

The Worthy 1: Fantasy Come True

Nia K. Foxx

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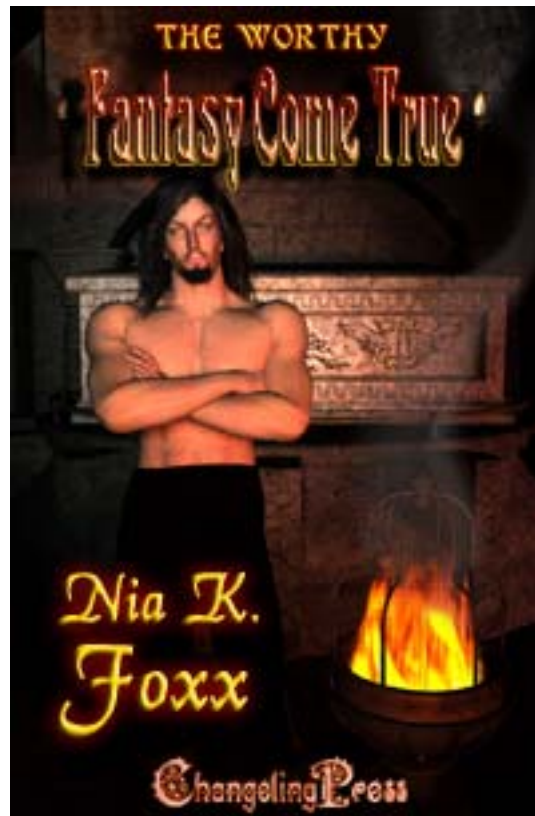
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Prologue

Of all the hokey things Kyra Littleton had ever participated in, and as a reporter she'd been involved in her fair share of doozies, this one had to take the cake. Here she was on a red eye flight to Europe, but was it heading somewhere romantic like France or Italy? Hell, she'd even take Amsterdam. No, she was bound for Eastern Europe, or more precisely, Transylvania. Why? Because her superiors thought it would be a great idea for her to do a Halloween feature on the history of vampires. Where better to get first hand knowledge than the motherland of all the fanged creatures?

She would stay in a fully functioning castle with several invited guests who eagerly awaited a view of the famed home of Vilhelm Dracul. According to local legend, Vilhelm, not his cousin Vlad the Impaler, was in fact the man behind the Dracula myth.

He'd lived over five hundred years ago in the historic castle with his family and several servants, all of whom mysteriously vanished. For years the castle had remained vacant with the memory of the Dracul family fading, until almost a century later when random murders began to ravage the nearby village. Suspicious that the killers were hiding in the abandoned relic, the local constable, along with several angry villagers, reopened the long forgotten ruins. Despite its outward appearance, it was reported that the castle's interior remained in pristine condition as if it were still maintained by a large staff of servants. However, a thorough investigation of the castle failed to reveal anyone in residence.

Unsatisfied with his findings, the constable and a small band of men began a nightly vigil to determine if their murderers had found a secret entrance into the fortress. Each night a group would go out, and each night they would return shy a man or two. Frightened, the town's people took matters into their own hands by torching the

castle in a mid-afternoon celebration. For nearly two centuries the ruins lay as a reminder of the atrocities visited on the small community.

In 1781, construction began over the ashes of the old castle, much to the surprise of the locals who watched in silent awe as an exact replica was erected. Although generations had passed since the murders and subsequent destruction, many people in the now thriving town felt a sense of unease at having the gruesome historical reminder reconstructed to loom over their homes.

The years to come proved that history didn't always repeat itself. The castle changed hands to various descendants of the Dracul family, eventually employing many people from the town, once again, to handle the day-to-day maintenance required for its upkeep. While its present owner was rumored to reside the majority of his time in various other parts of Europe, over the last two years he'd spent an unprecedented amount of it in Transylvania while he completed a project aimed to spark tourism to the forgotten community.

"Do you know how many people would like an all expenses paid trip to somewhere exotic?" her editor had asked when Kyra voiced her objections to the assignment.

"If you want to send me somewhere exotic, how about Morocco or Turkey? I'm sure I can find all types of wonderful stories there. Why me? I'm sure that anyone else can do this, would probably even want the assignment. Why now, when I've met the man who could quite possibly be the one? For God's sake, I don't even write tourism columns."

"Number one, you're a damned good reporter. Two, you're not working on anything right now that can't take a back burner. Besides, the new boss doesn't want the traditional tourist piece; he wants something fresh and new from a novice traveler. Three, the new owner, Mr. Dracul requested you personally."

"Why would he want me?"

She'd shrugged. "I guess he's a fan of your work. The bottom line is I need you on that flight at the end of the week."

“Like I had much of a choice,” Kyra muttered to herself as she squeezed her way into the plane’s narrow aisle en-route to the bathroom. Not only was she on her way across the ocean to a city whose name was synonymous with cult-like murders, but she’d also had a fight with William over leaving town just before his first pre-season game.

Kyra sent up a silent thank you to the powers-that-be at finding the bathroom vacant. They were on the last leg of their journey, and cabin fever was in full effect from the lengthy flight with a space-hording seatmate. Her dark caramel reflection in the mirror looked as tired as she felt. Tight curly tendrils had escaped a braid that looked as if she’d slept on it. Her only hope was that the new boss would be kind enough to wait until his guests had a good night’s rest before requiring them to be social.

Coffee-colored, almond- shaped eyes did a slow assessment of her face. Maybe she should have packed her makeup in her carry-on for her trip. A little color to her plump lips, perhaps a bit of eyeliner, several swipes from her brush and she could look human again.

She sighed heavily, wondering what William was doing and questioning why she didn’t really care that he hadn’t bothered to call and apologize.

Kyra sighed again. A week wouldn’t be too long, it would pass in a heartbeat if she loosened up and allowed herself to have a bit of fun. When she got back to Chicago, she would reevaluate her relationship with William.

Chapter One

Ivan bowed as he entered the room where the vampire he'd faithfully served for over five hundred years stood. "Everything is going as planned, my Lord."

Good. Have the other guests arrived?

"Yes, we await only her arrival now."

Dumitri nodded his acknowledgement, turning back to look out the picture window to the darkening sky above. The rains would start soon. He would ensure it. His guests expected to visit an authentic vampiric castle, the home of Vilheim Dracul and he would make sure they received the entire gothic package. In actuality, he couldn't care less for the humans who even now traipsed about his ancestral home, fingering his paintings, and turning over every candelabra as if they would discover some cheap knockoffs rigged with wires. To him the people were a necessary evil, a means to an end.

What he really wanted was her... Kyra Littleton. And in a matter of a few short hours he would have her with him where she belonged.

She was one of the Worthy, a small group of humans who were descendants of the first vampires. It was said that these human/vampire hybrids rejected their lineage centuries ago, choosing to breed among humans to dilute their beastly ancestry. Many believed that the Worthy were extinct, their vampire heritage being completely cleansed away. It was said that only a true vampiric mate could detect the special pheromone present in the males or females of the Worthy destined for them, and it had been many centuries since a Worthy and vampire joining.

Dumitri carefully devised his plan after sensing her for the first time many months ago. He'd known immediately that she was the one who would share the rest of his immortal existence. Her scent had wafted to him as he exited the limousine to

inspect his new acquisition; a United States based newspaper headquartered in Chicago with worldwide distribution and acclaim. Until that moment, he'd never thought that one of the Worthy could exist for him. None had been seen since his grandparents' time. Like most vamps, he'd been content with living a life of decadence, satisfying himself with human conquest to temporarily assuage his needs. He'd thought that eventually he would choose a mate from amongst the vampire nation, someone with whom he could tolerate an eternity.

But once he'd scented her, his frantic gaze had searched the various humans milling about, catching a glimpse of her dark frame as she entered the downtown building in front of her short companion.

"Kyra, can you slow down? Not everyone is gifted with long legs," the woman chasing her had complained.

Kyra. He'd repeated the name, knowing it would be one of many times he would say it. She would be his *sotie*, his wife, of that he was certain.

* * *

They'd definitely gone all out, she'd give them that much, *Kyra* silently acknowledged as her things were transported from the sidewalk into the horse drawn carriage. It had been a short forty-five minute ride from the airport to the quaint town of Moraga. Once there, she'd barely had a chance to sightsee before the darkening sky rumbled with thunder. Ominous clouds drifted in swiftly. Perfect!

She stepped under the awning of what appeared to be a general store. According to her itinerary, she was to wait there for her coach. She hadn't expected it would literally be a horse drawn carriage coming for her. The driver wore a period black cloak, complete with wide brimmed hat, which he tipped before helping her into the private interior.

The inside of the coach was done in a gaudy crushed velvet material that seemed to envelope her in warmth. Despite its garish interior, she was thankful for the dry enclosure. Outside the rain pelted the carriage in a steady stream. Periodic flashes of lightning and thunder accompanied the relentless onslaught, yet *Kyra* felt completely

secure in the safety of the cocoon. She only hoped the driver fared well under the slightly enclosed shelter that probably didn't afford much insulation from the elements.

The ride up to the castle took longer than she'd originally expected. From the town, she could see two towers reaching toward the sky and assumed that they were probably a good twenty minutes away via the horse drawn contraption. Almost an hour later, her head lolled on the soft headrest as they pulled up the long drive to the castle's entrance.

"Mistress, we are here."

Kyra came to with a start, embarrassed that she'd finally succumbed to sleep when she'd been unable to do so on her journey over.

"I'm sorry." Stepping out onto the gravel road, she gasped, struck with the complete magnificence of the castle. She stared up at the large stone walls that seemed to go on for several stories. A raindrop fell in the center of her forehead as she craned her neck to take in the gray exterior. "My God."

"We'd better be getting inside," the driver urged from behind her.

He didn't need to tell her twice. Moisture added to her already skewed hair wouldn't be a good combination.

The inside proved to be just as impressive. High ceilings, a grand staircase, granite flooring, all added to its old world appearance.

Another man dressed in Renaissance style pants and ruffled top appeared from a side door as if waiting for their arrival. "I hope your flight was a pleasant one, mistress."

His sudden manifestation startled her dulled senses. She was tired and in dire need of more sleep. "It was fine." No need sharing with him how close she'd come to shoving her seatmate into the aisle because his bobbing head refused to stay in his designated space, or the man's loud snoring which was unable to be blocked out by her complimentary headset.

"I am Ivan." He bowed slightly. His English, although accented, didn't compare with the driver's thick brogue. "Please feel free to call on me for any of your needs. All

the guests are getting acquainted in the parlor should you wish to join them.”

“If I could be shown to my room, I would like to freshen up first,” she said.

“Certainly, this way,” he said before picking up her bags.

Kyra followed him up the long winding staircase and down a hall that was illuminated by torch-like sconces that cast eerie shadows against the walls.

“Here you are.” He swung open a heavy wooden door which silently gave way to an oversized room.

Kyra felt a chill course through her as she entered the dim chamber.

“I will make sure a fire is lit before you retire. This castle can be quite drafty at night. When you are ready to come down, simply pull this cord.” He indicated a tassel that seemed to drop down from the ceiling near the door. “I will come to get you.”

“I’m sure I can find my way,” Kyra protested, although she didn’t look forward to traversing the dark halls on her own.

“No,” he said abruptly. “It is best if I come for you until you’ve become acquainted with the castle. There are many places to get lost here.”

She didn’t doubt that. She could get lost in this very room if she wasn’t careful.

* * *

Twenty minutes later she felt half way human again, dressed in dark cotton slacks and a peach short-sleeved button-up shirt that dipped into a modest V at the neck. Chalking her hair up to a loss until she could get out all of the proper accessories, she brushed her kinky tresses into a ponytail, twisting and wrapping the dangling shoulder length fluff around itself until she fashioned a neat bun. With her being jet lagged, this was as good as it would get. It seemed only seconds after she pulled the corded rope that Ivan was tapping gently on her door. Hell, was this man always lurking about?

Kyra entered the parlor where six other guests sat debating the week’s activities.

“So it seems our final player has arrived,” an older man with an unmistakably British accent stated.

“Indeed,” a woman, close to Kyra’s own twenty-nine years, added. Her bottle-

blonde hair, in dire need of a touch up, sat stiffly around her head as if it had been overly moussed. Definitely British as well.

"May I present, Ms. Kyra Littleton?" Ivan introduced.

"You must be the American contingent," a dark haired woman with a thick Spanish accent stated in a friendly tone.

"I'm not sure about a contingent, but yes, I'm American," Kyra admitted, quickly perusing the eclectic group assembled. She wasn't surprised to find herself the only black person represented in the group. In her line of work it had become somewhat expected. Although amongst this European bunch she doubted her race would matter as much as her country of origin.

Quick introductions were made and she tallied up two Brits, a French man, the Spanish woman she'd taken an instant liking to, a German man who seemed friendly enough and a short Greek fellow who looked like he'd much rather be any place else but in the castle.

"So has our illustrious host made an appearance yet?" Kyra asked, not hesitating to pour herself a cup of tea and take an empty seat on the sofa next to the French man, whose eyes seemed to linger on her breasts.

"Not yet." Bottle blonde sounded annoyed. "Which is really quite rude when you think of the distance I... we've come to participate in this show."

Thunder rumbled loudly outside causing the blonde to jump. Kyra smiled into her mug, taking a sip to mask her amusement.

"You are quite right, Madame Smiley. It appears that I have neglected my guests long enough this evening." The distinctly Romanian accented voice reverberated against the walls, although the man who suddenly appeared had not raised his voice above the average tone. Several gasps went up around the room, accompanied by the clanking of goblets and cups.

Kyra wasn't sure if the responses were from the unannounced manifestation of the man or from the shock of his overall form. He stood several inches over six feet, his almost warrior-like physique shrouded in Renaissance attire that should have looked

silly on a man of his physical stature. Wavy auburn hair hung to his shoulders, framing a rugged manly face that sported a manicured goatee. A strong Roman nose jutted out underneath deep-set eyes that appeared gray in color, although Kyra couldn't be certain without a closer look.

Hubba hubba. She didn't try to harness the thought that came instantly to mind. The man was a hottie with a capital H.

Steely gray eyes fixed on her for several seconds and she paused, wondering if she'd actually communicated her thoughts out loud. It wouldn't be the first time. Hell, that was how she'd caught William's attention. He'd walked passed her at a charity function and there, in front of a room full of do gooders, she'd commented on how nicely he filled out a pair of pants.

Enough!

Kyra stared unblinkingly at their new arrival. Did he just speak or was it her imagination?

"I am glad that you could all make it for the week's festivities. I am Dumitri Dracul, and I personally welcome you to my home."

"Mr. Dracul, why exactly have you chosen to open your castle?" the Spanish woman began.

"As I have stated in numerous press conferences, I hope to attract tourism to this region of the world, but please, I ask that you save your questions until the last day of our adventure. It is my hope that once you have enjoyed your journey in Dracula's castle you will be able to write up a report based on your firsthand experiences."

"What exactly does this journey entail?" Kyra finally found her voice.

"All in due time, my dear." Those gray eyes zeroed in on her again. *All in due time*, he repeated, but she could have sworn his mouth hadn't moved.

* * *

Kyra stared at her reflection in the full-length mirror, not recognizing the woman in the white chemise who stared back at her. The skintight bodice of the garment pushed her already ample breasts to the forefront. She knew if she breathed too deeply

they would spill out over her top.

You are beautiful.

She turned to the vaguely familiar voice although she was fairly certain the sound came from within her head. The swift motion caused the material to billow around her ankles as she twirled. Dumitri Dracul stood before her minus the filmy white shirt he'd worn earlier.

"What are you doing here?"

"I could not wait another night to have you, *meu dulciuri*. I have been denied too long, waiting for you to come into existence."

"What do you mean *come into existence*? I don't understand."

"You will, but now is not the time for talking."

Kyra took a cautious step backwards. *This isn't real*, she silently chanted. She didn't even own a chemise for God's sake.

"Do not attempt to deny me; it is not my wish to cause you harm but you must not fight me. Do you understand?"

Another step back brought her in contact with the smooth surface of the mirror. "This is a dream, you aren't real."

"If you believe that, then give yourself to me freely. Allow me to pleasure you in your unconscious state."

"No. Dream or not, I'm involved with someone else."

"I am a jealous lover, *meu dulciuri*. You must forget him."

"No."

"Then I will make you forget."

"How arrogant..." Her voice trailed off when she felt the warning growl vibrate through the entire room. As her heart rate quickened, Kyra willed herself to wake up. Her efforts were to no avail.

"You will not deny me what is mine to take." He descended upon her before she had time to calculate an alternate means of escape. Her lips were taken roughly in a kiss that, if real, would surely leave her sore. Her neck craned as Dumitri gathered her into

his embrace.

The material of the bodice gave way as he traced one finger down the middle of her back. She gasped in protest which only gave him further access to her mouth. Taking full advantage of the opportunity, Dumitri plundered the deep recess, showing just how completely and masterfully he planned to take her body. He pushed the torn material of her dress down the swell of her softly rounded hips until it pooled at her feet.

Dumitri groaned at the feel of full plump breasts pressed against him, his already aroused cock straining against the snug fit of his pants, threatening to burst through. He tore his mouth away from hers long enough to scoop her up in his arms, cradling her there while he strode to the massive bed. When she would have protested, he swooped down for another toe curling tongue lashing to sweep away all reason.

She was exquisite, he thought, pulling away to take in the perfection of her dark shapely body after laying her on the bed. Although slender, she hadn't conformed to the anorexic style of beauty. His eyes lingered over her round breasts before skimming the flatness of her stomach, traveling further to settle on the hairless juncture between her thighs.

This is a dream, she reminded herself. The cool crispness of the sheets was like a lifeline to her drowning senses. "I can't do this."

"You can and you must. You belong to me. *A da înăuntru, meu dulciuri*. Submit to me, my sweet."

Without waiting for further protest or her acquiescence, he cupped her dark breasts in large hands, his eyes eagerly feasting on the firm mounds before diving in to taste her flesh.

Kyra arched her back against the wonderfully hot sensation of his mouth on her sensitive nipple. He strummed the other with his thumb while laving the object of choice with his tongue.

"A da înăuntru, submit to me. You are mine, meu dulciuri."

"No," Kyra denied, while digging fingers into his thick mane. He paid homage

to her second breast, nipping it between firm teeth until she arched against him in total abandonment.

Kyra protested when he stepped back long enough to do away with his breeches. His brief departure was soon forgotten after he rejoined her on the bed, pulling both her legs over his shoulders and pressing his nose against the outer folds of her labia. He delved between the fleshy skin with its tip until he came in contact with her pink clit.

With deliberately slow strokes, he undulated against her nubbin until she clawed at the bedspread in an effort to keep from pushing him further into her. He pushed one finger into her tight sheath just as his tongue darted out to begin its own program of assault on her sensitized clit. Kyra felt as if she were coming apart, literally. Unable to control her mounting desire, she finally succumbed to the urge to push his face further into her now gyrating mound.

“Oh yes... yes.”

Just when she thought she could take no more, when she would explode, Dumitri pulled back, leaning over her with lust filled, yellow predatory eyes. “Do you submit, *meu dulciuri*?”

“Yes, yes to anything, please.” Was he torturing her on purpose?

“As you wish.”

He positioned himself before her moist channel, pushing the head of his cock into her tight sheath. Seemingly satisfied by her mewling noises and soft moans, he thrust himself completely into her welcoming core. Kyra let out a protesting yelp as his cock tore through the thin barrier that signaled the end to her maidenhood.

A dream shouldn't hurt. The thought registered in her mind as the pain began to slowly subside. Her fantasy lover had become deathly still, his large hands holding her hips in place while her body became accustomed to having him entirely within her.

Dumitri wanted to shout his good fortune up to the powers that be. He hadn't expected her to be a virgin, had thought to erase all past experiences from her mind with his lovemaking. He needn't think of it now. She had known no other lovers before him and would know none after.

"Tu ești al me, acum și de-a pururi. You are mine now and forever," he repeated, alternating between Romanian and English.

Unable to hold back any longer, he started again with slow deep thrusts that had her gasping for air. Soon she joined in with tentative movements of her own until a passion-induced Dumitri increased the love play by ramming himself balls-deep inside of her, over and over, until there was no distinction where one began and the other ended.

"Tu ești al meu, acum și de-a pururi. Tu ești al meu, acum și de-a pururi."

He pulled her legs around his waist while he leaned further into the thrusts, nipping at her neck.

Oh yes. She clutched her legs around his waist, holding on tight as her climax washed over her in a burst of vibrant colors. Her pulsing channel throbbed around him, just as she felt two pricks at the base of her throat.

She thought she would faint from the pleasure. Passing out in a dream would have to be a first.

She was in the throes of a second orgasm when he finally exploded within her, his seed flooding her womb in a long gush.

"Drink," he demanded, offering his wrist, spotted with a trickle of blood where he'd just made a small incision.

"What?" She was disoriented. Her body felt both light and heavy, both tired and exhilarated at the same time.

"Drink now."

"Ask me another time. I'm too tired." Was he really offering his blood? What a weird dream.

"Meu dulciuri, you must drink now." He forced the wrist to her mouth before she could protest further.

It's only a dream, Kyra reminded herself as her mouth latched on to the throbbing vein opened to her. The sweet metallic taste of him flooded her system in a blinding rush of light, bombarding her mind with images that jumbled together in a non-sensible

mixture. Her breathing became erratic as her body craved more of him.

“Enough.” He detached her thirsty mouth. Yellow feral eyes studied her with a possessiveness that should have sent her scurrying off the bed.

When their bodies finally calmed, Dumitri drew her into the fold of his embrace.

“Sleep now,” he ordered.

Kyra giggled, “I already am.” It was her last conscious thought.

Chapter Two

She came awake slowly, stretching tired limbs, her stiff body protesting the sudden change in position. She groaned at the soreness that seemed to radiate from unused muscles throughout her.

"Why do I feel like I ran a marathon?" she mumbled, gradually sitting up in the huge bed that threatened to swallow her whole. The curtains were drawn in the room, effectively blocking out all manner of light save the beam that forced its way through the sliver of a gap. It was obviously morning but she wondered at the exact time. A quick glance around the semi-darkened room didn't reveal one solitary clock. She doubted aristocratic women of the Renaissance era cared much about time, probably basking away their mornings in bed while servants tended to their every needs. Well, she most definitely wasn't a Renaissance woman, she thought, tossing the covers off her naked body.

Naked! Kyra stared down at her bare flesh in stunned disbelief. She'd put on her favorite red T-shirt before going to bed, she was certain of that much. Riotous curls tumbled wildly about her face while she scanned the floor next to her bed; perhaps she'd tossed it away in the night. Nothing. Frantically, she searched the covers for evidence of the material. Her tender muscles throbbed from the hysterical movements.

It's got to be here somewhere, she told herself, pushing at the thick coverlet. What she found made her heart stop, her next breath catching in her throat.

"Dear God." The red stain stared back at her as bold evidence of what had transpired the night before. Something she'd wanted to deny in the light of day.

"This can't be," she muttered, climbing out of the bed. "It was just a dream."

Backing away from the bed as if it were possessed, she found herself standing in the middle of the room feeling utterly lost. Something white caught her attention. Part

of her knew, before examination, what the pile of material was. Her heart skipped a beat as the chemise from her dream lay as further proof that what transpired the night before was very real.

* * *

His future *sotie's* extreme distress awakened him from a much needed rest. Dumitri had lain awake for hours watching her sleep at his side, as if she realized her natural place. It wasn't until well after dawn that he'd retreated to his own rooms for a deep slumber. Now he lay awake in complete darkness, regulating his breathing and making the necessary internal adjustments to his body that would allow him to walk in daylight. Soon he wouldn't need to go through such measures, but he couldn't think of that now. Kyra needed him.

Calm yourself, little one. I am coming.

* * *

Up And Coming Reporter Cracks Up In Transylvanian Castle!

That's what the headline would read if she stayed in the place a moment longer, Kyra thought as she shoved clothes back into suitcases she hadn't remembered unpacking. Sheila could pitch as many fits as she wanted when she heard about her early return. She didn't care. Not even her job was worth her sanity.

She'd dressed quickly after hearing Dumitri Dracul's voice in her head, this time unable to chalk it up as jetlag or a dream state. It was real, as if he'd stood in that very room and spoken to her.

Certain that she hadn't gotten everything but not bothering to look around, Kyra zipped her bags and picked up the light cases, making for the door without so much as a backward glance.

"Are you going somewhere, *meu dulciuri*?" Dumitri greeted as she barreled into his massive chest.

Even at five-foot-eight, her neck craned back to look up at him. She took several retreating steps back into the room. "I have to leave. I've forgotten some very urgent

matters back home," she lied lamely.

"Such as?" He followed her inside, the door closing slowly behind him of its own volition.

"They are personal matters." She tried to look unaffected by the reality of being in close quarters with him. "Matters that involve my boyfriend."

"The football player, William Southerland, if memory serves me correctly."

How did he know that? "Yes, William and I have become quite serious but we didn't part on the best of terms. So I'm sure you'll understand if I leave now."

"No."

"No?" She wasn't surprised by his single response.

"As I told you last night, *meu dulciuri*, I am a very jealous man. I will not allow you to run to the arms of another." The storm raging in his eyes belied the calmness of his tone.

"You can't stop me from leaving." Her voice sounded weak to her ears.

"Can't I?"

She stared in stunned silence, digesting the truth of his words. Although he stood there in an unbuttoned ruffled shirt and form fitting pants, she could see there was nothing foppish about him. He could physically keep her in this very room if he wanted, not to mention keeping her in the castle.

"What do you want from me?" she asked in exasperation.

"Everything," he answered with a passion that sent a shiver down her spine. "The other guests are waiting. Why don't you freshen up and join them for breakfast," he suggested, as if their words of a moment before hadn't been spoken. "Be sure to ring for Ivan. I wouldn't want you to get lost wandering about."

Dumitri stood for several seconds regarding her rigid stance. She was confused, frightened even. He could read her without telepathically touching her mind, so raw and pure were her emotions.

He felt a slight twinge of regret at what he would have to subject her to for her to truly belong to him. Last night was only the first step in their bonding. The others

would require his total domination of her. He still needed to complete two full blood exchanges for her body to go through the awakening. His cock hardened at the thought of his incisors sinking into her warm, dark flesh, her life's blood flooding his senses like the most potent aphrodisiac.

"If you dally here too long, I will take it as an invitation," he said roughly, allowing his incisors to lengthen just enough for her to glimpse them.

"What are you?" She couldn't mask the quiver in her voice.

"I am Count Vilhelm Dumitri Dracul, the one known as Count Dracula."

She bit her lip at his admission. It couldn't be true. This all had to be a part of the castle's show, the "journey" that Dumitri spoke about last night.

Be quick, meu dulciuri, came his mental parting.

Dear God. Kyra's eyes rounded at the telepathic communication. *Meu dulciuri.* He'd called her that last night in her dream which really hadn't been a dream.

What was going on? She remained rooted to the spot for several moments after he left while recent events played over in her mind. The beginnings of a headache threatened.

You are going to make yourself ill. Do not worry over these things. You will become accustomed to your new life.

No. She yelled the mental response. *And stay out of my head.*

* * *

When Kyra was finally escorted into the dining room, the hodge-podge group was finishing up their breakfast. She breathed a sigh of relief at Dumitri's absence, not wanting to confront him or the idea of what he was.

"At the risk of sounding like a paranoid kid," the French man began, "did anyone else experience anything *strange* last night?"

There was a pregnant pause while the guests glanced around the table as if to gauge the others' reactions.

Kyra was certain she couldn't share her erotically surreal encounter with the group of strangers. "What happened to you?"

"I dreamt... well, at least I thought I dreamt, that someone was in my room last night."

"Go on," encouraged the Spanish woman.

"It was a woman who appeared as real to me as you all sitting here."

"Did she say anything?" Kyra asked.

"She said she wanted to know if I was really of *the Worthy*."

"Worthy of what?" the Greek asked.

The questioned man sat silently wistful for several seconds, absently rubbing at a spot on his neck. "She didn't say." His voice sounded faint.

"Well what did she look like?" the British man wanted to know. "We can't just have some villager roaming about in our rooms. She could be a common thief."

"She wasn't," the Frenchman answered with certainty.

"Well, I am going to report this evening marauder to Mr. Dracul for sure," the British woman chimed in. "And I will be certain to lock my door this evening until this woman is apprehended."

"What about anyone else?" The Spanish woman looked around the table with urgency.

"I believe I heard voices in my room," the Greek man volunteered quietly.

"Voices?" the Spanish woman queried.

He nodded slowly but added no additional information.

* * *

After breakfast Ivan announced that the guests could have access to the castle's garden and first floor level for photo opportunities or general exploration. Not daring to be alone for fear of encountering Dumitri again, Kyra partnered up with the Spanish woman who had introduced herself as Cecilia Fuentes.

"So what happened to you last night?" the woman began after they'd snapped several shots of the castle's exterior in silence.

"I didn't say anything happened," Kyra responded quickly, feigning interest in the colorfully manicured flowers.

"You didn't have to. It was written all over your face."

"I'd rather not discuss it." Kyra snapped several more shots, although she wasn't certain at what she aimed.

"Do you think it was real or an illusion?"

Images of the night before came back to her with a vengeance. She remembered everything in such vivid detail.

"I don't know," Kyra lied, looking out into the distance at nothing in particular.

Cecilia spoke after a long silence. "Something happened to me too."

Kyra turned questioning eyes on her.

"A woman and man came to my room."

"Did they say anything?"

"Not to me directly. They were aware of me but didn't want to acknowledge my presence. It was as if they wanted me to watch them. They looked like humans but... weren't. Their eyes glowed yellow like a cat's and they had fangs." Cecilia had a distant look in her eyes. "*Dios moi*, they bit at each other, as if it were turning them on, like animals. I couldn't stop watching. I felt compelled to see them. Truth-be-told, the scene was very erotic," she finished with a whisper, even though they were the only two in the garden.

"Afterwards they looked at me, smiled... and bowed, like it was part of some sort of performance. Then they just disappeared... vanished. I spent most of the night looking for trap doors or projectors, something that could explain this all, but there was nothing." Cecilia looked at her expectantly as if she could provide an explanation.

"Perhaps we should leave. This is nothing at all like I expected," Kyra suggested.

"But there are still six days left. Although I am surprised by what took place, I'd like an opportunity to experience this "journey" to its fullest and find out what's really going on here."

* * *

"I take it that your morning was productive." Dumitri materialized behind her as she looked out the parlor window. Kyra started at his sudden appearance even though

she'd expected him, somehow knowing he would seek her out eventually.

"I would like to leave," she stated, not turning to face him. "You may have charmed all the others with your macabre journey crap, but I want nothing else to do with it."

"You know I will not allow this." He sighed as if bored with the mere suggestion.

She watched an animated conversation below between the two Brits and briefly wondered what it could be about before refocusing on her own dilemma. "Why?"

"Because you belong with me and for now I choose to remain here."

"But why me?"

There was a long pause before Dumitri spoke again. "Come with me. I wish to speak with you in private."

"I don't think that's such a good idea." She still couldn't find it in herself to look at him. She knew her resolve would be lost if she did. She couldn't explain it, but the man... creature... whatever he was, wrecked havoc on her senses. She wasn't herself around him, had proven her lapse by giving her virginity to him, the very gift she'd hoped to save for her husband, as old fashioned as that seemed.

"You test me with your denials. Our destiny is together. It has been written since before our births. All that is left is for us to complete that bond."

"And if I don't want that? I have a life back in Chicago, complete with friends... and William." She'd almost forgotten him in all of the madness. A twinge of guilt washed over her.

"You will not mention him again," he raged, whirling her around in a swift motion that left her head spinning. "Do you wish this man's death?"

"Of course not," she replied breathlessly, staring up into the storm that was his eyes.

"Then you will submit to me fully."

"I... I can't..." she protested as he swept her up in his arms, cradling her as if she were a child.

"You must and you will."

With supernatural speed, he moved them to a chamber in the bowels of the castle. At least she thought it was the bowels, although its exact location was blurred by their speed of travel. Its darkened interior obscured any view she might have of what was in store for her.

"You are one of the Worthy." He dropped her onto a soft surface. She bounced on the material of the covered object. A bed. Her heart quickened. "The only true mate to a vampire."

"No." She scrambled away from the sound of his voice.

"Yes, *meu dulciuri*. Your kind was made for mine. You, specifically for me."

"This makes no sense." She shook her head in denial, gasping as he encircled one ankle in his large warm hands, dragging her toward him. He secured a soft leather bond around the ankle.

"What are you doing?" She managed to sit up as her second ankle was bound. A hand pressed against her flat abdomen, pushing her back onto the surface.

"No!" she protested, as each wrist suffered the same fate as her ankles. The bonds were secure but with enough slack to allow her slight movement in her limbs.

"Should I gag you as well to gain your silence?" His voice came from somewhere above her.

Oh God, no, Kyra's mind wailed, even as she willed herself to calm down.

"Answer me, Kyra."

"No, I don't want the gag."

"Good, then you will listen to me?"

"Do I have much of a choice?" The retort slipped out.

The gentle rumble above her caused her body to tense for several seconds before she realized that he was laughing.

"I'm glad one of us is enjoying this," she muttered.

"Trust me, my dear, before this night is over you will experience pleasure beyond your wildest imaginings."

"I doubt that."

"Cease your prattle lest you distract me with your obvious challenge. Need I remind you of the pleasure you gained from me just last evening?"

"I thought I was dreaming."

She could almost hear his shrug. "We both know that was not the case."

She felt silly trussed up and arguing with him in the dark. "Do you mind turning on a light or something?"

"Of course, *meu dulciuri*." The words were barely out his mouth before one wall sconce, and then another illuminated the darkened room, until it glowed with several of the antiquated flaming lights.

"How did you..." The question trailed away as she slowly took in her surroundings. There were no windows, or door for that matter. With the exception of the torch-like lights and ill-placed swords, the dark stone walls were bare. In fact, she lay on what was the only bit of furnishing in the room. It was a bed of some sort, not quite as large as the one in the room she was given but still roomy enough for two people. Her gaze traveled the length of her bound wrist, up the constraining material to the metal chain at the opposite end.

"I haven't done much here because I know how particular women are about decorating."

"If you think that I'm going to decorate..." Her next words were replaced by a blood-curdling scream that had Dumitri plugging his ears.

Kyra thrashed as a hovering Dumitri secured a gag around her mouth. She stared up at him in wide-eyed wonderment. There was nothing holding him in place. She was sure of that, yet he levitated over her as if it were a natural occurrence.

"As I said before, you are one of the Worthy, a race of people that are both human and vampire. Capable of fully mating with a vampire for life and bearing our children. It is through you that I will be able to walk uninhibited in the daylight and will know complete joy."

This is some kind of trick, I am human. I would know if I were something else, she ranted mentally.

"To all but your true mate that is what you appear to be. Now that I have found you, I can unleash that dormant part of your genetics."

I don't want you to. I'm happy with my life as it is. I don't want to be a vampire.

"I realize that this is hard for you to take in. I wish there was some way that I could make it easier for you accept."

I will never accept this, never accept you.

Kyra watched as some unreadable emotion flashed over his eyes before the gray gave way to the yellow feral coloring she'd witnessed the night before.

"I am sorry that you feel that way because you will be mine from now until the end of time."

Without so much as a touch from him, her clothes ripped from her body in a series of loud tears. Dumitri's eyes glowed even brighter as the ruined material was tossed across the room, leaving her naked brown body exposed for him.

The predator in him roared in triumph as his conquest lay helpless before him.

Please, Dumitri, I don't want this.

"Even if I wanted to, there is nothing that can be done to change our destiny, *meu dulciuri*. You must submit to me fully."

Not now, not ever.

"Then I will have to prove to you that you need this just as much as I do." His ravenous eyes feasted on her displayed breasts, her nipples firming from his hungry gaze. "Your body gives you away. Even now your breasts beg for my touch, the feel of my teeth plucking those beautifully dark nipples."

Kyra watched as Dumitri's body settled on the bed between her parted legs. She tugged frantically on the bindings as his clothing seemed to disintegrate from his muscled frame. With slow deliberateness he ran long fingers up her legs, tracing the contours of her body, up rounded hips, and still further past her slender waist.

"Should I give you what you want?" he asked, already bent over the tempting breasts.

His hot breath sent shivers over her sensitive flesh, causing an instant reaction in

her body. She closed her eyes against the sight of him lingering just above her aroused body, wishing that he wasn't right.

Dear God, she wanted him to taste her.

The first contact of his swirling tongue on her breast had moisture flooding her hot core. He flicked the nipple with several swipes before clamping his mouth over her dusky flesh.

Kyra groaned, biting into the soft material of the gag between her lips. As if sensing her body's instant reaction, he trailed one hand between her thighs and pushed a finger into her inviting channel, using his thumb to stimulate her clit.

His tandem manipulation made her breathing shallow. He slid another finger into her hot cunt, plundering her body with deep thrusts.

Dumitri lifted his head as if to watch her enjoy the pleasure his fingers were causing, his pulsing erection pressing against the soft satiny sheets. How he wanted to bury himself inside her, to lose himself in the feel of her creamy, tight sheath, but he would have to wait until much later to take his pleasure.

"Should I stop, my sweet?" His fingers continued their thrusting. His thumb grinding on her clit becoming firmer, more frenzied.

Go to... h... ell came the mental response, although her body's reaction gave her away. Her undulating hips pushing off the bed urged him on.

He whipped the cloth from her mouth. "What was that?"

"I said... ooohhhhh." She whimpered as a third digit was added to his finger-fucking raid.

"Tell me what you want."

She cried out in protest at the abrupt halt of his ministrations. "Screw yourself," she bit out.

"Is that what you wish to see?" He eased his hips closer until his cock was mere inches from her hot channel. He grabbed his impressive shaft in one large hand, stroking it slowly, watching her practically salivate over what was to come.

Dumitri rubbed the tip of the heavy head against her dark folds, pushing

forward until he reached the slick pink nubbin hidden away. He made several measured strokes over her clit before he slipped partially into her welcoming tightness, pulling out only to torture her with several more unhurried strokes before sinking into her again. He alternated between the manipulations until she arched off the bed, the restraints pulling taut.

"You need only tell me what it is you want." His strained voice revealed how torturous this game was even to him.

At her silence, he pulled away again leaving little room for contact. Kyra watched as he slowly undid the bindings on her ankles.

He couldn't be giving up. Not now when her body throbbed so much. She caught her breath as he hoisted her legs onto his shoulders, lifting her so far up that only her shoulders and head remained on the bed. She stared up at him, eyes wide, as his mouth clamped down on her hairless mound. She bucked against the currents that radiated through her body, only to have her hips secured in his strong hold. He tongued her with firm long strokes, all the while watching her with those predatory, glowing eyes.

"Tell me." He ground against her dripping cunt.

"I... I..."

He raised his head, blowing cool air on her bared flesh. "Tell me, my sweet."

"I want you... damn you."

Dumitri clucked his tongue at her response. "I'm sure you can do better than that."

She cursed under her breath, uncertain if it were at him or her treacherous body.

"I want you, please."

He licked her with one long drag of his tongue. "Do you want all of me, my sweet?"

"Yes," she moaned.

"That wasn't so hard, now was it?" He loosened his hold, allowing her body to slide down to the bed again.

His throbbing veined cock was poised outside her wet channel. "You are mine,

now and forever. Do you submit?"

She nodded. Couldn't speak, only feel. Her entire body ached with need.

"You must say the words," he growled. "Tell me and I will end the torment."

"I submit to you, to whatever you want," she whimpered in defeat.

Without further urging, he thrust into her, his stiff shaft driving into her so completely she felt he would reach her womb. He plowed her with deep repetitive thrusts, growling ownership over her body. She surprised herself by matching his movements, pound for delicious pound.

"Give yourself to me," he groaned.

Not sure why she knew what he meant but too far gone to question herself, she bared her neck to him, wanting to feel the sinking of his fangs into her flesh. She didn't have long to wait. He continued to ram his full length inside of her while drinking thirstily of her very essence.

"Ooohh... yeeessss!" She yelled her completion to the heavens, her cunt convulsing around him in a succession of throbs.

He came in a long rush of semen as he buried himself deeply inside her greedy pussy. He was overcome with emotions he'd never thought to experience.

He made an incision in his wrist.

"Drink." He offered her the open vein like the night before. He'd taken too much from her this evening, could tell that she was weak. Before she could protest, he pressed the open wound against her lips certain that she would be unable to resist the offered temptation. He was right. She drank from him with fervor, like a starving man sitting down to his first meal. His still erect cock jerked at the phenomenon of having her full lips sucking him. When he was certain she'd had her fill, he pulled away with only a whimper of protest from her.

"You got what you wanted. Will you let me loose now?" she said after several moments, pulling uselessly on her bound wrists.

"If you think that is all I want from you, then you have not been listening to a word I've said."

"It's you who hasn't been listening. I won't stay here with you and become some blood sucking creature of the night."

He chuckled, "You've obviously seen one too many of your human horror films."

"Enough to know that a stake to the heart will rid me of you."

"Which is why you will stay bound while I rest tonight, *meu dulciuri*. But to show you that I am sensitive to your needs, I will not keep you in such an uncomfortable position." As he spoke, the bindings on her wrist came loose. Kyra's freedom was short lived as Dumitri enveloped both wrists easily within one hand, securing the material around her soft flesh to keep her hands together.

"You're a bastard," she spat.

"Actually no, my parents have been happily married for over two thousand years. In fact, they are very anxious to meet you." He gathered her up in his arms, eyes closing but not before giving her a tender kiss on the forehead.

Chapter Three

When Kyra awoke this time, there was no questioning the reality of the previous night. She knew the arms around her belonged to one Vilhelm Dumitri Dracul. Part of her acknowledged that she should be frightened, angry even, instead of lying with him in utter darkness, reveling in the feel of his firm embrace.

Her bonds were gone; she'd registered that almost immediately. So he hadn't really been worried about her taking retribution while he slept. *Cocky bastard*, she thought.

Speaking of which, one very large cock was pressed firmly against her back. Was he awake?

How can you expect a vamp to sleep with all the senseless prattle going on in your head. It is enough to wake the dead, least of all a sensitive immortal like myself.

Sensitive my foot, she retorted. *And if my thoughts are bothering you so much, I can always go back to my room and you can stay out of my thoughts.* She sat up suddenly, or at least attempted to. Her head thumped soundly against something just above her head.

"What the hell?"

Dumitri stiffened at her sudden exclamation.

She reached out, her hands coming in contact with the same satin cushioning material that they laid on. "What is this?"

"Don't panic, Kyra. It is only the covering."

"Covering for what?" She tapped her knuckles against the material, feeling the hard barrier just underneath it.

Dumitri didn't answer, but the obstruction in question receded away, revealing the lit chamber they'd made love in. She stiffened as the bed they lay on began to levitate, pushing them up out of the depths of the...

"Coffin... you had me in a fucking coffin!" she yelled, bounding up and off the moving object.

She stood in the middle of the cool chamber, getting her first true glimpse at what she'd assumed was a bed. Although larger than your standard coffin there was no mistaking what the thing was now.

"Kyra, there is no reason to become hysterical." Dumitri rose slowly, reminding her of an old Bela Lugosi film. He swung his naked legs over the side of the now level surface.

"No reason to become hysterical? I could have suffocated in that thing."

He chuckled, running fingers through tousled, shoulder length hair. "I think not."

"I'm glad you find this amusing because..." She paused as he stood to his full naked magnificence. "Because I fail to see the humor in this."

She averted her eyes from his stiff cock, which bobbed with each step he took closer to her.

"Normally I sleep on a traditional bed. That device is only necessary when I am at my weakest. It was constructed to withstand any form of tampering. I could not take even the slightest chance last night. Not when I had you to protect."

Kyra wanted to stay mad at him, tried hard to muster up the anger, but found it impossible. He stopped in front of her, gazing longingly down at her with gray eyes that melted away the remaining barriers of the wall she'd erected to keep him at bay. Something was happening to her, she could feel it in every fiber of her being.

"Next time give a girl some warning that she will wake up in a coffin," she reprimanded weakly.

He nodded his acceptance. For several intense moments they regarded each other in silent contemplation. Dumitri wanted to reach for her mind again but thought better of it.

"What are you thinking, *meu ducliri*?" he asked, only inches separating them.

"Don't you know?"

"No." He touched the dark smooth skin of her arm, wanting her to tell him voluntarily. "I'm not in your mind at this moment."

"I... I was just wondering what time it is. I'm feeling a little hungry," she answered shakily. It was an obvious lie but he decided not to call her on it. So much was happening to her so quickly. He would afford her some privacy. He'd touched her thoughts enough these last couple of days to know that she was coming to terms with her fate, accepting him more rapidly than he'd hoped possible.

"It's not too late, although some of our guests have already retired for the evening."

She didn't miss his use of the word "our" but chose not to correct him.

"Please tell me you have something for me to wear back to my room." She blushed, glancing at the nearby ruined heap that were her clothes.

"I'll take care of it," he said before pulling her in his arms for another intoxicating kiss.

Heaven help her, she wanted him again. Her senses reeled from the heady experience. Kyra found herself leaning into him, craving the feel of his mouth.

She felt the reluctance as he pulled away.

Later, came his silent promise.

Kyra opened her eyes only to find them in the hall that led to the dining room.

"How did we..." She trailed off, looking down at her leather-clad body. "How did you do this?"

She smoothed her hands over the comfortable form-fitting material. The leather gleamed in the dimly lit hall complimenting her brown skin. He smiled at her surprised response and the seductive image she presented. From the moment he saw her, he'd wanted her adorned this way. Thick, curly hair tumbled over her shoulders, her lush curves molded by the soft obsidian leather material.

He smiled at her confusion, "Quite handy, wouldn't you agree? Soon you will be able to do the same."

"I doubt that. So is this the best you could come up with?" She touched the

leather garment.

He shrugged. "Fashion isn't one of my strengths, but I think you've seen some of my better abilities."

She blushed as if conjuring up a memory. "I think we should eat before I wind up in trouble." She sounded breathless.

"My sweet, you were in trouble the moment I laid eyes on you."

Wasn't that the truth, she thought, allowing him to escort her the remainder of the way. Dumitri made a point of stopping at one end of the rectangular table, pulling the chair out for her.

What are you doing?

This is where you belong. He stared down at her with a look that dared to be challenged. Kyra took the offered seat, meeting the open stares of all the guests. She could only guess at what they must be thinking.

She didn't have to try too hard.

"Well, we know how some people spent the last twenty-four hours," the blonde commented snidely under her breath but loud enough for everyone to hear. At the silence, the woman looked about ready to get in another dig when Kyra gave her a look that effectively silenced her.

"I apologize for my absence," Dumitri started looking anything but sorry. "I trust you all have been enjoying your stay?"

There were several muttered affirmatives while the assembled group looked between themselves or at their meals with flushed faces.

What the heck is wrong with them? Kyra sent the telepathic question to Dumitri who wore a grin that reminded her of the Cheshire cat.

I believe they're remembering how they've passed their time.

So?

Let's just say I have allowed everyone to experience their wildest dreams.

Sounds wicked.

In some cases it was. Our resident loudmouth has a penchant toward severe S&M, and

while her countryman is pretty much impotent, he finds pleasure in watching people get beaten, so I've taken the liberty of linking their two fantasies.

Kyra wondered if that had something to do with the discussion she'd witnessed the day before.

Our brooding Greek reporter leans more toward same sex play. Your Spanish friend is the consummate voyeur, and from what I've been told, she can have multiple orgasms just from watching.

Been told by whom? she wanted to know.

My little helpers. I've been too preoccupied with my mate to see to the needs of each guest personally.

Well, don't let me distract you any longer. She couldn't help the edge to her comment.

Meu ducliri, there's no place I'd rather be than with you, buried deep inside that--

"So what's for dinner?" Kyra blurted out suddenly.

"If memory serves me, I believe Ivan said a Romanian cuisine called *ghiveci din carne de vaca*," Dumitri supplied, not hiding his amusement.

"Sounds heavenly." For all she knew, it could be some poor animal's brain.

* * *

"I still can't get over the change in you, or seeing you with Dumitri. Just yesterday you were ready to bolt without a backward glance," Cecilia began, as she caught up with Kyra after dinner.

Dumitri was waylaid by the British woman who had several complaints she wanted to discuss with him.

"I know, I can hardly believe it myself," Kyra agreed

"So what's changed?"

"I guess I didn't stand a chance against his form of persuasion."

"I take it he was your nightly visitor that you couldn't talk about."

Kyra wasn't surprised by the woman's deductions. "There's no point in denying it now, is there?" She smiled.

Cecilia shook her head, returning her newfound friend's warm smile. "Tell me

one thing, is he as delicious as he seems?"

Feeling brazen, she answered honestly. "A fantasy come true."

* * *

Dumitri found Kyra in his library later that evening, leisurely thumbing through an aged hardcover book.

Dante's Inferno, he recognized with his keen sight. He knew the book well, had practically committed it to memory. She looked incredibly sexy propped on the window seat, her leather-clad legs bent, the novel resting securely on her knees.

"Exactly how old is this?" she asked, not looking up from the page her eyes seemed fixed on.

"Nearly seven hundred years," he answered smoothly. Her hair fell forward concealing her features from his view. She closed the book, running her slender fingers over the binding.

"The covering is considerably newer, perhaps three hundred years. I don't remember exactly when I had it bound."

"I can't boast to know Italian, but it looks as if there's a dedication to you."

"Un amico e un fratello allineare del apothecary. A true friend and brother in apothecary."

"Exactly how old are you?"

"I will reach my thousandth year this June," he answered without hesitation.

Kyra nodded as if what he'd said made perfect sense. "How long will you live?" She continued to trace the book as if by doing so she could more easily absorb what he said.

He shrugged, "I am of the immortals. Unless I meet an untimely demise, I shall live for a very long time."

"What about me?"

"Right now you are still considered of the Worthy, but before the night has completed its cycle you will be of the immortals, a true Vampire."

She sat silent for several moments, and he resisted the urge to touch her mind.

"I know you say that I am of the Worthy, that we were created for each other, but I don't understand it. I'm human, my parents were human, so were theirs."

"Tell me, have you ever known yourself to be sick, even a minor cold?"

She thought back over the last twenty-nine years of her life. She had always been an incredibly healthy child, never suffering any childhood ailments, nor breaking a bone even in her very rough tomboy years.

"It is very likely that one of your parents carries the genetic trait of the Worthy and is unaware."

"How?"

"That I do not know. It is unknown why the Worthy removed themselves from vampiric circles."

"We... they must not be as important as you say if they were able to disappear so easily."

"Vampires are very arrogant creatures. I have heard it said that there were those who refused to take their created mates for fear that the person would wield power over them."

"You obviously don't share this same fear."

"*Meu ducliri*, you have always owned my heart, always will. Without you I am nothing." Kyra's heart swelled at his declaration. "Had I not met you, I would have selected a suitable vamp from a prominent family to share my existence with. Perhaps we would have had a child, but my heart would not be completely whole, not so long as you existed on this earth with me."

What he'd said should have overwhelmed her, but in the most inner workings of her heart and mind she knew it was the truth.

"So now what?" she asked, finally looking up at him with luminous amber eyes.

In answer he held out his hand. "Now you come with me."

Kyra complied without hesitation, easily unfolding herself from the window seat. Within seconds she was in his arms, succumbing to his firm embrace. It was amazing how a man she hadn't known existed three days ago could suddenly become

such a prominent figure in her life. Her heart raced at his touch. When she looked up into his smoky-gray eyes her legs threatened to give way. If it were not for the arms that easily enfolded her waist, she was certain she would be an embarrassing heap at his feet.

You feel it too, meu ducliri?

Yes, dear God, she did feel it. Emotions she'd never experienced threatened to burst through her like a tidal wave, to drown her if she didn't hold on to the lifeline he offered. Was this what love felt like? She'd heard people describe it, had even thought the affection she felt for William was the real thing. She realized now that it didn't compare to what she was feeling for Dumitri.

He bent to take her lips in a tender kiss that had her pressing her body into his, her own mouth taking the lead in her desire for more of him.

Dumitri seemed to bask in her eager response, pulling her even closer into his arms.

Kyra felt a brief floating sensation before realizing that he had transported them to the windowless room from earlier.

He pulled away slightly. "Are you ready, *meu ducliri*?"

"No," she admitted, feeling the instant stiffening in his body. "But I want you, want to be at your side from now till eternity."

If he were of the Werekind, he was certain he would be howling his joy now for all to hear. Instead, he busied himself with manually peeling the leather off his mate's lush curves. How beautiful she was, he thought, as the zipper at the back gave way to expose her ass.

"You are perfection. Never have I seen a woman as lovely as you." He nuzzled her neck with his seeking mouth, nipping the skin lightly. The one-piece material slid surprisingly easily from her body. Underneath she wore leather thong-like panties that served only one purpose, to arouse. He sucked in a quick breath at the impact of seeing her as he'd envisioned for so many months. Finally, she would be his.

She kicked away the smooth material of the cat suit, enjoying the way Dumitri's

eyes lingered on her firm body as she wiggled out of the thong panties.

His enormous arousal was evident in the legging-style pants he wore, leaving nothing to the imagination. Eager to see all of him, she tore at the buttons of his filmy loose-fitting shirt. In her haste, several of the round objects dislodged and flew helter-skelter around the room.

Eyes feasted on his muscular torso, she sparing him one last glance before pressing butterfly kisses against his chest with deliberate torture. Dumitri groaned lovingly at her initiative. Just getting started, she switched her attention to a turgid nipple. His sharp intake of breath and the feel of his masculine hands tangled in her hair was all the encouragement she needed. She flicked the pebbled nipple with her tongue several times before switching to its neglected brethren.

With one finger under her chin, Dumitri dislodged her mouth, causing her to look up at him with questioning eyes. "Wrap your legs around my waist," he instructed, lifting her effortlessly into his arms.

Kyra complied without reluctance, pressing her bare breasts against his hair-roughened skin.

"Dear God, I need you," he muttered into her neck, inhaling her heady scent. She smelled of fresh jasmine. He'd never known a person could be so sweet.

With long strides he had them at his coffin/bed. She tilted her head giving him better access to her throat.

Dumitri resisted the temptation to drink from her exposed flesh, to take her sweet nectar into his body.

He lifted her further until her breasts were level with his eager mouth. Kyra threw her head back with the pleasure of his lip's first contact, burying her fingers in his auburn tresses.

"Oh... yes." She sighed as he swirled his tongue around one erect nipple, switching to pay equal reverence to the other until she fisted her hands in his hair. He pulled away, easing her down his body to give her another of his impassioned kisses before allowing her to slide the remainder of the way to the satin sheets. His pants

dissolved away, permitting his engorged cock free rein. On her knees, she touched him tentatively with curious fingers. When he didn't make a move to halt her perusal, she wrapped her fingers around his thick flesh.

"Meu ducliri." He moaned.

Kyra smiled mischievously at his heated response. She dropped down to lay on her stomach, catching Dumitri completely off guard.

"You don't have to do that," he croaked, just as her tongue darted out to taste the salty tip of his cock.

"But I want to." She peered up at him with hooded eyes.

He crooned in Romanian as she slowly took him in, inch by inch. He was lost in the total sensation of having her mouth stroke him, watching as her head bobbed rapidly. Leaning over her prone body while she continued her wonderful sucking, he stroked her velvety back with one large hand. Gradually moving to her round firm buttocks, he squeezed it appreciatively before dipping further to spread her legs apart. He slipped expert fingers between her open thighs until he came in contact with the object of his desire.

"Aahhh," Kyra sighed around his engorged cock, spreading her legs even wider to allow him deeper access to her ravenous cunt. He fingered her in rhythm with her suctioning mouth. Her mouth full of him, she cried out in protest when he pulled his drenched fingers out of her channel.

"Don't move," he growled as he slid the soaked fingers between her butt cheeks, zeroing in on his new target. He traced the puckered flesh of her anus, teasing the tiny hole before edging into the tight confines of the walls.

Kyra tensed in automatic reaction.

"Relax, meu ducliri. You know I would never do anything to hurt you."

His words seemed to have an instant calming effect on her body because her muscles relaxed of their own accord, granting him further entrance into her tight ass. For several moments she lay still, not making any sudden movements while he stretched her with his thick finger. When he was knuckle deep in her tightness, he

began a gradual twirling motion that nearly rocketed her off the bed.

Oh my, oh my, she repeated mentally while moaning over his stiff cock. Never in her wildest dreams could she imagine garnering so much pleasure from this type of intrusion. To show her appreciation, she took him deeply into her mouth again and again, sucking as one would over a favored popsicle. She repeated the action until he abruptly removed the thick finger from her ass.

"I will not waste my seed in your mouth," he growled while pulling her greedy mouth away from his rigid cock.

Kyra wanted to tell him that she wouldn't mind, but the words never had a chance to formulate completely. In seconds, Dumitri had her positioned on all fours while he guided his engorged member into her moist core.

"Aahh," Kyra cried. Her head fell forward from the pleasure of having him drive into her over and over, her breasts swaying from the fierce domination. Just when she thought that she couldn't take anymore, he slid an arm underneath her, his fingers finding their mark on her aroused clit.

"I... I... oh my God, oh my God," was all she could manage, her impending climax loomed in the distance like a beacon of light, which her body seemed to gallop toward.

"Submit to me," came his rough request and she knew immediately what he meant. Tossing her curly mass of hair to one side, she bared her neck for him, not having to wait long before she felt the sharp stab of incisors in her soft flesh. The light became even brighter, blinding her as her orgasm racked her body.

"I'm coming!" she yelled, while he continued to pound her with determined strokes.

He drove into her with the uncontrollable force of a man on the edge of sanity, easily encircling her small waist, pulling her repeatedly onto his ramming cock. The need to completely possess her was like nothing he'd ever experienced, and he knew he could never get enough of her.

The combination of her orgasm and the sweet taste of her blood flooding his

mouth pushed him over the edge, causing his seed to burst forth into her welcoming womb like a tidal wave. Even after the last ounce of him spurted into her body, he continued to drink from her quivering body. Finally, he forced himself away, flipping her in his arms while using an extended fingernail to slice an opening for her own feeding just below his neck.

"A bea meu dulciuri, a fi unul cu eu pentru tot timp." Drink my sweet, become one with me for all time.

Although weak, she did just that, taking in his sweetness like a hungry babe.

"Lay with me," he said moments later, pulling her down with him on the soft surface. "You must rest and gain your strength."

"I can't sleep now. There is so much to consider. Do you realize that when I wake up tomorrow I will no longer be Kyra Rochelle Littleton, ordinary reporter?" she said shakily, feeling both drained and alert.

"I doubt if you were ever ordinary, meu sotie."

"What exactly does that mean?" She loved it when he spoke in his native tongue to her.

"It means 'my wife'."

Wife, the word rang in her ears. "I'm a wife? My God, I don't even know the simple things that a wife should know like your favorite color, if you prefer boxers or briefs, how many children you want."

She felt the laughter vibrate in his chest. "Blue, although I'm becoming very fond of mahogany, neither, and as many as you will give me."

She smiled at his answers before giving him a playful punch. "Hey, how come when you thought you were going to spend eternity with a pure vampire you only wanted one? If you think that I'm going to be a baby factory for you, then you got another think coming, bucko."

"Had I married a vamp, we would have been lucky to produce one child. With a Worthy as my life mate, there is no limit to how many we can have."

"Great." She tried to sound disappointed but failed miserably. "Why don't we

clear this up right now? Exactly how many little vampires are you suggesting?"

"Perhaps two."

She sighed at his answer. Two was a good number.

"Most likely the other five will be of the Worthy."

"The other five?"

"Yes, I would love seven, maybe more. I've always been very fond of big families. I would never wish the lonely existence I grew up with on my children."

Although she had been an only child as well, she'd grown up with so many cousins she was never truly alone. Yes, she would love a big family too, complete with all the fussing and love. "You said that the others would be of the Worthy. Why is that?"

"Again, I do not know the full answer to that question. I can only speculate that it ensures a sort of population control with vampires, the same reason two vampires have a hard time producing one heir. If you are concerned that I will make a difference in our children, you needn't be."

"I know," she answered truthfully, certain that whether vampire or Worthy, he would love any of their children all the same. Kyra smiled at the bright future ahead. her eyes drifting close.

"Before I forget, once our visitors leave we must return to the States and settle things with this William person."

Her eyes flew open. "I nearly forgot about him."

"Nearly?" He growled.

"Ok, I did," she admitted. "I have no idea what I will say to him."

"If you don't think you're up to it, perhaps you should wait."

"No, I can't string him along." Although she doubted he would be too heartbroken over it.

"I would also like to take you to France to meet a good friend of mine and his mate."

"More vampires?"

There was a pause. "Actually no."

"No?"

"He's a gargoye."

"A gargoye!" She struggled to raise herself on one elbow to look into his face.

"You mean the perched on top of a building type?"

"Not exactly. He looks very human."

"Good Lord, next you'll be telling me that you know werewolves."

"Ah yes, Grigory and his pack."

"You're kidding me." She only needed to see his expression to know that he wasn't. "What else is out there? You know what, that's okay; I don't want to know right now. I think I'll take your advice and get some sleep. Something tells me I'm going to need to be perfectly rested for everything you're going to need to tell me."

Dumitri smiled to himself knowingly as if agreement. Their future together would definitely hold surprises beyond her wildest dreams.

The End

Nia K. Foxx

Nia K. Foxx is the proud mother of three beautiful, very active children, all under 10 years of age. They currently reside in a picturesque, small town burg of Michigan, where they enjoy biking, swimming, fairs and traveling in their minivan. Ms. Foxx holds a BA from the University of California, Santa Cruz, in International Politics and Literature. She began an interest in writing romantic stories at the age of twelve, trying her hand at erotica only recently. Ms. Foxx has written several unpublished novellas and novels, mostly writing for her own enjoyment until now. Nia loves to communicate with other readers of erotic romance and encourages anyone to email her at nia@niafoxx.com or read free excerpts on her website at: <http://www.niafoxx.com>