

Make Love, Not Money



Kate Hill

Changeling Press

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Felicia was a newly made blood drinker when the vampire knight, Sir Drake, took charge of her keep and claimed her as his own. The rugged warrior swept her off her feet and ignited her lust in ways she never imagined possible.

Now, in today's world, Drake has become a successful businessman. Rich, refined and boring Felicia to death, which takes a lot for a vampire. Drake has become obsessed with his career and, other than arguments and predictable sex, seems to have lost interest in his wife.

If Drake doesn't want to bother with her, that's fine with Felicia. She spends her time with old friends and on shopping sprees, since all Drake seems good for is making money. What she wants is a M-A-N. More than anything she wishes for her man back, but the way things are going that will probably never be.

During an anniversary cruise on their private yacht, Felicia decides it's time they stop torturing themselves and asks for a divorce. Then the ship sinks in a storm and the couple find themselves on a deserted islet where they have only each other to depend on. Without the shackles of modern living, they rediscover the passion they have lost.

Prologue

England, 1110

Felicia had been married nearly five years when she met Sir Drake. The King had sent him to report back on her husband, Lord Ruland, who had been acting strangely since returning from battle eight months before.

Once a favorite of the King, he had since become almost as ornery to his ruler as he was to everyone else. If not for Felicia, his lands would have fallen into complete neglect. Worst of all, he had ignored a summons from the King. No doubt the monarch now believed him to be completely incompetent and undeserving of the land he'd been entrusted with.

Ruland's behavior came as no surprise to Felicia. He had always been a cruel and arrogant master to his wife and servants. Only fear kept him cordial to the King and since returning from battle, he no longer seemed to have any fear. Indeed, he had no reason to fear anyone. Something had happened to him while he'd been away. Something evil that had left him with incredible strength, animal fangs and a thirst for blood. In a painful ritual, he had passed on the possession, or infection, to Felicia. Now she, too, suffered blood cravings.

Since giving her the power, Ruland had kept closer watch than ever upon her and Felicia feared that now she couldn't even hope for death to release her from her hated husband. The demon inhabiting them seemed immune to death, making their once mortal bodies incapable of that final release.

Ruland was out hunting when Drake arrived, so Felicia went to greet him in the great hall where servants had escorted him. Before she even saw him, she caught his scent, strong but delicious and not quite human. Her stomach clenched and a twinge of horror darted through her. He was another of *their* kind, like her and Ruland.

A slight shudder coursed down her spine. The last thing she and this keep needed was another overbearing male blood-drinker. Ruland had already killed so many peasant wenches that whispers of demons floated throughout the house and grounds.

While Ruland feasted on their serfs, Felicia only drank from him, for he would not allow otherwise. The monster wanted her under his power.

Sir Drake's back had been to her as he stood in front of the hearth, warming himself after a long journey through the brisk autumn night. Almost as soon as she entered the room, he turned, probably catching her scent as she had caught his.

Felicia's heartbeat quickened, this time not from fear but from arousal. Tall with long blond hair and piercing blue-gray eyes, he stirred emotions she'd never felt before. His long, rather pointed nose and catlike eyes kept him from being traditionally handsome, yet Felicia found those features particularly stunning. He had slender lips and chiseled cheekbones that again stirred feline images.

Her gaze swept his body, covered in leather and mail, and she wondered what his rangy, broad-shouldered form looked like beneath the armor. Just imagining it made her tingle in places she ought not think about, yet how could she help it? She was still a young woman bound to a cruel husband who made the marriage bed more torturous than a dungeon.

She managed to stop gawking at Drake long enough to realize he was staring at her with equal intensity. "Sir Drake, welcome." She forced a smile.

"Lady Felicia." He inclined his head slightly. "I'm told your husband is hunting."

She nearly smirked at that. The bastard was hunting for helpless peasant girls to satisfy his unholy cravings.

"He'll be back by dawn," Felicia stated. Since the Change, they found sunlight uncomfortable. Ruland scarcely ventured out by day, though Felicia had found she had been able to build up her tolerance so that now the daylight scarcely harmed her.

This skill would be useful if she ever managed to flee from Ruland. Already she'd tried several times, but he always caught her, and each time the punishment was worse than the last.

"One of your guards has already gone to find him," Drake replied.

"I see. Then while you wait, please have a seat. Are you hungry?"

"Yes. Thank you."

"I'll have a meal prepared for you."

"While I'm waiting, you won't mind if I speak to members of your household?"

"No. Of course not."

Felicia nodded and went to the kitchen to order food brought to them. She approached Rosamund, a maid she had grown up with and regarded as a friend.

"The Master won't like this," Rosamund whispered. "You and I both know why he sent that knight."

"Yes." Felicia sighed and glanced out the door to where Sir Drake now stood with his squire, a slender young man with chestnut hair tied at his nape. His scent told her that he was also a blood drinker. Was the world suddenly filled with them? She had been under the impression that she and Ruland were oddities, but it seemed she knew little of the world. Not that she could have learned much. She'd spent her entire life in the keep. Her father's only heir, she had been eighteen when he'd died and the King arranged for her marriage to Ruland, a warrior twenty-two years her senior.

Thrusting aside thoughts of the past, she continued watching Drake and his squire. They didn't speak, yet Felicia had the oddest feeling they were communicating nonverbally, another skill of blood drinkers.

"I'm almost afraid for that young man," Rosamund continued softly. "The way the Master has been lately, he's sure to kill him if he believes he'll carry an unfavorable report to the King."

"Something tells me Sir Drake can more than hold his own with Ruland." Again Felicia tingled and she felt a pleasant ache between her legs, the kind of sensation she'd only experienced by her own hand.

While Rosamund prepared food for Sir Drake and his squire, Felicia joined them by the hearth. His squire had already helped him remove his shirt of mail, and he now wore only a linen shirt that draped his sinewy body, giving her an even better view of his broad chest and lean sides. Her mouth actually watered with desire and that ache in her loins grew even stronger.

Drake's piercing eyes met hers and his lips parted, revealing his beautiful, shockingly white fangs. Good teeth were so rare. Felicia's were rather nice as well, but Ruland's -- she nearly curled her lip just thinking about his dark yellow, wolfish fangs. A shiver, this one of disgust, shot through her when she recalled how he'd plunge those fangs into her flesh as he rutted her mercilessly with his cock. She'd never hated anyone as much as she despised her husband.

"Lady Felicia, this is Chris, my squire."

"My Lady." Chris bowed from the neck.

"Chris." She nodded, offering him a slight smile. The young man's eyes, though wise beyond his years, glistened with good humor. So unlike those of his serious master. Drake's eyes smoldered and she found them absolutely irresistible.

Why couldn't the King have wed her to a man like this? Or perhaps he was worse. Many masters abused their wives and servants. But at least with a man like Drake her physical desires would be better fulfilled than with Ruland, who disgusted her in every imaginable way.

A while later, Drake and Chris were seated at the table in the great hall, enjoying a warm meal. Felicia and Rosamund stood near the kitchen door, discreetly peering out at them.

"Virile as a bull, that one," Rosamund murmured.

"No doubt," Felicia admitted, her gaze lingering on one of Drake's long, sinewy legs stretched beneath the table.

"All that gorgeous chestnut hair."

Felicia wrinkled her nose in question, then realized the servant was staring at Drake's squire with a lustful glint in her eyes. He was attractive enough, but rather

boyish to Felicia. Drake was the virile one. So tall and powerful, even when sitting there, relaxed and enjoying a thick slice of bread. She caught the glimmer of his fangs and studied the adorable shape of his lips as he chewed.

Before she could admire him longer, the door opened and Ruland strode inside, a scowl on his swarthy face and a furious glint in his close-set, swamp-green eyes.

He paused a moment and inhaled deeply, an expression of surprise on his face that faded to a wicked smile. He approached Drake who stood slowly, as if reluctant to show any measure of respect to his host.

"You have a message for me?" Ruland asked without preamble.

"If you are Lord Ruland, then I do."

Ruland narrowed his eyes. "I am he. And you are?"

"Sir Drake, as I told the servant who went for you."

"What is the message?"

"The King wants to know why you ignored his last summons."

Ruland's smile broadened yet became even less sincere. "Follow me so we may speak in private. But first... Felicia!" he roared.

Rosamund jumped back from the door and Felicia also started, though she should have been accustomed to his shouting by now. She'd listened to it for five years.

"Yes, my Lord," she said, hurrying to the table.

"See that this mess is cleaned up," he growled, motioning toward Drake and Chris's half finished meal. "How many times have I told you that once mealtime is over, nothing else is to be set out?"

"We had guests --"

"This is not a guest." Ruland glanced at Drake with disgust. "But a spy."

"Ruland, I don't believe --" Before she could finish speaking the back of his hand lashed across her face and she gasped. In spite of the pain, anger coiled inside her and she glanced toward the bread knife glittering on the table.

Drake's fists clenched when Ruland struck his wife. Many men in his position abused their power and Drake had always considered it a pathetic weakness. Violence in battle was one thing. Beating women was another.

Unlike many in her position, Felicia did not cower. Her blazing eyes darted toward the knife and for a moment Drake thought she might grab it and attempt to plunge it into Ruland's chest.

He wouldn't blame her if she did, though it would make life complicated for them both. If she killed her husband, no matter how deserving, they would be forced to flee, for Drake would not condemn her or allow others to do so merely for defending herself.

Blood drinkers were not like mortals. A female could wield power and demand respect, the same as a male, though living among ordinary people could cause problems. Unfortunately even some blood drinkers still clung to their human ideals.

Drake almost imagined running off with Felicia. Strange that she provoked such feelings of protectiveness and arousal in him. He was certainly no stranger to women, but he sensed there was something different -- something *special* -- about her, and not just because she was a blood drinker too. He'd known others of his kind, both male and female, but Felicia made his fangs and cock ache like those of a man starving for blood and flesh.

"Looking at this, are you?" Ruland snatched the knife from the table, dragged Felicia into his arms and pressed the blade beneath her chin. "After all I've done for you, wench, you're still an ungrateful brat."

"Lord Ruland!" Drake snapped. "There is no need for this. Release her."

"She's my wife and I'll do with her as I please," Ruland growled, but shoved Felicia aside so hard that she stumbled. Grasping the dinner bowls from the table, she hurried to the kitchen. Drake was glad to see anger rather than fear in her eyes.

He would contemplate what to do about her later. Now he must deal with the task entrusted to him by the King.

"This way." Ruland headed for the stairs.

"Shall I come with you?" Chris asked.

"No. Wait for me here," Drake told him and followed Ruland up to his private chamber.

Once alone, Ruland turned to Drake. "Have you seriously come here as a messenger boy for that pathetic mortal king?"

"Is that your reason for ignoring his call?"

Ruland stepped so close to Drake that their chests nearly touched. "Do you have any idea the power we have? Mortals are our prey. *We* are their masters."

Though Ruland might have been older in mortal years at the time he was Changed, Drake doubted he had seen his first century. His attitude was one of a stupid fledgling. Even blood drinkers who despised mortals and sought power knew enough to play the game. To either mingle seamlessly among them or take control of their minds.

"Exactly how much do you know about what we are?" Drake asked, his gaze fixed on Ruland's until the man curled his lip and stepped away.

"Enough to realize you're a fool if you think I'm going to let you or that mortal king take what's mine."

"I have spoken to several members of this household and have gained enough evidence to support the King's claim of disloyalty and incompetence on your part."

"You've been here but a few hours. And there is nothing wrong with the condition of these lands."

"That's mostly due to your wife."

"She has to be good for something." Ruland smirked. "Heaven knows she's as lively as a corpse in the marriage bed. I thought gifting her with our powers might improve her disposition, but if anything it's made her worse."

Drake felt a twinge of compassion. He hated to imagine Felicia enduring the Change at the hands of this beast. His Creator had taught him that the Change should only be initiated in love, an emotion Ruland seemed incapable of. "Lord Ruland, you

will return to court with me and be tried by your peers. Then you will accept your punishment."

Ruland laughed long and loud.

"You will either do it or leave this land."

The man's greenish eyes studied Drake carefully. Then he said, "You want my land."

"I have no interest in your land."

"But you have an interest in my wife. I could smell the lust between the two of you. You won't have either one. Now get out of my home or suffer the consequences."

"The consequences?" Drake smiled humorlessly. "Excellent. For our kind it's better to settle these matters privately."

"Outside."

Drake nodded and turned for the door. He spun, his sword drawn, and shoved it through Ruland's heart just before the man backstabbed him. Drake had expected him to attack from behind. A fair fight was something a man like Ruland wouldn't accept unless forced into it.

Not only was Drake's aim true, but his blade was dipped in silver, deadly to blood drinkers.

Ruland's death cry shook the walls of the house. As Drake jerked the blade from his chest, Felicia and several servants rushed into the room. They stared dumbly at the body, except for Felicia.

A slight smile touched her lips.

* * *

No one who knew Ruland doubted Drake's. Not only was he judged to have killed Lord Ruland in self-defense, but he was offered control of his lands and Felicia as his wife. He agreed, but only under the condition that the marriage was satisfactory to her. Not that he had much doubt she would accept him. However, he was responsible for the death of her husband, malicious as he'd been.

Her reply was quick and positive. Though Drake had contemplated marriage, he'd never imagined finding his mate in this way. Nor had he planned to bind himself to another blood drinker. Their marriage could very well last millennia. He wondered if Felicia had considered that possibility. She was very young and inexperienced while Drake had already seen several centuries of life.

There was little time now to reconsider. A few short weeks after meeting Felicia for the first time, he returned to the keep for their wedding.

When he saw her in front of the church, looking as lovely as when they'd first met, his heart leapt in his chest. Her scent told him that she felt the same lust that made his cock twitch and blood pound. Then for the first time their thoughts mingled.

I have longed for your return, Sir Drake.

As I have longed to see you again.

He was pleased to know her experiences with Ruland hadn't soured her for another marriage.

On the contrary, I know in my heart you are as different from Ruland as night is from day.

We will be happy together, Felicia.

Yes, I believe we will.

Though part of Felicia felt apprehensive about accepting another man, she had little choice, unless she wanted to leave the land where she'd grown up. Not only that, she sensed she and Drake somehow belonged together. Meeting him was almost like a dream. This gorgeous, powerful man had slain her dragon and now for the first time she had hope for her people as well as herself.

After the ceremony and feast, they finally retired to her chamber. Felicia left the table first, escorted by Rosamund who prepared her for Drake.

"Tonight, my Lady, I believe you'll finally know the joy you deserve," Rosamund said, helping her out of her embroidered wedding dress.

"I think we'll all be better for Drake's arrival," Felicia said softly. Though she could scarcely wait to be in Drake's arms, she couldn't help feeling nervous. Other than Ruland, she had no experience with men and she very much wanted to please Drake.

A short time later, Felicia, naked, perfumed and her hair brushed until it shone, lay beneath the covers and stared at the door.

Drake stepped inside, his smoldering gaze upon her. He approached the bed and sat beside her, his fingertips gently tracing her hairline. "You're very beautiful, Felicia."

"As you are," she said, reaching up hesitantly to caress his cheek.

He smiled slightly and turned his face into her hand, his eyes closing halfway so that she could fully see the length of his thick, dark blond lashes.

"You're so young," he said. "I wonder if you understand what this marriage means for creatures like us?"

"It means forever," she said, her gaze fixed on his with such openness that warmth flooded him. It seemed she wasn't as ignorant as he'd thought.

"I swear to protect you throughout our lives together. You'll never suffer neglect or abuse as you did with Ruland."

"Forget him," she said, reaching up to take his face in both hands. "I know I have. You are my husband now."

"I will always take care of you, Felicia. That I promise."

"I know." She smiled slightly, feeling safer than she ever had in her life.

He continued staring at her for a moment, stroking her face. Then he turned away to tug off his boots and hose. He stood and removed the rest of his clothing while she stared, enraptured at the sight of the lean, sleekly-muscled body slowly revealed to her. His skin was light gold, his chest, forearms and legs dusted with curling, dark-blond hair. The hair on his groin was light brown and from it emerged his long, thick cock, the balls beneath more than a handful. Several old scars marked his chest and shoulders, but somehow they added to the masculine beauty of this proud warrior.

Felicia moistened her lips and felt her heart pound as quickly as when she was mortal. His scent grew strong with desire and his gaze burned into her so that she could scarcely wait for him to join her in bed. He tugged the covers off her and glanced at her.

Though Felicia knew she wasn't outstandingly beautiful, she had a rather pleasing body -- tall with full breasts, rounded hips and long legs. Constant work around the manor kept her well conditioned and during what little free time she had, she enjoyed taking long walks in the woods behind the house.

Drake joined her on the bed, his big, warm body pressed close to hers. Though it was a cold night, the fire burning in the hearth kept the room comfortably warm. Raising himself on his elbow, Drake began stroking her hip and belly gently.

He edged closer and kissed her while continuing to caress her hip. His hand strayed up to her breasts and he cupped one.

Felicia moaned with delight and arched against his hand.

Still caressing her breast, Drake moved his mouth from hers and kissed her throat. She turned her head, giving him easier access to the side of her neck. Warmth, hotter than that of the fire, spread through her and she felt moisture pool between her legs.

"Oh, Drake," she whispered.

"My beautiful Felicia," he said and used the tip of his tongue to trace the delicate shape of her ear.

He gently pinched her nipple then let his hand roam down her belly. His fingers combed through the hair covering her soft mound, then dipped between her legs. Using first one finger then two, he explored her pussy, stroking and teasing, while rotating her sensitive nub with his thumb until her legs trembled with need.

The only time she felt sensations such as these were during the rare moments when she'd pleased herself. Funny, it seemed even better with her vampire knight caressing her.

Almost too soon she felt the marvelous climactic thrill building inside her. As if sensing what she needed, Drake stroked her delicate flesh faster and she exploded, arching off the bed and writhing with pleasure.

Just as she settled into a calm, semi-conscious state, she felt his warm lips on her breasts, pressing tender kisses to them. His wet tongue lashed over one of her nipples, then he sucked on it. A twinge of desire seemed to connect her nipple and her loins. She moaned again and used her foot to caress his long, hair-dusted leg.

Drake slid down the bed and stretched out on his side, guiding her legs over his shoulders. Before she could protest, he covered her clit with his mouth and teased the plump bud with his tongue. Felicia had never felt anything quite like this. The pleasure was so keen all she could do was moan, writhe and clutch his head nearer. Drake lapped and sucked relentlessly, dragging her to another climax. Then he loomed over her and thrust his thick, hard cock into her pulsing body.

"Oh, Drake. I need you so much," she gasped, clinging to him with her arms and legs.

He seemed to enjoy her tight embrace and said, "I'm yours, sweetheart. Now and always."

Felicia closed her eyes and rode the waves of pleasure, her mind and heart full of Sir Drake, her gorgeous warrior. Her husband for eternity.

Chapter One

Present Day

"Drake, oh! Yes!" Felicia gasped, clinging to her husband as he filled her pussy with hard, fast thrusts of his cock.

He growled softly and covered her mouth with a possessive kiss. His tongue stroked hers and she moaned with pleasure.

Her legs locked around his lean waist and her hands roamed over his shoulders and back, feeling the hard muscles ripple beneath the warm flesh. The orgasm built deep inside her and she pulsed around his cock. Several more thrusts and she came, gasping into his mouth.

Her climax spurred him toward his. Tearing his mouth from hers, he called her name breathlessly and exploded, his sleek body straining against hers.

Drake collapsed on top of her and she closed her eyes, enjoying their closeness. It had been so long since they'd made love like this that she had almost forgotten how good it felt.

Too soon he lifted his head from her shoulder and stood from the comfortable, king-sized bed in the master bedroom of their New England mansion.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I have a meeting," he replied, reaching for his white dress shirt.

"Another one?"

"Chris and I are about to close an important deal."

Felicia snorted. "Sometimes I think your meetings are a cover up for an affair."

He shot her an annoyed look. "I won't even dignify that with an answer."

"Of course not. Answering me might lead to a discussion and take precious time away from your business."

"That's not fair, Felicia. You know how important --"

"I know there used to be a time when you couldn't get enough of me. Short of battle, you'd never take off like this after making love. You used to like spending time with me."

He leveled a cool stare in her direction. "You used to be better company."

His words wounded her more than she thought possible. She believed her feelings for him had dulled so much that it no longer mattered what he thought of her. At one time her life had revolved around Drake. She'd never imagined a rift between them, but much had changed over the centuries.

Always serious and dedicated to the tasks set before him, Drake often became obsessed with work. Yet only over the past century had he allowed business to completely overrule his personal life.

In the early twentieth century, he and Chris had a thriving construction company. During the Great Depression they had nearly lost everything and if not for Drake's stubborn dedication, their business would have fallen completely to ruin. Unfortunately his attempt to save them from failure had started the downward slide of their marriage. Even after they had not only recouped their losses, but multiplied their holdings, he didn't let up. He and Chris now headed one of the most successful companies in the world.

Felicia had tried to tell herself it was a normal reaction from a man whose duties were so important to him. She hoped that eventually he would relax and allow their lives to return to normal. Instead, his long hours and obsession became worse. Though always serious, he used to have a gentle side, even a sense of humor. Now he was nothing but a walking calculator whose idea of conversation was spouting investment figures. Actually he was worse than a calculator. At least calculators didn't have short tempers.

"You're the one whose company sucks," Felicia snapped. She stood and walked, naked, to the door.

"Felicia!"

She stopped abruptly but didn't bother turning to him. "What?"

"I probably won't be back until this evening."

"I didn't expect anything else," she muttered and left the room, slamming the door behind her.

* * *

Felicia sat across from Rosamund in their favorite restaurant at the local mall. She watched a couple fawning over each other and sighed deeply, recalling her first centuries with Drake. They had been so in love. Now they had grown so far apart she scarcely knew who he was anymore. Where the hell was that tender yet powerful warrior who had saved her from an intolerable marriage? In many ways her current marriage was worse than the one to Ruland. At least she had hated Ruland from the first. It was far more painful being ignored by a man she had loved as much as Drake.

She knew it had frustrated him beyond belief when he'd nearly lost his business and they had, for several years, lived in worse squalor than they'd seen in any past age. Drake had always taken his promises very seriously and he'd often told her his marriage vows were the most important thing in his life. To him, honoring them meant providing for her financially. To her it meant a joining of hearts. When she was young, she'd ignored his obsession with battle and business. Like most men of his day, he defined himself by his abilities as a provider and a protector. She'd even been proud of his successes. Yet he had always made time for her. Maybe they had been better off in a simpler age. Life had been tough, but it hadn't been controlled by computers and conference calls.

Somewhere along the line, one or both of them had changed.

"So," Rosamund smiled and leaned forward, "how are things with you and Drake?"

Felicia shook her head sadly. "Worse, if possible. How do you manage to keep Chris from spending his entire life at the office?"

"I don't." She snorted. "However, we do have an agreement."

"What?"

"One date a week."

"Date?"

"Yes. You are aware that in this century people date and most marriages aren't arranged anymore?"

Felicia cast her a chastising look, took a sip from her latte, and said, "Yes. I do know that, but you and Chris have been married for three hundred years."

"That's the fun of dating. It keeps our relationship interesting. You and Drake should try it."

"Us? Date? I'm lucky I see him once a day in passing. Do you know he doesn't even work nights at all anymore? He has completely changed his nocturnal lifestyle to suit his clients."

"I have to admit Chris is happy about that. He still enjoys working the night shift and handling their vamp clients. Still, I can understand how Drake working all day, every day, is difficult for you."

"I should call it a blessing. When we are together all we seem to be able to do is fight," she muttered. "Or occasionally have sex. I can't even call it making love anymore. It's just a quick interlude when he gets the urge. Sometimes I wonder if he's not getting it somewhere else."

Rosamund reached across the table and took Felicia's hand. "Drake loves you."

"He used to. And I used to love him."

"Maybe you're just in a slump?"

"We've been through rough times before, but not like this. We don't even like each other anymore."

"Do you really think he's cheating?"

Sighing deeply, Felicia shook her head. "No. Drake is too honorable for that."

"Maybe you should --"

"Rosamund, please. I don't want to talk about this. I just want to relax and go shopping. Not that I need anything, but the only enjoyment I get from this marriage now is spending some of the money he makes."

"Bury your heart in diamonds."

"Why not? It's as hard as one."

Shaking her head, Rosamund stared at her with a discerning expression.
"Somehow I don't believe that."

"Rosamund --"

"All right. We'll drop the subject."

"Good."

"Just one more thing."

Felicia glared at her friend. "What?"

"Don't do something in anger that you might later regret."

* * *

At nearly eight in the evening, Drake sat behind his desk, pouring over paperwork. Chris tapped on the half open door and stepped inside.

"Are you still here?" Chris asked. "I swear you live in this office."

"I'm trying to catch up on some work."

"You do have a partner. A damn capable one, if I do say so myself."

"I know you are, Chris." Drake leaned back in his chair and rubbed his temples, then shook his head as if that would clear his jumbled thoughts. Between business and Felicia, he had a throbbing headache. Reaching into his desk drawer for the bottle of emergency blood he kept, he asked, "Want a drink?"

"No thanks. I fed before I came. Or should I say I came as I fed." He grinned.
"Rosamund still has the most irresistible blood I've ever tasted."

That was how Drake felt about Felicia's blood. He had intended to ask her for a drink before he left for the meeting, but they'd ended up in another fight and he refused to take blood from a woman who was angry at him. He uncorked the bottle, took a long swallow. "I wanted to ask if you'd mind taking care of things here next week while I take some vacation time. It's our anniversary and I want to take Felicia out on our yacht. Just the two of us in the South Pacific."

Chris smiled. "That's a fantastic idea. You need a vacation."

"It's not so much for my sake, but Felicia has been upset lately. No matter what I do we can't seem to get along anymore. I thought if we got away for a while --"

"I understand. I know it's none of my business, but since the Depression you've been like a friggin' work machine. I don't think you've taken a vacation since 1927."

Drake gave a snort of laughter. "You're right. It's just when we almost lost everything and Felicia ended up living in that dilapidated building, working even harder than she had to in the middle ages... In all our lives I've never asked her to live like that. I swore to take care of her and I'd never failed her before."

Chris's brow furrowed. "You didn't fail her any more than I failed Rosamund. The entire world was having trouble hanging on. It wasn't you Drake. It wasn't me. It was the economy itself. The way Felicia and Rosamund pitched in and helped us salvage the business was --"

"Humiliating. It was like asking my wife to ride into battle with me. What honor is there in that?"

"You're still living in the Dark Ages. Nowadays women and men share everything equally. Don't you remember when they burned their double Ds for the right to do battle alongside us?"

Drake curled his lip. "Your mind is always on breasts. Sometimes I wonder how Rosamund has put up with you for all these centuries."

"I keep her happy. And that means being there to give her what she needs, if you get my meaning."

Drake shook his head. With Chris everything pointed to sex.

There had been a time when he and Felicia were like that. Now they argued so much he sometimes preferred jerking off to approaching her for sex. She still aroused him as much as ever, but he hated how often they fought. It soured his desire and seemed a waste of energy.

If the woman wasn't so damn unreasonable, life would be much simpler. The woman he'd married all those centuries ago had understood his duties. She'd accepted

the sacrifices a man had to make to provide a decent home. Now all she seemed able to do was complain that his work hours conflicted with her sleep.

At one time she had trained herself to endure the daylight, just as he did. She had made a comfortable home while he trained for battle, worked the fields, or did whatever other jobs he'd had to in order to support them. What had happened to that reasonable, loving woman? When had she become an argumentative shopaholic? All he'd ever wanted was for her to be happy and well cared for. He had vowed to protect and support her and Drake never went back on a promise, but it seemed their marriage didn't mean nearly as much to Felicia.

Or perhaps he wasn't being fair. She had asked him to stay with her today, but he couldn't avoid the business meeting. What they needed was time away, just as he'd planned.

"Why don't you go home and get some sleep?" Chris suggested.

"I think I will. Actually, I'm pretty wound up. I think I'll jog."

"Good idea. Sitting behind a desk all day can frustrate a guy. Rosamund likes to take care of my excess energy, though." Chris winked mischievously.

Drake raised his eyes to the heavens. He shut off his computer as Chris left, then he changed into sneakers and sweats. Outside the building, he stretched a bit then started jogging down the rain-dampened street toward home, leaving his car in the lot. He could jog to work in the morning.

On the way, his thoughts drifted from business to Felicia, stirring his emotions and his worries until he found himself running at top speed for the last few miles. He arrived home panting and sweat-drenched but still restless, so he decided to finish his workout in their home gym.

He considered seeing Felicia first, but he wasn't in the mood for another stupid argument. Besides, she was probably on her way out for another day of lunches with friends, charity work or shopping. When the hell had she turned into a typical rich bitch?

Chapter Two

Felicia gazed at herself in the round brass mirror on her vanity, half-heartedly admiring her impeccable make-up job. Painting her face and dressing in modern fashions was mildly amusing, but sometimes she missed the old days when a woman looked more natural.

Before meeting Drake, she hadn't taken much interest in her appearance, but even centuries ago, she'd begun taking pains with her looks, wanting to please him. Not that he'd ever been anything short of complimentary, even when she looked her worst. At one time just putting on a sexy outfit would be enough to grab his attention. Now she couldn't even make him stay for the customary after-sex cuddle time when she was stark naked in his arms.

She heard the front door click open, then caught his scent -- strong and delicious. Just smelling him made her heartbeat quicken with lust, but she doubted it would do her any good. Usually when he got home from the office he ate something, drank bottled blood, had a workout and went to bed. She rarely waited around for him to complete his routine. The night belonged to their kind and she wasn't about to waste it feigning a mortal's existence.

Standing abruptly, she reached for her coat and purse, then hurried down the stairs. She paused in the foyer, surprised Drake didn't at least call to her in greeting. Glancing in the kitchen, she saw no sign of him. Seconds later she heard the sound of him working out on the heavy bag in their home gym. Another erotic thrill darted through her. She'd always loved watching him do anything physical. One of the things that had first aroused her was his raw virility and nothing looked hotter than a guy using his body. Not that she had anything against men with brains, but something about brawn made her hornier than a bitch in heat.

Unable to resist, she placed her coat and purse on a chair and walked to the gym. They had added on the room after buying the house. It was spacious and had free weights, a variety of bags and wall space for the martial arts weapons they both enjoyed practicing with.

It was wise for vampires, male and female, to know how to defend themselves and Drake had personally seen to her education. She had considered how much he'd taught her over the years. When they'd first met, she'd known so little about their kind, but he had been an endless source of information and encouragement, particularly when it came to self-defense. During martial arts practice was about the only time he didn't treat her like a lady and for that she was grateful. Enemies certainly didn't concern themselves with her sex and Drake's instruction had saved her life many times over the years. Sometimes work or battle had taken him away from their home, and during those times she needed to depend on herself for protection. Of course she felt even safer when he was around. She was his and in his presence no one dared touch her, or else they'd lose their lives. That was one of the perks of belonging to an alpha male vamp. That was the vamp she'd fallen in love with. Not this boring, yuppie --

Felicia paused in the doorway of the gym and drew a sharp breath of desire. All thoughts, except those of a sexual nature, fled from her mind as she watched Drake punch and kick the heavy bag. His strikes made it swing so hard she thought it might fly off the support beam, even though it was a bag made specifically for vampire strength. His tank top, dark with sweat, clung to his sleek torso. Muscles rippled beneath the pale, glistening flesh of his broad shoulders. As his stance shifted, his black sweatpants outlined the shape of his long, sinewy legs.

"Hello, Felicia," he said, his voice deep and husky. He paused, his back to her, and held out a hand to stop the bag from rocking. He turned to her, his steely eyes sweeping her from head to toe. "You look beautiful tonight."

Warmth flooded her at his words and at that moment she was glad she'd dressed so carefully.

"Funny," she walked toward him, her gaze holding his, "I didn't think you noticed how I looked anymore."

"You know I've always noticed you," he said, turning back to the bag and poking it with a jab.

Moistening her lips, Felicia stepped between him and the bag, her breasts touching him.

"I ran here from the office, Felicia."

"I know."

"If you don't move I'll get you all sweaty."

"That would be a very nice change." She slipped her arms around his neck and spoke against his lips.

"Felicia," he said in a warning voice.

"What? I'm either interrupting your work or interrupting your workout." She curled her lip and shook her head in disgust. "Forget it."

She took a step away, but he grasped her upper arm. The heat of his long, slender fingers and the slight dampness of his soft cotton hand wraps turned her on, even though he'd already annoyed her yet again.

"That's not what I meant," he snapped. "If you'd stop taking everything the wrong way maybe we could get along a little better."

"So it's my fault?"

"I don't know why I bother trying to reason with you. There's only one way to shut you up."

"Shut me --"

He covered her mouth in a deep, possessive kiss.

Felicia struggled at first. Struggled against him and against her desire. Desire won and she surrendered to him, at least in body. She clung to his neck and he wrapped his powerful arms around her, crushing her to his hard, damp chest.

When the kiss broke, she stared into his eyes and loosened his hair from where it was bound in a tail at his nape. "I always loved the warrior in you," she breathed.

"At least you still love something," he murmured, but before she could reply, he kissed her again. This time he swept her into his arms and carried her across the room. He placed her on the exercise bench and pushed the skirt up to her waist.

Felicia's pulse raced and her breathing quickened. It had been so long since they'd done something this spontaneous. Usually when he wanted sex, he gave her "the look" and if she responded, he took her swiftly and in the traditional manner. It had been a while since they'd fucked anywhere but the bed.

She kicked off her shoes and Drake pulled off first one of her thigh-high stockings, then the other. He took his time caressing her legs before dragging her toward the end of the bench and kneeling. Licking his lips, he guided her legs over his shoulders and began pressing moist, tender kisses over her inner thighs.

Closing her eyes, Felicia sighed with pleasure. She reached down and threaded her fingers through his hair.

Drake's tongue trailed along the joining of her thighs and legs, then he slid his hands beneath her bottom, lifted her slightly and thrust his tongue into her pussy. It swirled around, exploring her soft, wet flesh. He took his time, his tongue teasing her while his hands kneaded her backside. Then he once again lowered her to the bench, grasped her hips and covered her clit with his mouth. He lapped and sucked, using his lips and tongue on her until all she could do was writhe with pleasure and pant his name over and over.

Her fingers tightened on his hair and she came long and hard. For a blissful moment she lay in the aftermath, then he pulled her to a sitting position.

He had removed his clothes and Felicia's eyes raked him from head to toe. A quiver of desire shot through her and she could scarcely wait to enjoy the sensation of his hard, sweat-slicked body close to hers.

"Unzip this damn dress," she breathed, turning so he could comply.

His deft fingers worked the small buttons then the zipper. She shrugged the dress down her shoulders and wiggled out of it. Drake quickly unfastened her bra and

again swept her into his arms, this time carrying her to the mat spread nearby on the floor.

"Hell, Felicia, I want you so much."

"Please," she panted. "Please fuck me, Drake."

One thing they had always been able to do was please each other physically. Even if they never had a decent conversation again as long as they lived, they could at least enjoy one more moment of ecstasy.

Drake loomed above her, a hand braced on either side of her head. He used his knee to roughly nudge hers apart and she spread her legs willingly, so eager for him that she doubted it would take more than a few thrusts before she came again.

His blue-gray eyes bore into hers and she felt the thick, velvety tip of his cock pushing against her drenched nether lips. Slowly he filled her, then began pumping in a steady rhythm.

Gazing at him through half-closed eyes, she stroked his shoulders and chest, feeling the muscles tense and release as he thrust. His flesh felt hot and damp from his workout and she relished the sensation of his soft, curling chest hair against her palms. Her fingertips twitched his nipples, then she locked her arms around his neck and lifted herself closer to his face. They kissed deeply; tongue stroking tongue and their fangs clicking.

"Blood," Drake murmured hoarsely, a vampiric growl rumbling in his throat.

"Oh yes," she panted.

His hips jerked against her, pinning her to the floor. Almost simultaneously he sank his fangs into her shoulder as she did the same to his. The taste of his sweet, powerful blood filled her and she moaned, clinging to him.

Drake growled again and thrust faster while licking and sucking her shoulder. Within moments she came and he soon followed. Crying out in pleasure, they continued drinking from one another while they surged and pulsed in climax.

Afterward Drake rolled onto his back, pulling her with him. Felicia rested her cheek against his chest, listening to his heart slow to normal and loving this rare moment of closeness.

"I made plans for our anniversary," he murmured.

"What?" She sat up abruptly, once again angry. "You made business plans on our anniversary? Without asking me?"

"Who said anything about business plans?" He curled his lip. "I've arranged for us to go on a cruise on our yacht. We leave Monday at eight in the morning. Just the two of us."

Felicia's anger faded a bit, though she was still skeptical. "Really? Usually you bring along business contacts."

"Not this time. Just us. Will you come or is there some big sale going on at the mall?"

"Excuse me?" she said icily.

"It was just a little joke."

"No, it wasn't. You're the one who has this thing about me getting a job."

"You don't need a job. You have a job taking care of this house and --"

"Being your sex slave when the mood strikes you?" Felicia stood and reached for her clothes. "You can go to hell, Drake."

"I thought I was in it," he said under his breath.

Felicia stared at him, aghast. Her mouth opened but no words came out. Finally she said, "Maybe this house will be less hellish if I vacate."

She stalked to the door.

"What do you mean vacate?"

"I mean I'm getting the hell out of here," she roared, spinning on her heel and glaring at him.

Drake rose swiftly to his feet and reached her in three long strides. "What do you mean you're getting out of here?"

"For a brilliant businessman you're a bit slow tonight, aren't you? I mean we need some time apart, Drake."

His eyes blazed with fury and something else. She couldn't place what. Hurt perhaps? She doubted it. Other than a roll on the gym mat, she meant little to him anymore.

"I think that's a good idea. But I'll go. I'm not the sort of man who asks his wife to leave their house."

"You're not asking me!" she shouted. "This is the twenty-first century! A wife is an equal. If I want to leave this house, I'll fucking well leave!"

"Good. Fine." He folded his arms across his chest, his jaw visibly tight. "Do you plan to tell me where you're going, or don't I even have the right to know anymore?"

She sighed and closed her eyes. When she spoke it was calmer. "I'll be at our summer place at Cape Cod. Drake...I really think we need this time apart to think."

"Look at me, Felicia."

She lifted her gaze to his and they stared at each other for a long, searching moment.

"Maybe you're right," he said. "Do you want me to cancel the cruise?"

"Do you want to?"

"We'll leave things open. If you want to go with me, be here by eight Monday morning."

Without waiting for her to reply, he walked past her and left the gym.

Felicia stared after him, torn between frustration and sadness. Then a little spark stirred inside her. Freedom. After so many centuries, she and Drake might be free of each other. On their own to start new lives. That could be a good thing.

She dressed quickly, went to her room and packed a few things for the trip. Drake was in the shower and she considered waiting to say goodbye, then thought better of it.

Filled with so many conflicting emotions, she left the house, got in her car and headed for Cape Cod.

Chapter Three

At five minutes to eight on Monday morning, Drake stood in the foyer of his house wondering why he was bothering to wait until the last second when it was obvious Felicia wasn't going to show.

Tomorrow was their anniversary and she intended for them to spend it apart. Maybe this was her way of ending it. He would have expected her to tell him to his face. After all these years he deserved that much respect.

Furious, he growled, gnashed his fangs and stepped outside. He locked the door and headed for his car.

Then he saw her car turn the corner and his stomach tightened with a strange excitement, rather like how he used to feel before riding into battle. Maybe the sensation wasn't so strange after all. Lately with Felicia everything had been a battle.

She parked in the driveway and stepped out of the car looking sexy in boots, jeans and a pink sweater that hugged her luscious curves. She'd arranged her chestnut hair in a French braid and carried her gray wool coat over her shoulder.

They approached each other stiffly, almost like strangers. Even when they'd first met there hadn't been such awkward tension between them.

"You've decided to come?" he asked.

"Were you hoping I wouldn't?"

"No. Not at all." His gaze swept her again. "You look --"

"Yes?" The slightest smile tugged at her lips.

He shook his head, walked to her car and retrieved her luggage. "Let's go."

Taking her lower lip between her teeth in an endearing gesture, she nodded and sat in the passenger seat of his car while he placed her bags in the trunk.

At first they rode in silence, then he said, "I missed you this week."

"I didn't think you'd notice I was gone."

"Damn it, Felicia, do we have to start off like this? Wasn't almost a week of sulking enough for you?"

"You see, Drake, it's that attitude that irks me." She removed an emery board from her purse and began filing her long, French-manicured nails. "You're so fucking condescending."

"I'm condescending? Love, you are the Queen of Condescending. You can't even carry on a conversation without making some kind of sarcastic remark."

She sighed. "Maybe you're right."

He tore his gaze from the road and glanced at her, just to see if she was serious. To his surprise, she appeared to be.

"I don't want to argue anymore, Drake." She turned to him. "I'm tired of it."

"So am I."

"Why don't we just be quiet for a while?"

"All right. We'll have plenty of time to talk on the yacht."

Felicia nodded, studying his handsome profile and feeling slightly sick. All week she had been dreading this trip. During her time alone, she had carefully thought about their marriage and came to the conclusion that while she still cared about Drake, it was over between them. They had outlived their love for each other. It happened sometimes with vampires who married too young. Hell, even some ancients came to realize they'd bound themselves to the wrong partner.

She wanted the man she'd fallen in love with, but he had changed. Change wasn't necessarily a bad thing and she'd never dream of stopping him from living life as he wanted to. She'd always backed him in his endeavors, just as he'd tried to make her happy. Now the time had come when they could no longer travel the same path because she had also changed. She enjoyed the freedom of being a modern woman, yet she still lusted after an old fashioned guy. She wanted a man. M-A-N. One who swept her off her feet and didn't obsess about business deals and bank accounts. She would

rather be struggling alongside him again as they had done in the past than living in the lap of luxury with a neutered male.

The drive to the airport as well as the plane ride to the South Pacific was made mostly in silence. They only spoke to each other when necessary. Drake spent most of the flight pouring over paperwork. Why had he lied and told her this vacation was just for them when he had brought his damn work with him?

She either slept or buried her nose in a romance novel. A historical romance. Oh, the details weren't exactly accurate, but at least the men resembled the sort she liked. The sort Drake had once been. Actually, she had yet to find a man in any romance novel who could match him in his prime, when he had been Sir Drake, her lord and master. He had been so powerful, so in command, yet tender at the right moments. Sometimes, such as a week ago in the gym, she caught flashes of the man he used to be and it made her wish they were happy again.

Before she knew it, they were on their private yacht, completely alone on the clear, warm ocean. She used to enjoy yacht trips. It reminded her of when they, along with Chris and Rosamund, had been involved in the rum trade in the eighteenth century. Those had been happy days, too. Often dangerous, but happy.

They decided to sleep by day and travel by night, sometimes stopping at their favorite island haunts. On the first night, Drake steered while Felicia prepared a meal. When it was finished, they sat on deck and ate by moonlight.

The night was very hot, so Felicia wore her red bikini while Drake wore only blue shorts. She couldn't help admiring his sleek chest and his long, muscled legs stretched out in front of him as he relaxed beside her.

Placing aside her fruit salad, she said, "Drake, you and I need to talk."

His blue-gray gaze turned to her and she tried to read his expression but couldn't. He'd always been a master at hiding what he felt when it suited him. "You're right, Felicia. Things have been terrible between us for a while now."

"I agree. This week I spent a lot of time thinking."

"Go on."

"I care about you very deeply. I always have and I always will."

He reached out and brushed a wisp of hair from her face. "I've never felt about anyone the way I feel about you."

"Felt. Exactly. It's in the past tense, isn't it?"

His brow furrowed. He pushed the plates of food away and tugged her close to his side. "Felicia, you're my wife."

"I know. You made a vow."

"I always honor my vows. *Always*."

"But we made those vows a long time ago. We've shared so many lifetimes."

"What are you saying, Felicia?"

"I'm saying... " She closed her eyes and shook her head. "This is harder than I thought."

"Just spit it out. I'm tired of playing games."

"Fine. I think we should get a divorce, or at least separate."

His face froze, except for his eyes. They seemed to burn right through her. For the first time she could remember, Felicia felt a bit fearful of him.

"Why now?" he demanded. "Why didn't you suggest this when I nearly lost everything? Was it out of pity?"

"I've never pitied you. Why the hell should I? You're the strongest, most driven individual I've ever known. You are the last person in this world who needs anyone's pity."

"If I have such admirable qualities, why do you want a divorce?"

"I'll tell you why. Point blank. I married a warrior. A man. Now what do I have? A corpse in a business suit who bores the hell out of me when he bothers to spend time with me at all."

"What do you want from me, Felicia? They don't use knights anymore, or actually they do, but I'm neither a singer nor an actor so I don't think I qualify. You want a soldier? I can certainly do that but there's no way I could have supported you in this manner if I had dedicated my life to modern-day warfare."

"I'm not saying I want a soldier. Just a man, Drake. M-A-N."

Now he looked completely enraged. "What the hell do you mean?"

"That didn't come out right. I know you're a man. It's just --"

"What?"

"I'm not happy anymore. *We're* not happy anymore."

"That's because you're unreasonable. And I have a newsflash for you. The way you spend money, I need to spend my life at the office."

"I don't give a damn about money!" She shouted in his face. "I have nothing better to do with my time than go fucking shopping or do charity work because that's what you want in a wife. You don't want a partner. You want someone to look pretty on your arm and be there for you to rut when you get the urge. You want a possession, Drake. A status symbol from an age long past."

"Is that what you think?"

"It's what you've shown me. Years ago I was useful. When I took care of the manor house or sailed with you or all the other lives we lived together, I had a purpose. Now what is my purpose? I'm no use to you and I'm no use to myself."

He looked at her blankly, then stood and walked away.

Tears sprang into her eyes, but she blinked them back. It was over. Almost nine hundred years of marriage were over and Felicia felt numb.

After a moment she picked up the dishes and brought them below. She had just finished cleaning when the boat began to rock violently.

Making her way topside, she heard crashing waves and thunder booming. Outside the night had grown pitch black, except for random streaks of lightning. The sight of the savage waves sent a rush of terror through her. It had been centuries since she'd endured a storm at sea.

"Felicia!" Drake bellowed from where he struggled to keep the ship under control.

She joined him and followed the orders he shouted. For what seemed like hours they battled the waves.

"Drake!" she screamed. "We're sinking."

"I know. We need to get to the raft."

The next moments past so quickly that Felicia could scarcely comprehend what was going on.

Felicia leapt into the water and it closed over her head. She kicked toward the surface, thankful for her life preserver. Disoriented and momentarily blinded from the lashing wind and waves, she searched in the darkness.

"Drake?" she screamed.

"Felicia!" he shouted, swimming toward her while clinging to their raft. He grasped her and helped her into it. As he was about to join her, a mighty wave crashed over the raft. Felicia was tossed under the raft's canopy where she hung on for dear life. When she could breathe again, she leaned out of the canopy and searched anxiously for her husband.

"Drake!" she hollered. He didn't reply and she couldn't see him.

Panic struck her. If anything happened to him, her life would be unbearable. Why did it take something like this to make her realize how much she still loved him?

"Drake! Answer me!" She was about to dive in after him, when she caught sight of him a short distance away.

"Felicia!"

"I'm coming," she called, grabbing an oar and beginning to row toward him. Her vampiric strength served her well and with her rowing and him swimming, he soon clung to the edge of the raft.

"Get in," she said, grasping his arms and pulling while he hoisted himself over the edge. Once they were relatively safe, she clung to him. "Thank heaven. I don't know what I'd have done if I lost you."

He embraced her tightly in return, "Afraid of being alone out here?"

"That's not it." She jerked away to look into his eyes. Rain lashed his face and tendrils of his long blond hair whipped in the wind.

"Are our supplies okay?" He turned away from her to check their food, water and other supplies, enough to keep them comfortable for a few days. After that they were on their own.

"Did you know anything about this storm?" she shouted above the wind.

"Of course not! Trying to blame me for that, too?"

"Drake, now isn't the time to fight."

"Exactly. Come on. All we can do is wait this out." He pulled her nearer and they settled on the bottom of the raft, huddled close against the storm.

By dawn the horrid weather subsided, giving way to a clear, sunny morning. Though Felicia hadn't completely lost her ability to tolerate sunlight, she still disliked it and even the canopy didn't protect her as much as she would have preferred.

Eventually, she dozed off and when she woke found herself still in Drake's arms. He had apparently been awake for a while and gazed at her with the calm strength she had come to depend on and taken for granted over the years.

"Any idea where we are?" she asked.

He shook his head. "I sent out a flare this morning, but no response. We have food for a few days and the emergency water filter, so we won't run out of fresh water."

"Do you think anyone will find us?"

"Eventually."

"Eventually! We're vampires. We could possibly float around on the ocean for years."

"Impossible. We're bound to hit land or at least run into another boat before then."

"Drake, what are we going to do?"

"First, we're not going to panic."

"I'm not panicking, but I am worried."

"Don't be." He caressed her face. "We'll make it. We've been through worse situations."

"Yeah, but I'm a pampered brat now," she said, half teasing and half serious.

"You're the courageous woman I married. Last night you helped me as much as I helped you, and it reminded me of something I've forgotten over the years."

"What?"

"That a marriage is a partnership, Felicia." He sighed and pressed a kiss to her forehead. "I'm sorry I haven't given you the time and the respect you deserve."

"It's not just you, Drake. I haven't exactly been fair to you, either. I know how much your business means to you, and when you almost lost it --"

"It wasn't the business I cared about, but you. In my mortal childhood, my father was a cruel, lazy man. Our family suffered for it and I swore I would never treat my wife like he treated my mother."

"You never told me that before. Why?"

"It was an unhappy time for me. Shameful, in a way. When you and I nearly lost everything during the Depression, I couldn't have that. Not for you."

"Drake, you are a good man." She snuggled closer. "I love you for the way you treat me and the way you make me feel. All I've ever wanted from you is love and a happy life together."

"I almost destroyed what I value most."

She caressed his face and shook her head. "Oh, Drake." Leaning closer, she touched her lips to his. "Make love to me."

He gave a snort of laughter. "Here in the raft?"

"Can you think of a better way to pass the time?"

"You've got me there, sweetheart." He cupped her chin and kissed her, then slid his hand to the back of her head, grasped the hair at her nape and tugged gently until her neck arched. He covered her throat with kisses, then gently grazed her shoulder with his fangs.

Sighing with pleasure, Felicia reached inside his shorts and grasped his cock. She stroked it, feeling it stiffen beneath the silken flesh.

Drake untied the straps of her bikini and bared her breasts to his lips and hands. He cupped one and lowered his head toward it. After capturing the nipple between his lips, he sucked the straining peak until she cried out with pleasure.

Using the tip of one fang, he teased her nipple, then gently pierced it.

"Oh, Drake!" she gasped, clutching his head closer. Her clit and pussy throbbed with need.

As if sensing what she wanted, he dipped a hand beneath her skimpy bikini bottoms and caressed her soft mound. He thrust his fingers into her hot, slick pussy and finger fucked her while his mouth covered hers in a deep kiss.

Felicia's passion rose and she gasped and moaned into his mouth. She squirmed against his rubbing hand while her hands roamed over his shoulders and back.

When his thumb began rotating her clit while his fingers danced inside her, she came to a shuddering climax. Drake continued rubbing, dragging out the final exquisite pulsations.

Finally he broke the kiss and withdrew his fingers from her. Uttering a soft murmur of pleasure, Felicia rested against him, her eyes closed and breathing deep and even. She felt shockingly calm, considering their situation.

She only stirred when she felt Drake sliding off her bikini bottoms. He quickly discarded his shorts and sat with his legs stretched out in front of him.

"Come here, Felicia," he said, his voice deep and rough with passion.

The sight of his thick, hard cock, a little droplet of pre-come beading upon the eye, aroused her so much that her clit and nipples began tingling again. She climbed onto him and he guided her legs around his waist while she impaled herself on his shaft.

"I love how it feels when you're inside me," she whispered in his ear, then traced the shape of it with her tongue.

A ripple of passion darted through him and he growled softly. Felicia chuckled seductively and continued teasing his ear. She thrust her tongue into it and swirled.

"Felicia, you sexy wench," he panted, his cock pulsing inside her.

While she continued licking his ear and caressing his back, he grasped her hips and rocked her upon his cock, almost keeping time with the rocking of the raft.

"Mmm, Drake," she murmured and began covering his neck with kisses. Her fangs ached for him. His scent and the feel of his body made it next to impossible to control her bloodlust.

"Do it," he breathed. "Bite me, Felicia. Sink your pretty little fangs into me."

She didn't need to be invited twice. Closing her eyes, she bit his neck and his blood flowed into her. Drake moaned and Felicia answered him with a soft grunt. She locked her arms and legs tighter around him and began rocking her hips faster.

"Ah! Fuck! Felicia!" he cried, his heart pounding, his blood rushing onto her tongue and his hips jerking hard.

Overcome by sensation, she came again even longer and harder than last time. Her wet sheath clamped around his cock, pushing him over the edge and milking him dry.

Slowly her grip loosened on him and she lay limp in his arms, listening to their mingled breaths.

Chapter Four

A couple of days later, Felicia and Drake were still adrift. Their food supply began running low, but the sight of birds flying overhead gave them a sense of hope. By dusk, an islet came into view and they rowed toward it. They dragged the raft onto the rocky shore and paused a moment, glancing around.

"Best if we get to the highest point," Drake said. "At least we'll be safe from the tide and we'll be able to get an idea of how big this place is and what kind of terrain we're dealing with."

"Good idea," she said. They walked along the shoreline until they finally saw a grassy incline leading up through the rocks.

They climbed up and beyond the rocks and scanty vegetation, including a couple of trees; they saw the layout of the entire tiny islet.

"No water other than the surrounding ocean," she said. "Thank goodness for our emergency water filter."

"At least we'll have food." He pointed to the outline of fish and a sea turtle swimming beneath the clear blue water. "Let's get the fishing gear from the raft."

"I'll start fishing while you drag the raft up here."

"And I'll see if I can get some firewood from those trees. Oh, and keep your eyes peeled for a ship. If we see one, we'll send up another flare."

A short time later, Drake had hauled the raft to the grassy top of the islet. He ripped several branches from a tree and dug a fire pit. When he'd finished, he paused a moment, wiped sweat from his eyes and gazed at Felicia who stood hip deep in the water, her attention focused on her fishing line.

A smile tugged at his lips as he thought how proud and lucky he was to have her. It had been so long since they'd worked together like this, in harmony and love.

A ripple in the water several feet from Felicia drew his attention and horror struck him. Even in the dark, his keen vampiric vision detected the outline of a shark swimming toward her.

"Felicia!" he shouted.

She turned, smiled and waved to him.

"Felicia, get out of the water! Shark!"

"What?" She glanced around in terror, caught sight of the dorsal fin headed toward her and bolted. Unfortunately, she wasn't fast enough. Before she made it out of the shallow water, the shark grasped her leg in its ferocious mouth.

She screamed and kicked hard.

Drake grasped the knife from their supplies and bounded down to the water. He dove under and plunged the blade into the shark. His vampiric strength allowed him to penetrate the thick flesh deeply. Over and over he stabbed, grimacing with the force of his strikes.

Blood, both the shark's and Felicia's, turned the water red. For the first time since the Change, the sight and scent of blood didn't arouse him. All he could think about was saving the woman he loved more than his own life.

He felt her hands on his arm, tugging him, and he surfaced, gasping for breath.

"It's dead, Drake," she said, her voice trembling.

He released the carcass, turned and swept her into his arms. He carried her up the incline and placed her by the fire pit.

Her leg was bleeding profusely, so he applied pressure and soon her regenerative powers kicked in. He hurried to the raft, got the first aid kit, then cleaned and bandaged her wounds. Had she been mortal, she most likely would have died from the savage bite.

"How's the pain?" he asked.

"I'll be okay," she sighed, leaning back on her elbows. "You should have kept the shark."

She was right. They could have used it for food. He stood and looked out to sea, hoping to locate the carcass. Unfortunately, the blood had attracted other sharks who were now feasting on the creature he'd killed.

He lit a fire in the pit and got a blanket for her to lie on before he retrieved the fish she'd caught. While he cooked them over the fire, he glanced at her and asked, "Hungry?"

She shook her head. "Not really."

"Eat a little anyway. Then I'll give you some of my blood. You need to keep your strength up so you can regenerate faster."

He gave her some of the fish and she took a few nibbles then began eating with more enthusiasm. Obviously she'd been hungrier than she realized. The fish did taste good, he thought as he dug in to his portion. Their emergency food supply had been getting rather boring. Of course if they ended up here for days or weeks, they'd eventually get pretty tired of fish.

When she'd finished eating, he used the knife to make a shallow cut on his hand and held the wound to her lips. "Drink."

Without hesitation she took his hand gently in hers and began lapping. Drake's eyes closed halfway as he enjoyed the sensation of her tongue against his palm. Even after the wound closed she continued licking for a while, her tongue flicking between his fingers.

"You're a tease, Felicia." He smiled, withdrawing his hand from her grasp and kissing her.

"Only with you."

A low, possessive growl rumbled in his chest. He picked her up and carried her to the raft, then left to clean the dinner mess. When he returned, he stretched out beside her and she rested her head against his shoulder.

"Drake?"

"Yes, love?"

"Can we pretend I never said what I said on the yacht?"

"You mean about you wanting a man. M-A-N?" he said with a teasing smirk.

"Yes," she whispered. "I don't know how I could have been so stupid. Eight hundred and ninety-seven years ago you slew my dragon and saved me from a loveless marriage to a cruel man. Now you've just saved me again. Any guy who fights off a shark for me -- What I mean to say is, you're still rescuing me. And I'll tell you something else."

"What?"

"When you make a vow to protect a woman, you sure take it to the extreme, thank goodness for my sake. You're so courageous."

"Killing that shark had nothing to do with bravery. I acted out of fear."

"Excuse me?"

"The thought of life without you terrifies me, Felicia. You're my heart, my soul, the only woman I've ever loved."

"Oh, Drake." She held him tightly. "Why did it take getting stranded for me to realize how stupid I've been?"

"I guess we both needed a wakeup call. When we get off here, I promise to make some changes, Felicia. I will make time for us, no matter what."

"Drake, are you making one of your famous vows?" she asked, her beautiful brown eyes glistening with humor and affection.

"Yes, I am."

"Then I'm making one, too."

His brow furrowed. "What sort of vow?"

"I promise to be more understanding of you. And now that I've been reminded that enduring sunlight won't kill me, I promise to change my schedule to accommodate yours."

This touched and surprised him. "You will?"

"Yes, but there is one condition."

He stared at her warily. "What?"

"That you give me a job at your company because if this situation has reminded me of anything, it's that we work well together."

Warmth spread through him. "I couldn't agree more."

"Drake?" Her smile faded and she edged even closer to him. "Are we going to be okay?"

"Yes. I won't believe otherwise." He caressed her hair. "How is your leg?"

"A little sore. Do you think you could take my mind off it?" she asked, gazing at him with an invitation in her eyes that he couldn't resist. Slowly, seductively, she unfastened her bikini top and slipped it off, baring her breasts to his heated gaze.

He fell upon her, eager to taste every inch of her yet handling her gently due to her injury.

Cupping one breast in his hand, he used his teeth to worry the nipple to a hard peak, then he sucked it deeply into his mouth, rolling his tongue over it. It felt so good that she couldn't keep from crying out softly. The sound of it spurred his desire, but he didn't quicken his pace. He intended to make love to her slowly, savoring each moment and doing his best to keep her mind off her discomfort.

Only when her nipple was so sensitive that she mewled in pleasure-pain did he move to her other. While he sucked and licked the stiff pink flesh, he caressed her breasts. The scent of her desire grew stronger and when he tugged down her bikini bottoms and thrust a finger into her pussy, he found her hot and completely drenched with passion.

Licking his lips, he moved down her body and covered her clit with his mouth. Even after all these centuries he never grew tired of feasting upon her. The scent of her womanly musk, the slickness of her silken flesh and the soft moans of desire escaping her throat turned him on so much that his cock felt ready to explode then and there.

Yet this moment wasn't for him. It was for her. He wanted to please her.

He thrust his tongue inside her and swirled it around. Little pulsations rolled through her and he knew it would be only a matter of seconds before she climaxed.

He pulled away and she cried out in frustration, but that cry soon turned to one of passion as he gently rolled her onto her stomach, parted her bottom cheeks and began tonguing her sphincter. While he lapped the tight little ring of muscle, he thrust two fingers inside her and explored, then took the wet digits, reached around and stroked her clit. Keen pleasure struck her and she began trembling in spite of the warm night.

"Drake! This is too much. I can't... I --" She gasped and writhed as orgasm overtook her. He continued licking and stroking until she lay spent.

Kneeling beside her, he ran his fingertips along her shoulders and down her back. After a moment, she rolled over and gazed at him through half-closed eyes. A tiny, satisfied smile rested on her luscious lips and he bent to kiss her.

"Lie on your back," she said, gently pushing his chest.

"Why?"

"Just do it."

He stretched out on his back and she lay between his legs.

"Doesn't that position hurt your injury?" he asked, though his heart was already pounding with anticipation. He knew by the way her hot gaze fixed on his cock and her hand curled around it what she intended to do.

"No," she said and before he could make another comment, she took his cock head between her lips and teased it with her tongue.

Drake's temperature shot off the scale. It had been so long since she'd given him head that he'd almost forgotten just how good it felt.

Her soft, moist lips rolled over his flesh and her wet tongue lashed the ultra-sensitive underside of his cock head. One of her small, soft hands curled around his shaft and pumped while the other kneaded his balls.

"Felicia, hell," he breathed deeply, trying to control his lust and not thrust his hips hard against her.

She murmured something indiscernible around his cock and the vibrations were almost enough to make him come.

Felicia continued lapping and sucking, knowing just when to pause and clamp a hand around the base of his shaft. She teased him with almost torturous flicks of her tongue along the underside of his cock head.

When the sexual frustration became almost unbearable, she began licking him relentlessly, hurling him into a climax so fierce he thought it might never stop. His muscles tensed and his come shot into her mouth. Felicia sucked, licked and swallowed. Her moans of pleasure mingled with his and when it ended, he lay, panting, while she slowly released his softening cock and used her fingertips to caress his inner thighs.

"I've missed that so much," she murmured, lying beside him and resting her chin on his chest. Languidly he draped an arm around her.

Chuckling, he said, "*You've* missed it? Do you have any idea how much *I've* missed it?"

"I can just imagine. There's no need for us to miss anything anymore."

"We won't." He stroked her hair.

Felicia uttered a soft, sleepy sound and he continued caressing her until he knew by the rhythm of her breathing she had fallen asleep.

* * *

"Felicia, wake up." Drake shook her shoulder gently and she opened her eyes, squinting against the sunlight shining in through the front of the canopy.

"What is it, Drake? What's wrong?"

"Nothing. There's a ship. I signaled and they're heading toward us."

Crazy as it seemed, a twinge of disappointment struck her. "Already?"

His slender lips turned up in a slight smile. "I know how you feel. As difficult as this has been, I almost don't want it to end."

"Neither do I."

"It won't," he said firmly. "It's not this place, Felicia. It's us. As long as we keep the vows we made on this islet, we'll keep our happiness."

"You're right," she whispered, taking his face in her hands. "I love you, Drake. And I'm yours. Always."

“I love you, too, Felicia. Now let me look at your leg.”

He carefully unwrapped the bandages and was glad to find she’d almost fully healed.

By the time they dragged their supplies to the shoreline, their rescuers had arrived.

A short time later, they stood on the deck of the ship. Drake’s arm wrapped firmly around her as they watched their islet fade from view.

Epilogue

One Year Later

"Drake, oh yes! Don't stop! Please don't stop," Felicia said, her voice husky with passion. Her fingers dug into the grassy ground and she thrust her bottom toward Drake who knelt behind her, his cock pumping in and out of her lust-drenched pussy.

He growled in reply and ran a hand down the length of her spine. Pleasure coursed through her as he tickled the indentation of her bottom with his fingertip. Then he grasped her hips and quickened his thrusts.

Felicia's heart raced and she cried out sharply as she came long and hard. Amidst her own pleasure, she felt Drake join her in ecstasy.

Panting, she dropped onto the ground, her face pressed to the sun-warmed grass. Drake collapsed onto her, his cheek resting against her back and his breath fanning her heated flesh.

After a moment they stirred. Drake rolled onto his back and tugged her against his chest.

"This is the best anniversary we ever had," she purred and swept her tongue over one of his nipples.

He grunted softly in reply and tightened his arm around her. "At least this time we're on this islet by choice."

"I'm just glad we found it again."

"So am I."

"It's nice to get away from the office for a couple of weeks," she said.

"Forget about the office." He guided her on top of him so they lay breasts to chest, thigh to thigh. "We're on vacation."

She chuckled. "Never thought I'd see the day when *you'd* tell *me* to forget about the office."

"You're a slave driver."

"I'm a third partner."

"I must have been masochistic to agree to that."

"What do you mean --"

He silenced her by gently covering her mouth with his fingertips. "Don't talk. Just feel."

He kissed her deeply. Every stroke of tongue and click of fangs seemed directly connected to her heart.

I love you, my sweet Felicia.

I love you, too, Drake.

Over the past year, their telepathic link, which they had neglected for so long, had returned stronger than ever before. She relished the intimacy of sharing his thoughts and having him share hers.

Since making their vows on this secluded islet, they had seen their relationship strengthen even more. Felicia had no doubt the bond between them could never, ever be broken.

Kate Hill

What do trips around the world, endless nights of breathtaking sex, and a muscular, 6-foot 3-inch, brown-haired, blue-eyed significant other have to do with Kate Hill? Absolutely nothing, but she can dream, can't she? In reality Kate is a single, thirty-something vegetarian New Englander who loves writing romantic fantasies. Visit her online at <http://www.kate-hill.com>, www.myspace.com/katehillromance, or join her newsgroup at groups.yahoo.com/group/katehill. Stop by Kate's Amazon blog at www.amazon.com.