

## BLOOD RED ROSE THREE

### CHAPTER ONE

A Melbourne hospital 2015

DOCTOR AMBER Cantala-Haleton took the scalpel from the nurse's hand and prepared to make an incision in the patient's abdomen. She never gave the Appendectomy procedure even a second thought seeing how she'd accomplished the operation countless times. In fact, she never felt nervous. For some reason this operation made her feel uneasy. Staring at the clock on the wall she witnessed the long red second-hand stop moving. For a few seconds, she kept up her gaze. Still deciding if she saw the hands of the clock had stopped, the long, thin red needle moved. It couldn't be possible time might have stopped for the briefest of seconds. Amber put the experience down to tiredness.

Focusing on the eight-year-old girl lying on the operating table, Amber noted the girl looked to be sleeping peacefully. She certainly didn't know the Doctor who held the scalpel in her hand happened to be a vampire. In fact, all the nurses busying themselves waiting for the operation to get underway didn't know. Neither did anyone in the hospital, including her two teenage children, Lexi, and Reese.

Placing the sharp edge of the instrument against the girl's skin, Amber watched the growing cut line. Staring closely at the blood oozing from the wound, she felt a tingle shoot through her body. Her eyes narrowed at the feeling. Behind her mask nobody could tell her mouth opened, allowing her eye teeth to slowly extend. Her tongue started sliding along the surface of her lips and teeth. Looking sideways at the nurse standing next to her, Amber made certain she didn't see the tainted glow on her cheeks or the twitches next to her eyes. She felt relieved the woman didn't know she desired to drink the girl's blood.

Using her peripheral vision, Amber again saw the red needle on the wall clock falter. Sweat broke out along her dark hair line. The nurse must have seen the water droplets. She lifted a cloth to wipe the annoyance away.

Switching her focus away from the clock, Amber glared at the nurse.

"Do you feel okay, Doctor?"

"Yes, I'm fine." On the back of her three-word reply, Amber managed to nod.

Handing back the scalpel, Amber's hands began to tremble. Opening the perfect size wound directly above the Appendix no other surgeon could have done a more professional cut. Glancing again at the patient, Amber knew the girl wouldn't remember the actual operation. However, Amber will. She remembers all the operations from beginning to end. She heard each drop of blood oozing from the cuts and every suture stitch that was inserted. The vampire blood raging through her body saw to the fact this time around the smell of the girl's sweet blood excited Amber.

Amber's mind and senses had been sharpened tremendously since discovering she was a vampire. Her husband, William Haleton, transformed into a vampire hundreds of years ago by Amber's distant relative Rose-a-lee Cantala and the council of four couldn't see any other way to save her life except to turn Rose-a-lee herself into a vampire. The three men who made up the council of four plus Rose-a-lee were insane. Rose-a-lee's husband transpired into a vindictive control freak. He wanted to create vampires out of all evil mortal men. He wanted to make an army of vampires to rid the world of evil. He blatantly forced Rose-a-lee into helping him discover a way. Due to the fact Haleton loved Rose-a-lee and always remained the perfect gentleman, her husband made sure Haleton stayed at arm's length to the married woman. After discovering their feeling for each other were growing stronger by the day, Rose-a-lee's husband devised a plan to turn Haleton and his cousin the murderous Alex Crompton into vampires. So, began their journey through time by way of the orb of light. Thanks to Craig Benyon who turned out to be Amber's great-great grandfather after he married Rose-a-lee, which in turn made Amber half vampire and half mortal, Amber kept up a silent vigil watching for any inkling her twins, Reese and Lexi might be vampires too. She saw no such sign. Amber didn't want to ask if they could dematerialize into a shadow. They'd shown no hint of being able to, so Haleton and Amber decided against saying anything. They appeared to be well-adjusted teenagers. Parties, friends, above average IQ's were the normal part of life. Nothing much seemed out of the ordinary.

The twin's seventeenth birthday bash looked well underway when Amber's mobile phone shrilled while she drove out of the hospital's carpark. The panic in the nurse's voice back at the Melbourne hospital relayed to her the emergency operation needed her expertise.

Amber instinctively remembered saying she'll be two minutes.

They'd prepped the young girl ready for the emergency operation. The girl's parents were on route to the hospital. The nurses didn't have any surplus time to get them to fill out the permission form. The girl would be dead in four minutes unless Amber operated immediately.

The diseased Appendix needed to be out in the shortest possible time.

Amber shouldered the theatre doors. She greeted the few nurses waiting for the operation to commence, nodded at the anesthetist and went straight to work.

"Have the parents given a verbal acknowledgement of the operation?" questioned Amber.

"The hospital staff is still trying to call them on their mobile phone."

"Keep trying. By the looks of this girl, the operation should have been finalized five minutes ago."

Waiting for the anesthetist to give the all clear, Amber hovered over the girl smelling her blood. The 'O' negative blood smelt sweet. She closed her eyes, trying to be content with knowing she'll save the girl's life. Amber somehow needed to stop the onslaught of having a taste. She'd never come across the feeling before. Haleton always needed to watch out. However, she was blessed with never having to fight the feeling, so why now?

Focusing on the clock, Amber again saw the large red hand falter. Glancing around the room, she saw nothing unusual. Concentrating all her senses, Amber studied the corners of the operating theatre. If the orb of light started to materialize, she wanted to see it when it appeared no larger than the head of a pin. Still seeing nothing, Amber studied the lights of the large lamp above the patient. Grinning at not seeing the orb she glanced at the nurse bringing in the empty kidney dish.

"Doctor, you look a little pale," commented the woman, placing the kidney dish on a side bench.

"I must be hungry," replied Amber.

"When did you last eat?"

"This morning at breakfast," she replied.

"I'll ring for another surgeon."

"Don't bother. By the time another has scrubbed up the girl will be dead."

Amber inhaled then exhaled in one long deep breath. Feeling a trickle of sweat near her left temple, she started to lift her hand to swipe the annoyance away.

Using a clean white cloth, the closest nurse wiped her brow.

"Thanks," whispered Amber.

Leaning her hand against the side of the bed Amber stumbled. Wide eyed she gave her left hand a cursory glance, trying to discover why her hand didn't stop her fall. What she found nearly made her vomit.

Her hand appeared to have dematerialized into a shadow.

Puzzlement, anxiety, and fear of someone discovering her secret rocketed around Amber's brain at the same time. She looked at the nurse who seemed to be engrossed in studying the heart monitor. Amber again looked at her hand. To her relief, it appeared normal. She moved her fingers, in, turn, several times just to make sure. The only time she ever dematerialized happened to be when she concentrated. Never like this and certainly never on its own accord.

Movement near the wall forced Amber to think of the next part of the puzzle. She witnessed a black figure floating through the wall. Almost immediately all noise ceased. The clock on the wall stopped ticking. The red second hand froze. Even the air bubble in the large water bottle in the corner remained at the midway point to the surface.

Amber attempted to move her feet. When she realized she couldn't, she tried willing her arms to straighten. She failed miserably. Her four limbs seemed to be frozen. The turning of her head also seemed impossible. Her eyebrows and eyes were the only parts which could move.

Amber used her peripheral vision to spy on a second black figure who had entered the room. It floated through the closed double doors. For a time, the creature hovered at waist height above the ground. It seemed content watching the other ghostly shape float about the room. Finally, it floated over to the first creature. Amber noted they didn't talk to each other like humans do. She surmised they knew exactly what they intended to achieve.

Amber momentarily switched her gaze from the smoky black creatures and witnessed the nurse standing next to her also looked to be frozen. So too one other nurse. She'd spun around to fetch the kidney dish from the stainless-steel bench. Amber's eyebrows angled to a point when she saw the kidney dish she reached out for had vanished off the bench.

To refocus her attention back on the creatures, Amber moved her eyes so that she could look to her left. She saw one of them turn his head to look directly at her. For a long time, they stared at each other. Amber put the experience down to the fact she inherited the vampire curse the moment of her birth. Half mortal and half vampire helped her to sense and see things mortals couldn't. Even though her body felt frozen, she could still see the creatures moving about.

The creature's limbs appeared as smoke, but its torso looked solid. The black robe draped around it flapped about when it moved. Every so often the creature's dematerialized hand solidified. In a blink of an eye, the black colored robe changed to a dark purple color and back again into dark black.

One of the creatures slowly floated across the room to replace the missing kidney dish. For a heartbeat, its hand looked human. When it completed the job, its hand reverted into smoke. The second creature floated across the floor to stand next to the nurse closest to Amber. For the briefest of moments, it flashed black eyes at Amber. Sweeping his smoky fingers above the nurse's hand the missing white cloth she used to wipe Amber's forehead of sweat materialized. Instead of slipping it into the nurse's hand the creature placed it in the air at knee height.

'Obviously, the nurse dropped the rag,' thought Amber. 'I'll put the mistake down to nerves. Maybe she even thinks I'm too far above her. I'll correct her thinking when all this is done and dusted.'

Still frowning at the error in time, Amber watched intently while both creatures floated about the well-lit operating theatre, replacing objects where they were supposed to be. Even Amber's car keys were replaced in the corner of the room, exactly where she left them in her haste to begin the operation.

After losing sight of one creature, Amber concluded it decided to float out of the room, or it must be busy behind her.

An overhead globe inside the large dome-shaped floodlight directly over the patient dulled slightly. The creature Amber could see floated over to her. Lifting his smoky hand to shapeshift it into a solid flesh and blood extremity with four fingers and a thumb, it pushed the limb into his torso. In a fraction of a second, the creature pulled out a new large globe.

Amber saw the creature nod. The second creature floated upwards. The black coat it wore brushed Amber's face. A shot of paralyzing electricity roamed around her body. Amber felt the shock travel down her legs. Her feet tingled when the power from the creature dispersed throughout the floor. The creature hovered below the light. It unscrewed the globe. Floating across the room, it didn't hesitate at the closed doors. It floated through, dropping the globe into the bin.

Floating towards Amber, she determined the remaining creature could have been over two metres tall. Floating towards the other side so as not to disturb Amber, he raised what appeared to be a smoky hand. In a micro second, a finger extended out of the blackness. Pushing the small thin limb to the place where his lips should be, the creature motioned for Amber to remain quiet. To cement his warning home, he wagged a finger under her nose.

Amber responded by blinking at the creature. She stood watching it reach up to screw the large globe into place. When the globe bit home the globe lit, sending more heat on top of Amber's head.

The creature floated over to the clock above the door and checked the time. It reached out and pushed the red second hand backwards three seconds. The creature glanced at Amber one last time as it floated through the wall.

The moment it vanished, noise erupted inside the theatre.

The nurse resumed her reaching out to swipe the kidney dish off the bench. In a fast spin, she began walking back to the patient, kidney dish in hand.

When Amber heard the slow, monotonous beep of the patient's heart, she yelled through her mask.

"I want the clock on the wall replaced. The object is faulty."

"In what way is it broken?" asked the nurse, staring up at the clock.

"Are you questioning me?"

"No Doctor."

"Good. If you must know, the red hand on the clock has stopped three times since I've walked into this theatre."

"I have never noticed the problem."

"I have. The next time I'm in this room, I want to see a new clock."

"Yes, Doctor."

"Thanks. On a lighter note did you happen to see anything peculiar happen a few seconds ago?"

"No. Is there something I should've seen?"

"I'm not certain how to explain it."

"If this helps, I saw and heard nothing different," interrupted the anesthetist.

"So, you didn't realize the noise in the room happened to be gone."

"No."

“What did you hear?”

“Exactly the point,” whispered Amber. “I heard the noise in the room suddenly stop.”

“I still have no idea what you’re talking about Doctor?” questioned the closest nurse.

“It doesn’t matter.”

“If you’re thinking about walking out on the operation, no one in this room will blame you.”

Amber glared at the woman. “What’s your name?”

“I’m Sky Danielson.”

“How long have you been a nurse?”

“I graduated last week.”

“Well done. How long have you been working in this hospital?”

“Five hours. I’m on my first shift,” the girl boasted. Sky glanced at the turned head of the anesthetist. “Did I say something wrong?”

“No, not at all,” replied Amber. “Seeing how you don’t know me, I’ll explain everything how I see things. I never walk out on a patient, and no one has ever died while in my care. I do the surgeries no one else will attempt. They call me a little miracle worker.”

“I apologize,” stammered Sky.

“There’s no need. I must give massive thanks to you for asking about my well-being. I appreciated it. Shall we finish saving this girl’s life?”

“Yes,” replied Sky.

“Seeing how the Appendix is ready to come out will you do the honors?” asked Amber.

“Thanks for the golden opportunity. Everyone in the hospital has mentioned you’re the best.”

Sky Danielson swooped up the Appendix out of the girl and placed the organ in the kidney dish. While the nurse seemed to be preoccupied, Amber drooled over the swollen organ.

“Doctor, you do look a little pale; are you okay?” asked the nurse, still holding the kidney dish.

“Fine,” she lied.

“Maybe you’re just overtired?”

“Perhaps,” Amber hissed.

In fact, she felt fine. She could’ve run a double marathon and operated for twenty-four hours. She only needed half an hour sleep each night to keep her refreshed.

The nurse placed the kidney dish on the bench to the side then started counting instruments.

“If anyone wants to return to the subject about the clock, I still want it replaced,” said Amber.

“I’ll personally inform the maintenance man,” chuckled the anesthetist.

Sweat again broke out under Amber’s black fringe hair-line. She felt a drip trickle close to the corner of her eye. Sky lifted her hand to wipe the aggravation away. She looked shocked to learn the cloth she held accidentally landed next to her right foot.

“I’m sorry, I must have dropped the cloth on the floor!” she gasped. “I’ll get another.”

“There’s no need to fuss,” replied Amber.

She used her wrist to swipe the salt water away. Amber heard the pounding sound of her heart in her ears. Glancing around the room, she expected to see the orb of light beginning to materialize in the corner of the room. Seeing nothing unusual, she shook her head at the idea. She and William, her hero husband, hadn’t seen the likes of the orb for seventeen years. She felt confident they’d never see it again. Seeing it might mean Haleton could be sucked through time to recommence his vampire nightmare back in 1749AD. Even thinking of the catastrophe Amber knew she couldn’t live apart from Haleton. Having him taken from her arms she’d die of loneliness. Besides, being married to a vampire had its advantages. Before starting a full day’s work, they could make love all night long.

Amber glanced over at the kidney dish. A small amount of blood still oozed out of the swollen Appendix pooling in one corner of the dish. She licked her lips again, her tongue gliding over her long vampire eye teeth.

“Are you sure you’re okay?” nagged Sky Danielson.

“Yes, I’m fine. The job’s finished. Will you close? I’m starving. I haven’t eaten in hours. On the way to my children’s birthday dinner, I’ll take the Appendix to pathology.”

“Say happy birthday to the twins,” sang the anesthetist. “How are Reese and Lexi doing? I haven’t seen them in months.”

“Good. The kids are just like normal teenagers.”

A different nurse stepped up to the narrow bed to wheel the patient out of the operating theatre. Amber knew the young patient would be in recovery in about seven minutes.

Satisfied everything will end happily; Amber grabbed the kidney dish on her way out of the theatre. She shouldered the door. Marching down the corridor, she glanced into the bin. A smile erupted on her face when she spotted the large globe from the overhead light.

Amber marched down the corridor, her heeled shoes tapping noisily on the floor. Closing in on the cleaner's office, she made sure no one looked her way. After entering the room, she shut the door. Drooling over the Appendix, Amber's eye teeth grew. The vampire blood flowing through her veins pushed all logic from her mind as she drooled over the blood-soaked organ.