

MOSTLY DEAD MELVIN

FOINAH JAMESON

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This book is dedicated to three very special people ~

Derek, Solas, and Luna.

You are my heart.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER 1: Poor pitiful pearl gets the lead in the play

Poke. Poke, poke-poke.

“Hey, dude! You can’t sleep here.”

I cracked open an eyelid and blinked against the daylight. A man was standing over me, his finger aimed and ready for another prod at my chest as I lay sprawled half on the sidewalk and steps in front of my apartment building.

He tsk-tsked me. “You’re going to get in trouble.”

I tried to sit up but my head felt dizzy, and I slumped back down on to the steps with a groan. I felt weird. Really weird.

“What happened?” I slurred.

“I dunno. You been here all morning. What happened to your neck?” He pointed. “That doesn’t look good.”

I reached up and felt two crusty holes a few inches below my ear. Uh-oh. I licked my lips and tasted copper, then ran my tongue over my retainer (yes, I was wearing a retainer), gagging at the taste. Something disgusting had taken over my tongue.

What happened last night?

The man was just standing there, staring at me. “I saw the lady drop you off.” It sounded like a question rather than a statement, and I squinted my eyes against the sun trying to fry my retinas.

“What?” Oh boy was I dizzy, my memory distinctly patchy in places.

“She was strong! She carried you all the way here from her car and then dropped you on the steps. Who was she?” he asked.

Images came back to me in a sickening rush, and cold sweat popped up on my upper lip as I finally remembered part of my night.

I was at a dingy downtown bar drowning my sorrows in cheap happy-hour liquor when I saw a girl sitting two stools down from me. She was alone and I noticed she was watching me. I figured, what the hell, and sat down beside her. No one else was going to chat her up and maybe I’d get lucky. She was pale and smelled a little off, but she had a nice smile.

Beggars can’t be choosers.

But she had the last laugh after all.

She got me good. Lured me to her car, let me believe that it was something special. We talked, we laughed....

She leaned in and kissed my neck. I felt the brief sting of her teeth and a moment of pain, and I actually swooned. I thought it was a hickey. What did I know? After a few minutes she pulled away and told me that I tasted awful, like fast food and Crisco, and I should have been insulted, but I wasn’t. I was too dizzy, caught up in the moment and probably woozy from the blood loss. Instead I just smiled and tried to kiss her again. I was clumsy and stupid, still wearing my retainer, and I clunked against her face and cut her lip as I mashed my lips against hers. It was just one drop of her blood, lapped up in my befuddled attempt at passion. She shoved me away and wiped a kiss-smear crimson bead from her lip, but it was too late. The deed was done. She looked horrified.

“Ahhh, crap!” was all she said.

Indeed. That’s when I passed out and then woke up here on my front steps.

I was going to be sick!

I managed to stand up and stumble into the building.
“Hey, Mister! You dropped something.” The man caught up and handed me a note.
I took it with shaking fingers, unfolding and reading it slowly as I climbed into the elevator.

Melvin, sorry about all this. It wasn't supposed to happen. Hopefully you don't have the dark gift - you'll know in a day or two. If not, consider this your free pass...you tasted awful anyway. You should clean up your diet.

If so, well, good luck with everything. Thanks for the evening. - Maddy

I barely made it to my apartment before the nausea hit. My bowels felt like they were filled with jagged little pieces of glass, twisting and shredding as they rode the roller coaster ride down from my stomach. I was panting and moaning as I fumbled the key in the lock, desperate not to foul the hallway, mortified at the thought of my neighbors catching me in this state; most of them already thought I was weird enough. Another cramp hit as I finally got my door open, tumbled into my apartment then kicked the door closed with my foot.

I moaned again as I crawled on all fours into the bathroom. Definitely not one of my finer moments. This was awful. Actually, awful doesn't even begin to cover it -- I was ass warmed over and then re-served to me in a shot glass. The previous night's adventure was still fuzzy in places, playing hide-and-seek-peek-a-boo. Every time I'd start again to remember what had happened, the rational part of my mind would slam down a wall and the memories would fuzz over again. Uh-oh.

Dizzy and weak from blood loss, and thirsty...so very thirsty, I drank at least twenty glasses of water but couldn't quench myself; this had to be the worst hangover I'd ever had. I didn't think it was possible to be burning up and freezing to death at the same time. If I was dying, I was surprisingly okay with that. Death would be a mercy right now. Ugh.

Oh, God, what the hell did I eat?

An image of Maddy's blood-smeared lips popped into my head briefly and I almost passed out.

Stop it!

I called in to work and told my boss that I was coming down with something awful and most likely contagious.

You were bitten by a vampire, dumbass.

I shuddered and ignored my inner voice. “There's no such thing,” I mumbled, even as I started shivering again. “It's just food poisoning. Yeah, that's it.”

More like blood poisoning.

I bundled up in a quilt and curled up on my bed with Maddy's note clenched in my fist. Boy, she was a real nut job. I was glad it hadn't gone any further with her; what kind of relationship would that be with a girl who was so obviously delusional? Huh? I didn't want to think about the bite on my neck, couldn't equate the dizziness with loss of blood. I ignored that last memory of my blood glistening on Maddy's fangs...yes, fangs. I knew I saw fangs, but I buried that memory. Yup. Oh yeah.

Maddy was a vampire...yeah, right. But maybe she really was, and that's the only reason she gave me the time of day. Ouch. I'd been used. How sad. That's me, though; sad, completely lonely, and let's not leave out scared.

Deep down I knew I was lying to myself on so many levels. Sure I was disappointed that Maddy was gone, a girl who had liked me enough to take me to her car and swap spit, but I also knew something was happening to me; something bad. Maybe the Dark Gift after all. The thing I had coveted for so long in my make believe La-La Land just might be the real deal.

Yay? Nope!

My body was tingling, but my limbs felt heavy and dead. *Dead.* As the sun rose higher in the sky exhaustion swept over me, and I slipped into a surreal coma dream that was the beginning of my end.

I was floating above my bed. The room was dark but I realized that I wasn't alone.... Someone was here with me. I focused through the balloony feeling in my brain, and stared down in shock at what I saw: myself lying there, my body beneath me pale and sweat-soaked, huddled and shivering in the quilt. The feeling of disconnect was so profound that I found myself floating higher towards the ceiling, unnoticed by my comatose self below. I flailed my arms in a swimming motion and got control enough that I was able to descend to the floor next to the bed.

"Hi, Melvin."

I spun around, losing control and floating again, and saw a dark shadow standing next to me. It had no features, and its voice echoed as if coming through a tinny cell phone speaker. The shadow reached out and grabbed my arm, pulling me back down next to it.

I said, "Who are you?" It was all I could come up with at the moment.

"Is that what you really want to know?" it asked mockingly. "You can do better than that." The shadow pointed at my body on the bed and crossed its arms (I think it had arms). My abandoned body convulsed on the bed, puffing out the quilt grotesquely from the spasms and twitches, and my floating self was nauseous; nauseous and terrified. The room was filling with a dull mist that was pushing in from the corners. That couldn't be good.

"Come on, lad. We're on the clock here."

"What's happening?" I stammered. A shadow with a posh English accent, this was the strangest dream I'd ever had.

"All right," the shadow sighed. "Einstein you're not, but that question will do." It leaned over my comatose form and tucked the quilt under my chin, and then sighed heavily as it turned to face me.

"Let's go in the other room, this part tends to creep out an initiate even though I also enjoy the moment. But it would be better for you in the other room."

It pulled my arm and we were suddenly in my sparse living room. The shadow opened up its jacket, a detail I missed originally, and pulled out a stone too large to have been hidden in there. The shadow handed it to me, and the weight anchored me to the floor.

"Whoa...." I said.

The shadow shrugged its shoulders. "Yes, whoa." It cackled briefly and then sat down on my couch. "You might want to sit down for this, Melvin."

I obeyed. What else was I going to do?

“Am I dreaming?”

“No, Melvin. You aren’t dreaming, you’re dying.”

I gasped and dropped the stone, which made me start floating again. Very patiently the shadow pulled my leg and reeled me in to the couch.

“Maddy, my dear, you messed up with this one,” it muttered to the encroaching mist. “Melvin, hold on to the stone and listen to me. Just try and stay focused, all right?”

“I’m Mr. Happy. Yes, I know. A dreadful moniker but meant to be uplifting. While the job description lacks certain details, I’m a self-appointed overseer of these types of things. A cataloguer if you will. More of a morbid spectator actually, but I like to check in with the anointed and offer some tips for the transition.” The shadow tented his hands on his lap.

“Did I hit my head?” I blinked a few times.

“Silence for now, Melvin. I am speaking. While you are a rather banal and uncouth evolved monkey, you must show me some respect. Dredge some up from that rather corpuscular form, now, or I shall grow very, very cross. Trust me, you don’t want to see me cross.”

I recoiled at the venom in Mr. Happy’s dictionary-based slap, and slumped into the couch. Possibly dying or simply dreaming, I invented snooty phantoms to torment me. Living ones weren’t enough. The shadow sighed heavily and shook his head.

“You have an opportunity here, although I must say I don’t have much faith in you. You’re rather pathetic, you do know that don’t you, Melvin?”

I feebly nodded and clutched the stone tightly to my chest. This was unreal. I stared at the stone in my hand, wide-eyed and dazed.

Mr. Happy patted me on the shoulder, his touch cold and inhuman. “Hmmm, yes. Life hasn’t been kind to you, but it’s what you make of it that counts. I’d say you don’t have a lot to count at this juncture.” The shadow cackled again and then leaned forward, his face inches from mine. I saw a swirling depth in those vacant features, like looking into the abyss; I think I may have even heard screaming.

“Focus, my boy. You, Melvin Morton, are ascending to the dark realm.”

“Crap,” I wheezed.

“Indeed. Others who have a vested interest in these sorts of matters will be most displeased with darling Maddy’s indiscretion. However, there’s no going back now. I personally think you’ll make a dreadful vampire, but time will tell. Hopefully you’ll just die. That would be wonderful, don’t you think?”

“No! I don’t want to die.” I sat up and glared at the shadow. “Wait a minute! This isn’t really happening. Vampire? No way.”

“Oh way, Melvin. Very way as a matter of fact.”

“I bet I got food poisoning from that cheap happy hour buffet.” I nodded to myself. Yeah, that was it. I was dreaming or hallucinating.

“My God, but you are dense. You really don’t want to die? It would be so much easier in the long run. Just choose that instead.”

I looked around the room at the encroaching mist filled with the outlines of writhing forms, at the stone I clutched against my chest, and then shook my head. “Yup, it’s the toxins. Wow, you even sound real. Vampires? Yeah, right.” I grinned. This was the most bizarre dream!

“You think those green tinged snacks are to blame for your plight? Think again, my boy. I didn’t see a buffalo wing bite you on the neck! You think that was Cajun sauce on Maddy’s lip?”

“Maybe this is alcohol poisoning. I’ll wake up covered in puke, and then I’ll be fine.”

“Are you that stupid? I’m becoming cross, Melvin.”

“Maybe a virus--”

“Focus, Melvin!”

“Maybe Maddy put a Roofi in my drink.”

“I should just let you founder and figure all this out on your own!” The shadow stood up and snatched the stone away from me. I started floating towards the ceiling, but it didn’t matter; it was all a vivid, toxin-laced, fever induced, hallucination dream combo.

Maybe I was dying after all.

“You’re on your own, Melvin. Such a waste of precious gifted blood. I hope for your sake you just die.” The shadow shouted up at me, but I just ignored it, deciding instead to go with the weightless sensation of my usually over gravity-bound slab of a body. I felt a lurch inside and then I was back in my room, floating over my bed again. The shadow was standing in the doorway watching me.

I said, “Okay, shadow thing or whatever you are, here we are...back in my room again with the spooky mist. What now, Mr. Happy?” I giggled.

The shadow tensed, and then morphed into my second grade teacher, Mrs. Nance, the one who used to call me “Melvin Moron” and belittle me at recess. She grinned wickedly and then ripped off her face to reveal a nasty clown head beneath the flesh. That hit a nerve (clowns are just icky...who likes clowns?), and I cowered against the ceiling.

I think I made Mr. Happy cross. Yes, I definitely made it cross. She, it, evil clown head rose up off of the floor and came sailing at me, shrieking like a banshee.

It screamed, “Now you die,” as the mist merged with the shadow being and swarmed over my body on the bed.

DIE?

And I did. Mostly.

I woke up tangled in the sweaty quilt, fiery pain lancing through my chest. It felt like I had a steel band around my heart, squeezing tighter and tighter with each slowing heartbeat. I looked around frantically for the shadow-Mrs. Nance-clown thing, but I was alone in my bedroom. That should have given me some solace, but then I saw the mist coiling over my body.

The pink tinge of the sunrise through a gap in the curtain filled me with dread. I tried to sit up but was paralyzed, immobile, with bright flashes at the edge of my vision as more pain rocketed through my unresponsive limbs. Exhaustion sucked at me as I gasped for breath, and then my heart stopped.

I died. Alone.

I was sucked into a black and empty abyss...no white tunnel of light, no fond faces of loving family members to welcome me to paradise.... Not even Mr. Happy to mock me some more. Just one solitary image: Maddy’s smirking face as she deposited me on my front steps.

I don’t want to die!, I shrieked at her.

Then I suggest you don’t, was her reply as everything around me faded to black.

I sat up in bed just as the last rays of sun ducked down behind the horizon for the day; I'd been out cold for eighteen hours, a fact I learned by looking at my digital watch that displayed the date and four different time zones if I so desired.

Eighteen hours? Uh-oh. I blinked a few times and found that I could see just fine in the darkness, everything had a faint glow like I was looking through night vision goggles. I stretched, expecting to feel a wave of nausea or cramped muscles from my sickness during the last few days, but I was fine. More than fine, actually. Energy coursed through my body in waves of electric tingles. My only discomfort was that I was hungry; ravenous. Starving.

I jumped up and ran into my kitchen, and flung open my refrigerator door. Before I knew what I was doing I had a package of raw hamburger and was stuffing the bloody clumps into my mouth, slurping and chewing. Then it hit me: raw meat?! I dropped the package and spun around to the sink where I retched and gagged, the chunks coming up in coppery bursts. Through the bile, the blood still tasted like ambrosia.

I sank to the floor and started crying. I calmed to just muted sobs and realized something was missing -- my heartbeat. I couldn't feel my heartbeat! I grabbed at my wrist and dug for a pulse, and finding none repeated the search on my neck. Nothing. I jumped up and ran into the bathroom. I skidded to a halt at the sink and stared at my reflection in the cracked and dirty mirror; I was blue. My skin was blue. And my overbite was worse...it had to be a trick, an illusion. I turned on the light and it was worse illuminated.

"Holy crap! I'm dead!"

That's when my heartbeat decided to start up, just a couple of times, and go still again. Then the hunger resurfaced; I wanted blood, and lots of it.

"I'm a vampire." My gums tingled and my overbite extended further...no fangs just clumpy, crooked incisors and timid canines trying to poke through my retainer. "I think."

And then, pathetically, I passed out. I wasn't out long, though, maybe five minutes, but when I came to I repeated the whole process: checking for a pulse, eating raw meat and puking it up, staring at my reflection; I thought vampires couldn't see themselves in a mirror? Oh, I had so many surprises in store for me.

Over the next few days I slowly accepted my fate and decided to put all of the vampire myths to the test. I grabbed a crucifix -- nothing. I took my picture and it came out fine -- I looked even bluer on film. I went down the street to a Catholic church, walked right in, and dipped my hand in holy water. Nothing happened. I tried to turn into a bat or a wolf, and just felt stupid after an hour of trying. I jumped off the roof of my building and fell three stories while trying to fly. I got banged up when I hit the ground, but it didn't really hurt, though. And nobody saw it happen so I was in the clear. I bench pressed my couch without any effort at all. I even tried sunlight... muted Portland rainy sunlight. It wasn't comfortable, but I didn't die. Well, die more.

The only thing I couldn't do was drink someone's blood. No way. Un-uh. That gave me a case of the queasies like nothing else. So what did I do? Why I went to the Internet of course. I checked my symptoms with the vampire site I frequented, haunted, obsessed over, and confirmed that I was definitely, most completely screwed.

My world turned upside down with a routine of sleeping by day and waking at dusk (in my own bed and not a casket!), a schedule that mostly worked out fine since my security job at the mall was at night. But could I go back to work? I had to. I didn't have any money, and I couldn't afford to get evicted. And my sick leave was coming to an end.

So I went back to work. My boss freaked when he saw me, but I assured him I was fine -- what else was I going to say? Could I use the Americans with Disabilities clause if he tried to fire me? Does being a vampire even qualify? I had to forge a doctor's note to come back to work -- thank God for the Internet and all the handy templates available! The boss commented that I didn't smell too nice and suggested, in the nicest way possible, that I start using a stronger deodorant. Ha! I've started hiding car air fresheners in my pockets so now I smell like pine, strawberry and decomposing, mostly dead vampire.

What else can I do? I'm a vampire. It sucks.

I regret that pun.

MASTERSOFTHENITE

BLOGLINE ∞ JUNE 28, 2014 ∞ MOOD: Blue

My name is Melvin Morton -- not Vlad or Fang or anything else exotic or sexy -- just Melvin, and I'm a vampire. Life dies and then you suck. Kind of.

That got your attention, didn't it? Your late-night surfing on the web has brought you to my story and I can just picture you now. Yes, you are probably draped in something black and depressing, holed up in your dank little room and hunched over your computer, devouring tales of dark fantasy like candy. Or better yet, you are the weird fat kid, lonely and desperate like I used to be, searching for something else to be, something to numb the pain of your daily existence; something different than what you are.

Well guess what? It doesn't get any better than this and being a vampire isn't what it's cracked up to be. My story isn't fantasy; it's real life. Almost. Halfway. More of a parody, really.

When I was a real boy, not this blood-craving sham Pinocchio I've become, I was fascinated by the all the thought and drama of the Masters of the Night. I saw every film, read every book, studied myths and legends, and haunted the Internet with every moment of my spare time. It was my hobby, my escape, my fantasy and it wasn't supposed to be real; just make-believe. But I still wanted it.

Hero worship is a real let down when you learn the truth.

I was the fat kid growing up. I didn't even have the sense of humor that we chubby folk are supposed to be hardwired with as a defense mechanism. Laugh with me, not at me, right? Nope. Just a big-boned, slightly pimpled and greasy-haired outcast that grew up into an overweight and still pimply dullard who worked security at a mall. I'm not a stupid man, far from it, but I lack even the basic social graces to blend in with society -- high school was a nightmare. Can you imagine even being shunned by nerds? College was a poor man's dream... Nothing ever went right for me. I even still wore a retainer for a terrible overbite.

Take my name for instance: Melvin. Why would a parent do that to a child? Did my mother view the ultrasound, see my blobby form floating in her womb and think to herself, *Bummer. I'll name him Melvin?*

Have you ever met anyone named Melvin that wasn't lonely and just plain weird in one way or another? I didn't think so. I'm named after a juvenile bully right-of-passage, for God's sake. I'm underwear wedged into a butt crack, personified. My parents doomed me to life a mediocrity and hardship from the start. I would have changed my name, but it was like an oily stain that seeped into who I am, who I was and into what I became. I'm just Melvin.

Now I'm undead, actually just mostly dead. That didn't even go right. My ascension to the dark realm was an accident. Yes, an accident.

Everything you've ever heard about vampires being beautiful, dark, sultry and exuding lusty sex appeal is a lie. Vampires have power, but it's not the romanticized Hollywood version. You don't become an enchanting beast when you turn, you just become an undead version of yourself. If you were beautiful when you became a vampire, you stay that way in un-death. If you were ugly...you stay that way forever: warts, pimples, retainer and all.

One drop of cursed blood from a pale, strange girl named Maddy was enough to change me, but not enough to make me whole. Dark Gift, I don't think so; more like a turd with a shiny bow on it. Looks intriguing from a distance, but up close you see it for what it really is.

My body shut down and restarted with a stutter. My heart still beats occasionally, I can tolerate the sun on overcast days and I've turned the palest shade of blue -- like I've held my breath for far too long. I got the unending craving for blood, but the thought of actually drinking it makes me queasy. Besides, I didn't get the sharp pointed teeth, only a more enhanced and exaggerated overbite. I have keen senses: I can hear the roaches crawling through the walls of my cheap apartment, and I can see in the dark. I smell terrible -- worse than when I was alive. My body can't seem to decide whether it should decompose or make the transition to the fully undead. I guess I have forever for it to decide.

Other than the being mostly dead thing, my life hasn't changed. I still work security at the mall and I still have bills to pay. And taxes. And I'm still an outcast. I've looked for Maddy and other vampires, but I'm alone here in this city. Humans go out of their way to avoid me now, even more so than before. They think I'm diseased. I guess I am, and with no real cure in sight.

Suicide? That makes me almost as queasy as the thought of drinking blood. Besides, could I even die properly? I don't want to risk it and make things worse than they already are.

I watch my old vampire shows on television and rent DVDs to pass the time. I just watch and laugh. I have to. If I don't I'll cry. Their version of the Masters of the Night is, after all, just fantasy. Oh, and that shtick about holy water and crosses...all Hollywood.

Even my favorite novelist, who wrote about vampires with such pain and beauty, has abandoned me. She's become a born-again Christian so my hero, the beautiful blond Frenchman who becomes such a demon immortal, is lost. There will be no more tales in which to escape. All I have now is reality, but reality can be stranger than fiction...

Being a vampire isn't what I thought it would be and I realize now that being human wasn't as bad as I thought it was. I guess the grass is always greener, right? Looking back, I could have been a better person, but probably not. I'd be a better vampire, but I can't. I was never particularly evil in life, just human, and now I don't know how to be really much of anything at all. I realize that I'll have to eat someone eventually; the craving is so intense and fast food just doesn't touch it.

So where does this leave me? Muddling along and late for work. Take this tale to heart and be careful what you wish for.... Get a life while you still can. Remember: Life dies and then you suck...kind of.

- Melvin

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CHAPTER 2: Ch-Ch-Changes

I sat back and stared at the screen, my skin crawling with those invisible little clammy hands that pinched and poked resulting in gooseflesh. Fright bumps. Nerve lumps. Ugh.

Why did I post this?

Well, the damage was done. Masters of the Nite dot com had a new blog entry. Alert the media, Melvin had something to say! Right. Who cares? Just me so far, and it was safe enough, I hoped, to share with other fangophiles (and maybe a real vampire or two). Welcome to the twenty-first century, Mr. Dracula. Snerk. However, this wasn't going anywhere near my friendless Facebook profile.

But I was getting tired of sitting around feeling sorry for myself. Feeling so alone. Well, again alone with all of the other Internet losers who surfed the vampire site. Maddy had destroyed my pitiful life two months ago and I thought I'd go mad from the experience, but I didn't. Or maybe I was crazy right now and just didn't know it.

Something had to change. I couldn't go on unliving like this. Time to go do something vampy. Vampiric. Vampirish. Whatever it is that we're supposed to do.

I made a checklist of all the things I knew about vampire legends, and then ended up crossing a bunch of it out that I knew from first hand experience was bunk. Really only four things were left: I was undead, I craved blood, I was scary strong, and I had keen senses. Woohoo. Did I have other undiscovered powers? I went through my DVD library and picked some of my favorite vampire stuff for tips. Maybe I needed to embrace the stereotype. I smiled. Hell, why not?

I slicked my hair back with some Vaseline (it's all I had), practiced my scary face and sexy face in the mirror, and doused myself in cologne to mask my particular ripeness until my eyes stung from the fumes.

Should I put on body glitter?

No, too cheesy.

I bumped my retainer, discarded and forgotten on the edge of the sink, and a feeling of nostalgia for the days of nerdy innocence washed over me.

Oh well, enough of that!

I did one pit smell check, gave my reflection a thumbs-up in the mirror, and headed out into the night. I was wearing a long black trench coat that felt like a cape; I was cool. Hip. Invincible.

My God was I delusional.

But I was a vampire with a plan.

I kept to the shadows as I walked through the streets towards a nightclub called Dante's. I skulked and flitted, trying to blend in with the darkness. I ignored the curious looks from people I passed; nothing would sour my mood. I had nervous little jitters in my stomach as I paid the cover charge and entered the club.

You can do this.

A metal cover band was playing on stage, and the club was vibrating and pulsing with energy as I eyed the room from a darkened corner and saw three mini skirt clad girls standing at the bar. They were stunning, way out of my league, but I was a vampire! I had super powers!

I took a deep breath, put on a brooding expression, and casually strolled towards the bar. I caught my foot on a table leg and stumbled a bit, looking around to see if anyone had noticed, and then ran a hand through my greased hair to smooth it down. I grimaced then wiped my palm on my pant leg, but there was still Vaseline between my fingers. Gross.

“Dude, you’re blocking my view,” a guy said from the table next to me.

“Oh, sorry,” I said quickly and then bumped into another chair as I tried to get out of the way. This wasn’t going well. Not well at all. I pushed my way through the crowd and got to the bar. I tried to catch the bartender’s eye, but he ignored me.

Maybe this isn’t a good idea...No! Stop it! You can do this.

I stood behind the three women, psyching myself up for what I was about to do.

“Hello,” I said, deepening my voice. They ignored me, too.

Okay...Frank Langella sexy vampire, Angel brooding vampire, Spike cocky vampire, or Edward sullen vampire? No... He’s not a real vampire, but he does have the moves.

I cleared my throat and winged it with a combination of all four.

“Allo, loves,” I said with a ridiculous sounding English accent while I licked my lips then pouted them out slightly. I winked, but I think it was lost in the glare of the stage lights on my glasses. One of the girls, a bleach blond with spiky hair, looked over her shoulder at me and smirked. Uh-oh. I stared intently at her, widening my eyes slightly while I concentrated on a vampire glamour.

Feel my power...you are mine...blah, blah, blah.

I think I was doing it right.

“You want to come with me,” I said.

“What did you say?” she squinted at me and leaned forward. It was working!

I raised my hand and beckoned to her. “You want to come with me. Now.”

The girl elbowed her friend who turned around with crossed arms. Again with the uh-oh. Should I try it on all three?

“I am Melvin.” I reached out and took the first girl’s hand, forgetting that I had Vaseline all over my fingers, and tried to kiss her fingertips. My overbite tingled with the contact of lips upon warm skin.

Oh yeah, work it!

She snatched her hand away quickly, squealing, “Eeeew. Yuck!” as she grabbed a napkin and swiped at the mixture of hair slime and spit that I’d left behind.

“You are mine,” I said, my voice cracking a bit at the end because of my overbite and nerves.

“Um, no I’m not, creepy guy. Go away already.”

I waved my hand in front of her face, wiggling my fingers in a desperate attempt to be hypnotic. Why couldn’t I glamour her, damn it? The third girl turned around, took one look at me and started laughing.

“Seriously?” She wrinkled up her nose, smirked at her friend, and then said, “Are you for real? Oh, honey, that’s just sad. At least the accent was interesting. Should have kept it up.”

I took a step back. The second girl, obviously the meanest one of the bunch, took a step towards me. “Knock-knock,” she said.

I gulped. “Um, who’s there?”

She shook her head in amusement. “Smell mop.”

“Smell mop who?” I grimaced as I said it; the punch line was the final kick in the gut. I should have just walked away right then.

“I already do, you stink.” She burst out laughing.

The spiky blond smirked. “Sorry, but she’s drunk, and you are creepy. What are you supposed to be? A ninja Smurf?”

I held my head up and made eye contact. “I’m a vampire,” I said.

I pouted my lips again, widened my eyes, and tried to look broody. Why? Why? Why? I think I looked like a chicken having a seizure, but I was determined.

“You are very beautiful. Don’t be afraid, embrace your dark desires and come with me.”

“Yeah...no, not gonna happen. Thanks for the compliment, but you should go now. Go on, buh-bye.” She made a shooing motion with her hands.

I sighed, mortified beyond belief, and stumbled through the crowd towards the door without looking back. The cool night air felt good against my skin and the darkness called to me in a way that was only for the undead.

Right. Whatever. I laughed self-consciously at the thought that I could do anything vampiric. Glamour? Another Hollywood myth struck off the list. I should have started with something easier.

Oh well. At least I tried.

I took off my coat and handed it to a man panhandling on the corner.

“This night never happened,” I said to myself.

This story is going with me to the grave if I ever get one.

I went home, dialed up my blog, and ordered a pizza.

There are some weird people out there. Yes indeed. Sad, pathetic, bizarre, lonely, bitter, denizens of the Internet who latched onto my blog like crack. Even though the negative outweighed the positive in the comment spectrum, I couldn’t help but read what was posted. My life’s routine consisted of craving blood, working a job I hated, craving blood and being too cowardly to do something about it, and surfing the Internet. The World Wide Web has plenty to say about vampires, most of it absurdly wrong, but I had to look anyway. While it was utterly stupid to post my story on a blog, I felt a perverse pleasure out of walking the edge. Pushing that envelope, being an exhibitionist.

Look at me! Look at me!

Maybe someone would figure me out. Maybe an angry mob with torches and pitchforks would storm my castle. Maybe someone would help. Maybe.

BLOGLINE COMMENT: FROM ANONYMOUS

HEY, YOU SUCK!

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

Wow, good one. Except I don't, anonymous. That's the problem.

BLOGLINE COMMENT: FROM BLOODCRAVER666

Excellent blog! Tone down the pity party and I'll keep reading. Bite someone already.

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

I'll get right on that.

BLOGLINE COMMENT: FROM SEXYGOTHCHICK18

CHECK OUT MY PROFILE -- PLENTY OF HOT GIRLS ARE WAITING FOR YOU. VISA, MASTERCARD, PAYPAL ACCEPTED

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

Whoa.

BLOGLINE COMMENT: FROM MICKEYMOUSER

Cool concept! I love fanfic, what movie or RPG is this from?

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

Um, my life.

BLOGLINE COMMENT: FROM Madmother

Who do you think you are? Stop spreading this nonsense! Kids are on the Internet -- you should be ashamed of yourself. Vampires...all that blood and sex and gore. SHAME ON YOU!

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

Oh give me a break, lady. There's worse stuff on cable.

BLOGLINE COMMENT: FROM BORIS_THE_SPITE_HER

Mr. Vampire, please bite me so that I can be a vampire, too. I'd do a much better job than you.

PS - Girls are mean. Fat girls are mean. You should have known better. Bite me.

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

How do I even answer this one? Uh, no. Clever username despite the ick factor.

This next one takes the cake!

I feel loved, no really, warm fuzzy love like a cactus hug. People like this make it worth living. Sigh.

BLOGLINE COMMENT: FROM ANONYMOUS

LOOSER!

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

Genius.

Fifty more comments waited, but if they all were in the same vein I might cry. I really am a loser. Ha.

MASTERSOFTHENITE

Blogline ∞ August 18, 2014 ∞ MOOD: Blue

First off I'd like to thank the readers for all of the warm and fuzzy comments on my last post. "Loser." Oh boy, I haven't heard that one before. By the way, it's spelled LOSER. This blog is my lifeline, so back off.

Now on to what's going on: Most of you think this is a fiction I've created for attention. You just keep thinking that, kids. Vampires can't be real.

The hunger is maddening. I can barely stand it. But as with everything else in my pathetic excuse for a non-life, I can't do anything about it. I tried, though. I suppose it's a funny story, especially since the joke's on me.

It's been four months since I had my chance encounter with Maddy. Bitch. Why didn't she just finish me off? Either kill me or turn me all the way. It's not fair, but life isn't fair. Neither is mostly death for that matter. Still no sign of her. Maddy has left the building, the stupid cow. She could have at least stuck around to see if I'd changed. Oh well, no use crying over spilled blood, right?

Work is the same. People are afraid of me, which works well for my job description: Night Security! Someone taped a hazmat sticker to my locker as a joke. Yeah, that was good one. I'm laughing my stinky blue butt off. But I can't quit, and my boss won't fire me. Life goes on...ha.

I finally psyched myself up to eat someone. Well, it was more of an impulse thing. And yes, it ended badly. The universe truly hates me.

I've been ordering pizza almost every night since the change, and it's always the same guy who brings it. He's grown used to me; I won't say that he's nice or even polite. Actually he's a jerk, but he's the only one on duty at 3:00 AM when I order, and I tip well for the trouble. I get the meat lovers' special and then load a bunch of raw hamburger on top of it here at my apartment. Yeah, it's disgusting, but it had worked until last night.

Lately Pizza Bob (that's what I call him) had been acting kind of funny around me, always peering over my shoulder to get a look into my living room, taking my money with his finger tips and holding it away from his body like it's toxic. He even asked me if I had some kind of disease? I just laughed at him. Then he asked me if I was a tweaker, and quickly decided, out loud, that I was too fat to be one. Now that was just rude. I growled at him and slammed the door, sans tip.

Last night I was starving so I ordered another pizza, dreading the encounter with Pizza Bob. Maybe I'm psychic or something. Ha, again.

He showed up all cocky -- you know the type: handsome, athletic, a cross between surfer chic and preppy bum, and totally dumb as a post. Something snapped inside of me. I could hear his heart beat, his blood rushing in his veins so warm and inviting! I don't know what came over me.

I yanked him into my apartment and put my hand over his mouth to keep him from screaming (I saw that in a movie once) while I grabbed him around the throat with my other hand and lifted him off of the floor. He struggled, and almost got away as I kicked the door shut with my foot, but I held fast to his throat. This was my chance. Maybe if I drank some blood I'd turn fully. My gums tingled, my overbite extended out further over my lips -- still no fangs -- and I snarled. I leaned in to bite him, and I smelled his fear. It was revolting. His eyes were bugging in their sockets as he mouthed, *What are you?*

"I'm supposed to be a vampire," I whispered as I dropped him and stumbled back.

I couldn't do it. I just couldn't.

He turned to run and got tangled up in the pizza bag at his feet. Before I knew it he was falling, headed right for my coffee table, and his skull made the most disgusting noise when it connected with the corner. He twitched a few times, and then went still. Deathly still. I realized I couldn't hear his heartbeat anymore...he was dead. He hadn't even screamed, but his blood was still warm...dribbling out the crack in his temple. I reached out with shaking fingers and touched it, a tingle rushing up my arm as I brought my hand to my lips. One flick of the tongue is all it would take and I'd be on my way.

Pizza Bob convulsed, a last electron firing in his shattered brain, and I squealed like a little girl. I jumped back and cowered in the corner until I was sure, absolutely sure that he was deader than dead. The smell of his blood in the room made me dizzy, and I let out a little moan as I wiped my fingertips on my pant leg.

Sometimes I wonder if I'm on a vampire version of Candid Camera, the stuff that happens to me.

I knew his car would be like a beacon for trouble so I took his keys and drove it out by the airport. No one saw me as I parked in a field under a stand of ragged trees and blackberry brambles. The thorns pricked and pulled at my flesh, but there was no pain. I wished there had been; something to make me feel less of a monster. I managed to get the stupid tack on delivery sign disconnected and stuffed into the trunk without much trouble,

and I didn't even bother with wiping away my fingerprints; maybe deep down I wanted to get caught, end this nightmare of an existence.

Maybe by putting these words here in cyber space I've already doomed myself. Ha! But maybe this is just a fantasy, right? It's just a story, so I'll finish it.

It was a long walk home, but I needed the time to figure out what I was going to do. This was something that was going to come back and haunt me if I wasn't careful. When I got back to my apartment the delivery guy was still very dead, so I shoved his body into the corner. I know, I know. Not very nice of me, but come on. He was just lying there, and it was creepy.

No one had come looking for him, no cops banging on my door, so I calmed down a bit. Maybe it might work out after all.

I took out the cold pizza, grease and slimy cheese congealed on the top, and sat down on my couch. I didn't even add the raw hamburger; I just sucked on the pepperoni until I felt the sun coming up. This was the last pizza I'd have for a while, at least until I found another place that delivers so late, so I had better enjoy it. I royally screwed the pooch on this midnight snack. I even felt bad for Pizza Bob, well, only a little. He was a jerk after all.

Maybe the next one will go better....

Melvin

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

"You better do something about that soon."

I jerked my head up and saw Pizza Bob pointing, with a disgusted look on his face, at the bloated and fleshy pile of clothes in the corner. He crossed his arms and glared at me.

"Crap. You're still here?" I asked, wiping a puddle of foul tasting sleep drool from my chin. I must have dozed off; it was close to dawn.

Pizza Bob scowled at me and drifted closer.

"Uh, duh. Where else am I gonna go?"

Flies were buzzing around the pile, the drone of their wings sounding like 747's in my sensitive ears, and I pushed myself up from the couch with a grunt. I should have lost some weight before I mostly died.

Add that to the pity list why don't I? I took off my glasses and cleaned them with a less greasy edge of my shirt; I didn't need them anymore, my eyesight was perfect, but the glasses were an anchor to my past life. I wanted them. I put the glasses back on and turned slowly to look at my visitor who had shown up the next night after he died, hovering next to the decomposing body, bewildered and angry.

I said, "Just go away, okay?"

"And I repeat, where else am I gonna go? Huh?"

"Into the light?" I shrugged.

"Oh yeah, that's real funny, mister. We've been over this already, dickhead. You killed me so now I'm stuck." Pizza Bob went hazy for a moment and then reappeared right next to his corpse that was covered in hundreds of tree shaped car air fresheners to mask the smell of rot. He kicked at the body, his phantasmal foot just passing through, but it was enough of a disturbance, a chilling vibration in the aether, that a blanket of flies

erupted into the air. They swarmed and buzzed around me while I waved my hands frantically around my head. Pizza Bob laughed humorlessly and then went back to his sullen glare.

I should have seen it coming; he'd done the same thing every day for the last week. The flies settled back onto the corpse, their routine reestablished, and I flopped back onto the couch again with a weary sigh. I stared at him.

"You're awfully sarcastic for a dead guy, ya know that? And for the umpteenth time I did not kill you." I glanced over at his body, and my stomach rumbled loudly enough that Pizza Bob heard it and scowled. It was humiliating.

He gave me a thumbs down. "Uh yeah, yeah ya did."

"No, I was going to kill you, but I chickened out. You were the one who freaked out when you realized I was a vampire--"

"Yeah, right. Some vampire," Pizza Bob muttered. "Toothless creep."

I ignored his sarcasm, it was all he really had left and who could blame him? "You freaked out, tripped over your own feet and the pizza bag, and fell. You split your head open, cracked your skull like an egg on my coffee table, twitched a few times, and then unceremoniously crapped your pants and died on my floor.

"Ergo," I pointed at the body, "I did not kill you.

"A technicality. But you better get used to it. I have the distinct feeling that every time you have a snack they'll stick around. Call it a ghostly case of the repeaters." Pizza Bob snickered and then belched loudly. The ensuing smell was ghastly, worse than the sickly, sweet aroma of fresh alpine meadow and rotting meat that permeated the room. Maybe I should have used strawberry.

Ah, but he was right. I was going to have to dispose of that sloppy pile soon. Undoubtedly someone was starting to notice the smell. Hopefully the neighbors would think it was just me; I had a distinct odor of my own.

Wow, this really sucked. Everything, all of it. My life (HA!) was a sad joke. I still hadn't managed to eat anyone yet, and I was starving. You wouldn't know it by looking at me, though. Still fat, pimply and greasy. Oh God how I craved human blood, but the thought of drinking it still made me want to retch. I looked up at Pizza Bob miserably and shook my head. Four months of undeath and I was trying to live on junk food.

And now this.

"Please, I'm begging you. Just go away."

"No can do, dude. Trust me, if I could, I'd be outta here on the next shaft of golden light." He floated over and plonked down on the couch next me, as much as a ghost could plonk.

He grinned wickedly. "I think you're screwed. There's not something right about you. It's like you're not a vampire but you ain't alive, either. Maybe that's why you'll keep seeing us; one foot on either side of the barrier. You are so screwed." He was delighted that I was suffering.

"This sucks," I said. "Nothing I ever read about vampires said anything about this. Of course a lot of what I read wasn't true, either."

"How long you been a vamp?" Pizza Bob snickered. "A wussy vamp?"

"What do you care?"

"Call it morbid curiosity. Well, you can't be that old; I'm surprised you've lasted as long as you have. God, you really are pathetic, and ugly as the back end of a scabby cat."

“And you’re dead.” Ha! I’d scored a hit with that one. But he was right, so score one for the dead guy. Damn.

“You’re right,” I muttered. “It’s been four months. Nothing ever goes right for me.”

“That’s all?” Pizza Bob snorted.

“It was a girl. I met her at a bar.”

“Way to be a player. I bet she was fat and ugly. She’d have to be to go for a guy like you,” he said with a sneer. But he’d hit the nail on the head, kind of, whatever.

“Look...do you want to hear my story or not?”

“What else have I got going? I want to hear how you got suckered.” He gave me a thumbs-up. “See what I did there?”

“Good one.” I rolled my eyes.

“Was it scary? I bet you cried.”

“No...and yes, she was a big girl,” I admitted.

“I knew it. Big girls need love, too.”

“Just shut up and listen. I saw her sitting there and figured I might have a chance. She said her name was Maddy and I thought to myself, *Maddy Fatty*, without much guilt, I might add.”

“Wow, you are a dick. Looked in the mirror lately?”

I ignored him and kept talking. It felt good to tell someone my story.

“I did feel sorry for what her childhood must have been like, though. Another victim of the parental naming game. She laughed when I told her my name was Melvin, but it wasn’t a cruel laugh, more a sympathetic chuckle at my lot in life. Something clicked. Maybe it was just the fact that she was actually talking to me, laughing at my jokes, even flirting a bit, but I liked her. I actually really liked her and better yet, she seemed to like me. Why was I such an idiot?”

“That’s an easy one--”

I held up my hand to silence Pizza Bob, and he smirked. I sighed.

I said, “One thing led to another and soon we were out in the parking lot making out in her car like a couple of teenagers, something I had never done before, by the way. It was magical. We laughed at the world and talked and kissed some more. I should have known that the universe would throw a monkey wrench into the works. I did mention that nothing ever goes right for me.”

“Get to the good part already. The part where she scared the crap out of you and made you cry!”

“I didn’t cry. I didn’t even realize I’d been bitten.” I nervously fingered the place on my throat where Maddy had left her mark. “I cut her lip with my retainer and got one drop of her blood. Just one frickin’ drop. That’s the last thing I remember.”

“That’s it? Really? I sat through this whiny, petulant, Lifetime movie summary for that? And now you’re a vampire? Oooh, lucky you.”

“Hey. I’m not a full vampire...I don’t know what I am except mostly dead.” The sad confession sounded desperate in my ears, but did nothing to temper bitter Pizza Bob.

“Pretty soon someone’s gonna notice that smell....” He pointed at his body. “Guess what happens then? They’ll know what you mostly are and then it’s stake through the heart time.”

“Maybe that would be for the best.”

“Naw, that’d be too easy an out for you. I wanna see you suffer.”

Daylight was coming and the weariness of my dead, mostly dead body was pulling me down. I leaned back and closed my eyes while Pizza Bob cackled next to me, the sound following me into my darkness. I wondered if I would ever dream again?

I awoke to an uncomfortable tingling on my skin. I cracked open an eyelid and saw sunlight streaming through my dirty window onto my body, the curtain lying in a musty heap on the floor. It was late afternoon, probably another hour or two before sunset, and the sky was hazy with clouds. The air stirred next to me and I turned my head to see Pizza Bob crouched on the arm of the couch, hovering over me like a buzzard. He noticed I was awake, and scowled.

“Damn!” he shouted. “I thought that would do more!”

I couldn't help the smirk on my face as I got up and walked over to the window. With my back turned away from him I inspected my arm for blisters. The blue tint to my skin had taken on a nasty dark tinge where the sun had baked it, but I had already experimented with sun exposure and knew it would just be minutes before my skin faded back to its melancholy hue. If I stayed in direct, unclouded sun for too long (about five hours), my skin would indeed bubble and blister. But because I was just mostly dead I could tolerate overcast days, and I doubted I would go up in a cloud of Hollywood ash anyway. My internal clock still put me to bed at dawn, but I'd started awakening earlier and earlier each day while the sun was still high in the sky. Maybe this was my version of vampire insomnia...I'd be a day owl. Or maybe it was just another way for the universe to torment me.

Chuckling mirthlessly to myself I rehung the curtain and headed for the kitchen; I was starving and had a carton of pig livers waiting. On one of the vampire shows I used to watch the lead character drank pig blood because it supposedly tasted close to human. I was willing to give it a try; I hoped it wasn't more Hollywood hype or that I would throw up because I was eating raw pig livers. Bleh. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

“Do you know how long it took me to get enough energy to do that?” Pizza Bob screamed near my ear.

I'd also gotten used to his tirades over the last week, but this was the first time he'd managed to physically move something. I suppose it was an impressive feat.

“No,” I said with a tired sigh. “And I don't really care, either.” Maybe he'd finally get tired of tormenting me and shove off into the great unknown. “Maybe you could try vacuuming next time.”

“I'll get you.”

“And my little dog, too?” I asked sarcastically. The confused look on Pizza Bob's face was priceless.

“You don't have a dog.”

I rolled my eyes and walked right through him, scattering his form briefly. He hated that.

“I said you don't have a dog,” he hissed as he sailed past me and sat down on the couch where I was going to sit. Instead I bypassed him and sat down at my desk, pig livers in hand, and fired up my computer. While my blog loaded I fished out a liver and tentatively took a bite. It was disgusting, more of a texture thing, and I shuddered.

Underneath my revulsion though, I felt something stir; the blood was pretty tasty after all. Maybe it was just a mental block I had about human blood -- I didn't seem to mind raw hamburger. Oh well, it was a start and I managed to swallow the bite without retching, then noticed Pizza Bob staring at me with revulsion.

That did it. I took another liver and popped it into my mouth, slurping and chewing noisily because it bothered him so much; that was the only thing that kept me from puking. Maybe having Pizza Bob around would push me towards more desperate and depraved acts. I picked up a piece and mashed it around so that the liver was pulpy and clinging in bright purple chunks on my tongue.

"Do I have something in my teeth?" I asked innocently, and then chuckled when the ghost paled even further.

Pizza Bob's eyes darted towards his corpse, and I felt something give inside me; I was being a monster. I wasn't ready for that yet. Defeated, I put down the carton and focused on my blog. I felt him standing behind me, and braced myself for the ensuing script.

He said, "You killed me."

"No I didn't."

"Yeah, ya did."

"Get over it."

"You're a dickhead."

"And you're dead." I looked over my shoulder and saw him just floating there, all anger gone from his face. He looked pathetic.

He's just like me now.

Part of me still felt a little bad for him, but I knew if I let that show he'd start in again.

"Finished?" I asked quietly.

"For now." He was staring at my blog, concentrating on reading what I had written.

"Not that whiny crap again! Why don't you do something nice for the guy you killed and dial up some porn?"

"If you leave me alone for just a little while, maybe I will." I was letting my guilt do the talking.

"Deal," he said continuing to hover over my shoulder. "Hee-hee!" He pointed at one of the comments. "That guy DarkPrince1509 ripped you a new one! Creepy much? But I kind of like his style."

BLOGLINE COMMENT: FROM DARKPRINCE1509

You fraud. You worm. You petulant and whining little pussy. How dare you claim the Dark Gift and then flaunt it and waste it by hiding behind this web site. WHY WON'T YOU ANSWER ME?! I hate you, hate you, hate you!!!! I'm going to find you and drain you by cutting your head off. If you won't share then I'll take what should be mine. I love you enough to do that. How can you do this to me? I thought we understood each other. I hate you. I'll get you. I wrote you another poem...did you see it yet? Comment back on my page when you get a chance.

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

I scanned the rest of the blog comments, ignoring Pizza Bob's glee, then hit the block user button next to DarkPrince's name. He had to go...that guy was a real psychopath. He'd first begged me turn him, extolling the virtues of being a creature of the night, and when I ignored him he began his "courtship." Um, nude photos and close ups of his wand of evil were just a bit off sides. Totally offside. Yech. When I sent him a polite note asking him to stop, well, that's when the name-calling and threats started. I wasn't too worried about him, though. His blog user profile listed him as living in Akron, Ohio -- that alone was enough to garner him some pity, but I made sure to keep my location here in Portland private. I figured he wouldn't wander too far from his mother's basement and the frozen burritos he undoubtedly lived on. They probably weren't real pictures of his winky either; the Photoshop job was pretty obvious.

It would be too hard to find me anyway unless Darkprince1509 was a hacker. I shuddered as I pictured him showing up on my doorstep in a long, dark cape, pale make up and the requisite fake fangs. I made a weak promise to myself that if he indeed showed up I would definitely eat him, or at least make the effort.

However, his crazy posts set the tone for the other readers and I found myself with a 'fan base' of what seemed to be teenaged to early twenty-year-old men. I still couldn't get a girl...a live one at least. Or one that didn't take PayPal.

"I can't believe you keep a diary like this," Pizza Bob said scornfully. "Don't you worry that someone is gonna investigate? Plus these people seem crazy."

Without thinking about it I chuckled and looked at him with a stupid, moon-eyed grin. "Yeah, I know. No one knows where I live, though. But I'm just so freaked out I need to talk about everything. I can at least pretend I've got someone who cares listening to me. I can pretend at least." I couldn't believe I was having a friendly moment here.

"Wow, bummer dude." Pizza Bob genuinely sounded consoling, and then he stiffened up, scowling at me.

I said, "Look, I'm really sorry about what happened to you. If I could take it back I would."

"You really are a pussy." He sneered at me, and then pushed the container of livers off the desk and onto my lap. He was definitely getting stronger, and I have to admit I was a little afraid of what he'd eventually be able to do to me. Pizza Bob took one withering look at his moldering corpse in the corner, and then faded away, leaving behind the smell of ozone. That must be the scent of the energy he'd used up for the little parlor trick now soaking through my pants. And the smell *was* better than his rotting corpse in the corner.

But I knew he wouldn't stay gone; he couldn't. He was trapped here with me, stuck in a situation he had no control over. Just like I was stuck being mostly dead. Ironic.

So I sat back and enjoyed the silence of my room while I could. Except for the flies buzzing I was alone, and after an uncomfortable span of listening to the fly orgy in the background I realized that I didn't like it. My whole life I've been alone, even in a crowded room I stand ignored purposefully. Pizza Bob was annoying but he talked to me, talked at me actually, but it was directed at me, to me, and I missed him. My own captive audience.

I glanced over at his corpse and winced. I'd find a way to make up for what I had done to him. I knew that under other circumstances we would never be friends, but now we were stuck with each other; maybe forever.

I'd only ever had one friend in my life, when I was ten years old, but her family moved away and I lost her. She was a hunched and chubby thing, homely to the core, but I never forgot her wicked sense of humor and brains. She was too smart for her own good, and such a mouth she had on her! Kids only picked on her once, and then went away in tears from her scathing and cutting comebacks. I used to sit in awe of her. When she left, a hole opened up in my heart that never got filled again...it still ached now. I hoped she remembered me as fondly through the years. What would she think of me now? She'd probably forgotten me. Yeah, what was there to remember anyway?

Stop whining.

What about Maddy? I wondered where she was. If I could find her then maybe I'd get some answers, a little help, and a shoulder to cry on. Or a neck to throttle. No, I'd probably cry and embarrass myself like usual.

It was just so unfair to leave me floundering like this. Why didn't she kill me when she'd had the chance? I thought about her note and got angry all over again: Hopefully you don't have the dark gift....

Thanks for checking up on me, Maddy. What a pal. *I'd like to exchange this Dark Gift. Do I have the receipt? Of course not.*

In my spare time I scouted all the dive, happy hour, booze caves I thought she might frequent; dark little bars where her pallor and odor would be overlooked by bar flies (but that hadn't mattered to me at the time, had it?) eager for a one-night stand. But no one remembered her.

I scanned the papers for reports of mysterious deaths, followed postings about unusual symptom outbreaks on the health department web site, but there was zip, nada, nothing. I wondered why I didn't see any other vampires here in Portland. Shouldn't I be able to sense them now? One of the perks of joining the club? Maddy couldn't be the only one. Who made her? There had to be others here. This town was perfect for the solar challenged; Oregon was famous for it's cloudy, miserable weather. We webfoots reveled in the jokes of getting "rust burns", and forsaking umbrellas, but in all truth some summers could be hot without a drop of rain for a month at a time. A secret we kept to ward off interlopers; something that now could possibly kill me. Great. But this summer had been fine and dreary, and I'd deal with the sun issue when I had to. If I survived until then, that is.

But still Portland was on par with San Francisco in the gloomy weather department. Besides the weather, the City of Roses had a dark underbelly that locals knew of, but spoke little about. Human trafficking...missing persons, the whole KEEP PORTLAND WEIRD mindset. There should be more vampires here.

Either Maddy was clever or she was really gone. But I'd find her...oh yes, yes I would. If not her, then at least another vampire. Wouldn't that be just swell.

I shrugged and stared at the computer screen. Should I write more about Pizza Bob? No, not yet. I tapped my finger on the desk and then shifted the mouse. I dialed up a porn site for the ghost, hoping he'd notice and come back.

"Thanks."

I jumped at his voice right next to my ear. I hated when he did that!

"Here," I said as I got up to give him my chair. I didn't want to hang out with a ghost and watch porn. That just set off the creepy alarm a little too much. "Knock yourself out, buddy."

“Bite me, jerk wad,” he said with a smirk. “Oh, wait...you tried that.” He laughed and then tuned me out, focusing on the flickering images on the screen.

I had to hand it to him, Pizza Bob had a sarcastic grasp of the obvious.

CHAPTER 3: A series of unfortunate events

I awoke to the sound of thunder. Joy. Another day of muddling through my un-life routine. I rolled over and looked at the curtain covering my open window, and watched it puff and sway with the wind coming through. I smelled the ozone in the air, and stuck my tongue out to taste the crispness of it. The tang, almost coppery in essence, suddenly reminded me of blood. My stomach rumbled, and just like that I was depressed.

I used to love the rain. Late afternoon summer rain that cooled everything down and made everything new.

Now it just meant that I could walk freely in the daytime, no worries of turning the color of an over ripe plum, or heaven forbid possibly bursting into flame. And now it smelled like blood.

The one thing I needed most, but was too weak to take.

Perhaps Maddy was dead. Well, hopefully really dead instead of undead. I let a little evil smile linger on my lips as I imagined some horrible Hollywood ending for the vampire, and then frowned. Regardless, she was gone and it was just me now; Official Sort Of Vampire in Residence. Well, me and a pissed off ghost.

Speaking of Pizza Bob, I looked up and saw him glowering at me from the corner of the room. I gave a tired wave, which he ignored. Whatever.

My stomach rumbled again, and I sighed heavily. Time to get up and quit my daily wallowing. I sat up and did a sniff check on my pits; still vile with a hint of potpourri. Lovely. I just sighed again and rolled out of bed. I grabbed my clothes and got dressed without taking a shower first; I was already depressed so I figured, screw it. It was still five hours until my shift started at the mall, but I was restless. And hungry. And still me. And I didn't even want to go to work.

I could already sense that today was going to be one of those days.

Pizza Bob trailed behind me, mimicking my walk and making farting noises as I headed into my bathroom. I glared at him and slammed the door in his face. Thankfully, he stayed put and didn't follow me in.

"You need to fire your decorator," he said through the door. "Seriously. It's like Comic-Con threw up in your place."

"Well no one asked you." I silently berated myself for even acknowledging him. Now he'd never shut up. I came out of the bathroom and saw him holding one of my Buffy collectibles.

Pizza Bob smirked at me. "You have dolls. Little boy vampire dolls everywhere." He waved an Angel action figure and dropped it on the floor. "It's creepy."

"Hey!" I snapped as I picked it up reverently. "They're action figures and collectibles. Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Dracula, Angel, I have them all."

"Dude, they're toys."

I walked into my living room and froze. All of my movie posters and framed magazine covers were now sporting mustaches and glasses drawn with a rainbow of sharpie colors.

"Damn it!" I yelled "Really?" I just shook my head at him.

"Oooh, you don't like it?" Pizza Bob crossed his arms and gloated.

I stood there with my hand over my mouth for a minute, and then forced myself to ignore him. There was nothing I could do about it now. Besides, for some reason Nosferatu now looked like Gandhi with the new little round glasses drawn on. I stifled a smirk and tried to appear angry.

“You’re a child.” I looked around at my apartment in disgust and then scowled at the ghost.

“You’re a child,” Pizza Bob sassed back.

I grabbed a cushion off of the couch and threw it through Pizza Bob’s form, dissipating him completely. “Take that, ass hat.”

He didn’t instantly re-materialize; he’d used up too much juice for the ghost graffiti. Hooray for me! A break. But as soon as he was gone I realized I kind of missed the banter. Wow. I was starting to like the jerk.

I picked up as much of the mess as I could, carefully putting my vampire figurines back on the shelves where they belonged.

“They’re action figures, damn it,” I said to the empty room.

I stared at Gandhi Nosferatu and started laughing. It was pretty funny after all. Oh well. My stomach rumbled, and with a defeated sigh I headed into my kitchen for some breakfast. I felt a tingle in the air and knew the ghost was on his way back.

“Melvin, we need to talk.” Pizza Bob materialized right next to me. “It’s important.”

“Well, aren’t you the Chatty Cathy tonight?” I smirked. “Rather cheery, too. Vandalizing my apartment make you feel all warm and fuzzy?” I wasn’t angry anymore, nope, not at all. Just hungry.

“Yeah. Actually it did.” Pizza Bob smiled.

“You going to apologize?”

“Whatever. Dude, it’s time.”

I was warming up a combination of raw hamburger and pig livers in the microwave, and squinted at the timer. I flared my nostrils and caught the intoxicating scent of the blood, not quite at body temperature yet, and shook my head.

“No...it needs a few more seconds.”

Pizza Bob reached past me and turned off the microwave. “Seriously? You have to stop eating this crap.”

“Hey! It was almost perfect.” Now I’d have to start the process again to get the timing right.

“Not the timer time, you moro--” Pizza Bob caught himself. I could see him trying to stay calm; that made me nervous. “It’s time to sack up and go bite someone.”

“Say what?” My mouth hung open for a moment. *What are you up to?*

Pizza Bob rolled his eyes. “I can’t keep watching you do this night after night. You sit in your living room, staring at the television until it’s time to go to work, or you just sit on the couch and play with your creepy vamp dolls on your days off.”

“They’re action figures,” I mumbled defensively.

“No. GI Joe is an action figure. Those are creepy little dolls. You’ve had enough wallowing. You need to go get your vampire on.”

I crossed my arms over my chest and took a step back. “What are you up to? I’m not going to go out and make you playmate.”

“That’s not why I’m doing this,” he said with a smirk. “You couldn’t get a Playmate; you’re probably scared of bunnies.”

“Wha? Oh...yeah...funny.” I rolled my eyes. “Why the sudden good cop/bad cop shtick?”

“You’re boring the crap outta me so I’ve decided to help you.” The ghost shrugged. “You’re a vampire, it’s time to go act like one.”

“Oh, gee...thanks. Tried that,” I pointed at him, “don’t need another one of you around here.” I reached through his arm and opened the microwave to retrieve my breakfast. It was tepid. Damn it.

I headed out into the living room, sat down on the couch, and began stuffing the livers into my mouth; I was starving tonight. Pizza Bob again materialized next to me with a smirk on his face.

“See? You’re doing it again. You had a lifetime in Loserville. Now’s your chance to move up to Coolsville.”

I snorted and sent a blob of liver into my sinuses. Bleh! “You did not just say that to me. What is this? 1950?” I made a series of disgusting noises until the chunk cleared and I swallowed it, choking down the bland, rubbery wad with a grimace.

He was right. This had to stop. Even I was getting sick and tired of my petulant whiny monologues. And worse yet the hamburger and livers just weren’t doing it for me much anymore.

I’m a vampire. Get over it.

“Just copy what one of your little vampire dolls would do, except, well, you know, if they were a real vampire and not a toy.” Pizza Bob grinned at me and I flinched.

Did he know about my other attempt at the bar? How embarrassing!

“You need a motivation.” He held up my Spike/William-the-Bloody figurine and waved its hand at me. “I wanna kill the slayer! Oooh! Ahhh...look at me! I’m a scary vampire who actually eats people!”

“Shut up.”

I snatched the doll (damn it! I mean action figure!!!) from his hand, stood up and headed over to my computer desk, stuffing wads of my unsatisfying meal into my mouth as I sat down, and then stood up again, chewing and swallowing on auto pilot while consuming raw meat at ease. Disgusting. I needed something new, a distraction.

Maybe a walk. What could go wrong? I’d been hiding in the apartment, hiding at my job, so maybe I’d try hiding in plain sight for a while. And I had to get away from Pizza Bob. I didn’t trust him and this new supportive, buddy-buddy thing he was trying even though I knew he was right. Damn it. I flipped him the bird and grabbed my keys.

“Hey! Where are you going? You need to listen to me. I can help you, dude. You just need some confidence.” He blocked the door.

Ha! Like that will stop me.

“I’d move if I were you.” I impressed myself with the menacing tone.

“Bite someone while you’re out. You can do it. Just Nike it, man. I wanna see blood on that overbite when you get home, mister.” He looked over at his corpse in the corner and grimaced. “Oh...and bring back some more fly strips.”

“Screw you.” With a grin on my face, I walked through his form and scattered him to vapors.

I opened my front door and saw my neighbor, a twenty something hipster carrying his bike down the hall. He started to say something, a mumbled “wassup?”, but saw who I was and ignored me instead.

Right back at ya, buddy.

I let it roll off of me, intent on salvaging my mood, and headed down the stairs to the street. I saw a variety of people -- the locals, a few winos, some punks, the downtown apartment crowd, and realized why I loved living here. Portland is weird. Just weird enough for me to still fit in.

A kid with a mohawk spare changed me, and then gave me a high-five when I flipped him a dollar.

“Dude...is that a full tat? Awesome tint, man.” I realized he was talking about my blue skin. Snerk.

“Making a statement about the suffocation by societal pressure even as you wear the rags of the man,” he said as he pointed at my security guard jacket. With a conspiratorial wink, he headed off on his skateboard towards another mark before I could answer.

Mad props from a street kid. It buoyed me, though. I people watched as I passed the library, deciding that maybe life wasn't so bad. So I was undead, or mostly dead. There were worse things to be. Possibly.

A schizophrenic transvestite wrapped in newspaper pants and a halter-top jumped in front of me with his hand up. He had blue eye shadow in great smudges under his bushy eyebrows, and he lewdly waggled his tongue at me.

“Looky, looky, looky...another marimba player. Needs a bath and a breath mint!” He cackled and then twirled away.

Ah, Portland. I'm up one minute then brought down the next. But I had to laugh. Crazy is as crazy does.

Takes one to know one, pal.

I wanted to shout after him that his eye shadow didn't match his halter-top, but that would be petty. Instead I just laughed. The day wasn't starting too badly after all. But I was still restless. I lived downtown, but my job was way out in East Portland -- a long bus ride through suburban hell. I didn't feel like spending any time out in the boonies with nothing but used car lots and tweakers. I wanted to stay local, ease into a better frame of mind.

Maybe I could go to dinner at Jake's Famous Crawfish, hit a happy hour in a dark bar...mingle. I couldn't afford Jake's and I didn't feel like mingling. I felt caged in.

I smiled to myself and decided to follow my melancholy. I'd go to the zoo. What could go wrong?

From now on when I say to myself, “What could go wrong?” I'll realize that everything can. And will. If I'm involved, that is. The second I walked through the front gate of the zoo it was like some subliminal alarm went off in the aether. A tremor in the force. The first animal I tried to see, a mountain goat that made the oddest high pitched keening sound when he saw me or just smelled me, leapt from his perch, committed a death defying ninja-like flip (much to the delight of the crowd), and dove into his cave. I should have just turned around and left right then.

Instead I went to see the bats. Bram Stoker would be so proud. I nudged my way past a group of kids and stood inches from my nocturnal cousins of myth, hoping to sense some kinship, simply glory in the humor of it all. I was hoping for vampire bats, but I got

regular bats. Gentle, timid fruit bats; not so timid apparently. Something about me set them off and they all began bouncing around in their enclosure; smacking into the glass, just generally freaking out, all right in front of me. Perhaps they were collectively enraged at my existence -- the mongrel half-breed that shamed their mythos and symbolism. I could attempt to analyze and anthropomorphize their reaction till I was blue in the face (ha!), but it seemed silly. The fact that I was rationalizing struck me as silly as they thrashed and flopped, antagonized to the point of frenzy, and I laughed so hard that I had tears in my eyes. The bats became so agitated that one of the zoo officials cleared everyone out of the exhibit quickly.

I was mortified.

Two-for-two so far.

It only got worse. The tiger tried to jump the moat to get at me, and the wolves began howling when I neared their enclosure. In fact the alpha male bared his teeth and bristled. The elephants went berserk, and again a zoo employee shut down the pachyderm hall and shunted all of us visitors out quickly. The same thing happened in the chimpanzee display, but instead of a stampede they all threw copious amounts of poop at the glass where I was standing. Their screeches and hollers echoed out after me when I left. I noticed that security was starting to follow me as I made my way to the polar bears.

The polar bears were the only animals that didn't freak out. What they did was much worse. One of them stood up, sniffed the air, and then looked at me curiously. It then popped into the water and swam up to the window, hanging there while eyeing me oddly. It started pawing at the glass, casually but insistent, the whole time looking me right in the eye. One predator to another. It made my gums tingle.

A woman watching the scene unfold came quietly up behind me. She said, "They aren't afraid of anything, you know. Nature's perfect predator. They would be at the top of the food chain if they could drive a car."

Drive a car? I turned to look at her with a bewildered expression on my face. "What?"

But my overbite had extended, I was blue, and I smelled decidedly unpleasant. But.... No one was around at the moment; I could take her and bite her, drink her dry and be done with the fear. So what if she haunted me? She was a nutso. It would drive Pizza Bob crazy.

I heard her heartbeat racing and my overbite extended further as I took a hesitant step towards her.

She gasped, took a quick step back, then mumbled something under her breath as she bolted from the room. That's when security showed up.

"Sir...."

I dropped my head and lisped through my unleashed overbite, "I'll go now." I sneaked a peek at the polar bear, and he looked like he was smirking at me. Oh man.

As the guards escorted me from the zoo, the cacophony of animal cries drowned out the announcements coming over the loud speakers: The zoo is closing. Please make your way to the exit in a timely manner. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Security asked that I not return.

So much for making the most of my day. And there was no way I was going to work now. I got on the bus and rode towards downtown in silence, shunned on the bus as usual. It made me miss Pizza Bob a little bit. Just a little.

Maybe everything might get easier if I just kept at it. And monkeys might fly out of my butt.

Probably just bats.

Angry fruit bats.

I got off the bus in Old Town, hoping some of the melancholy of the area and the homeless people who hung out here would buoy me. Nothing like looking down on the less fortunate to make you feel better, eh? How sad is that? I figured at least I had a roof over my head and a job. So what if I was mostly dead.

These people had it far worse than me. But the more folks I encountered, the darker my mood grew. It didn't matter how drunk, stoned, or crazy they were, the homeless at least had an identity, a community. I was still searching for mine. I saw the nightclub, Dante's, up the road, the shrine to my vampiric fumbling, and that clinched it for me. No more waffling. Tonight I was going to eat someone!

I wandered through the darkened streets until I hit the industrial area, nice and abandoned, perfect for the hunt. My super hearing picked up the sound of someone coughing, and I followed the hacks and gasps to a darkened alleyway where a man was hunched over, his back to me. He was too busy yorfung up a lung and hadn't noticed me yet.

Perfect!

I raised my hands up over my head like claws and started creeping forward slowly, channeling my inner Nosferatu, hoping I looked properly vampiric. I hesitated when the man turned his head and spat a gross looking glob of yuck onto the pavement. Was he contagious? Could I catch something nasty if I ate him?

Stop stalling! You can do this.

I started creeping forward again, enjoying the predator feeling coursing through my body.

I can do this...I can do this....

I readied for the lunge as my overbite extended.

The man sensed movement behind him and turned to stare at me with rheumy eyes, and I faltered mid-step, my hands still stretched and comically splayed like talons. I looked ridiculous.

I put my hand up in front of my mouth to hide my teeth and lisped, "Um, you okay?"

I just can't do it!

The man coughed once and spit at my feet. "Sound like it?" He wheezed. "What the hell are you doing, son?"

I turned and ran away, and kept running for blocks until I tripped over a furry lump on the road and went down hard, rolling to a stop against the curb. I looked up and saw two beady eyes glaring at me. It was an animal. A mangled, angry, suffering opossum that had been hit by a car and left for dead, but it wasn't yet. *Hey! Kind of like me.* I smelled the blood, so warm and inviting, and my overbite extended again. As I stood up the thing hissed at me.

"I know how you feel," I said. "It's been that kind of day. A series of unfortunate events." The scent of blood was intoxicating. It was driving me nuts and I was so hungry.

It can't get away...you could end its suffering!

Before I could talk myself out of it, I pounced. Less than graceful, I snatched the animal up by its tail, wincing at the sound of crackling vertebrae, and bit the damned thing on the neck. He was a fighter, though; he got in one good bite on my face before he went limp. I drank my fill and then burst into tears at what I had done.

"I killed it!" I sat on the curb crying, holding the dead opossum in my lap until the first hints of sunrise graced the morning sky. I laid the body on the pavement and wiped my snotty nose on my sleeve, then dabbed at the blood on my hands and face with my shirttail -- the wound was healing and I hoped it wouldn't scar. I couldn't go home looking like this. I knew Pizza Bob was going to give me grief if he knew I'd chickened out twice and then settled for roadkill. How humiliating!

But the sun was coming up and I had to go. I ran home bathed in the rays of early dawn, and then came face-to-face with Pizza Bob as I opened my door.

"Crap," I muttered.

He saw the blood all over me, cheered, and gave me a fist bump. "Sweet! You did it! Rock on, stinky! Tell me all about it!" He looked around the apartment for the ghost of my victim. "I can't wait to meet him! I know you didn't bite a girl!"

I thought about the opossum and sure enough I started to sniffle a bit. Oh man.

"Yes, yes I did." He didn't have to know it was an animal. "I fed."

The ghost floated up closer to me, stared at the healing bite on my face, then squinted his eyes at me. "Wait a minute..."

I just stood there with my lip quivering. He reached up and pulled a wad of blood soaked fur from my collar. "Are you kidding me? What did you do?"

"It was suffering," I said with a quaver in my voice. "I couldn't help it; I just ate it...I'm a bad person!" I started to cry. "Poor thing left on the side of the road--"

"Oh. My. God. You are hopeless, dude. I give up." Pizza Bob glared at me and threw the fur in my face. "You ate roadkill!"

"Do you think it's going to haunt me?"

"I hope so. That'd be priceless." He looked over at his body still decomposing in the corner. "You forgot the fly strips."

I winced. "Leave me alone," I said as I flopped onto my couch. "The more you tease, the worse I feel. But at least I tried!"

Pizza Bob floated in front of me, glaring and shaking his head in disgust.

My eyes drooped as the sun rose higher in the morning sky. "Poor little opossum...so tasty...so sorry...." I mumbled.

He started laughing. "A frickin' opossum? You are the worst vampire ever."

"I know. I don't suck."

"Ha! I see what you did there. Good one, stinky." And then Pizza Bob disappeared in blast of icy cold air.

I curled up on the couch, hugging the piece of fur like a Teddy bear; a Teddy bear that smelled of garbage, blood, failure, and death. Cheery, right?

Yeah...not so much.

MASTERSOFTHENITE

Blogline ∞ September 18, 2014 ∞ MOOD: Blue

No new adventures to speak of, at least none that I want to admit to, just a lot of wallowing and self-pity. I know, I know...it's getting old. Okay, I need help. I'm terrible at this undead thing. I thank those few of you who have sent me encouraging private messages. It means more than you know. To the others I say, "GET A LIFE." Born again Christian vampires? Are you kidding me? I'm not (nor was) a religious person, but that whole zombie Jesus thing is a bit off sides. There's a line, folks. Every time you guys try and post a comment or a link I'll keep deleting it. Forever. And yes, I have that much time.

And now to the Satanists. You guys are seriously twisted. Just because I'm a vampire.... Wow. Seriously, wow. I'm really hoping those barnyard scenes were Photoshopped. The same deleting standard applies to you whack jobs as well.

It's been a while since I posted, I know, but things have gotten out of control. I won't go into much detail, but suffice it to say there is indeed an afterlife. You thought the whole vampire thing was hard to swallow (no pun intended)? Well, how about ghosts? Time for a little Haley Joel: I see dead people.

Woo, shiver. I don't see people in the plural...just one former person. My midnight snack; attempted midnight snack I should say.

Pizza Bob won't go away. It's like being in high school all over again -- bullied daily with the only respite my time at work, and I hate my job! The ghost can't leave my apartment -- yeah, the body is still there (I'm too icked out to move it), so his spirit must be linked somehow. If I have to live forever with his constant nagging I'll go insane. I thought I'd get used to his company, but no. I have an idea about getting rid of him, but believe it or not he reads this blog! If it works out I'll post about it. The whole experience has put me off trying to bite someone else; the price is just too high.

I received a notice from my landlord today. My neighbors are starting to complain. Any suggestions on odor eradication (besides the obvious removal of the body!) would be greatly appreciated. I've got one week to make it go away or I'm out on my stinky blue butt. On my salary this is the cheapest place I can afford.

I've discovered pig livers. They aren't too bad. I don't think I'll ever be able to bite someone so keep your fingers crossed that the local butcher keeps up his supply for me. I've tried some other blood; won't go into detail, but I'm content with cow and pig for now.

Please be on the look out for a fat girl named Maddy. Yeah, that Maddy. I'm looking for her! PM me if you spot her. She likes happy hour.

- Melvin

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CHAPTER 4: Second verse, same as the first

“Don’t be mad.” I snapped open a garbage bag and stood staring down at Pizza Bob’s corpse, which was looking a little worse for the wear. The Indian summer month and my lack of air conditioning had not been kind to him; the body was bloated in places with a waxy, oily sheen. Luckily I’d already put down a shower curtain underneath the remains a couple of weeks before. I should have thought of it the night he died, but I was a bit rattled.

Because the body had been making disturbing gurgling and popping noises, I was afraid it would explode soon. As it stood, my damage deposit was in serious jeopardy because of the seepage stain on the hardwood floor. I didn’t want to think about what would happen to the walls and ceiling if he popped. Gah!

“I deserve better than this,” Pizza Bob said.

“What am I supposed to do? Huh?” My hands were shaking at the thought of touching the goopy mess, even through dish gloves. “I’ve got to get rid of the body!”

“Yeah, well, I deserve better than a Hefty Cinch Sack.”

“It’s not like I’m going to throw you in the garbage, I’m going to *bury* you. Any place in particular you’d like to go?” *Like into the light maybe?*

“Screw you. How about going back to living again? Huh? Can you do that?”

“I wish.”

“I can’t watch this,” he said, and disappeared with an angry glare.

My plan was to bury him in hallowed ground, get rid of his body -- the anchor here in my apartment, but I hadn’t really thought it through. Pizza Bob had been a fairly big guy in life and wouldn’t fit into just one bag. And then how was I going to transport him? I didn’t own a car, and the bus was out of the question.

Maybe a taxi?

One thing at a time.

I crouched down and grabbed his foot; it came right off the leg with a sickening slurp. I hate to admit this but I screamed -- it wasn’t a quality scream, but it certainly was humbling. Some creature of the night I’d turned out to be.

I dropped the foot into the bag and tentatively tried the other foot. It came off, too; the flies and their offspring had done a pretty good job on the connective tissue. Nature’s little helpers; a vampire’s best friend. How sick am I?

Enough stalling, just get it over with!

I took a deep breath, adjusted my rubber gloves and pretended it was just a project, a game of slimy Jenga. Pretty soon I had Pizza Bob broken down like a carved turkey at thanksgiving, and portioned out into two garbage bags. Gross and disgusting, but now easily moveable.

Pizza Bob reappeared as I was tying closed the last bag.

“I’m leaking,” he said, and I saw a puddle forming under the first bag. Gross!

With a shudder I triple bagged his remains and then scrubbed the entire floor with straight bleach. The majority of the stains came up and it looked like I might get out of this all right. I was running late for work so I left Pizza Bob hovering over the bags while I went to take a shower.

He was waiting for me outside the stall when I got out, and handed me a towel; he was getting stronger with the moving things and it made me nervous. That's all I needed. A full-blown poltergeist making my life even more miserable. Living with Pizza Bob was like having a creepy, nosy roommate who didn't pay any rent. Hopefully he'd be gone soon; the glorious hallowed ground theory.

"Privacy?" I demanded, but he ignored me.

He said, "I know where I want to go. It's gonna be awesome!"

Uh-oh. I didn't like the sound of that.

"I want a Viking funeral."

"What?"

Pizza Bob grinned. "A Viking funeral, man. The helmet with the horns, the boat, the fire, the whole works." He crossed his arms. "You owe me."

"How the hell am I going to do that?"

"Not my problem, dude."

I got dressed in my uniform and walked out into the living room; I was pleased that the stench was almost gone. When the bags left I'd just have to contend with my own particular ripeness. A throw rug over the little stain in the corner, a new set of air fresheners, maybe some incense, some bug spray and fly strips, and the landlord would have nothing to complain about. The smell would be no worse than the exotic cooking smells coming from my diverse set of neighbors. In fact I'd take my smell over kimchi, nasty pickled cabbage, any day. That brought a little smile to my face as I sat down to put on my shoes.

Ugh. Speaking of kimchi....

Pizza Bob settled on the couch next to me. "I want a Viking funeral," he said firmly. "It's so Thirteenth Warrior."

Yeah, that was an awesome movie; Beowulf done Crichton style. I thought Antonio Banderas was pretty cool, in a manly way of course, and had done a good job of being a Viking warrior. So Pizza Bob wanted a Viking funeral, just like the dead Viking king; of course he did...who wouldn't? It screwed with my hallowed ground theory, but I had to admit the thought was pretty cool. With the body gone maybe Pizza Bob would leave, too. And I did kind of owe him.

"I'll do my best," I said, and I meant it.

I got to work and started walking the mall. Where was I going to get a boat? I stopped at a toy store and found a plastic Viking helmet, and then had an epiphany. A blow up raft! The sporting goods store was closing in fifteen minutes so I hustled over and found a small one. But it was \$300, way out of my budget. Then I saw something that would be perfect -- necessity is the mother of invention! I bought two big inner tubes for river floating, and figured I could tie the two together and wedge the garbage sacks into the middle.

Ha! I was good at this.

I bought four bottles of camp stove propane and some outdoor torch oil for the flame requirement. I thought it was funny. Citronella-scented oil to ward off pesky little bloodsuckers.

Good one.

Now all I had to do was figure out how I was going to get to the river with two garbage bags full of dead Pizza Bob, light him on fire without anyone seeing, and escape before I got caught.

I'd figure something out.

As an afterthought I stopped by the video store and bought a copy of the Thirteenth Warrior as a going away present.

I woke up to Pizza Bob sitting on the bed next to me. He just didn't get the boundary thing!

"Dude, I thought you'd never wake up!" He was unusually chipper this afternoon.

I checked my hand for shaving cream, felt to make sure my eyebrows were still attached and unshaved, and then felt my head to make sure there was hair. Everything was where it should be, but it wouldn't have been a shocker to wake up to something like that. Last week he'd drawn a handle bar mustache on my face, and devil horns on my forehead with a sharpie pen. Pizza Bob loved the petty little torments since he couldn't kill me out right. It was like living with Kato from the Pink Panther movies.

"This is cool, dude." He had the dvd in his hand. "Sets the mood for my send off. Thanks!"

"You're welcome." I sat up and stretched. "But we might have to wait a few days for the Viking thing. I can't figure out how to get to the river. I'd walk, but twenty miles with two garbage bags filled with body parts, river tires, and a shopping bag filled with propane and a Viking helmet might look a bit weird.

"I don't want to get stopped. That might be awkward." I yawned, and my stomach rumbled.

"What about my car?" he asked.

"Um, no. It's gone."

"Well go get it, jerk. That was a good car."

"I'm sure you've been reported missing," I said diplomatically.

"I doubt it. My boss probably thinks I just bailed with the pizza money." Pizza Bob shrugged.

"That's sad." Wow, he might just be as pathetic as me.

"Whatever, dude. So go get the car."

"Again, I don't want to get stopped. And if I drive your car, the way my luck is, I'd get stopped with your body in the trunk."

"That would be funny," Pizza Bob said with a snort.

"Yeah, a laugh riot. But then you wouldn't get your Viking funeral."

Pizza Bob held out both of his hands, palms up like he was weighing something. "Hmmm, on the one hand seeing you arrested for my murder, interrogated, investigated, possibly dissected when they find out you're a vampire; getting myself a little justice." He lifted one hand higher than the other. "On the other hand, getting a wicked awesome Viking funeral!"

Pizza Bob grinned at me.

"Just rent a car," he said matter-of-fact.

“I don’t have that kind of money. I used most of what I had for the funeral stuff.”

“Always focusing on the negative, dude. I’ve got money.”

“Ghost MasterCard?” I said, and instantly regretted it. Pizza Bob glowered at me.

“In my wallet, ass-hat.” He shook his head. “You did grab my wallet before you stuffed me in those bags?”

I pursed my lips and looked at him sheepishly. He had a way of making me feel so stupid sometimes even though I knew my IQ was way above his; but he had bully logic. How can you argue with bully logic? My stomach growled again and I finally got up, Pizza Bob following me into the kitchen where I grabbed a carton of pig livers.

He said, “You really are a moron, you know that? I’ve got at least three hundred bucks in there. I was gonna buy some weed after my shift.”

“Shocker,” I said sarcastically.

“Whatever, pig sucker.”

“Touché.” At least he didn’t mention the opossum.

“Plus there’s about sixty in pizza money. I can’t believe you just left it there. You’re either lazy or stupid. I vote for both.”

“You should have said something sooner. Maybe I was just respecting your privacy.”

“Yeah, right. A polite murderer. You’ll kill me, but you won’t rob me.” He winced as I chewed on a liver. “God that’s disgusting.”

“Don’t start, okay? You need to cut me some slack.” I hated how whiney I sounded.

“Whatever, princess. I’m telling you about the money now so go get it.”

The last thing I wanted to do was dig through the sloppy contents for his wallet, but I did need the money. And I didn’t want to look like more of a wuss than I already was. I gave a little shudder at the thought of dipping my hand into that bag, feeling the slippery flesh, stirring up the stink again. I was doing another mental shudder when Pizza Bob shook his head again in irritation, and floated over to his jumbled remains. He crouched down and plunged his hand through the second bag, his ghostly arm just passing through the plastic like air, rooting and digging until he found the wallet.

“It’s in this one, but I used up my juice finding it. Man up, dude.”

I retrieved the wallet and carried it pinched between my thumb and index finger into the kitchen to rinse in the sink. The money was in good condition, not too stained or stinky. I saw Pizza Bob’s driver’s license but avoided looking at the picture. I didn’t want to know his real name, as it was he kind of reminded me of that actor Owen Wilson, but the fact he was an organ donor made me chuckle. He’d donated his organs all right. Millions of flies and their off spring worshipped his corpse like a shrine.

“What’s so funny?” Pizza Bob demanded.

“Gallows humor.”

“I don’t watch foreign films.”

That made me laugh harder. “No, gallows humor.”

“That comedian who smashed fruit with a sledge hammer?”

“No,” I was laughing so hard I was crying. “That’s Gallagher.” I wiped at my eyes with my sleeve.

“Gallo like the wine?” he asked, starting to get mad. “I don’t get it.”

I stopped laughing for a second, saw the confused look on his face, and then lost it completely. I hadn’t laughed this hard in forever. He just floated there glaring at me.

“I’m sorry, really. Wooooo.” I took a few deep breaths and got myself under control. “They used to hang criminals from platforms called gallows.”

“I still don’t get it. What’s funny about hanging people? That’s twisted.”

“Oh, please. I’m going to rupture something if you keep this up.” I started laughing again. “Go Google gallows humor.”

“Google this,” he said, and flipped me off. “You’re a real asshole sometimes.”

“So you keep telling me.” I couldn’t stop giggling as I fanned the money out on the counter to dry. “I’m sorry. You’re right.” When I was sure that I was done laughing I turned around and looked at him.

“Thanks for the money, but I can’t use cash to rent a car. We’ll have to think of some other way for me to get to the river.”

“I saw your credit card statement and you’ve got plenty of room for a car rental.” Pizza Bob looked smug.

“That’s not cool,” I muttered. I should have guessed that he was a snoop. But what did it matter? He’d be gone soon, so I forced a cheery smile as I put the dvd I brought home for him in the player.

“Get over it, I was bored,” Pizza Bob said with snide grin. “So get on the phone and call CheapWheels; they’ll deliver the car here by the time the movie’s over.”

He was right. The car showed up just as the ending credits rolled. I loaded the bags and the rest of the gear into the trunk with Pizza Bob watching from the window. I felt a little bad that he wouldn’t be able to see his own funeral; but really, who gets to anyway. I waved, he scowled, and I set off for Sauvie Island where it would be deserted near the river.

I was just pulling onto Highway 30 when Pizza Bob appeared in the passenger seat. He startled me so badly that I veered into the wrong lane and gave a trucker his dose of adrenaline for the evening.

“It worked!” the ghost shouted over the semi’s blaring horn while pumping his fist in the air.

“What the hell are you doing here?” I was watching the rear view mirror nervously, positive that a cop had seen my erratic driving and would pull me over any second; or that the trucker would turn around to come kick my butt. The latter was more unlikely, but it still added to my stress level. Could vampires have a stroke?

Pizza Bob was babbling at me. “I couldn’t miss this, it’s gonna be so cool. I just concentrated real hard on my body, and whoosh...here I am.”

At least I was right about the body connection. Woohoo, score one for the vampire. And thankfully no cop materialized behind me. Woohoo times two.

Just ten miles to go; focus on the positive.

“Are we there yet?” Pizza Bob asked with a grin.

“No.”

“Are we there yet?”

“No.”

“Are we there--”

“No! If you keep asking me I’m going to dump your body on the side of the road.”

“Geez, lighten up already.”

He was silent the rest of the trip until we turned off onto a dirt road and parked by the riverbank.

He started to say something but I held my hand up. "Yes, we're here."

We sat staring at the city lights of Portland up river. The night was cool and clear, the stars twinkling merrily overhead, and it just felt right.

"This is a cool spot, Melvin. Well done."

"Are you ready?" I asked.

"This is gonna be epic."

I unloaded the trunk and piled everything on the sand.

"Um, Melvin. How are you gonna blow those up?" He was pointing at the deflated inner tubes.

"Oh."

"Holy crap, dude!"

"I'll think of something," I said quickly. I picked up an inner tube and stared at the air valve. I put it to my lips and blew. It was difficult at first, but then I just used a combination of brute strength and patience on the stem; it worked. Vampire lungs like Superman. It was actually really cool. This vampire thing had its perks.

"Did you see that?" I sounded all giddy.

"Woohoo." Pizza Bob twirled his finger in the air. Did he get that from me, or I from him? Damn!

"Well, I thought it was cool," I muttered to myself. "Let's see you do it."

"Just hurry up, stinky."

I got both tires blown up and duct taped together, and then I settled Pizza Bob's bags of body in the center with the propane bottles shoved inside.

"Dude, which bag has my head in it?" Pizza Bob asked.

"I don't remember."

He just shook his head in disappointment, and then stuck his hand into the bags. After a minute he said, "This one."

I duct taped the helmet on that bag and doused everything in lamp oil.

"Tiki Oil? Are you serious?"

I shrugged. "I thought it was apropos...you know, the human torch."

"That's funny."

"Thanks."

"Is that gallows humor?"

"Yes."

"Okay." He gave me a thumbs-up.

"Okay," I said, and then froze.

"What?"

"I, um, I forgot a lighter," I said, afraid to look at him.

"Are you doing this on purpose or are you really this stupid?"

This was horrible. I felt like an idiot as I stood dumbly staring at him.

"Maybe the car has a cigarette lighter," I offered meekly. I started to go look, but Pizza Bob shook his head.

"It's a nonsmoking car, Sherlock. There's a lighter in my back pocket, in that bag." He pointed and I grimaced. Reluctantly I opened up the garbage bag and dug around, pulling out various body parts until I found the lighter.

“You know what? I’m doing the best I can here,” I snapped. The parts wouldn’t go back in the bag right so I had to settle for an arm sticking out, the hand flopping at the end.

“Stellar work, dude. Stellar. Be proud of the way you’ve bumbled through the body disposal of your first murder victim.” Pizza Bob was floating over the river, smirking at me.

“I didn’t have to do all this. You killed yourself and blame me. Now I’m trying to be nice.”

“Whatever.” But he was smiling now. He adjusted the fingers so that he was giving the world the bird. “That about sums up the situation.”

I might just miss him after all.

I pushed the tires out into the river and looked at Pizza Bob. “Ready?”

“Say something,” he said.

“Something.”

“Good enough.”

I smiled and lit the bags. I pushed the burning pyre further out into the water and watched until the propane tanks exploded. It was spectacular. When I turned around Pizza Bob was gone.

“Oh, thank god!” I did a little dance on the sand. Things were finally looking up for old Mostly Dead Melvin, yes indeed.

I was still smiling when I opened my apartment door at home.

“Did ya miss me?” Pizza Bob shouted, and I thought I was going to throw up. “You didn’t think that would get rid of me, did you?”

I slumped onto the couch.

“Nope, no siree. I can go anywhere I want to now. Awesome!” he gloated.

I lay down on the couch and covered my ears.

“My life sucks,” I moaned.

“Thanks for the funeral, that rocked when the bags exploded.”

“You’re still here. Why? Why is this happening to me?” I couldn’t believe how much the universe had screwed me.

“Dude, my body is gone. I’m free wheeling now!”

“Just go away, please. I’m begging you.”

“Where else am I gonna go?” Pizza Bob flopped onto the couch next to me with the dvd remote in his hand. “We should have video taped the funeral. It was awesome, man.”

I actually prayed for death as he started the Thirteenth Warrior over again.

“Hey.” Pizza Bob nudged me. “Go make some popcorn so I can smell it while we watch the movie.”

I curled up tighter on the couch and buried my face in the cushions. Life wasn’t fair. Undeath wasn’t fair.

“Seriously, hop to it. I put on the director’s cut with commentary. We can compare my send off with the movie version. I need popcorn, dude.”

I bit the pillow and sobbed. Yeah, it was pathetic.

“Are you crying?” Pizza Bob yelled. “Oh my god, you are. What a total pussy.” He cranked the volume on the television, and I lay there, face down in the cushions until the sun came up and I finally passed out.

MASTERSOFTHENITE

Blogline ∞ October 5, 2014 ∞ MOOD: Blue

Two words: Viking Funeral. It didn't work. Should have stuck with hallowed ground.
What a total pisser.

- Melvin

REPLY TO POSTER ∞ BLOCK USER ∞ REPORT POST

“Why are you being such a dick?”

I sighed as Pizza Bob ranted next to me in the food court at the mall. Yes, my life had become even more miserable; everywhere I went, Pizza Bob was sure to follow. Thankfully no one else could see him, or better yet hear him, either. I had no peace, no respite from his running commentary about the failings of my non-life.

And here we were, at the mall, just me and my shadow. Joy.

“I mean it, dude. They're just having fun.” Pizza Bob floated over to a table with four teenagers sitting haphazardly in the chairs, some rocking back on two chair legs, the others slumped like lizards sunbathing across the table. The ghost stared at their basket of fries longingly. “Oh, man! I miss curly fries.”

I ignored him and addressed the oldest and meanest looking boy; his body language screamed LEADER!!!!

“You guys have been here for three hours, there's a huge mess on this table, you're being loud and lewd to the staff and other patrons. It's time to go.”

“Check it out,” the boy mocked to his friends. “Rent-a-cop here is flexing. What's with the blue skin? Halloween's weeks away!” He laughed and waved his hand in front of his nose. “You ever hear of deodorant?”

Pizza Bob snorted and gave him a thumbs-up, frowning when the kid didn't acknowledge him. Of course the boy wouldn't, I was the only one who had the joy of seeing the ghost.

Pizza Bob nodded at me. “That was a good one, Melvin. You do stink.”

“Wow, good one,” I said in a perfect imitation of him.

“Whatever, Rent. A. Cop,” the boy sassed back, the other boys laughing loudly.

My god how I wished I could just eat the little smart ass, or have real fangs to scare the crap out of him at least. Instead I took a deep breath and leaned over menacingly. With one hand I gripped the leg of his chair and lifted the boy a foot off the floor. Sass boy's eyes bugged out, and he gripped the edge of the table.

Not looking so cool now, are ya? I let him dangle for a minute.

“Now look here,” I whispered. “I hate my job, I don't get paid enough to babysit pimply-faced, moron bullies like you, and I'm having a bad day. A bad life, in fact.” I gave the chair a little shake. “Yes, I know I stink, but that's my problem that can't change. Your problem can.

“You don't have to be such an ass, you know. If you really want me to I can embarrass the hell out of you in front of your little glee club, make you cry like a little

girl,” I said leaning in closer so he could smell my breath. “It’s all up to you, pimple face.”

“Uh, no sir,” he squeaked.

“What was that?”

The boy cleared his throat and cast a furtive glance at his buddies who were watching all this with their mouths hanging open. Even Pizza Bob was silent, just staring at me like I’d grown a third eye or something.

“I said no, sir,” the boy mumbled.

I set the chair down, and held his shoulder in a vice grip that would leave a nice set of bruises. I waved over one of the busgirls. “Conchita, this young man has something to say to you.”

“I do?” he asked as the small woman shuffled over to the table with a nervous smile. I squeezed the boy’s shoulder a little harder, and he whimpered.

“Yes, you do.” I said. “You want to apologize for making such a mess here, and yelling profanities at the cleaning staff. You understand their job is very tiring, and you didn’t mean to add to their workload or be such an ignorant fool.”

Okay, I decided to embarrass him just a little. If I couldn’t bring myself to be a vampire and bite the jerk, at least I could get a little pay back for the underdogs of the world.

“I’m sorry we made a mess and said things to you.” The boy was staring at the table, afraid to look up at his friends.

“And?” I prompted.

“The ignorant fool thing he said,” the boy mumbled. It was close enough.

I let go of his shoulder and stepped back. “See? That wasn’t so hard, was it? Manners will take you far in life, and respect given is respect earned.” *Wow. Did I just say that?*

The other boys pushed back from the table and stood up quickly. They gathered the garbage on the table, wiped up the obscene words written in ketchup with extra napkins provided by Conchita, and high tailed it out of the food court. Sass boy was frozen in his seat, afraid to move in case I grabbed his shoulder again.

“Why are you still here?” I asked, and he jumped up and ran out of the food court without a look back.

Conchita finished wiping off the table and smiled at me. “Thank you for that.”

She started to take my hand, but instead put her hand in an apron pocket, her aversion beating out her gratitude. I smiled back and moved out of the way so she wouldn’t have to pass by too close to me; She was holding her breath and fingering her crucifix as she watched me out the corner of her eye.

I’d like to say it didn’t, but that hurt my feelings. I sighed as Conchita moved off to clean other tables across the food court.

“Dude.” Pizza Bob was standing right next to me and I jumped at the sound of his voice. He snuck up on me all the time, and I’d never get used to it.

“Seriously, I take back the dick thing.” He playfully punched me in the shoulder. “Sticking up for the working class.”

“Whatever.”

“Speaking of working class, that Conchita is hot! Maybe you should try and bite her, you know.... Kill her so I won’t be alone.”

“You’re an idiot,” I snapped. “A hormonal specter that’s more of a monster than I am! She’s a mother of four, and one haunting is more than enough.”

“You are so selfish, Melvin. You suck. I hate you!”

“Get over it, I didn’t mean for this to happen to you, and I’ve apologized enough for your death. You killed yourself, damn it!”

“You owe me.”

“I gave you a Viking funeral.”

“So?”

“Blah, blah, blah! I don’t owe you anything.”

Pizza Bob looked down at his clothes, forever the same loud Hawaiian shirt and stained khakis, and gave a weary sigh. “You know, this used to be my favorite shirt...now I hate it.” He looked at me glumly. “At least you get to change your clothes.”

“Big deal. A security guard uniform. At least you look the same, but I turned blue!”

“Oooh, check her out!” Pizza Bob nudged my arm.

A young mother pushing a stroller heard my one-sided conversation and looked to see who I was talking to. I waved, but the damage was done -- just the crazy night security guard having a deranged argument with himself. The woman stared at my blue face, caught a whiff of my eau de rot with strawberries, pulled a U-turn with the stroller, and quick walked in the other direction.

“Have a nice evening, ma’am,” I called to her, but she ignored me. I sighed (I was doing that a lot lately) and sat down in a chair.

“I so would do her,” Pizza Bob cackled and sat in the chair next to me. “When I was delivering pizzas up in the West Hills, there were a few desperate housewives, if you know what I mean. I miss it. I really, really do. All those Milfs and Cougars wanting the salami on the side, if you know what I mean.”

“Just shut up. Please.” Yes, I know what he meant. That mental picture would stick with me for a while. Time to poke out my mind’s eye with a stick. I put my head in my hands and sighed heavily for emphasis.

This was hell. I was in hell, that’s what this was. I wasn’t really a vampire, I had in fact died that night months ago from food poisoning. Now I was in hell, being haunted and tortured everyday for the sins of my wasted life.

“I won’t shut up and you can’t make me, dickhead,” Pizza Bob sing-songed next to me.

How long would my penance be? Eternity?

“Hey, I’m talking to you.”

Maybe I was just in a coma somewhere, or locked away in a mental institution in the midst of a psychotic break. Pizza Bob was just an hallucination. Yeah. That sounded reasonable and more realistic than hell.

“You can’t pretend I’m not here.”

If I just ignored him, Pizza Bob would go away.

A sharp nudge to my rib cage dashed that hope immediately.

“Holy crap! Look at those fun bags!”

With another weary sigh I took my head out of my hands and looked where Pizza Bob was pointing. He was a pig, but he did have a good eye for fun bags. Come on! I’m just mostly dead, and a breast man. Go figure.

My breath caught in my throat, and I had to blink a few times.

She was a goddess. Beautiful. Radiant. And she was staring right at me. My heart chose that moment to start up and thud in my chest for a few beats; I thought I might faint.

“Melvin, you go and bite that girl right now. Do it. She is so friggin’ hot and you owe me one. You so owe me one. Just grab her and do what you do!”

I couldn’t move. She was beautiful; her eyes, her lips. She was perfection. That honey-colored hair offset her alabaster skin and her lavender/blue eyes seemed to stare right into my soul! I don’t care how cheesy that sounds, I wanted to melt. And that body! Oh dear God!

“Bite her!” Pizza Bob shrieked, and I jerked in my chair. The woman was still staring at me and I blushed -- something I didn’t think I could do anymore because I had no heartbeat thus no blood pressure. Mark that one down in the curio book. My mind was spinning; I couldn’t believe I was thinking about something like that while the most gorgeous woman I had ever seen in my entire pathetic life sat staring at me.

I’m sure I looked like a blueberry, a stinking, rotting blueberry in a cheap polyester uniform, and I was mortified. The woman wouldn’t look away which induced the sensation of being a bug under a magnifying glass; something to be handled with tweezers and rubber gloves, something to be horrified by and mocked. That was me, Mostly Dead Melvin the freak of nature, the sideshow freak. The freak. The rotting blueberry-colored-bug-on-a-stick.

Then the woman smiled and stood up. She was headed towards me. I’m sure she would berate me, embarrass me for daring to even glance in her direction, yet I couldn’t move.

“Jesus, look at those tits!” Pizza Bob moaned. “Holy crap! She’s coming over here! Do something!” He shoved me and I fell off the chair. I decided to stay under the table, as good a plan as any because I wanted to just dissolve into the floor rather than hear a harsh word out of that angel’s mouth. I watched her feet stop at the table, and I held my breath.

“Melvin?”

I gasped.

“Melvin Morton, is that you?” Her voice was soft and sweet. I couldn’t believe she knew my name.

“Are you all right?” she asked as she crouched down and peeked under the table. “It is you!”

“For Christ’s sakes, just do it!” Pizza Bob shouted as he hovered over her.

I glared at him standing right behind her, and said, “Go away!”

The woman looked at me in shock, and then grinned. “Did you hit your head, Melvin? What’s wrong? Don’t you recognize me?”

Recognize her?! I gulped as she reached out for my hand.

Pizza Bob was jumping up and down. “You know her? Holy crap!” He started making rude gestures while grinding his body against hers with an obscene grin on his face. “Oh yeah, baby, yeah! Daddy likey!”

“I said go away, you bastard!” I shouted at him.

The goddess pursed her lips and scowled, but she was still so beautiful. “You’re not still mad that I moved away are you? Come on! I was ten!”

WHAT?! It can’t be!

“Abby?” I hit my head on the underside of the table as I rushed to stand up. “Abby Abbisnson?”

“Wow, I haven’t heard that name in a while.” She laughed.

“It’s you...it’s really you!”

My best friend in the world...the girl of my dreams...but she was so different! But it was her all right. I couldn’t believe it; she’d come back to me.

And then I passed out.

How embarrassing.