

Sample Chapter

Snow Blood Season 1

By Carol McKibben



Episode One : Transformation

The pain sliced into my ribs like steel on bone. Then, nothingness.

Searing pain, and the sight of two snarling, rabid beasts locked in battle, interrupted the safety of my void. The scent of their blood-filled rage made my nose twitch. My brain screamed "move" but my legs disobeyed. Paralyzed on the ground, I watched as two giant beasts circled each other, lumbering dangerously close. One, an unknown, unnatural brother who could stand on hind legs. The other ... a demon, perhaps? That was the best way I could describe this otherworldly creature.

My eyes began to focus. I could see blood-covered fangs and claws, a demon strangely glowing in the lunar light. It looked "moon-kissed". Light from the night-time sun caressed this deformed creature. Perhaps I'm imagining this? Maybe it's my love of the moon. I've always felt its protection at night on my forays into the woods near my home.

Jaws snapping. The upright wolf-being lunged. The demon creature moved faster, almost a blur. It hastily side-stepped the wolf's bite as easily as a mongoose avoids a cobra. The

wolf snarled its frustration. It circled the moon-kissed demon that appeared to be taunting its opponent. I tried to move to observe better, but pain savagely raked through me. A dark circle of wetness surrounded me. The air reeked with the smell of ... blood. My blood.

Why had I recklessly left the comfort of my home? The fireplace in the den warmed us against the outside of fall's cold weather. Perhaps I needed adventure. Prey lurked in the outside darkness, and instinctively, I had wanted to give chase. My little human tried to tackle me just as I dashed to the kitchen and nosed aside the flap from the back door to the freedom of the night that beckoned me.

"Snow! Don't go out there. It's dark!" He squirmed, trying to hold me. He weighed less than any little subaltern laying his body across my shaggy mass. Embarrassing, I thought, since I outranked him in the pack. But, I never snapped at him. My little human needed my protection.

"Let him go, Tommy. He's just doing his job; keeping the coyotes away." Tommy's father, our Alpha, had spoken, and we must all obey.

The little human stood upright and slowly released his grip on my back. Moments later, I was chasing coyotes across the front lawn and out into the street, doing what I did best – protecting my pack. Now, as the sound of gnashing teeth brought me back into the present, I wished for the chance to better safeguard them. Who would warn my humans of this danger if I didn't make it home?

The two creatures battled on. The wolf leaped over its combatant's head, narrowly avoiding a crushing blow to its leg. The glowing demon blurred, quickly avoiding an attack from the rear. It spun just in time to avoid its throat from being taken. Suddenly, fall leaves were flying into the air. They hit the grass under the trees that lined the abandoned road and tumbled, arms and heads over legs.

My paws quivered as the fight drew closer to me. Inexplicably, I remained unable to move from where I had landed after the pain hit me. My energy had already seeped from my body. Running away appeared no longer an option.

I watched as the fierce beasts arose quickly from their tumble. The wolf gained an advantage, lunging forward and extending its claws as the demon stumbled over a broken tree trunk. Its opportune fall to the ground enabled the demon to duck the razor-sharp claws. Just missing the demon, the wolf landed and rolled behind its enemy. Quickly, it spun up to go after its prey now sprawled out on the grass.

Just as the wolf leaped, BOOM. A loud explosion ... and then the wolf crumpled to the ground with a pained yelp and a heavy thud. His lifeless body sprawled awkwardly on the dirt.

A strange voice pierced through my head. "Silver bullets work well on panweres, too." A malicious chuckle followed.

Was that the demon's voice? I wondered. Surely I did not see his lips moving.

The demon creature knelt over its victim and poked the wolf's body. No sign of life.

Triumphantly, it threw back its head and let out a victory scream that made the hairs on my neck bristle. It then rose to cast its appraising gaze in my direction. I struggled to get my feet under me, fearing that if I didn't, the demon would kill me on this spot, just as he had taken the life of the wolf. As it approached me, I felt my life slowly drain away; the darkness enveloped me again. The sadness of never seeing my family again lingered ...

Darkness closed over me ... drifting into ... an overwhelming itchy sensation? My nerve endings were on fire, consuming me with a new-found rush. The thin line of life spread throughout me. Every fiber of my body stood on end as the blood-filled eyes of the demon pierced mine. A thin drop of blood clung to one of its fangs before descending onto my face in slow motion. I tried to move but the creature held me in place with one giant claw-covered hand. Other than the weight of its massive body, I felt no trace of the initial pain that had sent me into darkness.

I watched transfixed as the creature transformed into a human. First claws became large hands. It shrunk only slightly. Its deformed body took the shape of a strong, muscular athlete. Its distorted visage faded into a handsome face with a strong nose, cheek bones and jaw. It was only seconds until it became a naked man. It spoke. "Hold still, dog. Let your body absorb my venom and heal."

Venom? Heal me? Fire streaked through my veins, forcing every part of me to come alive. An unfamiliar strength enveloped me. I had been crippled only moments ago. Now, every part of me sprang to life. My eyes never left the demon/man.

Blonde and fair, a pale face framed large violet-colored eyes that transitioned back to red and again to violet. He towered over me; his long, muscular frame stretched over what must have been almost a half-head taller than James, my master. I once heard my master brag, "I'm six-foot-one in my stocking feet." I guess that was his way of stating how tall he is.

The demon/man wiped the blood from his face onto his hand. My blood, or his? I wasn't sure.

"All right," he commanded, "try to get up now."

I sprang to all fours, shook my heavy white coat and sat back on my haunches. How did I get on this deserted road in the middle of the woods? Prey. That's it. Chasing prey. The large black car with Oregon plates sitting sideways in the road next to us, lights on, motor running, looked as though it had swerved to avoid something. Had it collided with me?

The man knelt down and patted my head. "Confused are you? That's right, I hit you."

I cocked my head at him, feeling better than before. How could he have hit me? I got a whiff of his odor. A layer of perfume concealed the smell of death and something rotten that had emanated from the demon during its battle with the wolf. I stood and shook my whole body again, as if to expel the experience and the smell. Then I turned away to go back home.

"Wait!" He placed a firm grip on my back with his strong, human hands.

I whipped my head around, baring teeth in warning. Let me go! I had to go home to my loving family and the warm fire that awaited me.

He stared at me. "No, that's an insane thought."

Was he speaking to me? Was he reading my mind?

He paused for a long moment, staring at me as if he could see through me. I shivered from the menacing touch of his hand on my back.

He released his grip. His shoulders slumped, and he ran a bloody hand through his blonde hair. He took a long, deep breath, then shook his head. "Come with me."

I watched him move toward the car. I had to go home. My people must be worried.

He turned to me, and I felt drawn to him. No, I must go home.

"There is no choice, dog. Come with me."

No! The hackles on my back stood on end in warning. I will go home! I backed away, growling in defiance. I turned to run, but he blocked my path to freedom and caught me in a heartbeat.

He stopped me in my tracks. How could this human outrun me?

He grabbed my head with his bloody hands and twisted my face to meet his blood-red eyes. "You will come with me now! It is for your survival and that of your people." He let go and stood tall again. He took two long strides to the car. Over his shoulder he commanded, "Come!"

I resisted with everything that I had.

He opened a door to the large sedan and motioned for me to take the passenger seat. I tried to resist again but my legs disobeyed me, and I covered the short space and jumped in. He slammed the door behind me.

I growled as I watched him cross in front of the car and open the driver's door. A black turtleneck sweater and black pants hung on the back of the driver's seat. Black loafers and socks sat on the floor in front of the seat. He reached inside for them and hurriedly put them on, never taking his eyes from me. His gaze was creeping me out. Intense.

Sliding behind the wheel, he looked at me for a long minute. "You're my responsibility now. Let's go find you something to eat. You will need your strength."

I didn't like his toothy grin. What wasn't he telling me?

I found it odd that my ravenous cravings for something ... something very bloody outweighed all other reason.

I spat out the bitter meat after sucking every drop of blood from it. What is wrong with me? I had always devoured a good piece of meat with joy. This brought none, just a bitterness that only the blood from it could mask. The smell repulsed me. Nauseated, I nudged it away.

I looked around me, trying not to think of my pack, or my growing hunger. The

surroundings were elegant. Where are we?

"At my wine estate in Chehalem Valley, not far from Newburg." He sat, his legs crossed, in a large, overstuffed mahogany chair covered in maroon velvet pulled near a giant fireplace.

My pack lives in Newburg, Oregon. I crept closer to the fire, but it gave me no warmth. I felt neither warmth nor cold, just hunger. He stared at me with those large eyes that seemed to shift from purple to red, and then back to purple. He appeared deep in thought. His raspy voice surprised me.

"Meat will no longer work for you, dog. You need blood, and soon, to complete your transformation." He sipped from a large glass, savoring the red liquid on his tongue after he spoke.

Transformation? The word made me shiver.

"But, before I take you hunting, what shall I call you?"

I remained silent.

"Come here." The man's eyes bore into me.

My resolve to disobey dissolved.

I walked to him.

He bent down and looked deeply into my eyes. "What is your name?"

My thoughts betrayed me as my legs had earlier. I felt compelled to answer. *My name is Snow.*

"Ah, yes. Snow. I shall call you Snow ... Blood. You can call me Brogio."

I heard the words, but his mouth didn't move.

He took another sip from his glass and smiled. "That's right; you're hearing my thoughts. Spoken words will not be needed between us now." He held up his glass.

I wondered what was in the glass.

"This is wine from my winery. Vintage 1985."

I was relieved that he wasn't drinking a glass of blood in front of me. *So tell me, Brogio, why do we not need words?*

Again, the smile. The eyes turned deep red for a fraction of a second. A cold chill coursed through me, and I shivered. I wanted to run, but where? This Brogio could outrun me. And he could read my mind too! Anger rose up, and I let out a reflexive growl.

"I am an Artemis. Animals understand and obey me. It is the way. And now, I am your sire."

If you control animals, why did the strange wolf attack you?

"I have no control over panweres."

Panweres? Never heard of them. What ...

"A shape shifter. A creature that can shift into many different kinds of animals." He stood straight up. "Come, you must feed. We can talk more later."

I want to go home.

"No, you can't. It would be dangerous." He kneeled down next to me. "Snow Blood, you would end up killing those you love until I can teach you to control your urges."

I shook my head from side to side. *I don't understand.*

He sighed and return to the oversized chair, taking a long drink of the remaining wine.

I sat firmly in place. I refused to go anywhere until I understood what he meant.

"Snow." He sat back in the chair as if ready to tell me a story, "You are becoming a vampire. And, only a vampire can make another." He stared at me to let the words sink in. "You died on the road, and I turned you to bring you back."

I died? I am dead? I didn't remember any of it. The shock of his words shook me to my core. How can that be? I am fine!

"Only because I healed you and brought you back." His gaze met mine, and I knew it was true. The darkness, the blood, my paralysis, the feeling of being revitalized. My coat still carried traces of dried blood. "The only way to save you was to make you a vampire."

What is a vampire?

"You are of the Kindred, the undead, and somewhat immortal. We don't appear to age. Many of us survive for centuries." He leaned forward. "Dog, I warn you. Vampirism is a curse; not a blessing.

Then why did you not let me die?

"Selfish reasons, I suppose."

What reasons?

Brogio ignored me. "Understand, it carries great power but has many detriments. Not the least of which is the rage of the beast. Oh, and feeding on human blood."

I sat stunned and motionless. I didn't know what detriments were, but the rest ... it sounded absolutely awful. Terrifying. I longed to go home and hear the voices of the ones I loved, James and Tommy and our female Alpha, Jeanne. I closed my eyes and imagined the kind stroke of their hands on my back. I loved my humans. They were my pack. I could never hurt them.

"Yes, you will hurt them," Brogio uttered, having read my thoughts. "For us, the act of feeding is euphoric. The human actually feels ecstatic when it happens, and you will undergo a rush." He stood up and began to pace. "I have struggled with this, and it pains me. Some vampires have sustained their undeath by drinking the blood of animals. They rarely do so for very long. The needs of their cursed bodies force them to seek human blood."

What then, if I bite my humans? Will they become vampires? I struggled with the knowledge that I could hurt them in any way. I had been with them since I left my litter. Tommy, my constant companion, had become my best friend. James and Jeanne had spoiled me from the moment we met. They treated me as more family member than pet. I visualized

them out in the woods calling my name, frantic that something had happened to me.

"A person doesn't become a vampire if he, or she, is bitten, or killed by us. It takes a conscious act of will. I call it the Embrace ... to create a new vampire." He stopped his pacing and looked at me for long seconds. He appeared to be in deep deliberation. Finally, he continued. "We can leave little to mark our passing if we are careful. All I have to do to hide the wound left by my feeding is to lick it when I'm done."

From his description, it sounded as if these vampires had great power, but also many unpleasant parts to their existence. I did not want to be one. It appeared I had little choice. Looking for something positive, I latched on to a question.

He answered before I could form further thoughts.

"Yes, I have many disciplines. I can turn into any form of animal. Sometimes I can fly. And I have the strength of a hundred men. Just a few of my ... attributes."

Will I be able to fly?

He laughed, and I cocked my head at him.

It's a serious question!

"I suppose we will discover that together. I have never sired a dog in all my time." He poured himself another glass of wine and returned to his large chair near the fire.

How long have you been training people to become vampires?

Brogio's glass paused mid-way to his lips, and he rolled his eyes and smirked at me.

Then, what are detriments?

"The bad side. In my case, I can't go out in the sun again. This will probably be the same for you. You'll evaporate if you do.

Then what do you do during the day?

"Sleep. Only the most resolute can shake it off. It's forced." He sighed, growing weary of my questions.

I can't sleep all day!

"Yes, you will. And don't get a stake run through your heart. It will put you down until it's removed."

Don't get meat put through my heart? How does that happen?

Again, he laughed. "No. Not a steak. A wooden stake. He pointed to a sharp object hanging on the wall. "Like that one over there."

Wow. That looks pretty scary. I wouldn't want to get stabbed with that. I was panting heavily, staring up at the sharp object. I wondered if there were any other vampire rules that I should know about. *Are there others?*

"You now know the important ones." He stood up impatiently.

"We must complete your transformation. You need blood, even if it is only the blood of an animal tonight."

I shuddered at the thought. Animals were for chasing, not blood. *What ...*

"Come, now! You will understand later."

I resisted following him. I licked away the thick saliva pooling on my tongue and dripping from my mouth. My stomach knotted with hunger. I could think of nothing else.

Brogio threw his clothes and shoes onto his large chair by the fireplace, then morphed into a demon, eyes ablaze, fangs snarling, claws slashing. He growled and sprinted through the front door after yanking it almost off its hinges. I hesitated, but the hunger in every fiber of my being pushed me to follow.

I tried to catch him as he sprinted through the fields and into the trees. I had never seen another creature move that fast. When I caught up to him, he had snared a large rabbit and ripped its throat open. He sunk his fangs into the gaping hole, then offered it to me.

Frightened by my desire, I backed away. I fought the blood lust that consumed me until I could fight no longer. Letting go, I ripped the creature to shreds, sucking every drop of blood from its torn body. A momentary sense of euphoria spread through me ... but it passed quickly.

Brogio, the demon, snarled and willed me to follow along behind him deeper into the trees. Stopping abruptly, he froze as I pulled up short so as not to hit him. We waited silently and were rewarded as a large deer sprinted in front of us. The demon creature blurred before my eyes ... twenty times faster than my human master. Much faster than a speedy deer. It was a sight to behold.

Brogio hit the deer with such force that it was crushed to the ground before it could escape. The demon Brogio lay across the dazed deer, almost covering its struggling body. He stared into the animal's eyes until it stopped moving.

My thirst for blood grew even stronger. I crashed into the deer's neck, trying to push the demon out of the way with my front paws. But he easily overpowered me and grabbed me by my scruff. "Wait!"

I backed away and watched as he punctured the submissive animal's throat with a fang, then he stepped back and motioned for me to feed. His words filled my mind. "No need to mutilate it; use your fangs to suck the blood from the artery in its throat."

I approached, and a surge of energy charged through me. I bit into the deer's neck and drained its body. It consumed me with an ecstasy I had never known, even better than coupling with the stray bitches that had gotten loose in my neighborhood. I rolled over on my back and surrendered to the orgasmic waves rolling through me.

The demon's rough voice in my head praised me. "Good! That will help until we feast on humans!"

Humans? We were going to feed on humans? I recoiled at the possibility. Humans had

always loved and cared for me. The blood in my body seemed to congeal like the Jello that Tommy loved to snack on after school. *I don't want to harm humans.*

"You may have no choice. You are young. You might not be strong enough.

I sat back on my haunches in the fallen leaves that crunched under my weight. *I will fight against it at all costs.*

"Tomorrow night. We will test it then. First, we will return to the house. I have more to share with you." Slowly his red eyes changed to violet. His large, grotesque demon head, fangs and claws grew smaller, then back to a human head, teeth and hands. His twisted form returned to normal size, and the handsome Brogio smiled at me. He wiped the blood from his face with his arm, then turned back to his home. "Come, Snow Blood."

We walked back to the house. Vines upon vines spanned for as far as I could see on both sides of the estate. Two marble dragons stood guard at the front gate. The lingering sweetness of the harvested grapes filled my nostrils. My senses kicked into overdrive. I could both smell and feel all the living creatures around me ... The rabbits and squirrels peering at us from the trees. The rotting corpses of dead birds. The traces of the humans who had been here earlier. The blood that ran through me exhilarated my body, yet somehow not quite enough. I longed for something ... more. Something I didn't understand. The need for human blood?

I tried to take my mind off what my body craved. I focused more sharply on my surroundings. The house and winery were layered with wooden beams and levels. The winery contained large, wrap-around windows so that those inside could see the outdoor beauty of Oregon. The beautiful mountains that my new master had called Mounts Hood and Jefferson rose in the distance.

My companion seemed to read my mind again. A prideful grin spread across his deceptively human face.

We returned to the large rock fireplace in which a man could stand upright. The overhanging mahogany mantle held an ornate gold clock in its center. An inviting fire blazed and cast a soft glow around the room. Framed photographs of young people hung on the walls, and a small table next to Brogio's overstuffed chair held a re-filled wine canister and several wine glasses. A matching chair faced his on the other side of the fireplace. Brogio redressed and used a velvet towel hanging on one arm of the chair to wipe away the blood on his face and hands. He took a damp towel hanging on a small standing rack that had been placed in the room while we were gone, walked over to me and wiped down my body and face thoroughly. I wanted to resist, but the vigorous massage felt good. When he hung the towel back on the rack, it was covered in

blood. He poured himself another glass of red wine.

I walked over to sit by his chair. So many questions were swirling around in my head about this vampire thing. But the sight of red wine brought me back to the subject of blood. I sat in shock at what I had just experienced. I asked the first question that sprang to mind. *So, Brogio, If you keep yourself alive with blood, why do you drink so much wine? And why sit next to a fire that you can't feel?*

"Just because I like it, I guess. The wine does nothing to me. But after all, I am a vintner. I love the taste of wine, especially red wine. And, I like to look at the fire. I enjoy the smell of burning wood."

Then, why did I not enjoy the taste of the meat you gave me earlier? It's something I've always loved.

"You need time to adjust. Food will no longer be necessary for you. Your transformation will take place over time. We won't know until later what your tastes will be ... or your gifts." He stretched out in the same large chair. He twirled his glass and stared into it in deep thought.

"Snow Blood, I need to tell you something important."

I stared at him in anticipation.

"What I didn't tell you before is that I hit you with my car on purpose. I meant to do it."

Anger flooded over me, and I jumped to my feet, confused and growling. *Why?*

He let out a weary sigh. "Because I thought you were the panwere that has been stalking me." He jumped up and began to pace again. His steps were so frantic in both directions that I thought he might wear a hole in the floor.

Why was it stalking you? I asked.

"That's the question, my boy. I don't know. He's been after me for weeks." He ran his long hands through his shaggy blond hair and took another sip of his blood-red wine. "Earlier this evening, it tried to jump me in Newburg."

In Newburg? My humans and I live in Newburg. How far is it from here?

"Just 10 miles."

What happened?

"I out-maneuvered it, but I could sense it in the woods following my car. When I saw you crossing the road, I thought I had him trapped at last. My mistake. Unfortunately, you were too mutilated for me to save."

You could have saved my life?

"I can heal injuries with my blood. But you died before I could save you. Your back was broken. Your ribs had punctured your lungs, and the car tore open your belly. You bled out while I fought the panwere. My only alternative was to turn you at the moment of your death." He walked out of the room.

I sat there absorbing his words. How could this be true? I didn't have a mark on me.

When he returned, he brought me a saucer of blood. "It's from a human blood bag. A taste of what's to come."

I wanted to resist it, but it smelled of a sweetness I never knew existed. I sat staring at it like an addict waiting for his next fix. When I could hold back no longer, I devoured it, and every hair on my body stood on end. A fire rushed through me like nothing I had ever felt, and I rolled over in ecstasy. I had transcended normal consciousness, but his words invaded my brain.

"Still think you will be able to resist?" He mocked me, but his words angered me, not at him but at myself.

Perhaps instead of killing humans I can get this blood elsewhere?

"We shall see. There's a possibility. We'll explore it tomorrow, and it might be more to our advantage."

Why didn't you let me die on the road?

"A fair question. I suppose after the actual panwere attacked me, and after I killed it, I saw you lying there dying. I wanted to save you. I meant you no harm. This was the only way. I've been alone with my own thoughts for too long."

I cared little for his loneliness. I could only think of my pack and my love for them. I came to them from my mother's teat. My Alpha and their little one had been all I have ever known. When I was still new to them, James taught me how to search for Tommy by sniffing his clothes. Then, Tommy would hide, and James would tell me to find him. James thought it great fun, and would be good in case Tommy ever got lost in the woods. Our lives were filled with games and eating food that James and Tommy would hand me under the table when Jeanne wasn't looking! I tried to remember how long I had been with them. I had heard my Alpha tell someone not too long ago that I am four years old. Brogio said I wouldn't age. *So, I will be four years old forever?* I asked aloud in my head.

His words again crept into my brain. "You can't return. Your humans would be your first victims. I know you don't want that on your conscience."

I could never harm my humans. I didn't trust this man-demon. Why didn't he give me a choice about dying or enduring this living death? Was Brogio as selfish as he seemed? Was I to be his latest plaything? His experiment? Assuming that he was telling me the truth about all that happened until now, I was both enraged and grateful that he had provided me this imitation of life.

His mocking smile and piercing stare jolted me. *Can you hear everything that I think?*

"I can't hear you when I'm resting, or if one of the gods blocks me. Otherwise, I hear your every thought." His sneer widened.

One of the gods?

"Ah, that's a story for another time."

Another time? So what if I want to rip out your throat before "another time"?

"I really wouldn't blame you. But I am stronger, and you need me now. Perhaps you should wait and see the kind of power I hold before you get aggressive with me."

What choice do I have but to stay here ... with you ... now?
