

## **Bloodline**

By

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We were cruising down Peachtree Street when Kerry got angry. It was midnight; despite his treatments he still preferred to go out at night, especially cloudy nights. The streets were still slick from the recent downpour so I told him to slow down.

“What? You afraid we might have an accident?” He smiled at me devilishly.

“That’s easy for you to laugh at,” I replied. “I’m new.”

Kerry jerked the steering wheel and we drifted left off Peachtree to International. We plunged down the steep hill before he slammed on the brakes at the intersection. An Inquisitor standing on the corner by Peachtree Plaza glared at us from behind his facemask, his lance pointed in our direction.

“Kerry, don’t,” I whispered.

“Fucking overseers,” he whispered back.

Kerry was upset but he wasn’t a fool. That lance would spit a streak of angel fire that would smoke both of us in seconds. He waited for the light to turn then pulled away slowly. We stopped again at the light before Centennial Park then turned left again, migrating around the park to the light between Phillips Arena and the CNN center.

“I’m hungry,” I said.

Kerry looked at me with a frown. “So you want me to take you all the way back home so you can eat?”

“No, there’s an open market nearby,” I answered.

“Where?”

“In Midtown near the Old Sears building.”

The light turned green and Kerry slammed on the gas, leaving a blue-white cloud of smoke. I felt sorry for him. I was born after the Inquisition so life had always been this way for me. Kerry was old school, a Trueblood. Though he looked no older than me he was at least seven hundred years old. He’d known only one way to live and that had been stripped from him by the Church. Once the scientists identified the genetic codes that revealed what we were, it was easy for the Inquisitors to hunt us down. We were rounded up and locked in internment camps until the See could determine what to do with us. The others weren’t so lucky. We had always been popular in a morbid sort of way so there were Believers that spoke for our salvation. The others were killed where they stood; weres, witches, and warlocks were slaughtered by the Inquisitors. At least that was what I was taught in history class. The same scientists that discovered how to identify us came up with a way to fix us. It involved a series of treatments that would convert our DNA and make us almost normal. Some things they couldn’t change.

Kerry drove to the market without my directions. He pretended earlier not to know but I knew he did. All of us do.

“Hurry up,” he said.

I got out the car and entered the Sunshine Market. I was hot; my skirt was too short and my shirt too low cut. My hair floated over my head in an afro; this time of year

was too humid so I just let it go natural. The men in the market leered at me until it became clear where I was headed. Their looks became frowns of disgust. By the time I reached the back of the market the only person paying attention to me was Jackie Chan.

“Whoa, Telisa! You are smoking tonight!”

“Watch it, Jackie,” I warned. “Mrs., Chan might hear you. You got some fruit?”

Chan grinned. “Just got some in today. Good ones, too”

Jackie reached under the counter and brought up a large blood fruit. The veins pulsed close to the surface and my stomach growled.

“Do all of them look like this one?”

“Yep.”

“I’ll take four.”

Jackie bagged them up. “This is a lot of fruit for one person.”

“I’m with Kerry.”

Jackie frowned. “I don’t see why you spend time with that low life.”

It was my turn to frown. “Shut it, Jackie. You’re not my father. How much?”

“It’s on the house tonight.”

“You’re so sweet!” I leaned over the counter and kissed him on the cheek. “Tell Mrs. Chan I said hi.”

I did my best runway stroll out the market, giving Jackie the show he expected.

Kerry was still mean mugging when I got back to the car.

“What took you so long?”

I jumped in the car and took a blood fruit from the bag. “Me and Jackie were talking.”

“That dirty old bastard makes me sick.”

“Everybody makes you sick.” I bit into the blood fruit, my fangs sinking into a thick vein. It was a juicy one; the warm red fluid ran down my cheek.

“Want one?” I offered.

Kerry looked away. “I’m not hungry.”

I shrugged and enjoyed my meal. The boys in the white coats failed to curb our tastes, so they developed blood fruit. It’s not really a fruit, but a simple organism that produces human blood. They’re great, but the old heads think they’re disgusting. They prefer the alternative, but the alternative will get you smoked.

We were cruising through Buckhead when things got funky. We stopped at a red light at the corner of Peachtree and Pharr. A swarm of party goers crossed before us, young men and women smelling and looking good.

“That’s what we should be enjoying,” Kerry said.

“Stop it, Kerry,” I said.

“Back in the day they feared us, now they just laugh at us, call us freaks.”

“The light’s green,” I said.

Kerry ignored me, his eyes locked on the young throng forming a line into the nightclub. Then he slammed on the gas and we sped towards downtown.

“Slow down, Kerry,” I said.

He kept speeding until we were downtown. He swung into a parking lot and grabbed my wrist, dragging me out of the car. I had to almost run to keep up with him he was walking so fast. He dragged me into a narrow alley, spun me about and kissed me. I

kissed him back hard, moaning as his hand moved down my back and under my skirt. I was working my hands down his pants when he pushed me away.

“Wait here,” he said.

“What?”

“Wait here. I’ll be right back.”

I was stunned. One minute my man was feeling me up in an alley and the next minute he was gone. Before I could get angry he was back.

“I brought you something,” he said.

It was a man. He was dressed in a concierge uniform, his eyes half closed.

“Now here’s a real meal!”

He jerked the man up and bit his neck. The man moaned but didn’t struggle as Kerry drank his blood. He dropped the man then came to me.

“Kerry, I don’t want any part of this,” I said. He gripped the back of my head and kissed me. I tasted blood on his lips, blood like I never tasted before. It was so warm and so...sweet. I ran my tongue through his mouth, savoring the trickle of blood still there.

Kerry pulled away. “See? This is what we were meant to have.”

A bright light flooded the alley, blinding us.

“They’re in here,” a voice shouted. “Send back up!”

An inquisitor emerged from the light, his lance tip glowing. Kerry shoved me aside and leaped higher than I’d ever seen anyone leap. Angel fire burned over my head as I fell. My head struck the ground and I was stunned for a minute; when my vision cleared Kerry and the Inquisitor were struggling in front of me. The lance was broken.

The two of them were slamming each other against the walls. I heard a lot of footsteps heading towards the alley.

Kerry lifted the Inquisitor off the ground, pinned him against the wall and looked at me.

“Get out of here,” he said.

“Kerry, no,” I pleaded. “They’re going to kill you.”

“If I have to live like this I’m already dead.” He smiled at me. “Remember what you are. Remember what it’s like.”

A squad of Inquisitors charged into the alley. Kerry threw his Inquisitor at them then leaped into their midst. I ran in the other direction, escaping into the parking lot. The concierge was there propped against the wall, trying to stop the bleeding from his neck. I rushed him, knocking his hand away and digging my fangs into his neck. The taste was exhilarating. He tried to struggle but I held him still, surprised at my strength. I drank until there was nothing left, the concierge limp in my arms. Angel fire flashed from the alley; I dropped the body and ran.

I don’t know whether to thank Kerry or curse him. He’s dead so I can’t do either. The Inquisitors are hunting me, calling me a backslider. If I turned myself in and confessed I would be rehabilitated. But I can’t. It’s just too good. I feel better and stronger than I ever have. Kerry told me to remember what I am but the reality is I never knew. Now I do. I can never go back.

The End