

The Rose Vol. 1 Excerpts

Excerpt 1:

“It’s in the blood, dear,” said Ellen, one of the women Sandy shared time and space with, her skin worn by age, hard labor, and days spent under the sun. Blotches, liver spots and creases led the observer to the eyes. One dark, the other a cataract milky white and she always wore a dark shawl draped over the head and shoulders. Sandy was afraid of Ellen, she reminded Sandy of a gypsy or witch from a fairy-tale.

“Come again?” said Sandy, her eyes shifting from soldier to Ellen to soldier then back to Ellen.

Ellen had cut herself transferring a wood bucket filled with rice to add to an already large trough of buckets. A thick wood splinter pinned in the bottom of her palm dripping with a thick stream of blood. She turned to Sandy raising the bloodied palm and caught a drop of blood in her unwounded hand.

“The blood dear,” said Ellen. “All magic comes from the blood.”

Sandy cringed at the sight; she’d always been squeamish. Her stomach bumped, blood curled. Magic, Sandy thought. If only magic *was* real. How wonderful would that be? Sandy understood she was naïve, the result of an isolated childhood and her parents’ death when she was ten years old. Not that they had taught the young Sandy about the world she lived in either. They’d kept her under lock and key, never so much as offering a glimpse or advice on the outside world. They were always so cryptic with their explanations, living in an abundant and overgrown mansion as if luxury were a childhood

friend. Sure there were plenty of rooms for a child to explore but as time went by those rooms seemed more like a prison than a home.

Years of neglect, isolation and secrets were as torturous as physical suffering. And she was tired of secrets. She wanted to know truth. Truth was like a blanket that keeps you warm in the coldest winter.

“The blood, Sandy,” said Ellen who clenched her fist around those crimson droplets, shaking her hand in front of her face. “All is in the blood.”

Excerpt 2:

Dr. Blum escorted an alien vampire, a Drac, down the pristine hallway. This Drac was tall, standing well above six feet. He wore thick black armor that shined under the light, covering his torso, neck to navel, all the way down his arms, locked at the wrists. Standard armor for Drac soldiers. His skin was pale, at least as pale as a scaly brownish auburn flesh could allow. His skull was smooth and large, and his neck bones stood on his shoulders protruding from the skin and skull like two thick stints up to the top of his head. The bones swelled then retracted, in unison with his breathing. The skin beneath his eyes was a pale red circling dry yellowish eyeballs with emerald pupils. His fingers were long and thick with sharp nails. Part of the Drac species, he wore his people's badge of honor proud on his sleeve.

“He’s the first to receive the new pills,” Dr. Blum explained. “He’s still coherent though, seems his strength and adrenaline are fighting off the effects, but at least he’s calm. Shock to the system if you know what I mean, Sanos?”

“Indeed,” replied Sanos, his voice a thick and heavy baritone. “He’s had all the necessary tests completed?”

“Of course,” Dr. Blum replied.

“Good...I’m starved.”

Dr. Blum bowed. “Of course.”

They stopped in front of the door leading to Ben’s chamber.

“This is it,” said Dr. Blum, sliding a panel from the small window. He looked inside seeing Ben sitting on the floor, his back against the wall. Ben’s pupils circled

beneath half closed eyelids. His body jerked. The back of his head smacked against the wall. “Hmm, see, much more calm.”

“Delightful,” breathed Sanos. “May I?”

“Naturally.”

Sanos commanded perfection in his food. His eyes widened, delighted in observing Ben.

Excerpt 3:

The blades were unharmed. The blades are a unique contraption with thin handles held in the palms, clamps that wrapped around the wrist and just above the elbow, connected by a thin, almost string like plastic. The metal blade descended from the handles down across the arm bone to the elbow clamp and locked into place. The metal they were made from was not of this earth and was able to collapse inside the handles and wrist clamp like tin foil crumples inside a fist. But this metal was strong and solid and unmatched to any substance on earth. The handles when pressed by the index finger would ignite the blades down the arm, locking in place. Another unique feature were the handles, fitted comfortably in the palm, when pressed with the thumbs would ignite claws of steel. A useful tool when needing to climb walls. Robyn had spent years teaching Phil the art of Kobudo Tonfa. An art he'd become supremely confident with.

Phil's stare drifted to the full blood moon rising over the compound. Eyes wide, thinking: *You know what that means. There's more under the moon tonight than just alien vampires.* And they come with teeth. The moon's red glow crept across the landscape as Phil dipped his chin to his chest, grinding his teeth. Four simple words on the tip of his tongue...

“Get ready to bleed.”

Excerpt 4:

Phil heard Sandy's pounding heart growing stronger between his ears. *Just one more corner.* He took the corner as if he'd been shot from a cannon when his heart jumped, his feet slid to a stop. Not far down the hall stood Orion, blocking the hallway where Phil needed to go. The vampire's eyes glared at Phil, standing erect, arms by his side and Phil could see he wore the blades. Orion's face stiff. Phil took a few steps closer.

"This is the end for you," said Orion. He shook his head and stretched his finger in Phil's direction. "You will be no more."

Phil looked to the floor, cocked his head. *Times wasting.* He shook his head. "No matter what," he said raising his eyes to meet Orion. "I'm getting down that hall."

Orion smiled. "Never." He stretched his arms, taking a fighting stance. "After I sever your head like you did to Titus, I'll reach into your corpse and pull out your heart to feed on."

Phil stepped closer, stretching his arms. "Damn vampires," he said. "Nothing more than devolved cockroaches, scattering in fear at the first sign of the light."

Orion threw his boot into Phil's chest. Phil reeled back, slammed on his back and slid across the floor. Orion dropped his arms. "Humans," he snarled. "So pathetic and weak. Nothing more than food..." he glared at Phil who pushed himself to his feet. "...for us cockroaches."

Phil spit a wad of blood to the floor. He gripped the handles in his palms and tightened his arms as he rushed at Orion who met Phil's blade with his own. As they fought, crossing blade to blade, Phil could hear Sandy's screams.