

# FIRST BLOOD

Book 2 in the Linked Series

Judy Serrano

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# FIRST BLOOD

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## WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT FIRST BLOOD

This book is very fast paced and found myself sucked into the story from page 1. I couldn't wait to find out what happens.

<http://ginaslibrary.info/first-blood/>

This book is full of mystery, suspense, danger and romance and there is no guessing what is going to happen as there is always twist that surprises you.

<http://stressedrach.co.uk/first-blood-linked-2-judy-serrano/>

Once again, Serrano hit a home run...I will have to say that some of the scenes made me blush a little because they are downright hot!!!...Who knew so many things could come into play when involving vampires: sabers and werewolves and not to mention the witches as well. There is never a dull moment in this book

<http://adventuresfrugalmom.com/2014/10/first-blood-first-taste.html/>

Just Serrano has done it again...Judy is a masterful writer who draws the reader into the story, losing you in a world of vampires, werewolves, and sabers. Like Linked, she leaves the reader wanting more.... I would highly recommend this book to other readers. Very well done, Judy Serrano.

James Glass Author of [Things Left Behind](#)

## AUTHOR NOTES

I want to say a special thank you to my husband, Miguel, for always listening to my storylines when they are still just tiny seeds, and for brainstorming with me when I get a hold of a new idea.

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# FIRST BLOOD







# Chapter I

I am not a vampire, but the voices in my head tell me otherwise. My cold skin, my hunger for red meat, it was all a sign. My sister, Sapphire, seemed to miss the whole experience. No symptoms at all. No waking up at night in cold sweats, no sores in her mouth, or pain in her teeth. Why did she always get so lucky? It wasn't fair.

The rain drizzled before us as a thick fog enveloped the taxi. I looked out the window, trying to steady my hands before we arrived. The guards let us through a tall, iron gate, and my sister reached over and grabbed my hand. "It'll be okay, Diamond. This is what she wanted." I nodded. It was always about what she wanted. No one else had any say.

"She's right, you know," my father added. "You'll like him. Everyone does."

I nodded again, still unable to speak. My father's best friends accompanied us. Ashley, Kyle, and Rex. He wasn't sure how Dante would take the news and he needed some backup. Kyle was ridiculously sexy. Broad shoulders and muscles other men envied. He had dark hair pulled back in a ponytail, with the bluest eyes I had ever seen. Rex was tall and slender with short spiked, blond hair. Also handsome but he may as well have had "womanizer" stamped on his forehead. He knew nothing of commitment and wore it well. Ashley was blond and gorgeous. I couldn't understand how none of them ever claimed her. She was about 5 foot 6, thin, and tough as nails. Personally, I had always thought she was in love with my father, but my mother didn't like to talk about her, so it was just speculation on my part.

The car pulled up to what looked like an old mansion. It was something you might see in an old movie. Terror ripped through me as the car stopped. My dad got out and held the door open for us. We approached the entrance, and my father rapped on the door using an old doorknocker. There was no bell.

A man opened the door and looked at my father. "Cliff," he started. "You look well." Then his face dropped. "Oh no... I'm sorry, Cliff. We hadn't heard."

"Thank you," he answered. "Is Dante home? I need to see him."

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“The guards told him you were coming. We weren’t expecting you. This may be quite a shock.”

“I couldn’t tell him over the phone,” he continued. “Please tell him we’re here.”

He opened the door and we stumbled inside. The place was like a museum. There was artwork and sculptures all over the living room. There were three men and a woman sitting at what looked like a bar. One of the men had a neatly pulled back ponytail, much like Kyle’s. That was all we could see from the back. That had to be him. That had to be Dante.

He turned around and looked at us. “Heathcliff,” he started. He was smiling.

At first.

He started to walk in our direction when his face fell. It was quite sudden. “You’re 26.” My dad nodded. “You were in your 40s when...” He stopped and looked at me. “Is this Diamond?”

“Yes, she’s 18 today, Dante.”

He looked over my father’s head as though he was looking for someone. “No!”

“I’m sorry, Dante...”

“She’s gone? She can’t be gone. She wouldn’t leave me.”

“She didn’t leave, Dante, she was taken.”

He reached for a vase on a table near to where he was standing and hurled it across the room. It slammed into a wall and shattered. My dad reached around and grabbed both my sister and me, pushing us behind him as though he thought we suddenly needed protection. Dante was howling out in pain with agony of which I was not familiar. It was like something inside him was dying. The woman grabbed him, but he fought her. “No!” he kept shouting. “No, this can’t be happening!”

She finally managed to get a hold of him and he wrapped his arms around her and started to cry. He was weeping sorrowfully like his whole world had just been blown apart. The woman looked over at the men who were sitting with Dante when we first arrived and said, “They were linked. Cliff and Daphne were linked. If the human dies first in a link, the humanized vampire turns back into a vampire in his original form. Dante and the human were close.” They said nothing, but continued to look at him with distress in their eyes. “Too close if you asked me,” she added, looking back over at my father. “Give us a minute, will you, Cliff?”

“Of course, Julia. We’ll be in the kitchen.”

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We walked away, although I was unsure of what to do next. I had never met Dante before, so I had no idea what kind of connection he had with my mother. When we discovered she was gone, there was a Bible on the floor with Dante's picture in it. She had told me about him, of course, and prepared me for this day.

"You knew he'd take it hard," Kyle reminded him. "Shoot, I'd do it if I could, you know that."

"You would have been my choice," he answered, "but we need him."

A little time had passed, and Julia called us back into the living room. My anxiety level had reached its peak. I almost couldn't breathe. Dante got up from the bar and approached us, his eyes focusing on mine. "I'm sorry," Dante started. "I apologize. Your mother... she was everything to me."

"Please don't apologize, Dante," my father said. "We knew it would be quite a shock."

"Why not call and tell me, Cliff. A little heads up would've been great." He looked at all of us as though he was evaluating us somehow. First Ashley, then Sapphire, and lastly me. He looked me up and down and finally rested his eyes on mine. "How did she die?"

"We don't know," I answered. "We heard her scream, and we ran to the bedroom to see what was wrong. She was looking at a picture of you that she kept hidden in a Bible."

"In a Bible. You're kidding, right?"

"No, no humor here, although the irony is not lost on us," my dad added. "Imagine my surprise."

Dante smiled as if he had won some kind of contest. "Go on..."

"That was all. Her Bible and your picture were on the floor. There was a broken picture of our family beside it. She was gone."

"How do you know for sure that she's dead, then?" he asked my dad.

"A few hours after she went missing, I turned 26 years old again. So whoever had her, killed her later that afternoon."

"Oh." He sighed. "So she's really gone."

"It appears so. I'm sorry. No one misses her more than I do."

"I am sorry for your loss," he continued. Then he looked at my father's face as though he was trying to read his thoughts. "So, you're

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here. Obviously it's for more than a quick message. What's going on? Do you need money?"

"No, not money."

"There must be something."

"I need to ask you a favor. It's important."

"Sure, Cliff. Anything, you know that."

My dad let out a breath and looked at the wedding ring that he still wore on his left ring finger. It was as though he was gathering courage. He looked back up at Dante with an expression that would scare anyone.

"Diamond is at the age of her transition."

Dante's eyes narrowed. "And..."

"I need your help, Dante."

"You want me to be her first blood? Is that what you're asking?"

"Yes, Dante. It was what Daphne wanted."

"Cliff, do you know what that entails?"

"Yes, I know."

"Sex, Cliff, she will ultimately be having sex with me." I shuddered.

"Don't make this harder on me than it already is, Dante." My father put his face in his hands for a second, and then looked back up. "It has to be you."

"I'm sorry, Cliff. It just wouldn't be right."

"It's what she wanted. You. You are the one."

"Why can't Kyle do it?"

"He's half human. It has to be someone who's got true vampire blood."

"Rex, then."

"He won't. Diamond is too much like a daughter to him."

His face scrunched up for a second. "I'm sorry, Cliff, you'll have to get someone else." He walked away from us and sat back down at the bar. One of the men standing there poured a shot into a shot glass, and Dante downed it. "It's been quite a day."

My dad approached him and threw a sealed letter down in front of him. "I haven't read it. But it's got your name on it."

He picked it up and smelled it. He closed his eyes for a moment as though he were breathing her in somehow. I saw what looked like fangs descend. I'm sure I gasped.

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“Dante...” My dad rubbed his fingers up and down his own mouth, hinting, I suppose, that his fangs were showing.

“She’s even doing it to me now.”

“Please, read it,” he urged him. “Please...” Dante shook his head and his fangs disappeared. I know I let out a breath. We had no idea what was in that letter.

As he opened it, he looked over at me. “You look just like her. Has anyone ever told you that?”

“Yes,” I answered. “Thank you.”

“It is quite the compliment. My brother, Charlie... did she ever mention him?”

“Yes,” I answered. “He’s Sapphire’s biological father.”

“That’s right. He and Cliff fought over her like nobody’s business.”

“And you?” I asked. “Did you fight for her?”

He smiled facetiously and looked at my father, who was already scowling. “Obviously not,” he answered. “If I did, I would have won.”

“I guess I didn’t expect you to be so... immodest,” I admitted. He smiled. “If she meant so much to you, why not fight for her?”

“They were linked,” he answered. “When Cliff was human, he possessed the same soul that eventually found Daphne. When the soul found Cliff again... well... it linked them. I couldn’t compete with that. It was hard enough accepting that I would never have her. I couldn’t watch her long for me and then give her back to him.”

“You wish,” my dad added. “She loved me. The way she felt about you was not the same.”

“Is this the right time to piss me off, Cliff?”

My dad snickered. “Just read the damn letter.”

“Out loud?” he asked. “What if there’s something in there about her feelings for me that you don’t want to know?”

“I have no worries. If you want to read it out loud... that’s up to you.”

He opened up the envelope and unfolded the letter. He handled it with such care. It was as though he thought he might damage it if he wasn’t careful. Then he looked up at me. “Your mom and I... we never...”

“I know,” I answered. “She spoke of you often.”

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He smiled. His friend poured him another shot and he downed it again. Then he cleared his throat and began to read.

*My dearest Dante,*

*You are and have always been my very best friend. I know you are feeling disheartened right now, and I understand completely. But I need you to be strong for me. Once again, I am coming to you for a favor.*

*My daughter will die during the transition if she doesn't have someone to give her first blood. Although Sapphire appears to have missed her time of transition, Diamond is not yet there. I want it to be you, my dearest Dante. You and I will never have that bond. But it's not too late for Diamond.*

His eyes filled with tears and he looked away from us for a moment. We could tell he was trying to regain composure. Then he went back to reading.

*I will always love you, Dante. You will always have a special place in my heart, in life, and now in death. Please don't turn her away. Don't turn your back on me.*

*Eternally,  
Daphne.*

Without another word, he put the letter down on the bar and got up from his bar stool. His eyes locked with mine in a way that paralyzed me. I couldn't turn and run, although that was my first instinct. "I don't believe we've been formally introduced. I'm Dante Franco." My heart began to pound. I was sure he could hear it from where he was standing. "Diamond, it is a pleasure." He kissed the back of my hand.

"Does this mean you'll do it?" my father asked.

"I can't say no to Daphne. You know that." The relief in my father's face nearly lit up the room. Then Dante put both his hands on my face and looked deeply into my soul. I thought he might kiss me for a minute, but he didn't. He was drawing from me somehow, and I couldn't make it stop. "Would you give me a moment to speak with her? Alone?"