



Blood Tears

by

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Part One
New York City - Present Day
Chapter One

Amanda pulled him towards her for another kiss, unable to stop herself as they walked together through the dimly lit galleries of the Metropolitan Museum of Art on Saturday night. He smelled of fresh air with just a hint of blood since he had been hunting in Central Park. Whenever their eyes met, she could not help but think back to the last Fourth of July when she had almost died in the very park they both loved.

Her brother, Ryan, had not been so lucky, murdered in front of her while she stood by, helpless to save him from the fiend that slit his throat in the tunnel near the Boathouse. When the monster had come for her, he was beheaded by a blond savior wielding a sword. That man was now her current lover, Christian Du Mauré; a vampire, alive since the French Revolution and who had spent most of his life watching over the descendants of his mortal lover, Josette Delacore.

Amanda had always been psychic, with the ability to touch an object and read the impressions from it. Her brother had inherited the same gift. Only through Christian had she since learned that she was a descendant of Josette, a woman with immense psychic ability, along with enough beauty and charm to seduce several vampires. There was even a physical resemblance, she had noted from the oil portrait of the woman that hung in his bedroom.

Much had happened in Amanda's young life, culminating in her brother's death opening the door to another world filled with vampires from New York and Paris; a world she had never imagined until that fateful night in Central Park. She was amazed at how much she had in common with Christian, despite their vastly different backgrounds. Amanda prided herself on her knowledge of European Art, especially French paintings dating from the period of Le Révolution Française, but he put her to shame. He was the most cultured, literate man she had ever known, surpassing that of her boss, Cole Thierry, also a Frenchman and the chief curator of the Department of European Sculpture and Decorative Arts.

Moving in a fluid motion that barely left an imprint on the naked eye, Christian would stop before each painting as if seeing it for the first time before launching into an expose that left her astounded: "And this was rendered on a summer night when the Pont Neuf was teeming with criminals, vendors and prostitutes, dodging the royal carriages. We complained about the screeching of the wheels on the stone, but it was better than being splashed by mud and refuse on dark, muddy streets."

Amanda had always been intrigued by the unknown artist, Jean Paul Trieste, and this particular painting was one of her favorites. Simply titled Le Pont Neuf, it depicted a woman standing on the wide stone bridge with most of her body in shadow, except for half her face, which was lit by the soft torchlight. The artist captured the moment when she wrapped the cape more tightly around herself while gazing at him longingly.

"That woman must have been brave to stand alone on the Pont Neuf, if all I've read about it is true."

Christian smiled. "It was quite the place, with all sorts of beggars, murders and whores. Michel and I had quite the time there."

Amanda translated that to mean a favorite hunting place. She had researched the bridge enough to know that any Parisian of the eighteenth century would leave it and be home before dark, dodging the pickpockets, street performers and prostitutes.

"Look at the way she looks at the painter. I wonder if they were lovers." She squeezed his arm, suppressing a giggle.

Christian stared at the scene. "What do you know about this Jean Paul Trieste?"

She shrugged. "Not much. He lived in Paris in the late eighteenth century, but there's not too much else, which makes him all the more intriguing and his work very valuable."

The vampire rarely smiled, yet Amanda swore she caught him smiling at the painting, as if he had some intimate knowledge of the artist or the model.

"And because so little is known about him, his works are very valuable."

"Wait a minute!" She grabbed him around the waist, the smell of his hair intoxicating to her. "You had a studio in Paris. Did you know him?"

"Intimately," he whispered into her ear.

Sated with blood, Christian immediately felt himself relax as his vision heightened and his muscles grew tauter. Along with his best friend, Michel Baptiste, he hunted in the shadows cast by the torch lights on the Pont Neuf as street vendors and prostitutes passed, unaware until it was too late; drained and dumped into the Seine before a scream could leave their lips. This had been the lives of the two men for the last thirty years since 1757, when they were both made vampires.

Christian glanced across the expanse of the stone bridge to where he had positioned his model and muse, the intoxicating mortal, Josette Delacore. Though it was a beautiful September evening, a cool breeze blew her dark curls around her sculpted face. She continually brushed them back from her eyes while the torch flames danced beside her, as if in competition.

"Don't let her know you are close, but could you please watch to see that no one tries to assault her, or worse," he directed Michel, who disappeared quickly into the shadows.

Christian set up his wooden easel and mixed his paints, all the time watching Josette and his best friend, unable to decide who was the more uneasy. He could understand his lover's concerns, being asked to stand on the bridge in the company of beggars, criminals and prostitutes who roamed it. No self-respecting woman would stand there alone, especially after sunset, but he loved the Pont Neuf and spent many an hour gazing into the Seine from this perch.

He began a rough sketch of Josette, capturing her posture and poise against the stone wall. It would not take long to complete as he had the bridge committed to memory. He worked quickly on the study of light and shadow, not wanting to risk any harm to her. The last few details could be completed in his studio.

She was only fifteen, the wife of a nobleman who had wanted a portrait of his young wife. He had heard of Jean Paul Trieste, the mysterious portrait painter who opened his doors only at night for the wealthy patrons of Paris. As Josette stood before him in his studio, a raven-haired beauty with eyes the color of emeralds, he was lost to her forever, having already taken her as a lover.

Amanda giggled, holding Christian tighter, not caring where they were, only that they were together. "Perhaps you could fill in some of the gaps I have about Monsieur Trieste?" She smiled up at him. "I have a stack of half-written articles in my office on this mysterious painter."

"I would love to see your articles." He smiled and Amanda blushed, pulling him closer still.

"Alright then," she replied with a grin, leading him silently through the back of the European Decorative Arts gallery towards a door that went down to the ground floor and offices.

At some point Christian took the lead, needing no light to navigate the cavernous wing of curatorial offices. Stopping at a doorway, he pulled her inside. How many times had he come here after hours to sit in her office chair? Christian had told himself that he would never stalk her, only watch over her, which he had done ever since she and her brother, Ryan, were children – the last descendents of his union centuries ago with mortal aristocrat Josette Delacore in eighteenth-century Paris.

Josette Delacore had captivated him from the moment they met. As he held Amanda's warm hand and gazed into her eyes, he saw Josette peering out at him. He stepped into the tiny office, pulling Amanda towards him.

"Maybe this isn't such a good idea, Christian," she whispered, still holding on to him.

Hearing two heartbeats, he promised to be gentle as he lifted her on to the desk between some stacks of books and exhibition catalogs. She leaned back as he slid off her boots and jeans, her heartbeat quickening as he unbuttoned her shirt. There was no light, yet her white skin glistened and her dark hair fell around her tiny breasts.

"Just relax, my love," he whispered, running his lips along her neck. Her pulse rushed under his tongue as he slid his trousers down and pushed into her, fighting for control.

Amanda's cries aroused him as he pushed again, holding her close, never ever wanting to hurt or deny her. Christian had watched over her for so long, loving her from a distance, never wanting to interfere in her life and her love of art, but fate had other plans and so he had fallen in love with her. As he held her close, feeling the warmth of her body wrapped around his, he remembered how her blood had saved his life; how finally meeting her had been the best day in a very long time.

"Harder," she begged as he fought to hold on, lost under the spell of her love and her blood, which called to him like a haunting melody he could not name.

Brushing her hair away from her neck, he struck, her powerful blood flowing down his throat as she screamed his name. Amanda's blood tasted sweet, like nothing he had never experienced, and as he fought to take only a little he felt his muscles strengthen. Christian moved faster as she trembled beneath him. Feeling her release, he let go as pleasure enwrapped them both and bound them tighter together.

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