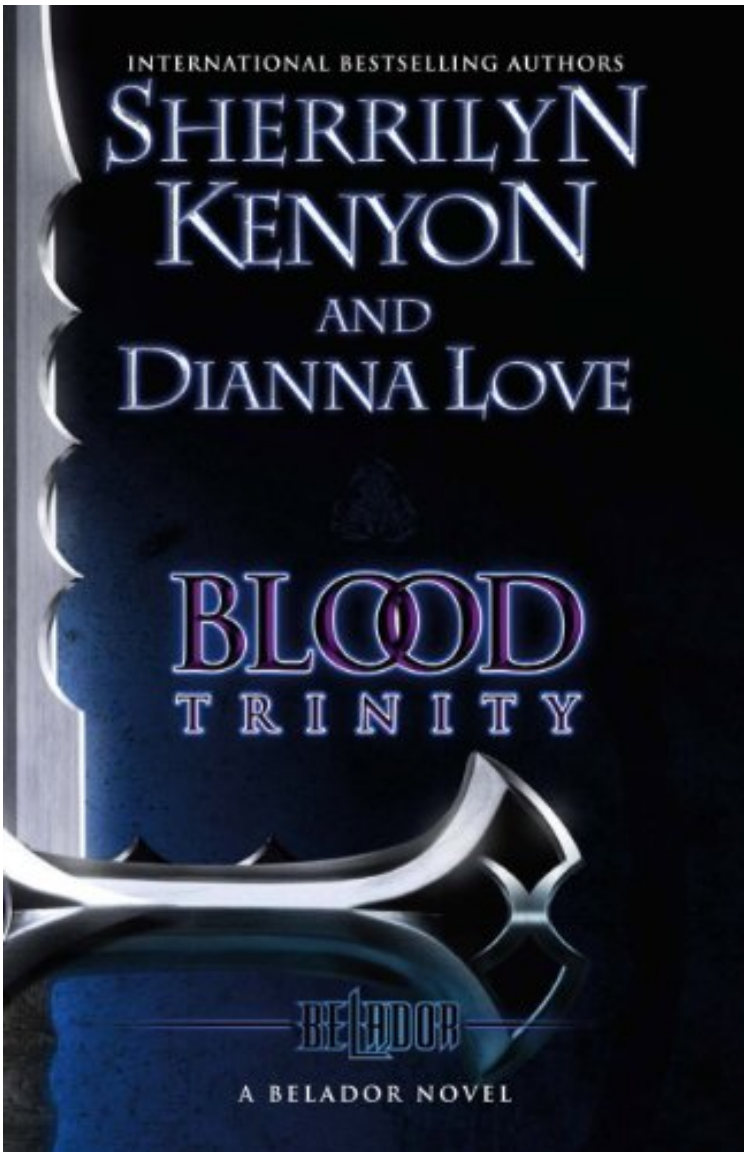


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Blood Trinity: Number 1 in series



*Par Sherrilyn Kenyon, Dianna Love
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAtlanta has become the battlefield between humans and demons. All her life, Evalle Kincaid has walked the line between the two. Her origins unknown, she's on a quest to learn more about her past - and her future. When a demon claims a young woman in a terrifying attack and there's no one else to blame, Evalle comes under suspicion and the only person who might help her is Storm, a sexy new agent with secrets of his own. Now she's on a deadly quest for her own survival. Through the sordid underground of an alternate Atlanta where nothing is as it seems, to the front lines of the city where her former allies have joined forces to hunt her, Evalle must prove her innocence or pay the ultimate price. But saving herself is the least of her problems if she doesn't stop the coming apocalypse. The clock is ticking and Atlanta is about to

catch fire . . . ExtraitONEEvalle kept a city block between her and the Cresyl demon skulking along Peters Street through one of the riskier sections of downtown Atlanta after dark. Three-in-the-morning dark. Graveyard quiet for a Sunday morning. Where were all the people leaving the bars? There should be more on the street than this. But more importantly, who had sent a Cresyl demon into this territory again and why? Second time in ten days, and she wouldn't have identified this one so quickly if not for having studied up on them after the last one showed up and ruined her day. So many nonhumans to learn about, so little time. Especially while hunting them. But the last Cresyl sighted in Atlanta had disappeared before causing any trouble. This time, they weren't so lucky. A human had died, and in a suspicious manner for a demon attack. A death that meant trouble for Evalle in the worst way with VIPER. The body of a young female had been mauled with only the heart missing. Worse had been the stink of sulfur, which told her exactly how nonhuman the attack had been. But that didn't make sense. A demon had to ingest the entire human to take a soul, so why only one organ? Why maul the body? It didn't smack of demon. It smacked of the way Alterants had decimated bodies in the past. Was someone intentionally trying to make the killing appear as though an Alterant had attacked the woman? Or am I just being paranoid? She wished Tzader and Quinn hadn't both been called out of town. They could sort reality from paranoia. She hadn't been really good at doing that for herself since surviving their escape from the Medb two years ago. Had the Medb sent this demon? Were they still trying to get her? But that didn't make sense either. Cresyls were South African and not Celtic, therefore they weren't the kind of demon the Medb would use. Stop with the crazy thoughts and catch that friggin' thing sneaking around the city. If she handed proof of what had killed the human to VIPER before they opened an investigation, she wouldn't face even suspension. If not, the first finger would point at her the minute they found out about a ripped-up human. Always worked that way. Guilty beyond doubt. Burden of proof on me, no matter how much I prove myself. Bastards. She'd never harmed a human, but she was an Alterant after all, profiled in the purest sense of the word as a predatory threat for nothing more than breathing their air. Even temporary suspension would be unbearable, because it meant having her powers stripped to a minimal level. That would leave her practically defenseless in a city where preternatural beings moved silent and deadly. With purpose. Like the being that crept along steadily ahead of her. If she ran around Atlanta without her powers, it'd be open season on her and she'd end up on a slab in the morgue next to that poor woman missing a heart. Much as the idea of losing her powers gave her the shakes, her greater worry would be that the sudden stripping of powers might trigger an involuntary shift into her beast form out of a natural instinct to protect herself. That would end any question of her guilt as far as VIPER was concerned, and she'd be doomed. She'd face a room full of demons to avoid that scenario. Besides, VIPER needed her out here working. She had the best informants in the city when it came to supernatural intelligence. That's how she'd found this demon in so little time. The Cresyl stumbled, caught his balance, then stopped as though stuck in place. Dividing her attention between him and her path, she barely sidestepped a pile of putrid-smelling ick on the sidewalk that he'd left in his wake. Great like walking behind a horse. Jeez. Didn't they have any sense of cleanliness? He the demon's gender as determined by the size of his horns glimmered in and out of shape, appearing more as shadow and mist than anything lifelike to unsuspecting humans at three in the morning. Even through her dark sunglasses, Evalle's natural night vision picked up his bony spine, slinking tail and leathery skin as clear as a high-resolution image. Why was he moving at such a sluggish pace? Cresyls were generally quick and dangerous and traveled in pairs. Where was this one's mate? Which one had ripped into a human tonight? Or had they? Something had, and they were the most likely candidates. The remains of the young woman had shown up in the Atlanta city morgue a few hours ago. The morgue where Evalle worked part-time as a maintenance tech from ten at night until five in the morning. All agents at VIPER were expected to integrate into the community, preferably somewhere that allowed them intel on supernatural activity. The morgue was a perfect place to be. Not just for VIPER but for her own personal reasons as well. The dead were not a threat. Most of the time. And what better place to hear about unusual killings or strange DNA evidence? Being on call for early Sunday morning usually meant processing run-of-the-mill Saturday night violence, not a demon mauling. The graveyard shift supervisor who'd received the woman's body had filed a request that animal control come inspect the ravaged body and gouged chest. That visit wouldn't happen until Monday during business hours. But Evalle couldn't gamble on the possibility of VIPER finding out about the mutilation before Monday, since they had other spies with morgue access besides her. Even if a wild animal from the zoo could have ripped the heart out of the body so cleanly, any investigator would question why an earthly predator would leave the rest of the body uneaten. Animals tended to be sloppy killers. Demons not so much. Everything about this death was off, didn't fit anything she'd

ever seen or heard about with regard to Cresyl demons or any other kind, for that matter. Her Spidey sense was tingling off the charts, and she couldn't shake the feeling this was bad for her. Real bad. Having been alone right before work, she had no alibi for the time of death. Not paranoia. I'm being set up. I have to be. Nothing else made sense. Quinn and Tzader would help with a minute's notice, but they were in Charlotte, and she refused to call them like some helpless female. I came into this world alone and I can handle anything it throws at me. And by the gods, she could handle the Cresyls. If she didn't make a mistake. Or run out of time. With daylight coming in less than two hours, she'd be forced off the streets to hide from the August sun. That was why she'd faked a case of nausea at the morgue and clocked out early to go home. It wasn't a total lie. She really was feeling sick to her stomach that someone wanted her butt in a sling. Or more to the point, a cage. Evalle flinched as unwanted memories tore through her with sharp talons at that thought. Nothing set off her panic attacks worse than imprisonment. Well, there was one other matter, but she wouldn't think about that either. Focus. But it was hard. No matter how much she tried to keep the past buried, things like this threat unearthed her worst fears and made the old wounds burn anew. Which was why she'd much rather battle the demons without. Once she killed them, they stayed dead. Too bad the ones inside her weren't so cooperative. Even when she did manage to kill one, a dozen more cropped up to attack her. As Quinn would say, bloody inconsiderate wankers. But that was neither here nor there. She'd made the ten-minute ride to her secure apartment beneath a downtown parking deck only to pick up a weapon—the special dagger she carried, which had a bone handle carved with Celtic designs. The blade shimmered with a death spell. Badass to the extreme, it could be used to kill most demons if she stuck the blade into the creature's forehead between where horns grew above each eye. The dagger had been a gift from Tzader after he and Quinn had saved her life in Utah. Just one of several treasured gifts from Tzader and Quinn, with friendship and trust being the most cherished of all. But she was on her own right now. The demon paused in the middle of the next block at the newspaper-wrapped feet of a sleeping vagrant, a poor wadded-up piece of humanity not bothering anybody. Was it sizing up the guy as a meal? Evalle paused, perfectly still. Sweat trickled beneath her top to streak down the naked skin on her back and soak the top of her jeans. The back of her vintage BDU shirt stuck to her back. She wore the cotton military shirt for comfort, but nothing felt good in this heat. Her steel-toe boots were hot, but much handier and safer than sandals if someone or something wanted a throw-down. She fingered the dagger in the sheath at her hip and wrinkled her nose at the sulfuric odor trailing off the demon. The odor was too faint for a demon who had eaten a human heart. Although one of them might have discovered the magic of deodorant or perfume. Then again, perfumed crap still stank no matter what you did. Maybe this thing hadn't attacked the human. She didn't like the idea of hurting anything on purpose, but that young woman had died a hideous death, and the quickest way to find this thing's mate would be to make him call for help. Besides, as a VIPER agent, she was expected to do whatever it took to protect the humans from predators. And she would. A car turned onto the street half a mile down and headed toward her, the burned-out muffler rumbling loud in the still night. She kept her eye on the demon. The last thing she wanted to do was attack one in front of a civilian who would see the demon clearly if it solidified to do battle, but ...

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