

DRACULA: HEARTS OF FIRE

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LAUREN RETURNED TO CONSCIOUSNESS inside a glass-covered coffin. She slowly opened her eyes and stared through the dirty glass; she could see multiple finger prints smudged on it. She had no idea how she got in there. A beam of light shone through it onto her left breast, but then vanished as the clouds blocked the sun. It was no ordinary coffin, it was shallower than normal and because of that she could barely move. She was pressed by both sides of the narrow box. Besides that the casket had been spelled.

It was an entrapment spell, put on the box by a high-level wizard and that meant big trouble. Lauren had a spell put on her several years earlier that would allow her to break free of any binding, but whatever wizard had her now was obviously much more powerful than the one that had created her anti-entrapment

incantation, either that or it had simply worn off.

“How the hell did I get in here?”

Lauren noticed that her badge was missing therefore no one could track her. She could see her swords near her on an old Mexican copper inlaid grand coffee table on a stylish iron stand but she couldn't get to them. The coffee table had two cubby holes and four long drawers. Inside one of the cubby holes was an hourglass with pale blue sand the color of the ocean. Sand was slowly draining from the top to the bottom.

It was then that she realized that she could only move her head. Couldn't wiggle her toes or fingers, couldn't move her arms, her head was it, and what a terrible feeling it was. It was as if the sheriff was paralyzed from the neck down. She was resting on some sort of flat surface about two feet off the floor. It was obvious that she was in some sort of log cabin with a high wooden ceiling, and from what she could see it was an expensive looking place. Apparently she was alone as she couldn't hear anyone. It would have been the perfect opportunity to escape.

“Someone's gonna get a shit kicking.”

Lauren put all of her concentration into one kick that would bust it open. She thought that if she put her mind to it she could accomplish something; she hoped that the power Dracula had infused in her had some counter magic to it. She visualized it, over and over, kicking that thing open so she could get the hell out of there. Lauren put several minutes into it but soon became discouraged. No matter how hard she tried she couldn't move an inch. Being trapped in such a fashion was becoming increasingly uncomfortable. Although she didn't know it the spell that had been placed on her was not only supposed to completely paralyze her, but was meant to have kept her unconscious as well. The extra energy that Dracula had infused in her had interfered at least somewhat with the enchantment.

"Damn it!"

A loud crash of thunder got her attention. Lightening lit up the place as it started to pour. It surprised her as the sun had just been shining through the window. The sound of the rain hitting the roof and windows would have been pleasant enough if it wasn't for her situation. Lauren had always liked the sights and sounds of a rainstorm, and used to dance in it as a child; she loved the way it brought

life to the world with its invigorating touch. Lauren had always thought how the flowers and plants must love the rain. It was great atmosphere for what was perhaps the last day of her life. If she couldn't get out of that damn coffin she was at the mercy of whoever put her there, and obviously he didn't just want to bid her a good afternoon.

"Whoever did this is going to lose his damn head!"

Her concentration wasn't exactly working properly; she had seconds of fuzziness ebbing and flowing through her mind. Her options were so limited that she really couldn't think of any. That's what really frightened her.

Lauren could hear a clock ticking somewhere in back, perhaps ticking away the seconds of her life. She could also hear a pair of zebra finches singing back there, with bird seed being scratched around. She tried hard to remember what happened but her mind was disjointed. Michael's face popped into her head which saddened her; if this was how she was to suffer her demise he would never know her fate. Her mind suddenly became a little clearer. She now had an idea of why she was there, perhaps asshole wizard was looking to kill and drain the excess energy that Dracula

had placed into her in order to augment his own energy. The Master had warned them about that possibility but as time went by she had put it out of her mind, more or less. It was really annoying that she couldn't remember what happened. The last thing that she could recall was someone in Harlem requesting backup, and then heading out to the scene, but obviously she never made it. Perhaps someone had been waiting for her outside the building? There was no recollection of arriving in Harlem.

A cellphone rang and she recognised the tone. She turned her head and saw that it was her phone on the end of the coffee table, but without being able to move it may as well have been on the moon. The sound of it was frustrating as if it was teasing her, when it stopped it was as if her only opportunity had abandoned her. They should invent a phone that was voice activated because that would have saved her. No tracking device in that one either. The heavy rain eased off and then stopped. It had been a small system so a brief shower. She could see part of a rainbow in the distance through the crack in the curtains; she could also see a part of an old fashion fence out there. Apparently, she was in some sort of ranch house, and in fact on a ranch by the look of it. There was lots of space out there from

what she could see. Probably not a working ranch as wizards tended to be solitary beings, especially the bad ones. Although she supposed that whoever had her could have killed the owners. Unfortunately, it appeared that no outside help was forthcoming. She tried to call for help with her mind, sent a shout out to Dracula but she sensed that the Master was too far away to hear it.

“Why the hell can’t I move! Ahhhhhhhhh!” If she survived this she was going to seek out a spell to make sure that it never happened again. She cursed and screamed her loudest but no one came. It did shut the birds up though. She even tried to mind the birds to come to her aid, which only served to confuse them.

Lauren thought that had she been a wizard it might be easy to get out of that thing, but she didn’t know a hell of a lot about spells or wizards. She tried to bang the back of her head through the coffin but it only served to make her dizzy. Even though she couldn’t feel much at all, somehow she still felt weak. What a predicament.

“I’m sorry Michael.”

The hourglass continued to flow and it bothered her. Why was it measuring time like in a countdown? Something familiar and disturbing nagged her about it. That yellow sand was just about at the halfway point. Now she could see tiny bugs inside it not much bigger than the grains of sand, when they collided they caused a blue sparks. What was going to happen when the sand ran out?

Suddenly she heard a loud thump. She tried hard to see what or who was making the noise. Sounded like someone outside on the steps. Was the wizard now returning to do her in? Her level of stress increased as she struggled to see what was going on. More steps on the porch outside. Someone or something was approaching.