

HEADPATS AFTER DARK

A cozy yandere
romcom for men
who like crazy
vampire women

Dracula,
1. Get a job, please.
2. Stop getting
blood everywhere.
3. Don't ask for
headpats
& Rent a movie.



Monstrous Love: Slice-of-Life Fantasy Romance for Men

Virgil Knightley

Headpats After Dark

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Chapter 1

(Trevon)

Trevon Beaumont stood his ground, fearlessly locking his stare on the trio of menacing, floating medusa heads hurtling towards him. His eyes were sore and blurry, for the once dark and gloomy corridor had lit itself blindingly bright upon his arrival. A thousand gleaming torches burned white along the walls, casting a brilliant glow on the long, red carpet that stretched in front of him—that same carpet his flying adversaries cast shadows over as they made their attack. With adrenaline pumping through his veins, Trevon sprinted towards the threat, his eyes landing on the tall double doors at the far end of the hall, past myriad hazards. He was not afraid.

With a swift crack of his three-pronged whip, Angel's Tear, each tip representing a member of the holy Trinity, Trevon struck the first of the three flying heads. The impact shattered it into chunks of flesh and bone that transformed to stone mid-air. He deftly evaded the second head and executed an aerial barrel roll. At the end of that flourish, he pulled off a squatted landing atop a statue of an angel, his feet resting on its shoulders. Blood-soaked tears streamed blasphemously down its cheeks.

Trevon patted the stone carving's head with his free hand. "They're about to give you something to cry about, my lady," he laughed, a wry grin spreading across his winsome face. However, he had little time to revel in his own good humor as

the two remaining medusa heads unleashed streams of acidic bile in his direction.

Trevon leapt up and off the statue and pirouetted through the air as he uncorked a bottle of holy water with his teeth. He doused both of his enemies as he passed over them, watching as their bodies went ablaze with blue flames.

“That’s what happens when you skip Sunday mass, foul denizens of Hell!” he said, softly landing on the ground where he’d begun this battle. When he looked back at the statue, he found it a smoldering mess, having melted under their projectile vomit.

He made his way down the hallway, dodging a maze of giant cleaver-like blades that swayed haphazardly from chains suspended from the chandeliers overhead. Sure—it would have been trivial for him to ricochet off the wall, and following that, he could grab hold of those tempting chandeliers. From there it would be a simple matter to swing his way across, and oh, Trevon did enjoy a good chandelier swinging every now and then—but not today. He was nearing the end of this dreadful castle, and the people of Wallachia had suffered enough of the evil Countess Dracula’s antics for one generation.

Trevon had come far for this victory: defeating ghosts, goblins, and ghouls through ancient mausoleums, kitchens, underground passageways, grand halls, and more. He had suffered many trials and endured countless wounds for his troubles, but his mission was not over yet. If the monster

hunter had to claim a thousand more scars, he would. Countess Vladimira Tepes would be slain, no matter the cost. His father made sure he knew his family's name depended on it. Trevon had endured too much to let this opportunity go to waste.

“I’m coming for you, Red Maiden, Widow of Wallachia!” he bellowed at the top of his lungs as he darted through the perilous deathtrap. For a peasant or even an elite soldier, navigating Dracula’s magical castle would be impossible—indeed there were very few who could make it past the front doors. Trevon, however, was no mere man, no simple soldier. “I am Trevon Beaumont, Countess Dracula—your executioner, prized scion of the Beaumont Clan. Remember that name! I know you’re watching!”

(Dracula)



“That handsome overconfident bastard,” Dracula huffed. She studied the image projected in the standing mirror ahead of her. “Ugh! Beaumonts! I absolutely detest that insufferable family. Death! Death, are you present, honey?!”

“Yes, Countess,” a wispy yet deep voice replied. A skeletal figure half the size of the room slowly rose through the floor, wielding an impressive scythe in one hand. When it had fully appeared, it bowed.

“Death, my pet,” Dracula cooed, leaning on one hip as she regarded the giant specter, “could you go do that thing I love where you take all his equipment and blessings and send him back to the castle’s entrance? Perhaps buy mommy a bit more time?”

Death lowered his bony head ominously. “I already took that step,” it murmured, and Dracula thought that its expressionless skull somehow exuded shame. “I can’t do it twice in one run-through.”

“What?! That’s a rather arbitrary restriction. You’re the embodiment of Death! Can’t you bend the rules a bit?”

“Obviously I’m not *that* powerful or you couldn’t command me, Countess,” the spectral giant pointed out, opening his arms.

Dracula stroked her sharp chin and turned back to the mirror. At that moment, Trevon was facing down a gargantuan hydra she had hidden inside a fountain for the vampire hunter to find. The fountain was one of her favorite adornments in the castle—each sculpture circling it was a masterfully carved little angelic cherub, except upon closer inspection they had devil’s wings and faces full of mischief. Also, they were crying blood.

I may overuse the bloody tears thing a bit, she privately reflected. I’ll revisit some design principles once I make a meal out of this heroic himbo.

The evil countess watched with quickly shifting facial expressions as one of the hydra’s heads disintegrated the Beaumont’s left pauldron with acidic spit. Undismayed, the monster slayer ripped that shoulder-piece *and* his shirt off in a single motion, pectorals threatened to break free of the flimsy breastplate beneath, so muscular that it actually made Death jump in surprise.

“Jesus,” he exclaimed under his breath.

“Tsk tsk. We don’t use that name in here,” Dracula muttered irritably, clucking at her oversized minion. “But yes. That’s certainly—an...*interesting* figure that he has. Very interesting...worthy of...study, perhaps...” Dracula adjusted the collar of her blouse that climbed all the way up her neck. She turned away from Death just a bit and undid a few buttons surreptitiously. *Can’t have myself looking like a prissy slouch when my nemesis gets here*, she reflected with a solemn internal voice.

The irritatingly gorgeous Beaumont decapitated the hydra’s three heads not with a sword or ax but a spinning magical cross with sharp blades affixed to its inner vertices. Trevon threw it like a discus, taking off two heads at once, and then the other after the cross magically returned to him. For that final head, he even dared to do the deed up close.

“That stupid, sexy idiot,” she groaned, balling her hands into fists. She brushed a strand of hair from her face and undid another button for good measure. “How I hate that Beaumont!”

Death cast a sidelong gaze at her but said nothing.

“Countess Dracula, foul creature of Hell!”

“Oooh, he’s talking to me again!” Dracula squeaked excitedly, her eyes widening as she tapped her mirror to try and amplify the sound. She took another step toward the mirror, fixating on his flexing pectorals as he called her out. “Hey there, big man!” she said in an oddly saucy voice.

“You see how easily I felled this beast, Countess! No matter how nightmarish the denizens of Hell, the holy power granted to the Beaumont Clan will prevail!”

“Those abs will prevail,” she growled, biting her lip. “And that tush.”

“Countess?” Death questioned her softly.

“I said nothing!” she shouted behind her. “I—uhh—shit, he’s almost here!” she gasped as the mirror showed that Trevon was approaching the door. She adjusted her boobs and tightened her belt, making sure her butt had the ideal amount of lift. “Go go go! Get get!” She shooed Death away and untied her ponytail, letting her long, raven-black hair spill down her shoulders.

Death’s bony face somehow managed to arch a questioning brow, a crack appearing above the eye socket as it strained to do so. “Countess? Are you quite alright?”

“I—I will slay the Beaumont on my own,” she said. “I will face him down myself.”

“And if he defeats you?”

Dracula laughed boisterously. “Ha! Amusing jest—I am the Princess of Evil. I will not be bested in combat by some—” she stared at the arched doors that Trevon was presently punching a hole in, “—breedable hunk of man-flesh!”

“*What?* “

“Mortal! By some mortal!” she corrected, fanning her face, which was technically not supposed to blush easily since she

had no blood coursing through her veins—but it did.

Death took his leave from her in the nick of time, vanishing through the castle floor. Just then, Trevon's hand punched through the three inch thick oaken door, reaching in and gingerly unlocking it.

“Oo!” Dracula squealed, wiggling her hands giddily. “So strong!”

“Evil Countess!” the hero declared as he stomped showily into the chamber, not even taking in the impressive marble architecture she'd prepared for him, “Your end is coming!”

“*Something sure is,*” she murmured under her breath as she struck a regal pose. She chanced a quick look down at her chest to make sure she had undone enough buttons for the occasion. “Respectable cleavage,” she noted proudly. “Very nice.”

Trevon lunged at her. He was fast, but not as fast as Dracula, and that, she knew, could make all the difference. By the time he landed where she'd been, the Countess had already transformed into a bat and flown out of reach.

Trevon hurled his spinning bladed cross upwards, his accuracy truly impeccable. She only just dodged out of the way in time. “Die, monster!” he yelled with an excited grin coloring his voice. “You don't belong in this world!”

The Countess reappeared in her humanlike form, spider-climbing across the round stained-glass window that adorned the ceiling and down the walls before stopping just out of his

reach. “Your anger toward me is misplaced. It was not by my hand that I was once again made flesh and allowed to return to this world. I was brought here by those who wished to worship me, begging me for salvation against the corruption facing this land and your precious Church.”

“Mankind needs no savior such as you, witch of Hell!” Trevon said, catching his cross. He pulled a bottle of holy water off of his hip and twirled it by the bottleneck between his fingers menacingly.

“What is a man, Beaumont?” she cackled. “A miserable pile of—of—” Her voice trailed off as she caught a bit of torchlight reflecting off his six-pack. “Daddy,” she whimpered. A bead of moisture leaked from one corner of her lips.

“W-What was that?” Trevon said, dropping his offensive posture for a second. “I believe I—I misheard you.”

Dracula used that moment of mutual distraction as her opportunity, launching herself off the wall at full speed. She collided with Trevon, tackling him to the ground. Together, they tumbled for dozens of feet, leaving shattered statues and torch stands in their wake like they were made of glass.

The Countess brought her fangs down on Trevon’s neck, but he raised his gauntlet in time. Once she punctured it, a noxious odor punched her in the face, sending her recoiling and retching for several seconds.

The monster slayer rose to his feet, looking as irritatingly cocky as ever. “Garlic pockets are laced in my armor. Bite at your own risk, bloodsucking beast.”

“Duly noted,” the vampire queen hissed. “You will not surprise me again.”

The pair collided once more, each leaping toward the other with an attack ready. Dracula’s claws extended to monstrous lengths as bat wings extended from her back, and Trevon cracked his whip, landing a hit across her thigh.

“Nyah!” she moaned in a manner that neither she nor Trevon appeared to expect, both of them jumping back in surprise.

“I—uhh—” Trevon grunted awkwardly. “I...”

“Sorry,” Dracula murmured, mortified. She held out her hand and conjured a boulder of flame, rolling it in Trevon’s direction. He dodged out of the way, but she anticipated his movement and caught him off-balance and unprepared. Her eyes lit up with their signature red glow as she exploited his awkward stance. She lunged forward and slashed him along the chest, spraying his blood across her face.

Some landed right on her lips. She licked it off. *Damn, he tastes good!* she whimpered internally, grinding her thighs together as Trevon stumbled back and steadied himself.

Dracula wasted no time, despite her heated feelings. She pounced on Trevon and grabbed him by the throat, squeezing—but he did the same. With her offense so heavy, she’d left her defense compromised, and now it was a race to see who would die first.

“I don’t...need to...breathe!” she reminded the Beaumont.

“But...you need...your head!”

The Countess's eyes widened as she realized his plan. He was squeezing so hard that he intended to pop her head off! That dick!

She released her chokehold to slash the exposed part of his arms, drawing streams of blood, but he didn't even flinch. If she slashed his gauntlets, she'd just cause another explosion of garlic powder, which would only further complicate her side of the battle.

Out of ideas, she wriggled until she was able to knee him in the penis, and his eyes went wide from shock and pain at the sheer force levied upon his family artifacts. His grip faltered, and she seized that split second of weakness to free herself.

Even so, as she glided backward, Trevon instinctively reached for his whip and let it crack, striking her this time across the chest. She didn't bleed, nor did she have soft enough skin to break so easily—but he did manage to sting her with his blessed weapon and undo a few more buttons. Her breasts were practically out at that point.

Trevon blinked a few times as he struggled to his feet, his eyes taking in the sight of her half-exposed chest. If she twisted a bit too much, or went upside down, a boob would certainly pop out. *No one ever talks about the wardrobe malfunctions in these battles*, Dracula mused.

“Not bad for a mortal,” she shouted, trying to reclaim some dignity.

“Not bad for a soulless vampire who made a pact with the devil,” Trevon replied, showing little amusement—but some

respect. “Let’s agree no more shots to the groin, please?”

“No more trying to strip my clothes off, too,” she countered with a teasing smirk, gesturing at the overly generous valley of cleavage that now extended to her belly button.

The monster hunter blanched. “I—I assure you, that was unintentional.”

Her eyes raked over his body one more time. He was more godlike than actual statues of gods. From this distance, her unholy sight could make out every scar in his flesh, every pore on his skin. Each feature was snugly fit over a rugged canvas of muscle and power—indeed, it was almost enough for her to think about giving her relationship with the Holy Trinity one more try. After all, they produced this utter gift of a specimen.

“You’re drooling,” Trevon remarked.

Dracula wiped her chin. “No, you—you are!”

“No matter.” The vampire hunter cracked his whip against the castle tile. “It’s time to end this.”

“Yes. It is.” That was not the Countess. Nor was it Trevon. The towering figure of Death emerged through the floor slowly, revealing itself to the combatants. “Once...and for all.”

Death turned the blade of his scythe to face forward as he held it out in front of him, and a swirling purple vortex appeared at the point where his weapons touched.

“What is the meaning of this?!” Dracula shouted as a strong magical wind blew her raven-black hair violently. The gale

was so mighty she found herself planting her feet. “What are you doing?!”

“Taking a vacation,” Death bellowed. “I have been saving up on power for centuries to build to this moment—the last Beaumont, and the Undying Countess—gone in one instant.”

“What are you saying?!” Trevon shouted. He did a forward flip from a standing position that made the vampire queen cock her head to try and catch a better glimpse of his spinning form. He bore down on Death’s cheek with his whip, then tossed an entire bottle of holy water at the fiend. Both attacks dealt significant damage, but Death was not about to be interrupted.

“I’m tired of being your minion, Countess—and I loathe the Beaumont clan who have hunted my Reapers for eight generations. It seems to me that a perfect solution for both of my problems exists: Put simply, you two deserve each other.”

Dracula joined Trevon’s assault, but the vortex continued to expand. As the pair laid down blow after blow upon Death’s face and body, the strong wind emanating from the vortex became a sucking force. An *irresistible* sucking force.

Before Dracula knew it, both she and the monster hunter were pulled into the spinning portal, tumbling through it, passing into a seemingly endless tunnel that spanned on for what must have been hours. They watched ages pass by—the horse and carriage was replaced by the motorcar, the lantern replaced by the light bulb—even personal discipline and happiness were replaced by the smartphone.

The pair tumbled together, but were unaware of each other all the same, taking in the changes, absorbing centuries of knowledge and language—and then, their journey terminated. With a heavy thud, Trevon landed on the ground in the middle of an open road, and Dracula landed directly atop him, her rump seated on his chest.

He wasted no time in tossing her off of him, sending her skidding across the ground. This hard ground—pavement, she knew it was called. The word just appeared there, unbidden.

But it wasn't only she who shouted in pain. "Gahh!" Trevon growled as people started shouting at them. It was the middle of the night, perhaps eight o'clock in the evening, but they were out and about as though it were midday.

Dracula looked over at Trevon and realized he was cupping his cheek in the same place that she had just endured roadburn. *What does that mean? she fretted. It can't be!*

"Get out of the road, you fucking lunatics!" a man howled as he laid into the horn of his car. "We're trying to drive here!"

The Countess and the vampire hunter made eye contact with one another, standing in opposite lanes. "Well," Dracula began, inspecting herself for injuries, "it seems like we are in a certain situation."

Trevon reached for his whip, but nodded with a hard-to-read look on his face. "Indeed we are."

Chapter 2

(Trevon)

Though poised to fight, they ultimately sprinted away from the blaring automobile horns. Trevon Beaumont incidentally ran in a different direction than Dracula, each making tactical retreats. He needed some time to regain his bearings and comprehend what happened before he could resume the battle, as delirious and confused as he was. His adversary seemingly had the same idea, as she rushed away rather than fight in front of a throng of common humans.

His eyes darted around for anything worth investigation. He found, at once, that he could read the local script with ease, despite the typographical and linguistic changes that English had endured with the passage of time. First, he spotted a rather large department store on the other side of the road, off in the direction that his nemesis had headed in. To his understanding, the store was called W-Mart.

Then he spotted a gas station—a place where people filled their gas-powered automobiles with food and purchased items of convenience. Its name appeared to be the Pump N' Go. Its logo was bright orange, compared to the blue-on-yellow design on the W-Mart's sign. The design sensibilities of this era were strange to him, making him wince even as his mind correlated all the knowledge he'd need to navigate these places when the time came.

But for now? He focused his gaze on the nearest target of interest. *There!* he thought, as his head pointed in the direction of a place called ‘Weekend Motel’. Lodging, perhaps? Though he had no money, he did need to square away a place to recover—a base of operations.

His boots hit the pavement harder and harder with each step, but a growing discomfort made its presence known. It began with a simple tingle in his heart, which blossomed into a pain that felt like his veins were on fire and his skin was peeling off. He stopped once he discerned that the pain grew with each step. “Dammit,” he cursed. “What is the meaning of this?”

He paced back in the direction he came from and found that the pain subsided. When he caught sight of the Countess clutching her stomach in agony and walking back in his direction, the likely reason dawned on him.

“You again!” she shouted as her eyes locked on him, an unexpected look of amusement on her face. “Looks like we can’t escape this final battle, can we?”

“It seems not,” Beaumont agreed, raising his whip and grabbing a bottle of holy water from his utility belt. “Prepare yourself, fiend of Hell! The end is nigh!”

Dracula soared at him, mouth open and claws extended. Trevon raised his gauntlet defensively to his face, biting the cork off of his holy water in the process. When Dracula slammed her sinful body against him, pressing her half-exposed breasts into his bare chest, she pulled away in disgust

from the garlic laced armor, giving him the moment he needed to splash the water into her face.

“Ahhh!” she shrieked terribly, leaping off of him just as quickly as she’d tackled him. She covered her face with her hands as steam rose from it.

“Gaahhh!” he also bellowed in pain—an unexpected pain that had no clear impetus or origin—until he noticed the same steam rising off his own face. “What in the name of Heaven?”

Dracula hissed at him as she finally uncovered her face. She looked about the same, except one cheek was still a bit red. As strong as she was, the burning effect from Holy Water wasn’t nearly as powerful as it was on normal vampires, Trevon realized. “Wait—why is your face also burnt?” she asked, cocking her head in a way that Trevon had to admit was rather cute.

“I don’t know. I burned my—ahh! Hey!”

Before he could finish his sentence, Dracula cut her wrist open with her nail—and the same wound opened up on her adversary’s arm. “Whoa!”

Trevon scowled at his wrist, but it healed rapidly—apparently matching Dracula’s own recovery rate. “‘Whoa’ does not quite cover the spectrum of negative feelings I’m experiencing here,” he said. “We are bloodbonded.”

Dracula’s head tilted to one side. “Most powerful spells affecting multiple people at once have that effect—I didn’t

think a bloodbond could affect us, though. We're too strong for such a thing."

"When the spellcaster is Death itself, I suppose that raises the bar a bit," Trevon mused, getting to his feet again. "What do we know about bloodbonds? I must confess, my own understanding of the occult has some gaps. I only know what my father and brother could teach me before an alpha werewolf defeated them for good."

Dracula paused in thought. "I wish I was there for that. Hmm. As I recall, bloodbonds can change and fluctuate over time. As the bond grows stronger, for example, our shared sensations may be lessened. Or worsened. But your strengths will be mine, and mine will be yours to some degree. It's hard to say for sure. I've never had to endure such a condition before."

"Hmm," Trevon murmured in quiet reflection. He wrapped his whip around his arm, letting the three prongs dig in just to confirm that the pain link currently worked from both sides.

"Staaaahp!" Dracula protested like a bratty little sister, waving and blowing on her arm in the spot where three fresh gashes appeared. "Doon'tuh!"

"I was only verifying—"

"Well it's fucking verified!" she hissed. He thought he noticed her eyes lingering on his chest for a moment, but thought better of it when she continued. "Now what?"

Trevon Beaumont shrugged. He had no answers. “Apparently if I kill you, I die, and if you kill me, you die. We are subject to each other’s pain and injuries, and, to make matters even more complicated—”

“We can’t leave each other alone,” she groaned, though he thought he noticed a tiny smile slowly appearing on her face. “We need to be close or it starts to hurt.”

“It’ll probably kill us. The question is—am I willing to die in order to defeat you?”

Her eyes widened. “Beaumont. Hey. Beaumont? Don’t do it, mister. Don’t. Don’t even think about it.” She slowly approached him and raised her hands to calm the monster hunter. In the meantime, Trevon’s fingers flirted with the spare dagger on his hip.

In the end, though, he knew he couldn’t do it. His grip on the pommel relented and sank back to his side. “It is an unforgivable sin to take one’s own life in the eyes of the Church. I would be excommunicated and likely face damnation, ending my family line in shame. It isn’t worth it, even if doing so means ridding the world of you.”

Dracula let out a sigh of relief, but now she was only a few feet away from him. “Hmm,” she noted, hand resting on her collarbone. “Do you feel that, Beaumont?”

“Yes, I do. A vague comfort from maintaining close proximity to you. Rather disgusting that I should find myself in this situation with Satan’s bride.”

Dracula rolled her eyes. “Oh, please—I hardly know Satan. We’re barely on greeting card terms, let alone married.”

Trevon let the remark pass, not really knowing how to take it. His head turned back in the direction that he had previously been headed in. “There is an inn over yonder. We could attempt to barter with the innkeeper and gain access to lodging for the evening, protecting us from whatever foul beasts roam this land.”

Dracula’s eyes narrowed as she scanned the surroundings once again. “Very well, I will play along for now. But what exactly do you intend to barter with? We have no money.”

“That is another problem,” he agreed.

“No matter,” Dracula swished her small hand playfully as her cape and lustrous black hair got caught up in a sudden gust of wind. “I can find us a solution, I’m sure.”

“I will not permit you to kill anyone,” Trevon warned, his brows slanting.

Dracula placed a hand on his chest and grinned, showing her fangs. “Relax, Beaumont—I ate only hours before you arrived in my throne room. I could go a week without another meal if needed.”

“How often did you typically eat?” he asked her, confused by this revelation. Once a week? That didn’t seem compatible with the lore he knew.

“Well—at least one virgin woman every few days, typically. They taste the best. But to maintain my strength, once a week

is all it takes.”

He grabbed her wrist and pulled it from his chest when she started to play with his chest hair. “Excellent lore for future generations of Beaumonts to use against you. Thank you for sharing.”

“My pleasure,” she cooed. “You know—since we can’t kill each other, we might as well—”

“Be careful what you suggest,” Trevon blurted out immediately, fearing where that line of thought was headed. “My patience for your games is limited.”

“We should get to know each other,” she rolled her eyes and giggled. “You’re so stubborn. It’s too bad mesmerism doesn’t work on your family. Imagine the fun we could have if you were a bit more...agreeable.”

Trevon Beaumont cast away an image of himself commanded by the Vampire Queen to do unspeakable things—raze villages, lead armies of monsters against innocent peasants, perhaps even take out Church officials. But as he looked into her half-slitted eyes he got the creeping feeling that she entertained even more devious ideas.

(Dracula)

I want to sit on his face. That was the prevailing thought in the Countess's mind as she stared down her counterpart.

The vampire queen lingered behind the Beaumont, letting him lead the way to his proud discovery—the Weekend Motel. A rather plain name, she mused, though she'd seen plainer in her centuries of life. Her eyes darted around her surroundings, taking in the strange cityscape. Even with the knowledge that Death's portal imparted upon her, she still struggled to piece everything together.

“This appears to be some sort of...small town in a country that barely existed when you and I first did battle. America.” The word felt strange on her lips.

“You mean ten minutes ago?” he asked blithely, without looking back. With each heavy step, his shoulders swayed and his glutes flexed. Dracula didn't have a living heart, but she felt something inside her throb for sure.

“More like three centuries ago by my approximation. When we were in transit to this time, I was flooded with information about the changes the ages of men had endured. Technology, language, cultural advancements—things of that sort. Did the knowledge of the portal not come to you?” she asked as she eyed his figure intently. At this point, Vladimira was only pretending to care about his responses to each question. She wanted him. Badly. She *had* to possess him.

“I received the same education,” the slayer admitted, his hands finally relaxing as he hooked his whip back onto his hip. “And I learned that this age is complex, but not entirely alien. If we are to stay here, we will need money—that much is familiar. To get money, though, we will need things like bank accounts, which require government-recognized identification.”

“Trivial to deal with. I can use mesmerism to have the paperwork filled out for us with no questions. I don’t think I’ll show up in photographs, though.” Dracula frowned and tapped her chin.

“Since you don’t show up in mirrors?” Trevon asked.

She nodded—but realized quickly that, with his head facing forward, he couldn’t see her. “Yes. A minor inconvenience.”

Trevon seemed to groan as he came to a sudden stop. “This is...maddening.”

“What is?” Dracula asked, a curious smirk tugging at her lips.

“Being forced into this situation with *you*—my family’s archnemesis, the most vile villain of all time.”

She shrugged. “It is what it is. I’ve lived through a few centuries already. To me, we’ve merely skipped a few more. I will rebuild my castle with time and reestablish myself as I always do.”

“Over my dead body,” Trevon growled, finally looking back over his shoulder. But when his eyes landed on her, he caught

her grinning and seemed startled. “What’s with that face?”

“Nothing,” she cooed, hands on her cheeks. “You’re just cute.”

“I will not take a compliment from a demoness,” Trevon uttered as he subconsciously ran his fingers through his long brown hair.

Eventually they moseyed their way past the parking lot of the Weekend Motel and through the glass door where a busy middle-aged clerk minded the front desk. Her hair was naturally curly, and she smelled of smoke—though not from a strain that the Countess was personally familiar with. *This must be...tobacco?* she figured as she took in the smell with a big, unnecessary sniff. She’d never encountered the stuff much in her centuries of undeath until now.

Being forced to exist among normal people, she would have to accustom herself to constantly breathing—something she had faked before, but it was always a bit awkward to get oneself used to it again.

“Wow, look at you two,” the woman said, pointing at the pair of them as they walked in, indicating their attire—or in Trevon’s case, a lack thereof. She let out a laugh that punctuated her statement in a way that made Dracula’s brow arch in offense. “Let me guess—you two are in town for the Fresco Comic-Con?”

Trevon made a fist and gritted his teeth before speaking. “What say you?! And what do you know of that foul tome?”

“Huh?”

“The Necronomicon, madam! Did you not just speak its blasphemous name?”

Dracula put a hand on her partner’s shoulder, causing him to jerk in surprise at her cold touch. “Sorry, umm, ‘Charlotte’,” she said, reading the woman’s name tag. “My traveling companion is merely tired. We wish to negotiate lodging with you.”

“Why are you...talking like that?” Charlotte asked, plainly confused. “Your...travel companion? Is he not your boyfriend?”

“If you are asking whether she and I are here for some sort of tryst, the answer is an unwavering *no*, madam,” Trevon growled, scowling down at the Vampire Queen. “Indeed, she speaks true. All we yearn for is a place to rest our heads.”

“I mean. Okay, for a room with two beds, that’ll be seventy bucks a night.”

“One bed is fine,” Dracula said. “We don’t sleep on the same schedule. And you’re going to give it to us for free.” She leaned forward, palms on the desk as her eyes started to glow. She tried to ignore the Beaumont beside her as he plunged his face into his palm, as though her antics were personally humiliating.

“This is fiendish behavior,” he murmured.

“The best room you can spare, please,” Dracula chirped, happily ignoring her adversary.

The woman's eyes dilated and went wide, then narrowed sleepily. "Yes, Mistress. One room. As long as you like."

Beaumont placed a hand on Dracula's shoulder, making her legs tremble with surprise. "W-what?" she asked.

"If you're going to take advantage of this poor woman, at least inquire if there's a room that's no longer in use. I simply cannot bear the thought of interfering with her honest business."

Dracula rolled her red eyes dramatically, but licked her lips and set her gaze back on Charlotte. "You heard the man. A room that's out of commission but still livable. Do you perhaps have one like that?"

The woman, hazy-eyed, fumbled with a bunch of keys in a drawer in front of her, then pulled one set of keys out. "Room 13. Local ordinance changed, saying we couldn't have a thirteenth room anymore, so we've been using it as an extra storage space, but the beds and stuff are still in there. Wallpaper's peeling, the carpet has some stains, and the mattresses are on the ground because we moved the bedframes into another room. But it'll work. It's got a kitchenette with a fridge, microwave, stove, and sink, too. Some of that's in the closet."

"Strange ordinance," Dracula mused, scratching her slender neck with long, red nails.

Charlotte shrugged, but it was a heavy lift and fall of her shoulders, and a cloud of darkness seemed to cover her face as she spoke. "There was a slew of senseless murders in this

county a few years back: our very own serial killer. She would go into hotel and motel rooms numbered 13 and kill whoever was inside with a knife.”

Charlotte let her words hang for a moment as she looked at Dracula and Trevon. “Sounds grim,” Trevon murmured, his voice low and soft.

The woman nodded. “She’d paint the mirrors red and leave strange messages in some foreign language on them using the blood from her victims. I have no idea what the messages said or what language it was. I didn’t pay much attention to the details. Anyway,” she sighed, nodding at Dracula, “long story short, we all stopped using the number 13, and to curb the killings further, every hotel room and even most residential addresses ending in the number changed by law—just to be safe. Some said it was unconstitutional but...” Her voice faded away, and she sighed. “It was tough times. People just wanted her to go away.”

“Her?” Trevon asked. “This killer was a woman?”

Charlotte nodded, her eyes narrowing to the point where it seemed like she was squinting. She had a far off look as she regarded him with a slight frown. “Yeah. They called her the Red Lady. All witnesses said she wore a red dress and carried a carving knife into every killing. Pale skin, long reddish-brown hair that was done up in a ponytail that went down to her ass. The creepy thing is that there were rumors she didn’t show up on film or video.”

This didn't mean anything to Dracula at first as this era's technology was new to her, but it seemed familiar, like she'd absorbed some simple understanding through osmosis in the portal. "How did she get into the rooms?"

"She somehow ripped off the knobs and locks. No one saw how she did it. I may be remembering wrong, by the way. It was interesting as Hell when it happened but—Well, let's see. It's 2023 now, and so that was about...ten years ago, I guess. It's a bit fuzzy."

Dracula's eyes had an unreadable quality as Trevon turned to her. "Intriguing. Thank you very much for being so candid with us, my minion. Room 13, it is." She snatched the keyring, instantly snapped it in half, and handed the extra key to the big sexy man glowering at her. "Keep looking at me like that—you'll just make me want to bite you even more."

Trevon projected a scornful glare her way in response. "Foul creature." He turned his attention to Charlotte and nodded politely, opening his hands. "Praytell, if I were wishing to acquire employment, where might I look? Are you hiring?"

"I could use a spare hand watching the desk during the midnight shifts on the weekends, but that's about it. Just across the street, though, there's a gas station. They're hiring, I think."

Trevon nodded. "Good to know. Thank you, Madam, for all your generosity."

She winked at him. "Hey, big fella, happy to help a strapping young man like yourself."

And that...triggered something. Dracula felt her brow twitch, and a fire ignite inside her guts. Her whole body quivered with silent fury as her claws subconsciously extended from beneath her fingernails. "You look tired, Beaumont. Why don't you get to the room first?" she suggested, trying not to let her voice shake. "I'll ask her a bit more about the surrounding area and opportunities. I think I might be a fit for that weekend desk job."

Trevon eyed her suspiciously. "You know what I want to say," he muttered with a slight growl ending the statement.

"I won't eat her," Dracula promised. "Yet."

"Pardon?" Charlotte asked, clutching the collar of her uniform polo. "You won't what?"

Trevon left, and when Dracula was satisfied that he was far enough away, turned her gaze back to Charlotte. The woman had grown visibly uncomfortable waiting for the silence to end, perhaps starting to sense the degree of control she was under, or maybe just understanding that she should be afraid.

"I will speak as plainly and colloquially as I can manage, you vile hag," Dracula hissed, seizing the inn clerk by her throat. Charlotte grabbed her hands and tried to peel them off, eyes bulging with surprise and fear as she choked in Dracula's clutches. Her strength wasn't nearly enough. "If I ever, ever, see you attempting to charm, flirt, bewitch, or enchant that man ever again, I will do to you what I did to thousands of my enemies in ages long past. Impale you on a post in front of this very motel, letting the crows have their fill as you beg for

death to take you. That slayer belongs to *me* and me alone. Am I understood?"

"Yes, Mistress!" Charlotte managed to choke out, her face as red as the blood that coursed through her veins. "Yes! I understand!"

Dracula dropped her, watching with satisfaction as the woman gasped and wheezed, struggling to reclaim full use of her lungs. "Excellent. Now—is there a breakfast buffet for my future toy, or will we have to make our own arrangements?"

"I—uh—I can stock the mini fridge with milk and cereal."

Dracula frowned. "That man needs to eat roughly a full-grown cow each day to maintain those glorious muscles."

"I'll...see what I can do, Mistress?"

Dracula smiled, showing her fangs, causing the older woman on the other side of the desk to let out a brief shriek of surprise. "Excellent. In the meantime, there's one more thing I need your help with."

Charlotte gulped. "Y-yes, Mistress. Whatever you need."

"Tell me about that weekend job."

Chapter 3

(Trevon)

This first night was sure to be pure agony. Not the physical kind, but the kind that wounded his spirit. Being forced to share a room with Dracula, the Blood Princess herself, was downright disturbing and a fresh sort of Hell he'd never imagined for himself.

Being with her, he recalled his father and the mission that he'd been told might one day be his. Trevon's thoughts drifted back to his younger days under his father's strict guidance.

"Your left arm lacks strength, Trevon." The voice of his father still rang in his head, along with a dozen inadequacies that he often listed. Then finally, "One day, perhaps you or your brother will have to face Vladimira Tepes like your grandfather before us. Do you think you're ready?"

"I'm sorry, father," he had said, blood and sweat dripping liberally onto the ground. "I will improve, I swear. I will awaken my blessing soon, I promise!"

His father sighed, and Trevon knew then what awaited him. "Yes, you will. Rickdar, come here."

Trevon hated this part of the memory. He watched in his mind's eye as his brother uncrossed his arms and made his way over, his posture casual and unburdened with any guilt about what they both knew he was going to have to do.

Trevon's eyes watered, tears streaking down his cheeks as he protested. "No, father! Please! Not the cross again!"

"The price of resurrection was crucifixion for our Lord, and so shall it be for you. Rickdar, tie him to the cross in the courtyard and leave him for the night. He can come down in three days—or when he finds the strength to pull himself down. Whichever comes first."

He had hated his father for that—for about two days, anyway, until the breakthrough in his power came to him like a bolt of lightning. Just as his father knew he would, he tapped into the Beaumont Blessing, and a new, fresh potency ripped through him. He tugged at the bindings, shredding the rope that had held him in place as the crows and vultures that had been patiently watching him retreated.

Since then, his father and he saw eye to eye on all matters related to his training. Even his brother seemed to treat him with more respect. But when it came to his childhood? That memory which caused him to mourn? It was the day that the ten-year-old boy became a warrior. It was the day that his world changed forever.

Being a Beaumont, Trevon was part of a family chosen and cultivated over the centuries by the Catholic Church to fight against monsters. This was a substantial responsibility. From the time he was ten, he was thrown into a world of monster-hunting, slaying his first hundred demons of the night by the age of eleven. Instead of a normal childhood apprenticing some humble artisanal trade, he had been groomed as the

perfect killer, with a body blessed, enchanted, and sculpted to perfection.

His father taught him to use his handcrafted whip, the Angel's Tear, on a gloomy night like this one. The whip had three heads dangling from separate chains, each standing for a member of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—the one ghost Trevon's family would never send to Hell. The Pope himself had blessed the whip, making it sacred, a firebrand to the fiends they were sworn to vanquish. Each swing was like a prayer for divine protection.

Now, being stuck with Dracula, his past lessons seemed to be twisted in some cruel way. But he stayed firm, gripping the Angel's Tear tightly at his belt. This weapon was a symbol of his purpose and a reminder of all the sacrifices he made, including his own happiness.

His new mission was not to slay a monster, but to partner with one. The notion was as disturbing as it was cruel—a trick of the Trinity casting them in a light that seemed more akin to Loki of Norse legend than the benevolent God of the Church. Had his God forsaken him? He certainly didn't feel His presence. Though perhaps that was another dark side effect of coexisting with the Vampire Queen, the Impaler herself.

She looked like a god in her own right. Her pale form was almost luminescent; comical in its feminine perfection. He scolded himself for the thought, but it was impossible not to appreciate her beauty the longer he was forced to spend time in her presence.

Amusingly, she seemed almost human in certain ways. She chewed her lip when she was thinking, rubbed her hands together when she was nervous, and even kicked the ground when she was upset. She let out little sounds like “Hmmp!” and stared at him with big, genuine grins that were difficult not to be charmed by.

It was likely all a well-crafted ruse. A soulless bitch of Hell like her could not be this adorable. He would bet his life on it. She could not have genuine, likable traits. Beneath that mask of womanly perfection was the face of the Devil, gnashing its teeth as flames spurted and spewed from its facial orifices. She was a monster, not a maiden, and he would do well to remember as much.

But it was oh, so hard to remember sometimes.

The Countess stripped her clothes with little pomp and circumstance the second she joined him in the room. “What are you doing?” he questioned, averting his gaze—but that was needlessly generous. This demon had no modesty, nor did she deserve privacy from his scrutinizing eyes. After a second, he turned back to face her, finding her naked and rifling through the closet.

“Oh, look! There are old bath robes and a few appliances in here.”

Trevon let out a noncommittal grunt as he watched her. The Countess’s long black hair hung down her back, stopping somewhere between her shoulder blades. It looked smooth and clean, completely devoid of the grease of sweat that mere

mortals suffered through each day. Beneath that, he made out two dimples above her round and shapely rump.

Her skin was like polished porcelain, so smooth and utterly flawless that he almost went breathless as his eyes roamed the length of her figure. It was the stuff of every man's dreams—a vision of feminine elegance in the extreme. If a poet saw this scene, he would spend the rest of his life doing nothing but reliving it through verse. If a painter held her lithe and supple form in his gaze, he would spend years trying and failing to capture its magnificence.

Even Trevon Beaumont had to admit that the Countess was beautiful. Her beauty was one pillar of her evil wiles, arguably one of the most valuable weapons in her war chest. It was but a portion of the package that made her such a devastating weapon, but it was a lethal one nonetheless. Without even resorting to her ungodly powers, she could seduce the holiest of paragons with just a crooked smile. With a mere wink, even Trevon feared his heart might flutter. He was only a mortal after all, his blood as red as any man's.

“I can feel you staring, Beaumont,” the vampire teased. She adjusted her posture, shifting her weight onto one hip. Trevon helplessly followed the movement of her buttocks before shaking its effect off.

“Of course I stare. You are my enemy. I am not yet secure in the idea of sharing a living space with the Widow of Wallachia.” He walked to the bathroom, leaving her sifting through the closet curiously, but she turned her head. He felt

her peripheral vision, those red eyes half-gazing at him the whole way. “I doubt I will ever grow used to it.”

She chuckled musically at that. “I wonder,” she teased. “Maybe we’ll be surprised with what we can get used to.”

“I think not,” he replied, staring at the sink. “Let me see...” His hand fumbled with the valve, turning it, and like a miracle, water spouted from the faucet. It was clear and clean—some of the purest water he’d seen in months. “Incredible! Just as I saw in the portal.”

“Running water indoors?” Dracula commented as she posed saucily while pulling something from the closet. It was a bathrobe, provided by the inn, that apparently was never withdrawn from the room when it went out of commission. “What horrors will they think of next?”

Trevon laughed. “I always found it amusing that such a mundane thing as running water can be fatal to a vampire.”

Dracula apparently did not find it amusing, as she ground her bare foot into the carpet and made an irritated sound before regaining her haughty tone. “Nothing is fatal to *me*,” she corrected as she tried the robe on. Trevon watched out of the corner of his eye, nodding at the snug fit. “Decapitation, a stake through the heart—Hell, even going for a swim during the day in a river of running holy water filled with garlic—it would only put me out for a century at most. And then I’d be back to make meals of your—” Her lip twitched, like the word she was about to say died in her mouth with a bitter taste.

“Meals of my what?” Trevon inclined his head as he turned around and faced her. She had also turned. Her eyes, glowing red, seemed to pierce him like a spike. “My descendants? My children? Is that what you were going to say?”

“Hmmp!” She punctuated that with a whine—a surprisingly feminine sound—and spun back around. “You will not *have* any descendants.”

“Because you will kill me, is that it?” he asked, chuckling. “What if I slay you first, fiend of damnation?”

“No, I—” Dracula stopped herself. She let out a sigh and flipped her hair back, peeking at him over her shoulder. “Enough of this meaningless banter. You will never take a human woman for your wife. Nor will one ever bear you children. I swear it.”

“Oh, so the Beaumont line ends with me, then? Is that what you’re saying? Ha! I had a cousin in Brussels. With any luck, he’ll have persisted once we vanished. Maybe, to this day, Beaumonts are slaying creatures of the night such as yourself.”

“That’s—that’s not what I meant,” she said, her bottom lip jutting out. “You—you—”

Trevon held his hand up, a look of disgust making his bronzed face pallid. “Cease your nonsense. I will not entertain your threats any longer.”

She nodded slowly, as though in apology, which startled him as he lay back on the bed. It was creaky, but comfortable

compared to the fare he was used to. This world had indeed come far in many ways.

“I spoke with the innkeeper madam,” Dracula went on after a pause between them. “She agreed to give me the job starting this weekend, off the books. That way, I won’t need to worry about the fact that I can’t get an ID card. But I can still help you get yours!” she quickly added, whipping her head to face him.

“So you’ll watch the front desk on weekends for some money,” Trevon muttered, fists balling at the immoral nature of this arrangement, “and we’re staying here for free. That should cut down our costs for now, at least. All we need is enough for food. In the meantime, we save up what we can and—and—”

“And *what?*” Dracula giggled, tilting her head playfully as she licked her lips. “What’s the master plan, monster slayer?”

Trevon’s lips tugged downward, frowning. “I suppose we look for ways to return to your castle to finish our battle.”

Dracula rolled her eyes. “That ship has sailed. As a master of magic, I assure you, there is *no* way back. My castle must have vanished when I did, and there’s no way to return to our era. We are stuck here—going forward in time is one thing, but back?”

Trevon glowered and drooped his shoulders as the words rang true. His father once said the same in his occult lessons.

Dracula held up a hand to quell his worry. “However, I do believe that the effect tying our fates together can be dispelled in time. We could banish it sooner rather than later if I can amass a collection of tools and ingredients.”

“What *kind* of tools and ingredients?” Trevon murmured suspiciously, his brows turned inward and stern. He tried not to show weakness in front of her, though his head reeled at the revelation of being cut off from his previous life forever. He leaned back against the cheap headboard, his arms folded behind his neck. “And to what end would you perform your magic?”

Dracula narrowed her gaze at him, then flashed the whites of her eyes as she rolled them back. “Your suspicion is noted, slayer. Various herbs, eye of newt, wing of bat—that sort of thing to start. A cauldron would be nice, as well as a crystal ball. A mortar and pestle, some incense—I’ll have to make a list.”

“I didn’t realize the so-called Bride of Satan was little more than a common witch.”

“Oh, I assure you, Beaumont, Darling, there’s nothing common about me.” With that, she spun and opened up her bathrobe, granting him a brief but eye-popping view before closing it again. She erupted into a fit of giggles, even going so far as to cover her mouth with her elbow and snort.

Trevon’s eyes—and something else—bulged in spite of himself. *Dammit*, he lamented in his head, *why does she have to be this cute?* He felt his cheeks burn from the sight he’d just

been blessed with, and even worse, he knew she could hear his quickened heartbeat if she tried to. The Countess eyed him in the mirror like a cat holding a rat by the tail.

She swished her hand after she finished securing her hair into a ponytail using only her hair itself. “With access to my magic, I could achieve a lot, for your information,” she said, though she sounded a bit quieter all of a sudden. “If we manage to acquire a place contractually licensed to us by deed or rental agreement, I could remake it in my image much like the castle you fought your way through to find me. And, with some time, I believe I could cancel the effect binding us together.”

“How much time?” Trevon asked as he arched a curious, manly brow at her.

She shrugged. “It’s hard to say. Perhaps—one year?”

He frowned. “Longer than I’d like, but certainly beats an eternity of this Hell.”

“Right,” Dracula said, sulking slightly.

(Dracula)

She could do it in a day. She could do it with a simple fire pit and a pinch of herbs. In fact, she literally just needed sage and a live mouse and that would be it. She could make it happen within a few hours if she wanted.

No fucking way, Dracula thought. She hadn't felt this way in centuries—since...

She was mentally transported back countless centuries to what had previously been the darkest night of her life. The only other mortal she'd ever dared to love died in her arms. Elisabeth Kostova—her precious, beautiful wife and her greatest friend. So much potential, gone before it had a chance to blossom.

Vladimira had arrived on the scene after inspecting her armies, returning to her bedchambers on the night of her wedding only to find an assassin sent by the Church leaping out the window.

Elisabeth, her first love, her first wife, was executed for the sin of loving her. They hadn't even been able to consummate their vows before her bride was taken from her. The Countess had long since accepted that she would never feel that kind of passion again. But she was wrong. Trevon brought new feelings out of her, stronger than ever before. Even before the bloodbond took root, she felt it. She could admit that to herself now—she already adored him then. There was a lust here that

she'd never known, that had seeped its way into her very core since the moment this man penetrated her castle—and it had swollen to profane degrees since their arrival in this time and place.

“My long, lost Elisabeth,” she muttered sadly. “I ask your blessing to pursue this one chance at reclaiming what you and I very nearly had.”

She would not let him go that easily. A month. That's all she needed. One month to seduce him. One month to make him hers. He would succumb—he was just a mortal, even if his blessed bloodline made him hard to dominate. No matter—it would make their ultimate union all the sweeter.

Vladimira Tepes sighed suspiciously loudly as she fantasized about kissing his neck and letting her fangs rake down the side of it. Imagining his hard, scarred hands gripping her by the waist, lifting her up only to slam his body against hers as she rode him like the mustang he was—she shuddered at the thought of it. The Countess felt her insides grow warm and slick, her skin go from cool to hot as her lust built at the thought. She was blushing again. He could probably see.

For centuries, Dracula ravaged the world, flooding the hills and valleys with the blood of peasants and nobles alike. She got her revenge as often and as violently as she could, committing sin after sin in the name of her long lost love. Her Castle—the symbol of her ultimate defiance in the face of the false God of the farcical Church—was the pinnacle of her

achievements. From there, she was master and commander of a legion of monsters who tore the world asunder on her behalf.

All in Elisabeth's name. But—what if she moved on at last? What if, as her lover's last words wished, she found someone else? Would her vengeance be...necessary any longer?

Dracula shook her head, casting out the thought. She covered her cheeks in shame—afraid to let the monster slayer see her blush. There was no blood in her veins, but somehow, she could blush. It was an odd quirk of hers that came up from time to time, and since she met this man, it seemed bound to come up more often than ever before.

“Why are you holding your hands over your cheeks?” the Beaumont asked, cocking a brow at her as he lazily pressed his head against the pillow of his bed. Their bed.

She shook her head yet again, taking a big, technically unnecessary breath and returned her palms to her sides. “I—I need a coffin.”

“So you cover your cheeks?” he asked.

“No, you fool,” she muttered, turning to face him again. “We have necessities, each of us. Hygiene. Sustenance. Clothing. Shelter is taken care of for the moment, so we should shift our focus onto more prudent matters. During the day, I can't go out. And these shutters aren't dark enough for me to rest on the bed safely. I need a coffin. I sleep best in them.”

He nodded and stroked the shadow of stubble that started to appear on his face. “We need money before we can buy a

coffin.”

Dracula crossed her arms. “We will steal one, then. I need it by morning. And we need some clothes.” She gestured at her bathrobe with a smirk. To her dismay, the oaf in front of her already seemed to cast aside the memory of her nudity, as he didn’t react except to slightly nod in thought.

“I prefer not to steal,” he remarked after a moment. “Could you ask for an advance from the woman you enchanted? Charlotte?”

Dracula’s eyes slitted, and her claws came out on their own. “Say that name again. Say it.”

“Hmm? Charlotte?”

“I don’t like the way you say it,” she growled. “Do you find her attractive?”

“What are you talking about?” he muttered in plain confusion. “Have you gone mad, woman?”

She twitched, and her fangs shot out. “Maybe,” she admitted. “I don’t want you to talk to her again. It’s important. Just to make sure you—you—” she paused—then forced herself to calm down, searching for an excuse. Her eyes lit up as she thought of something. “If you approach her and speak too candidly, you may compromise my spell over her. That’s all.”

The monster slayer’s hand gripped the whip on his hip, but he nodded slowly. “Very well. I have no particular interest in talking to her.”

The Countess let out a sigh of relief, her claws and fangs receding. “Good.”

“Are you—alright to go out tonight?” he asked.

She smiled, grinning impishly. “Never better,” she cooed. “Let’s run some errands, *Darling*.”

“Don’t call me that.”

“I shall, and you can’t stop me.”

Chapter 4

(Trevon)

The vampire hunter cast the door to the motel room open and stared out into the night. As small a city as this was, and as low to the ground as the buildings were compared to those he'd seen in the portal, light was still everywhere. Street lamps cast their incandescent yellow glow onto the cracked, gray roads, while vapors of humidity swirled through the air, scarcely visible under the light. Automobiles pattered sleepily through those streets, creating a low, persistent hum that was audible even from inside the room.

“This world is strange and unfamiliar,” he muttered. “Too much is different.”

“Poor, old-fashioned little Beaumont,” Dracula teased, grabbing his hand and raising it to her cheek. “So resistant to change.”

He yanked his hand away as it touched her cool skin, making her growl. “My connection to you is the most intolerable change of all,” he said. “I cannot wait to burn you to ashes and piss on them.”

“In this day and age, I gather they call the latter part a golden shower. I'm not into it, personally, but if it's something you'd like to try, Darling—”

“Cease calling me that at once,” he muttered.

“Oh, I think I shan’t,” Dracula giggled noisily. “I rather enjoy watching you glow and gleam with fluster.”

Ignoring her, he stepped outdoors, letting the outside world’s less stagnant air slap him in the face like a cold burst of water. He cast a look back at the drab motel room—abandoned as it had been, it possessed a stink he only noticed once he’d been removed from it. “Another thing to consider—cleaning that room.”

“I’ll have my devoted minion do it while we’re out,” Dracula said. “Wait for me, darling.”

Trevon scowled as she walked away, but his expression changed to one of pursed lips and scrutinizing eyes when he caught a glimpse of her swaying hips. “Should I go with you?”

She turned back around and pointed at him. “You should not! Nor should you ever speak to—to another—” Her voice trailed off. “Never mind.”

She disappeared into the door leading to the Weekend Inn’s lobby, and Trevon found himself standing awkwardly waiting for her to reappear. As he waited, his eyes darted around. There was the gas station—the Pump N’ Go, just across this narrow stretch of road, less than fifty paces from where he stood. It was a safe distance from the motel. It would not pose any danger to him nor his abominable partner if one remained in the motel and one ventured there alone.

He almost retched at the treacherous thought that named Countess Dracula his partner.

“Whoa, man, nice outfit!” some young passerby called out with his arm around a scantily clad wench. “What is that? A Halloween costume? Are you wearing a muscle suit?”

Trevon turned his attention to the young lad. He was roughly his height, so fairly tall—six feet and four inches, as the people of this time and place would say. But Trevon was slightly taller, and twice as wide due to his impressive bulk. The lad’s hair was reddish in hue, but it seemed an unnatural color.

The young woman was certainly pretty—too pretty for the noisy man she was with, he dared estimate. She had dark, curly hair, and perhaps an overabundance of makeup. Still, she had a pleasant shape to her figure and a sharp jawline that he found attractive. She was dressed all in black— a mini skirt and a strapless top that showed off an indecent portion of her flesh.

“I wear no costume for purposes of vanity, my lad,” Trevon laughed. “Mayhap you can tell me where I can square away some apparel such as yours?”

The red-haired boy cocked his head and traded bemused looks with his woman. “Bro. Did you just say ‘mayhap’?”

“I apologize if my manner of speaking is antiquarian. I have only arrived here a short time ago—please, young man, what is the name of this settlement?”

“Uhh. Wapa Lake, Wisconsin, man, just next to Fresco City. I’m Jack, by the way, and this is my girlfriend, Carol. Are... you okay? You hit your head or something?”

Trevon couldn't help but smirk at the question. "Many times on my way to defeat my adversary. Ah! There is the foul creature of whom I speak now." He gestured quickly as Dracula emerged from the inn's lobby, jumping and waving excitedly at him with a big grin.

"Hello, Darling! Did you make some new human friends?! Oh, how cute!"

"Ignore her," Trevon grunted, getting sniggers from the young couple in front of him.

"Trevon, introduce me already," the vampiress cooed as she sauntered up to join them. "Who are these people?" Her grin faded the second she made eye contact with the dark-haired woman, then seemed to notice the plunging neckline of her tank top—which only irritated her further.

"Vladimira, Bitch of Perdition, meet Jack and his lover, Carol. They are citizens of this humble settlement—I have discovered its name. It is known as Wapa Lake."

"Wa...Pa Lake," Dracula tried it out. "Pleasure to meet you two," she said, then squinted at the woman, "unless it isn't."

"Are you two...foreign?" Jack asked, chuckling. "Your accents are wild, man."

The woman, Carol, giggled, causing her cleavage to jiggle enticingly. Trevon took notice out of his peripheral vision, but was not boorish enough to stare. The clothing of this time and place were not modest in the least—a shocking amount of the wench's legs were exposed as well. He wondered idly how

anything got done when beauties walked around in such scant attire, though he realized it was likely his own personal hangup.

“We are indeed not from this place,” Trevon said, maintaining eye contact at all costs. He jerked away out of instinct when Dracula’s arm looped around his bicep, but when she refused to let go, he just...let it happen.

“And they’re, like, the hottest couple I’ve ever seen—both dressed up crazily, too.” That was the woman.

Trevon winced as they referred to him and the Vampire Queen as a couple. “Though it may seem confusing, we are no couple. And I’m afraid we must cut this short, but I wanted to ask—”

“What did you just say, woman?” Dracula hissed, her face flickering with intensity that she failed to mask with a smile.

The woman noticed. “I—I just said you were a hot couple.”

“As in—you find him attractive?”

“Well, I mean, duh—who wouldn’t?” the young woman laughed. “He’s about as hot as—”

Dracula’s hand extended so quickly that Trevon barely had time to stop her, catching her wrist just as a sharp nail nearly pierced the woman’s throat. “What are you doing?! We just arrived here, you madwoman!”

The Countess pouted at him with big, misty eyes. “I don’t like her, Trevvy. Can I eat this one?”

“No. And don’t call me Trevvy. What a deplorable nickname.”

“W-what?” Carol squeaked. “Eat me? Sexually or—?”

Trevon made eye contact with Jack. “I mean, I’m pretty flexible—” the young man started.

“No one is eating anyone, sexually or otherwise,” Trevon grunted. “I just wanted to ask—”

Dracula groaned and cut him off. “Darling please, they know we’re suspicious. They’ll report us to the local authorities and make all kinds of trouble. We *have* to kill them now—starting with her.” She glared at the other woman, who let out a scream.

Trevon found himself covering the woman’s mouth and weakly headlocking her to keep her from ripping herself away from him, but that only made her scream louder. “There’s no need to make a scene. No one is going to hurt anyone!” Seeing Trevon subdue his mate, the one called Jack honorably started pounding fists into Trevon in alarm, shouting the whole time, but it was more like the soft pitter-patter of rain than the blows of a worthy foe. When Jack tired himself out, Dracula grabbed him by the nape and tossed him several feet back, sending him rolling along the pavement.

“No more violence!” Trevon shouted at last. “No one is killing *or reporting* anyone, right?” he looked at the scared woman in front of him. When she nodded, tears streaming down her cheeks, Trevon freed her and turned to Dracula, repeating the word. “*Right?*”

Dracula sighed. “Very well. Listen close, you two, look me in the eyes.” Trevon sighed as he watched Dracula perform her admittedly necessary work. “The two of you will walk away now and forget about this encounter. Also, woman, you do not find my Darling attractive, nor will you ever again. In fact, you can’t even see him. He doesn’t exist. You are undyingly loving and loyal to your own man. Stay far, far away from mine.”

Trevon rolled his eyes at this behavior, but he was more confused than annoyed. The Dracula of legend was turning out to be something of a disappointment. Did she truly think she could get him to believe she harbored affection for him? Was possessive of him? If she was possessive, he mused, it was only because allowing him to have a life outside her put him beyond her control.

“Yes, Mistress,” Jack and Carol muttered together, answering the Blood Princess’s command, their pupils dilated. Moments later, they stumbled away, and Trevon let out a weary sigh.

“What the Hell is wrong with you? Why are you pulling a stunt like that?! If I didn’t know better, I’d say you acted like an obsessive bride. I’m not fooled by these—”

“What’s wrong with *me*?!” she gasped, her hand clutching her breast. “What’s wrong with *you*, acting like a fat-cocked gigolo in front of every woman we meet?! Honestly, how are we supposed to get *anything* accomplished if you keep trying

to whore yourself out to each and every creature with a pussy we come across?!”

To this, he was silenced. The madness she just vomited was so nonsensical, so baseless, that he simply had no words. But he found some anyway, after a slack-jawed pause: “You are insane,” he said, furrowing his brow in a mix of anger and confusion.

Dracula crossed her arms and spun, facing her back to him. “Humph!” she protested.

“Don’t ‘humph’ me, you witch of twilight,” Trevon murmured. “You are the one acting without reason.”

She spun back around to face him, her scowl irritatingly adorable. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, Beaumont. I’m acting *very* reasonably. I’m trying to keep focused on our objective while you waste the night away, galavanting your superior figure in front of any and every woman you can! Well, the crier has news for you, Trevon! I won’t tolerate it! We have to get me a coffin, and we need to—to—” She gestured broadly at his exposed chest. “We are going to cover every inch of you up until I’m satisfied.”

“You are demented,” he said. “If I could punch you without harming myself I would.” He paused in thought. “Actually, it may very well be worth the pain.”

She grinned, her expression resetting into her default mischief. “I knew it wouldn’t be long before you started fantasizing about getting your hands all over me once more, you horny beast.”

“That is...a gross mischaracterization of my comment,” he murmured, gesturing at the gas station. “I have gathered that people find my lack of attire unsettling. I can’t blame them—it would be similarly upsetting to walk shirtless into a place of business in our time, so I agree with you, for what it’s worth. Finding some clothes will help avoid unneeded attention.”

“In *your* time,” she corrected him, wagging her finger. “I am a creature who is at home in all eras. But yes—let’s get you some clothes.”

“Now—with what money?” Trevon asked. “That’s the problem.”

“Charlotte gave me some money out of her safe—oh, don’t worry, I won’t let her business fail. That would draw attention to us or, at the very least, force us to relocate,” she said when she noticed Trevon’s unamused face. “I told her to treat it as an advance toward my upcoming weekend shifts, like you proposed. Good thinking, by the way, Darling.” She licked her lips and smiled at him again.

“Hmm. Very well. Do not mistreat that poor woman.”

Dracula’s brow twitched, and her claws came out. “Why are you so obsessed with me treating her well, exactly?”

“I am sympathetic to commoners,” Trevon replied, his shoulders bouncing and voice nearly exasperated. “She is an innocent victim that you needlessly pulled into our troubles. If I could spare her of ever coming across us, I would—but now she’s involved, at least while we stay in this motel. I hope that

we leave her and others like her better than we found them when all is said and done. That is all.”

Dracula’s claws slowly receded and she nodded her understanding. “Very well. I will make sure not to abuse her—so long as you keep your distance.”

“I already said I would.” Trevon eyed her crossly. “Honestly, Fiend, what is with this disturbing pattern of clingy behavior?”

Dracula grinned at him with the eyes of a predator. “Maybe I consider myself lucky—magically bound to a strapping warrior in another time, far from any other responsibilities or distractions. It sounds like the premise to an epic love story. Perhaps an unlikely romance will bloom between us, Darling—what do you think?”

“I’d sooner gouge out my own eyes and eat my tongue than couple with the likes of you,” he spat.

“Oh, really?” she teased. “ I doubt you find me half as revolting as you say you do. I saw the look on your face and heard the thudding of your heart when I gave you a peek of my...assets.”

Trevon decided it was high time to change the subject. “Which way is the nearest place where we can buy new clothing, anyway?”

Dracula gestured to the east, behind the motel. “Just over there, there’s a large structure called a department store. This one is an establishment called W-Mart, wherein we can buy all

manner of goods, from clothing, to tools, to food and drink. That is our destination.”

“Lead the way, Fiend,” he said nonchalantly, bowing in mockery, but Dracula apparently chose to take it for a chivalrous gesture.

“Why thank you, Darling,” she cooed back and winked at him. “I was thinking—we should probably pose as a couple. For practical reasons, yes?”

“How do you figure?” Trevon asked, jerking his hand away when she tried to reach for it.

She shrugged. “I imagine we will be viewed with less suspicion, and neither of us will attract unwelcome or distracting attention. You wouldn’t want me being courted by some random mortal, would you?”

“Why would I care about such a thing? I would only pity the man and pray that his oncoming end came quickly and without pain,” Trevon said. That was his official answer, but even as he spoke it, a rumbling in his gut told him his feelings on the subject were slightly more nuanced.

She was beautiful—and the idea of another man having access to that beauty on an intimate level...of her calling another man ‘Darling’ in that tone she reserved for him? Something about it irked him. He shook his head violently and shuddered as if casting off a sudden spell of nausea, but the wretched feelings didn’t leave.

“What was that?” Dracula chuckled. “Aside from being a rather amusing outburst, I mean.”

“Nothing. Perhaps I’m still adapting to this place,” he said, though he knew his lie was obvious. Dracula smirked at him impishly and grabbed his hand again. This time he didn’t dodge—but he did scowl. “I shall consent to your game if it makes you easier to deal with.”

“Oh, Trevvy, Darling,” she whispered in his ear breathily, “I think you’ll find me *very* easy.”

At that moment, Trevon’s heroic member began to flop sporadically in his pants like a wounded beast clinging to life. He feigned indifference, but feared the worst—feared that the Countess could smell his attraction, or sense the soft rustle of fabric from his expanding endowment.

“You’re walking rather funny all of a sudden,” Dracula noted with a smirk. “I haven’t known you to be one for random cramps.”

“Perhaps the portal has had an unwelcome effect on my mortal body,” he muttered sheepishly. “No matter. Focus on the task at hand.”

They arrived at W-Mart within five minutes, marveling at the sheer number of cars and empty spots for them in the parking lot. “Civilization has come far in a short time,” Dracula commented, squeezing Trevon’s hand and leaning against his shoulder. “Humans really can be rather intriguing.”

“You were human once,” Trevon noted.

“Indeed I was—but I like to think I’m much more intriguing as a vampire. Don’t you think so?” she asked, stealing some eye contact away from him to flutter her lashes wickedly.

Trevon smirked. “That is one way to describe it.”

They got many strange looks as they entered the store—but not half as many as they expected. As they looked around, it gradually became clear why. People in all states of undress could be found here—and with clothes far more bizarre than their own. One man walked around in denim pants that hung low on his hips, displaying a thong that flossed between his hairy buttocks. Additionally, he wore something called a crop top which exposed his belly, and his hair was done up with wax in comically exaggerated spikes.

One woman, who could only be described as dangerously corpulent, wore an outfit that was...distressingly similar to the man’s. Another woman, this one bone-thin, appeared to be under the influence of some foreign substance, with dilated pupils, wild twitches, and tics. She couldn’t stop scratching herself.

“The people of this W-Mart appear to be affected by some strange curse,” Trevon whispered incredulously.

“I don’t sense any black magic at play,” Dracula noted as she nuzzled against his naked shoulder. Even though she said this, Trevon noted that she didn’t sound entirely convinced by her own words. “I get the feeling that this place is merely a beacon to whatever foul corruption has claimed these people’s souls.”

He nodded darkly. “Perhaps you are right. Let us acquire what we need and be on our way.”

“Agreed,” the Countess said, her eyebrow arching as a man dressed like a scabby freebooter limped toward the cereal aisle. But then she brightened and bit her lip when she stared up at Trevon’s face. “Well, Darling, are you ready to go shopping with me?”

Trevon growled and creased his brow. “I will endure what I must.”

Chapter 5

(Mary)

Mary drove her sleek, black Corvette into the small town, the moon casting an opalescent glow over the tops of its short buildings. She felt the hum of the engine beneath her, a rhythm that soothed her excited yearning. She was so close. So very close.

Not two hours earlier, she had seen footage on the news that made her heart race. The video, captured by a dash cam on the very street she now drove toward, showed two shadowy figures engaged in a brawl right in the middle of an open road—a man and a woman. She recognized the man's figure by virtue of his reputation, but the woman? Mary knew that one from the fact that she showed up as a mysterious, shapeless blur—like most supernaturals.

This was the signal she had been waiting for. Death's spell had finished—thanks to her help, her sacrifices, his will was done.

As the dust kicked up from their violent struggle settled on the screen, Mary could not help but marvel at what she saw. Most would find it shocking, even horrifying, to have such a brutal fight break out in public, involving whips, teeth, claws, and more, but for Mary, it was a reminder of the old world. The way things used to be. Vampires and monster hunters weren't really a thing over here in Wisconsin. You'd get a few skinwalkers and werewolves, but that was about it, and those

stuck to the countryside. But these were relics of the glorious past—some of the most significant names in this world's secret history.

More importantly, her efforts had worked.

She remembered the painstaking hours she had spent, chanting under her breath, focusing her energy, trying to summon Dracula and the Beaumont back into being after centuries floating through time and space. She sat alone in a ring of candles after each murder, naked and painted with her victims' blood under the light of a gibbous moon. That moon had been her only companion on those nights.

She took a deep breath, the car's leather scent mixing with her perfume in a comforting blend. Her heart pounded in her chest, not from fear, but excitement. From hope. This was her moment, her time. The long years of preparation and sacrifice had led her to this point, and no one, not even Countess Dracula, could take it away from her.

The small houses of Wapa Lake passed in a blur as she drove further into town. The peaceful quiet was about to be disrupted, the veil of normality about to be lifted. Death was coming. Chaos was coming with him—enough of a calamity to swallow this town whole. *That* would awaken this country to the supernatural. *That* would bring the Old World back, right here in humble Wisconsin. Mary was right in the middle of it, just as she had always intended—she would achieve her revenge, repay her debt to her master, and bring about a new dark reign of monsters of the night. Her summoning had been

answered. The time had arrived at last for her to play the rest of her part.

Pulling into the sprawling parking lot of the Wapa Lake W-Mart, Mary had to suppress a shudder of revulsion. The sterile glow of the fluorescent lights, the garish sale banners flapping in the evening breeze, and the soulless corporate logo grinning down at her all sickened her. Mortals had traded the glory of the past for the manufactured fakeness of the present.

Mary exited her car and walked through the entrance. With a polite, yet strained, smile, she nodded to the greeter, an elderly man with a patchy beard and faded uniform. His cheeriness was unsettling in a place that held as much appeal for her as a rotten apple.

As Mary moved further into the well-organized aisles, she glimpsed several patrons of the store. They formed a motley crew of humanity, each one a caricature or parody emblematic of societal decay. A man with sunken eyes and twitchy fingers scrutinized the canned goods, his erratic demeanor painting a clear picture of a life surrendered to addiction. Then there was a woman, the poster girl of 'laundry day chic', wrapped in a mishmash of floral prints and neon colors that had seen better and brighter days.

Finally there was the gangly teenager, his greasy hair falling into acne-ridden skin, consumed by the glowing screen of his smartphone as he bumped into displays without a care. Even after knocking a kiosk of gum onto the ground he stumbled on like a zombie, eyes never straying from his phone. Mary

grimaced only inwardly, her smile never faltering. She wasn't here to socialize with the great unwashed, after all. She was here for business.

Her heels clicked on the linoleum floor as she made her way directly to the kitchenware section. Memories of her last killing spree resurfaced, a time when her master's plan had been set into motion. With each Room 13 that she 'visited', she'd offered up a sacrifice, a bloody tribute to her dark purpose.

Mary loved her job, her part to play, and thanked her master for assigning her something so within her area of expertise. She doubted at first if she could finish the job. Even Death himself, her glorious master, had been unable to defeat Dracula and Trevon Beaumont back in that ancient castle, resorting to throwing them in his time vortex instead. Yet, with her master's blessing, she would succeed where he had failed. She brought them out of the spell. She could also take them out of this world—and when she did? Death would take her for his bride.

Now, those two old adversaries were hiding here, in Wapa Lake, Wisconsin, of all places. The thought of a Beaumont willingly sharing space with Countess Dracula was, in its own twisted way, laughable. Yet, she knew the humor of the situation would soon be replaced with the sweet satisfaction of victory. The final act of her master's grand plan was about to begin.

“Can I help you find something?” A store clerk approached Mary, his nametag reading ‘Brad.’ He was a young man, probably working his way through community college or, maybe, just taking up space in his parents’ basement.

“Yes,” Mary responded, her voice soft yet firm, “I’m looking for the sharpest set of kitchen knives you have. Something sturdy, capable of cutting through tough meat, maybe even bone.”

Brad laughed, nervously scratching his head. “Well, ma’am, you might want a cleaver for bones, but...” His voice trailed off as he saw her cool, unwavering gaze. “I suppose a big knife could do if you’re strong enough. With the latest technology, today’s knives really are something.”

“I’m much stronger than I look,” Mary assured with a wry smile, her red dress clinging to her slender frame, hinting at little might beneath the deceptive elegance. Brad’s gaze lingered on her, his eyes trailing up and down her perfectly tight body. His cheeks flushed a tad too obviously.

He quickly suggested a few knife sets, carefully keeping his distance as Mary inspected each one. She lifted a particularly sharp chef’s knife, its polished steel reflecting the harsh store lights. She sliced through the air in quick, efficient movements, more like a trained assassin than a casual shopper. Brad swallowed hard, beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

“I’ll take this one,” Mary finally decided, holding the blade aloft. “No need for the whole set, this one will do just wonderfully.”

Brad nodded and answered her, his voice barely above a whisper. “I-I can help you with that, if you want. We can check out just over here.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Mary said, gracing him with a serene smile. “I can help myself, thank you.”

And with a swift, effortless movement, she drew the blade across his throat, slashing it like wet paper. Brad gurgled, hands desperately clawing at his neck, eyes wide in shock and terror as blood poured all over his blue shirt, his face going white.

“Always be prepared to help yourself,” Mary murmured as the clerk’s blood painted her face and neck. Her smile never wavered as the light faded from Brad’s eyes. “Those that aren’t afraid to take what they’re after usually get what they want, Brad.”

As blood dripped on the linoleum and Brad collapsed completely, horrified gasps filled the air. Shrieks of panic echoed around her, but Mary remained unperturbed. She bent over and casually wiped the blade on Brad’s shirt before sheathing it in a specially-designed compartment in her purse.

She strode confidently towards the exit, her high heels clicking against the floor, matching the rhythm of the chaos erupting behind her. Shouts of terror and cries for help punctuated the air, but none of it fazed her. After all, she was the Undying Duchess, Bloody Mary.

The camera lenses that peppered the corners of the store couldn’t see her. She had been given gifts that made her

unseen and unfollowed, able to vanish from sight at her leisure. It was one of the many privileges of serving Death, of being bound by his ethereal chains.

She reached for her neck and found some wetness there. She reveled in the slick warmth of Brad's blood as she smeared it over her skin, feeling the pulse of life that was no longer his. The blood seeped into her pores, a price she willingly paid for her immortal existence. This was no spell for her master—this was just her topping up for what might prove to be an intense encounter in the days to come.

Her lips bowed into a satisfied smile as she slid back into her Corvette, leaving the sounds of mayhem and panic behind. The roar of the engine echoed through the still evening air as she drove off, a crimson queen cloaked in the throbbing heart of the night.

A frown marred Mary's face as she drove, the memories of the past resurfacing like phantom pain. Once, she had been a duchess, a woman of high standing and prestige. That was before the rebirth, before the blood and the eternal servitude to Death.

A memory of Dracula, the Countess herself, rejecting Mary's heartfelt proposal flashed in her mind—she knew it would. How could it not? With the Countess so near, it was bound to happen. But it still hurt. She could hear her voice even now.

“Marry you, Bloody Mary? The Undying Duchess? Please—don't make me laugh. Like I could ever lower myself to consider someone of your...repute.”

Those words hurt her more than any of the false deaths she'd suffered as an immortal. Dammit, they were *both* immortals. They could have ruled the world side by side, an unbreakable pair. Yet, Dracula had remained indifferent to her plea, dismissing Mary's affection as a mere whim.

Her rejection had sparked a fury in Mary, a resolve that turned admiration into an all-out war. The stage for this epic confrontation had been set years ago, in 2013. Mary had marked the start of her vengeance by killing thirteen innocent people, each murder taking place in the 13th room of some forsaken hotel or motel, spread across the 13th county of Wisconsin. It was her signal to Death, a grim beacon that would bring Dracula to this unsuspecting town as his spell finally reached its end.

The mere thought of Dracula, sheltering with a man, sent a bitter taste to Mary's mouth after the amusement attached to it had passed. But it was a sweet bitterness, one that stoked the fires of her vengeance. She would make Dracula pay for her rejection. She would set fire to everything precious to her—she already had. The Countess just didn't know it yet.

Yes, the Countess of Wallachia would soon realize the gravity of her rejection, would understand the fatal error of dismissing the undying duchess when she should have embraced her. A conflict was on the horizon, a final battle ignited by the flames of scorned love, and Mary would stop at nothing to ensure her victory.

Glancing at the rearview mirror, Mary couldn't help but let a grin play on her lips. Where any other person would see their reflection, all she saw was the interior of her sleek car and the road stretching out behind her. Immortality had its perks and curses, and the lack of a reflection was one of each.

She stared at the empty space, her smile never wavering. The world outside was drowned out by the purr of her car, and the chill of the evening air was kept at bay by the warmth inside. In the solitude of her vehicle, Mary spoke the words, a chant that had been a part of her existence for centuries, as the last drop of Brad's blood seeped through her skin.

"Bloody Mary," she murmured, her voice barely above a whisper, yet resonating with an eerie power as she focused on the mirror.

"Bloody Mary," she repeated, louder this time, as if trying to etch her name into the very fabric of reality.

And then, bracing herself for the rush that would come when her own power was invoked, she closed her eyes and opened them again. This time, for a split second, her reflection was there, clear as crystal, and it was then that she repeated her chant one final time. "Bloody Mary."

Chapter 6

(Dracula)



“Trevon, Darling, come here for a moment,” Dracula called from inside the changing room, both of them ignoring distant screams from the other side of the store. “I need your opinion.”

She heard his gruff reply from a distance away. Irritatingly too far away for her liking. “Just buy the most nondescript clothes that fit. Honestly, them fitting right is optional as far as I am concerned, though I suppose we may as well be comfortable.”

“All the same, come here,” she said, a tiny smirk tugging at one corner of her lips with impish intent.

“Fine. I’m here.”

“...Just you?” she said. “What I’m about to show you is for your eyes only.”

“Huh? What are you—”

“Just you, Trevon?” she pressed.

There was a long and delicate silence, but her grin widened just before the final surrender came. “Just me.”

She cracked open the door and let him drink in the sight of her, a reward for his obedience. She had selected a skimpy but cute pair of pink panties that had a feline avatar printed across the front of them. Just over her nether regions the words “Hello Kitty” were emblazoned beneath the character’s face. Over her chest, she wore a matching push-up bra that was clearly intended to form a set with these panties. “Aren’t they cute?” she squealed with a little bounce from one foot to the other, setting her breasts to jiggling.

The vampire hunter kept his composure, having no doubt braced himself for this eventuality, but his wandering eyes told all tales. “Adorable,” he grunted dryly before closing the door. “Hurry up in there.”

“Awww, Trevon, don’t be such a killjoy. This era has such colorful tastes in fashion—we might as well partake. Surely that would help us fit in?” She spoke in a pouty voice designed to further fluster her nemesis, though hoping something like that would have any effect was admittedly a bit of a long shot.

“I grabbed you a pair of pants, a pair of shorts, a few more *modest* selections of undergarments, and a hooded button-up sweatshirt designed to look like a bat. It’s all in your size.”

She gasped and threw the door open, this time with her clothes all back on. “Let me see that hooded shirt you just mentioned!” she commanded him, her fingers wiggling as she held out her hand.

Trevon smirked at her, inclined his head slightly, and handed it off. “Here.”

She slammed the door after taking it and quickly donned the outfit, leaving a few buttons down more out of laziness and hurry than a need to be seductive in the moment. She threw the changing room door open and struck a pose like one of the women on the posters looking down on this department of the W-Mart. “How do I look?”

“Honestly?” Beaumont said, allowing himself a chuckle, “annoyingly cute. This world is strange, and its attire is stranger still. But it works for you.”

“Does it?” she asked, looking down at the hoodie. “If you like it, I’ll buy it.”

He rolled his eyes. “Don’t insult me with your attempts at seeming sweet and demure or caring about what I think. You are still the Vampire Queen Vladimira Tepes, and I won’t forget that. I can see through your plan.”

Dracula scowled at him, balling her hands into fists at her sides. “I think you don’t.”

“But I do,” he said. “You are as transparent as they come.”

She pulled the hoodie over her head as she started talking, the little fabric wings under her arms wiggling as she moved.

“Well then, by all means—illuminate me with your insight. What is my plan?” As she asked him, she could have sworn for half a second that her dead heart thumped once in her chest. Furthermore—she felt sweat forming along her brow. That wasn’t unheard of for her, but it was damned rare.

“You wish to make me dependent on you, attached to you, to the point where perhaps I forget that you are my eternal foe. Then, when the curse is lifted, you will kill—”

“Wrong! Would you like to try again?” she said as she crossed her arms smugly.

Trevon blinked in surprise at her forceful interruption. For a moment, his eyes darted around the store to see who had noticed their little tiff, but there was no one in sight. “I—if I am correct—”

“Which you aren’t,” she said flatly.

“—If I *am*, you wouldn’t tell me anyway.”

She considered that for a minute, smiling slightly at him as she brushed her fingers through her hair and pulled on the drawstrings of her bat hoodie. “Perhaps true. But only if you guessed the correct truth—which you did not.”

He eyed her with a hateful gaze. “If that is true, then I’ll—”

Vladimira interrupted him by leaning forward as suddenly as she could and pecking him on the lips with a kiss. Then, giggling, she fled back into the changing room before he could utter a word.

The resulting silence was borderline apocalyptic. Her eyes widened and mouth gaped open as she'd realized just what she'd done. She'd shown all her cards in a moment of weakness, but she couldn't help it! Just looking at his serious face, smelling his manly musk right in front of her, watching him guess cluelessly about her evil designs—her adoration for him exploded in her chest.

And then she felt it. Unerringly, undoubtedly, her heart was beating. Her eyes bulged at the realization. She could feel them strain open as wide as they could get as her hands clasped over her heaving chest and she froze. Was this the result of the magic that connected them to each other? Was she feeling mortal feelings because of her bloodbond to a human?

“It must be so!” she whispered, finally having puzzled it out. She had been attracted to him before they arrived in Wapa Lake, Wisconsin, but ever since they came here, that attraction had blossomed into something much more potent—genuine infatuation. She was utterly smitten with her sworn enemy, and now she knew why.

Perhaps I should rush that spell to break the link after all, she thought. She was acting like a teenage girl in love, not Queen of the Night! Not ‘Satan’s Bride’ or whatever nonsense title the Beaumont Clan had given her. She was pathetic!

Yes. She must make haste and break this spell as soon as possible—before whatever effects it was having on her became lasting ones.

“Uhhh.” The monster hunter grunted in confusion from the other side of the door. “I—I am uncertain about how to respond. Uh. Foul creature?”

Her cheeks burned with shame, and she started bouncing up and down on her heels as she fanned her face, hoping the redness in her cheeks would come down. “Fuck!” she squeaked under her breath. “Fuck fuck *fuck!*”

“Are...you...Do you want to tell me what the actual fuck that was, Countess?”

“Uhhh...” Her voice dragged that non-word on for suspiciously long as she attempted, and failed, to come up with something to say that wouldn’t deepen her shame. “I—Gimme a second, Trevon, Darling!” she said. She actively tried *not* to call him Darling that time. But she couldn’t. She absolutely could *not*.

Oh shit! she realized. I’m in love with the enemy! I wanna hug him and kiss him and snuggle up with him under a blanket while he drinks hot cocoa and I drink his cocoa flavored blood! I wanna fuck him in a totally romantic way—perhaps missionary! Or have him hit it from the back while he holds my hands! I love him I love him I love him!

“Dracula!” he bellowed, and he sounded so close to the changing room door now that she imagined his lips pressed up against it. “Come out here right this instant.”

“I’m—I’m naked!” she shouted back. She wasn’t. She hadn’t even changed a single article of clothing yet. “Fuck!” She just shouted that out loud. “Fuck!” She shouted that too.

After the longest two minutes of her centuries-spanning life, she stepped out of the changing room with her eyes round and huge as she stared at the inexplicable expression on her sweet nemesis's face. "Hello," she squeaked, her cheeks still red even then, her heart still thumping in her chest.

Trevon stared at her, his eyes narrowing with a question. "What was *that*?"

"Uhh—I like the hooded bat shirt. Let's definitely get that. Did you find any clothes for yourself?"

"Yes. What was that kiss?"

She looked away and crossed her arms behind her back, holding the shopping basket there as her lip jutted out in a pout. "I...I...I'm just..." Suddenly a wave of inspiration hit her. "I'm evil!"

Her partner cocked his head at that. "Well, yes. I know. But ___"

"If I told you the reason, it would...it would...betray the full extent of my cruel plan!"

Trevon actually smirked at her. Shit. He was on to her, there was no doubt about it. "You are skilled in the art of seduction," he said at last, making her heart beat even harder. She felt a powerful sensation inside—like butterflies flapping their wings against the lining of her stomach. But then he continued. "I won't fall for your tricks. There is no way the Vampire Queen of Wallachia can be this adorable. You are using some manner of profane magic to disguise your vile

mannerisms with sweet ones and increase your physical attractiveness. I will not befall your witchery.”

Dracula’s jaw dropped with sheer awe. He was dumb. Hot, but dumb. Or maybe just too indoctrinated to realize that Dracula was just a woman in the end. But no—*she* was the dumb one for even thinking that. He was right, wasn’t he? If not for the bloodbond connecting their souls, this wouldn’t be happening. She wouldn’t be having these profoundly deep and uncompromising feelings. Maybe...she should just...tell him?

“Trevon,” she murmured, her face tightening as she spoke his name. “I think I need to explain—”

He held up a hand to stop her. “The time for conversation will be when we are alone in our room at the Weekend Inn. Let us finish buying what supplies we need and get on with our evening.”

Dracula smiled slightly at that, feeling like she’d been let off the hook. “Very well.”

(Trevon)

Trevon's head was spinning from the confusing events that had just taken place, but there was no time for that nonsense. There was still much to do tonight. He had to see about the Pump N' Go's job opening and learn about its recruitment process. He had to get some food in his stomach. He also had to, regrettably, procure a coffin for Dracula.

He looked at her out of the corner of his eye as they passed aisle after aisle. For some reason, she was all he could focus on. That...kiss. It was unexpected and seemed so pure compared to what he'd imagined a first kiss with a vampire might be like. And yes—he had imagined it. In fact, he didn't have to imagine. On more than one occasion, he'd pretended to allow himself to be seduced by vampire women in the hopes that they would take him back to their covens. But Dracula, of course, was an entirely separate entity when compared to the garden variety bloodsucker. She was like a goddess in comparison.

The word seemed apt for her. Her power, her grace, her beauty—and now, her odd charm. She had a hold over him, and he had to watch himself from this moment on. He couldn't be found vulnerable like that again.

They bought clothes, food, and some utensils and appliances they gathered would be useful. In the closet of their room he also discovered an automatic cooking device known as a

microwave. The machine fascinated him, but there was one more thing, even more powerful, that they were missing.

“We need cellphones eventually,” Dracula said. “You know the device I’m speaking of, yes?”

He nodded, gesturing at a woman waiting in a cashier line who was looking at her own phone. “Yes. But why do we need them?”

“Well—So I can call you when you are away for too long,” she said, her cheeks reddening again. “If you are delayed at work, I could see myself worrying.” He saw her cheeks take on this color earlier, shortly after she’d kissed him, and here it was happening once more. “Or if I need you to buy something while you’re out.”

He clung to an unexpected word in that explanation. “Worrying?” he laughed. “About me?”

She shot a confused look at him, like he was an idiot. “Yes, about you. Have I not—” She stopped herself and let out a growl of frustration, forming fists that she shook parallel to her face. “Well, think of it this way: If you die, I die. So of course I’d worry about you, yes?”

“You think this world would kill me?” he questioned her with a skeptical smirk.

Dracula looked away and pouted. “No, I suppose not. But—perhaps...another woman...” Her voice trailed off before he could really discern what she was trying to say, and he was too impatient to press her further.

They checked out their goods and made their way back to the motel to drop them off. They found that Charlotte had already cleaned up a bit, which was a nice surprise, if a bit invasive. Trevon enjoyed an entire jug of milk and box of cereal, while Dracula stared at him in a look between disbelief and affection.

After that, the monster slayer headed to the gas station, and Dracula stayed behind to explore the new TV that was waiting in their room as she put their new clothes away and attempted to set up the microwave. Everywhere Trevon needed to go was within the maximum distance that they could get from one another without feeling pain, thankfully.

Trevon entered the Pump N' Go and spotted a burly man with a brown beard and spiked blond hair standing behind the counter in the ugly orange polo that seemed to be the uniform here. There was also a skinny girl with red ringlets and too much makeup who wore the same polo with the store's logo on it.

“Greetings, citizens,” Trevon said, bowing his head deferentially. The two people behind the counter eyed one another with confusion before settling their gazes back on him. “My name is Trevon Beaumont. I would like to apply to work at your fine establishment, the Pump N' Go. Might I inquire as to the process? Is there an apprenticeship which I can receive some pay for, or must I spend some time in a trade school? Will I be required to join a guild as—”

The tired-looking man handed him a sheet of paper from under the desk, cutting him short. “Take this and a pen and fill the paper out. Come back here when it’s done and I’ll do the interview on the spot.” The man pointed to a nametag. “I’m Justin, and this is Tammy.” He indicated the red-haired waif.

Trevon bowed again and took the paper. “I shall fill in this form posthaste and to your satisfaction, good sir. Thank you for providing this opportunity. My archnemesi and I have just moved in nearby, so a workplace that is near our dwelling is mandatory since—well, let’s just say that we find distance to be troubling.”

“Too much information,” the man grunted. “Did you want to buy anything while you’re here?”

“We’ve got six dollar pizzas,” Tammy chimed in, grinning at him as her eyes charted and traveled an indirect course across his muscular body.

“Pizza, you say? Intriguing that Italian cuisine would be all the way over here in the New World,” he muttered. “Very well, proprietor, I shall take one of your finest pizzas!”

“Go get it,” Justin grunted, gesturing at a counter full of strange foods spinning across odd rotisserie contraptions. On one corner of the table, there was a heated metal plate on a pedestal. On this plate was the fabled pizza in question. The smell of it captured him completely, and he boxed the entire thing up in a matter of seconds, sliding it into the cardboard receptacle he found under the table. “Six dollars for this?” he noted. “Prices here are fair indeed.”

He purchased the pizza and bid both Justin and Tammy farewells, minding their mannerisms so that he might better copy them next time. When it got right down to it, they weren't all that different from the vulgar masses of his time, though there was far less of a desire to be seen as polite here than where he'd hailed. The general atmosphere was more... casual. It wasn't bad, just different.

Trevon utterly devoured the entire pizza on his way back to Room 13 of the Weekend Inn. When he got back to the room, he suddenly thought of another item they should have bought—trash bags. “Well, there's always tomorrow,” he muttered as he unlocked and opened the door.

Dracula rushed to the door to greet him. “Darling,” she cooed, but before she could say anything more, his breath hit her, and her face steamed as she leapt onto the ceiling and clung to it like a spider. She hissed at him. “You ate garlic, you dick!”

He frowned. “I admit I did not consider the consequences of Italian cuisine,” he sighed. “I'll shower and brush my teeth at once, and then we'll go find your coffin and those phones.”

Trevon ambled toward the bathroom, but Dracula stopped him, tugging gently on his sleeve. “The cellphones can wait. I think we'll need you to have an ID for those.”

“I thought I saw prepaid phones at the electronics section in W-Mart, actually,” he replied.

Dracula pointed at the windows. “In any case, I borrowed extra blankets from Charlotte and nailed them over the

windows, so no sunlight can get inside during the day and we have all the privacy we could need. So...”

He arched his brow. “So, what? You don’t need a coffin? Where will you sleep?”

“I was thinking we could just...both keep a nocturnal schedule and...maybe share the bed during the day?”

Trevon blinked at her, his mouth opening into the shape of a startled ‘o’.

Dracula got over her performative shyness and grinned. “I must warn you, though—my feet are very cold.”

Chapter 7

(Dracula)

It was a rough night as far as sleep was concerned. At least for the Countess. Her unwilling partner had little trouble falling asleep at all. She watched him with a vacant stare as the vampire hunter breathed softly, his chest rising and falling with every intake and exhalation.

It was strange. The notion that she should be sharing a living space and a bed with her nemesis. That they would ever be in a position to watch one another sleep—but she was utterly powerless to hurt him without hurting herself, and, well—he counted on that.

“I hope you do kill me in my sleep,” Trevon had said, punctuating that comment with a dry, manly laugh that made her heart thump a few more times. “If you do, then I won’t have to commit suicide to defeat you, and you’ll be dead.”

“You don’t want me dead,” she had cooed at him teasingly.

But he did. He still did. He hated her, even if he’d admitted to finding her cute and attractive. It set a scowl on her face as she watched him sleep, and then the scowl deepened when she reflected on it.

Why am I behaving like a girl in love? she internally seethed.
Why am I so—so helpless as I watch him?

She had known many Beaumonts over the centuries. Some she’d slain, some had defeated her. She detested every last one

of them from the instant she saw them—but when her eyes first landed upon Trevon, it was like he'd cast a spell on her. No man should be so desirous. You might as well tell Guinevere to resist Lancelot, or Juliet to resist Romeo. It was impossible. Unthinkable. Vexing to consider, even.

Dracula purred a little as her fingers ran across his chest, testing him. *How deep of a sleeper is he?* She wondered. *Time to find out.*

She began her experiment with caution, merely ghosting her fingertips across the muscled planes of his pectorals. When he didn't stir, her eyes widened as she felt emboldened. She traced a path with her index finger from his chest, up his shoulder, down his bicep, all the way down his arm until she ended her journey in the palm of his hand.

Her eyes widened and she bit her lip as she dared herself one step further. "Don't hate me even more for this, Trevvy," she whispered as her hand opened and she interlocked her fingers in his. She closed her eyes in bliss and bit her lip as she felt his pulse beneath his skin, and she could swear it seemed to quicken for her. *His body loves me, she thought, even if his heart and head are slow to catch up.*

She was holding his hand. His rough, calloused hand squeezed hers just a little, and she almost jumped. She opened her eyes, watching his face for any signs that he was about to wake up, but he seemed a deep sleeper. It amused her—this warrior who had traveled alone to slay untold monstrosities... sleeping so soundly in a cheap bed on the floor of a seedy,

disused motel room—in which he shared his room with his family’s archnemesis? It made little sense.

“Then again,” she cooed in a soft hush as she eyed him with pure love on her blushing cheeks, “We’re more like archlovers.”

She levitated over the bed, suspending herself in the air, bringing her body parallel to Trevon’s until her face was hovering inches from his. She stared, wide-eyed, at his lips. She’d kissed him before. It had been fleeting and she didn’t get enough of a flavor to savor. She couldn’t recall the texture of his lips, it had happened so fast and spontaneously. Even she didn’t know she was going to do it at the time.

But she knew what she was about to do now. With her eyes still wide, she lowered herself until her hanging breasts gently brushed over his chest, and he was safely within kissing distance. She leaned downward and let her lips make contact with his, freezing in that moment to memorize every impression she could get.

Trevor breathed out through his nose onto her lips. The taste of his breath was enough to make her insides churn with a bubbling desire that made her grind her thighs together as moisture formed in her unholy place. She was so wet—just from a kiss! She couldn’t remember being this wet in the last century, yet this man had reaped her lust so effortlessly, even unknowingly.

For a moment she considered trying to fuck him right then and there, but that would certainly be too far. First of all, he

would definitely wake up. Second of all, she wanted him to feel it, wanted him to reciprocate her kiss as she bounced on top of him, his thick heroic cock using her pussy until she was his broken toy.

At that moment, she realized she was still kissing him. Her lips remained static and still, but they were fixed to his, and it was almost torture forcing herself to pull away. She stared into his closed eyes as she started to float upward and sighed. “I really like you, Trevon,” she whimpered. “How can I make you like me, too?”

To her surprise, Trevon’s hand broke from hers and reached up to grab her by the throat. It happened so fast that even she hadn’t seen it coming. She choked and clawed at his wrist, and soon he was making choking noises as well. At first, she’d forgotten why, but then it dawned on her when she saw her own wrists open up with fresh cuts. They shared each other’s pain.

Trevon opened his eyes and released her, but planted a foot in her sternum, forcing her against the ceiling. She reached back and clung to it as she looked down at him in shock. “I—I’m sorry!” she blurted out in mortification.

Trevon wiped his eyes and studied his bloody arms as the wounds closed. “What are you apologizing for precisely?” he asked. “What were you trying to do?”

She flew down to the ground and sat at the foot of the bed, blushing and toying with her hair as she found herself unable

to look him in the eye. “I—I was...nothing. I’m sorry I woke you.”

“Don’t you sleep during the day?” Trevon asked. “According to that clock, it’s still morning.”

“I couldn’t sleep,” she muttered.

Trevon brought himself up on his elbows. He looked at her for a long time, and then his mouth opened to say something, but no words came out.

“What is it?” Dracula asked. “What do you want to say to me?” Her voice carried a bit of hope.

He shook his head. “I find it hard not to treat you as a woman. I have to constantly remind myself of what you are.”

“I *am* a woman,” she said, looking down at the stained carpet.

“You are also one of the worst villains in history,” he reminded her. “You’re responsible for more death than few ever could be—and horrible deaths, too. Even before you were claimed by the forces of evil, you did unspeakable things in the name of war.”

“What if I changed?” she asked, fluttering her eyelashes at him. “Would you treat me like a woman then?”

“I have no idea how I could verify such a change. And your crimes cannot and should not go without punishment, either,” he told her. But she found him staring at his face with a softer look in his eye than usual. “And yet...I feel conflicted about it.”

She bit her bottom lip and crawled over him, and he didn't stop her. She planted her ass on his stomach, and they made long, intense eye contact. "Treat me like a woman now. You have my permission."

She smirked as she felt the proof of his arousal poke her in the ass after she said that, but the Beaumont's face contorted in a look that would have been funny if it weren't paired with rejection. He picked her up by the waist like she was some small animal and set her aside.

"What are you doing?" she asked with irritation.

"Maintaining my virtue for one more day."

She blinked. "You're not a virgin, are you?"

He laughed at that. "Hardly. I had a rather wild start to my career as—"

Dracula found her fingers covering his mouth independent of her own thoughts. "Do not finish that sentence," she hissed, her eyes wide and glowing with warning. "I don't know what I would do if I were made to picture you with another woman."

It was the closest thing to a real declaration of love she'd made, and it wasn't lost on her adversary. Trevon slowly guided her hand away from his mouth as he studied her with a furrowed brow. "The spell that binds us together seems to have come with unexpected side effects. This is trouble."

"Trouble?" she growled. "Why is it trouble?"

Trevon actually smirked at her for a second before returning to a more somber expression. "Because I doubt I can fight you

off forever.”

Her eyes widened with hope at that. “Trevon—Trevvy—I was thinking. Maybe we should forget our past and just...have a fresh start. We’re in a new place, a new time, and three hundred years have passed since our battle. The world has surely forgotten us. Even God and the Devil are likely to leave us alone.”

He seemed to give it some thought, but ultimately shook his head, making her heart sink. “It’s not that easy, Vladimira.”

She grinned at him anyway. “You can just call me Mira if you prefer to use my given name now.”

Trevon nodded slowly, his eyes never departing from hers. “Very well. Mira.” He winced as he said it, and she had to admit it did seem strange coming from his lips—but not in a bad way..

She straddled him again without meeting any resistance. She planted her palms on his chest and wiggled her butt playfully as she looked at him, not sure what was the right thing to say. “Well, it’s a good thing we’re on better terms now, at least,” she told him at last. “Imagine what we could achieve as partners, after all.”

He grimaced at the thought. “I don’t think I want to achieve any of your goals.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” she giggled. “Right now I’ve got just one, and I like to think you’d enjoy it too.”

Once again, his dick hardened to the point of poking her in the ass even through his pants and the bedsheets, but he said nothing.

She went on. “I have an idea!” she said, clapping her hands together. “How about we try and improve our standing with one another by exchanging praise.”

Trevon cocked a brow at her in bemusement. “No.”

Dracula’s face fell abruptly. “Please?” she pouted. “Praise me!”

“You’re...” His voice trailed off and he blinked a few times. “You’re not as heavy as you seem like you should be.”

Her mouth opened to say something, but the smile was gone. “That was—the worst.”

“So don’t ask me to do it again,” he muttered.

“Well, now I’m demanding. You have to do better than that.”

His brow crinkled. “Very well. You are a formidable combatant.”

“You know that’s not the kind of praise I want,” she muttered, moving her hands up and down his chest. She batted her eyelashes at him and jutted her lip out. “Please, Trevon? I need to hear you say it.”

He looked away. “You are not...taxing to my eyes,” he muttered.

“I should bite you now,” she hissed, climbing off of him. She walked toward the closet and opened the door, then went

inside and closed it behind her. “Wake me up at night.”

(Trevon)

Trevon was at a loss. Just a few days ago, the thought of finding himself growing begrudgingly fond of the Countess would have been unthinkable. His mind told him, even now, that entertaining her suggestions and giving in to her temptation was wrong. But he wanted her. And not just for her body, either.

She was charming and uncommonly cute. He had trouble keeping his eyes off her, and even more trouble forcing himself to keep his hands off her. He wanted little more than to let her have her way with him.

Romance isn't something Trevon ever thought he'd have need of. He grew up in a family where political and practical marriages were the norm. The fathers who were passing on the warrior legacy would take hardy, healthy peasants as wives, or those who had magic running through their veins. Meanwhile, the ones who kept the family relevant in the eyes of the church and leaders of nations—they would marry nobles. Love was never a part of it.

But Dracula inspired something in him that was unfamiliar. Was it love? Certainly not. But it was to love what a horse was to a destination. He was on the path toward genuine affection for her, and it ripped him up inside.

The motel room felt painfully empty then. With the Countess asleep in the closet, and him now wide awake and full of

thoughts he'd rather not entertain, he decided to get up. He took his first shower, and damn, it did feel nice. A part of him felt a little sad that his archnemesi could never know this simple yet potent pleasure, averse to running water as she was. Even that innocuous thought in her favor made him feel guilty.

He dressed himself in a T-Shirt and jacket and donned a pair of blue jeans. He checked his reflection in the bathroom mirror—again, he thought of her. He thought of how they could never take a photo together, or admire their reflection together in a mirror. The invasive thoughts disgusted him, but his resistances were lowering to her by the minute, and he couldn't even police his own mind anymore.

He blamed the bloodbond. That was the reason for their unusual attraction and affection. He just had to continue resisting until she found a way to cancel it.

They had bought a few items that would get her started—powdered herbs, a cauldron—well, a pot, but she said it would do. The 'eye of newt and wing of bat' components unfortunately could not be bought at W-Mart.

He decided he had to take action. From this point on, each choice he made would lead him down one path or another. One thing was for sure—he needed an ID. It was time that he figured out the truth of that esoteric process.

Trevon ventured out into the world and found that his understanding of it had grown overnight. Everything made a lot more sense, and he no longer felt as though he were groping around, figuring things out haphazardly. He felt like a

native of this time, more or less, when it came to technology, but bureaucracy was still a bit elusive.

He started with the gas station again, the Pump N' Go. The staff working at the front desk were not the same people as he encountered the last evening, which he'd expected. "Greetings," he said, trying to sound more natural this time. "I need to update my ID so I can apply for this job. What will I need for that?"

The man at the desk was a scrawny, freckled man with thick-rimmed spectacles and orange hair. His nametag hinted at his name being Dustin. "To apply we'll need you to fill in your driver's license or State ID number on the form. Do you need a copy?"

"No, I actually have one," he said. "I took it in a bit of a hurry last night without asking the right questions. I'm afraid I'm new to this area and need to update my ID."

Dustin beamed at him warmly as he sat behind the counter. "Oh, got it. Well—you'll need to put your Social Security Number on the tax docs we give you when you're hired, and you'll need that ID. You can have both printed up for you at the city clerk, just a few blocks west of here. It's the biggest building on the block, between the McDaniel's and the Pizza Cabin."

"And what should I bring?"

"Whatever you have to prove you are who you say you are. Old IDs are an example of primary identification, bills in your

name with your signature are secondary identification—hopefully you have your Social Security Card, right?”

“Right,” Trevon grumbled. He bought two long, tubular items called a hot dog and a churro and ate them both. He immediately bought two more of each and wolfed those down as well, which Dustin watched with amusement as he checked out another customer.

Trevon headed to the City Clerk but was predictably turned away when he failed to produce any of the items they needed. That wasn't a surprise. What he really came for was to see the open hours to find the best time to visit with Dracula so she could work her mesmerism on them—and there was a problem.

“Open Hours: 9:00 AM until 4:30 PM, closed for lunch from 12:00 PM until 1:00 PM. Damn,” he grumbled as he read it. “That's going to pose a problem.”

The City Clerk was only open during the strictest daylight hours—hours in which Dracula was useless. Or so he thought.

Chapter 8

(Dracula)

She should not have retreated into the motel room closet. That only gave Trevon permission to go about his day without her. Much to her horror, he had risen after she excused herself from the conversation, showered, and gotten dressed. She watched through the crack in the closet door as he walked outside, the sun's light blinding her for a moment as it crept into their room.

He left! He left her! How dare he?! But he couldn't go far, at least—that was her one comfort. A few hundred meters at best seemed to be the limit...but with a man as uncommonly handsome as he was? He'd have women crawling all over him within the hour.

She had slighted him, made him feel bad, and now he was punishing her by throwing himself into the arms and pussies of as many women as he could. She imagined some naked human whores bouncing atop him, sitting on his face, cloying and begging to suck his heroic cock until he painted their features with his potent and powerful seed. Maybe he would even let them bear him children—the one thing she could never do for him!

He must be thinking about it. He knew now how badly it'd hurt her, his nemesis, for him to do such a thing. It had been mere seconds—but as handsome and strong as he was, he was

probably already leaning against a wall with a trio of needy women purring as they kissed his shaft and sucked at his tip.

As much as the idea infuriated her, her arousal at the thought of his cock was reaching a boiling point. She needed him so, so badly. She needed him to take her however he wanted to. It could be rough, it could be sweet, it could even be entirely devoid of passion—as long as he was inside her, and she could unblinkingly stare at him as he thrust into her, that was enough. Just to know that she had him, and not some other useless mortal whore.

She was wearing only the bat hoodie that Trevon had selected for her and a pair of pink panties—the one with the cartoon cat. With a tug, the panties slid down her legs and landed on her feet, and she stepped out of them. She climbed up the wall a bit with her back to it and spread her legs. With a moan, her fingers touched her outer labia, dancing along its profanely glossy surface.

With an embarrassingly loud squelch, one digit slipped inside her pussy, causing a splash of fluid to splatter on her thighs and the floor. She made a noisy mewling sound, bucking her hips wantonly as her need welled up and she delved deeper inside her own depths. She wasn't even interested in stimulating her clit—she wanted to live that fantasy of penetration, imagining her fingers were his cock.

“I—I love you, Trevon,” she whimpered, one hand pinching her nipple while the other employed the use of two fingers to fuck herself. She had no idea just how she was able to generate

as much fluid as she apparently had as the floor and her legs grew damp with her lewd runoff. “I love you I love you I love you!”

But the feeling of love and affection was paired with something dark. She saw faces—nondescript, but pretty nonetheless, and she imagined her pussy was theirs, and that Trevor’s powerful dick was fucking them, making them moan like indecent sluts. She wondered how many such women he could handle at once. Probably a hundred. Maybe more. He was practically a god as far as she was concerned. Would she even be enough for him? How could she make him hers when he had the whole world of women to choose from?

“I’ll—I’ll kill those whores!” she oathed as her fingers made lewd, splishy-squishy sounds in her pussy. “I’ll kill them all for you, Trevon! For us! I love you!”

It didn’t take all that much to send her past the brink of pleasure. She crawled wildly up the walls until she was kneeling upside down on the ceiling, and the force of her orgasm hit her like a crashing wave. She dripped, and gravity caused her lady juice to squirt and dribble down to her face. She tasted it, imagining instead that it was the mixture of her fluid and Trevon’s. It would be sooo sweet when she finally knew what the authentic flavor of that blend was like.

She hung there for perhaps ten minutes, trying to calm down, before she came out of the closet. She used her magic to clean herself, and within moments she was as fresh and fragrant as ever. She donned her panties but also put on a pair of pants,

some socks, a raincoat, a baseball hat, and wrapped herself up with a spare blanket and towels from the closet she'd just been in. Her whole body was covered in multiple layers from head to toe. There was only one thing left to do.

She had to go find Trevon and stop him from fucking those human sluts. After she killed them, she'd do whatever it took to seduce the monster hunter, debasing herself however she had to. She couldn't let him run around, gallivanting without her any longer. He didn't know it yet, but this was fate. Dracula had never felt a feeling like this in her centuries upon centuries of life, and she didn't care if it was brought on by a spell. It was real to her.

Just as she approached the door, it opened, and there he was—alone. He stared at her in confusion, his mouth opening, jaw dropping as he tried to figure out what she was up to. The sight of her wrapped in blankets and towels seemed to be intensely humorous to him as a bemused smirk tugged at his lips.

“Should I ask?” he grunted.

“Definitely not,” she replied. “But—be honest with me. How many women did you just have sex with?”

He blinked at her. “What.”

(Trevon)

Trevon quickly explained where he'd been and what he'd been doing, and Vladimira listened patiently. She had been under the suspicion that he had sneaked out after their argument in order to secretly sleep with as many women as he could just to spite her, and she explained as much in due course.

“That is...the most unhinged nonsense I've ever heard,” he told her in no uncertain terms. “I don't have time for that.”

“But if you did, would you have done it?” she asked.

“No,” he said, furrowing his brow in irritation. “You are quite a possessive little thing. Need I remind you that we are sworn to destroy one another? What difference does any of that make?”

Dracula huffed. Then she cleared her throat. “I thought we were beyond that, Darling.”

“We are not,” he grumbled, though he had to admit he was less sure of himself by the second.

Dracula shoved him lightly. “From now on, we are exclusive. No more fucking sluts, no more—”

“I never fucked *any* sluts while we were here,” he groaned, rolling his eyes.

Her brow twitched. “But you did before?”

He shrugged, ready to downplay the number as was obviously necessary. “Maybe a time or two. But that was centuries ago now.”

“Tell me their names so that I can track their families down and destroy them,” she hissed, her claws coming out and eyes going bloodshot. Her fangs emerged and ears went pointed as a red aura of rage emanated from her.

“No,” Trevon grunted, crossing his arms. “I don’t think that’s a smart idea. Besides, that was before I even met you.”

Her rage stopped abruptly, along with all related effects. “What do you mean by that?”

“Before we—well, now you say we’re exclusive, whatever that means.”

“And that should include the past! But yes, it means that you must stop throwing yourself at women so aggressively, and that you belong to me and I belong to you. We are bloodbonded, and perhaps it’s that which has given us complex feelings for one another, but I intend to follow them to their logical conclusion.”

Trevon’s brow furrowed. “Again, I take issue with the wisdom in this plan.”

She crossed her arms and struck a haughty pose that would have looked impressive if not for all the sheets and towels wrapped around her. “Take issue with what you want. I am Countess Vladimira Tepes—Dracula. No one can keep me from what I want—even if it’s a Beaumont.”

“So. This is you telling me that you’d like to...court me,” he said, feeling sweat pooling under his chin.

Dracula looked away shyly. “Well—I just...I think maybe we could...see what happens. Maybe we can hook up a TV later and rent a movie and...go with the flow?”

Blood was currently flowing to his penis, Trevon noted, and he’d very much like to go with that particular flow. Still, he knew that heading down this road with his sworn enemy was a bad idea. But he had to confess—the power of the bloodbond was getting to him as well. Every time he looked at her, she seemed even more lovable, and his forgotten penchant for insane women was more than satisfied by her displays of jealousy.

Oh, but the sex they would have. He wouldn’t have to hold back with her, and she with him. And yet—as sexy and voluptuous as she was, it almost felt wrong having impure thoughts about her. Not because she was an evil Vampire Queen—but because she was so cute.

He shook his head. “We’ll revisit this later. We’re burning daylight. I need your help—the City Clerk can fill my request for an ID but there’s all this documentation I need which I obviously don’t have.”

“That’s where I come in,” she said, grinning, her fangs still out even though her claws and that malevolent aura was gone.

“Right,” Trevon agreed with a single nod. “However, it’s only open until 4:30 PM. So—we have a problem.”

She gasped. “I need to go out in daylight?!”

“Yes,” he said. “Honestly, I’m not sure why that should surprise you. You look equipped to do so already.” He gestured to her unusual ensemble of clothing and sheets.

She blushed. “That’s different. This is my slut-murdering attire. We’re going to a government office. Do you think they’ll let me in like this?”

Trevon shrugged. “One way to find out.”

As it turned out, they would, and did, let her in like that. Once Trevon mentioned that she had special needs due to a rare skin allergy, they stopped asking questions, but security seemed to keep a close eye on them.

The woman at the desk was named Gertrude and was apparently too old for Dracula to consider a threat to her claim on Trevon. He explained all the items that they would need help with, and Dracula used her mesmerism to make sure that they accepted every excuse he gave as to why he didn’t have any form of ID at all. Waiting in line took about an hour, but once they were in front of Gertrude, the process really only took another thirty minutes.

They left with temporary IDs for Trevon, including a Social Security Card and a State ID. Trevon rushed Dracula back to the motel room and unwrapped the bedsheets to inspect her, but of course she was fine. He didn’t feel any burning or pain himself, after all.

Dracula looked up at him, lying on her back against the bed as his hand ran up and down her body looking for places where her protection hadn't been enough. "I'm fine," she muttered shyly.

"I know," he said. "I'm just being thorough." He got up and looked at the door. "Get some rest. I'll be back soon. I'm going to fill out the job application for the Pump N' Go and drop it off."

She nodded at him, watching carefully. "Oh—about the TV. I'll call Charlotte and see if she can help me hook it up."

Trevon looked back at her, his brow arched. "And then what?"

"And then...snuggle on the bed and watch a movie with me?" she proposed, batting her lashes and smiling sweetly. "It'll be the first movie either of us sees. Aren't you curious what they're like?"

He smirked. "We'll see," he told her, unable to refuse her outright, though he knew he should. He left and closed the door behind him, then headed to the gas station to drop off the job application. He had no idea just how well he'd ace the interview.

Chapter 9

(Trevon)

The monster hunter was starting to feel more like a *former* monster hunter than anything else. There was something dark and dreadful about filling out the job application to a gas station and handing it over to the spiky-haired man he'd met the first night. It was quite the downgrade from his former position.

Justin looked its contents over and shrugged at Tammy. "Under former employers you wrote The Catholic Church," he noted. "Under years employed, you wrote years in the 1700s."

"Mine is a complicated story," Trevon said, furrowing his brow. "I realize it may not seem credible on its face, but—"

A shout rang out that silenced everything. "Everybody down!" The man who spoke those words was a nervous but aggressive youngster. He let the words go from the top of his lungs, drawing the ire of the monster hunter and a startled shriek from Tammy.

"Oh fuck, Justin! We're being robbed!" she shouted, and she hit the ground on her belly.

Justin was a bit calmer, but immediately threw his hands up in surrender. "Hey man, calm down."

Trevon turned his head to face this man who inspired so much fear and found what appeared to be a scrawny punk dressed in a black hooded sweatshirt with a skull on the chest.

The hood was drawn up, and a black bandana and sunglasses obscured the details of his face. At the briefest glance, anyone could assume such a man was up to no good.

He brandished a firearm over his head. Guns existed in Trevon's time, but the ages had changed them, making them more accurate, more lethal, easier and less frequent to reload, and dangerously compact. This man had walked into Pump N' Go with the gun in the pocket of his baggy pants or sweatshirt and drawn no suspicion or notice.

Trevon turned around and faced the criminal, unafraid but wary. "I was in the midst of something when you interrupted, villain," he said. "I lament whatever misfortune brought you to such depths of moral bankruptcy, but surely there are alternatives?"

"Not easy ones," the nervous man croaked, his hand shaking as he lowered it from the sky, bringing it to point at Trevon. The seasoned warrior noted that at the angle the gun was pointing, it would clip him in the shoulder at best. Such a hit would deal no major damage and signal Dracula, who could be here within seconds in his defense now that the sun was behind the clouds and fixing to set. "Why—why do you have a whip?"

Trevon smirked. When on his hip, the Angel's Tear appeared to be a brown leather bullwhip, not unlike any other. But once he held it in his hand, its indestructible silver chains would appear, and the three prongs of the Holy Trinity would

glimmer divinely under the ghastly fluorescent lighting of the gas station interior. “Call it a family heirloom,” he said.

“D-drop it.”

Trevon snatched the whip in a rapid movement and snapped it into the man’s arm, causing a spurt of crimson to streak into the air and paint the potato chip display in the blood of a sinner. Then, Trevon crouched low, scarcely dodging a bullet from another man he’d pretended not to notice, turning the Angel’s Tear on him. It wrapped around his leg and shredded his ankle as Trevon tugged the chain of his whip with both hands. The second man let out a cry as he went ankles-over-ass in the air, then a groan of pain after his cranium clunked against the linoleum floor.

Whatever bystanders were left quickly ran out the door—some of them taking their prospective purchases with them, Trevon noted gravely.

“Tammy, call the cops!” Justin shouted, perspiration pooling in his armpits as he hopped over the counter and locked the front door, causing a neon sign that read “Open” to suddenly say “Closed”.

Tammy fumbled for her cellphone, which Trevon eyed jealously. Getting phones was another thing he needed to accomplish in the next day or so—perhaps using prepaid plans rather than contracts they couldn’t yet commit to. He saw a pair of them in the W-Mart for sale earlier and almost bought them on the spot, but—

“Trevon, what the Hell are you suddenly daydreaming about?” Justin blurted out, apparently noticing the bored look on the monster slayer’s face.

“Sorry. Nothing.”

The scrawny red-haired girl’s hands were shaking as she returned to the conversation. “Hang on one sec, in all the stress, I forgot my passcode for a minute there. Dialing now!” Before Tammy could input the 9 in 9-1-1, though, the windows and doors shattered as a veritable torrent of vampire bats screeched shrilly as they invaded the Pump N’ Go, descending upon the two men on the ground like piranhas as they ripped their flesh from their bones and caused bubbling puddles of blood to fill the gas station floor. When the bats began to coalesce into a womanly shape moments later, only skeletons were left.

Dracula appeared, just after the nick of time, wearing a plain T-Shirt that was just a shade whiter than her ghostly pale skin. Her eyes had gone to solid red as she flung herself against Trevon’s chest and rubbed her face against him and inhaled.

Trevon stood utterly still, making the most awkward eye contact of his life with the man that he had hoped until a moment ago might be his future employer.

“Trevon, Darling,” Dracula sobbed dramatically, “did those bad men try to hurt you?”

“I had it handled,” he said, his body tense as she rubbed herself all over him like a needy kitten. “We were going to report them to the authorities.”

“Well don’t worry now,” she told him, “I’ll take care of everything.” She turned her monstrous stare on Tammy next. “What are you looking at, girl?”

“W-what?!” Tammy said, dropping her phone. A terrible shattering sound indicated that she broke her screen, but no one in the room acted like they noticed.

Dracula turned around with her back to Trevon, but reached back to put her arms around his neck possessively. She leaned into him, and against his best judgment, he supported her weight with his hands on her waist out of reflex.

“I understand that you are a mortal woman with whom Trevon is to be employed. As his coworker, if you wish to continue to exist, you must abide by the following rules— Firstly, you’re a virgin, I can tell from the smell of you. Therefore, you are my blood bitch from now on. Once a week, I will drink of you, and I will drink enough that you will need to take the next day off of work.” She turned her gaze on Justin. “Mark that down.”

“Y-yes, ma’am,” Justin grunted, ripping some paper off the receipt roll to jot her comments down with the pen clipped to his breast pocket.

“Good. Now,” she looked back at the quivering Tammy. “You must not ever physically make contact with Trevon or I will skin you alive and eat you, piece by piece until only your torso and head are left. I will keep you alive as I do it for as long as I possibly can, fully conscious so that you may know

the truest depths of regret. The same also goes if you make prolonged eye contact with him.”

“I’ll just...schedule them at different times,” Justin croaked.

Dracula let out a little purr of contentment and spun back around. “Did you rent a movie?”

“I...uh...”

“I’ve got some movies in my backpack!” Tammy blurted out anxiously. “Please don’t kill me! You can have them!”

“Those are *my* movies,” Justin noted, to which Tammy shot him about the dirtiest look a mere mortal could be expected to conjure up.

Dracula snapped her fingers without removing her blood-drunk gaze from Trevon’s eyes. “You have ten seconds to put the movies in my hand, girl. Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six. Five—Very good!”

Tammy was back behind the counter before Dracula even looked at the films in her hands. “Let’s see. Evil Dead 2. Army of Darkness. Twilight—”

“That one isn’t mine,” Justin quickly inserted.

Dracula studied it, her brow raising with curiosity the longer she stared. “It’s a vampire and human love story?”

“It’s...really bad,” Tammy warned her, her voice still trembling along with her entire body. “Super cheesy. But the actors are all hot.”

“It’ll do. Good job, minion,” Dracula chirped. “Congratulations on the new job, darling.”

Even Trevon was intimidated by her bravado and her sheer madness. His penis was as hard as the tip of the Longinus Spear, and if Dracula pressed her body any closer to him, he wondered what control he’d have over his faculties.

Why was this cruel insanity working for him? “Th-thank you,” he said at last.

She stood on her tiptoes and pressed her forehead against his lips. “Kiss me here,” she said.

To his horror, he obeyed, his hands squeezing her waist as he did so. Her skin was cool but not cold, and he wondered how much that had to do with the fact that she’d just fed.

“I will clean this mess up,” Dracula said, turning to Justin as sirens started blaring in the distance outside. “And I will handle the police and magically repair the windows immediately afterwards.”

“Thanks for that,” Justin murmured, just staring blankly, clearly traumatized. Trevon couldn’t blame the man. He was on the brink of madness himself. “Uh. Trevon, right?” Justin was looking at the monster hunter now, his leery gaze filled with tension that could crack at any moment.

“Yes,” Trevon grunted, pulling his hands away from the vampire in front of him as though he’d suddenly sobered up. “That is my name.”

“Welcome aboard, I guess. Do you have a bank account?”

“Oh. No, actually. Is it possible to pay in cash?”

Justin frowned. “Well, actually—”

Dracula hissed and flashed her fangs at him in warning.

“I’m sure we can find a way to make that work,” he said.

“You’d better go,” Dracula moaned in his ear. “As hot-blooded as I am right now, I won’t be able to focus on cleaning up if you’re here.”

“What hours do you prefer?” he asked Trevon, and to his own amusement, the warrior found himself looking to Dracula for her suggestion. “Hmmm. We don’t want you working all day while I’m asleep because then you’ll be tired all night when I’m awake. And we don’t want you working all night while I’m awake and then sleeping all day.”

Tammy chimed in, her breathing sounding less ragged but still obviously frightened. “How about he works 11 AM-7 PM? I usually work night shifts, so it won’t change my schedule much if he, uh, needs to avoid me.”

“Good blood bitch,” Dracula purred, clapping her hands together. “How about that, Trevvy? I typically only get up around 6 PM anyway, so you can spend at least five hours with me every night before you need to sleep.”

“Can we...talk about this later?”

“I’ll plan 11-7 for you then,” Justin grunted, eager to be done with this. “Just let me know if it changes, uh, ma’am.”

“I like this era. These mortals learn quickly who’s in charge,” Dracula giggled as she turned back to Trevon. “Why can’t you be as easy as them to bend to my will?” She jutted out her lip in a flirty pout, but her eyes were still blood red, and her fangs were still out. Somehow, though, Trevon didn’t find himself repulsed.

His priorities were shifting rapidly. Right now all he could think about was what her skin tasted like, as good as she smelled. He wondered at how warm her insides would feel once he impaled her—and not with a weapon.

He turned and cast a defeated look at the only other living man in the room and sighed. “What is it about crazy, evil women, Justin?”

The blond man with spiky hair just shrugged sympathetically. “I don’t know, man. I wish I could tell you, but I do get it.”

(Dracula)



When she finally returned to the motel room, she found herself a little embarrassed at just how aggressively flirty she'd been in front of the mortals. She half-expected Trevon to have lost his attraction to her in the space of time that they'd been separated.

She had sent him home so she could use magic to clean the blood and bones out of the Pump N' Go, and then use her powers of mesmerism on the cops to make them go away. She then used the same powers on Tammy to make her physically unable to look him in the eye or touch him without feeling like her skin was set on fire. Admittedly, she'd used a bit too much magic for that, but it was worth it, just in case.

As she stepped into their room at the Weekend Inn, she didn't immediately see Trevon, but the TV was on, and he had

already set up the DVD player she stole from another room and put Twilight on. It was still in the menu screen, the cursor highlighting the “Play Movie” words, ready to go.

She smiled with relief at that. “Trevon, Darling?” she called out. “Are you home?”

“I’m in the bathroom,” he said. “Drying up. I took a shower.”

She bit her lip as excitement bubbled up inside her. He freshened up! For her! This could only be a good sign. She looked down at what she was wearing—a blood-splattered plain white v-neck T-Shirt that hung down to her thighs. It wasn’t at all date attire, but it did give off a cozy, cute impression. But she needed to be more aggressive.

There had been progress in the Pump N’ Go. He had been into her then, even going so far as to kiss her forehead and squeeze her waist of his own free will. He found her attractive and was tempted by her. Perhaps the shower meant that he had already resolved to unite flesh with her.

But she couldn’t take chances. She had to seduce him, no matter what.

She snapped her fingers, and in an instant, her hair was perfect, her skin was flawless, her clothes were clean, and her preferred fragrance was renewed. She even dolled up her face with some magical makeup. In particular, she added more blush to her cheeks, some eyeliner, and longer lashes. The eyelashes were so that she could bite her lip and flutter them at

him in the middle of the movie when the two actors had their first kiss.

“They’re kissing, Darling,” she practiced, her hands clasped over her breasts, batting her eyes cutely. “Do you think we... maybe...”

She burst out into some wild giggles that she fought to restrain. When she calmed down she considered her outfit one last time. It was cozy, sure. But it wasn’t sexy. It wasn’t necessarily inviting intimacy. But she could think of an easy way to remedy that.

Dracula slipped out of her panties and reached inside her shirt to unclasp her bra, letting it drop to the floor. As they snuggled, eventually he would notice her hardened nipples poking through her shirt, or maybe his hand would land on her ass and he’d realize she was naked underneath. From there, he wouldn’t be able to resist.

Trevon walked out of the bathroom wearing a blue sleeveless muscle shirt and a pair of black shorts that were tight enough to hint at the magnitude of his endowment.

“Unholy fuck,” Dracula whimpered as she watched him dry his hair in the mirror.

“What was that?” Trevon grunted, trying to find her in the mirror’s reflection for a second, but of course she wasn’t there.

She nearly laughed at that. “Nothing, Darling,” she cooed. With a leap, she launched herself onto the bed, and Trevon looked back at her to see what she was doing. The T-Shirt rode

up as she got on hands and knees, having belly-flopped onto the mattress. She was in the process of turning around and sitting normally, facing the TV when she realized that, in the process, she had given Trevon a perfect view of her ass—and probably more.

Good, she thought. The sooner he's aware of what treasures await him the better.

Trevon's eyes seemed to glow with reverence for a fraction of a second, but he quickly turned back to the mirror. "Are you looking forward to the movie? It'll be interesting to see how this technology works firsthand."

"I'm looking forward to watching it with *you*," she cooed, rubbing her legs together. She held her arms out expectantly, her hands closing and opening, beckoning him. "I'm cold, Trevvy."

She could see his mind at war with itself as she watched his face. She knew what the old Trevon would say. "No you're not, you're undead. You can't feel the temperature unless you want to." Or maybe he'd just say, "If you're cold, you're sitting on a perfectly good blanket."

But that is not what *tonight's* Trevon said. After a few seconds' pause, he turned back, eyed her up and down, swallowed, and said, "I'll be right there."

Chapter 10

(Trevon)

Trevon had gone insane. That was the only explanation for what was unfolding. He was sitting on a motel room mattress, watching a romantic movie about a vampire and a human falling in love—with Dracula. With Vladimira Tepes, the Princess of Darkness herself.

He could smell her scent in the air beside him. She made no secret of her affection for him, and he was beginning to suspect it was genuine. How should he feel about that? And what was this treacherous feeling in his own heart—and stomach. His guts writhed and turned over as nerves took him. He couldn't remember having this level of anxiety since he was a boy, trying to pass his whip proficiency examinations.

Oh, but how he longed for the simplicity of those days. The world was black and white. Beaumonts good, monsters bad. Beaumonts kill monsters, then ride off into the sunset on their white horses.

Trevon could not afford to mistake the Countess's affection for him for a change of heart. She had proved time and again, as recently as twenty minutes ago, that she was more than comfortable with a little murder for her own selfish ends. Well...

Except that her latest killing was for his benefit. In her own, misguided way, she had tried to protect him. If not protect, then punish those who would dare to draw weapons against

him. If that wasn't true love, it was genuine care and concern. Perhaps...not the healthiest variety of it, but he couldn't fault her that. She was a vampire, after all. This was progress.

And that's how he had to choose to see this scenario. Slowly, he allowed his arm to extend over his head as though he were stretching. He even added a little sound effect. "Ahhh," he said. "This movie is absurd. The lore is ridiculous."

"I don't know," Dracula sighed, furrowing her brow as her gaze focused on the screen. "I have to admit, I might be sold on this film. The woman is a little annoying, but I identify with Edward. He just wants to protect her and knows he's a danger to her. If you were any normal man, I would likely feel the same way."

Trevon froze with his arms over his head for an oddly long time. Long enough that Dracula took notice and scowled at him. "Hurry it up, Darling, I know you're trying to put your arm around me. Don't make me wait."

Trevon smirked at that and lowered his arm, her bratty words somehow relaxing him somewhat. His arm rested over her shoulders and he couldn't help but notice how warm she felt. "Your skin isn't as cool as it usually is."

"I just drank blood from living mortals, and the strength of our bond has made my heart begin to circulate my own blood from time to time," she cooed, grinning at him and batting eyelashes that seemed longer than usual. "Shh. The movie's still on. Snuggle me more."

The forwardness was jarring, but not exactly unexpected. Not long ago they'd been literally at one another's throats. Ever since they came here, though, she'd changed. Her affection for him seemed to grow by the second. It was a problematic affection, too—obsessive even. Her disdain for him interacting with other women even on a formal basis was going to cause trouble for them one day, he had no doubt.

He found himself blinking with disbelief when Dracula leaned closer against him. His arm, seemingly acting of its own volition, moved down from her shoulder and went around her lower back. His hand found its place on her hip, and as he gave a little squeeze, she shifted in her seat to move closer to him and reward his quiet act of affection.

“Did he just call her a spider monkey?” Dracula gasped, pointing at the TV screen in astonishment. “What a delightfully macabre sounding creature!”

“Indeed. Does such a beast exist?”

Dracula grinned, turning her head to look at him. “We should get our own apartment, you know. If we have a legal writ stating that we dwell on the property, I can convert it to my new castle and start experimenting with magic. I bet I could make a spider monkey—imagine, an eight-armed ape with many red eyes and sharp mandibles.”

“Sounds positively horrific,” Trevon muttered.

He chanced a look down at her legs, and that's when he noticed—her hoodie had hiked up quite a lot, and Vladimira was not wearing any panties. His eyes went wide and became

fixated on that point for conspicuously long, but if the vampiress noticed his gaze, she made no comment, nor did she adjust her posture or attempt to obscure anything.

Hers was about the prettiest pussy Trevon had ever seen—and he'd seen his share. Her slit was pale and its line thin, promising tightness just beyond the folds. The longer he stared, the more he was sure that he was supposed to be staring, that this was some trap that the Countess had laid for him, and he was falling right into it.

He considered his options. Firstly, the clearest, brightest, most obvious option was to embrace the madness and fuck Dracula here on the motel bed while the first Twilight film played on the cheap TV screen as the backdrop to their activities. That option was growing more compelling by the moment, but he couldn't discount the other possibilities. While it certainly was tempting to give into his lust and growing affection for the Princess of Evil, it contained some risks and moral implications that were so obvious he didn't bother to dwell on them.

The second option was to simply play dumb all evening and avoid things escalating. That was probably the smart option, but then—why had he let it go this far already if he were going to do that? At this point, as a man if not a Beaumont, he owed it to himself and the Countess to at least not send mixed signals.

The final option was to embrace death. If he slayed Dracula now, he would die as well, but she was vulnerable. It would be

easy. He looked down at her face, her side profile. Her pale beauty made her seem more like a goddess of the night than a vampire. After a moment, she looked up at him, catching him staring, and that grin spread on her face, making his heart beat. What's more—he swore hers was beating, too. What did that mean?

So very vulnerable...

But no. In the end, he couldn't do it. He could not bring himself to seduce *or* kill Dracula. Even if it meant pacifying her with love, both options represented sins too heinous for him to consider.

And then, just as he was sure he'd steeled his resolve for good, she crawled into his lap, straddling him, and pressed her nose against his nose. Her red eyes stared into his blues. She let him breathe a few times as he looked at her in stunned silence, inhaling, exhaling, holding, releasing. His hands—what were his hands even doing?

Oh. That's right. The second Dracula migrated into his lap, his hands cupped her bare ass and had yet to let go. The texture of her skin was so smooth it made him shiver at its perfection. Despite her power over him and her supernatural strength, she felt so small and pliable in his arms, on his lap—her flesh so inviting.

She licked her lips. "Kiss me."

"I...I can't."

“Yes, you can. Kiss me, Beaumont,” she urged him, seeing the weakness for her in his eyes, perhaps.

Trevon met her halfway, raising one hand to the back of her head, he pulled her head toward him until her lips were against his. “Mmmf!” she murmured, her voice too sweet and adorable for a demonic Vampire of Hell.

Trevon’s fingers wasted no time exploring her body, one hand remaining on her ass as the other entered her hoodie from the back. As she bit his lip and coaxed his tongue out, his fingers danced over her skin.

Dracula’s arms encircled Trevon’s neck. “You’re mine, Beaumont,” she whispered. “All mine, all mine, all mine. Say it.”

“I won’t say that. You ask me to lower myself to such submission. I refuse.”

Dracula nipped at his cheek in punishment, but it was really more of a playful bite than one of aggression. He scarcely reacted. He reacted far more when she started licking and sucking the blood that leaked out of his cheek. “You’re always acting so tough and hard to get, but you want me, Trevon. At least admit that.”

Caught up in the passion, Trevon refused to say those words but kissed her neck instead, offering his own series of bites, which made his lover giggle.

“Say it, Trevon, please. Say something at least—something so I know where we stand.”

“I don’t know where we stand,” he said flatly. “But right now, you’re sitting on my lap, dampening my leg with your wet, wicked pussy. I intend to purge the evil from it once and for all.”

Dracula cackled as she tightened the grip of her arms and started thrusting her hips rhythmically. “Calling me out, huh? It’s true. My pussy’s wet as fuck for you, Beaumont. In fact, I’ve never been this soaked in all my undeath.” She paused all movement for a moment, grabbed his head with both hands, stared him in the eyes, and commanded, “Fuck me.”

He frowned at the direct order, hard though it was to refuse. “Possibly. But if we go that far tonight, there’s no turning back.”

“I don’t wanna turn back, Trevvy,” she mewled, smearing her wetness on his leg again with renewed undulations and thrusts. “I want you to be mine. Just—if you won’t fuck me tonight, then at least say you’re mine. Say it, please.”

“Where are these feelings coming from?” he asked, trying to steady her. “Have you questioned them?”

She blinked thoughtfully, but her hips continued their movements. “I don’t care. I need you. I need you like I haven’t needed anyone since I died—the first time,” she clarified. “I never feel this way about anyone. I won’t let you go, so don’t ever ask me to!”

He shook his head and put his palms on the mattress. “This is too much.”

“Like Hell it is,” she hissed, grabbing his wrists. With all her might, she forced his hands up and back onto her ass, then just as he was preparing his next protest, she stripped off her hoodie in one fluid motion.

Trevon stared at her in complete astonishment. The perfection of her figure could not be denied. Could it be resisted? He didn’t know, but it seemed an impossible ask. He felt his skin grow hot and sweaty at the sight of her nude figure, her lissome, pale body, her perfect, round breasts, her tempting flower, the way it all came together in a series of curves uniquely her.

Her hands found his throat, and he didn’t complain. “See? I’m yours, Trevon. This body—it’s yours to love and cherish however you want. Tell me you don’t want this.”

He shook his head, his mouth slightly ajar, as his eyes took in the sight of her and his ears just barely processed what she’d said.

“I want you to...to love me,” she said, her cheeks somehow flushing with the words. “I want you to treasure me and only me. Imagine—us together forever, wrapped up in sheets like these, but better, making love and giving one another pleasure until the Earth itself dies and turns into a sun-dried husk.” She sighed happily, baring her fangs in a wide grin. “Imagine it, Trevon.”

“I don’t deny it has some appeal—”

“Baby, please,” she said, squeezing his throat, making him choke as she cut him off. “Stop this silliness, Trevvy. Don’t

make me just take what I need from you and pretend you don't need it too. I'd really prefer you gave yourself to me willingly, but I don't know if I can trust my heart around you when you say no too many times when you really mean yes."

Trevon choked and hacked, tapping Dracula's hands, and she let go of her grip after a big eye roll and a high pitched groan. "What is it, Darling?" she asked in irritation.

She had shown him her true self now. Trevon had seen the monster for what she was. Her threats, her violence, her mad passion—all of it laid bare at his feet, with nothing left to hide. Intellectually, he knew that this was the turning point where he should decide to slay her once and for all, giving up his own life to die a hero.

But...there was something about crazy, evil women that really polished his scabbard.

"I'm yours," he said, coughing, making her eyes light up with surprise. "I'm yours, and you're mine. But—with some conditions."

"What?!" she shouted, so excited that she hovered a foot off of his lap. "Name it!"

"No murdering women just because they look at me," he began.

Her lip quivered and brows furrowed with indignation. "You ask the impossible. You're my territory. If some horny human slut comes around shaking her bosom in your face, it'd be dishonorable for me not to kill her."

“That’s—” His voice trailed off and he let out a sigh. “Well, that’s something I think you’re going to need to work on, because we can’t leave a pile of bodies in our wake. Technology is different in this time period. There are surveillance devices everywhere, and forensic science has come a long way. If you murder every woman that finds me attractive—well, you might be murdering every single woman.”

She smirked. “Pretty confident in yourself, aren’t you, handsome?”

He grabbed her by the waist and pulled her down from the air and back onto his lap. “Compromise with me here.”

She pouted. “One murder...a month. Tops.”

Trevon considered it, tapping his chin in thought. “One murder a month. And you have to leave no trace and cover your tracks. And ideally it should be a criminal or something, not an innocent woman.”

“The greatest crime is wagging tits in my man’s face,” Dracula said, pounding one fist into the opposite palm. Incidentally, it caused her own perfect breasts to jiggle in a rather charming way.

“That is...not a crime,” Trevon groaned. “Look—clearly, we need to take this slower.”

Her nostrils flared as she crossed her arms, making a face of offense and fury. “What?! But—you’re mine! You said so!”

“I did, but you can’t agree to my terms.”

“Because your terms make no sense, Trevvy! Think for a second. Let’s say some dumb whore comes up to you and kisses you on the mouth or the dick—”

“Interesting scenario but go on,” Trevon noted, arching a brow.

“Obviously, she deserves to be impaled on a spike and left to die over the course of several days, right?” she said, spreading her palms as though she expected to find common ground here.

Trevon closed his eyes for a moment, inhaled the deepest, darkest breath of his life, and fought not to sigh as he exhaled. “No,” he said quietly. “No, that is a case of the punishment not fitting the crime.”

“But you’re *mine!*” she hissed, throwing her arms around his shoulder and pulling his face into her chest. “I love you, I love you, I love you, I love you—”

“I’m starting to see your logic a bit,” he muttered from between her breasts. “Maybe scale back the proclamations of love until—”

“But I love you with all my heart,” she declared proudly, hugging his head tightly. “Listen. Shh. Stop talking. Don’t even breathe for a second.”

Curious what she was getting at, Trevon obeyed. He waited to see what would happen—but it was a sound that he was meant to hear.

Ba-dump. Ba-dump. Ba-dump.

Dracula's heart was beating in her chest, just as he'd noticed before. "I hear it," he said.

"My heart beats for you," she cooed in his ear. "Maybe because of our connection. I don't want to break our bond—not by magic. Not now, not ever. I want to be tangled up with you, feeling this love until forever ends. Trevvy—I love you!"

"You've established—"

"Do you love me, too?" she asked.

Trevon's anal sphincter clenched so tightly he could have cracked a walnut with his rectum. "Let's just agree that I'm yours, you're mine—and no murdering women just because they talk to me."

"If they rub their tits in your face, then—"

"Fine," he muttered. "That's fair. If a random woman rubs her bare breasts in my face, sure, kill her. A scenario like that isn't happening anyway. But let's keep the hypothetical murder quick, alright? Impaling for days isn't something I could stomach or forgive you for."

"Her breasts don't have to be bare. Hang on—I have a list of killable offenses I wrote down on a receipt, let me go get it." Dracula leapt off of his lap and cutely scampered to the desk in the corner, grabbing a tiny strip of paper. She raised it to her face and squinted at it, still perfectly naked. "Are you ready?"

Trevon let his sigh out loudly and proudly this time. "Fine. Let's hear it."

“Okay—Vladimira Tepes’s list of killable offenses against her beloved. One. Killing him. Two. Sexually assaulting him. Three. Attempting to murder him.”

“These are actually fairly reasonable,” Trevon said, nodding and smiling a little with clear relief etched across his features.

“Four. Commenting on his appearance. Five. Commenting on his smell. Six. Looking into his eyes for more than three seconds. Seven. Seeing him without a shirt on—”

“I’m going to cut you off,” Trevon grunted, holding up a hand to stop her. “This list is going through a few drafts, I’ll tell you that right now.”

Dracula nodded sweetly and looked back down at the receipt. “I’ll continue. Eight. Asking him more than two questions in the same conversation. Nine—”

“How many are there on this list?”

Dracula looked up in surprise at the inquiry, then back down at the receipt. She unrolled it and followed it all the way down with her eyes. “Only seventy-three.”

Trevon covered his face with both hands and groaned. *I should have just fucked her*, he lamented.

Chapter 11

(Mary)

Bloody Mary parked her car in the motel parking lot. She remembered this place well. She killed a family of three in the room where Dracula and Trevon Beaumont now stayed. She watched them from a distance, leveraging a camera with a telephoto lens to peer into their room. They covered the windows with sheets, but they left the lights on inside. She could still see their shapes, still make out their...activities.

Imagine her surprise when she watched them kiss. The monster slayer's powerful hands entombed the naked silhouette of Countess Dracula, swallowing her up in his powerful embrace. She watched the vampiress, the powerful, formidable, domineering Dracula, paw at Trevon's chest with frenzied lust and passion as she pressed her face against his.

She ground her sex in his lap, but it didn't seem like they were actually coupling. Were they...grinding like teens in the back of a cheap minivan? Dracula and the greatest warrior of the Beaumont line, hornily humping on a motel bed?

She pulled her face away from her camera in disbelief. This...woman. This vampiric slut denied her and now settled for their common enemy? "A vampire hunter, Vladimira?" she growled. "*Really?*"

The plan had changed. This was just too delicious not to exploit. Mary saw what Dracula had and wanted it—for no other reason than to take it away from her. A simple plan

formed in her mind. Very simple indeed. It didn't have to be complicated—it just had to hurt.

“So,” she purred, watching as the Countess wrapped her legs around Trevon's back as they spoke about some matter or another, “you're in love, are you? How sweet.”

She started to disassemble her camera, but kept her eyes locked on the window anyway. She couldn't see inside anymore, but the shadow cast on the sheets covering the window was enough of a visual for her to understand what was transpiring.

“It would be a pity if someone took that love away from you, Vladimira. It would be so, so sad if someone made that boy break your cold, dead heart.”

She didn't need to see anything else. Instead, she waited. Using the gifts bestowed upon her by her deathly patron, she made herself undetectable, watching from a safe distance as they went about their evening. Eventually, Dracula sat on his lap, and it seemed like they were just...watching TV together? It was such a wholesome scene that she almost vomited.

“Disgusting whore,” she hissed. Why was Trevon Beaumont worthy of such affection and she wasn't? What was he that she could not be? She shook her head, gritting her teeth in anger. With a growl, she cast off her mounting fury, taking labored but deep breaths to regain her composure.

Mary settled in her corvette seat and waited. She waited for someone to emerge, for something to change, and she got the feeling that she might be waiting for a while. But eventually, it

did happen. As morning broke, the monster hunter left the motel room, closing the door behind him. He was wearing a tight white T-Shirt that showed his herculean physique while leaving little to her imagination. Even more damning, he had donned some rather form-fitting gray sweatpants in which she easily found the outline of his heroic cock. “No wonder he’s got that bitch domesticated,” she mused with a smirk. Mary was fairly gay, but even she had to give credit where it was due. The man was a looker.

She watched with puzzlement as he walked toward the same W-Mart she had conducted her recent killing at, opting not to follow him inside. What she did do was follow him to that parking lot in her car and park in front of the entrance. He emerged a few minutes later with a plastic bag. Looking through a pair of binoculars, she saw what was inside the fairly transparent bags—two prepaid smartphones. “Off-brand Android, too,” she hissed. “Filthy human. Doesn’t he know who his lover is? She deserves the iOS app ecosystem.”

The sun was up now, which meant that Dracula would not be anytime soon. With that thought in mind, and her knowledge of the curse that bound them together, Mary knew that Trevon would have to eat eventually. She glanced around for his options, trying to understand what was within range and where the monster slayer might choose to go to get his meal.

She didn’t have to think for long. For breakfast, the options were limited to W-Mart’s hot food section, which he didn’t select, and the nearby gas station. Setting her sights on the Pump N’ Go, Mary started up her car and drove to it, settling

her vehicle in the parking lot before Trevon could arrive. Sure as shit, she saw him plodding his way toward her from the W-Mart parking lot, occasionally glancing excitedly into his plastic shopping bag.

Mary got out of her corvette and walked inside, thinking up her cover story. With a quick snap, she shifted her appearance to resemble a blonde twenty-something she'd eaten a few months back, bathing in the woman's blood before drinking it all up. One of her gifts was the ability to take on the appearance of those she'd recently slain. She usually used it to tempt other victims while never revealing her own true appearance—she'd made that mistake in the past and it made her life on the run rather tedious and annoying.

This would be a rather novel use of her powers. She looked down at her chest, admiring the borrowed tits for a moment just as Trevon wandered inside. He dodged a greeting from the clerks at the front counter—who seemed eerily anxious to see him, she noted, like they'd been warned about him or something. Next thing she knew, Trevon was heading in her direction.

Mary straightened her posture and walked past him, pretending to squeeze by. She let her chest brush over his back, and with some unexpected amusement, he flinched at the contact. Was he really that innocent? He didn't seem to be so virginal just before sunrise. The way he voraciously made out with the nude Countess seemed anything but chaste.

“Pardon me,” she breathed in his ear. “I didn’t mean to bump into you.”

“That’s fine. Good day.”

Wow, but that was a quick dismissal. She was going to have to work a bit harder. Furrowing her brow, she glanced down at the bag of phones. “Oh. Just picking up your first smartphones? Did you need help getting set up at all?”

He turned his head in her direction, arching a brow of inquiry. “That seems like a great inconvenience to you. Have you no work?”

“No job, I’m afraid,” she sighed, but didn’t elaborate. The less she said, the more intrigue she would lace in his mind, making him curious to know more. “I don’t mind taking a few minutes out of my day to help a handsome stranger.”

Trevon’s teeth clenched at the word ‘handsome’ as though its utterance physically hurt him. “Woman, I beg you not to compliment me,” he said. “It’s best if I let you go now. Thank you for your generous and friendly offer, but I must respectfully decline...for your own good.”

“Nonsense,” she cooed, placing a hand on his bicep. “I swear, my intentions are pure. All I ask is for the opportunity to help a stranger.”

Trevon motioned to a disheveled homeless man stacking change on the counter as he tried to buy a protein bar. “That man seems in need of more attention than me.”

Her composure wavered for a moment. She hadn't expected this level of resistance from the man. If she showed her true form, seducing him would be a trivial thing, but this blonde's figure was comely enough, and she was certainly pretty and nubile. Was Trevon's willpower really so strong? She'd never had to spend more than a minute or two winking and flirting to draw a man in before.

It was certain that Trevon was no normal man—that much could be gleaned from a single glance. But did his strength come with spiritual strength as well? What could be fueling his resistance? Loyalty? To Dracula? She doubted it.

Very well, she thought. It looked as though she'd have to play the long game here, planting a seed, watering it, watching it grow. It lacked the instant gratification this modern world had made her accustomed to, but perhaps that was a good thing. Destroying Dracula's heart would be so much more fulfilling if she had to sweat a bit for it.

She imagined it—the broken look on the Countess's face when she walked in on Bloody Mary riding her man, making him moan her name. She would get him to renounce her—then she'd kill them both and live forever with the memory of Dracula's utter defeat. *How does it feel to be scorned, Vladimira?* She mused. *Not very good? Not to your liking, you blood-sucking whore of Hell?*

“Are you alright?” Trevon asked, apparently having noticed the pause that she fell into.

She nodded and smiled graciously. “I am. You’re right about that man. I’m going to take care of him right now, perhaps buy him some clothes along with a proper breakfast, see what else I can do to get him back on his feet.”

Trevon nodded, looking more relieved to be rid of her than impressed. “Thank you for your offer of help with the phones. I think I’ll be able to figure it out myself. The store clerk walked me through it with one of them already.”

“Oh? And who’s the other one for?” she asked as she pretended to start walking away.

His mouth opened, but a pensive look plastered itself on his face, as though he was trying desperately to find the right word. “My roommate,” he said at last.

“Glad to hear you’re single then,” she chirped, winking as he walked away.

“I—I didn’t say—don’t tell anyone I said I’m single—”

She allowed his voice to trail off behind her as she ambled to the counter, graciously paid for the homeless gentleman’s food and a coffee, took him outside, and loaded him into her corvette. As they pulled out of the parking lot, she grabbed her knife from her purse and slashed his throat without another word.

As he bled out, she opened her coffee thermos and held it against the flowing wound, filling it about halfway. “Very nice,” she sighed. “This ought to help me take the edge off that irritating exchange.”

As she drove to her own motel across town, she tried to piece together everything she'd learned thus far. Dracula and Trevon had arrived here in Wapa Lake after hundreds of years tumbling through time and space. Now that they'd arrived, they seemed to have formed some kind of horny truce. There was no doubt in her mind from the amorous display she'd seen in the window to their room that Dracula was entirely in love with him—but the verdict was not in when it came to Trevon.

He had denied her. He had said they were only roommates, but at the same time he was quick and eager to brush Mary off as she made her forward advance. What did it mean?

She couldn't be sure about the details, but she knew it meant one thing: Trevon was not as devoted to Dracula as she was to him, and that meant he was vulnerable. She would seduce him, ravage him, and watch as the Countess's pathetic face erupted into bloody tears. And then she'd kill her, collect those tears, and bathe in the Countess's own immortal blood. Would it do anything for her, bathing in the blood of the damned? Maybe not. But she would enjoy it nonetheless.

Chapter 12

(Dracula)



Dracula did not enjoy being left alone. This wasn't a codependency trait she'd only recently developed, either. She kept her castle stocked full of monsters for a reason, and it wasn't personal security.

She hated feeling alone. And though that feeling felt the same as it always was, it seemed somehow so much worse knowing that it was Trevon who had left her behind.

Yes, he had errands to take care of during the day—and then he would sleep. Then, this afternoon he would depart from her company once more. True, she'd be fast asleep by then, hanging upside down in this closet like she currently was. But it was the fact that she'd know he wasn't there...

Human women were out there. A world full of them, scantily clad, mortal hearts filled with lust, all ready to throw

themselves at her man. She had to trust him. But did she trust him? Men were creatures of the flesh, after all—and a man as sexy as Trevon Beaumont would be constantly tested. Even God seemed to answer indecent prayers every now and then. If gods could be swayed, then could even Trevon be expected to remain forever faithful?

The surest way was to remove temptation altogether. Soon they would move out of this dingy motel room into their own apartment, and she would convert its interior to her own labyrinthine castle. She would make sure that Trevon was locked inside with her, never to leave again without her. That would be the only way she could rest easily.

But until then, she still had to rest. She closed her eyes, begging sleep to come for her. *But no! Fuck that!*

She could not sleep! She threw open the closet door and snarled at the tiny sliver of light that shone through the blanket covering the window. How could she rest knowing that her soulmate was out there in a world full of slutty pussies? She'd have to be some sort of psychopath!

“How does any woman in this world function knowing that their man could be seconds away from seduction?” she wondered aloud. There were so many women walking around half-naked when they went to W-Mart. What could she do about it, though? She couldn't alter the culture of America with a simple incantation.

But what she could do was keep a protective eye on him. She had fed recently enough to do a bit of magic. In a hurry, she

sat on the floor and closed her eyes, muttering an incantation as she harnessed her innate abilities as Vampire Lord. In front of her, a glassy white sphere took shape, slowly revealing its true form to be an eye. It floated in the air in front of her, awaiting her command as soon as she finished the spell.

“Go find Trevon,” she said. “If a woman speaks to him, transfer a memory of her appearance back to me. Hurry! Before his dick gets wet!”

The eyeball swayed in the air for a moment before finding its equilibrium and blasting off. It thumped against the door, splattering in a white, messy gunk, and Dracula let out her frustration with a sigh.

She summoned another eye and gave it the same instructions. This time, she opened the door for it first, sending it on its way. “Remember,” she said, “don’t be seen!”

She watched the floating eyeball go, her own eyes following it until she noticed the smell of smoke in the air. The sunlight leaked through the doorway in small amounts, singeing her skin.

The Countess closed the door with a hiss, then leapt face first onto the bed, so full of strange and unfamiliar feelings. Feelings that struck her as very mortal.

Her magical bond with Trevon was surely to blame, at least in part. The things she felt now she would have laughed at scant days ago. Yearnings and impulses that had been out of character before were now all she could think about.

What if they got married? Had a child? Ten children? What if they spent their nights together sharing a home, her cooking him food that would satisfy his human palate, while he hunted for nubile virgins that she could drink from? What if—what if he kissed her every time he walked in the door, told her how much he missed her throughout the day? Better yet, what if he never, ever left her to begin with? If he spent all day, every day, looking at her and only her, accepting the pleasure she could give him over and over and over again?

She clutched a pillow to her breast and rolled around, screaming into it—partly out of frustration at emotions she couldn't comprehend, partly out of happiness for the love that she'd found. Her feet kicked behind her excitedly, and soon she was giggling like a little girl—until she rolled off the bed. She bumped her head on the ground, let out a grunt of surprise, and dropped the pillow, standing up straight.

Taking a breath to steady herself, she felt the air flood inside her dead, unnecessary lungs. But everything felt warmer, closer to life since she got tangled up with him.

Dracula walked over to the mirror and tapped it, then used her sharp nails to etch a subtle rune into its corner. “Mirror on the motel wall, nestled by the bathroom stall, show the eye that serves me well, let's send slutty cunts to Hell.”

Strictly speaking, the incantation wasn't necessary with the amount of power Dracula possessed, but she was old-fashioned and liked the performance of speaking a spell aloud. Admittedly, that one sounded less proper than most of her

others. Less like a spell and more like...well, she couldn't quite say.

In any case, the spell worked. Soon the reflection of the room behind her disappeared as the mirror fogged over. When it was completely covered, Dracula reached out her hand and wiped it clean, using the sleeve of her bat hoodie.

Her heart jumped in her chest as she saw Trevon as though he was right in front of her, looking as handsome as always. "Oh Trevvy," she cooed, folding her hands by her cheek with hearts in her eyes. "You look so handsome. And just as I suspected, you aren't fucking any other women. Good job, baby!"

He couldn't hear her praises, but he looked up suddenly after grabbing something from the shelf. A shadow appeared in the corner of the mirror's image, then grew larger. Dracula perceived that someone was approaching.

It was a woman! And a hot, young blonde, too! She snarled and her hands balled into fists at her sides as she watched. "Maybe nothing will happen," she soothed herself. "Maybe the woman won't even notice him or—"

But of course she noticed him. She noticed him and even made a show of walking in the snug space behind him, rubbing her slutty boobs against his back. She watched Trevon's expression as she did that—his eyes bulged wide and he blushed, but to his credit, when the woman started talking to him, she could tell he made every effort to dismiss her, never even properly raising his gaze.

“That’s my boy,” the Countess cooed approvingly, even as her blood boiled while the woman persisted. “Tell that bitch off.”

But the longer she watched the scene unfold, the more she realized the obvious truth—this world wasn’t safe for Trevon. For all his downplaying of its sexy perils, this woman was proving her right. She had to accelerate her plan. Vladimira couldn’t sit on her hands and wait like a submissive housewife each night, knowing that Trevon was having hundreds of women every hour throw themselves at him.

“I’ll keep you safe, baby,” she murmured. “I promise—these wicked women won’t get their fingers on you.”

He would be so grateful when he finally tasted her love and all the treats she had to offer him. For the security of their future together, she’d need to make sure that came to pass sooner rather than later. She allowed last night to skate by with only a proclamation of loyalty—but it felt like Trevon was placating her rather than embracing her. “Well, not for long,” she grunted.

Tonight she would seduce him. She would give him so much love, validation, comfort, and pleasure that it physically hurt him to walk away from her.

She watched the reflection with relief to see the woman finally take the hint and walk away, instead luring some disheveled man at the counter outside by paying for his purchase. She struggled to understand what had just happened there. Did she settle on seducing the homeless man? It felt...

unlikely. She wished she could direct the eye to follow the blonde, but without a castle, her magic was limited and the spell could only be used to follow a single target until it expired.

Still—the dryness of Trevon’s genitals was safe and secure for now, and though a few more women passed by Trevon on his way to the counter, they seemed to only notice him for a passing second—drinking in looks with their lustful, whorish eyes, but never actually approaching.

The Countess returned to the bed, abandoning the mirror for a moment to process what had just transpired. Trevon rejected a beautiful woman easily. He even looked uncomfortable with her advances. And while that evil harlot’s attempts on his purity were troubling, the other women in the gas station were happy to let Trevon simply exist without making a pass at him. Could it be? Might she be worried about nothing?

“No,” she decided. “I must remain vigilant. If one woman attempts to claim his seed, then at least one woman will each day. Over all the days in each year, that’s three-hundred and sixty-five women. Across all those hundreds of women, he may encounter one in a moment of weakness and be forced to let her suck him off or worse.” She didn’t know what she’d do if she ever walked in on something like that. Just the thought of it cast a red glow across the walls of the motel room as her aura flared and the air seemed to shudder around her.

“Tonight I must seal the deal,” she decided, hugging the pillow again. “Tonight we make love—or I’ll be forced to kill

us both.”

Chapter 13

(Trevon)

Trevon had errands to do before his first shift at the gas station began at eleven in the morning. He'd never felt so mundane in his entire life. Part of him absolutely hated the fact that he was running around the neighborhood talking to potential landlords, buying groceries, picking up prepaid phones, and just generally trying to act the part of a modern man. Another part of him enjoyed it.

There was an unmistakable comfort to this low pressure lifestyle. Not having to worry about killing monsters and putting himself in danger day in and day out was already quite the comfort. His past, his training at the hands of brutal taskmasters felt so very far away. At the moment, the largest, most indomitable stress in his life was the threat of giving into his lust for Mira. Dracula. Whatever.

“This unit is pretty basic. One bed, one bath, a living room with a kitchenette, and two closets. I'm afraid you and your ___”

“Partner,” he muttered.

“Yes, your partner might find it a little cramped.”

Trevon shook his head dismissively. “Space isn't our concern. Price is.”

“Well, a room of this size and level of...disrepair...” the landlord grumbled, a portly man named Steve-O who smelled

of cabbage and cheese, “My asking price is one grand per month, plus utilities. I’ll also need a two month deposit.”

Trevon wasn’t worried about the price. Mira could work her magic and talk the man down in her uniquely persuasive way. Although it was unethical, he didn’t see much choice, at least not at the moment. Whatever advantages they had, they would have to use.

“The price seems fair,” he grunted noncommittally, “Would you be able to meet again tonight? I’d bring my partner along and let her have a look and meet you herself.”

“I should be able to pry myself away from the TV long enough to do that,” Steve-O answered, nodding half-heartedly. “Sure thing. It’s a date.”

“Very well. Thank you for showing me all the properties you have available.”

“I’m surprised you didn’t take one of the bigger ones,” he said, arching an eyebrow at Trevon. “Will such a small space really be enough for you?”

In truth, it probably wouldn’t have been if his companion wasn’t able to conjure space out of thin air. Within a matter of weeks, that apartment interior would resemble a gothic castle more than a dingy rat-hole.

“My girl’s a bit of a shut-in,” he explained. “She doesn’t go out much and likes a small, cozy space. We don’t live very complicated lives, so it works for us.”

“Hey, more power to ya,” Steve-O chuckled, nodding. “What I’d give to have a cuddly shut-in girlfriend. Is she a cutie?”

Trevon’s brow shined with sweat at the question. “Yes, she’s remarkably pleasing to the eye. I’ve never happened upon a more comely maiden in my life.”

“Right. Strange way of speaking you got there.”

“I’m European,” he grunted, offering a limp excuse if ever there was one.

“I gathered that. Anyway...” They shook hands and separated, Steve-O escorting Trevon to the elevator but staying behind. He imagined the landlord was going to try and tidy up the shithole before Mira came to see it with him. It would take a lot more than a bit of scrubbing to clean that place up, though.

Trevon had pretended not to notice the cigarette stains in the carpet, the peeling paint on the walls, and the general piss poor condition it was in. Those concerns were going to be trivial to manage. As he exited the apartment building, he felt some pain well up inside him, and he knew it meant that this spot was on the very edge of the distance he could handle from his bloodbonded partner.

He headed back to the motel, walking with heavy, plodding steps. His jaw set tightly as the Weekend Inn came into view and he made out the plate lettering on the door beside his room—the one that said twelve. Approaching the entrance, he knocked a few times on the door, jingled the keys outside, and

started unlocking it. The extra noise was to let Dracula know that he was coming in in case she was above the sheets. He didn't want to let the sun's rays burn her.

The compassionate thought gave him pause. He stood for a moment with the key stationary in the lock, unturning, unmoving, as he pondered the meaning of that impulse. Oh, how his mighty bloodline had fallen with him as its scion. He was supposed to slay the Countess of Transylvania—not caution her that a bit of sun might leak through the door as he returned home to her like a loving husband.

With a sliver of self-loathing, he opened the door. As he stepped inside, his eyes immediately went to the bed, but seeing nothing there, they drifted to the closet. “Mira?” he called out as he closed the door behind him. “I have returned. I got a phone for you.”

The closet door creaked open slowly, and Dracula stepped out into the room, stretching and purring like a black cat as she made her way over to him, throwing her arms around his shoulders. “Were you faithful to me?” she whispered.

“Of course.”

“Did you meet any women who pursued you?” she asked, her tone a little rougher now.

Trevon swallowed and nodded. “There was one. But she was quickly dismissed. You need not kill her.”

“Are you defending her?” she asked, her eyes slitting with suppressed anger. “Don't you think that's a little indecent of

you? Trying to stop me from punishing a temptress?”

Trevon sighed. “Can we be done with this?”

To his surprise, the vampiress giggled and pecked him on the cheek before walking over to the bed and falling backward onto her back. She rested her head on her arms, folding them behind her—grinning up at him like a cat eyeing a mouse in a trap.

“So, you met a landlord already? How productive, Trevvy, Darling. You must really be eager for my praise.” She spread her legs, revealing a lacy pair of red panties that were now visible beneath her hoodie.

Trevon controlled himself not to stare. “I want to move us into a more stable situation sooner rather than later. Having an actual address of our own where you can use your magic is that last step we must take—that’s all.” He tossed her a cellphone, which she caught. “Here. My number is already in there. I also put our potential landlord in, as well as the gas station in case you need to get a hold of me while I’m at work—but don’t abuse that. I don’t want to get a reputation.”

“As a man loyal to his true love?” she asked, her brow arched quizzically. “I should think mortals would understand the appeal of that. The only ones who might protest would be ___”

“Don’t say it—”

“Temptresses,” she spat out. “Disgusting whores—like that blonde bitch who smeared her tits into your back this

morning.”

He blinked at her, stunned. “You were watching me?”

“I was,” she admitted, pouting. “You were good. I’m not angry at you—but that woman was out of line.”

Trevon closed his eyes for a moment and sat on the bed beside her. “Mira—this kind of jealousy—”

She sat up suddenly, her eyes glimmering with a rebuttal. “But I was right! I said it would happen and it happened! Trevvy, please,” she whined, tackling him and bringing him down against the mattress. Next thing he knew, she was straddling him again—a position he was growing more and more familiar with. “I want you to fuck me tonight. When you get back from work, make love to me. I want you to cum inside me until I’m so full of your love that my womb reawakens and I get pregnant with your lovechild.”

His eyes bulged at the insane words being levied against him. “Is that possible?”

“If we believe in our love, anything is possible,” she said, her brows knitting as her hands squeezed his shoulders. “Promise me tonight’s the night.”

“Will you feel more secure if I say yes?” he asked. He spoke with a low tone, feeling muscles spasm in his bicep as he yearned to pull her against him right that instant.

“Oh, for sure!” she squealed. “I’ll feel sooo much more secure and happy with our situation once you take my virginity. When I know I’m really yours, then I’m sure my

jealousy will be far less pronounced. It makes sense, right?” she asked.

The revelation that she was a virgin was instantly shocking, but he nodded cautiously, giving nothing away on his face. “Some measure of sense, at least. As much sense as you can make.”

She bent down and pressed her lips against his as her groin ground against his. “Can you feel the heat down there, baby?” she whispered. “I’m so wet already just thinking about it. If I don’t get what I need tonight—” she started cackling for a moment, her eyes going wild, “I don’t fucking know what I’ll do.”

“I understand,” he said, pulling her off of him and standing. Turning around, his erection knocked a lamp off the nightstand, but he managed to catch it in time. “Very well. In the name of keeping the humans of Wapa Lake safe, and in pacifying the vile Countess—I will do my part.”

“Whatever you need to tell yourself, Darling,” she cooed and giggled. “Just lie here with me. How much time do you have before you need to go to work?”

“An hour,” he told her.

“Then lie back down with me—hold me. That’s all I want right now, I swear. It’ll help me sleep.”

Trevon didn’t budge for a moment as he processed the request, but eventually nodded. He lay back down on the mattress on his side, slowly, awkwardly pulling the Countess

against him, her body yielding immediately. She scooped closer to him, letting her head rest against his chest.

There was a silence that fell over the motel room then. Only the ticking clock on the wall made a sound. Trevon almost panicked when he noticed Dracula stopped breathing—but then remembered it was an elective activity for her anyway.

“Trevon?” she whispered after a few minutes of quiet.

He didn’t say anything, just waiting for what she wanted to say, but she wouldn’t let him off the hook that easily.

“Trevon, Darling?” she pressed again, squeezing him tighter in a hug.

“Yes, Mira?”

He could feel her lips smile against his chest. “You called me Mira.”

“I did. What is it you wanted to say?”

She paused for a moment, then looked up at him, staring into his eyes. “I’m sorry if I’m a little more intense than most girls.”

“You definitely are,” he murmured.

“I’m not a mortal—when you live forever, the rare things that make you feel something make you feel that much deeper,” she explained. “I’ll...try to be a good lover for you. A good...girlfriend. That’s what the people of this age like to say. I’ll be a loyal, understanding, forgiving, patient girlfriend. I’ll do my best.”

Trevor couldn't stop himself from kissing the top of her head then. He tried to fight the urge but lost that battle within seconds. "I hope you mean what you say."

"I do," she intoned breathily. "Will you treat me well, too?"

He nodded and stroked her hair, breathing out his last defenses with a sigh. "Yes, I will."

Chapter 14

(Death)

Deep in Transylvania, a network of winding labyrinths twisted like corkscrews beneath the earth. Their secret depths concealed a truth far more malevolent than any mortal would suspect.

In this age, the dreaded 2023, the era where the evils of humanity overpowered the evils of what few monsters remained since Dracula's disappearance, things were different. Monsters had become less outwardly monstrous with the passage of time, passing as human in broad daylight more often than not. Without Dracula, the Sorceress of Sin, to rein them in and direct their wrath, they scattered to the wind. Without her to conjure and direct monsters, however, the few aimless, existing ones that remained quickly grew cautious. They evolved.

Werewolves, gorgons, vampires, succubi, skinwalkers, changelings, fallen angels and worse—those malformed entities that had once rallied under the Tepes flag were now independent.

Much to The Grim Reaper's irritation.

Death sat in a recliner, watching the news play out on his seventy inch TV from his chamber of evil under the heart of Castle Dracula—or where it once stood, anyway. The first error he made was that once Dracula was gone, he lost access

to her castle. Once the castle vanished, all her magic implements were gone with her.

He had to restart from scratch. Over the last few centuries he had managed to collect a respectable sum of magical artifacts, but to the Countess they would be mere knick-knacks. Novelties with little practical use. Why, she could transform any cauldron or mirror into an object of remarkable power. But Death—well he was mostly just good at killing stuff.

Death's bones rattled a bit as he threw one leg over the other, shaking his head at the newscaster. He was tuned in via the profane magery of the internet to a news station based in Wisconsin, keeping up to date with his would-be wife, Bloody Mary.

“In other news, a brutal murder took place two nights ago in Wapa Lake. The small city, home to only twenty-thousand residents, has seen more than its share of high profile murders in the last decade—all of them purportedly conducted by a beautiful woman with red hair and a knife. The W-Mart slaying was, unfortunately, no exception to that rule, and police are baffled by the lack of eyewitnesses and security footage able to give a clear picture as to the she-devil's true identity...or purpose.”

“Mary, Mary, quite contrary,” Death said, swishing a goblet of Nosferati bloodwine in his bony digits, “How does your little brain work?” He slammed back the drink, letting it pour through his open mouth only to drench his rib cage and spine with alcohol. With a flick of the wrist, he chucked the goblet

aside, shattering it in the corner. “Has that fool forgotten her purpose? Really, Mary? Are the theatrics actually needed? Would it kill my gal to be subtle for once in her fucking life?!”

Not that the mission was blown or anything—and not that the Undying Duchess hadn’t been useful. She had succeeded in ending his spell, after all, and bringing Dracula and Trevon back into the world at a time and place where he would be able to kill them. It had taken her a few decades longer than he’d hope it would, but the job was done either way. “Beggars can’t be choosers, I suppose,” he grunted as he reached for the crystal ball on the coffee table in front of him. The newscaster continued to blab on and on about something, but it was inconsequential now, so he pressed the mute button on his remote control and brought the orb into his lap.

He tapped the glass. “Show them to me now,” he rasped. “Let me see them.”

The image in the crystal ball swirled, and soon two shadows appeared, separate from one another. One shadow was clearly the masculine figure of Trevon Beaumont, standing behind a counter and in front of a cash register, his whip on his hip. The other shadow was the naked-looking silhouette of the Countess hanging upside down, suspended by her feet.

“Well, glad they’ve settled down so quickly,” he murmured. “They don’t even seem to be concerned with me at all.”

That thought actually kind of annoyed him, but then he supposed it had reason to it. Until they had some kind of base of operations, Dracula couldn’t take any action against Death.

He assumed that she remained entirely clueless as to Mary's involvement.

In any case, it didn't matter. Before they could recreate her castle, or even begin to, Mary would take them out of the picture. She'd been waiting for this vengeance for centuries and certainly wasn't looking to take her time. In fact, perhaps as soon as tomorrow, he suspected that he'd hear back from her on the matter.

He set the crystal ball down and stretched, letting out a big sigh. Death stood up and surveyed his room, nodding in approval. It wasn't much—he didn't have a knack for interior design like the Countess—but it was his little slice of Hell. Soon, once Dracula was dead, the magic and power she commanded would be released back into the universe, ready for him to claim.

He poured himself another goblet of wine, eyeing the shattered goblet on the floor. He'd been too hard on Mary when he threw that. He knew what he was getting into when he put her on the job, and so far she had done what he'd asked. Patience was a virtue, and virtues weren't only for heroes like the Beaumonts. Well, some of them. Besides—she was as sexy as they come.

“Yes,” he purred as he pretended to sip another goblet of wine, “Soon you and I will be united in unholy matrimony. Once you slay the Beaumont and the vampire queen, I will seize their strength for my own, and with you by my side, we will rule this world and remake it in our own image.”

Death hadn't yet worked out just how consummation was going to work. He was looking forward to plowing that Bloody Mary pussy, as one does, but the logistical challenges he faced on the way to that feat were...noteworthy. For one thing, being a skeletal apparition and incarnation of death and decay, he had no penis. He didn't even have a tongue, and his phalanges were too skinny and sharp to provide a lot of pleasure to a woman. But these were minor concerns. When the time came, he'd find some way or another to fuck her. Somehow.

Death tapped the call button on his intercom. A deep voice belonging to his minion, Ghoulxander, bellowed back to him. "Yes, Master?"

"I'm bored," he replied. "Do you want to play Uno?"

"Of course, Master. I'll be there in a moment."

Death nodded in approval and sat on the floor, folding his legs as he found a spot in front of the coffee table. A few minutes later, Ghoulxander knocked on the door. "It's open!" Death called out to him. "Come on in!"

"Of course, Master," the flesh hulk said as he opened the door and made his way across the room. He eyed the spilt wine on the floor and the recliner and furrowed his brow. "Shall I call Miss Howler in to clean that for you, sir?"

"No, it's fine. Leave it. I like the smell."

Ghoulxander stared blankly at the skull that Death had for a face, but didn't seem brave enough to give voice to his doubt.

“Very well. Where is the deck, Master?”

“The Uno deck? I don’t know, don’t you have it?”

“You last played with Miss Howler and Mister Stonewing,” Ghoulxander reminded him. “I, unfortunately, do not have a deck of my own. I imagine Miss Howler probably took it with her.”

“Dammit all,” Death cursed, shaking his bony fist. “Never mind then.”

“Very well, Master,” Ghoulxander replied as he stood slowly and brushed off the seat of his pants. “Is there anything else you require?” He eyed the wine stains suggestively.

“No, no—but maybe you could stay. You don’t have to be in such a hurry to go, you know.”

“Are you lonely, Master?” the ghoul asked, looking down on Death as he remained seated on the floor.

Death sighed—somehow. Without lungs or breath. “Well, it all started when I was summoned, I suppose—”

Ghoulxander detected that this was going to take a while so he sat back down and stared patiently at his master.

“I never had much of a home life. I never knew my father—being called out of the ether by the Countess as an incarnated, soul-imbued embodiment of death. Dad was never really around.”

“Did you even have a father? It sounds like you were just made from scratch by Dracula.”

“Well, no, but—I mean, things are getting pretty heated between her and Trevon lately. So that’s awkward,” he murmured.

“How so?” Ghoulxander asked, cocking his head.

“Well—if they get married, then I suppose that makes Trevon my stepfather. But Mary will probably slaughter them both before that can happen.” Death sighed a little at that, lowering his head and drawing in his shoulders slightly.

“How does that make you feel?” his servant asked, folding his hands on the table. “Is that what you want?”

“Well—yes, of course! I need Dracula’s power, after all.”

Ghoulxander nodded, smiling at his master. “Yes, master, of course you do. And what is the first thing you’re going to do when you have that power?”

“I’ll rule the world!” Death declared, fingers spreading incredulously. “What the Hell else would I do?”

“Yes, very well. And what is your purpose behind ruling the world?”

“Well—mainly to take a vacation. Everyone keeps dying all the time and it’s just exhausting. If I have Dracula’s powers, I can conjure up more aspects of Death to make the reaping easier on me.”

“I see,” Ghoulxander hummed, stroking his chin. “And what if you merely had asked Dracula to do this for you?”

“She wouldn’t. She’d consider it a waste of her powers,” he growled dismissively, pounding the table.

“Do you think her priorities are the same now?” Ghoulxander asked. “Forgive me for pushing—I’m just trying to understand your ambition and see if there’s some sort of compromise that gets you what you truly want.”

Death glowered at his minion, sockets glowing harshly. “And what is it that you think I truly want, Ghoulxander?”

“A relationship with your mother. A father figure. And some rest. Perhaps all those things are achievable.”

“Yeah, well, fuck you,” Death growled dismissively. “You forgot to add Bloody Mary’s pussy to that list by the way.”

The ghoul blanched and shifted. “Noted, Master.”

Death rose to his feet and tightened the cord keeping his bathrobe shut. “Get the fuck out of here and don’t come back until you find a deck of Uno cards. Fucking minion, trying to psychoanalyze me.”

“Of course, Master, my apologies for overstepping.” Ghoulxander stood and bowed before walking toward the door. As he opened it, Death called out to him one last time.

“Oh, Lex?” he said.

“Yes, Master?”

“Send Miss Howler in with a mop. For the wine.”

“Of course, sir.”

The door closed behind his minion, and Death was alone in this room once more. He unmuted the TV as he sat down in his chair, but the Wisconsin drawl that came back to him was almost intolerable. He checked his phone, fishing it out of the pocket of his bathrobe and sighing at the zero bars of service that he got in his hidden base.

Death groaned and uttered a sentence he felt with every bone. “Man, this is fucking boring.”

Chapter 15

(Trevon)

“I sincerely thank you for choosing to fill your tank at the Pump N’ Go, young lad,” Trevon said, nodding his head reverently as the teenager stared at him in rapt fascination. “May the trails ahead of you be smooth, and your labor find its just reward.”

“I literally just put ten bucks in the tank and bought a slurpee, but sure,” the young man said, waving as he walked away. “You too, bro.”

Trevon smiled in approval, turning to look at Justin. “I appreciate the camaraderie offered by the youth of today. He called me his brother—as though we were members of the same order, despite not knowing one another’s monastic affiliation.”

“My guy, I have literally no fucking clue what you just said,” Justin muttered.

Trevon chuckled. “I’ll adapt to the colloquialisms soon enough, fear ye not, Justin.”

“You’re understandable most of the time. Try keeping it succinct when talking to customers, though. Like that interaction you had with the kid, just say, ‘Thanks for choosing Pump N’ Go, have a good one!’ or something like that.”

Trevon nodded and stroked the growing beard on his chin. “Brevity is the soul of wisdom, Justin. Your counsel is appreciated. I shall gladly take your lesson to heart.”

“Uh. Great. Well, we don’t have any customers now, so let’s continue your training, if you don’t mind?” Justin said, his voice a bit shaky. Trevon had to assume it had something to do with the conditions under which they’d last met.

He nodded and gestured his acquiescence. “By all means, Lord Justin. Teach me your ways.”

Justin led him to a corner of the store where a closet sat alone. Upon its door was a sign that read ‘Employees Only: Supply Closet’. He handed Trevon a key, which Trevon deduced was meant for him to open this doorway. He fixed the key in the lock and turned, earning a click.

Once the door was open, Trevon was greeted with the sight of rags and bottles full of oddly colored liquids sitting on three shelves. There was also a brown bucket with a stick sitting inside it. “An alchemist’s closet?” Trevon guessed. “Fascinating.”

“No—it’s actually—”

But Trevon puzzled it together after a moment, his mind humming with neural connections as it reconciled his memories with his understanding of this world. “Ah, my apologies. This is a closet with supplies meant for the facilitation of custodial labor.”

“If you mean this stuff cleans other stuff, then yes,” Justin muttered. “The blue squirt bottle is for the windows. Our windows are functionally brand new because of your... yandere monster girlfriend, so we don’t need to clean those too often for at least a few more days. That pink one—put a few drops in that bucket down there.”

“The mop bucket,” Trevon grunted. “Very well. I shall obey.” Trevon allowed several drips of the pink fluid to fill the mop bucket, then gestured to it triumphantly.

“Good. Now fill it up in that sink there. Use the hose to direct the water into the bucket without making a mess,” Trevon’s boss instructed him, crossing his arms. “So far so good.”

“A trivial task. Child’s play, really,” Trevon intoned with confidence as he filled the mop bucket. “Tell me when to stop.”

“That’s about good. Stop there. Stop. STOP!”

“Sorry, I turned the lever the wrong way at first—but we’re good. Now, let me guess: you wish for me to mop the floors?”

“Yep, I’ll watch the front desk. You mop the floors in the whole place, but start in the bathroom and break room. Someone sprayed piss all over the men’s bathroom.”

Trevon’s brow furrowed. “I see. That is...unfortunate.”

“Never cleaned a bathroom before?”

The monster hunter scoffed. “Hardly. When I was training under my father as a young man, every time I made an error he

would lash me with his whip and make me clean the latrine with only a single brush. Early in my studies, our outhouses and latrines were always immaculate as a result. It's just that—well, having to do so—”

Trevon's boss regarded him with sympathy as he settled behind the front counter. “It sucks, I know. But that's the job, and a fairly big part of it. I've cleaned that bathroom there probably a hundred times this year.”

“I understand. This is the way of the world. As long as there are ale, children, and assholes in this world, needlessly filthy bathrooms will be a constant.”

“Well said,” Justin replied with a chuckle. Then, as a customer filed into the gas station, Trevon got to the job, dragging the mop bucket behind him as he entered the bathroom, beginning with the men's room first.

He didn't waste time knocking on the door because he knew for a fact that it was empty. Once inside, he regrettably breathed in, inhaling the rank odor he expected. He made a face.

However—Trevon had a secret weapon up his sleeve. Well, in the pocket of his cargo pants, anyway. He retrieved a little blue bottle of liquid—holy water, blessed by the Pope himself, anointed with the tip of the Longinus Spear. Trevon uncorked the bottle and sprinkled a tiny bit of the liquid into the mop bucket. The scent in the room instantly improved one hundred fold as the purity of Christ's divinity radiated from the janitorial container.

In proper fashion, Trevon recited the Lord's Prayer as he retrieved the mop and started scrubbing the floors. Tiny bits of grime that normally would not give way with a single pass came off the tile easily, leaving behind sparkling linoleum, resplendent with God's love.

When he strained to listen, the faint sound of an angelic chorus was audible beneath the bathroom speakers, which were currently playing "I Got You Babe" by Sonny and Cher. A holy warmth spread through his body as he grabbed a rag and dabbed it with a bit of the sanctified water. He cleaned the counters, wiped down the mirrors, and scrubbed the toilets. Seeing his work completed, Trevon let out a sigh of contentment and walked out of the bathroom, dragging the mop bucket behind him.

"There's no way you finished cleaning it that quickly," Justin noted, calling to him from the counter over the head of a customer—an old man with headphones on.

"See for yourself."

Justin brushed past the customer, rolling his eyes and sighing en route to Trevon's location. The monster hunter did not blame him for his skepticism. How should he know that he had an ever replenishing bottle of holy water that could purify anything?

Justin pushed beyond Trevon and opened the door to the men's bathroom and was suddenly awash with radiant golden light. A gentle breeze wafted through his hair, and a thousand

sweet voices singing the Hail Mary in Enochian, the tongue of the angels, graced their ears.

Trevon smiled with satisfaction as Justin fell to his knees, his hands clasped in front of him in prayer. “It’s—it’s so fucking...beautiful,” Justin said.

The monster hunter gently placed a hand on his boss’s shoulder and nodded. “Wait until you see the toilet.”



It was hours later. The gas station was as clean as it had ever been. A blind man regained his sight when he kissed the urinal, and a news crew came by shortly after that. Eventually, they left—for now.

Nearing the end of his shift, Trevon cautiously looked forward to the night ahead. How could he not? He was still a man, after all, and the most sinfully beautiful woman he’d ever laid eyes on was waiting for him. She was probably naked right now, touching herself as she thought of him, or hyping herself up by raging about other women he might have encountered throughout the day.

Trevon had never had a proper girlfriend before. He’d experienced his share of trysts throughout the years, certainly, and was not coming to the table with as little sexual experience as the Countess.

In his encounters and conquests in the past, Trevon found the act of courting and flirting to be somewhat tedious. The best lays he'd had were with women whose hinges were perhaps a bit looser than others. Crazy women, in other words, got the job done for him best. Was that another reason why the Countess was so enthralling to him? In any case, he had never had a lot of sex with the same woman. That...would be a new experience.

The potential of it excited him. He could feel his blood throbbing in his veins at the thought of him finding a certain rhythm, a familiarity with Mira that the two of them agreed on. He wanted to know all her secrets, how to make her cum with just a touch. He had heard the men working for his father brag about their exploits with their wives. The idea that you could become so intimate with someone that pleasing them to their breaking point became not only easy but second nature—it had remarkable allure.

And she would know his secrets, too. She would voraciously seek the truth of his pleasure, he was sure about that. Dracula was nothing if not determined to please him, to make her case as his lover with a finality that would silence his doubts. He wanted that—imagined her face looking up at him as she slurped his length, applying perfect suction and knowing licks.

But then the other thought came...why did it have to be her? Of all people, why his archnemesis, the demon Dracula, the vampire queen, the Princess of Evil, the one who'd killed more members of his extended family over the years than any other threat. Why her?

But it was pointless to have doubts now. He'd committed to her already, and he was a man of his word. Whatever honor he had left, it was alive in the strength of his word. If he gave that up and reneged on their promise to one another, how could he even call himself a man at that point?

Plus, he'd seen her naked. Yikes. It would prove hard to turn that body down forever—emphasis on 'hard'.

"You doing alright there, Trev?" Justin asked, nodding at him with a concerned look.

"Just thinking about—never mind."

Justin looked this way and that, making certain there were no customers around. "You're thinking about your lady, right?"

Trevon nodded grimly. "The situation is rather awkward."

"How so?"

"Long story short, I am a monster hunter, she is a monster, we both came from centuries in the past, and now we're here. You see? Complicated."

"Sounds pretty simple to me," Justin said with a laugh. "Unusual? Sure. Complicated? Not really."

"But there are problems."

"Moral ones, right?" he guessed. "I can see that."

Trevon stared out the window for a moment, deep in thought. "Are you in a relationship with a woman?"

"No, just got out of a bad one, actually. She was crazy. Really jealous, really demanding. I loved her, though," he

sighed.

The warrior smirked in spite of himself. “Sounds oddly familiar.”

“Difference between you and me is you can handle your girl,” Justin chuckled. “I think you’re strong enough to keep her satisfied. I just wasn’t strong enough for mine.”

Trevon stroked his stubble. “A little jealousy in my time was the norm—but Mira threatens to kill any woman who gets close to me. It’s a bit much.”

“Agreed, but I think you’ll figure each other out eventually,” he said. “Chick like that—look, there’s a graph I call the Craziness Coefficient.” He grabbed a bit of receipt paper and started charting it down. “Let’s say that X is equal to crazy and Y is equal to hot.”

Trevon’s brow arched curiously and he leaned forward. “I’m listening, Justin. Share your wisdom.”

“So—basically, according to the Craziness Coefficient, the crazier a woman is, the hotter she needs to be to balance it out. If she’s hot enough to balance it, then not only is she worth it, but the craziness acts more like seasoning than poison. If she’s crazier than she is hot, then she’s not worth it in the long run. If she’s hotter than she is crazy—well good for her, but that sounds boring, am I right?”

“Regrettably, yes, you are not mistaken in the least, young Justin,” Trevon muttered. “So what you’re saying is that my

Mira, while indeed insane beyond reason, is worth the trouble because she is unusually comely.”

“And, hey, she’s clearly into you,” he said. “That’s the best kind of crazy—the obsessive thing? That’s hot. I vibe with it. I say you’re a lucky guy.”

Trevon’s brow furrowed. “She threatened to murder a woman for looking at me.”

“And that is extremely hot, my guy,” Justin said.

The monster hunter blinked. “Well, yes, it is, but—the consequences of a failure to manage that kind of behavior seem rather daunting.”

“Well then fuckin’ manage it, bro,” Justin said, throwing up his hands in exasperation. “A hottie with that body, completely into you to the point of madness, plus she’s a vampire that’ll never look any different from how she currently does—sign me the fuck up. If I get a girl like that, she can lock me up in a cage and feed me bread twice a day and I will bark like a dog when she asks. I simp a crazy queen.”

Trevon’s eyes narrowed with suspicion. “I feel as though you are the exact wrong person to seek guidance from on this matter.”

“Or am I the right one?”

He could not deny the possibility. Justin was saying precisely what his darkest side wanted to hear—yes, it was okay to be with Dracula, to love her, to fuck her, to let her be herself with him. Not only was it okay, but it was good, sexy,

validating. The comfort in the notion was powerful, but he had his doubts.

“I don’t know what to think,” he admitted.

“That’s fine. Your dick knows.”

Trevon chuckled in spite of himself at the crass comment.

“Indeed he does, young Justin. Indeed he does.”

Chapter 16

(Trevon)

As Trevon walked back to the motel, his phone started ringing. It was the first time he checked it all day, since he opted to keep it in his locker in the break room during his shift.

“Hello?” he said, answering. “This is Trevon Beaumont, at your service.”

“Trevon, hey,” a familiar voice said on the other side. “Are you free? I’ve got the contract and the keys to the place you were looking at. I could sign it off to you tonight if your partner likes it. Happy to give one more tour to her before anything is final.”

Trevon nodded, but smirked at himself when he realized the man couldn’t see through this piece of technology. “Yes, that would be fine, I think. We don’t have much to move, so it should be simple enough. Await my call, kind Steve-O.”

“Will do, uh, muscular Trevon,” the man grunted in reply before hanging up.

Trevon kept his eyes locked on his phone once the call ended. They almost popped when he saw what else awaited him.

> *You have 1,838 missed messages from 1 number.*

Trevon’s lips parted in surprise as he began scanning through them, one at a time.

> *Hey, Trevvy. Miss you.*

> *I know you're busy, but if you see this, maybe say hi?*

> *I hope you're having a good time at work!*

> *I'm touching my pussy thinking about you, baby. I think I can take a picture of it. Wanna see?*

> *Why aren't you replying? How can I get your attention? Do I need to kill someone? Please reply, I miss you so much. Kisses.*

> *Trevvy!!!! Message me!*

And they just went on and on like that without ending. Thankfully, they didn't really escalate much further. The 1,838th message was her trying out song lyrics that he was supposed to sing for her at their wedding.

He heard Justin's voice in his head, dark susurrating whispers about the Craziness Coefficient causing his penis to stiffen at the prospect of whatever unholy sight waited for him beyond the door to his motel room. Might she be lying stark naked in bed, waiting for him to find her? Perhaps she would be masturbating while calling out his name when he stepped into the room. The possibilities were exciting.

With a quiet approach, he opened the door to their motel room. He nearly jumped out of his work uniform and skin altogether at the sight that greeted him.

Oh, she was waiting for him all right, standing at the door for God knows how long, bloody vampire tears running down her face as an unnervingly wide smile stared up at him.

“I waited for your text message for so long,” she sobbed. “You didn’t answer me, but I’m so happy you’re back. Are you angry at me?”

She threw her arms around him and he patted her awkwardly on the back. “Not particularly. I just left my phone in my locker at work and didn’t think to check it. You’re the only number I had in there, so—”

“But you said I couldn’t call you, so I thought maybe it’d be okay to text you. I texted you, like, ten times!”

His brow furrowed. “Considerably more than ten times.”

“So you did see!”

“I saw on my way back,” he confessed. “Listen—nearly two thousand texts is far too many.”

“It wasn’t that much,” she said, pouting up at him with a brow slanted as though he was levying a wild and unfair accusation. “It was... fifteen texts at most.”

“Check your phone and count them,” he said.

She huffed. “No! That would take hours!”

Trevon patted her head and rubbed her cheek. “Well, I’m here now, at least. And I’ve got good news.”

Her jaw dropped in disbelief as he reached in his pocket for his phone. “Trevon—proposing to me?! Today?! At least one more day, it’s too soon! Oh, who would we even invite to the wedding?!” She fanned her cheeks with both hands and

hopped up and down, shaking her head. “This is all too soon—but yes! Yes, of course!”

His entire body tightened. “Err. Hang on—I was going to tell you that a condo across the street from the motel has a room available. The landlord is waiting for us there now.”

Dracula deflated with obvious disappointment. “I see,” she sighed. “And there’s...nothing else?”

“Not really, no,” he grunted, scratching his own head.

“I see. Forget what just happened for now, then. I apologize for jumping to conclusions.”

He shook his head. “Not an issue.” That unhinged display got him so abruptly erect that when he closed the door and prepared to lock it, he almost slammed his member inside. Thankfully, he dodged backward at the precise fated moment, securing the entrance as though nothing happened.

Trevon looked at Dracula—from behind, as she posed with her hands on her hips, her eyes searching, guessing where she might be taken.

Every curve, subtle and pronounced, was perfect. Her hair, shoulder-length only, blew in the breeze, casting her scent in his direction. She was wearing a black dress with white polka dots now, plus the unzipped bat hoodie, too. The dress was so generous with regard to her legs that you would guess she was naked beneath the hoodie when only viewing her from the back.

“You took to the fashion of this era well,” Trevon commented.

She cocked her head back at him and grinned her fanged grin, giving him a cute wink. “I have to compete with roughly four billion human sluts, don’t I?”

“Oh, you have no competition, don’t worry,” Trevon chuckled, placing a hand on the small of her back as he pointed her in the right direction. “There. See that three story building across—”

Dracula apparently appreciated his praise, because she shoved him against the motel building’s wall and pinned him to it, jamming her tongue down his throat. Trevon gave into the embrace. *I can afford to keep Steve-O waiting one or two minutes*, he reasoned. *No straight man would blame me, save for perhaps the pope.*

He cupped her ass and felt her grind against his hardness, raising one leg up, pressing her knee against the wall behind him. “If you fucked me here, I wouldn’t be mad,” she moaned in his ear. “I could never be mad at you for celebrating my flesh. It’s your gift to unwrap, Trevvy.”

“I’m not having sex with you outside. And we need to see the landlord,” he reminded her, even as he kissed her neck, leaving a series of hickeys that immediately healed and faded.

“Mmmm, but I’m so ready for it,” she said. She nipped his jawline, planting two little fang marks there. “You promised me.”

“I promised tonight. It’s barely past sunset. We have all evening—and all the errands are taken care of. I won’t be going anywhere tomorrow until my shift in the afternoon. Let’s take care of this apartment business and then...I’ll take care of the rest.”

“I want you,” she whispered, rubbing and smearing her whole face against his cheek. “I want you I want you I want you—I would kill *anyone* for you. Anyone at all, I swear it.”

Trevon chuckled quietly. “You’d kill anyone for no reason at all.”

“I’d kill *myself* for you,” she said. “I’d die.”

Those words were full of potential that no longer had any appeal to Trevon. He no more wanted her dead than he wanted her gone. She was his Mira, for better or worse, and with this kiss, the last part of the monster slayer that wanted her defeated and slain was gone. In a way—she’d won. With her immense appeal, she’d murdered the dutiful Beaumont in him. Gone was the little boy driven to succeed, to fulfill his family’s legacy. All that remained was Trevvy—Dracula’s lover.

“I want you too,” he said, a powerful admission that made him shiver as he spoke the blasphemous words. “You are my greatest failure as a monster hunter and my greatest success as a man.”

“I’m just...I’m jus’ gonna do what I want to you,” she whimpered, fumbling for his belt. “Please forgive me later.”

He grabbed her hand, startled by her lack of concern for his cooperation. “What? No. Hang on. Stop that.”

“Forgive me after you cum inside me.”

“We’re outside!” he grunted. “There’s an old man looking at us now, glaring in disgust!”

“Let him watch. Let the world witness the beautiful moment that your cock slips inside me. I love you so much. Since I saw you in my castle, I wanted this. I needed this—I didn’t know it back then, but I always needed it. I need *you*, Trevvy.”

“Let’s get the fucking condo, and then we can do this. Deal?”

His unsheathed cock was already being pumped by her hand. He could feel his tip pressed against her tight, disastrously soaked entrance. His own self-control astounded him in that moment as he refused her.

“But baby, my pussy’s right here,” she whined. “Let me stick it inside or I’ll bite you harder.”

“You’d be biting yourself,” he commented, poking at the spot on her own chin where two fang marks had appeared, mirroring the place where she’d nipped him moments before. “I’m taking over.” He managed to set her leg down on the ground and tuck his cock back inside his work pants.

Dracula’s eyes welled up with red tears. “Why do you hate me?”

“Come on,” he said, taking her hand. “Let’s take care of one thing before taking care of the next, alright?”

She wiped her eyes on the sleeve of her hoodie and nodded, clinging to his arm. As they waited at the crosswalk, two college-aged women looked their way, probably glaring at the blood streaming down Dracula's face, but she didn't take it that way.

"They're staring at me," she whispered to Trevon. "They crave you because they know you rejected me."

"Fairly certain you're misinterpreting," he murmured.

Dracula cleared her throat and daringly called out the two girls. "Hey, you! Sluts!"

Their eyes widened in shock. "How fucking dare you—"

"Walk into traffic and die," Dracula hissed, her voice reverberating with the magic embedded in her command.

Without another word, the two girls stepped into the road and were promptly hit by a truck, scattering gore everywhere. Other cars skidded to a halt, one that had been tail-gating the truck rear-ended it. Horns honked, people screamed, drivers got out of their cars, and everyone else waiting at the light for their crosswalk scattered in different directions.

Trevon's eyes widened as the scene unfolded too fast for him to react at first. "Mira!" he said when he realized what had happened, his voice struck between confusion and anger. "That was uncalled for! What are you doing?!"

She tossed him puppy dog eyes and juttied out her lip. "But I feel better now," she told him sweetly. "They're just two dumb

mortals, Trevvy. They don't really matter more than me, do they?"

Trevon frowned at the question. "No, of course not, but that's not the point! All human life is sacred," he grumbled. Then he gestured at the light. "It's green now, let's go. Never again, Mira."

Dracula cooed happily, wrapping her arms around his waist as he placed one around her back. "You still love me, don't you?"

"Don't get us caught. You can't keep killing people like this, even if it looks like an accident. For one thing—murder is wrong. I don't care if you're a bloodsucking demon of Hell, that's a universal constant. If you want us to live happily ever after with no friction between us...one day you'll need to accept that."

"One day," she giggled. "But not today. Today I'm only accepting one thing."

"And what's that?"

"Your you-know-what in my you-know-where."

Trevon sighed but nodded in approval anyway.

They finally made their way to the apartment building, walked inside, and headed up the stairs. Trevon knocked on the door, but not before spit-wiping the last vestiges of Dracula's bloody tears off her face.

The door opened. The apartment wasn't much to look at, but it had clearly been dusted, wiped down, and vacuumed since

Trevon saw it earlier in the day. Steve-O stood there, adjusted his glasses, and made a big, sweeping gesture to usher them inside.

“Well Hello, there, little lady,” he said in a rather cringey way. “Lucky man your boyfriend is. I’m Steve-O, nice to meet you.” They shook hands.

She grinned at Steve-O in return. “Believe me, I’m the lucky one, Mister O.”

Steve-O looked like he was considering correcting her, but thought better of it in the end. “Mister O it is,” he chuckled. “Well, it’s not much, but if you follow me—”

“We’ll take it,” she said, without even looking around. The landlord almost jumped in surprise at the forceful proclamation.

“Wow. That quick, huh?”

“Not quite that quick,” she said. “Look into my eyes, Mister O.”

This was the part that Trevon hated, but he had to admit, he’d been looking forward to it this time. This time the results of her mesmerism would allow them to take the next step forward in their relationship—and set down roots for the future.

Steve-O met her gaze obediently, one eyebrow arched at first, but it flattened quickly enough. His eyes widened, pupils dilated, and pores started pouring sweat as Dracula spoke her command.

“You are going to sign this property over to us for an unbreakable ten year rental agreement for three hundred dollars a month. You will not bother us ever. When there is a problem with the utilities, you will repair it on your own dime. Now—revise the paperwork and call us when you’re ready. We’ll be here in the meantime.”

“Yes, Mistress,” he said, eyes unblinking as he immediately made for the door to do as she commanded.

Dracula’s gaze shifted from one of focus to one of lust. She turned her full attention on the vampire hunter, placing her palms on his chest. “Now—while he works on that, Trevvy Darling, what do you say we break in the bedroom?”

Trevon made a fist and nodded as the door closed behind their soon-to-be landlord. “It shall be done.”

Chapter 17

(Trevon)

With a yip of excitement, Trevon tossed the vampire queen over his shoulder like a sword and carried her to the bedroom. It was small, and not so much a room in and of itself as it was a corner of the apartment with a banister separating it from the living room area and the kitchen—but it had a mattress, and that was good enough.

There was no bed frame, and there were no sheets, but those matters were not concerns in the monster hunter's mind at the present moment as he felt the hump of her ass, his hand resting atop it just before he slung her down upon the makeshift bed. "Take off your clothes," Trevon growled as he practiced what he preached. His eyes raked her pale form ravenously as his desire welled up inside him, finally reaching the point of no return.

He took off his shirt, and his pants, but Dracula didn't move. She sat there on the mattress, almost frozen with a drunken grin spreading across her face.

"What are you doing, woman?" Trevon grumbled. "I said strip."

"Strip me yourself," she rasped with an impish smirk.

"Have it your way," he muttered, kneeling between her creamy thighs.

“Rip the dress off my body,” she instructed him. “Tear it to shreds. Wait! The dress, the dress! Not the fucking hoodie!”

Trevon almost groaned as he was made to lift her off the mattress in order to gingerly peel the hoodie off of her—but the black polka-dotted dress was ribbons a second later. With one strong grasp and pull, he ripped it all down the middle from breast to hem. From there it came off easily once he broke the straps, and the sight that lay beneath him was one so precious, so beautiful that it gave him pause. He licked his lips as his vision was overwhelmed with the sight of her, all pale skin and the most perfect shape a woman of her stature could possibly possess.

She stared up at him with a loving gaze, her cheeks flushed red. As he leaned forward to kiss her, he felt her heart beating in her chest—a surprise to him each time.

She wrapped her arms and legs around him and mewed sweetly in his ear at the bliss of their naked skin making fresh contact. There was nothing between them now. He could feel her tiny nipples dig into his torso, could feel her wetness pressed against him underneath his navel. Her tongue licked his lips, and he just let her do it, let her taste him how she wanted to—giving in.

For a few seconds, he let her field the kiss on her own, luxuriating in the desperate energy that radiated from her as her tongue darted between his lips and seemed to want to clean every last corner of his mouth.

He caressed her back gently as he began to return her kiss, but she raked her nails down his until his skin broke. “You’re mine, Trevvy,” she giggled happily. “You’re all mine, finally.”

“Almost,” he said as he moved down to her neck, kissing her there, inhaling deep of her uniquely sweet aroma. Unable to help himself, one hand greedily cupped her breast, kneading it gently, then squeezing, exploring until he felt bold enough to pinch a nipple. She reacted blissfully—and he noted with surprise that he had felt nothing in his own nipple from the bloodbond. Recalling how Vladimira had stated when their bond was stronger, it might fluctuate or change, that made some sense. He sought her back for blood—since she scratched him there, he had to know if she had bled or endured pain as well. She hadn’t. There wasn’t even a hint of a mark.

He would have time to broach that subject later. From the way she twitched beneath him, he knew that she was thinking the same thing, but neither of them were in the frame of mind to discuss the topic. Instead, she moaned a horny moan into his mouth as two of his most dexterous fingers found the dewy lips of her flower, running them up and down the seal of her slit to ease and prepare her for his grand entrance.

“Make love to me, Darling,” she cooed, taking a break from the kissing to look him in the eyes, her arms hugging his neck possessively. “I belong completely to you.”

Trevon wasn’t in the best mood for talking. He lined himself up with her entrance, almost losing his composure as the tip of his endowment pressed sweetly against her womanhood—the

promise of what was about to happen left him momentarily breathless.

Reveling in the perfection of her, he latched on to one of her nipples with his lips as he slid slowly inside, easing himself in—not sure what he expected to feel. The vacuuming suction of her heated, humid canal slurped him inside, accepting his cock like a lock that finally found the matching key.

He pulled away from her breast to look at her face at the moment that he fully hilted himself within her, eager to know if it felt as good for her as it did for him.

What he found was an uncompromising, unblinking smile, staring at him with wide eyes that refused to close no matter what. With every thrust, she let out a little whimper in the back of her throat, but she still smiled at him, and she still stared. She watched his every move. When he kissed her neck, he could feel her gaze on the top of his head. When he sucked her nipples, he could feel her eyes on him then, too. He was too desperate for the pleasure she was giving him to comment or even find it particularly unnerving—but it was strange.

The slick walls of her insides gripped him like a warm, wet hug, letting him slide through the grasp of her pussy, in and out, until she was shuddering with ecstasy. “Are you alright?” he asked her. “Should I slow down?”

“Don’t slow down. Don’t stop. Go as long as you can—I want to capture this moment in my memory forever,” she said, still staring at him, though the smile was gone. When she wasn’t speaking, her mouth was open wide as she stared, little

“Oh! Oh!” sounds coming out in huffs and puffs of pleasure. Her cool body had fully heated, making him feel cozy and secure in her embrace, and he relished every little twitch she made, every little moan or whimper.

“Your cock is a perfect fit in me, Trevvy,” she moaned. “Darling! I’m—I’m going to cum! Cum with me, Trevvy!”

“I wish I could obey,” he growled, picking up the pace as though he was racing to catch up with her. “I’m not there yet, but I’ll be there soon.”

She erupted first, soaking his length in even more of her sweet womanly wetness. Her hands found his throat as her eyes rolled all the way back and she let out a groan of finality. “Ahh-ohhhh fuck, baby!” Her whole body tightened, then released, repeating that pattern several times. Nowhere was the effect more pronounced than in the depths of her pussy, where the tunnel of her love throbbed around him with such intensity that he was left breathless from the sensation.

“Are you—are you almost there?” she panted. “If you’re not, I’ll try to hurry up, baby! I wanna cum with you! I want us to cum together!”

“Follow your fucking heart,” he muttered, unable to commit much else as he was now bucking away inside her like a profane beast, artless and hungry. He had had sex before—dozens of times, really, with different women nearly every time—but nothing had been even close to this. The intimacy, the level of connection, the sensations they offered each other

—none of it. At that moment, even more than he wanted to keep fucking her, he wanted to kiss her. So he did.

He pressed his lips against hers and held her face between his palms. She sought his tongue, and he let her, but he wasn't particularly interested in making out. He just wanted to feel her lips and his united.

He was getting damn, damn close as he thrust inside her. The texture of her tight walls treated his immensity with love and respect, seeming to prioritize his enjoyment above all else. It was like she had complete control of her body to the point that she could complement his thrusts with her own pulsating replies.

He broke away from the kiss all of a sudden, feeling the rush ready to hit him like a horse-drawn carriage. He bit her shoulder, and she migrated her tongue's efforts to his ear lobe. "Are you cumming, Darling?" she whispered between breathy kisses. "Are you cumming for me?"

He let out a rough grunt that acted as a confirmation, and Dracula wrapped her legs around his waist and locked him inside.

"Release inside of me," she cooed. "I want it so fucking bad. I want to exist with your cum inside me all my days. Can you make that happen for me, baby?"

Trevon reckoned at this rate that he could. His thrusts grew monstrous, and soon with his arms wrapped around her lower back and his face buried in the pillow behind her, he exploded, firing off countless ropes of sticky, hot semen inside her evil

womb. He had no reason to believe that that was a particularly risky thing for him to do, so he embraced it, spending every drop he could inside her.

When he finished, his whole body relaxed like it hadn't in decades. He breathed hard, surprising himself with the volume of his own breaths. It was...impossible. How good this felt. How *right* this felt. How happy he was to be here, on top of her, with Mira peppering thousands of kisses on his face as red tears of joy streamed down her cheeks.

"I'm so happy," she said, nuzzling him between pecks. "I'm so so happy, Darling. Did it feel as good for you as it did for me?"

Trevon was without words. He realized he should roll over and lie beside her, but he didn't want to. With a sudden start, he realized his cock was still inside her. He shifted—but she squeezed his shoulder, sensing what he was up to.

"Let it stay inside," she pleaded sweetly. "This is where your cock belongs now. If I could, I'd never let it go."

"We're on the same page then," he muttered, then let out a laugh.

Dracula laughed along with him, then bit her bottom lip, showing fangs. "I—I'm...Trevon, I love you."

"I love you, too," he replied. The answer came without thinking. Maybe it was the post-coital high talking, but he felt the answer so deeply and powerfully then that it came out without his meaning for it to. But he heard himself say it—and

it felt good. It felt correct. It was honest, even if it was blasphemy.

“I wish you never had to get off of me,” she whimpered. “But you’re a mortal, and you will eventually need food.”

“And so will you,” he pointed out with a laugh.

She bit his shoulder and started suckling gently. “I’ve got all I could ever want right on top of me—the perfect meal in more ways than one.”

Trevon wasn’t even put off by her biting him uninvited. Maybe because he bit her mid-sex as well, he guessed. But again, it didn’t feel wrong to him. He caressed her hair as she drank a few more sips, then rolled over, but pulled her with him so that he ended up on the bottom and she on top. She giggled sweetly as the development unfolded and nodded in satisfaction.

“You’re still inside. That’s very good.”

“I’m glad you approve, Mira.”

She grinned at him. “You’re the only one who’s called me Mira since before I became a vampire, you know.”

He frowned. “I can call you whatever you prefer.”

“Mira is fine,” she insisted. “In fact, I love it. But if you want to call me something sweet—like honey, or baby, or my love—”

“I’ll definitely experiment with it every now and then until it feels natural,” he said.

“Now,” Dracula began, cracking her knuckles behind his head, “What do you say we fuck five or six more times and then move on?”

“Move on to what?” he asked. “Also, five or six seems...like a lot.”

“You’ll be fine. And after that we’ll move on,” she outspread her fingers and wiggled them as she made her announcement, “to magic.”

Chapter 18

(Mary)

Mary spritzed herself off with a bit of virgin blood in a green spray bottle she picked up at a garden shop off the highway a few days back. At the moment, she wore her own skin, not bothering to select a disguise from the myriad women she'd slain over the years.

Trevon had proved a troublesome man to bewitch—much more so than she had been expecting. Each time she encountered him over the last few weeks, wearing different disguises of course, he reacted to her almost as though out of fear. When she made advances on him, hinted at attraction, or brushed up against him, he often recoiled or withdrew altogether. His paranoia about women perplexed her—vexed her as well.

“What is the deal with this man?” she asked herself, leaning on the steering wheel as she gazed into the Pump N’ Go where he was currently working a shift.

Mary was at her wit’s end. This had to work. Death was getting anxious and impatient with her—Hell, she was getting impatient with herself. Whatever she tried this time, it had to be different, bolder, more decisive. It had to achieve her goal. True—she could cut to the chase easily enough and slaughter Dracula and Trevon when their guard was down, but where was the fun in that? She wanted to break Vladimira first. She wanted to see her weeping over Trevon’s desiccated corpse,

knowing that the last thing he did with his useless mortal life was to be unfaithful.

The thought of that impending victory still made her smile, even after all these failures. Oh, but it would be so fucking sweet when she finally saw that whore's face as she walked in on Mary bathing in her lover's blood.

But how would she do it? How would she hurt Vladimira Tepes? How could she get this surprisingly skittish monster hunter to pursue her?

It wasn't as cut and dry of an answer as she'd have liked, after all. But before she could theorycraft a new method of seduction, her phone started ringing to the tune of Blue Oyster Cult's "Don't Fear the Reaper". With a smirk, she lifted the phone to her face and pushed the green receiving button on her screen to answer.

"Hello, sweetheart," Mary cooed. "Nice of you to check in on me."

"Yeah, yeah—are they dead yet? I'm getting antsy here, Mary," Death said, his voice coming in crackly.

"Your reception must be awful, I can barely make out what you're saying," Mary noted.

Death grumbled back at her. "I'm in a subterranean base halfway across the world, so it is what it is, baby. Tell me some good news."

"I'm mere meters away from Trevon's location," she intoned, dragging a few fingers through her red ponytail. "It's

almost done.”

“I’m getting deja vu, here, Mary,” he muttered. “Pretty sure I called you last week and you said roughly the same fucking thing.”

“Sorry, sweetie,” Mary replied. “I’m just making sure that I do a thorough job.”

“Thorough shmorough. Either they’re dead or they aren’t. Once Dracula is killed and Trevon is out of the way, I can safely be the first to absorb the magic that leaks back into the weave,” Death said. He tried to ignore Mary’s soft sounds of amusement as he continued on. “For centuries, with her absence, magic almost completely left the world—but with her return, it has come back, but she controls the bulk of it. The world needs someone to wield that power who isn’t going to spend her days canoodling in a dingy condo with a washed up monster hunter.”

“You make yourself sound so magnanimous, but your agenda is anything but selfless,” Bloody Mary giggled. “You want nothing short of world domination.”

“I mean—mostly I just want to rest. Do you have any idea how many people I reaped while we were having this conversation? An assload. Fucking exhausting, Mary.”

“I understand. I plan on making a final move today. Trevon’s almost finished his shift at the gas station, and then it’ll be my chance to strike.”

“I hope you know what you’re doing,” Death murmured.

“I hope so too,” she giggled.

Death did not respond.

“Relax, sweetie, I’m only joking. I’ve got this under control.”

“In the history of evil people saying they have a situation under control, it rarely turns out to be true. At least in movies,” Death grunted. “Be careful out there.”

“I will be, Deathy-poo. Can’t wait for you to take me as your bride and show me what that boner of yours can do.”

Death paused. “Yeah. Definitely. Gonna...gonna fuck you real good, fo’ sho’. Best be gettin’ ready, little lady,” Death replied, anxiously putting on a folksy accent.

“What was that?” Mary muttered in surprise at the awkward voice.

“N-nothing. Sorry. Forget about that. Anyway, call me back as soon as you deal with those two. Their bloodbond should still be active, so in theory if you kill one you kill the other. The job couldn’t be easier.”

“Got it, I’m aware,” she sighed. “It’s just that—well, never mind. I’ll probably call you later tonight.”

“Send me a booby pic if you get the chance, but no pressure if—if you’re busy or whatever,” Death muttered.

“I’ll definitely find the time, sweetheart,” Bloody Mary chuckled. “Bye now.”

She hung up the call and dismissed her false lovey-dovey persona, fixing her gaze on the Pump N’ Go. Pulling her keys

out of the ignition, she put them in her purse and shifted her form into that of a black-haired, olive-skinned woman she'd murdered a few years ago, the change only taking a moment.

Mary walked up to the Pump N' Go and sauntered inside. Seeing Trevon stocking shelves with potato chip bags of many varieties, she raised her hand to flag him down.

“Oh, sir! Would you mind helping me with something quickly? I don't know how to fill my tank with gas.”

Trevon looked at her over his shoulder and smiled. “How do you have a driver's license but not know how a gas pump works?”

Admittedly it was a stupid lie, but she just had to double down. “New car. I always drove my father's before now and he used to fill the tank up for me.”

Trevon appeared to be persuaded by that, and abandoned the box of potato chip bags on the ground to help her. He looked around the store, just to be sure. “Anyone else in here? I shouldn't leave the store untended if so. My boss is on his break at the moment.”

And that was by design, she noted, or he might have tried to pawn the job off on him. She even knew his shift manager's name: Justin. She'd been in here often enough that she recognized everyone that regularly worked with the Beaumont. Thankfully, she also knew when they took their breaks.

Trevon followed her outside and cocked his head when he noticed her car still parked in a parking space. “Well, go fetch the car and I’ll be waiting here.”

“Oh, of course,” she said. “One moment please.”

Mary returned to her vehicle and drove it in front of the pump nearest to where Trevon stood. She popped the gas cap and got out of her car. “I can’t thank you enough. Would you mind showing me how it works?”

“Sure,” he said, keeping some distance from her as he took the fuel dispenser’s nozzle in hand and walked her through the process.

Now, Mary knew well enough how gas pumps worked, so she stood behind him and focused on the back of his head and his neck while he went about his explanation and demonstration.

She had considered all kinds of tools for this task. Chloroform was at the top of her list—but given that previous generations of Beaumonts were immune to poisons and toxins of all types, she doubted that would work, mortal though he was. She considered a hammer to the back of the head, too—that had more promise, but also bore some risk. If she struck too hard, she might kill him. If it wasn’t hard enough, she would end up dead instead. Even more likely, his superior senses would pick up on any weapon before she had a chance to use it.

So the tactic she had elected to use was fairly guileless on its face. She bit him. Now, Mary wasn’t a vampire—not of the

same sort as Dracula, anyway. She was an immortal with a blood curse, but part of that curse did include the ability to replace her normal human teeth with a row of monstrous fangs.

As Trevon pleasantly and respectfully mansplained the gas pump's operation, Bloody Mary sought to live up to her name and reputation, chomping deep into his neck. There was a chance, albeit small, that Dracula's bloodbond would cause her to receive the same wound—but based on how close their bond seemed to be, that probably wouldn't happen. Mary would have to bet on that. If that failed, she'd have to bet on the fact that the sun was still out.

Mary chomped Trevon's neck, and not with the gentle puncture of a vampire, but with the raking thirst of a true monster, splitting his throat open. He lost blood rapidly, but reacted fast, covering the fresh wound with his hand while he whipped around and doused her in gasoline.

Suddenly soaked in the noxious fumes, Mary's senses soared with an unpleasant burning that pervaded not just her nostrils but her eyes, her mouth, and even her skin. She leapt backward, ready to wait for him to bleed out enough that he would faint, but to her irritation, Trevon seemed hardly the worse for wear.

“Just go unconscious, you fucking oaf!” she hissed.

This was a stupid gambit, but she had to succeed. Trevon pulled a lighter out of his pants and considered it, but thought better at the last second, tucking it back inside his uniform's

breast pocket. Mary was relieved at that—but it was the right call, even from the monster hunter’s perspective. An explosive gasoline fire so close to the station pump would probably kill him, and she’d still survive.

“What are you?” he groaned, pain etched on his face as his hand cupped his wound. She needed to inflict another one at this rate—Dracula’s regenerative capabilities and his own Beaumont enchantments would kick in soon, healing the wound before the blood loss had taken him out of the fight completely. It didn’t seem fair to Mary that their pleasure and pain may no longer be linked but they still received each other’s various advantages.

She lunged, desperate, long red nails protruding from her fingers, her eyes going feral. She slashed at him, but he leaned back, avoiding the attack just barely.

“Just bleed out, Beaumont!” she hissed. She had chosen today of all days because he left his whip in the crew room. This was supposed to be easy! How was she having such a hard time?

“Who are you?” he asked, adjusting his previous question. To her irritation, he took his hand away from his neck, and it had already scabbed over, though his shirt was completely soaked in red. She thought he noticed his second dodge seem a bit slower as she made another swipe, and that relieved her somewhat.

I can still do this, she thought. But she’d need to be quick. She could see cars on the road, some of them probably about

to pull into the parking lot in search of gasoline for their automobiles, and a scene like this playing out in broad daylight served no one.

Trevon reached inside his shirt and pulled out a small bottle that glowed blue. Mary knew it well—his ever-replenishing holy water. One drop of that, and she'd be covered in burns from head to toe. Time was running out. She let this go on for too long, and Trevon was switching from defense to offense. Well, she wasn't about to let that happen.

She lunged daringly forward, only to be greeted with a meaty backhand to the face, sending her smashing into her own car's hood. Immortal or not, the impact stung like a bitch and a half, but she bounced back into the fight quickly. Her nails flew, swiping at him like long, red claws, as sharp as they were invulnerable. One swipe, two swipes, a horizontal slash, covering his forearms with lashes that failed to reach an artery, but he was bleeding. She was getting closer.

With his hands up in defense, Trevon pulled the cork out of his bottle with his teeth and splashed it at the Immortal in front of him, but Mary ducked low at the last second, dodging the assault. She came back up with an uppercut strike, impaling him under the chin so that her nail pierced his tongue and came out of his mouth.

“The Countess would be proud of this, wouldn't she?” Mary giggled, her eyes wide with triumph at the decisive blow she'd finally struck. She ripped the nail out of him as roughly as she

could, worsening the gash, forcing Trevon to clasp his throat shut once again.

Still aware of the stink of gasoline covering her, it was hard for Mary to enjoy the moment when Trevon sank to his knees. Had he been armed or in the frame of mind for a fight, she wouldn't have had a fucking chance, that much became disastrously clear—but she'd gotten the drop on him this time. She'd won.

And now, as Trevon collapsed forward into her arms, and she placed him in the backseat of her car—she knew that her revenge was only minutes away.



She couldn't go far, so there was only one spot she could take Trevon that wouldn't signal Dracula that he was getting out of range of her bloodbond. There was a construction site on the road, just a couple blocks away, and thankfully construction had stalled on the new storefront due to insufficient funds to continue it. She pulled around the back, parking her car in the alley. She figured she had maybe twenty minutes before someone called the cops about Trevon going missing, and another twenty minutes before they traced him here. Plenty of time for what she had in mind.

Waiting for them in the center of this candle-lit room was a mattress she'd bought from Big Bad Bed Boys downtown, a poorly named mattress and bedding store owned by a pair of

portly ginger brothers. The candles were originally meant to provide a romantic touch when she assumed that she would be seducing Trevon for this moment—but now they added a malevolent, satanic glow to the atmosphere.

She tied Trevon up with her unbreakable rope—an enchantment that she hoped even his holy bloodline couldn't neutralize—and used a hammer and some stakes to nail the rope into the ground at each corner of the bed, posing the now half-naked, unconscious Beaumont in something of an X.

She got out her phone and started snapping pictures. Despite the magic rope, she wasn't certain Trevon wouldn't be able to escape, utter hulk of a warrior as he was, so she needed to act fast and collect the most hurtful, damning evidence that she could now. She straddled his lap and took selfies. She forced kisses on his unconscious face, photographing that as well. But she wanted Dracula to watch live footage when she rode her man and made him fill her up with his release.

This wasn't how she'd originally imagined it. She wanted Trevon to succumb to her wiles of his own free will, but that didn't pan out. This was the compromise, and as she imagined Dracula's reaction, she knew that this would suffice just fine.

Mary fished the monster hunter's phone out of the pocket of his discarded pants, pointing it at his face to unlock it. Once access was granted, she went inside his contacts in search of Dracula's number. He had four total contacts, so it didn't take long to find. Mary's lip turned up in a snarl as she saw the name he had for her. Mira.

“Mira,” she hissed in disgust. “She lets him call her such a familiar name?” Even the Undying Duchess had never been allowed to call the Countess anything but Dracula. She’d attempted Vladimira a time or two but always faced insult or anger for doing so. And yet this...human shit sack had “Mira” in his phone for her? The world was an unjust place indeed.

“No matter,” she told herself. “Let’s see what ‘Mira’ thinks about this.”

Mary copied Dracula’s number into her own phone and sent the images she’d taken of Trevon looking rather compromised. She hadn’t even finished sending the first three out of fifty before she had her first response.

> Bitch, who the fuck is this? I’d like to know who I’m about to skin alive.

Mary felt her veins throb with exhilaration as she received that confirmation that her work was having its desired effect. She made no response except to keep sending photos.

> Release him. I can see that you have him bound. This isn’t blackmail or him being unfaithful. It’s a dumb fucking slut in over her head.

Another message came in a minute later.

> Where are you, whore?

Mary cackled as she kept sending images. She situated herself back on Trevon’s lap, cutting his throat a bit to keep him bleeding so that it would be tougher to regain

consciousness. If he died in the process, then two jobs were done at once.

In fact, she noted—it's almost time. But this cock she was sitting on was a fine specimen indeed. She might as well make use of it.

Just as she was about to unsheath Trevon's member and impale herself with it, another message came through. It was a photo with a caption. The photo was an image of her car parked outside the building Mary and Trevon were currently in. The caption simply read: "This you?"

Chapter 19

(Dracula)



Dracula had known rage many times in her numerous centuries of existence. She'd known true fury the likes of which most mortals never had the dark privilege to experience. With her anger, she had leveled mountains, reduced armies to blood-soaked plains, and turned throngs of grown men inside out. She wasn't at her peak strength here in this era—not yet. But the anger she felt now? She didn't know what madness she was capable of.

Trevon Beaumont was her soulmate. Some sadistic sicko wanted to fuck with her. Well, fine, Vladimira Tepes knew how to fuck right back. She wasn't the least bit curious who the responsible party was or her motive. All she knew was that a woman had to die—and she hoped, *hoped*, *HOPED* it wouldn't be too easy.

The world seemed to move in slow motion as Dracula approached the entrance of the abandoned construction site, walking through a sheet of vinyl that hung over a vacant doorway. She could already see a slutty silhouette, begging for death. Dracula was feeling generous—she would give this psycho what she wanted and take her time doing so.

She pushed past the hanging sheet and into the room, where a couple dozen candles cast an eerie glow across the contents here. It was a whole lot of nothing, for the most part, but at the center of it all was a dark-haired woman with a curvaceous figure and red dress standing over Trevon's nearly naked body.

She thought she could keep it cool. She thought she would be able to do this slowly, meticulously—but at the sight of this...this unworthy scum feasting lustfully on the sight of her man's flesh, she lost it.

Dracula exploded into a hive of a thousand vampire bats that moved like a tornado in the direction of the interloper. She took almost sexual pleasure in the sound of the woman's screams, picking apart her flesh bit by bit, bite by bite. Skin torn from muscle, muscle torn from bone, all the while shrieks of pain and terror begging her to stop.

“Countess, please!” the voice screamed.

Oh. That was mildly interesting. This whore knew who she was. How fun. How cute. Dracula couldn't be bothered to give half a shit over that fact. One thing became clear to her very quickly, though. This woman wasn't human. For one thing, there was no skin left on her bones, and she was still

screaming and thrashing about. She was glad for that. The more suffering the better.

Dracula shifted her form, letting the twister of bats coalesce into the shape of a pack of black wolves. They pounced on what remained of her victim and tore her limb from limb, separating her head from her torso, then her arms and legs as well. Each wolf took a piece and hurled them into different corners of the room. One wolf stood guard atop the mattress and started chewing on the rope that bound Trevon, but the restraints didn't break nor budge. Dammit.

No matter. She wasn't done. The woman, headless though she was, still screamed, which narrowed down the options of who this could be quite considerably. Not that it mattered.

“Dracula! Countess, please! I can explain!”

Dracula was so beyond a need for explanation at that point that she almost laughed in her wolf forms. The only thing she knew or needed to know was that this woman had violated her Trevon, sought to use his body for her own pleasure. The reason didn't matter. The backstory meant nothing to her. All that mattered was that she had done the one thing the Countess could never forgive in a thousand lifetimes—the one thing that would haunt her for the rest of eternity.

Dracula's wolves lost shape as emotion overtook her, forcing her back into a humanlike form. The wolves turned into a black mist, which churned in the air until they formed the Countess's usual body, kneeling on the ground, sobbing.

She failed to protect him. Whoever this woman was, Dracula had failed to protect Trevon from her. Here he was, almost nude, restrained, covered in his own blood, forced to kiss and be used for some perverse woman's evil game. She had failed him. How could he ever forgive her? For the second time, she had failed to keep her lover safe. Last time it was Elisabeth. This time...

She crawled on hands and knees to the mattress where Trevon lay spread eagle against his will. Sobbing, she untied his restraints, casting them aside and placing his handsome head onto her lap.

"Trevvy, Darling, please wake up," she whimpered. "Please wake up, Trevvy. I know you're alive because I am too. Please stop sleeping, Trevvy, I can't do eternity without you!" Her words were pathetic, weak words she never imagined herself speaking let alone weeping, but she felt them so truly and deeply that it was all she wanted to say. She didn't dare kiss him, though she yearned to. She couldn't bear to imagine what it'd do to her if he awoke and assumed the kiss belonged to the evil bitch she'd torn to shreds.

Trevor Beaumont stirred slightly in her lap, making her dead heart pound with hope. She caressed his face gently, trusting that the love in her touch would tell him that it was her. "I'm here, Trevvy," she said, trying to be strong. "I'm so sorry this happened."

"Me too," he croaked, and at the sound of his voice she almost jumped for joy.

“Trevon, it’s me!” she giggled, though tears still altered her tone. “It’s me, your Mira. Tell me you remember me, please!”

“Why wouldn’t I remember you?” he grunted, opening his eyes. They flickered at her and he smiled. She smiled back. His expression faded as he looked around the room, formerly gray, now almost entirely red.

“What creature could possess this much blood?” he muttered in astonished disgust.

“Oh, I think I know,” she said. “I hope you won’t be upset with me. I made a little mess.”

It was the understatement of the century, and even she knew it. The walls, floors, and ceiling were covered with blood and gore. Flayed skin, muscle tissue, intestines, and bones were scattered everywhere in the room.

“Well, whoever it was, you certainly took care of her. It?”

“It’s a her,” Dracula confirmed. “And she’s not dead. She can’t die. Not this easily anyway.”

Trevon’s brow furrowed, prepared to hazard a guess from all the context clues. “Bloody Mary, the Scarlet Duchess?”

“You know, she used to have a crush on me back in the day,” Dracula sighed. “I do believe this was her misguided attempt at getting back at me for turning her down.”

Trevon blinked at this new information, apparently unsure how to respond.

“Can you sit up?” she asked, worry seeping back into her tone as she cupped his face.

“I can. I’m just quite comfy on your lap is all.” With a chuckle, he sat up and stretched, and Vladimira helped him to his feet. She handed him his cellphone, giving him a concerned look. He immediately checked the time.

“If I’m lucky, I can still get back before Justin finishes his break,” he grunted.

Dracula’s jaw dropped. “Are you really up to it? Don’t you feel violated? Traumatized? Broken?”

“Not really,” he muttered. “My childhood was way worse than that. Besides—why should I have worried or felt traumatized when I knew you’d be there for me?” he muttered.

Dracula pounced at him, wrapping arms and legs around him in a ferocious embrace. After too short a duration, he set her down. “I’ll be home in just a couple of hours. How did you make it here, by the way? There’s still some daylight outside.”

She shrugged. “Must be the bloodbond, but it didn’t hurt as badly this time. I didn’t really care if it burnt me to a crisp or not, honestly. I knew I’d survive in some form, and that making sure your fidelity and health was protected was the only thing that mattered.”

“Well, I’m fine,” he said, smiling at her. “Don’t worry. Be careful on your way back to the apartment, Mira.”

Dracula grinned at him, showing fangs as her fingers danced on his chest. “Just tell Justin what happened if you get in

trouble. I think he'll understand."

"He's afraid of you enough to let it go, that's for sure," Trevon murmured. "I'll tell him...some version of what happened, anyway."

She looked at his red-stained uniform. "Do you have another work outfit by chance?" she asked with a cringe as she handed it to him.

"I'll just tell customers the microwave in the break room exploded the Spaghetti Bolognese on me."

Dracula gave him one more kiss and watched him go, deciding to stay put for a moment until she was sure Trevon would be back inside the gas station. She collected what remained of Mary's head and took it out to the red car parked in the alley behind the construction site.

Dracula strolled up to the car and knelt down in front of the right side traffic mirror, gazing into it and holding up the duchess's head. She could feel the fading sun in the sky burning her flesh, but it was slow and manageable. She had time enough for this.

With a grin, she looked into the mirror, of course not seeing her own reflection. Taking a big breath, she spoke out a particular phrase, repeating it three times. "Bloody Mary, Bloody Mary, Bloody Mary."

Chapter 20

(Trevon)

Trevon was a bit in shock from the drama that had unfolded earlier in the day. As he finished his shift and helped his last customer for the night, he forced one more smile, but they were getting weaker and less convincing as the night wore on.

He wanted to go home. He was so, so ready to be back in their condo, to just relax in their bedroom and beg Mira to pamper him. Ever since they started having sex, Mira forsook closets and coffins altogether and trained herself to sleep in bed with Trevon, sacrificing a little sleep quality in so doing. She always made these sacrifices, just to be close to him as much as she could. He'd never known this kind of love in all his life. After a childhood of trauma and neglect, was it any wonder he had grown to see the Countess's passion not as madness but as the gift it was? He didn't want her to suffer the burden of knowing he was ever uncomfortable, as a result. He didn't want her to know how affected he was by what had happened. Keeping her in the dark about that was the least he could do for her—and his own pride, maybe.

Trevon had lost a fight. True, it was an ambush, and he had chosen that day of all days to leave his whip in his work locker. He had no weapons except a bottle of holy water he'd made ill use of. He hadn't even put on his armor since the day they bought their wardrobe from W-Mart.

But none of that was an excuse. He'd allowed himself to grow comfortable. But Mira was never fully comfortable, so she wasn't caught by surprise like him. He smirked to realize he wasn't her equal after all.

Trevon shoved his work uniform vest into his locker and retrieved his whip, affixing it to his hip. He bid a quick and thoughtless goodbye to Tom, the guy who'd replaced Justin in the latter part of his shift, and made his way out the automatic doors of the gas station.

His blood was still on the pavement in front of Pump 3.

He shook his head and walked home, cursing to himself under his breath. How could he be expected to care for Mira if she had to protect him? What kind of a man did that make him?

Trevon walked the distance from the Pump N' Go to his condo, heading inside and going up the stairs. He unlocked the door and took in a big breath before he worked up the courage to open it.

Well, he didn't open it in the end; she did. Dracula had been waiting by the door again, and the second she'd heard the door unlock, she apparently took that as an invitation to open it and pull him inside.

Mira was clean and wearing only a set of lacy merlot red lingerie as she drank some blood from a blood bag she'd gotten through Justin's sister—a nurse. Along with Tammy, the skinny redhead from the Pump N' Go, and her weekly blood donations, Dracula was eating good as it was. Trevon

wondered how she needed to drink anything today after all the blood spray that there had been on her just a couple hours prior—but then he recalled that vampires don't get sustenance from other Immortals.

“How was the rest of your shift, Trevvy?” she cooed, pulling him inside by the hands. The door slammed shut behind him—a minor magical effect, among the least of the enhancements to the apartment that they'd made so far.

“It was fine,” he said. “I'm still a bit tired after everything that happened, so I think I might head straight to bed tonight.”

Dracula blinked in surprise, worry painted across her pretty face, her eyes expressively wide as she finally spoke. “I see. Very well. Yes, that makes sense. You should get some rest, Darling. Do you want me to draw you a hot bath first?”

Trevon nodded. “A hot bath sounds nice, actually.”

“Not a shower,” she clarified. “No running water.”

He chuckled at that, bobbing his head twice in nods of understanding. “Of course.”

Trevon discarded his things onto the couch and sat down while Dracula headed to the bathroom. The bath tub wasn't big enough for the pair of them on any level, but that had never stopped Mira, and in fact, that degree of closeness was exactly what he craved from her tonight, so he wasn't about to complain. He listened as he heard the faucet creak and squeal, and then the water started pouring. Dracula hissed, and he shot up.

“Are you alright?”

“I’m fine, Darling,” she called back sweetly. “I just got a tiny bit of water on my hand.”

Relaxing somewhat, he still made his way to the bathroom to see the extent of her injury. She was naked already, her bra and panty set discarded in the sink. Trevon’s eyes absorbed the sight of her nudity gladly, feeling comforted by the intimacy it implied between them, but he frowned when he saw the deep red burn mark on her wrist.

“That looks bad,” he said, kneeling beside her. “You should be more careful, Mira.”

“I’m sorry, Darling,” she said, grinning back at him. “Your concern is noted and appreciated, though.” Her lips pressed into his cheek until one thing led to another. Soon she was taking off his clothes.

Mira had changed since the first few times they’d made love. Gone was the frantic desperation in her touch, replaced by a calm, serene affection that knew how to be gentle and patient. She pulled his shirt over his head slowly, kissing him almost constantly as it happened. She folded the shirt without looking down at it and dropped it in the hamper beside the bathtub.

From there he let her undo his belt buckle as he tasted her tongue, sucking it into his mouth. There was a hint of blood still from her dinner, but he didn’t give a fuck about that. All he cared about was keeping her close.

Trevon raised his hips and helped her remove his pants, and she hooked her thumb in his boxers along the way. He was naked with her then, kissing her on the bathroom floor while the tub filled with steamy water, making out while she affectionately massaged his cock.

Every night was like this, more or less. Every time he was with her, they spent their time together entangled. They'd have sex, then watch Netflix while Trevon ate a pizza, then they'd have sex again, then Dracula would experiment with magical enhancements and security measures for the condo—then more sex. He wouldn't have it any other way.

But it wasn't the sex that was so good about being with her. It was the connection he felt with her. Maybe it was the bloodbond. Maybe it was their shared experience forming an artificial link between their souls. Maybe it was nothing but madness—but in such a short time, a couple of weeks, Trevon had fallen in love. Madly so.

He didn't have any time for the side of him that once entertained guilty thoughts. His priorities had shifted. He didn't like when Vladimira killed humans, of course—but the thing he disliked most about it was that it would eventually get them caught if she couldn't rein it in. If not for that, he very well might let her do as she pleased after a while. He had begun to understand her possessiveness on some level because he felt it for her as well.

When Mira came to visit him at the gas station the other day, a couple of punks muttered to each other about how badly they

wanted to fuck her. It had taken Trevon every ounce of strength he had not to bash their skulls together. He imagined it, disgusted more at the disrespectful words those miscreants uttered than the things he imagined inflicting upon them.

He kissed her ravenously, groaning with contentment as she ground her sex into his muscular thigh. She idly fingered his scars, kissing his neck, leaving hickeys that would vanish in short order. Even if they didn't, he couldn't be bothered to care. If she wanted to leave her mark on his flesh, he wanted it too.

“Get in the tub, baby,” she whispered directly into his ear before giving his neck a playful bite. Trevon nodded and slipped inside the bath, displacing enough of the water that some of it leaked over the edge, but the drain on the floor collected it.

Dracula caused even more of an overflow as she joined him in the tub, sitting on his lap facing him. It was the only solution that worked in the small bath's confined space. She reached out and turned off the faucet, and the room fell quiet except for Trevon's breaths.

Trevon stared directly into her eyes. When she closed them and leaned forward to kiss him again, he stopped her, placing his hands on her shoulders. “No,” he said. “Let me just look at you.”

Dracula smiled at him, and he could practically see the love written all over her perfect face. She patiently stared back at him without saying a word, instead occupying her hands by

wrapping them around his cock and pumping in opposing corkscrew patterns.

“I love you,” he said.

“I love you more,” she cooed.

There was a time when Trevon wouldn't have doubted that statement. But today he did. It was then that he pulled her close, allowing her breasts to mash against his chest as he embraced her tighter than normal.

She released his cock and hugged him back. “My poor darling,” she whimpered, finally sensing something was awry. “She really hurt you, didn't she?”

“I'll be fine,” he said. “I just realized today that I'm nothing without my weapons. But you—you are a weapon. You came to defend *me*. It should have been the other way around. I'm the man between us—that duty should fall on me.”

“If I need to be rescued someday, I know you'll rise to the challenge. But love isn't about restricting ourselves to gender roles at all costs, Trevvy. I will always defend you, just as I know you will always protect me. I submit to you like a loyal wife, of course—but I know that you would do anything for me if I asked for it.”

“Anything,” he echoed, realizing as he said it just how dangerous a promise it was. But he was beyond doubt and fear now.

Dracula grabbed a sponge and pressed the discounted soap bar into it, grinding it until the loofa was full of suds. She

washed his whole body from head to toe, kissing each part as it became clean.

Trevon enjoyed every second of it—the feeling of her nudity pressed against his, of her eyes never relinquishing their hold over him. She stared at him like she was possessed, a charming madness plastered over her eyes. She always smiled, never blinked. Her touch was so soft, yet so hot and electric from the hot water of the bath.

“I need you to be happy for me, baby,” she whined sweetly, still grinning despite the sad and sorrowful tone of voice. “I need you to be okay. I see it now and I can’t unsee it.”

“See what?” he asked.

“Trouble in your eyes,” she murmured. “She hurt you so badly.”

“I’m fine. I’m not in any pain now,” he told her.

Dracula shook her head. “You know that’s not what I meant. She hurt your pride. Your self-confidence. The experience left you traumatized and anxious—it’s totally understandable, but I need you to accept that though you might feel damaged, you aren’t.” She clearly noticed him resisting her words, looking down and away, but she pressed on with even more passion. “You’re just as perfect to me as you were yesterday. You aren’t tainted or unimpressive. You are my Trevvy, and I would do anything to see you happy. I love you, I love you, I love you.” She kissed him after the third declaration, pressing her lips into his forehead. “Do you believe me?”

“I know you love me,” he said. “Of course I believe you.”

“Do you believe me when I say you aren’t broken? That there’s nothing wrong with you?” she pressed further, clasping her hands on his cheeks and forcing him to look her in the eyes.

Trevon stared for a long time. “I don’t know, Mira. I’m sorry. I should have been able to handle her myself.”

“You were an unarmed, unarmored human caught off guard by a literal immortal. True, your bloodline has its advantages, as do the powers our bond grants you from my side, but you’re still mortal in the end.”

“That doesn’t make me feel better,” he chuckled darkly.

“Maybe this will.” Dracula disappeared under the water, and soon Trevon felt the warmth of her lips wrap around his cock. She had pulled this stunt before, and he had to admit he did find it rather erotic. Not needing to breathe, Dracula could suck him off like that until night became morning if she wanted to—but it never took that long.

Trevon felt his length grow and go hard in her mouth, then felt her dotting tongue glide from base to tip in repetitive motions. Soon, her lips sealed around his cockhead, and the texture of her throat became a familiar blessing as his manhood slid deeper into her mouth.

As good as it felt, this isn’t what he wanted from her. Guiding her up by the shoulders, he brought her head above water once more and smiled at her gently, hoping it didn’t look

forced. "Let's dry off and move to the bed," he said, and she nodded eagerly.

"Anything you want."

Dracula instantly dried upon exiting the tub, but she helped Trevon towel off, avoiding his enormous erection except for a few stray gropes she apparently couldn't resist. As they finished up, Trevon reached back in to drain the tub, pulling the plug, then picked his lover up and carried her like a princess to their bed, tossing her atop it.

"Is this all?" she asked. "You want to make love?"

"No, actually," he said. "I want to demonstrate my love for you."

He got onto the mattress and crawled into a spot between her legs, which she instinctively opened as he approached. Sensing what was happening, Dracula pressed her back against the headboard of the bed and raised her knees. Her eyes wide, she reached down with two fingers to spread her pussy lips for him. "You wanna taste me, baby?"

Trevon let his tongue answer her question, gripping her slender thighs in his powerful hands. He buried his nose in her mons, the bare bit of skin above her cunt, and nuzzled his nose into her clitoris as his lips and tongue concerned themselves with her slit. He licked a long oval around her entrance, used his hands to pry her thighs open wider, and as soon as he felt her hands come down on him and grab a chunk of hair, he delved inside, letting his tongue slip between her folds.

Dracula moaned as he supped on her quim, rubbing his scalp tenderly as her hips bucked against his face. “Feels...really good,” she mewled. “I can feel your love.”

That was his goal. He kept going, unrelenting, unyielding, sucking, tongue-fucking her perfect pussy—this treasure between her legs that always treated him so well. He savored her fairly neutral taste. Since she rarely sweated, there wasn’t much to it, but the taste of her skin and the pleasant texture more than made up for the lack of additional flavors.

Feeling her arousal build, he decided it was time to focus on her clit, but he wouldn’t give back any ground. He allocated two fingers to the task of thrusting into her flower while he sucked and rubbed her clit with his skilled and generous tongue, feeling her start to shake as an orgasm heralded its arrival.

“Cum for me, Countess,” he said, taking the briefest reprieve to issue the command.

She obeyed, flooding his mouth with her sweet release, her insides throbbing and convulsing around his fingers. “I—I’m cumming, Trevvy! I’m cumming for you! Can you taste it?!”

He didn’t answer except to keep going. Like a frenzied demon, he laid into her, never giving up, continuing until another orgasm crashed into her, stacking on top of the last one.

“Trevvy, Darling, it feels so good!” she moaned, scratching and rubbing at his scalp wildly in reply as her hips thrust against his dotting face. “G-gaaah! Here comes another one!”

Trevon still didn't stop. He needed her to feel his love, to know he was still worthy of her, that he could provide for her and give her endless happiness—despite his failure. He needed her to know—

“Trevvy, I need a break, baby,” she moaned, gently trying to pry his lips off of her. “You were amazing.”

He didn't heed her words. He tightened his grip on her thigh, doubled his efforts with his fingers and tongue, and sent her into another spiral of pleasure.

“Trevvy! That's enough, baby, I'm going to lose my mind! It's too sensitive now. Trevon! Stop! Stop!”

Finally she managed to put her palm in front of his mouth and pry his fingers out of her, and he froze, caught by surprise. He looked up at her, eyes wide with regret. “I'm so sorry,” he muttered, seeing her panting, her body shaking with uncontrollable sensations even still, looking at him as though afraid.

But she wasn't afraid. She crawled toward him, still panting, leaking, trembling, and embraced him. “There's nothing to apologize for. I see right through you.”

He gazed into her eyes and was startled at what he found there. “My God,” he muttered in disbelief. “You really do. I can't hide anything from you, can I?”

“Rather than tell you not to worry, knowing that that'll accomplish nothing, I'll say this. My love for you is unending and unconditional. But if you need to grow stronger to love

yourself, then I will help you do that, Darling. I have a surprise for you.”

He blinked and nodded at her. “I could use a nice surprise, I guess.”

She giggled and snapped her fingers. Within a matter of seconds, the dingy walls with peeling wallpaper, the cheap carpeting, even the bed beneath them was replaced by stone walls, stone floors, and a luxurious red bed in a room that was easily ten times the size of where they’d just been.

“I worked on a little something while you were gone,” she cooed. “Turns out the heart of an immortal was the last little bit I needed to make this work.”

“You got your castle back?” he asked, his mouth open in shock. He sat up and looked around, taking in the sights of the candelabrum, torches, gargoyles, fountains, and other adornments that decorated the massive chamber.

“Just this room so far, but it’s more than enough. Trevon, Darling—welcome to our new home away from home: Dracula Loves Beaumont Castle. Now—shall I summon some monsters for you to slay?”

Chapter 21

(Trevon)

The familiarity of the castle surroundings was odd to say the least. The last time he'd faced down Dracula in a setting like this, Trevon was armed to the teeth in holy artifacts, weapons, and armor. Dracula herself had been clad in black metal and leather, but now she wore only a pair of panties and a Pump N' Go polo that she'd borrowed from him.

Then there was the difference in their relationship to contend with. They were no longer enemies at one another's throats. Now, if Vladimira was at Trevon's throat at all, it was to pepper it with dozens of gentle kisses while she held him tight.

"I won't hold back on you, baby," she cooed across the hall.

"That's fine," he said, choosing to fight with a dagger made from the tip of the Longinus Spear, the spear which pierced the side of Christ on Golgotha at his crucifixion. Before he was ready to wield the Angel's Tear again, he figured he should work his way up his entire arsenal, starting with the lowliest gear.

As for armor—he wore none. He wore only a pair of boxers with black hearts on them. Mira had chosen them for him because she said the black hearts represented her love for him, always hovering around his crotch in thought if not in physicality. Beyond that one piece of clothing, he was clad only in the layer of body hair the Holy Spirit had blessed him

with—rugged though it seemed, he doubted it would protect him much.

He clenched his jaw and struck a battle pose, motioning to his lover with a come hither stroke of his fingers. She bit her lip at the sight of it, and he realized only then that the motion was actually rather suggestive.

Paintings of Dracula and Trevon fucking in various positions and places flew off the walls, still embedded in their golden frames. They moved in a perfect ring formation around his head, circling him like a halo of oncoming death. Trevon went aerial as they flew toward him at high speeds, meaning to smash against his powerful body, but he dodged without struggle, backflipping to safety and grabbing hold of a chandelier over head.

“Nice, baby!” Dracula cheered, clapping and giggling in support. Her paintings smashed together with such force that they became splinters and a haze of debris that almost looked gaseous in the instant before it settled.

“Thank you, honey,” Trevon replied, though he didn’t smile. Not yet.

Dracula stomped her naked foot into the red carpet running up to their bed, and suddenly the suits of armor lining the walls started moving.

Trevon let himself fall from the swinging chandelier, landing gracefully on both feet, hardly needing to bend at the knees when he hit the ground. The animated armor was slow and clumsy, but with only a dagger the length of his forearm,

Trevon would have to be clever and precise to destroy them, pinpointing their weaknesses like a surgeon.

Each of the three suits wielded a spear. One of them lunged it toward him, but he deflected it easily with his little blade, pulled the spear, and brought the armor within range. His dagger found its mark, wedging into the elbow joint of that armor, making it fall off at the forearm and drop the spear. It was no longer a major threat, so he planted his foot hard in its chest and sent the thing toppling onto its ass.

Meanwhile, the other two steely foes made their attacks, which Trevon dodged while defeating the first of them. He spun around and pierced the hole in one's helmet where the eyes should be, taking off the helm in the hopes that that would cease the enchantment keeping the armor alive—but it didn't work. It was merely a headless foe now.

No matter. Trevon caught himself grinning as he flipped over their heads and planted his dagger between the joints in the knees of one of the suits, making the armor separated below the knee and fall over. He kicked the spear away from it and set his sights on the last.

For that one, he split the spear in two with his dagger, then took his time in disassembling the armor by hand, piece by piece, bit by bit, using the advantage of his own greater speed and strength. Inside the chest of that armor, he found a diamond-like prism floating in space.

“Ah, so that's what makes you tick,” he chuckled, piercing it with his dagger's tip. The armor stopped moving, and he

repeated this process with the other two in no time at all.

He set his sights on Dracula and found her sitting straight up on the edge of the bed, kicking her feet and clapping excitedly. “Yay! One more?”

“Don’t hold back on me,” he commanded her. “Send me the best you’ve got.”

“The best I’ve got, you say?” she mumbled, tapping her cheek thoughtfully. “I wonder...”

Trevon watched as Dracula stood up, raising her hands over her head in a way that exposed the crotch of her panties for a moment beneath his work shirt. “Alright, my traitorous minion! Acknowledge your master and seek forgiveness! Come to me, Death, embodiment of the Reaping and Decay! Worship at my feet and give Trevvy a fun workout!”

Trevon watched as the torches in the room flickered and a roiling mist appeared in front of him. It churned and bubbled in the air taking a ghastly shape and making the atmosphere feel cold and hopeless. He set his jaw and assumed his battle stance, his brow furrowed with purpose.

But at the last moment, the mist dispersed and Trevon was left staring at Dracula looking somewhat deflated on her bed.

“Well, that was disappointing,” she muttered. “Seems like he grew a little more powerful while I was gone if he can resist my summons from inside a castle now.”

Trevon nodded. “We will have to deal with him eventually, though. You were right to try but—perhaps next time give me

some warning and let me put some pants on before we defeat him.”

“Defeat him?” she asked, cocking her head. “But Death is my favorite creation. I just want him to come home to me and apologize. I was thinking he could preside over our wedding and everything.”

Trevon arched a brow. “It would be the first Beaumont wedding not presided over by a Cardinal or Bishop of the Roman Catholic Church.”

“I doubt that’s true,” she chuckled. “I haven’t heard anything about your family since we came here. I imagine they’ve fallen out of favor or been sidelined since there have been so few monsters since I disappeared.”

“You’re probably right,” he sighed, realizing the truth. “I even googled my family name and came up with nothing at all. There seem to be very few of us still active, if any.”

“Soooo…” she giggled, batting her eyelashes.

Trevon was momentarily puzzled. “So, what?”

“Can Death marry us?”

Trevon laughed. “I suppose, if it makes you happy. But I haven’t proposed yet.”

“Well hurry up and propose, dammit!” she hissed, crossing her arms. “I just assumed we were on the same page about that. We’re bound together forever—thanks to the bloodbond, I mean, it’s actually pretty likely that you won’t even age.”

“Sounds like I’m stuck with you,” he said, sauntering over to the vampire on his bed.

She huffed and humphed and shot him an angry look. “Don’t tease me. I wuv you. I’m happy I get to be with you forever.”

“Doesn’t that contradict your curse, though?” Trevon asked as he sat beside her. “Vampires are creatures of Darkness in league with Satan. They are supposed to be cursed to endless loneliness and misery. Yet, here we are—”

“Hopelessly in love and content,” she chirped, tossing her arms around him as he sat beside her. “All that curse stuff is mostly overblown, to be totally honest. That’s lore we drip-fed the Church over centuries to mislead them. I actually know of one happily married vampire named Godfrey who lived in Sicily and was about the most joyful guy in the world.”

“Really,” Trevon chuckled, flabbergasted by that. “I better revise the lore, then.”

Dracula pouted at him as she crawled into his lap like a kitten. “Why do you need to document vampire lore now?” she whined. “Forget your stupid family duties. Maybe you should focus on a different kind of lore.”

“Oh?” he replied, his eyebrows raising with interest. “I’m all ears, Countess.”

“Maybe...maybe you could...” She covered her cheeks, trying to hide her blush as she averted her eyes. “Maybe you could write a guide on...kissing vampires? I’d be happy to help you conduct the research.”

“I’m not sure the Church would appreciate that contribution to the literature on nosferatu secrets, but it’s certainly an intriguing notion,” he said, laughing as he patted her on the head. “You can relax. I was mostly just joking about updating the lore anyway. You’re all I care about now.”

“Good,” she sighed, clearly relieved. So relieved in fact that Trevon felt as though he was watching her melt as she sank against his chest. “Hmm.”

“Hmmm?”

“Nothing,” she sighed. “I’m just thinking about Death. I hope he’s alright without me. He was always such a good boy—I never saw it coming when he betrayed me, you know.”

“Why do you think he did it?” Trevon asked.

“I don’t know,” she admitted, shrugging. “I know he felt like I kind of cursed him by giving him a consciousness because he felt every single reaping. Before I made him a living entity, obviously he couldn’t perceive such things.”

“So he overthrew you, or tried to, in the hopes that he could...stop reaping souls?”

“I have suspicions. I was already working on the problem when he did that, but I never told him. I wanted it to be a surprise. Anyway, I don’t know for sure if that’s the reason,” she admitted, hugging him tightly. She grabbed Trevon’s hand and guided it to cup her ass, which he happily obliged. “I just wish I could see him. Let him talk to his mommy about it.”

“It’s tough having to look after children,” Trevon muttered. “I helped raise a few of my younger cousins for a couple of years before I began my adventure. I can only imagine what it’s like being Death’s maternal figure.”

“He’s a sweet boy,” she insisted, sighing like she was trying to convince herself. “If he just told me what he needed, I probably would have given it to him. But I’m so grateful he betrayed me.”

Trevon chuckled. “Why? That seems strange.”

Dracula raised her head off his chest and tossed a look at him that could probably kill lesser mortals. “Fucking seriously, baby?”

“Oh,” he quickly understood. “Right. If he didn’t betray you, we wouldn’t be together.”

“It’s the happiest betrayal of my life,” she purred. “How about you?”

“I don’t think I was ever betrayed—and I had no affiliation with Death anyway, so, what he did to me didn’t count as a betrayal.”

“But are you happy? That was the point of my question.”

He smiled at her. “I am. And yet—I feel like I’ve been given a gift I don’t deserve.”

Dracula smiled at him softly. “Here. Come with me, Darling. Let me show you something.”

She got up and held out her hand. He took it, and she walked him toward one of the walls. “There’s actually one more room in here. It’s where I spend most of my time when you’re gone at work or running errands during the day.”

Trevon nodded as she turned a book over in a bookcase, and the wall split, opening up into another chamber.

This room was dark. Too dark for Trevon to make out anything at first. As he walked inside, though, a few torches lit along the walls, and he realized there was a pair of feet dangling in front of his face.

Trevon looked up and saw the body of a woman—hung on a noose. Not just her—the entire room was full of hanging bodies of women. His eyes widened with shock and horror, and he turned to Vladimira, who was grinning at him like a Cheshire cat. “What the Hell is this?”

“Three hundred and twenty-two women. They’re not real—just flesh dolls I made. These are replicas of every woman I’ve caught lusting over you since we arrived in this era. I’m trying my best, baby—not to kill them in real life, but I have to...to express myself. So I made this room to keep my urges under control. See! Aren’t you proud of me?”

Trevon’s brow furrowed, but he nodded as he patted her on the back. “Well. Everyone needs a hobby.”

Chapter 22

(Death)

Death was left gobsmacked when he woke up the next day in a field of corn out in the middle of bumfuck Wisconsin. The teleportation across the world wasn't even the most shocking part about it. Death didn't sleep, and yet he felt as though he'd suddenly regained consciousness, like he'd been out cold for a long time.

“Fuck my coccyx,” he muttered, rubbing his forehead, bony digit scraping bony skull. “What the fuck was in that wine I pretended to drink?”

Death stood up and realized he was naked. Scrambling to cover his lack of a penis, he screamed like a little girl before correcting his tone—screaming like a strong man instead. Just to get into character.

Of course, no one was around, and anyone that happened upon him would be far more rattled about why a ten foot tall skeleton was standing in the middle of a corn field than they would be about the fact that said skeleton wasn't wearing clothes. In fact, the inclusion of clothes might even confuse them further.

Nonetheless, Death hated to be nude. One day, he'd have a big, fat, swinging dingus between his legs, he hoped, but for now? Just the ol' pelvis.

Uttering an incantation under his breath, Death saw fit to summon himself a cloak. It appeared on his skeletal body mere seconds later, hanging off his frame like it'd always been there. He raised his hood to hide his face, but appearing at his full height would also pose an issue. As far as his centuries of experience dictated, humans didn't grow to ten feet tall. "Then again, I've heard American beef is laced with growth hormones," he muttered.

Even so, his common sense won out in the end, and he expended a little bit of mystical power to shrink himself down to half his height. Now he was a respectable five feet tall, what humans of this day, age, and place, would affectionately refer to as a "Short King". It would make him seem non-threatening and allow him to go unbothered wherever he wandered.

Still, his typical cloak was honestly not as discreet as he would have preferred. With a sigh, he accepted that he'd probably have to reap a few dozen people while he figured out exactly where he was and why.

Well, the "where" of it wasn't all that puzzling. He was almost definitely in Wisconsin in the USA, in the Wapa Lake region where Bloody Mary was assigned and Dracula and Beaumont were playing house in a cheapass condominium.

It was the "why" he needed to decipher. The most likely scenario would be that Bloody Mary summoned him to give the ol' bag of bones a fuck-a-doodle in celebration of a job well done. Presumably, she had killed the Beaumont and the

Vampiress and was calling upon him to officiate their marriage with some sticky consummation.

“Man, I need to get a dick bad,” Death grumbled, rubbing his palms together as he thought about suggestively licking his lips. He had no tongue, so the thought was the best he could do. But it’s the thought that counts, humans liked to say.

Then, of course, there was the other possibility. Death had to entertain the distant, yet distinctly real, chance that Bloody Mary had failed in her mission. If that happened, Dracula might have used her Immortal heart as a power core for a new castle, and in so doing, she would have the power to attempt summoning him again. He could only assume she meant to enslave him or scatter him back into the ether from whence he’d come, punishing him for his wicked betrayal.

But that was almost definitely not what happened. Bloody Mary was powerful, calculating, and sexy. She was motivated to get her revenge on Dracula and see her dead at any cost. Without a doubt, she would get the drop on them and finish the job. He must be here at her summons.

But then...why didn’t she warn him in advance? No. Something was off about this. Death strode through the cornfield, finding a road and holding out his skeletal thumb, hoping for a ride.

Bloody Mary was cold, methodical, and calculating...except when things got personal. He remembered one time in 1856 when they played drinking games through the night with the devil’s daughter and a werewolf gal named Biscuitina. It was a

strip game, too, though he couldn't remember the rules. All he remembered was that every round, the loser had to take something off. Bloody Mary was damned good and kept all her clothes on the whole time, defying luck until Biscuitina revealed that she saw Dracula naked a few centuries prior. After that, Mary lost her focus and became fixated on punishing the werewolf, only to lose terribly and end up completely nude after blunders upon blunders played out.

“That was a good night,” Death sighed at the memory, but it implied something he hadn't considered until now. Mary's clinical approach to her mission might have been compromised the second she laid eyes on the Vampire Queen and old feelings of rejection were exhumed.

“Meaning,” he supposed, “She very well could have fucked up and gotten herself ripped to pieces and converted into Dracula's castle core. Fuck.”

On the plus side, he wouldn't have to admit to Mary that he still didn't have a dick nor balls. And to think, he had been this close to buying a convincing strap-on and just turning off the lights.

A car pulled over to the side of the road, and a young man probably in his late teens or early twenties at best peeked his head out. “Shit, dude, I'm high as fuck but you look dead.”

Death crawled into the passenger seat and checked the kid's phone. It was mounted to the dashboard in one of those phone holder things, and the map was on the screen. “Are you headed toward Wapa Lake by any chance?”

“I’ll be passing through,” he muttered, taking another hit of something Death was too inexperienced to identify with confidence. Marijuana, he had to guess, but he didn’t fucking know. “Want me to drop you off anywhere there in particular?”

“The W-Mart just off the highway ought to be close enough to my destination.”

“Oh sick, bro, I know the spot. I’ll drop you off there, no problem.” He passed the joint over to Death, who took it awkwardly and stared at it. After a pause, the kid cocked his head. “You gonna take a hit or not, man?”

“I don’t have lungs or breath, so...”

“Ahh, sure. I dig it,” the kid said, nodding as he took the bud back. “Yeah man, everyone’s got different tolerances. This is a no judgment sedan, bro.”

“Thanks,” Death muttered, suddenly realizing that they hadn’t even driven off yet. “Are we going to start driving?”

“Yeah, man, sure thing. I forgot I wasn’t driving yet for a second there,” he chuckled.

Death stared at him, his sockets glowing with worry. “Hey man, are you cool to drive or not? I can take the wheel for a bit if you need to chill.”

“Nah, bro, I got this.”

Death nodded and put on his seat belt. “Suit yourself. Giddyup, bitch.”

The kid chuckled and started driving, his eyes glazed over and bloodshot. “So what’s your story, man?”

“Me?” Death muttered. “In town to check on my mom and her new boyfriend. Just passing through. Once I’m sure they’re all set, I’m catching a flight back home.”

“Bro, that’s so nice of you to check on your mom. Is she having a tough time or something?” the kid asked, wiping his nose on his sleeve before taking another hit from his joint.

Death thought about it. “I can’t say for sure. She just sort of popped up in my life again for the first time in like, centuries,” he sighed. “I mean, to be fair, I was the one who drove her away in the first place.” Death reached out the window, gesturing at the swaying fields of corn, draining the life out of a few hundred yards of the stuff just because he could. After he’d had enough, he pulled his hand back inside and glanced over at his driver.

“Family is important, dude,” the young pothead sighed. “Name’s Josh, by the way.” He extended his hand, but Death leaned away.

“Oh, I’d better not. You’ll die.”

“Ah, shit, right on, dude.” He put both hands back on the wheel and locked his eyes on the road. “Anyway, what happened between you and your mom that caused you two to have that falling out?”

“It wasn’t any one thing,” he replied. “She just was so focused on her own shit, and she never let me move out and do

my own thing. And there was just so much of a burden on me because of the fact that I'm the embodiment of Death, it's like I never got a break, and she never really seemed to understand that."

"Right, right." Josh paused, nodding his head slowly until it stopped. "You wanna run that whole thing by me one more time?"

Death just pushed past it, shrugging. "I think it's fair to say I have a famous mom. Our home was always getting visitors, which I had to help entertain, and she was pretty controlling. It's funny, for a long time I really wished she'd find a boyfriend and get off my back but now that she has—"

"Sucks to not feel needed anymore, is that it?" Josh guessed.

"Yeah, I think so," Death murmured. "Sometimes I think—Death, is this what you want? Everything you've been after since she left—is it really better than what you had before?"

"Is it?" Josh asked, tossing the last bit of his joint out the window.

Death shook his head. "If I'm honest, I regret it. But I can't just show up empty-handed and beg for her forgiveness. She'll fuckin' kill me, man."

"I bet she wouldn't. I lost my parents a few years back," the pothead said, his voice croaky with emotion all of a sudden. "I'd give a lot to be able to see my mom again. Even though she'd nag me for smoking weed and having a shitty job and not having a girlfriend or college degree. Even though I failed

at life, I wish I could go crawling back to her. I just wish I had that option, you know?”

Death almost caught himself nodding, but instead bounced his shoulders in a shrug. “I’m not sure.”

“Then be sure,” Josh said, laughing a bit. “I think maybe you found your way into my shitty car for a reason, bro. I think God or Buddha or whoever sent you here to hear this wisdom from me.”

“What wisdom, exactly?” Death asked, taking the bait with a slight grumble.

“Treasure your mother while you can. Have faith that she’ll still recognize you as her son, despite everything that happened between you two. I don’t know the details of your whole thing with her, but I know this—family is everything. I just wish I realized that before I really, truly lost mine forever.”

Death stared out the window after hearing those words for a solid ten minutes without much talking. Is that what he needed to do? Assuming Bloody Mary was now a prisoner in Dracula’s castle, how would Dracula react when she saw Death? Would she instantly try to fight him? Torture him? Would she sic the Beaumont on him? Or...Would she be happy to see him?

Death sighed and turned back to find Josh staring at him with an amusingly big grin.

“What is it?” Death asked with a chuckle.

The young man laughed and shook his head before looking back at the road. “Nothing. It’s just that—motherfucker, you are literally a fucking skeleton.”

Death nodded and continued laughing. “Guilty as charged, Josh. Guilty as charged.”

Chapter 23

(Dracula)

Vladimira reminded herself that this part-time job was necessary as she sat behind the desk at the Weekend Inn, messing around on her phone. Trevon still needed food, and food still required money—and that boy could eat. In fact, she had never seen a man eat as much as he could put down when he really asserted himself.

It seems so inefficient, she mused with a smirk on her lips and a rosy color to her cheeks as she thought of him. How can humans multiply like rodents when they require so much sustenance?

Of course, Trevon wasn't just any man. Just to maintain his muscles, he needed to eat roughly eight thousand calories a day. At least, that was Dracula's estimate. Trevon hadn't really caught on to the fact that his body was in stasis, more or less, and though he felt hunger pangs, he didn't actually grow stronger or weaker depending on his diet. She wasn't even sure he really needed to sleep.

Bloodbonds were mysterious, but after centuries meddling with magic, she had learned that an eternity is a long time to experiment. For now, she let Trevon follow his habits as usual, eating, drinking, and slumbering however he felt compelled to. But eventually, once they had really settled into their routines and established a comfortable life for themselves, she would broach the topic.

With him, bonded to him, she could have everything. She almost laughed that at one point they had planned to break their bond. Now she considered it an indispensable part of their relationship and their eternity together. Eventually, the bond would expire on its own, but not if she dedicated some of the power of her new, blossoming castle to maintain it indefinitely. She would do whatever it took.

An old man came through the door, smiling at Dracula as he set a suitcase down on the ground, tightened the belt on his loose-fitting corduroy pants, and adjusted his glasses with a weary sigh. “Greetings, little lady,” he said with a polite nod and charming local accent. “Got any free rooms?”

“Did you book anything?”

“Afraid not,” the man admitted. “My daughter’s in the hospital having a baby, and it’s a week sooner than expected so I didn’t have much time to plan. The second I heard the news, I hopped in my car and started driving.” He chuckled a little, a whistly breath in the back of his laugh, his shoulders bouncing with love and pride as he told his story.

Dracula’s eyes opened with interest, her thin, dark eyebrows forming twin arches of surprise. “A baby?”

“Yes, ma’am. A baby boy. Even naming him after me, too.”

Dracula smiled in spite of herself, something about the story catching in her paradoxically beating heart. “Congratulations. We have two rooms available, and they’re pretty much exactly the same. I just cleaned one of them, though, so it might still smell of chemicals.”

“Doesn’t bother me either way, it’s just a place to crash. I could very well end up sleeping in the hospital all night, so I plan on dropping off my luggage and seeing where the night takes me.”

“I’ll give you room four, then,” she said. “Cash, check, or card?”

“I’ll pay it on my Visa, thanks,” the man said. “Name’s Brown. I don’t know if you need to write that down in a log or something.”

Dracula chuckled. “I have a clipboard. This place is pretty old fashioned. But yeah, I’ll need your full name, but I bet it’ll be on your card.”

The man laughed as he handed his credit card to her. She took note of the name on it and jotted it down. “Leslie Brown. Room four. Let me just swipe you in and...there you go!” She handed the card back to him, then turned around to pull a key off a hook behind her. “Here’s the key to room four. We’ve got spares, but don’t lose that one or we’ll have to change the lock and that’ll be an additional charge.”

“I understand the way motels work,” the man commented with a smile. “Thank you very much, Miss...”

“Tepes-Beaumont,” she said.

“Like...Countess Dracula? That Tepes? From the Britney Stoker novel?”

“I have no idea who Britney Stoker is, but yes. Have a good night, and congratulations.”

“Thank you.” The man gestured to someone who appeared to be waiting in the parking lot outside. Vladimira tilted her head to see out of curiosity, and soon a pretty chestnut-haired woman with freckles and a bob cut walked through the door. From the look of her, she couldn’t have been older than twenty. Vladimira’s brow slanted in suspicion at the new arrival.

“We’re all checked in, kiddo,” Leslie said, handing the girl the key. “You want to take the luggage to room four and rest? I’m headed straight to the hospital.”

“Yeah,” she sighed, her voice irritatingly high. “Sure thing, Daddy. Call me when the baby’s born and I’ll grab an Uber.” She kissed her father on the cheek, then turned to size up Dracula, her eyes scanning over her from head to toe while her father raced to the car, leaving the door swinging shut behind him. “Damn, you’re fine.”

Dracula blinked in surprise. “Oh. Thank you.”

The girl sighed and pivoted onto one foot, crossing her arms and adopting a look that wasn’t unlike flat-out suspicion. “Why the fuck are there so many absurdly hot people in smalltown Wisconsin? Makes, like, no statistical sense.”

Dracula frowned. “Let me guess: you just stopped at the Pump N’ Go?”

“Yeah, how’d you know? The guy there had a body like Hercules and the dreamiest eyes in the world. I tried to slip him my number, but he pretended to ignore that. I might head back over there in a few minutes anyway to let him know I

have a room. After being cooped up in that car for five hours, I really need to cum, you know?”

“Are you always this forthcoming about your intent to sleep with a woman’s man right in front of her?” Dracula asked, her eyes wide as she wore a plastic smile. She grabbed the letter opener on the desk in front of her and started fiddling with it—a detail that didn’t go unnoticed.

“Oh—shit, I didn’t know he was your boyfriend, sorry,” the slut mumbled, taking a step back. “I’ll...just be heading to my room.”

“Maybe I’ll see you there later,” Dracula added as the young woman scrambled out the door and toward freedom.

It took everything Dracula had to not tear that whore limb from limb. She needed to find a way to stop this from happening again and again—for a man to be tempted at that level so fucking often...it must have been such a burden for Trevon when all he wanted and needed was her love. What a sick, evil world this was, with women attempting to fornicate with any and every handsome man they saw, heedless of whether or not they might have a girlfriend until it was too late. Sometimes she really wanted to chain Trevon to a bedpost in her castle, keep him naked and free from desires outside those of her love and her flesh. He’d be happier that way. Like a dog kept as a pet, he’d be happier in captivity—but like a tiger in a zoo, she couldn’t abide it if that spark, the fire of a hunter’s soul, left his eyes. More than she wanted him to be free from temptation, she wanted him to be free. She

loved him, and that meant trusting him. It was Trevon against a cruel world of wet, willing women—but she knew Trevon would win, because she felt the intensity of his love for her.

She knew this was true because the heart that pounded in her chest beat because of his love for her—the passion in his bond with her was enough to bring her back from undeath into something in between.

Vladimira leaned on the desk and grinned drunkenly as she thought about the man—Leslie Brown...his other daughter was having a baby.

If Vladimira's heart was beating, was her womb alive again? If there was blood circulating in her veins, would her period eventually start up for the first time in centuries? Could Trevvy put a baby in her?

She didn't even like babies, but the thought of bearing Trevon's child and raising it with him struck her somewhere deep and maternal. She could really have it all then—a fantasy so old she'd forgotten any version of her ever yearned for it. A spouse. A child. A home. A family. A life of love, her only goal to bring peace to her husband and children, to work with her lover as equal partners to build a legacy that would stand the test of time. What greater joy could there be than this? She imagined sitting around a table with her beloved Darling, their ten children, their hundred grandchildren, their grandchildren's children—all that love and beauty could emerge from within her. It was a power she'd never even spent much time considering before—sparkling life without even using black

magic...Twisting love and passion into a beautiful act that created a child with literally unlimited potential.

That was her *new* happily ever after. And just as she was about to start picking out baby names, her phone rang, and the word “Darling” appeared on the screen. She gasped, blushed, fanned her cheeks, her eyes going wide as she answered the call. “Hi, baby!”

“Hello, Mira. I have my break now. I was thinking about walking over there to eat my dinner while you’re on desk duty.”

“Oh! Yeah, of course, it’s dead as always here,” she chirped excitedly. “Trevvy—I have a question. Something that just sort of...came to mind.”

“Oh? Is this related to the movie we watched last night?”

“No. Samwise is the best Hobbit and I’m not debating that with you—”

“Frodo was honestly great in the book. If you’d read it, you’d see he was the emotional core of the Fellowship and they never—”

“I wanna have a baby!” she blurted out, never one to let an impulse sit on the back burner once she felt it.

There was a painfully awkward pause that went on way too long, but eventually Trevon said, “I’m on my way over. See you in a minute.”

The two minutes and forty-seven seconds that it took Trevon to make his way from the Pump N’ Go were the longest nearly

three minutes of her life. Her heart pounded like a war drum in her chest as she waited for him, wondering what he'd say. She knew he was less direct than her, more logical, that he was going to be smart and rational about it while she was going to feel like a fool. What did she go and confess that for out of fucking nowhere?

Trevon walked through the door and she almost laughed and sobbed at the same time when she saw the constipated look on his face. He was sheepish in the silliest way, and he walked in short steps up to the desk and then went around it, bending down to kiss her as she pouted in her chair.

He pulled something out of his pocket, and she blinked in confusion when she realized what it was—a wad of blank receipt paper and a black ballpoint pen. He cleared his throat. “Have you thought of any names yet?” he asked.

“Names?” she murmured, her head rolling to one side as she regarded him with a look of bemusement. “Names for what?”

“For babies,” he said.

Her eyes went wide and wet. “You mean—you want to have a baby with me too?”

“Or a few, if possible. Are you having periods? I noticed your body is getting warmer for longer periods of time and you have more color in your skin than before. I've been thinking about what it means and if it could be possible, but I didn't want to ask and make you feel upset if the answer was no.”

She shook her head. “I haven’t had any periods yet, but it feels like it’s just a matter of time. If nothing else, we could make a baby with magic, right?”

Trevon arched a brow. “How would that work?”

“I don’t know...but I can do it. Just give me time,” she pleaded, putting her hands on his chest. “I just need some time to figure it out, Trevvy Darling.”

“We have lots of that,” he chuckled.

Dracula threw her arms around him and buried her face in his neck. “You’re the best.”

“They say we are what we eat,” Trevon murmured as he returned her embrace.

Dracula looked up at him. “So you eat...the best food?”

“The best pussy, that’s without a doubt,” he replied with a grin.

“So you’re the best pussy, is what you’re saying,” Dracula cackled.

Trevon’s face fell. “I see my error now. Please forget what I said.”

“Never,” Dracula whispered as she crawled onto his lap. She reached for the lunch box on the table and opened it up, grabbing hold of the food inside. She raised it to his lips. “Say ahh, baby.”

“I’m not going to say that,” he chuckled.

She grinned. “Fine. But you still have to let me feed you your fucking sandwich.”

“It’s pretty thick. There are twelve sausages and eight slices of cheese in that sandwich,” he noted. “I usually have to break it into pieces.”

Dracula rolled her eyes. “Take at least a little bite for me? I wanna nurture you a bit.”

Trevon chuckled. “In a moment. First, I want to know what our plans are for after work.”

“Castle expansion and chill?” she proposed, tapping her cheek.

“What room do you want to add next?” he asked.

“A bathroom would be nice so we don’t have to revert the castle back to our shitty apartment just so you can piss or we can take a bath in that undersized tub.”

“Sounds like a plan to me. Alright. You can feed me now.”

Dracula grinned. “Say ahhhh.”

Trevon frowned. “I will not.”

Chapter 24

(Trevon)

Trevon got back to the apartment a few hours before Dracula would finish her shift the next night. His body didn't feel tired after a full shift at the gas station, but his soul did. The worst ordeal he'd faced today was a woman with a short haircut and too much makeup and jewelry who demanded Trevon fill her gas tank for her while he was still helping another customer. One thing led to another, and Trevon very nearly lost his patience and ended up shouting at her.

In the end, though, his training kicked in, and through a series of intricate breathing exercises he managed to keep his composure and wade uncomfortably through the situation, being berated by a lesser woman until he finally finished with her. If Mira were there, watching him get treated like that, she would have torn her limb from limb. The thought actually amused him.

Oh, how he'd changed. Gone was the hero his fallen father or brother would recognize, replaced by this loyal lover to an unhinged villain. Where before he concerned himself with the karmic weight of Dracula's heinous deeds, now he found her wicked impulses almost endearing—so long as she managed to keep them in check as much as possible, that is. She was his priority now. All he wanted was the peace that the Countess

alone gave him. The rest of the world could disappear for all he cared.

This world in any age never treated him particularly well. Raised to be a killer, brutalized by his own family until he fit in the misshapen mold they'd cast for him—a life of pain was all he knew. Pain, yes, but there had been purpose in it, too. Truth be told, he did miss saving lives from monsters—but that wasn't an option available to him anymore. Monsters in this age were rare, and those that existed seemed more interested in remaining hidden than they did in killing people.

So he had every right to be selfish. After all, what was left? All there was in his world was his bond with Vladimira Tepes.

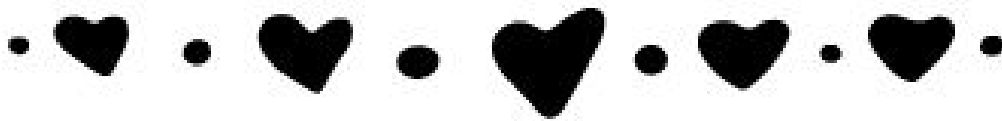
These were the sorts of thoughts he still battled with every now and again. It was the last bit of his heroic nature blowing out like a flame in a strong wind. As he tossed his work vest on the coat hanger and hurled his clothes into the laundry hamper, a now familiar ease washed over him. That intrusive need to rationalize who he was and what life choices he'd made lately subsided. Now there was calm.

Trevon put on a different pair of boxers and a black athletic T-Shirt. With a big stretch, his arms extended back toward the headboard, and his legs lifted his body into something like a bridge position as he let out a tired groan.

The room was just a room now. Without Dracula here to control the castle's core, it was a dingy condo, not much better than the day they'd moved in. He grabbed his phone off the bedside table and pulled it out.

> I'm done for the day. Going to take a nap while I wait for you to get home. Wake me up when you're here.

With that, he set the phone down and set the alarm for when Mira would arrive back. Hearing the phone vibrate seconds later, and he knew that she had gotten his message and was offering confirmation to the fact. Knowing that, he dozed off easily.



Trevon woke groggily a while later as his alarm went off. His arm reached beside him to pull his lover into an embrace, but all he managed to grab was a handful of sheets. Blinking his eyes open, his brow furrowed with confusion to discover that he was the only one lying in the bed.

“Mira?” he grunted, sitting up all at once, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. He stood and groped in the darkness for the drawer with all his clothes, grabbing a pair of denim shorts along with the Angel’s Tear, which he kept in the same drawer for convenience. “Mira, are you there?” he called out one more time, just to be sure.

Trevon grabbed his phone and checked it, looking for some explanation as to why he was still alone. It was minutes past her normal return time—impossible. She was never late to return to him. Knowing his lover, he was surprised that anything could keep her out of bed with him when she knew he was at home.

He saw the message that was sent shortly after he'd sent his to the Countess. It wasn't what he thought it'd be.

> *Put three inches on your dick with this amazing secret!*

He furrowed his brow at it, wondering why anyone would think it wise to send him of all people such a message. More importantly—Mira never texted him back. That...was simply not possible.

“Something is wrong,” he spoke aloud, striding across the room toward the apartment door. “Something is very, very wrong.”

Thankfully, Dracula had shared her location with him after the whole incident with Bloody Mary, so he could find her phone and go from there. He just hoped he'd find her before it was too late.

(Death)

Death had found her. He'd found her and he made his move, seized by the spirit of the moment. He caught her making a beeline from a Weekend Motel's check-in lobby toward an apartment building—alone no less.

He had planned to wait—maybe even to feel things out and approach her calmly, but this was too good, too perfect. He couldn't pass this up. Not only did he not have to confront her in her own castle where she'd have the bulk of her powers available to her, she was alone—no Beaumont to contend with. If he was going to kill her and take her power as he originally intended, this was the time.

“No regrets,” he mumbled. “This is what I came for, isn't it?”

Death approached her from behind, keeping pace with her long steps easily given the height and leg length disparity between them. Being roughly ten feet tall and wearing black robes, Death stuck out like a sore thumb, but facing forward, she hadn't noticed him until he'd gotten close. Something must have been on her mind—or perhaps her senses were weaker than when they last met.

He allowed himself to cling to that possibility, letting it make him feel disgusted and disappointed at how pathetic she was—anything but love or affection. Those feelings would get in the way.

Dracula stopped walking when his presence became known to her. She stopped mid-stride, sliding to a halt, her hands balling up into fists, trembling. She spun around with dizzying speed and extended her hands. “Death!”

Death would have blushed if he had skin and a circulatory system. “I haven’t come to embrace you, Countess,” he said.

Dracula lowered her arms and nodded. “Of course I know,” she sighed. “You’re afraid.”

“What?! No, I’m not. Afraid?”

His mother beamed at him, and he noticed more color in her face than before. She was positively glowing, and her smile wasn’t the malicious, plotting grin of a predator any longer. There was a much softer look behind her crimson eyes now. “You’re afraid I’ll be angry with you, but I’m not,” she said. “I missed you. I’m so glad you’re home, even if you’re here to kill me.”

Death growled at her, his resolve flickering this way and that. “No. I will not be tricked.”

“I’m not tricking you,” she insisted, frowning at him. As they spoke, a small crowd gathered around the entrances to nearby buildings—the Pump N’ Go, the Weekend Motel, and a few windows. The appearance of a ten foot tall skeleton had not gone unnoticed. Phones were out, recording their exchange, but Death didn’t care. He was so close to having everything. Let them watch. He welcomed the witnesses. Let a crowd see the glory of his success, centuries in the making.

Although he had no internal organs, something stirred deep within his bones. He was so fucking close.

And yet the look on her face was tender, and she was as beautiful as the last time he'd seen her. Even more beautiful, if he was honest, because she radiated peace and even...life? To some extent, yes. She was alive, which meant he could...

Once again, Dracula extended her arms in a gesture inviting an embrace. Death couldn't stop himself. "Come on, Death, honey," Dracula cooed at him, too sweetly. "Let's go home. Come home with me."

Death said nothing but completed each heavy step toward her, his own arm extending automatically. Filled with purpose, he bent low and wrapped his bony limbs around her, and she hugged him back.

"I'm so happy you've come back," she said, humming sweetly as she rubbed her fleshy cheek against his bony skull. "I'm so happy you're here with me."

"Oh, mother," Death said, laughing slightly. "No one's as happy about it as me."

(Trevon)

Trevon felt the eyes of many mortals upon him as he sprinted toward the parking lot. His stomach sank as he saw a darkly shrouded figure billowing a black fog from the bottoms of a tattered cloak. He'd seen that shape before, and there was simply no mistaking its owner.

Even worse, within the arms of Death itself, his Mira was cradled, her body limp and lifeless. "She can't be dead," he growled. "Not while I still breathe—she isn't dead!"

He charged at top speed, tearing the Angel's Tear off his hip. He did not wear armor for this encounter—all he had was his whip, a pair of jorts, and a black sleeveless tee. But it would have to be enough.

"Ah. I was wondering when you'd come," Death bellowed, raising his head. His skeletal face, bleached white, shone under the pale light of the moon like a beacon of malevolence. He was already twice the height of a normal man, or nearly, but as Trevon struggled to close the gap between them, the monster...grew.

Death's robes extended like ghostly black tendrils, no longer hanging to the ground but catching on a breeze from the netherworld as they wavered in mid-air with an uncanny grace. Death himself grew, his bones making a grinding sound that was audible even from a distance as they did the impossible and expanded, looking somehow denser, longer,

and thicker with each passing second. Before Trevon had even made it halfway there, Mira was now in only one of Death's hands, her body loose, whipping around like a ragdoll at every subtle gesture the monstrous entity in front of him made.

Trevon leapt through the air, drawing up all his strength, putting faith in his bloodbond with Dracula to make him even stronger. He cleared an ungodly distance, his hand rearing back behind his head as he prepared to whip the Angel's Tear in the most powerful, merciless crack he could manage—but he was robbed of the chance.

“Oh, were you looking for this?” Death said casually as he threw Vladimira at Trevon. Trevon almost dropped his whip and opened his arms, catching her like a boulder to the chest, canceling out his momentum.

He landed on his feet, but almost fell backward. Onlookers were growing in number, but they were still far from the fight, and from the looks of it none of them yearned to get much closer. Trevon set Mira down and wanted so badly to check her vitals—but he wouldn't know where to start. She was a vampire after all—what would he check? Technically she wasn't supposed to have vitals.

More importantly, Death was doing something menacing with his hands. “I was hoping I could avoid running into you again entirely,” he said. “But now that I've defeated the wicked Countess, I've absorbed the magic her death has released—so taking care of you shouldn't be too difficult.”

“You’re lying,” Trevon said as he set Mira down gently. “She’s not dead, or I’d be dead, too.”

“You’re half right,” Death cackled as an orb of green electricity pulsed in his hands. “She’s clinging to something like life now because of the bloodbond—but it’ll pass, and she will die.”

“And me?” Trevon asked.

“I suppose if you’re standing tall as you are now, you could survive. Bloodbonds mutate over time, after all. It’s hard to predict how things will turn out—even now. You might drop dead any second, or you could theoretically go on to live a long, meaningful life if you choose to walk away.”

Trevon’s eyes widened with surprise and shock.

“That’s right, Beaumont. I’ll give you this one chance to turn around and walk away. Hell—you can take her soon-to-be corpse with you for all I care. Bury her, do what you must. I’m merciful.”

“I’m not,” Trevon replied curtly. With that, he dashed forward, and Death extended a digit, launching the orb of green energy at the monster slayer. Trevon dismissed the attack with a flick of his whip, the three holy lashes dispelling Death’s spell easily. Trevon kicked off the hood of a car for added height, barrel-rolling as Death groped clumsily at the air to swipe at him. One good touch from Death—and he’d die.

Trevon landed on the ground in front of the Reaper and rolled between his legs. He cracked the whip at the back of

Death's knee, causing an explosion of bony splinters to rain down.

Death let out a shout of irritation, though not pain. "You little bitch!" he hissed, reaching back for him, trying to turn around in the process, but he was too slow.

"You were a fool to fight me here," Trevon said with a cocky smirk.

"Oh? And why's that?" Death asked, pretending that he was bored by the prospect of the oncoming answer, but he already sensed what the monster hunter was going to say.

"Dracula's magic, which you claim to have absorbed, is most potent in her castle. You don't have one. I almost beat Dracula the first time we met in her own domain—you think I can't handle her pathetic minion outside of it?"

Death had to admit that the Beaumont had a point. Still, he didn't let up on his assaults. The Grim Reaper hurled fireballs, lightning bolts, and worse at the warrior, one after the other, but with every passing second, Death lost ground that Trevon only recovered. He was going to lose.

And then the Beaumont landed a critical blow in Death's skull, taking off about half of his face. When that happened, Trevon lowered his whip and spoke as the great Grim Reaper pulled back, evading much too late. "Give her back to me," the Beaumont said, his voice shaky yet resolved. From his standpoint, the battle was over.

Death struggled to keep up as another chunk of his face crumbled away. “W-What? What are you talking about?!”

“I don’t want this. You’re going to die if we continue any longer. Mira didn’t want that—and I can’t let my last chance at reviving her waste away while we fight. If I kill you, and she truly dies, no one wins. If you give her magic back to her, then you live, you can be reunited with her as she wished, and she’ll survive. We’ll all survive. It’s the only way everyone walks out of here satisfied.”

Death let go of the spell he was charging and lowered his head. The Baumont’s words hit him hard—such compassion for a mortal foe, while Death had rewarded the woman he thought of as mother with his treachery. What kind of son was he? What kind of man—or Reaper—does that to his mother.

But...there was little he could do. “I used the Reaping Touch on her. I can’t bring her back or return her magic. Eventually, the last remnants of your bond’s effect on her will fade and she’ll be gone for good. You may die then as well, I can’t be sure.”

The warrior’s mighty shoulders slumped as his head hung low at the unwelcome words. Trevon ignored any lingering threat Death might represent and walked toward the beat up car where he’d set Vladimira’s body. “She’s colder than she was before,” he said, his voice choked up. “That can’t be a good sign.”

Death watched and felt something burning inside his bones. She’d gone cold again. The color he’d seen in her cheeks

when he first found her, minutes before—it was all gone. She was...dead. But Trevon wasn't, which meant that there might still be time.

“Trevon Beaumont,” Death muttered. “There is one chance, though it's weak at best.”

“I'll take any chance you've got,” he said, turning back to look at Death. “I'm at your mercy. You could kill me now if you wanted—but I don't believe that's what you want. I can sense it in you. She loved you like her child, and I think part of you knows and respects that.”

Death stared hard at him. “If I remove your bloodbond before it dispels on its own, you'll lose your connection to her—but she will lose all the traits of humanity she's developed since becoming linked with you.”

“Her heartbeat?”

Death paused to hear that. Still, he kept his composure and offered an answer quickly enough. “Most likely. When that connection is removed, I can't guarantee you two will feel the same as you do now—and you'll be fully mortal again. Any agelessness and regeneration you've seeped from being connected to her will be gone. But if we act now—”

“Then act now!” Trevon roared, no hesitation.

“If we act now she'll become fully vampire again, with none of the humanlike traits she'd gained from you. Do you understand? It won't be the Mira you know anymore. She'll be different.”

Trevon's brow furrowed with irritation as he stared at Death. "Did I fucking stutter?"

Death nodded with understanding and maybe a bit of hesitant respect as he extended his hand. "This is going to put me in a weakened state—breaking a bloodbond without components or prep time is kind of a big deal. I'm trusting you as well, Beaumont."

"Trust that I want Mira to be happy, and that being reunited with you is what would achieve that. I won't harm you further."

A pang of guilt coursed inside Death's broken bones as tendrils of shadow extended from his hand, impaling Trevon through the heart, then passing through him to Dracula in his arms.

"Do you feel anything?" Death asked.

Trevon's gritted teeth seemed to answer the question well enough. His body shook as the line of dark energy twisted inside him, spearing through him into Dracula—then dissipating into the air like a thin mist.

Trevon collapsed to his knees, but his grip on Dracula's small body remained true—in fact, he clutched her even closer to his chest than before.

"It's done," Death sighed, feeling weak and brittle. His body started to shrink down to its normal, demure size of ten feet tall.

Trevon, Death, and the distant crowd watched in silence, and even Trevon didn't seem capable of breathing as the suspenseful scene played out. Beads of sweat trickled down the warrior's face, and all Death could do was keep his distance and watch.

He did this. He almost sacrificed his own mother's life for a chance at—what, exactly? Ruling the world? Taking a vacation from reaping? Was that worth what he'd very nearly given up? Would she forgive him? He should have listened to the pothead in the sedan.

After a few minutes of silence—long, painful minutes—Dracula's eyes slowly fluttered open.

“You're alive,” Trevon breathed out in relief.

Dracula looked at her lover and smiled. Though the color in her cheeks was gone, it was the same, gentle, happy smile Death had witnessed earlier—but even meeker somehow. “In a way. Do you still love me?”

“Of course I do,” Trevon declared without a pause.

“Even though I can't bear you children anymore?”

“We don't know that,” Trevon said. “We'll find a way—with magic, or recreating the bloodbond—that doesn't matter right now.”

“Oh, Darling,” she moaned, and they kissed, and Death decided to turn around for a minute to let them have their moment. And then another minute. And then they slipped into

the car that Trevon previously set her on top of when she was unconscious and—were they fucking?!

“There are people watching! A crowd has gathered on the edges of this city block!” Death scolded them.

“Mind your own business,” Dracula said. “We’re just making out!”

A police siren sounded in the distance, and Death could make out the flashing blue and red lights on a car pulling into the parking lot. “Shit, it’s the cops. We gotta split,” Death growled.

“Just...talk to them for us, son,” Trevon grumbled. “We just need a minute.”

Death had only half a face, and it was all bone, but he was sure that if he could, he’d be frowning.

Epilogue

(Anya)

The little girl stretched and squeaked as she awoke, rolling out of bed with her eyes still closed. The torches sconced on the wall lit themselves for her, having thrown a blanket to shelter from the sunlight coming in through the balcony window. Her skin was so very sensitive to direct sun. Her father liked to say she sunburned faster than a ginger-haired Irishman. She didn't know what that meant, but it felt vaguely racist.

“Good morning,” Anya cooed, lifting her arms in the air. A pair of vampire bats had just finished making her bed for her. She let them descend upon her with a brush and a hairband, smoothing and braiding her raven black hair in a manner of minutes.

Anya Beaumont skipped over to the mirror, grabbing a pink backpack off the hook on the side of her armoire. She put it on and made a cool pose, flashing two thumbs up at herself, then doing a little dance.

“Constable, Popo!” she said, turning her head to more clearly see the two bats hovering around her head. “Do you know what's for breakfast today?” Before the bats could give any clue as to the answer, there was a soft knock at the door. “In a minute, Mommy!”

“It's actually me,” a manly voice bellowed—the voice of her father, Trevon. Her heart thumped in her chest at the sound of

him calling out for her, and she rubbed her hands together in delight. She loved her mother so much, but her father? He was the best!

“Coming, Daddy!” she squealed, rushing toward the door with her backpack already on. Constable and Popo followed in her wake, scurrying through the air to keep up with her.

Anya pulled the door open and found her Daddy standing there, looking down at her. She grinned up at him and pointed at her mouth. “I got my first fang last night,” she declared proudly. “Are you proud of me?”

Trevon chuckled and bent down on one knee. “Let me have a look at that,” he said, placing a hand on her cheek as Anya continued to use both thumbs to keep her mouth peeled open. “Yep, there it is,” he agreed, nodding. “Your mother will be very excited.”

“I showed her last night. It happened after you went to bed!”

Trevon nodded. “Well then, maybe she’s got a special breakfast planned for you today.”

Anya’s eyes went wide—one blue, one crimson. She bit her lip and nodded excitedly, then gestured with her arms extended, her hands opening and closing a few times expectantly. Her father got the hint.

With a laugh, he scooped her in, picked her up, and tossed her over his shoulders. “Alright,” he growled playfully, “Let’s see what monsters and hazards await for us in the corridor on our way to the kitchen, kitten.”

“Meow!” she squealed, her response to her father’s nickname for her. Kicking her feet, she dug her nails deep into his back and fought a compulsion to bite him.

Trevon chuckled. “Look!” he shouted, pointing ahead of him, “It’s a skeletal dragon!”

Indeed it was. A huge bony monster dragon stood on all fours in the middle of the hallway, rearing up in a threatening pose as dark steam oozed from its face. *So scary!*

“Kill it, Daddy!” she shouted, waving a fist as he set her down. She watched and cheered as her father lunged forward, bringing a dagger off his hip. With a showy jump, he ricocheted off the walls several times before making an assault on the gargantuan beast blocking the corridor.

He brought his dagger down on its head, but the impact seemed to do very little. Rearing back, the monster blew black fire at Trevon, which he blocked by grabbing a shield off of one of the standing suits of armor just in time. “Back, Anya! I’m not sure I can take him!”

“Yes, you can, Daddy! Use the Angel’s Tear!” She jumped up and down with glee, practically frothing at the mouth at her father’s heroic display—his daily way of entertaining her each morning.

He chuckled and shook his head. “That wouldn’t be much fun. Maybe your big brother could help me?”

Anya pumped her fists excitedly. “Big Brother Death! Come help Daddy and Anya beat this big, mean, skeletal dragon!”

The room suddenly filled with black mist, and a towering skeletal goliath bearing a mighty scythe emerged from the ground. “You called, Little Anya?”

“Get the dragon!” she shouted, jumping up and down.

Death and Daddy each made their own powerful strikes on their foe, and within seconds, their enemy was a pile of broken bones, steaming with necrotic energy. Daddy turned around and smiled at Anya. “How was that, kitten?”

“So good! Can we do a cyclops tomorrow morning?”

“How about two?” Death suggested, tapping his bony jaw.

Her big brother and father held each of her hands as they escorted her down the corridor—though Death had to wear a glove to protect Anya’s half-mortal skin. They navigated a few little puzzles with her, then found the oaken double doors leading to the kitchen.

“What is that heavenly smell?” Daddy sighed contentedly.

“Smells like pancakes and bacon!” Anya cheered, squeezing his hand. She broke her grip on him to open the door and skipped inside, singing a little song as she did so.

“There you are,” Mommy said, turning around. “I’ve got your plate right here. Bacon, eggs, and waffles.”

“I was close,” Anya grumbled, casting a look back at Daddy.

“Well, I have a date tonight,” Death muttered. “Ghost girl I met at the graveyard last month. Actually, I reaped her then, but we really hit it off, so—wish me luck!” He made a finger-

gun gesture at Anya, then waved at mom and dad as he headed toward the door.

“Bye, big brother!” Anya said, letting out a sigh as the door closed behind him.

Her mother knelt down and placed a hand on her shoulder. “You know, Anya, you’re almost six years old already, and you got your first fang last night—so I tried doing something a little different with the syrup today. Let me know what you think.”

Anya’s eyes went wide with excitement, her feet tapping on the floor as anticipation took over. She ran with her plate into the dining room and set it on the table, finding her elevated chair. She sat down and stared at her food—it looked so yummy! But even better, the syrup bottle was right in front of her, and instead of the brown maple syrup she was used to, there was something red in that dispenser.

“Blood!” she squealed. She whipped her head back to see her father beaming at her from the doorway, nodding his approval. “Human blood?!”

“Yep, from Aunt Tammy from the Pump N’ Go. No one really wrote a book on raising a dhampir daughter,” he said, “but we figure you getting your first fang means it’s time to introduce a bit of blood to your diet more regularly.”

She nodded, her lip jutting out as tears filled her eyes. “Thank you, Daddy! Thank you, Mommy!”

“You’re welcome, sweetie,” her mother cooed. “Why are you wearing your backpack, though? It’s Saturday—you don’t have school today.”

“Jackie Barnes is coming over later for a pajama party, right?” Anya asked, arching a little eyebrow. “I’ve filled my backpack up with toys.”

Her father nodded. “That’s right. I forgot about that. It’s a shame I’ll be at work.”

Anya blinked a few times in rapid succession, forcing a plastic smile. She didn’t even register the fact that her body started shaking and the colors drained from the world. “Why’s that, Daddy?”

“Oh, just that I quite like Jackie Barnes,” he said, grinning at her. “She’s a good kid.”

As the little dhampir felt the urge to snarl, another fang shot out, making its debut, and her nails extended into something like claws. “You like Jackie, Daddy?” she said, her voice going shaky with quiet fury. “You sure about that?”

Her father realized what was going on and sighed, shooting a look at her mother. “I guess she inherited even more of your bad traits than I thought,” he muttered under his breath.

Vladimira, her beautiful mother, grinned and patted Anya on the head. “Looks like you and I are going to have a little talk before Jackie gets here,” she said.

“About what?” Anya asked, her voice still tremulous.

“Rule number one,” Mother said, “No murder.”

“Why?” the little girl asked, cocking her head curiously.

Her mother laughed. “Because it’s wrong!”

Trevon, Anya’s dear Daddy, laughed aloud at that. “Oh, how far we’ve come, Mira.” His voice was rich with warmth, and it dispelled some of the jealous butterflies in Anya’s tummy.

Her mother smiled and took Anya’s hand. “Yes, Darling—how very far we’ve come.”

Afterword

Hello, readers. Please try out my latest book “Backyard Goblins” if you enjoyed this. What did you think of Headpats? Would you like to see more stories like it? Let me know on Facebook, Discord, or email!

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Please Review the Book if you want to support me without spending another dollar! Solar Dragons 6 is up next, followed by either Backyard Goblins 2 or Nosferatu Academy 3!