

## London's Night Stalkers

### Chapter 4 – Travelling North

**“When we get home I’ll teach you a few tricks I learned killing for the Medici.” He said. “No cops though, no going after Van Helsing. Agreed ?”**

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Simon hadn’t intended putting it off, things had just turned out to be so hectic. Anthony had given him a few days off, but then increased his monthly sales targets. Then there had been all the organising and packing for their trip to see Daniel. True, Clara had done most of the organising, but it had still thrown his life into turmoil. The day before they were due to drive to Aberdeen and he still hadn’t told Patsy he was leaving London for a week, maybe two.

“Why aren’t we flying ?” Laura had asked. “It’ll take all day to drive there.”

“Daniel might not be there.” Clara had told her. “Taking the car means we can find a hotel to stay at, while we wait for him to return.”

“Couldn’t you call him before we leave ?”

Clara had given him a smile and let him tell Laura a bit more about Daniel. It seemed he’d been given the job of explaining how eccentric Daniel could be.

“Call him and he definitely won’t be there.” He’d told Laura. “He likes Clara though, so we’re fairly certain he’ll let us in.”

“Oh !”

Laura hadn’t been impressed and part of Simon hoped Daniel was off on one of his trips to wherever he went. Simon had decided to leave work early and take the Piccadilly Line to Southgate and wait for Patsy outside her college. A mistake of course, he realised after sending her the text.

‘I’m outside by the bus stop – fancy a late lunch ?’

She was bound to have friends who might not know about him, her regular crowd to eat with.

Suddenly he forgot about looking as though he was in his mid-twenties and felt every one of his seven hundred and forty one years.

‘Gr8 that’ll B fun. On my way.’

She’d skipped half a lecture to meet him once before, coming across London to have a meal in Shoreditch. This was the first time he’d come anywhere near her college life. A few minutes and he saw her, recognised her walk among a crowd of students. He had no idea about her timetable and assumed a lecture had just ended. He waved and she waved back, before crossing the road.

“Wow this is nice.” She said. “Good timing, I’m starving.”

“Where’s a good place to eat ?” He asked.

She looked around, waving at two girls who waved back.

“Unless you fancy being interrogated by my friends,” she said, “we should walk for a while. There’s a decent Pizza place on Chase Side.”

“Do they know about me ?” He asked. “Your college friends.”

“Gina does and a few others. They all know I’m seeing someone. Do you need to hurry back to work or anything ?”

“No, I’m off for work for a while. That’s really why I wanted to see you.”

There was a wariness in her eyes, suspicions about his motives of course. There would always be suspicions about his motives and any excuses not to see her. Eventually it would all be too much for

her and she'd find someone less complicated, someone not already in a relationship. They looked at the menu in the pizza place window.

"They do a fantastic veggie calzone." Said Patsy.

Simon waited until they'd been served with drinks and ordered their food, before telling her his piece of news.

"I meant to tell you days ago." He said. "But things have been so hectic at work. I'm going away for a few days, maybe a week or so. It's one of those family things."

"When are you going?"

"Tomorrow, driving up to Aberdeen."

"Aberdeen! You don't sound very Scottish."

Damn, he hadn't intended to explain things in detail. Patsy was normally as taciturn as a guy, it was a large part of her appeal.

"It's an uncle with a wise head on his shoulders." He said. "Lives near Aberdeen and might be able to help out my cousin."

She was smiling at him while they waited for their food to be cooked. They had been warned that it might take a while.

"I understand Simon, these things happen. It's still fun, so I will carry on seeing you when you get back."

"Good."

He meant it.

"I didn't think you drove." She said.

"I don't, the car belongs to....."

She had her hand up, stopping him from speaking.

"Tell me her name and you'll tell me other things about her. I might start to feel guilty about seeing you Simon and break up with you. No names, no details."

He simply nodded at her, relieved that the waiter chose that moment to turn up with two delicious looking veggie calzones.

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Clara was packing her essentials for the trip, which tended to be most of the black and beige clothing from what she thought of as her 'urban wardrobe.' Three pairs of trainers, just in case there was a situation where they became muddy or bloody and the inevitable two dozen pairs of knickers.

"A girl can never pack too many clean knickers." She muttered.

"Sorry?" Called Laura.

"Nothing, just muttering about my underwear."

Laura was packing too and seemed to be taking every scrap of clothing she owned. Not that she owned much, it would only loosely fill two cloth holdalls. Laura clumped down the stairs and dropped her bags in the hallway.

"Are you home tonight?" Laura asked.

"Yes, Simon is stopping to get an Indian takeaway on the way home. He always buys enough to feed about six people. I assumed you'd be eating with us."

Laura hadn't walked into her room. Clara was getting to know the new addition to their house and keeping her distance meant that Laura was feeling awkward about something.

"Out with it Laura?" She said.

"I fancy the Indian food, but then I'm going out to feed properly. As you said, I need this one to be a lone female."

Clara put about three bras into the bag on her bed and zipped it closed.

“Good, you need to do this.” Said Clara. “Do you want me to come with you ?”

“No, I’ve been planning it all week. I need to do it all by myself, but I will need your help to dispose of the body.”

“Fine, call me when you need me.”

Clara had been talking something over with Simon, something they’d been talking about ever since Laura had moved in.

“Are you happy here Laura ?” She asked.

“Yes, very. I’m not hunting alone because I don’t like you, it’s just.....”

“No, no, I understand that. There’s something else Simon and I have been talking about and we were waiting to see if you became a little..... Restless. We vampires are normally solitary creatures.”

“I’m not restless Clara, not at all. I love living with you and Simon.”

“And we love having you here. Daniel is going to find that very strange and he’s bound to come up with a theory to explain it. Anyway, Simon has been doing well at work and you’re now working. We were thinking about buying you a car.”

Laura entered her room and hugged her.

“Oh wow, that would be brilliant.”

“Nothing too expensive of course, but now there are three of us, it makes sense to have a second vehicle. Tom in Erith is always trying to sell us a van of one kind or another, though I’m sure he can find you a reliable hatchback.”

“I quite like the sound of a van.” Said Laura. “It’ll be cool, like the A team.”

“Oh, it’ll probably be quite old and a little battered.”

It was no good, Laura was happy and almost skipping around the room.

“I like the idea of a van Clara and it’ll be good for the disposals.”

“Once we get back from Scotland I’ll talk to Tom. Just don’t expect anything too fancy.”

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Laura had been planning it out all week, though mostly in her head. She’d taken the Tube north to Cockfosters and walked the streets for a few hours one night. A maze of houses in quiet suburban streets, it was perfect for what she had in mind. There were distinct advantages to being a female vampire. She could follow women home from Cockfosters Tube, without them showing the slightest concern.

“Women are harmless, right !” Clara had told her, several times.

Laura sat at a bus stop for a while, watching the people walking out of the Tube station. Several guys looking at her, easy stuff, but it had to be a woman this time. Eventually she spotted a woman on her own, walking as though she’d had a drink somewhere between work and home.

“Drunks are easy.” Simon had told her. “Though you might be a little light headed for a while, after feeding on one.”

The woman looked about forty, dumpy and a little dishevelled. She was also carrying a heavy bag, which was twisting her over to the right. Laura seriously doubted if she was heading home for a romantic meal with her man.

“Always make sure they live alone.” Clara had told her.

Eventually the woman stumbled over a curb and dropped her bag. Laura went to the rescue, steadying her new friend and picking up her bag.

“Are you alright ?” She asked. “The way the council leaves these curbs. Someone should sue them.”

“Yes, I went over full length last winter.”

The woman was quite pretty close up, though her dark hair was a bit greasy.

"I know you." Said Laura. "I'm sure I've seen you with that hunky husband of yours. You live in Church Way don't you?"

The woman laughed, quite a pleasant laugh.

"No, I live in Belmont Close and my hunky husband now lives with some slut in Watford."

"I don't live far from Belmont. Let me help you."

"I'll be fine now."

"I'm walking that way. At least let me carry your bag, it looks so heavy."

The woman agreed and quickly became quite talkative. Her name was Judy and she worked as the office manager for a local building company.

"The boss is a swine, but aren't they all?"

"Oh yes!" Agreed Laura.

Judy lived in a newish house on a private estate and didn't object when Laura carried her bag right up to the front door. Laura had intended to wait for her chosen victim to open the front door and simply push them inside. Violence of any kind in the street was risky though and proved to be unnecessary.

"Thank you." Said Judy. "Do you fancy a cup of tea?"

The kitchen was clean, even a breakfast bar with chrome plated stools. Judy unpacked the bag while the kettle boiled. Lots of chilled ready meals and quite a few tins. It reminded Laura of how she'd lived, when she'd been on her own. Cat food at the bottom of the bag, it seemed she was about to make a cat an orphan. Judy made their tea, before putting some of the cat food in a bowl.

"Suki! Dinner time!"

Suki was a quite ordinary looking short haired cat, with more colours than it seemed right for one cat to have. Brown with spots of orange and a white chin and paws, a real mixture.

"Oh, she's gorgeous." Said Laura.

"Yeah, had her years."

It was all so easy. Judy sat on the stool next to her and Laura grabbed her, gripping her firmer than any human could. No sound, not a murmur as she pulled Judy towards her and sank her fangs into her neck. Even Suki ignored her owner being killed, as she carried on eating.

"Take your time," Clara had told her, "a good kill should be savoured."

Her human emotions were leaving her, as Clara had told her they would. Judy was just food, there were no negative emotions about killing her. Twenty minutes she took over feeding, enjoying every drop of blood that passed through her throat. As Judy's heart stopped, Laura stopped feeding, though she did lick clean the neck wounds she'd caused.

"Thank you Judy, you were delicious."

Judy was lowered to the floor and a wad of kitchen towel pushed into each wound on her neck.

Laura was determined the kill was going to be as clean and perfect as she could make it. Money and valuables next, Clara had impressed her on how important it was to live off the land.

"They don't need it anymore!" Clara had told her.

The worn leather purse was in a side pocket on the bag. A few credit cards and forty pounds folded up in the centre compartment. Laura quickly transferred the money to her own purse and left the credit cards alone. Simon had given her a few burglary tips;

"Everyone thinks they're the first and only person to hide cash in their washing machine." He'd told her. "I once found over a grand in one."

Suki rubbed up against her legs as she rummaged among the dirty underwear in the washing machine. There was a blue leather purse, containing five hundred pounds in twenty pound notes. Laura smiled and stroked Suki for a while.

“Where next puss ? Anything in the lounge worth having ?”

Laura was on a roll now, determined to find any other small valuables in the house. Jewellery maybe, or more ready cash hidden in a drawer. She picked up Suki, who seemed unconcerned at the death of her owner and carried her into the lounge. There was a nice new Ipod in the docking station on the sound system. Laura picked it up and put it in her pocket.

She never saw the door opening from the bedroom down the hallway, or heard the sound of footsteps. She should have of course, but she'd been too busy looking for shiny gadgets to steal.

“I couldn't sleep. Is my mum in the kitchen ?”

A girl of about twelve in pyjamas, still rubbing the sleep out of her eyes. If it had been a man in the lounge, she'd have been screaming. A woman though and carrying Suki, had to be a friend of her mum's.

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They were watching a found footage horror film on Netflix, when her phone rang. 'Laura' it said on her phone, as she carried it into the hall.

“Did everything go well ?” She asked.

“Oh, Clara, such a mess ! Such a fucking mess !”

“Calm down and tell me the address ?”

Laura told her the house number in Belmont Close and that it was just a few minutes walk from Cockfosters Station.

“I can be there in about twenty minutes Laura.”

“You taught me so well and I forgot to ask one simple question. Such a mess !”

“It's probably not as bad as you think. It never is Laura.”

“Oh, this is as bad as it gets. Do you like cats ?”

“Why ?”

“I just don't think I can kill Suki.”

“Crap Laura ! Have you been drinking ?”

“No. I think I'm going mad though, please get here quickly.”

Clara leant into the lounge, where Simon was still watching the horror film.

“Laura is going on about a mess of some kind. Can you do me a favour ?”

“Sure, what ?”

“Find a map on the net of the area around Cockfosters Tube and print it out for me. One that shows a Belmont Close. I'm changing into my cleaning up blood and gore clothes.”

The holdall containing her decorating clothes hadn't made it back into her car and was still next to her wardrobe. Jeans, top and trainers, all stained forever with a lilac paint they'd used on the lounge. Clara changed into the clothes, which could be burned if the mess was really bad. By the time she was back downstairs, Simon was handing her a map.

“Two streets from the station.” He said. “Do you want me to come with you ?”

“If we both turn up, it looks like we don't trust her.” She replied. “I can handle it, probably nothing a mop and bucket can't put right.”

Simon didn't need much encouragement to return to the comfort of their sofa. Clara drove north at the fastest speed she could get away with. She was willing to risk a fine from a camera, but not being pulled over. She found the street quite easily, there was even space to park a little way down the

road. Laura must have been looking out for her, the door opened as she approached the house. Nothing was said until they were inside with the door closed.

"Are you alright ?" Clara asked. "Your phone call worried me a little."

"I'm a lot better now. I think Judy must have drunk a lot more than I realised."

"Avoid feeding on alcoholics, the side effects can be unpleasant."

The kitchen looked clean and tidy, a body laid out on the floor. Far from being a mess, there wasn't a trace of blood and Laura had even plugged the holes in the woman's neck.

"This must be Judy ?" She asked.

"Yes."

"If you call this messy, I dread to think what you'd have thought of some of my early kills."

A multi-coloured cat entered the kitchen and began to rub itself against her legs. A cat wanting to be petted is impossible to ignore, so Clara rubbed the animal's head.

"Rare, cats and dogs normally avoid us." She said. "Unless you get them very young, so that get used to your aura, or whatever it is they sense. Still best to avoid pets though, with our lifestyles."

"Yes, I know I can't keep her."

"So, where is this mess ?" Asked Clara.

Laura took her through an immaculate lounge, along a short corridor and into a small bedroom. It was only lit by a nightlight plugged into a floor socket, but that light was enough. The girl on the bed had the pallor of those freshly drained of blood. Skinny, though all young girls seemed keen on being skinny.

"How old do you think ?" Asked Laura. "I thought twelve or so. If I'd just asked her if she had children....."

"She's small, but I'd say ten or eleven." Answered Clara. "Don't torture yourself over it Laura. Start interrogating people about their lives and they'll get nervous."

"Has it happened to you ?" Laura asked.

"Unexpected people in the house you mean ? Yes, I had one guy who took me home for a threesome, only he never told me his plans. I was just dropping his body onto the lounge carpet, when a naked girl came out of his bedroom. Simon even had to kill a cop once."

"A Van Helsing ! What happened ?"

"We'll be driving for hours tomorrow, ask him about it then."

Clara had several pairs of latex gloves in her pocket. She put some on and handed several pairs to Laura.

"The police will take the disappearance of Judy and her kid seriously." Said Clara. "Wear these and change them if they split. We can drunk walk Judy to the car. I'm guessing seeing her being helped to walk won't be a rare sight to her neighbours. The kid is small, we can fold her up into a suitcase. If anyone sees us, which is very unlikely if we're quick. It'll look like Judy is going away for a well overdue spell in rehab."

Laura put on the gloves, making the usual snapping sound as they went over her wrists.

"Ok, what do you want me to do ?" She asked.

"A suitcase, a big one. Look on top of wardrobes and in storage cupboards. There must be a large foreign holiday case somewhere."

Laura went to look for a case, leaving Clara with the dead girl. Like most predators, vampires didn't target children if there were adults to feed on. Accidents happened though and it wasn't going to be that hard to sort out the problem. She pushed the girl on her side and pushed her knees up to her

chest. Good, rigor mortis hadn't stiffened the limbs yet. She had the child folded up completely, by the time Laura returned with a large suitcase.

"It was on top of her wardrobe, covered in dust."

"Help me get her in it."

She easily fitted inside the case, wrapped up in the top sheet from her bed. Clara carried the case out to near the front door.

"Did you take anything they owned?"

"Only some cash and an Ipod."

"The cash is fine, but wipe the Ipod and put it back where you found it. Even a full reset doesn't wipe everything, each one has a unique ID code. Now we wipe not just where you touched, but everywhere you might possibly have touched. No one cares about a missing pervert, but the police will get excited about this one."

They cleaned and wiped for nearly an hour, until everything glinted and shone in a way it probably hadn't for years. When she was happy they'd left no trace of Laura being there, Clara turned her attention to the dead body of Judy.

"A coat, maybe a headscarf too." She said. "Poor Judy hiding her face in shame. Then the drunk walk routine out to the car. Even a fake low volume conversation with her, just in case we're seen."

"Supposing someone remembers your car registration?" Asked Laura.

Clara looked at the clock in the kitchen.

"Late enough for all good people to be in their beds." She said. "Yet not late enough for them to worry about a car door closing. Simon and I have several regular routines to get bodies out of houses and no one has challenged us, ever. As to the car number.... Ask Daniel about the age of digital tyranny and he'll go on for hours about it."

They had Judy upright on a kitchen chair, looking almost as good as she had in life.

"Tell me a bit? Why use a car registered to you?"

"Just a few broad ideas, Daniel can fill in the gaps. Once you could buy an old car and as long as it had a tax disc in the window, you were fine. Any tax disc, I used to steal them off motorbikes and change the details. If you collided with anyone, you just left the car and ran. Never registered to you of course, the guy who owned it five years previously probably ended up with a bored cop on his doorstep. Now everything is different."

"How different? You and Simon never tell me everything!"

"Because it's not normal for one of us to be this curious!"

Laura looked upset, which hadn't been her intention.

"Sorry, but most of us just pick this stuff up as we go along. You have an immortal lifetime to get it right. Even allowing for accidents, you must have a few hundred years."

"Just tell me a little about digital tyranny and I'll shut up, promise."

"The police can now quickly look everything up. No insurance, they'll know. Dodgy license used to get insurance, they'll know. Any unpaid fines, they'll know. In short, driving a car that isn't a hundred percent legit, is a really good way to get your collar felt by the Van Helsings. Simon and I came up with ideas about plausible reasons for my car being in certain places at certain times. We even agreed to vanish if the police questioning started to look serious. None of that had ever happened."

"Never?!"

"No, never. Look as though you belong and people ignore you. Plus we're a couple of pretty girls and we know what they are, don't we?"

"Yes, harmless."

"Indeed, many millennia of social stereotyping has worked in our favour. Come on, we need to get Judy into the car, then her case."

They saw no one at all, as they put Judy on the back seat of the car and the suitcase in the back. The car ran out of the front door, before they could close it.

"For the best." Said Clara. "I can guarantee some dotty old lady will feed her."

"Then George at the hospital?" Asked Laura.

"Yes, it's going to be a long night."

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It was only the second time that Laura had met George and she didn't like him any better than the first time. He was a big man, who easily lifted poor dead Judy onto a trolley.

"Nice to see you again Miss Laura."

Laura smiled at him rather than answering. George was big and strong, yet something about him told her he was unwell. He was obviously totally under Clara's control, but who wouldn't do anything for the reward of immortality?

"The case too George." Said Clara.

"No problem Miss Clara."

He opened the case for some reason, yet didn't make any comment about the contents. Last time Clara had left before the incineration, but this time they waited while Judy went into the flames. Next the suitcase containing the dead child. Laura still didn't know her name, but that was probably for the best.

"You're a good friend George." Said Clara. "Your loyalty won't be forgotten."

"Always happy to be of use."

He actually kissed the back of Clara's hand, like a thrall in a Hollywood vampire movie. No spell had been cast in him though, apart from the promise of living forever. Ten years he had though, until he went into his own furnace.

"Maybe sooner if his health becomes an issue." Clara told her during the drive home.

The house in Wood Green now felt like home, as Laura climbed into her bed. Only for two hours though, before getting up to travel the twelve hour drive to Aberdeen.

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Simon was the only one to have had a proper night's sleep, yet he still slept for hours, as Clara drove them north. He had listened to the details of the previous evening and wondered why Laura had made such a fuss.

"You handled it well Laura." He'd said. "Never leave a witness alive."

Laura had prodded him awake with a question, when they were somewhere in the region of Leicester Forest;

"What's wrong with George? Clara said you know."

"His chest, a degenerative disease like Pleurisy. Not likely to kill him, but he'll spend his old age connected to an oxygen cylinder."

"No wonder he's so keen on being turned."

He'd been left in peace then, until being woken up for a toilet and food stop at the Trowell Services. The idea had been to grab a sandwich in a plastic carton and carry on driving. Then they'd all smelt the wonderful food in the restaurant area.

"We said no stops." Said Clara.

"Oh please, just one proper meal." Pleaded Laura.

"An extra hour won't make much difference." He added.

They all chose something different to put on their tray, Simon couldn't resist a full roast beef dinner. Expensive of course, but the motorway did provide a steady stream of customers with nowhere else to eat.

"Hmmm proper food." He said.

"You ate an Indian takeaway last night." Said Clara. "Enough to feed a family of six."

"I think he must have hollow legs." Said Laura.

Trowell Services seemed a popular stop for coaches, they'd walked past several on the way from the car park. It was as if someone had sounded a bell, when a good fifty people got up and left at the same time.

"A couple of coaches getting back on the road." Said Clara.

From being a busy restaurant, they now had an area almost to themselves. Laura was giving him her inquisitive look, questions were about to be asked. He inwardly cringed.

"Now we've a bit of privacy." Said Laura. "Clara told me you once killed a policeman."

There had been several, if you thought of various local militias as the police. He looked blankly at Clara, hoping she'd narrow his mental search down a little.

"In the sixties Simon, the unexpected police car near Rochester." She said.

His memory worked quite well once he had a few key points to pull everything into place.

"I remember, turned up out of the blue in what were known as Panda cars, an old Morris Minor that you could outrun on a moped."

He chuckled remembering doing just that once, though he had eventually driven through woods to avoid the chasing Panda cars.

"Tell her properly Simon, or poor Laura's head will explode." Said Clara.

Laura was looking at him over a fork full of lasagne and did seem a little fed up.

"Sorry, I'll try to put in all the details, but it did happen a good fifty years ago, maybe longer." He said. "We rented a crappy but cheap house near Gravesend in Kent, for most of the sixties."

"Nice house though." Said Clara. "Damp and freezing in the winter, but we had some good times in Gravesend."

"I've heard the town is becoming a bit gentrified now, but some of it was almost medieval in the sixties, especially down by the Thames. "He said." Old warehouses, lots of itinerant people moving through the town, pubs full of tarts. It was a brilliant place to be a hungry vampire."

"Why did you move?" Asked Laura. "Were the Van Helsing's on your tail?"

He was still digesting his roast beef and looked at Clara for help.

"It's Laura's new name for the police."

"Oh right, sounds a fair name for them though, pretty cool. No, the Van Helsing's never bothered us. A developer bought the entire street to build lots of tiny modern houses."

"You're drifting away from the bored housewife and the cop." Said Clara.

"Yes I am, sorry. I used to hunt for a variety of different victims, but bored housewives were by far the easiest. I used a variety of pubs and clubs, but that night had been a grubby old tavern near the river."

"What was it called?" Asked Laura.

"I have no idea, or the name of the middle aged lady I fed on that night. It has been a long time, though I think the pub might have been The Jackdaw Tavern, but the woman's name has vanished from my mind."

"Simon!" Said Clara.

“Ok, it was a long time ago and I haven’t told the story that often. I picked her up, or rather she picked me up. A bored housewife pretending to be a divorcee, though the ring marks were still on her finger. Quite nice looking for her age and keen as hell to find somewhere quiet to have some fun in the back of her car. A Jaguar it was, fairly new with leather seats that were more comfortable than our sofa.”

“So you remember the car, but not her name.” Said Laura.

He shrugged, there didn’t seem to be an acceptable way to answer her. He was a guy and really into Jags back then.

“I had a place picked out, near the quarry we’ve been putting bodies in since the fifties.” He continued. “Rachel wouldn’t go there though. Yes, it came back to me then, her name was Rachel.”

“Don’t expect a prize.” Said Clara.

“Anyway, she insisted on driving us towards the A2 and a lane in the middle of nowhere. Not far from the airstrip where all the small private planes buzz about. Nice and quiet, but a long way from anywhere and there were no cellphones then. I almost considered letting her live.”

“Wow !” Said Laura.

It sounded like sarcasm, but he let it go as he wasn’t sure.

“In the end I was hungry and knew of a flooded cellar not more than a mile away. A long way to carry a body, but I was pretty hungry. I’d just finished feeding, when two headlights came on behind her car.”

“The cop ?” Asked Laura.

“Yes, though I didn’t know that until I got out of her jag. There he was, stood next to his little blue and white car. All on his own and demanding that I stayed where I was. They had radios in those days, but no cameras. I took a chance and waited for him to walk up close, before killing him.”

“Did you feed on the Van Helsing ?!”

“No, I hit him. Just once and very hard, an upper cut to his chin. Broke his neck, he fell backwards like a felled tree. Strange, I can still remember him lying there with a look of amazement in his dead eyes.”

“What did you do with him ?”

“I decided to leave him there, as a mystery for the police. I opened all four doors on the jag, as though a whole crowd of ruffians had run off into the night. Wiped anything I might have touched and dumped Rachel’s body into the flooded cellar. For all I know she’s still there.”

“It was a mystery.” Said Clara. “It was in all the papers and on the TV for days. No one knew why the police officer had driven to where he was killed.”

“Not that I’m encouraging copacide.” He said. “They have a lot of good technology these days. The best way to handle the Van Helsing is to avoid them and run away if they get too close.”

“Oh I will, but still..... You got one !”

He liked the look of hero worship on her face, but hoped she didn’t attempt to emulate him. There really was a wild look in her eyes.

“When we get home I’ll teach you a few tricks I learned killing for the Medici.” He said. “No cops though, no going after Van Helsing. Agreed ?”

“Agreed. I’m not stupid.”

He might have believed her if that look had left her eyes.

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It took nearly fourteen hours to get to the small holding near Aberdeen. There had been a flooded road and a couple of diversion for no reasons she could see. Laura hated Scotland, even though she hadn't seen that much of it.

"Is it always dark here?" She asked.

"It is night." Said Simon. "Don't insult Scotland, it upsets Daniel. He seems to love the contrast between constant rain and freezing cold."

"Shush Simon, don't teach her to upset Daniel." Said Clara.

"I think Daniel was born feeling pissed off about something."

Laura had a good stretch as she examined the farmhouse she'd be living in for a week or so. Not the pile of moss covered stones she'd been expecting. Two floors and an attic with windows, all looking well maintained and above all.... Dry. Clara walked up to the door and hammered on it three times with a clenched fist.

"Daniel ! It's Clara." She yelled.

It took a few minutes for the door to be opened. He filled the door, a great beast of man who looked to be half bear and half something else. Little about him immediately indicated him to be human. She was glad that Simon had warned her about his strange appearance. His voice sounded kind though and he obviously liked Clara.

"Come in, come in." He said. "All of you, come inside."

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