

The Order OfThe Blood

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The Order of the Blood
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Dreams were fitful. Nightmares, really. They always were when she was confronted with her past. Adam's face slipped in and out of crowds where she ran, trying desperately to convince anyone who would listen that her brother was human—in spite of his condition—and that he must be treated and tried like a human. Shouts from the corners of her mind echoed the sentiment that the Brethren could not be trusted, and should be destroyed, or administrated.

She continued to run. The dream shifted as was its norm, and she found herself in the basement of a home that was not hers. She was helping tunnel Brethren through, and then the fire came. It did not come as the ball of terror that had chased her up from between the floorboards as it had done in reality, but it came in the sniggering whisper of a struck flame. She could hear the accusations and the demands as each orange tongue licked over a surface, engulfing it in heat.

"Why didn't you smell the gas, Robin?" one would ask as another chimed in, "Not just the gas. Why didn't you notice the strangers who'd been hanging about the day before?" Acrid and burning, more voices chorused in cacophony. Why hadn't she locked the basement door? Why had she gone out that day? Didn't she realize that she had been their death?

She always expected the metallic slam of iron bars to jar her awake, but it never did. The six years she had spent behind them for harboring the Brethren and helping them to flee had hardened her to surprise. At least if she ever felt it, she never showed it. So instead of waking, she dreamed out a version of her incarceration that always ended with what had been the first, brutal beating.

Finally, she woke with a cry and sat bolt upright to find Ian standing with his toes to the line of the crushed herbs that crossed her doorway. "Robin?" He asked, concerned, "I heard you...are you alright?" He looked distinctly uncomfortable and was shifting slightly, one foot to the other, but did not cross inside.

"It was a dream," she nodded, wiping her cheeks with the back of her hand. "Just a dream."

He nodded and stood a moment longer. "I'd close your door back," he offered sheepishly, pointing to where it had arced back into the bedroom with its opening, "but I can't seem to be able to get to the handle."

Robin felt a smile tugging at her mouth and she climbed out of bed and went for the door. "Apparently the ward works then."

"Apparently," he smiled back. "I'm, ah, just down the hall if you need me."

"I think I'll be fine. It was just a dream. Thanks."

Ian nodded again as she shut the door, then leaned down to pick up a pinch of the dried arrangement that had lined her doorway. He sniffed it. Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme. Someone had a sense of humor. Chuckling, he dusted off his fingers and moved down the stairs into her library. If it made her feel better to throw old spices on the floor, then who was he to take that away from her. He owed her peace of mind, if nothing else.

Ian spent the wee hours of the morning browsing through the library by the light of a small fire and several candles. It was odd and ironic that Robin would end up there. The Robin he had known loved light. She loved society. She loved people. She was the most energized when surrounded by loud, boisterous groups. She had been a party girl, involved in every activity on the college campus where he had met her. Where she had been a whirlwind of energy and excitement, he hardly recognized her now.

Picking up a photograph, Ian smiled. Under a dusty glass, Robin and Adam smiled back. His arm slung around her shoulders. Two of her fingers behind his head, turning the pose silly. No one could ever have lived up to Adam. Robin followed her older brother around in a puppyish haze of pride and adoration, that was completely mutual, and it was that affection that had given her entrée into the world of the Brethren when Adam had joined their ranks.

