



Sudden Clarity

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Supernatural

Prologue

When I was in elementary school, I was completely obsessed with ancient myths and fairy tales. Specifically the legends set in downtown Detroit where my grandmother and I both grew up.

The roots of my obsession could actually be traced back to my grandmother. I practically lived with her during my childhood, and her favorite pastime included reciting every legend she could recall from her memory. The best part of my days were the times before bed when she would come to my room and ask me: “So, Tommy, what type of lore do you want to hear tonight?”

She told me old Egyptian mummy tales, and tales of genies in the Arabian Peninsula. She told me stories of werewolves in England and the vampires of Romania. She told me about faeries, apparitions, angels and demons, and mermaids even.

But my favorite stories weren't the ones in far away lands like England and Romania. My favorites were the ones set in my country. In my city. In my town.

And those stories included my favorite mythical creature. The ones that could outrun any Olympic athlete. The ones with skin like ice and strength overpowering any bodybuilder. The ones with teeth as sharp as a knife and the bite of a snake.

That's right.

Vampires.

I idolized all of the tales my grandmother would tell me about vampires. She told me downtown Detroit once had such a high population of homeless that the vampires flocked there to feed on them. A police recording revealed that they had discovered an abandoned home filled with the drained corpses of Detroit natives.

I thought that was awesome.

Well, not the mass murder part, but to be able to possess that much raw power over a person was a mesmerizing thought.

Every night after grandma went to bed, I would do independent studies on vampires. I used encyclopedias and fiction novels based on their different legends depending on the culture that it stemmed from. I learned what environments vampires liked, where they would most likely hide with their covens, and what time of day that they usually like to hunt.

I would travel to different abandoned hotels and study ruined buildings after school to see if vampires would potentially live in those places. I was only seven, so I always brought vampire protection with me- a cross necklace, garlic, and some sort of stake- just in case one was lurking in the shadows.

You never know. They are as silent as mice.

By the time I was a teenager, I was sketching out my ideas about vampire anatomy and physique. I was forming theories about their behavior and mannerisms along with writing numerous essays about their life.

Vampire lore was woven into every piece of writing I wrote, even for papers that I needed for school.

When writing for my own pleasure, I would cast myself as a character in the story. I would be the innocent

bystander, the witness, the victim, or even the treacherous vampire itself.

The last one was my favorite perspective. I would have complete control over my surroundings and the situations.

I would cast my enemies as the bystanders. Or the witness. Most likely the victim.

I could get payback on those jerks without their knowledge. I would get revenge for every time they called me a freak, a loner, or a cult member. And the best part was it could be in any way I wanted.

Soon I would start creating mind complexes in my head. I would use my imagination and knowledge to build another hidden 'dimension' where I could escape to whenever the real world was too overwhelming. Or too boring.

I was always a vampire.

I would be the evil one trying to hide behind societies curtain as I traveled the world without ever leaving not have to leave Detroit. It was all inside my head.

However, by my late teens, -after all of the study, the writing, the dreaming- I no longer believed that it was all a facade, that it was only in my head.

Oh, no.

By my late teens, the legends had become very real to me.

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11 Years Later

Comet gas station, Downtown Detroit

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Zzzz.

Zzzzzzzz.

Zz.

I have listened to the constant, random buzzing of the convenience store lights every weekday for the past two months.

It's annoying every time.

"Won't those god-forsaken lights just shut up once in their entire lame existence!" My co-worker, Joel, cries as he jams a stack of magazines into their rack on the wall. "Nowadays, their only point is to blind every person that so much as glances at them, even from a mile away. I thought the blue coloration was to '...attract creative and interesting customers from around the city', not to scare them away!"

I only shrug, for nothing I say can comfort him. When Joel goes off on a rant, there is no stopping him. He could knock down a wall with all of his pent-up anger and stress. He is a single forty-five year old balding man that sports a beanie and works two mediocre full-time jobs due to his detrimental abundance of student-loan debts.

"This place is just wickedly outdated, which doesn't mix well with new fancy lighting that holds as much power as Thor the god himself," I joke. I try to not let things bother me too much, but those electric blue lights are really testing my patience.

Joel snorts. "You got that right, son. This sad excuse for a trendy gas station is enough to make any grown man cry."

He is definitely not wrong. The outside of the station was completely redone to appear around thirty years younger than it actually was. The owner wanted a "bright and blue glowing theme that will attract the customers like flies." To bad it did the exact opposite. We only have the select few regulars that stroll through here every morning for a coffee and a protein bar. Other than that, the store practically survives off of the money from the multitudes of tourists passing through to find someplace far more "family fun" than lonely 'ole downtown Detroit.

On the other hand, the inside of the store is example A of 'controlled chaos.' Everything is in the right section, but not in any formal organization system. Each product was thrown haphazardly into its section without

much thought or care. Since this station is pretty much ignored, we have an over abundance of just about every product here. Except protein bars. Those sell like crazy.

Not to mention that behind the cashier counter where I usually work there is an entire wall just for cigarettes and gum. That is the entire wall. Cigarettes and gum.

Two very addictive potential purchases grouped together on their own wall of exile. Perfect.

“I just might,” I joke, bringing myself back to the conversation while pretending to choke up. I snatch a tissue from the plastic package next to me in order to properly ‘wipe my eyes.’ I have to get them acting just right.

“You’re a funny kid, Jack. Stay that way,” he sighs for a long time. “Being an adult sucks. When you get to be my age everyone is too busy and ‘mature’ to crack jokes. It’s a depressing time and I wish that I had never gotten this far.”

That last comment kind of shook me up, but I brushed it away. It doesn’t matter anyway since he’s still alive and well. His blood’s still pumping and giving him the strength to trudge through the rest of his life.

I steal a glance at the clock. It’s nearly eleven-thirty on a Friday night and we’re both getting delirious. I’m itching to get out of this place.

After a long moment of sad silence, Joel suddenly claps his hands together and pushes away the rest of his magazine stacks.

“Do you mind locking up tonight, kid? I’ve gotta get home and feed Monsieur Tortue,” Joel asks me. Monsieur Tortue is his pet box turtle that he’s had since college. Apparently his former girlfriend owned over thirty different kinds of turtles, so she gave him one as a gift for their anniversary. She always gave him something turtle-themed.

Joel probably dodged a bullet with that one.

“No problem, dude. Just throw me the keys and I’ll take care of it.”

Honestly, I would much rather get far away from here and read, but I’ll let it slide this time. Joel is sorting through enough junk in his life already. I really do not want to add to his stress by forcing him to stay and lock

up just because I want to go home and read fiction novels. That just seems a tad bit selfish, don't you think?

Joel quickly gathers all of his miscellaneous junk together and stuffs it into his satchel type accessory. I noticed that he carried hand-sanitizer in a rubber turtle-shaped holder. Might as well keep what you didn't need to pay for, I suppose.

He rummages around the bottom of his bag for a second and finally pulls out the keys. They had bright red and orange flames painted on the sides. Might as well make your keys interesting.

Joel chucks them too high but luckily I have quick enough reflexes to snatch them before they knock down a pyramid of Tic-tac packages behind me. I spent a lot of time building that thing yesterday.

"Nice catch," Joel comments, already half-way out the back door.

"Thanks. I played baseball in high sch-," I start but the employee entrance door slams shut. Joel left.

Rude.

I sigh and fall backwards into my rotating office chair. I have fifteen minutes until official closing time and those minutes couldn't pass quickly enough.

Clarity

Thirteen Minutes Later

Ding-a-ling!

I jolt awake suddenly from hearing the main entrance's theme song sound in the background. My innate reflexes take over as I try to compose myself .

"Welcome to Comet gas station, how can I help you?" I ask robotically, trying to adjust my eyes to the sudden brightness.

No answer.

Not even the usual "No thanks, just looking around" human spiel.

Because of this I assume that it's some variation of a teenager. I can only imagine.

Thinking of this possibility, I roll my eyes and glance up from my stationary bagging position to look at the late-night customer.

A girl's face is positioned directly in front of mine and from this I jolt again from surprise. Her platinum blonde hair drapes over her shoulders elegantly as she leans over the counter to stare into my eyes.

Just a little creepy.

I notice she is chewing green spearmint gum- that's my favorite flavor- but she's also wearing a striking black colored dress to compliment her misty dark eyes.

She is silent.

We continue to examine each other for quite some time and the only sound is the snap of her gum. She hasn't shifted her gaze from my eyes, and quite frankly it's making me uncomfortable. Is there a red mark on my face from sleeping? Cow-lick in my hair? What is it!

All is quiet.

I finally decide to clear my throat to cut the silence in half. "So, um, do you need any help miss?"

No answer.

Smooth, dude. Smooth.

“Miss?” I ask in a casual tone, but am trying my hardest to bury the anxiety building up in my chest. I’ve encountered lots of strange people in the customer service business, but never anyone like this.

The mystery girl has strategically fixed her elbow onto the counter to comfortably lean her head onto her palm. So dramatic, yet totally attractive. Her porcelain skin and grey eyes are transfixing, and yet there is something off. Her sunken eye sockets and hollow cheeks were giving me an uneasy feeling.

Another snap of the gum.

Okay, now I am just annoyed. I try to be nice and my reward is uncomfortable silence.

I glance at the Mickey Mouse clock on the counter. It reads 12:02. The store could have been all locked up by now and I could be sleeping.

I roll my eyes to convey my feelings towards her actions as clearly as possible. “If you’re just going to stand there and not buy anything, I’m just gonna go ahead and lock things up. If you need any more gum or something you better take a chance and get it now,” I say while gesturing to the enormous selection of gum behind her.

“I know it must be very hard for you, but all it takes is a little courage, and you can snatch up and pay for up all the gum you’d ever want at 12 pm. I have plenty of recommendations. You just might have to form a few words with your mouth in order to get them,” I say with snark that I didn’t know I had. I guess it comes with working late shifts every night and having to deal with difficult customers.

She shifts her body slightly around to glance over the collection of gum, and I almost let out a sigh of relief. When she finally leaves that means I can leave.

She situates her hand on her hip and grazes her fingers across multiple packages of Eclipse spearmint. Personally, I prefer the brand 5 gum. The long-lasting flavor is to die for.

Fine. That might be a little much, but it’s definitely on a higher level than Eclipse.

She abandons the Eclipse and turns to the 5 gum packages. It's like she read my mind.

Weird.

Mystery girl now has a package of wintermint in one hand and a package of spearmint in the other. She's apparently weighing the pros and cons of each flavor.

The clock reads 12:06.

I drum my fingers against the counter out of impatience.

The girl snaps her head around so fast that I yelp and jump back in surprise, tripping over my office chair which causes me to slam the back of my head against thick metal cigarette shelving.

I recover quickly and clutch the back of my head. In my peripheral vision I see mystery girl slam both of the gum packages against the counter. The sound was so loud that it resonated throughout the store.

I pluck up the courage to make eye contact, and what I see almost causes me to scream again.

Her eyes are blood red.

I gasp instead. Then I try to hold my breath out of fear. I don't really have any breath right now because I'm not exactly breathing but that's not the point. Mystery girl only provides me with a close-lipped smile.

"Name's Clarity," she says in a hushed tone and I pick up on her thick French accent. She then decides to climb up onto the counter itself and spit her gum onto the floor at my feet. "Thought you should know, Jacksie, since this could quite possibly be the last night you'll ever feel your heart beat for a woman."

Okay, this was way past a little creepy. How in the world did she come up with a pet name for me when I haven't mentioned my name once during our 'exchange.'

Then I realize and look down at the left side of my chest.

My name tag, of course. HELLO, MY NAME IS JACKSON was printed in large bold letters across the cheap piece of plastic. I am such an idiot.

But what was with that offhand “last night you’ll ever feel your heart beat for a woman” comment anyway?

Who is she to threaten me?

“Th-that’s ridiculous,” I laugh nervously, trying to comfort myself with false hope.

Clarity cocks her head to one side and gracefully slips off of the counter to where I was first standing. “What do you mean, Jacksie? Clarity seems like a perfectly elegant fake name to me!” she cackles- actually cackles- as she misinterprets or just plain ignores the actual meaning of my comment. I was actually referring to the ‘heart’ comment, but I thought it best not to point that out to her.

But that doesn’t mean I’ll just let it slide, so I scowl dramatically. “What do you want, Clarity?”

It’s her turn to roll her eyes.

“That’s the third time you’ve asked me that, Jacksie,” Clarity states while I take a calculated step backward.

Once again my head becomes acquainted with the cigarette shelves. “But, honestly, if you knew exactly what I wanted, I would never get your help voluntarily.”

Well. Alright then. Now I’m properly scared.

Clarity smiles with her teeth this time.

I gulp.

Her four incisors are actually perfectly sharpened fangs that I hadn’t noticed before this moment.

“Oh, crap,” I whisper and leap to the right to get out from behind the counter, but Clarity was already in front of me again.

“I knew you were the one chosen by the Vhémptaires,” she says in a triumphant yet menacing tone, as if she had met me before. “The tune that flowed from your fingers is sacred to my coven.”

My heart seems to skip a beat.

Coven.

She’s a part of a coven.

That’s fantastic.

“Your coven, huh?” I feign a voice crack. I’m actually elated.

“Yes, silly,” she strokes the sides of my neck and arms. “I had hoped to taste some of this delicious blood for months. Your scent is so- what’s the word- subtle. I could barely pick it up. It intrigued me; therefore I’ve watched you. And now I finally can have it- all to myself.”

She stands on her toes to reach for my neck, but I kick out her legs from under her. She hisses from the floor as I scramble over the counter and to the back door.

I grab the handle and push. It doesn’t budge. How did it get locked?

I yell in frustration.

Two strong hands firmly grasp my arms and spin me around. My back is now pinned against the door.

I am pinned against a door by a gorgeous vampire at midnight on a Friday night at the back of a crappy gas station in downtown Detroit.

Well, I never thought I’d be in this situation. That’s for sure.

“You can’t escape me, worker boy. I’m the head of the local coven, and you have been specifically chosen by the council for your superior blood status over the other thousands of puny human souls for experimentation. You should be grateful that I’m putting saving you from that hell and claiming you as my own.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about!” I scream as she squeezes my arms against my sides with more force.

“That sacred tune was Nirvana! How the fluff does that make me special to your evil vampire cult?”

Clarity huffs. “My coven wasn’t formed that long ago, and we want nothing to do with the Vhémptaires. But you can be a part of it, you know. I’ve been watching you for months. You have extraordinary patience, memory, rhythm, and noticeable strength. That makes you the most eligible for a spot in the Vhémptaires ranks, but I got to you first.”

I raise my eyebrows.

Clarity releases her grip on my arms slightly as she continues talking. “With just a little blood you could become even stronger, faster, and more cunning than any other vampire in the country. Even over me. Maybe you could start your own coven someday.”

I cough awkwardly into her face. She doesn’t look impressed.

“As appealing as that sounds, I don’t believe that crap for a second,” I lie. “This sounds like the usual superstitious garbage. Or is this a late April Fool’s joke? Please leave now or I’m going to call the cops on you and your mentally challenged friends,” I whisper, trying to keep my voice even and convincing.

Clarity snarls, “Accept my offer or be killed. I won’t let Jasper’s pretentious coven get you instead of me. I need humans like you to boost my coven to an elite status- past Jasper’s.”

We stand close together, staring. Her red eyes gazing up at me, seeping with obvious desire.

I start to laugh.

She narrows her eyes suspiciously.

I laugh louder. “You are so stupid for revealing your true form, Clarity- or should I say- Larissa.”

Her narrowed eyes widen in shock.

“How....? Who...?” she whispers from confusion then completely releases my arms and takes a step back.

I snicker. “I know perfectly well that you’ve been watching me, Larissa. Your glamour was weak. Tan skin, brown hair, and an athletic aura? Way too easy. I considered you a regular here at the shop, strolling in every other afternoon for protein bars and large quantities of gum.”

Larissa is now backing away very quickly, realizing her mistakes and that she’s now utterly screwed.

“By the way, love, good stab at getting a stupid human to fall for your tricks. You almost had me falling for them.”

Larissa is shaking her head slowly while continuing to back away. “What is the meaning of this? How could you ever see past my glamour?”

I smile, revealing my newly developed fangs and releasing my own glamour. Larissa gasps, covering her mouth from disbelief at what she is seeing.

“Thomas.”

I chuckle and kick Larissa into the gum shelving. I hear a crack and there is a deep cleft in her skull on the right side. She yells out from pain and frustration. Her failure is probably killing her.

That’s what happens when you haphazardly throw together a mission to recruit a human. She didn’t do her research.

What a shame that it came to back to bite her in the end.

All of her stalking. All of her observing. All of her conniving and plotting and sneaking around resulted in nothing gained and everything lost. Nothing for her. Nothing for her coven. Nothing for her soul, but a lot for her reputation.

Larissa whimpers where she lays, clutching her head as she waits for it to heal, which won't take long. I leisurely take one step back, turning my shoulders away. Larissa sees this as an opportunity to attack, but I anticipated that. She launches herself at my neck, trying to tear away some of the skin and gain the advantage.

I'll admit, she got too close for comfort. Her fangs graze just above my shoulder blade as I grab her wrist and vault her over my shoulder into the wall-rack of magazines.

Unfortunately, she appeared to have taken only minimal damage. She snaps her hand out and grabs my wrist, twisting it around to the back of my body.

I sneer and stomp on her foot with all of the force that I could muster.

CRACK.

"Sacré bleu!" she exclaims, her French slipping out.

I know that all of the bones in her foot have shattered. Larissa releases her grip on my wrist and falls to her knees, her mouth open in a silent scream.

I tsk several times as I lean down and grab her hair by the roots. "You should have done your research, lovely Larissa. If you had, you would not be in this oh so terrible situation at the moment, hm?"

Her eyelids part slightly into a red hot glare and she pulls back her lips into a ferocious snarl. I chuckle, ripping out a chunk of hair. "Always so determined, but never strong enough. It's a shame that Detroit will lose such a tenacious and courageous leader this night, but this cannot be avoided. When one makes a mistake, they must pay."

Larissa whimpers again and I can tell that if she had the ability to cry, she would be right now.

How sad.

“It’s the cruel back-and-forth game of “killed or be killed” in the world of the undead- and you are about to learn that lesson too late, sweetheart. If only someone had informed you earlier,” I grin and grasp the sides of her head with my hands, forcing her to now meet my gaze.

How ironic.

“Just get it over with, l’andouille,” she snaps impatiently.

L’andouille? Did she just call me a lazy sausage?

Yes. She’s definitely deserving of what’s coming to her.

Her wounds are healing rapidly, so I don’t take my time ripping a shard of wood from the obliterated magazine rack.

I kneel over her small form. “Jasper sends his regards.”

Larissa screams, and her courage from before slips away at the thought of death being moments away. “No, wait, please! Have mercy.... I’ll join the Vhémptaires with you and Jasper. Please. Spare me,” she chokes.

“Jasper gives no second chances.”

I pounce, aiming the shard at her heart.

End

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