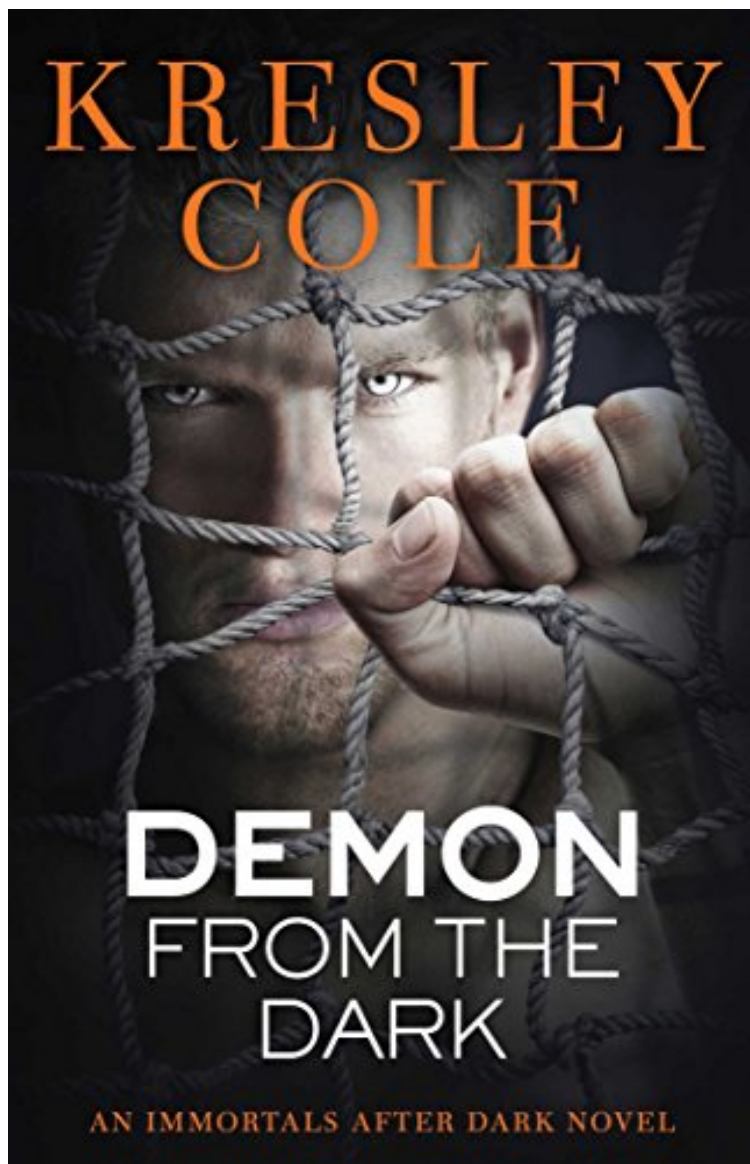


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# Demon from the Dark (Immortals After Dark Series, Book 8)



*Par Kresley Cole*

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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom New York Times bestselling author Kresley Cole comes this scorching tale of a demon outcast poisoned with vampire blood and the vulnerable young witch he vows to protecteven from himself.A DANGEROUS DEMON SHE CANT RESIST . . .Malkom Slaine: tormented by his sordid past and racked by vampiric hungers, hes pushed to the brink by the green-eyed beauty under his guard.A MADDENING WITCH HE ACHES TO CLAIM . . .Carrow Graie: hiding her own sorrows, she lives only for the next party or prank. Until she meets a tortured warrior worth saving.TRAPPED TOGETHER IN A

SAVAGE PRISON . . . In order for Malkom and Carrow to survive, he must unleash both the demon and vampire inside him. When Malkom becomes the nightmare his own people feared, will he lose the woman he craves body and soul? Extrait Demon from the Dark 1 Demon plane of Oblivion, City of Ash Year 192 in the Rule of the Dead Do we go to our death or worse? Malkom Slaine gazed over at his best friend, Prince Kallen the Just, wishing he had a better answer for him, anything to ease the apprehension in Kallens eyes. As the vampire guards shoved them along, deeper into their stronghold, Malkom suspected death might be welcome before the night was out. The rumors are likely untrue, he lied, putting up a renewed resistance as the dozen guards forced them down a flight of stone steps. But his bonds were mystical; Malkom was unable to teleport or break free. At the base of the stairs lay a subterranean chamber with an ornate throne on a dais. Though the floor was of packed earth, the walls were hung with rich silks and tapestries. Rare crystal and glass adorned the room. At once, Malkom began analyzing every inch of the area for an escape. Ahead, a pair of winded demon slaves stood beside a freshly dug grave. More guards lined the walls, with swords at the ready. In the back, a black-robed sorcerer worked at a vial-cluttered table. Gods, let the rumors be untrue... those whispers of the Scrbthe abominations. Kallen muttered, Can you see a way out of this? Normally, Malkom could. Without fail, he figured his way out of seemingly impossible predicaments. Not as of yet. The guards shoved Kallen and Malkom to their knees before the grave. Ronath will pay for this once I get free, Kallen grated. Ronath the Armorer was a seasoned warrior, the strongest demon after Malkom. Hed once been Kallens favored commander. The traitor will not see another night. Twas Ronath whod turned Malkom over to the vampires. Disastrous enough. But without Malkoms unwavering defense, Kallens fortress had fallen just a week later. The Trothans beloved prince had been captured. Blinded by his hatred for Malkoma slave turned commander Ronath had unwittingly doomed Kallen and all the Trothans. Malkom had already planned his own revenge. As he was neither noble nor good like Kallen, his retribution would be far more vicious than the prince could ever envision. Without warning, a vampire traced into the room, teleporting directly onto the throne. Clad in costly silk robes, the male was pallid, his skin untouched by Oblivions blistering sun. His eyes were wholly red, his visage twisted by madness. The Viceroy. When the vampires had conquered Oblivion and turned it into a colony, theyd dispatched the Viceroy, their most malicious leader, to act as ruler of the plane. Ah, my two new prisoners, he said in English. Though Malkom and Kallen both were fluent in the language, they refused to speak anything other than their native Demonisheven as the use of that tongue was now punishable by death. The vampire rubbed his narrow, clean-shaven chin. At last, you have both been captured. Malkom and the prince were the leaders of the rebellion, and to break them would be to break the resistance. The vampire overlords had searched for them relentlessly. When the Viceroy snapped his fingers, the two slaves exited the room, returning moments later with an unconscious demon boy. One of their own, handed over for a vampires refreshment. A leisurely repast. Malkom started sweating. He strained even harder against his bonds but couldnt get free before the vampire collected the boy in his arms, then bent over his neck. At the sight, rage spiked within Malkom. Those sucking sounds... He bared his fangs, overwhelmed with memories of his childhood as a blood slave. His only consolation was that this boy was unconscious, a luxury he himself had never been afforded. Nor had Malkoms neck been taken, for that skin would have been readily seen and he hadnt been kept only for his blood. Steady, Malkom, Kallen murmured in Demonish. Keep your wits about you. How many times had Kallen said those exact words? The prince has long kept me sane. The Viceroy dropped the boy from the dais to the ground like refuse, then dabbed at his lips with a crisp handkerchief. I confess, you two fascinate me. His red eyes burned with curiosity. A friendship between a beloved royal and his brutal guard dog. The highest of the high, and... He flicked his hand at Malkom. No one had been more perplexed by their friendship than Malkom. Kallen was the crown prince of the Trothan Demonarchy, hundreds of years old, and filled with wisdom. Malkom was the illiterate thirty-year-old son of a whore, raised as a vampires slave and filled with rage. Yet somehow he and Kallen had become comrades in arms, brothers by choice if not by blood. Kallen had said hed recognized something in Malkom, an innate nobility. As if hed known how badly Malkom wanted to be noble. Penniless, ignorant, and fatherless, the Viceroy intoned. The son of a demon whore who sold her body. With a sneer, he added, Until she could sell one of her offspring. Malkom could deny nothing. How easily you sprang to life, when you should have been no more than seeping waste in a back alley. If Malkom is not noble in blood, Kallen said, then he is noble in deed. Kallen, still defending me. The Viceroy seemed amused. I can imagine none so lowly, yet you had the gall to resist us, knowing death awaited. Amazingly, you very nearly routed us from your world, demon. Malkom could scarcely comprehend this. Though hed won numerous battles, he hadnt imagined his foes were on the brink

of surrender. Malkom had never known an Oblivion without the walking-dead vampires here. Decades before his birth, they had arrived from an alien plane filled with myriad breeds of immortals and mortals, settling here for one reason. Blood. When the vampires consumed Trothan blood, it made them more powerful than theyd ever been, made them heal from injuries more swiftly. Blood had eventually become the currency in Oblivion. So very nearly, the Viceroy continued. But in the end, breeding will tell. The vampire traced to stand just beside them. You can dress in your fine warrior clothing. He reached down to rip Malkoms rich cloak from him. But you can only mask what you truly are. Under those manacles at your wrists, I bet I would find bite scars. Again Malkom voiced no denial. He normally wore silver cuffs to conceal those shaming marks. The details of his past werent necessarily held secret. All the demons in Ash knew how Malkom had earned his bread as a boy, how hed eaten from their trash once hed grown too old for a vampire lords tastes. But for this vampire to know as well... Does not matter how you appear, demonyou are still nothing. Do not listen to him, Malkom, Kallen said. You are a good man. A stalwart leader. Who was betrayed at the earliest opportunity? the vampire said. A gang led by the powerful and devious Ronath had tricked Malkom. Before he could trace or attack, hed been caught in a metal net and stabbed through repeatedly. You rose up high for the briefest time. But I will break you down once more. Malkom craned his head up to face the Viceroy. Break me down? You submitted to a vampire master once. You will do so again. Is that why we live still? For me, save yourself time and kill me now. Nothing this vampire could do would be worse than what the slave master of Malkoms childhood had done. Malkom gazed at the demon boy, unconscious in the dirt. Nothing. Tis not so simple, the Viceroy said. It never is with our kind. Had he signaled something to the sorcerer at the back of the chamber? Youve destroyed so many of my soldiers that I have decided to create more, starting with you two, the strongest of your kind. You shall be transformed, remade in my image. The rumors... Twas said that the overlords had developed a rite to transform Trothans into Scrbdemonic vampires who thirsted for the blood of their own. A demon and a vampire united, an abomination stronger than both. The Viceroy drew his sword from a scabbard at his hip. You will drink my blood, and it will open your veins to the ritual. Your deaths will be the catalyst. He ran a finger over the edge of his sword, while in the shadows his sorcerer began to chant, fueling a sinister curse. Power emanated from the sorcerer with every utterance, filling the room with forbidden black magics. Some unseen force seemed to wrap around Malkoms body, digging in. Even more guards closed in, heaving tight on Malkoms and Kallens chains. One of the largest vampires jammed his knee into Kallens spine, forcing his head backward, while another wedged a bit between Kallens teeth. No, no! Malkom roared, twisting violently. The Viceroy sliced his own wrist. Tis a gift Im giving you. The Thirst. I am going to make blood sing for you, make you dine on demon flesh every day for eternity. He shoved the streaming gash to Kallens pried-open mouth. You will become like us, and be loyal only to me. It begins now. Do not drink it, Kallen! Malkom bellowed, but they forced him to swallow it. They set upon Malkom next, stabbing him until he was too weakened to resist. The Viceroy's thick, vile blood was forced down his throat as well. Then the vampire raised his sword. Malkom thrashed against the chains with every ounce of power left in his body, but neither he nor Kallen could get loose. Kallen met Malkoms gaze for a harrowing momentjust before the Viceroy's sword sliced clean through Kallens neck. His body collapsed backward, his head tumbling into the grave. Dazed, sightless eyes stared up at Malkom. The princes brows were still drawn, his teeth gritted. Malkom gaped in disbelief while years of their shared memories flashed in his mind. The two demons countless battles, more victories than defeats. The dozens of times Malkom had saved Kallens life; the thousands of times Kallen had praised him, encouraging him to better himself. You are a fearless warrior whos more than his past. Of course youve the intelligence to learn how to read! Who the devil convinced you otherwise? You are stronger and faster than the others, your will to live greater than any Ive known. You see details others are blind to. Uniqueness is a kind of nobility, is it not, brother? Throughout, Malkom had begun to shed the taint of his past. Hed dared to entertain dreams of a better life. Now Kallen was dead. Malkom roared with impotent fury, his eyes going wet with loss. Kallen. Dead. Or worse. The sorcerer cast a layer of black dust over Kallens body. No! Malkom bit out. Leave him in peace! More chanting, more power. Malkoms lips parted. Kallens body was lifeless no more. With each of the sorcerers words, it began to twitch, to... move in the dirt. Not from death spasms. But writhing with life. The headless neck pumped blood anew. The Viceroy again snapped his fingers for the demon slaves. Once the pair had kicked Kallens body into the grave, the sorcerer scattered more of that dust over all. To make Kallen whole once more? When smoke snaked up from the depths, the Viceroy raised his bloody sword. Now tis your turn, Slaine. And I promise you, rising from the deadif it takeswill be the easy part. If you live, I will break you. Malkom silently prayed for a true end, beseeching

the gods who had never once answered his most desperate entreaties. Please, do not let me rise The sword whistled through the air. He perceived the scantest bite of blade. Then nothing. Despite Malkoms prayers, he and Kallen had both risen two nights later, waking into a nightmare of darkness, deep in the earth. After clawing through the dirt, inching their way to the surface, theyd been thrown in a murky cell in the Viceroy's dungeon. They hadnt suffocated as theyd risen because they now drew no breaths. Nor did their hearts beat. The walking dead. Vampire. I am a vampire. No! Malkom still hadnt accepted his fate, was ready to rage and fight it. Even as he recognized how much hed been altered. Though he wore no cuffs to prevent him from tracing, he no longer had that ability. His clammy skin felt as if a thousand spiders crawled all over him. His upper fangs had elongated and narrowed, throbbing painfully. Even in the low light, merely opening his sensitive eyes was an agony. His very hearing was different, more acute. He could detect insects boring in the ground beneath him. From the moment hed awakened in the grave, the burgeoning need for blood had lashed him. Confusion and anguish roiled within him. In Kallen, too. He stared at the filthy cell walls, hollow-eyed and unblinking. We will fight our way free, Malkom assured him now, then return home. We are Scrb. Brother, no demons will ever take us among them. He was likely right. The two were worse even than the vampires. They were defiled demons, cursed to feed off their own kind. They were the monsters of legend feared by all. Kallen rasped, There is no reason to go on. There is always a reason. How many times had Malkom had to convince himself of this? If for nothing else, you can seek vengeance. He himself would not rest until retribution was meted. He would slaughter the sorcerer whod muttered his curses in the background, the guards whod held them down, and the bloodthirsty Viceroy whose sick will had set them all into motion. Then he would return to destroy Ronath. Those who betrayed Malkom did it only once. When all was done, he would find a way to erase every vampire trait from himself, to rid his veins of the Viceroy's blood and return to what hed been. Or hed greet the sun. Malkom frowned. Would that kill a Scrb? Live for vengeance? Kallen said. Tell me, will that be enough? How to answer that question when Malkoms own dreams appeared so ridiculous now? Hed wanted a home that no one could ever force him to leave. Hed wanted as much food and water as he could ever enjoy. But more than anything, hed secretly longed to be respected like Kallena noble like himgifted with a blood far better than his own. Malkoms only fortune was that no one else had ever discovered how much he yearned to be highborn. Then live for your fated female, he urged Kallen. She will accept you. She must. Is that what you seek, Malkom? Your fated one? Ive no such expectations. What use had he for a woman of his own? Hed needed no offspring for a noble line or sons to work the water mines with him. No? Then why have you never taken a demoness from the camps? Malkoms gaze flicked away. Never had he known a female. Those who followed the army could be had for a price, but Malkom had never used one. No matter how urgent his need, no matter how badly his curiosity burned, he physically couldnt. They smelled of other males, reminding him of his childhood. Nothing extinguished his lusts like the scent of seed. So hed put females from his mind. As a boy, he disciplined himself not to dream about food. Hed applied that same discipline to keep from fantasizing about intercourse. At length, Malkom answered, Because war has become everything for me The Viceroy traced into their cell, his eyes lit with pleasure. Remade in my image, he said. The vampire wasnt shocked the ritual had workedhe was brimming with pride. So how many had they created here? And this is just the beginning. Do you feel the Thirst? Its sacred to us, as death is. His gaze fell first on Kallen, then on Malkom. Only the one who killsor answers the Thirstwill ever leave this cell alive. Just as Malkom tensed to attack, the Viceroy disappeared. Once their situation sank in and hed found his voice, Malkom said, We will not fight each other. They both knew that when he said fight, he meant drink or kill. I will not fight my brother. But if anyone was freed, it should be Kallen. Hes all that is good. Nor I, Kallen vowed. We will not, Malkom repeated, wondering if he sought to convince Kallenor himself. Three weeks later... Malkom weakly stood before the bars, expending precious energy just to remain on his feet, yet unable to lie down as though defeated. Day after day had passed with no food, water, or dark gods help themblood. His thirst intensified hourly, his fangs throbbing until hed silently wept. Hed caught himself staring at Kallens neck, the skin there taunting him. At times, Malkom had flushed to find Kallens gaze on his own neck. Never had he hungered like this. Last night, Malkom had waited until Kallen fitfully dozed. Then hed sunk his aching fangs into his own arm, sucking, disgusted by how rich hed found the taste. How delicious, how blistering the pleasure... Endless days passed as their bodies withered but would not die. With no industry to be had, no battles to be fought, Malkom was beset by memories cloying in his mind. For someone who held survival paramount, hed begun to have doubts. How important was living? Living means more betrayal. His first betrayal had been dealt by his own mother. At six years of age, hed complained of hunger so acute hed

nearly blacked out. Shed railed that he was never satisfied, then sold him to a vampire who would feed him all he wanted if he was an obedient and affectionate boy. His second betrayal? That same vampire had cast him out at fourteen, deeming Malkom too old to stir his lusts. Back to the gutter, back to hunger. But against all odds, Malkom had grown increasingly strong, until hed finally been ready to exact revenge on the master.

Malkom had always been observant, and hed noted every protection guarding that vampires home. Hed found it easy to steal back inside, take out the guards, and murder the master whod tormented his youth and twisted him as a man. And itd felt so good, so glorious, to kill one of their kind, hed hunted another, and another. Soon, word of his deeds had reached Kallens ears. The prince had invited him to his stronghold, then spent months convincing Malkom to join their rebellion, even to lead it. Eventually Malkom had been acknowledged in the street, asked to dinner by Kallen, paid in riches and fine clothing merely for risking a life Malkom had cared naught about. For so long, shame had been his companion, but at last hed dragged himself from the gutter. Hed known his people didnt love him, but hed thought he was earning their respect each time he saved their miserable lives. Weeks ago when hed noticed a tension among them, hed chastised himself for reading too much into others reactions, telling himself he needed to listen to Kallen and stop expecting betrayal at every turn. No matter how many times I have been dealt it. And now what is going on in that head of yours, Malkom? Kallen asked from across the cell, his voice faint. Youve that dangerous look on your face. My thoughts are dark. As are mine. I fear we near the end. There is no end. Malkom faced him. Not until I decide it. A sad smile creased Kallens gaunt face. Fierce as ever. He rose unsteadily, then limped to stand before Malkom. For me, Ive decided this cannot go on. His eyes flickered black with emotion. So embrace me, my friend. He wrapped his arms around Malkom. His own arms hanging by his sides, Malkom peered up at the ceiling in confusion. Ive never been embraced like this before. Touching meant using. Was this giving instead? Am I too scarred to recognize it? Hesitantly, Malkom wrapped his arms around Kallen as well. Not so bad. When he felt Kallens lips against his neck, Malkom frowned. Kallen loved females, enjoyed a new demoness nightly. So what was this? You are merely ignorant in the ways of affection. Kallens lips parted. He was going to drink. With the realization, Malkom started to sweat, his eyes darting, the will to survive rising up. But if he was truly steadfast, hed sacrifice himself for the prince, for the good of the crown. How much had Kallen done for him? Hed taught him how to control his rage, to channel it. Hed given Malkom purpose. If not noble in blood, then in deed... But memories arose within him, sordid scenes with a vampire whod used him for years. The feedings in the dark... the way the masters skin would grow warm against his own... No, no! Do not do this thing, Kallen. Malkoms voice was hoarse. Do not betray our friendship. Dont betray me. I am sorry, he said, his tone defeated. I do not have a choice. Kallen is all that is good. Though Malkom had vowed he would never be bitten again, he somehow held himself still as the princes splayed fingers dug into his back, clutching him even closer. A final sacrifice for my friend? Can I control my will to live? Or would the princes brutal guard dog finally turn on him? When Malkoms jaw clenched, his every muscle tensing, Kallen rasped, Steady, Malkom. Then he plunged his fangs into Malkoms neck, giving a wretched groan of pleasure as he sucked. And the sound was so familiar, the shuddering of his body just like the masters. Kallens chilled skin began to warm against Malkoms. Betrayal. Rage erupted, and he roared with it. Cannot control this. Seizing Kallen by the shoulders, Malkom shoved him back. He looked down at the prince and knew that, for him, this was the end. Forgive me, brother.... But those who betray me do it only once. *Revue de presse* "Sizzling sex and high-stakes adventure are what's on tap in mega-talented Cole's sensational new paranormal release." --Romantic Times on NO REST FOR THE WICKED ". . . intense action, devilishly passionate sex and fascinating characters . . . hot stuff!"--Romantic Times on A HUNGER LIKE NO OTHER "Rich mythology, a fresh approach, and excellent writing make this unique vampire tale superb." --Fresh Fiction on A HUNGER LIKE NO OTHER