



FATED



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SPECTRAL
by Cayelle Imprint

FATED

Hunted Book 3

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CHAPTER ONE

EDITH
THREE MONTHS LATER

“**T**ALK TO ME, RED LEADER. WHAT DO YOU SEE?” Dan’s voice crackled over our Bluetooth communication links, as we slunk in the near pitch darkness, through what was known as the graveyard, but was, in actuality, the holding stop for the vampire’s supply trucks. It still felt strange being on the opposing side to my vampire brethren, but they started this war, not us. I could not blindly follow Mr. Heart-song anymore—war or no war.

“Why do we have to be a boring color like red?” Hope complained to the air, and by default Dan, who was safely back at the vampire base

“Why can’t we be something fun like pink or glitter?”

“Glitter isn’t a color, stupid,” her sister, Angel, hissed from my left.

“I’m not stupid, you’re stupid,” said Hope. She tried to reach around me to punch her sister in the arm, but I held her back.

“That’s enough,” I warned. “We don’t need a mini sibling war in the middle of a real civil war. If you two can’t behave, you’ll stay behind on the next mission.”

“Sorry, Mama E,” the girls chorused.

“Still waiting for an answer here,” Dan’s voice reminded me. I wasn’t quite sure how I got stuck being Red Leader, but as the only adult vampire on the Hunters’ side, they expected me to take up some leadership role. I knew the clan’s methods and movements. I was an asset ... or so the Hunters kept telling me. I suspected their real motive was to make sure I didn’t defect to the other side.

“We see four supply trucks,” I told Dan. “Perhaps a fifth, but it is smaller. Less of a cargo van and more of a pickup truck. What do you see on the radar? Has the clan figured out we’re here yet?”

“Not yet, but it’s only a matter of time,” Dan said.

“They always seem to know we’re coming.”

“That’s because someone is still tipping them off,” Darren’s voice said over the comm link. We had split up to run the mission and gone into different entrances. I had Hope and Angel with me, and he had Parker. “Maybe you should have stayed back at the base to keep an eye on your boyfriend, Angel.”

“Caden isn’t compromised anymore,” Angel said. “And, even if he was, he wouldn’t remember if he was tipping off Mr. Heartsong or not.”

“That’s why he’s still dangerous,” Darren said.

“Stick to the mission,” Dan warned. “How are you doing, Parker?”

“Is giving a shout out to your boyfriend what you call sticking to the mission?” Darren grumbled. “Real mature, Danny. We’re counting on you to keep us safe and you’re playing verbal footsie with—”

“Only problem I see with the mission is we have four supply trucks and only two people who can drive,” Parker said, ignoring Darren’s griping. “And no keys. I doubt Heartsong or his lackeys would leave the keys in the ignition waiting for someone to steal their food and weapons.”

“Leave that to us,” said Hope. She grabbed Angel’s hand, and they zipped towards the trucks with the aid of their vampire speed. “Door’s open! Awesome!”

“Be careful!” Darren said. “It could be a trap.”

“Everything could be a trap,” Angel scoffed. “Well, guess what, Darren? We’re still alive.”

“But you’re not invincible, girls,” I reminded them. “No one is.”

“Maybe not, but we can be useful.” Hope fiddled with something near the truck’s steering wheel before the engine sprang to life. They high fived each other before clamoring down the line of trucks, repeating the process as they went.

“Okay, you’ll never hear me admit this again, but that’s some seriously impressive shit, girls,” Darren said. “Where did you learn to hot-wire cars?”

“Cambodia. 1972,” Angel said. “We can sort of drive too, as long as it’s in a straight line.”

“Four trucks, four drivers. Great job.” Parker said as he and Darren joined me near the trucks. They each picked a truck. I climbed in next to Hope. I hated leaving Angel or anyone alone, but Hope would be the most likely to get distracted and crash if it came to a chase. Even with Dan’s real-time surveillance from the base, I still had my doubts on us getting out of there unnoticed.

“We told you we could be useful, Mama E!” Hope settled into the driver’s seat, her feet barely reaching the pedals.

“I always knew you were useful, *Bopha*,” I said. “Darren is the one who needs convincing.”

“Well, this should help, right?” She may be a fifty-five-year-old vampire but Hope still had the innocence and the need to please traits of a child.

“Absolutely, *Bopha*.” I smiled. “I’m proud of you and your sister.”

“We got incoming!” Dan called over the comm link. “Heat sensor shows—shit—fifteen vamps in the graveyard—with ten more where they came from. Get out of there while you can!”

Darren threw his truck door open and jumped down. I saw the glint of weapons already in his hands before his feet even hit the ground. He wasn’t planning to face off with the vampires on his own, was he?

“Parker. Girls. Get out of here, even if you have to run some of ‘em over,” he said. “I’ll hold them off and try to give you as much time as I can.”

“Not without me, you aren’t.” My feet were on the ground before anyone—least of all Darren—could object. “You heard him, girls. I’m counting on you, Parker, to lead the way back to the base. Now go!”

Parker peeled out of there faster than I thought possible for a cumbersome supply truck. He took out a locked fence gate in his bid to find the straightest path to safety, followed closely by Angel and Hope in their own hot-wired trucks.

Once we were alone with the incoming vampire horde, Darren looked over at me and grinned. “You ready for a fight?”

I clutched my fountain pen. It was the only *weapon* I felt comfortable wielding against my vampire brethren. “Only if you are.”

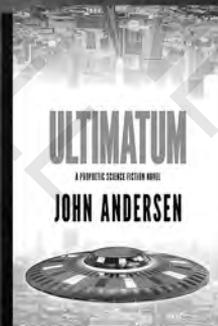
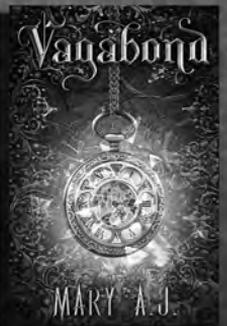
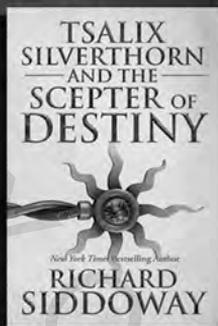
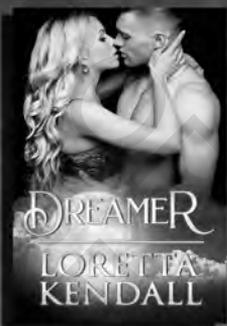
He shifted to a fighting stance. “I’m always ready.” “Twenty-five against two is not exactly a fair fight.” Despite being outnumbered, I felt fairly calm and capable with Darren beside me. At times, it felt like we could take on anything together.

“Odds bore me.” He pivoted and landed a sharp stab to the heart of the nearest vampire. “I like results. Let’s do this.”

I took a breath and followed him into the fray.

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