



Shadowbound

Author: *Evangeline Anderson*

Category: Romance, Paranormal

Description: Alaric, Paladin of Solaris

I was sent to kill her... but I submitted to her instead.

The GodKing ordered me to slay the sorceress Sylvanna and retrieve the Heart of the Eclipse—a legendary artifact said to shape fate itself.

Failure was not an option.

But when I found her, her Shadow Magic overwhelmed my Celestial Light. I alone bear the Holy Fire, yet I was powerless against her.

She offered me a deal: take her Oath of Submission and serve her for a time, and she would grant me a chance at the Heart.

I had no choice but to obey.

I never expected to crave it.

Sylvanna, Sorceress of Nocturna

He came to destroy me. Now he is mine. Shadowbound.

I knew the Paladin was coming to kill me. I didn't expect him to kneel.

Alaric is strong enough to snap me in half... but instead, he begs to serve, to please, to taste. He burns with Light, but his soul hungers for Shadow—and for me.

Training him is a pleasure. Keeping him is a temptation.

But our bond will be tested. To reclaim the Heart of the Eclipse, we must travel to the City of Night and face Kraven—my treacherous former Blood-Partner.

If we fail, our kingdoms will fall.

If we succeed... the magic awakening inside my Paladin may change everything.

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Author's Note

The End?

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About the Author

Shadowbound

THE SHADOW FAE, BOOK 3

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He came to destroy me. Now he is mine. Shadowbound.

Shadowbound is a steamy enemies-to-lovers fantasy romance featuring:

A dominant vampire sorceress

A proud, submissive paladin hero

Sex-Magic training, and power exchange

A high-stakes quest through a sensual, magical world

Fated mates tension with dark spice and deep feels

If you love romantasy, magical kink, enemies to lovers, and powerful heroines who take what they want, this book is for you.

Foreword

If you have read the first two books in this series, I want to make it clear this isn't Amy's book, though I do want to write that in the future. This book takes place in an alternate universe where the Dark Fey are called NightBorn and live in a land where it is magically always nighttime. I feel like there are many worlds that include the Fey and I love to write about them in all their variations.

The other thing you need to know about this book is that it has Femdom themes. If you're not sure what that is, it means that the woman leads in the bedroom. I happen

to enjoy writing this particular kink but I know not everyone enjoys reading it. So if you don't like the idea of a woman taking charge of spicy times, this might not be the book for you. However, if you're on the fence and you've never read this kind of book before, let me urge you to give it a try. You never can tell—you might unlock a new kink that will rock your world and change your life forever. ;)

Hugs and Happy Reading!

Evangeline

May 2025

Prologue

Alaric Brightsword

Paladin of Solaris

Oathsworn Servant of the GodKing

“Come, Paladin—the GodKing will see you now.”

I nod at the Royal Guard and stride into the audience chamber, my ceremonial armor clanking. The sunlight falling from the high windows above lights the golden Celestial runes etched on the silver metal like lines of fire. It is a fitting look—I alone among my generation wield The Celestial Fire. I alone am indwelled by the Holy Flames.

Not that I'm proud of my status—I didn't choose the Fire—it chose me. From a very early age, I knew what my vocation must be.

My metal boots clang against the flagstones and I come to a stop about a meter from the dais where the GodKing's throne is located. He, too, is bathed in sunlight, thanks to a skylight cut into the arching stone above him.

Here in Solaris, we are lovers of the light. The beams of the sun fall upon the GodKing, making his snowy hair seem even whiter and lighting his craggy face. I lower myself to one knee before him.

I remember the first time I bowed before this throne—it was ten years ago and the GodKing still had streaks of brown in his hair. I was just a young knight then but still, he honored me. I am oathsworn to the man upon the throne—I would do anything for him.

“Paladin...Alaric.” He nods at me, his faded blue eyes sweeping over my armor. “It is very good to see you again, my boy,” he says. “I have a quest for you.”

My heart leaps. Things have been quiet lately with our enemies—the NightBorn of Nocturna. It's been too long since I went to battle.

“Yes, my GodKing,” I say. “What can I do for you? What quest would you have me complete?”

“A very important one—perhaps more important than any before it,” he says. He leans forward, his bunched knuckles tightening as his arthritic fingers grip the golden arms of his throne. “My boy, I would have you search out and bring to me The Heart of the Eclipse.”

My eyebrows shoot up.

“But my Lord—I thought that was just a legend?”

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He shakes his head, his long white hair moving over his once-broad shoulders.

“Nay, lad! My head Seer had a vision just today. The Heart exists—it is in the keeping of one of the most wicked of the NightBorn. The Sorceress Sylvanna holds it in her tower.”

I frown—I’ve heard the name before. Who hasn’t? But I don’t like fighting women.

“There is little honor in killing a woman—even a witch,” I point out to the GodKing.

He glares at me.

“You think I’m sending you for honor’s sake, boy? The Heart of the Eclipse is said to have unspoken powers! There is a prophecy attached to it. It speaks of the final destruction of Nocturna! The supremacy of Solaris! And best of all, rebirth and renewal—possibly even youth eternal.”

For a moment I see an almost greedy light enter his faded blue eyes. The GodKing is ancient—he has ruled our lands—the kingdom of Solaris—for countless years. But he has no heir. Everyone expects him to name someone to take the throne when he passes but he never has. Maybe this is why. He thinks that the Heart of the Eclipse will bring him eternal life.

I have my doubts about the efficacy of such an artifact, but I can’t share them with my liege lord. It is not my place to question his judgment.

“Yes, my Lord,” I say instead. “And you wish me to find it for you?”

“Find it and lay it at my feet!” he demands. “You know the location of Sylvanna’s tower?”

“I can find it,” I tell him. “The Holy Fire inside me will guide me to her evil that I may purge it from the world.”

“Good lad.” He nods, apparently satisfied. But then he leans forward again. “Listen to me, Alaric—you’re my best knight—the only one gifted with the Celestial Fire. I value you highly.”

“Thank you, my Lord.” I bow my head in gratitude. “You honor me.”

“And I will honor you even more if you return with the Heart of the Eclipse,” he tells me. “But look at me...”

I look up, meeting his steely gaze.

“Yes, my Lord?” I ask.

“If you don’t get the Heart, don’t come back,” he says to me. “My halls will be closed to you. Do you understand?”

My heart feels like it’s freezing in my chest. My whole world is here in the GodKing’s holy Citadel. My entire life has been dedicated to defending it—to protecting and furthering the GodKing’s interests. But never has he given me such an ultimatum.

“I...understand, my Lord,” I said, my throat tight. Would he really refuse me entrance to the Citadel if I cannot complete this quest? It seems so. I have never seen him look so serious—so harsh.

“Good. Then go—and bring me The Heart,” he commands, sitting back in his golden throne. “Do not fail me, Sir Alaric.”

“I won’t, my Lord.” I rise, lifting my chin. I will bring back The Heart of the Eclipse if it kills me.

I have no other choice.

1

Sylvanna

SORCERESS OF NOCTURNA

I see the Paladin coming from quite a distance, thanks to the Mirror of Far-Seeing. It is a shallow silver basin filled to the rim with oily black liquid. Some say it is the blood of a dragon—some say the slime left behind from the thousand years frost. I don’t know—my mother, who was a great sorceress before me, left it to me along with many of the other artifacts in my tower.

I have added to her collection over the years, of course. Among my possessions I can count the fabled Veil of Nyx. When worn over the eyes, it grants the ability to see into the spirit world and read the true nature of souls. However, care must be taken when wearing it that the spirit which lurks within the veil doesn’t take over the wearer’s mind. I use it sparingly, if at all.

I am also the owner of the Thornheart Grimoire. It is a living book of spells that bleeds every time it is opened. I must feed it a drop of blood or a single tear each time I use it and the spells within grow more powerful in proportion to my distress and need. For obvious reasons, I only use it in times of great necessity.

In addition to these artifacts, I own the Lantern of Withered Stars, the Crown of Hollow Bone, the Ashen Chalice, and too many more to name. But for this particular visitor—the Paladin riding so bravely to best me—I think I will need the Jewel of Knowing.

I climb the long spiraling steps of my tower until I reach the very top—here, just above my bedchamber and living quarters—is where I keep my collection.

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I wander through the room, which is dark, for there are no windows. But each artifact has its own glass case lit from within by a single luminous moon crystal. The white, milky light coming from so many cases—for as I said, my collection is extensive—makes the room quite bright enough to see where I am going.

Not that I need much light. I, among the other High Born of my kind, have eyes which glow, allowing me to see in near pitch darkness if I need to. This is necessary here in Nocturna where a spell laid by a very distant ancestor ensures that we are a Kingdom of Night. Lest you should wonder about the practicality of such an arrangement, our plants and animals have all been magically modified to thrive in the moonlight. Our farmers grow abundant crops and so we do not suffer—in fact, we thrive.

Which is something our neighbors to the West in Solaris cannot abide. That's where the Paladin who seeks me is coming from. They are a barbaric nation—a people who worship the burning sun in the sky first and their beloved GodKing second. They think we're evil simply because we prefer the darkness.

Well, to be fair, that's not the only reason they think we're evil. I run my tongue over the tips of my fangs which are located where a human's canine teeth would be. They give me the ability to drink blood, but I don't need more than a small sip now and then—usually for magical purposes.

Magic is not free—it must be paid for. Blood is one way to pay. Hence, my fangs...which have been dry these many months while I have been without either a Blood-partner or a Blood-servant. I have been alone ever since I left my last Blood-partner, Kraven.

My mind shies away from the memory. I thought he loved me but in truth, he sought to Drain me. I barely escaped with my life and my magic intact. I prefer not to think of the details.

I know I'll need either a new partner or a new servant soon, but who can I trust? No one in the City, that's for certain. Likewise, I'm reluctant to take a servant. Who knows if the person I choose might be infected by Kraven's dark magic? I don't feel that I can trust anyone now—not after the man I called “Beloved” tried to take my life and drain my magic.

At the moment, though, I have other matters to worry about. The Mirror of Far-Seeing has revealed the Paladin is coming to do battle with me. Why? I don't know yet. But I soon will.

I find the Jewel of Knowing in a glass case near the back of the room. It is a flat, oval-shaped gem with many facets about as big as my thumb. To wear it, I need only press it to my temple, where it will adhere and begin drawing knowledge for me. It will allow me to hear some of the thoughts and see into the memories of the one I focus on.

I don't press it to my temple yet—each magic artifact has its drawbacks. I must be careful not to use any of them too long or too often, lest I lose pieces of my soul and mind. Overexposure to Shadow Magic can cause madness.

Sadly, this is how my mother died. She would have lived many more years if only she had not become addicted to the Mask of Many Faces. I stop to look at it now, resting in its glass case.

It appears to be a simple porcelain mask—the right half smiling and joyful and the left half crying with misery. It allows the wearer to “become” anyone they have ever met or seen—including their voice and memories. However, each use frays the user's

own identity, making it harder and harder to remember who they truly are.

My mother loved to wear the mask to the City of Night, where most of the High Born of my kind dwell. It amused her to listen to gossip and sow discord among her enemies—of which she had many. But she became addicted to her pastime and wore the mask more and more. By the end she was many people—none of them herself. Ranting and raving, she threw herself from the top of our tower before I could stop her.

The memory is ten years old, but it still saddens me. And the Mask of Many Faces is one artifact I will never use, no matter how dire my need. I will not risk the magical addiction that leads to madness and death. It consumed my mother but it will not consume me.

Indeed, I'm very careful with all my magical artifacts but the greatest one—The Heart of the Eclipse which is the jewel of my collection—is not even on display here in my tower. That is because it is being held in the Queen's Royal Collection in the City. She is the ruler of all Nocturna, though lately she does little but sit on her throne and stare into the Glass of Distraction all day. It tells her stories of far-off lands and distant worlds—stories of people she has never seen and will never see in real life—stories so engaging she cannot look away.

I believe our Queen to be as addicted as my mother was, but at least the artifact she chose is less harmful than the Mask of Many Faces. It won't cause her to go mad—it will simply draw her focus away from the necessary duties of running her kingdom. Which is why Kraven gave it to her, I believe.

Yes, my ex-Blood-Partner—the one who tried to kill me—is the Queen's most trusted councilor. I doubt he would be if she knew the truth about him, but I cannot risk telling her. She probably wouldn't hear me anyway—she is too caught up in the various dramas the Glass of Distraction shows her.

At some point, I must go and take The Heart of the Eclipse back. It is too dangerous and powerful an artifact to be left where Kraven might access it. I pray he does not yet know that I left it in the Queen's collection. I had meant only to loan it to her—she was curious to see it and learn its properties. But that was before she became distracted and addicted. I hope it is still on the pedestal where I left it. For if it falls into the wrong hands...

I don't want to think what might happen and to be honest, I don't really know. There is a rather cryptic prophecy which lends itself to various interpretations. Some claim that The Heart will bring ruin to us all. Some say it will cause rebirth and regeneration. And some scholars think it might even hold the key to ending the endless war between ourselves and our barbarian neighbors in Solaris.

I don't know the answer—Queen Valenna was going to try and find it. But now I know she never will. I should go back to the City and recover it and keep it safe. I look at the empty case where it once sat on a velvet pillow. I never should have risked taking it out in the first place. Now, I feel responsible, knowing that something so dangerous is out where unscrupulous hands might put it to deadly use.

But I can't go back alone—I need support. I need someone to guard my back and watch for Kraven and his allies, who would be happy to finish the job he started. He knows if he could Drain me completely, he would have access to my tower and my collection—I cannot allow that.

For now, though, I must put aside these worries and go out to meet the Paladin who has taken such great pains to find me. My spies, the ravens, brought me word that he was searching for my tower—which he must not find. Instead, I will meet him at the ruined temple of the Old Gods. There I will lay my trap. Once I snare him, I can use the Jewel of Knowing to find out why he's seeking me.

Then I shall decide if I should kill him or not.

Alaric

I am not surprised that the Sorceress finds me before I reach her tower. When I entered the borders of Nocturna, I felt myself being watched. The sound of wings and the harsh cawing of the spy birds she uses to patrol her lands were ever in my ears.

It is jarring to ride from blinding daylight into blackest night all in the space of a single horse's stride, but I crossed the border a while ago. I have been riding through what feels like endless night for ages now.

Though I confess, the darkness of Nocturna is different from that of the nighttime in Solaris. The plants here all glow with unholy magic. It is not uncommon to ride through a forest lit with softly glowing green, blue, pink, and yellow lights. It makes me think of a fairy village and it is quite beautiful—in an evil way, of course.

The animals often have glowing eyes, the better I suppose, to help them see in the endless darkness. They scamper away from my horse well before his hooves might find them. And always the full moon rides above me, pouring silver luminescence that is, thankfully, enough to find my way by.

I had to ask the villagers who live on the edge of the Demarcation—the line between Solaris and Nocturna—where the tower of the Sorceress lies. Some were reluctant to speak—apparently they trade with the NightBorn, though such commerce has been outlawed by the GodKing—and they did not wish to offend their Nocturna neighbors. However, gold on their palms loosened some lips and now I am sure of my path.

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I begin to grow weary just a few hours from my destination. So weary, in fact, that I fear I might start slipping from my saddle. It's natural to be tired, I tell myself. After all, I've been riding for days with very little rest.

I decide to stop a while. I need to be fresh for the battle ahead. I ride until I find shelter—the overgrown and crumbled remains of an ancient abandoned temple to the Old Gods. We worshipped them until the GodKing rose to power.

Up until then, we DayBorn of Solaris didn't understand the threat that was posed to us by the wicked NightBorn of Nocturna. But the GodKing opened our eyes—he made us see how evil they are with their dark arts and Shadow Magic. After he took the throne, we went to war with them and we've never let up since. It's one reason I am proud to serve him.

I dismount and give my horse his head. Destrider won't go far from me—I've had him since he was a colt. I'm so weary now I can barely stand. I find a stream and bathe myself—I always feel better going into battle if I'm clean—and then lay out my cloak and take a nap.

I have no idea I am being watched.

3

Sylvanna

The Paladin is very trusting. He seems to have no idea that his weariness is due to the spell I laid on him using my Sleep Spool. It appears to be a spool carved of ebon

wood but the silvery thread wrapped around it is actually woven of dreams. To use it, I simply cut a length of dream-thread for as long as I wish my subject to sleep and whisper the Paladin's name—which is Sir Alaric Brightsword, how very fitting—as I blow it into the wind.

Once the dream-thread finds its target, the spell takes effect. I stand over Sir Alaric and watch him sleep. He is divested of his armor—wearing only a long tunic which falls to his hips. He has spread his cloak on the grass beside the stream and he slumbers deeply.

He is a fine-looking man—if one likes the ruddy barbarian type. We of the NightBorn favor pale skin and dark hair. Sir Alaric is tanned all over—unsurprising, I suppose, since he spends so much time under the burning eye of the Sun. I cannot see the color of his eyes but his hair is brown with golden streaks in it. He has a straight nose and a sensuous mouth. He also has surprisingly long lashes for a male.

I cannot help looking down below, where his linen tunic has ridden up to his flat, muscular belly, and I see that his shaft is absolutely immense. Even in repose it's much bigger than anything a NightBorn man would wield. Well, well—I wonder how many bastards he's sired for the Jewel of Knowing tells me that he has no wife.

I force my eyes above his waist again. His face in repose is troubled—as though his dreams are bad. A pity the thread I cut for him didn't bring him sweeter sleep. But it could just be that he is anticipating battle with me.

The Paladin is well built—I estimate that he would stand at least a head and shoulders taller than a man of my own kind. Indeed, if he was standing next to me instead of lying on the ground, I doubt the top of my head would even reach his shoulder. He has the heavy muscles that can only be gained from swinging a sword day after day. A Solarian barbarian indeed—he looks like a formidable opponent.

There's something else that's special about him as well. I press the Jewel of Knowing which I wear at my temple and am surprised at what I learn. Sir Alaric has magic! It's very rare in Solaris now, because their GodKing did his best to stamp out anyone who has Power in their veins. He has it himself, of course—it's one reason he's been able to rule for well over a century and still lives. But he doesn't like the idea of anyone besting him.

I am intrigued. I wonder why and how this Paladin has been allowed to thrive when he so clearly has magic coursing through him. Has he been able to hide it all these years?

The Jewel of Knowing can only tell me so much. I'll have to ask him or reach inside his thoughts and memories when he's awake to learn more. But should I let him wake? All my ravens told me that he seeks to kill me and take something from my collection. The men of Solaris are not supposed to kill women, but of course he will justify it by saying I am a "wicked witch" or some such nonsense.

It might be wise to simply cut a longer length of dream thread—one that would last for say, twenty or thirty years—and let him sleep until he's too old to bother me.

But I can't help myself—I'm curious about the strangely beautiful barbarian lying on the ground at my feet. I want to know what he's seeking but more importantly, I want to know how he was allowed to grow and thrive with his power still intact while living in a land that views any kind of magic as blasphemy.

I decide that I will meet him in the ruined temple after all. The dream thread I gave him has almost expired. Soon he will wake and put on his armor to come and find me.

Then I'll get my answers and decide what to do with him.

Alaric

This battle isn't going how I expected it to at all. I hate to admit it, even to myself, but I may have walked into a trap.

"Let's see how strong your magic is, Warrior. Let's see you escape my Shadows."

The soft, purring voice seems to echo from all around me. I look for her—for the Sorceress Sylvanna, the NightBorn witch I have been sent to conquer...but I can't see her anywhere.

The ruined and crumbling temple of the Old Gods, overgrown with vines that glow softly in the moonlight, has disappeared. All around me I see nothing but roiling black shadows tinged with poison green threads. Still, I stand my ground. I am the bearer of the Celestial Fire—I fear no one!

The glowing golden sigil at the center of my armor pulses, reinforcing my conviction. Where Purity and Righteousness raise their banners, Evil and Corruption cannot prevail.

This is what I have been taught all my life—from my earliest days at the Citadel of the GodKing and I believe it with my whole heart.

"I wield no magic, Witch," I tell her, speaking into the shadows as I take a firmer grip on the hilt of my sword. The sharp nubs inside my gloves dig into my skin—the pain urging the Holy Fire within me to burn more brightly. "Come—show yourself that I may strike your wicked head from your body!" I call to her.

A soft, teasing laugh echoes in my ears—it seems to come from all directions at once.

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“But you see, I’m quite attached to my head, noble Paladin. I do not care to lose it,” she murmurs. “However, since I am quite curious about you, I will show myself...but first a few precautions.”

Suddenly, two coils of shadow detach themselves from the roiling mass around me and curl themselves around my forearms.

I shrug my shoulders, meaning to twitch the shadows away. But they remain...and grow more firm. In short order, it feels as though two strong hands are holding me just where the shadows are.

Irritated, I change my grip on the hilt of my sword and twist one arm to be free of them...or try to. I find that my hand is pinned to my side—I can’t lift it.

Then, slowly but surely, the shadows binding my other arm began to twist it. I can feel myself losing my grip on the hilt of my sword...

Fuck! Desperately, I squeeze the hilt tighter, digging the sharp nubs inside my glove deeply into my palm, willing the Celestial Fire to rise within me. As the familiar pain shoots down my arm I feel the burning pressure start to build. In just a moment, it will explode out of me, scorching and incinerating everything in a two-meter-wide radius all around—including the wicked Sorceress, Sylvanna.

But then the shadows curl around my fingers, prying them open and my sword drops from my hand. I hear a clang! proving that there is still stone beneath my feet, though the shadows obscure it. Then the bright silver blade is lost to me.

Only now do I begin to feel the first tendrils of panic creeping into my soul like a dark infection—a foul pestilence which I abhor. But I am not without resources. Though I have lost my sword, I still wear my thorned vambraces.

I press my forearm against my body, feeling the sharp metal hooks dig into my flesh and again the Celestial Fire begins to rise within me...

“No, no—I see what you’re doing, my naughty knight. We can’t have that.”

The voice now has a reproving tone to it—as though I am a disobedient child instead of a Paladin in the service of His Most Holy Majesty, the GodKing. The shadows pry at my arm, bringing it away from my body. I find myself unable to resist them.

“Now, just to be certain...” she says, her voice echoing from all around me. And then the shadows begin to strip me of my armor!

I watch with indignation and unease as, piece by silver-plated, gold-etched piece, my protection is removed. And with my armor, go my talismans—the pieces of equipment I use to help me raise the Celestial Fire.

Gone are my thorned vambraces, then my flensing chain. The shadows strip me of my grieving blade and a moment later, my spiked pauldrons clatter to the ground. The crown of nails I wear beneath my helmet is taken along with the helm itself as it leaves my head. They even strip me of my pain beads—the holy rosary spiked with thorns—and the Shard of Martyrdom I wear strapped to my thigh at all times.

Before I know it, I am practically bare—wearing only my chain mail shirt and linen tunic. But apparently the sorceress still isn’t satisfied because the shadows strip me further until I really am bare—standing naked before her, wherever she is.

“Release me! In the name of the GodKing, I command you!” I shout, enraged. The shadows have parted my legs, curling around my thighs and calves to hold them

open. They are deceptively soft—the texture of silk. Yet hard as stone when I attempt to break free. I struggle in vain—they will not move. They could rip me apart but the Sorceress Sylvanna seems content to simply hold my nude body in place for her pleasure.

“Your GodKing means nothing to me.”

Finally, the voice has a direction. I hear it in my left ear—she must be right behind me! A shiver crawls down my spine—the evil is so near but I cannot fight it! I’ve never felt so helpless in my life—not even as a lad when The Sisters of Correction tied me to the whipping post and beat me for insolence.

In fact, that is what the shadow bindings remind me of. The shame of being stripped and flogged before everyone. Feeling the eyes of the priestess on my naked body as she counted out the lashes. She would always add extra because for some reason, feeling her eyes on me while knowing I was helpless and in her power would cause my shaft to rise...

It is rising now, against my will. I curse the loss of my metal cod-piece. The sharp needles on the inside of it are always enough to stop any unwanted engorgement. The smith thought me mad for asking for such a thing, but I assured him it was only to help raise the Celestial Fire. I didn’t tell him that I wear it to bed as well as to battle, to keep the dreams at bay.

“Well, well...aren’t you a fine, strapping specimen of manhood. But so many scars! Do you pay for your magic with pain, then?”

The voice comes from in front of me this time and a face swims into view. My breath catches in my throat. Why...she’s beautiful. How can the face of evil be so lovely?

Wide, dark eyes that glow with red Hell-fire contemplate me. Her skin is pale as parchment with just a hint of a violet undertone and her nose it tiny and

delicate—adorable. Silky black hair spills down her bare shoulders and over the tops of her breasts, barely held in check by the black and gold gown she wears. It encases full curves—fuller than most, which makes her even more beautiful, at least in my eyes. I have always admired curvy women.

“This...this must be some enchantment,” I stammer at last. “The Sorceress Sylvanna is meant to be old and ugly—a withered crone.”

“Is that what they told you?” She arches a perfect eyebrow at me. “Perhaps you are thinking of my mother, who has been dead these many years. I myself am scarcely a year or two older than you, my Paladin.”

Her lush, ruby red lips part as she smiles at me and now I see the evil. Two fangs curve from her upper teeth—needle sharp and ready to draw blood.

This is the corruption of the NightBorn—the High Born among them are cursed with the thirst for blood. Well, just let her try to bite me! She’ll get a harsh surprise the moment her lips touch my skin.

“I can hear what you’re thinking, you know.”

She taps the side of her head and I see that she’s wearing a deep green stone at her temple. It pulses with unholy light.

“The Jewel of Knowing,” she says, as though I asked. “It allows me to hear the thoughts and see the memories of certain, self-righteous people who think they’re better than my kind, simply because they’re DayBorn.”