

Raina's Fantasy
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*Unedited Draft

Chapter One

"Rough crowd tonight, sweet cheeks. Sure you wanna go through with this?"

Johan stared at the young woman awaiting his answer. A girl, really. Once pretty features already hardened beyond her years, dark eyes that had seen too much. Silver studs adorned her nose, lower lip, and unless he was mistaken, her tongue. Her black skirt barely covered the firm globes of her rear, and the taut circles of her large nipples were clearly defined underneath the wifebeater shirt. His gaze swept to her feet—*combat boots?*—and up to her skull.

Bright pink hair flew in tufts from her head as though trying to escape the entire horrid picture. She was smacking gum as though her life depended on it, a bored *I don't give a shit* expression fixed on her face when Johan knew from experience nothing could be further from the truth.

"Yes, I'm sure."

Dread coiled in his gut, a serpent waiting to strike. Poisoning him with fear he could not afford. More than his own life hung in the balance, and he ruthlessly squashed the useless emotion.

More smacking, the arch of a fuchsia brow. "Once your fine ass is up on the slave block, it's too late to book out. Like, your soul is toast. You get that, right?"

"Yeah, I get that."

Feel nothing. You have no choice.

"What about your friend?"

Johan's gaze flicked to the sofa, where Zane had collapsed to rest. His lifelong best friend. The only person left in the world who gave a damn about him, and vice versa. Sweat trickled down his friend's lean cheeks, dampened his sun-streaked brown hair. His breathing was raspy, getting worse by the hour.

One more night starving in the bitterly cold streets of St. Louis, sick with pneumonia, and Zane would die.

Zane raised his head and nodded, mouth drawn into a grim line.

No choice. "He gets it, too. And we are sold together, or no deal," he reminded her. Gods, the worst thing would be for Zane to suffer alone, ill, and at the mercy of a tyrant.

The girl braced her fists on her slim hips. "Gotcha. But he'll have to be able to stand, or he can't go on the block."

"He will." *Even if I have to hold him up.*

"Drakkon is sitting in front with the bidders. You've heard of the creep? The shapeshifters used to get a kick out of stealing the choice slaves he'd picked. Until he

started eating our furry friends." She paused for dramatic emphasis. Blew a noisy bubble. "No one outbids the nasty demon anymore."

Oh, fuck. "I appreciate your honesty, but we won't change our minds. Let's just get this over with."

"All right," the girl sighed. "It's your virgin ass. Take off your clothes."

Confused, Johan opened his mouth to protest that he wasn't a virgin...then realized what she meant. In spite of his resolve, a prickle of fear raced down his spine. Gritting his teeth, he forced himself not to ask questions when the answers didn't matter.

Johan removed his clothes and tossed them aside, along with the hand blades, dagger, and sword he'd carried for as long as he could remember. The weapons of a warrior. Protector. Reduced to a pathetic joke.

He and Zane would stand upon the block in their skin, allowed no comforts save what their new master deemed them worthy. A wave of misery swamped him, and he fought to hold steady as the girl began to oil his body. Preparing to show his assets to the best advantage. The more beautiful the slave, the higher the bid...and more money lining the pockets of club Lash's mysterious owner.

Nakedness didn't bother Johan. But tonight, his and Zane's nudity before bidders and gawkers alike symbolized their plummet to the dregs of society. A slave. Lower than any other creature. Less than nothing.

He stood, legs spread as the girl worked the aromatic oil into the muscles of his arms, chest, shoulders, back. She massaged his legs, then began spreading the stuff all over his cock and balls. Kneading with gentle fingers.

"Relax. You gotta show off that impressive package, sugar. You want to snag an appreciative master, don't you?"

No. He wanted to run screaming from the building. "Is this necessary?"

She moved away for a moment and returned, holding out a glass half full of burgundy liquid. "Drink up. It will help."

Johan downed the contents as she gave some to Zane also. Wine? If so, it wasn't like any he'd tasted. The vile fluid burned a path clear to his toes. His body heated like a torch...and his cock...*great gods*.

He'd been set ablaze from the inside out. Blood filled his shaft, lifting his erection up and away from his body. Turgid, painful. He groaned, instinctively reaching for himself.

Which earned him a swat on his rear and a swift reprimand. "Hands off, big boy," Pinky smirked. "The audience expects a sexy show during the viewing and that's what they'll get. And if you're not primed and ready for your new master, the consequences will suck."

Johan had heard the stories. Didn't want to venture a guess as to which ones to believe. After tonight, his master could do anything he or she wished to him and Zane. In the eyes of the law, one can't rape or torture the willing. And they'd bartered their bodies and souls willingly, at least on the surface. No one, not even the highest-ranking Superior of Exodus, would be able save them. Ironic, considering their former employers were responsible for bringing them to ruin in the first place.

Anger threatened to choke him. Useless and debilitating, like the fear. With iron determination, he blanked all thoughts of betrayal and the trial to come. Which left only his rampant prick to keep his attention, no relief on the horizon.

Zane was standing now, holding on to the end of the sofa, shaking with the effort. The laced wine seized him in vicious talons as well, and his friend moaned in misery. The girl oiled his skin everywhere, taking obvious pleasure in saving Zane's thick erection for last. Fingers stroking the slickened, blue-veined length. Suddenly she stood, leaving him aroused and desperate.

The decadent sight of his friend's straining body did nothing to quell Johan's rising lust.

Zane closed his eyes. "Please," he rasped. "Help me..."

"Sorry, stud. If you're a good slave, maybe your master will let you off the hook. Let's go, boys." With a cheeky wink, Pinky led them out of the holding room directly onto a large, slick stage.

The deep crimson curtain edging the stage was drawn closed, but Johan could hear the festive noise of the crowd beyond. Anxiously awaiting tonight's tasty fare at Lash.

He and Zane were the treat.

His heart sank as he spied two sets of silver poles. Each set consisted of two poles about eight feet high, silver chains with manacles attached to the top and bottom. One restraint for each wrist and ankle. The simple contraption was fixed upon a round section of flooring that would rotate slowly, showing all angles of their bodies to the audience. Letting the bidders savor every inch their prospective new slaves.

So much for helping Zane stand upright. But the restraints would help bear his weight without being too obvious.

Don't think of tonight, and all the nights for the rest of your life. Don't imagine what this master will do to us.

Johan swallowed hard, standing between the first set of poles as the girl instructed. In moments, she'd fastened his wrists and ankles, spreading him wide in a letter 'x'. She secured Zane, then left without wishing them luck. Not that any amount of fortune could help them now.

Turning his head, his gaze locked with Zane's feverish one.

"Forgive me," he whispered.

"We were outcast, and fresh out of options, old friend. Whatever comes, we'll face it together, just as we always have." Zane sent him a weak smile, then faced straight ahead, stifling a raspy cough.

Regret speared Johan as he did the same. His friend was gentle and far too forgiving by half. For all his deadly skills as a warrior, Zane possessed a big heart.

The curtain began to slide open. Johan had known what to expect, but this final debasement, complete vulnerability, came as a shock nonetheless.

Bodies, a mass of them, crowded around every available table. Standing room only, all the way to the back of the room, around the bar. Smoke hung heavy in the air, a human habit. Lights filtered through the swirl, creating the ghostly image of bodies rising from Hell. At least he couldn't see individual faces. A small comfort.

They cheered, stomped, pounded on the tables. Shouted obscenities, lewd suggestions.

And one of them would own his body and soul by the end of the evening.

Shame cut off his breath, shriveled his heart. He didn't look at Zane again. It was done.

He'd consigned them both to a fate worse than death.

Johan, seasoned warrior, revered champion, was no better than a whore.

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A vampire Queen with the Millenium itch? Be careful in there, my lady.

Raina paused outside the trendy nightclub, a ghost of a sad smile hovering on her lips. Alexi, her lone coven member and loyal companion, knew her too well. Did she dare? And why not?

Because she was saving a part of herself for her future mate, the great passion of her existence? The sexy, dominant male whose steely will and insatiable appetites exceeded her own?

Right. At her age, the chances of finding this elusive paragon of male perfection were infinitesimal. And to be fair, she readily admitted to her own flaws, which had contributed to her continued failure in the mating pool.

She'd always been far too picky in her choice of males, demanding, dominant, and basically self-centered. Not traits that had endeared her to the males of her acquaintance, save for steady, gentle Alexi. But those were the traits of their Vampire Queen, and Raina couldn't afford to bow to anyone, to show weakness. Not even to her mate.

Which made her a very lonely Queen, though she'd adored Alexi madly ever since she'd plucked him from a hellish existence fifty years ago. She and her young vampire gave one another friendship – and yes, pleasure – but he wasn't her *mate*. And though he tried to hide his emotions from her, she sensed Alexi's restless longing as well.

If not for her treasured fantasies and her handsome companion, she might've sought the sun long ago. Every one hundred years, she treated herself to an indulgence. A fantasy held sacred, to be savored until the time had come to celebrate the passing of another endless century. Surely, a girl's Millenium birthday was deserving of her greatest, most deliciously wicked fantasy-made-reality.

Before the end of this night, she would own two males. Two men she would bond as her blood slaves. As such, they would exist only to satisfy her every desire, at her beck and call. Two cocks filling her, making a yummy Raina sandwich. Make that three whenever Alexi chose to join them.

Her new slaves would be spread naked before her, helpless to prevent her from doing whatever she wished to them. Learning to pleasure their Queen and each other, in every possible manner.

Raina nearly moaned aloud. Her sex heated, throbbing and hot between her thighs. Failure tonight was not an option. She may have buried her dream of finding a mate, but very soon, she and her companion would add a blazing fire to dispel their dreary nights. Determination boosted her flagging spirits, propelling her into the gloomy

interior of Lash.

Millenium itch indeed, though what quality of slave she could expect to acquire was in serious doubt, in spite of her positive outlook. Not because of the establishment—Lash was as polished and sleek as any club of its kind—but because of supply and demand.

Fine, attractive specimens were too few, and were snatched quickly off the blocks by only the wealthiest of masters. Highly coveted, these slaves were used for food and sex. If very lucky, they enjoyed a normal life span serving a benevolent master like herself.

The unlucky ones sold to cruel masters like Drakkon who abused them mercilessly, without remorse. Under his rule, all slaves eventually suffered hideous deaths. And by law, a master can do as he or she pleases with them. Thinking of Alexi, her heart nearly broke all over again.

The lesser creatures sold at a low price and became food, consumed and discarded. Harsh times, but that was the way of the world. Nothing wasted. The weak perish. The strong survive.

The thick crowd parted in deference to Raina's passage. Drawing her long cloak tightly around her shoulders, she ignored the whispers floating on her heels. She bit back a sigh of annoyance, reminding herself that glimpsing royalty among any of the species was considered a rare occurrence and cause for excitement. She'd never understood why.

Pushing to the front of the room, she located a perfect table at the edge of the stage. Unfortunately, it was situated next to Drakkon and his three unhappy sentinels, which explained the unusual vacancy. *Damnation.*

Resisting the urge to pinch her nose against the odor of his rotting, bloated carcass, she took her seat. Why didn't he assume one of his handsome forms, for pity's sake? Probably to frighten his potential competitors. The day one of Drakkon's warriors became powerful enough to oust the Demon King and take his throne, wild festivities would abound throughout the city. Cheered by this lovely idea, she chose to ignore him.

Tonight, however, the demon was having none of it. "Raina, my dear. What brings you out to play this night?"

She stiffened and looked him in the eye. That he'd addressed her as *my dear* rather than 'my lady', 'Highness', or another appropriate term would have been acceptable if he were a close friend. Coming from Drakkon, it was meant as public disrespect. She arched a brow, opting for a noncommittal reply.

"Drakkon."

"Come now," he laughed, causing all three of his chins to wobble. "Tell us what's behind this rumor that the Vampire Queen has been haunting every slave auction within five hundred miles these past few moons."

"What's with the rumors that you've been devouring your competition in the bidding arena? Sore loser?"

He sent her a sinister smile that didn't reach his dead, black eyes. Dirty, yellowed

fangs split his gaping mouth. "Only the pesky shifters. I could think of a much more pleasurable punishment for you, Raina."

Ick. "I'd rather be eaten, but thanks anyway."

Anger darkened his ugly features. A stab of satisfaction zinged through her as she dismissed him, facing forward.

A voice over the loudspeaker announced the start of tonight's auction. The crowd quieted as the curtain began to slide open. A momentary pause as the room held its breath and then...a collective gasp of stunned appreciation.

The predictable jeers and rowdy merriment began, but Raina stared in mute awe, jaw hanging open. Blinking, she studied the gorgeous vision before them all. They were the two most beautifully formed males she'd ever seen, human or not. Naked, every inch of tanned, gleaming skin a feast for the senses. Strong thighs, ropy arms, and deep, broad chests corded with muscle.

Her gaze strayed to the apex of their thighs. Both men were huge with arousal, their cocks thick and long, arching to kiss their six-pack abs. A pearly drop of pre-cum had seeped to the purple tips of each broad head, heavy balls taut, evidencing what must be true sexual agony. The fire in her sex grew worse, the knowledge that these men *would* be hers, no matter whom she had to battle, making her hopelessly wet.

Chained with their arms and legs spread wide, the position accented their sheer strength and perfection. And heightened everyone's awareness that these magnificent creatures would soon serve a lucky master's every desire. That they'd given themselves willingly to do so.

Last, she studied their faces. *Oh, my, yes!* The male on her left sported a head of shaggy brown-gold, sun-kissed hair brushing against his neck and falling into bright, glassy green eyes. His cheeks were lean, as though he'd lost a little weight. Sweat beaded on his face, and her preternatural hearing discerned his wheezing breaths. With a start, she realized the man wasn't just aroused. He was very ill. But no matter. A few drops of her blood and this sexy male would be good as new in no time. And the other...

Every cell in her body stood at attention. Her nipples puckered against the filmy blouse under her cloak.

This male personified raw power and defiance. Quite a feat for a human. The proud tilt of his dark head, the leashed rage in his golden gaze, struck her like a million volts of electricity. He may as well have shouted *I will not be broken*, so clear was his arrogant challenge.

Intrigued, she studied him. If the human harbored strong animosity toward bondage, why had he cast his fate to the wind by placing himself upon the block, knowing full well that few of his prospective masters would show him any mercy? Indeed, what could've driven two impressive men to such dire straights?

"Don't even think about it, my dear," came Drakkon's gravelly voice. He smacked his ample lips. "These two will satisfy my appetites far better than your loyal companion ever managed. How *is* Alexi these days?"

Masking her anger, she flicked her cool gaze to his. "Fuck off, demon."

Drakkon's face colored purple with rage, but she focused her attention on the stage once more, ignoring him. She had the coin to outbid the demon, as well as the ancient power necessary to deflect any attempt at retribution on his part, and he knew it.

She lifted her chin, and smiled.

The circular portion of the stage each slave stood upon began to rotate, pausing briefly at each quarter turn.

Left side view, emphasizing the firm, hard lines of their bodies. Straining, erect cocks and heavy balls.

Back side. Broad shoulders roped with even more muscle, trim waists. Chiseled buttocks. Powerful thighs.

Her attention scanned north again to the small tattoo each man sported in the center of his lower back. About three inches in length, the design boasted a dagger with an ornate handle, razor-sharp tip pointed downward.

Stunned, she gasped in sudden recognition. "Warriors of Exodus."

Another quarter turn, and the men faced front once more. The viewing had ended, and bidding would begin.

They were the fallen warriors of Exodus, the ones branded as traitors. What creature had not heard of their banishment? The implications left her mind reeling.

Exodus had been formed using the strongest among humans, vampires, demons, and shapeshifters. The elite. A warrior's job entailed forcing all creatures, both fanged and furry, to play nice. Or else. They were respected, feared...and most of all, hated.

The lewd shouts and jeers directed at the pair on the block took on sinister new meaning. A great many in this crowd would covet the rare opportunity to enslave a fallen warrior, wield terrible power and control to beat down once proud men.

First in line, the Demon King who, according to hushed whispers, gleefully persuaded his fellow Council members to ban the pair in disgrace.

The auction master stepped onto the stage. Beside her, Drakkon chuckled with confidence, the stench of lust pouring off his putrid body. His sentinels glanced at the block and each other, sympathy for the humans etched on their faces.

She straightened, awaiting the signal to begin bidding. For the present, all thoughts of self-indulgent fun and games vanished. With an effort, she crushed the unfamiliar and unwelcome surge of apprehension.

Blazing Hades, she couldn't remember the last time she'd been truly afraid of anything, but knowing the horror these men would suffer in the wrong hands—especially Drakkon's—knifed her heart.

Raina looked to the beautiful raven-haired warrior, his head high, silently defying any creature in the room to conquer him. Compassion stirred in her breast, and fear unlike any she'd experienced in centuries.

Yes, many here tonight would pay dearly for the privilege of breaking these two. Damn the price and the consequences. She had never learned to be a good loser, and she would not start now.

Even if she had to flash-fry Drakkon the Disgusting and send him to Hades.