

**Chapter Thirty, "The End of the Whole Bloody Mess"**

Camille and Kimberly raced through the woods, chasing Papa and running from the dawn. The sun was rising quickly and would wait for no one.

Kimberly could smell Papa. They were close.

The two women found her in a large grouping of trees. She was sitting on the ground, head in her hands, turned away from them.

She seemed to be crying. Kimberly could hear deep, loud sobs coming from the woman.

Kimberly looked at Camille. They weren't going to be fooled. Both of them got their stakes ready and crept up on the vampire.

Unsurprisingly, Papa whirled around to face them, teeth bared, hands outstretched. Camille and Kimberly were ready for her but, to Kimberly, it didn't seem to matter. Papa was old. Papa was strong. Stronger than either of them.

She threw a punch that shattered Camille's stake. Managed to block Kimberly's strike with her arm. Kimberly's stake impaled Papa's forearm. It stuck right through the limb.

Papa was full of her former sire's blood. It burst out of her veins in a long arc, splattering Kimberly's face. She twisted her arm and the stake snapped in Kimberly's hand, leaving her with a simple wooden stump.

Quick as a snake, Papa grabbed one of the drumsticks from Kimberly's jeans and thrust it into the woman's chest. A makeshift wooden stake. Kimberly reeled back in shock.

It missed Kimberly's heart by mere centimeters but she felt it rub along the splinter of wood that was nestled up against her heart. She was frozen in pain and terror for one brief second.

Papa seized the moment. She dropped Kimberly, leaving her on the ground in a heap.

She grabbed hold of Camille, lifted her up. Camille clawed and kicked but it did no good. Papa merely smiled up at her.

Camille tried one more time. She grabbed hold of the broken wooden stake in Papa's arm and twisted it. Papa's face broke into a grimace of pain. But it wasn't enough. It seemed to only make her more angry.

She threw Camille twenty feet away. The Beast tumbled to the ground but almost immediately got

back up.

Papa was on Kimberly in an instant. She dropped to the ground and mounted her like a spider attacking a fly.

Kimberly had just pulled the drumstick out of her chest. She dropped it on the ground as Papa mounted her. She wasn't ready for the attack. Papa bit down on her neck.

"No!" Camille screamed and started to run towards them.

Kimberly fought back, biting down on Papa's neck as well. They both drank from each other, sire and progeny exchanging blood; as one drained, so did the other. They were running a race. A bloody, fatal race.

But Papa was winning.

Kimberly could feel it. Papa was older, more experienced. She drank faster. Kimberly could feel herself slipping away, bit by bit.

Camille ran towards them at full speed. The Beast and Camille, working together, both of them fighting to save the woman they loved.

Neither of them saw the trap until they stepped into it.

It wasn't a trap set up by Asa or Wendy. Nothing so elaborate. No, it was something simple. A bear - or possibly wolf - trap, set by hunters. It was brutally effective.

Camille's foot was caught in the claws of the trap. It stopped her dead in her tracks.

And she could only watch as the worst thing she could imagine unfolded in front of her like a Greek Tragedy.

The two vampires fed off each other for a moment more before both of them noticed dawn cresting the trees. They stopped drinking and looked up.

"Sorry," Papa said, "gotta run."

She reached into the hole in Kimberly's chest. The young vampire gasped in pain as Papa's hand entered her chest cavity.

Papa's hand was inside her up to the wrist. She felt the splinter of wood there and pushed it towards the young woman's heart.

Kimberly screamed and grabbed hold of Papa's hand. She held tight. She could hear the bones in Papa's wrist snapping.

"Let go!" Papa said.

"No," Kimberly said.

"We'll both die!"

"Then we die."

Using the last of her strength, Kimberly pulled the both of them from the grouping of trees. It was a struggle.

Kimberly persevered and pulled them both into the beautiful dawn light. Papa screamed and tried to fly away but Kimberly was weighing her down. She dug a hand into the ground and held on.

"Kimberly!" Camille said.

Their eyes met, in those last moments. Tears spilled down Camille's cheeks as the Beast left her and she transformed into a girl once again. Kimberly was crying, too.

"Say good things about me," she said.

She and Papa caught fire, both of them screaming. Kimberly kept holding on to Papa, right to the end.

Camille couldn't be sure, but she thought that Papa transformed in those last moments. She fancied that she saw a pair of horns sprout from Papa's head and that her body became twisted, misshapen, a demon of some kind. But it was hard to see through the flames.

The sound of their screams dug into Camille's head. She dropped to her knees - the trap cutting into her leg and bringing intense pain - and put her hands on either side of her head. This couldn't be happening. Not after all this.

Then both vampires were dust.

Camille cried out in soul-crushing agony. The wind kicked up and swirled the ashes around her. She sniffed the air and could just catch the fading scent of Kimberly on the air. After a moment, it was gone entirely.

Camille sat on the ground for nearly a full minute, wiping the tears from her eyes, before getting to work on the trap. She pushed the release lever and pulled the metal jaws apart but it was as if all the strength had left her body. The claws snapped back onto her leg and pain surged through her body.

But the pain was good. It got her mind off Kimberly.

She stood up, just for something to do. That was when she saw the figure in the shadow of a tree behind her.

It was Wendy.

Her whole body was covered in burns and she was smoking. Not smoking a cigarette but actually smoking, tendrils wafting off her and swirling into the air. The shade was enough to keep her alive for the moment but the sun was getting to her anyway.

She held something in her hand, something that Camille couldn't see at first. Wendy held up the something and Camille saw that it was a gun, a pistol. And she recognized it.

"Wendy," Camille said. "Put that down."

It was Arthur's pistol, the one Manny had ended up with. The pistol with one silver bullet left in it.

"This is all your fault," Wendy said. "If you hadn't worked at the diner, I wouldn't have met you. Asa would never have gone after me."

"Wendy, calm down," Camille said.

"If you had helped Asa more, she wouldn't have died."

Wendy stepped out into the sunlight, pistol aimed right at Camille's heart. Camille tried to let the Beast out but it was now the day. And the Beast was a night creature.

"And I wouldn't be dead," Wendy said.

Wendy caught fire in the sunlight. The flame licked her body.

"Wen--" Camille said.

She never finished the word.

Wendy fired the pistol. Her aim was true.

The bullet passed through Camille's chest cavity and hit her heart, embedding itself there. Wendy screamed as fire engulfed her. She turned to ash and the scream disappeared on the wind like dead leaves. The pistol dropped to the ground where her feet would have been. Camille flew backwards but not far, trapped in the bear trap as she was.

She hit the ground and looked up at the sky. The clouds were all gone. The storm had passed. With eerie clarity, she knew that all over town, fires were dying, the wind blowing them away. People were trying to pick things back up, trying to find those they had lost during the night. The hideous vermin infecting the streets were running away in terror after their master died. Police from nearby towns were on their way. Manny would be dropping off the Old Woman and would be leaving town to find his wife. And he would find her.

Camille coughed up blood. In her head, she could hear Donovan, singing a sad song. She sang along with it for a moment, for as long as she could.

She died thinking of Kimberly.

## Epilogue, "Autopsy"

### 1) "Midnight at the Morgue"

On the day Camille died, at nearly midnight, two morgue-workers - Jeff and Bruce - wheeled her body into a desolate, dimly-lit morgue in Providence. The lights flickered as they rolled her in.

"Where'd they find this one?" Bruce asked. He was a good-looking man with dark hair, probably in his early thirties.

"Just outside of the town," Jeff said. He was similar in age and also had dark hair but was shorter than his colleague and wore glasses.

"Bolton," Bruce said. "I hadn't even heard of it till today."

"I expect very few others had, either," Jeff said. "Let's get her on the slab."

They heaved her onto one of the slabs with some effort. Put on gloves and got to work.

"I heard they've brought in every medical examiner in the state," Bruce said.

Jeff snapped his gloves on. "Every one of them?"

"Practically. But we got this one."

Jeff made an encouraging noise, grabbed a scalpel and placed the blade between the girl's breasts. Bruce stopped him.

"What?" Jeff asked.

Bruce shrugged. "She's kinda cute, isn't she?"

Jeff narrowed his eyes. "I suppose. *Was* is the word, I believe."

"No, *is*. Just because she's dead doesn't mean we couldn't have a little fun with her."

"Where are your medical ethics?"

"I'm just joking," Bruce said a little too quickly.

Jeff eyed him for a moment before starting the Y-cut on the body. Bruce watched, rubbing his hands together.

"Such a shame," he said.

"Hand me the clamp," Jeff said.

He pulled her chest open and Bruce handed him the spreader, which he set in place. They both

examined the chest cavity.

"Appears to be in good shape other than the bullet," Jeff said.

Bruce nodded and probed near the chest with tweezers. Jeff looked at him.

"You know, you're in here often," he said. "Alone."

"What are you implying?" Bruce asked.

"Do I need to imply anything?"

Bruce scoffed. "I think you'd better. Because if you were to imply anything, anything that you *would* imply would be fairly serious, wouldn't you think?"

"Never mind."

They returned to work. Bruce pulled a bullet out of the girl's heart, held it up to the light. It glinted in the moonlight, which shown through the small window in the room.

"Is that..." Bruce began.

"Silver," Jeff said.

"A silver bullet? I had heard some strange rumors about what went on last night but this..." He shook his head. "Silver bullets are supposed to kill werewolves, aren't they?"

"Don't be ridiculous. We're dealing with science here, we--"

There was a strange cracking sound, then the sound of metal hitting the floor. Jeff and Bruce looked down to see the spreader gone from the body, lying on the floor below the slab. But there was something else, something more disquieting. The Y-cut had resealed, seemingly by itself.

"Jeff," Bruce said.

"That's..." Jeff said. "That's impossible. That shouldn't happen..."

The body's eyes popped open and they were a vibrant shade of green. She transformed right before their eyes, hair sprouting all over her. The next second, Camille sat up, grabbing hold of Bruce by the neck.

Jeff ran from the room, already half-mad. Camille still had hold of Bruce.

"What were you planning to do to me, huh?" she asked, the Beast in charge once more. "Rape me? Fuck me?"

She squeezed, crushing his larynx. Bruce coughed up blood and The Beast pushed him down onto the slab, straddled him and took a bite out of his face. The man screamed but not for long. The She Wolf bit down on his neck, severing a jugular vein and pulverizing his larynx.

Bruce's eyes went wide and unfocused. Blood cascaded into the air from the wound in his neck. Camille bit down on him again, this time taking out an eye, the left one. She continued feeding, eating

an obscene amount of his flesh.

When it was over, she sat up, looking at the ceiling. Out the window.

There was a feeling in the air. Every hair on Camille's body stood up in attention. The She Wolf cocked her head to one side and listened. Nothing. She sniffed the air. Same result.

A hand fell on her shoulder. Camille jumped. There shouldn't be anyone here. She would have smelled them. Would have *felt* them.

She looked around and saw a figure standing in the doorway. Slowly, she transformed back into a girl again.

The figure was Kimberly.

Kimberly was standing in the doorway. She wore a black wedding dress, much like the one Camille had worn through much of the night. Except Kimberly's had a veil that covered her face.

After a few seconds, the spectre was gone.

Camille took a moment to clean herself up, grab a lab coat and then left. In all the confusion that followed, she simply walked out of the hospital, just missing Jeff, who brought security down to the morgue with him.

She walked out of the hospital and into the wild, not knowing where she was headed. Immortality still had her in its grasp and meant to keep her.

No matter what she had to say about it.

## 2) "Night Life"

In a dive bar on the outskirts of Providence, Belinda Burke sighed to herself. The creepy guy alone at a table in a darkened corner of the bar was her's. Of course he was. Her section, her guy.

It had been one of those nights. Belinda was a pretty, raven-haired young woman with a curvy form that men - drunk men, especially - liked. She had swatted away at least half a dozen wandering hands already tonight.

But this guy was different. He was quiet. Intense. She didn't like it.

He hadn't touched her. Hadn't said anything offensive or demeaning to her. No, it was nothing like that.

He had simply looked at her. Once, no more than that, but it was enough. He seemed to look right through her. It was creepy, to say the least.

But it was her job and she had to do it. The pay was shit but the tips were good. It was enough to keep her afloat, despite the shittiness of the world.

The bar air was a mixture of smoke and beer farts as she crossed the room to the darkened corner. The guy had taken a whole small booth to himself. Belinda had seen three young toughs try to take the spot from him. All it took was a look to send them running off, tails between their legs.

Something about this guy.

She approached his table, grabbed his empty beer bottle. "Can I get you anything else."

The guy had been staring off into the middle distance, barely noticing her. Now he turned to her. "Yeah. Something stronger."

"Anything more specific?"

The guy looked at her. He produced a small bottle of pills, opened it and shook one out. It was large and white. To Belinda, it looked like an antibiotic of some kind.

"Bourbon," he said. "How about a bourbon to wash this down?"

"That a good idea?"

He shot a dagger at her with his glance. "What are you, my fucking mother?"

Belinda sighed. "No, mister, I am not."

The guy tapped the table with the large pill. He smirked at her.

He was fifty with greyish hair that was dull and flat. He was thin, almost gaunt, with hollow cheeks and a deeply lined face. The one eye that Belinda could see matched his hair.

He looked unwell. He wore an eye-patch and Belinda could see a few large scratches under it. They were red and inflamed. Maybe that was what the pills were for. One of his hands was bandaged.

"Forget that 'mister' shit," he said. "Name's Arthur Samms. What's your name, dear?"

She didn't like this. Not at all. She spoke slowly, cautiously. "Belinda."

Arthur Samms smiled. "Well, Belinda, I'd tell you a tale. I sure would. A fucking tale about monsters and the righteous battling against them. I'd tell you all this, Belinda, but I think I'd be telling the wrong person. Preaching to the choir, as it were."

Belinda shook her head. "What do you mean?"

That smile didn't leave his face. "I mean, you're one of them, aren't you?"

"One what?"

"One of the monsters. I knew it the second I saw the horns on the top of your head."

Belinda didn't have any idea what he was talking about. She turned to leave but before she could, she felt a hand wrap around her arm.

She didn't want to look over her shoulder but she did. Arthur was only a couple of inches away from her. He leaned in. She could smell his foul breath. He licked his lips. "Tell me what you know about werewolves, demon."



**THE END**

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