

CHAPTER ONE

Rise of a Queen

Book 1 of the Vampire Realm series

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CHAPTER ONE

I used to love the night. I craved all the things that came with it; the gathering of people that you would otherwise not give a second glance to if you walked past them on a busy sidewalk, three dollar Kamikaze's that kept you warmly happy on the inside, the deep pounding of your heart that unmistakably matches rhythm with the loud trance of techno music. I longed for the dark clubs that had too many bodies pressing up against one another, feeling the music, the flashing lights, without a single care in the world. The drug of their choice coursing through their liquid moving bodies. There was always that last bite to eat, around three in the morning, at a run-down diner with a waitress named April or Sally who would disappear to the back, making you wonder if she was with the cook getting that late-night screw.

Now all I can think about is how much I miss the day. I want the breaking light through the crack of my curtains, that first sip of over-sweetened coffee, and the herding of all the eight to fivers as they hold their purses or briefcases too close to themselves in paranoia; rushing around always ten minutes behind.

Yes, I do miss all of that. I miss those things people take advantage of until they no longer fit into their life. Life...I contemplate that very thing as I look out from my overly indulgent penthouse window. I scan the city for signs of my old life. Is this my kingdom? Are all the subjects below truly mine to control? Of course they're not. They don't even know I exist. They continue on with their pleasure-seeking ways; ignoring the shadows I slum through. How close I live with all these people and yet they are so far away from their true comprehension of who, or what, I am. Would they understand my need for companionship, my constant searching for meaning, or my want for knowledge? I think they would cast me aside for lack of understanding. The only thing they would see is my darkened soul, my unholy manner, and my thirst for warm, salty blood. They would hunt me down to get rid of the abomination that doesn't fit in with their God-fearing ways. These are the same people that have pushed the tiger into near-extinction. Their reasoning? The tiger, like me, has a thirst for blood - just packaged differently in the likes of wild game and sometimes the unsuspecting child that has wandered too far from his village. That is how the tiger was made, and for that, it is punished and sold off into pieces for all sorts of exotic cures and concoctions. How funny it is, that the people created from a God that they worship deeply, would mutilate and murder another of their father's blessed creatures, and not even think about any sort of repentance. They would think of me the same, I know. Am I no different from the enchanting tiger?

I am the Goddess of my own urban jungle. Little do these people know how important I am to the natural cycle of life. Our race is on this earth to hunt down the weak and keep the world from overpopulating. So here I am, looking out of my window just as the tiger lurks in the brush, seeking, always searching out for that next feast.

Seven years. Has it really been that long? If I weren't in a business where I had to mark off the days on my calendar, the days would bleed together. Bleed. Such an apropos word. That is what all creatures do; Bleed. From the prick of the enchanted rose to the gash of the knife. Of course nothing beats the puncturing of the flesh of mankind with the gushing of warm liquid gold. The intake, so full of explosive orgasmic drinks. Nothing can beat that feeling of pure satisfaction coursing through these replenished veins.

I turned from my window and glanced at the pale wanderer lying limp on the couch. *I might have taken too much this time. I got caught up in the oneness of our joined souls.*

“She will survive,” said a deep dark voice from the shadowy corner of the room, “Barely, but she will live.” It was Bryon, one of my most loyal of human servants.

“I took too much.” I said with a low sigh. I bent down and touched the powdery cheek of my helpless victim. I stood up and walked away. “She will be frightened when she wakes up,” I stopped briefly in the front hallway, “Move her to the guest quarters and keep an eye on her. I am going to The Black Raven.” Without a second thought I slipped out the door.

The Black Raven was one of the businesses that I happened to have owned. It had its fill of Nuvo-Goth humans, who cried out their pitiful souls to each another while the silent competition of who was in the most turmoil played out. The music was deep and dark like the mood I was in as I went through the back entrance. I made my way down the stairs to the other level of the club, cleverly called the Dungeon. That was where my kindred went to partake in the orgy of sexual madness and intensified blood taking. The victims thought it was all just role-play until the first bite and then one of two things happened: they either let out a terrifying scream and tried unsuccessfully to fight off their poacher, or they delved into the feeling; having let go of their fear and inhibitions, so much that they experienced multiple orgasms until they passed out from the blood loss. The one rule in my club that existed, and offered severe punishment to any blood drinker who broke it, under no circumstances were they allowed to drain their playthings completely of blood. They had to leave enough in the body so that it replenished itself so as to not have caused the stirring of the police.

I pushed through the pits of flesh that lined the halls of the Dungeon until I reach my haven. I moved aside the dark netting and sat down on the pile of violet velvet pillows that were carefully placed on the floor. The nearby scantily clad slave boy rushed towards me and knelt down. I found it amusing that people dressed so strange just to be part of my darkened world.

“What can I get for you my immortal enchantress?” He kept his head bowed as he knew never to look into my eyes.

“The House Special, and to not be disturbed.” The House Special was our word for bottled blood; we always kept some in stock to avoid as many accidental deaths as possible.

“Yes mistress.” He nodded and rose to attend to my asking.

As I lounged in my private thoughts, my slave returned and handed me my glass. “Now leave me and cause no more interruptions.” I waved him on. I touched the glass to my lips, slowly tipped it, and allowed the nectar to flow through to my rough tongue on down my throat and into my chest. I closed my eyes and savored that first sip. It was sweet and refreshing.

I heard the curtain as it was pushed aside, “I said no more interruptions.”

“I didn’t get that memo.” A calm brooding voice spoke.

I opened my eyes and looked at my maker as he stood over me. I stood up quickly. “Greco, I...” I was at a loss for words; I had always been that way around him. I could be calm and collected until the moment a thought of him entered my mind and then my body completely gave into the weakness under his control.

“No worries. Sit, Tessa, let’s chat.” His smooth words flowed out as he motioned for me to resume my comfortable position. Seated, his hand glided over to mine, and brushed it gently as he took the glass away from me and set it on the floor. “I am beginning to get worried about you. I have been hearing some burdensome things.” His dark eyes looked at me with much care and thought.

I turned slightly from his glance; embarrassment and shame filled me. “Greco, I don’t know what you mean. As you see, I am doing fine.”

“On the outside, yes,” he moved closer towards me, his cold lifeless breath brushed up against my neck, “But I fear that you are not enjoying fully all that I have given you. Do you not love your gift? Do you not enjoy all the luxuries that have come with your immortality?” He pressed his body up against mine and embraced me like he always did. “Do you not wish to be with me any longer?”

I sat quietly and gathered my thoughts. I did love Greco, he was my master and he had cared for me as his trusted consort. *How had I thought that my unhappy thoughts would escape him? Had my regrets been so strong that my body showed every last feeling?* “Greco, I don’t understand. You know, since that night you offered me your gift, I have lived in acceptance. I have enjoyed being by your side, ruling as the Queen of our children that are bound to us by blood and loyalty. Why would you think otherwise?” I turned and decided to look at him, but quickly learned it may have been a mistake.

“Isabel is worried. She sees you feed like a raging beast. She watches as you toss your prey aside, practically draining them of every last drop of blood without care. Then you either stand for hours looking out the window or sitting in moonlight holding tight to your journal.”

Damn Isabel. She had always been the first to tell of any inconsistency in my actions. She wanted to be Greco’s chosen one. She had detested being the lowly human handmaiden of mine. “Isabel exaggerates too much. I am fine. I just get lonely for my old life every now and then. That isn’t anything to be concerned of is it?”

“Not in itself, but you need to be careful my child, because you need to appear strong now that the Kronos are striking up a treaty that will join our two clans together again after all these centuries at war. If they sense that you have any doubts about being a true Levé, and my vampire queen, they will take that as a sign of weakness of our whole tribe. They will cancel the treaty and try to wipe us out once and for all.”

Greco was right. Things had already gone on for seven years; I should be over these feelings for now, shouldn’t I? I shouldn’t live in my past for I have an eternal future ahead of me, waiting for me to uncover all of those hidden and ancient secrets. I touched Greco’s cheek, “I am sorry, my love. I didn’t realize that this hurt you so much. I’ll be fine; you have nothing to worry about. I will be strong, especially for our gathering tomorrow. No more living in the past.” I forced a smile on my lips; I needed to feel and sound as sincere as possible. I hadn’t wanted to have those feelings.

Greco nodded and kept his somber expression. “Thank you.” He stood up, and pulled me up with him. “Now, my dear, I want you to drink up and then head home. Daybreak will be in a little over an hour and I want you to be refreshed for the next evening.”

“Yes, Greco, I will.” He pressed his lips against my hand then walked away through the curtain.

* * * * *

“My Queen, it’s time to rise,” Tessa heard Bryon’s voice in the back of her mind. She didn’t open her eyes; instead she rolled over to revel in her soft linens for a moment or two longer. “Isabel is waiting to dress you for the meeting with the Kronos.” Bryon continued, not giving up on waking his majesty.

Tessa opened one eye, then the other as she attempted to wake up; she noticed her caretaker hovered over her. “What time is it?” She stretched her arms like a kitten that had been curled up in a ball.

“Nine. The meeting will take place in two hours.”

Tessa popped up out of bed, and rushed around her room. “Why didn’t you wake me earlier?” She searched for the clothes she were to wear to the treaty signing, not even a shoe in sight.

“There was no need, you have plenty of time.” Bryon stood in her path, “Isabel has everything ready for you in your dressing chambers.”

Tessa moved on to her dressing chambers to get ready. Isabel sat on the plush stool and looked slightly agitated. Tessa had known that Isabel had always been jealous of her. Isabel probably played a role reversal in her mind over and over; made herself the lovely bride of Greco while Tessa was the handmaid who watched helplessly at the love that unfolded before her eyes.

Isabel helped to lower the extravagantly handmade necklace, which was passed down from each Queen of the Levé's to the next. The heaviness of the gold and jewels weighed too much for most humans, even for the human royalty who were used to the decadent massive amount of jewelry, but Tessa wore it as if it weighed as light as a feather. What was coming was supposed to have been a momentous occasion; history in the making between the two clans. Tessa only felt nervous and full of uncertainty.

She stared into the mirror and noticed the jealousy in Isabel’s eyes. “I am getting tired of your ill feelings of me.”

“I don’t know what you mean.” Isabel lied and avoided Tessa’s eyes, as it was apparent she knew that she was being watched.

“You dare lie to your mistress?” Tessa’s voice grew colder.

“I’m sorry.” Isabel stopped short.

“It has been years Isabel, I was chosen as his Queen, and this will never change.” Tessa reminded her.

“You won’t be Queen once we become allies with the Krones.” She snapped back.

Tessa turned around. “This alliance has nothing to do with my royalty.”

“Don’t be so naive. The Krones do nothing but dominate. They will make you kneel to them or make you perish.” Isabel venomously snapped in pure bitterness.

“You need to stay out of our affairs and tend to your humanly duties, which at this moment, is serving me!!!” Tessa’s voice boomed as she pushed past Isabel. “I do want you to know that this treaty is only the beginning for the Levé's. We will be taking over the human race very soon, beginning with this city. You can stand by my side as my slave or be part of the bloodbath that awaits them. It is your choice.” Her fangs protruded. She quickly moved to Isabel and pressed her cold lips to her ear, “And if I find you are against us I will personally enjoy hanging you and let every drop of your blood drip to the floor so that I can bathe in it, cursing you to walk in purgatory for all eternity.”

Isabel backed up slowly and tried to escape from the room. “You’re mad.” her voice trembled. *What did she think that she gained by speaking to her mistress in this manner,* Tessa thought.

Her eyes burned like fire; her fangs bore completely, “Do not mess with me human. Stay away from Greco and for fucks sake just go wait in the foyer.” She had enough of Isabel’s disobedience for the evening.

Isabel turned and ran out as quickly as she could.

The rage filled Tessa so fully that the black blood began to boil beneath her skin. She picked up a vase and threw it at the door just after Isabel barely escaped.

Tessa headed down to where Greco had been waiting in the limousine. Once inside the limo she sat quietly beside him.

“I am certain that there is a logical explanation for your tardiness,” Greco spoke in a calm, under toned voice.

“Isabel was becoming nervous and paranoid about the joining of the Krones and Levé's.” She had known it was in her best interest not to bother him with too many unnecessary details.

“How so?” He questioned.

“She feels as though once the alliance is done that you and I will be cast aside.” Tessa gave as short of an answer as possible without going into the rough details.

“Did you settle her fears?” His tone rose slightly out of only minor curiosity.

“I did the best I could,” She said then peered out into nothingness. The rest of the ride went silent as she only had thoughts about how nervous she was.

* * * * *

“Are we ready my queen?” Greco held out his hand; his head was down in a courteous bow.

Tessa took a long breath, placed her hand gently on top of his, and lifted her chin, as the colossal doors were pulled open. The two walked slowly behind the procession of their underlings until they reached the throne room, which was purely for decorative purposes; they were the original thrones for the King and Queen of the Levé's. They proceeded through the antechamber and into the boardroom. The chairs they sat in were almost as extravagant as the thrones themselves, which sat slightly higher than the rest of the chairs. The six members of the Levé council were seated to their right. Once Greco and Tessa were settled, the boardroom doors opened up and in came the Krones council. The King and Queen of the Krones then made a procession of their own to their designated seats, slightly more decorated than the council's, but still wasn't as glamorous as Greco and Tessa's. It had been imperative to gain a mental upper hand on one's own turf. They sat straight across from each other, the Krones and the Levé's.

Tessa had only heard tales of these ancient rulers, until this very evening. King Renos was a very fierce and savvy businessman. He had fingers in everything that you could imagine, although the technology that his companies came up with had been completely astounding. He had ruled his people for over a thousand years. Aside from his business demeanor, he was more of a quiet King. The ruthlessness of his rule came from the support of his Queen, Desdemona. She was the one to be afraid of. She was not shy about what she wanted, how she wanted it done, or how many lives were taken to get to that point. She cared for no one but herself and sometimes her King when it best suited her. She was out for power; she craved it more than she craved blood. Being a vampire had suited her completely. She was everything people had imagined. She had been by Renos' side throughout his rule of their people, although she was much older than he was; she knew just how to take advantage of a situation when the moment arose.

As the two clans sat across from each other they only glared. The tension could have been cut with a knife. They both knew the reason they were there. It was to make peace and sign a treaty for the greater good of the vampire species. If they did not do this, they would be left in the dark of the massive plan to take over the human race that would be soon in working order.

There was something greater out there than just vampire clans with their Kings and Queens and their councils. There was The Vampire Nation. It was the vampire equivalent of the United Nations. Members from each clan gathered to speak, make plans, and derive ideas on better ways for vampires to co-exist with the human race. Politics at its finest. In the previous four years there had been a different plan though. One that was keen on turning the tables and becoming the dominant species on the planet. Each clan had their specialty, their own thoughts on how to run things. They had in mind the territories they would take over in order to ultimately rule the world and make the humans into their slaves. Of course, the initial taking over would no doubt result in massive bloodshed and near genocide of the humans. Once that had settled down, conditions would be more on The Nation's terms. Businesses had to be run, life needed to continue in the same fashion as before the takeover. Trade needed to exist as did the population in general or they, the vampires, would die of starvation without their blood supply. The humans would have all rights stripped from them so they wouldn't get any ideas of equality. They would live and breathe only as workers and cattle for the vampires. If they refused, they would perish. It was quite simple.

The Levé's already had their buildings ready to go for their human and vampire workers alike. There were plans for underground quarters further than a mile down beneath the surface. The first step was to wipe out all communications around and outside of Chicago (where Greco and Tessa resided) and all other major cities around the world. Then a mass bloodbath was to begin where humans were offered up and tore to pieces. The next wave was to capture, then kill, those who resisted. Once in captivity, they were to be classified into different groups depending on their previous experience and worth. The humans were, of course, nourishment for the vampires. There were plans in place for a special shield technology. Greco had been working secretly with technological engineers to make a grander version of the one he had already in place at the main headquarters in Europe. Once it was up, nobody could enter except for specified designated areas and they were not to leave without special permission. The shield also controlled the day and night settings with a virtual "shade" on the shield, which made it safe for the vampires to walk around whenever they wished. This is where the Levé's came into play, Greco especially. They held the secret to the shield technology; none of it was to go into effect until a treaty was signed. The Kronés' business and technological advances alone were important, but to get The Shade (as it were to be called) up and around the world, they needed the Levé's. The Kronés offered military technology as well which was quite imperative to The Nation. The precise moment of this meeting was very important to more than just those present in the boardroom. It was critical to the entire Vampire Nation.

"I will not proceed with any talks until that *child* leaves this room." Desdemona stared at Tessa, with eyes as violet as the flower itself but were much colder than ice.

"She is my Queen; she is my equal in this," Greco said in his usual calming tone.

"How can you call *that* you're equal? She not only is a vampire made by your hands, but she has not even been amongst our race for longer than a blink of an eye. How can we sit here knowing that she still lacks the knowledge and experience that it takes to truly be a vampire, let alone a queen of an ancient clan."

Tessa retorted in anger, "How *dare* you say that to me. You know nothing about me or what I have accomplished in conjunction with the Levé's. It is true that I was just a human seven years ago, but when Greco held me and turned me into this magnificent being, I embraced everything that became Vampire. If you do not understand how much I have done for my people and how hard I work, then that is your loss. But don't sit there accusing me of being a child just

because I am young in age. My soul is as old as yours and I understand more than you ever will.”

Desdemona stood up, and pointed toward Greco, and seethed, “You will be the one held accountable and you will be the one The Nation comes to eradicate when this treaty is rejected. All because you could not keep that tongue of your young lover in her head.” She turned and stormed out of the boardroom.

Greco stood up, grabbed Tessa’s arm, and drug her into the back office behind the boardroom. “Do I not provide well for you?” The door slammed shut and left an echo through the marbled chambers.

“Yes, my love, you do.” Tessa looked into his eyes quickly aware she may have overstepped her bounds when she spoke out of turn in the boardroom.

“Do I not treat you like my equal partner and as my Queen?” He asked her, more as a reminder than as an actual question.

“Yes, you do.” Tessa nodded.

“Then why do you stab me in the heart so?” He seemed genuinely hurt.

“It is not meant for you my love. Desdemona, she does not respect me as a true Queen, as *your* Queen.” Tessa tried to justify her words, uncertain if they were getting through to him.

“She merely stated a truth that we have to come to terms with. I did a bold, brash thing in taking a human and making her my Queen. This is usually done with someone who understands a lot better, who has been a vampire for at least a hundred years.”

“She had no right to offend me so!” fumed Tessa, as she behaved very much like the child she was accused of being not moments earlier.

Greco roared, “She had EVERY right. She is over two thousand years old; she is wise and does not want our dominance to wait any longer because of someone who still holds ties to the human race.”

“But I hold no such ties.” She stared at him blankly as a response mechanism. She knew better, deep down, but she also knew this was not the time or place to announce those feelings.

“So you tell me.” Greco sighed. “I fear I was foolish in my judgment, not realizing the massive repercussions that could take place.”

Tessa walked up behind him. “Do you no longer love me?” She quivered with anxiousness of the answer.

Greco lifted his head, looked at her from the corner of his eye, and then turned a cold face once again. “Love is not what matters at this point and time.”

Almost heartbroken, yet determined, Tessa walked in front of him and tried to catch his eye. “I became your partner because I loved you and wanted to be with you for all eternity. You have taught me well in these years and I have yet to make a mistake. I rule well, my love, because you and I rule together. It isn’t about just you or me; it is about us together. The King and Queen of the Levé’s.”

Greco looked at her. “Yes, you are right. Times have been changing, that is what this alliance is all about in the first place. We are vampires and we shall rule accordingly.” He stood straighter, less worried and more confident.

“This is the Greco I know and love.” Tessa looked into his eyes and the two kissed passionately, which put an abrupt end to the conversation.

The meeting reconvened in the boardroom, Desdemona sat in her chair, very poised, as she eyed Tessa.

“I want to apologize on behalf of my Queen.” Renos spoke first, to everyone’s surprise. “She is just anxious to get everything signed and moving forward for our two clans. We have agreed to continue with this meeting, both Queens by our side.” Renos looked at Desdemona and then at Tessa in a silent form of reminding them to behave.

Greco nodded, “And I apologize for my Queen, she sometimes has a habit of speaking before she thinks.” He looked at Tessa and she glared back at him with a not-so-happy expression. “So let this meeting proceed in that we will soon join forces and become the true power that we deserve to be.”

* * * * *

It is on its way, the end of the human race as they know it. No longer will they walk about freely or make the simplest of decisions. No, it is coming and they won’t even know what hit them. They tell me three months time, that’s all it will take. This may be what I need to shake all these mourning thoughts of the life I once had. It never did me any good anyway. Greco truly saved me from everything that was consuming my human life bit by bit. So why do I miss it so? I have everything that I could ever want and more.

Look at them down there, poor souls. Poor, poor, defenseless souls. We’re coming for you. Are you going to give in? Are you going to be my slave? You don’t want to die do you?

“It is time for us to sleep, my love.” I heard Greco in the background as he summoned me to our sleeping chamber.

“Soon.” I waved it off gently. *He is watching me I can feel it. I can tell of his uncertainty of my loyalty. Yes, I do stand here and I do think over many things. From time to time I like to go over old memories and think of alternative endings to them. I wish that I could tell him that I will stand by his side through everything, even the slaughter of these poor souls. Maybe Desdemona was right; I am too young to fully understand and I am just a child. I suppose I will have to try harder with each passing day, starting with getting rid of my journal. No, I suppose that will be one of the last things that I destroy of my old life. I am still writing in it to this day, but Greco will no longer know it; no one shall. Sometimes I feel as if it is my only sanity and that it holds the key to my true purpose in this world of the undead.*

Three months is so soon. I have much to prepare for if I am to be the Queen of so many more subjects. Three months; goodnight human souls, enjoy the life that you have now, for soon it will be forever changed with nothing but darkness to guide your paths.