

THE RESCUE

(Book 2 of the Blood Cure Trilogy)

By

Eileen Sheehan

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Notice** Portions of this story may prove too graphic, sexually explicit, or violent for sensitive readers. This novel is intended for the mature adult.

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Hiding from the collectors proved far more taxing than it had in Oklahoma. During my time there, they weren't looking for a specific person or persons like they were now. Bethany had taken precautions to cover the fact that she was the one who'd killed the vampires at the lab as well as disguise the fact that it was with her blood by driving wooden stakes in their hearts, but the fact that there were vampire killers on the loose was known and the search was on. It was especially serious since four vampires were now unaccounted for. Were they killed by the killer, or killers, as well? The New Order demanded answers.

Not only were the collectors ordered to comb the nooks and crannies of all human homes, but every evil bloodsucker within miles was also on the lookout. Bethany was forced to return to her place and behave as if nothing was amiss while Rick remained on the farm performing his duties as usual.

Sara was sent for. I learned that her fear for her safety for herself and her great nephew compelled her to take Peter to a remote hunting cabin on the New York-Canadian border that had been in the family for as long as the farm had been when Bethany arrived with us. It was one thing when Jared was the overseer, but quite another with wicked Glenda at the helm.

Even though Jared allowed Sara to take Peter to the cabin on occasion, with him interned at the lab and his

replacements buried in the field, not having the entire family at home during such an intense time was unwise. It was vital that everything appeared as normal. Fortunately, upon hearing of Glenda's demise, Sara gave no argument.

The big problem was what to do with Rita and me. They tried putting us in the old root cellar. Because it had been so long since it was used that the entry was overgrown, Rick doubted the vampires were even aware of its existence. Unfortunately, it proved intolerable for Rita, whose pregnancy was unstable and causing her great discomfort. We didn't even complete a second day before Rita was out of sorts and being difficult.

We had to think of somewhere else to hide.

"Will those vile beasts never give up?" Rita complained as she massaged the small bump in her stomach.

"After you were caught, it was a few months before they stopped looking for more rogue humans," I informed her. "I can't imagine how long they'll dig their heels in the search for vampire killers. It's surprising how loyal to each other they are. I never would have thought it by the way the ones that Jared lived with behaved and spoke."

"Rick mentioned something about a vampire code," Rita pouted. "He also said that he was surprised that Chase and I escaped becoming lab specimens since we showed no signs of mutation."

"I'll wager my uncle had something to do with that," I said. "Although, I don't know if you would have been worse

off in the lab, I do know that it would have been harder to rescue you.”

A sudden cramp caused my friend to double over.

“Damn, why can’t this thing just come out?” she complained. “What I endured to conceive it was bad enough. Must I continue to be tortured?”

“If you’re really serious about aborting that baby, I think Rick and Sara might be able to help you,” I said. “They helped me after Oscar raped me.”

“Why did you wait to tell me that?” she accusingly asked.

I will admit that I didn’t appreciate our living conditions any more than she did. I was doing my best to stay patient and even tempered, but her constant whining was beginning to wear on my already fragile nerves.

“Excuse me,” I said with a huff. “I’ve been a bit pre-occupied saving people and hiding from vampires.”

“Not all were saved,” she sullenly said.

“Why do I get the feeling that you’re blaming me for Chase’s death?” I snapped.

“I’m not,” she weakly said as she turned away from me. “I just hate it that you’re happy when I’m so miserable.”

“Happy?” I incredulously repeated. “How can you possibly come up with that?”

“You have two lovers, for one,” she pouted.

“That’s not exactly something to be happy about,” I confessed. “Those two lovers aren’t willing to share me. In

the end, I'll have to make a decision and someone will be hurt. That doesn't make me happy. That makes me sad."

"Well, you're okay staying in a rotten room below ground," she continued.

"Says who?" I asked with surprise. "Have you forgotten that I suffer a mild case of claustrophobia? I have all I can do not to hyperventilate every time I think about the fact that we're closed in beneath the ground... buried alive, so to speak."

"Is the door locked?" she asked with a hint of panic. "We're not locked in here, are we?"

"Crap," I said with open concern. "I never thought to check."

Her question set my claustrophobia into motion. With a heavy dose of adrenaline coursing through my veins, I struggled to get my legs to stop shaking enough to hold me and carry me to the door. Once there, I struggled some more with trembling hands that couldn't manage to operate the doorknob.

"Oh, for crying out loud," Rita impatiently hissed as she shoved me out of her way. I let out a small yelp as I fell onto my backside while she grumbled, "Let me check."

I was both relieved that she'd found the door open and hurt that she'd behaved so abnormally with me. In all of the years that we'd known each other, we'd barely had an attitude with each other that lasted more than a few minutes and it was never serious enough for us to even recall the

reason for it after an hour or two had passed. Two days of her bitching at and about everything, including me, was about to send me over the edge.

I needed air.

Although I pushed past her, I made sure that I was far gentler with my actions than when she'd shoved me out of her way. True, she was pregnant, but I inherently knew that it was more than pregnancy hormones causing her to behave in such a way. She was angry with me and it was grossly unfair.

As soon as I climbed out of the stairway with its worn steps and ancient wood supports that were laden with angry looking splinters, I filled my lungs with the clean, sweet air. I hadn't realized just how damp and rank it was in the cellar until then.

"For crying out loud, Haven," Rita complained as she climbed up the steps behind me. "You could have knocked me over."

"You *did* knock me over," I said with emphasis as I continued to breathe in the fresh, delicious air.

"I can't stay down there another second," she insisted.

Doubling over, she wrapped her arms around her waist as she moaned, "The cramps are getting worse."

"I'll go find Sara," I offered.

"I thought you said that Rick would be the one to help me," she said with a surly tone.

“I said Rick and Sara,” I corrected her. “She’s his assistant in these matters and extremely competent. It’s the middle of the day, I imagine Rick is doing his chores. I, for one, have no desire to search for him amongst the buildings on this farm of hell.”

“I’d rather have Rick,” she complained.

“Sara will find him,” I assured her.

I found it odd that she was so stuck on having Rick help her instead of Sara, but, at that moment, I wasn’t up to giving it much more thought than that.

It was twenty-four hours since Sara gave Rick's concoction to Rita to help abort the baby. So far, all that happened was that her cramps became more intense and her patience dwindled.

I was rocking in my favorite chair on the porch while listening to Rita's howls and protests from the open window above me when I spotted Bethany's horse drawn wagon coming up the long, dirt drive. Relieved to have a break from the tension of the moment as well as happy to see my friend again, I jumped up from my chair and raced off the porch to meet her.

"What are you doing outside in broad daylight?" she scolded as she pulled Sam to a halt. "The area is crawling with collectors and vampires."

"The vampires can't tolerate the sun," I reminded her. "It's high noon."

"No matter," she rebuked. "The collectors are both human and vampire. You need to get back inside."

"I need to get off this farm," I complained. "Sara is having a fit about us being here. They tried putting us in their old root cellar, but, not only am I claustrophobic, but the air was really unhealthy."

Rita must have had a super intense cramp because her intense moans gushed out of the bedroom window with such power that Bethany actually winced.

“Is that your friend?” she asked with concern.

“Sara gave her Rick’s concoction to abort the baby,” I explained.

“She did what?” Bethany incredulously bellowed.

“That girl’s too far along for that. Why would Rick allow such a thing?”

“He didn’t know,” I worriedly offered. “I didn’t realize it was too late. They gave it to me after the farmer, Oscar, had drugged and raped me for almost a week straight, so I asked Sara to give it to her. Rita desperately wants to abort.”

“That’s a shame,” Bethany sorrowfully said.

“I know,” I sighed. “Rick gave me that concoction of his without knowing if I was pregnant. It was mainly to prevent a pregnancy. It’s not in our makeup to abort children. It’s just the circumstances of how the child was conceived. I don’t know how I’d be if I was in Rita’s situation, that’s when you have to be in their shoes, I guess. Even so, I have to respect her feelings.”

“I’m not judging her. If she doesn’t want the child, I’d happily raise it for her. If she’s against carrying it full term and she’s adamant about aborting that fetus, she needs an actual abortion. There’s still time. It’s her decision,” Bethany said with pursed lips. Her head twisted in all directions as she asked, “Where’s Rick?”

“He’s in the barn,” I replied, “but I don’t know which one.” Then, with my eyes opened wide and my lower lip

quivering, I asked, “You aren’t going to ask me to fetch him, are you? I’m not up to seeing what goes on back there.”

She studied me for a brief moment.

Her expression softened along with her tone of voice as she said, “You’ve been through more than one person ever should. The focus is so much on Rita that I doubt anyone noticed what’s happening with you.”

“I’m fine,” I lied.

“You would say that,” she mused, “and, they’d believe it because it’s easier than facing the fact that we have a clusterfuck to deal with and no solution in sight.”

“I’ll go get him, if that’s what you want,” I hesitantly said.

“What I want is for you to get inside and out of sight,” she firmly said. “I’ll fetch Rick and we’ll be along shortly. We need to do something different for both you and your friend. The New Order sent their goons out to search my place so thoroughly that, even though I had nothing to hide, I got nervous. They’re bound to come here soon.”

“Wonderful,” I said with a hint of panic.

She gave me a warm, relaxed, confident smile as she said, “Just go inside for now. I’ll fetch Rick. We’ll be along shortly and we’ll put our heads together.”

Just then, Peter came flying out of the house. Hopping onto the wagon, he positioned himself so that he could give Bethany a much appreciated hug.

“Grandma Bethany!” he said with genuine joy. “I’ve missed you!”

She laughed and hugged him back with equal enthusiasm.

When they finally broke their embrace she held him at arm’s length and said, “Look how you’ve grown. Has it been that long since I last paid a visit?”

“Dad says I’m growing like a weed,” he chuckled.

“I understand you and your Aunt Sara went to the cabin,” she thoughtfully said. When he vigorously nodded, she asked, “How was it there? I mean, the vampire situation. Has it reached that far?”

His brows furrowed in thought.

“I don’t know for sure,” he replied. “Aunt Sara wasn’t nearly as nervous while we were there.”

“So, it’s still fairly safe,” she mused. Then, directing her attention back to me, she said, “You need to get back inside.”

I nodded and did as I was told.

Once inside, I looked out of the window at the old woman and the young boy. There was genuine love between them. It not only made me miss my parents to the point that my heart hurt, but I felt a deep sorrow for the change in my uncle Malcolm. Chase and Rita were my surrogate family after my parents died. Malcolm was my only living relative. With Chase dead and Malcolm turned psycho vampire supporter, Rita was all I had left.

I'd noticed since our reunion after being separated during the journey that her attitude toward me had shifted. The closeness wasn't there. It was as if our innocence died and it took that bond with it.

The impact of the losses left an emptiness within me that was soul crushing.

"Damn those vampires," I said aloud to no one in particular. "I can't wait to get Jared safe so that we can kill those sons-of-bitches."

I walked away from the window when Peter scampered off the wagon and headed back toward the house. Bethany remained seated until she was certain that he was coming inside.

Like I had been for so long, Peter was oblivious to the actual purpose of the farm and what went on in the stable. He wasn't allowed past the animal barn and chicken coops. I often wondered how long Rick would be able to shelter the boy from it all. With any luck, we'd be able to stop the vampires and he'd never know what horrible acts his father was forced to do for so many years.

I'd seen very little of Peter since he and his father had found me in the woods months earlier. Because of this, there was still an awkwardness between us that didn't exist with the other members of the family.

I decided that it was time to address it square on.

Remembering how Chase was at that age, I asked, “What games do you like to play? Ones that can be done inside, of course.”

He looked at me with surprise.

“I have a few board games that I play with Dad on occasion,” he thoughtfully said.

“Would you like to play one with me?” I asked while flashing him a warm smile.

His eyes lit up with anticipation. It was then that I realized that this poor child was terribly bored and lonely. Of course he was. The farm was cut off from the rest of the world, he had no school to go to, and no friends to play with. The duties of the farm kept his father and his aunt busy most of the time. Of course he was bored and lonely... and, I’m sure a little scared.

It was something that we had in common.