

COMMUNITY
CREATED CONTENT

Jack Snow

STORYTELLERS
VAULT
FICTION

BLACK DOG
GAME FACTORY

A Novel for VAMPIRE: The Masquerade™

JACK SNOW

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VÄSTGÖTAGATAN 5
SE-118 27 STOCKHOLM
SWEDEN

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Chapter 1

From An Abrupt End, To An Abrupt Beginning

New Orleans, Louisiana
May 24th, 2009

It had been a rough night for Jack Snow. He woke up in his bed, sweating and panting for fresh air, as none was to be found in the hot and humid bedroom of the small, cramped apartment he lived in. He could only vaguely remember the night before. He'd gone to the club with his friends, and he'd seen this girl, all pretty like. They'd danced, and he was pretty sure they'd made out, too. Feeling a wrenching in his gut, he rushed out of bed and into the small bathroom. He just barely made it to the toilet in time to release his stomach's content into the bowl. He heaved, and for what seemed like hours, he sat on his knees in front of the toilet.

I am never drinking again.

But he knew that wasn't true. He knew, that come the next weekend, he would be out partying with his buddies again. Or, at least, what buddies he had left. Jack was just over thirty, his best friends had already settled down, gotten steady, decent jobs, and even made families. Jack was thirty-four, single, and a bachelor through and through. As it was, though, he seriously regretted his life-choice of the night. It

had been pretty fun, evidenced by his lack of memory of most of it. He weakly stood on wobbly, sleeping legs prickling with the sensation of thousands of needles, and flushed the toilet before he leant over the sink. He rinsed his mouth with water, then splashed some in his face to cool down his hear. He rubbed the water on his throat, the back of his neck, and his arms. He then dabbed at his face, throat and arms with the towel hanging next to the sink.

I should probably start washing soon. I'm running out of clothes.

Pushing the though aside, he stumbled back into the bedroom/ living room and over to a window. He opened it to see that the sun was setting again. And the breeze that slapped him in the face instantly calmed him, soothed him. He felt the almost-cool breeze sweep over him, and he closed his eyes to relish the sensation. He then turned around and let himself fall on the bed. He plopped down and laid in the bed for a few minutes, but he quickly grew restless. He then got up and changed his clothes, before leaving his apartment.



Jack walked down the streets of the Garden District, the part of New Orleans he'd grown up in. He remembered running around with his school friends after school let out, trying to decide whether to go to the park, or to get pizza. Life had been so carefree, back then. Now, he had trouble holding down a job, he couldn't for the life of him find a steady girlfriend (God knew he'd tried), and his best friends these days consisted of college kids. Granted, time had been kind to him, and he looked no older than his mid-twenties, not to mention that he had quite dashing looks. But he *felt* his age. He felt tired all the time, he barely got any motivation, and he'd tried looking to the bottle for purpose. It was a shitty

try, but it was a try all the same.

Jack sighed deeply as he passed his childhood home. He stopped and looked up at it with a nostalgic, and dreadful feeling in his gut. He'd lived there until he turned fourteen. It was also the house his mother had died in, passed away from a brain tumor. His father had died when he was twenty, from mercury-poisoning. His father had always been careless when it came to his personal health and safety, and breaking a thermometer, then swallowing by accident, had been the greatest concern he'd ever had, but he ate fish all the time, and had eaten a lot of snake, as well. All those things combined almost guaranteed his death, and at one point it had just become too bad. Okay, so maybe mercury poisoning wasn't the **biggest** cause of his death; that had been the pistol he'd stuck in his mouth, while Jack was at school. The police had tried to be gentle about explaining it to him, but he'd gotten the gist of it after the first sentence or two; his father had committed suicide to escape the pain.

Jack looked away from the house, now inhabited by a small family of four, parents and twin boys. When they'd been told the stories of what happened in the house, they'd tracked down Jack, invited him over for dinner and expressed their condolences. They were nice people, really. Jack liked them a lot. He babysitted the boys from time to time after that. Harry and Jolene, with their sons Eric and Jack. Jack had been amused to learn their youngest son (by two hours) shared his name. The man then walked down the street and turned right. He was nearing the border of the French Quarter, and he wasn't sure if he wanted to go there. He'd heard stories from his pals living there, that a lot of weird things happened at night. Shrugging it off, Jack continued on, ignoring his old friends' advice.

Wandering through the streets and alleys of the New Orleans district, he took notice that it was a lot quieter tonight than he'd ever expected of it. Usually, the parties and music and parades could be heard throughout the surrounding districts, but tonight, it was deadly quiet. Jack was almost afraid to talk. When he reached the infamous Bourbon Street, he was shocked to find it deserted. He looked around, but not a single person was in sight. But then a 'crack', like a pistol going off, resounded through the streets, soon followed by what he could only assume was a barrage of bullets being shot, just a few streets down.

"This a fucking gang war!?" he muttered to himself, his somewhat hungover brain scared sober.

He turned back and was leaving, only to see two figures passing the alley he was in. He stopped dead in his tracks, but before he did, he accidentally kicked a tin can. His heart started pounding, sweat formed on his brow, and he felt his bladder tightening. The two figures stopped as well and looked into the alley. One of them, he saw despite the darkness of absent light in the alley, was that one of the men's eyes were *glowing*! The two then started towards him, slowly. Jack finally regained control of his body and stumbled backwards. He turned and ran, ran faster than he ever had. It didn't amount to anything, as he soon felt a foot lightly tap his own back foot, causing it to get caught by his leg, and he stumbled roughly onto the ground, face first. He scrambled to continue, desperately. His breath had become panting, and his heart was beating so quickly, he thought it might explode. He felt his control of his bladder slip, and a warm liquid made its way down onto the ground as he dragged his legs through it.

One of the men behind him howled in laughter.

"The wimp fuckin' pissed himself!" he roared loudly, and then, unexpectedly, he howled like a wolf.

Jack didn't understand what was happening, but he felt a hand roughly grab his shoulder in a vice grip, to the point that he felt like his arm would come off. He hissed in pain and was turned over.

"Ple—please don't kill me!" Jack pleaded, a little blood dripping from his forehead, tears streaming down his cheeks and with thoroughly wet pants. "I—I'll give you anything!"

The man who grabbed him looked like his face had been to see a body-modification artist recently; spikes were protruding from his forehead, piercings lined his face in strange patterns, there were abnormal features to it, and the most gruesome part was his eyes, which seemed wholly inhuman. More like those of a frog, or goat. They were yellow with horizontal, rectangular pupils. Jack looked at the hand holding his shoulder, and realized it had six fingers, all of which seemed like long, thin branches with sharp points. He looked back at the man's face, and when the man smiled wickedly, his teeth were like those of a shark. Two rows of extremely sharp teeth, likely being easily capable of sawing Jack in half. To top it off, he was dressed like an old punk-biker, with leather jacket over a bare torso, tight leather pants and big biker boots. Jack was happy he hadn't eaten anything in almost a day, so that peeing himself was the most humiliating thing he could do, but his mind didn't register that little silver lining. The man, or monster, or **thing** holding him leant close and peered deeply into his eyes, looking for something. Jack cringed away, but dared not close his eyes, fearful that the creature would hurt him if he did.

“I see,” the thing said with a ghoulisn smirk. “You just might be what I’ve been looking for, kine.”

Before Jack could understand and register what the beast had said, it pulled Jack towards itself, and roughly bit into his neck. Jack screamed from the agony, the feeling of the sharp teeth cutting into his throat and the creature simultaneously crushing his shoulder making him unable to think. He just screamed and roared and yelled in pain, until his voice cut out, and he felt his mind slip. He became limp, and he briefly wondered if he’d died.

What a mercy. The pain...

But soon, he felt again. He felt something cold and wet drip onto his lips. Despite himself, he let his tongue out of his mouth, and lapped at the wet substance. And it was *heavenly*! Soon, something was pressed to his mouth, and more of the divine and wonderful liquid came out of it, so Jack, using the last bit of his strength, grabbed the thing close and started needily suckling on whatever it was. Soon, it was torn from him, and he *growled*. He opened his eyes and sat up, only to see the man with the glowing eyes swing what could only be classified as a shovel straight towards Jack’s face. And despite seeing it coming, Jack was struck right on the nose, and blacked out, once more.



When he came to once more, he felt an oppressing weight all around him, and started to panic. He opened his eyes, but saw nothing but darkness, and something like dust or sand fell into his eyes. He also felt something tasting like dirt in his mouth, and tried to spit it out, but he couldn’t. He tried moving, but whatever surrounded him didn’t budge in the

slightest.

Jack then felt something he'd never experienced in his chest. A panic, much like his own. He felt it claw at his chest, and he tried harder to sit up, but he couldn't.

What is this!? What's going on!?

And then, connecting the dots, Jack's panic turned up to eleven.

DID THEY BURY ME ALIVE!? HELP! HELP!

But Jack, deep down, knew no one would help him. And the panic in his chest fought harder, and Jack was helpless as he felt *something* wash over him. He'd never felt so lost, so out of control, but Jack felt his limbs starting to move on their own. His fingers slowly but surely dug out small crevices, allowing his hands to move. He roughly wriggled his feet, and without ever consciously moving his limbs, Jack put so much force into moving his left foot, that he heard and felt his ankle '*snap*'! He would have screamed in pain, but he felt nothing from the broken appendage. His body continuously moved, strengthened by an unknown force, and slowly clawed his way out of his unmarked grave. Jack was both scared, angry, sad and thankful. But something was definitely off, as he couldn't take control of his own body. He was reduced to being a passenger within himself, and whatever this *thing* was, he was sure it was **furious**! He could feel the anger flow throughout his mind and body, but it was noticeably separate from himself.

Soon, his right hand breached the surface of the ground, and relief washed over him. Punching out his other hand, he grabbed the earth around his grave, and pulled himself out. As he breached the surface, he instinctively let out a furious

howl, roaring into the night. He felt the anger and fright subside, but as they did, his broken left ankle started hurting again. And it hurt quite a lot. Jack pulled himself fully out of the grave, rolled over on the ground and looked up at the sky. He spat out the dirt in his mouth and smiled with relief.

"I'm alive," he breathed out with a raspy voice. "I'm alive!"

"Not quite," came the voice of a man with an off-British accent. Jack had heard real Brits speak, and they didn't sound like that.

He whipped around to see the two men who'd attacked him lying on the ground with pieces of wood sticking out of their backs, right below their shoulders. On a small case, which could have contained beer or torture tools, for all Jack cared, sat a man, looking about as old as Jack himself. His hair was dirty blond, and his eyes were as blue as the noon sky. He was resting his arms on his knees, and was wearing all-black, practical clothing, as compared to Jack's party clothes, or the *creature's* punk outfit. He had a very short beard a few shades darker than his hair, and his face held a small smile. Not sadistic, like the one the disfigured man had, but a genuine smile.

"I'm glad to see you made it out alright," he said calmly. "I would have dug you out, but I had no idea of your actual placement, and I could have cut you in half with the spade if I had just dug."

Jack didn't say anything. He just stared at the man and studied him. The man slowly extended a hand.

"I'm David," he said politely. "Good to meet you, Jack."

"H-how do you know my name?" he stammered out.

David took back his hand but kept up the smile.

“I looked in your wallet,” he said and pointed at the black wallet lying next to the weird looking creature–man–thing. “Jack Snow, thirty–four, living in a quiet part of the Garden District,” David listed off. “Sound about right?”

Jack slowly nodded and tried to stand, but his ankle suddenly thundered pain through his leg. He groaned in pain at the sensation. David looked at his ankle, then rose from the box he sat on, opened it, and pulled a few bags of some red liquid out of it. He sat again and threw the bags at the man with a broken ankle.

“Drink,” he said casually. “You’ll feel better.”

One of the bags had ripped open as it landed on the ground, and within moments, a strong, delicious scent made its way to Jack’s nostrils. It was...overwhelming. Before he could react, he flung himself at it, grabbed it, and forced it to his mouth. He bit it hungrily and started sucking out the contents of it. He drained it in seconds, and then threw it away in favor of another. He repeated the process several times, each slowly subduing the sense of fire in his throat and head, calming the bubbling anger in his chest. He slowly regained his senses with every drop he consumed, and soon, the liquid started tasting different, but not wholly unpleasant. Before, it had been like honey or syrup; sweet and pleasant. Now, it took on a copperier taste as the *hunger* he felt died down. When he threw the last bag to the ground, he calmed down enough to see the white label on the bags: A+. His eyes widened in horror, and looked at his hands, stained with the liquid he now recognized as *blood. Human blood*. He felt his head lighten, as if he’s been drinking booze. He began breathing rapidly, but he noticed that, strangely, he didn’t

feel like he needed to. He closed his mouth and stopped breathing altogether. He sat quietly like that for minutes, each minute making him more acutely aware of how different he felt than he had just before he was smashed in the head with the shovel.

“Don’t worry too much about it,” David said calmly as he studied the man-turned-monster. “For now, just focus on clearing your head.”

Jack couldn’t understand. Clear his head? Don’t worry?

“WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME!?” Jack roared and threw himself, hands outstretched, at the other man. The other man tumbled backwards over the box, pulling Jack with him. “WHAT’VE I BECOME!?”

Before anything else, the man, his face as calm as ever, grabbed Jack by the front of his shirt, and used his leg to throw the angry man over his head from his lying position. Jack flew a good few meters before he landed roughly on his back, and his ankle shot another surge of pain through his leg.

“I haven’t done anything to you,” David said calmly as he got up from his position on the ground. “You can thank the Fiend over there for what you’ve become.”

Jack got up and turned around, fangs bared and a growl leaving his throat. David seemed mildly impressed.

“And I see you have a natural instinct for your transformation. Nice.”

Jack’s angry face dropped slightly, and he put his hand to his teeth. Sure enough, there were two, sharp, pointy teeth where his canines would have been.

“Fangs?” he muttered weakly, as his face fell all the way, and he fell to his knees. “I...I’m...”

“A vampire,” David finished for the man, and slowly made his way over. “A Tzimisce, as well.”

He came close and knelt in front of the unraveling neonate.

“I can’t– I can’t be a–” Jack tried to utter, but he couldn’t get the word out. He felt his eyes tear up, and his vision strangely became red at the bottom. He felt like he would have sobbed, but his lungs didn’t feel like he could. He clenched his jaw and eyes tightly. “I’m human...” he whispered, his voice pained.

“You are no longer a human, Jack,” he said calmly. “But that doesn’t mean you have left humanity behind.”

Jack didn’t move.

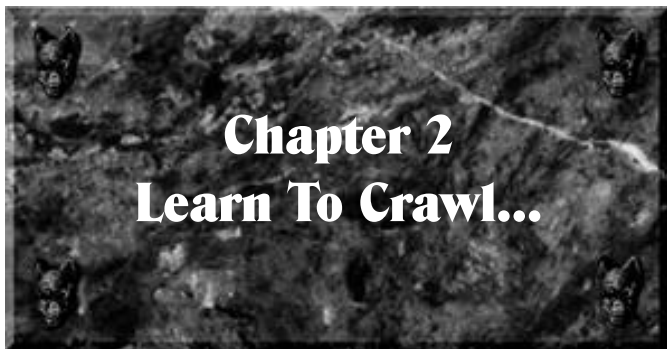
“You have to feed on blood, you can never again see the light of day, and your body is undeniably dead. But your soul is still there, and it is still human... –ish.”

Jack, more bloody tears rolling down his face, nodded with a sorrowful expression, his face pulled tight in sadness. David looked at the night sky, and saw it slightly brightening.

“We need to get to shelter,” he calmly informed Jack, who nodded.

He wiped his face and eyes free of blood with his shirt, which was now quite thoroughly ruined, just like his pants. David turned around and pulled Jack onto his back. Jack was slightly alarmed, but then calmed again. His ankle was broken. He couldn’t walk, anyway. He just let David carry him on his back and was surprised when David even started

running at quite a fast pace. Jack was even more surprised when he ran at almost a dead-sprint for several blocks and didn't seem winded in the slightest when they arrived at a red brick building. David carried him inside and up the stairs, until they reached an apartment with the name tag 'David Kane' on the outside. David casually opened the door, revealing it hadn't even been locked. When they entered past the door, Jack swore he felt a warmth wash over him, like passing under a sheet of warm water. But it was gone as quickly as it had appeared, and left Jack no wiser as to its nature. At that moment, Jack felt an overwhelming sense of lethargy wash over him, and he blacked out before he could guess what it was.



Chapter 2

Learn To Crawl...

New Orleans, Louisiana
May 25th, 2009

Jack woke up on a bed in a small, clean bedroom. There was nothing but the bed, a clothesbasket and a wardrobe. When he stood up from the bed, he realized he didn't stink like piss or blood anymore, and even realized he wasn't wearing his own clothes. He looked himself over in the mirror on the wardrobe door and saw that he was clean and freshly bathed.

"Thought you might not want to wake up in your old clothes, soaked in blood and urine," he heard David's voice from the doorway to the rest of the apartment. He looked and saw David with a friendly smile on his face. "Feel any better?"

Jack nodded quietly.

"Good," David acknowledged, and stepped back. "Follow me. We need to see the Prince."

Jack did a double-take.

"Prince?"

"The vampire ruling the city," David calmly explained. "He

decides whether a vampire is allowed to create progeny. But you were embraced by a Sabbat shovelhead, so I want to request of him that I take you as my own childe.”

Jack was a little off-put, but he nodded in agreement. He looked down at the black Henley shirt, the black jeans and the black Chelsea boots. He was dressed pretty stylishly, actually. He noticed that David wore the same type of pants and shoes, but he wore a black long-sleeved t-shirt instead. David then backed out of the room and headed towards the entre. Jack hastily followed him and accepted the black utility jacket David handed him. David then put on a black leather blazer and put up the collar. He walked out the apartment, and Jack followed.

“So, what is this whole Sabbath spadehead thing?”

“Sabbat shovelhead,” David corrected with a small chuckle as they left the building and walked down Royal Street. “The Sabbat is a kind of radical, extremist terror organization, if you will. They think vampires are meant to be monsters, and they definitely live up to their reputation. They want to rule mankind as the ‘blood gods’ we are,” David made air quotations at the ‘blood gods’ part. “A shovelhead is a term for someone embraced, or ‘turned’, by the Sabbat. They embrace you, smash you in the head with a shovel, and bury you in a shallow grave. You have to make your own way out.”

Jack got vivid flashbacks to the previous night and remembered all the terror and horror he felt.

“It isn’t too terribly practical when there is just one, like with you,” David explained further. “The way the technique was invented, the Sabbat would do it to a lot of people, and throw them in the same, shallow mass-grave. Then, they

would have to kill each other and make their way out. The ones who made it would have become dehumanized and desensitized to fear and remorse. When it's just one, like with you, the only thing they manage to do is terrorize you, and maybe give you PTSD, but then again, such types like them don't tend to be too terribly intelligent," David stated. "Just be glad you were the only one. Else you might not have survived."

Jack nodded as he watched his savior. David was so calm, and nice.

"Are most vampires like that?" he asked nervously.

"Far from it," David said reassuringly. "New Orleans is a Camarilla-held city, and as such, we do our best to stay hidden from humanity at large. And we are far more civilized in our nightly practices."

They turned right down another street and walked past Jackson Square. It was then that the memory struck him, as he saw the hole dug in the ground of the square's grassy earth; that was where it had happened. He stumbled and threw himself against the wall of the café they were passing. He slid down the wall, and his eyes widened. He couldn't feel anything, not physically. But the memory, the sheer terror and fear he felt, it all came rushing back. David calmly walked over and knelt in front of him. He touched his finger tips to Jack's forehead. Suddenly, all the memories stopped, and he calmed down. He took a few deep breaths, trying desperately to find comfort in the once-comforting action, but he found none, so he stopped it. He accepted the hand the now-standing David offered him and was smoothly pulled to his feet. David smiled slightly at him, and turned back down the streets, with Jack hot on his tail. They soon came to the doors

of the Cabildo, the once-Spanish government building-turned-museum. David opened the door and let Jack enter first.

Inside, it was quite pretty, for a museum. Jack had never been fond of them, and he had visited the Cabildo during middle school, but he'd never really taken notice of just how tall the ceilings were, or how elegant the halls looked. There were a few chandeliers, some flags, museum items, and such other things. David headed down one of the corridors, and Jack quickly fell in step behind him.

"Unless you are directly addressed, keep quiet," David said casually. "Let me do the talking. When you answer, never make snide comments or remarks, and always finish a statement with 'sir' or 'ma'am'. Some of these aren't adverse to killing you with minor provocation, and I'm in no position to stop them."

Jack nodded and kept quiet. They soon reached a small locale, where there were several other vampires, judging from how pale they all seemed. Some of the bodyguard-looking types did look human, though. Everyone was wearing some type of fine clothing, either in the form of a suit, a dress or some other incredibly fashionable outfit. One of them even wore a 1920's style suit, complete with a fedora and a skinny mustache. It just dawned on Jack that, if vampires really were immortal, then how old mustn't such a vampire be, to be unable to keep up with suit trends?

"Ah, David!" came a loud, boisterous voice.

Jack flinched slightly at the noise, but nevertheless looked to the man who exclaimed it. He was a somewhat tall, good looking man, with dark skin and piercing eyes, despite the

smile on his face.

“Prince Marcel,” David greeted the man back with a small bow, and Jack quickly copied David.

“How did last night go?” the Prince asked on a slightly more serious note. “There hasn’t been any more ruckus tonight.”

“I managed to silence sixteen of them,” David reported dutifully, almost like a soldier. “I sent the rest running. I could not have been so successful without the aid of your ghouls, my Prince.”

“In defense of New Orleans, there is no such thing as withheld assets,” Marcel stated with a nod. His eyes then landed on Jack, who tensed up. “Who’s this?”

“A Tzimisce shovelhead, embraced last night,” David said, which made whispers break out in the room amongst the other vampires. “I managed to take out his sire before he could twist the childe.”

“I see,” Marcel nodded and stroked his beard thoughtfully.

“With your approval, I would like to take him as my own childe, and teach him our ways and Traditions.”

Marcel closely inspected Jack, making the neonate quiver slightly in nervousness.

“You have never failed in the past,” Marcel then finally stated. “He shall be your childe, and all the laws and Traditions of the Camarilla shall apply to him, indoctrinated by you. Besides, you are of a Sabbat clan yourself. You would be the most obvious choice for a sire.”

“Thank you, my Prince,” David bowed his head in appreciation.

Marcel nodded, and turned back to the other presumed vampires. David nudged Jack, and taking the older vampire's cue, he followed him out of the room, through the halls, and out of the building.

"What did he mean by 'Sabbat clan', or 'sire'?" Jack asked his newly adopted 'sire'.

"The sire is the one who turned the human into a vampire," David told his childe. "Like a vampiric parent. And the two Sabbat clans are the Tzimisce, like you, and the Lasombra, like me. I'll give you a more detailed introduction when we get home."

Jack nodded.



The pair of vampires reentered David's apartment, and Jack knew he smelt something. Something very sweet, but somewhat bitter at the same time, as well. David led Jack to the kitchen, where the stove had a pot, inscribed with various strange symbols covering the outside, on it. It had recently boiled. David took the pot and a glass. He then poured a portion of the contents into the glass.

"Drink," he said and handed Jack the glass. "This will quench the hunger, for now."

Jack nodded and took the offered drink. He took it all in, very quickly. It was absolutely delicious. David kept refilling the glass until there was no more of the contents in the pot, and then placed both glass and pot in the sink, where he filled them with water and dish soap. True to his word, Jack no longer felt any discomfort at all after he finished drinking. Rather, he even felt stronger, more clear-headed than he had

before.

“What is it?” he asked his adopted sire.

“A blood mixture, imbued with magic,” David stated as he started washing the pot and the glass. “It was made from the blood and hearts of the people who attacked you.”

Jack’s eyes widened, and he was about to go to the toilet and make himself gag, but David grabbed his arm.

“Don’t,” he said. “You need blood to survive now, and those bastards got what they deserved. Besides, it should make you stronger, as well. Give you a little head start.”

Jack didn’t like the idea, but he slowly nodded his acceptance. David let go of him.

“I’m going to teach you about being a vampire, as well as about our history, customs, the whole thing. But first, I need to teach you how to hunt.”

Jack didn’t like that one bit.

“But what i—”

“No ‘if’s,” David said. “If you can’t hunt and feed, you can’t survive. Besides, do you really think we have to kill our prey?”

Jack shrugged his shoulders.

“Won’t they turn if we bite them?”

“That’s just a myth from TV. If that were the case, there wouldn’t be any humans left.”

Jack quieted. David was an experienced vampire. Jack had to take what he said to heart, because no one else would tell him. In the silence, he noticed something he hadn’t before. He couldn’t hear the thumping of his heart, or the rushing

of blood in his body. As it was, the silence was almost deafening, but he could hear vague sounds from the outside. Chatter and music and cars, only vague, but present. David's foot rocked, and the creak in the floorboards, as silent as it would have been, was like it happened right next to his ear.

"You hear everything, don't you?" David asked with a smirk. "I've seen that look a lot of times."

"Yeah," Jack confirmed absentmindedly, his gaze wandering the apartment.

When he focused, he realized that he could also *see* much more clearly. Every contour seemed much sharper and crisper than it would have, every little detail on David's face was clear and precise. He even saw the dust particles floating around in the room they stood in, like a sheen of many, many grey dots, a blanket covering everything, but still transparent.

"And now you see everything," David continued, a smile appearing on his lips. "Watching reactions like that never gets old, just like us."

Jack chuckled at the joke.

"So we're immortal?"

"Undead. We are clinically dead, and we can be killed. But age? Never. Disease? Usually not an issue. Drowning, starvation, exposure? Not a chance. With the exceptions of fire, sunlight, magic, and the natural weapons of unnatural creatures, we are, in some way, immortal. You will look in a thousand years as you look no— well...maybe a little paler."

"Neat," Jack muttered, still entranced and fascinated by his new sensory inputs.

David simply watched his child awed by the new sights and sounds he was experiencing. Jack looked back at David.

“Is this what it’s all about?” he asked.

“This is just a fraction of it,” David reassured the neonate. “As you weather the centuries, you’ll find that we have so many powers at our disposal. The strength of ten men. The speed of a cheetah. Becoming mist, or a bat. Seeing perfectly in the dark, beguile mortals with a glance and command them to do our bidding. The possibilities are almost endless.”

“I’m sold,” Jack breathed, his eyes flittering about the place. “This is fucking awesome.”

“There are a few downsides to vampirism, however,” David commented. “You can’t walk in the light of the sun, and fire will consume you in seconds. Not to mention the Beast now residing at the core of your soul.”

Jack’s eyes snapped to his mentor.

“Beast?”

“No one knows what it is,” David began. “I can tell you of at least twenty interpretations I’ve heard over the centuries, each more ridiculous than the next. But what is true, is that it’s not some external entity entering and possessing you after the Embrace.”

Jack wasn’t sure he liked where this was heading.

“It’s you. Or rather, a manifestation of your deepest, darkest, most animalistic desires and urges and instincts. Its greatest concern is keeping you alive, but don’t be fooled. It’s a part of you, but it doesn’t care about the rest of you. It wants you alive so that it can take over your body, take control.”

Jack was nailed to the spot, and despite the complete lack of necessity for it, he swallowed in anxiety on instinct. David's expression had become dark.

"Every negative and destructive emotion you feel is a tiny crack in its cage. Let your anger get the better of you, and the Beast will follow. It will use any and all tricks it can to make you let it out. When you're hungry, it will push you to kill unnecessarily, break down your humanity, and give it free reigns."

Jack was sure he would have felt the rock in his stomach, the cold sweat breaking out, but he felt neither. The fright didn't feel exactly the same, but it was still familiar.

"You must train your mind, steel your humanity, if you want to remain in control. You've felt but a mere fraction of the Beast's power already."

Jack immediately knew what David talked about. That anger he'd felt when he was buried, the fear, terror...and the desire to fucking tear apart the cunt who'd done it to him. Jack then felt his anger boil up once more, merely thinking about that monstrous prick making his blood boil, metaphorically.

"Calm down, Jack," David said calmly, but his words held a certain, soothing quality in them. Something Jack had never experienced before. The anger vanished instantly, leaving him calm and composed as ever. "That's what I was talking about. Feed until you're satiated, and make sure to stay full at most times. Let go of all you fear. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate, and hate leads to suffering."

Jack was stunned into silence. He stared at David for minutes, not saying anything. David seemed slightly

unnerved and confused.

“What?”

“Did you just quote Yoda from Star Wars three?”

David quieted for a few moments.

“Might have,” he replied with a shrug. “But that doesn’t make it any less valid. Succumbing to the Beast is suffering. You might not feel pain while it happens, but it hurts your very soul. Weakens it. That’s when vampires become monsters.”

Jack walked over to the couch and sat down on it with a tired sigh.

“Damn it. Well, sensei, teach me.”

David walked over and sat in the armchair across from Jack.

“That concoction should sustain you for a few days, so let’s go over some basics. Don’t sunbathe, don’t play with fire, and make sure a wooden stake doesn’t come anywhere near your heart. It won’t kill you, but it will paralyze you, and that’s how hunters take you out to catch a sunrise. The Sheriff too, for that matter.”

“Sheriff?”

“Right. The Camarilla has a strict hierarchy, and you are practically at the bottom of it.”

“Gee, thanks.”

“I’m not kidding. At the top, there’s the Prince. He can do practically whatever he wants, and he decides what is law and what is rubbish, except for the Traditions. The Six Traditions are the laws every Kindred in the Camarilla must follow, and

breaking one can very well lead to your execution by being put to the sun.”

“No rest for the wicked’, eh?” Jack mused humorlessly.

“True,” David chuckled. “They’re broken down like this; the first is the Masquerade, and it is by far the most important. It means that you’re not allowed to tell people about vampires, you’re not allowed to show them, you can’t reveal yourself to them in any way imaginable. Understood?”

“Perfectly.”

“The second is Domain. When you’re on another vampire’s property, which means the whole city when concerning a Prince, you are their guest, and you have to show them respect. If you don’t, a Prince can kill you for a rude remark. Granted, few would, since that would make them look petty and vain, and especially Marcel is pretty lax about this, but that doesn’t mean you should be an ass to them. That just makes you look bad.”

“Right, don’t be a dick. Got it, great advice,” Jack muttered sarcastically.

“Third is Progeny. You can’t make another vampire without the Prince’s permission. If you do, you’ll both be hunted down and slaughtered. Simple enough.”

“Simple?” Jack’s eyes widened slightly at David’s choice of words.

“Fourth,” David continued without acknowledging his new childe’s comment, “is Accounting. Every sire is responsible for everything their childe says and does. Which means, if you fuck up, I’m going through the mud for it. Just don’t fuck up, it isn’t that hard.”

“Got it.”

“Fifth is Hospitality. Now, this might sound like it means every vampire has a right to be in any city. It isn’t. It means that a Prince can refuse or grant permission to stay in their city, and every vampire coming to town has to report it to the Prince.

And lastly comes Destruction. This is the most important one to remember after the Masquerade. It means that you cannot, under any circumstances besides being sanctioned by the Prince, kill another Kindred. You’ll be executed for it.”

“I sense there’s a pattern with execution being a very popular method of punishment for vampires,” Jack chortled.

“Just for breaking the Traditions,” David reassured his child. “The smaller, individual laws Princes invent usually carry a rather meek punishment in comparison. After all, one of the greatest appeals of vampirism is immortality. Who would want to die when you’ve been promised that?”

“True.”

“Anyway, below the Prince is, usually, a Primogen council. They’re the leaders of their clan in the city, and not all cities have Primogen councils. They’re like the governors of the states here in the United States. Below that, there’s the Sheriff, who is the Prince’s ‘fixer’, if you will.”

“Fixer?”

“He’s the police captain, the executioner, the head of internal security, whatever have you. Most take them as bodyguards, but they’re so much more than that. They can employ Hounds, their own minions.”

“And the Hounds are, what, Sheriffs to the Sheriff?”

“Essentially. Below that are the average citizens. And below that, you.”

“That was unnecessary,” Jack looked accusingly at David, but David shrugged.

“You are a childe. That means that, as far as the society is concerned, you are basically my slave, my ward. No one likes putting it in those terms, but that’s how it is. You’re obliged to do exactly as I tell you, whenever I tell you to, until I decide to release you. When I do that, you become a neonate. The lowest of the average citizens, but a citizen nonetheless.”

“And how long until you release me?”

“When I deem you ready. Some have been childer for over a century, and some have been as little as a night. That’s for the sire to determine, but when you’re released, you’re on your own. Period. The only things you’ll be forced to do are those you sign up for, or those you’re blackmailed into. If you don’t do anything that can be used against you, you might never have to do as anyone says, ever again.”

“Right,” Jack sighed once more, though he felt strange doing it. Like it was completely unnatural to do so. “So, what about those clans you mentioned?”

“There are thirteen clans, each with their own specialties and unique weaknesses. Seven belong to the Camarilla by popular vote, two to the Sabbat, and four remain independent. The Camarilla clans are the Brujah, the Gangrel, the Malkavians, the Nosferatu, the Toreador, the Tremere, and the Ventrue. Lasombra and Tzimisce belong to the Sabbat, and Assamite, Giovanni, Ravnos, and Setites are

independent clans.”

“So, three factions?”

“Kind of. The Camarilla is a monarchical dictatorship, but it works. The Sabbat is a huge band of monstrous dicks. And the independents are just that: independent. They don’t really have alliances to the Sabbat or Camarilla, or each other for that matter, but they just might help you, if you make it worth their while.”

“Right. So if there are these ranks in the Camarilla, where are you?”

“I’m the Scourge of New Orleans,” David explained further. “I’m the Prince’s personal hitman for when he wants to be more discreet, but since there isn’t a Sheriff in New Orleans, I fill out that role as well, for the most part.”

“A hitman?”

“Yeah.”

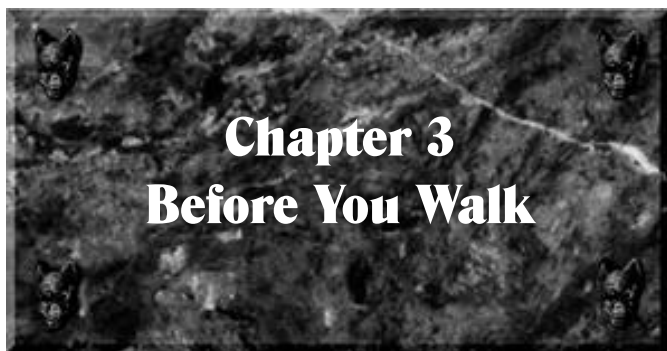
“As in gun-for-hire, paid killer?”

“Yes.”

...

“Dude, you’re fucked up.”

“I know,” David sighed and rubbed his eyes.



Chapter 3

Before You Walk

New Orleans, Louisiana
May 25th, 2009

Jack was sitting in a club called ‘The Crimson Kiss’ next to David, both wearing expensive, tailored suits in all-black, and Jack was beginning to wonder how David made so much money. The music was loud and blaring, but while Jack had once felt the thunderous bass in his whole being, he now felt like it was...weaker. He felt it somewhat on his skin, but it didn’t flood through him like it used to. Like he was hollow, somehow, when he had once been full. Jack looked around, sniffing the air. He’d been able to smell something on the way over here, but once they entered the club, the scent became so much stronger. And if he were to put it in relatable terms, it was like he could smell the Thanksgiving dinner being put on the table when he was younger. It smelt so *delicious*, but the smell was practically everywhere, and he somehow doubted everyone was cooking Thanksgiving dinners in May.

He noticed David’s amused expression.

“What?”

“You’ve been thinking about that smell, right?”

“How’d you know?” Jack asked.

“What you’ve been able to smell, Jack, are humans.”

Jack was quiet for some time, as his eyes glanced over the humans dancing around them to the punk-rock music playing loudly throughout the club.

“They smell like food because that’s what they are to us. Am I right?”

“Exactly,” David nodded. “In vampire society, humans are quite literally considered beneath notice. I suppose you could equate it to giving a domestic salmon in an aquarium human rights.”

“Who has salmon in an aquarium?” Jack questioned, astonished.

“Well, would you skin, grill and eat your dog?” David countered.

Jack stared blankly at David for a good few seconds.

“No. No, I wouldn’t.”

“Right. The very lowest you could go in Kindred society is a ghoul, seeing as they’re servants who are fed vitae. Vampire blood,” David elaborated at Jack’s confusion. “They get stronger, and gain some of our weaker powers. But most notably, they don’t age as long as there’s vitae in their bodies.”

“Right. So, what’re we doing here, anyway?”

“I’m going to teach you how to hunt.”

“Vampires hunt in clubs?”

“And parks, casinos, hotels, back alleys and brothels. Remember, humanity is our prey, so anywhere there are

humans can be considered hunting grounds.”

“I understand.”

“Then there’s the issue with Domain again, though. A vampire who holds domain can decide if others are allowed to hunt in their domain, though you shouldn’t be concerned with that here in New Orleans, much less the French Quarter.”

“Why not?”

“New Orleans is open to anyone who follows the Traditions and Marcel’s laws.”

“Marcel’s the prince, right?”

“Exactly. And the French Quarter is my domain, so you can feed anywhere you want there, so long as you don’t break the Masquerade, and you don’t litter the streets with corpses. I’ll help you clean up if you lose control or mess up once in a while, but keep casualties to an absolute minimum. Humans get drunk and get themselves killed practically every week, but several bloodless bodies are going to raise suspicion.”

Jack just nodded silently. He hadn’t even considered that he might mess up and kill someone he would feed from. The thought that it was a real possibility sickened him in his gut. He didn’t feel the same gag-reflex he normally would have, though. That, coupled with how he could smell food all around him, and how he couldn’t *feel* the music around him like he used to really hammered in the fact that he wasn’t human anymore.

“There,” Jack snapped out of his thoughts as he heard David’s voice and felt the older vampire nudge him. “Single, shy, probably a little tipsy.”

Jack looked in the direction David pointed, and saw a young woman, probably around twenty or so, sitting by herself and nursing a mojito. She kept looking around with a somewhat lost expression on her face.

“What do I do?”

“You waltz up to her, ask her to dance, and if things go smoothly, you’ll be going to the bathrooms with her in less than half an hour.”

“You want me to nail her?” Jack asked.

“You can if you really want, but I just want you to act like you’re going to. Then, when you’re about to do the deed, you just push out your fangs and bite her in the throat. Don’t worry. It’ll come to you naturally, like you’ve done it a thousand times already. It’s pure instinct.”

“How do I know when to stop, though?”

“When you drink, you’ll be able to feel her pulse like a drum in your body. Like the bass in a club like you used to. It’ll pound throughout your whole body, and you’ll know when it slows down. When it slows to the point where it’s just steady enough to be normal, you let go and lick the wounds. That will seal them up, like it never happened.”

“But it’ll be normal the whole time,” Jack countered anxiously.

“No, it won’t,” David placed a reassuring hand on Jack’s shoulder. “She will be hot, light-headed, and almost definitely *horny*, I think you call it.”

“That’s what we call it,” Jack nodded.

“Right. Her heart’ll be beating like she’s skydiving. Like

she's riding a bicycle down a steep mountain. You'll know what I'm talking about when you bite. And don't worry about closing her mouth, she will be moaning. The bite is bliss. Don't worry about other people either, sex is a very common occurrence in this club."

Jack took a few breaths to calm himself, which really didn't work, but he still stood up and made his way towards the girl David had pointed out. On the way, Jack put up his most charming smile, and turned his personal magnetism up to eleven. He walked around her table, and she looked up at him. She was rather pretty in Jack's opinion. Long, brown hair in curls, brown eyes and regal cheekbones. Freckles faintly covering her somewhat pale cheeks and nose, and lovely lips, looking as delicious as he had ever seen on a woman. She blushed when he sat down next to her on her right.

"Good evening," Jack said seductively.

"H-hi," the girl nervously stammered back and looked down on at her hands.

"Will you tell me your name, or should I leave here crying because the prettiest girl in the club wouldn't talk to me?" he asked endearingly.

Her blush deepened, and she glanced at him with a small smile.

"Rachel."

"Rachel," Jack repeated slowly. "What a beautiful name. I'm Jack," he said and extended his hand for her to shake. "Pretty crude compared to 'Rachel'."

Rachel hesitantly took his offered hand. Jack relished in the

softness of it, like a silken pillow.

“So, are you here by yourself, or do you have a friend here?”

“I came here with my roommate, but she ditched me for a jock,” Rachel admitted.

“She a party girl?”

“Yeah. We attend UNO, but she’d rather party than study,” Rachel frowned lightly.

“Not that I can exactly say that partying sucks, but studying is definitely more important,” Jack said with an honest smile.

“You’re still in school?”

“No, I graduated three years ago,” Jack lied through his teeth, something he was pretty good at. “I’ve gone into the private sector. Architecture.”

Rachel sat up straight and her face brightened a little more.

“Really?”

“Yeah, but there aren’t a lot of jobs around anymore,” Jack nodded with defeat in his face. “I drew the schematics for a new apartment building being built in Sydney as part of an ecofriendly project, that’s how far I have to go to get jobs.”

“Wow!” Rachel’s eyes lit up. “That’s so cool!”

“I thought so too in the beginning, but it gets dull really quickly. I tried going into graphical design after that, but that got boring too. Believe it or not, having a creative job isn’t as exciting as it may seem.”

“But you got to actually go to Sydney, right!”

“Yeah, and it was pretty alright. But it was hot as hell, and

there were bugs and creepy-crawlies everywhere.”

“Really?”

“Tarantulas are pretty common, and they suck to find in the corner of your bedroom,” Jack chuckled, and Rachel started giggling as well.

Jack kept making small talk with the girl, and he found out that she wanted to work with biochemistry. She really wanted to travel the world as well, and with every new bit of information he learned about her, the worse he felt. He came over there to try and get her to go to the bathroom with him, make her think he wanted to screw her. And had intended on biting her in the throat so that he could drink her blood. The thought made him feel like his chest was being crushed by a vice, and he felt sick to his core. He started to become anxious again, and glanced over at David. David sat shockingly still, like he were a statue. His eyes were glued to Jack’s, but they showed nothing. Like he was just a wax doll in a museum staring blankly at him. Jack knew he had to do this, or he might never make himself do it again. And David had said that his life **would** become hell if he couldn’t feed.

Jack picked up his courage, and lightly placed his left hand on Rachel’s thigh. She looked up at him with a deep, heavy blush. And Jack knew that he had crossed the threshold. There was no way back, now. Rachel’s eyes slowly fluttered closed, and she slowly leant in. He leant in himself as well, closing his eyes as he went, though compared to her, his movements were precise, like a machine. He pressed his lips to hers, and she jerked just slightly, but brushed whatever it was off. Jack was grateful that he had brushed his teeth before they came here, else she would have tasted that heart-blood drink.

They moved slowly at first, with Jack taking the lead. Their lips molded together, and Jack felt nothing but emptiness. He had once felt so good, so ecstatic when he made out with a girl. But now he felt nothing. Her lips tasted so nice, and her lips were incredibly soft, but it was like the emotions associated with the action were gone, making the kiss hollow to him. He gently grabbed the back of her head with his left hand, and started caressing her thigh with his right.

The more she leant into it and eased up, the more Jack wanted to get the hell out of there, but he had committed to this, and it was his life now. He had to do it, or he wouldn't survive. Jack pulled away and begrudgingly forced a seductive smile to his lips as he gently took Rachel by the hand. Her face was completely red as he gently led her towards the bathrooms. He opened one of the doors and pulled her inside before locking it behind him. He then pulled her into himself and started heating up the kissing, but his chest hurt more and more the farther they went. Rachel momentarily broke the contact and pulled her shirt over her head, leaving her torso bare except for her bra. Rachel was quite well-endowed, but was by no means record-setting. She crashed her lips back onto his own, and she started unbuttoning his shirt.

It's time. It's now or never.

Jack carefully moved his lips from hers, and planted kisses along her cheek, and then down her neck. She moaned and draped her arms around his neck, and Jack only briefly felt like it was a gallows' noose, promising to hang him once his fangs broke her skin. He pulled her tightly against himself, and just like David had said, he felt his fangs unsheathe. He then slowly brought them to her throat, and pressed them

down, before they swiftly retracted once more. The blood slowly pumped into Jack's mouth, and he felt an overwhelming euphoria like no heroin he had ever tried. It tasted divinely sweet, and he pulled her against him more tightly on instinct. Rachel moaned and caressed his hair. As soon as the blood trickled down his throat, Jack forgot all about the vice-like sensation he had felt earlier, and all anxiety evaporated instantly. He no longer had a care in the world, only to drink more of this heavenly liquid.

But Jack felt it. He felt the pulsating sensation throughout his body, beating like a drum, like his own heart once had. It was as obvious as the sun in the noon sky, and it was soothing, lulling him into a daze, despite how rapidly it beat. Jack drifted off, his spirit dislodged from his body and floating back into the club where the sounds and smells and tastes and the *bass* all invaded his body, filling him with ecstasy. He was dimly aware that he and Rachel had changed their position, but he simply couldn't bring himself to care... until the pulse of life invading his undead body slowed down, and then *stopped*. Jack was slowly being pulled back to his body, but he didn't want to go back to it! He wanted to stay like this, forever! Purged of all emotion, all flesh and material, and simply float in the void of music and blood and life forever.

Jack slowly opened his eyes, and looked around. He was lying on the heated floor of the club's bathroom, his head spinning and his mind unwilling to focus. He felt something next to him, and turned to look at... Rachel's eyes staring blankly into his own. They were glossy, and seemed empty, somehow. Like there was no...

Jack felt his stomach drop, then lurch. He tumbled up into

a sitting position and started shaking the girl.

“Rachel,” he slurred out hazily. “Rachel.”

He felt the spinning slowing and quieten, and felt his mind become clear, only to feel like he was being dipped in Antarctic water.

“Rachel. Rachel! RACHEL!”

His shaking intensified, making the girl’s head roll around, but he didn’t get a reaction out of her. She merely stared blankly out into nothingness, her mouth hanging slack. And where she had just earlier felt almost burning hot to the touch, she now felt... like his body temperature. Jack’s breathing increased and deepened, becoming heaving, but he felt nothing arise out of it. There was just Rachel on the floor, and himself with a little blood on his lips. All of a sudden, however, that turned. He practically heard something snap, and he just felt like his head became enveloped in a cool blanket. And despite his horror at what he had just done, he looked down, and his hand was completely steady. So steady, that it looked like a hand carved out of white marble. And despite knowing all too well how fear and sadness could be mind-numbing, having just been riling up to a panic attack, his mind was as clear as a quiet lake on a windless day. He still felt as though he was swimming in the arctic hemispheres, but he was calm like a buddha in meditation.

He sat back and looked down at his hands, and felt a... disconnect. A thought occurred to him, one he would never have thought he would have.

She’s dead. I need David to help get rid of the body.

It was as serene a thought as any he had ever had. And he

pulled his phone out of the inner pocket of his jacket, dialed a number, and put the phone to his ear.

"What happened?"

"I killed her," Jack said calmly. "I didn't mean to. Can you help me get rid of the body?"

He heard the beeping tone letting him know that David had hung up on him. He pocketed the phone, and not a second later, someone knocked on the door.

"It's me," he heard David's voice.

Jack unlocked and opened the door, as David swiftly squeezed inside and locked it again. He looked down at the cooling corpse, and back at Jack.

"Why didn't you stop?"

"I...couldn't," Jack muttered quietly in a monotone voice. "I couldn't...move."

David's expression became one of concern.

"You alright?"

"I think so," Jack said with a small frown. "I don't feel... anything. I'm just...calm."

David frowned lightly.

"I was getting sad, angry, I just wanted to shake her awake and then suddenly...calm. Is that...normal, when you kill?"

"Usually not. At least, not the first time. Some grow desensitized, but what you describe is...extraordinary."

David looked at the dead body, then at Jack, whose face was calmly set in stone. He seemed genuinely fascinated in what

Jack was going through, but he unlocked the door and took a peek, less than a second, before he closed the door again.

“Pick her up,” David said. “She’s your burden to carry. We’re going to walk straight out. Don’t say anything, don’t make any sounds, no nothing. I’m going to obfuscate us.”

“Obfuscate?”

“Vampire mind-trick, no one will see us. Just pick her up and follow me.”

Jack crouched down and picked up the surprisingly light girl. He then followed as David led them through the crowd. Much to Jack’s surprise, everyone seemed to move out of their way without seeing them. Jack felt as though he was walking down the hallway to the hangman’s noose, only he wasn’t going to hang himself; he was going to hang Rachel, the innocent girl he held in his arms, her corpse very rapidly cooling down. And while he knew he would have been sad... he couldn’t feel it. As if that snap he had heard earlier was his sanity had broken. That he had, in that very moment, gone insane. David led Jack outside through a back entrance to the club. They found themselves in an alley, with no one around. David stood still for a moment with his eyes closed, as if concentrating.

“No one’s going to disturb us,” he said as he opened his eyes. “Put her body down over there,” he pointed to the middle of the alley.

Jack did as he was told, and gingerly laid the newly-dead corpse down. David came over to him and held out a bottle of ethanol. Jack realized what his mentor wanted him to do, and accepted the bottle. He opened it and poured its contents out over the body, until there was nothing left. David then

pulled him a good distance away from the corpse and handed him a zippo lighter.

“Fire’s one of the things that can really kill us,” David calmly explained. “Don’t get too close to it.”

Jack nodded and flicked the lighter open. He snapped the wheel, and the flame arose. Jack felt only a slight tug inside him, something whisper in his mind that he should get away from it, but it seemed so far off. He then threw the lighter at the ethanol-doused corpse, which lit up instantly. The acrid stench of burning flesh soon reached his nose, but he didn’t feel the need to hide it with his sleeve. He just ignored it and watched the flames lick away at the body. The tug inside him grew stronger, but he still didn’t feel compelled to do anything, really. He looked at his mentor, who studied him with fascination.

“It would seem that you fell apathetic when the trauma of what you’d done settled in. I can only presume that it’s a self-preservation mechanism for your subconscious. It also seems that you’re unnaturally resistant to the red fear in this state.”

“What?”

“Oh, nothing,” David shrugged. “Just thinking out loud.”

Jack nodded, and looked back at Rachel being burnt to a crisp.

“Can’t we just leave?”

“No. We have to make sure there isn’t a body left to find. We don’t leave until she’s ash. It’ll take a few tries, so I’ll go get some more bottles.”

“Right.”

It took three further bottles to make sure that there was absolutely nothing of Rachel left, but a pile of ash.

“For the record,” David mused somewhat morbidly, “this is what myself and other elders are going to look like when we die.”

“Don’t you mean ‘if’?”

“There’s no such thing as absolute immortality, remember that. One day, every single one of us **will** die. It could be the sun, fire, a well-placed axe, an experienced vampire hunter, a werewolf, sorcerer, demon or another Kindred. But everyone, and everything, will inevitably, without exception, die. It might take a second, a century, a millennium, or a billion years, but it will happen. That goes for you, your friends, me, our elders, and even the mightiest of supernatural creatures.”

Jack nodded. David turned around to walk away, and his new protégé followed behind. They slowly walked through the streets of the Garden District, neither saying anything. As they reached the border to the French Quarter, however, Jack felt something. A deep pain in his gut, spreading to his chest. Not physical, but emotional. David turned his head and looked on as Jack’s face contorted in sadness, and red tears of blood welled up in his eyes, rolled down his cold cheeks, and he fell to his knees.

“I killed her,” he whispered. “I couldn’t stop it.”

He started heaving for breath, but it didn’t do anything for him. He started sobbing, and more tears poured down his pale face. He grabbed the front of his jacket and clenched

tight. If he had normal skin coloration, his knuckles would have gone white.

“I killed her because I couldn’t stop myself,” he whined out between sobs.

He fell forward and placed his head on his forearms coming to rest on the pavement as he started screaming in emotional torment. David merely stood and watched the child come to terms with what had happened. The apathy had clearly worn off, and the boy was now feeling the full force of what he had done. He laid on the pavement, sobbing unnecessarily and crying precious blood, the blood he had just taken from a girl. He wept her blood, the thing he had taken from her, the thing which had killed her.



New Orleans, Louisiana
May 26th, 2009

Jack woke up the next day, feeling slightly hungry. He now knew better than to try and satiate it with food. He felt thirsty, but he knew better than to try and slake it with water. He knew that the hunger and the thirst, once separate needs, were now one and the same, and that whenever he tried to satisfy it, he might end up killing someone. He laid on the couch, not wanting to get up and move. He just wanted to go to sleep again, and to never wake up. But he didn’t want to die. Not now that he had survived death itself. If you could even call it survival. He couldn’t hear David anywhere in the apartment as he used his recently discovered strengthened hearing to try and locate the vampire. His mentor. Jack was still having trouble with getting used to the idea that vampires were real. After all, if vampires were real... what else might

be?

He did hear footsteps outside the apartment, and the door soon opened.

"I've made sure that your apartment is being cleared out, and your things brought to the apartment right above mine," he heard David say. "I own this apartment building, and all the apartments on this floor and above are sunproofed for Kindred. The apartment above mine is yours as long as you stay in New Orleans."

"Right," Jack muttered. "Thanks."

"You're my childe. Don't mention it."

"Do you often take in sireless vampires?" Jack wondered aloud.

"No, but then again, I'm not usually hunting Kindred who just recently sired. It does happen occasionally, though."

"Alright."

Silence permeated the room for a few minutes as David messed around with a few things. He then came up to the couch, allowing Jack to see that he was carrying a bag.

"Let's go," he said and threw his head towards the door. "We're going somewhere."

Jack sighed and got up.



The pair of vampires walked through the streets of the French Quarter until they reached the other end, where David headed towards a large warehouse. He took Jack's hand, but Jack knew better than pulling away. David likely

wouldn't do it unless something required it. As they reached the steps leading up to the door, Jack felt a warmth rush over him, and he knew something was going on. David then let go and opened the front door. He ushered the childe inside, who did as wordlessly ordered without question. As he stepped inside, he looked to his left and saw a door with a plaque on it.

David Kane

Red Alastor

He then looked to his right, and paused at what he saw: a grey-skinned... *something*. It stood upright, like a man, but it had a deformed face with a twisted mouth, an eye which looked like a tumor was growing behind it, flaking skin and completely bald. It seemed to be smiling, but Jack wasn't entirely certain.

"Hey," he said casually, having seen enough horror films to not be fazed by it.

The thing seemed a little saddened as it's shoulders slumped and it slowly dragged its feet across the floor, back into a room filled with servers and a few computers. It closed the door behind itself.

"Damn," David muttered behind him. "Seems it's getting old. Oh well."

"What was that?" Jack asked as he looked at David.

"Who," David corrected him, "and it was SayMX, our technology and IT genius."

"That was a dude?"

"He's a Nosferatu. They don't look... normal."

“I can see that,” Jack muttered as he looked at the plaque adorning that door.

Symond Maximillian

Auditor

“What are Red Alastors and Auditors?”

David walked towards a large, near-empty space where a woman was hard at work in a sports bra and running shorts. Her brown hair was tied in a ponytail, and to Jack, she momentarily became the whole world. He was punching and kicking a large tube of concrete standing upright, and while her punches landed solidly, nothing happened to the concrete. He did notice etchings of strange marks all over it, though. However, he couldn't take his eyes off her lithe, yet muscled body. Her bare stomach was lean and toned, with just a trace of a six-pack, and her arms and legs were muscled without it being unsightly. Not a drop of sweat rolled off her pale body, and after a final kick with her bare foot, which honestly sounded like it could splatter his brain all over the walls, she turned and looked at the pair, and Jack swallowed when he saw her smooth and divinely gorgeous face. Her eyes lit up when she looked at them, though he quickly noticed that her eyes were trained at David.

“You should start taking your job more seriously,” she said with a small smile, which made Jack feel as if a rock was dumped in his stomach. She didn't even acknowledge his presence. “You barely come in once a week these nights, David.”

“I know,” David returned. “I'm raising a new childe. Jack, meet Catherine,” David gestured at the ungodly beautiful woman. “Catherine, this is Jack. He was shoveled a few nights

ago by a Fiend.”

“Antitribu like you, then?” she asked and sized Jack up and down, and her intense scrutiny made Jack feel embarrassed to be in her presence. “Don’t seem like much.”

Jack’s heart sank. He had never seen a woman as beautiful as the vampire standing in front of him. Nor had a woman ever made him feel the way she did.

“He might yet surprise,” David said. “Besides, he’s not a recruit. I’m just showing him how things work. A year or three, and he’ll be on his way to make his own unlife.”

The woman, Catherine, hummed lightly and then turned back to the concrete tube and resumed her routine.

“I thought vampires’d be able to easily break that thing,” he said without thinking, and his felt as if icy daggers were driven into his chest and gut when Catherine shot him a glare. She then looked at David, who nodded.

He walked over to a case where he opened it and reached his hand in, and when he stood back up, he threw something at Catherine. She easily caught the object with her left hand as she lifted the wide and thick concrete disc that lay a little distance away with one hand, making Jack’s eyes widen in surprise. She then revealed the object in her hand as she pilled a ring away from it with her thumb; a hand grenade.

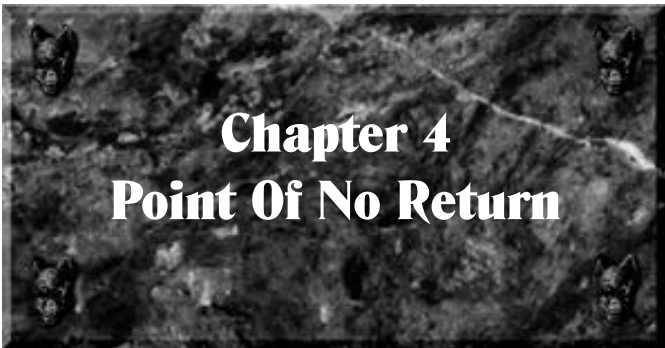
“Nade,” she lightly called out with a bored tone and dumped the grenade into the tube, before placing the lid on top.

She covered her ear right next to the concrete with her now free hand, and David turned away and covered an ear as well. Suddenly, an explosion, louder than anything Jack had ever

heard, resounded from within the concrete, shaking the floor, and making the fledgling vampire's ears ring as he stumbled to the ground, the ringing noise overwhelming. His head hurt from the loud ringing, and everything around him sounded muffled, as if he was underwater. David stood talking at him, but he couldn't hear anything at all.

"Whaaaa?" he asked, trying to regain his bearing as he couldn't stop swaying.

He did notice that the concrete tube was completely intact, and the strange etchings all over it glowed very faintly red, before the glow subsided completely. He only became more and more dizzy, however, and soon, he started feeling tired again. He also noticed that David and Catherine were walking away, but he couldn't hear anything they said, and soon, the darkness enveloped him completely.



Chapter 4

Point Of No Return

Garden District, New Orleans
May 27th, 2009

Jack calmly walked down the streets of the district of the city he was born and raised in, with a very specific destination in mind. He took the time he had on the walk to think about everything that had happened in only the past few da- nights, alone. He no longer felt refreshed by the air around him, he didn't feel uncomfortable in the heat, he didn't... there were so many things that had changed, and yet, it could all be summarized in one word; vampire.

Jack looked around. The night seemed so much brighter, though, and so much more vibrant. So full of *life*. He could see *everything*. He heard *everything*. And he smelt *everything*. It was all so overwhelming, but at the same time, it seemed so *right*, so... *proper* for him to sense everything. A small, saddened smile appeared on his lips as he stopped in front of a familiar house. He looked up at the windows and saw Jolene serving Harry, Eric, and Jack lasagna, and he felt a pang of guilt in his chest. He had taught her how to make that lasagna. After his mom died, it had been up to Jack to learn to cook, and his best dish; lasagna.

He saw Harry smile and kiss his wife on the cheek, making her smile as well. Jack outside looked down at his watch and checked the date.

It was the twins' birthday, and Jack's lasagna was their favorite.

Jack smiled soberly, until his eyes widened as he saw Harry place a picture frame with a photograph of Jack in it on the table. The mood inside seemed to fade a little, and they all closed their eyes and said a prayer or something. But Jack had eaten with them many time; they didn't say grace before they began, being very casual Christians. Jack looked around for the newspaper stand he knew to be close, and when he spotted it, he quickly ran up to it and smashed the glass with his bare fist. He then pulled a paper out and looked at the front page, his anger rising up inside him, the *Beast* or whatever thrashing to get out.

On the cover was a picture of Jack hanging with his chest impaled on a pike sticking out of the ground, and a sign with the words 'Negro Lover' written on it below a swastika. Jack became furious. The past few nights after becoming a vampire, he fell asleep an hour or two before sunrise, giving David plenty of time to fake his death. Jack curled the newspaper into a tight ball and threw it away with a growl. He then looked back inside the house, and the family had begun eating. Now... he could never see them ever again. Not without a lot of trouble. His hands shook in anger at what David had done. He could never enter that house again. Not in good conscience, and not without repercussions.

His lips pulled back in a snarl, revealing his fangs, and he turned back and headed down a few streets, seething.

Jack barged into his apartment, only to find a young couple rocking his bed. They shouted and screamed in shock when the door slammed open, and Jack was stunned when he saw who it was.

“Sarah?” he asked.

In the bed was Sarah, the closest thing Jack would consider to having a steady girlfriend to him. Her darker Latino skin was covered in sweat, her black hair tousled, her brown eyes wild and dazed, and her delicate hands holding Jack’s duvet close to her chest, hiding her modesty. Jack looked at the guy who was with her, who was just as shocked as Sarah. It was Michael. His best and oldest friend, and the same age as himself. Sarah, coincidentally, was quite a few years younger, being around twenty-five or twenty-six.

“Jack!” Sarah exclaimed. “I thought... I thought you were dead!”

Jack’s surprise over seeing his best friend shagging his ‘girlfriend’ quickly faded, and the anger David had placed in him flared to dangerous heights.

“And so naturally you start fucking my best friend not two days later,” Jack said icily, and leant against the side of the door.

“Jackie, bro,” Michael said, and it was easy for Jack to see that his friend was so stoned, he wouldn’t be able to tell a snake from a garden hose. “I’so good ta see ya ‘live, man.”

Jack felt the same stoic, cold, emotion-suppressing sensation glide over him again, and soon, he felt nothing but dark, cold, icy contempt.

“You won’t be saying that in a few minutes.”



David walked down a road in the Garden District. He had been wanting to talk with his new childe, but the young Tzimisce had merely brushed past him and left. David was never a tyrant with apprentices, so he let the boy go. Better he be calm and learn than upset and waste time. But the childe hadn’t returned for a while, so David had followed Jack’s scent by way of his incredible sense of smell. It led him straight to the Garden District, and now, he was walking briskly down the road towards the apartment building Jack had lived in. But something he sniffed on the air made him stop. He could smell it, and he would never confuse that scent.

Blood. Human blood. And a lot of it.

He started jogging down the road and made his way into the unlocked building. He took the stairs five steps at a time with ease, and when he finally reached the apartment, the door was slightly ajar, and David slowly pushed it open as he walked in. He didn’t even flinch.

There was blood everywhere, covering the bed, the floor, the walls and even the ceiling. Jack stone-faced sat on his bed beside a heavily mutilated corpse of a woman, and bits and pieces of someone else, likely a man, was strewn and splattered all over the room. One thing David noticed was that Jack’s blood-soaked hands weren’t hands, but vicious-looking claws on long, thin fingers, and his eyes were glowing a bright, dangerous red. Blood was splattered up across his face, and one hand was gently, absent-mindedly caressing the ankle of the eviscerated, defaced and shredded woman lying

on the bed beside him.

"I don't know what happened," Jack said, his voice as cold as the grave and as emotionless as granite. "I couldn't stop myself. I just did it."

"Were you angry?" David asked as he assessed the situation and apartment, taking a glance inside the kitchen and the bathroom.

"Furious," Jack said.

"The Beast got out," David said nonchalantly. "This is what happens when you frenzy. It tries to kill anything and everything that's close enough, and it doesn't know friend from foe."

"She slept with my best friend," Jack said calmly, and looked up at David, his eyes as cold as his voice.

"I see," David said. "Well, come on. We'll go to the roof. Aiden'll bring new clothes, and I'll make sure someone cleans up your apartment."

Jack wordlessly followed David out of the apartment and up some more flights of stairs, until David easily pushed open a locked and chained door leading outside. They stood out on the roof, which had a surprisingly good view of the city towards the French Quarter. David breathed a relieved sigh, making Jack look at him.

"Why do you sigh?" he asked monotonously. "Or breathe, for that matter?"

"It's a habit," David said. "Keeps hunters off your trail if you seem completely human. Breathing, sighing, blinking. Snorting, shifting your weight, wriggling your fingers,

running your hand through your hair... there are so many small things that put us apart from humans, many small things we forget to do that are characteristic of mortals, and good hunters know them. Better Kindred replicate them. You should start trying."

Jack looked at David for a few seconds, then looked back out over the city. Soon, a little mechanically and a little quickly, his shoulders and chest started heaving, though he didn't draw breath.

"Just breathe, Jack," David said. "It doesn't hurt, and that attempt was horrific to look at."

A few moments later, the two Kindred breathed in synchronized rhythms, the younger following the elder's lead.

"That's good," David said. "Not too fast, not too slow. This should be your resting breathing. Pick it up a little when you start running, and then keep it up for three to five minutes after you stop, depending on how far you ran. Do this, you'll be fine."

Jack nodded lightly. The two simply stared towards south-east, towards the French Quarter.

"Why New Orleans?" Jack asked.

David was quiet for a while, and Jack didn't know whether or not his mentor would answer it.

"I don't know," David said with a slight shrug. "It just... felt like the place, I suppose. Then again, it was just before the '20s, and I tell you, New Orleans was fabulous in the '20s, all through to the 60's. It still is, but back then... it was *great*."

Jack nodded, and he silently thanked the elder for his gift.



I would like to extend a special thanks to a very dear friend of mine, Anders Petersen. It was he who originally conceptualized Jack Snow, and brought the young man-turned-Kindred to unlife in our favorite role-playing game, **Vampire: The Masquerade**. I always liked how Anders played as Jack, his very first **Vampire** character, and I felt that the character could do with an official origin story. Not only that, but I also felt that his story could serve as a look into how a Kindred's first nights were.

Thanks for all the great times, my friend! At *and* away from the table!

Jack Snow

Jack was a normal, average-joe New Orleanian. Well, looking away from the fact that he was thirty-four, single, constantly partying like a teenager, and not knowing what to do with life, or what it handed him. Most of his friends moved on, got hitched, had kids, and got steady, decent, honest jobs. But Jack... Jack couldn't let go.

One night, as he goes for a stroll to the French Quarter, he hears gunshots. Thinking there's some sort of gang war going on, he tries to leave, but he runs into a pair of thugs. These thugs, as it turns out, don't want his money. One of them just makes fun of him. But the other... the other entangles Jack in a world he had never thought could be real. A world of darkness, hidden right below the nose of his former kin, the human population. But now, he can no longer call them kin.

Ever since that night, Jack was changed, in ways no human could claim to understand. But one man understands. The man who saved him from the sickos who killed him and turned him into something... not human. David Kane, Jack's last hope of survival, and the guiding mentor Jack could only have hoped would be there. This is a beginning. The beginning, of...

Jack Snow