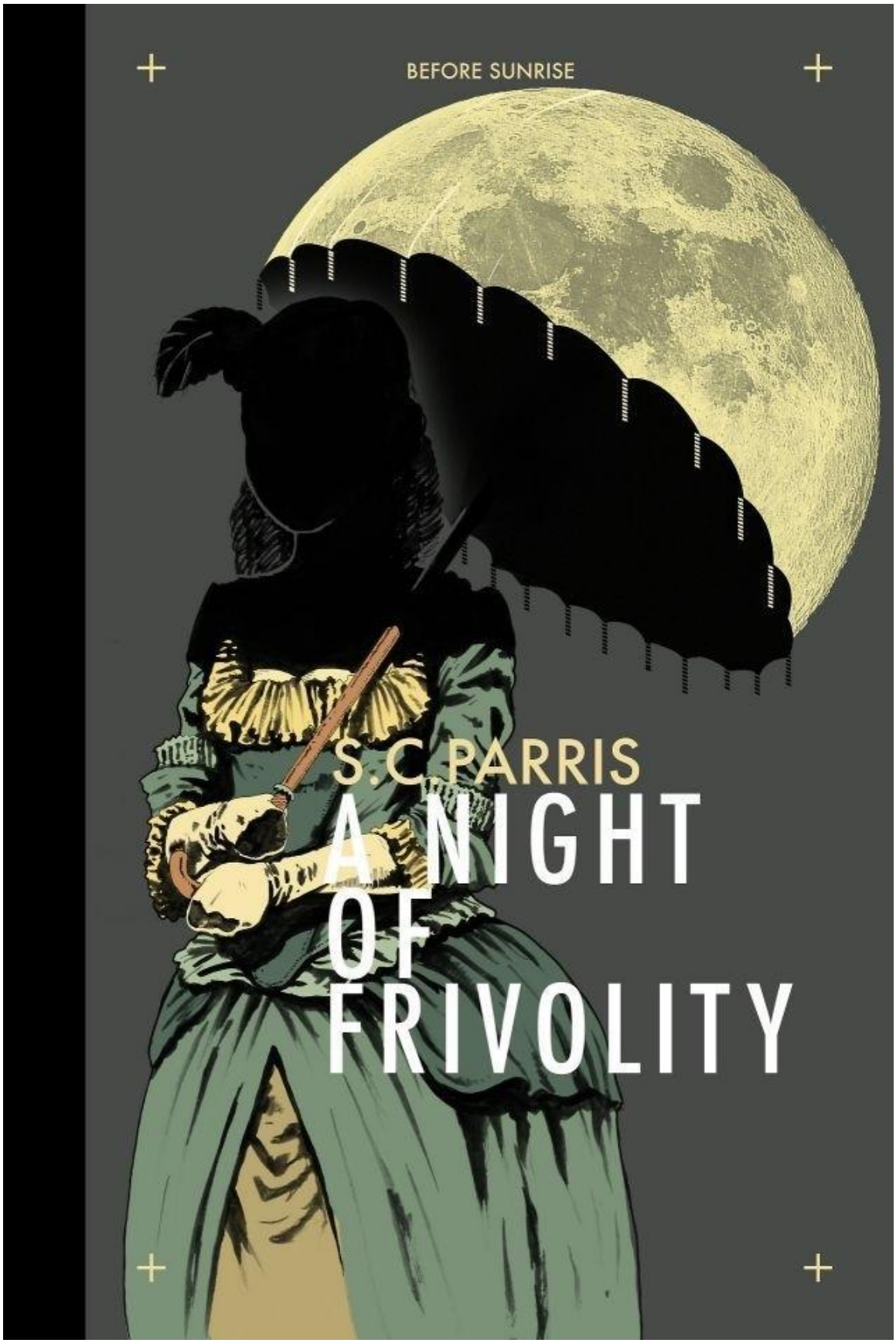
BEFORE SUNRISE
S.C. PARRIS
A NIGHT OF FRIVOLITY

A NIGHT OF FRIVOLITY;

A PATRICIA LAUREN BORDEAUX STORY

S.C. PARRIS

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A Rather Dark Introduction

January 4th & 5th, 1714 – Thursday & Friday

There was much I could say about my life, much I could pen down with reasonable time given, but it was terribly hard for me, you see. For I was old. Much too old to remember. But still far too young to forget. I was trapped in time...and as much as I never wanted to be, I had no choice.

My name is Patricia Lauren Bordeaux, and I, like my creator before me, am a very lonely vampire.

Born to Margaret Emilie Clarke in 1686, my family found themselves the center of scandal. For you see, my sister, Sarah Clarke, landed in the Virginas with the rest of the deserters around the time of my twenty-eighth birthday. With my father's death some years before, my dear mother and I had no one else to rely on. Shunned from society with my sister's betrayal to her country, we were forced to send pieces of our furniture to a dear friend's house in the efforts to evade the tax collectors, persistent though they were.

Our state of anxiety further continued throughout the years with no hope of relief in sight and when we'd received news of the Americans and their Declaration of Independence, my mother had long since passed from malaria at the tender age of seventy-six. But where are my manners?

I suppose I should start at the beginning, and though one would debate just what the beginning consists of, I must say that it starts on the rather cold night of January 4th, 1714. My mother remained at home with her dear Lady Langdon, gossiping about the world and pining for her youth, while I, a quite adventurous sort in those days, made it my fortune to venture to those rather indecent places one would only whisper about behind drawn curtains and closed doors with blushing cheeks and lowered eyes.

My particular goal in sight this night was to scour a new gentleman's club, and although I was no gentleman by any moderation of the word, I often thought it fun to try my hand at getting in.

I had made it to the lamp post, I remember, just several establishments down from the place, when it had occurred to me that Lord Raymond Bennett would be attending tonight's gambling and assorted debauchery. The thought that he was to attend did not frighten me in the least, quite the contrary it set stirrings of amusement to fill my cheeks, for the Lord was quite known for his rather uncouth air. And it was also known that I had made it something of my duty to rile him wherever I could: An old misunderstanding we had never bothered to sort out, you see. So there, with my surprise appearance at tonight's affair, would it not rile him thusly?

It was with this thought of great delight that I stepped lightly along the hard sidewalk, mind sparking with my new goal. And that was when I met him.

He stood just near the club's steps, his back to me along the foggy English night, and it was not until I'd passed him and began my ascent of the many steps that I'd heard his voice. The voice I knew, in all my years of living upon the Earth, that I would never forget. Even then I had known this. It was the slippery way of his tongue, or perhaps it was the coolness of which his words passed across the air and slid its way into my ears as though they were only meant for me.

Indeed, there were quite a lot of stand-abouts lingering around the club's entrance, loitering along the sidewalk, but it was this man that had noticed me, it was this man that had ceased his rather droll conversation (he'd later told me) with a fellow gentlemen of older years, and stepped around him to block my path toward my goal of fun.

Though I had not known it, then, what I had considered fun would soon take a rather disturbing turn.

"My Lady," he said simply, staring down at me with a pride I had seen in many of those with title, "what in God's name are you doing?"

I must have looked the fool merely blinking upon him, I realize now, and if the blood could rush to these cold cheeks they would. For in truth, I had never seen such an interesting man before; all of the men I had met in my years at Court were quite simply boring. But this man had a spark in his dark eyes, I'd figured he had to have seen death, I even thought him to be an officer of the law for one brief moment, but the flicker of coldness in his eyes at that precise instant had quickly destroyed that foolish thought.

“I’m attending tonight’s festivities,” I answered smoothly, though to be quite fair my insides were boiling. Here was the perfect opportunity for my night of frivolity to be ruined with a simple word of this man’s tongue.

The gentleman he had been conversing with placed a gloved hand upon the gate nearby and pressed the end of his walking stick into my watcher’s finely tailored chest. I had not realized this man was already quite drunk until he spoke, the liquor on his breath traveling rudely to my nose. “Now, now, Alex,” this man said thickly, the ruddiness of his cheeks quite clear through the gloom, “let the lady through. I daresay the woman is free to enjoy our hot chocolate...gamble if she pleases.” And he chuckled benignly while giving me an appreciative glance over.

I remember burning at his leering gaze, and even through the cold night, I tugged at the fur wrap I had stolen from my mother’s dresser and pulled it closer around my throat. For you see, I, ever the brazen sort, wore my *grand habit de cour* even though Court was not for another few months, but the plunging neckline and stiff bodice it afforded me would do wonders to catch any gentleman’s eye. It was like my mother used to say, “You have had no luck in Court, perhaps its best you find your husband in these hovels you cling to frequent every other night.” I cannot say that she was wrong, but of course, she, like so many of the Clarke family had all but given up on me finding a husband and let me do as I pleased. It was too bad for me, however, that this life I had created for myself was soon to come to a rather abrupt end.

“This woman, Sir Harrington,” he said with that same cold glare in my direction, “cannot enter the gentlemen’s club, for God’s sake that is why it is reserved for *gentlemen*. Not fading dandies who have had no luck in Court.”

If I told you that those words did not steal the breath from my lungs, I would be a rather terrible liar. But even so, the fire that rose to my cheeks could only linger there, for I knew he spoke the truth, and I had later learned that he did, in fact, know of my state having never laid eyes upon me before. It was, as he’d told me, one of our baser gifts.

But then, on that cold night, I was stung and he knew it: The smile showed itself upon his face quite clearly. I swallowed spit and quickly worked within my mind to retrace my steps. Warmth and the ever-elusive hot chocolate remained for me within the club and I was determined to seize them both. Lord Bennett as well if I could muster it.

I loosened the shawl if only by mere inches, but it was enough for this annoying man to pay attention, indeed. I watched in humour as his black eyes slid from my face to my looming bosom with something of absent traces. “Fading dandy, am I, my Lord?” I countered coquettishly, glad to see his relatively handsome face falling to that of slightly heated discomfort.

The dry Sir Harrington took my arm at that moment and lay his walking stick against the black gate of the establishment. I remember feeling quite bemused as he did this, but quickly pleased as he said, eyeing my revealed chest shamelessly, “She is no fading dandy, Alexander – you must have an open mind!” And chuckling jovially, still, he pressed forward along the stairs, pushing past the slighted Alexander now, pulling me along as he moved. The stairs’ width was quite small to comfortably house three people, and as such I found myself brushing up against the annoyed Alexander far too much as I would have liked: he had full view of my breasts, and I smelled a strange scent along his black waistcoat, a scent no man of his seeming stature should be adorning.

I later learned it was blood.

Sir Harrington had pulled me through the door, never stopping his stride as the man that stood beside it held out a hand upon eyeing me. “No, no, my dear, man,” Sir Harrington said easily, though his steps were quite uneven, “she’s my guest for the evening.”

It was a statement all but forgotten as the night wore on, however. Sir Harrington had gotten lost in what he called a “rousing” game of chess with a rather stone-faced individual whose name I haven’t remembered, and I was left to my lonesome, gulping down my fourth cup of hot chocolate. It was by that time the whole club had heard word that Lord Raymond Bennett had arrived before he’d even set foot through the door.

Mister Bennett was accompanied that night by a rather doting mistress, or so I'd later discovered when I'd returned to him to play out the final part in our little game, and beautiful though she was, I felt it quite unbecoming of the Lord to gather a...well, to put it quite bluntly, harlot such as

"Jennifer Connelly, my Lady," she said, extending a white gloved hand toward me. I merely stared at it, quite affronted. *'My Lady?'* Did she truly think me an old housewife?

"I am not married, Miss Connelly," I corrected her quickly, before turning my stare to eye the handsome man at her side. I still remember his blazing gaze as he discovered my warm cheeks, my glowing interior, his gray eyes alive with something of divine anger. He truly did hate me, I surmised then, lowering my own eyes from his scathing glare. It was all I could do to curtsy my acknowledgement of the Lord. A gesture he returned with the stiffest of bows.

Before another word could leave my lips he had all but turned with Miss Connelly, his broad shouldered-back given to me by way of quick traversal through the crowd and then he and the blond rose of a woman were gone, moved to a card table before I could take my next breath.

And all at once I felt a demeaning sense of ridicule bathe me in its abruptness. Why, he paid me hardly a thought at all! Wasn't I worth a disdainful retort at least?!

The damned man didn't have the right to just blow me off like that! Who did he think he was?!

I remember being so incredibly incensed that I didn't realize that annoying man from the steps was leering at me with something of grand intensity from the bar until another patron, a man with a rather long nose stepped up to me, his eyes trained brazenly on my breasts.

"Yes?" I'd said coldly, desiring nothing more than to leave him and fetch yet another cup of hot chocolate. I remember calling it my refuge from the mundane, the sweet milky taste...interesting now that I look back upon it, I had no idea just how far my desire for the drink would take me.

"Forgive me for staring," he'd said, his chest heaving with deep breaths, "but I could not help but take note of your beauty...and how alone you are. Why would someone as lovely as you not have...an attendant at a place like this?"

Well you can imagine at these words my anger, now already at a scathing point of utter disappointment seared through my chest, and rendered me completely speechless. I had just raised my hand to bring it across the man's sallow face when another hand, one much stronger, much colder clasped around my wrist.

I remember shivering at that touch, for it was terribly uncalled for, naturally, but there was something more within it that made me turn probably faster than I would have done if the hand in question was warm at all. You can guess my brilliant surprise when I saw it was the rather rude man from the front steps, his dark eyes upon the hopeful gentlemen with something of a smoldering disquiet.

I remember thinking he was truly upset the needy gentlemen had made such a bold statement toward me.

I later learned he had merely thought me an interesting meal.

"S-something wrong, my good man?" the ruddy gentleman stammered, his eyes never reaching the heated gaze: he kept his eyes upon me for all the good it would do him.

The hand was removed from my wrist and despite the strength with which he had held it, there was no ache or pressure upon my arm at all. I remember thinking this quite odd until the man named Alexander spoke:

"Nothing is wrong—if you don't count accosting fine women while they are simply lounging about at their leisure."

How peculiar it was for the man to seemingly defend my honour when just an hour before he had moved to keep me from this place. It made not a sense to me at the time, I again, simply figured the man had had a change of mind and had desired to see me free from anyone's clutches but his own. I learned that only the last part of that was true.

"Accosting?" the affronted gentlemen whispered now, his blue eyes wide with his embarrassment. "I was not—I did not mean—"

“Perhaps it is just best for you to...forget this ever happened and move along—tend to your...sixteenth cup of sweet drink, if you will,” Alexander said simply, and I almost thought there was a joking implication upon those words that only I was meant to hear.

As the forlorn gentlemen stepped from us, his gaze trained upon another sorry soul, Alexander stepped in front of me, and my gaze could not help but fall upon the winning smile across that daringly handsome face. Yes here in the light of the establishment, I could see the hardened line of his jaw, the pleasant shape of his nose, his eyes so deep with thick...intention.

Something of a thrill of possible pleasure rose up my spine, and as we stood there staring upon each other, not a word escaping our lips, I figured the man was truly...accosting me now, in place of the sullen man he had just run off.

“I’ve been watching you,” he said quietly at last, and now a chill descended my spine where the thrill had only just appeared.

“Watching me?” I repeated, not understanding what it was he meant, not wanting to assume he’d meant that he had been surveying me...desiring me, for how embarrassing would that be if he had meant differently?

“Yes,” he said simply, and he stepped aside and gestured with a pale hand toward a dark hall to the back of the establishment, “watching you, surveying you...may I be so bold as to say desiring you as well?”

I froze at once and could only stare at his lips, for he had read my mind, and not only that, but he had mocked me, and that was when my first serious thought for this gentlemen crossed my mind: *Who was he?*

“Desiring me, my Lord?” I managed to whisper beneath my astonishment.

“Yes,” he said with a curt nod, sending his black hair to bounce ever the slightest along his finely tailored waistcoat, “desiring you.”

“I don’t—I don’t understand. Just...not an hour ago were you keeping me from entering this place—and now you—”

“I have had a change of...mind,” he said quickly, dryly, and I wondered whether or not he was so very used to women falling at his feet whenever he outright said he desired them: he looked quite expectant that I would do the very same.

“My Lord, that’s—that’s quite a fast change of thought to have, do you not think?”

“I do not think, Miss Clarke, I merely do.”

And I took a step from him with those words, for never once—never once, indeed—did I give him my name. My mind felt quite heavy then, a swirling thickness of warning keeping me from saying anything more to this man. I could only curtsy quite quickly and then turn from him, my uneven steps taking me to the bar once more where the concerned barman eyed me with intrigue.

“Another, Ma’am?” he asked skeptically, wiping a glass with an already filthy rag.

I lingered on my answer before deciding that perhaps yet another glass of the warm drink was not best, after all, my stomach still churned with the grand unease of that man’s words, filling it with even more would only make it worse. “No,” I said after a time, “no, I suppose I should stop.”

“Very well, Ma’am,” he said with a nod, and as I turned from him, staring around the large room, I took note of Lord Bennett with his meager mistress. They were wrapped around each other in a dark corner, her lips pressed against his, and yes, I could even detect a bit of tongue swishing through their lips.

I remember stifling a groan and turned from them at once, feeling all the worse for the bloody man had moved on and had no interest in me and my fruitless schemes. I remember thinking I had truly overstayed my welcome at the bloody club when the cold breath was upon my neck, and the smell of blood was thick in my nose.

I could not turn as the man placed a cold hand upon my wrist once more, though the touch was not at all gentle this time. There was a sting with the coldness, the strength of his grip, and I let the small gasp escape my lips as my eyes traversed the barman who had turned his back to us the moment the strange man had appeared. That was when I began to wonder what more went on at a gentlemen’s club when the bloody patron did not take notice to the strange ways of its members.

“Let us walk, Miss Clarke,” the low voice of Alexander whispered, blowing my dark hair from its place against my neck, “let us walk.”

“I’m afraid I won’t be walking anywhere with you,” I said quietly, the tremble in my voice quite unable to be calmed. For I knew—or I thought I knew—what kind of man this person was. He had to be a murderer surely, for no one kept such a strong smell of blood against their clothes unless they had just suffered an awful wound or had given the wound to someone else.

The hand was released from my wrist, but quickly moved to my hand, and it was with a slippery ease that his cold fingers were placed in-between mine, a firm squeeze given that I should obey him, surely, and as he spun me around, I lifted a hand and slapped him clear across his handsome face, my anger filling me once more.

I wanted nothing to do with the man—nothing at all, so why would he not just leave me alone?!

The slap had drawn the attention of the revelers within their seats, pressed against the walls, and I felt their astonished glares, but could hardly care for them: the man’s dark eyes were narrowed upon me with his apparent amusement. The smile turned up the corners of his lips, and if it were not for the hand rubbing the side of his face where my hand had hit, I would have thought he’d hadn’t felt it at all.

“Miss Clarke?” the voice of Lord Bennett called across the room, and I stared toward the dark corner, seeing the forlorn expression of Miss Connelly at his side. “Is everything well?”

“Perfectly fine,” came my answer, but the fast beat of my heart could not be slowed as I knew my hand to tremble with the sensation that I had done something I certainly shouldn’t have, “Sir...Alexander was showing quite the rude face...I had to remind him that I am not to be pulled and pushed wherever he desired me.” I remember hoping the words would not falter as they left my lips, and much to my relief, they did not.

But there was a stern curiosity in Lord Bennett’s face as he left a most bewildered Miss Connelly within her corner and strode the length of the room to reach us. “What is the trouble?” he asked me, the interest deep in his eyes as he looked from myself to Alexander.

“There is no trouble, here,” Alexander said quickly, his stare making me all the more uncomfortable. It was as though he wished to kill me for laying a hand on him. Well excuse me, indeed, for not desiring to hang around an utterly strange man who demanded I walk with him away from watching eyes.

“I’m afraid there is,” I responded at once, despite my shaking frame, “and regardless of if you are aware of it or not, *sir*, you cannot simply demand I walk with you when I don’t know you at all.”

“She speaks sense,” Lord Bennett agreed, looking to Alexander, “even if she is a most insufferable cad most of the time. What business did you have with the woman, my good man?”

The stare Sir Alexander placed him with then was unbelievable. I remember thinking it impossible to see death emanate from ones eyes, but there it was in that cold stare. And it seemed Lord Bennett had seen it, felt it as well, for he let a wary smile grace his lips and said quite carefully, “Now, now, my good man—there’s not a need for trouble—all I asked was what business it was you had with the woman—”

And there the hand was pressed forth, wrapping tightly around the man’s neck before I could properly see it. I felt the wind against my face as the man’s hand squeezed it tightly, Lord Bennett’s hand trying unsuccessfully to pry it from his throat with his own trembling fingers.

“Sir Alexander!” the barman cried out. He had hopped over the bar in the next second, running for the man with fear in his eyes, but Alexander simply said quite harshly, “Stay where you are!” And that was the first time I noticed how sharpened two teeth were at the top of his mouth. Fear filled me in earnest then, for I knew, without a doubt, that Sir Alexander was no man at all.

The barman lingered on a foot as the other onlookers watched with large, terror-filled eyes.

“Don’t kill him! Please!” Miss Connelly screamed.

For the slightest of seconds there was a hint of decision within Alexander’s dark eyes, and then a small smile graced his lips, and for the briefest of moments, at least it seemed so to me, his eyes changed color and appeared a deep red in the light of the room.

I blinked and it was gone.

A horrible crack sounded through the large room then, and it took me far too long I think to recognize what had happened, and even longer to know that I should run.

For at that precise moment, as Lord Bennett's body fell to the floor and screams of horror filled my ears, I could only see Alexander's eyes gazing coldly upon me.

And one thing could resonate within my brain, still so thick with a heavy, crushing weight, only one thing, then, could replace my utter inability to process what I had just seen—

I was going to die.

My legs felt like water no matter how fast I tried to run, and even as I joined the others who were all trying to squeeze through the door leading to the night air, I did not feel like I had taken a step at all. And I might as well have not for Alexander was there just before me again, Miss Connelly stepping quickly past him to reach the open door. The drunken Sir Harrington had just barreled through it when a cold hand was thrown outward, wrapping knowingly around Miss Connelly's throat. All the while his eyes had never left mine.

I suppose murmurs of meaningless pleas and words left my lips, but I cannot truly remember that, all I can recall is that I turned from the open door as I heard the woman's screams abruptly cease, and ran the length of the large hall to reach the extravagant staircase that led to more rooms, more escapes.

I began my ascent feeling the cold wood of the railing slide beneath my sweat-covered palm. I knew nothing but fear, then, the echoing sounds of the man's footsteps thundering within my ears as though a bell ringing for my doom.

Someone, anyone, there had to be someone left within the club, surely, I'd thought rashly as my eyes quickly spanned the landing. Closed doors lined the green walls here and I could hear his footsteps moving steadily up the stairs behind me.

"Come now, Patricia," the unsettling voice drifted on the air as I ran for the door farthest down the hall, my skirts wrapping distractingly around my legs. And I cursed myself for my choice of dress. How I wanted to be the center of attention! Well, I certainly was now, wasn't I! "Do not run. I merely want to taste you for my own..."

A scream of terror fled my lips as I reached the door and pulled on the handle fruitlessly: it would not open.

“Patricia...Patricia...please,” the voice called, and I, despite myself, turned to the voice. He was moving slowly toward me, walking idly even, as though he were strolling without a care in the world. “I shall not harm you...much. If you merely came with me earlier...well...no one would have had to die, would they?”

The seize of panic filled me along with my inescapable terror and I moved for the door just beside the one that remained locked. I pulled on the handle, my shaking sweaty hands sliding off it with ease. *No, no, no,* I thought frantically, as he drew ever closer. The sound of his shoes against the floor an impending harbinger of the death that would follow...

I tugged on the knob once more and it opened. A cry of relief left my lips as I threw myself into the room and looked around frantically for another door, another way out—

There. Toward the back of the room, past a large, lavish bed remained a simple wooden door. *Yes,* I thought frantically as I moved quickly toward it, knowing full well his footsteps had stopped at the door behind me.

I did not turn to eye him as I reached out a hand and pulled it open, throwing myself forward into the night air.

A balcony.

A bloody balcony.

I remember cursing my luck as I turned to eye him against the white railing, the wind whipping at my hair and clothes. The cold of the night pressed against my skin and I shivered with its embrace, his eyes reaching me through the dark of the room.

“Patricia Lauren Clarke,” he said soothingly, as though knowing my full name would have made me anymore complacent to being killed, “you are quite the interesting woman.”

I felt the bitter cold of the railing within my hands, for my legs shook far too much for me to stand properly anymore. The wet of tears trailed down my cheeks as he stopped just in the doorway, my only escape quite gone. Of course, I could have jumped to my death, but I did not hold the strength to lift myself over the railing.

“H-How do you kn-know my name?” I managed to breathe. I was very well aware that my voice had long since left me.

“Miss Clarke,” he said simply, and it was though he’d been waiting for this moment his entire life, “the moment you appeared in front of me this...glorious night...I was simply...enraptured by you.”

“What?”

“Your distaste of the status quo, your impeccable desire to shrug off the rules of society, your utter lack of care for your age, your poor choice of place for...frivolity, leaving poor old mummy home to tend to the ramblings of an older woman. You’re alone. You have very little to tie you to your life. And that,” he said smoothly, stepping closer to me without a care in the world, “is why I chose you.”

I remember not being able to draw breath, for he had said it all so easily. The honest truth of my life and all that had accompanied it. I had little to no one, next to nothing, and my little romps to places of interest were all but fleeting time and time again. But how on God’s green Earth did this man know it—know it all?

“Ch-chose me f-for wh-what?” I’d asked, despite my utter confusion at his knowledge of my life.

He stepped closer toward me and now he was just inches from me, the smell of blood quite revolting as he pressed himself against me.

The cold hand was against my neck, and before I could attempt to gather my breath, he had whispered in an ear the words I know I shall never forget:

“I am lonely—what better a companion...than someone who does not want to exist as they do?”

It made not a sense to me at the time, but looking back, quite naturally, I see now what it was he’d meant. I did not want to exist as I did, my life...it was quite the bore and I was looking down the road toward a life of mediocrity and a death of old age. But now, well...I still cannot say if my life was truly any better than my death.

“What,” I breathed as the cold hand began to tighten around my throat, “what are you going to do to me?”

I remember thinking I heard him smile as his face hovered beside my ear. “Haven’t you been listening, my dear? I’m going to kill you.”

And before the words could find my rattled, pulsing mind, a terrible pain filled me, the sharp needle-like daggers tearing into my flesh, and it took me a moment to realize that he had opened his mouth and had bit me, it took me quite a moment to realize that my blood now left me in droves, spilling into his mouth, down his throat.

But by the time I realized that I was dying, my hands, which had clung tight to the railing could not grip them anymore, nor could I keep in focus the door that was still open just before me, the dark room within it that would mean my freedom if only I could reach it.

I had not a thought to spare for my mother, then, nor my sister for all her betrayal, for his arms had wrapped tightly around my waist, pulling me tighter toward him. Breathing was something of a memory, then. I could not spare breath, could not will away the pain that coursed through me, could not push away this monster that held me fast to him, could not fight back against the demon that took the life from me.

I remember thinking, before all went black and I was no more, that my life had not been worth the fight, that I had wasted it, truly, on things and people that had not mattered, never truly mattered. And that my death, as present as it was, would have to be infinitely better, indeed.

I remember thinking this as he pulled away at last and I slumped to the stone floor of the cold balcony, unable to feel a thing, death’s numbing embrace overcoming me.

What I did not realize, of course, was that my death would be no better than the frivolous life I had lived.

It was the next night that I awoke, my mind filled with strange odds and ends, things, in my lingering state of life and death, which I could not determine with any certainty then, and I dare say I can fully know what they were now.

For it was a state of in-between. Not entirely dead, not entirely alive. And I thought...I thought on things that confused me the more I tried to focus on them, I remembered people and events in my life that had left terrible impressions on me, and I did not know why. I did not know what was happening, and I’m

not sure I had a deep desire to know, for I was aware that this whole time, although I was “awake”, I had not opened my eyes.

The thought to open them had not occurred to me, so lost was I in my nightmares. And when I did, I knew myself to eye a beige ceiling, and upon tearing myself from the far away wall, I saw I rested atop a bed. Four tall golden posts surrounded me, thick red curtains on all sides, but there was light somewhere. Yes, I knew there was light because there was a flickering illumination spilling over me, casting great relief over the thin white sheets that covered me, and as I tore my gaze from the sheets, I saw the five small white candles that hovered several feet above me, their wax dripping slowly down from the burned wick.

I remember feeling miraculously confused when a candle moved as though pushed by a light breeze, although I felt no such thing. It moved directly over my face, and as I stared up at it, wondering what in the world caused it to move as it did, a drop of wax left the candle and fell directly above my eyes, right in the middle of my forehead.

I had known what fresh wax felt like having felt it many a time setting about lighting candles for myself and my mum, but I felt nothing from the moment it touched my skin, and by then I knew it had cooled, but it remained all the same to me.

I had only lifted a hand to wipe away the drop of wax when the candle moved away from my face and a curtain was pulled open by a strong-looking hand. And it was not long at all before I saw him.

His black hair was unbound as it lay loosely against his back, and I remember thinking only that that was quite strange a hairstyle for a man to wear. Normally one would have to wear his hair tied, or covered by a wig of powder, to wear it loose was quite...unbecoming.

But the more I stared, the more I saw the matter of his hair hardly mattered.

He wore a black waistcoat, embroidered with intertwining black silk vines all throughout its body. It was buttoned to the white cravat against his neck and as it ended past his knees, he wore the trademark blouse underneath, it’s long sleeves bound by black lace at the elbow, allowing the rest to flare out into a large cuff at his wrist as was custom.

I had hardly made a thought to why he appeared before me as he did, when he said it:

"You're finally awake, Miss Clarke?"

Oh, that voice. I remember it even now, and here where it can haunt me no longer, I recall it every other year or so despite my vain efforts to keep it from my thoughts. The voice that gifts me with a sickening kind of pain, a bittersweet longing. This was what the one who turned us gave to us, he'd told me shortly afterward: The never-ending longing for the monster who'd birthed you.

He merely stared at me, awaiting my response, his eyes a clear black in the light of the candles' glow, and I remember thinking vaguely how strange it was, his eyes being black, when he cleared his throat, a cold smile never lifting his lips.

I blinked then, realizing what he'd wanted from me. To speak. To do something I wasn't entirely sure I could. Everything was...difficult. I could barely understand what was around me, to speak...I am not ashamed now to say that I wasn't sure I knew how to speak back then.

But I'd opened my mouth all the same after a time, not able to feel my tongue within my mouth.

"I...I am."

And my voice was not mine. It left my throat, yes, but it was so greatly changed, I could not fathom its difference. It left me in a breath, a simple breath, but it alluded to me the fact that I had not taken a breath since I'd woken from my fitful dreams.

He spoke before I could panic:

"I only ask to make sure you are truly awake this night—you had several half starts throughout the day, I'm afraid."

Half-starts? I thought dimly.

"Yes, half-starts," he said simply, a hand stretching for the candle most near him. I blinked in surprise as the flame passed against the red curtain, but it did not catch onto it. It remained obedient, staying above its home, the man who held it never tearing his gaze from me as the candle further illuminated his pale face.

Yes, his brow was high, a rather unbecoming stare it afforded him, and I wondered why I had not seen it before when surrounded by people; he looked remarkably off-putting, as though he desired never to relate to others, never to converse with them, never to speak, never to bask in their presence. He seemed incredibly closed, remarkably alone.

"Since you're awake," he continued suddenly, "you will get dressed."

And with these words, I stared down at the sheets that covered me and lifted them. Much to my surprise, I was completely naked.

"Did you remove my clothes?" I asked him, indignation filling my face.

He continued to stare upon me unabashedly. "They were stained with your messes," he said without care, his black eyes roving to my chest, and I promptly lifted the sheets to cover my breasts, wondering why on Earth I had not felt my nakedness, felt anything at all.

"Messes?"

"You were dead for a time, Patricia. You soiled yourself. I cleaned you. Destroyed your clothes. Burned the sheets. You know, simple things like that. These things are different for everyone."

"What on Earth are you—? You *'cleaned'* me? Well what does that mean?!" I almost shouted, not entirely liking the sordid implications.

"Exactly what it implies," he said indifferently, and upon seeing my bewilderment at his words, he went on, "I cleaned you, yes, that means I touched your body, removed your feces, your urine from your arse, and gave you my blood periodically to ensure that you did not just die."

I lifted a hand to touch my head, his words matching the maddening confusion that filled it. None of it made sense. None of it—at all—

And that was when I remembered what had happened.

The blood as it left my skin, the cold of the banister, the pressure of his body against mine, me, his trapped victim...

I stared into his eyes once more. "You killed me last night," I managed to whisper amidst my astonishment, my incredulity. For I couldn't see how I was alive, I couldn't see how I was here...wherever

here was. I couldn't spare a thought to that. All that mattered then was that I was not dead. When I know I should have been.

"Yes," he said simply, turning from me for the first time, giving me his back. I didn't know why, then, but the movement made me feel incredibly alone.

The candle's light danced silently against his hardened frame: he must've worked vigorously doing physical matters with his body, for it was so well-formed it appeared through his clothes.

He stepped to a dark wooden chair against the wall which was covered with a dark green sickly kind of wallpaper and sat, his frame quite relaxed. He leaned forward, his elbows and forearms resting atop his thighs as he pressed his hands together as though impatient for something he much desired.

"You are not complete," he whispered almost to himself.

I had only known that my stare could only follow him when I tried in vain to look elsewhere. I could not. My gaze was only held on him, everything else would not register. It only frightened me further.

"You," he said again, his strange glare on me in full, "are not complete."

And before I could utter a word, he was gone, leaving me alone to stare at the ceiling in a numbing, cold anguish.

The End