

The Vampire's Redemption

A Tale of Shar (2)

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One

Lars looked across the crowded hall, examining the latest acquisitions his lesser demons and slave traders had found. He might have lost the slave Alyson to a fallen angel, but he still held out hope that he could find a woman to love him. A commotion in the far corner drew his eye. Standing, he went to investigate.

As he drew closer, he saw a slave trader had stripped one of his slaves and was whipping her repeatedly. Blood dripped from the lacerations on her back and pooled on the cold stone floor.

“You stupid whore! You’ll do as I say!” the man yelled, bringing the whip down repeatedly.

The woman cowered on the floor, her long hair covering her face.

“What’s going on?” Lars asked, standing with his massive arms crossed over his chest.

“This stupid bitch insulted one of my best customers.”

Lars raised a brow. “And you think beating her will change her value?”

The slave trader stopped mid swing, knowing better than to anger the ruler of Shar. His business depended on Lars. “Do you want to buy her?”

Lars gazed at the woman on the floor. Her chin lifted and large green eyes stared up at him with tears shimmering in their depths. He felt as if someone had reached into his chest and squeezed his heart. In that moment, he knew he wanted her.

“Yes, I do.”

The slave trader looked surprised, but didn’t argue. He quoted a rather large sum and watched as the vampire pulled out the money. Accepting the marks from Lars, he turned back to his other slaves, the young woman already forgotten.

Lars knelt by her side. “What’s your name?”

“Cadence.”

“This might hurt, but I’m going to pick you up, Cadence. We’ll go upstairs and get you cleaned up.”

She nodded, sensing the power that radiated from her savior. She knew he was Lars, the leader of the area, a vampire feared throughout Shar. She’d heard of his wicked temper; she was more terrified of him than she had been of the slave trader. She had heard the horror stories of what happened to his slaves when they disobeyed him. Also, he liked taking multiple women to his bed.

When he lifted her into his arms, she winced in pain and bit her lip to keep from crying out. A tear escaped and slipped silently down her cheek. When the droplet hit Lars’s arm, he looked down at her, compassion and worry etched on his face.

“I know it hurts, but I promise it will be better soon.”

Cadence stared up at him in amazement. *Is this the same man of which everyone has spoken? They made him out to be a monster.*

Trying to consolidate the conflicting information she had on the man who now owned her, she rested her head against his chest. Whether she liked it or not, she was now his property to do with as he pleased. She only hoped she survived it.

Upstairs, Lars laid his new slave down on the bed. Getting her comfortably settled on her stomach, he examined the criss-cross marks on her back. Anger welled up inside of him and he had to tamp it down. The important thing was that Cadence was safe now; he would ensure that no one harmed her again.

“Cadence, this is going to hurt a bit, but I have to clean the wounds and rub some ointment on them.”

She merely nodded.

Bringing a pitcher of water and small bowl over to the bed, he dipped a clean rag into the water and began cleaning the blood from her back. It didn't take long for the clear water to turn pink. Some of the wounds were superficial, but several worried him. She wouldn't be lying

on her back for several days. He hoped it wouldn't hurt for her to wear a dress in the morning. While he enjoyed looking at her naked body, he preferred to be the only one doing so.

He reached for the jar of ointment and unscrewed the lid. Dipping his fingers into the jelly like substance, he gently spread it across her back. She whimpered in pain, but otherwise remained silent.

When Lars was finished, he wiped his hands clean and crawled onto the bed beside her. Smoothing her hair back from her face, he noticed the tears streaking her cheeks.

Lying back on the bed, he pulled her into his arms, careful not to touch her back. With her head resting on his chest and her body pressed against his side, he stroked her arm.

"Why are you being so nice to me?"

He looked down at her in surprise. "Why wouldn't I be nice to you?"

"I've heard the stories."

He tensed. "What stories?"

Cadence looked up at him. “The other slaves, they... they mentioned that you’re harsh when you punish your slaves.”

He nodded. “I have been.”

“And now?”

He shrugged. “Sometimes they deserve a severe punishment, something that befits the crime.”

Cadence was quiet for a moment. No matter what he asked of her, she would make sure he was never angry with her. “Do you have many slaves?”

“I have six slave women.”

She wasn’t sure how to respond so she remained quiet.

“You should get some rest,” Lars said.

Cadence closed her eyes and tried to sleep. It had been a horrible day and she wasn’t certain tomorrow would be any better. *If only someone else had bought me! Someone who might actually like me, and treat me well.*

Although, if she were honest with herself, she had to admit that Lars hadn’t treated her badly. He had saved her from a sound beating,

and tended to her wounds himself. Nevertheless, she wasn't naïve enough to think it meant anything. Men like Lars didn't change over night.

In the morning, Lars woke to the sound of his bedroom door opening. Quickly covering Cadence, he watched to see who dared to intrude his private chambers. He was surprised to see one of his slave women tiptoe into the room.

“Veronica, what are you doing here?”

She flipped her hair over her shoulder and lifted her chin defiantly. “I heard you bought another woman.”

“I did, but why are you in my room?”

“You never called for me last night.”

Lars glared at her. “If I had wanted you, I would have called for you. Go back to your quarters.”

Veronica glared at Cadence. “Is that your latest whore? Is she the reason you didn’t call for me?”

“Veronica, I won’t tell you again. Leave. Now.” Lars was barely holding onto to his temper. Hearing her call Cadence a whore enraged him. He knew the woman was jealous, but she was a slave and would do well to remember it. It was obvious he had been too lax with her in the past. She needed to learn her place.

With a huff, Veronica turned on her heel and stormed out of the room, slamming the heavy door behind her.

“I should have locked the damn thing last night,” he muttered to himself.

“Is she one of your slaves?” Cadence asked in a voice still husky from sleep, surprised that she hadn’t woken even once during the night.

“Yes, Veronica is one of my slaves.”

“Does she usually sleep in your bed?”

Lars looked at her, humor in his eyes, making her blush. She realized she sounded jealous, but she was merely curious. Wasn’t

she? A covert glance showed that her jealousy amused him. Perhaps if she kept him amused and happy, he wouldn't find a reason to punish her.

"Veronica has often shared my bed, as have the others. Is that a problem?"

Cadence shook her head. "It isn't my place to say anything. I'm sorry I brought it up. I was curious."

Lars leaned down, his mouth inches from hers. "If you don't like the idea of the others in my bed, then I suppose you'll have to plan on staying here."

"In your bed?"

He nodded.

"But... my back..."

"I won't ask you to do anything that could do further damage to your back. But I think a kiss may be in order."

Before she could protest, he captured her lips with his, invading her sweet mouth with his tongue. Her taste and scent surrounded him, pulled him in, and made him want more. As he plundered her mouth, he pressed himself closer

to her, wanting to feel the imprint of her naked body against his.

Lars broke the kiss and watched as Cadence tried to pull herself back together mentally. It was obvious his kiss had affected her as much as it had him. He'd wanted women before, but none had stirred his emotions as this one did.

He caressed her cheek and pressed one more kiss to her lips. "I have something for you."

Getting off the bed, he walked over to a chest in the corner of the room. He opened the lid and reached inside. A moment later, he produced a emerald green satin toga. Longer than the usual slave garb, it fastened at the shoulders with silver ribbons and had a matching belt.

"What's this?" she asked as she accepted the extravagant gift.

"I thought you might like something to wear."

"But... it's not... I'm just a slave. I shouldn't be wearing something like this." The moment the words left her mouth, she wished she could recall them. She cringed; waiting for the blow she knew would come. When nothing happened,

she looked up into his face and saw that he wasn't angry with her.

"I want you to wear it, Cadence. Besides, the material will feel better on your back than the standard issue slave dresses."

She nodded and gingerly moved to her knees. When she tried to put the dress on, she could feel her sores trying to re-open and cried out.

Lars gently took the gown from her and slipped it over her head. One arm at a time, he helped her get into the garment, and then tied the shoulders for her. He loosely fastened the belt so that the outfit would have shape, but wouldn't rub across her cuts.

"Thank you." Her voice was so soft it was barely audible.

"You're welcome. Do you feel up to eating this morning?"

She nodded. While she was nervous and wasn't sure what to expect around Lars, it hadn't dented her appetite. The slave trader had only fed the women bread yesterday morning.

Not having eaten in twenty-four hours, she was starting to feel faint.

When they reached the top of the stone staircase, Lars placed her hand in the crook of his arm, escorting her down the stairs as if she were a princess. In reality, she figured he just didn't want her to fall. She was, after all, his property.

In the main hall, she started to walk toward the table where the slaves ate, but Lars stopped her. With a gentle tug on her hand, he led her up the steps to the dais and seated her at his table directly beside him.

She blushed and glanced around the hall, noticing several stares, not all of which were friendly. Thinking he expected her to serve him, she began to stand.

With a gentle hand on her arm, he pressed her back down onto the bench. "Sit. Someone else will serve the food."

"People are starting to stare."

His gaze raked over the people below, daring anyone to say anything. Most ducked their heads or looked away. Only Veronica stood up

glaring back. He stared her down until she looked away. It was only a matter of time before he had to do something about her, but it wouldn't be today.

"I believe they've stopped staring." Lars looked down at her and smiled.

She couldn't help but smile back. "That's because you gave them that ferocious look and scared them away."

Surprise lit his eyes at her teasing tone. He found that he liked this side of Cadence and hoped to see more of it in the future. She hadn't denied him when he asked her to remain in his bed, even if she hadn't sounded too enthusiastic about it. If the slave trader was any indication of how men had treated her, combined with what she had heard about *him*, then it was no wonder she was skittish and reluctant to give him a chance.

"After our meal, would you like to take a walk around the grounds? Or would you prefer to rest?"

Cadence stretched a little, wincing. "I still hurt, but I think I'd prefer some fresh air."

He nodded in acceptance. Maybe during their walk, he could find a way to convince her he wasn't a monster. While it was true he *had* been one, he was trying to change. He wanted to be someone she could trust, maybe even learn to care about. After seeing Alyson and Adam together, he desperately wanted what they had.

They ate their meal in relative silence, ignoring the curious looks from the people scattered below. Lars took notice of Veronica, one of his sex slaves, but he refused to acknowledge her despite the glare she was aiming their way. To do so would only push her to act out even more.

Three

Outside the sun was shining and the birds were chirping. A breeze rustled the leaves of a nearby tree and playfully tossed Cadence's long tresses. Lars had placed her hand in the crook of his arm when they left the castle and that was where it had remained.

As they circled the castle and walked through the gardens, Cadence took notice of the world in which she now lived. It was beautiful, if not brutal at times. But then, her captor had found her outside of a park in New Orleans, Louisiana. She had lived just outside of the French Quarter in a rather seedy section of town. Her money was too thin to support herself and live in one of the nicer apartments. Her apartment had been spacious, but the floor was so soft in spots that she had often worried about

falling through. When it rained, the roof leaked in nearly every room. It seemed like a lifetime ago.

Lars walked them over to a bench in the corner of the garden and helped her sit on the cool stone surface.

“What do you think of your new home?”

“It’s far grander than any place I’ve lived before.”

“How long have you been in Shar?”

She shrugged. “I lost track of the time, but I think it’s been around six months. Time hasn’t had much meaning for me lately.”

“Could you... could you be happy here?”

The question took her by surprise and she didn’t answer right away. It baffled her that he would care about her happiness and that it seemed to matter if she was content. She’d only known the man for a day, but something didn’t seem right.

“Cadence, I won’t make a secret of the fact that I’ve bedded many women, often at the same time, even in the past week. But if you were to

willingly come to my bed, I would be faithful to you.”

She stared at him in shock. *Did I hear him correctly? Did he just promise to be faithful to me?*

“Say something,” he nearly growled.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t know what to say. You took me by surprise.”

“I know you aren’t well enough to do anything more than sleep, but promise me you’ll think about my offer.”

“Why? Why are you doing this? I’m your slave and have to do as you command.”

He sighed and ran a hand through his long blond hair. “Yes, I could order you to remain in my bed, but it wouldn’t be the same. I recently tried to steal the woman of a fallen angel. When he came to rescue her from me, there was a look of complete adoration on her face.”

Lars stretched his legs out and looked over at her. “It made me realize that I wanted that, wanted someone to look at *me* that way.”

Her heart twisted in her chest and gave a painful wrench when she realized that he was just as lonely as she was. True, people

surrounded him, those who had no choice but to do his bidding, and yet he didn't have anyone who loved him. Unbidden, the image of the irate slave woman from that morning came to mind.

"What about the slave woman from earlier? She didn't seem happy to find me in your bed."

"Leave Veronica to me. She's warmed my bed for a while now, but I never gave her fidelity and never will."

"But you're willing to offer that to me? You're willing to take no other women to your bed?"

He nodded, hoping she was considering his offer. He'd never felt bewitched by a woman – until now. Cadence had him tied in knots. He wanted to protect her, provide for her, love her... the thought took him by surprise. He was a vampire! What did he know of love?

"What if... what if I make you angry?" she asked quietly.

He reached out and cupped her cheek. "I promise to never harm you, if that's what has you worried. No one will harm you again."

Cadence twisted her hands in her lap and stared off into space. She could certainly do worse, yet the thought of giving herself to Lars body and soul terrified her. Not that she had any control over whether or not he used her body, but she hoped that she would have a say in the matter. The thought of being intimate with a man scared her witless.

“You might change your mind when you know more about me.”

He shook his head. “I doubt that.”

“What if I told you I was poor? That I was so poor there were times when I didn’t eat more than peanut butter and bread once or twice a day. What if... what if I told you I didn’t have a family? That I was orphaned as a baby and stayed in the foster care system being bounced from one home to another my entire childhood?”

“None of those things bother me, except I wish I could take away your pain.”

She swallowed and steeled her nerves. “What if I told you I had never been with a man before?”

She felt Lars become still beside her, could practically hear the thoughts hurtling through his mind. She knew she had shocked him, and possibly repulsed him since he was accustomed to women with certain talents.

Lars pulled her into his lap and gently held her. “Then I would consider myself a very fortunate man to be the only one in your bed. I would consider it an honor.”

Cadence blinked back tears, his sincerity and caring enough to break her. She had always been strong, hard. She had to be in order to survive foster care, and yet looking into his eyes, she felt her heart begin to melt a little, felt her resolve slipping away.

“What is it you want, Cadence?”

“Kiss me,” she said softly, leaning closer to him, her hands braced on his shoulders.

Lars complied, his lips sweeping across hers in bold strokes - tasting, devouring, nibbling. He’d never tasted such sweet nectar. As she kissed him back just as passionately, he knew that he had chosen wisely. The fiery beauty in

his arms was definitely worthy of being his queen.

Four

In the bedchamber, Cadence felt shy once more. Lars had promised her time to heal, but she wasn't sure she wanted time. She had spent a lifetime not knowing the touch of a man, and now that she had gotten a small taste of passion, she wanted more.

Divested of his clothing, Lars made quick work of her toga dress and watched it slip to the floor, landing at her feet in a puddle of silk. Guiding her to the bed, he lay down and pulled her down beside him.

"Relax, Cadence. I merely want to hold you."

As she snuggled close to his side, boldness overtook her. "What if I want more than that?"

He was surprised at the question. "I don't want to hurt you."

"Aren't there ways to avoid that?"

Her innocent question made him desire her all the more. “You could ride me. It would give you complete control over what happens between us. But I would prefer that you wait until you’re healed.”

An image of her sitting astride him flashed through her mind making her blush. She wasn’t sure if she was capable of such a thing.

“Maybe I’ll wait,” she murmured softly and wrapped her arms around him. Closing her eyes, she drifted to sleep.

Cadence awoke to a cold bed and a dark room. The sheet was covering her body, and the fire was blazing in the fireplace. A cold chill settled in her bones and made her shiver. She started to sit up and froze. She wasn’t alone.

“Who’s there?” she called out, eyes straining to see in the dark.

“Who do you think you are?” a woman’s voice snapped from the corner of the room.

“Excuse me?” Cadence still fought to see who was in the room with her, but it was impossible.

“Who do you think you are? Lars is *mine*. I’m the one who has shared his bed for the past months. Me! Who are you to toss me out of his bed?”

Cadence knew immediately the jealous slave woman was in the room with her.

“I didn’t toss you from his bed. He bought me just like he bought you. I only do what he tells me to do.”

The woman gave a brittle laugh. “Hardly. In all the time I’ve warmed his bed, never has he asked me to dine with him at his table. Never has he walked with me as he did with you today. You’ve bewitched him!”

Cadence shook her head.

“Don’t deny it!”

“What do you want from me?”

The woman stepped close enough for Cadence to see the cruel smile on her face. “I want you to refuse him. I want you to disobey him and be removed from this room!”

“I... I can’t refuse him what he hasn’t asked of me.”

The smile slipped from the woman's mouth and she narrowed her eyes. "Do you mean to tell me he hasn't fucked you yet?"

Cadence knew her face was on fire from the woman's crude language. "No, he hasn't."

"And yet you're naked in his bed!"

"I was sleeping."

The woman stalked closer still and Cadence felt a tremor of fear run through her. Lars may have asked her to stay with him, but this woman had been with him longer. If something happened, which of them would he believe?

Cadence yelped when the woman grabbed her hair and hauled her out of the bed. She hadn't expected the woman to get physical with her.

Punishment be damned! Digging down deep, she found the fighter that still lurked within her, the woman who had survived against the odds, and shoved her elbow into the woman's stomach. When the grip on her hair relaxed, she turned and punched the woman in the face, grinning in satisfaction when the cruel excuse for a human fell to her knees.

The door behind them slammed open.
“What’s going on in here?”

Cadence spun with wide eyes to stare at Lars. “I I....”

“She assaulted me!” Veronica yelled. “I came to make peace and she hit me!”

Lars could see the bruise forming on Veronica’s face and the guilt written on Cadence’s. And yet, it didn’t seem like her to act violently. When the slave trader had attacked her with the whip, she had lain passively on the floor.

“Cadence, what happened?”

She bit her lip and looked at the floor.

Lars walked closer and lifted her chin with his hand, forcing her to look him in the eye.
“What happened?”

“I woke up and you were gone. The room was dark and cold. After a moment, I realized I wasn’t alone.”

At his nod of encouragement she continued,
“The slave woman from this morning was here.”

Lars ran his fingers through her hair and stopped when she winced. “What did she do, Cadence?”

“She pulled my hair.”

He raised an eyebrow, knowing there was more to the story.

“She forced me out of the bed. When she wouldn’t let go, something in me just snapped. She’s right. I did hit her.”

He fought to keep a straight face. So his kitten had claws. The idea entertained him immensely.

“I’m sorry it was cold and dark when you woke up.”

Lars pulled her close and hugged her, placing a kiss on top of her head. “Get back in the bed and I’ll return in a moment.”

Nodding, she did as he commanded, sliding between the sheets once more. She watched as he grabbed the other woman’s arm and dragged her from the room. If the glare she received was any indication, she would have to watch her back with the woman.

As she waited on Lars to return, she wondered what was taking him so long. Sitting up in the bed, she watched the door. When he finally returned, she smiled.

“I was starting to worry.”

He closed the door and walked to the bed, weary. “It took longer than I thought.”

The smile slipped from her face. “What did?”

He looked at her with serious eyes. “I had to punish her for harming you, for threatening you.”

Cadence shook her head. “Now she’ll be even angrier than before.”

“She won’t hurt you. I won’t allow it.”

“You can’t be with me all the time though. She came in here while you were gone. What’s to stop her from doing that again?”

He sighed. “For the moment, chains will. She’s chained up in the dungeon.”

Cadence gasped and pulled back.

“She’s not hurt, Cadence. Just locked away for the time being. Meals will be delivered to her and she has a cell to herself.”

“But...”

He shook his head. "I will not be swayed in this. She has to learn her place."

"Why can't her place be somewhere else?" Cadence grumbled under her breath.

"What was that?"

"Nothing."

Lars placed an arm on either side of her and leaned in close, forcing her backward. "What. Did. You. Say."

Cadence felt her heart begin to race. She had finally pushed him too far and now she would pay the price. Would she share a cell with the other woman?

"I... I...I said, why can't she be somewhere else," she whispered. She stared up at him with wide, frightened eyes. "Are you going to punish me now?"

His lips twitched. "You think you should be punished?"

She just stared at him, uncertain what to say.

"Cadence, why do you want her to be somewhere else?"

A blush crept across her cheeks. “If you plan on me staying in your bed and you’re going to be faithful to me, why do you still need the slave women?”

He smiled, his eyes twinkling. “Are you asking me to get rid of my slave women? All except you?”

She bit her lip. “It isn’t my place to suggest anything.”

He cupped her cheek with his hand. “Yes, it is, if you’ve accepted my offer.”

“Then... I’d like you to get rid of your other slave women.”

“How about I send one to the kitchens, one to take care of serving the people in the hall, and sell the others?”

“Will you make sure they aren’t sold to anyone cruel?” Briefly, she wondered if she could amend that to *not* include the troublesome woman who had wanted to harm her.

“I will. And I’ll make sure that Veronica is on the list of women to be sold and not kept.”

She gave him a warm smile. “You would really do all of that for me?”

“I would.”

Five

Cadence woke the next morning feeling happier than she had since before her abduction. Who would have thought that the most feared vampire in Shar could be so warm and caring? They hadn't done more than sleep in the same bed because of her wounds, but she was certain he wanted her. She had seen the proof with her own eyes.

She stretched and rolled out of the bed. Donning the toga dress Lars had provided for her, she hurried out of the door and down the stairs, hoping to find him. When her search of the hall proved unproductive, she looked at the dais in uncertainty. It was one thing to sit up there with Lars by her side, but another all together when she was by herself.

A hand descended on her shoulder and she turned, thinking Lars had found her. Instead, a half demon by the name of Niko leered down at her. Part Putale demon, his skin held a bluish tinge and his eyes were a deep sapphire. When he smiled, the blood in her veins froze.

“What do we have here?” Niko asked.

“I... I was looking for Lars.”

“It seems he’s left for the day. In case you weren’t aware, he doesn’t have to inform his slaves of where he’s going.”

Her face flamed in embarrassment; of course, he didn’t have to tell her when he left. She had been stupid to think he would have waited for her.

Niko pulled her roughly against his body; the pants he wore barely concealed his erection and Cadence felt nauseous. “We could pass the time while you wait for him to return.”

She twisted, hoping to break free from him. “No, please let me go.”

He advanced until she backed into the rough, cold, stone wall. “I don’t think I will. Not until you’ve pleased me.”

“No, I can’t...”

Niko gripped her by her hair and pulled her face close to his. “Oh, I think you can, and you will.”

Cadence closed her eyes, expecting the worse, when suddenly, she found herself free. Opening her eyes, she stared in amazement as Lars dangled Niko by his neck. His fangs bared, his eyes looking ferocious, Lars shook the half-demon as if he weighed no more than a piece of paper.

“What are you doing?” Lars growled through clenched teeth.

“She came down unescorted. I was only having some fun.”

“Unescorted or not, she isn’t for you, or for anyone else. She’s mine and mine alone, is that clear?”

Niko choked out his answer, “Understood.”

Immediately dropped on the floor, Lars stepped over the demon, as if he were an inconsequential piece of garbage.

Without a word, Lars lifted Cadence into his arms and carried her back up to his room. Once

inside, he kicked the door shut and laid her gently on the bed.

“Are you okay?”

She nodded her eyes still wide with fear. “I couldn’t stop him.”

Lars leaned over her, pressing her down into the bed. Gently, he caressed her jaw. “I know. I’m glad I arrived when I did.”

“He wanted me to... to... please him.”

Lars’ jaw tightened and the fierceness entered his eyes once more. “You won’t have to worry about him again.”

“But there will be other’s, won’t there?” she asked quietly.

He reluctantly nodded. “I had hoped that by seeing you on the dais with me, the others would understand that you belonged to me and only me. I’ll have to make a more public proclamation.”

“How are you going to do that?”

“There’s one definite way, but you won’t like it.”

She studied the harsh lines of his face and lifted her hand to cup his cheek. She wasn’t

sure who was more surprised, her or Lars. Slowly, she lifted her head and pressed her lips to his.

With a groan, he buried his hands in her hair and deepened their kiss, his tongue stroking against hers over and over as he delved into her mouth again and again, tasting, teasing, and tormenting. Shifting his body, he pressed a knee between her legs, parting her thighs. As his knee brushed against her pussy, she pressed closer to him.

Untying the shoulders of her toga dress, he bared her breasts, the nipples puckering in the cool air of his bedroom. He brushed his chest against the erect points, drawing a gasp from Cadence. He could feel the heat of her against his knee and he wanted to bury himself inside of her.

Lowering his head to her breasts, he suckled first one and then the other, chuckling as his sweet, fierce kitten clawed at his back. He rose from the bed and pushed the dress down over her hips, exposing her to his hungry gaze.

With nimble fingers, he unlaced his shirt and pulled it off. Next, he unfastened his pants, letting them pool on the floor at his feet.

He joined her on the bed, covering her body with his, their heat mingling along with their scents. She was aroused and it was making him crazy.

Parting her thighs, he reached between them and stroked her wet pussy with his long fingers, plunging one into her wet heat. He hissed in a breath at the tightness of her. Stroking her intimately, he watched as she writhed on the bed, meeting the thrust of his fingers.

“You like that, don’t you?”

She nodded, unable to put how she felt into words. The amazing sensations flooding her were unlike anything she’d experienced before. She gasped and arched against him as his fingers thrust into her again and again, creating wave after wave of pleasure.

“What is it you want?” he murmured.

“I... I... want...”

He plunged his fingers into her again. “What. Do. You. Want.”

“You,” she whispered. “I want you.”

Removing his hand from between her legs, he settled himself between her legs, his cock poised at her entrance. With one, long, powerful thrust, he entered her, and stopped in shock.

Cadence threw back her head and screamed at the searing pain she felt as he claimed her virginity. She’d known it would hurt, but she hadn’t been prepared.

Lars gathered her close and kissed her temple. “Why didn’t you tell me? If I had known, I could have been gentler.”

“I... I didn’t think it would hurt that much.”

“It wouldn’t have, but I was too forceful, too eager.”

Cadence shifted her hips a little as the pain eased. “It doesn’t hurt so much anymore.”

He stared into her eyes as he slid his cock out of her and then thrust back into her hot, wet pussy, watching as pleasure spread across her face. Knowing that he was no longer causing her pain, he thrust long and deep, driving both of them to the precipice, then tumbling over as they both climaxed.

“Damn,” Lars muttered. “I haven’t finished that quickly since I was a young boy.”

Cadence grinned. “I would say it was my sexual prowess, but we both know that would be a lie.”

He chuckled. “Maybe not your prowess, but your delectable little body certainly did.”

She sighed and wrapped herself around him. “That was better than I could have ever dreamed.”

Lars smiled and wrapped his arms around her. Drawing the sheet over them, he tucked her head under his chin. “Get some rest.”

She mumbled something, half asleep already, and snuggled closer. For once, she thought being a slave wasn’t so terribly bad.

Six

Once Cadence was asleep, Lars eased himself from her embrace and dressed. Quietly slipping from his chamber, he went downstairs to deal with Niko once and for all. While Lars hadn't lied about there being one certain way for him to claim her, there was another way to make sure everyone knew to keep away.

Reaching the great hall, he grabbed Niko by the scruff of his neck and hauled him up to the dais where everyone could see his punishment.

"This demon dared to lay his hands on that which is mine. His punishment shall be no less than twenty lashes and a one month confinement in the dungeon." Lars narrowed his eyes and studied his subjects. "Anyone who

dares to touch Cadence will suffer a similar fate.”

Tying Niko to a post, Lars grabbed the long leather whip he kept by his chair. As the whip whistled through the air, the crowd sucked in a breath. When the whip laid open the demon’s skin, the crowd roared with approval. Repeatedly the whip lashed Niko, leaving his blue skin streaked with blood. After twenty lashes, Lars untied him and tossed him to a vampire.

“See to it that he’s secured in the dungeon. And let this be a lesson to everyone.”

With a final glare, he coiled his whip and put it back beside his chair. Climbing down from the dais, he ran back up the stairs and hurried back to his chamber, not wanting to be away from Cadence any longer than necessary.

He slipped back into the room quietly and dropped his clothes on the floor. Pulling back the sheet, he slid into the bed beside her and pulled her close. With a smile, he closed his eyes. Peace swept over him for the first time

since he had become a vampire, and he realized with startling clarity that he loved her.

Releasing his other sex slaves suddenly wasn't enough. He needed to do something more, something to prove to her that she was more to him than something he had purchased. He knew if he confessed his love to her, she would scoff at him.

As he lay with her in his arms, he decided he would have to lay the foundation for their relationship one brick at a time. He would start by buying her a grand wardrobe, something befitting of a queen. Then he would find out what she wanted most and he would do his damndest to give it to her; as long as it existed within the land of Shar, he would make sure she had it.

With a smile, he breathed in her scent and allowed himself to drift into a dreamless sleep.

Cadence slowly woke, and found herself snuggled in Lars' embrace. She smiled and traced his face with her fingertips, studying the

angles and planes. Gently, she pressed her lips to his.

“Mmm, definitely my best morning yet,” he murmured against her lips.

Pulling back, she smiled at him. “I didn’t intend to wake you, but I couldn’t resist.”

He winked at her. “Good to know I’m irresistible.”

He surprised her with his playfulness.

“Do you mind if I stay in your room today?” she asked.

He raised an eyebrow. “Any particular reason why you want to?”

She blushed when she realized the double meaning in her words. “I would just prefer a quiet day, if that’s okay.”

He frowned at her a moment. “Cadence, does this have to do with the incident yesterday?”

“Maybe.”

“You don’t have to worry about that happening again. I told you I would take care of the issue and I did.”

She sighed and rolled over, presenting him with her back.

Lars gently put his arms around her and pulled her close. "What's wrong?"

"You can't be there to save me all the time. What if it happens again?"

"It won't."

"You can't promise that. When you're not around, someone is bound to think I'm fair game. I've seen them with your other slaves."

His arms tightened around her.

"I've seen your subjects, watched as they..."

"Shh, stop. That won't happen to you." He kissed the back of her neck, wanting to reassure her.

"I wish I could be as sure of that as you are, but I can't. I can't forget what I am."

Turning her to face him, Lars gently kissed her. Perhaps if she knew that she meant something to him, perhaps then she would realize he meant to keep her safe.

"Not long ago there was a slave woman I thought to claim. A fallen angel bought her before I could and I was furious. I snuck into his home one day and stole her, bringing her to my chamber."

“I had seen the special relationship they had and I was envious of them. I thought if I brought her here and forced her to be with me, then she would feel that way about me too.”

“Instead, she told me she hated me and that she would die before she would lie with me. Her fallen angel came and saved her from me.”

He caressed her cheek.

“It made me realize something. It wasn’t the woman I wanted, but the relationship she had with Adam. I decided at that moment that I would do whatever it took to find a relationship like that, to find someone special.”

“Why are you telling me this?” She was a slave and knew she could never hold that place in his life, so why tell her the story?

“Because I think you could be that woman.”

She shook her head. “I’m just a slave.”

“You’re more than that. If you were just another slave, I would have taken you that first night despite your wounds. Then I would have allowed Niko to have you, or any other demon who wanted you.”

Cadence didn't know what to think or what to feel. She hadn't expected Lars to care for her, but she had hoped he could. Was it possible that her wish had come true?

"Lars, make love to me."

He smiled and lowered his head to her, softly moving his lips over hers, letting his tongue taste her. Pushing the covers aside, he rolled her to her back. His lips trailed down over her neck, across her collarbone and down to her breasts. Suckling first one and then the other, his hand dipped between her legs. He grinned when he discovered she was already slick with need and found her swollen clit. Flicking it with his thumb, he made love to her breasts with his mouth, gently grazing her with his teeth.

Lars leaned up and gave her a wicked grin before sliding further down the bed. Pushing her legs wide apart, he settled himself between her legs, using his shoulders to brace her thighs apart. He swiped his tongue against her clit, tasting her.

"Oh, oh my," she gasped, trying to wiggle closer to him.

He chuckled and repeated the action. Using his thumbs to hold the lips of her pussy open, his tongue thrust inside of her before returning to her clit. He teased and tormented, bringing her close to release, only to retreat and start over.

In days past, he would have had two or three women in his bed. Now, Cadence was enough to fulfill his desire. As he drove her to the brink again and again, he knew he was close to losing control.

Lifting himself, he flipped her over and lay on top of her, his chest against her back. With one long, powerful thrust, he entered her. As he pounded into her over and over, she lifted her hips and pushed back against him, wanting more. When he felt her pussy spasm around his cock, he gripped her hips and thrust in as fast and hard as he could, pressing into her to the hilt, and spilled his seed inside of her.

Not wanting to retreat from her body yet, he rolled to his back, pulling her with him.

As she lay sprawled across the top of him, looking up at the ceiling, she giggled. “Well, that was interesting.”

His hands reached up to caress her breasts. He pinched and rolled her nipples, drawing a gasp from her. As her pussy grew hot and wet with need, he felt his cock hardening in response.

With a grin, he realized they were going to spend the day in bed, and he could think of nothing better.

Seven

Cadence woke the next morning to find a new dress draped across the bed. An off the shoulder design, the skirt was long and full. It was something she had seen the fine ladies wearing and it brought tears to her eyes. Lars may not have freed her, but he was treating her as if he had.

Slipping the garment on, she brushed out her hair and pulled it back with a matching ribbon she found on the dresser. A pair of soft leather shoes sat beside the bed and she slipped her feet into the luxurious pair, feeling as if she had just landed in a fairy tale.

She grinned. Her prince charming was a feared vampire, but as long as he cared about her, that was all that mattered.

With trepidation, she stepped into the hall and slowly walked down the stairs. Terrified there would be a repeat performance with another demon, she watched the people in the room. When she realized they were all staring at the dais in fascination, she looked and gasped at what she saw.

Naked and bound to a column, Veronica showed signs of being whipped. Lars sat on his throne ignoring her as she cried and begged him to release her. Several demon men in the crowd were calling out, hoping to fuck her.

Cadence trembled and slowly climbed the stairs to the dais. She stopped in front of Lars, not sure how to act. This was the feared vampire, the leader of the people of Shar. She knew Lars the gentle lover, but this Lars... this Lars she knew nothing about. He seemed hard and cold and that frightened her more than anything.

“What are you doing?” she asked softly.

“Making sure no one harms you again.”

She glanced at Veronica and winced. “I know you want to protect me, but ...”

He narrowed his eyes. “Don’t undermine my authority. She needed to be punished. This is mild compared to what could have happened.”

Cadence blanched at the rebuke and turned to walk away. His hand snaked out and grabbed her, hauling her into his lap.

“Do you like your new outfit?”

She nodded. “Very much. I was excited to come and show you how I looked.”

He sighed. “I’m sorry you had to see this, but it was the only way she would leave you alone, the only way to get my point across without hurting you.”

“Hurting me?”

His arms tightened around her. “The only other way to publicly claim you would be to fuck you up here in front of everyone.”

Her eyes went wide and she stared at him in shock and horror.

“I didn’t want anyone else to see you, didn’t want to humiliate you.” He caressed her cheek and kissed her. “I’ve come to care about you and I couldn’t do that to you.”

Despite her revulsion over his treatment of Veronica, she couldn't deny that she had feelings for him. While she didn't approve, she knew she had no say in the matter. If she could have given her heart to someone else, she might have – then again, things may have ended the same way.

“I care about you too,” she said softly.

“I spoke to the other slave women this morning and gave them a choice. Some chose to work in the kitchens and as maids, while others offered to entertain the males in the castle.”

Cadence couldn't imagine choosing a life of prostitution, but she was glad that he had given them a choice. Even better, he had made sure they wouldn't be returning to his bed. That alone told her that he truly did care for her.

“Thank you for that.”

He smiled, showing a bit of fang in the process. “Hungry?”

She paused. “Speaking of hungry, I've never seen you feed.” She lifted her eyes to his, asking a silent question.

Lars tensed. He would have preferred her not to ask that particular question, but now that she had...

“Normally I feed from my lovers, but I didn’t want to subject you to that. So I’ve been feeding from the slaves.”

Cadence bit her lip and looked at him from under her lashes. “Does it hurt when you feed?”

His hand caressed her waist. “If done at the right time, I’ve been told it’s quite pleasurable.”

“Could we... I mean, would you try feeding from me?”

“Are you sure?” he asked softly, wanting desperately to take her up on the offer. He had wanted to sink his fangs into her neck each time they had made love, but he had refrained.

“I’m sure.”

Lifting her into his arms, he carried her down the steps to the main floor and back up to his room. He kicked the door shut with a booted foot and tumbled her onto the bed. Quickly opening his pants, his cock sprang free. With a tug, he pulled Cadence closer, bunching her

dress around her waist, exposing her to his hungry gaze.

Reaching for the top of her dress, he tugged it down, freeing her breasts, the nipples puckering in the cool air. With a groan, he plunged into her wet, hot pussy and pulled her close. Her breasts pressed against him, he began to thrust into her hard and fast. When he felt her body loosen and become pliant, he leaned his head down and kissed her neck.

“If you’re going to change your mind, now is the time,” he whispered in her ear.

“No, I want this,” she gasped as pleasure spiraled through her.

While she climaxed, Lars sank his fangs into her sweet, soft neck. Her blood tasted like nectar, sliding over his tongue in a thick, hot rush. Drinking just enough to sustain him, he pulled back and licked the wound.

He could feel the pressure building within her again and knew she was going to have another orgasm. Laying her back on the bed, he cupped her breasts with his hands, his thumbs circling her nipples. He fucked her harder and

faster, reveling in every gasp and whimper of pleasure that escaped her lips.

As Cadence found her release, her pussy convulsing around his hard cock, he plunged into her and let himself go, surrendering to his desire.

Panting for breath, Cadence lay on the bed, eyes half-closed. A satisfied smile curved her sweet lips and she wrapped her legs around his waist, holding him captive.

“I think I like it when you feed from me.”

Lars chuckled, pleased that she hadn't been repulsed by the act. If it had, he would have continued to feed from the slaves, but feeding from Cadence was so much sweeter. For as long as she belonged to him, she would be his only source for pleasure and nourishment.

Eight

Sated, Cadence finally released Lars and sat up. Pulling her dress back into place, she gave him a sultry smile, eyes still glazed with passion.

“If that’s what I’ve been missing, then I insist you feed only from me in the future.”

The moment the words left her mouth, she wished she could recall them. What if he didn’t take her demands well? Regardless of how she felt, she had to remember that first and foremost she was a slave.

Sensing the immediate change in her, Lars brushed her hair back from her forehead, her ribbon having come undone during their frantic lovemaking. And he’d come to realize that was precisely what it was – making love, for he loved her as he had never loved anyone before. Until Cadence, he hadn’t realized he was capable of any emotion, let alone love. He had wanted to *be* loved, but had never thought to feel the emotion himself.

“What’s wrong, sweetheart?”

She peered up at him, surprised and pleased by the endearment. "I didn't mean that to sound like an order. I would never order you around."

He studied her a moment and then sat beside her. Gathering her in his arms, he pressed a kiss to the top of her head.

"Cadence, are you worried that you're going to do something wrong? That I'll have to punish you as I did Veronica?"

"Yes," she answered, her response muffled by his shirt.

"Haven't you realized yet that you're different, special?"

She shook her head. "No, I'm not. I'm just a slave like the others."

He chuckled. "You're nothing like the others. From the moment I saw you, I knew that you were different." He stroked her back. "When I saw the slave trader beating you, I was enraged. It took everything in me not to rip him to pieces. And then you looked at me with those large, sweet eyes and I knew that I had to have you."

"I'm sure you felt the same about the others," she mumbled.

He shook his head. "Nothing they have done, or that has been done to them, has ever made me as angry as I was that day. I was drawn to you before I even met you. The moment I saw you, I knew you would change my life for the better."

“What are you trying to say, Lars?” she asked, finally lifting her head to look at him.

He swallowed and drank in her beauty. “I’m saying that I’ve never felt anything but lust for a slave, or any woman, before now. But with you... with you it’s different, *I’m* different.”

“You really meant it when you said you cared about me?”

He grinned. “I’m afraid it might be more complicated than that.”

Her brow furrowed in confusion.

“I’m afraid... that I’m in love with you.”

Surprise and pleasure flared in her eyes, and a warm smile lit up her face. She put her arms around him, hugging him tight, before pressing her lips against his. When she pulled back, she caressed his cheek.

“I love you too,” she admitted tenderly.

Lars smiled a full smile, both fangs showing completely before he stood with her in his arms, turning her around.

She squealed in delight, feeling safe and happy. Nothing mattered as long as he loved her, she could survive anything with that knowledge in her heart.

“Cadence.”

With smiling eyes, she looked up at him.

“I want to free you.”

“Lars, you don’t have to...”

He shushed her. “Yes, I do. I can’t very well make you my wife if you’re still a slave.”

Her heart beat rapidly within her chest and her breath caught in her throat. Tears glistened in her eyes. “You want to marry me?”

He nodded. “I can’t think of anything I want more than to have you by my side, as my wife, for the rest of eternity.”

Pulling his head down for a kiss, Cadence felt as if she were soaring. Had anyone told her she would find love in the most unlikely of places, she would have scoffed at them. But she had managed to find love in Shar, a land of demons and rejects, with a vampire no less.

Easing her back down on the bed, Lars began undressing her slowly. He paused and looked into her eyes.

“Was that a yes?”

She grinned. “Yes, my lord Vampire. Yes, I’ll marry you.”

Lars smiled as he undressed and joined her on the bed, anxious to make love to the most beautiful, perfect woman he had ever seen – his Cadence, his redemption.

The Fallen Angel's Faith

A Tale of Shar (3)

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Written by Jessica Coulter Smith

COMING SOON

One

Luke sat in the local tavern nursing a mug of ale. It had been months since Adam had found his perfect match and fallen in love, months since the two fallen angels had shared a willing woman. While he hadn't been celibate during that time, it just hadn't been the same. He didn't understand how Adam could have fallen in love with a mortal woman and decided to be faithful to her.

Rising to his feet, he rolled his neck, stretching his tense muscles. He may have found his release in many a barmaid over the past few months, but he still felt wound tight. Even two women at once hadn't been enough to ease his tension.

Luke tossed some money on the table and walked out into the sunlight. Stretching his wings, he lifted into the air. Perhaps it was time to return to the castle for a diversion. He had heard that Lars had found a queen and was a

much-changed man, still firm but not quite as ruthless. If nothing else, he wanted to see the vampire lord and his new bride.

With a gentle thud, he landed outside of the large stone structure and walked through the large wooden doors. The hall was noisy as always, demons haggling over slaves, wenches serving ale. All in all, it seemed the same as before, except that Lars had a beautiful female by his side on the dais.

Making his way through the crowd, he approached the vampire lord, king over the land of Shar. He smiled when he stood at the foot of the dais.

“So I see it’s true, you have a new bride.”

Lars narrowed his eyes on the fallen angel. “Nice to see you again, Luke. I hope you don’t plan on doing more than looking upon my wife.”

Luke chuckled. “No. Far be it for me to seduce an unwilling woman when there are so many who will fall into my bed easily enough.”

Lars smiled. “True enough. So what brings you to the castle today? I haven’t seen you since Adam left here with Alyson.”

He shrugged. "I thought I'd come see the new queen for myself, and see if anything had changed around here." He glanced at the bustling hall. "I see that it hasn't."

"Are you sure that's the only reason you came?"

Luke looked at him quizzically.

"Your best friend found a mate in one of the slaves, and my own queen was one. Are you sure you didn't come to see if women appealed to you?"

Luke laughed, throwing his head back.

"As if I need the hassle of having a woman depend on me, or expecting me to be faithful."

Lars snorted. "I doubt a slave would expect that."

With a pointed look from his wife, he grinned. "Well, they might *want* it, but only if they actually care about you," he amended.

Before Luke could respond, a commotion began in the back corner of the hall. He heard Lars swear and the vampire landed on his feet next to Luke.

“I knew this would happen,” the vampire muttered.”

“Knew what would happen?”

Lars tipped his head toward the corner. “Insobar brought in a new slave two days ago. Every demon in the castle has been trying to buy her, but so far he’s held out. Looks like someone isn’t going to take no for an answer this time.”

Luke lifted a brow. “Why didn’t he just sell her?”

“Said he wanted to auction her off later in the week.” Lars looked over his shoulder at his frowning wife. “Cadence would like for me to abolish slavery in Shar, but you know if it weren’t legal, the demons would find a way to sell them anyway. At least this way I can keep an eye on things.”

Luke nodded and looked toward the corner again. “So what’s the plan?”

Lars ran a hand through his long, blond hair. “I’m going to have to rescue her I guess. Cadence is *not* going to like this. I promised I’d never buy another slave.”

Luke was surprised, but held his tongue. With long, purposeful strides, he began making his way through the crowd. When he reached the slave trader, he stopped in surprise. A petite redhead, as small as a pixie, cowered against the wall. Her cornflower blue eyes were wide with fear and she was trembling from head to toe. Her slave garment was ripped, exposing the top of her creamy breasts.

He swallowed the knot forming in his throat and without thinking, reached for the young woman. Her frightened gaze flew to his face as his fingers brushed against her soft skin.

“It’s okay. I won’t hurt you,” he said in a soothing voice. Holding out his hand, he waited, hoping she would take it.

When she placed her small hand in his, he gently closed his fingers around hers. Pulling her close, he wrapped his wings around her, shielding her from the demons.

He heard a gasp and looked down into her stunned face.

“You’re an angel?” she asked in wonder.

He shook his head. “Not anymore.”

“But... your wings...”

“Are black. I fell from heaven and am now doomed to live in Shar, much like you are.”

When the demon Niko came a little too close for comfort, he felt her shrink against him. Luke held her close and spoke in a loud, clear voice.

“Enough! Back away now.”

The demons stopped arguing and shoving one another to look at him in surprise. Their eyes flicked to a place over his shoulder and he knew Lars had made it to his side. One by one, they backed away, but never took their eyes off the slave woman.

“This one is mine,” Luke heard himself say, instantly wondering what had made him utter the words. He’d never wanted a slave, and now he’d committed himself to buying one.

A look at Lars showed the vampire was grinning from ear to ear and Luke mumbled a curse under his breath, sure the vampire had engineered the whole thing somehow.

“Ten thousand marks,” the slave trader stated, and Luke stared at the man in shock.

Before he could react, Lars handed over the money without a word. Walking beside Luke, he herded them back to the dais and Cadence.

“Why did you do that?” Luke asked.

“Because you saved me from having to answer to my wife later.”

Luke snorted, but followed Lars up the steps. He gave a short bow to the queen and looked down at the frightened woman in his arms.

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“Faith.”

The vampire threw his head back and roared with laughter.

“What’s so funny?” Luke demanded.

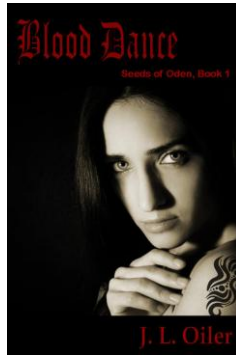
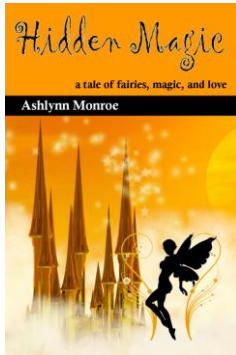
“An angel just bought a woman named Faith, and you don’t find that funny?”

With a groan, Luke closed his eyes. He would never hear the end of this and he knew it.

About the Author

Jessica Coulter Smith makes her home in Tennessee, where she spends her time writing romance and erotic romance stories. Recently, she has branched out into the Young Adult romance genre under the author name Jessie Colter. She welcomes fan mail addressed to JessicaCoulterSmith@yahoo.com and promises to respond, even if it takes a week or two.

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