

# Loth's

R. J.  
Llewellyn



# Blood

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Love's Blood

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LOVE'S BLOOD: WAIKIKI  
VAMPIRE BOOK 4

BY

A.J. LLEWELLYN

## DEDICATION

*To Clive Barker whose artistry, genius and amazing generosity have been a big influence on my work and to Billy and Roger because their love inspires me.*

## CHAPTER ONE

We sat in our car, in the tiny strip mall on Montserrat Avenue, rain kissing the windshield in small, tiny drops. Tem stared at the dentist's office. *The Tooth Shark*. Yes, it was pithy and yes, I knew my husband was in severe pain. I knew his teeth ached badly but what was hurting his teeth could not be fixed by any dentist.

I sighed, taking my hand off the steering wheel, trying once again to stroke the head of long, gleaming black hair that was my obsession. "Tem, baby, you can't go to a normal dentist. What do you think he would make of your elongating and retracting canine teeth?"

"Can't we swamp him with pheromones?"

"We could...but it still wouldn't help."

Tem looked desperate. "Div, you are a man of miracles. You can fix anything. Why not this? Why is this happening to me? Why isn't it happening to you?"

I kept my voice gentle. "Baby...you're new at this. I've been a vampire for over two hundred years. I used to kill before you came along." I

paused to gather my thoughts. Whenever I thought of the times he wasn't mine, I ached enough for ten men.

"It's my fault. I'm so happy that I don't want to kill. It's deepened our bond to exchange our own blood...love's blood...but I'm afraid, your body is dictating terms now."

"You mean we're going to have to kill?"

I didn't respond.

His face brightened. "We need to knock off a bad guy!"

"You needn't be so excited about it, baby." I couldn't help laughing at his gleeful expression, even though it saddened me that love was not enough.

We really needed to feed.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the tiny health café, the Diamond Head Cove and remembered they served *'awa*, a pure ancient medicinal herbal root ground into a powder and mixed with water to make a very unpalatable but absolutely kick-ass relaxant.

"Come, baby."

We took advantage of a break in the relentless drizzle and I held his hand, leading him into the little hippie hangout. Tem's eyes were wide and excited. One of the things I worshipped about him was his wonderment and sheer pleasure at new discoveries.

There were four odd-shaped tables squeezed into the small, rectangular space. Photos of locals, peculiar art and a couple of printed testimonials culled from the Internet, dotted the wall. The counter was a splash of organic fruits piled into a glass case along with some unappetizing looking, but probably very healthy muffins. The blonde girl, sponging the countertop down, wore dreadlocks and a blissed-out expression that told me she'd been sampling her own merchandise. Two other women sat at a table behind us playing ukuleles-badly. Tem and I perched on rickety stools at the counter.

The Cove smelled of fresh cut pineapples while Johnny Helm's smooth folk music played over the sound system. A transplanted New Yorker and now beloved local, Helm had a cult following. We loved his music, having caught him live at a couple of late-night clubs and coffeehouses. I recognized *Haunted Wind* and for some reason, a sense of uneasiness spread through me. I ordered two bowls of 'awa and Tem sat alert and excited on his stool as the waitress took the jug out of the fridge and poured the tan-colored sludge into coconut bowls.

Dropping two bracelets of *koa* wood beads on the counter in front of us, she placed the bowls on them to steady the rounded bottoms. A nice touch.

"First time?" she asked Tem who nodded

eagerly.

"Not for me," I said and handed her a twenty-dollar note. There was a big sign asking for cash only, which didn't surprise me. There was a feeling of this café being different, of not embracing commercialism in any way, which was very unusual and to me, welcome in *Waikiki*. Tem held his bowl in his hands, sniffing at the contents. I waved away the change. The waitress looked ecstatic about a ten-dollar tip on a ten-dollar order as I faced my husband.

"Sip it, you'll get used to it."

"It smells like mud."

"Tastes like it, too," I said with a grin and took the plunge. There was the familiar tang at the back of my throat. The waitress watched us.

"You like it?" she asked Tem who glanced at me.

"Not really. But I'll finish it."

"We'll take two more, please," I said and the waitress' face fell. I realized then, she thought she was losing her big tip. I slid her another twenty and downed my *'awa* in two gulps.

Tem glanced at me. He was able to read my mind and I telepathed to him, *It takes two bowls, baby. Trust me, you'll feel very good.* He didn't hesitate to finish his and accept the second serving. The tangy taste was stronger now and my lips felt numb. I could tell Tem was experiencing



the same thing, the way his tongue kept running over his own lips. We finished our drinks and smiled at each other.

"I love you," Tem said and leaned in for a kiss. I could taste that same earthiness on him that I carried in my mouth.

The counter girl sidled back to us. "We're the only place on *Oahu* that serves it...except for a shop on the North Shore."

"Thank God you're close by," Tem said and his voice sounded thick.

Within seconds, the feeling hit us both. Euphoria. Tem's pinched expression turned peaceful. I wanted to enhance the sensation for him and knew a little bit of me would help. It was easy to swamp the three humans in the café. I exuded a little effort and pheromones hit them like a ray of love. Even the ukuleles started sounding better.

"Here, baby," I whispered as the counter girl danced with her broom. I offered him my neck and his teeth elongated, plunging right into me. It hurt me at first...his teeth needed to bite into a stranger. It felt like a dull knife cutting...but as usual, the love we felt for each other overshadowed everything. With my heart beating faster, I watched the way Tem's mouth fastened itself to me, feeding furiously. I let him feed longer than usual, pushing him away with reluctance as I

reached down to his crotch.

I searched for his cock, which was hard, very hard, straining at his black leather pants. I rubbed it, knowing he was commando, proud that love's blood had helped bring him even higher.

"Whose little whore are you?" I whispered in his ear as the little café receded from our view. It was just Tem and Divine Thunder now. Nothing and nobody else existed. I heard his breath catch in his throat as I unbuttoned the fly of his vintage leather pants, forcing his huge, hungry cock out with difficulty. He groaned when it found its way into my warm mouth.

*I'm your whore, Div.* He was so turned-on he couldn't speak aloud. I took that beautiful cock and licked it, but I couldn't spend much time entertaining it. Tem was on the verge of coming. I gave the magnificent, huge head that topped the thick shaft a few possessive licks and sucked him in as his juices spilled into my mouth. When he finished pounding my jaw, he lifted my head in his beautiful hands and closed the two puncture marks on my throat with long, loving tongue strokes. I wanted nothing more than to throw him on the nearest table and fuck him, but that would have to wait.

With great reluctance, I tucked my husband's cock back into his pants.

"No, Div," he moaned. "Can't you fuck me? I

want you to fuck me.”

“Soon, baby.” I took his hand again and. I turned off the vampire mojo as we stepped outside. It was five o’clock in the afternoon. We’d have energy to fly now. Our passion was so immense we could even deal with daylight, but today an unexpected tornado in the middle of *Honolulu* had sent gunmetal gray clouds across the sky. No sun.

We left the car in the little mall and took a running leap together, flying up and over the far east end of *Waikiki*, the part most tourists never see. We flew over treetops, the wind whistling around us. Tem, reading me as always, followed my mind and we descended together, unseen, down into the International Market Place on *Kalakaua* Avenue. This was the ultimate tourist trap. We’d be good here for at least a thief or pick pocket. Our feet touched the ground with a soft thud as we landed by the sound stage where nightly shows were staged for free. We were absorbed into the swell of insanity that was the tourist trade.

A very effeminate, overweight man in nothing but a purple *pireau* was on stage, dancing—no, murdering—the *hula* to the tune of Aretha Franklin’s *Freeway of Love* to a captivated audience of *haole*, foreigners. Some of them were recording it on camera phones and I felt enraged. They’d no

doubt go home thinking they'd seen real *hula*. The idea was horrifying.

"Him," I said, but Tem was eyeing the hot dogs at Hank's. We blew past two women having an unhappy time trying to sell hand care products.

"Can I ask you a question?" they asked everybody who passed them. We, too, ignored them, passing the Pick a Pearl stand and the last jewelry cart that bore a sign saying *Clearing Out Sale. Everything Must Go!* It's been there for three years.

At Hank's, I watched my beloved deliberate on his choice of hot dogs for a whole twelve seconds. I could have predicted he'd pick the butter poached lobster roll and when it arrived, we found a wooden bench under the giant banyan tree in the courtyard, enjoying the sound of hundreds of birds that congregated in it this time each and every day. The joyous voices drowned out the bad *hula* and the tinny rap music from the souvenir stand on the corner.

Tem bit into his roll and groaned with pleasure. "Want some, baby?"

"Always." I tilted his face toward me with one finger, licking his buttery chin and he beamed at me. God, I was married to the sexiest man alive.

I checked the courtyard for nefarious activity. The birds tittered still, sharing a thousand different stories. Something was on the wind. I

could feel it.

A young, sobbing woman came down the wooden stairs built into the tree leading to the second floor shops. She stood beside us, her head in her hands.

Tem sprang to his feet, throwing his arms around her to comfort her.

Her story tumbled out in jagged bursts. She owned the scrapbooking store and the marshals had just come to evict her.

"Oh, Div," he cried. "We have to help her!"

I opened my mouth to speak and it came. The warning. It was right there, just below the bird song. As Div comforted the woman, I tuned into another distress signal.

The birds were chanting, *They're coming*.

"We have to go," I blurted and Tem was about to protest, but he saw the look on my face. I was worried. Tem's brother *Todah*, his wife, *Elenai*, and their baby son, *Akua*, our precious baby boy, were visiting from *Kauai*. They were home alone.

There was trouble. I could feel it. Tem gave the woman his business card, took my hand and we ran to the alleyway.

"No time to pick up the car," I said. "We'll fly."

Neither of us said a word as we zoomed east...*they're coming...they're coming*. Tem's face reacted to the words on the wind.

*Who's coming?* He telepathed to me, flying right

into my thoughts. He saw my concern for the baby.

“Hurry, Div,” he said aloud.

On the plus side, if we did encounter anyone trying to hurt our nephew, Tem and I would have an instant bad guy for dinner.

## CHAPTER TWO

Home. We zeroed in on the happiest kingdom we knew and I spotted *Todah* in the kitchen with the baby in his arms. He held a baby bottle in one hand and glanced up, smiling as we flew into the house through the kitchen windows.

"He's fine." Tem's hands shot out to our pudgy boy baby before he'd even set foot on the ground. *Akua*, who so adores Tem, immediately laughed and reached out his tiny hand to Tem who kissed it.

"Of course he's fine. He's about to eat." *Todah* was smiling down at his son whose face broke open into happy shrieks, his little forked tongue scissoring between his open lips. Thanks to an accident at birth, lightning struck *Akua*, which turned him into both a baby vampire and a storm demon. In time, he would become a very powerful man, much feared in the underworld. He could be powerful enough to kill, but we hoped to harness his powers for good use only. In the meantime, we

feared anything happening to our little boy ever since our cat, Moontime, dumped our precious bundle on our doorstep, Christmas morning. His mother, *Elenai*, thought the baby was dead and so did his daddy, *Todah*, who was a vampire like us. *Todah* had no idea *Elenai* was pregnant. Vampires weren't supposed to be able to conceive, but she had and once they realized their baby was alive and had his unusual and priceless traits, they took their parenting seriously, even leaving our island to raise him in peaceful surroundings.

Two days ago, they'd showed up, missing us, their family. My sister, Heavenly, and her wife, Clancy, were in Australia visiting Clancy's family. Now they knew that the baby was here, they were cutting their trip short. We'd all missed our little guy.

"You want to feed him?" *Todah* asked Tem whose face looked glassy. I knew he was feeling great now he'd get to feed the baby. Next to helping bathe him, feeding him was his passion. Boy, he sure had a bad case of Uncle-itis.

Let me tell you, that kid needed a lot of baths! He needed full contact with water every single hour or his demonic traits started to show...claws, razor teeth, pointy ears, the whole enchilada and he was only seven months old. After he turned one-year old, his baths could stretch to two hours.

Right now, his parents must have been



exhausted. Since she'd arrived, *Elenai* had done nothing but sleep and Tem and I had jumped in, happy to help. We expected my sister and Clancy to arrive tonight and then we'd have tons of helping hands.

*Todah* yawned and stretched as Tem took hold of the baby who suckled the milk in his bottle the way he always did.

"He's going to be a tit man," *Todah* joked. "Just like me."

"How's *Elenai* doing?" I asked, leaning against the kitchen counter. Moontime had chosen that moment to return home, jumping through the open window, rubbing his head against my hand. He knew evening was close and that meant fresh *ahi* tuna. Our magnificent black cat purred as I stroked his fur. I was trying to relax, but until everyone was in the house, I was certain I would still feel this uneasiness.

*They're coming...*

I tried to brush the thought away and concentrate on *Todah*.

I felt Tem's presence whistling through my mind. He'd caught my thoughts and his arms tightened their hold on the baby.

"*Elenai* really appreciates being here, Jimmy," he said.

Though my birth name is Divine, most people call me Jimmy, a nickname from long ago. Only

three people call me Div, my husband, my sister, Heavenly, and her wife, Clancy.

*Todah* met me as Jimmy and preferred to call me that. In a way, I have always felt it serves as a distancing tool between us, but I can live with that. *Todah* is a young man finding his place in the world and I don't plan on leaving the planet anytime soon.

"She hasn't slept for eight whole hours since we left here. This is such a luxury for her." *Todah* grinned.

What remained unspoken was that it was *Todah* and *Elenai* who chose to leave the family home. Nobody asked them to go. Nobody *wanted* them to leave. It had devastated Tem who first thought the dumped baby was ours, then once the truth emerged, he unflinchingly stepped into the role of doting uncle, only to have his own brother reject him because he thought Tem was getting too close to the baby.

We'd seen him once since then and that was because we'd begged them to let us visit. Now they were back and I hoped *Todah* would see his family as supportive, not intrusive. Tem burped the tiny boy over his shoulder and gazed at me. We would never have our own baby, both being men, so we hoped *Todah* and *Elenai* would bring more children into the Thunder household. So far, we'd resisted the urge to act like yentas, asking for

more. We had *Akua* and he was home safe.

Tem bounced the baby in his arms and our little guy tucked his head under Tem's chin, his eyes drifting shut.

"When does he need his next bath?" I asked.

"About thirty minutes." *Todah* was on a perpetual time watch, poor guy.

"Why don't you get some rest? We're here now. We'll take over," I said.

"That's an offer way too good to refuse." *Todah* gave us a finger wave and sloped off to the east wing of the house, which we'd sectioned off for his family.

"Let's put him down for a nap and I want you to finish what you started in *Waikiki*," Tem said, cradling the baby in one arm and opening the fridge with the other.

"Oh, and to what are you referring, Mr. Thunder?"

He laughed. "I got an image of you throwing me on coffee tables and fucking me. I demand that in real time."

"I can do that, but since we seem to be short of coffee tables at this time, how do you feel about a quickie in the bedroom?"

"That would be most agreeable." He grinned at me as I took the plastic container from his hands and he moved away with the baby.

I picked out some big chunks of *ahi* for

Moontime. "You're on baby patrol, kid," I told him. The cat glared at me. "HmMMM. A tough customer." I added a little more *ahi* to the bulging stash and I swear the cat smiled. The baby was in his crib in the living room, right outside our bedroom. Fastened to the side of the crib was a baby video monitor with its partner in our room next to our bed. I raced to it and found my husband, face down, wearing nothing but his leather pants.

"Not naked?" I kept my voice gruff, knowing it turned him on.

He squirmed a little. Man, he had the most beautiful ass in the whole world and it was mine. *Mine.*

"No. I told you, finish what you started. Show me how you would have fucked me in that café."

I knelt between his legs, stroking from his broad, muscular shoulders, down that fine tapered body, my hands falling to that hot ass. He'd once been the busiest bottom in gay porn and I'd been a gay-for-pay porn actor who fell in love with him the first time we fucked on camera. Thank God he fell for me, too. Now we were semi-legends with gay couples everywhere, enjoying the last three movies we did together, just the two of us, to honor Tem's contract. We were proud to have brought pleasure to so many people. Now we brought pleasure only to each other.

Tem turned his face and laughed as I kissed his butt crack. "Are you kissing my ass?"

"Yeah." I was so far gone on this guy, the way I never had been over *any* woman and I wondered sometimes how I ever thought I was straight.

"You have to fuck me, Div. We have twenty-five minutes before we have to bathe *Akua*. Please, just fucking *take* me."

I went crazy then. My hands slid under his taut belly and I fumbled at the buttons he kept having to sew back on his favorite leather pants. I was the most impatient lover in the universe and could never wait to unbutton him. I'd been on good behavior in the café. Tem moaned as I ripped the fly on his pants, buttons flying across the room. His cock sprang out. It never failed to inflame me, seeing how hard I made him, how huge and thick it was. I turned him onto his knees.

"Oh...I love it baby...that feels so good when you fuck me that way," he moaned.

I wasn't going to fuck him yet. I raised his hips and slipped a pillow under his belly, allowing my hands to linger over his gorgeous cock a few seconds longer. He squirmed at my touch and I plunged my face into his ass as I gripped his hips again, keeping him steady as my tongue sought out his ass hole.

Tem hissed as I licked him, his strong thighs grappling against the crisp, white sheets. His

hands braced themselves against my attack and he moaned louder as my tongue entered him. He was practically cantering up to my face, backing into me, begging for relief.

I grabbed him then, placing him on my lap facing away from me. Tem leaned into me, giving me his mouth to kiss.

"I love how tight you are," I whispered against his lips as my cock rode him. Tem bucked, squeezing my cock with his ass muscles.

"Oh, Div, I love how you hold my hips to keep me exactly where you need me."

"That's right. This ass...I own it!

"Yes you do! Bite me, Div."

Of course, I couldn't resist. His head flew back as my teeth elongated against his throat and I shuddered as I sliced into him. I didn't drink much, despite his urging. I retracted my teeth, sealing the fissures and felt his pulse race as I kept fucking him.

"It makes my cock hard when you bite me there."

I was lost in the sensation of fucking him.

"Tell me you love me, Div."

"What?" My hazy thoughts rose to the surface. I could no longer speak English. Long-abandoned French tumbled from my lips as my fingers moved to Tem's nipples, which hardened to my touch.

"Je t'dis comment je te veux. Maudit!"

"Oh, fuck," he screamed. "Oh, man you make me crazy when you talk in French."

"Ouvres ton cul, baby! Je veux te fucker." Dis moi que tu m'aime." I remembered my English. "Tell me you love me."

"I love you, baby. I love you, I love the way you fuck me. Your cock belongs inside me...nobody else can fuck me."

Jerking steadily on his cock, I murmured, "Come, baby," right in his ear and he exploded all over my hand as I blasted right through him. My teeth grazed his throat and neck and Tem trembled in my arms, slumping against me. I loved the feeling of his fuck-induced racing heartbeat and his labored breathing. I pined when he came off my cock and rolled onto his back.

"Div, I swear, you always manage to fuck me better and better."

I draped a hand across his belly. "I'm glad you think so," I mumbled into the pillow.

Tem sighed. "I'm going to bathe the little guy."

"I'll help you."

"No, baby. Stay there. If he won't settle down again, I'll bring him in here. He loves his Uncle Div."

I grinned. No, *Akua* adored Tem, but there was a small spot reserved in his tiny, demonic heart for me. I reached up and kissed Tem who threw on one of his own handmade silk kimonos, covering

that beautiful body. I yawned and stretched, looking forward to a rematch with my handsome husband and drifted off into a lovely, warm state somewhere between sleep and trance that only a rocking orgasm can induce.

The baby started to cry. Man, how had *Todah* and *Elenai* coped with his condition all alone?

Next thing I heard was a loud crash. I sat up. I heard the baby's shrieks, Tem's cry for help.

"Div!"

As long as I lived, I would never forget the tone...the anguish in that single word. And as long I lived, I would never forget what happened next. My sluggishness fell off me and I flew into the living room, unprepared for what I saw. The entire room was in disarray. I could see a terrible fight had taken place. Flowers, once lovingly placed in massive vases around the room, laid smashed and ground into the carpet, and family heirlooms shattered. The baby squalled, his face screwed up in red distress.

And Tem was nowhere to be seen.



## CHAPTER THREE

**I**t took me a moment to absorb it all. Tem flittered into my mind...I could see him, feel him. I knew he was afraid, but he was alive. At first, this seemed impossible when I saw all the blood in the room. It was splattered over everything., I wondered how he could have survived such bloodletting, then realized it wasn't his. I knew the scent of Tem's blood. His blood smelled like roses. This was how he smelled to me.

Tem screamed for me in my head and I howled in anguish at the moon hovering, as if disoriented in the gray-black sky.

Neither of us had prepared for this. We'd prepared for a child abduction. We hadn't expected one of us as the target. My mind focused on my beloved. He was running from room to room...trapped. Oh God, he was in a cell of some kind. I sent him a message.

*I am here, I will find you.*

Tem's great, dark eyes turned to my spirit

voice. They filled with tears. I read his thoughts and knew they echoed mine.

*What if I never see you again?*

“Div! What the hell is going on?” *Todah* was in the living room now, picking the squalling baby up into his arms.

“Interesting choice of words,” I said. I stared at the moon. I had died before, I would die willingly again if it meant a life without Tem. *No...* I shook such negativity from my thoughts. Our lives together had just begun. And now, somebody had stolen him. I forced myself to take action, when all I wanted to was to love my husband, to be with him, like none of this had happened.

I bent and touched a finger to the blood at my feet, but I already knew it was human blood. I could smell onions. Why did they always eat onions?

*Todah* paced now, the baby revving up for a demonic episode.

“You need to bathe him.” I had no idea where my stillness, my clarity was coming from. My addled brain veered between the mush caused by panic and then the clear messages from Tem.

*Protect the baby, Div...they are coming.*

“Bathe him and then I want you and *Elenai* to take him from this house.” I turned and looked at *Todah* now, seeing him for the first time.

“Where’s my brother?” he asked, his voice a

whisper. "Where's Tem?"

I tasted the blood from my finger. "He's been abducted. I want you and *Elenai* to take the baby to a safe house."

*Todah's* face reddened, tears invading his face. "They took Tem?"

"Humans," I said. "I'm surprised."

"This isn't his blood?"

"Oh no." I continued to work on the taste of the blood.

"Humans know about my baby?" *Todah* looked shocked. *Elenai* came into the room, one swollen breast slipping from her gaping bathrobe. I tuned into Tem again as *Todah* instructed her to bathe the baby and pack immediate essentials.

"I don't want to go anywhere," she moaned. "Why can't we stay here?"

"Tem's been abducted."

"Abducted?" *Elenai* sounded dubious.

"By humans," *Todah* told her. "Div said so."

My gaze fell on *Todah's* pretty, young wife. "Who have you been talking to, today, *Elenai*?"

"I...I haven't..." Her face clouded over. Uncertainty swept across her eyes. "There were the two men on horseback."

"What two men?" *Todah* looked furious. "You spoke to strangers today? Why didn't you tell us? You know I've been frantic—"

"Frantic?" My voice cut like ice through *Todah's*

understandable rant.

The couple exchanged glances.

"People were following us," *Elenai* blurted.

"What people?"

I wanted to scream at them. How could they not have told us there'd been problems in *Kauai*?

"We weren't sure at first. They...there were two guys who showed up whenever I was out with the baby." *Elenai* looked embarrassed.

"Div, I'm so sorry." *Todah* looked bewildered.

"Were they Asian?" I asked her.

*Elenai* looked shocked. "Um...yes."

"What about the two horsemen today?"

She hesitated. "It wasn't the same guys...I thought they were women at first...I thought they might have been some of your former porn friends...they kind of looked like...you know...transvestites—"

I cut her off. "What did they say to you?"

She frowned. "I don't...I don't remember."

"Think, *Elenai*." I was frantic now. *How in the world had it come to this?*

She bit her lip and glanced up at me. "They told me I have beautiful hair and asked if the baby did, too."

*Oh, man.* "What did you say?"

"I told them not yet. The baby was crying. I ran inside, but *Todah* already had him." She licked at her lips. "Were they transvestites?"

"They were eunuchs actually." What I didn't add was that I had a feeling they'd come a very long way to try and snatch *Akua*.

"Eunuchs?" *Todah* echoed.

I could see it clearly now. The vision played like a movie in my mind. *Elenai* taking clothes off the line when the two horsemen approached her. Had she been an animal person, had she been just a little less...*selfish*...she would have recognized them as our own horses. She'd chitchatted with horse thieves.

Chastising myself for my mean thoughts, I focused on her.

"Div," *Todah* suddenly said. "Please put some clothes on. I know you're upset, but you're stark naked."

I excused myself quickly. In my haste to get to Tem, I hadn't even thought about clothes. In the bedroom, my heart sank when I saw the sweet mess we'd made with our passion. I hunted out my clothes from those tangled on the floor with Tem's. He'd made everything we owned. He found the best fabrics in the world and lovingly created unique pieces for us. I tuned into him.

He was huddled in a corner. It was a wet place. He was in the dark. I saw him lift his face to me and I sent him kisses that made him blink. I would bring him back home, no matter what. I hastily threw on pants, sweater and a coat and returned

to the living room.

*Todah* still stood there, looking stunned as my sister, Heavenly, came toward me. Her grave expression told me she knew everything.

"Oh, Div!" she rushed to hug me. "I knew something was wrong. I heard the voices on the wind." She looked at me, confused and in pain. "Why would humans take Tem?"

"Ransom. Where's Clancy?" I asked her.

"Helping *Elenai* with the baby. What's going on, Div?"

"I blew out a breath. I felt, for the first time in a long, long time as old as I really was. "He was taken by eunuchs."

"So you said." *Todah's* voice was a shocked squeak. "Such things really exist? I mean...they're real?"

"Oh yes," I said. "Unfortunately." My mind had sorted through the banks I kept stored in my mental rooms. Eunuch blood had a doughy taste to me. There was no other way to describe it. If eunuchs were involved, they were expendable, trusty servants. I needed to confer with Blossom, queen of *Hawaii's* underworld and the woman who was *Akua's* godmother.

"*Todah*...Heavenly...we need to move." Something stopped me. *Hell*...how had I not heard the breathing before this? I held up a hand and nobody moved. Heavenly heard the beating hearts

at the same moment I did.

She opened her mouth, mouthing, *downstairs*, as *Todah*, dazed, tried to tune into the frequency. He, Clancy and *Elenai* were new vampires who still had trouble tuning into the high range of frequency of heartbeats and breathing.

Clancy and *Elenai* returned to the room and stopped chattering. The baby giggled in his mother's arms.

My sister caught my thoughts easily and I watched her telepath to Clancy. I could feel her words. *Keep talking, pretend to discuss the baby...anything...we have uninvited company.*

Clancy nodded and immediately engaged *Elenai* in a conversation about baby bottles as Heavenly and I slipped away. How long had the intruders been in our home? Probably all day. We took the stairs down to the wine cellar and Heavenly and I paused. The two men hiding sensed danger, but we split off now, knowing our home better than they did.

We found them in the wine cellar, a single light illuminating their rushed activities. They'd made a neat little stash of some of our most expensive bottles. They jumped when they heard us, backing against the wall.

Their appearance was startling. Both were dressed as women in silk saris, makeup on their faces and their hair in braids.

"How nice," I said, rounding on them. "You steal horses, babies...and wine."

The two men, who looked middle-aged, had the feminine appearance of some of the older eunuchs I'd once known. Being human, I thought the ones I knew were long dead. I thought they weren't recruiting anymore. These were so feminine I was betting they had the full castration. I recognized that pudgy patina of zero testosterone and felt a momentary pang of pity for them. Their lives had never been their own. Their parents had given them up early, for money or glory—or both—and they'd suffered. Still, they'd invaded our home, tried to take our baby and when Tem resisted, they altered their plans and took him instead.

*What if they castrate Tem?* I blew the thought from my mind.

The larger, softer-looking man gave me a sick smile. "We do as we are told."

"What is he giving you for bringing him the baby?" I asked.

He laughed.

"You think this is funny? I *will* kill you. Make no mistake about that."

He glanced from my sister to me, obviously not realizing she had the same killer instincts as me. He lifted his shoulders. "I have nothing to fear. I will tell you nothing."

I nodded. "Yes, I understand. You are already



damned. Tell me, where do you keep your manhood? Is it in a jar?"

He couldn't respond because I flew at him, holding him against the wall, his feet dangling from the ground. His eyes bulged from his head.

The eunuch panicked now, I could see it. I wondered how old he'd been when they'd cut of his dick and balls. If he belonged, as I suspected, to the Nguyễn lords, they would preserve his manhood for his death so that he could be reborn as a whole man again. If he died without them here in a strange land, he was doomed to return as a woman or worse...a hermaphrodite, but he could never return as a man.

I kept my gaze on his petrified eyes. "Listen to me. If I don't kill you, *he* will when you return empty handed because nobody in this house will let you leave with our baby."

"The Lord needs him," the second man said.

*Ah. Now we are getting somewhere. Lord...which lord? They assume I know. I have no idea...I have to let them think I do...or they will tell me nothing.*

"What is he promising you?" My voice came out harsher than I intended, but it seemed to work.

"Five hundred thousand dongs." I quickly calculated. Dongs were Vietnamese currency. So, my business with the Nguyễn lords was not concluded after all. The money he promised his

servants worked out to be roughly three hundred and fifty thousand American dollars. The eunuch started to weep. He knew now he would never see that money. I set him back on his feet and he clutched at his throat. "He also promised us our own homes."

That made me laugh. "Your own homes? Are you kidding me? You're his servants."

I was trying to figure things out. I'd known the Nguyễn lords over a hundred years ago. I thought they had died. I'd been to the funeral of the last remaining one...except...except...

"He isn't a real Nguyễn lord," I said, hoping to provoke a response. *I got it.*

"Yes, he is," the first eunuch hissed. "Quen has full rights under the new laws."

"What new laws?"

Neither man spoke, but I read their minds. *The law of blood.*

"Quen is a vampire," I said this as a matter of fact. It was the only thing that made sense. If he had our baby with him, trained him and controlled him, he would be a dangerously powerful vampire. So the funeral I had attended...he'd been alive after all? Or was this a descendant?

The two men huddled together. Pee seeped from the pant leg of the second man, down to the floor.

"If you fail to return with the child? What will your Lord do then?"

The two men peered at me in the dark. "We will die."

"Yes," I whispered. "You will die." My sister and I lunged at them, our teeth going straight for their jugulars. They were dying in seconds and I felt sorry for them. Deprived of basic human desires from an uncaring ruler since childhood, they couldn't even die in bliss.

We gorged ourselves, knowing we had a long flight and fight ahead of us. The bodies of the eunuchs fell to the floor. They had died so fast for two men who had lived in long, hard servitude.

"What the..."

*Todah* was with us now.

"I hope you find a better place in the hereafter," I said to the dead man at my feet, wiping my mouth across the back of my hand.

My sister gulped at the blood still in her throat and coughed. "I never did like the taste of eunuch."

I nodded. I worried about Tem. He had been desperate to feed, but we had come home, fearing the baby was in danger. He soon would be very weak without blood. Then I remembered the blood in the living room. He must have attacked somebody and I hoped he had time to take enough blood.

"Did you find another body anywhere?" I asked *Todah*, whose gaze was fixed on the dead eunuchs.

"Yes." He seemed to come out of his trance. "That's what I came to tell you. There's a dead guy outside the house, just outside the living room windows. He has puncture wounds on his arms and throat."

"Good." *Three down, God knows how many to go...they left the way they came...the windows...*

We now had strength and we knew our enemy. If it was the Quen I thought it was, I'd believed him to be long dead. Quen wasn't an unusual name in southeast Asia, but it was too much of a coincidence for it to be someone else.

I almost asked Heavenly what she thought, but she hadn't reacted to the name. Quen was part of her past. Why dredge up horrible memories if I was wrong and this was a different Quen?

Whoever he was, I would find him and kill him. We had to move quickly, for I knew that once the two eunuchs failed to return, their reinforcements would soon arrive.

"Help me," I said to *Todah*.

We dragged their bodies across the floor to the hidden anteroom. The latch sprang open and the lights came on automatically. The harsher light made the eunuchs appear even more garish.

"I can't help it, I have to see." *Todah* dropped to

the ground, yanking up the long, ankle-length sari of the first eunuch. Underneath this were strange leather leggings, which *Todah* pulled down to reveal a pudgy body and as I suspected, no balls or cock.

"How in the world do they pee?" he asked, awed by the waxed pubic mount that looked strangely feminine.

"His urethra is intact...at the time of the surgery, however crude, they insert or stick a quill or a pipe from the urethra to ensure it doesn't close over."

"Man, I would miss my prick. Wouldn't you, Div?"

"Yes, and so would my husband." My heart gave a leap. Tem. We had to get out of here.

"There's a kind of ridge here..." *Todah* rummaged around the eunuch's thighs. "I feel it. It's almost like a pussy. How strange. Wait, there's something else." He pulled and a small gadget emerged from between the dead man's thighs. It looked like a homing device. A counter on it ticked off seconds. I moved to the second eunuch and found the same type of device on his body. Somebody had given these guys a set amount of time. We now had two minutes.

Too late for us, the cavalry was already coming.

## CHAPTER FOUR

We threw the electronic bugs into the trees on our property, wondering what our pursuers would make of them and then fled to the underground path beneath the cellar.

It was a long, circuitous path we rigged, full of wrong turns, trap doors, wall spikes, whatever we could think of, should anyone ever discover it. We sped along to the cavern Tem, Heavenly, Clancy and I had so carefully carved the last few months to connect us to our second house at the *makua*, or mountainside of the property we owned. In the past, my sister and I had slept in secret bedchambers there, but not anymore. With our new lives and wonderful life partners, we'd kept the house as a kind of panic room.

I held our cat, Moonlight, in his custom-made harness against my chest, the baby in his own harness on my back. I led our family members to the cavern that emptied out to an old road once used to transport taro roots from the upcountry

ponds downstream where families who worked the fishponds traded for them.

None of us spoke until we reached the unmarked trail, on which we stood now, listening for voices, listening for breathing. Moonlight yawned and I patted his head. He growled at me. I pointed to the sky and we flew off together. I was grateful I still could fly. It meant Tem was alive. The moment I could no longer do it, I would know he was dead.

We flew quickly to Chinatown where the smell of roast pork hit me straight away and I realized I was hungry. We landed on the bad end of River Street with its flophouses and Laundromats and people even now lined up outside the homeless shelter across the street.

"I don't feel anything," *Todah* said, sounding fretful.

"Neither do I," I responded, distressed to see Chinatown decaying once again. It was ironic how many lives this small piece of history had...we crossed through three small blocks and I could smell eunuch.

"I smell them," *Todah* said, excited now. One eunuch, tall and skinny, paced nervously outside the back entrance to Blossom's new favorite abode, the old Buddhist temple.

I was shocked the eunuch was there, but he was alone and *Todah* whispered to me, "Let me handle

him. You go up and see Blossom."

None of us said a word, but we heard a small yelp as we flew up the second floor windows of the temple that had denied Blossom entry as a house of worship many years ago. She got her revenge though. She'd bought the old building and turned it into her most lucrative opium den.

At the windows, we could see her lying back on an antique Chinese canopy bed, a group of men surrounding her on the floor. *Eunuchs*. One lay with his head on her lap as she prepared to give him the opium pipe and her stoned eyes raised themselves to us.

Being a vampire, she could see us, though we were invisible to the human eye when we flew. She held up a finger, gave her client the pipe and soon he was smoking. I realized they must have been there a while because they were all out of it. None of the men moved.

Blossom excused herself, scooted her formidable frame from the bed and inclined her head. We flew around the side of the building and she threw her windows open. We flew into what looked like her private domain, a flurry of pinks and reds. She herself always wore red, her hair so heavily lacquered in the old Asian style, I wondered how she slept on that helmet-like creation every night.

Once we entered the room, she immediately



grabbed for the baby.

Moontime hissed at her and she took a step back.

"Where is Tem?"

"They took him. They came for the baby."

She strode to the red jewel box on her dressing table, extracted a piece of opium and started chewing it. She was nervous.

"The baby?" She looked shocked, but kept chewing at the small black pebble in her mouth. Man, her habit was out of control now.

"That's impossible. These are all men who..." she dropped her voice. "I worked out a nice little arrangement with a private hospital here. I keep the men who are in the process of getting you know...the snip...I keep them on a diet of milk and opium and they are happily intoxicated when they finally become the women they always wanted to be."

Her voice faltered. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"How long have you had this arrangement?" I asked her.

"A couple of months."

"Do you ever see your...er...patients once they get the surgery?"

"Yes, of course I do. They come here to recover. Sometimes it's days, sometimes it's weeks." She paused.

"What?" I asked.

"Four of their keepers disappeared today."

"I think they are the ones who came to the house. Three are dead...the fourth one vanished, I am assuming with Tem."

"Oh, no, the fourth one came back. He's been at the door for the last couple of hours."

I closed my eyes as *Todah* flew into the room.

"Is he dead?" I asked him, feeling bleak that he had died before I could interrogate him about Tem.

"Of course."

I sighed. "Blossom, how many keepers are there?"

She shrugged. "Seven or eight."

"And where are they?"

She hesitated and I knew then she'd paid a high price for her addiction. It wouldn't kill her, but the Nguyễn lords probably would.

"I have no idea. They come and they go...all of these lovely creatures will be heading home to Vietnam tomorrow."

"I have news for you, Blossom. These aren't transgendered women. They're eunuchs."

"Well, of course they are," she said. "They belong to the Prince."

"Prince...Quen?"

"Yes, of course, Prince Quen. He said he is a friend of yours."

"So you sent him to us?"

She opened her mouth. "I..." she paused again. She was so strung out on opium she was having trouble keeping things straight.

"Jimmy, did he really kidnap Tem?"

"Blossom, listen to me. You said they're going home tomorrow."

"Yes." She looked troubled. "He said he was collecting his son and then he was leaving."

She stared at the baby snug at my back.

"Oh..." she raised a shaky hand to her mouth. "What have I done?"

I wished I could hate her. The most powerful woman in *Hawaii*, the queen of the underworld had developed such a voracious appetite for drugs she hadn't read between the lines, hadn't sensed the danger. She saw only money and opportunity. Tem was her cherished and adored favorite. And now he was in trouble.

*They're coming...Div!*

Tem. The unexpected contact brought tears to my eyes. Turning my back on her, I gestured to the others and we flew off.

"Jimmy San!" she called after me. "Please!"

I needed to stash *Todah*, *Elenai*, baby *Akua* and Moontime in a safe place. Fast.

"This is cool." *Todah* looked around appreciatively. "We can stay down here for

days...weeks if we have to."

"That's the idea."

We were back on our property, in the caverns under the second house. We had built a safe house underneath our safe house. It was comfortable and it surprised all of us when we first completed it that it was not at all claustrophobic.

Tem and I had stocked the kitchen well, taking into consideration everybody's dietary needs, as well as our favorites. Moontime was going to be pissed when he realized he was getting canned tuna instead of fresh, but we couldn't help it.

We had hot and cold water, electricity, linens and bedrooms enough for all of us.

My sister and Clancy insisted on accompanying me in search of Prince Quen, but I wanted to go alone.

"You will encounter trouble," Heavenly said. "You're going to need us."

*No, I will need you, but you need to bring your wife.* My thoughts stumbled then. If anything happened to Clancy, Heavenly wouldn't be able to fly. If she, like I, lost the love of her life, she would not want to live anymore.

We kissed *Akua* goodbye and I tried to pat Moontime who extended a claw at me.

"Bring my brother home, Div." *Todah* hugged me, *Elenai* snuffled into a tissue and Clancy tried to comfort her.

We checked that we had cash and credit cards on us and a cell phone for emergency use, leaving *Todah* and *Elenai* with the landline we'd installed in the kitchen. It had a private number not connected to any other line in the house. They understood it was purely for emergency use and that we would not call them, nor they us, unless lives were at stake.

With one last look at the baby, Heavenly, Clancy and I waited for his parents to seal the door closed behind us. We ran to the long chamber leading to the cavern room that split off in several dizzying directions. Heavenly grabbed my hand. In my mind, I could see Tem. He was still in the dark. Where was the cell?

*Tem, let me see where you are. Show me. I love you.*

*Div, they are coming.*

"What's he saying?" Heavenly asked me. "I know he's communicating with you."

*"They're coming."*

We came out on the old taro road again and this time we heard voices. The three of us moved as one, hiding in the bushes on the other side of the rough-hewn path. We could hear men's voices in a jumble of languages. I had trouble picking out the words. Flattening ourselves against the natural barricade that shielded our property from the old road, my heart stammered wildly in my chest. I was sick to the core that total strangers were

milling about our land and had probably been there all day.

I concentrated to try and catch some of the conversation that I knew now was in Annamese. I chided myself. That was in the old days. Now they call it Vietnamese. I realized now the voices came from the cell phones we'd tossed into the trees. One of the benefits of being a vampire is acute hearing. My sister and I tuned into the thought at the same moment. She grabbed my hand and we flew to the nearest tree. The phone was lodged between two branches and from this vantage point, I could see a car parked in my driveway. It churned my stomach muscles into soup.

Trying to tune into Tem again, all my mental rooms were empty. This worried me a great deal because our bond was so strong. Only death or extreme duress, such as torture, could keep him away from my mind. They would pay for this. They would pay...

My sister nudged me. A man in handcuffs was stumbling along the driveway, squeezing past the car.

*Jose!*

It was a trap, I was certain of it. Jose, our property caretaker, adored our horses. I wondered where they were. The two eunuchs who had stolen them, I hoped were the same ones lying dead in my wine cellar. The voices on the cell

phone crackled louder.

"Khong hieu, I don't understand... O dau... where is Lajuan?"

A voice broke out in English. "The phones are further down that way...they haven't come out. What do we do with the caretaker?"

"Kill him," came the chilling response.

Seconds later came the crack of gunfire, a squall of night birds. I didn't want to look, but I turned to see Jose slumped against the car in the driveway.

"Check the old lady's house," said the same voice, speaking in heavily accented English.

A second later, Blossom's voice came on the line. These cell phones were the most sophisticated technology I'd come across.

She sounded old and tired.

"If they return, you will know it," she said. She started to sob. "They surprised me. Your men didn't have to tear up my home...they....they...killed everybody!"

"The trees...they're in the trees," said another voice. My sister and I flew down and grabbed Clancy who looked frightened.

"What's going on?" she asked as we heard the sound of horses' hooves. Our beloved animals were still alive, but we needed to get out of here. Holding hands, we took to the skies and my sister waited until we were well over *Waikiki* before

shouting to me.

“Where are we going?”

“Vietnam,” I shouted back. I let go of her hand and was still airborne. That meant my beautiful husband, the love of my life, was still alive.

The Nguyễn lords had seemed like the perfect refuge when I was a new vampire in fear of my life. When smallpox broke out on the islands, claiming almost my entire family, for several months, my sister and I hid on the island of *Kauai*, ultimately realizing we needed to make a complete break to protect our uncle who had done a wonderful job of protecting us. He met some Vietnamese sea traders in a gambling den in *Honolulu* one night, and paid for passages on a ship going to French Vietnam, or Indochine as they called it back then. A few days later, we took advantage of the opportunity. I never thought I would be going back for any reason, certainly not for another life-or-death, yet again.

Flying there was the quicker way for sure, but we made two stops, starting in Tokyo. Clancy had traveled here before as a student when she lived in Australia, but had bad memories, thanks to a boyfriend who stole all her money and her passport. My sister became incensed when she



heard this story. We arrived at dusk, the sky a wonderful, pearly gray with a pink border edging the horizon.

I was in good spirits that we'd come this far and were about half way to Vietnam. However, as we walked the streets, Clancy and Heavenly discussed the evil ex boyfriend and I felt my spirits sinking as I caught snippets of *men are bastards, they're all selfish* and my personal favorite, *Heavenly, your brother was one of the bloody worst!*

We walked past a Cat Café, the third one I'd seen.

"Oh yeah," Clancy said. "They're huge here. Space is small so people can't always keep them. You pay for time with a cat with your cup of coffee."

"This I've got to see." I steered the girls toward the stairs leading to the Café. We removed our shoes as the sign on the door requested, washed our hands and, as we visited the cats, I decided I couldn't wait to share this with Tem. On the other hand, if I brought my husband here, we'd end up adopting all the kitties.

"Tem will want to redecorate," my sister said, taking in the tacky seventies decor.

I loved that we were all operating under the absolute belief we would find Tem and bring him home.

The café had a dozen kitties of varying ages in

baskets scattered in high and low places. One black cat was in a cage, having a time-out for bad behavior.

“His name is Lucifer,” Clancy said, reading the kitties’ names from the menu.

Lucifer. That explained a lot.

All of the cats were adorable. We ordered hot green tea and paid for fifteen minutes of cat playtime. When the aroma of the tea reached my nostrils, my spirits plummeted. I remembered the first thing I’d ever bought Tem was iced green tea. I fucking missed that man so much I thought I was going to die.

“We’ll bring him home,” my sister said as she put her hands into various baskets to stroke the very cute and receptive kitties.

I missed Moontime and hoped he wasn’t giving *Todah* and *Elenai* fits with his dietary whims. I knew he, too, would go mad without our man.

Outside on the street, we looked for some place to eat. Nothing was familiar to Clancy who started grumbling about men again. We found a series of noodle bars with the meals displayed via plastic replicas in vending machines. You put coins in, pressed the number you wanted and out popped a ticket.

Around the corner, we gave our tickets to a stern-faced man who seconds later, shoved steaming bowls toward us on red plastic trays. We

huddled in the outdoor bar that looked like it was made of redwood, but might have been red-painted plastic, built outside an apartment building. Long yellow flags shielded the patrons from the wind, but not by much.

We sniffed our steaming bowls of udon noodles, bits of meat with hairs sticking out of the broth greeting my lips. I closed my eyes and swallowed, hoping it wasn't dog meat.

"Poor Jose," Clancy said at one point. "I keep hearing that gunshot. I can't believe he's dead. I wish we could have done something."

"He might be okay," I said, not really believing it. Tem and I paid Jose well to care for our land and animals and he knew there was something different about us, but he also knew there was possible danger. He assumed it was because we had money. I tried not to think of him handcuffed and slumped to the ground.

"We couldn't have gone to help him," I said, wiping my mouth with a black and white printed paper napkin. "It was a trap to lure us out."

"We're vampires," Clancy said, stabbing at the egg in her bowl with her chopsticks.

"No. We had no time. We might have saved him, but we had no time." I paused. I wanted Clancy to understand the danger involved. "If they take us against our will, we have no bargaining tool. When we are ready to meet you-

know-who, we have more power, more control."

"But —"

"Div's right," Heavenly said. "We've discussed this, sweetie."

"I know." Great tears splashed down Clancy's little heart-shaped face. Heavenly took her in her arms and held her.

"You know, I'm dreading this," Clancy said at last.

"I would be worried about you if you weren't," I said. "Just remember everything we told you. We must stick together and trust nobody other than immediate family."

The night was growing cold when we decided to head to Incheon, South Korea after consulting a world map we found at an Internet café. The place was so busy, the noise level was deafening.

"I need to sleep," Clancy moaned as we soared back over the top of the city.

I'd never flown like this, with such a deadly purpose. The grim nature of our voyaging, not to mention the length of it, sapped all our energy.

We followed a flock of black-crowned night herons soaring over us. Curious fellows, they swooped down to flap beside us, their calls sounding small, sharp dog barks. I think our hysterical laughter offended them because they took off, their white bellies tipping upward as they sped past us into friendlier skies. A bird of a

different kind followed in their wake—an Asiana flight headed for Incheon. We grabbed onto a wing, hitching a ride for the last hundred miles and spotted two small children in their seats playing with Game Boys. Theirs was the only window open in the dimly lit cabin and they kept pointing to us. I was surprised they could see us, but then children see with their hearts, not with their eyes.

They ran off and returned with a woman who peered out into the darkness, not seeing anything. The kids kept pointing at me as I gave them a finger wave. The woman promptly lowered the window shade.

I sincerely hoped I had not screwed those kids up for life, but I had more important things on my mind now.

It was near daybreak when we landed in Incheon. Because we are *Hawaiian* vampires in love, daylight was not a huge problem at home since we slept through most of it, but here in a strange land, it was a significant issue. We had no idea how the daytime would affect us and we found ourselves looking for the nearest hotel.

“Look at that,” Clancy breathed. “A *Best Western*. Doesn’t matter where you bloody go, there they bloody are!”

I laughed in spite of myself. Clancy’s Australian way of inserting the word bloody into everything

always cracked me up.

"It's a bloody nice one, too," Heavenly said and our ensuing laughter gave us a much-needed boost.

She was right, it was bloody nice. It was elegant and the pink-gold lights welcomed us as we stepped into the gleaming lobby with the black and white checked marble floor.

"Good morning," the desk clerk greeted us.

We asked about rooms and suites, selecting a suite in the end. Clancy who was legally my wife slumped against me, limping by the time we made it to the bank of elevators on the far side of the entrance.

"Something bit me," she moaned and in the elevator, Heavenly bent down to study her foot that looked like it was very swollen.

I carried her to our suite on the eighth floor. I'd requested the room for two nights, paying cash. I didn't want a record of our credit card used here, even though I was probably worrying for nothing.

"No bites." Heavenly and I looked over both her feet and her calves. Nothing.

"I'll check the rest of her myself...alone," my sister said primly.

"Women," I muttered as Clancy fell asleep right where she was.

"Carry her to bed for me, will you, Div?"

"Sure." Heavenly held the door open to the

very first room and I placed her wife on the bed as she pulled back the bedspread.

"See you later," she said, and as if having second thoughts, she hugged me.

I chose to sleep on the sofa, angling it, so it faced the door. It was a well-furnished, elegant bloody room, but I was too exhausted to take in much detail. I, too, needed sleep and as I fell into hard-earned slumber, my dreams were awash with blood.

In repose, my mind raced over my association with the Nguyễn lords who had not cared about who I was, or *what* I was. I only knew their *Day of Blood* ceremonies, which were very frequent and in which they turned young men into loyal, subjective eunuchs, provided me and my sister with all the blood we needed until the lords wanted more. My association with them had long since passed and I believed I wasn't even a footnote in their history. After all, I'd left about two hundred years ago to reclaim my own life.

I dreamed of Tem and, in my sleep, was aware that he was in me...knew what I was dreaming, but I could not stop the images flooding into my mind. I could not stem the tide to talk to him, to ask him if he was okay. He was there and the image was so strong it was as if I was reliving the moment all over again...

It was late at night and we had been to a lecture at the McCully Street library. It was not my idea, but Tem's. Our old friend, gay porn director, Billy Flamingo, had turned mystery novelist and was giving a talk at the library. We attended and I noticed many of Tem's fans from his porn days — fans who knew him as Angelis — flocked to him. It was devastating to Billy, worse for me. My jealousy is extreme, but Tem didn't care about the fans. In fact, as soon as the talk was over, we spent a good deal of time in the parking lot talking to Billy. The security guard passed us a couple of times during his foot patrol. I knew he was gay and was hoping to talk to my husband.

As soon as we waved goodbye to Billy, Tem sighed.

"Div, don't you know that part of my life...our lives is over?"

"It better be," I snarled. My jealousy got the better of me and I dragged that man to our car. We have a beautiful car, an old Lincoln Continental in mint condition. I threw him into the roomy backseat like the bitch that he was, ripped his pants off and sucked his cock like I took the assignment on a dare.

"Oh, Div, you are so fucking hot!" Tem's eyes were wide as the security guard took a long walk past our car.

That really pissed me off. I parted my



husband's legs and sucked his ass noisily.

"Oh fuck," Tem murmured. "He knows I belong to you now."

I lifted my face and gave him a smug smile, putting my tongue back into him. His legs flew into the air as I grappled with his ass to pull it tightly to my face. Tem wasn't making sense and neither was I. That was the first night I started speaking to him in French.

As I tossed and turned on that uncomfortable hotel sofa, the words I said in lust came back to me.

"Mon Dieu. Je t'aime."

"Baby, your cock in my ass is amazing," Tem said. I wasn't even inside him yet, but I didn't wait for an engraved invitation. I unzipped my pants and stuck my cock straight into him. Tem bucked and jumped underneath me as if he'd been tasered.

"Ton cul me fait parti!" I screamed. "Que je t'aime donc!"

"What the fuck is it that you're saying?" he panted. "Shit, Div...I'm gonna come!"

The explosion we shared was so intense we made that library parking lot part of our sexual repertoire.

I awoke in a haze, remembering our passion. It was so real, so physical I felt hot tears pricking my

eyes. I knew Tem was alive. I could feel him and knew he was okay. It was like knowing deadly smoke and mirrors shielded him. I could reach out, but not touch. I wondered if I was going mad.

I helped myself to bottled water from the hotel mini bar and looked outside the windows at Incheon. We were strangers in a strange city. I was used to being on the outside of things until I met Tem. I felt, with him as my partner, I belonged just a little bit. I didn't want to be outside of things again. I did not want to go back to being a lonely man. I'd just discovered a love, a life I never thought was possible. I would do whatever I had to do to get them back. Not just for me, but for all of us because Tem was our glue. Without him, none of us would ever be the same again.

I woke around two in the afternoon, when the room service maid knocked at the door.

She hurriedly slipped away when I told her we were fine. I sat up and took in my surroundings again, feeling wilted and weak. I felt half-alive, but my husband was there, trapped in my mind like a wingless bird.

He still belonged to me.

My sister must have sensed I was awake for she came out of the bedroom in her underwear. Clancy soon followed. We all had strange dreams. We would bathe and rest some more, order food

from room service and then make our final flight to Hanoi.

"I had the weirdest dream about Tem," Clancy said. "We kept exchanging recipes."

Heavenly and I laughed at that. I was certain Tem had sent her these messages on purpose. He was letting her know nothing had changed. They were still our official Kitchen Divas.

My sister said, "He just told me to look after you for him."

I choked on those words. It was so like Tem.

Our bodies were in charge of our rescue mission and, after taking turns at long, hot showers, we all slept until early evening. We'd lost some time so we abandoned the idea of eating at the hotel. We'd wait until we arrived in Hanoi. I returned the room key cards to the front desk and Clancy, walking much better now, decided her swollen foot was the result of an allergic reaction to the noodles we'd eaten in Tokyo.

"I think it was onions. I could smell them on your breath all night," Heavenly told her.

"Geez, before I became a vampire, I loved bloody onions," Clancy groaned.

"Me, too," I said.

We braced ourselves for our flight, but despite our exhaustion, it was an exhilarating journey. As we cruised across the skies of Hanoi, I felt my husband close, I knew, just knew he was here.

*I'm here, Tem. I'm here baby.*

In my mind, I felt him stirring...was he in pain?

"It's lost none of its charm," my sister called out, invading my thoughts as we landed by the Hoan Kiem Lake. "It still reminds me of Paris."

"Paris!" Clancy breathed, taking in the strip of brightly lit cafes with their noise and chatter calling to us. "I can see that. Can we please have some soup? I feel so rattled."

*Poor us.* I felt relieved the family was safe, but the longer we stayed here, the more trouble we were all in. Motorbikes roared by, the sound of their horns annoying and constant. We walked around the lake, drinking in the sight of the majestic mansions I remembered from my time in Vietnam so long ago. We passed ancient temples, lit from within by flickering candlelight. We passed old Chinese merchant townhouses, crumbling Vietnamese stores, some open, some closed and we turned down the pretty, tiny lanes of the Old Quarter's Thirty Six Streets section.

The leafy streets I'd once walked, dreaming of love now held my heart in their secretive grip. *Where was he?* We walked along, all of us silent until we dovetailed to the busy main street and then I could smell it.

Robusta.

"Coffee." My sister gave an appreciative sniff. We all brightened considerably at the thought of

refreshment. We sped along the streets toward the cacophony of images and sound. Music of all kinds competed from restaurants and bars, even buskers on the street played bongo drums, organs, violins. One old man played electric guitar while his little girl tap-danced with a red umbrella.

"They play a lot of pool here," Clancy observed and she was right. Every single bar and restaurant on Dong Du Street seemed to have a pool table. We picked the nearest café, a gray cemented affair called Latin that looked comfortable with its scrawled chalkboard menus out front. It also didn't appear to be patrolled by anybody looking like a Nguyễn Lord. There was a long, wavy bar on one side doing brisk business and scattered tables inside and out. My first thought was that it was shocking to see everybody smoking, since state and local government banned it just about every public place in America.

We took an inside table and I sat facing the open doors so I could see who was coming and going.

A man in jeans and a T-shirt that read, *Free Winona*, stood behind me on a small dais, microphone in hand and I turned. *Free Winona*. I stared at the image of a brunette woman and pondered Tem's sartorial reaction to this. I realized the shirt referred to the American actress, Winona Ryder and her shoplifting trial many

years ago.

"Welcome!" he said in English and Vietnamese. Several groups of people at tables assembled in front of him broke into applause. He pointed to the television screen mounted on the wall. "We have here the movie, *Interview with the Vampire*. An oldie, but goodie. Won by a landslide. Closest movie behind it was *I Spit on your Grave*."

"Lovely," Clancy whispered.

"...and we're going to discuss the differences between the book and the movie. Now, we all know vampires aren't real, but we all love this book, don't we?"

A roar of approval and some other stupid remarks soon became a distant buzz, my attention taken by the cute Australian waitress who came to take our orders.

Heavenly looked thunderous as her wife chatted with the waitress about their home country and some oddly-named places and things.

"I'm hungry," my sister announced a couple of times. We scanned the menu quickly. Printed in Vietnamese and English, it consisted largely of tapas and a vast array of Australian beers.

"I'll have the Australian steak, rare," Heavenly said. "Very rare, in fact. And a cup of coffee, please." She smacked her menu shut and Clancy ordered the sweet potato soup and asked for extra bread. I ordered coffee and a bowl of linguini,

which came with a red sauce.

“...and of course, we all know that Hollywood ruined the vampire, Le Stat, but does a man really exist?” the idiot on the microphone was saying. “I mean...is there such a man, a vampire leader of his family clan who will stop at nothing to protect his loved ones?”

Heavenly and Clancy grinned at me and we almost burst out laughing.

Oh yes, such a man existed and I wished I could rip the mike from his fingers and tell them all a few of my problems. In that same second, I knew exactly where my husband was.

Tem was in Cu Chi. The ancient, underground city.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Created long before my time in Vietnam, Cu Chi emerged from the manic Lê Dynasty. During my time in Indochina, it was the dark heyday for the underground city located in the bowels of Saigon and stretching all the way to Hanoi. Until that moment in the café, I'd forgotten about it. I operated on pure instinct coming here and now I knew I was right.

During the Vietnam War, the system of tunnels was used by the Americans and the Viet Cong...but long before that, the dark, shadowy city made of stone was used for battles of a different kind.

When I was here last, the Nguyễn lords used it to hide.

The girls and I paid for our meal with Clancy's credit card since the only currency the café would accept was dong, which we didn't have. We hustled back through the decaying Thirty Six Streets, pondering our next move. I felt Tem's



spirit in my mind and knew he was holding strong. He was otherwise not communicating with me and it tore me up. I hope he felt my presence here. I needed time to think. I had to figure out how to go underground and get both my man back and a promise of no more interference with my family.

This part wasn't going to be easy.

My dealings with the devil were, for the most part, straight forward. In my experience, the devil is a little more honest than God is because he lays it all out for you. He gives it to you straight. You know exactly what he wants of you and you'll probably hate it, but fuck it, the horned one makes it all clear.

I wondered why he wanted to tangle with me again, I mean at least his spokesman, devotee, whatever, Prince Quen was trying to fuck with me. I don't know about you, but I like some lovin' when I am getting screwed.

Away from the cafés and bars, I could think better. I had to make my appearance in Cu Chi, make my presence felt. Then I could begin the negotiations. As my girls and I walked through the dense fog, now consuming the Old Quarter, we peered up at the old street signs. So much had changed, but a lot hadn't. The street signs still marked what was selling there. Hang Gai, for example, means silk goods and my heart twisted

at the thought of how much Tem would have loved the rolls and rolls of silk lined up against the darkened windows of each store, now closed for the night.

I was pleased to see To Thanh Street was still the wood turners' street and the closed stores filled with wonderful pieces of furniture and toys. Each street had a temple or pagoda and Hang Ma, the paper street sported paper versions of the temples in their windows.

Though the old stores were in abundance, modern living was encroaching. New galleries, new bars and stores interspersed with history and I knew I would soon be too busy getting Tem away from this place to bring him fabric shopping.

We turned down Lang Ong, named for an eighteenth century doctor. The pungent scent of herbs and bark, tinctures and powders filled my nostrils. We walked past countless herb shops advertising everything from sleeping powders to aphrodisiacs.

"What about this house?" Heavenly asked me. The street was typical for its long, almost identical narrow houses jutting between the herb shops. The house we studied was a two story, decaying, moss-covered stone property that seemed perfect.

"I don't hear human breathing," I said as we scaled the two dozen steps up to the front door. The house was dark and we took our time walking

around outside, searching for signs of life. The plants in front showed signs of a recent watering, but the plants out back looked wilted. A credit card easily opened the back door and the stench of stale incense wafted over us...and something else. I detected human decay.

"Is that eau de dead man?" Clancy asked, her nose wrinkled in disgust. In the narrow kitchen, an electric rice maker glowed in the dark. I lifted the lid. Dried, cracked contents burned at the bottom of the pot. We passed through to the living room.

Brightly colored funeral flags lined the walls, red paper money for burning and stacks of incense boxes lines a sideboard.

A butsudan, a huge Buddhist altar, stood on another, bowls of rice with chopsticks poking out of them lined the table supporting it. Wilted, half-dead flowers, groups of fruit and evergreens looked like they'd seen much better days. Extinguished incense sticks were scattered in large bowls of sand around the room. In the center of the dining table was an urn.

"I've never seen rice on an altar before," Clancy said.

"Whoever lived here, died," I responded. "He can't be too long dead."

"He?"

I pointed to a picture on the altar next to a card

written in Vietnamese. He looked like a very old man with half his teeth missing, judging by his gap-tooth smile.

"It must be at least a week because the cooking pot is empty. If it was still the first week of mourning, there would still be fresh rice in the steamer."

"Right," agreed Heavenly. "There would still be candles burning and the uh...body would still be laid out, wouldn't it?"

I nodded. "In the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition, the cremated remains come home until they're interred."

"For how long?" Clancy asked.

"They're still here, which means they are probably observing the formal forty-nine day mourning ritual."

"So we aren't necessarily expecting company tonight?" Clancy asked.

I shrugged. "I don't know."

"Well, I don't feel any spirits. I don't feel anything at all." Clancy seemed exhausted and I suddenly knew her problem wasn't onions. She needed to feed on fresh blood, just like Tem. Every new vampire experiences the need differently.

"You need blood," I told her. "Tem's teeth were bothering him, with you, it's your foot."

"We'll get some bad guys here for sure," my sister said, putting her arm around Clancy.

"Are we safe here?" Clancy asked.

I nodded. "For now, yes." I emptied my pockets of my money and credit cards.

"Give me your cards," I told the girls. They resisted at first, but I knew we'd lose everything otherwise. They passed them to me. I searched for the perfect hiding place. I went back through to the kitchen and noticed a closed door. I didn't want to turn on the lights, but I needed to look around. I found an overhead bulb operating from a pull cord and was pleased to see I was standing in an herb drying room.

Many herbs hung from pegs on wires slung across the ceiling. Muslin bags packed with herbs lined baskets on several shelves stacked against the walls. I picked a few bags and stuffed them with our cards and my cell phone and hid them in a couple of baskets, switched off the light and closed the door again. It was the best I could do.

The girls were waiting for me in the living room. I tried not to make eye contact with them. I couldn't look them in the eye and tell them lies.

"Right. I'm going to leave you both here. You need rest. Anyone turns up, you have my permission to knock 'em off. I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Where are you going?" Heavenly asked.

"To see a man about a dog."

"Fine, don't tell me then." Heavenly's huffiness didn't seem genuine. I knew she was concerned about Clancy who hobbled toward the sofa. They lay down together. More than anything, I wanted their safety and I could not, in good conscience, ask them to come with me to Cu Chi and meet the devil.

I didn't even want to go myself, not for old time's sake, not for anything.

I slipped out of the house and paused outside the front gate before turning left, away from the main street and the crowds.

*Jimmy...*

I stopped, but did not turn around. The voice came from behind me, but it was Tem's voice. The skin on my arms and neck prickled and it wasn't from the bank of fog closing in on me.

*Jimmy, come to me, I need you.*

The voice tore at me, but I pressed forward now. I did not turn around despite my desire to punch holes into the calling ghost. Oh, the devil knew I was here all right and I thought he had a nerve using the spirit of the dead man from the house to play tricks on me.

*Please, Jimmy.*

His voice sure sounded like Tem, but I knew it wasn't him. For one thing, all *Hawaiians* of a certain era know that only bad spirits, the calling spirits talk to your back. They lure you to your

death.

*Jimmy! I need you!*

The voice sounded agonized, but I just crossed the street. Unbelievably, the ghost followed me. I felt very sorry for the old man's family because the devil had lured him to taunt me and thus, he was not making his way to the hereafter. After all their careful ceremonial rituals, the dead man was now doomed to haunt the streets of Hanoi. The devil does not like it when you go back on a deal, not that I ever tried.

*Jimmy! I hate you!* The voice turned spiteful. I raced away from it. Tem never called me Jimmy. He always called me Div. Score one for the vampire. I paused as I turned the corner, but the calling ghost was gone.

I huddled in a shop doorway and two young thugs in jeans, brandishing sharp sticks walked right past me. I grabbed them both, clunked their heads together and left them in the doorway. They slumped, but one of them awoke. He looked like a local and, judging by the way he screamed when I grabbed his cock and balls, he was no eunuch.

He lunged at me in fury and I grabbed him by the throat, holding him against the wall.

Heavenly was here, I could feel her. I glanced back at the street. She and Clancy landed with soft thuds beside us and walked toward me, two angels in black leather.

I squeezed on his neck and released my grip slightly to give him a chance to respond.

"Who sent you?" I asked the guy who swore at me in Vietnamese. I recognized the word Du-Ma as *fuck you*. How rude!

"Du-ma-mai," I said. "Fuck your mama."

The little twerp's eyes bugged out. "Who sent you?" I asked again. He looked into my eyes and knew I meant business.

I squeezed his neck a little until he gurgled. His cell phone crackled. I heard a voice.

"You got him?" a voice said in English and Vietnamese.

"He's here!" the twerp shouted out.

"Clancy, get his cell phone."

She rifled in his pocket and found a cell phone similar to the ones we'd found on the eunuchs in our wine cellar. She handed it to me.

"They're all yours," I said. "Go back to the house as soon as you're done."

I left the girls to their bad guy suppers and I flew off, cell phone in hand. My flight was shaky, but Tem was in my head.

*Hurry, Div.*

My heart burst at the feeling of his voice. He was alive. He knew I was here. I felt his resistance. Something was pulling at him. A crackle of mad laughter. The devil had my husband.

I flew to a rooftop of an old temple and perched



on the head of a winged dragon high up on its slanted roof.

The cell phone rang and I checked the readout. It was a private call.

"Chao ong, hello," I said.

"Frankie, is that you?" asked the male voice on the other end.

"Yes."

"You found him, right?"

I hesitated. "Yes."

"Is he dead?"

"No."

A sharp intake of breath. "Banh, cool. They want him alive. How was he allowed to escape?"

*Escape?* I felt the blood rush through me. They hadn't been hunting for me. They'd been hunting for Tem!

## CHAPTER SIX

I had to choose my words carefully. “I...I don’t know.”

He said something unintelligible. I heard scratchy, indistinguishable chatter on the other end of the line and I paced the roof frantically, searching the darkened streets below me. I saw no sign of activity. I heard no sounds of close human breathing. Tem could be anywhere. Officially, seventy miles long, the underground city, I believed, was more than that.

The cell phone turned silent after the man I was speaking to abruptly ended our call.

I tried desperately to tune into Tem. It alarmed me that I couldn’t sense him at all. I sat back on the roof, taking deep breaths, trying to focus. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw an old ghost flitter across the street and I was shocked.

It was the ghost of an old Chinese man, his queue of long hair flying over his shoulder.

This old man has been with me many, many

years in *Hawaii*. I must have carried him with me. This was not a good sign. He always meant immediate trouble and in that second, I sensed a trap.

The devil wanted me to hunt for Tem so he could capture me. Okay, bring it on. I had no way of knowing where Tem was and no way of outsmarting the ultimate bad guy. I listened for a few more seconds and then made my decision. I prepared to fly down to the street, but something stopped me.

I couldn't fly. I almost choked on my own manic laughter. There would be only one reason I couldn't fly. Tem had to be dead.

This thought alone sent me into a state of panic and I hurled myself from the roof. I hurtled toward the ground. It was a fast sixty feet below me and I almost landed flat on my face, until unseen forces picked me up and I hovered a few inches from the ground. Tem was in my mind, his face covered in blood.

He shook his head.

*Tem?* I telepathed to him.

*Trap.*

*Yes, I know.* My feet touched the ground and I waited.

Tem hesitated.

*I love you, Tem. I will come and get you.*

*Don't let them take the baby.* I watched his shaky

hand wipe at his nose. His eyes when I saw them were haunted, hunted. He hadn't escaped and he'd tried desperately to stop me from flying from the roof.

*Tem, your love is so strong you can stop me from flying?*

I could hear him breathing and I thought my heart would shatter into a million pieces. Out of nowhere, a trap door, one of countless in the city, opened and Tem's last words ripped into me.

*Div, don't come here. Please!*

I stepped forward carefully and peered into the opening. The devil expected me to rush right into his trap, but I'd experienced these before. This was a booby trap. Long, lethal bamboo spikes stuck straight up and waited for me to plunge to instant death.

Stepping back again, I waited and the door closed with a tiny pop.

"Not bad, not bad at all," said a voice behind me.

I didn't even need to turn around. I'd known it was him all along.

"Hello, Quen."

He stepped forward, surrounded by minions, until he was standing right in front of me.

"Your husband said you were smart." He had the same sinister smile and looked exactly as I remembered—a handsome, long, lean Asian man

of deceptive strength. He still wore his long black hair in a queue and he wore jeans and a black T-shirt.

"I see some things have improved," I said. "You dress much better than I remember."

Quen laughed and held out his hand. I shook it. We went back a long way and the last time I'd seen him, I was at his funeral.

"You aren't surprised to see me," he said, his grip surprisingly weak. He dropped my hand and indicated to the men to stand close.

Tem was pacing in my mind. I was relieved that he was okay. There was no blood on his face. How was that possible?

I blinked, concentrating on Quen.

"No, I'm not surprised. You created a myth. Nice funeral, Quen, did you enjoy it?"

He shrugged. "Not bad."

"And your mother? I heard she never recovered from her grief."

His eyes glittered. Yes, he was angry. He'd paid a high price for his immortality.

"We were friends," I said, trying to make sense of why he would try to destroy my family.

I heard a sound behind me and to my dismay, I saw Clancy and Heavenly coming toward us.

Quen almost fell apart and suddenly it all made sense. He hadn't forgiven Heavenly.

For her part, my sister was in shock. She and

Quen stared at each other and she glanced at me.

"Is it...is this..."

"You brought her here?" Quen's words, the pain in his eyes showed me that he still loved her. Heavenly just kept staring at him.

"Quen...I thought you'd died."

The part of Quen that loved her, that pined for her and still missed her, rose to the surface.

"Heavenly."

"I..." She started to cry and I saw his anger return. He hadn't forgiven her for not loving him, and now his flat, furious gaze flicked toward Clancy.

"Who is this?"

"My wife."

A series of emotions crossed his face. A hard resolution settled itself on this ancient warrior's features.

"Gay. I should have known."

"What's that supposed to mean? You let me think you were dead. We buried you!" my sister screamed.

Quen looked right at her when he announced, "Arrest them. All of them."

"Not so fast," I said. "There's no reason to manhandle us. We're here willingly. We are happy to speak to the devil."

There was a moment of silence and I silently applauded myself. I knew the Vietnamese people

were deeply superstitious. You mention the devil and he appears before you.

A second trap door opened in the street.

"Is this for real?" Clancy asked me.

"Be careful," I told her. "Don't believe *anything* you see."

She looked so spooked that I held her hand. She was Heavenly's wife in every way, but legally, she was my wife. Heavenly knew the tricks of the dead and the undead. Clancy did not. I needed to help steer her through the labyrinth.

I peered into the trap. No spikes this time. No, we were in for much worse. I helped the girls climb into the tight opening and we took the stone stairs down to the tunnels.

Even though the Vietnamese government opened the Cu Chi tunnels for the public to tour, I was betting this was not part of the underground city the paying public ever saw.

We touched ground and Quen and his men were right behind us. The trap door shut and we plunged into darkness.

"Move," said Quen and the girls huddled closer to me. Man, I'd forgotten how uncomfortable these tunnels were. It was hard to breathe and in the Vietnam War when the US troops camped down here, some American soldiers went mad.

A faint glow from tiny pinpoint lights in various places in the stone walls, emerged so we

could just manage to pick our way through the tunnel. We turned various routes and I could hear the voices now. The devil was in a hurry.

We were in darkness so thick it became a real, extra dimension.

"Remember what I said," I shouted to Clancy. "None of it is real! Don't buy into it!"

I felt myself pushed ahead, separated from the girls. I fell to the ground and when I looked up, I was sprawled in a long, dark hallway, ahead of me, a door. The words *Twilight Zone* kept thumping in my brain. Light filtered from under the door. I took a deep breath. Rising, I squared my shoulders and took confident strides until my hand reached the door. It opened before I could touch it.

The room inside was much as I remembered it. Gilt-edged walls gleamed in the firelight. Blood-red candles and curtains completed the gothic effect. Hideous paintings of death and torture lined the walls. Every few seconds, the pictures changed. I steeled myself not to stare too long at them. While the pictures didn't move, the images shifted. They came from your nightmares and if you gave them enough attention, they could devastate you.

A long rectory table in the center was a nice touch and my host, the horned beast himself, sat at the far end. He hadn't changed much. He was still



small and thin, very muscular and almost naked, save for the live serpents coiling and uncoiling around his arms. His head sprouted the horns of myth and tiny serpents scissored around the black tufts of hair between them. I noticed a long gold-colored snake slithering across his throat and down his back. I tried not to flinch.

I stepped forward and the Devil indicated the seat to his right. He wore his usual necklace of shriveled men's hearts and it looked and smelled awful in the warmth of the room that suddenly felt very close. I noticed a fresh heart dripping blood down his left nipple.

"Jimmy Thunder, just in time for supper."

*Oh, joy.* Mysteriously, two full services appeared in front of him and the seat, which I now took. Red wine self-filled our glasses halfway. I raised mine and noticed a human eyeball staring at me from inside it and I carefully put it down again.

"Not thirsty?" the Devil asked me. His voice was low and deep. He sounded like six hundred devils, not just one.

"No, not really." I twirled the stem of the wine glass and the eyeball bounced against the side. I glanced at his crotch. He wore his usual gilded grapes as a codpiece and I fought the urge to run. The golden snake slithered under the grapes and I wanted to throw up.

Food materialized on our plates. "Perhaps you will enjoy this more," the Devil said, his voices multiplying.

*It's not real*, I kept telling myself. Keep him laughing until he tells you his terms.

I found myself suddenly vaulted back to the past when I realized I'd inadvertently made a deal with him by asking a *kahuna* to grant me a second chance at love. It sent me into hell and into negotiation with the Original Trickster who told me I would owe him. So many years—two hundred to be precise—had passed that I had forgotten a promise made from a heart torn with grief and held together by hope.

I had loved a woman once and she loved me. She died of leprosy two hundred years ago and I had been unable to help her. The feeling of despair still washed over me whenever I thought of her. I banished her from my mind. Tem had not just replaced her, but surpassed her in every way. I waited a long time to find him and I was not going to let him slip away from me.

"What is it that you want?" I asked him.

He got angry then. "You're no fun. All that hot fucking you're getting and you're still the same, bottom-line guy."

"Oh no," I said. "Sometimes I top."

He laughed. "You know," he confessed, leaning closer, which was truly disturbing, thanks to his

hideous breath, "You are one of my favorites. You aren't afraid of me, at all?"

"Oh yes, I am afraid of you," I replied. "I respect you and I've tried to keep out of your way. Actually, I've sent a few bad souls your way. Pickpockets, thieves, a child molester."

"Oh yes, you're talking about the man who raped *Todah*. I especially enjoyed him."

"Yes, I'm sure you did."

"Now, be fair, Jimmy. You know I enjoy my games. Have some supper, then we talk."

I glanced at the plate. It was filled with crisp looking, fragrant vegetables smothered in honey.

"Not bad," I said. "You know it's one of my favorites."

He laughed and his teeth were long, pointed, brown-black spikes. His forked-tongue slithered in and out of his gaping slash of a mouth.

"Enjoy."

I shook my head. "No, I don't think so. This is honey from rhododendron flowers, isn't it?"

He stared at me, his eyes changing shape from a cat's eye to a snake and then to a human eye.

"How did you know?"

"We've done this dance before, Mara." I said, calling him by the Devil's Vietnamese Buddhist name.

He inclined his head and I continued.

"Besides, the scent of this honey is truly

intoxicating. One bite and I *might* be fine. If it's pure honey however, and I suspect it is, the toxins will kill me after putting me into a coma. Depending on my immune system, the coma might be brief, but death is inevitable. I will virtually choke to death in my sleep."

He laughed, an odd, high-pitched squeal that sliced through my soul. His tongue turned into a long blue lizard tongue and I watched him lap at the honey.

I'd forgotten that horrible sound of his laughter. He snapped his fingers and an attendant materialized out of the wall with a gigantic book. Mara pointed a finger at the book and the pages flew open.

"I don't remember giving you rhododendron honey." He sounded petulant. He sure hadn't matured any in two hundred years.

"No, we did the Death Cap dance last time."

"Oh yes, the poisonous mushrooms. You didn't eat those either." He flicked me an accusatory glance. I already knew in order to win he couldn't force-feed me, that I had to feed myself.

I sighed. "No, I didn't eat them. I could smell the poison." I sat back in my chair, trying not to think up fearful things. Whatever you feared had a way of showing up in this room. Sure enough, my fears of a golden snake materialized on the table right in front of me. The creepy critter

slithered across my plate. I pushed my chair back.

"Mara, in order for Prince Quen to have our baby, you know the child must *choose* to go with him," I said. "He can't just take him."

I knew I'd gone too far. The Devil wanted whatever his henchman wanted. It wouldn't hurt to have a baby demon in the fold and I knew that the price of my husband's safe return would be *Akua* delivered to him without interference.

The Devil loved his games. I knew this. He got off on small tortures. I felt my first moment of true fear.

"You disappoint me," the Devil rasped. "You always want to control things." He banged his now cloven foot on the dining table and the room disappeared. I was spinning...spinning and next thing I knew, punches were coming at me. Invisible hands hit my face and landed hard across my eyes. I went head first into a cell and found myself on the floor, blood seeping toward me.

*Oh no, not this. No...* Huddled across the cell, facing away from me was a young boy, sobbing in the darkness.

I stared at him for moment. I didn't want to believe it was possible. I swallowed my revulsion and fear. "Sa'ng?"

He twitched, but did not stop crying. I couldn't believe it. Hot tears pricked the back of my eyes. I forced myself to feel nothing but love. Not fear.

Satan feeds on fear and I knew none of it was real, but he was really hitting below the belt this time.

For two hundred years, I'd kept the memory of this young boy's death in my worst memories. Occasionally, I dreamed of him. Since I'd met Tem, the dreams had abated.

Until now.

I crawled on my knees as the sobbing grew louder. I watched the blood pooling out from under his body, his racking sobs consuming him. I touched his arm.

"Sa'ng, forgive me for not saving you, for not knowing how to help you. I am so sorry."

Memories of doing the devil's bidding and holding the twelve-year-old boy down as they castrated and initiated him into ceremony were back in full force. Sa'ng had died from blood loss and although I tried to save him, he bled out in my arms.

"Sa'ng," I said again. "I grieve for you, but I am sorry, I know you are not real. Only love is real."

I heard the singing then—the sick singing and the screaming. Somebody was being tortured.

Tem.

The guards grabbed me roughly and dragged me by my feet out of the cell. I thought my legs would rip from my pelvic bones. Sa'ng's pitiful tears stayed with me as the new and bitter sound

of Tem's heart-stopping shrieks filled my ears. The guards jerked me to my knees in front of a cell and it looked so real I thought I would die. Tem was on a rack and two men twisted the handle. I heard his bones breaking as a third man, kneeling between his thighs fucked him roughly.

Yet another man reached between their merging bodies and sliced off Tem's penis and balls.

I gripped the bars of the cell as Tem's terrified eyes turned to me.

"Stop it!" I yelled.

Tem's screams were heartrending, his eyes rolling back in his head. The men laughed.

In the distance, I heard my sister screaming for Clancy.

This was the worst kind of hell.

"Div!" Tem screamed and I thought I would go mad.

He screamed as the knife sliced his skin repeatedly as an Asian girl singer warbling Britney Spears in a bad karaoke—yes, my idea of hell—sang the same lines over and over again.

I watched my husband being cut, the blades running down his arms and legs, Tem twitching and screaming as blood seeped from his wounds.

"You're not real. You're not real!" I screamed and the guards sat him up. Poor Tem's matted, bloodied head lolled against his chin. The guards

grinned at me and two of them opened his legs, a third drew a long sword out of a sheath and ran it through my husband, through his anus.

I sobbed and screamed as Tem's cries of terror and his agonized howl as the sword emerged through his back, ripped into me. Finally as my man's cries reached a crescendo, I called out, "All right, you've had your fun. Fucking tell me what you want!"



## CHAPTER SEVEN

I was naked on a cold floor when I awoke. I was relieved. It meant he was ready to talk. The floor was white marble and I remembered this room from the last time we talked. Snakes slithered around me, just to make sure my comfort level wasn't too high.

Trying to focus on being in the moment, I found myself plunged into the past instead.

"If I give you a second chance at love, you must give me your first born," the Devil had said.

"Yes, yes, anything." I never, ever, in a billion years planned to have children and when I fell in love with Tem, the problem receded for me. Tem loved children, but I had no interest in adopting babies or obtaining any via a surrogate. I loved baby *Akua*...the closest I was ever going to come to having a child of my own.

Freezing cold water fell on my head and I spluttered to attention.

"Finally."

I rose to my knees. I was so cold, my skin was blue. So much for hell's fires.

"You have been unconscious for a while." The Devil sat on his throne and I was certain there was a new heart on his necklace.

I didn't say anything. I wanted Tem and I wanted to go home.

"Sa'ng affected you more than I thought," the Devil purred. "I thought it was a nice touch. Don't you?"

I looked at the floor and a tear streaked down my cheek. I would never, ever forgive myself for that child's death in spite of knowing there was nothing I could do. The women in charge of the eunuchs had tried as valiantly as I had to save the boy. I was the one who chose to tell his parents he was dead. The same parents who sold their son to the Nguyễn lords for gold. For the rest of their lives, I made sure they had money so their two younger sons did not suffer the same fate.

"You have nothing to say?" Mara asked me.

"No." I felt empty. Drained. I'd let this place get to me and I never thought it would. I shut my mind to Tem's brutal torture. *Only love is real*. I could feel him in my mind and tried to hold him close.

"If it makes you feel any better, Sa'ng's not here." The Devil fingered his gruesome necklace. "He's with the other guy."

I nodded. The other guy. Good or bad, sometimes I couldn't tell which was which. God allowed so much destruction, yet the Devil had his hand in the pudding, too.

"Now these are my terms. I will return Temeura to you, on receipt of the baby demon. He is to remain with me. He is mine."

"No. I take Tem now and my sister and her wife, then you can have the baby."

He stared at me. "You think I am here to negotiate?"

"You think I'm not?" I countered.

"You think I'm Oopsy the Clown?"

"Oh, is he here, too?"

The Devil laughed and his eyes turned into a bat's. "You always did amuse me, Jimmy. All right, here's what I'm gonna do. You can have my word you'll get Temeura back."

"Not good enough."

He flew across the room at me and I lunged out of the way. "You told me you'd spare Sa'ng!"

The Devil circled me. "I could take you now, you know."

"It won't get you *Akua*."

"Don't call him that!" the Devil shrieked. I smiled inwardly. *Akua* meant Godly and of course, the Devil couldn't deal with that. "Call him by his proper name. You first called him Beelzebub."

"So we did." It was true. I wasn't going to

argue that point. "Tem loved that name. And I love Tem."

"I fucked him. Nice ass."

Yes, Tem has a nice ass. I had no idea if the Devil really fucked him...raped him, but a part of me felt bereft at the thought that he would leave Tem with the impression that he had.

"I can't live without him. I can't do what you need without him."

The Devil paced, trying to assess the negatives. I'd never lied to him once, despite his bending of the truth with me more than once.

"Okay, I'll give you Tem, *but*...Quen is coming with you back to *Honolulu* and you will deliver the baby to him."

"The women, too," I said.

"I'm not interested in them. You can have them. Besides, I know where you live."

He smiled and his teeth were black hairy spider legs. It was a jolting effect.

"Thanks for stopping by, Jimmy. Next time, you must stay for dessert."

Suddenly socked in the gut, the next thing I knew, I was lying in the middle of a road in broad daylight with cars and motorbikes zooming past me on both sides. And...hot shit, I was still naked.

I rolled one way, then the other, avoiding the cars almost hitting me. Further down the street, Tem was huddled in a naked ball. I rose, racing

toward him. I turned his face to me and he lifted his tear-streaked eyes to me.

"Div...I thought you were dead." He sobbed as I took him into my arms and flew back to the house on Lang Ong. He clung to me and I held him, hating the way his body shook. He pressed his face into my neck and I kept my gaze moving everywhere, looking for bad guys. I saw none, but as I landed at the back door of the house we'd so briefly stayed in, I saw it was ajar.

A noise inside. I kicked at the door and the girls, naked and crying, jumped back in terror.

"It's only us," I said, moving into the kitchen.

"Don't even speak to me, Jimmy Thunder!" my sister shrieked at me. "I saw you fucking my wife."

"I didn't touch her, sweetie. You know it."

"See, I told you so." Clancy wept and staggered into the living room. I kept Tem in my arms and kissed the top of his head.

"We can't stay here," I told the girls. I stared with dismay at the obviously ransacked room.

"What do you think they were looking for?" Clancy asked.

"I don't know. We can't stay here though. We have to keep moving." I gently put Tem onto the only upright chair, but his arms wouldn't leave my neck. I saw the terror in his eyes, the haunted visions still close to the surface, and I kissed him.

"Nothing you saw was real," I told him. "None of it happened."

"Oh, Div." His arms tightened around my neck and I fell to my knees, between his legs and held onto him. For long moments, we kissed each other and my sister and Clancy disappeared. I took Tem's face into my hands.

I felt the hunger with which he returned my kisses. Our need was mutual. It wasn't just the sexual fire, but also the urge to banish the bad images, the literal hell we'd just been through.

"He was much worse than you told me," Tem said and his lovely face crumpled.

I saw then, the horrible things he had endured. He'd been subjected to images of his former lover Michael, raping *Todah*. He'd seen our cat Moontime as they flayed and skinned him alive. And me. The worst images were of me being tortured and now, unfortunately, he caught glimpses of my experiences. I shut the door on him. He was having enough trouble with his own nightmares. He didn't need mine, too.

"You had dinner with him?" Tem frowned in concentration.

"He tried."

"What did you promise him to get me back?"

"Don't talk about that now." I stroked his lovely face, wiping the tears from his eyes with my thumbs.

"He...he raped me, Div."

"No, he let you *think* he did."

"When I wouldn't come, he told me you were dead. They showed me your body."

"I know, baby. I'm sorry."

Tem shook his head. The images would take a long time to erase. Good thing I am a patient man and Tem and I are going to be together for hundreds and hundreds of years.

He ran his hands over my body. "I want to clean up, but I also can't bear not to keep my hands on you."

"I want your hands on me," I told him, aware of the girls moving around the house.

"There's no bloody shower," I heard Clancy wail. "There's a big bloody hole in the floor for a toilet and great big bloody lizard in the corner blinking at me!"

For the first moment, since this ordeal began, I felt a real burst of laughter bubbling in my belly.

Tem and I grinned at each other and I loved him even more than I ever thought possible.

"Until you came along, Tem, I ever knew such joy in love."

"Neither did I." His hands pulled my face back down to his and we kissed each other. When I was finally able to draw breath, I pulled back a little and looked him right in the eye.

"Oh, Tem...what I love about you...all the

things I love about you, the Devil could never touch. Not in a million years. Not in a million lifetimes."

"You should fuck me if you're going to make me cry again, Div."

I pushed him back against the sofa and looked into his eyes again. "You sure you're ready?"

"Of course I'm ready. Div, I'm yours for the branding. Come on, baby, mark me."

I bent my head and licked his beautiful mouth. His teeth elongated and I let him feed from my neck. I felt my own blood merging with his and almost came on the spot. I saw snatches of his bad dreams, snatches of the good he kept trying to impose to balance the evil. What I saw was the two of us, making love. What I saw was how beautiful we are together.

Taking my neck away from him, I gave him time to recover and whispered, "Lick it closed, baby."

His hot tongue lashed at the puncture wounds on my neck and I moved down his body with my own tongue. He writhed underneath me. I wanted to bring him nothing but pleasure. I never wanted him to experience another minute of pain in this lifetime...any lifetime.

My hands moved to his cock, which stirred against my thigh.

I moved down until Tem was humping my



face, anxious to bury his cock in my mouth. I smiled because I knew the image he kept in his mind during his darkest hours was his husband sucking his cock.

"Oh, Tem..." I murmured and sucked him into my mouth. His ass flew off the couch and I worked him, holding him in my hands as his legs flailed helplessly.

"What the..."

I heard Clancy's voice...heard her muttering. "Bloody hell, they're bonking."

"Of course they're bonking," my sister rasped back to her. "Just like we should be."

Tem's feet batted at my shoulders as I took hold of his ass in my greedy hands, my tongue touching his fiery ass hole.

"Oh fuck, Div...that feels so good. Stick your cock in, baby...stick it in. Please."

I wanted him to come in my mouth, but he started sobbing again so I did what any self-respecting husband would do, gave my man what he wanted.

My cock tore into him and he seemed to relax. "I fucking love you!" he screamed and started to laugh.

I fucked him hard because I wanted to bring him relief and pleasure....because there was nothing gentle that I felt in this moment. The good had to erase the bad.

"Take it out of me," Tem moaned and as my slick cock pulled out of his hot ass, his fingers reached down and gripped it. I slid back into him and the only thing barring full immersion was his finger crooked possessively around my shaft.

We looked into each other's eyes.

"Let go, baby," I whispered.

"No. It's mine."

I pulled out, pushed back in and each time, his fingers wrapped themselves around me. Within seconds, we were ready to explode and my husband released his hold on my cock—his cock—and we came together, our orgasm so intense I saw a mushroom cloud in my mind.

The Devil backed away and I knew he was displeased. We loved each other. We had triumphed.

"Baby," I said, reluctantly taking my cock from his sweet ass, "we need to leave. We're not out of danger yet."

## CHAPTER EIGHT

We ransacked the old man's bedroom for clothing. We each found threadbare trousers and long shirts, but nothing really fit.

"Promise me when we are old men we will never wear anything like this." Tem held up some old man underpants...gray with age and full of holes.

"I promise. Now, put them down. They're making me feel queasy," I replied.

"Don't you think it's that Prince Quen has left us alone so long?" Tem asked me as we sponged each other down from a basin of cold water and a strange-smelling bar of soap.

"He probably isn't far away."

My sister sniffed the soap. "It smells like seaweed, but it's not very nice," she grumbled.

We looked at each other's ugly outfits.

"I hope if I ever die, I never leave such sorry-ass attire behind," Tem said, making us all laugh.

Clancy glanced at him. "I am going to miss my

flying outfit. That was the coolest thing I ever owned in my life."

"Don't worry, I'll make you another one. Even better next time."

Clancy was saucer-eyed. "Even better? How are you going to do that? It was amazing."

He hugged her and I felt such love for my little family, I wish I didn't have to keep them on guard, but I knew we were still in danger.

"Stay here," I instructed them and prepared to leave the house through the back door.

"Oh, no you don't," Tem said and clung to me. He looked ridiculous in his high-water pants, but I knew I did, too. The man who'd owned them was a little guy...but this was better than nothing.

Tem and I peered outside. I could hear human breathing. Oh joy. I caught a glimpse of a couple of eunuchs hiding behind some bushes. I closed the door again.

*How many are there?* Tem telepathed to me.

*I don't know...five, six maybe.*

*What do we do?*

I looked at him and wished I could fuck his brains out all over again. The man just does it for me.

*You're so hot, Div.*

He looked at me with such a sweet moon face I couldn't help myself. I leaned forward and kissed him.

*That's not going to help.*

No? *How's this then?* I took his face in my hands and gave him such a deep, long kiss our knees started to buckle.

"Oh bloody hell!" Clancy huffed. "Stop with the kissy-face. Let's get this show on the bloody road."

I held up my hand. We had to do this carefully. I knew the eunuchs surrounded the house. I also knew they were aware we'd killed a couple of their pals. They weren't going to be the most pleasant guys to deal with. I had to think fast.

"We're in trouble," my sister whimpered. "They're going to take us back to that horrible place."

"No, they are not." I kept my voice firm. "You're forgetting where we are."

"Where are we?" Tem asked.

"The herb street." I opened the herb room door and was pleased to see it didn't appear to have been touched since I'd last entered it.

The baskets that held my cell phone and our credit cards were intact. I checked the phone for a bug, but couldn't see one. No calls had been made or received. Cool. It still had a couple of bars for the battery. I switched it off again to preserve the energy. I'd need the phone soon.

I stuffed everything into a pocket in my very tight pants and made a check of the herbs in the

room.

"Tem," I whispered.

He was right beside me.

"Take this, and this..." I pulled herbs as I sniffed them and handed them to him. "Find the biggest cooking pot you can find."

"What are we doing?" he whispered back.

"We're going to invite our dickless friends to a little party." I kissed his surprised lips.

"What kind of a party?" he asked, as he clattered around the kitchen.

"An orgy."

"An *orgy*?" he stared at me in horror. "I thought we already went to hell."

"Now, baby...it's all for a good cause." I found the dark stub of a root and sniffed it. This was getting better and better.

"What's that?" Tem asked me as he filled a large pot with water.

I couldn't resist grinning. "It's *'awa*...or the Vietnamese equivalent."

"You don't say."

"I do say." I grabbed the root and handed it to Clancy. "Grab that mortar and pestle on the shelf there and start grinding this."

"Are we making a sleeping potion?" Tem asked me as he tried to fire up the antiquated wood-burning stove.

"Sort of...let's just call it Love Potion Number

Six Six Six." I handed him a bunch of fresh mint.

"Well, I see there's some poppy seeds...and what's this?"

"They call this hot mint. It's sweet...it will mask the flavor of the other little...surprises."

"You're brilliant, Div." Tem gazed at me lovingly as I instructed my sister to follow my lead.

"Eunuchs love to party and they are easily turned on." I listened at the window. No movement outside. "Tem, when the liquid comes to a boil, turn it down to a simmer and pour it into glasses. We'll offer our guests a little drink and as soon as they all nod off, we leave."

I returned to the herb room and found what I suspected I would. Ganja. So the old man had been drying his own marijuana. A risky thing in Vietnam.

In the living room, my sister found an iPod and speaker. "How bizarre," she said, working the speed wheel until she found music we could live with. "He's got the stove of a cave man, but he's got an iPod Shuffle."

I lined up bunches of herbs and left them inside the herb room. I held a bunch of sea buckthorn to the stovetop and lit it.

"Everybody ready?" I asked.

"Ready? I'm too busy wishing this was all a part of our bad dream," my sister said as I opened

the back door and stepped outside, Kylie Minogue's contagious pop beat wafting out there with me. I waved the burning herbs around, dancing and singing. My sister caught on and soon the eunuchs were drifting into the kitchen.

"I can't believe I am doing this," my sister muttered, her hands over her head as two eunuchs gyrated with her. I felt sorry for these poor bastards. They spent their life giving service and any chance at a bit of fun they took it. I kept dancing around the living room, catching the eunuchs' hands in mine. Clancy soon joined us. Somehow our song caught on and the pasty-faced men who'd been spying on us were now having a er...gay old time.

Grabbing some more sea buckthorn and a second pile of herbs, I danced back into the living room, feeling the weight of my husband's stare on my back.

The eunuchs sang and danced with a lot of energy. I sent an urgent telepathic message to Tem.

*We need that drink now.*

He bustled in with a large tray filled with steaming cups, which our guests imbibed. None of us took a cup, but I was waving the smoldering herbs around as Kylie sang about *not getting enough* and Clancy danced with three eunuchs who laughed so hard, I thought their spiked



drinks would come up through their noses.

One of the eunuchs was sniffing his drink suspiciously so Tem ran up to him, urging him to drink. The eunuch rubbed up against Tem and downed his cup in one gulp. The combinations of herbs and powders started working their charm and the eunuch giggled helplessly.

*Eunuchs like sex?* My husband telepathed to me and I counted eleven of them in the room in varying stages of intoxication.

*Oh yes,* I responded.

*Eeew,* Tem shot back. I almost laughed out loud. He went to the kitchen and returned with the pot and a soup ladle. Somehow, my tiara-obsessed man had found a gold paper crown and now wore it with a great deal of dignity. The eunuchs were having a marvelous time as the music switched to Van Halen's *Jump*. Man that old man had some eccentric taste in music.

I lit one more bunch of herbs and the eunuchs started to fall down. One by one, they slipped to the floor and Clancy looked at me.

"Do I smell pot?" she asked.

"Yes," I said, extinguishing the remainder of the bunch.

"How did I not smell it before?"

"I hid it with the sea buckthorn."

Clancy stared at me and Van Halen *jumped* some more.

"Quick, find their cell phones," I shouted and we all rifled their pockets. Each of the eunuchs had the same cell phone we'd seen on all the others.

"What are we going to do with them?" Clancy asked.

"Show them a good time," I said. "We gotta leave."

We flew off, the cell phones in our hands, and soared over rooftops. I could still hear the music blasting from our house and each of the cell phones started to ring.

"Where are we going?" Clancy asked and I pointed to the river. We dropped all the phones into the murky-looking water as I glanced at my beautiful husband, whose grave eyes were on mine. I took his hand.

"Trust me," I said.

"Always." We took off, our hands holding onto one another and in that moment, I rediscovered the exhilaration of flying. We headed north, against the wind, but none of us cared. We were all together and we'd bought ourselves some breathing room.

It was time to go home.

We flew straight to Tokyo and arrived in the early evening. We had managed to fly without taking a break, but now we were all exhausted.

We needed a rest and a visit to an Internet café found us chatting to a young couple who urged us to try a *ryokan*, the Japanese equivalent of a bed and breakfast.

"It's impossible to find places in Tokyo that aren't part of a chain, the young woman told us. "*Royokan* are really becoming popular."

Further inquiries led us to Claska on Meguro Street and we checked in, requesting two adjoining rooms, again using Clancy's credit card. Tem and I were unprepared for the sparse décor, despite the warnings of the people who recommended the place.

The room Tem and I walked into had bright, peacock blue carpeting that was immaculately brushed, the weft all leading in one direction. In the center of the room was a long, low-lying table with tatami mats for sitting.

"Oh, Div," Tem cried. "It reminds me of the geisha house you took me to back home."

We searched high and low for a bed. If I was going to be in a hotel room with the world's sexiest man, I needed more than a mat. We found a blue futon rolled up in a closet. A phone call to the lobby informed us the staff would roll out the bed for us after we had dinner. We had the choice of the hotel restaurant or a kaiseki meal in our room.

"Kaiseki!" Tem's eyes shone. "This was meant

to be, Div. I will never, ever forget the kaiseki meal we had at that geisha house.”

I cringed. I wanted a proper bed and finger foods...on the other hand, we’d enjoyed one heck of a meal. Maybe this was meant to be.

We ordered dinner in an hour’s time and shared a bath in the Japanese tradition. We took our time bathing one another and I loved it when Tem offered me his throat. I bit into him, feeling the way he jolted as his blood mingled once again with mine. He held my cock and as soon as I finished feeding, he grabbed me, licking the tip, his canine teeth protruding in his lust.

“What kept me going in hell Div was knowing this beautiful uncut cock is mine and that it was waiting for me.”

He bent his head and I got a little thrill as his teeth grazed my stiffening cock. Tem devoured me in one swipe. I felt his fingers tugging on my balls, flicking across my ass until I was putty, with me shooting into his mouth.

“Man, I love bathtub sex,” I shouted as Tem gripped the base of my cock like it was about to run somewhere. He came off me, licking his lips with satisfaction.

“I taste a bit of ganja. I guess you’d call this third-hand high,” he grinned.

“Tem, I fucking love you.” I slumped in the bath, feeling completely sated. A knock at our

door and we glanced warily at one another. I stepped out of the tub first and padded to the door, looking out the peephole. Two women in crisp white uniforms stood outside the door. I saw the room service table and decided they looked harmless enough. My bath towel didn't cover much and they tried to hide their shock.

My husband strolled out in a thick white bathrobe belonging to the hotel and immediately pounced on the dishes. He bossed the women around, urging them to roll out the futon. Again, they exchanged looks. We weren't doing things the Japanese way, but we were horny, hungry men and they complied with our wishes and scurried from our room.

"They had their eye on you," Tem said, lifting the stone lid from a pot.

"I don't think so, baby."

He took an appreciative sniff and read a card on the table. "Oh, baby, this is the first course. Sakizuki. This card says it's like the French Amuse-bouche, hamachi with salmon roe, basil and a tiny basil flower. Come, Div, please let me feed it to you."

I drifted toward my man who perched like the perfect, beautiful male geisha that he was, on one of the tatami mats on his knees.

Tem held the bite-sized delicacy in his fingers and I wrapped myself around him, swallowing

the morsel with relish. I could taste each ingredient and my mouth zinged with the freshness of flavors. He watched for my reaction and our mouths met in a kiss that would have gone on forever, except I wanted to feed Tem. He enjoyed his mouthful, too, and like excited children, we moved onto the next course.

Each one was tiny but memorable. The Hassan, the second course, was yellowtail sashimi set out on dishes in the shape of small fish. The third course, Futamono, was soup made of vegetables and chrysanthemums. The scent changed as we sipped through the layers. Sweet, spicy and then a combination that really was extraordinary.

The finishing touch was a tiny edamame bean at the base of the bowl that we removed with our tongues and fed to each other.

Tem whispered into my mouth. "Div, Futamono sounds so deliciously dirty. Wouldn't you like to Futamono me?"

"Don't mind if I do." I removed the still-warm cup from his fingers and dragged him across the floor to the futon. Our bodies were a tangle of limbs and tongues, our hard cocks screaming for each other. We moved into a passionate sixty-nine and I took my time sucking Tem's beautiful, big, thick cock. I never grew tired of pleasuring him. However, I hadn't sucked him to fruition in the herb house and I planned to rectify that error

immediately. His mouth moved from my cock to my ass and he stabbed his tongue into me.

Oh man, he knew what that did to me. I moved over his face, my ass over his mouth and almost screamed at the way he sucked me. He kept up a relentless pace on me as I sucked his cock. I knew he was close and had to hang onto him for dear life as he thrashed and bucked beneath me. He moaned and groaned into me and I quickly turned around and mounted him. I straddled his hips and felt his hand encircling my rigid cock.

"I am trying to hang on, Div. I want you to come like the whore you are. Come with me, baby."

Having him inside me was something I never thought I would get used to or crave. I came hard, shouting his name and felt his release flood through me. He tapped the base of my spine lightly, a technique he once learned from an Asian lover and I felt like I was coming all over again. All the nerve endings sent shock impulses through me and Tem smiled the satisfied smile of the courtesan.

"Oh, fuck, Tem."

He fell back against the buckwheat pillows and I came off him, taking him in my arms. We fell asleep, glued to one another, his body seeking safety against mine. I felt sleep overtake me, banishing the thoughts of Tem being tortured. Just

a little while, I told myself, aware of Tem's head growing heavier against my shoulder. I pulled him tighter, closer and listened for the sounds of anything...something. All I could hear was Tem's deep, even breathing.

We woke two hours later, feeling refreshed, the rest of the meal swallowed quickly as we called the girls in their room. They came to us and we used the cell phone to call *Todah* on the landline in the underground safe house.

He answered it on the third ring. "Hello?" his voice sounded stressed until he heard mine.

"Div! Oh man, am I pleased to hear your voice. You have Tem?"

"Yes, I do. He's right here. Is everything okay there?"

"Oh, yes. We're fine. The cat's pissed, but what else is new?"

"You have enough food?"

"Yes. We're very comfortable."

"*Todah*, I'll let you speak to Tem, but you must listen to me. In exactly four hours, you must stop bathing *Akua*."

"Stop bathing him? But he'll —"

"Yes, I know. He'll start turning into a demon." *If Prince Quen wanted a demon baby, he was gonna get a demon baby.*

"I want you to do everything I say, *Todah*." He



listened to me. I could tell he was frightened. I would have been, too, in his position, but he seemed to be taking it all in despite the terror I knew he felt for the safety of his son.

When I handed the phone to Tem, I thought my heart would break when he told his brother that he loved him.

When he ended the call, Tem looked at me with infinite sadness in his eyes. "When the Devil tortured me, I saw things happening to *Todah*, Div. I believed everything I saw."

"I know, baby. I know." I held him in my arms and the girls started talking at once.

"What are we going to do, Div? You promised the Devil he could have *Akua*. I can't believe you did that." Tem's gaze rested on my face. "I know you have something up your sleeve because I know you would never give him our baby...you wouldn't give him our baby, would you Div?"

"Of course I would. I never go back on my word, Temeura."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It's up to *Akua* which path he chooses."

"But—"

I put my finger to his lips. "I'm a man with a plan, baby."

He sighed. "Yeah, I know, but how come I can't read the plan?"

I took him in my arms and kissed him and Tem

broke away from me breathlessly.

“Oh my God...Div, I just saw...pieces of...” he shook his head. “Are you sure about this? We’re about to play with fire.”

“Yeah,” I said, cracking my knuckles. “I know.”

## CHAPTER NINE

Tem was determined we would stop by Harajuku train station before we flew anywhere.

"The people dress in gothic Lolita outfits on the weekend," he insisted. "I read about it in a fashion magazine. I need to see this with my own eyes, Div."

I was not so sure about walking the streets, especially in our outfits. In stylish Tokyo, we certainly stood out as country bumpkins. However, I can't say no to Tem regarding anything so within minutes of checking out of our hotel, we walked down the street and, despite the almost midnight hour, we found a group of teenagers in the most bizarre outfits I have ever seen. A very fat Japanese girl wore a white tutu over black jeans, cropped at the knees. She topped this off with heavy, black platform boots that conjured to my mind Herman Munster from the old TV show.

Another girl, in a pink and white skirt and jacket ensemble with matching colored hair, wore an Alice-type pink headband. Her chin stubble made me realize she was actually a *he*, and he cuddled a girl in black and white with white strips of fabric across her eyes and mouth. All around us, the Lolitas laughed and pointed at our outfits, but Tem was busy examining cuts, colors and the feel of fabrics...and then I heard the voices on the wind.

*They're coming.*

Oh man, they'd found us.

"Tem, we need to leave," I said, spotting two eunuchs merging with the gathering crowd.

"Wait," my husband shouted and everyone stopped. Even the giggling teens stopped talking as Tem retrieved his gold paper crown from a pocket in his pants and slipped it over his head.

He threw his arms out wide. "I am the *real* queen of the damned!" he shouted and the teens applauded as Clancy, Heavenly, Tem and I rose as one.

The crowd *ooed* as one of the eunuchs tried to grab Tem's foot, but I pulled my man to safety. We took off fast and the crowd on the street returned to their gay chatter. I guess when you're a gothic Lolita, not much fazes you.

*I knew Prince Quen was probably on his way to our house.*

"You don't think he's already there?" Tem shouted to me, obviously reading my thoughts.

"Not yet, but soon." I took his hand in mine and the four of us sped toward home.

Tem had to keep pushing his gold crown down on his head to keep from losing it, but its presence buoyed our spirits.

We flew fast, against the wind and half way home, the spirits seemed to change their mind and pushed us along instead of fighting us.

As we approached our beloved island home, Clancy gave a shout as the magnificent, emerald allure of *Diamond Head* rose just beneath the clouds. We dipped down and my breath caught at the sight of the *Ko'olau* Mountains ringing the island. We hovered above our own precious peak, *Tantalus*, and I could see movement on our land.

"Stay close to me," I shouted, gripping Tem's hand harder. We landed with a cloud of dust billowing beneath our feet. Everything was dry. Half our garden was dead, but we couldn't think about that now. I counted twenty eunuchs and another seven men in steel mesh uniforms marching toward us.

Quen emerged through the pack and stood front and center. He was wearing *my* flying suit, hand-stitched by Tem. Really, this little prick was taking things too far.

Tem's fingers squeezed mine, but he didn't say

a word.

"I want the child," Quen said, taking in our outfits.

"How...charming."

"Thank you," I said. "You can come into the house, but I want your goons to stay out here."

"Goons?"

"Yeah, goons." I was irate now. "They broke into my house, assaulted my husband. Quen, we are going to do this *my* way."

He flicked a glance at his idiot followers while accompanying my little family into our house. As we passed the driveway, I saw that Jose's body was no longer there and I wondered what had happened to him.

Ransacked, the inside of the house lay in rubble, many of our priceless heirlooms destroyed. My sister started to cry. These had belonged to my aunt and they were like children to us.

Quen was fixated on the living room. "What's that sound?" he asked and I could hear the inhuman wailing and felt a moment of panic. *It has to go the way I planned.*

I opened the closed door to the living room. An ashen-faced *Todah* sat with *Elenai* on the sofa. Opposite them, our family matriarch, Blossom sat in a wing chair, oblivious to the dried blood spatter on it. Perhaps the blood was why she

chose it. I noticed now that her black eyes kept changing shape. Ah. The Devil had found himself a host body for the occasion. I should have expected it.

"Where is he?" Quen asked and he stepped forward.

"He's in the kitchen," Todah said. "But I should warn you, he's been teething and —"

Quen ignored him and threw open the French doors leading to the kitchen. There was an unholy scream followed by low, guttural growls and shrieks. I saw a flash of blood, like fire. Quen shouted for help. Blossom ran for the door, her tight, long red dress prohibiting fast movement. She shrieked in horror and the screams continued.

I moved to the kitchen and watched our baby, now a fully formed demon with talons and skeletal tail, attacking Quen again and again with his vicious little teeth.

"Get him off me," Quen wheezed as his blood flew everywhere.

"Do you accept that the baby chooses not to come with you? That he chooses to remain with us?"

"Yes, fuck! Get him off me!"

The baby demon crouched on the prone Quen, his gaze shifting to Blossom. As he flew across the room at her, she fainted.

I saw The Devil's dark spirit, like a swarm of

black flies leaving her body. The baby screamed and I beckoned for Tem. He stepped in front of me and *Akua* stopped howling. He threw himself into Tem's arms and sobbed like the infant that he was. Tem inserted a baby bottle into his mouth with the steel tip we fashioned for him the day we first found him on our doorstep.

"He does get so testy when he's hungry," my husband said and drifted off to the bathroom with him as *Todah* joined me at the door.

"You know what to do," I said quietly and my brother-in-law's vampire teeth emerged as Quen flapped ineffectually on the floor.

"He is my child!" *Todah* yelled, lunging at Quen, grabbing him by the throat. A few jerks and Quen was gone. Daybreak flooded the kitchen as I'd planned and Quen's body disintegrated, ashes to ashes.

There was silence in the house for several beats. I heard the bathwater running and *Akua* started to laugh.

"I know he's my kid, but he is one ugly mofo when he gets that way," *Todah* sighed, wiping his mouth. "Thank God Tem knows how to handle him." He glanced at me. "Is it done?"

"For now. I think when the baby is a little older, the dark forces will try again, but he showed them he is right where he wants to be."

"What about her?" *Todah* pointed at the still



unconscious Blossom.

"We'll take her home soon. She won't remember a thing."

Tem came into the kitchen, the baby swaddled in fresh towels. He was pretty much back to normal, save for his fangs, pointy tail and a clawed foot.

Blossom was still on the floor.

"I don't love her anymore, Div," Tem said. "I hate her."

"Oh, darling, we can't really blame her. Possession is a terrible thing."

"She was possessed this whole time?"

"Yes, the drugs, the dark lord...baby, maybe this is a good time for us to get her an intervention."

Tem rolled his eyes. "An intervention? Where do we find one for a cranky, old she-vampire?" He shook his head. "Oh no. She's not staying here."

"She would be very appreciative, baby."

"What are you saying?" Tem handed the baby off to *Elenai*, who giggled and cooed at his mother.

"I'm saying she might be so appreciative she'll let you play with her tiaras..." I shrugged. "You know...just to be polite."

Tem's eyes narrowed. "Forget the fucking tiaras, Div. I want you to help me clean up this kitchen and our ruined house." He paused. "And I expect a rollicking good time in the sack right after

it."

"Of course, baby."

"You can start by bringing up some champagne from the wine cellar. I've made a list. We need to drink the 1914 Pol Roger. Not that it's going to turn or anything, but it is almost extinct and this experience reminded me we need to live in the moment, Div."

He opened the kitchen cupboard and removed a bottle of bleach. "Bring up three bottles. The girls and *Todah* and *Elenai* need to celebrate life, too."

"Do I get a kiss?"

He hesitated. He actually hesitated. "Of course you do."

He gave me a lovely, soulful kiss and I headed down to the wine cellar.

I switched on the overhead light and realized things were still messy from our eunuch kill of a few days ago. Man, it felt like a hundred years had passed.

There was movement behind me, then I felt something at my back. I glanced over my shoulder. Our caretaker, Jose had a pitchfork at my back.

"You tricked me," said the Devil who'd picked up a new host body. Poor Jose. The devout Catholic would die again gladly before allowing this type of unholy alliance.

"No," I said. "I did not trick you. I did what I

promised."

"You unleashed a demon on my foot soldier."

"Is that what Quen was?" I was pretty sure Quen saw himself as something much grander, but I wanted to get things straight.

"*Akua...sorry, the baby is not of my blood. I love him like a son, but he is not mine to give. Had he chosen to go with you, I would have relinquished him.*"

The devil poked me with the pitchfork. *Boy, he wasn't very original.*

"His father denies him passage to you. That means, until he is of age, you will just have to wait."

"Oh yes, I'll wait," the Devil said and he raised the pitchfork above his head.

"You are not real," I shouted and threw the contents of the nearest wine bottle at the decaying body of my formerly loyal, trusted employee.

The body fell, the flies swarmed and I kept my fear at bay by telling myself several times that it wasn't real.

What was real was that I'd smashed a damned fine bottle of wine and there was going to be hell to pay with Tem. So...I thought to myself, nothing new there...

Upstairs, I ran into my sister who breathlessly told me that she'd found our horses running free, grazing on our property.

"Tem's gonna go ape," Clancy whispered. "They ate all the vegetables and mowed through two apple trees."

"Have some champagne," I told her and handed her a bottle. "I'll take care of Tem."

I was thrilled to have my husband alone again, naked and in my arms.

"Baby," I said, opening an edamame pod and dropping peas into Tem's mouth. "These are my favorite things. You know why?"

"I do," he said, sipping at his champagne. "It's because it's the first food we ever ate together."

In a far and distant corner of our house, I could hear Blossom wailing.

"Baby, I think cold turkey's a little cruel when she's been a helpless opium addict for close to a thousand years," I said, letting Tem suck my salty fingers one by one.

"Oh, she's not going cold turkey." Tem smiled. "I'm making her watch *Mean Girls*, because that's what she is, a mean girl. I think she hates that movie."

"So what are you giving her to calm her detox?"

"Awa." Tem looked very pleased with himself. I took the champagne from his hand, downed the contents and ran my hands over his gorgeous, toned body.

"Baby, you know what I realized?"

"What's that?" I asked him, completely absorbed with his skin and absolutely amazing muscle tone.

"Love's blood works in so many ways. *Akua's* parents feel it for him, he feels it for me and them and you and I...we really feel it."

"Yes," I said. "Love conquers everything, Tem."

"You know, Div, I could never have been a eunuch. I love having my cock and balls."

"I love you having a cock and balls, too," I said, kissing his waiting mouth.

"Could you imagine the pain some of them went through?"

I caught a glimpse of Tem's thoughts and realized one of the things he feared most. Castration. The Devil had continually shown him castrations.

"Don't," he whispered against my arm, kissing it. "I don't want to remember it."

"What you saw was real for some boys, hopefully, a thing of the past." I thought of Sa'ng and hoped it was true that he'd found a pain-free afterlife in heaven.

Our bedroom door opened and I was about to tell whomever it was to give us some privacy, but I saw the tip of a cat's tail and realized it was Moontime. He padded to his favorite place—the pillow next to Tem's head—completely ignoring

me as he cleaned his face.

"Tem...what...what the heck does that cat have on his head?"

"What does it look like?" Tem's manipulative fingers worked their magic on my cock.

"Um...it looks like a tiara."

"You're so smart, Div. I found it in Blossom's purse. She said it belonged to her cat and said Moontime could borrow it. It suits him, don't you think?"

The cat's eyes burrowed into mine, challenging me to disagree.

"Absolutely," I said. "But, baby, I can't believe you went through her purse."

"I was looking for contraband, Div. She is here for rehab, you know."

Smothering a smile, I said, "No, baby. You were looking for jewels. You know she carries her most priceless gems with her."

He blinked. "I found gorgeous things...stunning...but the kitty tiara. I might have a hard time giving it back to her."

"If Moontime wants it, he can have it. She can tell us how much she wants for it."

Tem looked giddy with happiness. "Div, were you serious when you said eunuchs enjoy sex?"

"Yes, baby. Some do." I glanced down at him. "Depending on how amateurish the castration is. The ones who have extreme castration and depend

on a hole from their urethra and believe it or not, it's very, very sensitive and they can have pretty intense orgasms."

"You don't say?"

"I do say."

"And you say this spot is on the urethra?"

"Yes....right next to it. Here." I moved my hand under his balls and started rubbing it.

Tem started panting. "I think it makes me want to pee, Div."

"The boys who get butchered often suffer from incontinence."

We stared into each other's eyes and I felt so much love for this man, I wanted nothing more for him, but his infinite and endless happiness.

"You do make me happy, Div. I feel so weird since we went to...you know..."

"Yes." It would be a long time before any of us banded about the name *hell* without stirring up painful memories.

"It's a good excuse, the mess they made when they came here. I've been wanting to redecorate," Tem said as I dipped down and lapped at his leaking cock head.

"Really? You mean you didn't like it the way it was?"

"Oh, yes, I love our home. But I'm thinking we need more red...and pink."

*Pink. Oh, man...* "That sounds lovely, baby."

"You're a terrible liar, darling, but I promise you it will look beautiful."

"If you say so."

"I say so."

We grinned at one another, feeling boyishly happy. Being in love and drinking good champagne will do that to you. Trust me on that. I hoped the other two couples in our home were equally enjoying their vintage tippie and their respective spouses.

"I did manage to pick up a few interesting sex secrets from the Orient while I was you know...down there." Tem pointed to the ground.

"Did you, now?"

"Oh, yes. A eunuch who was very mean at first, later became nice. He told me he worked for a sultan and he was supposed to look after the sultan's wives and he watched them fuck."

"I bet he picked up a lot of cool tricks."

"There's one with chopsticks I am anxious to try."

"Chopsticks, eh?"

He got up from our bed and left the room, despite my bleat of protest. Moontime turned his back to me until his daddy returned and the cat's head swiveled around, one eye open, in case fish was involved.

Tem got busy with a pair of black lacquered chopsticks in his fingers.



"Kiss me," he whispered and I did. With him in my arms, his mouth on mine, I could forget all the demons, my own and everybody else's. Yes, life was good again. My tongue moved of its own accord down his neck, past my favorite feeding spots on his throat. I felt the racing pulse there and took my time, exploring every sexy inch of him. Tem, however, had other ideas.

"The geisha used chopsticks to hold the man's testicles in a way to increase blood flow, like this." Tem took my balls in his interesting little vice grip. "Maybe we need to practice it baby, just to be exact."

"Yes," I murmured. "We need to make sure it works."

"I think it would work best with a blow job and I would be certain not to squeeze too tight." Tem's head dropped to my thigh and he started to lick and suck my balls.

He raised his head again. "I love your ass, Div, and I never usually neglect it, but this particular method focuses on the balls and cock."

All I could say was, "Fuck."

"I love the idea of mixing it up for you, baby...getting your balls in my grip and sucking them...a mixture of sweet and savage...and a few light licks on your perineum and a squeeze of the chopsticks and then hurry up to the main course...your leaking cock."

My eyes were half closed with the intensity of feeling. I thought my balls would snap off, at the same time, the pressure did produce sensations that were extraordinary. Every lick was like a little electric current shooting through me. Man, Tem had already mastered the art of providing me with multiple sensations as he gave me head, but this was spectacular. He kept his fingers and tongue moving and the chopsticks rocking back and forth.

I got so excited and I knew Tem felt it, too. His own cock was so hard...I reached down to touch it, but he resisted, wanting me to enjoy myself. I put my foot between his legs and rubbed his cock. I loved the feeling of my skin against his rigid cock and he moaned as he took my whole cock into his mouth. I came so hard I was seeing stars, only then did he release me. The orgasm did not stop. I'd stopped shooting, but I was still coming and Tem kept sucking me. We were going to need a hell of a lot more chopsticks in our future.

Naturally, I had to return the favor. Tem went crazy as I experimented with sucking and licking, squeezing briefly on the chopsticks and then letting them go. He let out a cry when a completely new sensation, a rush of heat and blood, shot up his belly. He, too, came very hard. He thrashed underneath me and I had to fight to keep my mouth on him.

We collapsed on the bed in a beautiful, sexy

heap, but a few minutes later, my hot horny husband was anxious for the main course. I started licking him again and he was patient at first, but Tem can be bossy when I take my time and soon, he'd had enough of waiting.

"Hurry up, Div," he growled. "I want that cock inside me."

Since he was holding it in his strong fingers, I wasn't in a position to argue, but I did want to suck and lick his ass first.

"Oh, well, if you must," he grinned, the lust bringing a haze across his eyes. I knew he couldn't wait, but man, I'd been patient long enough. I needed some tongue to ass contact and I needed it now.

"Div," he shrieked as my tongue entered his ass. I felt the way he humped my face and I lost all control as he said my name over and over again. I got between his open legs. A hot, naked man with a beautiful cock and balls waiting for his lover to enter him is the most erotic vision there is. I slid into him, Tem clawing at my back. I tried to take my time, but his legs wrapped themselves around me and we fell to the floor. We rolled around and around until I was on top of him again and my baby moaned my name as he came, his cock spewing like a bottle rocket between us.

I came inside him, Tem screaming, "Yes, yes!" and we kissed each other, laughing.

"Div, we just get better and better," he said, kissing my eyes and nose and coming back to my mouth again.

Outside in the living room, the baby started wailing.

"He's so sweet, isn't he?" Tem asked. He glanced up at me. "Wait...who's supposed to be feeding him?"

"I think we are."

"Oh, right." He gave me a lingering kiss and threw one of his hand-painted *pireaus* over his seductive hips and I followed him into our more or less cleaned up living room.

There we were, in the moonlight of our home. Just a couple of vampires in *Waikiki*, with their demonically-challenged nephew.

And their tiara-wearing cat.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A. J. Llewellyn lives in California, but dreams of living in Hawaii. Frequent trips to all the islands, bags of Kona coffee in his fridge and a healthy collection of Hawaiian records keep this writer refueled. A. J. loves male/male erotica, has a passion for all animals (especially the dog, the cat and the turtle). A. J. believes that love is a song best sung out loud.

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