

## The Hornsey Vampires

(Season two of London's Night Stalkers)

### Chapter 2 – An Approaching Storm

**“It was a habit born out of necessity. A habit carried on, even though they were now fairly comfortable. Vampires tended to live off the land, taking anything valuable their prey didn't need anymore. Clara found an envelope containing five hundred pounds in the glove compartment.”**

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Patsy enjoyed her job behind the counter at Hayle's Motor Factors. She hadn't expected to enjoy the laddish atmosphere and handling parts covered in grease, but there were days when she genuinely loved the job. Being the only girl behind the counter helped, she'd become a quick hit with the guys buying car parts.

“You're always right.... This is the bit Patsy, you're a genius.”

The computer parts system was really the clever one, but she was beginning to know her way around the components that made up the average car. The money was good, far better than most retail jobs she'd applied for. Simon had spoken to Tom, the guy in Erith with contacts in the motor trade. She'd met Tom once or twice and from what she'd heard at the house in Wood Green, Tom was.... Connected, as they said in cheesy films about mobsters. A friend of a friend of Tom's had secured her an interview with Hayle's and a boss who seemed very keen on her being happy. Twice a week at least he'd ask her if she was happy.

“... Great Patsy... Make sure you tell Simon how much you like it here.”

Knowing that Simon was a vampire in a house full of other vampires, had been enough of a shock to take her through into the next decade. She wasn't about to ask him if he was the North London equivalent of Vito Corleone. The only problem with the job was the shop closing at six thirty. It made it difficult to get home in time to get her room ready for 'Chinese and Sex,' on Monday nights.

“Mum !!.....” She yelled down the stairs. “That'll be the food delivery guy. Can you put it in the kitchen, I'm still changing.”

Her mum actually liked Simon, though she thought he was her full time, one on one, exclusive boyfriend. No one knew she was the 'other woman,' and she intended to keep it that way. Not that it was the clichéd love triangle so beloved of TV soaps. Patsy liked Clara and believed Clara liked her. She was welcomed into their home and Laura now felt like a sister. A very strong and scary sister, but they spoke on the phone every day and got drunk together at least once a week.

The front door bell rang again and it had to be Simon. Her hair wasn't perfect, but it would have to do. Patsy was halfway down the stairs when her mum opened the front door.

“Come in Simon, it looks a nasty night out there.” Said her mum.

“Thank you Evie, I hope you're keeping well ?”

No one ever got away with calling her mum by her first name, no one. Apart from Simon, who her mum was beginning to dote on. He was nearly seven hundred years older than her mum of course, though she didn't know that. Patsy gave Simon a chaste peck on the cheek, before heading for the kitchen.

“The Chinese arrived, I'll get it from the kitchen and meet you upstairs.” She said.

Her mum couldn't afford the bills on her own, not after the tragic death of her dad. Patsy had wanted privacy and independence and no more nights spent with Simon in grubby hotels. Patsy now

had the upstairs of the house and Evie tended to keep to the ground floor. No expensive house conversion or anything like that, just using the front parlour as a bedroom for her mum.

“No one has used this room since about Christmas ten years ago mum.”

Timothy was a little confused for a while, but eventually her mum’s cat had started sleeping downstairs with her mum. Evie had asked only one thing of her, which had probably been a good idea for many reasons.

“Simon can leave in the early hours, but he mustn’t be here all night. Men leaving as the sun comes up can get any girl a bad reputation.”

Patsy had laughed and agreed to her mum’s conditions. Sometimes it hurt to let Simon leave her bed at three in the morning, but it had probably stopped her from being late for work and Simon had to hunt and feed of course.

“You smell like Laura.” He said, once they were alone.

“Oh yes, I liked it and she gave me a bottle.... Sorry, does it freak you out ?”

“No, I’m just glad that you two are such good friends.”

They ate quickly, both of them eager to get naked. The sex was always amazing and Simon was becoming far more attentive, as though having a long term human lover was having an effect.

“There is a dessert, but it’s not one that melts or anything.....” She said.

“I can’t stay that late.” Said Simon. “There’s someone I need to see later, right over in West London.”

A few moments later they were naked, kissing, touching. Sometimes there was quite a lot of delicious foreplay, but not that night. Patsy envied her friend Gina who claimed to be able to get her ankles up next to her ears. Patsy had never been that bendy and needed Simon to hold her knees up with his elbows.

“Hmmmmmmmmm.” She sighed.

His thrusts felt good, but not quite rubbing against the spot that drove her crazy. She lifted her legs slightly and he responded, going a little higher up her body, using his elbows to lift her legs, bringing her bottom an inch or two off the bedsheet. Oh, that was perfect, just the right angle and depth to hit where it was..... Perfect.

“Ohhhhhhhhhhhhh.”

Without saying anything they’re communicated, one of the great advantages in having the same regular lover. They knew each other’s sexual idiolects, to the point where they didn’t need to say anything at all. It was a pity that she had to share him with Clara, but that didn’t worry her too much, for now.

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The various appendices in the Psochic Bible had proven to be accurate and reliable. The lists of plants and chemicals in the various medicines had been written in English, after being translated from various dead languages. The result had been a confusing mess, which had taken her two days to understand. Eventually Brendan had visited various herbalists she knew and most of the chemicals had been bought online. There had been just a single item acquired by burglary and Brendan had obtained the metal alloy without causing too much attention in the media.

“I’m already feeling so much better.” She said, stirring the contents of a large pan.

“There were poison warnings on the jar of Antimony.” Said Brendan. “I was worried you were going to make yourself worse.”

“My body isn’t that of a human.... Though I was surprised at how fast the concoction worked. I’m still weak and need a proper cure. I can get out of the house though, perhaps even drive a car. Yes Brendan.... You must buy me a car, I have plenty of money.”

Her kitchen table was covered in bottles and packets, many covered in stickers warning about toxicity, some mentioning addiction or side effects. There was even some aconite she'd bought online, a box of dried Wolf's bane. Her kitchen didn't smell that bad though, the aroma reminding her of a shop she knew that sold aroma therapy candles. Brendan was sneezing a lot when she began a new batch of her medicine, but he seemed to suffer from various allergies anyway.

"Did you have any particular type of car in mind?" He asked.

"The make doesn't matter, it just needs to be an automatic. Any medium sized automatic in a neutral colour.... No canary yellows Brendan..... Beige would be nice. Nothing new and flashy, second hand will do."

"I will visit a few used car dealers in the area and find you a car my queen."

Mabina had other uses for her new henchman, including a research trip that was rather urgent. She tasted the medicine she was currently stirring. Vile stuff which tasted like mouldy cabbage, but it might increase her strength a little.

"Good, a car will make me more mobile." She said. "I need other artefacts though and a full understanding of the book we found. To fully understand the book, I need the context of the original translation.....You will need to go to Jerusalem for me."

"Me..... Jerusalem my queen?"

"Don't look at me like that, it's a standard destination from Heathrow, just five hours and you'll be there. It's not as if I'm asking you to go to the moon... I take it you have a valid passport?"

"Yes, but the furthest I've ever been is two weeks in Tenerife.... And I don't speak any foreign languages."

For the first time she wondered if Brendan had been a good idea. He was so timid and unadventurous. Sadly there was no one else, she'd have to nurture him as best she could.

"He'll speak English, but you have a point..... His first language will be Modern Hebrew. Plus people travelling on their own are much more likely to be stopped at airports. You need a companion.....Ideally Jewish and fluent in the local languages."

"Do you know someone who can go with me?" He asked.

"Not so much someone..... I won't go into details of how I know them, but there is an agency I've dealt with before. Businessmen needing a companion for a trip overseas, someone who will dress right and fit in. Expensive, but I can take care of that. I'll give you the number and you can call... Mention my name and they should come up with the right woman. You'll need to insist on someone who can speak Hebrew and Arabic.... Interview her Brendan, you'll need to feel comfortable being with her for a while."

Poor Brendan, his face looked like she'd ask him to lose a limb for her.

"You want me to go to Jerusalem with a hooker?" He asked.

"Yes I do, a very high class hooker, a woman paid a lot of money for one thing.... To keep you happy. Most men would give their right arm for such an experience. I will give you an address for Sam Isaacs and the woman can help you talk to him. Sam used to be a sort of local Indiana Jones, finding all sorts of antiquities, often by illegal means. Now he's a trader in antiquarian books, though I've heard he's still very sharp, perhaps too damn sharp. If it looks like he knows we have a Psochic Bible, you may need to kill him."

There was that timid look again, the frown that never seemed to lift from his face.

"You want me to kill this Sam Isaacs?"

“Now want Brendan, no not want.... You’ll need to make your own judgement on that. If he were to realise you have an original Psochic Bible and wish to use it to cure a vampire..... Yes, he will need to die.”

“And the woman, the hooker..... Will you want me to kill her ?”

“No, no, never the woman, her employers know me.....Come on, it’s not as if you’ve never done this sort of thing before.”

“But I haven’t my queen, never..... Ever.”

Her mind still wandered when she was tired and for a moment it had been Roy standing there, her dead husband. They’d been in Romania and about to journey far to the west. He’d had the same timid look on his face, he’d seemed even more unimpressive than Brendan. She’d grown to care about Roy though, even shedding a tear when she found out he was dead. Mabina hugged Brendan, before kissing him once on the forehead.

“First you will find a car for me. Then you will need to interview the woman and be happy with her. I will go through what I know about Sam Isaacs and give you a little of his history. I’ll also make sure you know what needs to be done. Don’t worry..... By the time you fly out from Heathrow you’ll understand your mission..... You’ll be fine Brendan.”

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Clara had gone out with no intention of feeding. Scruffy anonymous clothing, hoody covering much of her face, she’d scouted out an area of North London. The idea had been to find the quiet streets in Barnet, the ones with no obvious CCTV or too many of those dreadful lights that go on as you walk past someone’s front gate. She wasn’t that hungry and would normally have come back several times in different clothing, to get a good feel for the area. There had been the woman in the pink Saab though and Clara had given into temptation.

“Hi, I’m looking for Derwent Avenue and to be honest, I’m lost.”

Said the brunette as her car window came down. Simon had hunted in Barnet a few times, but Clara couldn’t remember feeding there before and her memory was very good. Derwent Avenue was one of the streets she’d walked down, marking it in her mind as a good place to hunt.

“It’s not that far away.” Said Clara. “Back the way you came, first right.....”

“Could you get in and show me ? Please, I’m useless at following direction.”

Clara didn’t really believe in a dark deity who looked after his children, the vampires. She did silently thank them though, for sending the woman in the pink Saab her way. She got in of course, even doing up the seatbelt. It was rare, but being picked up on the street by a woman had happened before. Some women seemed to get off on it, picking up a bit of rough.

“I’m Jenny by the way.”

“I’m Clara.”

Using her real name wasn’t going to be a problem as Jenny was soon going to be dead, her expensive car broken up for spares, the shell going into the crusher at Tom’s yard. Jenny didn’t really seem to be lost at all and knew the perfect street to park in. Garden walls one side and some sort of water pumping station the other. Throw in a few dull yellow street lights and it was the perfect spot to get on the back seat and enjoy each other.

“Hey, you’ve done this before.” Said Jenny.

Women were always so much better with their fingers than men, it almost seemed ungrateful to kill her new friend. Clara needed blood far more than she needed sex though. The kill was a little messy, definitely not one of her best. Jenny had moved around and Clara had been at the wrong angle to

get fangs in at the first attempt. Never mind though, Tom was used to her bringing in cars with a little blood on the seats.

“Now I’ve got a bright pink Saab to get rid of.” She muttered.

Clara pulled up her knickers and did up the belt on her jeans, before thinking about what to do with Jenny’s still warm body. There were two car blankets on the back seat and a couple of cushions.

“Hmmm... I don’t think I was your first Jenny.”

Clara pushed the body into the foot well, before covering it with the blankets. Good, even close up to the car, no one would be able to tell there was anything wrong. Blood looked black in the dark to humans, but Clara saw it as almost luminous red. She used one of the cushions to wipe the back seat. Clara got out of the back and into the driver’s seat, before calling George.

“Hi George, are you on duty tonight ?”

Hesitancy, which was strange, he normally answered her right away. George ran the incinerator at the local hospital and many of her kills had ended up as smoke coming out of the chimney. George had been a real find, a worker left to get on with his job at night and an incinerator that ran twenty four seven. It didn’t hurt that George had a nasty degenerative illness that was likely to kill him off in a few years. A promise of immortality had made him her willing slave. George was creepy as a human though and was likely to be worse as a vampire. Clara had no intention of ever trying to turn him into a vampire.

“Tonight is fine.... It just might need to be the last for a while.... Sorry.”

“What’s the problem George ?”

“Not me, I’ve done nothing wrong Miss Clara. The management started taking in waste from a few private medical outfits.... Greed miss, pure greed..... Burning things they shouldn’t have been burning. It was even in the local papers. There’s been a clamp down, everything has to be recorded properly now. Tonight will be alright, but after that..... Sorry.”

“That’s fine George, I’ll see you soon.”

Damn, he’d been really useful. No body means no crime scene and the hospital incinerator had taken care of a lot of her kills and Simon’s. They all had other ways of disposal of course, their own favourite flooded cellar, hole in the ground or tank full of corrosive chemicals. It was a nuisance though, losing George and his wonderful incinerator.

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Simon left Patsy later than he’d intended and drove over to West London, a street full of two ups, two downs, quite close to Northfields Tube Station. After years of refusing to drive, Simon had finally seen the light. His license had been legally acquired after passing the required test. True it had been gained using a dodgy birth certificate, but he had passed a driving test.

“Start off with something old and clunky, you’re bound to put a few dents in it.”

Clara’s comment had been a little unkind, but probably true. Simon still felt he was driving erratically, despite getting through the test. He parked his five year old Vauxhall Astra and pulled his hood up to cover as much of his face as possible. Ealing was a bad area for CCTV, the damn things seemed to be breeding.

“I am your nemesis Johnny Rose, your death arrives tonight.” He mumbled.

Simon wasn’t usually that arch or poetic, it had just been a bad week at work. Calling the public when their favourite TV programmes were on the box had earned him a lot of insults and profanity. Not that he considered hunting drug dealers as being cathartic or balancing the scales in some way. It was because they tended to lurk in dark quiet places and carry plenty of cash. There were the drugs too, Tom could always find someone to offload them to.

"All these damn streets look identically." He muttered.

Along Ridley Avenue and left towards the rail yards. Johnny was selling his shit somewhere near Cranmer Avenue, though his source said Johnny moved about quite a bit. No car, which was rare, just him and his henchman working out of a backpack full of tablets. Johnny was into designer drugs, the kind the kids used to get high.

"There you are Johnny." He mumbled.

Under a street light in a quiet cul-de-sac, it was almost a cliché. No sign of the backpack, it was probably hidden under bushes in a nearby garden. The minder would carry just enough stock to be classed as for personal use, just in case the police arrived. That was rare though, there were a lot less cops about these days. Simon pulled his hood up and tried to look and walk like a punter. Eager to get a fix, but cautious and a little unsteady on his feet.

"What you looking for?" Asked the minder.

Jeeezzz the guy was big, but he had a plaster that covered his left hand and wrist. He'd been told Johnny Rose was a real player, a big time dealer. A one armed minder though? That was amateur night stuff. Simon had been stabbed by a couple of henchmen he'd tried to simply knock out, plus the guy was huge. Simon took no chances, breaking the man's neck in one quick and easy movement.

"A wounded minder Johnny.... I heard you were the dog's bollocks."

It was rare for a major dealer to run, they usually believed themselves to be fireproof, untouchable. Johnny ran though and Simon helped him move faster, dragging him into some bushes the local council had thoughtfully planted beside the road. No talk, Simon let his fangs drop and thought about the delicious taste of hot fresh blood.

"Are you from her? I did it, got what she asked for.... The Irish guy took the box."

He'd heard some strange things said to him when people knew they were about to die, but Johnny's comments made his fangs go back up into his head. It seemed important enough to allow the drug dealer a few more minutes of life.

"Who do you think I'm from?" He asked.

"You're not from her, are you?"

"Look Johnny, this can get really painful for you, really quickly... If you don't tell me about the Irish guy and what you got for him."

"It's..... Just that she had fangs too."

"Tell me, who was she?"

Damn, it happened sometimes, the public wanting to be heroes. A little old man was walking across his garden, coming in their direction, his wife calling out to him from the doorstep.

"I've called the police Bert, come back inside."

Fuck, there was no time to dispose of the dead minder... Though that would look like a drug related death, a hit from a rival gang.

"Who's there?" Shouted Bert. "I'm fed up with you bastards.... Selling drugs.... I've seen it going on."

Bert was the salt of the Earth type and also a damn nuisance. Simon briefly considered killing Bert and his wife, but that would achieve nothing if the police had been called. He put his mouth close to Johnny's ear.

"I'm going to carry you out of here." He hissed. "Stay limp and you live, struggle and I'll snap your neck.... Understand?"

"Yes."

Simon put Johnny Rose over his shoulder and ran as only a vampire can run. Fast and quiet, he kept to the shadows, easily carrying the drug dealer over his shoulder. There was a high fence around the train yard, which he jumped over with ease. Simon found a dark spot, between two Piccadilly Line trains, which seemed to have been left in the sidings for the night. He dropped Johnny onto the ground.

“Damn, that jump..... I think you broke two of my ribs.”

“At least you’re alive Johnny. Now tell me everything, right from the start. Tell me about the Irish guy, the woman with fangs and the box you got for them ?”

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Laura had grown to love her den near the large old listed building. She’d become so attached to her second home that she no longer brought her food home to feed on. It just didn’t feel right and there was the chance that spilled blood might attract vermin. She’d slept there a few times after the move to Hornsey, though she now trusted their new location and thought of it as home. Now she just came to her den to think and dream.

“Why can’t I ever talk to you Wiremi ?” She muttered.

He’d only claimed to be a seer, yet the gift had only arrived after he’d told her it might. Maybe a curse rather than a gift, as she still had no real understanding of the phantom beast she’d used to kill Susan Eversley the policewoman, a Van Helsing, her enemy. In her own mind Wiremi had become a beneficent ancient God, like Mother Theresa mixed up with Bob Geldof, with a pinch of Odin. Some little bit of Simon too of course, she’d always think of Simon as being a little bit special. He was the vampire who’d turned her, though she’d probably never been fully human to begin with.

“Tonight Wiremi....Let me find you. It matters.”

Laura rested her head back onto the arm of the leather sofa that had been so hard to get into her den. She listened to various creatures moving about in the grounds outside of the small annexe building that now meant so much to her.

“Gudara, Gudara.” She heard faintly and knew she was dreaming.

Gudara, the name for the Devourer in some long dead language, the name for the first feeders on blood. Vampires who seemed to predate mankind, which logic said was impossible. She wanted so many answers from Wiremi, but the seer seemed to be avoiding her. He was dead of course and had been for a very long time, but time didn’t seem to matter in the world of dreams.

“Gudara, Gudara.”

Laura was getting to know the ancient woodland very well, she’d visited it at least three times a week since the female Van Helsing had died. Always in her dreams of course and Wiremi had always ignored her. Always arriving from the same direction, drifting through some small fluffy clouds and across the forest. Laura now recognised a few landmarks, the huge dead tree, the hill with a flat top, a river glittering in the moonlight.

“Devourer.... You have come again.”

The words sounded encouraging, though she knew they didn’t mean the seer would acknowledge her presence. Her dream self crossed the river and descended towards a small village full of huts. A fire burned in the centre of the village, a fire bright enough to keep the night predators at bay.

“Come devourer, come.....”

Laura had form once her spectral feet touched the ground. It was her usual waking form, right down to the clothing she was wearing as she’d lain back on the sofa. As always Wiremi was sat on the ground, cross legged in front of the fire. He wasn’t alone, at least twenty ancient humans sat in a circle around the fire. They were like humans, but different. The jaw a little more pronounced, the

forehead raked back above the eyes. There might have been other differences to be seen if it hadn't been night and they weren't all sitting on the forest floor.

"Devourer come here."

The usual routine which left her feeling alone and frustrated. So many times Wiremi had called her forward and ignored her. Perhaps she was doing something wrong? So many nights spent wandering through the village like an ignored ghost, before waking in her den, or her bed in Hornsey. She walked towards Wiremi, sitting between him and the fire, the heat warming her back.

"Ahhh Laura.... I am glad you persevered."

"Wiremi, why have you been ignoring me."

"I keep forgetting there are no seers in your time Laura, no one to guide you. We talk in the world of dreams..... Which can be difficult. To those around me you are invisible and I am in a trance. They probably assume I'm communing with the spirits and they'd be right. In our time Laura, you are the phantom, the ghost."

"I can see how that can be difficult. It's just that there are so many things I need to know."

Strangely he looked less human when he smiled, there was something about his eyes. It was a kind smile though, the warm smile of a friend.

"The devourers, were they here before people Wiremi?" She asked. "How is that even possible?"

Without seeming to move he was right in front of her, their knees touching. He picked a tiny yellow flower from the forest floor and dropped it into her lap. Like so much else in that time, she had no idea why it might be significant.

"Curiosity is good Laura, but needing to know is different." Said Wiremi. "As there are no seers, you must become your own seer Laura Selway. The answer to your question is obvious once you think about it, though you don't need the information. Your first step is to decide what you really need to know and what doesn't really matter."

"That sort of makes sense..... Can I do that? Can I really be my own seer?"

"Come here Laura, to this place, every night if you can. Sit with others around the fire, close your eyes and let your thoughts drift. It will give you more....Focus on what matters. Try to sleep here if you can. Sleeping in the world of dreams is hard to master...It can lead to all sorts of possibilities. Now I must go, I am needed in my own time."

"The phantom devourer Wiremi.... Please, how do I control it?"

"That is easy Laura, it is your servant to command. You just need to summon your Gudara. Call it at night and it will come to you, it has to obey you. You will need it to survive the coming storm Laura."

"What storm?"

Laura woke up on the sofa, still asking the same question. She looked at her phone and it was five in the morning, time to be heading home to get ready for another day at the hotel. As she stood up, a small yellow flower fell to the floor. She picked it up, twirling the perfect tiny bloom between her fingers.

"That..... Is impossible." She muttered.

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It seemed things might not have been as bad as George had implied. Clara left the hospital in a far better frame of mind than when she'd arrived. The internal notification simply said that records might be inspected without warning, but so far only one bored looking manager had bothered to visit the incinerator room.

"It's hot, smelly and grubby George." She'd told him. "All that works in your favour. Dim the lights, take out a few fluorescent tubes to increase the feeling of grubby squalor. Your managers will soon find other nicer places to cause annoyance."

Clara thought it might take three months until business as usual was restored, which was nothing, a mere blink of an eye to a vampire. There had been a scare when there had been talk of finding George a trainee, an assistant to lift and carry. Luckily the cuts had taken care of that potential problem.

Clara was currently near Tom's car breakers in Erith and eager to get rid of the pink Saab. No thought of parking it a few streets away from their house and getting rid of it later. The damn car was brightest pink she'd ever seen. Anyone seeing it would remember where and who was in it. She called the number for Tom, expecting one of his minions to answer.

"Hello Tom, I thought you'd be at home and in bed."

"No, there's always football somewhere in the world and..... My wife isn't a great fan of the game, so I come here to watch it."

"I have something to drop off Tom, a slightly messy one."

"Fine, come up to the gate."

There had to be a camera, probably more than one, though she could never spot it. Neither could Simon, so they were having a bit of a competition to see who spotted it first. As the bumper of her Saab got close to the gate it opened. She drove round the back of the yard, parking the bright pink monstrosity between the workshop and a pile of car bodies waiting to be crushed. Tom was there by the time she was checking the boot for anything useful. He didn't know they were vampires of course. To Tom it was Simon who ran things, the Pablo Escobar of North London. In his eyes Laura and her were his molls, if gangsters still did have molls ?

"Christ ! That's pinker than Barbie." Said Tom.

"Now you can see why it has to go straight in the crusher."

"You mentioned it being messy."

"Some blood on the rear seat, just spray a bit of bleach in there."

"Thinning the competition a little ?"

"It's our life's work Tom.....Protecting our patch. Is it alright if Simon settles up later, this was an unexpected thinning of the herd."

"No problem..... How are you getting home ? Beetle can run you up to North London. He's a good lad, keeps his mouth shut."

Normally she'd have walked into the centre of Erith and found somewhere still open and busy. A club, a restaurant, even a Kebab place with a few people spilling onto the pavement. She'd stand there for a while, mixing with the crowd, before calling a cab. Clara was tired though and she remembered that Beetle was fairly taciturn.

"That'd be great Tom, I just need to look the car over."

"Fine, come to the office when you're ready."

It was a habit born out of necessity. A habit carried on, even though they were now fairly comfortable. Vampires tended to live off the land, taking anything valuable their prey didn't need anymore. Clara found an envelope containing five hundred pounds in the glove compartment.

"What were you going to use this for Jenny ?" She muttered. "I suppose it will always be a mystery."

Satisfied that the car had given up all its secrets, she wandered towards the office.

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Johnny Rose was breathing a little strange, he probably had worse damage than just cracked ribs. Simon could easily leap a thirty foot set of gates, but it must have given Johnny one hell of a jolt as they'd landed. Simon just hoped he told him everything he knew before dying.

"Damn... Fuck ! I just coughed up blood. I need a hospital."

"Talk and I'll take you to one, I promise."

"The Irish guy found me one night, asking about some Chinese herbs. I used to carry them in my stock, but the kids just want the pills, the designer drugs they make in Eastern Europe. No one wants expensive herbs that just give you a bit of a buzz.... I told him."

"What did he say then ?" Asked Simon.

"Just something about his Queen demanded them and I needed to order them. I just told him to sod off or I'd get Niko to hurt him a little. Poor Niko, there was no need to kill him."

Johnny had to be badly hurt, something busted up in his chest or guts. There was a steady trickle of blood coming out of his mouth.

"I assume he didn't take your advice about sodding off ?"

"No, he came back with this dark haired woman. Quite small, she looked almost shrivelled up. The Irish guy introduced her as his queen..... Crazy bastard."

"Did either of them mention proper names ?"

"No, she talked to him as though he was a retarded toddler and he grovelled.... Yes my queen this, no my queen that. All a bit of a joke until she broke Niko's wrist. She did it so easily, as if it was nothing to her.... Imagine that.... Though I suppose you can do that too."

"So you ordered the Chinese herbs ?"

Johnny was coughing so badly that Simon had to be patient, waiting for him to be able to speak again.

"Yeah, I got her the herbs and the Irish guy paid for them..... It was her though, after she broke Niko's wrist. She threatened me, told me she'd rip my throat out if I didn't get what she wanted.... Fangs she had as she threatened me, fangs just like yours."

"Do you know where she lived ?"

No good Johnny Rose was dead. Simon didn't need to check for a pulse or breath, he just knew. It was a vampire thing, knowing if a human was food or just so much dead meat.

There were sirens now and blue lights on the other side of the perimeter fence. They'd find Niko's body and begin a search that was certain to spread out and include the rail yard.

"Hmmmmm I think you died after a beating by a rival gang Johnny." He muttered.

Tempting to kick the body about a bit to add authenticity to the idea, but the cops were good at knowing what damage was caused after death. Simon left the dead drug dealer where he was. He vanished into the shadows and ran the length of the rail yard, before jumping over the fence where it was closest to his car.

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