

SONG OF THE VAMPIRE

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Books by K. M. McFarland

Under a Bourbon Street Moon

Masquerade

Sex, Blood, Rock 'N' Roll, and Vampyr

For the city of New Orleans

If Ever I Cease To Love

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FALLING STAR

1989

NINETEEN EIGHTY-NINE WAS a good year for Quinn Forrester. It surpassed anything he had ever imagined in his wildest dreams.

As frontman for one of the era's hottest glam metal bands, West Side, Quinn owned the stage and mesmerized his audience. His outstanding talent on keyboard, incredible guitar riffs, and raspy vocals defined him as an artist.

Quinn could ignite any woman's libido with his good looks and long, luscious blond hair, but his heart belonged to his beautiful wife, Lacey. Their baby daughter, Nadia, was the center of his universe.

West Side's management felt it would have been better for Quinn's career to keep his wife and daughter in the background, so his fans would think they had a shot at him. But everyone close to Quinn knew his family was his world.

With the success of West Side's first album, Quinn's star couldn't have shone brighter. At the time, everyone thought it would burn forever. But as quickly as Quinn's star rose, it fell from the sky one fateful night when the lights went out. His music died, leaving his fans devastated. But what happened to Quinn to make him drop out at the peak of his career?

His entourage suspected foul play, but the authorities could not find any evidence to support that. The tabloids had their explanations, from a near-fatal accident leaving him in a coma, to a horrible accident

disfiguring his face. The one they ran with said he left his family for another woman and gave up everything for her. None of the stories were true.

Only Quinn knew the truth, but his story was too bizarre to tell. Besides, nobody would have believed it. Quinn's fate had to remain a secret to protect himself and those like him. That's why Quinn never surfaced and provided any explanations to his wife, his band, or the world.

The first thing Quinn did was divorce his wife because he wanted her to go on with her life, raise their daughter, and find happiness. With nowhere to go and nobody to turn to, the once charismatic frontman became a recluse.

Quinn purchased and renovated an old three-story building on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. It was funded with money he earned from his music career and a sizable inheritance from his wealthy grandmother. He turned the upper floors into apartments and the street level into a music club called Vampyr.

Quinn operates Vampyr and resides in an apartment on the second floor. He spends his time running his business affairs and losing himself in the music of the parade of musicians that pass through his nightclub as time ticks on.

Quinn thought everything was over for him, and the only future he could see was a dark, lonely one. But sometimes, when we least expect it, things have a way of changing.

Even though Quinn's fabulous life came to a halt in late 1989, time went on, the world went on, and his daughter, Nadia, the child who was once the apple of his eye—grew up.

Eighteen Years Later

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WELCOME TO VAMPYR 2007

SATURDAY NIGHT FOUND VAMPYR rocking to capacity. Customers occupied every table and barstool, mingling, and soaking up the sounds of the loud, dimly-lit, smoky music club.

Icedragon, a popular up and rising local cover band, drew near the end of their first gig at the venue. They have a large following wherever they play, and their appearance here tonight brought in a huge crowd. Part of their appeal could be Nadia, the drop-dead gorgeous female singer and the three hunky male musicians backing her, but the main attraction is Nadia's fantastic voice.

At the end of the second-to-last song, Nadia began to speak. "Let's hear it for the incredible Jason Guillot on drums, the marvelous Brad MacAlister on keyboard, and the fabulous Mark Thibodaux on guitar. These guys rock! Thanks to everyone for coming out tonight. Be safe, and we'll see you next Saturday night at ten at the Crow's Nest." She went into their last song, a beautiful rendition of *Black Velvet*.

Aside from having the voice of an angel, Nadia looked exceptionally radiant with her long, dark hair

flowing, her large blue eyes enhanced with black eyeliner and smoky eyeshadow, and her lips painted bright red. Her black spandex mini tank dress emphasized cleavage and a trim, petite figure. Black high heels complemented her killer legs. A large cross with red stones hung from the wide black choker around her neck.

At the end of the song, Nadia placed the microphone back on the stand while everyone applauded and cheered.

Jason, Mark, and Brad began to pack up their equipment. "I'm shocked Nick wasn't here tonight, Nadia," said Mark, placing his guitar in its case.

Nadia smiled and said, "Maybe it's finally starting to sink in that we're over."

"Be careful," said Jason. "I don't trust him. Why would he pick tonight to stop stalking you? Maybe you should let one of us drive you home, just in case. I can bring you back to get your car tomorrow."

"I'm concerned about you in that big house all alone," said Brad.

Their voices echoed around her, and she appreciated their concern, but Nadia was going to be her usual independent self. She pulled her phone from her purse. "Thanks, guys, but I'll be all right. There are no messages, so maybe he's getting the picture. My car is just around the corner, and the house has a security system. I'll call the police if anything looks weird when I get home. You guys have girlfriends waiting. You don't have to babysit me." After half-way convincing her friends not to worry about her, she told them goodnight and headed over to the bar.

Nadia started Icedragon and manages the band.

Tristan Perrault was her contact at Vampyr. She booked the gig with him, and she needed to see him for payment.

As she made her way over to the bar, she couldn't help but feel overwhelmed by the club's ambiance. Nadia had heard the stories about New Orleans being a haven for vampires, especially the Vieux Carre. Prior to Icedragon's gig that night, some of her friends had told her about how Vampyr is rumored to be a vampire bar and warned her to be careful. Nadia thought they were crazy for believing in such creatures. She laughed and blew off their advice. Her eyes drifted around the club, drawing in a deep breath. This place doesn't look that scary.

Vampyr's atmosphere is uniquely New Orleans. The renovated building dates back to the early nineteenth century. The three French doors facing Bourbon Street are usually open, blending the inside with the outside. The brick, stucco, and dark wood walls create a feeling of stepping back in time. The pinewood bar extends almost the length of the wall. The stage is on the opposite wall toward the back, surrounded by tables and chairs. Dim purple and pink lighting, mixed with purple and pink stained glass fixtures, create a Gothic atmosphere. Steps to an upper loft lead to a few more tables and a game room.

Nadia leaned on the bar. The bartender walked over to her. "What can I do for you?" he asked, ogling her up and down.

She grinned, thinking, oh brother. Can this guy be any more obvious? "I need to see Tristan. He's my contact here."

"I'm sorry, but Tristan's not here right now. Is there something I can help you with?"

She shook her head and said, “Not unless you have the money to pay the band.”

He laughed and said, “I’m afraid you’ll have to see the owner about that. He’s in his office, down the hall, second door on the left.” He pointed to the hallway.

“Thanks,” said Nadia with a smile.

As she proceeded down the hallway, she noticed the restrooms and an unmarked door on each side. She knocked on the door to the left.

A disgruntled male voice called out, “Come in. It’s open.”

Nadia frowned. That voice doesn’t sound too friendly. She slowly turned the knob and peeked inside of the small, dingy office illuminated by a reading lamp on the desk. Across from the desk was a black leather sofa. One window looked out on the alleyway between Vampyr and the venue next door.

“Enter at your own risk,” said a handsome gentleman, spinning his large, comfortable-looking, leather chair around to face her.

Nadia stepped inside, thinking this dude is really playing along with the Goth theme. She couldn’t help but notice how incredibly good-looking he was, more beautiful than handsome, almost too young to own a successful bar such as Vampyr. He seems a bit to the arrogant side, but damn, he’s hot.

His long, blond, curly hair spilled well below his broad shoulders, cascading down his back in a disheveled manner, but yet he was still impeccably neat. His perfect face seemed almost angelic, but his beautiful blue eyes told her otherwise. His straight nose seemed practically perfect, not to mention the sensuous lips. His black long sleeve shirt, open partially down the front, paired with black jeans,

appeared tailored to fit. The black boots on his feet looked a little warm for July, but he seemed comfortable.

“Hi,” said Nadia. “I’m with the band. I understand I need to see the owner. Would that be you?”

“In the flesh.” He pointed his index finger at her and said, “Are you that fabulous voice I’ve been listening to all night?”

Nadia smiled and said, “That was me.”

He nodded, making eye contact. “You’re as beautiful as your voice, but I’m sure you hear that all the time.”

Nadia smirked and said, “Thanks, and yes, as a matter of fact, I do, so you’re not very original.” She stepped over to the desk, twisting strands of her hair around her fingers. “Are you saying you know something about music that you’re in a position to be such a critic?”

“Yes.” He nodded, looking at her. “I was a singer myself many, many years ago.”

Nadia laughed. “Well, it can’t be that many years ago. You look barely legal.”

“Looks are deceiving,” he answered, sizing her up from head to toe. “But I meant what I said, and you do have an incredible voice. I can’t recall the last time I was so impressed with a singer.”

Nadia smiled. “Thank you. My dad was a singer, so I guess I got his genes.”

“Well, I guess that explains it then.” He eased back in his chair, gazing at her. His eyes met hers. “What beautiful eyes you have.”

Nadia laughed, checking him out. “Who do you think you are? The big bad wolf?”

“Stick around, and you’ll find out.” He half-smiled

as his eyes made contact with hers. “So what can I do for you tonight, lovely lady?”

Nadia shrugged. “I was supposed to see Tristan for payment, only he’s not here. The bartender told me you would be the one who can help me. We do like to be paid, you know.”

He pressed his fingers against his forehead and said, “I’m sorry. Of course. Forgive me for not taking care of that earlier. I’m so used to Tristan handling those things for me.” He gestured at the decanter on his desk. “Would you like a glass of wine while you wait? It’s a fine red from Sicily.”

She nodded with a shrug. “Sure. Why not?”

He poured her a glass and handed it to her.

She took the glass from him with a smile, allowing her fingers to touch his. “Are you joining me, or am I drinking alone?”

“No. I’ve had my fill for the evening.” He gazed at her and said, “You really do have beautiful eyes, you know.”

Nadia sipped the wine and smiled. “People tell me I have my excuse for a father’s eyes, but I wouldn’t know. He didn’t stick around long enough for me to find out.”

The gentleman scoffed, shaking his head. “Well. That’s his loss.”

Nadia had ended her relationship with her boyfriend, Nick, a couple of weeks earlier. As far as she was concerned, it was over for once and for all. She found herself attracted to this mysterious man’s charm and good looks. He couldn’t have made it any clearer that she appealed to him. He is a little arrogant, she thought, but who cares. It’s not like I’m going to move in with him or anything. She stepped over to

his chair, twirling her hair. She leaned in close to him, whispering, “What else can you do besides run a bar?”

He looked up at her pleased but a little surprised by her boldness. “Aren’t you the little seductress?”

She batted her eyelashes. “When I’m bad, I’m damn good.”

He looked at her and half-smiled, moving in closer to her. “I’ll bet you are.”

Just as their lips were about to touch, the moment was interrupted by someone knocking.

The gentleman scoffed. “Yeah,” he said. “What is it?”

The bartender’s voice seeped through the door. “I need you out front for a second.”

He exhaled deeply. “What great fucking timing. Where is Tristan when I need him?”

Nadia lifted her hands, twisting her mouth.

Tristan was still out. The new bartender’s dire emergency was going over a list of supplies that needed immediate attention. He handed the list to the owner.

The owner’s eyes scanned the paper. “Do we need the items on this list to continue operating smoothly?” asked the agitated owner, flicking his fingers on the paper.

“Yes,” said the bartender.

“Then, you don’t need to run it through Tristan or me.” He handed the list back to him. “I rely on my bartenders to make decisions on simple matters such as supplies. I’ll be in my office. Please don’t disturb me unless it’s an emergency. I’m surprised nobody told you that. I thought that was part of training.”

“Okay, I’ll remember that,” said the bartender. He

scowled as the boss walked away.

The owner returned to his office and closed the door, twisting the lock. His eyes focused on Nadia. He scoffed and said, “New help. It takes them a while to catch on.”

Nadia laughed and said, “It’s okay.” She stepped up to him, tilting her head. “Maybe we can pick up where we left off?”

“Yes.” He raised his finger. “But first, let me take care of paying you. Business before pleasure. That is the reason you came back here, isn’t it?”

She tossed up her hands and said, “We don’t work for free.”

He laughed. “No, I guess not. Tristen didn’t provide me with any contracts or information other than I owe you \$2,000. Is that correct?”

She nodded. “Yes, that’s right.”

“Is a check all right? If you prefer cash, you’ll have to wait until we close out.”

“No. A check will be fine. Vampyr is a reputable club. I’m sure your check will be good.”

He laughed, lowering himself into his desk chair. “I guarantee it’s good. My reputation depends on it.” He pulled out a checkbook from the drawer, dropping it on the desk. “What did you say your name was again?”

“I didn’t, but it’s Nadia. You can make the check out to Nadia Forrester.”

The owner’s eyes widened as his jaw dropped. He looked at her and asked, “Did you say your name is Nadia Forrester?”

She noticed his expression and wondered why he would have such a strong reaction to her name. “Yes, I did.”

He raised his eyebrows, thinking, it can't be. Feeling the need to further verify her identity, he asked, "What is your date of birth, Nadia Forrester?"

She shrugged, raising her palms. "May 29th, 1988."

Oh shit! Right age and date of birth, but this is just too much of a coincidence. There's no way. One last question would verify her identity without a doubt. "What are your parent's names, Nadia?"

Nadia snickered. "Since when do I have to give my parents names to receive a check?"

He looked into her eyes and said, "You will tell me, won't you." She was unaware he was using his preternatural power of hypnosis on her.

"Lacey Lanning Forrester and my father's name is Quinn Forrester. Is there some reason why you're interrogating me with all of these questions? You're the one giving me the check. I should be questioning you."

He smacked his palm against his forehead, wondering how he could have been so oblivious. He looked at her closely, wondering how he could have missed her strong resemblance to her mother, not to mention the deep blue eyes he had been admiring were his.

His head was spinning, wondering if he should tell her the truth. He wanted to reveal himself. If anyone could handle hearing the truth, he felt this young woman could. After all these years, his past had coincidentally caught up with him. Too much time had gone by, and he didn't want to waste any more. He decided just to go ahead and confess. If his intuition turned out to be wrong and the outcome a disaster, he had the power to make her forget the conversation. He hoped he was right about her.

He focused his eyes on Nadia. “Yes, there is.” He sighed, replacing the cap on his pen, tapping it on his desk. “I do have something to tell you, but I’m not sure how to tell you.”

Nadia shrugged with a furrowed brow. “Just say what you have to say. Whatever it is, I’m sure I can deal with it.”

He sighed and said, “You make it sound so simple, but I’m afraid it’s a bit complicated. I have to tell you it is about your family, and I’m afraid it may come as a shock to you.”

“My family?” Her eyes narrowed as her mind raced. She raised her palm. “Wait! Are you getting ready to tell me you know my father?”

He gave her a blank stare, not sure how to answer.

“Oh, my God,” said Nadia, running her hands over her face. “Are you trying to tell me you’re my brother? I know he left my mom and ran off with some bimbo. Are you trying to tell me you’re their spawn?”

He turned to her shaking his head. “No, I’m not your brother. But you’re close. We are related.”

She wrinkled her brow. “What?”

He brushed his hand through his hair, facing her. “Look, I’m going to get right to the point, so brace yourself for a shock. Despite what you may think, this is a vampire bar, and I’m a vampire. I’m a lot older than I appear to be.”

Nadia chuckled. “You’re a vampire? Okay. So what are you saying, and just how old are you supposed to be? How are we related?”

Quinn scoffed, shaking his head. He faced her and said, “Please allow me to introduce myself. I’m Quinn Forrester. I know I’m the last person you want to see, but I am, as you put it, your excuse for a

father.”

Nadia began to laugh. She pointed her finger at him and said, “You? There’s no way you’re my father. My father disappeared eighteen years ago. He’s much older than you are. He would be in his early forties now.” She raised her hand, pressing her fingers against her forehead, shaking her head. “Oh, my God, this is not a good joke.”

Quinn looked her in the eye and said, “I’m not joking. I don’t blame you for not believing me. If I were you, I’m sure I wouldn’t believe me either. But it’s true. I’m Quinn Forrester, once a charismatic rock star, now a reclusive vampire. My name is on this check I’m about to give you.”

Quinn handed Nadia the check. Her eyes drifted down to the name, her hand covered her mouth. “Oh, my God! Okay, so you have the same name, but that doesn’t prove anything. You expect me to believe you’re a vampire? Come on.”

There was only one way to prove himself. Quinn displayed his fangs and lunged toward her at a faster speed than any human could ever move.

Nadia shrieked with widened eyes, backing away with her hands covering her face.

Quinn backed away, holding up his palms. He faced her and said, “I’m so sorry. I didn’t want to frighten you, but I could see you needed proof that what I’m telling you is true. Just know that I would never hurt you. Are you okay? Do you believe me now?”

Catching her breath with her hand over her chest, she said, “I’m okay, just startled, that’s all. This is a lot to take in. Okay. I answered your questions. If you’re really my father, you’ll be able to answer mine. What’s my middle name?”

“Marie, after my grandmother, the late Marie Benet.”

“What time was I born and where?”

“You made your debut at 6:33 a.m. at Lakeside Hospital.”

“What’s my mother’s favorite perfume?”

“Poison by Dior. That was her favorite when we were together. I should know. I bought enough of it.”

Nadia took a deep breath, running her hand through her hair. She looked at him and said, “It still is. Wow! Vampires exist, and my father is a vampire. I’ve never thought the existence of vampires was even a remote possibility before, but I’m convinced now.”

Quinn shrugged his shoulders and said, “Again, I’m sorry for frightening you, but I didn’t know of any other way to convince you.”

Nadia thought about what almost happened between them and nervously placed her hands over her face. Her eyes settled on Quinn. “Oh shit! We almost kissed a few minutes ago. Now you tell me that you’re my father. This is a little embarrassing and shocking. Oh, my God, this is awkward.”

Quinn sighed and said, “Thank goodness for the interruption, and you’re not the only one. I’m so sorry about the almost kiss. I had no idea at the time. I would never have let that happen.”

“Hey, I came on to you,” she said, tossing up her hands.

“Like gangbusters,” said Quinn, returning to his chair.

“Well, I would never have guessed. I mean, physically, we appear to be around the same age. You look like you could be in your mid to late twenties at most. I would never have thought you were in your

forties. How can you look so young? How is it even possible?”

Quinn looked her in the eye and said, “We’re dead, or undead, or whatever, and apparently, you don’t age in this state of being. I still look the same, and, as long as I walk the earth, I’ll look the same.”

Satisfied with his explanation for not aging, Nadia wondered what he planned to do to her if her identity had not been revealed. Should she fear him? Is he a killer? She stared at him coldly. “Look, I need to clear a couple of things up. And be honest with me, please. Were you going to suck my blood?”

He shrugged one shoulder with a frown and said, “No. Remember, I told you earlier, I’ve already had my fill for the evening.”

“Well, excuse me, but I didn’t realize you were talking about blood. Were you going to kill me?”

Quinn chuckled. “No. I don’t kill people. We only take enough blood to sustain us and eradicate it from our donor’s memory. Most of our blood sources are willing donors. You’d be surprised at how many mortals want to be food for vampires and how easy it is to get blood. We also have alternative methods. That’s just one of many misconceptions humans have about us.”

“Okay. So you’re not a killer. But I have one more question for you. Why did you cheat on my mother, and were there others besides her? I mean, considering you were going to jump into bed with me before you ever even got my name, I think it’s a fair question.”

“Touché, my dear. As I recall, you didn’t bother to get mine either. And for the record, it was just that one time. I loved your mother, and my life was much

different then. I was happy, and my career was skyrocketing. What more could I have asked for?”

She slapped her hands on the desk and cried out, “Why did you do it? Why did you sleep with her? Why did you leave us? Why did you run off with her?”

“I didn’t run off with her,” shouted Quinn.

Nadia’s gut told her he was telling the truth. “You didn’t?”

He covered his face with his hands and said, “No. I was incredibly naïve. I met a woman in a bar. Believe me, I’m not making excuses. She must have used her power of hypnosis because I would never have left with her willingly. The next thing I remember after talking to her in the bar is waking to this dark, lonely existence.”

“So that’s how it happened. That woman was a vampire, and she’s the one who turned you?”

Quinn nodded. “You got it. I don’t know how she did it, but it happened.”

Nadia took a deep breath, placing her hand over her mouth, shaking her head. “This is unbelievable. All my life, I believed you were a no-good bastard who left us for another woman. So you didn’t leave us for her then, did you?”

He shook his head. “No. I never saw her again after that night.” Quinn nervously pulled a cigarette from the pack on his desk and lit it.

Nadia looked at him, wrinkling her brow. “So, you smoke?”

“Always did. Remember, I’m already dead, so it’s not like it’s going to be harmful to my health or kill me.”

Nadia chuckled and said, “Yeah, I guess you have a

point. I've just never heard of a vampire smoking before."

"Forget everything you've ever heard about vampires. They're all stories created by mortals."

"I would love to hear your story."

Quinn took a deep breath, shrugging, twisting his mouth. "Well, I guess you deserve an explanation for my disappearance. You have a right to know."

"Damn right, I do. And I want to hear all of it."

"I'm not sure I know where to begin."

"How about at the beginning," suggested Nadia.

"It's a long story," warned Quinn, taking a drag on his cigarette.

Nadia poured herself another glass of wine. She sat on the sofa, kicked off her heels, and leaned back, pulling her feet up under her thighs. She gazed over at Quinn and said, "I have the rest of the night."