

Blood Possession



by Tessa Dawn

A Blood Curse Novel

Book Three

In the Blood Curse Series

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The Blood Curse

In 800 BC, Prince Jadon and Prince Jaegar Demir were banished from their Romanian homeland after being cursed by a ghostly apparition: *the reincarnated Blood of their numerous female victims*. The princes belonged to an ancient society that had sacrificed its females to the point of extinction, and the punishment was severe.

They were forced to roam the earth in darkness as creatures of the night. They were condemned to feed on the blood of the innocent and stripped of their ability to produce female offspring. They were damned to father twin sons by human hosts who would die wretchedly upon giving birth; and the firstborn of the first set would forever be required as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of their forefathers.

Staggered by the enormity of *The Curse*, Prince Jadon, whose own hands had never shed blood, begged his accuser for leniency and received *four small mercies*—four exceptions to the curse that would apply to his house and his descendants, alone.

Ψ Though still creatures of the night, they would be allowed to walk in the sun.

Ψ Though still required to live on blood, they would not be forced to take the lives of the innocent.

Ψ While still incapable of producing female offspring, they would be given *one opportunity and thirty days* to obtain a mate—a human female chosen by the gods—following a sign that appeared in the heavens.

Ψ While they were still required to sacrifice a firstborn son, their twins would be born as one child of darkness and one child of light, allowing them to sacrifice the former while keeping the latter to carry on their race.

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And so...forever banished from their homeland in the Transylvanian mountains of Eastern Europe, the descendants of Jaegar and the descendants of Jadon became the Vampyr of legend: roaming the earth, ruling the elements, living on the blood of others...forever bound by an ancient curse. They were brothers of the same species, separated only by degrees of light and shadow.

Prologue

800 BC

“Napolean, run!”

The ten-year-old child stumbled backward, his eyes wide with fright. His father’s commanding voice shook him to his core.

“Run, son, go quickly!”

“No, Father. I don’t want to leave you! Father, please—”

“Go now!” Sebastian Mondragon clutched his stomach and fell to the ground. His hands and fingers curled into two twisted balls, and his body contorted in an agonizing spasm. The transformation had begun. Writhing in pain, the once fearless warrior panted the warning a third time. “Napolean...son...please, run! Hide!”

Napolean heard his father’s words as if from a distance. He wanted to flee, but he was frozen in place. Mesmerized by the horror that surrounded him, he swallowed hard and simply watched as the thick, inky fog swirled around his father’s writhing body. Long, skeletal fingers with hooked claws and knobby knuckles clutched at his father’s throat, raked deep gashes along his chest, and dug mercilessly toward his innards. Blood seeped from Sebastian’s mouth as, inexplicably, his canine teeth began to grow, assuming the shape of—

Fangs.

But it was his father’s unrelenting cries of agony that finally forced Napolean’s retreat.

Napolean ran like he had never run before, his little heart beating furiously in his chest, the need for air burning his lungs. He weaved through the morbid courtyard, dodging fallen bodies and claspng his hands to his ears to block out the endless wails.

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All around him, males fell to the ground, cursed, and moaned. Some died immediately from the shock...or pain. Others drew their swords from their scabbards and took their own lives. Still others succumbed to the brutal torture, helpless as the darkness embodied them.

They were being punished.

Changed.

Transformed into an aberration of nature by the ghostly spirits of their victims.

The Blood Curse was upon them.

Napolean focused his eyes straight ahead, never losing sight of his destination: the imperial castle, a would-be fortress. He and his friends had hidden there so many times in the past, playing hide-and-seek, avoiding angry parents, hoping to catch a glimpse of a member of the royal family. Napolean knew the grounds like the back of his hands, and so he pressed on, desperate yet determined to get there, resigned to hide as his father had bid him.

At last, he arrived at the familiar gray castle gate.

He scurried into a small hole beneath the fortified wall and drew himself into a tight little ball. He tried to become invisible. Although he could no longer see the carnage in the village, the haunting cries continued to batter his ears like thunder against a stormy sky.

Napolean shook, remembering the moment Prince Jadon had emerged from the castle, his dark onyx eyes glazed with fear. He had gathered his loyalists to his side to explain the pronouncement—their punishment—what was soon to become a new way of life.

With so little time to prepare his men, Jadon had tried the best he could. Napolean had understood none of it, save one thing: The followers of Jadon needed to pledge their loyalty to the twin monarch as quickly as possible, before the transformation began, or they would meet a much worse fate.

Though Napolean's father had served for years in the royal one's secret guard, fighting to defeat the ever growing armies of

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Prince Jaegar, Napoleon had been too young to join. Consequently, it had been imperative that he formally align himself with the right twin—for those who followed Jaegar were to receive no mercy.

And so, like all of the others, Napoleon had knelt to kiss Prince Jadon's ring—recited the sacred pledge of loyalty before it was too late—and braced himself against what was to come...

Napoleon shivered, bringing his attention back to the present moment.

He wanted to be brave, but fearful tears stung his eyes.

Then all at once, he heard cruel, disembodied laughter, the sound coming closer and closer, assaulting his ears.

"No. No. No," he whimpered, drawing further into the hollow cavity for protection, quivering so hard his bones rattled in his skin.

The fog swirled into a miniature cyclone, rose up from the ground, and dipped low as if it had eyes that could see...

Him.

Hiding.

"You think to escape, child?" the ghostly aberration hissed, laughter ricocheting through the small cavity. Flames exploded from the center of the darkness. "Die, little one! And be reborn the monster that you are!"

Napoleon screamed so loud the sound became a cosmic explosion in his ears, yet the fog kept coming. It wrapped itself around his meager body, entered his mouth, and descended into his chest.

And then the pain began.

The excruciating, unrelenting, unbearable pain.

Acid flowed freely through his veins. Fire consumed his internal organs. Bones reshaped. Cells exploded. His entire composition changed, transformed...died.

He heard his own shouting as if it belonged to someone else, someone wretched and pitiable. He clawed at his skin, hoping to tear it from his body. He bit through his hand and pounded the

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ground. He writhed, thrashed, and tried to crawl away, but nothing stopped the assault.

Dear Celestial Gods!

He prayed for death, but it wouldn't come.

How much time had passed before the agony subsided, he had no idea. Had it been minutes? Hours? Perhaps days? It could have been a lifetime for all he'd endured before it had ceased...and the craving had begun.

A gnawing, all-consuming, primal thirst.

For blood.

It was the craving that had brought him out of the hole, crawling along the ground like an animal, stumbling through the darkness, searching for his father.

Now, as bitter tears stung his eyes, he absently wiped them away, only to find smears of blood on his hand.

Great goddess Andromeda, what had he become?

Finally reaching the village square, he staggered to a halt beside an aged stone well. As his vision adjusted to the darkness, he caught a shadow out of the corner of his eye: No, it couldn't be.

Please gods, no!

The grisly scene unfolded in slow motion as Jaegar Demir, the evil prince, hunkered over his father's body. The prince's eyes were wild with insanity as he bent to Sebastian's throat, tore into the flesh—as if it were mere parchment—and drank his fill of...blood. Napoleon could neither move nor turn away as the macabre scene unfolded before him. As the evil prince drained his father's already gored and tattered body of life.

And then...

Horried, trembling, and defeated, Napoleon watched like a coward as Prince Jaegar withdrew his sword and took his father's head.

When at last the terror released him, he fisted his hands and howled at the heavens.

"Nooooooooo!"

He shouted until his throat bled: "Father! Father! Father!"

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Father...



Buzzzzzz.

Napolean Mondragon hit the button on the alarm clock hard. He sat up and wiped the sweat from his brow. *Great gods, not again.* He swung his feet over the edge of the large canopy bed and rested his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands.

This was the third time this week he'd had the nightmare.

As the sovereign lord of the house of Jadon, the only remaining male living from the time of the Blood Curse, the memories occasionally plagued his sleep, but never this often. *Hades*, the nightmares must have been provoked by the sight of the male he had seen in the shadows just a few weeks back: the one who, impossibly, looked just like his murdered father.

The father who had been dead for twenty-eight hundred years.

Napolean rubbed his eyes and wrinkled his brow. *Gods*, he could use the sweet affection of the princess right now—the touch of her gentle hand, the gaze of her compassionate eyes, the warmth of her soft lips against his.

“Ah hell, Napolean. Why torture yourself?” He wrung his hands together and shook his head. Vanya Demir had been a bright light in an otherwise dark, unending life. Her presence in the mansion had brought song and laughter and joy to a heart that had known nothing but duty and solitude for twenty-eight hundred years. The attraction between them had been magnetic, undeniable. She had become the best reason he'd had for rising in the morning in centuries.

And that was part of why she had left.

That, and the invitation she had received to go live with Marquis, her sister, and their newborn baby. Family was everything to Vanya, and she was not about to pass up the chance to help raise her nephew...or to be with her sister. In addition,

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Napolean had begun to mean far too much to the female, and she had been afraid that she might fall in love with a male she couldn't have—a male who was destined to only one woman in an eternal lifetime.

A woman who wasn't her.

Vanya was not Napolean's true *destiny*, and she had lost too much in her life already to risk losing once again.

Napolean shrugged, forcing his thoughts elsewhere. What difference did it make why Vanya had left?

She was gone.

She wasn't coming back.

And that was that.

Rising from the bed, he headed toward the shower and turned on the water. No, he would not obsess over the princess again. He had far too many pressing concerns with the recent discovery of the Dark Ones' colony. With the recent string of dead—no, *murdered and drained*—human bodies showing up all over the place in Dark Moon Vale.

And hell and brimstone, if that damnable nightmare was not beginning to unnerve him. Why now, after all these years, would his memories come back to haunt him so? Would he never be free of the guilt? Would he always feel ashamed of the day his father died?

And just who was that male he had seen in the shadows?

one

Brooke Adams smoothed her pencil skirt, flipped a wayward lock of ebony hair out of her eyes, and turned back to her PowerPoint presentation. It was Friday morning, the last day of the weeklong sales conference, and this was her moment to shine.

Her eyes scanned the audience.

Good. Tom Halloway seemed visibly impressed, and he was the one she needed: the CEO of PRIMAR, *Professional Image & Marketing, International*. Jim Davis, on the other hand, was noticeably confused, but what was new? He was in way over his head in the department anyhow, and there was no way to explain such a complex—and if she dare say so herself, *brilliant*—marketing strategy to the likes of *Jimbo*, a name he had chosen for himself. And Lewis, well, Lewis was...distracted. His beady eyes bounced back and forth between the large, drop-down screen and Brooke's breasts like an out-of-control yoyo—up, down, drool; down, up, drool; drool, stare, drool...

Annoyed the heck out of her, really. But the presentation was far too important to interrupt now. She had put too much time and energy into this moment. She didn't dare break her rhythm to chastise Lewis-hit-on-everything-with-legs-Martin. Not today. Unless, of course, he raised his hand.

Which he just did.

Seriously?

Raised his hand?

What was this, kindergarten?

"Yes, Lewis?" She put on her best professional smile.

His beady eyes narrowed, and he licked his lips. Probably had some drool to catch. "Could you unbutton your blouse?"

Brooke gasped. "Excuse me?" Her eyes darted around the room, waiting, as she fully expected one of her male colleagues to

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come to her rescue, snatch Lewis up by the collar, and escort him out of the meeting—that's if Halloway didn't fire him right on the spot first.

No one moved.

In fact, no one seemed even the least bit offended by Lewis's request. *What in the world?* She swallowed a lump in her throat. Apparently, it was up to her. Squaring her chin, she gave Lewis her best I'm-gonna-mop-the-floor-with-you sneer and nearly snarled. "I beg your pardon, you little jackass, imbecile, son-of-a—"

And that's when her alarm had gone off, mercifully ending the nightmare.

For the love of Pete, this presentation was going to be the death of her.

Brooke wrapped the soft, Egyptian-cotton towel around her head and swallowed an aspirin: Such strange dreams always gave her headaches. Or maybe it was just the anticipation of the actual presentation. She glanced at the bright blue numbers on the digital clock. In less than one hour, she would be standing in that hotel conference room, all eyes focused on her, as the annual event came to a close, pitching the largest marketing proposal she had ever dared to envision to the entire PR department, head honchos included. And Tom Halloway, the company's CEO, would be sitting right there in the front row.

Good Lord, what if Lewis really did ask her to unbutton her blouse? How would she handle such an unexpected hiccup?

Yeah, right. Get it together, Brooke.

She reached for her cell phone and punched in the number of the most reasonable person she knew, her favorite coworker and trusted confidante—who also happened to be her best friend for the last ten years—Tiffany Matthews.

Tiffany picked up on the second ring. "Hey. What's up, Brooke."

"I think I'm completely losing it, Tiff. I had a dream that I was in the middle of the presentation when Lewis asked me to unbutton my blouse."

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Tiffany's laughter echoed through the phone. "Sounds about like Lewis."

Brooke frowned and peeked out the hotel curtains to check the weather: cool but clear. A perfect day for her presentation. "Tiff, it's not funny. I swear, I think I'm caving under the pressure."

"You're not caving, Brooke. And you're not going to cave." She sounded amused.

Brooke bit her lower lip, a nervous habit that just reinforced her point. "How do you know?"

Tiffany sighed. "Because you're the best presenter we have, and other than some insane, repressed paranoia you tend to harbor, you never bomb on anything. *Miss perfect?* Are you kidding? Halloway is gonna love your idea, and hey—if for some reason, he doesn't, your dream already told you what to do."

"Huh?" she asked, confused.

"Unbutton your blouse!"

Brooke couldn't help but laugh. "Yeah, that would be great. Halloway could fire me, and then he could ask me out on a date."

Tiffany snickered. "True. True. Maybe not the best idea." She paused then. "Brooke?"

"What?"

Tiffany's voice was all at once serious. "Girl, tell me you are dressed and out of bed...please."

Brooke rubbed the towel over her thick, shoulder-length hair to speed up the drying process and stared at the ruffled hotel sheets beneath her.

"Brooke?"

"What?"

"Brooke!"

"I'm out of bed."

"Oh hell, Brooke; you aren't, are you?"

Brooke sighed. "Okay, okay, so maybe I climbed back in bed, but I've already showered and washed my hair...and I'm getting back up...right now."

"Brooke! I swear—"

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“I’m up! *I’m up!*”

“I’m coming over,” Tiffany said.

“No, you’re not.” This time Brooke spoke with authority.

“What’s the room number again?” Tiffany asked, her voice heavy with insistence.

“Tiff, don’t. I’m twenty-nine years old! I think I can dress myself by now.”

“*Room number?*” Tiffany’s tone brooked no argument.

Brooke absently glanced at the plastic key-card on her nightstand: *Dark Moon Lodge, room 425*. She rolled her eyes.

“How many times have you been to my hotel room, Tiff?”

“Don’t get smart with me, Missy,” Tiffany warned.

“Fine,” Brook said. “Four—two—five.”

“Be there in ten.”

Brooke laughed. “Make it fifteen and bring me a doughnut? I need some sugar.” She put an extra ounce of pleading in her voice.

Tiffany huffed her annoyance. “Now just where am I supposed to find a doughnut shop in Dark Moon Vale? Have you actually seen one since we’ve been here?”

“No,” Brook admitted, feeling the promise of a nice, sugary-sweet pastry rapidly slipping away. “But I’m sure they have a bakery somewhere. If not, maybe try a local coffee shop or the grocery store. *Please?*”

“Oh, good grief,” Tiffany grumbled. “The conference starts in forty-five minutes, you’re not even dressed, and your top priority is finding a doughnut!”

Brooke stifled a laugh. “Think of it this way,” she said, ignoring the anxiety-producing reference to time, “maybe you’ll get lucky and there’ll be a specialty souvenir-slash-pastry shop right next to the lodge, fully staffed with big, handsome mountain men.” She groaned. “Big, *naked* mountain men with huge...axes.”

Tiffany sniggered. “Yeah, that’s going to happen.” She sighed, ruefully. “With my luck, it’ll be fully staffed with toothless, mutated psychopaths, all recently transplanted from *The Hills Have Eyes*.”

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Brooke couldn't really argue: Tiffany's luck with men was just that bad. "Just get me a fresh chocolate éclair if you find one, 'kay? Pretty please with a cherry on top?"

"Maybe," Tiffany teased, trying to sound maternal. "In the meantime, you just get dressed and concentrate on your presentation. Think about what you're going to do with all that bonus money when Halloway falls in love with your proposal and offers you the director of marketing position."

Brooke smiled. Now *that* would be the perfect outcome. Not that the idea of hot, naked mountain men serving pastries—with big axes—didn't also rank pretty high on the list. "Oh, and Tiff?"

"Yeah?"

"Bring your black stilettos in case my navy pumps don't work with my skirt."

Tiffany giggled on the other end.

"What?" Brooke asked, failing to get what was so funny.

"You have an IQ over 140, yet you still rely on sexy legs to give yourself an edge."

"Hey, Mama didn't raise any fools, right?" The moment the words left Brooke's tongue, she regretted speaking them. Not only were they untrue—Mama hadn't cared enough to raise anyone—but her *mother* was a subject better left alone. And thoughts of the heartless woman were not about to steal her joy—or her confidence—this time. Not today. She deliberately made her voice cheery. "Every possible advantage, right?"

Tiffany cleared her throat. "I'm telling you, Brooke, you're not gonna need it. Anyhow, hop to it; I'll be there in a few."

"Okay," Brooke replied, "see ya soon." She hung up the phone smiling and took a deep, cleansing breath. She might not have much in the way of family—and boy, was that the understatement of the century; outside of her precious grandma Lanie, there was virtually no one related by blood who cared for her—but she had struck gold when it came to finding a best friend.

And, who knows, maybe Tiffany was right: Her presentation was going to be a knock-out. Halloway was going to fall in love

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with her ideas, every bit as much as her sexy shoes. And the conference in Dark Moon Vale was going to go off without a hitch.

Brooke rubbed the towel energetically through her still damp hair, tousling the thick, heavy strands as she grinned. If all went well, in less than ten hours, she would be headed home to San Francisco with a tentative contract in her hand and an even brighter future on the horizon.

Tiffany was absolutely right.

What could possibly go wrong?

two

Salvatore Nistor raised his arms languidly above his head, crossed his feet at the ankles, and sank deep into the comfortable mattress in his underground lair as he replayed the events of the previous night in his head. He could still see the female he had used...and exterminated...so vividly in his mind. He could still taste her fear, and the thought hardened his groin even now.

She had been standing beside her car in a grocery store parking lot, fumbling with her keys, so tempting and unaware. Her ample chest had risen and fallen with each shallow breath, such a willing victim just crying out, *Take me! Choose me!*

And Salvatore had been quick to oblige her.

In one lightning quick move, he had snatched the human by her arm, sent her groceries scattering to the ground in random piles of rubbish, and flown the two of them behind the building to a nice secluded area.

“Please,” she had whispered in a terrified voice as desperate tears had rolled down her cheeks.

Salvatore licked his lips as he remembered how he had snarled back at her, “Please what!” The female had been as beautiful as she was...stupid. But that was to be expected, as all humans were pathetically inferior to vampires. Salvatore had pressed his finger to her lips and made a shushing sound, glaring at her with eyes he had known were gleaming red. “Quiet. Not a word,” he had commanded. “Do not move, and do not speak a word.”

He had allowed his fangs to elongate then—slowly, for effect—before lifting her trembling wrist to his mouth and dragging the sharp points of his canines lengthwise across her vein. A small line of crimson had trickled along the creamy white skin of her forearm, and he had quickly lapped it up with his tongue, groaning at the exquisite taste of freshly drawn blood.

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Mmm, he moaned even now, growing restless on the bed.

He let out a deep breath, remembering how he had invaded her mind, forcing his way into her memories in order to retrieve her name.

Jane.

Ah, yes, his delectable prize had been named Jane.

He could have sworn Jane's knees had literally buckled as she had swayed before him then, nauseous from the sight of her own blood, nearly passing out from fright.

But she hadn't passed out.

She had stood perfectly motionless. Deathly quiet. *Like an obedient female should.*

"Good girl," he had murmured, impressed.

He had scanned her fine features next—her soft lips and pale blue eyes, the high inset of her cheekbones, which gave her a model's appearance—and then he had frowned, thinking it a pity that he would have to kill her before he could thoroughly enjoy her—say, for at least a week or more—if he could avoid getting her pregnant that long.

He sighed, releasing the pang of regret; after all, duty was duty, and time had been of the essence: Oskar's orders were to kill, not capture.

In fact, Oskar Vadovsky, the Dark Ones' new chief of council, had made all of his instructions explicitly clear: "Drop enough bodies in the streets of Dark Moon Vale to terrify the local humans; create enough pandemonium in the towns to rile up the hidden vampire-hunting societies; and let the humans come after their foolish enemies—the sons of Jadon, who live on the surface—while we, the sons of Jaegar, remain safely hidden beneath the earth." In other words: *Exact revenge on Napoleon Mondragon for the damage he inflicted on the colony.*

Salvatore snarled, remembering the wretched king of the house of Jadon and all he had wrought upon the house of Jaegar—the *utterly humiliating* ass-kicking he had given all of them the day he and a handful of his warriors had come to rescue Princess Ciopori

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from Salvatore's lair. The day Marquis Silivasi and his crew had slaughtered *fifty* of the Dark Ones' children, even as the young ones had slept in their cribs.

A deep growl reverberated in his throat, his desire for revenge rising like bile.

As if the murder of their children had not been enough, Napoleon Mondragon had single-handedly slain *eighty-eight* of their soldiers as the males had chased him through the tunnels on his way out of the colony. The haughty king had harnessed the power of the sun—*underground, of all things*—in order to incinerate his pursuers deep in the heart of their own home—where they should have been safe from burning!

Salvatore ran his tongue over his canines and tried to force the memory from his mind...back to more pleasant recollections.

Back to the night before...

Back to Jane and the way he had snarled at her like a feral animal when she had tried to back away, whimpering at the pain in her wrist.

"You think to escape me, female?" he had thundered.

She had not been such a good girl after all.

"I'm sorry," she had whined like a baby, clearly not understanding what *quiet* meant.

Salvatore had cuffed her then, and the impact of his blow had sent spittle mixed with blood spewing from her mouth. "Not a word!" he had repeated, searing her with a harsh glare.

Horrified, she had covered her mouth with both hands, struggling to stifle a scream, and then her legs had given way and she had fallen to her knees, shuddering like an idiot. For a moment, Salvatore had simply watched her—kneeling in the dirt, squirming like a worm—but his patience had not lasted. Jane had moved when he had told her to be still. She had spoken when he had warned her not to make a sound. And she had more or less worn on his last nerve...just because she had. He had been determined to punish her for her insolence.

He laughed now, thinking about it.

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They had been such minor infractions, really.
But it simply didn't matter.

Defiance was defiance, and his enemies never went unpunished.

His lips twitched, and he sat up on the bed, contemplating the importance of that truth: Napoleon Mondragon would not go unpunished either. *He could not go unpunished.* The Dark Ones would have their revenge, and Salvatore would benefit, politically, in the process. He would pay Marquis Silivasi back for taking Ciopori from his lair. He would appease Oskar Vadovsky by demonstrating his superior knowledge of Dark Magick. And he would regain the respect of the remaining council members—the two who had witnessed his own unspeakable *degradation*—by doing what had never been done before: He would kill Napoleon Mondragon, the ancient, heretofore invincible leader of the house of Jadon.

His plan couldn't fail.

It was too well constructed.

Salvatore had paid too much homage to the Dark Lords of the underworld for their favor in the matter—their assistance in his wicked scheme—and the demon lords would help him. So far, they were delivering handsomely.

Salvatore exhaled.

He stretched his arms and rolled his shoulders, allowing the tension to ease. All in good time. It would all happen in good time.

Once again, he returned his attention to the night before, conjuring the image of a delectable silhouette: the body of the squirming woman still kneeling beneath him, trying desperately to crawl away.

The game had become fun then.

Salvatore had waved his hand, turned on his heels, and started to walk away—pretending as if he were finished with the night's festivities: He had intentionally given Jane a small measure of hope, a slight window of time in which she almost believed she might escape.

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“Ha!”

He laughed aloud, recalling the scene in exquisite detail, the way that Jane had played along so beautifully. She had leapt to her feet—quite adeptly, actually—and taken off running with a strength of purpose that was...well, shocking. And kudos to her for trying. She had even let out an ear-piercing scream, a cry for help so desperate it might have possibly reached the heavens.

But her god hadn't come to rescue her, and neither had anyone else.

Salvatore lifted the tip of his finger, extended a jagged talon to his mouth, nicked his bottom lip, and tasted the blood, sighing.

The memory was positively erotic.

The female had taken five solid steps—five enormously wide strides—before Salvatore had caught her. He had grasped a handful of her fine, strawberry blond hair in his fist and yanked her back against him. And then he had spun her around by the shoulders, clutched her by the neck, and forced her to face him. “Look at me!”

It had been an imperious command, possibly a little overdramatic.

Of course, he had also scanned the area around them for the presence of others—not that he had been worried about humans; he could always erase their memories if he had to—but he had to be wary of the sons of Jadon, the *privileged* vampires. If one of them had heard her scream, Salvatore would have been forced to fight. And she was hardly worth it.

Confident that her cries had gone unheard, he had tightened his grasp on her throat, hauled her solidly beneath him, and bent to drink from her neck.

She had truly become hysterical then, beating her hands against his chest and twisting her torso back and forth in a frantic attempt to break free; and all the while, her heart had pounded like a bass drum, threatening to explode in her chest as her tears had fallen like raindrops.

She had begged for mercy, her entire being consumed with

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terror.

And then instantly, albeit noiselessly, a puddle of pale liquid had pooled on the ground beneath her. Annoyed—actually, *disgusted*—Salvatore had withdrawn his fangs and quickly shuffled out of the way. He had been wearing a brand-new pair of Testoni Norvegese shoes—not to mention a six-hundred-dollar pair of black linen pants—and the last thing he needed was some human urinating on his crisp, expensive outfit.

He had to admit, the female's inability to control her bodily functions had really been a buzz-kill; she had almost completely squelched his desire to play.

Almost.

He sighed, musing. If only he could terrorize Napoleon Mondragon the same way. Imagine, forcing the arrogant king to wet himself and beg for his life...before killing him: Now that would be worth all the spells in the Blood Canon!

Salvatore's hands slowly curled into fists at the mere mention of the ancient book of Black Magic. He had possessed the Blood Canon for nearly eight hundred years, and the dark treasure had been his greatest acquisition. His most prized possession. He ground his teeth together. Nachari Silivasi had stolen the book the same day Napoleon had killed eighty-eight of the house of Jaegar's warriors.

In fact, Nachari Silivasi, along with that headstrong tyrant Marquis, had murdered Salvatore's beloved little brother Valentine even before then—

Stop! Salvatore told himself.

Do not go there!

Not now.

He was surprised by his pathetic lack of discipline. He was getting far too worked up when he needed to stay focused on the here and now. The others would pay.

They would all pay.

One at a time.

Starting with their insufferable king.

Tessa Dawn

Oh, to hell with it, Salvatore growled. He would not restrain his fury! He would not control his thoughts! He would ruminate on his hatred. Feed his sweltering thirst for revenge until it grew into a living, breathing entity with a life of its own.

He would continue to delve into the heart of Black Magick, to beseech the assistance of the dark lords to mess with Napoleon's head—sending him nightmare after garish nightmare, day after endless day—conjuring ever more vivid images of the ghostly apparition Napoleon believed to be his father until the worthless king's mind was so twisted with guilt and confusion that he didn't know which way was up, what was real and what was illusion.

Napoleon Mondragon would ultimately bend to the will of Salvatore Rafael Nistor just as the useless human female had bent to his will last night!

His chest heaved with the raw power of his conviction, and he salivated over his final tryst with Jane, turning each delectable detail over in his mind, savoring the memory of every precious moment one last time. He had punished her for wetting her pants by slowly carving a macabre outline into the delicate flesh of her throat...watching...anticipating...while blood streamed down her neck, across her shoulder, and along the swell of her right breast. Oh, how he had relished the taste—sucking the tender flesh of her nipples as they had slowly marinated in her blood.

The female had opened her mouth to cry out in anguish, but no sound had come out. Salvatore had stolen her voice, and *damnit, if her silent pleas hadn't turned him on*.

He had thrown her down to the ground then—careful to avoid the noxious puddle she had made in her moment of weakness—as he tore off her soiled clothes. Gazing down into her pale blue eyes, he had brought his lips to hers and kissed her harshly—a small token of mercy as women liked that kind of thing—and then he had pierced her bottom lip with his fangs so he could drink from her mouth as he took her.

The union had been perfect.

Shocking, painful, uninhibited.

BLOOD POSSESSION

She had begged him to kill her—and he had almost shed a tear. “Soon, my lover. *Very soon*,” he had whispered in her ear.

Salvatore wiped the sweat from his brow. The memory had inflamed him almost as much as the real thing, and now that his state of arousal was too great to deny, he would require a physical release. He wondered if one of his fellow Dark Ones had a female captive close by, but then he realized that his need went beyond what a woman could provide.

Salvatore craved extreme adrenaline, violence, and pain—the erotic strikes of venomous snakes, the awareness of the serpents’ lethal poison being attacked by his own, and the sweet sensation of nimble scales slithering over his warm flesh, bringing him to satisfaction again...and again. He rose from the bed and headed for the colony’s Chamber of Cobras.

As he glided through the underground halls, his thoughts returned to Napoleon one last time. Indeed, the wretched king would die this time, too. With the help of the dark lord, Ademordna, Salvatore Nistor would accomplish what no other Dark One had been able to do in twenty-eight hundred years: He would end Napoleon Mondragon’s life. He had finally found a way to make it happen. As he entered the final hall that would lead him to his erotic fantasy, Salvatore picked up his pace and laughed at the brilliance of his plan...

Napoleon Mondragon would continue to be haunted by endless nightmares.

Confusion, guilt, and *insanity* would torment him relentlessly...until it finally wore him down. Salvatore would never let up until he broke him. Until at last, the ancient one could bear his existence no longer. And then—when Napoleon was agonizingly desperate, confused, and completely vulnerable—the ghost of Napoleon’s father would offer him a way out of the madness...an opportunity to atone for the one great sin of his past. The one thing he had never shared with his people.

The shameful secret the dark lords of the underworld had revealed to Salvatore, alone.

Tessa Dawn

In exchange for freeing the ghost's eternally tormented soul, Napoleon's father would order Napoleon to take his own life. And at last, no one would need to defeat the unconquerable Napoleon—because the all-powerful king would be the instrument of his own demise.

Napoleon Mondragon would kill himself.

At his father's command.

About The Author



Tessa Dawn grew up in Colorado where she developed a deep affinity for the Rocky Mountains. After graduating with a degree in psychology, she worked for several years in criminal justice and mental health before returning to get her Masters Degree in Nonprofit Management.

Tessa began writing as a child and composed her first full-length novel at the age of eleven. By the time she graduated high-school, she had a banker's box full of short-stories and books. Since then, she has published works as diverse as poetry, greeting cards, workbooks for kids with autism, and academic curricula. The Blood Curse Series marks her long-desired return to her creative-writing roots and her first foray into the Dark Fantasy world of vampire fiction.

Tessa currently lives in the suburbs with her two children and “one very crazy cat” but hopes to someday move to the country where she can own horses and a German Shepherd.

Writing is her bliss.

Books in the Blood Curse Series

(In order of publication)

Blood Destiny

Blood Awakening

Blood Possession

Blood Shadows (Coming Soon...)

If you would like to receive notice of future releases,

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