

A Vampire's Prey

By : **Bridget Shayde**

This is the redone version of Awakening the Blood. It stars a handsome and reclusive vampire lord tormented by his father's banishment of his half-brother, Felix. Wicked dreams torment Draegan as he hunts for the woman that has been trying so hard to reach out to him for help. Will his Draegan's countrymen capture him before he can rescue this mysterious beauty or will Naomi abandon the vampire before he can rescue her from Felix's clutches?

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head tilts and leans in closer to her body, to her throat. A flash of fangs causes her to gasp.

Her blood! It wants her blood.

Feet smash into the prickly blades, but she ignores the thorns marking the bottoms of her feet. Her eyes are set on the creature leaning in towards her body. Those fangs become closer. They grow nearer.

Heart pulsing she runs, but the distance seems to stretch out in front of her. The void grows. With her hand outstretched she can only pray the creature stops. She can't scream. They will come if she screams. She can't be sent back to that world without finding her sister, and she can't let that creature steal the last of her moments here.

The fangs move even closer. The world spins in slow motion. That creature looms even higher over her body; its fangs distend, ready to feed upon her flesh. No. No. No. No! "No!" she cries, and the beast rips its head up from the throat of the woman.

The entire meadow seems to rip apart as they come. They come from nowhere. Hands burst out of the ground. They grapple at her feet and legs. They pull her down to the earth. The meadow bursts open from beneath her feet, and she fights in frenzy to break free. There is nothing she can manipulate here. She must use her hands and feet to be freed, but she is only so strong. Her hands grab at one of their fingers. She pulls to no avail.

Out of the corner of her eye, she sees the beast. It is male in form and coming straight for her. "No!" she exclaims once more but is quickly distracted when another hand wraps around her. It has her wrist. With only one free hand, she tries to claw them, but it affects nothing. She can do nothing as he grows nearer, as they pull harder.

Screaming to break free, she gives another vain yank. Her other hand is grabbed, and the dirt sinks around her waist. For a brief glance, she sees the man up above her. She is in the pit now. Reality waits at the bottom. His mouth opens to scream something inaudible, and she cries for help. All he can do is watch with his hand outstretched in the pit.

They pay him no mind and continue to drag her down. She is the one they want. He is but an unimportant distraction to them. Her eyes are closed by the masses of hands grappling at her, but not before she gets a look at a few of them. They are her family, her friends...

Her blood!

Her blood!

Her blood!

Chapter One

"Another rough night, eh, Draegan?" Ricardo Aventis pondered as he peeled the bottle of blood and Scotch from his master's clawed grasp. "You really should find a more comfortable table if you're not going to sleep in the bed." The butler popped his master upside the head with the empty bottle before tossing it onto the cart he was wheeling around.

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Snickering, the heavy male lifted his head up from the desk. "I'm sure that you would be accustomed to sleeping on tables considering that I found your previously mortal ass sleeping in a dumpster behind a bar," he scoffed and gave his head a rigorous shake. "What kind would you approve of?"

"Pool tables, sir. They have just the right amount of cushion for a drunkard." He tossed another empty bottle into the cart then disposed of Draegan's office trash. Paper wads were scattered all about the wood floors, and stains of blood dotted the trails they had rolled upon before laying still.

Changing the subject, Ricardo asked, "I don't know if you've been writing in your sleep, but what's with all of the bloody notes on the floor?" He picked up one of the wads then unfolded it for his master to see.

"Huh?" Draegan mumbled then snatched the crumpled paper Ricardo tossed his way. The paper was the same kind that Draegan used to write out contracts and laws for his country, but the bloody handwriting was not his own. It was feminine. The words were scrawled out in twisting swirls of a cursive print.

Second day that I've been here. Still no luck at finding her. Where could she be?

The creatures took me away from here last time. I must remember to not speak.

Mar. 2

Casting the note a sideways glance, Draegan asked Ricardo, "What day is it?"

"It's March the third, master. Why?" The servant turned around to give the note a quick glance then his jet black eyebrow went up in a fluid arch like it'd been painted on with a stroke of ink.

The vampire lord rested his jaw against his fist as he studied the note. "Give me more of these. If you find anymore after today, put them in my desk. I want to read them," Draegan ordered the butler. When Ricardo simply nodded, Draegan took the few notes that had been written on.

Three notes were laid out in front of him. Each was in a woman's handwriting. They were written like pages out of a diary. Each one had a date and notes of a dream. The one labeled February twenty-eighth held a description of a horrible world that a young woman had been teleported into. Demons had walked within her sight. Hands had grappled at her body when she'd screamed at the sight of her bloodied corpse resting on an altar. After she'd wakened from her nightmare, she chose to write these dreams down in her diary.

The second note was written March the first. It told of a demon visiting her dreams. The demon had her sister and was carrying the fair woman off into the night. Her sister had fought and screamed to break free, but the beast refused to let her go. It just kept walking without a single care to the claws and teeth digging into his thick hide. This time the hands hadn't taken her away from the dream. This time, her corpse had run out of blood. She had wasted too much time watching the creature take her sister away instead of trying to stop the male monstrosity.

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1/2 Draegan studied the notes as Ricardo cleaned the bloodstains off of the floor. He himself had visited that strange nightmare that this woman wrote about, but he knew where it was. He could venture there at will by tracing through the night. It was his kingdom of Bloodmist. It was the mighty Red Forest, a place so littered in war and death that the streams still ran red with blood from the battles waged there. It was the vampires' paradise.

1/2 Still, Draegan had to wonder what sort of so called demon this woman was writing about. Very few creatures would dare to leave Bloodmist just to return back with a captive female, and the fact that this woman was going there in her dreams could only mean that she was accidentally tracing to that place. Why was her body on that altar? Why was she forever cursed to silence and her time limited by how much blood still ran hot within her veins?

1/2 Only creatures from Anthropos had the power to cage a dream and reality into a single entity. What kind of creature could want to cage this young woman?

1/2 Scratching the side of his head, Draegan could only wonder. Then again, he had little time to ponder over these kinds of fantasies that were so popular within his realm of Anthropos. He had more important matters to worry with. He couldn't waste time pondering over just another nightmare that went on within his realm.

1/2 With a casual yawn the vampire lord rose from his desk chair only to reel from a hangover that howled within his skull. The piercing headache slammed down upon his brain like an anvil, sending Draegan flopping back down into his chair.

1/2 Two clawed hands gripped the side of his head, and the man scowled while massaging his temples. "Blasted hell, Ricardo!" He hissed, "What kind of concoction did you whip up for me last night?" He winced up to see where the entire room was faltering. The vision of his office ebbed and swayed as this reality was replaced by another. As his headache still hammered at him, the vampire scowled. "Felix."

1/2 In mere moments the man Draegan had scorned appeared. "Ah. Such a pleasure to know that you still remember my name, brother," Felix purred as his black coat and even blacker hair swirled in the rift between realms.

1/2 As his headache wavered, Draegan ripped up from the desk chair that had been replaced by a tree trunk with chains to keep Felix's half-brother contained. "Why did you bring me here? What is this?" Draegan demanded to know while straining against his iron bindings.

1/2 "This? Why it's my little paradise, Draegan, but you wouldn't know since your accursed father bound me here decades ago." The incubus strolled over to an altar and sat down. One leg was draped over the other as he watched his brother strain against the manacles. "Oh, calm down, brother. The only way that you're going to get out of those is if I send you back to your little castle on the hill." At Draegan's surprised glance, Felix added, "Oh, yes, brother. I always know where to find you. Rumors even spread in the dungeons of the Red Forest."

1/2 Relaxing as much as he could against the chains and thorns of the tree trunk, Draegan bit out, "Alright. So what's the catch, Felix? Why'd you bring me here?"

1/2 Felix gave his younger brother a halfway hurt look. "I can't just want to see my innocent, little brother for a small moment in my eternity?" he asked before that hurt expression turned into a charmingly wicked grin. When Draegan's mouth never wavered from its flat lined state, Felix

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decided to add, "I'm actually here to make a deal with you."

"What kind of deal?" The vampire lord's eyes narrowed down until his golden eyes were just cat slit, yellow slivers of light.

Felix cast his haunting red eyes up to the red sky then tapped his bloodied nail upon the stone altar that levitated like a ghost in the air. "Oh, you know. The kind of deal that everyone in captivity tends to make. You set me free, and I deliver you something."

Draegan shook his head and grinned. "You must have grown idiotic in your time below the surface. If my father banished you down here, what makes you think that I would want to bring you back to Anthropos? You sent the Xanatos demons to butcher my family. If not for our mother getting in the way, you probably would have succeeded in killing me and our other brothers."

Felix's look of triumph never faltered. He explained, "Then let me give you something to chew on. Thneskan woman brought to delusion. Her blood to follow her into the exclusion. Dreams made real. A single heart meant to steal."

Reality began to waver once more, and Draegan wrestled with his bindings once more. "What the hell is that supposed to mean? Tell me Felix!"

"Uh, oh. Looks like our time is up. See ya later, Draegan. Tell Naomi, 'Felix says hello'."

"Tell me you bastard! Who is Naomi?" Draegan gave a hard wrench on his dominant left arm only to find himself tumbling over his desk. The oak creaked beneath his weight before collapsing against Draegan's fist, and the powerful male glowered up towards unwitting Ricardo. The vampire lord's eyes were a brilliant gold that glowed brightly even under the faint daylight that whispered through the closed curtains.

Ricardo raised up his hands in defeat then fumbled, "I-I don't know master. Maybe you could ask Arcadia?"

Shaking the remnants of the desk out of his light brown hair, Draegan rose to throw his fist against the wall. The entire room shook as it took the wall shattering blow, and Draegan withdrew his bloodied fist. The wood stuck deeply into his skin like tiny spears, but he paid them little mind. Blood dripped down his hand that pulsed in pain from the wood.

"Felix," Draegan snarled before turning towards the door to his office. His free hand ripped the wood splinters out of his hand, and he angrily tossed them to the floor.

"Ricardo, it's time to pay a visit to the Exorcists. We're moving to Thnesko," he added before slamming the door on the shocked butler.

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