

CLUB VAMP

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Chapter One

Closing time.

Another night come and gone, another day without an answer.

Adam Chase locked the doors of the club, the padlocks clicking with empty finality. Kenelm had already retreated downstairs, and Adam had to go to him and tell him they'd failed yet one more night.

He walked through the dark club, catching a glimpse of himself in the mirrored wall, a tall man with a mane of blond hair hanging in a tail against his black suit. His hard, square face held a grim expression, his dark blue eyes empty.

A door in the back of the club led to the private quarters, a staircase leading to the bowels of the place—Kenelm's sumptuous home spread under the Manhattan club, hidden, unseen, secret.

Lord Kenelm awaited him in the living room, which was decorated in black silk and crammed with priceless objets d'art Kenelm had collected through the ages. This morning he sat on a gilded sofa studying an Egyptian scarab, solid gold with a sapphire on its back.

His full name was Ghislain Avent Brennan, Lord Kenelm, but he didn't make anyone say all that, not even his blood slaves. He went by Kenelm, a title he'd held since the eighteenth century.

He'd long since abandoned eighteenth-century garb for more modern dress of jeans and boots and black leather. Black haired and black eyed, he fit the vampire stereotype just fine. His dark eyes could suck you to your doom and frequently did.

Adam had first seen his eyes in Paris, the year 1848, when a mob had begun another revolution and the city reverted to madness. Adam, an Englishman in the wrong place, had been stabbed and lay slowly dying. Kenelm lifted him out of the muck and took him home.

His magic had saved Adam and allowed him to live for the next century and a half without aging. Adam wasn't a blood slave, he was Kenelm's best friend and partner in crime. And what crimes...

Kenelm didn't look up from studying the scarab, which they'd found in Egypt the year Petrie had begun his excavations. "Such a beautiful thing," he said absently, turning it in his fingers to catch the light. "A beetle, an insignificant insect, recreated to be a revered and valuable object. On the one hand, the Egyptians were the most boring and practical people on earth, and on the other—incurable romantics."

"She didn't come," Adam said.

"I know." Kenelm looked up, eyes burning Adam all the way across the room. "If she had, I'd have felt her."

Adam crossed the room to the bar on the other side, pouring himself a glass of malt whiskey. He lifted the glass, questioning whether Kenelm wanted any, but the man shook his head.

Adam knew what he wanted and needed. They'd better find this woman soon, or Kenelm wouldn't be able to leave the compound, even at night.

Adam drained his whiskey glass, swallowed the soothing liquid and removed his jacket. Underneath he wore a white silk shirt, which he also removed while Kenelm ignored him. He made his way to the sofa and knelt just as Kenelm returned the scarab to its place on the end table.

"The man said she'd be in Manhattan," Adam said, trying to sound reassuring. "We'll find her."

Kenelm gave him a deprecating look. "Do you know how many people live in New York City?"

"Not at last count, no."

"Many." Kenelm thumped his feet to the floor and rested his arms on his knees. "The phone book is about three feet thick. I'm ready to find this woman, kick some ass and take her back home."

"You and me both."

Kenelm lifted Adam's wrist and ran his tongue across it. "You drank way too much Scotch tonight."

"I was depressed."

"I hate Scotch." Kenelm's mouth heated Adam's arm as he licked his way up to the bend of his elbow. "Ready?"

Adam nodded once. His pulse was beating fast, his cock stiffening. Kenelm leaned down and sank his fangs into Adam's wrist. Adam hissed a breath through his teeth at the first suckling, then moved his body in rhythm with Kenelm's mouth. He stroked the jet black hair that flowed across Kenelm's shoulders.

He was lucky, he knew. He'd have been dead long ago, but Kenelm had chosen him for this mission, which guaranteed him long life and protection. All Adam had to do was keep Kenelm alive, a difficult task but one he gladly performed.

Kenelm gave one final suck and raised his head, wiping blood from his mouth.

"Better?" Adam asked.

"Better."

He wasn't completely sated, and Adam knew it, but Kenelm would never say so.

"Ready to hit it?" Kenelm asked. "It's what, eight in the morning?"

Since all the clocks had struck the hour, there was no denying it. Kenelm rose, his energy restored for now.

He was a big man, tall and wide-shouldered, black hair falling in a thick swath. He was a pure vampire, one of the last of his kind, a man who could put a human into a trance at five paces and leave him there until he was done. He could be gentle when he remembered to be, but most of his lovers were perfectly happy to have it rough.

He snaked his arm around Adam's neck and kissed the side of his mouth. "Thank you."

Kenelm always said *thank you* – in a deep velvet voice with a hint of gravel. It was a survival trait of vampires to be irresistible, and Kenelm had that trait in spades.

They went to the bedroom where Adam stripped off while Kenelm leaned on the doorframe and watched. "Do you have *any* ideas?"

Adam paused in the act of pulling off his briefs, deciding to tell the truth. "No. Not a one." He kicked off the underwear and faced him, nude. "I haven't been much help, have I?"

Kenelm flicked his gaze over Adam's body. "You compensate."

Adam's balls tightened and lifted, responding to the powerful need of Kenelm's gaze. Without word, he walked to the bed. The covers had already been removed, the sheets cool and inviting. Adam lay down on his back and laced his hands behind his head.

Kenelm wanted the oil tonight. He rummaged in a drawer for the glass bottle then removed his clothes with deliberate slowness, while Adam's skin prickled in anticipation.

Kenelm was a being made for sex and blood. Hunger and lust, trapped and mixed up inside a hard male body. Standing over the bed, Kenelm poured oil across Adam, letting the fragrant liquid stream across his skin before sitting beside him and working in the oil with his hands.

Adam basked in warmth. Kenelm had just fed, which made him strong and flush with heat, his skin almost glowing. It made him dangerous, sometimes gentle, sometimes letting loose his full strength. Adam was never sure what he would do.

Tonight his dark gaze was intense as he rubbed the oil around Adam's areolas and slid hands to his navel. Then down to his cock, where he took Adam in both fists and began to work him.

It was going to be one of the wild nights. Kenelm's fingers clicked against his palms as he slid fingers on and off Adam's cock, his grip tight and designed to bring Adam off very fast.

Adam tried to will himself to hold back, telling his body to lie still and enjoy as long as he could. He clenched his fists at his sides, trying to keep his hips from leaving the bed as Kenelm's hands stroked and pulled, stroked and pulled.

Kenelm watched him with fathoms-deep dark eyes, liking the challenge but still wanting to win. There was no way he couldn't win, and when Adam came it would be explosive, but for now the game was to see how long Adam could last.

"Damn you," Adam said, and Kenelm gave him the smile, ruthless and arrogant.

Fire flowed up and down Adam's body, shooting tendrils of excitement that elongated his cock even more, daring Kenelm to enclose all of it at once. Kenelm closed his grip so tight it was like fucking almost, except the slippery friction of his fingers was a little different from that of a quim.

"A hundred and fifty years," Adam murmured. A hundred and fifty years since he'd started playing this game with Kenelm, and Adam had still not tired of it.

"A hundred and forty-six," Kenelm corrected. "It took you a while before you let me touch you."

"I was ignorant."

"You were a man of your time. But I have lived and seen—so much more."

He fell silent, and Adam knew what was coming. Kenelm cranked him harder and harder, and Adam's self-control stretched to the breaking point. All of the sudden it was no use, he had to let go. He envisioned his come leaking all over Kenelm's hands, Kenelm leaning down to take it in his mouth, and his climax washed over him. He moaned...

And Kenelm let him go, cold air flooding Adam's cock just at the point of explosion. The fire died enough to keep Adam from releasing, and his body raged.

"Fuck."

Kenelm laughed, that deep, dark laughter that said the rest of Adam's day would be interesting. Kenelm was on the bed before Adam drew another breath, hard hands lifting Adam's hips and opening his thighs, so Kenelm could get on his knees and fit right between Adam's buttocks.

He'd lubed his cock with the oil so all he had to do was ring Adam a little with his finger and then enter. Adam's wanting body drew the cock all the way inside.

"It's nice to have friends," Kenelm said as he started his slow, in-and-out seduction, "for a hundred and forty-six years."

Adam's reply was incoherent and obscene. His mind was a blank of sexual ecstasy and built-up tension, Kenelm deep, *so goddamn deep*, inside him, and his own cock standing up hard and heavy.

Just when he couldn't stand it any more, Kenelm closed his fist over Adam's cock and squeezed. Adam released in screaming joy, lifting his hips to let Kenelm fuck him for as long as the man wanted. Today, it was for a long, long time.

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Adam lay on his side later that afternoon, drifting in and out of sleep, a sheet draped half over his body. Kenelm lay behind him, not bothering with the sheet. He clicked the remote over Adam's hip to flip through channels on his wall-mounted television.

Adam could care less what was on the news and drowsed, seeking sleep so he wouldn't be too exhausted tonight. The club opened at nine, and Kenelm might feel well enough to make an appearance.

Kenelm ran his fingers absently through Adam's hair, his touch gentle, far from what it had been earlier. Whenever they shared a woman, Kenelm could be almost tender, but when he was in a mood, he knew Adam could take his rougher side. Adam could, and enjoyed it.

Because it was Manhattan, there was always news, most of it gloomy – gloom drew more viewers than gladness. A suicide on a bridge. A fire at an apartment on the Lower East Side. A subway stuck in a tunnel for two hours, and when tempers started to fray, a woman had shared out the cake she'd bought for an office party and led a sing-along. Well, that news had turned happy.

Needing more grit, the news channel turned back to the fire. A young woman stood in front of the apartment building, microphone in her face, speaking in the earnest tone of journalists everywhere.

"The fire began at eleven a.m. and no one yet knows the cause of the blaze," she said. "Neighbors smelled the smoke and reported it. Apparently no one was home in the apartment when it started, and the owner had no pets." It seemed important to add the line about the pets. People worried about pets.

She had short brown hair, curls buffeted by cold October wind, and wide, very earnest blue eyes. Red lips, full and lush and made for kissing. A neck a vampire would love to bite. In short, a savory woman, much too good to stand shivering in front of a burning building with soot on her face.

She had a European cast to her features, high cheekbones and pointed chin that indicated Russian or eastern European ancestry. Her accent was American, her attitude American, so he concluded she'd been born here.

Kenelm had a different reaction. He hurriedly clicked buttons of the remote and zoomed in on the woman.

Adam saw it. At the base of her neck, in the curve of her collarbone was a tiny tattoo, a stylized ankh. The sign of Osiris.

Kenelm leaned over Adam like he'd go right through the screen.

"It's her." His eyes held dark rage, and beneath it, hope. "Go get her."

Chapter Two

Helena Girard stood her ground, the flames behind her making even the cold day roasting. Soot and smoke and ash coated her throat, rendering her voice raw. Her first assignment, and it was a brutal one. Well, they wanted to see what she was made of.

She swigged water the cameraman Josh handed her and wiped her mouth. "Ready?" she croaked.

Josh shouldered the camera, adjusted one or two things, and gave her a signal. Helena lifted her microphone.

"Two hours ago, this street was business as usual. Witnesses say the front windows on the second floor blew out and the fire spread quickly. Those exiting the building had no idea what caused the blaze. Fire crews are working furiously, and the mayor wants answers, now."

From her earpiece, the voice of her co-worker back at the station said laconically. "Okay, that's enough. Thanks."

Easy for him to say. Helena gazed earnestly into the wide camera lens. "This is Helena Girard, WLB News."

Josh lowered the camera and rolled his shoulders to relax them. Josh was an old pro and his presence had helped her get over her first-day-on-the-job jitters. Nothing seemed to rattle him.

Passersby who'd stopped to watch her began to drift away. Even fires got boring after a while.

One man remained. He had stood for thirty minutes on the sidewalk opposite her, immovable despite the crowd flowing around him. *Good looking*, she thought as she pretended not to notice him. Blond hair, tall, handsome body, eyes that could have you ripping off your clothes before you knew what hit you. Seductive.

While I'm here with wind-whipped hair and soot all over my face. Not that I could have anything with him anyway. I can't risk that I wouldn't kill him, and killing him would be a damn shame.

"How long do they want us here?" Josh asked her, setting the camera carefully on the ground.

"Until the bulldozers come, I guess." Fire crackled behind her, coupled with the steady rush of water of hoses. Blue-Eyes still watched her.

"Want me to grab some coffee?" Josh offered.

"That would be fantastic."

Josh moved off while Helena tucked her mic under her arm and backed out of the way of the frantic firemen.

"Helena Girard?"

Even Blue-Eyes' voice was seductive, warm and gravelly, making her think of hot baths and oil massaged all over her body, a firm cock pressing between her legs. *I wish.*

"Yes?"

"Can I interest you?"

Oh, yes you can, you hunk of a sex god. "Interest me in what?"

The man held out a card. It was black, glossy, with a scarlet logo that read *Club Vamp*.

"It is invitation only," the man said. "I would like to invite you."

He had a slight accent. English, she thought. It made him all the more delicious.

She took the card but shook her head. "I can't interview you. Interviews have to be cleared with the features department. You'll have to contact them."

"You misunderstand," he went on in that adorable voice. "I want to invite *you*, not your television people. It is a private invitation. I saw you this afternoon and decided you would be the perfect guest."

She blinked. "Why?"

He brushed back a wisp of her hair, smiling a little. "You just are."

She went still in shock. She never let men touch her, because it was much too dangerous—for them—but she loved the way his fingertips feathered over her skin, the flushed warmth in her body.

"My name is Adam Chase," he said. "The doorman is instructed to admit you. We open at nine."

She knew what Club Vamp was. A place you could be with a vampire—oh, yes, they were real—and take no hurt from it. They needed sex and blood, not necessarily in that order, and you could wallow in ecstasy and emerge again like nothing had ever happened to you.

The vampires admitted only those they chose and gave their guests their ultimate fantasy. The rich and famous vied to get in, but it was for members only and the vampires were very selective about who became members.

Helena had never tried to find out what it took to become a member. She didn't know if she could hurt vampires if she had sex with them, but she didn't really want to find out.

It was brilliantly sunny today, proving Adam wasn't a vampire himself. What was he, then? A barker for the club? Someone who recruited members? If she went to the club, a vampire would choose her, not the gorgeous Adam. What good would that be?

She tried to hand the card back to him. "No thanks. I don't like vampires."

"Keep it." He smiled again and backed a step. "I will look for you tonight."

Without another word, he turned and walked away, showing her a tantalizing backside in tight leather pants before he disappeared.

Oh, he was beautiful. It was tempting to show up at Club Vamp just to feast her eyes on him again. She could sit in the corner with a virgin cocktail and drink him in. *We'd be perfect for each other. Except for my curse.*

She knew she'd go home, curl up on her bed, and try to forget about blue-eyed Adam. Watch *Buffy* reruns or something. No dressing up and going to Club Vamp, not even to satisfy her curiosity.

So she never understood why, eight hours later, she stood at the black-painted door of Club Vamp on Forty-Eighth Street, handing the card to the doorman and telling him Adam had sent her.

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Helena walked in, keeping her reporter's eyes open. If coming here turned out to be a big mistake, she could at least do a story on the club and earn some brownie points with her boss. Reporters weren't allowed in, which was why she'd finally decided to come tonight. Or so she told herself.

The club seemed normal enough. Dark room, loud music, large bar, three bartenders mixing drinks with lightning speed. Mirrors on one wall—to prove vampires cast no reflection? Muffled black velvet walls and lots of drapes.

She found a table far from the dance floor and ordered a martini from a waitress in skimpy black vinyl. Helena sipped it, watching people dance. None of them seemed to be vampires, not that she thought she could spot one, unless that was what the mirrors were for. From what she understood, the biting here went on in back rooms.

After she'd sipped the last of the martini, she threw the cocktail stick back into the glass, disgusted with herself. She admitted the truth—she'd come here specifically to see Adam, liking the way he'd smiled at her, thinking maybe they could get to know each other better, even if it could go no further than that.

He was nowhere in sight. Likely he was only a man who drummed up business for the club, no matter how seductive he had to be to do it. In spite of his smiles and his touch he had no real interest in her.

She stood up, snatched up the beaded silk shawl she'd dragged out for this special occasion, threw a tip on the table, and turned to march out.

Someone touched her elbow. "Do not leave yet."

The velvety, erotic voice, the warmth, the tall presence—yes, it was Adam.

He wore black leather pants, black shirt, black suit jacket, his blond hair pulled back into a ponytail. A diamond stud glinted on his earlobe matching the diamond stickpin in his lapel. Against all this black his eyes blazed blue.

"Hi," she said.

He gave her a slow smile. "Hi." The word sounded strange on his lips as though he was unused to the idiom. "Kenelm wants to meet you. He's due out any minute."

"Kenelm?"

"Lord Kenelm. He owns this club."

Helena suppressed more disappointment. Beautiful Adam was a pimp for his vampire, and Helena had no wish to be a vampire's whore. "Is he really a lord?" she asked skeptically. "Or is that a title he takes to impress customers?"

"First Earl Kenelm. He was awarded the title by George the Second of England for services to the realm. Including a pile of money and a huge estate."

Hmm. She could stay and interview Vampire Lord Kenelm and ask him what it was like to dance the minuet, or she could go before Adam handed her to him as a tasty snack.

"Well, thanks for the invite, but I have things to do..."

"Here he is now." Adam gestured to the rear of the club, planting himself next to her in such a way that she'd have to climb over a chair to get around him.

From the shadows in the back of the club stepped the vampire that must be Lord Kenelm. She expected a fanfare, an announcement, a herald, maybe his adoring blood slaves raising him on their shoulders. No, he simply walked out into the club and stopped. The patrons, intent on dancing, didn't even notice him.

Helena didn't understand how they could *not* notice him. Black hair, eyes like a gateway to night, tall body, wide, wide shoulders and strength that blew her away even across the room. He wore black—what else?—a silk suit similar to Adam's with a ruby stickpin in his tie. He turned his head, not so much scanning the room as honing in on Adam and Helena next to him.

As though moved by invisible strings, he floated across the club directly for them, his feet an inch from the floor. People melted out of his way, most as though they hadn't even seen him.

What, he can't walk twenty feet like everyone else?

She remained rooted to the floor, lips parted, as the large, powerful man with sin-dark eyes drifted to a halt in front of her. The sin-dark eyes pinned her in place as one hand came up and touched her cheek, the gold band on his finger cool.

"Helena Girard." Not a question, delivered in a to-die-for voice while callused fingers caressed her skin. A decadent man, but not soft.

"Yes." She didn't ask how he knew her name—Adam had seen her broadcasting, and the WLB News website listed her picture and bio.

Kenelm's fingers moved from her cheek, silkily traced her throat, and came to rest on the red tube-like dress she'd donned to come here. He pulled the fabric down a fraction to touch her collarbone.

"You bear the mark."

He meant the ankh tattoo that she'd gotten when too little to remember. As her body had grown, the tattoo had stayed in the same place and same shape and size, which she'd been told was unusual.

"Yes."

"Then you know you do not need to fight. We will not hurt you."

His eyes grew darker and wider. Vampires could entrance with their eyes, and Helena hurriedly shifted her gaze to Adam.

She found Adam one step closer, hemming her in on her right as Kenelm blocked her way forward. She also became aware that both men were highly aroused. Not only did their gazes lock to her, but Adam stood close enough that her forearm brushed the large bulge in his leather pants.

Going to bed with someone like Adam was one of her wildest fantasies. The man had the aura of one who could please, who would smile and let his blue eyes shine as he took her in.

But she'd never dreamed of having sex with a man like Kenelm. He was too much, too high, too far. He would devour her, never mind the pleasure of it, though she had the feeling she'd die in ecstasy.

"I have to warn you that if I have sex with either one of you," she said in a steady voice, "I might kill you."

Kenelm's brows quirked the slightest bit, and if anything he looked more interested. "You do not need to threaten us, daughter of Osiris." He slid his fingers through hers and raised her wrist to his lips.

Osiris? She had the insane urge to babble, "My father's name was Bob," but she actually had no idea what her father's name had been. Helena was an orphan, raised by a charitable institution after she was found abandoned with no clue to her identity. *Helena Girard* was a name picked out at random.

"I meant, I can't be intimate with a man," she said. "I'll hurt him if I do."

Kenelm did not answer. He feathered a kiss to her wrist, lips warm.

Warm. Did that mean he'd just fed?

Her quim tightened as Kenelm ever so lightly stroked the inside of her wrist with his tongue. "I can control it under normal circumstances," she said. "But during sex, if I let go..." She drew a breath. "Let's just say men avoid me."

Another lick, another draw of fire. "When you orgasm, you cannot contain yourself, you mean?"

"Yes. That's what I mean." She could orgasm right here and now with his tongue on her wrist.

"With me," he said softly, breath on her skin. "It will not be a problem."

"Because you're a vampire?" she squeaked. "I don't know, I might still fry you. Believe me, celibacy is better than risking manslaughter. Or vampire-slaughter."

Kenelm gently released her. "Will you show me what you do? On Adam, if you're afraid of frying me, as you say."

Helena darted a gaze at Adam, landing in blue, blue eyes that held vast interest in her. Sexual interest.

"I don't want to hurt you," she told him. "Even though you tricked me into coming here you don't deserve that. Me walking out in a huff, yes, you having a heart attack or dropping dead, no."

"You said you could control it," Adam replied in his *come into my bedroom* voice. "Show me carefully."

"He'll come to no harm," Kenelm said. "I will not let him."

Helena didn't have much doubt that Kenelm could make things happen to his liking, but still she hesitated. Years of experience showed her the terrible things her power could do.

Kenelm's smile deepened, and he looked at Adam. "She does not want to hurt you. She's sweet."

"I see that." Adam laced one large hand under Helena's hair. "You can touch without danger, obviously," he said softly, leaning down to her. "And kiss?"

He brushed her lips to hers, much the same way Kenelm had trickled his kiss to her wrist. Fire stirred in her belly. Usually her strange power didn't manifest until she came, but Adam's lips were powerful, mastering, and he tasted as delectable as he looked.

He slid his tongue into her mouth, a bite of spice, and Helena lost it. Electricity sizzled and danced from her fingertips and bit deep into Adam, engulfing him in a wild sparking nimbus.

Chapter Three

Helena gasped and jerked herself away from him. Adam's eyes were wide, his body shaking with the charge that snaked over him in glowing waves.

Kenelm never blinked. He stepped behind Adam, placed his large hands on Adam's upper arms and closed his eyes. The electricity seeped from Adam into Kenelm and dissipated harmlessly.

Helena gaped. "Are you all right?"

Adam opened his eyes, languid and heavy. "Mmm, what a ride. Men *avoid* having sex with you?"

"I just electrocuted you! You could have died."

Kenelm slid his hands to Adam's waist. "Not with me behind him. You see? As long as I am there to absorb the energy when you have sex, he'll be fine."

A vision flashed into Helena's head of Adam, naked and delectable, riding her on a sumptuous bed, while Kenelm, equally naked, knelt beside them and ran his hands all over Adam's body.

Why didn't that alarm her? It should alarm her.

But it didn't, it made her horny as hell. A lifetime of toys and photos of the hunk of the month couldn't possibly compare with basking in the arms of a man. Or two.

The temptation tantalized her. She could have Adam, whom she'd wanted since she first set eyes on him. Kenelm would let her.

"Why?" she asked. "Why would you offer this to me?"

Adam smiled a slow and promising smile. "For the joy of it, my dear." He covered one of Kenelm's hands with his own, a gesture that made her stomach flutter.

"But he's a vampire." She felt safer looking into Adam's blue eyes than Kenelm's very dark ones. "Vampires never do anything without demanding a price."

"That is true," Kenelm said. "But we can give you a night and a day of the most exquisite ecstasy you will ever know."

The flutter moved to her heart which pounded hard and fast. A night and a day of pure ecstasy with these two men. Adam with his blue eyes and faintly accented voice, Kenelm with a touch like sin.

He was offering to let her have a man inside her, making love to her, while he siphoned off the killing electricity. Two men, bringing her to orgasm, Adam touching her, Kenelm watching with his night-dark eyes.

She put her hands to her face. "You are both tempting me all to hell. Please don't do this to me."

Kenelm reached across Adam and touched her ankh tattoo. "But I must ask you, daughter of Osiris. I need you."

"And what's with the *daughter of Osiris* thing? I'm not Egyptian."

Kenelm's secret smile returned to his mouth as his finger brushed the hollow between her breasts. "We will explain. You must decide quickly and come with us. There isn't much time."

"Why not? Why isn't there time?"

A sudden explosion filled the entrance of the club. The music halted, the bartenders dropped bottles and people screamed. Smoke and a whiff of sulfur drifted on the air.

"That is why not," Adam said, his expression bleak. "They've come for you."

* * * * *

The Guardians existed outside time and space, in limbo and darkness, without thought. Whenever a true vampire found a daughter of Osiris and tried to unite with her, then the Guardians were fated to act.

The Guardians had been created by Ammut, the crocodile-headed goddess who ate the hearts of the damned. She raised the Guardians to keep pure-blood vampires, who could mate only with the female descendents of Osiris, from strengthening and spreading.

The lightning of Osiris had settled in the daughter called Helena Girard, and she could restore her vampire to his full strength. Which must be stopped.

Both Ammut and Osiris had long ago ceased to be worshiped or even thought about except by a few pagan sects. But the Guardians lived on, in stasis and forgotten, ready to perform the one task for which they were created.

Now they burst into Club Vamp, armed in bronze, seeking to slay the daughter of Osiris and her foul vampire lover.

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"They're the *what*?" Helena shouted.

She was beautiful and Adam wanted her. She was Kenelm's, fated for him but the kiss had sparked deep need for her. She tasted like honey and oranges, and reminded him of a woman he'd lost long ago.

"Guardians," he repeated. "They've come for you."

Four huge men wearing little but bronze greaves and breastplates and holding enormous bronze swords started across the room. Patrons of the club screamed and fled, but the warriors didn't hurt them. They honed in on Helena with deadly intensity.

"Get her below," Kenelm snapped. "I'll clear the club."

Adam wanted to argue—*No, you get her below, I'll clear the club*—but he spotted the fury in Kenelm's eyes and decided to obey him. He took the bewildered Helena's arm. "Let's do it."

"What are we doing exactly?" she protested as he began shoving her toward the door in the back of the room.

Behind them, Kenelm raised his hands. His vampire magic rolled over the club, the power of his mind soothing, quieting. The men and women who'd come to the club for the titillation of vampires began to relax and smile. Calmly they walked out to the street, blank looks on their faces. The doors swung shut behind them and the locks clicked.

The Guardians now had a clear field of attack. Adam hustled Helena through the door and down the stairs toward Kenelm's compound. She went willingly, less afraid of him than of the four determined warriors with sharp swords.

At the bottom Adam shoved her through another door and raced back upstairs to help Kenelm. He found Kenelm still standing in the middle of the floor, his powers raising a shield between himself and the bronze-clad warriors. Adam knew the shield would not hold. Kenelm had lost too much strength.

"Is she safe?" Kenelm asked without turning around.

"Yes. Now let me get *you* safe."

Kenelm lowered his hands. In that moment, the Guardians attacked.

Adam grabbed Kenelm around the middle just as swords came hacking down on him and dragged him from the club. He banged the door to the compound shut and flipped the many locks closed. He didn't have Kenelm's powers, but a good dead bolt or seven helped.

On the other side of the door, the warriors rammed it, banging the smooth, seamless door with sword hilts and fists. Kenelm pressed his hands against the door and willed it to hold.

When he backed away, his face was gray and weary, lines deep around his eyes and mouth. Blood oozed from under the ripped sleeve of his jacket, and he sagged when Adam put his arm around him.

"Thank the gods they're from the Bronze Age," he muttered as Adam helped him down the stairs. "They haven't figured out guns. Or nuclear weapons."

"Don't give them ideas," Adam answered.

They found Helena in the black-silk living room. She looked up when they walked in, her blue eyes round with astonishment. "You own all this?" she asked, waving her hand at the artwork.

Kenelm shrugged, sliding his ruined jacket from his body. "Trinkets I've picked up through the years."

"Trinkets?" She lifted a gold statuette of a cat that had come from the tomb of Tutankhamun.

Kenelm's lips quirked. He slid off his tie and let it drape across a gilded Regency chair. "We need to make love, daughter of Osiris. I tend to be—rough—so Adam will keep me from overdoing it."

In shirtsleeves, his collar unbuttoned to reveal a V of dark skin, he moved to Helena and cupped her face in his hands. Whatever wound he had sustained had already closed, though his shirt bore a red hole under the sleeve. "Like you, I sometimes lose control."

She reacted to him. A woman couldn't help *not* reacting to Kenelm. "You want me to have sex with you?" Her voice had softened, dipping to the sultry range. "With four armed men banging on the door upstairs?"

Kenelm made a negligent gesture with his fingers, and the sound of swords on the door went away. The warriors were still there, but he'd muffled the noise.

"My magic can hold them for a while. By the time they break in, we'll be ready to face them."

"We might be naked when they break in."

Again Kenelm almost smiled. "We must be quick, but that does not mean we will not enjoy it."

Her eyes grew more languid. "You promised me a night and a day of pure ecstasy."

"And you will have it." He smoothed her hair from her forehead. "Would you like Adam first? To get you used to it?"

Adam chuckled, though his heart beat rapidly. "The warm-up act. What a compliment."

"You are gentler than I am."

"She has an electric touch." Adam ran fingertips through Helena's hair, brushing Kenelm's hand along the way. The idea of sharing this beautiful woman with his lover made him pounding hard.

She looked from one to the other, her eyes like a dusky sky. "Are you both crazy? Or maybe I am. I'm the one down here with you."

She didn't look as alarmed as she could have been, but that was Kenelm's effect. He dampened fear and heightened joy, and Adam had firsthand knowledge of how much joy Kenelm could heighten.

Kenelm spoke as slowly and calmly as though they had all night. "I won't force you, daughter of Osiris. The magic won't work if I do. It must be your choice."

"Will you *please* tell me what the hell is going on? I can't make a choice if I don't know what my choice is."

For answer, Kenelm lifted her into his arms and sat down with her on the black velvet sofa. She crossed her long legs over his lap and settled in, looking happy to be there.

Adam took a chair across from them, leaning forward with elbows on knees. He enjoyed studying these two people—one he loved and one he was falling in love with.

"Once upon a time," Kenelm said, "there was a daughter of Osiris who saved a vampire."

"When was this?" Helena asked, the natural curiosity of the journalist springing to her eyes.

"Right now." Kenelm's velvet voice caressed, the vampire charm high. "When a daughter of Osiris mates with an ancient vampire, he will both save himself and create offspring. A child to raise."

Her eyes widened. "A child?"

Adam saw longing flicker across her face. A woman who could not safely have sex with a man would believe she could never hold her own child in her arms.

"That is what I can give you," Kenelm said. "And the twenty-four hours of ecstasy. I haven't forgotten about that."

"And in return?" A skeptical look crossed her face, along with pain. "I give you the child to raise?"

"No. You raise her with me. You stay with me as my life-mate."

"You'd keep me here? What about my own life, my career?"

"Have your career. I don't mind staying at home and looking after the children."

Adam hid a smile. The idea of a dark sex lord like Kenelm being a stay-at-home dad amused him. And yet he knew Kenelm had a deep capacity for love, which Adam had been lucky enough to touch.

Helena twined her arms around Kenelm's neck, already aroused and scented with desire. "Let me get this straight. You want me to have sex with you and have your children? But you want your friend to have sex with me first to loosen me up? Then what does he do? Go home?"

"Adam lives here," Kenelm said. "He is my lover. He is watching us, hard as a rock, wanting to be your lover, too."

Her blue eyes flicked to Adam again, even as she snuggled against Kenelm's broad shoulder. "You two are gay? Or bi, I guess you'd be."

"Adam has had no male lovers but me. I have had only one other, long, long ago when I first became a vampire. I had no intention of taking another male lover until I met him." He glanced at Adam. "You can understand why."

"Yes." She was purring now. "He's absolutely beautiful."

"He is." Kenelm's dark eyes held fire, and Adam's cock hardened still more. There wasn't much Kenelm wouldn't do, and he'd done it all to Adam.

"Shall we suck him?" Kenelm asked Helena. "I think he'd like that."

"You're absolutely right," Adam answered.

"Then let us see you," Kenelm said.

Happily. Adam fumbled with his buttons, hands shaking, and stood up to peel the leather pants down his legs. He sat on the chair again, the upholstery tickling his backside.

He spread his legs to let them see how huge and ready his cock was, knowing exactly what Kenelm liked him to do. He pulled his hard balls forward then ran his fingers all the way up the length of his cock, swallowing a groan.

“Hurry,” he said, his words slurring. “Before I come. I want to come on you. Both of you.”

Chapter Four

Helena's heart thumped as she stared at Adam's cock, bared for her. Kenelm's eyes darkened as he riveted his gaze on his friend, his throat moving with a swallow.

She wondered about their relationship—Adam was not a vampire, nor did he bear the servile attitude she'd seen in people who had chosen to be blood slaves. Kenelm was obviously massively wealthy, scarily powerful and sexy as hell, but Adam was his own man.

These speculations danced in the back of her mind, but the front of her mind spun with excitement. Adam was beautiful, and Kenelm's magic almost made her forget the four ferocious men upstairs who wanted to kill her.

Kenelm put his hand on her arm and guided her to kneel on the soft carpet. "Have him," he said. "Enjoy him."

Helena's position on the floor let her examine Adam's cock up close, dark and long, thick and ready. Adam stroked it lightly with his fingers. "Please, Helena," he murmured. "You won't hurt me."

It had been so long since Helena had attempted to find pleasure with a man that she'd almost forgotten what to do. College dates had quickly dried up once she discovered she couldn't control the electricity in her fingers. Well, not entirely—some men hinted they wanted to be shocked possibly to death by her, but such men were too creepy to contemplate.

Kenelm knelt next to her, his long black hair spilling over Adam's bare thigh. His broad hand rested on Adam's waist, his eyes on Helena. Helena leaned down and licked Adam's tip, which tasted warm and salty and good.

His cock moved, beckoning her touch. She explored him with her fingers, his velvety shaft, the coarse hair at his balls, the smooth tip, the enticing lip of the flange.

"Mmm." Adam spread his legs a little more, shifting his hips forward.

Kenelm's black gaze took in everything she did. She knew he watched to stop her electricity if it flickered out of her, but she could tell he enjoyed seeing what she did to Adam, and he enjoyed Adam's reaction.

Adam enjoyed it too. He unashamedly splayed his legs open, groaning aloud as Helena licked her way up and down his cock. She slid her fingers around the stem, amazed at how large he was.

She had a feeling that Kenelm would be even larger. She darted a glance at Kenelm's groin as she drew her tongue around Adam's flange, her mind quivering with possibilities.

Adam lolled his head against Kenelm's shoulder, his blond hair mixing with Kenelm's dark strands. "She's so sweet. Thank you, my friend."

For answer Kenelm kissed him, catching Adam's moans of delight on his tongue. Helena watched, mesmerized by the two strong mouths taking each other in a practiced way. What would it be like to watch these two men making love?

Her fantasies made her quim squeeze and liquid dampen her underwear. It never occurred to her that watching two men kiss would be a turn-on, but then, she'd never met Adam and Kenelm.

She lowered her mouth over Adam's cock, wishing she were more practiced, because Adam was obviously used to skilled pleasure. She did her best, licking and nibbling and suckling. The taste of cock in her mouth plus the sight of Adam and Kenelm was enough to trigger an orgasm if she let it.

Adam must have thought so too. He rocked his hips, sending his eager cock into her mouth, his balls hard and standing firm beneath his base. She loved the dark golden hair there, loved the way he lifted his ass as though begging her to stroke it.

Daringly she eased her fingers into the warm place between his cheeks and wriggled her finger until she found his anal star.

"Oh, yes," he whispered. "I'm going to come."

Yes, come for me. Helena's heart pounded in excitement. To taste his come, what would that be like? Heaven on her tongue. His cock moved in her mouth, and any minute now...

Kenelm lifted Helena away, ripping her from Adam's lovely, lovely hardness. She made a noise of disappointment.

"No, make him wait for it," Kenelm said, his voice raw like he too was on the point of explosion. "You will ride him now, and let him get you ready for me."

Adam looked up at him, eyes clouded with frustration. "Bastard. Some day you'll let me finish."

"Maybe. Imagine how good that will feel."

"Damn you," Adam said, but he laughed, as though he and Kenelm had this argument all the time.

Kenelm fetched a bottle made of thick blue crystal, a work of art itself. The oil inside smelled like a work of art too, all spicy and warm.

Kenelm set down the bottle and unbuttoned his shirt. Helena got lost in looking at him, his incredible hard body shadowed by the placket, the dark hair on his chest that beckoned her fingers. Would she find a heart beating under her touch or silence?

Kenelm dribbled oil over his fingers, droplets spilling to the carpet unheeded. He smoothed his hand up Adam's cock, making it glistening and slick. Adam's head dropped back, then he moaned as Kenelm leaned down and brushed a light kiss to Adam's tip.

"Soon, my friend," he promised.

Adam gave Helena a half-smile. "Are you going to take off your clothes, love? It would be nice with clothes, too, but I want to see you."

Kenelm turned a dark gaze to her, waiting.

Helena put her hand to the back of her dress and began to unzip. It was exhilarating, and unnerving, to have these two men watching her with undivided attention, waiting for fabric to fall from her flesh.

The room was slightly colder than what she was used to, she discovered as she stood in nothing but strapless bra, panties, and thigh-high stockings.

Adam smiled at her. "By the gods, you're beautiful."

Her skin heated, and she remembered her dignity enough to not stammer thanks. She decided to pretend she had no worries about undressing in front of two men who looked like they wanted to devour her, and unsnapped her bra.

Definitely colder than she was used to. Her nipples rose to firm peaks and seemed to reach toward Adam and Kenelm. Before she lost her nerve, she slid her panties off, hoping she looked incredibly sexy and not as shaking and clumsy as she felt.

Both men fell silent, and she glanced up at them.

Kenelm had sat back, his face quiet, while Adam's smile made him unbelievably gorgeous. His jutting cock didn't hurt, either.

She walked to Adam and placed her hands shyly on his thighs. "I'm ready," she said.

"Almost," Kenelm answered for him. He rose and slid his hands, still slick with oil, across her waist, over her breasts, fingers plucking the tight buds. He dipped his slick hand to her quim, brushing it once. "Go to him," he whispered.

Adam reached for her. She placed her hands on his shoulders and straddled his thighs. He stroked the petals of her quim, opening her, nearly sending her to orgasm with his very touch.

"You're very wet."

"Can't imagine why," she said shakily.

"She likes us." Adam's smile grew brilliant, and he eased her down onto the tip of his waiting cock.

* * * * *

She felt so nice. Adam lifted his hips, liking how the folds of her quim eased around his cock. Sweet woman who smelled so good. He leaned forward and licked a trickle of sweat from between her breasts.

"Adam," she murmured.

He tried to go slow, getting her used to having a man inside her. He felt her tightness, then her slight gasp as she opened like a flower. Yes, Kenelm was wise to let Adam have her first, and so generous. Adam was the first one in her, the *first*.

The fire in Helena's fingers began. Faint lightning crackled through her hands as her thighs rocked against his, tight and fine.

Kenelm moved to stand behind him, strong hands drifting to Adam's shoulders. Adam leaned his head against his lover's chest as the lightning entered Adam's body and flowed into Kenelm's.

Kenelm made a noise in his throat that became a purr. "Lovely."

Adam thought so. Her fire tingled through his body, not hurting him because Kenelm drew it from him, in much the same way he drew Adam's blood into his body when he fed.

Adam had never had a woman like this. She was tight, tight, squeezing him hard like Kenelm's fist. Her lightning shivered faster, snaking through Adam's body in waves. Kenelm calmly drew it out, never letting it burn.

He loved Kenelm's hands delving inside his shirt, pulling it down to bare his shoulders. Kenelm slid his fingers between Adam's body and Helena's, pulling on Adam's tightened nipples, cupping the globe of Helena's breast in his hand.

Helena's eyes widened. "I'm going to come," she panted.

"Not yet," Kenelm murmured, his voice driving Adam to the edge. "Ride a little longer. Enjoy yourselves, my friends."

Adam's fingers bit into Helena's hips, pulling her harder onto him. Behind him, Kenelm moved Adam's hair out of the way, baring his neck.

"Yes," Adam moaned. "Please."

He held back a cry as Kenelm's fangs sank into his neck. The faint pain, masked as usual by Kenelm's magic, coupled with Helena's pressure, released him. He pumped upward into Helena, loving the feel of her around him, of Kenelm's hands, of his mouth, his teeth holding Adam fast.

Helena screamed. Her hips moved with her climax, her walls clenching his cock in heavy pulses, the electricity from her fingers covering his body. The lightning went through him like no orgasm ever had, to be absorbed into Kenelm's mouth.

Adam felt his seed shoot into her, their joining complete. Helena rocked and danced on him, her nipples hard little points. Kenelm continued to drink, feeding on sex and electricity as much as he did Adam's blood.

Finally as Helena began to calm, the fires died. Helena drooped in happy exhaustion and Adam gathered her into his arms, letting her head rest on his shoulder. Kenelm eased away from Adam's neck, fingers touching the wound to close it.

"Stronger," Kenelm said. "Already I am stronger."

He sounded stronger, the wicked glint in his eye deeper and more gleeful than Adam had seen it in a long time. A playful Kenelm was a dangerous one, and Adam's cock stirred as he wondered just how dangerous Kenelm was going to be.

Adam touched Helena's hair. Her eyes were closed, breathing even, the lightning gone. "She's fallen asleep."

Kenelm pressed a kiss to Adam's neck and unfolded to his feet. "Carry her to the bedroom. I will finish while she is relaxed from you. I have no wish to hurt her."

Adam stroked his hand up Helena's limp form, a protectiveness welling inside him. He knew Kenelm needed to join with her to save himself and her, but he would be there to make certain Kenelm remained gentle.

"Come on, love," he said, lifting her into his arms, but Helena slept on.

* * * * *

She woke with Kenelm inside her.

She nearly screamed in shock. *Kenelm. Inside her.*

He was huge. He spread her like nothing ever had, his large body wedged between her legs, fists taking his weight, muscles cording with strength as he held himself over her. He was stark naked and so was she, both of them lying on a soft bed hung with black silk.

"Helena, look at me."

Helena bit back another cry and stared into eyes black as a moonless night. As soon as their gazes connected, she felt lassitude, a relaxing of her muscles, fear and worry ebbing.

"I'll not hurt you," Kenelm said, his voice a near whisper. "But you have to believe me. Can you do that for me?"

"Adam?" she gasped.

"I am here."

She turned her head to see him stretched out at her side, also naked, his honed body like a work of art. Blue eyes regarded her steadily.

"Look at me, Helena," Kenelm commanded.

Reluctantly she turned back to Kenelm and was caught again by his fathomless eyes.

Making love to him was different from making love to Adam. Adam had smiled and held her with warm hands and made her want to laugh in delight. Kenelm demanded her to focus on him and nothing else. His body dominated hers, wanted hers, would have hers.

His cock was so damn big. It spread her wide, and only by lifting her hips could she accommodate it. He stayed still in her, his arms shaking a little as he held himself back.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

Adam skimmed his hand across her shoulder, but she couldn't look at him. Kenelm's eyes held her, bringing her in, in, in. A lock of hair fell over his dark face, a few wisps catching in the shadow of whiskers on his jaw.

He waited for her answer. She gave a tentative nod, then groaned out loud when he pushed even farther inside her.

She'd thought him big before, *this* she'd never be able to take. She gulped a breath to scream, but Kenelm's touch on her face calmed her. "Shhh. I will make it easy for you."

Adam moved closer to her, his presence comforting. "I won't let him hurt you."

Kenelm did not look at him. His entire focus was for Helena.

Slowly he eased himself out and just as slowly came back in. He'd been right—she'd never have been able to endure this had Adam not taken her first. She felt faint surprise that she wasn't sore, but Kenelm's mesmerizing magic had likely taken care of that.

Another slow stroke, and another. Tentatively she squeezed the huge thing inside her and was rewarded by Kenelm's eyes growing heavy.

"Adam, you are right, she is sweet." Kenelm's voice grated.

He was filling her so full. Her entire body flushed and tightened with the wonderful pressure.

"More?" he asked her.

She nodded against the cool pillows. "Yes. More. Please."

"She likes you," Adam said. He smoothed her hair. "Doesn't his cock feel good? So damn big you don't think you can take it, but then he makes you able to take it."

The fantasies his words spun through her mind made her writhe with delight. Adam on his knees looking back at Kenelm, smiling as Kenelm thrust his hard, slicked cock straight into him.

The fires began. When she'd made love to Adam, Kenelm had dispersed the electricity, but there was no one to do it for him. It snaked all over his body, ropes of light on his naked skin. Any other man would scream with so much power streaking through him, but Kenelm laughed and drew it into himself.

"Beautiful," he said. "You are beautiful, my Helena, inside and out."

His words triggered her release. More sparks snaked from her hands and body as she lifted her hips to him. He stroked into her, her body pliant now, over and over until she couldn't see. Wonderful darkness swamped her until she realized he was coming too.

His seed scalded into her, her body wanting it, knowing she belonged to him. The joining was nothing like her joining with Adam, which had been pure pleasure. This was something deeper, more basic, a whispering through her body that this was *right*.

"Love you," she whispered.

Kenelm groaned. He pumped into her, faster and harder, and she could take it because she was his mate. His. Forever.

She was also aware of Adam next to her, his lips at her temple, his fingers on her hair. Her two lovers. She wanted to laugh. Yesterday she'd had no lovers, today *two*.

Kenelm gave one last thrust and sank down to her waiting body. "Thank you," he whispered, his body heavy on hers, his breath hot in her ear. "Thank you."

They lay together for a while, calming, then Kenelm withdrew, inch by slow inch, until he eased out, still hard. Helena felt momentarily bereft until Adam kissed her.

The kiss went on and on, his tongue tasting the corners of her mouth, for all the world like he had just made love to her instead of Kenelm. Kenelm rolled to her other side, his body warm against her.

When Adam eased away, she found Kenelm's gaze fixed on them both, his smile feral. "You have restored me, daughter of Osiris. And fed me your fires."

He sat up and with the stroke of one arm made every candle in the cavernous room explode into light. A hot wind blew the bed hangings, and the candle flames danced.

"Damn, I haven't felt this good in years." He quirked his black gaze to Adam. "Are you ready for me?"

Adam laughed, a dark eager laugh. "I was born ready for you."

With a growl, Kenelm was on him.

Chapter Five

Kenelm astonished him. Adam had lived with the man for a hundred and fifty years, as his lover for all but four of those years. He thought he'd learned everything Kenelm could do, but he realized now he'd never been in bed with Kenelm at full strength.

Good thing Adam liked it hard, he decided. Kenelm had him flat on his back, Adam's feet curled around his head, Kenelm holding him while he slicked Adam down and entered him. The best, the best. Kenelm drove in mercilessly, and Adam loved every second of it.

Helena lay beside them, propped on her arm, watching them with round eyes. She appreciated watching them, if the little smile on her face indicated anything.

After a long time Kenelm came, his face twisted in ecstasy, and Adam was not far behind. Kenelm withdrew, kneeling back on the bed, breathing hard. "I need more."

"Insatiable," Adam chuckled, his body relaxing. "As usual."

Kenelm's hungry gaze flicked to Helena. "Can you?" he asked her.

She wet her lips, considering, but Kenelm was hard to resist. In the end, she held out her arms.

Kenelm made love to her, deep and fast, and after she climaxed, Kenelm withdrew and returned to Adam. He went back and forth between them, his mate and his lover, until Adam and Helena were sleepy with satisfaction.

Adam imagined the future between the three of them, when they'd teach Helena to take them both at once—Kenelm in her quim and Adam in her ass—how fine that would be. She was nowhere near ready yet, but they would teach her.

Adam fell asleep while Kenelm rode Helena one more time, dreaming of glorious things to come.

* * * * *

Helena lifted her head and sleepily brushed her hair from her face. Adam slept soundly next to her, Kenelm tangled on his other side, one brown arm slung across Adam's bare hip.

The room was quiet, the wind gone, the candles guttering or already burned out. She had no idea how long she'd slept, time being hard to gauge in this room. A few minutes? Hours? Days?

She really should give a thought to getting up and going to work. Kenelm needed an alarm clock in here—any clock. She sat up, wondering where the shower was, and

then she remembered why they'd scurried down here so quickly and hid themselves behind bolted doors.

The Guardians. She heard nothing from upstairs, but Kenelm had dampened the sound. They could still be there.

As though he sensed her movement, Kenelm flicked open his eyes. He showed no indication he'd been asleep. Unlike herself and Adam, who'd fallen exhausted onto the bed at the end of the last round of lovemaking, Kenelm looked alert and ready to play.

"Um," Helena ventured, "weren't there four armed warriors upstairs wanting to kill me?"

"They are waiting for us." Kenelm's voice was low and silky. "Shall we go fight them?"

"We?" She stared at him. "Who's this *we*?"

"You and I, daughter of Osiris." He reached for her hand. "You and I now have the strength of gods."

Between them, Adam shifted in his sleep, and Helena got lost looking at him. She thought he'd wake, but he only made a faint noise, drew a long breath and drifted deeper into sleep.

"Explain how we now have the strength of the gods," she said, keeping her voice low. "Because I had sex with the two of you?"

"Because you had sex with *me*. Sex with Adam was just for fun."

And what fun. The man knew some techniques.

"Go on," she prompted.

"The daughters of Osiris were made to breed with vampires. The gift of Osiris to us. A curse too, because if we cannot find a daughter of Osiris, then we fade and die. Daughters of Osiris can mate with none but vampires. Which is why you fry everyone but me."

"But my parents weren't..." She broke off. She'd never met her parents, knew nothing about them. How did she know they weren't a vampire and a descendent of a god?

"It took me a long time to trace you," Kenelm said, giving her an understanding look. "I knew you'd come to Manhattan, but from there I had no leads. Your parents died when you were young, didn't they?"

"When I was a baby. I don't remember them at all."

He traced her cheek, his touch holding fire. "Your mother was a daughter of Osiris, your father a vampire. He was a lesser vampire, not as strong as I am, and so couldn't save your mother when the Guardians found them. An eye witness I finally tracked down said your father died in the daylight trying to protect her. That was in Russia. Your mother came to New York and hid you before the Guardians caught up to her. The Guardians never found you."

Tears stung her eyes. "The charity has no record of her. I was Baby X. They didn't even know my name."

"They chose a beautiful one. Helena." The backs of his fingers grazed her cheek. "But the new name did make you difficult to find. For the Guardians, and for me."

"And now you expect us to go kick the Guardians' collective butts? The same guys who killed my parents?" Sudden rage swept her, and she sat up. "Wait a minute—the same guys who killed my parents? I've changed my mind. I say we go kick some ass."

* * * * *

Adam woke to an empty bed. The warmth and scent of both Kenelm and Helena clung to the sheets and tried to draw him back to sleep, but he sat up, forcing himself awake.

The Guardians. *Shit*. He knew that Kenelm, cocky with his power, and Helena, likely stoked on a sexual high, had both gone to fight them.

He threw off the sheets and rolled out of bed, reaching for his pants. Bloody hell, this wasn't a game.

Adam dressed quickly, throwing a shirt on over his naked chest, then opened a cabinet hidden in the wall and removed a pistol. The bullets nestled inside were silver, good for stray werewolves or vampires who lost control in the club. Now to see if they worked on Guardians.

Adam shoved his feet into shoes and left the room, jogging through the deserted living room and back up the stairs toward the club. He heard the battle long before he swung the door open, the clang of swords, Kenelm's laughter, Helena's screams.

He banged into the club and found chaos.

Kenelm battled three Guardians himself, laughing as he cut and parried with a broadsword he'd kept since the Middle Ages. The Guardians had him backed into a corner, chopping at him with swords of edged bronze. Iron might be harder, but a bronze sword slicing off Kenelm's head could still kill him.

Helena grappled with another, lightning snaking from her hands to the warrior. The Guardian flinched and growled as the electricity engulfed him, but he was a magical creature and could fight through it.

"Helena," Adam yelled. "Get down."

Helena saw him. Her eyes widened but she instantly dropped. *Good for her*. Adam fired once, twice.

Silver bullets seemed to work fine against Guardians. The one fighting Helena jerked as Adam's shots entered his body, the bullets searing right through his breastplate.

Blood stained the bronze, and the Guardian toppled to the ground. After a few seconds, his body disintegrated with a hiss and a waft of noisome smoke. Helena clamped her hand over her nose at the smell of decay.

Adam spent a moment feeling triumph then aimed at one of the Guardians surrounding Kenelm. If Kenelm would get out of the way, Adam could fire.

Kenelm fought on, paying no attention. The vampire was having *fun*. Adam sighted over the gun trying to find an opening.

Sudden pain seared through his middle. He looked down in surprise to see a bronze blade pushing itself out from his own stomach, shoved into him by a *fifth* Guardian who stood directly behind him.

Damn, I should have checked to see if they sent for backup.

As if in a dream, Adam saw his own blood spurt over his clean shirt and puddle on the floor, before the pistol fell from his useless grip and everything went dark.

* * * * *

Helena screamed. The fifth Guardian had come out of nowhere—perhaps hiding himself until Kenelm thought he'd won? Helena ran to Adam and dropped to her knees beside him just as the Guardian yanked the sword out of Adam's body.

Adam's blood streaked the blade. Helena looked up at the grim-faced warrior, his eyes filled with more reason and life than the others'. He must be their leader, the one who gave the orders, the man responsible for killing her parents. He'd killed her father and her mother and now he'd killed her lover Adam.

She snatched up the pistol Adam had dropped and shot the warrior full in the face. He jerked back, blood all over the place, but he didn't stop. His sword came up, ready to slice Helena in two.

"His heart," Adam rasped. "Aim for his heart."

He was still alive. Swallowing tears of relief, Helena obeyed. She aimed and sent the last three bullets into the Guardian's heart. This time he fell, his sword clattering to the ground just before his body fell on top of it. Like the other, he evaporated with a hiss and a stink.

Kenelm threw the warriors fighting him away from him. They scattered, seeming dazed without their leader. Kenelm raised his hand and sent a blast of darkness at them that felled them all.

Helena watched him step over their disintegrating bodies, his face dark and savage, like the deadly night creature he was. She wiped tears from her eyes. "Could you have killed them at any time?"

"Yes." He spat the word in anger and sank to his knees beside Adam. "I was enjoying myself fighting. Idiot, why didn't you stay in bed?"

"Had to help Helena," Adam whispered.

"Damn it." He put his hand on Adam's stomach, blood smeared everywhere. "I was playing—I was so damn happy to have my powers back."

"He saved me," Helena told him. "I don't know if I could have held off the Guardian on my own."

"I know." Kenelm's eyes were full of self-loathing. "My arrogance has almost killed the two people I love best in the world."

Adam smiled, his face stark white. "You love me best in the world? Me and Helena? Aw, that's sweet."

"Shut up," Kenelm growled. He placed his hands over the wound, his eyes closing. Helena sensed vast power in him, far greater than that of the Guardians, far greater than it had been when she'd first seen him.

Adam felt it too. He clenched his teeth as though staving off pain. "I love you too, sweetheart."

Kenelm said nothing, lost in whatever magic he poured into Adam's body.

Helena smoothed Adam's pale hair. "Shh," she whispered, and kissed his forehead.

Kenelm saved his life. Whatever magic Helena had given him, whatever strength she leant, he saved Adam. Near the end, Kenelm turned to her, his dark eyes burning.

"Put your hands on mine," he instructed. "I need your power."

She obeyed. Placing her hands on top of Kenelm's large warm ones, she let out her power little by little, amazed she could control it so well.

They closed his wound, her power lacing with Kenelm's as Adam lay still beneath them, watching with his blue eyes. As the lines of pain eased from his face and he relaxed, he murmured, "I really do love you, you know."

"I know," Kenelm said, his voice like silk, his hands powerful under Helena's. "That's why I put up with you."

Adam smiled, and his eyes slid closed.

* * * * *

"An explosion early this morning at Club Vamp destroyed half the club and injured Adam Chase, the club manager."

Helena stood tall, the microphone at her mouth, her professional reporter voice at full strength. The wind whipped her hair as she stood on the street in front of the club, the afternoon sun shining through patchy clouds.

"Chase was taken to the hospital for minor injuries and released late this morning. He announced that Club Vamp will be closed until further notice."

Kenelm reached across Adam on the bed, cranking up the volume so he could listen to Helena. He'd never tire of listening to her.

"I didn't need to go to the hospital, you know," Adam rumbled beneath him. "You and Helena healed me."

"I wanted to be sure." Kenelm didn't think he'd ever forgive himself for almost getting Adam killed. Power like he'd never felt had surged through him, and he'd let himself wallow in it. *Like an idiot.*

Adam would have come running to his and Helena's rescue no matter what. Adam was just that way. At least Kenelm's newfound strength had allowed him to heal Adam. He'd not had to pay for his arrogance by losing the man he loved.

Kenelm let his hand slide down Adam's torso to his cock. Adam half rolled over and looked sleepily up at Kenelm.

"Mmm. Completing my cure?"

"Something like that."

Kenelm leaned down to kiss him, taking his eager lips. Adam made a noise in his throat and snaked his hand to Kenelm's naked back, fingers sliding toward his ass.

Kenelm broke the kiss. "I don't want to hurt you."

"Fuck you," Adam said, smiling. "I'm fine. Fuck *me*."

Kenelm returned the smile, his power stirring. He needed it rough right now, and Adam, damn he loved him, was giving him his *come on, I can take it* look.

"Suck me, and I just might," Kenelm growled.

"Any time, lover boy." Adam slid down the bed, away from Kenelm's grasp and rolled over to take Kenelm's giant cock in his mouth.

"Oh, perfect," Kenelm crooned.

Adam was talented with his lips and tongue, knowing exactly how Kenelm liked it. He splayed his hands across Kenelm's thighs, teasing his rock-hard balls. Kenelm lifted his hips, letting Adam get his thumb against Kenelm's anal star and ever so slowly work his way in.

Kenelm fisted Adam's long hair in his hands, moving his thighs apart so Adam could have better access. He loved this man who'd stuck by him through the long years, searching for the daughter of Osiris. Now that he'd found the daughter of Osiris, she loved Adam too. Life was good.

"Hey, wait for me."

Helena's voice sounded in the bedroom doorway and both men looked up at her. She'd shucked her microphone and cameraman, and now grinned at the two of them who were so obviously screwing on the bed.

"Get your clothes off and come on then," Adam called, then he went back to doing wonderful things to Kenelm's cock and ass.

Only a few minutes later, Helena was naked next to Adam, who moved over a little to let her join him licking and nibbling and suckling Kenelm. Kenelm sucked in his breath and swore and loved it.

"So you'll be coming with us?" he asked through his rising orgasm.

"Mmm hmm," Helena replied, her mouth busy.

Earlier that morning Kenelm had cupped her shoulders and told her he wanted her to be his wife, his mate, for life. He had a magnificent palace of a house in England where the three of them could live. Helena could have the life she chose—petted love toy or sharp girl reporter, whatever she liked.

She'd made her choice to join them. Kenelm rejoiced. "I'm falling in love with you," she'd whispered as she kissed him, "and Adam."

He came now, holding tight the two people who meant the most to him. They laughed, happily lapping his cock.

Kenelm rose up on his knees, not sated at all. They'd just made him come before he was ready for it, and that deed could not go unpunished. Adam's eyes darkened as he realized that Kenelm was in one of his moods, guaranteed to further arouse him.

Kenelm took Adam first, entering him in wild plunges, feeling Adam squeeze him tight. Adam writhed and groaned, enjoying every second of it.

Kenelm had hoped to calm himself down on Adam, but it didn't work. His cock was just as hard and pounding even after he'd come and Adam had collapsed on the bed, breathing hard.

Smiling, Helena offered herself to him. She proved, with lightning fire, that she was learning to like it just as rough as Adam did.



About the Author

Allyson James is yet one more name for a woman who has racked up four pseudonyms in the first two years of her career. She often cannot remember what her real name is and has to be tapped on the shoulder when spoken to.

Allyson began writing at age eight (a five-page story that actually contained goal, motivation, and conflict). She learned the trick of standing her math book up on her desk so she could write stories behind it. She wrote love stories before she knew what romances were, dreaming of the day when her books would appear at libraries and bookstores. At age thirty, she decided to stop dreaming and do it for real. She published the first short story she ever submitted in a national print magazine, which gave her the false illusion that getting published was easy.

After a long struggle and inevitable rejections, she at last sold a romance novel, then to her surprise several mystery novels, more romances, and erotic romances to Ellora's Cave, and became a bestselling author. She writes under several pseudonyms, has been nominated for and won Romantic Times Reviewer's Choice awards, and has had starred reviews in Booklist and Top Pick reviews in Romantic Times.

Allyson met her soulmate in fencing class (the kind with swords, not posts-and-rails). She looked down the length of his long, throbbing rapier and fell madly in love.

Allyson welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

Tell Us What You Think

We appreciate hearing reader opinions about our books. You can email us at Comments@EllorasCave.com.

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Christmas Cowboy

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