

The Warder Series
Book 4



The Warder's
Vampire
Viola Grace

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The Warder's Vampire - Book 4

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*To my Aunt Mary, who has given me more pep-
talks than I could count...*

Prologue

“C’mon Mitzy, what do you need? You know I’m nocturnal.” Serafina Zenecar rubbed her eyes as her sister fidgeted with a teacup across from her. Her eyes were sensitive to daylight, it was just easier to do her work and socializing after the sun went down.

“I am so sorry to wake you, Sera, but I need your help.” She put her teacup down with a clatter that startled her half-sister into gripping her hand to steady her.

“What is it? You know that I would do anything for you, but what do you need from me that Mom or Symon can’t do?”

Mitzy took a shuddering breath and blurted, “I need you to take my shift at the Repository this All Hallows Eve.”

Sera blinked in astonishment. It was Mitzy’s source of pride that she had been the Warder chosen to guard the Repository of Magical Artifacts in Realm for the last five years. She wouldn’t give it up unless... “How pregnant are you?”

“Three months. I haven’t told mother yet. I was waiting until Thanksgiving.” She sighed deeply and looked over at her half-sister, so different from the rest of the family.

Serafina had always been pale, a creamy ivory that set off her deep chestnut hair and pine green eyes. It was her pointed teeth and slightly pointed ears that gave a hint as to her father’s nature. That, plus her sensitivity to sunlight.

The story that their mother told was that a stranger named Zenecar had seduced her at a Yule celebration, and left her with child. The Warders and the councils of Realm determined that the father had been a vampire, leaving poor Serafina to be the only Dhampir to be female in eight hundred years. The half-vamps were male as a rule.

Zenecar’s appearance in Realm was itself unusual. The vamps left when the wolves did. Sure that they could make their own way in the human world without the interference of councils, they locked themselves out of Realm with blood and salt.

“Wow, a grandkid. Definitely something to be thankful for.” She smiled brightly, showing her fangs, “Hey, I am going to be an Auntie! C’mere you.”

She surged to her feet and moved with unnatural speed to hug her sister in a firm but

delicate embrace. She had learned years ago that she could be hard on people if she was careless.

She pulled away and held her sister at arm's length. "Wait. Who is the father?"

The blush that had been building earlier flared into full bloom. "Well, you know the band Goblin Rulz?"

"Yep."

"The lead singer, Haruki. He is delighted, but I haven't been able to tell Mom or Dad yet. They aren't that fond of goblins."

Sera thought of her step-father's stringent attitudes towards other magical species and winced. "Especially ones that can't pass for human."

"Exactly." Tears welled in her eyes. "I didn't even tell them we were dating."

"Symon should know that you had to mate with a non-human. It is one of the Warder bindings. We can't get out of it."

"Yes, well. He has been trying to make connections for me in the Magus guild. Dad wanted me to make a 'proper' match with a magus or wizard of his choosing." Mitzy blushed again. "He thinks that because Mom had you, the curse was satisfied for this generation."

"Oh, come on, Mittens. You know it doesn't work that way."

"I don't think he believed it himself, but he has

the normal prejudice towards the non-human races."

"Normal for the Magus guild, you mean."

"Well yeah." Mitzy hesitated for a moment. "Can you tell me what it is?"

"What what is?"

"The baby, whether it is a boy or girl?" Her eyes filled with entreaty, and Sera sighed heavily.

"Are you sure? I can't take it back once you know."

"I'm sure. Haruki wants a little girl, and given the Warder birthrate, I know that it is an eighty percent chance, but I still want to know for sure."

"Alright. Give me a moment." Serafina closed her eyes for a moment and when she opened them her green orbs had changed into her hunting eyes. Slitted red pupils were ensconced in amber irises. Her teeth extended as her mouth opened and magic crackled around her.

Kneeling before her sister, she leaned forward until her face was inches from Mitzy's belly. An exhalation of magic swirled around the fabric of Mitzy's shirt and seconds later Sera stood, patted the abdomen she had just examined for life and looked expectantly at her sister.

"The little one is strong and healthy. Are you sure that you want to know the gender?"

"Please, Sera. This is hard enough without having all the information that I can."

“Alright, Symon will be happy. It is a little boy.”

Mitzy's expression crumpled in disappointment. “Not a girl?”

“Well, you have one of those as well. A little girl with the mahogany skin and green tinted hair of her father's people who will carry on the line of the Warders, and a little boy with fair skin and black hair who carries on the Magus line.”

A whisper of sound, “Twins?”

“Twins,” she confirmed, then Sera darted forward to catch her sister as she fainted. Good thing she had fast reflexes.

She put Mitzy on the couch and set about preparing her special tea.

Using magic always gave her a craving for blood, and reading a pregnancy was no exception. The tea stopped her cravings and let her interact with normal beings on a regular basis without eating them or draining them dry. It came in handy at family gatherings.

By the time the tea was steeping, Mitzy was stirring. “Oh. What the heck happened?”

“I told you that you were having twins and you passed out. A sudden rearrangement of blood in your body. Happens occasionally during a pregnancy I'm told.”

“You aren't joking? There are really two of them in here?” Her hands pressed against her

abdomen and she looked at her belly in wonder.

"You won't be able to see them like that. Get a sonogram." Sera sipped at her tea and smiled at the bemused glow that was spreading across her sister's features. Her Mediterranean good looks came from their mother, her height from her father.

"Haruki will be so happy."

"So you are going to introduce him to Mom and Symon?"

"Of course. Now that I have inside information." She winked, then wrinkled her nose at the smell of the tea. "You still have to drink that stuff?"

"Yep. Every time I use magic. I will bring a thermos along when I go to the Repository on Halloween. Charging those wards against all that energy is going to be tiring."

Relief lit Mitzy's features. "So, you'll do it?"

"Of course. We can't put my niece and nephew at risk now, can we?" She quickly set her tea down as her sister hurled herself into her arms. She caught her in a gentle hug and smiled into her hair, being a big sister had its fun moments. Doing a favor for her little sister was one of them.

Chapter 1

Serafina went over the checklist that Anryn Warder had given her. Books, wardstones, MP3 player, batteries, sandwiches, tea, and a few liters of soda.

Anryn had been the guardian of the Repository for three years until she got a part-time job as a teenager that kept her working on Halloween. The honor and duty had passed through three different warders since, but none that Sera trusted more.

Anryn was currently running her massage therapy business out of her husband's office building. She was also Sera's employer. It made her easy to find.

Now in her sixth month of her own pregnancy, Anryn was stuck in an administrative capacity at the business. Sera was taking on all of the evening clients. She was not the only nocturnal creature living in the mundane world with ties to Realm.

She double checked her supplies and powered

up the mirror that would take her to Realm. Taking a deep breath, she stepped through and waited for the magic to carry her to the other side in a swirl of quicksilver and fire.

* * * *

Realm, the warm rays of the sun combined with the magical pulse of the very air, welcomed her home. It was the only place that she traveled to where the sun welcomed instead of irritated her.

She breathed deeply and stepped off the mirrored platform to greet the guard.

Arov grinned widely as he spoke the ritual words, "Greetings to she who will guard the Repository of Magical Artifacts."

She bowed low and responded, "Greetings to the Guardian of the Gateway on this, the night of spirits."

She stood aside and made sure that no one else was on their way through the mirrors and asked him, "So, how is Albina?"

"Irritated with me. She wanted to attend the festivities, and I am not to be relieved until midnight. She had to choose between my family and hers for the evening."

Sera grinned at that, "So, she is with the cousins?"

"Yes, the werewolves have sent representatives

for the festivities for the first time in centuries. I believe that she is with them just to watch their faces.”

“Yeah, that does sound like fun.” She grimaced, “Well, I had better get to work, the curator will be having a canary by now.”

She bowed in response to his formal acknowledgement and set off to the small stand of buildings about half a kilometer away.

It took her only a few minutes and she was able to see the preparations for the great bonfires and the setup of the stage and buffet tables.

Realm pulled out all the stops for All Hallows Eve. The magic flowed wildly, spirits flew unchecked and the Magus guild called a special service to hold solemn ceremonies. In response to that formality, the other creatures held a huge party.

Sera saw Mitzy in the distance, under the arm of a rather handsome goblin. It must be Haruki, she thought. No one else would have the nerve to keep their arm around her in an area filling up with her family.

Her opinion of the male that had won her sister went up a notch. Apparently he was willing and ready to force Mitzy's hand on making their relationship public.

She turned her mind back to the task at hand and noted the fading of the light. The Repository

steps were a black granite that glowed as her feet touched it. It acknowledged the magical blood in her veins and the door swung open to welcome her.

"Where have you been? I have been waiting for hours...oh. It's you." The curator was an officious little troll. *Literally*. Asgoth had been curator for the last two hundred years, after a warder had freed him from the confines of a bridge in Germany.

"Yes, Asgoth. It is me. Let's keep the animosity to a minimum, shall we? I need to set up." She dropped her pack to the ground and removed the first five warding crystals.

"Yes, yes, of course. I will be going. You hereby have responsibility for all of the objects in the Repository of Magical Artifacts. Please leave a drop of your blood on the ledger. There is a lancet on the table." Asgoth left through the main doorway and the Repository locked its doors behind him.

As the sun went down, she placed twenty-five wardstones around the building. One in each gallery of the twenty main species of Realm. She then placed one in front of the large mirror, the first traveling mirror designed by Kesler and Celestyn Warder. It would transport the user to any reflective surface. Even the eye of a dragon.

It was extremely powerful, but not very well

controlled, as were most of the artifacts of the Repository. She laughed to herself. As were most of the Warders, if she was honest.

The other four stones went in front of the underground passage, the window in the main hall and two in front of the doors.

Once they were all in place she went into the center of the building and charged the wards. The stones gleamed in response to her power; she could see the magic coating and locking together the walls of the building. Nothing could come through a door, window, wall, or mirror with the wards up.

Time to have some of her tea, listen to music, and get ready for the four-hour mark when she had to recharge the wards.

As she sipped the brew from her thermos she thought about all of the races whose bloodlines ran through her veins. It had to be almost all of the major races by now, though the dragons tended to try and reclaim their granddaughters every few generations.

That a vampire had sired her was only supposition. No actual testing had ever been done on her, at Symon's insistence. She was an embarrassment to him. His wife's freaky bastard.

She sighed deeply and took another sip. Perhaps she needed to learn more about her so-called father. Since she was already in the

Repository she may as well start now.

The halls of the building were made of the same power sensitive granite and marble as the stairs. The glow of her power was reflected in the radiance from the panels beneath her feet. The rooms were as bright as daylight as she passed them.

She stood on the threshold of the vampire collection and tried to see the articles stored there without actually going inside. It was no use. She could see nothing from where she was, only a collection of books and small articles were visible from the doorway.

She would have to go in.

Steeling herself she took a few steps forward, she gasped in amazement at the tapestries and works of art which hung on the walls. Warriors and their ladies from over two thousand years in the past stared at her. One warrior in particular caught her attention.

He was without a lady by his side and holding a sword hilt in either hand. Obviously a warrior vampire. Trained and bred to lead and conquer.

A shiver went through her at the hint of arousal that followed the last thought and she looked quickly away from the hypnotic eyes that seemed to be calling her into the portrait.

Chapter 2

She shook her head and wandered through the vampire artifacts. She idly picked up daggers, opened chests, and tried on armor. There were no mirrors in the Vampire Gallery but she could see her reflection in the panels of glass guarding the dangerous artifacts. Before she knew it, it was time to recharge the wards.

Serafina wandered back into the center of the building and poured her power into the stones. She was staggering slightly and had to take a break at the information desk. The lancet and the book lay open and ready for her.

She sighed heavily and pricked her finger, marking the book and watching her designation in magical script come to life as it sprung from her blood. No other being had magic that would make the same mark, and she watched the graceful calligraphy that was uniquely hers with pride.

All the colors of the rainbow, and some that were not, flowed through her blood.

She tore herself away from the fascination with her own magic and energy to slowly make her way through the halls and to the Warder's cupboard. It was not common knowledge, but hundreds of years earlier Calliope Warder had created a dimensional portal for the express purpose of holding the soul stones of the Warder family.

The stones were far too precious to leave in any one person's hand and with the increase in the size of the family it was only prudent to put them somewhere safe. What could be safer than the Repository in Realm?

A touch of her hand opened a section of wall that the curator was not aware of and into it she went. A small flare of magic created light that allowed her to see that arranged on the walls were the history of her family.

Relics holding cursed objects and confined energies of evil were kept carefully behind locked cases. Only the elders of their family could open them, and only then if they were in desperate need. Portraits of the initial seven Warders who survived the punishment of the councils hung proudly on the walls. The portraits of their descendants stretched as far as the eye could see down the endless hall. It was grander than all of the other races' galleries combined.

Dimensional doorways were useful things.

She wandered to the portrait of Alethea. Her own ancestor whose marriage to a dragon produced one of the most creative women in their family. Marissa had created the first of the dimensional gateways that was used to travel to and from Realm. Her grandfather was the creator of the unstable mirror that the elves claimed as their own in the great hall, but hers was the enchantment that made it work. A Warder enchantment.

Her pride swelled as she contemplated the magical advances that had been promoted and created by the women of her family. Although, of course, none of the magical councils would ever admit it. Each and every new spell and object had been carefully documented in grimoires that contained the family histories.

Time flew by as tears tracked down her cheeks. The trauma of the women in those portraits affected her sense of empathy. Most of the brilliant women had found reliable and loving mates, but some had been abandoned by those that they loved when their duties had interfered with their home life.

A few had even been left by their husbands for other women. Women who did not care if they were treated as an equal, only that they were provided for.

The few males that were born to the family chose their wives carefully, knowing what a strain the magic would put upon their marriage.

Sera wiped her eyes and left the gallery, her heart heavy with the burden and joys of life as a Warder. It was why they remained a closely knit family, even separated by vast distances. Only another family member could understand the stresses that the wards put upon them. A tiny piece of their soul went with every magical field that they generated, and only a close family or mating bond could fill the void.

As soon as she left the wall sealed completely, leaving no trace for the curator to see. Only another family member would be able to access the cupboard.

The other half of her blood called to her now. She found herself once more in the Vampire gallery. Theirs was a darker history. An offshoot of an elven race, the magic of a vampire was tied closely to its intake of the blood of magical creatures. It was something they hadn't realized until they left Realm and took up residence in the human world. Feeding off humans only extended their lives, it did not give them sufficient power to rejoin the magical races.

They also needed far less blood from magical creatures to maintain themselves. It was a richer substance that would rarely lead to the gorging

that had gotten vampires in to the public eye of the human world.

It was a noble history, but one with dark overtones of war and conquest.

With that in mind, she found herself in front of the portrait of the warrior once again.

A frown started between her brows. He was wearing a fitted tunic that was far too recent to be right. The vampires had broken with Realm in the early twelfth century; his clothing was from the fourteenth.

She leaned forward to peer more closely at the designs on his clothing and weapons. Her hand touched the frame of the portrait and she felt a surge of power.

"Shit!" She fell to her knees as the power continued to flow out of her. Something was using the puncture wound that she had made to sign the book to suck the power out of her body. She tried to fight it, but the magic was using her blood as a conduit somehow and she began to black out.

The last thing she saw was a figure walking toward her, and funny, he looked just like the man in the portrait.

Chapter 3

“**W**hy the hell am I here?” It was a very existential question being asked by a dark and sexy voice that normally would have had her shivering.

Her own voice was a croak. She felt like she had been screaming, but she knew that only one word had passed her lips earlier. “Because wherever you go, there you are.”

Her eyes levered themselves open with difficulty. A scowling vampire was facing her. Here. In Realm. Behind her wards. It was impossible.

“I am not in the mood for jokes, magus. Why did you bring me here?”

She felt him grip her shoulders to shake her. “I didn’t.”

“Well you are the only one here and your body reeks of magic.”

“Reeks? That isn’t very flattering.” She looked around. They were still in the vampire gallery. He

had put her on one of the tables that was left over from the days of humans worshipping the blood-drinkers as gods. It wasn't a very comfortable place to be. Especially as he had shackled her into the sacrificial position. Spread-eagled.

"Flattery is not one of my strong suits. Why have I been brought here?"

Stars, he was persistent. "I don't know. But I do know that something in your portrait over there pulled magic out of me." She paused and took stock. "I need a cup of tea."

"This is no time for the pleasantries. I want to return to my home!" His fist pounded against the table next to her hip. She would have jumped if she hadn't been tied down.

"No, I am not kidding. I need some tea." Her body had begun to hum with hunger. Her body was shaking in the manacles and she refused to meet his eyes. She closed her lids just to make sure he didn't notice anything. She could feel her hunting features taking over and she articulated carefully around her extending fangs. "I have a medical condition that is affected by my use of magic. I need the tea to stabilize myself."

"Well then, I am afraid that you are out of luck as I can't leave the room and there is no way that I am going to release you." His voice hummed against her skin and she could feel his warm breath against her neck. He was leaning over her.

She opened her eyes a crack. She could feel his hunger. It called to her own. That was it. With a snarl she snapped the cuffs and dragged his neck to her mouth. Her teeth dug into the flesh and she groaned as his blood filled her mouth and ran down her chin.

Swallowing rapidly she took in as much as she could before he recovered from his shock and pushed her away.

He stumbled back and clutched at his neck. "What the hell are you?"

Sera unlocked the cuffs on her ankles and stood to face him. "A dhampir. Haven't you ever met one before?" Her fist flew at his face and connected with a sharp snap.

He fell to the floor and she was on him again. Punching, kicking and biting at any exposed skin. Her nails extended and sought purchase on him.

"Son of a bitch!" He wrestled her off him and seemed astonished that it was taking most of his strength to keep her at bay.

With three brutal attempts at keeping her down he finally held her to the floor by the expedience of sitting across her hips and holding her hands beside her head. "What the hell are you?" His own fangs had extended in the heat of the fight and his chest heaved with the effort of subduing her.

"I told you I am a dhampir."

"You can't be. They are always male."

"Surprise."

"How did that happen?" He looked down at her, his eyes carefully tracing every contour of her face, neck and the deep vee of her shirt. His own hunting features had emerged in the fight and she was watching red and midnight eyes assess her form.

"Well, first there was this bird, and then a bee was trying to have sex with it..." She trailed off as his features darkened with anger. The grip on her wrists tightened and she flinched with pain. "Fine. My mother is a Warder and my father was supposedly a vampire."

She continued, "Warders tend to have girls. In a twenty to one ratio."

"What is a Warder?"

"Where have you been?" She smirked, "Oh, right. A warder is a magical human with the singular talent of creating a magical barrier to block or allow passage for whatever they wish."

"Fine. I have met some magical creatures, but you still haven't answered my first question. Why am I here?"

"I don't know. As you may have noticed, I passed out when you came through that portrait. Something pulled my power out of me and I have no idea what it was." She squirmed under him and asked, "Since we are talking now, could you get off me?"

"Not just yet. You haven't answered all of the questions that I have." He settled his pelvis more firmly against hers and she felt something firm and heated against her belly.

"Fine, but you have to answer mine as well."

"Fair enough. Where are we?"

"Let me welcome you to the Repository of Magical Objects of Realm."

"Realm? How the hell did I get here?"

"I can only guess that whatever pulled out my power brought you through. I still don't know what it was." She was surprised "You know what Realm is?"

"Yes, my parents told me about it. The mythical land of magic where the sun doesn't burn."

"Well you are there, scooter." She relaxed in his grip and tried to fight the rush of hormones that were waking up at his proximity. Having a man she couldn't damage during sex had always been a fantasy, until now. "Are you married?"

"No. You?"

"No, not a lot of the races will join with a freak like me."

"You seem like a very attractive female to me, what is your name by the way?"

"Serafina Zenecar. My mom got knocked up at a Warder Yule party by a vampire named Zenecar. And here I am."

"Zenecar?" He laughed in surprise. "Zenecar is

one of the oldest of those who left Realm with no intention to return. I wonder why he did."

"No idea, he didn't stop to chat."

"Well, he left something behind."

"That he did, and my mother never forgave him for it. Or me some days." The wry tone did little to disguise the hurt of her childhood. *Why did I tell him that?*

"My turn, what is your name?"

"Franc, Francesco Berwick."

"Nice to meet you, Franc. I am assuming you are a born vampire?"

"Yes, both my parents were in the exodus from Realm just before I was born. They tell me stories of the magical blood of the inhabitants, and the strength of their own magic when they were here."

"Were they shocked when the magic left them?"

"They adapted. I have never heard them complain."

"So, they wouldn't want to come back?"

"They might wish to visit. But I don't know about returning to Realm."

"Most of us commute." She gave him another small smile and repeated, "Will you please get off of me now?"

"Fine. But you are very warm and cuddly you know."

She blushed furiously, "Thanks. I'll put it on my resume."

He levered off her, but the manner in which he faced her indicated that he was preparing for another attack. Or perhaps something else. There was a focused intensity to his features that hadn't been there earlier. His cuddly comment came back to her and her gaze fell beneath his belt. She bit her lip and sighed slightly at the bulge that was calling her from beneath the fabric of his trousers.

It would have to wait. It was time to charge the wards.

Chapter 4

She led the way out of the vampire gallery, taking his hand to guide him past the wardstone and into the main hall. “So, if you were in fourteenth century clothing in the portrait, why did you come through in slacks and a dress shirt?”

“I have no idea. I was just finishing up a business meeting and then I was here.” He paused and she could feel him re-constructing the scene in his mind. “There was a whirl of silver and fire, a sharp tug, and I landed on the floor next to you. You looked up at me, said ‘I’ve been waiting.’ and passed out.”

“I said ‘I have been waiting’? I don’t remember that.” She was scowling now. They were almost to the center of the Repository and she just wanted to get the charging over with.

“You passed out.”

“Yeah, you said that.” She stood quietly and began to gather power.

She could see Franc’s reaction to her energy as

she started and a moment later, she felt it as he slammed her to the floor.

“What the hell are you doing? Casting another damned spell on me?” His lips were inches from her own, his body pinning hers to the floor.

“The only reason that I am in this building at all is to cast that ‘damned spell’.” His arousal pressed against her stomach and she fought the urge to rock her hips against him.

She almost moaned as a wave of heat ran through her at every point that their bodies connected. His eyes fluttered closed and she didn’t have to wonder if he felt it too.

His voice was soft and husky, his breath warm on her lips as his head drew inexorably closer. “What does that spell do?”

“It protects the Repository from being invaded by spirits and any other beings who would seek to take advantage of All Hallows Eve to cross between worlds.” Her neck ached with the effort not to lean up and press her lips against his.

A light, teasing kiss was all he brought to her mouth. Sera almost hissed her frustration until he asked, “Then how did I get here?”

Her face went blank with shock. If her wards had indeed been working, how did he manage to come through to Realm? It was a question that acted on her in the same manner as a bucket of cold water. “I don’t know, Franc. Get off of me. I

need to charge those wards.”

“I like you just where you are.” This time, he meant business.

This was no gentle kiss by any stretch of the imagination. His tongue parted her lips and swept past the sharp fangs with delicate precision. Her breath caught and held as she returned his embrace with years of pent-up longing.

Sera’s fingers tangled in his dark silky hair and held him to her as the fire in her blood began to burn away all of her hesitation.

Skin. She wanted to feel skin. She moved her hands until she felt buttons under her fingers, then popped them loose one at a time. His skin was hot, she felt power sizzle between them as her nails drew a path down his chest and to the snap at the top of his pants.

“Ah, Serafina.” Her name had never sounded as sexy as it did coming between his parted lips. He quickly moved off of her and shed the open shirt and his pants. The pants got stuck on his shoes for a moment, but a wet sound of tearing fabric and pants, shirt and shoes were in a heap.

“Now it’s your turn.” He tugged her shirt of over her head and groaned at the sight of her breasts encased in scarlet silk. It was her ‘special occasion bra’ and he obviously appreciated her effort as a drop of liquid formed at the angry head of his cock.

He took her shoes and socks off first. The jeans went without a fight, sliding from her with a hiss. The hiss was echoed by Franc as he took in the matching panties.

She fought the urge to cover herself or to go on the attack. Her body was a study in contrasts, chalk-white skin, blood red silk and waves of chestnut hair to frame her face and her red eyes. Another pulse of heat went through her as his hand covered one breast and stroked her through the silk. Her teeth came out to bite at her lip as sensations tripped through her and she felt the flesh give way. Stars, she was hungry and her mouth craved the taste of the vampire before her.

She drew a line down his chest with her fingers and encircled his erection with delicate curiosity.

“Not yet, Serafina. First it’s your turn.”

She was confused when he took her hand away. “My turn for what?” The moisture that was leaking from his cock was slippery and her hand had just been finding its rhythm. She brought her fingers to her mouth and licked them clean.

They tasted like salt and musk.

Words that she couldn’t interpret spilled from his mouth and his hunting eyes flared as he watched her tongue delicately remove the traces of his pre-cum from her skin.

He brusquely pushed her knees apart and lowered his mouth to the scarlet triangle of silk at

the apex of her thighs. His tongue lapped at her through the barrier and she felt herself getting wet, dampening the fabric even more.

At her body's response she heard a dark chuckle. A long and elegant finger pushed aside the inhibiting fabric and he slowly drew it through the open lips of her sex. She shivered and her hips flexed to capture the torturing digit. It moved in a clever dance that circled the throbbing flesh of her clit then delved back down to dip lightly into her opening.

With each trail she felt a different surge of sensation. A harsh hunger as the finger inserted only an inch of itself within her, and a tense shivering expectation as her clitoris screamed for attention.

Her hips were moving in time to his motions, thrusting and retreating in a reflexive dance that had a sweat coating her in minutes.

Finally a shivering cry broke from her as he paused with his finger inside her, to gently bite down on the center of her sensation at the top of her sex. A scream soon followed as she shuddered in response to her body's release.

He left her. As her body slumped against the cold stone of the floor, he pulled away from her, licking her juices off of his finger. She squirmed against the stone, her eyes drifting closed with satisfaction, only to have them flare open as her

panties slid off of her. Well, were tugged off of her. They were far too damp to slide anywhere.

He settled his thighs between her own and their eyes met and held as he pressed the blunt head of his cock against her in a deliberate invasion of her body.

She watched him carefully and saw the instant he realized she was a virgin. Her legs wrapped around his hips and she pulled him into her, shattering the maiden's barrier with a sharp cry from both of their throats.

At last he was fully seated and his head dropped to her shoulder, sweat dampening his inky hair. "Why didn't you mention it?"

"I figured that you could manage to work it out on your own," She threaded her fingers through his hair and brought his mouth to hers in a ravenous kiss. "And now, I would like it if we did more than discuss my ex-virginity, please."

"Oh, really? Like what?" He shifted his hips, dragging the head of his cock back across the abused tissues, then soothing them with a forward thrust.

"Play a hand of cards?" She tried to hold him within her, but his body mastered hers without any trouble. He had all the leverage.

"I don't really like cards." Another slow thrust had her biting her lower lip to keep from moaning.

"Dice?"

"No, I like my hands free." His motions were increasing in speed and intensity.

"Tic-tac-toe?" It was difficult to keep her part of the conversation up while her body was arching and slamming against his, but she wasn't going to give up quite yet.

"I think wrestling would be more appropriate. But I have already won, as I have you pinned." He took her wrists in his hands and held her hands next to her head. "Do you yield?"

"I do indeed." Her body was clenching frantically around him now. Fighting her control, the sensations ripping through her built until she thought she would burst into flame. Wait! She knew that feeling. Magic. Her magic was trying to recharge the wards!

"Franc! Stop!"

He looked at her as if she had lost her mind. He continued to pound into her, oblivious to her squirming struggles.

She arched her hips in an effort to throw him off and shattered into a thousand pieces under him. Her magic flared out and gripped him tightly, setting off his own orgasm as he shouted and spilled his cum into her in a shuddering torrent.

As he came within her, she felt something else enter her. Something that ate her power and

consciousness.

Chapter 5

“Serafina, are you alright?” Arms held the body that she occupied. Strong arms. The smell of sex was still heavy in the air.

* * * *

She moved the body and found that it responded sluggishly to her commands. Serafina was not letting go of her flesh that easily.

‘Serafina. I only need you for an hour or so. I need to get a message to Eylonwy and this is the only way.’ She whispered it into the angry corner of the mind and was not surprised to have Serafina come roaring out at her trying to take back supremacy.

‘So you high-jacked my body for a joy ride? Why not just send her an email? She has her own web group.’ She stopped and waited for an opening. Whatever had grabbed her was far stronger than she was right now. Of course it was. It had eaten her magic.

'Because I have been dead for hundreds of years. It is hard to get anyone to carry the signal.'

'So, Franc knew what you were planning to do?'

'He didn't even know I was there. I waited until you had to recharge the wards, then entered through your wound.'

'Wound? What wound?' She had a prick on her finger, but she didn't feel the presence come through there.

'The other prick.' A tinkling laugh sounded in Serafina's mind as she remembered everything that she had been involved in when she was taken over.

'So, you came out of him, and into me? Why?'

'I told you. So that I could get a message to Eylonwy.'

'I can pass it along for you.'

'No, it has to be me.'

Sera thought about it. *'How did you even get here? The wards should have kept everyone out.'*

'Everyone except you.'

'Well, of course.'

'Blood called to blood. The signature wound in your finger left blood on the picture frame. It is an Athelan mirror under that picture. You simply opened it, and we fell through.'

'Did he know about this?'

'Franc never knew a thing. I crept into him weeks ago, in preparation for this evening. I waited, as I have waited for years.'

'Well, how could you have gotten through? The magic should have filtered you out.'

'Blood calls to blood, Serafina. You are my descendant.'

The name that sprang to her thoughts was answered by a pleased laugh. *'Indeed, Sera. Now you know why it must be my voice that speaks to Eylonwy.'*

'I do.' If she had eyes to weep with, tears would have been running down her face. *'I will help you.'*

'Wonderful. Now, let's be on our way.'

* * * *

"Sera! Answer me! What happened?" Franc was shaking her, trying to get a response. She seemed to have blacked out.

He had felt pretty smug about it until he realized that she was barely breathing and that all the energy she had been exuding had disappeared. Even her scent had changed.

It was as if it was now a completely different woman in his arms.

Her eyes focused on his for a moment, then her gaze frosted over. The magic that had drained from her earlier now surged to the fore.

"Please stand aside, vampire. You have served your purpose." The mouth was Sera's but the voice was echoing in his mind.

"What the hell?" His arms fell numbly to his sides as a surge of energy went through him and

broke his grip. "What have you done to Serafina?"

"Nothing that she has not since agreed to, now stand aside." She calmly rose to her feet and after shrugging into his shirt, walked to the great doors, flinging them open in a smooth motion. The crowd waiting for her at the base of the stone steps did not seem to surprise her.

It shocked the hell out of him though.

A large group of males were gathered at the foot of the stairs. He could tell that they were males, even though they were no longer recognizable as human. Dragons, werewolves and goblins faced her in silence. They did not look pleased.

"I wish to speak with Eylonwy Warder." Whatever was now controlling Sera was facing the crowd with passive authority. It clearly was expecting them to bring this person forward.

"You won't get to another Warder unless you can make it through us." A dragon stepped forward, his wings flaring. The other species echoed his motions and prepared for an attack.

It was not long in coming. *"So be it."*

The power within her flared to life and Franc stood back in amazement as the power formed a second skin. A suit of armor was being created out of air and magic.

As she completed her transformation she began to advance. Supernatural creatures went flying as

they came into contact with Serafina's silver body. She staggered slightly at the ferocity of the attacks and that was when he decided to act.

Regaining the feeling in his hands, he surged forward to protect her. No matter what was within her now, he had an unfathomable urge to keep her safe.

As he fought his way to her side, he shook his head at his own monumental stupidity. Whatever was possessing her was far stronger than he was. She flicked the dragons out of her way with small surges of power, the wolves were scattered back with kicks and the goblins seemed to enjoy the burning pains that she ignited on their hides.

He, however, was being bitten clawed and finally was thrown to the ground unceremoniously. Sera had stopped her progress and her bare feet were next to him.

A few of the defenders hauled him to his feet, claws digging in to his arms to hold him fast. He looked over to Serafina and was ruefully unsurprised that she did not seem to have a hair out of place.

Whatever had control of her was truly an impressive power. He shivered with pain and hoped that wherever she was, Sera was alright.

Chapter 6

“You have fought your way to me. Now tell me, why you are inhabiting that body?” The elf was furious.

Sera’s occupant smiled at the show of temper. It had been unlike Eylonwy in the old days, she had always been so sedate. It must be her choice of vessels that perturbed her. All of the Warders that had assembled for the Halloween celebrations were around them now, creating a field that would destroy both herself and her host if she wasn’t careful.

It warmed her heart to see the family that had survived her, and recalled her to the purpose for which she had fought her way to Realm.

“Eylonwy, I need your help.” The voice issuing from Serafina’s lips was delicate and had a silvery chime to it. *“She needs your help.”*

A sob broke through her. *“She’s all alone. There isn’t anyone to help her.”*

“Why did you take over Serafina?” She was

gathering power to expunge the spirit from her relative and only her passive treatment of the guards who tried to stop her stayed the elf's hand.

"I needed to ask you for help. She is your grandniece. She needs you!"

Eylonwy's elegant face twisted in astonishment, "My grandniece? What the hell are you talking about. Serafina is my grandniece!"

"No, not her, the other one. I had two girls, Lonny. One was obviously mine and Leon's family left her to die next to me. The other they took."

"A..Amarante?" Tears were welling in the aqua eyes as she looked on the body of her niece which was holding the spirit of her dead sister.

"Yes, Lonny." Her hand slowly reached out and she left it, palm up for Eylonwy to take. *"It's me."*

The crowd was eyeing each other in bemusement. No one had been hurt, with the exception of the djinn and dragons that had landed on their butts as she flung them through the air.

"But how?" She took the hand and the Warder armor receded back to the shoulder. "Is Serafina in any pain?"

"No, I explained myself to her and she is willing to help."

"Help with what?"

"With telling you to look for my daughter's descendant. She is gaining her power and has become a

target to a warlock who is seeking to drain her dry. She needs protection and training before it's too late." The other arm was now free of the armor, it melted away from her body as she relaxed and carried out her task.

"Where is she? Where can we find her, Mara?" The armor covering the dhampir was melting away rapidly now. Whatever control Amarante had was being used up quickly.

"She lives in a large city, I don't know where. Track her through blood. That is how I was able to do this. Blood calls to blood. Send Serafina to trace her."

"But why did you wait hundreds of years for this? We could have retrieved your daughter at any time."

"I needed one of my blood to shed her own blood on hallowe'en when the spirit world is close. Serafina shed her blood to sign the book and take responsibility for the Repository, that was all that I needed."

'Thank you, Amranthe, for not mentioning the fooling around in the Repository.'

'No problem, Sera. I am sorry that your first experience was on this night.'

'It's alright. I am sure I will recover.'

She straightened and met her sister's concerned gaze. "I am fine. Sera and I were just discussing this evening's events." She paused to look over to where Arov and Decklyn had the vampire in their grip. "He had nothing to do with this. His body was merely the vessel that I used to transfer my spirit into Realm."

* * * *

A flick of Eylonwy's fingers and the men released him. He straightened his shoulders and watched the conversation with interest. This whole evening was beyond the fantastic, even for a vampire.

First, he had been sucked through a painting that he had posed for six hundred years earlier and become the first vampire in Realm in centuries—according to records anyway—then he had met the most riveting woman that he had ever seen, consumed her blood and been consumed himself by lust. Finally, he had just started to make love to this fascinating woman when she had been taken over by the ghost of one of her ancestors.

Getting his butt handed to him by werewolves, dragons and goblins, not to mention the women binding him in magic were just cappers to the weirdest evening in his very long life.

* * * *

"I am getting weaker, dawn is approaching, Lonny." She sighed heavily and looked down at the body that was now only wearing an open shirt that obviously belonged to the vampire.

"Amarante, I just have to ask you one question

before you go."

"Yes?"

"Why did you die?" She wailed her grief and loss to the assembly. "You could have chosen to survive, you could have summoned me. Why did you choose to die?"

She moved forward to hug her sister. *"I chose to die because there was nothing to live for. He never loved me, Eylonwy. Not ever. I was a trophy for him and then a freak. He was having three separate affairs and had two other children while we were married. It broke my heart."*

"Then why did you leave your daughters?"

"Because the only thing that I felt was betrayal, and I didn't want to teach them that. I knew that you would come for Fianli, and that Morgiani would be taken and raised as human. I saw it. But I did not see myself in their futures."

"I was always with them, standing by. Offering guidance when I could, however I could. There was no reason to step in until now. Her name is Audrina and she will be dead by Yule if no one saves her." Serafina's body swayed.

It was her own voice that spoke now, "She's gone. She gave me a picture of Audrina and her location. I'll start looking as soon as I recharge." Tears were tracking down her face as the grief and frustration of her ancestor filled her.

She staggered, then tried to make her way back to the Repository where the remains of her

clothing lay. A helpful arm came around her and supported her back to the steps. "It's cool, I can take it from here." She looked up and saw Franc, his eyes wide with astonishment as he watched the rising sun of Realm.

The rest of the Warders stood and watched them go, the creatures that had earlier barred their way parting to let them pass.

"Yeah, I know. Fascinating. The sun of Realm doesn't burn vamps, it doesn't hurt, and lets you live a fairly normal life. The vampires left because they didn't want to stop eating the locals. The werewolves left so that they could completely control their own societies. Both races lost a lot of magic in the process."

She was nodding off. Amarante had drained off all of her power and left her limp. She staggered inside and was unsurprised to feel herself falling to the floor. It didn't hurt. She blinked drowsily and realized slowly that she was being held off the floor by two hands gripping her arms.

Those same arms lifted her and cradled her face against his neck while he issued a command. "Bite me." He settled at the desk with her in his lap.

Her fangs had extended and she was practically drooling at the warm source of sustenance just inches from her lips. "I hadn't ever consumed blood before tonight."

"Then this will be another first for you, now

drink." His hand came up and pushed her mouth into his neck. Her earlier bite mark had faded to nothing and his neck looked so good.

Daintily, she licked out at his flesh, tasting him. Then she let one hand come up to keep his neck from moving and bit down. Oh, the warmth of his blood filled her mouth, her teeth digging deep to keep the wounds open.

Her head spun, but she felt her strength returning with the warm rush of his blood into her body. She also felt arousal returning and that was the sensation that stopped her from feeding.

"Thank you, Franc." On instinct, she licked the wounds on his neck until they closed. The ridge of his own arousal had firmed under her hip the instant that her lips had touched his skin.

He didn't reply.

She cautiously met his eyes and shuddered with the urge to wrap herself around him and bear him to the floor. No. She wouldn't.

The only reason that he had come to her was that he had been under the influence of a Warder's ghost. It had never been his idea.

Reluctantly, she pushed herself away from him. "Well, I think that we need to get you home. Do you have any large mirrors at your home?"

"Yes. There is a large one over my fireplace, but it will be bathed in sunlight by now. I don't think I should be bursting into flame after all that I have

seen today.”

Something in his eyes made her smile wearily. “You don’t actually burst into flame, do you?”

“Well, the older we are, the less likely it is that we will suffer more than light sunburn. I was hoping that you didn’t know that.” He gave her a sheepish grin and looked around the room. “I was also hoping for a tour.”

She staggered again, “One of my cousins will have to take you around. I just need a nap right now and I am heading out. Now, where did I leave my clothes?”

Leaving Franc bemused and looking at her back she moved as quickly as she could to reclaim most of her clothing. Still wobbling, she finished dressing and reclaimed him from his position behind the information desk.

“Come on. I will find you a guide who can show you the wonders of Realm.” Her hand grabbed his and she smiled at the warmth that flowed through him now. He had absorbed a bit of her magic, she only wished she had enough energy to take advantage of that warmth.

A small cluster of her family was waiting at the base of the steps and she smiled at Anryn and Decklyn. Perfect.

“Anryn, Decklyn. Franc here needs a tour of Realm. I think that you two would be just the ones to take him around. You know everyone here, and

Decklyn has eaten some of their ancestors.” She released his hand with regret, gave him a small wave and headed for the mirror station.

The swirling burst of energy of the transport was like a warm cocoon. Sera stepped into her own living room with a sense of melancholy and proceeded to bed. It had been one helluva night, and she was nocturnal after all.

Chapter 7

“So, you want a tour of Realm, huh?” The woman facing him was green. She appeared to have Mediterranean olive skin from a distance, but up close, she was definitely green. Anryn, Serafina had introduced her as Anryn.

Franc didn't know what to do. He had watched the most riveting creature he had ever met in his long life walk through a mirror and disappear, and now he was facing a group of magical creatures that were staring at him with a combination of amusement and hunger.

It was certainly a change from the normal gazes of lust that he received. A few of the women were looking at him with interest, but nothing along the lines of what he was used to. It was simply curiosity in their gazes.

“No, I...” He met her gaze and was compelled to answer honestly. “Yes. I would like a tour. But I also want to learn more about Serafina. Can that be arranged?”

The dragon that had been identified as Decklyn smiled at him for the first time. "Yes, that can be arranged. They should just be getting up now."

"They?"

"Oh, yeah. They would be the right ones to ask." She laughed at his confused expression and began to lead the way into the field that was decorated for a party. "Come this way."

"What are those buildings over there?"

"All in good time. First, you will learn more about Serafina." She skipped lightly over the grass with what must have been her husband following closely. How a woman that attractive could settle for a dragon was only one of the mysteries he had yet to uncover.

He trailed behind them in a bemused state. They were approaching another large cluster of people. The woman stopped to ask some questions and was directed to a small stand of trees.

"C'mon, Franc. They are having breakfast now. You can ask all the questions you want." She strode forward with a swing in her steps, and he quickly averted his eyes when he noted the scowl on the dragon's face.

His feet moved quickly to keep up, they were disappearing into the wood and he lost sight of them for a moment.

He needn't have worried. They had stopped

just inside the trees and another clearing, shaded from the morning sun by the green canopy above them.

Children. At least two dozen were seated and having cereal in cross-legged groups on the ground. The little girls outnumbered the boys by close to ten to one. The groups were loose, the little creatures often talking in giggling tones over four or five heads.

Judging by the pallets and blankets on one side of the clearing, the children had spent the night here while their parents enjoyed the party in the field.

Anryn walked forward and clapped her hands. "Warders! Warders, please!"

The children fell silent and gave her their attention. A spokesperson that appeared to be around fourteen stood up. "Yes, cousin? What do you want?"

"Melia. This is Franc, he's a vampire. Franc, this is Melia. She is the daughter of a merman and my cousin Rowan, who never bothered learning how to swim."

"Pleased to meet you, Melia." He executed a bow in response to hers. The delicate scales tracing her scalp were apparent to him, now that he was looking for them.

"We are here so that Franc can learn about Serafina. Can anyone here tell him about her?"

Hands rose all over the clearing. Anryn let Melia point to each one in turn.

A cute little girl with bluish skin went first. "She's half vampire."

"She likes to play hopscotch."

"She can burp the alphabet!" This from an enthusiastic little boy, the comment drew, "Ewws," from the female contingent.

"She will teach you for hours until you get it."

"Her aura is violet. That means she likes blood."

"She drinks a lot of tea so she doesn't need blood, dummy!" A short scuffle broke out involving tugging pigtails and then they were back to business.

"She likes pralines and cream ice cream."

"Her favorite color is blue."

"She has a little sister that she loves very much."

"She doesn't like gum in her hair."

"Serafina is ticklish." This caused a spurt of giggles and tickling amongst the kids and he had to smile in reaction.

"Is that enough for a start, Franc?" Anryn was laughing with the lighter voices.

"Yes, thank you." He raised his voice, "You have all been very helpful. Thank you very much."

A chorus of, "Your welcome!" rang out and the

children went back to their breakfasts.

Anryn led the way out of the grove and he was surprised to see a field snap into position behind him as soon as he had passed.

"You didn't think we would leave the kids unprotected overnight, did you? We had three of our nocturnal cousins watching over them until dawn. They were relieved at dawn by six dryads that were watching us the entire time we were there."

"When the wards at the Repository blew, anyone with combat experience came running. We are sorry that you ended up used in such a way, but the spirits of the elves don't transport easily."

"So, it was an elf that used me as a mule?"

"Half-elf. All of the Warders are half breeds. It's a curse." She looked back at her husband, "But it has its benefits." Her smile was full of love and affection.

Decklyn returned her smile with a grin that promised more than just a look of affection at the first opportunity.

"A curse? Like a magic spell kinda curse?"

"Exactly. It ensures that we don't form any kind of militia to take over Realm." She paused for a moment. "I am sure that Serafina will explain the details to you at a later time."

"Really? What makes you think that I will meet up with her again?" He was curious. As far as she

knew, he had only been the transport for the spirit.

"Well, the little detail of her having had sex with you in the Repository of Magical Artifacts. That's all."

He was stunned. "How did you know about that?"

"There was blood on her mouth. She never drinks blood. So, it must have been a fit of passion. Which would also explain the blood on the inside of her thigh as she returned to fetch her clothes. Serafina doesn't date much, so if she lost her virginity to you, she must have liked you."

He whistled long and low. "You don't miss much, do you?"

"I try not to. Of course, it was Decklyn who pointed out the blood to me. I don't smell it like he does."

Franc looked to the dragon's impassive face and looked quickly away. He himself had been glaringly aware of blood on Sera, but he had thought that their tryst had been private. "How many others noticed?"

"Six or so. They spread the word. Everyone knows that you and Sera...you know." A flip of her hand filled in the rest.

"Let me guess. She isn't going to be happy about that." He had an image of Sera's face as she left. She was exhausted and humiliated. Crap. That was going to make seeing her again difficult.

"Yep. Sera is one of the most private people I know. This whole thing is going to make your courtship of her awkward."

"Courtship? Who said anything about courtship?"

Anryn laughed at him. "Your face did. Your heart was in your eyes as you watched her go, and there had to be some reason that you were chosen by the spirit."

"So you think that the ghost was matchmaking?"

"Of course! It's what the elders do." She stopped and suddenly turned into a tour guide. "This is the main square of Realm. Each race has a building and each building has a gateway to their cities in the far reaches of this world."

He turned slowly and noted the distinct styles of architecture that denoted each individual species. Franc was drawn to one specific building that looked like it hadn't been used in years.

He crossed the square in a daze, the pull of the architecture irresistible. The symbol of the full moon with a dagger thrusting through it was mounted over the door. The doors themselves were carved onyx with depictions of vampires feeding.

He stood before them in amazement as he realized that this was the equivalent of the vampire consulate, and it had not been touched in

hundreds of years. Until now. He placed his hand on the plate of the door, jumping back as a shower of debris came down on him. Slowly, soundlessly, the door swung open.

A great entrance way lined with the same onyx led into a hallway that disappeared around a corner. He looked behind him to see his tour guides at the door, unable to enter.

"Franc, did you want to continue the tour? Or did you want to run through an empty building?"

He called back, "What else is there to see?"

"Nothing really, but in that case, would you please invite us in?"

"Why can't you just walk in?"

"We need an invitation to enter another specie's centre. Every magical creature does."

He laughed at this reversal of vampire lore. "Please, be welcome. I invite you in."

With audible sighs they entered the great room and swiftly caught up with him as he walked down the halls.

"What was this place used for?"

Decklyn answered, "We don't know what this particular centre was used for, but the Dragon Centre is used for council meetings and formal functions."

"So, no one has been here since the vampires left?" He knew it in his bones, but he needed confirmation.

“No one has been able to get through the doors. They are species specific.”

Not another word was said as they passed through the halls which were lined with portraits of dozens of vampire leaders from eons past.

The main council chamber suddenly opened in front of them, the skylight letting in the full light of the Realm day. The slab in front of the podium made them all pause.

It held cuffs and a head restraint. The dark stains on white granite sent a chill down Franc's spine. It was blood.

With slow and careful steps he approached the slab, using his senses to analyze the scent of blood left in this abandoned building. It smelled of wild magic and was definitely female. He touched it and a scene from the past flooded his mind. “Oh hells. No wonder they left.”

“What was it?”

“A dryad. But not for long. This was a Turning table. They were trying to make more vampires. It didn't work, and she died screaming for an end.”

The horror of what they were hearing was not lost on them. The vampires had been trying to turn magical creatures to create an invincible army. They could not breed quickly enough on their own, so some of them must have tried to turn the supernatural inhabitants.

With fury at the hubris of generations past, he

strode to the white granite slab and put his shoulder to it. It creaked and shifted, but he couldn't get it to flip. Until his efforts were assisted by Decklyn. With both of them straining, it toppled and shattered.

"Let's get out of here. This place reeks of death." His guides didn't say a word, but led the way out of the Vampire Hall as quickly as they could.

The doors sealed shut behind them and Franc gasped for air. "That place should be destroyed. What happened in there should be forgotten."

"As you are the only representative from your species. It can be destroyed after the next Great Meeting."

"Great what?"

"Meeting. All the races have representatives and they get together in the Central Hall. They make any policy changes necessary at that time." She stopped for a moment and smiled slowly at him. "Serafina will be there."

"Why will she be there?"

"Warders have to check in for a scan to make sure that they aren't plotting against the council. Unless they are married. Then their husband is responsible for them." An angelic smile that Decklyn didn't believe for a moment judging by his rolling eyes, crossed her face.

"And if I request it, they will destroy the

building?"

"Yes, they will. The werewolves asked for their Hall to be destroyed when they left, and the new contingent is going to ask for a new building on a new patch of ground. You can do the same."

"So, the werewolves are recent returns to Realm?" He grimaced at his own alliteration. Well, at least he didn't rhyme.

"Very recent. Four months ago one of the Warder's hand fasted with a werewolf. That was the first contact that they had had with Realm in three hundred years." Decklyn had taken over the tour and was leading them to a raised platform covered with large mirrors.

"This is the mirror station and the last stop on the tour. Anryn and I will see you home."

"Wait. How do I get back here? How do I find Serafina?"

"We will get you her contact information. We promise." The dragon grabbed his shoulder and held on while Anryn charged up the mirror in a way that he couldn't see. She only seemed to touch it, and it was humming with power.

Chapter 8

Sera was exhausted. She made it home to take a shower and change clothes but that was as far as she had gotten. The blood she had taken from Franc had recharged her temporarily, but she wanted more. Her shaking hands prepped her tea and she sipped it slowly.

It took the edge off, but now that she knew what the blood felt like singing in her veins and throat, she wanted it. But only vampire blood would do.

Her body wanted sleep, but first she needed to write down all pertinent information on her new cousin. Everything that she had been given was carefully recorded on paper. Audrina Williams was her name. The city was somewhere in the northwest, near an island. Her eyes, hair and skin tone were carefully written down as her body slumped into a heavy sleep.

* * * *

A hand shaking her shoulder woke her some hours later. Her face bore the imprint of the pen she had been using to write her hunting statistics. A groan burst from her and she looked up to see the concerned face of an elf.

"I am sorry to wake you, Sera. I know how much energy she took from you and I came to offer to replace some of it."

"Please, Aunt. I am completely flattened." She held out her hand and sighed heavily as the power began to flow between them. Her brain sighed in relief as the stores of energy were replaced.

"Why are you here so soon? You should be at the Warder's council." They didn't have a building so the Warders met after large holidays to discuss their concerns.

"Sera. That was two days ago. You have forty-six messages on your machine and I don't know how many emails have been sent."

"Two days? Aww...hell." She rubbed gently at the pen-impression on her face and contemplated the last rays of the setting sun outside her window. "Why did you decide to show up in person?"

"It was my idea, actually." A masculine voice startled her into turning around. Francesco Berwick stood there in all his glory. "I got worried when you didn't return my calls. You don't seem

the type to pretend nothing happened."

"I'm not." She thought about it for a moment. "Well, I don't think I am. I haven't ever been in that position before."

"Naked on the floor of the Repository?"

She flushed scarlet and looked over at Eylonwy's amused face. "I will leave you two to work this out." The elder bowed and walked back to the mirror and disappeared into the silvered surface.

It was now just the two of them.

"I would have returned your call." She was flustered. "I fell asleep."

He was closer now, she could smell his skin and remember the taste of his blood. "I know. That is why I used the numbers that Anryn and Decklyn left me to ask for help."

"Good Lord. A man who asks for directions." Her quip was whispered, as he was leaning toward her and she was spellbound by the tempting curve of his lips.

"Only when I need to know where I am heading. If I know where I am going, I use the direct approach." His lips gently caressed hers and she sighed into him.

For long moments it was the simple meeting of their lips that had her blood singing in welcome. She placed her shaking hand on his jaw and he traced her lips with his tongue.

Sera opened her mouth in welcome, and tasted him in return. A snarl escaped him and she found herself pressed against him from breast to knee.

Her hands were in his hair, holding his mouth to hers as they devoured each other. She heard a soft whimper and only vaguely realized that it was her voice, begging for more.

His hands gripped her ass and pulled her pelvis into his, the firm rod of his erection heating her blood to boiling. All of her hungers were awakening.

She wanted his body and she wanted his blood.

Her fangs extended and her hunting eyes flared. She grabbed his head to hold him and nipped his lips with her teeth, he snarled and drew back for a moment, then locked his lips to hers once more. The blood pooled between them and her busy tongue lapped it up. More...she wanted more.

Her hips rocked against him, drawing a groan from his chest. He lifted her up and she opened her thighs to wrap her legs around his hips. Her weight was now suspended by her hands on his neck, and her grip on his waist.

Without breaking their ravenous kiss he walked her into her bedroom and laid her back on the bed. His hands firmly unlocked her ankles from behind his back and he stepped away to shed his clothing.

She hadn't had a chance to really look at him

before, so she did so now. Propping herself up on her elbows she watched every inch of skin he revealed. Including several interesting inches that drew her attention and caused her mouth to water.

She tried to remove her own clothes, but her hands were shaking. Her fumbling efforts drew his attention.

“Would you like some help with that?”

“Yes, please. If you wouldn’t mind.”

He walked up to her, his awareness of her interested gaze clear on his face. “So polite. Even now.”

She fell mute as his hands drew her shirt open with astonishing ease. Her jeans met with the same end, disappearing from her body in seconds. This time, he discarded her bra first, then slid her panties off.

She watched them go and lay back, waiting.

She didn’t wait long. The frenzy of their first fuck was still with them, as neither knew how much had been supplied by the ghost and the loss of her virginity had been an obstacle.

His hands and mouth roamed over her torso, paying special attention to her breasts, which she found to set off an answering response in her clit. Each tug of his mouth on her nipples caused waves of sensation to echo between her thighs.

Her throat gave off an endless selection of

moans and sighs as she lay back and let him do all the work. A shivering groan ran through her as his tongue and the scrape of his teeth trailed over her soft belly, dipping into her navel before continuing to lick his way to the weeping mouth of her sex.

She expected a slow exploration, but his tongue began a hard stroke that went from the wet entrance to her pussy up to flick her clit. Over and over he continued this treatment, never changing his speed.

She was whimpering for her orgasm in a matter of moments. The slow strokes were driving her out of her mind. Her hands clutched his hair as her thighs tightened around his head and she twisted against him, seeking the stroke that would finish her.

He stopped and drew back, grinning at her through a mouth covered with her juices. He leaned forward to kiss her, his cock nudging against her belly. Her hips shifted against his erection and she started to squirm slowly against him in a plea for completion.

He obliged. With one hand, he supported himself above her, and with the other he guided himself into her willing body. With one thrust past the resistance to his invasion, he was inside her.

She purred with contentment, and arched against him. Trying to draw him into thrusting

deep with her. She called out in a voice not her own for him to fuck her hard.

He merely smiled at her through the sweat tracing his brow and slowly drew out of her only to thrust in once again. He moved within her in a slow and deliberate rhythm that was going to drive her nuts. Each time he withdrew, her hips thrust up against him and each time he drove deep her body rose to meet him.

It was something that had the bed sheets soaked with their sweat, his in an effort not to go off, and hers in an effort to achieve it.

Finally, she used her last resort. As he came forward to kiss her, she swung her head away and bit his neck. His cock was hot and hard inside her, giving her intense pleasure with every motion he had given her.

His response was his own snarl of lust and a hard shove of his hips. That had been what she wanted all along. She began to suckle at his neck, drawing more blood into her as he continued to fuck her, harder with each stroke.

At the first hard slam, she felt a shiver, by the time he had reached the third, her orgasm was upon her. She let go his throat and shrieked her release to him. Her whole body going limp and quivering seconds after the contractions hit.

He howled in frustration and returned the favor, biting her shoulder with savage ferocity that

still sent a bolt of pleasure through her. His hips now pounded into her each thrust driving him faster and rekindling her lust.

Finally, he howled his release into her shoulder and she felt a strong suckling of her blood rush out of her as his semen rushed in. He fell heavily beside her. Gasping for breath in a counterpoint to her own chest heaving to get back to a normal rate.

The wounds she had made in his neck were closing already, and she could feel the ones in her neck doing the same. Her body was satisfied, the hunger for blood finally sated. But her hormones were still active as she ran her hand idly down his chest, toying with his nipples on the way.

She wanted more, and based on the limp and shining cock on his thighs, it was going to be slow in coming. Sera sighed and snuggled closer.

"That went much better than the first time." Satisfaction was thick in his husky voice.

"Yep, I didn't get possessed or have all my magic sucked into a ghost. I consider it a step up." *Sucking, yeah, that might work.*

Her lips began a trail of tiny nips and kisses that began at the bite marks on his throat and continued across his chest and down his belly. Tiny sighs and groans emanated from her victim as she approached her destination.

His penis twitched slightly as she wrapped her

hand around the shaft and raised him to her lips. The flared head was warm and soft under her tongue as she lapped her juices off the delicate tissues. The salty musk of pre-cum began leaking from him in only a few seconds and she felt the column under hand swell and harden as she licked and swirled her way around his rapidly hardening cock.

A hand wove through her hair and tugged her head up. "How do you know how to do that?"

She crawled up him, straddling his hips and pressed her lips to his in a kiss that rapidly flared her body to full burn. "I like ice cream."

She drew her head back and waited until he stopped laughing. She was drumming her fingers on his chest when he finally stopped snickering.

He used her hair to bring her lips back in range and just before they met he said, "Pralines and cream."

Her eyes widened in shock, then crossed as she tried to meet his amused gaze at close range. She finally let them close and just enjoyed the feeling of his hands on her back and his erection pressing against her belly. Her body took up a rhythm of its own sliding against his in a dreamy motion as their tongues met and tangled. She arched her back and moved against his cock until it was nestled between the open lips of her sex and her clit rubbed against him with every stroke.

She felt more than heard him groan into her mouth as she began to pant with her own rising need for completion. Her body was slick with sweat and her arms shook as they took her weight. He lifted her hips and guided his turgid flesh into hers.

Sera groaned and sat up, burying him as deep as she could. She let her head fall back and circled her hips on him, enjoying the feel of that warm cock moving within her. Her eyes were closed as she began to rise and fall on him. Almost letting him slip from her, then dropping down with a gasp.

He kept his hands on her hips, speeding and slowing her pace on him while watching her with eyes that had narrowed with intensity. Her orgasm was sudden and intense, freezing her muscles in a spasm of pleasure. His hands pulled her tightly against him and lifted her to thrust into her again.

She squealed and shook helplessly in the grip of the waves of release washing over her, sweat running down her sides and forehead. One by one her muscles went limp and she slumped onto his chest in repletion.

"Are you done with me so soon?" He toyed with her hair, sifting the long strands and separating the locks into a silken cape.

"Mmmff." Her voice against his neck warmed

his skin, but even she didn't know what she said. She turned her head to the side and told him the truth. "I am done for the night, but you can go nuts."

A dark chuckle sounded in her ear. "Indeed. Then I shall."

A moment later and their positions were reversed, he was now cradled between her thighs. A slow thrust into her slick channel had her arching against him. It was this slow and steady pace that he maintained, the beat of her heart controlling his pace. As her blood began to pound in her veins, his beat increased to match her tempo.

Her lethargy was soon forgotten and she was arching against him, her legs locking together behind his back as she urged him on. Her next orgasm was upon her in moments, her breath sighing out of her in a wave as sparks danced behind her eyes. It was then that she felt him slam into her with inhuman force and he bit at her joint between neck and shoulder, draining her blood as his body shook with his own release.

His groan was audible through his bite and she felt the magic that he was taking from her, but it was oddly invigorating. As if his gaining strength was making her stronger as well.

The pain of his bite slowly turned into a warm river of pleasure loosening her muscles and

keeping her in his power. That was the warning sign.

In reflex she brought up her left hand and—knowing that she couldn't pry him off—smacked him in the ear.

"Oh, hells, Serafina. I am sorry." He scrambled free of her body's embrace and she shook as she struggled to sit up, all the while glaring at him.

"I am not a 'nice light snack' alright?" She tried to leave her bed, but her legs wouldn't hold her. The 'thud' as her butt hit the floor was audible. Knowing herself unable to walk, she simply sat there, her arms curled around her knees and a lost feeling welling within her.

He picked her up, ignoring her feeble struggles, and sat back on the bed with her on his lap.

She began to sniffle and in seconds tears had begun to flow from her eyes. She simply sat there, the echoes of years of loneliness coursing down in pink-tinged rivulets across her face.

His arms held her close, the smell of their coupling still strong in the air. He raised one of his arms to his mouth and bit deep. He then held the bleeding flesh to her mouth.

She tried to turn her head away, but he grasped it and held his wrist to her lips. She opened her mouth and reached out with her tongue to taste the offering. As she opened her mouth he pushed his wrist more firmly toward her, and she was

soon suckling at his arm, the energy of the blood replacing the loss of magic she felt earlier until a strange balance had been struck.

She could sense her magic swirling within him as she could feel his energy now moving within her.

The balance was unmistakable. They had each shared equal parts of themselves and had possession of the others powers.

She looked him in the eye and saw the same recognition in his face as there must be in hers. As one they said, "Well hell."

Chapter 9

It took a moment until they both burst out laughing. The emotional bond was growing stronger by the second and shortly their hearts would begin to beat in time.

“What the hell is happening to us? I can feel your amusement as if it were my own.” He didn’t seem to upset about it. In fact, he merely tucked her head beneath his chin and cuddled her against him.

“It’s one of the Warder’s enchantments. It was designed generations ago to keep what happened to Amarante from happening to others. Your pleasure and pain are now bound to me, as are mine to you.”

“Did you cast this spell? If so, I didn’t see you do it.”

“Nope, my mother cast it the day I was born. My sister got the same treatment. It’s tradition.”

“So, the first guy you slept with was ‘the one’? What if I hadn’t been dragged through that

portrait?"

She began to laugh. It was too funny. "No, it only works with the person we are destined to be with. In our case, the blood made the process faster. Your energy and my magic are exceedingly compatible. Probably why Amarante picked you."

"She picked me?" He seemed puzzled, and his mind echoed the statement. "Why?"

"As far as I can tell, you were near her burial site at some time in the last few months. She chose you deliberately because of our compatibility. She had the gift of foresight, so she knew I would be at the Repository and not my sister."

"How did I end up pulled through the mirror?"

"Blood called to blood. I marked the logbook with my blood and the wound was still open when I touched your portrait. Nice tights by the way." A hiccupping laugh escaped her.

"They were all the rage when it was painted." He slapped her lightly on the thigh and she jumped and giggled. "I think we need a shower."

She couldn't argue and amidst playful teasing and quasi-serious caresses they managed to tidy themselves into normalcy. Well, as normal as they were ever going to get.

She made a light snack and they wandered into the living room, only to be brought up short by the presence of another vampire on the couch.

She smiled as Franc put himself between her

and the intruder who was watching her television with the headset on. There was something familiar about him...

"Hello, pet." He took the earphones off and looked up at them, taking in the defensive stance that the younger male had taken up. "I trust that you know who I am."

"I do. But why are you here, Zenecar?"

"To meet you at long last, my one and only offspring." He stood. Franc didn't move from his position between them.

"Okay, so we have officially met. I think you may want to leave before hostilities erupt." She was shaken to the core by meeting her sire. She had thought him long dead, or moved to another country. Some reason for him to never contact her or her mother.

"I am not afraid of this pup." He eyed Franc carefully, belying his words.

"I meant me. You are not welcome here, so state your true business and go." Sera stepped to the side and met the eyes of the vamp that were so close to her own in color.

He addressed Franc directly. "You have gone to Realm? You have seen the Vampire Hall?"

"I have."

"Then I need you to take me back there. I need to go back to Realm."

"He can't take you." She drew his almost

fanatical gaze and shuddered. There was definitely something there that he wanted.

"Why not? He has joined with you and siphoned off half your power. He should be able to manage a single transport."

"Oh, that one is easy. Franc, will you please approach the mirror?" She stood aside and nodded at him. She knew what she was doing.

He walked over and stood before the mirror as directed. His image reflected easily in the silvered surface.

"Now, touch the frame."

The instant he touched the frame, his image disappeared. There was no way that he could open a gateway without knowing where he was going. The scene on the other side fluctuated wildly from one scene to another. A bedroom featured obviously as he flicked a warm glance over to her.

"You see, Zenecar, since Franc has only been there once, he doesn't know what the station looks like. And since you also don't know where you are going, you had better explain yourself."

"I need a portrait. It is of a woman with light brown hair and riveting blue eyes." He paused and the gleam of his eyes faded. "She was my wife. One of the first to die in the conversion experiments. She was a mage of good family, and they didn't approve of the vampire connection. So,

when we began the experiments, she volunteered to try a Turning. It didn't work and she died soon after." Bloody tears were tracking down his face.

"That was the reason that I enchanted your mother. I needed someone with vampire blood who could get me to Realm. I need that portrait."

"Will it do if I fetch the portrait for you? Will you leave then?" It was a plea forced from a desperate part of her mind.

"Freely and gladly. I will never darken your door, or couch, again."

She grabbed Franc's shoulder and shoved him through the mirror. A guardian met them on the other side.

"Just heading out to the Vampire Hall. We will be back in less than half an hour." The troll on guard nodded and stepped out of their way.

"Shall we speed this up?" With a burst of superhuman energy, she began to run flat out to the Vampire Hall. Eager to see if she could open the doors, and relieved to use her abilities to the fullest.

It was magnificent to just run, the half mile flying by in seconds. This was why she loved Realm. The freedom to just be herself was addictive.

She glanced to her right and saw Franc keeping up with her at an easy lope, and in no time they were at the onyx doors.

They opened easily at her touch, swinging aside to let her pass. She sprinted down the hall and selected the picture that she had plucked from Zenecar's mind. She also flipped the portrait over and removed the charm and necklace that were hidden in the back.

That was no mage enchantment, nor a vampire one, but an elven seduction spell that belonged in the Repository. No wonder he had had this image burning in his mind. It would cause any woman he gave it to, to be in his thrall.

"The picture he will get back via Realm post. The medallion hidden in the picture stays here." She smiled brightly at Franc who had remained silent this entire time.

"He knew. He has been planning the retrieval of this artifact for years. It is why he mated with your mother."

"Yep. And it is why I will not let him get it. He started my life, but he has no right to what I choose to do with it." A strange sense of freedom came over her. All her life she had felt a certain obligation to the memory of a man she had never met. Now that she had met him, she could let him go. "And I choose to only give him the portrait he asked for."

Her hunting eyes flared in anger, changing her surroundings to the sharper focus on all things living. She could feel her teeth extending in

irritation. That rarely happened.

"You know, you are stunning when you are furious." He gathered her into his arms and planted a kiss on her lips that quenched her fury quite effectively.

"Umm. Thank you." It was all she could manage when he let her up for air. "We need to take this to the Repository before we drop the portrait off at the mirror station."

"Well then, shall we?" He extended his arm to her and she took it with a small head shake at the courtesy. He was so...well, normal. It was hard for her to remember that he was over six hundred years old.

"Yes. This way."

"I remember the way. In fact, it is unlikely that I will ever forget it, as it brought me to you."

She was blushing furiously and it only seemed to amuse him. Their path was only occasionally crossed by members of the other species of Realm, some of whom stopped them for introductions or waved at Sera as they passed.

Finally they were at the steps of the Repository of Magical Artifacts and she took a deep breath to steady herself before facing Asgoth.

The stone rang under her feet, glowing in response to her magic once again. Had it only been two days since she had last climbed these steps? It seemed as if she had lived a lifetime in

Franc's arms.

Asgoth was distant and polite. The vampire glowering at him might have had something to do with his alteration in attitude. He accepted the medallion and logged it carefully into the inventory of the Repository.

It would be studied by elves and members of the Magus and Warlock councils at the first opportunity. Asgoth thanked them for bringing the charm to their attention and bid them good day.

She simply nodded, then led the way out to retrieve the portrait that they had left on the steps of the Repository. The trip to the mirror station was made in silence.

The attendant stepped forward, "Do you need some help with that, Sera?"

"Yes. Yes I do." She took a deep breath and rattled off her instructions. "I need this delivered to Zenecar, a vampire who is in my home, then I need a cleaning crew and a warding done on the entire property. Against vampires not of my blood specifically."

The troll took the information down carefully and nodded to her. "So, you will be staying in Realm until this is done? It could take a day or so."

"No, she will be staying with me. At my home." The last was said as much to Sera as to the

attendant.

She merely blinked for a moment, then smiled. "Great. I need somewhere quiet to find the missing Warder that Amarante mentioned."

Franc smiled in relief. He had been afraid of her refusal if his face was any indication.

"Let's go home Sera. You have had a long day. You need something to eat." His eyes were sparkling with triumph at her easy capitulation.

He touched the mirror and tried to hold the picture of his living room in his mind, but it kept leading to his bedroom. She put her hand on his and he felt her touch his mind. The picture of his living room faded and the bedroom came into sharp focus.

"Are you sure Sera?" He didn't want to rush her again, but hells, she was sexy.

"Franc." She began to pull him into the mirror. "Bite me."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Viola is a proud Winnipegger living in Manitoba, Canada. A compulsive crafter and sucker for a 'happily ever after', she spends her time avoiding anything related to housework. Her hobbies have included needlework, metalwork, henna tattoos and costume design. Oh yeah, and writing. She loves to write. A rabid sci-fi buff and nerd to the core. www.violagrace.com