

A blue-tinted photograph of a couple kissing. The woman is on the left, her eyes closed, and the man is on the right, his face partially visible. They are in a close embrace. In the background, a stone tower with arched windows is visible against a dark sky. The overall mood is romantic and mysterious.

# BLOOD QUEST

Hunt for the Elixir Series

Midnyte Dupree

Blood Quest: The Hunt for the Elixir Begins  
*by Midnyte Dupree*

**Resplendence Publishing, LLC**

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## **Blood Quest**

The Hunt for the Elixir Begins

By Midnyte Dupree

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I dedicate this one to my readers! I hope you all enjoy this vampire series! I also want to dedicate this series to my editor, Chantal. I appreciate all your insight and suggestions. Also, thank you to my wonderful family who puts up with the times I sneak away to read and write. I love you guys!

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## **Chapter One**

"The Queen is dead!"

Chaos broke out in the courtyard as the servants screamed in fear. Their beloved Queen Leah was dead. Safety, as they once knew it, was destroyed.

The assassin hid in the shadows, enjoying the berserk nature of these beings. They thought they were safe as servants to the vampires, however, the Others had known better.

They bided their time for the perfect attack.

It had come today, under the cloud-covered sky, when the guards changed posts. The servants hadn't seen him slip in. As enemies to the vampires, the vampires had believed the Others to be running scared.

No longer.

Now, the Others were tougher, stronger, and more determined to get what was stolen from them.

And he wanted to see his race prosper again.

Once revered as Gods, the Others had lost their beautiful exteriors after being cursed by a vampire. Having lost their godlike countenance, they now looked much like demons. Hence, most chose to stay in their human forms. They were vain creatures who couldn't accept the loss of their ethereal beauty. Sending the assassin to retrieve the Elixir of Life would help restore them back to the beautiful and powerful creatures they had once been.

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The knowledge of the potent liquid was passed down from generation to generation, to keep their anger alive, and the mission to regain it at the forefront of everyone's mind.

Especially the assassin's.

Because he was pulled away from his family at a young age to train for this mission, his anger was a living being inside him. With the restoration of what the Others coveted, he might be able to return to his family. Once the elixir was in his hands, he could take it back to his people and restore their beauty and sexuality.

He was actually surprised by how easy it had been to penetrate the vampire's home. The only thing he didn't count on was the overwhelming aroma of sex. Seeing the open coupling when he'd first entered the compound was a shock. The Others could not find sexual fulfillment no matter how hard they tried. Their climax was always just a breath away. Many of them only copulated when they wanted to make a child, for the release of their seed brought no pleasure.

With a few in the village previously having sex prior to his arrival, the scents pulled him, making his cock lengthen with jealousy. He imagined moans filling the courtyard, softly drifting from the homes around him as the lovers reached their peaks. For a brief moment, he felt the need to find a woman for himself. Only at the last moment had he come to his senses, and slipped back into the shadows.

How could he be so stupid at such an important time? The Others had put him in this position because they knew he would complete the mission. It took a lot of blood, sweat, and tears to gain his high rank; he would not back down now. No



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matter how full the woman's breasts or how slick he knew her passage would be, he had to keep his mind on the mission.

Panicked screams echoed off the halls as women raced down the long corridor looking for their lovers or children. The servants did not know what kind of attack befell them. He did, however, and knew they were safe ... for now. The queen had put up a fight, but with the sun high in the sky, she had been weak and easy to overpower. One swift strike with a stake through her heart was enough to kill her. The look of shock in her clear blue eyes would haunt him, no doubt, but it was worth it. The Others would praise him and rain gifts upon him. He pulled his shoulders back at the thought.

His mind envisioned the parade of gratitude he would receive from the Council for finding the Elixir of Life. The Queen of the Vampires held this precious fluid in her safekeeping. She had the true formula that would allow them to live in euphoria and beauty—and most of all, restore their ability to find sexual pleasure. They would be able to enjoy the act of lovemaking again.

The curse had been inflicted upon the Others by a vampire. The tale began with a male vampire who kept to himself, and stayed away from the village. However, one night when the vampire had gone out hunting for prey, he saw a village girl, the princess. In one heartbeat, he felt a different kind of hunger. He wanted the princess for his mate. He knew what he wanted was forbidden, but it didn't stop his longing. For ages, he had lived alongside the Others, keeping well away from their ways. But with this woman, he knew he would have to risk their wrath.

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And he did.

Soon, he and the woman fell in love. He enticed her to leave her family and her people behind. Once her father learned of this, he went to the mountain and dragged his daughter away from the vampire, then he dragged her to the center of the village square and he killed her, severing her head from her body.

Before her father sought out the vampire to end his life, the vampire placed a curse on the Others. No one knew exactly what he'd said, or how it came about, but soon the females began to lose their children or not have them at all. Their beautiful visage began to fade, and the males could never quite reach full ecstasy when coupling. Rumours began to circulate, and the blame fell to the vampire.

*Because one of them had lain with a vampire,* they believed their Gods were turning away from them and would not help them counter the curse.

Then they heard about the Elixir of Life. The precious liquid would restore what they had lost, and the Others would again find their way back into the Gods good graces. Unfortunately, the Elixir could not be found just anywhere; they could only obtain it by invading the vampires who caused their despair in the first place. A complete circle of life it seemed.

The Queen guarded the Elixir of Life, and no one was allowed to touch it or get near it.

Well, he would.

The cold emanating from the palace wall brought him back from his thoughts as he leaned against it. Remembering why he was there, his resolve grew strong in his veins once more.

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He wouldn't let these beasts get away with keeping the secret to his heart's greatest desire.

The corridor was now dark and empty, and horses' hooves clomped outside on the hardened dirt road. The servants readied to move their masters. The masters were the highest-level vampires, the most loved and cherished. Striking a blow directly to their Queen would knock them off balance—at least for a little while. He needed to move quickly. There was still a lot left to do, he had to find the location of the Elixir.

Time to make his move.

On silent feet, he walked slowly, progressing towards the throne room. That is where he thought the Elixir would be. Never far away from the Queen.

Candlelight radiated from one room, its soft glow reflecting onto the marbled floor in the corridor. He skimmed the wall to the door, peeking around the corner, checking to see if the room was empty.

A new wave of scents assaulted his nose. The musky aroma of fresh sex curled around him, calling to his penis, pounding against the barriers of his mind; barriers he had carefully erected.

"Oh Micah," a woman sobbed. "She is gone. Our lovely Queen is gone."

The assassin could feel power from these two, and though the woman grieved for her Queen, he could feel her anger stirring inside her.

"It will be okay, Sasha. She prepared us well. We know what needs to be done. Even now, the servants are waiting

for the masters to give them the summons." Micah gathered Sasha against his chest as her tears pooled on his fresh tunic.

Sasha looked up at him, obviously waiting for his assurances. "Do you think we're safe now? Has anyone been caught?"

Pulling her closer, he said, "I'm not sure, love. I'm not sure. As long as the servants are with their masters, and you and I are together, we should be safe enough." He stroked her long blonde hair.

She shivered under his touch and melted against him.

Rage boiled within the assassin. So, they were staying. No matter. Their Queen was dead, and none of the masters were old enough to take her place. From what he knew of the hierarchy, a Queen was born a Queen, not appointed.

Hearing their discussion made him want to vomit.

Shaking off the distraction, he focused on his destination. He moved to the opposite wall of the corridor, into the shadows, before passing by the doorway. He was lucky that the candlelight did not illuminate the whole entrance. It made his task easier.

Finally making it into the throne room, the cool air penetrated his dark shroud, making his mind wander for a moment back to when he'd been in training. His life was harsh then, with many needs withheld. He needed to be strong for his calling. No soft clothes, no shoes ... He fought a shiver as it tiptoed down his spine. He was grateful for the soft material covering his feet now; for once his toes were not freezing.

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The marble floor in the large room glowed with its own light as he made his way further inside. It must have taken the servants years to perfect each curve of the columns and to decorate the walls with the intricate artwork that showed vampires in various forms of their life.

One piece of artwork caught his attention. He moved around the throne to study it closer. The picture depicted a male vampire and a female Other facing each other. Their faces soft, lover like.

Could this be the infamous couple? He found himself running his fingers over the female's arm as if to feel her smooth flesh. She glowed with an inner light that was amazingly captured by the painter. Inwardly, he ached to feel the real touch of an Other. To have one touch him in return with true affection in her eyes.

Something shiny caught his attention, and he turned away from the picture. A large golden case sat on a raised platform beside the throne. His fingers were drawn to it, itching to stroke the massive treasure chest. Too bad he couldn't take the chest with him. Maybe after his mission was over he could return and claim it. For now, he needed to get the Elixir and get out.

The weight of anger pressed down upon him, but he brushed the emotion to the side. The vampires desperately wanted to escape their prisons, he knew, but it was not time just yet.

Looking around the lid, he found the clasp unlocked. With hesitant fingers, he flipped it up and pushed against the heavy lid.

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His heart stopped.

The chest was empty.

Even worse than seeing the emptiness of the chest, his skin began prickling, indicating that night had fallen faster than he calculated. The masters were waking and likely moving about. He held back the need to roar in frustration, opting instead to squeeze his eyes shut and inwardly growl. He had let the time get away from him.

How dare the Queen outsmart him by moving the Elixir before her death? It would be his! One way or another. He could not leave without it!

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## **Chapter Two**

The masters awoke to find their frightened servants pacing their chambers. The sour smell of their fear invaded their noses. Words were whispered in various stages of fright as the servants explained what had happened. The queen was dead. Most of the masters knew when the fatal strike had occurred, having felt the dagger slice through the layers of her heart, but the sun had kept them prisoners in their coffins.

Dante and Eli rushed through the corridors, their eyes glowing red with their anger. Neither spoke as they raced to find the queen's servants. Hopefully, they could provide a more detailed accounting of the queen's death.

Dante led the way with Eli close on his heels. The older vampire felt compelled to take control, though he knew that Eli was almost his equal in knowledge and strength. Dante's dark features did not hold any speck of emotion. He was careful to keep his eyes clear as he approached the two lovers on the sofa. The woman had been crying, the salt of her tears drying on her cheeks. They would die soon. Their reign of life would slowly fade now that the Queen was dead. All servants lived through their masters, and once the master died, the servant's mortality would catch up with them in a few days. He felt a twinge in his chest as he looked at them huddled together, not yet having realized their time was very short. Had the Queen never told them what would happen upon her death?

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Dante's heart ached. The Queen he had grown to love was now gone. He remembered when he first met her—his palms had been damp, his heart racing. Her long dark hair curled over her shoulders as she looked down at his little frame. She had touched him on the head as a smile graced her lips. *"You will be a strong one, Dante. Your destiny will be a hard road, but you will find something very special."*

Those words stuck with him through the many, many years. He had not found anything special that he could think of, and now he only hoped with her death; his life wouldn't take a wrong turn.

He would sorely miss the Queen. She had never acted as if she were too far out of reach for anyone. With a door that was always open, and a welcome smile on her face, she made everyone love her, and now the vampires had lost an important piece of their collective lives.

The man Dante knew as Micah rose from the sofa. Dante watched as he leaned in and brushed his hand down the woman's arm. She looked up at him and nodded. Only then did Micah turn to Dante and Eli and bow.

In his hands, he held a parchment sealed with the Queens signet, a rod adorned with ivy and a magnolia at the top. Micah presented the seal for Eli and Dante to see. Both nodded their heads in acknowledgement of the Queen's emblem.

"Upon the Queen's death, she wanted me to read this for the two of you." The servant cracked it open. When he unfurled the paper, a rush of cool air swept into the room. "Upon my death, I, Queen Leah, leave each of you a portion



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of the Elixir. Take it, flee our land, and protect it with your lives."

Micah then approached Dante and held out his other hand. Looking down, Dante saw a glass vial filled with a clear liquid glistening in the servant's palm. Dante reached out and collected it, noting the vial's warmth against his starving flesh. He had not had time to feed, so his skin was very cool. Suddenly, the vial glowed and the warmth spread through his body, bringing a light feeling to his heart. He almost wanted to smile, but he carefully hardened his features.

Seeing the slight change in Dante's features, Micah smiled and bowed slightly before moving to stand in front of Eli. The vampire narrowed his eyes suspiciously, refusing to open up his palm to accept the gift. Instead, he crossed his arms over his chest.

"What is this, servant?" he asked, his arrogance obvious.

Dante squeezed his fist at his side, refusing to reprimand the younger master in front of the two servants. He knew that Eli disliked most of the male servants, for reasons he was unaware of. Instead, Dante angled his eyes, showing his anger at Eli for the tone he used with the servant. Eli refused to look at him, but he acknowledged the silent warning by softening his features.

"Please take it, Master Eli. The Queen has entrusted you with her greatest possession. It has been passed down for many centuries, and now you must protect it." Micah again held out the vial, this one holding a dark liquid. Eli leaned over to study it before taking it between his fingers. He quickly placed it in his pocket, out of his sight.

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Micah stepped back, a look of relief crossing his face. "Now, all the masters will scatter throughout the earth. You will not communicate until a new Queen rises. When this happens, you will know it. Then, you will deliver the two vials to her for safekeeping."

"How will we know there is a new queen if we cannot communicate with the other vampires?" Eli asked.

Micah looked back at his woman, and she smiled softly, urging him on. Turning back to the two masters he answered, "You will feel it here." He made a fist and held it over his heart. "She will be here with you. With all of you. Now you must go. The other servants have prepared for everyone's departure."

Dante saw the look of sadness flash in his eyes, and he knew the male was aware of what would happen to him and his lover. Dante looked over at Eli, "Go. I will see to these two."

Eli's face softened as he realized what was to become of the lovers in the room. Dante believed that inside Eli there was a soul that wanted to be loved, but he had kept his heart so denied of passion that a wall of ice had formed around it. Where the other masters had servants to take care of their sexual needs, Eli had always left their clan to find his release.

Dante had grown up with Eli, but even then he had been a difficult child. Something tragic had happened to his mother that none of the other vampires ever discussed. Dante had once asked his parents about the child who never interacted with the other children. Before they spoke, he saw a look he couldn't identify at the time pass between his parents, and

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then his father said he couldn't talk about it. His tone was one Dante never hoped to hear again. Sad, yet angry. Was he angry for what had happened to the young vampire? After that he never dared ask about Eli again. Dante feared it had something to do with the lack of love in his young life.

Eli lowered his eyes and moved out of the room. The silence in the air was deafening as Dante turned back to Sasha and Micah, focusing on the couple with precious time left. He debated how to approach the subject of their impending death. He wanted them to understand that he would stay until the end if they wanted.

Although he didn't know Sasha and Micah well, he could recall the sound of their laughter as they walked hand in hand down the road. They always acted as if staying with the vampires was the most glorious place to be.

"Micah?" Dante cleared his throat, uneasy with the conversation.

"Yes, Master Dante. Do you have a question about the decree?" Micah moved back to the sofa to sit with the woman. He enfolded her in his arms, pulling her tightly against his chest. Dante didn't understand why the man was remaining so calm about the whole ordeal. Maybe he just didn't want to upset the woman.

"It would be my honor if the two of you would allow me to stay until the end. I want to make sure that you are both comfortable in your departure."

The woman took a deep breath, her hands balled in the loose material of Micah's tunic; a fresh tear fell from her eye. Micah kissed it away before he captured Dante's gaze.

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"No. You have a mission now. You must fulfill your destiny." Micah turned to the woman and smiled. "And we must fulfill ours."

"If you insist. I'll leave you two to handle this on your own. Just know that you will be missed." Abruptly, Dante sailed from the room leaving the two dying lovers to their last night together.

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### **Chapter Three**

Micah pulled Sasha closer. Her breath was heavy on his neck, stirring his senses. He knew she was worried about their fate, but he wasn't. A smirk crossed his lips as he chuckled.

With big eyes, Sasha looked up at him, "What are you laughing at? I see nothing humorous in our situation. We should find the Other that caused us such pain, and then destroy him!" She reached, and rubbed the muscles of his chest, gently kneading them between her fingers.

"Just a moment, love, and you will understand why we cannot. Let the vampires leave and then I will tell you." He kissed her nose. Not to be so easily placated, Sasha pulled out of his embrace.

"Micah you tell me, now. I don't like that look you have. What are you up to?"

Micah pulled her back against his chest. She was beautiful, her dark hair splayed around her shoulders, a stark contrast over the white material of her tunic; her eyes were shiny, their vibrancy in anger made him happy knowing they would be okay. The gold lining of the tunic brought out the honey gold deep within, making them appear almost cat like.

He remembered the first time he saw her. Those eyes caught the light of the sun as she sat under a tree with her friends. He knew she was special, although it took him ages to get up enough nerve to speak with her.

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At first, her friends had laughed at him as he tried to talk with her. With each sentence he grew more and more embarrassed, until she stood up one day, off the ground where she had been sitting and touched his cheek. Her smile rivalled the sun that day. The gold in her eyes captured him, making him forever hers.

She not only had eyes like a cat, but she moved like a one too; she was lithe and graceful in their lovemaking, always aware of pleasing him. The thought made his groin tingle with awareness. His phallus stirred to life, reaching out for the warmth of her body. He should not be feeling such a need with all that has happened, but he couldn't deny it.

It would definitely be a good way to pass the time until the Masters left. She would need the distraction until he could reveal his secret to her. Leaning down, he brushed her full red lips. They tasted of the red flowers she used to color them. It was a sweetness that came alive on his tongue, her own unique taste; a taste he craved. The Queen would not want them to mourn. Not right now. Mourning would come after they had to leave this place.

Sasha moaned into his mouth. Lying flat on the couch, he pulled her on top of him. Her feet only reached his calves, and her toes tickled the hair on his legs, and she giggled.

"Micah, what do you think you are doing?"

"I'm loving you." He loved the way she shivered against him. His words could always bring her into compliance. Reaching around her, he lifted her tunic to her waist so that he could grab the soft globes of her bottom. She spread her

legs more widely in invitation. He whispered across her neck, "See, you want it too."

"Well, we do have a little time to waste before the Masters are gone." She wiggled her bottom half against his aching erection. "Although there is still much we need to do ourselves, I can't help wanting to be selfish and feel you one last time."

He pulled up her tunic, removing it from her body so that he could take in the full glory of her cream-colored flesh. She did the same to him until their bodies lay with nothing between them. The air was charged with a sensual promise, nothing could ever come between them. She pushed against his broad chest until she sat upright, his penis resting at the crook of her thighs. It jerked against her heated core; Sasha giggled, knowing she was torturing him.

Micah watched her, the glow of the candle creating a heavenly light around her form. Her nails raked across his skin, the pain heightening his pleasure. Gods he loved her, and would spend eternity making her see just how much.

"I love you, Micah. Always." She lifted her body slightly and sank her vagina down on his throbbing erection. He moaned as he felt the silkiness of her heated core surround him. Her muscles jerked as he grabbed her waist stilling her motion so that he could get under control. He wanted to savor this moment. This precious moment with her. It was a turning point for them, a new road in their destiny.

Unable to hold back any longer, his hands tightened around her, raising her up so that he could slide almost out of her, he lowered her back down, making her take the full

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length of his erection. She threw her head back, baring her neck to his view. He was not a vampire, but the need to taste her soft flesh would beckon any man.

Sasha picked up his rhythm and rode him with wild fury. He loved the abandon she showed for him. Her hair trailed behind her back in soft waves, tickling the tops of his thighs bringing him to a new high. Their hips moved together, creating a passion that filled the room. Low moans escaped them, their breath coming in fast pants.

"Micah. Oh Micah, come with me."

"Yes." He managed to grind out as both their bodies stiffened when the sweep of their pleasure consumed them. Her muscles milked him of his seed, and it jetted out into her womb.

Her body melted against him as he lay still inside her. Micah wiggled, but she gripped his waist with her thighs, shaking her head back and forth. "Don't move. I don't want to feel our bodies part just yet."

"Sasha, my love." He brushed her damp hair away from her temple, before placing a kiss there. "You don't have to worry that this will be our last time."

She didn't move, but snuggled closer to his hot body. "What do you mean? We're dying, Micah."

"But we don't have to."

She pushed against his chest, and her head popped up, a questioning look in her eyes. "What do you mean we don't have to? Our Queen is dead. She made us. We die when she dies."



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Slipping from her body, he sat up and leaned down to rummage inside his tunic. She whimpered at the loss of his body, and leaned against his side, rubbing her cheek against his skin like a cat while he searched. "What are you looking for?"

"Hang on. Let me find it."

Sasha moved away from him and shivered; he stopped searching and found a blanket to wrap around her. Her eyes glowed with passion, and her smile at his kindness ignited his desire again. He ignored it for the moment, knowing that what he sought was a little more important.

Finally, he felt the cool glass against his fingers. Gripping it, he pulled it out and held it in his hand for her to see. A bright smile graced his face with excitement.

Her eyes grew wide as she reached out to touch it, stopping a few inches from it. "That's not—"

"It is, Sasha."

What he held went far beyond what other servants were ever offered. He could see the look of fear cross her face, just before relief, and excitement took control. This was the Sasha he had fallen in love with. They were not vampires, but with this they would live as long as one.

"Micah, you shouldn't have stolen it! It goes against everything we were taught. The Queen would not allow such a thing. We should die with her!"

"The Queen is the one that made this for me. For us." He watched as the glow in her eyes grew brighter. Her brows arched in surprise. Gods, he wanted to kiss her. To squeeze

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her face between his hands, and kiss the look of surprise right off her face.

He smiled as she gave into the temptation to touch the vial. She stroked a finger against the cool surface. "It's the Elixir of Life?"

Even being told she could take it, Micah knew Sasha's inner voice was telling her not to do it. They had known from the start their lives only hinged on the length of their master. Their master just happened to be the Queen.

"Yes, it is. She told me that if anything were to happen to her, then we were to take this, and guard the pieces that she split up."

Sasha looked into his eyes, and he could see all the questions that whirled around in her mind, but relief that they were not going to die was apparent on her beautiful features; it made his heart soar. If ever a gift he could give, this would be the one. Nothing else could top the power of the Elixir. They would live for eternity, together.

"Guard? No, Micah, I cannot split from you. I would rather die." She pulled her hand back, but he caught it and brought it to his lips.

"We will be together. Dante will not need us, but Eli has many inner demons that will leave him vulnerable to assault. We must help guard the Elixir until the new Queen rises, and we must bring the pieces together."

"Why can't we just go and find the one who did this, and kill him? The bastard should be taken down."

Micah pulled the stopper from the vial and inhaled the sweet smell, letting Sasha's angry words float on by. A small

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plume of smoke drifted up from the small container, wrapping around his senses. He knew that she was upset, but once they found their place with Eli, she would realize their importance in making sure that the Others paid the price for taking their Queen. He felt his muscles relax, and his mind released great waves of pleasure throughout his body.

"Smell it, Sasha. Feel its effects."

Holding it under her nose, she closed her eyes and inhaled. A glorious smile curved her full lips, making him smile too.

"I'll drink it first, and you can drink the rest."

Sasha nodded, but held his free hand in a tight grip.

"It will be okay, the Queen would not harm us."

"I know," she whispered.

He tipped the vial back, and the bittersweet liquid slid down his throat. Pulling it away from his lips, he coughed as he held out the rest to Sasha to take. "Drink ... it ... now."

\* \* \* \*

Holding the glass, she saw the pain cross Micah's features. Fear engulfed her, and she didn't think that she could drink the dark red liquid that now covered her lover's lips. He fell from the couch onto the floor, holding his stomach. He coughed uncontrollably, Sasha dropped beside him, concern and fear evident in her eyes.

"Take ... it ... now." He pleaded, and she knew that if he died, she could not live in a world without him. Stealing her nerves, she closed her eyes and gripped the vial, holding it against her lips. Sending up a silent prayer to her Queen, and to any God that might be listening, she tilted it back; she felt

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the fire racing down her throat. It felt alive inside her, spreading slowly through her veins. It attacked her blood, the pain gripped her stomach.

Micah reached out, and the touch of his fingers felt like needles prickling her skin. She fought not to pull away from his touch. He pulled her closer against his naked skin as they both felt the Elixir attacking their bodies. Surely this was death. Instead of fading away, maybe the Queen had wanted them to go quickly, and this was her way of ensuring that they did not suffer for hours.

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## Chapter Four

Sasha was not sure how long they lay naked on the floor. She only awoke when she felt the warmth of the sun coming in through a window. Micah lay at her back, his arms wrapped around her waist. Her heart stopped, and she quickly turned around to look at him. Placing her hand on his chest, she felt frantically for a heartbeat, anything to show that he was alive. Relief swamped her as she felt the hard thump of his heart against the wall of his chest. She laid her head there, listening to the gentle rhythm that was the most beautiful sound. They had survived.

"Sasha?"

"Yes, my love?" She looked up into his dark eyes, a bright smile on her face.

"Why didn't you tell me that was a bad idea?" He laughed, before a moan escaped him. She kissed his chest at his humor.

"It was worth it if it means eternity with you." Wrapping her arms around him, she felt the hardness of his phallus against her stomach. It jerked, and her body responded, a fresh wave of moisture readying her for his conquering.

"Yes, it was worth it, but it hurt like demons from hell." Moving, he pulled her under him, placing his length at her entrance. Micah looked down at her and she felt the radiance of his emotions caress her skin before he thrust deep inside her. Arching her back, she let the new feel of his passion fill her. It felt so right to have him inside her.

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"Micah, my love. You feel so good."

His hands covered her breasts then tweaked her already hard nipples between his fingers. The sensation sent a spasm to her core, making her squeeze him tighter with her muscles. He groaned.

"Stop that, woman, if you want this to last." His hands caressed her sides as he leaned in to taste the skin of her neck. He nipped her flesh before he kissed the pain away.

"I want it hard and fast, Micah. Love me hard and fast. Let me know I'm alive."

He laughed against her neck, "My pleasure." Picking up the pace, Micah slammed into her, and she quickly found his rhythm. Their bodies came together as his erection reached a spot deep inside her, stroking it in an effort to send her over the edge. Her desire blossomed, taking her higher with each hard thrust of his cock. Harder, harder. She wasn't sure if she spoke the words, but Micah complied, and worked his body with greater force against hers.

Sweat coated their flesh as he captured her lips with his, searing her with his kiss. Sasha tasted the saltiness of his sweat, and it made her muscles tighten around him. Everything about this man infused her. Feeling him moving inside her was not enough. She wanted to crawl inside him, to feel him everywhere. Her hands moved over the grooves of his muscled back. His body was well built.

"Yes. You feel so good, my Sasha." She loved the way he spoke to her when they made love.

Then she felt it, the great crescendo of their love like a tidal wave over her body. It swept over them sending them

into oblivion, until they both lay limp in each other's arms. They could not move, and Micah's weight on her chest was heavenly.

He rolled off her, and they both lay face up staring at the ceiling. Now all the questions began to form in her mind. How would they guard the Elixir and how could they keep Eli safe while they waited for the new Queen. How long would it take for a new queen to rise?

"We have much to do, love. Dante is well on his way with his half of the Elixir and Eli, well, he's just on his way." Micah's voice cut into her thoughts. His voice held the roughness of the early morning and their lovemaking.

"What do we need to do first? How can we stay hidden from Eli and guard the Elixir at the same time?"

Micah rolled onto his side and propped his head in his hand. His eyes traveled over her well-loved body. Sasha shivered feeling his gaze on her.

"First, we need to dress before we're tempted to spend all day pleasuring ourselves. We need to find out where Eli plans on going. Then we protect him."

Just then, a dark shape formed in the doorway. Micah jumped up and shielded Sasha's body with his own.

"Who are you?" Micah called out.

Sasha knew that it was not a vampire or a servant. Fear raced in her veins as she felt his essence. The power to read people was from her human days, but enhanced when she became a servant. The man felt hallow inside, like something in him was missing. She felt his sadness as he stood there watching them, with calculating eyes.

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Then he was gone just as quick as he had arrived.

"Micah?" Rising, Sasha looked over his shoulder at the now empty doorway. "Are we in danger?"

Micah turned and rubbed her arms. "I don't think so, but I think we need to hurry and get on Eli's trail."

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## **Chapter Five**

He had searched all night for the Elixir.

He had avoided both the servants and the vampires. Once he had come close to getting caught, and that was when he had opened the chest where the Elixir was being held only to find that the chest was empty. All thought of protecting himself had fled as he tried to comprehend that the Elixir was gone. It wasn't supposed to be empty. The Queen did not know he was there. She couldn't have known to hide it.

He had heard the movements of the vampires gathering their coffins and the servants packing their belongings, and finally the sounds faded as they abandoned the palace. Then he had gotten bolder, knowing there was no one there to find him, the thought that someone else had the Elixir becoming a very real possibility.

His anger had erupted inside him until everything he touched he either threw across the room or broke within his grasp.

Blood still dripped from various wounds on his hands.

Accepting his failure, he knew he would have to return without the Elixir. It would mean punishment, but there was nothing else that could be done. It was gone.

Defeated, he slowly made his way down the corridors. He heard a slight sound, the noises growing in clarity the further he went.

They were moans.

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Following the sounds, he soon found himself standing at the same doorway from the previous night.

The man and woman inside were making love.

Leaning against the wall, he let their pleasures assault his body. His eyelids ached to close from forcing them to stay open all night. Too drained to fight it, he let them drift shut as his penis lengthened and brushed against his dark tunic. Reaching down, he pulled up the hem of his tunic, and held his hardness in his palm. He was forbidden to give himself pleasure, but he couldn't help stroking the straining flesh as the sounds of their pleasure engulfed him.

The echoes of their flesh slapping together made his body tighten even more as he tried to visualize their coupling, his breath coming faster, matching theirs. He stroked faster, feeling the rise of his desire.

No, he needed to stop. They would be able to tell, and his punishment would be even more severe.

Hearing the sounds of their completion, he ground his teeth together. His body ached for its own finale, but he fought it. Removing his hand, he leaned against the cool wall, thankful for its calming effect against his heated flesh. Hearing the word Elixir, he pressed closer to the door forgetting for the moment his loss.

They spoke of the vampires having half of the Elixir. Dante and Eli. Interesting. Not sure of what overcame him; he stepped into the doorway. The couple's eyes grew large before the male stood over his woman, blocking his view. He had actually hoped that he could get a glimpse of what a female form looked like. Maybe it was for the best that this

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was denied him; it would probably torture him even more than he figured his masters would torture him for his failure to secure the Elixir.

The assassin locked eyes with the male in the room, sending out a silent challenge. He knew they spoke of the one that carried the Elixir. No, there were two. And he would find them.

Fleeing the room, he escaped the Palace and ran with the wind to his home to plan. The end of this passionless torture would soon be over.

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Read on for a preview of Midnyte Dupree's *Winter's Blood:  
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Coming October 2008 to Resplendence Publishing

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## **Winter's Blood**

By Midnyte Dupree

"Why did they have to pick Christmas time," Angel muttered under her breath.

The freezing wind whipped under her heavy coat. She tried pulling it tighter to her body, but the cold always found a way inside to curl next to her skin. Her teeth chattered, her fingers tingled, and her toes ... her toes felt like if someone touched them they would shatter like glass.

The snow had stopped an hour ago, but looking up at the clouds against the coming night, they still held a threatening element.

She forced her feet to move through the six inches that had already fallen on the sidewalk as she made her way to the shop, *A Christmas Night*. Once inside, she had to find a way to steal the formula for the glass ornaments the owner made.

"Damn it," she said as her foot slipped against the ice. Looking to the sky, she prayed, "Please, no more snow. Just let me get my sister back. Then it can snow all it wants."

The video had arrived by special carrier first thing that morning. When she had popped it into her VCR, her younger sister's face appeared huge before her eyes. Instantly, she knew something was wrong. Abby's dark blond hair looked oily and dirty, something her sister would have never allowed, and her mascara was smudged under her blue eyes. One wet

streak raced down her pale cheek. Angel's heart all but stopped.

"Angel," Abby's voice sounded hoarse as it shook with fear. "You have to steal a formula. A very special formula! Or they will..." A heavy sob rocked her body. "Or they will kill me."

Those awful words still echoed in her mind. Abby said she had forty-eight hours to steal the formula for a special glass that only the owner of *A Christmas Night* possessed.

Angel shook her head in confusion. What could be so special about this glass that someone would kidnap her sister for it, she wondered. Not that it mattered. The only thing that concerned her was getting her little sister back. Not who kidnapped her, or why he wanted this particular glass. None of it mattered, except getting the formula.

Abby was the last remaining member of her family. They often vegged out on the couch together during the Christmas season, letting the holiday cheer pass them quietly by. Together they would stock up on all the necessities that would last them through the month of December and cut themselves off from the world. It was a time for them to mourn the loss of their parents, who had died in a car explosion right before their big Christmas celebration three years ago.

The year after their death, Angel and Abby had tried to celebrate, but it conjured only hurtful images of their once happy family; so they both decided to put away the Christmas tree and hibernate until the New Year. It soon became a tradition. It was something they both accepted not knowing how to get past their grief.

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Now, Angel was fighting the mad rush of people to get the one thing that would save her sister. Whoever these people were, who thought they could abuse them this way, had another thing coming. She hoped getting the formula would be easy, so she could get her sister back and escape to another state where these bastards would not be able to find them again.

"God, I hate Christmas." She reached up, pulling her hat further down around her ears. The wind whipped wildly around her legs as if seeking a way to breach the heaviness of her clothes. The shop was not much further. Window after window full of Christmas displays passed on her left. She refused to look at them. The Christmas trees, the lights, the garland, everything made her cringe. This would all be over soon was a mantra created in her head.

A few steps from the door, she pushed her blond hair over her shoulder, pasted on a big sweet smile, and blinked her eyes a few times to give them an innocent effect. Just another job, she thought, trying to get into the roll. Once inside, she could say she needed to use the bathroom, then slip off into the office and quickly search the files. That is, if the owner weren't occupying his domain.

Rethinking her plan, Angel decided it might be best to see how far she could get tonight and get a feel for the layout of the shop. Later, after the shop closed, she could slip inside and search the files.

Reaching out to grab the knob, she inhaled deeply and slowly exhaled as she passed over the threshold. Cinnamon

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and spice assaulted her senses making her fight to keep from sneezing as the scents accosted her.

"For Abby's sake," she whispered to herself as she let the symbols of Christmas fill her vision.

The door jingled as it slipped back into place behind her, Christmas tunes played over a speaker. For a moment, she allowed the warmth of the shop to soak through her clothing and gently caress her skin. *Ahhh*, she found herself wanting to say. "Warmth," her body replied, causing her to relax.

"May I help you?"

With a start, she grabbed her chest, and turned to face the saleswoman.

The little woman was at least four inches shorter than her own 5'3 frame. Her hair, pulled back into a tight bun, was the whitest white, much like the fallen snow that blanketed the street. Wrinkles characterized her face, and a wide smile, and loving eyes looked expectantly at her.

"I'm sorry, dear. I didn't mean to sneak up on you."

Angel looked at the little grandmotherly figure, resisting the urge to roll her eyes. Shaking her head, the tips of her lips curled up into a soft smile.

"No. It's quite all right." Angel lowered her voice, her smile growing. "I was just so caught up in the shopping list that I have running through my mind that I didn't hear you. Totally my fault." She threw in a little giggle at the end knowing it made her appear less threatening.

"Who are you looking to buy for in here? We have all sorts of lovely gifts. My son said just the other day, Mama—he's always called me mama, never mom or mother, always



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mama. Well, anyway, he told me the other day that he hoped I'd bring home one of Dante's newest ornaments. They have prisms on the inside, you see."

Angel just nodded her head as the old woman took her around the shop, pointing to this ornament or that ornament. Each one had a special story, a unique tale that she told in agonizing detail.

Angel fought the urge to flee the building and never look back, but she kept reminding herself that she had a job to do.

"Um. Ma'am? May I use your ladies' room?" She managed to work up a blush and cheered herself inside. *Bravo!*

"Sure deary, it's in the back. Second door on your right. I'll just wait right here for you."

Angel noted an odd glint in the saleswoman's eye before the front door jingled and another customer walked in. The woman excused herself and raced to the new customer, eager for a sale.

"Perfect," Angel said under her breath.

Pushing through the back door, she located the bathroom, but did not enter. Instead, she walked a few more feet further down the hall until she stood in front of the door marked OFFICE. The threat of the old woman discovering her was at the front of her mind. With any luck, the new customer would keep her busy for a while.

Looking back to make sure no one had appeared, she reached out and grabbed the knob, silently twisting it, praying that it was unlocked. Her heart pounded against her chest, sounding loud to her ears in the deathly quiet hallway.

The door slipped open.

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The room appeared very dark, grey shadows outlining the bookcases along the wall. Before entering, she looked down the hall again, then slipped inside closing the door softly behind her.

She felt along the wall for the light switch and flipped it up. The room erupted in light just as she realized she wasn't alone. Angel's body froze in place as the hair on the back of her neck stood on end as her heart pounded, one solid beat against her chest. But, she refused to turn around.

A large hand moved over hers, easily covering the fingers resting on the light switch. His touch heated her skin, causing her hand to throb inside the warm cocoon of his palm. Inhaling deeply, she allowed the oxygen to infuse her muscles, to relax them, so that her mind would stay focused. She had found herself in far worse situations than this before.

He squeezed lightly indicating to her that there was no way she would win if she decided to fight.

Angel took stock of their positions. Other than her hand, he was not touching her, but the warmth of his chest seeped into her back, even through the multiple layers of her clothes. How odd.

She jumped as his scorching breath brushed across the skin of her ear, the heat radiating down her neck and traveling to parts of her body she tried to stay unaware of. She could smell a fragrance of exotic flowers drifting up from his clothes, accompanied by a pure male odor that screamed at her to let down her barriers. Something about this man made her body burn to be touched.

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Angel found herself easing back into a hard chest, shocked at how unmovable it felt. His muscles danced against her body, sending more heat racing across her flesh. Moisture seeped into her lacy underwear, making her desire undeniable. She squeezed her thighs together to dispel the ache that started between them.

"It is not often you mortals come of your own free will."

She was too caught up in the feel of his hands for his words to register. The room grew hot, or maybe it was just she who was hot. A drop of sweat raced down the path between her breasts, her nipples pushed against the silk of her blouse.

His hand still held hers in his hot grip. He moved their joined hands away from the wall bringing hers to rest at her side.

She *wanted* to turn around and sink into his chest, to let his arms settle around her shoulders. But, she *needed* to get away from this man that was awakening her body from its long slumber.

Angel broke free and turned around, quickly realizing that it was not the smartest thing to do. His eyes caught hers, holding them to his dark gaze. "Oh. I'm sorry. I was just on my way..." She cringed at the seductive whisper of her voice. It sounded husky and passion filled even to her own ears. She tried to remember why she was there, but his lips filled her vision, pushing all other thoughts out of her mind.

"Shh," he said, placing one warm finger to her lips. "You are beautiful. I would have chosen you, had I seen you first."

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He ran his finger lightly over her lips, slowly over her chin, and down the line of her neck. Chill bumps erupted down her spine, making her shiver and long pent-up passion flooded her veins. She had built walls after her ex-fiancé betrayed her, now this man's touch was battering them down.

His finger continued gliding down until he parted her shirt, leaving her breathless for his next move. After a moment, he continued slowly over her flesh before resting directly in the valley between her breasts, her skin on fire where he touched her.

"What are you doing?" Angel asked, hesitantly.

"I'm admiring your ... neck."

At his words, she self consciously rubbed at the exposed flesh. His eyes, locked with hers, were so dark, she thought she could see her own reflection. The pupil and the iris faded together, outlined with a ring of gold.

His eyes questioned why she covered her flesh to him, and her hand dropped away obediently. The man exuded power that could not be denied.

Angel fought to remain calm. She had been in more precarious situations—this was nothing. Once, shortly after her father past away and she had taken up being a professional thief, she had been caught stealing a piece of art. The owner had taken one look at her curvaceous body and thought he would have his way with her. He had almost succeeded, until she kicked him so hard in the balls she thought they would come out of his mouth. She had gotten away, the painting clasped tightly in her grasp.

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Even during that situation, she had been completely aware of her feelings, knowing she wanted to escape, never wanting the owner to touch her body, not like this. But now, she was totally consumed by the man before, her mind was growing fuzzy the longer she looked into his eyes, and her thoughts were growing slower, lazier.

Her eyelids drooped.

Angel forced her eyes to open, to watch the seductive way he lowered his head to hers. She thought for a minute that he would kiss her, and anticipated the feel of his lips, but at the last moment he angled his head and brushed his lips across neck.

A jolt of electricity raced from the spot where his cool lips touched her neck. It had been so long since she had been touched like this. She wanted more. Much more. She closed her eyes, wanting to feel his palms rub across her nipples, down over her stomach, and to caress her even lower.

Erotic images of the two of them naked, splayed out across a bed of crimson sheets played against the back of her lids, his hands cupping her breasts while the heat of his mouth seared her nipples. Even now, she felt the cream begin to soak her panties as her body called out to his to fill her.

She inhaled deeply, bringing herself back to the here and now. Placing her hands on his chest with the intent to push away, her fingers began to stroke over his muscles. Feelings warred within her, fighting to let him continue, and fighting to remain in control. Her passion won out as a sensual longing infused her. She was in the arms of a complete stranger, and she was allowing him free reign, and it felt so right.

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*This was insane.*

She tried to pull away, but he cupped the back of her neck with a large hand, holding her steady. "Shh..." His warm breath caressed her neck and goose bumps broke out over her arms.

He kissed the area over her collarbone, teasing her skin. A moan escaped from deep in her throat, and she angled her neck to give him better access.

A deep haze wrapped around her thoughts as her body slowly succumbed, wanting him to take what he wanted just as long as he did not stop. She needed to feel more of him. Her hands continued rubbing over his muscled chest, his shoulders, stroking up and down his arms. The world around her became unimportant as she arched into him.

Out of nowhere, something pierced her skin. Angel's eyes flew open as fire raced through her veins. She did not have time to scream before her body became languid and the room dimmed. A chill overcame her body. Finally, she closed her eyes, allowing the darkness to claim her.

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## About the Author

*K.L. Bjork, also writing as Midnyte Dupree, is a full time telecommunications analyst, a wife and a mother of two small children. She started reading romance in 2003 and when all her favorite authors were in between books she decided to do some writing on her own. That is when she discovered the joy of creating characters and building worlds full of magic. Christine Feehan was the first author in romance that she read and instantly fell in love with the Carpathians, soon following Feehan she discovered Sherrilyn Kenyon and the Dark Hunters. She anticipates each book coming out, but now understands why it takes so long between stories.*

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However, once she's in the opulent Manhattan flat, Moreen can't resist the urge to take one small token from the woman she still blames for her own downfall-an old, neglected oil lamp that she's sure Aliya will never miss.

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Moreen accidentally summons a gorgeous demon-turned-pleasure djinni named Paran ... and he's not too thrilled with the theft of his property. Moreen has rubbed his lamp, the contract is sealed. For the next thirty days, she belongs to him. And Paran intends to use this time to help his little felon learn some important lessons, including the true meaning of the words honor and obey.

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