

London's Night Stalkers

Chapter 1 - Simon

“Top predator, pinnacle of the food chain. Yet you’ve probably queued with one of them to get a coffee, without realising. They’re real, they’re dangerous, but they’re also very good at appearing to be..... Ordinary.”

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Late on a Friday night and the Piccadilly Line was full of intoxicated, but mostly happy people. It was that time, when those just going out to a club for the night, merged with those coming out of pubs, heading for homes in North London. Simon Atherton didn't fit into either category; he was on his way home from work. His latest job, in a long list of casual and short term jobs, was in telesales. Simon spent from about three in the afternoon until late into the evening, trying to talk Londoners into changing their mobile phone provider. He was good at it, made enough to pay his share of the rent on a house in Wood Green and have a bit left over for life's little comforts. Companies rarely asked for references for telesales roles and often the work was cash in hand and free of nasty complication, like deductions for tax and national insurance.

“The guy in the hoody is cute.”

“Which one ?”

“By the door, all green eyes and trimmed stubble.”

“Looks a bit old for you Patsy.”

“When has that ever stopped her ?!”

Three girls at the other end of the carriage, discussing him in little more than a whisper. Simon can hear them though, he can even hear their hearts beating in their chests. He looked at their reflections in the carriage windows wondering if Patsy might be worth encouraging. The tube stopped at Manor House station, the crowd doing the usual shuffle around as passengers left or joined the already busy carriage. Simon took the opportunity to look at the three girls. They looked no more than nineteen, dressed in short clinging dresses, the uniform of young girls on the way out to a club. He looked for a little too long. Patsy caught him examining her and smiled at him. He pulled his hoody back slightly and smiled back.

“Oh, you're right Patsy. He is cute !”

Clara wouldn't mind, they both enjoyed and tolerated a little variety in each other's sex lives. Simon was tired though, over a hundred calls to people who were often quite rude. He just wanted to get home, make some coffee and watch a film on Netflix. He forgot Patsy and her perfect figure and long legs. Simon looked at the wall, as the train hurtled through the tunnel. Turnpike Lane station and again, the crowd changed a little. A few Goths got on, one carrying a guitar.

“Going home or going out ?”

He hadn't seen her move, the girl with those perfect legs. Patsy was next to him, leaning on the glass partition, blushing ever so slightly. She was occasionally glancing in the direction of her friends.

“On my way home after a long day.” He replied.

“We're going to a party in Southgate. I can get you in..... if you'd like ?”

Simon turned towards her, liking her perfume. Patsy had an iPhone in her left hand, all people under forty seemed to have them permanently in their hands.

“I'm not saying this out of politeness.” He said. “I don't do polite.”

She didn't protest when he took her phone off her. It was a newer version than his own rather elderly iPhone, but the layout was almost the same. He entered his name and number into her phone, showing her the entry.

"I would love to see you, maybe next week ? Call me one evening."

She took her phone back, exchanging a grin with her friends. She was now a date of course, never a meal. Too many people had seen him with her and his name was now on her phone. The train was pulling into Wood Green station.

"This is my stop."

"I'm Patsy."

"I know. Call me !"

She looked confused, but he knew she'd call. By the time he was on the up escalator, he'd filed Patsy away in his mind as someone who might be fun to know. It wasn't a long walk to his house, but his legs felt as tired as his mind. Simon decided to go the ATM and get out enough money for a cab home.

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You could easily walk past Simon on the streets of North London and not even notice him. There was a green tinge to his eyes that had gained him quite a few female admirers, but he was completely ignored by the queues using the ATMs near Wood Green Tube Station. He was just another skinny guy in a hoody, probably in his late twenties. He'd lived in London since nineteen-oh-seven and millions of people had gone about their business and ignored Simon Atherton. None of them had realised that the ordinary looking young man, with the unsettling green eyes, was a vampire.

"This one has run out of cash."

Crap, he wasn't joining another queue. Anyway, he didn't live that far away; a mini-cab home was just being lazy and wasting money. Simon walked back towards the station and turned left, walking around the back of Wood Green Shopping City. The area wasn't too bad. The general seediness suited Simon Atherton; it meant people had their own problems. There were a lot of crappy flats and a fluid population. No one noticed an ordinary looking guy, who kept himself to himself.

Simon automatically sniffed the air and picked up the wonderful tang of blood. He wasn't hungry, but like most predators, he rarely missed an opportunity to feed. The tang in the air was too strong to be from a minor accident, he just hoped it wasn't a car crash. Those just worked up his hunger, with too many police around to do anything about it.

There were a few streets of council housing, but the scent of fresh blood took him beyond those streets and towards a small parade of shops.

"Well, if he thinks I'm chasing after him....."

Two girls passed him, barely registering his presence. Top predator, pinnacle of the food chain and they just carried on walking. That was fine, that was how his kind survived. Simon lived in the shadows, causing few waves and doing his best to be....ordinary. The blood was making him feel hungry and it wasn't far away. It was the kind of line of shops where few had any signs up, nothing to announce to the world the services they provided. Some would be empty, others used as workshops of one kind or another. The smell of blood was coming from a shop with half a sign left above the door.

'Wood Green Copier Rep.....'

A dead copier repair shop with at least three locks and a chain across a grill on the doors. Far too much noise to get through all that. Simon decided to climb over a fence and check the rear of the store.

“Crap ! Well secured for a place that looks long dead.” He muttered.

Damn, the door at the rear of the building was locked, they usually were. Simon had been around since the thirteenth century, there was a fair chance his fingerprints were on a few police databases. He had gloves though, three pairs of surgical gloves, folded up in an inside pocket. There were lots of myths about vampires, but the extra-strength was true. Simon pushed the door until the lock broke away, taking a piece of the doorframe with it. Noisy, but there had been no alternative. Stairs in front of him, he appeared to have opened a rear exit from a basement of some kind.

The texture of the entire world seemed to change, when he was actively hunting his next meal. The basal ganglia, his reptile brain became completely dominant. Things that moved were brighter in colour, the static background turning a uniform grey. Blood didn't just become a far brighter shade of red; it seemed to glow, as if his brain was running a highlighter over it. He speeded up as the world around him appeared to slow down.

She'd heard him break open the door ! A female voice, barely audible and the sound of clanking chains. Things were becoming a little gothic, even for a vampire approaching his seven hundred and forty second birthday. He didn't call out to her, he wasn't there to reassure her, or make her feel better. With luck, he'd drain her dry of blood and be home before dawn. Not that light damaged him, he just preferred the night. Bright daylight stung his eyes, made him sneeze and sometimes feel a little nauseous, but he could still function.

“It's a bit like hay fever in humans.” Clara had once said. “But sadly, there are no antihistamines for it.”

Clara Copley was a vampire too, a thin wisp of a thing with vivid green eyes. He'd met Clara during the Second World War, a time of plenty for their kind. Green eyes was something they all had, to one degree or another, hers were almost luminous. She was the closest thing he had to a proper relationship and they'd tried to kill each other a few times.

His hearing was better than when he'd been human, all his senses were sharper. Not good enough to hear her clearly though, as she struggled against being chained up. There was another locked door, which he easily forced open.

“Help me.”

Someone had hurt her, quite badly. Still plenty of life in the girl though and enough blood to have made his efforts worthwhile.

“Why should I ?”

The chains went through manacles on her wrists, to be wrapped round some thick water pipes. Whoever had left her there, had done a thorough job of making sure she couldn't escape. Maybe the chains were part of his thing, or hers, some women were into that sort of thing. Simon had his own quirks, far worse than any Wood Green sadist was likely to dream up.

“He'll be back.” She said.

So, her tormentor was male, how predictable. Simon often despaired of finding anything new to excite him. He knelt and looked into her eyes, seeing no fear, just sadness. He kissed her lips, licking the blood that had congealed on her chin. Wonderful, though all blood tasted that way. During his early days as a vampire, he'd fed on a man in the terminal stage of leprosy. It was an experiment, the blood had tasted good and caused him no harm. Since then he'd fed on the young, old, healthy and diseased. All blood was good blood !

“How do you know he'll be back ?” He asked.

“He always come back late at night. He leaves some food and water.”

She had an attitude to her situation that intrigued him. He looked at her, left defiled and helpless, yet in many ways, unbeaten. He'd never asked the name of his food before, it just seemed....inappropriate. Nevertheless, he found himself asking.

"What is your name?"

"Laura. Laura Selway."

There was a lot of blood on the floor, he doubted if Laura would survive another beating from the one who'd imprisoned her. Simon leant towards her, letting his fangs extend and rub across her neck.

"Make it quick." She said.

Strange, most of his victims reacted when they felt the sharp tip of his fangs on their flesh. Horror, surprise, sometimes even trying to scream, once they'd realised his true nature. Curiosity was one of the few human emotions that hadn't changed dramatically when Simon had been turned by Giovanni, all those hundreds of years ago in Pisa. Simon hadn't been called Simon then and he'd never heard of Britain.

"Why are you so keen to die?" He asked.

Laura spat up blood as she laughed at him. That was a first, his victims had done some very strange things, but none had ever laughed at him before.

"I'm dying, the bastard enjoys causing pain." Said Laura. "Soon I'll die anyway, so why not get it over and done with?"

There was a sound from above, cursing and footsteps on the stairs. Simon pulled back after whispering in her ear.

"Shush, we'll surprise your tormentor."

He moved back and melted into the shadows. It was no vampire's trick, just the skill gained from centuries of experience. Simon had once been an assassin for the House of Medici, he knew how to stay hidden. The door on the basement was flung back, the man entered and seemed relieved that Laura hadn't escaped.

"Who broke in? Tell me, or I'll hurt you worse than before."

"Someone who can easily snap you in two." She answered.

Brave and maybe a little foolhardy. Simon still hadn't made his mind up whether to kill the man and release her, or kill them both. Killing both was safer in the long run. Her jailer looked quite ordinary, but most successful criminals usually did. It was the failures whose faces adorned the news and reality TV shows.

He looked like the sort of man who'd run a corner shop, a friendly and likeable character. Then he undid her chains, wrapping them round his fists to begin hitting her with them. He was no longer a nice man, he was now a monster. Simon was a monster too, so he just watched. There was something about her eyes though, watching him in the shadows.

"Enough." Said Simon.

Her captor spun round at the sound of Simon's voice, holding his hands up like a boxer. The chains wrapped around his hands dripped blood, Laura's blood. He didn't want to speak to the man, he didn't deserve that much respect. Not that Simon was averse to causing pain, but there was something about the woman, now lying on the dirty concrete floor.

He grabbed the man, easily pinning his arms to his sides, before plunging his fangs into a vein in his neck. The man was strong, his heart carried on beating for several minutes, pumping the hot blood into Simon's eager mouth. She watched, enjoying the death of the man who'd hurt her.

Simon let the body fall to the floor, the instant the blood stopped flowing. Once the heart stopped, the blood took on an unpleasant aftertaste. There was no living from blood bags for real vampires, it had to be hot blood, pumped out by a still beating heart.

"What will you do with him." She asked.

"I have my ways to dispose of him."

"Tell me ?" She insisted.

She was so annoying, so confident, so..... Like him. He knelt and put his fangs back on her neck, before pulling away again.

"I'll give you a choice." He said. "You must decide quickly and there is no returning from the consequences. Few survive the change to become a vampire, but you have something about you. Or I can leave you here, to escape as best you can."

He kissed her, a long hard kiss on her bruised and bloody lips.

"Which is it to be ?" He asked.

"Will I really live forever ?"

He laughed and decided he'd been right to make the offer to turn her.

"There are accidents and we fight each other." He said. "There is a slim chance you'll survive the change and few of my kind are really old. There are very few of us anyway ! I've met barely fifty of my kind, in over seven hundred years."

"How old are you ?"

"No more questions ! A decision ?"

"Yes, change me, make me a vampire."

Simon had never turned anyone, he'd just watched one of the rare occasions when it had worked. It was all down to timing and a lot of pure luck. There were no instruction on how to turn a human into one of them, just rumour and folklore, most of which was wrong. He stretched her out on the floor, ignoring her yells as he touched her wounds.

"What is your name ?"

Damn the girl, he needed to concentrate.

"Simon. Now shut up !"

He bit into her throat, allowing her blood to begin flowing. He drank from her feeling her heart begin to struggle. She was too weak ! He'd seen it work on a great bull of a man. He bit his own wrist, pushing the wound into her mouth.

"Drink !" He commanded. "You need to digest my blood, before your heart stops."

She swallowed, coughing as she tasted his blood.

"Survive and the next time, it will taste like nectar." He said.

Timing was the key and Laura was dying, far too quickly. He drank a little more from her, not certain if that was essential to the process. He opened the wound on his wrist further, pouring his blood into her throat. She couldn't die now, he wouldn't let it happen.

"No Laura ! Don't cough or spit. Swallow or you'll die !"

She swallowed; he felt the movements in her throat as he leant forward to drink from her again. Her heart stopped beating before he could get his fangs into a vein. Always a vein, only an inexperienced vampire killed by opening up a major artery and killing their food too soon.

Laura was dead, her blood was now just dribbling from the puncture wounds he'd put in her neck.

The woman he'd wanted to turn into a vampire, was now just a hundred and twenty pounds of dead meat and might remain that way.

"You died too fast." He muttered.

He sat cross legged on the floor and waited, he was good at waiting. Maybe the boredom side of the human brain died during being turned ? Whatever the reason, he could sit and wait for hours, without feeling even slightly bored. After two and a half hours, Clara found him. It wasn't any kind of link between them, no bond of the Nosferatu. The house they shared was less than a mile away and like him, she'd picked up the glorious perfume of freshly spilled blood.

"Are you trying to make her one of us ?" She asked.

"Yes, there's something about her. I think she'll be..... Useful."

He hadn't heard her arrive, like him she'd had centuries to learn the art of remaining unseen and unheard. Just a young woman in jeans, trainers and the inevitable hooded jacket. Perfume though ! She always gave herself away by wearing perfume. Clara knelt next to Laura, putting her cheek against the dead woman's chest.

"How long has it been ?"

"Two and a half hours."

He could see her eyes peering at him in the darkened room, those wonderful green eyes that he'd learned to almost love. Love was for humans though, a mindless bonding to ensure children were cared for. Vampires didn't give birth to young, so love was a redundant emotion. His kind were at the top of the food chain. Like the great white shark, they no longer needed to evolve.

Clara knew and he knew, that Laura was almost certainly never going to open her eyes again.

"We should dispose of both bodies." Said Clara. "You know she should have responded within an hour, if she was ever going to."

"No ! Leave her. She's unusual, her personality. She was like us, without being us.....it's hard to explain."

Clara kissed him on the cheek and picked up the dead man, as though he weighed nothing.

"I'll get rid of this one." She said. "But you know if she hasn't moved within the next two hours..... Special or not, you'll have to dispose of the body."

"I know. Thank you Clara."

She left, just a slight trace of her perfume remaining with him. Chances were that Laura was never going to become a vampire, but he'd give her another two hours. After all, he wasn't getting any older. Three hours later, an hour after dawn, Laura opened her eyes.

"I thought you'd never wake up." He said.

He remembered the confusion in his mind, when he'd woken up, after that fool Giovanni had turned him into a vampire. Simon let her sit up on her own and gave her time for her mind to work properly. Being new born was like waking from years of sleep, her thoughts would be chaotic for quite some time.

"Who are you ?" She asked.

"Be patient, the raging in your head will soon stop. Try to relax."

He sat next to her, but didn't touch her. Her eyes had flecks of green now, but otherwise there was no outward sign of the change. She'd have fangs too, which would drop down when she needed to feed. That had shocked him, the first time he'd fed from a human throat. Laura put her hand up to her neck.

"The vein will be healed." He said. "The wound in your skin will heal soon."

She recognised him and smiled.

"So Simon, it looks like it worked."

"It did. Sit for a while longer and then I'll take you my house. You can meet Clara."

"Is she your wife ?"

“No, we don’t marry, but we have been together for a long time.”

“How long ?”

“About seventy five years. We met during the Second World War.”

The questions ! She’d probably drive them crazy with the questions. Simon would tell her the truth though and be honest about the things he didn’t know, which was quite a long list. Giovanni had filled his head with nonsense about them being the Children of Cain and piles of other quasi-Christian mumbo jumbo.

“Will I need to feed soon ?” She asked.

“Yes, but there is no uncontrollable hunger. Most of the stuff in films and TV shows is crap. Don’t worry Laura, you’ll pick it up as you go along.”

She looked at the light, coming through a tiny window high up on the wall. He knew what was coming next, another avalanche of questions. He sympathised, remembering his own post change mixture of confusion and misunderstandings. Hollywood had a lot to answer for, when it came to dodgy vampire folklore.

“Are we stuck here until sunset ?” She asked.

“No, nor are you harmed by holy water, garlic or crucifixes. You still have a reflection in mirrors and your heart still beats, though quite slowly. Ignore just about everything you’ve read or seen on TV.”

She looked so forlorn. It was time to hold her hand and get her on her feet.

“Is it all nonsense ?”

“You’re strong, you’ll never again have trouble opening a jar of pickle. The rest though ? Yes, most of it is crap. Be careful around holy places though, like churches and convents. No one is certain of the rules, so it’s best to avoid religious places.”

“Can we fly ?”

He sighed and saw her face drop. He too had once hoped to fly, or turn into a bat, or maybe even a cloud of fog. Those bastards in Hollywood had a lot to answer for. Simon looked her over and she wasn’t ready to walk the streets of Wood Green.

“You’ve enough blood on your dress to make someone call the police.” He said. “You’d better wear my jacket.”

She looked a mess, but no worse than many others arriving home in the early hours of Saturday morning. She’d do, no one was going to call the authorities if they saw her.

“Come on, it’s only a short walk to our house. You can probably borrow some of Clara’s clothes.”

She clung to his arm as they climbed the stair and out into the sunlight. He remembered the way sunlight had stung his eyes and sometimes still did.

“You get used to sunlight Laura, but you’ll never like it.”

“Why do we have to avoid holy places Simon ?”

Questions, questions ! He’d condemned himself to bringing up a toddler. Part of him liked it though, the opportunity to relive some of his past. How would Clara react though ? She was even less keen on strangers than he was.

“I saw the consequences myself.” He said. “I travelled with three others then, wild people from Prague. We thought all the rules about anything holy were nonsense.”

“Tell me about it ?!”

“It was a bad winter, even we were beginning to suffer from the cold. We’d taken shelter in a small village church. There was no problem until Ludmilla was hungry the next morning and decided to feed on the priest. I can tell you, feeding on holy ground is something to avoid.”

The streets were quiet, they'd only walked past one guy taking a tiny dog for a walk. Soon he'd have Laura indoors and get her into some clean clothing.

"Stop teasing me." Said Laura. "What happened to Ludmilla ?"

"Me tease ? I never tease. She fed on the priest and I saw her die as the priest died. It wasn't pretty ! Her death was nasty and slow. I wouldn't wish her death on my worst enemy. Trust me ! You don't want to hear the details."

They were there, the rather shabby street he lived in. He liked it, no one asked what you were doing if you came home late and didn't seem to have a regular job. The key was in his jacket pocket, so he had to stop and get Laura to give it to him.

"I do want to know the details." She said. " Tell me Simon, tell me everything ?!"

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Clara had saved him from the constant stream of questions, taking Laura upstairs for a shower and a much needed change of clothing. He knew nothing about their new houseguest, but Clara would ask Laura about her life. She still seemed to have more intact human emotions than him, even signs of affection. It occurred to Simon that if Clara liked the new potential resident of their small North London house, he might well be outnumbered on important decisions. The thought lingered for a few seconds, until he remembered the coffee he'd desired hours before.

"Do you both want coffee ?" He shouted up the stairs.

"Yes please." They both replied.

By the time the machine had finished making its spurting and hissing noises, he noticed the kitchen clock. It was eight in the morning, sunlight was trying to get round the edges of their kitchen curtains. Sunlight was like the noisy neighbour you pretend isn't really a problem. True the brightest sunlight didn't cause any damage, but it was unpleasant. Simon had once tried to sunbathe in the back garden and been nauseous for nearly a week. He poured strong black coffee into three cups, they could add milk if they wanted it.

"You're right, she is special." Said Clara. "I left her in front of my wardrobe. She's a fusser, it'll take her an hour to decide what to wear."

"She's..... Very curious."

Clara sipped at her coffee, before laughing out loud.

"Curious Simon, is that what you call it ? She'll drive us both crazy. Your new friend even asked me what sex was like as a vampire."

"What did you tell her ?"

"To find a nice hunky human guy and find out !"

It was his turn to make breakfast, usually eggs and bacon at weekends. More information that Laura was bound to ask about. They didn't need to eat solid food, or drink, but it was still pleasurable. He turned on the grill to heat up and took a pack of bacon from the fridge.

"Have you told her she can still eat solid food ?" Asked Clara.

"No, she was insistent on hearing about Ludmilla's death. I did tell her that most of the stuff in TV shows and films is fake."

"Ludmilla ! Don't scare her, that kind of death is almost unknown. Putrefaction of bodily tissues, while the victim is still alive for most of it ! Poor Laura must be terrified."

"Pahhh she loved it, wanted more details. Anyway, did you find out where our new houseguest comes from ?"

The bacon was under the grill, so he put a little oil into a frying pan and took the bowl of eggs from the kitchen cupboard.

"I found out the essentials." Said Clara. "Laura Selway, twenty four at her last birthday. Engaged once to a guy called Ben, but it didn't work out."

"Wow, she just came out with that ?"

"Yes Simon, you ask questions and people answer. You should try it out one day."

"Ahhh sarcasm ! So, what else did you find out ?"

Breakfast was ready and still there was no sign of Laura. Clara went to the foot of the stairs and called for her.

"Hmm yes, where was I ? I mentioned the ex fiancé." Said Clara. "She lived in her own rented flat in Potters Bar and worked full time as a legal secretary. I did tell her she'd have to leave her old life behind, which didn't seem to worry her."

"Will she be missed ? Her picture in the local paper might be a problem."

"Ask her, I can hear her feet on the stairs."

Laura joined them, wearing a pair of Clara's black jeans and a black hoody top. All that time deciding and she was dressed almost identically to Clara. He noticed her eyes widen, as she saw the plate of food waiting for her and a steaming cup of coffee.

"Yes, we can eat normal human food." Said Clara. "Though we don't need to."

"We're like giant Cimex lectularius," said Simon, "bed bugs !"

"Oh Simon ! Think before you speak." Said Clara. "That sounds awful."

"True though, Google Hematophagy. We don't need to eat or drink, we get everything we need from the blood we take from our.... Victims. Feed regularly and you don't need solid food or coffee, but life will be a lot more boring."

Laura was sort of half listening, as she bolted down the bacon and began on the eggs.

"I didn't realise I was so hungry. To think I was a vegan, until last night."

All three of them laughed, the first laughter there'd been in the house for quite some time. Simon began to be sure that Laura was going to be good for them.

"A vegan vampire," he said, "definitely one for the record books. Do you want more ? There's still some bacon left."

She just nodded at him, as he rose from the table and put a few more rashers under the grill.

"How old are you ?" Laura asked Clara. "Simon mentioned being over seven hundred."

Vanity of course, but Clara had a thing about admitting her age. It had taken her several years to even give him a few hints. He now knew that her next birthday would be her five hundred and twenty third, but she'd kill him for telling anyone. He tried to defuse the situation;

"I'm a bit of a cradle snatcher. Clara is a good two hundred years younger than me."

If only Laura hadn't been so engrossed in eating eggs, she might have seen the angry vampire sat across the table.

"So if Simon is seven hundred or so, that makes you....."

Simon coughed and Laura finally saw that not everyone in the kitchen was happy. He was the same, that reptile brain again, all too quickly anything could turn to anger. Clara was angry, but it would all be forgotten in a few minutes.

"Sorry Clara, I'm being rude. It's just all so new to me."

"No problem.... I read a line in a book once, which said it perfectly." Said Clara. "I am twenty three years old. It's just that I've been twenty three for a very long time."

There was silence for a while, as Laura ate the extra bacon he'd just cooked and Clara drank her coffee.

"I haven't seen your face on the news Laura." He said. "Is anyone looking for you ?"

“Probably not, I lived alone and rarely saw the neighbours.”

“How about your boss ?” Asked Clara.

“A pig, always accidently touching me. I hated him and he knew it. He probably thinks I just got a better job.”

Maybe that was why Laura had felt like a vampire before he’d turned her, the lack of the usual support system that humans seemed to think was so important. She was truly alone, which made everything so much simpler.

“We have two spare rooms Clara, what do you think ?” He asked.

“It might be fun, if we can ever stop her asking questions.”

Laura knew they were talking about her, looking from one to the other, as she chewed her bacon.

“How would you like to move in ?” He asked. “We have two spare room, you can choose which you like the best.”

“It would be a good idea, having us around to teach you the basics.” Added Clara.

“Yes, that would be brilliant.” Answered Laura.

“We can help you move.” He said. “You’ll need to tell your boss that you’ve found another job, we can’t have people looking for you.”

“And a letter to your landlord about moving out.” Added Clara. “Do you have many things to pack ?”

“No, I moved in to where I am with three suitcases and a box of books. There might be a few more books now.”

Clara looked at him and put her head a little to one side, asking an unspoken question. He nodded back at her.

“Then this afternoon I’ll drive you to Potters Bar and help you pack your things.” Said Clara.

“This is your home now.” He said. “For as long as you need it.”

Vampires didn’t expect huge displays of emotions, unless the emotions were anger or rage. Laura did smile at them both though.

“Can I ask you something ?”

“Yes Laura, anything.” He replied.

Clara was nodding furiously too, their new protégé needed the benefit of their centuries of accumulated wisdom.

“How do you dispose of bodies ?”

“I think Simon needs to catch up on his sleep.” Said Clara. “I’ll drive and on the way to Potter Bar, you can ask me anything you like.”

He caught Clara’s eye and mouthed ‘thank you,’ at her.

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