



JENNIFER ABRAHAMS

SOMETHING
WICKED

BOOK #4 IN THE VAMPIRE'S WITCH SAGA

SOMETHING WICKED

**Book #4 in
The Vampire's Witch Saga**

Jennifer Abrahams

About Jennifer Abrahams

Jennifer Abrahams is the author of *The Den*, *In the Blood*, *The Seventh Day*, and *Something Wicked*. While studying Psychology and Sociology at Boston College an event took place that significantly altered her life and ultimately inspired the creation of *The Vampire's Witch Saga*. She lives with her husband in New York City.

Jennifer loves to hear from you, so please visit www.jenniferabrahamsauthor.com to stay in touch.

Books by Jennifer Abrahams

THE VAMPIRE'S WITCH SAGA

THE DEN (Book #1)

IN THE BLOOD (Book #2)

THE SEVENTH DAY (Book #3)

SOMETHING WICKED (Book #4)

Copyright © 2012 by Jennifer Abrahams

All rights reserved. Except as permitted under the U.S. Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior permission of the author.

This ebook is licensed for your personal enjoyment only. This ebook may not be re-sold or given away to other people. If you would like to share this book with another person, please purchase an additional copy for each recipient. If you're reading this book and did not purchase it, or it was not purchased for your use only, then please return it and purchase your own copy. Thank you for respecting the hard work of this author.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictionally. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

I have almost forgot the taste of fears:
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
To hear a night-shriek; and my hair
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir
As life were in't: I have supt full with horrors;
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
Cannot once start me.

-Macbeth

Inspired by Actual Events...

-One-

Hopes and Dreams

There was a loud pounding inside Alex's head when his eyes finally fluttered open. He turned over onto his side and waited for the room to stop spinning. He sat up on his cot and looked around the den. The other four beds were empty, so he figured it must be evening. There was more banging, but this time it came from upstairs. A band was playing in the bar. Memories began trickling back into his fuzzy mind. His breath caught in his throat, and his hand flew to his neck. He rubbed the fresh fang marks.

Yesterday had marked the start of his immortality. Skylia had bitten him for the first time. He was marked, and he was hers now—no one else could claim him. If he were ever to be turned into a vampire, it would have to be by Skylia. He tried to smile.

Upstairs, the band banged on and on. Skylia leaned in close to James. She pressed her lips against his ear to tell him she was ready to leave. She had been

trying to speak to him with her mind, but he was ignoring her. He looked over at Brooke. Brooke and Mara were behind the bar serving a bunch of rowdy locals. It was a pretty busy Thursday for mid-September, and they would have to handle the bar alone. Peter had gone to Charlotte's Book Boutique. He was picking Lydia up after her shift and accompanying her to a party in the Warehouse District.

"Why are you ignoring me? I want to go, James. Come on! It is time!" Skyla shouted into James' ear.

"Sorry. I wasn't ignoring you. I just had to shut down for a bit. I could not handle Brooke anymore. She is relentless. Now that she knows how to mind-read and mind-speak, she does it constantly. She keeps shooting questions at me from behind the bar, asking me when I will feed her my blood. It has only been ten days, but she thinks that since Steve turned you right away, I should do the same."

"Well? What are you waiting for anyway? Isn't it time?" Skyla poked her finger into James' chest with each question.

"Come! Let's get out of here." James grabbed Skyla's hand and dragged her out the door.

Skyla sighed loudly. She breathed in the refreshing night air and threw her head back. James laughed and kept pulling her along. She skipped by his side, not concerned about where they were going. Two girls stumbled by and bumped into them. Skyla inadvertently reached out toward the girls, but James tugged her into his arms.

"Stay calm. There will be plenty of time, later, for drinking blood," he whispered into her ear.

A shiver slipped into the pit of her stomach and she turned to stare into his eyes, searching for the reason. His simply whispering into her ear should not have caused such a reaction, especially now that they were both immortal creatures. He smiled down at her and brushed her nose with his.

“Come!” He laughed.

They began walking again. Skyla did not start to skip this time. Her head was spinning and a thousand thoughts raced through her mind, but not one made it to the front of her brain. She felt dizzy and disoriented.

“Be still, baby.” James breathed into Skyla’s ear as he held her to his chest.

All was quiet for a moment.

“We are here,” he whispered.

Skyla looked up at James and beyond him to see the three-story brick house with an ornate balcony wrapping around its second level. The balcony threw a shadow onto the sidewalk below it. A wrought-iron lantern swung back and forth, without the help of a breeze, and threw amber specks across the house’s clay-colored exterior. Skyla held her breath.

The front door was a pace away. James moved toward it and reached out to bang the fleur-de-lis door-knocker. Skyla pressed herself against his back and waited.

*

Brooke slammed a beer down on the bar as she shouted at Mara with her mind. *I can’t believe this! I am so ready! I’m, like, over-ready. All I think about is his blood—all night long and during my dreams, too.*

Mara placed a hand on Brooke's back as she passed by and leaned down to grab a few bottles of Bud from the ice trough. She put them on the bar, wiped her hands on her jeans, and grabbed the opener from her back pocket. A guy wearing a baseball hat turned the cap from backward to forward to backward again. Then he stuck his hands in his pockets. Mara raised her eyebrows at him, and he looked away as he tried to locate his patience.

She opened the bottles and slid them closer to the baseball-hat guy. He dropped a twenty-dollar bill onto the bar, grabbed the bottles, and walked over to his friends, who were seated at one of the high bar tables close to the stage.

Brooke poured some gin into an ice-filled shaker and shook it violently. "Ahhhh!"

Mara took the shaker from Brooke and pointed to the trapdoor that led to the den. *Take a break, Brooke. I got this.*

"No! No, I'm fine. Sorry. I'm okay. Maybe I just need a drink or something." Brooke tried to take a shot of vodka but had to spit it into the sink.

"Here," Mara said, handing her a glass of red wine. Then she turned her attention to the girl who was jumping and waving her hands in the air.

Brooke sipped the wine slowly. It didn't taste good, but it warmed her insides and calmed her nerves on the way down. She looked over to the band. "It's progressive bluegrass," she remembered the fiddle player, Gabe, telling her. He had sat across from the bar and flirted with her while the other band members set the instruments up and tested the amps.

When Gabe leaned over the bar and grabbed Brooke's hand, James could no longer tolerate the overly friendly fiddle player. Gabe was telling Brooke that he was going to dedicate a song to her when James flew up behind him.

"Better get up on the stage," James growled.

Gabe stood up stick-straight and went white as a ghost. Brooke tilted her head in the direction of the rest of the band members. He nodded slightly and walked backward to join the others. Then James continued ignoring Brooke for the rest of the night.

Gabe noticed Brooke as the band started another song, and he pointed his fiddle in her direction. "This one is for you, New York City," he said into his mic as he winked at her. Brooke smiled and leaned back onto the register.

Mara had arms, hips, and hands working at the same time to try to keep up with the rush. She didn't complain, though. It was nice to have a distraction after what had happened just before sunrise. It was a good thing that Steve had stayed to hold her in her bed. She doubted she would have made it through without him. When she woke, her face was stiff with tears. The pillow was still damp. She had had to walk past Skyla and Alex as they held each other in Alex's cot. Her heart hurt just thinking about it. *That had been my bed for the last six months.* When Alex was up North, stalking Skyla, Mara had slept in his cot to feel closer to him.

It was finished now. All of Mara's hopes and dreams—anything and everything she had ever wished for—were obliterated. Skyla had bitten Alex. He belonged to Skyla now.

There was a knock on the trapdoor. Brooke moved out of the way as it lifted open. Alex emerged, sloppy-haired and pale-faced. Brooke turned to look at Mara. Mara was shoving money into the tip bucket with one hand and pouring a shot of Cuervo with the other. Brooke wriggled her nose. *Ugh, tequila!* She backed away toward Alex.

“Where is Skyla?” Alex shouted at Brooke over her song.

“With James. I don’t know where they went. No one bothered to tell me.”

Mara smiled to herself. *Ha! Now you know how it feels.*

Alex shrugged and grabbed a beer. He sat on the stool by the entrance.

*

Peter fidgeted at Charlotte’s store, the Book Boutique. Charlotte wasn’t there. She had stayed home to spend some quality time with Stephen, the den father figure and leader. Sylvia, the more responsible one of her two employees, was at Jackson Square running Madame Charlotte’s Vampire Tour all by herself. Lydia, the other employee, had a big party to go to, and Peter had agreed to pick her up and take her. She had met the cutest guy. He was here to display his work at a gallery. There would be opening-night cocktails, and at midnight the DJ was going to turn it into a dance party. Lydia knew better than to go alone. She would need an escape excuse if the artist wanted to follow her home or asked too many questions.

“Careful with that!” Lydia shouted.

Peter fumbled with a purple and red glass paperweight that had been resting on top of a leather-bound history book. It was blown glass shaped into a beautiful peacock feather. He caught it right before it was about to smash to the floor.

“Sorry. It’s pretty.”

“Oh, yes. Charles gave it to Charlotte as a party gift when he came to the Ostara party last March. Did you know that a peacock feather symbolizes immortality? At least I think it was Ostara. I don’t know. I mean, it could have been Yule. It is so hard to keep up. Always some kind of party around here.”

“Immortality?”

Lydia danced over to Peter and took the paperweight from his hands. She stood on her tiptoes and kissed him on the lips.

“Oh, yes. Immortality,” Lydia murmured. “Charles is always giving his favorite immortal creation such meaningful gifts. You see this?” Lydia held up her necklace. “These are peacock feathers, too. They’re separated by amethysts. It was given to Charlotte when she complained about those witches at Trois Souers Plantation. She felt that Beverly was going to place a spell on her.”

Lydia thought back to the time when Charlotte had flown around the Book Boutique ranting about “the bitchy Beverly” and “the sneaky Stella.” She even claimed that Ruby had threatened her with one of Stella’s concoctions. The necklace was her guardian. She had worn it constantly. Charlotte had only just taken it off this evening when Steve arrived to pick her up. She’d offered it to Lydia.

“She gave it to you?” Peter asked.

“Well ... she kind of thought I might need it. This freaky girl Pam came in here the other day. She was actually asking around for Alex. She was trying to track him down and had sensed that he had been at our bookstore. I told her I didn’t know any Alex. I wasn’t about to tell some pointy-eared wannabe elf or witch or whatever

where Steve's Place was. Anyway, I have kind of been feeling her—Pam—in my head lately. Charlotte thinks maybe I should wear it for a bit.”

“What is Alex doing with a witch?”

“I don't know, but I'm guessing after what happened with Lucy you have had enough of witches for a while.”

Peter nodded and fingered the peacock feathers that hung from the thick silver chain around Lydia's neck. His mind wandered to Lucy and the old, vicious vampire Charles. They would still be traveling in Europe. Lucy's e-mail had said they were going to be on a honeymoon. Charlotte had confirmed the story: Charles had phoned to say they would not be back until Halloween.

“Let's get out of here. Let's go party with my new artist friend,” Lydia sang out.

“What's his name anyway?”

“It's Christopher. Christopher Michael.”

“Christopher Michael?”

-Two-

Trust

Lydia perked up and looked at Peter. “You haven’t heard of him, have you? Christopher said his work consists mostly of abstract paintings. I didn’t realize you were into art.”

“It sounds familiar. But no, I guess not. Just rang a bell, that’s all. Since when are you into art?” Peter poked her chest and laughed. “Well, you know what they say: ‘Never trust a guy with two first names.’”

“No one says that. Anyway,” Lydia said, looking down at her twisting hands, “I think his real name was Christopher Michael Johnson, but he changed it. Let’s go.” She pushed Peter out the door. She locked it behind them and put the keys in the tiny black purse strapped across her body.

Peter took her hand and they strolled together through the Quarter toward Canal Street. Bourbon Street was filled with blaring beats and stumbling tourists. They weaved through the crowd and into a bar. Peter needed a drink first. For some reason, he wasn’t ready to meet this Christopher Michael guy. They made their way through the swarming drinkers up to the bar. The bartender, a pretty girl with long wavy blond hair, took one look at Peter and turned a bright scarlet. Then she noticed Lydia and the color drained right away.

Lydia spoke first. “Hey, Heather! Two drafts of whatever and two shots of whiskey.”

Heather dropped what she was doing and brought the drinks over. Peter reached for his wallet, but Heather shook her head and waved her hand. She wouldn't take any money from one of Steve's guys.

"Come into Steve's soon for a drink," Peter said to her.

"Sure. Sure. See you guys soon."

Lydia and Peter tapped their glasses and shot the whiskey back. Heather placed two more on the bar. They did it again and then picked up their drafts to wash away the burn.

"Tonight should be fun," Lydia said.

"What?" Peter leaned closer.

"Fun! Tonight should be fun!" Lydia giggled and Peter leaned in to rub his nose against hers.

Lydia put her arms around his neck and giggled again. He kissed her neck and ran his lips along her throat and up to her mouth. Lydia kissed him gently and nibbled at his lower lip. Peter groaned a little. Lydia giggled again, but the sound came from a deeper place. Peter heard a bang as Heather slammed two more whiskeys down. He raised his eyebrows at her, but she just shrugged and gave him a smirk. Suddenly, the situation with Lucy and the witch sisters seemed to have happened a very long time ago, in a land far, far away.

*

James banged the fleur-de-lis knocker again. Skyla gripped his shirt and wondered where they were. The door swung open and a cool wind rushed over her,

prompting her to immediately relax. She peered around James to see Steve standing in the doorway.

“Welcome! Come in. Come in. I have been waiting for your visit.”

Skyla threw her arms around Steve and he picked her up. She wrapped her legs around him and squeezed him as hard as she could. She had missed him so much. Steve laughed into her neck.

“I missed you, too, dear, but it’s only been a few hours. Come, let’s have some wine.”

Steve carried Skyla through the living room and into the back parlor. She buried her face in his chest, not even bothering to look around. He placed her on the rose-colored love seat, and she rubbed her hands along the satiny fabric. James sat next to her and positioned his arm around her shoulders.

“We would love some wine now, Steve,” James said.

Steve nodded and looked James up and down.

“Where is Charlotte?” James asked as Steve poured the red wine.

“She is getting ready. She’ll be down soon. I suspect she will want to give Skyla a tour. You should feel quite at home here, Skyla.” Steve handed them the glasses. “James does. Don’t you, James?”

James drank his wine. Skyla held hers and watched the red ring as she swished it around the glass. Steve took a sip and gave her a look out of the corner of his eye. Skyla smiled and took a sip, too. It did not go down easily. She would try, though, to make Stephen happy.

“Welcome!” The voice rang out from the top of the staircase. Charlotte sashayed down to the parlor.

James walked over to her and placed a kiss on each of her cheeks. Charlotte approached Skyla and took the hand without the wine glass. She pulled Skyla off the couch and into her arms. She held her for a long time.

“Oh, my dear,” Charlotte said as she nuzzled Skyla’s curls. She breathed in deeply and let out a deep sigh. “I am so glad you have come home to us. We all are.”

“Thank you,” Skyla mumbled into Charlotte’s neck.

Charlotte kissed Skyla on the top of her head and then on each cheek. She held Skyla’s face in her hands and looked deep into her eyes. Skyla wasn’t frightened this time. They were both vampires now. Charlotte was being so sweet to her. Skyla felt her heart open as if white light were pouring out of it and flowing into Charlotte’s. Charlotte leaned in and kissed Skyla’s mouth. She held her lips to hers, and Skyla’s body grew numb.

“Charlotte, would you like some wine?” James asked as he grabbed Skyla from behind and gently pulled her away. Skyla recovered as her energy returned.

Things were not going as planned. James had thought this visit would be a double-date situation. It seemed no one could keep his or her hands off Skyla. This was getting ridiculous.

“So let’s toast to our family reunion,” Steve said when Charlotte had her wine in hand.

“To family,” Charlotte said.

“To family,” James and Skyla said in unison.

They drank and reminisced. Skylia tried to keep up. Things were starting to sound very familiar, but she had to stretch her mind back two lifetimes. It was going to take more meditation. She would work on it in the den. She would not forget to pray and repeat *The Seven Sacred Let Lines*. She would continue all the lessons she had been learning before she left the den. Before Steve had bitten her three times and fed her his blood. Before Steve had brought her home.

*

“You are worse than I am, Brooke Leigh.” Mara smacked Brooke on the butt as she poured another round of shots for the three guys lined up at the bar.

“What?”

“You are shamelessly flirting with that fiddle player. Leave the band alone. Don’t you have enough on your plate? We will go out and find some tourists tomorrow night. Peter and Alex can work the bar. Skylia will probably be out with James, meeting lots of new friends. I think it is James’ job to introduce her around.”

“That band guy is cute, though. Hey, do you think James is the jealous type? You think if I hung out with the band he would notice? Maybe pay more attention to me?”

“Not really,” Mara spit. She ran to the other end of the bar to help a few young girls. She wished Brooke would snap out of it and start helping. It was becoming exhausting running back and forth by herself. She peered over at *useless Alex* perched on his stool.

Alex swiveled on the stool and shot Mara a dirty look. She was so loud when she was upset. Her thoughts were pummeling him in the back of the head. He got up and walked behind the bar.

“Brooke, go hang out on the stool and pretend to check IDs. I’ll help Mara for a while.”

“Thanks, Alex. I really appreciate it,” Mara said and took a sip of her soda. The straw bobbed around when she gestured to Brooke. “Really, Brooke. You need some fresh air.”

Brooke looked at Mara and then at Alex. She nodded and walked out from behind the bar. She sat on the stool and watched the people going by. The band played on, but she didn’t turn to watch.

A guy waved from the other side of the bar, and Alex walked over to help him. Mara took another sip of her soda and followed him.

“She is upset with James. Did you know that?” Mara asked Alex.

“Yes, I caught that. Kind of hard to miss, actually. She had been shouting at him with her mind all night long. He conveniently did not hear, but I could hear it all the way downstairs over the banging from the band and the pounding inside my head.”

“Oh. How are you feeling?”

“I’m okay, Mara. It’s a bit uncomfortable right now. Not bad. Just as if my legs are filled with jelly. I wish Skylar were here. I could use her support right now.”

“I guess you should get a drink tonight. Don’t you need the blood since she took yours?”

“I guess you’re right. I’ll go out later, though. I don’t really want to leave you girls by yourself when it is this busy.” Alex’s eyes turned toward the woman standing alone at the bar. She had just checked her cell for the fourth time. Obviously, she was accidentally alone. His hands trembled slightly, and Mara noticed.

I would never say anything, Alex. You can take her downstairs and no one would ever know. It would be our secret.

Really, Mara? Really?

Mara nodded.

No. I couldn’t. Taking a customer is forbidden by Steve.

You can trust me, Alex.

It would probably make me feel much better.

Mara smiled.

*

“It is getting late. We’d better go if you want to see your artist.” Peter ran his hand up Lydia’s thigh. He tucked his fingers into the waistband of her jeans.

She smirked up at him and placed her glass on the bar. “Bye, Heather!” she shouted at the bartender but kept her eyes on Peter. She shook her head. *This could be a very bad idea.* “Okay, Peter. Follow me.”

Stepping out onto Bourbon Street reminded Peter that he needed to be ready for a party. He rolled his eyes. This could be a brutally boring night at an art exhibit. Lydia was very persuasive. If she asked Peter to do something, he simply did it. He

immediately said “yes.” Everyone—men and women alike—seemed to react the same way around Lydia. She was ... something.

“What are you thinking about, Peter?” Lydia spun around the street.

Two guys stopped short to watch her. One of them had a girl on his arm. She wasn’t so happy, and he got a smack on the back for it.

Peter just laughed and rushed down the street toward Canal. It was getting late. Maybe they would miss the party anyway. They walked on Canal and crossed at Magazine Street. The sounds of the Quarter faded away. There wasn’t any music flowing out of these buildings. There weren’t any shouting tourists. The streets were silent. Lydia shivered. She quickly turned her head. She could have sworn she’d seen someone out of the corner of her eye. She grabbed Peter’s hand. He held it tight. They continued walking toward the Contemporary Arts Museum. It was dead quiet and nearly pitch black. The moon was only in its first quarter.

They crossed Julia Street, and clinking and banging could be heard spilling out of a bar halfway up the block. Peter raised his eyes, but Lydia just shook her head and kept walking.

“Oh. Here. I think. Yes, I think this is the address,” she said when they reached a one-story white-brick building. There weren’t any windows, but there were a few people milling around the alleyway just around the corner. As they turned into the alley, they could hear the music and see the pulsating colors of strobe lights bleeding out the back door. Lydia dropped Peter’s hand and skipped forward.

Inside, the wood floors were painted white. The lone couch and the folding chairs were all white. The exposed-brick walls were also painted white. Huge white canvases with bright splashes of color hung on the walls.

“Wow! Peter, look how gorgeous.”

Peter nodded and looked around. The DJ was set up in the opposite corner. A guy with spiky blond hair and a black leather blazer was talking to him and waving his hands around. Then he looked in Peter and Lydia’s direction. He stopped midsentence and came straight toward them.

“Hi, Lydia. I’m so glad you made it.”

“Christopher! Hello.” Lydia kissed him on the cheek and threw her arms around his neck for a long hug. “This is my friend Peter Desmarais. Peter, this is Christopher Michael,” she said as she held both their hands.

Christopher looked down at Peter’s and Lydia’s hands and back up at Peter’s face. He took a big step back. A chill raced up his spine. He shook it off.

“I’ll go get you two a drink. We have white wine, red wine or beer. What would you like?”

“We’ll both have a beer,” Lydia answered.

“So this is ... impressive, Lydia. How exactly did you meet this guy?”

“He happened to walk into the Book Boutique.”

“He just happened to walk in?”

“Why do you ask?”

“I don’t know. Something seems a little too—”

“Oh, Peter, you are such a worrier. Enjoy the night! Let’s dance.” Lydia grabbed his hand and led him to the dance floor.

He was swinging Lucy around when he felt it. A dark cloud moved into the room and all the oxygen was sucked out. He swiveled around as three men walked through the back door. They were dressed all in black—black jeans, black jackets, black hats. They stopped short when they recognized Peter.

“Oh, no, Peter,” Lydia murmured.