pad and pencil, scribbled the items down, and then suddenly had an idea: "Oh, man, I bet she's hungry. I mean, she's still human, right?"

Deanna paused. "I didn't even think about that. *You're right*. Do you think I should stop somewhere on my way to the clinic and pick something up?"

"It might be nice," Jocelyn said.

"Okay," Deanna agreed. "But what? I mean, I doubt she's ever had Chinese or French fries."

Jocelyn grimaced. "Yeah, good point. Why don't you stick with something neutral, like meat and potatoes, that kind of thing."

Deanna sniffed. "Cool. I can do that. Oh, and Joss?"

"Yeah?"

"Would you mind calling Ciopori? I still have to get hold of Braden and Kristina, and I want to try to get to the clinic as soon as possible."

"No problem. I'll see you there in a few."

"Okay."

"Thanks for calling, sister," Jocelyn said.

"Of course; I'll see you soon," Deanna replied.

"See you...*love you.*"

"Love you, too."

Jocelyn disconnected the phone, squeezed it between her hands, and let her head fall forward, resting it against the chrome cover. Now that she was no longer trying to maintain her composure, her tears fell like raindrops. As she alternated between crying, laughing, and nearly hyperventilating, she said a prayer to the celestial gods for Keitaro.

And then she tossed the phone on the counter – uncaring if she broke the cover – and raced to the master bedroom, taking the stairs two at a time.

Despite the precarious situation, her heart was literally soaring!

Nathaniel was home.