

A Torn Mind Collection

EYES OF FRIGHT

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EYES OF FRIGHT

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INEBRIATE ME

“Jonathon, you will keep yourself occupied, I presume?”

“Yes, Mother. I have my writing and sketches, and well, there may be others my age there. Isn’t that right, Father?”

Eyes of scorn met his own. His father gritted his teeth as he pushed the car to wrap around the upward winding roads.

“Listen, boy, I have business with the Flaglers’ estate. This meeting trumps any significance you may think has ever crossed your ungrateful, undeserving mind.”

“I’m aware, Father.”

“Don’t cause any trouble and stay out of sight for Christ’s sake.”

“I shall,” Jonathon said with a pursed smile.

The car reached the plateau atop the mountain. A behemoth mansion stood in the distance. The tires slowed atop white sparkling rocks. They opened their doors in slow motion,

taking in the magnificent site. Large marble columns took the beat of the sun and held a golden glow.

Jonathon's father grasped the knocker on the door.

"Hello," an attendant said, welcoming them in. He directed Jonathon's parents towards the main hall and led Jonathon down the west wing. He raised his eyebrows, pointing towards the dance room.

"Lady Marsela will accompany you. She is of the Genith family."

Jonathon shrugged and leisurely strolled into a large spacious room with a glassed-in patio dressed with roses and geraniums. Marsela slowly circled the patio with her fingers barely touching the glass surface. She looked elegant in a tight white dress as she admired the flowers in their prime.

The worker excused himself and shut large double doors behind him. Marsela didn't look up from the flowers.

An invisible force sent Jonathon peddling backwards until the wall caught his back. He noticed her large attractive eyes and slightly larger than average nose. It fit her face and removed any assumptions of her being perfectly privileged. He found his right hand gravitating towards his inner breast pocket. The tips of his fingers brushed against the lid of a flask with his family's initials. The thought of the poison on his tongue wrapped through his brain, tempting him. It offered a new perspective – a new lighting to the scene – some courage for however he would approach the Genith's prize.

It can wait, he told himself, sliding his hands into multiple pockets, brushing against pills, bags, and pieces. He straightened his collar and walked to the enclosed room, watching her eyes for a signal. He gestured to the entrance and she gave a nod of approval. He stepped inside with her. Together they sat. Her delicate mouth moved.

“Hello,” she said.

“Hello, hello,” Jonathon responded warmly.

Stillness captured them, but his laughter ended the moment abruptly. He caught himself noticing her worry.

“Sorry, it’s rather fanciful to witness the extremities of life. Why, just earlier I was getting chewed apart by ol’ dad and now I’m in the presence of, and I kid you not, the most stunning girl I’ve ever seen.”

She darted her eyes away.

“You’re not bad yourself.”

“Oh, but I’m wickedly bad as you’ll come to see, and temptations may come your way that appear like succulent, luscious fruit, yet grab on to you like the vice of death.”

“Surely not. I’m a strong girl.”

“Indeed. Marsela, I’m Jonathon. Please don’t call me Jon.” A slight frown appeared on his face. She was stung by the reservation. “I prefer Mars to those who I’d know fondly,” she said sternly but friendly.

“Mars, you shall be,” he said.

They admired the flowers and plants. He found beauty wavering in front of him and beside him, but an additional drive tapped through his psyche like a chisel and hammer.

“Say, Mars, are you fond of being inebriated? Like a joyous, gangly flower. Like those, before your eyes.”

Her words were surely internal, he noted as her mouth twisted in thought. Her cheeks blew outward as if harboring a canary. A line appeared on the bridge of her nose as her eyebrows crinkled. Thoughts and decision analyzing were swallowing her up whole. Her hands clasped together on their own, picking at the lovely blue midnight on her nails. He smiled slyly, perhaps even revealing a glimpse of carnage as he laid a hand atop hers and watched as her face melted away.

“Well, I don’t want to look foolish or —”

“And you won’t,” he assured.

He had already scanned the visual and made sure no auditory clues were around. Muscle memory and knowledge of his pockets contents let his hands fly this-and-that way, dismantling a piece, carefully breaking apart flower heads, and pushing the final product, stem-first slowly, but firmly to her lips. He struck the flint and she inhaled not oxygen, but nature’s gift that propelled her mind beyond any fixed, predetermined boundaries and crashing through the roof, past the clouds, far into the blackness of space. He took the stem to his lips and joined

her in the Milky Way. Their eyes glossed over in love and adventure. Time displaced itself, but Jonathon was a formidable time traveler.

Her reactions slowed as his quickened. 'What have I done,' crossed Jonathon's mind as he watched the last of the smoke dissipate from the patio.

"Say, girlie girl. What say we explore this juggernaut of a house?"

"OK," she said with doughy eyes.

VBORN

Jonathon led Marsela in a burst of madness. They crisscrossed through shelves of eighteenth-century philosophy in the library. Attendants dutifully dusted the shelves and categorized books. He inched his way through the mansion, stealing one room after the next. He led them into a bathroom and locked the door as she entered. A small window showed the night's sky beginning to crack and peel open as thunder drummed its way closer. A strike of lightning made Marsela clutch his hand. He knew he had her. He raised a strand of her hair to the light and slowly raked his fingers through it, enjoying it thoroughly. Jonathon climbed into the bathtub. He reached by his collar and pulled out a sheet of two stamps.

“Mars,” he called. She bent down to reach his eye level. He was taking care and using precise hand manipulation with his product.

“Close your eyes,” he said, and she did. ‘Thank God,’ he thought. Her mesmerizing eyes had released him from her sensual hold. He could finally think straight, but began to miss her. He studied her and tried hard to remember her face: the angle of her forehead, the birthmark above the corner of her right brow. He admitted to himself that she appealed to him. He peeled off a stamp, stuck it to his tongue, and kissed her. Rain pelted the window in horizontal viciousness.

He snatched her up and ran with his head ducked down, passing through hallways. They descended many flights of stairs. Wallpaper and fine candles no longer dressed the walls. Cobwebs and green moss breathed from cold concrete. The temperature dropped, but Jonathon could see steel furnaces roaring with fire in the distance.

He pulled her farther into the blackness. The light reached its end. The ground slanted downwards. The walls began to narrow to an uncomfortable width that squeezed their bones and bruised their flesh as they pressed on. Jonathon had an itch and his fix was somewhere in the depths of the darkness. His frenzied pace was interrupted as they entered a large cavernous clearing with wet shining walls. A bat flew before them and circled the ceiling in a slow, methodical fashion. It rolled off the ceiling and grew in mass before it touched the floor. Dark fabric and flesh appeared where there was none. The face of a sinister, human-looking creature appeared before them.

Marsela had eyes of fright while Jonathon looked to the man with eyes that beckoned death. He coolly spun the flask's top and swigged the gin hard, and twice for good measure. He looked to Marsela, but thought twice and put the flask away, sparing her virgin senses. The creature wore an elegant silk, black suit. A white handkerchief sat pleasantly folded in his outer breast pocket. Jonathon brushed his hand across the strange man's coat, feeling the fabric, and knowing it to be real. The man seemed amused, if not tauntingly so.

"I am Jonathon and she," he pointed to her, "is Mars."

"I bid you hello. How courageous of you two, you especially," he gestured to the boy.

"May I ask your name?" Jonathon asked.

"Why tell a human, who lives but a short life, knowledge he can't retain?" His words were sharp and venomous.

Respectfully, Jonathon asked, "Might you join us in a smoke?"

"Gladly." He laughed. "In fact," he said, stopping Jonathon, "why not try mine?"

"We'd be honored," he said and looked to Marsela who didn't look like she had her wits about. She was studying the veins in her arm. The creature slid his back down the wall and gestured. They followed, looking to the master. He conjured a purple piece and a glass vial with the head of a lavender rose covered in orange and green hairs and frosted in white and yellow powder. He skillfully packed the piece and handed it to Jonathon.

“Thank you, friend,” the boy said, looking up to the creature, who’s expression told him that it was his pleasure.

Jonathon rolled the flint and watched the flame erupt in spits and flickering. His newfound companion’s face was near translucent, a sure fright to an unsuspecting human. He handed off and succumbed to purple clouds choking his throat, taking his breath until his dying stopped and he bounced loftily on clouds with a scrambled brain and a heavenly indifference to the world he knew. A dream took his entirety and dumped him in a swim. Turning and twisting, he succumbed to the flower and gave over his reins.

He danced, shifting his shoulders and nodding his head. Music crept through the walls in delightful swoons of energy and bales. Marsela had her head in the clouds. She was enjoying the breeze and lifting her head into the oncoming air. She soared in absolute bliss. The skies stroke her cheeks and whispered ecstasy into her ears.

Jonathon awoke with a chill. He latched onto Marsela in fright. She awoke in his arms, scared with her big doughy eyes. Chains clanged and rattled, and shadows raced along the walls. Jonathon felt challenged to find the source of the sound. He perked his ears, and focused on his keen sense of smell. Marsela followed him willingly. Around a few corners and bends, swinging back and forth in their visual was an upside down bag of meat – human. He was salty, sweaty, and gluttonous, seeing by the size of his waist. He hung with anxious eyes, trying to reflect his pain onto Jonathon and Marsela.

“I don’t like the looks of this one,” Jonathon said plainly.

“Me neither,” she responded.

A bat flapped beside the body. It fluttered its wings and pushed off the man as it formed into the shape of a man. The vampire stretched out his strong neck and tore into the human. Hot fluid splashed the walls. The master shared a smile with blood in his teeth and gums.

“How are you two?” he asked.

“We want what you have. We want to devour the night.”

“That so? But why, I knew that’s what you’d ask for,” he said, stretching out two vials of deep crimson to the boy. “Drink and you’ll die, and live undead like me. But I have something you must do. Yes, a troubling errand I’ll ask you to take care of it, otherwise I’ll destroy you.”

“Name it,” he dared the vampire.

“Good. Drink now. I’ll explain after.”

Jonathon shrugged off his familiar jacket, gave Marsela a vial, and held her hand firmly.

“Tonight, we die,” he proclaimed, “and live forever – immortal, unmatched, and forever dominant. To us – the new way.”

She drank as if to please him and not for herself. He noted this, warning himself there could be vast complications.

The light and warmth inside their flesh burned out. Their bodies died, yet their bones seemed to harden. Strength was building. A lightness came to their limbs.

Jonathon forced himself to his feet while Marsela quaked, still petrified. His eyes sat cruel, fixed on the ugly swaying human. He flexed his forearm, spanned out his claws, and swiped across the human's throat. The flesh peeled outwards and drooped obscenely. The human choked, and gurgled blood. He drank from the wound and pointed Marsela to the growing puddle beneath. She leaned forward on all fours and lapped at the blood. She instantly felt more comfortable in her skin.

The master vampire returned as a strong-backed wolf covered in black fur with devious eyes that needed no words. He offered a map in his loosely clenched jaw. Jonathon pulled it from the beast's mouth and gave all effort to studying the map. The only significance was the circled Brunswick Cloisters. 'Why here', he pondered, and folded the map away into his boot, not bothering to show Marsela.

The wolf massacred the bloody, swaying meat. Growls echoed, filling the lair in piercing volume.

Jonathon snatched Marsela's hand and ran up the winding steps, back to the furnace room, and back to the stairs leading to the dining room. His legs carried him faster than ever. Attendants blocked the doorways. The two of them altered their forms to wolves, lowering their perspectives to the ground, trampled the humans, and scrambled out of the main door. Jonathon looked over his shoulder, directing Marsela, and launched himself to the sky in his aerial form as a bat. They ascended, feeling the currents of wind on their wings.

With a wide wingspan, he was airborne. They parted through the clouds, dispersed through water droplets, and splashed themselves in cool, vibrant water. Hours passed, but the

joy did not lessen. As the night died, light appeared through the tops of the clouds, and burned them with liquid fire. He dived below the atmosphere with Marsela mimicking his movements. Spiraling down, he glided over dark fields. The night grew purple with pink not far behind. They raced for cover under the great evergreen trees until they landed before the base of a cliff side.

As wolves, they burrowed through the cakey mud, and shut their eyes, impervious to insects and disease. Jonathon rested his immortal frame, eager to find the cloisters and pay their due.

THREE RIVERS

The night greeted them in dirt and wetness.

“Are you alright, Mars?”

“Yes, thank you, but I hope we can have better preparations for future nights.”

“I agree,” Jonathon said.

They took to the skies as bats. The clouds and wind dried the muck and dirt off. The sky was open and stretching forever. They flapped their wings, falling to rhythm, soaring vertically, hooking currents, and diving like a bullet.

The three short rivers preceded the cloisters just as the map entailed.

“Say, Jonathon, I know we haven’t talked much –” she raised a wing, “and this is all I could ever ask for, but I feel guilty.”

“Jonathon –” He moaned. “You know I never liked that name. Why don’t you call me Ravenous?”

Marsela didn’t look pleased. “Rav, what about our families?”

“Fuck ‘em,” he spat, unwavering. “We’re no longer of them. Not even the same species. We are bestowed with godly gifts and it shan’t be wasted, dawdling in your mind on past human families. ”

His anger deformed his face severely. ‘How cold and cruel’, she kept to herself, biting back her tongue.

“Rav?”

“Yes, love?”

She flinched. He was fueled with emotion, ready to spring, poised to attack.

“Do you ever see us parting in this great reasoned – equalizer of a mind you have?”

Ravenous ran his face against his hand. Deep in thought, he weighed each interpretation his words may carry.

“We are dead, Mars. I have no one; you have no one. It’s not to say we must agree on things if anything at all, but what would we be alone? I don’t know. That frightens me.”

She was relieved to see what-she-deemed as humanity in her companion, but second thought her outcry when she realized that maybe humans *are* no longer significant. She attempted to shake her head loose from plaguing questions and settled on acknowledging that she hadn’t entered paradise – no, but may have condemned herself to a very long, possibly dreary, possibly maddening limbo.

“Let’s not waste time, baby.”

Marsela felt a growing resentment for the man who had plucked her from a loving family – a beautiful mansion. ‘And for what?’, she asked herself, ‘to follow blindly a power-hungry blood-demanding lunatic?’

Ravenous swooped down to the earth and landed in his human form atop the water. His legs sank below and the water came to his waist. He brushed himself clean and nodded her to do the same, but she stood reserved aside from the water.

“Join me,” he said thickly.

She shuddered and discarded her garments. He watched with wicked ease, feeling her discomfort.

“How are you going to face the priests and monks and nuns if you can’t even stand here nude?”

Her head rolled down and her eyes flashed weakly down. He stepped forward hastily, snatching her neck. His claws punctured her beautiful curved neck. Drops of blood rolled down his arm. Her eyes begged for mercy. He stepped backwards.

“Are you going to slow me down? I cannot tolerate weakness,” he said, tilting his head, trying to pry open her brain with his eyes.

“I thought we might *not* do what that vampire said,” she pleaded.

In a death-like grip, he dragged her close to him and roughly staggered out of the water. Heavy lines appeared in his forehead. He puffed his chest and back muscles outward, and slashed her face downward with a tense hand. Blood pooled at his feet.

His fury melted, but his eyes stayed transfixed on the girl. At first, she stood in disbelief, but sank to her knees in voluntary defeat and humiliation. Ravenous turned pensive, offering the back of his hand for her to cry on. Her eye, snagged with a rip, split open and drained to the floor. The disfigurement disturbed Ravenous’s world.

“I should not have done that,” he declared.

She gave no acknowledgement. Rising to shaky legs, she took leave in aimless footsteps. Barefoot and naked, she walked away from the river and away from the cloisters. Ravenous stood his ground, watching her fade into the distance. There was no trace of her, but the shed blood at his feet. He collapsed to the floor with horizontal vision. His reflection in the liquid showed a broken soul. Stillness grasped him, telling of death.

A glimmer of hope sparked into his mind. 'Maybe', he thought, 'our paths will cross, and she'll let me explain, or she can explain, or maybe there's nothing to explain. We'll see each other and we'll smile. Hold hands', he thought, and laughed.

Taking to four legs as a prideful, large black wolf, he trotted slowly towards the cloisters, sniffing the ground with his snout, beginning the hunt.

THE BEAST

Ravenous left his troubles to the wind and in full sprint charged the monastery. Large wooden doors with great rings to pull them open stood before him. He pawed the door and watched the wood scrape off like foil, but the solid construction told him to find another way. He sat, pondering a plan until the doors began to creak open. He ran in a half circle and sat in place again.

"Brother Joseph," a monk said, startled, "have you seen this beast on our land before?"

"No, Brother George. This creature has not set foot within court land miles.

"Do you think he may be a sign? Brother Jacob's recent departure has left a rather gaping hole. A rather low morale has been plaguing us."

“You think this beast is from God? Look at his coat. It’s jet black. He looks to be sent from Lucifer.”

Brother George fixed his gaze on Joseph.

“Ideas like that won’t nourish a healthy mind.”

“Perhaps I was rash. I meant nothing by it. Only to suggest another view.”

“Well, it’s a view I do not wish to share or entertain.”

“My apologies, Brother George.”

“I want you to seek Brother Jamie. You tend to this beast. Give him shelter, food, water, and prayer. Then ask of our Brother Jamie to aid in dispelling such wicked thoughts you seem to harbor. From Lucifer? Disgusting, Brother Joseph. I will not tolerate such nonsense. Promise me this will not happen again.”

“It shall not happen again, Brother George. Please forgive me.”

“I’ll give you my forgiveness in a week’s time if I see fit.”

Joseph approached the large black wolf and stroked the back of his head. He crouched to his level and planted his palm on the beast’s shoulder.

“Please accept my hospitality. It’s what Jacob would have wanted.”

Ravenous followed Joseph into the main courtyard. He examined the architecture and structures, looking for points of vantage.

The courtyard was bathed in moonlight with full exposure to the outside. Most of the cloisters were attached, but there were two unattached buildings. The inside walls they passed were lined with torches. They entered the living quarters, which featured twenty rooms. Each had a very simple wooden bed with a white pillow, a light sheet, a heavy sheet, a knee rest, and a Bible.

“What shall I call you?” Joseph asked the beast, who simply looked back with cool, fixed eyes. “How is Lazarus?” The wolf licked his teeth. “Ah, yes, that’ll do,” the monk said. As Joseph turned his back, Ravenous changed form to a bat, flew above the rafters, and watched. Joseph spun in circles, entirely stupefied. He held his arms out in defeat and stormed towards the dining room.

“Ah, Brother Jamie.”

“Hello, Brother Joseph, you look quite flustered.”

“There’s been a bit of turmoil. I feel so confused. It all started with this animal – a wolf that was just outside our main courtyard – outside the heavy doors.”

“Yes, I heard you were seen with a wolf in company. How nice that must be to be put in charge of such a large splendid animal. By the way, where is he now?”

Joseph swallowed hard. “Resting,” he lied.

“Ah, yes, I wonder how far away he may have traveled from. I haven’t seen such an animal around these parts if anywhere.”

“Yes, he is quite a stand out, and uncommon – that I agree with.”

“Join me.”

Joseph sat down and allowed Jamie to pour him a full goblet of lush red wine. He swirled the drink and dipped his mouth to it.

“Refreshing,” he admitted.

“Tell me, is something troubling you?” he asked, and shoved a generous chunk of bread into his mouth, and offered the same to Joseph.

“Thank you, friend. Yes, well, I made a rather absurd remark while in converse with Brother George.”

Wide eyes met his.

“Brother George doesn’t entertain much. His humor is rather at the bottom of the barrel. Bless his soul.”

Joseph was surprised by the straight-forwardness.

“What was this remark,” Jamie asked.

“I suggested the beast may have been sent from Lucifer.”

Jamie coughed up his bread and spat wine.

“I’m sorry, Brother Jamie, it was out of place. Perhaps I shouldn’t have even brought this to you.”

“No, it’s quite alright. You know these cloisters can get rather routine-like. To hear such is a startle for anyone. Now, what made you make this declaration – suggestion?”

“Its eyes. They’re very unlike any animal I’ve ever seen. They seemed to think – to dwell on thoughts, and possibly even formulate plans.”

Jamie’s eyebrows lifted and forehead crinkled.

“Interesting. You are not testing my patience are you?”

“I would never do such a thing, brother. Please.”

“Have you had any falter in your faith, Brother Joseph?”

“No.”

“God tests us. He puts challenges ahead of us and sees how we persevere, and ultimately it makes us more complete. Yes? A stronger version of our prior selves.

I witnessed a man drown in my youth. He was a heretic and so I thought it proper and fitting, but had I another chance, I’d save that man. I’d speak to him about God and I’d lend an ear in perhaps a way that no one had done for him. We tend to fall into an easy routine and quickly forget that God has these certain challenges and just when you’re comfortable enough, he reminds you that life isn’t so easy after all. Things that are easy do not test us. They do not sharpen our minds or improve our ethics or morals.”

Joseph drank deep into his cup, unsure how to respond.

“Do you think that animal is from Lucifer?”

Joseph couldn't find an answer. He stretched and pulled at his own face, fighting internal conflicts, trying to put sense to the talks with Brother George and Brother Jamie. They didn't even seem to agree with each other. Had Brother George known that?

Time seemed to escape Joseph. His face deformed to a spectrum of uncomfortable, awkward states. Jamie wasn't bothered by this altercation. He almost reveled in Joseph's contortions and incited them on. Jamie filled both of their cups to the brim. He smiled, raising his wine.

Joseph shook his index finger and looked to Jamie.

"Might I ask you, whether you think this beast is from Lucifer?"

"I'll answer your question. But I'd prefer you not be offset by my opinion on the matter."

"Please, state your mind, whatever it may be. There are no wrong answers. Remember where you are, brother. This is God's sanctuary for us."

"Yes, then. I believe that's my answer. I think he's from *or of* Lucifer, or possibly Lucifer himself."

Jamie nodded, standing up. He paced the room, turning sharply on his heels.

"Animals and people both at times may show behavior and actions that we may deem similar to that of how God or Lucifer would act, and make such remarks in plain sight, no matter

how outlandish it may look. Do not worry about Brother George. Perhaps something was troubling him prior to this incident. I will speak to him. You have nothing to fear.”

Joseph felt relieved. “Thank you, Brother Jamie,” he said, downed his cup, and left the room.

Ravenous sat perched on the roof and watched the lights in the sky bleed out of the night. He took to the wind and flapped his wings hard and long until the monastery was out of sight. He stopped at a small cottage with an adjacent farm and flew into the attic. He relaxed his body and cleared his mind. He left a single image of Marsela’s large, tantalizing eyes in his mind and slid into sleep.

He rose from slumber and took to the skies again. He felt his flying technique improving. His muscles pumped him through the night like a swimmer. He passed the three rivers, gritting his teeth, ashamed he hadn’t finished his job the other night. His eyes didn’t search for Marsela; he knew his errors might take years to be laid to rest.

On the roof of the cloisters, he watched the monks, and watched the clouds transpire in the humidity of the night. Ravenous folded his wings in and deformed into a wolf, growing ever bigger. The thick of the air was perfect, he thought. It would slow the pathetic, inferior humans, while he would unleash his endless endurance. The humans reeked of salty and slimy flesh, but he crawled, craving their vitals.

He snarled with a malevolent storm brewing in his eyes. His breath was slow and thick with spit. Drool drizzled below and hit the head of a monk. The man’s eyes slowly fixed onto the

wolf. He fell backwards and paddled backwards on the grass. The monstrous wolf lurked, pawing the air. He howled upwards in anger and flew towards the monk as a wrecking ball of fury, desperation, and hate.

Blood flooded the beast's mouth. A long purple tongue lashed out of his mouth and licked his sharp incisors.

CLOISTERS

Ravenous dug his claws into the roof. He snarled with spit dripping from his mouth. He leapt through the air in his large wolf body and ravaged a monk's neck to strings. With his body pressed low to the ground, his eyes darted for others. Three monks appeared around the corner. They held their hands up as if to control the beast through signals and words. Ravenous charged them and circled their legs, snapping his teeth into their ankles. They dropped to the floor in agony, trying to reach for the beast, but his muscled physique slipped through their fingers. He clenched his teeth into their flesh, spitting blood into the air, and howled valiantly.

Bright lights shot on in large metallic sounds. Ravenous escaped to shadows. Nuns and monks came to the aid of the fallen. The ones that could speak protested, warning their brothers and sisters to stay back.

“Evil has spilled into our mist,” a fallen monk said.

The confusion and yelling began to die down as more of the holy men gathered to observe the atrocity. Torches were passed around. They genuflected in a continuous wave. He stretched his wings outward and curved through the main yard. He dipped below into the crowd and raked across a holy man’s eyes. Ravenous tumbled to the ground, concealing himself in darkness.

“Bat,” one screamed. “Holy God in Heaven protect us from thy sinners. And mayest Thou not lead us to temptation, but deliver us from the evil, because Thine is the reign, and the power, and the glory – to the ages. Amen.”

Ravenous began running towards the crowd in human shape and charged through them, pushing through their torches and blocked attempts. With eyes of glee and madness, he dashed his hands out toward their necks, spraying their blood in long spurts. Deep in focus with measured patience, he struck them down, seeking their blood. Horror shook him when a brave monk swung his flaming torch into his back. The heat whipped across him. He spun and sank his teeth into the man’s neck and pried open the space between his head and neck, bathing himself in a fountain of red. He dared them, throwing corpses into piles, throwing his head back, booming with laughter. The red pools of holy blood joined, creating a lake of fresh blood.

They held crucifixes out as they chanted prayers. Obscenities escaped some men’s lips, while others stood frozen in shock. Ravenous was caught in a stupor of madness. He rubbed his bloodied fingers into the gums of his mouth. His head turned to the side as he tasted and pondered the subtleties of his different victims. Screams and terror flooded the night. All who

remained in Brunswick Cloisters lay twisted, torn, and brutalized. The walls were blood-drenched and the bodies contorted, trying to escape to heaven.

Ravenous flew through the skies, indulged from the carnage. The air reeked of death and spilt blood. He parted ways with the cloisters and its three rivers. There was no grand satisfaction swirling in his mind, but hunger. His loyalty and obedience had been proven. He didn't care if he spilt the blood of any man. His conscience was clear and his mind sharp.

Knowing he needed supplies, he coasted the air streams until he saw the bright lights of a large city. He flew down to the main streets and took to walking as a man on two limbs with naked flesh. He walked down the main road, looking into storefronts. In the reflection of the glass, he only saw the road and sidewalk behind him. He stopped at a medical office with an emblem of snakes wrapped around a staff. He smashed the glass on the door and climbed inside. Walking into the back, he rummaged through cabinets and drawers, finding clothes. He donned a top hat, a purple suit, and large industrial boots. An assortment of syringes and a metal briefcase caught his eye. Looking to avoid notice, he escaped out of the back and ran through the streets in long strides until he spotted an apartment building he deemed his. He launched himself up the fire escape in short leaps, opened the screen, and stepped inward.

An old TV sat dully on a stand. The place was messy with newspapers strewn about. He walked over, hooked the deadbolt, and set his briefcase down. He laid out five syringes and set to work, draining himself of blood. By the sixth vial, he began feeling very weak. His head was wobbly and hanging downward like a broken neck. He shuffled his feet out of the apartment door and into the hallway. He kicked the adjacent door down, searching for humans.

In the third door he tried, a woman lay sleeping on a bed. He dipped his long, curved claw into her eye socket and severed the eye loose. She woke with a seizure of torment. He shushed her and sat complacently, watching tears of blood and salt run down her face. A sad, confused, hysteric animal, she shook in his arms. He ran his hands through her long brown hair and stroked her ears, appreciating and analyzing the human body. His serious, studious face fell to a sadistic cringe of laughter.

His face extended forth into a snout. His short, rectangular teeth elongated to sharp incisors that dripped with saliva. His black fur was ruffled and wild and his eyes crazed – ready to ravage. He darted forward and clenched the meat in his teeth, and grinded and pulled. The warm spray of blood quickened his desire until the body lay limp and fluids drained. Hungry, he took his case and stood upwards in his suit, licking his teeth as he entered back into the night.

Ravenous carried his briefcase while pondering and etching in his mind. ‘Who would make good creatures? Who is fearless and driven enough to slaughter nightly without regret or mercy? There can’t be discrimination, even that would be too weak, for all must perish.’ He dissipated into the night along with the steam from the streets.

Ravenous thought about his encounter with Marsela. He wished she were back, but he knew it was proper that to consent to her wishes. Besides, he thought, the bloodbath he caused would unravel throughout the news to the human public. He had made his name, and now it was time to recede, and to think. It was no resignation, but a triumphant victory.

Ravenous cruised the night’s skies. He turned on his right and barreled into the city. The night was rich with a purple thickness. Fog rolled in with green and yellow hues. The buildings

soared into the sky. Wind battered against him. Landing on his feet, he walked with his hands tucked into his pockets as he passed a familiar church with crosses that extruded from the walls.

Voices came spiraling into his mind. Words became articulated, with pictures flashing by of Chicago's Dodge Elementary school. There seemed to be something very crucial about a school nearby.

Ravenous looped through the night's skies and came crashing down as a bullet, smashing through the glass of the sky windows. He landed in a tumble, rose to his feet, and flexed his claws outward. He crept between the desks and hugged the walls before he turned the corner. He heard the breathing of a female, and whispers in the distance, down the stairs and behind a wall. She was in a corner holding a shotgun. He spun towards her and wrapped his arms around her.

"Are you the lookout?" he whispered to her.

Her eyes opened painfully wide. Her gun pointed upward. She tried to direct the barrel towards him, but he held the barrel in his left hand. He snatched the gun from around her shoulder and threw it spinning through the air. It smashed through a window and fell downwards two stories. Her heartbeat quickened. He held her, savoring her fear. He slid his index on her chin and pushed it upward as he crept closer, tonguing the side of her neck. He stroked her hair. Her forehead was full of sweat. He inhaled and ripped her clothes off. The moonlight splashed its light onto her flesh in a blue tint.

A garbled radio static played on her belt.

“Hey Clarice, why aren’t you checking in? It’s been 25. Check-ins are every 15. You copy?”

Ravenous held the radio to her mouth for her to speak. He mouthed the words as she spoke them, “Everything’s OK up here,” she said in a slow measured manner.

“Copy that. Jackson brought some Corona if you’re interested. Over and out.”

She swallowed deeply and looked to the radio. Ravenous gripped it until it burst into pieces. He wet his fingers and slid them to her thigh. She hesitantly looked away. She grabbed his arms, but her strength wasn’t enough to manipulate him. He lowered his head down her stomach, licking her navel and tracing downward. She screamed as he clamped down. He caught the sound of doors opening from below. He could hear the footsteps rushing up the stairs. Three men with shotguns entered the room. Clarice was on her knees, naked with her head pointed down and hidden.

“Clarice, you OK?”

She didn’t answer. Jackson grabbed her chin and pulled it upward, checking her neck. There were no holes or marks.

“Come on, Clarice, speak to us. Tell us what happened.”

Her eyes were flat and her expression catatonic.

They surrounded her, pointing their guns into the pockets of the room.

“Shit, the sky window’s smashed, and so is the window over there,” John said, and pointed.

Clarice grabbed Jackson’s leg and bit down. He screamed and kicked her away. Chris held her down with his left hand on her throat and winced as he drove a stake into her heart. She rattled until her face fell to serenity and her body lay stiff.

“Shit! How’s your leg, Jackson?”

He shook his limb. “I’m fine,” he said. “Her teeth didn’t go through.”

Chris noticed the specks of blood on Jackson’s leg. He looked to John. They nodded, and pointed their guns at Jackson.

“Guys, no!”

They blew him away with blaring shotgun sounds. Jackson flew backwards and sank to the ground with his arms wide. They cocked their guns.

“I’ll get Jackson, you get Clarice,” John directed.

Chris walked up to Clarice and held the barrel towards an inch before her face, closed his eyes, and pulled the trigger. John blew Jackson’s head away. Chris and John met in the center of the room, spinning in circles, looking for intruders.

Ravenous began clapping in the corner. The men shot towards the direction of the sound and morphed into a wolf. He pushed the door open and clamped through their necks, letting the blood fly as he tore their flesh loose. A shotgun fired, piercing his shoulder, but he

latched onto the gunned man and proceeded to eat his eyes. The still breathing corpses choked on their blood and spit. Their bodies pulsed with their stomachs, inflating and deflating quickly. Sweat dripped off their foreheads. The blood loss slowed them to a crawl.

Ravenous took to the skies with an injured shoulder. It burned, but in the pain, he could feel the microfibers realigning and re-stitching them.

Ravenous stood in the blackness of a church with small candlelight at the end. Two humans kneeled in pews, praying. Ravenous looked to the body of Christ at the ceiling above the altar. He balled his hands, flexed his veins, and carried off into a run, slitting their throats where they stood, and departed back to the night skies.

He flew through the open night. Proud to be done of his deeds, he triumphantly soared across the sky, stretching his limbs, cruising and coasting on wind streams. The air rushed forth, battering against him in a tunnel of wind, but he was free from all. After a stretch, he dived down to the ground of a night lit city.

He walked the streets in a dark heavy purple suit with long strands of hair shielding his eyes. He passed by a brick walkway. A store sign read 'The Happy Muffin Man'. It had a green cross emblem. He tried the door, but it just shook violently. He went around back and crashed the door open. He pushed his shoulder through another door, and beheld the brilliant light of plants. He sat down, pulled out a new glass pipe, and burned it. His head took to the wind and submerged itself deeply into the clouds. Underwater movement grasped him and the bubbly

sound from atop the surface pulled at his ears.

More of the lights turned as he fought to his feet, but gun bullets caught him and riddled him back down. Blood oozed out his wounds and his tongue unraveled out of his mouth. Pain gripped him tight in his chest and internal organs. He felt his life fading out and his vision quivering and dimming, but he still felt aware. He fought through the blur and felt his body pinned down, but surges of strength began fueling into his mind and powering his body with elasticity. Sweet euphoria covered his pain and propelled him up in laughter. The claws on his hands cut through the gunman's face and his teeth sank into their wrist. Blood tore loose in waves. Ravenous walked out and sprung upward into the air with his wings spanned.

Ravenous dropped out of the air in a bomb and transformed into a walking man. His back hulked with muscles arched his spine like a coiled snake. He kicked his feet down the grey walk. The path opened to a courtyard overhanging the lower leveled pier. Flagpoles of steel rose like crows nests with rippled flags, sputtering in the wind. He stopped, grasped the railing, and took sight of the docks below.

A layer of crud covered everything in salt and grit. Passersby paid no mind to his apocalyptic aura and traversed on their ways. The hunger swept his mind with a lick. An instant need to quench it grasped his vessel. His mind sawed through his visions. With his hands flexed and his legs on edge, he leapt through the night. The passersby couldn't hold their converses when they saw the leaping, running demon, escaping from Hell, eager for the soft body of a human. He grinded his teeth as his hair flailed in his face. He latched onto a female and pushed away her accompanying friend.

Ravenous sharply jammed his right hand into her face and licked the blood. He sank his teeth into the fold of her neck and shoulder. The flesh punctured and crept through the tissue. She screamed, looking to the passersby, who shrunk in horror. 'There is no one to pry her free', he saw, and sank to one knee, slicing the fabric of her jeans and puncturing her plump thigh. The teeth sank and the blood sucked to the back of his throat in spurts of heavy inhales with iron-rich, coppery tones. She fell, whimpering. Ravenous looked to the crowd and dropped his large boot over her face. The head bounced and came down squished like a wrinkled carpet. He crowed his arms outward, sighing in a huff, spitting blood, and jumped upward. He stretched into the night as a bat, fighting his way through the clouds. The victim laid lifeless, her expression as if foreseeing Hell.

Ravenous flew through the night with anger searing through his mind. He descended to the city streets below that were clouded with purple. He snatched a man in glasses wearing a tweed suit and gripping a leather briefcase. Ravenous held him by the shoulders and spat at his face in anger. His mouth was barking. The man looked perplexed and defeated. Ravenous sank his fangs in deep, draining the blood into the sides of his mouth, and cast aside the empty body.

He walked clumsily without destination. His feet plodded along the ground, his steps drunken with too many thoughts. A chaotic swirl of hate and sadness spun him in a tornado. Dull eyes laid flat on his expression and a dead line for a lip. The passersby avoided him, but he charged them slashing at their necks. One dived away, screaming and running. Another sank to the floor and stared upward at their oppressor, but the vampire staggered on.

Ravenous held a fat man to a brick wall and jaggedly ripped his fingers through his throat. The man's eyes bugged out like frogs. He spat to breathe, but Ravenous ravaged his throat apart with his teeth.

He flew off into the night, not caring about his blood trail.

DEATH

A white celestial light blinded Ravenous. He laid frigid in an alley, having killed over three hundred people in one night. Tired, exhausted, and having receded deep into his mind, his eyes were in a lull, and his body like a corpse. In front of the light, a silhouette of a woman approached with long flowing hair.

“Jonathon, you’ve defiled God’s children. Tell Lucifer your kind will *not* be permitted here.”

Ravenous opened his eyes to fire. It took his sight and flooded him with unbearable heat. His body convulsed, his heart spun, and his mind swirled with pain. He felt as if he were falling.

He laid flat on his back in a distant place that was unlike the streets. The air was thicker and the horizon stretched in all directions. Grits of sand carried in the air. The clouds above

loomed heavily. Currents of wind sliced past his ears, scaring him, forcing him to stagger and lower his head. He knew it to be Hell. His hands shot to his ears to stop the haunting, blustering wind. He rubbed the ground with his foot, noting the dirt-laden rock in which he stood. Smoke clouds swirled in his visual as the sound of men marching quickened over the field. Muscles bulged and tensed in human-shaped bodies, but were clearly disfigured into demonic oddities. Some stood tall. Each bore a different face and body structure. They gave off auras that commanded utmost respect and absolute awe.

Ravenous took to run, weary from the standstill. He felt his mind would have frozen over had he not burst into movement. A heavy, blue fist clashed down into his face. He ducked, sidestepped, and drove a hook into the tall standing beast that doubled his height. He noticed his own flesh was a much paler, translucent white that hinted with blue and purple fuzz. He could see through the flesh to his veins that roared by with sparks of fire and highlights of orange and red splashing to yellow colors. A returning fist blew into his shoulder, dislocating the bone severely out of his flesh. Shock and terror grabbed his visual, but the beast protested with curled fists, shattering his bones with each punch. He fell to the ground in a disfigured crook. He was smashed under heel and foot, and whittled downward into untraceable remains. His ears singed and burned until he could feel them no more. His vision went not black, but nothing at all as if he never had sight. The taste of his mouth was gone along with the smell of the ash-laden red skies.

Ravenous felt nothing at all. He could not even feel his mind. A battle continued at his point of death and trampled onwards. Beasts destroyed other demon figures. They had wicked

savagery with an instinct to torture and destroy all sight of their prey. None clad weapons, but used their fists, legs, tails, and other phantom limbs. They ripped their enemies to shreds with horns, claws, and razor sharp teeth. The fight slowed after time and the contenders stepped away, venturing their own paths with no regard for each other. Each traveled with utmost confidence, focused, piercing eyes, balled fists, and seething anger.

The clouds grew in size, puffing outward. The atmosphere dropped to just above the heads of the demons, and then finally touched to the floor. Grey and red billowing smoke fueled strongly, organically pulsing alive with the souls of the living and dead. It caused a static, electric zone of drug-like sensation.

Ravenous felt conscious. His cells spilled outwards, forming a human body. He felt himself reborn both physically and mentally stronger. A stinging vibrant intelligence wrapped throughout his brain in godlike flashes. The atmosphere was the same as he remembered when he had fallen, but the location was different as if he had been carried by the cloud coverage thousands of miles.

He stood on his feet, flexing his fists and looking upward. His back ached as he shrugged around, stretching sharp bones that extruded from his back and spanned out in flesh-like wings. His flesh was a soft white with purple translucent skin. Long sharp claws were at the tips of his hands and feet. His teeth were pointed. He pressed into his tongue and trickled blood in his mouth in a sweet salty palette of iron-rich blood. He crouched down and jumped skyward, with wings stretching out.

He clawed and pumped his thick fleshy wings, making a path through the grey-red clouds. Their thickness caused him to use his full exertion of strength. He swam upward like in a great ocean funnel. Energy swirled and carried throughout the clouds, creating their own base of gravity.

No one was in sight. He felt his face, and could feel it wasn't the same. His skin felt rubbery and hardened. His frame was riddled with muscles. His mind was refreshed. Time felt stretched and misaligned as if he were under the knife.

He spun through the clouds on his back, sharpening his wings movements. He felt himself traversing miles of air upwards into the clouds. They burst with electricity as he forced through them with his body. A drug-like sense passed through his mind like flowing endorphins and dopamine. His body felt rippling strong, quick, agile, and capable of destroying anything or anyone. He flew through the clouds, shouting and clenching his jaw. The air stretched like a black hole and bubbled outward into another sky. The spewing drug-like sensation was gone, but still withstanding, pulsing through his brain. The reds were gone from the clouds and they were now pillow white and softer grays, and the sky was a blue midnight as he remembered. He flew effortlessly in his demon body.

The hunger gripped him, forcing him to descend. He landed, tucked his wings behind his back, and took a stroll. People bought admission at the carnival booths. He walked alongside the perimeter and with one leap, jumped over the ten-foot fence, gracefully landed crouched, and resumed his stroll. Great banners stretched across wooden posts proclaiming of 'wolf man' and 'crab boy'. The carnival goers talked loudly, drowning him in white noise.

Pales of water were set-up at game booths to entertain the people. He looked at his prey and traveled a line of thought with every neck that passed his vision as if he could feel his teeth clench down into each one's flesh.

His hands shook and his mind quaked, beginning to sever itself apart. He broke into a run with his tongue trailing behind, running three times as fast than any human, dancing as he passed them with footwork unseen, he glided across the ground, pushing himself into angles, deciding whether to strike or keep moving.

He held his hands outward with his claws extended and pointed them, digging across a man's throat, and watched the blood cascade upward into a wide spray. He tested the red on the tips of his claws and cried out for more, rushing into the figure and charging him into the shadows. The people of the crowd saw nothing but a blink. In mere seconds, blood was flying outward like explosions. He charged the people, thinning them out, and slammed another to a wall, causing its head to explode like a cracked egg. The ground darkened with the vitals of the people.

The night air felt thin. In his anger, he jumped to his next victims and threw them upward, only for their bodies to fall like anvils. Their bones cracked on the pavement. Curdling screams tried to break his eardrums. He sank atop a dark haired girl. It triggered a memory of a girl he hadn't quite forgotten. He stood before her with his arms outstretched, holding onto her neck. His muscles tightened and he pressed the claws into her neck. He raked his claws up her abdomen and watched her mouth open wide and flood out blood. It splattered into his throat, and sent him thirsty for more into the night.

In ecstasy, he ripped apart humans with overpowering strength, slicing them to pieces, smashing their bones, tearing off their flesh, and covering his self with their insides. Bullets fired in the distance. He saw them ripple through the air and leaped away. Sirens spun in flashing interims of blue and red. Police officers ran into a mess of fallen bodies. Ravenous grabbed an officer and raised him above his head by his neck, and drank like from a spewing fountain. Bullets smacked into his frame and sunk through, spinning into his body. They shoved him back with each hit. He ran behind a wall and ducked low. In his chest, the bullets gripped together in a burning pain and limited his movement. He clawed his way up the side of a building and felt his wings outstretch and take full span. He rose into the air and flew downward, sliding through the air at different angles, turning in flight, making confusing patterns.

He barreled into another officer, tore off his leg, and threw it horizontally spinning through the air. More bullets pierced him, making him fall back to the ground and stare upwards to the night with its soft white clouds. He fell in love with the yellow light of the moon.

The officers enclosed, running closer to his body and fired more bullets. He twitched with every shot. He barely shed any blood. The cops looked to each other with eyes of shock. Ravenous laughed and shot upward biting into their faces and stabbing them with claws, mangling their bodies. He extended his wings and flew upward. The bullets dropped from his body and clinked onto the floor. He spiraled upward into the clouds, and looked below at the tiny man-made buildings and the pools of blood amongst the corpses.

GHOST

“I want revenge,” Dmitry said. “We *must* find a way to stop these creatures. The law sure as hell hasn’t.”

“Ease up,” Damian said. “We’ll find a way to end these dark days.”

Damian, Dmitry, Allister, and Corigan talked in the basement of a church. Dmitry unraveled a wooden pole from a sack and placed a pouch on the table. He dropped long steel nails out of it. They sat tediously working on their handcrafted weapons. Allister brought a six-round magnum and extra barrels that he planned to wield together. Damian unsheathed a long claymore sword. Corigan shrugged a batch of arrows off his shoulder onto a table, and began stringing a bow.

Dmitry pained small ornate crosses on his polearm and hammered nails into the other end. He thrust it into the air and spun it as if tearing through someone’s chest. The weapon felt heavy and firm in his hand. He practiced his swinging motions while having a smoke. He had the largest build of the four, but was of kind spirit.

Damian sat meditating at the table. Eldest, his left eye was permanently shut. He laid his hands onto the hilt of his sword and fell into deep contemplation. He had gray-white hair and wore chainmail atop his head and upper body. Corigan sat wearing blue jeans and having a cigarette while cleaning a smudge off his shades.

Allister stood up and aimed his newly crafted eighteen-inch barrel as he stood in a wide

stance. He pulled the safety and laid his finger near the trigger. "Pop," he said.

They jumped in a van and spun down the street. Night had taken over the sky along with the large full moon.

Ravenous spied the streets below as he flew through the white clouds. He peered, looking for those he could make his comrades.

He glided downwards, strolled around a cemetery, and read the gravestones. A picture of a man with a sinister smile that was posted on one of the headstones caught his eye. A letter stood before it stating, "You burned in death, but in Heaven you will burn no more."

The dirt was loose. Ravenous kicked at it and laughed just before he morphed into a wolf. He dug. Excitement gripped his eyes. Fifteen feet below ground, he found the surface of a coffin, tapped on it, and nudged the lid open. He pounced atop the stiff corpse. Worms crawled between his paws and scurried up his arms. He clamped onto the corpse's neck and inhaled the blood. He bit his own tongue and allowed the blood to drip to the corpse.

He called for the creature to rise, pulling his soul from beyond the grave. The body began to move and the creature began to breath. His hair was crude and laden with dirt. He swatted the worms off himself with shaking limbs. He looked ghastly as if he'd skin someone alive with his teeth with a crazed endurance.

Ravenous darkened as brown fur covered his body and his wings shot outward. He flew out of the hole, and called his fledgling to do the same. The man's flesh disappeared as his wings sprouted outwards. He flew upward and landed back onto his undead legs, catching his balance as he remembered the feeling of the earth under his feet once more. "Come," Ravenous called to him, "let's be away from here." He trotted away into the night with his new

undead companion.

Ravenous paused at the mouth of a cave in the deep of a forest. He built a fire of twigs and branches in fast array.

“What’s your name?” Ravenous asked. The flames lit their pale faces.

“Len,” he replied. His black hair hung in soft strands.

Ravenous looked at the creature, knowing he could kill him when he wanted or needed.

“I was burned alive,” Len said, turning his head to the side, thoughtfully. “Were you killed as well?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think so.”

“I’m in your gratitude.”

Ravenous pondered. “I need your help. Listen; there are certain people who are educating themselves on our breed. They’re hunting us, but we can sweep out the whole lot of them if we attack early on in this pitiful escapade.”

“I’ll help you,” Len said, falling to a smirk and a great laugh.

He charged through alleys in wolf form, sliding on the slick ground. He stretched his legs and pushed to a faster run with unwavering stamina. Above, Ravenous soared with a massive wingspan. He wasn’t small and in a rodent-like in his bat form, but was in a new demonic body like that of his own naturally, but stronger with a pump flowing through his veins. His body was demonic with a solid purple suit adorning his vessel. He looked to be of the abyss. The night was cold and wet with low-hanging clouds. They fumed by his raven-like eyes, but he kept his vision sharp on the streets below, watching the people. His eyes set on targets.

Televisions blared in storefronts with newscasters speaking of the Brunswick Cloisters

slaughter with a witness who claimed a vampire was responsible for the fifty-two lives lost that night.

Len paused at a screen. The female newscast carried on, "Vampire fans nationwide are frantic and starting some boisterous rumors." The anchor looked to her co-host and smirked.

"Do you believe in vampires, Mark?"

He laughed. "Of course not, Sally. Vampires are things like dreams, and last I checked, dreams are only figments of our imagination. They are *not* real. They do *not* breathe the air we breathe. People can certainly simulate a vampire-type attack, and I think that's what we've been seeing lately."

"An organization in Chicago, Illinois is asking for donations and funds to support vampire investigations. They claim they have researched the 'night walkers' their entire lives and knew that this day was inevitable." Sally looked to Mark.

"Their entire lives?"

He shrugged, breaking into laughter.

"A few words from the local clergyman, Father Damian."

"Thank you. These creatures are in existence and someone needs to treat this matter seriously. We're already in the thick of it. Naturally, we're going public to further branch out our investigations and cause."

"And what is that cause, Father Damian?"

"To send all of God's unwanted children back to Hell."

Len looked up at Ravenous, who descended to the sidewalk beside him.

"Did you get an address?"

“8300 South Saint Louise Ave, Chicago, Illinois.”

They both took to the night skies as bats, scurrying upward in spirals, entering the plume of the clouds as a sanctuary in their travel. They glided on the air currents, saving their energy, letting nature carry them.

Ravenous and Len circled the church with a bird’s eye perspective. They lowered and met eyes, coordinating their strike as they crawled on their bellies along the roof. Ravenous ripped a pane of glass off, threw it, and dropped through the roof. He walked along the upper inside balcony. Len jumped up and pushed the door open as a black furred wolf. He pranced towards a man praying in a pew and snatched him violently in his mouth. Blood shot across the room. Len’s heavy sound of gulping blood echoed throughout the chamber.

Ravenous paced atop the second tier that circled the entirety of the church. Weapons clanged and cocked from behind a double wooden door in the hearth of the church before the altar. The doors creaked open and flashlights shone onto a body that was torn to pieces. The man laid with deathly eyes that looked Heaven bound.

The slayers stepped out from the hearth. A long silver barrel stretched out that shined with a blue metallic hue. Len raced by, snapping into Allister’s wrist. A fresh circle of bite marks oozed red. “Damn it,” he shouted, dropping his gun, and pulling out a rigid pointed stiletto knife.

Dmitry along with Damian walked up the steps with flashlights in the crooks of their necks. They crept outwards. Ravenous flew downward as a bat and turned into his demonic shape with a full wingspan. He tackled Dmitry to the ground, scooped out his right eye, shoved it into his mouth, and took a bite. Purple-blue puss splattered out. Dmitry’s remaining eye

wavered in shock as his entire body trembled. Len rose to human size and grabbed Damian by the throat, and rushed him forward into a wall. Damian shoved the vampire backward and waved his sword towards his neck. Len caught the blade in his hand. Blood dripped down the sword below his grip.

An arrow came spiraling out of the darkness, puncturing Len in the upper torso. He fell backward with momentum and crashed to the ground in a sitting position with his head rolling to the side. Ravenous spun, witnessing his fallen comrade, and dived towards the slayers. A barrage of arrows sunk swiftly into his chest. He fell forward, lowering his head, and spilling his limbs outward in momentary defeat. Damian spat blood with a hazed look.

“Have we done it, friends? Have we defeated these satanic beasts – ‘Vampyre’?”

Dmitry stood up, slapping his large hand over the cavernous hole in his right eye socket. It dripped with dark red. He grabbed his polearm with nails in the end and drove the heavy pole downward atop Len. The vampire moved, dodging the falling weapon. He lunged at Dmitry and uppercut his jaw with his sharp claws tearing through the flesh. The big man’s jaw swung loose. Bone fragments scattered. He collapsed backwards in spasms.

Ravenous tore the arrows loose from his body and sailed an arrow at Corigan. It punctured the boy’s left hand as he tried to catch it. Ravenous walked up to Damian, ripped the chainmail atop his head aside, and latched his teeth down into sweating flesh. The blood poured forth to Ravenous’s delight. He drank deep, let the body fall from his grasp, and walked over to Allister, who lay in pain, fighting to raise his weapon at the creature. Ravenous stomped his hand, leaving it mangled and crooked. He gripped his left ear, tore it off, and spat it out.

“Len,” he called to his friend, who morphed into a wolf. His devious eyes glared at the

wounded slayers as he trotted out the front of the church.

The vampires disappeared into the night.

Damian laid on his sword with his eyes rolling around his head. He was sickly pale with a battered body. He clasped onto Dmitry's strong shoulder. They stood together. Corigan stepped forward, tying a garment over the wound in his left hand. Claws scarred the top of his forehead causing blood to drip into his eyes. Allister rolled around on his back in agonizing pain before standing to his feet. The four stood in a circle, meeting eyes as they communicated silently. 'Was this a message just to show that we're no threat at all,' Damian thought, questioning everything.