

Unsuspecting Secrets

Bound In Blood Trilogy

Book 1

By Greta Krafsig

1. Austin

The light under the pump had been in need of replacement for several weeks now. In the darkness of the evening the woman fueling her car tapped her foot as she waited and glanced up at the flickering bulb in annoyance. Every other pump had been occupied when she'd pulled her car into the station, otherwise she wouldn't have picked one in semi-darkness.

Her eyes scanned the vacant lot where she stood. The man inside the gas station booth was looking out at her from behind his bulletproof glass. He gave her a smile and drew another puff on his cigarette. The woman rolled her eyes in disgust and turned away before she drew any more unwanted attention.

When the light above her gave a loud pop he moved. Shards of glass rained down on the young woman and she screamed in surprise. Her laugh of relief came a few moments later and her shoes crunched on the broken glass underfoot.

"Are you all right?" The man called out to her. He squinted into the darkness trying to see where she stood. The uncertainty written upon his face was all the reassurance Austin needed.

"Yeah, I'm fine," she said with a chuckle. "It just startled me, that's al-" she broke off mid sentence. Her voice dropped to a trembling whisper as she said, "Did you hear something?"

Glass crunched again as the woman shifted. With one hand she reached out and sought the trunk of her car in the darkness. It took several moments before her fingertips brushed the rusted metal of her vehicle. She was blind in the darkness.

"Lady? Are you okay?" came the worried voice of the attendant.

Austin's dagger found her throat as the gas pump gave a loud click. Full tank. Blood ran down his hand and between his fingers where he supported

the woman's weight as her body went limp. Hungrily he ran his tongue along the red smile at her throat. The warm liquid never tasted better. He extended his fangs and drank.

"L-l-lady?"

Austin heard the creak of hinges. The man built up his courage and placed a tentative foot outside with the scrape of sneaker on asphalt. More hesitant footsteps followed.

"Lady can you hear me? Say something...?"

The beam of a flashlight swept the ground, over their feet, and then arced slowly upward. The light came to rest upon the woman's red throat before it hit him in the eyes. Instead of turning away Austin grinned and let the woman's body fall to the ground. Her skull hit with a wet smack. Slowly Austin brought his dagger to his mouth and licked the blood from the shiny metal.

The flashlight shook in the man's hand and a wet stain spread over the front of his pants. Disgusted, Austin raised his dagger and threw. The blade struck the man in the middle of the forehead and force of the blow knocked his whole body backwards. The flashlight clattered from his limp fingers. He lay sprawled on the ground.

Austin stared at the pool of blood forming around the man's head. "What a waste," he muttered. Reaching for the dagger he gave it a yank, only it wouldn't come free. Using both hands he tugged to no avail.

"Bloody hell," he cursed. He put one foot over the man's nose and mouth and pushed down. The blade came free so suddenly he stumbled a few steps to regain his balance. His chuckle sounded loud in the pregnant silence.

"Now that's what they call a hard head."

He twirled the dagger in his hand before he slipped it into his belt. Leaving the bodies where they lay he pushed open the door to the gas station booth. Inside he hit a button on the cash register and tucked handfuls of large bills into his pocket. Glancing around a final time he grunted and crossed the

street. Six months ago he would have thought twice before making a kill so close to his destination, but tonight he didn't care.

The neon signs of the strip club beckoned him. The girl depicted was gaudy pink with green highlights where scanty clothing might cover her. The boobs were much too large for her small chest, thin waist and long legs. Her mouth opened and closed in a suggestive gasp of pain or pleasure as her eyes squinted shut and her hands slid from her breasts to her crotch. The parking lot outside was relatively full for a weeknight. Faint rumbling bass roiled out the building and hummed against the ground with pulsing vibrations, as steady as the pulse of a vein. Austin licked his lips and lengthened his stride.

Inside he paused at the doorway, letting his eyes adjust to the intensity of the lights. Several men noted his entrance and stood swiftly from their bar stools. Grinning he watched them scramble for the few remaining seats beyond the center stage. The women being spotlighted in their thongs and scanty tops exchanged worried looks with one another before they walked off stage mid-performance. A few men in the audience grumbled but none of them raised their voices in open protest.

Austin found a seat at the bar, now empty, before one of the bronze striping poles. Her heels clacked on the polished surface of the countertop and drew every man's eyes but his. Several bold men whistled and shouted catcalls but the woman ignored them. Her black high heels stopped before him and she sank down to a squatting position. Her thong concealed little. Without moving his head he tipped his eyes upward and let them travel the length of her muscular legs, to her slim waist, and upwards past her pert breasts to rest on her face and one inquisitively raised eyebrow. He felt a sense of satisfaction as goose bumps prickled her skin.

"Don't you have a life? A family?" she asked as she slid a hand down the inside of her thigh and back up to her breast. The loosely netted black pantyhose under her garter belt accentuated the voluptuous curves of her figure.

"Would it matter if I did? I'm here aren't I?" He paused to admire her ass as she turned and swished it back and forth, the cloth nearly touching his nose.

"I'm surprised you're here tonight," he said suddenly determined to change the topic. "I thought I'd get stuck with the bitch again." He jerked his head towards a curtain beyond the bar where another stripper stood watching them.

The stripper smiled and rubbed her stomach up and down the bronze pole in a suggestive fashion. She danced for him like she had for nearly six months now. Of the several men who watched her dance in the background, none of them were daring enough to approach.

"Do you like your job?" He pondered, shifting and pulling bills out of his pocket.

"Sometimes. I mean we all have to earn a living don't we?" She stepped closer to him and he let his fingers trail across her hip as he tucked a wad of money into her panties. His touch was cold against the warm, sweaty flush of her skin and shamefully she allowed his fingers to linger before she pulled away.

Austin chuckled and sat back on the bar stool. He let his eyes wander up and down her body a second time. Her long, straight, black hair was caught up into an intricate bun at the top of her head. This particular style drew his eyes to the accentuated high cheekbones and full lips. Her eyes were a warm honey brown and slanted slightly at the corners, giving her a dark, exotic flair. She was breathtakingly beautiful.

The police sirens were several miles away when he heard them. It was time for him to go. He pulled several more bills from his pocket and stood. Leaning in closer to her he tucked the money between her breasts.

"Until tomorrow..." He whispered in her ear like a sensually soft caress. She shivered and he grinned.

His black trench coat billowed behind him as he strode purposefully to the door. An incoming boy was so caught up in his own thoughts that they crashed into each other.

"Watch where the fuck you're going asshole." The boy cursed at him as he pushed past and sauntered up to the bar. Austin fingered the hilt of his

dagger then thought twice as the sound of the sirens drew closer. Several other men had already filtered back to sit before the woman. There was always tomorrow.

"Hey wait!" the stripper called out with a note of desperation to her voice.

Austin turned and watched her catch her breath. She was as attracted to him as he was to her. "Yes?" he spoke in a voice smooth with confidence and used to command.

"I still don't know your name."

He watched her lean back against the stripping pole and take support from the solidarity it put between her shoulder blades.

"Austin." He said and walked out.

The police were pulling up to the gas station as he crossed back over the street.

"Stay back!" A thickset police officer barked as he set up a boundary around the bodies with yellow police tape. Several other people had gathered to look and another balding police officer was asking a sobbing woman and her solemn husband question after question.

"What the hell happened here?" Austin questioned, trying to sound concerned. "Are those bodies?"

"Where were you when this happened?" a detective asked him from where he was squatting near the dead woman.

Austin could still taste her blood in his mouth when he answered, "The strip club across the street. I was getting ready to head back to my wife and kids when I saw all the commotion."

"You didn't hear anything did you? See anything?" The police blue asked with a tone that reeked of indifference.

"Nope, not a thing. I was too interested in the girls, if you know what I mean."

"Best get home to your wife then," the detective smiled and glanced over at the strip club with a look of longing. "You wouldn't want to keep the little lady waiting, now would you?"

"Of course not officer." He gave the man a curt nod and disappeared back into the darkness.

Police are so gullible. Austin made his way through the twisting back alleys of the city streets. He could have approached the crime scene with his knife in his hand and walked away without them so much as batting an eyelash. Committing the crime was only half the fun.

Even at one in the morning he was not alone on the streets as he went. Cats yowled as they clawed each other and fucked all the same. Starving dogs and rats alike scurried through the alleyways and plundered human garbage and waste. Beyond the animals, New York City was alive with sounds all its own. A car backfired, metal collided, a woman shrieked, and more sirens wailed. Whores grabbed at the crotch of any man passing by and filled the night with grunts of pleasure or crude curses to those who turned them down. Drunks puked in the gutters or laid passed out and snoring while gang fights and drive by shootings filled the air with their rhythmical pow pow, pow pow. Austin took a deep breath and cherished it all. He loved this city, his city.

The building he called home emanated a red light as he strode towards it. The Lair had been in his family for generations. Home sweet home. A large horned daemon dragged a young girl out the door. The girl's shrieks colored the already flavorful New York night. When the daemon saw Austin he grinned.

"That wife of yours is in one hell of a mood tonight. Glad to say she isn't mine," he nodded down at the girl struggling to free herself from his grip, "but this one will do well enough." The daemon wrapped his arm around the girl's waist, whispered a word in her ear, and the two vanished into the darkness.

"Where have you been?" The voice was as sharp as a slap across the face. Austin didn't flinch; instead he looked coldly at the woman standing before

him. She was nothing like the lean, tall, distinctly curved stripper. Valerie was by far more substantial, shorter in stature, with large full breasts, round hips, and a less distinguished waist. It was her beauty that had first drawn him to her. She had a delicate nose and well arched eyebrows, pale skin, dark curly hair, full lips and strong chin. None of these could come close to rivaling her spectacularly violet eyes. The fact that they were shot through with an intense black made their purple depths all the more vivid.

"That's none of your damned business woman." He snapped, brushing past her.

"The hell it isn't!" Valerie said glaring at him as he pushed his way through the club's crowd. After a second she followed.

He spent longer and longer away from her every night now. Going on three centuries they'd shared together and each night he found himself wondering what besides her beauty he liked about her. "I'm not going to talk about this here." Austin said spinning back to face her. The Lair was packed tonight, and they were starting to attract attention.

"Oh yes, we are. Don't you dare walk away from me!" She reached for his arm and stopped him with an iron grip.

Austin turned and growled at her low in the base of his throat as his fangs extended within his mouth. "Not now Valerie." Each word was so clipped and well defined it was as if he'd spoken three separate sentences.

Valerie brought her hand back and let it connect with his jaw. The scrape of her nails brought thin lines of blood to his skin. Austin's eyes turned from golden brown to black in anger.

"I swear if you ever do that again I'll kill you. Do you understand me?"

Valerie hissed, showing him the points of her two inch white fangs. "Don't think you can get yourself out of this so easily Austin. You may be my partner but I'm the mother of your children. You wouldn't dare harm me!" She spun on her heel and left.

Austin punched at the nearest wall and the plaster cracked under the force of his blow. His hand came away slick with fresh blood, but it was not his own. The Lair was famous for the blood that covered its walls. Once upon a time they'd started off as white as new fallen snow. Now they were black, pitch black. Slowly his eyes studied the vampires and demons surrounding him, watching him.

"Preston!" he roared over the semi-silence. Moments later a young vampire appeared, almost the spitting image of his father. Although centuries younger, Preston already matched him in height and build.

"Yeah Aussie?" Preston gave his father a grin as he spied the dent in the wall. Austin had taught his children drop the formalities decades ago. In the vampire world blood relations meant little more than pack dominance.

"Where's your sister?"

"She's around somewhere. Last I saw her she was leading a guy into the back rooms." As if on cue a scream arose from the rooms down a hall at the back of the building. In the meantime a drunken vampire stumbled up onto the stage and belted out a few verses of an obscene song before his friend pulled him down with an apology to the annoyed crowd.

"Go get her. I want her to watch the bar while we're out."

"Where are we going?"

"Don't question me, go!" The tone of his voice was more than enough to put his son into action.

2. Preston

The female bartender gave Preston a fearful smile as she set his drink down beside him. Her tight, short, pink t-shirt accentuated her small boobs and the blond color of her hair that was too odd looking to be natural. Preston returned her smile and turned away in disgust. Though the girl didn't know he was a vampire she sensed it and tried as hard as she could to avoid contact with him. It was rare when Preston met a human that could look him in the eye and walk away on steady legs.

"How long have we been coming here now Press?" his father asked as he set a drink down. The sleazy little bar was at maximum capacity even at two in the morning.

"As long as I can remember. You took me here after my first hunt." Preston eased into the seat beside his father. He noted his father's stiff shoulders had relaxed as he downed drink after drink of hard liquor.

"I still don't know why we keep coming back here though." Austin grumbled into his glass.

"For the sentimental value I guess. Though we have all this stuff at the Lair..." Preston stated but Austin wasn't listening. Preston followed his father's gaze across the room. The bartender was talking to a group of large men and gesturing towards them.

"Looks like we're about to have company," Austin said with a slur, patting the place his knife rested securely against the side of his thigh. Preston nodded and forced the last of his drink down. He couldn't bring himself to waste good booze.

As the men started over Preston jumped out of his seat and turned to face them. "Hello boys, let me buy you a drink." Preston held out the empty bottle.

The biggest man lunged. The empty bottle shattered across his forehead and he went down with an oath.

Preston turned with lightening speed and smashed the fat one in the face with his elbow, breaking his nose. As the man wheeled forward to fall Preston grabbed him by the arm and yanked it back. The crack of the broken bone made the crowd cringe.

"Who's next?" Preston mocked as his second victim fell to the floor with a flop. The first man moaned and tried to stop the blood spilling down his face and around the piece of glass protruding from his forehead. The fat man couldn't decide to use his working arm to cradle his broken one or to try and stop the blood pouring from his nose and down his mouth. The third man pulled both injured men to their feet and managed to drag them outside.

"Anyone?" Preston asked, hoping beyond hope that someone would answer the challenge. He wanted to hurt a few more people now that the adrenaline was coursing through his system. The silence was all the answer he got. "Guess not."

Preston heard Austin snort; half amused, half pissed they would have to leave now. Finishing his beer Austin stood up and barked, "Let's go Press."

"Oh come on Aussie, I was just starting to have some fun." Preston looked towards the fake-blond bartender and grinned. "Just one more, okay?"

"No." The word was cold, and projected in a tone that could not be disobeyed. "We're leaving. I'm not in the mood for this shit tonight."

Preston nodded meekly and followed his father out. The crowd in the bar sat as still as stone as the two dark clad figures were swallowed back into the depths of the night.

"Where are you going?" Preston called to his father as Austin turned away from the winding street heading back to the Lair.

"I have things to do. You go ahead on back."

Preston shrugged and turned down a dark alley for home. He heard their voices before he saw them emerge from the shadows. The man at the forefront was markedly larger than the men that trailed behind him. His eyes were gold and gave off an eerie yellow glow. His skin was so dark red it was

almost black and lent him a camouflage in the darkened alley. Where he should have had fingers he had claws instead. He was no human.

The daemon smiled at Preston and raised a hand. His followers stopped a few feet behind him at his signal. "Preston, your reputation precedes you."

"And yours doesn't. Who the fuck are you?" Preston fingered the dagger at his belt. The feel of the obsidian inlay on the hilt of the ancient blade was reassurance to his raised hackles. Strong as he was as a vampire of the ancient blood, his chances when faced with so many opponents were significantly diminished. His weapon was one of the few things he would bet his life on.

"Temper, temper. So much like your sire but far more handsome; that must come from your mother." The daemon chuckled and cocked his head in Preston's direction. "The names Reese. Call me an old family friend if you will. Your mother has a far more pleasant impression of me than your father. Austin never was fond of me."

Preston jerked his head towards the men behind Reese. "Who are they?" His fingers tightened on the dagger.

"Lesser vampires and daemons. They're nothing to be worried over until they combine their strengths. To our victims we're known as the Others."

Preston snorted. Gangs of lesser vampires were not uncommon as were gangs of lesser daemons, or witches, or werewolves. However, a gang of vampires and daemons together was unheard of. Daemons and vampires were notoriously enemies. Their views as creatures were just too conflicting and tension between the two groups could be traced back to the beginning of their very existence. Unless Reese was a remarkable leader, Preston had little to fear from the unlikely gang.

"Don't underestimate us." Reese noted how Preston dropped hold of his dagger hilt and took a more relaxed stance.

"You're smart, smarter than most I'll grant you. How do you know my parents?" Preston crossed his arms over his chest and eyed the Reese up and down.

"Reese, we're supposed to be hunting." One of the daemons closest companions said, flashing his fangs at Preston. "I can walk away from this group any time you know."

The vampire shuffled his feet and with these small movements Preston caught a glimpse at him. He was tall, wiry; his arms and legs almost too long for his body. With skin as pale as new fallen snow and his deep blue eyes he was in no way unattractive. His dark black hair completed the picture, giving him a menacing aura even though Preston knew better.

"Jamie," Preston held back a laugh. "I should have known you'd fall in with a group like this, insignificant as you are."

The weak vampire glared at Preston. "I'm walking." He turned to stalk away but Reese caught him by the arm and jerked him close.

"He's right. Without us you're even less than nothing. You wanna leave, then go. But don't you ever come crawling the fuck back." Reese shoved Jamie away from him and kicked out at him with his foot. Jamie yelped like a battered dog and resumed his place behind Reese. Preston couldn't help but grin.

Reese took a step towards Preston and lifted a hand to brush his hair out of his face. "You're beautiful when you smile like that," the words were colored by his apparent desire.

Preston jerked his head back and smacked at Reese's hand. Instinctively his fangs came unsheathed and he felt for his dagger. Every line of his lithe body prepared to spring for an attack. "I may be a vampire, but I don't stoop that low. Jamie knows what I'm talking about. Ask him if you don't believe me."

Reese laughed and Jamie glared at Preston from over the daemon's shoulder.

"So that's how you got into this gang, isn't it Jamie?" Preston sneered. He'd known Jamie since his beginning as a vampire and Jamie's flexibility in his

sexual preferences had always disgusted him. As younger vampires the two had been inseparable until that one day...

"Fuck you Preston," Jamie retorted, spitting in his direction.

"You'd like to, wouldn't you?"

"Enough!" Reese roared, turning on Jamie and smacking him hard across the jaw. Thin lines of blood welled where the daemons claws had nicked the pale vampire skin. Jamie growled threateningly when the two other gang members took tentative steps closer at the scent of his blood and momentary display of weakness. Should they attack he would be sorely outnumbered.

"Morons," Reese barked. "Let's go hunt." He eyed the members of the gang as the other two fell back under Jamie's hard glare. "All of us." Reese glanced at Preston over his shoulder and winked before loping off into the darkness. Jamie glanced at Preston one last time before he and the others followed.

It was a small black building yet the Lair was a welcome sight when Preston spotted it. The door flew open spilling red onto the streets like puddles of blood. Two giddy female vampires stumbled out, groping each other in naughty places as they swayed on unsteady feet. Although Preston admired the sight it stirred nothing within him. Five decades and he'd yet to find a female vampire that he could put up with for more than a few weeks. His sister was the only exception and that thought frustrated him.

The heat of so many bodies in a small area blasted him as he entered. Tara stood at the bar flirting with a good-looking human. She'd always been partial to male humans.

"I dunno, it's something about their weakness that I'm attracted to," she'd answered when he'd asked her why. He couldn't argue there. He'd had his share of humans as well.

"They taste better after they're dead and their blood is still warm." Tara told him with a giggle those fateful years ago.

Preston took a seat next to a man at the bar and draped his arm over the guy's shoulder. The man was so caught up in the sight of his sister he didn't noticed. Instead he eyed Tara's breasts where they spilled over the top of her dress and rubbed at his crotch with one hand as he stroked the neck of his beer bottle with the other.

Preston was rightfully amused. Tara had this effect on all men. He caught Tara's eyes and held her gaze. An unconscious message passed between them and finally she grinned and nodded her assent.

"Hello," he said to the man. "Ever been here before?"

The man shook his head and took a drink of his beer, wincing at the warmth of the liquid; they never served cold drinks. His eyes groped Tara's figure as his hands would were the counter not providing a barrier between them. "Naw, my ex-girlfriend told me about this place. I can see why she liked it here..." He answered grinning as Tara bent over to get something from under the counter. Her dresses were always short, and this one was no exception. Her black thong panties swayed teasingly back and forth before the man's eyes until she stood back up. That was Preston's cue.

Preston squeezed the man's shoulder with a tight grip. "You like looking under my sisters clothes?"

The man's head jerked up and turned to look at him. He felt comprehension dawn in the man's face as Preston towered over him. Humans were always too forward with their inner thoughts, and the play of emotions over the man's facial features was quite comical: confused, surprised, annoyed, nervous, and then terrified.

The man slowly set the beer bottle back down on the counter as he stammered, "Y-y-your sister?"

Preston fingered the hilt of his dagger. He loved toying with his prey. "Of course, my sister. She's a beauty, isn't she?"

Laughing, Tara seductively swaggered her hips forward and rested her elbows on the black surface of the bar's counter top. He could faintly

distinguish one of her rosy nipples as her full breasts peeked over the top of lace lining her black and red dress.

The man couldn't take his eyes away from them even as he sputtered, "I didn't, I mean - I wouldn't, I was just-" The guy's eyes went wide as he felt the sting of Preston's dagger cut across his throat. Still in shock he clapped a hand over the deadly wound and started to rise. Blood leaked through his fingers and splattered both the bar and black floor. The dark pupils of his eyes dilated and contracted as blood filled his lungs and spurted through his nose and mouth. The expression mirrored in his eyes was that of a man who knew he was dying.

Laughing Preston grabbed the man's hair and jerked his head backwards, exposing his bleeding throat. His iron grip stifled the man's futile struggles to escape. Tara swung onto the counter and sank her fangs into the man's neck where his hand left it exposed. Preston listened to his gurgled final screams with satisfaction before he extended his fangs and drank.

The bloodless corpse fell to the ground with a solid thud. The regular customers of the club didn't once flinch. The humans fled. Vampires and daemons alike detained many of them as they raced to the door. Those that didn't manage to slip out into the night would suffer the same fate as the corpse at Preston's feet. Some would be killed immediately-and were, their blood splattering and joining the blood of many long dead on the clubs walls-while others would be forced to the back rooms. Screams in cacophony filled the air thick with the scent of death.

Tara giggled and slid off the counter top and into her brother's lap. She licked the blood from his knife and slid it back into his belt. A devious smile crossed her countenance before she kissed him and licked the blood from his lips in an un-sisterly like fashion. "Yum. I feel better already," she said wiggling deeper into her position astride him.

Preston wiped at his mouth with a sleeve and stood up abruptly. His physical reaction to the feel of his sister's ass was disconcerting. "I'll get rid of the body." He grabbed the corpse under the arms and dragged it past the back rooms. He was happy to get away from the heat spreading throughout his loins.

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