

Growing Beyond

“Remember,’ my Mama said, ‘You will grow beyond this’.” Telena Petrokovitch stood and slowly walked to the far side of the small chamber. It was as well and comfortably decorated as it was far underground. Very much in both cases. “That was right before she sold an evening of sex with me to the village baker for thirty pieces of copper. Judas got silver but my mother only got copper for selling me out. Still, I understood then and I understand now. Starvation for my brother and sister was a worse fate than me spreading my legs for the fat baker.

“Food and work had been hard to come by that year. The spring planting was not growing well and our village was relying on that to help us overcome a very lean, hard winter. My father had coughed himself to death that winter which made it all the leaner and harder for our family. Pneumonia I now know. After his death, it became obvious that we could not work the fields. My brother was just a boy and not strong enough to stand a plow. Mother tried but her health had suffered that winter as well.

“Mama had hoped to marry me off but there was no one in our region who was much better off than we were. No one willing to marry a peasant girl anyway. So, she sold my body to put food on our table. I was not the first to be forced into that line of work and I certainly was not the last. That was my beginning as a village whore.

“Some of the time it was not so bad. Thankfully, I’ve forgotten most of those encounters. This went on for two years. Our village was not large but it was big enough to have another professional whore. You’ll never guess who she was?” Telena said with a sardonic smile.

“Vanessa,” Selina stated.

“Yes, none other than your own mother,” Telena confirmed as her smile twisted further. “For a while we competed against one another. Later, we came to an understanding and we both raised our rates at the same time. Made a few more coins and worked a little less. Not enough to make up for the derision with which we were regarded, but it helped.” She walked over to the balcony looking out over the underground stadium and stood there for a moment.

With her back still to the other woman, she continued, “One spring day three travelers came to us. Markus, a rather sad looking fellow was handsome with silky, dark hair. Hans, a larger, rougher fellow but not unpleasant to look upon. And then there was Dominic. A powerful man both physically and otherwise. These three men were like nothing we’d ever seen before. They were strong and confident and well to do. They were vampires of course, but I did not know it at the time.

“They hired our services for the evening. Both of us and all three of them. Paid us in silver. It was the most money I’d ever held. The men had rented a room for the night at the inn. Vanessa and I drank wine and had sex while they pretended to drink wine and gave us quite the education. An eye opening experience for us.”

Selina started to say something but did not. Unaware of the aborted interruption, the older woman continued.

“They said they were traders. Had a nice box wagon they traveled in and a couple of serving men who helped them with the day to day chores of traveling from one city to the next. Told us they’d be leaving the next night but wondered if we’d care to go with them. Promised us riches and plenty of food and a better life. Told us to meet them at their camp at sundown if we were interested. There followed one last round of sex which ended for me when I had so many orgasms I passed out.

In hindsight, I suspect that there was some blood loss from being bitten involved with that but I don't know for certain.

"Naturally, we went to their camp the following evening. We had heard that afternoon that something terrible had happened at one of the outlying farms but made no connection between those dead and missing people and the rich merchants who we'd entertained that evening. Neither Vanessa nor myself felt particularly well that day. Too much wine and not enough sleep. And likely my suspected blood loss as well. Still, we made it to their camp just before sundown.

"There were two odd men guarding the camp. Neither spoke to us. Never showed any expression either. Naturally, they were soulless. But we certainly didn't know that and were rather... how do you say... creeped out by them?"

"Yes," Selina whispered. It seemed that Telena's recitation might be stirring up some of her own personal ghosts.

"One of them simply pointed to a log next to the fire and there we sat, keeping a wary eye on the pair of strange men. Then shortly after sundown arrived, Hans, Markus, and Dominic stepped out of their wagon."

"What a wonderful way to start an evening," Dominic announced. "Hans, bring these ladies some wine." And right then and there we had something of a repeat of the night before. The two soulless men watching on occasion but mostly they seemed to be keeping lookout and breaking their camp. And as we lay there, unable to move with the last waves of bliss washing over us, Dominic bit out a chunk from each of our necks.

"As we lay there bleeding out, they filled large bronze goblets with our blood. It was the most frightening thing to happen in my life. And that was how my life eventually came to an end.

Telena turned away from the view to once again face Selina. "I'm not sure what happened next but a battle took place in that camp. When next I woke, my neck hurt horribly and the rest of me felt most peculiar. There was the taste of blood in my mouth and something was laying across my body. Pushing it aside, I found a man had bled all over me. But not any man.

"Arkusinski," Selina stated quietly.

"Yes. Someone had opened him up with a sword or axe. From his chest almost to his crotch. He'd fallen across Vanessa and myself. Bled over us. Into our dead and open mouths and into the wounds on our necks. Except I guess we hadn't quite been dead, otherwise we would not have transformed.

"Pushing his body aside, I was very frightened. Here was a dead man laying next to me... who had just been laying over me. And I remembered him killing me. Remembering, I put my hand up to my neck wound... only to find it missing. My neck still hurt but the wound was closed. Terror washed over me and I feared the whole thing was the devil's work," she said quietly, shaking her head. "Just how very correct this fear was I wouldn't find out until much later.

"Then Vanessa moved. I'm not sure why it seemed so strange that my dead friend should move when I was already standing myself, but her sitting up was simply too much. Naked and covered in blood, I ran through the camp, jumping over dead bodies which lay everywhere. I'd seen death before but nothing like that. There were clawed and bitten bodies everywhere. Probably fifteen or twenty dead including both of the strange men who'd guarded the wagon. Panicked, I ran into the woods. I had not gone very far when suddenly a large wolf stepped out from behind some trees, right in front of me!

"Sliding on some leaves, I fell on my butt right in front of the wolf. Not knowing what else to do, I screamed. And then the wolf turned into Hans. He said, 'Now isn't this just quite the

surprise?’ and I fainted.

“I awoke back in the camp. Markus was vigorously humping Vanessa, who looked like she was going to be sick at any moment. Hans took me waking up as a sign to begin mimicking Markus. Seemed the fight had made the two of them just horny as hell. My objections fell on deaf ears. Wasn’t the first time that had happened and wasn’t to be the last.

“Once they were sated, the two of them explained that Vanessa and I were now vampires. After they explained just what a vampire was, we began slowly understanding. It seemed most unnatural to have the scene of the battle begin smelling so good. Like everyone who makes the transition, I went a little crazy. That’s the only sane way I know of to make the transition from living to undead. Frantic, I ran around trying to suck blood from the corpses. Eventually, I filled myself. Then I threw up and did it again. They had to force Vanessa to drink at first. Filled one of their bronze goblets and poured it down her throat. You know what that first drink is like. Confusion, the wrongness, you can almost feel your old life tearing away. And the pleasure. The exquisite taste.”

With a sigh, Telena walked back over and stood next to where the shorter woman sat. Still not looking directly at her, she said, “We traveled with them for the next twenty years. I admit I rather liked Hans and sad Markus. Markus had lost someone long ago and a part of him had never let go. He was not bad company. Hans was something of a wild man. Big and brawny and determined to get his way but oddly gentle at other times. But Dominic was another story entirely. Vanessa and I quickly grew to hate and fear him. The more we got to know him, the more vile and repulsive he became. Then one night in Rome, we escaped. Each of us stole onto a ship leaving for a different country. There was no tearful goodbye. We both reminded the other too much of things we were not proud of doing. Shared humiliation is still humiliation.

“I never saw her alive again.

“For fifty years I traveled Europe. Saw many wonderful sights and beautiful lands. After a while, I tired of traveling and settled in for a few decades in England. Loved the people but grew to hate the weather. My house burning became just the excuse I needed to go back to traveling which I had learned to miss. During those quiet years in England, I had made some friends, gathered a few enemies as well, and gained a small fortune. Traveling naturally began eating into those funds. With this in mind, I bought some shipping fleets so I’d always have a ship available. Made traveling much less expensive. So you see, I was doing rather well for myself.

And then one fateful night in Spain, I walked into the castle of a local lord, and there they were. Dominic Arkusinski, Hans Glesser, and Markus Weller. And just like that they dragged me away from what I’d built and back into their lives. Except this time I didn’t have Vanessa to share their attentions.

“Thirty years. That’s how long I was with them before your brother killed them. They fed off me to keep me weak and they... hurt me, the three times I tried to escape. I think Markus might have helped me escape but evidently Dominic thought so as well. Markus was never alone with me. And during that time my spirit withered away as I gave up hope. Then one evening, Dominic declared that he could feel where Vanessa was. And we began traveling relentlessly towards her. A month later he figured out it was Paris we were heading towards and he was very excited. He liked Paris.

Selina muttered something rude under her breath which the other woman ignored.

With a sigh, Telena said, “You killed Vanessa just before we arrived in the city.

“Walking past all the unconscious vampires and soulless reminded me so much of that night

Vanessa and I became creatures of the night. And then we found her. I don't know how long I stood there staring at her body. The crossbow bolt sticking out of her back. Tears of blood ran down my cheeks. I couldn't help it, I was so incredibly jealous of her. There she was at peace and I was trapped in an eternal hell.

"You of course know what happened from there. They gathered every vampire and soulless they could find and bound them. It didn't take long for them to learn that you were the one who'd killed Vanessa. They liked your looks. They spoke for a while about you taking Vanessa's place. In the end, they decided that they wanted to take control of the city and towards that goal you would serve better as an example than you would as a whore. And I was so jealous of you as well. Granted they were going to torture you before finally killing you but you were going to die after just a couple of nights.

"Then your brother came to save you. I hope you appreciate how lucky you were to have someone who cared enough to come for you.

"And at the same time he saved you, he saved me. After that, I learned to defend myself. I mastered the sword and from there every other form of weapon I could find. I found other older vampires and learned that some of them were not as twisted as Dominic and his friends. From them I learned what it truly meant to be a vampire and how to use my blood and to unleash the power stored within it. And I never stopped hating myself for being too weak to escape those three dead men or for not doing anything to help you as your brother did. Cowards die far too many times and each death is another slice of the spirit.

"And while I have not forgiven myself and probably never will, I find now that my mother was right: I have grown beyond it."