

## Outside Rabid's Playhouse

"We're in position," Randal reported over the radio headsets.

Via the same means, Samuel asked, "Dmetri? How are you coming along with that bag of tricks Kegger took you?"

"Just about done," I replied with a grin as I adjusted the tension on the last of the trip lines. Had to be careful. The end of the line was attached to the pin on this final grenade. "In fact, I'm coming back up now." Actually, I was hurrying as fast as possible, which wasn't very, away from the rubble-filled corridor, back towards the area I could actually walk in without concern for breaking an ankle or leg.

"And no one's going to escape that way? Right?" he more demanded than asked. Having reached even flooring again, I jogged the last ten yards towards the opening the werewolves used to enter and exit from this very storm drain. Of course, when they came down here, they were going the other direction. Away from the sanitarium with the crazy vampire. And people say werewolves are just dumb animals.

"No one's leaving the sanitarium from this tunnel," I replied, walking the last few steps towards the exit. "White phosphorous grenades hidden so well I certainly couldn't have found them had I not just placed them. No vampire nor werewolf will come through this way. That I guarantee." "Even if they're running super fast?" Randal asked with concern tinging his voice.

"Not even," I replied confidently, climbing up into the moonlight. "The terrain down there won't support it. Trust me. I've done this before."

"Come on," Robert demanded, sounding rather surly. "We've got work to do."

"I've just reached the surface. Kegger and I are heading towards you," I said, gesturing for the waiting Ravnos to precede me which he did.

"Fine. Don't be seen."

Five minutes later we met up with the others behind a group of trees that did a pretty good job of screening us from anyone in the house who might be looking. The others looked excited and ready to go.

Robert whispered to the others, "Dmetri and I will scout the lower windows and entrances. Everyone else work on patience."

Randal quietly declared, "I'm going to move around back and check it out. I'm almost as good as the two of you and it will cut down the time we're outside. And the longer we're out here, the better the chance that we'll be found out."

"I don't like it," Samuel stated.

"Good," Randal said with a feral smile, "It's decided." And with that he began moving quickly and silently around to the back. Control over any Ravnos was always a precarious thing.

Samuel began quietly cursing in some language I wasn't familiar with. I may not have known the words, but I had no doubts from his tone as to just what he meant.

Robert and I exchanged silent shrugs and peeled off towards the house. Before we left the cover of the trees, the two of us were once again obfuscating; in my case, weapon in hand. We hadn't discussed it, but since I had been standing on Robert's right side, I began checking out the first floor windows on that side of the building.

Because of the way the house/sanitarium had been built, the windows were up fairly high.

Still, I had no real difficulty seeing that the place looked abandoned. The rooms I could see were mostly empty. The first one I looked into contained the remains of a couple of wooden chairs and a few beer bottles. The second room didn't even have that. My path carried me around to the burned wing. Fire had long ago darkened the walls and ceilings of the first couple of rooms here. The next room had even more extensive damage as the fire had burned the floor as well, damaging it lightly. After that, the ceilings were gone and I could see sky when I looked up through the openings where the windows used to be. A few steps further and I found I could walk inside through a collapsed portion of the wall. Nothing in this section looked particularly sound.

Still, I was looking for a path to at least let me poke around inside a bit when I heard a scream from the back followed by a gunshot. Cursing under my breath, I began running towards the rear of the house.

Rapidly moving further along the remains of the burned wing, I noticed that the grass was getting progressively taller. As I cleared the wing and arrived around at the back, I found the grass had not been cut in a very long time indeed. It stood extremely high, rising almost to my chest and extremely thick. There was no immediate sign of Randal. Slowly stalking around the periphery, I heard a strange squeal, a thud, and a scream so close together as to almost be one sound. Randal flipped up through the air, head over heels, before crashing back to earth; out of sight in the tall grass. It looked like he'd gained a gash on his leg but his brief appearance had been too short-lived for me to gauge how bad it was.

"Help!" he cried, firing his sten gun at something in the tall grass. The noise allowed me to easily get a fix on his location. Plowing my way into the tall grass, I got to him quickly. And I found what he'd been shooting at. A pig. Not just any pig but a huge one. Back in my human days I'd seen pigs and hogs. This was far and away the largest I'd ever seen. The monster then flipped the Ravnos vampire high up into the air as though he weighed nothing. Causing a brief, light shower of blood, a badly injured Randal rose into the sky before plummeting back down to land with a thud. The beast began dancing on him even while it's glowing red eyes somehow focused on me. Despite my being obfuscated. Digging it's back hooves in, the monster pig leapt towards me as I overcame my surprise and blazed away at it.

Realizing that the beast was neither slowing down nor properly dying, at the last moment I threw myself to the side. This earned me a gash in the arm from a tusk and a temporary reprieve from being trampled over.

"Not good enough vampire," it growled before charging me again. Blazing away at it again, it occurred to me that between the size, the almost glowing red eyes, and it talking - this wasn't exactly a normal pig. And it seemed to be bullet resistant on top of that. Sadly, I figured this last part out only moments before the monster intercepted my dive for cover and flung me high up into the air. The tusk wounds to my side were both deep and painful.

During my brief but unpleasant return to earth, time seemed to slow down for me. I had plenty of time to realize that my side hurt abominably and to appreciate the way my expatriated blood droplets were falling with me. Looking down, I also had time to figure out that the damned devil pig was almost dancing in anticipation of my upcoming crash landing. Seeing that the cavalry was on it's way would have been much more heartening had they been much closer.

Twisting to land on my feet, time returned to normal speed. I hit dirt and sprang to the side, the pig lunged at me, painfully catching my leg with a tusk that seemed to have grown several inches in the last few moments. Twisting, I dove again as the beast continued after me. I fired what was intended to be a three round burst between it's eyes but the hammer fired only

once and then the slide locked open. Out of bullets. I hadn't done something so dumb as allowing my weapon to run dry in combat for a long time. This was a really bad time to pick back up on old, foolish habits.

However, the pig had stopped. Shaking its head, it looked at me and growled, "Gonna take more than that to kill a rakasha, corpse puppet." Obfuscating, I began reloading as fast as possible, however, this was made much more difficult by the monster apparently being able to see me. With a huge lunge, it was after me again.

Robert crashing into its side threw it off balance just enough that I was able to dodge away. Using those disturbingly long claws that he seemed so fond of, the big Nosferatu began stabbing and slashing at the beast. And he came to realize what I'd finally figured out: this was one tough devil pig. I finished reloading.

Thrashing about, the pig frantically tried and then finally succeeded in dislodging the Nosferatu from its back. As it stopped and focused its attention on the rolling Robert, I fired a three round burst into the monster's side. I'd managed to place all three rounds close enough together that they drew blood. And more than the tiny amount that it had thus far lost. It lunged back towards me much faster than something that large should have been able to. Samuel's shotgun blast surprised us both. Unfortunately, it didn't seem much slowed by whatever the Ventrue had fired.

"Aim where it's already bleeding!" I yelled just before the monster bit me on the wounded leg and flung me off into the tall grass as though I weighed nothing at all.

Son of a bitch but that hurt!

Not just the bite itself but the ligaments and stuff as well, which objected to my leg being used as a handle with which to fling me about. I landed without grace but thankfully without further injury. Attempting to stand, I realized that I couldn't put weight on the leg. Shifting my concentration to my leg, I focused my blood there than began healing as I limped as quickly as possible back towards the area where our fighting had trampled the grass flat.

Just before I got there, I heard the sound of rapidly moving hooves. Stopping at the edge of the cleared area, I just missed seeing Robert get hit but had a good view of him flying up into the air.

Damn but that demon pig was strong. It turned its attention to Samuel then but that put it on the wrong facing for me to shoot at the spot I'd focused on earlier. However, it did look like the Ventrue had tagged it a good one on this side as well. As Robert returned to earth, landing on all fours, I aimed at the small, leaking hole in the beast's side and fired a three round burst at it.

Squealing in pain, it spun towards me. Yes!

Kegger jumped into the clearing and hit the creature with the stupid metal stick he seemed to love so much. The monster ignored this completely and ran at me. Having slowed it down before with a hit between the eyes, I tried again and succeeded with hitting it with all three rounds from a burst. It lurched a bit and stopped its charge. While it wasn't bleeding from the head wounds, it was obviously stunned.

"Robert!" Samuel called, "Right side. Dmetri, left!"

As the beast shook its head, Samuel and I arrived at the same time and began firing at close range into the bloody hole located there. Robert seemed to be stabbing the other side repeatedly with his claws. Whipping its head and body around, the thing hit the big Nosferatu and knocked him sailing into back into the tall grass. Samuel and I blazed some more.

Flipping its body around like a bull in a rodeo, the thing knocked me down and actually caught Samuel with a hoof, sending him flying. This left me the only person in close proximity

to it and the angry red eyes focused on me.

Before it could charge, Kegger ran up to the beast. Sticking the barrel of Randal's sten gun into the hole in the beast's side, he opened up with it, getting off several shots before the monster whipped its body around sending the young-looking Ravnos flying.

Rolling up from where I'd landed, I aimed and squeezed off another three round burst into what was becoming a large, deep wound in the beast's side. Rather than whip around, this time it stumbled and then lunged. Springing with mostly my uninjured leg, I was able to just get out of the way. From across the open area Samuel shot twice. From the squeal of pain, I knew at least one of those had hit one of the holes we'd bored into the monster. Robert rolled up on its other side and slammed his claws into the bloody hole there. Shifting its weight, the pig-looking beast, moved away slightly and then threw itself into the air, landing on the big Nosferatu and then rolling over him. As it stood up again, I reached it on one side and Samuel on the other. Switching to full auto, I stuck the front four inches of the hammer into the wound and blazed away as Samuel racked shell after shell into it from his side. A moment later, Kegger shoved the sten gun into its mouth and opened up as well.

About the time we emptied our weapons, we realized that we'd finally killed the thing.

"Aagh!" Robert groaned as he staggered back to us. "It's blood tastes disgusting!"

"Can you cut the creature's head off?" Samuel asked, wiping blood off his face with a handkerchief.

"It'll take some time, but yeah, I can do it," he replied, setting to with his long claws.

The rest of us reloaded, drank blood from the supplied we'd brought, and recovered. Randal woke up when we poured a pint of blood down his throat. Though he looked disapprovingly at the mess that had been made of his sten gun, he didn't say a word. Perhaps because he noticed that we'd all been made a mess of as well.

Once Robert finally separated the head from the rest of the beast, he spent some time resting as well.

"Do you think they know we're here?" Kegger asked with a laugh.

Grinning despite myself, I told the clearing at large, "I do rather suspect so. Unless everyone inside is deaf."

With a worried frown, Samuel turned to look back at the house. "I hope Rabid didn't take the opportunity to run away."

"Somehow, I don't think so," I replied with a thoughtful frown of my own. "It's no coincidence that this... rakasha or whatever it really was... was here. No, this was an outer defense. And knowing him, I'm sure he's got lots more tricks in store for us. I wouldn't be surprised if we weren't on camera now." The others looked a bit spooked by this and spent the next several moments looking around, searching for hidden cameras.

Pulling out one of my now empty flasks of blood, I went to the corpse and filled it with what passed for the creature's blood.

"What are you going to do with that?" Kegger asked with a frown of distaste.

"I have no idea," I lied. "But it might come in handy."

"I'm just about healed now," Randal said, working his leg now with only a small grimace. Robert stood as well, twisting his torso about as though working out a last few pig-induced kinks.

"Come on," I told them, standing up and turning towards the Sanitarium, "We've wasted enough time. We're going in."