



Gothic

***"The Night is darkening round me
When Logic and proportion gave fallen sloppy dead
Children of the night
Sprit of the night
That haunts you night and day
How dreadfully savage"***



THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO
HELPED ME WRITE THIS ZENE. I AM
VERY PROUD OF THE WORK I HAVE
DONE, AND I COULD NEVER HAVE
DONE IT ALONE. TO FELIZON, MY
CLASSMATES, MY FAMILY, MOM,
DAD, CHRIS, NESSA, AND POP,
ALEXIS AND CARLY, ALLIE, LISA,
AND VARIOUS OTHER SOURCES, I
THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR IDEAS,
COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS, ADVICE,
AND SUPPORT.

(THE ABOVE THANK YOUS ARE
LISTED IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER!)



About the Author

I the author of this compilation pf gothic stories do thank you for taking the time to read my work. Feel free to tell me what you think, even if its bad, because how else will I learn? Anyway, if I really don't agree with your advise, then I probably won't take it, but it couldn't hurt to speak up, now could it?

I wanted to put together a group of stories that were gothic in nature, and when I say gothic, I don't necessarily mean strictly vampires and evil, though I did manage to include that aspect as well. I also wanted to portray some elements of classic romanticism which emphasizes the emotion, nature, and probably overdramatic feeling among the human being. At the very least, it was just fun to let my imagination run wild, and let my creativity flow.

About Me~

I'm from San Diego, and am a freshman this year at the University of Redlands, soon to be a sophomore. I hope to incorporate writing somehow in my life because I love it so much, but at the moment, I am simply enjoying being able to explore the wide variety of my different interests.

If you ever have the urge to write me and tell me what you think, or give me a suggestion on my writing, or just want to say hey, my e-mail below should help out. Thank you again for reading, and I hope you enjoy.

Samantha Bradshaw

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"The Man, the Monkey, and the Depths of Hell"

The man was walking slowly down a dark street in the middle of the night. His clothes were torn and tattered beyond repair. He was stumbling back and forth in an apparent drunken state. He coughed twice, and then began to sing. His voice was a deep baritone and would have been excellent had the words not been so slurred.

He paused beside an alleyway to give off a few particularly loud 'harrumphs' to clear his throat. Something rustled in the alleyway. He stood still and peered down the dark path, illuminated in one corner only by the light of the windows above. He took a few steps forward and listened again. More rustling, then silence. His curiosity got the better of him and he continued to walk forward, away from the light and towards the pile of rags, not even fathoming what would occur next. He cringed as he heard a terrible guttural yelp, the origin of which could only be the depths of hell. Still he earnestly pressed forward towards the rags. As he came closer, the rags began to move. Surely, something was not right.

Soon, the rags began to make even stranger noises. He stooped down, unable to resist his own curiosity and prodded the rags with his index finger. Tiny teeth latched on so tightly that the man felt as if he had stabbed himself with a needle. Howling in pain he shook his hand trying to break free from the thing's murderous grasp. It held on tightly though, and after several moments of that blinding pain the thing released the man's finger of its own accord.

The man was now sobbing and fell into a dingy heap on the ground. Leaping out of the rags was the tiniest monkey he had ever seen. Astonished, the man fell

backwards. The monkey leapt onto his chest and stared at him. The man lay still and watched the monkey. The creature settled himself on the man's chest and proceeded to clear his throat.

"I am Abu" said the monkey.

In reply the man let out a yelp and stumbled to his knees trying to shake the English speaking monkey off of him.

"What the hell did you say?! Monkeys can't talk. What are you?" cried the frightened man.

"If I can't talk then why are you pestering me with all these questions? It seems as if you are very confused, Alex," Abu calmly replied.

"How in the world do you know my name? I must be going crazy!"

"Well genius, it certainly seems so."



"If you're a talking monkey that must mean that you're magic!"

"It's true," said the monkey. "I've been sent here by one of the Gods to advise you, and to be your muse."

"You?!" The man cried out, completely incredulous.

"Yes, and the first thing I must tell you is that in twenty seconds you are going to be hit by a bus."

The man stood gaping at the monkey, completely speechless.

"Oh, and also," the monkey said grinning with a crazy and odd smile, "I'm not real. You've just had way too much

to drink tonight."

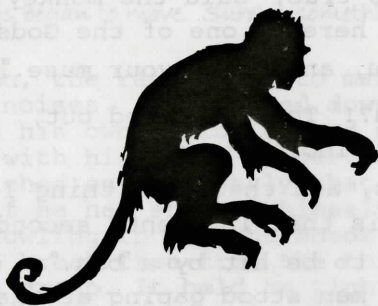
Wham! A double-decker bus bearing down at high speed barely noticed as it hit an annoying speed bump on the dark street.

*From the twisted
Imaginations of:
~Samantha*

~Autumn

~Shannon

(And In That Order)



'It goes on, you know,' the Hatter continued, 'in this way:--

"Up above the world you fly,

Like a tea-tray in the sky.

Twinkle, twinkle--"'

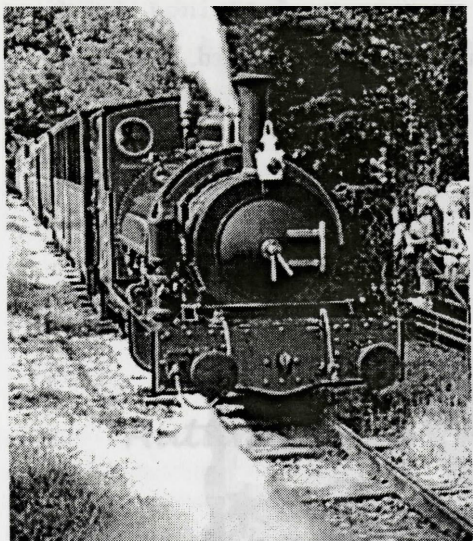


Here the Dor- mouse shook itself, and began singing in its sleep 'Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle--' and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop.

'Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse,' said the Hatter, 'when the Queen jumped up and bawled out, "He's murdering the time! Off with his head!"'

'How dreadfully savage!' exclaimed Alice.

~Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
~ Lewis Carroll



"A Situation"

There was only one way to diffuse the bomb. The only person who knew how to do it was dead on the floor, killed by the gun he had held to his head just moments before. The train was moving at a crazy speed that made Jack's head ache, and he realized that at any moment, he and all of the other screaming passengers on the train could be dead. Perspiration dripped in huge globs down his heated cheeks. His breath was coming in short gasps as he tried to control the pressure and movement of his muscles. He rose from his dingy seat and moved out into the aisle, pushing his way through the throngs of people that were herding like frightened cattle to the back of the train.

He couldn't believe he was back in this situation. It had to be some sick sort of fate that had placed him, a former bomb squad member, on a train overtaken by a terrorist with an explosive device. The terrorist had been sitting quietly in his seat up until a few moments ago when he had stood, pulled a gun out, and calmly killed the conductor. Among frantic screams of horror, the man had planted the bomb, and then brutally shot his own selfish brains out, leaving behind chaos and panic in his wake.

At the moment, Jack was ashamed to find the thought of suicide somewhat appealing. They were probably going to die, and when they found his body, if they found it, what would they say? What would they say when they found that there was a former member of the bomb squad on the train, who had failed to save them? Somehow, it would end up being his fault. Two years ago, Jack had faced a similar situation on the job. At the last minute, he'd lost his nerve. In the end, it had been some newly recruited officer who had taken control of the situation, saving them all, elevating himself in both rank and respect. That didn't leave Jack in much better of a situation. Once you fuck with life and death, there are no second chances.

At the moment, Jack had no other choice. There was no one else, and he owed it to the people on the train to at least try and save their lives. His entire body was one tense

wire, ready to snap with the slightest provocation. He was squatting now, down next to it, listening to the tick that was barely audible above the noise of the compartment. To him, it sounded louder than the break of thunder. Every successive tick caused a spasm of fear and pain to shoot through his body, as if there were a band around his heart squeezing in tune with the rhythm of the bomb.

Jack raised a trembling hand and wiped the sweat from his brow. Why not just throw it from the train? It was a simple answer, but not a choice. The passing city streets around them would guarantee other casualties.

He studied the bomb with more interest than he had ever studied anything in his life. He couldn't take the chance of repositioning it. It could be pressurized. Even if it was an amateur's bomb, it could be sensitive to the slightest movement, to the slightest change in position. Even minimal adjustment could mean instant death.

Jack licked his lips, and tried to control the impulse to vomit from fear. With every ounce of his energy he tried to remember the feeling, the control, and the concentration that had once been second nature to him. He tried to think like he had once thought, that he could handle any disaster, uphold under any pressure, and still get the job done. He grabbed unconsciously at his pocket where, for years, he had kept a set of emergency tools. They were gone as he should have known they were, and had been for the last two years.

He couldn't swallow, he felt like gagging as the bile he tried desperately to ignore and repress, rose in his throat. He started to go numb, and the noise of the room faded away until it was just Jack and the bomb. Just him, and the bomb. It had been that way the last day he had worked on the bomb squad, nearly two years ago. The face of his partner and the rookie cop who had accompanied them that day, swam before his eyes. They were there with him. They stared at Jack intently, beads of perspiration running down their faces.

That day, the rookie had made a hero out of himself, and an old man out of Jack. It had been a fluke that the new officer had even been there with them that day. He wasn't Jack's responsibility, but because of the disorganization in the department, Jack, his partner, and the kid had all been

together when they'd gotten the call on the radio. The kid was new, and had little experience. Jack had ordered him to stay out of the way, to watch and learn. It was Jack who had learned much more than he had ever bargained for that day.

They were there together, the three of them. The other two were strained, focused on him, depending on him, rooted to the spot for fear that their tread would set something off. Their faces were vivid, stark in their overwhelming concentration. They were there, flesh and blood, and he was going through it all over again.

"Jack! Jack! What are you doing? Jack! There's only twenty seconds left, Jack buddy, snap out of it!"

"GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY! The guy's cracked. He can't do a damned thing!" shouted the kid, and he pushed Jack so hard, he fell, and landed sprawled out on the floor.

He had been a professional, and always knew what to do before. But even professionals can crack, and it had been too much pressure. It was a perfect parallel. These people were going to die because two years ago, he'd lost his nerve.

A mother screaming shrilly jarred him back into the present.

"What are you doing? It's a bomb! Leave it alone, leave it alone!" She clutched tightly to her five year old child who shouted, "Mommy, Mommy, what's happening?"

A pale faced man in a sharp business suit rushed up to Jack saying, "WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?! WHAT THE HELL--"

"Stand back! Shut that woman up! I'm going to try..." said Jack. He had briefly stood, but by the time he had finished the sentence, he was already crouching back down again, sweat staining the back of his shirt. Something in his tone, some trace of the authority Jack had once possessed conveyed itself to the other man. The guy shook his head,

looking terrified and bewildered. He backed away.

The train seemed to be gaining in speed. Tall buildings, and short stretches of shrubbery hurtled past, creating a blurry brown blend of color. The compartment was garishly lighted, the seats a faded blue that melted into the cream colored wall behind it. Jack didn't see any of it. All he could see was the bomb.

He did not see as a frightened woman fainted, and sunk to the floor, blocking the center aisle.

One man, dressed in jeans and flannels, screamed at the top of his lungs, "I'M NOT GOING TO DIE! I'M GETTING OF THIS GODDAMN TRAIN RIGHT NOW!" He rushed to the door, and pulled the emergency handle. The door flew open with sparks and screeches of protest. The man was thrown backwards into the seats, but rose purposefully. Violent wind whipped around the inside of the car. The man pulled himself forward, using the seats to anchor himself. He got to the door, braced his arms, pulling himself through the frame, and with accompanying screams from the other passengers, jumped into the air.

But all that Jack could see was the bomb in front of him. His rough and unpolished nails struggled to move with the finesse they had once been capable of. It was a mere memory, and seconds of his life were ticking away, almost gone. It was incredible to think that this was how it was going to end.

He was frozen, crouched down in front of the device. His whole body was numb, a dead weight, a helpless block of lead. The images of his partner and the rookie bomb squad member faded away before his eyes. Who was going to save him this time?

Sheer adrenaline brought his body back to life, brought it achingly back to the moment, to an excruciating pain that was coursing through his veins, and exploding in his heart. His eyesight clouded for a moment, then cleared.

A plain pocket knife, cutting into the flesh of his thigh through his pocket, came to his attention. He wrenched it out and pulled it open, testing the blade as he had done so many times before without thought. He must have squeezed

too hard because he felt a sticky warmth that could only be blood on his fingers. He wiped away the blood, not even feeling the pain.

His hand was steady all of the sudden, and he thanked God for the temporary gain of some, if not all his control. Gently, he pried open the main compartment on the left side, something he had formerly been able to do with very little trouble. Now the pressurized feature on the bomb consumed his thoughts, and he struggled with every ounce of his remaining control not to involuntarily shake the bomb loose out of its position. The cover sprung open and the wires that spilled out under his less than suave administrations were unlike any he had remembered working with. He wasn't breathing, and he paused for one precious moment of time to force air in and out of his lungs, to force himself to concentrate.

With one hand he grasped the edge of the box, and with the other he brought the knife to rest against the wires. Those wires would mean life or death to not just him, but a great many people. He could feel now the mind numbing, heart-stopping weight of the decision before him.

His brain exploded with a million possibilities, and he gritted his teeth, clenching them so tightly he thought they would crack. It was incredible that he wasn't dead already from the stress. How in the world had he ever done this sort of thing before? How had he lived his life in such suspense, and with such confidence, when he had constantly been on the edge of death? Constantly chased by the demon of tragedy and mayhem. By Death itself. Yes, he was losing the battle with death. Its cold icy fingers were closing around his heart at that very moment, triumphant with his imminent defeat.

With mere seconds left to live, all he could think was, *I can't save myself any more than I can save these people.* The responsibility was tormenting him.

The mother was huddled on the floor, wedged between the seats with her child tight in her arms. She was repeating something under her breath. It might have been a prayer, but a prayer would not save her now. The man in the

expensive suit was at the back of the car, trying to break through the door to the next compartment. Most of the people had congregated there, as far away from the bomb and Jack as possible.

Maybe Jack would have just given up and thrown the knife to the farthest corner of the room, if it hadn't been for the rest of them. He silently cursed them all, and prepared to make the biggest gamble of his life. It would be either the biggest mistake or luckiest break that could ever happen to him. It would be the moment where his life would end or begin.

Memory struck him like a sharp hammer on his head. He knew this type of bomb. He'd seen it many times. A prickle of doubt made him sick inside though, and he knew that it was still a chance. Being out of the game for two whole years didn't make Jack confident, or knowledgeable about the latest changes and models.

He curved the knife blade up until it strained against the patch of multicolored wires, and moved them aside. Underneath, were different fuses and a microchip board. It was complicated, and getting more complicated by the minute. The timer read twenty seconds remaining.

He disengaged the clamped-parallel blue wires, and slipped his hand under the fuse board, gentry prying it off its setting. So far so good. He didn't have to worry about the pressurized element anymore.

Last but not least, the critical wire. Grimly, he picked it out, and cut through the outer red plastic casing. The actual filaments of the wire were gold in color, and static with electricity. He took the knife, and he cut the wire through to the core. As the tension in the wire gave out, the beating of his heart all but stopped, his eyes rolled back into his head, and his breath left him in a whoosh of relief and unconsciousness.

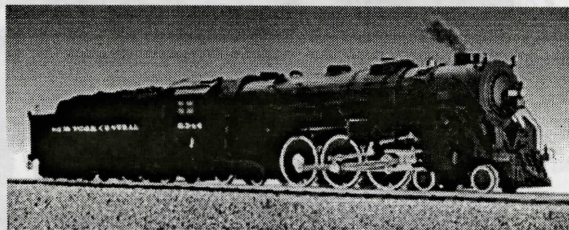
Jack woke with the smell of burning flesh around him and despaired. If he was dead, then he must surely be in hell. He must be in a personal hell, along with the victims that he hadn't been able to save.

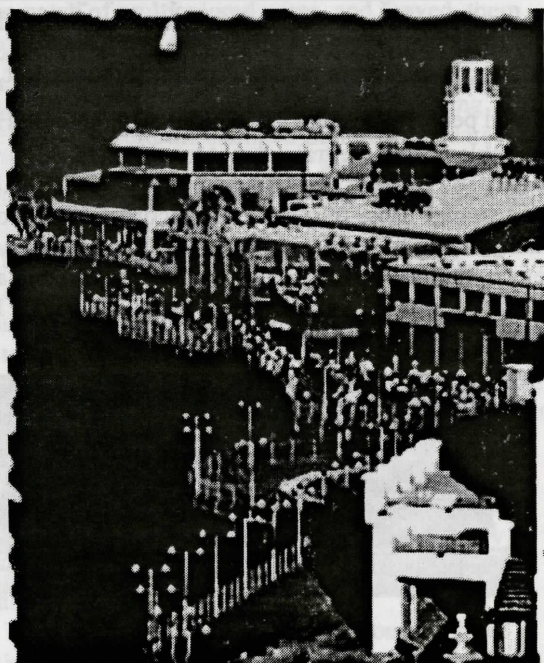
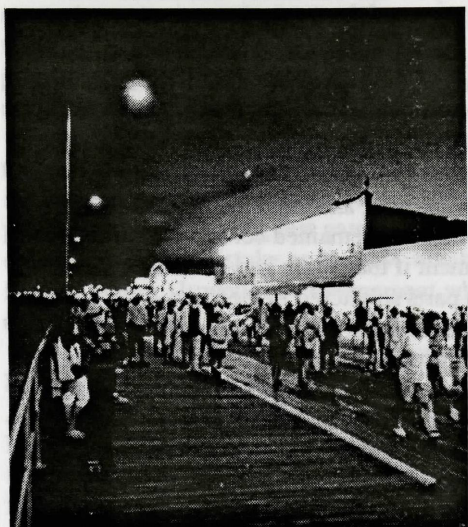
There were screams, but another sound pierced through the air. Sirens. Incredible, and in excruciating

pain, he opened his eyes. He was alive. The sirens were getting louder, and louder, and he could hardly trust his disoriented senses. He lay within the bent and disfigured compartment of the train, early morning sunlight streaming through the shattered windows. It had not detonated. It had not *blown up*. He couldn't feel his legs, but his other senses were invariably active. He could taste blood on his lips, feel the twisted shape of his arm, and smell the burnt flesh all around him. But one thing remained certain; he would not be alive at this moment if that bomb had been blown. He would be a million parts splattered in the wind.

He lay his head back gently, and out of the corner of his eye, through the window, he saw the split in the path, and how the train, failing to switch tracks, had derailed and crashed, skidding off and flying out onto its side. Though moments ago they had been passing through a busy town, Jack saw trees and vegetation through the shattered window of the train car.

Jack sighed in relief and lay waiting for the approaching sirens to rescue him from his paralyzed state. As he waited, he listened to the most beautiful sound he could ever have hoped to hear around him; the tortured screams of injured people who were *alive*. He had done it. He hadn't been able to stop the train, but at least he had stopped the bomb. His struggle and responsibility were finished, and he felt a strange sense of release and accomplishment over finally facing the demon that had confronted him those years before. He may never recover his nerve again, but at least he had succeeded once more at conquering his fears. He would never take the train again.





"THE KIDNAPPERS"

They were walking along the boardwalk, sand crunching beneath their feet, hands clasped, and eyes alert. To the world they were just a young couple taking an evening stroll on the beach. A cursory look from passerby revealed an attractive looking man, with dark wavy hair, a tall thin frame, and broad shoulders. He held the woman's hand tightly, whose willowy figure, blue eyes, and softly rounded features would have been beautiful if her face had not been twisted, trying unsuccessfully to conceal the fear and tenseness that radiated from her. In the other hand, the man carried an ambiguous brown shopping bag. They walked swiftly, wary of being approached. His eyes roamed around examining the other people around him as if he suspected someone were watching *him*. But to the unconcerned people around them they were simply an innocent couple enjoying a beautiful sunset on the beach.

The fiery red sun set into the glowing waters of the Pacific, casting the surrounding streets in long shadows. Condos lined the edge of the boardwalk, and beyond, a maze of crowded beach front properties created a dizzying grid of alleyways and dwellings.

They turned a few sharp corners and were suddenly far away from the safe sidewalks of the beach. They were moving into a very different part of the area. They seemed to know where they were going, but still they moved with a cautious uncertainty as if they were treading on glass. They made no noise as they approached a doorway that had a sliver of dim light slipping out the threshold space. The man consulted a paper, a single address confirming that this was indeed the place. He looked into the woman's eyes.

"Sheryl," he said in a hushed and stern tone, "I mean it now, I let you come, but if something happens here, you have to run and not look back." She pursed her lips, nodded and moved behind him.

"Be careful Richard," she murmured breathlessly.

Her mouth had gone completely dry and her voice sounded hollow and distant.

He moved forward cautiously with the bulging bag in his hand, checking to make sure it was stapled shut. He placed it on the step and, tense and sweating with fear and aggravation, rapped shortly on the door three times. The noise was a cannon blast in the silence of the night and Sheryl had to stifle a gasp by clamping her hand over her mouth.

Richard strode backwards quickly and grabbed her elbow, pulling her into the shadows, where they waited with bated breath in the cold still darkness of the night. The sound of the ocean waves echoed in the distance, and an overwhelming salt breeze assaulted their senses. Moments later, the door opened. A man whose face was obscured with some sort of mask picked the bag up off the front stoop and re-entered the house. What seemed like an eternity later, he or another man wearing a similar mask returned carrying a small bundle. He came forward towards Richard slowly, and after wordlessly transferring it to him, turned and left.

Sheryl was white in the moonlight and taking her breaths in irregular and painful gasps. There was their child, unharmed and in their possession. She kissed her son's cheek briefly, and her husband pulled them both close and shamelessly let the tears gather in his eyes. Some would never be so lucky as they...

"Let's go home, Richard," said the woman softly. He nodded silently, relief and exhaustion etched upon his face. They moved away quickly, back towards the lights and safety of the main street, carrying their precious child.

Later, when the moon was far overhead, Sheryl stood gazing at the slumbering form of her child, safe in his crib. His tiny and angelic features were serene, untroubled, unharmed. She glanced behind her where her husband was sitting in a weary stupor, getting the first untroubled sleep in a long while. It was doubtful that either of them would leave the nursery for some time. She turned back to her child, and convulsively straightened the blankets around him for the tenth time that night.

She felt as if she had suddenly awoken from a long torturous nightmare. It was nothing but a dream, and the nightmare was over. It had been such a long time to wait. Months of not knowing, of despairing, of feeling the cold sweat of terror each time the phone rang. The constant planning and negotiating alone had almost driven them both insane. There were a million other details that had been dealt with, and more to come now that they had been successful with their risks.

After all that hell, they were finally finished. They had their child. She stood over the crib, unwilling to move out of sight, and let the silent tears run down her face, trying not to sob aloud.

~ ~ ~

In the weeks that followed Sheryl knew happiness and content in every laugh, hiccough, and high pitched wail that issued from her son's chubby lips. She quit her job, staying home just to see his angelic cherub-like face stretch into an innocent smile of delight when she played with him.

"Mummy's little boy! Aren't you? Aren't you! Does David want some applesauce? What a big boy! Lets get your highchair!" He would beam at her when she used that tone of voice, his fair features positively glowing. Richard was happy too, and came home every night, focused on being affectionate and attentive to his wife and child. When Sheryl saw Richard on the carpet of their small home, playing peek-a-boo with their son, applesauce stains all over the front of *both* their shirts, she knew that their family was finally complete.

After two weeks of perfect health, David developed a slight cough, but the doctor that Sheryl contacted didn't seem too concerned. During the day David seemed happy, normal. It was with the onset of night that he would become feverish and red, wailing with misery. Sheryl began to get dark circles under her eyes from staying up with him all night. She kept taking him back to the doctor, and the verdict was always the same: More fluids, and warm baths, the list went on and on. Over the next week and a half she went through a number of close calls and false alarms that

unnerved and frightened her out of her wits. It was a Monday night when Richard came home to such a situation.

Richard walked in the door, a smile poised on his face as his wife ran from the other room, anxious to greet him. The smile faded as he saw her expression. Her brows were two stark compressed lines, and her mouth was pursed and trembling.

"Sheryl? What's wrong?"

"Richard, I don't know what to do, he's getting worse and you said that..." she stopped speaking abruptly and started to wring her hands.

"Well, let's get the doctor here," he said soothingly, trying to restrain his own panic.

"Damn it! I don't want that doctor! He's a fool. He doesn't know what he's doing--"

"Sheryl, you know we can't risk--" His sentence was interrupted by the high pitched wail of his son, and the two of them hurried to the nursery where they found him distressed and feverish.

"Richard, what are we going to do?" Sheryl asked as she took David from the crib and attempted to comfort him.

"We'll wait the night out Sheryl. He'll be okay..."

~ ~ ~

The brilliant rays of sunlight streamed through the window, waking Sheryl from her light slumber. She sat next to her husband who was still asleep on the nursery sofa. Her eyes, after a moment of groggy incomprehension, flew to the crib, her heart pounding with sudden fear. Then she realized that all was quiet and remembered that in the early morning hours, her son's fever had finally broken. David lay sleeping peacefully in his crib. Breathing a sigh of infinite relief, she rose from the sofa and wrapped her arms around herself, cold in the briskness of the morning. She crept forward quietly trying not to wake her son with her approach. A smile of tender love and delight lit up her face as she saw him there.

He was unmoving and still asleep. The light from the window reflecting on the mirrors on the mobile above him cast glimmering shards of light onto his pale face.

Sheryl brushed at the locks of golden hair on his forehead but stopped when she noticed the chill of his skin. He was ice cold. Alarm and panic rising in her chest, her heart pumping faster than she could breath, she nudged his body slightly, then shook him hard. He did not stir. Her piercing screams shattered the peaceful morning into a million irreparable fragments.

When Richard awoke to this ungodly sound, he realized instantly that his son was dead. The grief didn't hit him until later. In that instant all he could do was look at the huddled form of his wife rocking their infant son back and forth, shuddering in shock.

"They were going to make sure that he was healthy," he muttered.

After a few minutes her sobs became quieter.

"They were going to--- we paid extra, to make sure," said Richard.

Sheryl clutched the child tightly in her arms, and after a soul wrenching sob, finally was quiet. Her face was bathed in salty tears, bathed in sorrow.

A long moment of silence followed where Sheryl refused to look at Richard. Then he spoke.

"We'll try again." She continued to stare at the floor, in disbelieving silence.

"Sheryl, it was only our first try for God's sake!" he said, his voice mounting in frustration. She looked up at him, despondent and without hope. Her arms became loose, and listless, still holding her lifeless charge.

"Why, Richard? What's the point? They'll all have problems, they'll all have backgrounds, sickness, attachments-- we'll never find one that won't. We couldn't even take David to a legitimate doctor because we were afraid they'd find out we had no birth certificate or that they'd ask questions..." she paused for a moment, drew in a shaky breath, then continued in the same dispassionate tone.

"We were naïve, admit it Richard. We were totally unprepared to handle this...and now David is..." She stopped speaking, her shoulders shaking with a repressed sob.

Richard ran a hand through his dark hair in frustration and crouched down next to her. His lips were set in a hard and determined line. Gingerly, he extracted the tiny form from Sheryl's arms, and placed it back in the crib. Then, supporting her by the shoulders, lifted her to her feet.

"This is what you want Sheryl." She looked straight into his face for the first time that morning, since it had happened. She looked deeply into his eyes, noticing in a detached way the intense sapphire color of his irises. She shook her head.

"I don't know if I can do this again Richard; take someone's child like that. What if we got caught this time?" She gulped heavily and licked her chapped lips.

"This is what you want," he repeated in a decisive voice. "I don't care if we have to move a dozen times, or commit a dozen crimes, or pay someone to commit it for us to find you a child, we will."

Sheryl nodded and taking a shaky breath, wiped the tears from her eyes.

"And we can start over again, we can start all over." He was tightening his grip on her shoulders bruising them with his desperate strength, wanting her to show some sign that she believed, trying to convince himself as well.

"We can have what the adoption agency won't give us, and what I can't give you."

"If you say so Richard, we'll try." But her voice was dead and without hope. She turned her head and looked towards the window where the sunlight had been streaming cheerfully into the room and saw that the initial glitter of the morning had faded into a dull, lifeless and dingy gray.

The Queen of Hearts, she made some
tarts,

All on a summer day:

The Knave of Hearts, he stole
those tarts,

And took them quite away!



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
~Lewis Carroll

To Night

~Percy Bysshe Shelley ~

*Swiftly walk o'er the western wave, Spirit
of Night!*

*Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear-
Swift be thy flight!*



"Delusions"

The vampire was there. He was standing in the front doorway of a closed and vacant shop, the overhanging eaves of the roof shadowing his luminous face. The moon was far overhead, lighting the streets of Spain with a powerful glow.

He bared his razor sharp fangs before retracting them and forcing his countenance from its terrifying state back into that of a civilized human. In human form, his face was dangerously handsome, with strong aristocratic features and dark expressive eyes that glittered like opals in the night. He wore his long dark hair tied behind him. Covering his mysterious physique was an elegantly collared coat of black. He blended seamlessly into the doorway of the shop, becoming a part of the very structure.

He watched as a young peasant woman walked past, looking uneasily from side to side. The overall effect of her finely shaped features, lustrous blonde hair, and lips the shade of crushed berries was ten times more potent in the moonlight. He saw her, vivid and desirous, his senses acute and aware. His eyes narrowed maliciously as he watched her stroll towards the center of the deserted square. The only sound in the still night was the cascading water that circulated through a small fountain in the middle of the plaza. Still the woman did not see the vampire, though a lingering chill in the breeze made her glance over her shoulder. Only the palely illuminated darkness returned her frightened gaze. She turned back, moving quickly on her way.

With no more than a whisper of rustling fabric, he moved away from his shadowy sanctuary. As he stepped into the street the reflected light that shone suddenly, like a beacon, from his pale and charismatic face was blinding. His expression was twisted between a sneer and smile as he regarded his unsuspecting victim.

The woman continued to walk forward, clutching a knit shawl around her shivering, curvy frame. She did not realize she was being hunted, only that the night was

strangely quiet.

The vampire closed the distance between them with an effortless grace. By the time she had reached the center of the square and was parallel to the fountain, he had moved in a long continuous stride, and caught her up in his grasp. He held her tightly in what was her last embrace, giving her no time to scream or even beg for her life before he plunged his fangs into the exquisite muscles of her exposed neck.

"Cut!" someone cried, and the darkness on the set was illuminated by powerful florescent light. Crew members, make-up artists, and technicians swarmed onto the set making fine tuned adjustments to the scenery, and lighting. The gothic scenery which moments before had been so supernaturally surreal, was transformed into an ordinary nondescript setting, a plain dark alley opening onto a fake street constructed to mimic a Spanish plaza.

"Gregorio, how many times have I asked you *not* to fondle the actresses who are your victims? We are going for art, not porn!" A tall and chiseled man was speaking forcefully to another man who was picking irritably at the protruding fangs in his mouth.

"Tell me Donavon, how am I to work with this, this imbecile of an actress? Her lines, every move she makes, casts me in a degrading light." With great difficulty he managed to extract a set of false teeth dripping in his profuse saliva.

"Really Donavon," said the attractive blonde who moments before had been clutched in the death embrace of the film. She walked over to the pair of them while a makeup attendant nervously hovered around her, making large, and off-target swoops with a makeup brush.

"I don't know how I'm supposed to work with such little respect!" She glared at Gregorio and adjusted her ever-rising skirt. Her costume was little more than a light off the shoulder peasant blouse, and a flounced skirt that was too

short to be realistic. She had disdainfully thrown off the modest shawl before joining them.

"Maybe I would respect you more if you did not sleep with every cast and crew member on the set!" Every syllable he uttered was dripping with disdain.

"*You* are telling me? How many women have you screwed since you've been here? Sometimes I think your whole fan club is waiting outside your trailer door, trying to get the chance." She spat this last line with a voice of such deep contempt and loathing that Gregorio tightened his lips, his face turning red regardless of the white face makeup adorning his features.

"And you Genevieve, did not you have someone in your trailer as well last Thursday?" he murmured in a dangerously low voice usually reserved for his vampiric character.

Donavon, a seasoned director, knew what was happening. He rolled his eyes and swept a tanned hand over his weathered face wiping his eyes in exhaustion. It was the end of a very long day, and his less than professional actors were quarreling like children. He was tempted to throw the lot of them out and recast the entire project. He had seen them act like this for weeks, though when they had initially started to rehearse, the two actors had gotten along wonderfully. More than likely the reason they were fighting now, was that their illicit off-set romance had gone sour, and neither one was willing to submit to the reasoning that 'the show must go on.' When Donovan thought how they were over-budget, behind schedule, and understaffed, he wanted to quit the entire project. He looked up at the dark sky, and wondered what he had done to deserve the actors he had.

In his time Donovan had been a respected and sought after director. Known for such films as *Undead* and *The Evil Ones*, he had made his reputation very early on in

his career as a quality horror film director. It had been a combination of a few bad flops and a few bad back injuries that had forced him to 'break' from the industry. About ten years later, Donovan was 50, and going out of his mind in retirement.

Since the strike had begun in Hollywood, film companies were grasping at straws, trying to find qualified people to act, direct, and manage their films. Even small companies like **Ace ♠ Studios**, were having problems recruiting, and when Donovan's name had somehow come up in conjunction with the proposal for the project, the offer had captured his interest. He had accepted despite the insultingly low budget and the obscurity of the script, because he had been desperate to find a project to fill his time. He missed the control and the work that directing involved.

They obtained an empty lot in a little town near San Diego, which had an empty warehouse that had so far served as an adequate headquarters. The cheapness of the location, and the relative simplicity of shooting the movie in a quiet town had its advantages, but despite its closeness to major cities such as San Diego and Los Angeles itself, the members of the crew and cast had complained bitterly. Something about the desert shrubbery and local nightlife of coyotes and jackrabbits didn't please anybody.

Donovan had initially determined that the anonymity, and unindustrialized area was well suited to the needs of the project, and once his mind was set on something, his stubborn determination made a change in plans difficult to arrange. They had started operations and setup in the field, using the warehouse as their main base of operations. Thus far they had managed to ward off curiosity seekers and tabloid photographers with minimum security. Donovan had also thought that the atmosphere of the small provincial town would be a method of focusing his cast and crew on their tasks...and he was sure it would be once they stopped complaining.

Now, looking at the disorganized situation, and the unprofessional people surrounding him, he thought twice

about the charms of a larger city. If they were closer to a major city the least he could do would be to hire a personal masseuse. The accident in which he had hurt his back a few years ago had been more serious than Donovan had admitted, even to himself. Donovan's back hardly bothered him now though...hardly ever...

He wearily raised a megaphone that was clutched in his left hand and effectively broke up the argument that was still continuing between Gregorio and Genevieve, by announcing to the set in a loud sonorous voice, "Everyone, that's it for today. Go home and get some rest. Wakeup call is at 6:30 tomorrow." There was a bustle of noise and excitement as everyone eagerly rushed to leave the set.

Gregorio and Genevieve eyed one another, their stances hostile and faces flushed with anger. There was a long dramatic moment of silence, then each one swept off huffily to separate directions of the set.

Donavon sighed before once again raising the megaphone to his lips.

"MILLIE!?"

A short and stout woman appeared almost instantly by his side. She had dark brown hair and a competent round and familiar face that inspired total confidence. Donavon had depended on her for years, and after he had received the offer to direct, he had immediately called the short brunette with an offer of his own. Completely loyal, she had refused a better job to collaborate with him once again. Donovan couldn't have done it without her, since he depended on her for everything from his morning coffee to advice in the editing room. She was as efficient as she was short, and always dependable.

"Yes, Elliot?" she said in a carefully measured and soothing tone. Just hearing her voice made him feel better. She was one of the few who dared call him by his first name, and after all the years they had worked together, knew she was the only one who could get away with it. She raised an eyebrow as her eyes followed the wave of his hand. The retreating forms of the two actors were still visible in the

distance.

"Are they at it again?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied curtly in frustration. "I can't get them to work together. Their lines are terrible, and their acting is worse. There seems to be a loss of genuine talent these days in Hollywood. I can't even seem to get the script straight with the writers!"

Millie's lips were compressed in a tight line as she patiently listened to the director's complaints. She smoothed the dark green pullover sweater she wore, and the matching calf length skirt before replying in her most comforting voice.

"Elliot, don't worry about a thing. I'll *personally* go to talk to Gregorio and Genevieve about their, err...

differences. As for the script, I'll schedule an emergency session with the writers for some day this week." She paused, for effect no doubt, then continued in the same voice, but now with a note of command.

"We'll continue on our schedule tomorrow as planned, and devise changes for the crew and actors as we go."

Her reasoning was so sensible and direct that as usual, Donovan felt completely assured once again. The film still had major problems, but with Millie by his side, he felt up to anything. Donovan gave her a rare smile, his oversized and ruggedly tanned features coming together to produce a strangely friendly and relaxed stance that was rarely seen on the loud and overbearing director. He then said briskly, "Great. If you need me, page me." As Donovan walked away he consulted his watch, and gaped in astonishment when he saw the late hour.

Already 11:00. I hope that I can still get through to the producers.

He walked ten feet to the left, entering the side door of the large warehouse, and then turning a corner, entered a very messy and makeshift office. After an impatient search,

he found the phone which had been hidden under the massive stacks of papers on his desk.

Damn! Donovan sighed as he lifted the phone and tried in vain to dial the overseas number. *They must be just waking up at this hour. If ever there was a bad time to make an assessment trip!*

The producers of the film were on a temporary investigational trip in Spain, seeing if the crew and set could be moved there for a more realistic background. As it was, their funding was limited, and the producers had wanted to see the potential for themselves before they invested more time and money and asked others to do the same.

Donavon put the phone back on the hook and left his office. He made his way through the crowded sets to the back lot where their trailers sat housing their cast and crew.

He strode up to a particularly small and hideous trailer with a small label on the outside reading *Elliot Donovan*, and rapidly keyed into the flimsy lock. He climbed the first two steps, carefully ducking his tall frame away from the doorway. He swore violently as he knocked a stack of parchment to the floor, and still fuming in exasperation, he bent to put the mess back in order.

The actors of the film all had their own personal trailers set up on the back lot for use between scenes, though they also were supplied with rooms in the nearest hotel, ironically named the *Star Sleeper*. Donovan was of the opinion that it was an unnecessary expense, and had made the decision to live on the set, hoping that others would follow his example. So far, nobody had even noticed.

The trailer, though small and a bit dingy, was well cleaned, except for the strong odor of cigar smoke which lingered comfortingly in the air. Just breathing the traces of smoke had a calming effect on his mind. When he finished rearranging the mess he had made, he automatically reached into the cupboards below the bench of the kitchenette table, and pulled out a Cuban cigar from a very old box. The smoke filled the air around him as he lit up and inhaled. Finally able to concentrate properly, he set his mind to the task at hand.

Pictures and still frames, notes and script pages one by one met their match and were edited, screened and with added notation placed in a neat pile on the kitchenette table.

He looked at the clock several hours later, and realized with a start that it was after two o'clock. Yawning, and exhausted, he made his way towards the small bedroom in the cramped trailer he called home, and after pulling his shoes and shirt off, he collapsed into bed.

Donovan was dreaming. He was running from some unknown attacker. Not a man to be passively attacked in the first place, he wondered why he wasn't standing and fighting. He decided it was because he was more frightened than he had ever been in his life. He couldn't stop. He knew that if he did, he might never live to see the day. The street he was on was shadowy and indistinct. Strange shapes loomed out at him in the darkness, making him change his direction erratically. Wrenching his neck around as he ran, he saw a dark blur, and heard footsteps that sounded like a jackhammer piercing the dead silence all around him. His breaths were coming in short gasps and he found, despite his best efforts, that his legs were slowing down. The sharp footsteps pounding into the asphalt of the street were gaining on him, yet his body was getting heavier and heavier. He rounded a corner, almost at a walk, still unaccountably terrified of whatever was behind him and seconds away from confronting it. He stumbled, skidding out on his knees, and then landed painfully out on the ground. Donovan found that he was paralyzed, left incapable in the strangling, hazy thickness of the dream. The footsteps that had been so rapid a moment before slowed to a maddening pace, and were no more than a moment away from turning the corner, when the vision faded and there was nothing. All that remained was a vague sense of danger that Donovan did not even remember when he woke the next morning.

When Donovan woke, intensely hot sunlight was

streaming in the window, burning his face. He opened his eyes a crack, then rolled over and shut them again tightly. He was slipping back into a state of lazy unconsciousness when his eyes snapped open, and looking at the clock, he realized that it was much later than it should have been.

Already 9:00!

He swore, twice, then hoisted himself out of bed. He was two steps away from the shower when the wooziness hit him.

His eyesight blurred, and his head swam with sudden pain. Confused and momentarily stunned, he reached a hand out to where the kitchenette table should have been, but missed, and in a moment, he had sunk to his knees. His heart was beating frantically, and as he struggled to regain his eyesight, he concentrated on keeping his breaths regular. Inhale, Exhale. Inhale, Exhale... His breathing was extraordinarily loud, and echoed strangely in his head. Inhale, *whoosh*, exhale, *whoosh*....

He sat kneeling on the floor for a minute, two minutes, and then his eyesight began to return, the pain in his head began to abate. Shaking his head from left to right, he climbed laboriously to his feet. He tested his muscles, and when a small spasm of pain shot up his spine, he took another few moments of rest before attempting to move any further. The brief pain in his back faded, and he breathed a sigh of relief.

Now, what was that all about? he wondered. *I feel sick, like I haven't eaten in days...* Rolling his shoulders in aggravation, he made his way to the shower.

It struck him about twenty minutes later that it had been the first time he had ever missed the morning call. Climbing out of the shower he reached for a towel and wrapped it around his waist. Stepping into the kitchen/living area, he reached for his cell phone which he had discarded the night before on the table, and hit the button on speed dial for Millie. For a few seconds he thought his phone was broken. After five minutes of repeated dialing, he realized with considerable shock, that Millie was not answering his increasingly frantic calls.



Donovan quickly dressed, and grabbed a bottle of water from his small fridge before he left the trailer and headed over to the set. The façade was there as it had been the night before, but in the bright sunlight it appeared foolishly unrealistic. It was fairly deserted for a Thursday morning, especially when they had been scheduled to start the day at 6:00 am. Only a few dedicated crew members were present; cleaning, sweeping, and setting up for the day's work. Donovan walked rapidly up to one of them, a burly six foot man who looked vaguely flustered at being approached by the legendary and intimidating director.

Years before as a fledgling director, Donovan had taken necessary steps towards being a respected director among his crew and associates. By being strict and aggressive, as well as intimidating, he had earned a reputation for being an all business director. After returning from his ten year absence, he had found a new generation of unruly workers and actors that needed reinforcement of that idea. Essentially, the idea that Donovan, and no one else, was in charge.

Seeing the stocky tough looking fellow cringe, he wondered if the first days on the set had really been that bad. *All I did was yell a little, and then the pushups weren't really that bad...a little unorthodox maybe, but nothing inhumane!* Donovan dismissed his momentary doubts, and addressed the worker.

"Good morning. Is this all in order?" Donovan's voice was gruff with sleep deprivation. He sounded much harsher than he had intended.

"Yes sir--well, almost sir. Well, as soon as more people start coming sir, Mr. Donovan..."

"Yes, yes," he said impatiently. "Where's Millie?" Donovan asked.

The confused crewman shrugged his shoulders, and turning his eyes back to the ground, started to coil a spare

piece of rope that had been lying listlessly on the floor. He looked like a child trying to avoid a reprimand.

A spark of memory struck the crewman, and after a moment of careful deliberation, he phrased his sentence.

"Uh, sir, I'm not sure if you already know, but the producers...they showed up a little while ago, and I thought I saw 'em go into the briefing room."

"Damn!" said Donovan, his tone intense and filled with frustration. "Well, get back to work, and get everyone on the set! We don't have time for this," said Donovan as he glanced at his watch and moved off towards the briefing room. He left the cowering six foot crewman to finish coiling his rope, a red flush coloring the man's cheeks. He looked sulky and resentful, but didn't dare voice his opinions to Donovan.

The room in question was little more than a small meeting space at the back of the warehouse, meant to be a staff room, but which Donovan used to confer with his associates. There, he found two men, both of whom represented all of the collaborators on the movie project. Donovan entered the room and studied them for moment, noting not for the first time that they were unnaturally similar in appearance. They both were middle aged, with salt and pepper hair, and newly acquired tans. Even the suits they wore were of similar style and color. They both looked slightly jet lagged, but still more well-rested than Donovan, making him feel even more annoyed than he had been before.

"Mr. Thompson, Mr. Grant, good of you two to join us." Donovan grasped each hand in turn noticing that they both appeared to be vaguely surprised to see him.

"Yes, quite, Mr. Donovan. We are back as you can see from our little holiday in Spain," said Grant. He was obviously the boss of the two, and maintained the better speaking voice. Thompson, who was slightly shorter than Grant, with dull green eyes and a supercilious smile, did not speak, but nodded his head in enthusiastic agreement.

"We had thought you would be at work this time

of day... We meant only to come and evaluate the proceedings." Grant's velvety manipulative voice wielded considerable power in certain circles, but not with the savvy director. Donovan had learned early on that in order to deal with Grant and his ways, it was necessary to take a firm stand.

"Yes," said Donovan, and he took a deep breath and tried to conceal the brisk impatient tone of his voice.

"We are a little behind, but in a few days time we will be back on schedule, just like before. Maybe if you two had been here—"

"The thing is, Mr. Donovan," Grant said, changing his tactics smoothly, "we have one hundred percent confidence in you as always, but things don't seem to be moving along as they should be." He picked a speck of imaginary dust off of his spotless tie before continuing.

"We have a lot of money invested in this expenditure and we want it to be a success. Everyone has seen a horror film at one point in their lives, but we want this one to be the one they remember and watch for generations to come."

"Yes," said Thompson, finally speaking up, "and we know you are the man to do it, but if we were to perhaps secure the chances of it being a success..." Thompson's voice was breathy and slight and he made emphatic gestures in the air as he spoke.

Donovan's brow creased in contemplation. *What have these fools done now? I swear, that if they're up to something even slightly illegal I'll turn them in with no hesitation...it would be a relief.*

Aloud he said, "For the time being, gentlemen, let's save any ideas or publicity campaigns for later. I have a long day of work ahead of me and I am sure that the two of you are tired from your flight."

They looked doubtful, but after a minute of quick consultation they agreed.

"We do need to talk about what we encountered in Spain. I have a feeling that we don't necessarily need a location change to bring this movie to life."

"If you remember," said Donovan in a restrained voice, "I was the one who said that we don't have the time or resources for such a move. We have everything we need here, and besides that, we've just completed the stairway--"

"We will be happy to listen to your concerns once again, whenever you like Mr. Donovan. For now though, as you said, I think we'll just check into the hotel and discuss our plans later." Grant finished speaking, and taking Thompson along with him as if on an invisible leash, gave a slight bow to Donovan as he passed out of the room.

Donovan sighed loudly, unsure of how he should feel. He walked over to the small coffee pot that Millie usually had brewing early in the morning, and swore when he saw it was empty. He left for the set, Millie's whereabouts weighing heavily on his mind.

"Where is Millie?" he asked person after person, but no one had seen her that morning. Donovan was beginning to become seriously worried. He walked into the warehouse and over to his office, searching his desk for any sign of Millie's presence.

Why am I worried? he thought. *She's probably running some errands and forgot to turn her cell phone on. She's probably on her way back right now from whatever she needed to do.*

Regardless, Donovan still felt uneasy about her absence and checked his messages, his voice mail, and his memo pad before finding a crinkled note on the rickety old desk. Pulling it open and smoothing it down he read the shaky handwriting.

"Elliot--I'm not feeling well. Will return to the set as soon as possible. --Millie."

Relieved to know Millie was no longer unaccounted for, but still discouraged by the message, Donovan made a memo reminding himself to call her later and check to see what the exact problem was. Millie had never been late before, and missing an entire day because of sickness was not like her either. Donovan searched his memory, and after a little thought, he succeeded in coming up with an image of Millie, sick with a cold and fever. That time, the *only* time he had ever seen her sick, she had arrived on the set, on time as usual, a box of tissues under one arm, the mended headdress of the African witch doctor character from their hit film, *voodoo doll* under the other.

"Hey, uhh, Mr. Donovan sir, whadya want us tado with these?" A tall lanky crewman with a strong Jersey accent interrupted his thoughts, holding up a pair of dueling swords for Donovan's inspection.

"Over there, on the back wall of the stairway. Didn't you read my instructions?" Donovan sighed and left his office, moving out into the fake scenery of the movie and back to business. The day was full of last minute additions and improvements. Towards the afternoon, Gregorio and Genevieve arrived, in separate cars, and began to rehearse in one of the upstairs rooms of the warehouse. Donovan zipped around, descending on idle workers, and supervising projects with a finesse and ease that made him begin to remember the joy of his profession. They all worked in something of a frenzy, trying to get the set together for that night. By the end of the day Donovan was considerably irritated. When he found his assistant director Seymour singing, "Here comes the sun..dum deedee dee dum," he snapped. If the crew had been afraid of him before, they thought he was crazy now. He hustled Seymour off to do some job after a thorough lecture on wasting his time, and continued with his tasks.

Donovan had been filming at sunset and sunrise alike for the last three weeks, trying to capture a truly unique setting, and in addition, trying to catch a good performance

from the actors... The sun was going down remarkably fast when Donovan realized Gregorio and Genevieve still hadn't come back from their twenty minute break---for the last hour.

"Where is Gregorio?" Donovan asked. Receiving no answer, he raised the megaphone to his lips and called again in a louder voice, "Gregorio! To the set! NOW!" His voice was magnified to ten times that of his normal one, and bounced off of the stone walls that had been constructed to look like an alleyway.

The sun was rapidly going down, and for the shot that Donovan wanted they would have to act fast. The red tinges in the sky were beautiful and brilliant, giving an almost otherworldly air to a setting that Donovan knew he could never reproduce.

He was raising the megaphone to his lips once more, about to treat the crew to another ranting tirade on incompetence, when Gregorio appeared at his side.

"Where have you been? You're wasting precious scheduling time. We have a small window of time to shoot our scenes--"

"Yes, yes," Gregorio said absently, fiddling with the strings of his cape. "But, where is Genevieve?" Gregorio craned his neck past Donovan, a look of dark jealousy crowding his handsome features.

"Just, go to makeup, and go quickly, okay? I need to get something done today if we want to at least pretend to remain on schedule."

Gregorio strode quickly off in the opposite direction than Donovan had indicated, towards the trailer section of the lot. Donovan was fairly certain that he had gone in search of Genevieve.

Donovan threw up his hands in defeat. He was seconds away from raising the megaphone to his lips and calling off the entire effort for the day, when a hand, strong and cold, grabbed his raised forearm and brought it back down to his side.

"Millie! Thank God you're here! My new assistant

is driving me crazy, and you..." He stopped as he noticed how pale she looked. She wore a light blouse and dark calf length skirt, and was perfectly composed as usual. Something else about her was different.

Donovan was still studying her when she spoke. Her voice like the rest of her, seemed different, though Donovan couldn't quite put his finger on what that difference was.

"Elliot," she began, "I'm sorry I've been sick, but I feel much better. What are we working on?" Her short explanation was all that Donovan needed at the moment. He promised himself he would talk to her again later, to make sure she was really okay. At the moment, he had to get through the filming.

"Millie, I need Gregorio and Genevieve on the set now. We need to get this sunset into the opening shot and it is not going to last much longer." Donovan glanced at the fading light, and saw with stricken eyes that the moon was already visible though the sun had not quite gone down yet.

"Look at that! We may never get a chance like this again--" but Millie was already gone. He did a double take as he noticed she had already closed the distance between the set and the trailer lot. He brushed his feeling of bewilderment away. It was natural for Millie to be overly efficient. Sometimes she even anticipated his thoughts.

Suddenly cheerful again, he moved off to have a quick conversation with the microphone/boom workers and when finished with the conversation, was just in time to join Gregorio and Genevieve as they came onto the set.

Both were dressed in the same costumes as they had worn the previous day. They were avoiding each others' glances though, and Donovan knew that little to nothing had been resolved between them.

His features arranged themselves into the image of a patient man, and he spent the next few minutes trying to convince the two to work together.

"I understand that you two have your differences, but in all seriousness, you're professionals." Donovan paused and thought for a moment about what he had said.

Deciding to continue, he said, "and you need to do your job and not let other things distract you." His voice was condescending and patronizing, but they hardly noticed.

Genevieve smirked at Gregorio.

"What's the problem, Donovan? I'm not the one being unprofessional!" She flipped her golden blonde hair over her shoulder and smiled coyly.

Gregorio's face darkened as he replied, "So it's me who's being unprofessional then? Then you are most certainly being a whore--"

"ENOUGH," said a strange voice behind the three of them. Donovan had just been about to explode in anger but the presence behind him had beaten him to it. With shock, he realized that it was...

"Millie? What are you..." But she interrupted him, an unheard of occurrence. No one had interrupted him in years, and for good reason. He had a fierce temper.

"Get to work," she growled, "or you'll be fired with no compensation---contract or no." The way she said it was everything. Her voice was icy and calm, but with a threatening note that held considerable power and demanded respect. Her usually amiable face was contorted to an ugly grimace that more closely resembled a tiger, viciously stalking its prey.

"If you choose to fuck with each other on your own time, that's none of our business. The truth is, you're both easier to replace than you think. You'll never get another chance to work with a director like Elliot Donovan again either, and if you continue to behave the way you are, you'll miss out on it." Her voice dropped to a menacing whisper. "Donovan is not the man to play these silly games with. If I were you two, I'd start thinking about my future in the acting business and being serious about your jobs. That is unless you want to end up working the night shift at Denny's." Her eyes were narrow slits of blue fire. She bared her teeth and growled, "So, stop fucking with our time. "

All three of them stared, wide eyed in shock, at Millie for a full ten seconds before Gregorio and Genevieve

beat a hasty retreat. They left quickly, casting dubious stares back at the five foot two woman who seemed ten feet tall at the moment. Donovan continued to stare, less in shock, more in admiration. Helpless with astonishment, random thoughts flew through his mind before he centered back to the task at hand.

"Err...thank you Millie. Very effective. Now if you would," and he handed her a sheaf of parchment, highlighted and marked with pen in the margins.

"The script needs to be retyped and ready for re-editing with the writers, with all my notes included. As you can see," he pointed ruefully at the chicken like scrawl that was virtually unreadable, "I wasn't too neat with my comments. I hope you won't have trouble reading them."

"Not a problem, Elliot." With a nod, she moved confidently off in the other direction towards her own trailer where she kept her computer for such assignments.

He stared at her retreating form and wondered why she seemed so different. Her form was the same, and she was behaving, for the most part, like the same old efficient Millie. Maybe it was the pallor of her face, or the way she walked away with more grace and finesse than he had ever seen her do, but Donovan couldn't help feeling that something just seemed *completely* wrong.

* * *

Donovan glanced at his notes as he watched Gregorio practice his scene in the corner of his eye. The sun had set minutes before in a blaze of glory, but Donovan had a strange feeling their last shots had failed to capture it. After an hour of re-shooting the plaza scene, they had taken a break and were working on a different part of the plot. Donovan was listening to his assistant director, Seymour, talk to him about a camera angle in one ear, and the ravings of Genevieve in the other.

"So, Donovan, if we turn the camera to the left and catch the vampire as he descends on the stairway..."

"But, Donovan, what do you mean *everyone* has to

be on the set tomorrow at 4:00? That's soo early, and I've got a party in L.A. tonight that won't be finished until--" Genevieve gave him a pouty glance that was wasted on Donovan's stony inattentive countenance.

"--and when you do that, you can see that you get the moon from the window casting light on the floor, which creates a very interesting effect, which in my opinion--" Donovan raised both of his hands, on either side of him, his fingers extended, palms outward towards their faces. Extracting himself from his protagonists, he stepped forward, and without a word, proceeded to examine the camera angle for himself. After a few moments he raised the megaphone to his lips.

"All right, Gregorio, let's take it from the top." Gregorio stopped pacing on the side where he had been studying the script and proceeded to walk on camera. He had changed his costume into a charming old fashioned tuxedo, complete with authentic cape. His makeup had artfully been done, giving him an appearance of unearthly paleness and luster. His fangs protruded slightly from his mouth, and as he clamored to the top of the set of curved stairs, he picked at them irritably, not yet in character.

In the main hall of the warehouse, the crew had labored for weeks constructing the set, which was made up of a magnificent stairway opening up into a large anteroom. A pair of ten foot cast iron doors with engraving and wolf doorknockers sat closed to the outside. The windows on either side of the staircase were stained glass, ironically portraying religious scenes in giant and hypnotic tableaux. The light from outside shone through the panes, casting strange shadows on the marble floor.

Pride filling him with a sense of satisfaction, Donovan took a moment to study his creation. Constructing this set had been a magnificent feat, and they had only just put the finishing touches on last week. He had a good feeling about it, and seeing Gregorio mount the last step at the top and turn around, he drew in a breath, ecstatic at how realistic and interesting the shot looked.

Donovan peered in the camera, and was trying to

focus for the shot when he realized that nothing changed as he made his adjustments. Everything remained indistinct and blurry.

"Seymour! Get over here!" The now less than confidant man, seemed to shrink in size as he followed the directors' orders.

"What did you do to the camera?" Donovan asked in a tense and imposing voice. Seymour looked into the lens, after first removing circular glasses from his face. He wore an anxious expression that faded into one of relief as he examined the shot through the camera.

"It's all right Donovan, there's nothing wrong. See..?" He straightened up and gestured for Donovan to have a look. Suspicious, Donovan looked into the camera once again.

"You're joking right? It's completely blurry. It almost looks like the lens is dirty but--"

"It's not sir, I checked it myself," Seymour said earnestly. He was a short man with balding hair which he hid with a bright purple beret. The rest of his outfit was equally ostentatious, complete with canary yellow running shoes and black sunglasses hanging from a diamond studded lanyard. Donovan had serious doubts as to his culpability, but had reluctantly hired him the week before, to replace his other assistant who had been extradited back to Boston on drug charges...Because his options had been so limited, he had been forced to make a quick decision. The strike had had a negative effect in all the areas of the Hollywood job market, and it just so happened that Seymour was the cream of the crop. Donovan studied the riding breeches, and breezy eggplant flannel the man wore, and inwardly groaned in exasperation.

"Well sir, it does look like the area around Gregory especially, is a bit--"

"Shut up!" Donovan hissed. "Don't call him that! He'll be uncooperative for a week if he hears his real name!"

Seymour looked as if he wanted to stretch his thin features into a sheepish grin, but succeeded only in creating a

pinched wan look that was farther from any smile Donovan had ever seen. Donovan rolled his eyes in exasperation.

"Let's just shoot the scene, okay? We'll use the other camera." Donovan strode back to his director's chair and after the other camera was in position, he raised the megaphone and shouted,

"Alright! Places! Action!"

Gregorio froze and watched Seymour count on his fingers until they were all folded down.

The transformation began, and it was complete and seamless. His entire countenance and manner changed. Where Gregorio had stood a moment before, there was a vampire.

He stood tall, giving the impression of superiority and strength. His eyes had a cool glitter, and he stood with one hand on his chest, covering his heart as if he were a sheik, a Latin lover, or a poet preaching to his audience. He was all of these things, and yet something completely different. He stood motionless at the top of the stairs for a moment, and then slowly, gracefully, began to descend. About halfway down, he languidly extended his arm, hand palm down. He rotated it and made a fist as he drew it back towards his person, and the magnificent cast iron doors before him screeched open. Fog billowed in softly through the doors, and the distant howls of wolves echoed in the distance. The vampire smiled hauntingly, and the sound of a pulse, strong and loud began to vibrate throughout the room. He swept forward, moving in the same measured yet almost gliding steps towards the gaping doorway. His form was silhouetted in the arch of the entrance, the light from the moon streaming in the doorway creating a long shadow on the marble floor. As the shadow lengthened, it morphed into a smaller flickering arc that disappeared into the blackness of nightfall...



"Cut!" Donovan cried, but then was speechless with astonishment. The shot had been perfect from its beautifully acted motions, to the art

direction, to the lunar essence permeating the room. Donovan held the megaphone in one hand while his other hand rose and absent-mindedly rubbed the side of his neck. Coming back to the moment, he further flabbergasted himself by involuntarily calling out on the megaphone,

"Well done. That's a wrap on that scene." In turn, the crew members and actors looked at him with expressions of complete shock etched upon their faces. Donovan was known for his quality work, and in the few short months that they had been filming, he had never once relied upon a single take for a scene. After a moment of silence, the crew once again went on with their jobs, still shaking their heads in disbelief.

"I can't believe it myself," Donovan muttered under his breath. He took a pencil from the right pocket of his expensive black leather jacket that was hanging on the edge of his chair and began to attack a random script with notation.

"Donovan, I think we should get at least one more take just in case something goes wrong with..." Seymour, who had walked up to him a moment before, stopped talking as he saw the expression on Donovan's face. Donovan was determined, lips set in a thin line, his brows heavily depressed. Seymour tiptoed away, a look of anxiety on his thin features.

"Here's your script Elliot," a voice said in his ear, making him jump a foot off his chair. Donovan turned and looked at a very pale Millie. She was standing so close that Donovan had felt her breath against his neck. She wordlessly handed the script to Donovan, then waited for his orders, standing almost as a soldier would, at attention. Donovan studied her silently for a moment. She didn't look sick anymore, but there was something else there. Her eyes were lowered, and dark hair framed her pale face. Her lips stood out in a slash of scarlet that made her face seem less round and more shapely. She looked, well, *pretty* Donovan admitted to himself. *Why have I never noticed that before? She's really quite...* She raised her eyes as the silence continued, her mouth suddenly quivering, and her eyes filled

with tears. Panicking at the thought that she might cry, Donovan rose from his seat.

"What's wrong Millie? Do you still feel sick?"

Millie didn't answer, but with a visible effort, got herself under control. She slowly shook her head from side to side.

"Maybe you should take the rest of the day off Millie. You're still looking pale, and I want you to get completely better." He smiled, his face kind and concerned.

"You never get sick, Millie. You had me worried this morning." He patted her shoulder in a friendly comforting way, but recoiled as he felt the coldness of her skin under the thin material of the blouse she wore. Millie did not flinch at this gesture, but caught Donovan's eye in a captivating gaze that sent shivers through his body. All at once, the background and all of the noise around him began to fade. Seymour's annoying comments about the camera angle, the lighting technicians arguing about the interference of the moonlight, even the screeching fight between Genevieve and Gregorio that had just begun, all faded into the distance.

Her eyes, why had he never noticed her eyes? They were startlingly blue, vividly transfixed upon his own and all he could think was, *I could get lost in those eyes, they're so beautiful...* Their gazes stood locked for what seemed like an eternity, and Donovan began to unconsciously inch closer to her. He slowly lifted his hand and let it rest lightly upon her shoulder once again, all the while advancing slowly, staring transfixed by her blue orbs.

"DON'T!!" shouted a voice as a whole pail of dirty mop water came splashing down on Donovan's head. It caught him with such surprise that he was pitched backwards, away from Millie. He landed hard on the marble floor, his back cracking painfully beneath him.

"--And if you think, that you can just cast me aside like some slut! Well, I'll tell you something! Genevieve Marlow doesn't stand for it!"

"I wish you would just shut up and listen to someone else besides yourself for once!" Gregorio was

furious, all trace of his Italian accent missing in the heat of his anger. Genevieve had attempted to throw an entire bucket of water on him, but had missed, striking the director instead. The entire cast and crew stared open-mouthed in shock as they watched the two actors continue fighting, despite the fact that they had just doused their director. A titter of combined concern and amusement ran through the rapidly increasing and watching crowd.

Gregorio and Genevieve were standing at the base of the stairs, about five feet from where Donovan lay. Donovan was still too shocked to move and remained in his prone position watching the scene unfold in front of him.

"If you think that for one minute that I even give a damn about you, and your stupid, controlling, domineering—"

"Oh, I'm the domineering one, am I?" Genevieve was livid, her hair was flying around her head like Medusa's snakes, and her skirt was being hiked up to an indecent level, though in all her passionate anger she didn't notice.

"I'm domineering? When you expect me to be at your beck and call, here whenever you want me, and then when you disappear you can't offer any explanation!"

Gregorio made rude sounds with his tongue and the roof of his mouth, but Genevieve managed to get one more sentence out before he could interrupt.

"--and don't think I don't know where you were. I knew it would only be a matter of time before that bitch Yolanda got your pants off!" A tall attractive woman watching from the side of the crowd raised her eyebrows and let out an audible gasp before she hastily retreated from the scene. The two actors in the midst of their fight did not notice the interruption but continued to roar at one another.

"I DID WHAT? I never--I didn't," he stopped, panting in a rage, then moved forward towards her, his index finger pointing in her face. "But even if I did, how can you stand there and accuse me like you're some kind of God-damn saint, when you slept with that bastard, Tony!" His face was a mixture of sweat droplets and makeup, making

his countenance alarmingly pale and shiny.

"Don't try and deny it!" Gregorio yelled at the top of his lungs. "I know it was him, I saw someone leaving your trailer the next morning!"

Gregorio looked like he was going to explode into another torrent of wild accusations, but suddenly and without warning his eyes rolled back into his head and his body swayed slightly before it toppled over, hitting the floor with an awful thud. He lay motionless.

It was pandemonium. Crew members ran every which way trying to locate a phone, Genevieve collapsed on the floor next to Gregorio and cradled his head in her lap, screaming, "Oh my God! Gregory! Wake up! Don't leave me like this! I love you." Her melodramatic cries drowned out all other rational speakers and served only as an impetus to further the panic around them.

"Gregory!" she shrieked. "He's...he's dead!" Her voice held a note of insane gravity that made everyone stop dead in their tracks. Had the situation not been so serious the scene would have been extremely comical. The dead hero and his lady cradling his head in her arms, and a crowd full of people standing frozen, staring at the misfortune before them, shocked into incapability.

After a moment of frozen astonishment Donovan was up and on his feet like the crack of a whip. "Dead?" he repeated. "Don't be stupid, he can't be dead..." But even as he said it and crouched down to take his pulse, the white sheen of his face, and the utter stillness of Gregorio's features testified to the reality that he was not alive.

This is not happening, Donovan thought, horror stricken. He leaned forward and studied Gregorio's pale unmoving features, willing them to come alive. *How can he be dead? He was alive a second, a moment ago...*

Gregorio's eyes flew open. Donovan staggered back, aghast at the red rimmed eyes that stared calmly back at him. For the second time that day, he felt himself being drawn in, being enveloped in an intense gaze. Donovan was fairly certain that the dirty water he had been drenched in

was not the only thing sending electrifying chills up and down his spine. He was inching forward, looking deeper into those dark eyes, when Gregorio shifted his gaze towards Genevieve, abandoning the director. She gave a little sob, then said in a soft voice, "Gregory, Greggy, don't leave me! I'm sorry I made you jealous with Tony. I was just trying to get back at you. You've been acting so strangely."

'Gregorio' reached up a lonely hand and caressed her cheek for a moment, then pulled her head down, passionately kissing her lips, before moving his kisses to her neck.

The crew was at a total loss, standing still as statues. Gradually, smiles began to break out on certain faces, and then all out relief-filled laughter burgeoned out into the room. Some people were temperamental enough that they began to clap and holler their approval. The crisis was over as quickly as it had begun.

Gregorio stood, still looking pale, supported in the arms of a sobbing Genevieve. He embraced her tightly, nuzzling her neck.

Even as Donovan felt his anger and frustration levels rising, he also felt a spasm of sudden pain in his back. Alarmed, he stumbled backwards a few steps, and leaned heavily on his director's chair. A cold hand grasped his forearm. It was Millie.

"Are you all right, Elliot?" Donovan felt like her voice was the only calm intelligent one for miles.

"Millie, I just need..." he started, then took a deep breath and tried to sound more confident than he felt. "I just need to rest for a little while. Those two are going to kill me one day!" He made every effort to give an assuring smile but only managed to keep from crying out in pain. It felt like someone had twisted his spine into a pretzel. It felt like it had that day, years before, when he had realized he would have to give up directing because of his injuries.

Though Donovan half stumbled from the set, with Millie's short, yet somehow strong frame supporting him, no one seemed to take notice. The drama taking place on the set was too much entertainment for people to notice their retreat. Gregorio and Genevieve had proceeded to make up in huge dramatic soliloquies that were receiving applause on completion.

"And I, I swear that to the end of my days that I will always love you...I swear I will never leave your side again." Gregorio held a hand over his heart while he promised his eternal devotion.

Genevieve swooned, partially because she was still supporting Gregorio, then replied in a teary yet articulate tone, "Gregorio, I am yours! I will never again stray from our love, I know it is you whom I was meant for all my life...I knew I loved you from the very first moment I met you in that little town in Pennsylvania—"

Gregorio made a loud coughing sound, then interrupted her before she could betray him any further. Their cries of unending love grew more and more faint as Donovan allowed Millie to guide him towards the back lot of the set. With a suddenness that took his breath away, sharp pains exploded in his head. With that added pain, it took his complete concentration to get to his trailer in one piece. Somehow, despite her short stature, Millie was almost totally supporting him, her shoulder feeling like a pillar of stone digging into Donovan's side.

As they neared the trailer, Donovan was too out of sorts to notice that the door was already ajar. He merely lumbered up the steps, brushing his head against the doorframe and collapsed two feet inside the doorway on the short sofa.

He raised a hand to his suddenly feverish forehead and wiped the sweat away from his eyes. Millie disappeared for a moment into the tiny bathroom and came back with a washcloth soaked in icy water. She stood over Donovan, her

face enigmatic and composed. He gave her a weak smile.

"What would I do without you, Millie?" he asked in a quiet voice. Anything louder and he thought his brain might burst. Realizing that his shirt was soaked and filthy he carefully raised himself, though not without a lot of pain from his back, and stripped it off. He painstakingly levered himself back down again. His last memory before he began to flit in and out of consciousness was of Millie soothing his forehead with the damp cloth and saying, "Get some sleep Elliot. You need to rest now..." He closed his eyes certain that when he woke he would feel much better.

* * *

Donovan fell into a deep sleep that lasted throughout the entire day. Close to sunset of the next day, he began to dream again.

The dream was intense and frightening. He couldn't move, he was paralyzed, and he had a strange feeling that he was going to die. He couldn't do anything to stop it, he could only sense that it was going to happen. Blood pounded in his ears, his heart raced so quickly he thought it would erupt in his chest. Some malevolent presence was watching him, and he could feel the eyes boring into the back of his skull. Without warning the presence dissipated, and then was gone. The blind panic lessened somewhat and he was able to breathe more calmly, though he still couldn't move. Before he could gather his wits, strange faces began to float in and out of his vision. Thompson and Grant, his producers, flitted by, closely followed by Gregorio and Genevieve who were still clinging to one another closely. Seymour stayed for a few moments and squealed like a pig while Donovan tried to swat at him as if he were an annoying fly. Then came Millie. Millie lingered far longer than the others, kneeling down to him and whispering unintelligible things in his ear. She caressed his brow and he found his fear dissipating as her sensuous touch made him shiver with some undefined emotion. She raked her nails through his hair, leaving trails of fire behind on his scalp, cupping his head in her hands.

The undefined emotion of a moment ago became passion so clear and blinding that Donovan gasped and wondered at the vivid reality of the dream. She lowered her own head and met his lips with an ardor so intense, Donovan prayed he would not wake. She tasted of fire and sweat, and blood? Donovan opened his eyes and she broke the kiss, biting his lower lip as she withdrew. With an unbroken feverish gaze, she lowered her head once more, but this time not for a kiss...

* * *

The ringing of his bedside phone woke Donovan from his deep sleep. He opened his eyes and saw the gathering twilight through his open window. He ignored the phone and when it stopped ringing moments later he barely noticed. He felt different. His head felt better, but he could tell that something was not quite back to normal. Donovan slowly moved into a sitting position noticing the natural ease with which he did so. Amazed, he realized that his back felt completely normal. The room was surprisingly vivid despite the increasing darkness, and Donovan could smell a myriad of different scents in the air. He closed his eyes and inhaled deeply. Then he started to remember the dream. Looking around him, he struggled to recall the details, but could only be sure that he desperately wanted to see Millie. He moved to the closet where he hastily put on a clean pair of jeans and a black tee shirt. He ran a hand through his hair, smoothing it down and noticed the sensitivity of his scalp. He was noticing everything, in a new way. He looked up and noticed the pale moonlight streaming in through the small skylight on the ceiling of his trailer. He reached up, intending to open it farther, grasped the handle, and...

A small explosion of noise occurred as he wrenched the entire cover off its steel hinges and into his hands. He dropped it, astounded by what he'd done. The skylight cover smashed to the ground in a motion so slow and pronounced that Donovan could hear every abrasion it incurred as it hit the tiled floor.

What is happening to me? he thought, glancing around the room in a fair state of alarm. He looked down at

his hands with mingled fear and wariness. It took him a moment to register the fact that he could see the veins and pale red blood of his hand, and straight through to the dirty tile floor. He dropped his hands quickly to his side, his mind unable to accept what he had seen. *These dreams, and that sickness, and now I don't know what I'm doing...how to explain it...* Donovan stopped. His lips parted as an image of him kissing Millie in the dream he'd had came back to him.

He let the image burn itself into his brain. He'd never had a dream like that before.

I don't know if I'm still dreaming or if I'm just going crazy. Maybe I'm hallucinating... He left the trailer in a few agitated long steps. *Millie will help me, I have to talk to her, I have to know if it really was a dream...to know what's happening to me...*

He started to run and finished the short distance to Millie's trailer in the space of a few silent heartbeats, but she wasn't there. Donovan didn't know what to do. He was in such a strange state of panic that he was uncertain about where to look next. The set looked strangely ornamental and gilded at that dusky hour, and as Donovan walked through it still vainly searching for Millie, he looked at the moon in terrified amazement and awe. It was a night meant for lovers; the glowing orb in the sky attested to the fact. So focused was Donovan on every detail of the night that he didn't even notice that the set was completely deserted and had an almost isolated quality about it. Dark clouds blown by a destructive wind framed the moon menacingly, and after a few endless minutes of rapt attention Donovan had to force himself to keep moving and not to stare at it forever.

He rounded the corner, passing the deserted plaza, and came to the small office room in which he had formerly briefed the producers. The door was slightly ajar, golden light slipping out the small space. He glanced inside and started to move on, until the things he had seen registered in his brain. He moved back to the doorframe and peering in, he saw Millie, Thompson, Grant, and Seymour? They sat

around a small table, Grant being the only one standing. Wearing an expensive, yet wrinkled black pin striped suit, Grant was gesturing to a paper in his hands, and speaking in low tones. The others were studying him in silent captivation, not moving, and not responding to his apparent pleas. Donovan closed his eyes and listened very carefully. Gradually Grant's voice became clear and loud, reverberating in his ears.

"I'm telling you that this has gone too far, and that it was never the original idea..." Grant was sweating copiously, his knuckles white as he gripped the paper tightly.

Donovan opened his eyes and drew in a deep breath of air, making little to no sound. Despite that, all heads in the room turned and focused on the door. They looked back at Grant and then to Millie. Millie stood, murmured a few words that even Donovan's ears couldn't hear, and then before he could react or move away she was there staring him in the face.

"Elliot, are you feeling better?"

He studied her face anxiously, then looked back into the room at the remaining members of the meeting. They had converged upon Grant and were whispering with their heads together, looking like conspirators of a crime.

"What's going on Millie?" he asked her, drawing her away from the doorway. His chiseled features were set in a pained expression. "I don't know what's happening anymore..."

Millie looked at him, her expression perfectly poised and unchanging. "Elliot, we need to shoot the final scene of the climax sequence. I've made arrangements for everyone to meet us."

Donovan grabbed her shoulders and pulled her around the corner out of sight of the doorway.

"MILLIE! What is happening? What were you talking about in there? I need to talk to you! I've been feeling so strangely lately." His voice increased to a pitch that he used when he wanted to intimidate people into doing what he wanted. There was a slight note of panic and frustration as well, and when Millie remained expressionless, he fought the desire to shake her by the shoulders. Instead he bent down until he was on her level and looked her squarely in the eye. Her expression softened slightly, the corners of her mouth relaxing, her vivid blue eyes shadowed by her long lashes. Donovan's expectant expression faded. In a moment of doubt, Donovan wondered if he was still dreaming. He took a deep breath and started to lean his head forward, suddenly intensely curious to find out. She twisted sideways out of his grasp, straightening the black pantsuit that she wore with a brusqueness that surprised and frustrated Donovan further.

"Elliot, I suggest we continue with our schedule as planned. We don't want to fall behind." She walked swiftly away, presumably towards the set of the scheduled shoot for the night.

The last thing that Donovan felt like was getting back to work. Running a hand through his hair, and letting off a frustrated sigh, he decided that there was some sense in at least attempting to finish the project.

At least then I can take a lengthy vacation and think about something else besides the disaster that this film has been....His eyes turned heavenward, transfixed once again by the moonlight. What am I going to do if something else happens? What else can happen? My back feels fine now, but I'm not sure how much more stress it can take. I'm not sure how much more of this I can take...



Can you Identify these Vampire Movies from their Plot Summaries?

1. Bela Lugosi stars in the role that made him a famous and reknown monster movie maker. This classic tale is based on Bram Stoker's novel.

†

†

2. A bunch of kids stumble on the diary of a vampire hunter, that tells them some pretty disturbing things that are set to happen in the near future. When the forces of darkness arrive in their town, ready to take over the world, the kids take matters into their own hands. They prove that they are up to the task, matching wits with full grown monsters and demons.

†

†

3. In this movie, one almost feels sorry for Louis, the main vampire character who feels insanely guilty for taking human life. This story chronicles Louis' journey through the ages, as he desperately tries to find answers to ancient questions, and meaning in an eternal existence.

†

†

4. Ben is a famous writer returning to his old home town to visit friends, and to face his childhood fear of a house that had held great evil at one time. When one dark night, a mysterious Mr. Barlow comes to town, the future of the small sleepy town is changed forever, and Ben's world is turned upside down. Ben and the few remaining people in the town must fight the powers of darkness and try to save their lives, before it's too late.

†

†

5. A sixteen year old girl receives a summons from her watcher, who tells her that she is the chosen one, destined to kill vampires. Reluctant and disbelieving, she quickly finds that her unique acrobatic talents, and haunting dreams are not coincidences. It's up to her to accept her destiny and save prom from the vampires.

†

†

6. F.W. Murnau's German silent classic is the original and some say scariest Dracula adaptation, taking Bram Stoker's novel and turning it into a haunting, shadowy dream full of dread. Count Orlok, the rodentlike vampire frighteningly portrayed by Max Schreck, is perhaps the most animalistic screen portrayal of a vampire ever filmed. Names had to be changed from the novel when Stoker's wife charged his novel was being filmed without proper permission.

†

†

7. A family waits on pins and needles for their grandfather to come home from hunting a vicious line of vampires in an isolated town in old Europe, in the 1800's. A Russian count, weary, and traveling through the area, stumbles upon them in the midst of this tension, falling in love with the beautiful daughter. Meanwhile, the grandfather has failed in his quest, and has become a vampire. What follows is a terrifying chase as the rest of the family tries to escape from the terror of the vampire.

†

†

8. A mother and her two sons move to a small coast town in California. The town is plagued by bikers and some mysterious deaths. The younger boy makes friends with two other boys who claim to be vampire hunters while the older boy is drawn into the gang of bikers by a beautiful girl. The older boy starts sleeping days and staying out all night while the younger boy starts getting into trouble because of his friends' obsession.

†

†

9. This vampire spoof has Count Dracula moving to New York to find his Bride, after being forced to move out of his Transylvanian castle. There with the aid of assistant Renfield, he stumbles through typical New York city life situations while pursuing a beautiful woman whose boyfriend, Doctor Jeff, realizes she is under the influence of a vampire. He tries his bumbling best to convince the police of what is going on, and to help him stop Dracula.

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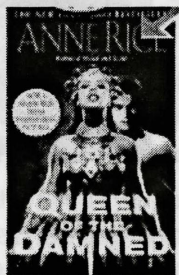
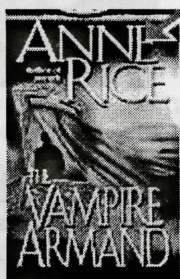
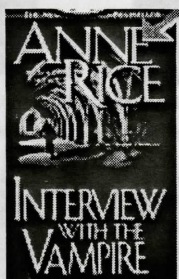
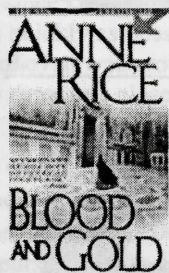
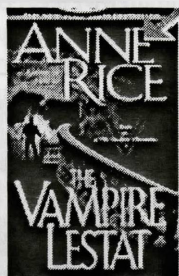
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10. In this movie the main character hunts vampires using a variety of exotic technology and incredible willpower in combat. He himself is half vampire and half human. In essence he has all of the strengths of vampires and none of their weaknesses. Sunlight does not affect him and yet he still has superhuman strength.

†

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*Can you Put The Anne Rice Vampire
Chronicles in order?*



Identify the Actors/Vampires below:

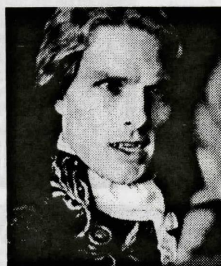


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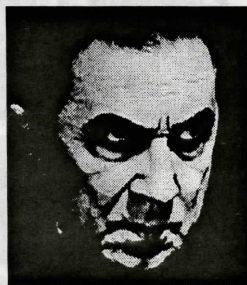


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Donovan felt amazingly awake, considering the fact that he hadn't slept peacefully in several nights. He had taken a few naps during the day, and always awoke, refreshed in the afternoon from a deep slumber. *I wonder if I've hit my second wind here...my back doesn't hurt at all, and I feel okay again. My sleeping patterns are off, but I'll recover. If I could just make some progress on this movie...*

It had been two nights since Donovan had decided to try and wrap up the movie as quickly as possible, but so far their progress was slow. Donovan was growing more and more frustrated as each day drew to a close, and less and less was accomplished.

He sat in his director's chair to the right of the same magnificently constructed stairway that they were re-using for the final and climactic scene of the film. Donovan glanced down at the script and pursed his lips as he concentrated.

Everything should work, theoretically. He looked up, intending to call Seymour, but seeing no one around he sighed and a look of displeasure darkened his face. *Where is everybody?* Although Millie had alerted everyone about the shooting schedule for that night, the usual crew members and artists were scarce. A scattered dozen people were milling about, doing random jobs but not looking very energetic.

No one is showing up anymore, and the few that do all look so tired. Have I really been working them that hard? Donovan shrugged his shoulders. *It will all be over in a few days anyway. They'll live.*

A few feet away, Millie was talking with one of the workers. As if feeling his gaze on her, she turned and inadvertently caught Donovan's eye. Donovan felt his pulse quicken, and Millie's eyes flashed for a moment, her face aglow in the remaining moonlight. Then she turned away.

An image of him and Millie kissing flashed across his brain, but he shook his head and dispelled the vision. He

had to remain focused, and these ludicrous visions were only misleading distractions. He reached down and grabbed his megaphone from where it had been resting next to his chair and raised it to his mouth.

"Listen up everyone!" His words were ear-splittingly loud, even to his own ears. He tried to moderate his voice before he continued.

"We're going to give this scene a try, so everyone get ready." He paused and looked around him. "Genevieve, Gregorio, places!" The two were standing half hidden, half exposed behind the front doors of the façade. They started violently, breaking their kiss as they heard their names called. They recovered their composure swiftly, and gave each other another quick kiss before obeying. The two of them sauntered into full view, Gregorio smirking, and Genevieve giggling inanely.

Millie walked to join Donovan and, on the way, stopped to reprimand the two actors. "Wipe that smile off your face Gregorio, and you, stop giggling and behaving like a fool. You're professionals, act like it." Millie watched to make sure they had followed her orders and then turned to Donovan, awaiting his commands.

Her voice had been hard, and full of disdain. Donovan willed himself not to stare at her. Instead he cleared his throat and took position behind the camera.

"Gregorio, Genevieve, I assume you've read the script and are ready to go?" The actors cast sidelong glances at each other, and coughed to hide their laughter. Donovan rubbed his tanned and lined forehead with the heel of his hand, wondering suddenly what would happen if he joined the strike, like every other self respecting worker in Hollywood. His distaste of the word quit, and his stubborn nature won out, and he continued, his voice valiantly trying to control the anger within it.

"Your character," he said, pointing at Gregorio, "has

just recaptured Genevieve. She was rescued by the Duke, and taken to his castle." Donovan nodded his head in response to their blank expressions. "That's right, we haven't shot that scene yet, so pay attention. You broke in on their wedding day and stole her again. You killed the Duke, and a whole bunch of the guards. Now, you're exuberant. Triumphant--" Gregorio was getting into it. He was grinning with a smile that said he already believed all of those things, but was certainly glad to hear someone say it to his face. Genevieve looked impressed, and fluttered her long blonde lashes, still softly giggling.

"Donovan," squeaked a voice behind him. Donovan held up his hand, hoping to make Seymour wait, then continued. "You're triumphant, and powerful, and evil! I want to see it in your face, in your actions. You've won the day. Now, lets take it--"

"Donovan, I need to talk to you..." Donovan spun around and grabbed the front of Seymour's shirt, lifting him a few inches off the ground. The man whimpered, and Donovan quickly released him. Smoothing his hair down, Donovan barely controlled himself as he said, "Not now Seymour, I am extremely busy. You're supposed to be behind the camera anyway."

Pulling his lower lip up, Seymour looked like a sulky child. "I just wanted to tell you that I fixed the camera.. I had a few people come down..." his voice continued, but Donovan wasn't listening. He could hear Gregorio and Genevieve behind him giggling and kissing, getting distracted all over again.

Gregorio let out a howl of pain. Donovan spun around and saw that Genevieve had somehow managed to dislodge Gregorio's costume fangs with her tongue acrobatics. Gregorio's teeth were very large and very white, and it took the makeup artists a good half hour to effectively superimpose fangs on top of them. Seething, Donovan forgot his attempt at patience, and shouted. "Damn it! Get to makeup. No, not you Genevieve, you're wearing enough already." Thrusting an arm backwards, Donovan caught Seymour by the shirt and pulled him forward. "Seymour,

you take him. Make sure he comes directly back. I don't want him wandering off..." he said, suspiciously watching the way Genevieve and Gregorio were winking at one another and making little nods with their heads.

They sauntered off the set, or rather, Gregorio sauntered, and Seymour skipped, trying to keep up with Gregorio's long arrogant strides. They made an odd and disturbing pair. Seymour was dressed in colorful pink trousers, and a violet sweater vest. The purple beret was perched precariously on his head, and Donovan swore the rhinestone belt had been worn at some time by Cindy Lauper in one of her music videos. Gregorio, in full cape and costume, looked slightly disgusted with his companion, and walked a full five feet apart from him.

Donovan turned away and cursed at the delay. Consulting his watch he saw that it was almost 10:00 at night. Through the stained glass window they had installed in the warehouse, Donovan could see bright stars twinkling in at him. Enchanting waves of brisk night air blew in through the open doors, and Donovan decided he may as well step outside and take a short break.

Outside, he found Grant, his executive producer, sitting on a few packing cases, smoking a cigarette. Since the beginning of the project Grant and Donovan had disagreed about almost every aspect of the film. Their fights over the casting and venue had been particularly long and bitter. Donovan had seceded to the choice of actors against his better judgment. After months of miserable arguments and shoddy work from his principle actors, Genevieve and Gregorio, he naturally held a grudge against Grant. As Donovan came and stood next to him, Grant briefly glanced up muttered and a hello.

"Have a seat," said Grant. He seemed deep in thought, and not quite his usually impeccably dressed and manicured self. Donovan studied the man for a moment, slightly taken aback by his behavior and haggard appearance. His expensive coat was wrinkled and had a slight tear on the arm, and it looked like he hadn't shaved in two days. In between taking long drags on his cigarette, he bit his

fingernails. Donovan could see that they were gnawed so far down they had started to bleed.

"No," said Donovan quickly. "I just wanted a breath of fresh air. It's a little stuffy in that warehouse." He turned to leave, but Grant caught him by the sleeve. "How is Arnold doing?"

"Who?" asked Donovan, puzzled by the obscure question.

"Arnold Seymour...your assistant director. How's he doing?" Grant's voice was casual and unconcerned, but he had started to bite his fingernails again. There was nothing left to bite, only skin, but he continued to gnaw at them like a hungry dog with a bone.

"Oh, fine, just fine." Donovan had never known anyone less like an Arnold in his life. He raised an eyebrow and his mouth drew in at the corners in a wry half smile. "He seems to be very earnest about the job. I guess, that's more than I can say about some of my other assistants."

"Really?" Grant's voice was thoughtful, and a little tense. He stared straight ahead, into the night. The area was pretty desolate, on the very edge of the town, and though less than 45 minutes from the ocean, very much like a desert. There were coyotes and dry shrubbery everywhere. The nearest houses were only ten minutes away, but in the night were curiously obscured and distant.

"There's something lonely about the night," murmured Grant. Donovan raised both his eyebrows.

"Excuse me?"

"The night. There's something lonely about it. Can you imagine, only having the night to live in...like your characters?" Donovan considered the question. He was about to answer in the negative, but the moon caught his eye.

"Yes, I can imagine," said Donovan.

Grant shot a quick glance at Donovan, then laughed, his voice breaking with a slight quiver. "You can eh?" He started biting his upper lip, and tried to smoke at the same time. It didn't quite work, and a coughing fit shook his

sturdy frame. Grant tossed the cigarette away and stood. Clearing his throat one last time, he said, "Back to work now Donovan? We've got a lot of ground to cover before the night is finished."

"Yeah, better get back to it," Donovan let Grant precede him, and they stepped back into the warehouse. Donovan couldn't help thinking, as he watched Grant's stumbling progress, that all he needed now, was for his executive producer to have a nervous breakdown. Grant went and sat in a seat on the edge of the set, preparing to watch the filming.

Inside, Donovan found Gregorio just returning to the set, and picking irritably at his newly applied set of teeth.

"Stop that!" snapped Donovan. "Get in place. And where's Seymour? Genevieve?" Donovan raised his voice. "Everyone better be in place and ready to go in ten seconds! TEN!--NINE!" As Donovan counted down, there was a wild scramble among crew members and actors alike. Genevieve miraculously appeared and Gregorio swept her up in his arms, preparing to carry her up the stairs for the scene. Millie stood by Donovan, ready and waiting. With no sign of Seymour, Donovan sat behind the camera himself and yelled, "Ready? Action!"

* * *



A woman's scream echoed in the distance. The giant iron doors of the castle swung inward as if by magic, the hinges screeching as they moved. The vampire was coming, and he was not alone. Through the mist and the tall trees they appeared. His black cape billowed out behind him as he carried the beautiful young woman in his arms. She wore a wedding dress, though she would never walk down the aisle of a church again. It was a

snowy white concoction, low-cut and form fitting. Yards of satin fabric cascaded freely down the vampire's arm. It was the same girl who had managed to elude him in the Spanish plaza. She had been rescued at the last moment, just before he had been able to completely drain her of her life force. Cheated of his victory, the vampire had pursued her and outwitted the Duke, her protector, amidst the confusion of the wedding celebration. Luring her into the garden, he recaptured her started back to his lair. After some time her screams had finally faded and she had slumped into a faint. There would be no rescuers this time, he made certain of that when he had killed the Duke in cold blood. No one else would dare challenge the vampire. The villagers all knew and feared him too well to risk it. His dark features radiated triumph. He had won. He mounted the marble steps in front of him, still carrying her limp and unconscious form. The doors behind him creaked closed with his silent glance as their only command.

As he reached the top of the stairs and paused on the landing, the girl began to stir a little. She murmured little cries of fear and insensibility, but it was clear in her condition she was not going to fight the events that would surely follow.

He placed her gently on her feet. Her dress was resplendent, and spread out like a fan behind her. She swooned, almost falling, but his strong arm supported her about the waist. Her skin was pale and glorious in the brilliant light from the moon. Her chest heaved as her breath quickened, a small whimper the only attempt at defense that she could muster.

"Do not fight it," he whispered to her. "You must want it to happen." His body was strong and powerful, and his dark eyes gleamed cruelly. "It is a gift. I give it to you, if you will have it."

Her eyes opened widely as she looked into his. After a moment of feverish contemplation, the fear left her face and was replaced with awe. She whispered back in a breathy voice, "Yes, I do, I want it!"

He smiled, and his eyes narrowed as he studied her.

"Then I give it to you." He bared his fangs and lowered his head not only in hunger, but in desire. She was his bride now, his bride of darkness. She did not move for a moment. Then, her features took on a look of stark horror, and she let out a gasp of air as the reality of what was happening hit her. As if in validation of her acceptance though, she raised a pale and graceful arm and pressed it against his head, gripping his hair and pushing his fangs deeper into the delicate tissue of her neck. She went limp a moment later, supported only by the strength of his arms.

"Cut!" Donovan cried, though he could not have said anything more at the moment since he was overcome with emotion. He had never in all his years of directing ever seen a scene so perfect, so wonderfully, so...

Why do they have to bring their stupid personal relationship into everything? The two of them had continued to make out despite Donovan's command to stop.

"Cut!" he repeated. "Genevieve, Gregorio, excellent work, I think we can say we're finished with that--- I SAID CUT!" When they continued to ignore him,

Donovan decided he'd had enough. His blood boiling, he sprung out of his chair and leaped forward starting up the stairs. As he reached the landing, his fury mounted when he saw they were not in the least bit intimidated by his approach.

Losing his cool, Donovan wrenched them apart, sending Gregorio stumbling. The moment he did it, Donovan knew it was a mistake. Gregorio had been the only thing supporting Genevieve. She collapsed in a heap on the landing and lay still. Her cheeks were pale, her body stiff. Donovan knelt down next to her in alarm, but when his hand slid through a sticky red patch of blood on the floor beside her, his stomach gave a powerful heave and he had to steady himself, stumbling backwards until he hit the back wall. There he slid to his knees and stared, completely senseless. She was dead. There was blood on the floor and on

Gregorio's lips. His brain didn't want to believe it. He couldn't believe it... The pool of blood on the floor oozed forth from her neck, staining Genevieve's pristine dress scarlet. Transfixed by the crimson color that was slowly flowing towards him, Donovan was sure he was either in hell or completely insane.

Gregorio had saved himself from falling headlong down the stairs by grasping the railing tightly. He now slid back to a standing position and watched Donovan suspiciously. His expression changed from a sneer of contempt to loathing.

"Finally caught on, have you?" Gregorio's voice was steely and cool. Full of power and confidence, he glided gracefully forward, and picked Genevieve up off the floor. He gave a sidelong glance at Donovan, then attacked her lifeless form, continuing to drain her. Donovan didn't know what to be more afraid of: the fact the Gregorio was taking blood from Genevieve, or that Donovan himself wanted that blood so badly for himself that he could almost taste it.

"It's hopeless, you know," a voice said in Donovan's ear. Millie knelt down, facing him. Where she had come from, he didn't know. She blocked Gregorio effectively from view, but not the horrible sound of his sickening and greedy sucking noises. A moment later a heavy thud testified to the fact that Genevieve's lifeless body had been carelessly discarded. Gregorio moved into view, and started to pick his teeth, that were more realistic than Donovan had realized.

Donovan looked at Millie as she began to speak. "I tried my best to keep them from you. I did everything I could. In life as well as death I have had the power to make others do my will...but not you. Never you." Her voice was bitter, her face harshly contorted with some unknown pain. Donovan stared dumbstruck into her eyes.

"Even now, when you look into my eyes, it's all a trick." She leaned against him, her palms pushing against his

chest, her face inches from his. "I've loved you for years and nothing, never once...All of those women I watched come and go, all of those whores who never knew you as I had, as I do..." His pupils dilated as if her intense gaze was shining light into his.

"And now, it's too late. Even in dreams you would only come to me when I called you." She was a breath away from his mouth. Donovan wanted so badly to kiss her that her words were barely registering in his brain. When she withdrew, he felt as if he had been cheated somehow. An intense flash of pain hit him like a thunderbolt as her fist collided with his cheek. He was awake and alert again, awakened from his trance to a reality he did not want to claim.

"THIS WAS NOT MY FAULT!" she screamed, backhanding Donovan across the face again. She was absolutely livid. Donovan had never seen her so disheveled. Her hair was coming down, tendrils of shining dark hair falling into eyes that burned into his, red rimmed and glassy as if from a fever. Donovan began to realize that fever was not the reason...

"I tried to stop it, but it's too late. This wasn't my fault." Her voice had changed to a whisper that was even more frightening than her shrieks. Two spots of burning color brightened her cheeks. Gregorio, leaning against the edge of the railing, laughed softly, and pulled a mirror out of his pocket.

"I know," said a hollow voice from the bottom of the steps, effectively cutting Gregorio's laughter off. "It was mine." Grant stood there, looking unkempt, terrified and *guilty*? Donovan looked beyond Grant, down the stairway and realized that the remainder of the crew had fled. The set was completely deserted.

"I wanted to make it better, Thompson and I did," said Grant. "We brought *him* back from Spain to make the film more realistic..." Grant crept forward as he spoke. "He seemed harmless enough, and he promised to only make one,

or two vampires in exchange for a job in Hollywood. We made him sign a contract, and he seemed perfectly happy with the arrangement."

Gregorio was still leaning against the railing, looking comfortable, but bored. He raised an eyebrow, and rolled his eyes as he listened. He yawned, but his eyes were focused on Grant. Grant started up the stairs still talking, while Donovan and Millie stood transfixed and silent, a few feet away from Gregorio. Grant's voice was hoarse and echoed around the room like a man calling up from the bottom of a well.

"We never thought that it would get out of control like this. He gave us his word."

"Who?" Donovan found his voice at last.

"We came back a week early, earlier than we told you. We wanted to put *him* into place and knew you'd never believe, or consent." Tears gathered in Grant's eyes as he continued to stumble up the steps. "We made Millie first." Millie flinched as if the words had physically struck her.

"We knew you depended on her, and we wanted to give her the power...and then Gregorio. That was all I authorized, I swear. After that we lost track...things started happening. We didn't know who was a vampire and who was pretending...It takes a while you see, to become a full vampire. In between, people just feel sick. They can still work, and move around in the daylight." The word *vampire* stuck in Grant's throat and came out sounding more like *umpire*.

"Then, they got to Thompson..." His voice broke, but with a deep breath Grant forced himself to continue. He was nearing the top five steps, still coming at a painstakingly slow pace. His feet made rough shuffling sounds that

pierced the silence like sandpaper grating against porcelain.

"They overpowered me, said I was the one who would take care of the day arrangements, work from their orders, be their slave..." He shuddered and came to a halt three steps from the top. "They blamed me, you see. But how could I have known that Seymour would betray our agreement?"

"SEYMOUR?!" shouted Donovan. He had not moved from his sitting position, and could not have if he had tried. *I must be going insane...he thought, pinching his arm quickly. That's it, I'm insane...*

"How could Seymour possibly be--? I picked him up last week as an assistant..." Donovan stopped speaking as Millie dropped her head to her hands, and Gregorio stood a little taller, a supercilious smile adorning his features. Grant shook his head, and continued. "Yes, and we forged his references, put him right in front of you, knowing he was one of your only choices. We would have insisted had you not made it easy for us and picked him anyway. We lost control, and now who knows where he is...what he's doing." Grant's voice faded out as if desperation were crowding all his coherent thoughts.

"But I killed him, that fool of a vampire...so it is no matter now," said Gregorio, as he took a step towards them. Looking bored and buffing his nails, his tone was supercilious and condescending, as if he were explaining something very simple to a room full of idiots.

"I cut off his head, this Seymour." His voice was thick with disdain and he sniffed and waved his hand in a dismissive gesture. "I therefore claim his title as leader."

Gregorio didn't even look up, but there was something threatening about the way he spoke.

"It wasn't that fool who made the others anyway. It was I! The Great Gregorio!"

"But why?" asked Grant in a shaky voice. His eyes were red rimmed and glassy. He looked as if he might faint at any moment.

Gregorio's eyes flashed in anger. "I've been shunned my entire career for my *behavior* and unsuccessful films. No decent director would take me, and I'm a laughingstock in the Hollywood community, the *only* community that matters to me." Gregorio lifted his eyes briefly, condescending to regard the people staring at him for a moment, then continued to clean his already gleaming nails. His slouching form took on a new stance though, and he seemed inches taller.

"I will have everything I need now. Slaves, assistants, directors, devoted crew members who will do my bidding and answer to my wrath if they do not." His eyes were shining now. His face hardened into a cruel mask. "They are mine, my own coven that I have created. With the incredible stunts and insight I will bring to my own vampiric character, I will be the most sought after horror movie actor of all time. I will surpass even *Bela* by the time I have finished, and I will never finish! I will live forever!"

Gregorio's dogmatic pronouncement seemed final and deadly. Horror struck life into Donovan's immobile limbs. He leapt to his feet and moved toward Gregorio.

"And just what makes you think I'm just going to sit still and let you make me a vampire *or* your slave?"

"But you already are..." Gregorio laughed long and hard, as Donovan's face changed from anger to surprise. He stopped laughing, long enough to ask, "Haven't you been having some strange nightmares lately? Haven't you been feeling strange?"

"You...you *made me...I'm--?*" Donovan's voice cracked in fury and he lunged for Gregorio. Gregorio slid deftly aside, but not before his tone changed from amusement to coldness. "She did it, not I. God knows I tried."

Donovan stopped dead in his tracks and turned. He begged Millie with his eyes, asking her to tell him it was a lie, even though he knew by her silence that it was true. She spoke as his stare continued.

"I wanted to spend eternity trying to... but now I know that was foolish. You would never love me, no matter what I did. And if you did, it would be because I hypnotized you, or because you were afraid." Millie's face was shadowed and faded. Her voice was even farther away. Donovan regarded her speechlessly for a moment, then addressed Gregorio again, using his most imposing director's voice.

"Even if I am a... I'm no one's slave, especially not to an idiot like you." Donovan felt his senses returning as he spoke his bold words. He faced Gregorio again, his features stone hard, his stance combative.

Gregorio stopped and regarded Donovan in cold calculated apathy, before snatching him by the neck. In an effortless display of strength, Gregorio lifted him over the railing, suspending him over a dead space of thirty feet. Donovan had not anticipated his move and even if he had, Gregorio had moved with a swiftness Donovan's eyes could not see. Gregorio laughed, his voice gritty and harsh, full of contempt.

"New are you? Just today I think. We've been playing with your mind for a while, trying to get to you that way, but she always protected you. Isn't it ironic that a woman's weakness, particularly *that* woman whom no one would ever have suspected *had* a weakness would be the one? You can't hope to defeat me. I'm one week ahead of

you, and that was all I needed to find out that my strength would grow tenfold with each passing day." Gregorio held Donovan firmly by the neck, but Donovan was a large man and his own weight and the bruising strength of Gregorio's hand was choking him. He struggled blindly, digging his fingernails into Gregorio's wrist, desperately trying to climb back up, but with no progress. Gregorio's grip was tighter than steel, and would not budge.

"I would not have you as my director anyway. Perhaps Steven Spielberg would be obliging. His talent far surpasses yours. You are nothing but a has-been who can't even recognize when his own set is being overrun by the creatures he has written and directed about his entire life."

A sneer painted Gregorio's handsome features black with malice. He pulled Donovan closer and whispered into his face, his dark eyes glittering.

"Would you like to know how I killed Seymour?"

"Like this?" murmured a voice behind Gregorio.

Millie lunged forward with the sword in a movement so fast it was a blur. It speared Gregorio through the neck with a force that made him slam against the railing, almost breaking it, and Donovan was dropped over the edge as Gregorio's grip released him to the air.

Donovan landed hard on his back against the cold stone marble, but amazingly did not experience the fatal sickening crunch he expected. In fact, he immediately sat up and realized in amazement that he felt nothing more than a little bruised.

Donovan looked above him to where Millie stood still holding the steel sword piercing Gregorio's neck. She had pulled it off the wall of the set, and until that moment, Donovan had been sure that the dueling instruments had only been props. The way that Gregorio's eyes bulged in horror

and pain testified to the fact that the sword was as real as it was deadly. The angle at which she had struck had not decapitated him, but hit him like a railroad spike through the neck. Black blood trickled, then flowed from his mouth as Gregorio choked and waved his arms around. His hands came up and grasped the blade that penetrated his throat. It was useless. Millie, as always, was in complete control. A quarter of the blade protruded through the back of Gregorio's neck, and with a cruel and long pause, Millie twisted the blade and sunk it in to the hilt. Gregorio's hands still gripping the blade, were sliced, leaving a stigmata that spurted blood down the front of his garment as his hands fell to his side. His features solidified, eyes staring open in astonishment. He dropped with a silent thud to his knees, the sword stuck in place. His body made violent jerks as it shrugged off the last traces of life and then went limp, sitting upright against the cracked railing. He sat only two feet from where he had thrown Genevieve minutes before.

At the first sign of trouble, Grant had dropped to the floor, his hands over his head, precariously stretched out on the top portion of steps. He did not raise his head as the silence lengthened. Millie stood a foot away from Gregorio's lifeless form, her back ramrod straight, her body radiating tenseness. She turned slowly after a minute and looked over the railing, and down into Donovan's eyes. The twin of the sword she had used remained on the wall, glinting silver in the moonlight.

"I just loved you for so long..." she whispered softly, but Donovan could hear her as if she had shouted it two inches from his ear. He stood up silently, and though he heard a couple bones pop, he felt no pain. He mounted the steps, first slowly then with growing speed and urgency. By the time he had stepped over Grant, who lay in a dead faint on the steps, reached the landing, and taken her into his arms, she had begun to cry. She pushed him away with such force that Donovan almost pitched backwards down the stairs. He caught his balance and continued to follow her.

"No! it's not real. It's only in my eyes, it's a trick!" She sounded angry and brokenhearted all at once. Donovan pursued her till her back pressed against the wall. He looked down from his considerable height into her upturned face.

"I do love you..." He said it with feeling, but also with some surprise.

"You're lying...you're afraid of what I will do to you if you say you don't." Millie's face was white with red splotches, but somehow still miraculously retained an element of reason and intelligence that was somewhat like her old self.

Donovan drew in a shaky breath and said, "I don't care what you do to me. I don't know why I've never seen it before. All these people had to die...is it true about the rest of the workers? The crew are all...dead, or vampires?" Millie nodded her head, her face grave and drawn.

Donovan shook his own head in disgust. "Damn that Gregorio! All of these people had to die before I could get it through my thick head what was happening." Looking again at Millie, his anger turned to tenderness. "Millie, I know that I've never said anything to you, or maybe I've never realized it myself, but I think I've loved you for a long time now... You know I can't pretend or act, that's why I'm a director." He smiled, and he reached his hand up and traced the round path of her jaw. "And anyway, what would I ever do without you Millie?"

"You can say that, after knowing what I am? After knowing what I did to you?" She drew in a shaky breath. Donovan looked squarely into her blue eyes.

"It's nothing I didn't deserve for having my head up my--"

A violent scream interrupted Donovan, and he saw that Grant had woken to find the bloody tableau of Gregorio's and Genevieve's lifeless bodies not two feet

away from him. Grant shrieked and then was violently sick on the floor.

Millie wiped the tears from her face, ignoring Grant's whimpers of, *"Oh my God, how are we going to explain this? I'm going to go to prison...I'm going to the electric chair...Both Genevieve and Gregorio..."*

"Do you mean it?" she asked, her voice carefully controlled once more.

Donovan did not answer but lowered his head and touched his lips gently on hers. After a moment, she responded. As the kiss deepened and grew more passionate, she stood on tiptoe, wrapping her arms around his neck. She tasted of fire and sweat and blood, and Donovan loved it.

They broke apart after a while and Donovan wrapped his arm about her shoulders, and called over his shoulder to Grant, "Grant, let's go. You don't have to be anybody's slave anymore."

Grant hopped to his feet and staggered after Donovan and Millie saying something that sounded suspiciously like, "Yes, master."

As they reached the bottom of the stairs, Grant trailing listlessly behind, Donovan commented, "You know, we've always made such a good team, Millie. Maybe Gregorio was right..." He hastened to complete his thought as he saw the look of dark disapproval she gave him.

"I mean, of course he was a narcissistic lunatic, the last person anyone should have made a vampire." He paused for a moment, thinking. "But, maybe being vampires will give us new insight to the cinema." They walked past the set line and started off through the Spanish plaza scenery.

"It's only a shame that this movie didn't turn out quite like we'd planned. It would have been a hit..." He fell silent then, and they walked off together, into the night.

They did not notice as they passed it, that the camera was still focused on the upper landing of the stairway, its red recording light glowing wickedly in the darkness...



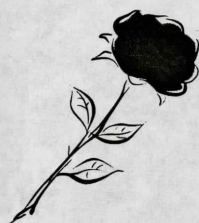
"Listen to them... Children of the Night. What music they make..."

~Count Dracula





Evie



Claire



"Beneath Silk"

"What do you mean?" Evelyn's face turned ashen, and the rosary beads she held in her soft pink and wrinkled hand dropped to her lap as she listened to the words being spoken. Her lined but pleasant face was at the moment creased with dismay.

"I was the reason. He left you a message, and when I saw it, I took it and hid it," said Claire, who was stretched out on a hospital bed, light playing across her face from the window of the private room. A crisp white sheet stretched tightly over her frail and thin body. She had never been a great beauty, but she had been pretty once. The wasted form that now spoke with halting slowness barely resembled the picture on the nightstand. In the picture, Claire and Evelyn stood, their arms wrapped around each other, glowing in happiness and youth. They wore dresses that had gone out of style many years before, with their blonde hair arranged in short bobs. The picture was signed, and dated, *Evie and Claire, August, 1919.*

"I don't understand. You're my sister," said Evelyn slowly. She sat next to the bed of her dying sibling Claire. Evelyn's age showed in her old fashioned clothing, snowy hair, and owl-like glasses that sat perched on the bridge of her nose, though she was still remarkably good looking for a seventy-five-year-old. At the moment, her lips were parted in shock, and she stared at her sister completely bewildered.

Claire reached out her hand and blindly tried to catch Evelyn's. When they touched, Evelyn shivered at the feel of the cold, clammy flesh.

"Forgive me Evelyn, I need you to forgive me... before I die." She broke into a coughing fit and for a few minutes the sound of her dry rasping throat expelling mucus was the only sound in the room.

"Evelyn...Evelyn...? Please...?"

* * * *

"Please, Evelyn, you're going to wear *that*?"

"And why not?" Evelyn replied. She turned in a wide circle, admiring herself in the full length mirror. The scandalously low cut frock that was fitted to her hourglass figure spun out around her. With her ruby red dress, and short cut, wavy blonde hair, Evelyn was stunning. She had turned twenty-one that year, and her face had matured to be slender and heart shaped. She possessed such a unique beauty, that Claire often wondered how Evelyn and she could truly be sisters. When they were younger, people had taken them to be twins, but as they had grown to be women, the differences had become more obvious. Claire's own chin was square, and her figure, though slim, was as straight and without curves as an pole.

Evelyn lifted her dainty nose in the air and sniffed.

"Mam's burning dinner again. Claire, would you cover for me? I wouldn't want to keep my date waiting." She grinned wickedly in the mirror and applied more rouge to her cheeks.

Claire lay sprawled across her sister's four poster bed, hands supporting her chin. Her intelligent brown eyes studied her sister silently. Claire had always surrendered to her sister's superior fashion and social skills, though some part of her had always resented the natural grace and popularity that Evelyn possessed. The look on Claire's face was particularly sour as she replied, "Evelyn, why do you always make me cover for you!? You could stay in sometimes, too, you know. Besides, you get to see James all the time."

"But I'm not seeing James tonight," said Evelyn, still studying herself in the mirror. In the background the vitrola played a merry tune that had come out that year at the 1919 Ziegfeld Follies. A deep baritone voice sang against a scratchy undertone. *A pretty girl is like a melody, that haunts you night and day, just like a strain of a haunting refrain, she'll start upon a marathon, and run around your brain...*

Claire's brow creased in contemplation. "Then who...?"

"Clifford Allen!" Evelyn's smile was so huge and

her tone so satisfied that she missed the small look of distress that crossed her sister's face. It was fleeting; there and gone in half a second.

"How long...?" Claire paused and schooled her features to indifference before continuing. "Honestly, Evelyn, he's not even Catholic. You know what Mam would say. Besides that, it's not fair how you're always out and leaving me here to do the work."

Evelyn let out a cheerful shriek of laughter before turning and swooping down on her sister. Before Claire could move, Evelyn had captured her in a giant bear hug and was kissing her cheek playfully. "Are you bitter, big sis? Don't be such an old biddy! As if I were *forcing* you to stay here and work!" Claire squirmed and made protests while trying to wrench out of her sister's tight and affectionate grasp.

"You're a funny duck Claire, but I don't have time right now to tell you why." Evelyn abruptly released her sister and retrieved her hat, handbag, and wrap before rushing out the doorway. She called over her shoulder as she left, "Enjoy the meatloaf! Tell Mam I'm sorry I missed it." She was gone in a flurry of skirts and laughter. A moment later, Claire heard her bright exuberant tone calling, "Taxi!" in the street below their two story home.

Claire silently lowered her head to her forearms, her body shaking with suppressed sobs. The record continued to play, singing in a cheerful voice, *I have an ear for music, and I have an eye for a maid. I like a pretty girlie, with each pretty tune that's played...*

After a minute of dejected self pity, she sprung up from the bed, and slammed the needle off the gramophone, scratching the record. She came and stood before the mirror, her face flushed an angry red. The look of misery on her features was horrifying, an ugly grimace that distorted her pleasant features, making her look much older than her twenty-three years. With a huge effort, she took a deep, deep breath, and forced her mouth to straighten, and her eyes to focus unwavering into the mirror. Her trembling hands unclenched and reached up to smooth her hair. A voice from

below called out, as she knew it would.

"Claire! I need help in the kitchen please. Where did Evelyn go?"

She can go to the devil... she thought, but aloud she said, "Coming, Mam.

* * * *

Claire listened to the sounds of Evelyn's distressed sobs from the next room, and tried to control the excited beating of her heart. She felt ashamed and guilty at the pleasure she felt over her sister's misery. She said an Act of Contrition, then recited a Hail Mary, but her conscience was not assuaged. Finally, curiosity, and a smidgeon of sympathy prompted her to rise, and in the dim glow of moonlight, she assumed her dressing gown. She left her room, and walked across the hallway to investigate.

She found Evelyn face down on the four poster, her beautiful dress discarded on the rug like a rag. Claire picked it up and carefully set it on the chair, folding the filmy sleeves neatly. Evelyn must have known she was there, but she did not respond. She continued to cry softly into the linen coverlet.

"Evie, what's wrong?" Claire asked, trying to keep her voice neutral.

"Claire, he's leaving. He's going. We fought." Her speech was muffled by the blankets, but there was pain, alive and throbbing in her voice.

"Clifford?" Claire asked quietly.

"Yes, yes, he said, oh God..." She raised herself up on her elbows, her disheveled but silvery gold hair shining in the moonlight. Her lashes were wet and her eyes were smeared with the eye makeup she had worn that night. The straps on the light cream colored slip she wore strained precariously against her shoulders, and when she raised her head, her face was a miserable, puffy mess.

"I didn't tell Mam, and I didn't tell you because, you wouldn't have approved, you know. He's divorced, and older---but oh, I love him, and he loves me." With that, she collapsed sobbing again onto the bed.

Claire raised an eyebrow, her mouth turned in at the corner. Evelyn had pulled this routine before. Claire started to feel better. *If this is just another one of her fellows, it will be over in a week, and Cliff will...* She forced herself to focus on her sister.

"Now Evie, that doesn't sound too serious. I'm sure that Mam can be brought round, and you know that I don't care who you date... Besides, you can't really love him. You haven't been going out with him that long."

"Oh Claire! Don't be an idiot. I've been seeing him for the last six months. I just didn't tell you." Evelyn's words stung like a brisk slap in the face. She spoke, oblivious to the pain that crossed Claire's face.

"But he, he said he was leaving, moving back to New York. He wanted me to come with him. We fought, and he, oh!"

"What?!" asked Claire in a sharper voice than she had meant to.

Evelyn hiccoughed and took a deep shuddery breath. She stopped crying long enough to say, "He wanted me to elope with him--tonight!"

In shock, Claire remained silent. Her confused thoughts bore down on her, and a dull ache in her chest took her breath away for a long moment. She struggled to maintain control.

"And you said no?"

"I wanted to go Claire, it's just, he made me angry. He just assumed that I would drop everything and come with him. I love him, but I don't want to elope." She paused, and for a moment her glistening eyes shone with excitement. "I want a big wedding. With grandma's lace, and Mother's pearls, and a trip to Niagara falls--"

"But...?" prompted Claire.

"But, he said, he didn't want all that fuss. We can't even get married in the church unless he converts, and he's been divorced. He'd have to get an annulment, and maybe they wouldn't give it to him. If the church wouldn't allow

the marriage, Mother wouldn't." Her eyes brimmed with a wave of fresh tears.

"And I couldn't have left without saying goodbye to Mam..." After a moment she said, "And you Claire."

I'm always the afterthought, she thought bitterly. The older one, the responsible one...

"Then he said that he'd changed his mind...that he didn't want me to come anyway. So, I...I, left...and he didn't follow!" Her voice broke again, giant tears splashing from her eyes onto her forearms.

Claire let her sister cry, offering tissues and comfort as best she could. Once Evelyn fell into an exhausted sleep, Claire brooded, her face drawn and her head bowed. She stared off into space, deep in thought, and the dawn came slowly, illuminating the luxuriously furnished room one ray of light at a time. As the room became brighter, Claire rose, and tiptoed out, pausing only to stare at her own grim reflection in the mirror before she left the room.

* * * *

She found it on the floor, pushed under the front door. The handwriting was familiar, and she looked over her shoulder before she picked it up and opened it, already sure of what it would say...



My love,

I was angry when I said those words to you, and I shall always regret them. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive me, especially since I do and will always love you. I realize that you are hesitant about leaving home, and so quickly, but I also know that if you think about it long enough you will find that you do want to come with me. My proposal still stands, and should you choose to accept, you will make an undeserving man happy beyond his wildest dreams. If you come, and I hope my darling, that you will, I will be waiting for you on the corner of Eighth and Nine tonight at seven o'clock. You remember the place? Where we first met these six months ago. I will wait an hour, and then I will accept your decision with as much fortitude and courage as I am able. If you do not meet me, I will leave immediately for New York, hopefully giving you the time you need away from me as you said. However, I want you to know this: I'm not accustomed to losing something I dearly want. You can expect that before long I will most certainly be back to try again.

*Yours, with affection and love,
Clifford Allen*

Claire wiped away the tears that had gathered on her cheek, smothering a cry that ached to be dispelled from her person. She wrenched open the front door, intending to let the brisk morning air cool her feverish brow, but stopped, when she saw the tall form of a man, walking away from the house and towards the street. He heard the door open, and turned, his face lit up with hope. It took him a moment to realize the blonde woman was not Evelyn. Not discouraged, he went back up the walk, towards Claire.

He was a six foot, well built man, at least thirty years old. He wore a light colored day suit, tailored and well fitted to his form. He walked with crisp light strides, displaying a grace that his appearance had not initially given an impression of. His face was slightly sallow, but his dark hair and expressive black eyes and brows gave his face an impression of strong character.

"Excuse me, are you Miss Claire Archer?" He reached the front porch in a few steps, and faced Claire with a dazzling smile that displayed even, white teeth. He swept

his hat off, and made a courtly bow. His hair was thick and black, and curled slightly at his forehead.

"We've met, Mr. Allen. At Fanny Barker's welcome home party. I was there..." Seeing his blank expression, she added grudgingly, "with my sister Evelyn."

His face registered recognition. "Oh yes, terribly sorry. About Miss Evelyn, I wonder if you saw that I left a letter for her. You see, I wasn't sure that I should be calling this early."

Holding the ripped and opened letter behind her back, and wary about saying anything that would betray her knowledge of the letter's contents, Claire only nodded her head in acknowledgement.

"Could you please give it to her. Its very important that she reads it--today in fact. I would be grateful." Again he smiled, his clean shaven face overpowering Claire with its fresh sincerity. Averting her eyes, she said in a careful voice, "I will see that she gets it." She started to move, backing away with the letter clutched tightly in a fist behind her back, but he caught her arm. Surprised at his forwardness, and somewhat startled, she lifted her eyes to his face.

"I'm sorry, but did she say anything, about me, to you? Does she," he paused and his confident face faltered for a moment. "Is she still angry?"

Claire didn't have the heart to look at him anymore. She gently dislodged her arm, and barely repressed the tears that were building up in her eyes. "She doesn't want to see you," she said, and retreated into the house, slamming the door practically in his face. She hadn't lied. Her sister probably didn't want to see him at the moment, since she was still asleep. Claire leaned against the doorway and let the silent tears stream down her face. She snuck a glance out the curtained window to the side of the door. Clifford stood there, looking slightly dejected. Replacing his hat, and furrowing his brow, he turned and walked back down the porch steps, towards the street.

Clifford Allen had arrived in Boston less than a year ago to conduct business with a law firm over a case he was

defending. He had succeeded in unintentionally charming every young woman in society, but had unbeknownst to Claire, focused his attentions on Evelyn. She belatedly realized, that they must have worked very hard at keeping gossip away from her own ears and the ears of their mother.

He doesn't even remember that we danced together, thought Claire. *It was to that song, 'The Road to Happiness'...* Miserable, and jealous, Claire admitted to herself that she was in love. It hadn't taken much; a few words, a dance, and a polite smile, but Claire was head over heels. Every social event where he had made an appearance, she had gone, trying to catch the lawyer's eye. Thinking back to how he always seemed so distracted, Evelyn cursed her naiveté. He must have been preoccupied with...Evelyn. Evelyn had been at those parties too. *Damn!* she thought. *I'm such a fool. And now, she's going to get her way, as usual...*

Stifling her tears, Claire dutifully turned towards the stairway from where she had come, knowing that her sister would be eloping that night with Clifford Allen. It didn't matter what she'd said the night before, about wanting a traditional wedding. Claire was as sure that Evelyn would go, as she was sure that her own heart was breaking.

The older, and divorced attorney was not the ideal Catholic boy that their mother had hoped for, but since their father's death a few years before, there was no other strong male in the family who could put a stop to the situation. At one time their mother had been a strong woman, capable of keeping track of her vivacious daughters. The death of her husband in the war had all but turned her into an invalid. *Mam can't do anything...they'll be gone before she notices that Evelyn isn't here to wash the dishes...as usual,* thought Claire.

Claire's foot paused on the first step, as a thought struck her. She looked up the curved flight of stairs, and seeing no one about, she nervously looked at the letter again. *If she doesn't read it, it won't change anything. He'll still come for her, but perhaps not so soon. It might give him time to think.* She hesitated for a moment, but sudden and

unfaltering determination set her face into a mask of iron. She placed the letter in the pocket of her light morning dress, her hands suddenly cool and steady. She ascended the stairway, and crept silently down the hall to her room. There, she stuffed the letter into the back of her lingerie drawer, where it stayed, hidden beneath silk and satin.

* * * *



Tears gathered in Claire's eyes as she struggled for breath. Her gray faded features were pinched and wan, with more than pain crinkling them in distress.

"I was so unhappy, Evelyn. I loved him too, and you never knew. The one man who," she stopped, wheezing and exhausted with the effort of talking.

Evelyn solemnly regarded her older sister. When she'd found out the news, that Clifford had been involved in a tragic automobile accident, she had regretted never being able to take back her harsh and foolish words. Knowing that he had never been meant to go to New York at all, and that perhaps he wouldn't have died, took her breath away. For the first time she saw the woman her sister was, and had always been. Bitter, selfish, and sad, Claire had been an old woman before she had even aged.

The pain Evelyn felt in her heart increased as she saw her sister continue to beg for her forgiveness. She fingered the rosary she had wrapped around her hand, the cool beads leaving impressions in her pink flesh.

One O My Jesus, and a Glory Be. Then three Hail Mary's. Finally, an Our Father. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name...

"I never knew, Evelyn, that he would die, I thought he would just go away." Claire tried to take a deep breath, but her lungs were failing. She choked, and coughed painfully.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

"Evie? Please Evie? My baby sister." Her voice was raspy and raw.

*Give us this day, our daily bread, and forgive us our
our trespasses...as we forgive those who trespass against us.*

"Please Evelyn, I'm dying, forgive me. I may have a few short days left, and I want you, my sister to be here with me..."

"I do forgive you, Claire." Evelyn's voice was calm, but the storm lay just beneath the surface.

And lead us not into temptation,

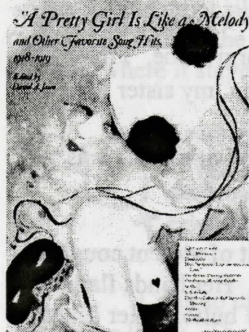
Claire dissolved into another fit of violent coughing that her weak body struggled to control. Her hands flailed around, then reached for the nurse's call button. Her fingers grasped it for a moment, but Evelyn leaned forward and gently broke her sister's brittle grip, placing the button back on the nightstand. She stood, waiting, and after a minute, her sister's choking subsided, then stopped altogether. The rosary beads clicked against one another as she sat back down and watched the form of her sister lying motionless and serene on the bed. She quickly wiped away a single tear that had escaped from her eye, and then she finished her prayer.

*--But deliver us from
evil, Amen.*



A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody

~Irving Berlin



*I have an ear for music,
And I have an eye for a maid.*

*I link a pretty girlie
With each pretty tune that's played.
They go together like sunny weather
Goes with the month of May!
I study girls and music,
So I'm qualified to say:*

*A pretty girl is like a melody,
That haunts you night and day,
Just like a strain of a haunting refrain,
She'll start upon a marathon
And run around your brain.
You can't escape, she's in your memory,
By morning, night and noon,
She will leave you, and then,
Come back again,*

*A pretty girl is just like a pretty tune!
A pretty girl is like a melody,
That haunts you night and day,
Just like a strain of a haunting refrain,
She'll start upon a marathon
And run around your brain.
You can't escape, she's in your memory,
By morning, night and noon,
She will leave you, and then,
Come back again,*

A pretty girl is just like a pretty tune!

How should I make Clifford die?



Vanessa Bradshaw

He should be so upset that Evelyn broke up with him, that he should go out and get drunk. Then as he's wandering around in a drunken stupor, he should end up into a cemetery. Its cold and snowing by the way. He's not paying attention, and an icicle hanging from a mausoleum roof should fall and hit him straight between the eyes, making him fall backwards into a conveniently placed, and empty grave. Unconscious and hurt, he stays there until the grave diggers come, and not realizing he's down there, they bury poor Clifford alive. He disappears, and Evelyn never hears about him again.

Kathleen Bradshaw

I did some research, and in September of 1919 there was a time bomb that exploded on wall street. He could have been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and gotten blown up with the bomb. Or maybe in an accident with a car and a carriage. It was 1919! It could have happened.

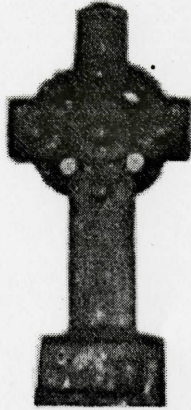
WHITE RABBIT

(Grace Slick)



Jefferson Airplane

One pill makes you larger
And one pill makes you small,
And the ones that mother gives you
Don't do anything at all.
Go ask Alice
When she's ten feet tall.
And if you go chasing rabbits
And you know you're going to fall,
Tell 'em a hookah smoking caterpillar
Has given you the call.
Call Alice
When she was just small.
When the men on the chessboard
Get up and tell you where to go
And you've just had some kind of mushroom
And your mind is moving low.
Go ask Alice
I think she'll know.
When logic and proportion
Have fallen sloppy dead,
And the White Knight is talking backwards
And the Red Queen says "off with her head!"
Remember what the dormouse said:
"Feed your head. Feed your head. Feed your head"



Emily Jane Brontë
The Night is Darkening round Me

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow ;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow ;
The storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below ;
But nothing drear can move me :
I will not, cannot go.

Samantha Elizabeth Bradshaw~ Author of this Work

