

# BLOOD AND DARKNESS



A DUMORNAY NOVELLA

SOPHIE GROSSALBER

**Sophie Grossalber**

# **Blood and Darkness**

**a Dumornay novella**

# Inhaltsverzeichnis

[Copyright](#)

[Content Notes](#)

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

[Chapter Eighteen](#)

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

[Chapter Twenty](#)

[Chapter Twenty-One](#)

[Chapter Twenty-Two](#)

[Glossary of phrases](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by the Author](#)

[Blood and Guilt - the prequel](#)

# **Copyright**

© Sophie Grossalber, 2022

[www.sophiegrossalber.com](http://www.sophiegrossalber.com)

Meiereigasse 8

2500 Baden

Austria

All rights reserved.

Translator: Sophie Grossalber, [www.sophiegrossalber.com](http://www.sophiegrossalber.com)

Editor: Michaela Harich, [www.michaelaharich.de](http://www.michaelaharich.de)

Proofreader: Nathan Pascu

Layout: Sophie Grossalber, [www.sophiegrossalber.com](http://www.sophiegrossalber.com)

Illustrations and cover design: Sophie Grossalber,  
[www.sophiegrossalber.com](http://www.sophiegrossalber.com)

ISBN: 9783754663004

This book was published via tofino media.

# **Content Notes**

For those who need them, the content notes are the following. Those who do not wish to read the content notes, please continue to the next page.

- Blood (partially graphic, on-page)
- Violence, fantasy (graphic, on-page)
- Violence, swords (graphic, on-page)
- Domestic violence (off-page)
- Consensual sex (partially graphic, on-page)

Two characters in this book are non-binary and use singular “they/them” as pronouns.

# Chapter One

Xi Lei took a deep breath and leaned to the side to look past the people in the queue towards the counter. She could faintly make out the customs officer, sat behind an acrylic glass panel, reasoning in a thick Southern accent with the older woman in front of him. The woman clearly didn't understand a word and kept waving the green immigration form in his face.

The Huntress sighed. Then she rolled her shoulders to loosen the tension that had built up over the almost four days she'd spent on planes and at airports. She silently cursed the vampire for being smart enough to flee to the U.S. Not only because Lei felt like somebody had to knead her whole body like a piece of clay because of the amount of time she'd spent in the most uncomfortable plane seats. There was also another problem: China hadn't signed an extradition treaty with the United States. So, even if she should find her target, the American Hunters - or the vampires themselves - could put a stop to her mission.

*Never mind that they might not be in New Orleans anymore ...*

Finally, the queue moved and Lei saw her silver lining. She just wanted to get to her hotel, shower and sleep off the jet-lag. Even better if she could find time for a massage or some stretching exercise. But first, she had to make it through passport control without complications. She had officially announced herself as an incoming Hunter and briefed her colleagues in New Orleans on her case. However, the customs officer stared her down so intensely

over the shoulder of the traveller in front of her, she doubted she'd make it to the hotel before midnight.

The dull thud of the customs officer's stamp hitting the traveller's passport echoed through the nightly arrival hall. He returned the passport and Lei watched the man in front of her walk through the doors towards baggage claim. The doors closed behind him with a little hiss and she turned her head back towards the officer. He waved her forward with a curt gesture.

Lei moved towards the line on the floor, then handed over her passport and the form. She bit down onto her lower lip and tried to quell her anxiety by taking a closer look at the man behind the glass panel and distract herself from her own thoughts. The dark blue uniform underlined his black hair. She could see a few grey hairs on his temples. The light from the neon lamps washed out his probably Terra Cotta brown skin to a paler reddish brown and painted harsh shadows and edges onto his face.

The officer cleared his throat and asked: "Your reason for entry?"

He looked at her over the edge of her immigration form. Lei suppressed an eye-roll. The reason stood in black on green on the piece of paper in his hand. But, of course, he had to ask. Protocols dictated it.

"I came because of a mission," Lei answered as calmly as she could. "I explained everything to the Hunters in New Orleans."

The man nodded. "You know, you'll have to register with the Hunter Coordinator of the city as soon as possible, Miss ...", he took a look at her papers before continuing, "... Lei?"

“Xi.”

He raised an eyebrow.

“My last name is Xi. Lei is my first name. And yes, the Hunters will be my next stop before the hotel.” *So, hurry up and let me out of here!*

“Alright. Please place your fingers on the scanner over here. First your right thumb, then the other fingers. When you’re done, please look into the camera here.” He pointed at a small rectangular device hanging above his computer screen in a cut-out of the glass panel. Lei did as she was told and fought the urge to ask him what took so long. She would get into serious trouble for that in China. Here too, probably. And she didn’t want to waste more time at the airport.

The officer nodded, stamped her passport and finally waved her through. “I wish you a pleasant stay in New Orleans.”

She thanked him, bid him good night and stepped through the door to get her luggage.

With her sword in its travel case and the backpack on her shoulders, she looked for the rental cars sign. Although she was exhausted and would have rather climbed into a taxi, a rental would make things easier. She looked up to the signs on the ceiling, which designated the taxi stand and the parking area. *This way.* The arrow on the sign led her to the right, partially back the way she’d just come, and then left around a corner. Already, she faced a row of counters.

Lei put down her backpack and sword and rummaged through her pockets to look for the note with the car rental company Josephine Bonnet had recommended. How had she put it? *“The cars aren’t cheaper compared to the*

*others, but at least you won't pay any hidden repair charges for scratches you're not responsible for."* She put the note away, pulled out the documents she needed and walked to the last counter in the farthest corner.

Roughly fifteen minutes later, she held the keys in her hand and paced the lines of parked cars in the garage on the lookout for hers. But she lost her bearings in the jungle of black and blue Chevrolet SUVs. With her patience wearing thin, Lei pressed the button to unlock the car and - Something beeped behind her. She turned around and sighed. She must have passed the midnight blue SUV a hundred times. She opened the boot, stored her luggage and got in the car. Josephine had given her the address to the Hunters' Headquarters in New Orleans on another note. Lei typed the address into the in-built GPS. The electronic voice of the GPS led the way and she drove into the city.

At first, Lei had struggled to understand the signs on the Highway. But together with the GPS, she found the way into the French Quarter.

"You have reached your destination. Your destination is on the left", the electronic voice announced. Lei shot a glance at the salmon-coloured house with the green door, above which stood *Mama Jo's Voodoo* in big neon letters. Now, she just had to find a suitable parking spot. Which wasn't easy with a car this big. Luckily, a car of the same size drove past her and left a free space in front of the Hunters' Headquarters.

She sighed with relief when she'd finally gotten out of the car. Those big, American cars made her uneasy. The occasional couple and small groups of people, who were either on their way home or to the next party, stumbled

along Dumaine Street. Lei blinked rapidly. Exhaustion and jet-lag crept deeper into her bones, but she still had to tell Josephine that she had arrived. Only after could she go to the hotel. *And to bed.* She lifted her hand and knocked on the green door, the colour already flaking off the wood. A few flecks of paint clung to her knuckles and Lei hastily wiped them on her jeans.

A group of laughing party people caught her attention for a moment, but vanished around the next corner. When she turned back to the door, somebody opened it. A woman, roughly forty years old, with dark, umbra-coloured skin and black hair pulled up into a tight knot, stood in the doorway. The question, who Lei was, hung unspoken between them. She hurried to introduce herself. She wanted to get this over with as quickly as possible.

“I am Xi Lei. The Huntress from Lhasa. I’m here because of a vampire, and both Josephine and the customs officer said I should register here”, she explained. She pulled out her ID and wanted to show it to the woman in the door, but she waved her off. Her strict appearance contrasted the warm smile on her lips.

“Lei! I hope, you had a pleasant journey. Come in, rest”, she said and waved Lei inside. She followed the invitation, albeit confused in the face of the sudden change in her mood. “I’m Kristin, by the way. Tell me, what did the vampire you’re looking for do? Probably something pretty bad, if your superiors sent you all the way from China to find him.”

Lei was barely listening while Kristin rambled and led her through a sales room full to the brim with items connected to voodoo. “Jhing supposedly doesn’t think much of Western gender identities. Which is why we use neutral

pronouns. Although I'm not sure why we afford them the courtesy. They didn't just break one of the most important laws of co-existence by turning a child; they're also responsible for the deaths of a whole village. Maybe only half of it, it wasn't easy to tell. The path of corpses was very clear, though." Her voice stayed calm, matter-of-factly. Even though everything inside her bristled at the memory of the lifeless, glass eyes, silently pleading with her for justice.

Kristin whistled. "Sounds like a difficult case you got there. No wonder your people sent you here." Then she opened a door in the back wall of the sales room. "Come on, this way. You can talk to Josephine tomorrow. I'll show you your room first."

"I sent myself", murmured Lei and paused. "I actually booked a hotel room. If I don't show up there tonight ..."

"Never mind that. You can go to the hotel tomorrow if you feel more comfortable there. But tonight, you'll stay here. Us Hunters have to stick together after all. There have been simply too many incidents with the wolves or vampires recently. Josephine would feel better if you stayed here. Safer that way." Kristin led her down a corridor with dark doors without any signs that would tell her what lay behind them. There weren't even any plants, or pictures on the walls. Lei didn't reply. Instead, she took in her surroundings like a hawk. The fine hairs on her neck and arms rose. Was Josephine maybe more comfortable with having all the Hunters under one roof because she could control them better this way?

*Well, I don't like it*, she thought while the foreign Huntress led her deeper into the salmon-coloured house with its green doors.

## Chapter Two

Damien Moreau slowly spun in his leather chair while his thoughts kept returning to one image: How Flor Lozano's face vanished in the dark of the entryway before Josephine shut the door in his face. In the almost six months since he had handed her over to Josephine, she might not have left *his* mind, but nobody had seen her in the city.

He cast a fleeting glance on the note on top of his pile of papers. The same intel from his partner in the eighth district of the New Orleans P.D., which was responsible for the French Quarter. No sightings. No strange occurrences around Josephine Bonnet's voodoo shop.

If he didn't pay her so well, Damien would almost think Josephine had turned his informant. There were only two possible reasons for her not having anything to report: either Flor had really not been seen by anybody, or Josephine held her cards close to her chest. Given how well he knew her, it was most likely the latter.

He leaned forward, took the note and put it on another pile. Flor was just one of many Hunters he'd brought to Josephine. None of them had ever been seen in the city again. And Damien doubted they had left New Orleans undetected. Not as long as he had airport employees and informants in the NOLA P.D. in his pocket. He was sure, the Hunters were already dead. He just wanted to know why. Josephine would never tell him directly. She'd made that clear enough the last time.

He scratched his chin while he considered his next steps. He had to make sure his clan wouldn't be hurt before he

confronted Josephine. He owed his vampires that at least. A cautious knocking on the door pulled him from his thoughts.

He lifted his head, sat up straighter in his chair. "Yes?"

The door opened and Malone put his head through the door. "Do you have a second, boss?"

Damien nodded and watched the sturdy Irish man enter the office and close the door behind him. "What's up?" he asked the younger vampire.

"Sergio called. A Huntress landed in New Orleans about an hour ago."

Damien raised an eyebrow. New Hunters in the city weren't news-worthy. Especially not if they entered via the airport. Why should he care? If the Huntress entered New Orleans legally, Josephine probably knew about it. And he could simply lean back and watch. "Did Sergio say something else?" he asked, just to be safe.

"He said the Huntress is from China. She's looking for a particular vampire." Malone seemed to dig around in his skull for more information. "Jhing Yahui? Madame Bonnet should know more."

Damien nodded, directed his attention back to his pile of paperwork. Malone didn't move, apparently expecting a reply or some other reaction apart from a nod. Without looking at him, Damien explained: "Yahui isn't here anymore. Just keep an eye on the new Huntress. If she asks too many questions ..." He purposely left the sentence incomplete. Malone knew what to do should somebody get too nosy, Huntress or not.

The Irish man mumbled a determined “Boss” and disappeared from the office. Damien leaned back in his chair. He clasped his hands and drummed a melody, known only to him, onto the back of his hand with his index finger.

“On verra où ça nous mènera,” he mumbled to himself while a plan took shape. He just wasn’t sure if this plan would be the solution to his problems or get him deeper into shit. There was only one way to find out. Damien got up, buttoned up his jacket and walked to the door.

Malone waited in the hallway, as always. When the Irish man saw him, he stood up as straight as a pole. Concern was written on his face. Damien hadn’t been able to hide the fact that Flor’s case had taken a toll on him. Or that Josephine had told her Hunters to be more thorough with their inspections as an answer to his not very subtle warning. Malone could feel something wasn’t right between Damien and Josephine. But Damien hadn’t yet found the strength to tell him everything. He knew he was treading a fine line. One wrong step and everything he had built over decades would implode around him like a house of cards. *Makes one wonder how stable one’s own empire really is ...*

“Everything okay, Boss?” Malone asked after Damien still hadn’t said what he wanted. The older vampire nodded.

“Did Sergio send copies of the new Huntress’ passport and all the permits?”

“Of course. Shall I get them for you?”

Again, Damien simply nodded. That was answer enough and the Irish man hurried down the hallway, faster than Damien would have expected from a man of his stature - and without using his vampiric abilities. While he waited

for Malone's return, he crossed his arms and leaned against the door frame. He closed his eyes and sighed when Flor's terrified face appeared before his closed eyes even now.

*¡No pueden hacer eso! ¡Por favor! ¡Espere! ¡Señor, por favor!* The last words the Mexican had thrown at him before Josephine had closed the door echoed in his head. Like a stuck record. *¡Señor, por favor!* She'd pleaded with him for help, but there was nothing he could have done. The deal he'd made with Josephine thirty years ago bound him to her. Unless he found a way to get rid of her without endangering his clan.

Malone rumbled down the hallway and Damien opened his eyes. The other vampire held the file out to him, which he accepted hesitantly. "Thank you, Malone," he mumbled, pushed away from the wall and went back into his office with the rows of book shelves and his mahogany desk. He put the file onto his desk, sank back into his chair. For a while, he simply sat there and stared at the beige folder as if the pages within would tell him their secrets if he just stared at them hard enough. Or the solution to his problems would jump at him out of thin air if he sat long enough in this chair. He twisted his mouth and sat up. He couldn't sit around, do nothing and wait for the muse to kiss him. He had to do something. And that Chinese Huntress could be the key.

*If she wants to ...* He didn't know what to expect from Lei. She was here to hunt a vampire he couldn't deliver. As long as Jhing didn't break any rules in his city, he wouldn't help Lei to close her case. He was only interested in what happened outside of his territory if it had something to do with his business. Like Flor, who had hid amongst other humans in Mexico coming to New Orleans, and who had