

The Silver Queen's Death



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An excerpt from The Bar

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When the Hellbound fell to the floor lifeless, Mace took Sterling's gun and ran back to her. She was lying in a spreading pool of blood and fear clutched him. It was too much blood. She was bleeding out, dying. With a strangled growl, he flew to her side, ignoring the gun that was pointed at him briefly as Eden entered the corridor. Mace knelt beside Sterling, taking her head tenderly into his hands.

She smiled at him, and he could see that already her eyes were glazing. Eden choked back a sob and stumbled to Sterling's side, falling on her knees and grabbing her right hand. It was ice cold.

"Why, Sterling? Why did you let this happen?" Eden said hoarsely, choking back painful tears.

"Mace can tell... you," she whispered, her voice a thin thread. "He knows." She clutched Eden's hand and her green eyes glowed for a moment as she stared at her best friend and partner. "The chess set... give it to Mace... Please..."

Eden wanted to shake her head and scream *No!*, but she knew it was useless. Both she and Mace could feel Sterling's life ebbing away. Silent tears tracked Eden's cheeks. "I will but I want you to stay with me. We'll play every day. You can't leave me. What will I do without you? You taught me everything I know."

Sterling squeezed Eden's hand again. "You were the best friend... I ever had," she gasped and closed her eyes for a moment as pain wrenched her body, twisting it in Mace's grasp. "I left you... everything. You can leave ... Langley now... I love you, Eden."

"I don't understand," Eden sobbed unable to hold back her tears any longer. "How could this happen? You can't leave me, Sterling!"

"You have Blake now... Be happy." Sterling closed her eyes and tilted her head into Mace's lap. He cradled her body against him, heedless of her life's blood pouring out onto his jeans.

"It's okay to let go, my silver queen," he whispered, stroking her hair. "I will never forget you. Your bravery humbles me. I wish I had known you years ago."

Sterling's green eyes opened and locked onto Mace's. "You did, bad boy..." Her bloodied hand, the one Eden wasn't holding, reached up and touched Mace's chest where his heart lay. "In here...you knew one day I would

come ... and you could no longer hide... A minute of your warmth, Mace...worth more than...all the years of sex... You didn't have to...show that to me...but because of it...because of ...what you gave me...tonight...I'm not ...cold...anymore..."

"Why didn't you let me turn you?" he whispered fiercely, his thumbs stroking her sculptured cheekbones.

Because you're not mine. Her thoughts drifted into his mind, shocking him to the core. *I saw you and I knew I loved you. I never believed in love at first sight until that moment and it was hell to know that I was dying and you were not mine and never would be. So I stole just a little bit of you tonight. It was heaven...*

Her thoughts began to fade from his mind and Mace gazed at the dimming light in her beautiful green eyes. Suddenly, the implications of her thoughts entering his mind hit him and panic took over. "No, I can't let this happen. I just found you, damn it! You can't die!"

His fangs extended and he bent to her neck as the slowing beat of her heart filled his ears. A moment later, his fangs sank into her throat. Her body arched in his arms. As he drank the last of the blood in her body, he held his hand out to Eden urgently, the dirk on his palm. She looked at him questioningly, but took the sharp knife. He turned his wrist toward her and she quickly slashed it, blood welling instantly from the deep cut. Eden pulled Sterling's jaw down so her mouth gaped open. Mace pressed his wrist to her lips.

At first he felt nothing. Then he felt the faintest of sucking at the cut. *Drink, Sterling! Drink!* He pushed his thoughts urgently at her.

Her heartbeat stopped and he raised his head from her neck. He could swear she was still sucking at his wrist, but he was so panic stricken he couldn't be sure. He'd never turned anyone before. Wasn't sure what happened during a turning. He sat motionless, his eyes watching Sterling for signs of life. There were none.

Mace's body jerked and his hands stroked her face feverishly as he realized he was too late. She was gone. Eden buried her face in her hands and sobbed. They sat like that for long moments, Mace holding Sterling's limp body while Eden cried. Then Mace rose to his feet with her cradled in his muscular arms.

Sterling's silver blonde hair spilled over his shoulder, her face pressed to his chest. He strode through the corridors of the Hellbounds' underground sanctuary with Eden following him, her tears tracking endlessly down her face.

In the circular chamber where the stairs led up to the mausoleum, Johann stood with Sascha. At the sight of Mace carrying Sterling's lifeless body, Sascha gasped, regret and sorrow in her eyes. Johann had removed his ninja mask and it dangled from his hand. He took a step toward his friend, but something in Mace's face must have stopped him because one step was all he took.

"She took the bullet to save me," Mace growled, explaining what had happened. "One of the last Hellbounds got her gun from her. She has special bullets in it. If he had shot me with it, I might not have survived. She stepped in front of the gun when he fired at me. I left her to go after him. As soon as I'd killed him, I went back to her but she was almost gone."

"You were there for her at the end, Mace. That meant something to her," Johann comforted his friend softly, this time taking the step closer.

Mace looked at him with torment in his eyes. "I asked her, Joh. I asked her three times to let me turn her, but she wouldn't let me. In the end, I heard her thoughts in my mind and I realized she was mine. I tried to turn her then, but I guess there wasn't enough blood left in her. Why did this happen?"

Johann put his hand on Mace's shoulder in a gesture of understanding and comfort. They all looked at Sterling's beautiful peaceful face, nestled against Mace's hard chest. "It was her time. She knew it," Sascha whispered. "You were not meant to save her."

"I'm obviously not meant to do much of anything that is good in this life," Mace snarled and took the steps to the mausoleum two at a time, emerging into the moonlight filled room. Eden followed him, but when he reached the outside door, he turned to her. "Please, Eden. Let me go. She gave me her trust tonight. Trust me to do what's right."

Eden stepped back just as Blake reached her side. She glanced at her mate, his sword bloodied, his face weary and heartsick. She started to shake and his arms went around her.

"Go ahead, Mace," Blake said over Eden's head. "But we need to deal with Madspawn."

Mace nodded. "I'll be back in an hour to help with Madspawn. For her." His eyes on the slight form that rested in his arms. "I'll be back before you're done cleaning up here."

Mace turned and walked away, Sterling's long silvery blonde hair trailing from his arms.

* * *

Mace laid Sterling down in the cramped backseat of the Mustang. She looked so peaceful, as if she was asleep. That is, if you discounted all the blood on her. He touched her cheek softly, surprised that she had cooled only slightly. He got into the driver's seat and started the car, driving slowly through the cemetery.

His first thought was to take her to the address on the card she'd given him, but it was quite a distance away and he didn't feel like dealing with it quite yet. Instead, he drove to his rented apartment on the ground floor of an old row house only a few miles from the cemetery. He parked the car in the old garage in the back and entered through his back door into the main hall of his small place. He carried Sterling into his bedroom and laid her on his unmade bed, sitting on the floor beside her.

He leaned his head against her bloodied hand and closed his eyes. He knew he had to get back to the cemetery to help take in Madspawn. He'd promised Sterling he would help Eden with that because of how dangerous Madspawn was. At the moment though, he needed to regroup and get his thoughts and emotions under control so he could go back and face them all.

Mace was shocked at how quickly things had happened. First, he'd seen her in the mausoleum, looking like a lethal angel in black leather with a big gun and a quiet commanding air about her. His heart had flip flopped in his chest and he'd been instantly in lust, his groin swelling in front of anyone who cared to look. She had and he'd noticed that she had.

When she'd left to track the Hellbound they'd turned loose, he'd been helpless to do anything except follow her, not that he'd have admitted to that. Every time her lithe body brushed his when they were walking, he thought he'd explode. Finally, when she had come on to him he'd felt like he'd died and gone to heaven so of course, he'd been an ass to her. She'd dished it right back at him too. *"Don't try to make me believe you give a shit what happens to me beyond your orgasm."*

But the truth of the matter was that he did give a shit. He never had before and didn't understand why he did now but her story had touched him more deeply than the pull of overwhelming attraction he'd felt winding around them all evening long. The sex had been mind blowing. Never mind the fact that half of the reason for it was pure adrenalin from squeezing out fifteen minutes in a cemetery full of murderous vampires. The other half of it had been her. He'd never had a woman be so completely uninhibited and in control at the same

time. His orgasm had been more intense than any he'd had in his long life. The feel of his juices running down her legs just made him want her again.

But she'd had strength he'd never imagined a person could have. She'd fixed her clothes and thanked him, making a reference to the fact that she would die this night, and she'd walked away without looking back. That was when he'd felt it. Something hard and warm rising inside him, urging him to go after her. He did, unable to stop himself. He grabbed her hand and bent her over his arm giving her a kiss like they did in the movies only this one was for real. She responded instantly. When he'd licked the tear from her face he tasted her regret and emotions. She felt something for him, but he didn't know enough about emotions to know what it was she felt.

In fact, he didn't know enough about anything it seemed. When she was dying, he had heard her thoughts in his mind. Usually, a vampire could hear only the thoughts of the person meant to be their soul mate. For him to hear her so clearly in his mind made him instantly realize she must be his. At that point, all thought disappeared and instinct took over. If she was his, he wasn't about to lose her to death unless it was the death of a turning. So he'd tried, but it hadn't worked. He'd found and lost his soul mate in the space of a night.

That seemed to be about par for the course where his life was concerned, he thought. Finding and losing Sterling made him angrier and more hopeless than he'd ever been in his entire existence.

But you haven't lost me.

Mace blinked. Someone was talking in his mind. Someone female.

It's me, you idiot.

Sterling's fingers wiggled beneath his cheek and Mace jumped. He looked up at the bed to find her green eyes twinkling at him. He sprang to his feet and looked down at her. She was still bloody, but the gaping hole in her side had healed. The fang marks in her neck were gone too. She was smiling at him.

In an instant, he was on the bed, on her, and her arms were around him. His mouth found hers and he kissed her hard, his lips mashing hers and his tongue demanding entrance. Her fingers clutched at him, her nails digging into the muscles of his back. Within seconds, they were tearing at each other's clothes and as soon as they were naked, Mace spread her thighs with rough hands and pushed into her without warning, knowing instinctively that she could take him without the preliminaries.

Oh my freaken God! Tell me I'm not dreaming. He nuzzled her throat as he thrust inside her. She was soaking wet and completely welcoming.

You're not dreaming Mace. You turned me. Although I said not to. She clutched his naked buttocks and returned his thrusts.

He kissed her behind her ear and licked her neck. *Fuck you. I heard you in my head, Sterling. You know what means. How could I not try to turn you when I knew?*

Fuck me? She raked her nails down his back and he arched against her groaning. *Fuck you! You didn't listen to me, Mace!*

I don't wanna listen. I want to fuck you so hard you won't ever scare me like that again. He thrust harder, the bed shook, and she began to moan.

Oh, God! That feels so good. Please Mace, more.

Mace twisted his hips against her, sliding the full length of his cock out of her before slamming back in. She was so tight and wet, he thought he would explode any second.

Wait, Sterling. Wait, love. There is more.

His hands held her head and he turned his own head to the side so that his jugular vein was pressed to her mouth. Suddenly, she growled fiercely and he felt her new fangs pierce his neck. As she drank, he felt the intense pleasure spiral through him. She was moaning and writhing beneath him. He'd never had a woman go so completely crazy for him. He felt her climaxing, her screams muffled in his neck as she drank. The second her fangs popped free of him, he sank his in her shoulder. She screamed and climaxed again, her pelvis grinding against him and her legs twisted around him.

Mace felt his climax about to explode as Sterling's blood filled his mouth. She tasted of vanilla. It was the oddest thing, but he only spared a moment for the thought as his climax roared through him and his hands gripped Sterling's hips. He shuddered as his hot cum gushed into her. His weight pressed her into the mattress, and he felt the hard tips of her full breasts against him. He was so crazed he hadn't noticed how wonderful their naked shape felt. Earlier, they'd both been clothed. Now, every naked inch of her was pressed against him.

He pulled his mouth from her shoulder and licked it so it would heal. She was breathing heavily and he closed his eyes, just thankful that she was breathing.

You scared the shit out of me, Sterling. I thought the turning hadn't worked.

You didn't know how it worked, yet you did it anyway? You're an ass, Mace. Her thoughts were wry and teasing, but he knew she was right.

At the moment it happened, I didn't care. I would have danced naked with the devil and his mistress to save you.

A giggle escaped her and she clapped a hand over her mouth. "Oh, God. I giggled. I never giggle," she said out loud with a grin, her eyes glowing.

Mace lifted his head and looked down at her. She looked the same except her faint crows feet were gone and her skin was flushed from drinking his blood. He reached up a hand and realized he was dripping blood from where she'd bitten him.

"Lick it, baby," he told her. "It will close up the wound."

Sterling leaned forward and sucked his flesh into her mouth. The feel of her tongue and teeth on him had his cock rising again and he groaned. "I've got to go back. Madspawn needs to be dealt with."

She gave his neck one last lick. "I'll go with you."

"No. You won't," he frowned at her. "After a turning you need to rest. I do know that much. Your body is still healing up all the damage from the bullet and from changing. You'll stay right here so I won't worry about your ass."

"But it's ok for me to worry about yours, bad boy?" Sterling the CIA agent was back. All cool confidence and take charge attitude.

Mace pulled away from her and stood up, ignoring his half hard cock, and looked for his clothes. "You, lover, are gonna keep your beautiful CIA-vampire ass planted right there in my bed until I get back. If you need me, you know how to reach me."

"I don't even have to whistle like Bogey and Bacall. All I gotta do is think," Sterling chuckled. "I could like this soul mate thing."

"You better, bitch!" Mace growled. He was pulling on his jeans. but stopped to bend over her menacingly, the fly still open. His mouth caught hers in a rough kiss, then he pulled away abruptly. "I've gotta finish this crap. You stay here and out of trouble. I'll be back to deal with you soon."

He yanked on his shirt and jacket and turned at the door to look at her. She was sprawled on his completely thrashed bed, naked and glorious and bloody, but she was alive and she was his. A shit eating grin split his face.

“How the hell did I get so lucky?”

“Fuck you! I’m the one who got lucky. Go back to work, bad boy. I need my beauty rest!” Sterling grinned at him. *I’ll be here when you get back. I’ll show you lucky then.*

You’d better, blondie.