

London's Night Stalkers

Chapter 17 – Blood Samples

“Laura enjoyed the drive too, along Green Lanes with its mixture of Greek and Turkish restaurants and stores that sold food she’d never heard of. She especially liked the admiring looks given to her SUV, even a couple of wolf whistles. Clara was right of course, it was a ridiculous vehicle for a vampire, a serial killer to drive.”

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Three months after the staged suicide of Mike Marcou and Clara’s hair was back to its former glory. She had no idea how her body healed and replaced itself so quickly, she was just glad it did. She was seeing Felipe after lunch, which meant quite a bit of extra checking in the mirror and a clean pair of panties in her bag.

“Come on Clara, we can’t be late again.”

Laura shouting up the stairs, while Simon slept through it all. He was on a two in the afternoon start for a few weeks, calling the citizens of London until around nine at night. Disturbing people during their ‘Netflix and chill,’ wasn’t going to be popular, but Simon seemed to thrive on the stress. She leant across the bed and kissed his forehead.

“Love you, don’t work all night.”

Simon grunted at her and pushed his head further into the pillow. Downstairs and Laura was actually stood by the front door, agitation coming off her in waves.

“We’re both on our second final warning..... Again.” Said Laura.

“Relax Laura, we’re underpaid and overworked. It’s almost our duty to be fifteen minutes late.”

Laura just sighed and opened the front door. They walked past her pimped SUV, which was now a uniform black, though the layers of lacquer still made it stand out. Add the over wide alloys and the closeness to the ground and it still stuck out like a very sore thumb. Laura loved it though, actually stroking a door mirror as they walked past.

“Damn, no one has stolen it yet.” Said Clara.

It was a standard joke in the house, yet Laura always reacted to it.

“Sometimes Clara.....”

“I know, I can be a complete bitch.”

They exchanged a smile and carried on walking towards Wood Green station. Laura had been better behaved, for all of about two weeks. Now she was hunting at weird hours and sometimes refusing to say where she was going. It was either chuck her out or live with her behaviour. Simon wouldn’t even discuss the ‘Laura problem,’ and to be honest, Clara was now too fond of her to chuck her out.

“She’s like a teenager, we have to be patient.” Simon had told her.

There had been a delay on the Piccadilly Line, Wood Green station was packed. As they worked their way through the crowd, Clara couldn’t resist giving Laura a quick prod in the ribs. There was that look again, the look of a girl who has something to feel guilty about.

“What..... what was that for ?”

“Nothing... Think what I’ll do if I find out what you’ve been up to.”

They laughed and Clara wondered if five hundred and twenty four, was a little old to adopt a teenage daughter.

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Susan Eversley had known an interview under caution was on the cards. Mike had sent her his now infamous suicide text, just a few minutes before turning himself and his car, into an inferno. Taking a service station with him, hadn't helped. Her superiors didn't like police officers destroying property and putting the public at risk. A question had been asked in the house, the press were still finding ways to put the story back on the front page.

"Were you having a relationship with Mike?"

Her federation rep leant over and muttered in her ear after every question. The advice wasn't usually worth hearing, but it did give her a few more moments to think.

"No, not then, not ever." She said. "Mike and I have been friends and colleagues for years, but never intimately involved."

"Then why was he sending you so many texts, often late at night?"

She'd been introduced to them of course, but now just thought of them as male inquisitor and female inquisitor. It was the female currently asking the questions.

"I asked him to..... In case he put himself in danger."

Her rep didn't like that admission, it opened up a whole new can of worms. The two inquisitors actually seemed quite agitated, the male opening a clean page in his notebook. Her career was gone with that admission of course. On the record, recorded and likely to be used in a formal hearing to have her dismissed or at best, demoted. The future in the Met might well be female, but it didn't have a place for Susan Eversley.

"So, let's be quite clear about this." The male said. "You were involved with Mike's private and unauthorised investigation of Ms Selway and her friends?"

Her rep was hissing 'say no' in her ear, but Susan just wanted the whole thing to be over. Mike was dead, the investigation into Laura Selway was now closed. So closed that she doubted if the commissioner herself could get it reopened. Susan had decided on something quite radical for a police internal investigation. She was going to tell the truth.

"Mike Marcou asked me to help him." She said. "I said no, but I did ask him to let me know his movements."

"Why?" The woman asking.

"There was a missing solicitor who still hasn't been found and..... A feeling that Laura might well prove to be dangerous." Said Susan.

"Do you still think that?" The male.

She'd been unofficially briefed that if she wanted a career at all in the police, the Laura Selway business had to end. No digging the files out, no more private endeavours. Mike's personal obsession had to end with his death, or else.

"No, I do not. I think Mike became obsessed with Laura Selway, perhaps even sexually."

That was her own idea, a theory to explain why he followed her around in the middle of the night. Her inquisitors seemed pleased with her, smiling. Smiles of course, weren't recorded.

"Last question." The woman. "Do you believe Mike's death wasn't suicide?"

Susan had made a lot of accusations immediately after Mike's death. She'd fired them off like a shotgun blast, at anyone who'd listen. They'd be aware of that of course. She still had her doubts, Laura and her friends just might be cleverer than her superiors suspected. Susan needed her job though and the pension that went with it.

"I did once, but not now." She said. "I now accept that Mike took his own life."

More smiles and the tape was turned off. Even her federation rep was smiling at her. No one liked coppers who rocked the boat. That was it, she'd be hearing from them in due course. Susan cried when she was alone in the lift, ashamed of betraying Mike.

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Life had changed for Patsy Smart too, though most of it was for the better. Being officially welcome at the house in Wood Green still felt strange, though she was getting used to it. It was nice to be able to see Simon without feeling guilty and much to her surprise, she liked Clara. They were never going to be best buddies or anything, but there was the start of a real friendship.

"You must know Patsy. It goes on the side, near the water pump."

"Let me look it up." She replied.

Her new job, after deciding her mum couldn't afford to pay all the household bills on her own. Patsy had been looking at jobs in retail, mainly because there seemed to be quite a few vacancies. For some reason Simon seemed to have a few contacts in the motor trade. One interview later and Patsy had ended up behind the counter of Hayle's Motor Factors in Southgate.

"Yep, I see what you mean." She said.

Exaggerating the truth, the screen in front of her did all the work. The thing that had surprised her was that once you got past the greasy fingers and colourful language, the guys who came in to fix their cars, were alright. They liked her too, which hadn't escaped her boss. He now beamed, every time they reviewed her sales figures.

"We probably have that in stock."

She liked the stockroom, rows and rows of shelves, filled with cardboard boxes and assorted jiffy bags. Patsy picked up the box and brought it back to the counter for the customer to look at it. She could always tell if it was the right part, by the look on the guys face. Nearly always guys, women fixing their own wheels still seemed rare.

"Patsy you are a genius, that's the thing."

Sometimes it wasn't quite right and they had to come back, but most of them didn't complain. It meant working some weekends, but the pay was far better than she'd expected to earn. Patsy took the money from the customer and the notes were grubby. That was the big drawback, everything she touched seemed greasy.

"Here's your change." She said. "We will exchange it, if it isn't the right part."

"It'll be right, you're a genius."

She wasn't really, but being the only girl behind the counter had its advantages. Patsy liked being busy and she liked the queue of adoring DIY car fixers. It all helped take her mind off seeing what had happened to Mabina and the nightmares she still had about it.

"It had to come out eventually." Simon had told her. "I was amazed at how well you coped with it all, but these things have a way of surfacing."

"Do you get nightmares?"

He did and told her enough for her to realise he'd had a very long and violent life. It wasn't full blown post traumatic disorder, she was certain of that. She'd just witnessed a brutal fight between vampires, where one of them had ended up being shot, right in front of her. Not an everyday occurrence and an experience not catered for by NHS counselling. Simon knew why she woke up screaming some nights.

"I see it Simon, Mabina's face being blown apart."

He'd hold her and sympathised, but she still had the nightmares. Patsy found that keeping busy was the best way to avoid dwelling on that night, so she kept busy.

"Next !" She yelled at the queue.

A rainy night with Simon not expected home until late, while Clara binge watched something awful on Netflix. Laura decided it was the perfect night to look for a kill in the Old Street area. The whole district intrigued her, it felt so old and full of potential for dark deeds. Lots of offices which locked up by about six, leaving the area to the new residents, those that could afford to rent a converted attic for ridiculously high rents. There had to be a few gallant men, ready to comfort a damsel in distress. "I'm going hunting." She said. "I've been wanting to try the Old Street area for months." "George is on duty tonight." Said Clara. "Call me if you need help." "I will, promise."

Laura enjoyed the drive too, along Green Lanes with its mixture of Greek and Turkish restaurants and stores that sold food she'd never heard of. She especially liked the admiring looks given to her SUV, even a couple of wolf whistles. Clara was right of course, it was a ridiculous vehicle for a vampire, a serial killer to drive. Laura loved her SUV though.

Down through the streets near Finsbury Park and she was soon going round the huge roundabout above Old Street Station. Laura had set her heart on parking in Curtain Road and was pleased to easily find somewhere to park. Curtain Road was perfect, all the offices were shut up for the night, the street deserted. It was close to Great Eastern Street though, with its sandwich bars, clubs and twenty four hour nightlife.

"Nothing clever girl." She muttered at herself. "A classic injured damsel in distress."

Laura pulled up her obligatory hoodie and stepped out of her SUV. It was still raining heavily, the hoodie wouldn't look out of place. She prided herself on being good at the harmless girl persona, it had kept her well-fed for months. Always in character, she began to limp as she locked her vehicle and continued to limp along the street. She checked herself in the window of a closed letting agent. "Perfect."

Her profile had just the right stoop, just the right limp on her left side. A girl out for the evening, who'd had a bit of a mishap. A dodgy kerb stone was her favourite story and guys fell for it every single time. Why wouldn't they ? She was young and pretty, with just that right amount of pain in her expression. Laura actually rested against a lamp post at the junction with Great Eastern Street, deciding on whether to turn left or right. Left meant back towards Old Street, right led further in towards the city.

"Right I think."

She intended to limp no more than twenty yards or so, before crossing the road and heading back. She'd only be able to trudge along that route so many times of course. Injured girls tended not to walk up and down the street all night. Laura had barely limped a few paces, before gaining the attention of a sympathetic saviour.

"Are you alright ? You look dreadful."

A face in the rain, a woman only a year or two older than herself. Laura hadn't come out intending to feed on a woman, but she was willing to be flexible.

"So silly, slipping in the rain." Said Laura. "I missed the kerb completely."

She dangled her leg about, as if demonstrating how useless it was.

"I don't live far away.... I could help you walk there."

Laura examined her would be saviour, noting the long red hair, which was wet through. They were dressed quite similarly in jeans and a dark top, the uniform for a casual night out. There was something in the woman's eyes though, an indication of interest that went beyond being a Good

Samaritan. Laura knew of course that it wasn't only men who were interested in saving pretty damsels. Laura wasn't going home with her though.

"I have my SUV parked in Curtain Road." Said Laura. "If you could help me get to it."

Disappointment written on her face, her new friend would never be a good poker player. Laura knew how to flirt though.

"It's quite large and dry and..... Comfortable."

She was going to fall for it, they all did. No sane person would ever follow a man to his conveniently parked SUV, yet there wasn't the slightest hesitation in her saviour's eyes.

"Fine... Yes, that sounds..... Um Great."

"I'm Laura by the way."

"Kate..... I'm Kate."

No problem with using her real name, Kate would soon be drained of most of her blood and on her way to the hospital's incinerator. Laura made a few comments about how much her leg hurt, as Kate helped her along the road. There was another method to gain trust that had never failed her.

"Wow, is this yours?"

"I always wanted one of these, but I haven't had it long. Can you open the door for me?"

Laura put her car keys in Kate's open hand, letting their fingers touch for a while. Give someone your car keys and you're handing over a little control, showing trust. They always responded by giving trust back, always.

"I see what you mean, lots of room inside." Said Kate.

There was no preamble, no glass of wine and a cuddle. Laura just wanted to feed and get Kate's body dealt with. As soon as the SUV door closed, she held Kate hard against her, making her yell. Not loud enough to travel far and it was the only sound she had a chance to make. Laura pushed her fangs into Kate's neck.

"Thank you." She muttered, while beginning to feed.

Laura had begun to thank those she fed on, it seemed polite. Before feeding of course, while they were still alive. She took a while over feeding now, savouring every drop of delicious blood. There was still that slightly light headed feeling, once seven pints or so of blood was working its way through her system.

Laura was prepared, her SUV equipped with everything she needed. Dressings and plasters to cover wounds, blankets to wrap up bodies. Fifteen minutes after meeting Kate, she was heading north through Islington. There had been close to a hundred pounds in Kate's purse. Laura was going to buy wine on the way home, the expensive red wine Clara preferred.

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Clara knew the TV show was predictable, formula driven crap, yet she was addicted to it. It was actually painful to hit pause, when she saw Daniel's number come up on her phone.

"Hi Daniel, been a while."

"I've been busy with those rather exciting samples from Laura."

She wanted to give him a serious telling off, a piece of her mind as one of the women at work liked to put it. She'd promised Laura not to though, as she quite liked being involved in Daniel's vampire projects.

"I thought that sludge looked useless." She said.

"No, far from it, very useful. Especially as I do appreciate the danger she placed herself in to get them."

"I am so glad to hear you say that Daniel. I had wanted to get quite angry with you at the time."

He was laughing and she had to laugh too.

“Quite angry huh ? There are times when I’m glad you live at the other end of the country.” He said.

“All that pee, it’s a wonder she didn’t burst into flames.”

It was no good, she could hear his uncontrollable laughter and had to join in.

“She must have poured half a litre of the stuff over that cross.” He said.

“And burned down part of our national heritage in the process.”

Clara poured herself a glass of merlot, while they exchanged more of the strange story of Laura and the oldest church in London. Eventually she brought the conversation back to Daniel’s reason for calling, if there was one. He had been known to call because he was bored.

“So, what did her blood and pee sludge tell you ?” She asked.

“I’ll send you a letter with the details, but it really is exciting.” He said. “Not only did the..... Holy energy, for want of a better word, strip certain things out of her blood. It added to some components, as if enhancing the human structure.”

“And knowing that is good because.....?”

“I can think of a thousand things that knowledge might lead to. Most importantly my dear Clara, it will give us a completely full proof test for a person’s suitability for turning into a vampire.”

“We weren’t planning on expanding our numbers Daniel. Other vampires tend to become mortal enemies.”

He didn’t like objections to his bright ideas, she could hear him breathing faster. She could imagine his flushed face and clenched fists.

“But..... think of it Clara.” He said. “I will be able to give you a simple blood test, to tell if someone can be turned. No guesswork, no hoping they’re the one in several thousand who might survive.”

He sounded so excited, so keen, she had to give him something.

“Yes Daniel, I can see how that might be useful.”

“Might..... Might be useful !”

Oh crap, the last thing she needed was an indignant Daniel, going into a fit of self-pity.

“We just see more of us as a problem Daniel, get used to it.” She said. “Anything else useful ?”

“I did find something quite remarkable in Mabina’s journal, but you’re obviously not in the mood to listen. I’ll send you all a letter about it.”

“Whatever..... I’m sure Laura will find it interesting.”

He hung up, the annoying bastard actually hung up. Clara was annoyed for the fraction of a second it took to start her show on Netflix going again. A decent merlot and a crappy American mini-series, life didn’t get much better.

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Simon didn’t mind the late shift at work. For every loony shouting and swearing at him for calling them during their favourite prime time TV show, there was a friendly person out there, happy to talk to him. Some very happy to talk to him, one lady had invited him to a party on Saturday night. A normal two til nine shift, with no surprises. As the clock on the wall clunked past nine, Simon put his last sale on the white board and put on his coat.

“How do you do it ?” A newbie asked. “I haven’t even had one decent call tonight.”

“You’ll get better at it.” Said Simon. “Don’t stay and call people after nine though, they get really mad at you.”

A table of four newbie sales people, all looking likely to still be there at eleven. They nodded at him, but he knew they’d still be calling people during Newsnight. His secret to success on the phones ? He didn’t honestly care if they bought or not and nothing attracts more than genuine disinterest. It

worked with women and it worked with sales. It was a deep idea though, his own ideology and likely to piss Anthony off, so he just smiled and left the office. He was tired and almost called Tom to put him off.

“Crap ! It must be important.” He muttered.

Clara knew he was having a quick drink with Tom and might be home late. After Laura’s experience with Mike Marcou, communication was the name of the game. Any unexpected delays and they’d all know. Aimed at the ‘Laura problem’ of course, but practised by all three of them, to be fair.

Not a decent pub of course, Tom had chosen to meet at a rundown back street place, which looked ready to be condemned. Simon looked through the dirty windows and counted no more than six people inside.

“Probably owned by one of his buddies.”

It had to be owned by someone with cash to spare, it wasn’t busy enough to turn a profit. Simon spotted Tom, sat at a corner table and went through the obligatory greeting and apology for being late.

“What can I get you Tom ?”

“My usual, they know what I have.”

They did, and Simon was soon looking at Tom over the top of a pint of lager. There was only one reason he could think of, for the normally taciturn Tom, to want to see him.

“Did Laura pay you properly ?” He asked. “For the respray and the other matter.”

The other matter had been an alibi for Laura, for two evenings when her true whereabouts were awkward to reveal. A friend of a friend of Tom’s was willing to swear that Laura had been enjoying a meal in her restaurant on those nights. The alibi hadn’t been needed, the police never asked.

“Oh yes, she paid me and even a little extra for the lads.”

“Good, good.”

Another five minutes went by, while Tom looked awkwardly at his pint of best bitter.

“So, always good to meet you Tom, but I’m sure you had a reason to invite me here ?” Asked Simon.

“Do you ever get territorial disputes in your.... Line of work ?” Asked Tom.

Lager made Simon relaxed, it always did. He leant back in his chair and chuckled.

“Funny you should ask that, we just had a bit of territorial trouble.” He said.

“You resolved it though, didn’t you Simon ?”

Tom rarely used his name, the matter had to be serious.

“Of course Tom, you have to. They won’t be bothering us again.”

Tom was smiling and nodding a lot. Simon understood what Tom was leading up to, with the pace of crippled snail.

“Ahh I see it now Tom. Your boss is worried I might get a bit too big for my boots. He’s given you the job of warning me off his patch, or else.”

Tom did have the decency to look embarrassed, taking a sip of his pint.

“I hate this stuff.” Said Tom. “Only drink it because the doc told me lay off the hard stuff. Do you fancy a scotch ?”

“Oh yes please Tom, any decent single malt.”

The landlord pulled a bottle from the top shelf and Tom returned with two glasses, which had to contain at least a triple measure.

“To hell with the doc.” Said Tom. “Who wants to live forever anyway ?”

Simon quite liked immortality, it had been fun so far. He lifted his glass and clinked it against Tom’s.

“To hell with doctors !”

The scotch was good, the best Simon had drunk for a while. Tom was relaxing too, which meant he might get some sense out of him before closing time.

"You know who I work for?" Asked Tom.

"Yes, though selling Laura his car wasn't your smartest move."

"Sorry Simon, I never thought....."

Simon put his hand up.

"I understand Tom, none of us saw that train wreck approaching."

"I have to ask, just for myself of course. The police detective..... Did you?"

Tom was fast gaining enough information to be on his list of people to worry about, potential meals or accidental deaths. He wasn't on the list though, because Simon actually trusted him. Tom was happy to run his breakers yard and earn a little on the side. Tom had no ambition and men without ambition, are rarely a threat. He leant in close to Tom.

"Just between us Tom, Laura took care of that problem."

"Laura..... Wow, I'm impressed."

"So Tom, are you ready to give me William Jarrold's official threat?"

"Not really a threat.... It's just that you've been bringing in a lot of cars with blood still on the upholstery and splashing cash about. Bill is happy if it's your usual line of work, but if you're veering off into his areas, he'd like a small sweetener. To show respect, you know how it is."

The landlord refilled their glasses without asking. It was a lot of scotch for a work night, it was a lot of scotch for any night.

"No problem Tom, consider your message delivered. I have no intention of treading on Bill's toes and if I ever step on them by accident, I'll offer a little compensation."

"Fair enough Simon."

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Laura was at work when the first call from a withheld number came up on her phone. She quickly rejected the call.

"Boyfriend trouble?" Asked Kallina, the woman helping on reception.

"I should be so lucky. Probably someone asking about PPI."

They laughed and she forgot all about the call, until it happened again while she was eating lunch.

She was slower to reject the call, her mind racing through all the people it might be. After about five rings, she flipped the number to the left.

"Who the hell is it?" She muttered.

"Answer it and you'll know." Said Clara.

"It might be a telesales call, I used to get a lot of those."

"Then tell them to fuck off and hang up."

"Hmmm."

Alright for Clara, but Laura wasn't sure if she could do that. Maybe you needed to be over five hundred years old to handle nuisance calls that nonchalantly. Laura had a busy afternoon and forgot about the calls until she was alone in the linen cupboard. Her phone rang again, another withheld number. She was mentally incapable of ignoring it for a third time.

"Hello."

"Am I talking to Laura Selway?"

A woman's voice she recognised instantly. They'd only spoken once, or twice but Laura had taken the time to remember Susan Eversley's walk, voice and scent. Susan was a Van Helsing, the only predator that needed to be feared.

“Yes, who is this ?”

“You might remember me, I interviewed you with Detective Marcou. My name is Susan Eversley.”

“I do remember, you came to the house in Wood Green.”

Laura felt her fangs beginning to drop, her senses changing. Completely unconsciously, her body was preparing to fight.

“You do know Mike is dead, don’t you Laura ?”

“Yes of course, awful business. It was on the TV news for days and the papers. Very sad.”

Susan was quiet for just a second too long and Laura knew a threat was coming, a recognition of one predator for another. The others might not like it, but part of Laura’s mind was already assessing the best way to kill Susan Eversley.

“The case is now closed Laura, you won. I have no doubt in my mind that you either killed Mike, or arranged to have him killed. You probably killed your boss too, Stuart Martin. I can’t investigate though, even talking about it might get me sacked.”

“You’re obviously upset.” Said Laura. “This is crazy though, I’m not a murderer.”

“We both know you are Laura. I am going to watch for your name coming up in connection with anything and I mean anything. A speeding ticket and I’ll make sure you’re investigated and the two you live with.”

“You’re obviously not well I’m ending this call.”

Laura disconnected and had to stay in the linen cupboard for half an hour, waiting to regain control of her body. She gripped a shelf so hard, that the edge of it came away in her hands. Eventually she was calm again and able to carry on with her job, though she had forgotten why she’d needed fresh linen.

“She has to die.” She muttered.

The others couldn’t be allowed to know of course and there was no immediate rush. Susan Eversley was going to die though and when it happened, her death was going to be slow and painful.

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Simon enjoyed Saturday mornings, even if he was expected to make breakfast for everyone. Bacon sandwiches with plenty of brown sauce, his speciality. Everyone sat around the kitchen table, waiting for Laura to read the letter that had just arrived from Daniel.

“You can open it,” said Clara, “you are Igor to his Baron Frankenstein.”

“I see her more as Caliban to Prospero.” He said.

Laura just sighed and opened the large, thick envelope. They’d teased her too much, but it was irresistible.

“Do you really want to know what he said ?” Asked Laura.

“Of course we do.” Said Clara.

“Then stop giving me grief about it, for five damn seconds.”

Clara exchanged a look with him.

“We’re sorry.” He said.

There was a lot of paper in the envelope, lines of neatly printed text with a few diagrams and pictures. Despite getting a bit irritated by Daniel, they all wanted to know what he’d discovered.

“He goes on quite a bit about this test for potential new vampires.” Said Laura. “He has lots of our blood, he could be thinking of creating his own vampire army.”

“I think there’s more to turning someone than just our blood.” He said.

“Besides, if he starts turning his neighbours into vampires, they’ll probably kill him.” Said Clara. “Like us, most of the vampires he knows view him as a bit of an oddity, who knows stuff and might be useful. Newly created vamps will just see him as food.”

Laura was still scanning pages of the letter.

“He does go on about it a lot.” Said Laura. “I really think he might be going to try out his new test. If he doesn’t intend to create vampires, what use is it?”

“I hate to agree, but I did have an odd conversation with him once.” Said Simon. “He was talking about a procedure to remove all human feeling from vamps, the few we have remaining.”

Even the usually unflappable Clara was looking worried.

“We should go and see him more regularly, keep an eye on him.” She said.

“Getting time off won’t be easy, but yes, we should.” He agreed.

“I’m not going to go there again, ever!” Snapped Laura.

“We’d never expect you to.” Said Clara. “You can look after the house while we’re gone. A few days every few months should be enough to make sure he’s not up to anything silly.”

“Or anything likely to get him killed.” He added.

“Anything else in the letter?” Asked Clara. “He mentioned discovering something in the journal.”

“Let me look, he does ramble quite a bit.”

Simon put more bacon in the pan without asking, no one had ever refused seconds on a Saturday morning.

“Yes, here it is.” Said Laura. “Daniel thinks Mabina’s family are one of the oldest in Romania. Not all vampires of course, but key members of the family, turning whoever they considered worthy of immortality. The journal mentions a whole line of gifted royal children, chosen to be vampires, almost from birth.”

“Well, if you can’t breed yourself, it makes sense.” Said Clara.

“A dynasty by proxy, but still a dynasty.” He said. “Anything else?”

Laura let out a long sigh and skipped three pages.

“He goes on a lot about pollen grains in 11th Century Romania.” She said.

“It’s usually the stuff he doesn’t get excited about, that really matters.” Said Clara.

Laura stopped skipping pages, just two pages from the end of the letter.

“Oh, this..... This is a bit worrying.” Said Laura. “He claims that all the accepted theories about the practise of burying victims under an earth floor are wrong.”

“What does he say?” Asked Clara.

“Daniel does say it’s only his theory, based on some of her scribbled entries. But he says the idea isn’t for the dead to awaken on judgement day, to fight in the ultimate battle between good and evil.”

“I never did buy that.” Said Simon. “Few vampires expect to really live forever and we’re definitely not altruistic. Mabina and Vlad, burying five or six thousand bodies for a war far in the future..... No, I never did believe that.”

“So what is the purpose of burying them?” Asked Clara.

Laura looked up at them, as though she’d just read a prediction of doomsday.

“Resurrection.” She said. “Daniel theorises that the life force of those killed and offered up.....He doesn’t say offered up to who, I’m assuming no one good. Anyway.... If a dead vampire is placed on the soil floor, they will be healed and reborn anew.”

“No..... I can see what you’re thinking and no.” Said Clara. “You shot Mabina three times, shattered her entire head into hundreds of blood soaked pieces. No one comes back from that, no one.”

“Even vampires can’t survive having their brain destroyed.” He added.

“Might be a good idea to check though.” Said Laura. “Make sure she still is dead and likely to remain that way.”

“That house is a massive crime scene.” He said. “Five, maybe six thousand bodies and all those hidden rooms..... If we left a single new fingerprint or DNA sample....”

“No !” Said Clara. “No one comes back from that kind of death, not even Mabina Gladitch. Besides, if she was capable of being resurrected, she’d have paid us a visit by now.

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