

London's Night Stalkers

Chapter 5 – Parish of Udney

“Best if you find things out for yourself.” Added Clara. “Why not write a journal, a hand written, locked one of course. Maybe eventually turn it into your own dark bible.”

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Simon had his own vivid recurring dreams. Most of the time he knew he was dreaming and actually enjoyed the memories. Their kind were drawn to wars as moths are drawn to the flame. He relished dreams of the days when men faced each other with steel and shield. He'd often been wounded in battle, but vampires healed far more quickly than humans. There was the chance an unlucky blow might cut his heart in two, an arrow pierce his skull. He'd be killed then of course, just as dead as any human suffering the same dreadful wounds. Despite the risks he'd actually loved warfare, maybe because of the risks. They did say it was only possible to really appreciate life, if you'd faced death. Simon had not only faced death, he'd yelled in its face and challenged it to do its worst.

His dream switched from fighting with swords and axes, to the industrial scale killing of the First World War. He'd volunteered to be one of the first sent to the battlefields of France and fought hard, right through to the armistice in nineteen eighteen. Dreams of the trenches were rarely pleasant, bad enough to make sure he didn't volunteer for the second leg in nineteen thirty nine. “Warrior training counted for nothing.” He'd once told Clara. “Skill can't save you if you're climbing over barbed wire with a German machine gunner firing at you.”

Simon had faced the German Maxim guns several times, the Maschinengewehr 08, which fired five hundred rounds a minute at men wearing just a khaki uniform. It had been carnage, leaving him with three bullets in his chest during one particularly insane charge into no man's land. He hadn't died though, his body healed and pushed out the bullets in just two days. Had he wanted to die ? Simon was never sure then and he still wasn't sure. He'd behaved like a wounded tom cat, finding somewhere quiet to sleep, while his body either healed, or he died. Simon had lived and he'd survived several other ghastly wounds. None of those experiences caused his recurring dreams, those were all about clearing tunnels of German sappers.

When it was realised that charging enemy guns was suicide, the generals had decided to dig down and tunnel under the enemy guns. Both sides did it, creating long tunnels to come up in the enemy trenches or used to plant massive amounts of explosives. Sometimes parts of the tunnels collapsed, enabling British troops to enter and fight the Germans in the darkness of the tunnels. Simon had volunteered for one mission to clear out tunnels discovered under their trench. He rarely volunteered for anything, there were unwritten rules to surviving as a vampire.

‘Never get noticed.’

‘Never run for any public office.’

‘Never be a bloody hero.’

All the rules boiled down to not being noticed. Famous people were seen by the public, not ageing was going to be talked about. Simon fancied a spot of tunnel warfare though, he had a few advantages in the darkness. Firstly no one was too worried about hygiene, their unwashed bodies would tell him where the enemy soldiers were, as though they were calling out to him. Secondly he had far better night vision than a human. Vampires couldn't see in complete stygian darkness, but there was likely to be some light in the tunnels, even if only candle light. The main reason he'd volunteered was purely personal, the chance to feed on those he killed, as long as he was careful.

German or British, they'd all taste the same in the dark. A hundred and fifty British soldiers had entered the tunnels and Simon had been one of the five to come out again.

He'd left his standard issue Lee–Enfield 303 rifle slung over his shoulder, realising the noise and muzzle flash would be disorienting. The dreams usually covered the last part of his journey, killing dozens of enemy soldiers, feeding until even his usually insatiable appetite for blood, was finally sated. Simon used just his sixteen inch bayonet and his fangs to cut through the enemy sappers. At the time he'd come out of the tunnels feeling happy, his hunger for blood satisfied. The dreams made him feel differently about the experience, causing him feelings of anxiety that could last for days.

"I feel as though I'm suffocating, trapped by their dead bodies." He'd once told Clara.

He'd stopped telling her about his dreams, becoming a tom cat again, hiding away and hoping his mind healed itself. It had been almost exactly a hundred years since he'd been in those tunnels under the trenches and if anything, his subconscious mind seemed to be finding it harder to cope, with every passing year.

Someone had begun using grenades at one point, bringing down whole sections of the tunnel ceiling. Fire too, as the wooden supports and planking began to catch fire. Clara had a fear of fire, understandable considering how her entire family had been killed. He had no such fear though, even the risk of being buried alive hadn't bothered him. Kill and feed, kill and feed were the only thoughts that had gone through his mind. That was then though, before the dreams indicated that part of his mind had been very scared indeed. Could vampires get posttraumatic stress disorder ? The dream carried on, with him moving through smoke filled tunnels, killing every enemy soldier he found. Eventually his uniform was caked in blood, his hunger satisfied. The dream hadn't finished with him though, pushing hundreds of faceless German soldiers at him. He used his bayonet to kill them as quickly as he could, but there were just too many of them. Stinking unwashed bodies and faces without eyes. So many bodies that they crushed him, held him pinned to the floor of the burning tunnel.

"Get off, get off me !"

He woke realising the words had only been in his head. No outward sign of stress, but Simon knew he'd feel anxious about stupid things for several days. Daniel had probably been the trigger for the hated dream, being under a strange roof, sleeping in a borrowed bed. Instead of Wood Green in North London, he was in Daniel's house near Pitmedden in the Scottish parish of Udny.

"Udny !" He'd once teased Daniel. "That sounds like a word in Klingon."

No Clara beside him, barely after dawn, yet he can hear her voice downstairs. Daniel was almost family to her though, she needed her quiet moments with him. Simon climbed out of bed and cursed the cold morning as he reached for his clothes. He looked through the bedroom window at the chilly, damp morning. Laura was outside in the garden, throwing food through the wire of the chicken coop. It seemed they'd both decided to give Clara some time with Daniel. Quality time was the awful modern expression.

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Clara hadn't slept well and Simon didn't help. He was probably dreaming about the various wars he'd fought in. His hands moved as though holding a weapon, he'd even hit her twice. When he started to mutter about darkness and fire, she gave up on sleep and pulled her dirty clothes back on.

"I thought I'd be the only one up at this time." She said.

"There are over forty animals to feed and water." Replied Daniel. "Getting up before dawn is part of my routine."

"Can I help?"

"Yes, be nice to have another pair of hands and someone to hold the lamp. You'll need a coat of course and.....Some shoes."

Her trainers were near the door, under the coat rack. Always an oil lamp with Daniel, his lifestyle was practically Amish, which contradicted his main way of earning money. She turned the lamp to a steady yellow glow and followed him out of the back door.

"How is the crap electronics market?" She asked.

"Cheap and nasty Clara, you know I prefer the term cheap and nasty."

Get him in a good mood and Daniel could be charming. Get him in a bad mood and it was best to give him space, a lot of space.

"What's the latest big seller?" She asked.

His phone line had a constant crackle, when he deigned to answer it. His internet connection was slow and poor, yet Daniel was an Ebay power seller. He'd once bought some cheap electronic devices that didn't work that well and sold them for a hundred percent profit on Ebay. He was good at it and his Ebay trading now earned him a nice income.

"Night lights that turn on and off by themselves." He replied. "Bought in a few thousand from China and they're selling quicker than last year's Lucky Cats."

"Our Lucky Cat is still on top of the microwave, though we took the battery out. It made a clunking sound after a while." She said.

"Would you like a couple of night lights? Guaranteed not to clunk."

Again the easy smile, if only the good moods lasted.

"Yes please Daniel, always keen on freebies."

He ignored the sheep, she'd helped him out a few times and knew his sheep needed very little care until lambing time.

"Little self-contained bundles of wool, that are as much trouble as a throw cushion. Until the spring of course, then I can be up all night with them." He'd told her.

They were heading towards his pride and joy, the pigs. Not a fancy breed or anything, just plain ordinary pigs, bred for meat. Daniel loved them though, becoming even more irritable when it was time for a few to go to the abattoir.

"You've extended their run." She said.

"And I bought in a few more, to strengthen then gene pool a bit. They can forage right through the orchard now. It means Gwen only has to worry about the chickens, if I'm away for a few days."

Clara had met Gwen a few times, a divorcee who ran a small holding with her grown up son. Daniel referred to her as his neighbour, though she lived about three miles away. Gwen was the opposite of Daniel, always a smile on her face. Simon called her the anti-Daniel, which was a good description. They helped each other out to cover vacations and illness. Clara suspected they might look after each other's needs in other ways, though she'd never broached the subject with Daniel.

"Free range is a boon to the modern small farm." Said Daniel. "Prices are better and they tend to look after themselves."

She watched, as two pigs came up to be fed whatever he'd brought with him in a sack he carried over his shoulder. Not kitchen scraps, that idea had gone out of use, too many ways to poison your livestock or infect them with something nasty. Only the best pig nuts for Daniel's pigs. He stroked them as they ate.

"I came all this way to talk to you about Laura." She said.

"Ah yes, Laura. There are three of you now, very unusual."

"I knew you'd say that, but we get on very well. I think of her as a sister."

Daniel rubbed the ears of a particularly large pig, which it seemed to find agreeable.

"Vampires are solitary predators Clara, highly territorial. Three of you hunting in one area will create a lot of missing people, enough to be noticed by the police."

"Laura calls the police the Van Helsings. She is aware of the need to avoid any contact with them."

"The Van Helsings, how apt." Daniel chuckled. "There were a few religious fanatics hunting vampires during the seventeenth century, but they didn't do any real damage. Your kind are hard to spot, if you spread your kills over a large enough territory."

"We will be careful Daniel; we're even buying Laura her own vehicle so that she can hunt in other parts of London."

"I once calculated that each vampire requires an urban territory of twenty five square miles to hunt without causing too many waves. That means the three of you needing to spread your kills out to everywhere within the M25. Even then, it's highly likely that you aren't the only vampires in London."

"We've dealt with territorial disputes before." She said.

Despite being so few in number, the vampire's main enemy was others of their kind. Move to a new city or a different part of town and you might well be entering the territory of a rival. A female vampire had broken into their house in Gravesend once, trying to kill Simon in his sleep. She might have succeeded, if Clara hadn't driven a kitchen knife deep into her heart. The look of surprise on the woman's face, as she'd realised two vampires lived together. Short lived surprise, there were advantages to living as a couple.

"Laura might be special." She said. "Strength almost beyond belief, she crushed a man's knee as though it was an eggshell. I felt the joint afterwards, the pieces of shattered bone rubbing together."

"Was the man healthy?"

"Healthy enough to live in a first floor flat with no lift. I thought of some kind of bone disease, but the man was fit and healthy, I'm sure of it. Laura seemed surprised that Simon and I didn't have the same skill."

"Anything else to indicate her being..... Special?"

"Simon turned her because she felt like one of us, before she became one of us. I know that sounds a bit out there, but his instincts are normally spot on."

"Vampires really existing is a bit out there Clara. I think it would be a good idea for me to run a few tests on Laura, with her permission of course."

"She won't object, Laura is obsessed with finding out more about vampires. She asks more questions than a toddler."

"A vampire with an insatiable curiosity, rare indeed. Come on, the goats need a few pig nut too."

"They eat those?"

"My dear Clara, goats will eat just about anything."

Just two goats, who seemed to be kept as pets rather than livestock. Daniel was stroking one, as Laura found them.

"I wanted to be useful." Said Laura. "I saw the scoop and their tub of food and fed the chickens. I hope that's alright?"

"Of course it is." Said Daniel. "They like being fed by visitors, who usually feed them more generously than I do. Clara was telling me you have lots of questions?"

"I do, hundreds of them! If you've the patience to answer them? I know Simon and Clara must be fed up with my constant stream of questions."

"I just wish I had more reliable answers for you." Said Clara.

"You're here for a while Laura." Said Daniel. "I will do my best to answer your questions. In return I'd like to run a few simple medical tests on you and take a few samples. Nothing too awful, Simon and Clara have put up with it many times."

No one likes medical tests, even vampires. Yet there was Laura smiling at him as though he'd offered to take her to Disneyland for her next birthday.

"Yes, that would be brilliant." She said.

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It was a well-lit spare bedroom, yet the chair and medical instruments made her think of a dank dungeon in a bad B movie. The man who'd abducted her had never used a scalpel on her, but seeing one on the tray and the restraints on the chair arms.....

"I'm not sure I can go through with this." Said Laura.

"Daniel was a real doctor once." Said Clara. "He won't hurt you."

"I was a practising doctor from eighteen fifty two, until eighteen seventy, a long time ago." Said Daniel. "Some of the tests will sting a little, but nothing agonising, I promise."

Laura hadn't really expected everyone to be there. It was nice to have her friends there to give support, yet it also made her feel like a specimen in a jar of formaldehyde. Laura sat in what looked like a dentist's chair, keeping her arms well away from the leather restraining straps.

"Laura was beaten by an abductor." Said Simon. "I found her chained to a wall, more dead than alive. I can hold her arm, rather than the straps."

She smiled at Simon, nodding at him. He'd seen her when she'd been completely vulnerable and had never hurt her.

"What are you going to do to me?" She asked.

"We'll start with a simple bleeding time test today and a small sample of your blood." Replied Daniel. "I will probably ask you to take further tests tomorrow."

Daniel placed some clean kitchen towel under her arm, before removing a brand new scalpel from its sterile packaging. He then swabbed her arm with something that smelled like surgical spirit.

"A very basic test, but one still used in major hospitals." Said Daniel. "I'll make a very shallow cut in your skin and time how long it bleeds for. That will indicate how fast your body can heal itself."

"What's the normal result?" She asked.

"For humans it varies from two to seven minutes."

"Mine is thirty seconds." Said Clara.

"Hold her arm please Simon." Said Daniel.

There was an instinctive need to jerk her arm away, as the scalpel cut a shallow groove into her skin. Simon held her arm firmly in place. Daniel wiped the wound with a tissue, showing her the bright red stain.

"When the tissue stops showing blood, I stop counting seconds."

Five seconds later he wiped again, showing her fresh traces of blood. The tissue at ten seconds came away clean and unstained.

"Wow, that's impressive." Said Simon.

"Vampires tend to be about thirty seconds." Said Daniel. "My own is about forty seconds. Yours is medically impossible and I wouldn't believe it, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. May I repeat the test?"

"Fine."

Another cut in her arm and once again it stopped bleeding somewhere between five and ten seconds. It seemed she was a medical wonder, a genuine marvel.

"I've always healed quickly." She said.

"Hmmm it might be that the vampire change enhanced something you already possessed." Said Daniel.

"It took her hours to come back from death." Added Simon. "A good three hours, maybe more."

Daniel watched the wound on her arm for a good five minutes, as it faded away to little more than a thin red line on her skin.

"Maybe it wasn't being turned that brought you back." Said Daniel. "Perhaps you'd have come back to life anyway."

"What does it all mean?" She asked.

"To be truthful, I have no idea. A few guesses and one glimmer of a theory, but nothing I'm willing to talk about, not yet. Your blood might give up a few secrets, once I get it under a microscope."

For an eccentric, who made a living selling junk electronics on Ebay, he had an impressive collection of medical kit. He began to open a sterile bag, which contained the usual paraphernalia for taking blood tests. Several small bottles, lots of sticky labels and a syringe.

"Wouldn't NHS blood tests have found anything strange?" She asked. "My doctor always seemed to be sending me for tests."

"There are times when the digital tyranny works in your favour."

Simon gave a loud groan and face palmed himself.

"Simon ! Behave !" Snapped Clara.

Daniel glared at Simon, but Laura still wasn't sure if their long running feud was genuine, or just a game they both enjoyed playing.

"Doctors want results fast and their managers want them done cheaply." Said Daniel. "Most blood tests are farmed out to huge private labs, who put everything through machines. Red blood cells, white blood cells, cholesterol, even the amount of vitamin D. All tested without a human ever taking a peek. It's probably been decades since a real human being, so much as looked at a blood test with their own eyes. Machines only see what they've been told to look for though, only count or analyse what they've been taught to understand."

"I see what you mean." Said Laura. "So if I've got half a dozen strange things about my blood, the machine doesn't know about...."

"It won't see them." Said Daniel. "Which is why vampires have been taken to hospital after traffic accidents, without the medical profession shouting 'vampire !' at journalists. I on the other hand, with my rather old microscope, just might spot something."

He hurt her more with the needle than the scalpel, drawing off about seven tiny bottles of her blood.

"Some I'll keep for my research." He said. "Most will be used for the usual everyday tests. One sample is going under the microscope before I go to bed tonight."

"I hope you find a few answers." She said. "Can I ask you something?"

"Yes, of course Laura."

"Do you think we've still got souls ? Vampires I mean ?"

Simon groaned again and Clara hit him, quite hard.

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The sex had been good, which was strange as they'd been trying not to make too much noise. Simon woke, his hand still on Clara's shoulder, stuck in mid-fondle. Clara liked to be fondled, especially

after really good sex. The sweat had dried on her back, he leant forward and tasted the salty residue left between her shoulder blades.

The problem with becoming fully awake and aware, was the knowledge that his bladder needed emptying. If he remained in deep sleep his bodily functions rarely bothered him, but wake up and his body seemed to almost turn traitor on him. The need for a pee wasn't going to let him go back to sleep. He climbed out of bed and looked at the almost complete darkness outside. In London there was always light outside, usually far too much of it for a night predator. In the parish of Udny things were very different, just total blackness once the moon had set.

Not quite total, a hill in the distance was illuminated by a low orange glow. Probably the sign on a small hotel, or a junction so dangerous that the council had decided to invest in a lone streetlight. Whatever the reason, the glow was the only light he could see for miles. He was thoroughly awake now and naked. No en-suite of course, the shared bathroom was at the other end of the hall. Laura might have seen some sights since becoming a vampire, but his balls swinging free hadn't been one of them. She'd probably be fast asleep, but he put on his boxer shorts anyway.

Simon saw Daniel as soon as he'd opened their bedroom door. He was crouched in the doorway of Laura's room, watching her as she slept. With his bed hair, he looked like a gigantic scruffy watchdog at her door. So intent on watching Laura, he didn't even hear Simon walking right up to him. Simon put his fingernails against the doorframe and gently rubbed them against the paintwork.

"Oh, Simon.... I....."

"Shush ! Make coffee while I pee."

Daniel went downstairs, moving quietly for a huge man in a dark house. Simon emptied his bladder and joined him in the kitchen, where Daniel was filling the coffee machine.

"Instant would have done."

"Foul stuff." Replied Daniel.

Simon waited until the coffee machine had finished making its hissing noises and they each had a cup of decent coffee.

"That was weird, even for you." He said. "Do you fancy her or something ? Clara thought that you and Gwen were looking after each other.... In that way."

"Christ ! Is it that obvious ? It's a strange community here, very Methodist, like going back to the forties, maybe the eighteen forties. Morals aren't the same as in London."

"Relax Daniel, Clara is good at spotting the signs. I'm sure Gwen's reputation is safe."

It was a bizarre conversation for two men who'd walked the planet for centuries. Simon still didn't really understand Daniel, just that he was important to Clara.

"So, why the early morning stalker routine ?" He asked.

"I looked at her blood in detail last night Simon and found some very strange anomalies."

"Well, she is a vampire."

"Oh yes, all the clear signs of that are there and the less well understood. High levels of Intracellular signal transduction molecules, high arsenic levels, but low calcium and....."

"Daniel, please, I'm not a medical student.... Give me the bottom line ?"

"To put it simply, labs tend to put down the huge increase in red blood cells as a sample error, without noticing the other indicators of vampirism. I found those changes in Laura, she is definitely a vampire."

"Was there ever any doubt Daniel ? She feeds on blood, Clara has watched her do it."

"She's also like me ! High dopamine and fluoride, very low glucose. Plus another half a dozen differences from human blood, which I thought were unique to me. She has them all !"

“And these differences are what has made you unnaturally long lived ?”

“To be honest, I have no idea. Hundreds of years of research and I just know I have different levels to human blood and a massive level of Lithium. It might all be a side effect of simply living far too long, rather than the cause.”

Simon sat back in the kitchen chair, letting the coffee work its magic on his sleepy brain. To him at least, there was only one conclusion to be made from what Daniel had told him.

“So, you’re saying I made the billion to one choice of picking one of the long lived, to turn into a vampire ?”

“Perhaps, but she’s also something else.”

“What is she ?”

“I don’t know Simon. Mankind was never meant to become so numerous, nine billion spread right across the planet. DNA is pretty good at error free duplication, but not perfect. I thought all the long lived were the same, but now I wonder. We might all be slightly different mutations and Laura might be one of those mutations. I must keep her here until I understand !”

Neither of them had noticed Clara by the kitchen door. Dressed in just her panties and his shirt, obviously looking for him, or drawn by the smell of coffee.

“No one is keeping her anywhere !” She yelled. “You heard Simon tell you what was done to her. Laura isn’t a lab specimen to be analysed, she’s family. You don’t fuck about with family Daniel.”

“But Clara, this is a one in a billion opportunity.....”

Simon let them rant at each other, while he poured two cups of coffee. One for himself and another for Laura. He could have told them about hearing her footsteps on the stairs, but decided not to. It was time for Laura to be given the truth and she was probably hearing much of it already. Daniel was just yelling about high lithium levels, when Laura walked into the kitchen. Simon gave her the cup of coffee and simply winked at her.

“I’m sorry Laura, you weren’t supposed to hear all that.” Said Daniel.

“You’re not keeping me here !”

“We won’t let him.” Said Clara.

Her eyes looked his way and Simon picked up an emotion common when dealing with humans, but not Daniel. Distrust was in the look she had on her face.

“No one is keeping you anywhere.” Said Simon. “You’re family now, you come and go as you please.”

“Of course, of course.” Said Daniel. “I didn’t mean kept here against your will, but further tests could reveal so.....”

“Not going to happen !” Yelled Laura.

“Tell her what you know.” Said Simon. “Tell Laura everything.”

He did, in far more detail than Simon thought possible. He switched off and made plates full of toast and a jug of fresh coffee. Laura seemed dazed by what she was told. It isn’t every day that you find out you’re not just a vampire, but also a rare human mutation. Eventually even Daniel ran out of long Latin words and strange theories.

“What happens now ? What does it mean ?” Asked Laura.

“I think it means we’re packing and leaving.” Said Simon.

“I agree, we need to leave.” Said Clara.

It was there again, the distrust when she looked at Daniel. Simon felt sympathy for her, the hero of her childhood had been revealed as being less than perfect. It was best to leave and let emotional wounds heal, rather than spending a week picking at the scabs. Besides, he’d be able to call Patsy and tell her he was home earlier than expected.

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Clara drove, watching Laura in the rear view mirror. She looked more confused than upset, gripping Simon's hand as though afraid they might have left her with Daniel. A lab rat, the bastard had wanted Laura to be nothing but a prisoner, a constant supply of fresh blood and DNA samples. Poor Simon though, it didn't look like he'd be getting much sleep during the drive back to London.

"What really upsets me." Said Laura. "Is that I'll never get an answer to all the questions I wanted to ask him."

"Probably for the best." Said Simon. "I believed everything Giovanni told me and most of it turned out to be complete nonsense."

"Best if you find things out for yourself." Added Clara. "Why not write a journal, a hand written, locked one of course. Maybe eventually turn it into your own dark bible."

That seemed to cheer her up a bit.

"Yes, I will. Though I really wanted him to answer one question properly. I asked him about five times, but he just pretended not to hear."

"What was that Laura?" Asked Clara. "We might know."

"Do we still have souls?"

She made eye contacts with Simon in the mirror, hoping he'd help her climb out of the hole. On a bad day, Simon was quite capable of digging her further in. Luckily Simon seemed to be in one of his more serious moods.

"I think Daniel was trying not to upset you Laura." He said. "I've seen enough to be fairly certain there is something..... Out there. I'm also fairly certain that if there is a heaven or something similar, we're not invited."

He had to spoil it, his impish nature just had to rise to the surface.

"Probably for the best." He said. "Who'd want to spend eternity with millions of clean living vegans, singing Kumbaya around the camp fire?"

Clara thought Simon had a good point, but Laura just looked depressed.

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Daniel was upset that they'd left, but pleased that no one had asked for Laura's samples to be returned or destroyed. Blood, hair, even some nail clippings and a small plastic container of her urine. The fridge in his research room wasn't good enough to store anything as delicate as a foetus, but it would keep the samples viable for years.

"Oh Laura, you might still give me what I'm looking for." He muttered.

Human DNA was complex and it had been mutated in some way, to form Laura and himself. Over three billion base pairs of chromosomes to make a human, with God knows what added on for vampires and the long lived. Such a vast number of DNA possibilities that even the most powerful computers had taken years to simply map the basic genome. Unless you had an idea what to look for, it was like looking for a tiny needle on a planet with nine billion haystacks.

"I thought you'd given up on this madness. You promised me!"

Clara, yelling at him as she slammed his front door shut. There had been a time when understanding how he'd come to exist was his only waking thought. Doesn't every living person ask the great questions?

Why am I here? What is my purpose? Where do I go?

Daniel was quite happy to accept that there was no afterlife, but like Simon, he'd seen things that proved something was out there, something enforcing certain rules. Rules meant purpose, even for mutants like vampires and him. He picked up his crackly phone and dialled a number in California.

“It begins again.” He mumbled.

He had contacts who owed him favours, perhaps a little time on computers and medical analysers he’d never be able to afford. Laura’s blood held the clues to bring that needle hunt down to just a few thousand haystacks. Clara had called him mad, but was it mad to want to know why he existed, cursed with walking the Earth until the sun went cold ?

If the samples weren’t good enough, he’d find Laura again and persuade her to return to Scotland. If she refused, there were other ways to get what he wanted from her.

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