

Changing the Vampire Romance

The appeal of vampires is obvious: their ageless love, their darkness, the strength of their needs, and often their inhuman attractiveness. But so many vampire stories end up having the same basic plot because they have the same starting point, that of an undead and deathless tortured soul overcome by his attraction for a special woman. To have a true “happily ever after,” the characters need to have an “ever after,” so the story usually involves the heroine becoming a vampire, too.

While I liked the most universal elements of the vampiric appeal, the transformation plot troubled me because it had been done so many times before. I didn’t want to just do the same thing all over again. And also, too many of the angst-ridden vampires didn’t really have that much of a reason to be full of angst. Sure, they wanted to drink people’s blood. But in many stories, they were able to survive just fine on animal blood or the blood from blood donors. And in others, drinking a human’s blood just wasn’t that big of a deal. The humans liked it and were fine afterward. If the vampire became more violent or had darker thoughts when he drank human blood, that was something, but I wanted to do more with it.

So I decided that blood-drinking had to be truly devastating to the victim. It had to carry the risk of death. Not just a risk—a near-certainty, I decided. But the humans had to be so completely in the power of the vampire that they willingly gave themselves up anyway. I was telling the story of a seducer-vampire, not a monster-vampire.

To make the struggle real, instead of just making the vampires really like fresh human blood, I decided that vampires would *have* to drink the blood of the living to survive. There couldn’t be any way around it.

I also decided that the vampires couldn’t be undead because that almost always leads to the vampiric transformation plot. Instead, they were another race that looked human but weren’t.

That meant that there had to be baby vampires. So, how are baby vampires made? Not from other vampires, of course. I still wanted to tell a vampire-human love story. That meant that the baby vampires had to come from the humans who didn’t die when their blood was drunk.

Then I asked myself a final question: What would a vampire do if he was tired of killing?

From that thought my entire *Aethereal Bonds* world was born. A vampire who has the power to make a human glad to die just to share a moment with them. A vampire locked in a moral struggle with himself—and with other vampires. A vampire who is impossibly beautiful, strong, and fast. A vampire who is dying...if not physically, then mentally, as his soul is eaten away by his isolation. He became Dorian Thorne.

As his counterpart, I chose a girl who sees herself as completely and utterly ordinary. One who has definite goals in life but never views herself as terribly strong or smart. I wrote the story to reveal her strength—her strength first to choose her own way in life and later to fight against seemingly insurmountable, overwhelming forces to save those that she loves.

That was Cora Shaw—a girl who starts as ordinary and becomes anything but. She is Dorian's obsession and his salvation, as he is hers.