



New Dawning International Bookfair

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Hunters' Game

\$3.49

Mortal heartbeats were an undercurrent to the steady throb of the music that reverberated throughout the noisy club. Youthâ€wild and insolent with the deluded certainty that they were immortal and untouchable. A cool smile curved his thin, cruel mouth, though none who might have witnessed the expression could ever have understood the source of his macabre humor. He toyed with the glass in his hand, long tapering fingers stroking the smooth surface, remembering her skin. He looked at the young people who drifted through the room, each locked in their own worlds. They played at death and immortality, but the truths would terrify them.

A soft, breathless whisper drew his attention outward, and he looked down into the simulated death-masque of a girl who could have been no more than twenty. Her desire was naked in her hazel eyes and he caught her wrist as she reached out to touch him. Amused in his dark, decadent fashion, he lifted the slender limb heâ€d captured and stroked a caress over the throb of life that pulsed rhythmically beneath the pale surface of her skin. She watched in rapt fascination when he bent over her wrist and he heard, distantly, the gasp of pain and pleasure as razor-edged fangs pierced her vein and he drank. The explosive force of her sudden climax reached him through the taste of her blood, and he licked the tiny wounds heâ€d made, healing them instantly.

â€Would you like to dance?â€ A glimmer of irritation and shock in her tone now that he refused to look at her further.

â€No.â€ It was curt, a dismissal. When she was reluctant to accept the obvious suggestion, he permitted himself the luxury of inciting fear. Ancient, odd-colored eyes flickered with golden fire, and she gasped. This time there was no pleasure in the sharp intake of air.

Seconds later, he was alone once again.

But *she* was getting closer.

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Moving deeper into the underground nightlife of Goths and thrill junkies, she strolled in complete ease. It took only a short time to locate the bar Demetri had named earlier in the evening, and she approached it with mild curiosity. She stopped on the sidewalk, immune to the mutters and curses her abrupt halt caused as people stumbled around her. The sign drew her eyes upward. Her mood transformed and became wickedly delighted as she read the name: Savage Garden.

He couldn't have picked a more appropriate place. She didn't doubt for an instant that she would find him inside; his presence was like a flame illuminating the path that would lead her to salvation. Or, more aptly, eternal damnation.

Smiling now, a secretive and deliberately seductive curve to her mouth, she answered the siren-song of her lover's call. A crowd was standing outside the entrance and she walked past them, ignoring the mutterings of discontent. The young man who stood at the door, selecting the clientele for the night, stared at her. His smile was like so many she'd seen that night, speculative and calculating and absurdly oblivious to the mortal danger he was in as he lusted for her.

“What can I do for you, darling?” His faint British accent added a pleasant lilt to the insolent query.

He was a nice-looking boy she noted with a sweeping glance: tall, fair and filled with his own importance.

“Let me go in.”

“Let me go in and you can have whatever you want, sweetheart,” he murmured when he leaned close and his tongue flicked at the lobe of her ear.

“Later.” She locked her gaze with his, penetrating his mind with little effort. “You're busy at the moment,” she added with a light nip at his bottom lip. She chewed the trapped fullness of his lip and laughed when he pulled back abruptly, a droplet of blood staining the corner of his mouth. She leaned close again and licked at the crimson smear, an electric shock of excitement exploding in her veins when the metallic taste lingered on her tongue.

She stepped past him and went inside, laughing as she released her mental hold on him and felt his confusion drifting out of her awareness.

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