

THE DISCIPLES OF COONT DRACULI

**A Novel by
Paul Slatter**

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First Trade Edition:

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For

Julie, laura and emma

Mirum Tribus Soroibus

Also by Paul Slatter

Burn
Rock Solid
Trust Me

*I'm not frightened of dying.
Anytime will do.*

Pink Floyd

CHAPTER ONE

The Coont slid the coffin lid away with his white, bony fingers until gravity took over, and he heard the heavy ironwood hit the dusty floor. The coffin lid landing next to the young Lupei boy's body with a crash. Trying to sit up in one fluid motion the way he'd always liked to do, his back locked halfway as he strained. The vampire feeling the crack of his spine with the second attempt.

He looked around. The room looked different from when he had gone to sleep in the chamber deep below his castle. The old damp stone now flat and painted a creamy beige. He climbed out and unsteady on his feet, shook his cape out, and straightened his collar. His black eyes dry, his skin white and peeling. He called out for his slave, "Igor!" And waited.

But Igor wasn't coming.

Taking a deep breath, the vampire tried again. The sound of his voice deep and rasping as he called out.

"Igor! Bringeth the blood of a virgin maiden. I needeth thine nectar."

Then he waited and listened but heard nothing. No distant scurrying of his servant deep within a passageway hurrying on his way to answer his Master's voice. He called again, this time so loud he felt the room itself shake. "Igorrrrrrrr!"

But no one came. Then he remembered his disciple queens, each one of them at his beck and call, who would always come rushing to his side whenever he felt the whim. Beautiful maidens whose eyes

were black with teeth as sharp as their long nails. He called out to them all. “Crina, Doina, Esmeralda, Sorina ... Come to thy Master!”

Waiting again, he heard nothing.

He walked to the room’s door and tried the handle, only discovering it was locked. Not letting go, he ripped the lock from the frame in one swift shrug of his arm and walked out into a larger room that looked out onto a balcony. Sniffing the air for the scent of Igor, he looked around. The man wasn’t there – that was certain – but he had been a few months back. The man’s visits to check his master becoming more and more infrequent as the years had passed by. But now he was out of the ironwood chamber his slave had confined him within, and for this, his slave’s punishment would be death.

He moved on to the glass sliding door which led to the small balcony and shattered its glass with the same ease it would have taken to flick the small catch down to pull it open properly.

Stepping out into the cool night air, the Coont looked about the place. His castle was different, square now instead of round as it had been before Igor had locked him away centuries before. The hill he used to live upon was also now gone. Before, he’d looked down upon the town. Now, it seemed as if he was within its walls and the mountains were far in the distance. *Confusing*, the Coont thought, as he pulled his tongue from the roof of his dry mouth. He was thirsty, no doubt about it. Before he found Igor and ripped the throat from this slave so full of deceit, he first needed to find a maiden and feed from her blood.

In one stride, he lifted his leg and placed it on the top edge of the balcony’s side barrier. Then, with a flap of his coat, he lifted himself and stood gracefully on the barrier’s top. *I shall fly now*, he thought, *fly until oneself hath found the blood needeth to quench mine thirst. Then I shalt fly again and smell the air until I hath found the slave Igor, who had interned*

I for so long. Calling out to the world to let them know he was back, he bellowed,

“Mortals taketh heed. Thine Coont be amongst thou!”

Taking his cloak in his spiny fingers and sharp black nails, he held it away from his sides and leaped out into the air. Feeling the wind in his hair, the cloak hit his face as it lifted in the breeze and wrapped itself around his head. The balcony’s railing of the balcony on the tenth floor hitting him next, followed quickly by a branch from a tree near the fourth floor as he plummeted and spun to the ground below.

Hitting the slate grey sidewalk hard, the Coont lay still for a moment. Hiding under cover of his cloak, he waited until the air which had escaped from his lungs returned. Then he stood, rising up from below his black cloak until it fell and hung beside him.

Standing tall and strong, bathed in the night time streetlight, he looked around. The city looking different from the last time he’d been out and about, causing havoc. Flying low centuries before for fun in the night air. Back when the vampire had been in his prime. Buzzing and splitting the township mortals as they panicked beneath. But now though, there was no one around. Just strange buildings and lights and odd, noisy chariots that passed at speed. He moved on towards a pathway. Holding his cloak out to his sides, he began to run, flapping his cloak as he jumped into the air in a bid to take off.

Stopping as he rounded a corner, the Coont looked to a man who stood holding a small wolf to his side. Approaching him, he asked, “Mortal, wereth be the slave whoeth name of birth be Igor?”

The man stared at him, this ghoulish figure wandering alone in the night. The Coont carried on, “Show him to I, thou dark lord, and I will gifteth thee with the immortality the slave once hath.” The man stood there looking to him, unsure as to what this clown had just said. With a whisk of his arm, the Coont spoke again.

“Mortal, why do thou standeth without fear?”

The man just stared, trying for the life of him to take in what stood before him. Who on earth was this fool? This theatrical creature with greasy, slicked-back hair, doing a bad job of trying to look like a vampire.

“What are you talking about?”

The Coont stood there trying his best to decipher the language the man who had befriended a wolf and showed no fear of him had replied with. He asked curiously, “Do thou feareth not I will taketh thou blood?” The man stood still, not bothering to answer this clown in his strange suit.

“Thou feeleth thine wolf hath strength enough to protect thou from the demon who cometh in darkness?” the Coont asked as he whipped his cloak around as he spoke for effect. He looked at the dog, who had only the day before run from a cat. He raised his bloodshot eyes once more to the mortal. Then in a blink of an eye, the dog sensed something wrong. He looked up to the demon his master now spoke with. Something changed deep within the animal’s being. A primeval awareness held inside that sensed the true evil that was before him. With a snarl and the hair on its back standing straight, the dog instinctively came at the Coont. The animal yanking the leash at the end of its Master’s arm, half choking itself as it strained, snapping its teeth and violently barking at the demon before it.

Jumping with fright and shock, the man let go of the leash, releasing the dog. Using all its power, the dog was on him. In an instant, the Coont’s own instincts came alive as he watched the dog run at him. Hearing the animal’s ferocious snarl and the scraping of its claws on the sidewalk as it approached. Then suddenly, crossing the short space between them in mere seconds, the dog was there. Stepping to one side, the Coont raised his right hand and brought it down sharply as

the dog jumped towards his chest. His hand powerfully sweeping through, severing the dog's head with his long blade-like fingernails in one fell swoop.

Empowered by the kill, the Coont slowly drifted up into the air and hovered only a few feet from the pathway where the dog lay still. He looked down to the man who now stood in disbelief. Calmly the Coont said,

“I needeth the blood a maiden shalt provide. For should I drink thou blood, stomach irritations cometh to oneself of dire consequence.”

Then he was off again drifting in the night, hovering above the bike lane that ran along the water's edge. He sniffed at the night air that smelt different from any other he'd breathed before. Oil and sulfur, with the mix of humans' breath. He could hear them all around him now, these mortals sleeping in giant monoliths that rose full of light from the stone floor. *What was this place?* the vampire wondered. This strange township touched by a lake where, so far, the townsfolk showed him no fear.

Floating high, he took the path above the trees and looked down into a small field. Below a young couple, sitting together on the grass, looked out across the water as they smoked from a large reed which they shared. The maiden young and virgin-like with her long golden hair. The boy slightly built, covering his eyes with his strange hat and wearing outlandish clothes of color that were loose and did not fit.

The Coont dropped down between the trees as he had so many times before when the mere sight of him would have created panic and the pointless heroics from a lover who knew his life was about to end, but did not care.

They stared at him as he floated there just a foot or so from the ground. The girl holding the joint and blowing rancid smoke towards the Coont. Its strange smell making his chest wheeze. Then, not

closing her eyes with the slightest of blinks and without a look to her lover, she simply said the word.

“Wow?”

And it was a wow – a great, big, huge marijuana-loaded spliff, fresh and home-grown from a basement in Surrey, mixed with a tab of ecstasy. Wow!

The boy watched the Coont as he floated in all his old-world fifteenth-century glory. The vampire looking at him with eyes as bloodshot as his own eyes would be after a full night of DJ worship. The kid doing acid along with a barrel full of ecstasy until there was no bottled water left to spare and dawn came around. For the second time that night, the Coont asked,

“Doeth thy fear I not, mortal?”

As he held his hand out, pointing his blood-stained fingers at the boy, the boy saying straight back,

“You what?”

Without missing a beat, the Coont demanded as the wind rustled the leaves in the trees above.

“Taketh I teeth Igor!”

Then suddenly, purely without reason and running on instinct, the vampire struck, moving fast as he flew across the short grass. Reaching the boy, his talons ripped out the young man’s throat as he came to rest in front of the girl. Lifting his hand, he called to her,

“Cometh hither, young maiden.”

His dark eyes staring into hers, holding her to his spell. The girl looked back at him, meeting his gaze as black as coal. The girl feeling his power, need, and unspoken calling that radiated from within him. Slowly she came to him as she smelled the musty cloak that hung from his shoulders. Unconsciously she twisted her head, revealing her neck to him. Leaning down, the Coont placed his bony fingers upon the

girl's neck, sank his sharp white teeth into the young girl's flesh, and drew her blood. The vampire tasting the iron, the marijuana, and the five tabs of ecstasy she'd done that afternoon which flooded her veins and mind.

He drank with the thirst of a demon who had not drunk in six hundred years. The drugs hitting home, just as they had hit the same young girl who hadn't been bit on the neck as hard as this, since taking a ride in the back of a limo on prom night.

"Oh, behold what feeling cometh to I now, maiden!" said the Coont, as his head spun. He began to feel warm and cosy and in love with everything and anything about the mortal world he hated with a passion. The girl looking back at him, feeling no care for the blood running in two small streams from the incisor holes in her neck. Nor for the boy she'd now been in a relationship with since midnight, after he'd failed to roofie her properly and started chatting, nonetheless.

"Hey, you're bleeding from your mouth?" the girl, who went by the name of Carol, said as she looked up at the vampire.

He was, but so was her boyfriend. The guy bleeding out behind her, the poor kid reaching out at something only he could see. With a smile, the Coont told her, "Your blood cometh to I with satisfaction great!"

Carol also liked it when her blood was just like it was right now, full to the brim with a cocktail of love and happiness that would make even a lifer in a Gulag glad to be alive.

The Coont still smiling as he watched her boyfriend breathe his last breath. The girl then saying, "You're really beautiful." The Coont was, at least in his eyes, beautiful in the way he moved, beautiful in the way he kept himself in style, and beautiful in the way he flew through the night in search of his prey. And now he had found just

that, and it was exactly to his liking. A young and fresh maiden, with blood that made him feel better than he had ever felt before.

But where was he? the Coont thought as he looked to the girl. He said,

“Feareth not, for thou will behold I once more.” Then with a flap of his cloak, the Coont sailed up high through the trees into the night sky. Breathing in deep, he stopped, floating in the night air alongside a high-rise tower. He felt good. Wow, he felt good. But where on earth was he? He moved off, following the shoreline and headed towards the Lions Gate Bridge. Then like a bird floating on the breeze, he rose up and up. Rising parallel with the bridge’s turrets until he reached the top.

Landing on the bridge’s peak, he stood there feeling the cold wind in his perfectly groomed hair. Looking around he surveyed the city, with its tall towers and lights rising up from the earth.

Taking in a deep breath of air he had never smelled before through his nose, he called out, his voice bellowing once more into the night,

“Igor! ... Igooooor ... cometh to I, o servant!”

CHAPTER TWO

Igor stood on the balcony of his huge West Vancouver mansion. Holding his violin, he played along to a soft concerto recording drifting out through the open doors from his music center in the living room. The vampire's voice, whom he knew so well, interrupting the melody as the Coont butted in again. The voice of his Master, who had given him immortality some six hundred years ago.

Goddamn it, Igor thought. What on earth had gone wrong? How had the Coont managed to escape? Putting down his violin, he walked back into the living room and picked out from a cabinet the Cuban cigar he'd been saving, lit it, and took a deep pull. He'd had him locked down tight in his coffin made from ironwood. The vampire tucked away, firmly secured in the basement of a small house near the water for the last one hundred and fifty-odd years.

Six months before though, he'd moved him. Stashing the Coont away in the bedroom of a condo he'd purchased while the small house by the water was being renovated.

Why, why, why, did I not just bring him here, put him in the cellar, and endure the inevitable constant goddamn moaning that came with it? Igor asked himself as he subconsciously felt the scars that ran across his face and neck. Scars that ran deep. Great warrior scars deservedly earned in the battles he had fought. Scars that made their way down the length of his body, spreading out viciously throughout his torso and limbs.

Taking the Cuban from his lips, he heard the Coont's voice once again echo through the night air as he called out his name.

Well, the demon was out now, he thought, and he wasn't going to stop. It was a double-edged sword. Ignore him, and the vampire could perish in the daylight – and himself shortly after. Or answer and deal with him again whilst he was out until he could find a way to lock him back down again. If the Coont would let him live, that is ... Taking a deep breath, he closed his eyes and knowing that this could very well be the last night he would have in this world, he called out,

“Yes, Master.”

The Coont was looking to the east and worrying about the sun as it came around, gently lighting the sky in the distance. Still standing upon the top of the Lions Gate Bridge, he drew a sigh of relief as he heard his servant's voice. He looked towards the glittering lights running up the side of the mountains that swept down to the sea below. Then, he called back towards the source of his servant's voice,

“Igor, moveth not – I command thou!”

Then with the front of his cape in either hand, he jumped again out into the night. Swooping as the air filled his vampire's cape, gliding him away from the bridge as the cars passed below and down towards the inlet's dark water.

Igor paced the length of the long balcony that gave an unsurpassed view of the bay and the tall suspension bridge from where his Master had just called him from. *This was it*, he thought, as he felt the panic begin to build within. It wasn't good. The vampire was going to kill him for what he had done. There could be no escaping it.

Stopping, he looked up into the night sky as the figure of the vampire who had saved him from the horror of death and gifted him with eternal life glided in and landed sodden on the deck.

Before Igor could say a word, the Coont, in complete confusion, was there with him. The vampire smiling, high on ecstasy and unnaturally happy via the drugs that flowed within Carol's succulent blood.

Pacing towards him along the mansion's wooden deck and leaving a trail of water behind him, the Coont stared at the still unfamiliar surroundings. Reaching Igor, he smiled with delight, showing his fangs.

"Igor, friend, an earthly time I hath wait, where art thou? Open up mine place of rest, hath thou not?" the Coont asked as the overwhelming feeling of happiness and love the vampire felt shone through.

Not answering for the moment, Igor swallowed. How many centuries had it been since he'd seen this vampire's face? The demon now right there next to him. The white skin and evil bloodshot black eyes of his Master as familiar to him now as they had been centuries before.

"Mine voice calleth for thou, Igor!"

Staying silent, Igor looked to the deck as the water dripped down upon it from the vampire's cloak.

"Disturbed was I, whilst I rest slave, Lupei men who wisheth to destroy us cometh, Igor. I hath calleth thou, answer I though, thou not?"

The Coont stopped talking for a moment. He stared out across the long garden to the lights of the houses in the distance, and then further out across the bay. He looked back and focused on Igor's face. He studied it for just a moment before saying, "Slave, in battle thou hath been?"

Igor nodded. He had indeed, centuries before, that is. Then he lied, saying, “Yes, they came for you, Master. Yet I did not let them pass. This is why you ...”

But the Coont could not care less as to what his slave had to say as his usual self-absorbed character broke through the chemicals. In instant dismissal, he quickly said,

“Where art thy castle? I findeth myself confused, slave. This lodging where I standeth be unfamiliar. These giant towers I see standing distant shed light without flame? I see chariots witheth flame also moveth like the wind, yet bare – no horses to propel?”

Staying uncomfortably silent, Igor shuffled in his soft leather loafers. The scars covering his face now hurting again for the first time in years. This wasn’t normal. Where was the Coont of yesteryear? The same vampire who, just on instinct, would take the life of a slave for the slightest wrongdoing.

Taking his time, the Coont stared at Igor’s feet first, then to his designer jeans and T-shirt with its wild horses’ motif running across his chest. Smiling he said, “Battle-scarred as a warrior ist thou slave, but thou dress as a jester. There are horses which run upon thou!”

And a warrior being exactly what Igor was, despite the nice comfy loafers and horses on his designer shirt. The man who, even before he was granted the inhuman strength immortality awarded him, had wielded a battle sword of such immense weight that a man of these times would barely be able to lift, let alone swing one-handed.

“You are wet, Master. How did you survive water?”

Shaking the water from his cloak, the Coont looked to his slave and smiled, almost ignoring the question.

“To sayeth the truth I hath found myself in water slave, yes. For though I findeth luck, I am still here. Mine heart feeleth as joyous as

though I hath just slaughtered a village and drank the blood from a hundred virgin maidens, Igor, yet I have doneth neither.”

“Your thirst has been quenched, Master. This brings you happiness, maybe?”

“I hath drank the blood of a virgin maiden slave and severed the head of a wolf and the throat of a maiden’s protector, yes. Yet that is of little reason to bring to oneself this joy and exhilaration I feel.”

Joy? Igor thought as he looked at the Coont’s cloak dripping on his cedar deck. Happy was good, a lot better than the quick decapitation he’d been expecting, that was certain. The Coont was though now in unfamiliar territory, so maybe he was playing it out and waiting. Then the talons that had ripped through a thousand jugulars would start swinging. Keeping up his already jovial tone, he heard the Coont ask again,

“Where art thou, mine slave? For an eternity, I findeth oneself locked in mine new place of rest.”

And an eternity it had been, as after one night, centuries before, the Coont had returned from flying. The vampire feeling the atmosphere change as the new sun drew air currents that birds knew so well.

He’d reached his old castle sitting high and proud upon a hill. Where within he’d walked the darkened, damp passageways, to lie down within his chamber lined with gold. The vampire ready to hide himself away in the darkness, guarded by Igor, his cursed slave, while he slept.

Igor, who had once been mortal, was now stuck within the dark side forever. He had sworn to protect his demon Master from the few men or women with courage enough to come armed with swords and stakes, fervent on ending his reign of evil.

Igor standing strong centuries before. Back when the warrior had guarded his Master and his Master’s hoarded gold. Stacking it in piles

around the coffin where he slept as the sun rose and touched the castle's turrets. The vampire lord settling in and sleeping, day after day, year after year after, having flown and drank a virgin maidens' blood.

Igor taking guard as the sun tried to penetrate through the castle's stone. The slave serving his Master, standing loyal and dependable throughout, as he coveted the demon who trusted him and had given him immortality.

But then his time had come, and the new coffin had arrived.

"Ironwood," he'd told his Master with delight as he'd followed the vampire's flowing cloak through the tunnels beneath the castle. The Coont's newest victims now changed into demon vampires themselves, clinging with their sharp-clawed fingers to the crevices and corners of the tunnels' ceilings.

"From the South Pacific, your new place of rest cometh, Master. It will last you forever as it is as strong as iron and its inside warmer and more luxurious than you'll have ever felt before."

And it was warm and dry, smelling of saffron and coconut and passion fruit. Its inside fresh and clean. Gold coins lay scattered upon its lined cushioned silk interior. The silk as red as the fresh blood that dripped from the Master vampire's lips as he'd laid down upon it to rest and sleep the day away.

That, though, now seemed like an age ago. For as much as the vampire had called and demanded his release, the ironwood coffin's lid had remained closed.

So, this was it, Igor thought, as he took a deep breath. The vampire had been playing nice, but any second, he would change. His eyes would suddenly flash red, and he'd hiss and spit as the snarl of his fangs showed true. Then the Coont would be on him, and that would be that. With an awkward shuffle, Igor put his cigar down and said,

"You know it was for your own safety."

“Why thy speaketh in this tongue so strange, slave? And where be mine castle? I need to sleep,” the Coont said. He stared Igor for a moment curiously before looking back towards the bridge and the beginning of dawn. Then he turned back.

“Before the light cometh and burn mine flesh! Taketh I toeth thy castle chamber wreathed in gold, so that I not becometh ash and thou die also a sudden mortal’s death.”

A sudden mortal’s death, Igor thought as he felt the chill run through his body. He watched the Coont parade about his deck as though he owned it. It was a good point and nicely put for once also. Igor certainly didn’t need sudden death, not now or any time for that matter. Having been though one once already, centuries before, and in the process he’d become completely terrified of it happening again. The Coont speaking the simple truth of the matter right there as he dripped water and stared confused at the window glass. The vampire again holding all the cards now that he was free.

The vampire saving Igor from the demons that came in death, gifting him immortality on the battlefield centuries before. The Coont leaning over the warrior’s dead body, spitting mouthfuls of blood and saliva into Igor’s mouth. Choking him with phlegm until he’d released the man from the demonic torture which awaited him and returned him to the world he knew.

The vampire had returned Igor’s life which he’d then owned. A life only the Coont could take away. Unless the Coont perished himself, that is, after which Igor’s shared fate would soon follow.

With a hand that gestured for the Coont to follow him inside the mansion, Igor said, “Follow me, my Master. I have prepared your place of rest.” Turning as they came inside, Igor carried on, “You look well, Master, the long sleep has done you justice.”

“Speaketh again thou hath in strange tongue, slave. Is it French thou speaketh with twisted words?”

They entered the mansion’s huge living room and walked through, reaching the bottom of the staircase which led down into the foyer. The Coont looked around at the two huge chandeliers which hung either side of the stairs and the strange pictures of women and landscapes which lined the walls as he walked across the marble floor. He turned to Igor and asked, “Thy maidens, their place of resting be within thine strangeth castle?”

“No, Master, they are not. They are women who have left this world.”

The women in the paintings now long gone, as were the starving artists who had carefully painted them with incredible skill. Hungry artists who in death had now become world-renowned masters only too happy in life to receive the gold coins the man with scars had bestowed upon them for their work centuries before.

“I thirst for thy virgins’ blood, slave. Bringeth thy maiden violinist from the orchestra that playeth now.”

Igor took another deep breath and listened to his music center as it still played the violin concerto he’d been listening to. He kept walking as he looked at the water dripping onto his mansion’s floor.

But there were no maidens playing in an orchestra close by or locked in the dungeon, crying whilst they laid upon a straw bed as there had been centuries before when the vampire had roamed free. Long gone were the days when the larder was full, and the Coont was feared yet accepted within the primitive society that lived within a lying distance from the Coont’s castle. Back then, when Igor had built lairs and slept amongst nests full of the Coont’s blood-sucking disciples. Days where he could patiently wait for the sun to set before he knew they all would leave the castle upon the hill and sweep freely

down to terrify and feed whilst the Coont sought out and took a maiden as he pleased.

They reached the other end of the large marble-floored foyer, passing a dark TV room. Seeing a large buxom lady upon the giant-size flat-screen TV against the wall, the Coont stopped.

“What be this witchcraft that thee performeth, slave?”

This was a tough one, Igor thought, as he cursed himself within for leaving a movie on. It was obvious – the longer he was up and about, the more questions he’d be asking. Before he could answer, the Coont made another demand.

“This maiden with suckling breast I see, bringeth her now!”

“I will find one soon, Master,” Igor said as he bowed his head and gestured towards the garage door. They entered, Igor leading, the Coont following majestically even though he was still wet.

The garage was large with a top-of-the-line black Mercedes sitting to one side and a gold-colored Tesla SUV with a roof rack and black roof box attached in the center.

“Here, not a maiden do I smell, slave?” said the Coont as he stared in awe at the two cars and the long coffin-like roof box on the top of the SUV.

“My place of sleep rises from thou earth now upon this plinth of gold, slave?”

“Yes, Master,” Igor replied.

“My gold, I find it hereth, now?”

“Yes, Master,” Igor replied, lying. The Coont walked over and trailed his hand along the Tesla’s wing and hood. Looking at the wheels, he turned to Igor.

“For what reason the plinth holds wheels upon this ground, slave?”

“Escape, Master. I fear the Lupei may cometh again,” answered Igor in a language that he had long forgotten. The Coont nodded. He

got it now. There was a reason he'd picked this slave up off the land as he'd lay tormented in death and given him immortality. It was not only for his loyalty and fighting skills but for his cunning also. This cunning served him well when the villagers and the Lupei family had come in angry determination carrying stakes.

With a swoop of his wet cloak, the Coont rose up and landed, unknowingly denting the hood of the Tesla with his weight. Touching the roof box, he prodded and poked at its sides. Speaking without looking to Igor, he said, "Toucheth such fiber I have yet to, slave, of what substance be this place thou wisheth I to rest?"

"Gold, Master," Igor answered, lying.

Igor walked to the side of the SUV and, with his large frame, reached up and undid the side catches to the car's roof box. Reaching inside, he pulled out his skis and boots and put them on the floor. Looking down, the Coont stared at them in confusion and then back to the inside of the roof box.

"Of what strangeth tools does thou keep in mine place of sleep, slave?"

"They are for you, Master."

"Shoes I am not of need, slave." The Coont then looked to the inside of the car roof box again, its strange, molded plastic inside empty and ribbed for strength.

"Mine silk and coinage of gold, slave, where be eth?"

"It's in your old one, Master. Come sleep now, I will bring it to you."

The Coont looked about, the fluorescent strip only yards from his face, burning brightly, wrapping him in artificial daylight. Closing his eyes and frowning, he said, "Thy sun hath toucheth mine face, but doth not burn, slave?"

"It is a lamp, Master."

“No flame smoke for a lamp? For where art thee flame, it is not for mine eye to behold?”

Igor stepped forward and with a smile gestured his hand to the inside of the plastic roof box.

“Sleep, Master. You are tired.”

He was tired. The Coont could not deny that, even if he had been asleep for six hundred years. The flying had exhausted him, as had hitting the ocean, luckily doing the impossible and rising back out and up in a wet cloak. But he’d done it, and he’d found Igor, good old dependable slave, Igor. The warrior he’d saved from death after a short mortal life full of disease and hardship.

The coffin didn’t look comfortable with its ridges and shining silver, but it would be good to lay down. Turning, he looked back to Igor.

“Virgin maidens of two I will hath upon awakening, slave. I commandeth thee!”

And Igor nodded obediently as he had so many times, many, many, years before and lied, “Yes, Master; two virgin maidens will be waiting.”

CHAPTER THREE

Igor waited until the Coont had climbed into the roof box and settled before he closed the lid and locked it down firmly. He stepped back and looked at the water from the vampire's cloak pooled in the new dent on the hood of the Tesla. *Well, going skiing in the morning was now out the window*, he thought as he stared for what seemed an age at the coffin-like roof box that now held the vampire who had given him eternal life. If you can call living amongst evil and bowing to the vampire's every whim while he was free, a life that is.

But what a life it had been since he'd had the ironwood coffin made. Igor, clamping down the lid of the new coffin so tight, the way he had all those centuries ago, so as the freak could not escape. The Coont settling down to sleep in the pitch-black darkness, all comfy and warm. The vampire completely naïve to the fact that he wouldn't be getting back out anytime soon.

Then for months after, in the daylight hours, Igor had walked the cold, damp tunnels and catacombs of the Coont's castle, the warrior armed with his long sword at his side and a satchel full of stakes. Stakes purposely cut from the same ironwood he'd purchased from the carpenters and had delivered along with his Master's gift of a newly made casket.

Feeling the water drip from the stone above, landing across his face and down his neck, Igor had hunted within the lairs. Lairs full of the Coont's victims whom the vampire had preyed on. Sucking their blood, drinking the life away from those he'd picked. Humans who

had once been free and beautiful. Mortals turned into disciples by the Coont or any of the vampire disciples the Coont had himself created, who in turn carried on the cycle of evil.

Disciples who had lived back then. Hiding in the darkness of the Coont's castle's tunnels in their cursed afterlife. Vampires now themselves with their white skin and eyes as red as the blood they spilled.

Demons that hung or lay flat against the damp, stone-clad ceiling or tucked deep in hidden crevices. Fiends that came at Igor with fury, biting and clawing him as he'd plucked them from crevices with his sword. Bloodthirsty vampires that attacked, before he'd wrestled them to the ground and staked their now black hearts. Vampires he'd fought and dragged one by one, day by day, month by month, kicking and screaming out into the sun, so as he could watch them perish to ash.

The villagers who lived close to the castle hearing the vampires' screams as Igor removed them from their world. This warrior who had once lived amongst them and had fought side by side with them in battle. This warrior whom they had seen brought down and killed by a child on the battleground now alive again and killing the demons he now lived amongst.

Then, as the screams of the young maidens and men who had lost their chance at life died away, Igor had sat alone. Alone in a castle with its high turret that lay upon the hill. Hearing only the happiness below and the muffled voices as he would pass through villages for food.

All who lived there, young and old, knowing who he was and how he had been their savior. All grateful for this and allowing him passage. Igor the warrior, big and strong, disfigured from his battles against evil, sitting alone at the helm of the Master vampire's carriage he now steered.

The man with the scars watching the crowds and the Lupei family as they stood amongst those who waved and smiled. The Lupei family still out to take the Coont's life, despite knowing what the man with scars had done for them. This man, who now sat alone.

And so they came, reaching the castle at the top of the hill, carrying their stakes and their swords. The Lupei family vehement in their desire to sacrifice Igor's life as they pierced the sleeping Coont's cold black heart and turned him to ash.

But Igor stood strong as a warrior, large and brave. The man with scars holding his sword, which he'd use to take these brave villagers down. Young men sent from within a family who refused to accept the compromise of imprisoned evil which Igor now offered. The Lupei family only wishing to rid the world of the Coont and the evil he represented.

And there, Igor had sat alone in his castle at the top of the hill as the years passed. Playing his violin and watching young men grow old and die. The Lupei family becoming larger as brothers married sisters, and as these new families grew, the attacks against the man who could not die became stronger.

Then as the months turned into years, decades became centuries, the truth about the man who played violin and lived alone turned to myth and legend.

As the world changed and opened up, Igor decided it was time for him to join it. With the Coont still locked away and closely hidden by his side, Igor set sail for a far-off world.

Moving with the Coont secured in his ironwood coffin at the center of a carriage and his bars of gold hidden in chests surrounding him, Igor passed through lands. Knowing that anyone who came too

close would feel the evil that lay within. The man staying briefly in cities he'd only heard of years before by name.

The man who was now cursed with immortality moving slowly towards the ocean and crossing it without fear. The man with the scars travelling onwards to a place where he could then walk free. Free from the past, free from the Lupei family who still came for the Master vampire he protected with relentless passion.

He settled at the bottom slopes of the coastal mountains that swept down from the clouds. A then remote district. A long way and across the water from the new bustling city emerging in Vancouver, Canada. Ten gold bars were more than enough to purchase the land and construct the mansion he now called home.

And there he sat in his mansion which reached up out from the forest with its large balcony. A home just far enough away from the small cottage on the water Igor had also built, wherein its deep basement he'd secretly housed the Coont.

There Igor had lived on the side of the mountain overlooking the water. Playing his violin to the trees and the snows that came and surrounded him in the wintertime. His only fear being the bears and mountain lions that inhabited the land he now owned.

The twentieth century came as so many before had, and soon a bridge came with it. A bridge that opened the land of West Vancouver to the people who wanted more than the holiday cottages that lined the beach.

Slowly, the bears and mountain lions moved further up the mountain and away from Igor's secluded tranquility as civilization began to encroach and wake the Coont from his long, long sleep.

“Igor, slave, Igor,” the Coont would call out from the depths of the cottage by the water.

Igor hearing his Master’s anger, his frustration, and his thirst. The ironwood holding strong as the vampire kicked and pushed until he gave up and would sleep again. Slowly more houses and streets rose up from the land. Trees that had stood tall and proud were cut, falling to this earth to be dragged away to the ocean.

Families came next as the years wound on and their relatives grew. One school became two and then three and onwards as two wars came and went, and another century passed.

Then six months ago, by chance, as Igor played the Stradivarius he had bought centuries before, his talent had been discovered. A school mistress hearing a violin played like she had never heard it before, as Igor had stood alone one evening on a beach playing to the stars.

“Come play at the school,” she’d asked. “Come play at our beautiful hall.”

After much cajoling, Igor had succumbed and agreed to appear at the school with its small concert hall, where he would play quietly, while a select few listened. The same local school music hall which had been paid for years before by a man covered in scars who had lived for centuries. A place where Igor had himself sat as the students played their music, and parents sat in awe as they listened, while bored siblings fidgeted.

A place where Igor would now soon play himself as he worked his ancient violin to the small crowd in a harmony no one had ever heard before.

CHAPTER FOUR

Sorin Lupei sat upon the bed of the shitty motel room on the east side of Vancouver as his cousin Cristi paced from one side of the room to the other. Both boys in shock from what had just happened. Their cousin Philippe now missing after telling them he'd followed the man with scars to an empty condo on the other side of town which housed an ancient ironwood coffin.

The young man, in doing so, possibly having just won his place of recognition on the Lupei family tree.

The two boys now in silence, ignoring their phones. Both inwardly shaking and rueing the fact they had been born into an ancient family who pestered them now. A family with a custom of attempting to hunt down and kill a silent demon and his slave. An evil – who, until recently, had seemed little more than folklore.

The Lupei family hunting for centuries. Roaming the cities of Europe armed with swords and stakes. Following bullshit leads of sightings of the man with the scars or the Coont in his cape. Just as the boys were now. Except, they this time around they had actually found him, and one of them was possibly dead.

It had all started with a chance encounter – an internet site showing stolen footage of a great violinist playing to a select few in a school concert hall. The Lupei family now drawn together with delight in knowing that they had once again found the man with scars.

The excitement spreading as one family member had called the other, quickly sending word across all of Romania, until the last

to know were the boys who had been hand-picked to go hunt the man down.

Sorin Lupei sat at the end of the bed and stared at the silverfish as they skirted around on the carpet that smelled. For the last few years, he'd been half expecting to be sent off on some wild-goose chase to some fancy European city in the hunt for the Coont and his slave. The truth was, though, he had been hoping it would have been London or Paris or somewhere he could hang out and feel cool. Just as some of his uncles had back in their prime and now bragged about.

He looked again to the centuries-old photographed painted picture of Igor. The man standing tall and proud, holding his long sword in his hand without the scars that now covered his body. Months before, he'd died in battle, only to be then resurrected like Jesus.

Placing the picture at the bottom of the pile, Sorin looked at the next picture, entitled, *Champs-Élysées – 1847*. The now faded photograph showing Igor playing his violin as he stood in a crowd in Paris by the Arc de Triomphe. The lined scars visible across his face, his clothes of the finest quality for the era.

Placing it on the bed, Sorin looked to the next, showing the man in London, entitled, *Serpentine 1848*. The man with scars playing his violin by the lake. He flipped to the next, this time the same man now in Vancouver nearly two hundred years later, playing his violin in a school. The man's face with the same scars as identifiable as a thumb print and not showing a single sign of aging. Looking to him, Cristi said,

“Why'd you keep looking at them? You know it's him.”

But Sorin couldn't help himself. Just a week ago, he had been sitting with his cousin Philippe in a café near his home in the outskirts of Borsa, Romania. Sorin with one hand on the thigh of a young lady

and the other on his designer coffee. His only concern being whether he'd be able to get lucky.

Then the uncles had arrived with the news. Bursting in and ruining the romance. Pissing off Philippe with their cheesy exaggerated smiles and laughter. Telling them both how they were about to make the family proud. Boasting loudly so that all the café could hear how he, Philippe, and some cousin named Cristi, they'd yet to meet from Bucharest, were going to track down and kill this 'vampire demon' and his slave. But now Philippe was missing.

"The monster has been found. He is in Canada; he is a violinist now, Sorin," his uncles had told him as they'd sat in the café at the side of the mountain. Excitedly poking him with their hands and hitting him with spittle as they spoke and for once ignoring the girl.

But Sorin had stopped listening, the kid now wondering where the hell Vancouver was. Philippe, sitting with him, doing much the same. The straight A's student, who was now missing, all embarrassed as he looked out of the window. Closing his eyes one second and opening them the next as his uncles rattled on and on loudly with bravado. Telling the world and anyone else who would listen as to how they would slay this Master vampire. Even though they were to have little else to do with the family mission other than shooting off their mouths back then, and bombarding the boys now with their phone calls.

Fuck it, we should just go home. Let those pricks come deal with it, Sorin thought, as he sat there inside the stinking motel room on a sticky bed. He stared at his phone as it vibrated.

Letting out a deep breath once the phone went quiet, he looked up at his remaining cousin, who didn't seem to give a care. The guy making Sorin feel like a farmhand, standing there in his trendy snakeskin shoes and tight jeans. His hair slicked back in perfect

tramlines, full of the shiny oil product Sorin had seen when he'd nosed through his bag. Taking command, Sorin said,

"We should just go back."

But this cousin Cristi with his perfect hair, wasn't going anywhere. Shaking his head, Cristi Lupei looked to Sorin.

"Go, and when you are home, you can listen to our uncles for the rest of your life tell you what they would have done."

Sorin turned his head back to the floor and looked at the silverfish. The small, skinny insects with little legs and big antennae. Seemingly slow until Sorin tried to stamp the life out of them.

His cousin Cristi was right. If he went home now, he'd be called 'Sorin the coward' or 'Sorin the vampire runner.' Some bullshit like that, which he'd have to wear for eternity. Even though the closest the men who'd be calling him that had ever came to Coont Draculi and his slave were the pictures he now held in his hand.

"And don't forget about the gold," Cristi then said as he stared purposefully at Sorin.

Yes, the gold, Sorin thought. It was another part of the big myth he'd listened to by the fire as a child.

"If there is any, that is."

But there was gold, and Cristi knew it only too well. As his side of the family had been living off it for centuries.

CHAPTER FIVE

There had been a few things Igor had learned to do and learned to do well since he'd arrived in Vancouver, and skiing was one of them. His mansion was built at the foot of British Columbia's coastal mountains. So, he had not had to wait long before a small ski hill had been developed.

With the wooden skis the newly arriving Europeans bought with them strapped to his feet, and his strength and inability to die, Igor had quickly mastered the sport. The winters and the ample snow that came, giving good reason for the man with scars to get away from the whining of his Master, locked within his ironwood tomb.

Soon, small tow ropes grew larger and evolved into chairlifts and gondolas, giving much pleasure to the man with the scars. A man who could ski menacing terrain freely, knowing he could only die at the hands of the vampire who had given him immortality.

The car taking him to the bottom of the slopes changing as quickly as the hills themselves changed. The skis also changing as time wore on, helping the humans carve deep into the snow or ice as they wound themselves down the mountainside.

Skis carried up the mountainside stuffed into the back of cars or into tidy, nicely designed roof boxes. Boxes shaped by über-hip techno guys in Sweden, such as the coffin-shaped one the Coont was now contained within, sealed in the darkness, upon the top of Igor's newly bought gold colored electric car.

Sealed ... except for a minute, tiny little hole, courtesy of a steel ball bearing. Released weeks before, from a pompous real estate broker's hand. A hand that had contained many other ball bearings he'd thrown as he drove himself down the winding road that dropped away from the freezing level above.

The man who liked to name his dick, digging into his little supply of deadly ammo he kept in a box at the side of his seat. Taking ball bearings, a handful at a time and launching them in the direction of any car he felt had disrespected him. Propelling them from inside his fist via the sunroof or side window of his Mercedes, which he'd open despite the cold and rain. Whipping them out at just the right time like small shinning missiles. Missiles that would bounce once or twice on the tarmac before hitting their mark in the windshield if he was lucky or leave their mark in the paintwork, gifted from a man who should have known better.

The ball bearing smacking the front of Igor's roof box with the same ferocity as the stone a young man named David once used to take down his foe. The same year, the Coont had also come kicking and screaming into this world.

The vampire felt the early morning sun as it began to bake the plastic of the roof box he lay within. The Coont rocking from side to side, as Igor drove his electric chariot of gold back down the hill towards the small cottage set alone in its own grounds by the water.

The cottage where the Coont had laid hidden away from the world. A small dwelling made from stone, with its basement dug deep into the cold granite to hide the evil that slept within. A place where no birds flew, and no animals roamed. A home that radiated evil, which children spoke of in whispers and whose bravest never found the courage to venture near.

A home purposely separated, acres apart from any neighbors. Far away from those who needed sugar or felt a yearning to inquire about the endless space they would love to own, which in the future they could exploit.

The Coont feeling sick for the first time in his life as the ecstasy and cocaine-riddled blood filled his stomach. The sun piercing through the tiny ball bearing chipped hole at the foot of the top box like a laser.

And like a laser it came, moving in one direction and then the other as Igor weaved his way down the hill towards the water. The car swerving along the tight, narrow backroad as he twisted from left to right and back again. The Coont staring through what tight space he had to the sunlight that burnt his bloodshot beady eyes with its glare. The vampire, who had been stuck in a ironwood coffin for nearly six hundred years, once again trapped inside another. This time built from composite plastic by children in China.

The pinhole laser beam switching directions as quickly as the Coont could move his feet in his leather shoes which seemed to never grow old. And then, just as the Coont felt he was safe as the chariot of gold drove under the shadow of a huge maple, the tiny speck of sunlight appeared again. God's own natural laser beam, bursting through and piercing an instant hole straight through the top of the Coont's foot. The sunlight slicing through the shoe and severing the toes of his right foot straight from his ancient body.

Igor hit Marine Drive and had his arm out of the window when he first heard the Coont's cries and smelled the familiar stench of smoke which came from a vampire's burning flesh.

Oh shit, the lid's opened, was Igor's first thought, as he wondered how long it would take before the demons came for him again, if the Coont was, in fact, dying. But no, the Coont was still screaming at

the top of his voice. Igor leant his large frame out of the side window of the Tesla. Smoke seemed to be rising in a straight line out of a small hole at the front of the box. Getting out quickly, he moved to the front of the car and put his finger on the hole. Then lying, he said through the plastic,

“Quiet now, Master, they are around us. The Lupei have attacked you again. I have repelled them. Lie still, Master and wait. You will be safe soon.”

Reaching the long driveway of the land, which was now worth tens of millions. They took the dirt track which led to the stone cottage that lay alone, close to the water’s edge. Igor hit the remote control for the garage and waited. Then watched the large metal door as it clunked away from the ground, sliding itself up along the garage’s roof before slipping the Tesla inside.

Getting out, Igor waited as the large door closed back down, sealing out the outside light. He unlatched the top box and took a deep breath, waiting for the barrage of abuse that he knew was about to follow.

Seconds later, with an angry flap of his cape, the Coont was out of the makeshift plastic coffin. The vampire landing on one foot in the darkness next to the car. Screaming, as he scolded Igor in a fashion that would have left Elton John on a bad hair day seem as shy as a choir boy.

Looking to his smoking ash-covered foot, he shrieked,

“Igor, thou fool. Mine foot hath been taken!”

Looking to the small hole in the top box, Igor quickly said, “The Lupei, they have a laser, Master. Be thankful you are safe.”

The Coont stood for a moment staring at his smoking foot. Looking up at the slave who was speaking in a foreign language, he said.

“Thy speaketh to I with unfamiliar tongue, Igor. Why?”

“The Lupei, they tried to burn you, Master. I saved you. We both live.”

The Coont looked back to his foot. “Mine toes, they will have rebirth. It is not of consequence. Until then, though, myself shall haveth trouble treading this earth when movement is necessary.”

“Indeed, Master. I will find you footwear that becomes a prince with stature that is yours alone.”

The Coont said nothing. The vampire standing there, just staring at his foot. His red bloodshot eyes in stark contrast against his pasty white skin. Then, taking in the musty air from the garage, the Coont shouted,

“Bringeth thy Lupei alive, I shalt destroy them, torment their souls an eternity. Feast upon their blood, shalt I forever after.” Then the Coont stood still again for a moment, seemingly contemplating his smoldering foot. Taking a deep breath as he made a decision, he shouted,

“But firstly, deliver thy Master three virgin maidens for lust of thirst I hath. Bathe shalt I in their blood, as they surrender their being to thine Master.” Looking to the vampire, Igor simply replied, “There is no bath here. The cottage only has a shower, Master.”

The Coont stared at his slave, this man whom he’d pulled from death in defeat and given life back to his tortured soul, now speaking with a strange tongue. With his foot still burning, he snapped,

“What be the words thou use, slave?”

“Thou cannot bathe in maidens’ blood now, Master. I can thou offer the blood of a sow, or bovine, or a goat?” And as the words hit

upon the Coont's ears and despite missing half of his right foot, the vampire was on him with an eruption of violence that Igor had long since forgotten.

“Defy I not, slave! Maidens bringeth! The feast of a maiden's blood is of need!”

And maidens were exactly what he was going to get.

CHAPTER SIX

Exactly where the vampire was going to find his maidens these days, Igor was not one hundred percent sure. The days of the Coont swooping down and landing gracefully in front of a young maiden while they wandered home at night was now, without a doubt, the wrong way to go. Yes, the Coont had liked to hunt and to seduce his prey centuries before, but that was more sport. His bread and butter, so to speak, were the women Igor had brought to the castle either unwittingly or simply kidnapped.

This, though, always caused issues with the locals, and ultimately even more fallout in the castle from the women once they had been drained of blood and became vampire disciples themselves. Once this happened, they too would need feeding as they inevitability filled the holes and crevices hacked away into the tunnels that wound below the castle like a rabbits' warren loaded with death.

Now the Coont was out again. Popping into the supermarket and plucking a maiden off the cashier's till, would certainly be out of the question for Igor. Unless he could get the Coont locked back in again. He had though already feasted, it seemed and in this feasting, the cycle would inevitably start all over again. For soon, that person would themselves turn and come looking for their Master as they never failed to do.

Pulling two large plastic cooler boxes from the top of a cupboard, Igor then, unclipped the top box with the hole at the top from the car's roof. He placed it on top of the cooler boxes on the floor at the

Coont's feet and opened it. Gesturing to the Coont with his right hand, Igor said,

"Sleep now, Master."

The Coont stared at him, his dark eyes inset to his bony features. His hair black and swept back as though an army of stylists had just come through and singled out each strand with precision. His cape, now dry and smooth again as though it had just been itself weaved from the finest silk. His trousers stopping perfectly just above his shoe that now only housed half a foot.

"How caneth I rest slave when thou hath alloweth mine foot to perish by rays of sunlight?"

"It will grow back, Master, fear not. But it cannot grow if you do not sleep."

Looking down at the roof box and then around the garage made dark by its blackened windows, the Coont asked,

"Where art mine gold, slave? Where art mine silk? Sleep cannot be found within!"

"I will retrieve your true casket, Master, and you can rest."

"I hath no foot slave! Howeth can I rest knowing the ability to stand hath been taken?"

Igor looked around, spotting a pair of big black steel-toed wellies he'd used years ago to clean the front of the home after a storm had messed up the yard.

"We live in different times now, Master. The sun has given benefit to you. You will find these boots to a fashion you will be more comfortable with. Many other demons are wearing them these days. You will be in great favor with the princesses of the night."

This was good news, the Coont thought if he was correct in deciphering the strange language this oaf of a man was saying. He had friends here.

“Thy speak of demons, slave. Of whom do thy talk? Will I feast again with Princesses Lamia and Lilith?” He would not. Igor had already killed the Princesses Lamia and Lilith himself, along with most of the other vampires who were in the Coont’s social circle and had come calling.

These vampire demons of the night appearing uninvited at the castle. Riding within their black chariots of death up to the gates only for the demon and their followers to be met with decapitation or a stake to the heart.

Igor, with his sword, dispatching them from this world. Then, taking the same demon’s carriage led by its horses of black, he’d ride out to the castle they themselves called home to rid the world of the countless undead that lay within the castle’s walls. Collecting scars like trophies as he fought with his sword and stakes as the demons came until none were left. Then, and only then, with his own flesh ripped and torn, would Igor begin to haul away the treasures within.

The man with scars passing freely through the open countryside and towns as he rode back to the Coont’s own castle where he now lay imprisoned. Any highwaymen or opportunist thieves who would normally see fit to remove Igor of his treasured haul standing down. For they knew the reputation of the man at the reins of any blackened chariot of death.

“I fear not, Master, for thou are the last. Time has though passed many moons whilst thou have been hiding, and many stronger demons now come in mortal form also.”

This intrigued the Coont, this Master vampire who dealt out fear but feared no other thing in return except daylight. He said, “I fear thou mind has becometh weak, slave. Howeth can a mortal be more feared than I?”

“There are mortals who work their evil alone and others who control or shield themselves behind God himself, Master. There is also sickness and viruses that behold mankind like none you have ever known, Master.”

Scoffing, the Coont smiled. “Thou memory be short, slave. Superior beings pay small consequence to thou Black Death.”

“No, Master, there are deeper and stronger enemies now. Mortals beset with unimaginable evil walk amongst us, unafraid of the light of day. There is disease and plague also. There are those that come to you through the blood called HIV while others called Covid-19 follow the air and hide waiting to strike in plain sight.”

That explained a lot, thought the Coont. It had been troubling why no one was afraid of him as he’d approached them with his usual majesty. Mortal demons? Who were these people, and did they drink the blood, sucking the power from their fellow man? It was interesting. But there could only be one king, and the king was back, even if half his right foot was missing.

With one eyebrow raised, he said, “I will sleep now, slave. In that time, bringeth I the heads of thine mortal demons named Ahe Eye Vee and Co Veed that now spread fear, so as they can rot in mine presence.”

“Yes, Master, I will go hunt them now,” answered Igor, not bothering to elaborate.

He watched as the Coont swang his arm at him and commanded, “And bringeth I a virgin maiden for when the sun has ceased.”

“Yes, Master.”

Then looking to the garage door, Igor quickly said,

“Master, the door can open. If it does, you will perish in the sun. Into your coffin quickly, I will wake you at dusk.”

With the plastic roof box firmly wound tight and sealed with duct tape, Igor took off again. This time alone, as he drove along his highly coveted driveway that was worth millions.

He had a big problem. It wasn't good. The Coont was back. He needed to get him comfortably settled again into the ironwood coffin so as he could get back to the easy life and his violin. He needed a maiden – and a virgin maiden at that. Someone for the Coont to not only feed from, but a maiden the Coont could seduce also in the process. But with that came death, and death was something he'd avoided for so long now it did not seem right.

Yes, he was correct about there being more evil men out there now than the Coont. Finding one of these types though and coaxing the prick along with his bag of fentanyl-laced smack over to West Vancouver for dinner would only upset the Coont further.

He pulled the Tesla onto Marine Drive and kept going, passing the shopping center and the virgin maidens in abundance within and hit the bridge. Five minutes later, he was downtown, sitting on the corner of Main and Hastings on the east side.

What the hell was he doing here? he thought. He looked out across and along the road to the sadness of humanity that lay before him. The homeless and forgotten lined the road. The drugged-out lost in their own tattered world, wandering back and forth tormented by visions that only belonged to them. Yes, he honestly could drag one of the verminous drug dealers who fed off them from an alley. But as he already knew, what could be possibly gained from presenting the Coont with some ghastly being, when a virgin maiden was supposed to be on the menu?

Then he saw her, and it was as if she'd been sent to him by God himself. A female drug dealer. The woman standing in amongst the

others at the edge of an alley lined with needles and shit. The woman fitting in well amongst the rest of the parasites who frequented this area full of lowlifes, junkies and sadness. Feeding themselves with poison as they slowly drained the life from their bodies, day by day and night by night.

Igor parked the Tesla and took a walk. The residents calling out with words only they could understand. The shit and litter strewn across the already filthy sidewalk. The ambulances in full use, draining the budgets of an already stretched system, parked at either side of the road. The place was a mess. It really wasn't a bad solution to the situation that had arisen after these members of the Lupei family had somehow found them again and opened the hornets' nest.

A woman who knowingly sold fentanyl-laced death on the streets, enabling the fallen without a thought for those that needed help, deserved nothing more than a meet and greet with what possibly was the world's last surviving vampire. The Coont being just the right person to turn the tables. To seduce her, then feast off her. Then once he was done and her blood was drained and black blood ran through her veins, Igor would produce his stake of ironwood and ram it through her heart as the Coont slept. If he was lucky, the whole process could be sorted within a couple of days. As long as he could keep the Coont at home and the woman who lived off selling death around long enough to keep the Coont happy, that is.

It was almost an hour of dodging meth heads before Igor maneuvered himself into the position of propositioning this woman who'd spent her day standing in a piss-stained alley she could no

longer smell. Her battle-weary eyes, which had been watching him for a while, unnerved as he approached. The woman asking, as she now saw the man's scars in close up,

"What you want?"

"You," replied Igor without a moment's hesitation.

"It's fifteen for a blowy, but you'll need to shoot quick as I'm busy." Igor smiled; he wasn't there for that. The woman sizing him up quicker than he could have imagined, saying straight back,

"Well then, I don't sell for Russians. I already got a boss. So, fuck off with your fucked-up face quick before they see you."

"I'm not here for either," Igor replied, taking the woman's brashness in his stride. "Like I said, I'm here for you. I have a friend who you'd like," answered Igor with a smile as he stood on the dirty gravel.

"I sell blow and give blowies – pussy is two blocks down."

And it was, the whole place in chaos, but everyone knew their place.

"My friend, the Coont, wishes to dine with you. Would you be interested?"

The woman standing there in her jeans and shoes with scuffed three-inch heels. Liking the fact that someone wanted to take her out, even though her rear molars had long rotted out from constant puking after meals throughout her teens. The rest long gone from smoking crack through a pipe as she'd drifted onwards through life. She asked,

"The who?"

"The Coont."

Then it hit her. *The man*, she thought, *was obviously Eastern European and was talking about a Count*. "Do I know him?" she asked out of sheer curiosity.

“You will have undoubtedly heard of him, yes. He is handsome, and he is rich, and he wants a virgin damsel to dine with this evening. I have searched for hours, and you are a rarity. A damsel of pure beauty.”

Well, go talk to my uncle about the virgin part! the woman thought, as the memory of the man fucking her in his bathroom when she was 14 raced through her mind. The man stinking of cigarettes and beer, saying, ‘Yeah, you want it, bitch!’ as he held her down by her hair over the sink. But beauty, yeah, it had been said.

“Your name, what is your name?” asked Igor in the strong Romanian accent he’d never been able to lose despite the years. Looking back along the road to see if his car was still there. He heard the woman say,

“Josephine.”

Igor smiled.

“Josephine, I am Igor, the servant of the Coont. He requests that you dine with him this evening. And for this, I will pay you in gold.”

And with this, Igor pulled a coin of solid gold from his pocket and without a thought, placed it gently into her hand.

Josephine, the young woman who wore jeans and scuffed heels and whose teeth had rotted out, had not long changed professions.

The woman now finding selling crack and whatever else she could get her hands on in little bags earned her more than she used to earn from using what was left of her looks to get paid for sucking dick with her teeth out. Selling bags of poison for \$20 a pop was a better return than the \$15 she’d receive for spitting out a mouthful of protein. Sometimes though, if she got lucky, she’d pull in both for the full \$35.

Josephine stared at the gold coin and felt its weight in her hand. It certainly felt like gold, and it looked like gold, but something was wrong. If it was real, why her, and why this much money? Why wasn’t this guy just cruising Yaletown or Coal Harbor where girls had dental

plans? But maybe that was it, maybe word was out, and the steady following she'd picked up over the last year or five was spreading further afield than the downtown east side. After all, even if she had been plying her trade in the alleys and piss-stinking doorways, for as long as she could remember, she had heard herself referred to as the blowjob queen of Vancouver on more than one occasion.

Putting the gold coin into her pocket just in case, she looked around to see if this guy was costing her trade. Unconsciously running her fingers through her dirty, bleached, blonde hair, Josephine then said with a smile.

“We talking about fangs here?”

Well, she was quick on the uptake this one, Igor thought. How on earth could she have worked that out? Was it that easy to read that he was a vampire master's slave? Maybe. As far as he could tell, he'd managed to assimilate himself into society. Apart from the accent, that is. However, some mortals still had an inherent ability to sniff out demons and their servants. Maybe this woman had that gene?

“So?” Josephine asked again.

“What makes you think that?” answered Igor as he smiled.

“Well, the man's a Count. You said it yourself.”

And taking a chance and keeping his smile sharp across his scarred-up face, Igor said,

“Yes, you are correct, his name is Coont Draculi, and he wants you to join him as his maiden.....

End of Sample Chapters

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