

## The Vampire 196

### Chapter 196 196: The Hidden Power of a Witch's Blood (Part Two)

"Then I'm happy," Ashlynn said, closing her eyes and resting her head against Nyrielle's chest. The sound of the vampire's heartbeat in time with the echo of that heartbeat in her own chest had become a powerful talisman of connection in Ashlynn's heart and she reveled in both the sound of her lover's heartbeat and the faint fragrance of lavender soap that clung to her even after such a long and eventful day.

"You've given me so much. Taught me so much, protected me from my enemies, and helped me to grow stronger. I felt like I hadn't given you anything to be worthy of all that you've done for me."

"With this," she said, opening her eyes and looking up at Nyrielle through eyelashes that held joyous tears. "I feel like I've given you something as priceless as what you've given me."

"You know that I will treasure you for our entire lives," Nyrielle said, giving Ashlynn a tender smile before she continued. She didn't want to say what came next but she wanted even less for Jacques to be the one to tell Ashlynn.

"There is one more thing you should know about what you could mean to me," the vampire said with great reluctance. "It's why Jacques thinks he might need to protect you from me. A witch's blood is a powerful, potent thing. Look at how much you have changed me just by allowing me to feed once or twice a month."

"You feed more than that," Ashlynn teased, stretching her face toward Nyrielle and kissing her lips firmly enough to bite gently on the vampire's lower lip. "You sample me regularly when we kiss."

"I suppose that's part of why you've transformed me so much, so quickly," Nyrielle said with a warm smile. "But there is a different value that a witch's blood can offer a vampire. I've explained to you that a vampire is balanced on the edge between life and death."

"There are many things that can pull even a True Vampire over the edge into the dark oblivion of death," she said. "We are timeless, ageless, and undying, but we are not truly immortal. We can still die and many of us have over the years. We can be killed. But there is also a path for us to live again."

"A witch's blood," Ashlynn whispered, her face growing pale as she realized what Nyrielle was building toward. "But, you taught me in the very beginning with sorcery, energy has to come from somewhere. For a vampire to 'live' again... the witch must die?"

She said it as a question, but deep in her heart, Ashlynn already knew the answer. No wonder the Mother of Thorns had sent a witch like Jacques to protect Ashlynn, not just from Nyrielle but perhaps from the other vampires around her. Even if Ashlynn trusted Nyrielle with her life, the temptation that a witch's blood represented couldn't be underestimated.

And... if Nyrielle ever lost control...

"Is that what almost happened the night of the opera?" Ashlynn asked, her voice trembling as the thought occurred to her. "Did we come close to the point where I would have died so you could... live?"

"Perhaps," Nyrielle said, closing her eyes and turning away from Ashlynn. As strong as her young lover was, she couldn't escape the fear that came from that moment, and seeing even a trace of it on her lover's face hurt more than any wound she'd ever suffered in battle. "I don't know what happened then. It's never happened to me before. I think, I think it could only ever happen with you."

"Nyrielle," Ashlynn said, reaching up to turn her lover's face back toward her. "Kiss me," she commanded, meeting Nyrielle's startled gaze with determined emerald eyes. "Kiss me and bite me," she said, leaning forward to envelop Nyrielle's soft lips with her own.

Some things couldn't be expressed in words, they could only be expressed physically. Right now, fear boiled in Ashlynn's heart but only a small portion of it was fear that her lover would hurt her. Ashlynn couldn't conceive of Nyrielle betraying her in order to live as something other than a vampire. Not when she knew how much being together had come to mean to the other woman.

Instead, the fear that seethed in her chest was the fear that the risks and the dangers would somehow pull them apart. That she would lose the woman who meant more to her than she'd ever thought possible.

So when Ashlynn reached out to take Nyrielle's lips in her own, she pressed forward with her whole body, wrapping her arms around the other woman and pressing her down into the soft feather bed as if to trap her there. What words couldn't say, she expressed with her body, her hands, her lips, and her tongue that desperately sought an answer from Nyrielle.

Slowly, as if she were stunned by Ashlynn's ferocity, Nyrielle began to return the kiss and the passion Ashlynn claimed her with. Her fangs elongated and she bit down ever so gently on Ashlynn's lower lip, spilling a trace of blood that sealed their kiss.

The energy that flowed between them in that moment was thin and minuscule next to what they felt when Nyrielle truly fed, and the pleasure that flowed from Nyrielle's bite lacked the overwhelming nature of the times that Nyrielle had pierced her neck or thigh, but that didn't matter to either of them.

The kiss was a promise. There were dangers ahead, and some of that danger came from Nyrielle herself, but both of them were determined to face those dangers together. Now, Ashlynn finally understood the risk but she refused to run from the danger. And, as long as Ashlynn was willing, Nyrielle promised herself that she would never push Ashlynn away. They would face the future together.

Their promise didn't need words, just the kiss was enough for each of them to understand the other woman's heart. For now, that was all they needed.