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THE BEGINNING

The Portal
Book One

Emery LaRue

THE BEGINNING: THE PORTAL-BOOK ONE
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The Beginning: The Portal – Book 1

By

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Chapter 1

Hell's Gate was at capacity tonight. The casino had grown over the years. The bright lights and slot machines flickered and flashed, drawing Ike's attention to every winner and every loser. The black jack tables overflowed with men seeking their fortune. They would be better off holding onto their hard earned dollars.

Ike Iverson watched with sharp, alert eyes as the patrons of the Hell's Gate Casino drank and gambled. He didn't suspect any trouble, but that didn't mean it wasn't there. In a city as large as Las Vegas, you never counted your chicks before they hatched. He was a retired special force's soldier, and he took nothing for granted. A lot of money came through this place in a day. He was ready for just about anything.

Scouting the room, his eyes touched those of his partner and best friend. Tony Rodgers had been in the special force's unit with him, and Ike knew if there were any problems, the best of the best had his back. The look Tony sent him now, however, had the hair rising on the back of his neck. The men knew each other well. There was a possible situation. Ike moved to meet him.

"What's going on?" he asked as he approached.

"Take a look over by the dollar slots." Tony nodded his head in that direction.

Ike scanned the area and his eyes widened. Two of the most gorgeous women he had ever seen were there, watching the crowd. They each had long, wavy hair that seemed to reach their knees. Both were dressed so provocatively. The smaller of the two

wore a sheer material that did nothing to hide all her glory, hip length and belted at the waist. But it was the taller of the two that caught his very appreciative eye. Though the same sheer material covered her breast, it split between them. A silver choker was the only thing holding it in place. Her flat, firm stomach was exposed, and her long muscular legs encased in solid leather. Then his eyes fell on her weapons. She was strapped with knives, and of all things, the hilt of a sword could be seen from over her shoulder. That could definitely be a problem.

"Is there a show tonight?" Ike asked, though he knew from reading the event's sheet that there was not.

"Even if there were a show, those weapons wouldn't be allowed." Tony clapped his friend on the back. "You want to ask her for those blades, or should I?"

"We'll go together." Ike decided. "She may look like a goddess, but if she can use those things and tries... well, it may take us both. I don't want to shoot a woman."

"I suppose you think I do?" Tony said as he shook his head and followed Ike through the crowd.

With determined strides, Ike walked toward the women. Maybe they were new employees. The others who worked in the place dressed just as provocatively. Well, not quite so revealing, but sexy just the same. It was the cause of a lot of the fights he had to break up. Then again, maybe they're just from out of town.

Just as he reached arm's length, the taller of the two drew her blade from her waist. He stopped quickly, not wanting to alarm her. He knew then, this woman was no employee, just as he knew Tony had pulled his gun. Ike held up a hand of warning.

"You don't want to do that, ma'am."

"Put the knife down!" Tony ordered.

"Get out of my way, mortal." She continued to hold her blade before her as she brought her hand up to his, clasping his wrist. He felt something like electricity flow up his arm and he gasped. Her dark eyes missed nothing as she looked into his; her short intake of breath told him she felt it too. But her attention was drawn elsewhere just as quickly.

He wasn't sure, but Ike could swear she was watching something behind him. He knew where Tony was, so it must be a patron. The ding of the machines turned to a buzzing in his ears. He didn't want to have to hurt this woman.

"I can't do that." He kept his voice calm. "Tell me what you are after."

"Dimenos!" she said as she drew her arm back, and the blade flew from her hand.

"No!" Tony shouted as his finger pulled the trigger.

Spinning around, Ike searched for the blade. He realized that he was not her target. A man had been pinned to a wall. At least he thought he was a man. She had impaled him through the shoulder, and he just hung there, silently watching her. He never made a sound. At Tony's gasp, he turned back and looked at his friend's stunned face, then followed his gaze. The bullet he had fired was spinning in mid air, right before the woman's chest.

"What the hell is going on here?" Ike asked. "How the hell did you do that? You should be down, with a bullet in you." Drawing his gun, he faced her. "I *will* shoot you if you move."

"If your friend failed, what makes you think you will succeed?" She stepped around him, walking to the man on the wall. But then again, he didn't look too manly anymore. A strange blue flame surrounded him.

"Where is the rest of your army?" she asked the creature.

"They are near, Brillasse. You will die, slowly if Tavoli has his way."

"They will fail and he will fail, just as you failed to escape me."

"Persephone will answer to Hades for this," he hissed as she drew near.

Brillasse pulled the knife from the man, though her hand still pinned him to the wall with ease.

"But you will answer to him first," she said as she drove it straight through his heart. The blue flame engulfed him and he was gone.

Ike looked around him then. The place was deserted. For the first time in his life, he was at a loss for what to do. A beautiful woman just stabbed a man and he disappeared.

And what the hell was this shit about Persephone? Hades? He didn't even want to think about the bullet that stopped in mid air. He needed a drink.

"The others will be back, and I must prepare," she said as she stood beside him.

"What are you talking about? Who are you?"

For the first time, she smiled. "I am Brillasse, and my sister is Roveena. We come from the portal world of Hellishiam."

Ike slapped his leg. "Of course, why didn't I think of that?" She was certifiable, he was sure of it. "I was there just last week." How would he explain this to his boss?

"What you saw as a man, was not a man at all," she said as she replaced her dagger, looking for all the world like she did this everyday. Ignoring his sarcasm, she asked, "What is your name?"

"Ike Iverson, and that's my partner, Tony Rodgers." He sighed heavily. "This is the Hell's Gate Casino, and you are out of your beautiful head."

"Thing's are not always what they appear, Ike Iverson."

"Just plain Ike will do."

Tony walked over with Roveena, and she smiled sweetly. Ike thought she had the kindest eyes he had ever seen.

"Tony tells me you and he were soldiers." Her voice was musical.

"Yes."

"Is there a place my sister and I can rest?" Roveena asked. "The dawn is coming."

He looked at his watch. It was indeed that time. Just then, the second shift of security came through the door.

"I'll have to make a report. I have no idea how many people witnessed the action." He looked around in confusion. "Where did all the people go?"

"There were no witnesses. I saw to that." Roveena smiled at him again. "We do, however, need a place to rest please."

"You have no place to stay?" Tony was all concerned. Ike had to wonder if he was not under some crazy spell.

"We were sent here through the portal," Brillasse said.

"Ike, we have plenty of room," Tony said. They had been sharing an apartment since returning from Desert Storm together. His best buddy was infatuated with Roveena and it may very well kill them all. Ike just didn't take strange females home, even if they were tongue wagging gorgeous. He could *not* believe he was doing this.

"We have room at our place, and you can stay on one condition."

"What condition is that?" Brillasse asked.

"I want the whole story."

They all agreed to sit and talk rationally. Ike just wanted to understand. Tony, however, had apparently won the affections of the lovely Roveena. Ike had no doubt where she would be sleeping. She made that clear every time she looked at Tony.

Chapter 2

The apartment was spacious, and they did have extra room. The problem was that Tony was willing to trust these strange women. Ike never doubted Tony. They had been through hell and back together. But his friend was thinking with his little soldier this time. The other woman looked very pale, like she might collapse.

"Are you all right?"

"I will be fine, once I am rested." She removed her dagger, and then her sword, placing it on the coffee table. She then removed several daggers from her boots. Ike watched as she sat heavily on the couch.

"Were you expecting a war?"

"As a matter of fact, I was." She sounded drained. "You have a very interesting dwelling."

Roveena came to her sister and sat beside her. She too looked worried, but her voice was soft and calm. "You need to nourish yourself, Brillasse."

"I will be fine."

"No, you will not. Please, take from me what you need."

Ike stood looking down at the two beautiful, crazy sisters on his couch. Interesting dwelling? Had they never seen an apartment before?

"Roveena, you know I cannot." She smiled at her sister. "You are in need, just as I am."

"What is it you need, maybe we can help?" Ike asked.

"Do you really want to know?" She smiled.

"If we can help you, we will." He wished now he hadn't asked. That smile on her face was chilling.

"I need blood," she said. "I need fresh blood. I don't need blood from a vile, but from a vein. Would you like to donate?"

"That does it!" Ike shouted as he paced the floor. "I've made up my mind. You are both certifiable, straight jacket wearing, in need of medication nut cases!"

"Ike!" Tony shouted.

"Wait! I'm the nut because I let you in here!" The scar above his eye, as always when he was angered, began to show. Ike's very own souvenir for his war efforts. Ordinarily, it never showed. Tony saw it and knew he was running out of patience.

"Ike, would you relax a little?" Tony asked. "You have to admit that some strange shit went on tonight. What she just said is not the icing on the cake."

"I suppose you believe her?"

"I'm a dead shot. After seeing a bullet that I fired stop inches in midair before my target, let's just say I'm ruling nothing out," Tony said. "Let's not forget the blue flaming dead guy either. Let's sit down and hear them out. You wanted the story."

Ike sat in the chair, facing the sisters. Tony sat beside Roveena, and she held his hand as if they had known each other longer than just a few hours. Ike didn't miss the look in his friend's eyes. He was infatuated with the woman.

"We are human, but not human. Brillasse was not lying to you. Blood is our lifeline. We don't need it all the time. But in battle, we use much of our physical strength. Today was not a bad fight, but she used much energy in directing the Dimeno away from you. It took a lot of her strength to throw her blade accurately."

"Are you telling me you two are some kind of superhuman vampires?" Ike asked.

"I suppose you may call us that." Roveena turned to face Tony. "That was no man today. He was a Dimeno. In your language you would say Demon. Brillasse and I are warriors for Hellishiam. It is the world in between this one and the underworld. Persephone created us to guard earth's portals when Hades releases his minions."

"Well, for a warrior you carry no weapons." Ike stated in a tone that clearly he didn't believe her. "Does your sister do all the fighting?" He flinched and paled when the lamp beside him exploded.

"I am more powerful than you could ever imagine," she snapped. "It was I who stopped Tony's bullet."

"Sorry about that," Tony said.

"Never mind that," she sighed. "I am tired and must rest. Brillasse, if you need, I will provide."

Standing, Roveena followed Tony into his room. He returned a moment later.

"I'm going to bed, too."

"You don't even know her."

"But I want to, Ike. Goodnight."

Ike watched his friend leave with mixed emotions. *What if she were telling the truth? Would Tony be safe with her?*

"Roveena will take nothing that is not offered freely," Brillasse said.

He turned back to the woman on the couch. Ike couldn't deny her beauty. Even though she could probably kick his Green Beret ass, he still couldn't help wondering what she would be like in his bed. She looked at him and smiled. Was she reading his mind?

"No," she replied, as if she heard his thoughts.

"What?"

"I'm not inside your head." Brillasse stood, stretched, and began to remove her top. Though her garment had been sheer and left little to the imagination, Ike's body responded to her disrobing.

"Can I get you a robe or something?" Ike asked, rising from his chair.

"Does my nakedness offend you?"

"No, I wouldn't say that."

"I don't need cover. My body is weak and I want to be comfortable."

When she began unlacing her leather pants, Ike sat back down in the chair. He felt as if the wind was knocked out of him. When she reclined on the couch, her arms stretched above her, he felt it through his bones. Her breasts were perfection. High and rounded with nipples he longed to taste. He wanted to take her, right there on his couch. Ike had a feeling she knew that.

“Has anyone ever accused you of being a seductress?”

“If you want me, Ike, then you can have me.”

“I want you, Brillasse. Only a fool wouldn’t.” His voice was raspy. “But I’m not in the habit of sleeping with just anyone, especially for the use of only her body.”

Brillasse slid from the couch and crawled to him. Ike sat, watching her every move. The image of a tigress came to mind, slowly and seductively stalking her prey. Still on her knees, she placed her hands on his thighs, slowly working them over his groin and stomach. When she reached his chest, she massaged gently and he groaned.

“I need sex as much as I need blood,” she whispered. “While I still have the strength, I would like to have one of those needs met.”

As she raised his shirt, she kissed his chest. Ike had always been proud of his body. Time in the military will do that. His body had always been firm. But the minute her lips met his chest, that tight body began to melt. He removed his shirt and buried his hands in her hair, holding her to him. She raised her mouth to his and he kissed her deeply, the taste of her was sweet. When he felt her at his jeans, he didn’t stop her but helped her remove them.

Both naked now, Ike pulled her onto his lap. Her long, luscious legs draped over the arm of his chair on either side of his body. He could feel her heat against him, and he had to fight to go slow. *Why the hell he was so instantly attracted to this woman?* He would figure out later.

Brillasse wanted him more than she had ever wanted a man. The sparks she felt were new to her, but she also knew this was more than just sex. In all her years, she never felt this much heat. She had found her equal, her mate.

Ike took a nipple into his mouth and suckled gently. She gasped, holding his head tightly. He willingly increased the pressure. Reaching between her legs, he rubbed her sensitive flesh until she was grinding herself against him. Glancing into her face, he thought her beautiful. Her face flushed with passion.

Though it felt like heaven, Brillasse needed more than his touch. She removed his hand from between her thighs, and his mouth returned to her breast. Taking him in her hand, she guided him to her heat. She began to take him inside slowly, loving the feel of him stretching her, filling her.

He laid his head back and moaned at the feel of her tightness around him. She continued to take him inside as she kissed and nipped at his neck. Her strong thighs gripped him as she seated herself fully. Ike watched her face as she rode him. Though still pale, her cheeks were flushed and her eyes told him what she felt. A small stream of blood rolled from her chin as she bit her lower lip. Ike licked the blood from her. Brillasse froze and looked into his eyes.

"How do I taste?" she whispered.

"Beautiful."

"I want to taste you." As she spoke, Ike could see her teeth. She had not lied. She was a vampire. For some reason, he didn't care.

"Will it change me?"

"No. There would have to be an exchange."

"Then taste me."

Again she moved, but harder this time. Her anticipation matched his own. Gripping her hips, Ike let her have her way. He felt her breath on his shoulder, her tongue licking its way to the pulse in his neck. His hips jerked and they both gasped as it drove him deeper inside her. But when her teeth sank into him, Ike saw the stars. The feel of her body around him and knowing she was drinking him in, sent him into a climax that was so good it hurt. It seemed to go on and on. He held her head to his neck, willing her to take all she needed.

Brillasse took from him until her own body splintered. Throwing her head back, she gave into her own pleasure. She could feel his release inside her, and it prolonged her own. Leaning forward, she kissed him as their bodies pulsed together. Ike deepened the kiss, tasting his blood upon her lips. She collapsed against his chest, satisfied in so many ways.

Ike caressed her back as he tried to focus. That had been the best sex of his life. No, he hadn't had sex. He had been made love to most thoroughly. He felt as if he had been waiting for this woman all of his life. Like she was his equal in both strength and mind. But that was impossible. He just met her, but he couldn't deny there was a definite connection between them.

Realizing they were still in the chair in the living room, he held her tight as he stood. Brillasse wrapped her legs around his waist and his body immediately responded. Looking into her eyes, he carried her to his room. Ike shut the door and walked to his bed, tossing her in its center.

"Ready for round two?" he asked. There was no time to respond as he quickly followed her down into the mattress.

Chapter 3

Tony lay beside Roveena, holding her as she slept. She drank from him tonight, and he loved every minute of it. He thought of Ike, and wondered how his friend had fared. Tony knew he had slept with Brillasse. Roveena had told him the reasons he should stay inside the room. He laughed at the thought.

The woman beside him had proven to be a talented lover. Her body took him higher than ever before. He had tried to be as gentle as he could, but Roveena would have none of it. Her mouth had taken him to the stars, and her body had taken him to the heavens. Tony didn't want to let her go.

She stirred beside him, and he knew she could sense his thoughts. Tony closed his eyes and welcomed the sleep that took him.

When he next opened his eyes, she was there, leaning on his chest and smiling. He could get used to that.

"Tony?"

"Yeah?"

"Did you feel it too?" she asked. "Did you feel the connection last night?"

"Yes."

Raising onto his arm, he pushed her to the bed and covered her with his body. He kissed her eyes and cheeks. When he reached her mouth, he kissed her deeply. Moving to her neck and breast, he paid particular attention there. He could spend hours right here.

"Tony, please stop teasing me."

"I have no intension of teasing you." He resumed his kisses.

With remarkable strength, Roveena pushed him to his back and straddled his hips. He looked into her eyes and stared in disbelief as her eyes went from dark brown to red. She had a smile on her beautiful face.

"Roveena?" his voice was unsure.

"It's all right, Tony. I won't hurt you."

"What's happening?"

"I have found my mate," she said as she leaned down and kissed him.

Tony forgot about her eyes. He trusted her, though he barely knew her. There was something between them that he knew was right.

Moving her body sensuously, she joined them together once again. Sitting forward, he wrapped his arms around her as she wrapped her legs around him. Together they rocked and moved as one.

Tony offered his neck to her once more, and again she accepted. Her teeth sank into his neck and he exploded, moving roughly. Roveena could not contain her own pleasure and she cried out, his name on her lips.

He held her for what seemed like hours. Roveena moved to lay beside him, content in her life. The only thing that could destroy her now was the Dimenos.

"Roveena?" he said as he turned on his side to face her. "What did you mean when you said you had found your mate?"

"If you can accept me and love me, you could be my husband."

"But how could you know that I was the one?"

"My heart and my body recognized yours. Did you not feel it?" Her eyes looked worried.

"Yes. I felt it." He smiled into her eyes. "I just didn't want to sound ridiculous."

Smiling, she stood and covered herself with his shirt. She walked to his dresser and threw him a pair of boxers. He caught them and pulled them on, then stood before her.

"You could never sound that way to me. Now, you must eat."

"Is it safe to venture out these doors?" He grinned.

"They retired long ago."

Laughing, they walked into the kitchen. Roveena stopped short. Looking into the living room, Tony saw five men. They were just standing there, as if waiting for someone. Stepping around Roveena, who seemed to be praying, he walked into the room.

"Who in the hell are you?"

Chapter 4

Brillasse sat up in the bed, her sister's message received. Reaching over, she started to wake Ike, but he was already sitting up.

"What is it?" he asked, pulling his shorts on and tossing her a shirt.

"They have come for us."

"Who?"

"The Dimenos."

"You mean those guys with the blue flames?"

"That will only happen if I get them with my weapons. Hurry Ike. Tony is in trouble and Roveena can handle only so many at a time."

That was all it took for Ike to get in gear. He quickly followed her out into the living room. He was shocked by what he saw. In order to protect Tony, Roveena was holding them all off, but it was costing her. A barrier had been thrown up between her, Tony, and the demons. Tony had fallen and Roveena stood over him, concentrating on holding the barrier. Ike could see a golden light, and it looked like half a sphere that the demons were trying to break through.

"Ike! Grab Tony and drag him into the kitchen. Roveena is weakening. Hurry!" Brillasse moved to retrieve her weapons.

Running forward, Ike grabbed his friend and pulled him to what he hoped was a safe place. There was a massive wound in his shoulder and Ike worried about the depth. His friend had suffered worse and never fell.

"The wound is poisoned. We can heal him soon." Brillasse kissed him quickly and stood, her weapons in hand. "Watch him, and no matter what you hear, stay out of sight."

"I'm not a coward."

"No. But you are not a Hellishiam warrior. Be here for Roveena. She will be very weak."

Not believing for a moment that he could, he agreed to stay put. Brillasse walked into the living room.

"Roveena let them go." Her voice was low. "Let them go now. I am here, and I will protect you." Roveena dropped her hands and her sister caught her to her side, holding her up as she almost collapsed.

"Tony and Ike are in the kitchen. Help Ike with Tony."

"I don't want to leave you."

"Tony has been poisoned. If you have anything left, save it for him."

Roveena gathered her strength and hurried to Tony's side. He was pale, and she knew if he had been conscious, he would be hurting badly.

"Can you heal him?" Ike asked.

"Yes." She stroked Tony's hair. "But I am weak. Should I fall, do not leave him."

"I want to help Brillasse." He rose to his feet.

"No! You must not interfere. Should you be wounded, she would die to save you."

At a loss for what to do, he watched Brillasse. Tony was being cared for, but she was alone against them all. Damn, he felt useless.

Brillasse moved slowly, her dagger in one hand and her sword in the other. Her beautiful hair was down and flowing around her. Her eyes missed nothing as they all moved around her. She was ready for them.

"Well, come on. Let's do it then." Her voice was strong. Ike was glad now that she had taken her strength from him.

A Demon tried to attack from behind. Ike was about to shout a warning, but she spun around and buried the sword to the hilt straight through his chest. Once again, the

blue flame engulfed the man, or creature. Ike wasn't sure, but it appeared to change before it died. The next Demon flew at her before her sword was at the ready, but a perfectly placed kick to the chest sent him flying.

"Come on!" she shouted. "If you are going to fight, at least give me a challenge!"

"Bitch!" another shouted, and advanced on her. He leaped through the air, but Brillasse turned easily, her dagger sliding into his chest. The blue flame took him as well.

"That makes two of you," she said, twirling her dagger in her hand.

The one who appeared to be the leader held up his hand, the other two stopped and waited. The only way Ike could describe him would be that he was just too damn handsome for words. The leader of this pack of whatever the hell they were, looked like most any man would want to –tall, dark, and dangerous. But the hate was rolling off of him in waves.

"Brillasse, why do you fight so hard?" His voice was chiding. "You know we will eventually kill you. Maybe I will take you first. Show this *mortal* just how it is done." His eyes singled out Ike.

"Not while there is breath in my body, Tavoli." She stood, legs braced apart, her sword before her and ready for more blood.

"We will see about that."

"Will you fight, or will you flee?"

He clapped his hands and his men turned to leave, standing near the open window. He walked backwards, knowing better than to turn it to her. If he presented his back, the she-devil would not think twice about killing him.

"This is not over, Brillasse." His voice remained low. "You will once again know me between your thighs before you die."

Ike had heard enough. "Get out! Get the hell out of here or I swear by all that is holy, I will rip you to shreds!"

The Demons laughed as they flew through the window. It was like they had never even been there, except of course for the damage.

"Are you all right?" Ike asked as he hurried to her.

"Yes." Her body shook with her fury. "I don't understand why they fled."

"Maybe you scared them away?" His voice sounded so unsure, that she had to smile at him.

"Would you have tried to rip him to shreds?"

Reaching out, he grabbed her and pulled her close to him. The fear he felt and the impotent fury were almost more than he could take.

"I would have died trying."

She dropped her sword and hugged him back. All her life she had to feel strong, but now she let him comfort her. It was a very nice change. She hated to pull back from him.

"How is Tony?"

"Roveena was helping him. We better check on them both."

Ike followed her to the kitchen. Tony was sitting with his back to the counter, holding a very unconscious Roveena.

"Brillasse, what's wrong with her?" He looked frightened and desperate.

Calmly, she walked over and knelt beside them. Brillasse tried to take her sister from his arms, but he held firm.

"Tony, I need to give her blood. She is very weak." Her voice was gentle.

"No. I will give it to her. She is like this because of me."

"She is like this because of the Demons. You are too weak to nourish her. Now, please let me have her. I have no demon poison in my body."

"Tony?" Ike knelt beside him. "Let her go, Tony."

"Just don't take her away." He reluctantly let her go.

Brillasse sat with her sister in her arms. She was not as weak as Roveena, but she would be once she fed her. Biting a small wound into her wrist, she held it to her sister's lips. Roveena didn't struggle and she eventually took greedily of her offering. Brillasse was feeling weak, but she would deny her sister nothing. Ike watched the color leave her face.

"Stop her now, Brillasse." He was not sickened by what he was seeing. He intended to give the same for his lady.

Roveena stopped herself at the sound of Ike's voice. Though weak, Brillasse stood and lifted her sister into her arms, carrying her to Tony's bed. A weak and exhausted Tony followed on the shoulder of Ike. They lay them together in the bed, and Tony immediately fell asleep with Roveena in his arms.

"They just need rest," Brillasse said as she followed Ike out of the room, closing the door gently.

"Will you know if they return?"

"Yes. I am aware of all of their scents now. They won't get inside again without me knowing it."

"Then you need rest too." He put his arm around her waist. "You also need blood."

"Yes. But I won't ask that of you."

"I offer it to you freely," he said as he walked her to his room and closed the door behind them.

"We should clean the mess out there. I'm sorry for all that."

"It can wait till later. You need blood now."

Ike slowly walked toward her. The fighting and the danger had his blood pumping. His erection was very evident as he approached her. Brillasse felt the same way. Meeting him half way, she kissed him hard and long, pushing the shorts down his legs. He kicked them aside and reached under the shirt she wore. There was nothing underneath and he groaned as he picked her up. Her legs wrapped around his waist, and he pushed her back into the nearest wall, entering her body in one long, hard thrust. Brillasse gasped at the feeling of being taken this way. He had such strength, and it made her hotter for him.

"Take what you need, Brillasse," he said as he pushed inside her again and again.

Lowering her head, she wasted no time in sinking her teeth into his pulse. Ike cried out and slammed his body into her. It felt so right, giving her his blood. He felt her

body contract and he pushed harder, sending them both over the edge. Their passion had spent quickly, but not their desire for one another.

When it was done, he walked slowly to his bed and laid her gently on it. Ike curled himself around her and held her close, knowing he was where he belonged. None of it seemed so unreal anymore.

“Thank you,” she whispered.

“Sleep now, baby. Let me take care of you for a while.”

Brillasse drifted off, her body in need of rest. Ike lay for a long time remembering how bravely she fought. She was so strong in body, but he wondered of her heart. Had that monster really touched her body? She was so passionate with him; he knew that if it were true, she had not let it defeat her. The thought of her past with other men didn't bother him. But the thought of her now with anyone else caused his blood to boil. Brillasse mumbled in her sleep, and he turned his thoughts to another matter.

Tony loved the woman in his bed. He could see it as he watched them tonight. Roveena was indeed brave and very powerful. His friend was very lucky. Ike saw the anguish in her eyes tonight as well. She was afraid she was too weak to help him. But she had, and could have died for it, yet she had continued anyway. Ike thought maybe he loved Roveena a little himself, for her selfless act to his friend.

Ike also knew he loved the woman in his arms. How or why it had happened so quickly, he didn't care. He knew what was inside him. The fight with the Demons had him crazy, and he had taken her hard. He didn't stand a prayer in the world to fight those monsters, but he would have tried. He also believed Brillasse's weapons had something to do with killing them. Not just any weapon would do. He would try to remember to ask her about that. Ike wrapped his arms tighter about her and slept himself.

Chapter 5

The next evening, Ike was preparing for work when Brillasse approached him. He would never get over how beautiful she looked, even though she was tough as nails.

"I know you don't want me to, Ike, but I have to go back to Hell's Gate tonight."

"Do you really think they'll come back to the casino?"

"Yes. They will be after you now too." She wrapped her arms around his waist.

"I can take care of myself, you know."

"In any other situation, I would agree." She sighed as he rubbed her back. "But these creatures are ruthless."

"Can they be killed by any weapon?"

"My blades are special. Hades himself created these creatures. Persephone created me and Roveena, and my blades were also created by her. They carry the cross of the goddess and are the only thing that can kill them."

"Why are they here?"

"Gods have the higher world, Hades has the lower. It is the only ground he can try to take and rule as he wishes."

"I believe you, but it all seems so unbelievable."

"Ike, before we leave, there is something I must say to you."

His stomach turned and he feared the worst. Would she tell him now that it was all over once her mission was complete? He knew he shouldn't care so damn much, but he did.

"What?"

"I just want you to know that I care for you very much."

"I care for you too." But he knew his feelings went much deeper than that. "Let's go see if the others are ready."

He followed her from the room, wishing he could tell her what he really felt. But one good thing was that Tony and Roveena seemed completely fine. He was thankful for that.

"Ready?" Ike asked them when he walked into the kitchen. Roveena was studying all the electronics in the room.

"Yes," Roveena said as she turned to face them.

"Ike?" Tony asked as they were walking toward the front door. "Do you think we should dress the girls differently?"

"What's wrong with my attire?" Brillasse asked.

"It looks good to me." Ike winked at her.

"Well, I guess that's settled. Let's get going." Tony smiled at them both.

Hell's Gate was not far from the apartment, so they chose to walk. The couples walked hand in hand, silently enjoying the other's company. Once they reached the casino, it was rough and rowdy.

Ike had to break up several fights right away, and Tony rescued a waitress from a drunk who had more hands than any of them needed. Brillasse kept a watch out for the Demons, and Roveena scanned the outer areas with her talent. They all stuck close together.

"Brillasse, they are close," Roveena said to her sister.

"I can smell them too," she said. "But with all these bodies, I can't single them out."

The scream of a woman was all the warning they got. Brillasse watched as a body went flying through the air, and rushed to catch her. Placing the woman on the ground, she exchanged a look with her sister who started clearing out the innocent right away, effectively erasing it all from their minds. Soon, the only ones inside were the Demons and those they really came for.

The two Demons closest to her attacked. Brillasse was so worried where the others were, she didn't see it coming. She gasped as a sharp pain sliced through her sword arm.

Ike rushed forward, and it was then that she knew their plan. Before she could stop him, he was met by the leader himself. They had used her to draw him out. She watched in horror as Tavoli tore a gaping hole in Ike's chest. Ike struck back before he fell, slicing the Demon across the throat. As she looked on, the leader tried to stop the flow of blood from his wound. She knew Ike had used her smaller dagger. It would not kill Tavoli, but it would weaken him.

"Kill him!" Tavoli shouted.

Brillasse rushed forward. In her fear she was ruthless, and they were dispatched quickly. Searching the room, there was only a trail of blood. Her enemy had escaped, but her only true concern was Ike. He had tried to protect her, knowing the risk. Tony and Roveena rushed forward.

"Can you stop the bleeding?" she asked Roveena.

"Yes." As she spoke, the blood flow ceased. "But it is not enough, Brillasse."

"What?" Tony asked. "What do you mean?"

"He will die. There is nothing I can do." Roveena looked to her sister. "But there is something you can do."

"No." She tried to ignore the pain inside her.

"What can she do?" Tony asked.

"She could change him," Roveena whispered.

"He would hate me."

"He will die if you don't."

"He won't hate you, Brillasse," Tony said softly. "Don't you see the way he looks at you? Can't you see he must love you to take such a risk?"

Brillasse looked at the man who had shown her so much care in the last two days since they met. Her mind did not want to believe what her heart was telling her, but her heart was winning the fight.

"I can't let him die," she whispered. "I will make the exchange, and then we must get him to his home."

Roveena took Tony's hand and led him away. Her sister needed privacy for what she was about to do. Though it was no different from offering nourishment, Brillasse would still want to be alone. Once the exchange was made, she would be forever bound to this man.

"Why are we leaving?"

"We are not leaving. She will want to make the exchange in private."

Brillasse cradled Ike to her breast. She made a small wound in her wrist and held her offering to his lips. Ike stirred enough to look at her.

"Take my blood, Ike," she whispered. "Be with me forever as my husband and protector, just as I will be wife and protector for you."

Ike accepted her gift and fell back into oblivion. Though tired and weak, they all managed to get back to the apartment. Ike was put in his bed, and Brillasse took the offer of blood from Roveena. She knew Tony would supply her with what she needed after Brillasse had finished. Once she was refreshed, she sat by Ike's side.

Roveena lay in Tony's bed, hoping all was well with her sister. She felt her fear, but knew there was nothing she could do. Tony held her close and she turned her attention to the man beside her. They didn't need to make love. They just needed each other. It seemed a miracle that they had both found their mates together.

Tony worried for his friend, but he knew Ike would not have wanted to die. It was love that drove him tonight. That same love would prevail when he realized just what Brillasse had done to save him.

Chapter 6

Ike slowly awoke; aware he was in his own bed. Looking out the window, he noticed it was dark outside. The others would be up now. Remembering the night before, he touched his chest and felt no pain. Sitting up he inspected his chest. All that was left from the wound was a red welt. The door opened, and the others walked into the room.

"How do you feel, Ike?" Tony asked.

"I feel better than ever," he said, noticing Brillasse watched him from the foot of the bed. She looked very worried.

"It's about time you came around. You had me worried." Tony walked over and patted him on the back.

Ike realized they were all too quiet, all very distant. There was something they were not telling him. "What's goin' on?"

"Do you feel any different?" Tony asked.

"No."

"Does the wound still pain you?" Roveena stepped forward.

"No. It's practically healed." He shrugged. Ike's eyes widened as he remembered more of the events from the night before.

"Ike. Don't get upset." Tony said as he stepped away from the bed.

"Brillasse?" He looked to her for answers.

"I had to, Ike." Her voice was so low he had to strain to hear her. "You would have died and I would not have been able to bear it."

"Just tell me what that means?"

Roveena took Tony's hand, and he asked no questions as he followed her out the door. Ike and Brillasse needed this time alone to come to terms with all that had happened.

"You are a part of me, as I am a part of you." She came forward and sat beside him on the bed. "You are immortal and have the ability to do many amazing things."

"I'm like you?"

"Yes." She looked at him with her heart in her eyes. "From the moment we touched, we had a connection. I knew you would survive the change."

Ike lay back, letting all she had just said register. He was going to live forever. He was a vampire.

"I will have to live on the blood of others?"

"Yes, for your strength. But we do eat you know. Too many people believe what they see on television. But yes, you will need the blood of mortals for your strength."

"I won't kill anyone, Brillasse. I will not take an innocent life."

"There would be no need. We don't kill for nourishment. We take only what we need."

"Will I have more strength?"

"Yes. Your strength combined with mine will make you very strong."

"Why did you change me?"

"I told you. You would have died."

"No," he said. "There is another reason."

She nibbled her lower lip, looking pained and almost afraid.

"The feelings I have for you go beyond the physical." She took a deep breath before continuing. "My heart recognized yours. You are my chosen mate."

"What does that mean?"

"If you will accept me, I would be yours forever."

Ike silently liked the thought of that. Living forever didn't sound so bad if he had Brillasse beside him.

"What if I don't accept you?"

"Then I will be destined to love no other."

"Do you love me?" Ike held his breath, waiting for her answer.

"From the moment I very first touched you."

They sat staring into each other's eyes for a long moment. Ike was not sure how it was possible, but he knew he loved her too. He would never again smirk at people who claimed to have fallen in love over night. He himself had done just that.

"Brillasse?"

"Yes."

"Would you do me a favor?" His voice was low.

"Anything."

Ike pulled the blankets away from his body. Brillasse's eyes widened at the evidence of his desire.

"Remove your clothes and lay with me."

She smiled as she stood and slowly removed her clothes. Slipping into the bed beside him, she gasped at the heat of his flesh against her own. He felt so solid and strong.

"Does this mean that you accept me?" she asked.

"Yes," he said and kissed her gently. "It also means that I love you."

Her smile was radiant. He was her mate and he loved her. She had waited her whole life for this, but her thoughts scattered when he pushed her into the mattress with his body. She gasped at the feel of his hot mouth on her breast. He took his incredibly sweet time. When he licked a path down her chest and nipped her belly, her muscles tightened. Her anticipation was too great. The feel of his hot breath on her sensitive flesh caused her to cry out. He was making love to her in a whole new way.

Ike had never felt more powerful. Her taste and scent were in him now, and he thought he could never get enough. When she pulled his hair, he wasted no time in returning to her mouth, kissing her deeply. With one powerful thrust, he joined his body to hers.

He moved slowly, determined to make it last. Having just proclaimed his love for this woman, he wanted to cherish this moment. But her body felt so good, and he could feel a change in himself. He stopped, trying to gather his thoughts. Colors appeared brighter, sounds around the house and outside more clear than ever. For a mere second, he started to panic.

"Ike?"

"Something is happening to me." He sounded worried and started to move away. Brillasse held him to her, not letting him pull away.

"It is the change, Ike." She knew just what was happening. "Don't fight it. Your blood calls for mine. I feel it to."

"I have the incredible urge to taste you." He looked into her eyes. "I want to bite you. That's the only way to describe it."

"It's ok, Ike." She moved her hips beneath him. "Take what you need from me. I will take from you as well. It's what we both want."

Ike kissed her again as he moved his hips with hers. He could feel his teeth extend from his gums and knew he could not stop himself. He licked his way to her shoulder and sank his teeth into the sensitive area.

Brillasse cried out and held him to her. Though she had known men before him, it was so very magical now. She could feel her blood flowing into his mouth and her body began to contract. She raised her head and bit into his shoulder. Ike lunged into her harder, both moaning at the taking and the giving.

He moved like a man possessed. He thought his first time with her had been good. This, however, was beyond any other time before. Her body shattered at the same time as his and they rode the storm out together.

Rolling to his side, he pulled Brillasse over to lie across his chest. If there had been doubts before, there were none now. It had all felt so right. He loved her and would face anything to be with her.

"Does this mean I can fight now?" he asked her.

"Yes. You have the strength to fight them now."

“Well, thank heaven for that. I was getting tired of hiding behind a skirt.”

“What?” she asked. Raising to stare at him, she looked very offended.

“I was only kidding.” He laughed and kissed her. “I would much rather hide under your skirt than behind it.”

Laughing, they tossed about the bed together.

Chapter 7

In the living room, Roveena laughed out loud so suddenly, it startled Tony. He looked at her as if she may sprout another head at any moment.

“What’s so funny?”

“Ike has accepted Brillasse. Everything will be fine now.” There were tears in her eyes.

“Why are you crying?”

“I am so happy for her,” she said as she dried her eyes. “Brillasse was not yet a woman when we were created. We had been left orphans and starving. But Brillasse had always been strong. She would fight or steal for us, whatever it took.”

Tony sat next to her, knowing she was not finished. He wanted to know all there was about these two extraordinary women.

“When Persephone found us, we were living in a shack, but at least we were alive. When she offered us immortality, we took it.”

“Are you happy with this life?”

“Yes. But it can be a lonely one. We are destined to have one true mate.”

“I am your mate.”

“Yes, but you must accept me.”

“I do accept you, Roveena.”

She smiled and moved to hug him close. She and her sister had found their mates. Everything was perfect.

“You were telling me about Brillasse.”

"It has not been all easy for her," she continued as she sat back. "The leader of the Dimenos, Tavoli, is a very mean creature. He had somehow trapped Brillasse when she was young and still in training. He had taken her innocence, proclaiming to love her. It took Persephone many months to find her. For years I feared she had been forever changed."

"Did she change much?"

"Yes," she sighed. "But she became stronger instead of weak. Her power grew to a point that Persephone deemed her a warrior way before she ever did me. No other has ever beaten her. But when she is with Ike, I feel that soft side of her again. I am very proud of her and so very happy for her."

"Then they will be happy together."

Roveena nodded her head and smiled. Things were working out beautifully. Now, they needed to end this war.

"What happens when this is over?" he asked.

"Brillasse will have to choose what world to remain in. If she stays here, I will have to go back through the portal."

"Where will that leave us?"

"You would have to make the decision to stay or go back with me."

"That's not a hard decision." He hugged her to him.

"What would you do?"

"Wherever you go, that's where I'll be," he said. "I've thought hard about this, and I would have no regrets should we decide to change me as well."

"You would do that?" she gasped.

"I would do whatever it takes to remain with you, Roveena."

Tony rose and lifted her into his arms. There was no need for words as he carried her to his room and shut out the world. His mind was made up. He wanted to be with her, in life and in death. He placed her on her feet before him.

"It's what I want," he whispered and kissed her gently.

"There would be no going back."

"I'm looking forward."

Smiling, she took his hand and led him to the bed. They would become one tonight in every sense of the word. He lay on the bed and she lay beside him.

"There will be no pain, Tony."

"I trust in you."

With a full heart, Roveena brought Tony into her world. He fell asleep instantly, but she knew he would awaken needing blood and more. She would be by his side when the time came.

In Ike's room Brillasse sat up quickly, scanning her surroundings for what had disturbed her sleep.

"What is it?" Ike asked.

"Roveena."

"Is she all right?"

"Tony has crossed over. He asked her to change him, so they could be together."

Ike sat up beside her, thinking of his friend. Tony would do that, if he truly loved Roveena. He was happy for his long time companion. Somehow, someday, fate had brought them together.

"Then they will always be together, where they both belong." He pulled her to him, and they lay together. "I'm now a firm believer in fate."

Brillasse knew there would be Demons to fight tomorrow. But that was a whole new day, and a whole new challenge. She snuggled next to her love and lover, and drifted off into a content sleep.

Chapter 8

The next evening, they all prepared for what was to come. Tony was reeling from his newfound powers. Unlike Ike, since it was Roveena who changed him, he would learn to use magic instead of strength. He knew how to summon the gift, but his control was another matter. That fact was clear when he tried to levitate a lamp and it crashed into a wall instead. Ike happened to be near the wall at the time.

"Would you watch what you're doing?"

"I'm trying!"

"Ike, leave him alone," Brillasse said, trying to hide her smile. "He is learning something very new to him."

"Well, direct your practice at something other than my head," Ike grumbled.

Brillasse started to giggle, and then the laugh broke through. Roveena looked at her with surprise. It had been a very long time since her sister had laughed.

"What do you find so amusing?" Ike asked as he glared at her.

"The thought of him crashing a lamp into your head is funny enough," she said. "But you thinking it might actually hurt you is way out there."

"What's funny about that?"

"That lamp would be no more than a mosquito to you." She shook her head. "You are learning, just like Tony."

Failing to see the humor, Ike continued to gather weapons. Brillasse had presented him with two daggers and a long blade. He asked her how she got them. She told him it was an easy thing for her sister Roveena. She just used magic to produce them. Since the daggers held the symbol that would kill the Demons, Ike had thanked her well.

"I don't think we should go to Hell's Gate tonight," Brillasse said.

"Why?"

"There will be many people, but that's not my worry. Roveena is excellent at crowd control."

"Then what's the problem?" Tony asked while trying to levitate a glass.

"I fear the Dimenos will use the mortals against us."

"You mean use innocents as shields?" Ike asked, concerned.

"They will make them do the dirty work. Like a puppet master, they will pull the strings."

"I can see how that would be a problem." Ike paced the floor.

"They will come to us, wherever we are," Roveena said. "I suggest a large, open area that will be less occupied in the evening."

"That's not an easy thing. This is Vegas," Tony said, giving his full attention to the group. He flinched when his levitated glass shattered in the sink.

"But there are deserted areas here, right?" Brillasse asked.

"Yeah," Ike said, pausing in his preparations.

"The open area would be perfect, and I would not have to do so much crowd control," Roveena said, sounding relieved.

"Then we will make our stand in Dry Lands. It's an area where the local kids like to party, but the cops have blocked the roads."

"How will we get there?" Roveena asked. "I don't want to use my magic unless I have to. This battle will be fierce. Not only will I need to fight, but if you three need it, I will have to heal you."

"Just because we walk to work doesn't mean we have no transportation," Tony chided as he grabbed some keys off the wall.

"You have a motor vehicle?" Brillasse's eyes widened.

"Yes."

"Relax, Brillasse," Roveena whispered. "We know of your transportation, but my sister has never tried to ride in one."

"They look dangerous," Brillasse said, defending herself. She looked quite pale.

"You think a car is dangerous?" Ike laughed. "Sweetheart, have you looked at yourself lately? You're not just dangerous. You're lethal."

Brillasse didn't appreciate the comment and her eyes told him so. She grabbed her weapons and walked to the door.

"Let's go, before I show you just how lethal I can be."

Ike walked to the door, kissed her nose, and they all followed him out of the apartment down to the parking garage.

Though she hesitated, Brillasse forced herself into the jeep. It was bad enough that she had to ride in one, but this one had no doors. Tony and Roveena rode in the back. When Ike cranked the ignition, her body went rigid. Hoping to relax her, Ike turned on the radio. The 'oldies but goodies' came softly through the speakers. It did little good as she shut her eyes. He pulled out of the garage and onto the main street.

"Look around you, Brillasse," he said as he reached over and took her hand. "It really is quite amazing."

"Let's just get to where we are going." She kept her eyes shut.

After a few minutes, she began to relax, and her eyes slowly opened. Ike was right. It was something worth looking at.

"It's really not so bad," she said, looking out at all the people and lights.

"I thought you might see it my way," he chuckled. It amazed him that this woman could fight like hell and risk her life, but a vehicle scared her.

They drove in silence. There was a fight coming, and they all needed to do their part. Roveena reached out and touched her sister's shoulder.

"We must hurry. They are close."

Brillasse nodded her head and looked to Ike. He said nothing, but increased his speed. He didn't need the bastards attacking the jeep. They would be helpless with only a roll cage. The road leading to the Dry Lands was blocked, but he quickly drove around it. In the middle of a large, deserted clearing, Ike stopped the jeep and killed the ignition.

"This is it," he said as he looked at Brillasse.

"Tavoli will be very hard to kill." She spoke to all in the car. "The others are not fledglings, but they don't have his strength and power. Use caution, they are sneaky and will try to trick you."

Ike reached over and drew her face to his. He kissed her with desperation. When he released her, she looked into his eyes.

"Be careful, Ike. If you should fall, I will follow you." She turned and stepped from the vehicle. Ike followed and they stood side by side, waiting.

"Tony, stay beside me at all times," Roveena said as she hugged him. "Together, we are very strong."

"It will be ok, Roveena. I'll be ok." He kissed her gently and they left the jeep. Together, they all stood waiting for their enemy.

Chapter 9

The wait was not a long one. Tavoli and his minions appeared before them, ready for the coming battle.

"Brillasse." He said her name like a curse. "I see you and your whore of a sister have mated." The Demon was openly trying to bait the men. It didn't work.

"For a demon, you talk an awful lot," Ike responded. "One fine day you may just wish you were nicer to the ladies."

"I suppose you think you can take me?"

"No."

"No?" Tavoli was clearly confused. "Then why are you here?"

"I intend to kill you, not take you."

"Tell me, *Ike*, does she scream for you?" Tavoli taunted him. "Can you make her beg?"

Ike didn't take the bait. "I can assure you. Her screams are from pleasure. When she begs, it's for more."

Tavoli was pissed, and that was just what Ike wanted. The Demon threw a red streak of lightning at him, but it was deflected. Ike looked to his right and knew it had been Tony.

"Well, at least you missed my head," Ike said, and he was indeed thankful.

"You're so welcome, Ike." Tony's voice was teasing, and he had to smile.

"That's enough," Brillasse said as she drew her sword. "I have found my mate, Tavoli, and I am anxious to return to him. Let's get this over with."

"You will watch him die, Brillasse," he hissed.

"You don't know his strength," she said. "His power is twice my own. I have no doubt that you will die this night."

Ike walked to stand beside her, his own weapons before him. It was time to end this and send them back to hell.

"Kill them," Tavoli ordered his minions, and they attacked.

Brillasse knew they would be strong, but they had so much more strength than she had bargained for. She hoped Ike would be able to handle himself, because she had problems of her own. A burning pain tore through her side and she knew she had taken a hit, though not from this Demon. Tavoli was interfering with the fight.

"Tavoli!" Roveena shouted and threw a barrier around him. She was confused when he fell. She hadn't tried to wound him. She realized that Tony had tried to block him as well, but instead of a barrier, he had sent a lightening streak. Tony had wounded Tavoli and hadn't even tried to. The demon had a look of utter shock on his handsome face.

"Shit!" Tony shouted. "I messed up again."

Roveena laughed at his expression. "You did the perfect thing, my love."

He looked to the Demon, writhing on the ground and bleeding. His form was changing as well. Tony smiled at a job well done. He frowned as the Demon disappeared.

"Where is he?"

"He has fled back to Hades." Roveena lowered her arms. "He will heal in time, but he will return."

They both looked to the others, still fighting. Brillasse had just defeated her foe and she was exhausted. Ike was still fighting, but they could see he had won the battle. The Demon slipped and Ike did not hesitate. He plunged the knife into its heart, and the blue flame took him. Ike hurried to Brillasse.

"How bad are you hurt?"

"It's not bad; he was just stronger than I thought." She looked to her sister. "Where is Tavoli?"

"I set a barrier, but Tony wounded him badly. He fled back to Hades."

"It will take some time, but he will return." Brillasse rose. "It will be here or Hellishiam, but he will return with more minions, stronger than ever."

They all stood close together, catching their breaths. It had been hard, but they had won for now. A soft glowing light started to form where the battle had been fought. It got larger and brighter, and then mellowed to an open doorway.

"What's that?" Ike asked, ready to fight again.

"The Portal is open," Brillasse said as she watched a woman step through. Ike was mystified by the beauty of the woman. The only way to describe her was perfect. The beauty had golden hair that flowed in perfect waves down her back. Her body was flawless, and he felt an incredible urge to cry. Weep at her feet in honor of such radiance. There was no lust for her, just admiration. He was brought from his shock when Brillasse and Roveena dropped to one knee before her. He looked to Tony, who was just as confused.

"Brillasse, Roveena, would you *please* stand up?" the woman said with a small amount of impatience. "How many times have I asked you *not* to do that?"

"We apologize, Persephone," they said in unison.

"Persephone?" Ike and Tony also said in unison.

"Yes." She smiled at them. "You are Ike and Tony."

"Yes," Tony stuttered. "Ike and Tony. He's Ike and I'm Tony. Of course you knew that." He was babbling.

"Yes, I did in fact know that." She turned back to her warriors. "You fought a hard battle. Tavoli will be licking his wounds for a very long time." The goddess giggled and rubbed her hands together. "Let Hades chew on that one."

"Persephone." Brillasse stepped forward. "My mate fought bravely and has proven himself a warrior."

"Yes, he did fight bravely."

"My mate inflicted the wound on Tavoli." Roveena stepped up as well. "In time, I know he will learn to manage his gifts."

"Yes, he will." She smiled at Tony. "I am sure Ike and his head will be grateful."

"Hey!" Tony wasn't happy with that comment.

Persephone laughed and faced them all. "I am proud of each of you. You are all valuable warriors. But, if you choose to remain with your chosen mates, then you must choose who stays and who goes."

"Ike?" Brillasse said as she walked over to him. "Is it your choice to remain with me?"

"Yes," he answered with no hesitation.

"Tony. What is your choice?" Roveena asked.

"I'll always remain with you."

"Choose," Persephone said. "One of you must return to Hellishiam with your mate and serve as guardian."

"We will go." Roveena took Tony's hand. "It will be a better place for him to practice his skills."

"I second that motion," Ike spoke up, earning yet another growl from his friend.

"Then Brillasse and Ike will remain here and serve as guardian. Should either of you need the other, you will know." She smiled at them all and turned to the portal. "Say your goodbyes for now. We must go."

Brillasse hugged her sister, tears in her eyes. They had never before been apart. Not by worlds anyway.

"If you need me, I will be there."

"Take care of yourself and your mate." Roveena hugged her back.

Ike and Tony shook hands. Ike pulled Tony close and hugged him.

"I think I just may miss you."

"I know I'll miss you, Ike. But we will see each other again."

"You can count on it."

“Roveena, Tony, we must go now.” Persephone took each of their hands. She turned back to Brillasse and Ike. “The portal will always be open to you.”

“Bye,” Tony said as he stepped through the portal with Roveena.

“Later,” Ike called back and pulled Brillasse to him.

The portal shimmered for a brief moment, and then it was gone. Ike held onto Brillasse for a long time. He was so relieved she was with him.

“Let’s go home,” he whispered, and walked her to the jeep. “You do know that you’ll have to learn to drive one of these?”

“Don’t push it, Ike. Let’s take it one step at a time.”

Ike laughed and spun the tires, much to Brillasse’s discomfort. It was going to be a whole new life now.

“You think you can handle being hitched to a guy like me?” he asked as he drove back toward town and home.

Reaching over, Brillasse wrapped her hand around his manhood and squeezed him gently. The car swerved and she laughed.

“I think I can handle you, and him, very well.”

Ike pushed the speed limit and hurried home. Yes, it was going to be a whole new life, and he looked forward to every minute of it.

Chapter 10

In Hades, Tavoli lay healing. Why was he so determined to make Brillasse suffer? He could see plainly that her true mate had been found. He knew he could not have her. Yes, he had held her body. But now he knew he never would have had her heart and trust. Then the reality of it all sank in.

"I want a mate," he whispered to himself. "My mate."

But was that possible? He, like the sisters, had been mortal once. Was there someone for him as well? Could he have that? In his heart, what remained of it, he still felt the tingle of the man he once was. Was she out there, waiting?

"I must heal," he said as he closed his eyes. "But if you're out there, I will find you. I will find you soon."

Tavoli entered the sleep realm, willing his body to heal quickly. He had a feeling he would see Brillasse again, as well as her mate. But this time, it would be for a whole new reason. He just hoped they let him live long enough to explain.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

From the time I was a child and listening to the wild tales of my grandfather, I knew I would love books. Once I picked up my first romance I was lost to a world of fantasy and characters that I would always remember.

The passion I had for reading brought out another side of me. I can't count the old notebooks in the attic with my childish tales and sloppy penmanship. (ok, so my penmanship is still lacking, but thank goodness for computers!) There has never been a book I did not like. I believe in many things, but not a bad book. Each one is a masterpiece to someone. The worlds they opened for me were endless, and I still have many of my childhood friends sitting on the shelf. Each new character feels like a small part of me. I love fast paced stories with passion and drive. And sometimes I meet a character, or characters, that I just have to keep alive. So their stories continue.

Why erotica? I love passion. The love affair between two characters, even when the odds are stacked against them, is the best. I love to experiment and play, so why not my characters. Passion is a beautiful thing. What woman can say they don't want to drive their man crazy in the bedroom? Or the kitchen....LOL...etc. I love to add steam and fire. Like I said, it's an extension of myself, my fantasies, and what I hope to be some of yours as well.

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