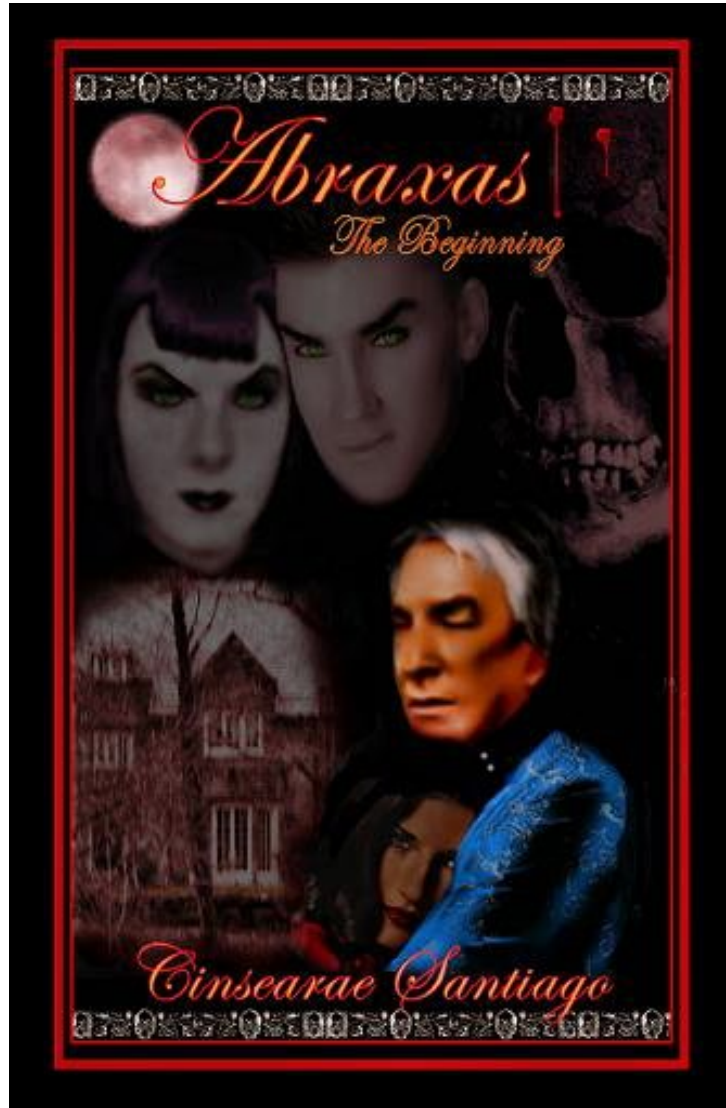


AN EXCERPT FROM *ABRAXAS: THE BEGINNING BOOK 1*
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The door was cracked open. Not a good sign. I pushed it all the way in. It was dead silent. What the hell happened to everybody? Somebody was gonna pay dearly for this... "My Lady... help..." came the voice again. "Where are you?!"

"The foyer..."

I was already standing in the doorway, the foyer before me. *"I don't see you..."*

"Behind...the couch..."

There was a burgundy colored couch off to my right, a large floor candelabra right next to it. Cautiously, I made my way to it, kneeled on the cushions, and peered over it.

Edward was huddled up in a fetal position, shivering.

"Edward..." I whispered, stretching my hand out to him. "It's alright. I'm here."

He looked up at me, still shivering. I jumped back in shock.

Someone had dug out one of his eyes, dried blood coating the whole side of his face, matting half of his hair.

"Save our Lord!" He lowered his head. *"Leave me."*

"I'm not leaving *any* of you," I said firmly, grabbing his arm, forcing him to sit up. He leaned against the wall, gulping, shaking. His blood had cascaded down the side of his neck as well. His other eye was rolling around, not focusing on anything. He was losing consciousness.

"I got...two of them...My Lady. Outside."

"And I commend you. You did a good job. Now save your strength." I envisioned how he looked when I first met him, the pressed my hand over the ghastly looking, reddish-black eye socket.

He stifled his cry of pain while my energies traveled down my arm and into his head. A light glowed under my hand for about ten seconds. When it died away, I removed my hand.

Slowly, Edward opened his eyes and blinked, looking at me. He gave a big smile and stood up, hugging me right over the couch.

"Bless you, My Lady!" he said happily, then jumped over the couch and grabbed my wrist, pulling me towards what looked like a tea room. We entered, and he quietly closed the door.

"Diana and Dartanian are still revolting," he started. "Me, Our Lord and Kiera went in, and managed to kill nineteen or twenty of them before the rest got an upper hand. The fledglings still aren't that strong enough to fend off Diana and the rest. She wants to convert the rest to Primitives." He sighed. "There are seven Sophisticates left, including me and Kiera. They did *this* to me--" He pointed to his now-healed eye, "--because I wasn't 'conforming'."

"What about Kiera?"

"They've been torturing her to get her walls of defense down."

My heart leaped when I asked the next question. "What about *Ryan*?"

"You mean... Our Lord?"

"Yes, yes. Where is he?"

He grinned. "I never thought Our Lord had such a... violent streak. All the Primitives on the lawn are his doing."

As genteel as Ryan was, him doing an act of carnage really surprised me.

"He took down the majority of them," he continued. "Until Dartanian sneak-attacked him and knocked him unconscious. He's... he's in the stables. Diana knows you'll come for him. She's...waiting for you."

I paused. "Does she think you're dead?"

"Probably. Dartanian was the one that had one of their cronies take my eye out."

I frowned. "I'll need you to be my backup. She doesn't expect you to be with me." I walked towards the dining hall, heading for the door that led to the stables. I had no clue how to go about my next move. I'd have to wing it and pray for the best.

Edward and I silently made our way down the stairwell. We saw two of Diana's henchmen sitting at

the bottom. I gestured a motion of crushing their throats.

I heard them choking, gagging, and finally gasping as they fell out. I stepped over their bodies and looked around. Edward reached for a small hand axe that was hanging from one of their belt loops and proceeded hacking at their necks. I turned and looked at him, appalled.

“Edward!”

He pointed to the one he grabbed the axe from. “*He’s* the one that took out my eye!”

I understood and shrugged my shoulders. “Oh. Chop away, then.”

He grinned and gleefully continued.

I started looking through the open stables. On the third one down, I found Ryan, still unconscious, sitting in a pile of straw with his arms chained above his head. I rushed towards him, pulled the chains from the walls and gently laid his head in my lap. He had a few whip marks across his chest. The dress-shirt he was wearing was torn and dirty. I stroked his hair back from his forehead.

“Ryan,” I whispered. He slowly opened his eyes and managed a faint grin.

“Don’t tell me,” he whispered. “It was foolish for me to come in here without you.”

“I won’t say I told you so. Ryan, we’re in this *together*, remember?”

“Forgive me, Christine.” He took my hand, giving it a firm grip.

“There’s nothing to forgive. Did they hurt you?”

“They’ve been draining me. I’ve been trying my best to resist...”

“Wait a minute. Draining you... *how?*”

“Diana... and Dartanian. He jumped on me... bit me. Then she bit my arm. They... took some of my blood. I’m afraid they might have a bit of Abraxas’ power in them now. Once they fed from me, it was too easy for them to overtake me. If we had fought together...” He looked down. “I see the err of my ways.”

I put a finger over his lips and listened. Someone was coming our way. I didn’t even give them a chance to get close to our stable. I looked in the direction of the sound. I gestured another choking motion as I raised my arm in the air.

Another one of Diana’s cronies. I threw him with a flick of my wrist across the rest of the stables, and he landed on a pitchfork, the tines piercing his chest in a bloody little explosion.

I focused on Ryan next. I placed my hands on his chest, my powers running down my arms and into him again. His chest glowed bright yellow for a few seconds and returned to normal. The whip marks were gone, and he sat up.

Ryan held my face in his hands, kissed me, then gave me a tight hug. He stood up, then helped me up next. “Now, time to gather what’s left of our family.”

In the stable next to Ryan’s was Kiera, stuck in the same position he was in. She too, was unconscious. Ryan waved his hand at her chains and the cuffs unlocked. She dropped to her side and he rushed over to her, picking her tiny frame up. I smiled at him. How heroic-looking.

“Do I hear little mice scampering about?” It was Diana, although we didn’t see her. Her voice was omnipresent. “Time to *exterminate.*”

We turned and looked down to the other end of the dungeon area. The cell doors opened, and the remainder of her lackeys emerged.

Something was *very* wrong with these Primitives. I wondered if they were people she knew---they looked like drug addicts. They had hollow, sunken, empty-looking eyes, lanky bodies, and were dirty and unkempt. They resembled zombies... until they hungrily opened their snarling mouths at us, exposing their fangs. Whoa. Zombie-looking vampires. Now *that* was a harrowing thought.

Quickly, they lumbered towards us. “Shit,” I mumbled. “Is there another way out?”

“This way,” Ryan said, and I followed him to a darker part of the stable area. “There’s a door back

here leading out behind the mansion.”

The sounds of the ruffian vamps moaning and growling freaked me out. “EDWARD!” I yelled out. “EDWARD!”

“Coming!” I heard him say, right before I heard a few hacks and slashes with the sounds of things dying. He was pretty handy with that axe.

“They’ve all gotten a taste of your raw power,” we heard Diana’s voice say. “And you’re the source of their next fix. They need you *very* badly now. They’ll kill you just for another taste again!” She laughed manically. “I won’t even *have* to lift a finger to destroy you two!”

We found the door, Ryan opening it with a thought. We escaped, only to find ourselves surrounded by hills and twisted woods.

“What the--?” I started.

“There’s a horse trail here. I used to take mine out this way, when I had one.”

I wondered how nice it must have been to be able to do something like that, and he read my mind.

“It was enjoyable, but not nearly half as much since I didn’t have someone to share it with,” he said as we made our way down the trail.

“Awww,” came tiny voice. Ryan looked down in his arms. Kiera was finally coming to. He gently set her down.

Edward caught up to us, panting, his bloody axe still in his hand.

“Are you alright?” I asked her.

“Just a little weak from Diana torturing me. I think I did good trying to hold her off. Telekinesis rocks! I kept throwing things at her. She gave up when I hit her with a clump of old, dried horseshit.”

Edward burst out laughing, and Ryan rolled his eyes. “My boy, *please* focus. We’ve got a small army of hideous blood drinkers that want to kill us. Your primitive fighting skills are excellent, but to keep progressing as one of us, you have to use your mind more!”

Edward bowed his head. “Yes, My Lord.”

“Don’t be so hard on him, Ryan,” I said, patting Edward’s shoulder. “He did a hell of a hacking job, and that kept them at bay so we could get away.”

Edward beamed at me.

“Now that we’re on open ground, it’ll be easier to get them,” Ryan said, watching those zombie-vamps brainlessly come towards us. “There’s seven of them left.”

“But they do have a bit of our abilities, thanks to that she-bitch,” Edward said. “The one I attacked tried forcing me to use my axe on myself!”

“No matter. Ryan and I are together. They’ll die within minutes.”

We saw them running like crazed heathens now. Ryan and I held hands, our eyes glowing brightly. The power of Abraxas flowed through us, severe and hot. Kiera and Edward watched us in awe. I grabbed Kiera’s hand and she yelped in surprise. I lent her some of my energy, as did Ryan to Edward. It was so intense for the kid, he dropped to his knees.

I sent the first ruffian sailing through the trees, impaling him in a branch fifteen feet above us. Kiera thrust her arms out, sending one sailing back into the small crowd. Ryan physically picked one up by his throat, broke his neck, and threw him to the ground. Edward not only mentally broke a ruffian’s arm with a thought, but hacked off his head once the vagrant dropped to his knees in pain. He ran over to the one Ryan had injured and finished the job. He tossed the head to another ruffian who caught it. That distracted him long enough for me to clap my hands together, causing his head to cave in on itself and explode. Kiera’s eyes widened.

“Whoa! That was *cool*! Teach *me* to do that!”

Ryan was struggling a bit with the vampire Kiera tossed earlier. I sent my energies to Ryan, who picked up the vagrant and broke his back over his knee. A sickening crack resounded that made me flinch.

A pair of glittering green eyes emerged from the woods off to our left. Dartanian. He had a yard-long tree branch in his hand.

“**NO!**” I screamed, then a sackcloth covered my head. I felt a punch to my stomach and doubled over in pain.

“Mousy bitches never win,” came a female’s voice.

Diana.

I felt teeth sink into my neck. I screamed.

“Christine!” I heard Ryan say, before he cried out in agony.

“Sticks and stones, old man,” Dartanian said and laughed.

I reached out, and found Diana’s hair. I yanked her away from my neck with one hand while trying to get the sack cloth off my head with the other. Ryan would die if I didn’t get to him, and I was panicking too much to focus.

Diana started choking me again. She may have had some of our powers, but she wasn’t using it at all.

I yelled in a rage, getting the cloth off, and grabbed her neck. I looked her in the eyes, head-butted her, and she fell off of me. I rolled over, got up, lifted her body with a gesture and sent her sailing through the air, slamming her hard against a tree trunk. I heard the air leave her lungs as she fell forward, flat on her face.

Kiera and Edward were tending to Ryan, sending the powers we gave them back into him. Good. That gave me time to get--

I looked around. Where *was* that twit, Dartanian?

He leapt out from nowhere, right onto my back. I landed hard, almost getting the wind knocked out of me. He bit into my shoulder, and I screamed.

“My Lady!” Edward said, jumping up.

“No! Stay with Ryan!” I said, trying to shake this other crazy jackass off of me. He leaned forward, biting me again. I could feel my blood draining down my neck, into my bra.

I screamed out in anger again. He was tough to shake loose. He bit me on my other side. The pain was excruciating, like being punctured with hot nails.

I envisioned myself surrounded in flames. In seconds, Dartanian howled, and jumped off of me. I rolled over just in time to see his upper body on fire. He dropped to the ground and began rolling back and forth to kill the flames. That gave me enough time to get up and make my way to him.

I smelled his burnt flesh as he lay there, blackened and crusty. Panting heavily, he looked up at me, those green eyes of his expressing raw fear. I picked up the branch he used to stab Ryan with, raised it, and slammed it into his right eye. There was barely enough room for bloody fluids to leak out around the socket. I never heard a guy shriek so loudly.

“That’s for Edward, asshole,” I said, then ran towards Ryan, Edward and Kiera. They got him breathing again, thank God, but he wasn’t well enough to get up. I touched the side of his face. He opened his eyes and looked at me.

“*I’m so sorry, my love,*” he said through his thoughts.

“*Don’t talk, you need to recuperate.*”

“*My God...you’re bleeding...*”

“*And so are you.*” I looked at Edward and Kiera. “Can you get Ryan back to the house without me?”

They looked at each other. “Yeah, we can. What’s wrong?” Kiera asked.

“I have to take care of *those two*,” I nodded to Diana and Dartanian.

“You sure you don’t want help?” Edward looked puzzled.

"I'll be fine. You guys get Ryan back to the house. Thank God we're not that far from it..." I looked in the distance. The house was barely visible in the growing darkness. I looked down at Ryan, dropped to my knees and pushed more of my energy into him. It took a few minutes, but he was able to sit up.

"Christine..."

"Shh. Edward and Kiera will help you back to the house. Let me deal with Dartanian and Diana alone."

"Absolutely... not..."

I looked at Kiera and Edward. "Please, for my sake."

They helped him up, and he stumbled a bit. How in hell did he expect to help me in his condition? Gentleman to the end, sheesh.

As they slowly led Ryan back to the mansion, I faced those two idiots. I grabbed Dartanian's hair, meaning to drag him by it, but he was burnt so badly, the clump of hair I had in my hand ripped right off his scalp. He cried out in pain. Oh well. I threw his hair down, then yanked the branch out of his eye. He shrieked again, and I noticed the three of them stopped up the trail. Kiera looked back, but I waved them off. They kept going.

Diana started moaning. I held the branch in my hand as I walked up to her. Slowly she looked up to me. My eyes were glowing a deep red and she looked confused.

"Stupid twat," I snarled. "I almost feel sorry for you. Wanting power for power's sake is completely *pointless*! If no one teaches you how to *use* the power, how can you expect to become powerful? You're nothing but a brainless anarchist."

After saying that to her, I beat her senseless with that branch. Every single bit of anger, frustration, let-downs, disappointments, and betrayals I experienced my whole life I took out on her that moment. I made sure not to kill her outright. Both their punishments were just starting.

I dragged her by her hair, and Dartanian by an arm, through the woods. I looked back at them, noticing the clumps of Dartanian's burnt skin that had rubbed off his back now lying in their dusty wake. Both of them were simply too weak to do anything else.

I kept looking around for something. I didn't know what at the time, but I'd know as soon as I saw it.

Then I did. A nice, little cave. I knew I could have just used a bit of telekinesis to just toss them in there, but I wanted them to feel everything I was dragging them across. Once at the mouth of the cave, I got on my knees and placed a hand on each of their chests. I began draining them of their essence as well as retrieved the powers they took from Ryan and me. When their hair became gray, I stopped. Both of them looked like they were in their eighties. Shaking and wobbling on the ground, Diana clawed at me, but I shoved them in the cave with my foot. She yelled in pain, as Dartanian kept moaning, balling himself up the same way Edward did when *his* eye was mutilated.

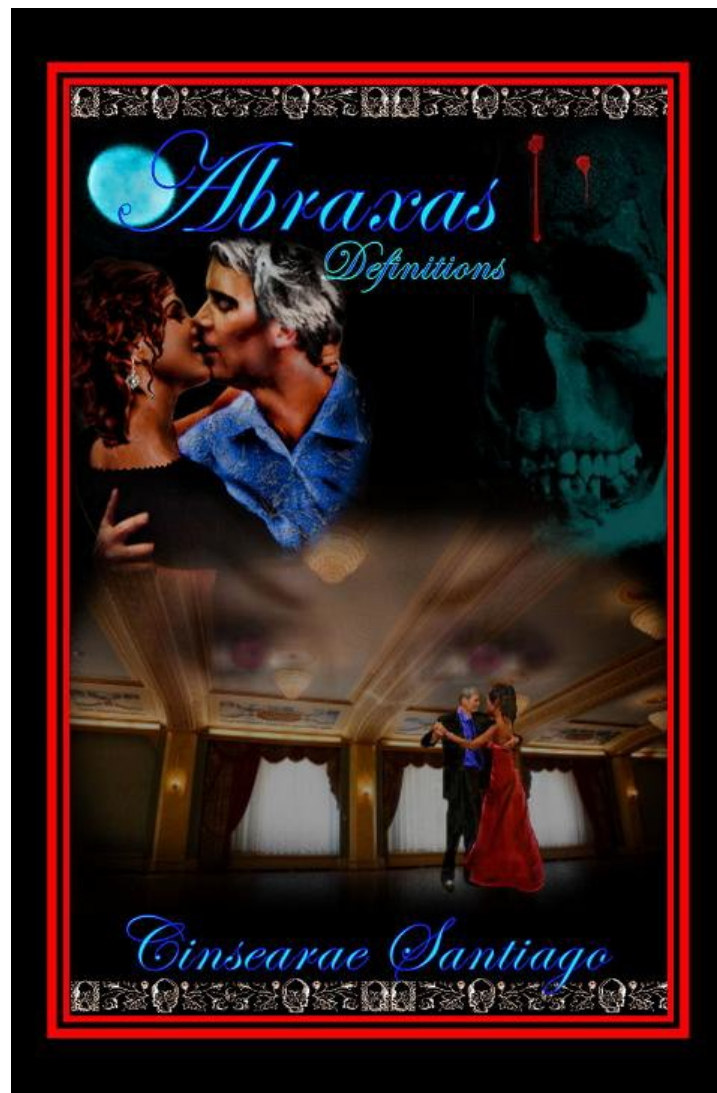
She gave me one last evil look. "I'll scream! Someone will hear!"

I spotted a small boulder a few yards from the cave. Gesturing for the boulder to move towards me, it started to shake and rumble. I dragged it with my thoughts until it came to the front of the cave. Diana looked terrified as I took a fast breather, then moved it with my mind once more, covering the mouth of the cave perfectly.

"Stones can't scream, you dumb bitch."



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ABRAXAS: DEFINITIONS

The saga continues as Christine and Ryan continue to develop their relationship, sharing intimacies and special moments like love-struck teenagers. Things take a more serious turn when an invitation to an elite Christmas charity ball halts their happiness, Christine now worried that her and Ryan's contrasting social status will be painfully recognized at the gala. Even worse, an old flame is at the Ball, with quite a few surprises that will force Christine to rethink the reasons why she should stay in Ryan's life. To complicate matters more, Edward is developing a crush on Christine, and she also discovers that Ryan's old flame is actually a witch, intending on removing Christine from Ryan's life permanently.

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