Lovereading.co.uk
Helping you choose your next book

You loved your last book...but what are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

Shadow of Night

Written by Deborah Harkness

Published by Headline

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

SHADOW OF NIGHT

DEBORAH HARKNESS

headline

Copyright © 2012 Deborah Harkness

The right of Deborah Harkness to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

First published in Great Britain in 2012 by
HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP

First published in Great Britain in paperback in 2013 by
HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP

Published by arrangement with Viking,
a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc

1

Apart from any use permitted under UK copyright law, this publication may only be reproduced, stored, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, with prior permission in writing of the publishers or, in the case of reprographic production, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Cataloguing in Publication Data is available from the British Library

B-format ISBN 978 07553 8475 4
A-format ISBN 978 0 7553 9526 2

Typeset in Fournier MT by Avon DataSet Ltd, Bidford-on-Avon, Warwickshire

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Headline's policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in sustainable forests. The logging and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP
An Hachette UK Company
338 Euston Road
London NW1 3BH

www.headline.co.uk
www.hachette.co.uk

Chapter 1

We arrived in an undignified heap of witch and vampire. Matthew was underneath me, his long limbs bent into an uncharacteristically awkward position. A large book was squashed between us, and the force of our landing sent the small silver figurine clutched in my hand sailing across the floor.

'Are we in the right place?' My eyes were screwed shut in case we were still in Sarah's hop barn in twenty-first-century New York, and not in sixteenth-century Oxfordshire. Even so, the unfamiliar scents told me I was not in my own time or place. Among them was something grassy and sweet, along with a waxen smell that reminded me of summer. There was a tang of wood smoke, too, and I heard the crackle of a fire.

'Open your eyes, Diana, and see for yourself.' A feather-light touch of cool lips brushed my cheek, followed by a soft chuckle. Eyes the color of a stormy sea looked into mine from a face so pale it could only belong to a vampire. Matthew's hands traveled from neck to shoulders. 'Are you all right?'

After journeying so far into Matthew's past, my body felt as though it might come apart with a puff of wind. I hadn't felt anything like it after our brief timewalking sessions at my aunts' house.

'I'm fine. What about you?' I kept my attention fixed on Matthew rather than daring a look around.

'Relieved to be home.' Matthew's head fell back on the wooden floorboards with a gentle thunk, releasing more of the summery aroma from the rushes and lavender scattered there. Even in 1590 the Old Lodge was familiar to him.

My eyes adjusted to the dim light. A substantial bed, a small table, narrow benches, and a single chair came into focus. Through the carved uprights supporting the bed's canopy, I spied a doorway that connected this chamber to another room. Light spilled from it onto the coverlet and floor, forming a misshapen golden rectangle. The room's walls had the same fine, linenfold paneling that I remembered from the few times I'd visited Matthew's home in present-day Woodstock. Tipping my head back, I saw the ceiling – thickly plastered, coffered into squares, with a splashy red-and-white Tudor rose picked out in gilt in each recess.

'The roses were obligatory when the house was built,' Matthew commented drily. 'I can't stand them. We'll paint them all white at the first opportunity.'

The gold-and-blue flames in a stand of candles flared in a sudden draft, illuminating the corner of a richly colored tapestry and the dark, glossy stitches that outlined a pattern of leaves and fruit on the pale counterpane. Modern textiles didn't have that luster.

I smiled with sudden excitement. 'I really did it. I didn't mess it up or take us somewhere else, like Monticello or—'

'No,' he said with an answering smile, 'you did beautifully. Welcome to Elizabeth's England.'

For the first time in my life, I was absolutely delighted to be a witch. As a historian I studied the past. Because I was a witch, I could actually visit it. We had come to 1590 to school me in the lost arts of magic, yet there was so much more that I could learn here. I bent my head for a celebratory kiss, but the sound of an opening door stopped me.

Matthew pressed a finger to my lips. His head turned slightly, and his nostrils flared. The tension left him when he recognized who was in the next room, where I could hear a faint rustling. Matthew lifted the book and me in one clean move. Taking my hand, he led me to the door.

In the next room, a man with tousled brown hair stood at a table littered with correspondence. He was of average height, with a neat build and expensive, tailored clothes. The tune he hummed was unfamiliar, punctuated now and again with words too low for me to hear.

Shock passed over Matthew's face before his lips curved into an affectionate smile.

'Where are you in truth, my own sweet Matt?' The man held a page up to the light. In a flash, Matthew's eyes narrowed, indulgence replaced by displeasure.

'Looking for something, Kit?' At Matthew's words the young man dropped the paper to the table and pivoted, joy lighting his face. I'd seen that face before, on my paperback copy of Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.

'Matt! Pierre said you were in Chester and might not make it home. But I knew you would not miss our annual gathering.' The words were familiar enough but coated in a strange cadence that required me to focus on what he was saying in order to understand them. Elizabethan English was neither as unlike modern English as I had been taught nor as easily understandable as I'd hoped, based on my familiarity with Shakespeare's plays.

'Why no beard? Have you been ill?' Marlowe's eyes flickered when they spotted me, nudging me with the insistent pressure that marked him unmistakably as a daemon.

I suppressed an urge to rush at one of England's greatest playwrights and shake his hand before peppering him with questions. What little information I once knew about him flew from my mind now that he was standing before me. Had any of his plays been performed in 1590? How old was he? Younger than Matthew and I, certainly. Marlowe couldn't yet be thirty. I smiled at him warmly.

'Wherever did you find that?' Marlowe pointed, his voice dripping with contempt. I looked over my shoulder, expecting to see some hideous work of art. There was nothing but empty space.

He meant me. My smile faltered.

'Gently, Kit,' Matthew said with a scowl.

Marlowe shrugged off the rebuke. 'It is no matter. Take your fill of her before the others arrive, if you must. George has been here for some time, of course, eating your food and reading your books. He is still without a patron and hasn't a farthing to his name.'

'George is welcome to whatever I have, Kit.' Matthew kept his eyes on the young man, his face expressionless as he drew our intertwined

fingers to his mouth. 'Diana, this is my dear friend Christopher Marlowe.'

Matthew's introduction provided Marlowe with an opportunity to inspect me more openly. His attention crawled from my toes to the top of my head. The young man's scorn was evident, his jealousy better hidden. Marlowe was indeed in love with my husband. I had suspected it back in Madison when my fingers had traveled over his inscription in Matthew's copy of *Doctor Faustus*.

'I had no idea there was a brothel in Woodstock that specialized in overtall women. Most of your whores are more delicate and appealing, Matthew. This one is a positive Amazon,' Kit sniffed, looking over his shoulder at the disordered drifts of paper that covered the surface of the table. 'According to the Old Fox's latest, it was business rather than lust that took you to the north. Wherever did you find the time to secure her services?'

'It is remarkable, Kit, how easily you squander affection,' Matthew drawled, though there was a note of warning in his tone. Marlowe, seemingly intent on the correspondence, failed to recognize it and smirked. Matthew's fingers tightened on mine.

'Is Diana her real name, or was it adopted to enhance her allure among customers? Perhaps a baring of her right breast, or a bow and arrow, is in order,' Marlowe suggested, picking up a sheet of paper. 'Remember when Blackfriars Bess demanded we call her Aphrodite before she would let us—'

'Diana is my wife.' Matthew was gone from my side, his hand no longer wrapped around mine but twisted in Marlowe's collar.

'No.' Kit's face registered his shock.

'Yes. That means she is the mistress of this house, bears my name, and is under my protection. Given all that – and our long-standing friendship, of course – no word of criticism or whisper against her virtue will cross your lips in future.'

I wiggled my fingers to restore their feeling. The angry pressure from Matthew's grip had driven the ring on the third finger of my left hand into the flesh, leaving a pale red mark. Despite its lack of facets, the diamond in the center captured the warmth of the firelight. The ring had been an unexpected gift from Matthew's mother, Ysabeau.

Hours ago – centuries ago? centuries to come? – Matthew had repeated the words of the old marriage ceremony and slid the diamond over my knuckles.

With a clatter of dishes, two vampires appeared in the room. One was a slender man with an expressive face, weather-beaten skin the color of a hazelnut, and black hair and eyes. He was holding a flagon of wine and a goblet whose stem was shaped into a dolphin, the bowl balanced on its tail. The other was a rawboned woman bearing a platter of bread and cheese.

'You are home, *milord*,' the man said, obviously confused. Oddly enough, his French accent made him easier to understand. 'The messenger on Thursday said—'

'My plans changed, Pierre.' Matthew turned to the woman. 'My wife's possessions were lost on the journey, Françoise, and the clothes she was wearing were so filthy I burned them.' He told the lie with bald confidence. Neither the vampires nor Kit looked convinced by it.

'Your wife?' Françoise repeated, her accent as French as Pierre's. 'But she is a w—'

'Warmblood,' Matthew finished, plucking the goblet from the tray. 'Tell Charles there's another mouth to feed. Diana hasn't been well and must have fresh meat and fish on the advice of her doctor. Someone will need to go to the market, Pierre.'

Pierre blinked. 'Yes, *milord*.'

'And she will need something to wear,' Françoise observed, eyeing me appraisingly. When Matthew nodded, she disappeared, Pierre following in her wake.

'What's happened to your hair?' Matthew held up a strawberry blond curl.

'Oh, no,' I murmured. My hands rose. Instead of my usual shoulder-length, straw-colored hair, they found unexpectedly springy reddish-gold locks reaching down to my waist. The last time my hair had developed a mind of its own, I was in college, playing Ophelia in a production of *Hamlet*. Then and now its unnaturally rapid growth and change of hue were not good signs. The witch within me had awakened during our journey to the past. There was no telling what other magic had been unleashed.

Vampires might have smelled the adrenaline and the sudden spike of anxiety that accompanied this realization, or heard the music my blood made. But daemons like Kit could sense the rise in my witch's energy.

'Christ's tomb.' Marlowe's smile was full of malice. 'You've brought home a witch. What evil has she done?'

'Leave it, Kit. It's not your concern.' Matthew's voice took on that note of command again, but his fingers remained gentle on my hair. 'Don't worry, *mon coeur*. I'm sure it's nothing but exhaustion.'

My sixth sense flared in disagreement. This latest transformation couldn't be explained by simple fatigue. A witch by descent, I was still unsure of the full extent of my inherited powers. Not even my Aunt Sarah and her partner, Emily Mather – witches both – had been able to say for certain what they were or how best to manage them. Matthew's scientific tests had revealed genetic markers for the magical potential in my blood, but there were no guarantees when or if these possibilities would ever be realized.

Before I could worry further, Françoise returned with something that looked like a darning needle, her mouth bristling with pins. An ambulatory mound of velvet, wool, and linen accompanied her. The slender brown legs emerging from the bottom of the pile suggested that Pierre was buried somewhere inside.

'What are they for?' I asked suspiciously, pointing at the pins.

'For getting *madame* into this, of course.' Françoise plucked a dull brown garment that looked like a flour sack from the top of the pile of clothes. It didn't seem an obvious choice for entertaining, but with little knowledge of Elizabethan fashion I was at her mercy.

'Go downstairs where you belong, Kit,' Matthew told his friend. 'We will join you presently. And hold your tongue. This is my tale to tell, not yours.'

'As you wish, Matthew.' Marlowe pulled at the hem of his mulberry doublet, his nonchalant gesture belied by the trembling of his hands, and made a small, mocking bow. The compact move managed to both acknowledge Matthew's command and undermine it.

With the daemon gone, Françoise draped the sack over a nearby bench and circled me, studying my figure to determine the most

favorable line of attack. With an exasperated sigh, she began to dress me. Matthew moved to the table, his attention drawn by the piles of paper strewn over its surface. He opened a neatly folded rectangular packet sealed with a blob of pinkish wax, eyes darting across the tiny handwriting.

'*Dieu*. I forgot about that. Pierre!'

'*Milord?*' A muffled voice issued from the depths of the fabric.

'Put that down and tell me about Lady Cromwell's latest complaint.' Matthew treated Pierre and Françoise with a blend of familiarity and authority. If this was how one dealt with servants, it would take me some time to master the art.

The two muttered by the fire while I was draped, pinned, and trussed into something presentable. Françoise clucked over my single earring, the twisted golden wires hung with jewels that had originally belonged to Ysabeau. Like Matthew's copy of *Doctor Faustus* and the small silver figure of Diana, the earring was one of the three items that had helped us return to this particular past. Françoise rummaged in a nearby chest and found its match easily. My jewelry sorted out, she snaked thick stockings over my knees and secured them with scarlet ribbons.

'I think I'm ready,' I said, eager to get downstairs and begin our visit to the sixteenth century. Reading books about the past wasn't the same as experiencing it, as my brief interaction with Françoise and my crash course in the clothing of the period proved.

Matthew surveyed my appearance. 'That will do – for now.'

'She'll more than do, for she looks modest and forgettable,' Françoise said, 'which is exactly how a witch should look in this household.'

Matthew ignored Françoise's pronouncement and turned to me. 'Before we go down, Diana, remember to guard your words. Kit is a daemon, and George knows that I'm a vampire, but even the most open-minded of creatures are leery of someone new and different.'

Down in the great hall, I wished George, Matthew's penniless and patronless friend, a formal and, I thought, properly Elizabethan good evening.

'Is that woman speaking *English*?' George gaped, raising a pair of round spectacles that magnified his blue eyes to froglike proportions.

His other hand was on his hip in a pose I'd last seen in a painted miniature at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

'She's been living in Chester,' Matthew said quickly. George looked skeptical. Apparently not even the wilds of northern England could account for my odd speech patterns. Matthew's accent was softening into something that better matched the cadence and timbre of the time, but mine remained resolutely modern and American.

'She's a witch,' corrected Kit, taking a sip of wine.

'Indeed?' George studied me with renewed interest. There were no nudges to indicate that this man was a daemon, no witchy tingles, nor the frosty aftereffects of a vampire's glance. George was just an ordinary, warmblooded human – one who appeared middle aged and tired, as though life had already worn him out. 'But you do not like witches any more than Kit does, Matthew. You have always discouraged me from attending to the subject. When I set out to write a poem about Hecate, you told me to—'

'I like this one. So much so, I married her,' Matthew interrupted, bestowing a firm kiss on my lips to help convince him.

'Married her!' George's eyes shifted to Kit. He cleared his throat. 'So there are two unexpected joys to celebrate: you were not delayed on business as Pierre thought, and you have returned to us with a wife. My felicitations.' His portentous tone reminded me of a commencement address, and I stifled a smile. George beamed at me in return and bowed. 'I am George Chapman, Mistress Roydon.'

His name was familiar. I picked through the disorganized knowledge stored in my historian's brain. Chapman was not an alchemist – that was my research specialty, and I did not find his name in the spaces devoted to that arcane subject. He was another writer, like Marlowe, but I couldn't recall any of the titles.

Once we'd dispensed with introductions, Matthew agreed to sit before the fire for a few moments with his guests. There the men talked politics and George made an effort to include me in the conversation by asking about the state of the roads and the weather. I said as little as possible and tried to observe the little tricks of gesture and word choice that would help me pass for an Elizabethan. George was delighted with my attentiveness and rewarded it with a long dissertation on his latest

literary efforts. Kit, who didn't enjoy being relegated to a supporting role, brought George's lecture to a halt by offering to read aloud from *Doctor Faustus*.

'It will serve as a rehearsal among friends,' the daemon said, eyes gleaming, 'before the real performance later.'

'Not now, Kit. It's well past midnight, and Diana is tired from her journey,' Matthew said, drawing me to my feet.

Kit's eyes remained on us as we left the room. He knew we were hiding something. He had leaped on every strange turn of phrase when I'd ventured into the conversation and grown thoughtful when Matthew couldn't remember where his own lute was kept.

Matthew had warned me before we left Madison that Kit was unusually perceptive, even for a daemon. I wondered how long it would be before Marlowe figured out what that hidden something was. The answer to my question came within hours.

The next morning we talked in the recesses of our warm bed while the household stirred.

At first Matthew was willing to answer my questions about Kit (the son of a shoemaker, it turned out) and George (who was not much older than Marlowe, I learned to my surprise). When I turned to the practical matters of household management and female behavior, however, he was quickly bored.

'What about my clothes?' I asked, trying to focus him on my immediate concerns.

'I don't think married women sleep in these,' Matthew said, plucking at my fine linen night rail. He untied its ruffled neckline and was about to plant a kiss underneath my ear to persuade me to his point of view when someone ripped open the bed's curtains. I squinted against the bright sunlight.

'Well?' Marlowe demanded.

A second, dark-complected daemon peered over Marlowe's shoulder. He resembled an energetic leprechaun with his slight build and pointed chin, which was accented by an equally sharp auburn beard. His hair evidently had not seen a comb for weeks. I grabbed at the front of my night rail, keenly aware of its transparency and my lack of underclothes.

'You saw Master White's drawings from Roanoke, Kit. The witch looks nothing at all like the natives of Virginia,' the unfamiliar daemon replied, disappointed. Belatedly he noticed Matthew, who was glaring at him. 'Oh. Good morning, Matthew. Would you allow me to borrow your sector? I promise not to take it to the river this time.'

Matthew lowered his forehead to my shoulder and closed his eyes with a groan.

'She must be from the New World – or Africa,' Marlowe insisted, refusing to refer to me by name. 'She's not from Chester, nor from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France, or the Empire. I don't believe she's Dutch or Spanish either.'

'Good morning to you, Tom. Is there some reason you and Kit must discuss Diana's birthplace now, and in my bedchamber?' Matthew drew the ties of my night rail together.

'It is too fine to lie abed, even if you have been out of your mind with an ague. Kit says you must have married the witch in the midst of the fever's crisis. Otherwise there is no way to account for your recklessness.' Tom rattled on in true daemonic fashion, making no effort to answer Matthew's question. 'The roads were dry, and we arrived hours ago.'

'And the wine is already gone,' Marlowe complained.

'We'? There were more of them? The Old Lodge already felt stuffed to bursting.

'Out! *Madame* must wash before she greets his lordship.' Françoise entered the room with a steaming basin of water in her hands. Pierre, as usual, trailed behind.

'Has something of import happened?' George inquired from beyond the curtains. He'd entered the room unannounced, neatly foiling Françoise's efforts to herd the other men from the room. 'Lord Northumberland has been left alone in the great hall. If he were my patron, I would not treat him thus!'

'Hal is reading a treatise on the construction of a balance sent to me by a mathematician in Pisa. He's quite content,' Tom replied crossly, sitting on the edge of the bed.

He must be talking about Galileo, I realized with excitement. In 1590, Galileo was an entry-level professor at the university in Pisa. His work on the balance wasn't published – yet.

Tom. Lord Northumberland. Someone who corresponded with Galileo.

My lips parted in astonishment. The daemon perched on the quilted coverlet must be Thomas Harriot.

'Françoise is right. Out. All of you,' Matthew said, sounding as cross as Tom.

'What should we tell Hal?' Kit asked, sliding a meaningful glance in my direction.

'That I'll be down shortly,' Matthew said. He rolled over and pulled me close.

I waited until Matthew's friends streamed out of the room before I thumped his chest.

'What is that for?' He winced in mock pain, but all I'd bruised was my own fist.

'For not telling me who your *friends* are!' I propped up on one elbow and stared down at him. 'The great playwright Christopher Marlowe. George Chapman, poet and scholar. Mathematician and astronomer Thomas Harriot, if I'm not mistaken. And the Wizard Earl is waiting downstairs!'

'I can't remember when Henry earned that nickname, but nobody calls him that yet.' Matthew looked amused, which only made me more furious.

'All we need is Sir Walter Raleigh and we'll have the entire School of Night in the house.' Matthew looked out the window at my mention of this legendary group of radicals, philosophers, and free-thinkers. *Thomas Harriot. Christopher Marlowe. George Chapman. Walter Raleigh. And—*

'Just who *are* you, Matthew?' I hadn't thought to ask him before we departed.

'Matthew Roydon,' he said with a tip of his head, as though we were only this moment being introduced. 'Friend to poets.'

'Historians know almost nothing about you,' I said, stunned. Matthew Roydon was the most shadowy figure associated with the mysterious School of Night.

'You aren't surprised, are you, now that you know who Matthew Roydon really is?' His black brow rose.

'Oh, I'm surprised enough to last a lifetime. You might have warned me before dropping me into the middle of all this.'

'What would you have done? We barely had time to get dressed before we left, never mind conduct a research project.' He sat up and swung his legs onto the floor. Our private time had been lamentably brief. 'There's no reason for you to be concerned. They're just ordinary men, Diana.'

No matter what Matthew said, there was nothing ordinary about them. The School of Night held heretical opinions, sneered at the corrupt court of Queen Elizabeth, and scoffed at the intellectual pretensions of church and university. 'Mad, bad, and dangerous to know' described this group perfectly. We hadn't joined a cozy reunion of friends on Halloween night. We'd fallen into a hornet's nest of Elizabethan intrigue.

'Putting aside how reckless your friends can be, you can't expect me to be blasé when you introduce me to people I've spent my adult life studying,' I said. 'Thomas Harriot is one of the foremost astronomers of the time. Your friend Henry Percy is an alchemist.' Pierre, familiar with the signs of a woman on the edge, hastily thrust a set of black britches at my husband so he wouldn't be bare legged when my anger erupted.

'So are Walter and Tom.' Matthew ignored the proffered clothing and scratched his chin. 'Kit dabbles, too, though without any success. Try not to dwell on what you know about them. It's probably wrong anyway. And you should be careful with your modern historical labels, too,' he continued, finally snatching at his britches and stepping into them. 'Will dreams up the School of Night as a jab at Kit, but not for a few years yet.'

'I don't care what William Shakespeare has done, is doing, or will do in the future – provided he isn't at this moment in the great hall with the Earl of Northumberland!' I retorted, sliding out of the high bed.

'Of course Will's not down there.' Matthew waved his hand dismissively. 'Walter doesn't approve of his command of meter, and Kit thinks he's a hack and a thief.'

'Well, that's a relief. What do you plan on telling them about me? Marlowe knows we're hiding something.'

Matthew's gray-green eyes met mine. 'The truth, I suppose.' Pierre handed him a doublet – black, with intricate quilting – and stared

fixedly at a point over my shoulder, the very model of a good servant. 'That you're a timewalker and a witch from the New World.'

'The truth,' I said flatly. Pierre could hear every word but showed no reaction, and Matthew ignored him as though he were invisible. I wondered if we would be here long enough for me to become so oblivious to his presence.

'Why not? Tom will write down everything you say and compare it with his notes on the Algonquian language. Otherwise no one will pay much attention.' Matthew seemed more concerned with his clothing than with the reactions of his friends.

Françoise returned with two warmblooded young women bearing armfuls of clean clothes. She gestured at my night rail, and I ducked behind the bedpost to disrobe. Grateful that my time in locker rooms had squashed most of my qualms about changing in front of strangers, I drew the linen over my hips and up to my shoulders.

'Kit will. He's been looking for a reason to dislike me, and this will give him several.'

'He won't be a problem,' Matthew said confidently.

'Is Marlowe your friend or your puppet?' I was still wrestling my head out of the fabric when there was a gasp of horror, a muffled '*Mon Dieu*.'

I froze. Françoise had seen my back and the crescent-shaped scar that stretched from one side of my lower rib cage to the other, along with the star that rested between my shoulder blades.

'I will dress *madame*,' Françoise coolly told the maids. 'Leave the clothing and return to your work.'

The maids departed with nothing more than a curtsy and a look of idle curiosity. They hadn't seen the markings. When they were gone, we all began to speak at once. Françoise's aghast 'Who did this?' tumbled over Matthew's 'No one must know' and my own, slightly defensive 'It's just a scar.'

'Someone branded you with a badge of the de Clermont family,' Françoise insisted with a shake of her head, 'one that is used by *milord*.'

'We broke the covenant.' I fought the sick feeling that twisted my stomach whenever I thought about the night another witch had marked me a traitor. 'This was the Congregation's punishment.'

'So that is why you are both here.' Françoise snorted. 'The covenant was a foolish idea from the start. Philippe de Clermont should never have gone along with it.'

'One that's kept us safe from the humans.' I had no great fondness for the agreement, or the nine-member Congregation who enforced it, but its long-term success at hiding otherworldly creatures from unwanted attention was undeniable. The ancient promises made among daemons, vampires, and witches prohibited meddling in human politics or religion and forbade personal alliances among the three different species. Witches were meant to keep to themselves, as were vampires and daemons. They were not supposed to fall in love and intermarry.

'Safe? Do not think you are safe here, *madame*. None of us are. The English are a superstitious people, prone to seeing a ghost in every churchyard and witches around every cauldron. The Congregation is all that is standing between us and utter destruction. You are wise to take refuge here. Come, you must dress and join the others.' Françoise helped me out of the night rail and handed me a wet towel and a dish of goop that smelled of rosemary and oranges. I found it odd to be treated like a child but knew that it was customary for people of Matthew's rank to be washed, dressed, and fed like dolls. Pierre handed Matthew a cup of something too dark to be wine.

'She is not only a witch but a *fileuse de temps* as well?' Françoise asked Matthew quietly. The unfamiliar term – '*time spinner*' – conjured up images of the many different-colored threads we'd followed to reach this particular past.

'She is.' Matthew nodded, his attention focused on me while he sipped at his cup.

'But if she has come from another time, that means . . .' Françoise began, wide eyed. Then her expression became thoughtful. Matthew must sound and behave differently.

She suspects that this is not the same Matthew, I realized, alarmed.

'It is enough for us to know that she is under *milord*'s protection,' Pierre said roughly, a clear warning in his tone. He handed Matthew a dagger. 'What it means is not important.'

'It means I love her, and she loves me in return.' Matthew looked at

his servant intently. 'No matter what I say to others, that is the truth. Understood?'

'Yes,' replied Pierre, though his tone suggested quite the opposite.

Matthew shot an inquiring look at Françoise, who pursed her lips and nodded grudgingly.

She returned her attention to getting me ready, wrapping me in a thick linen towel. Françoise had to have noticed the other marks on my body, those I had received over the course of that one interminable day with the witch Satu, as well as my other, later scars. Françoise asked no further questions, however, but sat me in a chair next to the fire while she ran a comb through my hair.

'And did this insult happen after you declared your love for the witch, *milord*?' Françoise asked.

'Yes.' Matthew buckled the dagger around his waist.

'It was not a *manjasang*, then, who marked her,' Pierre murmured. He used the old Occitan word for vampire – '*blood eater*'. 'None would risk the anger of the de Clermonts.'

'No, it was another witch.' Even though I was shielded from the cold air, the admission made me shiver.

'Two *manjasang* stood by and let it happen, though,' Matthew said grimly. 'And they will pay for it.'

'What's done is done.' I had no wish to start a feud among vampires. We had enough challenges facing us.

'If *milord* had accepted you as his wife when the witch took you, then it is not done.' Françoise's swift fingers wove my hair into tight braids. She wound them around my head and pinned them in place. 'Your name might be Roydon in this godforsaken country where there is no loyalty to speak of, but we will not forget that you are a de Clermont.'

Matthew's mother had warned me that the de Clermonts were a pack. In the twenty-first century, I had chafed under the obligations and restrictions that came with membership. In 1590, however, my magic was unpredictable, my knowledge of witchcraft almost non-existent, and my earliest known ancestor hadn't yet been born. Here I had nothing to rely on but my own wits and Matthew.

'Our intentions to each other were clear then. But I want no trouble

now.' I looked down at Ysabeau's ring and felt the band with my thumb. My hope that we could blend seamlessly into the past now seemed unlikely as well as naïve. I looked around me. 'And this . . .'

'We're here for only two reasons, Diana: to find you a teacher and to locate that alchemical manuscript if we can.' It was the mysterious manuscript called Ashmole 782 that had brought us together in the first place. In the twenty-first century, it had been safely buried among the millions of books in Oxford's Bodleian Library. When I'd filled out the call slip, I'd had no idea that the simple action would unlock an intricate spell that bound the manuscript to the shelves, or that the same spell would reactivate the moment I returned it. I was also ignorant of the many secrets about witches, vampires, and daemons its pages were rumored to reveal. Matthew had thought it would be wiser to locate Ashmole 782 in the past than to try to unlock the spell for a second time in the modern world.

'Until we go back, this will be your home,' he continued, trying to reassure me.

The room's solid furnishings were familiar from museums and auction catalogs, but the Old Lodge would never feel like home. I fingered the thick linen of the towel – so different from the faded terry-cloth sets that Sarah and Em owned, all worn thin from too many washes. Voices in another room lilted and swayed in a rhythm that no modern person, historian or not, could have anticipated. But the past was our only option. Other vampires had made that clear during our final days in Madison, when they'd hunted us down and nearly killed Matthew. If the rest of our plan was going to work, passing as a proper Elizabethan woman had to be my first priority.

'"*O brave new world*".' It was a gross historical violation to quote from Shakespeare's *Tempest* two decades before it was written, but this had been a difficult morning.

'"'*Tis new to thee*",' Matthew responded. 'Are you ready to meet your trouble, then?'

'Of course. Let's get me dressed.' I squared my shoulders and rose from the chair. 'How does one say hello to an earl?'