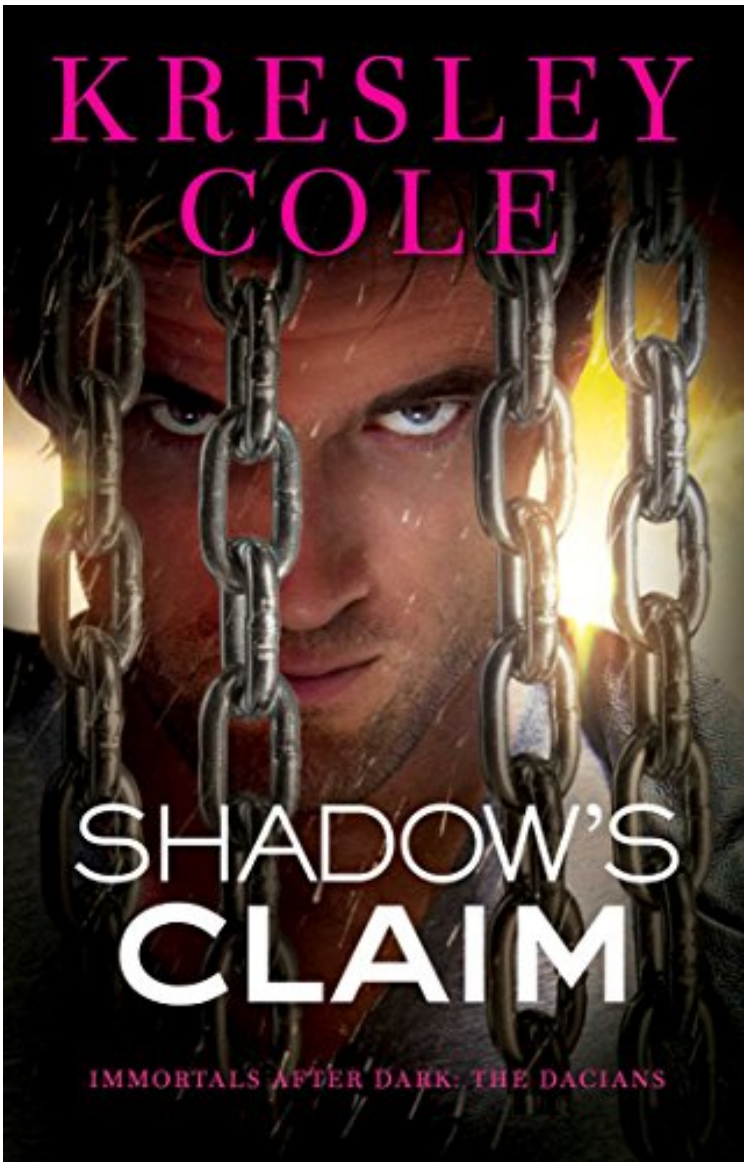


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Shadow's Claim: Immortals After Dark: The Dacians



Par Kresley Cole
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Description : Description du produit'Sizzling sex and high-stakes adventure are what's on tap in mega-talented Cole's sensational new paranormal release.' Romantic Times 'Rich mythology, a fresh approach, and excellent writing make this unique vampire tale superb.' Fresh Fiction 'The snappy dialogue and sensual tormenting make this the best in the Immortals After Dark series so far!' Romantic Times

Prsentation de l'diteur#1 New York Times bestseller Kresley Cole introduces The Dacians: Realm of Blood and Mist, a new paranormal series following the royal bloodline of Dacia, a vampire kingdom hidden within the Lore of the Immortals After Dark. Shadows Claim features Prince Trehan, a ruthless master assassin who

will do anything to possess Bettina, his beautiful sorceress mate, even compete for her hand in a blood-sport tournament to the death. HE WONT BE DENIED Trehan Daciano, known as the Prince of Shadows, has spent his life serving his people striking in the night, quietly executing any threat to their realm. The coldly disciplined swordsman has never desired anything for himself until he beholds Bettina, the sheltered ward of two of the Lores most fearsome villains. SHES BOUND TO ANOTHER Desperate to earn her guardians approval after a life-shattering mistake, young Bettina has no choice but to marry whichever suitor prevail even though shes lost her heart to another. Yet one lethal competitor, a mysterious cloaked swordsman, invades her dreams, tempting her with forbidden pleasure. A BATTLE FOR HER BODY AND SOUL Even if Trehan can survive the punishing contests to claim her as his wife, the true battle for Bettinas heart is yet to come. And unleashing a millenniums worth of savage need will either frighten his Bride away or stoke Bettinas own desires to a fever pitch. . . . Extrait A savage kick to Princess Bettina of Abaddons back severed her spinal cord. A blessing. The searing pain that had been clawing through her entire being faded below her waist to pinpoints of pressure, then tingles, then . . . Nothing. Blessing. Shed long since stopped begging for her life, knew shed never leave this field of poppies alive. The four winged monsters whod dragged her here had plans for her: as much agony as possible before her death. Just as their kind had delivered to her sorceress mother twenty years before. Though half demon, Bettina was weak in body, hopeless at fighting. Shed depended on her Sorcery power for protection the one that these Vrekeners had siphoned from her as easily as theyd snatched the clothes from her body. No longer could she open her swollen eyes. Her last sight? The leader standing over her, brandishing a scythe, his eyes frenzied. His claw-tipped wings had blocked the light of a low yellow moon. The scythes blade wasnt fashioned out of metal, but of black flame. . . . Yet Bettina could still hear, was still aware. In the distance, a new age band played in an outdoor arena. Young mortals danced and sang The force of one kick jostled her over onto her belly. Her mauled face shoved against crushed poppies. The leader played with her as a hawk would a mouse, ravaging the meat from its bones. His followers jeered and doused her with bottles of spirits. Menacing yells, steel-toed boots, the blistering sting of alcohol. Ah, gods, she was too aware. She tried desperately to lose herself in memories of a boy with smiling blue eyes and sun-kissed hair. He doesnt know how much I love him. So many things I wish Id done Her upper body exploded with even more pain, as if to compensate for the numbness in her fractured legs. She could perceive her broken ribs jutting from her skin. Her mangled arms draped limply across the ground where theyd fallen when shed last tried to protect her head. . . . Anguish multiplied. Or perhaps the Vrekeners blows rained down more swiftly. The kill was near. All shed wanted was to go to a party with her mortal college friends. Shed been excited, happy to fit in with them, or to appear to as a halfling, shed never fit in before. Little did she know that shed already drawn her enemys notice with her sorcery. Shed never intentionally used it Over all other pain, she perceived the heat of that burning scythe descending ever closer to her. Hotter, hotter, scorching. Alcohol on her skin, the black flame. . . Bettina choked on a sob. They planned to burn her? Suddenly she felt weightless. This is what dying feels like? No, she was traveling. Summoned? Dear gods, yes, the demon in her had been summoned across realms. Naked, powerless, sightless, she slipped from that field in the mortal world to her home plane of Abaddon. In a flash, the poppies were replaced by cold marble, a balm on what was left of her skin. That awareness returned. Im lying on the floor of my castles court, broken, wearing only my blood and the Vrekeners rank liquor. The courtiers still gossip and laugh. Cant they see me? She tried to scream for help; blood bubbled up over her lips. Cant scream, cant move. She could only listen. A conversation between her godfather Raum the Grand Duke of the Deathly Ones and another was already under way. Now youve done it, Raum. It was Caspion the Tracker. The demon she secretly loved. Tina hates being summoned with that medallion. Not at present! She considers it a leash. Her guardians had insisted on it, a condition of her leaving Abaddon. Ha! It probably makes her feel more like a demon, Raum said in a gruff tone, knowing that wasnt true. Theyd had words over his use of the mystical medallion. Besides, she told me she was coming home from college by months end. You know time moves differently in the mortal realm, Caspion said, amusement lacing his words. And more, she said she was very busy but would try to visit Bettina heard a courtier gasp. Theyve seen me. Murmurs rose to a furor. From the front of the court, Caspion demanded, What is it? Closer by, he asked, Who is this pitiful creature? No, no, this isnt Tina. It cant be! A touch on her forehead . . . a sucked in breath of recognition . . . a roar of grief. Bettina! Raum bellowed, What has happened? Tina, wake up! Caspion commanded her. Ah, gods, stay with me. Stay. For him, she managed to slit open one eye. His curling blond hair hung over his harried face. His own eyes had gone from midnight blue to black, signaling his emotion. They even started watering as he gazed over her injuries. She saw a

shining hero of old. Her beloved Cas. He yanked off his warm coat, covering her. A physic! he yelled into the crowd. Now! Others gathered around her. She heard Raum stomping closer. Whos done this to my little

Tina? Something broke directly. No doubt from his fist. Damn you, tell me! Whos hurt her? She tried to answer, parting her lips. . . . Her jaw must be broken. Another anguished roar. Oh, Cas. Visibly making an effort to control himself, he said, You hang on and stay with me. Theres nowhere else Id rather be than with you. Ill get you through this, Tina. I swear it. Youre going to be all right, he said, his voice thick. Dont leave me. Bettina felt the tiniest sliver of hope, something to fight for. Surely Cas returned her feelings, saw her as more than a little sister. Will she live? Raum bit out. Shes not hardy like a demones, not strong like we are. She hadnt been a true demon before. Now she was no longer a true sorceress. They took my root power. My soul. A male she didnt recognize asked, Has she frozen into her immortality? The physic? Cas answered,

She was on the cusp. Maybe by now . . . We need a Sorceri healer. If we act quickly, the princess could recover, the physic said, but hastily qualified his statement: Her body could recover from this. What did that mean? Raum ordered, Find Tinas godmother! Dont return from the Sorceri plane without Morgana! Coming into Bettinas line of vision, Raum yelled to Cas, I should never have let her go! I was too lenient! Things will change in Abaddon! His eyes were glinting, his voice choked up. The crusty old warrior was at a loss. He began ramming his horns against a stone wall, roaring to everyone, Heed my words! We return to olden ways! Free of the attack, Bettinas body started trying to regenerate, nerves sparking to life once more. Pain erupted all over her, blistering waves of it. Even in the midst of her escalating agony and lingering horror, the words olden ways struck fear in her heart. Prince Trehan Daciano shot awake in the middle of the day, bolting upright from his pallet of furs. He gazed around in confusion, seeing his usual surroundings shelves of books, weapons, his sideboard with carafes of mead-laced blood. Though hed experienced no nightmare, sleep had been snatched from him, replaced by a marked unease. With each moment, he grew even more on edge, a feeling like . . . like emptiness settling in his chest. Like dread. So different from his usual numbness.

Brows drawn, he rose, tracing across the spacious room to one of the curtained balconies. These grand apartments had once been the royal library. Centuries ago, hed moved in and never moved out, haunting this place until no other member of the family would enter. Time and history seeped from these familiar stones.

He knew every crag and groove as well as he knew his own grim reflection. Like these stones, I quietly endure the ages. Drawing back the thick curtain, he gazed outside. From this height, Trehan could survey far into the Realm of Blood and Mist, the secreted lands of the mighty Dacians. The royal city below was still at

this hour. Only the sound of Dacias bubbling blood fountains could be heard. Across from his residence stood the majestic black stone castle, the heart of the realm abandoned without a king. How many of his kinsmen had perished trying to seize that keep? How much deceit and murder surrounded it? The warring houses of the royal family had once boasted hundreds of members each now dwindled down to a handful. For an immortal family, they knew death so well. Trehan was the last born to the House of Shadow, the assassin arm of the family. Though he was a potential contender for the crown along with four of his lethal cousins he had no real aspiration to seize it. A quiet loner by nature, he loathed spectacle and attention, was content to blend into the shadows. He only wanted to perform his duty. For nearly a millennium, hed been the enforcer

of law, a merciless assassin. As his long-dead father had oft told him, You are the sword of the kingdom, Trehan. Dacia will be your family, your friend, your mistress, the grand love of your life. That is your lot,

Son. Want for nothing else. And you will never be disappointed. Trehan had once foolishly entertained secret hopes, but hed eventually embraced his fathers teachings. As was logical. I want for nothing. This was his lot, to await down here in the earth until Mother Dacia needed his sword. To strike, execute, then return.

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